

SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2011

IOWA OUTDOORS

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IN THIS ISSUE:

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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.

EDITORIAL MISSION

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

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

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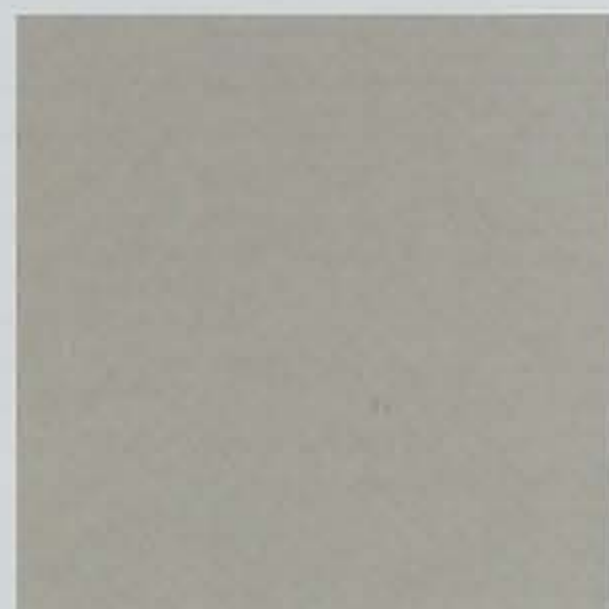
MIKE WHYE PHOTO BY MEREDITH WHYE

SOLID WASTE ALTERNATIVES PROGRAM

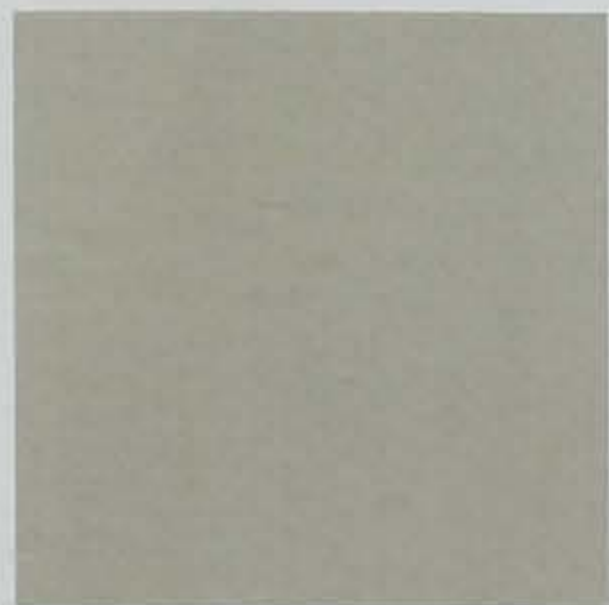


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ABOUT THIS PHOTO AND THE COVER

Tag along as correspondent Ty Smedes hits the blind during subfreezing early mornings on assignment to capture the poetic beauty of retrievers at work. With photos so vivid you can smell wet dog, hear the calls and feel the hum of the vintage 1958 duck boat motor, you'll feel as if you're in the marsh.





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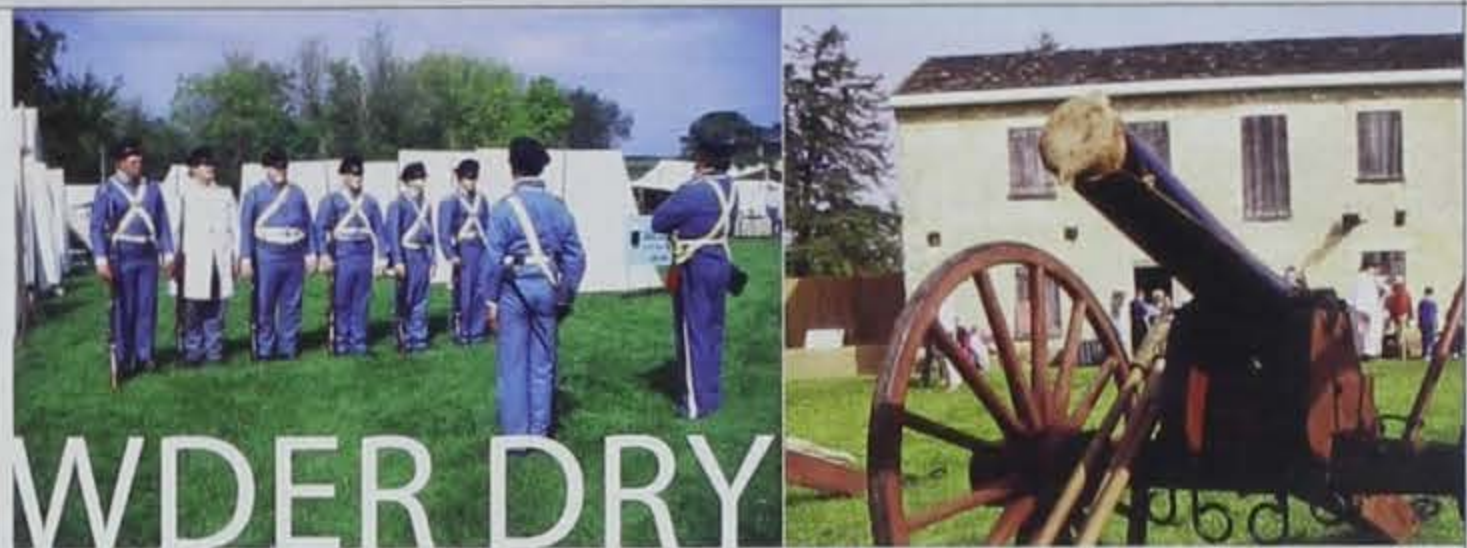
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Holy moly, meet this earth-mover that can tunnel 18 feet per hour fueled by eating its weight in worms a day. Take a blind guess, will it hibernate this winter?

Photo by Jacob Zweibolmer



ACTIVITIES, TIPS AND EVENTS FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY



KEEP YOUR POWDER DRY

Hear cannons roar, watch tomahawk throwing matches and shop for period clothes and goods at the **35th Annual Fort Atkinson Rendezvous**. Thousands attend to soak up the early autumn sun while reliving history through craftspeople, buckskinners and military reenactors who gather to trade wares and recreate 1840s military life on the Iowa frontier.

Mill around the small museum to see artifacts, then buy beads or blankets, eat fry bread, drink root beer, watch black powder shoots and hear period music. Be awed by old camp-to-camp signals made by blasting a 300-pound anvil 40 feet high. Get tips on basketry, rug hooking, pottery, blacksmithing and period hunting and trapping. Watch rivals compete in skillet throws, flint and steel firestarting, turkey calling and knife throwing. Youngsters can play old games with kids clad in garb of the era.

Spend a day at the fort, then browse city-wide garage sales, tour the Bily Clocks Museum in nearby Spillville or take a scenic

drive along Mississippi River bluffs to Pikes Peak State Park.

The family-friendly, free event is held Sept. 24 to 25 from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Saturday, and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday.

Fort Atkinson is in Winneshiek County, west of highway 24, about 90 miles north of Cedar Rapids. Spend the night camping at the DNR's new modern campground at Volga Recreation Area in Fayette County (*call first about road construction updates*). For camping or rendezvous details, call park ranger Scot Michelson at **563-425-4161**.

FORT FACTS:

Built in 1840, the fort monitored the Ho-Chunk (Winnebago) Nation that was forced from Wisconsin to Neutral Ground in northeast Iowa. Fort founder Brigadier General Henry Atkinson promised to protect them from rivals while keeping settlers out. The fort was disbanded in 1849 when the Ho-Chunk were moved from Iowa and local soldiers left to fight the Mexican-American War.

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.

JANE, AGE 10, IN HIAWATHA ASKS: Why don't we have earthquakes in Iowa?

For most of us living in Iowa, we're much more familiar with snowstorms and tornadoes. What we do know about earthquakes we've likely learned from movies or textbooks, but earthquakes do occasionally rumble in our state.

When two blocks of the earth quickly slip past each other underground, it lets out built-up energy that shakes the ground and buildings above the surface. Most earthquakes happen along fault lines, or tears in the earth's crust where stresses build. Iowa doesn't have any major fault lines, but we have had at least 13 earthquakes with epicenters within our borders since European settlement.

The epicenter is the point on the Earth's surface directly above where the fault lines moved. The largest Iowa earthquake shook Davenport in 1934, and Iowans

felt the most recent quake southwest of Shenandoah in 2004. Iowa was one of only four states that did not have an earthquake between 1975 and 1995.

However, just because an earthquake doesn't originate here doesn't mean we can't feel it. Large earthquakes in southeast Missouri in 1811 and 1812 were the first earthquakes that Iowa settlers reported. More recently, quakes in Illinois shook the ground enough to wake some sleeping Iowans in 2008 and 2010, but did little damage here. In the Midwest, the Earth's crust is older, thicker, cooler and more brittle, which allows shockwaves to travel further and faster than they do in the western part of the U.S.

So while earthquakes aren't common here, they do happen.

Hi-Tech Hiking for Hidden Treasure

GET GEOCACHING AT **HONEY CREEK RESORT STATE PARK**

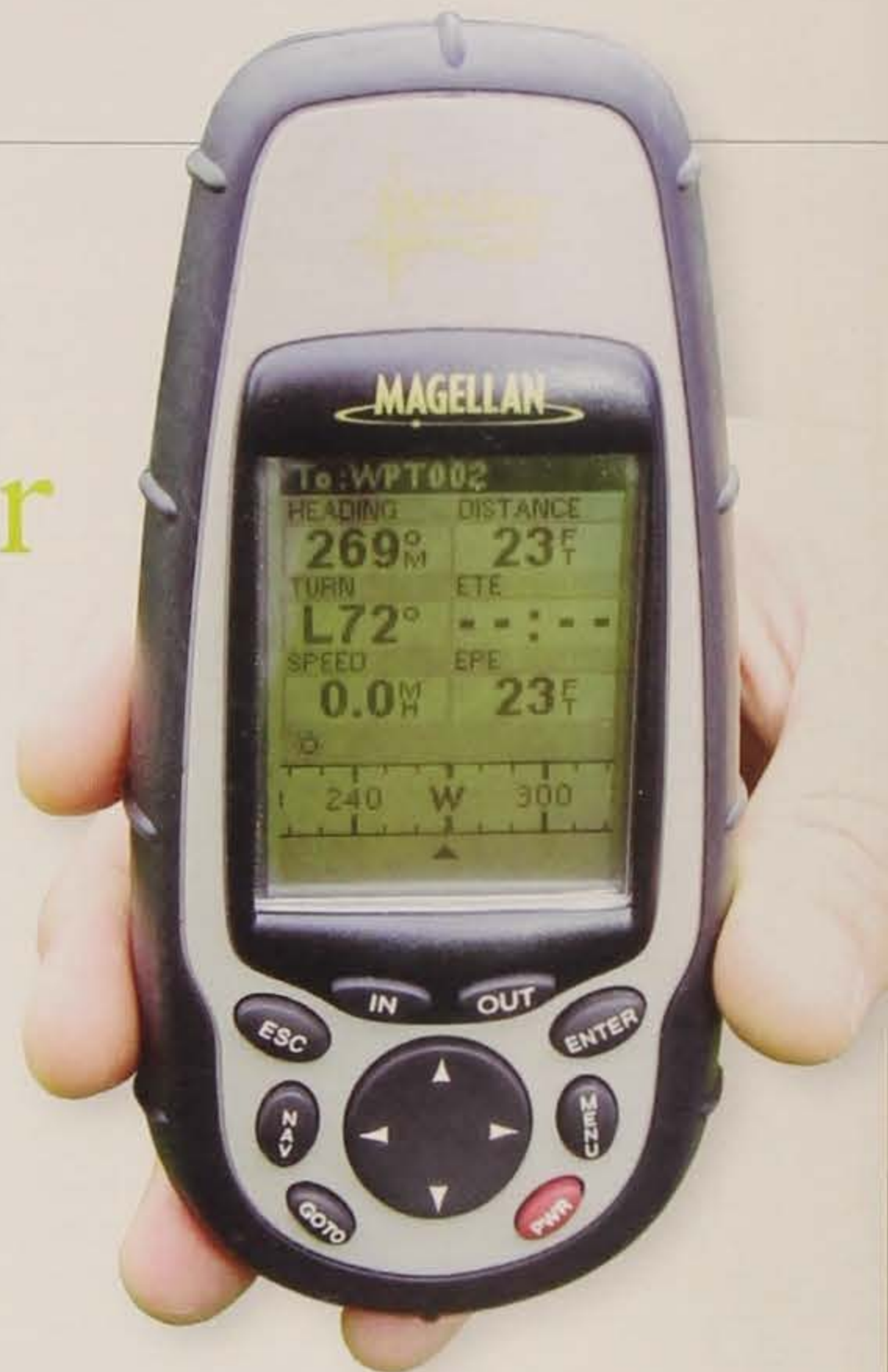
BY BRIAN BUTTON PHOTOS BY CLAY SMITH

Go roam the vast rolling hills and timber overlooking 11,000 acres of Rathbun Lake in search of hidden treasure, as there is no better place to learn geocaching. Honey Creek State Resort guide and naturalist Hannah Wiltamuth can conveniently set first-timers up with everything needed to get your crew scrambling about outdoors.

"Resort guests can borrow geocaching packs for free. They have a GPS with pre-programmed coordinates and instructions—everything you need for finding caches," she says. Also included are pens to leave messages in cache logbooks and a journal to record your adventure.

Wiltamuth also offers a free, 30-minute Geocaching 101 class each month. (Check the resort's online event calendar or request a special class for groups.)

Geocaching is an outdoor treasure hunting game where participants use a Global Positioning System (GPS) device to seek out hidden containers called geocaches or caches. A typical cache is a small waterproof container containing a logbook and treasure, usually toys or trinkets of little monetary value. Resort visitors can bring their own trinkets, get some in the gift shop or ask



Wiltamuth to provide them.

"The hidden caches are located in interesting places like a nice overlook or a neat tree," she says. "It's like being on an adult Easter egg hunt. The caches are as small as a test tube or as large as an ammo box, all hidden in places not damaging to the natural landscape.

"You can spend as little or as much time as you want doing it," either hiking or using a resort rental bike. "There are 18 permanent and archived cache sites at the resort park and another 10 across the lake at the original state park," she says. Gaining fame as a geocache getaway, the resort will host the Midwest Open Geocaching Adventures conference in April 2012 with extra temporary caches planned.

And after all that hunting for hidden booty, relax at the resort by cooling off in the Buccaneer Bay water park or take a hot stone or deep tissue spa massage. (Spa services by appointment only. \$50-\$140. [641-344-1886](tel:641-344-1886)) www.HoneyCreekResort.com; 1-877-677-3344.

THE RULES OF GEOCACHING

- 1) If you take something from the cache, leave something of equal or greater value.
- 2) Write about your find in the cache logbook and log your experience at geocaching.com.
- 3) Don't let muggles (non-geocachers) see you when you have found a cache.



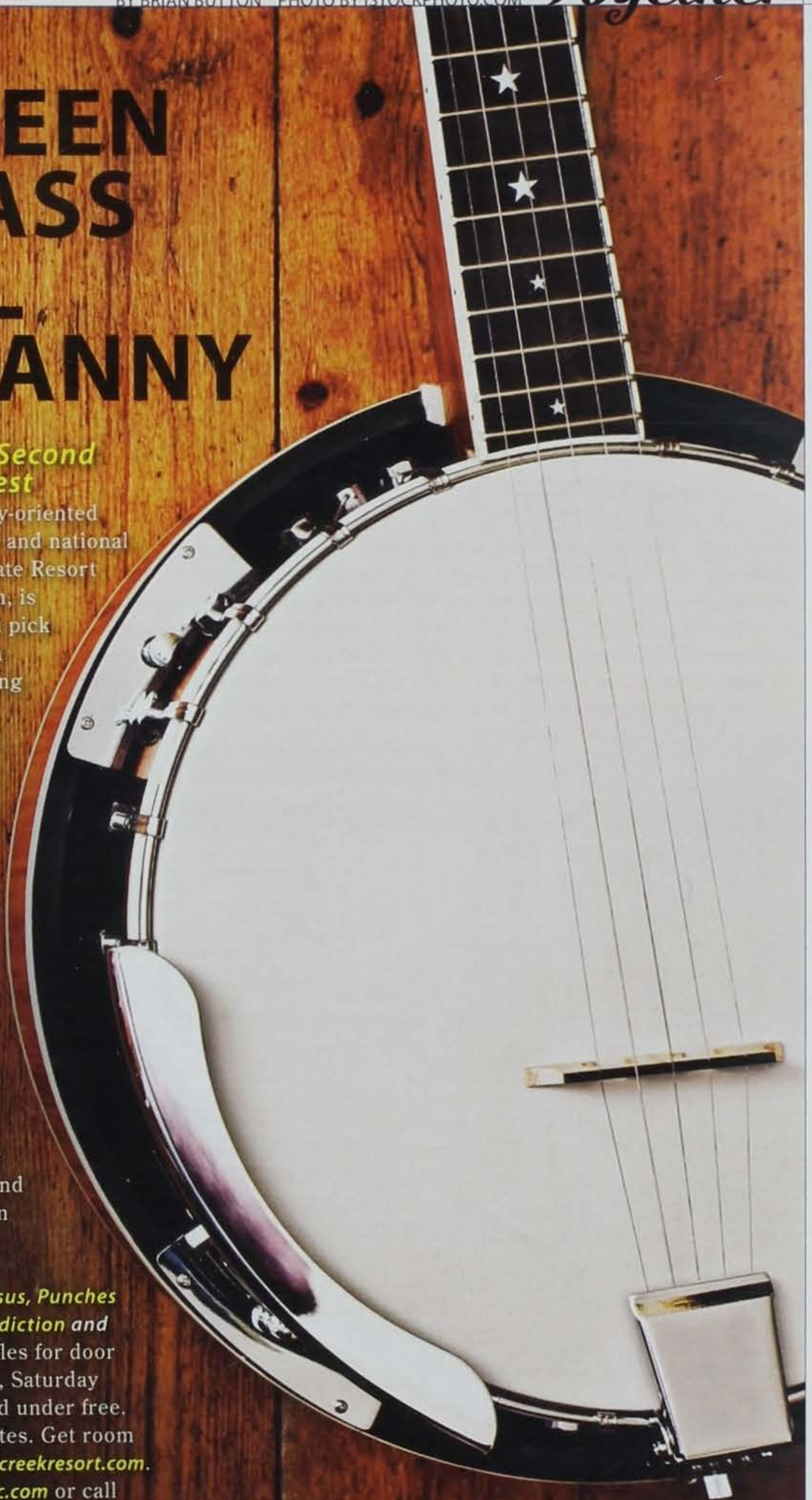
HALLOWEEN BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL HOOTENANNY

Honey Creek Resort Hosts Second Annual Iowa Bluegrass Fest

Spend Halloween weekend at a family-oriented bluegrass festival featuring six regional and national bluegrass bands at the Honey Creek State Resort ballroom. One band, Special Concession, is hot off a European tour. Youngsters can pick up playing tips from pros and work with two family bands at the Saturday morning youth workshops. Music vendors offer instruments for sale.

For those brave enough to belt out some tunes, pack your fiddle and banjo to hit the open stage, says event coordinator Lori King, co-founder of the Bluegrass Music Association of Iowa. "Over 400 attended last year, and this year should be even better with the bands we have scheduled," says King, who also plays upright bass and vocals for Bluegrass Addiction. "We have quality bands booked and Honey Creek is such a great place. We do it in conjunction with the resort's Halloween celebration, so there is also trick or treating, face painting, hay rides and pumpkin carving. It is a fun and comfortable place to hang out and listen to music."

