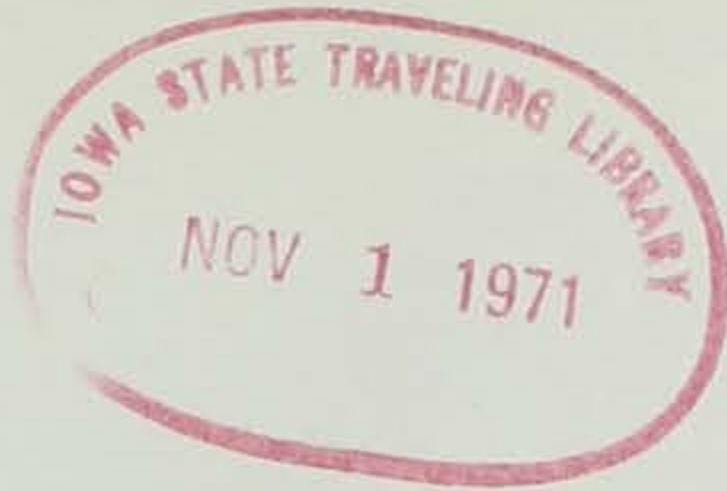


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OCTOBER, 1971



# conservationist



OCTOBER, 1971

# IOWA conservationist

David R. Evans, Editor  
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Wayne Lonning, Photographer  
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## Iowa Conservationist

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## Forum



Gentlemen:

Enclosed you will find a news clipping and glossy photo of the albino pheasant I shot during last fall's hunting season.

I have had numerous phone calls and several write-ins in the "Letters to the Editor" column in the local newspaper since this appeared in the paper and believe an article of this type would be informative and interesting for everyone.

Some people have said that this is a cross breeding with a chicken. Others who are informed on the subject say that this is impossible since the genes are not compatible.

—R. A., Des Moines

The photos which you sent show a partially albino pheasant. Albinism, or the absence of pigment in the feathers, is not too uncommon. The pure white pheasant is a rarity. The full albino is easy to spot in any type of cover, and therefore usually falls prey to a hawk, owl or other pred-

tors. The partial albino retains much of his camouflage and often escapes detection. Occasionally, we see melanistic birds. These are the opposite of albinos, having some or all black feathers.

Some persons believe these birds are crosses with domestic chickens but this is not genetically possible. Both albinism and melanism occasionally occur in all species of animals.

Sorry you missed in your "Pleasure Boating 1971" list of Iowa lakes to enjoy, Lake Cornelia in the center of Wright County, which Iowa Fish and Fishing lists as 285 acres. We have four concrete boat ramps with public dock, and I must say it is widely used with skiers and boaters from all parts of the state, also the Lake Cornelia Improvement Association places and maintains two public fishing docks of which we are proud, plus a fine campgrounds.

—G. B., Clarion

## Commission Minutes

Authorized the chairman and director to sign a revised agreement between the State Highway Commission and Conservation Commission for the relocation of Highway 20 at George Wyth State Park.

The following land acquisition items were approved: Walter's Creek watershed, Adams County, flowage easement, approved two final options of 18 and 40 acres; approved condemnation awards on ten parcels of land in the Volga Lake project.

Approved the internal operating budget and capital budget for the fiscal year 1971-72.

Approved the following County Conservation Board projects: Black Hawk County, West Fork River Green Belt Addition, acquisition 60 acres; Butler County, Fremont Township Wildlife Habitat Area No. 1, acquisition 25 acres; Clayton County, Osborne Outdoor Education Center Addi-

tion, Acquisition 175 acres; Dickinson County, Horseshoe Bend Recreation Area, acquisition 85 acres; Hardin County, Iowa River Green Belt Addition, acquisition 19 acres; Van Buren County, Bentonsport River Front Park, development plan.

Approved a resolution authorizing the Highway Commission to close a section of road located in White Pine Hollow Park and Preserve for repairs.

The following Fish and Game land acquisition options were approved: Barnes City Lake, Mahaska County, 160 acres located within the proposed take line of the Barnes City Lake; game habitat area, Ringgold County, two options (360 and 240 acres).

Authorized the director to issue, under Section 111.5 Code of 1971, an order for the removal of an obstruction from a portion of the Des Moines River in Mahaska County.



# COTTONTAILS

By Glenn Moravek  
Information Specialist

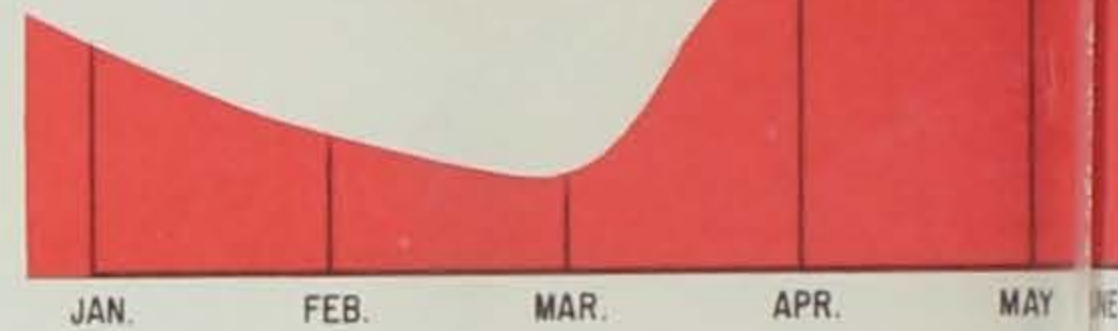
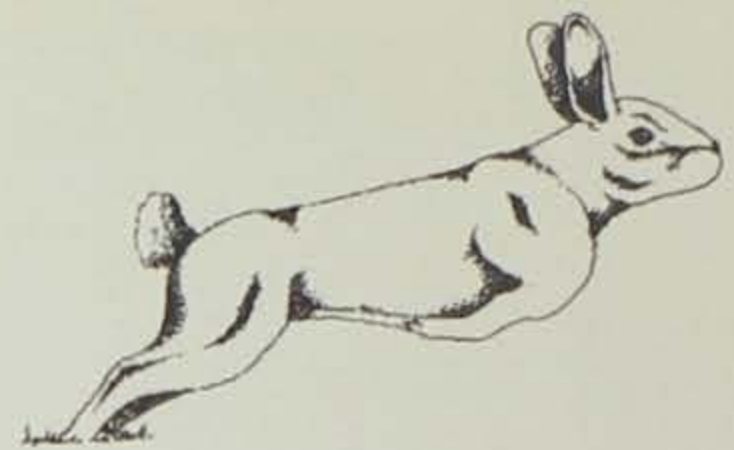
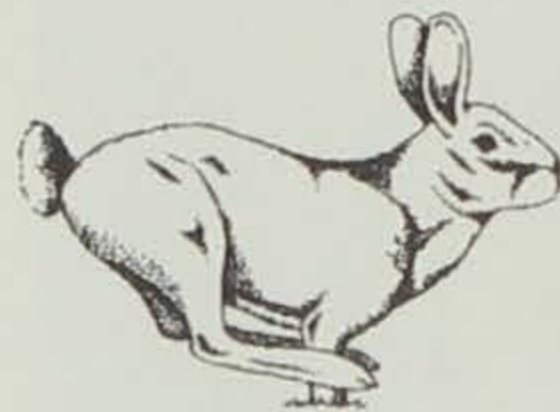
Night is coming. The evening breeze rustles the corn stalks and the oak leaves turned red by fall's first frost.

