

Iowa CONSERVATIONIST

MARCH 1985

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Iowa CONSERVATIONIST

Volume 44 No. 3 • March 1985

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FRONT COVER: Ring-necked duck.
Photo by Ty Smedes.

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Springtime on the Marsh

Photos and text by Ty Smedes

An early spring visit to a nearby Iowa marsh will reaffirm, more than ever, that your five senses are still very much alive and well. A myriad of stimuli await those winter-dulled senses, and that case of anxiety will undergo a metamorphosis into full-blown spring fever.

Although it is a chilly day in late March, you are startled to find the metal buttons on your waders surprisingly warm to your touch, for the rays of the sun are now becoming stronger with each passing day. In contrast, there is a subtle feeling of coolness as you step into the boat canal and begin your trek into the marsh.

You marvel at the golden reflections of last year's cattail stalks where they stand watch around the perimeter of the first small opening. In just a few short weeks, the protrusion of new growth will mark the changing of the guard. Now the reflections are beginning to fade and are replaced by the deep blue of the water which mirrors the sunny sky above.

Finally you are there, in the heart of the marsh, peering through the cattails, basking in the sights and sounds in front of you. The sound of splashing water and whistling wings is everywhere, as birds come and go in great numbers. And the contrasts! The variety of colors, shapes, and voices is amazing. What a giant melting pot of nature, the marsh.

During another season you might be carrying a shotgun rather than a camera. But this day is simply for watching and listening. It is the season for peaceful appreciation.

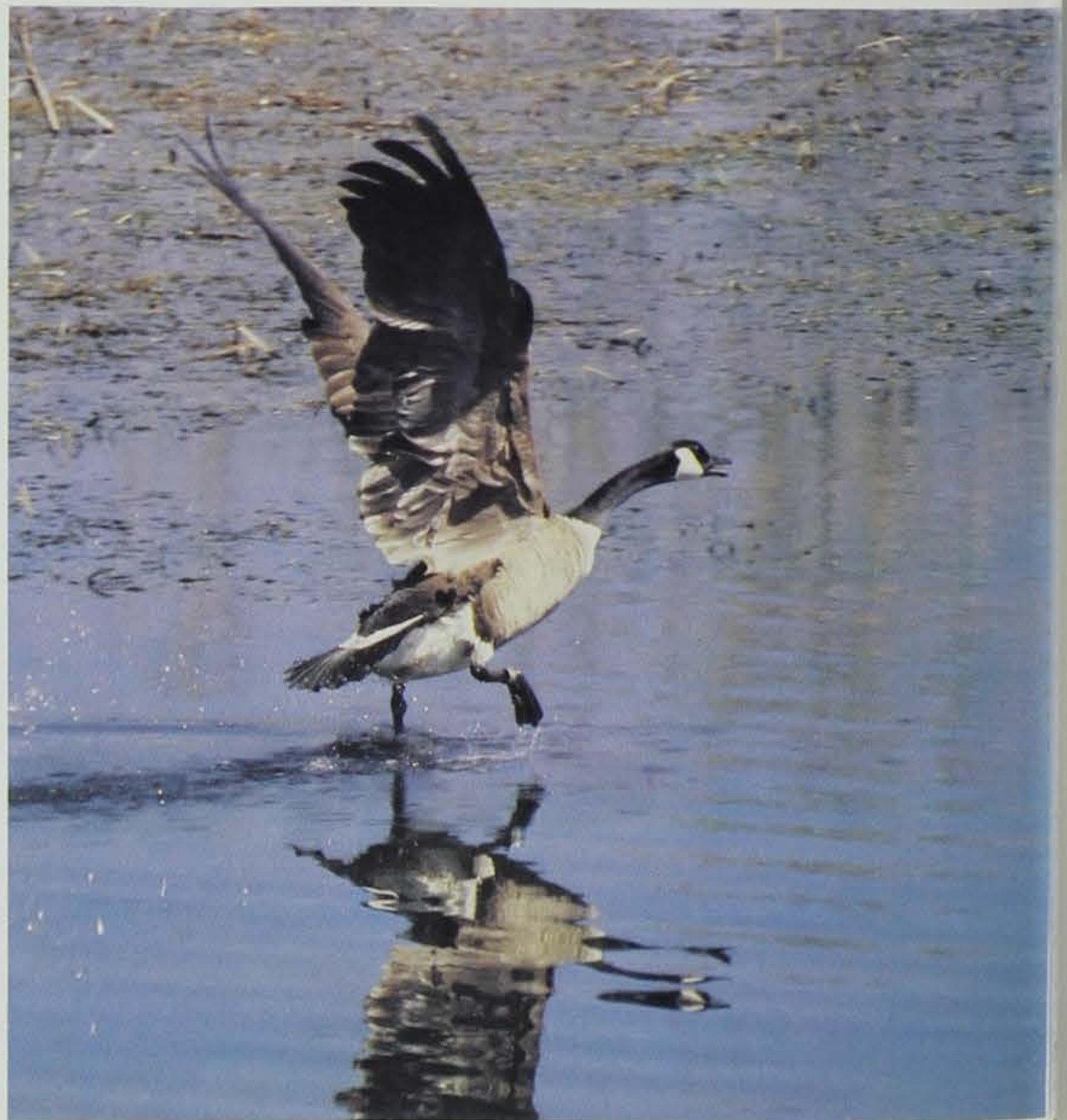






Flocks of snow geese (above) use Iowa wetlands for resting places on their spring journey to arctic nesting grounds. Some Canada geese, like the one at right, nest in Iowa. Giant Canadas may exceed 15 pounds in weight, providing a real thrill to marsh visitors.

Blanding's turtle and blue-winged teal share Lakin Slough (previous page).





Mallards often appear in large numbers during the spring migration period. Some will stay to nest here.

The muskrat (left) uses cattails for food and houses, creating channels and thousands of small, open-water pools within the marsh. When rat numbers are right, the balanced marsh is most productive for hundreds of wildlife species.

Ty Smedes is an avid waterfowl hunter and wildlife photographer from Des Moines.



Ty Smedes

Using Wood Duck Nesting Boxes

By Lowell Washburn

One of the most spectacular events to occur each year is the annual spring migration of waterfowl through Iowa. It is a fast-paced and exciting time when places which only yesterday were nothing more than barren expanses of snow, ice, and withered cattails have suddenly come alive with the hiss and roar of wild wings.

During the next several weeks, over two dozen webfoot types will visit our state. From the tundra swans on down to the shy little green-wings, the individual species are as diverse as they are beautiful. But in my opinion, at least, the

magnificent wood duck is the most strikingly beautiful of them all.

The bird's plumage consists largely of bold patterns of metallic greens, purples, and burgundy. These iridescent hues continually change in response to varying light conditions, and once the bird has been observed at close hand there can be no doubt that the title Beau Brummell is justly deserved.

However, the wood duck is not one to willingly flaunt its color. Among the most secretive of waterfowl, the bird is most prone to frequent wooded swamplands, timbered river bottoms, or willow-lined creeks. These wooded covers also supply the duck much of its forage, with acorns ranking especially high on the bird's list of preferred foods.

Perhaps the wood duck's most unusual association with trees is its woodpecker-like habit of nesting in them. Shortly after their arrival each spring, pairs begin searching for suitable cavities among the trees of their home range. Most nest searching takes place during the early morning hours. Invariably, the female will lead the excursion with the drake following close behind. During these forays, mated pairs may often be observed perched atop snags or among the spreading branches of a dead tree as the hen cranes her neck first this way and then that as she sizes up potential nest sites.

Once a location has been chosen, the female will return to the site each morning to deposit a single egg. Most clutches

will contain 10 to 12 eggs, and incubation requires 30 days. When hatching is complete, the hen flies to the ground and calls her offspring from the nest. The hen's soft clucking creates quite a stir among the members of the brood which soon begin leaping in the general direction of the entrance. Suddenly, the first baby appears in the doorway, and without hesitation leaps into space. From there the tempo quickens until the ducklings bail out of the nest two or three at a time. As soon as the group is reassembled on the ground, the female cautiously leads the family to water.

Unfortunately, many of the wood duck pairs returning to Iowa each spring find that natural cavities become harder and harder to find. Stream channelizations, agricultural pressures, and even an increased demand for firewood all serve as important factors in the wood duck's ever shrinking world.

Those cavities which do remain are at a premium as female woodies are forced to compete for nesting space with squirrels, owls, starlings, and even other wood ducks. During the spring of 1983, I observed five wood duck pairs simultaneously exploring a single dead basswood along the Winnebago River in Worth county. Those birds which do successfully initiate a nest are still susceptible to predators, with the raccoon being public enemy number one throughout the wood duck's range.

But in spite of all the pressures placed upon them, Iowa wood duck populations remain at surprisingly high levels. Currently, the species fluctuates between second and third in the hunter's bag, with only the mallard and blue-winged teal being taken in greater numbers. But, as the duck's woodland haunts continue to disappear, biologists are less than certain as to what the future may hold for these regal birds.

Fortunately, however, man can lend the wood duck a helping hand through the installation of nest boxes. Nesting woodies eagerly accept these artificial cavities, and for the person who enjoys helping wildlife, building and maintaining these structures can become a most worthwhile and rewarding hobby.

Wood duck boxes may be constructed into a variety of shapes and sizes, and all styles have both advantages and drawbacks. Personally, I prefer two types. The first is the traditional wooden bird house which may be built from any type of 1"x12" lumber. During the past two sessions I have also been using, and had excellent success with, what is commonly referred to as the bucket nest. This

inexpensive structure can be assembled in minutes by simply putting together two discarded five-gallon pails.

No matter which type of nest used, there are a number of guidelines to follow. First, a strip of 1/4-inch hardware mesh should be attached to the inside of the box, running from the bottom of the entrance hole to at least half way to the floor. The ducklings will use this mesh as an escape ladder and without this feature a nest could inadvertently become a death trap.

Since wood ducks add no nesting material of their own, three to five inches of coarse wood shavings should be added to the nest. Sawdust should be avoided since this material tends to become hard packed. Suitable shavings can usually be found at retail outlets which specialize in farm or kennel supplies.

Also, a number of 1/4-inch drainholes should be drilled into the floor of all nests.

For wooden boxes, I prefer a 3-inch by 4-inch horizontal entrance hole, which is the smallest a hen can fit through. This entrance eliminates most raccoon problems. Since bucket nests have no lid, a slightly larger entrance will make periodic nest maintenance a much easier task. Boxes should be inspected and given a general house cleaning at least once each year.

