

January / February 2008

IOWA OUTDOORS

THE DNR'S MAGAZINE OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION

IN THIS ISSUE:
A CASE OF WHO DONE IT
ARE MARAUDING COYOTES TO BLAME FOR SHEEP LOSSES?

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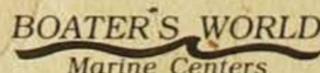
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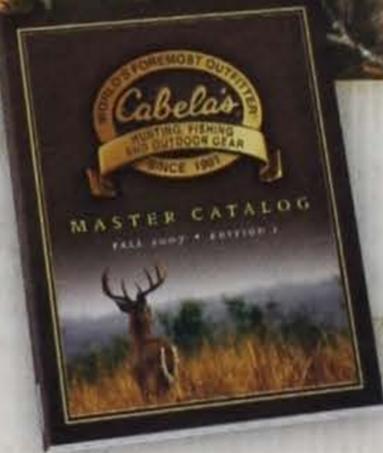
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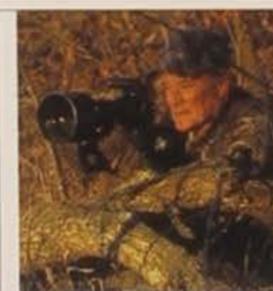
ERIC EARNHARDT

Eric is a recent graduate of Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pa., where he majored in English literature. He and wife Amber returned to Ohio after completing a year of AmeriCorp volunteerism in Iowa's state parks doing trail work and land management in western Iowa and cleaning flood debris from Maquoketa Caves State Park in eastern Iowa. Amber now serves a second AmeriCorps term for Rural Action, Inc., an Ohio based, non-profit environmental group. Eric wishes to pursue a career in teaching and writing.



SANDRA FLAHIVE

With essays in *Newsweek*, *Reader's Digest*, *The Iowan* and more, she lives in Des Moines, but her heart and soul dwell in a rustic cabin in a southern Iowa forest. She purchased this bit of paradise nearly 20 years ago and spends as much time as possible there, sitting on the porch swing, looking out at the pond and the timber, writing...and dreaming.



ROGER HILL has photographed wildlife and nature since 1962 when he started hunting big game from Iowa to Alaska. His passion is photographing Iowa game. His work

is published in countless state and national magazines. Roger lives on a farm with his wife, Marcia, near Roland.



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DNR MISSION

To conserve and enhance our natural resources in cooperation with individuals and organizations to improve the quality of life for Iowans and ensure a legacy for future generations.

EDITORIAL MISSION

We strive to open the door to the beauty and uniqueness of Iowa's natural resources, inspire people to get outside and experience Iowa and to motivate outdoor-minded citizens to understand and care for our natural resources.

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The Keepers of the Land program matches volunteers with natural resource service needs statewide. Give back to Iowa's lands, waters and skies. Call 515-281-0878 to match your interests with needs or visit www.keepersoftheland.org.

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Charitable giving of land, funds, and goods and services greatly enhances Iowa's outdoor living. Contact: Diane Ford-Shivers at 515-281-6341.

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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Iowa Knows Rivers.

"Everybody needs a river, one that they can call their own. Treat her right and she'll deliver a peace of mind that's seldom known."

—Curt Carter and Tom Connelley

Iowa knows rivers and streams. Our state has more than 24,000 miles of perennial running water, which is more shoreline than all of the ocean front on the Pacific and Atlantic coasts, combined. Many of us have our unique river experiences, whether on a canoe or kayak float, shore fishing, finding a cool swimming hole on a warm summer day, or my own family's favorite, "river walking" (hiking up a stretch of a shallow river.) Rivers and streams and their corridors are some of the wildest natural areas in Iowa, and an important habitat and travel corridor for many wildlife species.

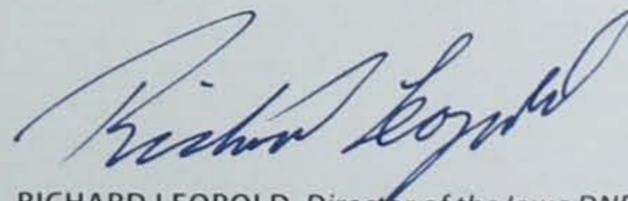
A great deal of policy activity lately has focused on running waters. New and improved water quality standards will better help protect aquatic life and recreational uses. The DNR's fledgling water-trails program is forming coordinated efforts between the state, county conservation boards, cities and other entities. Greenbelt and habitat-corridor efforts continue to spring up around the state.

One of our state's monikers, "the land between two rivers," refers to the Mississippi and Missouri rivers that form Iowa's eastern and western borders. There are major regional planning efforts with surrounding states focusing on ecological rehabilitation of oxbow lakes and river-bottom wetlands, protection of endangered species such as Higgins-eye mussels and the pallid sturgeon, work on nutrient overloading leading to Gulf of Mexico hypoxia, and managing droughts or floods.

Of course, natural resource conservation and recreation are not the only uses of these border rivers. Major electrical-generation power plants use these rivers for cooling waters. Transportation of barges on the Mississippi River is important to our exportation of commodities. Agricultural irrigation takes place on the southern portion of our Missouri River border. These uses are historical and usually compatible with natural resource management goals.

That isn't to say there aren't challenges with sometimes competing uses, but when we focus on solutions rather than excuses, we tend to agree on common-sense management. But perhaps more important than our work with other competing interests, and other state and federal partners, I believe Iowans are becoming more engaged with their backyard rivers and streams. So get out there, take a float, grab a fishpole, or just sit by a river (or in one) and think calm thoughts. Most areas are devoid of the sound of highways or the sight of power-lines and buildings. You could almost believe a bison was peering at you over the bank from century's past.




RICHARD LEOPOLD, Director of the Iowa DNR

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BY LOWELL WASHBURN PHOTOS BY ROGER HILL

ABOUT THIS PHOTO

Brutal wind chills from -9° to 3° F had DNR photographer Lowell Washburn running to revive his failing camera with heat from his car engine. "You'd press the shutter and it wouldn't go and digital readings wouldn't appear. My camera lives in the combat zone, not the playhouse, but it just couldn't handle the cold," he says. Out from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m., he used three camera batteries. The wind was cracking at 20 miles per hour. "That's what made it cold. But I like the snow and bitter cold." See his high-flying images on pg. 30.

ABOUT THE COVER

Every outdoorsperson knows to expect the unexpected—that the next state record bass, trophy whitetailed buck or elusive bobcat may be lurking just around the corner. It's no different for photographers, as told by noted Iowa wildlife photographer Roger Hill. The Roland native had just settled in his ground blind for a morning twilight photo shoot of one of his favorite subjects—the ringneck pheasant—when a cottontail rabbit appeared from a nearby buffer strip. Not far behind was this adult coyote, who upon catching wind of a favorite meal, followed the scent trail right to Hill's waiting 400 millimeter camera lens. Hill captured one close-up frame of the wily animal before it spooked.



DEPARTMENTS

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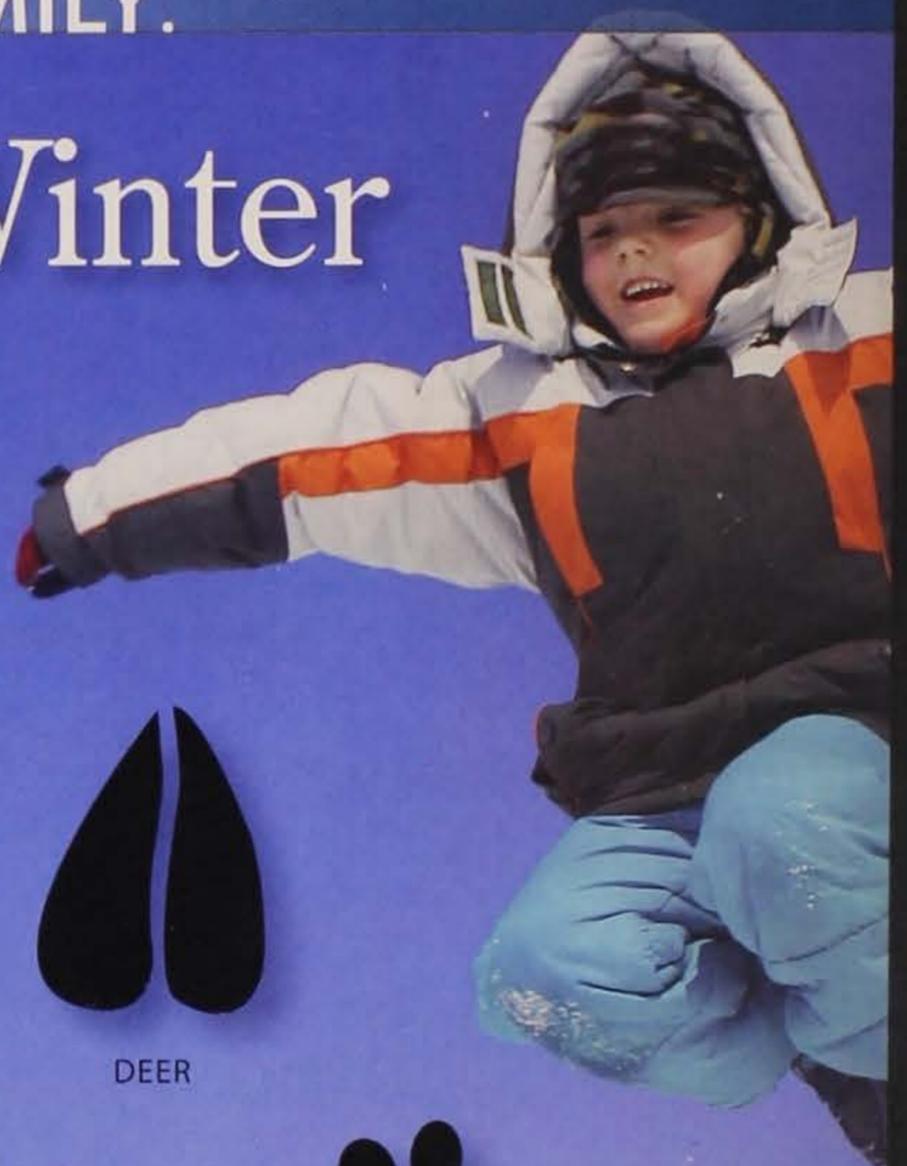
66 FLORA & FAUNA

Meet an animal with eyes so sharp it could read a newspaper from 100 yards away...could it read, of course.



ACTIVITIES, TIPS AND EVENTS
FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY.

Jump Into Winter Tracking



Pheasant wing print



Pheasant tracks



DEER



PHEASANT



BOBCAT

Kids love discovery, and what better way to feed that need than by turning snowbound winter days into a fun family or couple's outing. Better yet, set aside time for regular outdoor jaunts to create a memorable family tradition.

To a child, identifying and following a set of animal tracks is a giant treasure hunt. The mere thought that a white-tailed deer, wild turkey, or maybe an elusive bobcat walked nearby connects your child to the outdoors for years to come. Spending a sun-drenched, crisp winter afternoon in Iowa's great outdoors is a sure cure for Cabin Fever, and offers exercise in an often sedentary season. Plus, your kids or significant other will gain an

appreciation for an amazing season too many miss while confined inside four walls.

Any season is a good time to look for tracks, but winter and spring are prime. Snow and soft ground create easy-to-find, distinctive imprints. Busy families don't have to travel great distances or spend money to enjoy this winter activity. A local park, family farm, river bottom or backyard will always show signs of life. Focus on well-used animal trails, park beaches or other dry, sandy areas, a river or pond bank, or any muddy area.

Turn your tracking adventure into a winter shed-antler or spring morel hunt for added fun. Print a few wildlife



RED FOX



RABBIT



TURKEY



COYOTE

track guides off the Internet, and make a game out of who can find the most tracks. Make it a “teachable moment” by explaining how wildlife survive Iowa’s sometimes brutal winters and the importance of habitat. Take along a few plastic grocery sacks and make it a practice to pick up litter along the way. Those environmental messages will carry over into future forays.

The next time you venture into Iowa’s greatest outdoor classroom, take a child. It’s cheap entertainment, a great learning experience and an opportunity to teach woodsmanship, the love of nature and environmental stewardship. It may just become a memorable family ritual.

WHAT YOU NEED

- Appropriate seasonal clothes, including comfortable walking shoes or boots and warm socks
- Sacks for trash and found treasures
- Walking stick
- Water and snacks (be sure to carry out your trash)
- Binoculars
- Camera
- Journal for making notes and recording experiences
- Field guides to animals and their tracks
- Thermos of hot cocoa, cider, coffee or tea

PHOTOGRAPHS BY TERRY WATSON/ISTOCKPHOTO.COM; TRACK IMAGES BY ROBERT HILL

TOGETHER ~ HALF A DAY ON \$50

DIY CAMP BOX MAKEOVER



Transform your cluttered camp box into an organized and functional campside "must-have." For a great winter do-it-yourself project, build this custom camp kitchen to keep camp cookery handy and ready to go. Well-organized compartments make finding needed items a snap. The camp kitchen doubles as a perfect off-season storage unit ready for future outings.

Place the camp kitchen on picnic tables, so items are within easy reach. The hinged flaps fold over for easy access to interior items. The bottom front panel is finished with salvaged kitchen counter laminate to make a convenient and easy-to-clean food preparation area. Load side handles with dishtowels and place paper towels on the side holder for quick cleanups and washing.

THE PROBLEM

Using a large box for camp cookery gear presents problems—small items settle to the bottom, creating endless rummaging, unpacking and repacking. Contents constantly shift and space is wasted.

THE SOLUTION

Build the camp kitchen to custom fit cargo areas for upright storage in station wagons, SUVs and minivans. Design the unit to fit your cooking gear. Small amounts of scrap, $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch plywood and hardware can create a kitchen away from home for tailgating, camping, picnics and hunting and fishing trips.



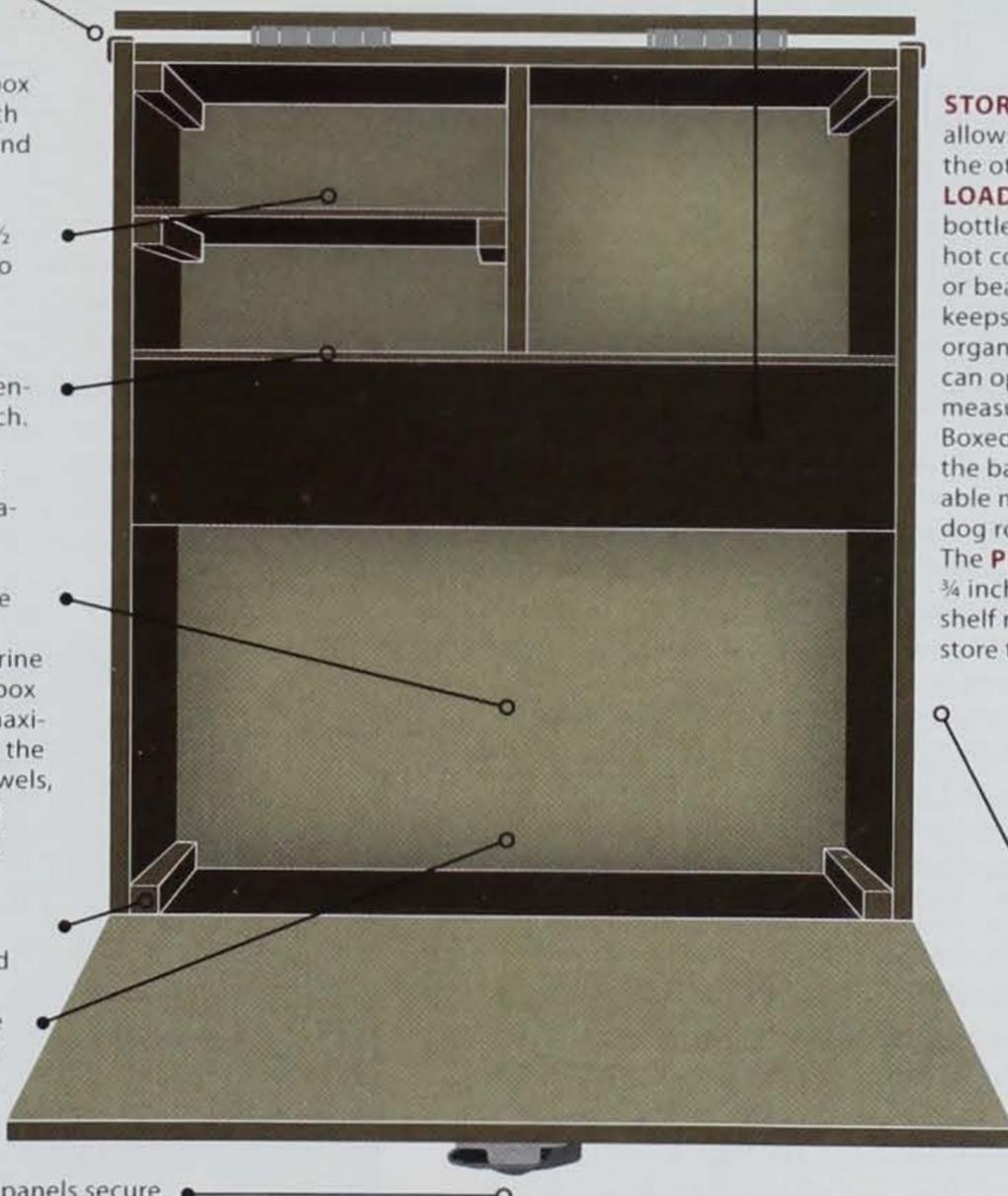
Use wood molding for top edges. Finish with wood stain.



DIMENSIONS

Measure your vehicle to build box accordingly. As shown, $13\frac{1}{2}$ inch exterior depth, 23 inch width, and 26 inch height.

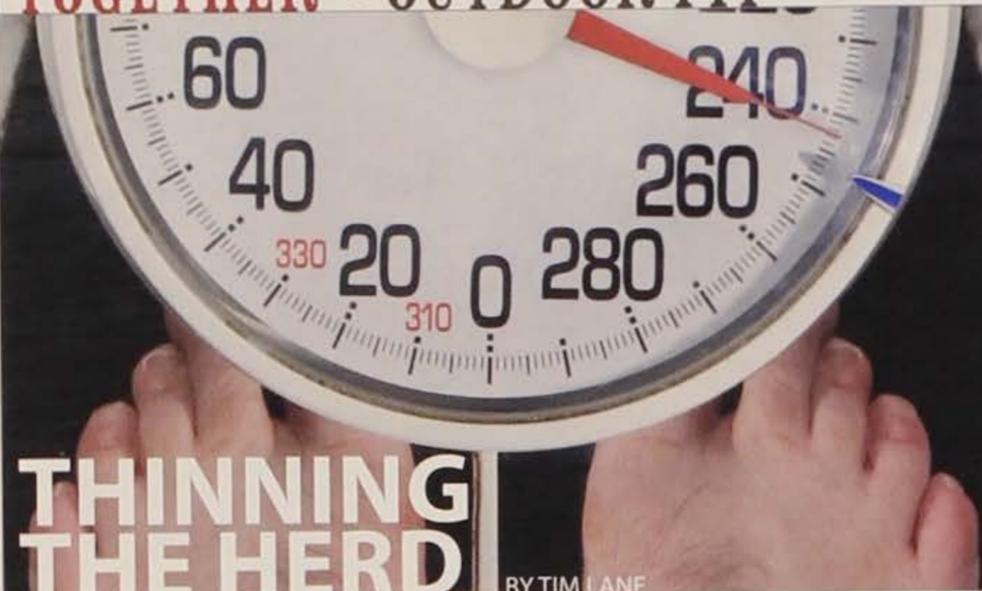
- Plate and cup shelves are $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide. Construct height to custom fit cup or mug heights (4 inches shown here.)
- Shelves and drawers keep utensils, cups and plates at easy reach.
- Utensil drawer front is $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick wood. Drawer interior measures $11 \times 20\frac{1}{4}$ inches.
- Store a large plastic tub inside for hot dishwater for post-meal cleanups. A small plastic margarine container makes a good matchbox holder. Nest pots and pans to maximize storage space and store in the plastic tub. A tablecloth, dishtowels, sponges and hot pads can keep metal pans from rattling during transport.
- Reinforce interior corners of box frame with $\frac{3}{4} \times \frac{3}{4}$ inch wood
- $11\frac{1}{4}$ inch tall bottom storage section is large enough to store camp stove griddles.



STORAGE for two coffee pots allows one for the morning brew, the other to heat up dishwater. **LOAD UP** the interior with a small bottle of dish detergent, coffee, hot cocoa and cans of soup or beans. **UTENSIL DRAWER** keeps spoons, forks and knives organized with added corkscrew, can opener, spatulas, tongs and measuring spoons as handy tools. Boxed aluminum foil fits nicely in the back of the drawer. Adjustable metal marshmallow and hot dog roasting sticks fit inside, too. The **PLATE SHELF** sits atop a $\frac{3}{4} \times \frac{3}{4}$ inch runner of wood, allowing shelf removal for cleaning or to store tall items.



- Heavy-duty latch keeps front panels secure.



THINNING THE HERD

BY TIM LANE

Last March I wrote about a friend from Florida who found hunting in Iowa more and more difficult. Not because the deer were any smarter, but because his shape was changing, that is, getting larger. After reading about himself, he decided to do two things...be a bit more guarded in what he said to me and mount a campaign to lose weight and get fit. The good news is that Curt applied for a hunting tag and will continue boosting the Iowa economy while attempting to thin the deer population.