BANDS: *Midnight Flight, Special Consensus, Punches Family, Bluegrass Blondies, Bluegrass Addiction and Copper Creek.* Tickets sold at door. Raffles for door prizes. Friday \$15, Saturday all day \$20, Saturday night \$15, weekend pass \$30. Kids 6 and under free. Ages 7 to 16 half price. Special room rates. Get room reservations at [1-877-677-3344](tel:1-877-677-3344) or honeycreekresort.com. For festival details visit iowabluegrassmusic.com or call [641-799-1442](tel:641-799-1442). Open stage Friday 6 pm, show 7 p.m., Saturday open stage noon-1 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. Saturday show 1 p.m. and 7 p.m. October 28 to 29.





GOING BANANAS OVER SPORTS DRINKS

BY TIM LANE

For years I have been thinking football players are in a rut when they win. Every time I see the Gatorade “sneak” attack I feel they need a new celebration. Even 20 players squirting the coach with water bottles would be a refreshing change.

Speaking of refreshing change and Gatorade, I suggest some changes for kids and adults. An article in *Pediatrics*, the journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics, focused on sports drinks, energy drinks and children. There were several pertinent observations:

“Sports and energy drinks are being marketed to children and adolescents for a wide variety of inappropriate uses.”

“These two categories, sport and energy, are different and should not be used interchangeably, but amongst youth there is little awareness of the difference.”

“...caffeine and other stimulant substances contained in energy drinks have no place in the diet of children and adolescents.”

Water came out as the clear choice for hydration. The article stressed “Adequate hydration is necessary for maintaining normal cardiovascular, thermoregulatory and many other physiologic functions during exercise and routine daily activity.” Everyone has heard of dehydration. Perhaps it is time for a new word—*malhydration*—to represent poor fluid choices.

The article didn’t mention that many well-intentioned adults are paying 100 times what water costs for an inferior fluid.

Another theme of the piece was that while carbohydrates are an important nutritional goal for an active child or adolescent, they should not be gained at

the cost of other dietary needs. The article was a strong endorsement of a balanced diet that includes protein, healthy fats, fruit juice and low-fat milk. Now if you have a child that exercises at length in a sweat-inducing environment, then sport drinks may be appropriate. But even then caution is advised. Many drinks have a wide range of ingredients and perhaps even a chat with your child’s physician may be called for.

VIGOROUS VERSUS CASUAL

Adults swigging Gatorade in the office or kids drinking it in the stands while watching the local football game have succumbed to marketing. So let’s review the word *vigorous*. In my book, I see someone running a half-marathon on a very hot June day, or completing a hilly day on RAGBRAI. I do not see Little League games or walks in a park warranting sport drinks. What is troubling is the marketing strategy is to sell *the image* of being an athlete or looking athletic *by consuming a product* that will probably contribute to weight gain in absence of the intended high intensity, lengthy workout. In the APA article such practice was viewed as inappropriate. Most people need a sport or energy drink like I need a sparring partner.

SPORT DRINK AS SOFT DRINK

On one hand I wish everyone drinking sport drinks needed them as it would indicate people exercising vigorously for long timespans. But sadly, consuming a sport drink merely as a soft drink or during a short, low-intensity activity means the drink’s high caloric intake is not matched by high caloric burn. Thus, weight gain. As adults we can set an example by drinking water and adding a banana to address the need for potassium.

The Academy is also concerned about caffeinated energy drinks and endorsed

water, not sports or energy drinks, as the principal source of hydration for children and adolescents. The bottom line is that “Excessive intake of carbohydrate-containing beverages beyond what is needed to replenish the body during or after prolonged vigorous exercise is unnecessary and should be discouraged.”

SPORT DRINK ALTERNATIVES

Maybe we need to rebrand the banana... “fruit of the conquerors” comes to mind. After all, the troops of Alexander the Great nourished themselves with bananas after battles in India. By some accounts he was responsible for introducing the fruit to the Western world in 327 BCE.

The banana delivers protein, carbs, fiber, vitamins, minerals and a little sodium. It is the king when it comes to sports nutrition, providing 602 milligrams of potassium with 140 calories. You would need about 8 pounds of sport drinks to get that same dose with a lot more calories. But there are other options, for example, apple, orange or grape juice can be an excellent sports drink. They contain glucose and fructose, as well as potassium lost with sweating. Their natural fructose can replace burned glycogen. If you or your child are sweating heavily during activity, add up to a tablespoon of salt to a quart or more of water to make your own sports drink. Call it Pantherade, Cycloneade or Hawkade.

But again, any exercise that is moderate or for less than an hour is best dealt with water.

By the way, the historical accounts do not record if Alexander’s troops showered him with banana skins after a hard-fought victory.

Tim Lane is a nationally recognized authority on public health and physical activity. Last summer he biked across Iowa, river to river, in 21 straight hours.



Bird Bombs?

A matrimonial myth regarding birds exploding from eating rice thrown at weddings has migrated around the globe for many years. The roots of this urban legend are difficult to trace, but the basis revolves around the rationale that grains of rice swell up in the bird's stomach, distending it so much that it causes our beaked buddies to burst. According to the Department of Ornithology at Cornell University, this is simply not true as many birds eat rice in nature, as well as other dry grains.

Some birds thrive on rice and some cause so much damage to rice fields they are considered pests. One particular species, the bobolink, is known in the South as

the "rice-bird" because of the serious damage they can inflict on rice fields. The bobolink's scientific name, *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*, translates to "long-clawed rice eater." According to Mississippi State University, in addition to providing food to bobolinks, rice fields provide critical habitat for large numbers of North America's wintering waterfowl, shorebirds and other wetland birds. Rice left after harvest is an excellent food source for wintering water birds.

Many venues have banned the tradition of throwing rice at weddings, primarily due to the fact that rice can be slippery and can cause harm to humans, not because it causes pyrotechnic pigeons—so it looks as if this rumor has been blown to bits.

Ask The Expert Martin in Cass County asks "Why don't we see waterfowl in trees?"



While it is rare to see ducks in Iowa perching in trees, the wood duck is the exception. They are one of few duck species equipped with strong claws to grip bark and perch on branches. Wood ducks nest in holes of trees near water, but because nesting cavities are scarce, they readily use man-made nesting boxes. The wood duck is the only North American duck that regularly produces two broods in one year. If you see ducks in trees in Iowa, chances are they are wood ducks.

Canada geese—one of America's largest waterfowl—aren't a species you would expect to see in trees. Because of their webbed feet and large bodies, maneuvering in trees has proven to be quite difficult. However sightings of geese in trees near Iowa waterbodies has increased the past few years. While we aren't used to seeing this phenomenon in our area, it has become a normal spring ritual in other parts of the country.

In the northwestern United States, geese nest in trees primarily to protect incubating eggs from ground predators including bobcat, coyote, fox and others who fancy goose eggs

as a delicacy. Geese do not build their tree nests, but adopt old nests of an osprey, hawk or other large birds, much to the dismay of the former owners. The former nest owner will try to repossess the nest upon their return, sometimes with success, other times the goose and gander will stand their ground, protect their eggs and remain in the nest. During mild springs, a nest can receive double usage first by the geese and then by the previous owners. Once goslings hatch, and are ready to learn how to find food and ward off predators, the nest is abandoned for life on the water.

Urbanization and a lack of adequate habitat for ground nesting may be another reason sightings of geese in trees are more prevalent. In some urban areas, there are numerous waterbodies for geese to call home, but due to foot traffic and a lack of ground materials to build nests, geese may opt to go to higher ground, including trees. Doing so also decreases risks of ground predators. It appears that spotting a goose in a tree is a sign of adapting to their local environment.

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

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



DIY Dove Decoys

Up your chances of bagging more doves with simple, cheap homemade decoys. Print several life-size color images of doves, trace on cardboard and glue picture to cutout. Cover with spray lacquer for added protection. Attach to tree branches and fence wire with clothes pins or office binder clips.



Food Flambé

Whether car camping or loading a backpack, pack fuel toward the bottom with food, clothing and gear loaded higher. If fuel leaks, your food will be saved and cleanup is easier as fewer items are dripped on.



Toddler Cold Feet Cure

Pull adult-sized wool socks over your toddler or preschooler's shoes and legs to add some insulation while camping during cooler fall outings.



Citrus Twist Water Bottle

Flavor your drinking water by adding a dash of lime or lemon juice to your water bottle before filling up.



BRINGING BACK THE OSPREY

SUE DAVIES, JOHNSTON

Polk County volunteer helps bring raptor back to Iowa

Sue Davies likes to say that there's a lot to discover in Iowa if you just take the time to look. You might even spot one of the ospreys she helped raise. As the volunteer coordinator of a Polk County Conservation Board project, Davies helped reintroduce the raptor that's been gone from Iowa since before European settlement. Wild chicks were obtained from Minnesota and raised near Saylorville Lake in tall towers that replicate a nest. Davies would take three weeks of vacation from her job at Principal each summer to raise the birds, feeding them fish twice a day. "I really enjoy learning and being around wildlife," Davies says. "Big raptors are amazing creatures and I wanted to learn as much as I could." When it was time for the birds to migrate in the fall, Davies took more time off to help the birds make it on their own. She weaned the birds from their feedings and opened the towers, allowing them to learn to fly and hunt. In five years, the group fledged 20 to 25 birds—15 of which have since nested in Iowa. "Sue is an exemplary citizen of the natural world, as she embraces wildlife viewing opportunities with dedication and wonder," says Pat Schlarbaum with DNR wildlife. While the osprey project is done, Davies still helps the conservation board by teaching canoe and kayaking classes and leading day trips. "I learned there's a lot more wildlife in Iowa than the average person sees," Davies says. "I would encourage people to investigate the natural places in the state. There's more here than people realize. There's so much natural beauty here if you just look for it."



STARTING THEM YOUNG

MAHASKA COUNTY PHEASANTS FOREVER, OSKALOOSA

Group passes on a conservation ethic to Mahaska County youth

The Mahaska County chapter of Pheasants Forever really focuses on the "forever" in its name by reaching out to kids. "That's the future," says chapter president Jeff VanDerBeek. "You can put habitat on the ground, but you need the next generation to carry on the work." The chapter received a national Pheasants Forever No Child Left Indoors award for involving kids in conservation and hunting. Every year, the 20-member chapter partners with other groups to present an outdoors day for all Mahaska County fifth graders and an annual conservation field day. The chapter sponsors a Youth Hunter Education Challenge team and the Oskaloosa scholastic shooting sports team. It hosts an annual hunt for kids that pairs them with adult mentors. Teens are an active part of the group, from the chapter's involvement with Conservation Teens of Mahaska County to the nation's first high school PF chapter, founded by VanDerBeek's son, Brooks. Brooks' was recognized by *Field and Stream*, which will fund his project to improve habitat at the Hull Wildlife Management Area. Improving habitat for wildlife is a large part of the chapter's efforts. Every spring, members help with controlled burns on about 500 acres. They help plant prairie plugs and food plots, and have planted 155,000 trees in the chapter's 22 years. "We really like doing hands-on stuff," says VanDerBeek. "A lot of people consider Pheasants Forever a hunting organization, but we're a conservation organization."

GOING WILD FOR TROUT

TROUT UNLIMITED DRIFTLESS CHAPTER, DECORAH

Group works to improve water quality, involve kids in fishing

Chris Wasta knows more about bugs now than he ever thought he would. The lifelong trout fisherman joined Trout Unlimited to help improve habitat, and he now knows the ins and outs of how trout thrive. President of the northeast Iowa Driftless Chapter, Wasta—along with about 60 of his angling compatriots—works to improve the ecosystem for better fishing. The group undertakes a habitat project each year, like Winneshiek County's North Bear Creek. There, the chapter stabilized the banks to keep eroding dirt out of the water, which can smother trout nests and kill bugs, trout's main food source. "Essentially, this is about a clean environment, which benefits you if you fish or not," Wasta says. They also placed structures that allow trout to hide from predators, which then improves the size and number of fish for anglers. Before, trout had to be stocked in the stream. Now, with cleaner water, trout are reproducing naturally in North Bear. "We're in a real exciting time because things have improved a lot—to improve ecosystems so streams are self-sustaining," says Wasta. "You can catch trout that are essentially wild." The Driftless Chapter, named for the geological area that gives Iowa its coldwater streams, also works to get kids involved. There's an annual fishing event, they teach Scouts fly fishing and hold casting clinics at local schools. "We want them to have a good first experience so they fall in love with a sport that can last your whole life," Wasta says.



THE GATHERING SEASON



Local sportsman Denny Mason helps set up backpackers Jen Wilson and Brenda Wegner for some dinnertime trout fishing after a hike. Paint Creek flows near the free Heffern's Hill backpacking sites. **RIGHT:** Brenda Wegner warms up after a cool night—nothing tastes better than hot coffee over a campfire after slumbering in the cold night air. The duo make their way on the leaf-covered hiking trail near their campsite.

Backpacking in fall gets a traveler thinking about essential things and provides fodder for thoughts that flourish in a colder season.

The fall morning mist settles over Yellow River State Forest like the earth is steaming after a rowdy night. As sunrise interrupts the cacophony of owl hoots, deer footfalls and the occasional cow chiming in for good measure, a quiet circle of humanity stirs in northeast Iowa's popular backcountry hiking area 80 miles northwest of Dubuque.

"Way off I heard coyotes howling last night," says Jeff Smidt, wrapped in fleece against the morning chill. "Mama just brought something home, probably."

The campsite he shares with his wife Mary is minimal and tidy—the mark of experienced backpackers, multi-day hikers who pack into a recreation area with all their camping needs on their back. Every fall, the Smidts have come here from Pewaukee, Wisc., starting with their honeymoon six years ago.

Seven units make up the sprawling 8,500-acre Yellow River State Forest. A 25-mile trail system loops through easygoing native hardwood and coniferous forests along limestone bluffs in the Paint Creek Unit, with some



remote hike-in campsites along the trails.

"Mary is a shower-a-day person, so this is perfect for her," says Jeff. "We stay in a hotel the first night, get up in the morning and drive over here, hike in and overnight, then hike back. It's a perfect fall weekend."

Making the foray into deep nature—away from busy car-campers, into remote sections of these rocky woods—brings a generous payoff in the off season, when the buzz of insects and wild children has died down and we begin turning inward for winter's hibernation.

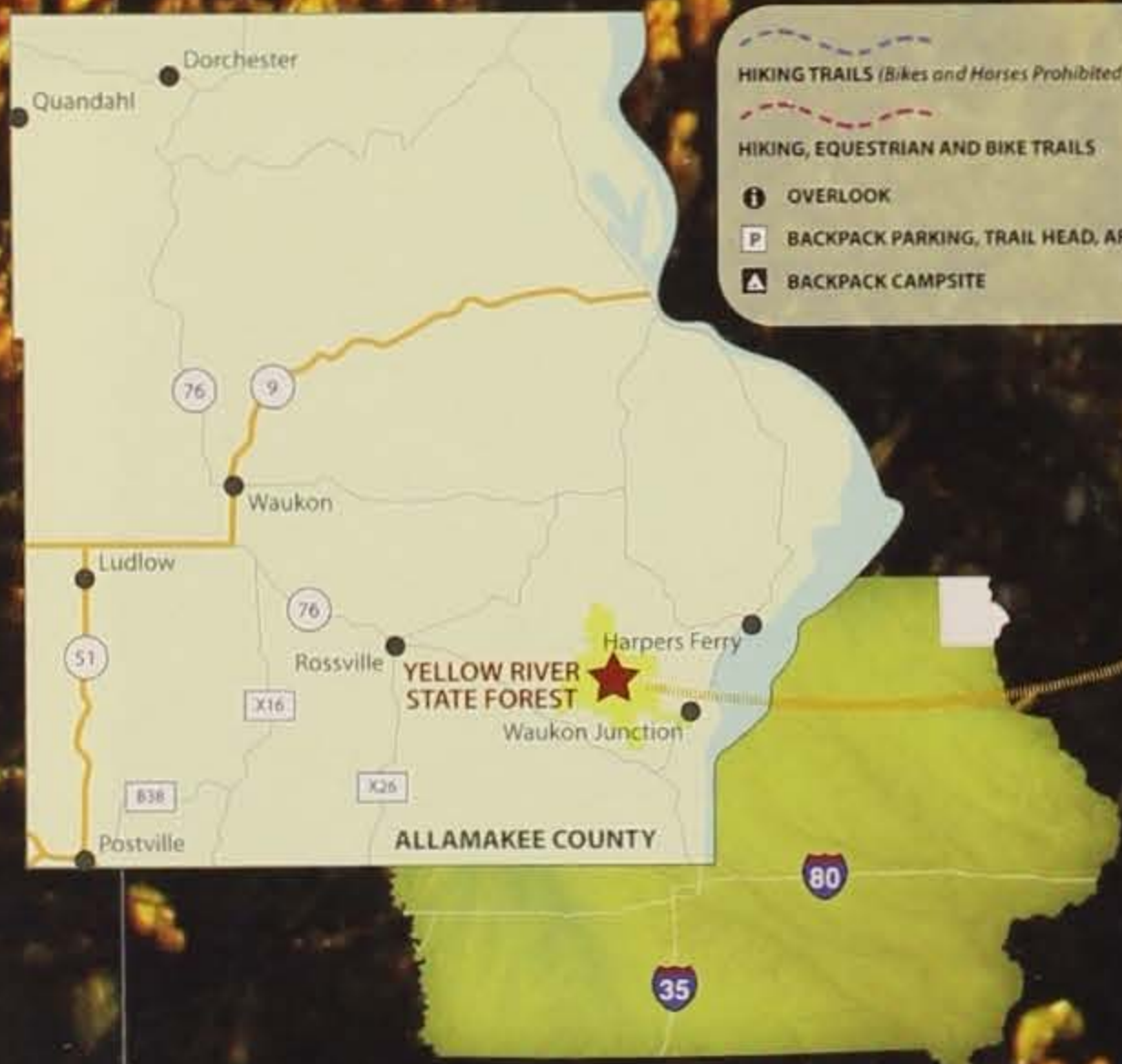
"And it's beautiful," Mary says, rolling sleeping bags into a neat spool. "You look out and see the stars. It's peaceful. You don't hear road noise at night. It's just so quiet."

LAIID BACK IN THE BACKCOUNTRY

A backpacking trip is a journey in two parts: the hike itself and the days of careful preparation beforehand.