In Iowa, wood duck boxes should be in place by mid to late March, and selecting the best location for a nest is perhaps the most critical step to success. I begin by choosing an area that I know is frequented by woodies and then try to place the nest where it offers the greatest visibility to passing birds. Nests placed



Lowell Washburn



Lowell Washburn

The beautiful wood duck has also proven to be adaptable. At home in secretive, wooded streams, the species readily accepts man's help in providing artificial nesting boxes.

over the water may hold a greater attraction than those placed over land. Whenever a nest is installed, precautions should be taken to protect the hen and eggs from roving predators. Routine maintenance is important. Unless nests are kept in shape, they will contribute little to the success of nesting wood ducks.

When beginning a nest box project, there is no reason to become overly concerned if the venture does not meet with immediate success. Sometimes, the nests will just need time to be discovered.

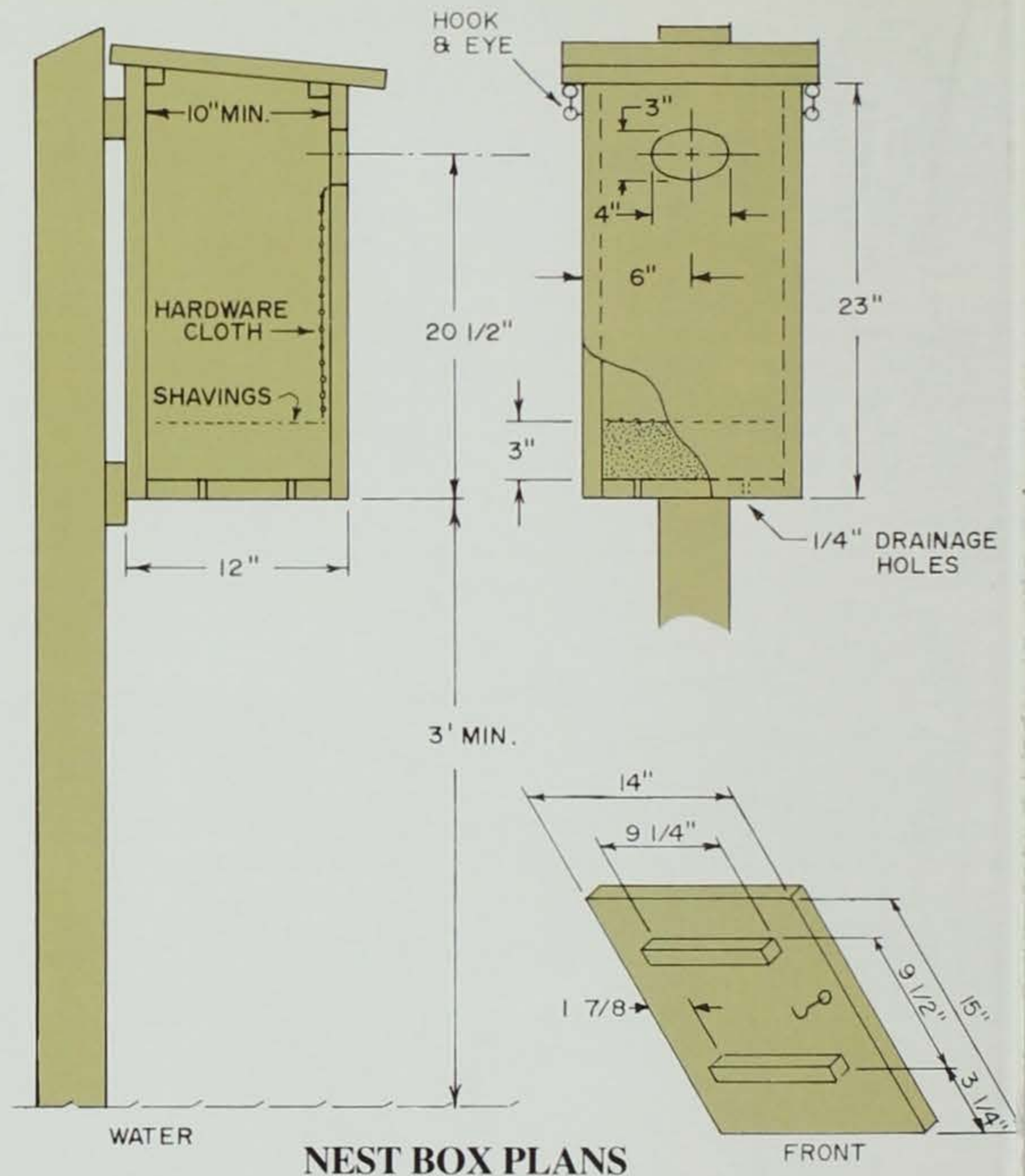
During the cold weather months, nest boxes continue to serve wildlife as they become winter headquarters for a variety of creatures ranging from white-footed mice to screech owls.

Female wood ducks have been found to possess a rather phenomenal homing instinct. Once a nest produces its first successful brood, additional boxes may be added to the project with a fair degree of certainty the boxes will be used.

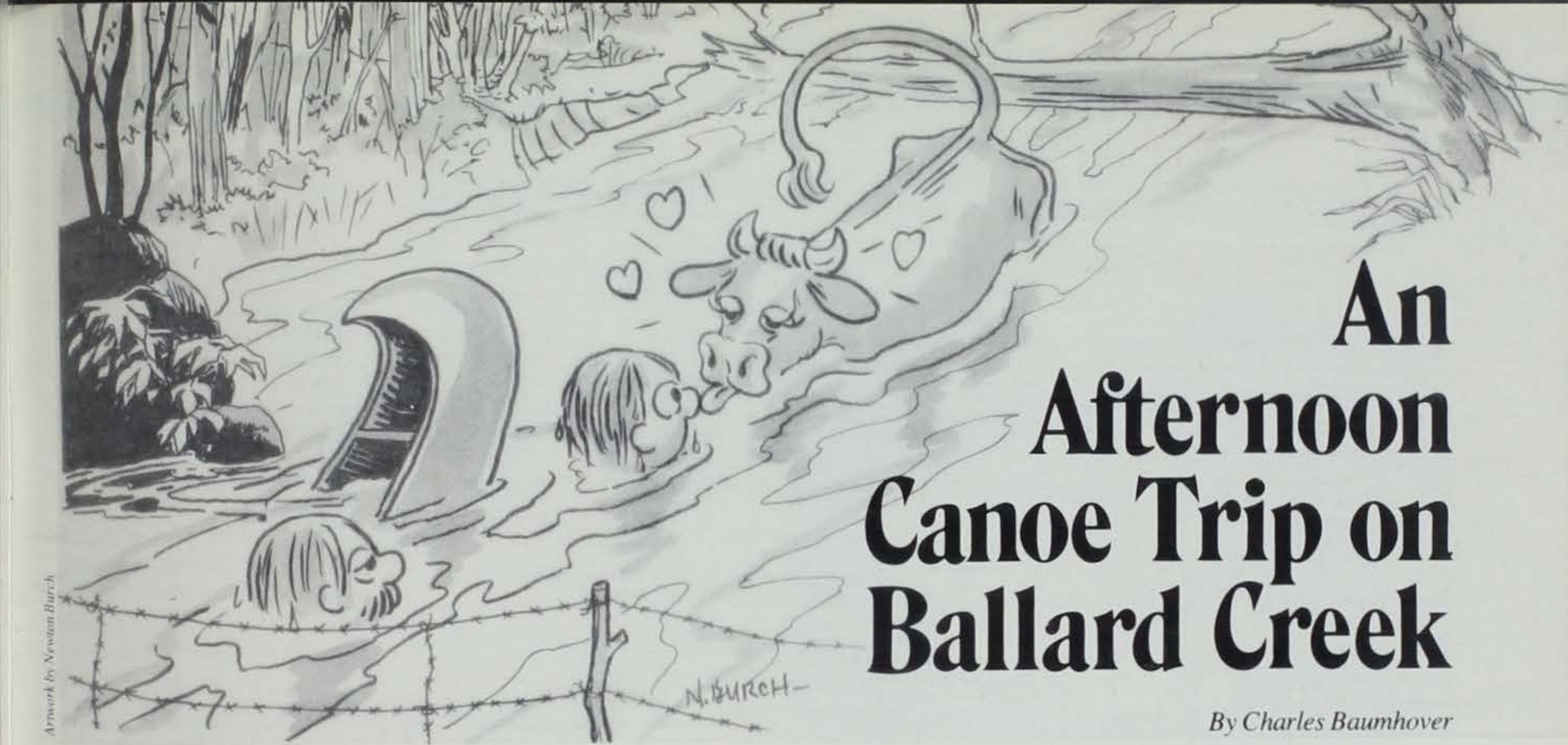
Some interesting examples of the wood duck's uncanny homing instinct have occurred at Cerro Gordo County's Mallard Marsh where I have captured and marked a number of hens and broods before they left the nest. Adult hens which survive until the next nesting season will return to use boxes in the immediate vicinity or may show up in the exact same nest used the previous season. Web-tagged ducklings from the previous spring will often move into the boxes within a few yards of where they were marked. Sometimes an incubating hen will even be recaptured in the very same box where she hatched the year before.

Since the lack of suitable natural cavities, intense competition, and predation all play a role in limiting wood duck numbers, it becomes easy to see how a collection of well-maintained, predator-proof nest boxes can greatly enhance existing populations. In areas where the bulldozer or chain saw has been especially aggressive, they may even spell the difference between a mediocre population and a thriving one. Nest box projects provide an opportunity for everyone from professional biologists to rank amateurs to make a real and significant contribution to the perpetuation of this magnificent waterfowl species.

Lowell Washburn recently joined the commission as an information specialist located in Clear Lake. He has worked as a naturalist for two Iowa counties and as an outdoor writer.



Lowell Washburn



An Afternoon Canoe Trip on Ballard Creek

By Charles Baumhover

The streams in the Des Moines area were about as high as I could ever remember seeing them during my twenty-nine years living in Des Moines. In early July I had attempted to canoe the Raccoon and flipped in mid-channel at the start of the trip causing me to abandon the plan.

When I got home there was a phone call from my frequent canoeing companion, Steve Kruse, of Huxley, who wanted me to canoe Ballard Creek with him. Normally, in consideration of domestic heat, I restrict my trips to one a week, but turning over at the very start of a trip could hardly be counted as a trip. I risked the domestic heat and said "yes."

I met Steve the following day at about 11:00 am after he finished his morning hospital rounds in Des Moines. Ballard Creek is a small, twisting, fast-falling stream that runs within a half mile of Steve's home in Huxley. We parked my truck on the Skunk River at Cambridge about two blocks from where the creek flows in and drove Steve's car and trailer with his thirteen foot Grumman light and carried the canoe down to the edge of the stream. The water was extremely swift.

