SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2014

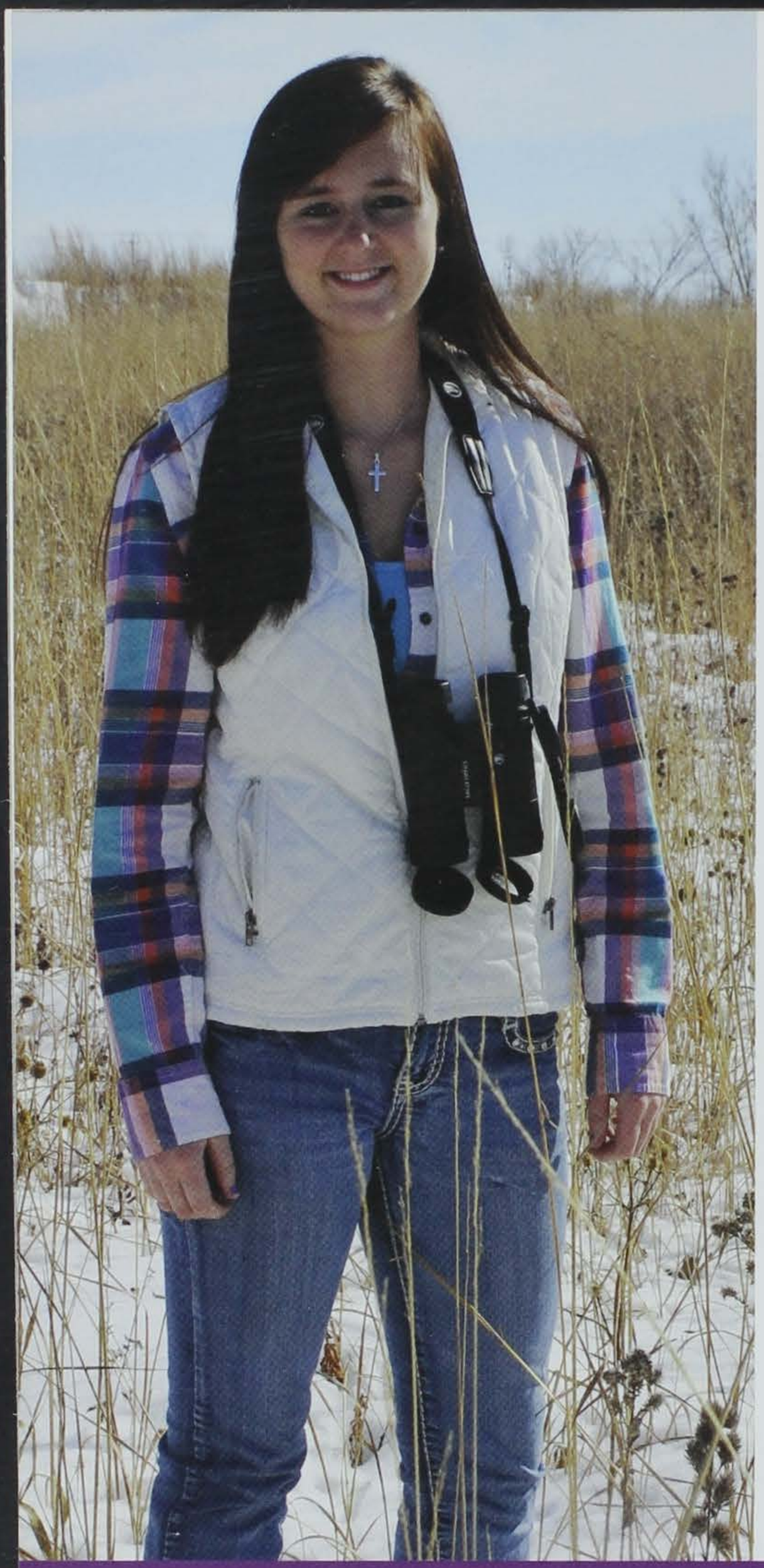
IOWA OUTDOORS

THE DNR'S MAGAZINE OF CONSERVATION AND RECR

IN THIS ISSUE:

WAPSI WONDER

WAPSIPINICON STATE PARK WOWS WITH COLOR, CAVES AND HISTORY



"I'm big into hunting, fishing and hiking. If you like to be outside and are looking for enjoyable college classes with students just like you, check out Ellsworth Community College in Iowa Falls. It's all hands-on here, and we literally go fishing during class time! We've also gone shed hunting, seining, bird watching, and more … it's so fun!

ECC prepared me for a summer job with the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, where I traveled all over the state restoring habitats for county parks. This fall I transfered to South Dakota State University to become a naturalist, and the transfer of my credits was easy."

- Tasha Larsen, ECC Class of 2014

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For information on Conservation Technology at Ellsworth Community College contact ECC Admissions at 800-322-9235 or email: eccinfo@iavalley.edu

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Contributors

GAIL GEORGE worked as a naturalist for the Des Moines County Conservation Board before spending 28 years with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources in central Iowa. Now, when not writing or researching her family genealogy, you might find her out hiking or birdwatching.

BILL KLEIN was born and raised in Des Moines, graduated from Dowling Catholic High School and worked for *Look* magazine in Des Moines. A life-long hunter and angler, his work appears in *Outdoor America* and many hunting and conservation magazines. He lives in Stillwater, Minn.

Des Moines writer **SANDY FLAHIVE** likes discovering the hidden gems in Iowa's many nooks and crannies and spending time at her remote cabin near Stephens State Forest in southern Iowa.

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

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

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SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2014

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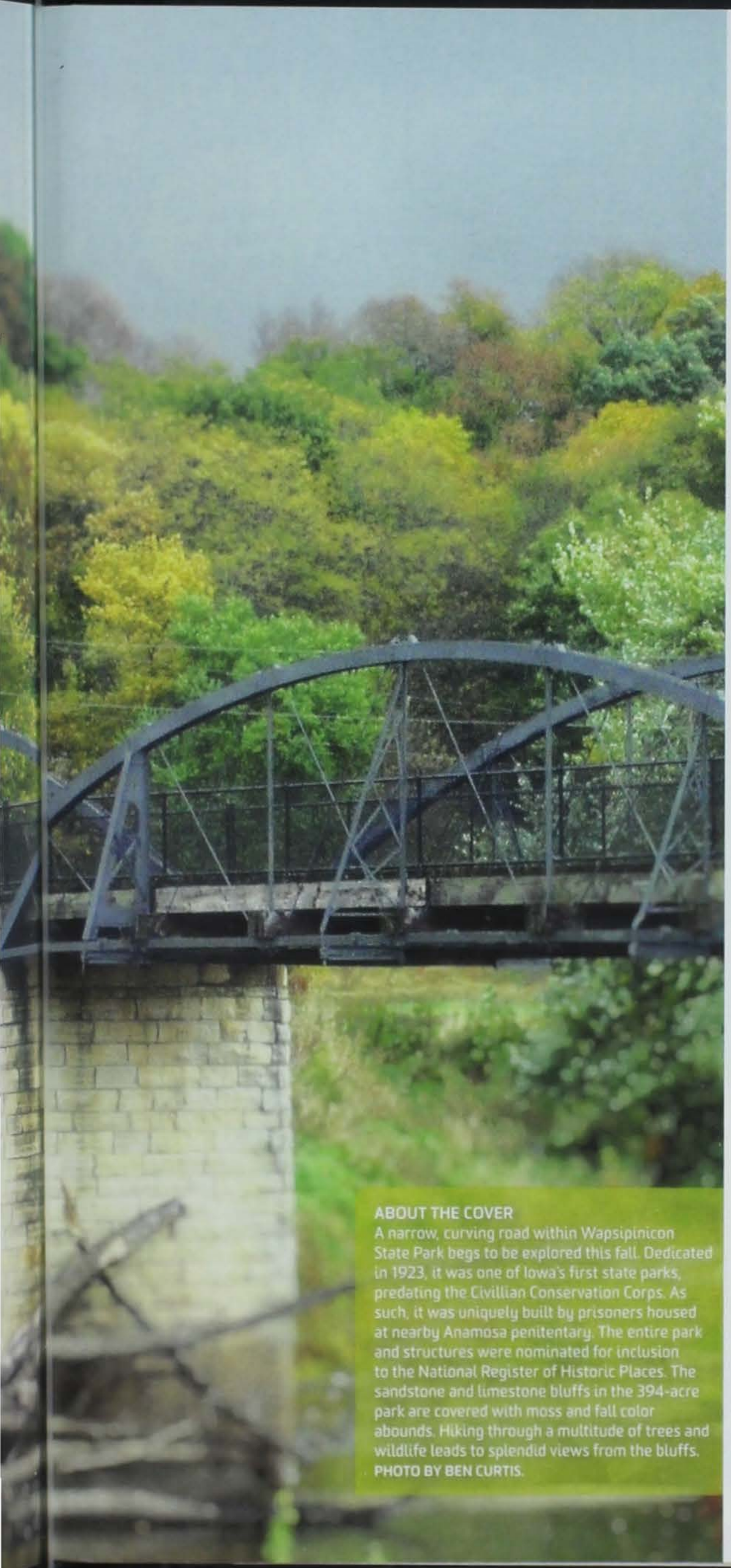

ABOUT THE COVER
A narrow, curving road within Wapsipinicon State Park begs to be explored this fall. Dedicated in 1923, it was one of Iowa's first state parks, predating the Civillian Conservation Corps. As such, it was uniquely built by prisoners housed at nearby Anamosa penitentary. The entire park and structures were nominated for inclusion to the National Register of Historic Places. The sandstone and limestone bluffs in the 394-acre park are covered with moss and fall color abounds. Hiking through a multitude of trees and wildlife leads to splendid views from the bluffs.
PHOTO BY BEN CURTIS.

DEPARTMENTS

ABOUT THIS PHOTO
Hale Bridge, transformed from a vehicle-carrying bridge to a pedestrian walkway at Wapsipinicon State Park in Jones County, spans the Wapsipinicon River. It is the longest bowstring truss bridge in Iowa. In 2006, it moved from a rural road to the park, thanks to two Chinook helicopters and the Iowa Army National Guard.
PHOTO BY BEN CURTIS.

Grasp the Power of the Wolf

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Shown much smaller than actual size. When displayed as shown on the premiere issue display, the collection measures 30 inches L x 16½ inches W.

SWING PHOTO BY ISTOCKPHOTO.COM

Hanging a Tree Swing

Chris Francis, an International Society of Arboriculture certified arborist, says she'd prefer seeing bolts in a branch to hold a swing, rather than ropes, bindings or cables. Although an eye bolt is invasive, if done properly the tree can grow around it, whereas ropes, bindings and cables can damage the bark (exposing tree tissue to airborne or insect-borne bacteria and fungi that can cause rot) or girdle the branch (cut away the bark and cambium around the branch and cause it to die).

As a rule, the limb should be at least 1 inch thick per 10 pounds of weight it supports. Make sure the limb is healthy by having a certified arborist examine it. The branch should be attached to the trunk with a moderate swelling and a "U" shape—a good sign that the limb will become stronger with age. If the limb attachment looks like a "Y" or "V," this is a sign that this is a very tight branch angle and the wood will actually push apart, becoming weaker as it matures.

Do not hang a swing from a tree with brittle branches or signs of insect or disease damage.

If your swing will be used near a treehouse, bolt the swing to a strong beam under your treehouse floor rather than a branch. —MINDY KRALICEK

Get Free Waterway Clean Up Bags

As much as we dislike admitting, anglers are some of the worst litterers. Their refuse and carelessness is not only gross, but puts the kibosh on public fishing access at private ponds and access to rivers and streams through private lands. Frankly, landowners are sick of the cans, bait containers, fish guts, bottles and garbage left behind. And public areas, most recently the Principal Riverwalk in downtown Des Moines, are now off limits to fishing thanks to the slob behavior of some anglers. Ethical anglers, paddlers and others who love our waterways are helping clean these messes using strong, lightweight, reusable mesh bags that let out water and sand to allow for easy cleanup of litter left by others. These efforts send a strong message to others—littering waterways is intolerable.

Get free bags at bait shops, email *todd.robertson@dnr.iowa.gov* or call Mindy Kralicek at *515-281-0716*. Bulk quantities available for groups.

Research shows when those prone to littering see others cleaning debris—they are more likely to stop their bad ways due to social pressure.

DIY Boot Hanger

Inspired by those in use at DNR fish hatcheries, easily construct this DIY boot hanger to keep harmful creases from shortening boot life during storage. Use either a 1x4 or 2x4 inch board for a base. A 43-inch board will hold four pairs of boots. Use a 5/8th-inch dowel cut to 8-inch lengths if using a 2x4 board. (Pegs can be 6-inches long for a 1x4 base.) Center each pair of pegs 2-1/4-inches apart. Drill holes with 5/8ths-inch bit. Between a set of pegs, leave 2-3/4 to 3 inches space for the next peg set. Add wood glue if needed to set pegs. Stain or paint for finish. If space allows, add a single peg to each end of board to hang a creel, vest or jacket. Bolt finished hanger to wall studs.

Together BY *BRIAN BUTTON*

LET THE BEAUTY OF Fall Color ROLL BY

River Excursions offer Unique Autumn Perspective along the Father of Waters

View the fiery colors of autumn while nestled deep in the Mississippi River Valley aboard the 196-foot *Celebration Belle*. With up to 770 passengers, it's the largest non-gaming passenger vessel on the upper portion of the river and attracts vacationers from as far as 1,000 miles away as well as many international groups, including the King and Queen of Sweden.

"We are known for our food, entertainment and staff," says Susan Yarolem, marketing manager, who adds that the delicious, plentiful food is prepared on-board in their galleys.

As testament to the experience, "We have lots of repeat business and new business comes from word of mouth," she says. "Fall is one of our most popular times with several cruise options that fit plans for all."

While passengers love going through the lock and dams, it's the picturesque forests draped in rust, copper, mustard, honey and crimson that make autumn cruises special. Eagles, white pelicans, migrating waterfowl, deer, towering bluffs, river towns and beautiful homes tucked along the way make for ever-changing scenery. The captain's narration tells the history of the river and its towns, natural history and wildlife sightings enroute, along with river navigation and tales of the river.

Fall colors are the backdrop for thousands of waterfowl migrating back to their wintering grounds. During peak migration in late October, hundreds of thousands of canvasbacks, common mergansers, goldeneyes, mallards, shovelers, blue-winged teal and coots gather on the river.

"It's an experience to remember," she says, so bring a camera. Binoculars are a good idea too.

The ship sails year-round in all weather thanks to two enclosed, climate-controlled decks that feature live entertainment along with meals. Two outdoor observation decks with tables and chairs on the third and fourth decks

require dressing for the conditions. The ship is fully handicap accessible.

Family owned, and in its 31st season, founder Joe Schadler, a LeClaire native and Dubuque resident, recently passed away. His son Scott, of Bettendorf, now runs the company along with his wife Laurie. In 1993, after spending much of his boyhood watching and helping his father onboard, Scott became a full business partner.

The Cruises

"There are plenty of cruise options," says Yarolem, ranging from four-hour jaunts debarking from the Quad Cities, Dubuque or Prairie Du Chien, Wisc., to all-day excursions. "That section of river from the Quad Cities to Dubuque is one of the most beautiful sections of Mississippi River," she says of the 100-mile cruise that also wends past Bellevue State Park.

New this year is an all-day, roundtrip fall cruise from Dubuque north to Guttenberg and back on Oct. 8. Guttenberg, named one of "America's Prettiest Towns" by *Forbes Traveler*, was settled in 1851 by German immigrants and is nestled between limestone bluffs. Meals include a hot buffet breakfast, lunch buffet and prime rib dinner onboard.

Other day-long fall cruises leave Dubuque and head north to Prairie Du Chien, Wisc., past the forested bluffs of Pikes Peak State Park and where, just upriver, explorers Marquette and Jolliet came down the Wisconsin River in 1673, and were the first Europeans to see the Mississippi River.

