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# Iowa CONSERVATIONIST

February 1986

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# Iowa CONSERVATIONIST

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**COVER:** Cross-country skiing at Swiss Valley near Dubuque. Photo by Ron Johnson.

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# WILDLIFE AND RURAL PROBLEMS A Common Solution

By Richard Bishop  
Wildlife Superintendent

Regardless of what period we look back on, there are memories of precious times, places, and things that are lost forever. There was the watermelon floating in the milk cooler on the Fourth of July, a cold glass of lemonade after the last load of hay was stacked in the barn, the old swimming hole in the bend of the river or the picking of wildflowers in the warm May sun. Then there were the dozens of pheasants that flushed from the cattails surrounding the small marsh below the barn, that first mink trapped along the creek, the brush patch that always held several fat rabbits, or the day father revealed his favorite catfish hole. These, and other memories like them are dear to many of us.

Growing up in rural Iowa, I remember the winding creeks and rivers flanked by bottomland hardwoods, oak-hickory timbers with trees that had stood there for one hundred years or more, and many odd weed and brush patches growing adjacent to pastures or crop fields. Farm work was more difficult then, but there was a real pleasure in the closeness of neighbors.

The mid-60's marked the start of the most radical period of agricultural change. We shifted from a healthy, developing agricultural system of the soil bank days to a destructive program of all-out production at any cost. Farmers were asked to produce more food to feed the world. Cropping from fencerow to fencerow was urged. Thousands of acres of unplowed grassland, forestland, marshes, hedgerows and grass waterways, were converted to corn and soybeans to allow for expanded agricultural exports. Extensive row-crop farming developed and changed certain parts of Iowa from a diversified pastoral landscape to one continuous cropfield.

This change had profound effects on wildlife as well as man. Pheasants

once abounded where farms provided oats and hay for nesting cover, corn for food and a good farm grove to escape the winter winds. Now many of these groves are gone — bulldozed to make room for additional cropfields. And in the late fall, the entire section is often fall plowed. Little food and almost no nesting cover remains for pheasants. Even in today's principal upland bird areas of east-central, south-central and southwest Iowa, pheasant and quail numbers have declined because of the loss of one or more of these essentials of life. Ducks and muskrats followed the same pattern, as many small marshes and potholes were drained and converted to corn.

Farming and farm programs have impacted farmers also. No longer do farmers use intensive human labor for crop production, nor do most farmers have a balanced program of crops and livestock. Big expensive machinery and high land prices have accompanied this change. These changes have caused farm size and cost of production to increase. Production of corn and soybeans has become so great that prices have been forced down. This, when combined with high production costs have made farming a "non-profit" business. The old economic law of supply and demand is actively at work.

In a state like Iowa, people are tied closely to the soil and what it produces. Intensive land use has accelerated soil erosion. If our soil is not protected, it will someday demand that we pay the price of poor stewardship in full.

Loss of wildlife, timber, grassland and clean water has caused a decline in the quality of life for most Iowans. This comes in several forms including polluted drinking water, silted streams, reduced soil fertility, less scenic surroundings and reduced opportunities for hunting, fishing,



hiking and other forms of recreation. There are solutions to these drastic problems and a common solution would address the dilemma for both agricultural interests and wildlife. Government and public must work together to protect our natural resources so we can draw on them in a real time of need. Valuable topsoil needs protection, not irresponsible exploitation in a time of too much production. Subsidized programs like the Garrison Diversion in North Dakota should not spend large sums of money to create more cropland at the expense of valuable wetlands (this project equates to giving each of the 400 farmers a \$1.6 million federal water subsidy to grow more food the government will subsidize further with crop-support programs). Nor should we provide tax breaks to those who wish to convert western grasslands to irrigated cropland, marshlands to corn, or southern bottomland hardwoods to soybeans. These actions are costing all of us only to benefit a few and further farming's real problem of overproduction.

The new farm bill is a move in the right direction. A set-aside of 40 million acres reduce erosion is also a good start toward providing solutions to farm and wildlife problems. The sodbuster and swampbuster provisions would not provide support payments on new land put into production. Other desired aspects of the new set-aside, require marginal lands to be seeded down for 10 years. This would reduce soil loss, cut production and benefit wildlife. Improved hunting, fishing, bird watching and sightseeing opportunities would benefit all society and, at the same time, bolster a sagging farm economy.

The future of Iowa's wildlife populations and Iowa itself are at stake. We cannot continue to degrade our environment and expect people or industry to stay where few recreational opportunities exist, clean water is a problem and overproduction of farm products has created a negative economic atmosphere.

A comprehensive program such as this one that promotes good agricultural practices interspersed with well-managed natural resources will, in the long run, truly benefit all Iowans.

## A Landowner's Guide to DEVELOPING WILDLIFE COVER

By Neil Heiser



Ron Johnson

Wildlife is a product of the land. Various animal species depend entirely upon their environment for cover, food and water. If one of these ingredients is missing, wildlife will exist in low numbers, if at all. In Iowa, both nesting and winter cover have been lost to the extensive conversion of natural cover to cropland. Reestablishment of this habitat is essential to improving wildlife populations.

Finding the right assistance in planning and developing wildlife cover areas can be confusing. The following information deals with the programs and agencies where such assistance is available. Owners of backyards and small acreages, as well as larger farm operations, can find help.

Farm ownerships and larger acreages that qualify as farm units under Agriculture Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS) guidelines have several alternatives available to them for improving or developing wildlife cover. Various wildlife management practices that are compatible with local farm operations are critical to resident wildlife at all periods of the year. Many of these practices may help control soil erosion or provide an economic benefit to the landowner.

Wildlife management biologists of the Iowa Conservation Commission

are available to assist private landowners in developing a wildlife plan for their farm, or to provide technical help for specific cover-improvement practices. They provide assistance in the design including the selection of plant species for maximum wildlife use. Assistance is also given the qualifying landowner by suggesting what programs or cost-sharing funds might be used to develop the area.

Programs available may include set asides, cost-sharing the expenses for developing wildlife areas, assistance in planting such tracts, tax incentives to preserve important existing habitat such as timber, wetlands, native prairie and windbreaks and sources of trees and shrubs to develop the area.

### 1985 FARM BILL

Land-diversion programs administered by the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture to reduce crop production have the potential to create vast acreages of wildlife habitat on privately owned farmlands. Because these programs seldom specify plantings of adequate wildlife cover and most are in effect for only a year at a time, this potential has seldom been realized. The 1985 Farm Bill, however, was structured to provide long-term soil, water and wildlife conservation benefits in addition to the traditional commodity control features. Final



*In Iowa, both nesting and winter cover for wildlife is rapidly being lost. The new shelterbelt program, beneficial to both the landowner and wildlife, may reverse this trend.*

decisions on how the act will be administered were not available at the time of this writing, but four features of the bill appear to provide substantial wildlife benefits.

The biggest impact will be realized from the creation of a 40-million-acre conservation reserve, which will retire erodible lands that have been cropped two of the last five years. Contracts will last ten years and require the establishment of permanent vegetation on these acres on a 50-percent cost-share basis. Farmers will bid the acreages to be set aside, cost-share amounts and set-aside payments competitively. The program will retire 5 million acres in 1986, 10 million acres in 1987, 1988 and 1989, and 5 million acres in 1990. Up to 11 million acres of land will be eligible for the program in Iowa. If permanent seedings of native grasses, introduced grasses and legumes or woody plants are established, and mowing and grazing are prohibited until after critical nesting seasons, the wildlife benefits will be substantial.

The bill contains popularly titled "swampbuster" and "sodbuster" provisions which will prevent landowners who continue to drain wetlands or plow highly erodible lands from participating in many USDA crop subsidy plans. It also provides for conservation easements whereby land use may be stipulated and public access allowed to private lands secured by FMHA loans, in return for reducing the debt load.

Sign-up periods for these programs are targeted for mid-February. Details and information will be available from county ASCS offices by late January.

### **COST-SHARING PROGRAMS**

The most widely used cost-sharing program is the agricultural conservation program funded annually by the ASCS. Qualifying landowners can receive cost-sharing to develop wild-



Jerry Leonard

life habitat under the WL-1 practice. This program is dependent on federal funding and county ASCS priority. The local ASCS office has qualifications, funding levels and application procedures.

Two cost-sharing programs available through the Iowa Conservation Commission include the warm-season grass pasture program and the shelterbelt (windbreak) program. The warm-season pasture program pays 50 percent of the costs to establish native grasses, including big bluestem, Indian grass and switchgrass on private lands in selected counties. This program, funded by sportsmen through the purchase of habitat stamps, is designed to provide an agricultural crop that will benefit both wildlife in the form of needed nesting cover, and the landowner in the form of economically desirable pasture or seed production.

