

IOWA STATE TRAVELING LIBRARY
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FLOATING THE BOONE RIVER

by Roger Sparks

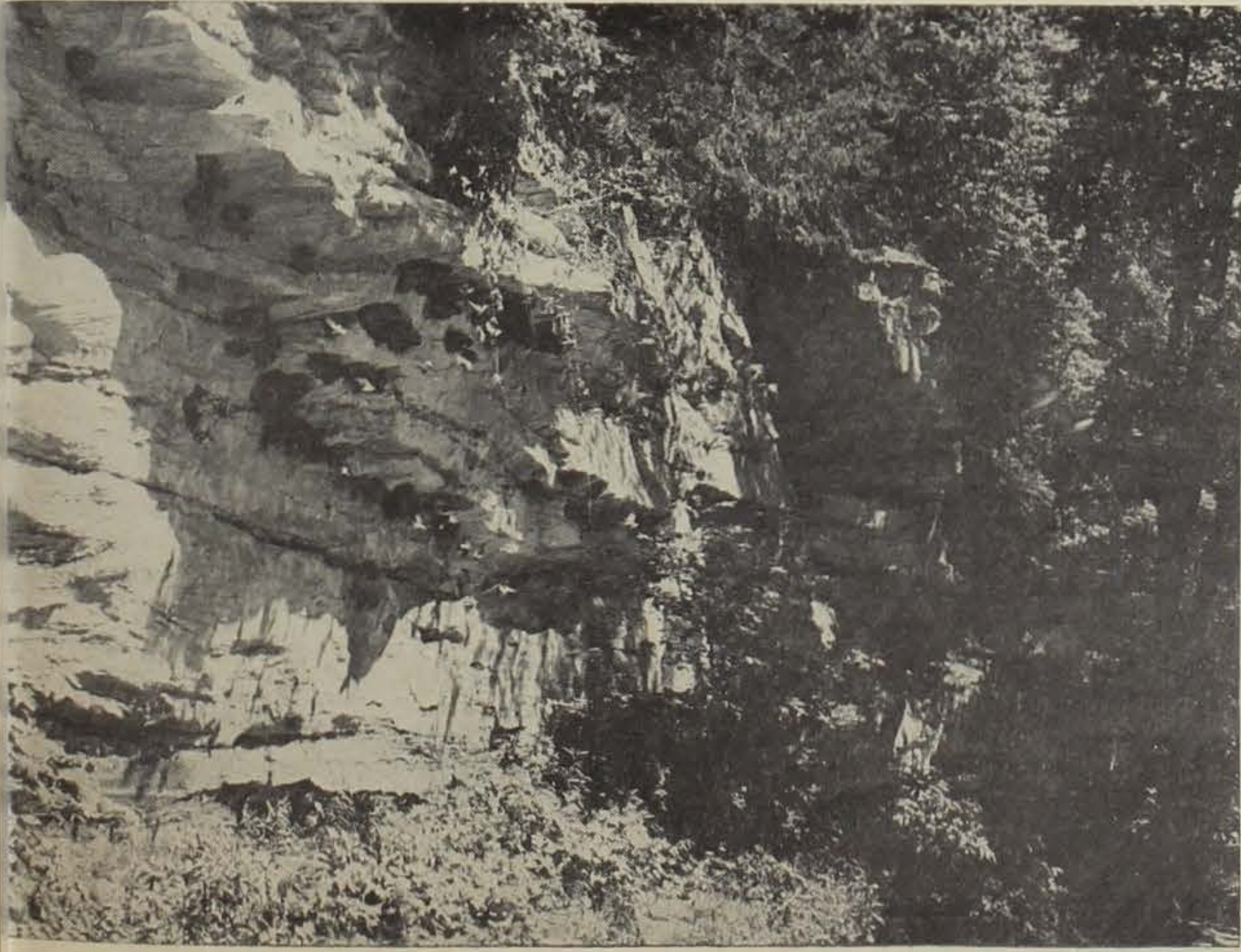


The best section of the Boone river for floating winds through Hamilton county. There the water averages from three to five feet in depth, with rapids around each bend.

Many of the rapids, perhaps better called riffles, divide, forming an island between. This calls for some quick thinking to decide which one is most navigable. But the riffles aren't treacherous, except during flood periods, and wet feet and a red face are about all that can come from a spill.

The stretch between Albright's Bridge and tunnel mill bridge is not only beautiful to float, but a catfisherman's dream. Our trip included both sightseeing and a few successful casts for channel cats.

The Boone river was once an excellent smallmouth bass and catfish stream. In 1967, pollution from an industry in Webster City resulted in a severe fish kill. The situation was corrected and the Boone has made a strong comeback. It is the policy of the fisheries section of the Iowa Conservation Commission to stock catfish in streams only after heavy fish kills caused by pollution or severe winters. This was the case on the Boone and in 1968, catfish and smallmouth bass were stocked in Hamilton county. Good runs of catfish enter the stream from the Des Moines river about 20 miles below.



We actually fished only a short while. We caught cats by floating to a likely spot (usually a deep, shady pool, behind a snagpile) tying up, and flipping baits downstream. The river was high, muddy, and dropping which normally puts an end to good fishing, but we managed to land five nice ones.

During low, clear water conditions, you might catch smallmouth bass, or even an occasional northern pike, but catfish are the main attraction. We promised ourselves a return trip during better water conditions with some serious fishing in mind.

We saw only one other person, a friendly farmer, during our six hour float. This stretch of the Boone takes about four hours non-stop (normal water flow) but plan on the entire day, and stop often.

