



**conservationist**

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# **conservationist**

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Front Cover — Bullfrog: Photo by Ken Formanek.

Back Cover — Summer fun at Lake Ahquabi State Park.

## THE IOWA CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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

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# Iowa's protected water areas study

by Kevin Szcodronski

OUTDOOR RECREATION PLANNER

AS WE ALL KNOW, Iowa is blessed with plenty of fertile soil, relatively flat terrain, and people who are living up to the motto "A Place to Grow". These basic elements have been working together over the years to make Iowa a prime spot for agricultural, residential, and commercial development. Iowa also has some areas which have been left in a "natural" or native state. The natural resources (vegetation, water, etc.) remaining within these areas provide invaluable fish and wildlife habitat, help to reduce soil erosion, provide water sources, and offer natural scenic diversity. However, these "natural" areas are becoming fewer and farther between in Iowa as more and more lands are converted to urban and agricultural uses.

The Iowa Conservation Commission's Protected Water Areas Study is aimed at identifying and developing workable solutions to preserve, protect, and enhance the dwindling number of native areas which lie within or adjacent to our natural lakes, rivers, streams, and marshes. The protection of these areas will provide us, our children, our grandchildren, and their children with one element of a high quality of life by helping to properly allocate the state's water area resources among their many justified and often conflicting uses.

Before going any further, it is important that we backtrack a little and review the chain of events which led up to the Protected Water Areas Study. Ever since Iowa's Scenic Rivers Act was passed in 1970, the State Conservation Commission has had the authority to designate river corridors which possess outstanding water conservation, scenic, fish, wildlife, historic, or recreational values. Even though the designation authority given to the Conservation Commission was limited, the intention behind the act was to manage selected rivers and their adjacent land areas in a manner which would protect the natural and cultural values of the river environment against incompatible uses and unnecessary resource deterioration. Unfortunately for the state's scenic rivers, Iowa has consistently placed other programs ahead of the Scenic Rivers Pro-

gram when it came time to divvy up funds and staff among specific projects. Consequently, the Scenic Rivers Act has never been carried out to its maximum capability.

However, the Conservation Commission did designate one of Iowa's most unique and truly outstanding river corridors. In January, 1971, an eight-mile segment of the Upper Iowa River became the first and, to date, the only component of Iowa's Scenic Rivers System. The designation was prompted by the fact that the Upper Iowa was being studied by the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation (now called the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service; "HCRS") in the U. S. Department of Interior for possible inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Based upon their findings, the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation in February, 1971, concluded that the Upper Iowa did possess the values which qualify it for inclusion in the national system, but recommended that it be managed by the State of Iowa. The Conservation Commission was uneasy with this recommendation and never "picked up the ball and ran with it" because they anticipated national recognition attracting increasing numbers of visitors to the Upper Iowa. The Commission staff felt that increased recreational use along the river would be detrimental to the area's natural resources and unique features; especially with the limited staffing and funding available to manage the Upper Iowa as a national wild and scenic river. As you can imagine, this is a very long and involved set of circumstances and the intention of this article is not to relive history, but rather to describe the Conservation Commission's current efforts towards scenic river preservation. Therefore, let us move on to new and hopefully more promising things.

In an effort to speed up the protection of Iowa's unique and outstanding water areas and adjacent lands, the Conservation Commission, in March of 1977, asked the State Legislature for funds and the authority to hire a staff person specifically establish the groundwork for a Protected Water Areas Program. The

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slature agreed with this need and  
anteed funds and staffing for the  
y. The Conservation Commission  
ed the phrase "Protected Water  
as Program" to replace "Scenic  
ers Program" since they felt selected  
shorelines, marshes, and other  
besides the Upper Iowa should be  
sidered for protection. In other  
ds, the implications within the pro-  
ed Protected Water Areas Program  
the same as the current Scenic  
ers Program, except the concepts will  
be used to protect selected lake  
elines and marshes in addition to  
r corridors.  
a nutshell, the Protected Water  
as Study is addressing the need for  
a to begin preserving significant  
er and associated land areas and out-  
g some alternative methods to pro-  
the designated areas in a manner  
ch can benefit everyone. Potential  
s for designation are being evaluated  
ed upon their fragile character, state  
ificance, and endangerment of their  
ural and natural resources.



Above: Otter Creek Marsh.  
Right: Upper Iowa river.

Photo by Ken Formanek

Photo by Larry Pool





Golden Alexander.

Photo by Randall Ma...

# DOOLITTLE PRAIRIE

## *Vestige of vanishing prairie wetlands*

by R. R. Pinneke & Steve Lekwa

"Not so long ago between the eastern forests and the buffalo plains, there was a sea of grass and flowers," so wrote John Madson in writing "A Wilderness of Light" in *Stories Under the Sky*. Today that sea has changed into carpets of green and gold with mile after mile of ground producing food and fiber for the world. The prairie world did an excellent job in producing some of the richest soils for agricultural production. Herbert Hoover, Iowa's famous son, stated that "the good Lord originally made it the richest stretch of agricultural land that ever blessed any one sovereign government".

The aboriginal grass prairies that saw Indian grass and big bluestem taller than a man in the saddle; that grew so thick it could hardly be turned by a horsedrawn plowshare; the fires that filled the sky with smoke, have all been tamed by modern man. At least almost all tamed.

The few remaining tracts left on the Iowa landscape are represented primarily by prairie wetlands that have not been tilled and plowed, such as the Dorrel Doolittle Tract, recently leased by the Story County Conservation Board.

This small twenty-one (21) acre virgin tract of prairie, located south of Story City in Section 25 of LaFayette Township, was protected and nurtured by the Doolittle family of Story City. William Rochester Doolittle homesteaded the land in 1857 and passed the farm on to Frank Douglas, who later passed it on to Frank E. Doolittle, father of Dorrel. Dorrel describes the father and grandfather as avid hunters who traveled as far as Oklahoma to hunt game. The Frank Doolittle family protected the prairie wetlands and hunted waterfowl on the potholes and frequently talked about wolves which lived about the area.

Dorrel Doolittle carried on the tradition of the prairie tract and although not a hunter, enjoyed with his family the beauty of the

area as it exists today. Dr. Roger Landers, Plant Ecologist at Iowa State University, leased the tract cooperatively in 1978 from the Doolittle family for the harvest of prairie seed. The Marshall County Conservation Board, Jasper County Conservation Board

and the Story County Conservation Board, along with private interests worked with students from Iowa State University, in harvesting a considerable quantity of prairie grass and forb seed. The seed is being planted on several tracts, both public and private, in central Iowa in 1979.