In his e-mail, Curt was cataloging his gear, noting how much his gun, ammo, boots, knife, etc weighed. At a tipping point, Curt was looking at every ounce of weight and contemplating how it would impact his roaming around the ridges of Madison County. I was impressed with the detail of his list and how he was concerned with the ounces being allocated to extra shells. This is the type of obsession I usually associate with elite cyclists. "Now if I put helium in my tires will my bike be lighter?"

But the point is well taken. Small items do add up. All too often at this time of year people think too big! They resolve to turn over new trees...not new leaves. May I suggest you stick to the leaves or even a single leaf? One pound of fat is created by adding 3,500 calories to your system. If you were to burn 250 extra calories a day (two 15 minute walks) and decrease your caloric input by the same amount (one soda or candy bar) you would lose one pound in one week.

A thousand years ago the tribes of eastern Africa had a proverb that went: "Those who walk together strengthen each other." That applies to Iowa today just as well. My number one health recommendation for you in 2008 is to gather your family, friends or co-workers together and form a Lighten Up Iowa team. This program started out to change the shape of our state and is currently impacting the nation through Lighten Up America.

I think it would be great if several hunters would get together and work on thinning the hunter population. This year the Lighten Up Iowa program lasts 100 days. The staff at Lighten Up Iowa will provide you with a ton of supportive material and advice, but it is no secret that it is the synergy that comes from your team that leads to success in becoming more fit and developing healthier behaviors.

The original column on Curt impacted at least one reader, that being Curt. By participating in Lighten Up Iowa this year you can impact yours. Please let me know how it goes. I will let Curt know what he started.

Get information on Lighten Up Iowa at lightenupiowa.org

Let me know how it goes at tlaneidph@state.ia.us. May you have a happy, healthy New Year.

Tim Lane is the fitness consultant with the Iowa Department of Public Health. He is also a marathoner, former director of the National Ski Patrol, climber, volleyball coach and cyclist. He has cycled across America once and Iowa 25 times. He's a regular participant in RAGBRAI and developed the Ride Right safety program. Tim also helped design and promotes Lighten Up Iowa.

But Why?

Helping adults answer children's nature questions

BY A. JAY WINTER

A. Jay Winter educates up to 20,000 Iowa children each year as the DNR's training specialist at the Springbrook Conservation Education Center.

Why are trees crooked?

- MINDY, Age 6

Explain to your child that tree size, shape and appearance can be affected by the surroundings. All trees are unique and can change appearance throughout their life.

Environmental conditions from availability of sunlight, nutrients and water to soil compaction, disease, competition and wind can affect how trees grow. Not only do they affect appearance, they also greatly impact tree health.

Light availability is often the biggest factor affecting appearance, and many times explains why trees are bent or crooked. Sunlight must reach leaves for trees to complete the process of photosynthesis—the conversion of carbon dioxide and water to glucose (sugar), water and oxygen. The process allows the tree to store energy and encourages growth toward more sunlight. This usually produces crooked trees, as they grow toward the highest concentration of sunlight to increase food availability. Photosynthesis also benefits us by producing oxygen (which we breathe) and absorbing carbon dioxide (which we expel).

Next time you are outdoors look at a tree and see if it is perfectly straight. Check what environmental conditions the tree is exposed to. With a little observation and thought, I'll bet you can determine why it grew the way it did.



SCALE PHOTO BY ISTOCKPHOTO.COM; TREE PHOTO BY A. JAY WINTER

IT TAKES MORE ENERGY TO REHEAT A HOME THAN IT SAVES BY **SETTING BACK THE THERMOSTAT.**

It's a common myth devoid of, well, cold hard facts. Gas and fuel-oil furnaces quickly reheat homes back to the comfort zone, says Curt Klaassen with the Iowa Energy Center in Ankeny. Simply put, lowering thermostats during the day or overnight cuts heating bills and greenhouse gas emissions.

"People feel furnaces have to work too hard to rebuild heat in the morning," but furnaces are most efficient when operating continuously for a stretch rather than cycling on and off, he says. The fuel spent warming the house back to 68 degrees is roughly equivalent to the fuel saved as the temperature drops to the lower setting. The real savings occurs as the house sits at the lowest setting.

Klaassen says for every degree setback over an eight hour period, you save 1 percent of your heating costs. Set a thermostat down five degrees from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. and you'll save 5 percent in heating energy, or 10 percent for a 10 degree setback. Some energy experts even recommend turning the heat down to 55 degrees at night and when your not home (CAUTION: Any lower, and pipes may freeze).

So avoid high bills by setting back thermostats. Programmable thermostats can help. There are different kinds; simple models allow only one setback, others offer auto setbacks for morning, afternoon, evening and night. "If you don't use it you don't save from it. Some can be complicated, so be sure to learn how to use it," advises Klaassen, who notes some people purchase, then fail to use them.



ASK THE EXPERT —Bud in Decorah asks "I bought an old 12-gauge shotgun. How do I determine the choke?"



A choke is the tapered constriction of a gun barrel's bore at the muzzle end. Choke size affects shooting pattern and effective range. The greater the restriction—full or super full

choke—the tighter the pattern and greater the shot range.

The amount of choke is measured by subtracting the inside diameter of the choke from the bore diameter. If you're serious about knowing the choke size, visit a gunsmith for professional measurement, or buy a micrometer and do it yourself.

Otherwise, there are quick field tests that will give you a good idea of what choke is in your gun. One way is by patterning your gun. Take a large piece of paper, draw a 30-inch circle in the middle and fire one shot at 40 yards at the center of the circle. If you are shooting full choke, 70 percent of the pattern, or pellet impact, will be within the circle. At 60 percent, you're shooting modified, and at 50 percent, improved cylinder. Not only will you know what choke you have, but also how the gun patterns.

If you have an older, fixed choke 12-gauge, try this quick test. Remove the barrel from the unloaded gun and insert an upright penny in the muzzle end. A full choke barrel will accept the penny just below the horizontal base of the Lincoln Memorial Building. Modified barrels will take the penny to the base line, and slightly above the base line on improved cylinders.

Keep in mind, different gun manufacturers may have slightly different choke standards, so for an exact determination, check with your local gunsmith.

→ GOT A QUESTION? Send to: ASKTHEEXPERTS@DNR.IOWA.GOV ←

OUTDOOR SKILLS

TIPS, TRICKS, HOW-TO AND MUST-KNOWS TO ENHANCE YOUR OUTDOOR FUN

KEEPING IT DRY ≡

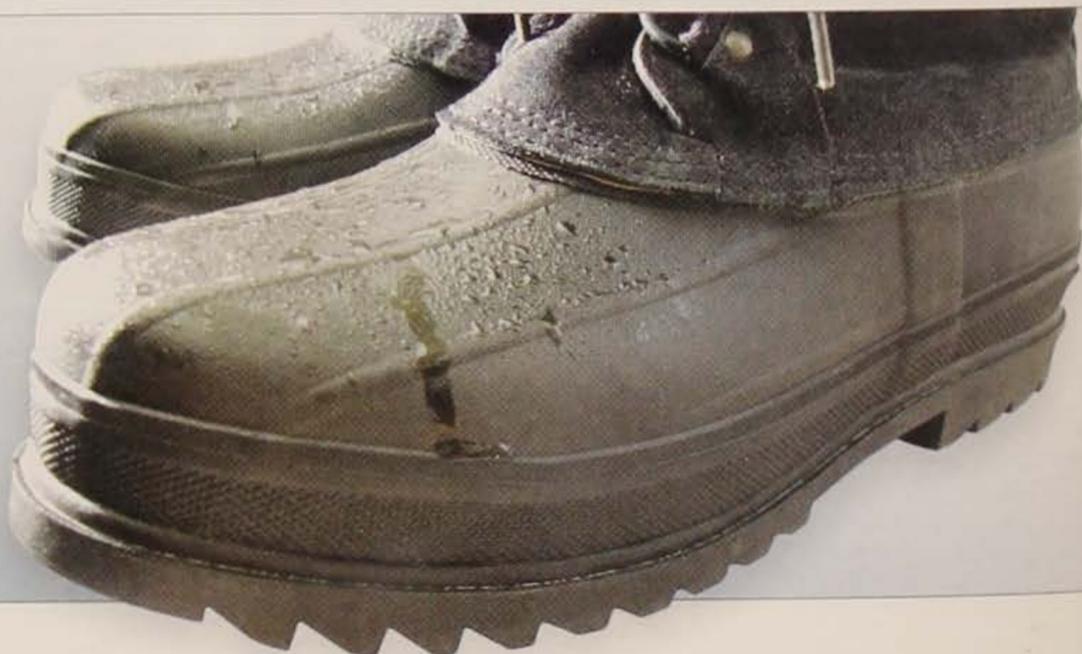
Nothing dampens a muzzleloader hunt faster than wet powder. To keep rain and snow from fouling your firepower, crisscross two short pieces of electrician tape across the muzzle, and another around the barrel to secure the first two. This will prevent moisture running down your barrel without affecting your shot. Proper cleaning will remove the tape residue at the end of the day.



« LIFE SAVING ICE PICKS Falling though ice is one of the greatest dangers facing winter fun seekers, especially ice anglers and snowmobilers. Getting out of the hole and to safe, dry land quickly is critical. Give yourself the edge with inexpensive, homemade ice picks. Cut two 6-inch handles from an old broom handle or 1-inch wood dowel. Pre-drill a small hole in each end. Drive a 16-penny nail into one hole on each handle, and a small eye bolt into the other two. Use a hacksaw to remove nail heads. Tie together with a 4- to 6-foot piece of rope. Wear them around your neck for a handy tool to pull yourself to safety.

PUT AN END TO WET FEET! »

Damp socks make for cold feet and can spoil a winter expedition in short order. Keep feet warm by creating a vapor barrier to trap and prevent foot moisture from soaking socks and boot liners. Place plastic bread bags over a synthetic wicking sock, such as polypropylene, then add a wool sock as the insulating outer layer.

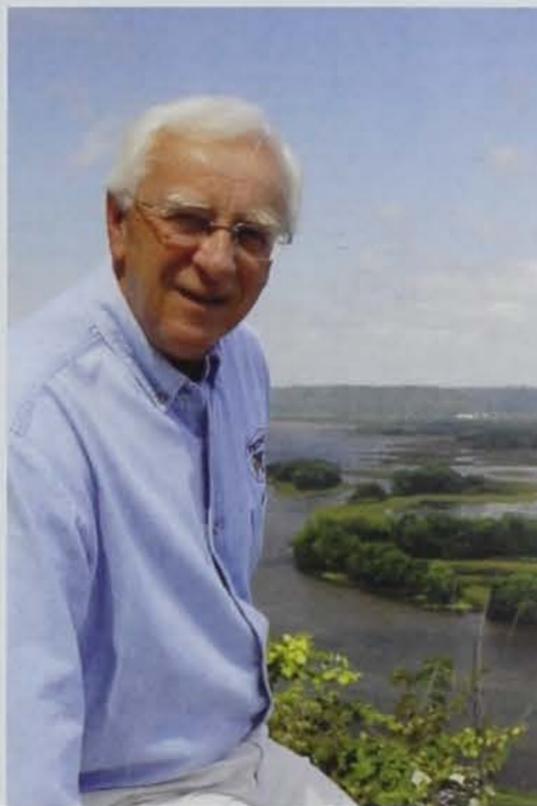


LEADING A CHARGE IN LANSING

JOHN VERDON, LANSING

Lansing native returns home to help the Mighty Mississippi

While the Friends of Pool 9 encourages others to "leave no trace," the group is leaving its own mark on the Mississippi River. Headed by Lansing native John Verdon, the group defends the 31-mile long, three-mile wide Pool 9. After 38 years of teaching science, Verdon retired to Lansing in 2002 and was soon organizing river and beach cleanups. Seeing government agencies needed help to restore beaches, Verdon and friends offered their help. That small group quickly grew into the 350-member Friends of Pool 9, encompassing eight Iowa and Wisconsin communities and federal, state and county agencies. "We can accomplish much more working together to address concerns along the pool," Verdon says. While the group helps with eagle counts and hosts the annual Fall Birding Festival during November migration, it keeps true to its roots in cleanup and beaches. Its "island nourishment" program adds sand to beaches to reduce erosion. Its signs, garbage bags and safely-located fire rings motivate beach-goers to "Leave No Trace." As the group's efforts grow, so does Verdon's concept of locals working with agencies to manage resources—he says friends groups are forming in Pools 8 and 10. He also lobbied in Washington, D.C. with wife Phyllis on behalf of the entire Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. "John's so effective at reaching out to the community and getting them to look at the river as a whole," says Tim Loose, a refuge wildlife specialist. "It's a wonderful example of what a community can do when they have the right leadership."



L to R: Kevin Pape, Greg Hoversten, Jim Redmond and Zac Chwirka

STANDING UP FOR STONE

FRIENDS OF STONE PARK, SIOUX CITY

Siouxland residents come together to give local landmark a voice

A hidden gem nestled away on Sioux City's north side, Stone State Park has welcomed people through its gates for more than 70 years. That includes Greg Hoversten and Zac Chwirka, who grew up hiking, camping and riding horses through the park, and have since led the Friends of Stone Park. Today, with about 50 other members, they organize park cleanups, prairie restoration and other volunteer activities. After forming in 2003, the group quickly adopted a highway that runs through the park and launched fundraising efforts. "We try to get more people involved in the park and to secure funds to improve the park," says Chwirka. Those efforts helped add 60 acres to the park and significantly improved the 50-year-old campground. The group worked to expand the campground, upgrade its facilities, build two log cabins and convert a picnic area to a youth camp. Following the \$237,000 project, park attendance has increased. "These improvements wouldn't have happened without the friends group," says Kevin Pape, Stone State Park ranger. The friends group also serves as a voice for the park. "There's more and more development around the Sioux City area, and it's really important that development and growth are balanced for the park and the city," Hoversten says. That includes successfully lobbying the city council to reconsider placing a communications tower adjacent to the park, which would detract from the park's natural beauty. "People in Siouxland really enjoy Stone Park," says Hoversten. "Recruiting for our group is not difficult."

LEOPOLD'S BURLINGTON RETURN

LEOPOLD HERITAGE GROUP, BURLINGTON

Burlingtonians reintroduce neighbors to ideas of conservationist Aldo Leopold

As the wilderness that Aldo Leopold traipsed in his childhood has vanished, so has his hometown's knowledge of the conservationist. Leopold, born in Burlington in 1887, is known worldwide for his writings on ecology, forestry and wildlife. But few Burlington residents today know of the local son's efforts. To reacquaint them, Randy Miller and Jerry and Lois Rigdon founded the Leopold Heritage Group in 2004. "The Leopold family home is still here, but there's nothing significant in the community that indicates his connection to the town," says Miller. The three launched the group to create awareness of Leopold's work and promote his philosophy of appreciation for the land. "We're trying to change people's hearts and minds, one person at a time, with the hope of changing many," says Jerry. About 60 members promote Leopold's ethic by inviting historians to speak, organizing forums and, with other groups' help, giving 700 copies of Leopold's *Sand County Almanac* to students. The group is also working to build a Leopold Learning Center and formally devote April in Iowa to Leopold. "An Aldo Leopold Month would build an awareness of his philosophy and ethic, because they're still relevant today. Iowans can benefit from knowing Aldo Leopold and what he's written," says Lois. In the spirit of Leopold, the group looks to get involved in prairie restoration, hiking and biking trails, and energy conservation. "We need to get people to understand we need to preserve and protect what still exists in nature," Miller says.

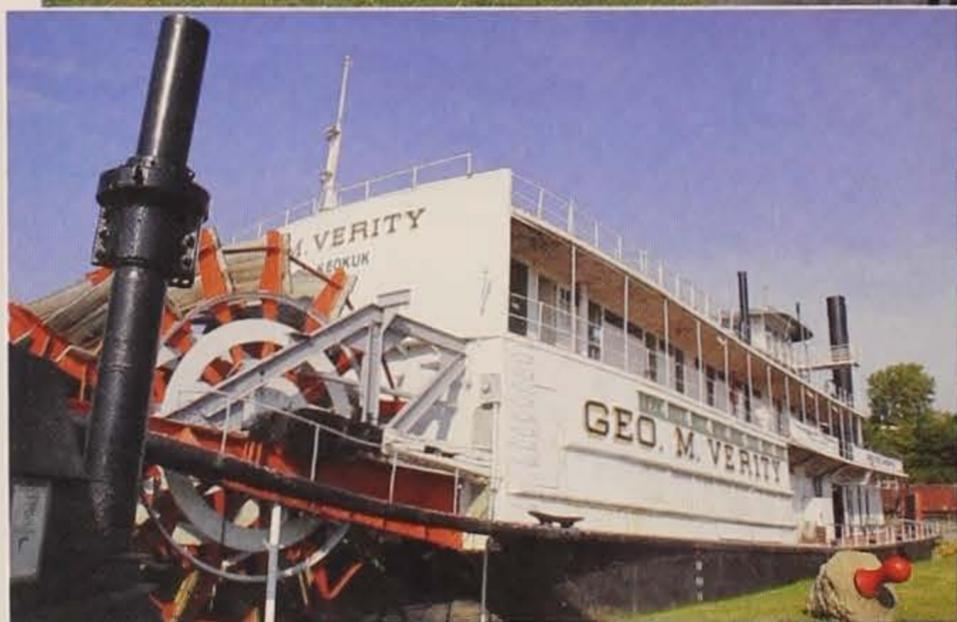


Randy Miller, Lois and Jerry Rigdon

South for the Winter

BY JENNIFER WILSON PHOTOS BY CLAY SMITH

It's always a couple of degrees warmer in southeast Iowa, so warm up with eagles, ducks and a fancy bed in Lee County this winter.



Marilyn Engler wants you to know a little about the southeastern Iowa town of Keokuk.

First, says this tour guide aboard the Keokuk River Museum on the sternwheel steamboat George M. Verity, Mark Twain once lived here.

Secondly, the town of about 11,000 is named for Keokuck, chief of the Sauk and Fox tribe after Black Hawk. (Engler will tell you, if you're not delicate, that at first Keokuck's head wasn't with him when he was buried here).

Also, adds Engler, hands clasped behind her back, a white blouse and black skirt setting off her captain's cap, Keokuk was once larger than St. Louis, and known as the Gate City of the West. That's why the daily paper is still called the Daily Gate City.

Marilyn Engler can reveal much more about Keokuk and Lee County, but you might investigate this inexpensive road trip yourself to bust the winter blues.

FOWL WINTER

Keokuk is like many of Iowa's river cities. Down at the heels. Housing stock that speaks of glory days long past. Empty storefronts like gap teeth on a once-thriving 1800s brick Main Street.

But the city has other, more promising, river town qualities, too. A storied history, for starters. For example, Lee County was once known as the Half Breed Tract, segregated by white families and those where white (usually French) adventurers, trappers and traders intermarried with Sauk and Fox women. (For more information about the Half-Breed Tract, read <http://iagenweb.org/history/moi/MOICHp15.htm>).

There's also a small but spunky population of boosters working hard, with success, toward revival. In October, nearly 400 new jobs were announced to build 260-foot tall wind turbine towers to meet the state's booming wind energy industry. Harnessing the river, barges will ship the towers to regional destinations.

You have to break through a tough veneer of chain stores to get to the old character of the city. Main Street is long and wide, leading right to the river, with attractive brick buildings. Restaurants, bars and shops are still here, some quite good, including Fiesta Jalisco Mexican restaurant, Tippen Neckers sports bar and Lock 19 Gallery. There's a record shop on the strip, and you can catch a first-run movie in the small-but-still-standing mall if the weather isn't cooperating.

Winter visits will consist largely of birdwatching, with a round of ice-skating at the far end of scenic, historic Grand Avenue, at riverfront Rand Park, where Keokuck is buried



The statue and grave of Chief Keokuck stand in Rand Park. When he refused to support rival Black Hawk's backing of the British in the War of 1812, he gained U.S. Government support and a tract of land. **LEFT:** The George M. Verity, a Dubuque-built 1927 historic sternwheel steamboat, was the first to move barges from St. Louis to St. Paul. In 1940, it plied the waters of the Ohio River. Berthed at Victory Park, the vessel houses a museum of Upper Mississippi River history.

at the base of his statue. Stay at one of the B&Bs on Grand for a spot of local history and gourmet breakfast.

