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# conservationist







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# conservationist MAGAZINE

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*All persons are entitled to full and equal enjoyment of the recreational opportunities, privileges and advantages available in Iowa's great outdoors.*

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# ELK CREEK MARSH

by Rock Bridges

WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST

PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR

THE HEADWATERS OF ELK CREEK are located in northwestern Worth County, near the town of Lake Mills, and just 10 miles south of the Iowa-Minnesota border. The stream meanders in a south-easterly direction for approximately 15 miles — originating as a trickle and being 35 feet wide where its 58 square mile drainage area enters the Shell Rock River near the town of Kensett.

In appearance, Elk Creek is a small stream which criss-crosses its wide floodplain and meanders through numerous overflow ponds, potholes, marshes, and willow bats. The floodplain is almost flat and the attending banks rise abruptly into low rolling hills of grasslands and scattered groves of burr oak.

Early settlers in the area were primarily from Norwegian descent. They were attracted to this type of country with its rolling hills, prominent oak timbers and wet areas, all of which provided an abundance of building material, heating fuel, water and wildlife.

The soils in and around Elk Creek vary from peat muck on the floodplain to shallow prairie soils overlying sands and gravels on the adjacent hills.

Early pioneers found Elk Creek too unpredictable for farming. The large watershed resulted in the floodplain being frequently flooded with spring runoff and summer rains. The area was primarily used for cattle grazing and occasional crops of prairie hay. Descendants of early settlers of the area recall trying to maintain fences and round-up cattle as an adventure rather than a routine chore.

Elk Creek, with its wide variety of habitat and limited agricultural use, was long recognized as an excellent wildlife area. During the late 1950's the wildlife section of the Iowa

Conservation Commission embarked on a program of acquisition and development of the floodplain and adjacent bluffs of Elk Creek. Utilizing Pittman-Robertson funds (a 11% tax on guns and ammunition) and hunting license monies, an 8.5 mile greenbelt totaling 2,000 acres of Elk Creek have been purchased.

Since 1962, six water control structures have been developed on Elk Creek and its tributaries. As a result a total of 600 acres of wetlands constitute Elk Creek Marsh. These wetlands along with surrounding uplands, regularly attract nesting waterfowl including blue-winged teal, wood duck, mallards plus a multitude of shore birds. The giant Canada goose also nests on the marshlands with six nests being located last spring. In 1972, a waterfowl refuge encompassing 200 acres of Elk Creek was created to attract and hold more waterfowl during the fall migrations. Within the refuge crops are planted and moist soil foods flooded to provide food for the thousands of ducks which stop each fall.

Furbearing animals including muskrat, mink, raccoon, and fox, are common on the entire area and provide many hours of recreation for the hunter, trapper and outdoor enthusiast alike.

Upon Elk Creek's original conception the wetland developments and increased waterfowl and furbearer use were felt to be the greatest potential for the area. However, the rapid development of intensive agriculture and general loss of habitat on private land in the past 20 years has thrust Elk Creek into the limelight in north-central Iowa as a significant production and harvest area for forest and upland wildlife.

Part of the wildlife management of the area involves 26 fields totaling 129





...s on which agricultural crops are  
 ...ted to provide optimum food and  
 ...or. Grasslands totaling 360 acres are  
 ...ntained and improved to provide  
 ...derable nesting and brood cover. The  
 ...27 acres of native oak timber is  
 ...ected and developed to provide  
 ...ol and cover for forest and upland  
 ...wildlife of the area. These areas,  
 ...interspersed with 686 acres of bogs,  
 ...slough areas, wet meadow, and  
 ...wows, spread over 8.5 miles, give  
 ...imum amounts of edge (habitat  
 ...vation) for the wildlife of the area.  
 ...ne future will include construction  
 ...of: at least two more large water

impoundments on Elk Creek.  
 Numerous small wetlands will be  
 developed on tributaries coming into  
 the main stream. The two large wetland  
 areas will be east of Interstate 35 where  
 the floodplain is up to one-half mile  
 wide and will be very attractive to  
 waterfowl as well as all water-related  
 wildlife. These developments depend  
 on a continuing land acquisition  
 program which will eventually result in  
 about 2,500 acres in public ownership.  
 Intensive management will provide  
 increased numbers in all wildlife  
 species. The most noticeable wildlife  
 increase will be in the number of

waterfowl which will use the area once  
 the proposed impoundments are  
 developed. This will include the  
 expanding giant Canada goose  
 population which have found a home  
 at Elk Creek.

In the future, with the present trend  
 of stewardship on private land  
 resulting in cover losses, Elk Creek will  
 stand out as a reminder of what once  
 existed. At the same time it will be a  
 major wildlife area and a tribute to the  
 sportsmen who have paid for its  
 acquisition, development, management  
 and maintenance. □

Above: Elk Creek impoundment. Below: Pelicans at Elk Creek.



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# 1978 Iowa Trophy Turkey Awards

NAME & ADDRESS	WEIGHT	BEARD	SPUR	DATE	COUNTY TAKEN	NAME & ADDRESS	WEIGHT	DATE	COUNTY TAKEN		
Dennis W. Proctor Corydon	26 lb. 15 oz.	9-3/4"	1-3/16"	4-21-78	Lucas	Gregg E. Moyers	23 lb. 8 oz.	11-1/4"	15/16"	4-26-78	VanBuren
C. L. Current Monroe	26 lbs. 9-1/2 oz.	12-1/4"	1-1/2"	4-20-78	Monroe	Marty Liepa Des Moines	23 lb. 8 oz.	10-1/2"	1"	4-29-78	Lucas
Tim Plimmer Des Moines	26 lb. 8 oz.	10"	1-1/4"	4-27-78	Clarke	Robert Feeley Cincinnati	23 lb. 8 oz.	9-1/4"	1-1/8"	4-23-78	Appanoose
J. S. Winslow Des Moines	25 lb. 12 oz.	10"	1"	4-23-78	Lucas	Gary Crow	23 lb. 8 oz.	11"	1-1/4"	5-8-78	Appanoose
William Rybarczyk Ames	25 lb. 14 oz.	11-1/2"	3/4"	4-21-77	Lucas	Delmar Burk Bussey	23 lb. 8 oz.	10-3/4"	1"	5-3-78	Monroe
Dr. David Randall Iowa City	25 lb. 11 oz.	11-1/4"	1-3/8"	4-30-76	Appanoose	Gary L. Biles Iowa City	23 lb. 8 oz.	10"	1-1/4"	5-4-74	Lee
Curtis Shepherd Des Moines	25 lb. 8 oz.	10-1/4"	1-1/8"	4-22-78	Lucas	Michael J. W. Sells Fairfield	23 lb. 6 oz.	10-1/2"	1-1/16"	4-24-78	Van Buren
Glenn R. Trisler Humeston	25 lb. 8 oz.	9-3/4"	1-1/4"	4-20-78	Lucas	Bernie Schneider Fort Madison	23 lb. 6 oz.	11"	1-1/8"	4-28-78	Lee
Dr. David Randall Iowa City	25 lb. 8 oz.	11-1/2"	1-1/4"	5-11-74	Clarke	Robert B. Hood Bonaparte	23 lb. 6 oz.	10"	3/4"	5-1-78	Van Buren
Jack Byers Indianola	25 lb. 6 oz.	10-1/2"	1-1/4"	4-29-78	Lucas	George Umphrey Keosauqua	23 lb. 5-1/2 oz.	10-1/4"	1-1/16"	4-27-78	Van Buren
Jerry D. Simmons Des Moines	25 lb. 6 oz.	7"	1"	4-22-78	Lucas	Duane T. Durian Ottumwa	23 lb. 5 oz.	10"	1-1/4"	4-30-78	Davis
Tom Putnam Boone	25 lb. 4 oz.	10"	1"	4-22-78	Lucas	Wayne Scott Iowa City	23 lb. 2 oz.	9-1/2"	1"	4-20-78	Davis
William Rybarczyk Russell	25 lb. 4 oz.	10-3/4"	7/8"	4-20-78	Monroe	Richard Pauley Mystic	23 lb. 2 oz.	9"	1-1/8"	4-27-78	Appanoose
Larry L. Brown Seymour	25 lb. 2 oz.	10-1/4"	1-1/8"	4-28-78	Wayne	Oat Jensen Denison	23 lb. 2 oz.	9-1/2"	1"	5-1-78	Lucas
William Stoutenberg Des Moines	25 lb. 2 oz.	9-9/16"	1-1/4"	4-20-78	Lucas	Ed Hamann Muscatine	23 lb. 2 oz.	11"	1"	5-10-78	Lee
W. Todd Downing Drakesville	25 lb. 1 oz.	10"	1-1/8"	4-23-78	Davis	T. V. Fry Des Moines	23 lb. 2 oz.	9-1/2"	3/4"	4-29-78	Lucas
Gene Sacco Centerville	25 lb.	9"	7/8"	5-14-78	Monroe	Nick O. Durian Dyersville	23 lb. 2 oz.	10-1/2"	1"	4-30-78	Davis
Virgil Crow Centerville	25 lb.	12"	1-1/2"	5-8-78	Appanoose	Dave Homewood Waterloo	23 lb. 1 oz.	9-1/4"	1"	4-21-78	Appanoose
John B. Meyers Dubuque	24 lb. 13 oz.	10-1/4"	1-1/4"	4-20-78	Lee	Roy Lee Wagner Montrose	23	10-1/2"	1-1/8"	4-20-78	Van Buren
Gary Middleswart Indianola	24 lb. 13 oz.	10-1/2"	1-1/4"	4-24-78	Lucas	Ed Tostenrud Oskaloosa	23	10"	1-1/4"	5-1-78	Davis
Todd Bishop Clear Lake	24 lb. 8 oz.	8-1/2"	1-1/8"	4-25-78	Lucas	Lyle Sindt Montpelier	23	9-1/2"	1"	5-11-78	Appanoose
Russell L. Conger Birmingham	24 lb. 7 oz.	10-1/4"	1"	4-74	Van Buren	Melvin K. Meyne Charles City	23	10-1/4"	1-1/4"	4-20-78	Lee
Kim Strub Des Moines	24 lb. 6 oz.	10"	1-1/16"	4-25-78	Lucas	Donald James, Jr. Waterloo	23	10-1/2"	1-3/8"	5-14-78	Appanoose
Laurence E. Andrew Yale	24 lb. 4 oz.	10-1/8"	1"	4-20-78	Lucas	Tom Gift Ankeny	23	10-3/4"	5/8"	4-24-78	Clarke
Peter Briedis Des Moines	24 lb. 4 oz.	9-3/4"	7/8"	4-30-78	Lucas	Dan Brimeyer Dubuque	23	10-1/2"	1-1/4"	5-1-78	Lee
Henry J. Wehrman Newton	24 lb. 4 oz.	10-1/2"	3/4"	4-20-78	Appanoose						
Russell L. Conger Birmingham	24 lb. 3 oz.	10"	7/8"	4-75	Van Buren						
Todd Willis Chariton	24 lb. 2 oz.	11"	1-9/16"	5-6-78	Lucas						
Ornn Fetzer Victor	24 lb.	10"	1-1/4"	4-28-78	Clarke						
Dale Hentrey Green Island	24 lb.	12"	1-1/4"	4-20-78	Lee						
C. David Ritchie North English	24 lb.	10-1/2"	1-1/4"	4-20-78	Lee						
Tim Seals Moravia	24 lb.	10"	1-1/4"	4-21-78	Monroe						
Geraldine Wagner Montrose	24 lb.	9-1/2"	1-1/4"	4-75	Lee						
Del Winter Clear Lake	24 lb.	9-3/4"	3/4"	4-22-78	Lee						
Jerry Brantner Davenport	23 lb. 11 oz.	11"	1-1/8"	5-14-78	Lee						
Fred Tisdale Milton	23 lb. 10 oz.	10"	7/8"	4-24-78	Van Buren						
Marvin Crabtree Madrid	23 lb. 10 oz.	9"	7/8"	5-4-78	Clarke						
Richard Jones Afton	23 lb. 9 oz.	10-3/4"	3/4"	5-12-78	Clarke						
Harold Jessen Pulaski	23 lb. 9 oz.	11"	7/8"	5-10-78	Davis						

