

AUGUST, 1973



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quality deer hunting theme for '73

By Lee Gladfelter
Deer Biologist

The cool crisp wind and sparkling snow of December seems a long way off as we bask in the hot summer sun, but plans are now underway for another exciting deer season in Iowa. In 1973 one objective of the deer season regulations is to improve the quality of the hunt and provide more recreation for Iowa deer hunters. Let's take a quick look at the past to see how current regulations have developed.

At the turn of the century deer were scarce in Iowa and were protected from hunting. By 1953 the size of the deer herd had



Pre-Season scouting can help "bucks only" hunters this Fall.
Note "rubbings" caused by antlers.

grown and a limited hunting season was allowed. Modest harvest of surplus deer continued for many years and deer numbers continued to grow until 1966, when they reached a peak and began to decline. Restrictions on hunting took the form of shorter seasons and fewer hunters and the downward trend of the herd was finally stopped in 1971.

In 1972 the deer herd began to increase again in many areas. A modified bucks only season held in two hunting zones last year is credited with helping to increase the deer herd and at the same time allowed more hunters in the field for a longer period of time. Reaction of the deer hunters to the new season was mostly favorable. The first step had been taken for quality hunting in Iowa. A longer season allowed hunters to slow down from the "rat-race" of previous two-day seasons. Most hunters were required to hunt for antlered bucks only meaning more skill was involved in hunting for the sly and secretive buck and more prestige was obtained by harvesting an adult buck.

Shotgun Season

In 1973 the modified bucks only season is being expanded to all hunting zones. Adult bucks are currently in excess in the deer population because they are polygamous (one adult can breed with many different does). Because of this behavior many bucks can be harvested without affecting the potential of the herd to increase in size. Another objective of the 1973 season is to produce a small increase in the deer herd because the carrying capacity of the habitat has not yet been reached. As the deer herd grows, more surplus animals are produced which means hunting seasons can continue to be liberalized.

This year, "bucks only" licenses will be issued to the majority of the hunters at different rates according to the hunting zone (see map). The remaining licenses will be issued for any sex or age deer. These any sex licenses are allowed because a

certain number of does and fawns are considered surplus and can be harvested. By using the modified bucks only season a great deal can be accomplished for improving the quality of deer hunting in Iowa. Hunting success will be lower because many hunters will be restricted to hunting for adult bucks only (must have at least one forked antler) but other factors have been added to the season to help compensate for this.

1. One of the big advantages of the modified "bucks only" season is that almost everyone that applies for a license will get one. The license quota has been increased from the 1972 limit of 19,000 to 27,500 for this year (10,000 hunters did not receive a license in 1972 and are guaranteed a license in 1973). The license quotas by hunting zones are shown on the map. This season allows more days and hours of big game hunting recreation for the citizens of Iowa.

2. The season length has been increased to 5 consecutive days (December 1-5) in all hunting zones. Hunters can slow down and gain more enjoyment from the outdoors and hunting with close companions. In the future it may be possible to increase the season length even more — perhaps to 7 or 9 consecutive days.

3. The hunting hours have been changed to sunrise to sunset to help hunters take advantage of the peak movement periods of deer.

The modified bucks only deer season will hopefully be the answer to increasing the deer herd and bring some quality deer hunting to Iowa. There has been a great deal of bad publicity on bucks only seasons in some northern lake states and eastern states. The reason for this publicity is that the deer herds in these states grew so large under these restrictive seasons that the carrying capacity of the habitat was exceeded. When this happened, many deer starved to death because of lack of food and harsh winter conditions. Neither of

these conditions exist in Iowa because Iowa does not accumulate great depths of snow forcing deer into crowded conditions and there is plenty of browse and waste corn in the fields to sustain the herd. In recent years many midwestern states have recognized the value of a modified bucks only season to build up deer herds. Our problem now is not

male animals are produced, thereby providing a larger supply of bucks. Research shows that 122 male fawns are born to each 100 female fawns. Nature has provided for heavier mortality of the male deer population.

Hunters receiving "bucks only" licenses this year will have to be very careful to select only adult bucks when hunting. Make



WAYNE LONNING PHOTOGRAPHER

enough deer to meet the recreational demands instead of too many deer for the habitat.

Some hunters may fear that after several seasons all bucks will be shot. This is not true since the male fawn is protected from the majority of the hunters and will provide a big boost to the adult population each year. Also, as the deer herd grows, more

sure of the target before a shot is fired. After a few hours in the field, looking for a rack on that deer will become automatic for the cautious deer hunter. The white-tailed deer is a great natural resource in this state and it must be protected so future generations of hunters will have the

(Continued on Page 14)



squirrel savvy

By Jon Gibson
Information Specialist

Want to know how some squirrel hunters seem to limit out throughout the season? Odds are that they studied up on squirrel habits ahead of time and scouted out the best places before the season began.