The shelterbelt program was designed to augment the agricultural conservation program's WL-1 wildlife-cover practice by providing additional cost-sharing to develop larger windbreaks or improve existing windbreaks in selected counties in northern Iowa. Large, well-designed windbreaks provide vital winter and nesting cover to a variety of wildlife species. As a result of the benefits to all wildlife, both sportsmen through the habitat stamp and nongame enthusiasts through the "Chickadee Checkoff" share in its cost. Details concerning funding and county eligibility are available from area wildlife biologists and local SCS offices.

If a county has a Pheasants Forever chapter, cost-sharing may be available through that organization for various cover-improvement projects. Local members, the local county conservation board executive officer, or the area wildlife biologist may have further information.

### **PLANTING ASSISTANCE**

Local county conservation boards can provide another valuable service to area residents who wish to develop an extensive wildlife area. Many such boards have an "Acres for Wildlife" program. Under this program, county conservation board personnel plant trees and shrubs provided by the landowner. Where available, the program generally requires the landowner to protect the tract for a period of ten years. Many boards also have tree planters available for interested landowners to use.

### **PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTIONS**

An important area of potential help available to landowners is property tax relief. Four basic habitat types — forest reserve, wildlife habitat, native prairie and wetland — may qualify for these exemptions.

Under Iowa law, a landowner may set aside certain timbered land tax free. Forest reservation guidelines require that the tract be at least two acres in size, contain at least 200 trees per acre and be protected from grazing. Requests for property-tax exemptions should be made to



county assessors by April 15 of the assessment year.

The wildlife-cover exemption is designed primarily for old or established windbreaks, food patches or small odd areas. A maximum of two acres may be set aside for wildlife cover under tax-exempt status. Applications must be made through the area wildlife biologist by April 15 of the assessment year.

Participation for setting aside wetlands, forest cover, open prairie, river and stream banks, and rivers/streams must be approved by county boards of supervisors. If a county participates, the parcel of property must be at least two acres in size and not used for economic gain. Information and applications for this exemption can be obtained from the local SCS office in the county where the land is located. Applications must be made by April 15 of the assessment year.

A final cover type allowing tax-exempt status is native prairie. Though very limited in acreage, this critical habitat type can be excluded from property taxes by contacting local county conservation boards and filing an application on or before Feb. 1 of the year for which the exemption is requested.

## BACKYARD OR SMALL ACREAGE LANDOWNER

The backyard or small-acreage landowner is primarily involved with "do-it-yourself" habitat or cover. Many landowners would like to attract wildlife close to their homes and enjoy the proximity of birds and mammals for their aesthetic value, for hobbies such as photography and birdwatching, or for a source of outdoor education.

Some planning is necessary. "Attracting Backyard Wildlife" is a publication soon to be provided by Iowa's nongame program which discusses many of the considerations necessary to plan such an area. It recommends plant species that are both attractive to wildlife and suited to various conditions of soil, mois-

*Landowners, both large and small, can help establish and maintain wildlife habitat. Songbird and wildlife packets of shrubs and seedlings are available at low cost from the state nursery.*

ture and sunlight. It will soon be available free by writing to the Iowa Conservation Commission, Wallace State Office Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0034; or from your local wildlife biologists.

Other agencies which may offer handouts or expertise include county conservation boards, local soil conservation service personnel (a handout of interest is entitled "Invite Birds to Your Home") and the National Wildlife Federation through their Backyard Wildlife Program, 1412 Sixteenth Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20036. Specific questions or requests involving unusual or special nongame species can be directed to Iowa's nongame wildlife biologist, Wildlife Research Station, Boone, Iowa 50036.

## SOURCE OF LOW-COST TREES AND SHRUBS

A last area of help to landowners is provided by the state forest nursery in Ames. Many species of evergreen, hardwood and shrub seedlings are available at low cost for developing wildlife cover. These seedlings provide a ready-made source for a committed landowner intent on improving an area for wildlife. Application forms for state forest nursery

stock can be obtained from ICC offices, many SCS offices, county conservation boards or the nursery at Ames. Applications are available in late fall and seedlings should be reserved as early as possible to avoid shortages.

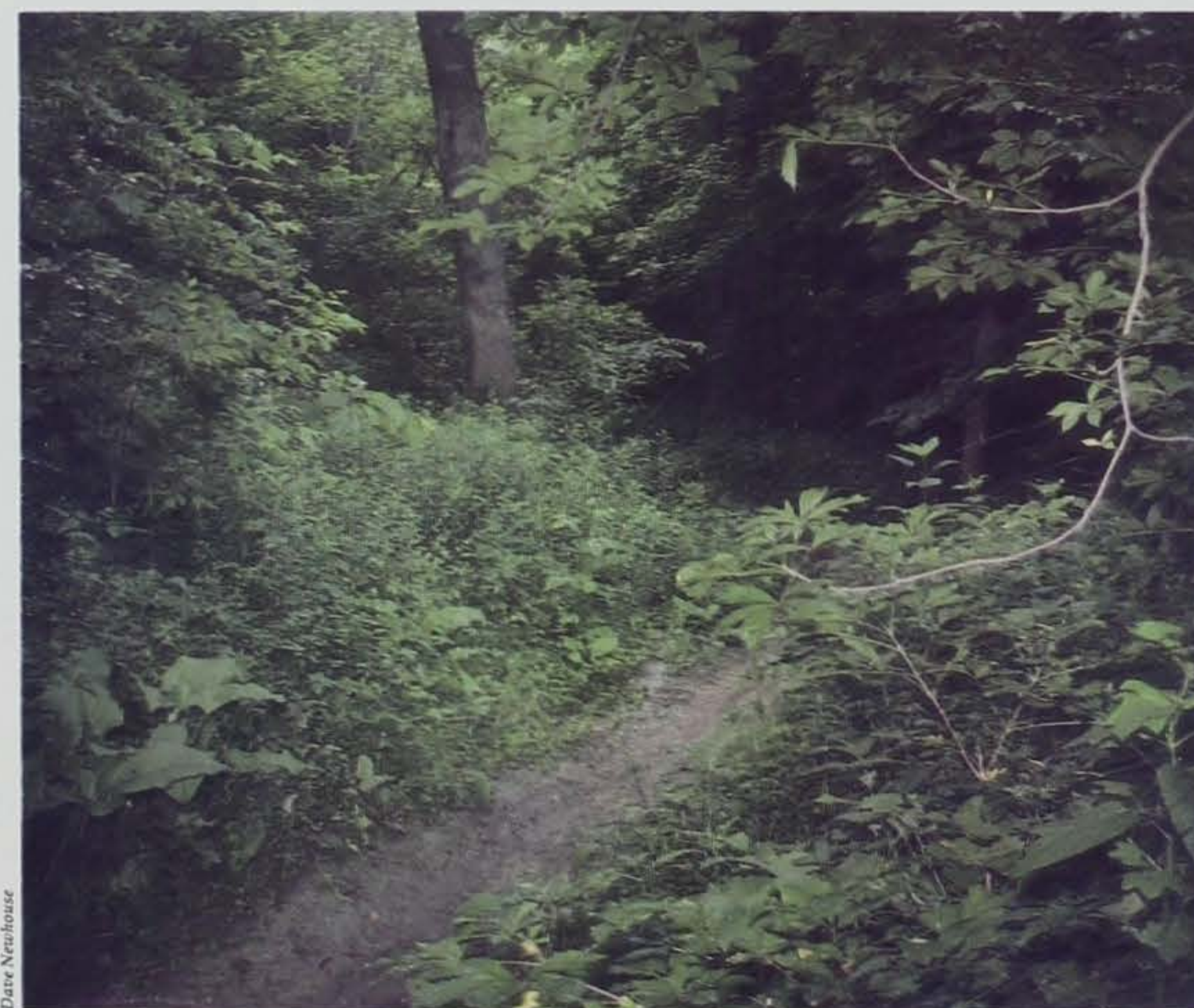
The wildlife resource in Iowa depends upon the land for its survival. As stewards of the land, Iowans must be concerned with the future of this valuable resource. Landowners, both large and small, hold the key to that wildlife legacy. Farm programs, cost-sharing programs and Iowa Conservation Commission programs coupled with property tax relief and local county conservation board incentives work together for qualified landowners.

The trend toward decreasing wildlife habitat can be reversed. Although landowners hold the key to correcting that trend, sportsmen and nongame enthusiasts share the goal of providing a wildlife resource for the next generation to enjoy.

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*Neil Heiser is the wildlife management supervisor for northwest Iowa stationed at Spirit Lake. He holds an M.S. degree from Iowa State University and has been employed by the commission since 1972.*

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Dave Newhouse



# Landscaping With Iowa's Native Bounty

By Judd Ulrich

Who isn't impressed with Iowa's beauty? If you're dazzled by the rich, warm hues of the beckoning countryside, you should seriously consider bringing the countryside to you and enjoying spring flowers, autumn leaves and other good things at close range — permanently.