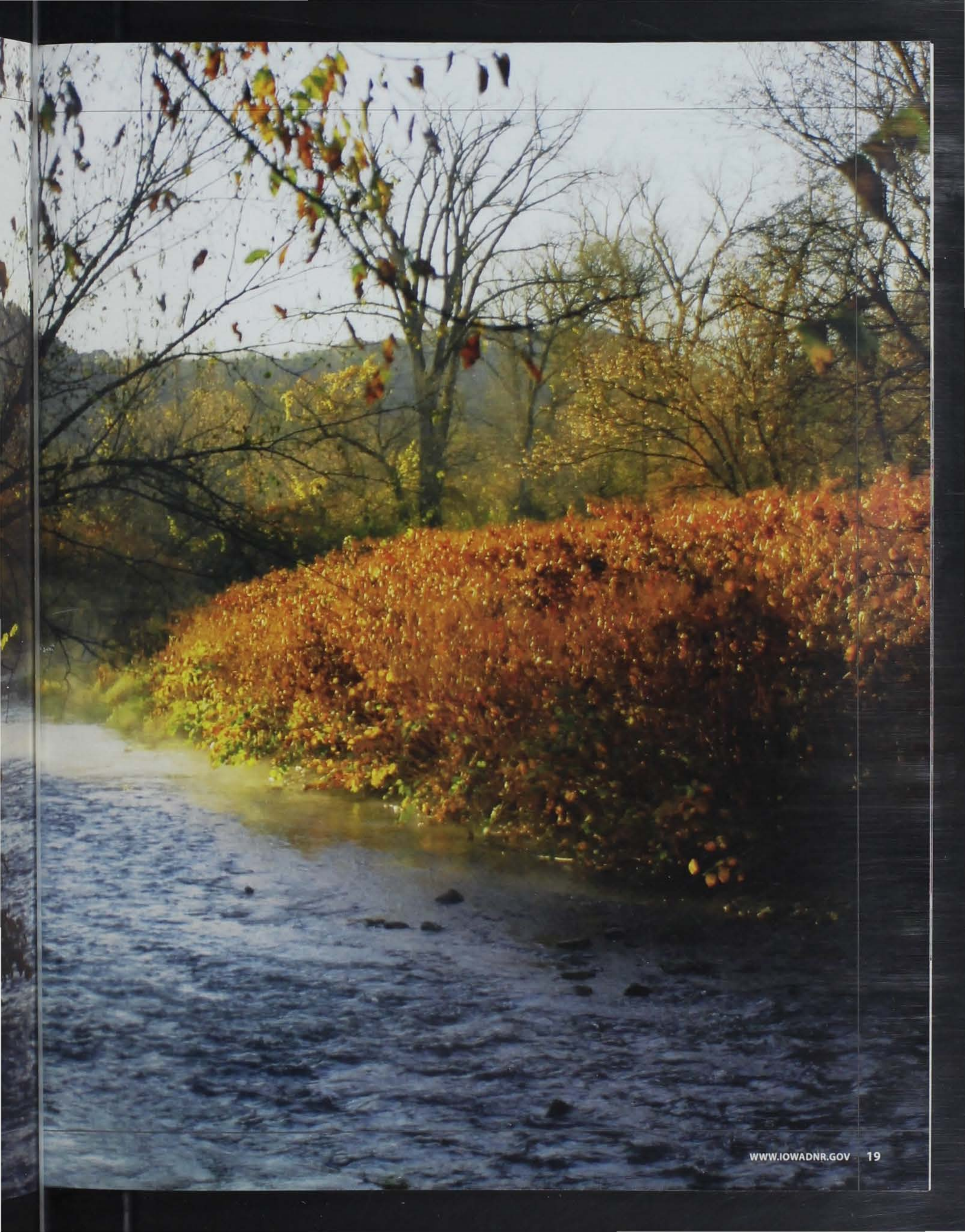
"If you're backpacking, you have to be aware of everything you put in your pack," says Mary. "It may not be

Lost In Iowa

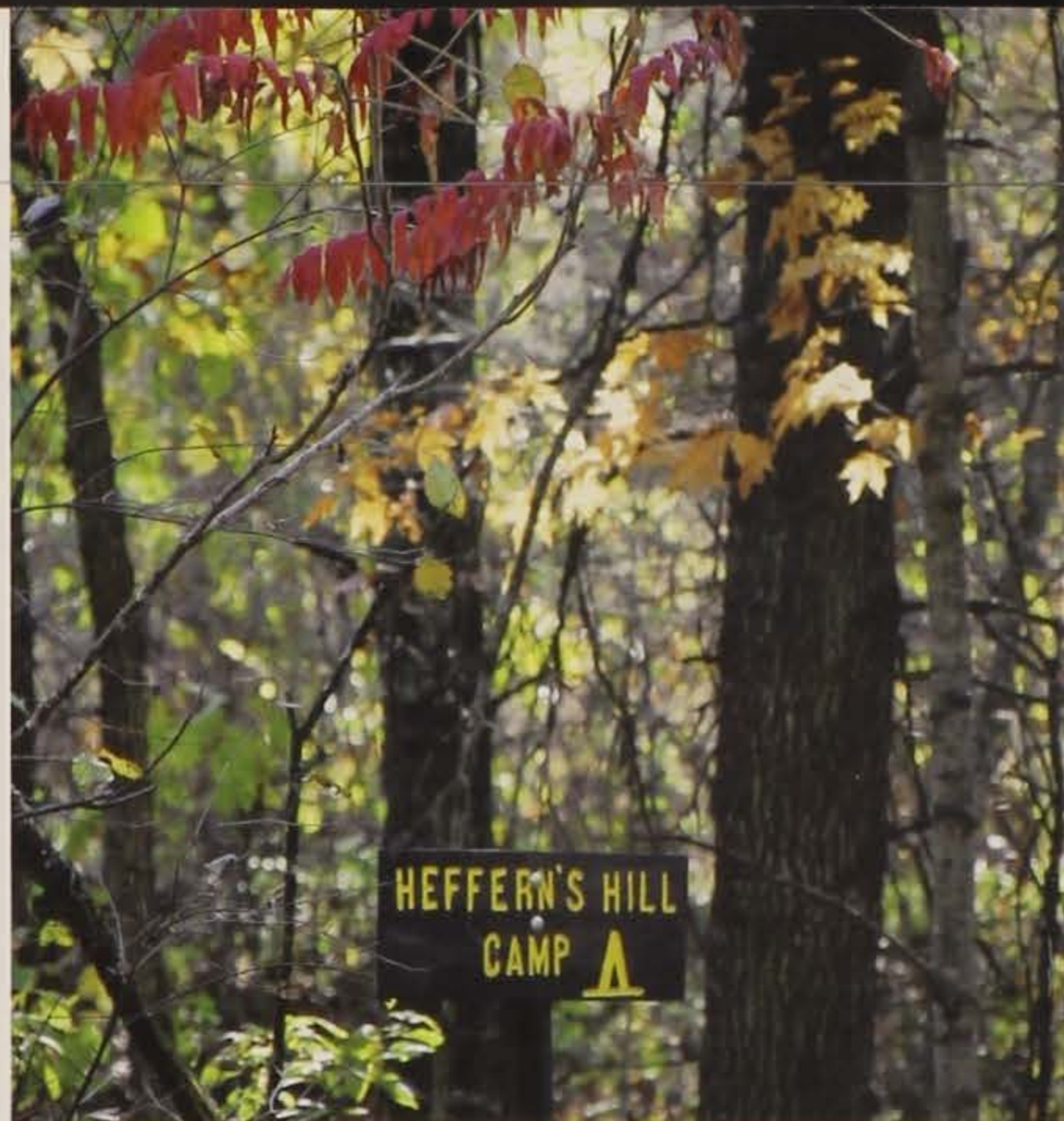


- HIKING TRAILS (Bikes and Horses Prohibited)
- HIKING, EQUESTRIAN AND BIKE TRAILS
- OVERLOOK
- BACKPACK PARKING, TRAIL HEAD, AREA HEADQUARTERS
- BACKPACK CAMPSITE

Morning water vapor rises off a portion of Paint Creek, which offers six miles of trout fishing in Yellow River State Forest. The Backpack Trail was called the best hike in Iowa by *Outside* magazine. With varied terrain and 25 miles in the Paint Creek Unit alone, the trails are popular with hikers preparing for long trips to the Mountain West.



Lost In Iowa



heavy now, but an hour from now? You have to be judicious.”

Pre-planning inspires the contemplation of need versus want, the study of landscape and our response to landscape, and the consideration of human frailty against a backdrop of stark nature.

Once on the trail, the frayed beauty of Iowa's favorite season envelops the hiker. Summer's work is ending. The land is sleepy and mottled, gathering into itself before dormancy. We, too, begin our preparations for winter's meditation. We steel for the lashing of cold weather. We walk outdoors in the last of the comfortable temperatures. We build fires.

That basic human need for warmth becomes a very active pursuit on a crisp fall backpacking trip. Yellow River State Forest is one of the rare rugged areas that allows campfires, a favorite beacon of fall.

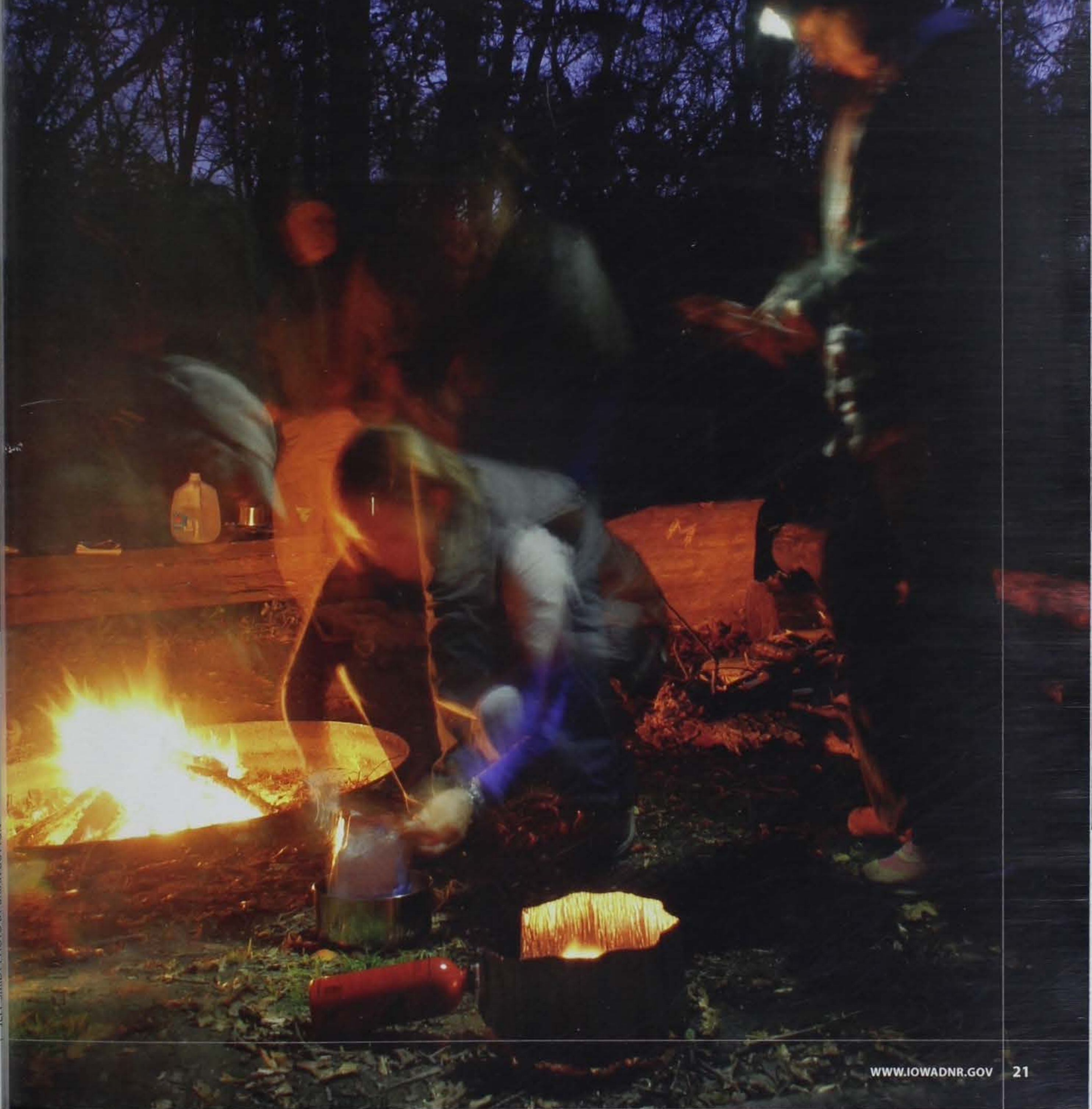
The Paint Creek Unit's 25 miles of trails can be

completed over the course of a long weekend. There are four backpacking campsites in a rough half-circle around the lower half of the unit—Camp Glen Wendel is just a few miles southwest of headquarters, with Camp John Schultz, Brown's Hollow Camp and Heffern's Hill Camp staggered progressively eastward. Hikers should study the forest maps at iowadnr.gov/forestry/yellowriver.html to choose and plan their route, their hikes, and their campgrounds.

Yellow River State Forest is a popular test run for backcountry enthusiasts preparing for bigger trips out west. But it's also the perfect weekender and a great beginner's run. The Smidts' short trip is a common one: park at headquarters, hike in to a campsite, return to the car the next day.

"It's not a grueling hike to Heffern's Hill—it took us about 2.5 hours—and the hills aren't epic," Mary says of the roughly 8.5-mile hike to a campsite so close to the Paint

CLOCKWISE AT LEFT: Wegner and Wilson on their hike. Heffern's Hill camp was a nice fall hike. Backpacker Jeff Smidt cooks breakfast as wife Mary tidies up the tent. Preparing the water bottles for the hike using tap water from the forest headquarters. Brenda Wegner starts to tear down the tent in the morning to pack out. **BELOW:** Dehydrated backpacking food is emptied into a pot to nourish the hikers before a night spent around the campfire recalling the day's experiences and a snug sleep cocooned in down sleeping bags.



JEFF SMIDT PHOTO BY BRIAN BULTON

Lost In Iowa

Hikers pause to check maps at an overlook of the sprawling forest below. The first lands were purchased in 1935 to create the forest. The original purchase was adjacent to the Yellow River near its confluence with the Mississippi. Later purchases consolidated scattered tracts, with today's forest spanning 8,503 acres. Because most of the land was previously farmed, the area was planted to trees in the 1940s. The plantations of large pines and hardwoods in the photo are the result. An extensive system of fire lanes to protect the forest also serves as part of the recreational trail network for hiking, cross-country skiing, horse riding and snowmobiling.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1949, 1,500 acres of the forest were transferred to the National Park Service to become part of Effigy Mounds National Monument.



KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

A big part of backpacking is detail-oriented planning. Darrin Siefken, owner of CrawDaddy Outdoors gear shop and outfitter in Waverly, offers these essential tips:

1. TAKE A GOOD MAP. Yellow River State Forest has a map brochure, but it's not detailed. Study the DNR website maps and call in advance with questions.

2. DO YOUR RESEARCH. Find out if there are special rules and regulations in the hiking area, and if you need a hiking permit. Have a clear understanding about water sources—if they're safe to drink or filterable.

3. REGISTER with the park ranger or conservation officer upon arrival and departure.

4. CARRY ONLY WHAT YOU NEED. "When you first start out, you think you have to carry everything and the kitchen sink," says Siefken. He recommends a 30- to 40-pound backpack, including food, water, shelter, warmth, basic hygiene and rain gear.

5. BRING A FEW LIGHTWEIGHT COMFORTS. An MP3 player, camp pillow or a nice coffee cup can make a good trip great.

6. KNOW YOUR FELLOW TRAVELERS. In Yellow River, you'll likely encounter equestrians. Because some horses get stressed about backpackers, announce yourself and ask what they want you to do. You may have to remove your pack to calm the horse.

7. UNDERSTAND THE CAMPSITES. Think about camp set-up. Some backpacking areas, including Yellow River, have specific backpacking sites. Others only recommend camping a set distance from the trail. Know where you'll be at night before you go.

8. CAMPFIRE VS. COOKSTOVE. Campfires depend on dry wood and many parks restrict them. Backpacking stoves are quick and easy to light, but lack ambiance. Whatever you choose, carry at least two lighting sources (matches, lighter, flint or steel). Bring lightweight tinder, such as dryer lint.

9. PRACTICE SIMPLICITY in food and drink. Locate water sources beforehand. Plan meals before you go. Siefken likes freeze-dried meals that can be eaten from the bag—he recommends beef stroganoff, spaghetti and turkey tetrazzini.

10. ANTICIPATE SLEEP NEEDS. Do you need a tent? Will you sleep under the stars? How much ground padding do you require for comfort and warmth?

CrawDaddy Outdoors offers a variety of backpacking trips to destinations such as Yellow River State Forest (\$75), the Rocky Mountains and Picture Rocks National Lakeshore during 2011. 319-352-9129; crawdaddyoutdoors.com.

Lost In Iowa

Hikers relish rugged terrain views, rock outcrops, bluffs and steep slopes. Unlike much of Iowa, in this corner of the state the thick mantle of glacial sediments that once covered bedrock have eroded away, exposing dramatic rock canyons that carry water to the Mississippi River. The result is a scenic paradise for play. For non-backpackers, several non-electric campgrounds can be reserved at [877-427-2757](tel:877-427-2757) or iowadnr.gov.



Creek that its babbling joins the noises of the night.

CONTEMPLATING THE SEASON

Each backpacking campsite is no more than a quarter-mile from a road, so the feel is remote but the hike is quite safe. The trout streams are stocked and ready to provide dinner. Fewer leaves on the fall trees put birds in clear sight, such as the uncommon red-shouldered hawk that calls the forest home.

Brenda Wegner of Des Moines also packed in with friends to Heffern's Hill. For her, a beginning backpacker, the experience heightened her awareness of the comforts of home, and amplified an appreciation for more basic luxuries, like the sweater and wool cap she bundles in after a cold night, and the warm coffee cup she wraps her hands around.

"Surviving a night of cold makes me all the more appreciative of the warm days that remain," she says. "Too many years it feels like I go from swimming on a hot August afternoon to dealing with the first winter snow."

Backpacking brings this deeper sense of connectedness with the actions of a day. Civilization fills our time with busywork, but in the woods on a backpacking trip, every task serves a primary need.

"You're hiking in to a place to be safe for the night. You're preparing your food to fuel your activity," Wegner says. "But on the way, you're relaxing, because you're really feeling these things that you do."

Backpacking isn't for everyone—it's not spontaneous, it requires more planning than the throw-and-go of car camping, it invites discomfort—but the effort one makes to roll off the usual mindless track and travel a more basic path for a few days is fine preparation for a contemplative season.

"Backpacking causes me to think about what's really worth carrying around all day," says Wegner.

"Fall is my favorite season of the year. And fall hiking in Iowa is a great way to actually mark that season." 🐾

Backpacking is free in Yellow River State Forest. Registering at headquarters (563-586-2254) is wise in case of severe weather or an emergency phone call. Cell phone coverage is limited.

Jennifer Wilson is a travel writer based in Des Moines. Her first book, *Running Away To Home*, about taking her family back to the Croatian mountain village of her ancestors to live, is available in bookstores and online. www.jennifer-wilson.com





Plumage Passion Takes Flight

“Every artist dips his brush in his own soul, and paints his own nature into his pictures.” —Henry Ward Beecher

STORY AND PHOTOS BY MINDY KRALICEK

JOHN EBERHARDT IS miffed about missing what seems to be the best day of bow season. His thickset hand cradles a fine-tip paintbrush. The left hand turns a feather with a partially painted image of a strutting turkey. He holds it in the light streaming through a studio window. Outside, past the neighbor's house across the street, laps the blue Mississippi, an apt place for a wildlife painter to reside.

