

MAY / JUNE 2012

# IOWA OUTDOORS

THE DNR'S MAGAZINE OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION



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# IOWA OUTDOORS

MAY / JUNE 2012 • VOLUME 71 • ISSUE 3

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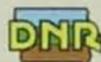
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## Contributors



**JAMES BARNHART** has spent his life exploring the outdoors. He has a bachelor's degree in fisheries and wildlife biology, a minor in entomology and a master's in business administration from Iowa State University. He developed a passion for macro photography 12 years ago and one of his favorite pastimes is getting up at first light and walking through any overgrown field or natural area to photograph small creatures he happens to find. When not exploring with his camera, he can be found wading the shores of Iowa lakes and streams indulging in his other passion—flyfishing. He lives and works in Des Moines.



**KIP LADAGE** is an outdoor photographer and writer living in Tripoli. Look for him paddling Sweet Marsh or the Wapsipinicon River, or exploring the many other wildlife haunts of Bremer County. His work has been published around the world in books, magazines and in reference materials. To view more of his images, search "Kip Ladage" on the Internet.



**SANDY FLAHIVE** is a Des Moines writer who likes getting in her Jeep and meandering around Iowa, discovering the hidden gems that lay in its many nooks and crannies. She also enjoys spending time at her remote cabin near Stephens State Forest in southern Iowa.

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STORY AND PHOTOS BY KIP LADAGE

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BY KAREN GRIMES PHOTOS BY DON POGGENSEE

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BY MINDY KRALICEK PHOTOS BY MINDY KRALICEK, CLAY SMITH AND DIANE MICHAUD LOWRY

#### ABOUT THIS PHOTO

Anderson Prairie State Preserve may be the most vibrant and diverse land in Emmet County. Biologists have documented more than 220 plant species, 27 different birds, 22 mammals, five amphibians and reptiles and five rare butterflies. Follow along with author Sandy Flahive and photographer Clay Smith as they document a day on the prairie in Emmet County.

#### ABOUT THE COVER

From kids to retirees, thrill-seekers come from hundreds of miles away to soar above the tree tops at the YMCA Union Park Camp near Dubuque where seven zip lines snake their way through wooded gorges. Strap in to kick it up a notch for a wild time outdoors.



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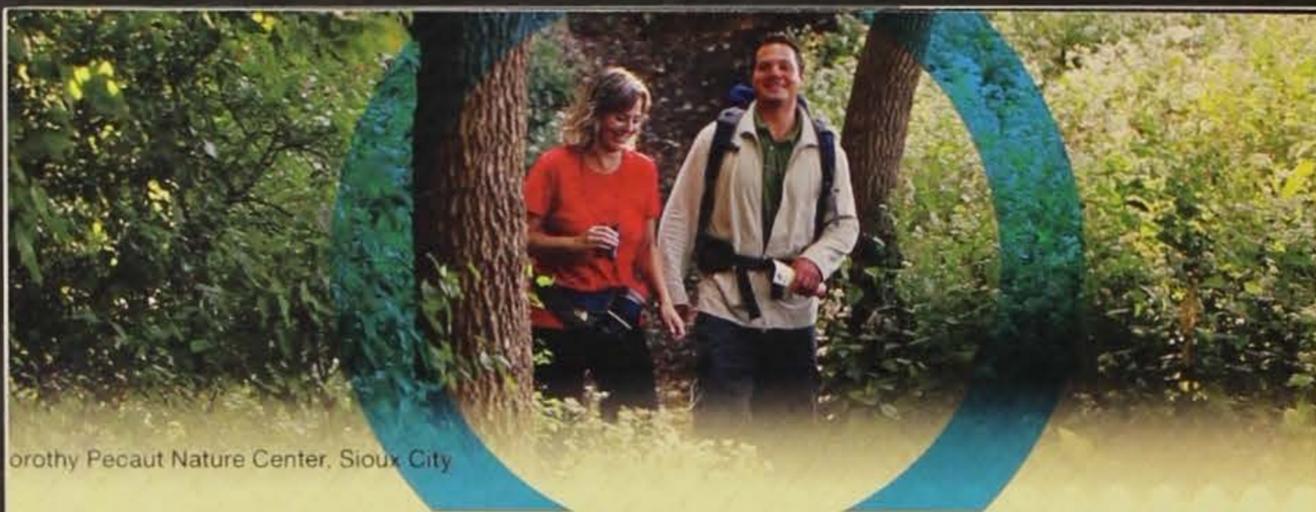


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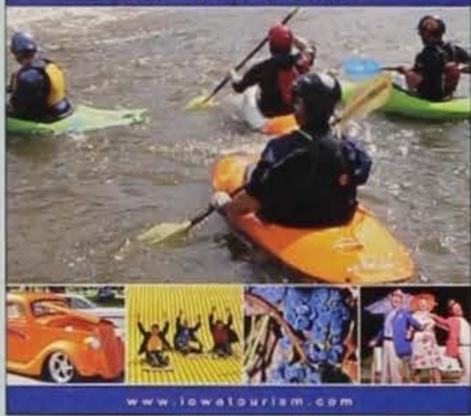
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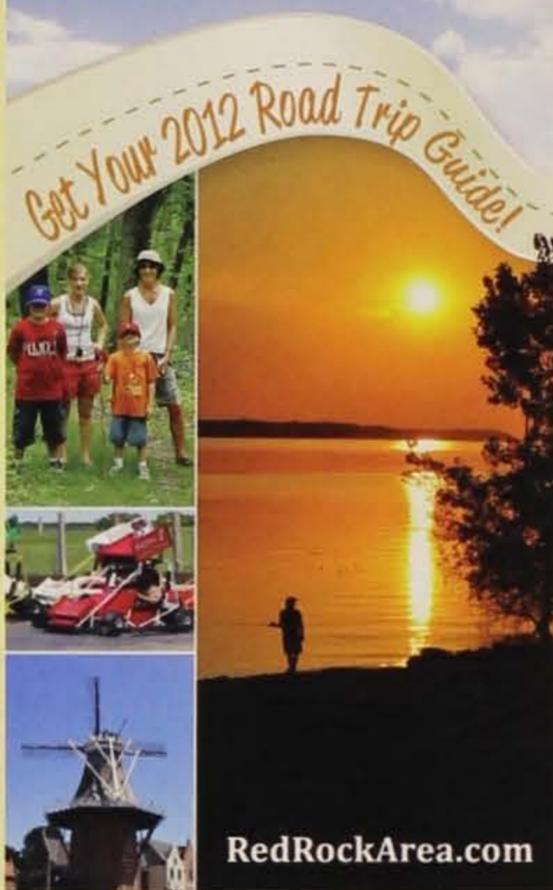
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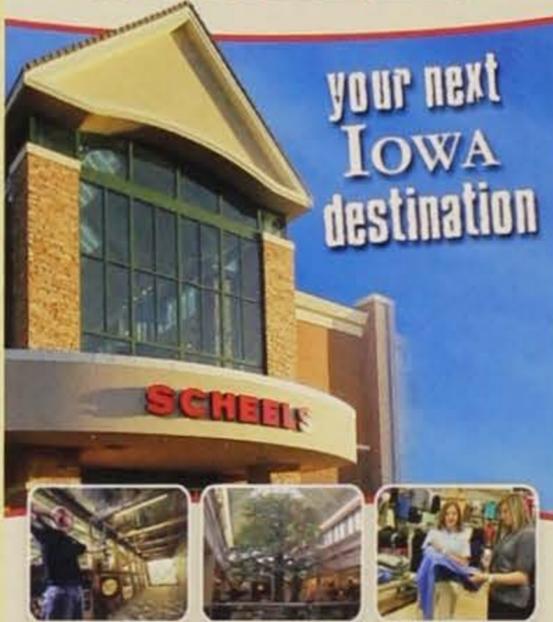


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Precision hand-crafted in solid sterling silver, this bold ring is loaded with features and dramatic styling. The centerpiece of the design is a sculpted classic Farmall tractor standing out against a field of black enamel and encircled by the familiar Farmall red. Surrounding the tractor are the raised words FARMALL PRIDE. On either side is the Farmall International Harvester logo in silver, and red and black enamel. And for a distinctive finishing touch, the ring is engraved inside with “A FARMING TRADITION SINCE 1923”.

### A Remarkable Value

The “Farmall Pride” Ring is a distinctive men’s jewelry design that will never go out of style. Individually made to order in men’s whole and half sizes from 8 to 15, it makes a wonderful addition to any man’s jewelry wardrobe... or a great gift.

Each hand-crafted ring comes complete with a Certificate of Authenticity and custom presentation case with gift box. It’s a superb value as well at just \$119\*, payable in 3 convenient monthly installments of \$39.67. To reserve yours, send no money; just send in your Reservation Application. But hurry... this is a limited-time offer!



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*Hand-crafted in Solid Sterling Silver*

*Dramatically styled with a sculpted Farmall tractor and the words FARMALL PRIDE*

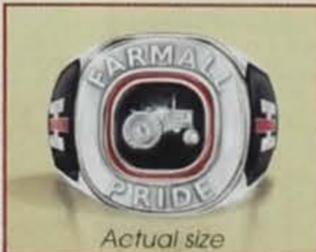
*Engraved inside with “A FARMING TRADITION SINCE 1923”*

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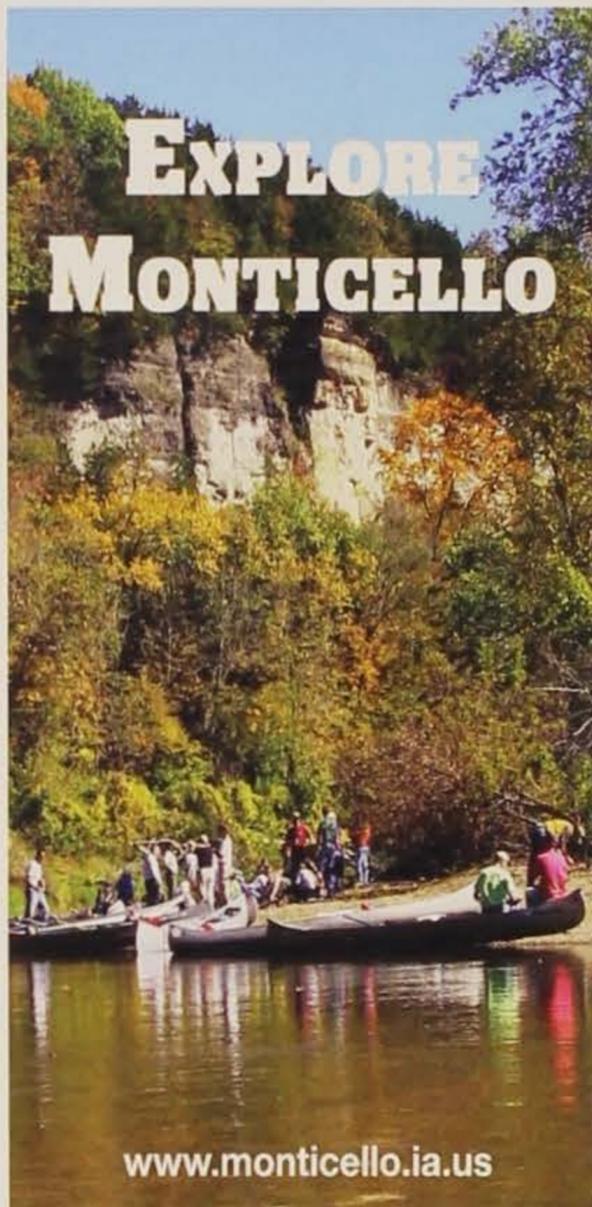
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Name (Please Print Clearly)

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ACTIVITIES, TIPS AND EVENTS FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

# Channel Your Inner Flying Squirrel

## Make Family Memories Ziplining through Wooded Gorges near Dubuque



Dubuque already bursts with outdoor activities, but now you can add flying through the forest above deer, coyotes and wild turkeys. Experience the rush of whizzing past mature trees; relish freedom while zipping over valleys and 80 foot hillsides. It's an airborne hootenanny that attracts people from 350 miles away.

This family-oriented pursuit packs a thrill factor at the YMCA Union Park Camp on the north edge of Dubuque. Two capable guides assist with gearing riders in harnesses and help with every takeoff and landing. They also serve as naturalists to interpret wildlife, tracks, plants and old lead mines.

"When parents come with kids, they enjoy seeing their kids have fun while doing it too," says Kevin Hougham, the course manager for Sky Tours, which is owned by the non-profit YMCA. They've hosted 72-year-olds and school groups plus a reunion with kids, parents and grandparents riding together.

"The lure of the zipline brings people outdoors. We turned it into a teaching moment," he says, noting the hike to reach the ziplines ventures through rock outcrops and dense woods that garnered unforeseen benefits—many simply stop hiking to absorb the views. "They say, 'I've never been in the woods before.' To our surprise, the hikes are among the most popular features."

### Going Airborne for Freedom

"It is more of a flying sensation than a pin-your-ears-back rollercoaster," says Hougham. The professionally designed and constructed course gets patrons started gradually, first by stepping into climbing harnesses and hooking onto the lines. The first two of seven runs

help riders get comfortable with ground-based takeoffs and landings. "You go over a 45-foot valley and then the ground gradually meets you. It's not too fast, but spirited. There is a sense of freedom. Your legs and arms are dangling and you are flying through the air."

Run three takes off from the ground and ends on a 45-foot tower in the forest. Run four is a "leap of faith—the tipping point for people with height concerns," he says. But with confidence built from three completed runs, riders step off the tower and upon landing look for a Cooper's hawk nest above.

Line five hugs the terrain for 450 feet. "Going so close to the ground makes it feel faster," says Hougham. After a short hike that gains 70 feet, the next run, "The Duel," features two lines set 10 feet apart. Hanging 65 feet in the air, two people zip over an 800-foot run.

### SEASON

April through November. Ask about full moon and fall color tours.

### RESERVATIONS

Highly recommended. **563-484-4248** or [skytourszipline.com](http://skytourszipline.com)

### REQUIREMENTS

All gear provided. Ages 10 and up. Weight limits: 70 to 270 pounds. Dress for conditions. Shorts allowed, but no open toe footwear. Must have ability to climb three flights of stairs and some mobility.

### COST

Iowans **\$65**, non-residents **\$75**. Takes about two hours.

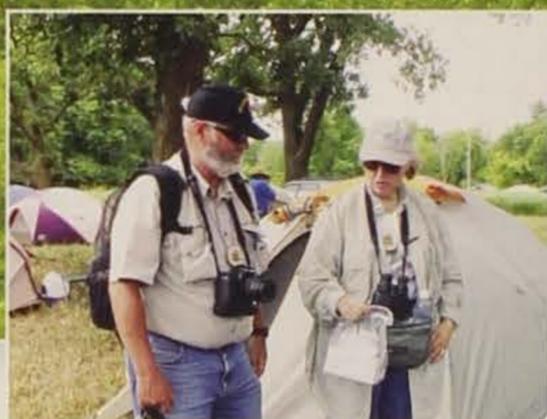
### NEARBY CAMPING

Camping available at Swiss Valley County Park, Mud Lake or Miller River Park. Visit [skytourszipline.com](http://skytourszipline.com) for links to camping details.

# Together

## Take a Magical Excursion into Loess Hills Prairie

BY KAREN GRIMES PHOTOS BY CLAY SMITH



Smoke drifts slowly upward in the small valley surrounded by hills, hefty bluffs left behind by the winds. This is the Loess Hills of western Iowa, sacred to Native Americans who trod these paths and camped in these valleys.

Children play. Adults converse. The sharp tang of wood smoke mixes with the sweet scent of dried grasses. Insects and tree frogs hum. The crowd quiets as dusk pulls a cloak across the sun. Jerome Kills Small beats a drum. The crowd stirs and quiets. Kills Small tells Oglala Lakota stories of star imagery, ceremonial symbols and later, Iktomi, the trickster. The drum beats. Soon adults and children shuffle into a circular dance, singing and dancing in the bewitching firelight. "Ayah, ayah, yah, yah."

Just 100 feet away, people cluster around campground tents talking quietly, watching smoke, feeling the drumbeat, mesmerized by the dance silhouetted against the campfire. The

drum beats. Whip-poor-wills call, crying out its name, but invisible in the dark. Stars gleam brightly overhead with nary a streetlight to compete with them.

It could be 1712 or 1812, but cars, nylon tents, flashlights and portable toilets defy that timeframe. It's the 21st century. June.

For centuries, Native Americans, fur trappers and settlers walked these hills. For 35 years, people have gathered east of Onawa in Monona County to celebrate the unique wilderness experience offered by the hills. For two nights and two days, they play, learn and discern. They experience the distinctive features of the soils that provide exceptional habitats—not just for ordinary rabbit, deer, pheasant, coyote and raccoon—but for extraordinary species like the eastern yellowbelly racer snake and the regal fritillary butterfly that is limited to prairie because its caterpillars eat only a few types of violets.

Many Loess Hills Prairie Seminar

participants have been here before. Some have rarely missed a session in 35 years. But newcomers are welcome. There is something for everyone to do. Days are packed with activities for children of all ages. This seminar is family-friendly.

Children to teens can learn about reptiles and amphibians—even touch live animals. Or, they can make and decorate their own kite, then take it up a hill to fly. A simple nature walk becomes an exploration as children look for nature's treasures, play games and hear stories.

Choices are practically limitless for those ages 7 and up. They're geared for all fitness and activity levels, too, from in-camp to lengthy hikes, an auto tour or a short walk—all designed to help people connect with area wildness.

So, take off on an extensive hike with Drake University Professor Thomas Rosburg to learn about prairie flora. Or learn to predict

The Loess Hills are one of Iowa's most distinctive landforms, formed by glacial "dust" left behind by westerly winds following the last Ice Age. The only other comparable deposit of loess anywhere occurs in Shaanxi, China. Discover firsthand their unique history and diverse ecosystem at the 36th Loess Hills Prairie Seminar.

