

MAY / JUNE 2010

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On our trip to Ireland this winter, we traveled around with Switchback, a Celtic music group, who have performed at TNG. Our group of 15 watched them play in pubs from Dublin to Killarney to Galway as we traveled in our tour bus. As we visited the old Castle in Blarney, I was able to kiss the Stone of Blarney.

The mysterious promise there follows: "Whoever kisses the "Stone of Blarney" will be given the "Gift of Eloquence". Now that the gift has been bestowed upon me, I would like to pass along some of my "Eloquence"..."

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June 25-27	Doc Hammill Driving Clinic
July 16-18	Music and Kayaking Extravaganza
July 23	Cave Concert featuring Sawtooth Bluegrass Band
Aug 7	ACTHA Ride
Aug 19-22	9th Annual Haybarn Rendezvous
Sep 10-11	Cave Concert featuring Switchback
Oct 9	Cave Concert featuring Michelle Lynn

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KIP LADAGE is a photographer/writer from Tripoli who often uses his camera at Sweet Marsh and the Wapsi River in Bremer County. He published his first book "The Wild Side of

Iowa—Images and Essays" and is working on another. View more of his work at www.butler-bremer.com/web/kladage.



DIANE MICHAUD LOWRY is an Ames photographer with images in catalogs and university publications. An avid year-round kayaker, she's paddled Puget Sound, the

Everglades, the Gulf Coast, Lake Superior and most of Iowa. She is a member of The Skunk River Paddlers, The Iowa Whitewater Coalition and Central Iowa Paddlers.



RON HUELSE of Knoxville has spent six years photographing wildlife, insects and birds near Lake Red Rock when not cycling, hiking or

volunteering. An avid paddler, he also helps find sponsors to reintroduce osprey locally and raises awareness of siltation issues at the reservoir. He's a recent retiree with "more hobbies than I have time for."



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JENNIFER WILSON is a travel and features writer based in Des Moines. Her work appears in *National Geographic Traveler*, *Frommer's Budget Travel*, *Midwest Living*

and *Esquire*. She spent 2009 in Europe for her upcoming book, *Touching Up My Roots*. www.touchingupmyroots.com

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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.

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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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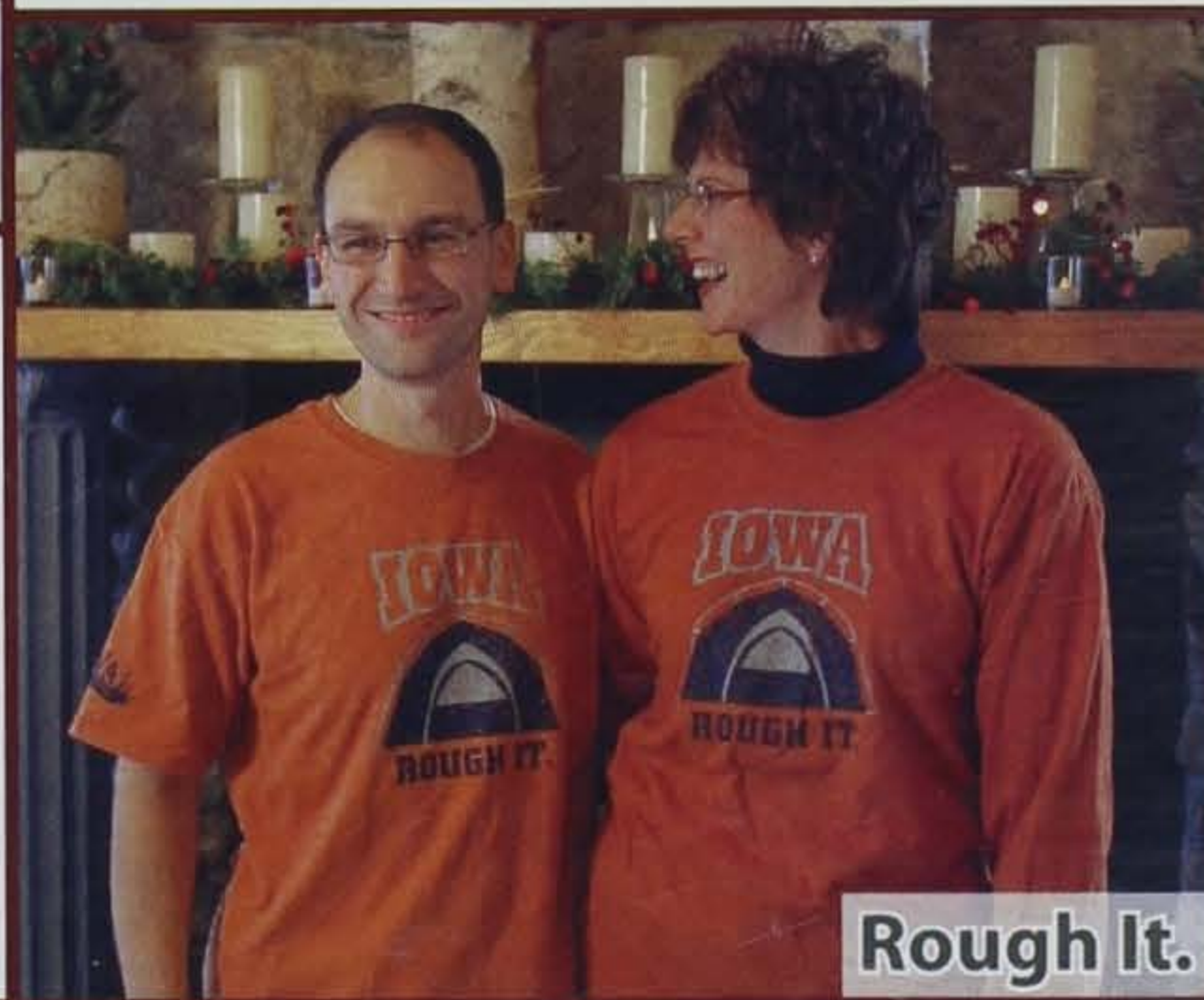
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Rough It.

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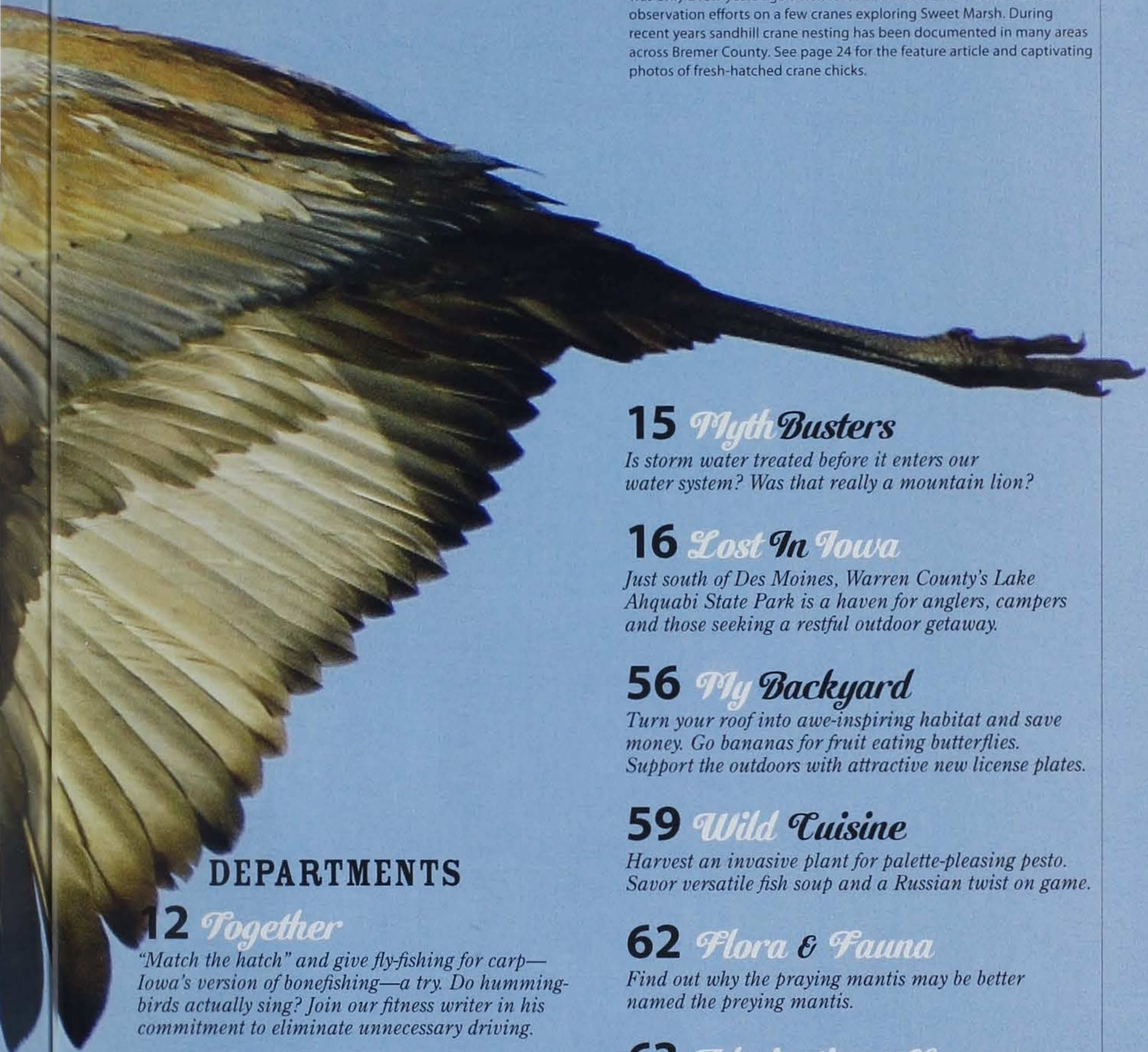
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ABOUT THE COVER

Contributing photographer Ron Huelse spent two weeks last spring photographing this pileated woodpecker nest. He got the photos plus a poison ivy rash. "It's an extremely vocal bird. Once you hear it, you'll never forget it," he says.



ABOUT THIS PHOTO

From his kayak, photographer Kip Ladage captured this image of an adult sandhill crane flying over an island of cattails. Sandhill cranes nest in the marsh habitat of Sweet Marsh in Bremer County near Tripoli. It was only a few years ago when local bird watchers concentrated their observation efforts on a few cranes exploring Sweet Marsh. During recent years sandhill crane nesting has been documented in many areas across Bremer County. See page 24 for the feature article and captivating photos of fresh-hatched crane chicks.

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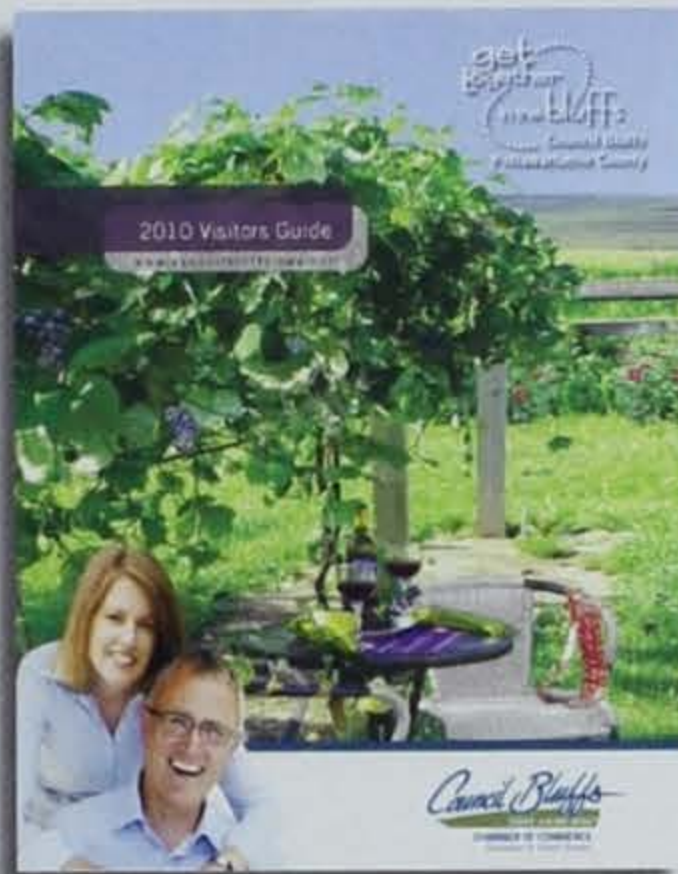


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with a dry fly hook, size 14 to 10. **1)** Use white thread and tie in white marabou. **2)** Tie in a tiny piece of white foam to aid flotation. **3)** Seal with head cement.

TIE A MULBERRY FLY

using a #8 hook, 1x to 2x length. **1)** Wrap the hook shank in thread and knot. **2)** Tie in pinched bundles of about 25 purple, blue and red deer hair starting from the back and working forward. **3)** Trim down to size. **4)** Knot off and seal with head cement.



Join the resurgence of fly anglers stalking one of the heavyweights of the freshwater world—the carp. A big, strong and tough fighter well-known to repeatedly strip the reel down to the backing line during up to four power runs, this behemoth is also known for its finicky palate when it comes to flies, making for a challenging strike.

According to Kathy Hughes of the Second Avenue Bait House and Fly Shop in Des Moines, Iowans head to Big Creek State Park in Polk County and area rivers to fly-fish for our local bonefish, the carp.

“It’s similar to fishing for bass, bluegill and crappie, but carp are bigger fish. They fight,” says Hughes. “It’s really exciting.”

Come springtime, when cottonwood trees send fluff into the air, anglers tie flies that imitate cottonwood seeds or mulberries that fall into the water from nearby trees. Look for carp feeding on the surface, sucking up food. Fish from shore or from a boat. Locate a mulberry tree during berry drop and you’ll find a feeding frenzy of engorging carp. Some anglers use kayaks to scout out lakeshores and rivers for the trees.

An 8- to 10-weight flyrod is best, and ensure your reels are lined with at least 100 yards of backing material because these freshwater freightliners will strip it during their line-stealing runs. A good drag is a must.

Sight cast by looking for fish tailing in shallow, flat waters and cast 1 to 2 feet in front of the carp or a greater distance to give time for the fly to sink.

Shane McFadden of Minneapolis is hooked on fly

fishing for Midwest carp. He’s gone on big game hunting trips in Africa and Argentina—he’s no stranger to a good time outdoors—and traveling to find carp for a fly rod session is a passion.

“It’s like hooking a Mack truck. They aren’t fast like a bonefish, but they give a heavy, slow power pull,” he says. “They fight, you reel them in, then they take off again. They will take you down to the arbor knot and make three to four runs,” he says. At a fraction of the cost of a saltwater trip, they are “the poor man’s bonefish,” he says.

McFadden ties a crayfish pattern using olive, black or green marabou, first wrapping the hook with lead thread to help it sink. To tie, wax up the thread, then spin in the marabou to create the thorax and tie two marabou bundles to replicate pinchers. He adds a dumbbell at the tip to mimic eyes. He says to tie it “bonefish style” with the hook barb facing up to avoid snagging the bottom.

“I cast 2 to 3 feet in front of feeding carp, let it sink and pop it once or twice along the bottom,” he says. He uses a 9-weight rod and also casts wooly buggers. “It is about as fun as it gets for freshwater fishing.”

So what to do with the catch? Contrary to popular belief, carp are quite tasty. It’s all the bones that put people off.

“Most people score them real deep and then deep fry them,” says Hughes. “If the bones are scored, they’ll be absorbed into the hot oil.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION Second Avenue Bait House and Fly Shop **515-282-4217**; iowaflyfishing.com.

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.

Do hummingbirds have a song?

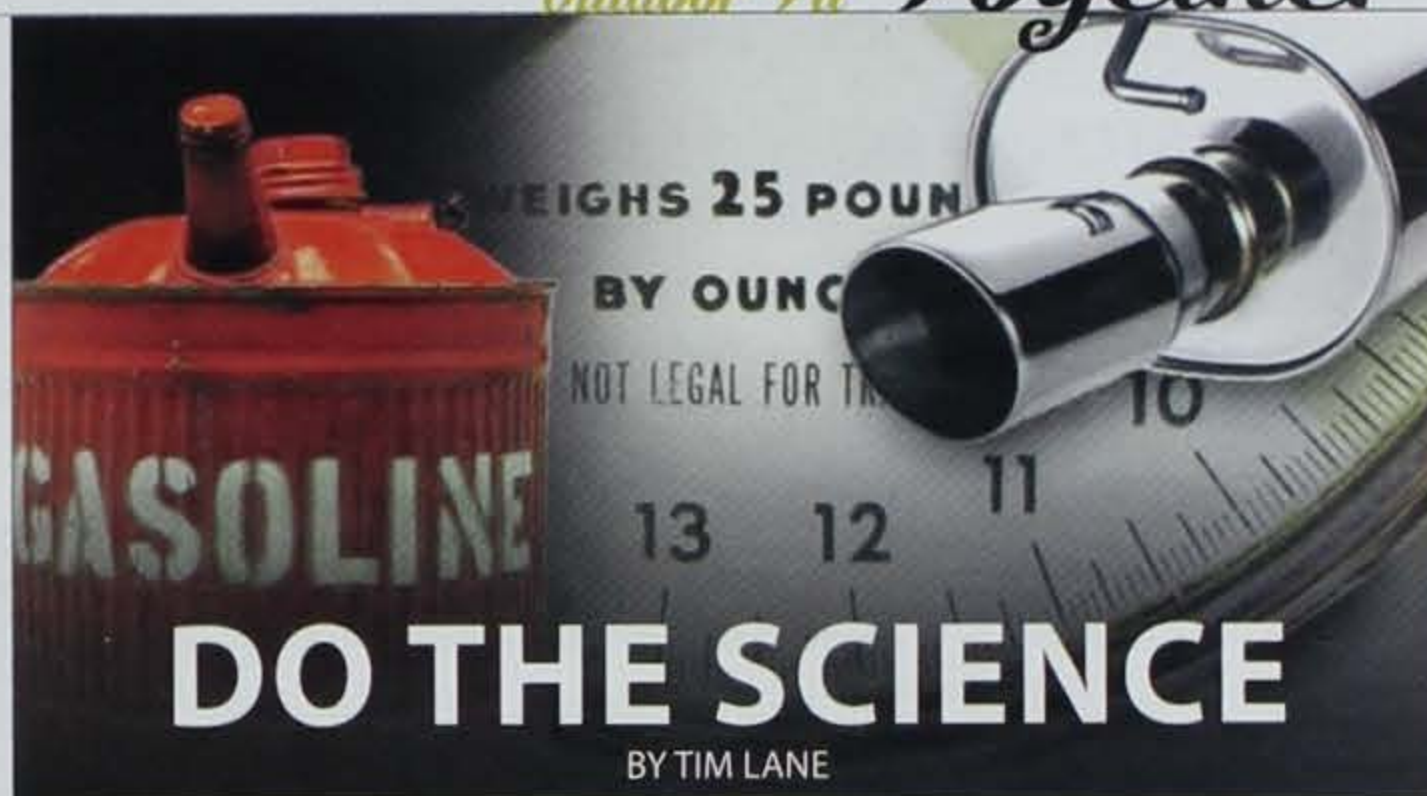
TIM, AGE 8, MARION

Start by explaining to your child that not all birds are songbirds. For example, there are shorebirds, birds of prey and upland game birds such as pheasant and quail. Robins, warblers and sparrows are songbirds frequently heard when your child goes outside. Hummingbirds aren't song birds. Scientists place hummingbirds and swifts in the same taxonomic order, the Apodiformes, which means "without feet," alluding to the hidden feet of the species.

Technically, they don't have a "song." They do, however, make noise. Hummingbirds emit high-pitched, low-volume chirps, which are often drowned out by other noises in nature. If you want your child to hear a hummingbird chirping, get very close to one in very quiet surroundings, such as sitting patiently near flowers that the birds visit. Other hummingbirds can hear the chirping, much like how dogs respond to dog whistles, even though humans can barely hear them.

The most noise you can hear from a hummingbird comes from its wings. They beat their wings so quickly—the ruby-throated wings beat about 53 times a second—they produce a low hum, earning them the name "hummingbirds."

Many birds, like songbirds, use their song or call to attract mates. That's not the case with hummingbirds. Hummingbirds are particularly aggressive and instead use their chirp to tell other birds to buzz off. You can watch this aggression in action when you see two hummingbirds hovering over the same plant. To attract mates, male hummingbirds display the colorful patch on their throats (gorgets) in hopes of catching a female's eye.



The next time you buy gas, take the number of gallons you buy and multiply it by 20. That sum estimates the weight of that gasoline after it has burned, or bonded in your engine with oxygen molecules, and converted to carbon dioxide. The molecular weight of carbon is 12 and the molecular weight of oxygen is 16! (Who knew oxygen had a molecular weight problem.)

The point is as we burn one gallon of gas, we chemically change about 7 pounds of liquid into water vapor and about 20 pounds of CO₂. A revelation to me, and in talking to others, I am not alone.

So I am now on a campaign to reduce automobile roundtrips of less than two miles. These trips account for 50 percent of all trips and 60 percent of emissions. Due to starts and stops, a short errand trip is inefficient. By eliminating short trips we cut those miles that burn the most gas and have the most impact on the environment.

The trips I suggest we purge are the absolute least efficient uses of the internal combustion engine. In its place, I suggest the absolute most efficient transportation ever invented ... the bicycle. This year Minneapolis and Denver are adopting an inexpensive bike rental system manufactured by Bixi and B-cycle. The goal is to make the most efficient choice the easiest choice.