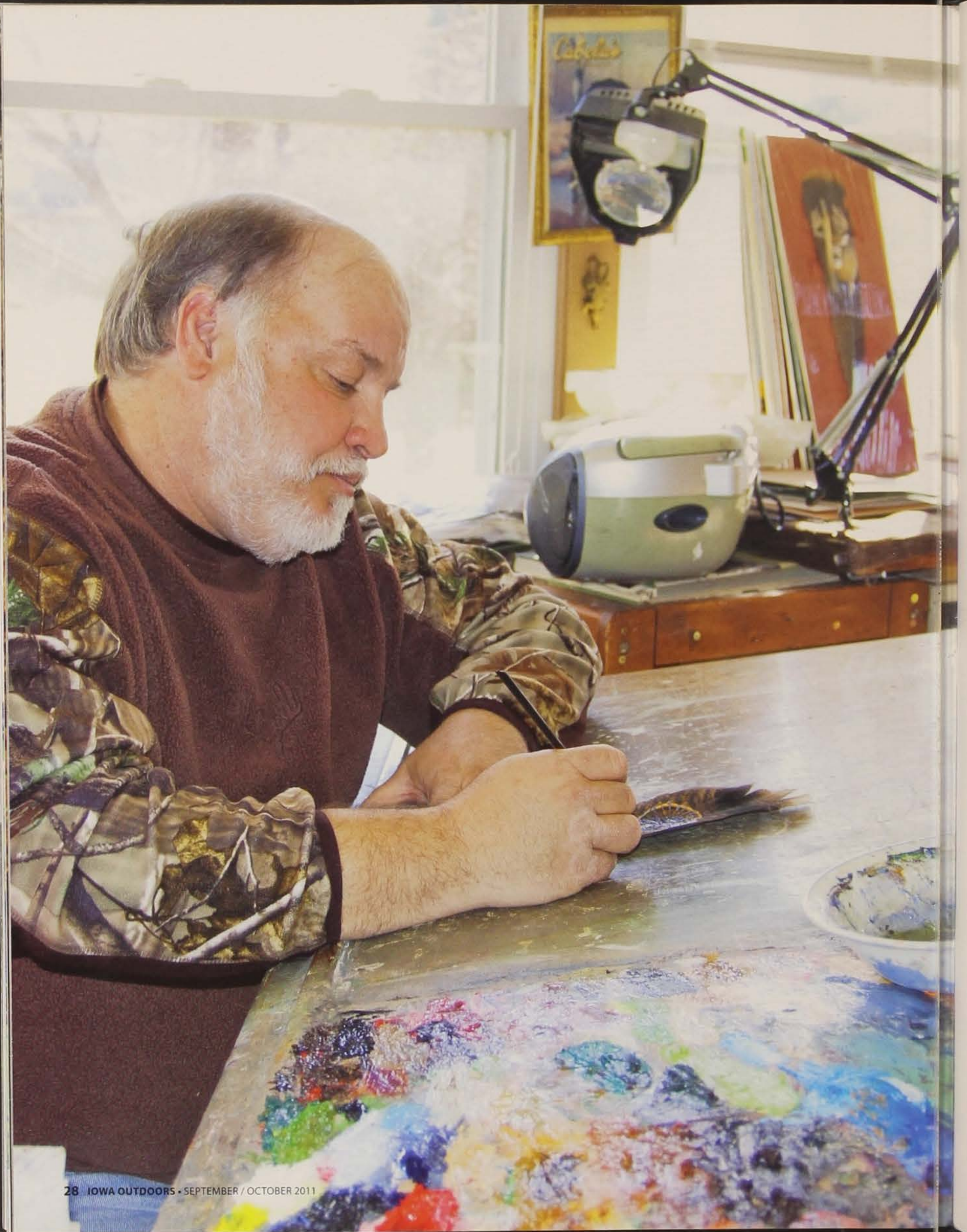
“When the air turns crisp and cold like this,” Eberhardt says, “and the deer are in rut, that’s the time to be out there. Today they’d be on the move.”

The life of an artist suits Eberhardt for the most part. “I work 25 weekends a year participating in art festivals, shows and farmers markets. I take a month off to hunt in the fall and two weeks for hunting in the spring. The rest of the time I’m painting on commission or filling orders. Sometimes it’s frustrating starting a painting I get really into, and then have to work on orders.”

Eberhardt points to a couple of 2-foot by 3-foot canvasses leaning against a wall, vivid earth-tones blending into infinite skies, seemingly lit by something within the canvas. In one, ducks are penciled outlines breaking their flight to settle ashore. In the other,



Eberhardt finishes a strutting turkey on a turkey feather. "I'll likely never run out of feathers. Hunters will provide fans in exchange for one painted feather. That's a good trade."



penciled quail are startled into flight.

"I paint backgrounds from photos, but the wildlife is envisioned. I've studied birds and deer so closely. I just lose sense of time when I start painting.

"The market for large works isn't there right now. What I really like is to paint large works. Something 4 feet by 6 feet. That is really satisfying," he says.

The Solitary, Twisting Road to Art

"My grandmother bought me my first paints and brushes," says Eberhardt. "She was a pianist and a singer. She made sure the family was exposed to culture.

"I was 22 or 23 when I started thinking about painting. There were no art teachers in the Catholic school system in which I was raised. I wasn't a good student—had problems concentrating. I tried college, but dropped out to join the Army. Afterward, I tried to go back to college, but I still had trouble concentrating. I took up welding and worked in the minor leagues—John Deere was the big league."

"Even if I'd been called up to John Deere, welding wasn't what I wanted to do. I loved the outdoors. Fishing and hunting. The primitive life with only myself to rely on."

Eberhardt hesitates and looks beyond the feather he's painting, back into his past.

"I read Nash Buckingham. Loved his stories. He inspired me. And my dad. One time my dad took me to a wildlife refuge and for hours we watched millions of ducks in the flyway. Witnessing all that game—it burns in your heart. I hope my painting expresses that. If the time comes that it doesn't, then I'll stop.

"The idea of painting for a living came after I went to a Ducks Unlimited banquet. I studied the paintings and prints on display. I thought, 'This is something I would like to do.' I started painting and a year and a half later, I quit welding and I quit school."

Self-taught, Eberhardt painted every day for six to seven years. He became a full-time artist in 1978, although he insists it took him 10 years to get good enough.

Painterly Pinnacles

Eberhardt perfected his artistic skills during the peak of wildlife print popularity. In the 1980s his oil paintings won

numerous awards in Iowa, Illinois and Kansas. A sportsman, he donated original and limited edition prints to further conservation efforts through Ducks Unlimited, Whitetails Unlimited and the National Wild Turkey Federation.

A high point occurred in 1982 when Jim Cabela bought one of Eberhardt's original paintings at a Ducks Unlimited meeting in Kansas City—a black Labrador retriever holding a limp duck in its mouth. The painting ended up on the cover of the Cabela's Outdoor Gear Catalog, raising some controversy at the time. A number of people didn't want to see a dead duck on the cover.

Thus began a 30-catalog cover relationship that continued until Cabela's changed marketing strategies and began using photography 23 years later.

Eberhardt turns back to his feather for more touch-ups. "I thought the painting would take care of itself, but other skills are important. I'm an introvert, so it's hard for me to put myself out there. Sometimes people at art shows will be looking at my work and say, 'I've never heard of you.'

"My wife says and does things I would never do. She helps with marketing and sometimes goes to art festivals alone to sell my works. That's where she is today."

From his studio, Eberhardt can look into his living room, where multiple mounted buck racks project from the walls. "Every time I look at one, it brings back 20 minutes of memory," says Eberhardt. "That strain to hear the softest crack of a stick. The glimpse of an antler through tree branches. The quickening of my heartbeat. Will he move in close enough for a good shot?"

"Older hunters have told me that the urge to kill leaves you, but nothing changes the desire to be outdoors. Witnessing the strength and instinct of two bucks violently slamming into each other, locking antlers, pushing each other to the ground. Then they get up and go at each other again."

Today he wistfully returns to his work. He quietly finishes the strutter and sets it aside for matting. Eberhardt's fingers drum the art table as he squints against the sunshine. "We had such a warm fall. I should be hunting today." 🦌





Quail are startled into flight in this work in progress.



FEATHER PAINTING

The tight economy has changed what John Eberhardt paints.

"People don't have \$1,200 to spend on an original painting at a festival, but they will spend less than \$100 on something they like. The feather paintings sell very well. I can do the strutter in about an hour and 20 minutes, but a deer takes only half the time."

Eberhardt tapes the back side of turkey feathers with two strips of clear packing tape. "I use two because that helps keep the feather flat. With one piece, the feather tends to curl."

Then two coats of acrylic primer are painted on the feather for an undercoat. When Eberhardt first started painting feathers he used a template to apply the acrylic base—one for a strutting turkey, one for a cardinal, another for a deer, one for an eagle. Now he free-hands them all.

He has painted a lot of species of birds and other game on feathers, as well as horses and pets. Eberhardt takes special orders, or buyers can select from several on his website. He signs, mats and frames the art in traditional oak or barn board frames.

See more of his works or view items for sale at **John Eberhardt's** website, eberhardtwildlife.com. Eberhardt also paints custom work on request. (319-430-2692 or marpoph@aol.com).



John Deere and Deer: a recent painting available for sale.



Love you, Dad



STORY AND PHOTOS BY MIKE WHYE

Hunting Fall Delicacies

EDIBLE OR NOT? The species at left show why one should never eat a mushroom they can't positively identify. Prairie States Mushroom Club treasurer Roger Heidt and past president Dave Layton believe it is of the *Psathyrella* family, most of which are inedible. Club secretary Dean Abel (pictured opposite) thinks they could be *Coprinus* mushrooms, a mostly edible species.

When Roger Heidt entered Brown's Woods

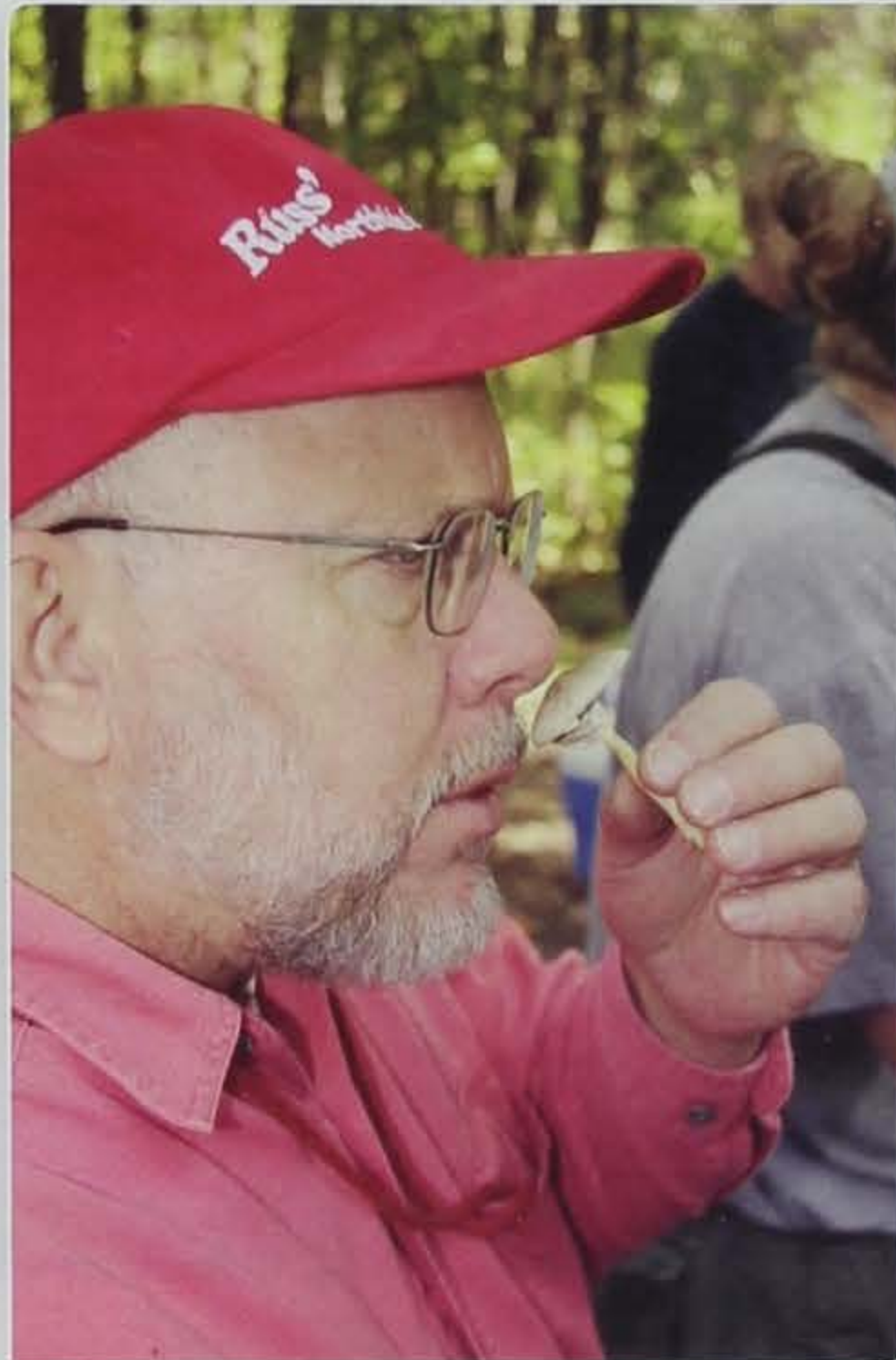
south of West Des Moines, he walked a short way on a path and veered off into the undergrowth, his eyes scanning decaying logs and the sides of living trees. He hardly looked at the colorful fall leaves that either still clung to the trees or formed an uneven blanket on the forest floor. As for those leaves that blocked his view of the ground, Heidt moved them now and then with his aluminum walking stick or stirred them with his shoe.

Flanking him on one side was Glen Schwartz, and on the other, Harlan Ratcliff and his 12-year-old son, Max. All were doing the same, slowly walking through leaves and pools of sunlight and shadow on a cool October morning looking for mushrooms.

Elsewhere in the woods, about a dozen others were hunting mushrooms, too.

A bit out of season, you might think, believing like so many others that spring is the only season to find edible mushrooms, and then, only morels. Members of the Prairie States Mushroom Club believe otherwise, and on their forays, which usually occur about once or twice a month spring through fall, they collect a variety of fungi, many that are edible.

At first, no one was spotting any mushrooms. Then a rhythm set in and the hunters began calling out their finds. "Here's some *Armillaria*," says Heidt, of Robins,



kneeling to check a clutch of tan-topped mushrooms attached to some decaying wood. Schwartz, from Hiawatha, and the Ratcliffs, from Granger, gathered around Heidt. Plucking one of the mushrooms from the group, Heidt turned it slowly, inspecting it. "It's an edible mushroom but these are old, so don't eat them," he says.

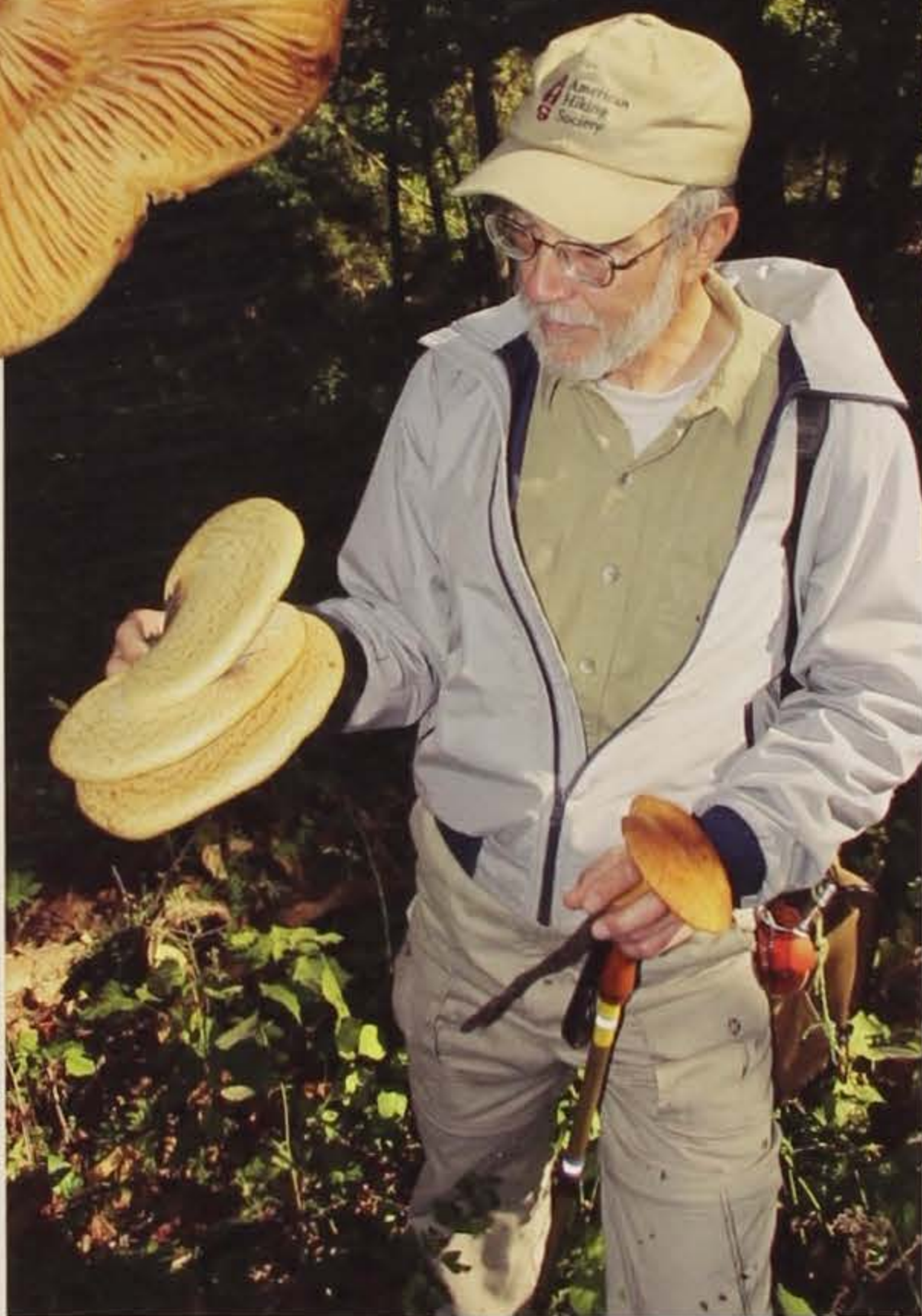
As Heidt tucked the one *Armillaria*—also called fox fire because it glows at night—into

a compartment of a small plastic box he carried in a pouch, others resumed searching. A few moments later, everyone gathered around Schwartz, who found another type of *Armillaria*—but this batch was more yellow and stickier than what Heidt found. From one angle, the cluster resembled glistening pancakes. "This is called honey mushroom," Schwartz explained. "They look like they're dipped in honey. You'll see 10 times more fungi in the fall than in the spring."

Then someone found eyelash cups with round brown caps hardly 2 millimeters wide. At another time, Harlan Ratcliff spotted shelf mushrooms high on a tree trunk. He boosted Max up to bring down a handful for everyone to see. And so the morning went with the four fanning out and then gathering to discuss each new find.

Mushroom Lovers Club

In another part of Brown's Woods, a heavily wooded 484-acre Polk County preserve along the Raccoon River, Dr. Lois Tiffany was also looking at mushrooms. In 1983,



Tiffany, the late emeritus distinguished professor of botany at Iowa State University, and Dr. Don Huffman, now an emeritus professor of biology at Central College in Pella, founded the Prairie States Mushroom Club, which today has nearly 60 members. Because the members live in central and eastern Iowa, forays are conducted in those regions, from Leon to Waverly and from Ledges State Park to New Vienna.