A bigger game bag will be the reward when the hunter knows where the squirrels are, and that's usually where the food is. The successful squirrel hunter prepares early in the season to know when, where, and upon what the squirrels in his area are feeding. A knowledge of when and upon what squirrels feed can be gained from a little homework.

Walnuts, Hickory Nuts & Corn

During the warm weather of early autumn, squirrel feeding habits are determined by both the digestible energy content and the taste of a given food item, and the rate of the mast (nut) crop's maturity. Foods from which squirrels can digest a lot of energy are needed to add layers of fat to their bodies in preparation for winter weather. Although they have thick shells and are

hard to crack open, hickory nuts and walnuts have the high energy content to make them the favorite of squirrels at this time of the year. Consequently, the hunter who plans to stalk the dawn on opening day should locate the best stand of hickory and walnut trees beforehand.

One interesting note is how some squirrels crack the problem that the hard hulls of walnuts create. After gnawing a hole in the hull of a walnut, squirrels let the walnut rest on the ground for a few days. Insects lay eggs in the exposed core of the hull and the larvae that develop turn the tough, green hull into a soft, brown pulp. Squirrels can then easily gnaw through the partially-rotted hull.

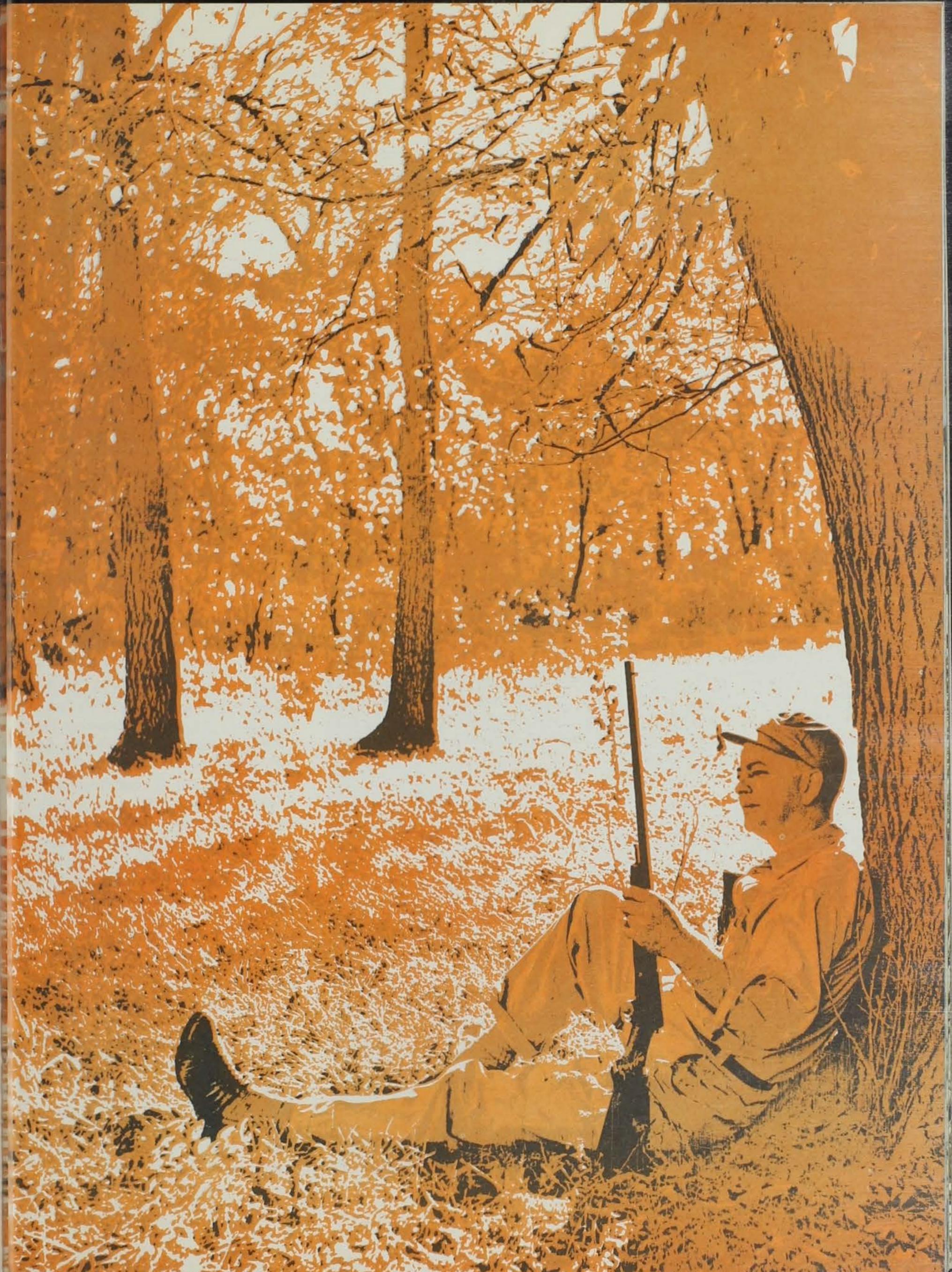
The sweet taste of ripened field corn can often alter the fall feeding habits of Iowa fox squirrels. Rarely with grays, but often with fox squirrels, there is a brief period in late summer or early autumn when most trees will be forsaken for cornfields. Corn isn't as concentrated in protein as most