A fallen tree lay across the stream less than one hundred feet from where we put in. Steve wondered if we might be wise to carry the canoe past the tree before starting. However, neither of us being prone to carrying canoes around over dry land, we put in under the bridge and had our first upset of the day when we tried getting around the fallen tree. We picked ourselves up out of the stream, rolled the canoe against the shore and remounted from mid-stream. Travelling along at a

rapid pace we twisted down the stream about another three hundred feet when we encountered another fallen tree. We had our second upset only this time Steve went out backwards and lost his bifocals. I have special bands to hold my new \$183 sunglasses on in such emergencies but they hurt my ears so I wasn't using them. Too late to go back and get them. This time the canoe went mostly under the tree and it took quite a bit of maneuvering to pop back up and roll out the water without getting pinned by a broadsided canoe against the fallen tree. A situation you would be wise to avoid. At any rate, we finally got the canoe out and emptied and were once again on our precarious way.

The next thing we encountered was taking the stream under Interstate 35. It passes under the highway in what would resemble a cattle chute. Already fast moving water is now rushing. As we entered the chute I saw turbulence in the middle about three feet high. I would guess we were moving through at about twelve miles per hour. I was in front, got down on my knees, prepared for a crash. There was none. Whatever caused the turbulence was far enough under that we passed with only one big wet splash. Somehow getting splashed that hard seemed without consequence after two dunkings. Coming out of the chute we hit a sharp curve and a barbed wire fence. We plowed into the bank to avoid the fence, got out of the canoe into the stream, floated the canoe under the fence, then crawled under the fence ourselves and got back into the canoe continuing downstream.

Shortly we encountered two bovine beauties weighing in at about 1,300 pounds apiece and sunbathing at about shoulder depth in the middle of the stream. I told Steve that at the speed we were travelling they would not be able to take long to decide if they wanted to challenge our passage. Fortunately they stepped aside rather quickly and we passed between them without incident. A little further downstream we made another sharp turn and landed on a partially submerged piece of farm machinery for our third upset of the day. Climbing back into the canoe we continued downstream and encountered yet another fence. It looked as though we were going to be able to glide under it but there was another wire that neither of us had seen. In trying to avoid it we upset once more. This time the canoe was floating away from us. With a couple of rapid jumps I was able to grab hold and keep it in tow until Steve got there to help me. I did manage to catch my hand on one of the barbs as we passed under, but received no real injury.

Eventually the stream began to straighten out and just before we floated into the Skunk we came on four boys swimming. They cautioned us that Ballard Creek was a tough stream to canoe. "Too many fences and fallen trees," they said.

Charles Baumhover is originally from Dubuque. He currently lives in Des Moines and is an agent with Bankers Life Insurance Company.

WILDLIFE WEEK THEME IS "SOIL"



"Soil — We Can't Grow Without It" is the theme for this year's National Wildlife Week, March 17 through March 23.

The 48th annual Wildlife Week is sponsored by the National Wildlife Federation. Soil conservation was chosen as this year's message not only because soil is one of the nation's most important natural resources, but also because 1985 marks the 50th anni-

versary of the founding of the Soil Conservation Service, part of the Department of Agriculture.

To help Americans celebrate Wildlife Week, the National Wildlife Federation and its 51 affiliates will distribute more than half a million Wildlife Week education kits free of charge to educators across the country — encouraging millions to participate in 1985 Wildlife Week.

More No-Till in '84

No-till farming, the "cadillac" of conservation tillage methods for soil conservation purposes, continued rapid growth in Iowa in 1984. Estimates show more than 600,000 acres were no-tilled in 1984, compared to 400,000 in 1983.

"That's a 50 percent increase in a year, and is also 6 times as much as the acreage in 1980," says Mike Nethery, state conservationist for the USDA Soil Conservation Service (SCS). The SCS worked with other agencies in making the survey cooperatively with the National Conservation

Tillage Information Center at Ft. Wayne, Indiana.

The bulk of the acreage was corn, with 522,500 acres planted by no-till. Another 95,500 acres of soybeans were planted by no-till.

"We're pleased to see the increase in this soil-saving practice, and we're especially pleased that the increase came from all areas of the state," Nethery says. No-till planting is done without disturbing the land, thus leaving the past year's crop residues on the soil surface for soil protection.

DONATIONS

The following are contributions to

Dolliver State Park:	
Fort Dodge Betterment Association, Fort Dodge	15 loads of riprap for bank stabilization, value — \$720
Lonnie Johnson, Lehigh	Purple martin house, value — \$50
Dickey Company, Lehigh	80 tons of clay for repair of flood damage

The following are contributions to

Pine Lake State Park:	
Iowa Electric Light and Power Company, Eldora	20 utility poles valued at \$200
	34 loads of wood chips valued at \$1,000
	120 hours use of limb chipper and 3 persons labor for prairie project, value \$1,800
Anonymous	24 fruit trees valued in excess of \$50
Palo Jaycees, Palo	Playground equipment for Pleasant Creek State Recreation Area valued at \$500
Central Tire Service, Chariton	8 truck rims for fireplace construction at Red Haw State Park valued at \$80
Dumpee Hog Yards, Chariton,	7 truck rims for fireplace construction at Red Haw State Park valued at \$70
Krutsinger Truck and Auto, Chariton	6 truck rims for fireplace construction at Red Haw State Park valued at \$60

The following are contributions to

Bellevue State Park:	
United Telephone Company of Iowa	110 telephone poles valued at \$1,100
Ron's Gardens, Houston, Texas	Cycad prehistoric tree valued at \$75
Dell Pooler, Bellevue	Indian artifacts valued at \$150
Bellevue Sand and Gravel, Bellevue	5 tons pea gravel, delivered, valued at \$50
Iowa Regional Lily Society, West Des Moines	49 lily bulbs valued at \$196
Chase Concessions, Solon	Materials valued at \$500 for picnic shelter construction at George Wyth State Park
Control-O-Fax, Waterloo	Materials valued at \$200 for picnic shelter construction at George Wyth State Park
Brady and Sons Const., West Des Moines	Cement valued at \$100 for fire ring repair and replacement at Walnut Woods State Park
Franklin County Rural Electric Cooperative	10 35-foot utility poles, valued at \$100 for Beeds Lake State Park
Anonymous	Lumber valued at \$250 for playground equipment construction at Beeds Lake State Park
Boone Garden Club, Boone	Plant materials, peat, herbicide and bone meal valued at \$550 for Ledges State Park
Robert and Michele Elsbernd, Ft. Atkinson	Use of water valued at \$50 for Ft. Atkinson Rendezvous
Iowa Conservation Education Council	2 volleyballs and volleyball net valued at \$92.60 for the Conservation Education Center, Springbrook State Park

DATE SET FOR STAMP DESIGN CONTESTS

Iowa wildlife artists must submit their designs for the state's 1986 trout, habitat, and waterfowl stamps between May 20 and May 24, 1985.

Ross Harrison, superintendent of information and education for the State Conservation Commission, said any artist wanting to compete in the annual contest should request a set of rules from the commission. Rules can be obtained by writing the Iowa

Conservation Commission, Wallace State Office Building, Des Moines 50319-0034. Entries are restricted to Iowa artists only.

The designs are used for stamps which hunters and fishermen must purchase to pursue their sports. Judging will take place in the auditorium of the Wallace State Office Building, Des Moines, at 1:00 p.m. June 3, 1985.



BOAT REGISTRATIONS EXPIRE

The Iowa Conservation Commission reminds boaters that this is the year to register boats. At midnight April 30, all boat registration certificates will expire.

Vessel owners may obtain an application for registration from the county recorder in the county in which they reside. Registrations will be valid for a two-year period ending April 30, 1987. The fees for boat registrations are as follows:

IOWA BOAT REGISTRATION FEES			Odd-Numbered Year	New Registrations Only Even Numbered Year
No Motor/ No Sail	Any Length	New	\$ 5.00	\$ 2.50
		Renew	5.00	—
Motorboat OR Sailboat	Less Than 12 Ft. In Length	New	8.00	4.00
		Renew	8.00	—
	12 Ft. To Less Than 15 Ft.	New	10.00	5.00
		Renew	10.00	—
	15 Ft. To Less Than 18 Ft.	New	12.00	6.00
Renew		12.00	—	
18 Ft. To Less Than 25 Ft.	New	18.00	9.00	
	Renew	18.00	—	
25 Ft. Or More In Length	New	28.00	14.00	
	Renew	28.00	—	
Documented Vessels	Any length	New	25.00	12.50
		Renew	25.00	—

A \$1.00 writing fee is charged by the county recorder for each registration.

ORDER TREE SEEDLINGS NOW

The State Forest Nursery continues to accept orders for tree seedlings. Some varieties have already sold out and those still planning to order are encouraged to do so soon.

Species still available in good quantities include white pine, red pine, ponderosa pine, jack pine, white ash, tamarack, reforestation, or erosion control.

Plants may be ordered in units of 100, but the total order must equal or exceed 500 plants. The only exception to the minimum requirement is that an order may consist of one wildlife packet and/or one songbird packet. These special packets are pre-selected shrubs, evergreens, silver maple, burr oak, Russian olive, tatarian honey-

suckle, amur honeysuckle, ninebark, redosier dogwood, and osage orange.

The State Forest Nursery was originated not only to provide plants for state land, but also to provide low cost plant material to the public. This stock must be planted for wildlife habitat production and broadleaved trees designed to benefit wildlife and

songbirds.

For order blanks or more information contact the Iowa Conservation Commission district foresters, wildlife biologists, county extension offices or the State Forest Nursery, 2404 So. Duff, Ames, Iowa 50010, 515/294-4622.

BIRD FEEDERS ENTERTAIN ELDERLY

"Since they couldn't come to the park, we took the park to them."

So said Jim Humberg, assistant ranger at Big Creek State Park, about a project he recently initiated. Humberg constructed two large bird feeders and erected them at the nearby Polk City Manor Nursing Home, where birds and squirrels now entertain the residents.

Humberg and other Big Creek rangers then asked Polk City businesses for donations to buy bird seed. "No one turned us down," he said. "We raised enough money to buy 300 pounds of seed and we fill the feeders every week. It should last the winter."





Bald Eagle Days a Chilling Experience

Bald eagle fans are brave. Even with a temperature of minus 20°F accompanied by a windchill factor of 50 or more degrees below zero, they still flocked to Keokuk to admire our national symbol.

January 19-20, Keokuk hosted its first Bald Eagle Appreciation Days program that was sponsored by the Iowa Conservation Commission, Illinois and Missouri Departments of Conservation, Army Corps of Engineers, the Keosippi Mall and the town-folks. Over 770 people attended the indoor program which included a talk, film and a honest-go-goodness live bald eagle called Omega.