Past club president David Layton says that the group isn't just about getting together for forays. "We help document the presence and growth of various fungi in Iowa and bring an awareness of fungi's role in the larger ecological balance to the public. Some members focus on the dynamic beauty that fungi bring to the greens and browns of the forest and others just enjoy the excitement of the treasure hunt and learning about whatever treasure they've found," he says.

In 1988, Tiffany and Huffman collaborated with Dr. George Knaphus, a professor of botany and plant pathology at ISU who was also in on the club's beginning,

to write the book, *Mushrooms and Other Fungi of the Midcontinental United States*. The book's 370-page second edition came out in 2008 with the aid of another member of the club, Rosanne Healy, former ISU mycologist now a doctoral candidate at the University of Minnesota. Besides detailing mushrooms in terms of their physical characteristics, the authors list what many people want to know—how edible each species is or isn't.

Generally, club members divide mushrooms into some broad categories: edible, non-edible (which means their taste, texture or other features make them undesirable to eat, such as bitter-tasting *Tylopilus felleus*), poisonous and those they nickname LBMs—little brown mushrooms, which no one knows much about when it comes to eating.

"One shouldn't eat a mushroom unless they can identify it properly," warns Tiffany. "Half a dozen of the most commonly eaten mushrooms are reasonably easy to identify. If people would concentrate on picking what they know and not randomly collect mushrooms, they'd be a lot safer."

She added that only a dozen or so mushroom species

OPPOSITE: Prairie States Mushroom Club treasurer Roger Heidt holds a dryad's saddle, or pheasant back, in his right hand and a rooting polypore in his left (notice the long root extending beyond his fingers). Club members take a break during a 2009 Brown's Woods foray. Tackle boxes serve well to separate and protect delicate fungi. BELOW, L TO R: Former ISU Mycologist Rosanne Healy, DNR Botanist Mark Leoschke and club secretary Dean Abel examine a fall foray find. Club president Glen Schwartz is in the background.



are actually good for eating. "There are others you can eat but they're not worth it," she says.

Knaphus, who died of cancer in 2000, was known for telling people, "You can eat any mushroom, but some only once."

When it comes to knowing what's what about poisonous mushrooms, Mother Nature provides many twists and turns. For example, not all parts of an edible mushroom may be good to eat, as with the velvet stem mushroom which has a cap that's safe to eat but a stem that's not worth eating. A species of mushroom that is toxic in one area of the nation may be edible elsewhere. Levels of toxins in a single species can range from deadly to nearly nonexistent. And some edible species, like the parasol mushroom, can be easily confused with the poisonous *Chlorophyllum* and the slender *Amanita bisporigera*, whose angelic appearance belies that it's among the five deadliest mushrooms. That makes staying away from the parasol mushroom sound advice.

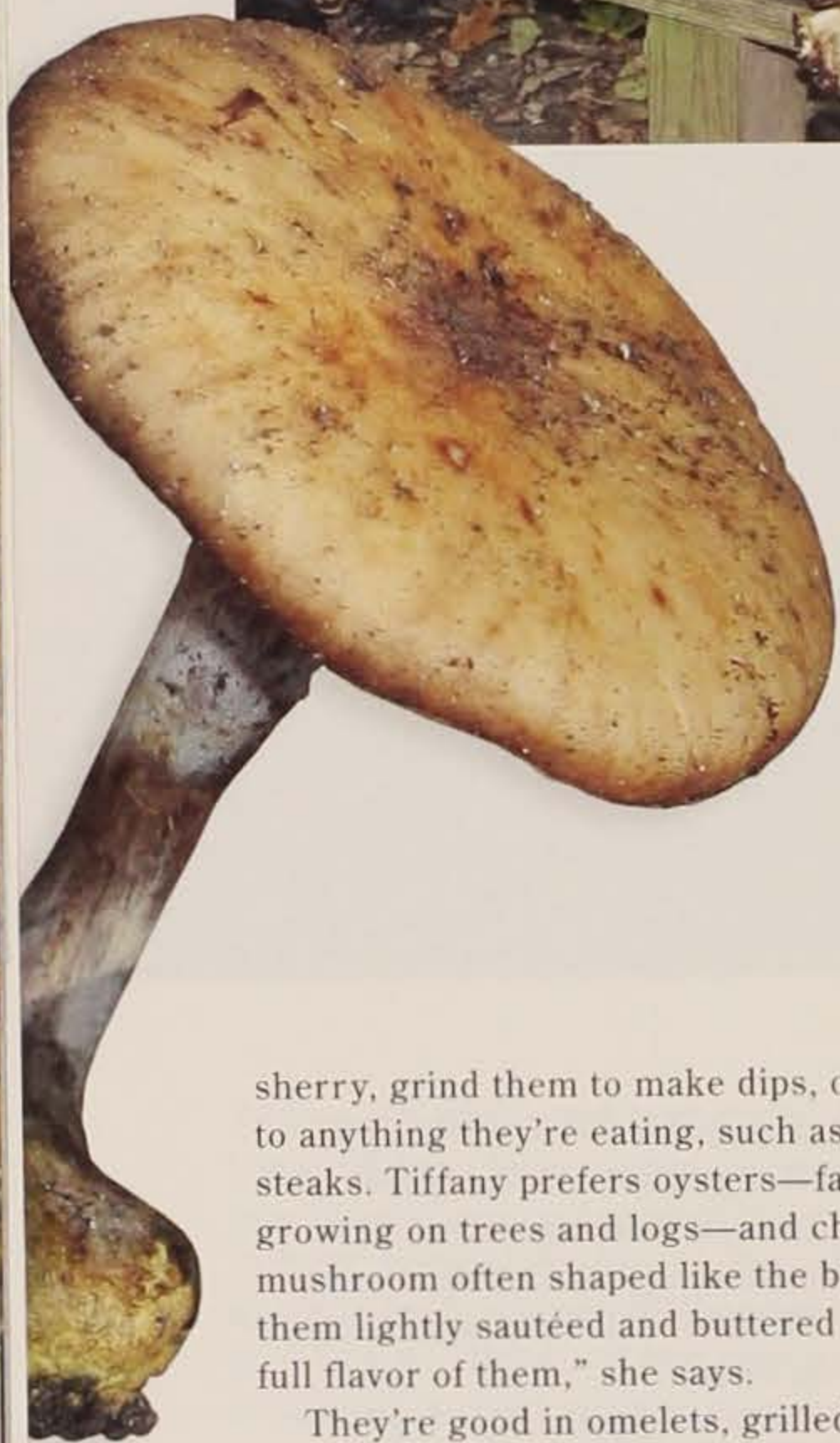
David Layton of Clinton recalls that not long after he began his fascination with mushrooms in his teens,

he brought home a parasol mushroom—so he thought. He sampled a small bit of it, thought it was tasty and put it in the refrigerator. Later, a roommate ate it all and within an hour was throwing up. The mushroom was actually a *Chlorophyllum*. "It didn't kill him," says Layton. "But he didn't feel good for awhile."

As for understanding which mushrooms are toxic, those who hunt mushrooms say the only way to know is that someone somewhere ate a type of mushroom and was able to say so later, although what's safe for one person to eat may not be for another.

Tiffany says some edible mushrooms can be eaten raw but she suggested all be cooked before eating. "Heating the mushrooms drives off things that can be harmful to a person," she says.

When it comes to cooking mushrooms, everyone has their favorite method. Some simply fry them plain, while others prefer to roll their pickings in milk, egg, flour and seasonings before frying them. Others boil them with heads of garlic, fry them in butter, sauté in wine or



ABOVE AND RIGHT: Forayers lay out a substantial find of hen of the woods, a prized fall mushroom that can grow to 30 pounds or more. It has a deep, rich flavor and chewy texture. OPPOSITE: Dean Abel studies a pear-shaped puffball, edible when still firm and pure white inside.

sherry, grind them to make dips, or just add them to anything they're eating, such as an accompaniment to steaks. Tiffany prefers oysters—fan-shaped mushrooms growing on trees and logs—and chanterelles, a golden mushroom often shaped like the bell of a trumpet. "I like them lightly sautéed and buttered so you can taste the full flavor of them," she says.

They're good in omelets, grilled cheese sandwiches and spaghetti, adds Layton, who has taught cooking-with-mushroom classes at New Pioneer Co-op in Iowa City. His favorite creation is adding a dozen or so varieties of cooked mushrooms to cream of mushroom soup.

The Bountiful Fungi Harvest

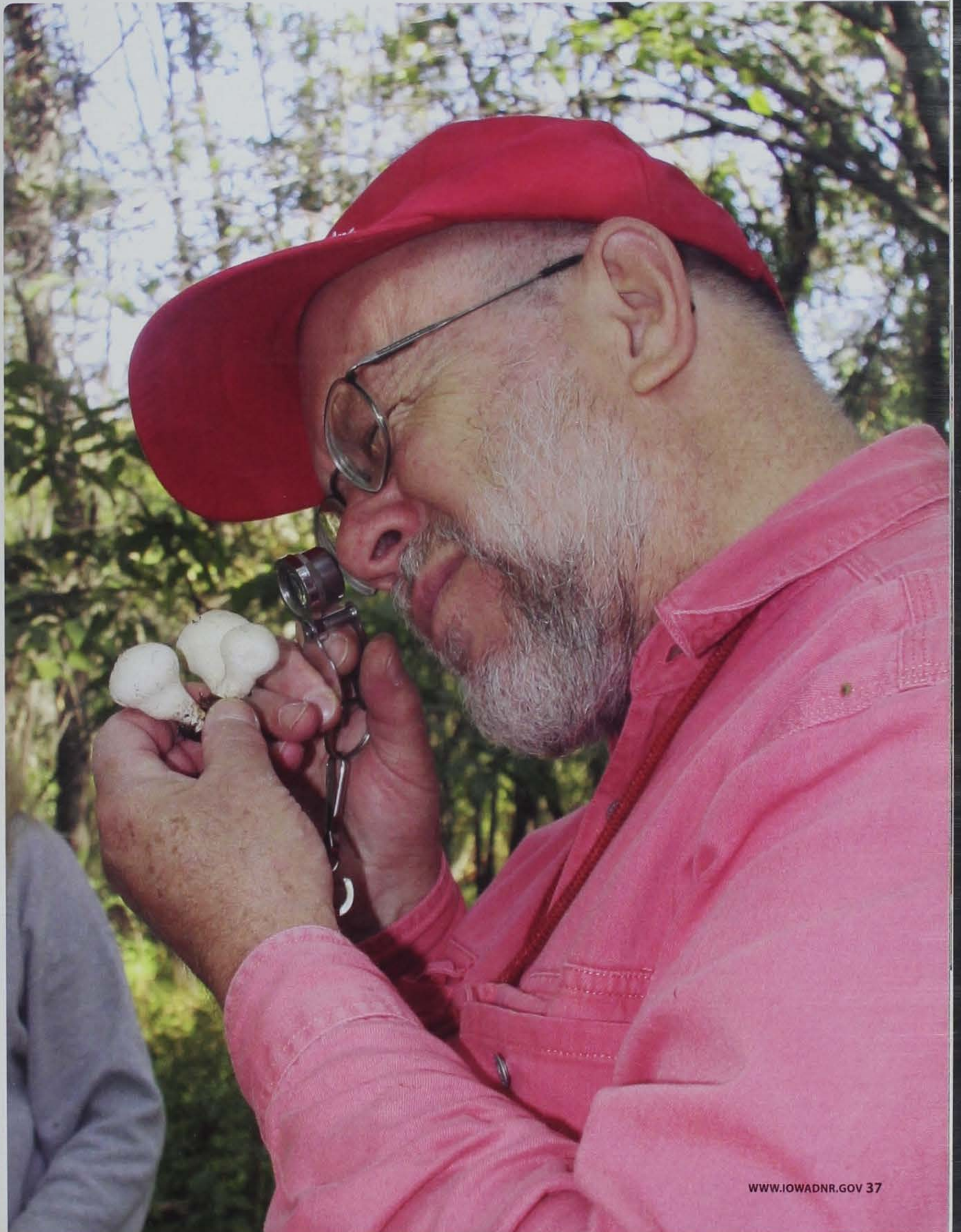
After a couple hours in the woods, everyone gathered near some benches where they laid out their finds. The list didn't quite make it from A to Z but it did go from *Agaricus pocillator* to *Xerula megalospora*, with quite a few in between. The Latin names could dislocate tongues, lips and jaws of those who try to pronounce them—*Irpex lacteus*, *Ischnoderma resinatum* and *Agrocybe*

acericola—but several of the common names spread smiles—knothole oyster, elfin saddle, inky caps, hairy turkey tail and false coral jelly. "I'd say we have about 50 to 60 species here today," says Dean Abel, secretary of the club and instructor in the University of Iowa biology labs.

Minette Carlson and son Austin were proud of the large clump of hen of the woods they had found. "This is good eating," she says, noting that in Asian markets the ball of what looks like coiled pieces of thin, gray paper goes by its Japanese name, "maitake," meaning "dancing mushroom, and is believed to have medicinal values.

At the end of the foray in Brown's Woods, the members of the club packed their findings back into their wax bags, cloth sacks and wicker baskets and headed home, leaving the woods with a few less mushrooms. But one's not to worry, they'll be back. 🍄

Learn more about the Prairie States Mushroom Club at www.iowamushroom.org, or contact Roger Heidt at 319-573-4795.





DOGS AT WORK

STORY AND PHOTOS BY TY SMEDES

Chuck Lenze and Chip, his retriever, are a solid team. Lenze uses both voice and hand signals to direct his well-trained retriever to fallen ducks.

Because wary ducks can be spooked by the flash of a hunter's face, the use of a face-mask is a good precaution.

IT WAS A COLD AND BLUSTERY morning in early November and one of those days that every duck hunter anticipates. A fierce northwest wind had ushered in a cold front, with rapidly falling nighttime temperatures and it was now below freezing. My own wetland and duck blind were just a stone's throw away, but today I would be hunting at a neighboring marsh with my friend and neighbor, Chuck Lenze. Lenze had invited me along and more than anything, I was itching to see his retriever in action.

The eastern sky began to glow as we entered the old wooden duck blind, just a few minutes before shooting time. And the howling wind seemed to carry a message—that fall would soon draw to a close. We both knew it to be a favorable wind—a tail-wind that migrating ducks like to hitch a ride upon. Lenze's Chesapeake Bay retriever, Chip, took his usual place at a small opening in the front of the blind. It was a spot Chip knew well, and he began eagerly searching the skies for waterfowl. With duck and goose calls at the ready and guns loaded, we also began to scan the sky. It was shooting time.





Retriever Resources

In the field, one of the best methods to reduce lost game is to use a trained retriever.

Lenze suggests contacting a dog club to get started with training.

- The Mid-Iowa Retriever Club (AKC) conducts hunt tests
<http://mirc.shutterfly.com>.

Iowa's North American Hunting Retriever Association clubs include:

- Skunk River Hunting Retriever Association
<http://skunkriverdogs.org> (southeast Iowa),
- Eastern Iowa Hunting Retriever Association www.eihra.net
- The Midwest Retriever Club (Des Moines & southwest Iowa)
midwestretrieverclub.org
- Okoboji Retriever Club okobojirc.org.

The North American Hunting Retriever Association, www.nahra.org, simulates real hunting situations for waterfowling and upland hunting. Tests simulate an actual day's hunt in the field.

Chip took his usual place at a small frontal-opening in the blind. It was a spot the Chesapeake knew well, and he began eagerly scanning the skies for waterfowl.

Soon we spotted a small flock of ducks to the west—as they flew down Beaver Creek. But our calling was to no avail. The crosswind was just too strong, and the sound of our hail-calls just didn't reach them. Continuing onward, they were soon out of sight. A few minutes passed and several more small flocks moved by, but far to the west. To our frustration, not one flock came close enough to see our decoys or hear our hail calls. But then, with a sudden swish of wings, a trio of mallards banked in and hung above the decoys. We scrambled to shooting position, shots rang out and two drakes tumbled into the decoy spread. Because the third duck was a hen, we allowed her to continue her journey.

Chip leaped through the small dog door and into the water. He had watched the birds fall and had them marked. A strong and powerful swimmer, it didn't take long for the Chesapeake Bay retriever to fetch them up. Chip didn't wait for his master to send him.

If Chip doesn't see the bird fall, he is sent on a blind retrieve, first lined up in the direction he should go. “

“Hopefully, he will go in a straight line to the bird; but if he is off line, you blow a whistle to get his attention and stop him. You then give a hand signal to restart the dog in the direction you want. You might use your voice—or not—depending on how much of a correction you want to make and what obstacles are ahead,” explains Lenze.

Chip retrieved the pair of mallards and we settled back onto the bench when three gadwall came rocketing downwind from the west. Several hail calls turned them, and we switched to greeting calls as the trio cautiously circled several times. Although gadwall are often hard to

decoy, these birds appeared to want down out of the wind. With our heads down, we continued to call—looking straight ahead and over the decoys. Duck hunters often mistakenly look up when they've lost sight of circling ducks, and that flash of the face usually sends a flock of keen-eyed waterfowl climbing sharply away. Our patience was rewarded when the trio dropped below the bills of our caps, fluttering downward, hanging in the wind and just past the decoys. Once again we sprang into action, and three ducks folded.

This time Chip wasn't at his private doorway and didn't see the birds fall, so Lenze sent him on a blind retrieve. Lenze and Chip put on a clinic as I watched. The teamwork between hunter and dog was something special to behold, and the many hours of training and dedication were paying off. Using a combination of whistle, hand and voice commands, it was water-dog work at its best. Soon, Chip fetched the gadwall trio and was again at his master's side. The morning flight was over.

First of Many Chessies

Lenze began duck hunting as a Mason City youngster and recalls shooting his first mallard at a marsh not far from Zirbel's Slough. “A Mason City hardware store owner had a Chessie that caught my interest. I bought my first one from a kennel in New Prague, Minn. and over the years I've come to own nine Chessies. I became interested in formal training when local hunter and friend Bruce Mountain invited me to an AKC hunt test in Lincoln, Neb. I began formally training my second Chesapeake, and he went on to achieve a 'Working Retriever' title.