Imagine an Iowa city or park with bikes available from locked racks conveniently located so all you need to ride anytime, anywhere is a credit card scanned for a very small fee. Imagine bikes as convenient as a Starbucks in Seattle. Even lazy folks would find biking easier than walking to their car or waiting for a bus. And think of the benefits of fun, fitness and health!

Now let me be clear, I think cars are great for hauling multiple individuals to destinations, like parks, that are far away. But they are overkill for hauling one person around for one mile. These trips add up, and the emissions outweigh any excuse for not walking or biking. One can cover a mile in 5 minutes on a bike or 15 minutes on foot. Driving such distances is a very small item to eliminate from our routines. But the impact is huge on both our fitness and air quality. Every mile of driving replaced by cycling or walking keeps around 3 pounds of carbon dioxide out of our environment, all while pumping our hearts and burning calories instead of gasoline.

Currently I am working with others in Iowa to introduce a bike kiosk system to various cities and parks. To get a better idea of what the program would look like visit www.bcycle.com.

By the way, last year I called for folks to join in my Carpe D.M. rides every Thursday from the confluence of the Des Moines and Raccoon River and for readers to begin similar fun rides across Iowa. This year, let's do it again with rides on the first Thursday of every month at 5:00 p.m. starting in May.

Tim Lane is the fitness consultant with the Iowa Department of Public Health. A marathoner, former director of the National Ski Patrol, climber and volleyball coach, he has cycled across America once and Iowa 25 times. He's a regular on RAGBRAI. Tim also helped design and promotes Live Healthy Iowa.

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

Learn the J-Stroke

Use this stroke to canoe solo and travel in a straight line while avoiding paddling on both sides. Start the J-stroke like a typical forward stroke, finishing with a gentle pry away from the canoe. Slowly turn the thumb of the top hand downward over the course of the draw to alter the pitch of the paddle blade. The thumb should point down by stroke's end. Combine this action with a gentle pry, or "J" motion away from the canoe with the paddle to provide additional course correction.



Hot Metal Fire Starter

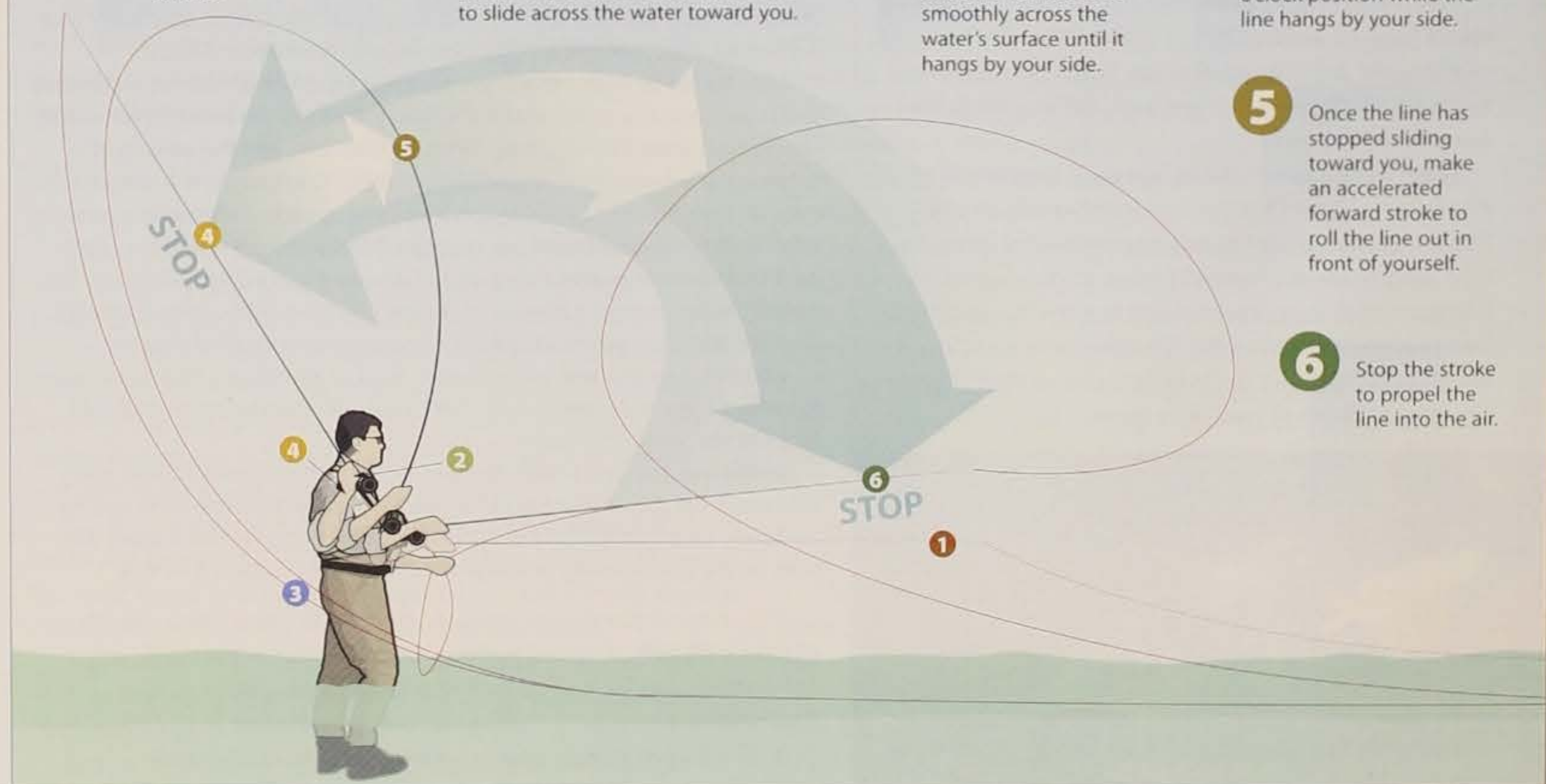
Keep a magnesium fire-starting rod in your camp box for a quick fire no matter the conditions. Waterproof and capable of creating thousands of fires, simply strike the rod to send burning metal into a pile of tinder. Using a knife creates more intense sparks than the striker that comes with the unit. Compact and durable, this new product from Coghlan's is available at many outdoor stores for less than \$4.



{How to Roll Cast}

The roll cast is truly a "must-have" technique for limited casting areas.

- 1 Begin with the rod tip parallel to the water's surface.
- 2 Lift your arm slowly and smoothly in a back-and-up direction until your hand is next to your face allowing the line to slide across the water toward you.
- 3 It is critical that the line not be airborne—it must slide smoothly across the water's surface until it hangs by your side.
- 4 Tip your wrist back stopping the rod in the 11 o'clock position while the line hangs by your side.
- 5 Once the line has stopped sliding toward you, make an accelerated forward stroke to roll the line out in front of yourself.
- 6 Stop the stroke to propel the line into the air.



J-STROKE ILLUSTRATION BY STUDIO Z; CASTING ILLUSTRATION BY BILLY POPE, OUTDOORALABAMA.COM; STRIKER IMAGE BY CLAY SMITH
STORM DRAIN PHOTO AND ILLUSTRATIONS BY STUDIO Z



NICE CLEAN STORMWATER?

A myth that has been making a splash maintains that stormwater runoff is treated before being released to our lakes and streams. We've waded through the facts to see if this allegory holds water or if it is simply all wet.

Stormwater runoff is generated when rain and snowmelt flow over the land and other non-porous surfaces and does not absorb into the ground. Unlike wastewater generated by our bathrooms and kitchens, stormwater is not treated by wastewater treatment facilities.

Instead, as the runoff flows over the land or impervious surfaces (paved streets, parking lots and rooftops) and makes its way to the storm drain, it accumulates and carries potential pollutants—including oil from automobiles, animal manures, fertilizers and pesticides, and cigarette butts and other debris resulting from illegal littering and dumping

activities. The stormwater and these accumulated pollutants then flow directly into our local lakes, rivers and streams.

Although we've drenched the myth that stormwater is treated, several measures can be taken to reduce the accumulation of pollutants in stormwater before flowing to our lakes and streams. These include cleaning up after pets, properly disposing of hazardous chemicals, properly disposing of litter and using Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices to reduce dependence on pesticides. In addition, rain gardens consisting of Iowa native plants—which act as pollution buffers—can be placed in low lying areas.

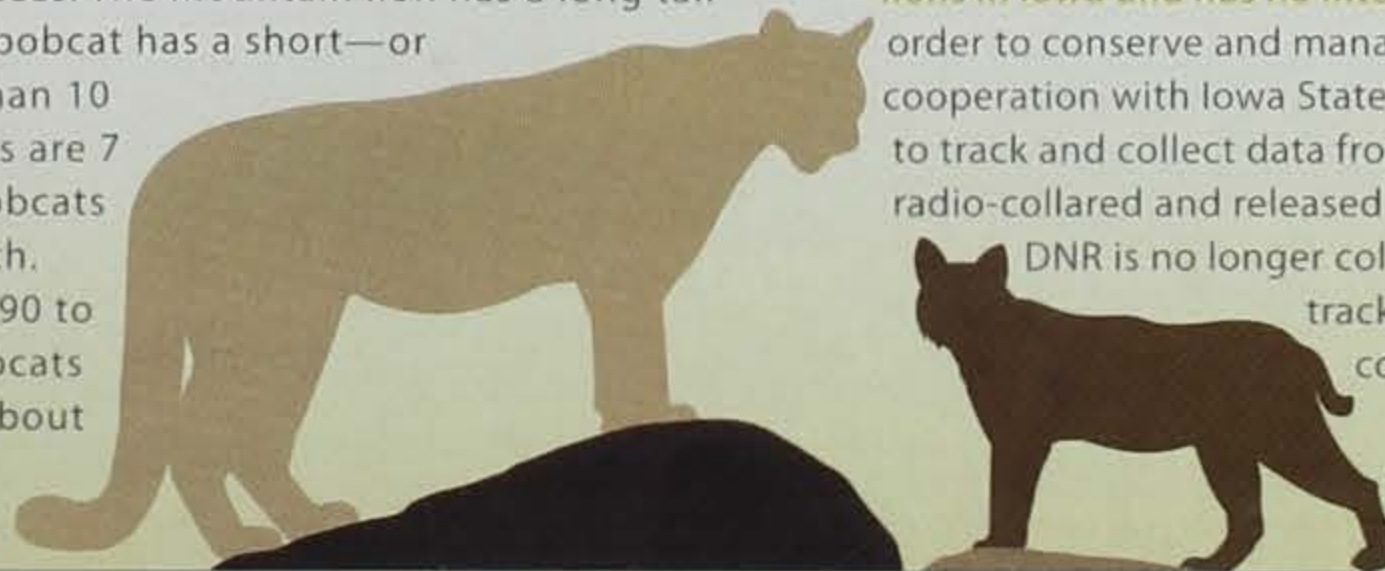
For additional information and other activities that reduce or eliminate stormwater pollution, visit the DNR website at www.iowadnr.gov/water/watershed/stormwater.html.

Ask The Expert Mountain Lions, Bobcats and Pumas

BY SHELENE CODNER

Mountain lions are often referred to as cougars, pumas, panthers and catamounts. They are the largest of three wildcats native to Iowa. The lynx and the bobcat are the other two. Seeing a mountain lion on the prowl in Iowa is a rarity. A recently confirmed sighting near Marengo in December 2009 marks the first confirmed sighting in Iowa in more than five years and the fourth mountain lion ever killed in modern times within the state (the last pre-modern kill occurred in 1867.)

Although the DNR receives numerous reports of mountain lion sightings, most are quickly debunked as a case of mistaken identity. Because mountain lions are known by many names, they are often confused with bobcats—whose estimated population in Iowa is approximately 2,500. But they are not the same critter. The mountain lion and the bobcat share many physical and behavioral traits, but they also have several distinguishing differences. The mountain lion has a long tail (2.5-3 feet), while the bobcat has a short—or “bobbed”—tail (less than 10 inches). Mountain lions are 7 to 9 feet long while bobcats are only 3 feet in length. Mountain lions weigh 90 to 160 pounds, while bobcats are 20 to 30 pounds, about twice the size of a house cat.



Bobcats tend to be darker brown with lighter belly fur and spots while mountain lions tend to be a more uniform brown, tawny color. Although difficult to see at a distance, bobcats have tufts on their ears and cheeks.

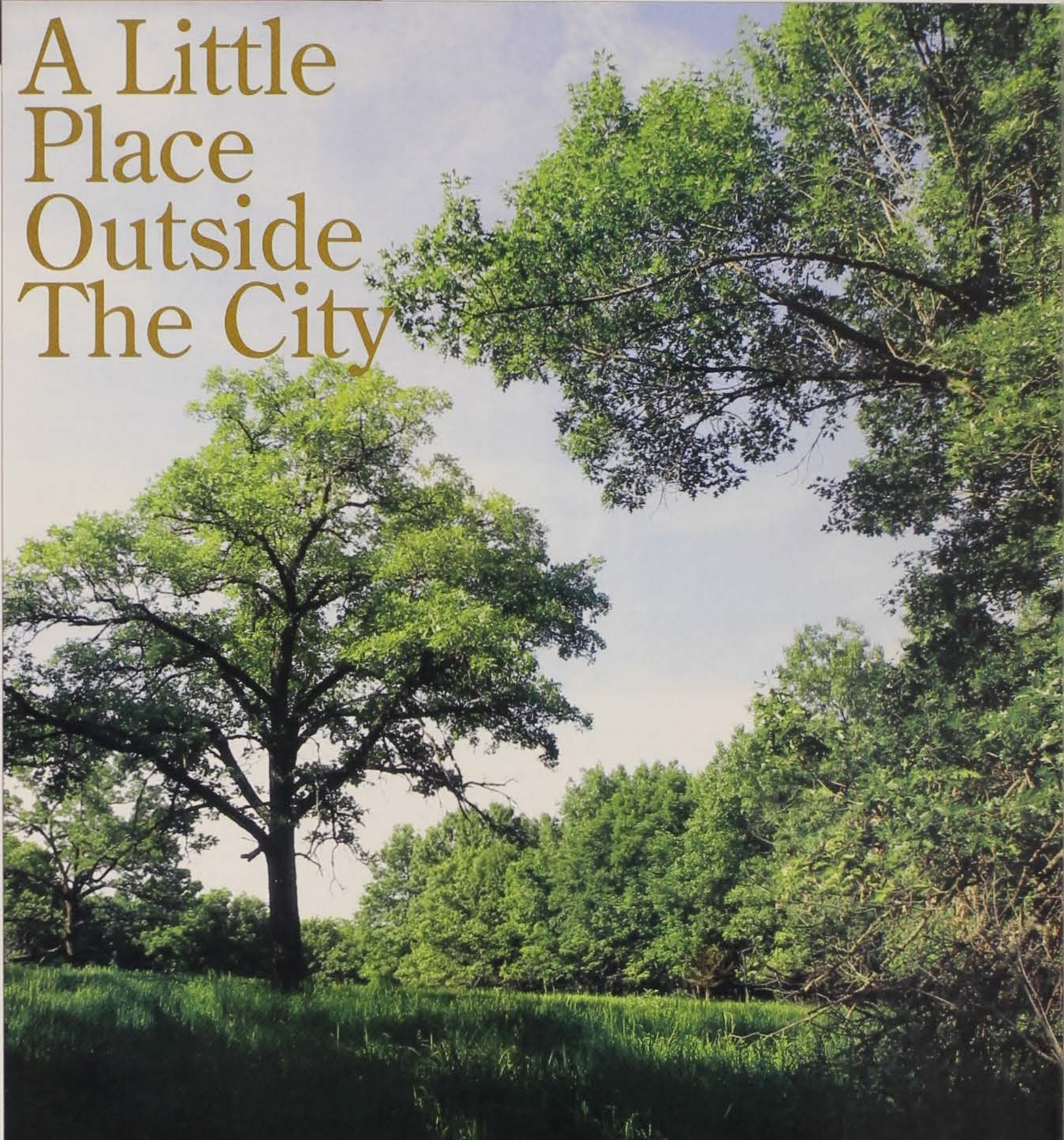
In examining evidence left behind by a wildcat, keep in mind that mountain lion tracks leave a heel pad track that is 2 to 3 inches wide for front legs and 1.75 to 2 inches wide for hind legs. A particular characteristic is the three distinct lobes divided by two indentations of the hind edge of the heel pad. Bobcat tracks are considerably smaller, the front being rarely wider than 1.25 inches. When observing scat (feces), look at size. Generally, the scat of a mountain lion is roughly the same size as the scat of a large dog, making it fairly distinct from the much smaller scat of bobcats and other mammals.

Although rumors persist, the DNR has not released mountain lions in Iowa and has no intention of doing so. However, in order to conserve and manage bobcat populations the DNR, in cooperation with Iowa State University, initiated a project in 2003 to track and collect data from live-captured bobcats that were radio-collared and released back into the wild. As of 2008, the DNR is no longer collaring new bobcats but continues tracking the survival of the remaining collared bobcats.

Visit www.iowadnr.gov and click on nongame wildlife, then Iowa's wildlife for more details.

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

A Little Place Outside The City

A photograph of a lush green landscape. In the foreground, a large, mature tree with a thick trunk and a full canopy of bright green leaves stands prominently. The ground is covered in tall, vibrant green grass. In the background, a dense line of trees stretches across the horizon under a clear, light blue sky. The overall scene is peaceful and natural.

In Iowa, travelers rarely have to venture far to lose themselves in nature. At Lake Ahquabi State Park, restored farm ground is shaping up to be one of the state's finest easy-access urban retreats.



Ahquabi gets its name from the Sac and Fox word meaning "resting place," a fitting title for the park known for its shimmering lake, restored oak savannahs and family-friendly fishing piers and campgrounds. As the second-busiest campground in Iowa, several nearby state preserves and trails allow exploration of less visited natural areas including upland prairie and the 11-mile Sunnyside Trail. Lake Ahquabi is a popular paddling lake with kayaking classes and sales offered through Canoesport Outfitters in nearby Indianola and boat rentals run at the park.



THE DARK JUNGLE of green is quiet, save for the rhythmic hum of insects. Sunshine dapples the forest floor, breaking in from the bright summer morning outside. A faint trail passes through the home of wild turkey, great horned owl and bobcat. It is the perfect place to plug in to nature, to place hands wide on the smooth white bark of an old oak tree.

Then, a clearing outside the 500 acres of timber. Just like that, daylight glares in full, made even brighter by the reflection off 115-acre Lake Ahquabi. The tang of mown lawn signals the return of civilization.

Lake Ahquabi State Park: where, for just a few miles on the South Shelter Trail, hikers can escape the daily grind, a mere 22 miles south of Des Moines and six miles south of Indianola.

LAKESIDE LEGACY

Ahquabi is the Sac and Fox word for "resting place," and urban escapes like this one tap a direct vein to the soul. Though it takes commitment to delve into Iowa wilderness areas, accessible parks like Lake Ahquabi require little more than an afternoon off to get the old boots dirty.

Park manager Josh Shipman grew up among its 300-year-old white and red oak trees—his father was the park attendant before him. Today, he's trying to reclaim the surrounding forest from the days when Lake Ahquabi State Park was a bunch of old farmland.

"All parts of the park were farmed, one way or another. Even the woods I'm sure had cattle in it," says state

ecologist John Pearson. "But if you have enough of a natural matrix left and take good care of it, this is what you can do."

Slowly but surely, Lake Ahquabi State Park is going back to its natural origins. The land was donated in the 1930s, and the Civilian Conservation Corps built its six sandstone structures in 1936 with materials quarried about a quarter mile away (scoring from the excavation can still be seen on many stones).

The restoration of oak savannah is a painstaking process, involving the removal of black locust trees and other invasives that moved in during the early stages of the park, bullying out the oak trees that are rightful residents. Honeysuckle shrubs the DNR planted in the 1970s as natural boundaries are the most aggressive offenders, infesting the woods like cheerful green fire. Lake Ahquabi's upland forest should have relatively few shrubs, maybe a few gooseberry or coralberry. Honeysuckle grows several feet high, overtaking the understory and choking out smaller plants on the forest floor.

It takes awhile for more delicate prairie species to come back during a restoration process. But Shipman notes that they will, given a chance. On the South Shelter Trail, a large lawn denotes where the lodge once stood. It was removed in 1990 and park staff burned off the area. Within weeks, big bluestem and Indian grass shot up from the ground. Ironically, several park users have commented on the absence of the lodge and even rallied for a while to put up cabins in its stead—but few notice the prairie grasses.

"The balance between conservation and recreation is a

Lost In Iowa



challenge," says Shipman, in wraparound sunglasses and a glistening buzz cut. "It's just part of being a public park."

Lake Ahquabi State Park isn't back to its original Iowa oak savannah form, but it's coming along, he says. "What we need now is a lot of fire, and eventually we'll reach a point where we need to stop burning for awhile and allow regeneration of young trees," he says. "We don't need that now because we have a surfeit of trees. But the trees that do come up will be oaks."

So Shipman clears and burns. The honeysuckle recedes. Purple milkweed blooms in its wake. If dappled sunlight is the best indicator of native oak-history forest health, the advance of a delicate lacework of light in the wake of formerly choked-out understory is a good sign on the north side of the road from the beach.

A FAMILY PLACE

The open forest is quiet. Birds flit about. A red-tailed hawk floats overhead. Deer tracks are fresh and deep on the trails. The natural ravine shows a loess soil layer

blown in after the glaciers retreated. It's wilderness, but not so deep that visitors can't get in some easy fishing or lazy beach lounging.

"This is a family park," says Shipman. "You can look out across that pier right now and see a guy out there fishing with his kids."