Iowa's native residents of the plant kingdom had long fed the bison when the first wagon wheels brushed by. They had adapted, survived, and thrived in spite of floods, droughts, frigid winters, scorching summer heat, and even prairie fires.

Today these healthy specimens of living history can successfully solve a host of landscaping problems ranging from poor soil to steep rocky slopes. If you lack the time to water, prune, mulch, feed, and protect, but would like a natural, professionally landscaped look, Iowa's native plants are for you. With practically any kind of a start they'll contribute years of maintenance-free beauty to any landscape under just about any conditions.

Several of my favorite natives were rescued from an abandoned railroad

right-of-way on a memorable hike with my young son four years ago. After just an initial watering and practically the coldest winter and hottest summer on record, our "project" is now prospering and spreading in a wide border where dozers left hard-packed clay, unworthy of even the term "soil". Try any one or all four of these favorites listed below and besides glorious fall color, you'll reap dividends throughout the year.

## GRAY DOGWOOD

(*Comus racemosa*)

In late May white flowers in two-inch cone-shaped clusters cover this large, spreading shrub for at least ten days. The resulting white fruits ( $\frac{1}{4}$ " diameter) against the handsome gray-green foliage are striking and remain for the rest of the summer. As autumn approaches the leaves gradually take on deep purplish red tones, varying in intensities from one specimen to another.

Since deciduous trees and shrubs are dormant for five to six months each year, their contribution to the winter landscape should also be considered. According to many authorities in landscape architecture,



Ken Formanek



Judd Ulrich

Some examples of Iowa's native bounty — smooth sumac (above), wild rose (right) and serviceberry (far right). Homeowners may wish to try these and other native species to provide a more natural landscape to their yard.



herein lies the greatest value of gray dogwood. The ends of the stems bearing the fruits remain a noticeable dark red all winter long; second year stems are a lighter reddish brown; older wood is a distinct light gray. These outstanding contrasts are especially beautiful when observed against a backdrop of fluffy white snow or a light-colored wall.

Gray dogwood will thrive in the poorest of soils under the most difficult conditions — full sun or shade, wet or dry. For best performance it naturally chooses partial to full sun and well drained to dry soils, such as southern slopes and rocky hill tops. A few plants quickly form a colony. Use it in borders or ditches, near large buildings, along fence rows, or on difficult slopes.

### SMOOTH SUMAC (*Rhus glabra*)

The flaming orange-scarlet-red foliage of this hardy friend is a familiar autumn sight to anyone traveling along Iowa's roadways. Consider its value in your own landscape. A small tree, it spreads at least as wide as it is tall (9-15') and forms a flat top. Its coarse, crooked, leaning trunks and scraggly branches covered with scaly gray bark are set in fine contrast to the dark-green, fernlike, compound leaves. Flowers are erect, pyramidal "torches" containing interesting globe-shaped "hairy berries" that change from yellow-green to crimson, persisting all through the



Judd Ulrich

winter and attracting all kinds of birds.

Sumac grows vigorously in any soil, from gravel to heavy clay. It knows no disease or insect and successfully weathers severe drought and even pollution. Two requirements it demands are full sun and good drainage. Since sumac suckers and forms wide-spreading colonies in all directions, it should not be used as a specimen or foundation plant, unless you're willing to continually pull up and trim off the runners.

With plenty of room to spread, sumac can be extremely effective in masses, naturalizing waste areas, along banks, roads and ditches. A grouping along a driveway or lane says "welcome" all year long.

### WILD ROSE (*Rosa virginiana*)

That's right, Iowa's state flower is one of the most handsome native roses. It has just a few benign prickles. Guaranteed with your planting you will take time to smell these roses. Hundreds of fragrant, pink flowers cover a border grouping day after day early in June. The glossy, dark-green foliage progressively changes first to purple then to orange-red, crimson and yellow as fall approaches. Shiny, bright-red fruits (hips) last all winter unless eaten by wildlife, or human health food buffs. The reddish canes of this medium-size shrub, often forming a dense mass of stems, are attractive all winter. For an effective barrier or informal hedge, for difficult sites such as banks, cuts, fills or sandy soils, for a striking backdrop against spring-flowering perennials consider the rose. For an old-fashioned ornamental along a graying weathered fence, or for simply a touch of class in any garden, consider Iowa's maintenance-free wild rose.

### SERVICEBERRY (*Amelanchier canadensis* or *laevis*)

The two varieties are very similar in most characteristics and referred to interchangeably by some authorities. These shrubs or small trees, also commonly called Juneberries, were valued by the American Indians for their small, apple-like fruits which change from green to red to purplish

black. They are still delicious in jams, jellies, and pies! Competition, however, is heavy; numerous birds and mammals quickly nab any of the juicy delicacies reaching maturity.

The flowers, individual white blooms clustered on three-inch spikes, are a wonderful surprise in mid-April even before leaf emergence. Medium blue-green summer foliage changes to breathtaking fall colors which can vary from yellow to apricot-orange to dull, deep, dusty red. It's rated by many as one of the finest specimens for fall coloration. Slender multiple trunks and smooth slate gray branches are streaked with deep, red fissures — striking winter characteristics!

In the wild, serviceberries are prominent in the forest understory on moist north or east slopes. Although adaptable to full sun and dry conditions, for optimum results leave these beauties at home in partial to full shade and in moist but well-drained soil. Serviceberries are now used in all facets of landscaping, but their most effective use is in naturalistic plantings. They blend well with evergreen backgrounds, shrub borders, on the edges of woodlands, ponds or streambanks, even on north or east exposures in residential plantings.

If you know of a natural area that is about to be destroyed, use it as a source of native seedlings. You may be able to rescue the four suggested varieties — and many more. You'll never landscape for less money. Everyone involved will show interest and satisfaction in the results for years to come. If scavenger hunts are not for you several local nurseries carry potted specimens. Even "city-slicker" cultivars of some country cousins are available.

Whether you choose to "rough it" or visit the nursery, you'll soon discover that these choices are just the beginning of a long list of native plants that can teach us plenty about longevity, utility and beauty in the landscape around us.

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Judd Ulrich is the owner/manager of a building maintenance service in Dallas County. He holds a B.S. degree in landscape architecture and business administration from Iowa State University.

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# WARDEN'S DIARY

By Jerry Hoilien

Then there was George! George Kaufman was a legend and that legend still wanders the deep valleys of Northeast Iowa. I can still hear the whisper of his canvas jacket on a willow just at dusk as I sit watching the ol' river slide silently by. The legend moves up and down the river bank, still watching over his charges, as he did so faithfully for more than forty-two years as a warden.

I remember those beady eyes sparkling as he talked to this younger warden. Though I had been on a whole five years — that was "just barely started" according to George. "Why, I remember," would start him on another fabulous tale of the "Good Old Days!" I could and did sit for hours listening and learning from that old veteran. I never knew just how old he really was and he wasn't telling either.

George retired as a full-time officer in 1964. He'd been working longer than I'd been alive. He was living in a small cabin at the Yellow River Forest, taking care of it during the weekends and for the rest of the week for that matter. As always, it was a way-of-life, rather than a job with George.

I had just moved to Allamakee County and was anxious to learn as much as possible about the area.

What better source of information and history than "the old warden"! His help was always full measure and running over (the running part came when he would stretch the size or numbers, particularly about fish). He knew everybody and all their kids in the country. He loved people and enjoyed life.

George liked to tell about the time he spotted all the pheasant hunters just shooting up a storm, and it was a week before the season. He couldn't get over it! He was parked on the road, waiting for them to come through the cornfield so he could grab them. The local mailman came by and when George didn't recognize him, it dawned on him that he was parked on the Iowa-Minnesota line. The hunters were in Minnesota and their season was open. "Close," he would laugh, "Real close!"

Jack McSweeney, who was, and is, in charge of the Yellow River Forest and created many of its multiple-use concepts, was a close and devoted friend of George's. They would hunt together. Once, Kate Quillan who ran the Harpers Ferry Cafe had a big feed for a bunch of us with the geese they had gotten. It was fabulous with all the trimmings. The next day, Jack and I stopped for lunch and he inquired if she had any goose left to

make a sandwich. She did and was it ever good again. As we left Jack walked to the cash register and pulled out his billfold. Kate started to tell him the price when she looked at me and looked shocked. "Gosh, I can't charge for that!" We all laughed and I told her I hadn't made a case all day but she had come close. Good people.

George had several bad times in the hospital. I remember getting a call from Des Moines to get to LaCrosse hospital right away as George wasn't expected to live. I rushed up there and as I came down the hall, thinking the worst, I heard a giggle coming from the room. There sat George in the middle of the bed, telling warden stories to three cute little nurses.

Once when he was really very ill, he opened his eyes, looked at me and said, "I just dreamt I cooked a great big walleye!" I told him to get well and I'd catch him that great big walleye. Well, he did get better and I did catch him a thirteen-pound dandy. Then he gave me the dickens because I didn't dress it for him. That was George!