## All-Time Top Ten

NAME & ADDRESS	WEIGHT	DATE	COUNTY TAKEN
Greg Smith Donnellson	27 lb. 0 oz.	5-3-75	Lee
Dennis W. Proctor Corydon	26 lb. 15 oz.	4-21-78	Lucas
C. L. Current Monroe	26 lb. 9-1/2 oz.	4-20-78	Monroe
Tim Plimmer Des Moines	26 lb. 8 oz.	4-27-78	Clarke
J. S. Winslow Des Moines	25 lb. 12 oz.	4-23-78	Lucas
William Rybarczyk Ames	25 lb. 14 oz.	4-21-77	Lucas
Dr. David Randall Iowa City	25 lb. 11 oz.	4-30-76	Appanoose
Ira I. Honnold Des Moines	25 lb. 8 oz.	4-27-77	Clarke
Dr. David Randall Iowa City	25 lb. 8 oz.	5-11-74	Clarke
Curtis Shepherd Des Moines	25 lb. 8 oz.	4-22-78	Lucas
Glenn R. Trisler Humeston	25 lb. 8 oz.	4-20-78	Lucas





PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR

# Spirit Lake Hatchery: A 'NEW LOOK'

by Wally Jorgenson  
HATCHERY MANAGER

THE "NEW LOOK" REFERRED TO is a 4,491 square foot addition to the Spirit Lake Hatchery. This is the latest of five new looks that have occurred at the Spirit Lake hatching facilities in the past 99 years.

The first hatchery was constructed in 1880. This 20 x 40 foot wooden building was replaced with a new brick building in 1916. In 1927, this building was not adequate to meet fish production needs and an addition was constructed. This facility served until 1962; at that time building deterioration had reached a point that the building was declared unsafe, consequently construction plans were implemented and the present hatchery was dedicated and put into operation in 1963 as one of the more modern hatcheries in the midwest.

In the 1970's, Iowa's hatching facilities were reevaluated and changes were implemented. The Spirit Lake station was no exception, facilities were not presently adequate and increased production was impossible. This fact, plus the decision to close the Clear Lake Hatchery prompted the new Spirit Lake addition completed in 1978.

## *Hatchery Addition*

The Spirit Lake Hatchery produces walleye, muskellunge and northern pike plus muskellunge hybrids called Tiger Muskie. The hatchery expansion obviously provided a larger working area but more importantly, it included 20 new concrete tanks holding over 100 cubic feet of water, three new hatchery batteries increased



walleye fry production capabilities by 10-12 million, muskellunge, and northern pike plus muskellunge hybrid fry by 1/2 million fish. Additionally, the construction replaced an antiquated water system with a new system from the intake filter box to the storage tank. A well was drilled providing water with a constant temperature which is critical for successful propagation of muskellunge. The well also serves as a back-up water system for walleye hatching.



The foregoing are some of the major changes realized by the addition; of course many other benefits were also derived such as: aeration for holding tanks, storage space increased, fish handling and stress reduced, truck unloading pit and more efficient use of manpower, etc. With this expansion Spirit Lake is once again a very modern hatchery with adequate production capabilities for many years to come.

### The Need for Hatchery Expansions

These hatchery changes are necessary not only because of the natural deterioration of buildings and equipment, but to keep up with the increased fishing pressure. There were approximately 500,000 licensed fishermen in the state in 1977. Hatchery fish are needed to replace or supplement natural reproduction which is not sufficient to maintain maximum angling and to restock waters after population reductions such as winter-kill, management practice draw-down, drainings or chemical treatments. Last, but not least, is the stocking of new waters. There are thousands of acres of newly impounded waters in Iowa such as Red Rock, Rathbun, Big Creek, Saylorville, etc., that receive their initial stocking from hatcheries.

These hatchery modernizations contribute greatly toward the Fisheries Section's goal of providing maximum angling pleasure for the public.

### Visitors Welcome

When the ice cover leaves the Iowa Great Lakes, hatching activities start. This normally takes place in April and May and is one of the more interesting times to visit the hatchery.

The hatchery is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week during this period. Between Memorial Day and Labor Day, the hatchery is open 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on weekdays and from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on weekends and holidays. The remainder of the year it is open from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. weekdays only. In addition to hatching, other activities of interest may be the rearing of muskellunge in the many tanks throughout the summer months. Also, the hatchery has five large aquariums displaying many native species of fish. Groups giving advanced notice are given a tour and shown a narrated slide series pertaining to the station's activities. Visitors are always welcome and personnel are available to answer your questions and to explain the hatchery functions throughout the year.

## Profile of an Endangered Species

# The BARN OWL

by Dean Roosa  
STATE ECOLOGIST

**G**HOST-LIKE. Silent. Rare. Beautiful. Killer. All these terms fit this month's endangered species, depending if from the viewpoint of a human, another owl or a mouse. So rare that most Iowa bird-watchers do not have it on their "life list", the Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) is an unmistakable bird. It has a "monkey-face", creme-colored and white plumage and the habit of living in vacant buildings or church belfries. The facial disc helps the ears in locating the faint rustling of a mouse in the dark; the long legs are handy and efficient at snatching scrambling prey. It has been proven that the Barn Owl hunts to some degree by hearing alone; its ears are wide-set and located above the eyes, with one ear slightly higher than the other. This allows for very accurate location of prey in a dark environment. They are efficient 'mousers' and land-owners like to have them living on their premises.