The stout-hearted could also visit two observation areas on the Mississippi riverfront to view wild bald eagles. Biologists were present at the observation areas to point out the eagles, answer questions and provide spotting scopes so that the visitors could get a better view of the soaring eagles.

Although bald eagles are endangered in Iowa, about 150 birds winter near open water throughout the state and 1,000 eagles spend the winter along the Mississippi River. The Keokuk area attracts 150-450 eagles each winter. The birds tend to concentrate there because the power plant dam keeps the water open so the eagles can obtain their main source of food — fish.

ARBOR WEEK, TREE PLANTING TIME

Governor Terry Branstad will soon proclaim April 21-27 as Arbor Week, urging Iowans to assist in the planting of trees and shrubs in order to beautify Iowa.

According to Iowa Conservation Commission state forester Gene Hertel, state nursery stock sales were in heavy demand this year and shipments will soon be made.

Wildlife Art Show Date, Location Changed

Iowa's largest art exhibition and sale, the Iowa Wildlife in Art Show, previously set for April, has been rescheduled for May 31 and June 1-2 at the Des Moines Marriott Hotel.

Show advisor, Ross Harrison, explained that the April date was based on use of the new Des Moines Convention Center. "That facility will not be available," Harrison said, "until at least July."

Forty-five of Iowa's leading artists will have all original works at the show and all will be for sale. Twenty percent of the proceeds from art sales goes for environmental education in Iowa. The State Conservation Commission and Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation are sponsors of the show.

A new addition to the annual event will be the state waterfowl, habitat and trout stamp contest. Judging of the designs will begin at 1 p.m., May 2 at the Marriott. Visitors will have the opportunity to see the more than 100 expected entries in the stamp competition and watch judges select the winners.

The art show is open to the public with a \$1 admission charge June 1-2. The show opens the evening of May 31 with Heritage Night. Tickets are on sale now for \$50 each from the Heritage Foundation, 505 5th Ave., Suite 830, Des Moines, Iowa 50309.

The seedlings are in excellent condition and with proper care should produce healthy trees and shrubs.

Hertel also said the planting of trees is important for increasing Iowa's woodlands, establishing orchards and windbreaks and improving the quality of life in Iowa's cities.

"CARE" PACKAGES FOR WILDLIFE

The State Forest Nursery has put together some tree and shrub packets for those who care about wildlife.

These inexpensive packets are comprised of special seedlings which provide food and shelter for wildlife.



The wildlife package contains fifty conifers, fifty hardwoods and fifty each of two shrubs. It may be purchased by rural Iowans only, at a cost of \$17 delivered.

The songbird packet contains five each of ninebark, amur honeysuckle, gray dogwood and autumn olive. It sells for \$10 and is available to rural and urban residents.

Orders may be placed through Iowa Conservation Commission district foresters, wildlife biologists, county extension offices, or the State Forest Nursery, 2404 South Duff, Ames, Iowa 50010, 515/294-4622.

TAX EXEMPTION DEADLINE

The Iowa Conservation Commission reminds those filing for tax exemptions under the slough bill that applications for forest reservations and wildlife habitat must be in the hands of the county assessor by April 15. Wildlife habitat applications must be previously approved by the area's Iowa Conservation

Commission wildlife management biologist.

Also, wetlands applications must be received by the local Soil Conservation Service district for certification by April 15. The wetlands category includes open prairie forest cover, river and streams and their banks and recreational lakes.

"ANGLING IOWA" on IPT

Fishing enthusiasts will be happy to hear that Iowa Public Television is broadcasting a 13-part series entitled "Angling Iowa." The half-hour shows air Friday at 8:30 p.m. and rerun the following Saturday morning at 10:30 a.m.

The first two programs highlighted winter fishing and early crappie fishing in Iowa and were shown in late February. The remaining 11 shows will be broadcast over the next three months.

Each program deals with a different body of water and a different species of fish, and will feature a guest expert. Seven of the 13 shows are new in the series; six were produced in 1983 and aired last April and May.

The remaining schedule of shows is as follows:

Date	Subject
March 1 & 2	SPRING BASS FISHING
March 8 & 9	TROUT FISHING
March 15 & 16	WEST OKOBOJI SMALLMOUTH BASS
March 22 & 23	DES MOINES RIVER CATFISH & WALLEYE
March 29 & 30	EARLY SUMMER ON THE MISSISSIPPI
April 5 & 6	FLYFISHING FOR BLUEGILL
April 12 & 13	FARM PONDS
April 19 & 20	SPIRIT LAKE MUSKIES
April 26 & 27	LAKE CATFISHING
May 3 & 4	FALL BASS FISHING
May 10 & 11	RIVER SMALLMOUTH BASS

LEADERS IN CONSERVATION

Iowa Wild Turkey Federation

The Iowa Wild Turkey Federation, formed in 1977, is a non-profit conservation organization concerned with the wise management and conservation of the wild turkey in Iowa. The membership totals 1,100 including sportsmen, landowners, conservationists, educators and other interested individuals. IWTF is the state chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, headquartered in Edgefield, South Carolina. The Iowa chapter is proud of the fact that it has the highest percentage of turkey hunters as federation members of any of the 36 state chapters.

The IWTF generates public interest in the wise management and conservation of the wild turkey and promotes sportsmanship and ethical behavior among wild turkey enthusiasts. To accomplish this, the federation sponsors turkey hunter seminars in the spring and fall and provides educational programs to civic and youth groups. Hundreds of seminars have been conducted over the past five years and approximately one-third of Iowa's turkey hunters have attended. The programs stress hunter safety, ethics, hunting tactics and the history of wild turkey restoration in Iowa.

Another successful endeavor of IWTF is its anti-poaching program. The program rewards informants who witness and report unlawful killings of wild turkeys in Iowa.

The informant's name is known only to the Iowa Conservation Commission who coordinates payment of the reward.

Strengthening the cooperation between landowners and hunters is an ongoing project of IWTF. A landowner thank you card has been developed

by the federation to be sent by the hunter to the landowner after the hunt. This has proven to be a simple but effective tool to improve hunter/landowner relations. The federation was responsible for legislation which guarantees a landowner a permit to hunt turkeys on his or her own property during both the spring and fall seasons.

Preserving and protecting Iowa's dwindling timber habitat is an important area of concern of the IWTF. A habitat acquisition fund has been established and funds have been earmarked for purchase of suitable turkey habitat. However, the federation believes that the best way to raise the needed funds to significantly affect the problem is to levy a small users fee on all citizens who enjoy Iowa's timbers.

Individual members of the federation receive *Turkey Call* magazine, the official bi-monthly publication of the national organization; *Turkey Tales* newsletter, the quarterly publication of IWTF; a decal and a membership card. Annual dues are \$15 for adult with a \$5 membership available for youths 17 or under. According to Roger Raisch, state president, "The magazines alone are well worth \$15, but more importantly, sportsmen should join to have the opportunity to become active in issues and problems facing the wild turkey and its habitat and to help preserve part of our natural heritage for our children and their children. All concerned citizens owe this commitment to future generations."

To join, contact Roger W. Raisch, The Iowa Wild Turkey Federation, 700 21st Street, West Des Moines, Iowa 50265.

Gene "Cork" Battey

By Ermin Jennings
Conservation Officer



"Cork" Battey became inspired early on the basic values of preserving habitat, the taking of legal limits and the companionship of youth. These values came from his father, Don Battey and grandfather, Herman Korneman on the banks and backwaters of the Mississippi and Cedar rivers.

The first thrust came from spending six years on the board of directors of the Muscatine Izaak Walton League, two of which he served as President. He worked hand in hand with the Iowa Conservation Commission on projects of tree plantings and wood-duck box placement in the area. His most satisfying times were spent with the ten youths he took to conservation camp at Springbrook State Park two years in a row. Battey also helped establish the "Wally Newcomb Land Acquisition Fund," a means to obtain land for the chapter.

While with the Ikes, Battey joined two local bass clubs, sat on their boards and won bassmaster of the year in 1977. But he is more than a good angler. With these clubs, he helped with fishing projects, kids contests and the implementation of "catch and release" requirements in their contests.

In 1975, Battey was contacted by Ducks Unlimited to

set up a chapter. Having been a member for four years, he decided to take on the challenge, and in 1976, the Great River Chapter was formed. This local club has raised over \$96,000 for Ducks Unlimited in the eight years since its birth.

In 1979, Battey was appointed Zone Chairman to work with 12 chapters on the Lower Mississippi from Davenport to Keokuk. In 1981 he became District Chairman of Southeast Iowa. He holds the position to date, coordinating efforts with seven zone people and some thirty-six chapters in this Southeast quarter of Iowa. This position has him on the Executive and State Council for Iowa D.U. The Iowa division has grown tremendously from 10 chapters and \$45,000 in 1971, to 83 chapters and \$1.1 million raised in 1983.

About six years ago Battey became a turkey hunter and soon joined the National Wild Turkey Federation. He has since helped the Iowa chapter set up hunter safety seminars in the Muscatine area.

The past two summers have found Battey and the Ducks Unlimited committee taking part in the "Kids Fishing Seminar" sponsored by a local sporting goods dealer and the County Conservation Board. This event has afforded some 500 kids from the area a chance to learn the art of fishing and its many sidelines from various experienced personnel.

Today's youth and our habitat are benefiting from the "seeds" planted in Battey as a youth. Conservation has been foremost in his mind and it's a sure bet he will pursue more of the same in the future.

One of his favorite quotes is, "We have an obligation to pass this world on to our children in as good as or better shape than we received it!"



IOWA STATE PARK MASCOT CONTEST

The state park section of the Iowa Conservation Commission has been actively pursuing ways to acquaint more people with the many activities and fine facilities Iowa state parks have to offer. As another means of achieving this goal, the Iowa Conservation Commission, Adventure Lands of America, Jerry Gazaway & Associates, Miracle Equipment Company and Chase Concessions are sponsoring a poster contest to "adopt" a mascot for the Iowa state parks. The ultimate goal will be to use the winning poster to design a costume to be worn at various events in the state parks throughout Iowa (similar to Smokey the Bear & Woodsy Owl).

School children in the fourth through sixth grades are eligible to enter. The prize winners will be announced during State Park Week in June 1985 and will be invited to attend an award ceremony in Des Moines.

- 1st Prize: One night's lodging and one day free admission for the winner and his/her immediate family to Adventure Land Park.
- 2nd Prize: \$100 Savings Bond — Donated by Jerry Gazaway & Associates and Miracle Equipment Company.
- 2 Honorable Mentions: \$75 each — Donated by Rick Chase of Chase Concessions.

