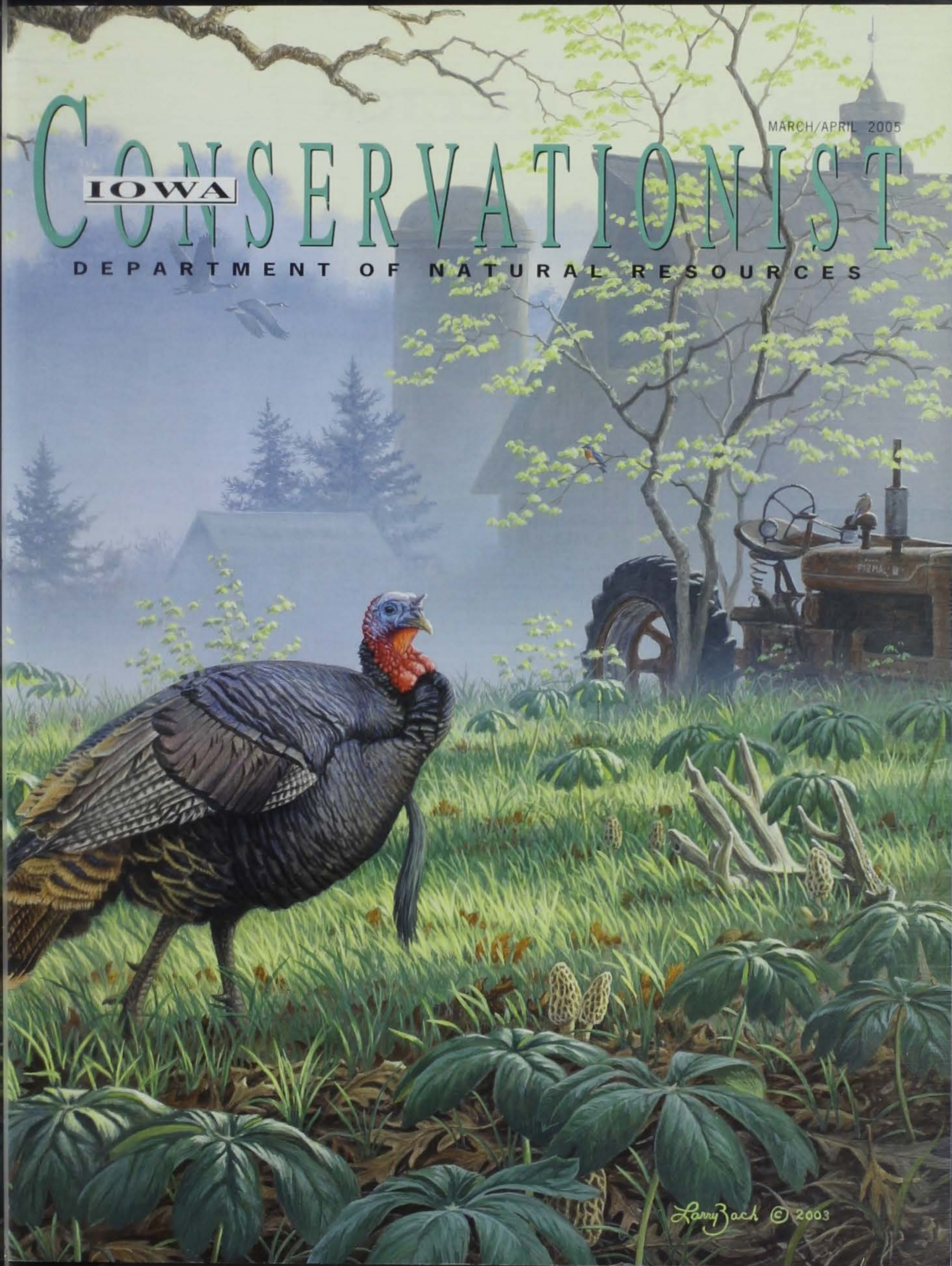


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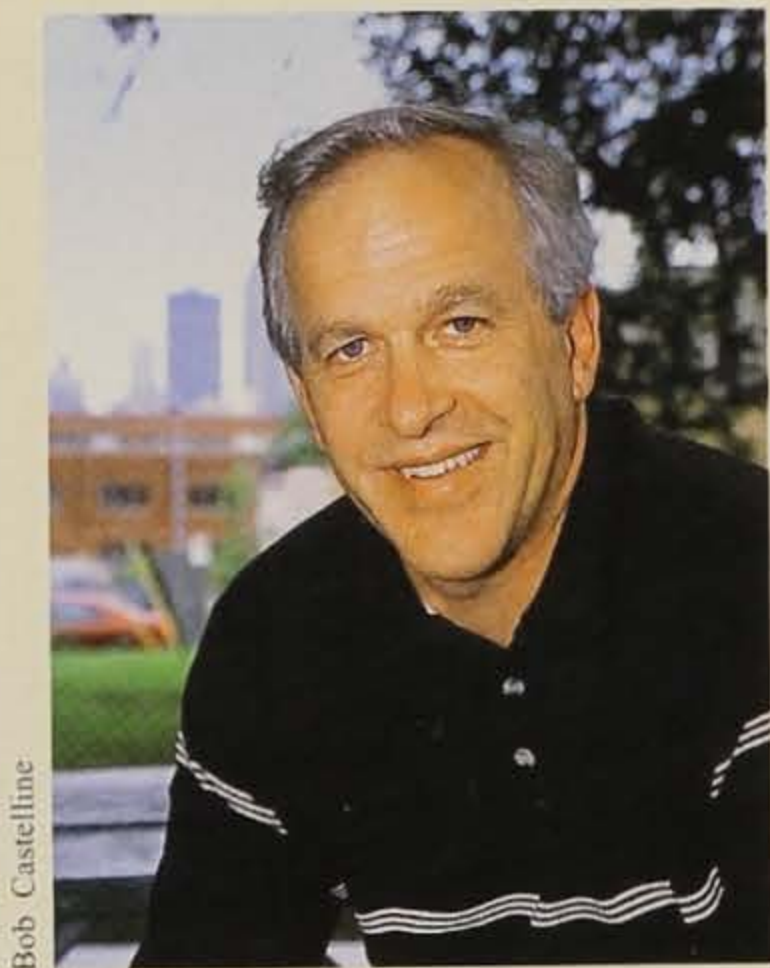
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DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES



Larry Zach © 2003

FROM THE DIRECTOR



Bob Castelline

Make Fishing Part of Your Outdoor Experiences – It's the Reel Deal

Our calendars mark the holiday as Jan. 1, but for many of us, the true beginning of a new year is more variable, particularly for that eternal optimist known as the angler.

The *real* new year for many of us starts when the ice finally gives way on streams and lakes. The days get warmer and longer. Twilight skies are filled with the sight and anxious honking of Canada geese making their spring ritual flights back through Iowa on the return to summer nesting grounds. There's a promise when we witness these great flocks making their way north. The water is beginning to open. It won't be long.

Those unseasonably warm winter days have a way of taunting us, tempting us to pull the tackle box off the shelf for a quick inventory. There's line to be changed and reels to be oiled. We want to be ready.

This issue marks our annual fishing forecast issue of the *Iowa Conservationist*. It is a must-read for our fishing public because no one knows more about the prospects for fishing Iowa's waters than the dedicated men and women we have working in our fisheries bureau. They know where the hotspots are and those places that are still a year or two away from reaching true potential. They can tell you about some of those out-of-the-way spots that the rest of us may have driven by without so much as a second thought.

It is also an important year for us for another reason. We will be stepping up our efforts to not only recruit more anglers to the sport, but also to make their fishing experiences more successful and hopefully more enjoyable.

Looking closely at the fishing license sales over the past four years lead us to a very important discovery. Recruitment of new anglers is definitely important, but we found retention of anglers is just as vital. In all, we have sold fishing licenses to more than 600,000 individuals in the past three years, but only about a third have purchased *every* year.

The trend lines have caused us to do a great deal of self-reflection in the last year. We

believe we need to do more than just the quality biological work that creates healthy fisheries. We need to think of the angling public – especially those who might enjoy fishing, but aren't on the "hard-core" end of the spectrum – as customers. We need to take a closer look at what kind of outdoor experience they are looking for and help them find it.

Our first attempt to have a more customer-based approach to promoting the sport of fishing will be this spring along the Interstate 380 corridor in Black Hawk, Linn and Johnson counties. We hope our experience this spring will provide us an opportunity to learn more about prospective anglers and what we can do to make their experiences on the water that much more successful and rewarding.

There are those who will look at this effort as the DNR trying to raise more revenues through license sales and while they are not entirely wrong, our primary objective is to get more people involved in outdoor activities. People who fish are more likely to become involved in other outdoor activities such as camping, trail walking and bird watching. And people who are avidly involved in those outdoor pursuits become stakeholders. An avid angler knows all too well the importance of water quality for providing top-notch fishing opportunities.

Director's Message

cont. on page 4

**COVER: FOGGY MORNING TRIO—
WILD TURKEY BY LARRY ZACH**

Foggy Morning Trio, the first in a three-print series, features three mature gobblers on the edge of a spring woods as the rising sun burns through an early morning fog. Upon further observation the viewer will find a giant shed antler, a lost turkey call, house wren, pair of bluebirds, old Farmall tractor, morel mushrooms, and a pair of Canada geese. All three prints in the foggy morning series contain sign of the world-record Albia buck, three gobblers, and Canada geese. For more information on this print or other artwork by Larry Zach, please contact Zach Wildlife Art, 641 S Ankeny Blvd, Ankeny, IA 50021, (515) 964-1570 or view their web site at www.zachwildlifeart.com

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by Lowell Washburn

It's the call every turkey hunter waits for – the distinct, staccato gobble of the eastern wild turkey. Spring is here and the woods are coming alive.

38 TURKEY SEASON FINALE PROVIDES FOND MEMORIES

by Lowell Washburn

The enthusiasm for spring turkey hunting rarely fades for those who have experienced it. And, although the season may end without a bird in the bag, memories are made for those who follow this spring tradition.

40 UNRAVELING THE ELK RUN CREEK FISH KILLS

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Protecting water quality can be as intense and exciting as CSI.

44 GOVERNOR'S ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE AWARD WINNERS

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46 AMES INSTITUTION SERVES UP BARBEQUED WILD TURKEY BREAST

by Mick Klemesrud

Hickory Park, famous for its barbeque know-how, grills a little something worth gobbling up.

SPECIAL INSERT: 2004 FISH AWARDS

Director's Message

cont. from page 2

Bottom line, the more people we have involved in outdoor recreation activities the more appreciation they will have for



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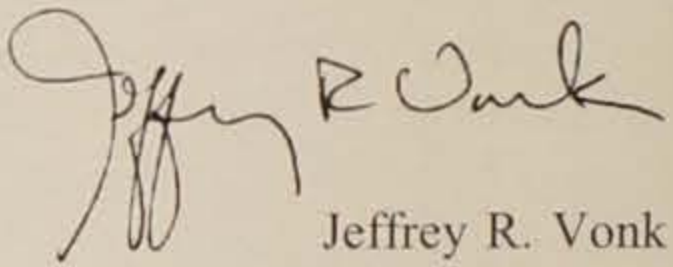
our natural resources. The more people we have that are engaged in the outdoors and natural resources, the bigger voice we become in advocating on behalf of our environment.

I don't think any of us should be surprised that with all of the changes in technology and lifestyle over the last 40 years, people have so many other things to do beyond traditional outdoor pursuits like fishing. It is precisely this reason that also leaves me optimistic that fishing can once again become a popular diversion for a popula-

tion now yearning for ways to "get away from it all."

A clinical psychologist and avid fly fisherman by the name of Dr. Paul Quinnett has done some fascinating research on the effectiveness of fishing in reducing everyday stress. As he puts it, "Fishing is hope experienced."

In a day and age where stress seems to be lurking for us around every corner, fishing does look to be a potentially strong and effective prescription. Our goal is to help more people find it.



Jeffrey R. Vonk



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iowa fishing forecast 2005

New & IMPROVED:

Iowa Lake, Stream and Facility
Improvements Greet
Spring Anglers

Just as tackle companies invest in new and better technology to catch fish, the Iowa DNR invests in lake and stream improvements and facility upgrades to continually provide quality fishing. Investments, like replacing an entire fish population; installing new walkways or water accesses usable by people with limited mobility; removing years of silt deposits from lakes and backwater areas and building basins to prevent siltation are viewed as long-term projects.

Looking around Iowa, a number of improvement projects are either underway or have been finished within the last few years.

Last year, Lake of Three Fires, Lake Icaria, Binder Lake and Old Corning Reservoir all received a dose of Rotenone to eliminate their fish populations. Lake of Three Fires also

by Mick Klemesrud

had the equivalent of 38,600 dump truck loads of silt removed as part of the renovation.

"We are stocking larger fish than normal to get the fishery back a lot faster," said regional supervisor Andy Moore. "In 2006–07, things will really be popping in southwest Iowa because we will essentially have six new lakes."

Major work in the Rock Creek Lake watershed to reduce erosion and to improve the lake water quality is still in progress. Lake Anita was renovated in 2003 and anglers should be catching largemouth bass and keeper-sized channel catfish this spring.

Swan Lake, near Carroll, was lowered, its fish population eliminated, and had a barrier installed over the outflow to prevent carp from entering the lake during flooding. The lake was re-stocked last fall and will be again

this spring. Fishing will begin at Swan Lake in 2006 and will be in full swing in 2007.

Near Sigourney, Lake Belva Deer, which was completed in 2001, was discovered by anglers last year and should be a fishing destination in 2005. Fish

surveys showed bluegills up to 10 inches are already there. "It really has developed rapidly," said Steve Waters, regional supervisor. "It's a 'go to' place, no doubt about it."

Red Haw, near Chariton, is probably a year away from consistently producing quality sized bluegills, Waters said, but there should be plenty of action for people looking to catch fish. The fish population was eliminated and restocked in 2002. Lake Macbride is in full swing after all the lake improvements three years ago. "We are seeing better water quality, and excellent fishing," Waters said. "This is an absolute 'go to' lake for crappies. They will be jumping in the boat."

On the Mississippi River, anglers will notice an increase in the fishing boat traffic in future years on Mud Lake, just north of Dubuque. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is funding a major backwater dredging project covering 22 acres and is building a deflection dike to protect the new deep-water habitat. The new habitat will draw largemouth bass, bluegills and crappies from miles. "We had similar projects at Bussey and Brown's lakes several years ago and they are very popular," said Dave Moeller, regional supervisor. The Corps finished a similar project in 2003 at Sunfish Lake on the Wisconsin side of the river. The

DNR also completed a new handicap accessible fishing pier at Hamm Island, adjacent to the Peosta channel.

Moeller said an intensive walleye fingerling stocking program in northeast Iowa rivers is resulting in greatly increased survival and impressive growth rates. "We

are seeing walleyes in their third year of growth in the 12- to 14-inch range,"

Moeller said.

As evidence of the tremendous walleye fishing, last November a Manchester angler caught an 11 pound, 2 ounce walleye on the Maquoketa River. "It is a great reason for people to come to northeast Iowa, grab a canoe or a pair of waders and fish our rivers," Moeller said.

Trout streams are also offering new opportunities. Moeller said there are now 31 streams with self-sustaining, wild populations of trout. That number is substantially up from six found in the 1970s. In addition, another 27 streams have shown some evidence of natural reproduction.

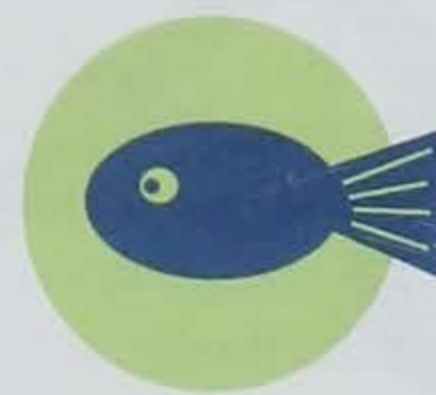
Anglers will also notice new bank hides and stream habitat improvements on North and South Bear creeks, Fountain Springs and Ensign Hollow. A three-quarter mile section of Turtle Creek is open to public fishing. The stream flows through a 72-acre section the county board purchased in 2004. The stream has since received extensive habitat work.

At the Iowa Great Lakes, the DNR, in partnership with the City of Spirit Lake, built four fishing piers – including three universally accessible piers – along the local trail system

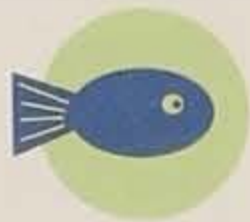
bordering East Okoboji Lake to provide better lake access. The lakes region will also be without a northern pike season for the first time in a long time. The DNR dropped the regulation closing pike fishing because of the increase in the population over the past five to 10 years. "There are some nice northern pike here, up to 40 inches," Gengerke said. "That would be a nice fish and I don't care where it was caught."

Along the East Fork of the Des Moines River, the DNR purchased 60 acres in Humboldt County that offers 2,900 feet of stream access. On Clear Lake, the DNR purchased a former restaurant in Ventura with 400 feet of lakeshore that will be developed for public use. Look for a shelter, new parking lots with rain gardens and restrooms all connected with the local trail system.

A new boat ramp is ready for use by small boats and new cabins are open at Scharnberg Park, along the Ocheyedon River, one mile east of Everly on county road B24. Lake Pahoja in Lyon County is as hot of a 70-acre fishing hole as there is in the state. It is part of the DNR caged catfish program, which has had a tremendous impact. "You can catch catfish day or night on about anything there," said Tom Gengerke, regional supervisor. The lake also has small bluegills and lots of them. "It would be a great place to take kids just so they can catch fish."



Tackle Box Basics



Keep it Simple

Nearly 75 percent of fish caught by Iowa anglers are bluegill, crappie, channel catfish or bullhead. With that in mind, an all-purpose, general use tackle box should focus on basic, simple items. The key is to think small and to think light. In most situations, a light action, 5-1/2 to 6-foot long fishing rod will work fine. A spin casting reel is the easiest for most situations.

BLUEGILL, CRAPPIE AND YELLOW PERCH

Hook Size: #6 or #8

Line Strength: 4-pound or 6-pound

Bobbers: No larger in diameter than a quarter

Jig: 1/32-ounce or smaller

Split-shot weights: 1/32-ounce



CATFISH

Hook Size: #2 or #4

Line Strength: 8-pound up to 12-pound and stronger

Snap swivel, snelled sponges or worms, 1/8- to 1-ounce sinkers

BASS, BULLHEAD AND WALLEYE

Hook Size: #4 or #6

Line Strength: 6-pound to 8-pound

Jigs: 1/8-ounce to 1/4-ounce

Sinkers: slip style, 1/8-ounce to 1/4-ounce

Bass (optional) plastic worms, spinner baits

Walleye (optional) crankbaits, spinner baits, live bait rigs



By Dave Moeller
Regional Fisheries Supervisor

What could Thoreau have really meant by his quote? Perhaps it is simply enjoying the babbling sounds of crystal-clear water flowing over a rock and gravel riffle of a spring-fed coldwater trout stream. Or, just taking in the grandeur of the mighty Mississippi River with its tremendous diversity of quiet backwaters, gently flowing side channels and bustling main channel. Or, the fun of exploring the myriad of interior rivers and streams where just around the bend you are in a world all to your very own. Or, leisurely relaxing on an artificial lake or impoundment where you can enjoy the serenity of quiet water from either the shore or a boat. Where else than in northeast Iowa can you choose from such a diversity of fishing waters with such beautiful surroundings?