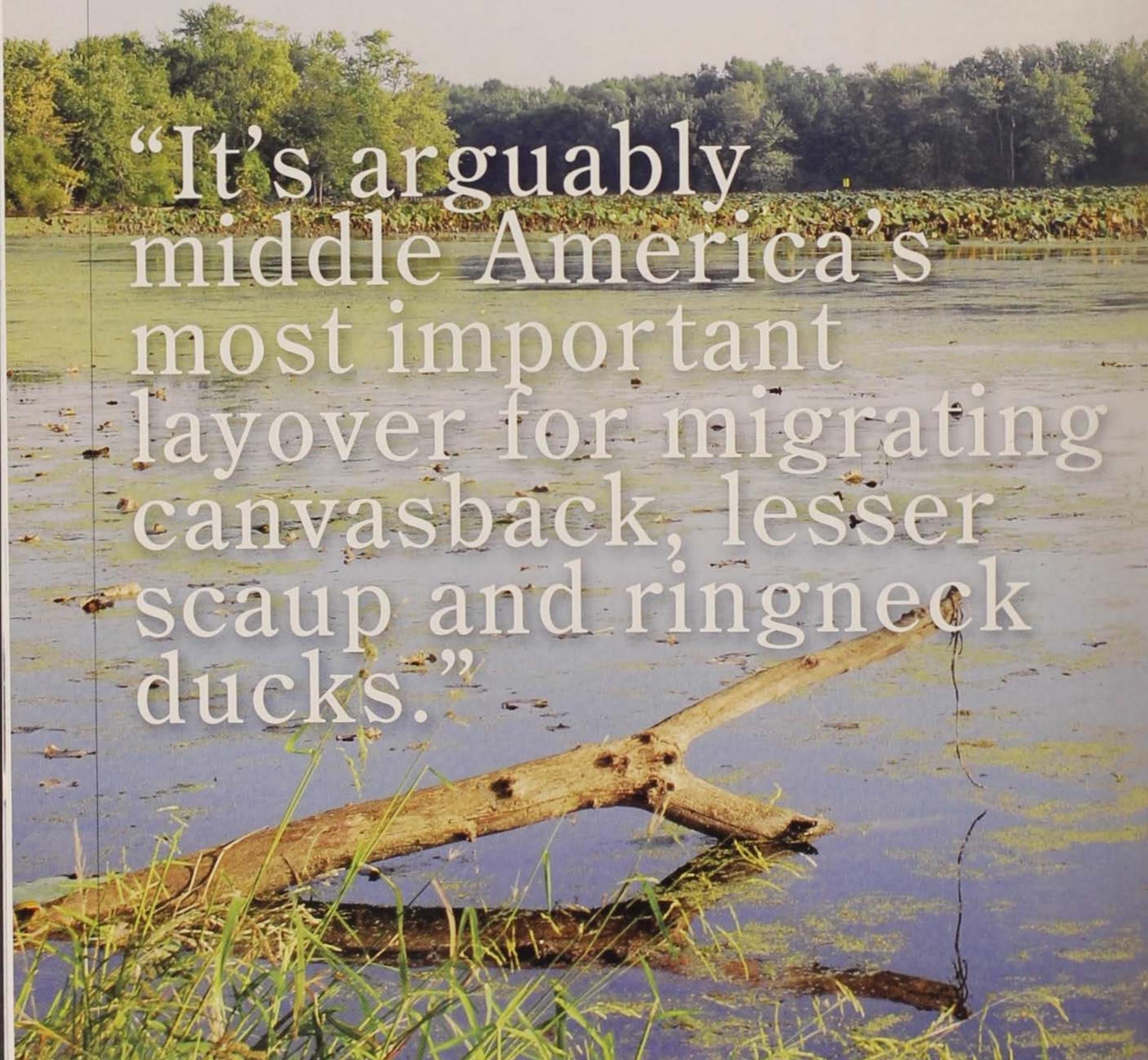
In summer, you might stay at rustic Shimek State Forest, also a birding hotspot, with 25 miles of hiking and 27 miles of multi-use trails for horses, bikes and hiking boots.

The Mississippi flows past Keokuk, on what was once a stretch of rapids so perilous that boats had to stop here (thus the boom of the early 1800s). To open to commerce, Congress authorized the construction of a canal and locks along the river's edge, which opened to traffic in 1877. The year 1913 saw the addition of a dam, powerhouse and lock and dry dock.

This is Lock and Dam 19, still the largest on the entire river, and during winter, the equivalent of the Ritz Carlton for migrating bald eagles and ducks.

"It's arguably middle America's most important layover for migrating canvasback, lesser scaup and ringneck ducks," says Bob Cecil, a Keokuk native and birding expert from Des Moines, who notes that the ducks number at least in the tens of thousands, scouring shallow waters (remember those rapids) for clams, mussels and aquatic vegetation.

Here, the largest concentration of eagles on the river roosts from late December on, scavenging stunned or

A photograph of a flooded agricultural field, likely a cornfield, with a large piece of driftwood in the foreground. The water is shallow and reflects the sky. In the background, there is a dense line of trees. The text is overlaid on the image.

“It’s arguably middle America’s most important layover for migrating canvasback, lesser scaup and ringneck ducks.”



TOP RIGHT: Eleven miles of rapids stymied boats as far back as French trappers in the 1700s. Future Confederate general, Robert E. Lee, led failed efforts to blast the rapids open in the 1830s. Today's lock and dam, completed in 1957, is the largest and most impressive on the Mississippi and able to handle a full-length barge fleet. In nine minutes, more than 38 million gallons of water fill or empty the locks. **MIDDLE:** In addition to pelicans and mallards, several million scaup pass through Keokuk's Pool 19 to feast on fingernail clams before heading as far as the arctic circle. Biologists are tracking scaup flight paths to help improve declining populations. (See our page 34 feature.) **BOTTOM:** With a main street that leads to the river, Keokuk boasts 18 sites on the National Historic Register and oozes architectural charm, none more stunning than majestic homes on Grand Avenue, Keokuk's Miracle Mile.



After a recent rain, local residents Robert and Andrea Kelly hunt for Keokuk geodes, the most beautiful and sought after in the world by museums and collectors. Most Keokuk geodes occur within a 35-mile radius of Keokuk.

GEODE HUNTING TIPS

- Bring along digging tools such as trowels, crowbars, chisels or hammers, to dislodge geode formations from limestone.
- Though there is no limit in Iowa on how many geodes you can take with you, please respect this Iowa treasure and take only a few home.

dead fish shooting through the dam. Keokuk hosts the 24th annual Bald Eagle Appreciation Days January 19-20 (www.keokukiowatourism.org/eagledays.htm).

ROCK HOUNDING

There's another natural treasure in Lee County, if you get here during a thaw. The Keokuk geode found in a 35-mile radius of town is the world's most prized, for the exquisite variety of minerals in its crystalline interior.

Robert and Andrea Kelly have been collecting and selling rocks for about 11 years. They met and married after bonding over their geode passion.

"Our idea of a good date before we were married was going out and looking for rocks," he chuckles. "It's a truly kind of a gem of a marriage, it is!"

Folks have come to Keokuk from as far as Japan to rock hunt, following river beds via canoe or sloggling through water searching the limestone bluffs in which geodes are often imbedded.

"We've walked for miles up creeks and riverbanks," says Robert. "We've climbed riverbanks that shouldn't've been climbed."

Andrea says its best to hunt after a good rain, anywhere the river has cut into the earth. Scout access roads and ask around, securing permission before entering private property.

"It's like mushroom hunting," Andrea says of getting an eye for geodes, noting the peculiar round shape and a cauliflower-like texture on a gray or brown exterior.

For travelers interested in the anatomy of a river town one hundred-some years after the boom, Keokuk is an interesting example. Decent restaurants, the dark beauty of river ecology and the glimmer of history is upon it. If you need more reasons to visit, just ask Marilyn Engler, who's lived here for more than five decades:

"Keokuk is the best little town along the Mississippi!"

THOSE CRAZY BIRDS

Sure, you're into Pool 19 eagle watching. But what exactly are you watching for? Some facts about our national bird:

- Seventy percent of the eagle's feeding occurs before 9 a.m., so avoid eagle-watching earlier than that.
- Eagles are hardcore scavengers. "I've even seen them out in the middle of a harvested cornfield, eating a dead deer," says state forester John Byrd.
- You can age an eagle by the proportion of black to white on the wings and tail. They don't get their white head and tail until they're four to five years old (the white tail develops last).
- Most serious birders consider eagles too common to be of interest. This is good news, considering eagles were endangered just decades ago.

BIRDING FOR BEGINNERS

Lee County's Shimek State Forest is a designated Bird

Conservation Area. According to birding expert Bob Cecil, the beginner needs only gas in the car and a bird guide. His suggestions, which can be purchased at Birdwatching Dot Com (www.birdwatching.com; 641-472-7256) in Fairfield, Iowa:

- The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America
- National Geographic's Field Guide to Birds of North America
- Peterson's Guide for Birds of Eastern and Central North America
- Binoculars aren't necessary for beginners, but if you're in the market, Cecil says you can get an excellent pair for around \$300. "It's almost an imperceptible difference between those and what you spend \$1,000 on," he says. If you don't want to research, stick with a brand you've heard of, such as Nikon.

For more information, contact the Iowa Ornithologists Union (www.iowabirds.org).

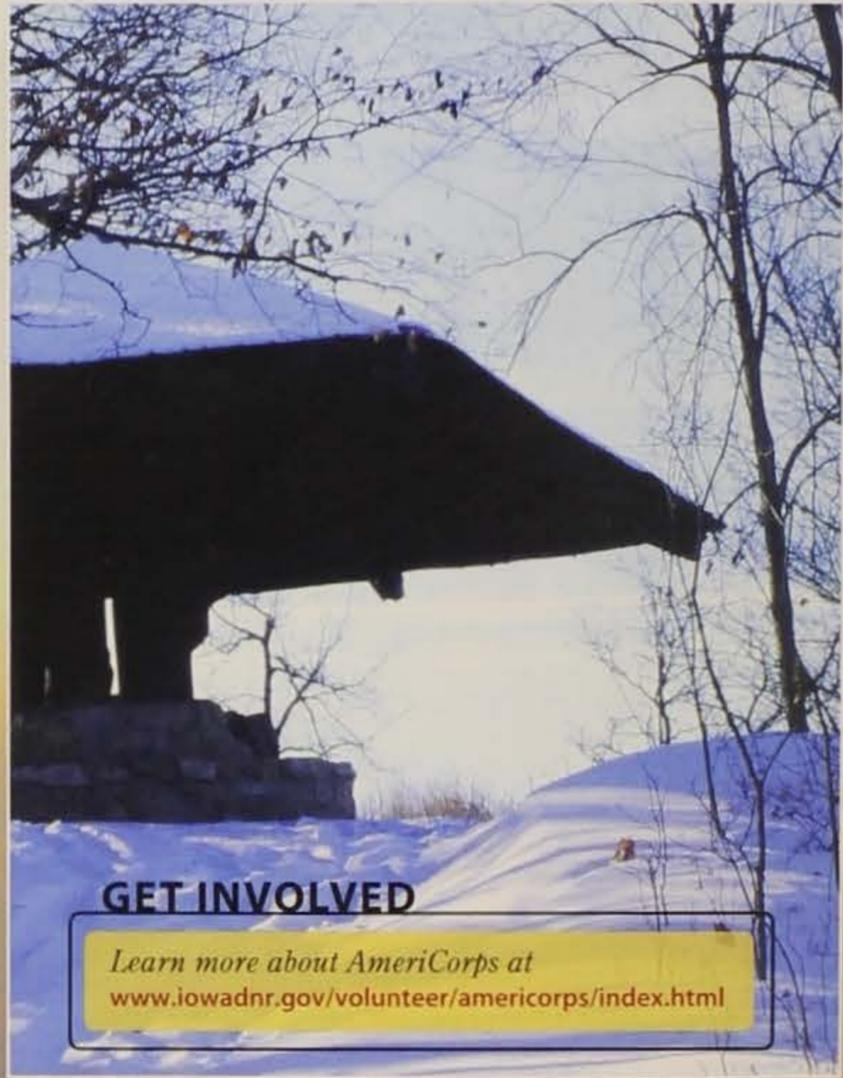
WHEN YOU GO:

LODGING: The Grand Anne. Upscale, impeccably restored Queen Anne style home across the street from the river. 816 Grand Ave., 800-524-6310.

River's Edge Bed & Breakfast. Just a few houses down, a more informal lodging for the laid-back traveler, but a seriously awesome view right on the river. 611 Grand Ave. 888-581-3343.

DINING: Ogo's, Montrose. Great little restaurant in a teensy





GET INVOLVED

Learn more about AmeriCorps at www.iowadnr.gov/volunteer/ameriCorps/index.html

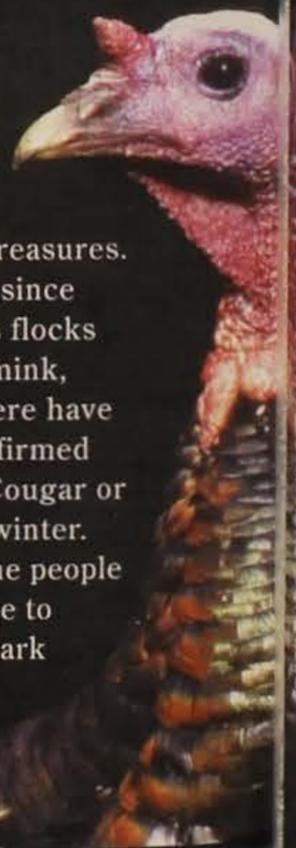
in the wind by turns." As for the rolling cornfields and the farmsteads huddled among these "Fields of Opportunities," they prophesied the kind of closeness to the land that I would soon recognize as the heart of most Iowans.

Fresh out of college, and just married, my wife and I left Ohio to work with AmeriCorps, a federal volunteer organization with nationwide programs accomplishing all kinds of humanitarian and environmental services. As for our part, we work with the Iowa DNR, helping build and maintain trails, renovating and repairing recent acquisitions to Waubonsie State Park, the cabins rented to the public and the vast adjoining sections of beautiful and richly inhabited Loess Hills prairie and woods.

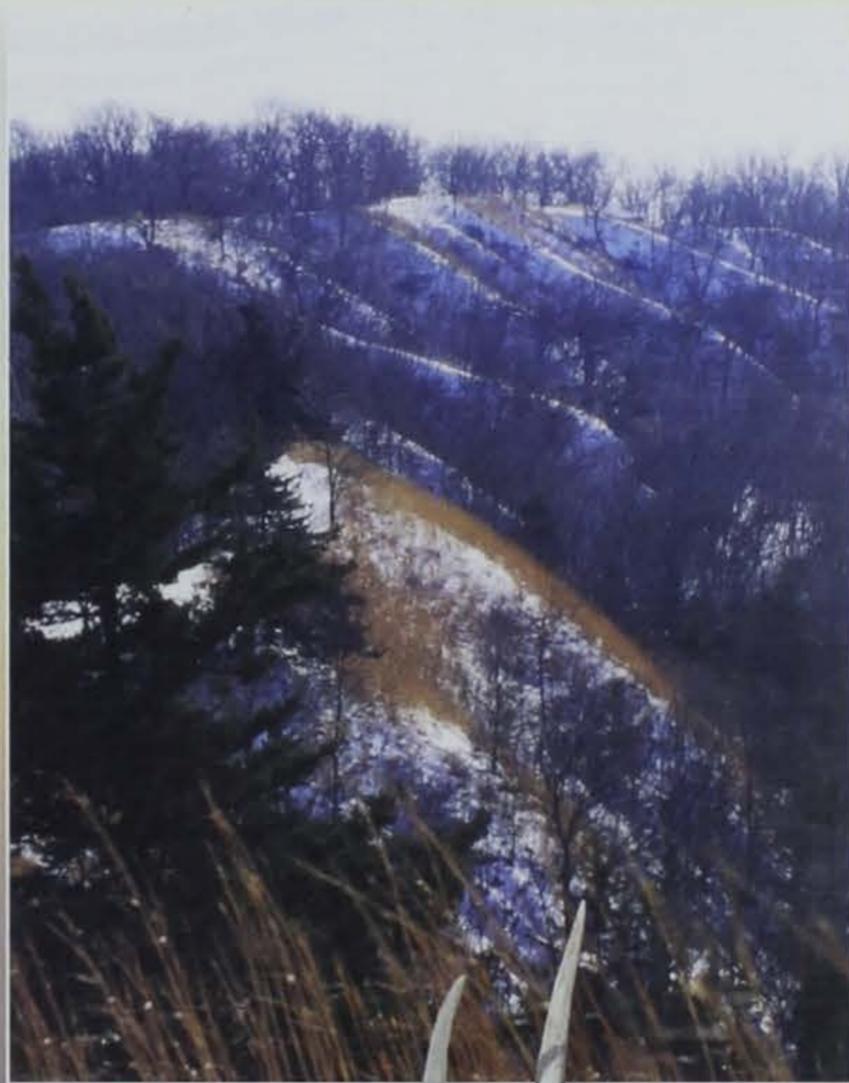
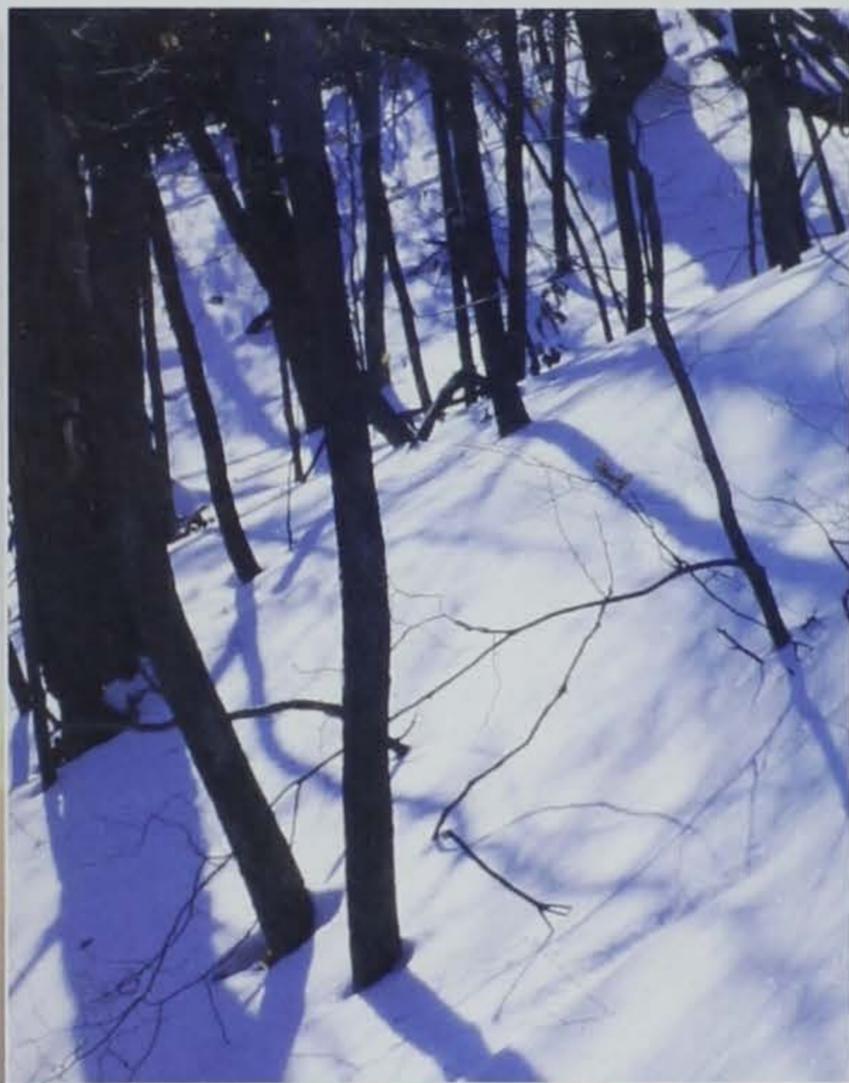
In birds alone, this region is amazing. Barred owls,

bald eagles, snow geese, downy and red-headed woodpeckers, Eastern bluebirds, and all sorts of hawks, are just a few of its winged treasures. We have watched in our back yard so to speak, since we live in the parks where we work—numerous flocks of turkeys, up to 25 deer in one field, coyotes, mink, squirrels, and lots of funny little field mice. There have been bobcat sightings and yes, even one unconfirmed report of a mountain lion roaming these hills. Cougar or no, this place is full of life, even in the dead of winter.

I came to Iowa to learn about the land from the people who care about and respect it, and to do a service to my country; I have not been disappointed. The park manager, Kevin Thorne, and then technician,



DEER PHOTO BY TIMMIER S. WAUBONISIE STATE PARK PHOTO BY CLAY SMITH



Beautifully blanketed in snow, the windswept ridges, gorges and valleys of Waubonsie State Park attract hikers in all seasons. Situated nine miles north of Hamburg, deep in southwest Iowa, the park's seven miles of hiking trails are on the national Lewis and Clark Historic Trail.



Dan Jacobs, now a park manager at Lake Manawa, guided me in learning about the unique Loess Hills landscape, theories about successful management, and gave me plenty of tips on where to go to have the best experiences. It is on the trails they recommended that I have fallen back upon those old childhood ponderings that come every time a hill is crested on the highway: I wonder what the explorers thought of this land of plenty, so many years ago. Here, as I'm sure every Iowa schoolchild has, I sit and think of Lewis and Clark, paddling their way up the Missouri and basking at the prospects of what wonders were to come.

I have only been to a few parks so far and done little compared to what lies ahead in my work with the Iowa DNR, but I already feel a connection to Iowa that I

did not feel before. It is a sense of pride that comes, not out of ownership, but of participation in and stewardship of our nation's natural splendor and the things that keep our world alive. Iowa, with its many environmental concerns, is important in this task of stewardship and, from the outside looking in; it is something I am happy many of the Iowans I know take to heart. 🏠

ICE SAFETY

BY MICK KLEMESRUD PHOTOS BY DNR FIELD STAFF

**THICK AND BLUE,
TRIED AND TRUE.**

**THIN AND CRISPY,
WAY TOO RISKY.**

WIW



Anyone who's spent time on the ice has either fallen through, or thought about the topic.

STAY SAFE WITH THESE ABOVE- AND BELOW- ICE SURVIVAL TIPS.

KNOW YOUR ICE

Smaller water bodies usually freeze faster and thicker than larger lakes or river backwaters, which often have warmer currents moving through.