He'll always walk these hills as long as there are those of us who remember him. The next time you're in the Yellow River Forest, stop at the area headquarters, by Jack's office, and read George Kaufman's plaque on the large stone there in the grassy lane in the valley. Pause a moment with that crusty old warden and just listen...you'll hear him.

## Plant Tale of the Month



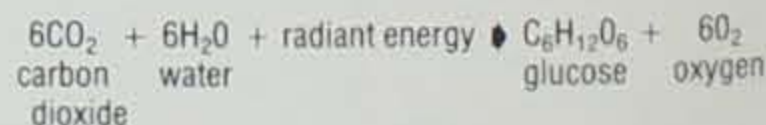
Ken Formanek

### A MOST IMPORTANT MOLECULE

By Dean M. Roosa

The sun's rays which blanket the earth do little direct good to animals, except to keep them warm, enable them to see, and for some to perhaps get a suntan. There must be a special agent positioned between the sun and the animals to convert the energy of the rays to something useable. This special agent which nature has devised is the chlorophyll molecule, shown above. This molecule absorbs the sun's rays and starts the

process of photosynthesis, which is the synthesis of a sugar from carbon dioxide and water, in the presence of light. The useable product is glucose, a sugar which is stored in grains and in the plant body; an important by-product is oxygen:



Here is a process which should interest everyone; one which utilizes a molecule to start a process which provides us food and oxygen. This molecule is found in every green plant; it is provided by nature at no cost; it is the reason we are here. Don't you agree it is one of our most important molecules?



## County Conservation Board Feature

### Black Hawk County



#### IOWA'S UNUSUAL WETLANDS

By Jeff L. Knapp

People acquainted with Iowa's wetlands and marshes usually envision the prairie potholes of northwestern Iowa, backwater oxbows along rivers and streams or artificial impoundments. Iowa also contains an unusual kind of wetland which frequently occurs in eastern Iowa and rarely elsewhere in the country. For lack of a better name, they could be referred to as eolian sands wetlands. Ancient windblown or eolian sands and a period of dry climate in Iowa's history played a dominant role in the creation of these unique areas.

Wetlands created by eolian sands have origins 12,000 to 14,000 years ago, during the retreat of Iowa's last glacier. Most of the rivers in the state carried large volumes of water melting from glaciers. The rivers fluctuated greatly in size compared to today, especially during seasonal melting. Vast amounts of silt and sand were deposited on broad flat floodplains of the rivers. These floodplains remained largely unvegetated because of this accumulation. The exposed floodplains were subjected to strong northwest winds which reworked the silt and sand deposits.

Silt was carried aloft and deposited great distances by winds as material called loess. The coarser, heavier sand particles were not carried aloft, but moved as a broad blanket of sand off of the floodplain and onto the adjacent uplands. The sand usually mantled the uplands to considerable depth.

These sand deposits created wetlands. The manner in which the sand was deposited allowed three types of wetlands to be formed. The broad deep blanket of sand deposited on the uplands contained many natural depressions or swales. These were later filled with water run-off and eventually became wetlands.

Occasionally long sand dunes would spawn off of the mantle of sand and cross the landscape. The climate must have been relatively dry because the sand crossed valleys which now carry water. As the sand moved across the landscape it would block existing valleys. With the return of a more humid environment many of the sand blockages were eroded away. However, some remained and the area they blocked developed into a second type of wetland.

A third type of wetland created by eolian sand deposits promoted prairie sedge marshes rather than open water marshes. This wetland developed from water seepage where the sand and underlying glacial till met. The resulting seep or spring was capable of providing adequate moisture to promote a wetland environment.

As with other wetlands in Iowa, those created by eolian sands have been impacted by agricultural practices and other human developments. Still, they have not been removed with as much vigor as the prairie pothole marshes elsewhere in the state. The sands surrounding the wetlands developed into poor soils and were not converted to cropland.

Such wetlands are usually found in uplands to the southeast of major rivers. The region in eastern Iowa known as the Iowan Surface contains hundreds of these unusual wetlands. They vary in size from less than an acre to well over 60 acres. These wetlands may also be found scattered throughout the state although with less frequency than on the Iowan Surface.

Recently, the fragile vegetative cover on sand deposited long ago has been disturbed and the sand is once again exposed to the wind. Deflation basins or blowouts may occur. In some cases, when the depressions reach the watertable or have adequate run-off, a wetland develops.

Many of these wetlands can still be found and visited. A four-square-mile complex of wetlands and sand prairie remnants are established on the eolian sand deposits in northwestern Black Hawk County. The Cedar Hills Sand Prairie, formerly called the Mark Sand Prairie, is a portion of this complex. The 35-acre prairie is owned by the Iowa Nature Conservancy and managed by the University of Northern Iowa. The sand prairie is open to the public, providing a glimpse of these unusual wetlands.

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*Jeff Knapp is the planning and administrative assistant for the Black Hawk County Conservation Board.*

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*Goose Lake, in Black Hawk County, was impounded by an eolian sand deposit.*



Jeff Knapp



By Tom Boland

# Hydropower Development on the Upper Mississippi

*At first glance, low-head hydropower may not appear to have many environmental impacts. Nevertheless it would have an impact on an extremely important resource on the upper Mississippi River — that of aquatic life.*



Less than a decade ago a smiling U.S. President paddle-wheeled down the mighty Mississippi River. It was an attempt for President Jimmy Carter to become acquainted with grass roots America. Local river people were thrilled to see, take pictures of and even shake hands with such a renowned political leader. At that time, no one had any idea of the future impact this seemingly short trip could have on the fish and wildlife resources of the Upper Mississippi River.

As you remember, the mid 1970's was a period of oil embargoes, escalating energy costs, and recognition of the grossly inefficient use of many energy resources. It was the beginning of a national awareness that we were consuming far more energy than we produced. And with the establishment of an oil cartel, the U.S. soon had to pay the price that was set and controlled by the foreign energy-producing countries. It was a period when leaders spoke of an urgent need to conserve and reduce our energy needs, to locate more energy reserves, and to diversify and expand our methods of energy production. It was during this time that President Carter commented that hydropower development on the Upper Mississippi River (UMR) should be investigated. And it was the beginning of an era which could convert most of the Upper Mississippi River locks and dams to low-head hydropower production.

It was also during the energy crisis that federal laws and policies were changed to encourage hydropower development. Federal money was directed through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to determine the feasibility of hydropower at each lock and dam facility on the UMR. Federal laws were changed to ensure that larger power producers would buy electricity from the small scale producers at a higher-than-current production rate. Attractive tax advantages for the hydropower developer were made available. These mea-



asures appeared to be necessary steps in the development of low-head hydropower on our nation's major river and streams. However, the recent rush to diversify the nation's electrical power production via low-head hydropower has raised many questions about possible environmental impacts. Most state and federal fish and wildlife agencies believe these environmental concerns must be addressed.

At first glance, low-head hydropower may not appear to have many environmental impacts. There are no smoke emissions which would contribute to the problem of acid rain. There are no dangerous radioactive materials to handle or dispose of. There would likely be only limited visual (aesthetic) or noise problems associated with most installations. There would be no mining operations for fuel, so the environmental problems associated with mining would be eliminated. Nevertheless, hydropower development would have an impact on an extremely important resource on the upper Mississippi River — that of aquatic life.

The Iowa Conservation Commission recently stated the major concerns regarding low-head hydropower development on the Upper Mississippi River. They are:

1. Fish mortality, including mortality from egg and larvae drift by turbine entrainment, as well as the death of juvenile and adult fish. Concern is expressed not only for single installation entrainment, but for the cumulative effects from many facilities.

2. Fish movement and migration. Research has documented that many fish species exhibit significant interpool movements in the UMR for a variety of reasons. With few exceptions, this activity is essential to perpetuation of fish populations and, without interpool movement, populations would be jeopardized. The American eel is the only endemic species in the river with migratory behavior, but several fish, including walleye, sauger, paddlefish, catfish, and sturgeon, demonstrate accelerated interpool movement dur-

ing specific seasons that hydropower operations could harm.

3. Tailwater hydraulics. Historically, tailwaters are some of the best fish harvest areas and hydropower generation would cause significant changes in the characteristics of the tailwater hydraulics. Bottom scouring and the depositing of substrate material in the tailwaters would be altered greatly and have a profound influence on fish staging, feeding, loafing, spawning, and harvest. Winter ice conditions would be modified, producing direct effects on fishing access. Many wildlife species depend on the tailwater for a food source in winter. The existence of these animals could be jeopardized.

4. Water level stability. Hydropower projects that are currently proposed state that operations would be in the "run-of-the-river" mode. Definition of this mode allows for water level fluctuations in hydropower operations that would harm fish populations and fishing success. Resource agencies have encouraged the Corps of Engineers to stabilize water discharge stages wherever possible to benefit fish and wildlife. This potential management tool would be nearly impossible if hydropower units were in operation.