nuts, and is therefore a temporary, luxury item. If just before season begins the woodlands seem devoid of both squirrels and any sign of their activity, then check out any adjacent cornfields. It just may be the ticket to bagging your limit on opening day.

The more northerly-facing a slope is, then the shorter the growing season is for the trees on it. As the growing season for most trees becomes shorter, the sooner those trees must bear their nut crop. Therefore, trees on more northerly-facing slopes may have a bigger, better nut crop before those on the south-facing slopes. If the hunter finds that most of the squirrels are feeding on a particular kind of nut, then very likely the squirrels will move, over the course of a week or two, from north-facing to south-facing slopes as that nut crop progressively matures. In this manner, squirrels can feed on prime quality mast nearly all of the time. The wise hunter keeps this in mind while in the field. For example, if a stand of hickory

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SOUTH SLOPE



BLACK WALNUT



SHAGBARK HICKORY

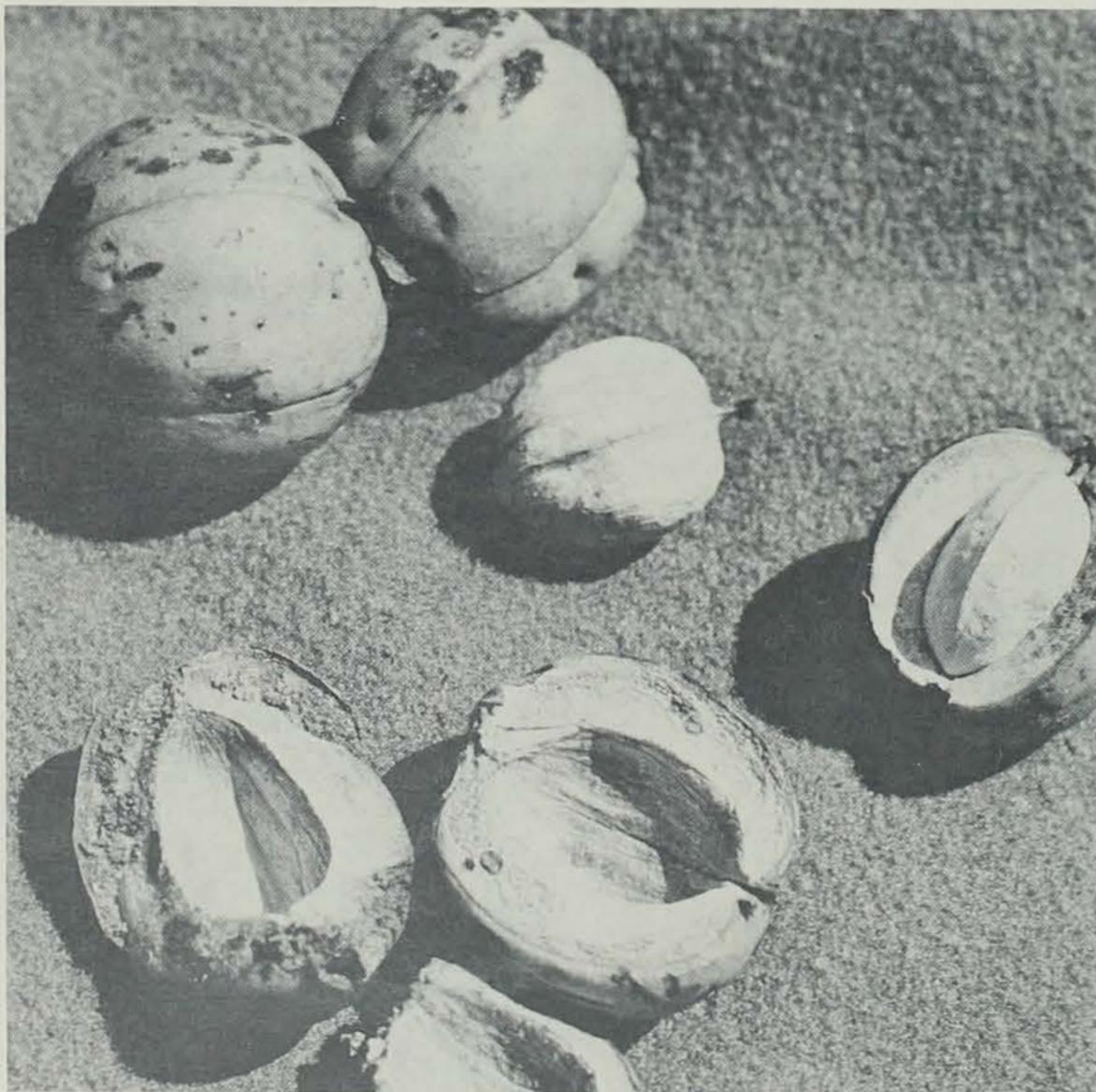


BUR OAK

MAST SPECIES

MAST SPECIES	V N
Black Walnut	in
Shagbark Hickory	in
White Oak	ly
Bur Oak	-O
Red Oak	y V in

Hickory nut



trees which was very productive earlier suddenly becomes vacated by the squirrels, then move to a nearby, more southerly-facing stand of hickory trees. This little trick can be the difference between a successful trip and an unsuccessful one.

Late Season Means Acorns

Factors that influence the feeding habits of squirrels in late fall and during the winter are how quickly and easily a food item can be eaten and digested, and its taste. A food item's ability to be eaten quickly and easily is important to a squirrel in cold weather. Energy lost as heat to keep warm can be costly to a squirrel if Mr. Bushytail attempts the difficult, time-consuming task of cracking open an old, winter-hardened walnut. Look for squirrels to be feeding on easily-opened, thin-shelled acorns in cold weather. If after the first few frosts a hunter finds his favorite stands of hickory and walnut trees abandoned, then he should check out the nearby stands of oak trees.



