

September / October 2007

# IOWA OUTDOORS

THE DNR'S MAGAZINE OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION

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**RUGGED DEER HUNTERS**

*CAMPFIRE CAMARADERIE AT A RUSTIC DEER CAMP*



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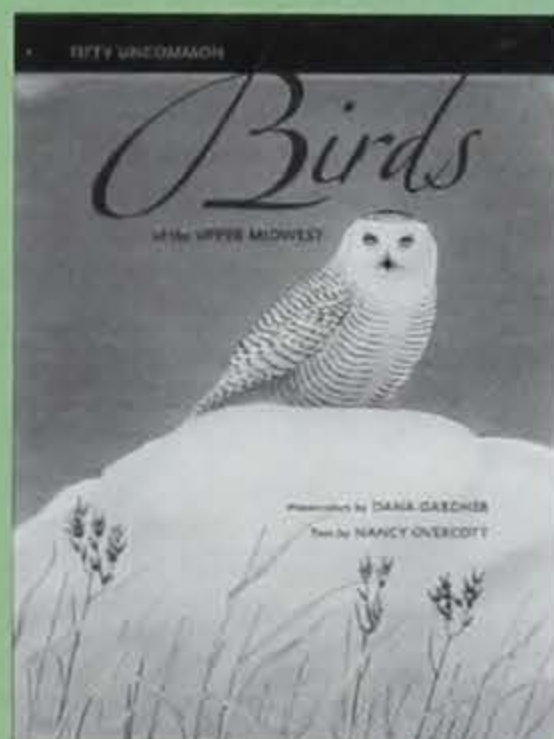
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## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



Construction of Honey Creek Resort State Park—Iowa's first "destination" park—is well underway, and we couldn't be more excited. Located on Rathbun Lake in southern Iowa, the park is scheduled to open in summer 2008.

What is a destination park? It's the natural environment and the outdoor experiences you expect in all of our state parks—trails, water and natural landscapes—combined with the comfortable, beautiful accommodations that families and conventions desire for vacations and group meetings. Honey Creek Resort State Park blazes a bold new trail for the DNR by matching Iowa's outdoor recreational amenities with economic opportunity on a much grander scale than we have undertaken until now.

One of the DNR's goals is to connect people with the outdoors. We want you to step outside and experience the beauty and uniqueness of our natural resources. We hope that each new step expands your appreciation—and your stewardship—of the natural world around you. We are especially pleased with the efforts made to ensure the resort is environmentally friendly. Lodge facilities are designed to meet high energy and environmental standards, and the golf course is Audubon-certified.

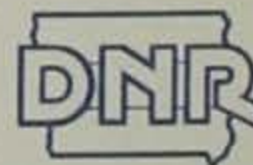
For many, appreciation of the outdoors comes from recreational pursuits like fishing, hunting, boating, biking, bird watching—and golfing. Our goal is that Honey Creek Resort State Park provides a new venue to enjoy these pursuits that appeals to all ages and interest levels.

The resort includes a stone and wood lodge that reflects the natural world around it, an indoor aquatic center, an 18-hole golf course, boating and beach facilities, and much more. Another great advantage is the opportunity visitors will have to experience firsthand the vast knowledge of our DNR staff. We believe Honey Creek Resort State Park will be the gem of Iowa's state park system.

The park will offer the balance of comfort, beauty and natural appreciation that will exceed your expectations. It's an investment in Iowa's future that puts natural resources first and an important step toward proving the beautiful landscape we call home can be a vital economic engine.

I'll meet you at Honey Creek in 2008!

RICHARD LEOPOLD, *Director of the Iowa DNR*



# IOWA OUTDOORS

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## DNR MISSION

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

## EDITORIAL MISSION

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

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# C CONTRIBUTORS



## SANDRA FLAHIVE

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



## BILL KLEIN

was born and raised in Des Moines, graduated from Dowling High School and worked briefly for *LOOK Magazine* in Des Moines. A life-long hunter, his work has appeared in *Outdoor America* magazine and many hunting and conservation magazines. He lives in Stillwater, Minn.



## KEN BLOCK

a National Park Service Ranger, left Grand Canyon National Park for the Effigy Mounds National Monument where he and his six children often hike. Beginning his career in his home state of Pennsylvania at Valley Forge National Historic Park, Ken says northeast Iowa and the Upper Mississippi River is "some of the country's most stunning scenery." He provided several photos for this issue.



## ROGER HILL

has photographed wildlife and nature since 1962 when he started hunting big game from Iowa to Alaska. His passion is photographing Iowa game. His work is published in countless state and national magazines. Roger lives on a farm with his wife, Marcia, near Roland.



## JENNIFER WILSON

is a travel writer who writes for *Better Homes & Gardens* and *Midwest Living*. Originally from Colfax, she's now a city slicker with a yard full of prairie plants in Des Moines.

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*A rustic, no-frills night in the cold woods before opening day in a big, drafty lean-to north of Shenandoah.*

BY JOE WILKINSON PHOTOS BY CLAY SMITH

#### ABOUT THE COVER

Veteran DNR staff photographer Clay Smith created the cover image after midnight. Shooting images of the hunters around the fire, he wandered from the warmth into the cold December woods. "It was a striking image," he says. "I grabbed my tripod and tried several exposures. I saw moonlight coming in on the trees, but the camera wasn't picking it up." His Nikon set to expose the campfire using a 30 second exposure, he used a series of electronic flashes in the foreground to mimic the moonlight. "I was wearing hunting gloves that open so my bare fingers could operate the gear. "It was very cold, but the final product was what my eye was seeing," he says.

#### ABOUT THIS PHOTO

Kenneth Block, chief ranger at Effigy Mounds National Monument, captured this early October image from Fire Point, nearly 350 feet above the river. "When you get up really early and the season is changing from summer to fall, sometimes the fog is so thick you are wading in it. Then it burns off on top of the bluffs and you are hiking, looking down onto fog," he says. The Great River Road, a national scenic byway, is just visible in the lower right. Downriver is the Marquette-Joliet Bridge, the arch 141 feet above the river yet dwarfed by bluffs. Barges are moored and shrouds of fog conceal the highest bluff along the entire river at Pikes Peak State Park, towering at nearly 500 feet above the water.

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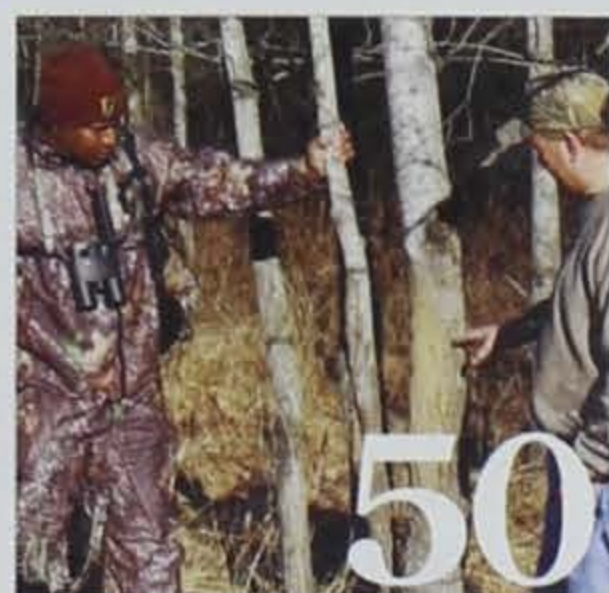
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# TOGETHER

## ACTIVITIES, TIPS AND EVENTS FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY.

### NATURAL EASTER EGG DYES

Discover a bounty of intense color palettes with easy-to-make natural dyes. In the March/April 2008 issue, we will offer simple steps to color vibrant Easter eggs using these super-intense dyes that outshine store-bought options. Get outside with a friend or loved one to gather plants and brew a tempest of color. The dyes are easily frozen for later use.

Make double batches for other projects, such as tinting fabrics and shirts. (Alum, common in grocery store spice isles, sets colors to prevent running. To stain fabric, add a teaspoon of alum per cup of dye and simmer for 10 minutes).

#### HERE'S WHAT TO HARVEST THIS FALL

"You only need a quart of berries," to concoct dye says Winneshiek County naturalist Larry Reis, renown locally for his beautiful hand-made dyes.

Black cherry, elderberry and wild grape berries offer a riot of colors. Search woodlot edges for low-branched black cherry trees to churn out a burgundy red dye. Peep around for elderberries in wetter habitats in low-lying, wild areas to make steel blue-grey colors. Use wild grape berries for royal purple tints. Hike along river bottoms, hedgerows and fencelines to pluck, nibble and gather a quart for dye. (Obtain landowner permission and leave enough berries, nuts and leaves for wildlife.)

**TO MAKE:** Smash berry types separately, add to a pan with several cups of water and simmer 20-30 minutes to extract pigments. Strain the colorful juice through a triple layer of cheese cloth. Cool and place in a Ziploc bag and freeze. Follow the same procedure for the species below.

Walnut, butternut and hickory create intense chocolate, tan and olive-brown shades. For walnuts, "shuck off the husk, that green yucky part," says Reis. "When they start to decompose they are easier to husk." Use the pigment-rich husks for dye. Green hickory nuts are easier to husk than older nuts. Allow butternuts to sit and ferment to aid husk removal. An ice-cream pails' worth creates 2-3 cups of dye.

Gather an ice-cream pail of cottonwood leaves to produce pale yellow dye. Wild sunflowers make orange-yellow dye. Place whole into water and simmer 30 minutes. Gather a gallon of goldenrod flower plumes for a true lemon yellow dye. Pick a gallon of milkweed leaves to create orange-yellow dye, again steeping 20-30 minutes.



Milkweed



Wild Grape



Elderberry



Butternut



Goldenrod



Black Cherry



Watch for our March / April 2008 issue for a look at using your new dyes to color eggs for Easter.

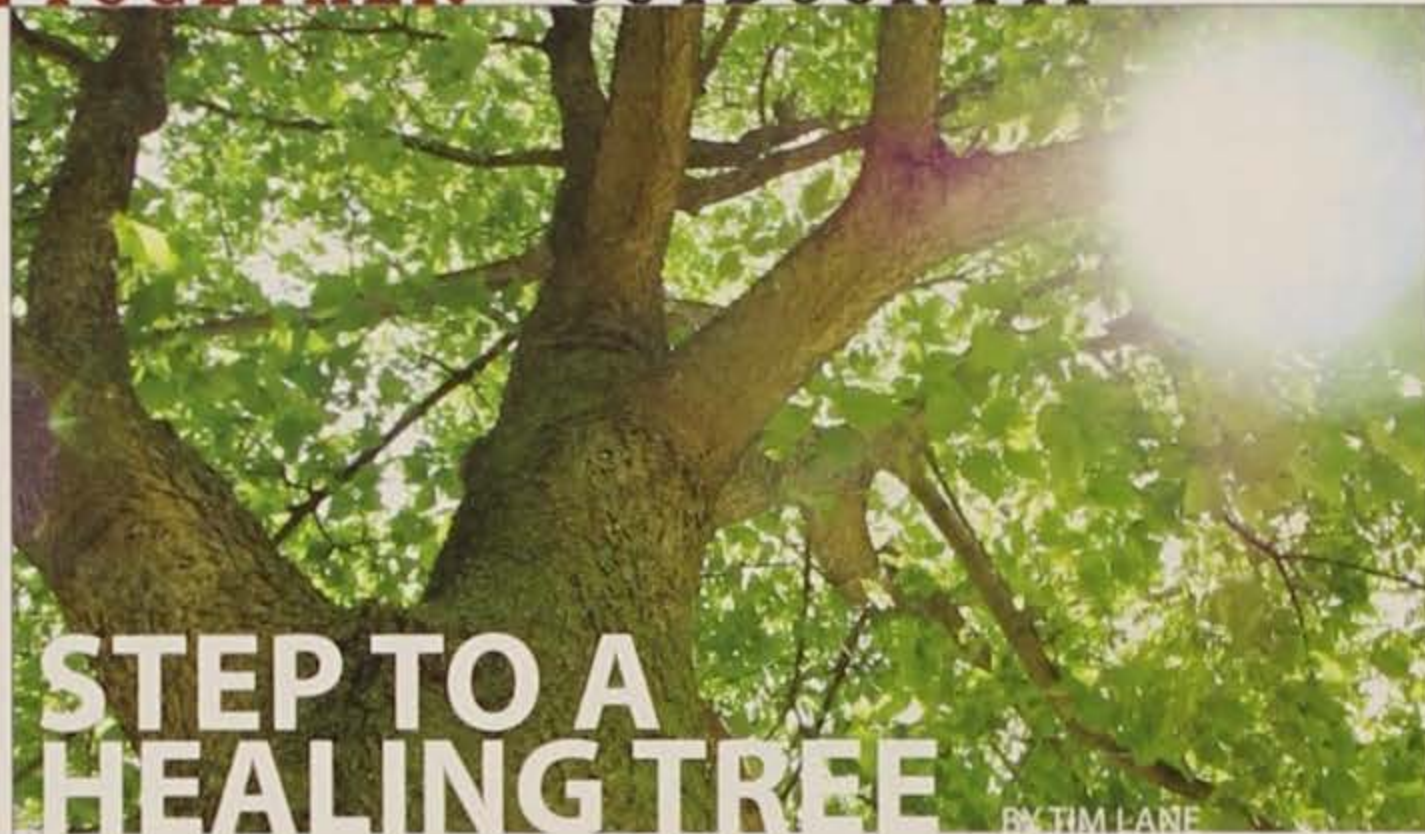


## PRESSING FAMILY FUN

Why drop \$50 on a professional plant press when you can make one at home for next to nothing. Phone books work in a pinch, but you can make a sturdy plant press that will stand up to years of use with scrap wood, newspapers and cardboard. Simply cut two pieces of plywood equal size (12 inches by 12 inches is a handy size). Clamp the boards together and drill a hole in each of the four corners. Place a piece of cardboard, slightly smaller than the wood, on one board, followed by a sheet of folded newspaper or blotting paper and a plant or flower. Place another sheet of newspaper and cardboard on top, and repeat layering until all plant specimens are in place. Place the other piece of wood on top and secure corners with a bolt and wing nut, or use a strap to cinch the pieces tight. Leave undisturbed for at least a week.

Dried plants can be used to dress up an old candle, make an attractive framed picture or used for family crafts. Use a glue stick to secure plant material to work surfaces. Dip or lightly brush a coat of paraffin wax over candles to preserve the plant.





# STEP TO A HEALING TREE

BY TIM LANE

Roger Ulrich, formerly of Texas A&M, found that hospital patients with rooms overlooking trees recovered faster, used fewer painkillers and left the hospital sooner. University of Maryland research shows that workers are sick less and have less job stress when their commute provides a view of trees and their offices have trees outside the windows.

I find that incredible. A few trees can impact health care and thus the national debt, which of course is tied to rising costs of illness.

If a few trees can do that, imagine the impact of a state park where by my scientific calculations there must be a gabillion trees. But if you do head to a park...don't just soak in the view...walk.

If a pill could lower risks for heart attack, diabetes, stroke, osteoporosis and breast and colon cancer while reducing weight, cholesterol, constipation, depression and impotence and increase muscle mass, flatten the belly and reshape thighs while reducing risks of age-related dementia and made you better-looking—with no side effects—it would cost an arm and a leg...except in Canada where it would only cost a leg.

Research shows that walking most days of the week delivers those benefits. Yet the Centers for Disease Control reports around 75 percent of Americans don't get 30 minutes of daily exercise, whether walking or more strenuous sport or recreation. And one-third of us live a sedentary life.

"We used to think that exercise had to hurt, and you had to bleed and throw up to accomplish anything," said Susan Johnson, director of continuing education at the Cooper Institute in Dallas, which studies the link between personal habits and health. "We now know that's not true."

Greg Heath, lead scientist in the CDC's physical activity and health branch, says early in your walk glands secrete adrenaline into your bloodstream and your heart beats faster and causes your blood pressure to go up. The heart pumps more blood away from the chest into limb muscles used to hike trails. Blood vessels in the arms and legs expand as they're fed more nutrients and oxygen by the blood. As your heart rate climbs, you're taking more breaths per minute, increasing oxygen intake 10 times the amount if you are sedentary. As muscles receive more blood, they use stored carbohydrates and sugar starches. Metabolism—the process of converting food to fuel—speeds up. As a result, so does digestion.

By walking 10,000 to 12,000 steps you can control your weight. Walk 2,000 more steps and you can lose weight with a healthy diet. For an average stride, 10,000 steps equals about five miles. Many lowans get less than 2,500 to 5,000 steps a day.

"Me thinks that the moment my legs begin to move, my thoughts begin to flow."—Henry David Thoreau

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

## But Why?

Helping adults answer children's nature questions

BY A. JAY WINTER

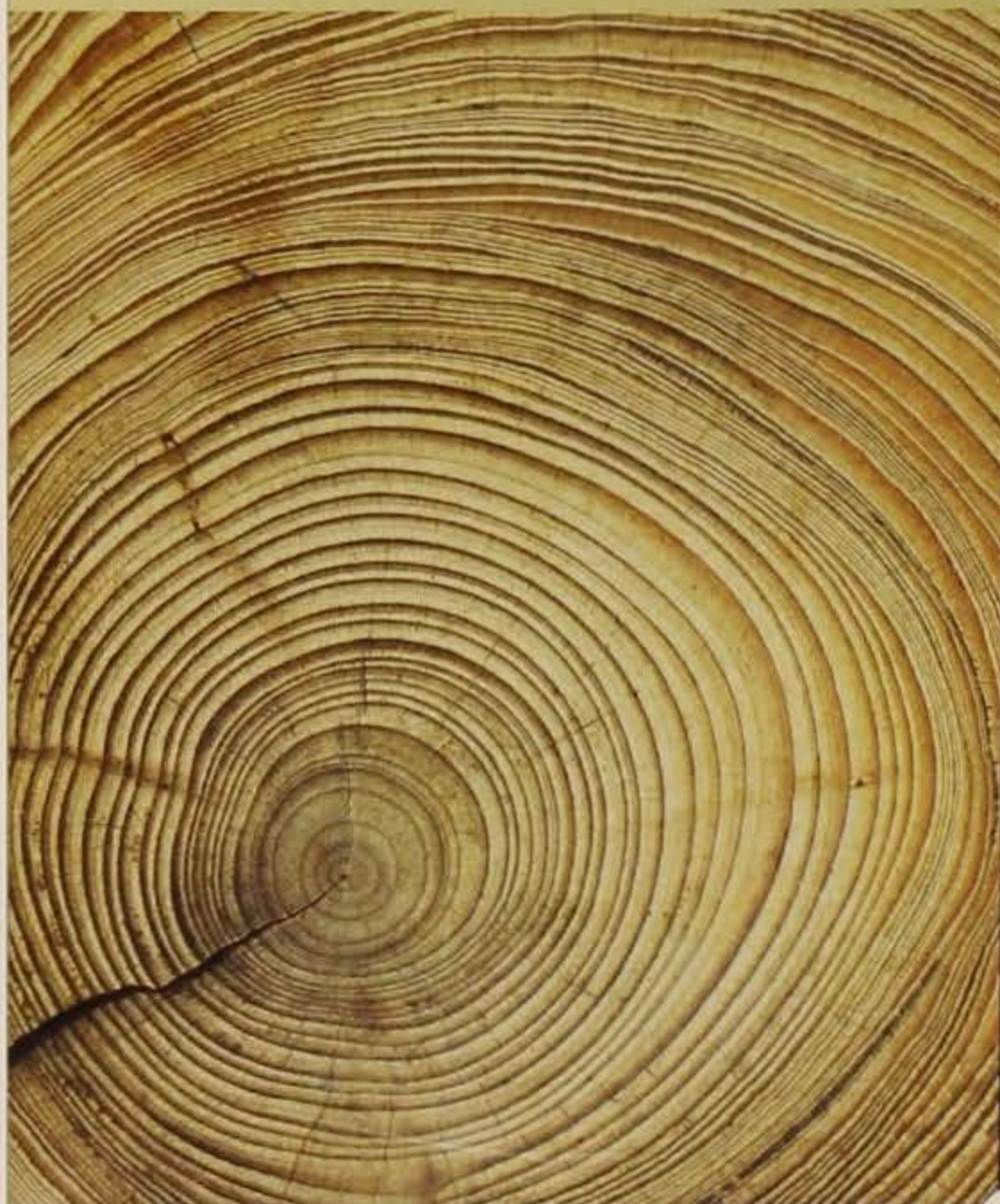
*A. Jay Winter educates up to 20,000 Iowa children each year as the DNR's training specialist at the Springbrook Conservation Education Center.*

**Why do trees have circles in the middle?**

— ABIGAIL, Age 7

Those "circles" are called tree rings, also known as growth or annual rings. Aptly named, they are measurements of each year's growing cycle. Within each ring are two layers of wood: springwood, which is lighter in color and indicates wood grown early in the season, and summerwood, which shows late season growth. Springwood rings are wider because growing conditions are typically better early in the season.

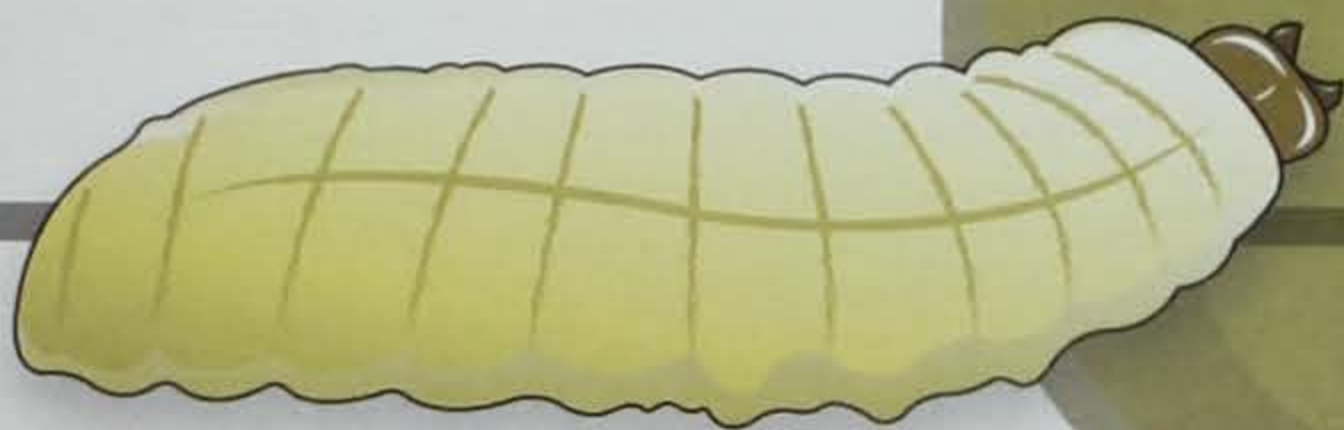
By studying tree rings (dendrochronology), scientists can tell much more about the tree than just age. They can reconstruct past climate because trees are good environmental indicators. Trees produce small rings in years of drought, larger circles when growing conditions are good. Scientists can also pinpoint the occurrence and frequency of fires by locating ring scarring.



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

### *Fishing Bait in a Nutshell*

Squirrels and gobblers love acorns and oddly enough, fish do too. Rake up acorns and place in a bucket or tray of water. Those that float could house an acorn weevil, a wax-worm-like grub. The impact from the acorn fall signals the grub to drill out of the shell to burrow underground for the winter. Float acorns within a day or two of falling—they are less likely to have the pencil-lead sized exit hole. Open shells with a hammer or nut cracker to remove grubs and bait them on a small hook for panfish.



WANING MOON

### HOW TO EASILY DETERMINE IF YOU ARE SEEING A WAXING OR WANING MOON...

If the shape of the illuminated moon fits into the cup of your **LEFT HAND**, the moon is **WANING**, where the lighted portion becomes less each night. If the moon fits into the cup of your **RIGHT HAND**, the moon is **WAXING**, or on its way to becoming full.

It takes 29.5 days to complete a lunar cycle. When two full moons appear during a month, (this happens every 2.7 years) it is called a blue moon. If you weren't paying attention, you missed the blue moon of 2007 last May. Stay tuned, the next blue moon will occur in December 2009.



THE PHOTO BY JAKE ZWEIBOHMER; TREE RINGS BY ISTOCKPHOTO.COM  
ILLUSTRATION BY JAKE ZWEIBOHMER

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# RIVER OTTERS **MYTH** CAUSING FISH DECLINES



The return of the river otter stands as one of Iowa's most successful chapters in wildlife restoration. But as otters continue to expand their range, some anglers are concerned the furbearers will have a negative impact on local fish populations.