Shortly after the prairie seed harvest in 1978, the Story County Conservation Board was successful, through the considerations of the Dorrel Doolittle family, in leasing the diverse prairie habitat.

This tract was leased for environmental education purposes and public enjoyment as well as for managing the prairie for wildlife habitat.

The twenty-one acre tract is rich in prairie flora. The prairie contains Indian grass, big bluestem, little bluestem, switchgrass and side oats gramma. More unusual grasses include the prairie dropseed.

The forbs are spectacular from mid-summer into the fall season. Yellow coneflower, compass plant, dense blazing star, purple prairie clover and sunflowers are common. Less common plants include the delicate ladies tresses orchid, golden alexander, fragrant mountain mint, meadow rue, Michigan lillies, and many others.

It is hoped that the seed produced on this and other native prairie tracts will allow restoration of several remnant prairie stands around Story County, as well as establishment of new stands.

The area also contains five wet cells from 1/2 acre to 1 1/2 acres in size. These cells provide some habitat for bluewinged teal and will be maintained as prairie potholes.

Story County Conservation Board initiated its first prairie planting in 1969 with the planting of twenty acres of Hickory Grove Park to tall grass prairie. Since then another thirty acres have been planted at McFarland Park and the County Conservation Board staff has programmed additional acreage each year since 1974.

Pothole after burnover.

Conservation Board staff has worked very closely with Dr. Roger [unclear] and has gained useful experience in utilizing the herbicide [unclear] in preparing no-till seed beds ready for planting prairie

The Conservation Board has also acquired other remnant prairie [unclear], including Cooper's Prairie Marsh, and most recently, 10½ [unclear] of the Chicago and North Western railroad between Roland [unclear] clearing, containing considerable area of tall grass prairie.

The Conservation Board also manages the I-35 Scenic Overlook, [unclear] contains a vestige prairie, and maintains a trail which allows [unclear] to walk through and enjoy, not only the prairie, but a view [unclear] Skunk River Valley forest beyond.

The Conservation Board staff, headed by Board Planner, Mark [unclear] son, in 1974 was instrumental in working with a legislative [unclear] investigating a potential state prairie park along I-35 in Story [unclear]. The interest in developing a tall grass prairie park lying in [unclear] a along I-35 in Story County is still a dream. The develop- [unclear] of a 700 acre linear tall grass prairie that greets interstate [unclear] is not beyond the scope of a local resource agency.

The acquisition and leasing of those few remnant tracts such as the [unclear] little prairie may provide the future nucleus for a state prairie [unclear] in which both the wildlife and the people of Iowa stand to [unclear] it from renewed interest in this North America's most di- [unclear] and colorful plant community. □

Below: Blazing Star (pink) Compass Plant.



Roundheaded Bush Clover.

# THE PRAIRIE: Iowa heritage

by Barbara Nelson

*"TO KNOW A PRAIRIE is to live with the prairie, to be drawn by its many scents, and captured by its beauty."* Years ago some variation of these words could have been and probably were uttered by the early settlers of the great west, but now very few of us can include the phrase "to live with a prairie." Except for a few protected areas and some private lands the prairie is only a remnant, its vast plains of color only a dream, and where the buffalo once wallowed we see only depressions around huge boulders.

Prairie is an Iowa heritage. It is a community that for millions of years supported a fauna dependent on great expanses of nutritious vegetation. Now most of the native flora has been cleared or pastured and is being increasingly restricted to smaller and smaller refuges. With the demise of the grasslands and the advent of an agricultural and technological society went also the buffalo and the elk.

We have lost much, but there are still state and private lands where we can walk among the carpet of blazing stars or marvel at the peculiar structure of that yucca-like plant, rattlesnake master. In some spots are endangered plants where every-once-in-a-while you find yourself fortunate enough to stumble across a species that was previously unrecognized in that area.

In your first year on the prairie the more striking flowers will undoubtedly be the ones which you will learn first. Chances are these will be blazing star, lead plant, and prairie clover. In that year also are found distinctions among the many species of blazing star and the realization occurs that for every one plant learned there are ten others to be discovered. As time passes the characteristics of certain plant genera become more familiar and by the end of the summer you can distinguish maybe half a dozen grasses and thirty-five forbs.

From top to bottom:  
White Prairie Clover,  
Lead Plant, Yucca, and  
Turks Cap Lily.

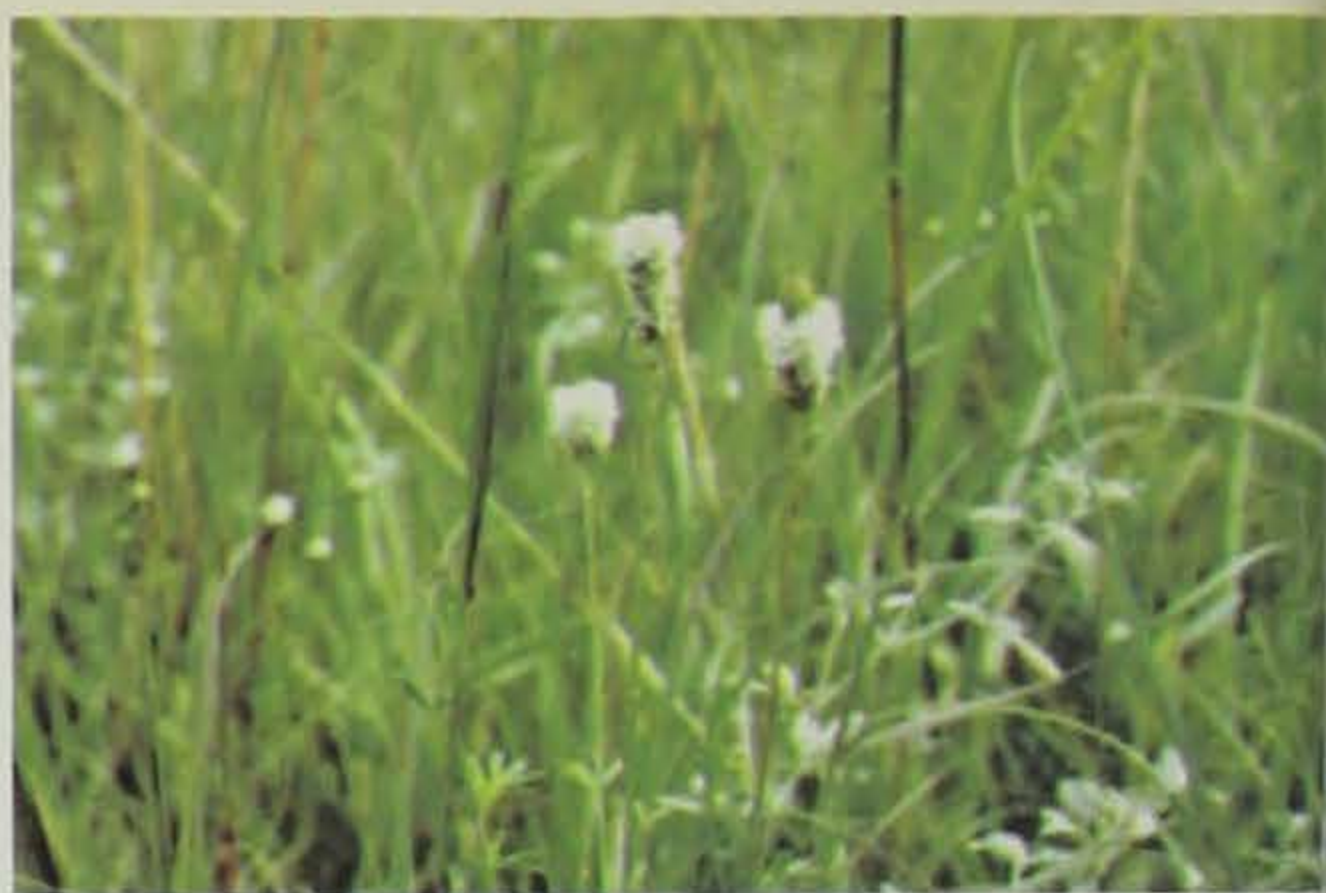
The second year on the prairie finds you trying to remember the names. After a while they are all committed to memory again and recognition of where a plant grows becomes important. You find that dotted blazing star grows on dry sites and the funny looking plant that someone told you the name of last week prefers moist spots. By the end of the season you are prepared for anything. You know all the common ones, plus many uncommon, and may even have a slide collection. It is the year when you might be lucky enough to discover the endangered prairie bushclover (*Lespedeza leptostachya*) on a little known prairie by the river. Perhaps you have even been introduced to the flora of those unique alkaline springs called "fens" where such rare plants as grass-of-parnassus and arrow-grass are found. And who could forget the morning when the innocent face of a white-tail fawn stared wide-eyed at you through the big bluestem.