Because they are so very rare in Iowa and on the Iowa endangered species list,

there is interest in attempting to re-stock certain areas of Iowa with birds that have been raised in captivity. Barn Owls breed when less than a year old, lay up to seven eggs, adapt well to living in captivity (because their

normal habitat is the same as that in captivity) and are the same sub-species all over the world; these factors make them ideal subjects for captive breeding projects. The first attempt at restocking captive-raised

birds into the wild occurred in 1977, when Dr. David Graham successfully raised four young birds from a pair taken from a power plant station site in western Iowa. Two juvenile birds were taken to an abandoned barn in western Iowa where they were confined and fed for two weeks so they would associate the barn with food. They were then allowed to leave and return to the barn, which they did for several days before leaving. No further sightings were made. It is hoped that more releases can be made in subsequent years until a nucleus of a breeding population is built up.

Reports are rare for this species of owl in Iowa; if you should see one and are positive of the identification, please let me know. We need to learn more precisely the status of this as well as other rare birds in the state. With success of the captive-release program, perhaps this ghost-like, silent, rare, beautiful bird will be a more common aspect of Iowa's natural history. □

PHOTO BY PERRY REYNOLDS — FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE





# Classroom Corner

by Robert Rye  
ADMINISTRATOR,  
CONSERVATION EDUCATION CENTER

NATURAL RESOURCES are all around us, and many receive more space in newspapers than others. Conservation means the wise use of our natural resources. Have you ever used the stars? Hunters and hikers often use them for direction. The lore of the stars and constellations goes back into antiquity and the use of satellites has made man more conscious of outer space.

To be a stargazer you need a telescope or at least a pair of field glasses, right? At the Center we find it is only necessary to have a flashlight to use as a pointer. It is easier to find constellations (star groups) with the naked eye. Your field of vision is larger without the use of field glasses and you can see all the stars in the group at the same time.

You can begin to stargaze on any clear, cloudless night. The darker the better. Just go outside and face north. You are looking for a group of seven stars called the "Big Dipper".

You may already know this one. If not, it is easy to find. It looks like a flat-bottomed, rectangular saucepan with a curved handle.

In the northern hemisphere — where Iowa is located — the Big Dipper is always in the sky. It appears to move from northeast to northwest and from high overhead down toward the horizon as the night progresses. In addition to moving across the sky, it turns around. Sometimes it's upside down and at other times it stands on its handle, but it never changes its shape.

The two stars at the end of the saucepan are special. They are often called the "pointers". If you draw an imaginary line away from the bottom of the pan and continue it for about five times the distance between the two stars, you will come to Polaris — the North Star or Polestar.

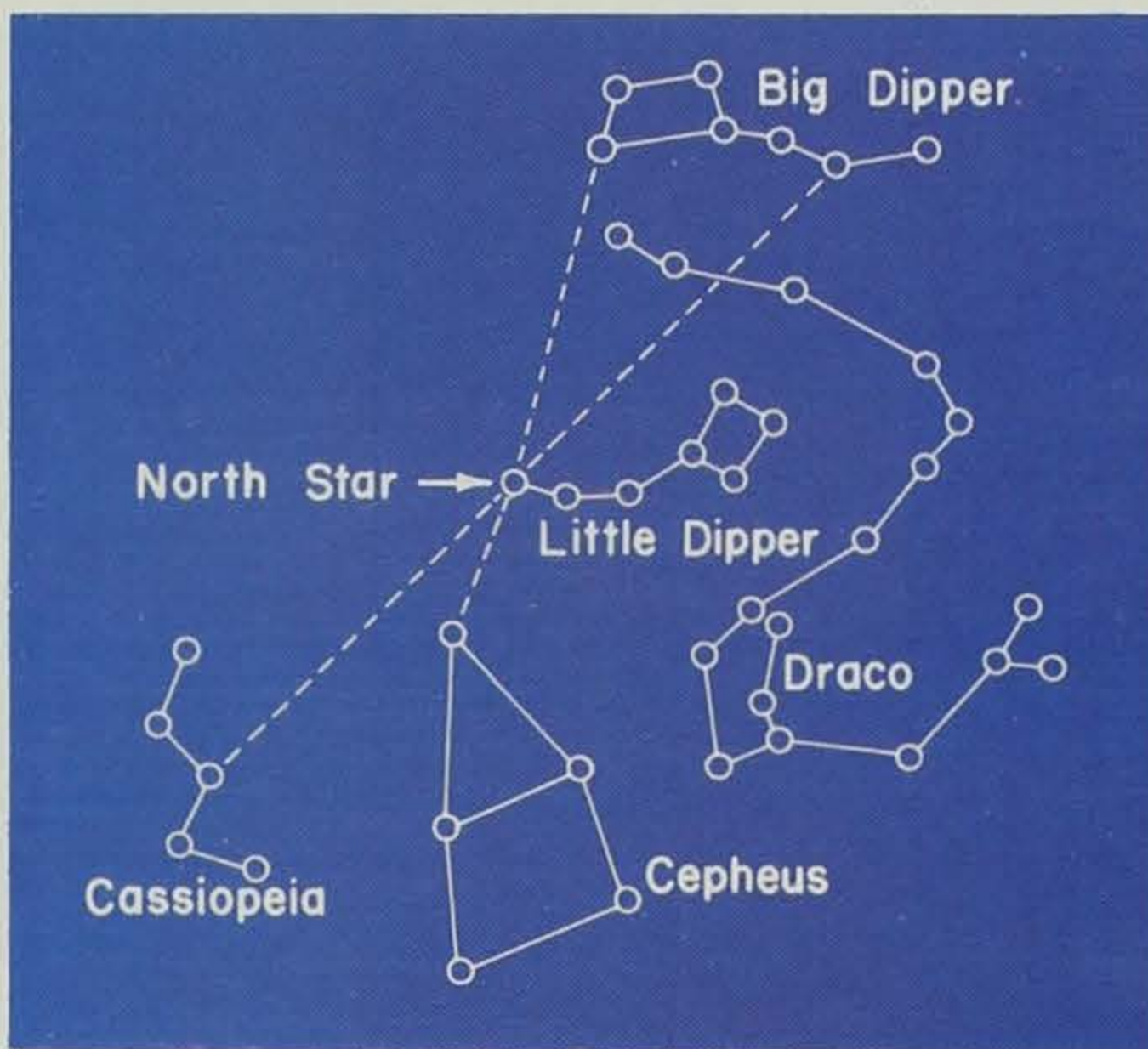
Polaris is the only star in the sky that never seems to move. The other constellations seem to move around it. The North Star has guided sailors for centuries in determining their position at sea. In the southern hemisphere there is no such star.

Polaris is also part of the "Little Dipper" constellation. It is a smaller version of the Big Dipper, except that the handle curves up instead of down. The North Star is at the end of the handle. The two stars that correspond to the pointers in the Big Dipper are bright and known as "The Guardians of the Pole" because they circle closer to it and the Pole Star than do any other bright stars.

Winding about the dippers is Draco, the Dragon. In order to locate it, you must look for a stream of stars that starts near the pointers in the Big Dipper. From there the dragon makes a semicircle around the Guardians of the Pole and then turns sharply back for some distance. The dragon's head lies between a very bright star and the guardians.

Another constellation you can find in the northern sky is Cassiopeia. This is nearly directly opposite the Big Dipper, on the other side of the pole. Five of the brightest stars of Cassiopeia form a giant irregular W (or an M depending on which side is up). You can draw an imaginary line from the second star from the end of the handle in the Big Dipper through Polaris. It is about the same distance on the other side of the North Star.

In Greek mythology Cassiopeia was a queen. This constellation may be fancied as a broken backed chair or throne. Cepheus was her king and husband. Cepheus is located near Cassiopeia. Another imaginary line can be used to locate Cepheus. This line goes from the pointers of the Big Dipper through the



North Star and continues on about the same distance. Some of the stars in the Cepheus constellation form a crude square and others make a triangle resting on the square.

Before groups at the Center venture out with their flashlight, we make use of the star bag (See photo). The students crawl inside and get a closer view before they

attempt the real thing. Many questions are placed in their mind prior to the trip into darkness.

The group then moves outdoors and while their eyes adjust to the darkness their ears are used. Night sounds are always there and the ears need no adjustment time.

Take your flashlight and make use of another of our natural resources.





by Bob Mullen

STATE FISH AND GAME CONSERVATION OFFICER

PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR

AT FIRST GLANCE a marsh seems rather placid during the summer. It appears as though the marsh is only full of vegetation, a few blackbirds, and little else except hordes of biting mosquitoes. From a distance, a marsh appears rather drab and lifeless. But a marsh is full of color and wildlife for the observant nature lover visiting there.

During the early morning and evening hours, the marsh is alive with the calls of numerous song birds, shore birds and nesting waterfowl. The careful observer might see a majestic Canada goose atop an old muskrat house patiently sitting on her clutch of eggs. One might come upon a carefully concealed hen mallard or teal nesting in the thick vegetation along the marsh's edge. Just before sunset numerous wood ducks come into the marsh to spend the night. In the late summer you might see a hen and her brood of young ducklings searching for insects to feed upon in the vegetation adjacent to an open water area.