A cottontail rabbit moves slowly through a patch of ragweed beside a cornfield. He works his way toward the edge of the patch, hopping a few feet, then freezing. His twitching nose, long ears and large eyes are alert for danger.

Sensing nothing which alarms him, he moves out of the ragweed and toward an abandoned apple orchard. In the wild, though, danger is not always obvious. Tonight it comes on silent wings, a great horned owl beginning his evening hunt.

The cottontail spots the owl just in time — a noiseless flash in the evening sky. Dodging quickly, the rabbit runs through the ragweed and into the raspberry thickets where the owl cannot reach him.

He is lucky tonight. For in the world of the cottontail and other small game animals, life is a constant gamble. From birth until death, they are continually preyed upon by their environment. Few die of old age. Yearly mortality rates for these animals are tremendously high. In some



areas, up to 90 percent of the cottontails present will not live another year.

The cottontail's high reproductive rate produces a high population year after year in spite of this mortality. The breeding season for the cottontail begins in February. Approximately 28 days after breeding, female cottontails give birth to the season's first litters. Soon after the young are born, the females breed again. The cottontails reproduce nearly continuously all summer.

The young rabbits are born in bowl-shaped nests which the females excavate. Three to four inches deep, the nests are lined with fur and grass. Hay fields, row crop fields, roadsides, fence rows and forest edges are common nesting sites. The young rabbits are independent enough to leave their nests about two weeks after birth.

Under conditions for maximum production, a female cottontail could raise one litter of young a month until the breeding season ends in September. Many factors prevent them from reaching maximum production. Poorly located nests may be destroyed by predators — such as stray house cats and skunks. Other nests are ruined when farmers mow hay. Heavy rain and hail in

isolated areas may also hinder nesting success.

In spite of nesting losses, the cottontail population continues to rise during the summer. Although a fair percentage of the nests are unsuccessful, this is not a critical factor when each female could potentially produce a new litter of young once a month. In addition, some juvenile females, born early in the spring breed for the first time in late summer which also adds to the population.

Generally, there is adequate food and cover for the expanding rabbit population in spring and summer. The herbaceous plants which the cottontails prefer grow everywhere. The crop fields and patches of annual weeds provide escape cover.

Predators do take cottontails then, especially when the rabbits are overproducing or nests had been poorly situated. These losses, for the most part, are compensated by the high production.

Autumn in Iowa is a time of clear days and woodlands painted with bright colors. But, for cottontails fall is the beginning of a perilous time.

Frosts which turn leaves to red and gold are killing or laying dormant the plants cottontails used for cover. The fields of corn



MAY E JULY AUG. SEPT. OCT. NOV. DEC. JAN.

and soybeans in which rabbits lived are now being picked. The abundant herbaceous plants which provided much of their summer diet are disappearing.

In short, the range loses its ability to support a high population of small game animals. Biologists say that the carrying capacity of the land is decreasing. Where formerly many cottontails lived, now only a few can survive and the population declines.

The decline of the cottontail population in southern Iowa during the late summer and fall months was studied in a research project. Cottontails were continually censused on a 180-acre farm. The food habits of predators living there were also noted.

The results of the project were as expected. In August, the mortality rate of the cottontails was one per day. With the lowering of the range's carrying capacity, the mortality rate slowly increased until late in November it was nearly three rabbits per day. During November, predators took more than three times as many cottontails as they did in August.

As fall merges into winter, the carrying capacity of the land continues to decline. The rabbits which lived in the open fields during the summer or early fall will move into the patches of

dense brush or be killed by predators. The snows will come, blanketing some of the available cover and food. Then the cottontail will feed on the twigs and bark of sumac, basswood, hawthorn, raspberry and other shrubs found within their range.

Winter mortality among the cottontails will be dependent upon the density of the population. If the population is above the land's carrying capacity, fatalities will occur among the rabbits. When the cottontails are trimmed down to a level where the survivors are well protected by the range, then losses will be lowered. This level where the cottontails can be supported by their range was called "the threshold of security" by the late Paul L. Errington, former Iowa State University professor.

When the number of rabbits on the range exceeds the threshold of security, many of them will be eliminated by some natural process — predation, disease or starvation. As the population again reaches the threshold of security, losses will slow. Living on the best part of the range, the survivors will be relatively secure.

In addition to natural mortality, hunters also take many of the rabbits which exist above the carrying capacity of the land. In

the past, hunters in Iowa each season have shot almost two million rabbits. This kill has had little or no effect on the cottontail population.

By hunting rabbits early in the season hunters would harvest the surplus (over the winter carrying capacity) before natural mortality takes its inevitable toll. The cottontail season is half over before most nimrods begin hunting. Early, the cover is thicker, but hunters find high populations. In September and October hunting with dogs has proven very successful.

Even with hunting, natural mortality will claim its toll of cottontails as the winter progresses. Occasionally, a mink will take a rabbit weakened by the harsh weather. A fox may kill a rabbit which won't have adequate cover. The weak and those living in poor cover will be eliminated.

In this still and frozen world, there will be one reassuring fact. Shortly, warmer weather will again be coming to the cornfields and brushy draws of Iowa. Strings of Canada geese will wing toward the north. With the signs of spring, the cottontails will breed and once again begin the yearly cycle of boom and bust. ☆



## pheasant research



Photos by Jerry Leonard

### *Dr. Eugene D. Klonglan* Wildlife Research Supervisor

The ringneck pheasant is Iowa's No. 1 game bird and a valuable recreational and economic asset to the state. Because of its important niche in Iowa's wildlife scene, the pheasant receives considerable attention in the State Conservation Commission's game management and research programs. These efforts aimed at learning the facts through research about the ringneck's life history and what he needs to survive, and then applying this knowledge through management practices, have been carried out in an intensive manner for nearly 40 years. Less systematic observations have, of course, been made since pheasants were first introduced into the state just after the turn of the century.

#### **Early Research Efforts**

The first really serious attempts to learn just what makes a pheasant tick in the Hawkeye State began in 1933. This was a segment of a new cooperative research program between the then Iowa State College and Iowa Fish and

Game Commission which was established through the imagination and financial backing of J. N. "Ding" Darling. This first project was a study of the nesting habits of the pheasant in northwest Iowa. When "Ding's" idea for implementing such a program at Iowa State was expanded in 1935 into a nationwide system of "Cooperative Wildlife Research Units" at key colleges and universities, the ringneck pheasant received top level priority at the new Iowa Unit — and has continued to merit such attention to the present time.