The third season approaches. It has been a long winter with deep snow and too little sunshine. For those who know the prairie the urge to watch it flourish grows stronger with each new sign of spring. To those who haven't yet felt the thrill of wandering through the prairie sea — don't miss the chance, it is a great learning experience in which imaginations have infinite boundaries. □

Below: Blazing Star.



Photos by Barb Nelson



# IOWA'S OPEN SPACES

by Randy Jensen

OUTDOOR RECREATION PLANNER

PEOPLE HOLD differing ideas of what our open spaces are. To some it is the great outdoors — expanses of natural terrain and water features unimpaired by man, to others it is merely a place to get away — to recreate or refresh the spirit; some feel it presents significant examples of our natural and cultural heritage while still others view it as merely a green area amidst our developed urban scene.

Given varying views, one fact seems common to all — open spaces are remnants of our natural environment, pieces of our world which represent our very existence. Open Spaces are usually viewed as those sensitive resource areas which continue to exist in a state of natural order. Man does on occasion intervene to create new areas of open space or to alter existing areas, however, an important factor in defining open spaces is that the powers of nature be allowed to prevail over those of man. At one time prior to settlement, Iowa was all "open space", but as Iowans have progressed, open spaces have diminished; first by the plows of the farmer and the axes of the lumberman, and in recent decades by intensive human activity and development. Economic pressures on farmers and trends in urbanization are painting a bleak picture for the future of Iowa's remaining open spaces.

Some say we've gone too far in depleting our open spaces while others say we haven't gone far enough, assuming man will adapt, that our open spaces are still plentiful, or that Iowans can go to other states to enjoy natural open spaces. Regardless of the point of view held, it is a fact that Iowa will continue to be developed and man will use the land with increasing intensity at the expense of our natural landscape. Open spaces, while once being all of Iowa, now exist primarily along rugged drainage systems, representing a delicate thread of our existence which binds together our developed manmade environments. In the open spaces are rivers, streams, forests, plants and animals, soil and rock all striving to exist in their given state. Even though diminished, our open spaces miraculously continue to give man his livelihood through the support of their natural processes. But how much more human pressure and depletion can they withstand before their processes break down entirely?

If we are to protect our open spaces, it will be necessary to integrate a network of these resources into our plans for Iowa's future. In this way, critical resources and significant natural environments can be protected and provided for as a part of our development and growth strategies. To develop a statewide system of

Starrs Cave.



open spaces will require major planning efforts and action at both the state and local level. The existing Iowa Land Use Policy Commission is now concluding a study on Land Use Planning for Iowa. The Iowa Conservation Commission is also developing a protected water areas plan, which is aimed at the protection of natural water features in the state. These two plans alone represent significant steps taken in addressing the question of open spaces from a statewide perspective, and in seeking solutions that can be implemented at the state and local levels. This statewide perspective may not seem important to some and may be viewed as inappropriate governmental intervention. In fact, if viewed at the local or individual level, the depletion of our open spaces is not seen as a major problem. No one person significantly affects or depletes our open spaces. Thus viewed from that level, there would seem to be no need for a statewide protective plan. However, if we view the actions of all individuals, we see that collectively, they do represent a major depletion of Iowa's resources. For this reason, public protective measures must be developed from a statewide (or at least regional) perspective if we are to retain a system of open spaces throughout our state for the benefit of all.

Iowa's dwindling open spaces may be related to the fact that Iowa has less land in public ownership than any other state in the nation (less than 2 percent). Much of that which is public is road rights-of-way and large federal reservoir projects which fall short of providing a statewide open spaces system. When one considers also that Iowa has 25 percent of the nation's prime ag ground, it is obvious why the public land figure is so low and intensive land use pressures high. Regardless of the percentage of land held in public ownership, we should strive to bring under public protection those lands which represent the most significant and unique natural and cultural heritage for Iowans.

The protection of our open spaces does not always require "public ownership". In those cases where land is to be protected primarily for environmental or scenic reasons and where no public access is needed, it is possible to achieve protection through such measures as . . . easements, tax incentives, local zoning regulations or private dedication of the area to the preserves system. The ongoing state land use planning and protected waters areas plan will be seeking out the most appropriate means of protecting our open spaces. However, even with the strictest of control measures placed on our open spaces, there will continue to be those "crown jewels" of the state, which will require maximum protection through public ownership.