The numerous bird calls you will hear might reveal their owner if you walk very quietly and keep your eyes opened. Darting through the vegetation or making its short feeble flight will be the small sora rail. You might not see the menacing looking bittern because it tries to hide by remaining motionless. Great blue herons and the beautiful white egrets might be seen slowly wading along looking for an unsuspecting frog or crawfish to dine upon. Along the edge of a marshy area one might see a small flock of cattle egrets. The comical appearing mud hen or coot can be seen bobbing its head back and forth as it swims along, or you might see several on a muskrat house.

There are many mammals which the careful observer might see at sunrise or dusk. Deer can be seen coming from their bedding areas in an adjacent woodland to the marsh to drink and feed upon some of the succulent marsh vegetation. You'll have to look quickly as a sleek black mink searches for its evening meal. A muskrat leaves its small V shaped wake as it swims across an open area in search of food for its young, patiently waiting in the muskrat's den. An added treat during the late evening moments might be a litter of fox pups rollicking and chasing one another as the vixen hunts for field mice along the marsh's edge. You must look closely to notice the drab colored water snake or turtle sitting motionless on a small log at the water's edge. Soaring silently above the marsh in search of prey a marsh hawk, or red tailed hawk can be seen; these birds seem to soar so effortlessly as they ride the air currents above the marsh.

As night approaches, the marsh comes alive with the deep croaking of bull frogs as they start their nightly chorus. An owl sends his haunting call from his perch in the thick willows as darkness quickly approaches.

Through the summer the marsh yields the colors of many wildflowers and aquatic vegetation to the careful observer. Marsh marigolds display their bright yellow flowers for all to see. Certain marshes contain the large but delicate flowers of the marsh mallow in late summer. The crimson red of the cardinal flower is never to be forgotten once it is seen growing in a low wooded area adjacent to the marsh. The delicate flowers of the arrowhead plant, and the beautiful waterlily flowers add color to the summer marsh setting.

A marsh during the summer is full of color and activity for those that take the time to search out and enjoy these pleasures. Much of Iowa's native marsh areas have been destroyed by the plow and extensive tiling operations. The few remaining natural marshes and man-made marshes constructed by the State Conservation Commission give the careful observer the opportunity to view the delicate interaction of animal and aquatic life that exists in the marshes of Iowa.



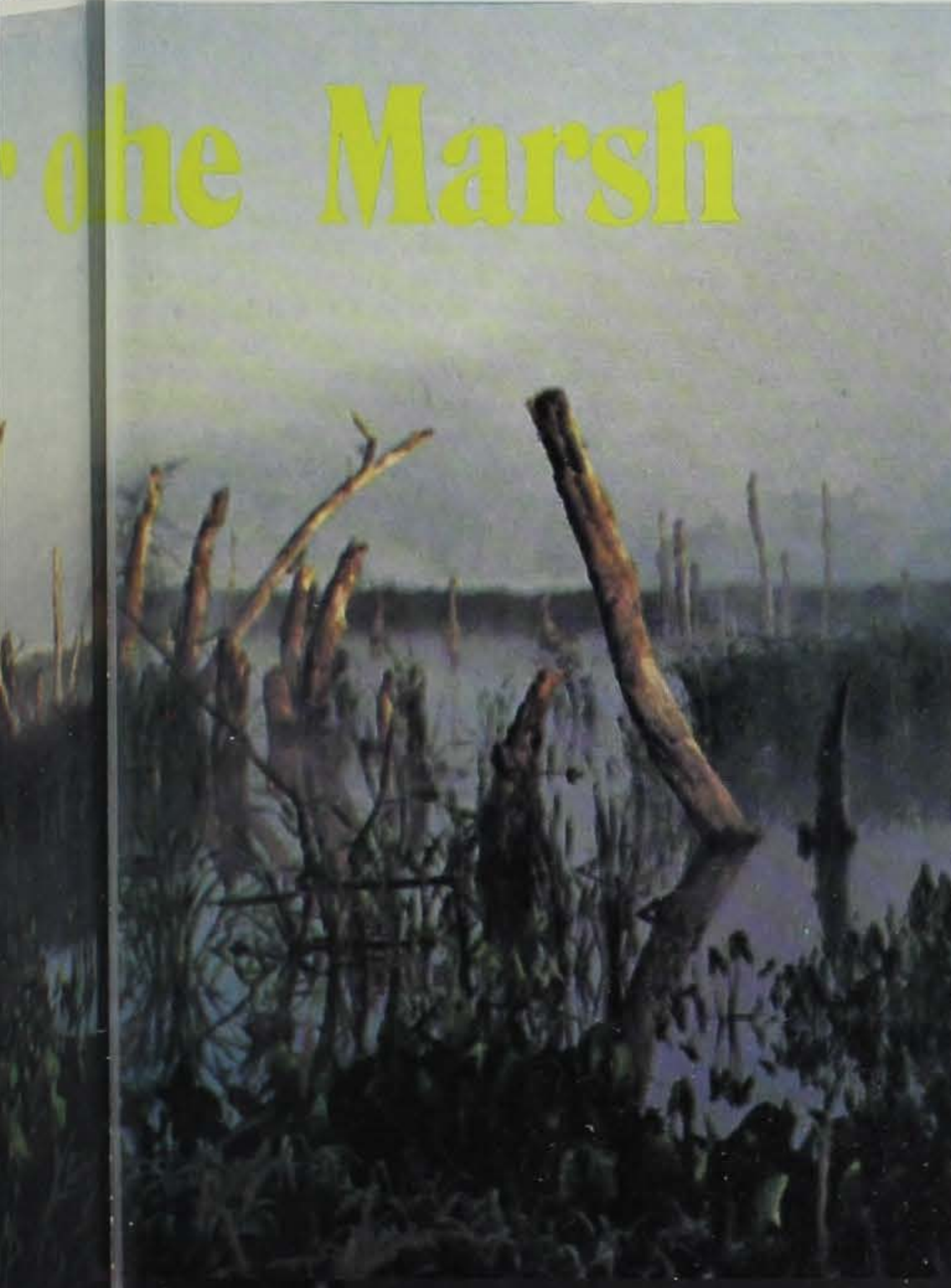
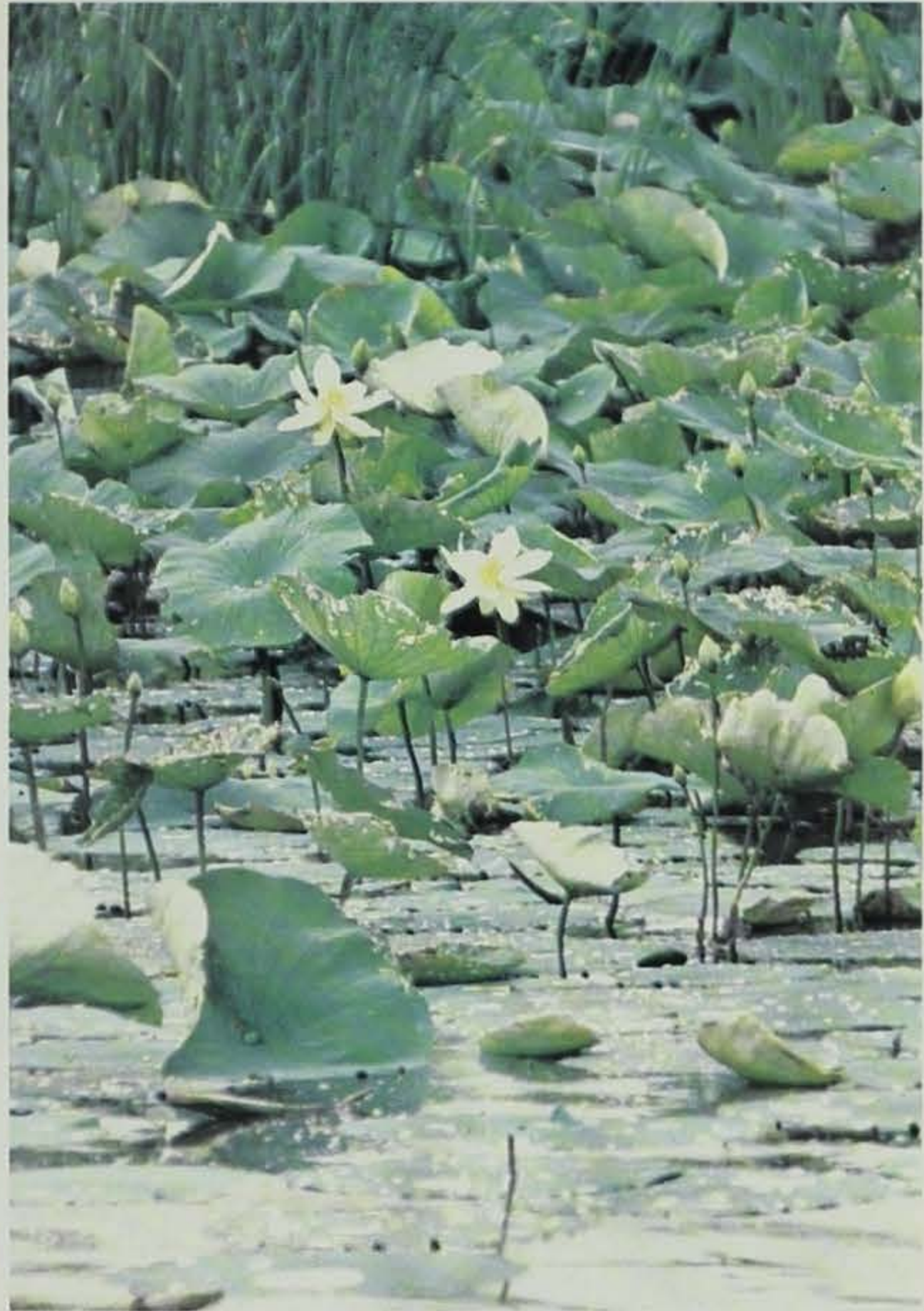
Right: Canada Goose.  
Below: White-tailed Deer.  
Bottom: The marsh at dawn.