Learn more about the 36th Loess Hills Prairie Seminar, June 1 to 3, at [www.nwaea.k12.ia.us/en/programs\\_and\\_services/loess\\_hills\\_prairie\\_seminar/](http://www.nwaea.k12.ia.us/en/programs_and_services/loess_hills_prairie_seminar/). Or contact Gloria Kistner at **800-352-9040 ext 6080** or **712-222-6080** or [gkistner@nwaea.org](mailto:gkistner@nwaea.org)



weather by reading clouds in a session led by Inger Lamb of the Iowa Prairie Network. Maybe an auto tour with a short walk to find birds or get details on the Nevada buckmoth.

On her fifth or sixth year at the seminar, Pat Hansen from Clear Lake asks, "Where else can you take a hike and learn about liverwort, lichens and mosses? It's just a wonderful experience and you meet such interesting people—people who bring their bug zoos or snakes to share."

Hansen sat at a picnic table four years ago, binoculars in hand, looking for the well-camouflaged whip-poor-will. "Are you a birder?" asked a 14-year-old boy walking past. "I've heard three different vireos this morning and haven't seen them. Do you want to go birding?" The same young man now leads morning bird hikes.

Not sure what to take? For early risers, there's a 6 a.m. bird walk Saturday and Sunday mornings. Try

prairie photography with expert Don Poggensee from Ida Grove. Learn why a Mora knife is the one tool you have to have in a bushcraft session led by Chris Anderson of the Black Hawk County Conservation Board. Take a short walk and capture the mood and the moment in a poem you write.

You choose the pace and which of 50 field sessions to attend. Camp free for the weekend, with chemical toilets and hand sanitizers available, but no running water. Or, you hook up at a nearby commercial campground or pamper yourself with a motel room. Choose catered meals at a reasonable price, culminating in a grass-fed beef banquet on Saturday night. The evening concludes with silent auction bidders and vendors at the high school, followed by a few campfire songs or a star party back in the hills.

Sponsored by the Northwest Area Education Agency, the seminar is a living memorial to founder and

environmental educator Carolyn Frerichs Benne. Its avowed purpose is to train K-12 educators in conservation and environmental and science education. Students, park and conservation professionals, community leaders and citizens are welcome. Educators can pre-register for credit with the Northwest Area Education Agency.

Whatever you do, bring sunscreen and insect repellent, a hat, layered clothing and water. Sunglasses, a small camp chair or towel for seating, binoculars and cameras are useful.

As you leave the enchanted valley, remember the words of Iowa naturalist Sylvan Runkel, who taught at the seminar for 16 years. "Getting people—getting children—acquainted with what's out here will make people concerned about what's happening here. If we get acquainted with natural communities we feel at home. Any place we feel at home, we feel like protecting."

# Together



I have always enjoyed a good quote, and when it comes to weighty issues, Oliver Wendell Holmes really adds clout to any position. So let me share one from Mr. Holmes: "Man's mind, stretched by a new idea, never goes back to its original dimensions."

I find it appropriate because I'd like to introduce a new idea to your stretching routine. Let me qualify. Getting information on stretching from me is like hearing a sobriety lecture from W. C. Fields. Stretching isn't one of my strong suits, but I can provide first-hand accounts of the risks in avoiding it. A great deal of pain and injury can be avoided by stretching pre- and post-exercise. In fact, stretching alone can be of value even without any exercise.

Let me demonstrate. Stand up and hold your thumb straight out in front of your face. Then twist your body without stressing any muscles and see how far around you can rotate without moving your feet. On a good day I can get above 180 degrees. Now do some rudimentary stretches...roll your shoulders...reach around one side and pull gently on a door knob or other fixed object...repeat on the other side... gently twist back and forth. Now measure your unstressed rotation again. I often can add 10 to 40 degrees of flexibility to my range of motion after stretching.

Most Americans exist in an environment not ergonomically designed to accommodate their body and do so with a body that isn't operating at maximum capacity. In the past I have encouraged activities to address both strength and cardiovascular health...maximum capacity should include flexibility as well. But even if strength and stamina are not your strong suit, there is value in flexibility. The value lies in both reducing falls and in the event of a fall, the possible injuries.

## Here are some tips endorsed by the Mayo Clinic:

- 1) Warm up first. Research hints that not stretching before strenuous activity may decrease performance. Whatever you do...don't stretch "cold" muscles...warm them up first with a brief walk or short run.
- 2) Go big...that is, focus on the major muscles groups like your calves, shoulders, back—especially those muscles used in work or play.
- 3) Don't bounce...ever. Here, the key word is gentle. If there is tension, back off. As the Mayo site says, don't aim for pain.
- 4) Be persistent. Make this, just like activity and good nutrition, part of your routine.
- 5) A win-win would be adding both movement and stretching, like tai chi, for example.

Perhaps as Iowa becomes the healthiest state in the Union, we will see hundreds of citizens gathering in Iowa parks at 7 a.m. every morning to gracefully perform such routines. View recommended stretches at [www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/growingstronger/exercises/cooldown.html](http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/growingstronger/exercises/cooldown.html).

TIM LANE is a nationally recognized authority on public health and physical activity. In 2010, he and his buddies rode bicycles across Iowa, river to river, in 21 straight hours.

## 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.

EMILY, AGE 7, IN WOODBURY COUNTY ASKS:

## Where do our recyclables go?

For most children recycling is second nature. At school and home they learn to place clean recyclables into the recycling bin. In addition to protecting and enhancing our natural resources, recycling provides an exceptional educational opportunity for parents to help children understand what happens beyond the bin.

First, explain where recyclables go. Tell your child that in most communities items are collected at the curb or a community drop box by a truck. The truck hauls items to a materials recovery facility (MRF). Once unloaded, they are sorted by material type using people power and specialized machines. Once sorted, the glass, cardboard, metals, paper and plastics are sold to manufacturers who use the materials to make new products, including food and beverage containers, paper products and plastic furniture. Pop and water bottles can be spun into fiber to create clothing and carpeting. Log on with your child to watch a video about MRF recycled materials at [www.recyclebank.com/live-green/the-cycle/](http://www.recyclebank.com/live-green/the-cycle/).

If you live in Ames, explain that materials are processed differently by a process called Waste-to-Energy, which burns trash to create electricity. Trash is an energy-rich fuel. Burning trash works a lot like burning coal for energy, but trash does not have to be mined and therefore does not deplete our natural resources. In Ames, trash and recycling (with the exception of glass) are collected together for use at the Resource Recovery Facility. The Ames Resource Recovery Facility is the only public Waste-to-Energy facility in the state and was the first in the nation. Once the material is unloaded at the facility, some metals are removed for recycling and the remainder is burned to produce electricity for nearby homes and businesses. Take an online tour at [www.cityofames.org/index.aspx?page=168](http://www.cityofames.org/index.aspx?page=168).

## A cold spell dismisses GLOBAL WARMING

We've all heard it exclaimed on an unseasonably cold summer day or during a winter blizzard, when someone concludes, "So much for global warming." Or, when someone exclaims during a warm winter day or scorching summer afternoon, "Wow, it must be global warming." In both instances, people are confusing or misusing the different concepts of weather and climate.

The main difference between climate and weather is time. **CLIMATE** describes long-term weather in a particular area. Climate averages the atmosphere's behavior over long periods of time (generally 30 years at minimum). It describes an area's average and extreme weather conditions and how those conditions vary over long time periods, looking at temperature and precipitation averages and extremes. **WEATHER**, on the other hand, describes how the atmosphere is behaving minute-by-minute to days at a specific location. Further, when discussing global climate, these are long-term

climate trends across the planet, so what happens at any one moment at one locality is a very small data reference when averaged to other locations worldwide over time.

In Iowa, we are fully aware that weather can change hourly, and unusual events, such as a snowstorm in April or cooler temperatures in August, do occur. When these unusual weather events happen, some are less inclined to believe that global warming (the increase of the Earth's average surface temperature) exists because they are merely looking at one weather event as opposed to long-term climate data.

It is extremely important to monitor climate data and to remediate how we interact with our natural environment. Catastrophic consequences could result if the Earth's average surface temperature continues to rise. These consequences include extinction of many plant and animal species, more severe and erratic weather, heavy precipitation events, widespread wildfires, rising sea levels and melting glaciers. All of these events have impacts on the land and oceans that sustain life.

## Ask The Expert

Dave in Cedar Falls asks:

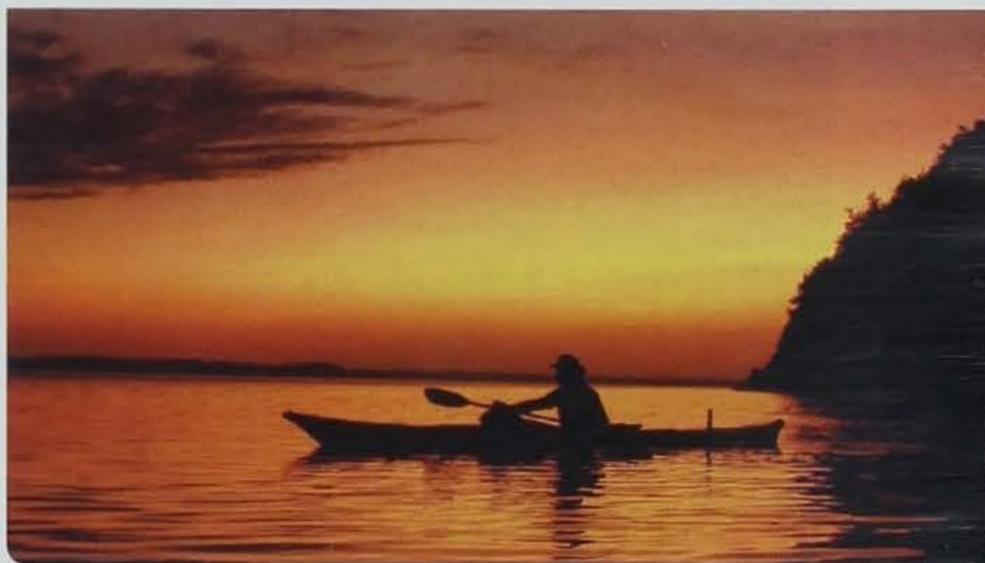
What is **civil twilight** and how is it useful?

Whether you're an early bird or a night owl, the term civil twilight is one of particular importance. In simple terms, civil twilight is the time before the sun rises and after the sun sets in which light is still available. Officially, it's an astronomical term that according to the United States Naval Observatory, begins in the morning and ends in the evening when the center of the sun is geometrically 6 degrees below the horizon. During civil twilight, natural illumination is sufficient to begin or continue activities such as canoeing, kayaking, boating, fishing, gardening and other Iowa outdoor daytime interests.

When sources give times for sunrise and sunset, they refer to times

when the upper disk of the sun is below the horizon. These times do not reflect the amount of time in which adequate light is available to participate in outdoor pursuits that require illumination.

When planning outdoor activities, because of safety issues, it is not advised to merely guess how much light is available before sunrise and after sunset, but to use accurate resources. An estimation error could put you up a creek without a light source and in other precarious and unsafe situations.



You can find several online sources to assist in determining the exact time that civil twilight begins and ends, including The United States Naval Observatory's website at [www.usno.navy.mil/USNO/astronomical-applications/data-services/rs-one-year-us](http://www.usno.navy.mil/USNO/astronomical-applications/data-services/rs-one-year-us). The site is useful when traveling great distances to the north or south where the duration of daylight hours vary greatly by latitude.

# Great Escapes

BY ERIN KENNEY

## PLAY OUTDOORS IN POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY

**M**ake this summer unforgettable for your family without emptying your bank account—take advantage of some of western Iowa's most scenic and diverse parks. With only a \$2 entrance fee per vehicle, per day, it's a bargain for any family.

Whether camped out on shore or huddled in a boat, you won't want to miss your child's excitement after that first big catch at Arrowhead Park in Neola. Families can float around the 17-acre fishing lake trying their luck at bluegill, bass and catfish. Visit during the Annual Fishing Derby on June 2 when no license is required for Iowa residents. Also, help celebrate Arrowhead's 50th anniversary July 13 to 15 with movies in the park and outdoor family programs.

Sleep under a blanket of stars with only the sounds of crickets and owls to keep you company. Take your

family on an adventure through the Loess Hills at one of the backpack campsites at Hitchcock Nature Center in Honey Creek. Pack up for the night and hike through woodlands, valley and prairie to get to your campsite just off the trail. There, you can gather wood for the fire pit and enjoy a quiet evening in nature.

Grab an oar and take a river journey down the Nishnabotna. You won't find rapids here, just a calm float down the river. Keep an eye out for wildlife and stop at a sandbar to enjoy a picnic or search for unique rocks and fossils. Start your voyage at Botna Bend in Hancock and make sure to peek in on the bison and elk grazing in the park's pastures.

For more information on all Pottawattamie County Conservation parks and activities, log onto [www.pottcoconservation.com](http://www.pottcoconservation.com) or call (712) 328-5638



### What can your family do with **\$2**?



(\$2 entrance fee per car, per day, at all PCCB Parks)

Explore **1,900** acres of scenic Western Iowa

Hike **20** miles through prairie and woodlands

Fish at **5** spots for the catch of the day

Get on the water at **4** boat ramps

Enjoy **countless** smiles during your nature adventures!



**Pottawattamie County Conservation**

start making your affordable memories, log onto [www.pottcoconservation.com](http://www.pottcoconservation.com)

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

## Turn Around, Don't Drown

According to the National Weather Service, more than half of persons killed in floods died in vehicles. Don't make a poor decision to drive across a flooded road because the vehicle in front made it safely or the water doesn't appear deep. Depths are deceiving and road surfaces could be washed out. **It takes only 18 inches of water to lift a car or SUV.** Once buoyant, water easily pushes vehicles sideways, often causing rollovers that trap victims inside and washes them downstream. Never drive through water-covered roads. It could cost you your life.



### Hat Trick

Ensure children's bike helmets fit snugly by choosing appropriate-sized helmets. Wearing a baseball hat underneath helps with fit and provides sun protection.

### Tenting Tip

When disassembling a tent, first separate shockcorded poles in the middle, rather than starting at the end of the pole. This eases tension on the internal cord.



### Avoid A Concussion

Bike helmets work best when fitted correctly. To test, put on the helmet and buckle it, then widely open your mouth. The helmet should pull down on the head. If not, tighten the chin strap. If the helmet rocks backwards more than two fingers above the eyebrows, unbuckle and shorten the front strap by moving the slider forward. If the helmet rocks forward toward your eyes, tighten the back strap by moving the slider back toward the ear. Buckle, retighten the chin strap and test again.

# Lost In Iowa

BY SANDY FLAHIVE PHOTOS BY CLAY SMITH

DNR botanist and ecologist John Pearson documents one of more than 220 prairie plant species found at Anderson Prairie State Preserve in Emmet County. Later, he leads a throng of eager students, educators and prairie enthusiasts on a tour of the preserve.



# A PIECE OF THE PAST

*Emmet County may not have the flashy nature credentials of, say, neighboring Dickinson County and the Iowa Great Lakes. But if you overlook this gem, you're missing some of the best scenic landscapes and recreational opportunities in Iowa.*

**WRAPPED IN A BILLOWING REDDISH-BROWN BUBBLE OF DUST**, a gussied-up Ford F-250 barrels over the crest of a small hill on county road 360 in Emmet County and noisily jets past the inconspicuous entrance to Anderson Prairie State Preserve.

Absorbed in the cosmos of the preserve, which lies within several yards of the road, John Pearson, a botanist and ecologist extraordinaire for the DNR, is oblivious to the rumbling pickup and the blaring Kenny Chesney tune spilling from its cranked-open windows:

*"Ain't nothing out here but me, the road, and the radio. Mmmm-mmm-mmm. The road and the radio. The road and the radio"*

"Butterfly milkweed," states the impervious Pearson, gingerly handling the common prairie plant as if it were the rarest of specimens. "*Asclepias tuberosa*," he instinctively adds, identifying it by its Latin name.

Meanwhile, the Chesney fan rambles on his merry way, no doubt one of countless daily passersby who mistakenly believe that along this stretch of road there really is nothing of note.

If only they knew what Pearson and other prairie experts know. Anderson Prairie State Preserve is likely the most vibrant, teeming-with-life bit of land in Emmet County. Although it may not have the notoriety of its flashy next-door neighbor, Dickinson County, with its proud offering of the Iowa Great Lakes, Emmet County holds its own with scenic landscapes, natural wonders and recreational opportunities.

"Don't overlook us," warns Eric Anderson, the county conservation board director. "We'll surprise the heck out of you," he promises, good-naturedly.

He's not kidding. This inviting area of northwest Iowa beckons longtime residents and visitors alike to enjoy quietly charming state parks; relaxing kayaking, canoeing and fishing experiences on the West Fork of the Des Moines River;

multiple lakes; and easily accessible wildlife, nature and camping areas.

Add to that some of the best—by far—birdwatching sites in the state, top it all off with Anderson Preserve, and Emmet County proves to be a welcome destination for anyone seeking a variety of outdoor activities. Or perhaps, merely a respite from the commotion and razzle-dazzle of its popular neighbor.



## A show of its own

Anderson Preserve, located near the western edge of the Des Moines Lobe landform region (the area occupied by the last advance of glacial ice into the state a mere 12,500 to 15,000 years ago), features a hummocky, rumbled landscape that marks the accumulation of debris left by the melting Altamont glacier.

It is out of this unattractive-sounding topography that the preserve evolved—its scenic beauty (panoramic views), diverse wildlife habitat (dry, gravelly hilltops to wet swales and marshes) and thriving botanical

# Lost In Iowa

Sunflower



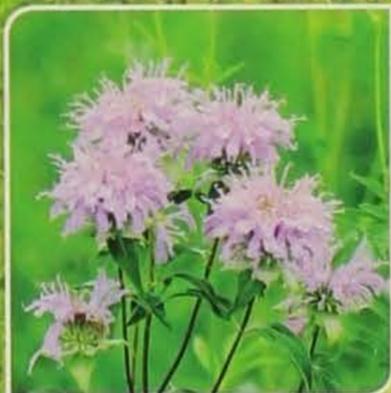
Butterfly milkweed



Purple prairie clover



Horsemint



Mountain mint

Prairie coreopsis



**WILD FLOWER SEED COLLECTING:** Students, educators and prairie enthusiasts fan out across the nearly 900-acre Anderson Prairie in Emmet County, collecting prairie flower seeds for use in future prairie restoration projects.

