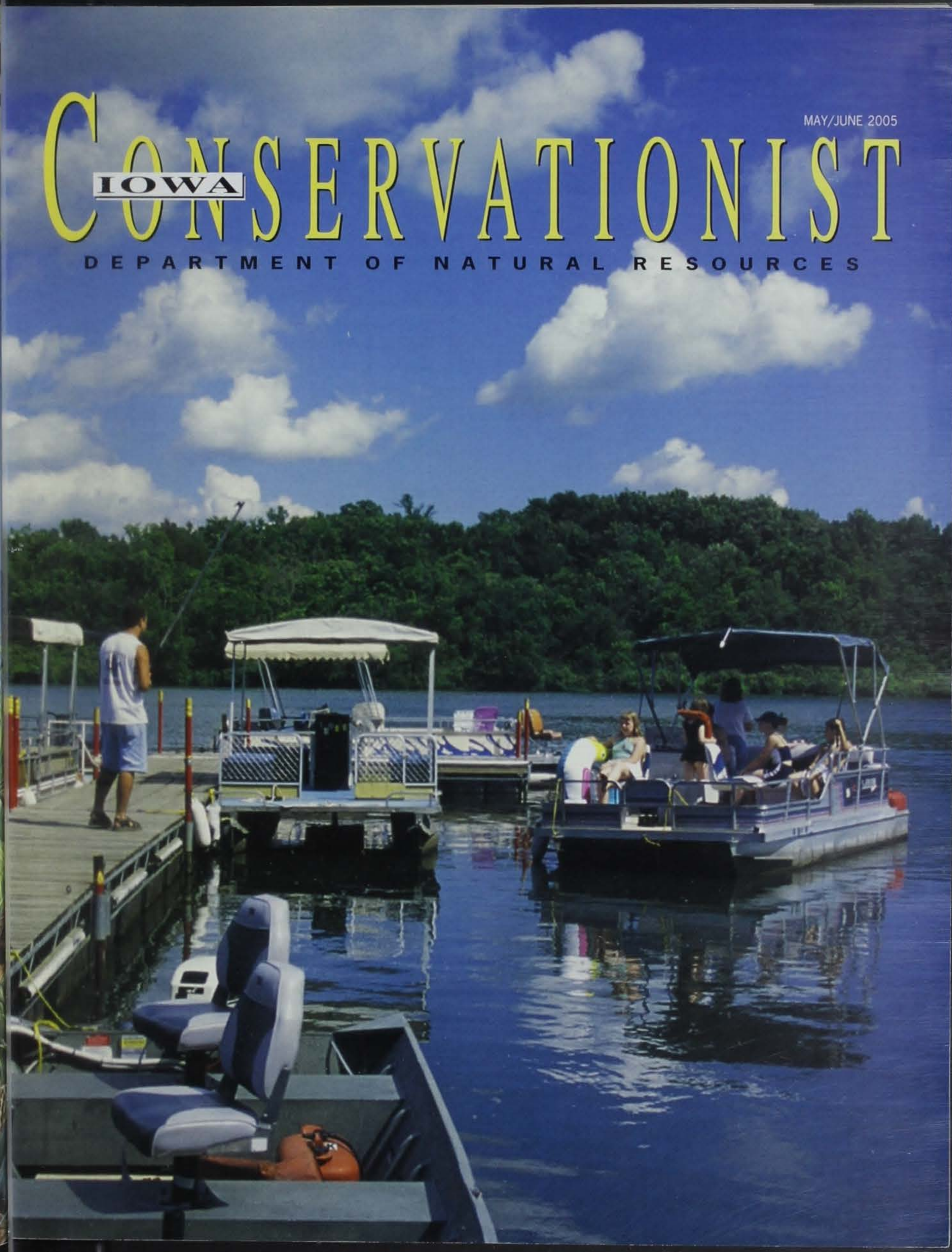


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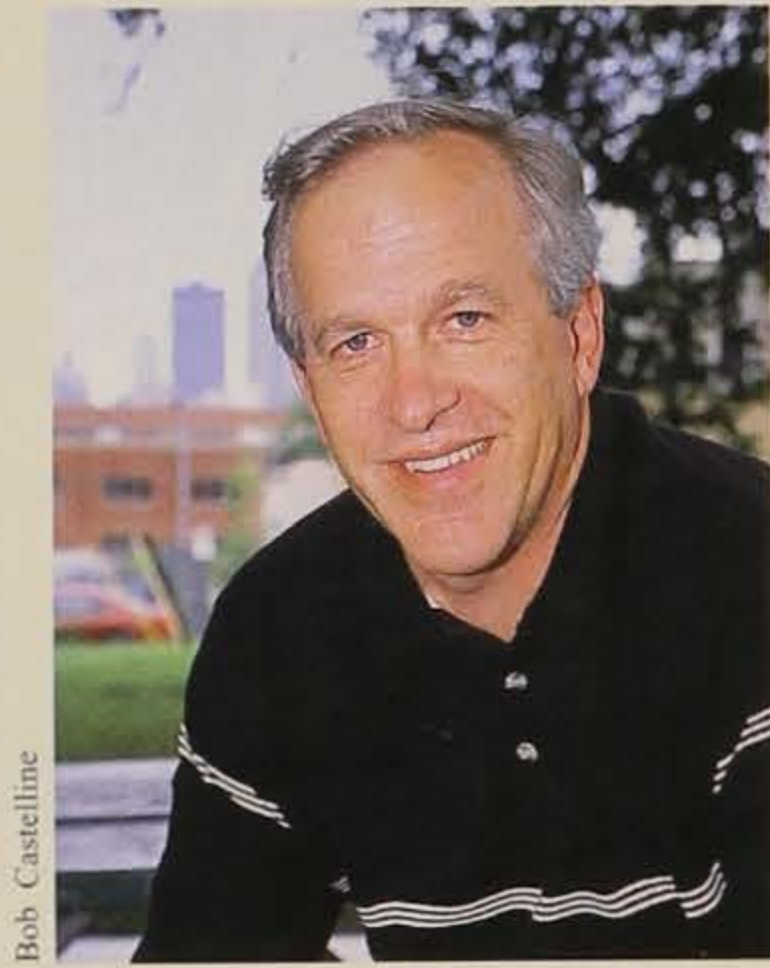
IOWA

MAY/JUNE 2005

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES



FROM THE DIRECTOR



Bob Castelline

Life Is Like A Box Of Chocolates . . .

"Life is like a box of chocolates..." Many of us remember that famous line from the movie "Forrest Gump." I think the same line could be applied to Legislative sessions because "you never know what you are going to get."

What started out as a session looking like a deer eradication mission, ended up with a reasonable compromise on managing the herd and a major step forward for improving our outdoor recreational assets in the form of a resort-style park at Lake Rathbun.

Before I delve too far into the intricacies of this year's session and the implications for Iowa's natural resources, I want to acknowledge up front that I recognize the difficult tasks

confronting lawmakers. Often times I hear the frustrations of citizens wanting more money to be spent on protecting our environment and natural resources. I also realize, however, that legislators have the delicate mission of balancing a very limited amount of state dollars, yet providing for ever increasing needs in education, human services, crime prevention, economic development and transportation.

I can assure you that I have spent far more days in the past year talking about deer – and, in many cases, defending deer – than I did harvesting deer. The fact that additional harvesting of deer is needed was never really the issue. The discussion was really more about how to go about it and in what quantity. We have set a management goal to reduce our deer herd by 25 percent in the short term.

It is vitally important to maintain recognition of the importance deer hold in our state. From a tourism standpoint, Iowa is always looking at ways to become a "destination." In the world of deer hunting, for many we are already THE destination spot for out of state hunters. This is because Iowa has a first class deer herd in terms of quality and provides an excellent hunting experience. Many people who are exposed to Iowa from hunting make return visits here for other reasons.

The bill passed this session allows for additional deer hunting

opportunities and raises additional revenue to expand the HUSH (Help Us Stop Hunger) program statewide. This is an excellent program that allows us to match the opportunity to hunt additional deer for many hunters and share an abundance in the resource with those less fortunate.

On another major tourism and destination front, the legislature has provided significant funding options for the establishment of a "resort" park at Honey Creek on the shores of Lake Rathbun. This opens a door for the state of Iowa to have an outdoor recreational amenity that we have never had before. This park, to be accomplished through public-private partnerships, goes beyond normal state park facilities to include a first-class hotel, a championship golf course and other amenities sought by today's modern society. It is an important investment for the rural southeastern portion of our state and a major development that will allow other Iowans to enjoy this type of experience without have to leave Iowa.

Funding for the destination park included \$3 million contingent upon getting a \$4 million local match. More importantly, the ability to issue up to \$28 million in bonds was approved, taking us beyond the point of a destination park in Iowa only being a concept. This action

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FRONT COVER: PONTOONS AT VIKING LAKE
STATE PARK BY CLAY SMITH
BACK COVER: BY CLAY SMITH



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moves it much closer to becoming a reality.

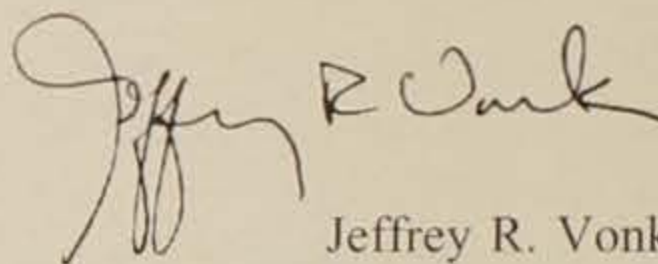
Other significant appropriations for Iowa's natural resources include the continued support for

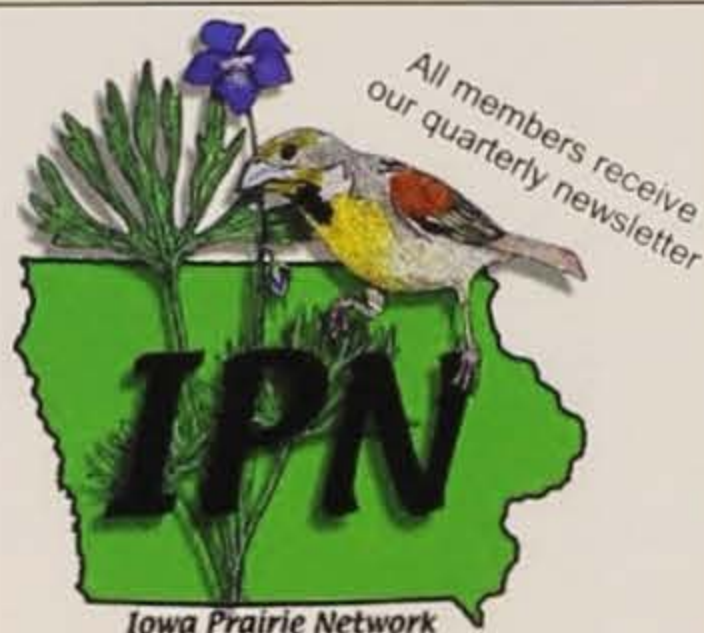
REAP at \$11 million; \$1.5 million for particularly beautiful parcel of land that will expand Waubonsie State Park; \$500,000 for badly needed restoration at Fort Atkinson; \$1.5 million for lake dredging; and nearly \$3 million for continued water monitoring.

You will never hear a politician or someone in government say that they got everything that they wanted from a Legislative session and I'm no exception. Iowa continues to lag behind most other states when it comes to providing funds for natural resources and, more importantly, we fall short

of investing enough in the environment when measured against our own needs. There is still a great need in this state to recognize the benefits we gain from making additional investments in the natural resources, particularly water quality.

But the commitments made this year in the Legislature will have a long-lasting, positive impact on Iowa's recreational capital through the investments made for the destination resort park at Honey Creek and at Waubonsie State Park.


Jeffrey R. Vonk



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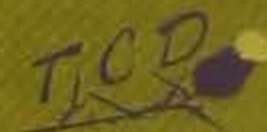
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May/June 2005
Volume 64, Number 3

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Julie Sparks, Editor
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Clay Smith, Photographer
Kati Bainter, Publications Intern
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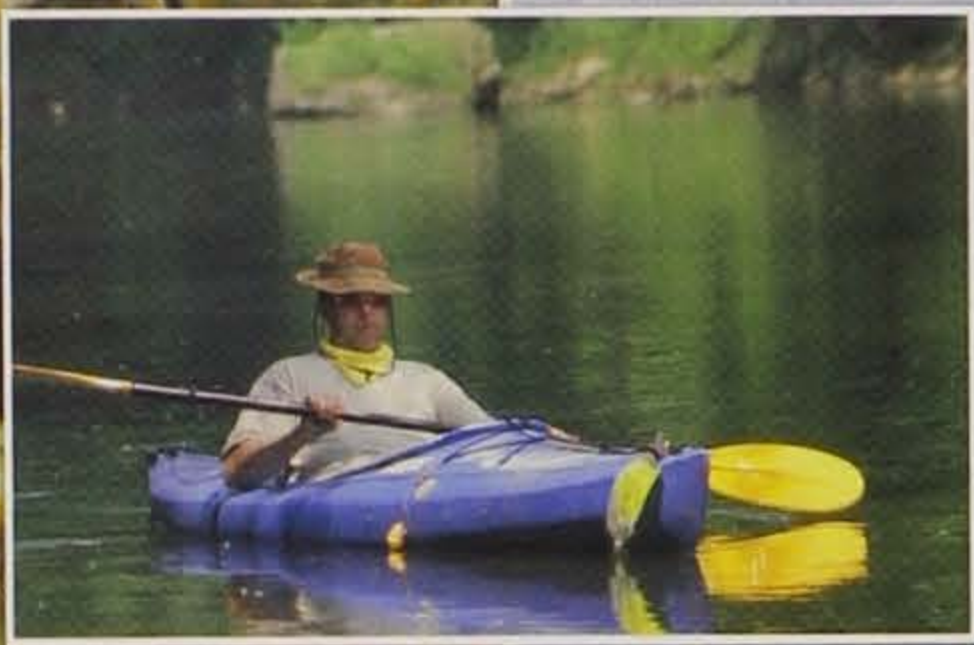
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Iowa Conservationist (ISSN 0021-0471) is published bimonthly by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Wallace State Office Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0034. Periodicals postage paid Des Moines, IA. Subscription rates: \$12 for one year, \$18 for two years and \$24 for three years. Prices subject to change without notice. Include mailing label for renewals and address changes. POSTMASTER: Send changes to the *Iowa Conservationist*, Department of Natural Resources, Wallace State Office Building, 502 E. Ninth Ave., Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0034.

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Clay Smith



Clay Smith

THE Economics of Recreation



Lowell Washburn

Iowa's nature-based recreation, cultural and historical attractions supply more than \$1.3 billion in tourism dollars to the state's economy, much of which flies below the radar with little fanfare beyond the county line.

Studies on the economic impact of nature-based recreation provide estimates on how much money participants spend doing certain activities, then adds a multiplier effect on how each dollar spent impacts the community through salaries, taxes, jobs and business.

For example, a 2000 survey of campers in Iowa state parks found that each person spends about \$13 in the community for each day spent in the park, mostly on food and gas. A survey of hunters and anglers conducted every four years by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service found that hunters spend on average \$16 on each hunting trip and anglers spend an average \$17 on each fishing trip. While \$16 and \$17 may not seem like much on the surface, it does add up. The same 2001 survey said, Iowa residents spent nearly \$320 million on fishing equipment, trips and other expenses; more than \$185 million on hunting equipment, trips and other expenses; and nearly \$240 million on wildlife watching equipment, trips and other expenses. That adds up to nearly \$750 million each year.

With all the economic data out there, the question remains: Does Iowa small business believe nature-based recreation has the ability to sustain a livelihood? In short, it does, and the opportunities are expanding.

By Mick Klemesrud

Upper Iowa River

Canoeing the Upper Iowa River was listed as one of America's 100 Greatest Adventures by a National Geographic reader's poll in 2000, and is the biggest reason visitors come to Winneshiek County, said Annique Kiel, executive director for the Winneshiek County Convention and Visitors Bureau. Area hotels, motels and restaurants benefit from tourism and are working to cater to the canoeists.

"The recreation on the Upper Iowa has a tremendous economic impact on Winneshiek County," she said.



Duane Hruska

Duane Hruska has owned Hruska's Canoe and Kayak Livery and Bluffton Campground based in Kendallville for 35 years. He has seen plenty of repeat customers during that time.

"We've probably gone through three generations of family," Hruska said. Those customers come from Illinois, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Nebraska and South Dakota as well as from around Iowa.

Hruska's busy season is Memorial Day through Labor Day and he said business is so good, that it's best if people reserve their canoe or kayak in advance because weekends fill in a hurry. He said his customers are active and will spend time on the hiking and biking trails when they are not in a canoe.

"The recreation on the Upper Iowa has a tremendous economic impact on Winneshiek County."

Annique Kiel, executive director Winneshiek County Convention and Visitors Bureau

Hruska expanded his operation three years ago when he bought a five-acre campground that can accommodate up to 40 medium-sized camping trailers. He said his revenues have doubled each year since. Hruska's customers spend time in Decorah, Harmony, Minn., and Lanesboro, Minn. to shop and eat.

While canoeing the Upper Iowa River is the top draw to the region, viewing fall colors is close behind. Fall foliage has an estimated economic impact on the northeast Iowa region of about \$7.5 million per year, according to John Walkowiak, chief of the DNR's forestry bureau. That money is spent on gas, food, lodging and shopping, and much of that is in Winneshiek County.

In 2003, Kiel said Winneshiek

County had \$19.3 million in tourism expenditures.

While the Upper Iowa River is often the focus of Iowa canoeing, there are a number of other rivers that offer excellent, scenic opportunities but have not yet developed the community support.

Canoeing and canoe rental is popular on the Middle Raccoon River from Panora through Adel. The Boone, Iowa, Skunk, Cedar, Little Sioux rivers also offer excellent canoe trips.

Lake Rathbun and Appanoose County

Lake Rathbun and its 11,000 acres of water has been drawing people from Illinois, Missouri, Wisconsin, Nebraska and all over Iowa with its tremendous channel catfish, walleye and crappie fishing, sailing and boating. The 35,000 acres of public land in the area are crisscrossed by thousands of deer, turkeys and morel mushroom hunters each year.

Lake Rathbun hosts 800,000 visitors each year that contribute a lot of money to the local economy. A 2003 survey of businesses found Lake Rathbun has a big impact on the ability to attract business and employees.

Lake Rathbun has been the focus of a DNR study to see if the area could draw enough visitors to support a larger, resort-type state park. Park plans include an indoor water park, 18-hole golf course, lodge, cabins and conference center. With full development of Honey Creek Resort State Park, visitors will be provided a



Roger A. Hill



Roger A. Hill



Lowell Washburn



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wide range of overnight accommodations from primitive tent camping through camper cabins, full-service cabins, upscale RV camping and rooms/suites in a 108-room lodge.