"It's definitely a topic where passions run high," says DNR Furbearer Specialist Ron Andrews.

"We'd love to be able to give fishermen a definite yes or no answer, but the fact of the matter is that we just can't say with certainty what impact—if any—otters really do have on specific fisheries," he adds.

Researchers know most about otter and fish interactions within farm pond settings. Small ponds are the biological equivalent of 'aquatic cereal bowls' and present foraging otters with the potential to virtually eliminate desirable fish populations, says Andrews.

"When it comes to a stream setting, the jury is still out," says Andrews. "Otters are opportunistic and will take whatever fish species are most readily available. In many cases they end up foraging on less desirable species such as chubs, suckers or rough fish."

Although trout fishing enthusiasts have voiced concerns over seeing an increased number of otters along northeastern Iowa streams, there is currently no evidence to support claims that the furbearers are having a negative impact on cold water fisheries.

"We often find river otters and trout living in the same streams," says Andrews. "The numbers of catchable trout and natural reproduction of (brown) trout remains good in some of the same streams where we also have some the best otter populations found anywhere in the state."

During the fall of 2006, river otters became legal game for Iowa trappers. The season was limited to a statewide take of 400 animals and was the first legal harvest of otters in more than a century.

## ASK THE EXPERT — Mark in Davenport asks, "Did glaciers or prairies create Iowa's fertile soils?"

A gigantic sheet of ice, thousands of feet thick, creeps across what is now Iowa, slowly grinding and chewing the ground beneath. It's that glacier-gnawed soil that gives us today's bumper crops of corn and soybeans, right? While the glaciers may have gifted us with wetlands, lakes and rivers, the glaciers' effect on Iowa's soil was—well, just the tip of the iceberg. As the massive ice sheets melted, torrents of sediment-loaded water poured down Midwestern rivers, ultimately leaving sediment behind on floodplains. Like a gigantic Dust Bowl, winds scattered this sediment across the Midwest. The wind-blown silt, better known as loess, covers much of Iowa, most famously creating western Iowa's unique Loess Hills. Prairie began to grow on the loess, and as plants, animals and insects lived, died and fertilized the prairie, a rich soil was created from the loess—or as we know it today, our valuable topsoil. Soon, prairie grasses and

flowers blanketed Iowa, covering about 99 percent of the state before European settlement. Those grasses and flowers grew tall and dug even deeper into the soil, locking in the organic material and nutrients created by generations of decomposing plants and insects. The deep roots held these natural fertilizers in the soil, making it so productive now. Today, less than one percent of Iowa's original prairie remains to reinvigorate the soil. "Glacial deposits are good for making soil, especially when they're new, but in Iowa, our best soils formed from prairies growing out of loess," according to State Geologist Bob Libra. Loess makes better soil than glacial sediment, and soils formed from loess-based prairies is better than soil formed under forest, says Libra. So, the next time you sink your teeth into a juicy ear of Iowa sweet corn, thank the bluestems and coneflowers that came before. — BY JESSIE ROLPH BROWN

**HAVE AN OUTDOOR OR ENVIRONMENT RELATED QUESTION?** Send questions to "ASK THE EXPERT," IOWA OUTDOORS MAGAZINE, 502 E. 9TH STREET, DES MOINES, IA 50319-0034, or email to: [ASKTHEEXPERT@DNR.STATE.IA.US](mailto:ASKTHEEXPERT@DNR.STATE.IA.US)

BY JESSIE ROLPH BROWN PHOTOS BY CLAY SMITH



## LIFTING A RIVER'S SPIRITS

**KATA McCARVILLE, FAYETTE** PHOTOS BY KEVIN SANDERS  
Upper Iowa professor organizes Volga River cleanup and helicopter lift

Who do you call when a 3,500 pound tank sits in your favorite spot along the Volga River? If you're Kata McCarville, it's the National Guard. McCarville, an assistant geosciences professor at Upper Iowa University in Fayette, rounded up students and 50 volunteers to tackle river trash—with no means to move the old co-op truck tank. A disastrous 1999 flood stranded the tank next to Big Rock, a picturesque student hangout inaccessible by roads. While volunteers yanked a motel sign, teapots, bicycles, propane tanks and tires from the river, the National Guard hovered above in a Chinook helicopter. In less than 10 minutes, the helicopter swiftly lifted the tank and dropped it into Birdnow Auto Salvage a few miles away. "It's an ongoing mission of ours to move equipment, so this is

great training for us, and fun to do," says Chief Warrant Officer 4 and pilot Dan LeDoux of the Iowa Army National Guard unit based in Davenport. McCarville organized the cleanup along the 12-mile river stretch after kayaking with a class. A \$900 Community Leaders Enhancing Area Rivers (CLEAR) Grant from the DNR allowed her to recycle the tank and other scrap metal pulled from the river. "It was a real opportunity to blend what I want to do in the classroom and something that would benefit the community," McCarville says. "The Volga has a lot going for it, but I wanted to see the community protect it and use it as a draw for recreation."



Mark and Terry Brockway with Terry's grandson, Joel Salvador.

## RESTORING A REFUGE

**MARK AND TERRY BROCKWAY, BURLINGTON**  
Brothers renovate vast wetland area and create wildlife refuge

Today, it's a luxurious rest stop for ducks and wildlife along their migration interstate. The land where the Skunk River meets the Mississippi more resembled a dilapidated roadside motel, logged and silted in, before Burlington brothers Mark and Terry Brockway restored 1,600 acres. "Mark and I decided if there was a possibility to purchase the property, we would, to save it. We made a promise that we would turn 85 percent of it into a refuge," Terry says. They restored 600 acres of wetlands, allowed streams to meander and planted 5,000 trees, earning them the 2007 National Wetlands Award for Landowner Stewardship. The brothers planted natural grasses, sunflowers and milkweed, producing a natural buffet for bald eagles, blue herons, egrets, game birds, songbirds, even butterflies. "One year we had millions of monarchs. You couldn't see through them they were so thick," Mark says. The duo worked with many organizations, but paid most of the costs themselves. "Their level of motivation stands out, because of their passion for nature," says Randy Robb, a Natural Resources Conservation Service wetland restoration specialist. The brothers opened their Greater Blue Heron Wildlife Refuge to the public. "Our dad has always taught us to enjoy nature and protect it," Terry says. "I'm almost 65 and felt it was time to give back to nature, and this was the perfect area to do that."

## A HISTORICAL RENDEZVOUS

**MYLES KUPKA AND AL BECKER, FORT ATKINSON**  
Volunteers work more than 15 years to share the area's rich history

For more than 15 years, Al Becker and Myles Kupka have been digging up history at the Fort Atkinson State Preserve in Winneshiek County. The pair works with archeological excavations, organizes volunteers, writes grants and teaches schoolchildren—earning an outstanding service award from the Iowa State Preserves Advisory Board. "They are a miracle in getting local volunteers excited about history and preservation," says board member Cindy Peterson. The fort, occupied from 1840 to 1849, sat in disarray for years. Today, it's a highly valued archaeological site and teaching tool, thanks to Becker and Kupka. The pair has coordinated digs that unearthed artifacts from the fort which stood in the "neutral zone," where the federal government moved the Winnebago to separate the feuding Sioux, Sac and Fox. "We want to keep it for someone else. The area (neutral zone) here is unique—it's the only one," says Kupka, who's led the Fort Atkinson Historical Preservation Commission since its inception in 1990. Becker, a history teacher for 30 years, visits schools in period dress before the annual Fort Atkinson Rendezvous' School Day, where more than 1,000 students watch demonstrations on Iowa pioneer life. "It's taking our local history and putting it into perspective," Becker says.



PHOTO BY LOWELL WASHBURN

# Autumn Gold in God's Country

BY JENNIFER WILSON PHOTOS BY CLAY SMITH

Ancient effigy mounds, 500-foot bluffs and cold springs abound along the Father of Waters in magical Marquette and McGregor. From high atop Pikes Peak, let fall colors ignite your soul.

Wrapped in a fiery blanket of autumn maple, oak, sumac, birch and aspen, the northeast Iowa towns of Marquette and McGregor tuck into a pocket of land where farm and river meet. High limestone bluffs hoist travelers up to view this fine spectacle of nature, as the fall colors of thick lowland forest along the Mississippi River bid farewell to summer.

Ancient burial mounds and effigies in the region stand as evidence that people have always come here for solace, be it to commune with the spirits or to pull a big old Northern pike from moving water or to drink a great cup of coffee in a sprightly little shop that's seen 100 years of wanderers just like those traversing its bluffs and backwaters today.

## DESCENDING TO THE RIVER

In northeast Iowa, the cattle and corn just seem to fall off the edge of farm country and into the Mississippi River valley. Here, anglers dip into the river's abundance every season of the year.


At Pikes Peak State Park, just over 11 miles of trail traverse 960 acres of land, including Pikes Peak Overlook a few steps from a pristine campground. In its brilliant panorama, the area's history unfurls.

In 1805, after the Louisiana Purchase, Zebulon Pike explored the Mississippi to find a suitable military fort. Pike chose this very spot for the rockin' view, though the government settled on the more accessible Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. (Later, Pike was sent further west, accounting for The Other Pikes Peak in Colorado.)

Just across the river from the overlook, two centuries earlier, explorers Marquette and Joliet rounded the final bend of the Wisconsin River in a canoe.

"They were the first white men to see what is now called Iowa," says Park Manager Matt Tschirgi (pronounced shur-gee—it's Swiss).

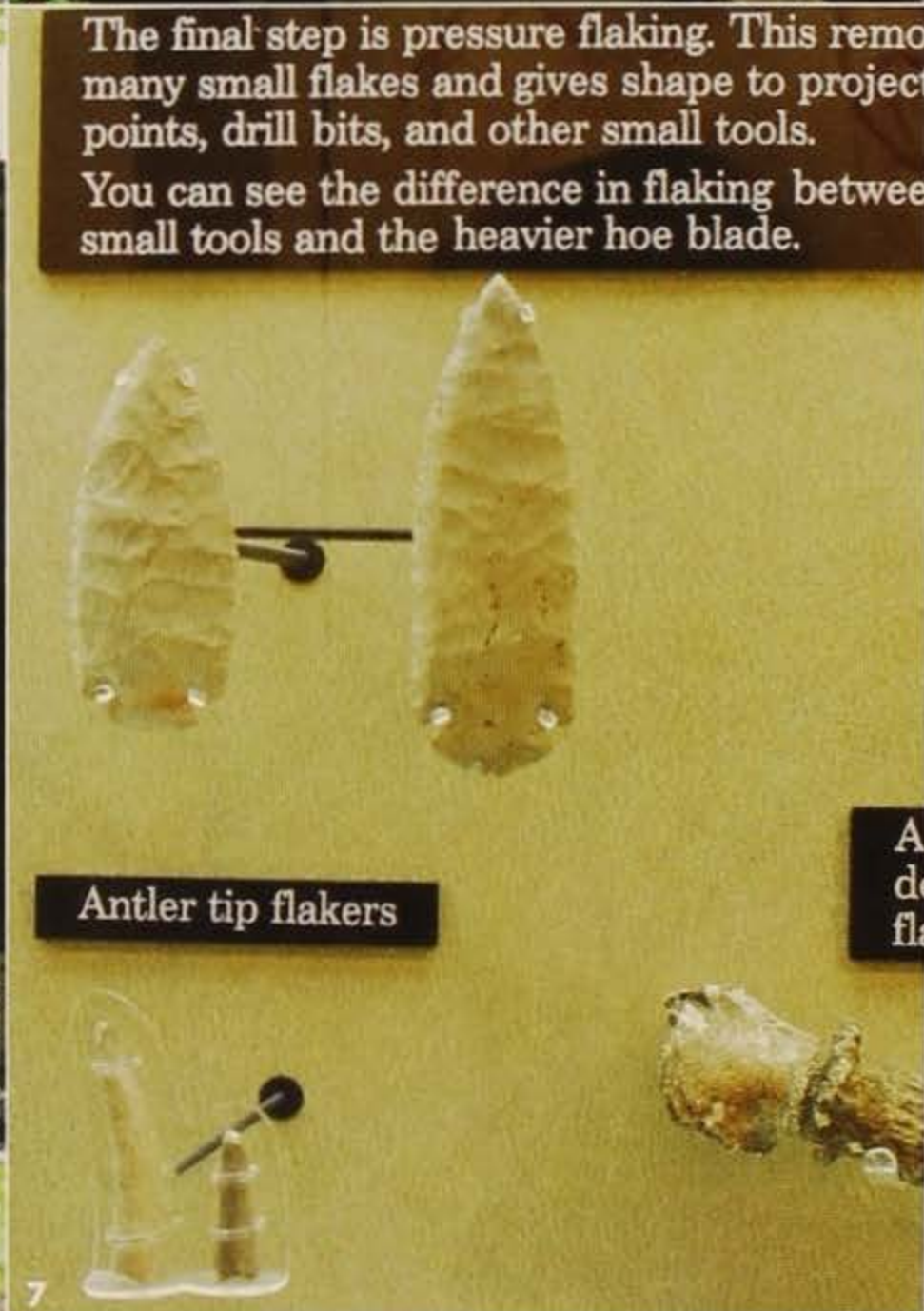
Families funnel past the overlook, then hike 15 minutes along a wooden boardwalk to Bridal Veil Falls, with its horseshoe-shaped dribble of water that freezes in winter to look like its namesake. The quieter old-growth oak and hickory forest trail to Point Ann takes 3 ½-hours—less on a bike. Its reward is a cool view of McGregor (and an unfortunately gigantic grain mill), originally established in 1837



The adjacent river immersed in fog, The Great River Road, a U.S. National Scenic Byway, peeks through the treed bluffs near Effigy Mounds National Monument and Pikes Peak State Park. For peak fall color reports, visit the DNR forestry webpage at [www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov).

# LOST IN IOWA

1) Hikers examine three conical burial mounds adjacent the Effigy Mounds visitor center. 2) At Pikes Peak State Park, several hundred steps take hikers down to Bridal Veil Falls. 3) McGregor's Main Street offers antique shops, eateries and places to parch thirst after an active day outdoors. The town sprouted in 1837, when a river ferry began, although local history reaches back thousands of years, evidenced by American Indian effigy and conical mounds. 4) Named by settlers for the strange sounds near the hillside entrance, today visitors can explore the 47-degree Spook Cave via boat tour. 5&8) Fall color views from Pikes Peak near the picnic area. 6) In the winter, Bridal Veil Falls forms a long wedge of ice that resembles its namesake, says park manager Matt Tschirgi, who notes a bear-shaped effigy mound is found left of the falls.





**7&10)** Visitor center exhibits at Effigy Mounds show stone points of chert and flakers used to chip or knap the stone points. A model eagle nest built by Boy Scouts gives visitors an impression of actual nest size. Visitors should budget 2.5-3 hours for the center and several hikes—more to hike 7 miles roundtrip to Hanging Rock. **9)** The office at Spook Cave near the private campground. **11)** Pikes Peak campground offers 77 campsites with pine and oak tree shade and an immaculate restroom/shower facility. Fall is the busiest camping time, with campsites filling as early as mid-week (make reservations at 1-877-IAPARKS). Peak leaf viewing is usually mid-October, or call the park for conditions (563/873-2341). Hikers can explore steep wooded bluffs and valleys, sheer walls of Decorah limestone and river overlooks.



as a ferry crossing by the man whose private land became this park.

"This is where everything funneled through, and trails and roads developed to move westward," says Tschirgi. "It was a gateway to the west."

It's now a gateway to a fine portion of the Upper Mississippi, where the river is relatively clean and slow, and a few hours in a boat restoreth the soul.

### A DELICATE BALANCE

"I really love this river."

Tschirgi pushes off a canoe from the Sny Magill boat ramp just south of the park. He's a young guy, tall and thin, wearing that standard floppy canvas hat canoe people often do. He glides along Johnson Slough, noting where motorboat wakes erode the riverbank, and trees seem to nearly slide into the water. An otter eases into duckweed, and a fish breaks the smooth surface in search of breakfast.

Yet there is something that seems almost brittle here. Hunks of Styrofoam bob against a bank. Fishing line dangles from a tree, just across from a roosting bald eagle studiously ignoring visitors.

Tschirgi says local river clean-ups make a good reason to visit—a little work, a little sightseeing. At the very least, any traveler can pack out trash.

Paddling is a fine way to survey the water's health. Tschirgi nods toward the eagle to make his point. "If we would've been in a motor boat, he would've been outta here," he says. "Motorboats seem like they push the wildlife out of their homes."

Silver river maples line the water in pastel shades of yellow and green. A misty fog hangs low. Tschirgi drops a heavy rock in a small net as an anchor, and casts a few times around a snag, hoping to catch a bass or northern.

In fall, he says, the buzz of Jet-Skis and power boats subsides. Leaf-peepers crowd in during weekends, but weekdays, visitors can get pleasantly lost here. The Upper Miss just seems to offer a sense of enveloping calm that feels pretty good.

Robert Myers, owner of Boatel's boat rental on the north side of McGregor, says that's what brings his customers back every year. White-haired and tan, Myers scuttles around a white-and-aqua pontoon that matches his white jeans and cobalt blue shirt in retro style.

He hands out advice before vacationers launch his pontoon. "Stay in the channel, and use common sense," he says. "Have a safe trip, and watch out for barges!"

Boating the main channel boils down to this: Stay between the red buoys of the Wisconsin side and the green buoys of the Iowa side. Easy stuff. There isn't a lock and dam to cross for 17 miles north or 18 miles south. The river is wide, so it's easy to avoid kayakers hugging the shoreline and barges chugging coal

shipments upstream or grain downstream to the Gulf to ship overseas. There are plenty of sand bars to dock and hang out.

"You can hike any of the islands, and see eagles in the winter," says Myers. "Not too long ago, we saw trumpeter swans. Anytime of the year, it's muskrats, beaver, or little water animals.

"It's really just a great place to be."

### OLD TIMES, NEW TIMES

"... 'feeling' the past and the environment is as valid an experience as 'knowing' it scientifically."

The words of anthropologist R. Clark Mallam posted at Effigy Mounds National Monument, three miles north of Marquette along Highway 76, seem a direct command for visitors to immerse in the spirit of this area. Over a 1,000 animal-shaped earthen Indian mounds, known as effigies, remain in the three-state region from a Woodland culture that built them for reasons that we may never know. No other place in the world has this concentration of effigy mounds.

A museum, interpretive center and more than 200 American Indian mounds are located at the monument, on steep trails along 400-foot bluffs.

Three khaki-clad women head to the mounds, lured in after a guided hike along the Mississippi Flyway. "I think it's because they're mysterious, and so old," says Angie Farrell of Lakeville, Minn.

"Not only can you enjoy the mounds for history," says Judy Beckman of Fairmont, Minn., "you can enjoy the natural surroundings, which are really unique to this part of the world."

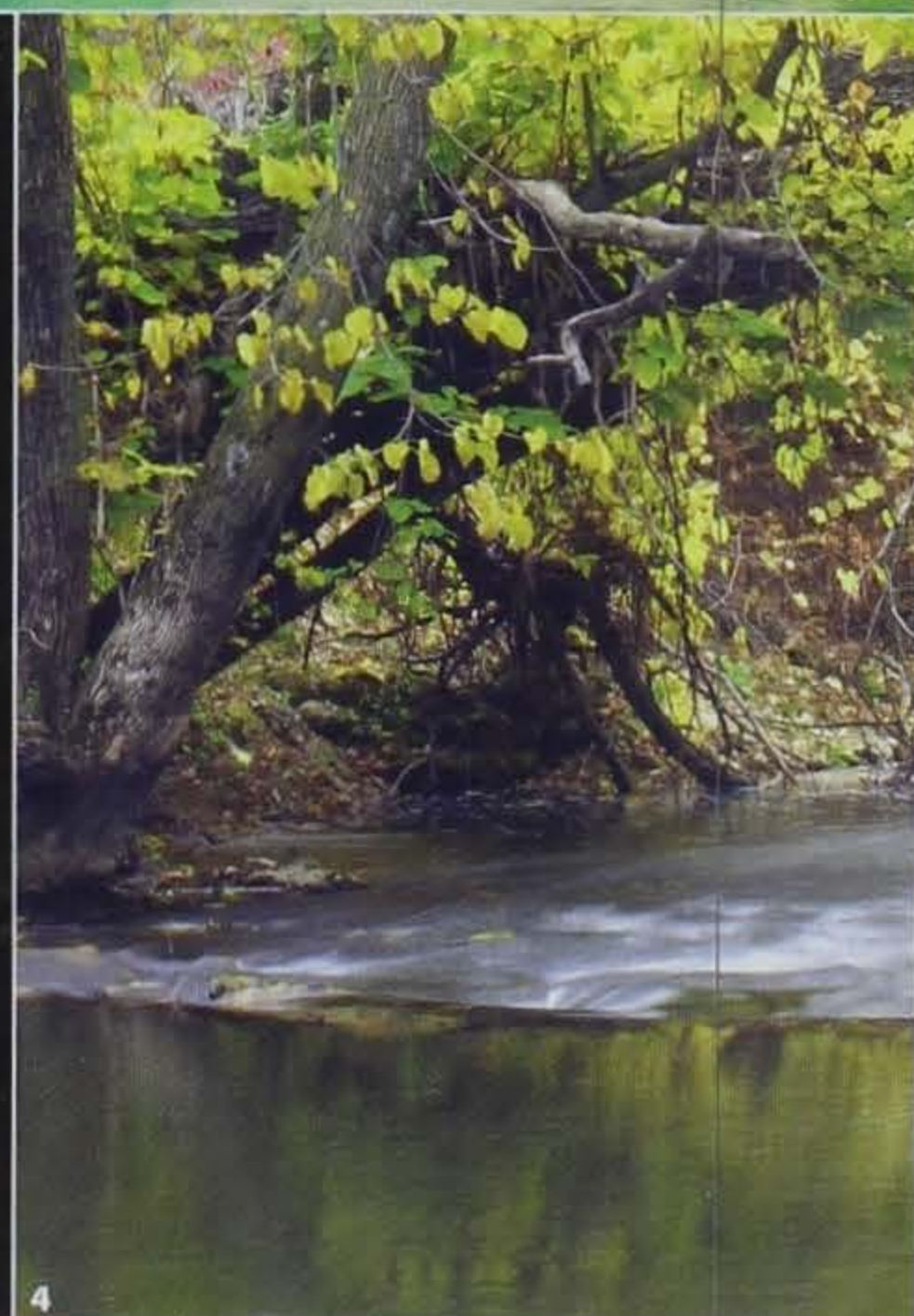
Just as area parks preserve traces of bygone times, so does the town of McGregor, showing how renovated storefronts revive the spirit of a place. It's clear that the town is flourishing because of its conservation efforts. Marquette, a mile north, isn't as far along, but does have a winery worth checking out, and the popular Isle of Capri casino.

As more people travel here, places like Iowa roadtrip icon Spook Cave will see even more traffic. Seven miles west of McGregor on Highways 18 and 52, this 93-acre campground features a cave at the base of a 90-foot bluff along Bloody Creek (good for trout fishing). Take a flat-bottom boat on a drippy, damp guided tour (not good for the claustrophobic) and immerse in its lore and legend as people have done for decades.

Fall brings an arts and crafts festival, farmers market and flea market to the small towns. But soaking in the surroundings seems to be the favored pastime around here.

"There's a phrase that some of the old-timers use that I like—they call this area Little Switzerland," says Tschirgi. "Maybe I'm partial to it because I'm Swiss, but anyone who visits here knows that description isn't too far off the mark."

**1&2)** Spook Cave, 7-miles west of McGregor, closes Oct. 29th, along with the private campground and lake. Boat tours of the cave last 35 minutes and a light jacket is recommended for the 47-degree air temperatures. **3)** "It's a common misconception" of the view, says DNR Pikes Peak manager Matt Tschirgi, "You can't see three states from here, that's farther upriver," he says. But from this overlook, you can see Wyalusing State Park across the river in Wisconsin at the confluence of the Wisconsin and Mississippi River here, and an eagle's eye view hundreds of feet above numerous hideaway sloughs and islands. The park also offers limited mountain biking. **4)** After gazing at commercial barges navigating the channels, casting for trout on area streams offers solitude on smaller water as autumn gold spills forth on streams with great place names like Sny Magill and Bloody Run.