# Summer othe







# the Marsh

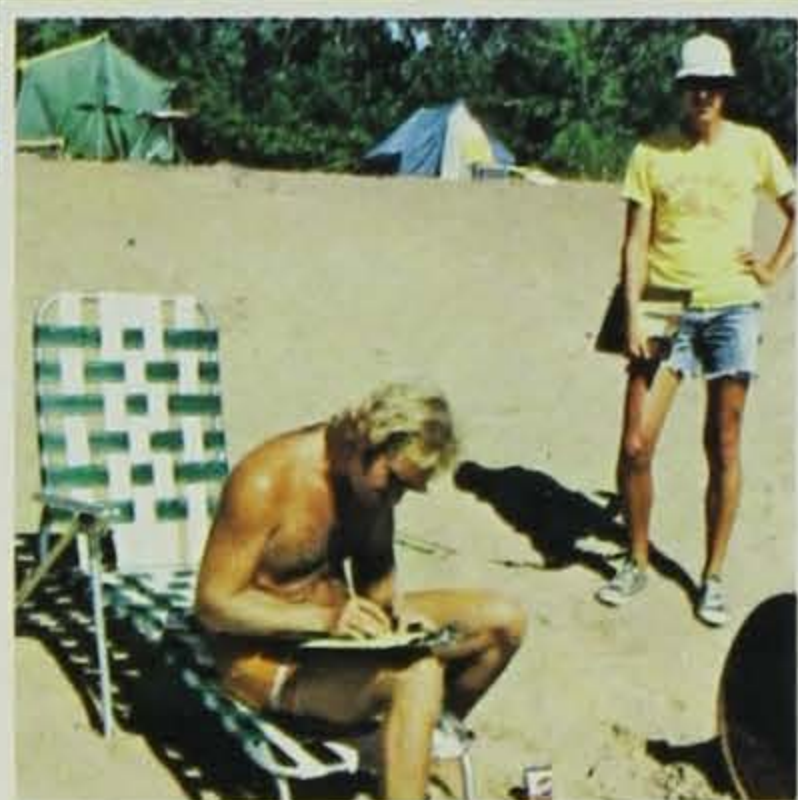
Above: Lotus. Above, left, top and bottom: Blue-winged teal. Below: Rose mallow. Bottom, left: Marsh Marigold. Bottom, right: Cardinal flower.







PHOTO BY ROGER SPARKS



## MISSISSIPPI BOATING SURVEY

Some 2,400 Mississippi River boaters and sandbar users were surveyed last summer to determine their recreation wants and needs. Three surveyors working for the Great River Environmental Action Team II (GREAT II) plied the Upper Mississippi from Guttenberg, Iowa, to Saverton, Missouri, stopping at dredge spoil beaches and natural sandbars asking boaters to fill out questionnaires. GREAT II is a cooperative effort of the Federal agencies; the states of Iowa, Illinois, Missouri and Wisconsin and the public to resolve conflicts arising from multiple demands placed on the river.

Results of this survey will be analyzed and recommendations will then be made to GREAT II regarding public needs, potential beach areas, and areas to avoid spoil deposits. These suggestions will be weighed along with data from other interests such as fish and wildlife, commercial navigation, and industrial development to determine management plans for the future of the river. Recommendations from survey analysts will be published in a future issue of the CONSERVATIONIST.

Boating the diverse waterways of the Mississippi is becoming more popular each year. In quest of a safe and systematic approach to handling the growing demand on the Mississippi, GREAT II began the surveys. For the boater the survey will help pinpoint the need for ramps, mooring areas near cities, litter disposal facilities, and protection from potential boating hazards.

The Mississippi River is one of the great resources of the midwest serving commercial navigation, fish and wildlife, industrial, and recreational interests. Conflicts between these entities have too often been worked out by the old "squeaky wheel" method. Consequently, the desires of the people to whom the river and its resources belong, have not always been accommodated. Surveys such as this will provide better knowledge of the users needs and a sound basis for future management plans.

**H**HEY! Look at all the activity on West Okoboji today. Have you ever wondered how many pleasure boaters use this lake? Or how many fishermen try their luck and what they catch?

West Okoboji is one of Iowa's most popular lakes for pursuing a variety of water oriented recreational activities. The activities range from yachting to power surf-boarding to slow trolling for lunker walleyes.

In 1976, a survey of these different activities was deemed warranted in lieu of possible future conflict of water recreational interests. And with past data available some trend comparisons of the demand on the resource was possible.

The main objectives of the recreational survey were: 1) To document angler pressure and fish harvest; 2) To determine pleasure boating densities.

### Methods

A creel clerk was employed to work a contact type comprehensive survey of both anglers and pleasure boaters. The survey was broken into two broad categories of winter (1 December - 15 March) and open water (1 May - 15 November).

Anglers and pleasure boaters were interviewed at the completion of their activities. Questions asked were pertinent to fulfilling the objectives.

Numbers of fishermen and boaters were estimated by mathematical extrapolations using interval counts and trip lengths.

### Fishing

In 1977, an estimated 20,000 open water anglers harvested 77,500 fish in a total time of 68,000 hours. Catch effort was 3.87 fish per angler and a bit over one fish per hour. The total harvested fish weighed 36,000 pounds or 9 pounds per surface acre. Yellow perch contributed 82% by number and 60% by weight to the catch.

Angler success was highest among perch fishermen with an average of two fish creeled per hour. Species preference indicated 44% of the anglers were fishing perch, 21% walleye and 20% multiple or more than one species.

Winter angling accounted for an estimated 18,500 anglers (4.64 anglers per acre) harvesting 50,000 fish (12.5 fish per acre) in 65,500 hours (16.5 hours per acre). The total catch weighed approximately 24,000 pounds or 6 pounds per acre. Yellow perch, bluegill and walleye made up 84, 12, and 3% of the catch respectively. (Table 1)

Species preference indicated 64% of the winter fishermen were after perch, 24% bluegill, 10% walleye and 11% multiple species.

*Table 1. Open water and winter creel - West Okoboji - 1976-77*

	Open Water	Winter
Total Anglers	20,047	18,557
Total Hours	67,815	65,455
Fish/Angler	3.87	2.70
Fish/Hour	1.14	.76
Musky	20	
Walleye	2,248	1,367
N. Pike	2,225	474
Y. Perch	63,516	41,938
S.M. Bass	1,208	74
Bluegill	7,076	5,927
Others	1,265	131
Total	77,558	49,911

Fishing boat use on West Lake has increased approximately 38% in the last 10 years while shore angling has decreased dramatically. There was an overall harvest reduction of 13% which nearly all (98%) was due to reduced bullhead harvest.



# Recreationally Yours... LAKE OKOBOJI

by Jim Christianson  
FISHERIES BIOLOGIST



Table 2. Estimates of pleasure boat numbers and densities - West Okoboji - 1977

	Week Day	Weekend Day	Holiday	Total
June	3,638	2,634		6,272
July	3,641	3,101	1,486	8,228
August	4,199	5,345		9,544
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11,478</b>	<b>11,080</b>	<b>1,486</b>	<b>24,044</b>
Boats/Day	177	462	495	261
Acres/Boat	23	9	8	15

vailing summer winds and has a popular boating access facility. Survey results indicated the majority of pleasure boating activity occurred between 12 noon and 6 p.m.

The 1977 recreational survey indicated the fisheries resource changed quite dramatically in some aspects; for example, the bullhead harvest, and remained fairly stable in others; for example, the yellow perch harvest. An increase trend in both fishing and pleasure boating was indicated.

Average number of fishing and pleasure boats per day in 1977 were 53 and 261, respectively as compared to 33 fishing and 228 pleasure boats per day in 1966.