The Conservation Commission is one state agency charged with the stewardship of Iowa's natural resources. Since its early beginnings, the Conservation Commission has brought into state ownership thousands of acres as a part of the parks, forestry, wildlife and management and preserves systems. While these areas represent significant open spaces, their establishment has historically been for timber production, wildlife production and recreation usage. The Preserves System which represents only a small percentage of the Commission managed lands, has been the only program aimed primarily at protecting critical natural and cultural resources.

In recent years, the Conservation Commission has recognized that protection of the state's open spaces is of a top priority. Whereas, earlier programs were aimed primarily at developing numerous public areas or recreation use facilities throughout the state, the Conservation Commission's primary objective now is to first protect the unique resource areas of the state wherever they exist, and then develop and manage these lands according to agency objectives, but in a manner which reflects the environmental integrity of each area. Some charge that the Conservation Commission asks

From left to right, below: Indian Bluffs, Elk Grove; bottom: Stephens Forest, Stone Park.



mission is negligent in wanting to acquire additional land when it has not developed what it now has. This statement reflects public attitudes associated with the Commission's earlier programs which stressed use as the primary purpose for acquiring public land. With the current priority of open spaces protection, development and use become secondary and obviously will not take place on all areas. The Conservation Commission has not shifted its programs exclusively to open spaces protection, but continues to pursue other traditional acquisition and development projects which are required to meet overall recreation/conservation objectives.

In 1973 the acquisition of open spaces was begun as a special program by the Iowa Conservation Commission. In that year, the Iowa Legislature passed the first open spaces appropriation bill. This appropriation provided the Conservation Commission with \$2 million dollars for the acquisition of critical, natural and cultural areas and other additional lands necessary for the optimum management of existing public facilities. Under the program, the Commission was granted authority to initiate land acquisition proceedings on a prompt, *willing seller basis* as critical tracts became available. This approach provided the flexibility necessary for acquiring critical areas on a statewide basis, encompassing a large number of landowners and made it possible to respond to urgent acquisition conditions.

Program results were not long in coming. Within six months of the first appropriation, over 7,328 acres of land in 17 counties were either purchased or under option by the Commission. The eventual total of land acquired with the first open space appropriation was 7,328 acres in 20 counties. However, a large backlog of open space projects still remained. Accordingly, the Iowa Conservation Commission asked for an additional \$1 million appropriation for open space acquisition the following year. \$500,000 was provided,

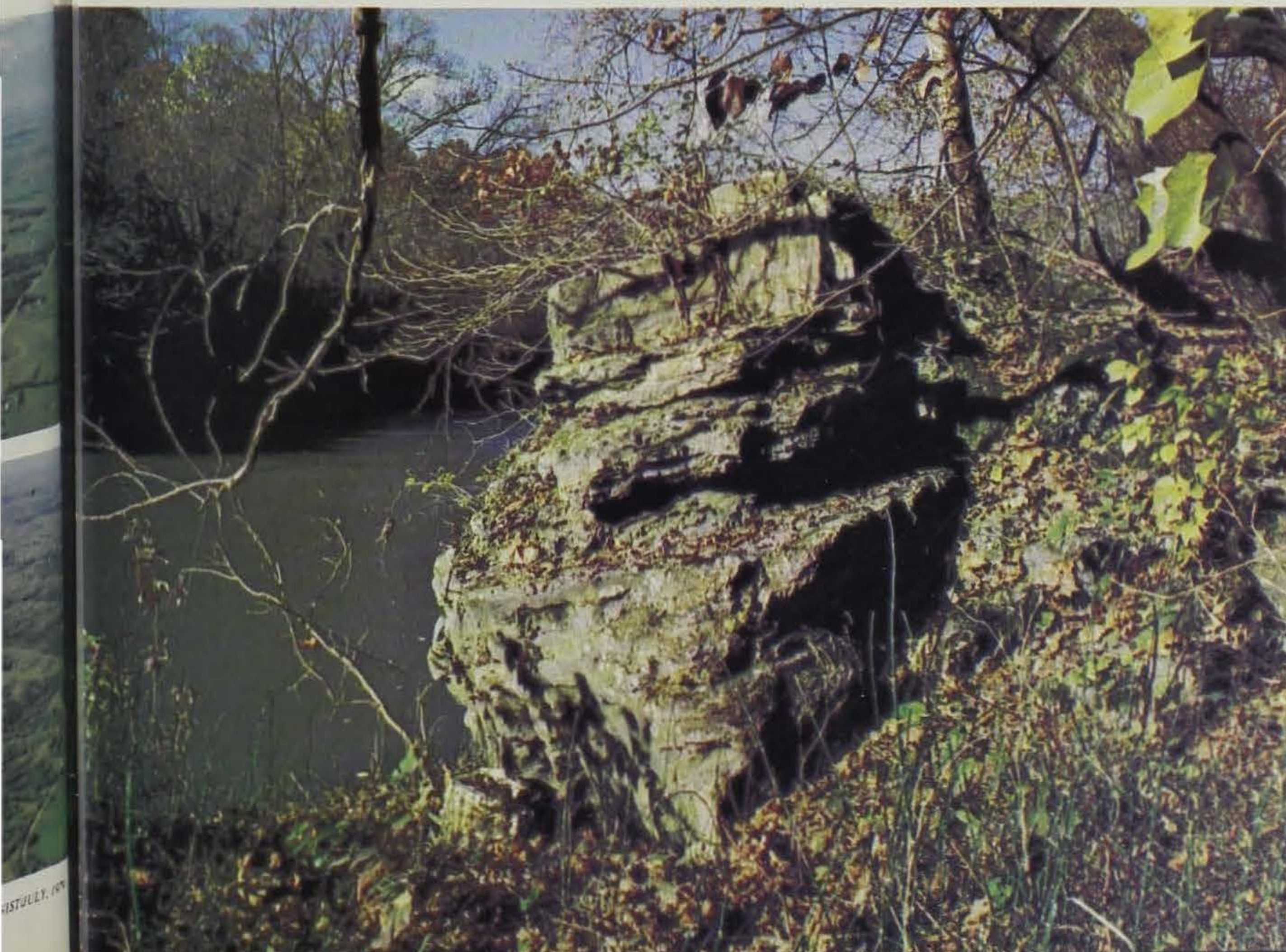
allowing the Conservation Commission to proceed further with acquisition and an on-going acquisition program was begun.

Since passage of the original bill the Conservation Commission has received Open Space appropriations annually, which to date total \$5,400,000. Over 15,000 acres have now been purchased with these funds. These purchases bring into public ownership a wide variety of critical resource areas throughout the state.