"The future of economic development here is Lake Rathbun. That makes us unique versus other counties in Iowa, especially other rural counties," said Jason White, director of economic development in Appanoose County.



Jason White

Impacts of increased tourism and recreation would be felt in several of southern Iowa's rural counties where farm economies have suffered in recent years. Land in much of southern Iowa has changed hands in the last few years as non-locals and nonresidents are buying up the pastoral countryside for its nature-based recreation potentials.

The tourism season pauses briefly when the boats are put away for the year, but resumes in full force when turkey, deer and pheasant hunting begin.

"They [deer hunters] come from all over," said Jeff Meng who has

tailored his Motel 60 and Villa in Centerville to meet the needs of hunters and anglers for the last 14 years. He offers a small room for fish and game cleaning, and has a freezer for use by the guests who come from 10 to 12 states, including Pennsylvania, Florida, Texas, Wisconsin, Michigan and Illinois. Meng is also a host motel for Crappie Masters and for local walleye tournaments.

But not everything has been rosy around Lake Rathbun. Since Meng has owned the motel, he has seen pheasant and quail hunting decline dramatically. He said the opening weekend for those species was once as popular as deer is today, but with the numbers in the area down so dramatically, hunters are going elsewhere.

The motel fills with deer hunters who generally stay three to six days. They spend time scouting the land, then hunting once the season opens.

Deer hunting helps rural communities economically from hunters buying gas, eating in the local restaurants and staying in motels. And they continue helping small businesses after they harvest a deer.

Allan Klatt, owner of the County Meat Market in Granger, said people who hunt are pretty important to him. He shuts down his locker from December through April each year and processes nothing but deer. Klatt will process about 3,000 deer during those five months. "They are close to half of the business," Klatt said.

Klatt said hunters are requesting more specialty meats like polish sausage, brats, pepperoni, pizza

sausage, breakfast sausage, corned deer and the list goes on. His smoke house holds about 1,200 pounds of summer sausage and runs nearly



Clay Smith

Allan Klatt

every night. The specialty meats cost quite a bit more than plain deer burger and roasts, but the demand keeps going up. Klatt rents refrigerated trailers to hold all the deer.

Camping

Herold Trailer Sales in Indianola has been selling campers since 1964. Co-owner Brian Herold said camper sales have been increasing each year for the last five or six years. Herold said the majority of the people who go camping do it within 10 to 15 miles from home. They are not traveling as far as they once did, but they are going more frequently. His customers are in their 30s to 40s and are looking to do things as a family. "It comes down to priorities," he said. "It's just what people want to do."

Herold said campers are becoming more comfortable with such features as DVD players, surround sound and fire places. As



Lowell Washburn



Clay Smith



Clay Smith

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camping trailers become more sophisticated, the campgrounds must work to keep up. Trailers require more power to run microwaves, water heaters, air conditioners and



Clay Smith

Brian Herold

other amenities that are now commonplace.

At Viking Lake State Park, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources has invested \$3.5 million on renovating the campground and restrooms, improving the restaurant, boat rental and the rental shelter with a kitchenette. Part of the campground renovation includes increasing and leveling the pads and increasing the electrical capacity from 30 amps to 50 amps. "It's been a vast improvement in this area," said Gary Poen, park ranger at Viking Lake since 1982.

Viking Lake has a full-service restaurant as part of the park concession, which has had a major impact on the park. Before the restaurant, in a good year, the concession would do about \$30,000 worth of business. After the restaurant, business increased nearly

five times. In 2004, the concession brought in more than \$150,000.

The DNR considers renovations a long-term investment and has a goal to have all state parks restored to their original luster by 2020, which is the 100th anniversary of the Iowa state park system.

The renovation at Beeds Lake was completed in 2004, and Lake Keomah was completed and the entire campground opened in late



Bob Schierbaum

Gary Poen

May. The campground at Bellevue State Park opened earlier than projected, and campers can now enjoy upgraded electrical sites.

The DNR has scheduled upgrades at Elk Rock and Black Hawk state parks for 2005. The Elk Rock campground will have electrical service added to more campsites. The campground will remain open during the work. The project at Black Hawk State Park should begin in the fall and be completed for the spring 2006 camping season. Work includes upgrading about 70 campsites to offer 50-amp service, the possibility of

adding additional electrical sites and adding several sites with full hookups. The campgrounds will also receive new grills and new rock surfaces on the camp pads. The DNR is investing about \$270,000 in the project.

The improvements are already paying dividends at Viking Lake. The most popular campsites are the 22 electrical sites with full hookups, meaning campers can also hook directly up to a water line and the sewer. Poen said the full hookup sites are difficult to get because they are always in use. Other parks with full hookups are Elinor Bedell, with eight sites, Honey Creek with 14 and Brushy Creek with 10.

The remaining 73 electrical sites at Viking Lake are also in demand. "We are expecting to be extremely busy in 2005," he said. Part of the reason is because other parks in the area are going through renovations, but part is also because of the allure of Viking Lake.

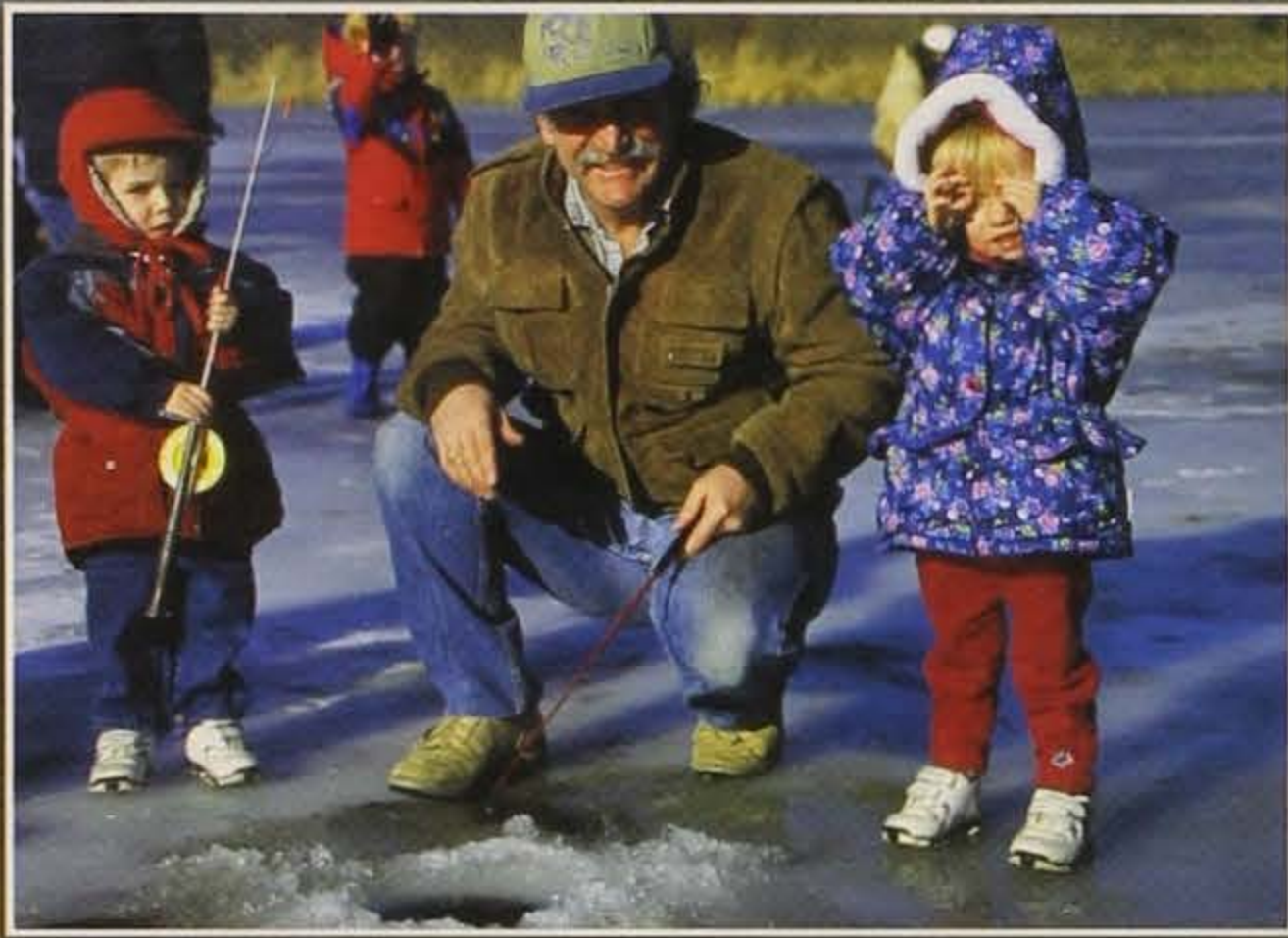
"We get quite a bit of support from the community," Poen said.

"Everybody [here] is glad to see summer coming. It brings people into town."

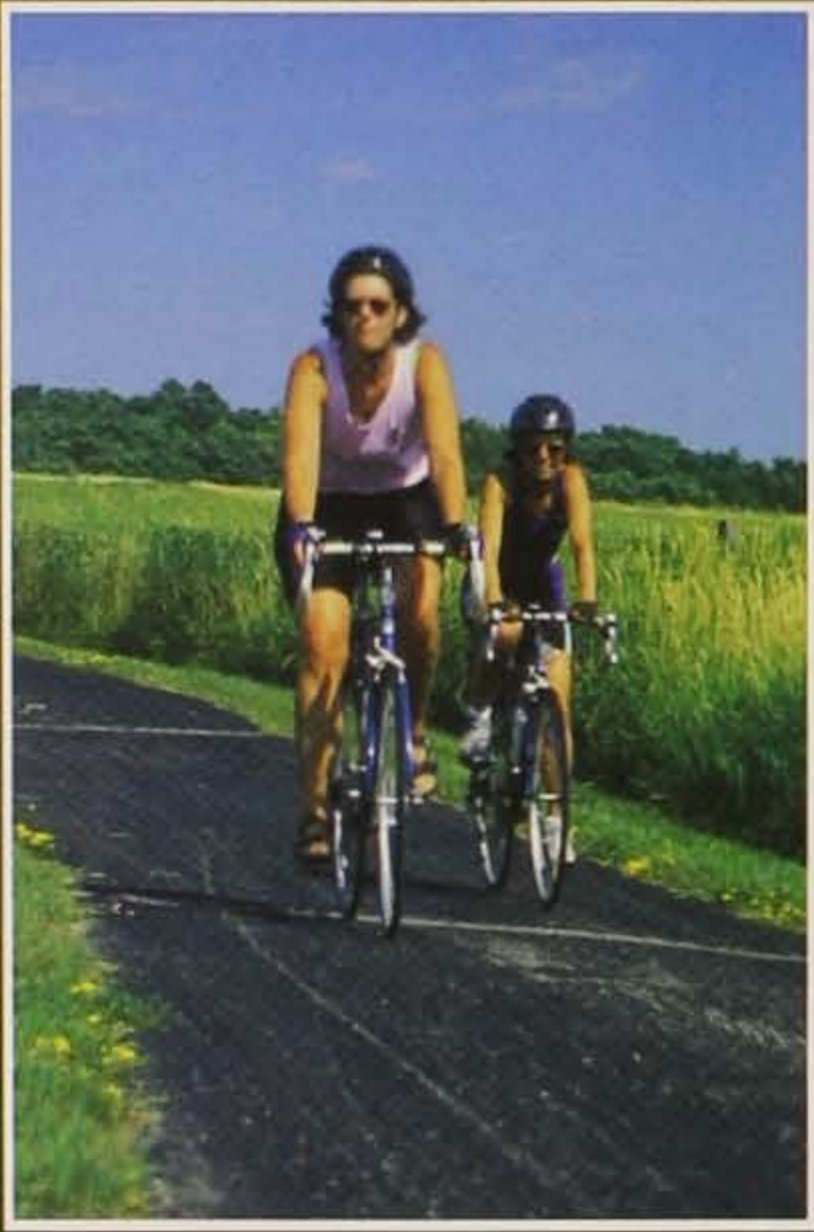
Ringgold County

Ramsey Farms at Lesanville opened for customers in the summer of 2004. The restored farm houses, one-room school house, carriage house, church and railroad depot show what life was like – minus the electricity and indoor plumbing of course – at Lesanville before the Depression.

Carol McCreary, manager of Lesanville, said she has had guests from as far away as Denmark, England



Ty Smedes



Ken Formanek



Roger A. Hill



Ken Formanek



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and Germany and all over the United States. Lesanville is near the Kellerton Bird Conservation Area that has attracted plenty of visitors who come to see the prairie chickens spar during their spring mating season. It is also in prime Iowa turkey and deer territory.

McCreary said guests staying at the bed and breakfast come to fish, hunt, ride horses and tour the restored town as well as to see the prairie chickens. "People just love it [Ringgold County] because it's a beautiful area; the rolling hills and all the wildlife," she said.

Guests travel to nearby Mt. Ayr for meals and shopping.

"People just love it [Ringgold County] because it's a beautiful area; the rolling hills and all the wildlife."

Carol McCreary, manager
Lesanville

Iowa Great Lakes

The argument can be made that the million dollar homes would not be in Dickinson County if it were not for the blue water of West Lake Okoboji. Tourism is the main economic engine driving development and jobs for the area. The lakes and all the public land around them offer all types of outdoor recreation from bird watching to biking to fishing, pleasure boating, hunting and winter sports.

Dickinson County is in the pheasant hotbed of Iowa. In fact, the whole northwest area has Iowa's highest pheasant population and plenty of wetlands to attract ducks. Hunters from all over the country trek to northwest Iowa and Dickinson County for a chance at Iowa's most popular game bird. For many, it has



Zac Jackson

Craig Tvedte

become an annual tradition. The increase of instate and out-of-state hunters is extending the tourism season beyond the traditional Labor Day ending.

Abby Larson, with Okoboji Tourism, said the lakes area received an estimated \$152 million in 2003, up from \$138 million in 2002, that can be traced to tourism.

Craig Tvedte has owned Tweepers since 1972 and has seen the area evolve. He said in the off season 30 years ago, you could shoot a cannon off through town and not hit anyone. Today, the area has more going on year 'round.

"Who would have thought 20 years ago that there would have been

"Who would have thought 20 years ago that there would have been a seven-screen theater in Okoboji, Iowa?"

Craig Tvedte, owner
Tweepers, Okoboji

a seven-screen theater in Okoboji, Iowa?" he asked. "It's just a good place to live. Good people, good surroundings and lots to do."

Area employers find it is easy to recruit employees to work in northwest Iowa, that is, if you can get them to visit. The place sells itself.

It's no mistake why the earliest Iowa communities evolved, for the most part, along major water thoroughfares. The early settlers knew the rivers were the lifeblood, providing food and water, and a quick and efficient link to the "outside world." It's also no mistake why communities situated on major, well-developed recreational water bodies are thriving today, albeit for a slightly different reason. The issue is no longer about sustaining life, but in improving it.

And there's 1.3 billion reasons that prove that.

Mick Klemesrud is an information specialist for the department in Des Moines.



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Becoming a Full-Fledged Birder

By Karen Grimes

Taking the leap from the casual to the full-fledged birdwatcher may be easier than you think.

I've been watching birds since I was 2 years old, toddling through the spring woods as my parents pointed out the common bluejay or imitated the whistle of a quail or whip-poor-will. But it can be a humbling experience to go out with a group of birders who can identify little hopping birds that flit from branch to branch, practically before I can even locate them in my binocular's eye.

Bird watching is fun, educational and a great experience, especially when seasoned birders share their knowledge and their favorite birding hot spots with a novice.



Daron Kent (above) began his love affair with all things that fly at age 2 when he first picked up binoculars. By age 8, he had officially changed his middle name from James to Chayton, a native American word meaning falcon.

So, how do you get started in this popular sport?

Basically, three elements are needed: field binoculars, a field guide and a place to see birds.

Picking Binoculars

Polk County naturalist Joe Boyles says binoculars are a necessity. "You have to be able to see features so that you can identify a bird," he said.

It's easy to get confused with all the discussions about optics, magnification and coatings, but Boyles said he started

out with a basic \$35 pair of binoculars. A common beginner's pair would be a 7 X 35, with the 7 indicating the amount of magnification, and the 35

indicating the width of the field of view and light gathering capabilities. For young birders, a basic 4 X 25 binocular costs \$15 to \$20.

As Boyles became more involved in birding, he purchased a \$150 pair, with a noticeable difference in optics and magnification. After three to four years he saved up for one of the top-of-the-line binoculars, choosing it based on fit, weight and the view.

For beginners, he recommends looking for fully multi-coated lenses, clarity of view, waterproofing, durability and light-gathering capabilities. Experienced birders usually purchase the more powerful 8 X 42 binoculars.



Becoming a bird watcher starts with fascination and progresses to choosing field guides and binoculars.

Boyles' work has verified the presence of several endangered and threatened species such as the Henslow's sparrow (right) on the Chichaqua Bottoms (background).