Sometimes on a summer Saturday morning, 15 to 20 boats line up waiting to get in the water and troll for bass, bluegill, panfish and catfish. Since the lake was renovated in 1990—drained, dredged and clarified with a series of silt ponds that are also stocked for fishing—the shallow 22-foot-deep lake is revitalized for livelier action.

"I like to fish here," says 16-year-old Jaclyne Collins of Indianola, looking out onto the lake and clutching a pink smartphone. "The fish are always biting—bass, catfish."

"I went out for two hours and caught 10 once," adds Blake Marchant, 16.

The CCC shelter houses are popular for picnics, and they have an unusual benefit, too. Brown bats love the buildings



CLUES TO FINDING AN ANCIENT OAK TREE, ACCORDING TO STATE ECOLOGIST JOHN PEARSON

- **The tree is big**—not necessarily the biggest in the forest, but dramatically large.
- **A lot of smooth, white, patterned bark.** As an oak gets older, its rough bark sloughs off, leaving the smoother, white bark beneath.
- **Round gnarls on the trunk:** healed areas where branches have broken off over time.
- **Massive branches,** extending like elephant legs off the main trunk.
- **A twist in the bark of the tree trunk,** created over time as the tree has strained toward openings in the forest canopy for maximum sunlight.

and can be seen flapping around at night. “We’ve got all sorts of bugs, but hardly any mosquitoes,” chuckles Shipman.

Visitors walk up a steep prairie hill toward the main CCC lodge that hints of Mission style. Outside, it’s a fine lookout for the lake and forest sprawl. Inside, the mosaic floor features an American Indian portrait. The lodge is popular in winter, too. “You can get about halfway across the lake on a sled,” says Shipman.

The water spreads out below, anglers tracing its shape while standing in their boats, hoping for the best. And the land seems to be relaxing, too, opening back up after years of farming. It, too, hoping for the best and providing its easy beauty in the meantime.

TRAVEL NOTES

For coffee and pastries to jump-start the day, there are three places all flanking the town square in Indianola, the county’s biggest city. *Funaro’s Deli & Bakery* appears to be where the old guys hang out, solving the world’s problems

Several jetties, plenty of shoreline access and a large universally-accessible fishing pier make Lake Ahquabi a perfect place for a family fishing outing. Thanks to an 18-inch minimum length limit, largemouth bass push the 5- to 7-pound range, and there are good populations of bluegills, crappies and the hard-fighting redear sunfish.

Lost In Iowa

With ample fishing opportunities, an enclosed ADA-accessible fishing pier (far right), a wide range of water sport opportunities, a renovated 142-site campground and roughly eight miles of hiking trails, Lake Ahquabi was featured by About.com as one of the top three state parks in Iowa to visit in the spring. The park site was recommended by "Ding" Darling, a nationally known Iowa political cartoonist and conservationist, and was dedicated in 1936. Many of its structures were constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the 1930s and remain today for visitors.



over coffee while waiting for fresh cinnamon rolls. **The Corner Sundry** was abuzz with a women's breakfast club when we visited, nibbling pastries and sipping coffee (they serve light lunch, too). Students and java connoisseurs hit **Uncommon Grounds**, with the full gamut of coffee drinks, as well as muffins, teas and rolls.

For dining in town, also on the square, the fourth-generation **Crouse Café** serves a number of scratch-made dishes—breakfast, lunch and dinner. One Des Moines food critic swoons over the pan-fried chicken dinner. **Pete's Pizza**, its walls decked in sports memorabilia, is a classic (non-chain) pizza-and-beer joint with tasty pie.

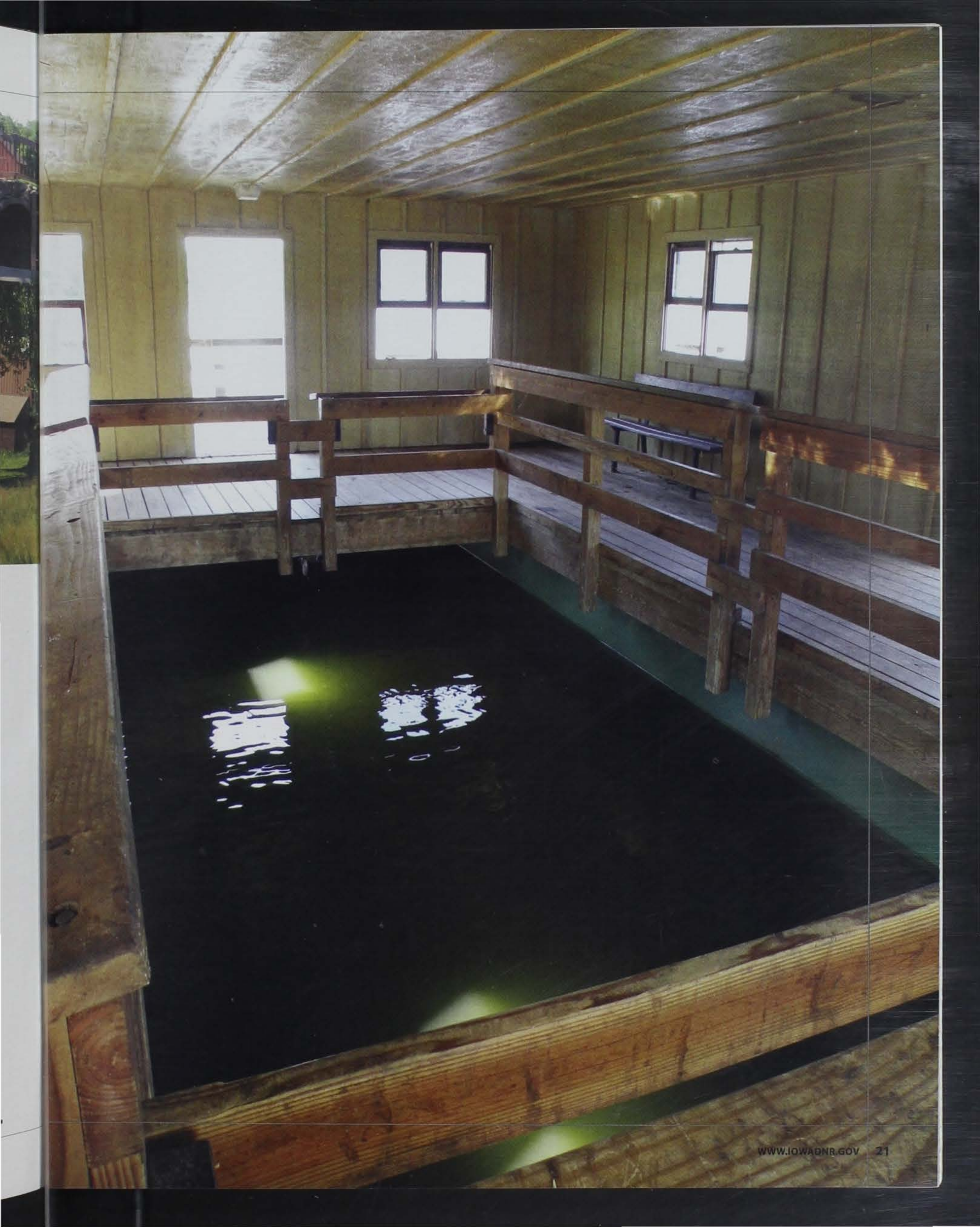
FOR A GOOD HIKE. Lake Ahquabi's graveled **Lake Trail** is 3.7 miles long and provides a peaceful walk around placid waters. **The South Shelter Trail**, featured in this story, stretches just a bit over two miles. Use a trail map on either; they're short but have little signage. **The Woodland Mounds State Preserve** (www.warrenccb.org/areas/wmp.html) is a more remote version of the recovering farm and pasture of Lake Ahquabi, with 325 acres of silent timber. On the 2-mile trail hikers are pretty much guaranteed to see no one, with the payoff of Indian mounds from the Woodland era just before hitting the South River. Careful, there is no signage, but the trails are designed as a series of Figure 8's, so as long as hikers don't just make a series of right turns, the end is always fairly near. Another warning: there's a lot of poison ivy off trail, staying tight on the path is the best bet to avoid a rash.

Two more state preserves in the area: **Rolling Thunder Prairie Preserve** is a 282-acre example of upland prairie; **Berry Woods** is a small forest preserve with no established trail, just a few footpaths (www.warrenccb.org).

For the most civilized, hard-surface walking/biking trails, **McVay Trail** is a 1.6-mile trail to **Pickard Park** and the **Indianola Balloon Field** south of town. **The Sunnyside Trail** runs 11 miles to Carlisle. Trailheads for both are at the 300th block of East 5th Street, Indianola.

FOR A DIP IN THE WATER. A sandy beach is popular for swimming. For anglers, there's a sheltered, universally-accessible fishing pier on the south side of Lake Ahquabi with built-in habitat all around. It's aerated in winter so it never freezes. It's a great introduction for beginners or anyone who wants to get out on the water without having to boat. Anglers catch panfish, bass and catfish anywhere on the lake. **CanoeSport Outfitters** in Indianola (515-961-6117; www.canoesportoutfitters.com) runs the lakeside concession from Memorial Day to Labor Day, renting out kayaks (\$7.75 per half hour), canoes and rowboats (\$6.50 per half hour) and paddleboats (\$5.50 per half hour). During the off-season, the outfitter rents directly from their shop in town.

FOR A PLACE TO CAMP. The newly renovated, 141-site Lake Ahquabi State Park campground is the second busiest in the state. Make reservations at www.reserveiaparks.com or 1-877-427-2757 (1-877 IAPARKS). 🐾



Lost In Iowa

TIP BOX

All state parks are undergoing severe budget cuts. Park manager Josh Shipman says he welcomes and encourages volunteers to contact his office to donate a few hours of labor to keep the park well-maintained. Call 515-961-7101 or email josh.shipman@dnr.iowa.gov.

OTHER "WILD" PLACES CLOSE TO URBAN AREAS

- Brown's Woods County Park** Des Moines, Polk County
- Hartman Reserve** Cedar Falls/Waterloo, Black Hawk County
- Mines of Spain Recreation Area** Dubuque, Dubuque County
- Stone State Park** Sioux City, Woodbury County
- Palisades-Kepler State Park** Cedar Rapids, Linn County
- Wildcat Den State Park** Muscatine, Muscatine County



Cruise through the park on any warm, summer weekend and the large sandy beach overlooking the 115-acre man-made lake will no doubt be teeming with swimmers and sunbathers. For the more adventurous, boats, canoes, kayaks and paddleboats are available for rent from the nearby concessionaire.



22ND NORTH AMERICAN PRAIRIE CONFERENCE
AUGUST 1-5 2010

The Tallgrass Prairie Center at the University of Northern Iowa invites you to attend the 22nd North American Prairie Conference. Participants will discuss the latest prairie research, explore remnant and restored prairies on field trips, and view local and national exhibits.

For additional info: www.NAPC2010.org

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Megan holding a pallid sturgeon
 FACT: Biology majors can study everything from fish and wildlife to plant ecosystems to human medicine

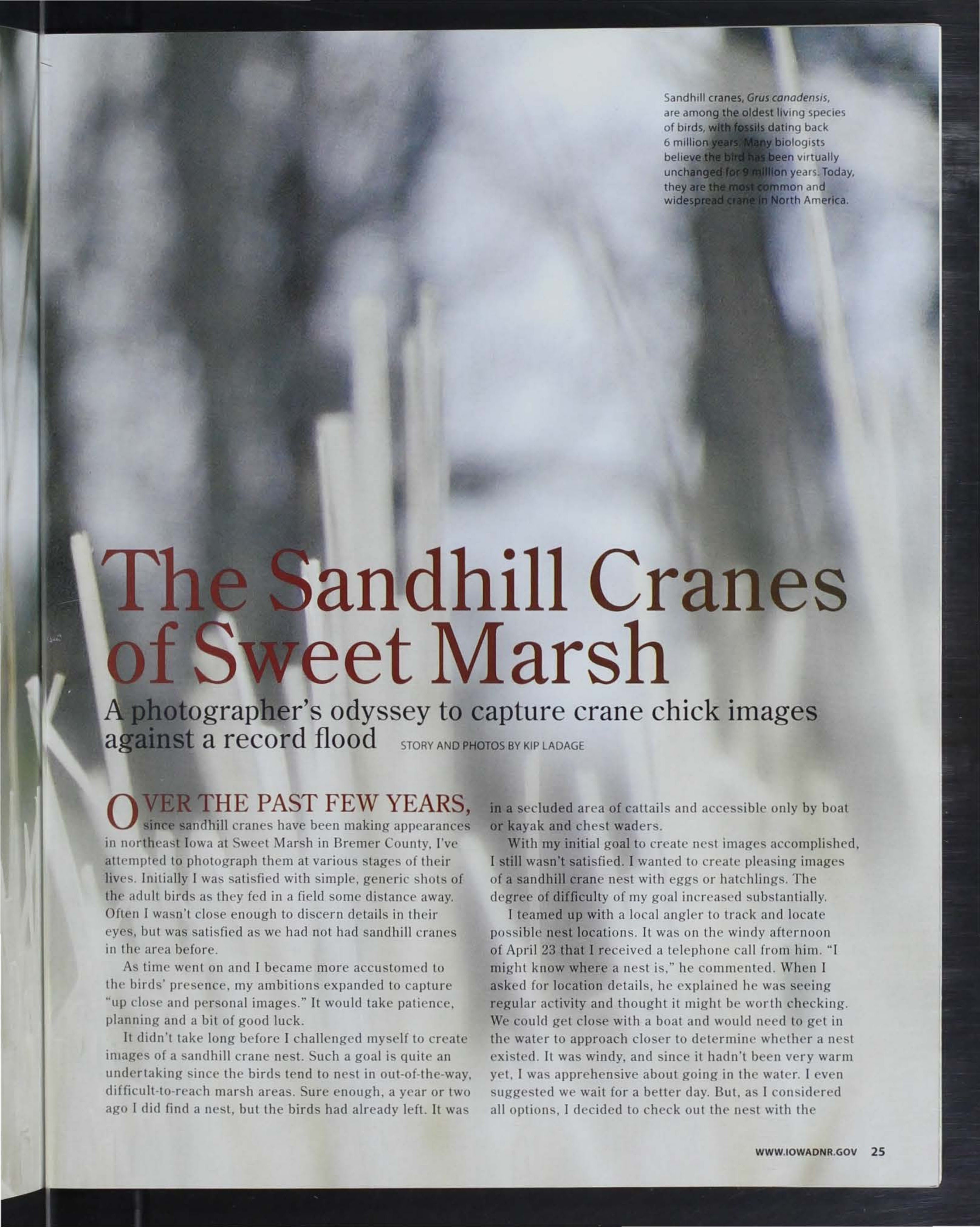
After a snorkeling trip during her freshman year of high school, Megan Thul thought that she might like to study fish. As a Biology student at Iowa State University, she was convinced. With the help of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Megan had the opportunity to study pallid sturgeon in the Missouri River. She worked to re-establish this endangered native species. With this experience on her resume, Megan hopes to begin her career on the water.

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Sandhill cranes, *Grus canadensis*, are among the oldest living species of birds, with fossils dating back 6 million years. Many biologists believe the bird has been virtually unchanged for 9 million years. Today, they are the most common and widespread crane in North America.

The Sandhill Cranes of Sweet Marsh

A photographer's odyssey to capture crane chick images against a record flood

STORY AND PHOTOS BY KIP LADAGE

OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS, since sandhill cranes have been making appearances in northeast Iowa at Sweet Marsh in Bremer County, I've attempted to photograph them at various stages of their lives. Initially I was satisfied with simple, generic shots of the adult birds as they fed in a field some distance away. Often I wasn't close enough to discern details in their eyes, but was satisfied as we had not had sandhill cranes in the area before.

As time went on and I became more accustomed to the birds' presence, my ambitions expanded to capture "up close and personal images." It would take patience, planning and a bit of good luck.

It didn't take long before I challenged myself to create images of a sandhill crane nest. Such a goal is quite an undertaking since the birds tend to nest in out-of-the-way, difficult-to-reach marsh areas. Sure enough, a year or two ago I did find a nest, but the birds had already left. It was

in a secluded area of cattails and accessible only by boat or kayak and chest waders.

With my initial goal to create nest images accomplished, I still wasn't satisfied. I wanted to create pleasing images of a sandhill crane nest with eggs or hatchlings. The degree of difficulty of my goal increased substantially.

I teamed up with a local angler to track and locate possible nest locations. It was on the windy afternoon of April 23 that I received a telephone call from him. "I might know where a nest is," he commented. When I asked for location details, he explained he was seeing regular activity and thought it might be worth checking. We could get close with a boat and would need to get in the water to approach closer to determine whether a nest existed. It was windy, and since it hadn't been very warm yet, I was apprehensive about going in the water. I even suggested we wait for a better day. But, as I considered all options, I decided to check out the nest with the

angler—windy or not, cold water or not.

We made a slow approach and as he had said, the cranes were in an area of suitable habitat for nesting. I pulled my chest waders up and slid into the water for a closer approach. My fishing buddy was right...the cranes had not only built a nest, but there were two brown-speckled eggs! I took a few photos.

I have a strong belief that I do not have the liberty or right to disrupt a wild animal's life or activities for the sake of photography. I returned as quickly as I could to the boat and we left the area.

If I could change any aspect of this unique experience, I would have liked to know exactly which day the eggs were laid. Since we didn't know for sure how long the eggs had been in the nest, we had no way of predicting what days to expect the hatch. That meant one or the other of us would have to check daily to monitor the incubation progress. When we did check, we didn't approach any closer than necessary and took just a quick glance to confirm the eggs were still present.

One might think simply passing by the nest would be easy. That is true until you factor in the ever-present, non-stop winds that accompany every Iowa spring season. This year was no different, which meant that some days I would travel to the nest in my boat while on the calm days (very early in the morning) I would paddle my kayak.

Each day was the same: two eggs in the nest and adult cranes guarding the area. After a few days, the adults seemed more accepting of our presence, although they never sat on the eggs for long. As soon as I or my fishing buddy would travel past, the birds would return to sit on the eggs.

All was going well until 6 inches of rain in 12 hours caused rivers, ponds and lakes to rise considerably. Many, many nests were lost to the sudden high water. Goose eggs bobbed along the shoreline, and I assume nesting ducks suffered the same fate. Within a day or two of the flood, numerous sandhill cranes were frequently observed together. Before the flood, the birds seemed to be paired up and claiming various sites around Sweet Marsh as their nesting ground. My unscientific, gut-feeling is that all but two sandhill crane nests were lost to high water.

Since I was unable to check the nest the day following the flood, my fishing buddy ventured out to look. He said

the birds were quickly tossing cattails to raise the nest. Their work was successful as the nest survived the sudden water influx. When the water did recede, the nest was 6 to 8 inches above water level—before the storm it was just above water level.

After the flood, I wondered if the eggs remained viable. Had the time spent with the adults off the nest damaged the developing birds? Had the eggs been cooled by water exposure? Was the time I spent paddling or boating to the nest once or twice a day going to prove to be fruitless? Time proved the eggs were fine!

Mother's Day was another very windy day, which meant I wasn't able to check the nest until nearly sundown. When I went by, only one egg remained and a clumsy, fuzzy hatchling was next to half an egg shell. We had a sandhill crane chick! The little colt could hardly hold its head up and was still damp. Its egg tooth was still very visible. My assumption is that the first egg to hatch was the first egg laid. However, due to the changes to the nest because of high water, I cannot prove that assumption.

I went out the next morning to make sure the chick made it through its first night in the wild. All was well, and the adults were clearly taking care of their chick. The strength and coordination that developed in a few hours was remarkable.

That evening, I went out to see if the second egg had hatched and to check the status of the hatchling. Due to a large-scale blockage of cattails, my approach to the nest was stopped. I climbed out of my boat and kicked and pulled at the cattails in an effort to open a path. While kicking at cattails,

I startled a largemouth bass that jumped out of the water and onto the cattails, which, in turn, startled me.

Despite my efforts, I wasn't able to open a path through the blockage and couldn't check the nest. Once again, the wind had caused problems.

The following morning, I paddled and when I reached the cattail blockage, I simply portaged around the cattails in my quest. The extra effort was worth it when I noticed the nest now had a second hatchling.

The first hatchling that struggled to hold its head up only hours earlier now walked around the nest without difficulty. A noticeable size and coordination difference existed between the two hatchlings and the older bird made every effort to dominate the newly-hatched





LEFT: While photographing the nest, a bass leaped from the water onto a bed of cattails, startling the author. A mink, *Mustela vison*, patrols nearby marsh waters for a meal. The carnivore feeds on birds, mice, crayfish, fish and other animals found in water habitats. THIS PAGE: Within 24 hours of hatching, crane chicks can walk from the nest and swim.