With regular appropriations and federal cost sharing (Land and Water Conservation Fund) open space acquisitions have virtually been uninterrupted since 1973. In order to be properly prepared to respond to critical resource needs, the Conservation Commission maintains a priority list of available lands, which meet the open space acquisition criteria. This list is updated quarterly by intensive field efforts, and represents the top priority areas available for purchase in the state. Currently this list contains properties valued at over \$7 million dollars. With constantly changing conditions, the list of potential open space acquisitions must vary accordingly. Even though high priority acquisitions are identified, limited appropriations make it impossible to purchase all of these areas. Many are destroyed or sold to other buyers before the state can act upon them.

Funds made available through previous appropriations and federal cost sharing are now nearly depleted, thus allowing for very few of the current top priority acquisitions to be funded. The Conservation Commission has requested \$2 million in state funds each year for the next two years. This amount may seem great, but if provided, could bring only 6,000-8,000 acres of critical resource area under public protection during the next two years. The Conservation Commission must receive significant appropriations in future years in order to successfully protect our critical natural heritage areas through the open spaces acquisition program.

Steamboat Rock.



## Open Space Acquisitions to Date

Date Acquired	Area	County	Acres	Types	Cost						
2/74 & 8/74	Loess Hills	Monona	2,438.3	Natural-Wildlife	\$527,700	9/75	Matsell Bridge	Linn	237	County Conservation	48,600
12/73	Indian Bluffs	Jones	410	Natural-Wildlife	82,000	2/77	North Raccoon River	Carroll	45.3	River Access	14,602.50
1/75 & 3/77	Upper Iowa River	Winneshiek	210.2	Natural-Scenic River	86,300	1/77	Lennon Mills	Guthrie	285	Natural-Wildlife	97,900
10/74	Fish Farm Mounds	Allamakee	304	Cultural-Wildlife	50,000	11/76	Cold Water Creek	Winneshiek	60	Trout Stream	27,500
8/74	Starr Cave	Des Moines	140	Natural-Preserve	100,000	9/76	Rosenow Timber	Shelby	120	County Conservation	51,000
6/75	Malchow Mounds	Des Moines	8.9	Cultural-Preserve	1					River Access/County Conservation	
12/73, 1/74, 2/76, 4/77 & 8/77	Stephens State Forest	Clarke & Lucas	1,508	Forest	284,200	1/77	Hitchcock Rec. Area	Cass	72	County Conservation	41,000
5/74	Shimek State Forest	Lee	165	Forest	24,750	11/76	Maquoketa Caves State Park	Jackson	116	State Park	97,050
2/74, 10/74, 11/74 & 2/75	Pine Lake State Park	Hardin	21 lots	State Park	129,000	4/77	Cameron Timber	Scott	33	County Conservation	44,600
12/75	Walnut Woods State Park	Polk	2	State Park	3,500	3/78 & 1/79	Yellow River Forest	Allamakee	304.7	Forest	37,500
2/74 & 3/74	Springbrook State Park	Guthrie	72	State Park	18,550	5/77	Sand Creek Area	Ringgold & Decatur	1,839	Natural-Wildlife	643,657
11/73, 4/74 & 12/78	Stone State Park	Plymouth & Woodbury	183.4	State Park	162,704	8/77, 1/78 & 11/78	Deer Island	Harrison	183.7	Natural-Wildlife	84,600
10/73	Clear Lake State Park	Cerro Gordo	6.5	State Park	13,000	9/77	Iowa River Greenbelt	Hardin	131.1	County Conservation	88,822.93
1/76 & 2/76	Lacey-Keosauqua State Park	Van Buren	132	State Park	45,000	10/77	Elkader Trail Area	Clayton	20	Trail	6,500
9/74	Pioneer State Park	Mitchell	4.3	State Park	250	2/78	Tyrone Wildlife Area	Monroe	900	Natural-Wildlife	244,400
1/74	Miami Lake	Monroe	160	Natural-Wildlife	44,000	12/77, 7/78 & 11/78	Tunnel Mill	Hamilton	119.2	County Conservation	100,519
1/74	Elk Grove	Guthrie	680	Natural-Wildlife	112,000	11/77	DOT Property	Wright & Franklin	231.2	Natural-Wildlife	52,500
1/74, 3/74 & 8/75	Green Island	Jackson	572	Natural-Wildlife	167,150	6/78	Smith Slough	Clay	52	Natural-Wildlife	18,620
3/74, 5/77 & 9/77	Elk Creek	Worth	124	Natural-Wildlife	64,524	12/77	Bloody Run	Clayton	308	Trout Stream	125,000
3/74 & 8/76	North Cedar/Sny-McGill Creek	Clayton	1,509	Trout Stream	454,450	10/78	Palisades-Kepler	Linn	43	State Park	130,000
8/74 & 2/75	Big Mill Creek	Jackson	743.5	Trout Stream	227,135	11/78	Bixby Park	Clayton	115	State Park	32,890
12/73	South Bear Creek	Winneshiek	80	Trout Stream	20,920						
11/74	Little Turkey River-Ram Hollow Creek	Delaware	100	Trout Stream	34,000						
8/74	Steamboat Rock Area	Hardin	122	County Conservation	28,700						
3/74	Hickory Hills Park	Tama	175	County Conservation	98,000						

### Properties Under Option

Brown's Lake	Woodbury	6 lots	Wildlife Area	51,000
Brown's Lake	Woodbury	1	Wildlife Area	4,000
Indian Bluffs	Jones	40	Natural-Wildlife	15,000
Brights Lake	Worth	57	Natural-Wildlife	80,000
Upper Iowa Mounds area	Allamakee	31	Natural Wildlife Preserve	13,950

Loess Hills.





# Pine Lake

by Dennis Van Patter  
Eldora Herald-Index  
with Darrell Arntzen  
Pine Lake State Park Ranger

Upper Pine Lake.

MORE THAN ONE-HALF CENTURY of use by millions of people has not dimmed the popularity or usefulness of one of Iowa's oldest and most beautiful parks — Pine Lake State Park.

Now in its 57th year of service, the lake and woodland area continues to provide nearly one half million people every year with a variety of recreational opportunities. The widely-known slogans "where the north begins" and "central Iowa's vacationland" apply just as firmly today as they did more than 50 years ago.

Earliest visions of a park along the valley of Pine Creek near its confluence with the Iowa River began midway through the decade of 1910-1920. Actual groundwork for the plan was laid in 1919 when a group of Eldora citizens with a big idea met Dr. L. H. Pammel, then the head of the Iowa Board of Conservation.