New Jersey tea



Canada anemone



White sage



Milkweed



Culver's root

# Lost In Iowa



**THIS PAGE:** Last year's Iowa Prairie Conference at Anderson Prairie attracted 60 attendees from all walks of life with varying reasons to be there. Participants came from across the state, and as far away as Chicago and St. Louis. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Fort Defiance State Park near Estherville offers limited non-modern camping. An inconspicuous sign to Anderson Prairie gives little indication to the natural diversity that lies beyond. High Lake, a 467-acre natural lake, provides opportunities for pike, walleyes, crappies and perch. **CENTER:** The West Fork of the Des Moines River is navigable by boat, but best floated by canoe or kayak.



communities (more than 220 plant species)—making it no slouch at putting on a spectacular show of its own.

Its performance is especially stunning on a breezy, white-hot July day when 60 attendees of the Iowa Prairie Conference gather midst its rippling waves of goldenrod, purple prairie blazing star and pale-yellow oxeye, not to mention the sweetest flower of all, the wild rose, and that least-loved, pernicious prairie invader, brome grass.

With Pearson, DNR biologists Bryan Hellyer and Bill Johnson, State Preserves Board Chair Deb Lewis and University of Northern Iowa Tallgrass Prairie Center Director Daryl Smith lead discussions and field questions under a summer sun arcing high in the cloudless sky. Nearby, scores of prairie enthusiasts roam through chin-high foliage in their study of the preserve. The bandana-wearing, camera-toting participants come from near and far, from all walks of life and for a variety of reasons.

"I do excavation and restoration work," says Carter Johnson, a Coralville contractor. "I try to have the least negative impact on the landscape as possible and thought I might get some useful information from these folks."

High on a knoll, Pearson explains to a group of eight that the preserve is really two in one. "Much of this was once a heavily grazed pasture," he says, "and it's being restored, but the western 60 acres is natural

tallgrass prairie. As a result, we have to apply different management practices to the two areas."

As he elaborates, explaining prescribed burning processes, Christine Riley, who lives near Chicago and volunteers at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie in Joliet, Ill., nods in satisfaction. "This is the information I'm interested in," she says.

Many in the crowd fan out, clutching clear plastic baggies distributed by Johnson for the purpose of harvesting seeds from various species for reseeded. Among them are St. Louis residents Ann Easley and Bob Siemer. "I belong to the Iowa Prairie Network and schedule my vacations so I can attend events like this," Easley informs a fellow harvester.

After an afternoon with the experts, Andy Nelson and Scott Christensen, students in the highly-reputed Iowa Lakes Community College environmental studies program, can take back to their classroom the knowledge that Anderson Preserve hosts, in addition to "regular" butterflies, several rare butterflies (though Pearson laments, "Rare butterfly numbers are plummeting due, possibly, to a combination of habitat loss, climate change, pesticides and over-application of fire.") They also discover the preserve is home to "the standard array of mammals," voles, badgers and pocket gophers (the



Emmet County Nature Center



Emmet County Nature Center



earthen mounds created by these latter critters allow for lots of plant reproduction) and that, not surprisingly, grassland birds (bobolinks rock the preserve with their throaty voice) relish the prairie scene, as do upland sandpipers and short-eared owls. Lastly, the college sophomores can report that five amphibian and reptile species contentedly reside in the small ponds and depressions of the preserve.

"A lot has been achieved here in the last 10 years," affirms Pearson, surveying the prairie that has come back from near extinction. "Additional land is being added as it becomes available, and, importantly, many private landowners today are actively engaged in protecting our preserves and prairies. The future looks good."

### From preserve to park

Each Iowa State Park struts its own personality. At first brush with Fort Defiance State Park, the calm ambiance inspired by graceful woodland flowers, the unhurried flight of a scarlet tanager and the casual rambling of several white-tailed deer might easily lead a visitor into thinking, "Oh, this is a piece of cake. All I have to do here is choose one of the 16 campsites, kick back around a roaring fire and while away the hours."

"Don't necessarily count on that," laughs Tim Richey,

Gull Point State Park manager, who also oversees Fort Defiance. "This park can keep you plenty busy."

It is possible to ease in, however, with a non-exerting look-see at the impressive day-use lodge built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the style of the frontier army stockade for which the 221-acre park received its name.

A pause at the park's scenic overlook doesn't disappoint. The panoramic view shows rugged timbered ridges ascending from the winding shores of School Creek, which has created a valley nearly 200 feet deep before the creek's confluence with the West Fork of the Des Moines River.

At this point, it's easy to turn the action up a notch by grabbing a walking stick and hiking those rugged ridges all the way down to School Creek. Here you can switch into full gear by climbing aboard a canoe or kayak for a scenic journey on the meandering West Fork of the Des Moines River.

On one side of the river, in the cavity of a tree, the bold, multi-colored plumage of a wood duck is visible. On the other side, a great blue heron issues a harsh squawk as it lifts up and flies away on huge arched wings. Below the water's surface, abundant pools of catfish, walleye and bullhead wiggle about anxiously, awaiting the anglers' invitation to chomp down on the dangling bait.

# Lost In Iowa





Fort Defiance State Park is named for a stockade built in nearby Estherville in 1862 to protect settlers from attacks during the Sioux uprising. The current lodge was built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the style of the original frontier army outpost and is used primarily for social events.

# Lost In Iowa

Richey is right. If you're up for it, Fort Defiance State Park can keep you hopping. However, if you're bound and determined to capture a few totally laid-back hours of contentment, Okamanpedan State Park is just minutes away. And yes, that interesting-sounding name is of Native American origin and means "nesting place of the herons."

An historical pony truss bridge marks the entrance to this 15-acre haven that resides along and offers a spectacular view of 2,300-acre Tuttle Lake, sometimes referred to as Okamanpedan Lake. Picnic areas and two shelter houses, one built during the CCC era and fashioned after a trapper's cabin, are features of this miniscule state park. Even so, if ever there were a place to pursue the challenge of shoreline fishing for perch, pike and bullheads, Okamanpedan is it.

## Preserving the great outdoors

It's a jolt to be nonchalantly rolling through Emmet County's rich, green farm county, cruising past red-barn farms and cud-chewing cows and, without warning, shoot straight into a wildlife area. But then, what was that other comment Anderson, the county conservation head, made? "There is so much diversity of natural resources here." To which one might add, "And so many."

"We have 10 sites to manage," says county conservation naturalist Anita Fisher, whose office, along with that of Anderson, is in the handsome, multi-functional Emmet County Nature Center. "Our goal is to protect and preserve these areas so everyone can enjoy them for years to come."

No problem. The sites speak proudly for themselves, as proven by a couple of examples.

Wolden Recreation Area's 65 acres snuggles comfortably against 467-acre High Lake. One of its several trails leads into an intriguing wild setting of birds and brambles, but not to fret. Voices floating from the 90-unit campground filter through the trees and assure that civilization is within reach.

Sure, Ringham Habitat is blessed with 76 acres of timber, native prairie vegetation and trails, but what you really need to know is that it is a terrific archeological site. Those low-profile, circular mounds you're staring at? They were constructed by Native Americans close to 1,200 years ago.

Your hankering for "new" can be accommodated easily enough, too. Set beside 802-acre Iowa Lake, the state-owned, county-managed Iowa Lake Wildlife Area sports 16 acres of spanking new campground. Small and quiet, it features both restored wetlands and native prairie.

## Birding at its best

It's not hard to locate Birding Central in Iowa. Just head to Emmet County. In its wetland areas, great egrets migrate through and Canada geese nest. Pileated woodpeckers and eastern wood warblers inhabit the dense

deciduous woods of Fort Defiance State Park. The tall, waving grasses of Anderson Preserve cause bobolinks to sing in flight, while indigo buntings prefer the edge where grassland meets the oak and walnut trees along the river.

"This is the best place for birding in the state. Positively!" declares sprightly Belva Henrickson, a long-time Emmet County resident. "I should know. Dennis and I have been doing it for decades."

Dennis is Belva's husband. Binoculars to eyes, scopes in hand, insect repellent at the ready, the retired school teachers-turned-farmers have scanned their rolling pastures, scoured the rugged timberland and checked out miles of tree-lined lakeshores for a gander at as many different species as possible.

"Along the way, we've been introduced to a wondrous variety," muses Belva. "We're always thrilled to see an unusual bird but still enjoy the common folk of the bird world. Pelicans are my favorite," she announces, cutting to the chase.

A woodland bird-watching trek with the energetic couple is an educational and entertaining experience, a stop-and-go adventure punctuated by twin "shhhs!" as they pause dead in their tracks, uncannily simultaneously, at the clear double outburst of "chick-a-dee-dee-dee."

"Hear that pair of chickadees? They'll probably follow us," speculates Belva. Sure enough, they do.

So how does a novice approach birding? Are there rules? "No rules. Don't pay any attention to that nonsense," advises Belva, vigorously shaking her head.

"True," agrees Dennis, "but you might want to brush up on bird calls and learn to recognize tones. Obviously, patience is the main virtue when it comes to birding."

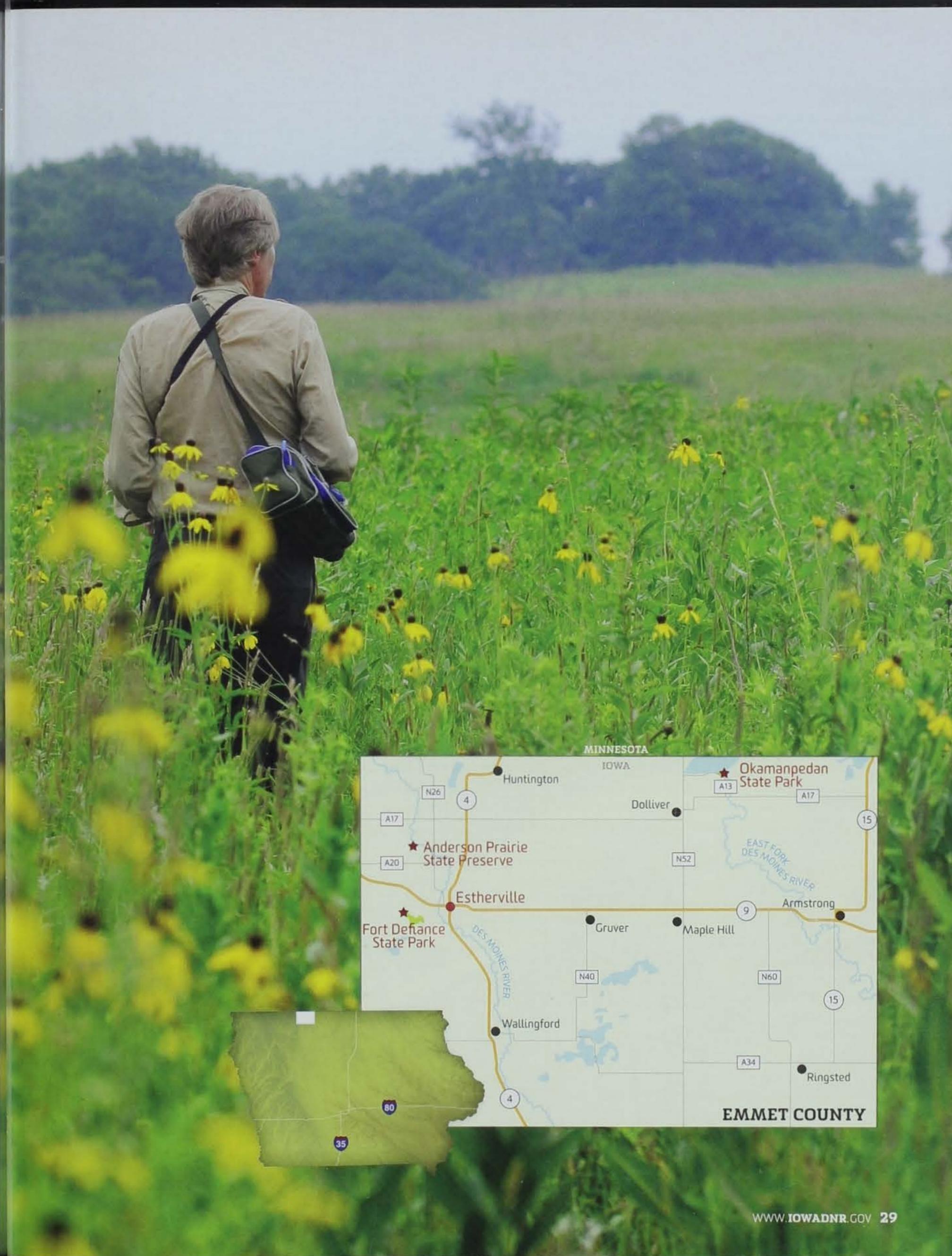
The Henricksons have practiced that virtue repeatedly through the years as they waited for the more elusive species to appear through their binocular lens.

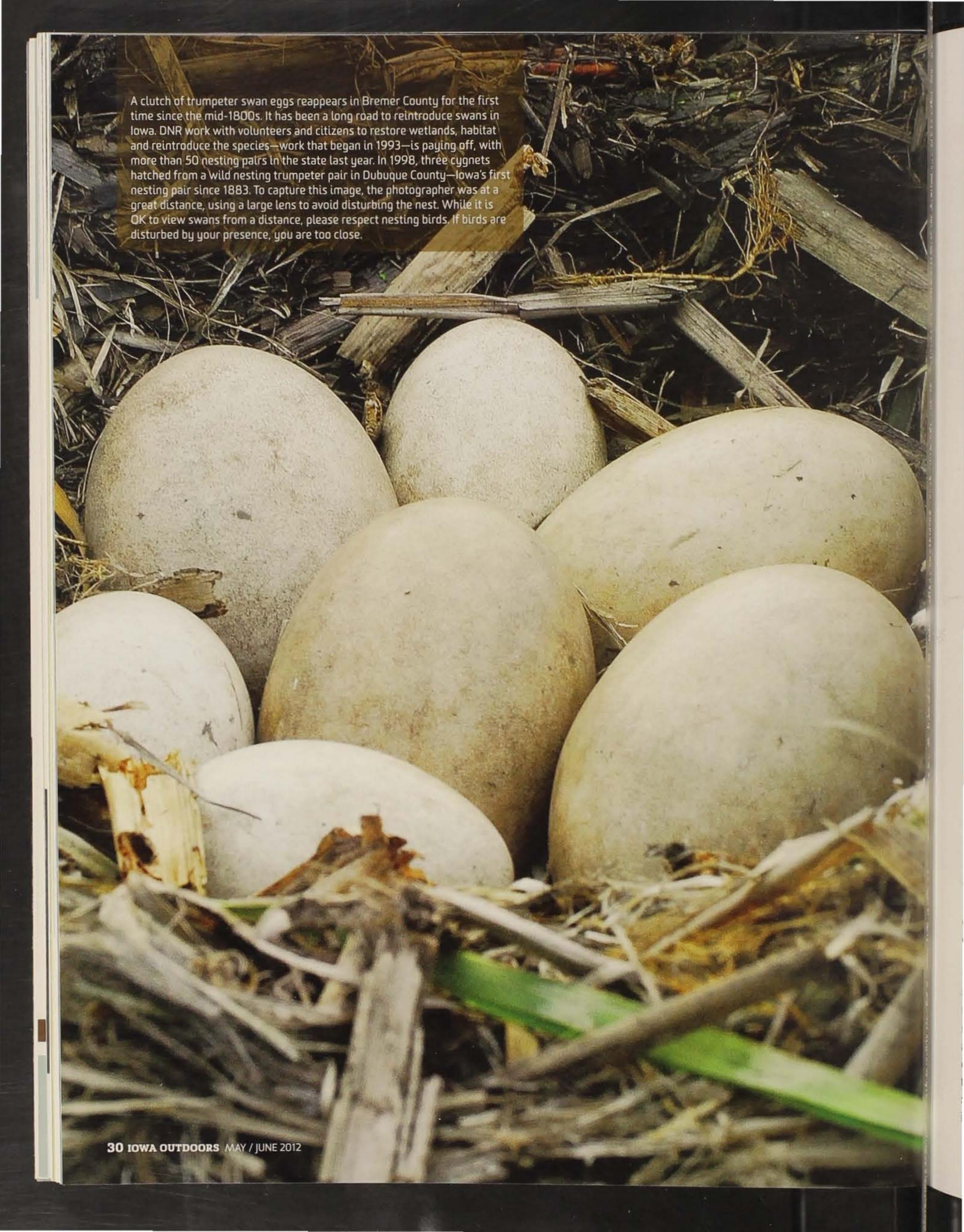
"Years ago we'd drive all the way to the Mississippi River to see a bald eagle, then wait for hours before spotting one. Now we have them right here," chuckles Belva.

"And I've waited ages to see an orchard oriole on our farm," throws in Dennis, "and this year one showed up at our bird feeder. I've also waited for scoter ducks to appear. In time they came around, too."

A story Belva enjoys telling is that after hunting for pileated woodpeckers in North Carolina and even Germany, they finally saw one. "Where?" she giggles. "Right over in Fort Defiance State Park."

With the scarlet and lavender sun showing signs of heading toward the horizon, the Henricksons head for their car. "This was the best time to be out bird-watching," proclaims Belva, as if anyone would question her good sense in doing so. "You never want to go out too early. Seven o'clock is perfect. A little after supper but before the birds' bedtime, when they're still out and about. They're just like Dennis and me. They like to tank up before going to bed." 🐼



A photograph of a nest containing several large, light-colored, oval-shaped eggs. The nest is constructed from a mix of dry, brownish twigs and sticks, some of which are arranged in a circular pattern around the eggs. The background is filled with more nesting material, including some green, blade-like vegetation in the lower right corner. The lighting is natural, highlighting the texture of the eggshells and the surrounding twigs.

A clutch of trumpeter swan eggs reappears in Bremer County for the first time since the mid-1800s. It has been a long road to reintroduce swans in Iowa. DNR work with volunteers and citizens to restore wetlands, habitat and reintroduce the species—work that began in 1993—is paying off, with more than 50 nesting pairs in the state last year. In 1998, three cygnets hatched from a wild nesting trumpeter pair in Dubuque County—Iowa's first nesting pair since 1883. To capture this image, the photographer was at a great distance, using a large lens to avoid disturbing the nest. While it is OK to view swans from a distance, please respect nesting birds. If birds are disturbed by your presence, you are too close.