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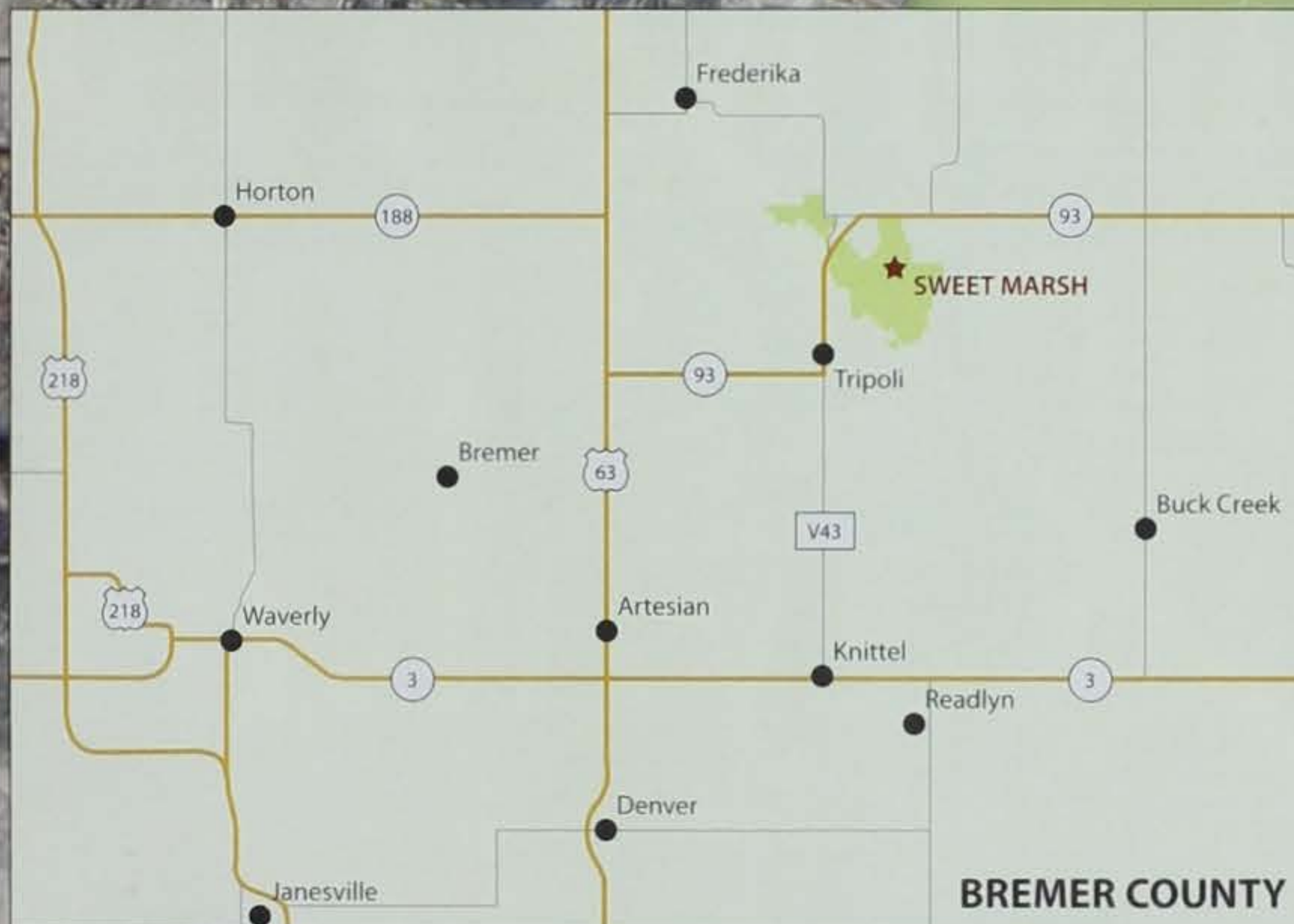
Regaining A Lost Century In 1992, after a 98-year absence, a pair of sandhill cranes successfully hatched two chicks at Otter Creek Marsh in Tama County, the first documented successful nesting since the late 1800s in Iowa. Nesting reappeared at Sweet Marsh in Bremer County in 1994. **1)** By the second day, siblings can be highly aggressive toward each other. **2)** Cranes form tight family relationships. Adults bond and remain monogamous for multiple years. Mother, father, and young stay together from hatch into the following March, a period of nine to 10 months. **3)** Conflicts between siblings may be one reason that often only one young survives to fledging at about 10 weeks, when the chicks can fly. **4)** Prior to the 1990s, the last nesting was at the headwaters of the Iowa River near Hayfield in Hancock County in May 1894. As was common then, the eggs were taken for an egg collection. **5)** Nests are built above water, attached to vegetation or built to float. Clutches usually include two eggs. **6)** Adults form unusually durable bonds and provide extended parental care of young. Sandhill Cranes engage in dazzling courtship displays shortly after dawn. The primary mechanism for pair formation, courtship "dancing" includes raising bills, strutting, prancing, spreading wings, and leaping, with distinctive vocalizations. These acts are triggered by hormonal changes that result from increased daylight hours.



Sandhill cranes may live past 20 years of age, and unlike herons and egrets, they fly with their necks extended. They slowly push their wings down during flight, with a quick upstroke. Loss and degradation of wetlands and other habitats are the most significant threats to sandhill crane populations.

Get Spellbound Watching Sandhill Cranes

Besides **Sweet Marsh**, other places to view cranes include **Otter Creek Marsh** in Tama County, **Green Island Wildlife Area** in Jackson County, **Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt** in Polk County, **Hogsback Marsh** in Worth County and the **New Albin Bottoms** in Allamakee County. Other sites exist, but these are the most reliable and easiest to view.



sibling. As I watched, I noticed the older bird would peck the head of the young bird. I've seen similar behavior between species that has resulted in death. For these sandhill cranes, neither bird seemed affected by the rivalry. As was the case in previous days, the adults did their best to maintain watch over their hatchlings.

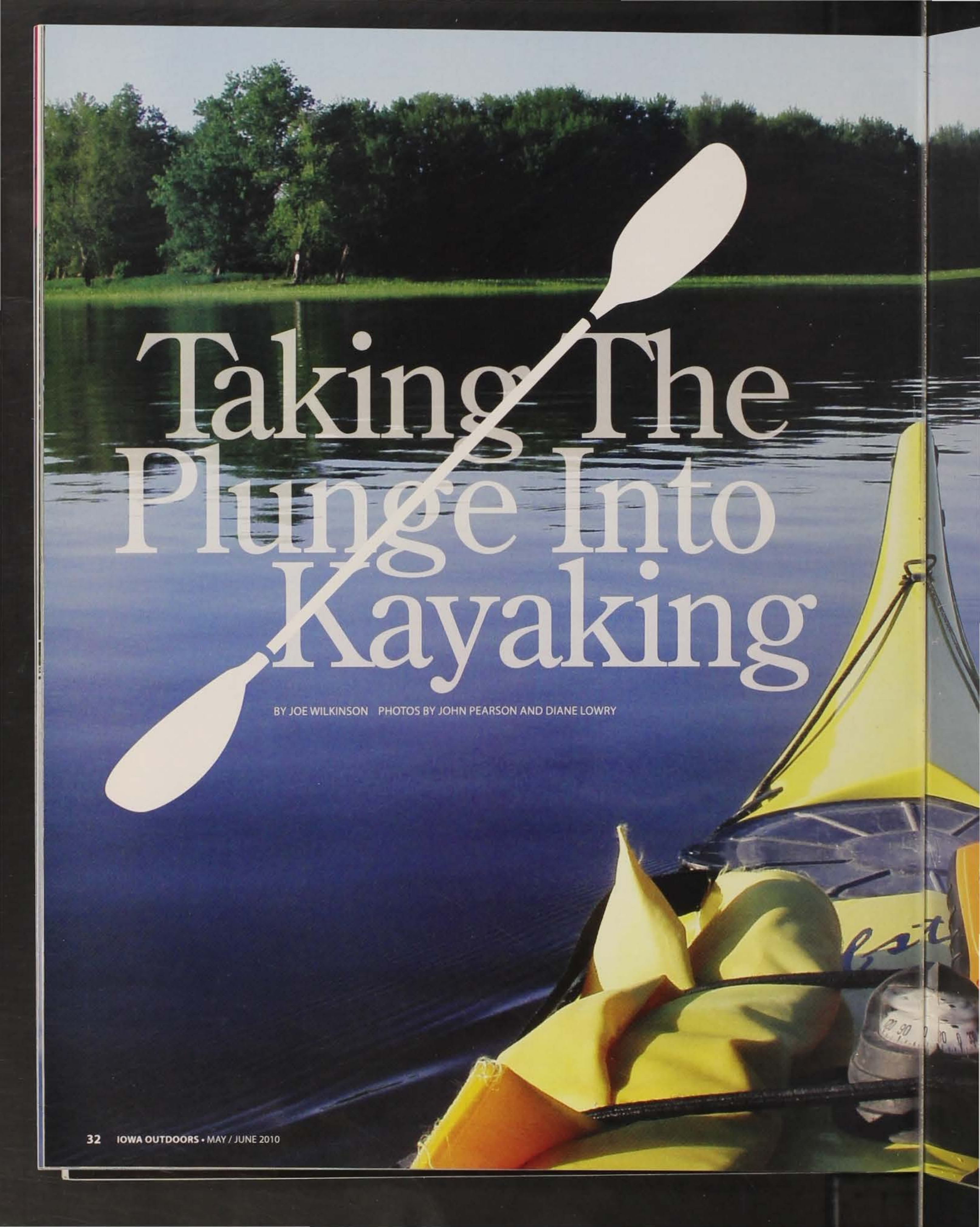
On my next visit, both colts were fully coordinated and moved about as needed. The birds weren't even at the nest, but were moving in and around the cattails at their pleasure. Both were in separate locations and were observed crossing short expanses of water by floating and swimming like goslings. I felt comfortable that the adults were taking good care of their offspring.

As suddenly as the hatchlings appeared, so too did they disappear. Instead of struggling for a while before finding the little cranes, my next visit to the nest proved disappointing. The two hatchlings could not be found. I'm hopeful they

survived, but they faced risks. On one of my early morning ventures, I observed a pair of minks hunting and feeding in a similar cattail area. Hopefully the aggressive animals found enough goslings and ducklings to curb their appetite for young sandhill cranes.


Five or six subsequent visits to the nest also proved fruitless. After more than a week without any sightings of the young birds or adults in the nest area, I accepted that the adults had moved the birds to a more secluded and probably drier area for the next phase of development.

I suppose I should be satisfied with the experiences and the images I created from this event, and I am. But I'm also somewhat disappointed that I wasn't able to document their development to flight age. Perhaps I will see them again, but maybe not. That is fine. I appreciate the time I was with them, as brief as it was, and truly enjoy the memories of the young sandhill cranes of Sweet Marsh. 🦢



Taking The Plunge Into Kayaking

BY JOE WILKINSON PHOTOS BY JOHN PEARSON AND DIANE LOWRY



SERENE SOLITUDE. A cockpit view of the Mississippi River junction of Japan Slough and Harper's Slough near Yellow River State Forest. The Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge provides thousands of shore miles of intricate channels, marshes and islands unrivaled in the Midwest, all best explored by kayak.

SEASON'S LAST FLOAT

Downstream 200 yards, the Maquoketa River took a bend to the left. On either side, limestone bluffs rose from the narrow valley. The streamside maple and ash trees were colored yellow to orange.

Ascending 200-foot bluffs, several shades of orange and brown accented the fading green oak canopy. It would still be a week before "peak" fall color.

The highlight, though, was the bald eagle, perched over the water where the stream went into the bend. Rather than disturb it, I turned back upstream, losing 50 feet or so as my kayak turned broadside into the current.

Recent rains had the stream running about 130 feet per

second—twice the normal mid-October flow.

This would be the last time out this year in my new toy. Most trips had been on nearby Lake Macbride, perfect for a novice kayaker. There, I could make mistakes, or just go out for a half hour and still be close to my take-out point.

My stream activity is hampered by "lone paddler syndrome." With an irregular work schedule, I fit time on the water when I can: early morning, midday, rarely weekends. That leaves little flexibility for group outings or arranging a vehicle drop off. If I paddle downstream, I have to paddle back up.

That's why I had picked this stretch of the Maquoketa. I knew the area from the Retz Wildlife Area upstream to the Lake Delhi dam. I had canoed it once, fished for smallmouth bass a few times and had tagged along with DNR fisheries crews on fall smallmouth bass population surveys.

KAYAK SUPPORT


Each passing year brings more support for kayakers. Iowa's Water Trails Program provides on-water, point-to-point information about streams and lakes. "A designated water trail offers better access; maybe kiosks, brochures and interpretive information," explains John Wenck, DNR's former river outreach coordinator. "You can learn what type of wildlife you might see, any historical amenities. It leads to a better appreciation and a better respect for the river."

Amenities like put-in/take-out points, locator signs on bridges and warnings about lowhead dams and portage routes around hazards are provided along a water trail. As of February 2009, there were 292 miles of designated water trails in Iowa and

another 953 under development.

Invaluable to many is the 184-page Paddling Iowa guide, which offers a nearly stroke-by-stroke narrative of 34 river and lake stretches. Brochures are available through county conservation boards, the DNR and area Resource, Conservation & Development offices.

Maps showing 25 river routes can be downloaded from the DNR River Trails Program. Go to www.iowadnr.gov then click on Trails & Paddling, then **Canoe/Kayak**. With the recent explosion of Geographic Information Systems, the DNR Interactive Mapping Service (same steps as above; then click on Maps & Brochures, then IMS guide) provides a birds-eye view of many paddle routes.

A yellow kayak is beached on a sandy shore next to a wide river. The kayak is equipped with various gear, including a black paddle, orange and red buoys, and a yellow dry bag. The river flows in the background, with a forested hillside visible in the distance under a clear sky.

ABOVE: The Mississippi River lends itself to kayak exploration with bays, sloughs, backwaters and channels to wander. Sandbar camping or using base camps at Pikes Peak, Bellevue or Wildcat Den state parks make for enjoyable adventures. FUN FLOTILLA: Group outings offer a way for novices to hone techniques from experienced paddlers. It is a great way to practice safety skills while forging friendships in the outdoors. With the right group, you can find paddling buddies year-round.



That stretch above Retz showed the impact of the floods—not just 2008, but high water from 2009. A large scrap of fabric—boat upholstery maybe—dangled from the limb where it had been deposited 10 feet above today’s waterline. On a quiet bend, washed-away cornstalks floated next to shore. “How much soil came downstream with them?” I wondered.

There was time still for a fast float downstream and then a heavy duty return paddle. Not bad for a season-ender. Walking the kayak along a gravel bar to cross current, the ankle-deep, mid-40 degree water reminded me the warm weather trips were over for this season.

But there will be more.

KAYAKING TAKES OFF

I didn’t realize I was a trendsetter when I started kayak shopping. Tired of a knee that swelled up whenever I jogged two days in a row, I wanted another way to get an outdoor workout. With two lakes just a couple minutes away and a half dozen good paddling rivers within an hour or two, I felt the urge to float. Canoeing is great, but I can borrow the neighbor’s any time. Maybe a kayak?

I learned I wasn’t alone. “Paddle sport activity has increased nationally, as well as in Iowa. The outdoor sport with greatest growth is kayaking, by 63 percent over the last four years,” notes John Wenck, referring to a U.S. Forest Service recreation survey. Until just recently, Wenck was the DNR rivers outreach

coordinator and is still an avid paddler. “I see more and more paddlers on the river. Iowa’s (canoe, kayak, raft) shuttle operations have gone from 23 to nearly 60 in the last four years.”

Across the country, kayaking is more popular among 13- to 24-year-olds. In Iowa, that might take a different turn. “More of our customers tend to be Baby Boomers,” assesses Darrin Siefkin, owner of CrawDaddy Outdoors in Waverly. “They have a little more discretionary income and they want to stay fit and active. When I started the store, I never would have guessed that.”

Spend a summer weekend at a busy lake and it is often an unorganized flotilla of color and paddles. “We expanded from four to 12 kayaks when I took over,” relays Tina Hoffman, who has owned the boat rental concession at Lake Macbride State Park near Solon since 2006. “They’re busy all the time.”

While climbing in popularity, there remains an ocean of growth for kayaking. The Outdoor Industry Association surveyed 40,000 Americans regarding 114 activities for its 2009 Outdoor Recreation Participation Report. It shows 2.8 percent—about 7.8 million Americans—went kayaking the year prior.

So, I started looking closely at outdoor shows and in-store displays. “It’s growing, I think primarily because we (and kayaking) are new in the area,” says Ken Kremer, owner of Seatasea Watersports in Cedar Rapids. His is one of a handful of stores to specialize in kayaks

Kayakers are within arms' reach of the water, rocks, fish and shoreline for intimate views of the natural world. Shore stops are easy, even in places that other boats avoid, such as these boulders at Elk Rock Cliffs State Park in Marion County. Exploring islands, beaches and shorelines is as fun as paddling through a 300 million-year-old sandstone cave at Lake Red Rock.



Showcase your love of paddling with these short or long sleeve tees. Prices vary by size, \$14.95 for small short sleeve to \$19.95 2XL long sleeve. Order at www.iowanaturestore.com or 1-866-410-0230.



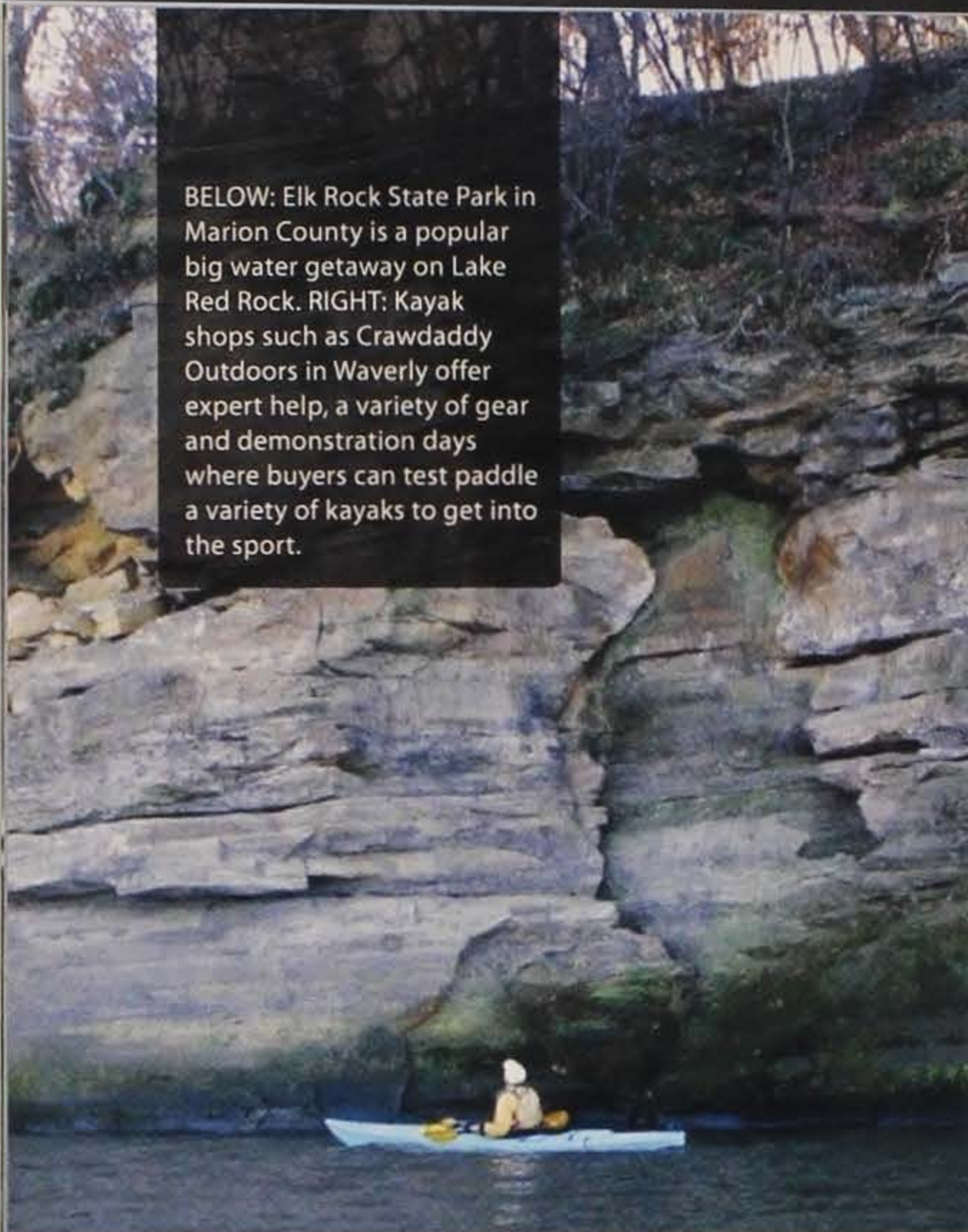
CONDITIONING

Kayaking is a conditioning tool. Working the whole body, it improves flexibility, yet avoids knee and leg impact. Some of the most effective outdoor activities include:

Bicycling (12-14 mph)	258
Swimming	258
Canoeing	250
Jogging	225
Hiking	193
Kayaking	161

*(calories burned per 30 minutes, by a 135 lb. person.
Source; Department of Kinesiology and Health;
Georgia State University)*

BELOW: Elk Rock State Park in Marion County is a popular big water getaway on Lake Red Rock. RIGHT: Kayak shops such as Crawdaddy Outdoors in Waverly offer expert help, a variety of gear and demonstration days where buyers can test paddle a variety of kayaks to get into the sport.



and canoes. "It's a great family sport. There's virtually no upkeep, no fuel. You don't even need a dock, just a beach or grass on public property and you're in the water."

As I pulled in to a parking lot on Lake Macbride late in September, Seatasea had seven kayaks of varying shapes and sizes at water's edge with another three or four still on the trailer. About 20 soon-to-be-paddlers gathered around.

These demo days serve as outdoor showrooms to match paddlers and kayaks for a few hours. The kayaks were near new, with a scuff here and there. "You have foot pegs inside and your knees are going to go up and over there," explains Danette Kremer, helping each of us climb into the water level cockpit. Once inside, we were shown how to use the back and knee rests to brace for stability and effective paddling.