We didn't have to carry our flat bottom boat once, but during normal or
(Continued on page 3)

Iowa Conservationist

Vol. 29 July, 1970 No. 7

Published monthly by the Iowa Conservation Commission, State Office Building, 300 4th Street, Des Moines, Iowa 50319. Address all mail (subscriptions, change of address, Form 3579, manuscripts, mail items) to the above address.

Subscription price: two years at \$1.00

Second class postage paid at Des Moines, Iowa (No Rights Reserved)

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CIRCULATION70,000

Drake Students Take A Close Look at Conservation



By Julius "Sonny" Satre

Last semester the senior advertising class at Drake University in Des Moines carried out a special project study of the Iowa Conservation Commission. Looking over the results of the successful program are, left to right: Professor Lou Wolter, head of the advertising sequence; Director Fred A. Priewert; Richard Mons (standing) and Miss Liz Nagelson, students representing the winning advertising account. Priewert praised the students for their efforts in the study of Commission activities and aims.

COMMISSION MINUTES

Accepted a land purchase option on 81.5 acres on Walters Creek Watershed in Adams County.

Accepted an option for 157 acres to increase the size of Preparation Canyon State Park.

Approved the following development project proposals for submission to the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation: Boone Park Commission, Franklin Park; Mills County Conservation Board, Pony Creek Park; Jasper County Conservation Board, Mariposa Recreation Area, Guthrie County Conservation Board, Nation's Bridge Park.

The following project amendment was approved: Ida County Conservation Board, Moorhead Park, development.

The following County Conservation Board development plans were approved: Clinton County, Follett Park; Dubuque County, Finley Landing; Floyd County, Ackley Creek Park; Greene County, Seven Hills Park; Guthrie County, Nation's Bridge Park; Jasper County, Mariposa Recreation Area; Linn County, Pinicon Ridge Park Revision No. 2; Worth County, Ochee Yahola Park.

Authorized a management and maintenance agreement between the Conservation Commission and Dickinson County on the 1.7-acre state owned property known as Orleans Beach in Dickinson County.

Issued a construction permit to Determann Blacktop Company to construct a barge docking facility on their property in Camanche, Iowa, and that the permit provide for the construction of protective dikes if tanking fields are installed.

Accepted a land purchase option for 64 acres, including 1320 feet of trout stream on the South Bear Creek Project in Winneshiek County.

Accepted a land purchase option for 80 acres on the Big Sioux River Wildlife Area in Lyon County.

SUBSCRIPTION Rates Will Change August 1

Effective August 1, 1970, the subscription rates for the IOWA CONSERVATIONIST will be raised.

Starting the first of August, it will cost \$2 for 24 issues of the magazine instead of \$1 for two years. Under the new rates a four-year subscription will cost \$3.50.

The steadily rising costs of magazine production have made the increase necessary. Costs of printing, paper, postage and mailing have risen greatly during the past years.

This is only the second increase in subscription rates for the magazine. The last increase was in February, 1959, when it was boosted from 40 cents per year to \$1 for two years.

It's interesting to note that the circulation in 1959 was 54,800 and presently the circulation is over 66,500.

The IOWA CONSERVATIONIST was among the last of the state conservation agencies to increase its subscription rates. Many other states have found it necessary to jump the price of their publication several times in recent years.

Even at the new rate we believe the IOWA CONSERVATIONIST is a great bargain in reading. At \$2 for two years it amounts to about 8 cents per copy. In the future, as in the past, the IOWA CONSERVATIONIST will strive to bring subscribers the ultimate in reading and visual enjoyment. There will be even more articles and photo features about outdoor Iowa and this state's great natural resources.

Two and four-year subscriptions are encouraged. However, a year's subscription for a dollar will be sold if requested.

So readers, remember the new rates go into effect August 1, 1970.

NEW RATES

24 issues	\$2	48 issues	\$3.50
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(BOONE RIVER (From page 1))

low, water, figure on a few, very short hauls.

The Boone is a beautiful, lonely stream. The pace slows in areas where long, beautiful slicks whisper through timbered flats and an occasional meadow or cornfield. Through these stretches, we would recline a bit and let the sleepy current and the warm, rustling breeze lull us.

Once, a series of startling screeches from a pair of red-tailed hawks warned us that we had again drifted into "no man's land." The current again carried us quickly, between high, rocky hills.

Around the bend and down a short riffle, swallows began showing up ahead of us. Soon there were swallows everywhere and the next view explained their presence. A large sheer rock wall, well over 100 feet high, rose above and out



over us. The current carried us directly under perhaps several hundred cliff swallow nests, built of mud, and attached to the underside of the wall. The inhabitants buzzed wildly about, apparently alarmed at the sight of such a wierd looking log floating through their living room.

Wildlife was abundant that day on the Boone. Three great blue herons glided smoothly over us, squawked their greetings, and winged slowly on up the river and away. Ducks, crows, countless songbirds, squirrels, muskrats, and a mink were surprised to see us; and although highways, farms, and small towns could not have been far, we seemed to be in another world. We were saddened at the sight of tunnel mill bridge, our take out point.

That's how a day on the Boone goes: long, lazy drifts, broken by fast water between high bluffs, plenty of wildlife, scenery, and relaxation. The catfish (just right for a large frying pan) seldom see a hook. Sound appetizing? It tastes of adventure.

The land immediately bordering the Boone river, and most of our streams, is an Iowa of another day. This is wild country, and though but a ribbon's width, it defies the bulldozer. It's wilderness.