RULES

1. The poster must be drawn on poster paper 15" x 20" or 14" x 22". Students may sketch their design lightly with pencil, but it must be colored. Any type of media may be used, such as crayon, cut paper, etc., but it should be easy to reproduce. No more than three (3) colors may be used.
2. The poster should include the mascot's name and illustrate some form of activity in a state park. A "slogan" to further illustrate the poster's message is a good addition, but is not required.
Please keep in mind that the poster will be used to design a costume to be worn at special events. Select a mascot accordingly.
3. The official entry form must be attached to the back of the poster and completely filled out.
4. Posters may be packed and wrapped flat or mailed in a sturdy mailing tube.
5. All entries must be received or postmarked by April 15, 1985.
6. Entries cannot be acknowledged or returned. All entries become the property of the Iowa Conservation Commission.
7. Winners will be contacted by mail and listed in the Iowa Conservationist magazine.
8. Children of the judging committee may not enter.

OFFICIAL ENTRY FORM

(Please print)

NAME _____ PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

NAME & ADDRESS OF SCHOOL _____

GRADE _____ DATE OF BIRTH _____

TO PARENT OR TEACHER:

To the best of my knowledge, this is the original work of my child/student and represents his/her level of ability.

Signature of Parent/Teacher

Check One: () Parent () Teacher

All entries must be postmarked no later than deadline date of April 15, 1985. Address to: **Iowa Conservation Commission, Wallace State Office Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0034.** Fill out entry form completely and secure it to the lower left hand corner on the back of the entry.

Nature

The barn swallow, which goes by the latin name *Hirundo rustica*, is perhaps the most graceful of birds. With its iridescent back, rust-colored undersurface and deeply forked tail, it is also one of the most attractive birds. And it is common on the Iowa landscape; nearly every farmstead has one or more pairs. Finally, it is one of the most beneficial living nearly exclusively on flying insects. This is a short story about a barn swallow that spends his summers on a small farm along a small river in central Iowa.

Rundo was angry. Normally barn swallows don't get angry, but this was too much! Everything was fine two weeks ago — he had just left the pleasant valley with a large lake in South America and had begun the long journey north. The first day went well, with light breezes and good-tasting insects hatching in Louisiana. The second day, however, began with a red sky and fast moving clouds, followed by strong winds. Hurricane Abel was punishing the seacoast, and Rundo had to fly under a bridge among a hundred big pesky pigeons where he spent all day and all night. For the next two days, he fought the winds to catch a few insects just to stay alive. Then the sky cleared and he ate and ate, storing up energy for the long flight. But now he was four days late!

In southern Arkansas a kestrel, the smallest American falcon, dived on Rundo, grabbed him by the wing, and flew towards a dead tree. The terrorized little swallow frantically beat his other wing and finally got free, but his left wing was cut and bruised. He fled into a nearby building and hid among the rafters. The little falcon left and the next morning Rundo flew from the building and painfully continued his northward journey — wiser to the ways of hawks. He fed as he flew because now he was five days behind schedule. In Missouri he encountered heavy rains and had to sit under another bridge while the skies emptied. He was now six days behind and getting peevish. At last he got to Iowa and followed landmarks known to swallows until he got to the same small farm in central Iowa where he had raised a family the past three years — the same one he left last September. He buzzed past the old barn. It was so good to be home!

Tale For Kids

Rundo - The Angry Barn Swallow

By Dean M. Roosa

Around and around the barn he flew; on the third trip around, a strange swallow flew from Rundo's old nest site and chased him. Someone else was using his barn. The intruder chased Rundo across the field and then returned to the barn. Rundo flew to the old corncrib, but those awful, sassy house sparrows had taken over that old nest. So, you can see why Rundo was angry. He sat on the wire and poured forth a bubbly song, but now a song of sadness. His barn for the past three years was now another swallow's home. The corncrib, his alternate nest site, was also in use. Darned hurricane! Darned falcon! Darned rainstorm!

He fretted most of the day, and then flew to the nearby quarry where he skimmed the water and captured midges. He had spent so much time under bridges on his way north that he decided to fly under a bridge to spend the night. Those big pigeons kept him up most of the night with their funny cooing. But he got accustomed to it, and

finally accepted them as friends. He pouted for a day or so, but then started flying far and wide to see if any late-arriving female swallows were around. Plenty of rough-winged swallows and tree swallows, but no barn swallows. But persistence pays, and a week later two barn swallows were seen flying from the muddy edge of the lake to the bridge, carrying mud for their new nest. A week later, there were four whitish eggs with brown blotches in the nest under the bridge. Rundo didn't exactly like the location because his real home was over there in that barn, and he often buzzed through the barnyard close to the barn just to upset the swallows that had stolen his barn.

Back at the bridge in early June, the four eggs had now turned into four hungry young swallows. They sat on the edge of the nest trying to muster the courage to fly. One was pushed, and fell into the water. Nothing Rundo could do would save the little swallow. Another

flew unsteadily from under the bridge up across the road and lost the battle in a collision with a truck. The other two fledged safely, and were soon skimming over the quarry. One got hit by a pellet from a pellet gun of a nearby neighbor youngster, and Rundo was now father to only one young barn swallow.

In late August hundreds of swallows of all kinds flocked around the quarry lake. In one exuberant sweep, they all left for their wintering grounds. It was an uneventful trip, and Rundo was pleased to return to the broad valley where he fed and perched in the warm sun all winter.

Remembering the awful trip north the previous year, Rundo was the first swallow to leave the valley the following spring. The trip north this time was as good as the previous one was bad. He arrived at the old barn on the small farm, in central Iowa, claimed it as his own, and sat proud and happily on a wire, pouring forth an intricate and bubbly song. How nice to be home!



A MIRACLE TREE

By Bob Hibbs

"Grow your own firewood. In four years you will be cutting cordwood about four to five inches in caliber. Produce three to five cords per acre per year."

So read the ads from nurseries selling today's miracle tree, the hybrid poplar. What are hybrid poplars? They are similar to our native poplars, aspen, and cottonwood. What makes them different is the fact that they have two or more types of the *Populus* family in their parentage. In Iowa, we have four naturally occurring "clones" (reproduced without flower and seed) of European white poplar and large-tooth aspen hybrids. We have also imported the Euramericana clones which are crosses between our native cottonwood and the European black cottonwood. This year the State Forest Nursery sold this hybrid at seven dollars per one hundred rooted cuttings. It quickly sold out.

Are these hybrids indeed miracle trees? The answer is both yes and no; much research is currently being done. There are literally dozens of crosses being tried, and regrettably, many are being sold with inadequate field trials and with exaggerated claims. Hybrid poplars are quite prone to many leaf and stem diseases, meaning that some crosses will survive while others will not. These trees, like all trees, have specific site requirements. For example, the native Iowa aspen hybrids need a good, well-drained site; the Euramericana cottonwood hybrid prefers a wetter bottomland site. Check with your nursery supplier to find out which hybrid is being offered. Then ask your forester whether your soil matches the needs of your hybrid.

Dr. Richard Hall, professor of forestry at Iowa State University, has monitored field research plantings in Marshall County since 1978. Preliminary results indicate that the native hybrids and the Euramericana clone will be quite productive. Measurements were taken in the

ISU plots six years after planting. One native hybrid called the Crandon clone averaged four inches in diameter and produced the equivalent of nine cords per acre — 1½ cords per acre per year. The Euramericana clone averaged 3½ inches in diameter and produced just under seven cords per acre — 1.1 cord per acre per year. Field measurements from different 20-year-old plantings of red oak, walnut, and ash indicate productivity figures between 0.3 and 0.7 cords per acre per year. It is safe to assume that the hybrids will be twice as productive as the more dense native hardwoods, in less than one-third the time. But realize, too, that poplar or cottonwood hybrids will have one-half the BTU content per cord of the more dense, native hardwoods. BTUs per pound are about the same for all woods. The real advantage, then, is the time required to obtain fuelwood from a planting.

When hybrid poplars are cut, it is not necessary to replant. Cottonwood crosses will sprout abundantly from the stump, and aspen hybrids will sprout from the root system. Because the new stems inherit the water and nutrient capabilities of the existing roots, they usually grow much faster. The second and third harvest cycles should be more productive than the first. Researchers do not know how many cuttings can be made of the original planting, but several should be possible. One problem with the sprouting tendency occurs when the aspen hybrids are used for yard plantings. Within a few years after planting, root sprouts are likely to pop up throughout your yard!

The Marshall County field plantings also suggest that the Androscoggin hybrid (an Asian poplar/western black cottonwood) may be too disease prone for some Iowa sites. If you purchase a mixture of untried hybrids, you should expect that some will not survive. You

will have to fill in your planting several years later by taking cuttings from those hybrids that have grown well and show themselves to be disease resistant. But realize, too, that disease resistance will decrease with time.

Choosing and propagating your own clones can be a fascinating aspect of growing hybrid poplars. For information about making cuttings, ask your County Extension Director for forestry extension notes F-345, "Selection of hybrid poplars for rapid growth."

Field plantings of poplar hybrids have also shown another significant problem by being a favorite food for deer. This is extremely desirable if your intent is to plant something that will benefit wild life. But if your intent is to produce firewood, you may have to add two, three, or more years to your anticipated harvest date. Or you'll have to make your planting large enough to feed both the deer and your woodstove!

Weed control in hybrid poplar plantings is also difficult, since Prince (simazine) cannot be used safely on any of the poplar/cottonwood hybrids. The best advice today is simply to kill the existing grass and weeds with Roundup prior to planting, and then cultivate or mow as necessary to keep the seedling growing.

You can grow a winter's wood supply for your home, on one acre, in about six years. You can if the deer, diseases, or weed and grass control problems don't slow you down. Plant about 800 stems per acre — a six- to eight-foot spacing — and give it a try. The hybrid poplars are fun and worthwhile even if Iowa's soil and climate cannot match some of the nurseries' claims.

Bob Hibbs is a district forester located in Marshalltown. He holds a B.S. degree in forestry from Iowa State University and has been with the commission since 1970.

A six-year-old hybrid poplar grown in Iowa.

Photo by Bob Hibbs

Rare Visit by a Siberian Goose

By John Fleckenstein

The north winds that chill us through the winter blew an unexpected visitor to Iowa this season. A bean goose (scientific name *Anser fabalis*) appeared at DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge before New Year's and spent the first week of the year there with a flock of white-fronted and Canada geese. Bean geese are native to Europe and Asia. They are seen at least once a year in Alaska, but only once or twice before has a wild bean goose been reported elsewhere in North America.

The goose was first seen on December 29. Rick Wright and Alan Grenon were counting birds on the DeSoto Refuge for the Omaha Chapter of the Audubon Society as part of the annual, nationwide Christmas bird count. They saw an unusual bird among a flock of white-fronted geese on the slough. A search of their field guides suggested that it was a bean goose. The following day, several other local bird watchers confirmed the identification.