## IF YOU GO...

### LODGING:

#### PIKES PEAK STATE PARK

15316 Great River Road, McGregor, IA 52157-8558

ph. 563-873-2341, fax 563-873-3167

E-mail address: [Pikes\\_Peak@dnr.state.ia.us](mailto:Pikes_Peak@dnr.state.ia.us)

77 campsites and pristine restroom facilities. \$11-\$16.

#### PARADISE VALLEY CAMPGROUND

19745 Keystone Road Garnavillo, IA 52049

563-873-9632 or email: [sandy\\_landt@hotmail.com](mailto:sandy_landt@hotmail.com)

Includes a swimming pond, trout fishing pond, cabins and laundry facilities.

#### LITTLE SWITZERLAND INN


Built in 1862 when the town was established, a collection of

guest rooms and one funky little cabin with a kitchen garden as a yard on Main Street in McGregor—breakfast could be anything from biscuits and gravy to quiche. Ask for Sadie's Cabin or the spacious Rob Roy with a balcony overlooking town. \$85-\$125 for doubles. 563-873-2057 or cell 608-412-0400; [www.littleswitzerlandinn.com](http://www.littleswitzerlandinn.com).

### EATING:

**THE TWISTED CHICKEN.** Great food from local producers, decent wine list, enthusiastic service and fresh flown-in seafood. A fantastic break from the supper-club scene or the fried-food drudgery of road travel. It's a small, contemporary space—call for reservations. 212 Main St., McGregor. 563-873-1515; [www.thetwistedchicken.com](http://www.thetwistedchicken.com).

**MR. MCGREGOR'S BEER AND BRATZ GARDEN.** Brats soaked in beer with warm sauerkraut and onions—and plenty of options



A warm sunrise lights-up Fire Point at Effigy Mounds, giving the appearance of a wooded trail in the clouds. Across the river, Prairie Du Chien, Wis. is lost in the fog. Fire Point is named from charred clay found in an excavated burial mound built about 2,000 years ago. A ceremonial fire may have burnt the clay, hauled up from the river, 350 feet below.

for just plain beer. Riverfront and Main streets, McGregor; 563-873-9613.

**LATINOS MEXICAN RESTAURANT.** Good gut-busting eats in a restaurant by day, bar by night. 213 Main Street, McGregor. 563-873-3838.

#### **ON THE WATER:**

**PADDLERS** can use any public boat ramp, though Sny Magill is a quiet backwater for easy paddling, located by the Paradise Valley Campground on County Road X56.

**BOATELS HOUSE BOAT RENTALS & MARINA.** Season through the third week in October. On the north side of McGregor along the river, a variety of rentals from houseboats to pontoons. Check the website for pricing. 563-873-3718, 800-747-2628; [www.boatelshouseboatrentals.com](http://www.boatelshouseboatrentals.com).

#### **ATTRACTIONS:**

**EFFIGY MOUNDS NATIONAL MONUMENT.** 151 Highway 76, Harpers Ferry. \$3-\$5. 563-873-3491; [www.nps.gov/efmo](http://www.nps.gov/efmo).

**SPOOK CAVE:** Cave tours \$8 adults, \$5 kids. Camping \$15-\$21, cabins \$55-\$95. 563-873-2144; [www.spookcave.com](http://www.spookcave.com). The campground is popular, as the high bat population keeps the mosquitoes at bay, and a pretty waterfall and fishing/swimming pond add scenery.

**EAGLES LANDING WINERY,** 127 North St., Marquette. 563-873-2509; [www.halvorson.org/vineyard/](http://www.halvorson.org/vineyard/).

**PAPER MOON.** Shopping in McGregor is fun, and this little bookstore and gift shop is the best for browsing. 206 A Street, McGregor. 563-873-3357; [www.papermoonbooks.com](http://www.papermoonbooks.com).

# The Well-Mannered Hunter

BY BILL KLEIN

*Most hunters know to ask permission before hunting on private land, and to close the gates so the cows don't get out. But private-land etiquette extends far beyond that.*

*Straddling the peak of the roof on my 100-year-old farmhouse, the roofer had a good view of deer habitat. "I'd consider it a privilege if I could try my luck bowhunting on your place," he said.*

*When I said maybe he could, he scrambled down the ladder to show me his expensive bow, tucked in a hard case under the roofing tools in his truck. Also in the case was a quiver full of carbon-shaft broadheads and some field points for practice.*

*From underneath a bow and arrow target so riddled with holes that it looked like a giant round of Swiss cheese, he fished out a dog-eared photo album.*

*"And this is my son Jason," he said as he led me through several pages of deer hunting snapshots.*

*"But where are the deer?" I asked.*

*"Oh, Jason has passed on lots of smaller does and button bucks. He's waiting for the right one."*

*After telling me he scouts year-round, he asked, "Do you mind if I take a break from the roofing to look for deer signs now?"*

*"Chuck," I said, "I'm paying you by the job, not by the hour. Have at it."*

*Unknowingly, or perhaps knowingly, Chuck had hit all of my "yes" buttons for granting permission to hunt. He had obviously made an investment of time, energy and resources in his sport. He knew the critical importance of scouting early. And most important to me, he had made a commitment to teach the next generation of hunters reverence for the resource.*

*For nearly 20 years I've been granting or denying hunters access to my small farm. And for many more years, I've been asking for permission to hunt all across the Midwest. I've made some mistakes, especially early in my hunting career. And I've learned from them. I've seen hunters who do—and hunters who don't—get the direct connection between their behavior and their access to private land.*

*Here are some highlights of the lore I have picked up and tried to pass along to my own sons and daughters.*



### *Scout For Land*

One of my axioms of hunting: Go where the game is. Check out the wildlife population in your desired area. Then plan one or more scouting trips at least a month in advance of the season opener.

Take along a plat map book of the county you are scouting. If you see game while you are driving around, mark the location on the map. The plat book provides the landowner's name, then you can use the telephone directory or Internet to look up a phone number or mailing address to contact the owner later. Many county offices sell plat maps of individual townships (six square miles) or a plat map book of all townships in a county.

### *Talk to the Landowner*

Whenever possible, ask for hunting permission face to face. It's much easier for a landowner to say "no" over the phone.

When you meet the landowner, light up your face with your warmest smile and state who you are. Begin the discussion by referring to the plat map. The map labels you a serious hunter intent on not trespassing, and it enables you to show the owner where you would like to hunt. Specify when and for what species you plan to hunt. Be candid about how many hunters will be with you. Try to keep your group small.

Property owners like to know who is hunting on their land. When I approach landowners, I always hand them one of my hunter's cards. One side of the card has my name, address, and phone number, and a picture of my dog and me. The flip side has my hunter honor code. I invested about \$35 in my cards at a local print shop.



### *Introduce Young Hunters*

If you plan to have youngsters hunt with you, have them tag along when you ask for permission. This experience serves as a good example for young hunters, and their presence enhances your chance for success in securing permission. Young people bring the right kind of emotions to the moment—anticipation, excitement and joy. And adults find it harder to disappoint children.

If the answer is "no," always say, "Thank you, just the same." I've been stopped in my retreat to my truck several times by people who changed their mind because of my courteous behavior.

If the answer is "yes," ask the landowner to tell you where not to hunt. Mark the location of livestock, standing crops, and any other off-limits sections in pencil on your plat map.

### *Plan to Walk*

On the day of the hunt, park near the landowner's home, let him or her know you've arrived, and then walk—don't drive—to the hunting ground. Walking is one of the joys of hunting. And it assures you won't be mashing crops with a 5,000-pound pickup truck.

If you are hunting with a dog, make sure your host has agreed to that. Use a leash until you are away from cats and other temptations. Remember, how you and the other members of your hunting party conduct yourselves will dictate whether you will be welcomed back—or not.

### *Stick to Your Stated Time and Quarry*

A yes from a landowner doesn't mean carte blanche to hunt anything anytime. Agree on what quarry you will hunt and when you will hunt. Never assume permission to hunt is for any other day than that one you asked to hunt.

I gave a fellow permission to hunt deer on my property last fall. Hearing several reports from his shotgun before 8 a.m., I thought he was either shooting poorly or had multiple tags to fill. But when he came back to his truck, he was carrying two pheasants. When I reminded him of the 8 a.m. start time on pheasants, he said, "I don't have my watch with me."

Wear your watch. And if you say you want to hunt deer, stick to deer.

### *Alter the Land Only With Permission*

If you want to put up a deer stand, first discuss its construction, placement and dismantling.

If you need to trim branches to open shooting lanes, get the landowner's approval before whacking away.

If you are camping overnight on the property, a campfire is nice; but first ask if you may build one. Always judge dry conditions, humidity and wind before lighting a fire. When in doubt about your ability to contain a fire, do without.

A good rule of thumb: Leave things as you found them. Assume you will be cleaning your game at your own home. In case circumstances such as warm weather dictate gutting immediately, get your host's permission before unsheathing your knife. Ask if you should bury the gut pile.

A compact shovel is a handy tool on all kinds of hunts. Besides using it to clean up after drawing game, you can use it to dig a latrine. The same deer hunter who shot birds on my property also left some toilet paper, flagging his open-air spot, which my black lab found and rolled in.

### *Say Thanks in Many Ways*

After the hunt, take a moment to stop and say thanks. If you've been successful, ask if the landowner would enjoy a share of the harvest. Deliver cleaned, wrapped and labeled game as soon as possible. Remember to give your host a game receipt with your name, address, and hunting license ID number; the recipient's name and address; a description of the gift (including quantity of each species); and the date.

When you are hunting someone's property, you might notice a problem, such as a broken fence or a tree down across a tractor path. Tell your host what you have seen and offer to help fix it.

When you've hung up your hunting boots for another season, write a follow-up letter to your hosts. I once sent a photograph of my daughter to a farm couple who hosted her first pheasant hunt. When I returned a year later, I was pleased to see







the picture still posted on their refrigerator.

I have a list of landowners who get a poinsettia from me every Christmas, whether or not I hunted on their property the previous fall. Expensive? Yes, but consider the money you have invested in your hunting equipment. A gift to thank the people who provided you a place to hunt is a small part of your overall investment in the sport.

### *Keep Your Friends*

The friendships I forge with landowners are among the genuine joys of hunting. Many years ago I was granted permission to hunt pheasants on a farm in Union County. Russell, the landowner, enjoyed teaching me about the business of farming. Now, nearly 30 years later, it has been my privilege to count his son, Ken, and grandson, David, among my life-long friends. The social gatherings after the hunt are like icing on the cake for a bird hunter.

Such friendships transcend the taking of another buck or another duck. And they add a dimension to the sport that lasts well beyond the hunting season.

*Bill Klein is a lifelong hunter and a freelance writer.*

## *Hunter Honor Code*

*I promise to know the rules before the season starts.*

*I promise to obey the rules even when no one is watching.*

*I promise to teach the next generation of hunters by good example.*

*I promise to remember my personal bag limit may be less than the legal limit.*

*I promise to treat the land and the landowner with respect.*



# Hunting Forecast

BY MICK KLEMESRUD PHOTOS BY ROGER HILL

**WITH WILDLIFE POPULATIONS  
GENERALLY STEADY OR ON THE RISE,  
IOWA HUNTERS ARE AIMING FOR  
ANOTHER BANNER YEAR**

ns one of the top pheasant hunting  
of families coming together each fall  
2007.

l position among pheasant hunting  
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and ice cover than average and spring  
for Iowa pheasants. Hen pheasant  
less snow cover, and nesting success

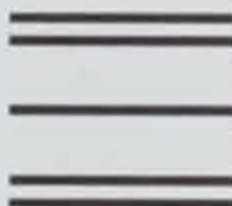
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in regions with better upland habitat.  
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east Iowa because more normal snow  
avy rains in western Iowa did not  
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regions are better than others, each  
pheasant hunting.

rediction model is accurate 70 percent  
nt population is the DNR's August  
d between Aug. 1-15 and the results  
5. Hunters can leave their e-mail on  
oadside numbers are posted.

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# Hunting Forever

BY MICK KLEMESRUD PHOTOS BY

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J07AC

## **RINGNECK PHEASANTS**

Pheasant hunters take note: Iowa remains one of the top pheasant hunting states in the country, and the tradition of families coming together each fall to pursue this wily bird will continue in 2007.

Despite the Hawkeye State's elevated position among pheasant hunting destinations, Iowa ringnecks may be a bit more difficult to find in 2007 if roadside counts confirm what appears to be a poor nesting season. Based on weather data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Iowa's winter had more snow and ice cover than average and spring was wetter than normal, not good news for Iowa pheasants. Hen pheasant survival is better after mild winters with less snow cover, and nesting success is better during warm, dry springs.

Although the weather model predicts similar or lower pheasant population from 2006, there will be good numbers in regions with better upland habitat. Iowa's northwest region had the highest pheasant population in 2006, followed by the north-central and central regions. The nesting outlook was more positive in east central and southeast Iowa because more normal snow cover and spring weather prevailed. Heavy rains in western Iowa did not bode well for successful pheasant nesting.

The key to finding pheasants is habitat. Where there is larger chunks of habitat, there will be birds. While some regions are better than others, each offers pockets of good habitat and good pheasant hunting.

While the weather-based population prediction model is accurate 70 percent of the time, the best predictor for pheasant population is the DNR's August Roadside Survey. The survey is conducted between Aug. 1-15 and the results are posted at [www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov) by Sept. 15. Hunters can leave their e-mail on the site and receive notification of when roadside numbers are posted.



# Hunting Forecast

## **WATERFOWL OUTLOOK**

Waterfowl hunters have good reason to be optimistic: a good production year from ducks and geese usually means lots of young, inexperienced waterfowl in the fall flight. And that usually results in above average harvests. Iowa hunters should be optimistic, but also realistic. The groundwork for a good fall flight through the state is there, but when the birds arrive, where they congregate and how long they stay depends on summer and fall weather patterns.

## **DUCKS**

Wetland habitat conditions varied substantially across the Prairie Pothole Region of North America, but overall, more areas had good habitat than poor. As a result, ducks are expected to have an average to better than average production year. North Iowa had dry and wet areas producing average breeding conditions. A wetter than average spring in South Dakota bodes well for duck production and a good flight through western Iowa. North Dakota had habitat similar to Iowa, but overall wetland conditions appeared good and an average fall flight is expected.

In Minnesota, habitat conditions were generally good in the southern part of the state, but very poor due to dry weather in north-central and northeast Minnesota. The dry conditions should result in good wild rice production, attracting ducks to that region and placing them in a good position to migrate over central and eastern Iowa.

The prairie portions of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba had fair to good pond numbers, whereas the

parklands in these provinces generally had excellent wetland conditions. The Northwest Territories had good habitat conditions as well. As a whole, that should result in an above average fall flight. Local habitat conditions and the fall weather patterns will largely determine how many of these birds stop in Iowa.

## **CANADA GEESE**

Canada geese should have an average production year in Iowa, Minnesota and Manitoba, which is good news for Iowa hunters given that about 80 percent of the Canadas shot in Iowa originated from these regions. Nesting geese in the Arctic regions were also poised to have a good production year.

## **SNOW GEESE**

Snow goose numbers appear to have stabilized in recent years, but given the warmer than normal weather in the Arctic and Subarctic regions, they will likely have a good hatch, which would continue to negatively impact coastal marshes in the Arctic and around Hudson Bay.

## **IOWA TURKEY OUTLOOK**

Many Iowa hunters pass on the opportunity to hunt turkeys in the fall because they are busy with ducks, deer and pheasants, which is too bad. Yes, fall hunting is different than spring hunting, but different doesn't mean harder. It can be easier.

Fall turkey hunting is done by separating individual birds from flocks, then calling them back together. The





# Hunting Forecast

best turkey numbers can be found in the Loess Hills region in western Iowa, and in northeast Iowa. The fall turkey harvest is mainly hens and young turkeys.

Those young turkeys will be from the 2007 hatch. Iowa had an average year for brood recruitment this spring, which means there will be good fall hunting for most of the state. There has been below average recruitment in south-central and southeast Iowa the past year, but there will still be plenty of turkeys to hunt. The heavy rains in May probably did not impact turkey production too much. Hens that lost the nest from the storms had time to re-nest. A warm, dry June is the key to turkey recruitment. If a hen loses a nest in June, she likely would not attempt to re-nest.

The light hunting pressure and low harvest numbers will not impact Iowa's turkey population. The lack of a stealth approach to fall turkey hunting makes it a good opportunity to introduce the sport to someone, especially kids. They do not have to be quiet, they get the excitement of busting up a flock, then they can sit and let the birds come to them.

## **FURBEARER HUNTING AND TRAPPING OUTLOOK**

Got Raccoons? Iowa has plenty. Raccoon numbers are best south of I-80 and east of I-380, but wherever there is timber, there will be raccoons. Coyote numbers are high,

too, and the population is spreading from its southern and western base to over much of the state. The red fox population is considered average, with fox sprinkled throughout the state. The 2006 river otter season was a huge success and this year it is expected to be the same. There are good numbers of beaver and mink sprinkled throughout the state.

Muskrats, once the bread and butter species for the Iowa trapper, has been on a population decline. Muskrats are still present on Iowa marshes, but for several years their numbers have not been high.

The outdoor experience of hunting and trapping furbearing animals is more valuable than any pelt price. While pelt prices fluctuate from year to year, the overall market remains good.

## **DEER OUTLOOK**

Iowa will maintain its place in the upper echelon of the deer hunting hierarchy with another banner year projected. While there are good deer hunting opportunities in each county, the best hunting will again be in eastern and southern Iowa.

The most recent population surveys showed an increase in numbers. After two years of harvesting more does than bucks, and an increase in the overall deer harvest, state wildlife experts had expected the herd size to be shrinking. And in some areas it has. However





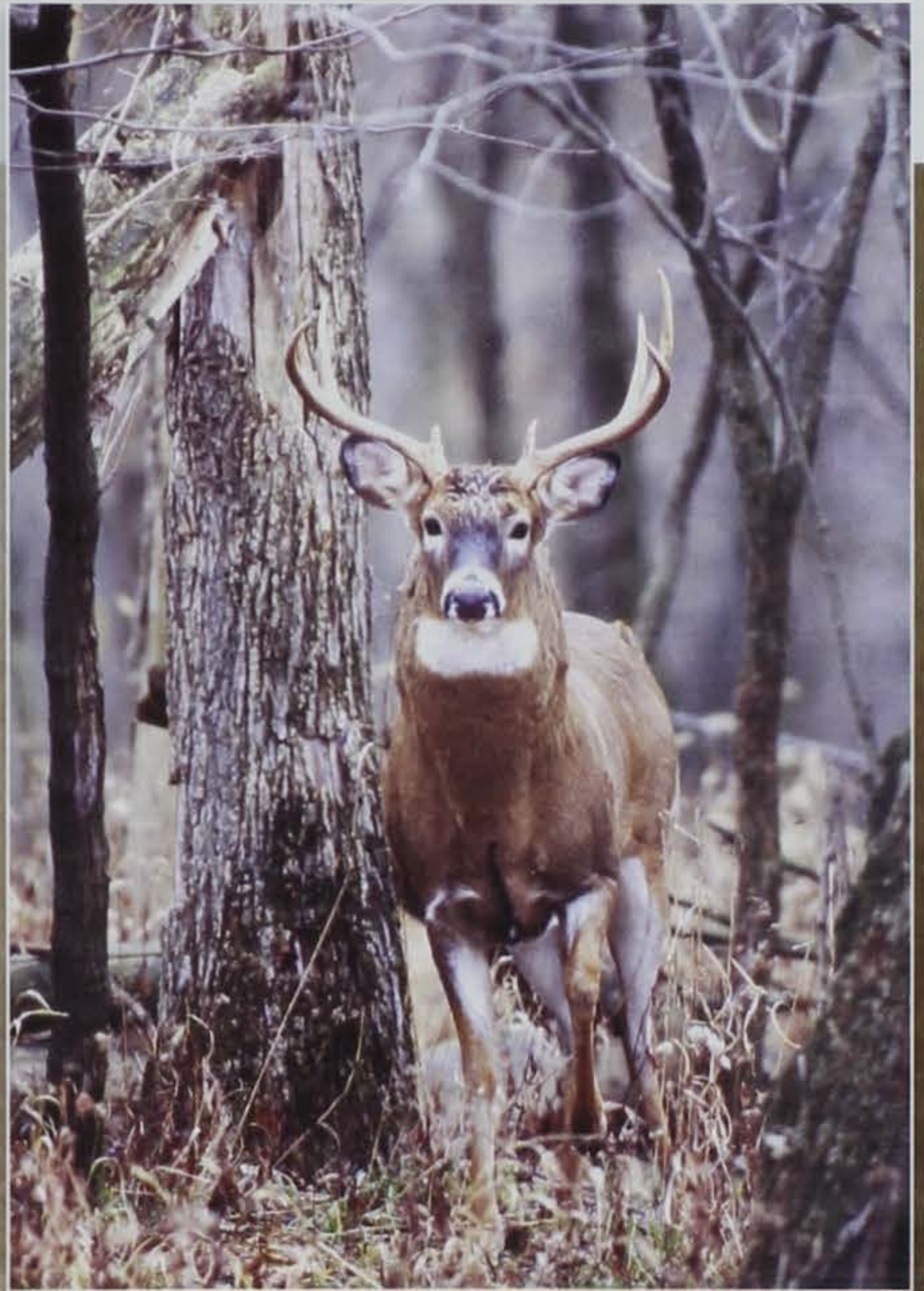
in other parts of the state there will be an extended January deer season and 13,000 additional antlerless-only deer tags in the counties where the population remains larger than desired.

Although the December shotgun seasons have the most participants and a strong tradition of hunters and families getting together for the annual hunt, Iowa offers a number of other underutilized deer hunting opportunities. These include an early muzzleloader, bow, youth only and late muzzleloader seasons, as well as special November and January antlerless deer seasons.

While many hunters prefer hunting on private land, there are plenty of deer and a tremendous opportunity to hunt on public land. Surveys show most deer hunters only hunt for three days surrounding each season's first weekend, so if hunters can find the time to go during the week, they would likely find little competition on many of these public hunting areas.

Hunters can extend deer hunting opportunities by traveling to southern Iowa for the January antlerless-only deer season. Generally public land does not need the extra pressure but hunters should find it relatively easy to gain permission to hunt antlerless deer on many farms if they ask permission.


The 2006-07 harvest data shows 52 percent of the deer taken in Iowa were does, and 61 percent were antlerless deer. Hunters are doing exactly what was asked of them to manage the herd. 🍖



# Padlocking Rock the Shell Moonlight

BY NATE HOOGEVEEN PHOTOS BY CLAY SMITH

Full moons  
bring a  
band of  
friends  
together  
along the  
river



**T**here's a place on the Shell Rock River where a riverside ridge studded with cedars presides over a westward view of the setting sun. Almost like one of nature's rhythms, a canoe with two men and an armful of firewood arrives once every 28 days at the sandbar below. If the weather is fair, maybe 10 more canoes will come with them. If not, it'll be just the one.

The men will build a fire and set up camp chairs. They may cut a few lengths of arrow-straight sandbar willows to roast hot dogs. They may cast a line to see if the catfish are biting. They may crack open a cold beer. They absolutely will tell stories, and for this, the more canoes full of characters, the merrier the evening.

And, after moonrise on a cloudless night over open water on the Shell Rock River, you can bet Jim Hegg and Bruce Juell will shove off from that sandbar, bellies full of hot dogs and s'mores, guided by the half-light of a full moon.

Every month there has been open water and open sky for the past couple decades, Hegg, 59, and Juell, 51, paddle south of Shell Rock, Iowa, a bit before sunset. When it's cold, they don't always stop for long.

Tonight, I'm invited for the moonlight float. The leaves are just beginning to turn, and I'm looking forward to paddling under a harvest moon. We load up and launch, shoving off behind the old creamery. Our group numbers 10, and



it's one of those glorious fall 72-degree afternoons.

I've been privileged to paddle across Iowa, but this river stretch is new to me. For these folks, it's about experiencing the river like an old friend, telling jokes everyone's heard, singing songs everyone knows the words to.

Just out of town, we paddle under the golden light of evening sun which illuminates cornfields along the banks,

scrubby trees and gapingly scarred banks, covered in places by junky-looking concrete slabs sometimes used to keep riverbanks in their place. Rounding a bend to the right, though, the banks instantly become sloped with wildwood, and the character of our journey changes.

"It's a nice stretch," says Hegg. "It isn't rough, so novices don't have to worry. It's convenient. It's just kind of become a tradition for us."