*Campfire Cookery***WILD GOOSEBERRIES**

by

Dick Ranney

The list of wild, eatable foods available and ready for harvest is long indeed. Some examples that come to mind are the mushrooms, wild plums, choke cherries, wild asparagus, wintergreens, dandelion greens, wild dill, mustard, red haws, mulberries, black walnuts, hickory nuts, wild strawberries, wild grapes, maple syrup from the maple tree and fresh honey from the bees. This is but a short list of the fine natural food that grows throughout Iowa.

One member of the currant family which grows in the cool shady, timber areas, and is ripe this time of year, is the gooseberry.

The gooseberry is an oval, tart, fruit commonly used in pies and preserves. They may be white, green, yellow, or red, and may have prickly, hairy, or smooth skin. The American Gooseberry is of the genus *Ribes*, species *hurtellum*, and is the variety found in this state.

One thing for sure, they are tart! A gooseberry can be put to good use by people who work for charity selling kisses. One bite is good for an all-day pucker!

Gooseberry hunting is an excellent way to get away from the hustle and bustle of the big race. Find a large quiet timber, stop and ask permission from the owner, and start picking. A large sack, bag or bucket will do. Pick the berries that are white to greenish-white (the riper, red ones aren't so tasty).

The gooseberry bush is prickly and will scratch hands and legs. For this reason slacks and a long sleeve blouse or shirt should be worn. Don't hurry. This is the time to loaf along and enjoy the timber. Take along a jug of water, a blanket, and some lunch. After picking as many berries as you want, stop and eat lunch and stem (nub) them.

The berries can be frozen or canned and will keep fresh in the refrigerator for quite some time.

If the owner of the timber has milk cows, it may be possible to buy some fresh, thick, cream. Hot gooseberry pie with thick country cream will make people who dislike you stop and visit.

Make enough pie dough for a double crust, nine inches, and line the pan. To make the filling mix 2 cups of white sugar, one-third cup flour, and one-half teaspoon of cinnamon. To offset the tartness, extra sugar can be added to suit.

Wash five cups of fresh gooseberries and mix lightly with the filling. Cut some of the largest berries in half for better flavor. Try this for something different: Use four cups of gooseberries and one cup of raisins. Add one-fourth cup brown sugar and a touch of salt.

Pour the mixture into the pie pan and add a few pats of butter. Cover with the top crust which has slits cut in it and bake in a hot oven, about 425 degrees, for about 35 to 45 minutes. Bake until the crust is nicely brown and the juice begins to bubble. You may want to put some foil under the pie in case it should bubble over. Serve it warm with a cup of fresh coffee or a glass of cold milk.

As you set there, eating your second piece of pie, grab a paper and pencil and jot down a list of things you can think of that grow wild or come from the wild, and are good to eat. I'll put the lists together and send you the complete list in return. You might add a little information about time to harvest, places to look, and how to prepare them. Be sure and include your name and address. Write to: Editor, Iowa Conservationist, Iowa Conservation Commission, 300 4th Street, Des Moines, Iowa 50319.



"This spot was recommended to me by my husband."



by David Evans

It all starts in the early hours of an August morning when the harsh jangle of an alarm clock wakes an employee of the Iowa Conservation Commission. Pulling his clothes on the man grabs a quick cup of coffee then gets in his car and drives out of town in the pre-dawn darkness.

This man and between 90 and 95 other members of the Commission's Fish and Game Division are conducting the annual late summer roadside pheasant count. Information from this and other surveys will enable the Commission to determine the ups and downs of Iowa's pheasant population and set proper hunting seasons.

There are over 180 carefully selected 30-mile routes throughout the state. Each county has at least one route and several contain two or three. The survey is conducted in August by Fish and Game conservation officers, biologists and game management personnel. Each man must run a survey on at least two routes.

Basically, the men count all the pheasants, quail, Hungarian partridges and rabbits seen as they drive along the routes.

Getting eyeball-to-eyeball with Iowa's rising ringnecks involves some planning. In the first place a man starts driving

his route at sunrise. Since many of the routes are some distance from town, this means Commission personnel must hit the deck around 5 or 5:30 a.m. The routes must be driven during certain primary weather conditions—heavy dew, sun shining and wind velocity not over 7 miles per hour. Very often the men get up early every morning of the week in order to hit one dawn when the proper weather conditions prevail.