West Okoboji will continue to be an attractive playground for a variety of water oriented recreational activities. The resource will respond but there will be a limit to which the resource can physically and safely support these varied demands. □

is reduction in bullhead harvest has been a general trend since the early 1960's when peak harvests were reached. This theory is speculated to have been established when large year-class production in the late 1950's from East Okoboji migrated into West Lake for food and space. Since that time, declining production has slowly resulted in the declining theory.

Yellow perch harvest was slightly above the 6 year average 1959-65 with walleye and bluegill slightly below average. Northern pike angling showed an increase with musky fishing added attraction.

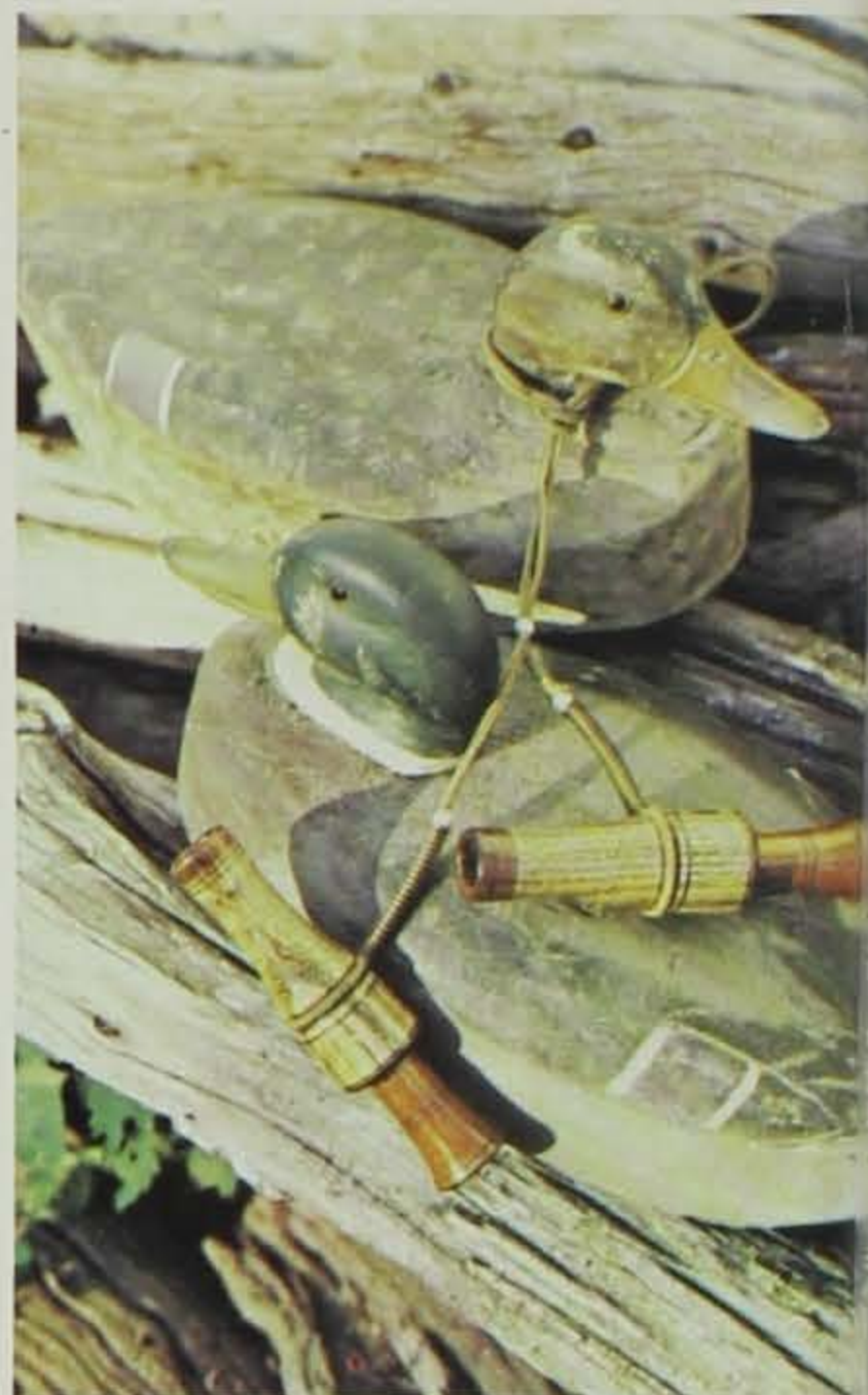
## Pleasure Boating

Clear water and protected bays make pleasure boating a very popular sport on West Okoboji. Comparing past surveys, 1977 activities increased approximately 14%.

Boating numbers calculated for June through August were approximately 11,500 boats for weekdays, 11,000 boats for weekend days, and 1,500 boats for the 4th of July weekend totaling 24,000 boats. Average boating densities for the summer season were 177 boats per day for weekdays, 462 boats per day for weekend days and 495 boats per day for the holiday amounting to an overall average of 261 boats per day. Pleasure boater area use was greatly influenced by wind factors and access locations. For example, Emerson Bay located on the west shore of West Okoboji received approximately 33% of the activity. This Bay is sheltered from pre-



# Wendell Carlson's Second Hobby



BY ROGER SPARKS

IF YOU LONG to sound just like a duck, help is available. When not in his duck boat, Wendell Carlson of Cedar Rapids pursues a craft that is making him famous among fellow duck hunters. Wendell makes duck calls — Carlson's Championship Calls — and they are just that.

Most of the finalists in the Iowa Duck Calling Championships over the past six or seven years have used Carlson calls. Last year Dick Schultz of Cedar Rapids, a duck hunting partner of Carlson, won not only the State Duck Calling Championship in Des Moines, but also the World Duck Calling Championship in Stuttgart, Arkansas. He is only the second Iowan to win the World Competition. Todd Elvidge, 11, son of Greg Elvidge of Cedar Rapids, placed second in the World Junior Division last year. This year Elvidge again won the state junior competition and will represent Iowa at Stuttgart. Both Elvidge and Schultze used Wendell Carlson's calls.

This year Carlson himself won the state competition and will compete in Arkansas this fall. He is a perennial finalist in championship competition calling. Among his better showings were first place in the Tri-state Regional Mississippi Valley Open at Galesburg, Illinois and two second places in the Iowa State Championship before winning it

this year. His son Brian, 16, is also involved in duck hunting and competition calling, having recently competed at Stuttgart after winning the Great River Days Regional at Muscatine. All contestants in world competition must have won a Stuttgart-sanctioned tri-state regional, state championship or foreign country championship during the year they are allowed to compete.

Carlson, an electronics technician, began making his own duck calls when he became dissatisfied with those produced commercially. Today his calls are finely polished, hand-tuned works of art. The body, or barrel, of the call is made of naturally-aged thornwood and the insert, or stopper, is made of very old hedge — correctly known as osage orange. But, the calls are not produced to be used as conversation pieces. They are made for the hands of ardent duck hunters and competition callers.

As you might expect, Carlson Calls are not inexpensive, but considering the effort and materials that go into them, the price seems fair. Many years of experience and training in electronics and musical background have contributed to Carlson's ability to understand sound. Many years of woodworking and duck hunting have also been key factors in arriving at a really fine duck call. To hand craft consistently well-made calls re-

quires lots of patience. Carlson says, "They must all pass many tests of quality and consistency and I mean it when I say if I wouldn't use it, I won't sell it."

No instrument can perform any better than its operator, so Carlson also produced a copyrighted instructional cassette tape. Proper operation of a duck call takes time to learn — how much time depends on a person's ability and how efficiently his practice time is used. Practice with definite goals in mind and helpful information on how to achieve each goal is the purpose of Carlson's tape.

Wendell Carlson believes that duck hunting is a game of small percentages. "Placing your blind so it blends well with the background is one improvement," he says. "Using a large spread of good-looking decoys improves your chances. Being able to use a well-made duck call provides still another important advantage. While each refinement improves your chances only slightly, all the things together make a considerable difference in getting that big flock of mallards into your decoys."

For more information on Wendell Carlson's hand-made calls, contact him at the following address: Wendell R. Carlson, Route 2, Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52401, residence 319/848-4516. □



# Leeches~

## Favorite Bait for Catfishing!

by Wendell Simonson  
CONSERVATION OFFICER

IT WAS A WARM SPRING day, "some kind of a day" to work boat patrol on the Iowa river. I had eased the johnboat off the trailer and onto the waters of the Coralville reservoir and started working upstream, checking fishermen fishing from shore, and also nose in boats. In a few miles I had left the impounded water of the reservoir, and was running up the Iowa against the current. I had traveled for perhaps 20 miles and had checked only a few fishermen with any catfish — water still a little cold and murky.

I rounded a sharp bend in the river and saw an old friend fishing from shore a few yards ahead. It was Jack Hahn (from Middle Amana, Iowa), baker, decoy carver, and wildlife artist. I slacked off on the outboard motor and eased by him on the opposite side of the river, crossed over and pulled onto shore a few yards upstream. I tied the johnboat to a small sapling, took the Thermos bottle and the camera and walked down to visit with him for a few minutes. He had our very nice channel cats tied to his stringer — the best catch I'd seen so far that day.