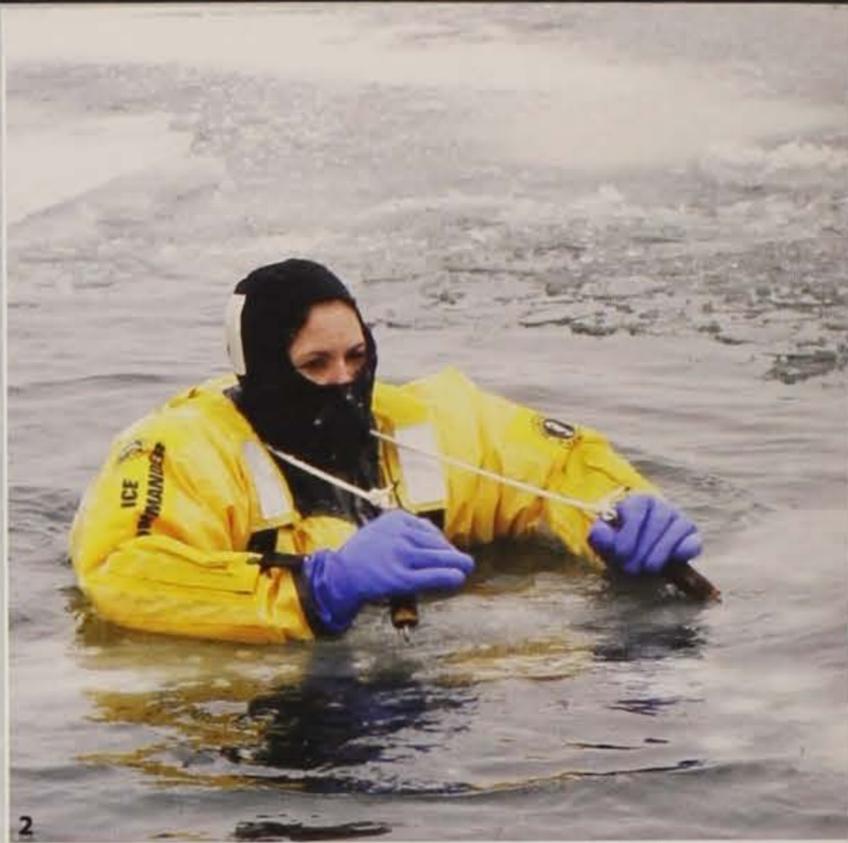
Treat all ice with caution. Cut test holes to check for thickness. Don't go out alone and avoid ice with deep snow cover which insulates and slows ice growth. Ice thickness is not uniform on any body of water.

Dress warmly with layers of loose-fitting clothes and stay dry. Do not ignore shivering. It is an important early warning sign that the body is losing heat. Continual shivering is a sign to get indoors.

GENERAL ICE THICKNESS GUIDELINES

- 4 inches clear, solid ice minimum for foot travel and ice fishing
- 5 inches clear, solid ice minimum for snowmobiling or ATVs
- 8 to 12 inches minimum for cars or small trucks

Remember, these guidelines are for new, clear, solid ice. Wind, snow cover, rain, freeze and thaw cycles and moving water affect ice quality. Also, trees, stumps, rocks and wooden dock posts sticking through the ice conduct solar heat, making weaker ice nearby.



BUOYANCY IS YOUR BUDDY

Use a throwable flotation device as a comfy ice fishing seat cushion and use for rescue attempts. Wear an approved personal flotation device under your coat, or better yet, a type 5 PFD float coat. But never wear either if driving across the ice in an enclosed vehicle as the buoyancy can pin the wearer to the top of a submerged vehicle.

Store a minimum of 50 feet of rope in your ice fishing bucket and tie one end to the bucket handle to pull someone from the water.

Keep blankets and additional clothes in the vehicle.

HOW TO SURVIVE A FALL IN

- Don't panic
- Act slowly and deliberately to conserve energy
- Fold arms and lay them across unbroken ice
- Kick hard to propel your body onto the ice

- Don't stand up; roll to safe ice
- Seek warmth, dry clothes and medical attention

HOW TO HELP A VICTIM.

- Don't panic and consider the best possible solutions
- Use a cell phone to call for rescue help
- Encourage self rescue
- Talk to the victim to keep them conscious
- If you must intervene, attempt rescue from shore
- If you are forced out on the ice, don't stand. Lie flat on safe ice and extend rope, branch or plank to victim or with other rescuers, form a human chain on the ice.
- After securing victim, wiggle backwards to safe ice
- Seek warmth, dry clothes and medical attention.
- Handle victim gently

WHAT NOT TO DO.

- Do not massage victim



PREVIOUS PAGE AND LEFT: The responsibility of removing sunken vehicles is up to the owner, at his or her own expense. **OPPOSITE PAGE AND BELOW:** State conservation officers undergo ice rescue training every year, sometimes training other law enforcement and rescue agencies. Many of the techniques they learn could help hard water fun seekers should they fall through the ice. 1) A spud bar or ice staff stretched across solid ice will help maintain buoyancy. Once on top of the ice, don't stand, roll to safer ice. 2) Spreading bent arms across solid ice and using inexpensive or homemade ice picks (see page 14) can help you get back on solid ice. 3) A rope attached to a throwable device, like a seat cushion, bucket or even snow sled, is critical for shore rescues. 4) On-ice rescues are best left to professionals, and should only be attempted as a last resort. If that is the case, secure the rescuers with a rope from shore.



- Don't give victim a shower or bath
- Do not give victim alcohol, caffeine or nicotine

HYPOTHERMIA BASICS

Hypothermia—a decrease in the core body temperature to a level that impairs normal muscular and cerebral functions—can be a dangerous force facing anyone who spends time outside. The cause and severity depends on many factors, including cold temperatures, improper clothing and equipment, wetness, fatigue, dehydration, poor food intake, lack of hypothermia knowledge and alcohol intake.

Recognizing the signs and treating the symptoms is critical when over-exposed to the elements.

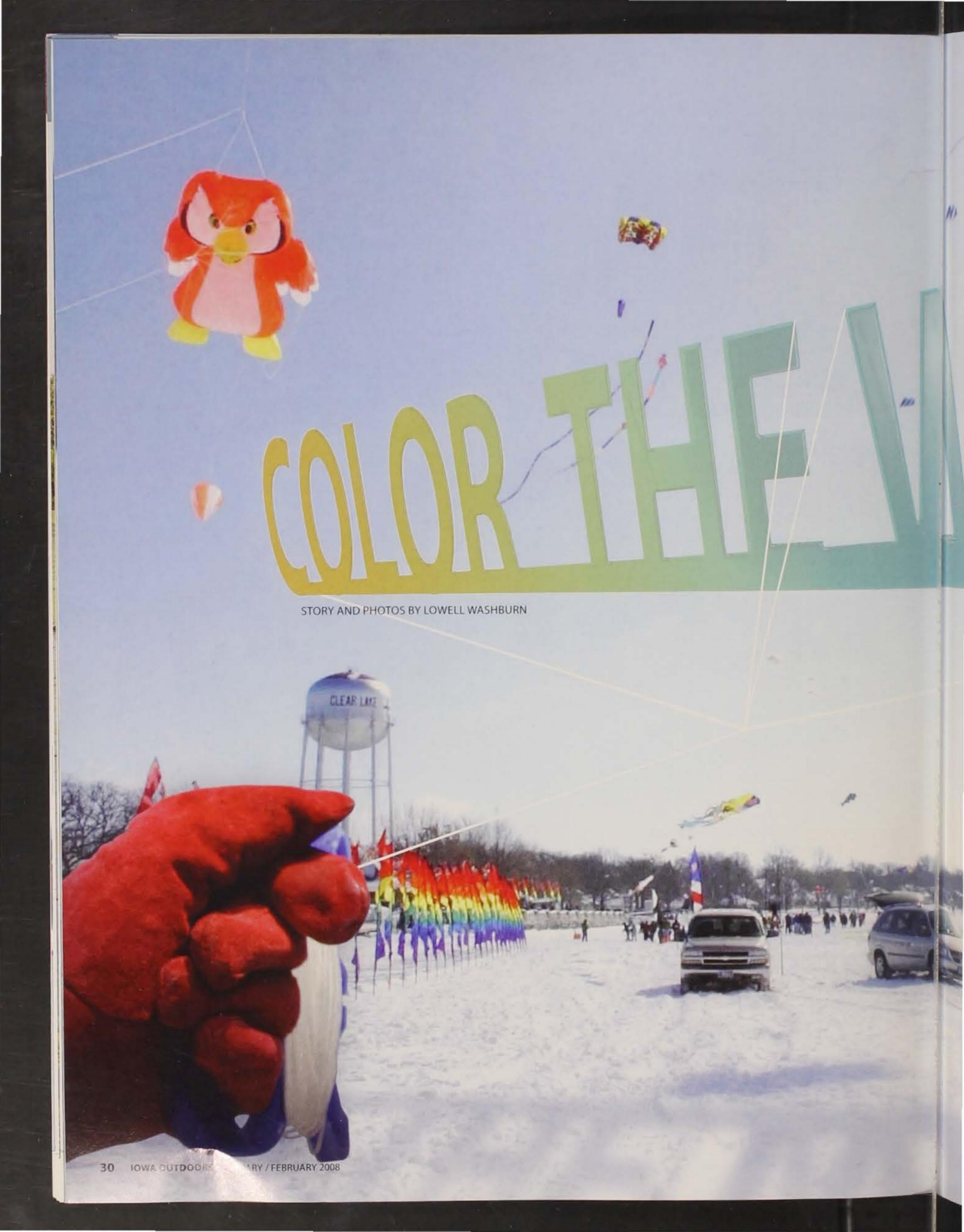
HEED THE WARNING SIGNS

Shivering and the inability to do complex motor functions are signs of mild hypothermia. A more severe

level can include confusion or sleepiness, slowed or slurred speech, shallow breathing, weak pulse or low blood pressure, change in behavior or appearance, stiffness in arms and legs and poor body control.

HOW TO WARM A HYPOTHERMIC VICTIM

To fight mild hypothermia and reduce the victim's heat loss, adding fuels, fluids and heat are critical. Seek shelter, change into dry clothes or increase physical activity. Stay hydrated and stoke the furnace with carbohydrates, proteins and fats—warm liquids and high carb and high fats snacks are best. Seek an external heat source, like a warm fire or body-to-body contact with a non-hypothermic person. Severe cases require immediate medical attention. 🐾



COLOR THE SKY

STORY AND PHOTOS BY LOWELL WASHBURN



WIND

CLEAR LAKE'S WINTER KITE FESTIVAL LEAVES MIDWEST HOBBYISTS FLYING HIGH

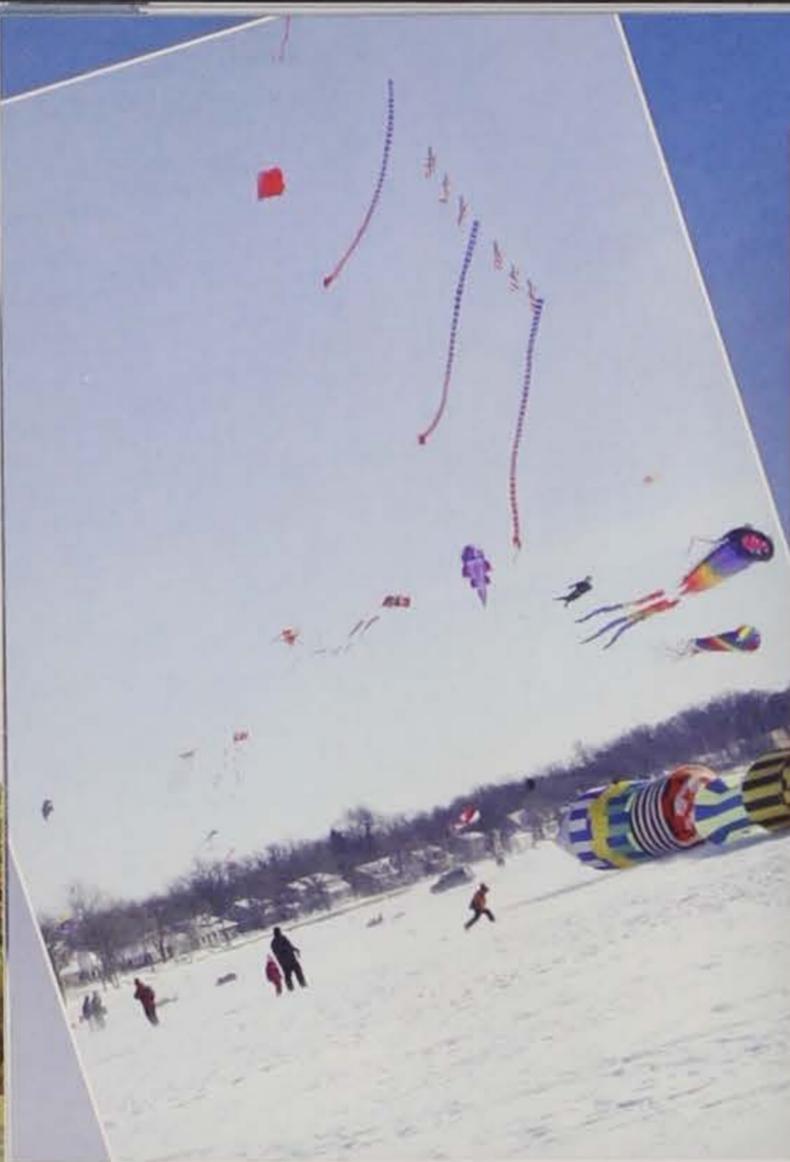
Clear blue skies, crisp temperatures, steady winds. For members of the American Kitefliers Association, it was an absolute perfect day on northern Iowa's Clear Lake for what they love most—which is, of course, flying kites.

Although the American Kitefliers Association includes a nine-state membership that travels to events across the nation, participants note the year's brightest, most colorful, and certainly coldest happening takes place each February on Clear Lake where enthusiasts assemble

for the annual Color the Wind Kite Festival.

The festival takes place the third Saturday of February. Last year, more than 100 kite fliers and hundreds more spectators gathered.

"People are really amazed by what they see. The kites come in all shapes and sizes and include owls, tropical fish, scuba divers, octopus—you name it. Some larger kites are really spectacular. We have a 90-foot-long trilobite and a 32-by-100-foot manta ray. When kites like that get into the air, it makes an impression," says event



In spite of frigid temps and blowing snow, Iowa City's Steve Dunbar prepares to fly his Delta Coyne kite.

LAUNCHING THE GECKO

Kite flying enthusiasts launch a 46-foot purple gecko during last year's Color the Wind Kite Festival held at Clear Lake. "Giant kites are always crowd pleasers," says festival organizer Larry Day. "These are very serious fliers and many of the bigger kites exhibited at Clear Lake will run 100 or more feet in length and may cost anywhere from \$1,000 to \$5,000 each."

Once in the air, the huge kites are held in place by 2 x 4 wood anchors under the ice. Secured by 1,200- to 2,000-pound test line, kites are best flown in winds below 15 or 20 miles per hour.

Day (who himself owns several kites including a 32-by-100-foot manta ray) noted that once the huge kites are in the air they "pull like mules."

"The force they exert is simply amazing," says Day. "When it comes time to bring them back down, one person can't do it—no way! You have to have help."



organizer Larry Day.

The kite festival is a family event with special children's activities. Last year 200 low-cost kites were given away and clinics gave kids a chance to make, color and fly their own kites.

The festival is for everyone from 3 to 93. "It's incredible how many 80- or even 90-year-olds turn out. I don't know if the kites are reminiscent of their childhoods, or what, but there's something that brings them out to the lake in the dead of winter. I've seen elderly couples stay for two or three hours—sitting on a picnic table wrapped in blankets—watching people fly kites. To me, that's just as important as anything else

we're doing," adds Day.

The event grows each year, with some folks who drive two or more hours. "By late February a lot of people are sick of being in the house and are ready to be outdoors. Once they've been here, it's something they look forward to," says Day.

The event attracts pros too, such as Don Murphy. "It's plenty brisk out here but, overall, it's a really beautiful day to be out on the ice flying kites," says Murphy, director of the American Kitefliers Association and a 22-year professional kite flying circuit veteran.

"This is the third year I've been to Clear Lake, and this is definitely becoming one of the better events" he says.



HOW HIGH CAN YOU GO?
 Three-year-old Kamryn Nelson, and mother Korrine Nelson, of Manly, test out their new kite at the 2007 Color the Wind Kite Festival. This was their first event.



Ann & Tony Killip

"We love kites and it's really fun to get together for that. I attend events all across the country, but you always seem to run into the same people time and again. Today, I've already seen friends from Colorado, North Dakota, Chicago, Wisconsin and Minnesota."

Ann and Tony Killip traveled from Watata, Wisc. "We've been flying together for over 30 years," says Ann. "We travel all over the U.S., mainly because it's so much fun to go places where you can see lots and lots of kites in the air at one time."

Husband Tony adds, "We like to fly with others, but really don't have anyone at home. These events are well worth the travel, but there are risks. We depend on wind,

and the weather can shut you down in a second."

Mason City's Tony O'Neill, along with his daughter Margo, supply local talent. Their third year attending, it's the first year they've participated.

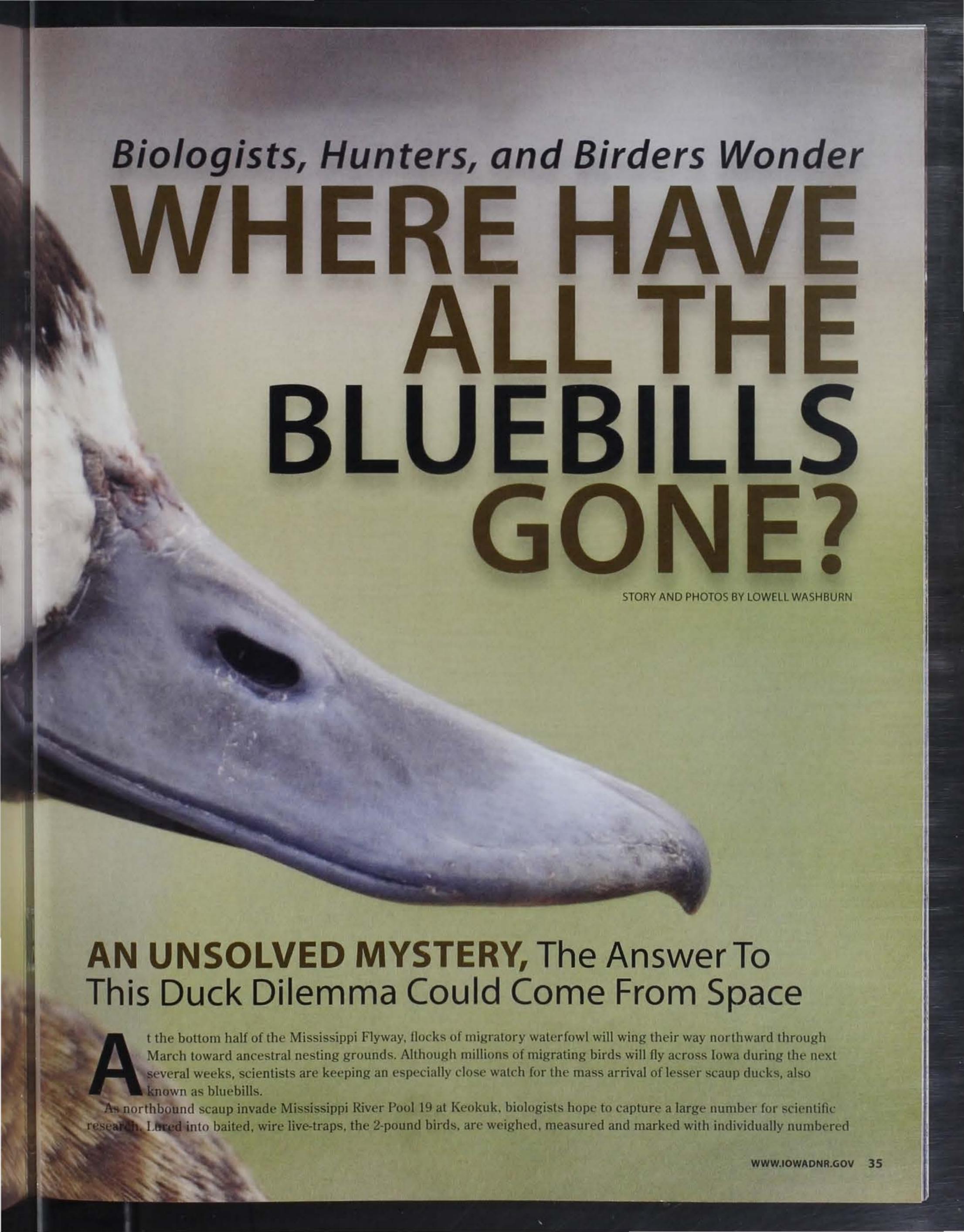
"We went to the kite making clinic first and—well—here we are," he grins. "This is really a great event. We love it. We dress warm, get to be outside, and best of all—it keeps us away from TV. For us, it's really a great way to spend the weekend together."

Nine-year-old Margo agrees.

"I like the cold, and I like kites. Today is just fun," she says.

For additional information on Clear Lake's Kite Fest, visit www.colorthewind.org.





Biologists, Hunters, and Birders Wonder

WHERE HAVE ALL THE BLUEBILLS GONE?