I figured I would try them all. Well, not the narrow pink one, I was told. Kremer discouraged a "mid-sized" man from even trying to get into that one. Like the kayaks, the paddlers came in all shapes and sizes.

After four 10- to 20-minute test paddles on the glass-smooth lake, I took a second turn in a 14.5 foot Wilderness Tsunami. With a foot-guided rudder, it tracked straight when I worked the pedals correctly. Maybe I was getting the hang of it after trying several craft. I liked how a longer, 16-footer knifed through the water. I wondered, though, could a novice like me handle turns against a strong river current? I really liked the blue Tsunami, but wanted to look around. I made a mental note that these demos were often on sale at season's end.

My wife, Sue, had come along out of curiosity. By the time we left, she was hooked. For the next couple months, we researched features, models and prices in store showrooms, on websites, even an electronic bulletin board. By then, I was ready. I worked out a deal on that September demonstrator and stashed it. On Christmas morning, it was on display in the snow outside.

Even though it was the one I wanted, I called it a family gift. Then, I opened my present from Sue; a gift certificate from the same store that would cover half the cost of another one. I kept "my" kayak and handed back the gift certificate. We had gone from lookers to a two-kayak family overnight.

And after a year, they have worked out great. I prefer solitary early morning or evening paddles. A 20-second stare down with a river otter was my summer highlight. A close second was five minutes floating through a school of feeding white bass, the water "popping" around me as they gulped down little fish at the surface.

I found that two kayaks in the garage don't take up much more room than one. From there, it's a quick couple minutes to load for a haul to the lake. About 10 family members or neighbors have given them a try too. The get-in-shape part of my plan has yet to materialize. That might be because I stop and watch a lot instead of working up a sweat paddling, or because I sometimes pack dinner and pull over to eat. Maybe, in Year Two, I can get serious. 🐻

HOW TO SELECT A KAYAK

You've decided you want a kayak. Now what?

"I'll ask where are you going to paddle—local streams and lakes, or the Boundary Waters, maybe Lake Superior?" explains Darren Siefkin, owner of CrawDaddy Outdoors.

Siefkin's is one of just a handful of stores in Iowa that specialize in paddle sports. Housed in a three-story former five-and-dime store in downtown Waverly, kayaks and canoes line its high-ceiling walls. Paddles, life jackets, dry bags, even trailers are featured with camping gear, an outgrowth from Siefkin's earlier life as an environmental educator.

"We really want people to come to a demo day to make a good choice," says Siefkin. "A guy who's 6-foot-plus with size 15 shoes—there may only be a couple kayaks he'd be comfortable in."

A staff that knows paddling can narrow down a kayaker's interest. Just paddling? Fishing from a kayak? Maybe a two-day birdwatching trip? "You have to get out and teach people about the outdoors. (Then) when they understand the gear, the equipment (and) go buy a kayak or GPS unit, you can help them make an educated decision," says Siefkin.

Those shops organize a variety of trips, too, providing organization and company for paddlers. It might be a group paddle down the local river or a once-a-decade trip to the sea caves at Lake Superior's Apostle Islands.


Across Iowa, most sold are recreational kayaks

used for lake or moderate stream tours trips of a day or less. More stable than the longer, narrow day-touring boats, they don't always track as well. The day-touring kayaks are longer and respond better as you learn to use your body. Until you master that, though, it also means they feel unstable. Touring kayaks are longer, narrower and faster. If you move on to whitewater kayaks, you'll be in a shorter, tighter fitting craft. Then there's the whole other world of sit-on-top and ocean kayaks.

As always, it helps to have someone who understands the sport to help determine not just the kayak and length, but what gear to pack. Any good life jacket will keep you afloat, but you learn that a Type III allows more freedom of movement and fits well in the cockpit. Any paddle will propel you, but one fitted to your size and skill reduces fatigue and provides a clean, balanced stroke.

Beyond basic gear, the sky is the limit, just as it is for about any hobby. I figured I would just toss a kayak into the back of my pickup, loop a bungee cord around the nose and go. At over 14 feet, though, it would tip precariously in the short truck bed. Especially with a second kayak in tow, a two-boat rack mounted on the trailer hitch prevents banging around and that rear-view look at flying kayaks after a big bump.

Dry bags, throw bags, cold weather gloves, insulated suits, a GPS unit, spray skirts—the serious gear attracts your attention as you get deeper into kayaking.



A water lowering at Lake Red Rock in Marion County allows kayakers to reach areas too shallow for powerboats. During low water, explore rocks, formations and areas normally hidden by water.

How to Fish Elkader's Turkey River

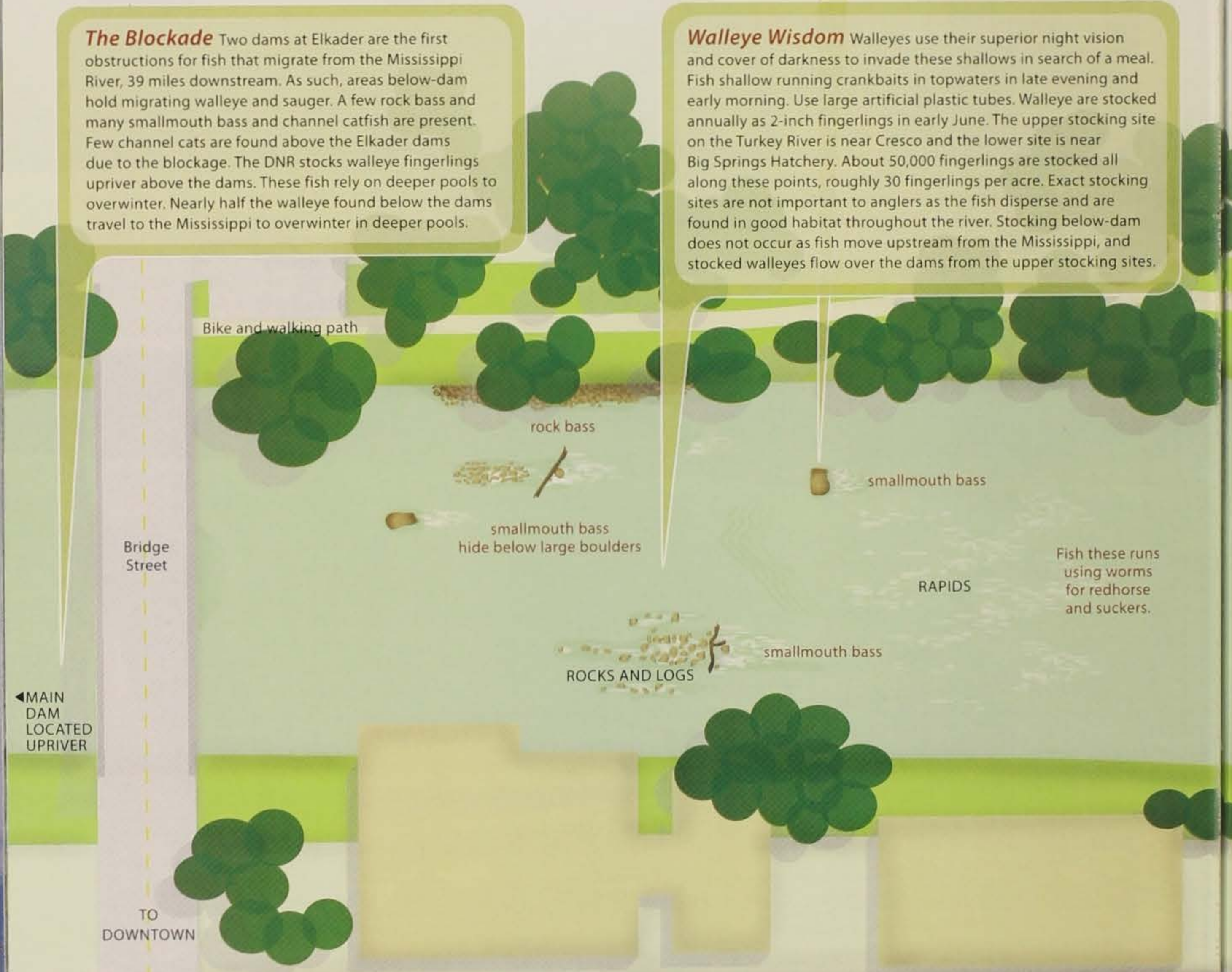
BY BRIAN BUTTON, GARY SIEGWARTH AND GREG SIMMONS ILLUSTRATIONS BY STUDIO Z

DAMS TEND TO BE LOCATED ON ROCKY bedrock areas in towns, creating convenient fishing access. Use these tips for other rivers with dams, too. Fisheries biologists say these easy-to-fish locations are good, but dispel the myth they are the best locations. So after fishing below the dam, head downriver to the natural, meandering sections to fish deeper pools cut on the outside bends of rivers, especially where logjams or boulders are found, as well as transition areas between sandbars on inside bends and the deeper waters. Use a minnow imitation crankbait for walleye, northerns and bass.

Bouldering Smallmouth bass hunt rocky bottoms in search of crayfish. Cast in the eddies below boulders where they rest. Actively feeding fish may lurk ahead of the boulders, riding the pressure waves.

The Blockade Two dams at Elkader are the first obstructions for fish that migrate from the Mississippi River, 39 miles downstream. As such, areas below-dam hold migrating walleye and sauger. A few rock bass and many smallmouth bass and channel catfish are present. Few channel cats are found above the Elkader dams due to the blockage. The DNR stocks walleye fingerlings upriver above the dams. These fish rely on deeper pools to overwinter. Nearly half the walleye found below the dams travel to the Mississippi to overwinter in deeper pools.

Walleye Wisdom Walleyes use their superior night vision and cover of darkness to invade these shallows in search of a meal. Fish shallow running crankbaits in topwaters in late evening and early morning. Use large artificial plastic tubes. Walleye are stocked annually as 2-inch fingerlings in early June. The upper stocking site on the Turkey River is near Cresco and the lower site is near Big Springs Hatchery. About 50,000 fingerlings are stocked all along these points, roughly 30 fingerlings per acre. Exact stocking sites are not important to anglers as the fish disperse and are found in good habitat throughout the river. Stocking below-dam does not occur as fish move upstream from the Mississippi, and stocked walleyes flow over the dams from the upper stocking sites.



Fish Trackers Based on a DNR tracking study of radio-tagged fish below Elkader, all channel catfish, 64 percent of walleye and 60 percent of smallmouth bass implanted with radio transmitters move to the Mississippi River in search of deeper water to overwinter. Movement begins late October or early November when water temperatures drop below 50° F. Channel cats overwinter in holes 20-feet deep; walleye and smallmouth in less deep areas. These fish move back to the Turkey River in early April when water temperatures are near 44° F. Water depths greater than 15 feet were only found in two places in the 39 mile run from Elkader to the Mississippi, with both spots within two miles of the Mississippi River.



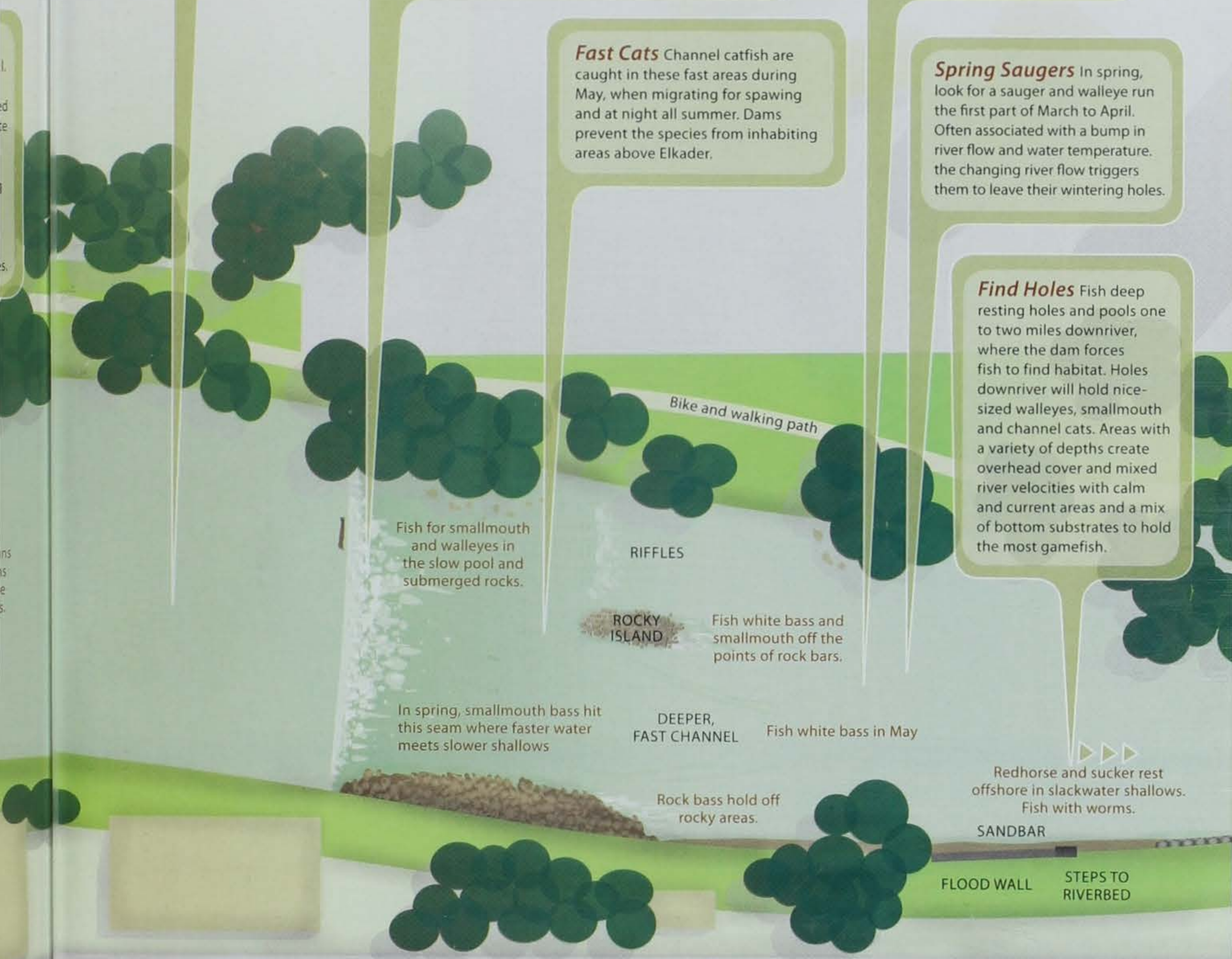
Below Dam Obstacles to fish migration, such as dams, are good fishing locations to target many species all year except winter, when fish seek deeper holes. Migratory fish stack up below dams as far away as a mile in deeper resting pools, so don't limit fishing to just below dams. Northern pike will dart the fast water at dams, attempting to migrate upriver right after ice-out. Use large, flashy spoons to target pike.

Bass Busters Adjust your retrieve based on species. Because of their speed, white bass hit twister tails with a quick retrieve. Use a slower retrieve for smallies. White bass tend to congregate in faster waters.

Fast Cats Channel catfish are caught in these fast areas during May, when migrating for spawning and at night all summer. Dams prevent the species from inhabiting areas above Elkader.

Spring Saugers In spring, look for a sauger and walleye run the first part of March to April. Often associated with a bump in river flow and water temperature, the changing river flow triggers them to leave their wintering holes.

Find Holes Fish deep resting holes and pools one to two miles downriver, where the dam forces fish to find habitat. Holes downriver will hold nice-sized walleyes, smallmouth and channel cats. Areas with a variety of depths create overhead cover and mixed river velocities with calm and current areas and a mix of bottom substrates to hold the most gamefish.



Fish for smallmouth and walleyes in the slow pool and submerged rocks.

RIFFLES

ROCKY ISLAND

Fish white bass and smallmouth off the points of rock bars.

In spring, smallmouth bass hit this seam where faster water meets slower shallows

DEEPER, FAST CHANNEL

Fish white bass in May

Rock bass hold off rocky areas.

Redhorse and sucker rest offshore in slackwater shallows. Fish with worms.

SANDBAR

FLOOD WALL

STEPS TO RIVERBED

FULL HOUSE. Two young pileated woodpeckers peer from the nest cavity, anxiously awaiting parents to return with a meal. The pileateds, *Dryocopus pileatus*, are year-round residents in Iowa, and adults defend a territory of 1,000 to 4,000 acres. They mark territory by sound, drumming 14 to 16 beats per second against trees with their chisel-like bill.



PHOTO BY RON HUELSE

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IN PURSUIT OF THE FEATHERED GIANT



Pileated Woodpeckers Provide Woodland Birding Challenge

STORY AND PHOTOS BY LOWELL WASHBURN

WITH ITS ZEBRA-STRIPED head, crow-sized body and maniacal call, the pileated woodpecker is hard to mistake for any other bird. Animated and flamboyant, the bird served as the original inspiration for the Woody the Woodpecker cartoon character. A thrill to observe, the species ranks high on my list of favorite woodland birds.

Getting a close look is never easy. As elusive as a spring gobbler and as shy as an emerging morel, the pileated is a master at avoiding human contact. This is definitely one forest species that is more often heard than seen.

Evidence of their passing is easier to detect. Most common are feeding cavities where birds engage their relentless, lifelong quest for carpenter ants. The equivalent of feathered jack hammers, pileateds use powerful chiseled beaks to whack away 3- and 4-inch chunks of bark and wood. Chips fly, and on a calm day, the noise can be heard for a quarter-mile.

Once the heavy work is complete and all the easy ants

have been captured and swallowed, pileateds employ their long sticky tongues to probe tunnels for fugitives. By the time the task is finished, hardwood trunks often bear telltale 10-inch-deep scars measuring up to 3 feet in length. Some excavations are even more dramatic. While attempting to locate and photograph a group of young pileateds, I once discovered a large trunk where foraging adults had carved a deep, continuous gouge measuring more than 7 feet from top to bottom. Given a bit more time, the giant woodpeckers could have easily turned the ancient stump into a perfect dugout canoe. As long as there are ants present, pileateds won't hesitate to go to the forest floor to launch an assault on rotting logs. By the time the forays are finished, the fallen trunks are completely shredded, as if visited by foraging bears.

Pileated woodpeckers have a commanding presence, and nationwide, perhaps no woodland species is more popular with birders. From the rich woodpecker-infested bayous of southern Louisiana to the barren pine forests





GROCERY RUN: A busy female hurries off to find more food—primarily carpenter ants and beetle larvae—to feed hungry ones in the nest. Both parents, mates for life, help incubate eggs, find food and raise young. Females have a black line and males a red line running from bill to throat. The birds can have wingspans of 30 inches and reach 19 inches in length.



of the North, I've been attempting to spy on and photograph pileateds ever since I heard and saw my first one at northeast Iowa's Yellow River State Forest in 1965. For more than 30 years I have dreamed of photographing an active nest. After several near misses and seasons of failure, it appeared as if my opportunity might finally have come when DNR Conservation Officer Bill Fribley called to say that he had located an active pair in the woodlands of Ledges State Park in Boone County.

It was late March and the pair had already excavated two potential nesting cavities about a hundred yards apart. Setting a ground blind near the most promising location, I was able to observe (and photograph) both adults as they repeatedly visited the nest. Although I'd been through the drill before, I had a particularly good feeling about the future of this site.

As always, the birds proved extremely wary. On one occasion, the drilling male halted excavations and nearly spooked from the nest at the sound of the camera. To avoid further disturbance, I decided to stay away from

the pair for the next two months. When I returned in late May, the territory was barely recognizable. Instead of stark, open and leafless, the forest had become closed, dark and green.

All was well, and I was delighted to find the pileateds still on territory. Even more exciting was the fact that they were busily engaged in the care and feeding of three boisterous youngsters. Like the forest itself, the pair had undergone a profound change. Burdened with the responsibility of providing an endless supply of ants and ant grubs to their open-mawed young, the adults had lost much of the wariness displayed during late winter. As long as human intruders displayed a modicum of respect and distance, the birds showed little concern and presented an ideal opportunity for close-up observation of this unique Iowa bird species.