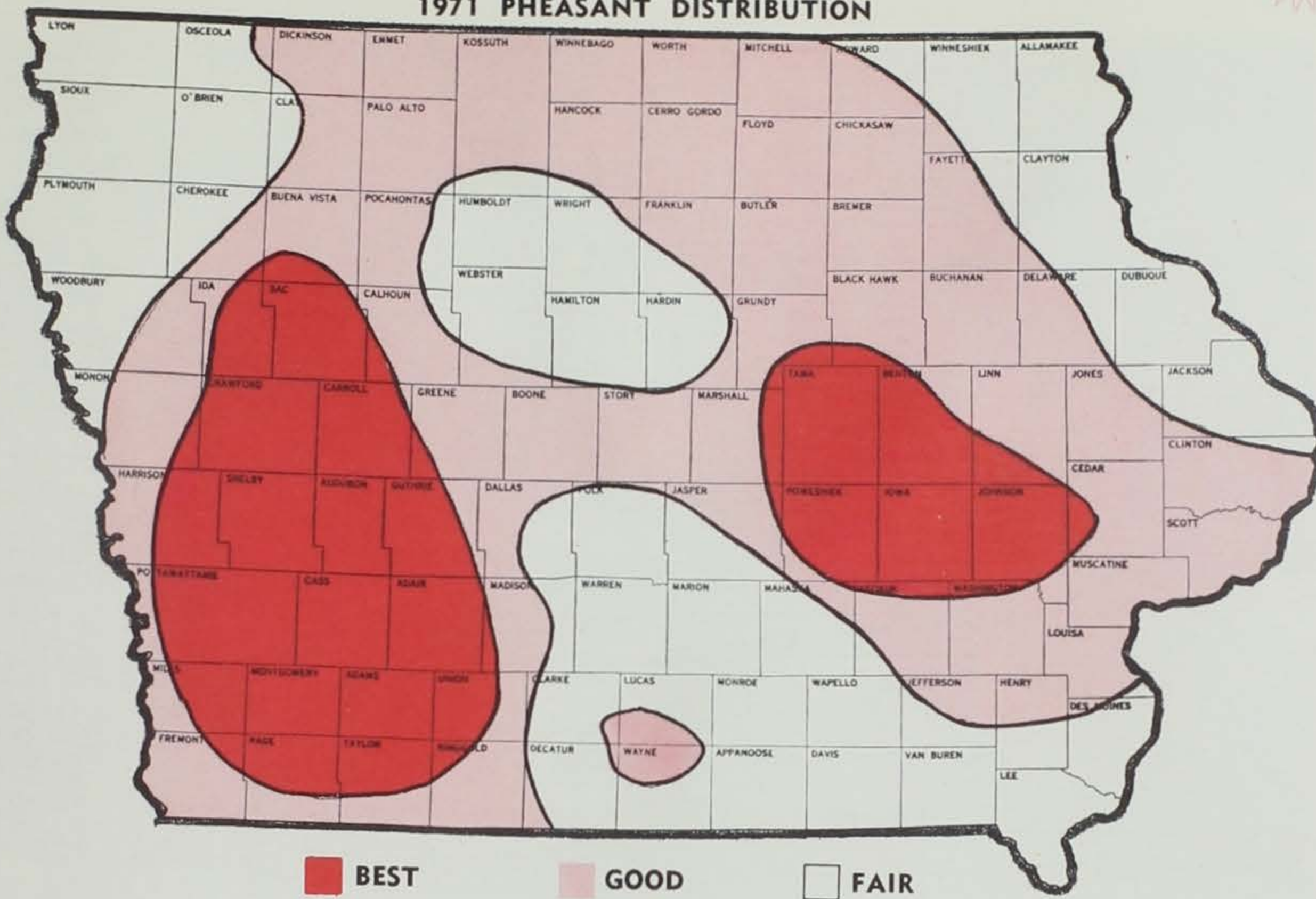
The nesting habits study mentioned above was done in the Ruthven area because a field station, concerned primarily with waterfowl research, had already been set up there. With good prospects for continued long term research, a more suitable study location was desired. Thus an area of several sections in Winnebago County in north central Iowa was selected, and much of the major knowledge of Iowa pheasants originated from studies carried out there from the mid-

30's through the early 60's. Some of the major investigations have involved winter food and cover as related to pheasant survival, reproductive cycle, development of experimental habitat management areas, winter movements and behavior, censusing techniques, use of flushing bars in hayfields, behavior of nesting hens, diseases, and effects of changing environment on pheasant population levels. An additional study on winter behavior and spring dispersal was conducted on and around two major state game management areas in Emmet county.

Once the basic life history patterns of the pheasant had been described, research efforts have followed diverse directions—primarily aimed at answering some important questions bearing on the whys and wherefores of ringneck distribution and density variations within the state. Another long-term research area was established in the mid-50's—this one in Union and Adair counties in southwest Iowa. Pheasant populations there had

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1971 PHEASANT DISTRIBUTION



shown a remarkable increase in the early-50's, a marked change from the low population status of southern Iowa until that time. Investigations into what was transpiring here should provide information that can be used to improve pheasant numbers else-

where in the southern part of the state.

In a similar vein, a series of studies was conducted throughout the 1960's on an area in central Iowa near Ames, where pheasant densities undergo a drastic drop within a few miles



along a north-south transect. Measurements were made here of the effects of many environmental factors that could be affecting population levels. With intensive research projects underway in the early-60's on three areas in widely scattered parts of the state (Winnebago Area in north, Ames Area in central, and Union-Adair Area in south), a unique opportunity to study the genetic differences in the birds from these widely separated locations resulted in further adding to our bank of pheasant knowledge. Since the Iowa pheasant is a conglomerate mixture of several types of pheasants, with the ring-necked variety predominating, chances are better than average for slightly different strains to develop. If one of these should prove better adapted than others for certain conditions, such as in southern Iowa, we want to be able to take advantage of that fact.

**Current Investigations**

The State Conservation Commission presently has two major pheasant research projects under-



way. Essentially these are both continuations of the long chain of studies trying to uncover better knowledge of how to improve Iowa's pheasant picture. We have learned from earlier investigations that the fortunes of pheasants are inextricably tied to farming practices. The present situation in northern Iowa, where pheasant populations have been gradually declining in face of ever more intensive farming methods, is today's best evidence of this. Winter cover was first shown to be the major bottleneck, but in recent years the lack of secure nesting cover has loomed just as great in importance. The bird has to be produced before you need to worry about getting him through the winter.