### **FRIENDS ON THE WATER**

Hegg and Juel have been friends since 1977, when Juel built a home next to the Hegg's. They were never just the "good fences" kind of neighbors. They began taking occasional paddling trips to Minnesota's Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

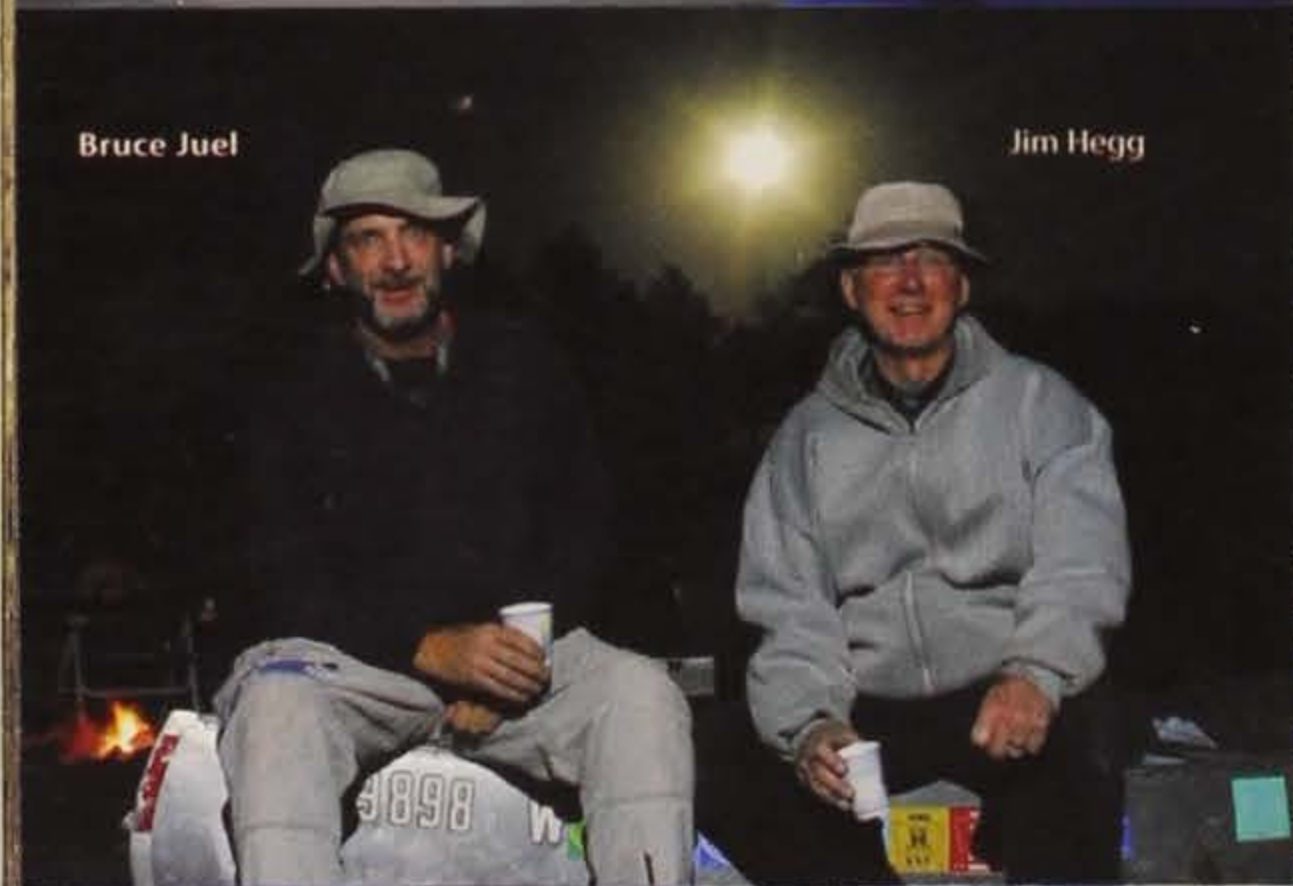
"We fish together, we camp and we do projects," says Hegg. "When he builds a garage I help him. When I put a roof on he

helps me. He's a good friend. He'd do anything for you."

Juel has since moved to an acreage outside Shell Rock, but the two continue to connect for home projects and fun on the rivers.

In the mid-1990s, in the late afternoon before Juel's daughter was to perform in her Christmas program, the river was open, although the air temperature was quite cold.

"Have you ever dipped candles before?" asks Juel. "The



ice kept getting a little thicker on our paddles each time we took them out of the water!”

They didn't bother to stop at the sandbar that evening, and they did make it to the pageant in time.

### LUNAR RHYTHMS

These trips put Hegg and Juel in touch with the moon and its cycles. Most folks don't know the difference of a waxing

or waning moon all that well. Jim Gates, a moonlight float regular who teaches physical education for the Waverly-Shell Rock School District, for years had followed Hegg and Juel's lead. Having missed the full-moon float, he once tried paddling by the light of a waning moon, two nights after a full moon. After sunset, he couldn't figure out why the moon wouldn't rise like it normally did on the moonlight float trips.



"I didn't realize that even though the moon still gets pretty full, that it won't rise until nearly two hours later."

### **SONGS AND STORY ON THE SANDBAR**

Today, it takes less than an hour to arrive at the sandbar. Everyone slides their canoes onto the sand. A fire is going as the sun sets, and soon we are eating and telling tales. Jim and Judy Meyer of Waverly, are obviously valued in

this group for their senses of humor. Jim, a natural-born storyteller, regales the group with an animated telling of "Old Blue," an only slightly off-color tale of the pucker-factor of crossing a mountain pass on horseback.

Then Jim Gates begins tuning his guitar. I wonder what sort of acoustic melodies he will grace us with for the evening. Turns out, Gates' plays the sort of humorous country tunes with verses in spoken word popular in

## PADDLING BY THE LIGHT OF THE MOON

### HOW DO I KNOW WHEN THE MOON WILL BE FULL?

Check out [www.farmersalmanac.com](http://www.farmersalmanac.com) and click on "astronomy" for the dates.

### CAN I GO ALONE?

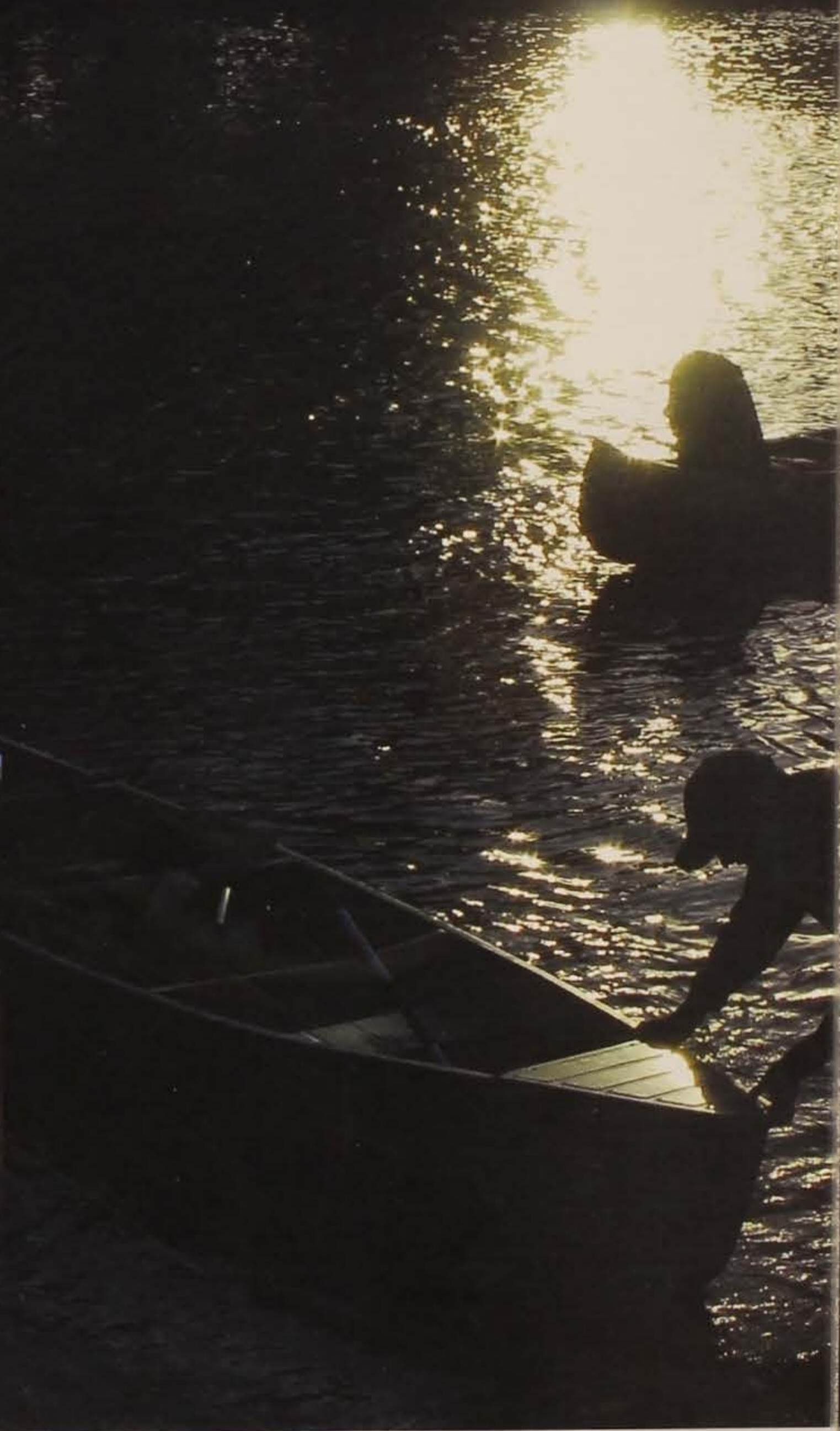
Paddling alone is never a good idea, but it's even more true at night. There should be people who are not only experienced paddlers in your group, but who also are very familiar with the segment of river or lake you choose. A full moon can help you see, but it is more difficult to anticipate what's ahead. Paddlers with poor night vision will be challenged even more.

### WHAT SHOULD I BRING?

A headlamp is a very good idea. LED headlamps use very little battery power and are available at discount stores for as little as \$15 in the camping section. Bringing along a life jacket for each person in the boat is the law—wearing it makes you smart.

### WHAT SORT OF STRETCH SHOULD WE PICK?

A short stretch will be plenty, and one that isn't terribly challenging during the day is best. Snag-riddled stretches of river are a problem for most paddlers at night.



my childhood, songs along the lines of Johnny Cash's "A Boy Named Sue." Gates' specialty was a Ray Stevens song called "The Day the Squirrel Went Berserk," about a squirrel that gets loose and creates all kinds of mayhem at the "First Self-Righteous Church."

It occurs to me that the sandbar is a place that all these folks are perhaps most themselves. The sandbar has begun to feel like a living room outpost for all of

us. On a sandbar, in front of a fire, it seems you can say anything.

### INTO THE MOONBEAMS: THE FINAL LEG

After an hour or so, conversation and song winds down, and we get back into the canoes. The silvery moon reflects on shimmering waters. If the sandbar is about friendship, the last leg of this journey is about silent reverie. As our





canoe slips through inky water, the plops of water droplets falling off our paddle tips are magnified. The crickets' slow autumn song is punctuated only by occasional murmurs from the human interlopers in canoes.

Past an island, we round an east bend to face straight into the moonlight. Here, the river widens and slows over a shoal. The surface looks metallic, almost like a pool of mercury, except the glassy sheen is strewn with large

rocks protruding from the river. Downstream of the rocks, the even and gentle current creates triangular shadows of flow called eddies, pointing at us on the surface like arrows interspersed across the water's surface.

Just downstream is a bridge, and below the bridge is our landing. It's a little swift here, and Hegg and Juel are sure to help everyone get their canoes safely ashore. It's a friendly end to a friendly evening. 🐸

# Fall Fishing Bonanza

BY MICK KLEMESRUD



Hunting season approaches, but don't hang up those rods and reels. Summer's sluggish fish are headed to wintering holes to put on the autumn feed bag.

**CRAPPIE** fishing at *Lake Miami* is awesome, biologist Mark Flammang says. Fish a jig and minnow in the middle of the lake. Peak hours are 5:30 p.m. until dark. When crappies begin surface feeding, cast into the schooling frenzy and make a haul. Crappie fishing picks up at *Three Mile* near brush piles or drift fishing 5 to 6-feet deep open water.

For **PANFISH**, "*Lake Anita* should be outstanding in the fall if the lake fills," biologist Chris Larson says.

**CRAPPIE** fishing at *Black Hawk Lake* meets or beats springtime. Fish the handicap-accessible jetty in Town Bay. Use a salt and pepper tube jig with Crappie Nibbles or a wax worm lowered 6- or 7-feet along the pier. Fish between the west and north stone piers with a lead-head tipped with a wax worm or nibble 2- to 2-1/2-feet below a bobber early or late in the day. As temperatures cool, the bite lasts all day.

*Lake Odessa's* **CRAPPIE** bite is excellent, with most between 8- to 10-inches and many between 14- and 16-inches. Fish the Sand Run area to the horseshoe bend and Burris Ditch all along fallen trees.

*Southeast Iowa rivers* offer trophy flathead **CATFISH**. Look for holes in large logjams, concrete pilings or riprap and use green sunfish or bullheads on bank lines or diddy poles. *Lake Darling* has good flathead fishing with cats up to 60 pounds.

*Lake Manawa* wiper fishing is best when water temperatures are below 60 degrees. **WIPERS**, some measuring 29 inches and pushing 10 pounds, move to the east shore in large numbers. Use a 2- to 3-inch white twister with a 1/8- to 1/16-ounce pink lead-head on a medium heavy rod with 8- to 10-pound line. For big ones, select a reel with a good drag.

*Mississippi River* **LARGEMOUTH BASS**, **BLUEGILLS** and **CRAPPIES** head to deep backwaters to prepare for winter. If you can't get in, fish the mouths of backwaters. *Norwegian Lake*, *Methodist Lake* and *Swift Slough* draw fish from miles. Other over-wintering backwaters are *Big Slough*, *Harpers Slough*, *Cassville Slough* and *Wylusing Slough in Pool 10*, *Wise*, *Frentress*, *Stone's* and *Tippey lakes in Pool 12*, and *Crooked Slough* and *Brown's Lake in Pool 13*.

**WALLEYE** and **SAUGER** fishing picks up mid- to late-September. Cast or troll crankbaits or three-way rigs with floating crankbait in front of wing dams. In October, sauger move to tailwaters and hit minnows or night crawlers on a jig.

**WHITE BASS** at *Rathbun* chase shad schools into shore. Any point with wind blowing in will have white bass. Use 2-inch white twister tails. Depending on water level and clarity, white bass fishing can be excellent at *Coralville Reservoir*. Troll shallow running crankbaits along rocks. If you catch one, stay put, there is a school nearby. *Coralville* brush piles will hold **CRAPPIES**: jig with a minnow. Fish move shallow as water levels increase for waterfowl season.

**YELLOW BASS** fishing is good at *Clear Lake* jigging minnows, night crawlers or cut bait in 14- to 16-feet of water. Try the hotspot north of the island. **WALLEYE**, **CRAPPIES** and **BLUEGILLS** bite at *Lake Icaria*, *Three Mile*, *Little River* and, if full, *Twelve Mile Lake*.

For **WALLEYE**, troll crankbaits at *Five Island Lake*. Fish around the footbridge, *Buffalo Run* and *Reeds Run* at *Spirit Lake*. At *Center Lake*, use a jig, minnow and bobber or shallow running crankbait. Walleyes turn on in *Silver Lake*, too. If the spillway is flowing between *Spirit* and *East Okoboji* lakes, anglers can hammer **WHITE BASS**.

**MUSKIE** fishing picks up from mid-September into October in *Spirit* and *West Okoboji lakes*. "There are some beautiful fish in these waters," biologist Jim Christianson says.

**RIVER WALLEYE** begin heading to over-wintering holes when water temps hit 50 degrees. "If you can find where those over-wintering spots are, you can really get into some great walleye fishing," biologist Bill Kalishek says. "This is the best time of year

to target walleyes." Use a lead-head with a white or bright twister tail. Tip with a minnow or piece of night crawler and look for deeper water. "October and November is a fantastic time for big walleyes," he says.

**SMALLMOUTH BASS** fishing turns on as river temperatures drop. Use crankbaits or jigs tipped with a night crawler or minnow in the *Maquoketa* below *Lake Delhi*, the *Shell Rock* in *Butler County*, the *Cedar* below *Waverly* and the *Wapsipinicon* below *Independence*.

In late October, interior **RIVER SMALLMOUTH BASS** and **WALLEYES** head to holes with 10- to 12-feet of water. There is a good class of walleyes from the 2005 stocking, now around 15 inches. "We saw them in almost every river we sampled and anglers are catching a lot of them," biologist Bryan Hayes says. In pools 9 to 14 on the *Mississippi*, smallmouth bass will hang near rocks until mid-October.

**TROUT** stockings end, but unannounced plants occur through October and fishing pressure is lower.

In northwest Iowa, fish **CHANNEL CATFISH** on the *West Fork of the Des Moines River*, above and below *Estherville*, using night crawlers. Use a jig and minnow for **WALLEYES** around riffles near *Estherville* and *Emmetsburg*. Wade if water levels allow.

**PERCH** fishing picks up in October at *Lake Cornelia*. Boat anglers do best in the north end dredge cut. *Silver Lake*, east of *Lake Mills*, has a lot of perch but sorting for keepers is necessary.

*Missouri River* flows drop one-third in the fall, making prime **WALLEYE** and **SAUGER** fishing. Use a jig and minnow in scour holes until ice forms.

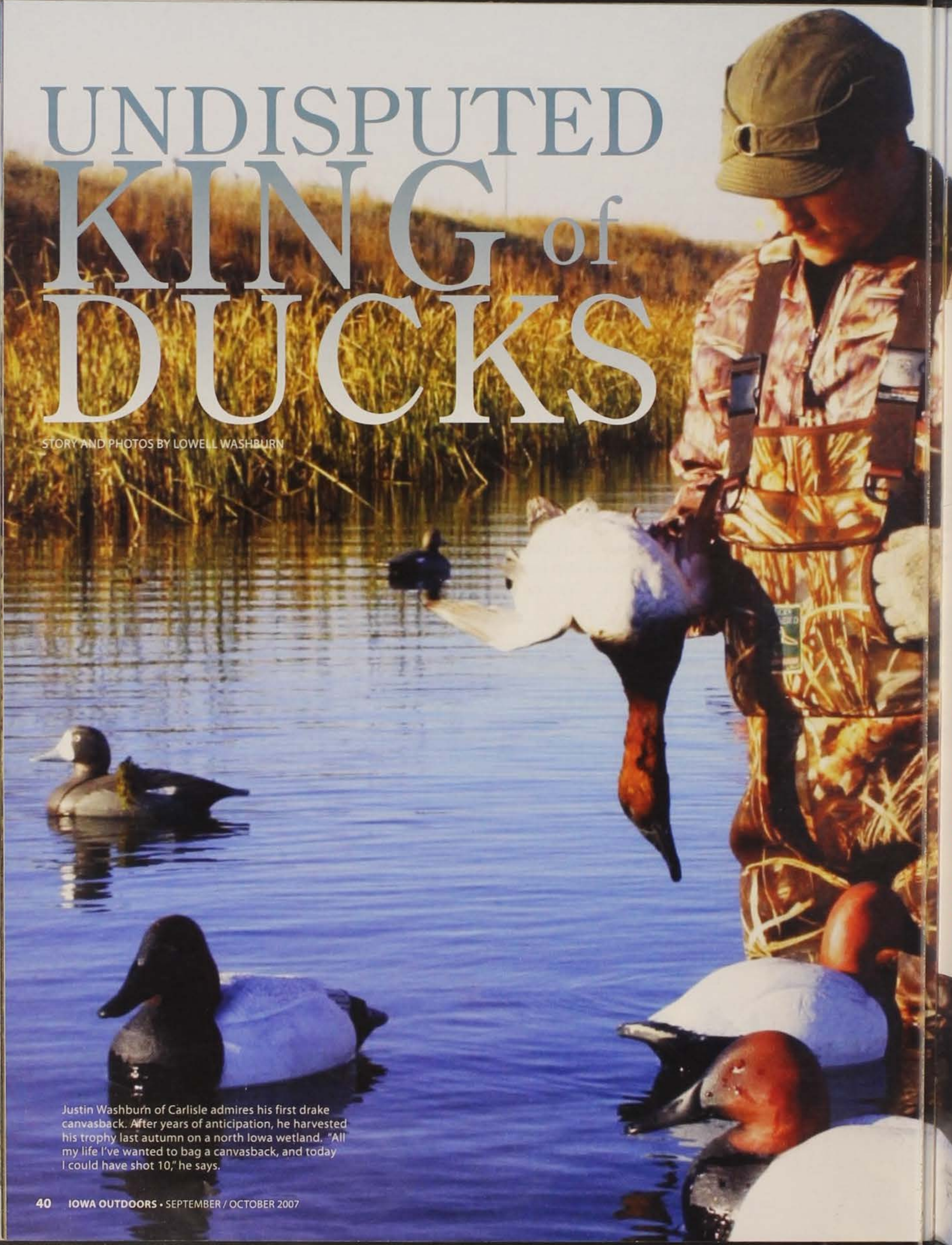
*Pleasant Creek* has many 14- to 16-inch **LARGEMOUTH BASS** moving to the shallows. Crankbaits or spinner baits in the brush are hard to beat. *Diamond Lake*, near *Montezuma*, offers quality largemouth bass, **BLUEGILLS** and **CRAPPIES** around brush. *Union Grove* has a big class of 8- to 10-inch crappies sitting in brush, too. Use a little tube jig or small minnow. "They can really stack in to those areas," biologist Paul Sleeper says. All it takes is a couple of warm days to turn the fish on. 🐟



LURE IMAGE BY ARLAN RULTON

# UNDISPUTED KING of DUCKS

STORY AND PHOTOS BY LOWELL WASHBURN



Justin Washburn of Carlisle admires his first drake canvasback. After years of anticipation, he harvested his trophy last autumn on a north Iowa wetland. "All my life I've wanted to bag a canvasback, and today I could have shot 10," he says.

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I may have just shot my last duck of the season. It's late in the year, and today is one of those brutally cold, blue-finger mornings. Wind is roaring out of the northwest and the lake has become a cauldron of dark waves. Nighttime temps dropped into the single digits with wind chills 15 below zero. Local marshes have been frozen solid for a week, and the lowering sky is beginning to spit serious snow.

For local duck hunters, it's the final hurrah. By now everyone has concentrated along protected shorelines of large lakes and reservoirs. It is the only game in town. But even deep water has its limits. When these howling winds finally blow themselves out, even the biggest lakes will ice shut and fall will be over. Things could be a whole lot worse though. The

prime drake canvasback—the King of Ducks. On the edge of the winter storm, the drake was traveling alone. To the teeth of the wind, it was obvious the big diver was any. I spotted the can' about the same time he spotted the of the distance, the bird's huge size, powerful flight and left no doubt as to its identity.