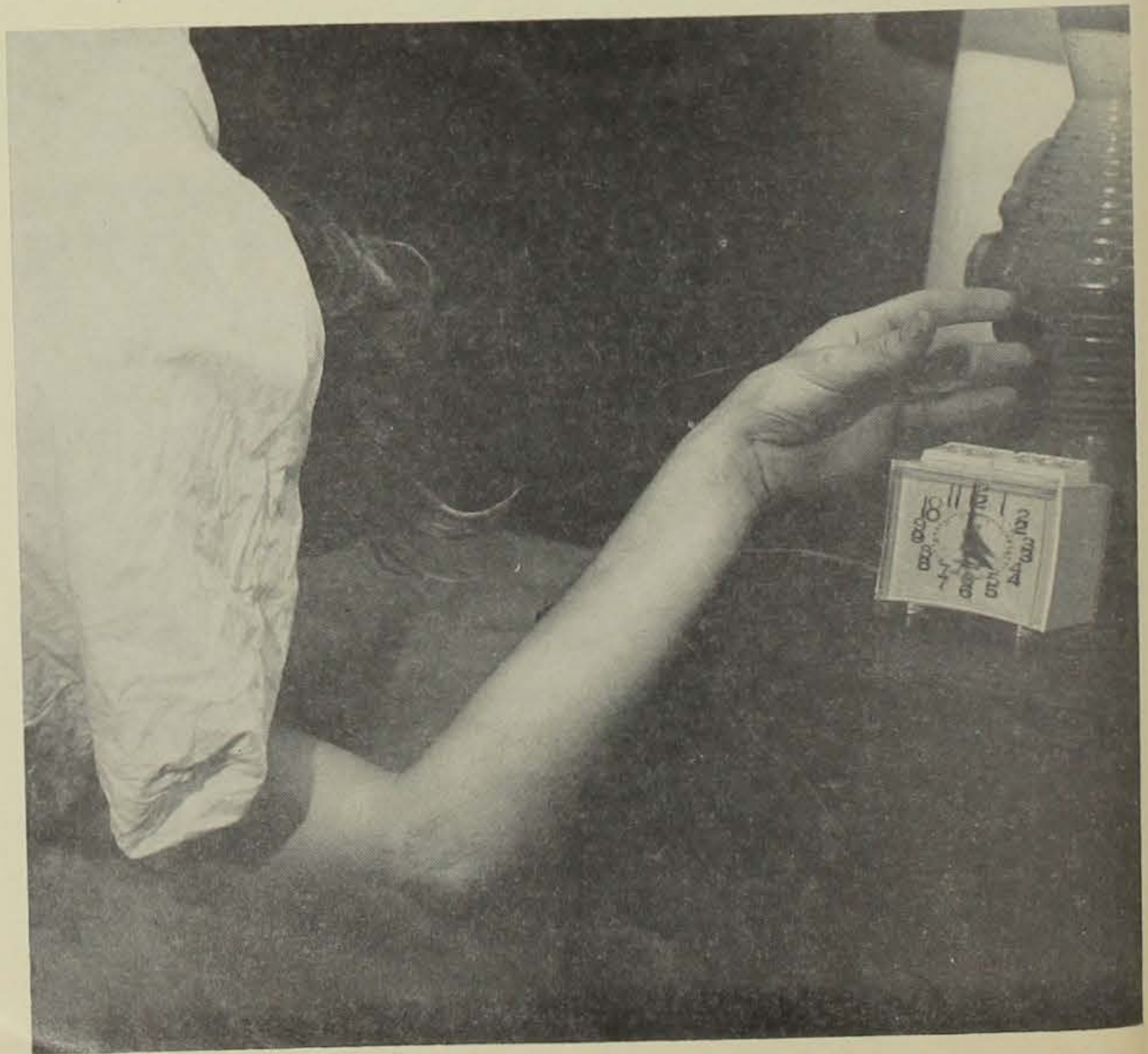
To better understand how a typical route is surveyed, let's go along with Bill Biologist of the ICC.

After crawling out of the sack and fortifying himself with black coffee, Bill drives to his appointed route. Getting out of his vehicle, he carefully checks the weather conditions, noting wind, clouds and temperature. He then kicks some tall grass to see how much dew there is. We observe moderate to heavy dew, light clouds, in wind and a rather pleasant 65 degrees.

"This is fine," he comments. "The birds will be coming out of the cover. A heavy dew usually indicates good weather and that the birds will be coming out to dry off."

Bill drives 15 to 20 miles per hour along the all-weather road of his as-

Operation P



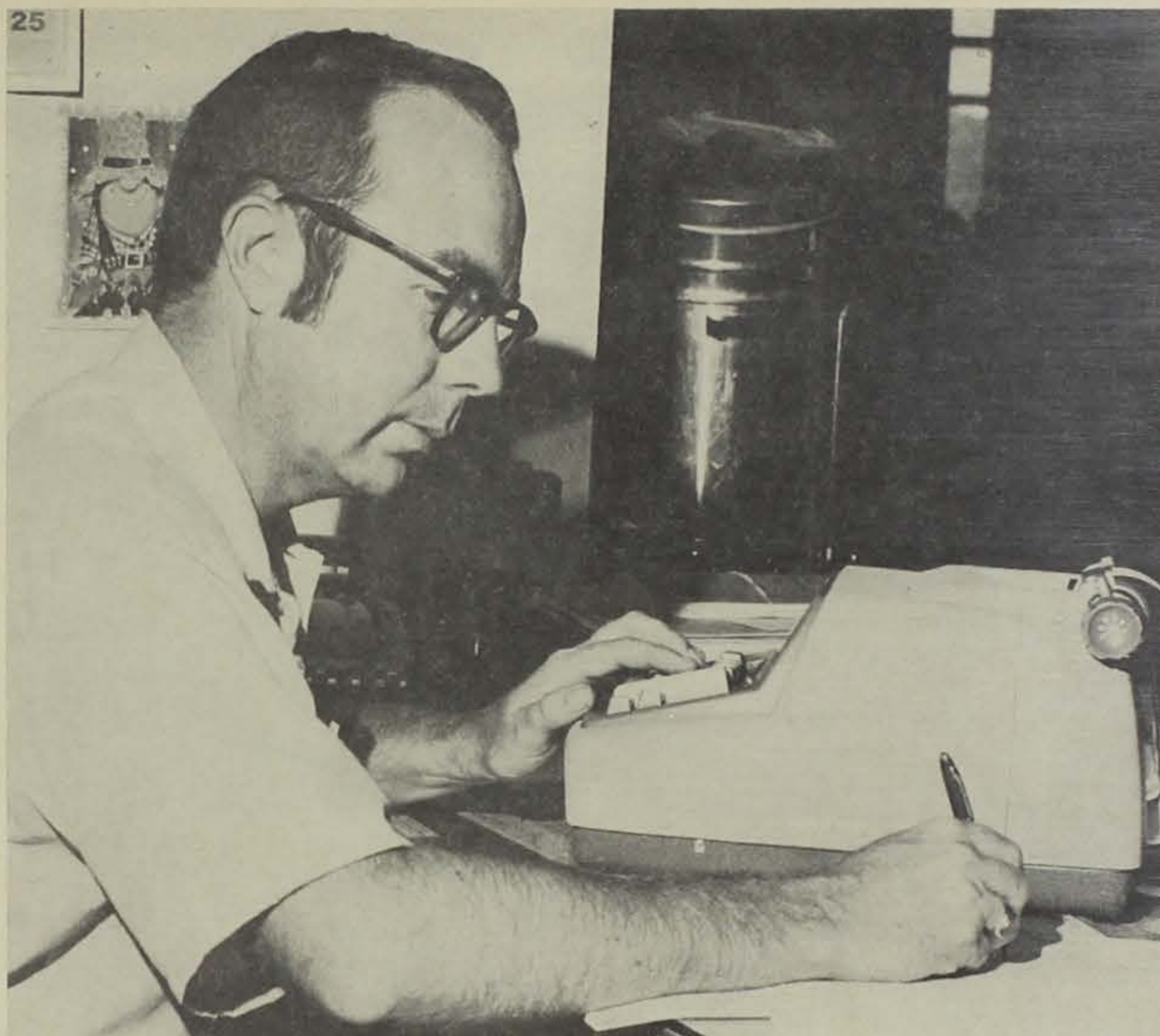
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signed route. He counts all the pheasants he sees on either side of the road, regardless of their location. We not only spot birds in adjoining fields, but also right in the road.