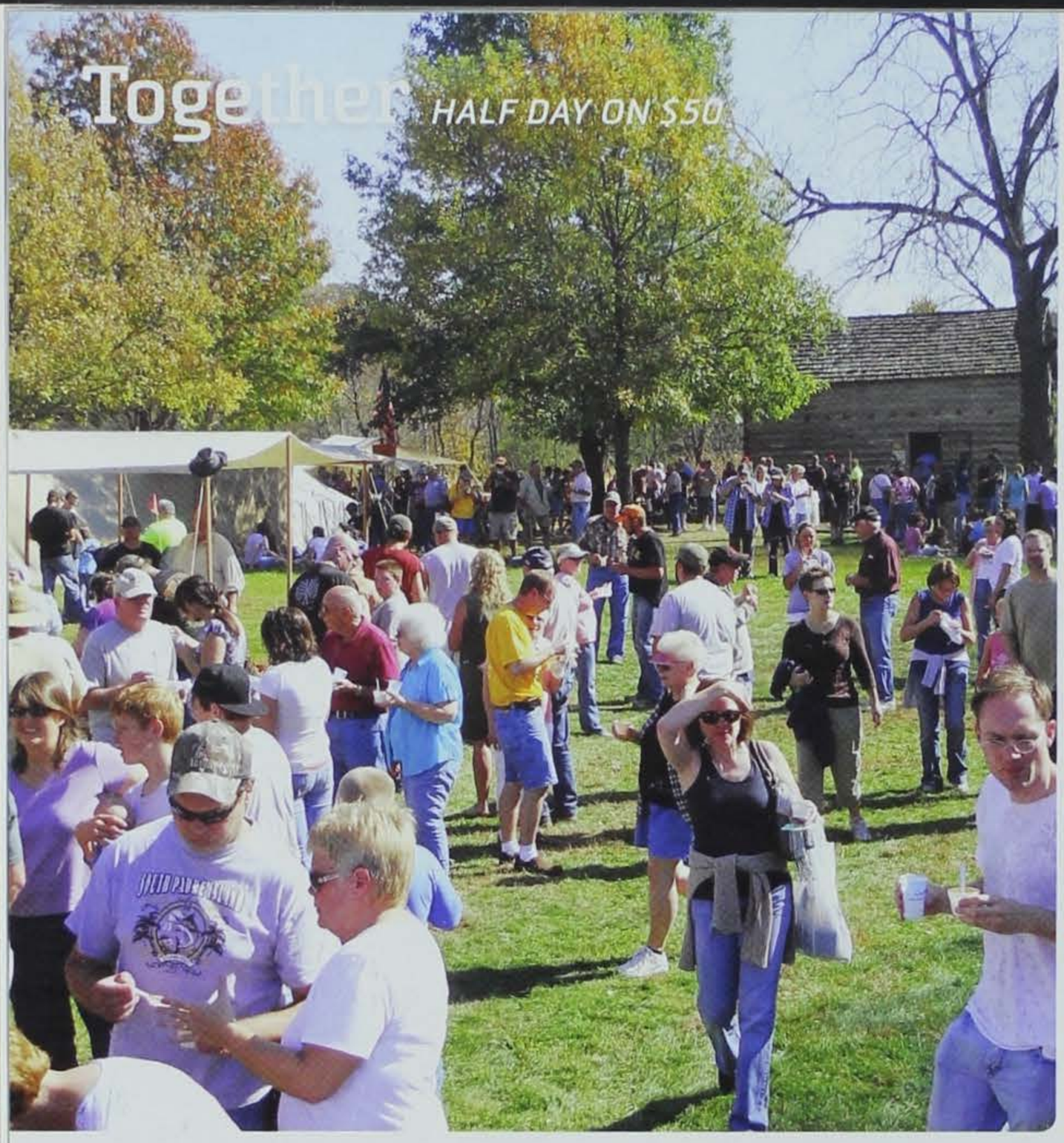
There are also half-day trips from Prairie Du Chien to Dubuque or Dubuque to Prairie Du Chien with two meals and live music.

Learn More

Reservations required. Fall is a popular cruise time, so check availability.

For non-roundtrip voyages, return transportation is provided to departure point. Children's prices for ages 3-10. Kids under 3 free.

For reservations, gift certificates, pricing, bookings and questions contact: *Celebrationbelle.com; 800-297-0034*



Get Way Retro AT Osborne Nature Center

BY *JOE WILKINSON* PHOTOS BY *BRIAN GIBBS*

To see, feel and taste history, head to the 40th Heritage Days Oct. 12-13 near Elkader and relish 1840s buckskinners, an 1880s general store and a turn of the century steam engine. Pick up some homemade soap from an 1800s family recipe.

Buckskinners show off trade blankets. Enter the buffalo chip throwing contest. A one-room schoolhouse and 1840s log cabin are big draws. Exhibitors—most in period costumes—make and sell leather, iron and bead products, plus food, soap, wood and gourd carvings and art prints. The clanging dinner bell signals the next huge kettle of buffalo stew is ready.

Tour the grounds for free, or spend a few bucks on food, provisions or collectibles of the 1800s. Stay for an hour or spend the weekend. And maybe come back for decades.

Fry bread sells all day long at Lost Moccasin Trading Post. "We've been coming for about 30 years. We started coming with the Boy Scouts. They were into beadwork and costumes," recalls Linda Holmes. She, husband Del, and friends Dave and Joy Young, also offer dream catchers, jewelry, fur pouches and other souvenirs.

Fresh apples, gourds, honey, jams and baked goods—even lefse—are offered. There is also a Sunday morning tent revival.

For a couple bucks, buy a steamburger, turkey leg or open-fire kettle corn. Fall produce, soap and crafts are priced to move. Here, too, "dreamcatchers," wood carvings, art prints, jewelry, leatherwork and some iron products run from $5 to $10 and up.

Sue Wilkinson (this writer's wife) reluctantly inherited the title, "Soap Lady," when her mother died in 2008. "We talked about it when Mom was sick. She was emphatic that we keep going at Osborne," recalls Wilkinson. She gets a stream of "Grandma used to make that" or "Can I get the recipe?"—the heritage lives on.

"This recipe—tallow or lard, lye and water—goes back in my family to the 1850s," she says. A little borax goes in now, as a water softener. "When first made, it can burn your skin. Let it age a year and use it for just about everything. It cleared up a rash on (newborn granddaughter) Madelyn, after too many hospital baths with conventional soap," she says.

Yet competition is inevitable. Granddaughter Mila, in her pioneer dress, undercuts Grandma's prices with soap she helped make. Within an hour, Mila earns enough to buy a rabbit skin purse to stash the cash from her weekend sales.

After all, pioneers believed in a little frontier capitalism, too.

Thousands of visitors stream to Heritage Days, held along highway 13 between Strawberry Point and Elkader. "It's a step back into history—the entertainment, crafts and food of the pioneer era. People want to remember how things used to be," explains Abbey Harkrader, naturalist and Heritage Days coordinator for the Clayton County Conservation Board.

Learn More

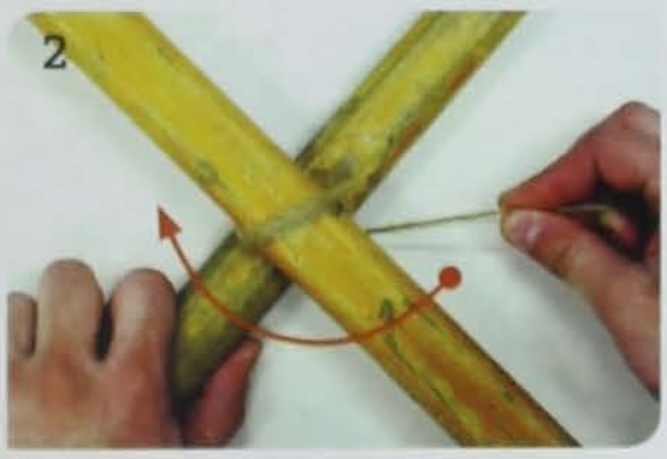
For more Heritage Days details or questions contact: *Claytoncountyconservation.org; 563-245-1516*

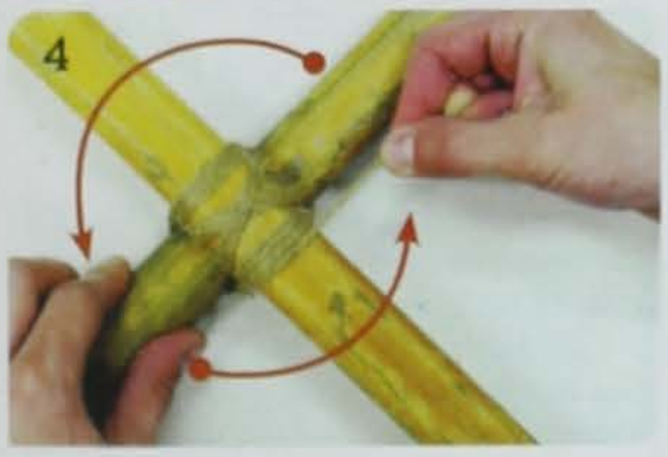
Heritage Days is held as fall color peaks in northeast Iowa. During your visit, see the reds, golds and purples along the way. "We see a lot of the 'retiring generation' bringing their families out. It is family oriented—kid-friendly—"muses Tim Engelhardt, Clayton County conservation director. **Get Iowa's fall color updates with the DNR Fall Color Hotline: 515-233-4110.**

TIED UP Memories

BY *BRIAN BUTTON* PHOTOS BY *BEN CURTIS*

Old oars, fishing poles, paddles, skis or other items can be lashed together to decorate your office, home or cabin using a few simple knots. Diagonal lashing is also useful in gardens and yards with lashed cross-bracing using sticks or bamboo.





HERE'S HOW:

1) Lay the items across one another at desired angle. Tie a timber hitch around the poles at the widest angle. Knot is shown from the backside in this image.

2) Tighten and lead the cord away from you and around the back as shown from the front in this image. Wind tightly over the top and around the intersection four to five times.

3) Wind across the narrowest intersecting angle. Hold the poles at the angle you desire as winding tightly will increase their angle.

4) Wind the cord counterclockwise, going in front of the upper vertical pole, behind the cross pole on the left, in front of the lower vertical and behind the right cross pole. Do this three to four times.

5) Finish with a quick and easy clove hitch around one pole. With the end of the rope, wrap the end over and down behind a pole, then up in front and over itself to the left. Pull the ends to tighten and slide knot toward center.

Together

OVERCOMING THE GAP TO FEED THE NEED

BY *TIM LANE*

Let me be honest. I am the last person in Iowa to get nutritional advice from. It would be like asking Donald Trump to mentor about humility. So I turned to the first person you should talk to...a dietitian. There are many to choose from. In fact, you can find one, conveniently, in larger grocery stores.

There are dieticians at the Iowa Department of Public Health, ISU Extension, senior centers, hospitals, online and in private practice. I started with Jen DeWall, "the only private practicing, board-certified sports dietician in Iowa." She is also founder of her business, Nutrition in Motion.

Let me address need. You may say, "I know everything about nutrition. (I just don't apply that knowledge to what I eat!)" Let me share some preliminary study findings by Nicholas Kalas, an epidemiological fellow on loan to Iowa from the CDC. RAGBRAI riders don't always drink enough water or know the signs of dehydration. After 40 years of that event, you'd think riders would know all about dehydration. But lack of knowledge and even greater lack of application of what they know points to a gap or disconnect between knowledge and action.

I am not picking on cyclists. This same condition is demonstrated by all. Take us "old folks" for example. After 65 years of experience, we should know to stay hydrated, yet dehydration is a leading hospitalization cause after age 65. According to DeWall, that is because "good nutrition" is not a static objective, but a moving target. What you need to know and eat as an 11-year-old swimmer, 20-year-old student, 30-year-old office worker and 65-year-old retiree changes. Heck, according to her, needs change from the day before a hike, during a hike and after a hike or other sport activity. What you eat to recover may be as important as what you eat prior.

Again, take aging and hydration. According to the Mayo Clinic, as we age, we become more susceptible to dehydration: The body's ability to conserve water is reduced, thirst senses are less acute and older persons are less able to respond to temperature changes. What's more, older adults, especially when in nursing homes or living alone, tend to eat less than younger people and sometimes forget to eat or drink altogether. (Some water comes via food such as fresh fruits, vegetables, soups and prepared grains like oats, quinoa, rice and pasta.) Such trends are compounded by chronic illnesses such as diabetes or medications.

Bottom line: you have a "metabolic fingerprint" that is unique, changing and requires different fuels before, during and after activity. There are general universal principals; fruit, water and grains usually trump sugar, fat and excessive alcohol. But the bad news isn't as simple. The good news? There is a legion of dietitians out there, even online, ready to provide information you need. Some even address the motivation needed to ensure that knowledge we possess is reflected by actions.

Two other words came up when chatting with dieticians...local and slow. DeWall left me with this: "It often isn't what you eat, but how fast. Better nutrition can be achieved by slowing down, chewing your food and starting the digestive process before the food is passed on to your stomach." OK, we're hitting pretty close to home here...my eating habits in the past were described as "inhale and gulp."

Here are places to learn more: 1) ***www.nutritioninmotion.info/*** 2) ***choosemyplate.gov*** **3)** ***hy-vee.com*** (click the health tab)

TIM LANE is a nationally recognized authority on public health and physical activity. He is president of the Iowa Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance.

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.

ANNA, AGE 11, CLINTON COUNTY ASKS:

Why do mosquitoes bite?

Male mosquitoes are content with snacking on nectar and plant juices, but that's just not enough for females. They're out for blood.

Female mosquitoes, the only ones that bite, require a meal of blood to develop healthy eggs to reproduce. When they don't have eggs to worry about, females don't mind dining along with the males on plants. But when they need a blood meal, watch out, because they have lots of ways to find their next dinner.

A mosquito can smell a person from at least 50 yards away—that's half a football field. Carbon dioxide, which we exhale, attracts female mosquitoes. They can also smell different substances in a person's sweat. Clothing colors that stand out from the crowd—like black or red—can also attract them.