A research study now being carried out in Hancock County will evaluate different methods of trying to provide additional safe nesting cover within the necessary scheme of farming operations. This latter point is very important. Our pheasant

## IOWA'S PHEASANT SEASONS

Year	Number Counties Open	Season	Bag Limit	Possession Limit
1925	13	3 half days in October	3 cocks	
1926	18	3 half days	3 cocks	
1927	17	5 half days	3 cocks	
1928		closed		
1929	24	3 half days	3 cocks	
1930	33	5 half days	3 any sex	
1931	24	2 half days	3 any sex	
1932	20	3 half days	2 cocks 1 hen	
1933	25	6 days some counties, 4 days some counties	3 cocks	
1934	27	3 days, 12 noon to 5 p.m. (Nov. 24, 27, 28)	3 cocks	
1935	33	7 days, 12 noon to 5 p.m. (Nov. 20-26)	2 cocks 1 hen	
1936		closed		
1937		closed		
1938	42	3 half days	3 cocks	6 cocks
1939	40	3 half days	3 cocks	6 cocks
1940	46	7 days (Nov. 12-18)	3 cocks	6 cocks
1941	53	7 half days, 12 noon to 5 p.m. (Nov. 12-18)	3 cocks	6 cocks
1942	39	21 days, 12 noon to 5 p.m. (Nov. 12-Dec. 2) (short zone open in 20 counties 7 days)	3 cocks	6 cocks
1943 (Spring)	11	8 days, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (March 12-22)	5 birds (2 hens allowed)	10 birds
1943 (Fall)	38	37 days, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Oct. 28-Dec. 3) (short zone open in 27 counties 11 days)	6 birds (1 hen allowed)	18 birds
1944	37	42 days, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Oct. 28-Dec. 8) (short zone open in 27 counties 10 days)	6 cocks	18 cocks
1945	36	34 days, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Oct. 28-Nov. 30) (short zone open in 30 counties 10 days)	4 cocks	8 cocks
1946	59	21 days, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Oct. 28-Nov. 17)	3 cocks	6 cocks
1947	63	10 days, 12 noon to 4 p.m. (Nov. 11-20)	2 cocks	2 cocks
1948	67	20 days, 12 noon to 4 p.m. (Nov. 11-30)	2 cocks	4 cocks
1949	79	25 days, 12 noon to 4:30 p.m. (Nov. 11-Dec. 5) (short zone open in 10 counties 7 days)	2 cocks	4 cocks
1950	83	25 days, 12 noon to 4:30 p.m. (Nov. 11-Dec. 5) (short zone open in 10 counties 10 days)	3 cocks	3 cocks
1951	92*	25 days, 12 noon to 4:30 p.m. (Nov. 11-Dec. 5) (short zone open in 27 counties 12 days)	3 cocks	3 cocks
1952	92*	18 days, 12 noon to 4:30 p.m. (Nov. 18-Dec. 5) (short zone open in 27 counties 12 days)	3 cocks	3 cocks
1953	92*	25 days, 12 noon to 4:30 p.m. (Nov. 11-Dec. 5) (short zone open in 23 counties 12 days)	3 cocks	3 cocks
1954	92*	25 days, 12 noon to 4:30 p.m. (Nov. 11-Dec. 5) (short zone open in 22 counties 12 days)	3 cocks	3 cocks
1955	92*	24 days, 12 noon to 4:30 p.m. (Nov. 12-Dec. 5) (short zone open in 22 counties 11 days)	3 cocks	3 cocks
1956	92*	24 days, 12 noon to 4:30 p.m. (Nov. 10-Dec. 3) (short zone open in 22 counties 13 days)	3 cocks	3 cocks
1957	92*	24 days, 12 noon to 4:30 p.m. (Nov. 9-Dec. 2) (short zone open in 22 counties 13 days)	3 cocks	3 cocks
1958	92*	24 days, 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Nov. 8-Dec. 1) (short zone open in 22 counties 16 days)	3 cocks	6 cocks
1959	92*	24 days, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Nov. 14-Dec. 7) (short zone open in 22 counties 16 days)	3 cocks	6 cocks
1960	92*	24 days, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Nov. 5-28) (short zone discontinued)	3 cocks	6 cocks
1961	92*	35 days, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Nov. 11-Dec. 15)	3 cocks	6 cocks
1962	92*	35 days, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Nov. 10-Dec. 14)	3 cocks	6 cocks
1963	92*	54 days, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Nov. 9-Jan. 1)	3 cocks	9 cocks
1964	†	58 days, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Nov. 7-Jan. 3)	3 cocks	9 cocks
1965	†	51 days, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Nov. 13-Jan. 2)	2 cocks	6 cocks
1966	†	52 days, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Nov. 12-Jan. 2)	3 cocks	6 cocks
1967	†	52 days, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Nov. 11-Jan. 1)	3 cocks	6 cocks
1968	†	52 days, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Nov. 9-Dec. 31)	3 cocks	6 cocks
1969	†	53 days, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Nov. 8-Dec. 31)	3 cocks	6 cocks
1970	†	51 days, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Nov. 14-Jan. 3)	3 cocks	6 cocks

\* Hunting not allowed in Davis, Des Moines, Henry, Jefferson, Lee, Van Buren and Wapello Counties.

† Hunting was allowed in all but portions of southeastern Iowa, highways were being used as boundaries.





management efforts must be compatible with the economic realities faced by today's farmers. Otherwise farmers will have little choice but to reject them, for not many can afford the luxury of placing good land aside solely for wildlife purposes.

The second major study evolved from the increased emphasis on southern Iowa beginning in the mid-50's, and resulting primarily from the interest generated by the rapid expansion of pheasant populations in the southwestern area centering around Adair County. The striking success of ringnecks in this part of the state raised hopes that such could be duplicated in other parts of southern Iowa. Though positive proof is still lacking that the southwestern pheasants are better adapted to southern Iowa conditions, it just made good sense to use these birds as the foundation stock for range expansion experiments rather than birds from northern Iowa (the genetic study mentioned earlier

did show measurable differences in birds from northern, central and southern Iowa, but it remains to be proved whether these differences have any significance in ability to survive in the wild). Controlled releases of pheasants reared from wild parent stock (and thus only one generation from the wild) have been made on an experimental basis at several locations in southeast Iowa. The success of this experiment, as evidenced by good survival and reproduction, has been sufficiently encouraging to allow hunting in those portions of the region where birds were first liberated.