While I certainly agree with Thoreau that you do not have to catch fish to have a successful fishing trip, I do believe that catching fish is like icing on the cake. And I do like icing. Just in case you like icing too, the northeast Iowa fisheries biologists have compiled the accompanying lists of waters where populations are very good and you should have good angling success for the more popular fish species. In addition, the following paragraphs identify additional opportunities for a few other species that are sometimes overlooked by most anglers.

Very early in the spring, just after ice-out, is a prime time for sauger fishing on the Mississippi River. This close cousin of the walleye congregates in late March and early April, and often again in late fall, in the tailwater areas immediately below the navigation dams. The tailwaters of Dams 9 near Harpers Ferry, 10 at Guttenberg, 11 at Dubuque and 12 at Bellevue are prime sauger hotspots. Sauger fishing was very good last fall, the best in many years. There are no size limit restrictions on saugers; however, there are on walleye, so check the specific regulations for the specific tailwater you are fishing because they vary at different locations. The daily bag limit for

sauger and walleye combined is six. Also, the tailwater areas at Dams 11, 12 and 13 (Clinton) are closed to all fishing from Dec. 1 through March 15. Like walleyes, saugers are absolutely excellent on the dinner table.

Also early in the spring is the annual spawning run of suckers and redhorses on several interior rivers.

Action normally begins in late March and continues through April. The three species most commonly caught are the

white sucker (also commonly called black sucker), shorthead redhorse and golden redhorse. The Upper Iowa, Yellow, Turkey, Volga, Maquoketa and Wapsipinicon rivers are the prime sucker streams. The tackle is simple – a long-shanked hook baited with worms or night crawlers and just enough weight to hold it on the bottom. And the action is often fast and furious. Sucker meat is delicious, but very bony, so most anglers either pickle them (tastes like pickled herring) or grind the meat and deep-fry as thin patties. Either way, you're in for a real treat.

Another species that provides a lot of angling enjoyment for Mississippi River anglers is the freshwater drum, also known as sheepshead. This fish is so plentiful that it also supports a substantial



top

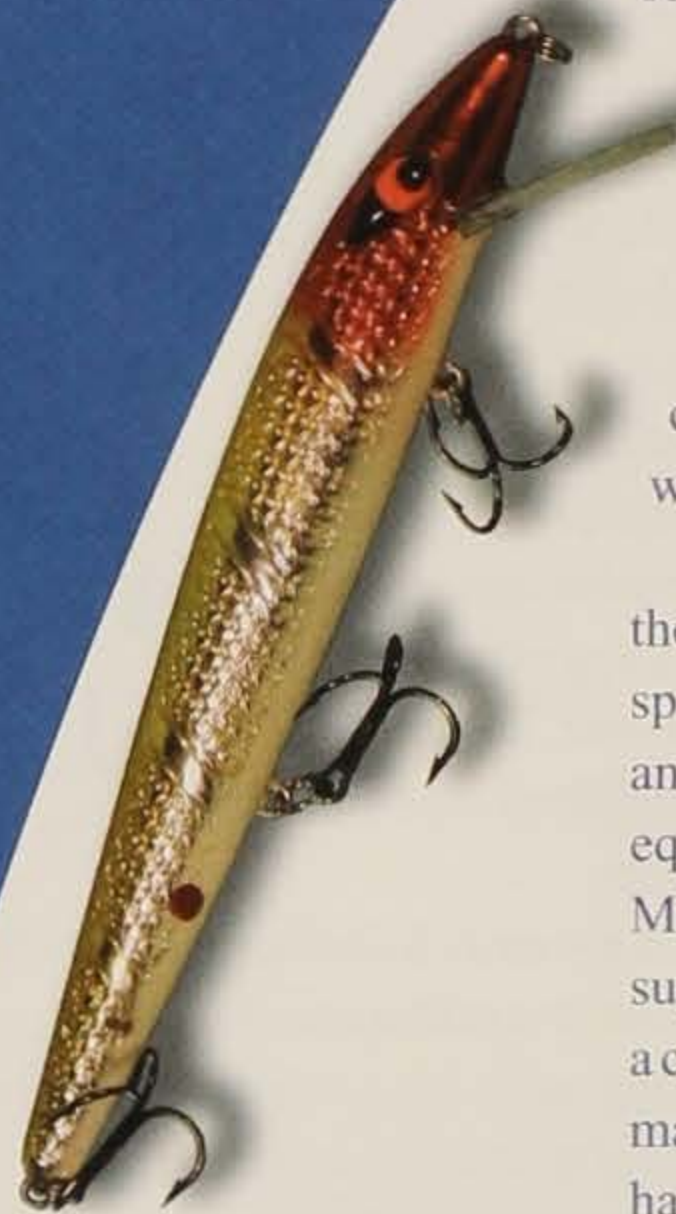
10 waters for smallmouth bass

1. **Cedar River** *Bremer*, Abundant smallmouth bass below Waverly.
2. **Cedar River** — *Floyd and Mitchell*, Good populations throughout both counties; catch-and-release from Halverson Park to the dam at Otranto.
3. **Little Turkey River** — *Fayette*, Secluded stream best fished by canoe; excellent numbers.
4. **Maquoketa River** — (catch-and-release area) *Delaware*, Classic rock habitat; 12- to 14-inch fish common; larger fish in good numbers.
5. **Maquoketa River** — *Jones*, Scenic Pictured Rocks area holds abundant numbers.
6. **Mississippi River** — *Pools 9-11*, Populations continue to climb; plenty of 10- to 13-inchers with fish up to 4 pounds.
7. **Turkey River** — *Clayton, Fayette, Winneshiek and Howard*, Smallmouths throughout, but best populations are in Fayette and Winneshiek counties.
8. **Upper Iowa River** — *Allamakee, Winneshiek and Howard*, Float the upstream areas in Howard County during higher flows in the spring; catch-and-release area from Decorah down to Upper Dam.
9. **Volga River** — *Fayette*, Small stream suitable for wader fishing; public access at Volga River Recreation area.
10. **Wapsipinicon River** — *Buchanan*, A lot of fish in the 10- to 13-inch range.

top

10 waters for channel catfish

1. **Cedar River** — *Bremer*, Last year's survey sampled excellent numbers of catfish.
2. **Cedar** — *Floyd, and Mitchell* Abundant from Mitchell dam downstream; a quality population with large fish present.



commercial fishery. The serious action begins in June and continues through the warm summer months. Drum love current, so look for them along the borders of the main channel, side channels and especially near wing dams. They love night crawlers and crayfish tails. Try a live crayfish for a better chance of catching a really big one – and, they do get really big! And hang on to your rod as drum can hit really hard, and they will test the drag system on your reel. Their fillets are boneless; however, the best eating is from those up to 2-pounds. On larger fillets, trim off any reddish meat. Many people can't taste the difference between drum and walleye on their dinner plate.

Another species that is a blast to catch is the white bass, also known as stripers. These speedsters love to hit a wide variety of lures, and they'll also test your line, knots and equipment. Look for stripers primarily on the Mississippi River; however, Lake Delhi also supports a good striper population. Stripers like a combination of current and rock, which makes the Mississippi's wing-dams a favored haunt. Baitfish jumping out of the water and

TOP SURPRISE OF 2004

Sauger and White Bass on the Mississippi River

Anglers fishing the tailwaters of the Mississippi River locks and dams were pleasantly surprised this past fall by not only the numbers but also the size of sauger available. There were many limits (six walleye and sauger combined) harvested with good numbers of sauger in the 15- to 18-inch range. In addition, white bass (stripers) showed up in numbers not previously seen during the late fall period. It was not unusual for two or three anglers to catch between 75 and 100 white bass in a day. A fair number of those fish were in the 12- to 14-inch range, the remainder 7 to 10 inches – which bodes well for white bass fishing the next several years.

By John Pitlo, Bellevue Fisheries Biologist

seagulls actively diving and feeding on the surface are good indicators a school of white bass are actively feeding just below.

Approach the area quickly and use about any lure that resembles an injured baitfish.

Now, it is up to you to get out and enjoy these beautiful water resources and the "icing on the cake."



BEST PLACE TO SHORE FISH

Mississippi River - Clayton County - City of Guttenberg

Take an afternoon and enjoy shoreline fishing in downtown Guttenberg. Situated on the banks of the Mississippi River, Guttenberg is a scenic town with historic buildings and a river ambiance that will put your mind at ease. Universally accessible angling can now be found at both Bussey Lake and the Guttenberg Harbor. Bussey Lake is on the north end of Guttenberg on lower Pool 10. It has easy parking with a walk-out fishing pier right into a Mississippi River backwater lake. You can expect to catch a variety of panfish in Bussey Lake, including bluegill and crappie, and an occasional predator species like largemouth bass and northern pike. Recently, the Iowa DNR constructed another accessible facility adjacent to the DNR Office and Fish Aquariums in downtown Guttenberg and just south of Lock and Dam 10. This new facility will allow anglers shoreline fishing opportunities directly in the tailwaters (immediately downstream) of Dam 10. A variety of fish species are caught in the tailwaters, including walleye, bluegills, freshwater drum and catfish. The access trail also has a viewing platform where you can sit and watch towboats approaching or leaving Dam 10, eagles, seagulls, yachts, speed boats and fishing boats – take your pick. While there you will want to take the entire family through the self-guided tour of the DNR aquariums and learn more about the variety of fish and wildlife on the mighty Mississippi. Nearly 30 species of fish are on display as well as a variety of turtles, mussels and crayfish.

By Scott Gritters, Guttenberg Fisheries Biologist

3. **Big Woods Lake** — *Black Hawk*, Big fish, lots of them; connection with Cedar River keeps this population strong.

4. **Casey Lake** — *Tama*, Local favorite; good shoreline access; all sizes available.

5. **Lake Delhi** — *Delaware*, Good numbers and sizes available; early mornings and late evenings are best.

6. **Lake Meyer** — *Winneshiek*, Good population of 14- to 18-inch catfish.

7. **Mississippi River** — *Pools 9-15*, Excellent year-class in 2001 provided good catches of 12- to 14-inchers during 2004; they'll be 14 to 17 inches in 2005 and provide excellent fishing.

8. **Turkey River** — *Clayton*, Channels and flatheads from Elkader dam to the Mississippi River.

9. **Volga Lake** — *Fayette*, Excellent population of all sizes; fish the riprap along the dam in mid-summer.

10. **Wapsipinicon River** — *Buchanan*, A rising river turns on the bite; 2-to 3-pound fish available.

top 4 waters for trout

1. **Coldwater Creek** — *Winneshiek*, Increased brown trout population due to natural reproduction; stocked weekly with rainbows and brooks.

2. **Ensign Hollow** — *Clayton*, Habitat project in 2004 will improve angling in this catch-and-release-only stream.

3. **Fountain Springs** — *Delaware*, Stocked twice weekly with rainbows; primitive camping available along this scenic stream.

4. **Glovers Creek** — *Fayette*, Nestled in a very scenic valley; stocked with rainbow and brook trout weekly from April through October.

5. **Little Paint Creek** — *Allamakee*, Located in Yellow River Forest; stocked with rainbows and brooks; wild brown and brook trout available.
6. **North Bear Creek** — *Winneshiek*, Major habitat project in 2004; excellent wild brown trout population; stocked weekly with rainbows and brookies.
7. **Richmond Springs** — *Delaware*, Stocking of rainbows during the week and on Saturdays makes this a popular place for family fishing.
8. **Spring Branch** — *Delaware*, Strong population of browns exceeding 12 inches; lots of insect hatches.
9. **Swiss Valley** — *Dubuque*, Stocked spring and fall with catchable trout; new fish habitat work in the Park above the Nature Center will hold more fish.
10. **Turtle Creek** — *Mitchell*, Western-most trout stream in Iowa; stocked with rainbows and brooks; fingerling browns stocked annually.

top
6 waters for largemouth bass

1. **George Wyth Lake** — *Black Hawk*, What this population lacks in numbers it makes up for in size — 18- and 19-inchers in fairly good numbers.
2. **Lake Hendricks** — *Howard*, High numbers of medium size bass.
3. **Lake Meyer** — *Winneshiek*, Good quality population for all sizes; new contour map available.
4. **Mitchell Lake**, *Black Hawk*, Nice class of 15- to 17-inchers.
5. **Mississippi River** — *Pools 9-14*, Populations are excellent; very consistent fishery with huge numbers of fish present.
6. **Martens Lake** — *Bremer*, These bass grow large and fast in this shallow water lake; fish the structure along the dike. Eurasian milfoil present so remove all vegetation from boat and trailer before leaving.

“Many men go fishing all their lives without ever realizing it is not fish they are after.”

Henry David Thoreau



TOP HUNCH FOR 2005

Upper Iowa River - Howard and Winneshiek counties - Developing Walleye Fishery

The Upper Iowa River has always been one of Iowa's premier smallmouth bass streams. But recent annual stockings of walleye fingerlings are producing an excellent population of walleyes as well. Small numbers of 2-inch walleyes had been stocked since 1996, but in 2000 the number stocked was quadrupled. The result is the beginning of a quality walleye fishery. In 2004, abundant 14- to 19-inch fish were caught with some walleyes topping 20 inches. Catches in 2005 should produce even higher numbers of quality-size walleyes. Besides good fishing, the Upper Iowa River is also the most scenic river in Iowa. Shear limestone bluffs often tower above the shore. The outstanding scenery along with generally good water quality makes this river a favorite of mid-western paddle-sport enthusiasts. Numerous campgrounds and canoe outfitters service the river between Lime Springs and Decorah.

By Bill Kalishek, Decorah Fisheries Biologist

HIDDEN JEWEL

French Creek - Allamakee County - Wild Trout in a Wild Landscape

Many Iowa trout streams now support naturally reproducing populations of wild trout. And one of the best is French Creek, a 6.5 mile long stream largely located within the 1,500-acre French Creek Wildlife Management Area. This stream is managed entirely for wild trout and no fish stocking is done. Natural reproduction of brown trout was first documented in 1994. Recent population surveys showed almost 2,500 brown trout per mile of stream in French Creek. Native brook trout were introduced into the upper two branches of French Creek in 1996, and today both are self-sustaining. This is one of the few streams in Iowa where there's a great chance of catching both a wild brown and a wild brook trout. The French Creek valley is gorgeous, an excellent example of the un-glaciated "driftless" area of Iowa. Primitive camping is allowed on the state Wildlife Management Area and private campgrounds near Dorchester and Lansing offer modern campgrounds. A catch-and-release regulation is in effect on the brown trout population in French Creek, and only artificial lures may be used.

By Bill Kalishek, Decorah Fisheries Biologist

top

6 waters for bluegills

1. **Casey Lake** — *Tama*, A consistent producer of 8-inch bluegills.
2. **Lake Hendricks** — *Howard*, Lots of fish up to 8 inches; thick vegetation can limit shore fishing in the summer.
3. **Lake Meyer** — *Winneshiek*, Very large population of 'gills up to 7.5 inches; face of dam and submerged brush piles on the south shore are good areas.
4. **Mississippi River** — *Pools 9-14*, Mild winters and good vegetation have benefited the bluegills; expect good stringers of 6- to 7-inch fish.
5. **Plainfield Lake** — *Bremer*, First stocked in 2001, bluegills are now 7 and 8 inches.
6. **South Prairie Lake** — *Black Hawk*, South edge of Cedar Falls; 7-inch fish; good shoreline fishing in May and June.

top

5 waters for crappies

1. **Lake Delhi** — *Delaware*, A consistent producer of 8- to 10-inch crappies.
2. **Lake Meyer** — *Winneshiek*, Excellent numbers of 8- to 10-inch fish; often suspended off the deeper side of habitat features.
3. **Martens Lake** — *Bremer*, Provides abundant 8- to 9-inch black crappies; white crappies fewer but much larger.
4. **Mississippi River** — *Pools 9-14*, Last year saw some huge crappies (2.5 pounds) caught; expect increased numbers but most 7 to 10 inches.
5. **Volga Lake** — *Fayette*, Fish the dam riprap in spring for 8- to 9-inch fish; work the large submerged brush piles in summer.

top

6 waters for walleyes

1. **Cedar River** — *Black Hawk*, Good fishing below the dam in Waterloo in fall and early winter.
2. **Cedar River** — *Bremer*, Annual surveys indicate good survival of stocked fingerlings in recent years; abundant numbers of 15-inchers available.
3. **Cedar River** — *Floyd and Mitchell*, Populations steadily increasing due to annual fingerling stockings; good numbers of 14- to 18-inch walleyes.
4. **Maquoketa River** — *Jones*, Best to access these walleyes by canoe; good numbers of 15- to 18-inch fish.
5. **Mississippi River** — *Pools 9-15*, Outlook is excellent with fish from the very strong 2001 year class in the 15- to 17-inch range. Sauger reproduction in 2001 and 2003 was above average and will provide good angling for this close cousin of the walleye.
6. **Turkey River** — *Howard Winneshiek and Fayette*, Populations steadily increasing; good numbers of 14- to 18-inch walleyes.

top

2 waters for pike

1. **Mississippi River** — *Pools 9-11*, Robust populations, but can be hard to locate; work the backwaters right after ice-out; in the hot summer they seek springs or coldwater tributaries and loaf near these cooler waters.
2. **Turkey River** — *Howard*, Annual fingerling plants are producing a quality population. Some lunkers are caught annually.



MOST OVERLOOKED

All Northeast Rivers for Catfish

Where better to go than the Mississippi River and the interior rivers which all hold very abundant channel catfish populations. Channel catfish thrive in our rivers for a number of reasons—abundant food, diverse habitats and excellent reproduction year after year. Streams offering some exceptional angling for catfish are the Mississippi, Upper Iowa (Allamakee County), Turkey (below Elkader), Maquoketa (below Manchester) Wapsipinicon (below Littleton), Cedar and Shell Rock rivers, and some of the larger tributary streams such as Black Hawk Creek and Beaver Creek in Black Hawk County. The mighty Mississippi offers two catfish species, flathead and channel, ranging in all sizes including lots of trophy-sized fish as well. Interior rivers offer vast numbers of channel catfish in the 2- to 4-pound range. Our rivers offer many excellent access opportunities for all types of anglers wanting to pursue catfish, whether it is fishing off a pontoon boat on the Mississippi or wading a tributary of the Cedar in an old pair of sneakers. Catfish are opportunistic feeders and use a variety of sensory organs to feed, thus, making them susceptible to a variety of natural and prepared baits.

By Mark Winn, Manchester Natural Resources Technician

By Steve Waters

Southeast Regional Fisheries Supervisor

It was a Saturday morning in January and there was ice on the ground, road, sidewalk, vehicles and just about everything else; a condition that makes winter-life more than a bit challenging. Thankfully, the TV was working and a fishing show was on and I was attempting to write this fishing forecast. At the same time my 8-year-old grandson was sorting through his fishing tackle and glancing at another big crappie being taken from a lake somewhere in Texas.