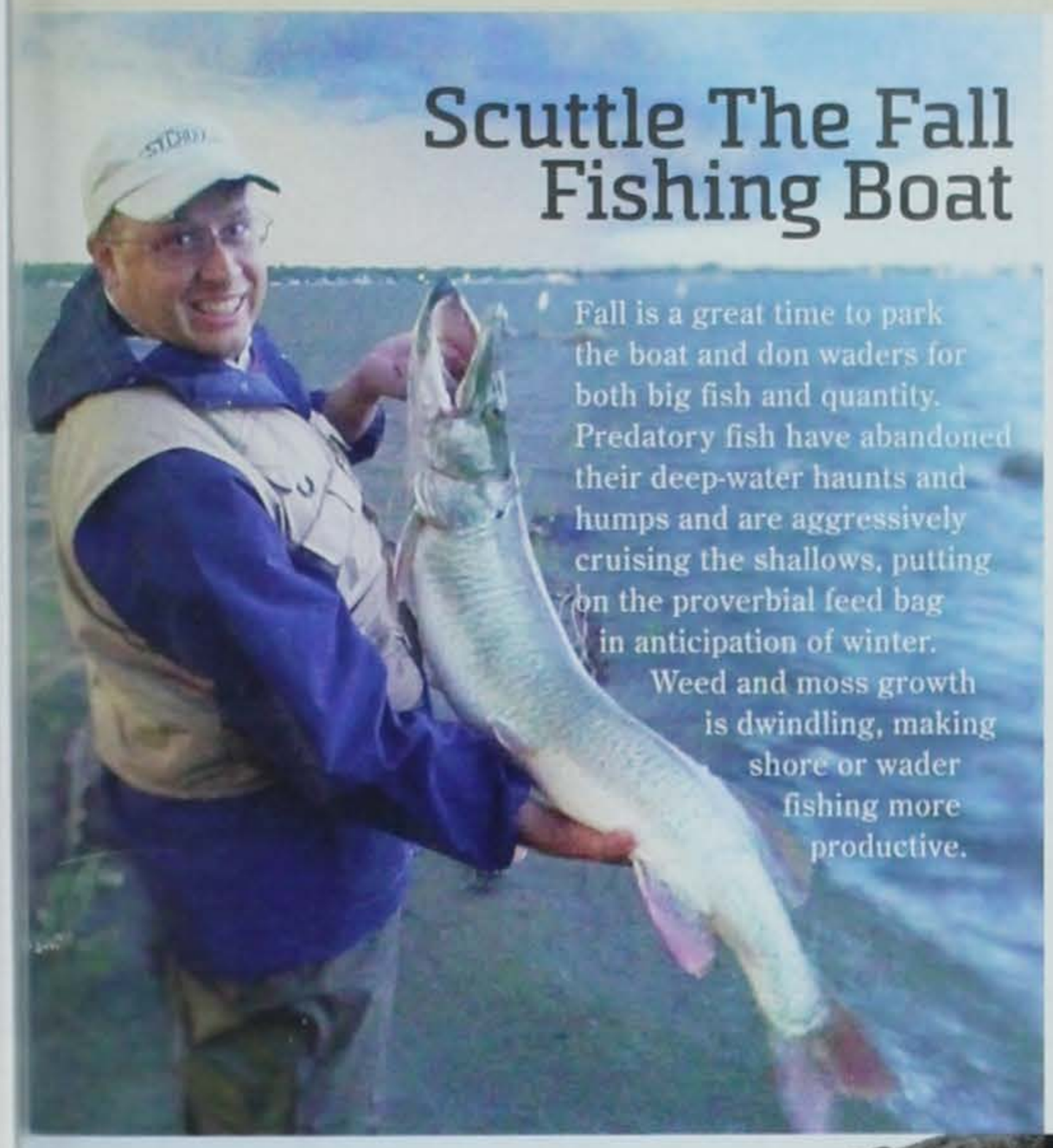
People that create more carbon dioxide and have warmer body temperatures—including pregnant women—tend to attract more mosquitoes. It's also said that people with Type O blood tend to attract more skeeters.

So, to try to avoid being a mosquito's next meal, wear light-colored clothing, and avoid dawn and dusk, when most mosquitoes feed. And don't forget the bug repellent.

Outdoor Skills

BY *ALAN FOSTER* PHOTOS BY *BEN CURTIS*

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



Scuttle The Fall Fishing Boat

Fall is a great time to park the boat and don waders for both big fish and quantity. Predatory fish have abandoned their deep-water haunts and humps and are aggressively cruising the shallows, putting on the proverbial feed bag in anticipation of winter. Weed and moss growth is dwindling, making shore or wader fishing more productive.

GO BIG In Fall

Fall fishing success is second only to the spring spawn, when fish are aggressive and vulnerable. But unlike spring, when fish are more finicky and smaller baits are the answer, fall is the time to go big. In fall, shoreline vegetation has died back, predator fish are cruising the shallows as opposed to deeper waters, and they are trying to pound as many calories as possible before winter. Whole live bait and larger artificials are called for. This is true for all species, but especially predator fish.

Safe, Simple DIY Haul Rope

Hauling gear up a tree stand with a rope is a cardinal safety rule of hunting from elevated positions. Carrying items up a treestand violates the three-point contact rule, thus increasing risks of falls. But cold, ice and snow can make plastic clips break and dealing with knots difficult. To remedy, cut an appropriate-length of paracord, wrap six times around a 6-inch-long solid stick and tie off with a square knot. Run the stick through your bow limbs and backpack loop and haul up for easy removal.

FISH PHOTO COURTESY ANGLER JASON BRINKMAN

Hot Feet

Cool-season camping can make for the most enjoyable family adventures. Crowds are smaller, campsites are more available and the weather spectacular. But cooler nights can put a damper on sleeping conditions, especially late fall. Remedy that with a couple leak-proof water bottles filled with very hot water, tucked in the sleeping bag just before bed. They will keep toes toasty all night. Make sure to fully tighten bottles.

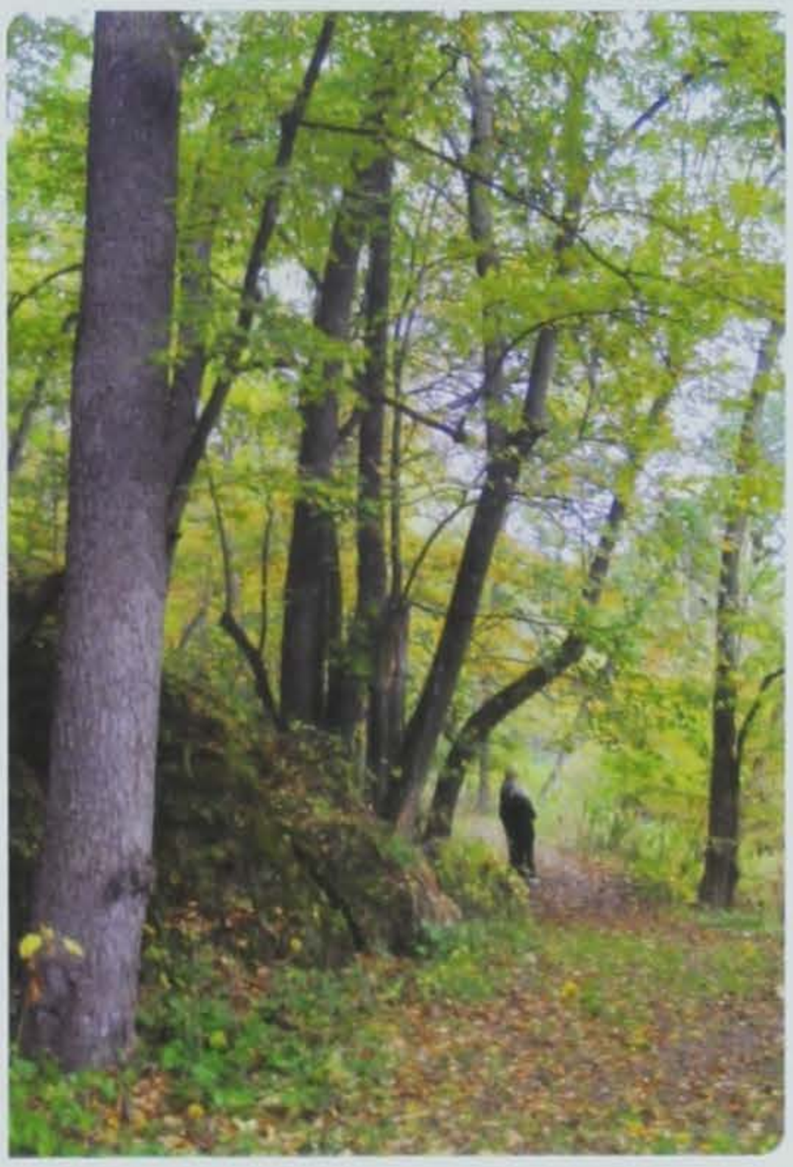
Lost In Iowa

BY *SANDY FLAHIVE* PHOTOS BY *BEN CURTIS*

Wapsipinicon State Park in Jones County is a special place that invites visitors to explore bluffs, scramble up rocky stairs and peer into narrow crevices of craggy cliffs. Perhaps most thrilling is recalling the excitement of years past when horse thieves hid from the law using the bluffs' deep, dark caves.

Undeniably, Unbelievably UNIQUE—

Wapsipinicon State Park



"Ya' see," says one old-timer, "it was this way." Some horse thieves were scramblin' from the law way back when and were acquainted enough with the territory to know they could vamoose up into the rocky bluffs and thick timber there along the Wapsipinicon River and disappear all the way back into the caves and escape the hoosegow.

"And," the storyteller continues, "one cave in particular was a favorite of these ne'er-do-wells and one or t'other was always skedaddlin' back in there with horses and loot and what have you. Why, some folks say there was a time the villains could hide out as many as 15 miles back in that cave, though skeptical sorts say that's just hearsay. Whatever the case, the honest-to-God's truth is enough scoundrels beat a hasty retreat in that black hole that folks started callin' it Horse Thief Cave—and the name's stuck ever since."

Thus endures one of the many stories, myths, legends and even proven historical facts about a well-known feature of what is now Wapsipinicon State Park, and, though its tale-inspiring caves are definitely a main draw, Wapsipinicon is so much more.

The perfect person to let a visitor know just how much more there is to this nearly-400-acre oasis of natural beauty gracing western Jones County is park manager

Lost In Iowa

Dennis Murphy.

"It's true that Wapsipinicon is unique," he affirms, "so much so that it has been nominated for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. Park visitors, after spending a little time here and learning about its history, understand why it should be on that list."

Without a doubt, its history is matchless—and its beginnings differ far from other Iowa state parks, many of which were built as part of the massive efforts of the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s.

Not so for Wapsipinicon. In the summer of 1921, shortly after local citizens purchased 180 acres of land near Anamosa, construction began on roads, bridges and facilities for a park—with the laborers for the project being a most unusual crew: inmates from the nearby men's reformatory. For five years, using dynamite, handpicks, sledges, shovels, wheelbarrows and lots of sweat, the men from the prison doggedly met the challenge of creating a park in the midst of extremely formidable and nearly impenetrable limestone bluffs bordering the Wapsi River.

"That was its beginning," states Murphy, "and we've been adding parcels of land to the park ever since, the last one as recently as 2005—always relying on the inmates. Without their help through the years, this park wouldn't begin to be what it is. They've had a hand in nearly every aspect of its development." (Now called Anamosa State Penitentiary, the facility, built in 1875, features spectacular Gothic Revival architecture from locally quarried limestone. It and the adjacent museum, also built by resident inmates, are both on the National Register of Historic Places).

From the outset, no time was wasted in park expansion. In November 1922, approximately 24 acres were added, and inmates went to work creating something that destined Wapsipinicon to become a rarity in the Iowa parks system. They were charged with building a golf course inside the majestic park tucked between the scenic bluffs and the river.

"So," explains Murphy, "not only were original features of the park built by an unusual group of workers, but their very next project, the golf course, was one that even to this day is rarely part of the makeup of a state park." The addition proved to be a hot item, because shortly after the land purchase was made, and before the course and its accompanying clubhouse were completed, 118 charter members had signed up, a board of directors was formed and the whole enterprise was named the Wapsipinicon Country Club, a title the nine-hole course laid out over nearly 3,000 yards retains today.

Still a popular attraction, the course always has been open to the public and has changed little in size or shape since its early 1920s dedication. From the first, its operation and maintenance have been supported solely through club membership and greens fees.

Whether teeing up or not, park visitors should take a gander at the two chimneys rising skyward on either side of the clubhouse roof. Looking closely, one can spy an oversized golf tee and two clubs embedded on the surface of one chimney and a tennis racquet on the other—additional distinguishing characteristics of Wapsipinicon.

Other features that came and went during the park's long and interesting history include: a Boy Scout camp (dissolved in the 1950s); a number of WWI German cannons (melted for scrap metal during WWII); grist mill turned hydroelectric plant (now defunct); inmate concerts (halted during WWII); and a huge swimming pool (forced to close in 1934 due to low water levels).

The historic district nominated for membership to the illustrious national register includes the entirety of the park, all buildings, structures and sites; the Wapsipinicon River Bridge, dam and waterworks; 10 archaeological sites; and the bowstring, relocated and restored Hale Bridge, which has been re-listed in the National Register following its move to the park. It is the only remaining three-span bridge in Iowa.

A RIVER WRAPPED IN LIMESTONE

While Wapsipinicon is indeed endowed with a rich and colorful history, it is no less blessed with natural beauty. The rolling upland wooded park with its river-wrapped limestone bluffs that tower 70 feet in places offers stunning views from the road that winds between the river and the bluffs.

It is with this backdrop that today's visitors happily enjoy the park. Campers hang out in a shaded campground with 30 sites, 15 with electrical hookups. Modern restrooms and showers are close by, and shelters and two lodges may be reserved for group events or a family picnic.

Touring the park with Murphy is an exercise in appreciation of the outdoors. "In addition to golfing and camping, we offer the full range of other recreational opportunities here," he says, indicating a tree-lined pathway. "For example, we have hikers who enjoy..." But before he can finish the statement, as if on cue, Don and Shirley Tureck of Anamosa, come walking from the other direction.

"Oh, yes. We walk in the park every day," states Shirley. "At least a mile or two."

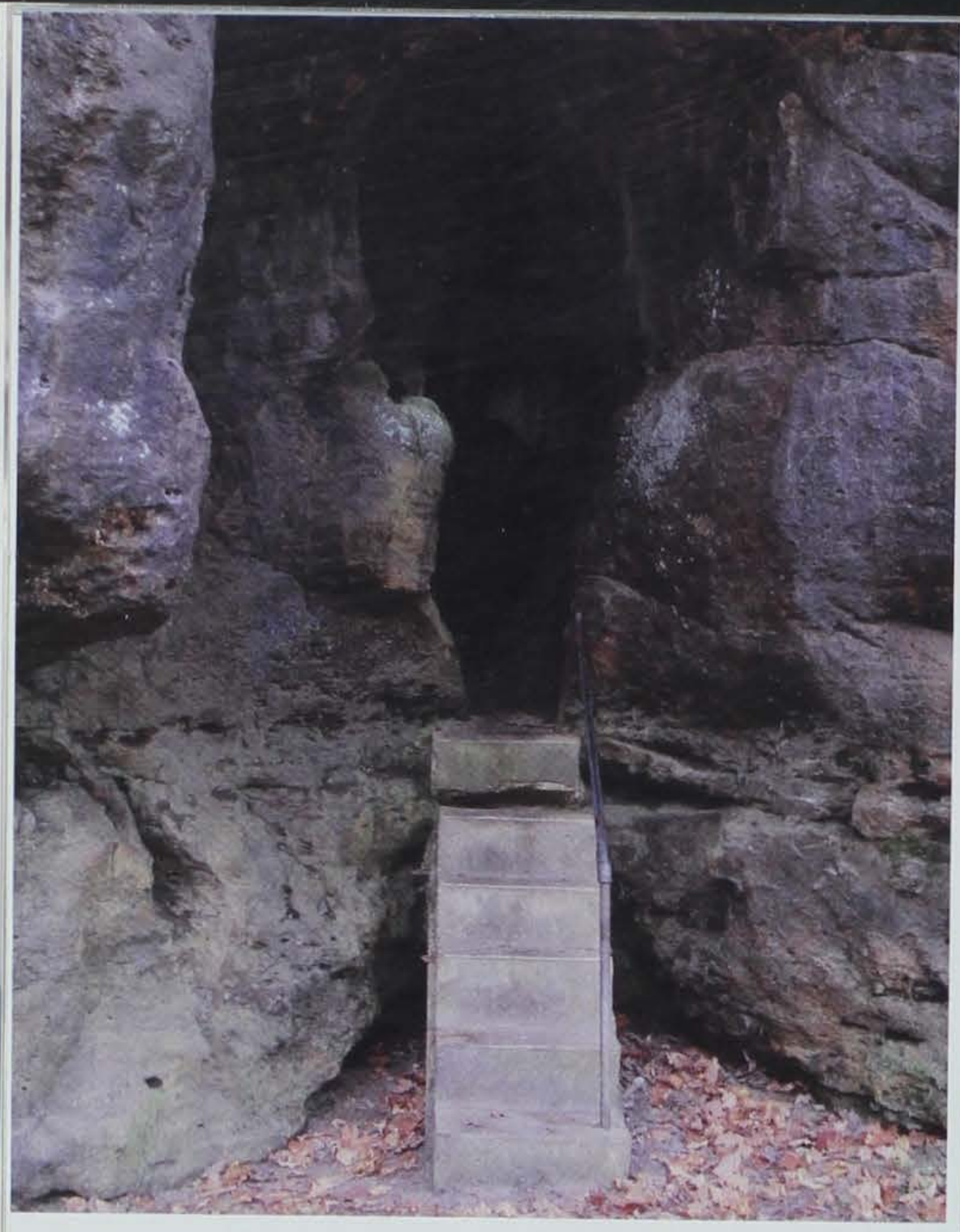
"We really enjoy the scenery," adds Don. "It's a super park and well cared for."