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shirk his duty as a nonslip retriever, the Labrador simply ked up the duck, and handed it to me. Neither one of us s an inch from our seats. If this was indeed going to be ck, it would be a memorable conclusion to a great season. you are or where you hunt, bagging a prime drake gnature moment. The dog and I decided to celebrate last of our ham on rye sandwiches. Tucker is the only who enjoys a good strong horseradish with his ham. Once

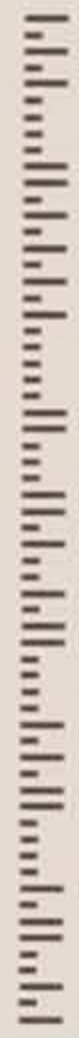
# UNDISPUTED KING of DUCK

STORY AND PHOTOS BY LOWELL WASHBURN



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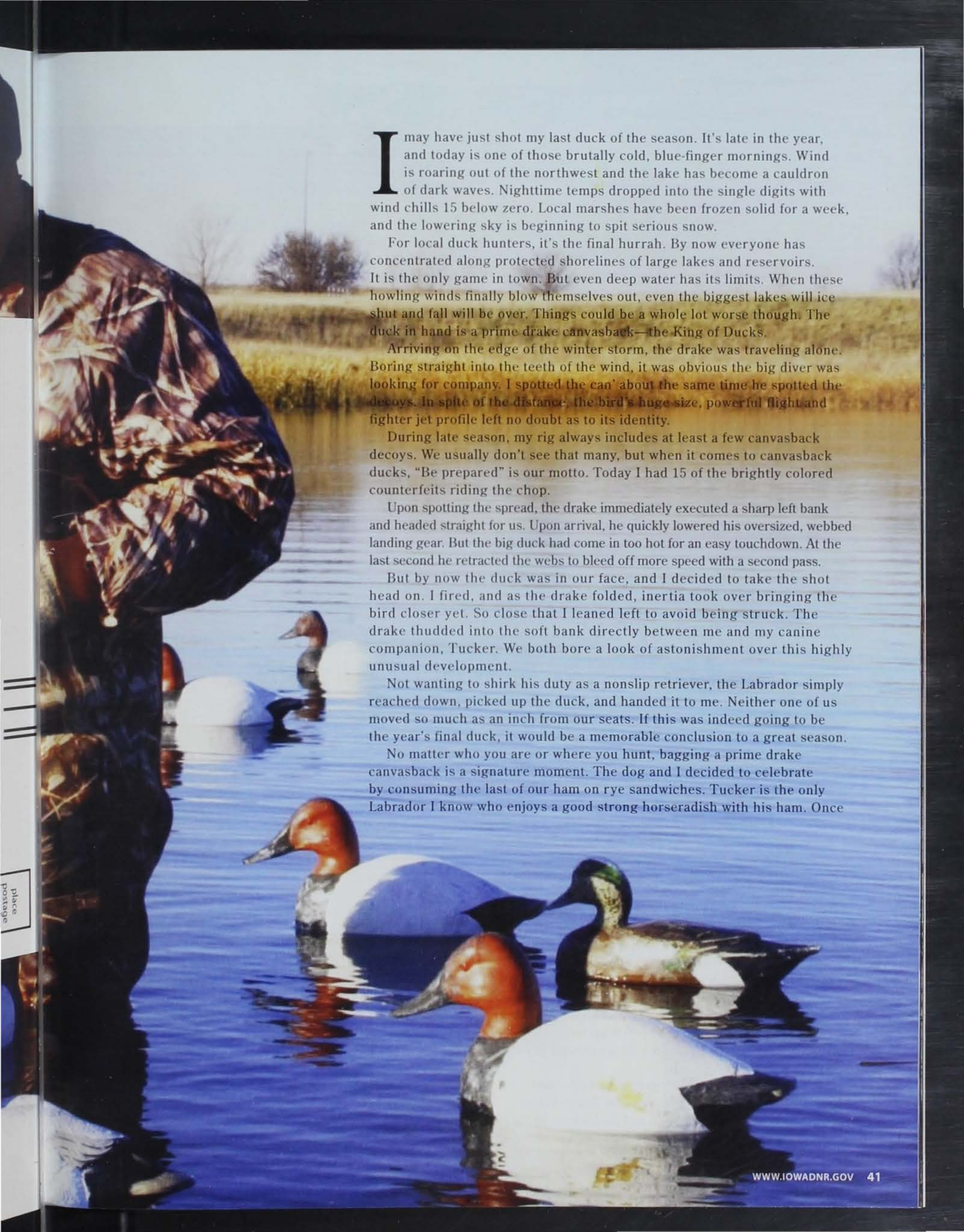
# IOWA OUTDOORS



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Arriving on the edge of the winter storm, the drake was traveling alone. Boring straight into the teeth of the wind, it was obvious the big diver was looking for company. I spotted the can' about the same time he spotted the decoys. In spite of the distance, the bird's huge size, powerful flight and fighter jet profile left no doubt as to its identity.

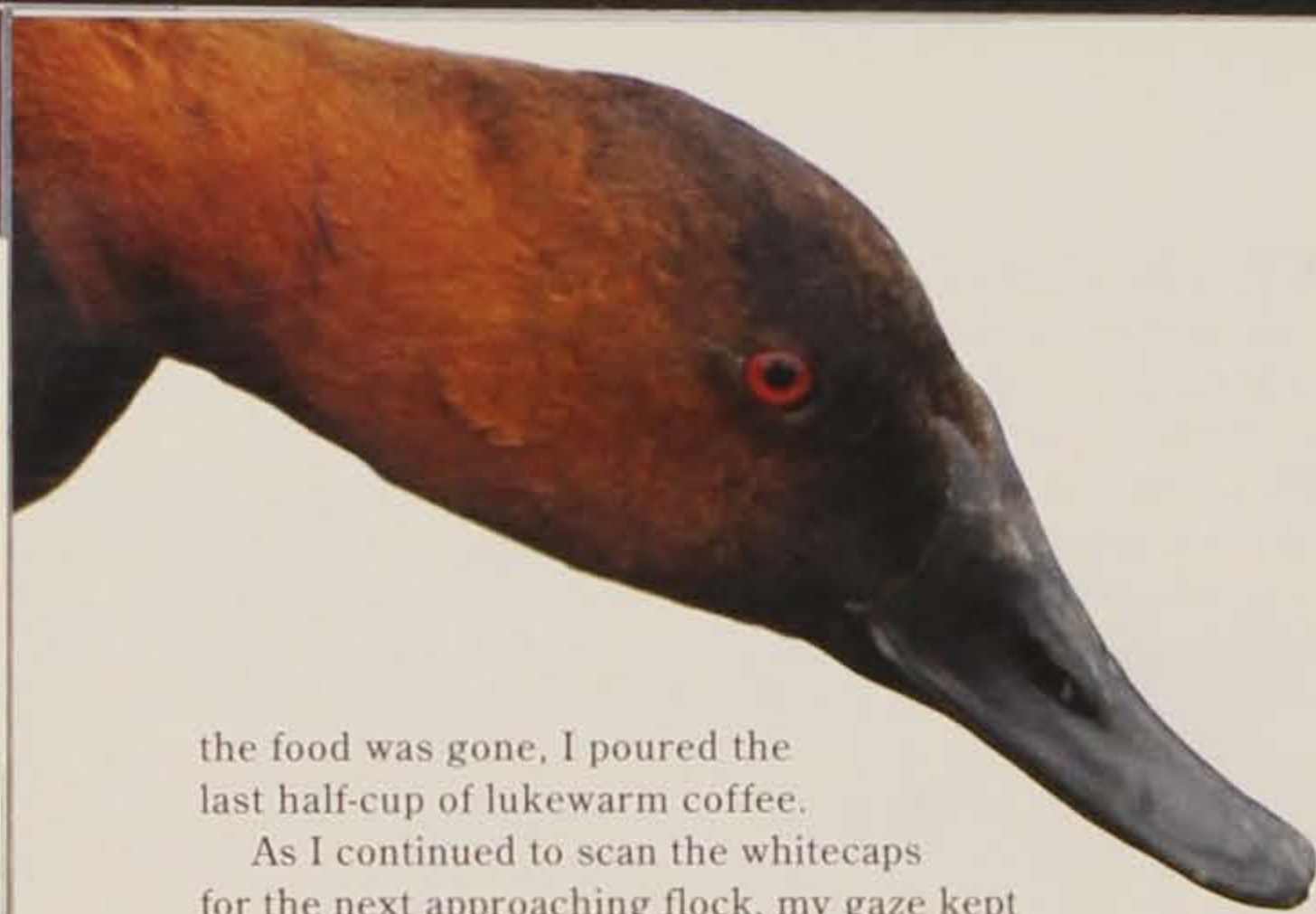
During late season, my rig always includes at least a few canvasback decoys. We usually don't see that many, but when it comes to canvasback ducks, "Be prepared" is our motto. Today I had 15 of the brightly colored counterfeits riding the chop.

Upon spotting the spread, the drake immediately executed a sharp left bank and headed straight for us. Upon arrival, he quickly lowered his oversized, webbed landing gear. But the big duck had come in too hot for an easy touchdown. At the last second he retracted the webs to bleed off more speed with a second pass.

But by now the duck was in our face, and I decided to take the shot head on. I fired, and as the drake folded, inertia took over bringing the bird closer yet. So close that I leaned left to avoid being struck. The drake thudded into the soft bank directly between me and my canine companion, Tucker. We both bore a look of astonishment over this highly unusual development.

Not wanting to shirk his duty as a nonslip retriever, the Labrador simply reached down, picked up the duck, and handed it to me. Neither one of us moved so much as an inch from our seats. If this was indeed going to be the year's final duck, it would be a memorable conclusion to a great season.

No matter who you are or where you hunt, bagging a prime drake canvasback is a signature moment. The dog and I decided to celebrate by consuming the last of our ham on rye sandwiches. Tucker is the only Labrador I know who enjoys a good strong horseradish with his ham. Once



the food was gone, I poured the last half-cup of lukewarm coffee.

As I continued to scan the whitecaps for the next approaching flock, my gaze kept returning to the slain canvasback. As I admired the bird, I replayed a mental tape of what had become a most rewarding Iowa duck season.

As usual, the season began with September teal and wood ducks followed by a severe case of mid-season doldrums. The weather was warm and the migration slow. By late October, most hunters had stashed their duck decoys and switched to pheasants or archery deer.

But good things come to those who wait. Waterfowlers who stuck to their marshes witnessed large numbers of diving and puddle ducks invade the state during the night of Oct. 31. It was the season's most spectacular migration. The flight included everything from redheads to green-wings, mallards to bluebills. Most notable, were the amazing numbers of canvasback ducks.

Appearing from the north in ragged lines and sharp v-formation, the cans' arrived in waves. As new flocks continued to descend on interior lakes and marshes, it soon became apparent the migration had become something out of the ordinary.

Although the regal canvasback is regarded as the continent's premier waterfowl, most hunters have never bagged one. More so than most species, canvasbacks have highly specialized food and habitat requirements. In Iowa, the bulk of the fall migration occurs along the Mississippi River where peak numbers of 250,000 to 300,000 canvasbacks gather late each autumn to feed on submerged beds of aquatic wild celery. But on Iowa's interior waters it's a different story. During most seasons canvasback hunting is, at best, a hit or miss, here today gone tomorrow, proposition.

But just because most contemporary hunters have never had an opportunity to bag this trophy species doesn't mean they don't want to. My nephew, Justin, is a good example. Although an enthusiastic waterfowl hunter for several years, Justin has seen but never bagged a canvasback. When I phoned to report an eye-popping, mega-flight of cans' was occupying the waters of our favorite Honey Hole, he lost no time in making plans to drive up from Carlisle to join my brother Sterling and me for a weekend hunt in northern Cerro Gordo County.

I love it when a plan comes together, and this hunt proved to be one of those times. Saturday dawned clear and crisp. The wind was favorable and ducks were flying in all directions. The first flock arrived at sunrise. Stunning

in the early morning light, there were seven of them. A tight squadron of fighters—all drakes—bore telltale canvas-white backs, bull necks and sculpted chestnut heads. The birds lost no time in coming to the decoys.

"Get ready," I whispered. "Remember, you can only shoot one." Although the daily bag limit on ducks is six, federal law dictates only one may be a canvasback. As the ducks arrived, we shouldered the guns and fired. At the sound of the shots, three magnificent, bull canvasbacks simultaneously fell from the flock.

Sleek and fat, the birds were perfect. My brother and I were pleased, but Justin was downright elated. While Sterling and I mused over the prospects of roast canvasback, currant jelly and wild rice in our Clear Lake homes, Justin was planning a trip to the taxidermist.

The sharp whistle of flaring wings broke our trance, and we returned to the hunt. Justin killed a mallard and then a bluebill. But his eyes rarely strayed from the real prize of the day—his first feather-perfect, shot-over-the-decoys, drake canvasback.

The sun cleared the horizon, and the flight continued. Best of all, the flocks of cans' kept coming. Some birds simply strafed the decoys while others piled in as if they expected to spend the winter. One squadron of 10 nearly took Justin's cap off as they passed within six feet of our cattail blind. For the canvasback devotee, it was the duck show of a lifetime. Justin's grin spread from ear to ear.

"This is just unbelievable," he proclaimed. "All my life I've wanted to get a canvasback duck and today they're everywhere. I could have shot at least 10 by now. This is unreal."

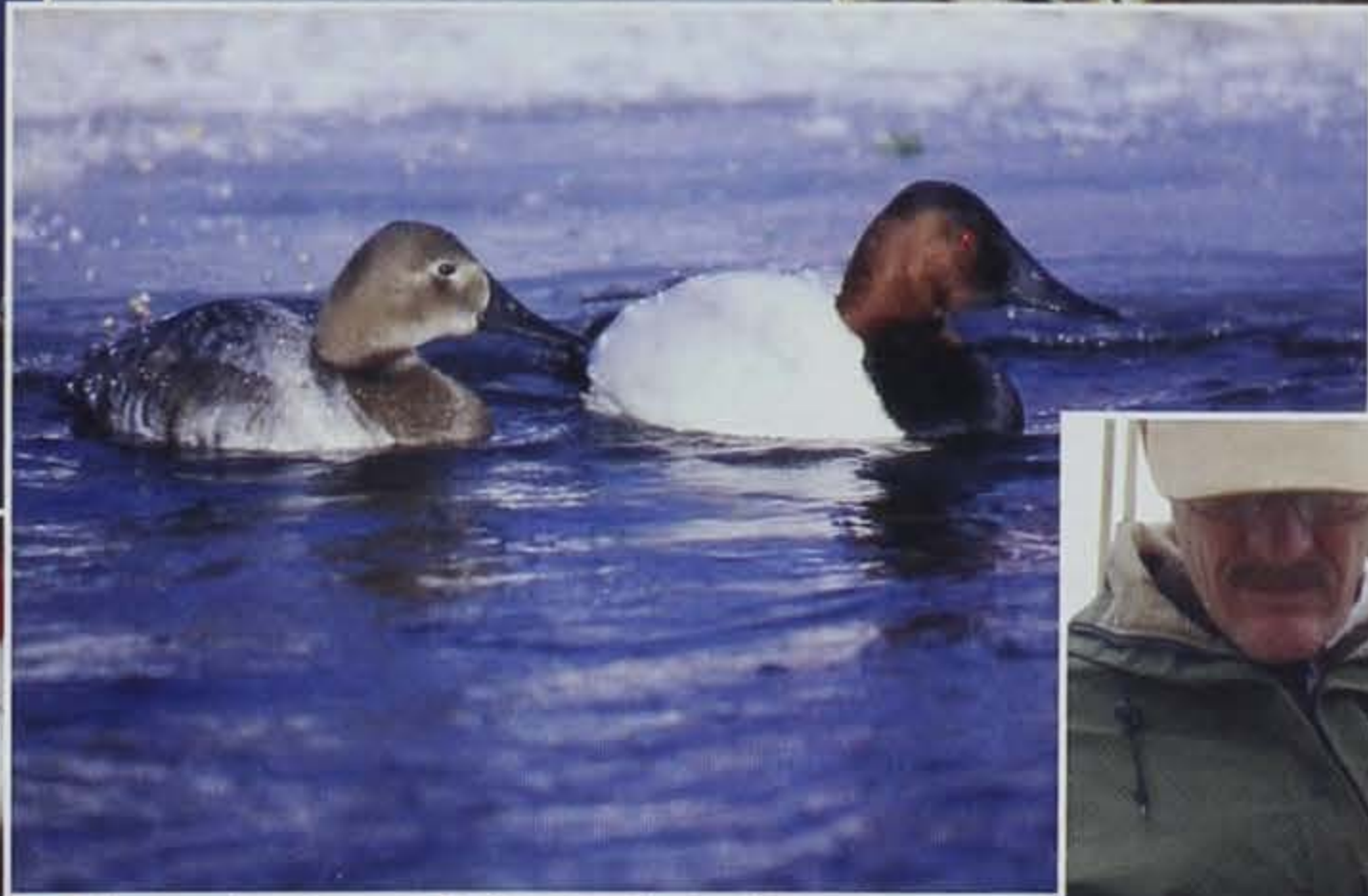
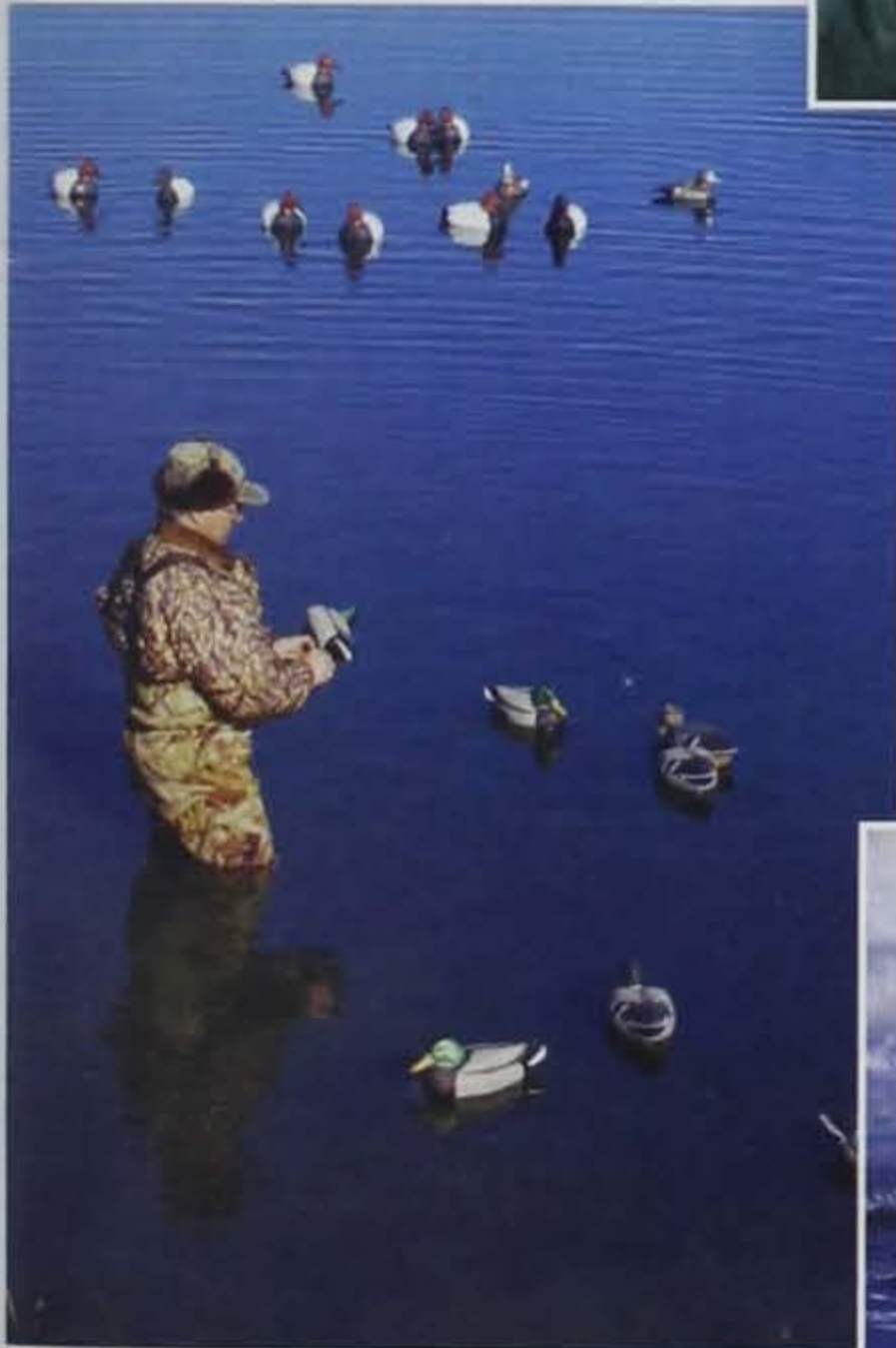
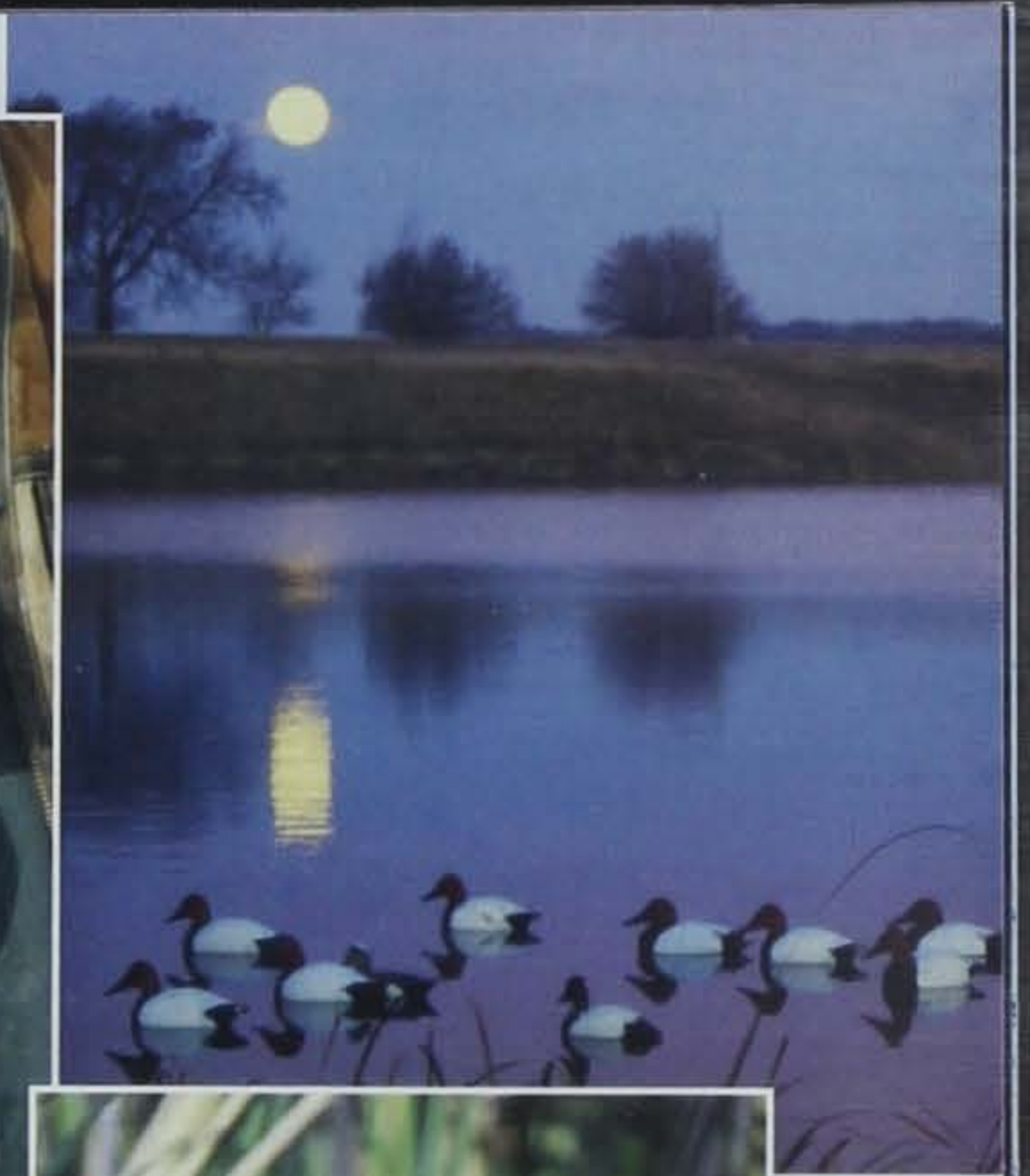
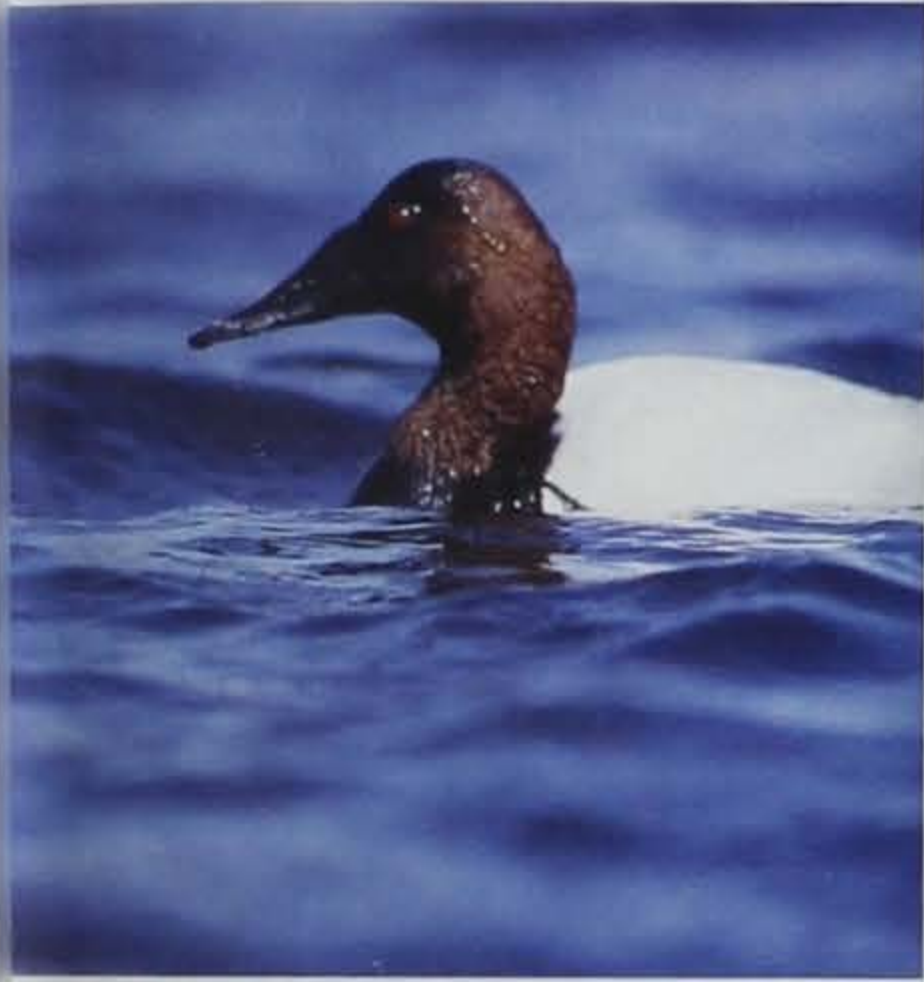
The weekend passed all too quickly. But as the migration continued, flocks of migrating canvasbacks remained a common sight for several more days. By Thanksgiving, the cold weather had set in for real. Another season's Big Push became history as most ducks moved on. Crouched along this rocky shoreline today, only a few stragglers, including the odd canvasback, still arrive from the north.