5. Fish stocking. State agencies and the owners of the Quad-Cities Nuclear Power Station have recently launched, as part of a mitigatory agreement, a long-term fish stocking program to establish the wiper as a game fish in the middle section of the UMR and to stock walleye to supplement natural populations in Pool 14. Both species are notorious for extensive intra-river movement and widespread distribution in both upstream and downstream directions. Consequently, serious concerns must be expressed over the impact of hydropower development on this program.

Generally, most fish and wildlife agencies feel that the biological information needed to address these concerns is presently not available. In addition, the developers of hydropower must provide the necessary data to address these concerns and be held accountable for any negative

environmental impact caused by development.

Is there presently a real need for hydropower development on the UMR?

This is a basic question that has not been sufficiently addressed by hydropower developers. Much of the push to develop hydropower may be due to other than a lower case need. The December 20, 1984, Upper Mississippi River Conservation Committee (UMRCC) position letter on UMR hydropower development stated, "Hydropower is being considered at 22 of 29 locks and dams on the Mississippi River. The total output for all these plants would be...the equivalent of one medium to small-sized coal-fired plant."

The UMRCC statement continued, "This relatively small amount of power would not significantly affect future consumption of fossil fuel or future construction of fossil fuel plants in the area. In contrast, the Mississippi River as a recreational resource has been estimated to generate close to one billion dollars annually to the regional economy. The combined energy production value of ALL the proposed hydropower plants along the river is dwarfed by this figure."

Is hydropower development on the UMR a gain or loss? If developed to its greatest potential, hydropower would contribute an insignificant (approximately two percent) amount of the area's energy needs. However, most fish and wildlife agencies believe that the potential for increasing the degradation of the Upper Mississippi River aquatic resource is great.

A more common-sense approach to hydropower licensing and development, concurrent with a reevaluation of the *true* cost-benefit of hydropower development on the Upper Mississippi River is essential.

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*Tom Boland is a fisheries biologist at Bellevue. He received an M.S. degree from the University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point, in fisheries management. He has been with the commission for seven years.*

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## Wildlife in Art Show Set April 4, 5 and 6



*Art Benoit of Marshalltown with his nearly complete "Wetland Heritage — Canada Geese", a 54 x 36 oil completed for the third annual show. Prints will be available from an edition of 250 at \$125, signed and numbered by Benoit.*

Fifty-eight Iowa artists, at this very minute, are applying some of the finishing touches to many dozens of artworks never before displayed to the public...but soon to be unveiled at the 1986, third annual Iowa Wildlife and Nature in Art Sale and Exhibition.

Mark your calendar, now, for April 4, 5 and 6 so you will not forget to make the scene at Adventureland's Palace Theater, just off of I-80 at Altoona. Sponsored by the Conservation Commission and Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, with all profits going for environmental education in Iowa, this is Iowa's largest, best attended, highest sale volume art show.

There are a number of improvements this year, according to Ross Harrison, show advisor for the Conservation Commis-

sion. "In addition to the artists having all of their original works on display and available for purchase, we are offering a special room in which we will be selling prints, reproductions and novelty items from the artists," said Harrison.

A special event kicks off the show as the designs for the state waterfowl, habitat and trout stamps are selected in a judged competition beginning at 3:30 p.m. at the Adventureland Inn's main banquet room. (This is at the Adventureland Inn Motel, not at the Palace Theater.) The doors to the art show open for the special Heritage Night festivities at 6 p.m. for holders of the \$25 tickets. Hors d'oeuvres will be served and guests will be given a free show catalog and poster, and will have the opportunity to visit more closely with the artists as the number of guests is limited to 450. The main event of Heritage Night will begin at 7:30 p.m. as Governor Terry Branstad conducts the Governor's auction. Featured artist Art Benoit of Marshalltown has donated the featured artwork to be sold at the auction, with all proceeds going to the show.

Saturday, April 5, the show opens to the general public at 10 a.m. and runs until 8 p.m. It is open Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Both days, a \$1 admission fee will be charged to persons older than 12 years. Youth are admitted free. (Parking is also free).

"This year's show has 13 more artists than last year's," said Harrison, "and includes seven of Iowa's premiere wildlife photographers.

## Legislation 1986 By Jane Messenger

The 1986 Iowa Conservation Commission legislative package is lead by a proposal to allow the sale of non-resident licenses for deer and turkey hunting. The provision would stipulate that such persons be from states that extend similar priorities to Iowans.

The Commission also asks to amend provisions governing the agency's Lands and Waters Division funds to provide for carry-over of revenues from year to year. This would mean that the funds would not go to the General Fund, but would remain with the Commission. Also, the proposal would allow the Commission to engage in various revenue-raising projects, including the sale

of items.

A third proposal would consolidate commercial fishing regulations into one code, establishing new fees. Commercial fishing for turtles would also be regulated.

Another proposal would allow Iowa's implied consent law to extend to snowmobile and boat operators as well as operators of motor vehicles.

The fifth proposal involves promoting wood as an energy source. Appropriations to the Conservation Commission would allow for: 1) Employment of one forester to serve as a wood energy coordinator; 2) A statewide inventory of forest acres to determine avail-

ability of wood for energy; 3) Establishment of five demonstration wood energy projects on public land, in consultation with the Iowa Energy Policy Council.

Another proposal would allow county conservation boards to spend \$25,000 instead of \$2,500 without the approval of the State Conservation Commission.

The Commission also asks for an increase in the snowmobile license fee from \$12 to \$20 for two years.

Finally, the Commission will ask for a joint House-Senate Resolution to double the acreage of forest land in Iowa.





## PARK USER PERMITS NOW AVAILABLE

from fees for activities within the area such as camping, swimming, or facility rental.

All school vehicles are exempt from the permit requirement when transporting students and faculty on official school business.

Motor vehicles being towed by or carried in or on another motor vehicle bearing a permit are exempt from the permit requirement so long as they remain attached and are not parked separately.

Vehicles with handicapped plates, wheelchair symbol decal or rearview mirror tag are exempt.

Free park user permits may be issued to qualifying Iowans in the county in which the applicant resides.

A person requesting the free permit must present one of the following items to the county recorder: 1) a

currently valid medical assistance identification card; 2) a written declaration stating that the person is receiving food stamps and a signed release authorizing the Department of Human Services to confirm his or her eligibility; or 3) proof (valid driver's license or nonoperator's ID card) of age 65 or over.

The person requesting the free permit must also provide a registration certificate for his or her motor vehicle, verification that a corporate-owned vehicle is assigned to the applicant for personal use; or certification that a vehicle owned by a relative provides the applicant's primary source of transportation.

State parks officials say revenue from the park user fee will be used to upgrade deteriorating facilities and maintain the areas.

## NOTICE:



Last month's front cover of the *Conservationist* featured a beautiful painting of nuthatches by J.F. Landenberger of Cedar Rapids. They were, of course, red-breasted nuthatches, not white-breasted as indicated in the caption. The red-breasted nuthatch is the only nuthatch with a white stripe above the eye and a black stripe through the eye.

# CONSERVATION

## Winners & Losers



Some farmers clear the trees next to the river to get in a few more rows of corn. Unfortunately, without the holding power of tree roots, the bank can erode faster and farther, leaving them with less available cropland than they started with.

## BIRDLINE

### UPDATES BIRDERS

An information service for birdwatchers has been established by the Iowa Ornithological Union. Updated every Monday afternoon, a tape recorded message on items of interest to birders can be heard by calling 1-319-622-3353.

The service also gives callers the opportunity to leave messages about their own bird observations at the end of the recording.