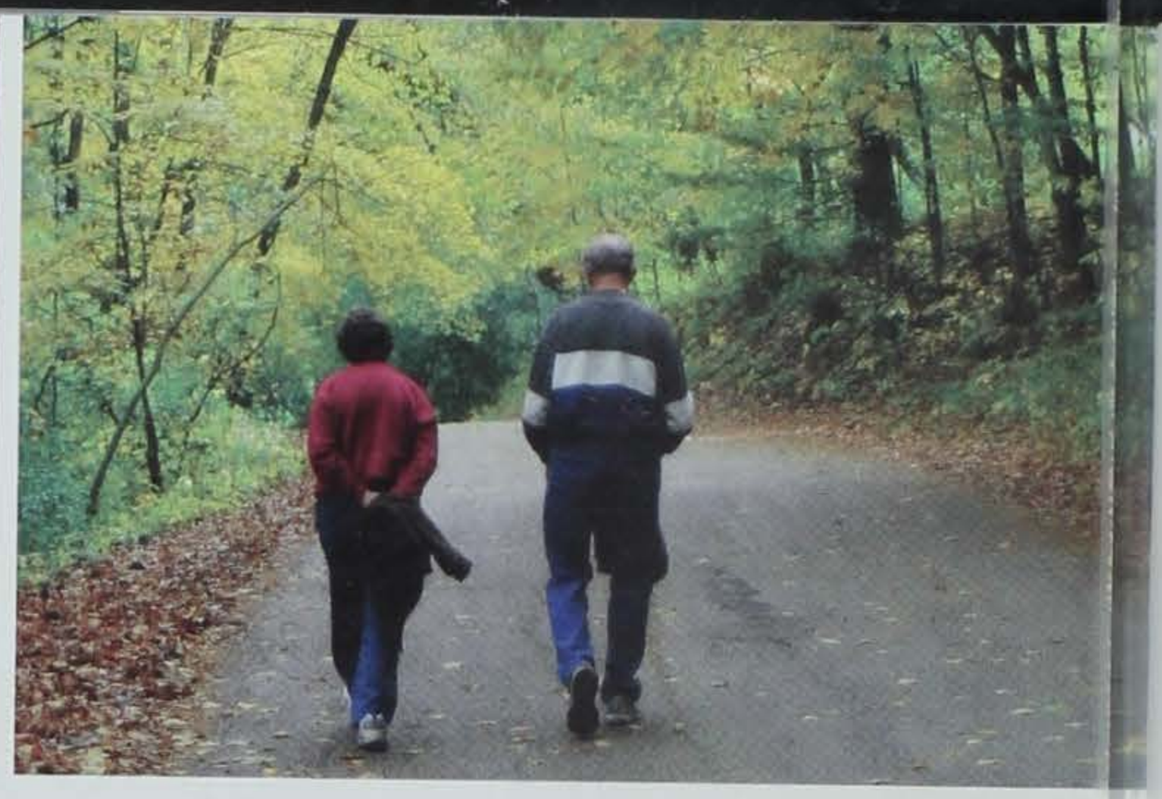
And away they go to continue their daily endeavor. But before they are out of sight, another hiker comes along. Steve McAleer, of nearby Monticello, is also a regular on the park's trails and pathways. "I try to walk here every day, but I don't follow the same routine. I try different loops. Don't want to get bored," he laughs.

"As I was saying," remarks Murphy, returning to his original thought as he waves adieu to these folks he sees daily, "even in the dead of winter people enjoy hiking here."

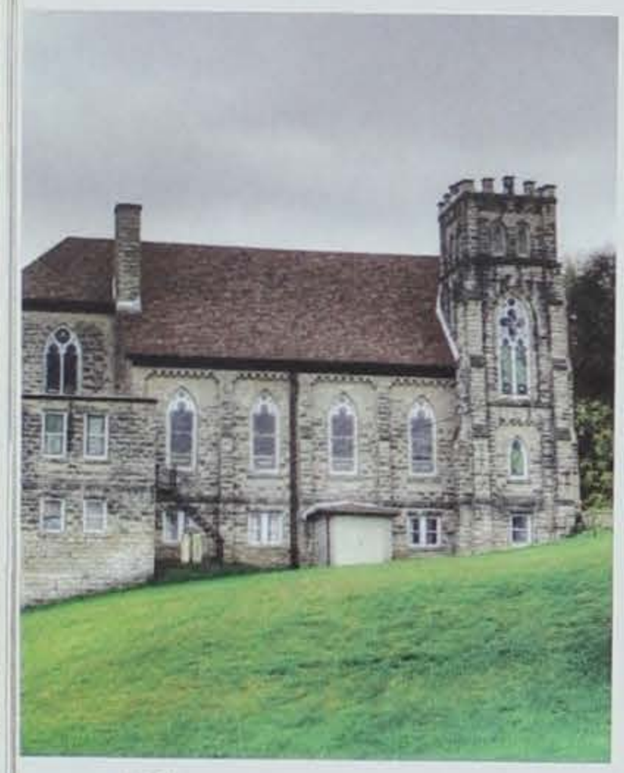
Skiing, snowmobiling, biking and nature walks also

Hale Bridge, transformed from a vehicle bridge to a pedestrian walkway spanning the Wapsipinicon River, is the longest bowstring truss bridge in Iowa. In 2006, it was moved from its rural roadway to the park in a dramatic effort accomplished by two Chinook helicopters from the Iowa Army National Guard.

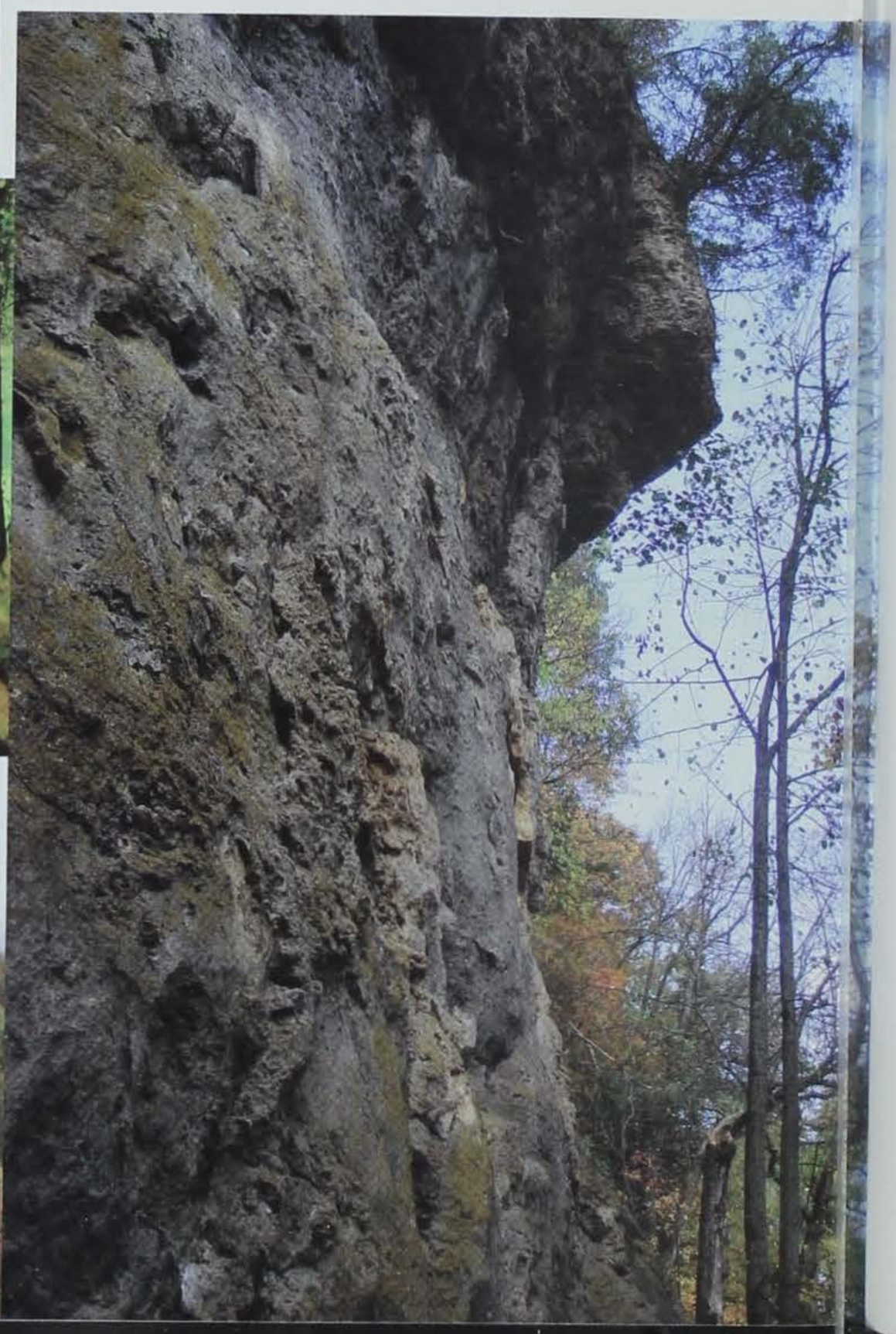




Along with legendary Horse Thief Cave, Ice Cave is a popular park attraction. Both are cool respites on warm days. **ABOVE:** Anamosa residents Dan and Shirley Tureck hike the park nearly every day to look at vegetation, observe wildlife and take in views from atop bluffs. **BELOW LEFT:** The Weber Stone Company in Stone City, birthplace of artist Grant Wood, provides limestone for buildings nationwide. St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, built in 1913, features local stone and stained glass windows imported from Germany. **BELOW:** Impenetrable, rugged limestone cliffs, bluffs and crevices sprout determined trees on the highest outcroppings and delicate plant communities stubbornly persist in the narrowest fissures and clefts.

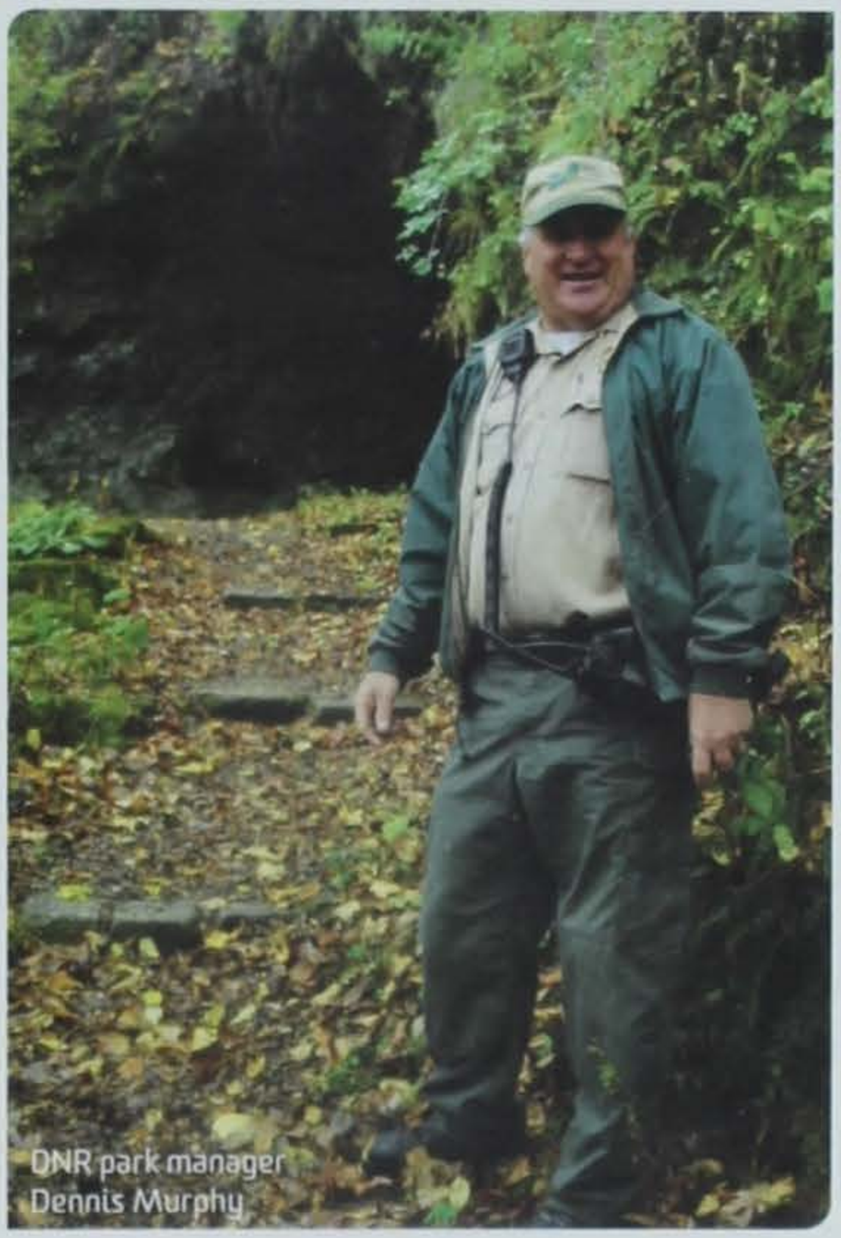


Wapsipinicon State Park features a 9-hole golf course.



make the trail system a popular park attribute.

Hunting, mostly for turkey and deer, is allowed in season on a 140-acre area that includes ponds, grassy slopes and brushy valleys. Fishing in the Wapsipinicon River, which forms most of the north and east boundaries of the park, and Dutch Creek, which runs through the park, tends to be excellent. The two waterways offer both easy pickings and great challenges for anglers—easy pickings due to the large variety of fish found below the dam near the park entrance and great challenges in capturing walleye and northern at their feeding area near the mouth of Dutch Creek.


DNR park manager Dennis Murphy

INTRIGUING, HISTORIC CAVES

Hiking, hunting, fishing, gorgeous vistas? Oh, yeah... awesome draws to Wapsipinicon State Park. But in reality, the real allure, the real excitement, for most visitors, lies in those intriguing caves buried within the craggy bluffs. They are not to be ignored, especially legendary Horse Thief Cave and smaller-but-still-captivating Ice Cave.

As mentioned, Horse Thief Cave was aptly named for the antics of bad guys when they actually did ride off on horseback into the sunset with their plunder. The bowl-shaped opening, some 15 feet high and 30 feet wide, goes back about 100 feet into the bluff before petering out into nothing more than a slender crevice that makes it impossible to scootch in further.

"At one time you could go back a long way," says Murphy, "but not since the ceilings and walls gave way. They may have fallen on their own, but we think the cave probably was dynamited to keep people from getting too far in there."

Murphy also reports, as do other accounts, that the cave was apparently occupied as a shelter by prehistoric Native American cultures. "After some blasting was done at the entrance many decades past, nine human skeletons, most of them children, were found," he says. Other credible sources indicate evidence of cannibalism in the cave. Pottery, bison teeth, a mastodon tusk, spearheads, arrowheads and numerous other antiquated items were found.

Ice Cave goes back about 70 feet into the limestone bluffs and, unlike Horse Thief Cave, has a narrow opening. "It's a little wet and drippy in there and the walls look like ice," says Murphy, adding that little kids find Ice Cave a fun place to get on their bellies and crawl around a bit. It's also a nice cool retreat when summer temperatures become unbearable.

On a warm fall afternoon, the only inhabitant of either cave seems to be a busy little ground squirrel, apparently preparing for colder weather ahead. "That's about all you see in the caves these days," says the park manager, adding that there is no indication of bat hibernation there.