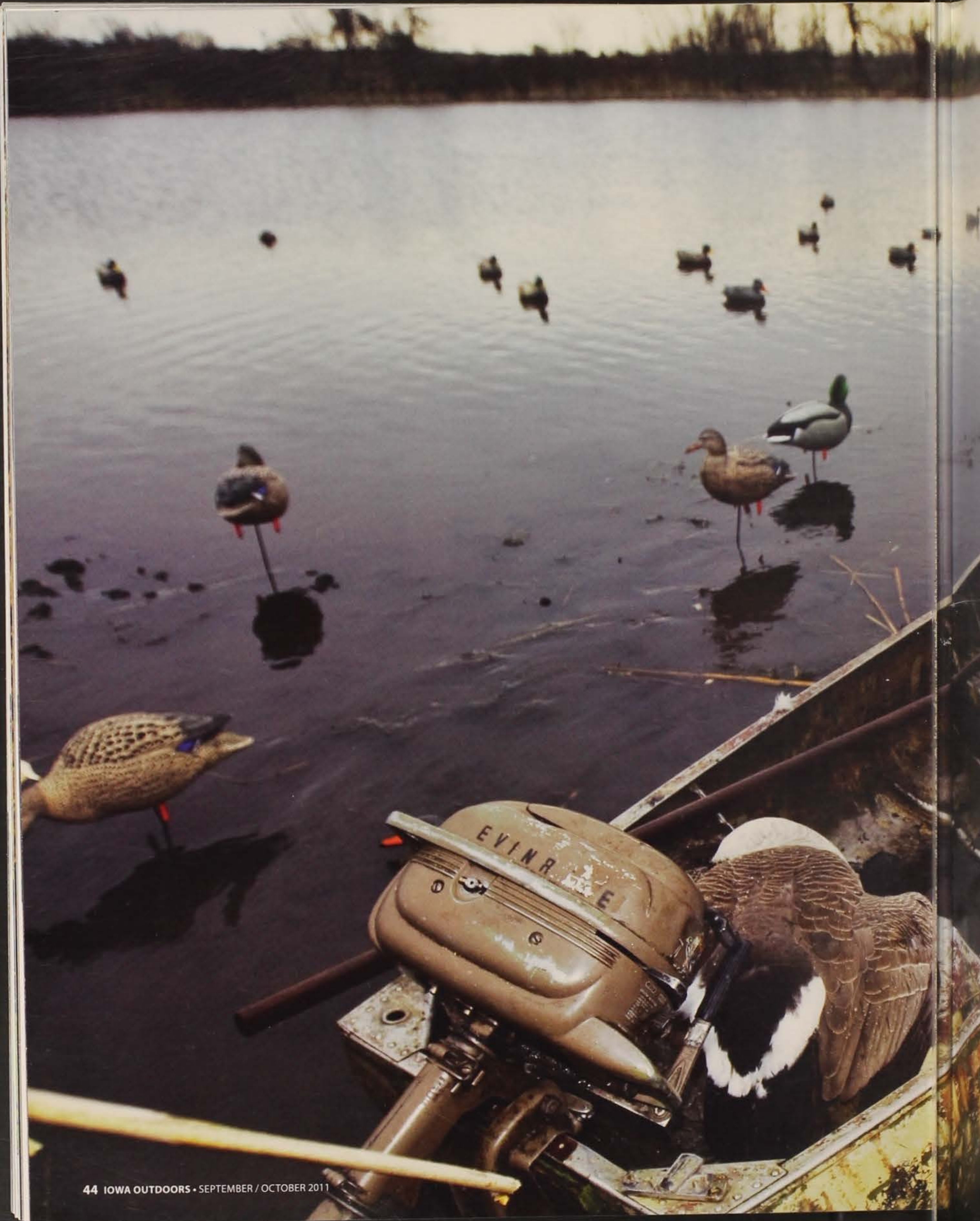
I now regularly enter my dogs in hunting trials and sometimes do some judging. I'm also a Midwest Retriever Club officer. I love the dog work, and I start working my dogs each year in January, since hunt trials begin in April and last till September.”

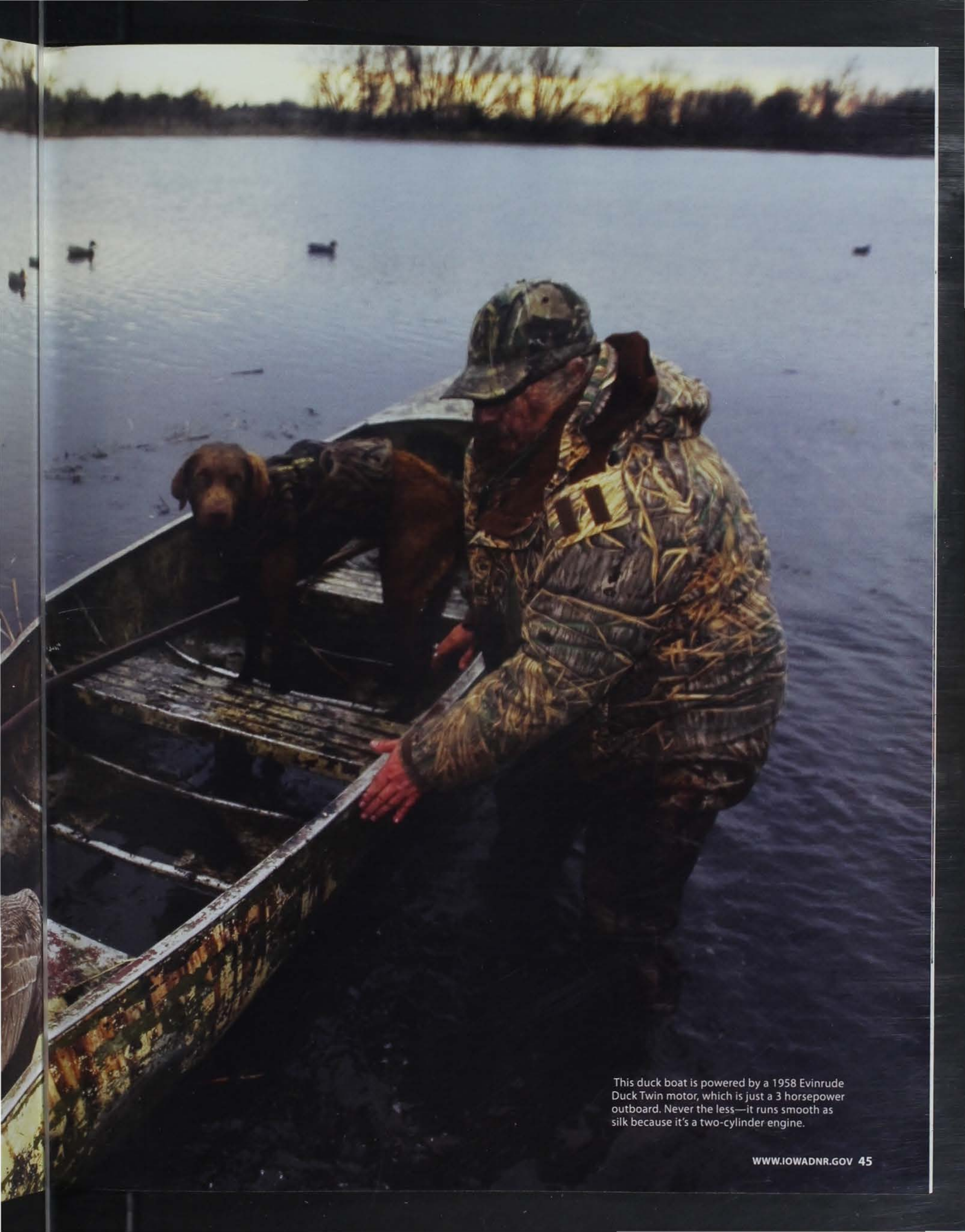
A week later I joined Lenze on another hunt. It was another sub-freezing morning, and the boat dock greeted us with a slick layer of frost as the eastern sky began to glow. As we carefully loaded ourselves, the dog and gear into the boat, the little outboard motor caught my eye. Its styling was from a time gone by, and the little engine sported a mallard decal on the front, along with the





Flagging is a technique used to attract geese at great distances. A goose-colored flag is waved to attract the attention of keen-eyed, motion-sensitive geese. The practice is often quite effective at gaining their initial attention, when calling can't yet be heard.





This duck boat is powered by a 1958 Evinrude Duck Twin motor, which is just a 3 horsepower outboard. Never the less—it runs smooth as silk because it's a two-cylinder engine.

A large Canada goose is a load, but the big Chesapeake had no trouble toting his prize back to the blind.



words "Duck Twin."

"It's a 1958 Evinrude Duck Twin. It's just a three-horsepower motor but it runs smoothly because it's a two-cylinder engine," says Lenze. It took three pulls to start the little engine, but once it fired, it ran smooth as silk. Not bad for a 53-year-old!

This time we occupied an island blind which faced eastward, centered in several acres of open water. It was a cloudy morning, so we didn't worry about looking into the sun.

Lenze's younger dog, Rudy, was our canine companion. Rudy was just 20 months old, eager to hunt and excited to be our hunting partner. Our decoy spread of a few field decoys were anchored in the mud just in front of the blind, as well as several dozen duck and Canada floaters. The northwest wind was at our backs, so incoming waterfowl would likely cross the large body of open water when approaching our set. Soon it was shooting time, and all eyes were on the sky.

Before long, the music of incoming Canada geese could be heard, as a flock of a dozen or so appeared in the distance. Lenze began flagging while I called. Flagging is a technique used to attract geese at a great distance, by waving a goose-colored flag to attract the attention of these keen-eyed, motion-sensitive waterfowl. The practice is often quite effective at gaining their initial attention when calling can't yet be heard. But the geese didn't quite buy it, and disappointingly, they continued onward.

Soon, a single Canada called in the distance, and again we called and flagged. The goose immediately swung in our direction on a straight line—as if on a string—and descended towards our decoy spread. Shots rang out and the goose folded. It was time for Rudy to gain some experience as Lenze directed the young dog towards the downed goose. Rudy had not seen it fall, and his master directed him, using voice commands and hand signals. The goose sailed some distance away before folding, but when Rudy eventually spotted the downed goose he easily retrieved it to his master's hand. The young dog's inexperience showed, but impressed all with his desire to please. Rudy showed great promise and will mature into a well-trained retriever.

So what is Lenze's favorite retriever moment? Hunting a public area in central Iowa, some neighboring hunters dropped several ducks and their two dogs weren't able to retrieve two wounded ducks that continued to dive. Again and

again they sent their quickly tiring dogs. Exhausted, both dogs gave up. Lenze sent his dog with the other hunters hollering, "your dog is gonna drown," as his Chesapeake launched after the wounded ducks.

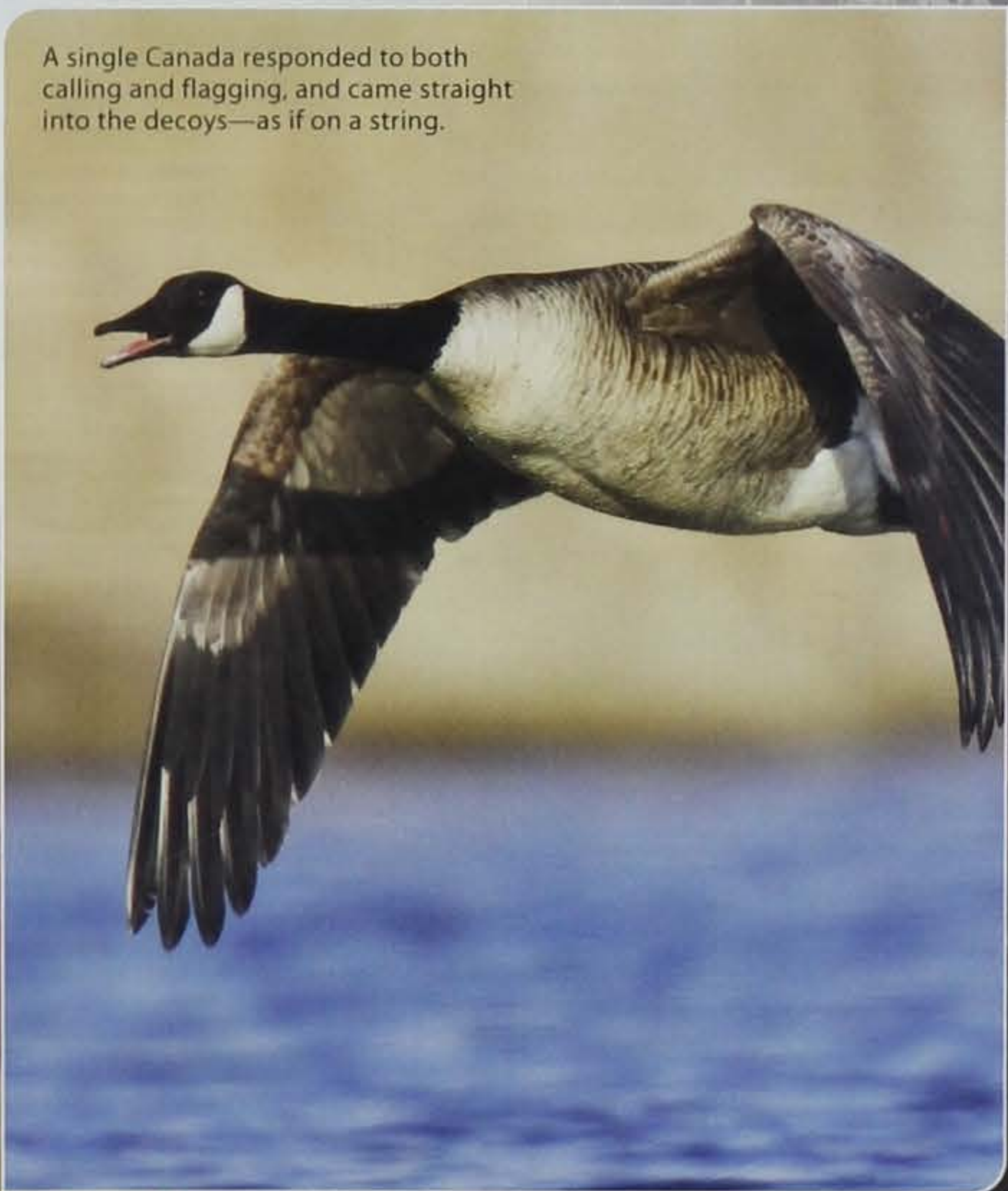
Lenze's dog had a knack of saving energy by waiting out a diving duck. Eventually he could wear down a wounded bird. The determined Chessie retrieved both ducks, and Lenze delivered them to the neighboring hunters who suffered greatly from wounded pride.

"Another time I sent my dog into the marsh to retrieve a wounded duck. We were surrounded by other duck hunters and everyone had experienced great shooting that morning. By the time my dog worked the vegetation, he not only retrieved my wounded bird but found five others! I can't emphasize enough how the use of a well trained retriever is just good conservation," he says. 🐾

GET IN THE FIELD

Buy your state waterfowl stamp and hunting license online at iowadnr.gov. Federal duck stamps are available at most post offices. Both stamps are required to hunt migratory waterfowl.

A single Canada responded to both calling and flagging, and came straight into the decoys—as if on a string.



Dove Hunting

BY ALAN FOSTER PHOTOS COURTESY MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION



FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HISTORY, Iowans have the opportunity to hunt mourning doves in their own state. Iowa joins 40 other states in hosting an annual dove hunting season.

THE PARTICULARS

Season: 70 days, Sept. 1 through Nov. 9

Shooting hours: One half hour before sunrise to sunset

Limit: 15 daily, 30 in possession

License requirements: Valid Iowa small game hunting license and habitat fee, if normally required to hunt in Iowa

Specifics: Hunters required to use plugged shotguns limiting shell capacity to three. Nontoxic shot required. Season includes Eurasian collared doves but not white-winged doves.

HUNTING TECHNIQUES

Doves—like other game—can be patterned to substantially raise hunting success. The key, says DNR wildlife biologist and avid dove hunter Chad Paup, is scouting and knowing where doves roost, feed, drink and loaf.

Guns and ammo: Any 20-, 16- or 12-gauge shotgun will suffice, so pick one you are most comfortable with. Autoloaders are preferred, offering three quick shots at the fast-flying quarry. Since shots are typically short range, 1- to 1 1/8-ounce loads of 7 1/2, 8 or 9 shot are perfect. Since dove hunting provides ample gun shouldering and shooting, lighter guns and loads are kinder on muscles and joints.

Concealment: Doves have keen eyesight, so concealment is important. Choose camo to match the season, and try to blend in with the landscape. Natural and man-made blinds can help if they allow 360 degree vision.

Decoys: In some situations, decoys can entice birds into closer range. Numerous styles are available or you can make your own (see Outdoor Skills, page 14). Place several on open ground and more in nearby fences and trees, as high as possible.

Water holes: Doves tend to seek out water at midday, so concentrate on water holes later in the day. Doves prefer turbid, small ponds for grit, Paup says, especially those that have barren or trampled water edges.

Livestock ponds are perfect examples.

Tree and Field Edges: Fencelines, treelines and natural grasses adjacent to feeding areas offer concealment and ideal stand locations, as long as they afford near 360 degree field of vision. They also offer shade for warm afternoon hunts. Doves move all day, but typically feed morning and evenings and seek water in the afternoon. Doves prefer barren, cover-free landing zones to feed. Set up facing landing zones, preferably into the wind with the sun at your back. Doves like to perch in dead trees, so concentrate on those areas.

Pastures/Fields: Pastures, especially when heavily grazed by cattle, are dove magnets due to barren ground and weed seeds. Newly seeded, freshly mowed Conservation Reserve Program fields and silage fields are also prime areas.

SAFETY

Dove hunting is a safe, enjoyable sport, but due to the fast action and concentrated hunting pressure, follow these commandments:

- 1) Always treat the gun as if loaded.
- 2) Keep guns unloaded when not hunting.
- 3) Ensure the barrel and action are clear of obstructions.
- 4) Always carry your gun so you can control muzzle direction, even if you stumble.
- 5) Always keep the safety on until shouldering the gun.
- 6) Ensure your target is a dove and your backstop is not a hunter or a dog.
- 7) Never point a gun at anything you do not want to shoot.
- 8) Never leave guns or ammunition within reach of children or careless adults.
- 9) Never climb trees or fences with a loaded gun.
- 10) Never shoot at a flat, hard surface or water.

- 11) Never drink alcohol or take mood-altering drugs before or during a hunt.

TIPS AND TRICKS

Quick, erratic flyers, doves offer challenging wing-shooting. Hone skills during the summer on skeet or sporting clays ranges, or simply shoot a round of clays. "Anytime you can get practice shouldering and swinging, that's good," Paup says.

With prime dove hunting in early fall, make sure to pack bug spray.

A retrieving dog that will sit still is a great asset for retrieving birds.

Five-gallon buckets are perfect for carrying gear and doves, and for sitting on when action is slow.

While blaze orange clothing is not required, wearing an orange cap walking to and from the field makes sense.

Wear clear, protective eyewear in areas where multiple hunters are set up.

Early season offers the best hunting. Doves will likely push in on

the first hints of cooler, northerly breezes. Don't be afraid of hot temperatures or drizzly days; doves will still be on the move.

Guns must be limited to three shots, but even the third shot on the same bird is often more out of frustration than anything else. Try limiting young hunters to only one shell to encourage concentration, identification and safety.

THE REWARD

Virtually all state-owned public hunting lands will incorporate dove hunting management, providing opportunities for the expected 20,000 hunters to pursue the bird. These areas have been planted with sunflowers, millet and winter wheat to attract doves.

Dove hunting is a great sport to bring friends and family together, especially the young and old. Since minimal equipment is required, weather is often warm and pleasant and physical exertion is limited, it's great for hunters with less stamina.

Doves are also great on the table. Paup compares dove meat to milder-tasting ducks and prefers marinated dove breast fajitas. The key, like most wild game, is to not overcook. He says doves are excellent wrapped in bacon and grilled or in casseroles. 🐔



Partners in outdoor exploration, the state park hikers have met since 2004, touring parks and nature preserves across the state. Outings typically involve lunch, a guided tour or short hike and always fervent discussion. **PICTURED TOP ROW, L TO R:** Jean Libbey, Bernie Runkel and Chris Henning. **Bottom row, L to R:** Carol Keeling, Ruth Kenney Randolph, Mary Garst and Elaine Mason Zimmerman. **RIGHT:** Ruth Kenney-Randolph consults her hiking guide which bursts with maps, notes and other essentials.