"Grandpa, where are we going to go fishing this year," he asked. At exactly that moment I knew what to write about – where we were going to fish this year in Iowa.

For me, my warm-water fishing season begins late March, and that means fishing ice out channel catfish.

When water temperatures reach

about 50 to 55 degrees, catfish begin a feeding spree, and their favorite food is any fish that did not survive the winter. Cut bait (the smellier the better) is the weapon of choice and any lake with a good population of cats will do. Most of our public waters support good catfish populations, but I have had excellent luck at lakes Rathbun, Coralville, Darling, Macbride, and any of our rivers for ice-out cats. Fish your bait in the shallow, warmer portion of a lake or river with the wind blowing across or away from you. This will set up a wind current that cats will use to find your bait. This will be my grandson's first ice-out cat trip and I am anxious to see his reaction upon smelling the sour fish we'll use for bait. I'll make sure we will have some good hand cleaner along and a couple of candy bars to lesson the negative reaction.

Depending upon the water body, late April to mid-May is one of the best times for crappie fishing. Crappies in spawning mode are generally in shallower water, which makes them vulnerable to angling. The action can be very hot, with the end result being a great fish fry.

I saw some very good bait in my grandson's tackle box. We prefer small jig baits for crappies. If the fish are really on a bite, a jig will generally out fish other baits. If the bite is a little slow we'll tip the bait with a small minnow or simply use minnows.



Once the spawning fish are found, we will use a small bobber to keep the lure off the bottom as we cast and retrieve. Many anglers prefer to fish out of a boat, but we have found that wading and fishing the shoreline is a good option. Kids love to do this, but do it in old clothes because mud will rule the day. When crappies move away from the shoreline we will change our tactics and seek deeper water. Fishing around trees or simply drifting in open water with minnows can be extremely effective.

I have fished crappie in most of

TOP SURPRISE OF 2004

Belva Deer Lake, Keokuk County

We knew it would be good fishing, but Iowa's newest fishing lake surpassed our predications last year. Bluegill up to 10 inches was not uncommon and many 7- to 9-inch fish were harvested as well. Catch-and-release bass fishing was non-stop and 12-inch bullheads turned a few heads. What was responsible for the outstanding fishing at this 264-acre lake? Excellent habitat, proper stocking and fantastic water quality combined to provide anglers a great year of fishing. Do yourself a favor in 2005; introduce the anglers in your family to Belva Deer Lake.



top

10 waters for bluegills

1. **Belva Deer Lake** — *Keokuk*, Lots of 7- to 10-inch fish at this new lake
2. **Sugema** — *Van Buren*, Tremendous numbers of 7- to 9-inch fish. Habitat galore!
3. **Lake Wapello** — *Davis*, Excellent numbers of 8- to 9-inch fish. Plentiful rock and woody habitat as well as vegetation.
4. **Indian Lake** — *Van Buren*, Excellent quality; 8- to 10-inch fish.
5. **Hawthorn Lake** — *Mahaska*, Good numbers of 7- to 9-inch fish; great water quality.
6. **Farm Ponds** — all counties, Mostly private water; best place for a trophy.
7. **Lake Geode** — *Henry*, Good numbers of 7- to 9-inch fish with 10-inch fish present.
8. **Lake Odessa** — *Louisa*, Lots of 7- to 9-inch fish; find woody structure.
9. **Shimek Ponds** — *VanBuren*, 7- to 9-inch fish common
10. **Diamond Lake** — *Poweshiek*, Fish off jetties and around brush piles for 7- to 9-inch fish.

top

10 waters for crappies

1. **Coralville Reservoir** — *Linn*, Fish around downed trees or vertical jig rocky shorelines; 10- to 14-inch fish common.
2. **Lake Macbride** — *Johnson*, Gobs of 8- to 10-inch fish.
3. **Hawthorn Lake** — *Mahaska*, Abundant 8- to 10-inch fish.
4. **Iowa Lake** — *Iowa*, Good numbers of 9- to 11-inch fish.
5. **Mississippi River** — *Big Timber*, 8- to 10-inch fish common; Mr. big is also present.
6. **Lake Odessa** — *Louisa*, Abundant 10- to 12-inch fish; some 18-inchers.



the lakes in the southeast region, and at times all have produced excellent crappie angling. Crappie populations do fluctuate from year to year, so it can pay to move around to the hot lakes. The areas listed in the table at left are good bets.

Toward the end of May bluegill set up house in the shallower portion of bays or protected areas. They fan out distinct circular areas for their nest (my grandson says they make elephant tracks). I believe bluegills are his favorite fish because they are cooperative and are great fighters. They are superb in the frying pan as well.

Fishing for these dynamic fighters during the spawn is similar to crappie angling. We prefer small jigs (smaller the better), and darker colors seem to be the more productive baits. If the fish need to be enticed, a small bit of worm seems to do the trick. My grandson's favorite bait to add is a wax worm (a value-added product). And he likes to fish this with ice flies. This combination is best fished without a bobber if you are fishing

deeper water. Also, bluegills are different than crappie in that they are more attracted to a

presentation with action.

Therefore, don't be afraid to give your bait a twitch or two on the retrieve. Although bluegills are attracted to structure, they often move to deeper and open water (like crappies) in the heat of the summer. At this time, a simple hook, worm and split-shot weight fished with a tight line or slip-bobber is the best fishing method.

One of the things I like about bluegill fishing is that populations are generally stable from year to year. That means good bluegill areas typically remain about the same from year to year.

If you looked at my tackle box you would see that I enjoy fishing for largemouth bass and my grandson now has some bass-busting lures in his tackle box as well. It was a lot of fun helping him select bass fishing lures; like most anglers he was caught by the flashy and unique looking baits. They say that muskies are a fish of 10,000 casts, but bass are a fish requiring 10,000 lures. The moral of it is bass will bite on a variety of artificial baits.

Certain baits are more productive at certain times, so I made sure my grandson had jigs for cold water, spinner baits for the spring and crank baits for the summer. Of course, jigs and various spinner baits can be good

anytime and plastic worms are producers from late spring on. And then there is my favorite, the surface baits. These lures work best on calm mornings and evenings during the late spring and summer. My grandson caught his first bass on a top water lure last summer. The fish literally attacked the bait; when it was hooked



BEST PLACE TO SHORE FISH

Lake Wapello, Davis County

Recently restored Lake Wapello (289 acres) is home to outstanding bluegill and largemouth bass fishing. Bluegills in the 8- to 9-inch range are common, and because the largemouth bass fishery is catch-and-release-only, bass are abundant and catch rates are high. Catfish and crappie can also be caught at Lake Wapello. The entire northern side of the lake has great access to the shoreline, and several parts of the southern shore provide good access as well. The campground, cabin, boat rental and fishing pier areas make it easy to gain access to the shore for fishing. Hiking/nature trails along the shoreline also make it easy to access the shore. This is a tremendous aid for the shore angler to enjoy fishing.

TOP HUNCH FOR 2005

Lake Rathbun, Appanoose County

Fisheries surveys tell us that Lake Rathbun (11,000 acres) crappie angling should be the best in 10 years. There are two strong year classes that are driving the fishery. Both 1998 and 2001 produced great year classes and the size structure is dominated by 9- to 13-inch fish. The 2001 year class runs from 9 to 10 inches and the 1998 year class is from 11 to 13 inches. Traditional crappie haunts such as Buck Creek, Honey Creek and Ham Creek are but a few of the areas to find some angling action. TIP: early crappie action is often the best in creek channels below the bridge.

7. **Rathbun Lake** — *Appanoose*, Excellent numbers of 9- to 11-inch fish; best in years.
8. **Lake Miami** — *Monroe*, Tons of 8- to 10-inch fish.
9. **Indian lake** — *Van Buren*, 9- to 11-inch fish with 12- to 14-inch available.
10. **Lake Darling** — *Washington*, 9- to 11-inch are common; big fish swimming.

top

10 waters for largemouth bass

1. **Mississippi River** — *Big Timber*, Great numbers - all sizes.
2. **Lake Odessa** — *Louisa*, Good numbers of fish up to 22 inches.
3. **Lake Miami** — *Monroe*, Excellent numbers-all sizes; fish submerged timber.
4. **Lake Wapello** — *Davis*, No-kill regulation; gobs of 12- to 15-inch fish and some reach 20 inches.
5. **Hawthorn Lake** — *Mahaska*, Great population of 12- to 22-inch fish.
6. **Lake Sugema** — *Van Buren*, 12-to 18-inch protected slot limit; numerous 11- to 17-inch fish.
7. **Pleasant Creek** — *Linn*, Lots of 12- to 16-inch fish; 18-inch minimum.
8. **Lake Macbride** — *Johnson*, Good numbers - all sizes; lots of new habitat and Kentucky spotted bass present
9. **Diamond Lake** — *Poweshiek*, Good numbers of 2- to 4-pound fish; no outboard motors.
10. **Farm Ponds** — *all Counties*, Best chance for a trophy; mostly private water.

top

10 waters for channel catfish

1. **Mississippi River** — *Pools 16-19*, Stump fields are good producers; all sizes and lots of them.
2. **Lake Darling** — *Washington*, Lots of 15-19 inch fish; 9-pounders present.

3. **Coralville Reservoir** — *Johnson*, Excellent population-all sizes.
4. **Kent Park** — *Johnson*, Outstanding angling; excellent shoreline access.
5. **Otter Creek** — *Tama*, Lots of 14- to 20-inch fish.
6. **Rathbun Lake** — *Appanoose*, Exceptional fishery - all sizes
7. **Most Interior Rivers** Exceptional fishery-all sizes; fish snag areas.
8. **Hawthorn Lake** — *Mahaska*, Excellent fishery with fish up to 25 inches.
9. **Corydon Lake** — *Wayne*, Abundant numbers due to the cage catfish program.
10. **Lake Miami** — *Monroe*, Excellent numbers-all sizes.

top

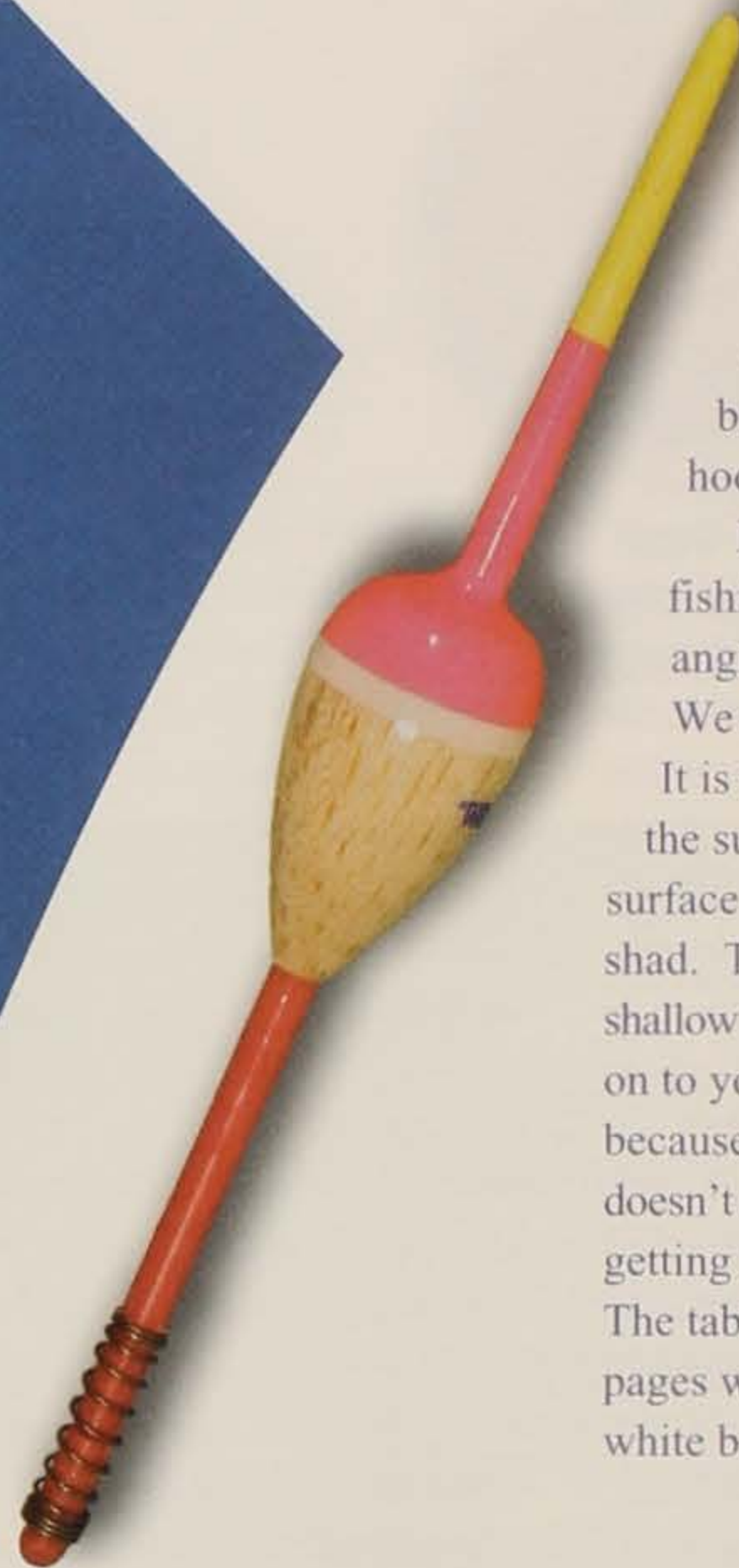
4 waters for walleye

1. **Rathbun Reservoir** — *Appanoose*, Excellent fishery; large numbers of 15- to 21-inch fish.
2. **Lake Sugema** — *Van Buren*, Good numbers of 15- to 19-inch fish, up to 24 in summer.
3. **Iowa River** — *Johnson*, Fish below Coralville Dam and Burlington Street Dam in Iowa City.
4. **Wapsi River** — Fish below dams at Central City and Anamosa.

top

3 waters for white bass

1. **Rathbun Lake** — *Appanoose*, Excellent fishery-best in years; 10- to 14-inch average.
2. **Mississippi River** — Fish below locks and dam and wing dams.
3. **Pleasant Creek** — *Linn*, Look for schools feeding on surface in summer; 12- to 16-inch fish common.



it jumped out of the water and fishtailed around some lily pads making quite an impression on my fishing buddy. It looks like he is hooked as hard as the fish was.

I am going to introduce my fishing friend to a new fish and angling technique this summer. We are going white bass hunting. It is a very simple technique. In the summer, white bass boil the surface feeding on young gizzard shad. Throw a surface lure or a shallow running lure at them and hold on to your rod like it's your last because the strike is intense. If that doesn't excite my young angler, then getting to drive the boat surely will. The table on the accompanying pages will point you to some great white bass fishing opportunities.

HIDDEN JEWELL

Mississippi River-Huron Island Complex (Pool 18)

One thing I like about fishing the Mississippi River is that you can escape the crowds and have a place to yourself. You can actually become part of what is going on around you. The only noise to listen to is mother nature's chorus and the gentle swirl of a paddle as you navigate the sloughs and chutes. Huron Island is such a place. This large complex is located at river mile 425 in Pool 18. Although there are a couple of boat ramps immediately adjacent to the complex, the size of the area allows one to melt into its uniqueness. It's a shallow area with downed trees here or there, and among that habitat are large crappie and aggressive largemouth bass. Along the main channel border and running chutes channel catfish are numerous and cooperative. Huron Island is a place Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn would be very comfortable at.

Another first will be a summer trotline angling adventure. I vividly remember my first trip with my brother, dad and granddad and I want to share that magnificent experience with my grandson. It is all great; finding the best location to set the lines, baiting the lines, checking the lines with an anticipation of catching a huge fish, roasting hotdogs and making smores around the bonfire, listening to mother nature's songs, and sleeping under the stars. What a trip.

There are some fishing experiences that will have to wait until my grandson is a little older. Iowa muskie, walleye and flathead catfish angling requires a little more patience than an 8-year old boy can maintain.

I see that we now have fishing equipment all over the floor, so, before my special friend becomes a human Christmas tree I have a job to do. I look forward to the many fishing adventures we will share this year. It is an important goal for me to make sure this special person has an opportunity to learn about this wonderful outdoor sport. It will help provide him with lifetime family experiences and nothing is more important than that.



MOST OVERLOOKED

Pleasant Creek, Linn County

Pleasant Creek (407 acres) is not an overlooked lake, but there is a fishery component that is. Everyone knows that bass, bluegill, crappie and musky attract a good number of anglers to this popular lake, but most folks aren't aware it has an outstanding white bass fishery. In the summer, young gizzard shad start to school near the water's surface, and it's like ringing the dinner bell for white bass. The result is extremely active feeding near the water's surface. You will want to hold on to your rod and reel with conviction because the strike from by these bad boys is intense. Surface and shallow running lures produce the best results when white bass tighten the napkin around their neck.

top

4 waters for flathead catfish

1. **Skunk River** — Easy to fish because of its size; popular fishery.
2. **Mississippi River** — *Pools 16-19*, Best below locks and dams and side channels.
3. **Rathbun Reservoir** — *Appanoose*, Target the Bridgeview area around Cedar.
4. **Wapsipicon** — *Des Moines*, rivers Good for all sizes. Look for big fish in holes during summer and around drift piles and bridge pilings.

top

3 waters for redear sunfish

1. **Lake Geode** — Henry, Fish have been sampled up to 11 1/2 inches
2. **Lake Wapello** — Davis, Good numbers of 8- to 12-inch fish.
3. **Lake Sugema** — Van Buren, Good numbers of 8- to 12-inch fish

northwest & north-central iowa



By Thomas Gengerke

Northwest/North-Central Regional Fisheries Supervisor, and biologists Jim Christianson, Lannie Miller and Jim Wahl

Natural lakes and small impoundments. Great border rivers and smaller prairie streams. Waters that run deep and cold and those which are shallow or warm. Different things to different people.

These contrasts contribute to differing perceptions of quality natural resources and all are available within northwestern and north-central Iowa. So what's the commonality? I think its diversity. Diversity of land forms and species contribute to the profound richness of natural systems and resource experiences available to us.

From an angler's viewpoint, we have to marvel at the diversity of opportunities available to us, and we need to remind ourselves that if we hope to reap the benefits of this diversity we need to remain flexible. We need to be flexible in our choice of environments, our location within the water body, our presentation and our selection of what species we pursue. The information in this article, highlighting more than a dozen favorite sport fish species found in northwest and north-central Iowa, should shed some light on how to be flexible in varying situations.

Spring will hopefully help in that process. It is a season of perpetual renewal. It is also one of my favorite periods of the year to fish. It's an easy time to be flexible because there is such a large array of diverse opportunities. I can fish for smallmouth bass with a small, 1/8-or even a 1/16-ounce jig, with or without a minnow, on the rocky shorelines of Spirit Lake of West Okoboji, or I can throw spoons or minnow imitating lures for northern pike. A recent change in regulations has opened some of our best

pike water to year-round angling opportunities. There is no longer a closed season on pike on West Okoboji, East Okoboji and Spirit Lake. Big fish and lot's of 'em. I can hardly wait.