CLIMB PICTURED ROCKS

As the crow flies, in fact even as the car drives, it's a short distance from Wapsipinicon to another Jones County treasure: Pictured Rocks County Park. Named for the unusual formations in the steep limestone bluffs along the Maquoketa River five miles from Monticello, the 60-acre Pictured Rocks Park is part of a 1,138-acre wildlife area which includes nearby state preserve Indian Bluffs. The entirety is managed by the Jones County Conservation Board and the DNR.

Popular with hunters, birdwatchers, fishers, paddlers, hikers and spelunkers (yes, there are caves in these bluffs, too), Pictured Rocks appeals to yet another category of outdoor enthusiasts.

"We attract huge numbers of rock climbers and rappellers," says Michele Olson, Jones County naturalist. "In fact, Jones County manages more than 60 climbing routes here in collaboration with the Iowa Climbing Coalition." Scanning the sheer cliffs, one can see embedded within them permanent anchors ready and waiting for the next round of gutsy ascenders. These are the only permanently anchored climbing routes in Iowa.

Leading hikers along a trail through an undeveloped hardwood forest running parallel to a mighty line of sun-drenched bluffs, she points out, "On fall weekends we have hundreds of people testing their skills on these cliffs. Our parking lot is usually filled, with many cars having out-of-state plates because people from all over the country come here. Lots of climbing clubs not only practice their techniques here, they also pitch in and help maintain Pictured Rocks."

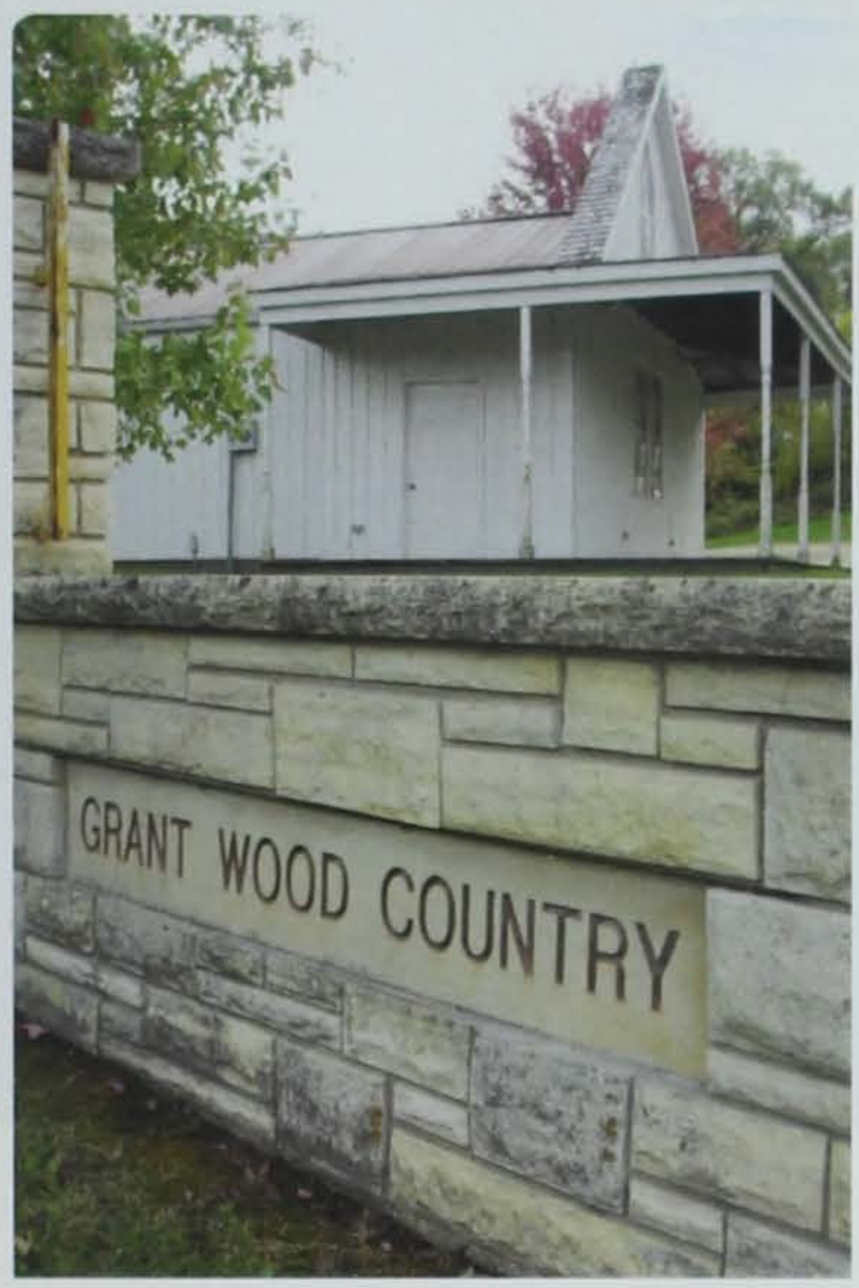
Passing by a cave embedded in the 230-feet-high bluffs from which tiny plants and wildflowers cling, Olson

Lost In Iowa


Monticello
151
PICTURED ROCKS
COUNTY PARK
80
38
136
Stone City
Anamosa
64
WAPSIPINICON
STATE PARK
1
WAPSIPINICON RIVER
136
JONES COUNTY

Legend has it that Horse Thief Cave extended back into the bluffs many miles and served as shelter to prehistoric Native American cultures. Today, due to the fallen ceiling and walls, access is limited to a hundred feet. Still, the bowl-shaped opening 15 feet high by 30 feet wide affords a unique outlook on the surroundings.

The picnic shelter at Pictured Rocks County Park signals entry to a wonderland of limestone bluffs, wooded shores and narrow valleys. Anglers, climbers, paddlers, birders and hikers flock to the area. Pictured Rocks, its name derived from unusual formations in the ancient bluffs of the Maquoketa River, is also abundant with cave systems.



Stone City

The unincorporated hamlet of Stone City, a Jones County gem four miles west of Anamosa, has an enviable history rich in the diverse areas of art and limestone quarries.

Famed artist and Anamosa-born Grant Wood was inspired to capture the local landscape in his paintings, which remain some of the most iconic in the world. In the early 1930s he established an art colony in the tiny village where he taught aspiring artists.

Although the town's fame is usually attributed to Wood, the art colony was short-lived...but thriving stone quarries became no less important to the town's development and survival. Today the Weber Stone Company, which ships all over the United States, is the reason for Stone City being known as "The Place That Refuses to Die."

A number of the original stone buildings still stand and have been preserved, helping retain the charm of old Stone City. Recent shipments of limestone from the Weber Company include its use in Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, many buildings at Cornell College in Mount Vernon, the state capitol in Des Moines and the state penitentiary in Anamosa.

According to Brad Hatcher, a director of the non-profit Stone City Foundation, "Grant Wood would definitely approve of how we have survived and revitalized."

discloses that the caves in this area do have bats.

"Unfortunately we've had to close the caves to protect the bats against White Nose Syndrome which has already killed hundreds of thousands of them across the country," she says. The only way to enter the caves at Pictured Rocks is to obtain a letter of authorization from the Jones County Conservation Board Director.

OCTOBER'S ANNUAL PADDLE

The forested valleys, extraordinary bluffs and unusual rock formations of Pictured Rocks serve as an impressive visual background for the annual October Fall Canoe Outing on the Maquoketa River that Jones County Conservation conducts.

"We usually paddle about eight miles on our journey," says Olson, "through beautiful stretches of scenery as we pass boulders and forested cliffs."

For paddler Libby Head of Cedar Rapids, a recent trip offered an opportunity to enjoy a rare tranquility. "The quiet of the river, the serenity of the landscape, and the peace of it all was mesmerizing," she reflects.

"Canoe shuttles can be expensive and often are difficult to arrange," she adds, "so we really appreciated the opportunity to get our canoe on a river we hadn't been on before and see more of Iowa."

So ya' see, it is this way! From hearing of horse thieves hiding far back in a dark, dank cave, to reading reports of inmates building a magnificent state park, to conversing with canoeists paddling down a wide, scenic river, the picture becomes clear: a visit to Wapsipinicon State Park and Jones County has to be penned in darkest ink on the bucket list.

TRAVEL NOTES

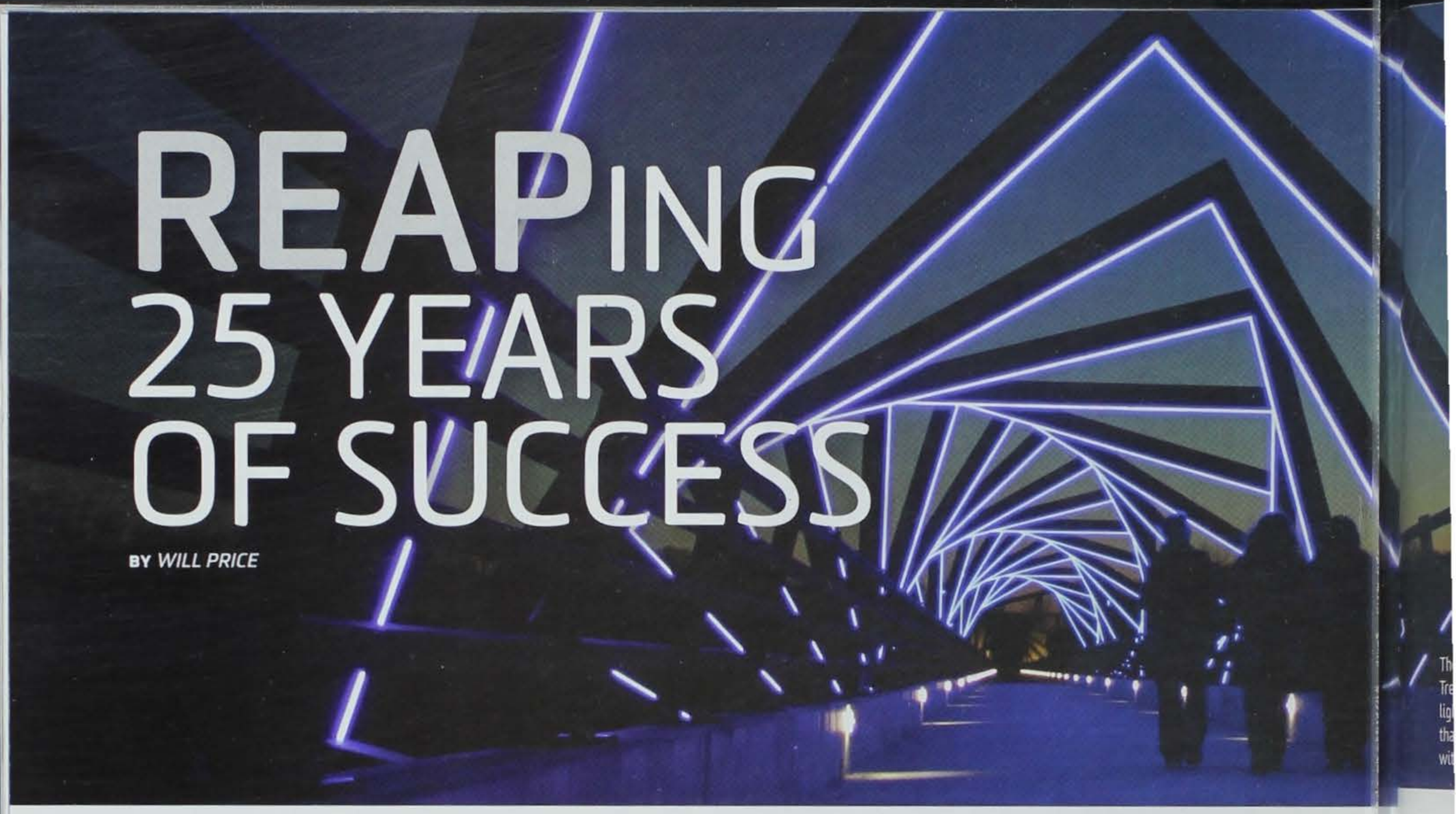
Pictured Rocks County Park: Get climbing information and cave closure information at *jonescountyiowa.org* or *563-487-3541* 190th Street, Monticello, IA 52310

Wapsipinicon State Park 21301 County Road E34 Anamosa, IA 52205 *319-462-2761*. *IowaDNR.gov*. Reserve campsites at *1-877-427-2757* or *http://iowastateparks.reserveamerica.com*

Annual Jones County Fall Color Canoe Outing
The Wapsipinicon River, Saturday, Oct. 11, 2014
10 a.m. (Shuttling vehicles at 9 a.m.)
Put-in at Matsell Bridge Access
Take-out at Anamosa Boat Ramp. Bring your snacks, sack lunch and cold-weather paddling gear.
(**Safety Note:** Fall cold-weather floats are best suited to experienced paddlers.)
Pre-registration required. Call *319-481-7987* or *naturalist@co.jones.ia.us* by 4 p.m., Thursday, Oct. 9, 2014.

REAPING 25 YEARS OF SUCCESS

BY *WILL PRICE*



One hundred green lights came on in the statehouse. Not a single red light. A unanimous go for landmark legislation in Iowa—three years later recognized as one of the most successful environmental programs in the nation. Its formal name is Resource Enhancement And Protection. Most call it REAP.

Those lights in the State Capitol turned green on April 25, 1989, indicating all 100 house members voted "yea" for REAP. No party lines...Democrats and Republicans alike pleased.

In 25 years, REAP has benefited every county by supporting *14,535 projects*—trails, historical efforts, nature centers, cultural resources, soil conservation, native plantings, scenic beauty, water quality, habitat and more. That $264 million state investment has leveraged *two to three times more* with private, local and federal dollars.

Collectively, these projects improve quality of life for all Iowans—outdoor recreation; sustained economic development; enhanced knowledge and understanding of our ecological assets and preservation of cultural and historic treasures. Here are *just a few*:

Black Hawk Lake Returns to Original Glory

REAP funds restored depression-era stone piers and a historic shelter house, campground development, restrooms and the Ice House Point Trail to make Black Hawk Lake in Lake View popular with 250,000 visits annually.

Two stone piers are focal points of the shoreline park and remain the most popular spots for fishing and events.

The paved hiking and biking Ice House Trail is the beginning of a project to encompass the entire lake.

And recent lake restoration and dredging created deep fishing holes off Ice House Point, with easy access.

Sprawling, Wildly Popular Central Iowa Trails Network

Exploring nature is easy—thanks to 676 miles of mostly connected trails saturating greater Des Moines.

From deer and turkey sightings during long tree-lined stretches, to great blue herons and white pelicans in wetlands, nature is on display. Butterfly gardens, bird watching, beaches, camping, historic museums, pioneer cemeteries, lakes and native wildflowers round out the trails.

"For Iowa to be able to attract and retain a quality workforce, we must offer recreation when people get off work," says DNR Director Chuck Gipp.

"We are highly successful using REAP to leverage millions of dollars to create the best trail system in the nation. Trails make our state attractive for economic development and healthier," he says.

REAP funded the Grimm Park trailhead in Slater, more paved parking, new restrooms and planned educational signs. "A small town couldn't do it without REAP," says Economic Development Coordinator Jennifer Davies, who says their residential growth is due to the trail. Businesses promote special events, bringing in money. Trail towns benefit economically—new restaurants, bars, bike shops, coffee and ice cream shops—all for trail users.

Bondurant will construct two miles of connector trail east of downtown to the Chichaqua Valley Trail. REAP already paved Bondurant's trailhead with another grant.

The locally well-known and nationally acclaimed High Trestle Trail Bridge between Woodward and Madrid lights the night sky with its mesmerizing LED display that crowns the Des Moines River Valley. It connects with almost 700 miles of central Iowa trails.

According to a 2010 Iowa State University study, the trail generates an estimated $240,000 in sales activity.

New residents say the trails are a reason they moved to Bondurant. "We couldn't continue expanding trails without REAP," says city administrator Mark Arentsen.

With REAP, the Raccoon River Valley Trail loop's "phenomenal usage" is testament to the goal of connecting trails. This trail alone runs 89 miles through 14 cities and four counties, much lined with a shady tree canopy. Many cities used REAP to connect trail segments and develop trailheads with restrooms and parking lots.