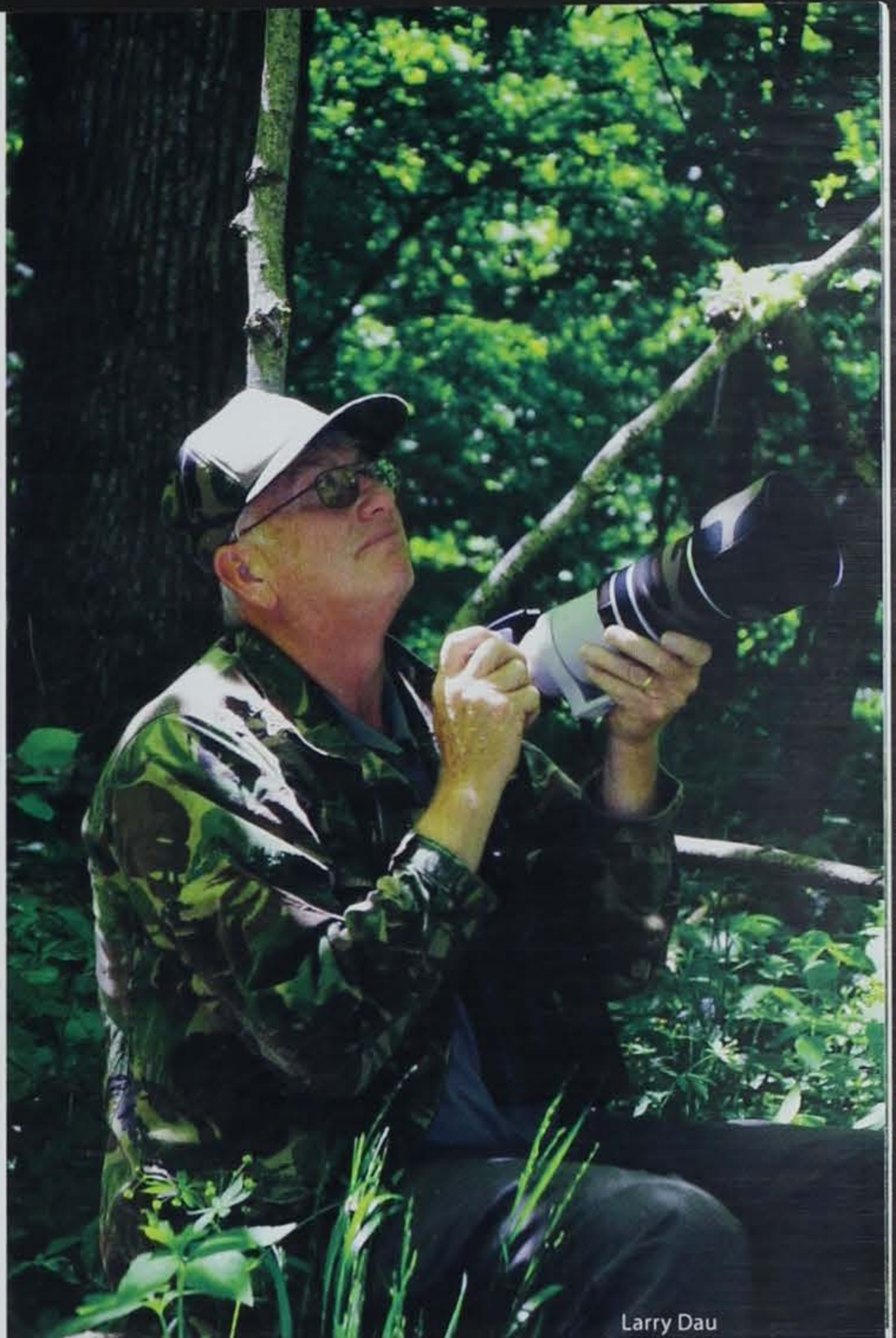
When the weekend arrived, I returned for some serious viewing. The sun was still rising behind the ridgeline as I settled in behind the camera tripod. I had literally waited decades to enjoy this event, and I planned on making a full day of it. To celebrate the occasion, I'd



OPPOSITE: A male uses a pair of stiff tail feathers to prop against the tree while delivering a meal of carpenter ants to hungry offspring. The youngsters—two males and one female—fledged, or left the nest, in early June. **LEFT:** In spite of the incredible work required to chisel the 20-inch deep cavity from solid elm—a process that can take 30 days to six weeks—the adults will not use the nest a second season. They'll create a new one instead, searching for another large, dead tree, leaving the old site to provide homes for secondary cavity nesters such as wood ducks. Last May, a pair of the giant woodpeckers nested at Ledges State Park near Boone where the birds soon became a popular tourist attraction as wildlife enthusiasts and outdoor photographers from across the state viewed the spectacle.



Jeff Glock



Larry Dau

even gone so far as to bring my own “ants” for lunch. Actually, it was a collection of peanut butter-filled celery sticks topped with rows of partially embedded dark raisins. My wife, Carol, refers to the tasty treat as “Ants on a Log.” All things considered, no meal could have seemed more fitting.

As news of nesting pileated woodpeckers at Ledges State Park spread, wildlife viewing enthusiasts from across much of Iowa traveled to view the sight. By the time the pair’s three youngsters successfully fledged in early June, the site had become one of the park’s most popular natural attractions. Included on the list of regular nest site visitors was Larry Dau, president of the Ames-based Big Blue Stem Audubon Chapter.

“This was an extremely exciting event,” says Dau. “All my life I’ve been trying to get pictures of this. I’ve had opportunities in the past, but something always went wrong and I never got the shots. This time it’s working; I’m getting the photos.

“It’s all been wonderful, but I think the best day was when a second adult male showed up near the nest,”

recalls Dau. “Suddenly, I could see two males, the adult female, and all three young in the same view. The first (resident) male became immediately defensive and gave chase. For the next couple of minutes, the two males went round and round flying at top speed weaving their way back and forth, up and down through the branches and foliage until the interloper finally left the territory. It was truly incredible. I never dreamed that I would ever view six pileated woodpeckers in one place at one time in my lifetime. It was a definite highlight.”

Ankeny outdoor photographer Jeff Glock shares the enthusiasm.

“I heard about the nest from a birder friend, and this is my second time here,” said Glock during a May 30 visit to the site. “It’s really been exciting—a very unique opportunity. We have a cabin up at Lake Superior, and I’ve tried to get shots of the pileateds up there, but the birds are extremely difficult and I’ve had a lot of trouble.

“My mom has wanted a picture of a pileated woodpecker, but I’ve never been able to get one,” Glock adds. “Now I can give her one of these.” 📸

Iowa State University natural resource ecology graduate student Irma Tapia releases a young jackrabbit after fitting it with an ear tag radio transmitter. Research students will track the animal's movements to get a better understanding of its home range and habitat requirements.



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TACKLING THE VANISHING JACKRABBIT



How many live jackrabbits does it take to draw a crowd? If it's at **ISU's Ames Research Farm**, it just takes one. STORY AND PHOTOS BY LOWELL WASHBURN

THE SCENE LOOKED MORE

like an impromptu game of football than an official scientific endeavor. The location was a short-cropped oat field at Iowa State University's Agronomy and Agricultural Engineering Research Farm near Ames. The ISU home team just tackled its opponent and was engaged in a classic "dog pile." In the melee, it was hard to determine exactly who had who. The suspense ended abruptly as animal ecology student Eric Kilburg emerged from the bottom of the heap. With right thumb held high, Kilburg gleefully announced, "We've got 'em." Given the OK to proceed, the remaining gallery rushed to view the captive.

There was good reason for all the commotion. It isn't every day a person receives an opportunity to see and touch a live Iowa jackrabbit. Perhaps no group is more acutely aware of that than student researchers with the ISU Department of Natural Resource Ecology and Management. For two years, they and DNR biologists have been reminded time and again how difficult it is to capture a quick-thinking, fleet footed white-tailed jackrabbit.

Whenever a healthy specimen is safely secured, it is cause for celebration. After all, you can't have a viable wildlife study without subjects, and few subjects come harder than a healthy jack. This particular animal (an adult female) had become an unwitting participant in a first-of-its-kind radio telemetry investigation of the seasonal habitat use and movement behavior of white-tailed jackrabbits. Born of necessity, the cooperative endeavor is exploring the little known biology of the state's only wild hare. Researchers hope the findings will ultimately enable wildlife biologists to make sound management recommendations regarding the ecological needs of this dwindling native species.

"Once we capture one, the main thing is to try and keep the animal calm," remarks Kilburg, still trying to catch his breath from the intense sprint that drove the fleeing jackrabbit into the entangling embrace of a nearly invisible waist-high, wall of nylon netting.

"Jackrabbits are so powerful and they struggle like crazy. When you catch a big one like this animal, it really takes two people to safely hold them down," he adds.



1) Members of the ISU jackrabbit research team study a depression that served as a resting spot for a pregnant female jackrabbit. The spot was located via radio telemetry. 2, 3 & 4) Team members conduct a drive to force fleeing jackrabbits into a short mesh fence where they are quickly subdued and calmed. Care is taken not to injure the excited jack. While no jackrabbit has been injured during the project, the same cannot be said for the students. Some have suffered bites and scratches from the feisty jacks. 5 & 6) Once captured, researchers take various length and weight measurements and collect DNA samples. Finally, radio transmitters are implanted; smaller, lighter ear tags like the one pictured for the young of the year, and radio collars for the mature hares. Researchers will conduct captures whenever conditions allow—either day or night. 7) Eric Kilburg and Irma Tapia, lead members of the research team, track a recently released jackrabbit on the ISU Research Farm.



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“One person pins the hips and rear legs while the other person takes the front half and covers the eyes. Unless properly secured, they can easily dislocate and break bones or they can break their backs. This technique is working, and so far, we haven’t had a single injury to a jackrabbit, although we have had some pretty good scratches and bites to humans.”

As soon as the jack calmed down and ceased struggling, the research team went to work.

“The first thing we do is take a variety of measurements—ear length, hind foot, tail, total body length and total body weight,” explains ISU Associate Professor of Animal Ecology and project adviser Sue Fairbanks. “We also do a small ear clipping for DNA analysis. The last thing we do is install the radio—an ear mounted transmitter for smaller jackrabbits and a collar for adults. Once the radio is installed, the jack is released and we wait for the animal to begin telling us things about itself. From start to finish, the whole process usually takes less than 10 minutes and the animal is on its way.”

Getting to that point is no walk in the park.

“The hardest part is getting an animal ‘on the air’ in the first place,” says Kilburg. “Jackrabbits are extremely hard to capture and we’ve been forced to experiment with a variety of methods. We’ve tried drop nets, but the jacks were reluctant to go under them. We tried box traps but only had one capture. Portable net barriers have been the best, and depending on location, we’ll install nets to fit the situation. Each set is different and we use anywhere from 300 to 400 yards of mesh for each drive.”

But before a drive is attempted, jackrabbits must first be patterned, notes Kilburg. Researchers normally spend four or five days determining what fields jacks are using, what time of the day or night they’re most active, where they enter fields and where they exit.

“It all takes patience and planning. And, on the day of the drive, it takes lots and lots of people. It’s challenging, but if you put in your time, you can succeed,” says Kilburg. “Some days it works, but a lot of times the animal will escape at the very last second. That’s frustrating. But when things go right and a jackrabbit hits the net full bore and is successfully captured, then the team members feel



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as if they've really accomplished something. Every capture makes all the effort seem well worth it."

"Obtaining a significant number of animals for the telemetry study has been very challenging, but I think we're already collecting some very valuable data from the group we have," says Irma Tapia, an ISU natural resource ecology graduate student who is studying genetic diversity among Iowa jackrabbits and is the telemetry monitoring leader.

"So far, we have been able to place transmitter collars on nine adult jackrabbits since 2008, and still have four of those on the air. Three of the radioed animals have been killed by coyotes (this assumption was based on tooth mark measurements and other circumstantial kill site evidence), one died of sickness and one mortality remains a mystery."

Movements within the jackrabbits' home ranges have also been interesting, says Tapia. One nonadventurous jackrabbit has never left the research farm. Others have explored several sections outside the area and returned to home base. Two moved at least three miles from the facility, but returned to their original habitats.

"The DNA work is another very important aspect of

the study," says Tapia. "One of the things we're trying to determine is if Iowa populations are truly isolated or if they're mixing with other fragmented groups. If DNA codes are very similar within a group, it can mean that inbreeding is taking place. Over time, the situation could prove disastrous. On the other hand, if populations are mixing and show good genetic diversity, that could bode well for the future."

ACCORDING TO DNR UPLAND WILDLIFE

Biologist Todd Bogenschutz, there remains little question that Iowa jackrabbit populations are in dire straits.

"It's alarming," says Bogenschutz. "For the past 40 years, jackrabbits have exhibited a downward trend as populations have followed a steady and dramatic decline in small grain production. During the early 1960s, Iowa had around four million acres of oats on the landscape. By 2009, that had fallen to around 100,000 acres, a 98 percent decrease. Oats, alfalfa and pasture were important habitats for Iowa jackrabbits and it's obvious that they haven't been able to cope with the loss."

Once abundant across the state, extreme land changes have virtually extirpated jackrabbits from the state (see graph on page 55). One remaining remnant population on the Iowa State University research farm in Ames is giving researcher valuable insight into the declining breed's habits and needs.



Although jackrabbits were once abundant and recreationally important to hunters, they have largely disappeared from much of their Midwestern range. In Illinois and Indiana, the species has become virtually extinct. Even though large scale habitat loss appears to be the real issue, Iowa hunting seasons have been shortened and daily bag limits dropped from three to one. Remaining populations appear isolated and vulnerable.

Despite the downward trend, amazingly little is known of the animal's basic ecology. While pondering the dilemma, Bogenschutz notes an apparently thriving population inhabiting the research farm near Ames. He proposed a partnership research study between DNR and ISU. The idea was quickly accepted, and the project's first official fall jackrabbit survey began in September 2006.

In addition to corn and beans, the Ames research facility presented a wide variety of cover types including oats, short-grass waterways and alfalfa—in many aspects very similar to landscape features of the 1960s, which is probably the reason a good population is hanging on here, notes Bogenschutz.

"When the study began, we were desperate for information. Although we had good historical data on animal weights and litter size, we didn't have information on things like home range requirements or habitat use. It was a case where any information we could collect would add to our knowledge," he says. "Unfortunately, there wasn't much information to glean from earlier study efforts. Although there have been radio telemetry studies for many other wildlife species, jackrabbits have never been radioed in Iowa.

"We thought telemetry had the potential to provide meaningful information on things like survival, habitat use, home range, dispersal and reproduction. What we underestimated was the difficulty of implementing such a study," says Bogenschutz.

DNR Wildlife Technician Mark McInroy has experienced ample doses of those difficulties firsthand. Most occurred while attempting to out-run, out-maneuver and out-think fleeing jackrabbits who, at the moment, were convinced that they were in a literal race for their lives.

"Capturing a live jackrabbit—by any means—is extremely challenging and extremely frustrating," says



McInroy. "It takes days and sometimes weeks of scouting before an animal is successfully captured. Organized drives are tough, and jackrabbits are as elusive as you can imagine."

The Ames research project is taking place on one section (360 acres) of land. The initial survey revealed the farm had a population of 44 jackrabbits, which is one jack for every five acres. "Although we're admittedly dealing with a very small sample size, this is probably the largest population remaining anywhere in Iowa," says McInroy.

When the study began, researchers determined that, in order to make meaningful statements, it would be necessary to put radio collars on about half of the existing adult population. It soon became painfully obvious that it flat-out wasn't happening.

Undaunted, researchers quickly shifted gears and began considering other methods. Although just out of the nest, young jackrabbits appeared somewhat easier to capture, traditional collars were too heavy and too loose for their tiny necks. Lightweight, ear tag transmitters provided an effective stop-gap solution.

"Iowa's jackrabbit telemetry study is strictly a pioneer effort. No one else has ever attempted this, and we've been forced to invent new tools along the way," says McInroy. "We're still learning, and the radio ear tags were one innovation that moved us a giant leap forward."

The tiny radio provides data on very young jackrabbits that would have otherwise been impossible to capture. The batteries last for about 120 days and researchers try to recapture animals before the transmitters quit. By that time, a young jackrabbit is big enough to be fitted with the traditional radio neck collar, which lasts a full year. The ear tags have a signal range of about a quarter-mile, and signals can be picked up for a mile.

"Put the two together and we're learning new things regarding the life history and needs of a vanishing native species," says McInroy. "When it's finally analyzed, our data will hopefully allow us to make intelligent recommendations to wildlife biologists and other land managers interested in maintaining jackrabbit populations."

Historic Jackrabbit Hunts Provided Iowans With Food, Cash And Outdoor Recreation

For those who loved to pursue hard running, high-leaping white-tailed jackrabbits, high school hunting buddy Craig Buehler was tough on jacks. The reason was he was owner/operator of a slim-lined, sweet-shooting .22 Hornet rifle. Equipped with a high grade scope, the rifle could drive tacks out to a hundred yards or more. All in all, the diminutive little centerfire was the perfect caliber for hunting northern Iowa jacks.

Back in the day, Iowa jackrabbits were about as close to big game hunting as most of us were likely to get. Although jacks were a common inhabitant throughout the region, our most favored hunting grounds were around Linden Ranch. Located near Thornton, the ranch's sharply rolling terrain was better suited to stock cows than row crops. The sprawling mix of short pasture and boggy lowlands presented a perfect landscape mosaic where both cattle and rabbits thrived.

Our weekend safaris were usually planned around one of the hunters' tables in the school cafeteria. When the foray began, Buehler assumed the point position while the rest of us fanned out with whatever artillery we could scrounge—usually an assorted collection of hand me down .22 long rifles or full choke 12 gauge shotguns loaded with heavy charges of #4 or #2 shot.

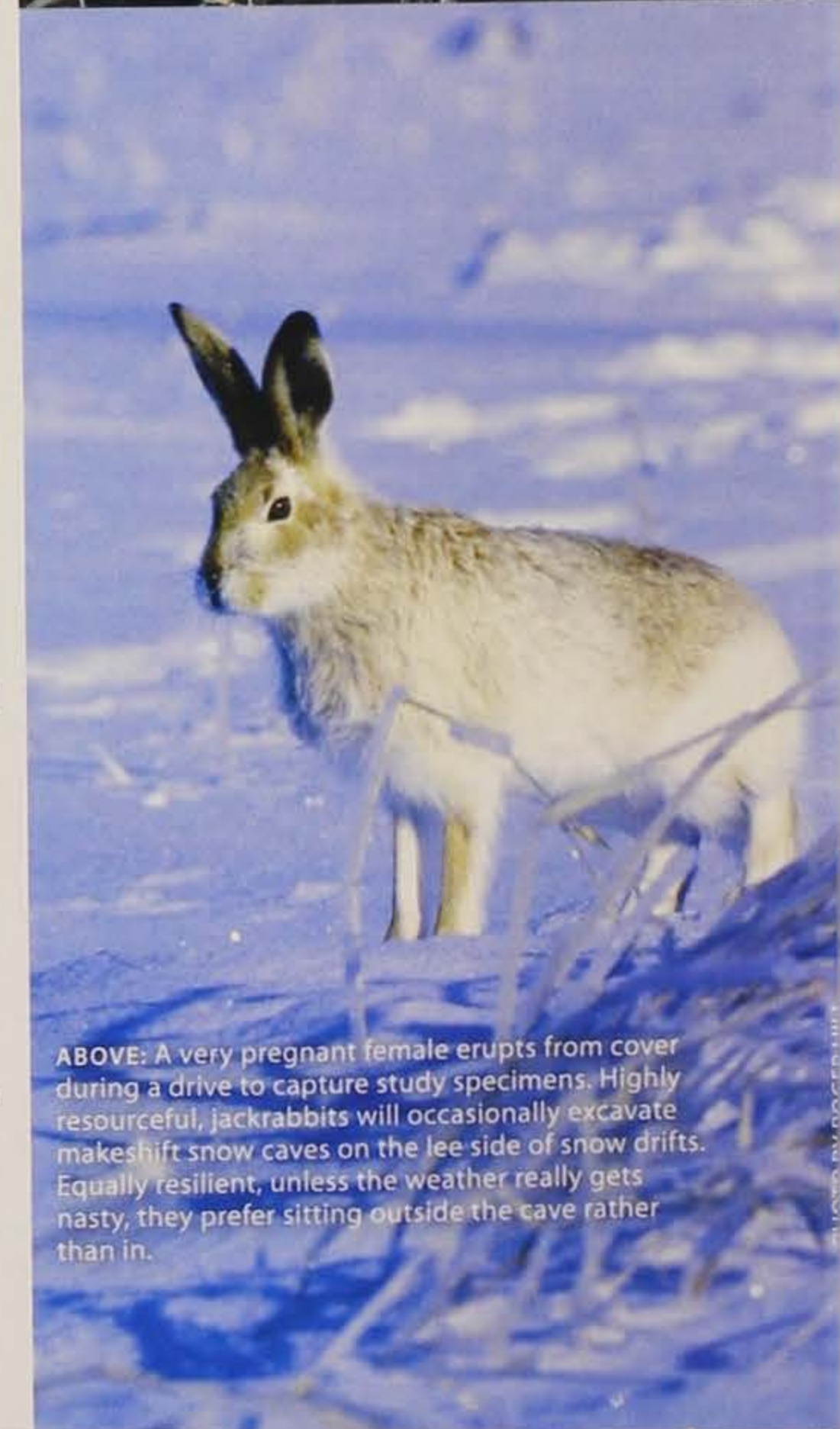
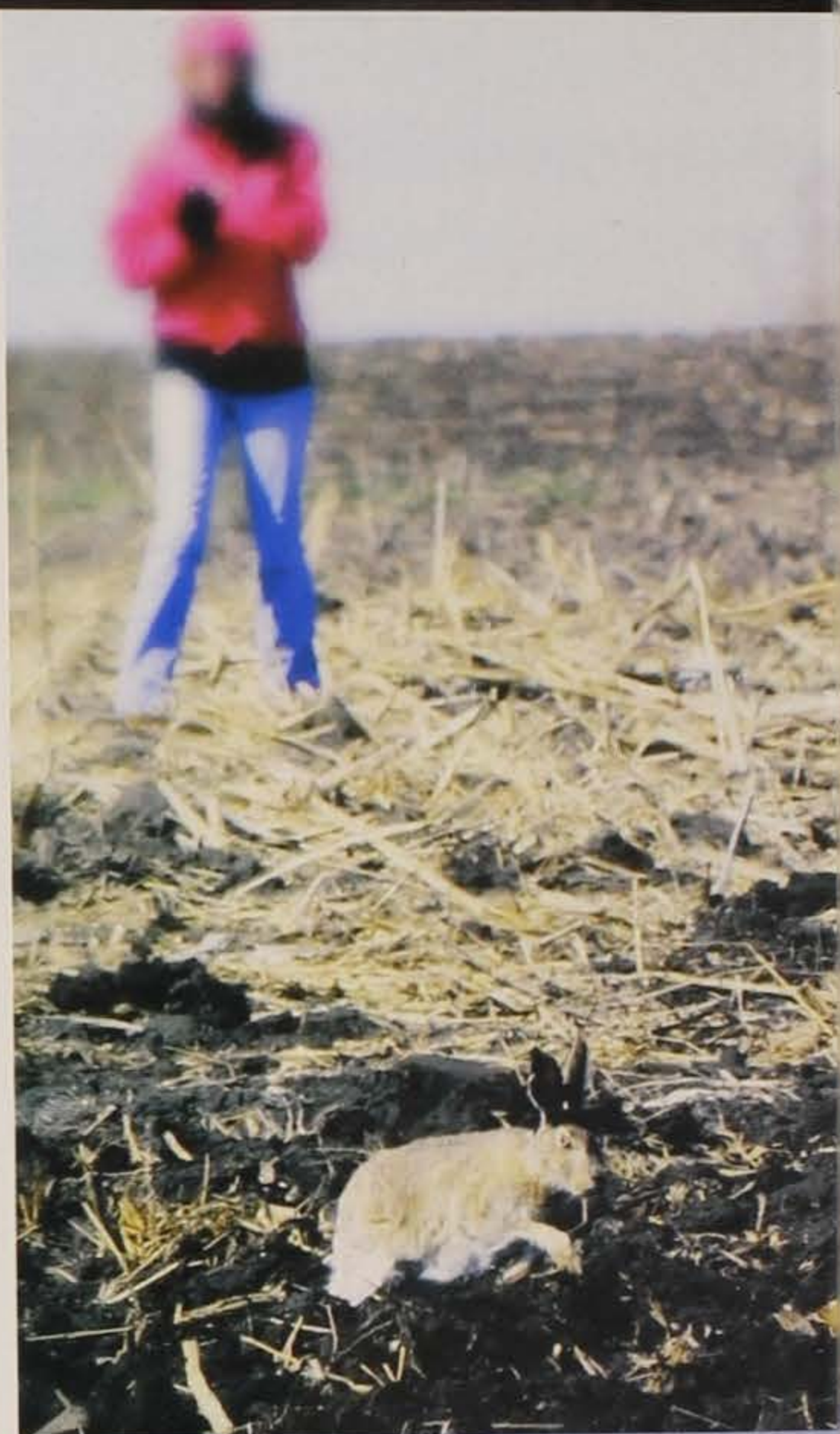
Finding game was rarely an issue. The first jacks were often sighted while we were still pulling on jackets or filling our pockets with ammo. Once the hunt was underway, our shots would vary from animals loping across a hillside at 75 yards or more (only Buehler could attempt these) to flattened out jacks that literally jumped at our feet. To have two or three hares running at once was not uncommon. Although our combined take was never what it should have been, we did sometimes bag enough to make carrying the hefty 8- to 9-pound critters back to the road a challenge.