# Trumpeter Swan SURPRISES

STORY AND PHOTOS BY KIP LADAGE



**A**fter many years watching and photographing wildlife, I had the good fortune last year to document the presence and successful nesting of a rare bird in Bremer County. Finding the adult birds was great. When the project expanded to include a nest and young birds, I was thrilled. Few people have such an experience. I am so thankful to have been at the right place at the right time. I'll do my best to explain this unexpected story.

Each spring I drive several hundred miles in search of migrating wildlife to enjoy and photograph. Nearly all of those miles are close to my home in Tripoli, about 25 miles north of Waterloo. With Sweet Marsh only a few miles from my home, most of my travels follow a route to the marsh and back, day after day. Sometimes I visit the marsh several times a day. Over the years I have recorded when various bird species arrive in the state, along with when turtles and snakes first appear. With each year's data, the information becomes so accurate that I schedule days off work based on the expected arrival of migrating species. The downside of such information is I tend to stay within my areas of familiarity.

This year was different and resulted in finding activity on a shallow, rural pond new to me.

Like so many years before, I spent several weeks last spring at Sweet Marsh photographing pelicans, sandhill cranes and a variety of waterfowl. My spring migration efforts at the marsh were average—no new species, but I photographed plenty of the regular visitors. For some reason I traveled down a county road I seldom visit. The road dissects a small wetland near the Wapsipinicon River. As I drove, I noticed a large white bird some distance from the road. I noted the bird's location and assumed I had seen one of the last remaining American white pelicans migrating northward. Pelicans usually spend several weeks in Bremer County each spring, and since I had recorded many images of pelicans again last year, I paid little attention to it. I continued on my way and didn't think about it until the next day.

While talking with an outdoor-active friend, he asked if I was aware of any trumpeter swans nesting in the county. I wasn't and said so, but in my mind I began wondering if the large white bird I assumed was a pelican was really a swan. My only way to know for sure was to explore the





A newly hatched trumpeter swan emerges after 30-plus days developing in the egg. While ducks hatch within six to 10 hours of each other, swan eggs typically hatch two days apart, says DNR trumpeter swan restoration coordinator David Hoffman. Cygnets face potential abandonment, predators and competition for habitat. Humans are also a threat. In February an adult swan was shot and killed in Clayton County. With more than 280 swan mortalities recorded in Iowa since 1995, poaching, collisions with power lines and lead poisoning are the main human-influenced causes of death. Readers can help protect swans by restoring wetlands and reporting illegal activities to the Turn In Poachers hotline at [1-800-532-2020](tel:1-800-532-2020). Callers may remain anonymous and be eligible for a cash reward. Fines and liquidated damages for killing a trumpeter swan exceed \$1,500.

"new" wetland. Maybe the bird would still be there... maybe not, and maybe it wasn't a swan. Regardless, I had to find out.

Early the next morning, with the weather still quite cool, I made my first visit to the shallow pond. Since there is no developed access, visitors must first cross a ditch filled with several feet of spring-fed water. I wore chest waders and dragged a kayak through thick vegetation to the open water of the pond. It wasn't easy pushing and pulling my way through thick wetland cattails, and even more challenging when I couldn't float my kayak—only drag it—but I did.

After struggling through the vegetation, I finally reached the open water. To my surprise, not more than a couple of minutes later, I saw in the distance not one, but two trumpeter swans. The birds didn't fly away as expected, but swam slowly toward the secluded far end of the pond.

Having never been on the pond before, I first paddled the edges of the small waterbody. I wasn't following the swans, being careful to keep an extremely safe viewing distance. Then I noticed one swan was wearing a neck collar. Staining from days, if not weeks, in shallow, murky water made the collar numbers difficult to read. Without the aid of a long lens, I wasn't able to discern the number, but I knew it had an interesting history that I wanted to learn.

As I paddled the perimeter of the shallow pond, I watched the birds' actions. Even from a great distance it was obvious they were determined to remain on the pond. I had a hunch they had a nest, but didn't see anything on the first exploratory outing.

My second visit ended the mystery. From afar, I found their nest. Viewed from a long lens, protected safely in the nest, were seven eggs. Four eggs were quite large and the same shade of brown and white. Three smaller eggs were also present. Although the smaller egg coloration was similar to the larger eggs, the size difference made me wonder if the eggs were swan eggs or possibly Canada goose eggs. I also wondered about the eggs because the swan nest appeared to be built on a former goose nest, both atop a muskrat mound.

Since I found the nest after the swans had begun incubating, I had no idea when to expect the eggs to hatch. For all I knew, they could hatch the next day, week or month. To document successful swan nesting in Bremer County, I regularly monitored the eggs to avoid missing an opportunity to photograph newly hatched trumpeter swan cygnets.

My methods for approaching the swans on the nest varied from a kayak to a smaller, less-invasive belly boat, depending on how much time and energy I had. Both options were labor-intensive and both had advantages. Kayaking, once I finally reached the water, allowed for quick and easy movement around the pond. The disadvantage was the difficulty getting it to the water.

Reaching the pond was easier in the belly boat, but once on the water, proved more challenging. Moving around with a belly boat in shallow waters involves frequent struggles in the mud and muck. Whether in my kayak or belly boat, I had plenty of snakes and spiders to deal with, along with countless mosquitoes and other biting insects.

My pond exploration wasn't limited to watching swans, spiders and snakes. One visit featured an unusual, memorable interaction with a wren and sandhill crane. As I paddled toward the small passage leading to my truck, an adult sandhill crane took flight not more than 20 yards away. The bird didn't fly far and landed in shallow water close to my kayak. Unlike any other experiences with cranes, this crane promptly began to feign injury, similar to the acting a killdeer does when a nest or young birds are nearby. Having seen the "injured bird" act many times with killdeer, I was convinced there was a nest nearby. Within a few short minutes I located the sandhill crane nest, but it was empty. There were no eggs, no shells and no young birds.

Observing the adult attempting to draw me out of the area and finding an empty nest were my cues there was a young bird nearby. Then a noisy marsh wren captured my attention. The wren wasn't flitting around, but remained perched on low vegetation only a few yards away. Not wanting to miss an opportunity, I photographed the wren while it continued to chirp. As I approached the wren, it stopped chirping, yet I still heard a faint bird call. It was a sandhill crane fledgling. After shooting photos of the young crane, I continued my journey back to my truck, satisfied that even if the trumpeter swan eggs did not hatch, I was rewarded by finding another successful crane nest.

For three weeks I checked the swan nest. During that time weather conditions changed dramatically, from cool and comfortable to hot, muggy and bug-infested. Twice mosquitoes bit me around my eyes, causing them to swell shut. Was it worth it? My answer is a resounding "Yes." The challenges were worthwhile when the first swan egg finally hatched.

I had almost given up monitoring the nest, but further study of swan biology gave me hope. It can take 30 days for eggs to hatch. I didn't give up and paddled to the nest one more time. It was meant to be. On my arrival, I was met with a single, wet, down-covered trumpeter swan hatchling.

From a distance, through my long lens, the fragile little bird, still damp from its weeks in the egg, struggled to hold its head up. Most of the time the cygnet's head rested on egg shells and nest material. Since I had never observed a newly hatched swan, I didn't know what to expect. I'll admit to wondering if the young bird was healthy. After shooting photos of the special day, I left the area to allow the adult birds to nurture—as much as swans do—the little bird.

Early the next morning I visited the pond again. At a minimum I wanted to see the first cygnet alive and

### MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Be a part of the success of trumpeter swan restoration by reporting sightings. Carefully note the type (neck collar, wing marker or leg band), color and the alphanumeric code. Search trumpeter swans at [www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov), fill out the Trumpeter Swan Observation Form and mail to 1203 North Shore Drive, Clear Lake, Iowa 50428, or call restoration coordinator Dave Hoffman at 641-357-3517.



stronger. I was also hopeful that more eggs would have hatched overnight. Cautiously I entered the pond, and using my long lens I could see not only the first young bird up and walking around, but a second fledgling. Regardless of whether the remaining eggs hatched, we could boast the successful nesting of trumpeter swans in Bremer County. I took pictures and left the area.

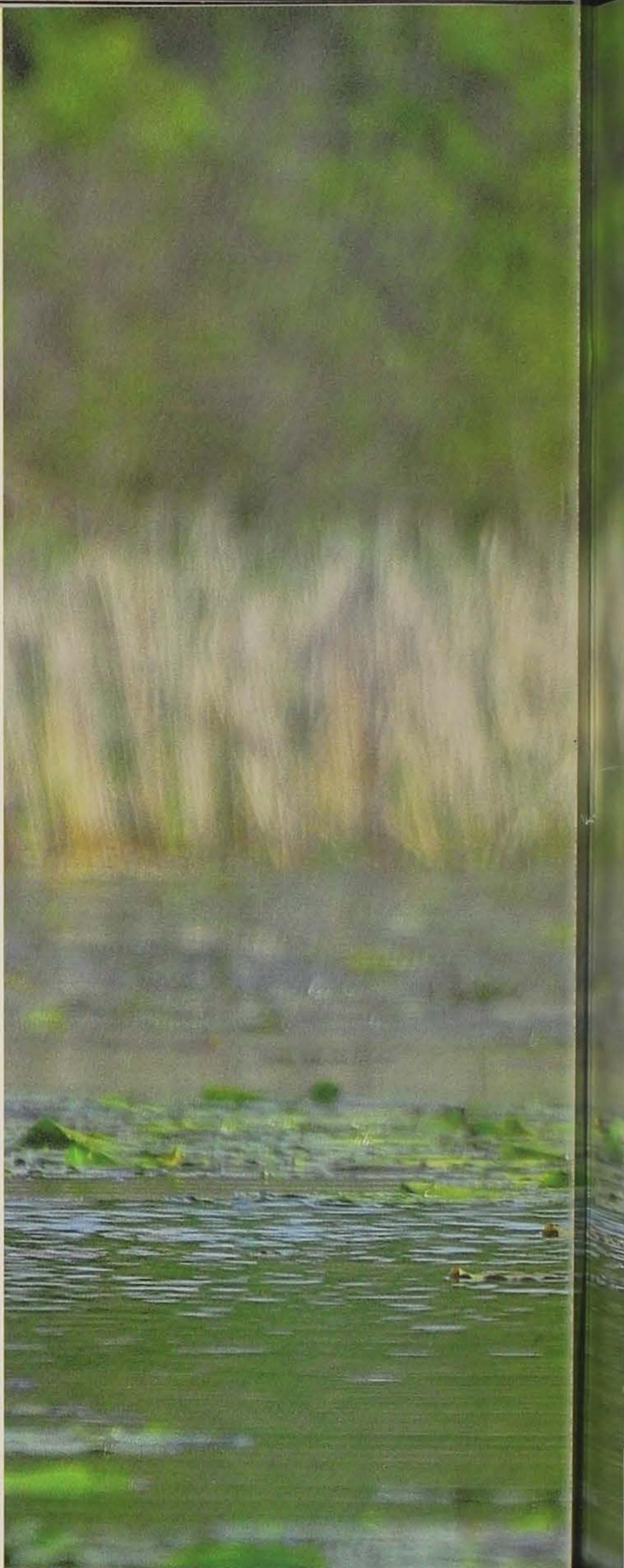
The next morning I repeated my ritual of checking the swan nest before work. Having seen how quickly a hatchling becomes an active young bird, and knowing how protective adults are, I was confident the nest would be filled with activity. I was partially correct in my assumption. From a distance I could see both hatchlings were up and about, walking around the nest as seasoned experts. Then I witnessed something I doubt I will ever see again.

The adult was keeping watch over the nest from about 25 yards away. I could hear her making low volume, low frequency honks, as she had done while incubating. As if on command, both young birds confidently climbed over the edge of the nest, waddled down the outer edge, and entered the pond. It was an amazing show of natural instincts. Both young birds seemed to marvel at the sensation of water. They'd dip their heads, squeak, and swim around—almost as if experiencing fun. Shortly after reaching the water, the older cygnet began swimming to the adult female. Interestingly, the day-old bird seemed to lock on to my green kayak some distance away and swam directly toward me. I remained still, hoping the bird would change direction and swim toward its sibling and parent, but that wasn't the case. With determination the cygnet continued swimming toward me. I really didn't have too many options other than to get comfortable and shoot some photos and video.

The day-old bird seemed to swim around me for quite a long time. In reality, the bird was with me only a few minutes before it responded appropriately to its mother's subtle honking. As soon as the little bird was clearly headed in the right direction, I quickly paddled out of the area. I couldn't help but consider the perils the young birds faced on the water. As threatening as life in the wild can be, I also remembered that birds have been raising young for years and didn't need any help from me.

After witnessing the swimming debut of the cygnets, I continued to check the nest for a couple of weeks. None of the other eggs hatched. During the subsequent visits I saw only the adult female a single time. Even that sighting was a long distance away. The fact that she didn't fly away told me she had at least one young bird with her, and possibly two. When many days had passed with no sightings of adult or young swans, I stopped checking the nest. I didn't return for many weeks to allow the special family plenty of space and privacy to thrive.

My work with the swans was recognized by the U. S.



With feathers stained from murky marsh water, red collar 7M9 cruises the shallow waters of a Bremer County pond. She was hatched in Holland, N.Y., where citizen Al Green rears captive swans to donate to state swan restorations. In 2008, she was released at Gomers Marsh in Clinton County, Iowa. Not ready to settle down, she was sighted a year later in Virginia, but returned to successfully nest in Bremer County. Her mate is red collar 1M7, a male hatched in 2006 from the private rearing efforts of Gary and Rojean Behrens of Clinton. Donated to the restoration effort, he was released at Beaver Valley wetlands near Cedar Falls in 2007.



Geological Survey, the Canadian Fish and Wildlife Service and the Trumpeter Swan Society. I reported my sightings to the Iowa DNR. Officials with the DNR advised me the last known successful nesting of trumpeter swans in Bremer County was at least the mid-1800s, and probably earlier.

I recently attended an Audubon Society meeting in Black Hawk County. At the meeting a fellow told me about an adult swan that flew into one of their wetlands.

The swan was stained a rusty color and was flying with two cygnets. He wondered about the swan and asked if I might know where swan 7M9 spent the summer. I smiled and told him I knew and had photos and video of the hatchlings he was now seeing as juveniles. Just like a secret fishing hole, I did not specifically identify where the swan raised their young, but I did assure him it was in Bremer County. I wonder if they'll return this year. 🦢

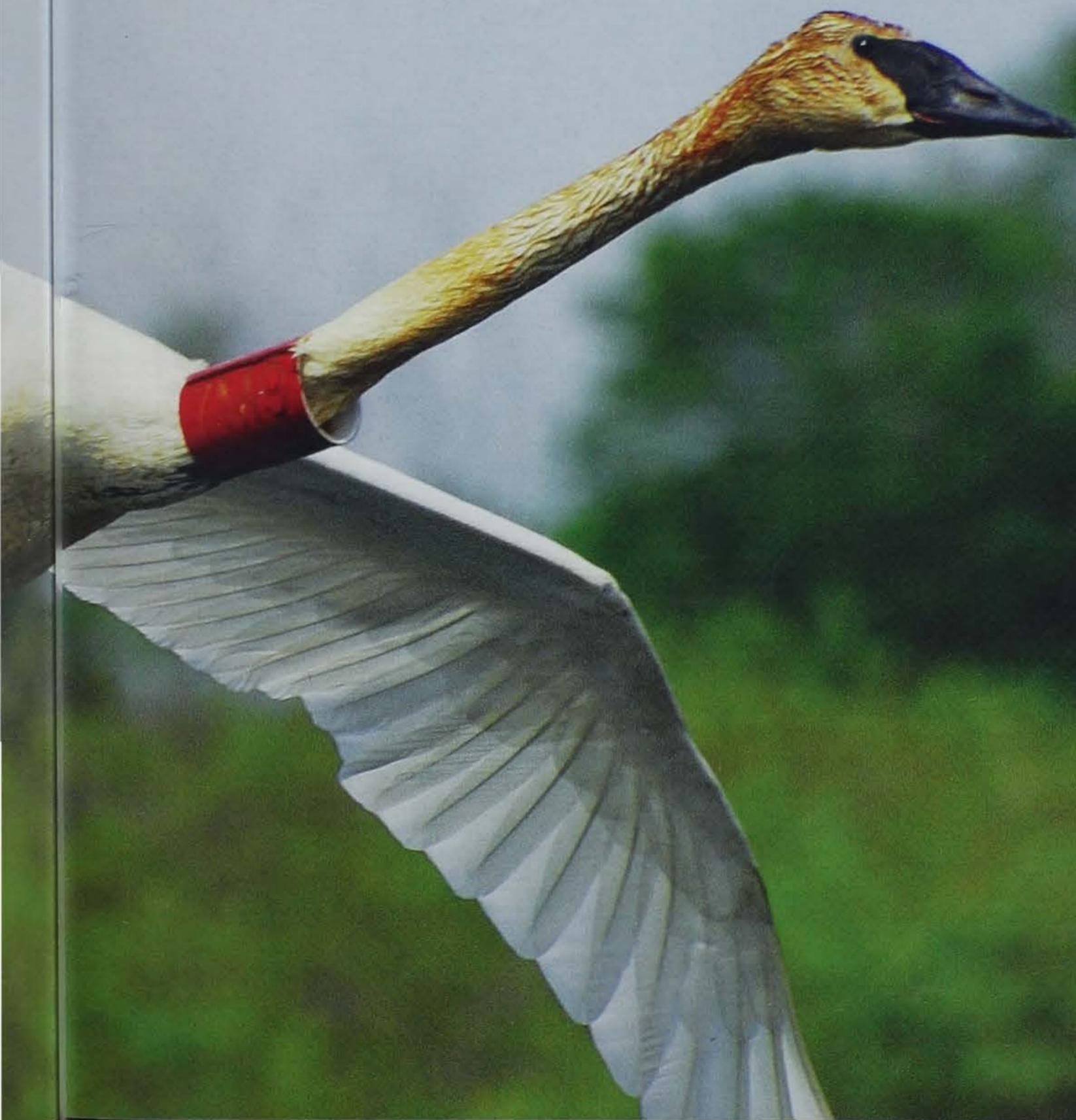


#### **BUILD IT AND THEY WILL COME**

Create or restore wetlands on your property to attract trumpeter swans, says DNR trumpeter swan restoration coordinator David Hoffman. Get help finding your local private lands biologist by calling **515-281-5918**.