ON GOLDEN TRAIL

Hiking Friends Relive the Past and Cherish the Present

BY KAREN GRIMES PHOTOS BY CLAY SMITH

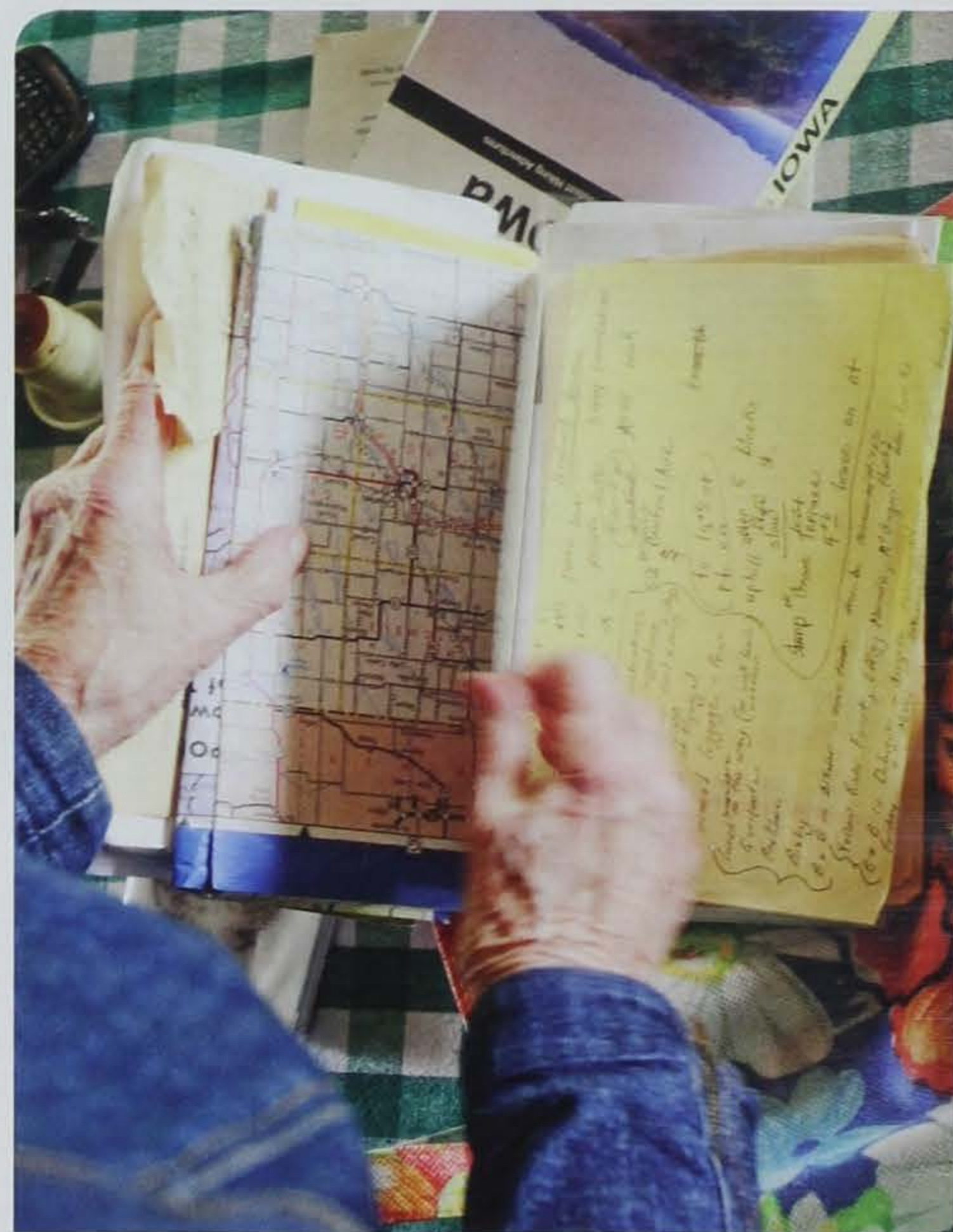
“IT’S CRIMINAL TO GO TO A STATE park and not hike.” That’s the maxim of the Iowa State Parks Group. There are just three criteria for belonging: members must be widows, have a certain political persuasion and bring a peanut butter sandwich to monthly meetings at a park.

Well, sort of. Newer member, Elaine Mason Zimmerman of Des Moines, took the “rules” literally—and brought that sandwich. No one else did. Instead, they had very interesting, fabulous sandwiches.

Their hallmarks are visiting parks, light banter, passionate political and book discussions, and lots of support. “We’ve all dealt with death, so we can talk about those issues,” said Ruth Kenney-Randolph of Johnston.

“We can talk about things we wouldn’t tell in any other group,” adds Bernie Runkel of Des Moines.

Three of them had been friends for years dancing on the finest dance floor in Iowa at Lake Robbins Ballroom near



Woodward. After they lost their husbands, the three founders were sitting together in the Hotel Pattee dining room in Perry when Mary Garst said, “We ought to be outdoors.”

In April, 2004, they held their first meeting at Springbrook State Park near Guthrie Center. Known for the DNR’s conservation education center, 12 miles of trails and practically a guarantee of seeing deer, the park was close to home for founders Garst of Coon Rapids and

Kenney-Randolph and Carol Keeling of Des Moines.

"It's my mission to get everyone to all state parks in Iowa," Kenney-Randolph says. "At first, I was coming up with places to go, picking up information on state parks and surrounding areas. After about five, I suggested we share the planning."

Since then, they take turns. Jean Libbey of Grinnell chose the Neil Smith National Wildlife Refuge near Prairie City to watch buffalo and elk, ponder the vast (for today's world) tracts of prairie and the fortitude of pioneer settlers, examine savannah restoration efforts and tour the museum.

At first they stayed local, visiting favorites like Ledges State Park south of Boone or Walnut Woods west of Des Moines. That's where they ate lunch under ancient sentinel walnut trees when Garst says

The wind-blown silts that created the loess hills some 14,000 to 28,000 years ago are called sugar soils by locals as they "melt" away when it rains, making steep, exciting terrain for sightseers and hikers. Western Iowa along the Missouri River and the Yellow River in China are the only places to find deep loess bluffs. The unique landscape is home to unusual plant and animal life, too, such as yucca normally found further west.

"Elaine and I went on one trip for five days to the Loess Hills in May. We found whole hillsides of ferns and jack-in-the-pulpits as high as my hip," says Kenney-Randolph nostalgically. The two had recently met and didn't know how compatible they'd be for hiking, eating and traveling. "When you don't know each other, my first objective is to come back friends," she jokes.

"The ferns were just gorgeous—so bright green and they just covered the whole hillside," Zimmerman adds. They found the hill of ferns in Preparation Canyon State Park where more than 50 Mormon families once settled

to prepare for the afterlife. This park in Monona County is rugged and remote, with hike-in camping.

On another Loess Hills trip, Runkel and Kenney-Randolph decided to camp. "Neither Bernie or I had pitched a tent in 15 years," says Kenney-Randolph with a grin. "But we decided to tour southwest Iowa on the way: Lake of

Three Fires and Waubonsie State Park."

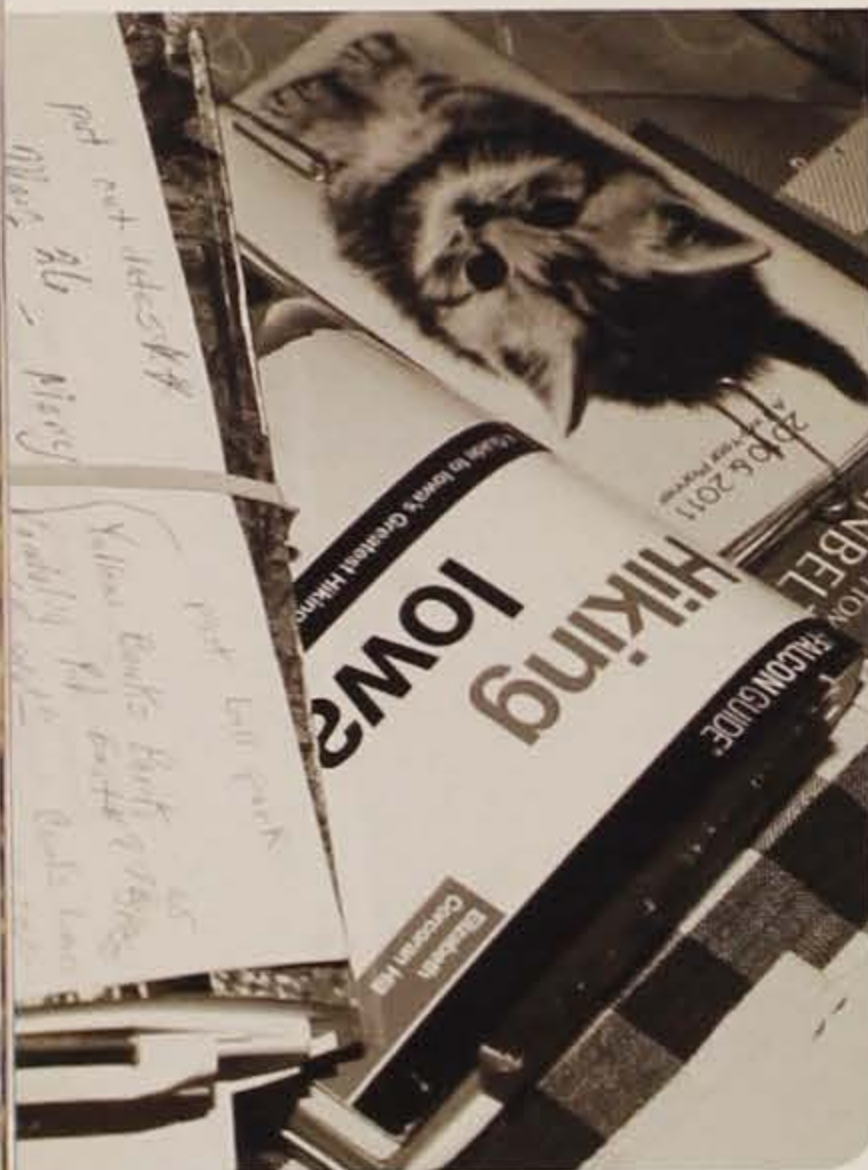
They tented at Waubonsie, at the southwest corner of the state. Named for a Pottawattamie chief, the park hosts hikers and horseback riders along 15 miles of trails. Visitors find incomparable scenery amongst bluffs and ridges and an interpretive trail to learn about Loess Hills plants.

Runkel and Kenney-Randolph, though, had little time for hiking or admiring views. They spent the night holding tents down as high winds and rain roared. After a wet, sleepless night, they cut the trip short.

Yet again the group explored the 200-mile ridge that forms this unusual hill complex on the western edge of Iowa. Trying to find the road to Lake Manawa near Council Bluffs, they were lost. "We just drove and drove," says Kenney-Randolph.

"I can't remember how many times we got turned around. We laughed so hard," says Runkel.

A popular destination in the Council Bluffs area, Lake Manawa is an oxbow lake, created in 1881 when one of




"park maintenance approached us very suspiciously."

"I think he thought we were teenagers," laughs Keeling.

Soon they'd visited most central Iowa parks, including city and county parks. Branching out, they planned overnights, including "the most beautiful trip to the Loess Hills," Zimmerman says.



Discussions and sharing are as important as the venue—whether touring Cedar Rock near Independence, watching barges lock through in Dubuque or hiking into lush forests of ferns and jack-in-the-pulpits in the Loess Hills. This group explores ideas while learning about the natural areas and history of Iowa. White push pins in the map mark those state parks and preserves they've visited so far.



Iowa's prairies and the art they inspired led the group to Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge near Prairie City. Followed by a hands-on exploration of Andy Goldsworthy's stone cairn in the Conard Environmental Research Area south of Grinnell, the day ended with a visit to the Falconer Gallery at Grinnell College. Jean Libbey (left) and Mary Garst examine the prairie setting for the landmark constructed in 2001. Weathering, winds, rain, ice and prairie fires will slowly destroy this cairn.

the Missouri River meanders was cut off. The resulting 772-acre lake provides great fishing for crappie, bluegill and catfish. Nature lovers, the mobility-impaired, hikers and bikers—all can find a trail to love in the 1,529-acre park with eight miles of mountain bike trail.

A special side trip commemorated Runkel's husband and one of his favorite natural areas. "Bernie was in the group by then," says Kenney-Randolph, "so we went to Sy's Preserve," the Sylvan Runkel State Preserve located in the Loess Hills Wildlife Management Area in Monona County. Dedicated in 1996 to the husband Bernie lost in 1995, the preserve honors his love of the natural citizens of the hills, both flora and fauna. Sy brought children and adults into contact with nature in his job as state biologist and as a 16-year leader of the Loess Hills Prairie Seminar. Also in Woodbury County, the friends toured a room devoted to Sy at the Dorothy Picaut Nature Center.

"Mary had to leave us after a couple of days," says Kenney-Randolph, "so we cooked up a wild tale to tell her when she rejoined us in Stone Park," in Sioux City. The trip culminated with a tour of parks and prairies around Lake Okoboji. "I remember Mary went into a store in Spencer and bought a big pint of ice cream and ate it. Jamoca almond fudge."

Trading the dry sunlit south slopes and burr oak-clad north slopes of the Loess Hills for the oak-hickory forests on the group's first trip to northeast Iowa led them to Cedar Rock State Park to tour the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed home near Independence. Other stops included Backbone, Pikes Peak, Mines of Spain and Bellevue state parks, mixed with Effigy Mounds National Monument. A bed and breakfast in Elkader provided home for one night and everyone went to the local theatre for entertainment. Unfortunately, *Barnyard*, the cartoon movie of a chicken escape artist, was the only choice.

"No one criticized me too much for the movie, because they knew they would have to plan the next trip," says Kenney-Randolph, "although they never let me forget about it." They spent a night in Dubuque to watch barges lock through from a high spot in Eagle Point Park. With shelters, lodges, wading pool, band shell, fish pond, rock garden and an outstanding view of Lock and Dam #11, the city park is a must-see.

On another trip, they toured Maquoketa Caves and stayed two nights at Iowa's first state park, Backbone. Named for the Devil's Backbone, a steep rocky staircase climbing from the Maquoketa River to one of the highest points in Iowa, the park has 21 miles of trails. Trout fishing, a Civilian Conservation Corps museum and rappelling are a few attractions.

In fall 2010, they spent nights in a bed and breakfast

near Pikes Peak State Park. Their plans to boat on the Mississippi with Jon Stravers, singer, songwriter, naturalist and hawk expert, were thwarted by high water and rough weather.

Another trip grew out of an *Iowa Outdoors* issue. Inspired by the photos, they trekked to Red Haw State Park in Chariton, searching for redbuds in bloom, to visit an Amish home, eat an Amish dinner and tour the John L. Lewis Museum of Mining and Labor. Located in Lucas, the museum exhibits the geologic history that made southern Iowa home to coal mining, and to labor leader Lewis.

In each small town, the group looks for public libraries.



"It's amazing the effort that goes into creating a library system in every small town in Iowa," says Garst. Books help glue the group together, too.

"We share book titles and movies, a lot of advice," adds Zimmerman.

In an hour they discussed a book about the Americas before Columbus, and movies about Georgia O'Keefe and *Immortal Beloved* about Beethoven.

Garst, who's never met an idea she wouldn't contemplate, is agent provocateur for the group—the one who asks political questions.

"One of the reasons for success in this group is that we are very casual so nobody worries," she says.

The support, camaraderie, shared memories and laughter are obvious. This group of women has been

through hard times, the loss of husbands, the illnesses of family members, tough family situations. But they are more than survivors. They are rejoicers.

"It's criminal to go to a state park and not hike," says Kenney-Randolph.

Then Garst adds, "This group has evolved way beyond parks. It's so much more." 🐾

Ruth—Phenomenal Hiker and Park Aficionado

A passion for hiking, a love of nature's ever-changing face and a spirit of adventure lured her into hiking every state park in Iowa and then some.



"It is a great art to saunter." HENRY DAVID THOREAU, 1841

"An early-morning walk is a blessing for the whole day." — HENRY DAVID THOREAU

With a petite frame, an engaging smile and mischievous, fun-loving eyes, she could double as a wood sprite. And the woods, valleys and prairies are her frequent locales.

Ruth Kenney-Randolph is a trekker with an affinity for parks. She proudly carries her bible, a 1991 edition of *Iowa's State Parks* by Robert Charles Wolf listing 99 parks and nine preserves. Bound with a rubber band and stuffed full of notes, park guides, maps and memorabilia, it's full of information she needs. It's her guide to the many parks she has hiked—every single one. From the smallest to the largest, from the most popular to the least known.

She's quick to say that she hasn't walked every mile of every trail in every state park. Depending upon weather, companions and time, the hike might be just a quick jaunt. But she has hiked every major trail listed in *Hiking Iowa: A Guide to Iowa's Greatest Hiking Adventures* by Elizabeth Corcoran Hill. And for Kenney-Randolph, there are no football games or naps for her family after a big Thanksgiving dinner. No, if the weather is decent, the aftermath of Thanksgiving is a two-hour stroll at Ledges State Park.

She is remarkably fit and energetic for someone who recently turned 80. Although after a nine-mile hike around Geode Park, near Burlington, she says she's slowing

down a little. "I'm not out in the cold every day, like I used to do. Now, I'm more fair weather," she muses.

Her all-time favorite hike into the Grand Canyon is off limits now. Although she's hiked it several times, its four hours down and eight grueling hours up with a 4,860-foot change in elevation. "You need to know your limitations," she advises.

She also takes some safety precautions. "I would rather hike during the week, when not everyone is out. I watch the weather. When it's good, I go. I always hike with a whistle, because cell phones do not always work in state parks," she says.

A founding member of the State Parks Group, she's met with six friends since April 2004, encouraging them to hike and enjoy parks. She's passionate about getting friends into every state park in Iowa. When they meet, she may go early to hike more.

Ledges is her favorite and first park. "I grew up on a farm near Rippey in Greene County. Ledges was the first state park I visited, probably about 1942," she says. Then with that mischievous glint in the eye, she explains how the Des Moines Register documented for all posterity her and her friends' truancy on senior skip day in a feature photo taken at Ledges in 1947.

Ledges was her refuge and playground, too, when she spent Saturday nights at the park during the summers of 1950 to 1953. As a counselor at Camp Hantesa, she had the choice of going home or going down to the park. With limited time off, Ledges won.

"It's still my favorite park," she proclaims.

Kenney-Randolph is a hiker. For her, the 13 miles of trails at Ledges are compulsory. Up and down the steep slopes, it's a workout rewarded by scenic views of the sandstone cliffs and ledges lining Pea's Creek. How could you skip some?

On a chilly December day, she hikes from the parking lot on the north end of the park down to Pea's Creek, walking stick in hand. The glint of sun on water, the dead stick encrusted with lichen, the brisk, heady air, the cry of bird or drumming of a woodpecker—who can resist nature's calls?

For her the natural world provides unending enjoyment. "It's just not to be missed," she proclaims. "What I think is phenomenal is this waterfall (cascading down a cliff at Ledges) and this right here (water flowing over the lowhead bridge). "Look at the different shadows as the water goes through under the ice."

The scenery changes with each bend in the path, each climb in elevation and each season. Kenney-Randolph enjoys them all. "My favorite parks are still river parks along the bluffs. Stone Park, Lacey Keosauqua." Here, each break in the foliage can yield a glimpse of river far below.

As part of the State Parks Group, she revels in sharing each new vista with friends or family. She's hoping to share a trip to Maine, the one state she hasn't visited, with her daughter Linda.

You can be sure—a trip to Maine will include more than a visit to L.L. Bean.