# Donations

Monticello Wreckers Monticello	50 truck rims and 150 car rims, total value of \$2,150 for fireplace construction at Wapsipinicon State Park	Bisom Truck Line Newton	27 truck rims valued at \$540 for fireplace construction at Rock Creek State Park
Katz Salvage Marion	Reinforcing rod valued at \$200 for fireplace construction at Wapsipinicon State Park	Hamburg Kiwanis Club Hamburg	\$50 for playground equipment at Waubonsie State Park
Ron Graham Waterloo	128 hours of volunteer labor valued at \$563 for park maintenance at George Wyth State Park	Anonymous	10 gallons Trimec herbicide valued at \$100 for vegetation management at Waubonsie State Park
Earl May Seed and Nursery Company Cedar Falls	39 trees and shrubs valued at \$557 for George Wyth State Park	Estherville Scrap Iron and Metal Company Estherville	22 truck rims valued at \$154 for fireplace construction at Ft. Defiance State Park
Robert Fisher Rockford	\$100 for playground equipment at McIntosh Woods State Park	Mid-Iowa Bassmasters Des Moines	\$1,611 for 400 metal signs and 100 posters stating "Help Save Iowa Fishery Resources, Release a Keeper Alive."
Jasper County Tire Newton	5 car rims valued at \$50 for fireplace construction at Rock Creek State Park	Des Moines Alternative School Conservation Class	40 cedar bluebird boxes valued at \$200
Barney's 66 Newton	10 car rims valued at \$100 for fireplace construction at Rock Creek State Park	Mrs. Evelyn Connell Des Moines	\$480 memorial gift in honor of William H. Connell, Sr. for fish and wildlife
Davis Mobil Newton	35 car rims valued at \$350 for fireplace construction at Rock Creek State Park	Grandchildren of John F. Zalesky	\$62 for waterfowl habitat maintenance at Hawkeye Wildlife Area



*The Iowa Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation recently donated an all terrain vehicle to the Iowa Conservation Commission to assist in its trap and transport program.*

*The above photograph shows the ATV being presented to Iowa Conservation Commission personnel. From left to right are Glenn Vondra of Grimes, (president of the Iowa Chapter), Charly Stills of New Virginia, (vice president of the Iowa Chapter) and Greg Hanson of Chariton, (turkey biologist for the Iowa Conservation Commission).*

## Environmental Education Courses

This spring, the UNI Institute for Environmental Education, through its Iowa Environmental Education Field Station Program, will offer a series of weekend courses for graduate credit. All courses will be offered at the Conservation Education Center in Springbrook State Park near Guthrie Center, Iowa.

Pre-registration is required for all courses. Final registration and dormitory assignment take place Friday evening from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Each pre-registration requires a \$25.00 nonrefundable deposit. All courses are limited to 40 students.

All listed costs include room and board and tuition or registration for each workshop.

### Spring Courses 1986

#### March 7-9

Iowa Hazardous Waste Disposal  
82:133g - 1 credit hour

#### April 4-6

Soil Loss/Water Pollution  
82:286 - 1 credit hour

#### Costs

Credit: \$78.00  
Noncredit: \$39.00

For specific information about each of these courses and events call the Conservation Education Center (515) 747-8383 or UNI (800) 772-1746 (toll free) or (319) 273-2122.

## Classroom Corner

*By Robert Rye*

What do you call the male and female of the following specific types of animals?

Type	Male	Female
Whitetail Deer	Buck	Doe
1. Duck		
2. Fox		
3. Goose		
4. Rabbit		
5. Pheasant		
6. Cats		
7. Turkey		
8. Raccoon		
9. Buffalo		

Answers:

1. Drake/Hen 2. Dog/Vixen 3. Gander/Goose  
4. Buck/Doe 5. Rooster/Hen 6. Tom/Queen  
7. Tom/Hen 8. Buck/Sow 9. Bull/Cow



# Champion Taxidermist

By Wendy Zohrer, Information Specialist

What does it take to become a world taxidermist? According to Joe Meder of Solon, Iowa, taxidermy is a study in animal behavior and the taxidermist then expresses that behavior in his/her interpretation of that animal.

Joe Meder won the world championship at the University of Kansas in Lawrence, in June. His entry was the interpretation of a white-tailed deer attempting to escape the harassment of flies. His attention to the rolled up tongue, the color of the veins in the ears, musculature in the neck and ears and the fly on the nose made his mounted deer head score highest of any white-tailed deer ever entered in competition. This world championship had approximately 550 entries and there had been representation from Japan, New Zealand, Australia as well as most states in the U.S.

There are three main areas considered during competition. They are: anatomical accuracy, naturalness of color and the taxidermist interpretation of the animal. In order to fulfill this criteria, Meder studies live animals and uses photos to assist in accuracy. He also makes fiberglass castings from road kills because one's interpretation of a feature may become distorted from the time of observation to when it is actually recreated in a mount.

Meder has been doing taxidermy for 16 years. Hunting with his father first sparked his interest in wildlife.

He expanded this interest by studying science education at the University of Iowa. He has since acquired a BS and MS in science education.

He still enjoys bow hunting and says, "It's not the trophy buck that makes the hunt a success but the relaxation and enjoyment of being outdoors." He does express a concern about our natural resources 50 years from now and wonders whether there will still be any wild game left for his son to hunt.

Taxidermy is no longer just a hobby for Meder. He opened his studio four years ago in his home in Solon. He has mounted everything from kangaroos to armadillos, but says that a turkey in full strut is still his most difficult species.

Winning the world championship in June was one of the most exciting days of his life. He summarizes this experience by saying, "I didn't win this on my own, but the support of my family and friends helped to make it possible. My wife especially supported me by allowing me to do my own thing. It was not easy for my family when this project took up my entire time for a month."

Winning this prestigious award is not the completion of a goal but merely a stepping stone. Meder is already making plans for his entry in next year's competition. His creative work in wildlife interpretation will be seen in many future shows. Look for it!



Joe Meder, 1985 world champion taxidermist and his winning mount.

## CALENDAR February-March, 1986

February 11	X-Country Skiing and Snowshoe Clinic, Snowshoeing: 3:45 p.m., Skiing: 7:00 p.m.	A.A. Call State Park Algona Kossuth County 1-800/242-5100 or 515/295-7981
February 15	Iowa Herpetology Meeting, 10:00 a.m.-Noon	Des Moines Center of Science and Industry Des Moines Polk County 515/274-4138
February 16	Checking up on the Chickadee Checkoff, 2:00 p.m.	Indian Creek Nature Center Linn County 319/362-0664
February 20	Raptors of Iowa: Session II, 7:30 p.m., "Injured Raptor Rehabilitation in Iowa"	Burt Community Room Kossuth County 515/295-2138
February 22	Maple Syruping Demonstration	Lake Cornelia Park Wright County 515/532-3185
February 22	Woodworking for Wildlife Workshop	Sharon Bluffs State Park Centerville Appanoose County 515/856-8528
February 22	Ski Fayette	Volga Lake Recreation Area Fayette County 319/425-3613
February 23 and March 9	Winter Hike, 2:00-3:00 p.m.	Lime Creek Nature Center Cerro Gordo County 515/423-5309
February 24	Walk When the Moon is Full, 7:30-8:00 p.m.	Eden Valley Refuge Nature Center, Clinton Clinton County 319/847-7202
February 25	Afterschool Snowshoe Clinic, 3:30 p.m.	Lakota Community School Kossuth County 515/295-2138
March 1	Maple Syrup Festival, 8:00 a.m.-Noon	Indian Creek Nature Center Linn County 319/362-0664
March 1	Winter Fun Day, Indoor/Outdoor Events	Joy Hollow Camp Plymouth County 712/947-4270
March 2	White Tail Deer Seminar "Rack Measuring", 1:00 p.m.	Kennedy Park Reception Ctr. Fort Dodge Webster County 515/576-4258
March 6	"Halley's Star Party", 7:00 p.m.	Warren County 515/961-6169
March 9	Maple Syruping (Free Samples), 1:00 p.m.	Liberty Center Public Park Warren County 515/961-6169
March 9	Great Horned Owl Look-out, 1:30-3:30 p.m.	Swan Lake State Park Carroll County 712/792-4614
March 13	Young Family Film Night, 7:00 p.m.	Burt Community Center Kossuth County 515/295-2138
March 15	Kite Flying	Lake Cornelia Park Wright County 515/532-3185
March 16	Winter Tree I.D., 2:00-3:30 p.m.	Lime Creek Nature Center Cerro Gordo County 515/423-5309
March 16	Discover Wildlife in Your World, 1:30-3:00 p.m.	Swan Lake State Park Carroll County 712/792-4614
March 20	Raptors of Iowa: Session III, 7:30 p.m.	Lake Smith Conservation Office Kossuth County 515/295-2138
March 23	Canoe Movie, 2:00-3:30 p.m.	Lime Creek Nature Center Cerro Gordo County 515/423-5309
March 25 & 27	Halley's Comet Watches, 5:30-7:00 a.m.	Fin and Feather Lake Cerro Gordo County 515/423-5309



# A NATURE TALE FOR KIDS

## THE REUNION

By Dean M. Roosa

Illustration by Brian Bemisdarfer

Changes in weather have a noticeable effect on the behavior of animals, including man. I can observe people's driving habits and predict, with some degree of accuracy, that a pronounced change in meteorological conditions is coming. But, changes are most apparent in our "lower" animal friends — those who have no heated house to warm them, no car to carry them, and no restaurant to feed them. I remember vividly the following episode, most of which is true, which was probably caused by the weather, the moon, and an apparent exuberance for life.