#### WHY REPORT SIGHTINGS?

More than 3,500 observations of Iowa released swans have been reported to the DNR from as far away as Manitoba and Texas. The information helps the DNR assess survival, reproduction and habitat use. All reports that include verifiable marker codes will receive a response with updated information on the bird. Follow the history, success stories and perils of trumpeter swans worldwide at [www.swansociety.org](http://www.swansociety.org).





# THE BIG YEAR— THE IOWA SEQUEL

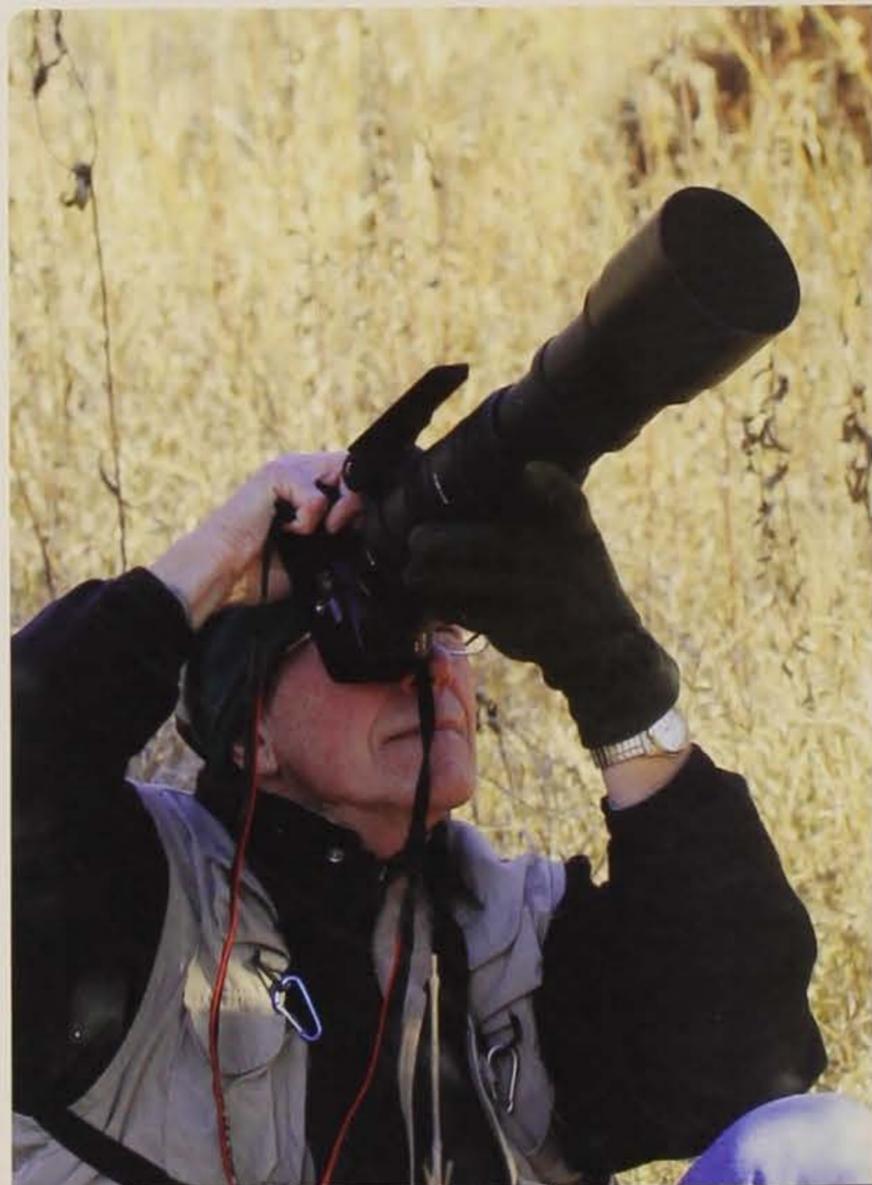
Let one Birder's Odyssey to Find **250 Bird Species** Help Improve Your Own Birding Skills

BY KAREN GRIMES

**W**et, muddy, frozen, hot or sweaty—birders go to near-impossible lengths to add one species to their life list. Willing to come home covered with ticks, cockleburs and mosquito bites, it's all worth it, provided they've heard or seen that elusive feathered friend. Some birders, the more obsessive perhaps, get competitive and will work to top all other birders as they tally up the numbers for a given year and location—their Big Year.

Retired DNR wildlife biologist Doug Harr of Ogden is not one of those. But last year he set out on a competitive journey to top his own personal best year, setting a goal of seeing 250 of Iowa's 425 bird species.

Unlike Steve Martin, Jack Black and Owen Wilson in the 2011 comedy movie *The Big Year*, who max out credit cards and undercut each other as they vie for North American champion birder of the year, Harr set a reasonable goal. "I think the personal record for anyone in the state is about 304," he says. So 250 is ambitious since there are only 305 regular species—birds who visit the state eight out of 10 years. The remaining 120



AVOCET PHOTO BY ISTOCKPHOTO.COM; DOUG HARR PHOTO © DON POGGENSEE; IDA GROVE, IA



Doug Harr's year-long odyssey to observe 250 of Iowa's 425 bird species ended just five species short of his goal. But on the journey, he was able to tally the American avocet, a unique experience for any Iowa birder.

**"The Big Year"**

is a 2011 comedy starring Steve Martin, Jack Black and Owen Wilson in a cut-throat race to see who can spot the largest number of North American bird species in one year. Although not a box office hit, the film illustrates the discomfort, expense and time modern birders will expend to outcompete others.

The film was adapted from the book, *The Big Year: A Tale of Man, Nature, and Fowl Obsession*, about three birders chasing Sandy Komito's 1998 record listing of 721 species. Author Mark Obmasick recounts how Komito retained his record, upping his previous year's count to 748.

## Tips to Add Birds to Your Life List

1. Print off a list of Iowa bird species from the Iowa Ornithologists' Union website. Check their site for listings and directions to see rare or unusual birds. [iowabirds.org](http://iowabirds.org)
2. Purchase good birding binoculars or a spotting scope. For tips on making a purchase, consult the July/August 2011 issue of *Iowa Outdoors* or buy a back issue for \$5 by calling 515-281-5918.
3. Buy a good field guide. *The Sibley Guide to Birds* from The National Audubon Society or *National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America* are excellent books.
4. Invest in a specialty publication if you're having trouble with a certain group of birds. In the last 10 years a host of new books have appeared focusing on hawks, shorebirds, hummingbirds, warblers—almost every group of birds.
5. Start learning bird songs—that really helps with warblers. Harr says, "I can go out

to Ledges State Park, stand by a sycamore tree and count on hearing a parula warbler in the spring. Or, the yellow-breasted chat has a very distinctive call making it easy to track down."

6. Carry an iPod or other device so you can listen to all of the North American bird songs while afield.
7. Befriend a local birder. They'll help you find great spots to bird. As President of the Iowa Audubon Society, Harr encourages people to find an Audubon chapter or one of the independent bird clubs or county conservation clubs. [iowaaudubon.org](http://iowaaudubon.org)
8. Seek the local bird honey-hole. "Almost every town has one. Brookside Park in the middle of Ames is a great one and has even hosted a painted bunting, a truly technicolor bird with brilliant blue and red and green and yellow plumage," Harr says. It's normally found only in the southern states.

9. Go out the first couple of hours after the sun rises during the breeding season, March through July. That's when the birds are actively courting.

10. Look for nocturnal species like night hawks near dusk and owls at night.

species are casual or accidental. Casuals enter the state three to eight times in 10 years; accidentals less than three years out of 10.

Harr's goal of 250 birds was achievable without chasing across the state every time someone posted an unusual species on a birder's email list. His strategy for racking up his bird tally for a year was to count birds while volunteering, while attending field days, on bird watching trips near home and, when needed, making a short trip to chase down a casual or accidental species. Not obsessive. Doable.

### Two Birds With One Stone— Birding While Volunteering

As a former employee, Harr frequently volunteers for the DNR, helping with the Multiple Species Inventory and Monitoring Survey at Harrier Marsh and the McCoy Wildlife Area near Ledges State Park. As a bonus, he turned them into personal bird counts. Nine times a year he rises before sunrise and drives to the 420-acre Harrier Marsh in Boone County, southeast of Ogden. As the sun

winks over the horizon, he walks to a prescribed point in the grasses surrounding the marsh, quietly stands, looks, identifies and counts everything he sees or hears. After 10 minutes, he dodges anthills and hummocks, hiking 200 meters to the next of seven points to repeat the process. The three visits in spring and fall yield many migratory species, as he breathes in the cold, crisp air, frozen vegetation squeaking underfoot in early spring and late autumn. By July, Harr is fighting his way through thick, tall sedges and warm season grasses while mist rises off the marsh and occasional musky whiffs of rotting vegetation waft upwards. The likely trophies of three summer trips include breeding birds, young chicks and fledglings.

One of his big finds occurred during a count at Harrier Marsh where he saw the well-camouflaged, secretive yellow rail. Like its smaller cousin, the black rail, the yellow rail thrives in marshes and dense grasses. With a dark crown and eye stripe and brown and yellow striped back, this 5- to 7-inch bird is virtually invisible in its preferred habitat. Even experienced birders covet a



A black-necked stilt bird is shown in profile, flying from left to right. The bird has a long, straight, black beak and a black cap with a white patch on its forehead. Its wings are dark with a prominent white patch on the underside. The background is a clear, light blue sky.

Another unique species marked off Harr's Iowa birding check list was the striking black-necked stilt. Harr recommends western Iowa for birders wanting to make a big dent in their check list.

sighting, as the highly reclusive birds often run through grasses to avoid humans.

The trips are rewarding and the data important. Harr also helps with the Breeding Bird Atlas surveys in north central Minnesota and in Iowa, where he can rack up even more species.

### Head West for Rarer Birds

He chalked up another treasured find, the white-winged dove, during a field trip at the Iowa Ornithologists' Union spring meeting. "It's quite rare in Iowa, maybe two to three are seen per year, almost always in the spring or summer," Harr says. While this bird of the tropics and southwestern United States prefers thick woodlands, it's also attracted to big shade trees in cityscapes. And that's where the ornithologists found one, in a backyard in Shenandoah with the telltale white line along the front of the wing visible when perched and large white patch when in flight.

The same meeting yielded a plethora of shore birds. "It was right before the big flood and there were so many mudflats, we had one of the biggest lists we've



ever gotten at the spring meeting," he says. "I saw a black-necked stilt and several avocets on the mudflats." The odd-looking black and white colored stilt is a western bird with extremely long red legs. Equally striking, the American avocet sports black-and-white plumage, too, but wears a rusty or gray mantle on its neck and head.

"I recommend the western part of the state for anyone trying to expand their bird list," Harr says. When he lived in Lyon County, the most northwestern Iowa county, he sometimes saw black-billed magpies and many western kingbirds, plus an occasional Swainson's hawk, all common to the western United States.

### Take Advantage of Nearby Habitats

Not far from home, Harr totals up an impressive list of ordinary species on short day trips. He recommends areas with diverse habitats: large expanses of water, grasslands, shoreline, woodlands and native prairie. One of his favorite spots is Saylorville Lake north of Des Moines. The first two or three weeks of May is prime for many migrants—from shorebirds on the northern mudflats to warblers in the woods. Spring is also the best time because birds are easier to identify in their breeding plumage.

But even for experienced birders, identification isn't always easy. "Who was it who said, 'Confusing fall warblers?'" Harr asks and answers, "Roger Tory Peterson in his book" *Peterson Field Guide to Birds*. For Harr, though, it's not warblers or sparrows that are harrowing to identify, it's shorebirds and some of the gulls.

Despite birding club alerts that a Thayer's gull and an

Iceland gull were spotted at Saylorville, Harr made multiple trips before verifying one of these species. In December he found the immature Thayer's, one of Iowa's rarer gulls. "It looks a lot like the herring gull, but with little differences in plumage, a little lighter gray on the back, lighter colored bill, darker eye, slightly different mottling on the breast of younger birds. Pretty subtle stuff," he says.

The quest culminated on the third trip in December by finding the Thayer's hiding on an ice shelf surrounded by mostly ring-billed gulls and a dozen herring gulls. "I had very good lighting and was able to look at it for 10 minutes through a spotting scope," Harr says. "I never found the Iceland gull, although others reported it was there almost daily. That's frustrating. You're there with other birders and then get home and read an email, 'Oh, it showed up an hour after you left.'"

Aside from patience, time and persistence, basic equipment for a birder includes quality binoculars and a bird guide. Harr started out at age 9 when a teacher encouraged students to draw birds. At 10 he received his first "*Golden Guide to Birds*," which he still owns, a pair of low-power straight-tube field glasses and a notebook. Those gifts from his parents started a satisfying life-long hobby and launched a career in wildlife management. However, Harr took a bird watching hiatus during junior high until a macho new wrestling coach and science teacher made it clear that bird watching was indeed cool.

Harr always kept a list, and his lifetime list is impressive (1,000-plus) including birds from field trips to southern Texas, Panama and Ecuador. He added about 35 new species on a three-day Arizona trip last August, edging his North American list close to 493. However, 2011 was the first time he sought his personal best in Iowa. "It's something you can do anywhere, even in a city," he says. "Birding is the biggest outdoor pastime in the United States. You can do it in your backyard or on a fantastic trip."

Despite its popularity, Harr was surprised to read recently that the average American can identify only 12 birds. "I was amazed. I thought it was sad," he says.

But Harr is unusual. His mother was the only girl in a large family of boys, all hunters, anglers and trappers. One brother studied to become a forester. An uncle worked for the old U.S. Soil Conservation Service, a cousin of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Harr taught ornithology as a graduate student in South Dakota and became a wildlife management biologist in northwest Iowa, capping a 38-year DNR career coordinating the non-game wildlife program in Boone. His son continues the tradition as a wildlife staff researcher at Iowa State University.

### Short Trips Yield Arctic Owls

Many of his great bird trips are not far from home and not necessarily in wild, scenic areas. He found a surf scoter, also called the skunk-headed coot, on a little pond in Grimes, about a mile west of Highway 141 near the Kia



Spotting a rare or elusive bird is always a treat. Getting a picture is even better. The snowy owl is one such rare find. Usually, there is only one or two sightings in Iowa per year. Last winter, there were 60 or more.

## Birding Hot Spots

1. **ANY OF THE BIG RESERVOIRS** Saylorville, Coralville, Red Rock or Rathbun. Here you'll find lots of habitat types in a relatively small area: large expanses of water, mudflats for shorebirds, woodlands, grasslands and prairies.
2. **WESTERN IOWA LOESS HILLS** to pick up species from the western half of the United States.
3. **THE IOWA GREAT LAKES** is a fabulous area for birding with big lakes, marshes, big grasslands, native prairie, agricultural ground and woods. An abundance of public land creates outstanding habitat for nesting birds.
4. **FORESTS** Northeast Iowa particularly near Yellow River or Effigy Mounds to see rarer nesting warblers. Shimek and Stephens State Forests in southern Iowa and Ledges State Park near Boone are other premier woodlands.
5. **FAR SOUTHWEST IOWA** near Waubonsie State Park, or Riverton and Forney Lake Wildlife Management areas for western species and outstanding spring and fall waterfowl migrations.
6. **GREAT GRASSLANDS** Kellerton Bird Conservation Area for prairie chickens, grasshopper and Henslow sparrows, northern harriers, short-eared owls and loggerhead shrikes.
7. **ALL OF DNR'S BIRD CONSERVATION AREAS** Some of the best birding areas in the state, all 17 of them were picked for their tremendous variety of birds and abundance of habitat, both public and private.
8. **MISSISSIPPI RIVER BYWAYS** Almost anywhere along the Mississippi River, especially near Green Island in Jackson County.
9. **FIND LOCAL BIRDERS** to help you find the best nearby parks and habitats.





Harr tallies most of his bird sightings on volunteer bird monitoring surveys, field trips and vacations. His lifetime bird list exceeds 1,000 species.

dealership. "You don't expect to see these in Iowa," he says, although years before he watched as these coastal birds occasionally showed up on the Iowa Great Lakes. "This one was just 50 yards away, the closest I've ever seen one."

Last winter was a snowy owl bonanza. His first showed up Dec. 6 just north of Luther between Boone and Madrid. Unfortunately, it died the next day. "There've been well over 60 sightings in the state, maybe 80. Usually you see one to two per year." But snowy owls are eruptive—when the arctic lemming population crashes after a four- or five-year boom, there's an influx of owls into Iowa. Or several years of high lemming numbers produced a lot of young owls. "Probably one-fourth of those seen in Iowa have died," he says. "Young birds are not as proficient at catching prey, so many are turned into county conservation boards and wildlife rehabilitators." Almost all are dead or dying from starvation.

He normally sees the endangered short-eared owl, sometimes a year-round Iowa resident, in big grassland areas like Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge in Jasper County, the Kellerton Grasslands Bird Conservation Area in Ringgold County or Harrier Marsh in Boone County. Its raspy, barking call and choppy low flight are distinctive. "I see one up there annually, but not this year," he says. "It's kind of frustrating." Another disappointment is arriving onsite just after the bird left. "That happens a lot," but Harr shrugs it off as "just one of the hazards of the game."

He nearly missed seeing the northern saw-whet owl in 2011. Generally Harr counts on seeing this small, 7- to 8-inch long woodland owl. But near year-end, the pressure was on. Harr found a post on the Iowa Ornithologists' Union's website from photographer and birder Don Poggensee who was seeing two almost every day. "I drove to Ida Grove and found a pine grove, where the owls were reported." Pine needles crunch underfoot as their sharp poignant scent bathed the air. "As I walked, I saw a guy walking towards me and it was Don." The small owls can be tricky to find—they freeze when seen, a defensive behavior. Victorious, Harr saw two owls on Dec. 27, but he didn't quite make his hoped-for goal of 250 birds.