Soon January blizzards will rage across familiar landscapes. No matter. I'll still have plenty of pleasant autumn memories to keep me warm. The thing I'll remember most about this season is the rare thrill of decoying canvasbacks and the timeless expression on a young hunter's face when he finally met the undisputed King of Ducks. 🦆

**OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM RIGHT CORNER:** Wildlife biologist Bill Ohde bands a drake canvasback on the Upper Mississippi River. The 'can's primary breeding grounds are in prairie Manitoba. Each year, as the birds move southward during fall migration, up to 80 percent of the entire population will stage in Iowa along the Upper Mississippi. Band recoveries reveal that upon leaving Iowa, the birds take one of two routes. One path leads to coastal wetlands in the Gulf of Mexico. The majority of canvasbacks, however, head east from Iowa toward the famed habitats of the Atlantic seaboard's Chesapeake Bay.

The reason so many canvasbacks are attracted to Iowa is the abundance of wild celery along the Mississippi. But scientists worry that concentrating up to 300,000 of the birds into one spot could spell trouble. Should an oil or chemical spill occur near the feeding grounds, it could not only mean the loss of thousands of birds, but result in the destruction of hundreds of acres of forage as well. During the 1960s, a spill killed 10,000 waterfowl.





“We offer no apology for thus elevating the lordly canvasback to a classical role, for among duck-minded people he has long been the ‘gold standard’ against which all lesser fry are weighed and measured.”

—Aldo Leopold, (1887-1948) Iowa-born conservationist and author of the classic, *A Sand County Almanac*. Leopold was born, raised and now buried in Burlington.

### CANVASBACK DUCKS PROVIDE GOLD STANDARD FOR EARLY AMERICAN HUNTING

**SWIFT OF WING AND UNIQUE IN PROFILE**, canvasback ducks are prized beyond measure.

Hunting with handmade bows and flint-tipped arrows, American Indians first realized the species' potential. Prehistoric hunters fashioned life-sized, realistic decoys from tule or cattail stalks colored with natural pigments or covered with canvasback skins.

Tender roots and shoots of aquatic wild celery are the canvasback's favorite food. Pioneers were quick to discover the flavorful flesh surpassed other wild fare. As civilization spread along the Eastern seaboard, the species became the foundation for an infamous era of commercial gunning. Perhaps nowhere on Earth was the shameful extravagance of market hunting carried to greater extremes than along the mighty Chesapeake Bay. For a few decades, these vast waters became the backdrop for the greatest duck hunt the world has ever known. Unfathomable numbers of migrating canvasbacks arrived from the north each winter to feed on 100-mile-square beds of wild celery.

Here, among the shallows of the famed Susquehanna Flats, professional hunters plied their trade with deadly precision. When the morning's shoot began, disturbed flocks resembled undulating plumes of smoke as they rose and fell across the Chesapeake. On a good day, a single gunner would bag more wild ducks than modern hunters take in a lifetime.

At Boston, Philadelphia or Washington markets, prime celery-fed 'cans fetched twice the price of lesser fowl. Small wonder why professional hunters soon called canvasbacks *The King of Ducks*.

The impressive flocks captured the attention of pleasure hunters, too. Listed among the canvasback's ardent admirers were presidents Ulysses S. Grant, Benjamin Harrison and Grover Cleveland.

As settlers moved into Iowa, they quickly capitalized on the territory's rich waterfowl resources, including abundant canvasback ducks. Although there were no seasons or limits, wetlands were abundant and pioneers simply hunted for food. As post Civil War railways surged west across prairies, for the first time, market hunting in Iowa became practical.

Although ducks were sold at markets in Iowa's larger population centers, such as the Quad Cities, most were shipped to Chicago or New York. The slaughter was appalling.

According to historian Jack Musgrove, market gunners near Spirit Lake bagged 2,000 to 3,000 ducks per hunter per year. Other "professional" market hunters tallied averages of 100 or more per day. At Clear Lake, migrating ducks were shot as they flew over the lake's west side Sand Bar peninsula and hauled by horse and wagon to Clear Lake for sale in local markets, or railed to Chicago. Green-winged teal, mallard and canvasbacks were regular seasonal menu items at Main Street's Lake Hotel.

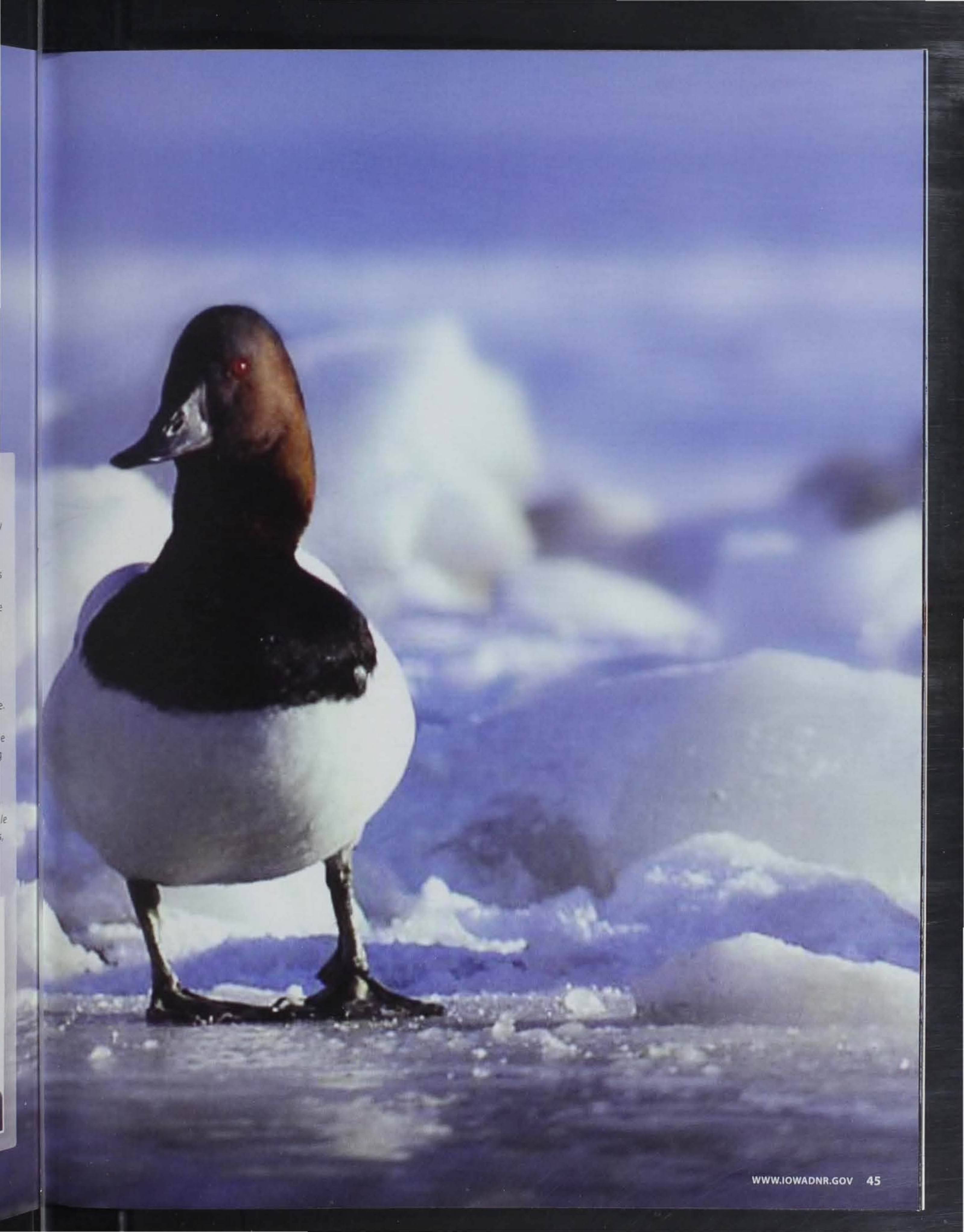
In Iowa, as elsewhere, the King of Ducks reigned king of the market. While fresh mallards sold for \$7 a dozen, canvasbacks brought \$15.

Although the market gunning carnage seems excessive and inexcusable, in early America, our vast treasure of natural resources was considered limitless. As the folly of this logic became evident, market gunners were legislated from existence.

While early commercial hunters exacted a heavy toll on canvasback populations, their combined impact was minuscule compared to the havoc wrought by drainage of prairie nesting grounds and degradation of wintering areas.

**WORTH A READ:** A complete history of Iowa market hunting can be found in Jim Dinsmore's *A Country So Full Of Game*, available from the University of Iowa Press. 261 pp, 19 photos, 28 drawings, 13 maps, \$17.95 paperback. Order at 800-621-2736.






# A RAZZLE DAZZLE

NIGHT...

*in an Iowa Woods*

BY SANDY FLAHIVE



**I**t had been a day that smiled smugly at those who hold the popular notion Iowa has no beauty, no razzle-dazzle, no pizzazz—a day that strutted the state's virtues: rolling landscapes punctuated with golden bales of hay; sweeping vistas of growing, green crops and blue-white skies that characterize high summer.

The day had worked its spell on me, and desperate to hang on to it, I decided to stay awake as long as possible and keep a vigil of the woods around my cabin, hidden in the hills of southern Iowa.

What I discovered during my odyssey was that all those naysayers who complain there's also no nightlife in the state simply haven't been awake to it, haven't stayed up far into the night in the middle of summer...in the thick of a woods. If they had, they would know an Iowa night is full of glitter and glimmer, of intrigue and suspense, that the sound of nocturnal revelry can be earsplitting, and that party animals by the dozens romp and stomp into every summer tomorrow.

My watch was conducted from the porch swing, a



refuge I eagerly claimed after a day of dodging poison ivy to pick berries; of going up to Poth's Feed and Grain on Highway 34 to get grass carp from Farley's Fish Farm truck; and of hiking through a remote section of Stephens State Forest. But before getting too comfortable in the swing, I stockpiled provisions: a thermos of coffee, a Butterfinger, a bowl of the just-picked berries, a pillow and a flashlight. Even a slight disturbance—walking across the porch floor, turning on a light to get something out of the refrigerator—might disrupt the nighttime

routine of the residents and sabotage my quest to eavesdrop on their world.

The evening was as perfect as the day had been. The air was cool and no mosquitoes were bugging me, at least not so many that a squirt of Off didn't quell their interest in my neck.

Before night settled firmly over the earth, cutting off the last remnants of a magenta sky, the uncanny silence that inevitably serves as a prelude to the evening's activities began its surrender when a woodpecker drummed "Taps" on a nearby tree. A commotion in the ravine indicated



*Who  
wh  
whoooo*

several wild turkeys were calling it a day as well, obviously uninterested in being part of the social scene about to rev up. One by one, locusts started belting out their repetitious little ditty. Periodically, crickets chimed in.

A mournful bleat in the shadowy timber near the cabin startled me. A fawn was in trouble. Instantly I heard crashing through the trees and the sound of an explosive, blasting snort, a deer's signal for "DANGER!" Obviously the doe was hell-bent on her maternal rescue mission. More bleats and snorts and twig-snapping ensued, all moving closer to the cabin, until into the dusky clearing pranced the totally bewildered, spotted fawn. Nudging it along was the doe. Too close behind was the crafty pursuer: a yellow-coated coyote.

Though the howl of a coyote from a distant ridge on a crisp winter evening is hauntingly thrilling, what was transpiring in front of the cabin outraged me. My yells were useless. The threesome passed within inches of the porch and proceeded into the timber on the other side. Twice more I heard the bleat of the fawn and hoped for its safety. I was relieved later when, in the twilight, I saw the doe and fawn drinking from the pond and the coyote

skulking up the path over the ridge.

As the world dissolved into darkness, I heard a rustle under the swing. Beaming my flashlight onto the floor, I found myself peering into the beady eyes of a mouse. On its impish face I read, "Hey, outta' here. This is my porch." I laughed when the slight tap of the flashlight on the edge of the swing sent it scrambling.

Somewhere in the forest a whippoorwill broadcast that nightfall had arrived and under its lead, the woodland characters let loose. Frogs and toads of every variety geared up to full throttle—in the pond, at the edge of the pond, up in the trees. At first their chatter was entertaining. Before long, though, the unrelenting cacophony of their fever-pitch presentation made me want to run screaming into the cabin.

As if to let these small amphibians know who was the biggest, baddest mouth around, a macho bullfrog boomed a bellow of profound contempt that hushed the world momentarily before sending the little guys into a bigger dither than ever.



oo-whoo-  
hooo-  
oo!

In what appeared to be a challenge to determine who, in fact, was the noisiest of the forest creatures, a barn owl issued a spine-tingling call that scared the dickens out of me and made me wonder what the sleeping turkeys thought about all the racket. The less vociferous barred owls exchanged pleasantries across the tips of the trees, asking the eternally unanswered question, "Whoo-whoo-whooo-whoooo?"

Sometimes observers talk about "darting" fireflies. My take of their antics on this particular night was that they were far more graceful than that. Thousands of them, it seemed, were contentedly surfing on the slight breeze and "beaming up" every millisecond, maybe in sheer joy or maybe just busting their guts to outdo the amazing display of stars lording over them light years away.

Reclining in the swing, I caught a faint whiff of drying vegetation, the earliest sign of summer on the wane. The lushness of the woods had peaked only a month earlier, and already the thick grasses and brambles on the bank of the pond were capitulating to the sun and the roll of the earth and destiny.

Before long, the light of the full moon was shooting

through the leaves of the trees, creating a strobe effect that was not lost on the inhabitants of the forest. They began to rock and roll, each species to its own distinct drummer: fish bounced in the pond; zillions of frogs boogied; the barred owls turned a bit roguish, squirrels rumbled at the base of trees, choruses of locusts rebelled against their own monotony, and the luna moth in the rafters over my head pulsated its ghostly light.

Across the state, folks slept soundly in silent, darkened farmhouses and quiet city homes, oblivious to the spirited world not far from where they dreamed, a world blazing with life, where energetic residents were shaking it up under the moon and stars...fully awake to the pizzazz of a summer night in Iowa. 🐸

# BO KNOWS BUCKS!



Searching for monster whitetails, legendary athlete Bo Jackson chooses north Iowa. STORY AND PHOTOS BY LOWELL WASHBURN

**W**hen it comes to hunting, sports legend Bo Jackson can, and does, go just about anywhere in the world. Although Jackson loves to pursue waterfowl, turkey and upland birds, his greatest passion is hunting big game with bow and arrow. From elk to bear, 'gators to javelina, Bo and his bow have done it all.

Retired from professional sports, Jackson's success strategies now focus on whitetail deer rather than touchdowns or home runs. For a November deer hunt last season, Jackson considered the possibilities and chose northern Iowa.

"I'd been hearing about Iowa's giant whitetails for a long time, and the stories of those monster bucks were really getting to me," says Jackson. "I've had several invitations and have wanted to hunt deer in Iowa for more than 10 years. But last fall was the very first opportunity I'd actually had to come here. When I finally learned that I'd been fortunate enough to receive a [nonresident] deer tag, I immediately dropped everything and rearranged my schedule to come to Iowa."

Jackson's first Iowa hunt centered on the Jennison

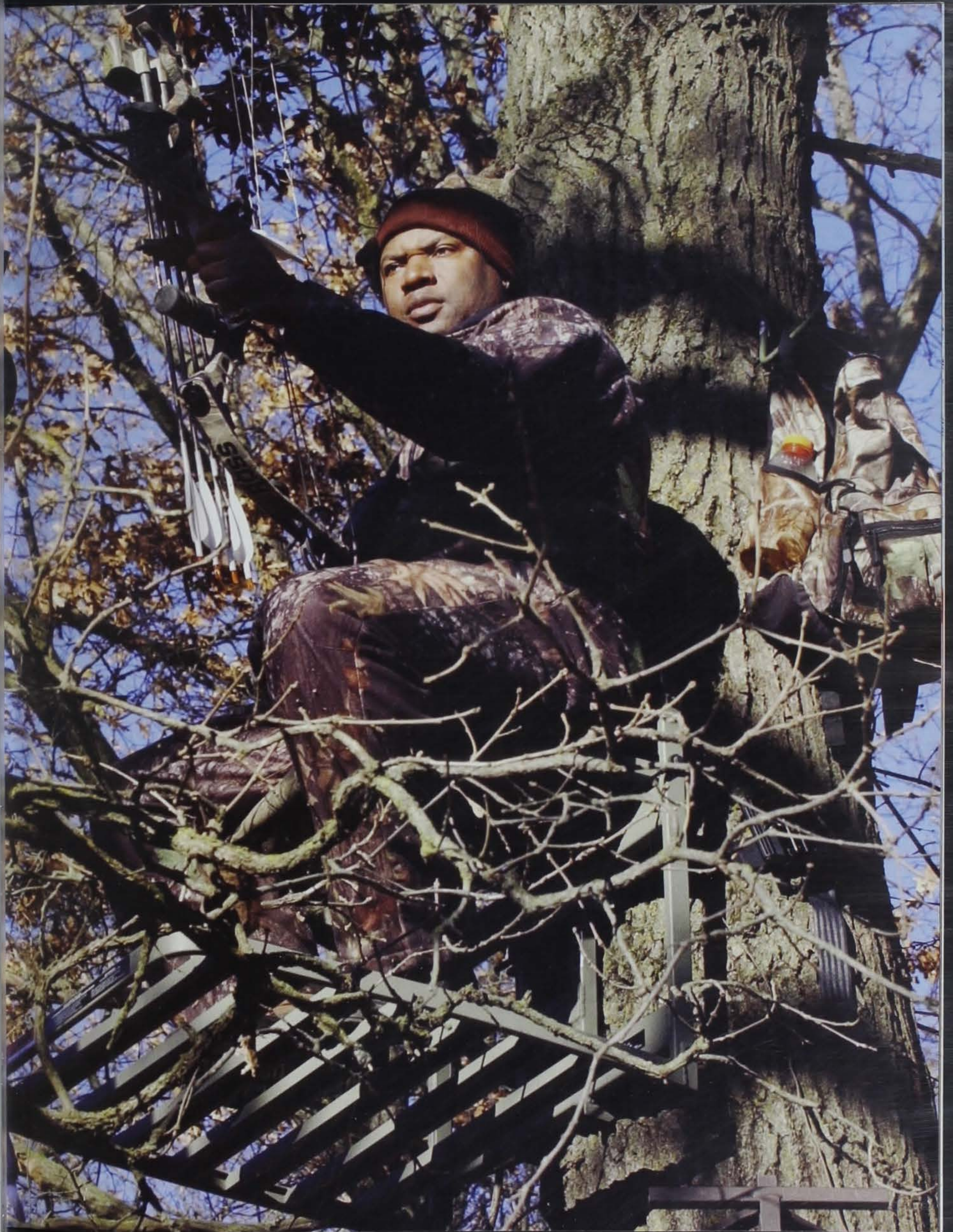
farm near Riceville in Mitchell County. Joining him were long time friend and avid bow hunter Martin Bruder of Lakeville, Minn. and host Mark Elliott of Osage. DNR conservation officer and deer hunting expert, Ken Lonneman, volunteered as hunt coordinator.

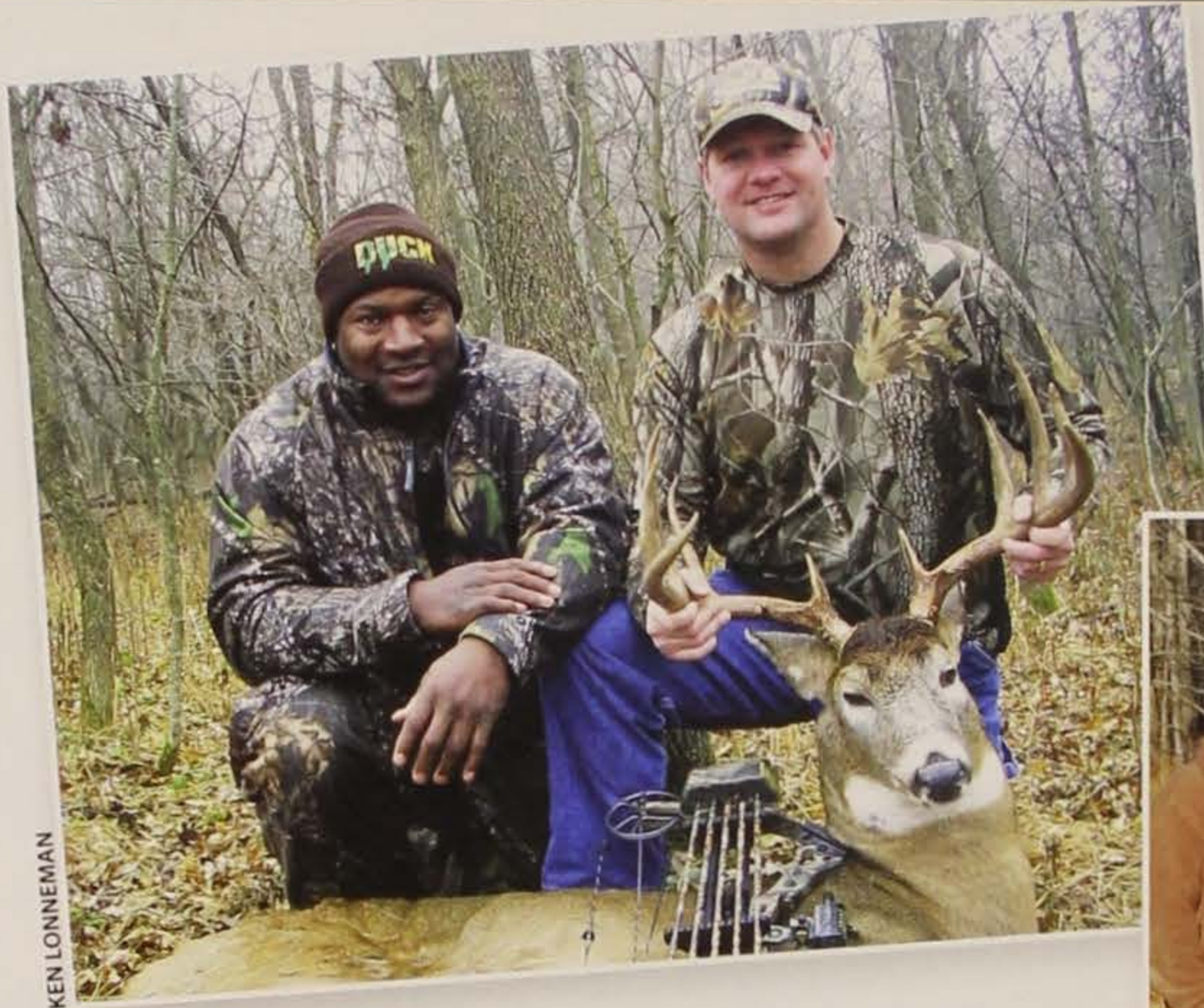
As Jackson climbed into his tree stand the first evening, he quickly realized myths about the size of Iowa's farm country whitetails were no exaggeration. Near sunset, large numbers of deer began moving along a maze of woodland trails surrounding his stand. After watching for more than an hour, Jackson picked his target, bent the bow and harvested his first Iowa whitetail—a prime, corn-fattened doe.