Early spring is also a time for channel catfish. Try the shallow and warmer water and use cut bait. These fish are on a feeding binge at this time of year. During May the crappies are vulnerable to minnow or jig presentations. Use a small bobber and a small jig. Jig color can make a difference, so be flexible. I've also learned that Berkley Crappie

Nuggets can make a difference.

As the water temperatures increase, so does the opportunity for great bluegill fishing. I would

suggest small jigs and dark colors; my preference is black. If the bite slows you might add a piece of crawler or even a wax worm. Twitching the bait will frequently entice a gill to bite. If the fish have moved to deeper water you might consider a slip bobber, light line and a #8 hook with a piece of crawler. If you choose to move away from bluegills it may be time to unload the tackle box on largemouth bass. Jigs, spinnerbaits, crankbaits – a multitude of choices – will all work. Talk to other anglers and, again remain flexible.

These species and many others will provide diversity, opportunity and lot's of recreation for old and young alike. Be flexible, appreciate these quality natural resources and – above all – have fun.





TOP SURPRISES OF 2004

Clear Lake (Cerro Gordo County) and Brushy Creek (Webster County)

Walleye fishing on Clear Lake (Cerro Gordo County) was much better than anticipated in 2004. In fact, nearly 10,000 walleyes were taken this past open water season, marking the best catch since 1996. Successful recruitment is critical for this fishery to prosper, and survival of fry and fingerling stockings exceeded expectations in recent years. An abundant forage supply allowed this strong year class of walleye to reach 14 inches (legal minimum length) by late summer/early fall. Clear Lake anglers took advantage of this and recorded one of the best fall walleye fishing in recent memory.

The great news is this should carry over to 2005. Walleye will continue to grow and many of these fish will be 1 to 2 pounds by this season. Fish the rocky shallow shorelines in the spring and move out to deeper water as the water temperature warms. A jig and minnow is the best technique in the spring and live bait rigs or trolling crank baits is the most successful technique in the summer. Drifting with nightcrawlers or minnows produced excellent results last year and will continue to work in 2005.

Brushy Creek Lake, located in Webster County, has been full of surprises since the gates were closed in 1998. Fish growth and numbers have been incredible, rivaling any lake previously constructed. The big surprise at Brushy in 2004 was the growth rates and number of bluegill. The numbers weren't surprising considering this huge year-class of fish was first observed in 2001 when they were spawned. However, due to the incredible numbers present, we thought that the growth rates would be slower than what had been observed in the past. But by 2004, many of these fish had grown to 7 to 8 inches. Look for fantastic bluegill angling opportunities in 2005. A great population of largemouth and smallmouth bass, walleye, crappie, catfish and muskies round out the opportunities.

top 10 waters for walleye

1. **Clear Lake** — *Cerro Gordo*, Outstanding last fall, should be excellent in 2005.
2. **Black Hawk Lake** — *Sac*, Strong year classes of 15- to 18-inch walleye. Slip bobbers and leeches are the top bait in the spring. There is a 15-inch length limit.
3. **Des Moines River** — *Kossuth & Humboldt*, Fish below rock dams immediately after ice-out.
4. **Iowa River** — *Hardin*, 1- to 2-pound fish are abundant.
5. **West Fork Des Moines River** — *Emmet*, Good water levels produced good angling in 2004 and the same will hold true for 2005.
6. **Little Sioux River** — *Buena Vista, Cherokee and Woodbury*, Fish the deeper holes with live bait, especially live chubs for walleye up to 6 pounds.
7. **Silver Lake** — *Dickinson*, Consistent producer, 13- to 18-inch fish available.
8. **Spirit Lake** — *Dickinson*, Continued growth of the strong 2001-year class will produce some excellent fishing.
9. **Lost Island Lake** — *Clay and Palo Alto*, Good 2001 year class strength will produce in 2005.
10. **Center Lake** — *Dickinson*, Fingerling stockings has produced 15- to 17-inch fish.

top 5 waters for yellow perch

1. **Rice Lake** — *Winnebago*, Abundant population, some sorting required.
2. **Silver Lake** — *Worth*, Best fishing in the fall with small minnows.
3. **Lake Cornelia** — *Wright*, Good numbers of 8- to 9-inch fish.
4. **Silver Lake** — *Palo Alto*, Surveys indicate good number of fish available.
5. **Trumbull Lake** — *Clay*, Good number of fish. Large fish available; best time — ice period.

top

5 waters for bullheads

1. **Crystal Lake** — *Hancock*, Half-pound fish are plentiful.
2. **Rice Lake** — *Winnebago*, High density of 9- to 10-inch fish.
3. **Black Hawk Lake** — *Sac*, Lots of 8-inch bullheads for anglers of all ages to catch. Early spring to June is the best time to catch a mess of bullheads.
4. **Center Lake** — *Dickinson*, Good shoreline access and good numbers of 10- to 12- inchers.
5. **Lost Island Lake** — *Clay and Palo Alto*, Plenty to go around in the 8- to 10 inch range.

top

5 waters for crappies

1. **Spirit Lake** — *Dickinson*, The past two years have been excellent; 10-inch fish available.
2. **Brown's Lake** — *Woodbury*, Lots of 9- to 12-inch crappie available. Spring and fall are the best times to go after these tasty panfish.
3. **Black Hawk Lake** — *Sac*, Huge year class of 7 - to 8-inch fish present. Good growth rates will have these fish up to 10 inches by fall. Some fish up to 14 inches present.
4. **Nelson Park Lake** — *Crawford*, Great fishing from shore for 8- to 11-inch crappie; fish with a bobber and small jig.
5. **Beeds Lake** — *Franklin*, Excellent fishing in 2004.

top

10 waters for catfish

1. **Des Moines River** — *Kossuth & Humboldt*, East and West forks are both excellent.
2. **Boone River** — *Hamilton*, Fish in riffles during mid-summer for active fish.

TOP HUNCHES FOR 2005

Lake Smith (Kossuth County) and Brown's Lake (Woodbury County)

A substantial winterkill in 2000 left Lake Smith with an abundance of undesirable species, so in 2001 it was chemically renovated. Personnel with the Iowa DNR and the Kossuth County Conservation Board treated the lake with Rotenone, a fish toxicant, to rid the lake of unwanted bullheads and carp. Following the renovation, the lake was restocked with largemouth bass, bluegill and channel catfish.

Recent fishery surveys reveal these fish have grown fast and are now angler-acceptable size. Bass measuring up to 15 inches and weighing 2 pounds were present last fall. Bluegills are very abundant and many are 7 to 8 inches and weigh 1/3 of a pound. Catfish vary in size, but many are 1 to 2 pounds. Crappie were stocked this past fall and will provide additional opportunities in a few years.

Lake Smith is located three miles north of Algona and is owned and managed by the Kossuth County Conservation Board. It has a concrete boat ramp, however it is limited to electric motors only. There is good shoreline access with several docks and piers, and camping is available as well.

If it's nice crappies you're looking for, try Brown's Lake, located two miles west of Salix in Woodbury County. A fisheries survey done in 2004 showed a great population of 9- to 12-inch crappie in this 580-acre oxbow lake. May and June are the two best months to pinpoint a mess of crappies. Fish near the shore and other structures as the fish move in to spawn. The other good news is biologists observed several year classes of these slabs, ensuring good fishing for years to come. Good populations of channel catfish, largemouth bass and northern pike provide opportunities for a variety of anglers.

MOST OVERLOOKED

Lake Pahoja (Lyon County) and Nelson Park Lake (Crawford County)

Lake Pahoja (Lyon County) – This small 70-acre man-made lake in extreme northwestern Iowa is overlooked by many anglers, probably because of its location. As with many small lakes, the fishery supports a rather localized clientele. The adjacent park is maintained and managed by the Lyon County Conservation Board, with all the amenities from camping cabins to playgrounds and all the facilities that accompany modern day camping. This lake has provided many hours of angling for largemouth bass, bluegill and crappie. At present, the lake supports a tremendous population of nice-sized channel catfish that can be harvested day or night on a variety of baits.

Nelson Park Lake – What this lake lacks in size, it more than makes up for in quality. Located in Crawford County, three miles west and three miles north of Dow City, this 11-acre lake contains an abundance of keeper crappie and bluegill as well as a great channel catfish fishery. Bluegills range from 7 to 8 inches and the crappie fall in the 8- to 11-inch range. A cage catfish program with the Crawford County Conservation Board assures the angler of a continuous supply of catchable size cats. Electric motors only are allowed on this small lake.

3. **Clear Lake** — *Cerro Gordo*, Fish early morning or evenings on the windy shoreline throughout the summer.

4. **Storm Lake** — *Buena Vista*, One of the best channel cat fisheries in the state. Lots of 2- to 4-pounders.

5. **Black Hawk Lake** — *Sac*, Great population of “eater” size fish, from 14 to 20 inches.

6. **Silver Lake** — *Dickinson*, Surveys indicate 2- to 3-pound fish available.

7. **Lake Pahoja** — *Lyon*, A huge population of 15- to 20-inch fish.

8. **Ocheyedan Pond** — *Osceola*, An excellent population of “cats” from cage reared and stocked fish.

9. **Five Island** — *Palo Alto*, Good numbers of “cats” present, a bonus for this walleye lake.

10. **Center Lake** — *Dickinson*, Good numbers of 18- to 20-inch fish.

top

5 waters for bluegill

1. **Lake Smith** — *Kossuth*, Renovated in 2001; size and numbers excellent.

2. **Upper and Lower Pine Lakes** — *Hardin*, High density in both lakes; larger fish in Lower.

3. **West Okoboji Lake** — *Dickinson*, Larger fish (8-inch-plus) but fewer numbers for 2005.

4. **Brushy Creek** — *Webster*, Huge year class of 7 - to 8 -inch bluegills. Target suspended fish near the timber in the summer or on the bottom in the fall with a small hook tipped with a wax worm.

5. **North Twin Lake** — *Calhoun*, Bluegills up to 9 inches are plentiful near the structures or on the weed line .

top

4 waters for smallmouth bass

1. **West Okoboji Lake** — *Dickinson*, Fairly consistent producer. Good year-class strength for the 15- to 17-inch fish.

HIDDEN JEWELS

Iowa River (Hardin County) and Scharnberg Park Pond (Clay County)

The Iowa River in Hardin County offers some of the best fishing in north-central Iowa. From Alden to the Hardin/Marshall county line the river supports populations of channel catfish, smallmouth bass, walleye and northern pike. The Hardin County Conservation Board maintains large numbers of public accesses throughout the county. The river valley is extremely scenic and provides excellent opportunities to observe deer, waterfowl, turkeys and other wildlife. The stream is excellent for canoes and small jonboats. Three dams exist along the route: Alden, Iowa Falls and Steamboat Rock.

Scharnberg Park Pond (Clay County) – This 10-acre pond is loaded with channel catfish. There is good shoreline access and a new fishing pier for convenient fishing. Also there are plans in the works for a boat ramp to accommodate small boats. In 2004, a modern campground facility was created along with a couple cabins. This area is maintained and managed by the Clay County Conservation Board and is located one mile east of Everly off County Road B24.

2. **Spirit Lake** — *Dickinson*, Steady with sub-legals growing into the fishery.
3. **Iowa River** — *Hardin*, Riffle/pool habitat with limestone bottom.
4. **Boone River** — *Hamilton*, Scenic river with good number of smallies.

top

5 waters for largemouth bass

1. **Lower Pine Lake** — *Hardin*, Fish up to 7 pounds in 2004 fishery survey.
2. **Briggs Woods Lake** — *Hamilton*, Bass of all sizes sampled in 2004 survey.
3. **Willow Creek Pond** — *Osceola*, Good numbers of legal-sized fish.
4. **Brushy Creek** — *Webster*, Lots of angling pressure but lots of bass. Some fish exceed 6 pounds.
5. **West Okoboji Lake** — *Dickinson*, Fairly consistent; will be more legal fish available for 2005.

top

5 waters for northern pike

1. **Silver** — *Worth*, Three- to 5-pound fish taken in spring and fall.
2. **Spirit Lake** — *Dickinson*, Spring brood stock netting indicates an abundant and growing population.
3. **West Okoboji** — *Dickinson*, Trophies and hammer handles available.
4. **Tuttle Lake** — *Emmet*, A border lake where the pike have recovered from the 2001 winterkill.
5. **Trumbull Lake** — *Clay*, Shallow lake with nice-sized northerns.

top

trophies & unique opportunities

Trophies – Muskie populations in Clear Lake (Cerro Gordo), Spirit and West Okoboji (Dickinson) and Brushy Creek (Webster), have matured in numbers and size. Late summer and fall are peak periods.

Unique Opportunities – They're scrappy and good eating so take advantage of yellow bass at North Twin (Calhoun), Black Hawk (Sac) and Clear Lake (Cerro Gordo). The white bass at Storm Lake (Buena Vista) and Yellow Smoke (Crawford) are definitely worth the trip. Lot 's of action and fish larger than 15 inches.

BEST PLACE TO SHORE FISH

Black Hawk Lake (Sac County) and Beeds Lake (Franklin County)

Black Hawk Lake, a 957-acre natural lake located in Sac County, has 11.4 miles of shoreline. Almost 50 percent is publicly owned, an extremely high percentage of public ownership for a natural lake in Iowa. Creel surveys in past years have shown that shore anglers catch almost as many fish per hour as boat anglers. The best shoreline fishing per hour occurs in the spring when the bullheads move into the shallow waters. These fish are ideal for young and old anglers alike and provide an ideal family fishing outing. Thousands of crappie, walleye, catfish and yellow bass are also caught from the shoreline each year. No boat, no problem.

Beeds Lake offers some of the best shore fishing in northern Iowa. Five fishing jetties, one pier and several small docks provide access from the shoreline. In addition to these structures the entire shoreline is open to fishing, with the causeway on the west end being one of the most popular areas.

Beeds Lake supports a high density of crappies, with most running between 8 and 9 inches. Crappies will move into the rocks around the jetties and the causeway in mid-May and provide good opportunities for panfish. Largemouth bass and northern pike are frequently caught from the shore when the weeds begin to grow. Early morning and sunset are the best time for these predators throughout the summer.

If you prefer catfish, Beeds Lake has plenty of them as well. Fishing at night usually provides the best results. Prepared stink baits, chicken livers, dead chubs and frogs are the preferred baits.

Southwest Iowa

By Andy Moore

Southwest Regional Fisheries Supervisor

During the spring and early summer, the Southwest District office receives many calls about when and where to fish for a certain species.

Maybe the following ideas will be of use to anglers.

March and April are often the most overlooked times of the year for fishing, yet channel catfish and walleye can be very active throughout this period, and crappie during late April. Walleye and catfish become active at the first hints of warming water, and of course, weather will affect this factor. Good channel catfish lakes include Prairie Rose (Shelby), Mormon Trail (Adair), Badger Creek (Madison), Nine Eagles (Decatur), Easter Lake (Polk) and Viking (Montgomery). Fishing with cut shad bait or night crawlers on the bottom can have good results.



For walleye, I recommend Little River (Decatur) and Three Mile (Union), and don't forget the Des Moines River above Red Rock Reservoir. Fishing along the rocky dams and points with jig and minnow and/or twister tail can be productive, but remember to work the bait slower in cold water.

Late April to June is when the easy fishing takes place. Crappie, bluegill and largemouth bass are actively feeding and coming into the spawning season. Crappie lakes I recommend are Red Rock (Polk) and DeSoto Bend (Harrison) for large 11-



to 14-inch fish, and Prairie Rose (Shelby) for good numbers of 8-inch fish. Small 1/16- and 1/32-ounce jigs work well. Yellow, black and white, and chartreuse colors are popular and tip them with a minnow for added success.

Many anglers prefer to "soak" a minnow below a small bobber for relaxing yet good fishing.

Largemouth bass are also moving into shallow water this time of year. They can be caught with shallow running crawdad or minnow-colored crankbaits or similar colored spinner baits. Work the baits

TOP SURPRISE OF 2004

Littlefield Lake, Audubon

This lake has not had a reputation of supporting a quality panfish fishery. However crappie and bluegill fishing this past spring was fantastic with numerous fish caught that exceeded 9 inches for crappies and 8 inches for bluegills. Anglers were catching crappies in May during the spawn along the dam and other rocky shoreline structure. Bluegills were caught during late May/early June along the shore from spawning beds located near points and backends of small bays. Fish were also caught during the summer months in open water suspended in 4 to 6 feet of water. Fishing should be excellent again this coming spring. Anglers will have their best luck using small lead-head jigs (1/64- to 1/16-ounce), light line (2- to 4-pound test) and bobbers. The jigs may need to be tipped jig with a small minnow or night crawler. Fish by casting along shoreline, especially around rocky areas, with or without a bobber, then retrieve the lure slowly. In the spring bluegills and crappies will be found in shallow water typically less than three feet near spawning areas. This lake can suffer from poor water quality (turbid conditions) following heavy spring rains.

top

5 waters for bluegill

1. **Lake Ahquabi** — *Warren*, Fish small jigs and crawlers near jetties for 7- to 9-inch fish.
2. **Beaver Lake** — *Dallas*, Good numbers of 7- to 9-inch fish.
3. **Littlefield Lake** — *Audubon*, Eight- to 9-inch fish common along shoreline beds.
4. **Three Mile Lake** — *Union*, Seven- to 9-inch fish common.
5. **Green Valley** — *Union*, Fish 7 to 8 inches are common.

top

5 waters for crappies

1. **Red Rock Lake** — *Marion*, Eleven to 15-inch fish; try feeder stream coves and dam.
2. **Prairie Rose** — *Shelby*, Good numbers of 7- to 9-inch fish.
3. **Wilson Lake** — *Taylor*, Eight- to 11-inch fish abundant on dam during the spawn.
4. **Little River Lake** — *Decatur*, Fish rocky shoreline in spring for 7- to 10-inch fish.
5. **DeSoto Bend** — *Harrison*, Eight- to 13-inch fish; best in spring along structure.

top

5 waters for largemouth bass

1. **Badger Creek Lake** — *Madison*, All sizes with largest at 20 inches.
2. **West Lake** — *Clarke*, All sizes; 14 to 17 inches common.
3. **Rock Creek Lake** — *Jasper*, Good population of 15- to 20-inch bass.
4. **Green Valley** — *Union*, Minimum 22-inch size limit; good numbers of bass available.
5. **Prairie Rose Lake** — *Shelby*, Large 14- to 20-inch fish.

BEST HUNCH FOR 2005

Lake Ahquabi, Warren County

Lake Ahquabi is one of the better fishing areas for largemouth bass, bluegill, crappie and redear sunfish. There is good population of 12- to 16-inch bass in the lake, with fish exceeding 20 inches. Bluegill range in the 6- to 8-inch size, with lots of action around the jetties and pier. Crappies range from 8 to 10 inches and provide good fishing. The redear population is excellent, and there are plenty of 7- to 9-inch fish available. Fishing for redear requires a little different technique than bluegill fishing and they tend to be more picky than bluegill. Try small jigs tipped with wax worms and fish just off the bottom, especially during spawning.