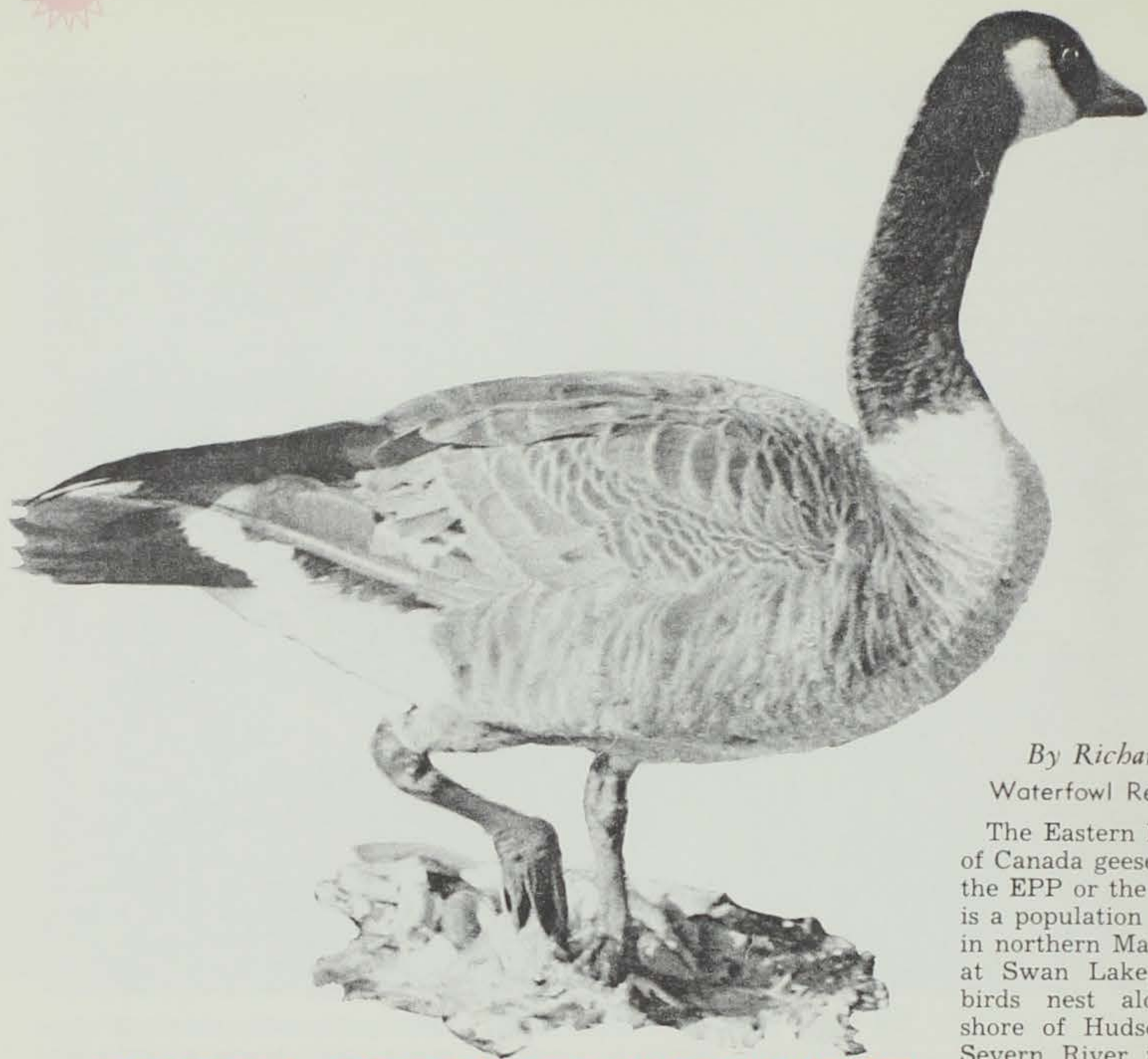
Meanwhile other areas remain to be stocked, and more needs to be known about the whole process of stocking. In spite of the encouraging results to date, losses of the pen-reared birds are greater than we like to see. Thus a special study has been set up in conjunction with the Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit at Iowa State University to determine the stress conditions that may be

causing this early mortality after release. One phase involves following the birds very closely in the field to see what happens to them. A second phase involves measuring several physiological aspects that may reveal stress, i.e., getting right inside the bird itself to see what may be going on.

Another current study of particular interest to sportsmen and farmers is an evaluation of the impact of small watershed development (P.L.566) on wildlife populations, with pheasants as a major indicator species. This is being conducted on the Twelve Mile Creek Watershed in Union County by the I.S.U. Wildlife Research Unit. The current phase involves measuring the pre-development wildlife populations, land use practices, and habitat conditions within the area slated for future watershed management work. After the watershed

Pheasant Research

(Continued on Page 12)



## CANADA GOOSE MANAGEMENT

it's why's and wherefore's

By Richard A. Bishop

Waterfowl Research Biologist

The Eastern Prairie Population of Canada geese commonly called the EPP or the Swan Lake Flock is a population of geese that nest in northern Manitoba and winter at Swan Lake, Missouri. These birds nest along the western shore of Hudson Bay from the Severn River in Ontario northward into the Northwest Territories and inland for distances of over 100 miles. They begin their south bound migration from the Hudson Bay area in early September but the main flight does not leave northern Manitoba until the last part of September. They wing their way southward across southern Manitoba, Minnesota, Iowa and reach their final destination at Swan Lake Refuge in Missouri.

Swan Lake National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1937 in north-central Missouri. The area is approximately 11,000 acres. Peak population of wintering Canada geese increased from a few hundred in 1941 up to about 137,000 in 1966 and 1968 but then declined to 105,000 in 1969 due to poor production and high gunning mortality.

The flock steadily increased up until 1966 due to fairly low harvest rates in Manitoba, Minnesota

and Iowa and good management of the wintering population in Missouri. The Missouri Department of Conservation maintained a moderate annual harvest of this flock which allowed for a gradual increase in the population. They can claim the lion's share of the credit for building the flock to its present day status. In 1966 this population of Canada geese probably reached an all time high.

Increased goose populations, changes in migration habits and the curtailment of duck seasons resulted in a shift of waterfowl hunting activity from ducks to geese. This trend followed true for Manitoba, Minnesota and Iowa during the 60's. The end effect was higher gunning mortality north of Missouri. The EPP finally reached its maximum harvest in the late sixties and in 1969 the wintering population dropped to 105,000 birds. It was evident that the hunter demand for these majestic birds was now above what the resource could provide.

#### Why the Shorter Season?

Large refuges built in Manitoba, Minnesota and Iowa are beginning to influence the goose migration and pattern and kill. The big picture of Canada goose management has changed. The kill has reached the maximum level for a stable population yet areas developed in Minnesota and Iowa promise to increase the kill in the future. In 1969 it was obvious that very restrictive seasons would be forthcoming and would be a way of life for as long as goose hunting was allowed if the population was not increased. It was decided that the best program was to increase the wintering flock to 200,000 birds which would eventually produce a larger number of young each year and allow Iowa, Minnesota, and Manitoba to increase their kill over the 1966-1968 level without reducing Missouri's quota. In short, this would provide a larger hunter harvest of birds from the EPP flock.

Biologists who had worked previously on the nesting grounds suggested that nesting habitat was available for many more

birds and that the main limiting factor on this population was gun mortality. Reduction of kill by restricting hunting seasons was the only workable solution to achieve a higher population. It was decided to cut back the kill in all three states to accommodate this increase. In 1969 a curtailment of the season in Iowa, Minnesota and Missouri was initiated. Poor production, a delayed migration and a good goose season resulted in a decline in the population despite our efforts. More stringent regulations were needed to gain the desired increment. The 1970 season was more restrictive with Iowa and Minnesota taking an October 3 opening and one Canada goose in the bag to run concurrent with the duck season. Missouri's quota was reduced from 20,000 in 1969 to 15,000 in 1970.

#### Slight Increase in 1970?

The wintering flock recovered somewhat in 1970 to approximately 120,000 birds. This brings us to the 1971 situation.

The Restrictive season in 1970 gave us a small increase but it was quite apparent that if we are to reach our goal of 200,000 geese, more restrictions would have to be imposed. The 1971, 1972, and 1973 seasons would have to be severely restricted. The only other alternative was to abandon our plans for an increased population and harvest the birds at the present rate until hunter demand and harvest reached the point that only limited hunting of this flock could be allowed in each of the three states. The eventuality would be a season of maybe nine or 16 days and or a system that would allow each waterfowl hunter one or two Canada goose tags for the year. This type of regulations would be present for as long as Canada goose hunting was possible.