"We must designate the adult roosters, hens with broods, hens without broods, number and age of chicks in each brood and of course the total number of birds," points out the biologist. Special forms are provided for the survey. Bill, like other Commission personnel conducting the survey, is experienced in the business of counting birds. He spots pheasants that the casual observer would never see.

The vehicle may be stopped momentarily to count chicks in a brood or obtain a better look at birds already sighted, but not to actually search for birds. Although making primarily a summer ringneck count, Bill also records the number of rabbits, quail and Huns observed. In addition, he indicates his general impression of the pheasant population in his area compared to last year.

Back home, Bill discusses other aspects of the survey: "All systems were go' and we completed the route in good shape. However, at times it can be rath-



Pheasant Count

er frustrating. Some mornings there may not be any dew or there will be a strong wind blowing. Of course, the birds won't be as apt to come out and it won't pay to run the route. At other times, the weather will appear perfect when I get up at 5 a.m. But, by the time I arrive at the jumping off place, it may be too windy. Or I may get halfway through the route and a sudden rain storm sends both pheasants and me campering for cover."

Just how important is this survey that sends men out in the early hours of the morning?

"This survey and others that measure trends in game populations are vital to good natural resource management," emphasizes Gene Klonglan, assistant biology superintendent. "The immediate value to the hunter of the summer roadside count is in predicting hunting season prospects."

Obviously one can't count every pheasant, quail, Hun and rabbit in the state. But, game surveys do provide valuable information when establishing hunting seasons and indicate long term population shifts. The pheasant survey is excellent when it comes to measuring differences in distribution and density of the birds around the state.

The August roadside count is the last

survey before the seasons are set. However, there are other important censuses. A rabbit roadside count is taken in mid July to help keep tabs on a population that can grow by leaps and bounds. In late June, and early July personnel make the quail whistling cock count. Other game are also on both of these surveys. April and May bring the spring crowing cock and roadside pheasant count. This is a preliminary look at the birds and gives an early indication of what prospects are. These routes are started 45 minutes before sunrise—making it an even longer day. As the name suggests, the men stop at certain spots along their routes and count the number of rooster calls (the two-syllable "squawk" only) for exactly two minutes. In other respects, it's similar to the August survey. The ruffed grouse drumming count is taken in northeast Iowa during April and early May. A winter game bird sight record is also maintained. What it boils down to, is that Commission personnel are keeping a close eye on pheasants and other game birds. All figures from the surveys are tabulated and interpreted by the Biology Section.

Klonglan discussed the surveys further:

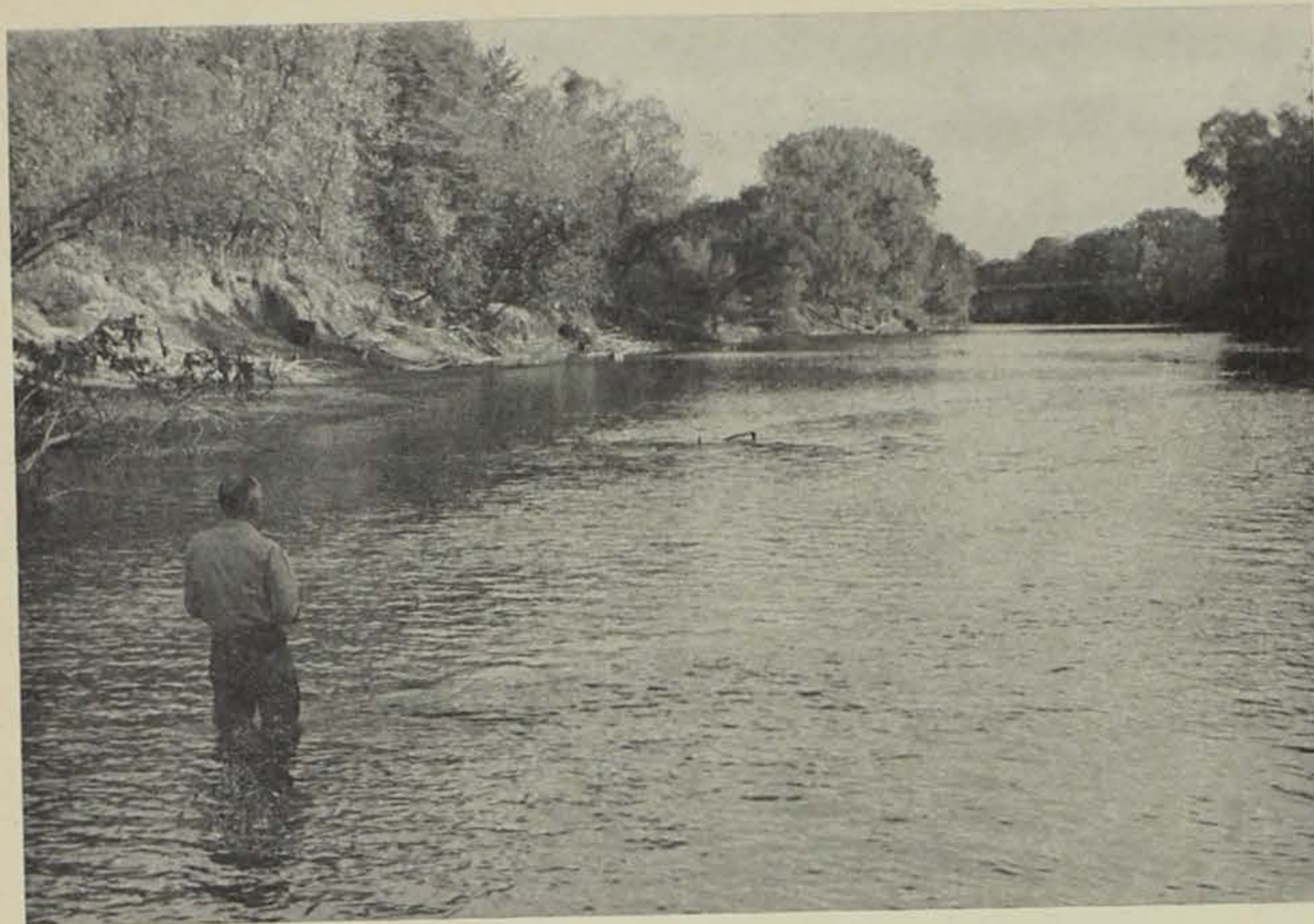
"An inventory of our game is neces-

sary if it is to be managed properly. We must know the current status of the populations before we can determine the effects of hunting seasons and other management efforts. Not only do we need to know the yearly fluctuations in population levels, but also the long term changes. In this way we can measure effects of changes in the habitat or overall environment.

"It's not possible, except in rare instances, to make a complete census of wild populations. So it's necessary to take advantage of the particular habitats of each species to measure consistent segments of the existing population. Then we have a means of measuring the effects of our management efforts and the relative status of the species.

"The present system of surveys have evolved over many years. One simply cannot rely on casual observations, memory or opinions to get an accurate picture over a long period. To obtain such knowledge we must maintain our system of scientific surveys."

Iowa's lusty ringneck and his mates are the subject of intensive research and study throughout the year by trained wildlife experts. Proper game management and good hunting seasons must be based on facts provided by these surveys.



Those channel catfish are once again the cause of much consternation to many an Iowa angler's intelligence. Numerous bewildering questions race through the mind of a novice catfish chaser as well as the seasoned veteran catfish catcher. Some of the puzzling queries may include the following: Is the river too high or is it dropping? Is the stream too muddy and what bait will bring the best results—live or stink bait? This type of lingo is just a few of the basic questions a catfisherman mutters to himself before venturing out to his secret spot in the boon docks.

Stream conditions of course are very important for a successful outing. If a stream is on the rise fishing conditions are considered ideal for channel catfish. During this period of rising water the catfish go on a feeding binge, grabbing most any type of food available. When the river flow is normal to low, fishing for "old fork tail" is quite productive, especially for the experienced angler who has mastered the art of catching this most abundant Iowa game fish.

Channel cats can be caught when streams are high and muddy but in most cases a fisherman would be wiser to cancel the river trip and try a lake or farm pond instead. When the water level in a river is dropping rapidly after reaching a crest that's a good time to stay home and mow the yard or wash the car because according to the experts catfish adopt a very cool, stubborn attitude toward the most appealing baits.

Every catfisherman has his own favorite bait or baits. Some of the old standbys known to do the trick include live minnows or chubs, nightcrawlers, crayfish, frogs, mud puppies, dead minnows or cut bait, shrimp, various commercial

Channel Cat:

Champ of Iowa Streams

by Julius "Sonny" Satre

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stink baits and home-made stink concoctions, fresh or aged carp chunks and entrails, sour cream, chicken guts, liver and blood.

As you can see by the variety of baits, a channel cat has a rather versatile appetite. But many times too often these sensitive fish are similar to a five year old boy at the dinner table—very picky and will bite on only certain baits. A wise catfisherman brings along an assortment of at least two or more baits. For instance a good practice is to have some live bait such as chubs and some stink bait.

Channel catfish are nocturnal feeders so early evening and night fishing is often the best. For the daytime angler, fishing around snags, piles of drift and roots, in shady locations will normally bring plenty of rod-bending action.