STORY AND PHOTOS BY LOWELL WASHBURN

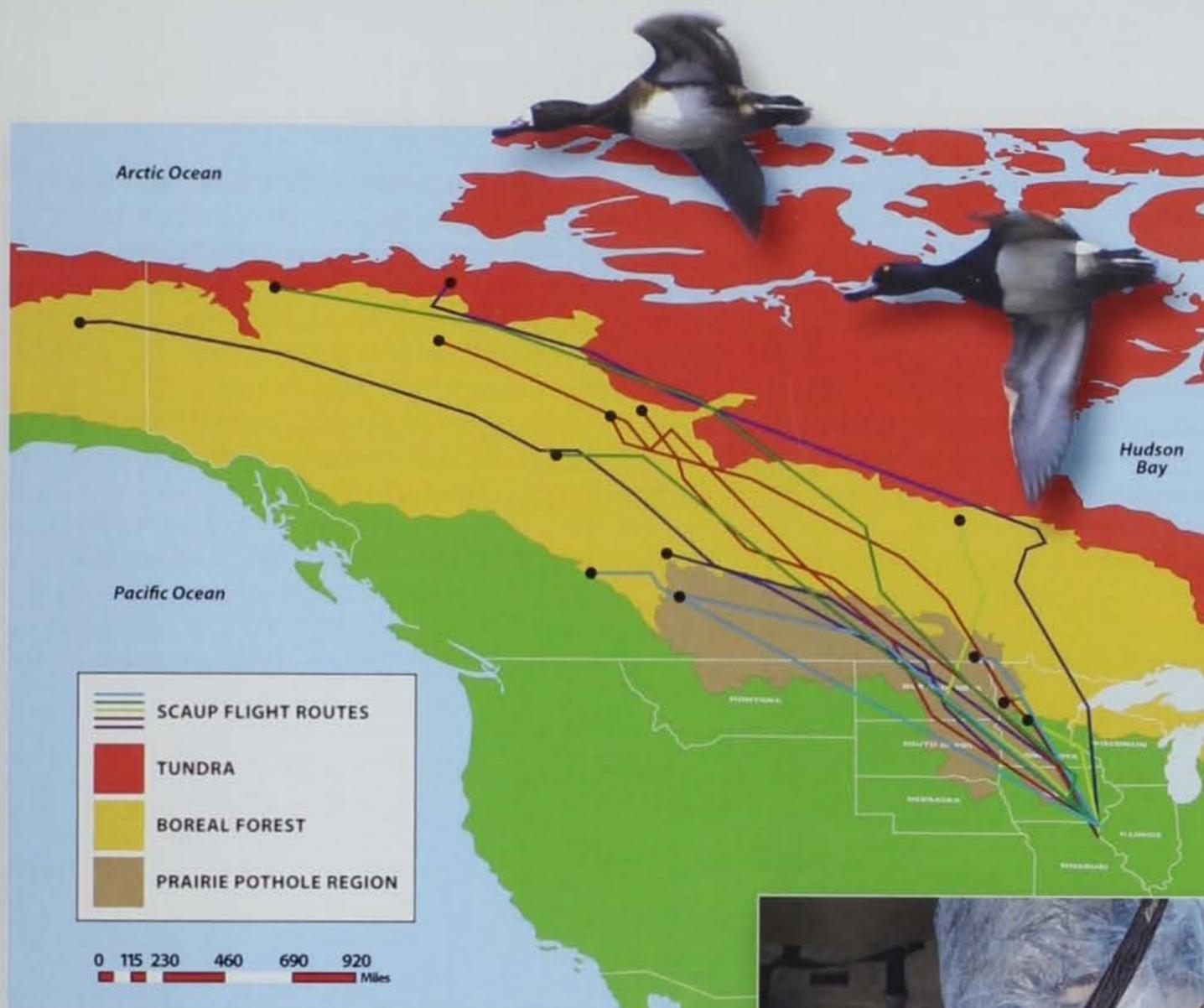
AN UNSOLVED MYSTERY, The Answer To This Duck Dilemma Could Come From Space

At the bottom half of the Mississippi Flyway, flocks of migratory waterfowl will wing their way northward through March toward ancestral nesting grounds. Although millions of migrating birds will fly across Iowa during the next several weeks, scientists are keeping an especially close watch for the mass arrival of lesser scaup ducks, also known as bluebills.

As northbound scaup invade Mississippi River Pool 19 at Keokuk, biologists hope to capture a large number for scientific research. Lured into baited, wire live-traps, the 2-pound birds, are weighed, measured and marked with individually numbered

After removing birds from a baited wire enclosure, DNR duck trapper Dave Hoffman bands a catch of lesser scaup ducks at Keokuk. More than 2,500 scaup were captured and banded last spring.





ABOVE: transmitter shown actual size.

Dr. Mark Mitchell, University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine, implants a 38-gram satellite transmitter into an adult female scaup captured at Mississippi River pool 19 at Keokuk. The purpose of the ongoing satellite study is to monitor the survival and habitat use of female scaup as they disperse from Keokuk for remote northern breeding grounds. Seventeen females were marked last spring. Three died during migration, two in northern Minnesota and one in southern Manitoba, Canada. One scaup traveled as far northwest as Alaska. Most, however, nested in the remote wilderness areas of western Canada's boreal forest.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service metal leg bands. As bands are reported (mostly by hunters) it will enable scientists to compile data needed to make intelligent management decisions.

But for a smaller, select group of captured ducks, scientists plan to extend their research to a level "out of this world." It's where the usual approach to waterfowl management ends.

Immediately following capture, the special sample group, all females, will be transported to a nearby field station, admitted to the equivalent of an avian "MASH" facility. After being carefully anesthetized, the ducks will be surgically implanted with satellite transmitters. Following a brief two-hour recovery, the ducks will be released to rejoin the migration.

Says Louisiana State University professor and scaup project coordinator Alan Afton, this high-tech endeavor allows scientists to collectively chart the birds' migration paths, habitat use and ultimate survival. Although previous land-based telemetry studies were conducted in Iowa, this is the first monitoring from space of Iowa-captured waterfowl. A pilot experiment was initiated last spring when satellite transmitters were implanted into 17 female scaup. That



preliminary effort has yielded fascinating insights into how breeding scaup disperse and the amazing distances they travel once the ducks leave the Keokuk pool.

Afton, who has been intensively studying lesser scaup for more than 30 years, hopes future studies will shed additional light on factors affecting the species' overall survival. Scaup populations have waned during recent

years—down from 6.3 million breeding birds inventoried during the early 1970s to 3.5 million today.

“While most other duck species are holding their own or even showing an increase, scaup numbers continue to decline,” says Afton. “Although there are theories, no one can say for certain why the decline is occurring. What we do know is that migrating scaup are in really good condition when they arrive at Keokuk each spring. But by the time those birds arrive in northwestern Minnesota, they are in poor body condition.”

Ongoing water quality studies reveal 97 percent of surveyed wetlands in north-central and northwestern Iowa contain measurable levels of herbicides, pesticides or other chemical contaminants. Additional pollutants include widely ranging levels of phosphorus and nitrogen. Many researchers suspect pollution has disrupted aquatic food chains.

Biologists say spring migration is a time when female scaup stoke up on natural aquatic foods to build nutrient reserves essential to egg production. Failure to acquire reserves could lower nesting success and significantly decrease offspring. Tiny shrimp-like crustaceans, or amphipods, represent the scaup's most important food source as ducks migrate across Iowa's interior.

“For lesser scaup to maintain the healthy body condition needed for egg production, they must have amphipods,” says DNR Waterfowl Biologist Guy Zenner. “Historically, it was no problem for scaup and other water birds to find that nutritional source in Iowa. Today, research shows wetland water quality has been so compromised that amphipods no longer exist in most of our marshlands. Scaup end up surviving on alternate food sources which are insufficient



LEFT: Waterfowl researcher Tore Buchanan of Peterborough, Ontario bands a lesser scaup duck captured on the Mississippi River at Keokuk. To better understand the ongoing and alarming decline of North American scaup populations, scientists from Louisiana to Ontario will assemble at Keokuk's Pool 19 in March. The purpose of the joint venture is to capture a large number of migrants for study. **RIGHT:** Randy Robinson of the DNR's Maquoketa Wildlife Unit in Miles releases a banded male scaup near Keokuk.

Project coordinator and Louisiana State University professor Alan Afton says more than 2,500 migrating scaup were captured and banded last spring. Seventeen female scaup were implanted with powerful satellite transmitters to allow scientists to monitor bird movement and survival from space. Additional transmitter implants are planned this spring.

“As scaup leave their Louisiana wintering grounds to head for breeding areas in northwestern Canada, the stopover at Keokuk becomes extremely important,” says Afton. “As scaup head north, up to 75 percent of the 3.5-million-bird migration will stop on this pool to feed on the abundant supply of fingernail clams. It would be hard to overstate the importance of this food source. If anything ever happened to the clam populations at Keokuk, it would have severe consequences on an already stressed population.” During the 1960s, a Mississippi River spill killed more than 10,000 waterfowl. View bird satellite-tracked migrations online this spring at www.iowadnr.gov.



to increase or even maintain critical body weights.

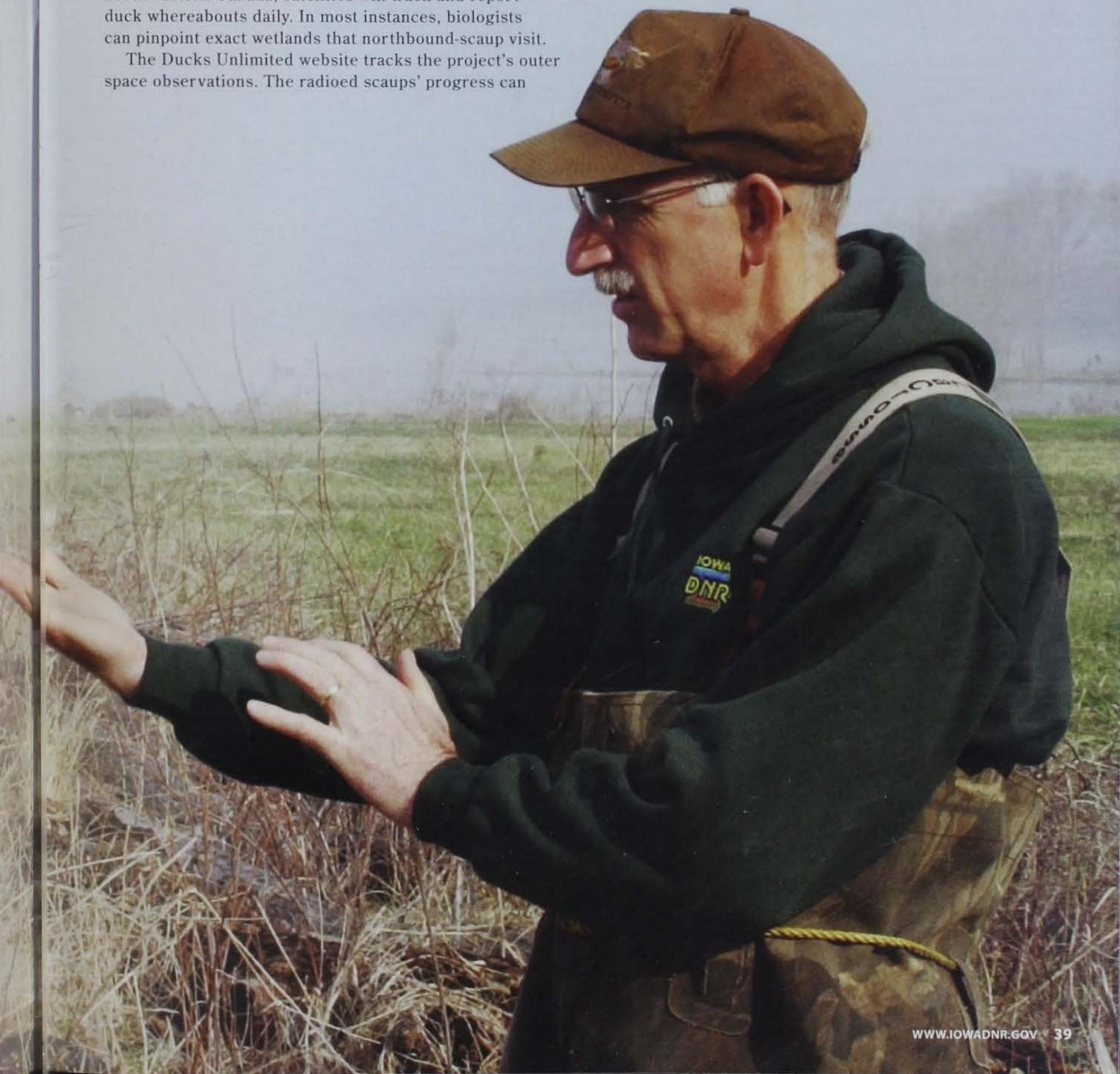
"This isn't just about ducks or duck hunting," says Zenner. "It's a water quality issue and everyone living in Iowa should be very dismayed by these findings."

After arriving in Keokuk this spring, the scaup migration will stall as birds pause to refuel on abundant fingernail clams in Pool 19. Following food and rest, flocks leave the Mississippi River and disperse northwest across Iowa. As those newly radioed hens continue their journey to the boreal forest breeding grounds of northwestern Canada, satellites will track and report duck whereabouts daily. In most instances, biologists can pinpoint exact wetlands that northbound-scaup visit.

The Ducks Unlimited website tracks the project's outer space observations. The radioed scaups' progress can

also be monitored on the DNR website, www.iowadnr.gov. Providing information during spring and fall migrations, the long-lived transmitters will monitor scaup through the 2009 migration.

"Once we pinpoint the actual wetlands scaup are using, we can go in and sample those same locations for food," says Afton, "and look at the landscape features affecting those habitats. If we can identify a fairly narrow corridor that scaup are utilizing, then we can focus on improving the condition of those particular wetlands."





The lesser scaup is one of North America's most abundant and recreationally important waterfowl. But as continental scaup numbers continue to plummet, hunters have been forced to tighten their belt—mainly through decreases in daily bag limits. During the 1980s, hunters could bag 10 scaup each day. The limit was reduced to six daily during the 1990s and was dropped to just three in 1999. In 2005, the scaup take was further reduced to two birds daily.

Although the moves seem logical on the surface, wildlife managers doubt the measures will affect or increase future scaup numbers. According to Louisiana State University scaup researcher Alan Afton, waterfowl populations are driven by two major factors—survival of adult birds and production of young.

Although scientists have been evaluating scaup band recoveries since the 1950s, the data has shown no significant decline in the survival of adults. Therefore, all evidence suggests population decreases are resulting from a decline in successful reproduction, not hunting. Unfortunately, restricting the hunters' bag is the only option immediately available to waterfowl managers.

A HUNTER'S REFLECTION, BY LOWELL WASHBURN

THE BLUEBILLS DON'T COME HERE ANYMORE

Along the Mississippi River counties of Iowa's eastern coast, gunning for bluebills is a time-honored tradition among duck hunters. Nowhere has the passion for hunting migrating 'bills been carried to greater extremes than along the bluff-shrouded corridor of America's "Great River."

Although a duck hunter since the close of the 1950s, it wasn't until the mid-60s that I received my first introduction to the joys of scaup. The hunt didn't take place in a blind along the famed Mississipp', however, but on interior waters of Clear Lake. As was the case on Iowa's big water lakes and rivers, annual flights usually began to pick up about the first week of November. From there it reached a rapid crescendo as Canadian freeze-ups sealed away critical supplies of submergent aquatic food plants. Major storm systems greatly enhanced the migration intensity.

For serious duck hunters, certain weather cues could not be ignored. When local TV forecasters announced 11-inches of heavy snow had fallen at Bismarck, or the season's first blizzard had paralyzed traffic and closed schools at Fargo, or the mercury plunged to negative numbers in International Falls, we took those words as an iron-clad guarantee that 'bills were on the way. We were seldom disappointed.

As daylight approached, newly arrived divers swarmed like bees. There were little bunches, big bunches, high flocks and low. Thousands of ducks suddenly forced to exit the North Country by a dramatic and magnificent late autumn weather event.

Although diver flights contained a variety of species—redheads, canvasbacks, goldeneyes, buffleheads, and others—migration was always dominated by lesser scaup. The sheer numbers were astounding. In spite of traveling all night, the storm-tossed birds remained restless and active. On open water, flocks rose and fell like great swarms of insects.

Hunting was incredible, largely because November bluebills consistently exhibited three traits. They were fast, fat, and exceedingly uneducated in the ways of human hunters. When the flight was on, we would sometimes take our limits and pack up decoys by the time normal folks were getting ready for work. On the very best days, we were done before sunrise.

For most of us younger hunters, recreational budgets were limited. Sometimes we ran out of ammo and had to suspend operations until we could scrounge the \$2.60 needed to purchase the next box of high-brass, 12 gauge shot shells.

Those awe-inspiring scaup migrations continued for the remainder of the 1960s and through the 1970s. In 1979, the bag limit was raised to 10 scaup daily. The blast furnace drought of 1980s arrived shortly thereafter, and continent-wide duck numbers began a rapid decline. The droughts

eventually passed. Water returned to Canadian wetlands. Duck populations rebounded.

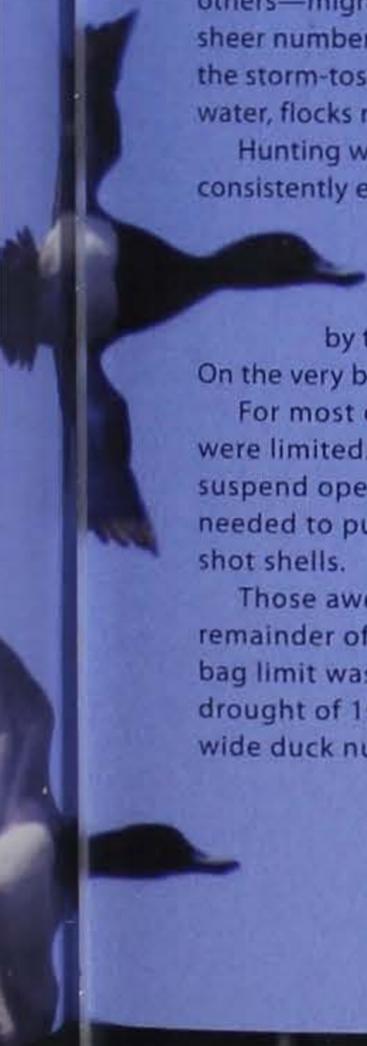
But for reasons unknown, lesser scaup never recovered. Today, although still huntable, scaup are listed as a species of special concern by biologists with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and are current subjects of widespread scientific investigation.

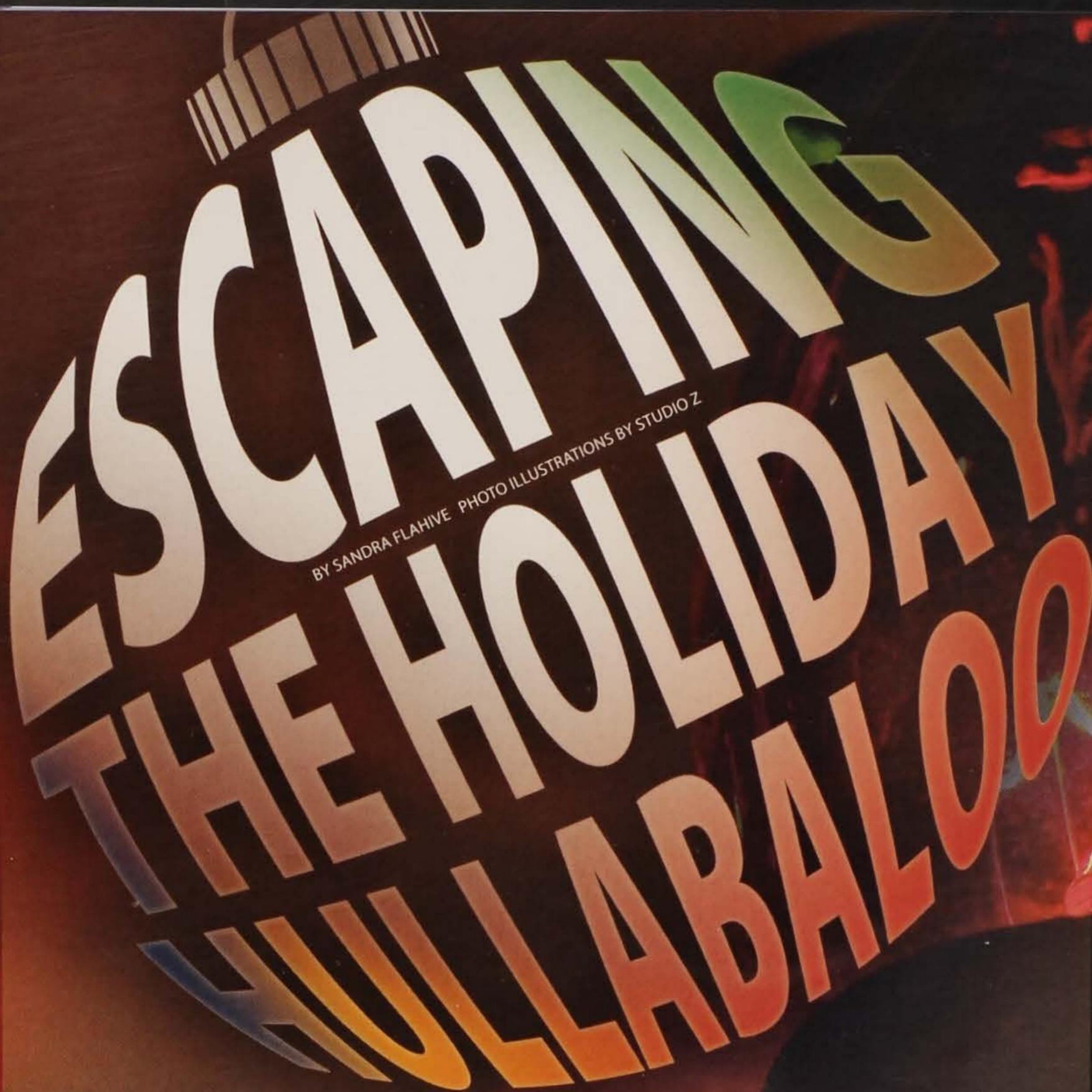
At Clear Lake, the great bluebill flights of yesteryear have vanished. In spite of this, a dedicated handful of diehard diver hunters still gather late each autumn to stand watch over bobbing spreads of black and white decoys.