IOWA KICKS OFF NEW HUNTER WALK-IN PROGRAM

Grant Pays Landowners for Habitat Improvements

Two concerns plaguing state wildlife officials—limited hunting opportunities and dwindling habitat—are garnering attention thanks to a federal grant program that assists landowners with habitat improvement in exchange for hunting access.

“We are 49th in the nation in the amount of public land available for hunting,” says Kelly Smith, DNR private lands coordinator. “Gaining hunting access on private land is a concern and it grows each year.”

The voluntary Iowa Habitat and Access Program (IHAP) is different from other state’s hunter walk-in programs. While others may pay a lump sum payment for access, IHAP pays for habitat improvement, maintenance and restoration in exchange for hunter access. Funding comes from a three-year, \$1.5 million U.S. Department of Agriculture grant, in addition to \$1 from every wildlife habitat fee collected annually from hunters. Contracts last between three and 10 years, however benefits of building habitat pay dividends years beyond.

“We believe this program is good for natural resources by creating more wildlife habitat and good for hunters by working to increase hunter access to private land,” Smith says.

HERE’S HOW IT WORKS

A landowner interested in installing wildlife habitat or improving existing habitat contacts a DNR biologist, who visits the property. Together they build a habitat plan that is submitted for consideration. If accepted, the DNR provides an incentive payment in exchange for the landowner installing the habitat.

The grant covers everything from mowing and herbicide application, planting food plots and native grasses, to brush and weed management, timber stand improvement and wetland restoration.

The portion of the property covered under the agreement will be treated like a public wildlife management area and open to hunting only from Sept. 1 to May 31. Access may be denied, however, to those engaging in behavior that threatens the health, safety or property of the landowner. DNR conservation officers will provide assistance and enforcement if needed.

WHY MIGHT THIS FIT INTO A LANDOWNER’S PROPERTY MANAGEMENT PLAN?

Many landowners enrolled in USDA conservation



programs, like the Conservation Reserve Program, are responsible for 50 percent of the cost to convert their land to CRP. The other half is picked up by USDA. Through the IHAP incentive program, much of the landowner's costs can be covered by the DNR. The DNR can also coordinate contractors to complete required CRP work, saving the landowner significant money and headaches. The DNR essentially plays the role of farm manager for conservation activities on the farm.

CAN THE CONTRACT BE TERMINATED?

A landowner may terminate the contract any time with a 60-day written notice. The landowner must reimburse the DNR a prorated value of the habitat improvement work completed on their property.

HOW WILL HUNTERS KNOW WHICH PROPERTIES ARE ENROLLED AND HOW TO FIND THEM?

Signs will be placed along the property perimeter. Maps will be posted on the DNR website. The DNR website will also show property boundaries on its

interactive recreation website with downloadable files for Garmin GPS units.

WHAT ARE THE LIABILITIES?

State law specifically protects the landowner from liability in most cases. DNR legal staff can help explain the law.

Hunters who damage private land are responsible for that damage, just as they are on public lands. DNR conservation officers will patrol the property and enforce rules and regulations.

WILL HUNTERS BE KNOCKING ON MY FRONT DOOR OR ASKING PERMISSION?

Hunters are not required to ask permission. By enrolling, the landowner agrees to open the property to public hunting, with similar hunting access as public wildlife areas.

HOW DO I ENROLL?

Call your local DNR wildlife staff. A list of private lands biologists can be found at www.iowadnr.gov under the wildlife and hunting page, or call **515-281-5918**.

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Hearty Fall Campfire Fare

DUTCH OVEN LASAGNA

- 1 box lasagna noodles, uncooked
- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 jar spaghetti sauce
- 1 14.5 ounce can tomato sauce
- 1 pound mozzarella, grated or cut into strips
- 1 cup parmesan cheese
- 1 container of cottage cheese
- 2 eggs

First, make the meat sauce mixture: brown hamburger meat in skillet and drain. Add spaghetti sauce and tomato sauce to meat mixture. Second, make cheese mixture: mix the eggs and cheeses together in a mixing bowl. In a large Dutch oven, layer as follows: $\frac{1}{2}$ sauce mixture, layer of noodles, $\frac{1}{2}$ cheese mixture. Repeat. Bake 45 minutes to 1 hour at 350° or place 17 coals on top lid and eight coals under the Dutch oven.



Pheasant piccata



Mike Curry



Drunk and Spunky Pheasant and Walleye

SIMPLE, ELEGANT WHITE WINE SAUCES ELEVATE PHEASANT AND WALLEYE TO NEW HEIGHTS

The unimaginative concoction of pheasant breast, rice and cream of mushroom soup will retire once you try this classy spin on Iowa's most popular game bird. With a tangy burst from lemon juice, sinful creaminess of butter and salty bite of capers, this recipe runs palettes up and down the flavor flagpole.

PHEASANT PICCATA

4 skinless, boneless pheasant breasts, pounded thin
Seasoned flour
4 tablespoons olive oil

PICCATA SAUCE:

½ cup dry white wine

Juice of half a lemon
3 tablespoons unsalted butter
6 tablespoons unsalted butter, chilled
1 teaspoon minced shallots
½ teaspoon minced garlic
2 teaspoons capers

Simmer sauce ingredients, excluding chilled butter, in saucepan over medium heat until reduced by half. Turn off heat and add chilled butter a few chunks at a time until emulsified. Season with salt, white pepper and additional lemon if desired.

Heat olive oil in sauté pan over medium-high heat. Dredge pheasant

breast in seasoned flour. Sear in hot oil until brown, about three minutes per side. Top with piccata sauce and garnish with lemon slices.

WALLEYE WITH LEMON BEURRE BLANC AND PEPPER JELLY

Who would have thought to bathe walleye filets—which need little more than salt and pepper to be pleasing to the palette—in tangy white wine sauce and sweet pepper jelly? P.H.A.T. Daddy's owner Mike Curry did, and the food critics here at Iowa Outdoors had one response—this works. The citrus kick hits the taste buds first, then finishes sweet from P.H.A.T. Daddy's homemade pepper jelly. Despite the duo

It's not hard finding good food in classic small-town Iowa, like in Marengo—population 2,500—where it's common to see as many riding lawn mowers filling up at the local gas station as motor vehicles. But fine dining? That's what you get when you stroll into P.H.A.T. Daddy's, where owner Mike Curry and top chef Jim Vido serve heaping plates of New American cooking. Sure, you can find traditional restaurant fare here, but why not try the Mediterranean—fresh black pepper pasta tossed with olive oil, lemon juice and white wine sautéed with olives, red and green peppers, artichoke hearts, tomatoes, feta cheese and basil. Or try raspberry barbecue sauce on your pound of ribs. The delightful Mahi Mahi D'Angelo is breaded with basil Parmesan, smothered in artichoke hearts, mushrooms and smoked ham topped with lemon garlic cream sauce. A destination restaurant, P.H.A.T. Daddy's draws diners from a 100-mile radius, especially on Friday and Saturday nights. Arrive early on Sundays, before tables fill for a popular brunch, loaded with carved meats, an omelette station, cold salads and homemade desserts.



1185 Court Avenue
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www.phat-daddys.com

HOURS:

Tuesday-Thursday 4 p.m.-8 p.m.
Friday-Saturday 4 p.m.-9 p.m.
Sunday Brunch: 10 a.m.-2 p.m.



Walleye with pepper jelly and beurre blanc sauce

of sauces, the delicate walleye flavor and crispy, corn breading shines through. Both dishes are available on P.H.A.T. Daddy's regular menu, although Curry switches pheasant for more common chicken. Pair either with two sides and a glass of Midnight Ember from the local Fireside Winery. Finish the meal with a decadent death by chocolate or refreshing key lime pie dessert, made by Curry's mom, pastry chef Carol Curry. Before you leave, grab a cocktail at the connected Phools Gold Lounge.

- 2 walleye filets
- 1½ cups buttermilk
- 4 tablespoons P.H.A.T. Daddy's Pepper Jelly

BREADING:

- 1 cup Golden Dipt brand breading (or favorite plain breading)
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- ⅛ cup yellow cornmeal
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon white pepper
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika

LEMON BEURRE BLANC SAUCE

- ½ cup dry white wine
- Juice of half a lemon
- 1 teaspoon minced shallots
- Pinch of kosher salt and white pepper
- 1 stick chilled unsalted butter, cubed

Combine all sauce ingredients, excluding butter, in small saucepan and simmer over medium heat. Reduce until roughly half a tablespoon remains. Turn off heat and whisk in cold butter a few chunks at a time until emulsified. Season with salt, pepper and additional lemon juice if desired. Sauce should be buttery yet slightly tangy.

Dip walleye filets in buttermilk, then breading mix. Fry in 360° oil for 5 to 7 minutes or until golden brown. Spoon beurre blanc onto plate, place filets on top and drizzle with pepper jelly.



Just Across the Creek

I take it back. Despite what I have said, I know now that not *all* kids these days are watching TV, playing video games and text messaging their life away. I was wrong.

It was an unseasonably warm November day. I was prowling the back roads on the lookout for hunters and drinking in the fresh air when I caught some radio traffic about an injured deer. It is a common call this time of year, so I didn't pay it much heed until my phone rang. I checked the caller ID. It was the sheriff's department.

"You want me to take the injured deer call, don't you?"

I said smartly when I answered the phone.

"If you aren't too busy catching poachers," the dispatcher deadpanned. "The caller said the deer is a little bit off the roadway, so you better get directions."

A little while later, I pulled into the caller's driveway. A young man emerged from the garage.

"Did you call about a deer?" I asked him.

"Yeah, my sisters and I found it when we were hiking," he explained.

"Where is it?" I asked.

The boy screwed up his face and said, "Well, it's back in the woods. I'll take you there if you want."

His mother recounted the details. The kids had been



hiking all day and were returning home at the time they found the deer. Both of its back legs were broken and they didn't want to watch it suffer. The boy's sisters were waiting with the deer.

I followed their minivan down the road to the edge of a timber. As I got out of my truck I scanned the ditches and surrounding woods expecting to see the deer, put it down and be on my way.

"Where is it?" I asked as they stepped out of the van.

The boy pointed into the woods. "That way."

"Is it on this side of the creek?" his mother asked.

"Well...sort of," he replied.

"Sort of?" I asked.

"We'll have to cross the creek a couple times," he replied.

I squinted through the trees, but didn't spot a creek anywhere close. I looked back at the boy, and noticed that he was wearing knee-high rubber boots.

"How far away is it?" I asked, still eyeing his boots suspiciously.

"I don't know... a mile or two?"

Huh? A mile or two? I sighed, certain it would look wimpy to back out now.

"OK, lead the way," I said.

We walked. And walked some more. I slowly began

to lose sight of the boy. I've always prided myself on my hiking prowess. At 5 feet 11 inches, my long legs have helped me outpace a few hiking partners through rugged mountain terrain. Hmm...how many years had it been since my last backpacking trip? I slowly came to the realization that my last major trip had been three years and two babies ago. I looked up again. The boy wearing the clodhopper boots was a good 50 yards ahead of me. He snaked through the timber, ducked under downed trees and sprightly leapt over others. Finally, after about 20 minutes of hiking, he stopped at a creek crossing.

"So, we need to cross this?" I asked when I caught up. I warily glanced over the edge of the drop-off to the creek far below.

"Yeah, there's a big log over the water that's fairly easy to cross," he said. "Think you can get down here, or should we go upstream where it isn't so steep?"

Suddenly I felt like a really old lady. I wiped the sweat from my forehead and glanced again at the drop down to the water. Then I muttered, "We'd better go upstream."

We finally found the "big log" he was talking about. "Big" wouldn't have been the adjective I would've chosen. He dashed across the log and waited for me on the other side. I dashed across too. OK...I scooted across on my backside.

"Are we about there?" I asked, sounding a little too much like a whining toddler on vacation.

"No," he answered bluntly.

We continued hiking. As we walked, the boy told me about their weekly explorations. His eyes glistened with excitement as he described the "really cool" rock wall they found on this trip. Then he pulled a small skull from his pocket and asked me to identify it.

As we continued trudging along, I reminisced about the time I spent as a kid exploring the woods and creeks near my home. Watching the boy make his way through the maze of trees reminded me what it had been like when weekends were blank slates waiting to be filled with adventure.

My brother and I spent hours poking through brambles, burying our feet in muddy creek bottoms, catching frogs and making up games. It never took long for daylight to turn to dusk. Soon we'd hear our mother's voice in the distance, "EEERRRII KKKAA.... JJJOOOEEELL...time to come home...." I never seem to hear the "come home" calls from parents anymore. Maybe now they just send a text message.

I was yanked from my reverie by the boy calling out to his sisters. We heard their voices echo through the trees, "We're down here!" We clambered our way through nettles to a small marshy area. I felt mud ooze over the tops of my boots with each step (some rubber boots might've been nice). A small deer, obviously crippled, lay

on the ground calmly watching us.

I leveled my gun on the deer and hesitated. When I glanced past my sights to the deer's steady gaze, I felt a familiar and unnerving stir deep in my gut that I'm not certain I'll ever get used to. My focus moved back to the sights and I fired. When I looked behind to check on the kids, they merely nodded. We turned and silently started the walk back to the road.

By the time we saw their mother waiting at the top of the hill, I was feeling light-headed, seeing black spots and was covered in mud, stickers and sweat (I don't recommend hiking in a bulletproof vest). She took one piteous look at me and thanked me for taking the time to help. I casually said, "no problem," then joked that I'd probably lost some baby weight.

As I climbed back into my truck I considered how refreshing it had been to see three teenage siblings spending so much time together exploring their own wilderness. I promised myself I'd never again generalize about "kids these days." 🐾

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THE EASTERN MOLE (*Scalopus aquaticus*)

This burrowing mammal's scientific first name, *Scalopus*, stems from two Greek words for digging and foot—skalops and pous. The Latin word, *aquaticus*, is for "of the water," a misnomer for a critter that dwells below ground. The odd name stems from the first collected specimen, found dead in the water, that was used to generate the scientific name. And the webbed foot suggested it was a swimmer. The common name, mole, is from the Middle English molle and mold-warpe, which means earth-thrower.

SUBWAY SMORGASBORD

Often mislabeled a rodent, moles are insectivores. A voracious feeder and energy burner, moles eat 25 to 100 percent of their weight in food daily (That's like a 175-pound human eating 35 to 175 pound of food). It noshes on earthworms, insects and larvae and destructive cutworms and Japanese beetles. Moles are least active overnight when nightcrawlers are above the surface.

WINTER IS COMING

Come winter, eastern moles do not hibernate and actively tunnel deeper beneath the frost line in search of hibernating earthworms and larvae.

BIOLOGY FOR DIGGING

Moles can tunnel up to 18 feet per hour, a task made easy with oversized, clawed, webbed hands. Strong digging muscles are anchored onto large bones in the front limbs and breast. When surface tunneling, a mole rotates 45 degrees to the right if the left foot is forward, then thrusts upward rapidly. At the same time, the opposite foot, braced against the burrow, extends to create more power, forcing dirt upward to create the surface ridge. To aid tunnel travel, its short fur lies flat against the body when rubbed forwards or backwards to aid movement back and forth underground. It can also do a slow, tight somersault to turn around in the cramped tunnels.

TWO BURROW TYPES

Deep, permanent burrows are used for nesting and to travel to feeding tunnels just under the surface. When digging deep burrows, soil is pushed up a vertical shaft to make a molehill. Burrows and tunnels help turn and aerate soil. Because they eat so much, moles need a lot of territory. A male feeds across nearly 3 acres of land.

BAD EYES, NO PROBLEM

Tiny eyes are hidden under the skin, only able to discern light from darkness. Like the eyes, the ears are covered by skin, and used to detect vibrations. Lacking sight, the excellent touch and smell senses of the long, fleshy, moveable snout help find prey. The short, sensitive tail guides the mole as it moves backwards.

MAMA MOLE

Moles breed by early April and about 40 days later, give birth to 2 to 5 young. The young nurse for a month in the deep burrow nest, then share the family tunnels until they can forage solo and start their own tunnels.



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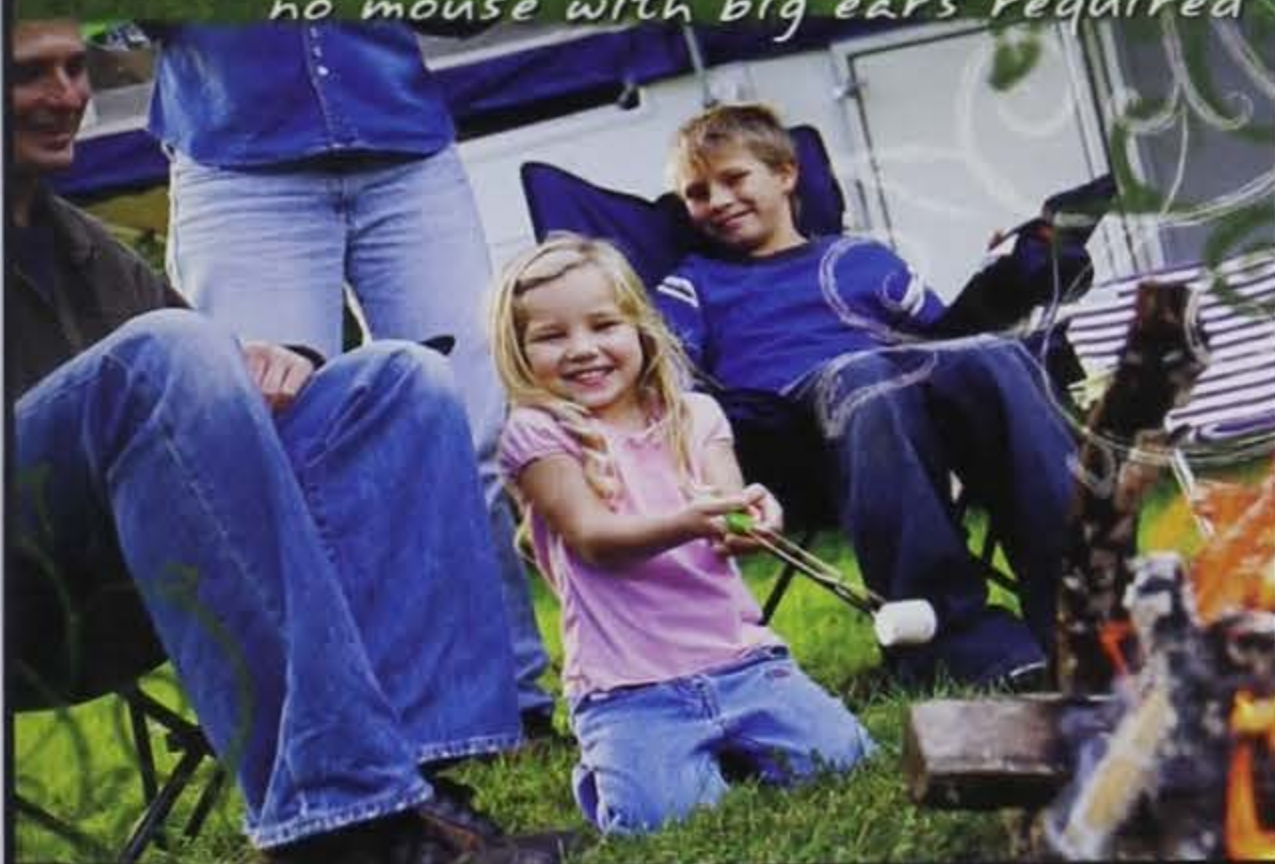
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