"I was close. I got to 245," he says. "Some birders see a listserv posting and will drive all over the state. I wanted to see if I could do it without breaking the bank or wasting a lot of gas. So, I drove a little." For novice birders, it's still quite an impressive record. 🐦

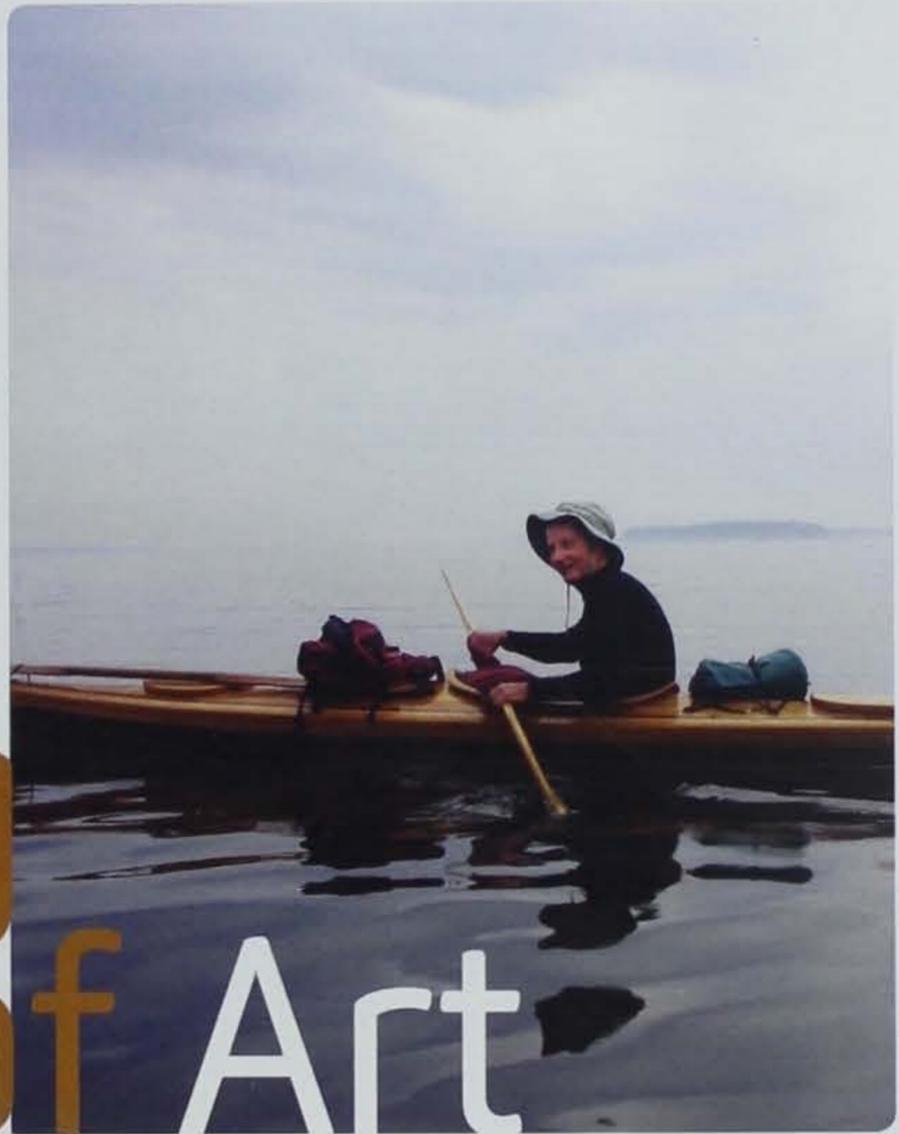
*Doug Harr is a 38-year veteran of the Iowa DNR. He spent 29 years as a wildlife management biologist in northwest Iowa, then a year as a wildlife diversity (non-game) biologist before being appointed as Wildlife Diversity State Program Coordinator in 2002. He holds bachelor's and master's of science degrees in wildlife biology, and in 2000 was recognized nationally by Partners in Flight for his work in conserving Iowa lands for bird habitat. Prior to his Iowa career, Doug worked for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and was an ornithology instructor at South Dakota State University. He currently serves as president of Iowa Audubon.*

In his garage in Newton, John Craun applies fiberglass and epoxy coating on the hull of his most recent cedar-strip kayak—a double Aleut baidarka. “You have to work fast,” he says. After the fiberglass is applied to both hull and deck, inside and out, the hull and deck are epoxied together. Above hang more of Craun’s cedar-strip built kayaks.



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# Floating Works of Art



Visions of faster, more beautiful kayaks and paddles haunt adventurer John Craun every time he is on the water.

BY MINDY KRALICEK PHOTOS BY CLAY SMITH, MINDY KRALICEK AND DIANE MICHAUD LOWRY

**H**is fingers and wrists are sure and precise. His blue-gray eyes are fixed in concentration. His fit, trim physique is ready for action. Whether he's talking or paddling or building, John Craun is wholeheartedly in the moment.

Today, retired 64-year-old Craun is in his garage finishing a double Aleut baidarka, a unique kayak that features a bifurcated bow used by Aleutian Islands natives. The front is divided into two parts, one above the other, similar to the jaws of a salmon. For Craun's kayak, both jaws go straight out and then curve upward. The lower jaw is narrow and sharp, thought to give the boat an efficient water entry. The upper jaw is full and wide for high buoyancy to lift the bow over waves.

The 23-foot long, 23-inch wide baidarka has a long waterline that handles well in rough water, tracks nicely and is affected little by wind due to its low profile. Craun is sure to take a tandem adventure race in this sleek one.

Growing up in Ohio near Lake Erie, "I was always around boats—canoes and fishing boats. Hiking, fishing and boating have been my pastimes as long as I can

remember," says Craun.

Kayaking came much later, in the 1990s when he tried out a kayak at Lake Ahquabi State Park near Indianola. Always up for a challenge, Craun decided to build his own.

His first cedar strip canoe weighed 65 pounds. Later, he concentrated on building lighter—his nine solo kayaks weigh between 32 and 44 pounds. Two years later, he made a 35-pound canoe. A 23-foot tandem weighs 70 pounds. For comparison, a shorter 19-foot canoe of aluminum feels like a heavy cruiser at 119 pounds.

His kayaks range from 14 feet to 23 feet in length, and from 17.75 to 25 inches in width. A 23-inch wide kayak is fairly stable and comfortable for most people. Anything narrower than 21 inches has little stability. In his 17.75-inch-wide kayak Craun says he'll tip over if he doesn't keep paddling. "Long, skinny kayaks are fast and fun to paddle if you can stay upright in them."

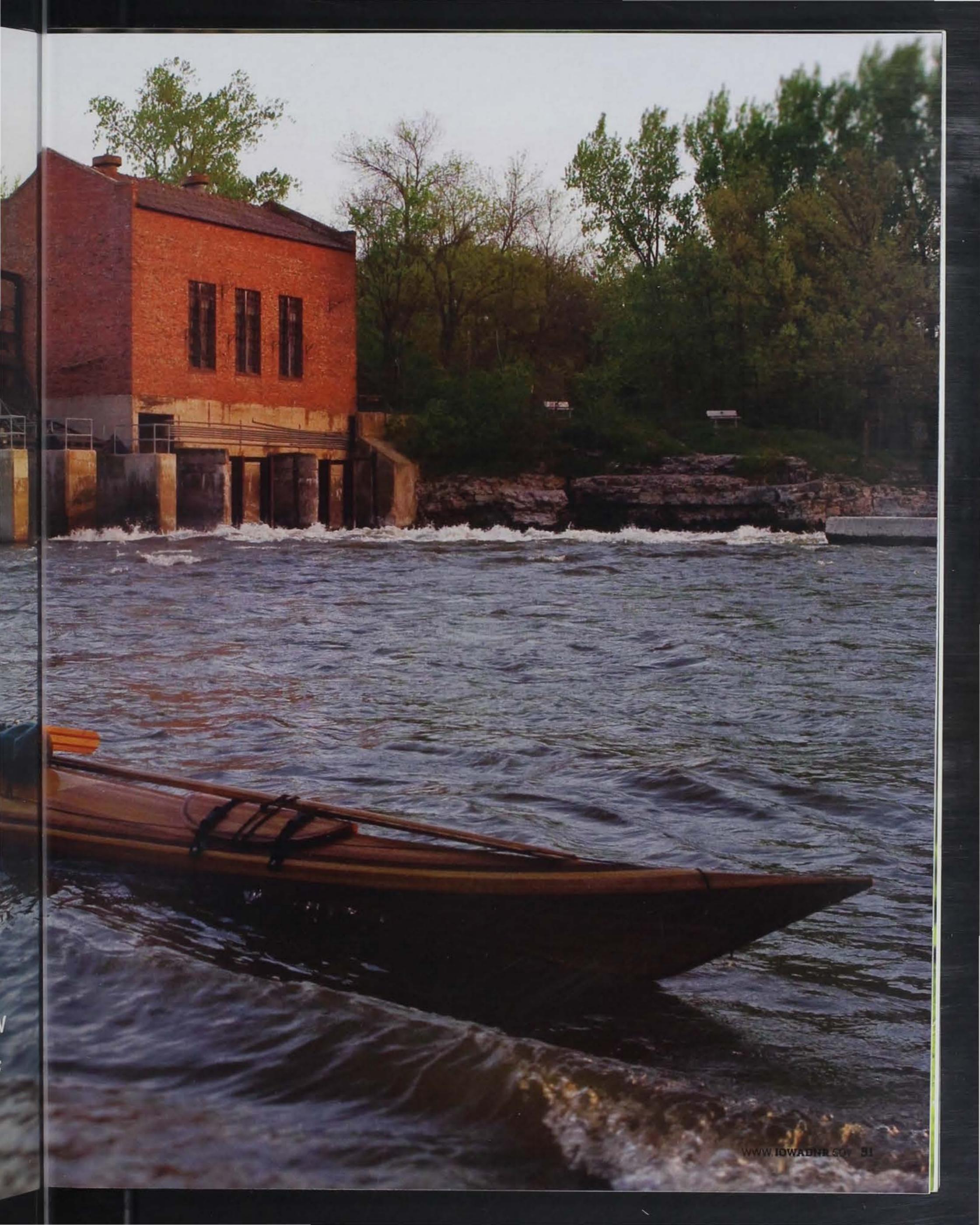
## Kayak Challenge Races

Intense about everything he does, Craun competes in kayak challenge races. His first was the Everglades

In the evening glow, Craun paddles with a favorite Greenland paddle—notice its narrow flat profile—below the Rutland Dam on the West Fork of the Des Moines River near Humboldt. A Greenland paddle tends to be flatter and twist less in the wind and the water column. (Low-head dams, like the one shown, are dangerous and paddlers must portage around them.)



“He’s the kind of guy that some people might underestimate, until they get to know him. He’s determined and focused and has a wonderful understanding of how mechanical things work,” says Diane Lowry, a friend and fellow kayaker. “He’s also a thoughtful and kind person who would go out of his way to help a friend.”



Challenge, a 300-mile paddle down the west coast of Florida in March 2009. Along with the other contestants, he signed a waiver that read:

*"The physical demands of the race, combined with sleep deprivation, heat, cold, water dehydration and exhaustion, often cause participants to become disoriented. Amnesia, hallucinations, hypothermia and other debilitating conditions are not uncommon."*

"I finished it," says Craun. "Many didn't." Modestly, he didn't mention he came in second place in the solo competition and finished the race in six days. Many contestants finish in about eight days.

Later that same year, Craun entered the North Carolina Challenge in the Outer Banks. He battled stiff headwinds, horizontal rain, pitch darkness, followed by more opposing wind, waves and tide current, and then, you guessed it, more lightning, wind and rain for roughly the whole 100-plus nautical miles. "It was not paddling," says Craun. "It was managing weather."

Then he did it again in October 2011, a week before doing the Missouri 340 in his tandem kayak with his kayaking buddy of eight years, Scott Evans of Knoxville.

"John is my inspiration," says Evans. "He is just a solid, consistent person and an intense kayaker. I teased him how I couldn't keep up with his pace and made him use a wider paddle so I could keep up with him. He used it for several hours and then went back to his Greenland paddle. I tried to keep up, but my shoulder gave out. We had to quit after going 140 miles in 18 straight hours."



Epoxy is used to fuse the hull to the deck. The Baldarka bifurcated bow is divided into two parts, one above the other. The lower jaw (out front) is thought to give the boat an efficient water entry. The upper jaw is full and wide for high buoyancy.

## Craun Paddles Across Iowa

In late April 2011, Craun kayaked more than 400 miles of the Des Moines River, from Minnesota to the Mississippi River, in a single trip. His goal was to raise funds for the Hickory Ridge Wilderness camp created near Whitebreast Bay and Recreation Area on Lake Red Rock. That 150-acre stretch of oak and hickory woodland is now a new primitive camping area for those who love hiking and backpacking and kayakers who seek a remote, paddle-in camp destination.

Wilderness camping is dear to Craun's heart. His favorite kayak trips are paddling around Isle Royale National Park, on the northwest corner of Lake Superior. With a friend, he hiked on the island and slept in primitive camps.

"Moose and wolves live on the island. It's a wooded wilderness that's been preserved like it was before America was settled," says Craun as his eyes look up and back to that place in time. "Only wildlife breaks the silence—eerie wolf howls, bellowing moose and birds that whiff by through the tree breaks. It's an amazing place."

## Fitness Mentor

"John talks a lot about fitness—mentally, physically and spiritually. He lives what he preaches," says Evans. "He works out regularly, his focus helps him endure those long races, and he is generous and compassionate, willing to mentor those just starting kayaking. He helped the Natural Heritage Foundation write the grant application for funding the Hickory Ridge Wilderness camp.

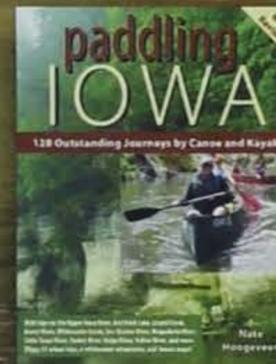
"We've kayaked when it was -30 degrees and in weather so hot we took about everything off. Usually we go to Rock Creek or Lake Red Rock. Ask him sometime about getting caught in 18-foot waves in Lake Superior. There's not much John hasn't attempted in a kayak."

Evans falls silent for a moment. "I feel like I'm mourning. John and his wife are moving in June to South Carolina, just north of Augusta, to be close to his mother-in-law. We'll see each other at races and we'll visit back and forth, but I'm going to miss just calling him and saying, 'I've changed my work schedule, can you go out today?' Of course, he is always ready to kayak...on weekends, evenings, mornings, at night. Just his enthusiasm alone has helped double the number of people who kayak around Red Rock."

## Building a Cedar Strip Kayak

Known as a stripbuilder for using thin strips of wood to build the boats, Craun employs computer design programs and blueprints and ideas from others to accommodate his goals for each kayak he makes. There are several stages and processes in bringing a cedar strip kayak to life.

Craun paddling during his three-day, 400-mile trip across the state of Iowa, raising nearly \$10,000 for the Hickory Ridge Wilderness Camp at Lake Red Rock. Onlookers who cheered him along the way knew Craun by his kayak's flag.



Discover 128 outstanding Iowa journeys by canoe or kayak in the newly revised and updated *Paddling Iowa*. Hot off the presses, the book has long been considered the river enthusiast's bible. Available at Amazon.com and select paddling shops and outdoor stores: \$22.95.

### Iowa Paddler Clubs

Join others who love to paddle and care about water resources and conservation. It's a great way to meet new friends, gather paddling tips and find out about upcoming paddling trips.

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[www.paddleiowa.org](http://www.paddleiowa.org)

#### CEDAR VALLEY PADDLERS

Cedar Falls • 319-231-0541

[www.cedarvalleypaddlers.webs.com/](http://www.cedarvalleypaddlers.webs.com/)

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#### IOWA WHITEWATER COALITION

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[www.iowawhitewater.org](http://www.iowawhitewater.org)

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[www.skunkriverpaddlers.org/](http://www.skunkriverpaddlers.org/)

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CANOE AND KAYAK CLUB • Quad Cities

[www.rivers-end.org/saukenuk/index.htm](http://www.rivers-end.org/saukenuk/index.htm)

#### KAYAK CHALLENGE RACES

See videos and learn more about kayak challenge races at [www.watertribe.com](http://www.watertribe.com)

#### IOWA DNR PADDLER RESOURCES

[www.iowadnr.gov/Recreation/CanoeingKayaking/PaddlerResources/PaddlingClubs.aspx](http://www.iowadnr.gov/Recreation/CanoeingKayaking/PaddlerResources/PaddlingClubs.aspx)



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:** Craun builds his kayaks around cross-sectional forms. Redwood and white pine strips are used with cedar strips to make the design on the deck. Craun installs the seat. Epoxy is mixed in a paint roller pan and applied to the fiberglass.

### SETUP

Craun builds his kayaks and canoes on a table that is 16 feet long and 1 foot wide. He sets up cross-sectional forms about every foot along that table, and the craft is made over the forms.

For kayaks, the wood is mostly white and red cedar, with some redwood and white pine. The colors and grains of the different woods make interesting designs. "You only want to use soft woods for strips for two reasons. One, hardwoods are difficult to bend on the forms, and two, hardwood strips will make your canoe or kayak much heavier. Hardwoods like oak, ash, cherry and maple are used to make keel strips, leading and trailing edges, cockpit combings, foot braces and paddles."

Craun wants boards that are straight, free of knots, show good grain and are more than 8 feet long. He cuts these boards into strips three-quarters of an inch wide, 0.22-inch thick and eight or more feet in length.

### STRIPPING

Next is the stripping stage. Hundreds of cedar strips are laid. While staples can quickly secure the strips, Craun doesn't use them to avoid thousands of little holes showing through the clear coat finish on his beautiful kayaks. Clamping strips in position takes longer, but to

him is worth the effort.

Most strips readily bend on the forms, but at times he uses a heat gun to get additional flex. Hardwoods used for the keels, edges and cockpits are bent using a heat gun or steam.

### SANDING

Sanding is not fun. Craun's most valuable tool is his 6-inch Porter Cable random orbital sander. This sander can do the job quickly and not leave visible sanding marks.