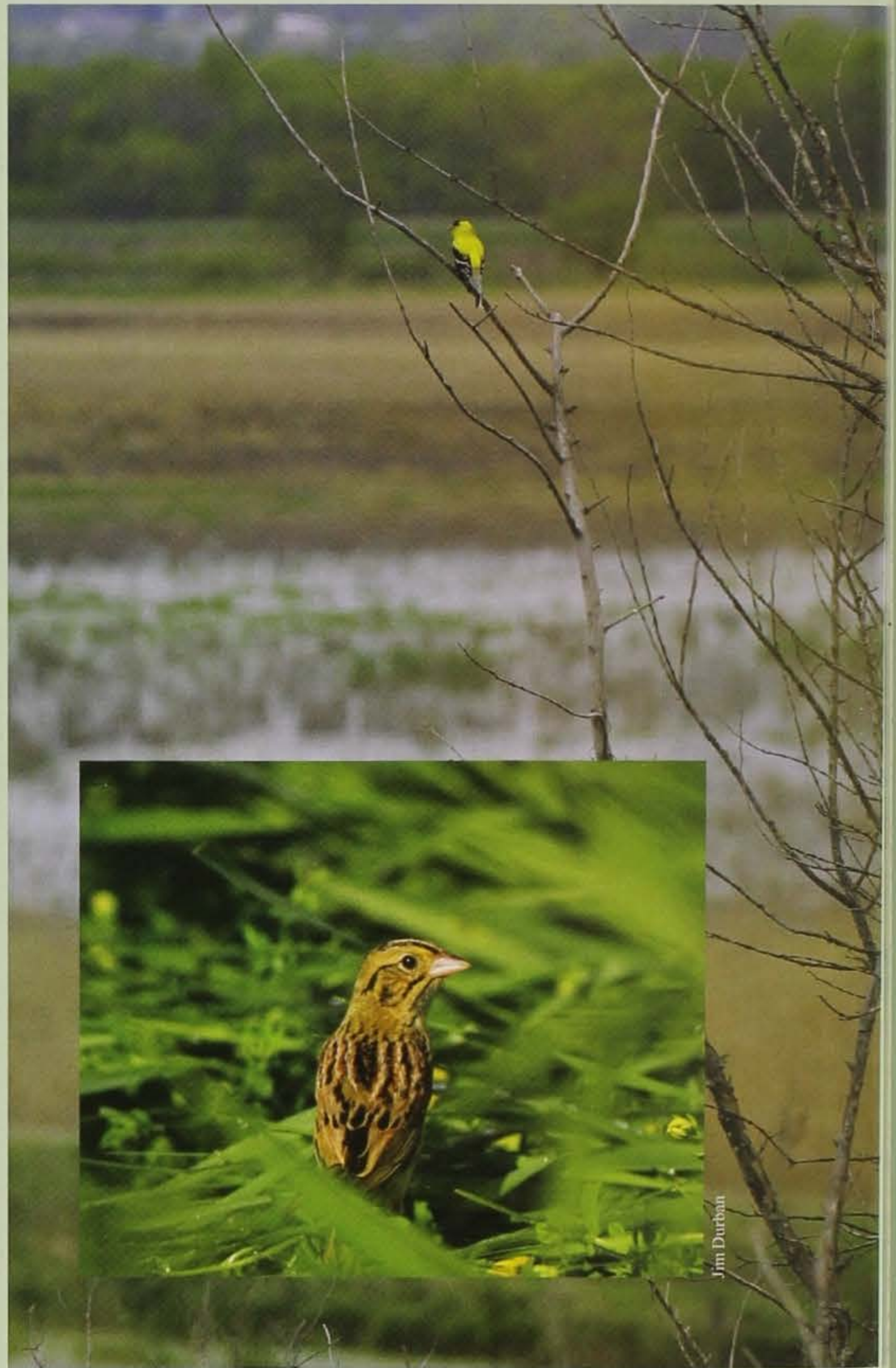
No one pair of binoculars will be right for all people, so experienced birder and Iowa Audubon Society president Doug Harr recommends going to a store that specializes in birding or to a sporting goods store that caters to hunters and other outdoor sports enthusiasts. Both types of stores will have someone on staff who can help a novice birder evaluate the many binoculars available.

Choosing a Field Guide

There's no easy answer to which field guide to buy, either. "There are a zillion pros and cons to all the field guides," said Boyles. "The most important thing is to pick a field guide that is small enough to put in your pocket so that you can carry it."

Boyles also recommends whatever field guide you pick, that you become familiar with it, so you don't have to thumb through the entire book to find a bird. "Placing sticky notes to locate the different bird families in the book will also help," he said.

Several popular guides available include *National Geographic*, *Kaufman's*, *Peterson's*, the *Zimm Golden Guide* and, if you are



interested in just Iowa birds, *Birds of Iowa*. Some of these popular guides also have versions for young birders or beginners.

Birding Hotspots

Finding birds is easy. "Birds are everywhere," says Boyles.

"Beginning birders can discover birds in their backyards, local parks, bike paths, walking trails and cemeteries."

However, locating and recognizing birds is easier with the advice of an experienced birder. I would never have seen the spiraling,



Clay Smith

All in a day's work, naturalist Joe Boyles (above right) spends two days a week documenting the birds found at Chichaqua Bottoms. Des Moines Audubon Society member Sue Davies (left) volunteers to walk the Chichaqua trails, collecting data on the grassland bird species found in Iowa's newest bird conservation area.

evening dance of the American woodcock if Eugene and Eloise Armstrong hadn't been willing to take Des Moines Audubon Society members on a field trip to Badger Creek.

Harr, who also heads up the Department of Natural Resources' wildlife diversity program, recommends contacting county conservation boards and local bird stores. They can help you find hotspots near your home and field trips led by local birders or naturalists.

"Many parks, refuges and nature centers have local bird checklists

available," said Harr. "Local checklists are much shorter than statewide lists and can help beginners focus on identifying just the limited number of birds found in that area."

Iowa's bird conservation areas (BCA) and Audubon's important bird areas literally put top birding hotspots within reach of all Iowans. Harr said that Iowa Audubon has identified more than 70 important bird areas — chosen for the critical habitat they provide for 37 bird species, including those on the threatened and endangered lists.

The Iowa Ornithologist's Union, www.iowabirding.org, and the Iowa Audubon Society, www.IowaAudubon.org, also maintain web sites with more information on birds, birding areas, field trip opportunities and equipment.

The most important advice for novice birders is to get outside and enjoy.

Karen Grimes is an information specialist for the department in Des Moines and an avid birder.

Birding at Iowa's Newest Bird C



Clay Smith

Even for an outdoors man, he has the perfect job. Twice a week, naturalist Joe Boyles spends all day searching for birds, including rare treasures such as Henslow's sparrow, the northern harrier, the bald eagle, and long-eared and short-eared owls.

Each of these birds is on the Iowa threatened or endangered species list, but can be found in central Iowa at the newest bird conservation area (BCA).

Stepping out in rainfall, snow and hot July days, Boyles is charged by the Polk County Conservation Board to hike six to 10 miles a day and document the birds found on this incredibly diverse grassland covering about 10 square miles along the old Skunk River channel in northeast Polk County.

Boyles' treasure trove of birds is located in the Chichaqua (pronounced Cha-chaw-kwa) Bottoms, a natural area managed by the Polk County Conservation Board. This 8,500-acre restored prairie and remnant woodland forms part of Iowa's seventh and newest BCA. Chichaqua Bottoms is located east of Elkhart and north of Bondurant.

The Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge, with more than 5,000 acres of restored tallgrass prairie, is located just south of Prairie City in Jasper County and forms the second half of this BCA. Part of the refuge's mission is to recreate the prairie ecosystem that spanned parts of 14 states some 200 years ago.

Today, less than one-tenth of 1 percent of the original tallgrass

prairie remains. With cooperating private landowners, the Chichaqua-Neal Smith Grassland Bird Conservation Area provides a large expanse of bird habitat that can help reverse the trend of dwindling grassland bird populations.

Slowly walking the routes, watching for movement and listening for songs, Boyles and volunteers from the Des Moines Audubon Society have found 151 bird species on the Chichaqua Bottoms since the survey began in July of 2004. He expects to find at least half of the 410 species found in Iowa by the time the survey ends this fall.

The area is rich in prairie species and Boyles' list of Chichaqua birds includes 18 sparrows, 12 warblers, five wrens, 10 blackbirds and seven raptors. Among these, the northern harrier is perhaps the most interesting with its tendency to hover and glide just a few feet above the ground.

Shorebirds, waders and swimming birds are also prominent in the area. One of the most exciting finds is a newly formed heron rookery. These breeding birds are very sensitive to human disturbances, so Boyles cautions visitors to observe the rookery from a distance.

Significant species found at the site include the least bittern, American woodcock, pileated woodpecker, prothonotary warbler, grasshopper sparrow, bobolink and black-crowned night heron. Many of these can best be seen during the summer months.

Bird Conservation Area

There are plenty of other things to see at the site, including otters, bobcats, box turtles and some federally threatened species of plants. Many of the birds and animals found at Chichaqua can also be found at Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge, along with bison and elk.

However, Boyles' hope is to find a nesting upland sandpiper at Chichaqua, a great indicator of quality prairie. "These birds pick prairie sites with open areas like we have at Chichaqua," he said. Once the upland sandpiper is found, that will indicate that prairie restoration at Chichaqua is succeeding.

Recent research indicates that viable bird populations require large conservation efforts—a minimum 10,000 acres of public and/or private lands for each bird conservation area. At least one-fourth of the area should be permanently protected, with at least 2,000 acres of high quality habitat.

Establishing the Chichaqua-Neal Smith Grassland Bird Conservation Area should help draw attention to the plight of declining bird species, and it indicates that this is a significant site with great ecological value, said Boyles. He thinks the designation may lead to some funding opportunities as well.

More information about bird conservation areas can be found on the DNR Web site under wildlife at www.iowadnr.com.

—KG



Carl Kurtz



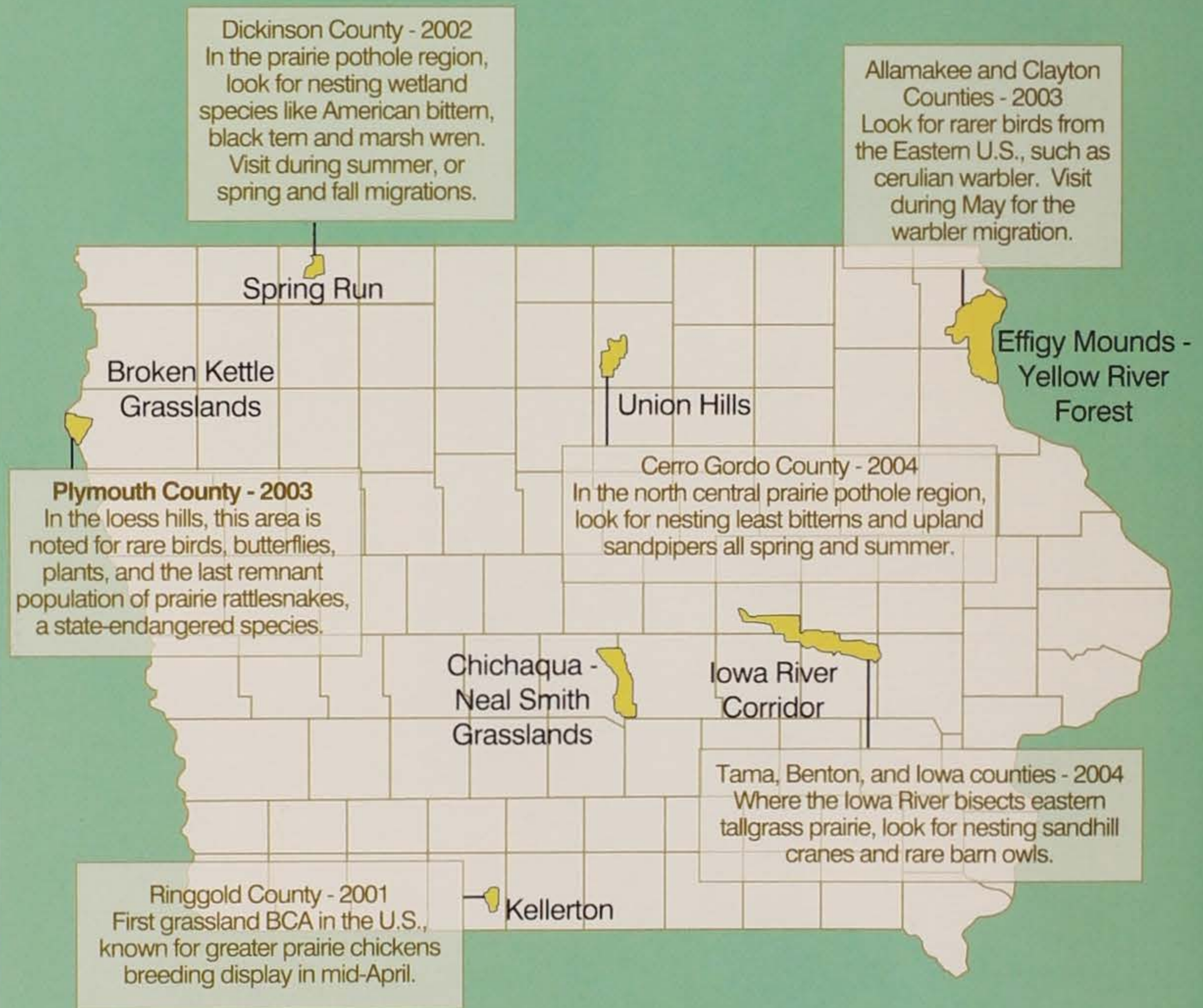
Carl Kurtz

Joe Boyles (far left) scours the grasslands at Chichaqua Bottoms for birds. The diverse grasslands and meandering oxbows along the old Skunk River channel make the area home for threatened and endangered grassland species, like the northern harrier (bottom), Iowa's only ground-nesting hawk. The sedge wren (top) and dickcissel (middle) add to the rich birding experiences on the bottoms.



Tom Rosburg

Iowa's Bird Conservation Areas



Bird watching is one of North America's fastest growing pastimes, with an estimated 50 to 70 million participants in the United States. A high priority for the DNR's Wildlife Diversity Program

is to designate Iowa's best landscapes as bird conservation areas (BCA). Enhancing habitat is the primary goal of all bird conservation in Iowa and may help attract eco-tourism to local

communities. The DNR has designated six areas as BCAs.

The seventh and newest area, the Chichaqua-Neal Smith Grassland Bird Conservation Area, was dedicated on May 20.



H99 lands among friends at the Wildwood Park and Zoo in Marshfield, Wisconsin.

Dodging a bullet

An Iowa-Reared Trumpeter Has a Near-Death Experience in Texas and Winds Up in Wisconsin



By Scott Flaherty

Each winter at the Wildwood Park and Zoo in Marshfield, Wis., assistant zookeeper Jeff Becker's daily routine involves tending to dozens of resident ducks, Canada geese and swans that resist the urge to migrate and over-winter on two aerated ponds that border the small municipal zoo. But one early December day last winter was anything but routine. "I went up to our upper pond to tend to one of our two mute swans. When I got there, I looked up and here comes this big ol' trumpeter on to the pond," he said. "It was quite a surprise."

A trumpeter swan is not a difficult bird to notice. Adults measure nearly 4 feet long with a wing span of nearly 8 feet. The all-white trumpeter is larger than its cousins, the tundra and mute swans, and is easily identified by its broad black bills and distinctive

loud, trumpet-like call. Becker also noticed this particular swan was adorned with a red and white plastic neck band that identified the new arrival as "H99."

To learn more about the zoo's newest visitor, zookeeper Kathryn Yochis contacted Robyn Flaherty of the Migratory Bird Permits Office at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the Twin Cities. Flaherty learned from the U.S. Geological Survey Banding Lab in Maryland that the swan was hatched in Iowa in 1999. After an exchange of emails with several of her contacts in the migratory bird community, Flaherty learned that H99's road from an Iowa wetland to a municipal zoo in Wisconsin was an incredible journey involving many people on both sides of the law.

H99, a male, was hatched in 1999 near West Bend and was raised at the Swan Restoration Project, a captive

breeding program operated by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Diversity Program. In March 2000, the young swan received its red identifying neck band and was released to the wild. Over the next three years, H99 was sighted in Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska and Kansas. Along the way, it had mated with a wild female trumpeter and was nesting near Sleepy Eye, Minn. The pair eventually produced four cygnets. In late fall 2003 the adult pair and their four cygnets left the Midwest, ending up at the small town of Lockney, Texas, on Dec. 13, 2003.

Alice Gilroy, editor of the Floyd County Hesperian-Beacon newspaper in Floydada, Texas, still remembers the day she first heard the news about the swans in her home town. But it wasn't good news.

"I was at home when I got a call



Floyd County Hesperian-Beacon

from Floyd County game warden Mark Collins and he was really upset. He told me that if I wanted a story I should come down to a city-owned pond in Lockney right away."

Gilroy arrived at the pond minutes later and encountered a visibly upset Collins surrounded by two dead and three wounded trumpeter swans. The birds had been shot by poachers and left to die. A passing pheasant hunter saw the injured swans and reported it. H99 had survived the shooting, but was badly wounded. His mate was nowhere to be found. Two of the cygnets were dead; the other two were in bad shape. H99 and his two injured cygnets were taken to the South Plains Rehabilitation Center in Lubbock, Texas.

"It was sad to see them so peppered with buckshot," said Center Director Carol Lee, who until that day, had never worked with a bird larger than a Canada goose. "We X-rayed the birds, medicated and treated them. It was hard work. It took at least two people to handle and treat each swan because of its large size. As we treated the cygnets, H99 would trumpet as if pleading with us to leave them alone. It was heart wrenching," recalled Lee. One of the cygnets was later euthanized due to the extent of its injuries.



Carol Lee, South Plains Wildlife Rehabilitation Center



Lowell Washburn

● ● ● ● ●
Texas game warden Mark Collins holds the wounded H99 the day he was discovered shot in Texas.

Top right, H99 receives treatment at the South Plains Wildlife Rehabilitation Center in Texas. Right, H99's cygnet 5C7 is released by wildlife technician Dave Hoffman at Union Hills Wildlife Management Area in Cerro Gordo County in April 2004.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department immediately offered a \$1,000 reward for the poachers. Nine days later, four individuals came forward and confessed to shooting the swans. The four were fined a total of \$17,000 — \$500 for each swan shot plus veterinary expenses and court costs.

On Jan. 1, 2004, H99 and his surviving cygnet were transferred from Lubbock to Orphaned and Injured Wildlife Inc., a wildlife rehabilitation facility in Spirit Lake. During their three-month stay at the Institute, the birds' wing fractures healed and a bone

chip in H99's knee joint was surgically removed, allowing him to walk normally again. The cygnet also received its own red neck band from the Iowa DNR: 5C7. In the spring of 2004, the swans were released back to the wild.

Since the December 2003 shooting, H99's female mate has never been found. Although trumpeter swans mate for life, wildlife officials at the Iowa DNR thought they might be able to pair H99 with 1F4, a female trumpeter who had also lost its mate. In March, the swans were introduced to each other on a wetland near New Hartford, Iowa.

"We hoped H99 would hit it off with the female but they never really bonded," said Dave Hoffman, wildlife technician with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

Hoffman said through the spring and summer, H99 was beginning to fly, "but not very well." In August, to Hoffman's surprise, H99 left the Iowa wetland.

For now, H99 appears content to overwinter within the safe confines of the Wildwood Park and Zoo in Marshfield. "We'll continue to feed him along with the other waterfowl and swans until spring when he'll likely set out for someplace else," Becker said.

"This year he may be a little gun shy of Texas," Hoffman said.

Update: H99 left the confines of the Marshfield Zoo in March and was recently discovered with a mate nesting on a wetland area near Sleepy Eye, Minnesota.

Scott Flaherty is a public affairs officer at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Twin Cities Regional Office.

About Trumpeter Swans

Trumpeter swans were once common throughout most of the northern United States. In the Midwest, the trumpeter's historic breeding range stretched from Nebraska to central Michigan. Trumpeters regularly nested in Minnesota, Iowa and Wisconsin until the 1880s when market hunting began to decimate swan populations. Swan skins were sold in the fur trade to Europe where they were used to make ladies' powder puffs and feathers were used for fashionable hats.