Less than 200 yards down the trail, things were even better for Bruder, who carefully took aim to arrow an impressive buck during his first trip to the stand.

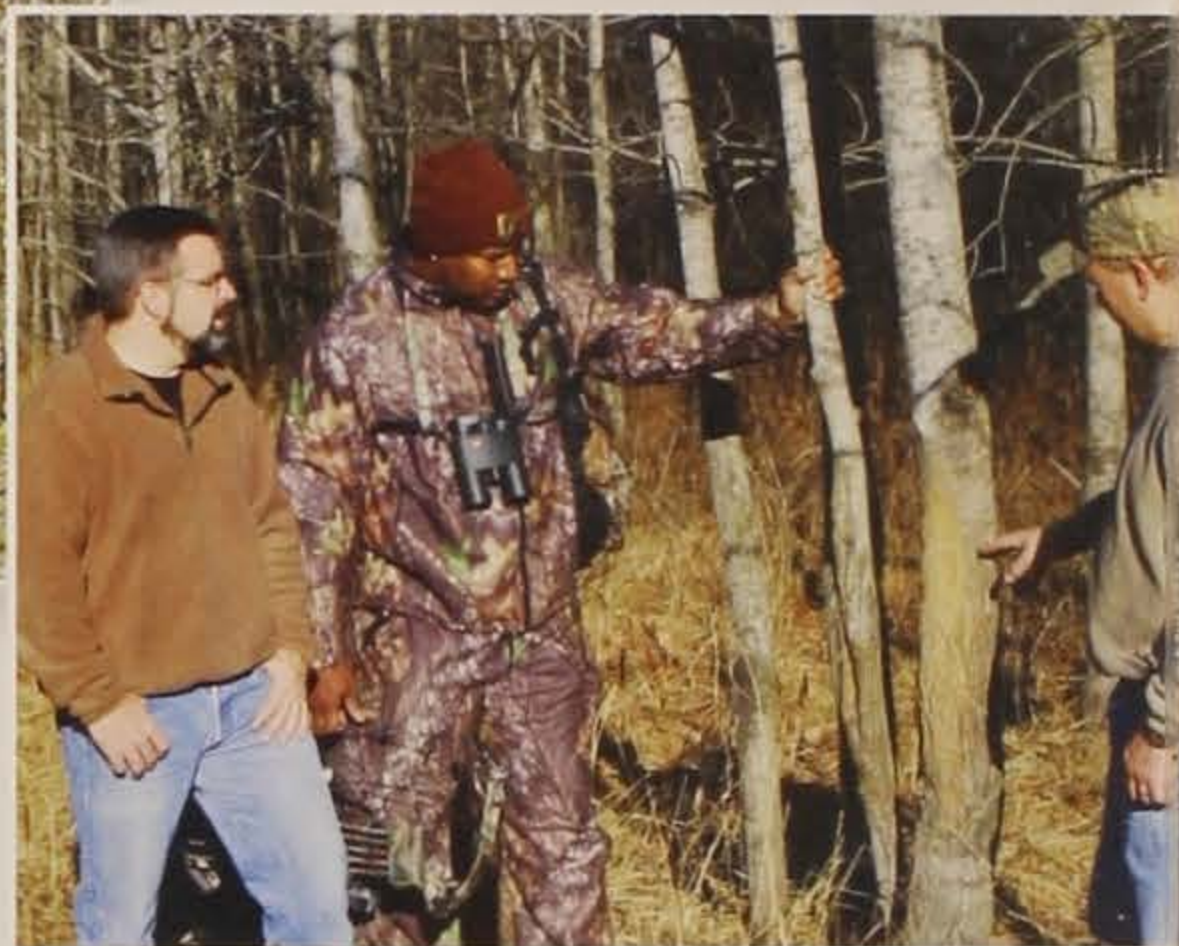
**RIGHT:** Football & baseball legend Bo Jackson waits for a glimpse of the giant Hawkeye whitetails he's heard so much about. An accomplished archer and bow hunting expert, Jackson has pursued big game across the nation. As the rut peaks this November, Jackson will return to Iowa to pursue the buck of his dreams.







**LEFT:** Martin Bruder of Lakeville, Minnesota displays a 10-point buck taken last year near Riceville while hunting with Bo Jackson. **BELOW:** Flanked by Iowa host Mark Elliott (left) and hunt coordinator Ken Lonneman (right), legendary athlete Bo Jackson inspects a fresh buck rub on the Jennison farm, located near Riceville in Mitchell County.



"It was incredible. Martin and I each harvested a deer at about the same time during the very first day of our hunt. These deer really are giants," he says. "I started hunting deer in my home state of Alabama during the early 1980s. I can tell you the first doe I took here in Iowa was bigger than any buck I've ever seen in Alabama."

But it was Bruder's deer that really took Jackson's eye. A fully mature, 10-point typical, the buck green scored 150 points on the Pope & Young measuring standard.

"That deer is the kind I've been hearing about," says Jackson. "I'd have to say that Martin shot the buck I came to Iowa for," he laughs.

hunting in Iowa," says Jackson. "It was really a great first trip and I'm very satisfied with what I've seen here. If I can get a tag, I plan to be back hunting deer in Iowa at this same time next year."

Jackson did get his tag, and sometime during the peak of this season's rut he'll be sitting in an Iowa tree stand—watching and waiting for the buck of his dreams.

## "I CAN TELL YOU THAT THE FIRST DOE I TOOK HERE IN IOWA WAS BIGGER THAN ANY BUCK I'VE EVER SEEN IN ALABAMA."

In spite of his attraction to giant bucks, Jackson hunts as much for the table as he does for antlers. Equally proficient in the kitchen as in the woods, his home freezer is well stocked with ample stores of venison, elk, waterfowl and African ornyx.

"When on a hunt, I like to do all my own work," says Jackson. "I don't really like to have people do things for me. If I am fortunate enough to harvest a deer, then I think it's my job to drag it out of the woods and process (it) myself."

After butchering his deer, Jackson turns a portion into summer sausage and jerky. Cuts are shared with family and friends or with those less fortunate.

Although Jackson could have bagged two Iowa deer, he chose only the mature doe. He had several opportunities to shoot additional does and smaller bucks while spending three more sits in the stand. He declined, wishing to leave them for next year.

"I've already harvested plenty of smaller bucks," he notes. "I decided to leave those deer in the woods and come back to see what they look like another year."

"I met some great people and had a lot of fun while

In 1985, Bo Jackson won the Heisman Trophy in the closest of all trophy votes—just 45 votes separated he and University of Iowa quarterback Chuck Long. Jackson was a powerful running back for Auburn and became one of only a handful of athletes to achieve careers in professional football and baseball. Retiring from sports in 1995, Jackson devotes his leisure time to hunting big game with bow and arrow. Currently engaged in nationwide speaking tours and private business ventures, he admits spending much less time in the outdoors than he prefers.

"One of the things I'm very involved with is a company that supplies the military with food items like bacon, beef and chicken—mainly to our troops in the Middle East," says Jackson. Jackson has a deep seated admiration and respect for our American service men and women. He has made two visits to Kuwait and spent the last three Super Bowl weeks with U.S. troops in the Middle East.

"I try to visit at least a dozen or more bases during Super Bowl week," says Jackson. "We just go in and sit down and really take time to visit with the troops. They are such great people and really appreciate anything you do for them. Spending time with them and looking at what's going on over there really makes you sit back and think about all that we have at home and how many good things we take for granted."



# Rugged Deer Hunters

BY JOE WILKINSON PHOTOS BY CLAY SMITH




**F**acing the roaring bonfire, it was warm...almost hot. With a pit 7-feet wide, the flames were waist high. Every 10 minutes or so, someone would set another block of wood, or maybe a pallet, into the flames. With eight of us circling the only heat source for miles, we traded stories and wondered about our prospects for the morning. The fire also provided the light on this night before opening day in southwest Iowa. This was Deer Camp and there were few frills.

Sweet potatoes wrapped in foil went into the coals. A camp tradition, they sparked a couple more stories across the fire pit. Snacks were passed around. A couple beers.

A few more stories. By then, the sweet potatoes were nearly cinders. Time to turn in. But there would be no ride back to town. No RV and kitchenette. No warm cabin or running water either. Just a big, drafty lean-to, a few feet from the fire. Did I mention there were few frills?

Want to hunt with Scott Young of Shenandoah? Better bring a winter-rated sleeping bag, maybe stuffed inside another one. It got down to zero that night. The lean-to, a tarp-wrapped teepee on a concrete grain bin base, would sleep seven that night; hunters, a couple cots, sleeping bags, ground covers; lying feet to the center like spokes on a wheel. "I've been out West, elk hunting.



A roaring fire provides light and heat as members of Scott Young's deer party swap tales and get ready for the next day's hunt. Based in a timber northwest of Shenandoah in Page County, the group hunts in three counties, taking advantage of generous antlerless tag allotments in southern Iowa. Cooking meals over campfire coals and sleeping in tents and a lean-to in the cold December air are part of the rustic deer camp life.

Camp was something like this; a big fire and one story after another; about past hunting seasons," observes Young. "We all can't afford to do that, though. They can't get out there. So we kind of do the same thing in Iowa."

Preparations start in advance of the first shotgun season on this wooded hillside, 12 miles northwest of Shenandoah. Everybody throws in \$25 for groceries, so the larder is stocked by the time they arrive. The lean-to was already in place when I pulled in late Friday afternoon. Young had the fire roaring by then. Wood is a cheap commodity; a by-product of his landscaping business. Chunked-up trees and pallets are dropped off during the year. It takes a lot of fuel to keep that bonfire roaring through the weekend and into next week.

To the north of camp, Jared McManis, also of Shenandoah, cuts limbs away from a treestand. A blocker will be positioned there in a few hours. McManis, Young's stepson, has hunted here for 10 years. About sunset, the kitchen went up—a large tarp serving as roof and one wall—to block the wind. A campstove sits on the wooden picnic table. Plastic coolers hold the weekend's food and beverages. No ice, though. In December, the insulation keeps everything from freezing. "We had eggs freeze once," remembers Young. "We learned. Now, the coolers keep it warm or cold, depending on the weather."

Through the evening, the cold-weather hunters

arrived. Brothers Doug and Darin Chambers arrived separately, ready for another December deer camp. "Most of us grew up and went to high school together. Now, we're maybe married and we don't see each other as much," says Darin, of Essex. "But we'll always see each other deer hunting. It's the people—my buddies—just us out hunting and hanging out."

Craig Franks, from Essex, does a lot of waterfowl hunting and bow hunting, too. But he wouldn't miss the nights sleeping on the ground and the day's hunt. "People—my own family—ask me why we do it," says Franks. "We're out here away from everybody. I don't have to go home. Nobody bothers me. It's fun, really."

The high mileage award each year goes to Gary Suntken. After getting off work Friday, he drives five hours from Cedar Rapids. It's back home for him. He and Young grew up nearby, in Corning. Suntken sometimes hunts part of the weekend with another group, but always works in a couple days at Deer Camp.

A last pass of the smoked turkey, another log on the fire and it was time to hit the sack. A couple hunters made use of the one-seat outhouse. To call it rustic would be a stretch. Others found trees in the dark. As the teepee-dwellers made final adjustments, the fire waned. "I bring a cot and make sure I get a good sleeping bag," says Suntken. "When you climb in, it's cold at first.



You just have to zip it up and you'll get warm. Then the snoring starts," he laughs.

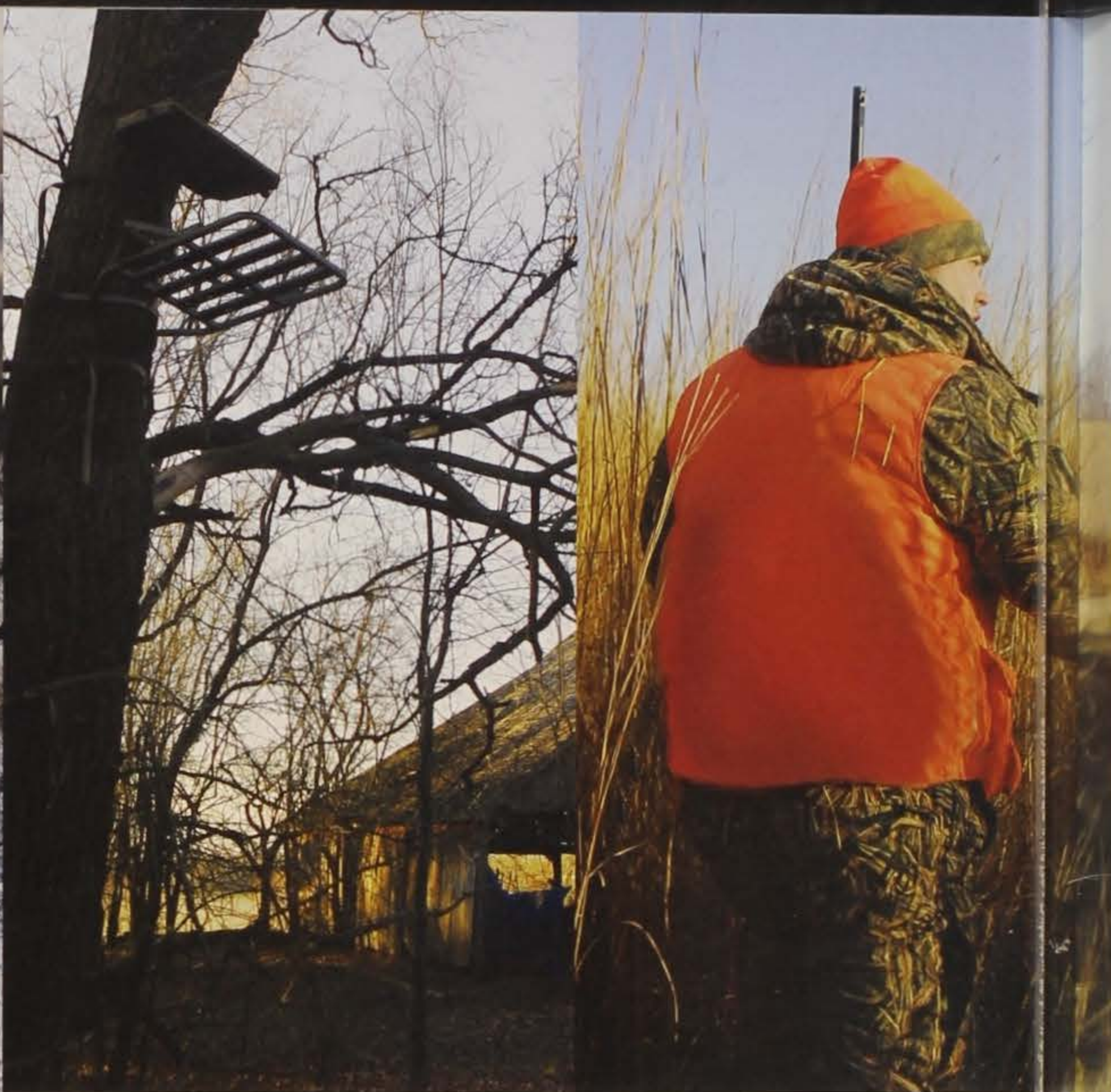
Unsure of the space available—and snoring tolerance—I pitched my one-man tent a few yards away. I had never before slept in all my clothes, a blaze orange hunting parka and a stocking cap. I did that night—for about four hours. Gradually, the cold convinced me that “awake by the fire” would be better. The sound of snoring from the teepee told me I had made the right call, location-wise. A couple guys had gone to bed wearing earplugs, having learned from the past. But we were here for the hunt, not to rate the sleeping accommodations. And when the mercury is at zero, everybody's an early riser. No breakfast this morning, though. That would come later. A bottle of juice, a visit to the facilities and we were ready to roll.

As five of us walked north to the edge of the 80 acres for the first drive, we could just make out each other and the trees. The other three had gone south, away from us, to post up back near the gravel road. The hunters had drawn numbers the night before to determine who would sit and where. From the treestand in the corner, blockers dropped off as we worked west, just inside the trees. I stayed with Franks, 80 yards past where Young and his son, Clayton, were posted. This was the 13-year-old's first official Deer Camp weekend, camping and hunting with the big boys.

It didn't take long for a medium-racked buck to move out of the CRP strip and across the field. Crossing between us and the Youngs, Franks didn't have a safe shot. A few moments after I lost sight of it, a single blast sounded. Was Clayton's first deer on the ground? A couple more whitetails crossed from the other side, but there were no shots. At a set time, the blockers knew to switch their attention. That's when those gravel road blockers began walking toward us. But it was their blaze orange, not gray-brown fur that emerged; ending the “two-part” first drive.

As the last blockers assembled, they exchanged details. There was no buck for Clayton, but the next drive was taking shape. “Craig, you go sit by the big tree snag. Scott will come in on the road.” After years of hunting together, everybody knew which big tree snag it was, where Scott would walk in from and where his drive would end. We split up into four pairs and got to work. Half of us hiked across a pasture to the west, covering a fenceline and pond. The water offered two prospects: if a deer veered right, it offered a shot; to the left, it would be out of range.

However, the deer didn't want to cross back into the open. Pushed by the drivers, three came trotting through the brush. At the edge of the pasture, though, they doubled back. A couple more slipped back into the grass and brush of the ravines. A volley of shots let us know that



the drivers were benefiting. Walking out at the end of the drive, we came upon Clayton...standing over his 10-point buck. It was one that veered back into the brush instead of crossing the pasture. "I looked up and there was a big buck walking over there," about 50 yards away, recalls Clayton. "It started running, came right down over here (at us) around these trees." He and his dad shot at the same time, with Clayton getting credit for his first deer.

With a deer to hang and camp nearby, it was time for breakfast. No one leaves hungry from a meal in Deer Camp. As the coffee pot went on the coals of last night's bonfire, the hash browns and bacon went into the campstove frying pan. Next to the coffee, Darin Chambers of Dexter lays strips of locker-made bacon into a heavy skillet. We sampled that, while waiting for the eggs to fry.

"I cook a lot at home," says Darin, who smoked last night's turkey on the grill. "I like to experiment a little bit."

As Clayton basked in the glory of taking a nice buck—a little trash talking began over one of the dollar pools.

"No, you haven't shot the biggest buck yet," laughs Sunktken. "Because he's still out there. I'm getting him after breakfast."

That's a key arguing point. Whoever shoots the

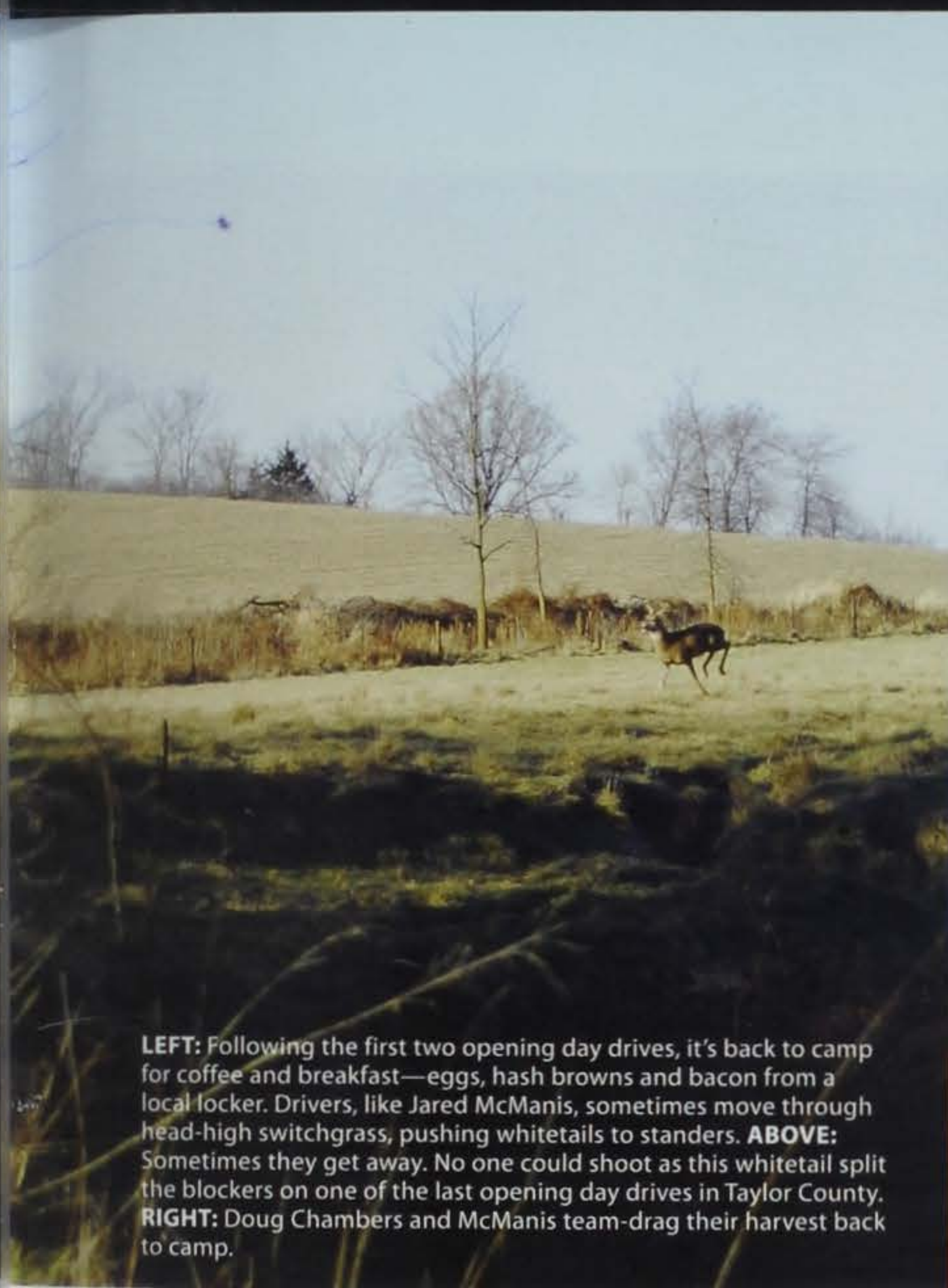
biggest weekend buck wins the pool. Clayton already won the other, taking the first "fork antlered" buck. And of course, the taker of the smallest deer serves the rest of the group Saturday night.

Clean up was a breeze. Into the fire with paper plates and cups and the dishes were done. Time for a road trip. Deer Camp itself might be a blast from the past, but we still needed internal combustion engines for the half-hour trip to Taylor County and the next farm.

The afternoon drives covered a lot more territory than the morning pushes—from blocks of CRP, wooded ravines and timber to pastures and streams. The deer cooperated, too. On this opening day of the first shotgun season, we could watch two or three—or eight or 10 deer—walk or slowly trot across the landscape; pushed by hunters a mile or two away. Crisscrossing the farm, the group ended the day with four more deer to take back to camp.

By nightfall, the open pit furnace was blazing again. The flames and a camp lantern helped light things up, as the hunters rehashed the day and made plans for Sunday. With it barely dark, there was plenty of time to plan their next meal, too. "As we get further into the weekend, there's a lot more time to cook," observes Young. "Once we get done hunting and get back, we'll have a beer or two. Then we have all night to cook."

Sometimes, that means a big pot of slow-cooking stew.



**LEFT:** Following the first two opening day drives, it's back to camp for coffee and breakfast—eggs, hash browns and bacon from a local locker. Drivers, like Jared McManis, sometimes move through head-high switchgrass, pushing whitetails to standers. **ABOVE:** Sometimes they get away. No one could shoot as this whitetail split the blockers on one of the last opening day drives in Taylor County. **RIGHT:** Doug Chambers and McManis team-drag their harvest back to camp.