WHITE OAK

NORTH SLOPE



RED OAK



BLACK WALNUT

TO HUNT

ing Day To Early October
ing Day To Mid-October
October To Closing Day
October To Closing Day
When Other Oaks Have Cropped.

Black Walnut

Taste can make the mast from one species of tree preferred over that from a similar tree species. This is especially important in the late season feeding habits of squirrels. Red oak acorns contain a higher concentration of tannin (the bitter substance used to "tan" leather) than either bur oak or white oak acorns, and are therefore a less preferred food. In most cases, hunters can concentrate solely on the more productive stands of white oak and bur oak for their late season hunting.

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

A knowledge of daily feeding times is just as important to the dedicated squirrel hunter as knowing their seasonal feeding patterns. While squirrels are feeding, their movements offer the hunter his best chance of spotting them among the branches or on the ground. In fall there are three daily feeding periods for Iowa fox squirrels: 7-8 a.m., 11 a.m. - noon, and 6-7 p.m., CST. As a general rule, Iowa gray squirrels feed both earlier

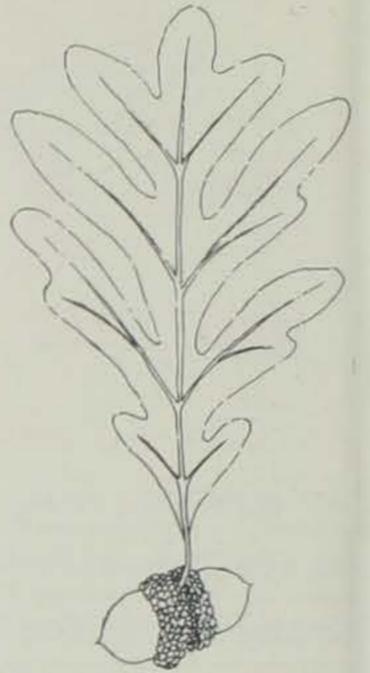




Northern Red Oak



Shagbark Hickory



White Oak





Bur Oak



Black Walnut

and later in the day than their rust-colored cousins. Both species confine their winter feeding to the middle or warmest part of the day. This happens after a gradual transition between the fall and winter feeding periods. The fall feeding times are reliable enough that the opening day hunter usually doesn't have to worry about the daily feeding times for squirrels in his area. Late fall or early winter hunters, however, should be alert as to whether squirrels are still feeding two or three times a day, or beginning to feed during the midday period alone.