The high demand for feathers and plumage from trumpeter swans and other migratory birds took its toll on bird populations and led Congress to enact the Migratory Bird Treaty Act in 1918. The Act decreed that all migratory birds and their parts (including eggs, nests and feathers) were fully protected. The federal law put an end to the unchecked commercial trade of birds and their feathers that, by the early years of the 20th century, had wreaked havoc on the populations of many native bird species. In the 1930s, less than 100 trumpeter swans were known to exist in the United States.

Iowa's Trumpeter Swan Restoration Program began in 1993 when the Iowa DNR developed a plan to restore trumpeter swans back to the state. The program produced its first birds in 1998 when three cygnets hatched from a wild nesting trumpeter pair in Dubuque County—the first hatching recorded in Iowa since 1883. To date, Iowa has released 572 trumpeter swans. Its banded swans have been reported in 15 states and two Canadian provinces. Approximately 100 will be released at various sites during 2005.

The majority of Iowa's reintroduced swans come from 55 flightless breeder pairs located throughout the state. Most of these breeding pairs are made up of swans that were injured or otherwise unable to fly. The young from these pairs are allowed free flight. Similar reintroduction programs in the Great Lakes region exist in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan and Ohio. In 2004, the population of trumpeter swans in the continental United States was estimated to be approximately 4,500 birds. Eighty percent of the world's trumpeter swans reside in Alaska, where the population exceeds 13,000 birds.

All trumpeter swans released in Iowa are marked with plastic green and red neck collars and leg bands as well as U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service bands. The plastic bands are marked with alpha letter F, H, P or J and numbers 00 through 99. Amateur birders and the general public can assist ongoing research of migratory birds by reporting numbers from banded birds to the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center via the Internet at www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbl/. Bands can also be reported by calling 1-800-327-BAND (2263) from anywhere in Canada, the United States and most parts of the Caribbean. The operator will need to know the band number, how, when and where the bird or band was found.

To learn more about trumpeter swans, Iowa's trumpeter swan restoration program and to report at marked swan, visit

<http://www.iowadnr.com/wildlife/files.swanindex.html>



Hostesses With the Mostesses

When Al and Carol Barnes first reported for duty as campground hosts, their park ranger posted a sign outside their RV. Bright yellow letters on a wooden board said “Information” could be found within the Barnes’ camper.

“Where are they going to get that part?” Al asked.

It was partly a joke — the jovial, bearded Barnes shares the friendly personality common among campground hosts. But his comment also betrayed a hint of nervousness — like all campground hosts, Barnes is a volunteer with no professional training. In spite of that, he and his wife have become able representatives for their park.

Drawing on a deep love for the outdoors and for camping, a desire to help people and a willingness to learn, the Barneses grew quickly into their role. They became experts on Pilot Knob State Park’s features. They learned all the local attractions, the summer events and festivals and gained plenty of knowledge about local wildlife.

“Our park is in a flight zone, so we get a lot of birds,” Carol Barnes said. “We’ve become birders because we get so many questions.”

Across the state, more than 100 people served as campground hosts last year. These volunteers stay on state park campsites during the busy summer season. They act as caretakers, information guides and all-

Article by Michael Dhar
Photos by Clay Smith





around laborers. Some stay just a few weeks; many set up camp for the full three-month season. They're granted a free camping spot, but receive no paycheck for their work.

Hosts help campers check in, suggest local attractions and offer a variety of assistance to campers. They give directions to nearby churches, ballparks and movie theaters. They supply Band-Aids, clear up confusion about park rules and tell people where the fish are biting — their best guess, anyway.

More than 100 people served as campground hosts last year, including Marvel and Tom Griffey (left), who have served at Walnut Woods State Park for 16 years. Many of those volunteers attended a recognition picnic last year (above).

"When someone new comes into the campground, they're trying to figure out how this all works," said district parks supervisor Jerry Reisinger. "Do they set up or register first? Where are the electrical hookups?"

Campground hosts, positioned near the campground's entrance, lead new guests through the process.

The amount of work a host tackles depends on his or her ambition and the park's demands. Some bravely trek into park bathrooms, latrines and showers to clean them for campers. Others elect to pick up litter, help park managers with the mowing and spot rule infractions.

"We clean out the bathrooms and the latrines — the 'smelly things,' my grandkids say," said Fern Snodgrass, who hosts at Prairie Rose State Park with husband Tom. "We give

information, point out things to see and do. We clean out the fire wells and mow. If we walk through and see litter, we pick it up."

Campground hosts volunteer out of affection for their park and a desire to help people, said DNR parks bureau chief Kevin Szcodronski.

"Most of them do have a love for the outdoors," he said. "They like being out there to enjoy nature and wildlife. I think they get a sense of gratification knowing they're helping the state parks."

Additionally, the typical campground host thrives on social interaction, and relishes the opportunity to interact with other camping enthusiasts, Szcodronski said.

"They tend to be very sociable people," he said. "They like to be around and help people. I'm sure the



Walnut Woods campground hosts Marvel and Tom Griffey in just a few or the roles they, as well as the

free camping's an enticement, but I think they just like the social atmosphere."

The hosts provide an invaluable service to Iowa's state parks, acting as a crutch to the already busy park staff. When visitors flood into campsites on Friday evenings, campground hosts prevent park managers and rangers from drowning in paperwork, Szcodronski said.

Park managers agreed, saying their hosts make it possible to attend to other vital park projects.

"The time that they spend is irreplaceable," said Lake Darling state park manager

Merril Lucas. "You can depend on them to tend to campers, otherwise you'd have to free someone else up. Because of them, we can do other projects. They have no idea how important they are."

Campground hosts contributed more than 7,000 hours of volunteer service to Iowa's state parks last year. That service represented an estimated \$100,000 for the park system.

"You give so much and do so much," Diane Ford-Shivvers, a DNR assistant division administrator for conservation and recreation, told the hosts at a picnic honoring them last summer. "You put Band-Aids on ouchies, you act as the face of the park. You are our spokespeople and advocates."

Campground hosts' terms of service range from freshman volunteers like the Snodgrasses to old pros like Marvel and Tom Griffey.

slightly different experience from other volunteers. Yellow River lacks the modern amenities common at other campsites. The Clancy's spend their summer without electricity, nearby showers, phones or bathrooms. They have to trek two miles to get their drinking water or to make a phone call.

"I find it quite remarkable that someone would stay with us like that for so many years," Reisinger said.

Charlie Clancy has been camping at Yellow River since he was a child, and has formed many bonds with other campers over the years, said Yellow

Become a campground host or volunteer in a state park by registering online at www.keepersoftheland.org, or contact Merry Rankin at 515-281-0878 or via email at merry.rankin@dnr.state.ia.us.

The Griffey's have hosted 16 years at Walnut Woods State Park in central Iowa.

"My wife and I both love to camp," Tom Griffey said of he and his wife's decision to host for such a long run. "When we retired, we started doing this full time. I just love the park."

During their 15 years volunteering at Yellow River State Forest, hosts Charlie and Grace Clancy have had a

River park ranger Rylan Retallick.

"A lot of campers come in and they ask if Charlie's home," Retallick said. "He enjoys talking to people. That's how he gets his gratification."

Many campground hosts take the position after they've decided to live in campsites year round. Fern and Tom Snodgrass became "full-time RVers" two years ago; they travel from park to park, their only home a roving camp-site on four wheels.



100-plus other campground hosts, assume every year in Iowa's state parks.

Serving as hosts gives them the opportunity to camp for free before they head south for the winter.

"We both had part-time jobs and he turned 76," Fern Snodgrass said of their decision to camp full-time. "I decided if we aren't going to do it now, we'll never do it."

Like the Snodgrasses, many hosts decide to volunteer after they retired. In most cases, the hosts have already formed a bond with their park and its managers beforehand, having spent years as avid campers. John and Connie Sabin became hosts at Clear Lake State Park in north-central Iowa three years ago, thrilled at the opportunity to "volunteer" by doing what they loved to do.

"The park ranger just came and asked us," Connie Sabin said. "He said, 'How'd you like to camp for free?' I said, 'What's the catch?'"

Hosts revel in sharing information about their parks. Al and Connie Barnes can rattle off attractions within driving distance of Pilot Knob, a park named for the highest point, or "knob," in Iowa.

"There's the knob itself, the Heritage Museum in Forrest City, Winnebago, the Pioneer Museum in

Mason City," Al Barnes said. "There's Clear Lake itself. The little towns have their own celebrations, the Railroad Ag Days at Manly, the Draft Horse Show at Britt. Each town has its own celebration appropriate to its own character."

Each park presents its own challenges and peculiarities, too. As a result, different hosts can expect different experiences. Parks can be "more rural, small and secluded or large with people packed in there like cordwood," Szcodronski said. "Some campgrounds are relatively small and maybe more remote, while others are very large and concentrated almost like a small urban setting."

At the Campground Host Recognition Picnic at Palisades-Kepler State Park last summer, campground hosts from across the state compared notes on their parks. They reported on their parks' respective camping facilities—the number of electric sites, how level their sites were, whether they saw more folks with tents or motor homes. Some hosts had to deal with difficult customers unwilling to follow certain rules. Other hosts said their visitors

never caused a problem.

John Sabin keeps a folded slip of paper in his wallet at all times, with a list of the parks rules and regulations. Sometimes, it's all he needs to remind a visitor of the rules. Sometimes it's not. In any case, campground hosts always work closely with park rangers and managers, reporting any problems to them.

"I had one old guy, I showed him the paper and he said, 'I don't want to see your rules,'" Sabin recounted with a laugh.

The rare brush ups aren't nearly enough, however, to sour these volunteers on their beloved parks or to dampen their enthusiasm for helping people. Perhaps best of all, being a campground host lets them connect with other people who share their love of camping.

"We get lots of locals and we get to know their families," Connie Barnes said. "It's like having houseguests every weekend."

Michael Dhar is a Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps communications and public relations assistant with the department in Des Moines.

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\$45 to buy; \$25 annual renewal.

Where the money goes for REAP

\$35 of the plate cost and \$10 of the renewal go to REAP. Much of the financial support for REAP comes from gaming revenues, but an important part is from the natural resources plate. Named the nation's best conservation funding program, here is how REAP distributes its annual funding:

- \$350,000 conservation education
- 1% DNR administration of REAP
- 9% DNR for land management (parks mostly)
- 28% DNR for land acquisition and development (open spaces)
- 20% County conservation boards
- 20% Soil and water enhancement
- 15% City parks and open spaces
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- 3% Roadside vegetation

For more information on REAP, talk to your county conservation board, city park department, or visit www.iowadnr.com and click on REAP.

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\$10 from the purchase price, and \$15 from your renewal, are dedicated to the conservation of Iowa's 550 species of "nongame" wildlife (those creatures not considered sport fish or game), to:

- Conduct special wildlife surveys
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- Track threatened and endangered species

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- Grassland and forest songbirds
- Rare amphibians and reptiles
- Winter roosts of bald eagles
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- Prairie chicken restoration in southwest Iowa.

For more information on Wildlife Diversity:
Iowa DNR Wildlife Diversity Program
1436 255th St.
Boone, IA 50036
515.432.2823, ext.102
Email: Doug.Harr@dnr.state.ia.us
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For a personalized plate (\$80, 5-character limit), obtain an application from your county treasurer's office, or DOT motor vehicle division office, or visit www.GetYourTags.com.

You can also buy plate gift certificates at your county treasurer's office.

BUILT *by these* HANDS

During the Great Depression, with its staggering unemployment, thousands of Iowa's young men were offered work in the Civilian Conservation Corps. The result – a legacy of beautiful structures we enjoy everyday in our state parks.

BY
GLENDA EDWARDS



Backbone boat house,
Delaware County

Clay Smith





World-renowned architects, engineers and naturalists didn't build the lodges, dams and trails of Iowa's state parks. But they *were* built by great Iowans. The parks where we enjoy boating, camping, picnicking or just relaxing are the result of years of hard labor from the men of the Civilian Conservation Corps.

President Franklin Roosevelt founded the CCC in March of 1933. The effects of the Great Depression, unemployment, and recurring drought and dust storms, combined with the lack of a national welfare system, created an urgent



need for employment for young men. Roosevelt used the CCC program to fill that need and also to improve conservation and erosion measures in the U.S.

In the first year of the CCC, 12,800 men were enrolled in Iowa. By the time the CCC program was discontinued in 1942, enrollment in Iowa had increased to more than 46,000. Nationwide, more than 2.5 million young men served in the Corps.

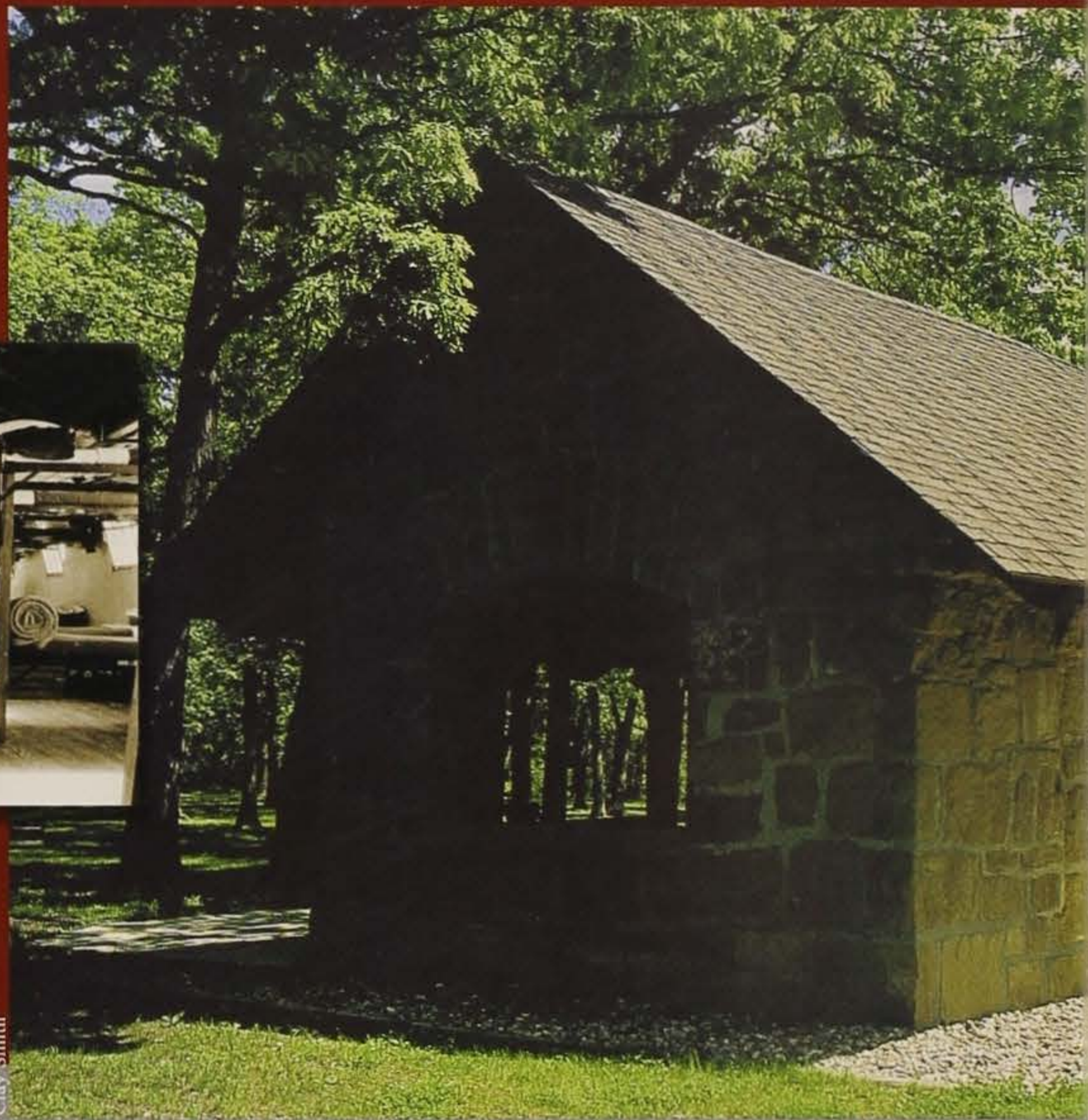
In Iowa, CCC men worked on conservation and construction projects in 41 different camps and in more than 80 state parks. The Conservation Corps in Iowa was organized at Fort Des Moines, where the men received initial training and conditioning. From there, companies were sent to various locations around the state, where they set up camp and began a regimen of training, schooling

DNR photo



Left, Ledges bridge, Story County

Lake Ahquabi shelter,
Warren County



Clay Smith

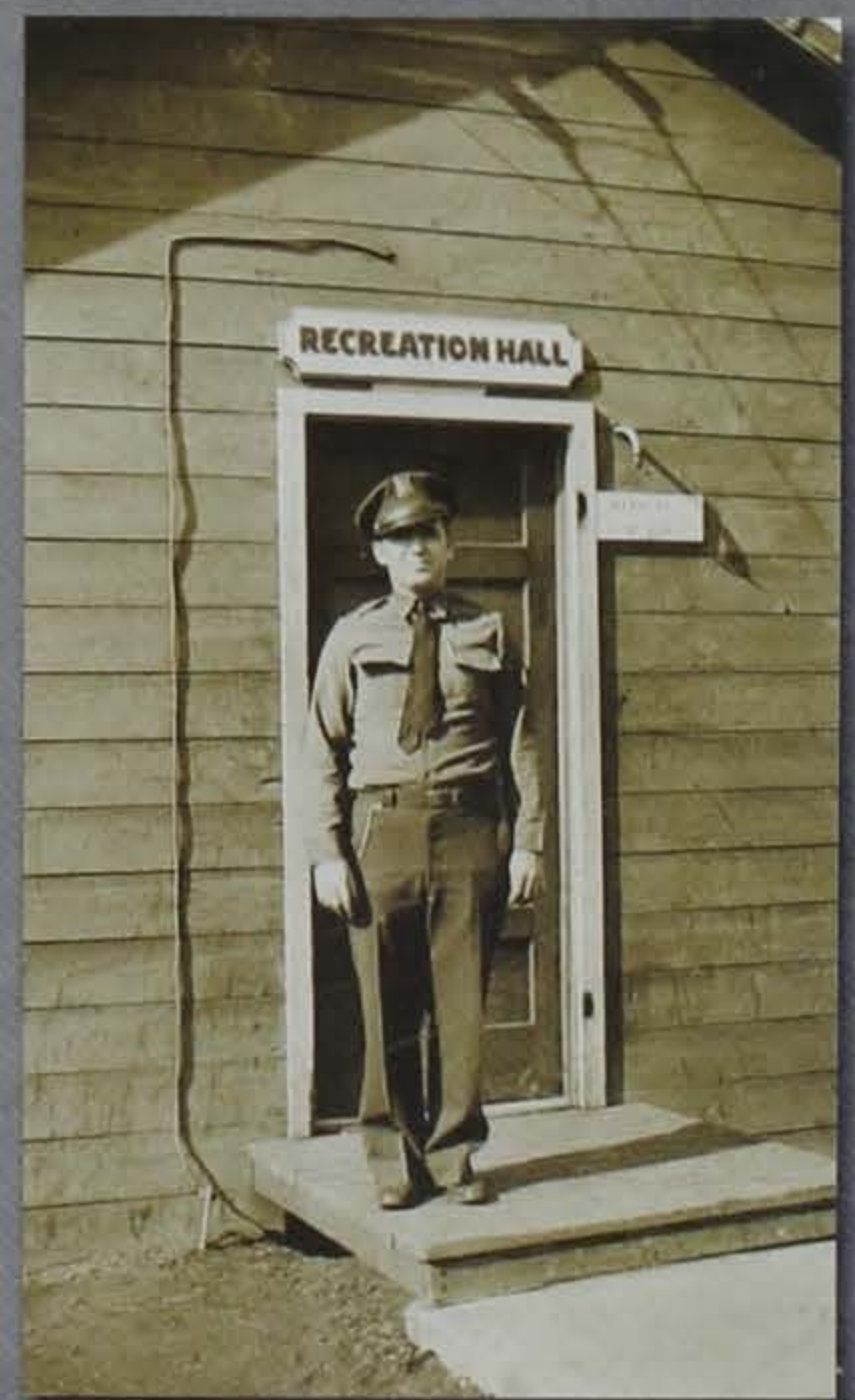
and work. Companies were organized in a military fashion and were supervised by officers pulled from the military. But leaders for the work groups were chosen from the ranks of young men.