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Crooked Timber is in the river valley not far from my home. I go there often, occasionally hiking there when nature is in all its glory — blizzards, rain storms, and full moons. The place I call Crooked Timber is an example of years of mismanagement of a woodlot; a place where fast-growing boxelder trees grew in a crooked pattern as they recovered from the damage of logging, and as they searched for light in the canopy. It is in some ways an awful place; it is in some ways a wonderful place. My presence would sometimes send a white-tailed deer crashing through the underbrush, or a grey fox scurrying through the woods, or cause Mottie the woodchuck to whistle a warning at me. It was here I was dive-bombed by a screech owl, defending her newly fledged young. See? In some ways, it is a wonderful place.

One night, for no apparent reason, I felt the need to hike to Crooked Timber. There was a certain feeling in the air that something was about to happen. The sky was overcast; a light frosting of snow. Lights from the nearby town reflected from the low

clouds, faintly illuminating the landscape so every tree could be faintly seen. As I walked, a faint mist began, which quickly changed to hard pellets of ice bouncing as they lit on the ground. It was exhilarating. The noise of the sleet obscured any sound my footsteps made so I could walk unheard by other creatures. With an air of anticipation, I approached Crooked Timber.

My first inkling that I would not be disappointed came when a cottontail rabbit hopped within ten feet of me, unafraid. Soon another emerged from the shadows and hopped past my feet, apparently oblivious of me, reveling in the hissing sound of the falling sleet. I moved closer to Crooked Timber, accompanied by the two rabbits, who were also obviously headed there. Thus, the unlikely trio of a large dark form with a walking stick, accompanied by two cottontails, arrived at Crooked Timber one sleet-pelted night in January. I stopped. The rabbits continued into the timber, to be joined by another, then another and yet another.

It was fairly mild, so I stood motionless in a grove of cottonwoods to watch the rabbits cavorting in the

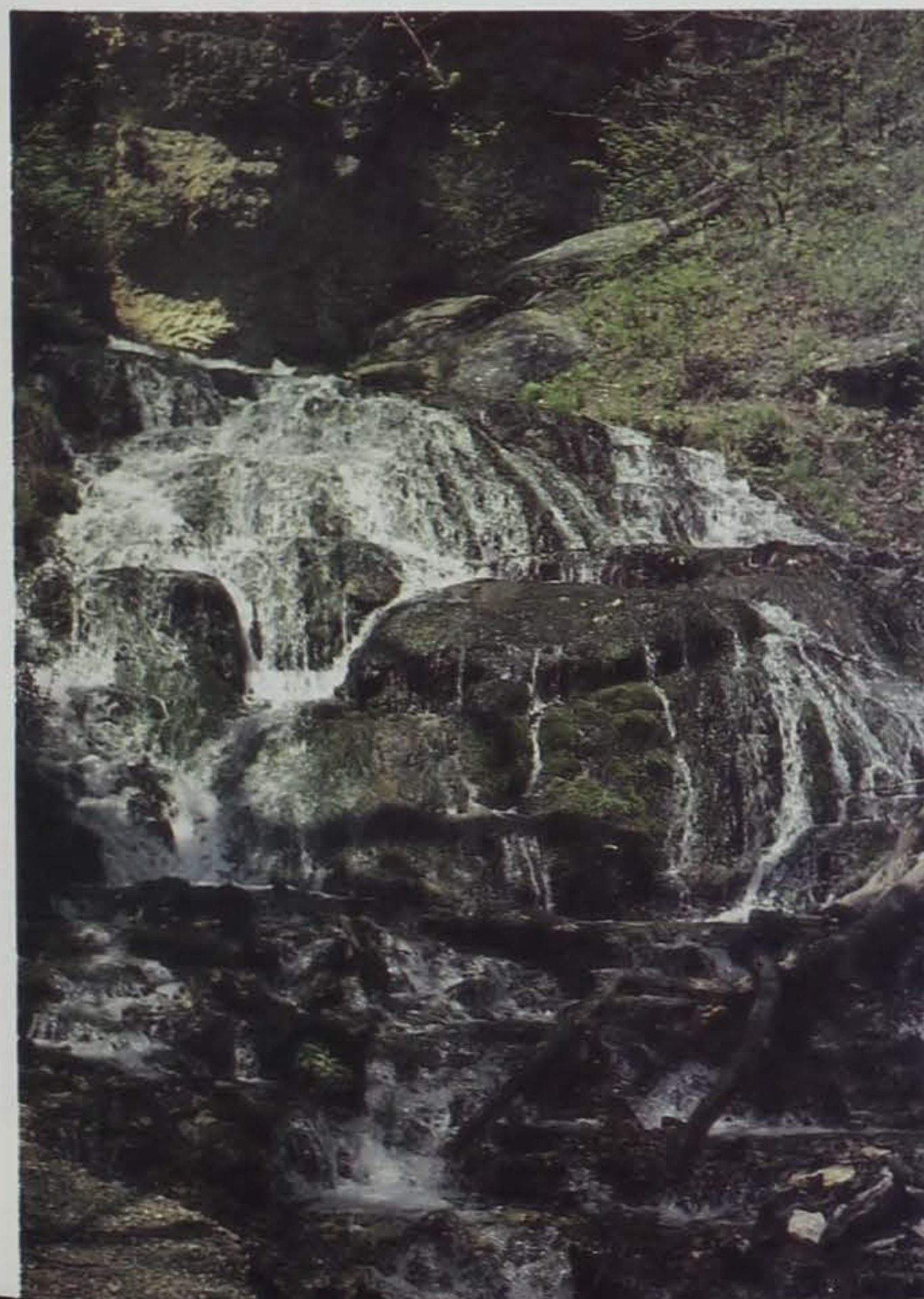
sleet. They would bound, stop to nibble on twigs, stand upright, race around each other, then repeat the process, obviously enjoying themselves. They were soon joined by Syl, the big Keg Valley buck and his family and a family from Sleepy Hollow. It was obvious rabbitdom was having what we humans would call a reunion. Soon 20 rabbits were seen in the heart of Crooked Timber. They would all suddenly stop, congregate in a small area, thump their feet, then, at a command completely missed by the human observer, bound away into the driving sleet. They were oblivious of the human intruder. As I watched I grew chilled and stamped my feet to warm them; no matter, the sleet muffled the noise and the rabbits didn't notice.

As suddenly as it began, the sleet stopped. Just as suddenly, the rabbits were gone and I hardly saw them leave.

As I started home, the skies cleared, revealing a bright, nearly full moon, and I stopped to look out over the peaceful valley. As I moved, a cottontail in the distance bolted for cover as though a demon was in pursuit. The spell was over.







**Kip Ladage,  
Tripoli**

*First place, power of nature*

**Jerry Seal,  
Waterloo**

*Second place, scenic beauty*

# 1985

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## PHOTO CONTEST

*Once again the selection of winners for the 1985 Conservationist photo contest was a difficult one. Following are the judges final decisions in each category. Too few entries were received in the black and white division to warrant separate categories, so all black and whites were judged as one.*

*The grand prize winner will receive a Cosina 35-70mm zoom lens compliments of Cosina Lenses and F-stop Camera and Supply Inc.*