Future extensions will connect Jordan Creek Trail with the Clive Greenbelt Trail, Gray's Lake, Great Western Trail and John Pat Dorrian Trail—all connected to Raccoon River Valley Recreational Trail.

Buckeye Creek Watershed Success Benefits Wapello County

The REAP-funded watershed project reduces sediments into Buckeye Creek by more than 8,700 tons annually using more than nine miles of locally contracted, farmable tile-intake terraces and grade stabilization ponds that permeate the 10,800-acre watershed.

REAP allowed 60 of 79 landowners to participate. By investing their own funds to pay for at least 25 percent of the cost, they cut precious topsoil erosion.

"Not only are you getting the environmental benefit, but it saves the county money on road costs," says project coordinator Ryan Rasmussen. No longer a concern for road flooding, silted ditches or deteriorating bridges due to high water, the terraces and structures dramatically reduced flooding last April when 8 inches of rain fell in six hours.

A 23-acre pool collects drainage from 1,408 acres. Earthen dams across ditches trap 90 percent of sediments.

The structures store water during heavy rainfall, releasing clean water at a controlled pace, significantly reducing flood damage to roads and farmland.

North Iowa Nature Centers

REAP safeguards Iowa's future through conservation education. Floyd County's Fossil and Prairie Preserve Center and the Lost Island Nature Center in Palo Alto County demonstrate success of statewide education efforts.

A steady stream of school buses shuttle field-trippers to the Devonian fossil beds of Rockford Fossil and Prairie Reserve Center and its 365-million-year-old fossils.

Field days begin in the prairie-remnant and REAP-funded Fossil Center, where exhibits educate students about fossils, geology, ancient oceans and prairie history. Then youth run wild exploring rock hills to collect brachiopods, gastropods, crinoids, corals and more.

"To me, the memory of the these kids' experience is most important," says county naturalist Heidi Reams.

In Northwest Iowa, REAP funded the Lost Island Nature Center. Located in the Prairie Pothole Region adjacent 7,000 acres of public land in Palo Alto County, public programs and demand led to a classroom addition—with more REAP grants.

The nature center's goal is education for all ages, especially students, with exhibits of a wetland diorama, raptor, archaeology and watershed displays, indoor beehive, native fish aquarium, library and classroom.

Field trips, tours, canoeing, cross country skiing, fishing, hikes and annual events all occur at the center.

Trout Fishing

An Odyssey To Health

BY *KAREN GRIMES* PHOTOS BY *BEN CURTIS*

Angela Hunstad and Steve Perry starting on Trout Run, Winneshiek County residents' favorite trout stream.

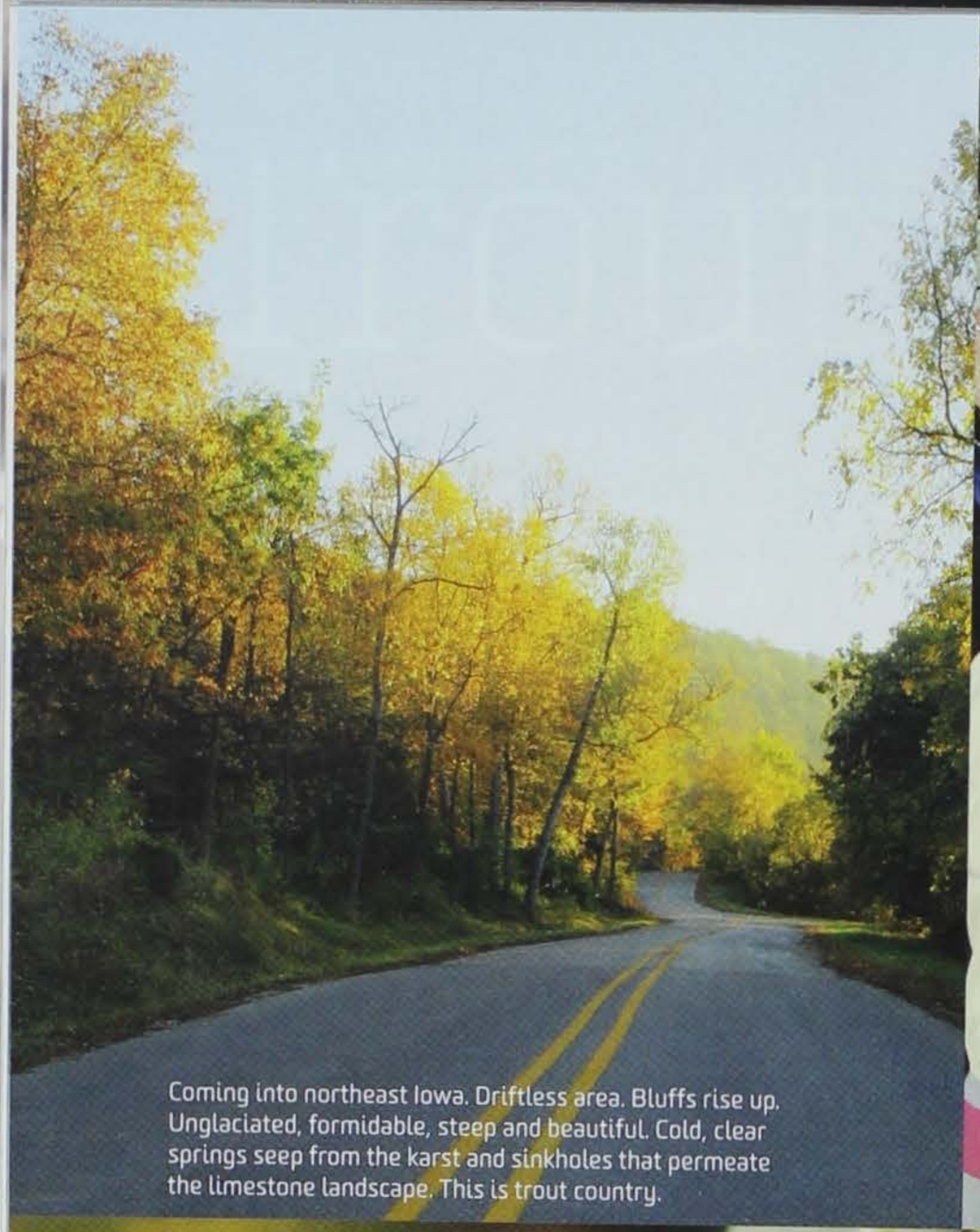
An eagle soars through crystal blue sky, drifting over gold-kissed leaves and limestone bluffs. Below her, clear, chilly waters from Siewers Spring wind through the trout hatchery at Decorah, where young fish whisper trout secrets amidst a crowd of weekend visitors.

Perhaps curious, the eagle circles as an unusual cast assembles—14 women decked out alike in drab khaki waders, tan fishing vests and light tan hats sporting pink flies and purple lettering. They hail from all parts of Iowa, differing in backgrounds, incomes and interests.

They share one commonality: their struggle with breast cancer. And for one weekend in the crisp October air, they can suspend their worries. Away from the doctors' offices, the institutional rooms, the critical decisions: surgery, radiation, chemotherapy. The nagging questions: How much? How long? What if? Here, they can focus on placing a dry fly where a trout can't resist it. Wellness.

The eagle glides in to perch in a maple tree. The women point, ooh and ahh. Then chatting and laughing, they turn to the task at hand—taking a group picture to commemorate a weekend of shared laughter and tears, healing and compassion and mostly the freedom to absolutely be themselves.

The retreat is part of a national program, Casting for Recovery, to promote and support mental and physical



Coming into northeast Iowa. Driftless area. Bluffs rise up. Unglaciated, formidable, steep and beautiful. Cold, clear springs seep from the karst and sinkholes that permeate the limestone landscape. This is trout country.

Anglers and guides gather to pair off for a day of flyfishing on Trout Run in Winneshiek County.

Peg Miskin, CFR national trainer

healing for women with breast cancer. They're allowed to be ruthlessly honest, share their fears, anger, hopes, knowledge and empathy as they face a future that's largely unknown.

As the women pair off with river helpers—excellent trout anglers and guides—each is greeted, "It's an *honor* to serve you." It's a salute to the women's courage and strength, and their decision to take part in an expenses-paid, three-day retreat aimed at meeting their social and psychological needs. While their physical conditions range from newly diagnosed, still in treatment, to those who've felt breast cancer's advance and those holding it at bay, they are celebrating life.

Anglers and guides grab fly rods and reels, leave the hatchery, past the world-famous Decorah eagles—favorites of 480 million webcam viewers—and turn north to fish the waters of Trout Run.

Each pair picks a spot along the 2.2-mile trail which parallels Trout Run, running from the eagles' nest to where the cold, clear waters of the stream join the Upper Iowa River.

Kathy Leibold of Dyersville and her river helper, Kate Lodge, from Geneseo, Ill., trek through dew-glistened grass and luminescent spider webs to reach a high bank. Eight feet below, the stream glistens as it swirls over riffles and into a deeper pool. From this high bank, the water below is transparent, the pool's surface calm. Lodge points to a shadow in the pool. Could it be a brookie or maybe a rainbow?

Lodge and Leibold like the spot and there are no nearby trees to snag this nouveau fly fisher's fly. Leibold tries her first cast.

"Keep your thumb on top of the rod," Lodge coaches. "Come up gently, get it straight, strength, get it out there. We want to get it farther and farther out there."

After a few frustrating tries, Leibold's fluorescent line sails out in a rhythmic swoosh. Swoosh. Swoo-oo. Whoonk. Woonk. The dry dogbane beetle fly lands perfectly, the leader invisible and just a small circle breaks the water's surface.

The repeated arm twirl needed to place the fly also stretches soft tissue, similar to exercises prescribed after surgery or radiation. The difference is: when fly fishing, the focus is on the cast, not the pain.

"Gently, gently. Give it a little flip and then go up," Lodge encourages. "There actually is a beetle that looks like this fly."

Some casts fall short and some go awry, catching in the tall grass behind them. "There are weed gods and tree gods, and they will often take your fly," Lodge philosophizes.

Despite miscasts and no bites, Liebold is enthusiastic, "It's been a great experience the whole weekend."

Lodge relates to Liebold because she, too, has had breast cancer. "When you have cancer, you are alone. It's really important to talk about the experience," Lodge says. "You are going through so many things emotionally and physically. A doctor just can't share in that. It's important to have that connection with other women."

Later in the morning Lodge and Liebold look to a spot they've abandoned, where another angler snares a trout. "Is this a buffet? We left that spot. They've caught five," says Leibold indignantly. "Maybe those fish don't want their pictures taken."

Although the angling today is catch and release, it's hard not to envy those who are catching. One of the top catchers, Cindy Robinson, fishes from the bank, avoiding the chilly waters coursing through Trout Run. The stream never freezes and temperatures range from about 42 degrees on the coldest winter day to no more than 57 degrees on a hot August day.

That's what makes this nine-county area of Iowa special, according to Brian Malaise, DNR hatchery manager. Northeast Iowa is part of the driftless area, a never-glaciated, 25,000-square-mile chunk of four states. "Trout need cold, clear water to survive. Seventy degrees or colder. They prefer cooler," he says. The springs bubbling out of limestone bluffs stay cold.

Mike Jacobs of Monticello, flytying teacher and owner of the business, Hawkeye Fly Tyer, helps Robinson learn the technique, pearlescent chartreuse line repeatedly circling in the air until laying the fly gently on the water surface, letting it drift downstream to catch the attention of a hungry rainbow.

Left hand on the line, Robinson feels the trout strike, gently sets the hook and watches the rod bend, the silver body flexing on the end of the rod. Ernest Schwiebert, one of the founders of Trout Unlimited, once described it: "Our methods of seeking them are beautiful, and we find ourselves enthralled with the quicksilver poetry of the fish."

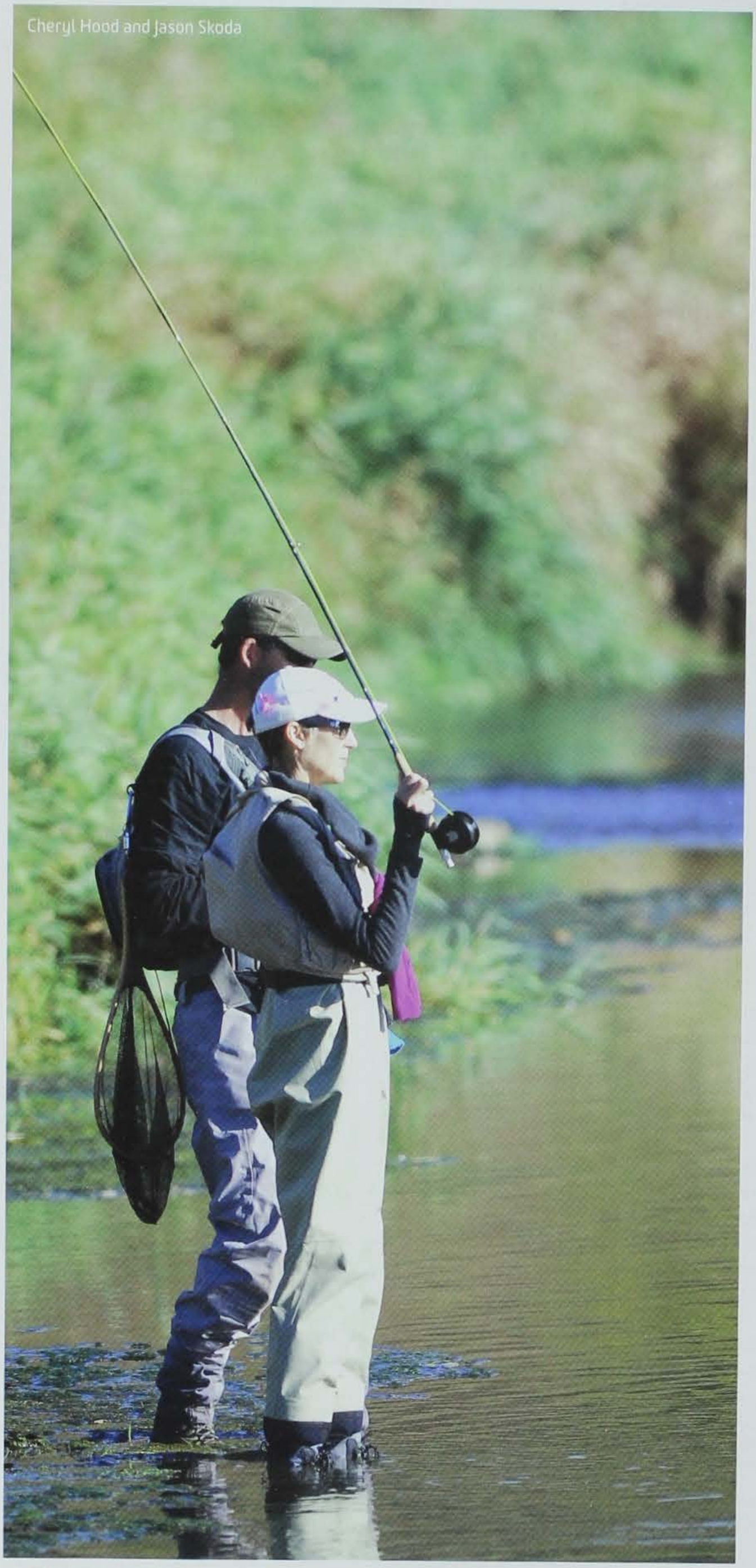
Robinson's excitement continues throughout the morning as she lands eight trout, nearly hooking five more. She revels in her success, the perfect sunny day, the scenery (so different from much of Iowa), the line unreeling in graceful descending loops to ultimately land on the rippling waters.

"It's been awesome to be around all these other women who've been through the same thing we've been through. We've learned a new sport. We've made best friends. I'm going to tell my husband a fly rod is what I want for Christmas. And I'm going to turn him into a fly fisherman."

Trout Run is the most popular trout stream with residents of Winneshiek County, says Malaise. "Although trout anglers from across the state voted another Winneshiek County stream the most popular, North Bear Creek."