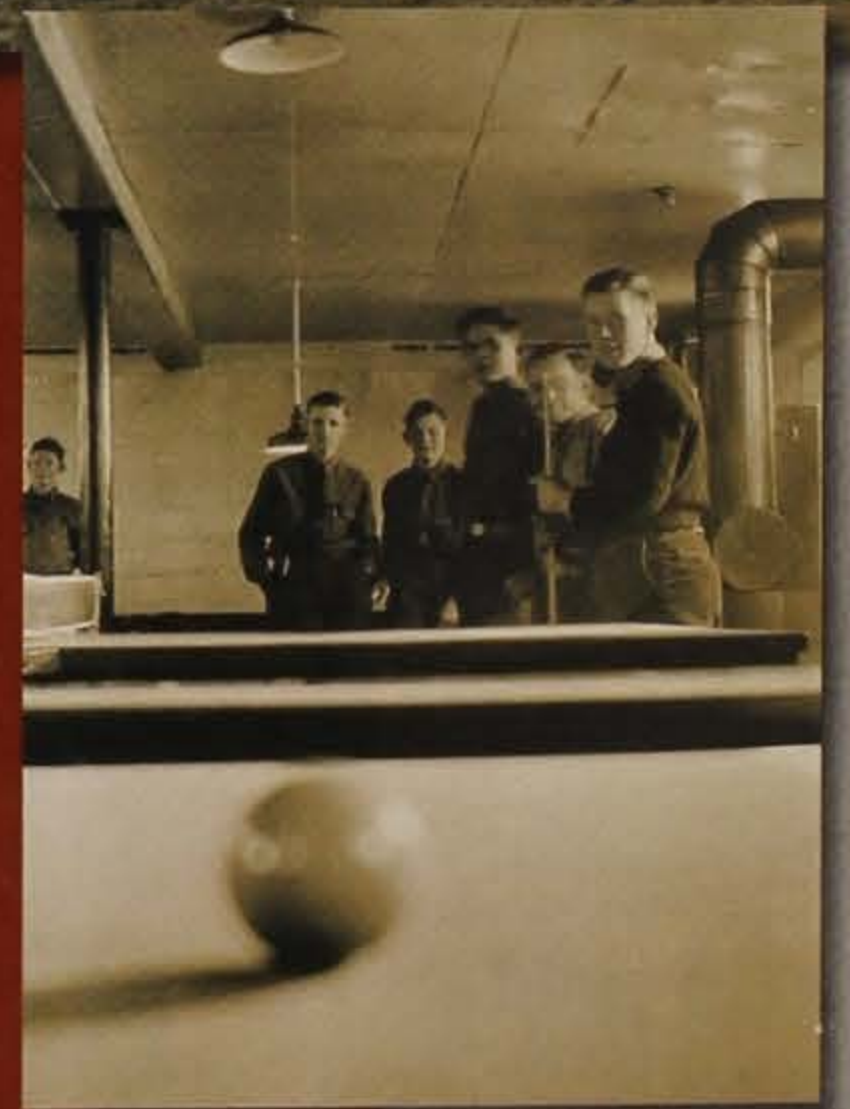
Initially, the CCC camps in Iowa were set up as “tent cities” with only the officers’ barracks being of sturdier construction. Later, as camp routine was established, the enrollees built more permanent quarters. These camp complexes also included buildings for the office, camp store, infirmary and tool storage.

Once the men arrived at their camp, they settled into a strict military-style routine – rising before dawn and working at their assigned sites until noon, when lunch was delivered. At the end of the afternoon work shift, the men would return to camp and change into dress uniforms or clean “civvies” in time for the 5:15 dinner bell. Evenings were spent on recreation, classes and study. Lights out was at 10 o’clock, with a bed check at 11.

Enrollees alternated taking weekends off to go home. Those left in camp were responsible for the general upkeep of the barracks and grounds. Enrollees were paid \$30 a month, \$25 of which was sent back to their families to provide relief from the hardships of the Depression. The \$5 that remained was usually spent in the camp canteen or on entertainment in nearby towns.

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Opposite page and above middle, Lake Wapello beach house, Davis County

LEMs or local educated men, as well as trained teachers were brought in to teach interested enrollees at most of the camps. Subjects such as woodworking, drawing or high school requirements were available. Some camps also published a monthly newspaper filled with news, stories, jokes and drawings from the men in the camp.

As when any large group of young men gets together, there was a lot of minor troublemaking and practical jokes that took place. Short sheeting was common, as well as "GI baths" for those who refused to shower. But, in the end, it was all in good fun, and makes up some of the men's fondest memories.

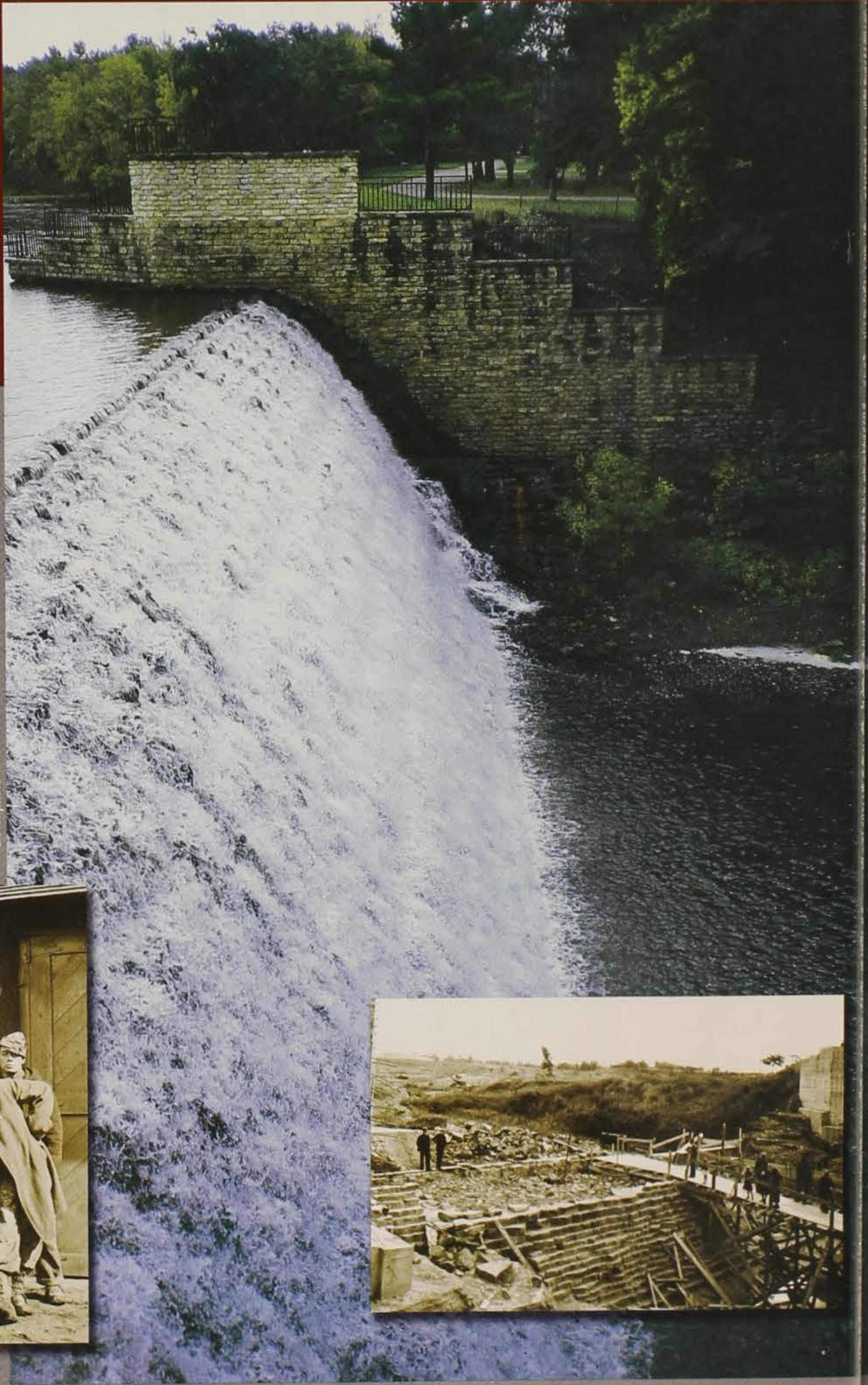
Disagreements among the men were uncommon, but there were solutions if they did occur. Some camps used KP duty as a form of punishment for fighting or misbehaving, while other camps encouraged enrollees to put on gloves and box as a solution to disagreements.



Ken Formanek



Beeds Lake spillway,
Franklin County



DNR photo





Certificate of Discharge
from
Civilian Conservation Corps

TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT * CLYDE B. BERRY A MEMBER OF THE CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS, WHO WAS ENROLLED October 3, 1938 AT POWERSVILLE Mo. 19-18, Imhanna, Iowa IS HEREBY DISCHARGED THEREFROM, BY REASON OF **CC REAR 178 DISCHARGE OF SER. NO. 10-000 REASSIGNED DATE 5/15/39

SAID Clyde B. Berry WAS BORN IN INDIANA IN THE STATE OF IOWA WHEN ENROLLED HE WAS Twenty YEARS OF AGE AND BY OCCUPATION A Farmer HE HAD Blue EYES Brown HAIR Neat COMPLEXION AND WAS Five FEET Seven INCHES IN HEIGHT HIS COLOR WAS White

GIVEN UNDER MY HAND AT POWERSVILLE, IOWA THIS THIRTY-THIRD DAY OF March ONE THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-NINE

Leroy D. Little
LEROY D. LITTLE, Capt., Inf-Res., Commanding

DNR-110437



Ron Johnson

The CCC Museum, located at Backbone State Park in Delaware County, is open to the public Saturdays, noon to 4:30 PM. (Memorial Day through Labor Day), or by appointment (563-924-2527).

Oral histories of 145 CCC veterans were recorded from 2000 to 2003. The black and white photos found on these pages were contributed by these gentlemen. Transcripts of the individual interviews and more photos can be found on the DNR web site at <http://www.iowadnr.com/parks/ccc/index.html>.

Currently, funding is being sought to produce a book based on the stories heard in these interviews. Rebecca Conard, historian and author of *Places of Quiet Beauty*, is researching this book. A long-term goal for this project is to produce a DVD chronicling these stories and distributed it to all schools, libraries and county historical societies.

Those who have used state park CCC facilities for family gatherings and other events are asked to share photos for possible use in the book. Please contact Angela Corio (515-281-4579) if you have photos that might be of interest.



The citizens where CCC towns were located were more than a little wary of the groups of boys that overran their towns on the weekends. But, overall, the situation benefited both the boys in camp and the town economy.

The term of service for an enrollees was six months, but they could re-enroll for a total of two years. At the end of his service, each enrollee was given a certificate of discharge, which could be used as a reference in future job searches. For many of the CCC veterans, this discharge certificate was the most precious memento of their experience, and they are still treasured today.

The legacy of each and every enrollee is seen today in our state parks. These parks represent not only the time, sweat and labor that each man contributed to environmental conservation, but also the memories, friendships and life stories of the men of the Iowa Civilian Conservation Corps.

Taken from CCC History, a video produced in 2002 by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and written by AmeriCorps volunteer Glenda Edwards.

a Decade Of Dedication

By Jerry Reisinger
Photos by Clay Smith

Volunteering to Keep Iowa Parks Beautiful

In the working world, John Neff is the epitome of the full-time employee working for part-time pay.

That's because that's exactly what he does — working half of the year for a paycheck and the other half for the satisfaction of knowing he is preserving a place that is special to him and many others. From mid-April through mid-October the 69-year-old, who is as fit as many 20 years younger who come to the park to hike, works at Palisades-Kepler State Park as a seasonal employee, maintaining and preserving the park that he has vivid and fond memories of as a child. When the summer work season is over, he takes a few days off to winterize his lawn mower and install storm windows at home before heading back to Palisades to continue doing what he has done all spring and summer. And he does it eight hours a day, five days a week, for free.

I first met John and his wife JoAnn in April 1994 when I was a ranger at Palisades. They came to reserve the lodge, and once they had arrangements made, John asked "Do you have any need for someone to do mowing and that kind of thing?" He had retired from Collins Radio in Cedar Rapids the year before, had done the projects at home that he always thought he'd do in his retirement years and was looking for meaningful ways to keep himself busy. Dressed in his faded blue jeans and wearing a pair of well-worn work boots, a gray short-sleeved sweatshirt

and baseball cap, he looked more like a construction worker than a retiree.

When I asked if he thought he was up to repairing damage the 1993 flood had left behind, he replied with a very soft but confident, "Oh, I think so." The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) had earmarked funds to repair the flood damage, allowing me to hire someone to do the work.

John showed up at 7:45 the following Monday morning, driving his 1986 blue Toyota pickup and carrying a black, steel lunch bucket — the kind with a domed top that a Thermos bottle fit nicely into. He later told me he had carried the lunch bucket for the past 37 years to work and it always suited his needs, although the Thermos bottle had been discarded years earlier.

John was eager to get started and I was eager to get him started. During the following weeks he rebuilt a 4-foot-high rock retaining wall the Civilian Conservation Corps had built in the 1930s along the Cedar River, as well as cut up and hauled away trees deposited by the flood. He caught on quickly to driving the park's old 1976 Ford 3600 tractor and loader, and used it to move washed-out sand back to where it belonged on the beach. Along the way, he made friends with other park employees and gained their respect.

The more we worked with him, the

more we all learned how talented, hard-working and gentle he was. He didn't talk much, but when he did, people listened because he thought carefully before speaking and usually had something worthwhile to say. He had a knack of gently persuading others to support his ideas.

Those who have worked with John say he sets the pace by volunteering to take the least desirable task, excelling at it, and then offering to help others complete their jobs before he moves on. I once heard him say to a 20-year-



old college student at the beginning of the workday, "What do you say we go down by the river and mow today? You take the rider and I'll do the trimming with the pusher." After lunch, the college student felt guilty and thought he'd push the trim mower and let John ride the tractor mower, but John insisted on pushing the trim mower, which he did the rest of the day.

Because of John's ability to work hard and smart, coupled with his natural tendency to mentor others who



haven't been exposed to such a strong work ethic, we were able to get far more work done his first year than we ever imagined. In fact, all of the flood damage was repaired.

When mid-October rolled around John and I were talking on his last scheduled day of work about the maintenance needs of the park. I explained that one of the realities of managing a state park is there is always more needs than money and staff to address them.

"You know, there are a lot of picnic tables with cracked boards and in need of paint," he said.

I tried in the nicest way I knew to tell him there was a number of jobs that needed his help, but rules do not allow for keeping employees on longer. He paused for a few seconds and explained that he knew there was no money to pay him but that he would like to donate his time and

repair the tables.

I didn't see John for a few days, but then one day he showed up in his little blue pickup. He backed into the parking stall — the same way he had done numerous times that summer — and walked to the shop with his black lunch bucket in hand. I asked if he came to work on some picnic tables. "Yeah," he said, "I thought I'd get started on 'em and see how it goes."

John volunteered a full day that day, taking no breaks and only 20 minutes for lunch. He stayed in that routine for five days a week, every week until spring. Most days were spent in the shop repairing, sanding and painting the 80-some picnic tables in the park, but he also cleared snow, or cut, piled and burned dead trees. He washed the trucks, put up new signs, cleared trails, helped park visitors with questions and worked on most any maintenance job the park needed.

John's favorite projects are ones he can later watch park visitors benefit from, like repairing the limestone trail bridge that had missing stones, a poorly supported floor and missing handrail sections.

"I remember the way it was after the CCC built it," he reminisced. "To bring it back to its original condition is rewarding. I still like to hear hiking boots clunk on that solid floor and I walk on it myself once in awhile," he said with a smile of satisfaction.

It's been 10 years since John and JoAnn came to my office to reserve the lodge. I am now the district supervisor for northeast Iowa's state parks, and John is still working and volunteering at Palisades-Kepler. I feel good every time I drive into the park and see John's pickup backed into his stall, knowing this part-time employee is giving back full-time.



Photos by Clay Smith



David Williamson

TRASH talkin'

by Michael Dhar

There's more than one way to be a rock star. David Williamson is proof of that. The Ogden artist lives in a house made from recycled trash – his unique existence motivated by equal parts environmental dedication and rock 'n' roll attitude. Since the 1970s, Williamson and his wife Linda have been creating a home from salvaged pieces of bulldozed buildings. His earliest artistic experiences – as a rock guitarist and singer – taught him to forge his own way in life, he said. That's what led him to create a philosophy, a form of artistic expression and a house, all built upon recycling. "I was in a high school rock 'n' roll band," Williamson said, during a tour of his handmade residence. "All four of us are self-employed businessmen, now. It's that idea of creating your own path."