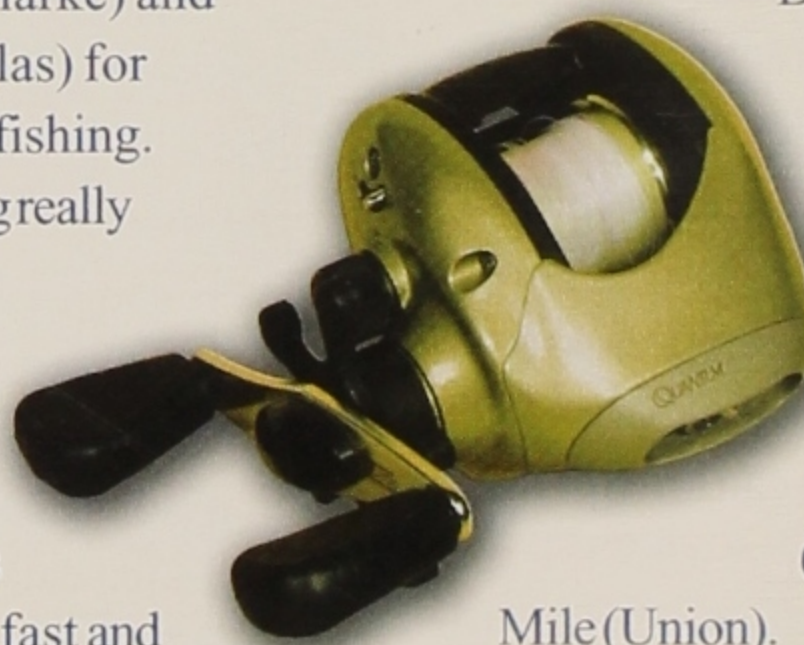
slower in cool water, then speed up the retrieve as the water warms. I recommend Green Valley (Union) and Prairie Rose (Shelby) because they hold big bass, and West Lake (Clarke) and Beaver Lake (Dallas) for general good bass fishing.

Bluegill fishing really picks up in early June and will last most of the month. Find the spawning beds and action can be fast and the fish big. These beds are usually located in 2 to 4 feet of water near sandy or gravel areas. The beds are where the male bluegill fans out a nest and often look like "elephant footprints" on the bottom. Small 1/32- to 1/64-ounce

jigs tipped with a piece of night crawler are very effective. A night crawler and small bobber work well, and remember to fish both rigs directly over the beds.

Don't over look any lake for bluegill fishing this time of year, but for big 'gills I recommend Green Valley (Union), Ahquabi (Warren) and Three Mile (Union).

Moving to a slightly different subject, a new fish population has been established in Lake Manawa near Council Bluffs. The hybrid striped bass, which is a hybrid of the ocean striped bass and the white bass, was stocked in 2002, 2003 and



BEST PLACE TO SHORE FISH

Greenfield Lake, Adair County

This is Greenfield's drinking water supply reservoir. It is 48 acres with excellent water quality. It has a concrete boat ramp (electric trolling motor only), five fishing jetties and a paved walking trail surrounding the entire lake. A habitat project completed in 2002 added numerous brush piles located in 8 to 16 feet of water and two gravel spawning beds that help concentrate fish in and around the structure. Greenfield boasts excellent numbers of large bluegills (7 to 9 inches) in addition to good numbers of 8- to 9-inch crappies with some more than 12. There are also excellent numbers of 1-pound and larger channel catfish.

2004. Fall surveys showed numerous fish from 8 to 22 inches. The larger fish weighed more than 5 pounds. For those who have fished the scrappy white bass, imagine catching a white bass weighing more than 5 pounds. This fish should provide much excitement. These fish can be caught by trolling shad-colored baits in 5 to 6 feet of open water during summer, or locating the schools when they surface to feed on shad. Other areas for hybrid striped bass fishing are Saylorville Reservoir, below the dam at Saylorville and in the Des Moines River at the Scott Street and Center Street dams.

A trout fishing opportunity was introduced at Banner Lakes in the new Summerset State Park near Indianola. Trout were first stocked

in early October, followed by stockings in November and January. These fish require cool water and can only be stocked during the fall and winter months. To fish trout, use 2- to 4-pound test line and



top 5 waters for channel catfish

1. **Prairie Rose Lake** — *Shelby*, High numbers of 3- to 6-pound fish plus flathead catfish.
2. **Badger Creek Lake** — *Madison*, All sizes up to 30 inches.
3. **Nine Eagles Lake** — *Decatur*, Size range from 14 to 25 inches.
4. **Easter Lake** — *Polk*, Good population of 14- to 18-inch fish.
5. **Mormon Trail Lake** — *Adair*, Population surveys indicate 100 fish per acre.

top 5 waters for walleye

1. **Lake Manawa** — *Pottawattamie*, Good numbers of all sizes.
2. **Saylorville Lake** — *Polk*, Fifteen- to 20-inch fish; try Cherry Glen to marina.
3. **Little River Lake** — *Decatur*, Thirteen- to 17-inch fish common plus trophy fish available.
4. **Three Mile** — *Union*, All sizes with plenty of fish over 26 inches.
5. **Des Moines River** — *Boone* and *Polk*, Fish below dams and in riffle/pool areas.

HIDDEN JEWEL

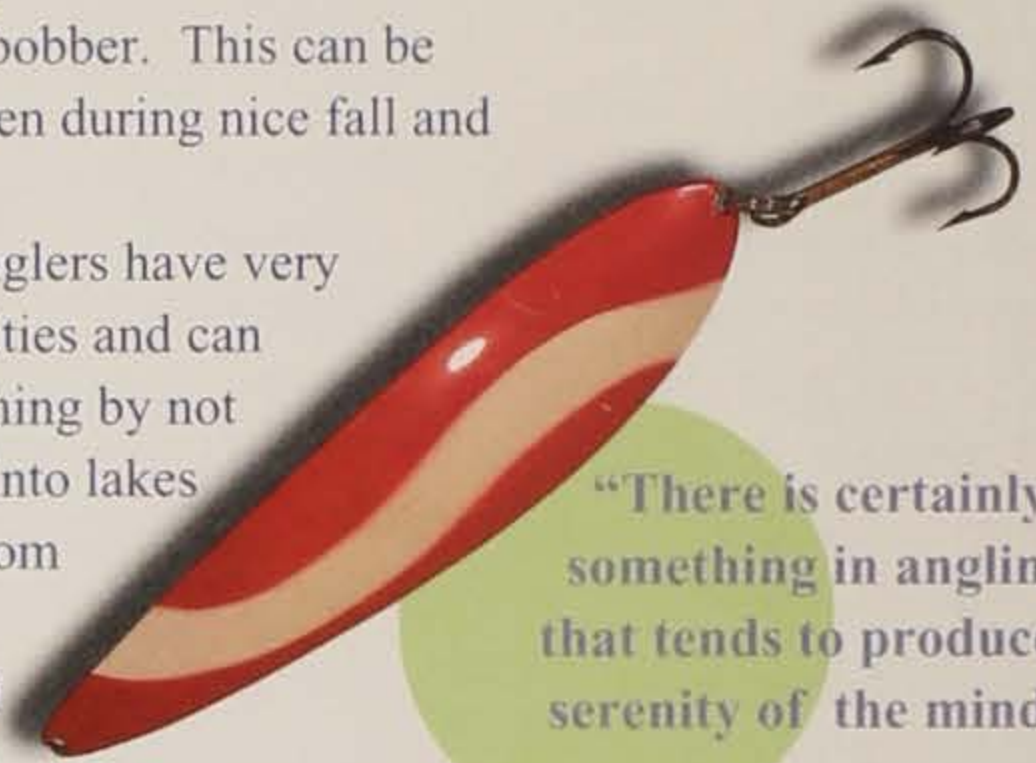
Jacob Krumm Nature Preserve

Jacob Krumm Nature Preserve (Jasper) is a 450-acre park and nature preserve located 1/4-mile north of the Lynnville exit, off I-80. The 25-acre pond is relatively new, and has good bass, bluegill and channel catfish populations. Access around the lake is good. Although it doesn't have the fishing jetties, there is a good hard-surface boat ramp. In addition to the lake, the preserve has seven miles of hiking trails that wind through prairies, savanna and woodlands, and offer excellent viewing of a variety of wildlife and plants. A shelter is available for use.

anything from small spinner baits to cheese and corn with a small bobber. This can be great fishing for children during nice fall and winter weather.

Southwest Iowa anglers have very good fishing opportunities and can help preserve good fishing by not dumping bait buckets into lakes and not moving fish from one lake or pond to another. Nuisance and unwanted species such as yellow bass, carp, gizzard shad, and bullheads can be stocked in this manner and can ruin good fishing in a very short time.

Remember, if you don't go fishing, you can't catch fish. Get out early and get out often. For more information, contact the fisheries biologist in your area or search our web site at iowadnr.com. Good fishing!!



"There is certainly something in angling that tends to produce a serenity of the mind."

Washington Irving

MOST OVERLOOKED

Beaver Lake, Dallas County

Beaver Lake (Dallas) is perhaps overlooked by many anglers due to its location and size. It is located about two miles north of Dexter. Although Beaver Lake is just a 35-acre lake, it does have some good fishing opportunities. The entire shoreline of the lake is accessible to anglers, with a number of fishing jetties on both sides of the lake. There is also a hard surfaced boat ramp on the south side of the lake. A universal pier is located just north of the dam on the eastside of the lake and is a good spot for those more interested in just tossing a line and relaxing for awhile. A private campground is nearby for those interested in more than a day-trip. The lake is located in a 300-acre-plus area and has plenty of room for the casual walk or for those wishing some solitude from a busy workday.

Beaver Lake is made for fishing. Areas of flooded timber and rock reefs provide an abundance of habitat. Bluegills and crappies are often found among the flooded timber and along the rocky areas and small jigs and bobbers are effective combinations. Smaller largemouth bass are plentiful and can provide some excellent catch-and-release fishing.

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Each spring, Iowa's hardwood forests begin to echo with the distinct, staccato gobble of the eastern wild turkey. It's a unique mix of siren song and call to arms ... an annual summons the turkey hunter cannot ignore.

For those of us who cherish all things wild, the deep resonate gobbling of an adult wild turkey is one of those unique natural anthems that is guaranteed to stir the blood. Many outdoor enthusiasts will even go so far as to rank spring gobbling right up there with the sound of bugling elk or howling wolves. For me, spring gobbling is nothing short of hair-raising. My blood pressure is never higher than when a dominate tom sounds off at close range.

As is the case with most world-class concerts, obtaining the best seats will mean losing some sleep and may even include a night on the ground. But once the show begins, these small sacrifices seem well worth the effort.



Spring



staccato
to arms
t ignore.



Photos and article by
Lowell Washburn



From picturesque northeast Iowa (above)
to the Loess Hills and nearly every timber
in between, turkeys are sounding off.

Ritual







The most aggressive toms may begin advertising their presence as soon as the first blush of an impending dawn begins to color the eastern sky. As the colors brighten, the gobbling will intensify as the symphony is joined by birds from surrounding ridgetops. During a typical day, gobbling activity will peak by sunrise and then cease altogether as hens assemble around vigorously strutting males. As hens eventually drift off, individual gobblers may crank up again by mid-morning or sometimes during early afternoon.



Barred Owl



Jack-in-the-Pulpit







During the first half of the spring breeding season, the woodland concert is heavily punctuated by the cutts, cackles and raspy yelpings of inquisitive hens. By late April, however, most hens will have become more subdued as they engage in nest site selection or egg laying.

Once a majority of these hens have begun to incubate eggs, hunters will frequently encounter a distinct and final spike in gobbling activity. By now the forest will have achieved full canopy. For human hunters, the dense foliage provides a catalyst for the most effective stalks – and close encounters – of the season.





Columbine

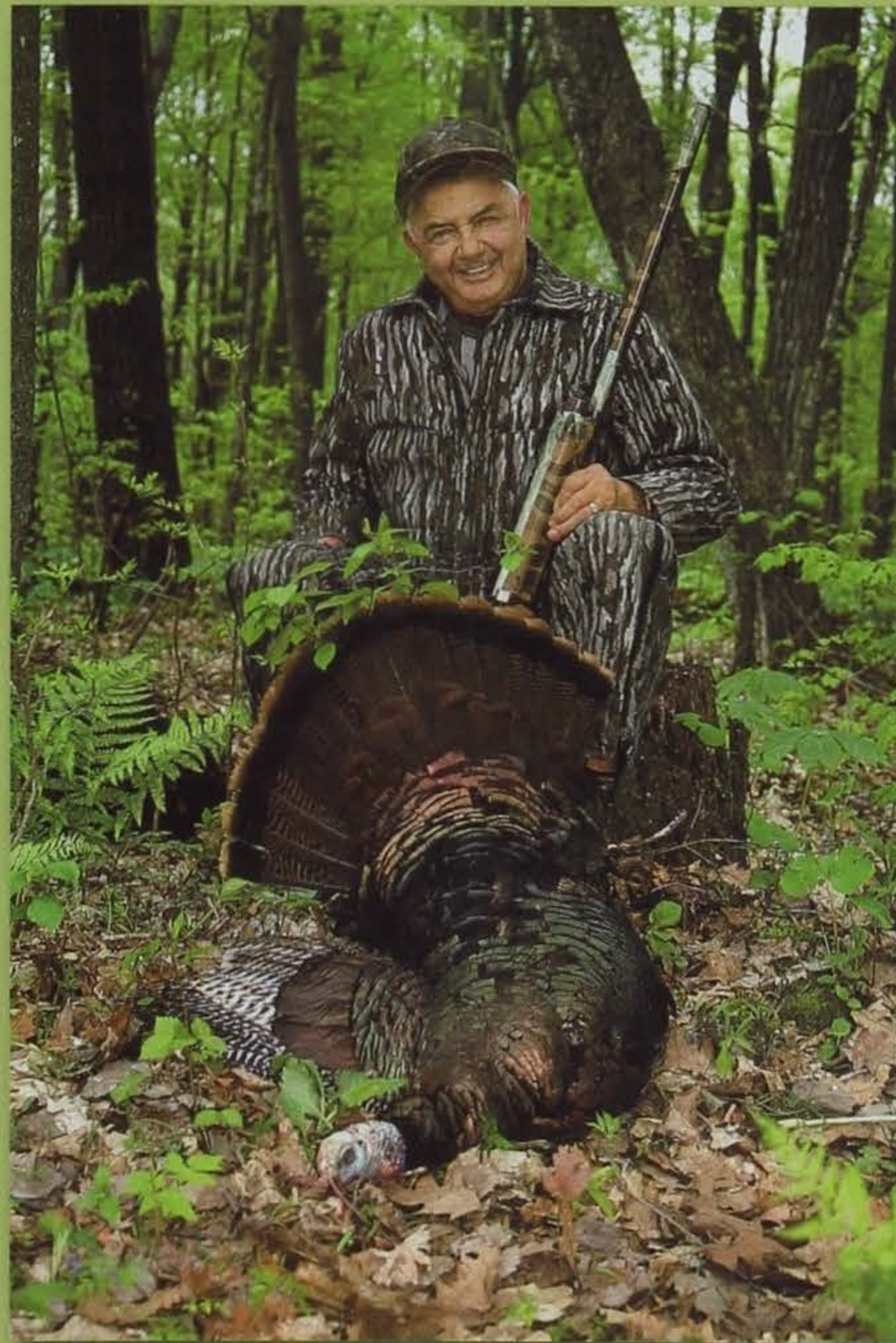


If conditions are just right, a gobbling tom can now be approached to within 50 or 60 yards — sometimes less. Many of these birds have recently become card carrying members of the Gobbler Lonely Hearts Club. Consequently, the spontaneous reaction to a series of soft yelps on the box call can be down right unnerving.

Although a dense, earth-toned tapestry of ferns, tree bark and gooseberry may prevent the hunter from obtaining immediate visual conformation, each new gobble loudly declares that the woodland monarch is indeed headed your way.

Suddenly, he appears. And although you've seen it all before, your pulse quickens and your breath is suddenly taken away as, bedecked in all his iridescent splendor, the timber ghost boldly struts directly toward your concealed position. You've already begun to tremble when, at 25 yards, the old tom pauses to emit a defiant, in-your-face, triple gobble.

Although you didn't need this heady reminder, the sound proclaims to all the world why spring turkey hunting is simply the finest sport ever invented.



Turkey Season Finale

Provides Fond Memories

by Lowell Washburn

Last year's spring turkey season was one of my most exciting ever. During the first hour of the first season, I passed up a 15-yard jake at sunrise and then called in and bagged a mature gobbler 10 minutes later.

During the fourth season, I hunted with bow and arrow. That proved to be a bit more challenging. With a shotgun, a turkey's distance is the primary consideration. But with archery, everything must be perfect before launching a broadhead. A small clump of gooseberry or handful of leaves that wouldn't even register with a gun hunter can make a 10-yard shot at a strutting gobbler completely out of the question.

Finally, after not bagging any of the seven birds that could have been easily

taken with a shotgun, I managed to arrow a 3-year-old tom at a distance of 7-1/2 feet.

After stowing my shotgun and bow, I returned to the telephoto. From the beginning of April until the end of the fourth season, I photographed a total of 26 jakes and toms as well as numerous hens. The combined opportunities easily surpassed any previous year.

I spent the last week-end of the 2004 season exploring the wooded blufflands of Clayton County near McGregor. There was no singular mission — I just hoped to see, hear and maybe photograph one more wild turkey, find a late mushroom or two, and take advantage of the world-class birding opportunities that

come to the Mississippi River woodlands during the spring migration.

The mushroom hunting was a pleasant surprise. In spite of the extremely late date, I collected about 10 pounds of fresh morels during my first hour or so in the woods. The songbirds — tanagers,

grosbeaks, thrushes, warblers and buntings — were more plentiful than I had dared hope. The timbers burst



Steve Schutte

Talking Turkey — Turkey hunting enthusiasts Lowell Washburn (left) and Ed Kotz Sr. enjoy the final morning of the 2004 spring turkey season in a Clayton County timber.

with the sound and color of these beautiful migrants. The best surprise, however, came on Saturday night when I received a call from my good friend Ed Kotz Sr.

Kotz, who lives in Grinnell, had heard that I was in northeast Iowa, and thought he might drop by the following morning and attempt to bag a gobbler on the season's final day.

During the past three decades or so, Kotz and I have pursued pheasants, waterfowl and deer during hunts that took place in Iowa, Missouri and Wyoming.

Ed is 80 years old now. And although he doesn't hunt upland birds, geese or big game anymore, he just can't seem to get turkeys out of his system. After we hung up the phone, I really began to look forward to the following morning.

When Kotz arrived at 4:30 a.m., he seemed downright chipper. I knew he'd left home by 1:30 a.m. in order to get here in time to hear the first gobble.

"Wow," I thought to myself, "I sure hope I can still do that when I'm 80."

By now, the stars were beginning to fade into what promised to be a perfect turkey-shooting morning — clear, calm and cool. Within minutes of entering the timber, we were greeted to the day's first gobbles. Unfortunately, none of the clamor was coming from atop our ridge. We opted against taking on the near vertical terrain that led to the next valley. Instead, we continued down the logging trail we were already on. The decision paid off. Within minutes, a gobbler fired up less than 200 yards away.