Within a few days, the discovery was announced on the Audubon Society national bird hotline. This recorded phone message is used by birders to spread the news of exciting sightings. For many, adding a new species to the list of 700 or more which they have seen is the high point of the year. People flocked to the refuge from New Hampshire, Washington D.C., Colorado. Others came from Omaha, Sioux City, and nearby Missouri Valley. As many as 1600 people per day visited the refuge.

I went out to DeSoto January 13, but the goose had left. It had last been seen on January 10. One disappointed couple also arrived too late. They had driven from Colorado to see the goose.

Bean geese are about the size of snow geese, weighing 6-7 pounds. They are lighter colored than Canada geese and have a dark brown head. Their most distinctive feature is bright orange-yellow legs. Five races of bean geese have been described. They are separated by shape and color of the bill and relative size. The DeSoto bird had a long, straight bill with a narrow band of yellow at the tip. These features are characteristic of the *middendorfi* race.

This race breeds on the forested taiga of eastern Siberia. It winters in eastern China and Japan. Other races breed across northern Asia and Europe and migrate to the Mediterranean Sea and the west coast of Europe.

The habits of bean geese are similar to many North American geese. They usually feed on land, eating green plants and seeds. They have learned that farmers' fields can provide an easy meal. In fact, their species name, *fabalis*, comes from the Latin name of the field bean, a type formerly grown by farmers across Europe. The DeSoto bird lived up to its name. It flew out to feed in nearby crop fields with the Canada geese each afternoon.

How did this bird get to western Iowa, thousands of miles from its natural range? Some think it escaped from a water fowl collection in the United States. Many people keep waterfowl and are especially interested in exotic birds. These escape occasionally, and if they survive in the wild, soon look and act like wild birds.

If this bird came from Siberia, it flew across the Bering Straits and bypassed geese along the west Alaskan coast. Most of these birds winter in California and along the Pacific coast. It flew to central Alaska or to the Arctic coast. Waterfowl from these areas migrate through the Dakotas, Nebraska, and western Iowa.

Other birds have made this trip. Last winter, a slaty gull spent several days in the St. Louis area. This species is also native to Siberia. It may have ridden across from Siberia and down to the Midwest on the frigid front which arrived here in November of 1983. The bean goose may have ridden a similar cold front.

Other evidence suggests that the bird was wild. Bean geese are not very attractive and are very hard to obtain. Therefore, few North American collectors have them. Most captive birds are of the European races. Serious collectors mark their birds with bands or tattoos and take precautions to keep them from escaping.

This bird showed no evidence of having been in a collection. It was not



Larry Galloway

banded or tattooed. Its feathers were not worn by life in a pen. It flew strongly and generally acted like a wild bird. Of course bands fall off, feathers grow out, and a tame bird could quickly learn to act wild. We will probably never know if this bird was an escapee or always wild. Plenty of evidence points either way, so believe what you will.

I hope it was a wild bird. And I hope it survives the winter. But since it is a "different" bird its chances are lessened. The geese in a flock survive in part because they are very much alike. They have evolved to fit their environment. They look the same, eat the same food, fly the same way. A different bird probably does not fit this environment as well. It may do alright, but more likely, it will be less successful. It will not find familiar foods. Its different appearance might attract the attention of a hunter or another predator.

If our bean goose returns north in spring, it will probably remain in Canada or Alaska. A return trip to Siberia would be very difficult. It may breed with a white-fronted goose — a closely related species. Or it may remain unmated.

In any case, it added some excitement to the lives of birdwatchers in Iowa. They will have their binoculars out in the spring and again in the fall watching for a bean goose or other rare species from far away places.

John Fleckenstein is the data manager for the commission's natural areas inventory. He holds an M.S. degree in zoology from North Dakota State University.



Wendy Van Gundy

A Ranger's View of Volga

By Wendy Van Gundy

As I traveled Highway 150 to Volga River State Recreation Area, I began to list the reasons a person may enter the conservation field. I was specifically interested in the characteristics necessary to become a park ranger. My plans were to spend time with Jerry Reisinger, park ranger at Volga, and explore this 5,432-acre recreation area in Fayette County.

My first question which heads the list for many people was, "What do you do all winter after you close the recreation area?" Upon entering the maintenance and office building, I saw a pair of cross-country skis in the corner and a snowmobile helmet on the file cabinet and I immediately asked Jerry about them.

"Yes," he said, "they are used as part of my work. I not only drive trucks and tractors, I must also know how to maneuver these skis up and down hills without smacking into a tree."

This is Jerry's first season with skis and I chuckled to myself when I thought

of this six-foot person taking his first tumble in some snow drift after missing a curve along the trail. It usually hurts the ego more than the body.

A snowmobile and skis are standard equipment in some parks and recreation areas. The parks do not close in the winter and this equipment is used for law enforcement, emergency rescue efforts, and assisting the public. I soon witnessed Jerry's public relations techniques as we skied the hilly terrain on that cold, crisp morning. We had just stepped across a small flowing spring when we heard the drone of a snowmobile coming through the valley. We sidestepped to the edge of the trail and waited and within moments, the snowmobiler popped over the hill. He slowed to a stop and asked about the trail system in Volga. Jerry directed him to some of the more interesting spots along the seventeen miles of trails, and explained why those places are popular during the winter months. After the snowmobiler had left, Jerry noted that many hikers, hunters, and horseback riders utilize the trails throughout other seasons of the year.

All state recreation areas in Iowa are open for hunting and trapping as well as picnicking and camping. I asked Jerry if he had heard many complaints due to conflicts in uses. He shook his head and explained, "I've worked here at the Volga River State Recreation Area for six years and I've never had a significant problem with cross-country skiers vs. snowmobilers or hunters vs. other users. The only problem that arises each spring is the conflict that sometimes occurs between turkey hunters and mushroom hunters. This problem could be resolved if the mushroom hunter would wait until noon before seeking the morels. Turkey season is only open until noon and neither hunter would then interfere with each other."

Park rangers' role in promoting conservation can be very rewarding but there are those times when they wish that they could escape the park and lead a more normal private life. These rangers are practically on call 24 hours a day. They expect and get calls or frantic knocks on the front door at any time of the day or night.

Jerry recalls one of those nights. "I had been in bed a few hours when I heard a loud knocking at my door. I rolled over and looked at my clock — it was nearly 4 a.m. By this time, the knock had turned into a continuous pounding. I got up and unlocked the door. It was still totally dark outside and I could barely see this unsavory-looking character on my front step. He excitedly explained, 'I came out to the lake to do a little catfishing and I looked down into the water and I can see two red tail lights and a headlight shining under water. Someone has driven into the lake and their lights are still on.'"

"I didn't know if this was a prank to get me out of the house but I couldn't take any chances. I threw on some clothes and rushed down to the lake. Sure enough, there was a submerged vehicle and the tail lights were still burning. Questions then started buzzing through my head. How did it get there? Why is it there? Are people inside the vehicle? Sometime later, we were able to hoist the car out of the lake and everyone was thankful that no bodies were found inside."

Many rangers do develop habitat for specific fish species in their lakes but stolen and abandoned cars are not typically used as fish habitat in the 135-acre Frog Hollow Lake. Other management techniques are usually implemented. This winter the Volga Valley Conservation Club worked cooperatively with the Iowa Conservation Commission in using Christmas trees as fish habitat. Two to three hundred trees were collected, tied in bunches and then put out on the ice. After the ice melts, the trees sink and then provide attractive cover for the fish.

Largemouth bass fishing should be good this upcoming year. The 14-inch length limit will be enforced as it was this past year. Jerry flipped back through his daily journal and recalled a fishing incident from last summer.

"I was conducting a student field trip when Jim, our park attendant, received a complaint that a group of men were taking undersized bass. Jim went out to observe the guys and gather information. He recognized them as a group who were currently camping in the recreation area, so he hustled down to check the garbage cans for evidence. Sure enough, there were largemouth bass carcasses inside and they were all under 14 inches. Upon my return, he reported everything to me.

I went to see for myself. I waited until they all returned to the trailer and I went up and knocked on the door. As I peered through the screen door, I could see the



Ron Johnson

fish soaking in the sink. I asked, 'How's the fishing?'

"'Oh, we didn't get anything,' one said."

"They were beginning to get nervous, so I continued, 'If not, why are there fish in the sink?'"

"One piped up, 'Those are only bluegills.' I was quite certain that they weren't bluegills so I continued questioning them."

"In the meantime, Jim returned to the garbage can in order to collect the evidence but returned empty handed and puzzled. The garbage can was now empty. They had outwitted us by trading garbage cans but I refused to let this incident drop. We quickly discovered the correct can at another campsite and it was now giving off a strong fish odor. It had been sitting in the sun for at least 24 hours. Imagine the fun we had confiscating and measuring rotting fish carcasses. Both of us reeked of garbage and fish by the end of the day, but our efforts weren't in vain. Each person was fined \$200.00."

Jerry anticipates an excellent fishing season this upcoming year; but that is not the only thing to enjoy in the Volga area. Unusual landscape characteristics in-

clude abundant rock formations, sink-holes, caves and substantial expanses of timber.

"We not only manage this area for people but wildlife as well. About 360 acres are leased to local farmers and 10% of the crop is left in the field as wildlife food plots. Another 150 acres are now under prairie reconstruction. These areas not only provide wildlife food and cover but also add a touch of our pioneer heritage.

Like other rangers, Jerry finds himself in the role of wildlife manager one day and law enforcement officer the next. He has the ability to wear the hat of an educator, biologist, law enforcement officer and general conservationist, promoting the wise use of all of our natural resources.

"Come out and enjoy this area," he says. "No matter what the season, Volga River State Recreation Area is a beautiful place to be."

Wendy Van Gundy is an information specialist for the Conservation Commission. She holds a BS in fisheries and wildlife biology from Iowa State University.

Make Your Land Acres for Wildlife

By James J. Zohrer

Do you like trees? Do you like to see birds, rabbits, and other wild animals on your land or around your home? Well, then you need to talk to your local county conservation board to find out how you can make your land more attractive to wildlife.

If you have not yet talked to a representative from your county conservation board, you should get to know one. Every county in Iowa except Allamakee has an active county conservation board. Conservation boards not only manage parks and other natural areas, but they are dedicated to the conservation of natural resources and to promoting conservation education throughout the

county. Most boards actively promote the preservation and establishment of wildlife habitat on both county-owned and private lands.

Conservation boards offer a number of programs and services to private landowners who are interested in wildlife habitat improvement work on their land. Most conservation boards employ professionals who would be happy to talk to you about how you can improve your land for wildlife. Winter cover, food patch plantings, and nesting cover plantings are generally recommended. They can tell you what to plant, where to plant it, how to plant it, and where you can get the plant materials. Did you know that

you can order trees for less than \$.08 each? Ask them, they will tell you where.