Williamson, now a professional artist and creative consultant, has done just that. He and his wife moved to an abandoned farmhouse in the 1970s on Linda Williamson's family farmland. From its dilapidated footprint, the two created a playground of colors and shapes salvaged from materials intended for the landfill.



really helped tie everything together, gave the volunteers a tangible result," said AWARE director Brian Soenen. "It's something that they can be proud of that will last beyond Project AWARE . . . It just far

Stepping inside the Williamson home feels like entering a Willie Wonka factory, or some other childhood fantasy land. Bright colors, a mirror ball and an airplane propeller decorate the walls and ceiling. Stained glass windows act as doors, an old basketball court serves as part of a floor, and countless other odds and ends lead new lives as house parts.

"It is kind of a play land," Williamson said. "You know, you have a place when you're a child where you dream and imagine. Now I have one, it's just insulated."

For Williamson's wife, and the two children they raised at "El Rancho Weirdo," the unique house made for an equally unique home life.

"It's definitely an adventure, because it's always changing and I don't think we ever will be finished," said Linda Williamson. "It really reflects who we are. I don't think it would fit if we had a beige house."

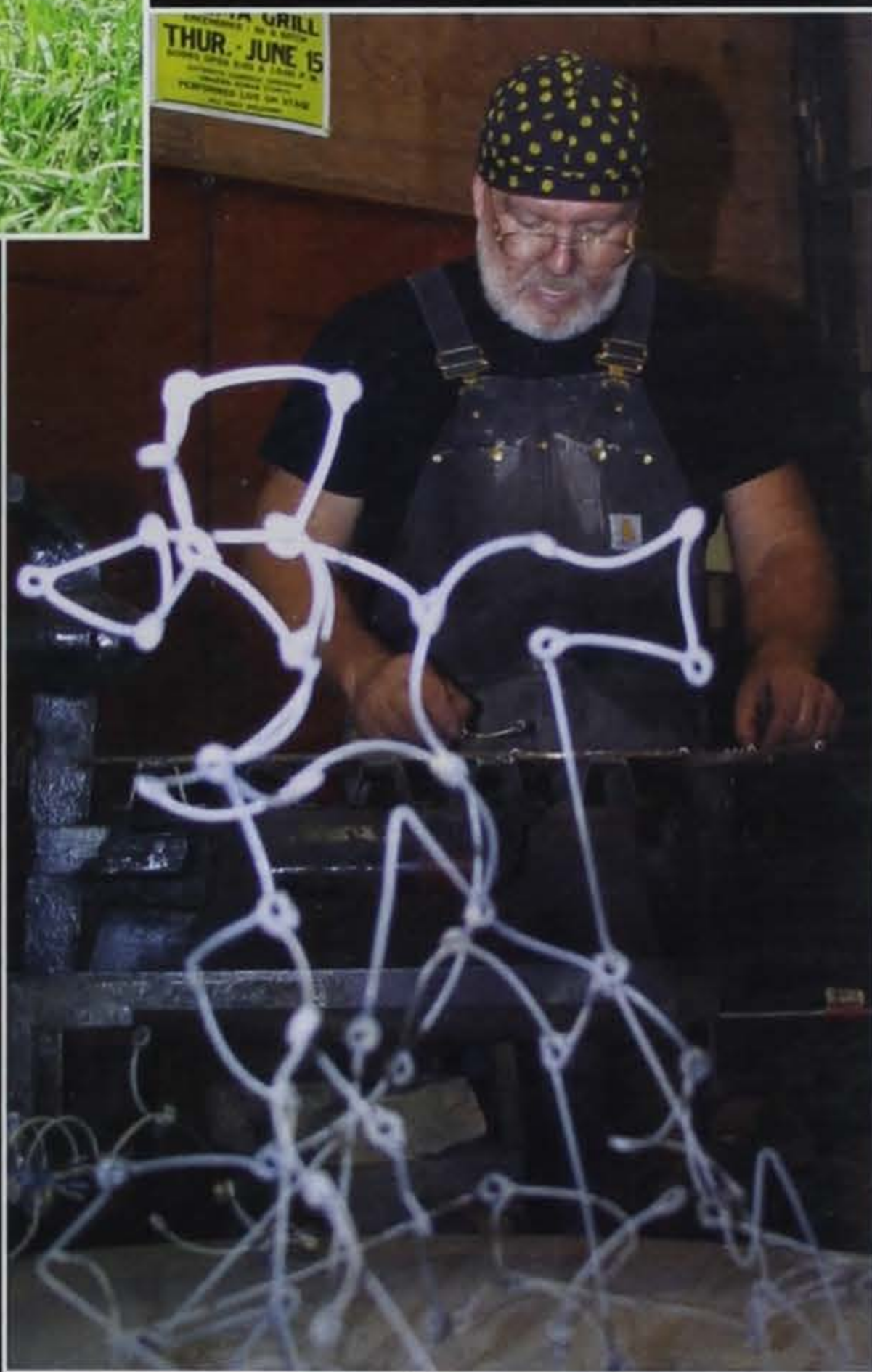
Williamson's house follows the same trends as his artwork. He sculpts from reclaimed garbage, mostly metal, melting down pop cans, car parts and other sundries in a

homemade forge. Last summer and fall he lent his unique artistic sensibility to the DNR.

Williamson helped turn more than 700 pounds of metal dredged from the Des Moines River watershed into a 10-foot tall canoe paddle sculpture. Iowa volunteers collected the trash in June of 2004 during the second annual Project AWARE (A Watershed Awareness River Expedition), a canoe trip and watershed cleanup.

The sculpture, crowned by a model of a stone fly, initially took shape during the 2004 Iowa State Fair. Williamson invited AWARE volunteers and other fair-goers to smelt, pound and form the sculpture's metal parts.

"From a volunteer standpoint, it



exceeded anything I ever imagined."

The sculpture now stands in the Wallace Building in Des Moines, home to the DNR's main offices.

Williamson also involved fairgoers in a collaborative written project, asking them to record their thoughts about rivers. He compiled their musings into a poem called

“Clear,” which now hangs on display beside the sculpture. Williamson, who advises governments and companies about the “creative economy,” advocates sharing the creative process with everyone.

“Some artists, over the past several years, have been involved in making art public,” Williamson said. “I’ve been involved in making the process of art public.”

The solidly built, white-bearded Williamson usually wears a black leather vest, especially when working at his forge. The heavy metal image fades a bit, however, when he dons a pair of wire-frame reading glasses to read some of his poetry. That dynamic – heavy metal attitude mixed with a poet’s depth – underlies much of Williamson’s art.

He gravitated to metal-smithing in college. The fire-spewing forge



reminded him of rock ‘n’ roll pyrotechnics and held a similar attraction. He wanted to be, he said, “like Jerry-Lee Lewis without the piano.”

“That’s where the whole fascination with metal began,” Williamson said. “It was really back

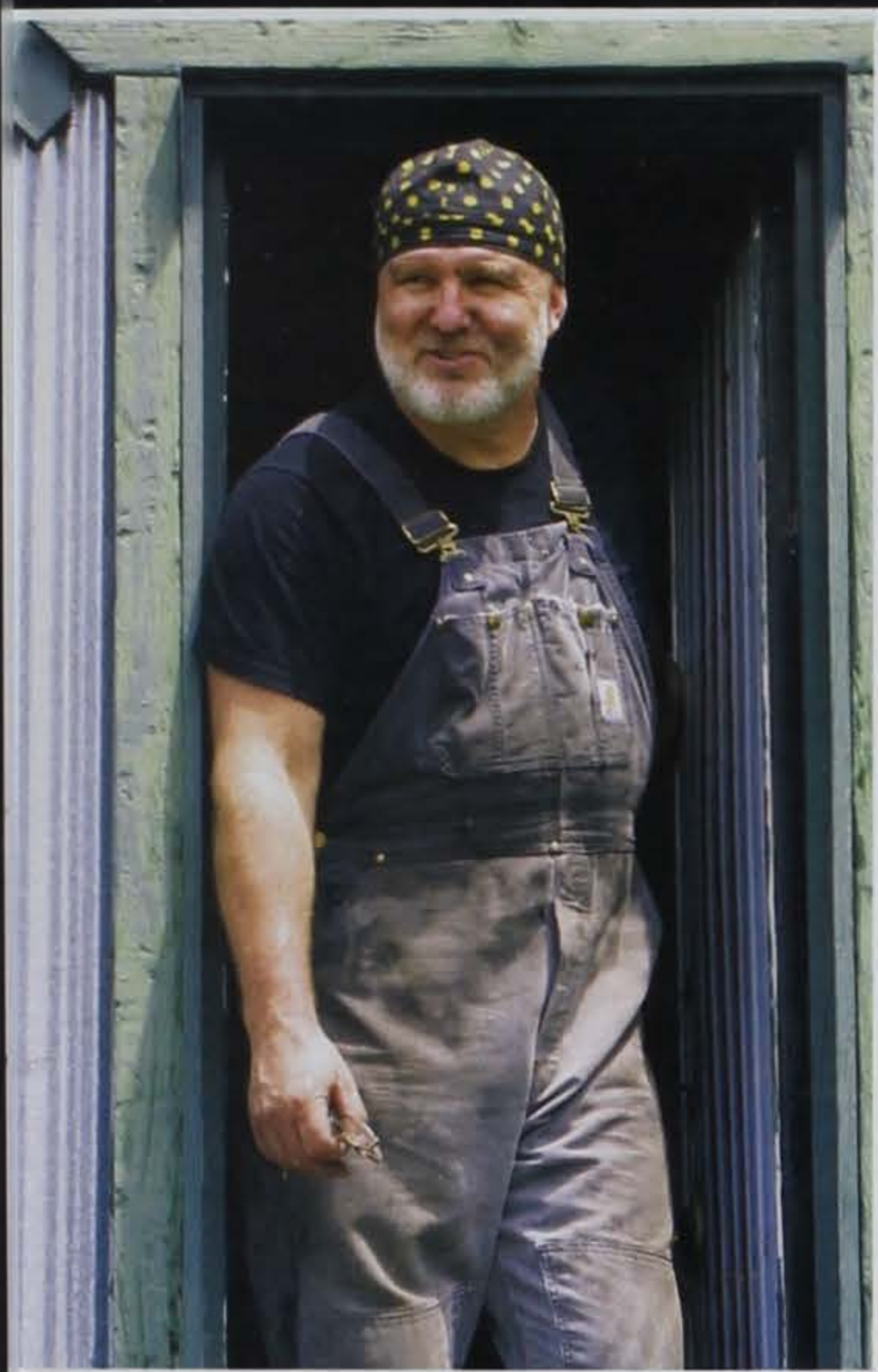
to that rock ‘n’ roll. Anything having to do with fire, I was into it.”

At the same time, Williamson talks about his creations and his philosophy like an enthusiastic art student. In his art and in his worldview, Williamson constantly emphasizes connections. He sees the

world as an interdependent web – and that outlook shapes both his artwork and his commitment to recycling.

The barn outside Williamson’s home now serves as a sculpting studio. Metal pieces of all different sizes fill shelves reaching to the ceiling. Sculptures at various states of

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in Williamson's chalk drawing, applies to much of our world, he said. It describes the connections among our blood vessels, among concepts on the Internet, and among wildlife, people and resources in the environment, Williamson said.

"If everything's connected, the idea of going to the edge of town and dumping something on the curb doesn't work," he said. "There is no edge."

As a result of that outlook, Williamson's commitment to recycling runs deep. His home produces not an ounce of trash. Everything he, his wife or his kids use gets

recycled, reused, sculpted or composted. Williamson even collects trash from his neighbors for use as firewood or sculpting fodder.

"I think when you see David, he's just about as honest a person as you can find," said sister Deborah McGinn. "That's why he's so honest with the land and with the environment. He's very serious about it."

Art and recycling feed off one another at the Williamson residence. The house itself functions both as an example of recycling and a continuing art project. During a tour last summer, he pointed out the different-sized boards that form his

home's skin. Williamson painted some of them with roofing tar. He plans to let it weather to see what texture results.

Living in a handmade house affords him such artistic freedom, he said.

"The house is meant to be rough and tumble," Williamson said. "I'm an artist. I don't care if a little paint drips."

Inside the house, Williamson's

sculptures and paintings adorn the walls. On the ground floor, he displays some sculptures he helped a special needs class create. Up a circular staircase made from steel planter wheels and spokes, a drawing studio displays another project – some illustrations for the Iowa Farm Bureau.

His creativity finds expression in practical ways, too. An old steel water heater, lined with bricks, has found new life as a wood stove. For a time, El Rancho Weirdo even employed a dry, homemade toilet. The system



ompletion fill up the barn's volume with jagged shapes.

During a recent visit, Williamson sketched a chalk model of his worldview on the top of an anvil in his studio. First, he drew a line representing the outmoded view of a flat earth. Then he drew a circle, which represented a round earth. He erased that one, too.

"We've learned that the circular model is just as screwy as the linear," Williamson said. "The truth is that when you breathe in, it splits in two, and then splits in two again and again. This pattern could go on forever."

That "network model," represented by a branching structure

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Adlai Stevenson (1900-1965)

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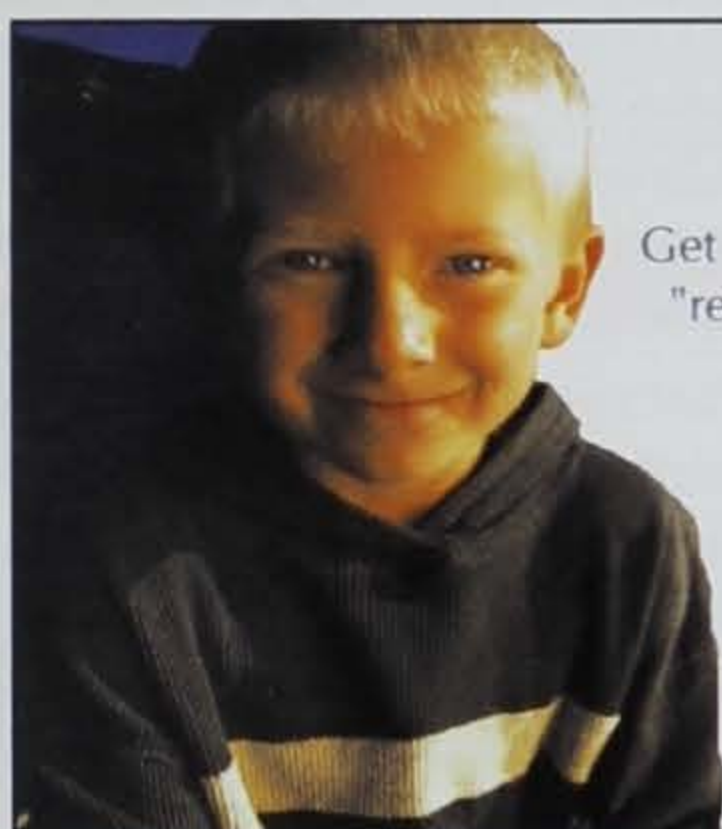
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John Muir

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Hobo Foil Packets



(easy, but kids turned up noses at idea of veggies, what do they know, adults thought they were delicious)

1 pound hamburger
carrots
potatoes
onions
seasoning
butter

Spray foil with nonstick cooking spray. Layer hamburger and cubed veggies. For those who dislike onion, it may be omitted or removed when done. Fold foil into packets and cook on coals until tender.



Banana Boats

(easy, but we messed up by removing the skin completely, but hey, melted chocolate, marshmallows and banana, no further comment)

banana
chocolate chips
mini marshmallows
aluminum foil



Peel banana down one side and cut out lengthwise wedge. Place marshmallows and chocolate chips into the wedge and cover with peel and aluminum foil. Put into coals for five minutes.

Dutch Oven Easy Baked Lasagna

(easier than you think, very popular)

serves 6 to 8

1 box (9) lasagna noodles, uncooked
1/2 pound ground beef
1/2 pound Italian sausage
1 jar spaghetti sauce
1 (14.5 oz.) can tomato sauce
1 pound mozzarella, grated
2 eggs
1 cup Parmesan cheese
onions and peppers

Make sauce mixture: brown ground beef and sausage in skillet and drain. Add spaghetti sauce and tomato sauce to meat. Mix.

Make cheese mixture: mix the eggs and all cheeses, onions and peppers together in a mixing bowl.

Line 12-inch Dutch oven with aluminum foil. *Layer as follows:* 1/3 sauce mixture, layer of noodles, 1/2 cheese mixture, 1/3 sauce mixture, layer of noodles, 1/2 cheese mixture, 1/3 sauce mixture. Bake 45 minutes to 1 hour at 350 degrees or use 17 coals on top and 8 coals on the bottom. Replace coals as needed.



Muffins in Orange Cups

(easy, and pretty tasty)

- 4 or 5 oranges
- favorite muffin mix already prepared

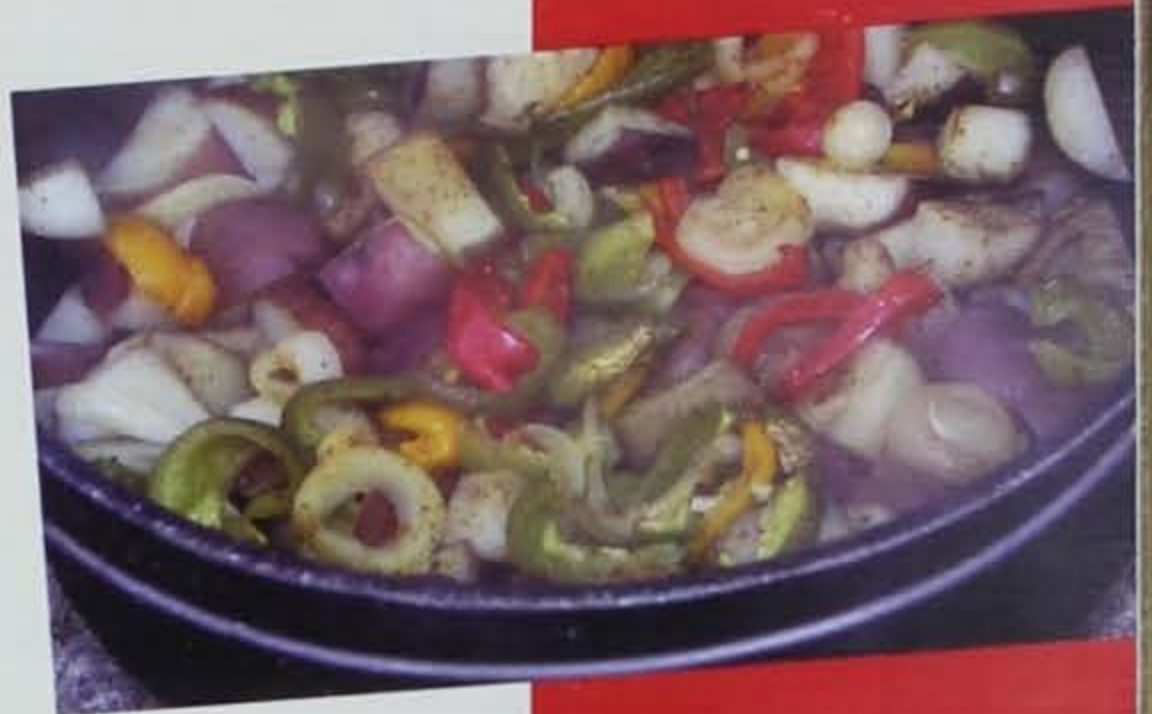
Cut oranges in half and remove (and eat) insides. Pour prepared muffin batter into orange "cups" to about half full. Wrap tightly in foil and carefully place in hot coals for about 15 minutes. Check occasionally for doneness. Cool slightly, eat with a fork directly from the orange or remove rind and eat.