### FIBERGLASSING

The wood shell is covered inside and out with fiberglass and clear coat epoxy. Craun cuts and dry-fits the fiberglass before opening the epoxy and has brushes, rollers and scissors at hand. Craun's advice: "Rehearse the steps you'll take so the process goes more smoothly."

Craun mixes epoxy in a paint roller pan and applies it with a 7-inch epoxy roller for quick work—and with practice—without runs.

Hull and deck are made separately, but on the same forms. The hull is made first. After both are ready and fiberglassed inside and out, they are epoxied together.

### FINAL TOUCHES

Next the hatches and cockpit are cut out. The outside of

PHOTOS BY CLAY SMITH; PHOTO, UPPER LEFT, BY MINDY KRALICEK; PHOTO, OPPOSITE PAGE BY DIANE MICHAUD LOWRY

the kayak is sanded smooth and painted with three coats of marine spar varnish. Craun often waxes his kayaks to make the finish shine and protect against UV damage.

Last, he installs the seat, foot braces, deck lines, toggles and bulkheads.

#### RUDDER

"A question that comes up with new kayakers is if a rudder is needed on a kayak," says Craun. Rudders are helpful, but also problematic. Well-designed kayaks with skilled paddlers don't need rudders. However, long kayaks are harder to turn and maintain directional control. Craun finds that on long challenge races, rudders are helpful.

#### PADDLES

Craun has built more than 50 wooden paddles and is passionate about those as well.

"The size of paddle a person should use is normally determined by how high you can reach standing flat footed, but other factors often change this," says Craun.

There are basically two types of kayak paddles: Euro or contemporary style, and traditional paddles of Greenland and Aleut descent. Euro paddles are those often found in sporting goods stores.

"Euro paddles come in all sorts of shapes and sizes that are constantly changing, like automobiles and clothing styles. Paddle manufacturers are always marketing their new design as the best one available," says Craun.

Greenlandic and Aleutian paddles were designed by those that invented kayaking in Greenland and the Aleutian Islands long before America was discovered by Europeans. They designed and perfected their paddles



**Greenlandic and Aleutian paddles** were designed by those that invented kayaking in Greenland and the Aleutian Islands long before America was discovered by Europeans. They designed and perfected their paddles and kayaks for **more than 1,000 years.**

and kayaks for more than 1,000 years. Craun prefers the Greenland paddle followed by Aleutian designs. Those are the paddles he makes.

"When I began kayaking, I used a long paddle with a big blade, but I discovered that I could cover longer distances faster using a shorter Greenland paddle with a narrow blade. If you doubt what I'm saying, paddle 20 to 40 miles with me and you'll see," invites Craun.

The Greenland paddle is simple in shape. The faces, or blades, are narrow, flat and identical. Because the paddle has a narrow profile, it tends to flutter and twist less in

wind and in the water column.

The paddler's torso is forward and the stroke is highly cadenced, wide, light and restful. It is easier to learn to roll with, as the paddler's hands and blade angle are the same. Also, there is less resistance when moving it around under water.

In side-by-side comparison, a Greenland paddler will average about one and one-half strokes to the Euro-paddler's single stroke. However, less effort is needed to cut the Greenland paddle through the water, saving energy for long trips. 🐾



## Cleaning out Household Hazards?

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For more informations go to  
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**Change Our Ways. Change Our World.**



# Walk with the wolf and see the world by moonlight

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## 10 TIPS TO PROTECT BIRDS



A grey catbird and Baltimore oriole "discuss" who gets the next bite of grape jelly, a favorite food of both.

In much of the nation, May is peak migration month. Birds of every kind—songbirds, raptors and shorebirds—fly from their winter homes in the south to summer breeding grounds in places as far north as the Arctic. Along the way they encounter many perils, including bright lights and tall buildings, cats and toxic lawns.

Fortunately, people can help ensure a safer journey for migrating birds. Backyards and parks, often key stopover points for many species, can become bird-friendly rest stops with a few simple steps. Use these tips from the National Audubon Society this spring:

**1) REDUCE OR ELIMINATE PESTICIDE AND HERBICIDE USE.** Some estimates show 7 million birds die each year due to pesticide exposure as many birds eat seeds and insects. Using fewer yard and home chemicals helps reduce risks to wildlife, pets and people. Use less toxic chemicals or natural controls.

**2) USE NATIVE PLANTS.** Native plants require less maintenance and provide birds with fruit and seeds and attract insects and spiders for other bird species.

**3) KEEP CATS INSIDE.** Millions of birds are killed by house cats every year. Keeping cats indoors ensures that birds stay safe and cats benefit too—indoor cats live longer than cats that go outside.

**4) PREVENT WINDOW COLLISIONS.** Window collisions kill an estimated 1 billion birds annually. Make sure birds can see and avoid windows by putting up screens, closing drapes and blinds when you leave the house or stick multiple semi-transparent decals from bird feeding supply stores on the glass.

**5) PROVIDE COVER IN YOUR BACKYARD.** Leave some dead standing trees for nesting places and stack downed tree limbs to create a brush pile, which is a great source of cover for birds during bad weather.

**6) HELP BIRDS STAY ON COURSE.** Close your blinds at night and turn off unused lights. Some birds use constellations to guide them on their annual migrations, and bright lights can disrupt them.

**7) CREATE OR PROTECT WATER SOURCES IN YOUR YARD.** Birds need water to drink and bathe.

Change water two to three times per week during mosquito season.

**8) LANDSCAPE FOR BIRDS.** Use lots of layers, including understory, ground cover, shrubs and trees. Multiple plant levels let birds use different layers for different purposes, such as nesting, feeding and singing.

**9) EXTEND A BIRD SAFETY NET BEYOND YOUR BACKYARD.** Contact your local Audubon chapter to learn about opportunities to create healthy habitat in parks and other local places.

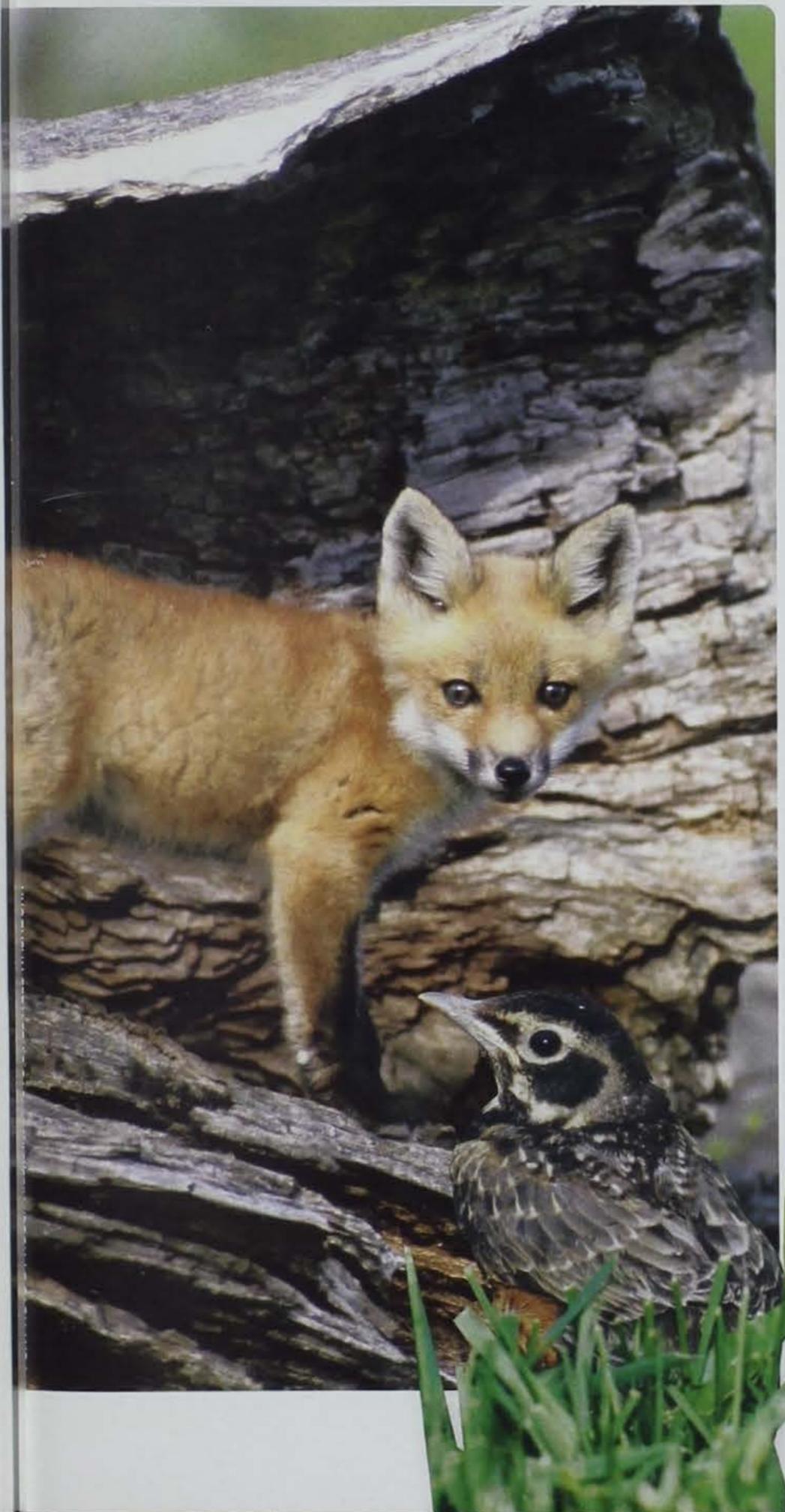
**10) TAKE THE HEALTHY YARD PLEDGE.** Commit to conserve water, plant native species, remove invasive plants, reduce pesticide use, protect water quality and keep birds safe in your yard.

**LEARN MORE** about building a better backyard for birds and take the healthy yard pledge at <http://athome.audubon.org>

Find your local Audubon chapter at [www.audubon.org/search-by-zip](http://www.audubon.org/search-by-zip)

# WILDLIFE BABIES BELONG IN **THE WILD**

BY LOWELL WASHBURN



**I**t's as predictable as April showers and May flowers. The wildlife baby season has officially begun in Iowa. From now until at least mid-June, DNR offices across the state will be inundated with hundreds of phone calls and scores of deliveries regarding "orphaned wildlife." It's not out of the ordinary for biologists to discover that complete litters of baby raccoons, foxes or even skunks have mysteriously appeared on their doorsteps.

From fuzzy yellow ducklings to tiny baby bunnies, nothing appears more cute and cuddly than a wildlife baby. It's really no mystery why humans feel compelled to come to the rescue. But in reality, most wildlife babies reported to DNR field offices are not really orphaned at all. In all likelihood, mom or dad are hiding nearby awaiting humans to leave. And while the people who attempt to "save" these babies may have the best of intentions, they are dooming the very creatures they intend to help.

Regardless of whether they are birds or mammals, the young of most wildlife leave their nests or dens capable to care for themselves. Although broods or litters may become widely scattered during this fledgling period, they still remain under the direct care and feeding of their parents. Unfortunately, this care is often short-circuited by human intervention.

When a newborn fawn, nest full of baby cottontails or brood of mallard ducks is discovered by humans, it is frequently assumed that the animals are orphaned. The fate of these youngsters is sealed as the hapless creatures are promptly "rescued from the wild."

Most wildlife babies, at least the fortunate ones, will perish soon after capture—usually due to the stress of being handled by humans or placed into the terrifying environment of a slick-sided cardboard box. Should an animal survive this trauma, it often succumbs more slowly to pneumonia, a host of other diseases or undernourishment.

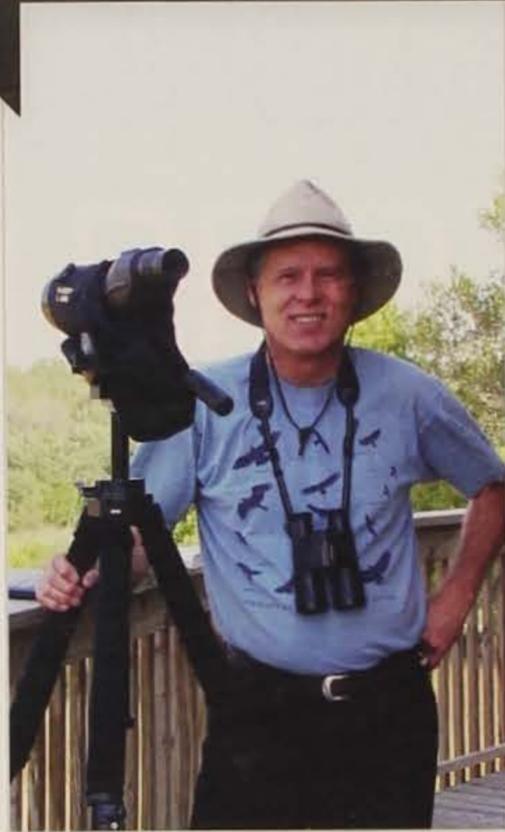
Whether they are adults or young, all species of wildlife have highly specific needs for survival. "Rescuing a baby from its mother" not only shows bad judgment—it is also illegal.

Observing wildlife in its natural habitat is always a unique privilege. Taking a good photo or two provides an even more lasting memory. But once you've done that, let well enough alone.

Leave wildlife babies where they belong—in the wild.

# Admiration & Legacy

BY JESSIE ROLPH BROWN



## FOR THE BIRDS

LEE SCHOENEWE, SPENCER

Birder teaches others, works to improve habitat

When the first feeder went into his backyard in 1978, Lee Schoenewe had no idea it would hatch a passion that would have him conducting scientific studies, teaching kids, speaking to community groups and advocating for conservation for more than 30 years. "I have to blame it on my wife, Nancy," the Spencer banker says. The feeder was her idea, and she convinced him to trek along on an Audubon Society field hike—hikes he now leads. Schoenewe has taught Clay County sixth graders in an outdoor classroom session for 20 years and leads a yearly bird hike for Spencer third graders, teaching them that "birds will only

be OK if we give them the right habitat." He speaks at senior centers and to community groups. "It's not hard to get me to talk to anyone about birds. Hopefully I can get a spark going," he says. Schoenewe's own spark drew the DNR's attention when it needed a bird survey at Dan Green Slough for the marsh's management plan. Over four years, he visited the slough weekly as long as there was open water, noting the types and numbers of birds. "Lee is a continuing supporter of Iowa's shallow lakes restoration program," says the DNR's Mike Hawkins. "With limited personnel, especially those with Lee's level of expertise, we wouldn't be able to document the success of these projects like we have." Schoenewe, a regular *Iowa Bird Life* contributor, serves as a Nature Conservancy trustee, chairs the Clay County Conservation Board and works with many other conservation and birding groups.

## BLAZING A TRAIL

TWIN LAKES TRAIL FOUNDATION, CALHOUN COUNTY

Group works over two decades to make recreation trail a reality

The history of the Twin Lakes Trail is as long and winding as the trail itself. The 10-foot wide, 7-mile-long concrete path opened in 2008, but the effort to build it began in 1991. Katherine "KAP" Linder applied for grant after grant for years. But the community effort to purchase 7 acres of cropland next to North Twin Lake and create Gutz Prairie in 2000 gave the effort new momentum. The first grant came soon after, followed by county funding, more grants and \$1 million in private donations for the \$2.5 million project. "We want to attract young people to live here with recreation opportunities," says Linder, who serves on the Twin Lakes Trail Foundation board. "The lake is such a vital place. It's a jewel—both the lake and trail. Twin Lakes has always been called 'Iowa's best kept secret.'" Foundation members, who led the trail-building and fundraising efforts, continue to take care of the trail by mowing, watching over plantings, picking up trash and helping the county with maintenance. The group has used its funds for benches, landscaping, signs, lighting and more along the trail. Residents and visitors have embraced the trail, which passes through five parks along the banks of North and South Twin lakes. "We never saw bikes coming in before," said Keith Roos, Calhoun County Conservation Board director. "It's enhanced our usage. Everyone uses the trail."



## WALKING THE LINE

WALKING SCHOOL BUS, ATLANTIC

Volunteers help kids get to school safely, promote getting outdoors

This school bus, powered by 60 little legs, tops out at 1 to 2 miles per hour. The Atlantic walking school buses get kids to school safely while encouraging outdoor exercise. Once the norm, only 15 percent of kids walk or bike to school now. Fewer kids walk today because they don't have sidewalks, school is too far, it's easier for working parents to drop kids off and because of parents' concerns over strangers, says Kathy Ridnour with the Iowa Department of Transportation's Safe Routes to School. Walking school buses—Atlantic was one of the state's first in 2007—overcome these problems to get kids moving. For four to six weeks each fall and spring, volunteers meet kids, ranging from kindergarten to eighth grade, at one of three set meeting points and lead them to school on a route reviewed by the police department for safety. Kids earn special charms for every five days they walk, and the top walkers' names are published in the newspaper. Up to 150 kids and 100 volunteers walk each year, says Bethany Rogers, Cass County Wellness Coordinator. The main focus is children's health, but the walk adds

other benefits. "The kids are more alert and ready to go in the classroom," she says. "And if more kids were walking, we wouldn't have the large amount of cars and traffic at the schools." The program, conceived by the Healthy Cass County coalition, has spread across the county to schools in Anita and Massena. Numerous Iowa communities have similar programs. Learn more at [walkingschoolbus.org](http://walkingschoolbus.org)

## Wild Foraged Greens and Morel Quiche

*Cap off a morel hunting expedition with this savory, satisfying recipe that expands gathering skills by using extra foraged greens. Thanks to forager Dave Layton of Clinton for sharing this wild foods recipe.*

### MOREL WITH WILD SPRING GREENS QUICHE

1.5 cups dried morels  
1 bunch of asparagus (Ostrich fern fiddleheads may be substituted if you have them.)  
8 eggs  
2 ounces extra virgin olive oil  
1/2 cup chopped green onions, shallots, or wild leeks

Small handful of chopped wild grape leaves and tendrils and smilax shoots and tendrils (10 to 15) or spinach leaves  
Garlic mustard flowers or chives  
2 8-inch pastry shells  
1 cup half and half  
3/4 cup milk  
6-8 ounces grated or chunked Swiss, goat or other white cheese  
2 tablespoons dry vermouth or dry white wine or 2 teaspoons lemon juice  
2 pinches of nutmeg and paprika

Reconstitute mushrooms by soaking and swishing them around in hot water. Pull from water and chop. With a coffee filter, strain and reserve water.