Many conservation boards will do more than just talk to you about plantings. If they have adequate staff, they may help you with the planting or do the planting for you. Conservation boards often have the knowledge and the equipment to handle this type of planting.

Many conservation boards will loan or rent their seeding and tree-planting equipment to private landowners. Many counties have tree planting bars which will allow you to plant up to 500 trees in a day. Most also have tree planters which are pulled behind a tractor. These planters will allow you to easily plant several thousand trees in one day.

Various grass seedings are also important as wildlife cover. Some conservation boards make both standard and no-till seeders available to private landowners who wish to establish this type of cover on their land. Included in this article is a list of county conservation board phone numbers. Call the board in your county to see what services they offer county residents.

Approximately 69 county conservation boards conduct "Acres For Wild-



Jim Zohrer

life" programs. Through this program, if a landowner is willing to set aside some land for wildlife, the conservation board will assist you in the planting of needed wildlife habitat. Their experience in the establishment of wildlife habitat is considerable. Last year, conservation boards in Iowa planted over one-half million trees, established 173 food patches, and planted 855 acres of prairie grass. This all helped to provide the food, nesting cover, winter cover, and escape cover that wild animals need.

You should also be aware that other government agencies may also be able to help you in your habitat improvement work. Personnel of both the forestry section and the wildlife section of the Iowa Conservation Commission are also available to provide technical assistance in habitat improvement work. They also have equipment available and may be able to come out and help you plant wildlife habitat on your land. Your local soil conservation service and extension service offices will also have valuable information on habitat establishment.

You may also want to contact your county assessor to discuss what tax advantages there may be to you if you establish wildlife habitat. Certain lands devoted to tree plantings or wildlife habitat are not taxed at all as a result of a law recently passed by the Iowa legislature.

There may even be various state or federal payments to help you in establishing wildlife habitat or other forms of permanent vegetative cover. Your local Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (A.S.C.S.) manager would be the one to talk to about these payments.

As you can see, there are a number of agencies that can help you to improve wildlife habitat on your land. This can all be a little confusing. You may want to start with a visit to your local county conservation board. If they cannot help you, they will direct you to other agencies that can help.

If you have additional questions on Iowa's County Conservation Board System, contact the Office of County Conservation Activities, Iowa Conservation Commission, Wallace State Office Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0034.

James Zohrer is an assistant administrator for county conservation activities. He holds a B.S. degree in zoology from the University of Illinois and an M.S. degree in wildlife ecology from the University of Wisconsin.

COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD PHONE NUMBERS

Adair	515-743-6450	Jefferson	515-472-4421
Adams	515-322-4793	Johnson	319-645-2315
Appanoose	515-856-8528	Jones	319-487-3541
Audubon	712-563-4551	Keokuk	515-622-3757
Benton	319-472-4942	Kossuth	515-295-2138
Black Hawk	319-277-1536	Lee	319-463-7673
Boone	515-353-4237	Linn	319-398-3505
Bremer	319-882-4742	Louisa	319-523-8381
Buchanan	319-636-2617	Lucas	515-774-4931
Buena Vista	712-295-7985	Lyon	712-753-2313
Butler	319-278-4237	Madison	515-462-3536
Calhoun	712-297-7131	Mahaska	515-673-9327
Carroll	712-792-4614	Marion	515-828-2213
Cass	712-243-3542	Marshall	515-752-3150
Cedar	319-886-6930	Mills	712-527-9685
Cerro Gordo	515-423-5309	Mitchell	515-732-5204
Cherokee	712-225-5959	Monona	712-423-2400
Chickasaw	515-394-4714	Monroe	515-946-8112
Clarke	515-342-3960	Montgomery	712-829-2241
Clay	712-262-2187	Muscatine	319-649-3379
Clayton	319-245-1516	O'Brien	712-448-2254
Clinton	319-847-7202	Osceola	712-754-4107
Crawford	712-263-2748	Page	712-542-3864
Dallas	515-465-3733	Palo Alto	712-837-4866
Davis	515-664-3358	Plymouth	712-947-4270
Decatur	515-442-3515	Pocahontas	712-335-4395
Delaware	319-927-3410	Polk	515-999-2557
Des Moines	319-753-8260	Pottawattamie	712-328-5638
Dickinson	712-338-4786	Poweshiek	515-623-3191
Dubuque	319-556-6745	Ringgold	515-464-2787
Emmet	712-867-4123	Sac	712-662-4530
Fayette	319-425-3613	Scott	319-381-1114
Floyd	515-228-5253	Shelby	712-643-2231
Franklin	515-456-4375	Sioux	712-552-1047
Fremont	712-374-2347	Story	515-377-2229
Greene	515-386-3849	Tama	515-484-2231
Grundy	319-345-2688	Taylor	712-585-3238
Guthrie	515-755-3061	Union	515-782-7111
Hamilton	515-832-1994	Van Buren	319-293-3589
Hancock	515-923-2720	Wapello	515-682-3091
Hardin	515-858-3461	Warren	515-961-6169
Harrison	712-647-2785	Washington	319-657-3457
Henry	319-986-5067	Wayne	515-872-2004
Howard	319-534-3634	Webster	515-576-3230
Humboldt	515-332-4087	Winnebago	515-565-3390
Ida	712-364-2255	Winneshiek	319-534-7145
Iowa	319-655-8465	Woodbury	712-279-6488
Jackson	319-652-3783	Worth	515-324-1524
Jasper	515-792-9780	Wright	515-532-3185

Tree planters are available for habitat development.



Black Hawk County Conservation Board

WARDEN'S DIARY

Turkey Hunters are Different

By Jerry Hoilien

He was sitting in his pickup at the headquarters waiting for me.

"I made a big mistake this morning," he said as he handed me his license. "I think I shot a hen. I've got it in the back."

Sure enough there was a young hen turkey laying in the back of his pickup.

"I guess I got excited. It came round a big tree and I just shot. What a thing to show your boy!" A small hunting cap peeked from the back window with big eyes. "I told my son the best thing to do is take it to you and take what comes. I was just plain wrong," he said.

Not many men are that strong and I felt badly for him, but at the same time I was proud of his honesty. A mistake had been made, but he knew the best way to

handle the situation was to get it squared away. I'm sure his boy will always remember the way his dad handled it. The three of us talked for a long time and I pointed out several ways of identifying toms and hens.

"Always look at the chest," I said. "Look for the beard. The turkey has to have a visible beard. Look at the head. The top of a tom turkey's is white. As a matter of fact, it is sometimes the thing you will notice first in the woods. It looks like a baseball bobbing its way toward you. Notice the color of the throat. The bright red wattle, below the head is blood red and large. The hen's head is small and bluish in color. The body color on a tom will appear almost black while the hen's appears tan or

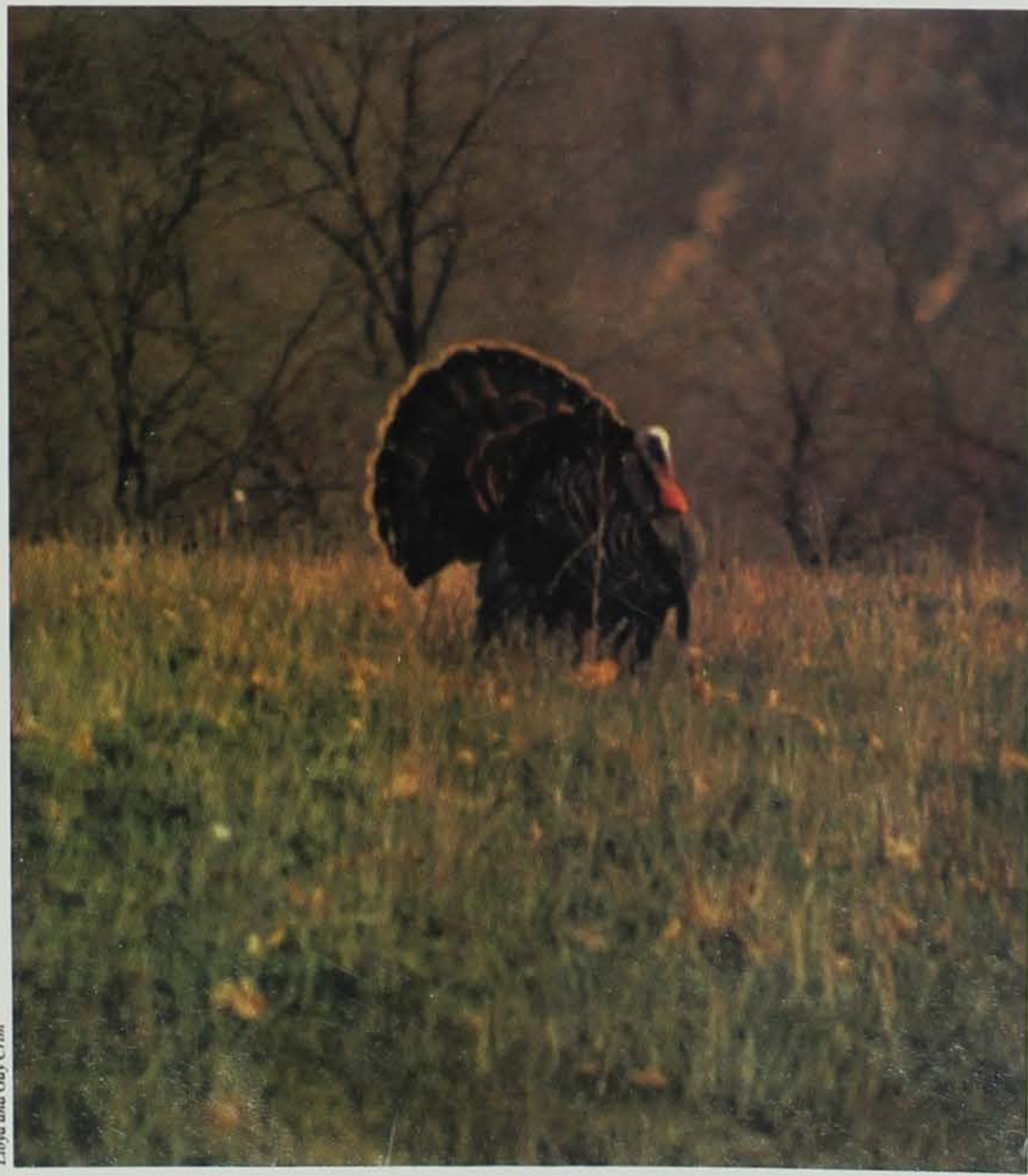
brownish, because of light tips on the chest feathers. Also, a hen won't gobble or strut."