Always hold your fishing rod or be ready to grab it when channels strike. You will find through experience that unlike a bullhead, a channel cat seldom wallows the hook. When he strikes hard, or begins to swim away with the bait, the hook should be set immediately. If big chubs or other large baits are used, allow the catfish ample time to work on the bait till he decides to make a run. The channel catfish is a champion bait stealer and a neglectful fisherman will likely become quite frustrated if he is either over-anxious, or not ready to set the hook.

Fishing baits on the bottom is the most popular technique used in taking channel cats. Gradually releasing line and letting it ride with the current down stream will many times pay dividends. A number 2 or 4 hook is chiefly standard equipment.

When using delicate baits such as blood many fishermen use a treble hook with a bobber. Bobbers are quite popular with other baits also in that you can float the bait close to the bottom right to some unsuspecting cat's sensory barbels.

There is one taboo experienced catfishermen cannot tolerate—excessive or unnecessary noise. Talking is fine, but catfish are very sensitive to vibrations, and spook easily from the slightest abnormal disturbance. Large sinkers or weights cause too much of a splash and alert the wiley catfish of your presence. Split shot or small, sliding sinkers are recommended. About the easiest way to scare a catfish is to stomp and kick around in an aluminum boat. In any event, try to be as quiet as possible.

It is legal to use trot or throw lines in Iowa's inland streams south of U. S. Highway 30. Fishermen are allowed not more than five lines with three hooks per line. Fifteen hooks is the maximum amount of hooks allowed per fisherman. Iowa law states that throw lines must be plainly labeled with the owners name and address when in use. Lines must be checked every 24 hours. Boundary stream fishermen are allowed one throw line



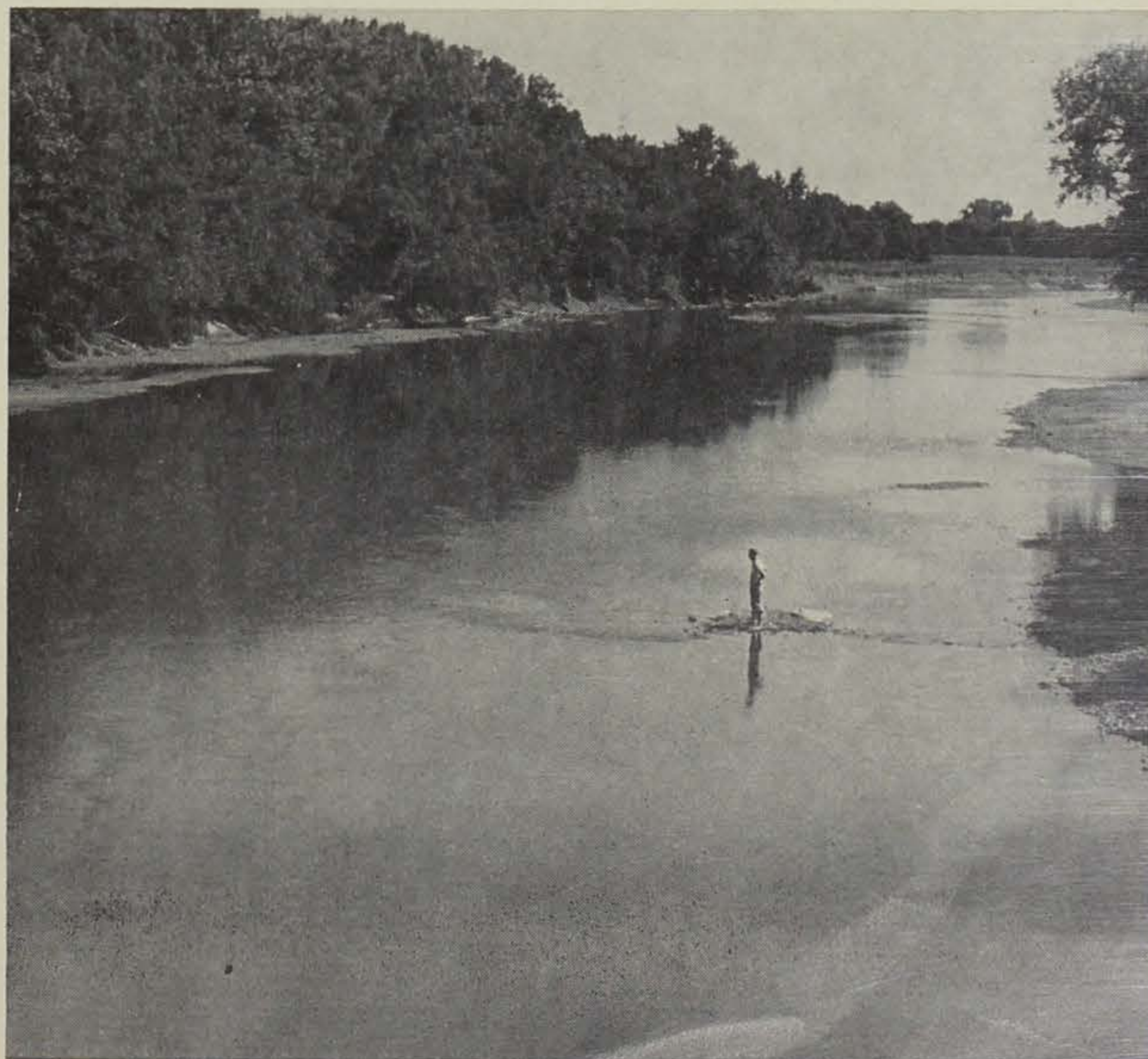
with a maximum of 25 hooks.