November storm fronts still arrive with a vengeance. They still get 11-inch snowfalls at Bismarck, school closing blizzards in Fargo, and negative temps at International Falls. Braced against chilling winds, hunters still keep vigil. But bluebills don't come here anymore. To see four or five small flocks of migrating scaup constitutes a good day. This same decline is reported along traditional big waters up and down the great flyway.

Last year, I shot three scaup at Clear Lake. The season before, I bagged two.

Hopefully better days are ahead. 🦆





BY SANDRA FLAHIVE PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY STUDIO Z

ESCAPING THE HOLIDAY HULLABALOO

For those who relish the hullabaloo of the holiday season—everything from the helter-skelter madness of the mall through the round robin of New Year's Eve parties—there's joy in being a permanent creature of the city. Others of us, however, quickly tire of the incessant bell ringing, piped-in music, and gaudy decorations. As the nippy days shrink into deep winter, and visions of holiday sugarplums get ambushed by bills and tax forms, solitude beckons. I eagerly surrendered to that summons one early-January morning and headed for the quiet wooded hills of southern Iowa.



Although I felt a pang of guilt for snubbing the stack of paper work and the cluttered house, both of which begged for attention, the feeling quickly vanished when I saw the delicate layer of lavender stretched along the eastern horizon. Unfortunately, the pastel promise of a clear day was only a flirtation. Before I reached the halfway point of my hour-long journey, cottonballs of snow were parachuting onto the backcountry roads and wooded hillsides, creating mural-like scenes that would have made even a New England landscape envious.

"How can anyone fail to appreciate the classic beauty of the Iowa countryside?" I wondered aloud.

I breathed a sigh of relief when I finally turned off the gravel and onto the rascally clay road that carries me the last half mile of my frequent trips to this remote area. The fickle passageway was going to allow me easy entry.

It's a gross understatement to say that this cantankerous little path has a mind of its own. Could it talk, the devilish scamp would boast of many conquests. Everything from monstrous roadgraders to powerful tow trucks has been victim to its unrelenting grasp when it's in an ill temper brought about by a wet winter snow, the spring thaw or a summer drenching. After such a tantrum, only a warm wind and a compassionate sun can convince it to let go. I scampered up it before it changed its pesky mind.

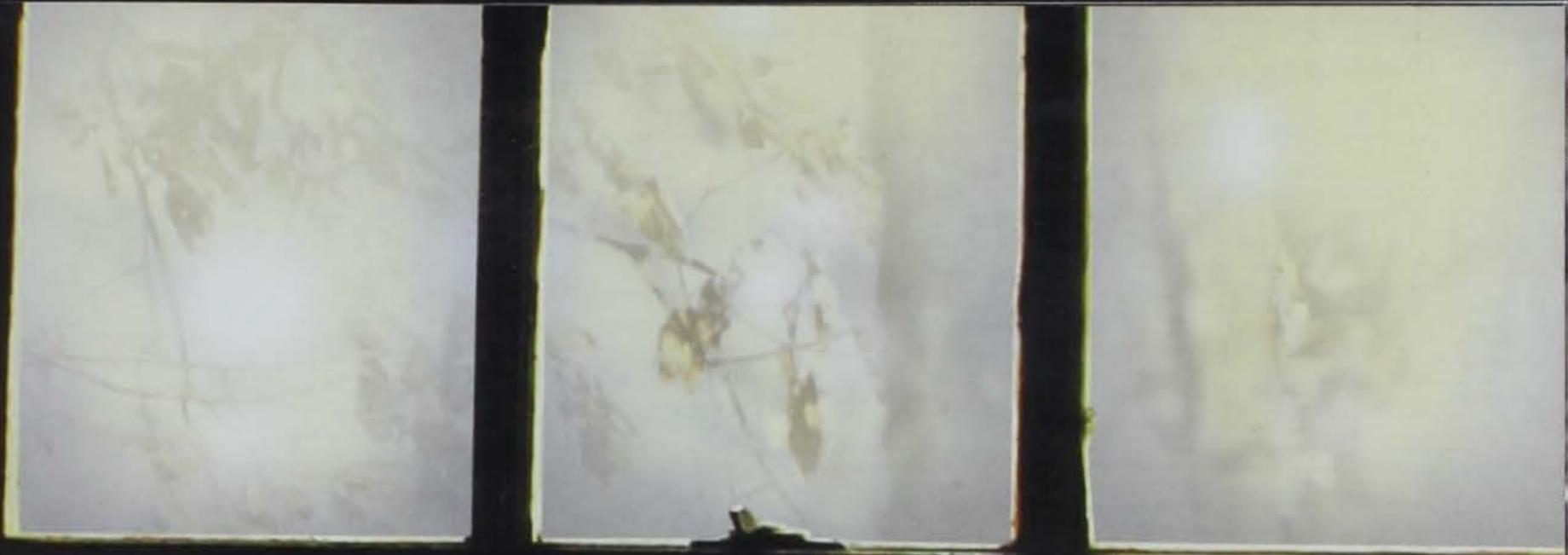
The small cabin I own in these woods lies in the protective embrace of towering oak and hickory trees. For me, this simple, rustic site is the Taj Mahal of tranquility, though by the time I maneuvered my Jeep through the gate and down the lane, I could barely see the cabin through the heavy snowfall, and the pond was already frosted white, the only indication of its existence



being the slender willow trees that ring it.

Within minutes I had the old percolator sputtering with a promise of hot coffee, then set about to fire up the woodburner. The cabin was freezing, literally. Even bottles of Bud Light had frozen and cracked open. I knew, though, that the trusty little stove would kick in fast and heat the room so well I'd have to open a window to cool it off a bit.

Plenty of fallen trees cover the forest floor, so I cut my own wood. With great respect and caution I use a chain saw I bought in the nearby county seat town. The man who sold it to me was a bit skeptical when he handed me the hefty box containing my purchase.



"Little lady," he said, bobbing his head in concern, "you be careful with this. Read the directions good...and follow them. This here's a mighty dangerous tool, ya' know." I knew—and indeed I do use it with great care, always wearing boots, gloves, and a blaze-orange hardhat with a face screen when I cut firewood. I'd likely scare to death anyone coming along who might see me in the getup.

When the woodburner was going well, I set the dampers and had a cup of coffee. Sipping the hot brew, I stood at the back window and watched a buck strutting through the trees behind the cabin, impressed, as always, by the noble and confident air these animals possess.

By two o'clock the snow had begun to taper off, and I eagerly headed out for a long hike. I wanted to be the first to make tracks in the new snow and was giddy to find no critters had beaten me to the punch. Even the buck's trail had filled in.

My few acres are surrounded for the most part by Stephens State Forest that is open for public hunting and

hiking. The truth is, however, that the orneriness of the road winding past my gate and on into the forest is such a challenge that often hunters and hikers figure it's not worth the effort, and seek out other public land for their pursuits. As a result, I frequently sense I'm blissfully alone in the several thousands of acres of timber, meadows, ravines, and creeks. This was one of those times.

These solitary escapades through the deep forest frequently prompt such questions from family and friends as, "Isn't that dangerous? Aren't you afraid?" Of course I know there is a certain element of danger, just as there is in my neighborhood in town, but I am cautious and alert. As for being afraid, I feel safer in the orderly wildness of the woods than in the wild civilization of town.

Hiking along, I thought of the relationship I'd been carrying on with this piece of land for so many years...nothing short of a love affair that part of me always want to shout about to the world and part of me wants to hold close in abject possessiveness.

Still, I mused, as I continued my trek and my reflection, just because I love this Iowa woods doesn't



mean everyone will. Even I have to admit it lacks many of the attractions that send Americans scrambling each year to the popular tourist spots.

The several thousand acres of forest I wander is a miniscule tract of wooded ground compared to our national forests, parks, and preserves that cover millions of acres. Of course I could argue that for that very reason it becomes even more significant as an untamed oasis on an overly cultivated landscape, which, unfortunately, Iowa is.

There are no majestic white mountain peaks here. Yet the hazy mellow ridges are decked out year round in chameleon woods, with garments ranging from luminous green to brilliant gold to its current glittery winter-white.

These woods have neither coastal shore nor large lake on which a mighty ocean liner or showy motorboat can navigate. But it does have that tranquil forest pond stocked with bass and bluegill for fishing and rimmed with a warm bank for sunbathing.

This woodland is not stirred by balmy tropical winds that blow in from a warm sea, but frequently there is a capricious breeze that begins down the draw and works its way forward to tease the tips of the trees that canopy the cabin.

The wild resonant call of the loon will never reverberate through this timber, but I can hear the quavering whistle of the screech owl and the summertime theme song of the whip-poor-will. Occasionally I'm treated to a visit by the great blue heron which lights momentarily on a fallen log, only to disappear just as quickly into the aerie-fairy world of the upper reaches of the tallest hickory trees.

No lordly elk or elusive bighorn sheep will amble along these trails, but the spirited white-tail deer and the strutting wild turkeys that parade near the cabin are warm and welcome substitutes.

All in all, this graceful, timbered land holds its own against its more majestic competitors, but as Thoreau

GET OUTSIDE

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said, one has to be awake to it.

In the otherwise silent world I walked, country sounds reached my ears. Somewhere a farmyard dog barked, possibly at nothing more than the glory of the crisp, snowy day.

A truck climbed a gravel incline miles away; and a distant gunshot told me a farmer was probably hunting rabbits behind his barn.

By the time I headed home and cranked up the woodburner again, the snowfall had stopped, and the western sky was flaunting a gleaming pink and blue sunset. The short day was ending and evening was close at hand. I grabbed a heavy quilt and went outside to the porch swing.

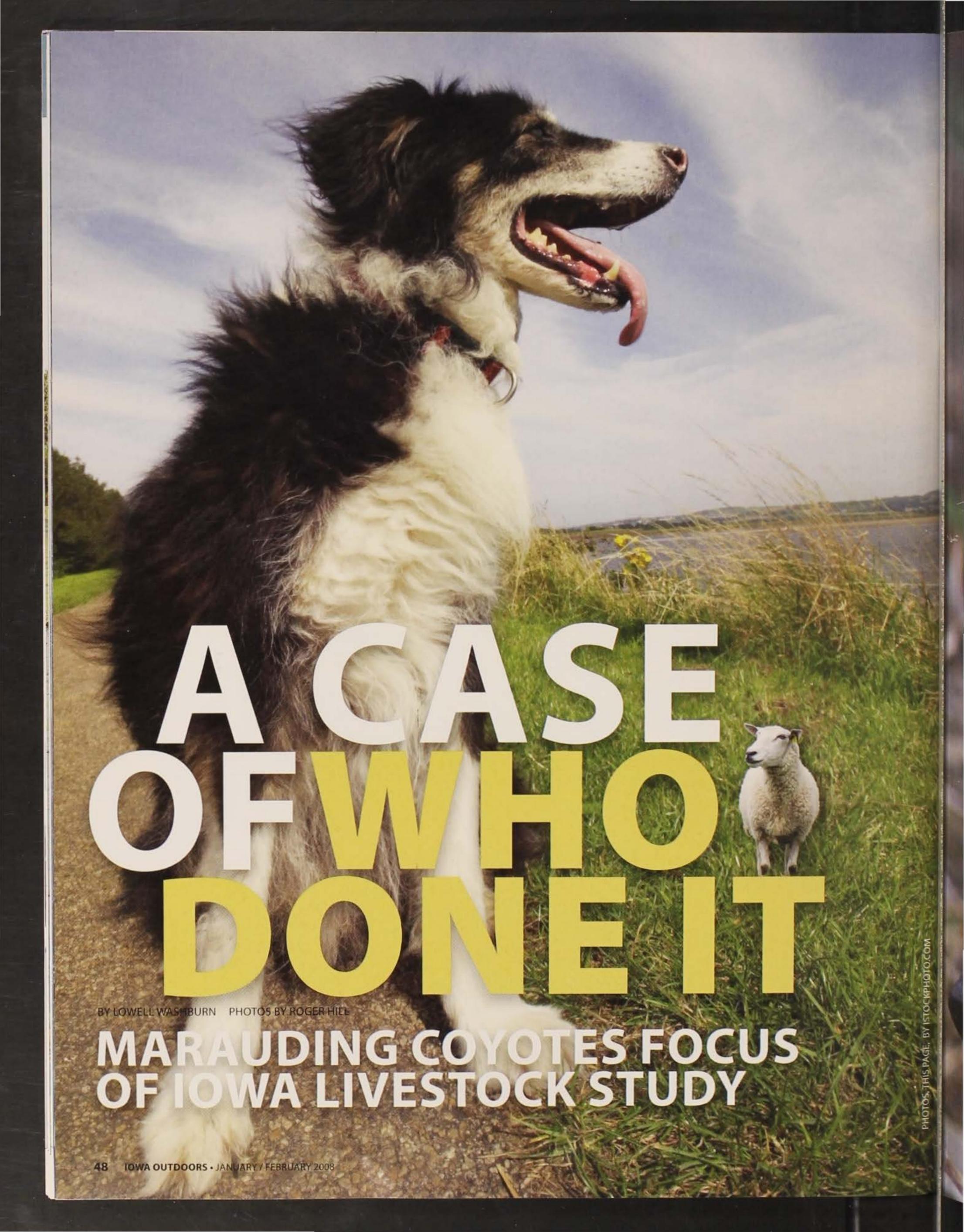
While I waited for the nearly full moon to rise, I pictured the mall a scant hour away, but an eternity removed from these woods in terms of spirit and atmosphere. There, no doubt, numb store clerks were still ringing up gift returns, and once-proud Christmas trees stood bereft of all self-respect, humiliated by the

sudden turn in circumstances that one day makes.

When I cleared my head of all its meanderings and focused on what was at hand, I saw the tip of the white-gold orb sashay into sight along the crest of the ridge, take a bow, and continue rising. Its laser beams danced in and among the black, silhouetted tree trunks, tickled the armpits of the branches, then leapt skyward to lay claim to all the heavens and the earth.

When the moon was directly over the cabin, when I could stay awake no longer, I went inside and snuggled deep into my cot. From the covers, I peeked out the window and saw the stars glistening over the pond and heard the beginning strain of the frequently sung duet composed of the wail of coyotes on a far-away ridge and the tolling of a train whistle as it shattered the peace of a distant village.

Before the wild animals' laments had dissolved into the cold, crystalline air and the clatter of the train had evaporated over the hinterland, I was sound asleep. 🐾



A CASE OF WHO DID IT

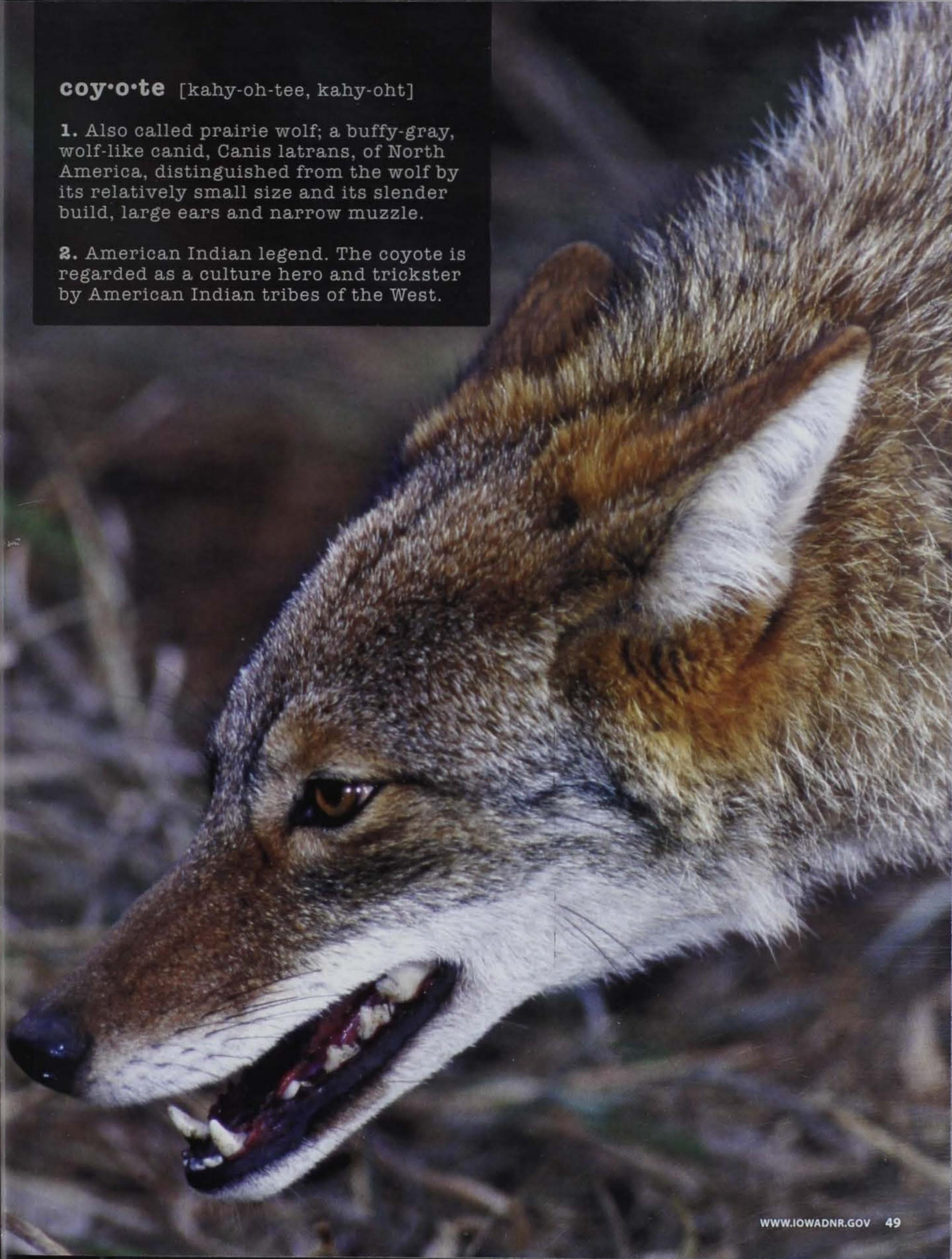
BY LOWELL WASHBURN PHOTOS BY ROGER HILL

MARAUDING COYOTES FOCUS OF IOWA LIVESTOCK STUDY

coy·o·te [kahy-oh-tee, kahy-oh-t]

1. Also called prairie wolf; a buffy-gray, wolf-like canid, *Canis latrans*, of North America, distinguished from the wolf by its relatively small size and its slender build, large ears and narrow muzzle.

2. American Indian legend. The coyote is regarded as a culture hero and trickster by American Indian tribes of the West.



The rancher's eyes flashed with contempt.

"I want you to kill every one you see," came the harsh pronouncement.

Then, as if his point needed any further emphasis, the landowner vehemently spat a thick stream of amber liquid in the direction of a nearby wooden fence post. The tobacco juice hit with an audible splat, barely missing its intended target—a large brown grasshopper.

"If you could know the number of coyotes around this place it would scare ya to death," the rancher continued.

Adjusting the brim of his sweat-stained Stetson, the man nodded toward a grazing herd of black angus.

"These heifers lost over half their calves to coyotes this spring, and that's not unusual. The older cows learn how to take care of themselves and hardly lose anything at all. But that first go round is a tough one, and anymore I don't even plan on a break even.

"Back when it was legal, we tried to poison 'em out but it didn't help much. Later we had a couple of guys who shot coyotes from an airplane. My neighbor shot them over bait and killed 139 in one winter. When it was all done, I think there were more coyotes than ever. We still shoot what we can, but today we just sorta live with the things."

This spicy conversation took place in a section of the Nebraska sand hills so remote that the only visible roads were dirt trails made by pickup trucks, and the rancher's nearest neighbor lived 12 miles away. Although the arid rolling landscape of Nebraska's short grass prairie is in stark contrast to the humid, corn-covered flatlands of Iowa, the commentary was no different than that heard everywhere. From the colorful saguaro deserts of Arizona, to the windswept plains of Dakota, to the rich farmland mosaic of the Midwest, the message is universal. That Nebraska rancher seemed to speak for everyone. "Kill 'em all!"

The scenario of "Man vs. Coyote" is not new. Ever since European settlers came in contact with this elusive canine there has been trouble. For generations humans viewed the coyote as a vicious, marauding predator. An unwanted competitor with the capacity to diminish livestock profits and destroy wild game.

In reaction to these perceived threats, coyotes have been vigorously trapped, shot and poisoned—often at taxpayer expense—throughout their range. The wiley coyote's response to relentless persecution is increased numbers and expanded territory. Although this able predator is accused of killing everything from colts to chickens, the most frequent and violent clashes involved the sheep industry.

By the 1970s, conflicts between southern Iowa sheep ranchers and coyotes peaked. In response to alleged ag losses, the DNR joined forces with Iowa State University to begin a decade-long study to determine the true impact of coyotes on the state's sheep industry. Heading the cooperative effort was veteran DNR Furbearer Resource Biologist Ron Andrews.

"At the time we launched the study, tensions between southern Iowa sheep ranchers and coyotes had become pretty volatile," says Andrews. "For the study to be successful, we needed to answer two questions. 'How much of the damage was actually being done by coyotes?' and, equally important, 'How could we help Iowa ranchers reduce their losses in a cost effective manner?'"

A central focus of the study investigated landowner complaints regarding coyote depredation. With Iowa's absence of large carnivores, such as grizzlies or wolves, there were two possibilities, says Andrews. The sheep killers were either coyotes or free-ranging, domestic dogs. Unlike many outdoor mysteries, determining "Who done it?" was straight forward.

The contrast between the two mammals was dramatic. Coyotes kill for food; dogs kill for fun.