The way was not easy. Never before had the state tried a project as ambitious as this artificial lake; many doubts plagued state officials. Only after eager Eldorans convinced the Board that they were willing to support the project financially did they win approval.

The vision was of a lake and woodland park along Pine Creek just northeast of Eldora. Examination of the area revealed a layer of bedrock, perfect for holding water in a future lake. Acquisition of land went along slowly with a few stormy moments.

Beginning in 1922, a dam was constructed across Pine Creek between two bluffs barely one-quarter mile above the Iowa River. Water first flowed over it in early winter of 1923. The Eldora Community Club, which backed the program financially many times, financed the clearing of the lake bed. Finally, the gates were closed and the lake, complete with the famous island, was born.

The 200-acre park slowly began to take the shape we know today. A sand beach was graded at the present spot near the northwest corner of the lake. A county access road was run across the dam and up the bluffs on the west shore. With ever-increasing use came the need for more facilities. Construction at the time included a new bath house at the beach, a picnic area on the scenic bluffs above the west shore and a large parking lot. Additions to the bath house at the beach were finished in 1926.

The heavily-wooded hills and bluffs of the park provide many opportunities for recreation and enjoyment. Picnicers may choose from seven different areas with over 250 tables available. Cookstoves are located for convenience.

Larger groups enjoy the old sandstone Lodge with its pretty

view over the Lower Lake. Until this summer, the sandstone cabins were rented during the warm season. Recently, they were closed until repairs on the park's dams could be made.

Lake enthusiasts enjoy the concessions on both lakes, boat rentals, and the fine swimming facilities. Fishing is popular throughout the year, with lunker catches not uncommon.

Nearby, the Iowa River Greenbelt affords canoeing, fishing and woodland scenic enjoyment at its finest. A close-at-hand golf course, now over 50 years old, offers a challenge over the rolling bluffs above both Upper and Lower Lakes. The Pine Lake golf links are regarded by many as "Iowa's most beautiful nine hole golf course."

Miles of trails provide hours of hiking and walking pleasure. There is never a lack of activity around the park.

The dream of area residents did not cease with the completion of the existing Lower Lake. Pressure for an addition to the park and another lake was a result of increased usage, and a siltation problem at the upper end of the existing lake.

Because of the success of the earlier project, the Board of Conservation backed the proposals fully. A civilian conservation corps was located in Eldora, and work began to prepare a tract of 332 acres of land which had been added to the park. Dam construction began roughly one-quarter mile above the Lower Lake in 1934, and was finished in 1935.

Much more work had to be done. Access roads were necessary for the new lake, and so was expansion of picnic areas. A new upper lake boat house was built of native Iowa sandstone, as were four visitor cabins below the Lower Lake and a huge new lodge overlooking the panorama of the lower Pine Creek valley.

Rock trails, sanitary facilities, bridges, and reforestation were just a few of the projects completed by the CCC group working in the park area. Although times were hard in the depression, work at Pine Lake State Park went forward constantly.

As time went on, many changes were made. In 1959, the dam on the Upper Lake was raised, expanding the water acreage from 76 to 101, allowing the use of small outboard motors. Campgrounds were first located below the Lower Lake, then moved to a much better position near the Upper Lake in 1968. The facilities were updated to include modern latrines and hot showers. Electricity was updated in the area, also.

New concessions were added on both lakes, and a new boat ramp was put in on the Upper Lake. Constant expansion of the picnic facilities and additions to the park area have resulted in the multi-use, 800 acre park we know today.

Anglers flock to the park by the thousands in summer, although the sport is popular the year around. The lakes yield northern, crappie, bluegill, catfish, and largemouth bass. The nearby river is known as a top smallmouth bass, walleye, and northern fishery in addition to the ever-present catfish crop.

Fishermen use their own boats, or the handy rentals. Electric trolling motors are allowed on the Lower Lake, and motors up to six-horsepower are used on the Upper Lake.

Area visitors are often impressed by the heavy vegetation and timber; sometimes they do not realize that this woodland environment is unique because of the 200-year-old white pines, growing here at the most southern tip of their range. White-bark birch stand out. The quiet and attentive observer is likely to see deer, beaver, ducks, raccoon, and other wildlife around the water environment.

The usual activities such as swimming, boating, canoeing, hiking, picnicking, and camping are ever-popular. But so are the more unusual hobbies such as birdwatching, mushroom hunting, and searching for the many unusual plants in the area. On the banks of the Iowa River near the park is an area of rare ferns growing nowhere else in Iowa.

Early spring brings a panorama of wildflowers. Summer is a favorite time for hunting Indian artifacts in the tradition-rich grounds of the old Hogsback picnic area, or along the river. Fall brings a brilliant panorama of color along the timbered



Lower Pine Lake.

bluffs. Patient camera buffs can catch classic views of fall colors reflected in the mirror-life surface of the Lower Lake.

Winter brings ice fishing, snowmobiling, and cross country skiing. Occasionally, a winter camper or picnicker braves Iowa's cold to enjoy the out-of-doors.

With so much to offer and so much to do, it is really no surprise that Pine Lake State Park continues in its role as one of Iowa's most popular state parks. □

## Warden's Diary

By Rex Emerson

A HOT DAY in July seemed like a good time to stop in to see an old friend who lives down by the river. His wife is sure to have some iced tea ready. When I asked about fishing the old man said, "There are two kinds of fisherman. Those who fish for the sport of it — and those who catch something! This month I have been a sportsman."

I told him about a sign that I saw in someone's front yard in Lee County. It said, "BEWARE! MEAN WIFE!" The old man's eyes lit up with mischief and he said, "I wonder if my wife has relatives in Lee County!" Needless to say after that remark we didn't get seconds of the iced tea.

I should never have told the old man about seeing a wild turkey down the road from his place. He was immediately angry. Although we have been having a turkey season since 1974, he has never been successful in getting a license. It didn't do much good to explain that we just don't have enough wild turkeys yet to let everyone hunt them. The biologists are doing a fine job in managing the turkeys, and they are increasing. As the

population increases, we can let more people hunt them. It is one of the best examples of proper game management. Once almost extinct in Iowa the wild turkey has now been restored in sufficient numbers to permit hunting in much of its old range. Only suitable habitat, proper management, and law enforcement will maintain a sizable turkey population in our state.

I had read some interesting bits of information one time about turkeys in the DeWitt Izaak Walton League Bulletin. I thought I would kind of relate some of them to the old man just to show him how smart I was about turkeys. I said, "Did you know that the wild turkey was Benjamin Franklin's choice for our national bird?" or "Did you know that a wild turkey can see everything within a 270 degree radius, and can assimilate what he sees ten times faster than man? The wild turkey is not color blind, and its flight speed has been estimated at close to fifty miles per hour. The main enemy of the wild turkeys are free-running dogs."