The most important rule in any form of hunting is to *know* what you're shooting before you touch the trigger. Once you've shot, you can't back up, the damage is done. But this gentleman was honest and wanted to clear it up. "This will be a tough one for the judge," I thought, as I gave him his receipt and ticket. I wondered how many other mistakes were made this morning. I knew one thing, though, I had a lot of respect for this man and his son and you can bet it never happened again — to either one of them.

I was going down the road later that same day and looking up I could see a *blaze orange* vest on the rider in an oncoming vehicle. I could see turkey tail feathers sticking up between him and the driver, and I turned on my red light. The grin on the rider's face left no doubt as to whose bird it was, and he held up the tagged foot to show me. He had a beauty! The beard was over 11 inches with spurs measuring over an inch. "Better get him weighed, he'll go over 25 pounds," I said. "He felt like a ton coming out to the road," he explained, giving me all the details of the hunt. It was his first bird and he was still shaking. I inquired about the blaze orange vest he was wearing. "I put this on while carrying him out," he said, "don't want anybody making a mistake out of me!" Darn good thinking on the part of a novice hunter, don't you think?

If you've never heard a wild tom turkey in the spring, you've missed something. Whether you're a hunter or not, before you leave the busy life you lead, take time to visit the world of wild things, if only to watch and listen. I can't guarantee you'll get to see or hear one (about the time I think I've got them figured out, they do something all together different), but that's part of it! That's why we call them wildlife, you know!

If the sight of wild things thrills you, as it does most of us, don't miss it. If a deer standing still in the fading evening light gets your blood pumping, or the glimpse of a high "V" in the sky and the lonesome cry of the Canada goose gives



Lloyd and Gay Crim

you a catch in your throat, or if the whirr of a grouse or pheasant bursting from under your feet startles your senses, just wait until you see your first tom turkey. I can't describe the beauty of "his majesty" in the woods. The colors are fantastic as he struts and turns, letting the light glisten off his bronze and black feathers with their iridescent brilliance. He can disappear like magic in the blinking of an eye. You probably didn't see him coming and you won't see him leave. He's truly a master of the woods.

Turkey hunters — remember these rules:

- Take your turkey license with the correct zone and season with you. You must tag your bird after the kill, punching out the date. You must also have a small game license and signed habitat stamp.
- The bag limit per license is one bearded turkey.
- Shooting hours are one-half hour before sunrise until noon CST (1 o'clock after Daylight Savings Time starts).
- Shotgun, muzzleloading shotgun (not smaller than 20 gauge) or bow and arrow (broadheads only) may be used. No rifles.
- No live decoys or mechanical devices are allowed. You can use a box or mouth call (no records or tapes in the field).
- All participants in the hunt must be licensed for the season and zone they are hunting (this includes callers).
- Camouflage is not only permitted but is almost a necessity for success. I would remind you not to use a gobble call unless you're positive you are alone in the woods. There have been accidental shootings in the past. Remember you have to see a beard before you shoot and a head shot in close is the only sure way to take a wild turkey. His wings and chest feathers provide an almost armored plating, even in close.

I don't recommend wild turkey hunting for the faint or weak of heart. In northeast Iowa, if the hills don't get you, the sudden gobble from a big tom pulling his famous "circle-and-come-in-from-behind trick" surely will. And for you hunters who use a mouth call, I might suggest a 6-inch string attached to a 4-inch stick to save you from swallowing the darn thing. Lots of luck!

TURKEY RESTORATION NEARS PEAK

Twenty years ago, wild turkeys were absent from Iowa and had been for more than a half century. Today, thanks to extensive restoration efforts by the Conservation Commission's wildlife section, gobblers thunder their spring mating call across most of our remnant forest lands. The introduction of turkeys from Missouri into Stephens and Shimek State Forests in southern Iowa, started the program in 1966. Trapping and transplanting free-ranging turkeys from these and other successful release sites has provided 1600 turkeys for 114 sites scattered throughout the state, wherever timber remains. About 80 percent of our remnant forest lands support wild turkey populations at this time.

Hunting opportunities have increased as turkey populations have expanded. Just 450 hunters were fortunate enough to draw licenses during the first spring

gobblers-only hunting season in 1974, and they bagged 113 gobblers. By 1984, 11,126 hunters bagged 2,221 turkeys, about a 20-fold increase. Fall any-sex seasons were initiated in 1981; in 1984, 2,800 shotgun and 530 bow hunters bagged 1,174 and 36 turkeys, respectively.

Although the growth of turkey populations has been phenomenal, the potential for future expansion is limited. Most potential habitat is stocked and hunters numbers are approaching the limits which can provide safe, quality turkey hunting. The remaining habitat will be stocked, but the area yet to be populated is small. Future harvests will probably not greatly exceed 2,500 turkeys in the spring and 3,000 in the fall. Iowan's can take pride, however, in being part of an amazing success story.

1984 Top 25 Turkeys

Name and Address	Weight	Date	County Taken
Reggie Williamson New London	29 lb. 7 oz.	4-17	Des Moines
Stanley M. Haston Fort Madison	29 lb. 1 oz.	4-18	Lee
Elmer Kopaska, Jr. Guthrie Center	28 lb. 8 oz.		Guthrie
Michael Halsor Cedar Rapids	28 lb.	4-18	Linn
Errol A. Montgomery Cedar Rapids	28 lb.	4-21	Linn
Randy T. Wagner Calmar	28 lb.		Winnebago
Bill Dorsett Linden	27 lb. 8 oz.	4-27	Guthrie
Don L. Weggen Muscatine	27 lb. 8 oz.	4-28	Muscatine
Larry Baumgartner Manchester	27 lb. 4 oz.	4-16	Delaware
Michael Olsen Estherville	27 lb. 4 oz.	5-8	Guthrie
Doug Craft Decorah	27 lb. 2 oz.	4-22	Winnebago
Dale A. Davidson West Point	27 lb.	4-25	Lee
Guy Goldsmith Earlville	27 lb.	5-6	Delaware
Mike Laugesen Dubuque	27 lb.	5-5	Dubuque
Dorothy L. Schwartzhoff Lansing	26 lb. 14 oz.	4-18	Allamakee
Linda Kopaska Guthrie Center	26 lb. 12 oz.		Guthrie
Norman A. Moen, Jr. Decorah	26 lb. 12 oz.	4-20	Winnebago
Steven M. Dirks Monmouth	26 lb. 8 oz.	5-3	Jones
Lon Hawbaker West Des Moines	26 lb. 8 oz.	4-17	Lucas
Thomas J. Marty Dubuque	26 lb. 8 oz.	4-26	Allamakee
Charles C. Overton Allerton	26 lb. 8 oz.	4-20	Wayne
Jack E. Runnells Russell	26 lb. 8 oz.	4-17	Lucas
Brian W. Alderton Farmington	26 lb. 6 oz.	4-21	VinBuren
David Boyles Urbana	26 lb. 5 oz.	4-23	Benton
David Horst Sebula	26 lb. 4 oz.	4-20	Clinton
John A. Houchins Leon	26 lb. 4 oz.	5-1	Decatur
Sieve Schuster Decorah	26 lb. 4 oz.	4-24	Clayton
Melvin Stevens Victor	26 lb. 4 oz.	4-16	Monroe



Reggie Williamson's 29 pound 7 ounce turkey, top 1984 bird. Over 200 hunters reported taking trophy turkeys (23 pounds or more) in 1984. To the left is a list of the top 25 (with ties).

ALL-TIME TOP TEN TURKEYS

Name and Address	Weight	Date	County Taken
Dr. David J. Randall Lucas	30 lb. 8 oz.	4-21-82	Lucas
Dennis Moore Sherrill	30 lb. 4 oz.	4-17-81	Clayton
Dwight D. Schumann Spencer	29 lb. 12 oz.	5-2-82	Monona
James Reichmann Amana	29 lb. 10 oz.	4-21-82	Iowa
Raymond Stotlar Wever	29 lb. 9 oz.	4-12-83	Des Moines
*Reggie Williamson New London	29 lb. 7 oz.	4-17-84	Des Moines
*Stanley M. Haston Fort Madison	29 lb. 1 oz.	4-18-84	Lee
Ed Hull Chariton	29 lb.	4-14-82	Lucas
Kerry A. Collen Dayton	29 lb.	4-26-83	Webster
Bob Scott Albia	29 lb.	4-12-83	Wapello

*new records



Bill Pusateri

Plant Tale of the Month

American Yew (*Taxus canadensis*)

By Dean M. Roosa and Bill Pusateri



Usually in this space we discuss showy wildflowers native to Iowa. This month we make a slight departure to describe a woody species. By doing so, we hope that our readers will find it easier to identify this plant and keep us informed of its whereabouts.

The American yew or ground-hemlock (*Taxus canadensis*) is a slow-growing evergreen shrub. Its leaves are flat and linear and arranged on two sides of the stem to produce a flat branch or fan-like spray. Each individual leaf or needle is about an inch long. The upper surface of the leaf is a rich dark glossy

green color. In contrast, the lower leaf surface is a yellow-green color.

Yews are often mistaken for immature shrubby hemlock trees. One can easily differentiate the two by noting that hemlock always have two white lines on the leaf's lower surface.

Members of the yew family produce inconspicuous pistillate flowers in the axils of the leaves. These flowers eventually produce a seed which is covered by a hard stony protective layer. This layer is surrounded by a cup-shaped fleshy disk called an aril.

These bright scarlet arils are very attractive and make horticultural yew species very attractive for landscaping. But, landscapers must be very cautious when planting yews for, even though the fleshy aril is edible, the hard stony seed is not. It is important for adults to recognize that children may be attracted to this plant by these red berry-like structures, and recognize that the seed, leaves, and bark contain a very toxic alkaloid called taxine. A very small quantity of taxine can cause the sudden death of animals including man. Deer

have an enzyme in their digestive tract called a "mixed function oxidase" which breaks down taxine and renders it harmless.

Apparently, yew is such a popular deer browse that it has become limited to steep rocky bluffs where deer have a difficult time reaching it. Waxwings and other song birds are also known to strip the arils off the shrubs for food. Another substance called taxol has been isolated from the western species of yew and has been used in cancer research.

Yew wood is known to be elastic but strong and was mainly used to make bows. In fact, the genus name *taxus* is the classical word for "bow."

Here in the midwest, yews are found natively in a scattered distribution in eastern Minnesota, Wisconsin, and northeastern Illinois. In Iowa, it is predominant in the northeastern counties with a single disjunct population in Van Buren County.

Look for yews on the cooler north-facing slopes in eastern Iowa. Their evergreen appearance should be easy to spot on these frosty winter days.