Part of the popularity comes from accessibility, part from the eagles. Trout Run is the most handicapped-accessible public trout stream in Iowa. The recreational path and flat topography make it an easy walk. Benches provide resting places.

But the eagles. "In just one weekend last year, we



Cheryl Hood and Jason Skoda

Excerpts From a Letter of Thanks

I'm home now from Decorah, basking in memories of a fabulous weekend at Iowa's first Casting For Recovery Retreat! I still feel the sunshine on the water. I can still feel the warmth of retreat leaders and my new friends. What a grand and generous gift you provided for us there! Thank you.

I anticipated the opportunity to learn the beautiful art of fly-fishing. It was not until I joined the group and experienced classes and group sessions that I began to recognize lessons a person could apply to the challenges of surviving cancer. The concept of a fly-fishing retreat for breast cancer survivors is amazing and took real foresight.

You took the fear of the unknown out of the introductory process and treated us as though each of us had value. Throughout the cancer treatment process we go through many changes and people in general don't like to "look" at us—they are afraid of our yellow skin, our bald heads, our lack of eyebrows and our gaunt frames. However, you, like so many who work in cancer centers, addressed each person as though she was essential and important. You ignored no one.

In addition to learning about fly-fishing, you included times for guided group discussions about the medical and emotional aspects of breast cancer that survivors face. It was in that environment I began to understand how important it is to stop all busyness and take time to heal, and that there is real value in meditation as I trust and thank God for life.

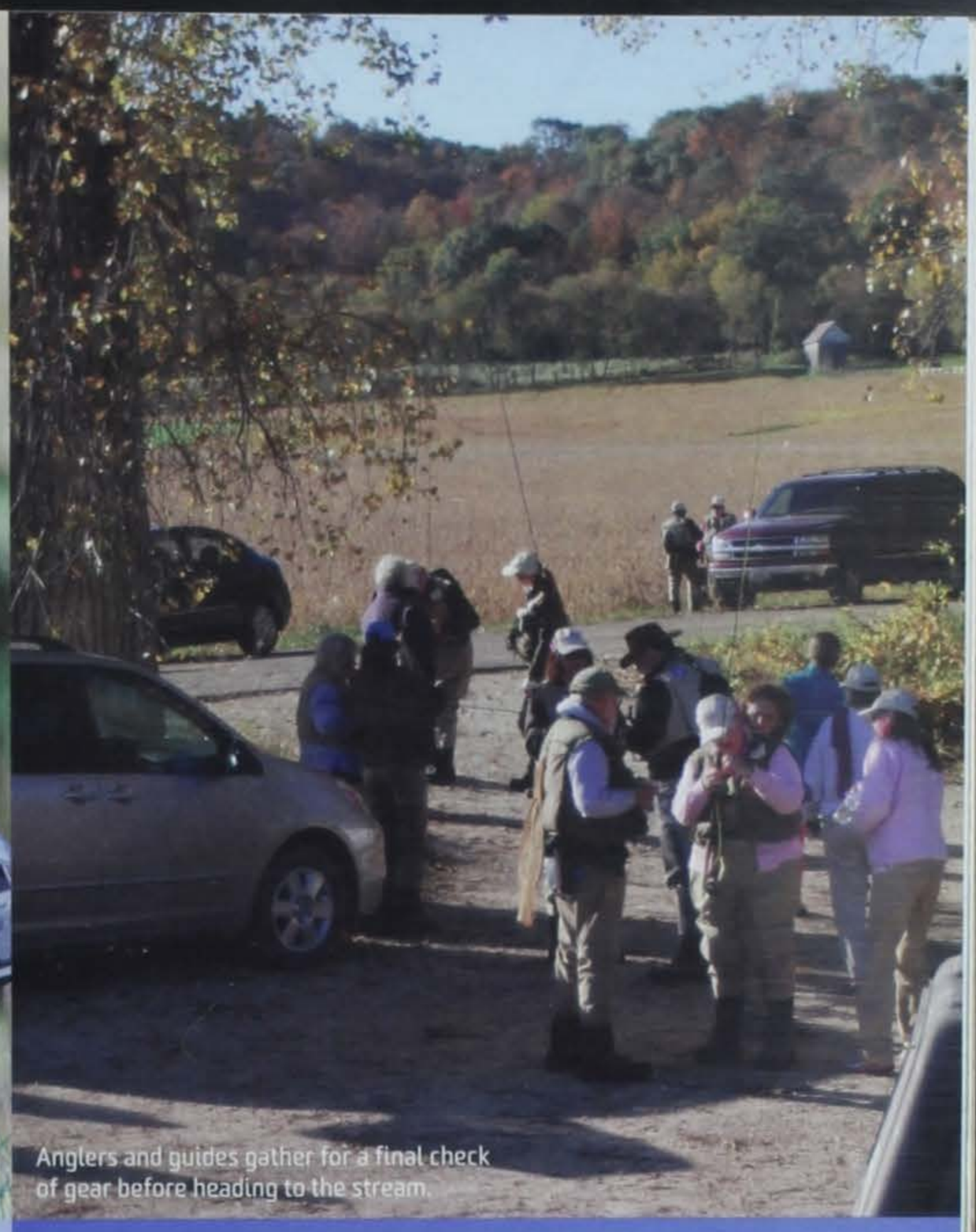
As I meditate now I am inspired by the life-cycle of the mayfly. Those "flies" process through many changes in their lifetime—leaving behind old ways and take on new ways of living at each phase. Then, in the end, if they don't fight it, they burst through the confines of water into thin air and sprout wings! I love that analogy. I want to leave behind old ways of fear and move forward in the joy of living.

What glorious time we spent outdoors, breathing crisp, cool autumn air and basking in sunlight, learning "beginning" and "advanced" fly casting! Then, Sunday morning you drove us to a stream to meet our "river helpers."

My helper was Ethan, a fly fishing guide extraordinaire. Sunday was an outrageously gorgeous and delightful day—and—with the help of my fishing buddy I caught a beautiful rainbow trout! Seems I caught that beautiful fish with a side cast (because of overhanging trees), and a dry, white fly Ethan had prepared. As the fly floated down the stream, we watched the fish swim directly toward it, open his mouth and swallow! Ethan assured me that fly fishermen everywhere would be impressed with that technique! It was a stunning moment in time. I'd like to go again next weekend!

—Excerpts from letter to event organizer Annette Norris from Lou Blanchfield

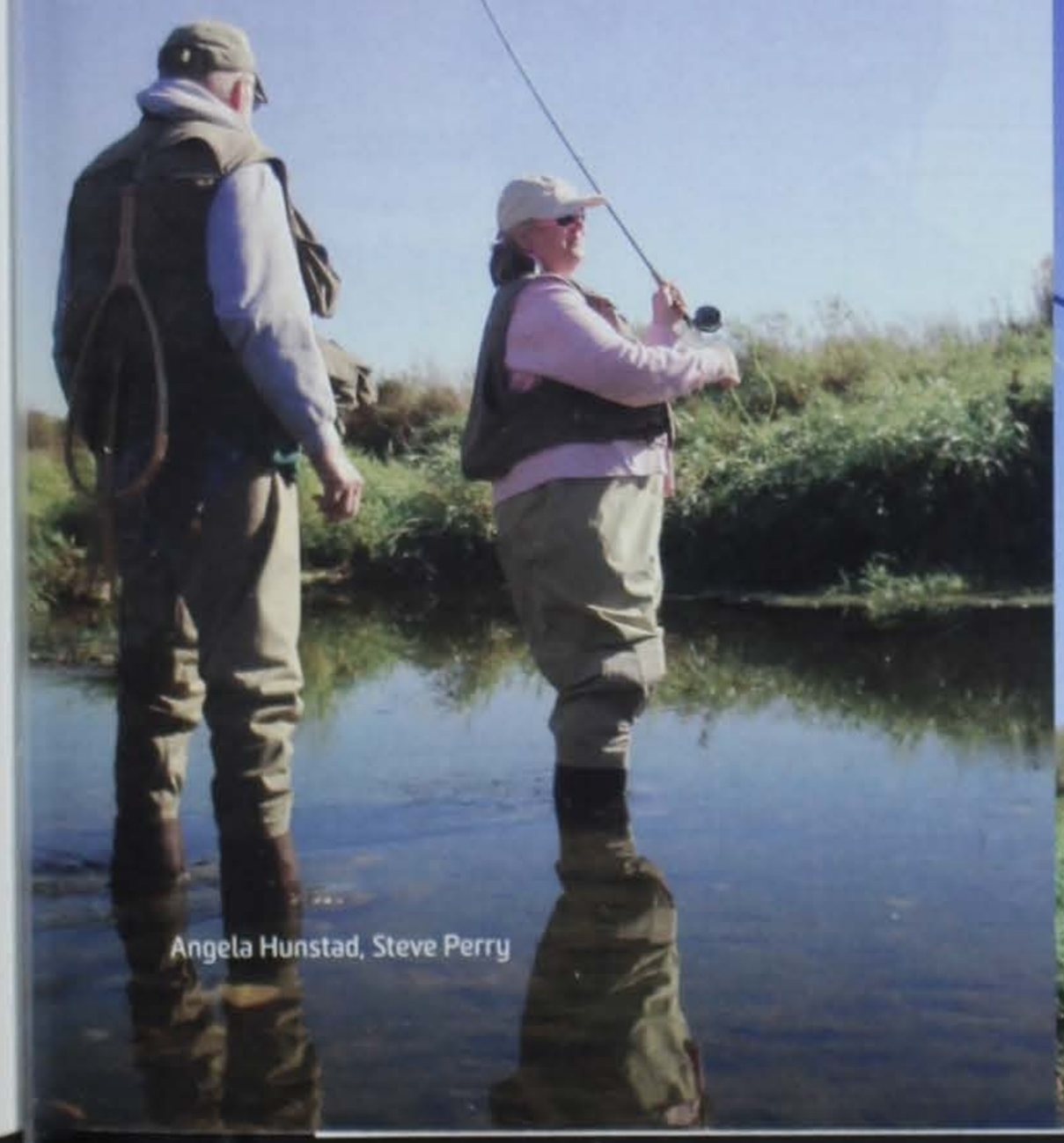
Georgia Hodge, John Channon



Anglers and guides gather for a final check of gear before heading to the stream.

Make a Difference

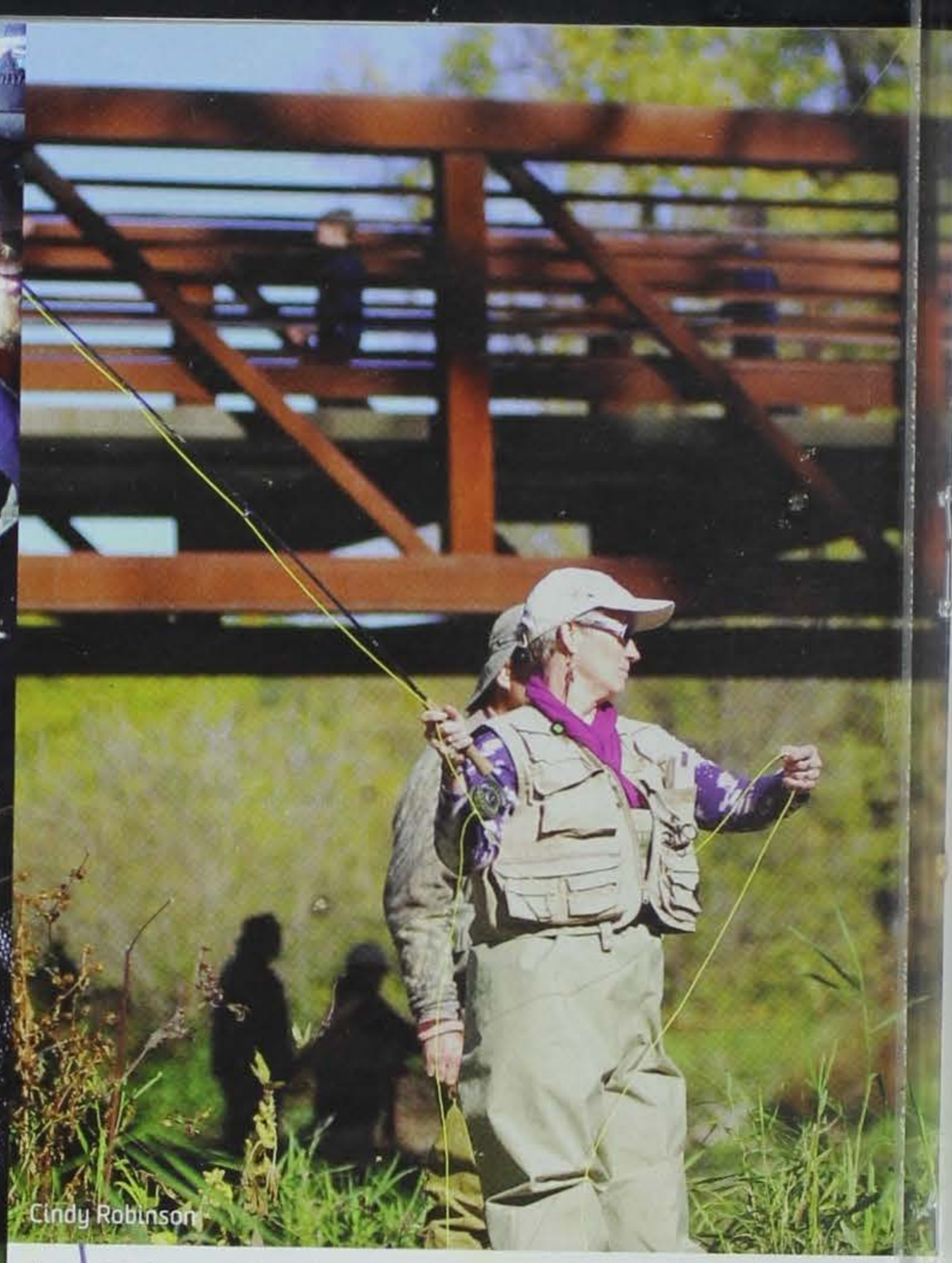
Volunteer your time or contribute money to make Iowa's CFR events successful at *castingforrecovery.org/cfr-iowa-2/*