Rod's Dutch Oven Shore Lunch Potatoes

(easy, delicious)

- 3 pounds red potatoes
- 1 large onion
- 1 red pepper
- 1 green pepper
- 1 yellow pepper
- 1/2 cup butter
- 1/2 cup water



Butter the bottom and sides of a Dutch oven. Cube potatoes into bite-size chunks and place into Dutch oven. Slice peppers and onion and place on top of the potatoes.

Slice butter and place on top. Add favorite seasonings. Place lid on the Dutch oven and cook at 350 degrees for 40 minutes. For a 12-inch oven, use 17 coals on top and 8 on the bottom. Replace coals as needed.



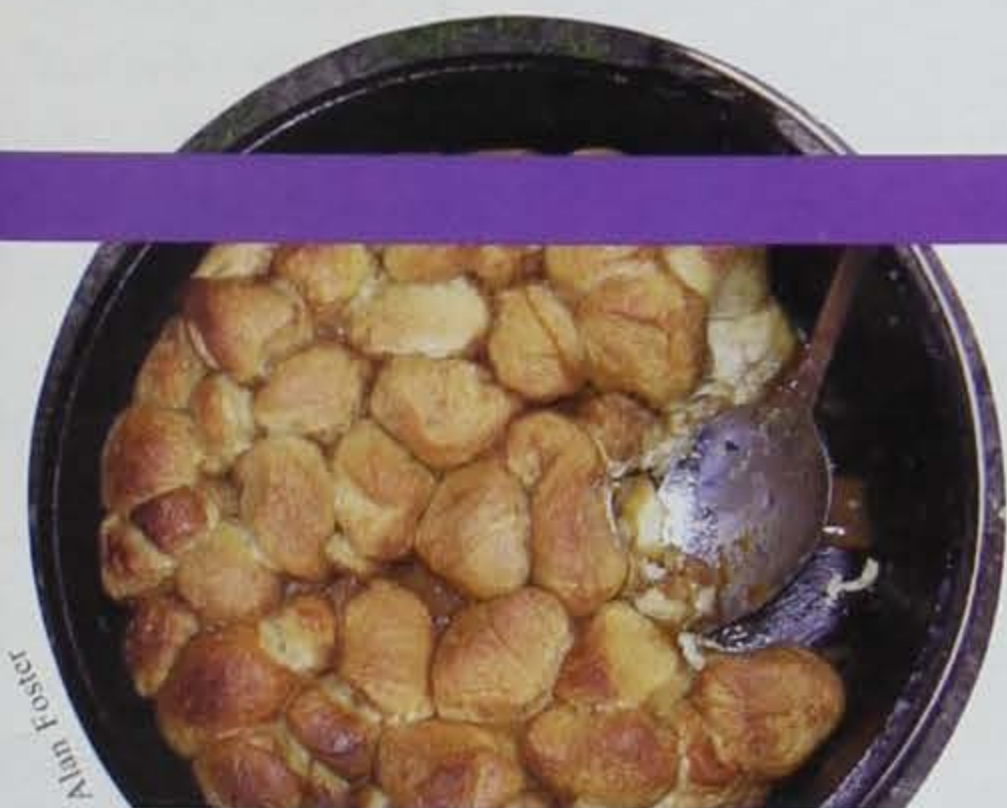
Dutch Oven Sticky Buns

(easy, very popular)

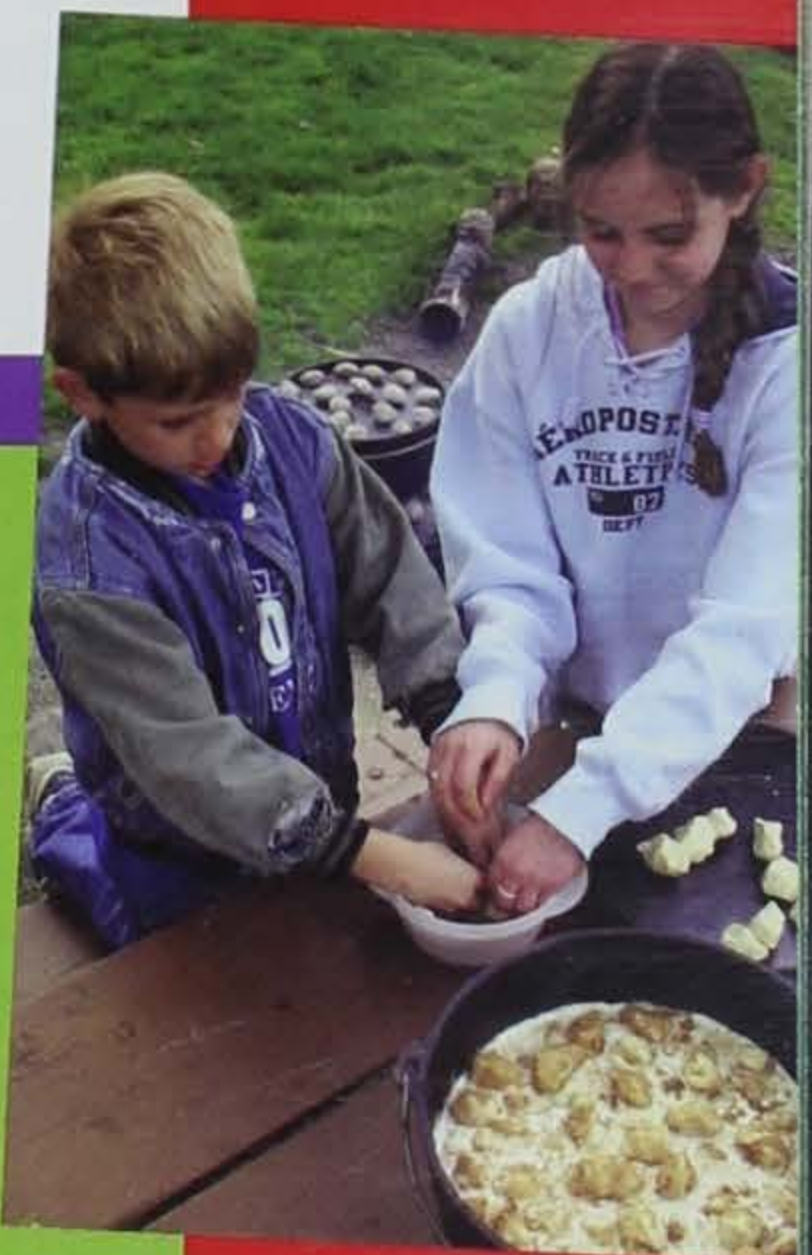
- 1 package frozen bread dough
- 1 pint heavy whipping cream
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- brown sugar and cinnamon mixture

Thaw frozen bread dough overnight and cut into chunks with scissors. Butter the bottom

of an 8-inch Dutch oven. Combine heavy whipping cream and 1/2 cup of brown sugar and pour into the greased Dutch oven. Place brown sugar and cinnamon mix in a shallow bowl and roll each chunk of bread dough into the mix. Place the bread dough in the Dutch oven layering but not too high because the dough will rise a lot in the oven. Bake for 20 minutes with 11 coals on top and five on the bottom.



Alex Foster



Bringing "GRASS" to the grasslands

Volunteers help save the Loess Hills prairie

by Michael Dhar

Swaths of burnt, felled and poisoned trees tattoo the earth in parts of western Iowa's Loess Hills. To the small armies of volunteers who swarm the hills there every June, it is a beautiful sight.

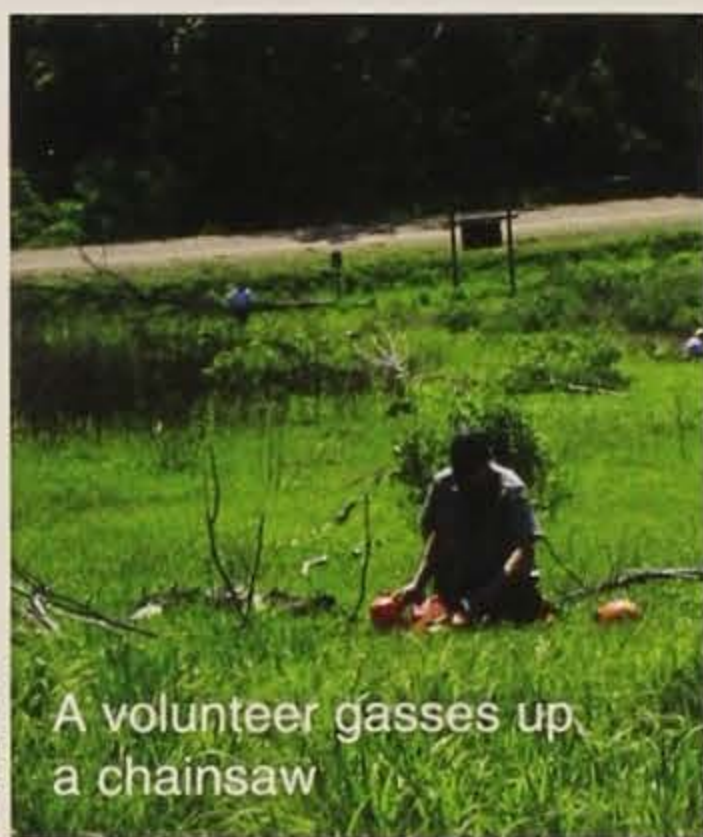
This summer marks 12 years since Jean and Chad Eells founded the "Great Race Against Shrubs and Shade (GRASS)," an annual push to save parts of the Loess prairie from invading woody plants. The event, held June 3, kicked off the 29th annual Loess Hills Prairie Seminar at the Sylvan Runkel State Preserve.

"It's really a pleasure to get up on a Friday morning with people who are really close to lunacy," Jean Eells said following last year's events. "We're clinging to, holding on to, buying time for a tiny stretch of prairie."

GRASS began as a two-person venture, when Jean and Chad Eells looked at old pictures of the Loess and saw that the prairie had shrunk, Jean Eells said. That loss reflects a statewide trend where 2 percent of Iowa grasslands disappear every year, she said. Today, only .1 percent of Iowa's original prairie remains, though it once covered 70 percent of the state.

"It's our own little way of trying to make a difference," Chad Eells said of the volunteer effort. "However small that may be."

The GRASS event now kicks off the Loess Hills Prairie Seminar



Michael Dhar

A volunteer gasses up a chainsaw



Ty Smedes

Loess Hills seminar participants hike the trails

every year, attracting as many as 90 saw-wielding warriors at a time. Last

year, more than 30 volunteers logged 126 hours clearing a section of prairie.

"It's pretty amazing," said 12-year-old volunteer Brendan Flannigan at last year's event. He pointed to a pickup truck-sized patch of cleared brush on the hills. "We went through and took all that out in about three minutes."

The Eells' effort fits naturally into the seminar at Sylvan Runkel, a three-day event dedicated to the study of Iowa's rare Loess Hills. Formed from up to 150-foot thick deposits of silt blown from the floodplain, the hills share their

features with only one other site on earth—in China. The unusual microclimate exhibits species, like yucca, not found for hundreds of miles.

This rare ecosystem warrants volunteer efforts, Jean Eells said, though she knows that

many of the invasives will grow back within a year. Hopefully, removing some trees will give the prairie enough access to sunlight to survive, she said.

"You turn an army loose with chainsaws and cutting tools, you can see landscape scale change," Jean Eells said. "The neat part for me is, from (county road) L12 from the north, you can see from the road the difference over time. And then I don't feel so bad about individual stems growing back."

For other Keepers of the Land volunteer events please visit:
www.keepersoftheland.org

Explore Iowa Parks

Grand Prize Winners 2004



Gene Huling & Rita Millard
First Place wins a year of free camping in Iowa state parks.



Roger & Teresa Finken
Second Place wins a \$250 camping package from Sportsman's Warehouse.



Dick & Elaine Leu
Third Place wins a camping coupon book.



Individual park brochures are available at the parks or can be downloaded at the web site address below.

www.exploreiowaparks.com

Contact the Department of Natural Resources for a copy of the *Iowa State Parks & Recreation Areas Guide*.

PARKS PROFILE

When Prairie Rose State Park was conceived some 70 years ago, it didn't take a committee or a task force or even much pondering, for that matter, to come up with a fitting name.

Maybe it was because the small, yet bustling village—with its busy general store, blacksmith shop and successful creamery—situated on the edge of what is now the south park entrance—shared the same name. More than likely, though, it originated from the rolling fields of prairie rose flowers that decorated the villa and dotted the rolling hillsides around the creamery.

Prairie Rose is considered one of Iowa's "newer" state parks, even though it was a product of the state's 25 Year Conservation Plan of 1933. From the onset, community interest in the park was high, however it wasn't until 1952 that the park site was actually chosen. Six years later, the construction of the dam started, and in 1962 the park was dedicated.

Situated among the rolling hills of southern Shelby County, Prairie Rose is also one of the more picturesque parks. Along with the many picnic areas with vistas of the beautiful 218-acre lake, two open shelters are available and may be reserved for a fee through the park office.

There are several native grass prairie areas, which provide

Prairie Rose

By Michelle Reinig
and Jan Curtis

State Park

Ty Smedes

OPPOSITE PAGE: It's no real secret how Prairie Rose State Park earned its name. BELOW: Fishing, boating and swimming are all popular activities on the scenic 218-acre lake.



Shannon Meister

excellent habitat for the pheasants. Along with them, you will see and hear many other types of native wildlife. Many different songbirds inhabit the park area along with deer, beaver, mink, muskrats, raccoons, herons and many others. Most are there year around, however spring and fall are especially exciting times with the waterfowl migration, when several species of ducks, snow and Canada geese, pelicans, and occasionally trumpeter swans, bald eagles and osprey stop for a break.

Some of the more popular water activities include boating, fishing and swimming. Prairie Rose is an artificial lake; boats with any-size motors can be used, but they must run at no-wake speed. Several dock slips are available for rent for pontoon

boats. Two paved boat ramps are available, one on the north side and one the south side.

Although many anglers are successful by boat, you don't need one to fish at Prairie Rose. Ample shoreline access and seven fishing jetties are available for the shore angler.

The lake supports a large number of bluegill, crappie and channel catfish. Large-mouth bass and flathead catfish

provide a challenge for the more serious angler. Two fish cleaning stations are available for the successful angler.

For campers, Prairie Rose offers 61 electric sites with scenic views of the lake. There are 36 nonelectric sites, some nestled in a wooded area. The shower building is located near the electric sites, with a large playground and ample parking nearby. Afternoons can be spent pitching horseshoes at one of two pits, either in the electric area or the picnic area near the nonelectric camp sites. The park also offers approximately seven miles of trails, an unsupervised beach with a playground and a new sand volleyball court.



DNR photo

PARKS PROFILE

Campground upgrades planned this year include adding more electric sites and upgrading to 50-amp service. New fire rings for each site and additional water hydrants will also be added. With camping becoming increasingly popular at the park, the upgrades will better serve visitors.

For those wanting a break from the peace and tranquility of Prairie Rose, nearby communities offer plenty of opportunities to fill an afternoon or even a day trip off-site. Approximately 12 miles east of the park, the Danish Villages of Elk Horn and Kimballton offer an educational

Roughly two-thirds of the campsites offer close views of the lake, providing convenient access to shoreline fishing.



Shannon Meister

interpretation of Danish history and culture. Several festivals and plenty of fun activities are scheduled throughout the year in both communities. Just eight miles south of the park is the quaint little town of Walnut, known for its antique persona. There, visitors can take a trip back in time while visiting the general store or grabbing a bite to eat at the local Pickle Barrel. Walnut hosts its annual antique walk in June, drawing thousands of people from across the country. Venture to Harlan, only eight miles north and west of the park for the annual Jammin' on the Square celebration held each year in August.

The Friends of Prairie Rose volunteers, work together to sponsor events and local fundraisers to increase environmental awareness and raise money for park improvements. Each year during free fishing weekend the

group hosts a kids' fishing day for anglers age 15 and under. Contests are held and prizes awarded. The group plans to build a wildlife blind near the east silt pond, providing opportunities to view the many different species that move through the area.

Those interested in joining the group should contact the park office. For a listing of other local events in and around Prairie Rose State Park, check out www.exploreshelbycounty.com

Whether you are just looking to kill a few hours or fill a week's vacation, Prairie Rose offers something for everyone. Come explore what Prairie Rose has to offer; it is truly the hidden gem of southwest Iowa.

Jan Curtis is the park ranger and Michelle Reinig is the park manager at Prairie Rose State Park.

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PRAIRIE ROSE STATE PARK AT A GLANCE

LOCATION: Located three miles south of Harlan in Shelby County.

PICKNICKING: There are a number of picnic areas overlooking the lake. There are two open picnic shelters with electrical outlets available for rent through the park office.