**GRAND PRIZE**  
**Tom Rosburg,**  
**Ute**  
*First place, humans and  
their resources*



**Mike Greiner,**  
**Sioux City**  
*Second place, black & white*







**Jeffrey Baker,  
Waterloo**  
*First place, wildlife*

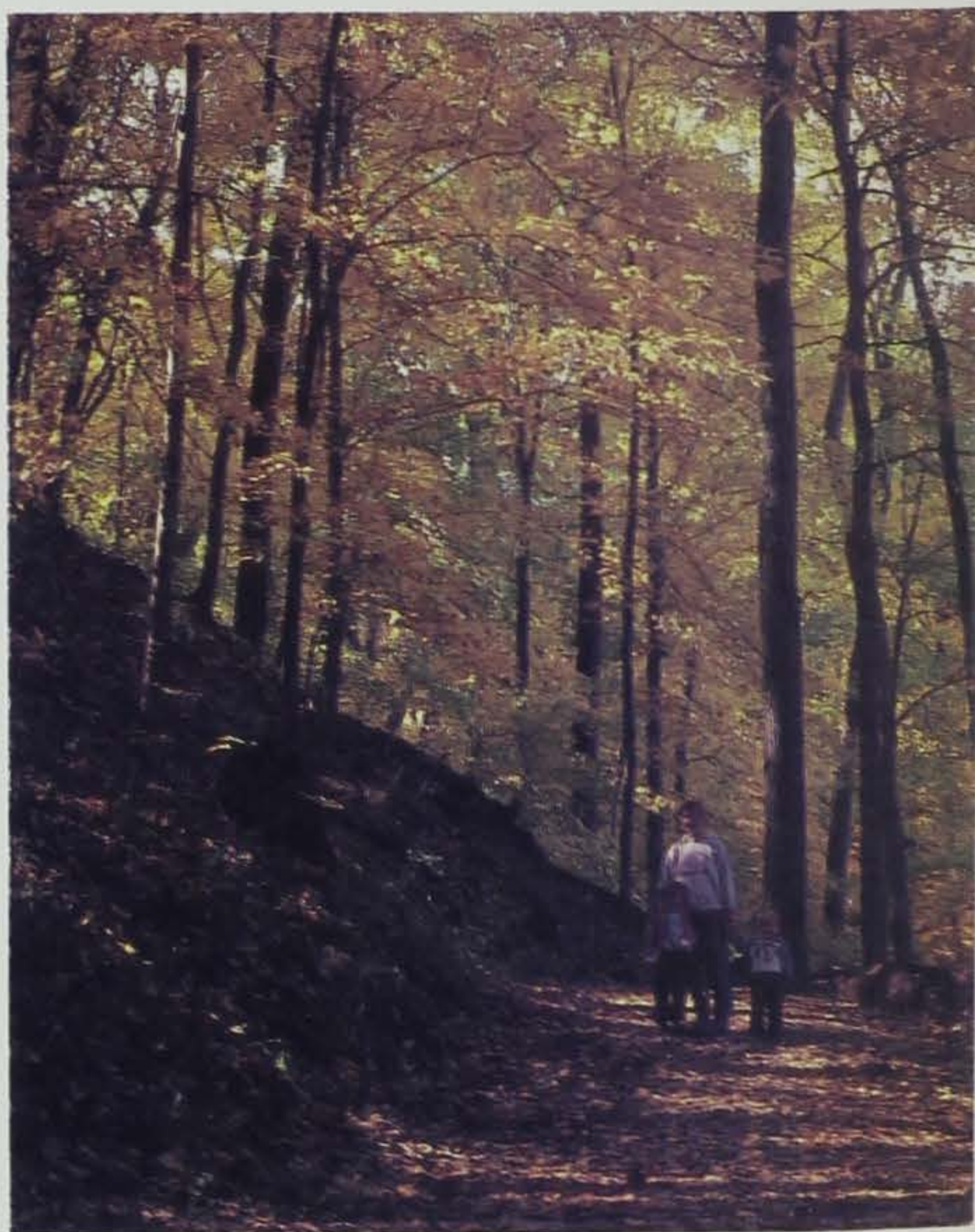


**Mike Greiner,  
Sioux City**  
*First place, scenic beauty*





**John DeVoe,**  
**Cedar Falls**  
*Second place, wildlife*



**E. R. Slattery,**  
**Muscatine**  
*Second place, humans and their resources*





**Randall Williams,**  
**Sioux City**  
*First place, black & white*



**Karen Mytas,**  
**Elkader**  
*Second place, power of nature*



# Cedar River Walleyes

By Jerry Hudson



Prepare for the worst! Chest waders, long underwear, heavy clothes, tackle, and a thermos of coffee are essential for today's outing. It's early spring, the air is still chilly, and the weather is unpredictable. At 40 degrees, the water is frigid but clear, and the walleye have started to ascend the river for their pre-spawn rendezvous. You'll enter the Cedar River below the power dam, wade across the riffle area, and fish that waist deep pool along the far riverbank. Your quarry is a group of large walleyes nestled among the rocks.

Even though conditions may be unfavorable, fishing opportunity is greatest at this time of year. Walleyes congregate in the Cedar River below dams and other obstructions in preparation for spawning. Your chances for catching walleye have been dramatically improved as these fish feed aggressively before spawning, utilizing the deeper pools by day and moving into the shallow riffles during the evening hours. Once the spawning ritual actually commences, their undivided attention is turned to that task and feeding is curtailed. Good fishing won't resume until well after the spawning process is complete. Following this post-spawn period, the walleyes again become vulnerable as they accept a variety of natural baits and artificial lures.

The critical factor in catching walleyes is knowing what they feed on.

This species is a predator, so a good selection of natural baits should include minnows, nightcrawlers, or leeches. These three items probably take 90 percent of the walleyes caught on natural baits.

Impale the bait on a snelled hook about 18 to 24 inches below a swivel and slip sinker. Spinner rigs often help to increase your catch by attracting the walleye's attention. Floating jig heads are also popular live-baitings. But whatever you use, the slip sinker should be just heavy enough to keep your bait on or near the bottom.

At times, artificial lures are even more effective than the real thing. Many fish including walleyes will aggressively attack lures if they're fished properly. These include spinner baits, crank baits, and leadheads. The leadhead is the most widely used lure in the Cedar River. When fished with a minnow attached, the combination can be deadly.

Hooking a big walleye is a definite possibility and, if you are lucky, you may take one in the record class. A number of lunker walleyes have been taken from the Cedar in past years, and while these fish weren't state records, they were big. During the past two years, several over nine pounds have been recorded in the Conservation Commission's big fish registry. The largest was 11 lb. 13 oz; taken by Allen Weston of Cedar Falls.

Predators, competition for food, and the right spawning habitat limit the number of fish reaching maturity. Studies indicate walleyes in the Cedar River bring off a successful spawn only about once every four or five years. To compensate for this lack of natural reproduction, the commission stocks several million walleye fry in the Cedar River each spring to maintain a steady walleye fishery. Stocking is only one aspect of this fish's management. Other walleye studies have been initiated to help solve problems and insure fine walleye fishing in the Cedar River for future generations.

Fishing locations, access areas and boat ramps are numerous, dotting the Cedar from the Iowa-Minnesota border, downstream for nearly three hundred miles. Local anglers and bait dealers can provide valuable information on where to fish. You can also write for a free "Fishing Guide" from the Iowa Conservation Commission, Wallace State Office Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0034. This guide lists the access sites and some of the prime fishing areas on the Cedar River.

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*Jerry Hudson is a fisheries management biologist at Manchester. He is a graduate of Kansas State University, with a degree in fish and wildlife biology. He has worked for the commission since 1975.*

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# SKIING IOWA

## the cross country way

By Leisa Knettle

While the rest of the world is sitting by the fire, drinking hot chocolate, and rapidly outgrowing their swimming suits, cross-country skiers are enjoying the snow season.

Iowa terrain has great cross-country potential. Skiers can start enjoying the outdoors after the first six- to eight-inch snowfall, which often occurs in early December, as it did this season. Iowa's rolling hills present challenge and excitement. City dwellers can glide across golf courses or through parks. Iowa also offers a number of easily accessible state parks that pose a variety of cross-country skiing challenges.

A couple of basic pointers can spare beginners a great deal of extra exertion. Most outdoor stores that rent cross-country skis also offer skiing lessons. Many community colleges offer continuing education courses which include cross-country skiing classes.

### EQUIPMENT

Another attractive aspect to cross-country skiing is that it is very affordable. Skis usually rent for about \$5 to \$8 a day. Ski packages, including skis, bindings, poles and boots, can be purchased for \$70 to \$150.

There are two schools of thought on what are the best kinds of skis. Dennis Waltz, Des Moines cross-country skiing enthusiast, prefers the waxless skis. Waxless skis have slight ridges on the bottom. These ridges enable the skis to go through a variety of snow conditions. Waltz admits that, "You lose a little in your glide with waxless, but then on the other hand you don't have to worry about waxing your skis."

Angela Corio, another cross-country ski enthusiast, recommends waxed skis. According to Corio, "Waxing your skis is a relatively non-technical process. Since waxes are temperature based, all you have to do is look at your thermometer and

then choose the appropriate wax. In exchange for those extra three to five minutes spent waxing your skis, you maximize your gliding efficiency, especially in warmer temperatures."

Cross-country skiers don't need special garb when they do their thing. They must remember to dress for the cold. Although the physical exertion keeps skiers warm to some extent, those Iowa winds can be bitterly cold. The trick to dressing for the cold is to dress in layers. The first layer should be cotton, the second layer wool for insulation, and the third layer should be nylon or some tightly knit material to break the wind. Of course, head and hands should be kept covered since as much as 85 percent of body heat can be lost through extremities.

*Iowa has a number of areas to cross-country ski. One such area is Swiss Valley outside of Dubuque.*

### WHERE TO SKI

Iowa has many cross-country skiing facilities. Swiss Valley Nature Trails, located west of Dubuque has four miles of prepared ski bed — the kindest possible way of rediscovering those unused muscles.

Other parks skiers might want to investigate are Jester Park on Saylorville Lake, Easter Lake, Waveland Park, and Ewing Park in Des Moines, and Brushy Creek near Fort Dodge.

Aside from a number of parks, Iowa also has a number of abandoned railroad rights-of-way to ski: Praeri Rail Trail, between Roland and Zearing; Cinderpath Trail in Lucas County; and Cedar Valley Trail north-east of Cedar Rapids extending to Waterloo. Since these old railroad paths have limestone beds, be sure a good snow base exists.

Don't miss the chance to enjoy the great outdoors with a friend or your family this year. Ski Iowa the cross-country way.

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*Leisa Knettle is a recent graduate of Grinnell College. She served as an intern on the Conservationist staff in 1985.*

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Ron Johnson