Coyotes prefer to kill lambs—they are lighter weight and pose less chance for injury; dogs take on whatever they can find.

Coyotes usually hunt by themselves, occasionally in pairs; dogs hunt mostly in packs—the more the merrier.

Coyotes are no-nonsense hunters. They kill cleanly, targeting the throat and quickly dispatching their victims by clamping their windpipe.

Dog depredation is a much messier proposition best described as frenzied mayhem. There are no clean kills.

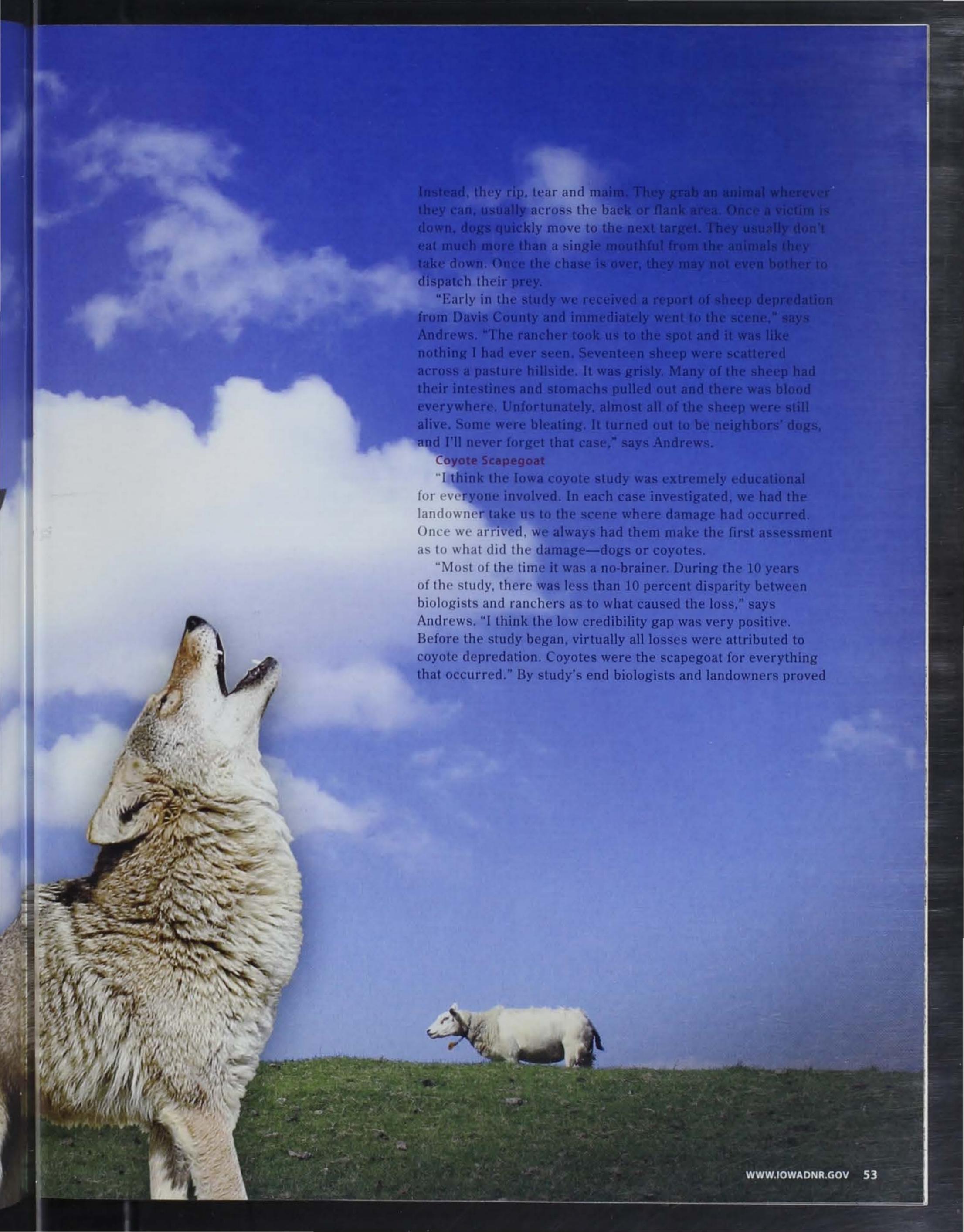




THE SCENARIO OF MAN VS. COYOTE IS NOT NEW. EVER SINCE SETTLERS CAME IN CONTACT WITH THIS ELUSIVE CANINE THERE HAS BEEN TROUBLE.

"THE SHEEP KILLERS WERE EITHER COYOTES OR FREE RANGING DOMESTIC DOGS. UNLIKE MANY OUTDOOR MYSTERIES, DETERMINING WHO DONE IT WAS VERY STRAIGHT FORWARD."



A photograph of a coyote howling on a grassy hill. The coyote is in the foreground, its head tilted back and mouth open. In the background, a sheep is grazing on the grass. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds.

Instead, they rip, tear and maim. They grab an animal wherever they can, usually across the back or flank area. Once a victim is down, dogs quickly move to the next target. They usually don't eat much more than a single mouthful from the animals they take down. Once the chase is over, they may not even bother to dispatch their prey.

"Early in the study we received a report of sheep depredation from Davis County and immediately went to the scene," says Andrews. "The rancher took us to the spot and it was like nothing I had ever seen. Seventeen sheep were scattered across a pasture hillside. It was grisly. Many of the sheep had their intestines and stomachs pulled out and there was blood everywhere. Unfortunately, almost all of the sheep were still alive. Some were bleating. It turned out to be neighbors' dogs, and I'll never forget that case," says Andrews.

Coyote Scapegoat

"I think the Iowa coyote study was extremely educational for everyone involved. In each case investigated, we had the landowner take us to the scene where damage had occurred. Once we arrived, we always had them make the first assessment as to what did the damage—dogs or coyotes.

"Most of the time it was a no-brainer. During the 10 years of the study, there was less than 10 percent disparity between biologists and ranchers as to what caused the loss," says Andrews. "I think the low credibility gap was very positive. Before the study began, virtually all losses were attributed to coyote depredation. Coyotes were the scapegoat for everything that occurred." By study's end biologists and landowners proved

"BY THE TIME THE STUDY CONCLUDED, WE (BIOLOGISTS AND LANDOWNERS) HAD PROVEN THAT SHEEP LOSSES WERE SPLIT NEARLY 50/50 BETWEEN COYOTES AND FREE RANGING, DOMESTIC DOGS."

sheep losses were equally split between coyotes and free-ranging, domestic dogs.

The study's final objective was to discover ways for farmers to effectively reduce losses.

Everyone agreed eliminating predators was impractical. "That had already been tried in every way imaginable," says Andrews. "Instead, we suggested ways farmers could change or improve their animal husbandry practices. The best solution, far and away, was to build a predator-proof wire pen that the sheep would come into at night. Pens were an incredibly simple and inexpensive measure that immediately cut sheep losses to almost nothing."

Some farmers tried imaginative measures—using guard animals such as llamas, guanacos or sheep dogs to protect flocks. They worked, but with widely varying degrees of success, says Andrews. A spectacular backfire occurred when a collie guard dog was caught killing a neighbor's sheep. A canine version of Jekyll & Hyde, the animal faithfully guarded his owner's flock by day and then ravaged the countryside by night.

IOWA COYOTES OFFER RECREATIONAL BENEFIT

The coyote may well be Iowa's most despised wildlife. Universally villainized as a "low-down chicken stealin,' good-for-nothing sheep killer," the coyote is regarded by most as a useless and destructive pest.

But Woodbury County's Steve Greibel has a different view of this wild canine. He respects coyotes and, from a recreational perspective, sees a valuable resource.

"For me, it would be pretty hard not to respect the coyote," says Greibel. "When you think about it, coyotes are pressured the year round. They're chased with dogs, chased with trucks, trapped, pursued by predator callers and continually harassed by farmers. No other furbearer endures that kind of pressure." So how does the coyote manage to survive? Superior mental and physical traits appear to be part of the answer.

"Everyone will shoot at a coyote," says Greibel. "Pheasant and rabbit hunters, deer hunters, everyone. I think the term 'once burned, twice shy' definitely applies to coyotes. Every time they survive an encounter with humans it just makes them that much cagier."

An avid trapper, Greibel recalls a year when he captured more than 100 coyotes. When skinned, more than half contained .22 caliber bullets, buckshot or birdshot. It's easy to see why coyotes become so effective at avoiding human contact.

"In order to survive coyotes need to have the best of all physical abilities," says Greibel. "As far as I'm concerned, they have the very best eyes, ears and nose of anything in nature. In my opinion, nothing even comes close matching them."

Although Greibel enjoys matching wits with the coyote in a variety of ways, predator calling is his favorite. The season is open year round, but late summer and early fall find coyotes most vulnerable as juvenile animals disperse to new territories. Pelt values peak from November through January. The most challenging hunting occurs after the shotgun deer season.





can·id [kan-id, key-nid]

-noun

Any animal of the dog family Canidae, including the wolves, jackals, hyenas, coyotes, foxes and domestic dogs

[From New Latin Canidae, family name, from Canis, type genus, from Latin canis, dog; see canine.]

**"IN ORDER TO SURVIVE COYOTES
NEED TO HAVE THE BEST OF ALL
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"In Iowa, coyotes can be anywhere—everything is habitat," says Griebel. "The main thing is to play the wind and always have a good downwind view. I also like to hunt along the edge of a pasture or alfalfa field where the animals will really stand out against the background."

"The first call I use is a Howler. To a coyote, a howl can be a challenge or an invitation. The Howler is a locator call and I'm hoping to solicit an answer," says Griebel, who switches to a distress call, usually one that mimics a cottontail rabbit, if there is no response.

"Usually I'll call for about 30 seconds or so and then wait for a minute or two. If one call doesn't work I'll try something different, just like you would when turkey hunting. Early in the fall, you can call a lot. Later in the winter most of the rabbits are gone, and I rely more on howling."

Early in the year, a coyote might run straight to the call. When hunting brushy habitats, close-up encounters are best handled with a 12-gauge shotgun. In open country, many hunters prefer lighter caliber, center fire rifles.

"Coyotes are always looking for an easy meal and, generally speaking, if you call they'll come. There are times when it can definitely get exciting," says Griebel. "Sometimes after hearing your howl a big male will decide to defend his territory and come charging right in with his hackles up. Once a coyote pinpoints your location, it's as if they're staring right through you. They really look huge and you get a sense of what it's like to be the rabbit."

NATURAL HISTORY & COYOTE TRIVIA

HABITAT: Highly adaptable to climate and terrain, coyotes can survive almost anywhere. They prefer thick brush, bottomland timber and rolling landscapes, but will also utilize everything from cattail marshes to urban green space. In portions of Des Moines, Davenport and Cedar Rapids, coyotes routinely prowl streets by night in search of urban cottontails and garbage.

DIET: Small mammals make up 85 percent of the coyote's diet. Like most predators, they are opportunists. Although coyotes consume game birds such as ducks, pheasants or turkeys, studies show raccoons have a far

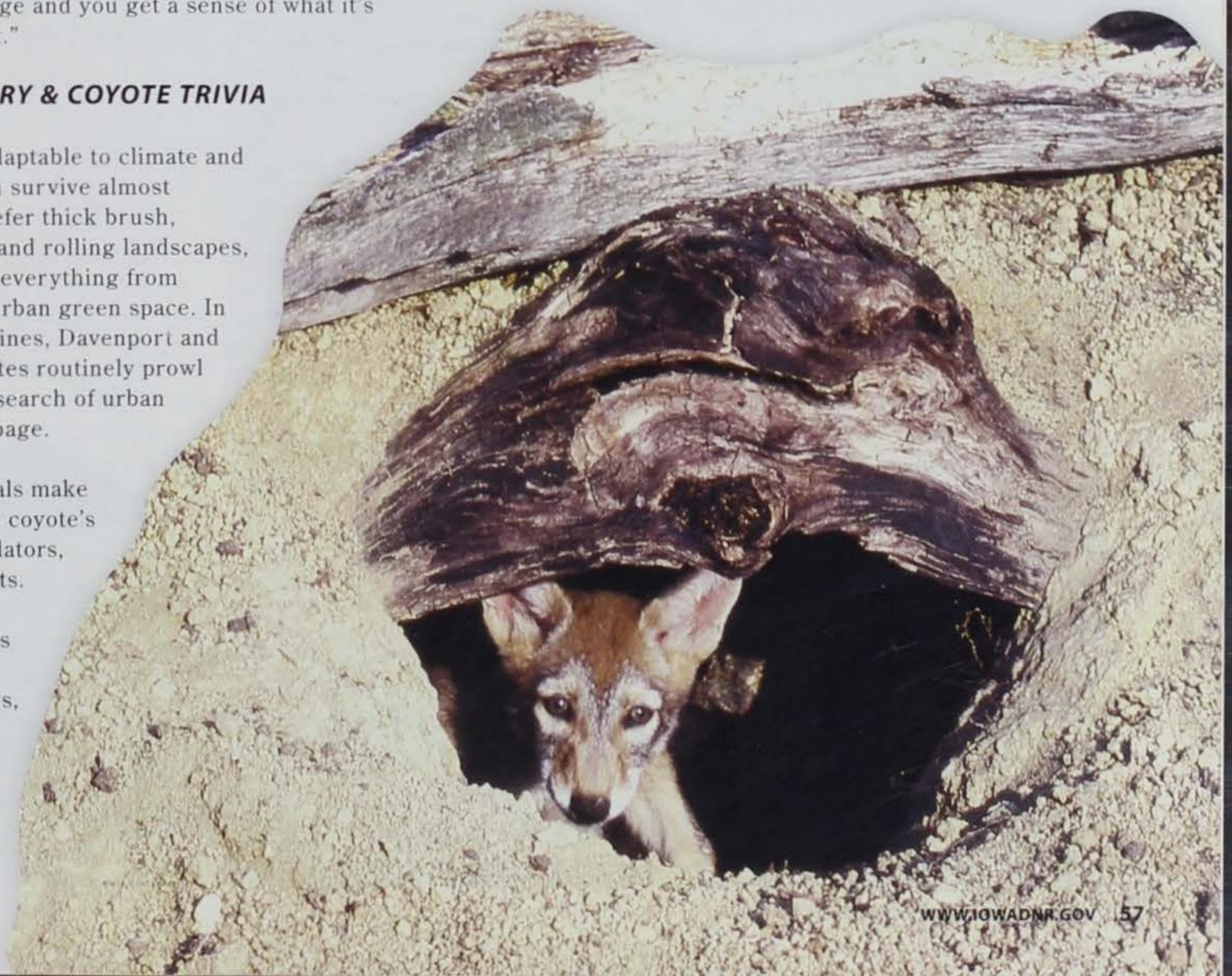
greater impact. A Jamestown, N.D. based study discovered red fox have a significantly greater negative impact on ground nesting birds than coyotes.

HOME RANGE: Radio telemetry shows Iowa coyotes have a home range of 50 square miles or larger for males, and around 20 square miles for females. Summer ranges are significantly smaller.

DENS: Coyotes den in a variety of habitats. Preferred sites include dense shrubbery, brush piles, natural caves and overhanging rock ledges. Coyotes can excavate their own sites, usually in terraces or stream banks far removed from sight of roads.

LIFE CYCLE: Mating season runs December through January. Pups are born during February and March. Litter size runs from five to seven. Males leave soon after pups arrive.

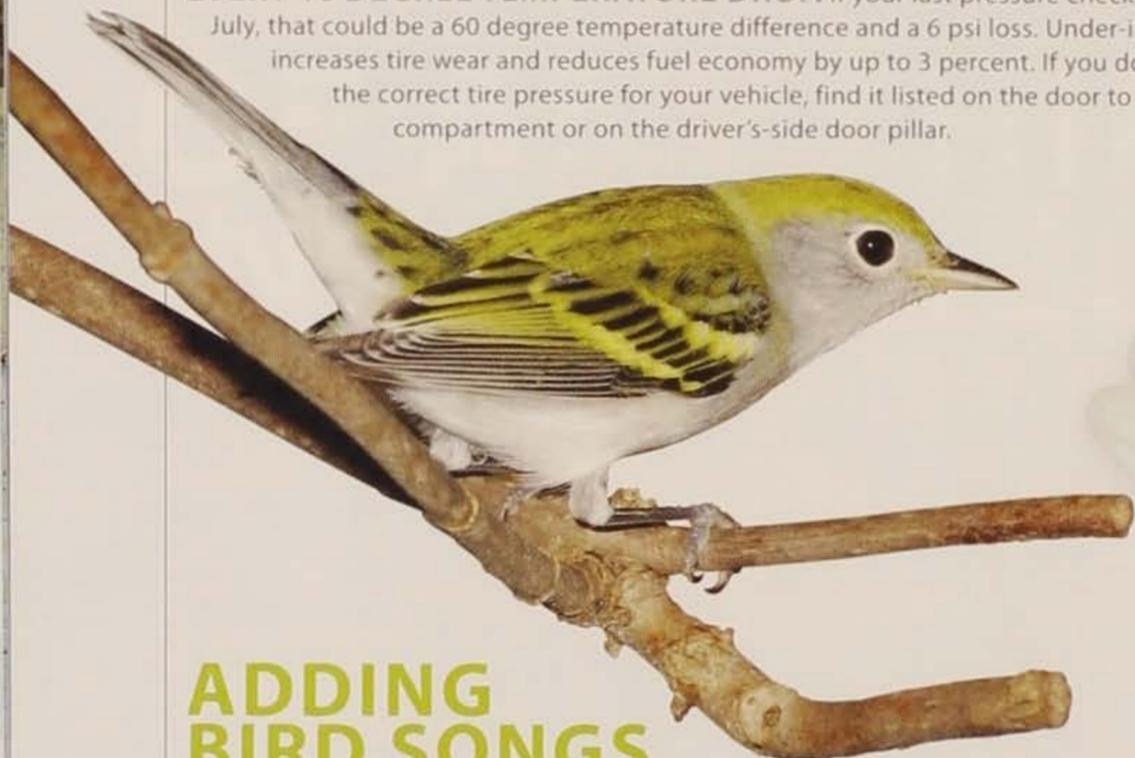
Females hunt and feed heavily away from the den and return to regurgitate partially digested food for pups. Young begin accompanying females during mid-summer hunts and gain independence by autumn. Adult males average 18 to 20 pounds but may weigh up to 30 pounds. Females are slightly smaller. 🐾





DON'T LET WINTER LEAVE YOU FLAT

Cold weather cannot only take your breath away, but deflate vehicle tire pressure, rob fuel economy and increase greenhouse gas emissions. **TIRES CAN LOSE ONE PSI FOR EVERY 10 DEGREE TEMPERATURE DROP.** If your last pressure check was in July, that could be a 60 degree temperature difference and a 6 psi loss. Under-inflation increases tire wear and reduces fuel economy by up to 3 percent. If you don't know the correct tire pressure for your vehicle, find it listed on the door to the glove compartment or on the driver's-side door pillar.



ADDING BIRD SONGS TO THE BYRDS' SONGS

Want a nature use for that new iPod® gift? Download bird songs to identify species by ear in the field. Buy, for example, the Stokes Field Guide to Bird Songs CD-ROM, rip the songs to a computer, then load the iPod®. Generally, such personal use by the CD-owner is fair use, but sharing tracks with others or posting to the Internet, well, that's piracy. Some companies that offer song CDs are adding software to download not only bird songs, but bird photos, sonograms, range maps, plus playlists by species location, season, habitat, family and sound groups to aid novice and advanced birders. Birders should not play back songs using speakers to attract birds when it may negatively impact birds during nesting and feeding young; times of stress; or to attract threatened, endangered or birds of special concern or in areas frequently visited by birders.

RESOURCES: www.ifieldguides.com/ibirdsongs.php



A Brighter Future

If American households replaced five frequently used conventional light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs, **THIS SIMPLE, MONEY-SAVING CONSERVATION ACTION WOULD PREVENT GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS EQUIVALENT TO NEARLY 10 MILLION CARS.**



BY BRIAN BUTTON PHOTOS BY CLAY SMITH AND BRIAN BUTTON

Dutch Oven Pheasant Pot Pie

BIG, HEARTY FOOD FOR A WINTRY CAMPFIRE OR EARLY SPRING CAMPING TRIP

Comfort food for a cold day is a snap using leftover pheasant or as a substitute, chicken breast. It's an easy one-pot meal with the golden goodness of stick-to-the-ribs crust.

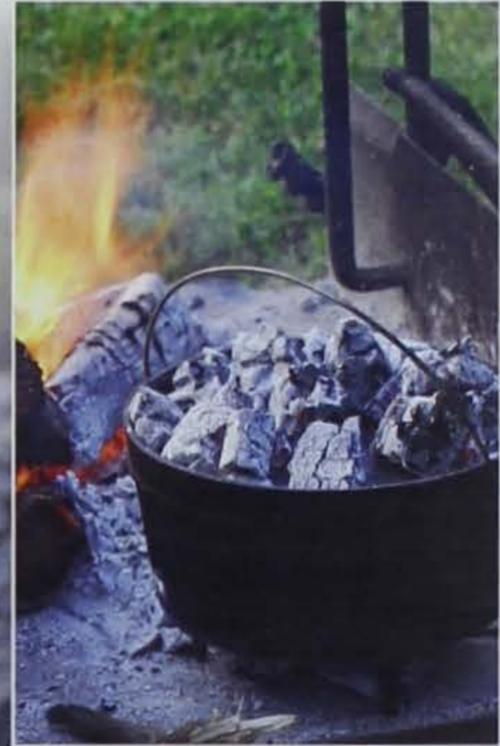
USE 20-22 CHARCOAL BRIQUETTES OR BUILD A SMALL COOKING FIRE REDUCED TO COALS.