We cautiously picked our way through the timber until we were within 100 yards or less of the turkey's roost. After quickly taking a seat against an ancient maple, we released a series of soft tree yelps in the tom's direction. He responded by going nuts with a series of double and triple gobbles.

It was getting pretty light now. We clammed up and the gobbler soon flew down and headed in our direction. Although we couldn't see the tom through the thick understory, the latest gobble said the bird had now approached to within 60 yards — maybe less.

"Get ready," I whispered. I knew that I really didn't need to say that. I just have a knack of displaying a firm grasp of the obvious whenever wild turkeys are nearby.

Suddenly, a second tom fired up from just over the ridgetop. The new arrival began to gobble incessantly, and the sounds told us that he too was rapidly approaching our position. The end result, unfortunately, was that the new (apparently dominant) bird drove the first (apparently subdominant) tom back over the ridge. Once that task was accomplished, the dominant bird refused to budge. No amount of pleading could coax him into view, and the bird finally gobbled his way back down the ridge and out of earshot.

All things considered, Ed didn't seem the least bit disappointed. The encounter had been loud and exciting. We both agreed that it had made the long drive and lack of sleep well worth the trouble.

We continued down the ridge. During the next couple of hours, we

identified a ton of songbirds, saw several species of woodland wildflowers and found more mushrooms. We discovered one morel that was practically large enough to hang ornaments on.

"I've never seen anything like this in my life," said Kotz. "I doubt I'll ever see a mushroom as big as this again."

That mushroom was something. Although I didn't have anything to measure with, I know the morel was an honest 9-1/2 to 10 inches tall — maybe more. Unfortunately, it had passed its prime. We decided to leave it standing and to come back next May and gather its offspring.

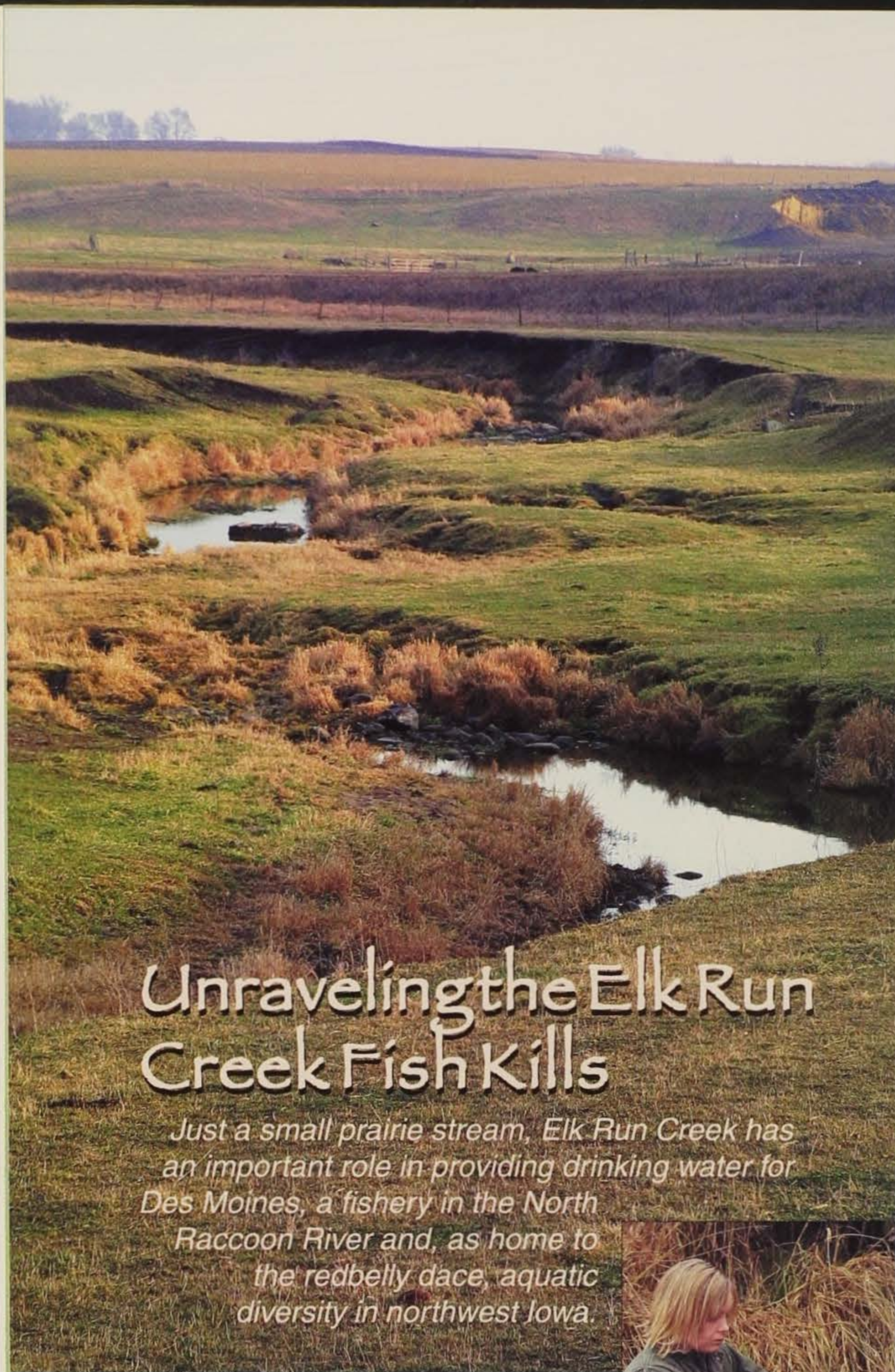
Later, we had another close encounter with a tom that gobbled twice. The bird sounded off directly behind us, and we never heard or saw it again. Soon after that, it was time for me to head back home.

We both agreed that it had been a great outing. The fact that we hadn't bagged a bird didn't seem all that important.

We were packing up when Ed suddenly announced that he hadn't had enough yet and was heading back to the woods for another hour or two. That night he left me a voice message saying he'd watched two adult toms strutting for some hens. He hadn't been able to lure the birds his way but had sure enjoyed the show.

"Those big gobblers are sure something to watch," he laughed. Although the hour was late, his voice still carried the enthusiasm of that latest encounter.

"Wow," I thought to myself again. "I sure hope I can still do that when I'm 80."



Unraveling the Elk Run Creek Fish Kills

Just a small prairie stream, Elk Run Creek has an important role in providing drinking water for Des Moines, a fishery in the North Raccoon River and, as home to the redbelly dace, aquatic diversity in northwest Iowa.

Article by Karen Grimes
Photos by Clay Smith

Alison Manz taking water samples near a tile outlet that flows into Elk Run Creek.



Alison Manz started out looking for a dead cow. What she found instead, on that otherwise inconspicuous prairie stream, was an unforgettable scene of aquatic devastation.

"I've heard others describe it, but I've never been there before at the start of a fish kill and seen the fish leaping out of the water and dying on the banks of the creek," she said.

It is not something she wants to see again.

It was Oct. 26, 2004, when the Atlantic DNR field office received an anonymous complaint about a dead cow in Elk Run Creek. When Manz, an environmental specialist, responded she had no idea this investigation would involve two fish kills and consume more than 300 staff hours.

On Nov. 1, she drove to the creek, a small stream draining about 35 square miles of Sac, Carroll and Calhoun counties. She stopped on Phoenix Avenue and walked up the creek, looking for the cow. Instead, she found herself in the midst of waters suddenly full of small minnows rising to the surface, gasping for air, many of them turning belly up and dying.

Half a mile up the stream, Alison found the source of the pollution – an underground tile – part of a vast network of underground clay tile or plastic pipe used to drain cropland. Manz found manure-smelling brown water flowing out of the tile drain and into the creek. Field tests confirmed why the fish were dying – elevated ammonia levels coming from the tile outlet flowing into the



Green biodegradable dye helped traced the miles-long underground connection between tile inlets (above) and tile outlets (right) that flow into the stream.



stream below. Laboratory test results showed fecal coliform levels of more than 18 million colonies per 100 milliliters of water, confirming manure as the pollutant.

When she called in the fish kill to the Atlantic field office, Kirk Mathis and Jerry Jordison went to work pulling maps and aerial photos, trying to match tile drainage areas with possible sources of manure.

Within days, DNR specialists found another fish kill as they investigated the first one. Unfortunately, DNR records show two other fish kills, in the fall of 1998 and 1999. The DNR investigated both kills, but was unable to identify all the pollutant sources.

"This has been a problem watershed for a number of years," said Wayne Gieselman, administrator of DNR environmental services.

"As a result of our efforts and with the help of Des Moines Water Works, we were able to identify a number of issues that need to be addressed," Gieselman said.

Neighbors and interested citizens concur, the creek has had ongoing water quality problems, including

turbidity and some fish kills. In late July 2004, Des Moines Water Works notified the field office that routine water quality tests showed Elk Run Creek also had high nitrite levels. Manz took water samples from the stream, but was unable to determine the pollution source.

When two fish kills occurred only eight days apart, the DNR devoted extensive resources to find the problem. Tracking down the source of the tile runoff took an intensive two-month investigation as six staff members searched for pollutants that ran literally for miles underground.

The search developed into an environmental CSI or Crime Scene Investigation, using modern technology such as dye tests, smoke machines, aerial photos and maps of county-maintained tile lines. The DNR specialists also used old-fashioned, but intense, on-the-ground investigative skills, talking with livestock producers, brainstorming potential pollutant sources, taking water samples and walking more

than eight miles of creek banks.

"The fish kills generally happen about five days after a rain," said Dan Stipe, supervisor of the Atlantic DNR field office. "The topography is so flat that the stream and tiles flow, pool, then become a trickle or a few riffles, then it backs up again. It makes it difficult to find the source."

It took an all-out detective effort to identify sources of the underground polluted runoff, because the usual clues from surface runoff were missing.

Manz and other specialists confirmed the runoff was from animal manure, but as they walked the creek, they found other problems. A slight blackish sludge turned out to be a septic tank discharge.

In Carroll County, they found a manure stockpile close to the stream, but no evidence that runoff from the stockpile was entering the creek. The owner moved the stockpile to prevent future problems.



"You know when you've solved the mystery that you have actually made a difference. That's what it's all about – protecting the environment," Stipe said.

A smoke test machine helped Stipe and Manz find the underground connection between surface problems, tile lines and the stream.



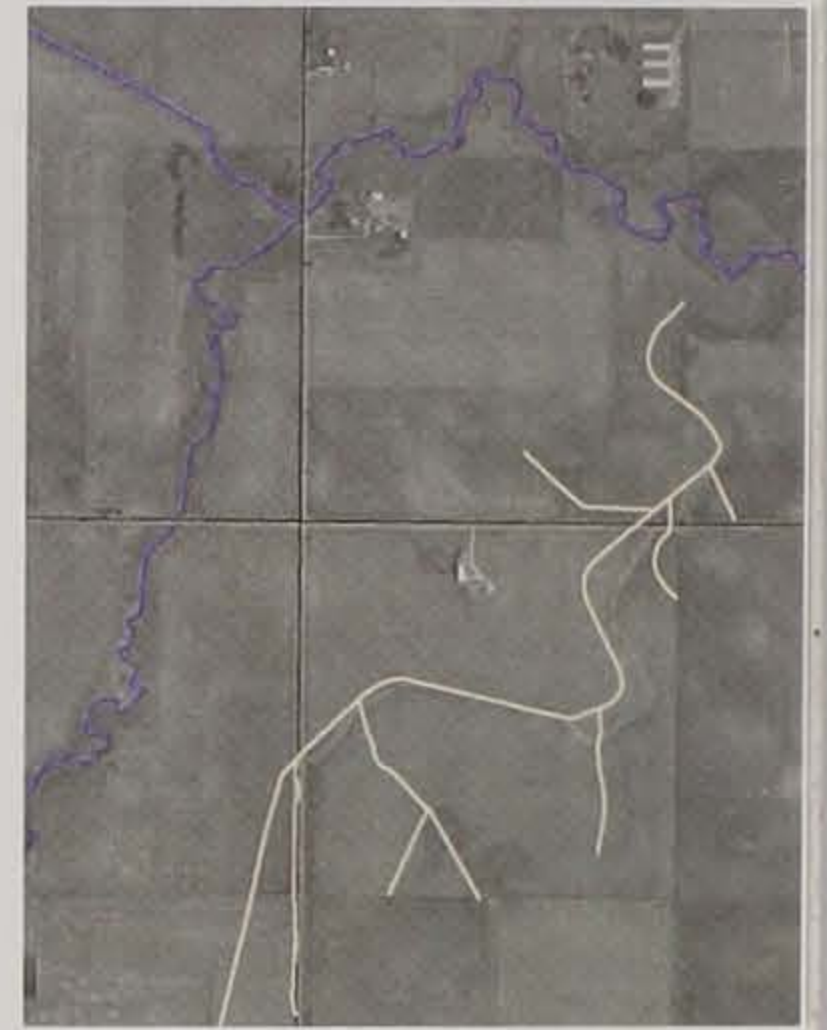
In the end, unraveling the county tile line maps (right) proved to be the key to the puzzle. An extensive county drain tile system underlies the land surface in Carroll County. Landowners have also installed subsurface drain tiles to allow crop planting in the spring.

Stipe and his staff used the Carroll County drain tile map to investigate more than 20 square miles of the watershed. They visited

every animal feeding operation that could potentially be contributing to the fish kill via an underground connection. When they found evidence of surface runoff, they used smoke tests, dye tests, trenching and water test results to determine if runoff from that site was reaching the stream. After two months, the DNR linked manure from several open feedlots to the two fish kills. One lot was located more than three

miles from Elk Run Creek.

But, perhaps more important, the DNR investigators found a disturbing pattern of manure storage on open feedlots. In lot after lot, the DNR saw improperly built manure storage structures. While cattle manure does



Drainage tile map showing Elk Run Creek in blue and subsurface county drain tile lines in white.

Why is Elk Run Creek Important?

DNR water quality specialists documented a remnant population of southern redbelly dace in Elk Run Creek during a water quality survey in the early 1990s. To them, Elk Run Creek symbolizes the diversity of aquatic life that once existed in small streams across northern Iowa.

A small minnow, the redbelly dace prefers small streams with cool, clear water. It is found mostly in northeast Iowa, with scattered



populations in northwest Iowa.

“From the fisheries standpoint, I like to compare the rivers to a big tree,” says Lannie Miller, longtime DNR fisheries biologist from Lake View. “The little tiny branches are the small streams like Elk Run Creek that feed into the bigger rivers like the Des Moines and the Raccoon. These are the prime areas of productivity.”

“Minnows go up these small streams in the spring and spawn and grow and move downstream in the fall. The minnows overwinter in the bigger rivers. As any fisherman knows, predator fish go on a feeding frenzy when there is this sudden influx of food in the fall. Minnows,

chubs and suckers are coming out of the small feeder creeks in the fall to provide that forage,” says Miller.

“If we keep polluting, damming or channelizing these small feeder streams that are the nursery and spawning areas,” says Miller, “the minnows can’t get up the streams or they are dead. But what these little streams are vital for is literally the base of production. When someone pollutes the little streams, it affects the whole system. If you cut off so many branches of a tree, it eventually dies.”

not have a high level of ammonia initially, if the solids sit and cook with the liquids, the bacteria in the mix converts the manure into ammonia which can be toxic to aquatic life. With the first rainfall, liquids wash out of the basin — a lethal mix when a tile line intake is located close to a basin and carries manure and high ammonia levels to a stream.

Solving the problem will not be easy, because so many lots have the same construction. The seasonally high ground water level is within feet of the surface, so soils are often saturated and that's why the area is so heavily tiled, according to Claire Hruby, a DNR geologist.

But Stipe plans to discuss the DNR findings with Carroll County cattle producers at a public meeting scheduled in April.

"Overall, I feel we will be able to greatly improve the quality of this water body as a result of our efforts," Stipe said. "By taking a proactive approach and working with producers we can prevent future problems. Better water quality will result."

Barb Lynch, chief of DNR field services, is pleased with the investigation that finally determined several sources of an ongoing water quality problem. She plans to pursue similar problems throughout the state.

"I plan for our field offices to target small watersheds that have ongoing water quality problems where the pollutant sources are unknown," she said. "As Dan and Alison have shown, it takes an intensive effort to find these sources, but the positive results for water quality will benefit all Iowans."

Karen Grimes is an information specialist for the department.



Two fishkills in Elk Run Creek were traced to runoff from open cattle feedlots that entered subsurface tile drains and flowed to the creek.

Importance to Des Moines

Elk Run Creek is one of approximately 30 small watersheds that flow into the Raccoon River, the primary drinking water source for six counties and more than 25 communities, including Des Moines. The Des Moines Water Works is responsible for treating the water and ensuring the safety and quality of the water to 350,000 people, according to Linda Kinman with the water works. Volunteer water quality monitoring shows that Elk Run Creek is one of four small watersheds that flow into the North Raccoon River that have extremely high levels of nitrate, from 20 to 36 ppm.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency sets minimum standards that drinking water must meet. In 1989 and 1990, the Des Moines Water Works exceeded the maximum contaminant level (MCL) of 10 ppm for nitrate levels in drinking water and had to publicly notify its customers. To avoid exceeding the MCL for nitrate, the water works plant built one of the largest nitrate removal facilities in the world costing \$3.7 million.

These small watersheds have a cumulative effect that can be good or bad for water quality in the larger rivers. "We're all connected and in the grand scheme of things, water should leave our land as good as when it arrived," says Wayne Gieselman, DNR administrator of environmental services.

Elk Run Creek watershed is located in north central Carroll County.

Mapping Mean Nitrate Concentration from 27 Subwatersheds in Raccoon River April - August 2001



Courtesy of Des Moines Water Works

Governor's Environmental Excellence Award Winners

Governor Tom Vilsack honored 14 Iowa organizations and businesses with environmental excellence awards in April, paying tribute to them for their leadership and innovation in protecting Iowa's natural resources.

"I am proud to recognize these Iowans for taking active roles in protecting our natural resources," Vilsack said. "Their leadership serves as a model in implementing environmental sustainability across the state of Iowa."

The statewide awards program recognizes comprehensive environmental programs by organizations and businesses, along with special project awards in water quality, air quality, waste management, habitat restoration/development and energy efficiency/renewable energy. The winners were chosen from nearly 40 nominations and include:

Environmental Excellence Award:

- Cedar Falls Utilities
- Iowa National Guard Combined Support Maintenance Shop, Johnston
- EMC Insurance Companies, Des Moines
- Textron Fastening Systems, Decorah

Special Recognition in Energy Efficiency/Renewable Energy:

- Consumers Energy, Marshalltown
- CUNA Mutual Life Insurance Company, Waverly
- Davenport Community School District



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Special Recognition in Waste Management:

- EMC Insurance Companies, Des Moines
- CURRIES Division of AADG, Inc., Mason City

Special Recognition in Water Quality:

- City of Prairie City, Jasper County Board of Supervisors & Jasper County Zoning & Planning
- Xstream Cleanup, Davenport
- Maytag Newton Laundry Products, Newton

Special Recognition in Habitat Restoration/Development:

- Bettina Bourjaily on behalf of Redbird Farms Wildlife Area, Johnson County
- Monsanto Company, Muscatine
- Drake University Biodiversity Center, Des Moines

Complete details about each award winner and the awards program are available at www.iowandr.com.