Sauté chopped onions, leeks or shallots and tendrils in part of the oil. Add rest of oil and morels. Stir and start morels cooking. Add asparagus and mushroom water, and cook until water is almost gone. Sprinkle in garlic mustard flowers or chives and add vermouth.

Meanwhile, combine eggs, cream, milk, salt, pepper, nutmeg and paprika.

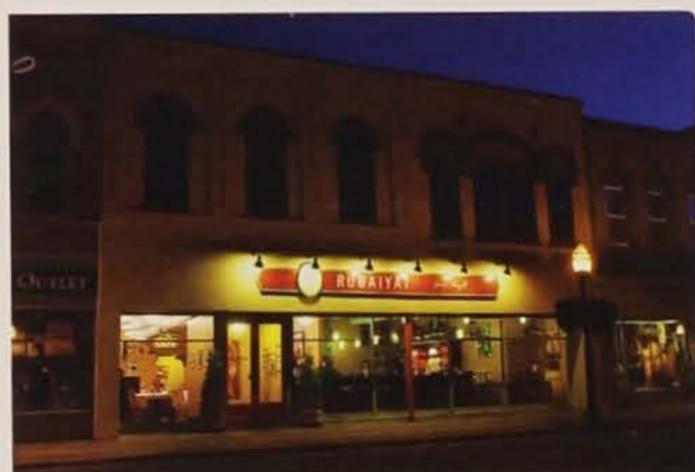
Put some of the cheese in the pie crusts, then add sauteed mixture and the rest of the cheese. Evenly pour egg mixture over the top. Cook at 450° for 10 minutes to brown pie crust then reduce to 350° and cook until center starts to set up. Remove and let stand for 10 minutes.

# Wild Cuisine KITCHENSIDE

BY BRIAN BUTTON PHOTOS BY CLAY SMITH

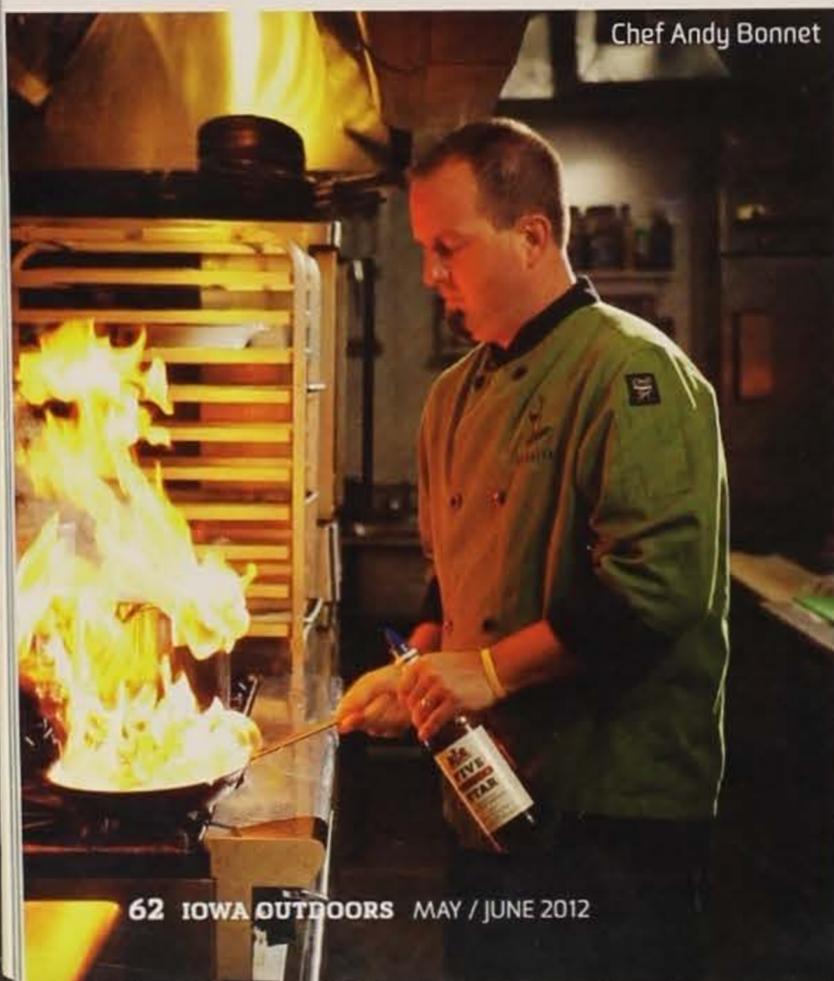


Bacon-wrapped pheasant breast with lingonberry leek sauce



Rubaiyat gets its name from a collection of ancient Persian poems that celebrate food and wine. It is an excellent name for this northeast Iowa eatery that displays awards of distinction from *Wine Enthusiast* and *Wine Spectator* for serving "one of the finest wine lists in the world."

Inside, the warmth of original brick walls and tin ceilings of this restored 1890s building create a familiar, relaxed feeling anchored to contemporary, crisp finishes. An open, well-lit interior yields views of bustling downtown through large front windows. An ever-changing decor features new paintings, photography and quilts every three months. For groups and events, the Vineyard Room creates party seating for 50 in a private area adorned with wall-size images of vineyards.



Chef Andy Bonnet



Stuffed quail with morel mushrooms and Marsala wine sauce

OPPOSITE PAGE: PHEASANT BREAST AND WINE BOTTLE PHOTOS BY STUDIO Z; EXTERIOR AND CHEF PHOTOS BY CHIP PETERSON

# Fresh, Locally Grown Foods Shine as Contemporary American Cuisine

## Enjoy creative, elegant dishes at Decorah's Rubaiyat

Savor and "enjoy the whole experience—the atmosphere, presentation—and have it come alive before the first bite," says Rubaiyat's Kim Bonnet of their ambiance.

Part of their achievement is knowing "people are more conscious of what they are eating and seeking out restaurants that have locally produced food," says Chef Andy Bonnet. "Here, we do things in season," he says.

To meet that appetite, menus change four times a year to capture abundant local produce.

Capture Rubaiyat's flair at home with these pheasant and quail recipes. The savory quail with carrots, figs and bacon elevate to another level with morels and Marsala. For pheasant, lingonberries and caramelized leeks create a constant flow of flavors, from sweet berries to the saltiness of bacon.

### STUFFED QUAIL WITH MOREL MUSHROOM AND MARSALA WINE SAUCE

4 4-to 5-ounce semi-boneless quail

#### STUFFING

2 cups panko bread crumbs  
1 small carrot, chopped  
1 celery stalk, chopped  
1/3 cup chopped figs  
1/3 cup sun-dried tomatoes  
1/3 cup chopped bacon  
1/2 tablespoon chopped garlic  
1/2 tablespoon chopped shallots  
1/2 teaspoon thyme leaf  
Salt and pepper  
1 cup chicken stock  
1 egg

Preheat oven to 375°. Combine ingredients. Fold in chicken stock and egg. Divide into four portions and insert into quail. On medium high heat, pan-sear both sides of the

quail in an ovenproof skillet. Transfer to oven and bake 15 to 20 minutes.

#### SAUCE

4 tablespoons butter  
1/3 cup Marsala wine  
Pinch of chopped garlic  
Pinch of chopped shallots  
Pinch thyme leaf  
1 ounce dried morel mushrooms or 6 to 8 medium sized fresh morels.

If using dehydrated morels, soak 30 minutes in simmering water. (Save the liquid for soups.) Remove quail from oven, add butter and mushrooms to skillet. Simmer on low, stir in wine, garlic, shallots and thyme. Simmer to reduce. Serve with rosemary roasted baby potatoes.

### BACON-WRAPPED PHEASANT BREAST WITH LINGONBERRY LEEK SAUCE

Lingonberries are a treat throughout Scandinavia, and with Decorah's Norwegian ancestry, lingonberries are used in several local establishments.

4 6 to 8 ounce pheasant breasts with skin and drumette attached  
8 slices apple smoked bacon  
Salt and pepper

Preheat oven to 350°. Wrap each breast with two pieces of bacon. Season with salt and pepper. Pan-sear skin side down in ovenproof skillet. Bake in skillet 10 to 15 minutes.

#### SAUCE

1/2 cup lingonberry jam  
1/4 cup heavy cream  
1 leek, diced  
Salt and pepper  
Pinch thyme leaf  
White wine

Remove pheasant from oven. Add leeks to skillet and sear for 3 to 4 minutes at medium to medium-high heat. Deglaze with white wine. Add lingonberry jam, heavy cream, salt, pepper and thyme. Simmer on low for 4 to 5 minutes until sauce thickens.

#### BUY LINGONBERRY JAM

Decorah's Vanberia International Gifts will ship 14.5-ounce jars of wild lingonberry jam, \$7.95 plus tax and postage. Excellent on ice cream, waffles and pancakes. 1-800-628-5877 or [vanberiadecorah.com](http://vanberiadecorah.com). 217 West Water Street, Decorah 52101



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Decorah

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[www.rubaiyatrestaurant.com](http://www.rubaiyatrestaurant.com)

RUBAIYAT  
*food for thought*

#### HOURS:

Wednesday to Saturday 5 p.m. to close  
Sunday brunch 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
Reservations appreciated and advised

#### PAIRING FOOD AND DRINK:

Rubaiyat has Iowa's largest beer and wine list with 230-plus wines and more than 100 bottled beers, plus 34 on tap—10 of those are locally brewed craft beers.



Chef Andy and Kim Bonnet, proprietors



# Warden's Diary

BY ERIKA BILLERBECK PHOTOS BY DNR ARCHIVES



# YES SIR!

I have an embarrassing problem. I'm just going to come right out and say it. Sometimes people mistake me for a boy. It doesn't help that I'm close to 6 feet tall with the box-like physique of someone wearing a bulletproof vest, and to top it off, I have short, cropped hair, which I call a "pixie cut."

These cases of "mistaken identity" used to distress me. In the past, whenever someone called me "sir," I'd call up one of my friends and say, "I just got called 'sir' again. This time I'm seriously going to grow my hair out," though I knew no such thing would happen. I like my pixie cut.

Getting called "sir" doesn't bother me so much anymore. Now I just wait for the awkward moment where the fisherman turns red and shifts around uncomfortably while he says, "Oh, sorry...um...I just saw the gun...you want to see my license?"

It is when there is no correction from "sir" to "ma'am" that we have a problem. Over the years I've conducted an unscientific study about the kinds of people who don't make the correction. Overwhelming evidence shows a high likelihood that he or she is probably drunk.

One incident that comes to mind occurred when I was called to the scene of a boat accident on Coralville Reservoir. One of the boat drivers was suspected of operating his vessel while intoxicated.

I arrived at the boat ramp to find one boat anchored to the beach with a gaping gouge in the fiberglass hull extending 4



feet along the length of the boat. Thankfully, the middle-aged couple who were on the boat when it was T-boned were uninjured, though understandably shaken up. I can't imagine relaxing on my boat, snacking on Fritos and reading the latest Stephen King novel only to look up and see the belly of a 24-foot Baja 10 yards away and bearing down.

"Where is the driver of the Baja?" I asked the trooper who was sitting in his squad car in the parking lot of the boat ramp.

"His name is Chris," the trooper said as he got out of his car and tilted his head towards a college-aged guy sitting on the curb, his head buried in his hands.

I walked over, introduced myself, and told him that we'd perform a few tests to see if he was sober enough to drive his boat back to the marina.

"You need tests for that? Can't you tell I'm drunk, sir?" he said. I smiled and glanced over at the trooper, hoping he hadn't heard the gender snafu. He hadn't.

For the next 10 minutes, Chris struggled through the tests. First was the "walk and turn" exercise.

"Do you understand?" I asked after reading the instructions.

"Yes sir," he said. I flinched at the "sir" once again hoping the trooper hadn't heard. The exercise proved to be a challenge. That rascally line jumped out from under

his feet so many times I gave up counting how many times he stepped off of it, and instead began counting the few times he actually stepped on it.

The next exercise was the "one leg stand." Again, I asked Chris if he understood the directions.

"Yes sir," he answered. Lovely.

For the first 15 seconds he hopped around wildly, resembling a preschooler demonstrating a newfound skill. I finally stopped the test early when, instead of jumping, he began leaning so far I thought he was going to take a header onto the cement.

Finally it was time for the horizontal gaze nystagmus test.

"Watch the tip of my finger with only your eyes. Do not move your head. Do you understand?"

"Yes sir," he said again. This was getting absurd.

Chris's eyes jumped around like ping pong balls, a positive clue. He was most definitely drunk.

I placed Chris under arrest for operating a vessel while intoxicated.

The trooper drove him to the police station where Chris would need to decide whether or not to provide an official breath sample to be tested for alcohol content. The ride took at least 20 minutes, and upon arrival, Chris was on the verge of leaving a puddle in the backseat of the squad car. We helped Chris out of the car and held his elbows as he waddled across the street with his knees pressed tightly together and moaning like a sick cat.

We buzzed our way through the secure doors and eventually reached the OWI processing room where Chris made a beeline for the bathroom with the trooper following. I made myself comfy at the desk and began filling out paperwork.

Chris must have gotten into position in front of the john before realizing that with handcuffs on, he had no way of fulfilling his mission hygienically. I heard him ask the trooper for some help.

The trooper removed Chris' handcuffs. Chris proceeded to relieve himself for the next five minutes straight.

Finally Chris and the trooper emerged from the bathroom. I asked Chris whether he would consent to a breath test.

"Sir, are you going to, like, take my breath from me then?" Chris asked.

"What do you mean, take your breath?" I asked, not quite understanding how you go about taking someone's breath, as if it was hiding in his back pocket.

"I mean, are you going to suck out my breath?"

"No... you have to blow. You know, like when you make bubbles blowing through a straw," I said, speaking slowly.

"OK, so you won't take it from me then," he said like he had just solved a trigonometry problem.

"No," I said.

Chris marked the box labeled "Consent" on my form and proceeded with the test. The result? .217—more

than two times the legal limit.

Next I asked Chris a series of questions from one of my forms. There were personal questions like, "What is your occupation?" and "What did you have for breakfast?" to more general questions like, "Where are you right now?" and "Where did you launch your boat?"

Chris was having problems concentrating. He kept pushing a pencil around on the desk...a millionth of an inch to the right...then a millionth of an inch to the left. Then he would crouch down low to get his eyes level with the desktop, like he was Tiger Woods lining up a putt. Then he would push the pencil another millionth of an inch. I interrupted him and asked the last question, "Were you involved in an accident?"

"No, sir," he answered.

"I mean today. Were you in a boating accident today?" I asked again, thinking about the boat sporting the giant hole in the side.

He stared upward like the answer might be hovering somewhere near the light fixture. He kept staring. I followed his gaze and discovered he was distracted by a fly crawling along the ceiling. Too bad the fly wasn't holding a sign with the correct answer because Chris finally looked back at me and said, "Nooooo siiirrrr! Nope, no accident for me, sir."

I glanced up at the trooper who was beginning to crack a grin. "Well then, I think we are done here," I said.

After booking Chris into jail, the trooper and I were walking back to our vehicles when he suddenly burst out laughing.

"What's so funny?" I asked.

"He called you 'sir' the entire time!" he said.

"You should really be sure to put that into your report. If he can't even get that right, he obviously was hammered."

I smiled and said, "Well, thank you very much, sir."

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## WONDERFUL, AMAZING JUMPING SPIDERS

Among the fastest of all arthropods, jumping spiders use speed and keen eyesight to accurately pounce on flies and crickets. Many use camouflage colors for easier stalking of prey and to avoid predators. The jumping spider family (*Salticidae*) has nearly 5,000 species, making it the largest spider family. Easy to recognize, jumping spiders have distinctive flat-faces and big eyes—an appearance different from other spiders. They also have jerky movements. Small and hairy, they often lurk near windows. They have four big eyes on the face and four smaller eyes on top of the head, with one small pair often overlooked.

### SHEEP IN WOLVES' CLOTHING

Jumping spiders are such effective hunters that some fruit flies mimic them with wing markings that resemble jumping spiders which they wave to ward off predators.

### BUNGEE JUMP

Jumping spiders do not build a web to catch prey, but anchor a silk tether before jumping. If they miss their target they climb up the tether and try again.

### HYDRAULIC POWER FOR BIG, FAST LEAPS

These fast-moving hunters are able to leap more than 30 times their body length without having large leg muscles. Instead, quick muscle contractions increase blood pressure in the legs to cause a rapid leg extension.

### COLORFUL COURTSHIP

Great eyesight allows for visual courtship displays. Males may have colored or metallic hairs and showy front leg fringe used in courtship. Zigzag movements are performed in courting dances.

### DEFOCUS VISION

Lacking visual focus, and with eyes set too close together for binocular stereovision like humans, how do they judge depth to know how far to jump? New research shows they estimate distance by comparing sharp and blurry images which are proportional to the distance of their prey. Known as image defocus, jumping spiders are the only known animals to use it. Their technique may help engineers at work on visual systems for robotics.

### INCREDIBLE VISION

Jumping spiders have the best vision of all spiders, maybe of all invertebrates. The small lateral eyes detect motion. Eight eyes are grouped four on the face and four on top of the carapace. The large eyes have high acuity, but small field of view, and the remaining six eyes increase peripheral vision, with lower resolution but broad field of view. Their excellent vision allows them to hunt like cats, spotting prey from long distances, creeping up then pouncing.



### HERE'S LOOKING AT YOU

Their moveable retina is the darkest part of the eye. Gaze deep into the eyes of a jumping spider and it changes color. When darkest, you are looking into its retina and the spider is looking directly at you.

### SPIDER GUTS

The esophagus passes through the brain to a stomach. After the stomach, the gut branches out into the legs and one branch extends over the brain. A main branch continues from stomach to abdomen. From mouth to stomach, the gut is lined with exoskeleton material. When shedding skin to grow, the esophagus and stomach are also shed, pulled out through the hole in the brain passage.

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Each "Spirit of the Wilderness" Jacket is crafted of leather, with the exception of the back shoulder panel, a polyester and leather blend which allows for a higher quality and more durable reproduction of Al Agnew's artwork.



Noble wolf image is  
featured on the back

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