For an adventure to remember for a lifetime, try floating your favorite catfish stream in a boat or canoe. Floating has its advantages. It is possible to secure your craft to sunken logs and roots in prime catfish habitat that otherwise would be too difficult to fish from the bank. Floating puts you where a split shot and a short flip puts your bait quietly into the prime spots. Another important advantage is floating to areas that are inaccessible to shore fishermen which could very well be an anglers paradise you've long dreamed of discovering. Besides finding some "virgin" catfish water while floating you will be able to enjoy some of the rugged and breath-taking scenery along the stream. Perhaps you may see some white-tail

deer and many other wildlife creatures not commonly seen.

Iowa has been gifted with three excellent border rivers and many scenic inland streams where catfish are found in abundance. The three border rivers are the Big Sioux, Missouri and the Mississippi. Some of the major inland streams which offer good populations of channel catfish include the Cedar, Des Moines, Iowa, Little Sioux, Maquoketa, Raccoon, Shell Rock, Skunk, Upper Iowa, Volga and Wapsipinicon. There are many smaller feeder streams or tributaries throughout the state which offer excellent catfishing too.

Anglers are allowed a daily limit of eight channels with a possession limit of 16. There is no closed season on catfish in Iowa.



Right-smack-dab in the heart of Iowa's lush green fertile farm land lies one of her most popular and historic state parks.

The original tract of land was acquired by the State of Iowa in 1920 and November 1924 the Ledges State Park was officially dedicated. This park offers varied recreation for the young and old alike. Not only does it have an historical background, but the natural beauty of this playground is enough to enhance visitors from every state in the union. In 1969, the Ledges ranked 6th in popularity from a total of 53 other state parks.

From Highway 30 to the spot where Pease Creek empties into the Des Moines River is approximately an 80 foot drop. One of the parks scenic attractions is the unusual rock formations from which its name is derived. These sandstone cliffs border Pease Creek and as one slowly drives through the park, you will find yourself fording this small stream five different times. These points in the road are very popular with the children and during the hot summer months you can roll up your pant legs and actually wade the meandering Pease Creek.

Another added feature is the two and one-half miles of foot trails which the Commission maintains, but it is unknown as to the footage of paths the public has made on their own. These paths lead up and down steep slopes to scenic spots such as Table Rock, Hutton Memorial and Crow's Nest. The rocky ledges offer breathtaking views, so it would be wise to carry your camera.

Just south and within walking distance of the park, are some very interesting Indian mounds. In the park itself there is an Indian Council Ledge where, in years gone by chiefs and warriors of the Sioux, Sac and Fox (now Mesquakie) Nations pow-wowed. Legend has it that an earlier incident occurring in

by Phyllis Harris

The

LEDGES

a State Park for Everyone

or near the Ledges, actually provoked the Spirit Lake Massacre.

For the naturalist, flowers and shrubs grow abundantly in this 900 acre park; plus giant maple, ash, cottonwood and elm trees. And because of the excellent cover and food potential, bird life is bountiful. Scattered throughout are many picnic areas and shelters enjoyed by all from early Spring until late Fall. One of the most popular spots is the Oakwood picnic area near Inspiration Point.

Near the west edge of the Ledges flows the Des Moines River. A boat ramp provides easy access to some fine fishing. Not only are adequate parking facilities



made available to the public, but one more added feature for the young at heart is the ball diamond.

In a wooded area on the east side of the Ledges, a camping site has been incorporated. Campers of all types and sizes tents of all shapes and dimensions can be found here. Of the reported 43 state-owned camping sites in Iowa, the Ledges ranked 12th in individual campers for the year 1969. This figure seems quite phenomenal considering the fact this park is not situated near a lake or a large body of water and is officially termed a non-water area. No reservations are needed but campers are re-

quested to secure a camping permit from the park office upon arrival. Camping fees are \$1.50 per night per unit with a two week limit. Overnight camping for organized groups can be arranged for 15 cents per night per person.

One must not leave the Ledges State Park without an enjoyable visit to the State's Wildlife Exhibit and Research Station. By following the signs you find this area in the southeast section of the park. Standing at guard to the entrance of the exhibit itself is a huge statue of Smokey the Bear. This was carved by hand from a solid walnut tree trunk by one of the Wildlife Exhibit employees. Children are delighted and intensely fascinated by the four playful River Otters or the majestic Bald Eagle. These are just two of the more than eighty different species of waterfowl and wild game on display. In the waterfowl pool alone there are 23 different species ranging from the beautiful White Swan to the drab-colored Coot. If you're lucky you might be able to witness the two White Swans violently and with great authority flapping their wings the length of the pool, driving all other waterfowl from the domain.

One interesting story from the Wildlife Exhibit Station developed this past Winter. For reasons unknown to the Wildlife Workers, the Prairie dogs were not reproducing. The men hit upon an ingenious idea by where they piled four feet of straw on top of the 18 inches of dirt in the Prairie dog's unit. Thus in late March, after removing the straw, several little, underground creatures were discovered scurrying in and out of their holes.

Wildlife Workers are always on hand to conduct guided tours for different groups and organizations. This attraction of the Ledges State Park is open to the public daily from early May through October.

In addition, the Research Station is doing experimental stocking of pheasants in areas where good habitat is available but an absence of birds is prevalent. The program, at the present time, is actually developing first brood stocks from the wild. Here in the Wildlife Research and Exhibit Station, biologists are doing work in wild game. Most of the work done, and also the animals on exhibit are taken from the 320 acres of the park's Wildlife Refuge.

When you visit the Ledges State Park this year or any other of your state parks, please remember this recreation spot belongs to you. Treat it as such. Take advantage of all the services available and enjoy yourself.