The awards are sponsored by the Governor's Office, the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, the Department of Economic Development, the Department of Education, the Department of Public Health and the Iowa Waste Reduction Center.



Ames Institution Serves Up Barbequed Wild Turkey Breast



The smell of smoldering hickory hits you as soon as you step out of your car and you react like Pavlov's dog—stomach growling, mouth watering. This is all-American cooking. An Iowa wild turkey cooked barbecue-style by Hickory Park in Ames.

The kitchen is busy and the smell of smoked meats, spices and sauces fills the air. Rick Baker, kitchen manager of Hickory Park, lays the breast on a cutting board and slices it horizontally to speed cooking. He seasons both sides with Season-all, garlic powder and white pepper. The meat is scored, then placed on the grill.

"This is the easy part," Baker says standing near the nearly six-foot-long charcoal grill. Baker has been a cook at different styles of restaurants, pizza houses and barbecue joints. "I've been cooking for 30 years," he says. "Been here since 97."

He says the key to barbecuing a wild turkey breast is to watch the temperature to prevent the meat from burning. Grills should be set to medium or kept at about 275 degrees. The turkey and chicken

meat used by much of the food industry is injected with a salt solution to keep the meat moist while cooking. A wild turkey, of course, does not receive the solution and has the potential to dry out quickly and become tough, so keep an eye on it, he advises.

After the meat has cooked about three to four minutes per side, Baker removes it and gives it a bath of what he calls baste, which is similar to a barbecue sauce. He then returns it to the grill checking and turning it often. The baste he uses is the same sauce he uses on chicken and ribs.

Baker cuts up a small piece of breast meat checking for doneness. The cut pieces are snapped up from all directions. "Whattayathink?" "Mmmitsprettygood." "Whatisit?" Barbecued wild turkey, tender and delicious.

Restaurant manger Jason Wheelock says there are a number of side dishes that could accompany this dish. At Hickory Park, baked beans, potato salad and coleslaw are the most popular, but buttered corn and mashed potatoes would also work nicely.

Barbequed Wild Turkey Breast

Ingredients:
1 wild turkey breast
Season-all
Garlic Powder
White Pepper
Barbecue sauce

The grill should be about 275 degrees. Cook the breast about three minutes per side. Remove, coat with sauce and return to heat. Keep an eye on the breast and turn to prevent burning. The meat is done when all the pink meat is brownish gray. Serve on a bun, sliced thin.

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Article by Mick Klemesrud
Photos by Clay Smith



“Boom” Time for AmeriCorps Member

Volunteer Helps Bring “Booming” Prairie Chickens Into View

by Michael Dhar

These days, the prairies of southern Iowa awaken to booming sounds heard for miles and birds dancing on hilltops—two signs of the recovering Iowa prairie chicken.

And this spring, thanks to the efforts of DNR officials and an AmeriCorps member, early rising nature-lovers will get a chance to see them.

Ben Mullarkey, an AmeriCorps member at the Mount Ayr Wildlife Unit, helped create the first annual Ringgold County Prairie Chicken Viewing Day last April. (AmeriCorps, the domestic Peace Corps, funds service positions across the country, including 47 in the Iowa DNR.)

This year’s event will begin at first light on April 16th. (For more information, contact Micah Lee at 641-464-2389 or Mel Moe at 641-464-2220.)

Last year, roughly 35 bird watchers trekked to the Kellerton Bird Conservation Area before sunrise to view the birds. They saw at least 12 male chickens dance on a “booming ground” or “lek”—a raised area on which male chickens compete for females.

“It’s a cool dance and display,” Mullarkey said. “They’re a pretty unique bird.”

The project highlights the importance of teaching people about Iowa’s wildlife, he said.



Viewers spot chickens at last year’s event

DNR Photos

A male prairie chicken during mating season



Roger Hill

“I don’t think many people know they’re here,” Mullarkey said. “Some exposure is good.”

Prairie chickens used to be the premier game birds in Iowa, with hunters bagging up to 200 a day in the 1800s. Over-hunting and loss of prairie habitat decimated their population by the 1950s, however.

Now, thanks to a series of releases in the 1980s and 1990s, the chickens are making a comeback.

The releases led to “a small, but somewhat stable population,” according to a report by Mount Ayr wildlife biologist, Mel Moe. Only recently, however, did the comeback prove strong enough to warrant a viewing day, said wildlife diversity technician, Pat Schlarbaum.

“I suppose we could have done this 10 years ago, but it would have been much more tentative that the recovery was going to work,” he said.

A strongly barred brown, tan and white grouse, the prairie chicken sports tuft feathers or pinnae on its neck. The males display bright orange eyebrows and air sacs during mating season. They stake out territory on the leks, fighting, displaying and making their “booming” call.

“We live in the country and we care a lot about wildlife,” said Rebecca Abarr, who drove three hours from Redding, Iowa with her family for last year’s event. “I think it’d be weird for someone not to be interested. It’s important to bring them back.”

Event organizers hope the birds’ continued comeback will support an annual viewing day in the coming years.

April Volunteer Events

* Help restore prairie habitat during the 6th annual **Statewide Prairie Rescue**. For more information visit: www.iowadnr.com/volunteer/pr05 or contact Katie Kemp at Katie.Kemp@dnr.state.ia.us

* Help bring landscape trees to Iowa communities with Plant Some Shade or Operation ReLeaf. Find out more at: www.iowadnr.com/forestry/urban/

* Learn more about other DNR volunteer projects at: www.iowadnr.com/volunteer/



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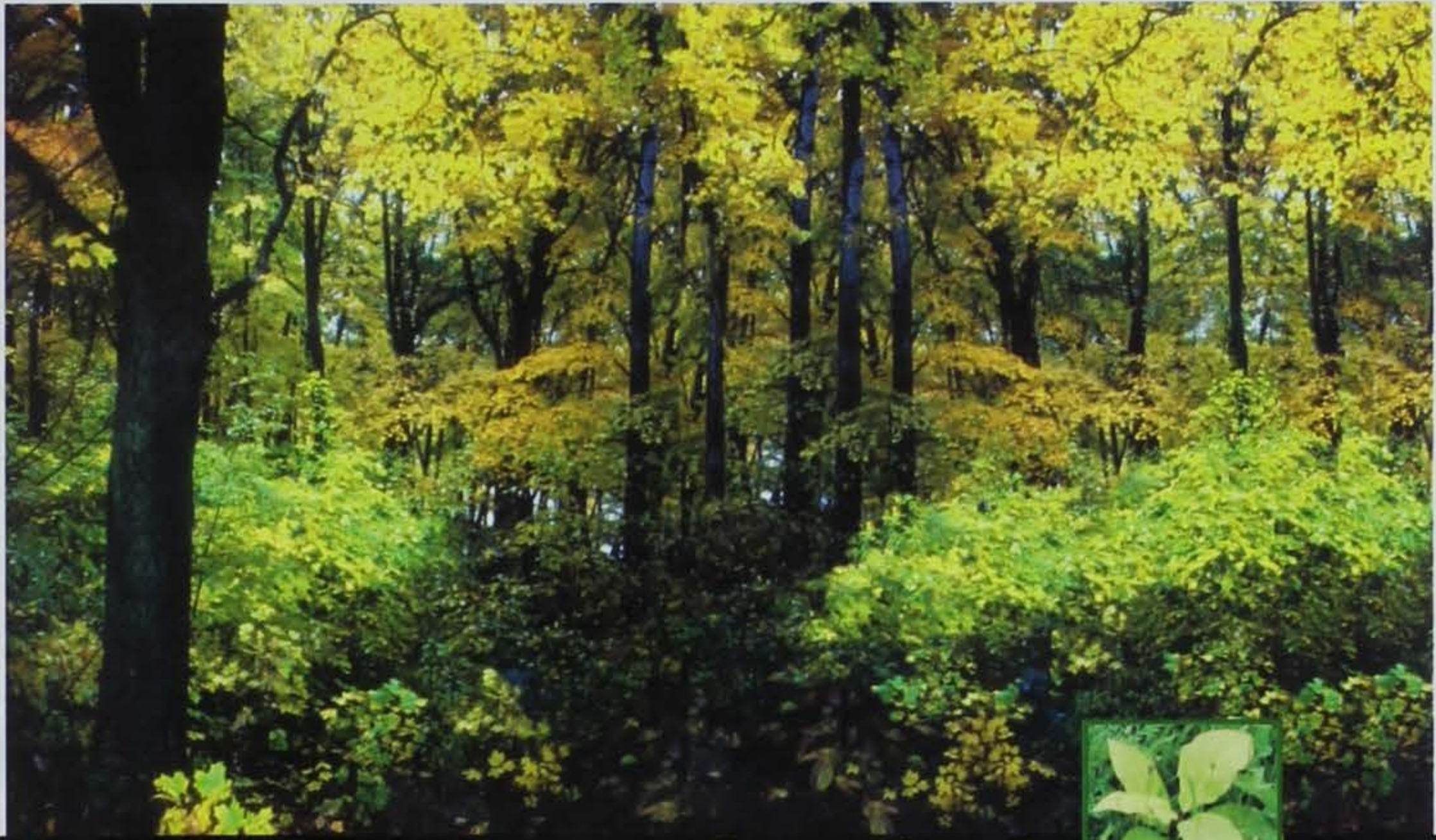
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- Anton Pavlovich Chekhov

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- Martin Luther

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- Alan Watts, *Cloud-Hidden, Whereabouts Unknown*, 1968, p. 111

"How long can men thrive between walls of brick, walking on asphalt pavements, breathing the fumes of coal and of oil, growing, working, dying, with hardly a thought of wind, and sky, and fields of grain, seeing only machine-made beauty, the mineral-like quality of life?"

- Charles Lindbergh

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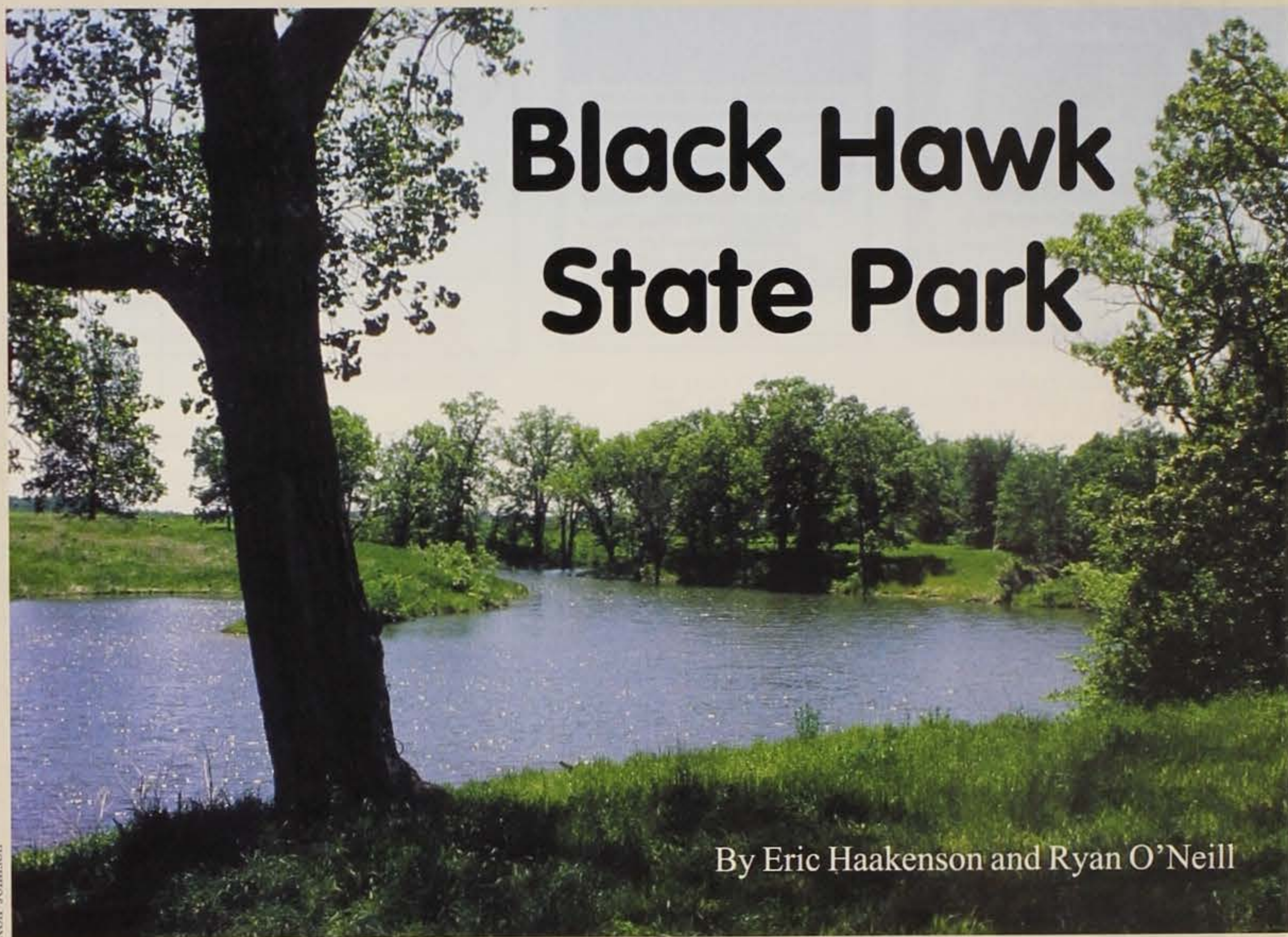
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PARKS PROFILE

Black Hawk State Park



Ron Johnson

By Eric Haakenson and Ryan O'Neill

A trip to northwest Iowa wouldn't be complete without a stop at Black Hawk State Park. And if you do, make sure to pack the swim suit and rod and reel to take advantage of the park's crown jewel. Virtually hidden from view from highway travelers, the 957-acre natural lake is a major draw for anglers and water enthusiasts in northwest Iowa.

The centerpiece was formed thousands of years ago by glacial action, and in fact, is the southern-most glacier-formed lake in Iowa. Known in earlier days as Boyer Lake, Walled Lake and

Wall Lake, it was renamed Black Hawk Lake in 1932 after the Indian chief who unsuccessfully fought off attempts of white settlers to claim the Sac Indian tribe's land. Chief Black Hawk was killed exactly 100 years earlier at the Bad Ax River in Wisconsin during the Black Hawk War. Black Hawk State Park was dedicated three years later.

Between 1935 and 1938, Civilian Conservation Commission (CCC) work crews built numerous structures using native fieldstone, including two fishing piers and boat docks, two shelter

houses and the park residence. In the mid 1990s, both shelter houses and stone piers were renovated, restoring their status as shining examples of the quality work done by the CCC.

The CCC was also responsible for riprapping more than 11 miles of shoreline with fieldstone. The workers also built fish hatcheries and holding ponds in the Black Hawk Wildlife Management Area. Today, the ponds are no longer in use, but serve as great viewing areas for a multitude of fauna found in the area. Wood ducks and Canada geese

make their home there in nesting boxes provided by the DNR, offering hikers chances to see the next generation of waterfowl.

The wildlife area is also home to the Stubb Severson self-guided nature trail. The trail stretches 1.6 miles and features 20 marked sites. A brochure is available to explain the sites and other natural features found along the trail. Winter finds the trail occupied by cross country skiers.

Two CCC stone entrance portals mark the beginning of a "trip around the lake," as local residents — some who make the journey daily to see what's new on the water — like to call it. The first structure visitors will notice upon entering the park is the CCC-built park residence and old shop. Travelling south, visitors will encounter the Ice House Point Picnic area, boasting a double boat ramp, a fish cleaning station, a handicap

fishing pier and ample shoreline to wet a fishing line.

Black Hawk Lake offers walleye, catfish, bass, panfish and bullheads. At certain times of the year, white pelicans, bald eagles and a vast array of migrating waterfowl and shore birds can be seen.

Leaving Ice House and continuing southward, visitors was cross the inlet bridge before arriving at Gunshot Hill. The bridge is a traditional hot spot for walleye and crappie in the spring and fall.

Gunshot Hill provides a quiet, shaded picnic area with a modern rest room and open shelter house for those wanting to take time away from their busy lives. Next



Roger A. Hill

up is the Thirty Acres boat ramp/campground complex, featuring a double boat ramp, a playground structure, a CCC shelter house and an unsupervised swim area.

This spring, Black Hawk is scheduled for a major campground renovation to upgrade and increase electrical sites to 118. In addition, the park will receive new grills, level gravel pads and easier access for today's larger camping vehicles.

The marina and north shore areas are located on the northeast corner of Black Hawk Lake, the only areas open to anglers 24 hours a day.

Heading north finds visitors at the Denison Beach Picnic area.



Lowell Washburn

PARKS PROFILE



Lowell Washburn



Ken Formanek

ABOVE: With the crown jewel at Black Hawk State Park being the 957-acre natural lake, obviously fishing for walleye, catfish, panfish and bullheads is a major draw to the park. PREVIOUS PAGE: Wood ducks and white pelicans are frequent visitors to Black Hawk Lake, along with bald eagles and other migrating waterfowl.

This area also boasts a CCC open shelter house with modern rest rooms. It is a popular spot for family reunions, as you can beach your boat right at the sandy shoreline while exchanging passengers or enjoying a picnic. All park areas previously described are accessible by either land or water.

Two separate dredging projects in the 1990s have deepened portions of the lake and have helped improve water quality. There is an aeration system in town bay to prevent winterkills, so make sure to check the ice conditions before venturing onto the frozen waters.

Last but not least, is Arrowhead Lake picnic area located at the extreme southeast corner of Lake View. Arrowhead Lake is an abandoned quarry easily accessible by boat that offers very good panfish and catfish fishing. Remember, only electric

trolling motors are allowed on Arrowhead Lake.

The City of Lake View, in conjunction with the DNR, holds three annual events at the park.

The Lake View Water Carnival, held the third weekend in July, boasts several professional events on the lake and hired entertainment on shore. Other activities include carnival rides, games, local food stands and a parade down Main Street as well as a float parade on the water — an event unique to Lake View.

The second weekend in August brings a Carp Contest and chances at catching one of 10 tagged carp worth \$1,000 each or numerous smaller prizes according to size of fish caught.

The final event is the Arctic Open, which is usually held in February. This event allows one to clean the dust off the golf clubs and try their hand at golfing on a course laid out on Black Hawk Lake with prizes awarded in several flights.

Whether it be a spring trip for walleyes and crappies, a summer carnival experience with the kids, or a hearty, winter golf outing, make sure to include Black Hawk State Park in your 2005 vacation plans.

Eric Haakenson is the park manager and Ryan O'Neill is the park ranger at Black Hawk State Park.

BLACK HAWK STATE PARK AT A GLANCE

LOCATION: Located in the southeast corner of the town of Lake View in Sac County; approximately 10 miles east of Odebolt and eight miles south of Sac City.