- 4 boneless, skinless pheasant or chicken breast halves, cut into chunks
- 3 tablespoons olive or vegetable oil
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 onion, diced
- 4 medium potatoes, diced
- ½ cup milk or evaporated milk
- 16 ounce bag of frozen mixed vegetables, thawed
- 2 10.5-ounce cans cream of chicken soup
- 1 can refrigerated crescent rolls
- 1.5 tablespoons poultry seasoning
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce

Heat 12-inch Dutch oven over coals. Add oil, garlic, and cook pheasant or chicken, stirring frequently until no longer pink. Salt and pepper to taste. Add onions and potatoes and cook until onions are translucent. Stir in mixed vegetables, soup, milk, poultry seasoning and Worcestershire. Bring to boil. Unroll crescent rolls and create a top crust by layering flat rolls across top of ingredients.

With sticks or tongs, reduce bottom heat by removing several coals or removing 8-10 briquettes and adding 14-16 briquettes to the lid. Bake 25-30 minutes until rolls are golden brown and flaky. Check to make sure potatoes are cooked through, if not, remove coals or briquettes from lid and continue cooking with bottom heat to keep pie bubbling an additional 15 minutes until potatoes are cooked. **SERVES 6.**

Recipe adapted with permission from <http://papadutch.home.comcast.net>





Venison Mignon with Bearnaise Sauce



After 35 years cooking some of Iowa's best culinary delights, Liz Clark, dubbed the "Julia Child of the Midwest" and the "First Lady of Iowa Cuisine" by some of the nation's top food resources, now focuses on teaching and writing cookbooks. Spend a weekend gawking at eagles from Keokuk's 1897 Grand Anne B&B along the Mississippi River and take a Liz Clark cooking class at night in nearby Nauvoo, Ill. "I'm a farm kid," says Clark, a fifth generation Keokuk native. "I found my first morels at age three. I picked a whole basket of them." Mushrooms inspired her creative venison lasagna. "America, please wake up and eat well. Venison is very lean. Deer feed naturally with no hormones. It is a very good part of a healthy diet, rich in iron."

Rethinking Venison in Keokuk

VENISON AT ITS BEST RIVALIS THE FINEST BEEF. FOUR SAVORY RECIPES WILL IMPRESS FRIENDS—TENDER VENISON MIGNON, MUSHROOM-VENISON LASAGNA, MARINATED ROAST AND APPLE-VENISON SAUSAGE.

VENISON MIGNON WITH BEARNAISE SAUCE

Mild black olives add little taste, but provide moisture for a tender mignon. "Sear it and forget it," says Clark; don't overcook venison.

- 1 pound ground venison
- 2 tablespoons chopped black olives
- 2 tablespoons minced yellow onion
- 1 tablespoon minced Italian parsley
- 1 teaspoon sea salt
- 5-6 grinds black pepper
- 2 slices thick cut, natural bacon
- 4 tablespoons butter to sauté

In bowl, mix everything except bacon and butter. Divide into two burgers

about 1½ inches thick. Wrap sides with bacon and toothpicks.

Heat butter in heavy skillet over medium high heat. When butter bubbles, add meat. Sear one side 3-4 minutes or until surface is caramelized. Flip and cook four minutes.

Preheat oven to 400°. Place skillet in oven if additional cooking is desired. Do not cook above medium rare for juiciest mignon. Top with béarnaise sauce and serve with sautéed fingerling potatoes.

BEARNAISE SAUCE

- 1 tablespoon minced fresh tarragon
- 1 tablespoon finely minced fresh shallots
- 7-8 grinds fresh black pepper

- ½ cup red wine vinegar
- 2 large egg yolks
- 1 cup (2 sticks) salted butter

Bring tarragon, shallot, pepper and vinegar to boil in a non-reactive pan. Reduce heat and simmer, until reduced to about one tablespoon. Place in blender, blend in egg yolks.

Melt butter over low heat. Remove pan from heat. When you can just hold hand on pan bottom, but pan is still hot, slowly add butter to mixture in blender with motor running on lowest setting. Motor will change sound as béarnaise emulsifies. Taste for seasoning. Serve immediately.



Spiced Venison Roast served with Sweet Potatoes with Cranberries and Peppers



Cretia Hesse
Liz Clark in apron

Listed by *Time* magazine as one of the top B&Bs in the nation, guests enjoy eagle and scaup watching and summer river activities. Caretaker Cretia Hesse rises each day at 5 a.m. to prepare breakfast for guests in the 22-room mansion. Lounge on a fern-studded front porch hammock or stroll flagstone, pebble and brick paths in the backyard rose garden. The Tower Room, in a third floor turret, offers sunrise and moonrise views over the river in a 1940s art-deco room with marble bath and Jacuzzi, all just off the billiards room. Other rooms feature soaring nine-foot Eastlake-style bed headboards and original marble sinks in this George F. Barber-designed structure known for five types of wood accents and a grand entry staircase.



— — — — — **HAVE A GOOD RECIPE OF WILD FOODS TO SHARE?** Send to: WILDCUISINE@DNR.IOWA.GOV — — — — —

SPICED VENISON ROAST

A traditional Anglo-Saxon Christmas dish, these spices harken back to the Middle Ages when marinades were used to preserve meats. The result is a dark, moist delicacy comparable to the finest roast beef.

- 3 pounds top round venison**
- ½ cup granulated sugar**
- ½ cup dark brown sugar, firmly packed**
- 3 tablespoons Kosher salt**
- 2 tablespoons ground cinnamon**
or 1-inch stick ground in grinder
- 1 tablespoon ground ginger**
- 1 tablespoon ground cloves**
- 1 tablespoon ground juniper berries**
- 1 tablespoon ground allspice**

- 1 tablespoon ground white pepper**
- ½ tablespoon ground red pepper**
or cayenne
- 1-2 bottles Guinness Extra Stout Beer**

Wipe venison with paper towels. Massage half the spice mix into roast. Save remaining spice in a tightly covered jar for future roasts or to spice beef or pork in the same way.

Place meat in a non-reactive glass or ceramic container just large enough to contain it. Refrigerate, turning once or twice a day for seven days. The meat will give off a liquid. At end of seventh day, remove from marinade and pour off liquid. Place meat in a heavy non-reactive pan such

as enameled cast iron and cover with Guinness Extra Stout. Preheat oven to 290°. Place a tight-fitting lid on pan or cover with heavy foil and place in oven center. Braise for 90 minutes, turning after 45 minutes. Remove from oven and allow to cool in liquid.

Wrap meat in heavy plastic or foil and place on cutting board. Place another board on top, weighted with canned goods or bricks overnight. Slice very thin and serve at room temperature. Tightly wrapped, spiced venison will keep up to two weeks.

SWEET POTATOES WITH CRANBERRIES AND PEPPERS

The savory combination of peppers, onions

WILD CUISINE ~ KITCHENSIDE



Venison and Apple Breakfast Sausage



and cranberries gives a new dimension to this classic holiday dish. A great accompaniment to the spiced roast, the sweetness will please the entire family.

- 3 pounds sweet potatoes, peeled and sliced into one-inch rounds
- 1 teaspoon sea salt
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 1 large yellow onion, peeled and diced into ½-inch pieces
- 6 ounces fresh cranberries
- 2 bay leaves
- ½ cup light brown sugar
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon

Cover sweet potatoes with cold water and add salt. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat and simmer until just tender. Drain. Coat heavy baking pan with non-stick spray and place sweet potatoes in one layer.

In heavy skillet, melt butter over medium heat. Add onion and sauté until transparent. Stir in peppers, sauté until softened. Add cranberries, bay, brown sugar and cinnamon. Stir constantly until cranberries begin to pop. Spread over sweet potatoes.

Preheat oven to 350°. Place baking dish on center shelf and bake for 30 minutes. Serve with roast venison.

VENISON AND APPLE BREAKFAST SAUSAGE SERVES 4

- 1 pound ground venison

- 1 medium tart apple, cored and grated, but not peeled
- 1 small yellow onion, peeled and finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon fresh thyme, minced (one teaspoon dried)
- ½ teaspoon ground mace
- Freshly ground pepper to taste
- 1 teaspoon sea salt
- 1 large egg
- 5 tablespoons butter

Combine above except butter in a ceramic or glass bowl. Mix thoroughly. Sauté a spoonful in a tablespoon of butter over medium heat. Taste to adjust seasoning.

Form four patties. In heavy enameled skillet, over medium heat, melt four tablespoons butter. Add patties and press gently with spatula.

Sauté for four minutes or until bottom browns. Turn and sauté four more minutes. Check for desired doneness. Do not cook past medium.

VENISON LASAGNA WITH ROASTED PUMPKIN MUSHROOM RAGOUT

SERVES 12

Our managing editor, Al Foster, tasted this and gasped, "This is the best lasagna I've ever had." Mushrooms add a complex, meaty flavor and the pumpkin a subtle sweetness. Don't let the preparation frighten you, as parts can be made in advance. Serve with side salad and

tomatoes dressed with wine vinegar, hazelnut oil and toasted hazelnuts.

LASAGNA

- 1 recipe venison sausage mixture
- 3 cups pumpkin and ricotta custard mixture (Can substitute pumpkin with butternut squash)
- 1 recipe mushroom ragout
- 2 cups fresh tomato sauce
- 2 cups béchamel sauce
- 2 cups freshly shredded mozzarella cheese
- ½ package no-boil lasagna noodles
- ½ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- 4 tablespoons butter

Preheat oven to 350°. Spray a 9 x 13-inch lasagna pan with non-stick spray. Spread ½ cup tomato sauce on bottom of pan. Arrange noodles over sauce, breaking if necessary to fill gaps. Cover noodles with layer of béchamel. Add layer of pumpkin and ricotta custard, followed by a layer of sausage. Add half of mushroom ragout and top with ½ cup of tomato sauce and sprinkle half the mozzarella cheese over top. Arrange a noodle layer over top. Repeat layers to use all sausage, custard and mushrooms.

Top with final layer of pasta and coat with béchamel. Sprinkle with mozzarella and top with ½ cup Parmesan. Dot with 4 tablespoons butter.

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Venison Lasagna with
Roasted Pumpkin Mushroom Ragout



Place in oven on top shelf on a foil-lined sheet pan. Bake 30 minutes or until top is golden and bubbles around edges. Remove from oven. Let stand 30 minutes before slicing.

VENISON SAUSAGE MIXTURE

- 1 pound ground venison
- 1 small, yellow onion, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons fresh oregano, minced
- 2 large cloves garlic, minced
- 3 bay leaves
- 2 teaspoons crushed red pepper
- 1 tablespoon fennel seeds, toasted in a 350° oven for 10 minutes
- Sea salt and fresh ground pepper to taste
- 3 tablespoons olive oil to sauté

Heat olive oil in a heavy enameled skillet over medium heat. Add meat and stir, breaking chunks. Add onion, oregano, garlic, red pepper and fennel seed. Saute until onion is translucent and venison has colored. Season with salt and pepper. Cool.

PUMPKIN AND RICOTTA CUSTARD

- Flesh of one 3 to 4-pound pie pumpkin, roasted, or 1 15-ounce can solid pack pumpkin (not pie-filling)
- 1 15-ounce carton whole ricotta cheese
- 3 ounces fresh grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 large eggs
- ½ teaspoon nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon sea salt
- ½ teaspoon ground white pepper

Mash together pumpkin, ricotta and Parmesan with potato masher. Whisk eggs and stir into mix. Add nutmeg, salt and pepper. **MAKES THREE CUPS.**

WILD MUSHROOM RAGOUT

- 4 tablespoons butter
- 8 dried shiitake mushrooms
- 6 pieces dried porcini mushrooms, 2½-3-inches long
- 6 pieces dried oyster mushrooms, 2½-3-inches long
- 8 ounces fresh crimini mushrooms, also known as baby bella
- 1 large shallot, minced
- 3 bay leaves
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme, minced
- 1 teaspoon demi glace sauce mix (Available in spice aisle or 800-860-9385 or morethangourmet.com.)

Cover dried mushrooms with warm water and soak at least 30 minutes. Remove mushrooms from liquid and squeeze dry. Reserve liquid. Slice criminis into four hammer-shaped slices per mushroom.

Melt butter in a large, heavy skillet over medium heat. Add crimini and sauté—stirring until mushrooms give up moisture. Add reconstituted mushrooms, shallots and thyme.

Strain reserved mushroom liquid through a coffee filter and add to skillet. Stir in demi glace and

dissolve. Remove skillet from heat. **MAKES ABOUT ONE CUP.**

BECHAMEL SAUCE

- 4 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons Wondra flour
- 2 cups whole milk
- Freshly grated nutmeg
- Sea salt and fresh ground white pepper to taste

Melt butter in heavy sauce pan over medium heat. Add flour, stirring constantly for 3-4 minutes. Add milk and stir until thickened, about three minutes. Season with nutmeg, salt and pepper. **MAKES TWO CUPS.**

THYME AND TOMATO SAUCE

- 8 tablespoons butter
- 3 large shallots, peeled and minced
- 3 bay leaves
- 8 ripe tomatoes, seeded and chopped or canned tomatoes, briefly pulsed but not liquefied in food processor or blender.
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh thyme or 1 teaspoon dried
- Sea salt and fresh ground pepper to taste

In large enameled skillet over medium heat, melt butter. Saute shallots stirring until translucent. Add tomatoes and bring to boil. Stir until liquid is reduced by half. Stir in minced thyme. Season with salt and pepper. **MAKES ABOUT TWO CUPS.**



The Kid in All of Us

No doubt one thing that's been getting a lot of attention and publicity lately is the condition of Iowa's rivers.

And, it's a good thing. If you consider water as one of the necessities sustaining life, then our rivers can be looked at as our arteries. And, consider their history. Is there any doubt rivers were crucial to Iowa's exploration and settlement? To this day, even with the advent of the motor vehicle, they've remained an important part of commerce and transportation.

Sadly, it seems they have sometimes fallen to neglect. To some, the river evidently became a dumping ground. Officers spend a fair amount of time on the river. Early in my career, we had an annual assignment to float the length of rivers in our territories logging any encroachments on public waters. What I saw was unpleasantly astonishing. Old cars, televisions, construction debris, fencing and assorted junk could be found. From the large to the small, if it could be heaved over a bridge, it seemed to find its way into the river.

Then later in my career came fish kills. A call would come in of some substance floating down the river. I would drive out and find dead fish lining the river or stream bank. Sometimes I would wonder what I was accomplishing when I would stand on the river bank issuing a citation for no fishing license or an undersized bass when elsewhere on the river a fish kill may have wiped out an entire section of it.

It would be easy to get discouraged if not for the fact there have been some wake-up calls that appear to be heeded. Rivers are essential to our quality of life. As I work, I see more people unloading canoes and kayaks

at accesses. The recreational potential of our rivers probably still remains to be fully unlocked. I think back to a memory of fishing for channel cat with my dad on the Grand River. It was just a cut bank, but to me it seemed like a Western canyon. I can still hear the hissing of the Coleman lantern. The sounds of the crickets and frogs unseen in the darkness made for great adventure. Then there was the subject of stink bait. Put a boy and a bucket of stink bait together, and you get the idea.

There's just something about kids and water. A few days ago I watched some boys on the river bank. They started out just walking up and down the bank. Then they skipped some stones. Then they fished a stick with an attached snail out of the water for examination. I knew what was soon to happen. The next thing they were in over their ankles. I think the water continues to pull at the kid in all of us.

When I want to get away from all of it, I find there is nothing better than a canoe tied to shore upstream of a large snag in the river. Apply some cut bait to a treble hook,

then lean back against the boat cushion and wait. The only interruption is the occasional shadow and squawk of a heron swooping overhead, or of a hen wood duck doing her award-winning act of being injured to draw me away from her young. Sometimes I even wake up with a start to find a tugging on my line.

Sometimes, even better is wading the river on a hot day with a fly rod or an ultralight. The shade and cool water is better than any air conditioner. You come to a riffle or a rock overhang that looks, well, "fishy." To me there is nothing better than matching wits against a smallmouth that finally decides to buy what you are trying to sell him,





and the fight is on. Can't say that I ever bring any back. I usually return them to fight another day.

I've had my share of river adventure too. I remember as a new officer, my first excursion onto the Mississippi—something I had only dreamed about as a boy. Hot days pulling an illegal fish trap. Cold early mornings hidden behind a bank waiting for someone who thought they were the only person in the world out that morning to open up on a flight of ducks or geese.

Here's a theorem I've proven over and over on the river, also. It's not so much a problem now that most outboard motors are equipped with clutches on the propellers. But, before that, it seemed to be a fact the odds of hitting a rock and snapping off a shear pin was directly proportional to how far away you were from where you put into the

river. Many has been the day I've limped back downstream thankful I found a nail I could fashion into a shear pin. I learned early on to pack a bunch of them.

I'm fortunate to live on the river. I love to sit outside and listen to the water swirling over the riffle behind my house. I can witness season changes first-hand. The siren of the wood ducks and their colorful streak low across the water signals spring. The fawn grazing on the island looks up at me in summer. The crunch of my footsteps in the snow as I hike upstream echoes off the banks as the sun sets on a winter day.

In a way, we all "live on the river." I think there are good things ahead. I hope like me, you can still take off your shoes, wade out from a sand bar into the cool water, pick up a rock, and, think to yourself, "I hope I never grow up." 🐾

AMERICAN BALD EAGLE

Everyone knows the bald eagle is our nation's symbol. And everyone is aware of the eagle's celebratory rise from endangered status to being common. You might even know the largest eagle nest in Iowa—a whopping 7 feet across and 10 feet deep—is perched near Cascade in Dubuque County. But did you know...

I AM NOT A KID

Eagles reach maturity at age 4 to 5. Until then, they model varying shades of black and brown in an otherwise stark, white head, and will appear somewhat like its cousin, the golden eagle. More common in western reaches of the United States, goldens make occasional forays into Iowa, most notably northeast Iowa.

STRONG AS AN...EAGLE

An eagle can lift and carry items up to half its body weight. With an upper-end size of 15 pounds, a large eagle could carry nearly a gallon of water. Its strength comes from leg muscles, tendons and bones. A unique relationship between the tendons and tendon sheaths creates a ratcheting effect within the talons, allowing the eagle to maintain its grip on prey for long periods without experiencing much muscle fatigue (HawkQuest). Although hard to judge, some research indicates eagles can exert 1,000 pounds of pressure in each foot (American Eagle Foundation), or about 10 times that of humans (HawkQuest).

EAGLE EYE

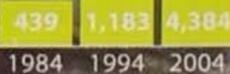
For a good idea of a bald eagle's keen eyesight, look through a seven or eight power pair of binoculars—roughly what a bald eagle sees, says DNR biologist Bruce Ehresman. Some researchers claim, if a bald eagle could read, it could peruse a newspaper at 100 yards.

SLOW DOWN THERE FELLA

An eagle can fly 35 to 44 miles per hour solo, or about 30 mph carrying a freshly caught meal. It can dive at speeds reaching 100 mph.

IOWA TIES

There are 210 active nests in Iowa, spanning 82 of Iowa's 99 counties, according to Ehresman. Iowa is also a mecca for winter bald eagle viewing. Only in Alaska can you see more bald eagles in one place at one time than you can on the Mississippi River. In fact, in a normal winter, as many as 400 eagles may be seen around Keokuk.



Iowa's wintering bald eagle numbers

I'LL GET TO IT...TOMORROW

Not one to rush a fine piece of work, bald eagles start nest building in November, and continue construction sporadically into January. A highly social and family oriented bird, eagles have no qualms nesting close to farmsteads, highways and even city edges. It begins incubating its clutch of one to three eggs as early as February.

EAGLE IMAGE BY MORGUEFILE.COM

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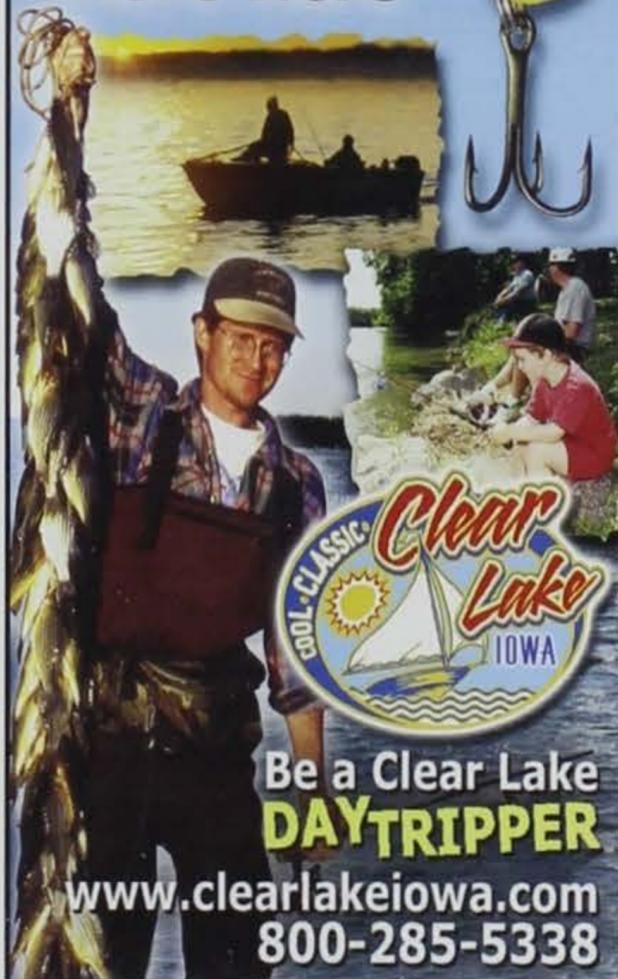
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