The old man said, "Get off your soapbox! It's a

conspiracy in Des Moines, and that's the reason I don't get a turkey license. It's a conspiracy. No one has as much trouble getting a license as I do!" This prompted me to go to my car to get a letter which I had received from another unsuccessful turkey license applicant for the old man to read. It was from Jim Weggen of near Muscatine, Iowa. Just in case there are other people who think they have had a problem getting a turkey license I obtained permission from Mr. Weggen to print his letter.

4/11/79

To: Rex Emerson

Always enjoy your column in the Conservationist and thought you might be interested in my first attempt to get a turkey hunting license. All this took place this year, by the way. On my first try my name apparently didn't get drawn. In the "tough luck" letter, however, it was pointed out that several other areas in the state still had licenses available. It said first come, first served so I sent it back in the next day. Of course, they couldn't accept this second application until March 26, so they sent it back. On March 23 (a Friday) I sent the third application. Here's how I addressed it:

Iowa Conservation Commission  
Wallace State Office Building  
Des Moines, Iowa 50319  
FOR TURKEY LICENSE

I put the last line on it so it would get to the right department as soon as possible. Between us we had already spent 75 cents on postage and I wanted to do this thing right. Well, by now you may have guessed what happened. Yep — the post office sent it to Istanbul — it finally got to Des Moines on April 5 — too late!

I'll try again next year, though. Even if I didn't get a license, I've had a heck of a lot of fun telling people how my turkey license application actually wound up in Turkey.

You know, the word turkey has come to have three meanings (at least) these days — the feathered kind, the country, and the guy who falls on his back and hurts his nose. All three have had a part in this story and I've probably got a state record for the most widely traveled turkey license application in history!

All the best,  
(signed)  
Jim Weggen  
Rt. 3

Muscatine, Iowa

And you think you have had problems!

## LOOKIN' BACK

### Ten Years Ago

the *Iowa Conservationist* ran an article on the Iowa Teacher's Conservation Camp at Springbrook State Park. The three week course provided teachers with three college credits and was in its twentieth year.

The Conservation Commission approved the purchase of 221 acres on the Walters Creek Watershed and 240 acres on the Brushy Creek area.



### Twenty Years Ago

the magazine featured a story on the animal exhibit at the Iowa State Fair. New that year were three otters which would be shown for the first time.

There was an Indian village excavation underway near Toolesboro in Louisa County. The project involved State University of Iowa students.



The previous deer season had been a good one even though temperatures ranged right around the -20° mark.

### Thirty Years Ago

the *Conservationist* announced that five new lakes were to be built, one each at Cold Springs, Rock Creek, Honey Creek (Washington County), Geode State Park and Nine Eagles State Park.

Strange experiences in game management were also discussed. Examples of species where odd things happen included the heath hen, white-tail deer, passenger pigeon and bob-white quail.



# Classroom Corner

by Robert Rye

ADMINISTRATOR,  
CONSERVATION EDUCATION CENTER

MOST OF US have trouble seeing with two eyes. Can you imagine what you could see with six or eight eyes? Spiders have this many eyes; however, the sight of spiders is distinct for only short distances. Spiders can see each other and the insects they capture and eat at a distance of only four or five inches.

With spiders feeding on insects rather than on man, most of us don't study the eight-legged creatures to any great extent. There are only two spiders which are poisonous in Iowa — the brown recluse and the black widow — and the biggest problem they present is the presence of their cobwebs.

Have you ever daydreamed about cobwebs? Your house provides a place of protection and some of us have gardens which provide food — a spider's web provides both.

Many types of houses are built in a style which indicates the origin of the people within. Many spiders can be identified by the webs they build.

Webs are of four principal kinds: 1) The flat webs — these are closely woven of long threads crossed by finer ones in all directions and connected with a tubular nest where the spider hides and from which it runs on the upper side of the web after insects that may fall upon it. The grass spider will make one of these webs. 2) The net-like webs — these are made of smooth threads in large meshes, sometimes in a flat or curved sheet held out by threads in all directions. The spider lives on the underside, back downward. The house spider is represented here. 3) The round webs — these are made of threads radiating from a common center and crossed by circular loops and spirals (see photo of garden spider).



Above: Wolf spider.  
Garden spider is shown below.



4) Unorganized webs — these are composed in part of loose bands of silk.

Spiders are divided into two groups. The hunting spiders and the cobweb spiders. The cobweb spiders make webs as previously described to catch insects. They live all the time in the web or in a nest near it. The hunting spiders run on the ground or on plants — catching insects wherever they find them — or they wait among leaves and flowers until insects come within their reach.

The colors of spiders are partly in the skin itself and partly in the hair and scales that cover the body. Almost all

spiders are covered with hair of some kind, but in some species it is so fine and short that it has little effect on the color. The colors of spiders are quite varied and many species, especially the jumping spiders, are as brilliant as butterflies. The common colors are grays and browns, resembling the ground or plants and stones among which the spiders live.

Spiders live in all kinds of places. Certain species are attracted to houses and are seldom far from them. Others are found in grass, trees, dead leaves, rocks, marshes, streams, and ditches.

The eggs of spiders are covered with silk and form a cocoon which varies much in shape and color in different species. Some spiders hang their cocoons in the web, others attach them to plants or stones, and still others carry them about either in the mandibles (mouth parts) or attached to the spinnerets (tube shaped parts which spin the webs). The accompanying photo shows the young of a wolf spider being carried on the back of the female. She had previously carried the eggs in a round cocoon with her spinnerets.

These eight-legged critters and their life cycles are studied at the Center, but the main study involves their habitat and its carrying capacity. Groups are divided, armed with baby food jars, and sent to various habitats — woods, prairie, parking lot — to capture spiders and their food. While on this expedition they record the numbers of both spiders and insects. Usually in grassy and woody areas there are two spiders per square foot. This is the carrying capacity. This carrying capacity is dependent on available shelter and resident insects (food).

Go out on your own expedition — determine the area's carrying capacity and observe the different webs that you can find.

# The Big Marsh

by Carl Priebe

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BIOLOGIST

LOCALLY KNOWN AS "THE BIG MARSH", THE BIG Marsh Wildlife Management Area has one of Iowa's first man-made marshes. Despite the name, however, the area is much more than a marsh. Big Marsh has 898 acres of brush and timber and 865 acres of grassland and small crop fields in addition to the 1050 acre marsh for which it was named.