PICKNICKING: Numerous locations within the park for informal cookouts, all within sight of the lake. There are four open picnic shelters that may be reserved for a fee.

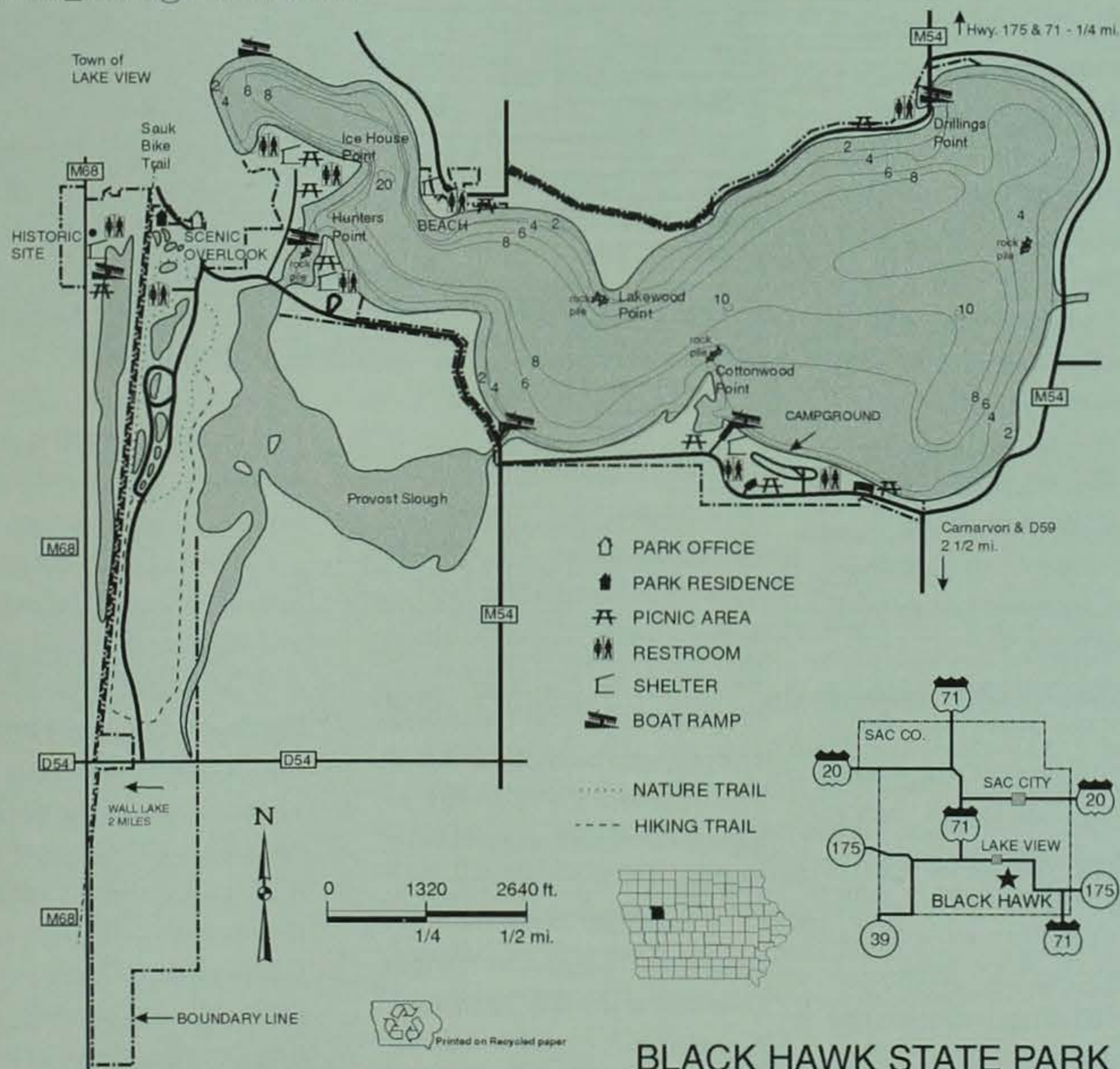
CAMPING: Campground accomodates 176 camping units; 68 sites have electrical hook-ups. Modern shower and rest room facilities. Frisbee golf course, volleyball court and large playground located nearby.

TRAILS: The Stubb Severson Nature Trail provides an opportunity for visitors to learn about the shrubs and trees found in the park, while viewing a wide variety of wildlife.

LAKE ACTIVITIES: Angling is popular at Black Hawk for channel catfish, crappies, walleyes, bluegills, sunfish and several types of bass. There are boat ramps available, three of which are located within the state park. Swimming is allowed only in designated areas.

FUN FACTS: Black Hawk Lake was formed many thousands of years ago by glacial action. In fact, it is the southern-most glacier-formed lake in Iowa.

CONTACT: Black Hawk State Park, 228 S. Blossom, Lake View, Iowa 51450; phone 712/657-8712; email Black_Hawk@dnr.state.ia.us.



BLACK HAWK STATE PARK

CONSERVATION UPDATE

Pfeiffer Honored With NWTF Joe Kurtz Award

Iowa-bred wild turkeys are firmly established throughout the state — now. They also thrive across much of North America. For his role in restoring wild turkey populations, Don Pfeiffer, of Washington, has been honored with the National Wildlife Turkey Federation's Joe Kurtz Wildlife Manager of the Year award.

Pfeiffer — southeast district wildlife supervisor for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources — received the award at the NWTF's annual convention, in February. "Don Pfeiffer has been a monumental force in assisting the trap and transfer efforts in Iowa," applauded Dr. James Earl Kennemer, NWTF senior vice president for conservation. "His hard work and leadership have restored turkey populations in Iowa and the future of the wild turkey hunting tradition."

Dale Garner, chief of the DNR's wildlife bureau said Pfeiffer's legacy is the successful return of the wild turkey to all counties of Iowa.

"Don has provided leadership and direction to more than 100 wildlife professionals who worked tirelessly over the last 18 years to trap, relocate and manage wild turkeys throughout Iowa," Garner said. "These efforts have opened doors to other wildlife restoration projects including river otters and prairie chickens."



National Wild Turkey Federation

Don Pfeiffer

The eastern wild turkey, native to Iowa, was extirpated from the state during European settlement in the 1800 to 1900s. Pfeiffer oversaw Iowa's recently completed turkey trapping program; through which 2,000 wild turkeys were live-trapped from areas with a surplus and released throughout Iowa in suitable habitat with few or no birds.

More importantly, though, from a nationwide perspective, was the relocation of 7,500 wild birds from Iowa to other states as well as Ontario, Canada. Iowa was one of the key states in supplying those restoration birds. The program brought more than \$3.3 million dollars to Iowa for habitat enhancement and land purchases.

Pfeiffer serves on the NWTF Iowa Board of Directors, and is co-editor of the NWTF Iowa Newsletter.

Deer Investigation Grounds Two Aircraft; Three Men Charged

State conservation officials have seized two experimental aircraft allegedly used to chase deer during Iowa's first shotgun season in December. Three men are charged in connection with the incident.

Department of Natural Resources officers say the craft, known as "powered parachutes" were used in Benton County to chase deer toward hunters on the ground. Witnesses say the aircraft flew in a "zig-zag pattern to herd the deer" in the area of county roads D-65 and V-37. A witness describes one aircraft flying so low that it had to pull up hard to avoid a vehicle and a power line.

Charged with illegal hunting/pursuing of deer with an aircraft are Steve Risse, 47, of rural Dysart, Harry Moeller, 48, of rural Buckingham and John Forbes, 28, of Waterloo.

Hunting with use of an aircraft is illegal under federal and state laws. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is reviewing the case for possible prosecution. If guilty, the three men would face substantial fines, potential loss of hunting privileges and possible forfeiture of the aircraft. The Benton County Sheriff's office and Black Hawk County Conservation Board assisted in the case.

Campground Reservation Web Site Up and Running

Campers who visit Iowa state parks can learn more about a new campsite reservation system by visiting www.iowadnr.com. The campground reservation information is under the special projects category on the park menu and will be updated as new information is available.

The web site outlines work and research already completed, and identifies issues facing the

2004 camper survey results, written comment themes and DNR responses, surrounding state visits, campground reservation issues and decisions to be made, and the reservation committee make up. Visitors can also provide feedback on the project's progress and direction via an email link on the web site.

The parks bureau is planning to host seven public meetings



Clay Smith

Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in order to create one centralized reservation system for all state park campgrounds and cabins.

"Creating a centralized reservation system is a large undertaking as well as a new concept to many Iowa state park visitors," said Sherry Arntzen, who is coordinating the effort for the DNR. "We hope this web site will keep the public informed on the progress and provide an avenue for additional input during the development of the system."

Web site visitors can view the

throughout the state in June to discuss the progress and gather public feedback. The centralized reservation system will be launched in time for the 2006 recreation season.

DNR Auction Set For May 7 At Fairgrounds

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources will hold an auction May 7 at 9 a.m. in the cattle barn on the Iowa State Fairgrounds. Sale items include old computers, boats, trailers, mowers, guns, bows and other items. Everything is sold as is with no guarantees or warranties.

In order to purchase a gun, bidders will be required to submit one of the following permits: a valid Iowa permit to acquire pistols or revolvers, available from the local sheriff's department; a federal firearms license; or a professional or non-professional permit to carry concealed weapons.

Most items, excluding guns, will be available for viewing May 5 and 6. Doors open at 8 a.m. May 7. Payment is due upon purchase and all sales are final.

For a sale bill, send a self-addressed, stamped, number 10 envelope to: DNR Auction, 502 E. 9th St., Des Moines, Iowa 50319, or email susan.davenport@dnr.state.ia.us.

Boat, Personal Watercraft Registrations Due

Boat and personal watercraft owners are required to renew the registration of their vessels by April 30. Registration fees vary depending on the size of the vessel and are paid to the county recorder in the county where the owner resides. Failure to display current registration is a simple misdemeanor.

Iowa's recreational boating activities continue to grow each year. Registration fees are used to support Iowa's boating enforcement and safety program.

CONSERVATION UPDATE

Quail Getting Help From Habitat Program

Iowa's quail population has been on a steep decline since the late 1970s, but a new effort by the Iowa DNR and the U.S. Department of Agriculture is attempting to reverse that trend.

The Northern Bobwhite Quail Habitat Initiative is a new practice under the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) continuous sign up. Iowa was allocated 20,000 acres, available to landowners on a first-come, first-served basis. Eligible lands include that in the southern half of Iowa and along the Mississippi River up to Clayton County and the Missouri River up to Woodbury County. The land must have been cropped for four years between 1996 and 2001.

Todd Bogenschutz, wildlife biologist with the Iowa DNR, said quail need a combination of brushy areas and crop fields to survive. He said the program would place a buffer strip between the two areas and stresses plant mixtures that are more forb intensive than other CRP efforts and the grasses are smaller, like side oats grama and little bluestem.

Although Iowa landowners have been slow to sign up, Illinois landowners have signed up their 20,000 acres already. "If we don't use our acres, there is the potential that they could be offered to other states," Bogenschutz said.



Roger A. Hill

The bobwhite quail initiative offers a 90 percent cost share for installing the buffer, a first-year bonus payment of \$100 per acre, and will pay the average county rental payment for the 10-year contract.

A good place for the quail buffer would be along a woody fence line, brushy draw, old hedgerow or other area along a crop field not ideal for corn or soybeans.

Landowners interested in the program should talk to their local wildlife biologist or go to their USDA office. "This is not a competitive sign up and once the acres are gone, they're gone," Bogenschutz said.

Additional information is available online at www.iowadnr.com, www.fsa.usda.gov/ia/, or www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/.

Prairie Rescue Events Scheduled Across State

Iowa volunteers are encouraged to get back to their roots in the 6th annual statewide Prairie Rescue event.

Prairie workdays will be held at approximately 25 sites across the state. Volunteers can take part in numerous prairie management activities including: removing non-native species and encroaching trees and shrubs, planting native wildflowers and grasses, and monitoring prescribed burns. On-site experts will provide guidance and prairie education at all events. Workdays will take place on most weekends during March, April and May.

Various private and public conservation groups are sponsoring events, including the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Keepers of the Land/AmeriCorps, Loess Hills Preservation Society, Iowa Prairie Network and the Grinnell College Center for Prairie Studies.

Prairie remnants are scattered throughout the state in small patches. Without proper management, Iowa's remaining prairie remnants could be lost forever.

For more information about Prairie Rescue and specific sites around the state, visit www.inhf.org/prairierescue2005. For questions, contact Katie Kemp at (515) 281-3134 or Katie.Kemp@dnr.state.ia.us.

Three Iowa School Districts Taking Biodiesel Route

The wheels on the bus will roll green and clean thanks to free soybean-based biodiesel given to school districts in Ft. Madison, Johnston and Nevada.

The fuel is given under an EPA grant to cut school bus emissions. The DNR is a partner in the Bus Emission Education Program, or BEEP, which received the funding.

"Biodiesel dramatically cuts harmful particulate emissions," said Brian Button with the DNR. The nation's largest biodiesel producer, West Central Cooperative in Ralston, is providing the fuel at half price to leverage the grant.

"We are pleased that Iowa-made fuels are a solution to school bus emissions," said Terry Voy, who directs transportation programs for the Iowa Association of School Boards.

Nearly 4,000 gallons of B100 biodiesel will be blended to B10 and B20 (10 percent or 20 percent blends). When blended,

about 33,840 gallons of B10 or 18,800 gallons of B20 will be used.

"This is a great project that helps protect the health of children, reduces pollution, saves schools money and supports Iowa farmers," said Troyce Fisher, executive director of School Administrators of Iowa.

Biodiesel can be used year-round without modifying engines. The fuel has a high lubricating benefit vital for diesel engines and is biodegradable. It delivers comparable fuel economy and is competitively priced.

"Schools, farmers, Iowans and most importantly students on the buses all come up winners," said Max Christensen, transportation director for the Iowa Department of Education.

BEEP partners include the DNR, Iowa Department of Education, School Administrators of Iowa, Iowa Association of School Boards and the Iowa Pupil Transportation Association.

Upcoming NRC and EPC Meetings

The dates and locations have been set for the following meetings of the Natural Resource Commission and Environmental Protection Commission of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

Agendas are set approximately 10 days prior to the scheduled meeting date. For additional information, contact the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Wallace State Office Building, 502 E. 9th St., Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0034.

Natural Resource Commission:

- April 14
Union County
- May 12
Storm Lake
- June 9
Des Moines
- July
No meeting

Environmental Protection Commission:

- April 18
Des Moines
- May 16
Des Moines
- June 20
Des Moines
- July 18
Des Moines



Stock photo

WARDEN'S DIARY



This year marks my 29th year in law enforcement, and that means several things.

For one, much to my chagrin, I'm no spring chicken anymore. Two, the little light at the end of the tunnel representing retirement is starting to look more and more like an oncoming train. And three, you would think by now I've seen it all when it comes to creative ways people try to get out of getting a ticket. Well, number one I don't like to think about, number two I find myself thinking about more and more, and number three, well, it still never ceases to amaze me. And the story I am about to tell involves a ruse every officer has seen many times before.

It was a summer Sunday morning by the Des Moines River in Fort Dodge. And, it was hot. I was driving in and out of spots I knew people regularly fished. Actually, I was trying to stay close to the air conditioner in my squad.

I had pulled underneath a bridge offering a perfect view of both banks of the river next to a low-head dam and concealment

With Friends Like This . . .

by Chuck Humeston

of my squad. I could see them, but they couldn't see me. Plus, I was in the shade because, well, it was hot.

Through my binoculars, I watched some people fishing, and I started to write down the times they cast, picked up rods, reeled in, took fish off hooks, etc. I do this so when I ask for a license I have a quick answer to the, "I'm not fishing today" remark.

After awhile, I drove out from underneath the bridge. I had noticed a parked car ahead of me, but couldn't see anyone around it. But, when I drove up beside it, I found two men fishing that I hadn't noticed earlier. I stopped the squad, opened the door, and sighed somewhat, because, did I forget to mention, it was hot?

I walked up to the first guy and asked how the fishing was. He said he had not caught anything, and I asked to see his license. He pulled out his wallet, and showed me. I thanked him and turned toward his friend.

The whole time I was talking to the first guy, I was eyeing the second. He was giving a classic response I've highlighted in the forum before. It's the "If-I-Don't-Look-at-You-Either-You-Are-Not-Really-There-or-You-Will-Go-Away" response. The whole time he had been standing

there sipping on a can of beer, and looking away from me into the sky as if watching an interesting cloud formation or looking at a tall building. Well, there wasn't a cloud in the sky, because it was hot, and there are not any buildings that tall in Fort Dodge.

When I approached him and said hello, he kind of acted surprised as if I had somehow landed beside him from another planet. He also acted like he wasn't too happy I was there.

I asked him if he was having any luck. He didn't answer, which is indicative of the, "If-I-Ignore-You-You'll-Go-Away," response. Well, I wasn't going anywhere. Finally, he looked at me as if surprised to discover someone was standing next to him. I knew very well where this was going.

"I want to see your fishing license," I told him.

"I don't have one," he answered, "I'm not fishing."

"You're standing here with two lines in the water in front of you," I said.

"Those aren't mine." He answered. "My friend picked me up, and I rode out with him."

I pointed at the guy I had already checked standing 10 feet away with two lines in the water in front of him. "So, you're telling me you rode out here to watch

your friend fish, and to stand here in front of two lines and drink a beer?" I asked.

"Yeah, I did."

"And, you're also telling me all these lines here belong to your friend?"

"Yeah, that's right." He answered. I couldn't help but notice the smile.

"Well, that's a problem," I said.

"Why is that?"

"Because you're only allowed two lines, so that means I'm going to have to charge your friend with fishing with four lines."

The smile was gone. It was obvious this wasn't part of his plan.

"Now are you sure these two poles in front of you aren't yours?" I asked, thinking no way would he sell out his friend.

He looked at his friend then at me. "No they aren't mine."

"So what you're telling me is you're going to stand here, and let him get a ticket for fishing with too many lines," I concluded.

"I guess that's what you're going to have to do," he said, and turned around as if, "You're bluffing, Officer."

"If that's the way you want it," I said. I looked at his friend, who by now had a "deer in the headlights" look on his face, and told him to follow me to my squad.

"Are all of these lines yours?" I asked. He looked at his friend as if expecting him to say something. He hesitated then looked at me.

"Yes."

I asked for his driver's license, and I wrote up the citation. I showed him where to sign it, and I tore his copies out of the book and handed them to him.

He didn't look happy.

"Look," I said. "I didn't just start doing this last night. I've seen this before. I know what's going on here, and as far as I'm concerned, the wrong guy is getting handed a ticket here this morning. But, if this is the way you guys want to play it, then that's fine with me."

He took the ticket, didn't say a word, nodded his head, and walked back to the river bank.

I got back into my pickup. I know nobody likes getting a citation. I understand that, and it's nothing personal to me. As one of my training officers said long ago, "I'd like to think I can give a guy a ticket, then go have a cup of coffee with him."

It's not personal, but between someone who would give up a friend and someone who wouldn't, I knew with whom I'd rather sit down to drink that cup.



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