All biologists involved are avid waterfowl hunters and we decided that for us not to manage for an increased flock and a larger harvestable surplus was not in the best interest of the sportsmen or the resource. So here we are!

The 1971 regulations proposals

were discussed at great length. The most liberal regulations that would still provide for a small increase were selected. Minnesota was given a nine day Canada goose season with one bird daily limit and Iowa was granted a 23 day season opening on October 9 and running through October 31 with a one bird limit. Missouri's quota was reduced an additional 1,000 birds to 14,000. These regulations are expected to give us a modest increase in the post wintering population at Swan Lake.

#### Present and Future Needs

Regulations are not the only aspect of concern for this flock of geese. There are many questions that need to be answered to ensure the proper management of this resource. More data is needed on mortality rates and kill for each state. We must pinpoint the production areas in the north and be able to properly assess production each year before seasons are set. Many other bits of information are needed to complete all parts of the EPP puzzle.

Presently a research project is being conducted on the nesting grounds by Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri and Manitoba. Data from this project should yield knowledge on migration routes, mortality rates, production areas and methods of predicting yearly fall flights. During the past few years researchers have been working on the Hudson Bay coast trying to find answers to some of these difficult questions.

Mississippi Flyway states and the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife are working on a program that will provide the most accurate information on harvest in each state. Management and regulation of the kill must be quite exact or we will end up in a situation that is both detrimental to the goose population and to the hunters recreation.

The Eastern Prairie Flock has been valued at several million dollars annually. People spend large sums of money in each state to hunt this trophy of the sky and

Pheasant Research  
(Continued from Page 9)

development is completed, a follow-up study will repeat the same type of measurements to evaluate the effects of the work done.

Pheasants are also involved to greater or lesser degree in several other projects around the state — some tending toward somewhat academic type of research, others more toward applied management studies. Any of these investigations, or any of those mentioned earlier, can be a separate story in itself. Some will be so treated in future issues of the Conservationist.

A Final Thought

The many research studies carried out on pheasants often give rise to more questions than they answer. This is as it should be. Research on wildlife species is no different in principle than that conducted in the fields of nuclear science, space technology, or any of the other physical or biological sciences. If we reach the point where we think we know all the answers, we are fooling ourselves and shortchanging the future prospects of pheasants in the modern environment. It is as important, if not more so, for the layman — be he farmer, hunter, bird-watcher, politician, or just someone interested in nature — to recognize this as for the professional wildlife manager to do so. Preconceived opinions based on insufficient factual evidence, or none at all, can lead to significant errors in deciding what course of action to follow.

Thus it is important to maintain an active research program to provide the basic facts we need to properly manage the state's pheasant population. Even more important, however, is to be able to make use of the knowledge we already have in conducting our pheasant management program. This aspect will be covered more thoroughly in the next issue of the Conservationist.



Hunting and Trapping Laws Synopsis

Pictured is the front cover of the 1971 Iowa Hunting and Trapping Laws Synopsis. The art work was provided by Jim Baldwin, Fish and Game Conservation from Spencer.

These booklets, which contain hunting - trapping seasons and laws, are available free from license depositories throughout the state or write to the Iowa Conservation Commission, 300 Fourth Street, Des Moines, Iowa 50319.

Canada Goose Management  
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to just observe the wild goose. For a resource of this value, how can we afford not to be actively involved in a good research and management program. In order for us to do this we need the support of the sportsmen of Iowa. The success of the entire goose project both present and future depends on cooperation. This is a dual venture . . . one group working without the other will fail.

The Conservation Commission is asking that sportsmen voice their support for this endeavor and bear with the current regulations. In a time when many forces are working against wildlife and the hunter, it is very important that we join forces and not pull in opposite directions. The old saying "United We Stand, Divided We Fall" has practical application.

NOTE: 1971 SHOOTING HOURS FOR DUCKS AND GEESE IS 1/2 HOUR BEFORE SUNRISE TO SUNSET.

Table with columns for cities (Sioux City, Omaha, Mason City, Des Moines, Waterloo, Cedar Rapids, Dubuque, Burlington) and rows for months (OCT, NOV, DEC) showing sunrise (SR) and sunset (SS) times for each city.



Ross' goose



American brant

**keep  
your  
eyes  
open**

By *Kenneth Formanek*  
Information Specialist

Fall waterfowl migrations through Iowa of past years have found species of geese passing through that are somewhat rare for this part of the country.

One of these is the Ross' goose (*Chen rossi*), a bird of primarily the western United States. Its usual wintering home are the valleys of central California. Interestingly, in recent years this mallard size white goose is appearing in the flyways of western and southwestern Iowa. In the sixties Commission personnel received an occasional report of a Ross' goose being sighted. In January, 1967, at Forney Lake during a lead poisoning study of lingering waterfowl an adult bird was collected by Commission biologists. Latest documentation of this bird's presence is the Commission's mounted juvenile specimen which was taken by a hunter at Forney Lake October, 1970.

The smallest of our geese, the Ross' is a snow white bird with black wing tips, reddish bill without a black "grinning" patch and pinkish feet. The field marks are about the same as for the snow goose, being about half the bulk of the Lesser Snow with which it frequently associates. It was not until July, 1940 that its nesting grounds were finally located in the Perry River region fifty miles north of the Arctic Circle. As each fall migration passes it is

becoming apparent that a few Ross' are joining the massive southbound flights of snow geese rather than taking their traditional route to the west coast.

Another foreign goose observed during Iowa's 1970 waterfowl season was an American brant (*Branta bernicla*) at the Ingham Lake refuge in Emmet county. The American brant is a true sea goose of the Atlantic coast and should not be confused with the local name "brant" often given to snow and blue geese.

This particular specimen spent several days with the local Canada goose population at Ingham Lake, affording the opportunity for Commission wildlife workers to verify the authenticity of the bird's presence.

The American brant is a small, greyish-brown goose with black head, neck and foreparts. The bird is slightly larger than a mallard. A white neck collar is incomplete before and behind. Its cousin the Black brant (*Branta nigricans*) of the Pacific coast differs in having darker underparts and an unbroken collar of white. Nesting grounds for the American brant are as far as northern Greenland. Wintering areas are usually along the Atlantic coast from Massachusetts to North Carolina.

The appearance of these geese, so rare to Iowa marshes, points up the importance for accurate and sharp-sighted observations.

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## sw iowa wildlife station

The Conservation Commission's Southwest Iowa Fish and Wildlife Station was dedicated last July. Governor Robert D. Ray officially accepted the station for the state at the dedication ceremonies.

The station is located two miles south of Lewis in Cass County within Cold Springs State Park. The park is managed and maintained by the Cass County Conservation Board.