Scouting the Key

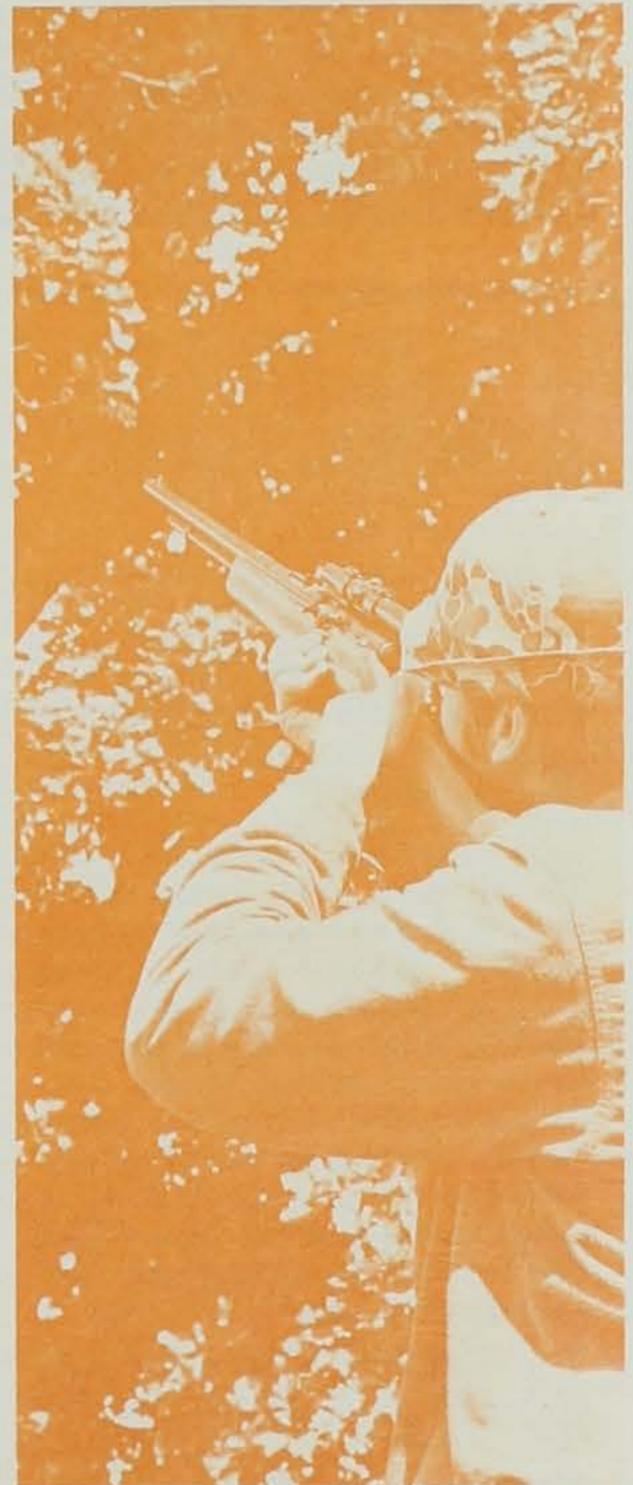
Going out early in the fall and locating the areas containing the various types of food items puts to practice all the background information you now have on squirrel feeding habits. Unless you have a good memory, it just might help to take notes on where the best areas are. Most squirrel hunters are familiar with local stands of black walnut, shagbark hickory, white oak, bur oak, and red oak. When surveying new territory, however, there are a few guidelines to help locate mast trees. White oak and red oak trees show a preference for north-facing slopes with the white oaks likely to be found at

the higher elevations. In contrast, bur oak and shagbark hickory trees are more likely to be growing on south-facing slopes. Bur oaks are similar to the white oak above in that they favor the loftier areas. Finally, well-drained bottomlands are the best bet for black walnut trees.

To determine whether squirrels are currently feeding in an area, hunters usually rely on the presence or absence of "cuttings." Cuttings are the discarded shells of nuts that squirrels have fed on. Fresh cuttings will be firm with a white color on the inside surface while old cuttings show a pulpy texture and a yellow color.

Armed with the background knowledge of both what squirrels like to feed upon and when they prefer to do it, and with the information gained from early scouting on both the location of possible food sources and which ones are currently being used, the only way a squirrel hunter can miss is with his gun.

photo by Wayne Lonning



NATIONAL
HUNTING &
FISHING DAY
September 22, 1973



Native grasses, like those in native Iowa prairies (shown) may one day make pasture land and wildlife compatible.

Native

Native grasses that southern Iowa farmers are beginning to use successfully for summer pasture may also be beneficial to quail, pheasant, and other wildlife populations.

A Chariton Valley Resource Conservation and Development Project is underway to study the possible benefits these grasses provide to cattlemen and our Iowa wildlife. The study involves the wildlife section of the Iowa Conservation Commission; Lucas, Wayne and Appanoose Soil Conservation Districts; the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; the USDA Soil Conservation Service; and several area farmers.