Located five miles north of Parkersburg in Butler County, Big Marsh was acquired with Pittman-Robertson funds in 1952-1954. Prior to acquisition it was a wet area with many small potholes. Lying on the flood plain of the West Fork of the Cedar River, the area had many small, shallow wetland areas filled by annual rains and periodic flooding of the river.

PHOTO BY RICHARD NOMSEN



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IOWA CONSERVATION

Following acquisition, the Conservation Commission built levees on the area to help create more wetland areas. Each September an earthen dam was constructed across the West Fork, diverting water into the low river bottom areas. Care was taken to maintain adequate flow in the river below the dam to support fish and other aquatic life. Unpredictable heavy rains and high water during the fall made construction of the dam very difficult and expensive. Some years the earthen dam washed out (once the same week it was constructed), preventing the marsh from reaching optimum water levels.

These occasional fall floods led to the design of a new dam structure in 1969. The new dam is put in the river early each fall and removed immediately after the waterfowl season in compliance with our permit from the Iowa Natural Resources Council. The Conservation Commission is not allowed to store water in the marsh area during the spring and summer seasons.

Following construction of the new dam, another levee was built to better control the water levels in the marsh. The addition of a third segment allowed Commission personnel to regulate water levels much more efficiently and maintain more of the marsh at optimum water levels.

Once the marsh fills in the autumn, it provides an excellent area for migrating waterfowl. The refuge segment allows the ducks and geese to rest without being molested. Buckwheat and corn are planted in the refuge to attract and hold these birds. Peak concentrations in the fall are usually in the neighborhood of 20,000 to 25,000 ducks. Geese also use Big Marsh as a resting area but do not concentrate in high numbers.

The refuge is located adjacent to Highway 14 and is an excellent place for waterfowl enthusiasts to view the birds. Trespass into the refuge is prohibited during the fall, but the birds can be seen from along the highway.

The other two segments of the marsh are open to public hunting. During the dry summer months wet soil plants are allowed to grow in the marsh, and in the fall they provide a wide variety of seeds when flooded. The vegetation attracts the ducks to the public hunting segments and at the same time offers concealment to the hunters.

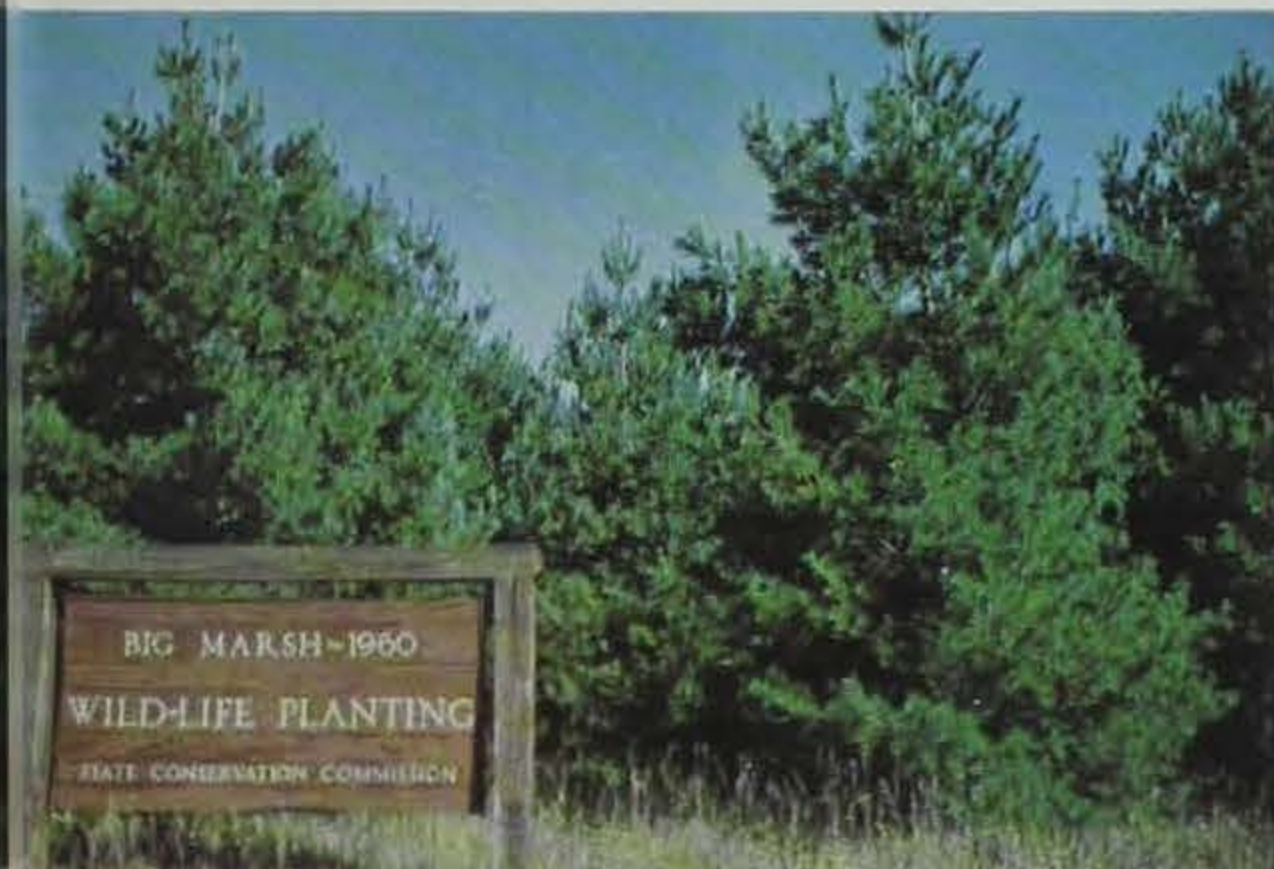
Big Marsh is known as a good late season mallard area due primarily to the build up of mallards in the refuge. Early hunting is usually slow, as it takes considerable time to fill the three marsh segments with water. Hunting usually improves as the water levels increase. As the hunting improves, the number of hunters also increases. When the big greenheads are flying the word travels quickly.

Waterfowl hunting is not the only activity available at Big Marsh. The area also supports excellent populations of pheasants and deer.

Many non-consumptive activities are also available. Bird watching, especially waterfowl, attracts many people to the area. Many school and scout groups use the area for field trips. Outdoor photographers can find a vast array of "subjects to photograph, enjoying the thrill and challenge of the hunt all 12 months of the year."

The "Big Marsh" is much more than its name implies. It is an area with excellent wildlife populations and very diverse habitat types. Best of all, it is there for your enjoyment, regardless of your background or wildlife interests. □

PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR



New dam at Big Marsh.