The station was established to provide southwest Iowa with better professional fish and wildlife management programs. It was constructed during 1971 and was financed by fishing and hunting license money. The facility includes a laboratory housing modern equipment consistent with scientific research and management work. In addition the building provides space for offices, garage work and storage areas and a conference room. The facilities also serve as the main office for district managers in Fisheries, Wildlife and Law Enforcement Sections of the Commission. ☆



keep your eyes open

(Continued from Page 13)

Waterfowlers should carefully watch the birds they are gunning. Note the characteristics of flight and speed the bird travels. The coloration of head, wings and underparts should register accurately in the observer's mind.

Considered by many bird watchers and hunters as a "bible" to waterfowl identification is the 476 page hard bound book by Francis Kortright titled "The Ducks, Geese and Swans of North

America." Found in book stores this volume offers good descriptions of each species plus color plates of the birds in various plumage stages.

Proper identification requires skill which can be achieved through plenty of field practice. The ability to identify not only in the hand but also in the air is the mark of a devoted outdoorsman.

With a little serious study and practice in the field—who knows—maybe someday a rare sighting may take place right before YOUR eyes.



## Campfire Cookery

By Dick Ranney

The following is for use by wives and sweethearts so they may better understand the strange behavior patterns exhibited by some men this time of year.

Be alert for the first hint of hunting fever. The signs are very hard to detect. A simple statement like — let's plan to spend next weekend with your mother — or it's been a while since your sister and her family have been here, are but two of the many early subtle signs.

The second stage is more obvious. A can of gun oil in a plain brown paper sack. A check stub for an Iowa hunting license and a duck stamp. Or a phone call to the friend who owns the farm. A call just to visit about his crops, family, taxes, health, happiness and let's see what else was it. Oh yes, the pheasant crop, quail, deer, rabbits, ducks, geese, squirrels, coons, fox, coyote, snipe, partridge, grouse and the outlook for mushrooms next spring.

The third stage is as plain as a knit on a gnat. All week the tension mounts. The work level falls off and gives way to long breaks for coffee. Hunting information guides are checked and double

checked for shooting hours, opening dates, seasons and limits.

Constant contact is maintained with the other guys in the party. Lunch is forgotten in favor of a quick stop at the store to buy another box of shells to go with the six and one half boxes already packed at home.

Any normal conversation about the important matters like taxes, school, family or where to go on a date ends up in the area of size of shot, best pattern, or which of man's best friend to buy.

The last few hours border on complete fantasy. At last peace, quiet and time to prepare the treatment.

The treatment is in two parts—his and hers. Start the treatment by getting a new hair-do. Plan a luncheon date with the other gals who have the same problem you do. Go shopping for a new dress, buy candy or anything you want. This is the time to buy. Enjoy yourself. Play golf, bowl or take in a movie.

(The treatment — part two).

Safe in the knowledge your nimrod will return tired, hungry and full of tall tales of missed shots — of both kinds, prepare a little dinner of roast cornish game hen, steamed rice in mushroom sauce, salad, hot biscuits, honeybutter and coffee.

Meet him at the door with a big hug and a kiss. The hunting fever is not fatal. As a matter of fact, more gals than ever before have found they can be infected. Let's see what did I do with that box of shells I just bought.

# RED HAW state park

By David R. Evans

It would be difficult to pick a "favorite" season at Red Haw State Park — it's a park for all seasons, especially when it comes to scenic beauty.

In spring the red haw and red bud trees paint the area in fascinating pinks and whites. Wild-flowers and shrubs add their own colorful bloom.

As the heat of summer envelops the countryside, Red Haw becomes a cool, green oasis. The sparkling 83-acre lake sets jewel-like in the middle of the park.

A riot of colors burst upon the scene in autumn as the air turns crisp and the first frost arrives.

Even winter fails to dull the luster of Red Haw. Covered by a mantle of snow, the 420-acre park turns into a winter wonderland.

But, Red Haw offers more than scenic beauty — the State Conservation Commission has seen to that. The angler, camper, bird-watcher, picknicker, shutter bug, swimmer and jogger all find Red Haw to their liking.

A modern \$83,000 beach facility and parking lot were completed



this spring. The facility includes a concession building and cement steps leading down to the beach. There is a designated swimming area and diving platform. Boats can be rented at the concession.

Both campground and picnic areas provide splendid views of the lake. The campground, accommodates 80 units. There are shower houses, tables and fireplaces. A rail fence built near the campground entrance, evokes memories of early Iowa.

A rustic shelter house, one of the first buildings at the park, provides a panoramic view of Red Haw and the city lake across Highway 34 to the north. There is another shelter house near the lake and both are very popular for family reunions and picnics. Areas have been cleared and grass kept mowed to provide ample space for picnic tables near the water.

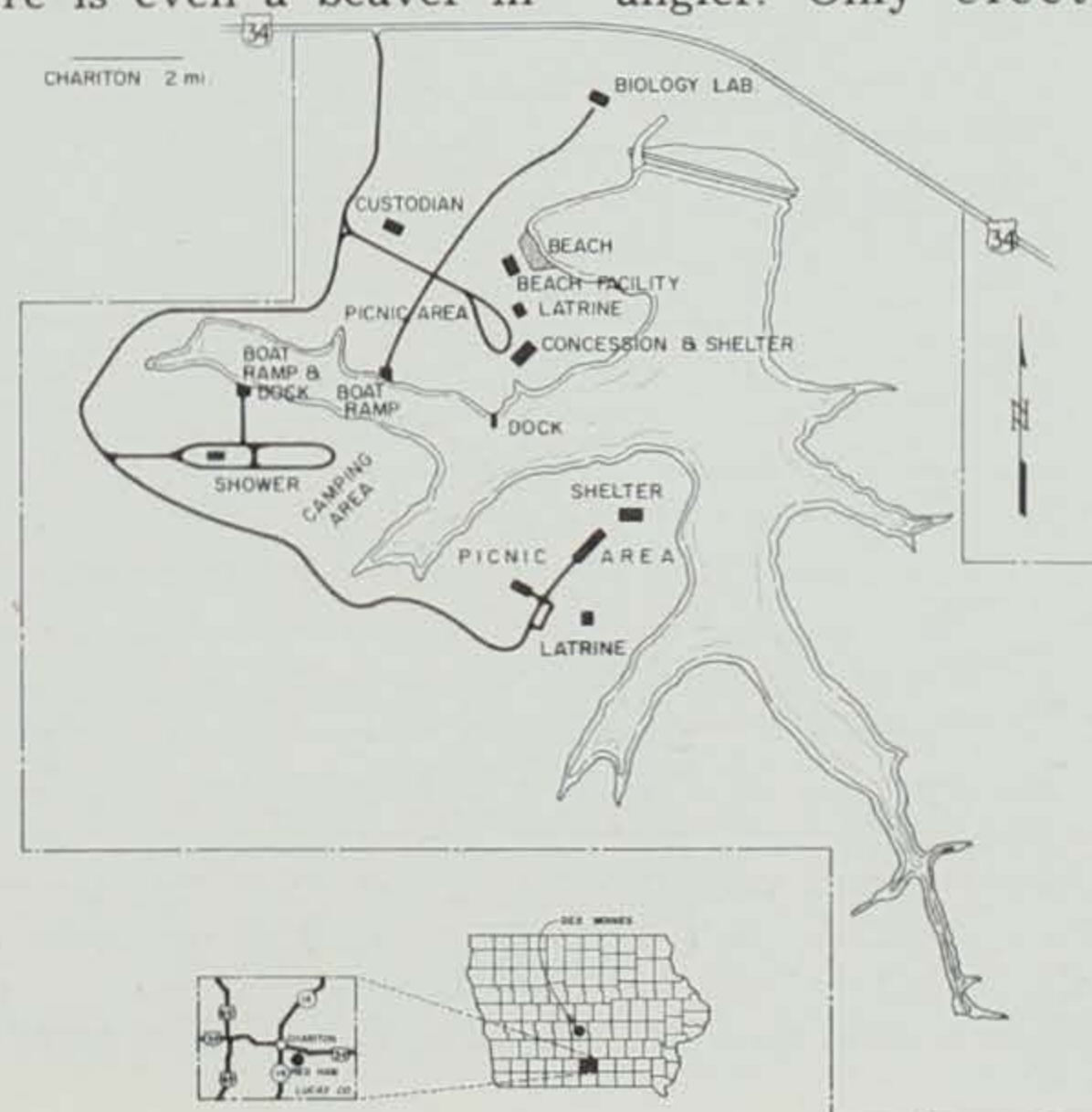
Numerous activities take place in the park on a typical summer weekend. Horseshoes, frisby, hiking, games for youngsters and picture taking are popular. Other