Participants believe the same high-level management practices that farmers use to maintain grasses like Switchgrass, Indian-

grass and Big Bluestem for pasture may also benefit wildlife. These grasses are not grazed until mid-July and should therefore provide undisturbed nesting cover for small game. These grasses, growing up to eight feet tall, cannot be grazed closer than eight inches to the ground to assure adequate regrowth the following year. This stubble may provide winter cover.

Cattle grazing, particularly in southern Iowa, is an increasing agricultural practice. Currently, most pastures are planted to "cool season" grasses such as brome, orchard or bluegrass. Often these pastures also contain clover and trefoil. These "cool season" grasses grow well during the spring and fall but during mid to late summer when condi-

tions are hot and dry they become dormant. However, the native grasses are "warm season" grasses; that is, they reach their maximum growth in mid to late summer and provide excellent grazing from mid-July to September. Therefore, these "warm season" and "cool season" grasses compliment each other and can be used effectively in a pasture rotation program. The cattle raiser can use the cool season grasses as pasture during the spring and early summer when their growth and forage quality is best and then rotate his cattle to the native grass pastures during late summer when their growth and forage quality is greatest.

The cooperative study involves planting native grasses on ten separate ten-acre plots around



Grasses

By

Lyle W. Asell, Biologist
Soil Conservation Service

Allen L. Farris and
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Wildlife Research Biologists
Iowa Conservation Commission

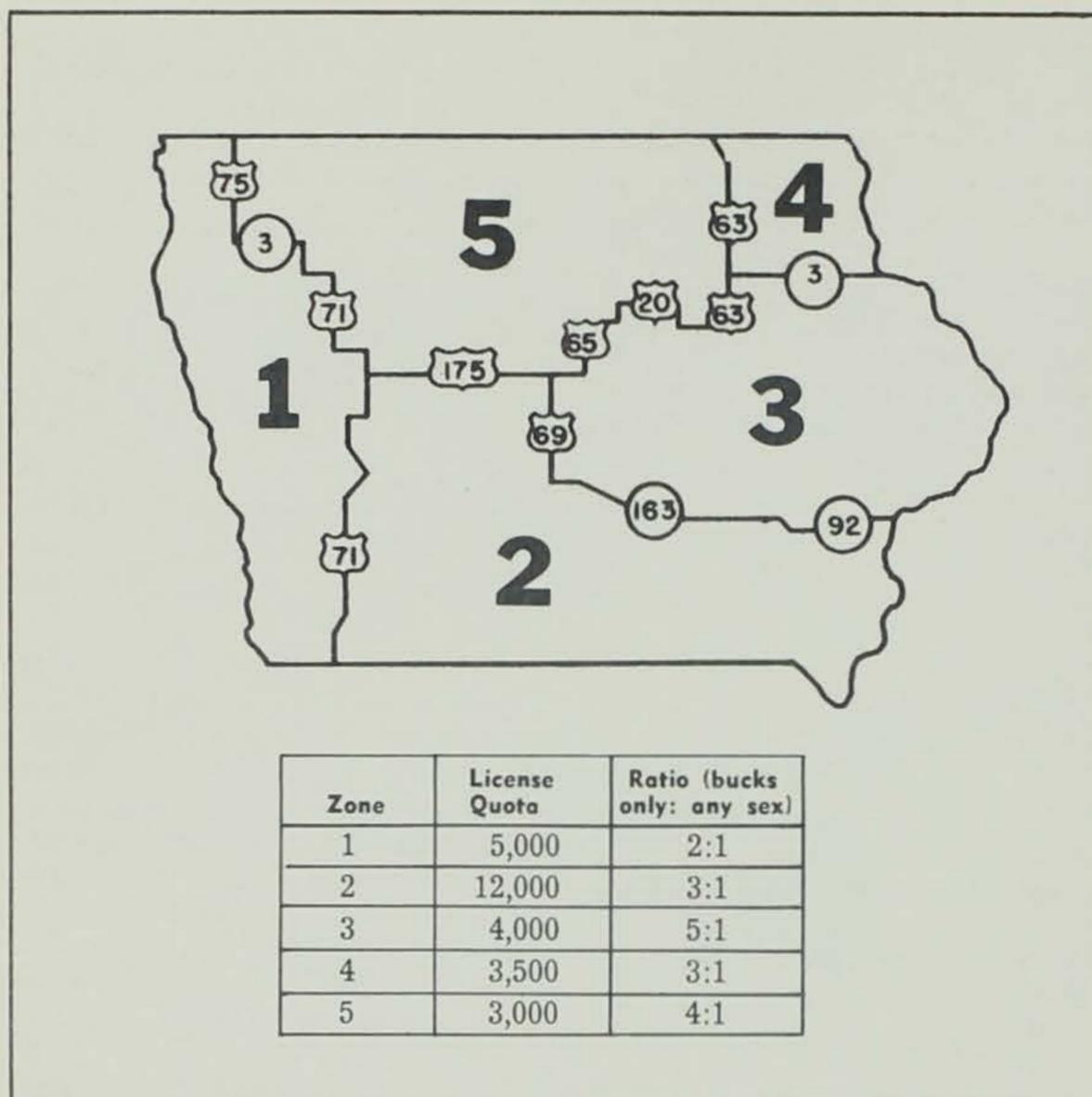
Lake Rathbun. Technical help will be provided by the SCS for seeding establishment and management, and information on cattle stocking rates, grazing lengths, etc. The Conservation Commission will provide labor and equipment to seed the grasses, as well as needed fertilizer, chemicals, and part of the seed. They will also contract private landowners to graze the pastures at a rate of two cattle per acre. An evaluation of the native grass pastures as nesting areas for quail and pheasants will be carried out by Commission biologists. The SCS Plant Materials Center provided 150 pounds of the 735 pounds of seed required and the Commission provided the remainder.