Other times, they'll grill the inside loins from the deer they've hung that day. It's a bonus for not having to be anywhere at a certain time.

"You're away from TV and the telephone. There's no agenda. You're just enjoying yourself," underscores Doug Chambers. "It's time out here with friends, sitting at the campfire and telling stories. Same thing with the food. You can make hash browns, bacon and eggs over a stove, but it tastes better over a campfire."

The group continued sleeping under the stars through Monday night. A couple of hunters had to head back to work Monday. A friend of Young's, Dave Cheney, came out early in the week from Randolph. They took 14 deer back for processing. Another dozen were harvested in the other seasons. Most they processed themselves, with the locker doing some sausage and jerky. Another four or five went to the HUSH (Help Us Stop Hunger) program to feed the needy. Overall, another successful season in Deer Camp.

"It's the thrill of the hunt," concedes McManis. "You go out trying to get that trophy, but knowing you are probably not going to get one," yet Clayton gets a 10-point buck for his first deer.

It's the whole picture that keeps everybody coming back. "It's the camaraderie, the people," offers McManis. "We get away from work for a couple days...and we eat pretty good, I'd say." 🍖

## MY BACKYARD



# Grab that Shovel to Scrub Carbon

"Acts of creation are ordinarily reserved for gods and poets. To plant a pine, one need only own a shovel," said Iowa-born conservationist and author Aldo Leopold. Of course, he's right, planting a tree is instant gratification with lifelong benefits.

Nothing beats reclining in the backyard, gazing heavenward into a spreading, emerald green canopy. Simply put, trees are good for the soul and nature too.

Autumn is a wonderful time to plant as several major utility companies offer steep discounts on tree prices—typically \$75-\$100 off retail costs. Here's other reasons to plant a tree.

### CARBON CLEANERS

Trees not only scrub carbon dioxide from the air, they prevent emissions by keeping homes and cities cooler. For every ton of new wood growth, 1.5 tons of carbon dioxide

are removed from the air, says the USDA Forest Service.

### NATURAL AIR CONDITIONER

Trees cool summer air by transpiring water and shading homes, asphalt, concrete and other man-made objects that store heat. By some estimates, the cooling effect of a tree equals that of 10 room-sized air conditioners running 20 hours a day.

### PLANTING GREEN SAVES GREEN

A single urban tree can cut summer cooling costs 15-50 percent by providing luxurious shade. Healthy, mature trees can add an average of 10 percent to a property's value. During a 50-year lifespan, one tree will generate \$30,000 in oxygen, recycle \$35,000 worth of water and clean-up \$60,000 worth of air pollution, according to the Forest Service.

### LEARN MORE

- Customers of MidAmerican and Alliant Energy can obtain high-quality trees for \$25 in September and October. For details, Alliant Energy customers can contact Amy Oliver with the DNR at 515-281-6749. MidAmerican Energy customers can contact Matt Brewer at 515-242-6892. Or visit [www.iowadnr.gov/forestry/urban.html](http://www.iowadnr.gov/forestry/urban.html).
- Order bulk seedlings from the DNR's State Forest Nursery. Learn more at [www.iowadnr.gov/forestry/nursery.html](http://www.iowadnr.gov/forestry/nursery.html) or call 1-800-865-2477.
- Before digging, call Iowa One Call at 800-292-8989 to check for buried utilities.
- Landscaping for Energy Efficiency [www.forestry.iastate.edu/publications/pubs-pdf/F-375.pdf](http://www.forestry.iastate.edu/publications/pubs-pdf/F-375.pdf)
- Tips for Proper Planting of Containerized Trees [www.forestry.iastate.edu/publications/pubs-pdf/F-376.pdf](http://www.forestry.iastate.edu/publications/pubs-pdf/F-376.pdf)





## Quick and Easy Pot Iron Reuben Sandwiches

A HEARTY WARMER FOR CHILLY AUTUMN

Pot irons have moved way beyond making fruit-filled pie desserts. For a quick, filling meal without messing up pots and pans and bothering with the camp stove, go for these golden toasted rye wonders with gooey, bubbly Swiss cheese. Don't forget the can opener, because sauerkraut is a must. Start that campfire, it's Reuben time.

Two slices rye bread, each buttered on one side  
Once slice Swiss cheese  
2-3 slices corned beef  
2-3 spoonfuls sauerkraut  
1-2 spoonfuls Thousand Island dressing

Place bread slices butter-side down onto pot iron. Add Swiss slice, beef, kraut and dressing. Close pot iron and cut off any bread sticking out around the edges. Toast over warm campfire coals until bread is to preferred brownness.



Smoked five-spice duck breast with mango coulis

Kim Hayes, owner and chef at The Twisted Chicken, is a Chicago born outdoors woman who has traveled the world making wildlife documentaries, but here she's home. "McGregor has the right feel. There is an energy to it," she says. Between hiking, lap-swimming or snowshoeing, that energy may keep this ex-falconer working 18 hours a day in this 1897 building she completely gutted. She kept the tin ceilings, tile floor and added bright walls adorned with local art. Tireless energy keeps her menu changing weekly. "I use duck breast frequently. I refuse to cook it past medium. It truly turns into another creature," she blurts before running a plate of food to a shop down the street. "I'll be right back." Tireless energy.



Duck breast with orange chipotle sauce

### Eating Sweet Duck in McGregor

ALONG THE UPPER MISSISSIPPI, DUCKS FLOCK, AND SKILLED LOCALS SERVE THIS VERSATILE MEAT WITH A VARIETY OF SWEET, SMOKEY FLAVORS.

#### SMOKED FIVE-SPICE DUCK BREAST WITH MANGO COULIS SERVES 4

- 1 medium mango, peeled, pitted and coarsely chopped
- 4 6-8 ounce duck breast halves
- 1½ teaspoons Chinese five spice powder
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 cup applewood chips, soaked in water 1 hour

Puree mango in blender and transfer to bowl, cover and chill. (Can be made up to six hours ahead, keep chilled). Score duck skin diagonally to create 3/4-inch-wide diamond pattern. Place on rimmed baking sheet, sprinkle both sides with

five-spice powder, salt and pepper to taste. Drizzle with oil, cover and chill two hours. Heat heavy skillet over medium-high heat. Add duck, skin-down, cooking 5 minutes until fat is released and skin browns. Turn and cook until brown, about 1 minute.

Drain wood chips and place in even layer in large skillet. Place round metal rack atop chips; cover skillet with foil, then place lid on top. Heat about 5 minutes on high until smoke forms. Remove lid and peel back foil. Place duck skin-side up on rack, cover with foil and lid. Reduce heat to medium and smoke about 15 minutes for medium doneness. Transfer to work surface and let rest

5 minutes. Slice into 1/3 inch pieces and drizzle mango coulis on top.

#### DUCK BREASTS WITH ORANGE CHIPOTLE SAUCE SERVES 6

- 2½ cups fresh orange juice
- ¼ cup fresh lime juice
- 3 tablespoons maple syrup (preferably dark amber or grade B)
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped canned chipotle chiles
- 1 (3-4 inch) cinnamon stick
- 2 whole cloves
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 6 6-8 ounce duck breasts with skin

Boil above sauce ingredients in



Kim Hayes

Kim's smoked five-spice duck recipe uses apple wood, but you can use mesquite, although hickory is too strong. "You'll need a good exhaust fan," she warns. The coulis (koo-LEE) is simply a term for a thick puree. If you make it to magical McGregor, she may serve pheasant or grilled quail with rosemary and maple marinade or trout stuffed with mushrooms, wrapped and grilled in a pecan crust—flavors that rival the area's beauty.



Duck with pear-ginger chutney

**THE TWISTED CHICKEN**  
212 Main Street  
McGregor

**RESERVATIONS: RECOMMENDED FOR DINNER**

**HOURS: LUNCH:** 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Tuesdays-Saturday; **DINNER:** 5 p.m.-9 p.m. Tuesday-Thursday and 5-10 p.m. Friday-Saturday. Closed Mondays

**LIQUOR:** Bar with full wine list.

**SMOKE-FREE**

563-873-1515

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

→ **HAVE A GOOD RECIPE OF WILD FOODS TO SHARE?** Send to: [WILDCUISINE@DNR.STATE.IA.US](mailto:WILDCUISINE@DNR.STATE.IA.US) ←

a heavy saucepan over moderate heat about 30-40 minutes, skimming foam occasionally, until syrupy and reduced to about 1 cup. Let stand while duck roasts. Pat duck breasts dry. With a knife score skin making 1-inch interval cuts (do not cut meat.) Sprinkle with salt & pepper. Heat a cast iron or heavy skillet on stove until hot. Add duck breasts skin-side down and cook about 5 minutes until fat is released and skin browns. Turn and cook 1 minute. Put breasts on a cookie sheet or pan and roast in a 350° oven for 8 minutes for medium rare. Remove and let stand on cutting board for 4-5 minutes before slicing diagonally. Serve with sauce.

**SEARED DUCK BREASTS WITH PEAR-GINGER CHUTNEY SERVES 4**

*Repeat pan-searing and oven roasting as above for duck breasts (cutting skin, rendering fat and finishing in oven).*

**CHUTNEY INGREDIENTS**

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1/3 cup onion, diced
- 1 tablespoon fresh ginger, minced
- 1/3 teaspoon fennel seed
- 1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1 cinnamon stick, halved
- 1/3 cup white wine vinegar
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1 1/4 cups pears, peeled, cored, diced (1 large pear)
- 1/4 cup dried tart cherries

Saute onion, ginger, fennel seed, red pepper flakes and cinnamon in oil in saucepan over medium heat. Cook until onion is soft, stirring to prevent scorching. Deglaze with vinegar and sugar. Simmer until sugar dissolves, then add diced pear. Cook 15-20 minutes until pears are soft and juices are evaporated. Stir in cherries and salt. Serve at room temperature.

Chutney can be made up to one week in advance and refrigerated.

*All recipes go nicely with wild rice pilaf.*



# ASIAN LADY BEETLES

By spring and summer, they are a gardener's best friend, gobbling undesirable aphids and scale insects that attack gardens and crops. But by fall, Asian lady beetles metamorphosis into a homeowner's headache.



**IDENTIFYING THE DECÓR**

Asian lady beetle color varies widely from tan to orange to red. Some have several black spots while others have none. Multi-spotted individuals tend to be females, those with few or no spots, males. Most Asian lady beetles have a small, dark "M" or "W"-shaped marking behind their head.

**NOBLE BUGS OR NUISANCES**

Originally introduced in the 1960s to protect apple and pecan crops in a handful of Southern and East Coast states, Asian lady beetles have since spread across much of the U.S. They are an effective, natural alternative to plant insect control. Despite that, their unsightly and offensive presence in the home has relegated them to nuisance status. Occasionally, adults get a "sweet tooth," says Laura Jesse, entomologist with Iowa State University Extension, and seek sugary treats, damaging grape and other fruit crops.

**PROLIFIC PROPAGATORS**

Unlike other indoor pests, like flees and cockroaches, they do not reproduce indoors. Outdoors, however, they lay 300 to 500 eggs on undersides of leaves, and each adult female can produce multiple generations per year. Individual beetles can live up to three years.

**TIME FOR A MIGRATION**

The first 70 degree-plus day following a fall cold front is when Asian lady beetles begin their annual migration to houses to hibernate, says Jesse. The lucky ones find an inviting attic, wall cavity or other protected area to over winter. The rest collect post partum, en masse, on window seals, countertops and floors. Asian lady beetles are the only beetles attracted to light, which might explain why they congregate on sunlit exterior walls and window seals. That might also explain why the homeward bound beetles are of the imported Asian variety, not native ladybugs.

**JUST STAY OUT OF MY HOUSE**

There is no quick fix to lady beetle invasions. Although laborious and sometimes impractical, caulking entry points is the most permanent solution to keeping pests out. An added benefit is reduced energy costs. Exterior pesticides can be effective, albeit costly, and require multiple application. Indoor insecticides are mostly ineffective and can leave unsightly residue.

**DIRTY, SMELLY DEFENSE**

Although sub-freezing temperatures and parasitic wasps may claim a few, lady beetles have few natural enemies. In the face of danger, they emit an acrid, yellow fluid from their leg joints. That smelly "reflex bleeding" stains walls, fabrics and furnishings.

## WHAT'S HAPPENING IN IOWA



HONEY CREEK RESORT STATE PARK

### HONEY CREEK RESORT STATE PARK FACTS & FIGURES

- 108,000 sq. foot lodge/convention center
- 11,000 acre lake nearby
- 800 acres of land
- 105 hotel rooms
- indoor aquatic center
- 18 hole golf course
- 10 miles of trails
- And a great view from the patio!

## SNEAK PEEK AT HONEY CREEK RESORT STATE PARK

Iowa's first destination state park is one year away from opening its doors, and we want to share the exciting details.

Nestled on the shores of Rathbun Lake among prairie and woodlands, Honey Creek Resort State Park will include a hotel-style lodge, conference center, restaurant, cabins, indoor water park and 18-hole golf course.

The centerpiece will be the mission-style, stone-and-wood great lodge with panoramic views, a massive stone fireplace and arts-and-craft decorating. A restaurant and lounge will open to a patio overlooking the lake.

Family and group cabins with kitchens, fireplaces, decks, grills, linens and housekeeping are planned.

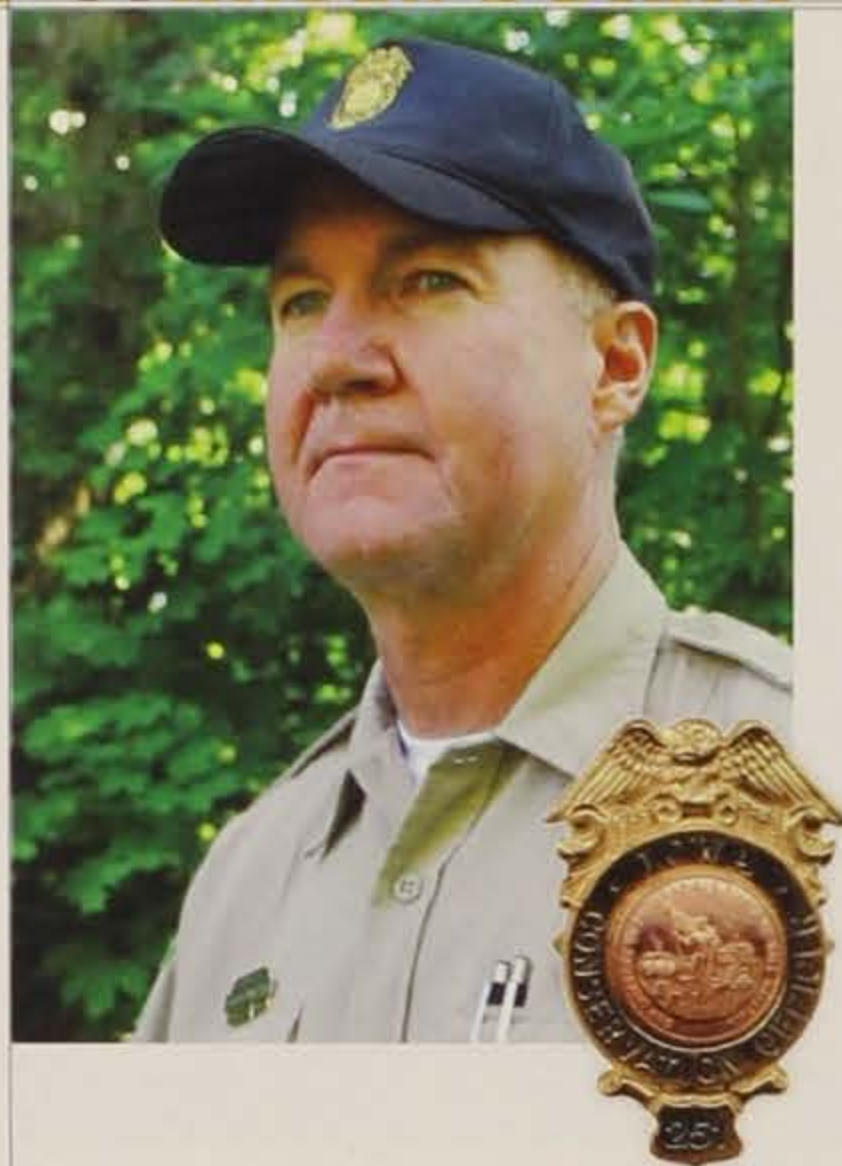
The Audubon-certified golf course is designed to maximize the natural setting, winding through prairie and old oaks. Hiking trails, a swimming beach and boat ramps and dock will also be built.

Whether spending time with family, hosting a wedding reception, or fishing at one of Iowa's best lakes, the resort will be an ideal destination.

Group meeting and events for summer 2008 can be booked by contacting Rossie Baker at 515-875-4818 or [RossieB@honeycreekresort.com](mailto:RossieB@honeycreekresort.com). Reservations for cabins and rooms begin in 2008.

For more details, area photos and construction updates visit [www.iowadnr.gov/parks/honeycreek/](http://www.iowadnr.gov/parks/honeycreek/).





## Hunting for Dummies

Last fall, I received a call for a problem we deal with every year when certain hunting seasons open—baiting.

You may say, "I thought baiting is something you do to a hook when you fish." True, but, if you hunt, the term takes a whole new meaning. Baiting is setting out food to illegally lure an animal to the hunter for an easy kill. Ethically, it removes the concept of fair chase. We usually see it in waterfowl, turkey and deer poaching. Let's face it, if you have to bait for deer in Iowa, well...maybe you should consider a different sport.

Reasons? Heck, if I knew why people do some of the things they do, I'd write a book instead of "Warden's Diary." Maybe it's laziness. Maybe it's lack of ability. Maybe it's an attempt to get an unfair advantage. At any rate, it's certainly a practice looked down upon by honest hunters.

I'm not going to go into baiting "how to," as I don't want to turn this into a "Baiting for Dummies" column. Suffice it to say the attempts I've seen have run from amateur to clever. The first time I saw it was sitting in the cold, pre-dawn hours, making myself look like a cattail while watching some duck hunters waiting for a flight to come to the grain they had spread out.

Another was at dusk lying behind a bush while watching a tower constructed above the wheat and corn spread nearby to attract deer. When confronted, one told me he was pheasant hunting. "That may have worked 25 years ago when I first started, but not today," I answered. Now, in addition to fines, offenders may lose their hunting equipment. In this case, the officer helping me was contemplating how we would seize the tower. We decided a chainsaw was not a good idea, a buck saw was too much work and the pickup wasn't big enough.



The common thread in these cases was the confrontation; every individual had a horrified look on their face, exclaiming, "Where did that stuff come from? I didn't put it there!" It was as if the bait was placed by someone from another planet, or like they never noticed it while sitting next to it for several hours. Apparently they thought I'd been reading "Game Wardening for Dummies."

But, my last experience with baiting had me seething. As I've said before, I try not to take things personally, but this one went beyond the pale.

My phone rang, and a deputy was on the other end. He told me a couple had been deer hunting from a blind on their property not too far from their house when their dog strayed onto adjoining property. The dog evidently began sniffing around a neighbor's deer blind. They heard a shot. The next thing they knew, the neighbor crossed the fence carrying their now dead dog. His story was he feared for his life from the vicious dog, a tail-wagging Lab mix about as ferocious as my 20-year-old cat. The deputy asked me about possible charges.

I told him, "Well, trespassing might be applicable and possibly animal cruelty. Shooting their dog right in front of them is pretty low, and the reason is pretty thin. I can't really think of any hunting violations. Sounds like you've got it covered."

"Ok, Chuck, thanks," he said. "By the way, are they allowed to have salt blocks next to the blind?"

"I'll be right there!" I said, putting my pickup in gear.

Sure enough, two mineral blocks sat next to the now vacant deer blind. The couple next door agreed to let me know when they saw the blind occupied again. They called the next morning. A car was in the timber and departed. I drove there

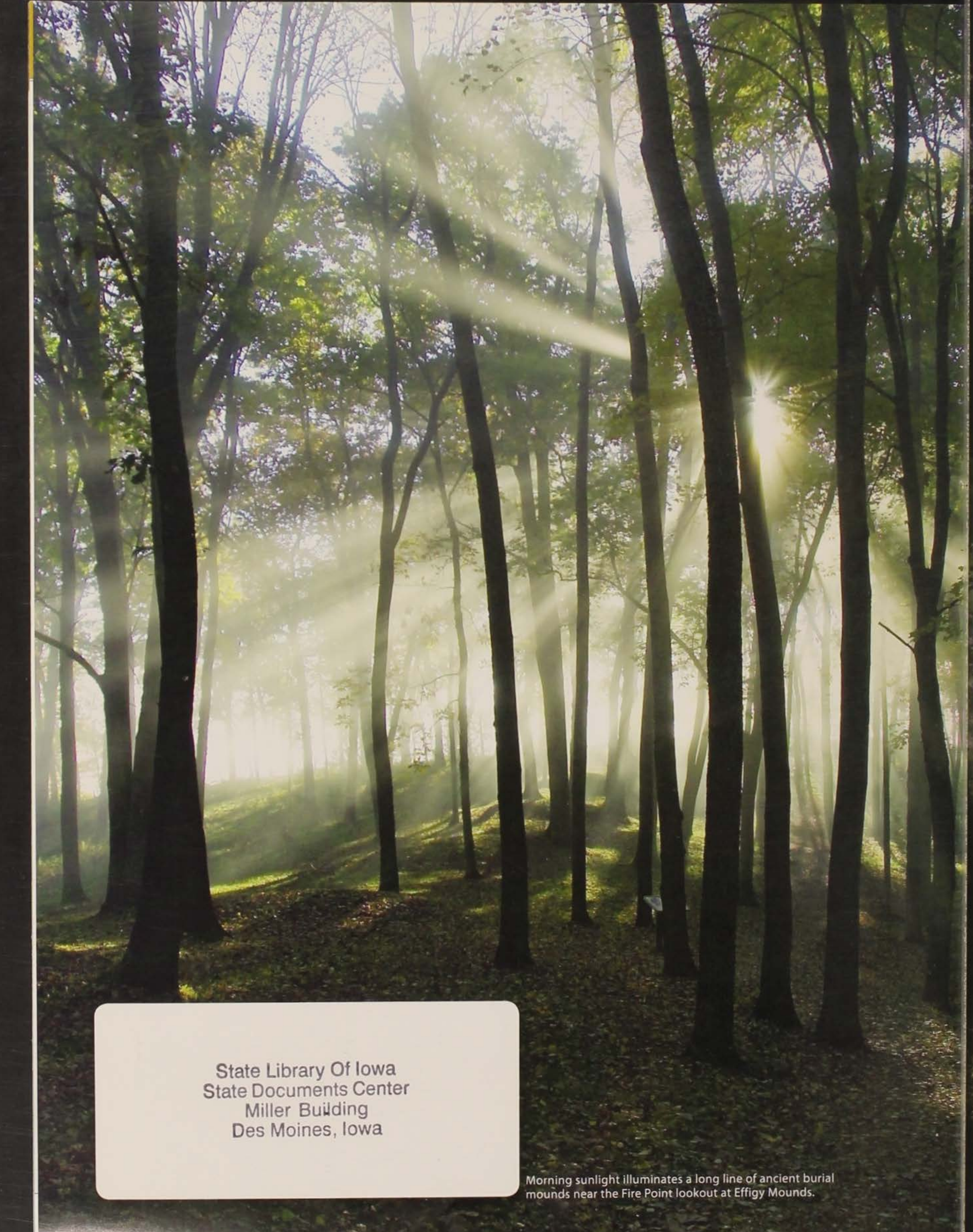


only to find the two blocks now rolled down into the ravine. Hmmmmm.

Knowing the suspect likely knew I was looking at his deer blind, another officer and I picked up the blocks. I called the deputy, and asked him to meet with me. We drove to the suspect's residence, and I knocked. Telling him I had found his baited blind met with a horrified look. "Who put those there? I didn't know they were there." Evidently that person from the other planet had been there.

"It's too bad you didn't notice them three feet from your blind all day. They were pretty easy to see," I answered. I handed him the citation book, and showed him where to sign.

I guess as long as there is a sport, there will be those who try to get an unfair edge. 🐾



State Library Of Iowa  
State Documents Center  
Miller Building  
Des Moines, Iowa

Morning sunlight illuminates a long line of ancient burial mounds near the Fire Point lookout at Effigy Mounds.