people enjoy sitting in the shade and reading.

There is a variety of trees and shrubs including red haw, oak, maple, elm, red bud and pine. They not only add to the beauty and natural appearance, but keep the park cool in the hot summer months. Deer, rabbit, mink, raccoon, squirrel, quail and pheasants are found in or near the park. There is even a beaver in

the lake. Special wildlife plantings have been made to provide food and shelter.

To anglers, Red Haw Lake means pan fishing — and some pretty good fishing at that. Crappies and bluegills are primary species, but there are some large-mouth bass. The lake is exceptionally clear with bays and points to lure both fish and angler. Only electric trolling



motors are allowed and fishing is a leisurely sport. There are docks and boat ramps available at different locations.

Although the park is most popular in the spring and summer, it also receives visitors in the fall and winter.

"We had campers here in February when there was 11 inches of snow," said Park Officer Warren Strait, who has been at Red Haw for five years. Many ice

fishermen also brave the winter weather.

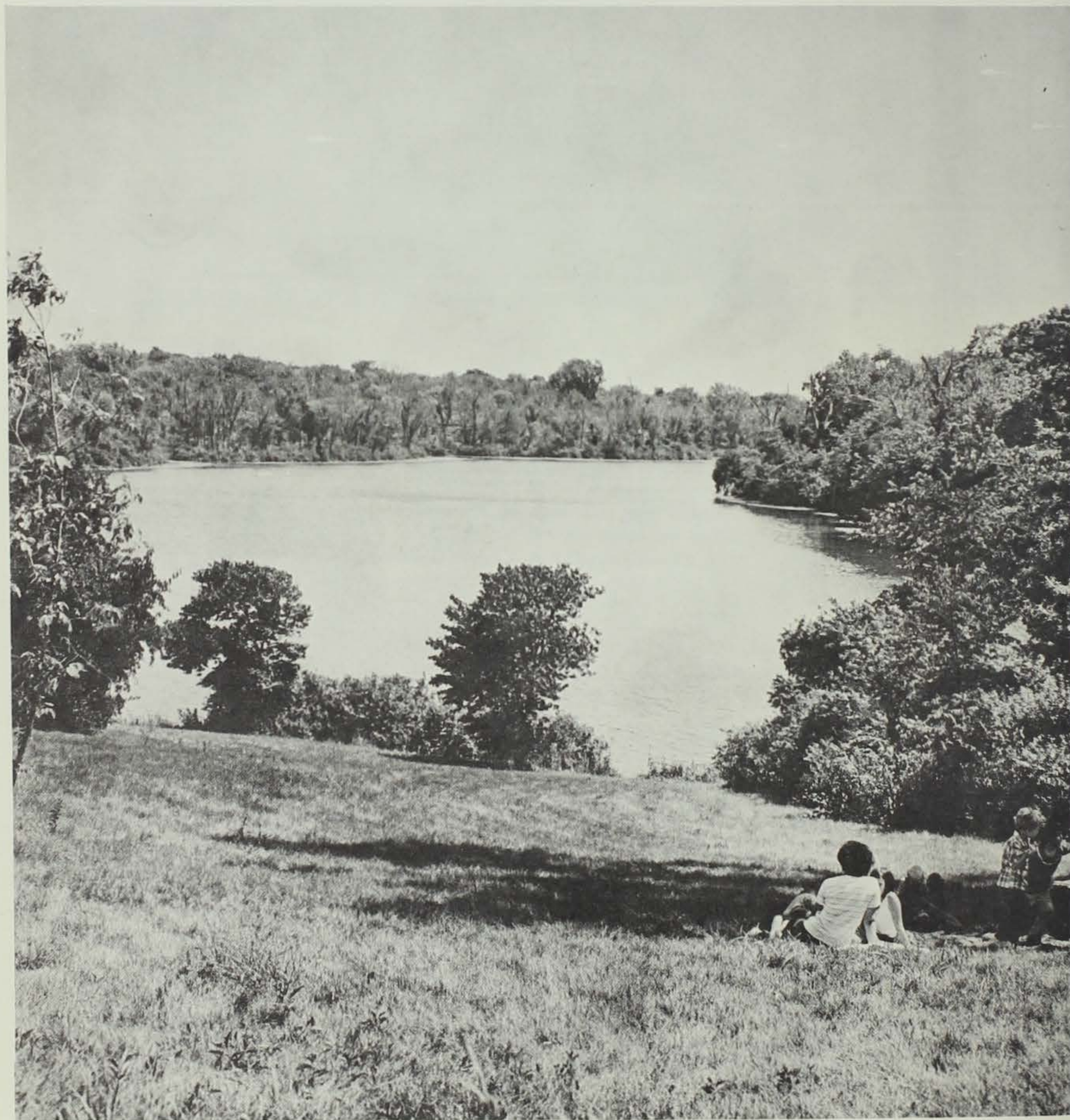
While emphasizing the year-around attraction of the park, Strait confesses to a fondness for spring. He said the first two weeks in May usually provide the park with its most spectacular setting when the red haw and red bud bloom, splashing the area with color.

Located in Lucas County about two miles east of Chariton, Red

Haw State Park draws visitors from a rather large area including Des Moines. In spite of its local popularity, overcrowding has not become a serious problem yet. As funds have been available, the Conservation Commission has attempted to improve facilities and provide necessary development and maintenance.

A Conservation Commission biology lab is located at the north end of the park near the dam.

Red Haw State Park



FREE JXST++OST+ITRVL+  
ST TRAVELING LIB  
ST HISTORICAL