"What are you catching them on?"

"Leeches! They're a tough bait. Caught three of those cats on one leech."

I asked Jack if he would show me how to find and keep leeches and permit me to take some photos for the 'Conservationist'. I told him I thought fishermen would enjoy a "how to" article on this type of bait for catfish.

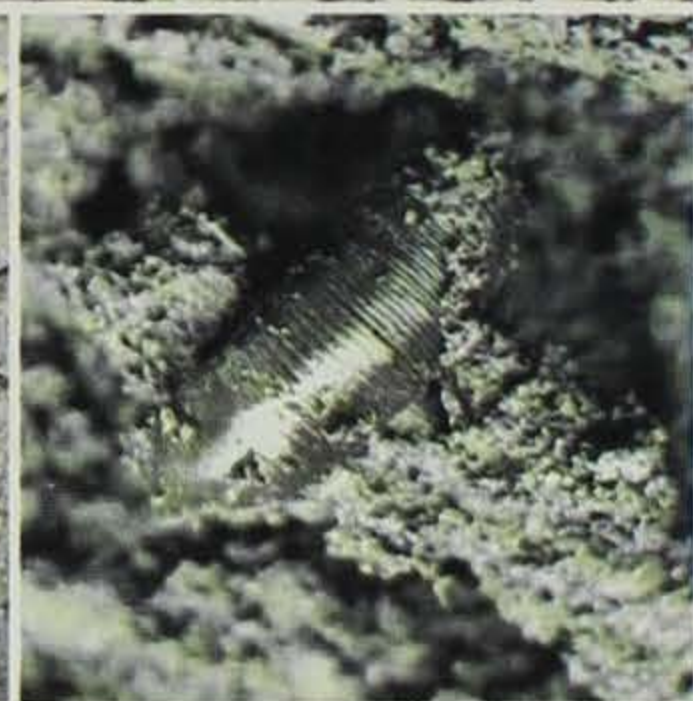
Jack guided me just a few yards away to where a small, muddy-bottom feeder stream entered the river. We walked up this short creek a short distance on the muddy, exposed banks. He told me to watch for small cracks in the wet mud where the leeches had

been tunneling under the surface. When he found a curving, irregular crack, he took a short, stiff stick — jabbed it under the crack a couple of inches and lifted out a wiggling, muddy leech. He washed it off and dropped it into a coffee can.

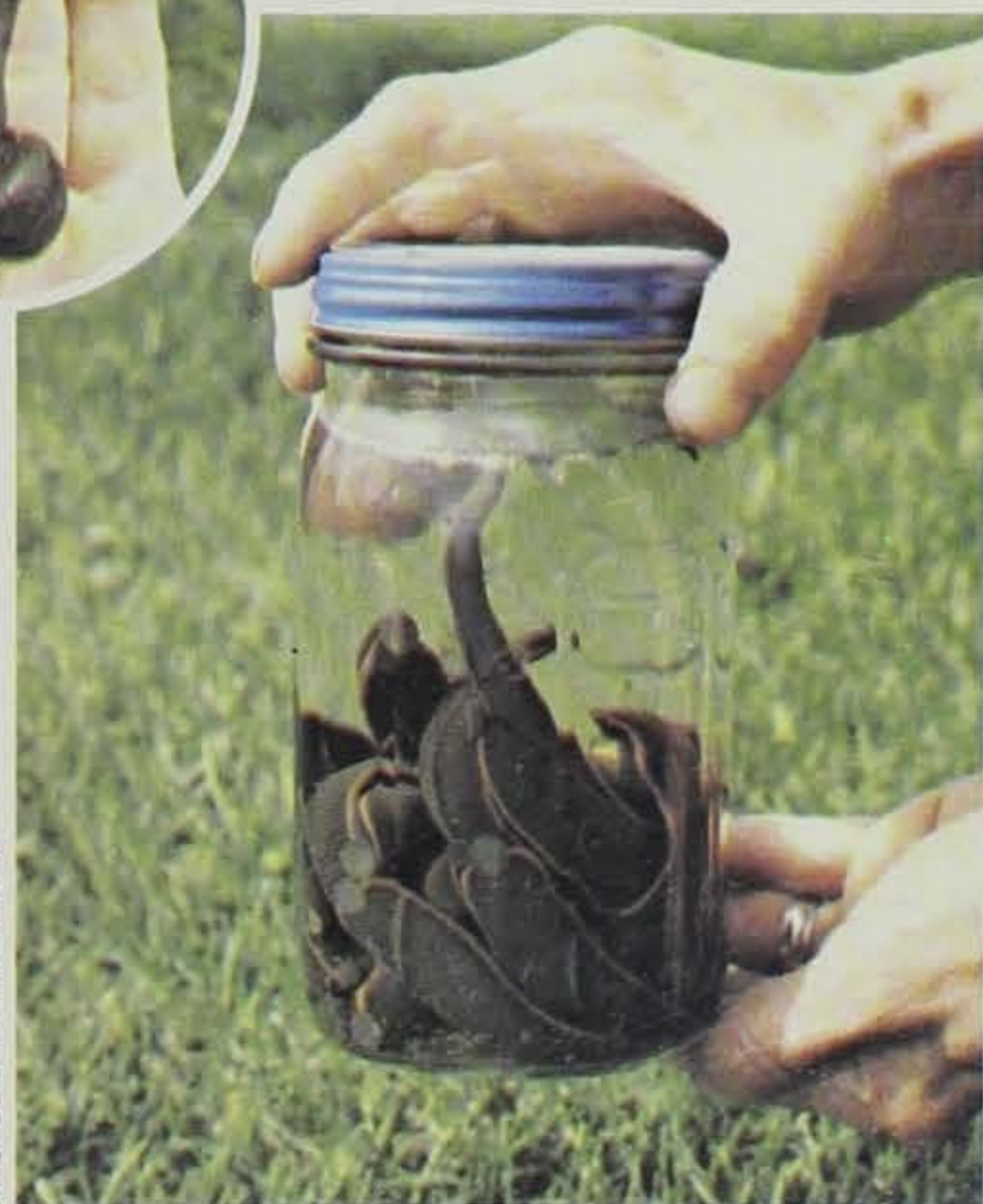
It must take a little practice because all of the muddy cracks I dug in turned up nothing but earthworms! Best times for searching for them are early spring and summer. During the heat of summer and fall he finds them very difficult to locate. Sometimes Jack will have difficulty locating them one day — and come back to the same area two or three days later and pick up a couple dozen.

Jack's wife, Doris, must be a very understanding woman — she lets him keep a quart jar of leeches in the refrigerator. Jack punches small holes in the jar lid for air and changes the water on the leeches about once a week. They keep very well in this manner. They attach themselves to the inside of the jar and hang in a vertical manner until disturbed. Jack wears cotton gloves to put the leech on a fish hook — they squirm quite a bit when handled and the gloves help hold them. The skin on the leech is also very tough and it's common to take more than one catfish on a leech.

Many years ago doctors used leeches for the medicinal purpose of bleeding people to cure them of disease. The World Book Encyclopedia states that the medicinal leeches live in swamps and sluggish streams. It also says the medicinal leech is genus *Hirudo*, species *medicinalis*. I don't know about the scientific jargon — I just know a good fisherman using leeches is a hard man to outfish! ■



Cracks in the mud (above, left) indicate where to dig for leeches.



PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR



# UNHERALDED CONTRIBUTORS

By Roger Sparks

EVERY YEAR an Iowa group makes a significant contribution to conservation and outdoor recreation without receiving much credit for it. These people spend thousands of hours making possible many of the programs of the Conservation Commission. Hunters, anglers, trappers, boaters, snowmobilers, and other outdoor-minded folks owe a salute of appreciation to the county recorders and their aides.



Errisje Mick of Newton recently retired after eight years as Jasper County Recorder. She explains the services the recorders provide and reflects on her experiences. "In Jasper County, we handled more than 18 different hunting and fishing licenses plus boat and snowmobile registrations for the Conservation Commission. While it may differ from county to county, we believed in distributing licenses to as many outlets as possible. This way, licenses could be sold at a large number of places making it easier for the people to buy what they need. All of those outlets make the job a little more complicated, but it is best for the public."

The former school teacher set up a detailed system of keeping track of all of the receipts. "We entered items in two separate areas and made sure everything came out right. In our books, everything was balanced daily. It worked well, and we never had a problem."

The county recorder's duties associated with the Conservation Commission

are getting more complex. "There is more of a demand for snowmobile and boating registration.

Age 65 and older licenses for hunting and fishing and the habitat, trout, and duck stamps are also making the job tougher. During my last year as recorder in Jasper County, we devoted about one-third of our time to Conservation Commission programs; but we always felt that we were there to serve the public, and if more licenses were needed we could handle them. I had wonderful assistants and we had a good working relationship with the Commission."