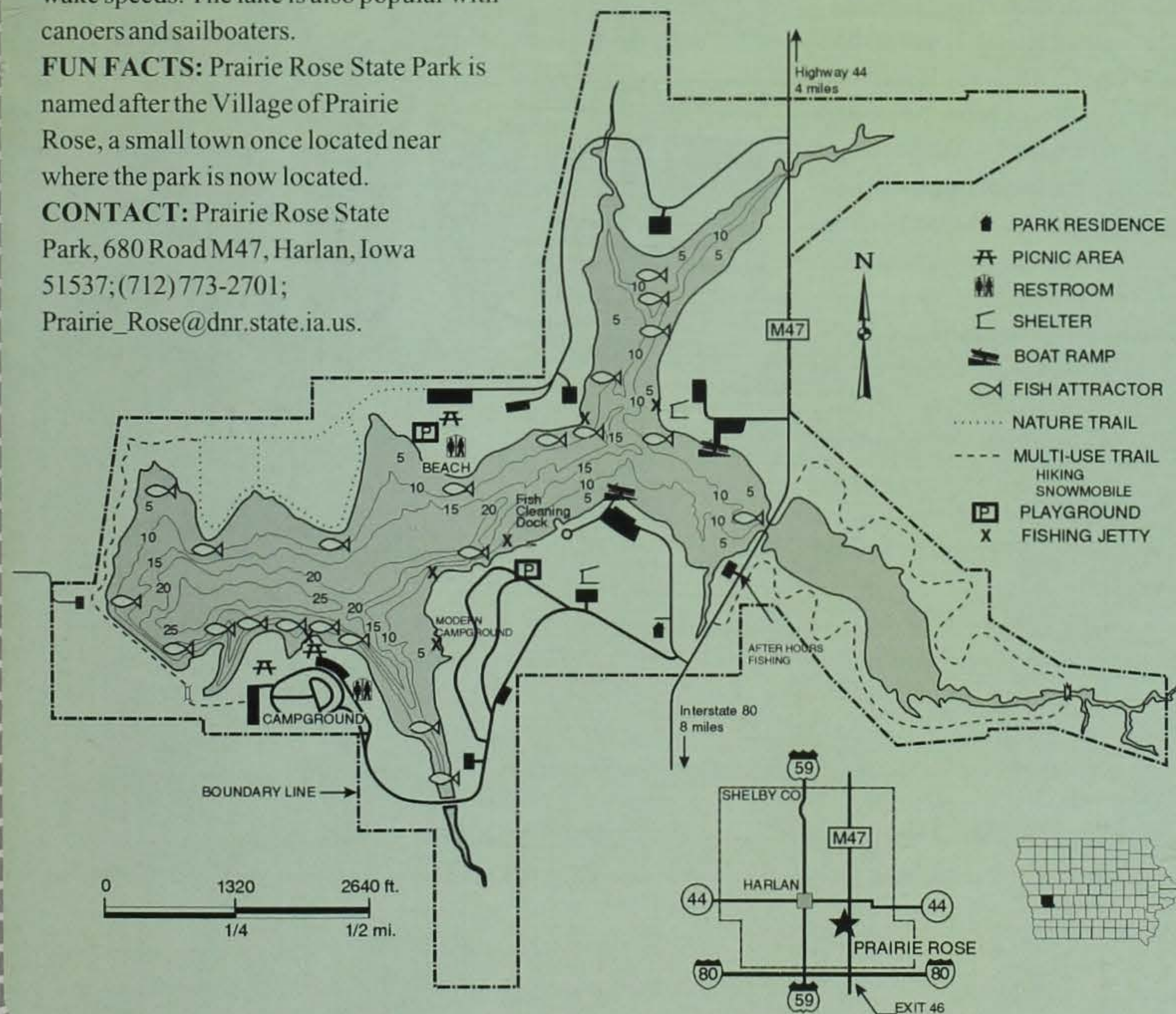
CAMPING: There are two separate campgrounds, one containing 61 electrical units with modern shower and rest room facilities. The other has 36 nonelectrical sites and a non-modern rest room facility.

TRAILS: The park offers approximately seven miles of trails, which explore the ecosystems within the park. The trails also provide opportunities to snowmobile and cross-country ski during the winter. A bridge now crosses the spillway connecting the campground area with the beach.

LAKE ACTIVITIES: A focal point of the park, the 218-acre lake provides excellent largemouth bass, channel catfish, bluegill and crappie fishing; six new fishing jetties have been installed. There is a beach and nearby playground for family fun. Boats with unlimited motor size can be operated at no-wake speeds. The lake is also popular with canoers and sailboaters.

FUN FACTS: Prairie Rose State Park is named after the Village of Prairie Rose, a small town once located near where the park is now located.

CONTACT: Prairie Rose State Park, 680 Road M47, Harlan, Iowa 51537; (712) 773-2701; Prairie_Rose@dnr.state.ia.us.



CONSERVATION UPDATE

Iowa Educators Recognized For Contribution To Youth And The Outdoors

Lyle Lundgren, a teacher at MOC-Floyd Valley High School in Orange City, is the 2005 recipient of the Brass Bluegill award. The award is presented each year to an instructor who has established an outstanding local program that exemplifies the goals of *Fish Iowa!*

Lundgren was among 30 educators who piloted the *Fish Iowa!* basic spincasting module in February 1990. At the time, Lundgren was teaching fifth and sixth grades. In 1992, he moved to MOC-Floyd Valley High School in Orange City where he has incorporated the program into his physical education curriculum. Lundgren has involved more than 3,200 students, and teaches field archery, orienteering, rock-climbing and rappelling. Freshmen and sophomores spend a half-day fishing at a nearby pond. Juniors and seniors visit Mill Creek State Park in O'Brien County where they not only fish, but also play softball, volleyball and "ultimate frisbee."

Lundgren also shares his enthusiasm and expertise outside the classroom. He uses *Fish Iowa!* with Boy Scouts on camping trips and to help them earn their fishing merit badge. He also has assisted with training workshops for other educators and youth leaders so they can teach the unit.

In 1992, Orv Otten, an

instructor at Northwestern College, in Orange City, began working with the DNR to provide training in *Fish Iowa!* for his students – future P.E. teachers. Otten uses it in his "Teaching of

Otten have taught the unit to more than 100 future teachers.

Lundgren received the Brass Bluegill award, along with a set of 24 spinning rods and reels donated by Pure Fishing of Spirit



Alan Foster

L to R: Barb Gigar, DNR aquatic education coordinator, with Brass Bluegill winner Lyle Lundgren and Fish Iowa! honoree Orv Otten

Sports" class. The same class includes units on how to teach cricket, eclipse ball, team handball, and other "unique" games. Since 1995, Lundgren has team taught the *Fish Iowa!* unit. Future teachers get practical, hands-on experience tying knots and casting. They also learn how to teach fishing and water safety to elementary and secondary students, from classroom to field experiences. The course is taught every other year. Lundgren and

Lake, at the May 12 meeting of the Natural Resource Commission, in Des Moines. Otten was also be recognized for his efforts to teach fishing and for introducing youth to the outdoors.

The Brass Bluegill award has been cosponsored by Pure Fishing and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources aquatic education program since 1997. *Fish Iowa!* strives to create safe anglers and responsible stewards of Iowa's aquatic resources.

Lake Of Three Fires Renovation Complete; Camp Sites And Cabins Now Open

The in-lake improvements at Lake of Three Fires are complete and the lake is filling. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources has invested \$3.2 million on lake and park improvements at Three Fires since 1997.

Largemouth bass and bluegills were stocked this spring and the DNR will stock channel catfish and crappies later this year.

All campsites and cabins are open for campers, but the shower building at the main campground is closed and will be replaced by a new shower building later this summer. Campers should use the shower building at the other campground. The equestrian campground is also open.

Work included installing

riprap to protect the shoreline, a new boat ramp, stake beds and other in-lake fish attracting structures and 33 structures in the watershed to prevent silt from entering the lake. A

newly constructed spillway will prevent carp from re-entering the lake. The fish population was renovated in the fall of 2004 and good fishing should return by late 2006. The dredging project removed 38,600 dump truck loads of silt from the lake.



Lake of Three Fires shelter under construction

The DNR has plans to install a large wetland in the summer of 2006 in the public hunting area above the lake, which will further protect the water quality of the lake and offer additional hunting opportunities in the area.

Foreign Visitors Make Stop In Iowa

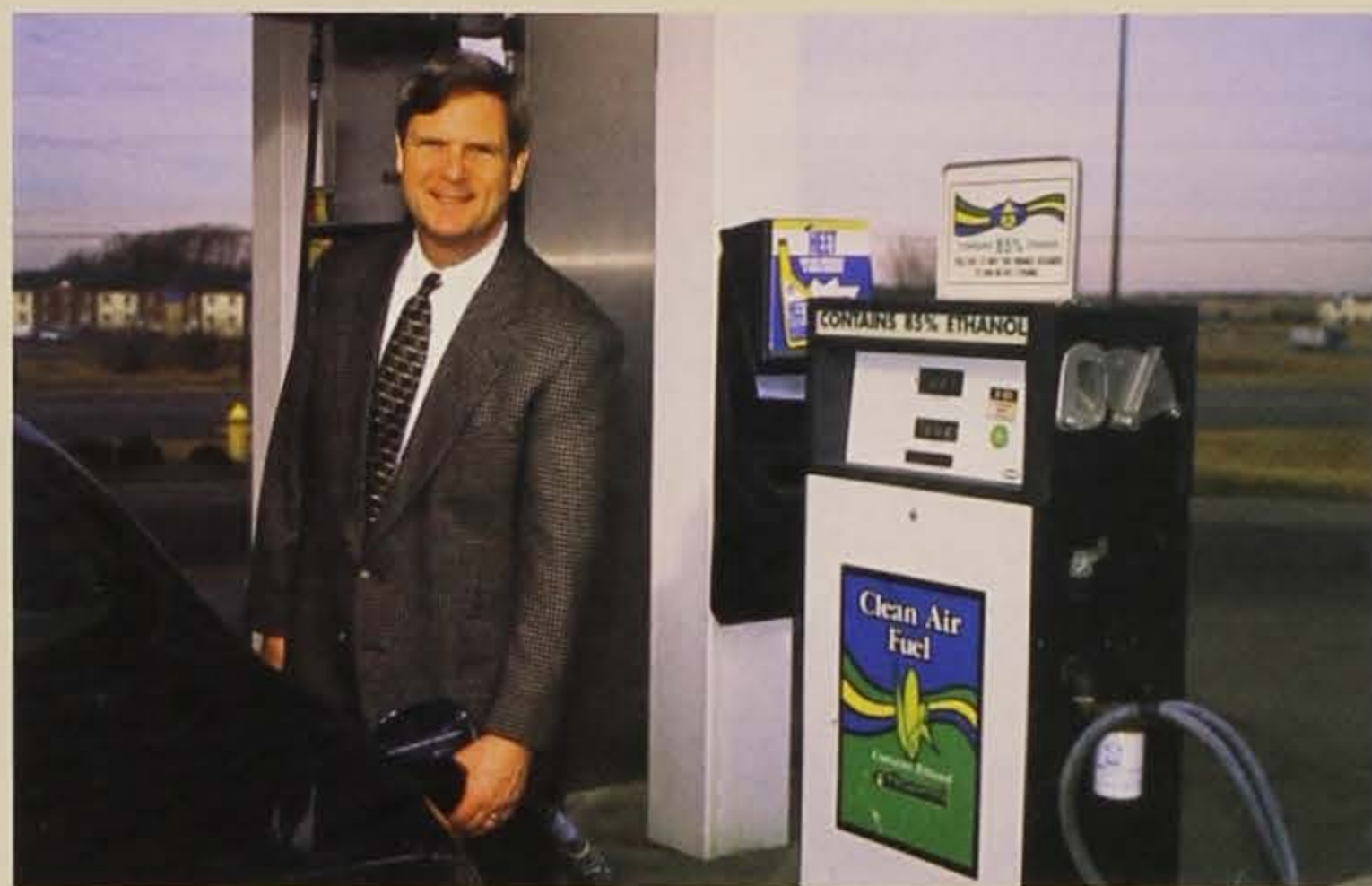
Four black-bellied whistling ducks were spotted on a pond north of West Lake Okobojo on April 18.

This tree-nesting duck is native to Mexico and its range is from the southern tip of Texas, Louisiana and Arizona and south.

This is the eighth sighting of the black-bellied whistling duck in Iowa on record.



CONSERVATION UPDATE



State Agencies To Become More "Efficient"

State agencies will become even more "efficient" under an order signed recently by Governor Tom Vilsack.

The Governor, in the executive order, directed state agencies to improve upon their current practices of conserving energy. Among other things, it requires at least 10 percent of agencies' electric consumption come from renewable energy resources; that they purchase alternative fuel or hybrid-electric vehicles for 100 percent of their non-law enforcement light duty fleet and increase their usage of bulk diesel fuel.

"When we use renewable fuels, we create economic opportunities for the farmers of our state, we return dollars to our local economies and strengthen communities," said Vilsack. "Renewable fuels also give families an opportunity to stretch their energy dollars because they are less expensive."

Since 1988, state facilities have invested more than \$51 million in energy efficiency improvements, yielding nearly \$100 million in savings. However, energy-saving technologies continue to improve, making energy efficiency a continuous effort, with many more millions of dollars in savings feasible. To ensure progress is made, all agencies will be required to submit quarterly reports on their progress.

State investment in cost-effective renewable energy sources and energy-efficient equipment will help provide stable, secure, long-term energy markets and the development of promising new technologies for the citizens of Iowa.

There are currently 23 government and retail sites offering E85 fuel for the 50,000 flexible fuel vehicles driven in Iowa.

Rural Odor Study Continues With Manure Application

State inspectors are continuing to test odor levels and responding to odor complaints as part of a comprehensive study to determine air quality near large animal feeding operations.

"With spring manure spreading underway, we are reminding Iowans of this effort," said DNR spokesman Brian Button. "Citizens can call 1-800-961-ODOR when unusually strong odors are present through the year." Radio ads will also promote the study.

Button said an inspector is sent to take readings as soon as possible.

"This isn't an enforcement effort. No action is taken against the source," he said. The study is used to collect data to help determine if any future odor-reducing measures are necessary.

The effort stems from state legislation in 2002 that called for comprehensive reviews of air quality near animal feeding operations. Hydrogen sulfide and ammonia gas monitoring also began in 2002.

State inspectors use handheld devices that dilute odorous air with seven to 15 parts filtered air, then record the results.

To report excessive agricultural related odors, call 1-800-961-ODOR.

Hamilton County Home To Six Trumpeter Swans

Hamilton County is the new home to six trumpeter swans released into the wild in mid-May.

The swans were released at Anderson Lake northeast of Jewell, Bjorkboda Marsh near Stanhope and Gordon's Marsh southwest of Webster City.

The event includes a 15-minute swan/wetland presentation, a unique opportunity to touch and view the swans up close, and a historic photo opportunity with the kids.

As the largest North American waterfowl, these all-white birds can weigh up to 36 pounds with an 8-foot wingspan. Trumpeter swans were once common in Iowa, but were gone from the state by the late 1800s. By the early 1930s, only 69 swans remained in the lower 48 states.

The trumpeter swans being

released are part of the DNR's statewide trumpeter swan restoration effort, with hopes they will help restore a wild free-flying population to Iowa. Since 1995, more than 500 free-flying trumpeter swans have been released into the wild statewide. The goal is to have 25 free-flying nesting pairs of trumpeter swans in Iowa by 2006. Public support is key to achieving this objective.

The releases were made possible thanks to the Hamilton County Conservation Board and to Sampson family. The Sampsons have been staunch supporters of the Iowa Trumpeter Swan Restoration Program in memory of David A. and Robert Luglan Sampson.

Additional releases have also occurred this spring in Carroll, Cerro Gordo, Ida, Winnebago and Wright counties.

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:

- August 11
Clear Lake
- September 8
Brushy Creek
- October 13
Northeast Iowa

Environmental Protection Commission:

- August 15
Des Moines
- September 19
Des Moines
- October 17
Des Moines

State Preserves Advisory Board:

- July 7-8
Mason City



Lowell Washburn

Trumpeter swans, like those pictured above, were released in mid-May at three locations in Hamilton County.

WARDEN'S DIARY



Debts of Gratitude . . .

by Chuck Humeston

They were a few simple sentences I read in an obituary, but to me, they spoke volumes.

"Berl Downing, 83, of Decorah, died at his home March 6, 2005. There will be no services or visitation. His body will be cremated, and interment will be at the USS Arizona Memorial, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii."

If you didn't know Berl, it would be just another obituary notice. Or, it might be just a statistic when you consider World War II veterans are passing away at the rate of a thousand a day.

But I knew Berl was a retired Iowa conservation officer. He was one of my training officers. Berl was another one of those guys who, as I've written before, I would look at and think, "No way will I ever know as much as this guy does." Little did I know at the time how much there was to his background. I quickly found someone whom I initially judged to be rough and gruff actually had a heart of gold.

Berl genuinely wanted me to succeed. He wasn't interested in telling me stories of past exploits on the job. He was more interested in equipping me with what I

needed to know to do the job myself. I've never forgotten that, and now that I'm in the position of training new officers, I try to emulate Berl's approach.

I had my first court case in Berl's area. I called him, and asked directions to the courthouse, and if there was anything I should know about the court there. He gave me the directions, and said, "You'll find out for yourself." I think it took the magistrate all of five minutes to find the guy guilty. When I came out of the courtroom Berl was waiting for me. "Did you win?" he asked.

"Yeah, I did." I was trying to be cool about it, but I think he could see I was excited. He just nodded his head, and broke out into that unforgettable smile he had. "Figured you would."

Nothing much seemed to bother Berl. I found out later why. Berl was a crew member aboard the USS. Maryland at Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941.

Maybe, like me, you've visited Pearl Harbor. When you enter the visitor center you pass by the exhibits. You see the photos of Battleship Row that day. You see pictures of the crews. You see their personal effects. You see photos of the attack. Then you enter an amphitheater, where, at least that day,

you are welcomed by a Pearl Harbor survivor. You watch a film, see the horrific explosion of the Arizona, see the aftermath.

After that you board a boat, and the Navy takes you to the Arizona Memorial. You immediately notice the boat is spotless, and the two sailors at the helm in crisp white uniforms are all business. You would think as you step off the deck onto the memorial with so many people there would be lots of chatter. It was complete silence.

You walk into the memorial, look down, and there is the Arizona lying beneath you. Suddenly, the history books you read become very real. It hits you this wasn't just a story you read, or a movie you watched. In another room, up on a wall, are all those names. That's what gets you. The names cover the wall. Hundreds of them. You realize they are still there in that ship beneath you.

But then, you see a section in the corner of some newer names. You get closer and discover they are the names of crew members who survived that day. You realize they went on to fight, survive the war and live their lives. But at the end, they returned to be with their comrades. I read that panel and I had to walk out because I was overwhelmed. I'm not a veteran, nor was I in the

military. The closest understanding I have to such comradeship is that of the law enforcement community. But reading it I felt "This is a holy place. I'm not even worthy to be here."

I walked back out into the memorial where Japanese tourists were dropping flowers onto the water above the Arizona. I went to the rail, and saw the drops of oils which still rise out of her hull to the surface where they slowly spread over the water. As others have described, they rise as if tears over that terrible day, and over those lost.

I've been fortunate to enter this profession when many officers like Berl were, and still are, working. They have served their country in places like Europe, the Pacific, Korea and Vietnam. I respect them, and I've learned from every one of them.

I think of them when I receive calls like I did from a young man who needed me to inspect his all-terrain vehicle so he could register it. I knocked on the door, and he answered it wearing a uniform. There were chevrons on the lapel. He had recently returned from Iraq.

"I have to train some guys that are going," he said. "I'm not sure if I have to go back, but I guess if I have to, I will."

He handed me the forms, and I signed them. "Sergeant, if you have any further problems with your registration, you call me."

"Don't you have to see my ATV?"

"No, if you have a problem, you call me."

He extended his hand and said, "Thank you."

I shook it thinking it was an honor just to stand in his house.

"Sir, thank you."

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