Although our 1960s jackrabbit hunts were exciting enough for us, they paled in comparison to what serious adults were doing. The most dramatic examples came from the so-called circle hunts. High jackrabbit populations

were sometimes considered a nuisance by alfalfa farmers and large organized hunts were an attempt at control. As the name implies, circle hunts consisted of a party of hunters surrounding a jackrabbit-laden tract of habitat and then closing in. Results proved incredible. During a 1961 winter hunt Conservation Officer Frank Starr reported 99 jackrabbits killed and only 15 escapees from a successful circle hunt that occurred on a section of land near Storm Lake. During a similar hunt, Conservation Officer Jim Ripple reported 90 jacks killed from a single section near Lidderdale. Conservation Officer James Baldwin reported that 458 jackrabbits were killed, while an additional 307 escaped, during the combined efforts of nine circle hunts conducted in Clay County during the winter of 1959-60. Although Iowa Conservation Commission archives contain detailed information regarding 32 northern Iowa circle hunts, there is no record of so much as a single human injury resulting from what, by today's hunter safety standards, was a potentially risky practice.

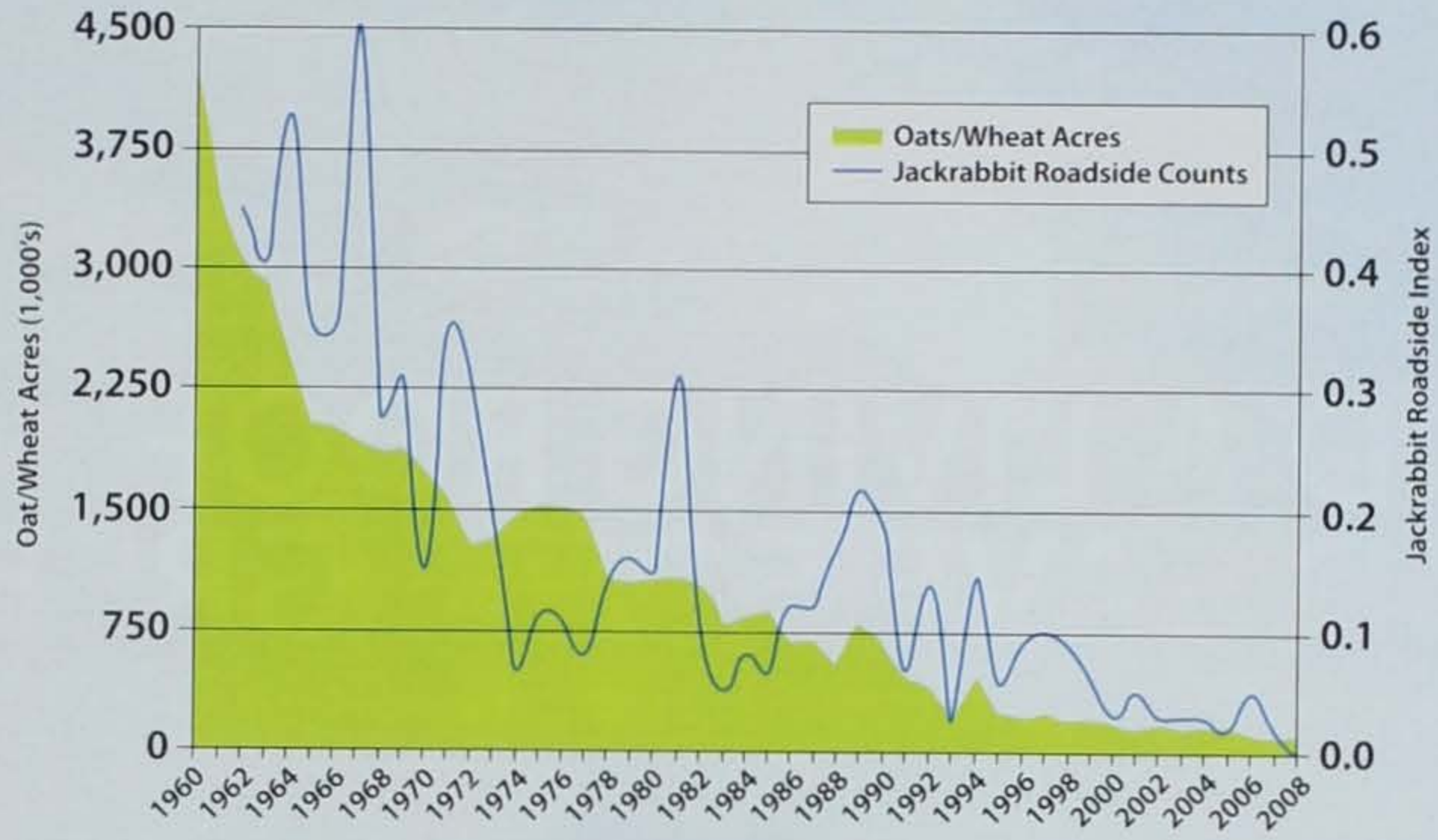
All told, more than 100,000 jackrabbits were annually harvested in Iowa during the 1960s. Many jacks made their way to eager markets where meat supplied protein to local mink ranches and the pelts used to make felt garment liners. Thousands more were taken to local county courthouses to collect lucrative 10-cent bounties. The jackrabbits my classmates and I killed were promptly served for dinner.

Early (1960s) surveys revealed breeding populations of white-tailed jackrabbits were present across most of Iowa. Highest densities occurred across northcentral and northwest Iowa where winter counts sometimes exceeded 100 jacks per square mile, and populations of 30 animals per square mile were not uncommon. Today, jackrabbits are rarely seen across much of their former range. No jackrabbits were reported during the 2008 August Roadside Survey, and only one was tallied during the 2009 survey. Most contemporary encounters are incidental to other forms of upland hunting. 🐰



ABOVE: A very pregnant female erupts from cover during a drive to capture study specimens. Highly resourceful, jackrabbits will occasionally excavate makeshift snow caves on the lee side of snow drifts. Equally resilient, unless the weather really gets nasty, they prefer sitting outside the cave rather than in.

DOWN A RABBIT HOLE



Iowa jackrabbit populations have suffered a continual, downward spiral following a roughly 98 percent decrease in small grain production over the past 50 years.



ADD A LIVING ROOF AND SAVE SOME GREEN



AFTER

In Indianola, a barren asphaltic roof is transformed into habitat to create pleasing views from upstairs windows. Living roofs reduce runoff, minimize air conditioning costs and prolong the longevity of roofing surfaces. The benefits and beauty are helping green roofs gain in popularity.

Homes, businesses and public buildings are adding green roofs as retrofits or new construction to harvest the benefits of a living roof. The rain-absorbing roofs create a cooler, energy efficient summer space, turn barren areas into beautiful habitat and can outlast typical roof materials by decades (some green roofs in Europe have endured for 75 years).

Iowa State University built the King Pavilion on the north side of the Design Center with sustainable design, including a living roof. "As we talk to our design students about the complexities of sustainability, we will be able to point to this facility and use it as an example of how it is done," says Luis Rico-Gutierrez, dean of design. Completed last June, the roof was sown with 20 varieties of hardy, colorful perennials, including 14 types of hardy

sedum in a gravel-sand medium over three substrate layers to control moisture flow and to protect the roof membrane. "This type of roof should prevent 80 percent of rain and melted snow from flowing to the storm sewers as runoff," says Kerry Dixon-Fox, an architect with ISU facilities planning and management.

It also cuts the heat-island effect, when sunshine heats a roof surface and bakes the interior space and adjacent areas. "Instead of a roof that could be as much as 80 degrees warmer than the air above it on a summer evening, the pavilion's roof should be about 5 degrees warmer than the air," Dixon-Fox says.

The building also features insulation from recycled denim jeans, natural ventilation cooling that negated air conditioning needs and other energy-saving touches such

Learn More

www.greenroofs.org offers news and features projects worldwide
www.roofscapes.com technical experts in green roof engineering
www.icosc.com an Iowa resource for sustainable building
www.sarnafilus.com maker of roofing and waterproofing systems
www.rdgusa.com Architecture, landscape architecture and planning firm with offices in Omaha, Des Moines and Ames. 515-288-3141.



The new King Pavilion at Iowa State University was recently awarded LEED Platinum certification by the U.S. Green Building Council, the first higher-education building in Iowa to receive that status.

as dual-flush toilets and stormwater management that allows most runoff to seep into the soil.

Designed by RDG Planning and Design in Des Moines, the group won an architectural award for its work. No strangers to green roofs, one designer, Patrick Dunn, added a living roof to his Indianola home. Due to the cooler roof and other practices, the six-member family home averages just \$90 a month in electrical use, less than half their previous similarly sized home used.

"It is certainly a conversation piece," says Dunn. "You can look down on it. The aesthetics are a big part of it."

GOING GREEN: FIRST STEPS

Contact a design and architecture professional during the building design phase or have a structural analysis done

for an existing building. Many buildings, especially those with rock ballast on the roof, may be able to be retrofitted with a living roof.

GREEN ROOF CROSS SECTION

More than just soil, living roofs use well-planned materials in layers. A waterproof membrane protects the building against moisture. A root barrier layer is placed atop the waterproof membrane. A series of drainage layers prevent plants from drowning during excessively wet periods. Sandy soils are placed above the drainage layer and either seeded or planted with plugs of durable plants such as sedums, prairie dropseed, asters, prickly pear, coneflower and black-eyed Susan.

My Backyard

BY BRIAN BUTTON

Go Bananas for Butterflies

Add fruit to your backyard to attract a variety of butterflies unlikely to visit flowering plants alone. *Cut, mash or place whole bananas, melons, apples and peaches* on a platform or on the ground to attract question marks, *Polygonia interrogationis*; eastern commas, *Polygonia commas*; and gray commas, *Polygonia progne*. The mourning cloak, *Nymphalis antiopa*, may also visit along with other species.

"Once the fruit runs its course of ripening and rotting and the butterflies stop visiting, it is time to change the fruit," says Ron Jones, manager of Bellevue State Park, which features a large butterfly garden.

"As fruit spoils, it produces alcohols and butterflies love that," says Nathan Brockman, curator of the 2,500-square-foot indoor butterfly wing of ISU's Reimen Gardens in Ames. "They also may visit trees for sap for the concentrated sugars." He recommends homeowners with fruit trees leave some fallen fruit on the ground. "That is the natural order of what occurs. Picking it up takes food away from those species," and denies important pollinators, such as native solitary bees, a food source.

Placing fruit outside can have some other effects. "You will get flies, beetles and wasps more so than butterflies, so use at your own risk," says Brockman, who also suggests keeping a section of earth moist to accommodate puddling behavior, where butterflies take in salts and minerals from the soil.

To get a butterfly-eye view of good plant species, visit the butterfly garden at Bellevue State Park or stroll the outdoor areas of Reiman Gardens to see butterflies flitting among both native perennials and annuals in attractive outdoor settings. "You can get ideas for plants that are good for butterflies and see what species the butterflies are visiting," says Brockman.

"You want to keep something blooming all season," says Jones. At Bellevue, they plant zinnias, marigolds and Mexican sunflowers, with their bright orange blossoms, along with cosmos and sedum autumn joy, with clusters of pink flowers that bloom in the fall, along with native coneflowers. The park's garden kiosk allows visitors to learn about plant and butterfly species and butterfly lifecycles. You can get your hands dirty, too, by volunteering to help maintain the garden.

Get Involved

Help maintain the butterfly gardens at Bellevue State Park. Visitors can help with planting and upkeep of the gardens as well as monarch tagging in the fall. To participate, call the park at 563-872-4019.



CRUISING FOR NATURE

Deck out your vehicle to help wildlife and habitat

Show your pride and support wildlife with two new license plate choices that feature a white-tailed deer or brook trout. Designed by Cedar Rapids artist Greg Bordignon who also illustrated the pheasant and eagle plates, the new plates join three others dedicated to natural resource programs. The goldfinch/rose, pheasant and eagle plates together generate about \$1 million a year and outsell all of the state's other specialty plates.

Ross Harrison, DNR coordinator for the Resource Enhancement and Protection program (REAP), predicts the new plates may double current income because of the popularity of the design.

New plate sales began this spring at county treasurers' offices. At a purchase price of \$45 and annual renewal of \$25, the REAP program receives \$35 from each purchase and \$10 from renewals. The DNR's nongame wildlife program gets \$10 from the purchase and \$15 from renewals.

REAP provides funding to cities, counties and state conservation efforts, as well as to landowners and conservation organizations and individuals. The DNR's nongame wildlife program uses the revenue to match federal money for projects dealing with wildlife that are not hunted or fished, and therefore not managed by use of hunting and fishing license revenue.

Visit your county treasurer's office to order plates.

Give a Gift

You can buy a gift certificate for the new license plates for \$45 or the \$90 personalized plate at your county treasurer's office. The gift receiver will have to follow through with the treasurer's office by bringing in the old plates and registration.

Turn a Forest Pest into Tasty Pesto

Garlic mustard, *Alliaria petiolata*, was brought from Europe in the 1800s for culinary and medicinal purposes. In the wild, this invasive species can quickly dominate a forest floor, choking out wildflowers, ferns and tree seedlings. High in vitamins A and C, the plant smells like garlic and resembles mustard plant or creeping charlie.

While most animals dislike the taste, cooks are rediscovering its culinary roots and are biting back. For reclaiming the woods, the best control method is to pull and dispose of the plants prior to seed production. Recently, discriminating connoisseurs are also weeding and eating this plant, once known as poor man's mustard.

Garlic mustard leaves can be eaten fresh in salads or used in any recipe calling for mustard greens. Ensure the plants are clean and free of any chemical treatments. Plants may be dried or sautéed to add spice to any favorite recipes. Do not replant this invasive into your herb gardens. There is plenty to go around and many opportunities in Iowa for volunteer pulling. Bon appétit!

GARLIC MUSTARD PESTO AND PASTA

MAKES 4 CUPS

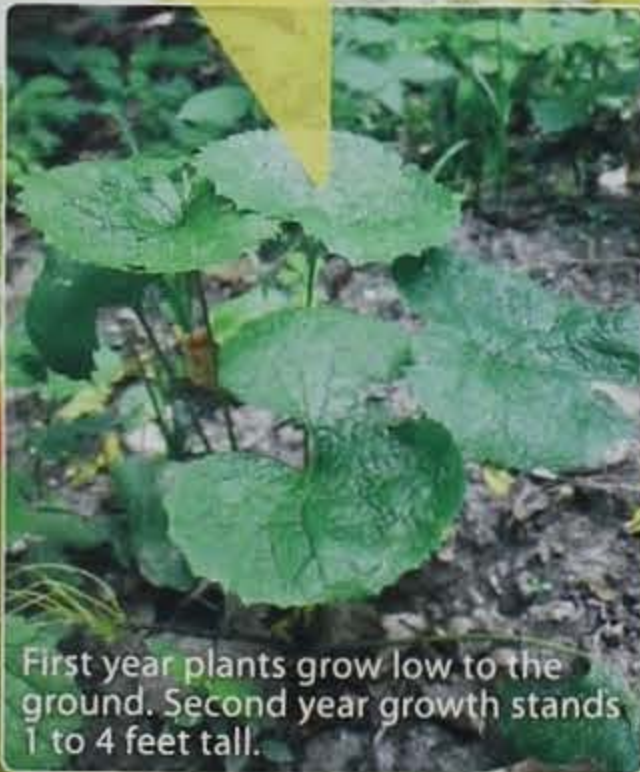
- 4 cloves garlic
- 3 tablespoons garlic mustard taproots
- ¾ cup parsley
- 1 cup garlic mustard leaves
- 1 ½ cups basil leaves
- 1 ½ cups olives
- 2 cups walnuts or ¾ cup pine nuts
- 1 ¼ cups olive oil (or as needed)
- 2 cups grated parmesan or pecorino cheese

In food processor:

1. Chop garlic and garlic mustard roots.
2. Add parsley, garlic, garlic mustard leaves and basil and chop.
3. Add nuts and chop coarsely.
4. Add olive oil and process until you've created a coarse paste. Add to cooked pasta and toss well.

Get Involved

Help control this invasive plant. Call your area state parks, county conservation boards and city parks to volunteer to remove this plant. Learn more about the Quad Cities pull Sat., May 8, 9 a.m.-noon by calling 563-344-4084 or www.extension.iastate.edu/scott



First year plants grow low to the ground. Second year growth stands 1 to 4 feet tall.

COLLECTING TIPS:

April through June, pull the plant and its entire roots. Search semi-shaded forests, especially along trails. Plant parts have a garlic like odor when crushed. Discard uneaten portions in the garbage to help prevent the plant from spreading. As one plant can produce hundreds of seeds that remain viable up to five years, once seeds start shedding, stay away from the plant to help minimize spreading.

The Iowa Outdoors cookbook features fish, game and camping recipes from Iowa chefs. From Dutch oven pheasant pot pie, venison lasagna, pecan-encrusted catfish, walleye fingers, hunter's pizza, wild sumac lemonade and dozens more, stay satisfied with 42 pages of color photos and recipe ideas. Five x 8 inches. Order at www.iowanaturestore.com or 1-866-410-0230. Cost \$5 plus S&H.





Quail's Nest



Russian Fisherman's Soup



Husband-wife duo Dmitri and Irina

Russian and American Cuisine Add a New Twist to Old Favorites MOSCOW NATIVES BRING FLAIR, FUN AND FLAVOR TO CENTRAL IOWA

Steak, pasta, ribs and burgers alongside Russian favorites like beef stroganov, Moscow fillet, Wellington salmon and shashlik kebobs satisfy all tastes at Irina's.

QUAIL'S NEST

Quick and simple to cook, the elegant quail presentation will impress guests and please palates with the mild sweetness from the Marsala.

One baking potato, finely shredded
Two quail
hard boiled quail eggs from Asian stores
Thyme, basil, rosemary, finely chopped
2 tablespoons oil
2 ounces Marsala wine

Preheat oven to 500°F. On stovetop, heat an ovenproof skillet with oil on high setting. Place quail skin side down, cooking until brown or golden. Flip quail, cover and put in oven for 13 minutes.

For nest, finely shred potato and place into bowl, covering shreds with water to prevent browning. While quail is baking, make nest by placing a portion of potatoes into a metal strainer to deep fat fry or cook nest on stovetop in a deep pan using a spoon to ladle hot oil over any areas not in contact with oil. Cook until golden.