This cooperative project will provide information helpful to everyone involved. From the biologist's standpoint it will help determine if the prairie grasses have value for wildlife habitat and which grasses are the best. It will also give them experience in "farming" prairie grasses. The SCS will gain practical information on the establishment and management of prairie grasses for pasture production and information on the number of cattle a unit of land will handle. Since this land is in public ownership it will give everyone a chance to observe some of the grasses that were once abundant in Iowa.

Although the grasses were planted this spring, work started on the project last summer. After

the fields were selected, grain sorghum was planted and harvested. Harvest was delayed in four fields by weather. Residues from the sorghum were rotary mowed and used for mulch, which will protect the soil from erosion and provide some weed control while the grasses are becoming established. Experience indicates prairie grasses are more easily established following a sorghum crop.

During future summers Commission biologists will search each of the ten experimental native grass pastures before mid-July. From these intensive studies data will be obtained on nesting densities and success rates of nests of bobwhite quail and ring-necked pheasants in these native grass pastures. ☆



DEER . . .

(Continued from Page 5)

same opportunities that are available now.

Bow and Arrow Season

The bow and arrow season will be split in 1973 to allow a late season hunt. The season dates are from October 13 to November 25 (both dates inclusive) and December 8-16 (both dates inclusive) which represents an increased bow season of 53 days. Hunting hours and bag limits remain the same as in previous years.

Deer License Application Procedures

Shotgun — A random drawing will be conducted to determine the 27,500 applicants to receive a license and also whether the license is a bucks only or an any sex license. Those who submitted valid application and do not re-

ceive a deer license will have their money refunded and will be given a certificate which guarantees them a license next year.

Landowner - Tenant — These special licenses are issued without cost to qualified landowners or tenants who live on their farm-



ing unit. They will be issued by the Conservation Commission; therefore, if application is submitted by mail, allow two weeks for delivery. Applications for these licenses must reach the Commission office by November 16, 1973, to assure applicants of a license before opening day of the shotgun season. These licenses restrict the individual to hunt only on his own farm unit. A drawing will be held for landowner-tenant applicants to determine the type of license that will be issued. Licenses will be issued at the same rate of bucks only to any sex as the paid shotgun hunters.

Bow and Arrow — There is no restriction on the number of bow and arrow licenses to be issued at a fee of \$10.00 each. Zones do not apply to bow hunters since a license entitles the hunter to hunt statewide. There are no restrictions on sex and age of deer that can be taken by archers.

1972 Season

The 1972 deer harvest was slightly higher than in 1971 despite the large quantities of unpicked corn left in the field during the shotgun season. Of the 11,813 deer harvested, paid shotgun hunters reported taking 7,747, while landowners harvested 2,738 and bow hunters added another 1,328.

Paid shotgun hunters in the any sex zones recorded a 44% hunting success while landowners obtained a 34% success. Paid shotgun hunters in the modified bucks only zones reported a success of 30% for the bucks only and 63% for the any sex licenses. The high any sex license success ratio is due to party hunting. The landowner hunters in the same zones recorded a 20% success for bucks only and 39% success for the any sex licenses. A new record success rate was set in 1972 by bow hunters with 20.5% of the archers connecting.