Errisje Mick and her fellow recorders don't build lakes or plant habitat and, except at election time, you probably haven't heard much about them. But because of their efforts, outdoor recreation is easier and cheaper to come by. By shouldering a costly administrative burden, the county recorders are serving the conservation interests of a great many Iowans.

## LOOKIN' BACK

Ten Years Ago



the Conservationist ran an article on Iowa's panfish fishing. It was figured that panfish including bullheads

made up almost eighty percent of the total fish caught in the state. Even though the harvest was and still is high on this fish, it was stressed that populations of these species can not be hurt by hook and line. It doesn't hurt to have a few of them in the frying pan either.

A special report on duck populations showed that drought conditions in Canada had taken

its toll on mallard production. 1969 was not a banner year for mallard shooting but good water conditions soon returned and the birds responded well.

Twenty Years Ago

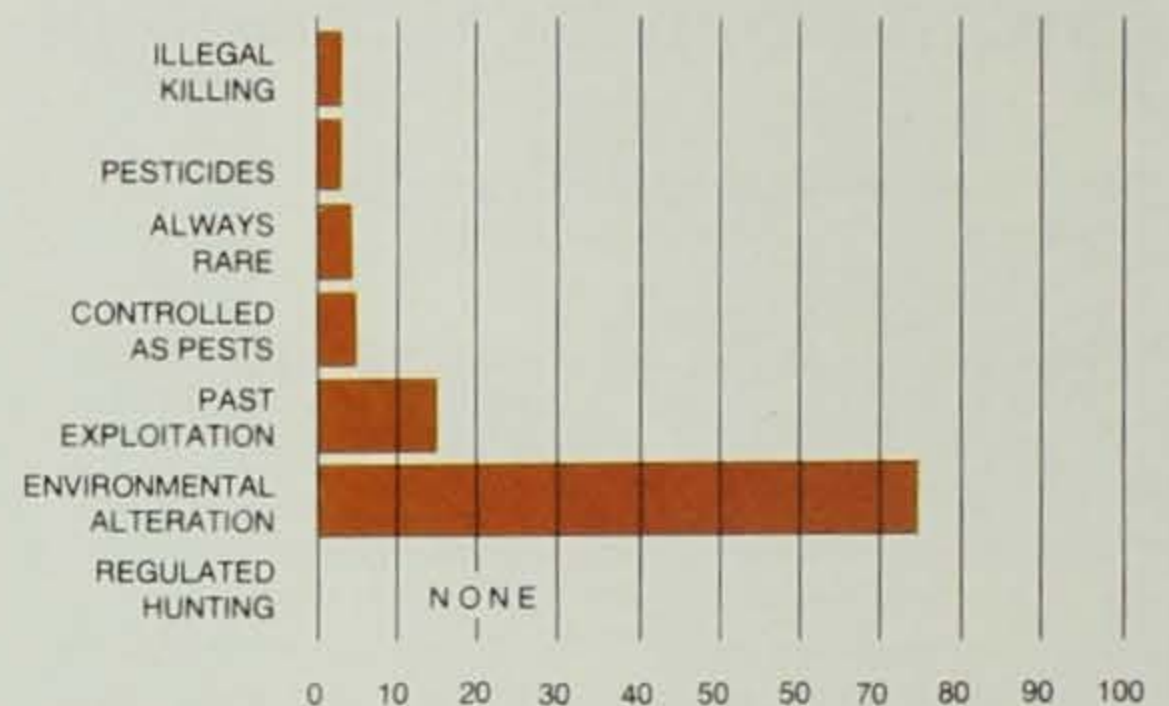


the magazine ran an essay on biology fact and fiction. It was noted that biologists knew that habitat was the key to game management but it was also mentioned that history has shown there to be a twenty year lag in public understanding and acceptance of research.

In the middle ages when birds disappeared in the fall most people believed that they obviously flew to the moon and returned in the spring.

## How Rare and Endangered Species Get That Way

(Compiled by John L. Schmidt, Wildlife Extensionist)



Total number of rare and endangered species listed in the U.S. is 104

## Thanks for the Memories . . .

Would you like to do something for the farmer who let you hunt last year? Or has a friend or relative included you on one of their hunting, fishing, camping or boating trips lately? Show your appreciation in the form of a gift subscription to the IOWA CONSERVATIONIST! All you need do is send us (1) the name of the recipient, (2) his/her complete address, and (3), a check or money order for the proper fee. Our address is: IOWA CONSERVATIONIST, Wallace Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319. We will send each and every name on your gift list a suitable notification of your thoughtfulness.

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**DO IT NOW!**

## Thirty Years Ago



the Conservationist ran an article on parks which stressed even then that parks could not be made that would provide everything to all people. One ideal park was proposed that had a pari-mutuel horse track, tennis courts, a night club, hiking trails and a roulette room. Although many people would like such a layout it was suggested that this probably wasn't the direction in which to work.

That year 44 percent of Iowa's people said they had visited a state park. Over 80 percent said that they liked them just the way they were.



FROM THE

# Warden's diary

by Rex Emerson

LAW ENFORCEMENT SUPERVISOR

THE OLD MAN who lives down by the river was dressing some nice catfish when I stopped in to see him. When I remarked that they were real beauties, he said, "Speaking of beauties, did you know my wife entered a beauty contest once?" And he continued, "There were no winners in the contest."

Then he asked, "Whatcha' been doin' lately?"

I proceeded to tell him how two other officers and I had spent two days on the Des Moines River to catch whoever was running three fish traps. There was about a mile of river involved, so there was no way only one, or even two officers could watch all three fish traps. We took one boat with a large motor on it, just in case we needed a chase boat. One officer got off where he could watch a trap from the bank, and I took my place on the bank about a mile down river, where I could observe the second trap. The officer running the boat took the third one in the middle. He parked the boat across the river from the

fish trap he was to watch. An overhanging tree provided good cover for him, so he could sit in the boat unseen. There was a boat tied up across the river from sit under the mulberry tree, I was left with only a horseweed for shade. In my canvas bag were cans of beans, fruit, and a canteen full of water. Cold beans will never take the place of steak, but it's better than nothing. While sharing my lunch with a wide variety of insects, I wondered why so many people enjoy going on picnics when they don't have to.

At 2:15 p.m. I could hear a motorboat in the distance. It was going away from me and was soon too far away to hear. In about fifteen minutes I could hear it again, coming my way. Soon the boat came into sight. It was the same boat that had been tied to the bank. Some quick notes were taken for future reference: time at fish trap, 2:36 p.m.; two men in boat; motor operator wearing a white T-shirt; man in front has a blue shirt; boat number recorded. The motor sounds a few minutes earlier had

indicated they had run the other traps first and the other officers would meet them on the bank. However, I didn't want to spend two days sitting under a horseweed and miss out on the finish of this case. I took off running through the brush like a bull moose. When I came to a ditch I jumped like a gazelle, but not quite far enough, and ended his secluded hiding place.

Our information was that this was the boat the fish trappers were using. We also had good information that they ran the traps in the daytime, so there would be no reason to spend nights out there.

My place on the bank was about eight feet above the river. With the weeds mashed down except for a fringe along the bank, it was a vantage observation spot. There was even a tree for shade. However, that tree did cause some problems. While lying there on my stomach "glassing" the river with binoculars, I kept feeling something dropping from the tree and hitting me on the back. Finally, when something hit me on the shoulder, I noticed it was a mulberry, and, oh, so very ripe. Where each one hit it left a blue stain on my shirt. It didn't do too much good to move out from under the tree because a bird flew over and gave me one spot on my cap. Evidently the bird had been enjoying the mulberries. The thought went through my mind, "Maybe

that bird was a reincarnated fish trapper!"

Nothing happened the first day. At daylight the next morning we were back in the same places. Not wishing to up more like a muddy hog.

When I finally did get to where the fishermen had tied up their boat, sure enough the other two officers were there and had the situation well in hand. One of the fishermen looked at me and asked the other officers, "Is he with you?" There is just no way you can fall in the mud and come out looking good.

This case was made due to some good information from a fisherman who was interested enough in his sport to get involved. He realized the fish trappers were stealing fish from him. They were taking fish that he could have a chance to legally catch.

The game warden can't be every place at the same time. The poacher knows this, also.

When someone tells us the bottom of the river is covered with fish traps, and then admits he has never actually seen one, that is not information at all. When someone tells us about seeing a fish or game violation last year, that information is no good. What we need is the person who can tell us who, what, where, and that it happened today. We don't put much stock in anonymous calls. Your name will not be revealed if that is your wish.

How much real interest in fish and wildlife do you have?



## CORRECTION

We missed listing the top flathead catfish in the March Big Fish Angling Awards. The fish was taken on 8 lb. test line by Al Bardole (left) of North Liberty while fishing below the Coralville dam on June 12, 1978. It weighed 51 pounds and ranks as one of the largest ever taken in the state.





CO