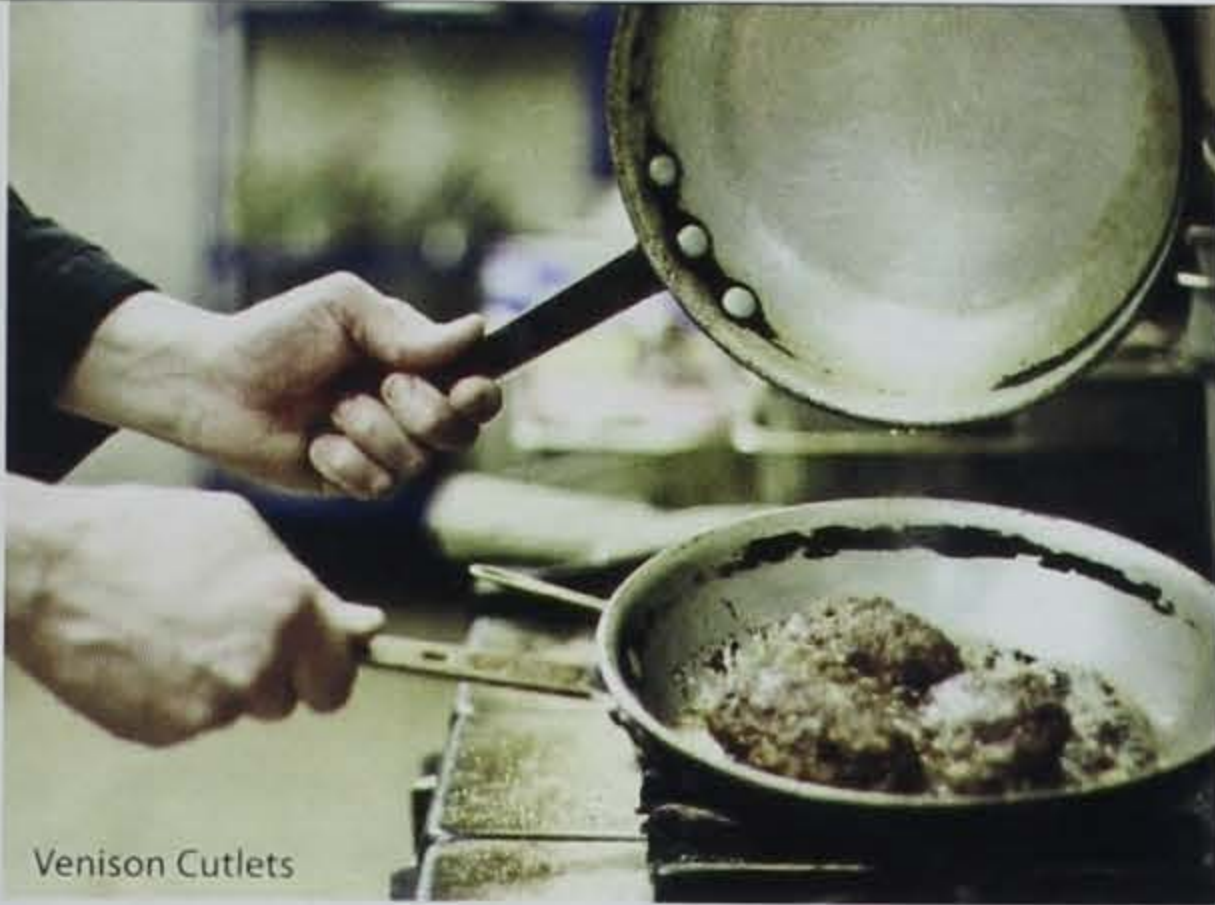
Remove quail from oven, and, while

in hot pan, add 1 to 2 ounces of Marsala. Place nest on plate, add quail and return hot skillet with juices and Marsala to stovetop. Heat for one minute to reduce liquid, while scraping any browned bits from pan. Pour over quail.

RUSSIAN FISHERMAN'S SOUP

A perfect recipe for a mixed catch, the clean, clear broth cheers the soul.

1 teaspoon black pepper
2 potatoes
1 carrot
1 bay leaf
1 onion, skinned
2 pounds freshwater fish
1 gallon water



Venison Cutlets

Irina Khartchenko and Dmitri Iakovlev created an intimate, relaxed and fun eatery where "You get the table for the night," says Irina. "People are constantly running in the U.S., but here, you can stay as long as you wish and relax—bring friends or family and make an evening out of your stay. We strive for five-star service with a two-star price." Most entrees are \$8 to \$18 and wines sold elsewhere for \$11 to \$15 a glass are half that and less at Irina's. Choices are endless with Baltika beers from Russia, 50 vodkas and 70 wines with tableside tastings.

In the past, magicians enchanted patrons tableside with up-close sleight of hand, now live music ranging from country to classic '70s and '80s is found Friday and Saturday. Irina's garnered national press with a month-long period where patrons could name their prices. "You could leave a dollar if you felt that was what the food and service was worth and you'd be good to go," says Dmitri. "But nobody underpaid; some paid twice what we would normally charge" as testament to the establishment.



Venison Cutlets with Tomato Basil Sauce

On stovetop, bring water to boil in a large pot. Add whole onion, black pepper and bay leaf. Skin and chop potatoes and carrots into small squares and add to pot with fish. Simmer until cooked. Salt to taste.

VENISON CUTLETS

- 1 pound ground venison
- ½ onion, diced
- 1 carrot, diced
- 1 egg
- 1 slice white bread
- 1 cup fresh cilantro, chopped
- 1 teaspoon garlic, chopped
- 2 cups flour
- ¼ cup oil

Add diced onion and carrot to

mixing bowl. Pull bread slice into small pieces and add to bowl. Add meat, garlic and egg to bowl and mix by hand. Take a handful of mixture and roll into an oblong shaped ball. Roll in flour to coat. On stove top, heat oil in sauté pan on high setting. Add cutlets to pan and cook on one side until crisp. Flip and cover, then cook on slow to steam. Cook 5 to 8 minutes. Top cutlets with a simple canned or homemade tomato and basil sauce.

Serve with side of mashed potatoes. Dmitri makes his with cream, pepper, oven-roasted garlic and butter.

Irina's

RESTAURANT & BAR

2301 Rocklyn Drive, Urbandale
www.irinasrestaurantandbar.com
 515-331-0399

HOURS:

LUNCH
 Monday-Friday 11 a.m.-2 p.m.

DINNER
 Monday-Saturday 5 p.m.-2 a.m.

A party room seats 32 for special events. The bar and booth dining area with projection television can be reserved too.

PRAYING MANTIS (*Stagmomantis carolina*)

Were not sure whether this member of the mantidae family gets its name from the way it prayerfully holds its forelegs or in the Greek meaning of its surname—the diviner or prophet. We're also not positive who it's praying for—itsself or its victims.

I SEE YOU

Mantids have sensitive compound eyes on the side that allow them to detect movement up to 60 feet away and accurately gauge distance. They are the only insects able to turn their heads 180 degrees, providing a 360-degree view. They are also the only creature in the world born with one ear, located near the middle set of legs. Roughly 60 percent have wings, used primarily when locating mates.



WHAT'S FOR SUPPER

Mantids are opportunistic feeders attacking just about anything. Moths, crickets, grasshoppers, flies and other insects are preferred, but frogs, lizards, small birds and rodents are not out of the question. They eat as many as 15 cricket-size insects per day. Females are known to eat the head of their partner before, during or after mating.

CHEW YOUR FOOD

When prey is spotted, the mantis will stage an ambush or, if the target is distant, a stalk. In an amazing display of speed and precision, the folded upraised legs extend, open and snap shut around its prey—all in the span of 50 milliseconds (.05 seconds). Tiny rows of spines on the legs hold the prey. Few escape, and few attacks fail. Some studies say 85 percent of hunts are successful. Mantids deliver two strikes in a fraction of a second. What happens next is not for the faint of heart. Powerful mandibles shred larger prey into bite-size morsels. They begin feeding while the victim is still alive, attacking the neck and head first to quickly eliminate a struggle.

YOU BE THE JUDGE

Due to its penchant for insects, the Chinese mantis was introduced in the U.S. in the late 1800s as natural pest control. Today, some gardeners still buy, raise and release mantids. However, voracious as they are, mantids are equally indiscriminate at meal time. Harmful bugs and beneficial bugs are fair game.

THE LIFE AND TIMES

Females lay between 10 and 400 eggs in the fall, encapsulated in a foamy mass that hardens, offering limited protection against predators and weather. Within a few weeks, she dies. In the spring, nymphs—wingless yet adult lookalikes—emerge. Hungry from the start, their first meal is often a sibling.

WHICH ONE IS IT

Of the more than 2,000 types of mantids worldwide, only about 20 are found in the United States. Of those, only five are common, and two—the Carolina and the Chinese—are found in Iowa.

RECREATING A PIECE OF HISTORY

MICHAEL OSTERHOLM, DORCHESTER

Minnesota public health professor returns trout country land to original setting

For a glimpse of northeast Iowa 150 years ago, just look to Michael Osterholm's Prairie Song Farm. Over the last decade, the University of Minnesota professor has returned to his native Allamakee County to painstakingly restore 100 acres of prairie, oak savanna and trout streams—including one wiped off the map in the 1950s to make way for corn. Osterholm flagged runoff to find the original stream channel and worked with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to match it with 1940s aerial photos. With help from volunteers, DNR and NRCS, he reshaped the original spring-fed channel and planted prairie grasses to hold the banks. With DNR-stocked brook trout, the aptly renamed Brook Creek is just one of five spots hosting Iowa's only native trout. Today, the fish are thriving, lunching on a plethora of aquatic insects placed by Luther College students. "Mike's a bulldog. Re-establishing a stream—you don't see many projects like that," says the DNR's Bill Kalishek. By taking a very site-specific approach on Waterloo, Duck and Brook creeks, Osterholm says he "challenged the traditional norms of doing stream restoration work." An easement protects the land from development and uniquely requires specific maintenance to keep the prairies, savannas and streams flourishing. "It's a legacy issue, something for the future," he says.



A HERO FOR ZERO

BRIAN PRESTON, PEOSTA

Dubuque County conservationist makes sure nature center leads by example

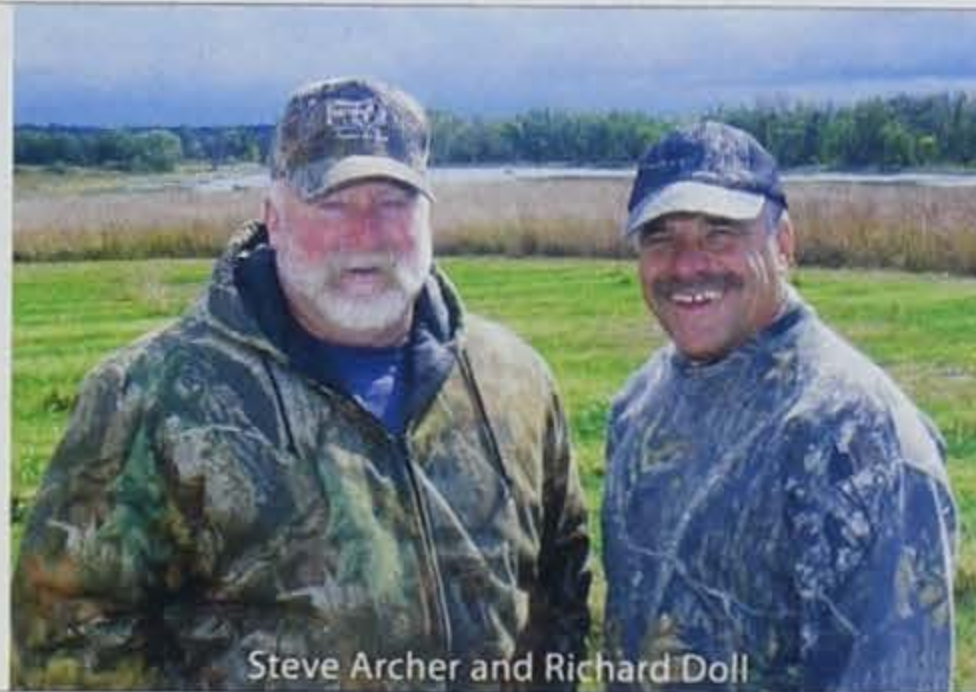
When it rains, it pours—off the land, washing pollutants into our streams and lakes, unless you're at the Swiss Valley Nature Center southwest of Dubuque, a zero runoff facility. Rainwater soaks into the soil or is collected to protect Upper Catfish Creek, thanks to Dubuque County Conservation Board Director Brian Preston. Rain gardens and deep-rooted prairie plants soak up water, while a rain barrel collects extra water to use for those plants in a dry spell. Rain water trickles through permeable paver walkways and a permeable asphalt parking lot into the ground instead of directly into the vulnerable trout stream, keeping the stream's cool temperatures in check. Newly planted prairie grasses help stabilize eroding streambanks. "We want to set the example by being zero runoff," says Preston. "If we take care of water quality, it gives us a lot of benefits." The practices, which he hopes to use in other county parks, are also educational tools for the 6,000-plus school kids that visit the center each year and for University of Dubuque students monitoring the practices' impact on the stream. "We wanted a demonstration site to show developers and builders that it can be done and encourage people to use these practices," says Eric Schmechel, who leads the Upper Catfish Creek watershed effort. "Brian helped us get out in the community and helped make the watershed effort well-known. He's pretty vocal about Upper Catfish Creek and a strong advocate for the zero-runoff mentality."

TRUMPETING THE CAUSE FOR HABITAT

STEVE ARCHER AND RICHARD DOLL, MOULTON

Relatives team up to restore southern Iowa land to wildlife paradise

The two cygnets that wriggled out of their eggshells last June were the first to do so in Appanoose County in more than a century, thanks to the home provided by Steve Archer and Richard Doll. The cousins-by-marriage restored about 1,000 acres with timber and prairie plantings, and most important for the newly hatched trumpeter swans, almost half of the area is wetland habitat. "I wanted to put it back to the way it was when my dad was a kid. To return it to how it should be," says Archer, who purchased the land in the late 1980s. A few years ago, Archer and Doll began working with the DNR's trumpeter swan restoration program to release a pair of birds. The largest waterfowl in the world, trumpeters were on the brink of extinction in the U.S. nearly a century ago. "It's neat to know something that was gone has returned and that I had something to do with it," Archer says. Wood ducks, pileated woodpeckers, owls, otters, deer, turkey and bobcats have all flocked to the property, rewarding the two wildlife watchers and hunters. "We enjoy creating habitat as much as we do hunting," Doll says. "Seeing the establishment of habitat—I get just as much of a thrill out of that." Doll and Archer also use the land as a showcase for others interested in conservation and wildlife, hosting field days and tours. The wetland work also benefits water quality and provides flood control along the Chariton River. "They're restoring habitat and doing the right things for wildlife and water quality," says Dave Hoffman with the DNR's swan restoration program. "They're passionate and enthusiastic to restore habitat on their land and be involved any way they can in promoting the cause."



Steve Archer and Richard Doll

Warden's Diary

BY ERIKA BILLERBECK PHOTO BY CLAY SMITH



Erika Billerbeck is the fourth officer to write Warden's Diary, taking over for Chuck Humeston, who retired from the DNR. She lives in Johnson County and began her career in 2000.

Tracy and Josh

I found out that there are some things worth getting up for at 4 a.m. As a parent, it isn't my normal practice to get out of bed on Mother's Day weekend before the sun comes up, but this time I happened to be invited to go along on a turkey hunt with Josh and Tracy Klein of Solon. I really wasn't very optimistic about our chances for a turkey when I woke up to the wind howling through the trees in the woods behind our house. And if the blustery morning wasn't enough to dampen my spirits, there's always the fact that I tend to be a jinx when it comes to hunting. The last thing I wanted was for my curse to ruin Josh's turkey hunt.

When I arrived, I was invited into their kitchen where the aroma of bacon and scrambled eggs made my stomach growl. I complimented Tracy on his ambition in fixing breakfast so early in the morning. "It's the only way I can get Josh out of bed," he answered with a smile.

Like many fathers, Tracy first started taking Josh squirrel hunting when he was 10 years old. Now, at 17, Tracy's concerns are pretty typical of many parents of teenagers. As Josh quietly ate his eggs, Tracy told me that one motivation for taking Josh hunting is to keep him active and away from the television and iPod.

Although the Kleins haven't always had a lot of success in terms of bagging their limit of game in the last seven years, Tracy was unconcerned. He made it clear that, for them, hunting is about spending time together and having a quality hunt, whether or not they fire a gun. Even when they do get a chance to take a shot, it's always limited to one because, for safety's sake, only one shell at a time is loaded into Josh's gun.

"You ready to hunt?" Tracy asked Josh when he finished eating. "Yeah," Josh replied. While I retrieved my camera, they put on their hunting vests and filled the pockets with their "essentials:" bug dope, hunting licenses and Mountain Dew. As we followed a path behind their house to the river bottom, we had to stop a few times to encourage Josh along. "Remember where we set up the turkey tent?" Tracy asked Josh. "Yeah," Josh replied. It didn't take me long to deduce that this was Josh's standard reply. It wasn't the bored, monotone "yeah" that questions tend to elicit from teenagers. It had a congenial tone that was refreshing coming from a 17-year-old.

After situating ourselves and cracking open Josh's Mountain Dew, they began calling. While Tracy used a box call, Josh yelled away on a push-button call. A few minutes later, we heard a gobble in the distance. As it got closer, Tracy became excited and started whispering rushed encouragement and instructions to Josh. The chairs were quickly rearranged to afford Josh the best shot. Tracy sat down behind Josh and helped him ready his gun. After about 10 minutes, a tom swaggered into view, fanned a few times and made for the decoys.

Tracy's voice shook with anticipation as he whispered, "I think your dad's more nervous than you are." Josh, completely composed, just smiled. "Are you ready?" Tracy asked. "Yeah," Josh replied. They raised the gun to the window and took aim at the turkey...BANG!

My heart sank when I saw the result. The turkey glanced toward the blind and nonchalantly sauntered away. "We missed," Tracy said. "Sorry Josh, I got too



excited." If Josh was disappointed, it wasn't evident. He simply took a swig of Mountain Dew, picked up his call and waited for the go-ahead. Tracy apologized several more times and gave Josh a quick hug and pat on the back. "You OK?" he asked. "Yeah," Josh answered.

Tracy reloaded a shell into Josh's gun. As we continued to sit in the blind, I began to lose hope after listening to a few more gobblers retreating into the distance. My spirits lifted though as Josh hammed it up for some photos, and Tracy teased him about missing the turkey. They laughed as they told me that I have the same first name as a girl in school who Josh liked. He had been announcing to his classmates all week that he was going to be taking Erika hunting. "I'm probably a big disappointment then," I said to Josh. He smiled, but was nice enough not to say, "Yeah."

By 6:30 a.m., I'd come to the conclusion that my curse had struck again, but we decided to stay for another half hour anyway. Josh used his call on and off for the next 25 minutes, trying his best to get the attention of a gobbler. I turned to look out my window one last time...and there he was. A stealthy jake was discreetly weaving his way toward the blind. "There's one coming," I whispered. Tracy hurriedly rearranged the chairs and took up his

post behind Josh. Slowly they raised the muzzle into position. BANG!

This time I didn't even open my eyes until I heard Tracy proudly announce, "You got him!" Josh grinned and said, "Yeah."

Tracy thanked me for taking time on Mother's Day weekend to hunt with them. He even told me that I must be good luck after all and invited me back for deer season. For me, this weekend was an apt time to be reminded of what it means to be a parent. Witnessing the interaction between Tracy and Josh, I was humbled. I was impressed not only by Tracy's efforts to make hunting possible and enjoyable for Josh, but also by their mutual dedication, enthusiasm and respect.

In spite of the fact that Josh has Down syndrome, he was able to engage in an activity that others either might have deemed impossible for him, or, in the very least, would require too much work and patience. Since patience has never been my strong suit, watching these two men made me realize what a virtue it truly is. Everything

from the tireless preparation for the hunter education test required of Josh when he turned 16, to the early morning breakfast buffets and waiting for the perfect shot was worth it for both of them.

For me, it was worth getting up at 4 a.m., just to see the look on Josh's face when he posed for a picture with his turkey. "Did you have a good time?" I asked Josh as I climbed into my truck to leave. "Yeah," he replied. It was just what I wanted to hear. 🐾

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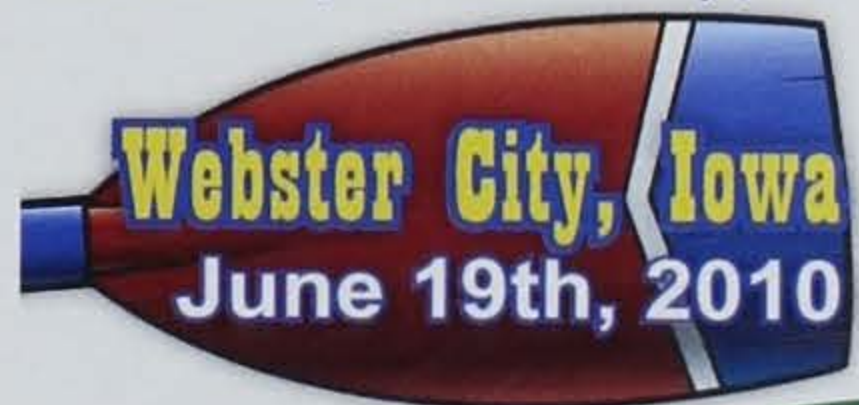
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A message from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources



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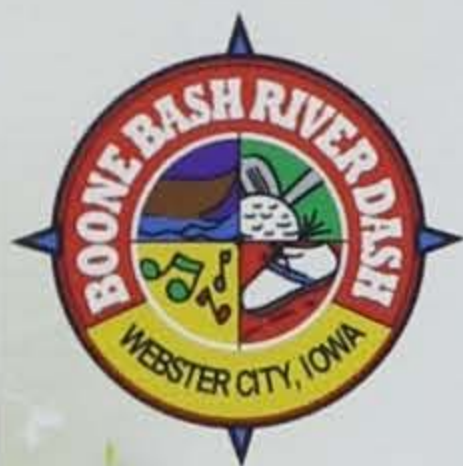
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