Classroom Corner

By Curt Powell
Administration

Conservation Education Center

There has been a great deal of interest in recent years in wild foods — wild herbs and various other edible plants that can be found along roadside ditches, fields, and even backyards. The most noticeable person creating interest in wild foods is Mr. Euell Gibbons, who has an entire series of books out concerning wild foods and wild herbs. Most notable among these are "Stalking the Wild Asparagus," "Stalking the Good Life," and "Stalking the Healthful Herbs." These books have caused many Iowans to become more interested in the out-of-doors not only as a source of beauty but also as a source of enjoyment for the gourmet.

Many plants that you and I might consider "weeds" may not be merely weeds; they may be a healthful and delicious meal for us if properly prepared. Gathering wild plants and preparing them is something that a person doesn't do immediately. It takes time to learn what types of plants are suitable and how to prepare them. One of the best ways to identify wild foods and wild herbs would be to purchase a good guide book on herbs and plants to be found in the wilds and then choose one or two from this guide book and spend the better part of a day trying to locate that particular plant.

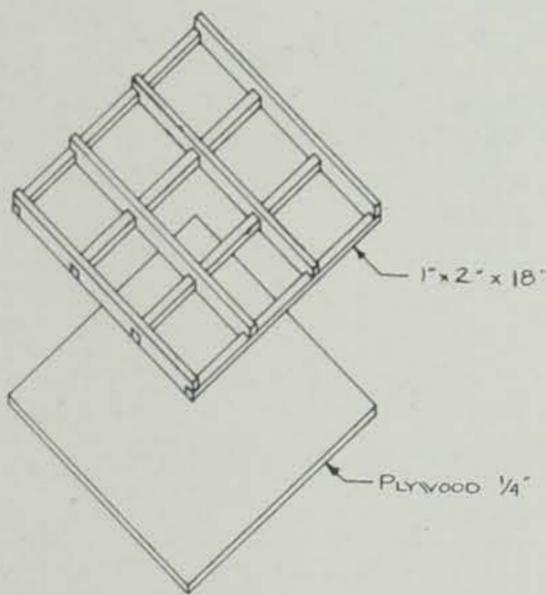
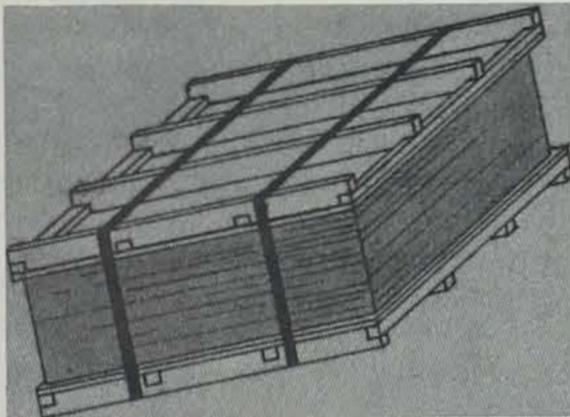
It is important that the identification of the plant be positive. If in doubt, consult someone that is an expert on the identification of plants so you may be sure that you have the right one.

Some of the more common wild foods are the walnut and hickory nut and some of the various types of berries, such as the blackberry and wild strawberry. Other plants that may cause some difficulty would be the milkweed plant, plantain which is very similar in looks to dandelion except it does not have the leaf-shape that dandelion has, and some of the types of thistles. All of these plants are edible if prepared in the proper manner.

There are other plants that may not be completely edible but yet serve a healthful purpose.

Many, many years ago the native Americans and the settlers knew of the healthful values in some of the plants surrounding them. Much of the medicine years ago was made from the plants that the people had to work with. Mr. Gibbons mentions that the wild blue violet is a very healthful herb and if prepared in the proper manner makes an excellent cough syrup. Such medicines as digitalis, which is used today for heart patients, came from a plant. The marsh marigold, for example, has healthful values.

There are many ways, of course, that you can identify plants. One method is, of course, to leave the plant there, remember it, and then return for observation. Another method of identification would be to take color slides of the particular plant in their location, have the film developed, and label the slide so you can refresh your memory each spring. One final way would be to build a plant press, and press these plants so that they can be kept dry at home for readily identifiable purposes. There are many ways to build a plant press; however, the important thing to remember is that the plant must be pressed flat and the liquid squeezed from it. This is done usually under pressure. There are types, such as the lattice type of plant press, which is made as shown in Illustration 1 or you might build a plant press where bolts with wing nuts are used to tighten the boards together and cause pressure to be applied to the plant. Remember, too, that when you are picking plants for your plant presses, state parks, preserves, and certain other designated areas are "off limits to collecting." It is one way that the people of Iowa can all have the satisfaction of seeing the various wild plants that Iowa has to offer them. This might be the time of year that you would want to collect some plants for classroom use for your school assignments. It's an excellent time to visit Iowa's out-of-doors, enjoying it and appreciating all it has to offer.



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