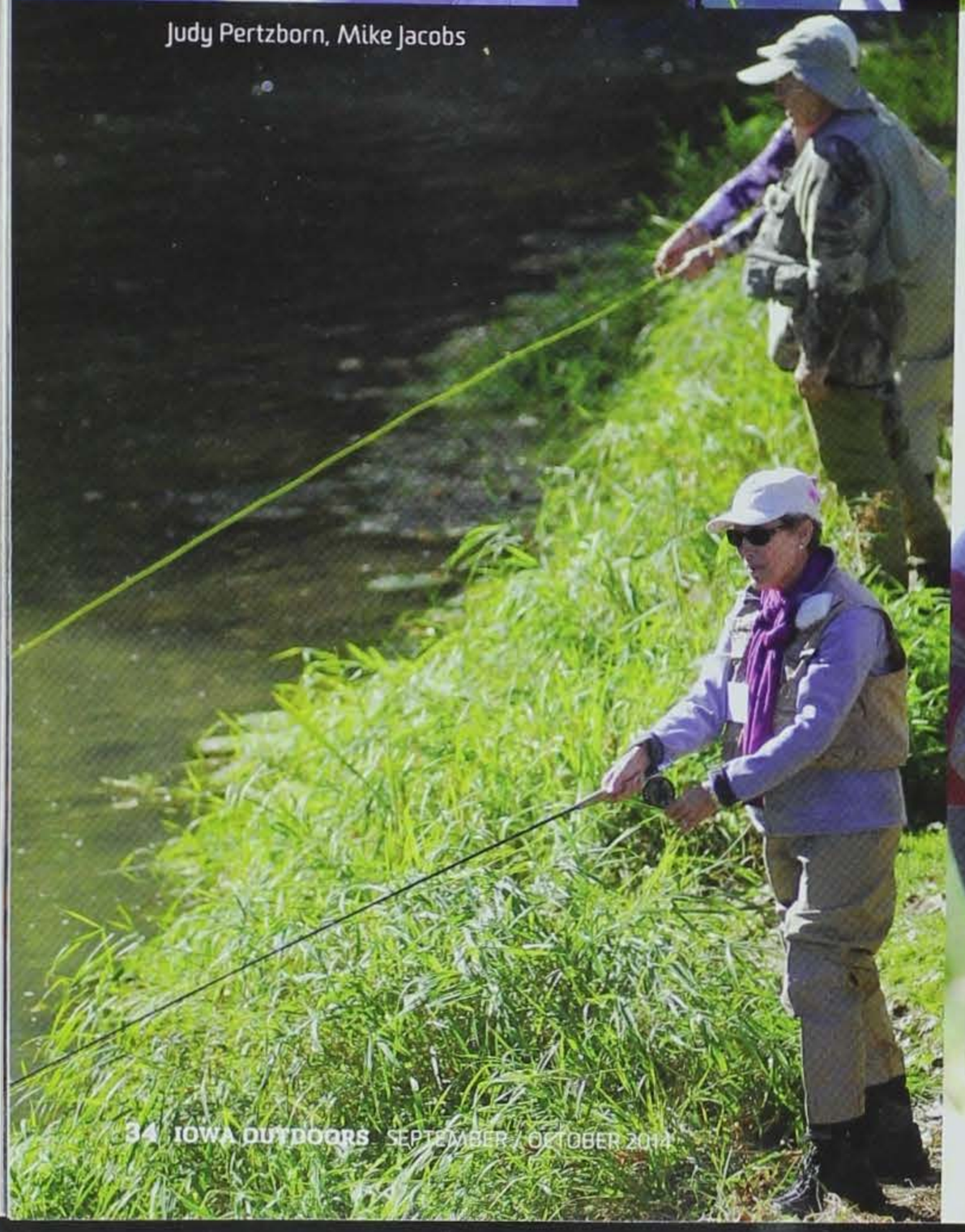
Angela Hunstad, Steve Perry

Sylvia "Lou" Blanchfield, Ethan Pole

Sylvia "Lou" Blanchfield,



Cindy Robinson



Judy Pertzborn, Mike Jacobs

Terese Stephenson, Gary Thurm

had visitors from 28 states and two countries," Malaise says. "One of our visitors came from Hawaii. She and her husband hadn't had a vacation for five years. As an anniversary present her husband gave her a choice of destinations: Paris or Decorah. She chose Decorah to see the eagles."

The sentinel eagle, wings outspread, glides across the stream from a nearby woodland. Jackets start to come off as the crisp, cool air of early morning warms up. Beneath the bicycle bridge, the water is shaded. Apparently this is where hungry trout hang out.

"Good catch," says Deeann Richards to her neighbor on the streambank.

Her river helper, Lisa Davis from Moline, Ill., is determined Richards will be successful. Davis changes flies. "I'm going to put on what we call a dry fly. We set it up such that feather material will set on top of the water, like an insect. I find a lot of luck with something called a caddis fly."

The line swirls through the air, chartreuse green sparkling against the sky as the rod flexes and Richards hopefully casts the new fly. She shares that she was diagnosed as terminal when she was 27 years old. "I hate that they used to say, 'You have five years.' And here I am."

She survived the damning diagnosis, and it's so far behind her she has two adult daughters. Both of them have had breast cancer and one is also at the event. "My daughter here is Terese. Richards' oldest daughter, Nicolle, was pregnant with her second child when she found out she had breast cancer. She went through treatment and now her son is almost 3."

Although she did not catch any fish, Richards says the event is wonderful.

River helper Robert Bernard of Urbandale puts a nymph on Judy Pertzborn's line. "Today's the culmination. They practiced casting and tying knots yesterday. They had some sessions listening to medical and psychological information. Judy's good though. She's smart. She learned how to catch weeds. One of the nice aspects of this Casting for Recovery, we're all here to have fun and help people."

Like Lodge and other river helpers, he's committed to this first event and ready to help out in the future. He's also involved in REEL Recovery, a fly fishing cancer recovery group for men.

In between casting, Pertzborn shares, "I'm so thankful to the Norrises for organizing this and the chance to talk. Here you can share things you maybe can't talk about with your husband or your family. It's nice just to step away and enjoy the weekend."

It takes much planning, organization and money to host a state event. Cost alone for the participants runs about $1,000 to $1,300 per woman, according to Annette Norris, who with husband Kirk, brought the national program to Iowa. Avid fly anglers, the Norrises were flying back from a trout fishing trip when they read an inspiring article about Casting for Recovery.

It was a natural progression for Kirk Norris, top administrator at the Iowa Hospital Association, to work with the national organization and state partners for an event here. He was well suited to recruit John Stoddard-Unity Point and Genesis Health System cancer centers, along with the IHA, as primary sponsors.

Three national trainers provide volunteer training and staff this first Iowa event. "We are here to provide an opportunity for the women to be who they want to be right now," says Susan Gaetz from Austin, Texas. "Scared. Mad. Happy. Distraught. Here it's OK to say that and know someone who's been through it will understand. It's an opportunity to be themselves and bond with other women. We know that 70 percent of women who come to a retreat have never been to a support group.

"It's not about the fishing. It's when someone says, 'I finally got distracted.'" It's also a chance to learn from specialists. "We bring together breast care navigators, cancer or lymphodema specialists, physical therapists, sometimes oncologists," adds Gaetz.

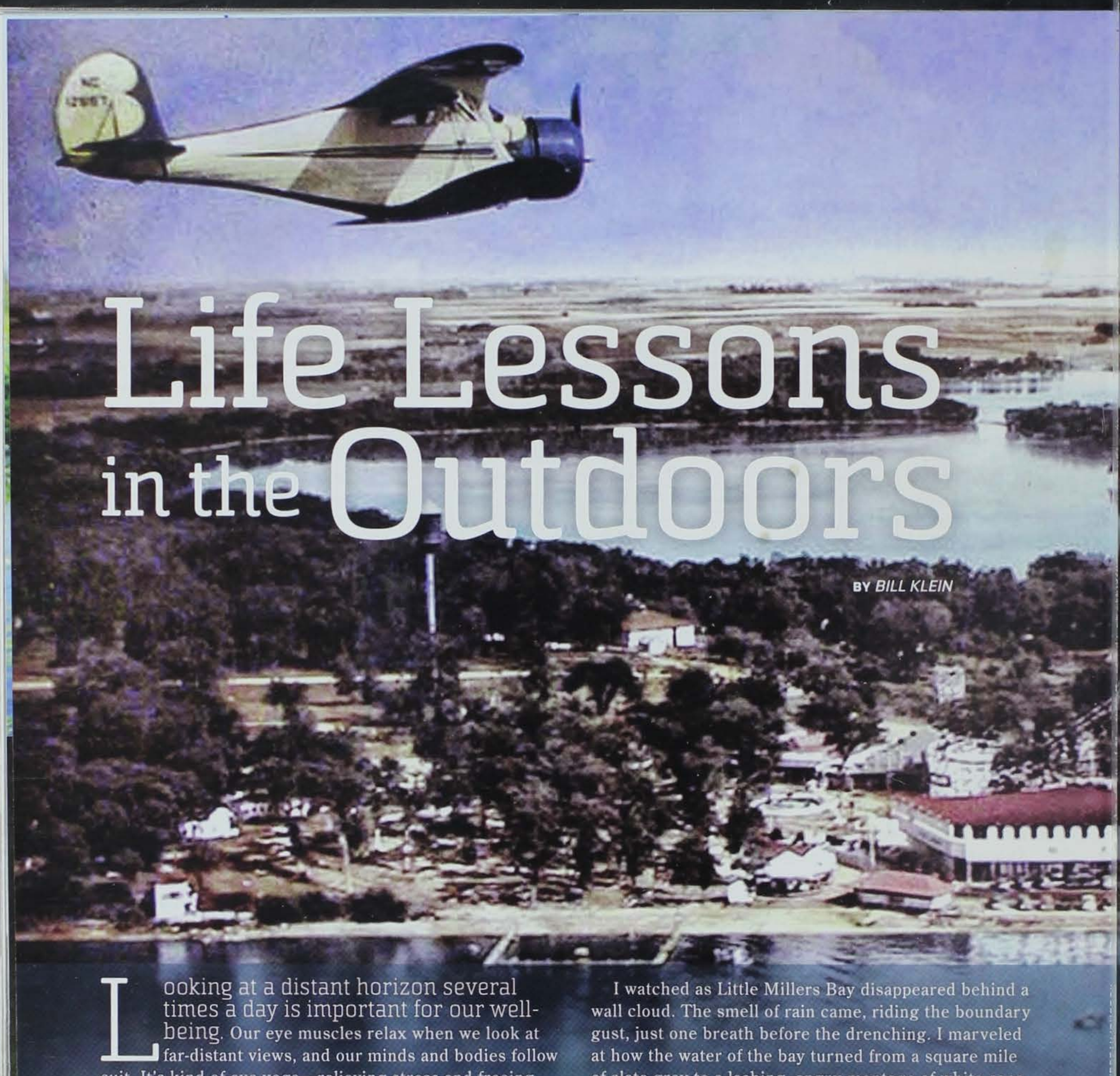
"I'm not a breast cancer survivor. I just love to fly fish," coordinator Peg Miskin, from Hamilton, Mont, says. "I call it my control-alt-delete. It's being in the moment." Miskin says they select participants at random, aiming for a range of anglers. Only 14 are selected per event, with 10 or 12 alternates in case some cannot come.

Northeast Iowa is an ideal place to find peace and inspiration. Nestled amongst the rugged limestone cliffs, the sparkling waters emerge from their subterranean origins feeding 450 miles of trout streams. Healing the waters by reducing sediment and pollutants has resulted in 72 streams that are fully naturally reproducing or showing signs—up from just six in the 1970s.

Along with the psychosocial benefits, the rhythm of casting and being outdoors in beautiful surroundings help the women abandon cares and worries, if only for a few days. As Terese Stephenson of Des Moines says, while she grins and reels in her fifth trout, "The group of women has been really great. But it hasn't been all about learning to fish. We've exchanged emails and we're going to meet up at the Susan G. Komen walk."

Providing tools to live full lives after this devastating diagnosis was the aim of the founders, a breast cancer reconstructive surgeon and a professional fly fisher. Developed in 1996 in Manchester, Vt., Casting for Recovery focuses on healing, not research. As one participant proclaims on the national website, "Fly fishing is a metaphor for how we will live with our lives after breast cancer: stay focused and aware of what surrounds us, move slowly and with grace, and be fully present in what we are doing."

More information at *www.castingforrecovery.org*.



Life Lessons in the Outdoors

BY *BILL KLEIN*

Looking at a distant horizon several times a day is important for our well-being. Our eye muscles relax when we look at far-distant views, and our minds and bodies follow suit. It's kind of eye yoga—relieving stress and freeing the mind to think.

I've thought while staring across a half-mile hayfield about what I've learned from six-plus decades as a student of nature. Life lessons kind of learning. And I find that while I often can't remember where I put my truck keys, distant memories of moments in the outdoors spring to mind with clarity of yesterday.

I can clearly recall sitting on a dock in Millers Bay at West Okoboji Lake one August day in the late 1940s. I was teetering on either side of the age of reason. About 7 years old. A thunderstorm was announcing its approach with rolling thunder. I had a front row seat, literally throwing caution to the wind.

I watched as Little Millers Bay disappeared behind a wall cloud. The smell of rain came, riding the boundary gust, just one breath before the drenching. I marveled at how the water of the bay turned from a square mile of slate grey to a lashing, angry montage of white caps in an instant. I was caught up in a heady mixture of awe and fear, like what I felt topping the first high rise on the roller coaster at nearby Arnolds Park.

My father, who was frantically looking for me, was not pleased by my youthful bravado. When the storm cleared, he took me on a boat tour across the bay to see the huge elms and oaks laid flat by the straight-line winds, like fallen soldiers after a violent battle. I learned respect for the power of weather that day and the humbling perspective of my place at the mercy of the elements.

Years later, as a 20-something, I was laying under the April trees in Waterworks Park in Des Moines, my mind clouded by the chaos of college and Air Force years just

"I have found that people go to the wilderness for many things but, the most important of these is perspective. They may think they go for the fishing or the scenery or companionship but, in reality, it is something far deeper. They go to the wilderness for the good of their souls." – SIGURD OLSON

Arnold's Park and Lake Okoboji circa 1930s with Beechcraft Staggerwing aircraft.

past. Career paths all seemed to lead to dead ends. I studied freshly minted leaves offering an array of greens never matched on an artist's palate. Goldfinches, mating on their minds, flitted among the branches in their best spring plumage. They spoke of hope as did the trees. As I drank in the invigorating sights, smells and sounds of spring, my ambition, my hopes, too, took wing.

When renowned nature photographer Les Blacklock needed to clear his mind, he walked to a certain stump in the woods along the North Shore of Lake Superior. He called the stump his psychiatrist. My therapist, for decades, has been the duck blind. Any duck blind will do, with or without ducks. I find the broad sky and the anticipation to be nirvana. I need a certain number of days of caching the visual and aural pleasures of a marsh before the ice, before I am ready to face winter in town.

I saw a sign supporting this mantra. It's above the door as you leave a bed-and-breakfast farm home on the coteau des prairie in duck country—North Dakota. It reads simply: A Day in the Country is Worth a Week in Town.

But what is it that makes country, the outdoors, nature, such a balm? Why do we universally find it comforting and restorative? I think it can be traced to our distant forefathers. Despite the millennia that have passed since we were all hunters/gatherers, some of those yearnings keep echoing forward into our souls; keep reminding us who we were.

A French cleric named Marbod penned this truism in the 11th century: "Town takes a man out of the truth of himself." Truth can be the victim when we build personal facades just to get along in our gentrified 21st century society. But honest perspective seems easy to rediscover in the silence, solitude and sometimes humbling aura of the outdoors.

Find a distant horizon to focus on. Better yet, hike to that horizon. Nature is waiting to teach you along the way, about itself and about yourself.

Family Hunters, **Hmong** Look for Understanding

BY *JOE WILKINSON* PHOTOS BY *JOE WILKINSON* AND *RYAN KIMBER*

It was a crowded campsite. Several women were packing up. A dozen kids were scattered; younger ones chasing each other or wading in the cold trout stream a few steps away. Teens were sitting around the fading fire. A couple others were wrapping up campsite chores here on Labor Day at Yellow River State Forest.

A few men were still in the woods hunting. The mature oak, walnut and hickory hills and bluffs are a squirrel's—and a squirrel hunter's—paradise. Three men in camp were preparing squirrels for the trip home. These families and friends, from a church group in Minneapolis, had made a late summer holiday weekend out of it—kids playing, men hunting as Iowa's squirrel season opened.

I rode with DNR conservation officer Burt Walters as he checked opening weekend hunters in Clayton and Allamakee counties. "Didn't know you had such good hunting," remarked Johnny Yang. One of six men in the extended group, this was just his second year here. Several had camped in the woods overnight and were still there. But it was about time to go. "It's the end of the summer. They start school tomorrow," explained Yang, pointing toward the children.

A holiday weekend camping, relaxing, maybe hunting in the bluffs and woods of northeast Iowa, is an annual tradition for many, including Hmong-Americans who came from Southeast Asia—and now their children.

Hmong family squirrel hunts are unique. They're multi-generational, multi-family weekend hunts steeped in tradition dating back to their days in Laos, Vietnam, Thailand and China. Food and family are at the centerpiece, but squirrels are what they are after.

The Hmong descended from ancient nomads with roots going back to China. They aided the C.I.A. during the Vietnam War. After withdrawal of U.S. troops, an estimated 20,000 Hmong in Laos were killed by a Communist purge. Many tens of thousands more were sent to "education" camps. Over the next three decades, waves of refugees emigrated to the U.S. To stay would be to die.

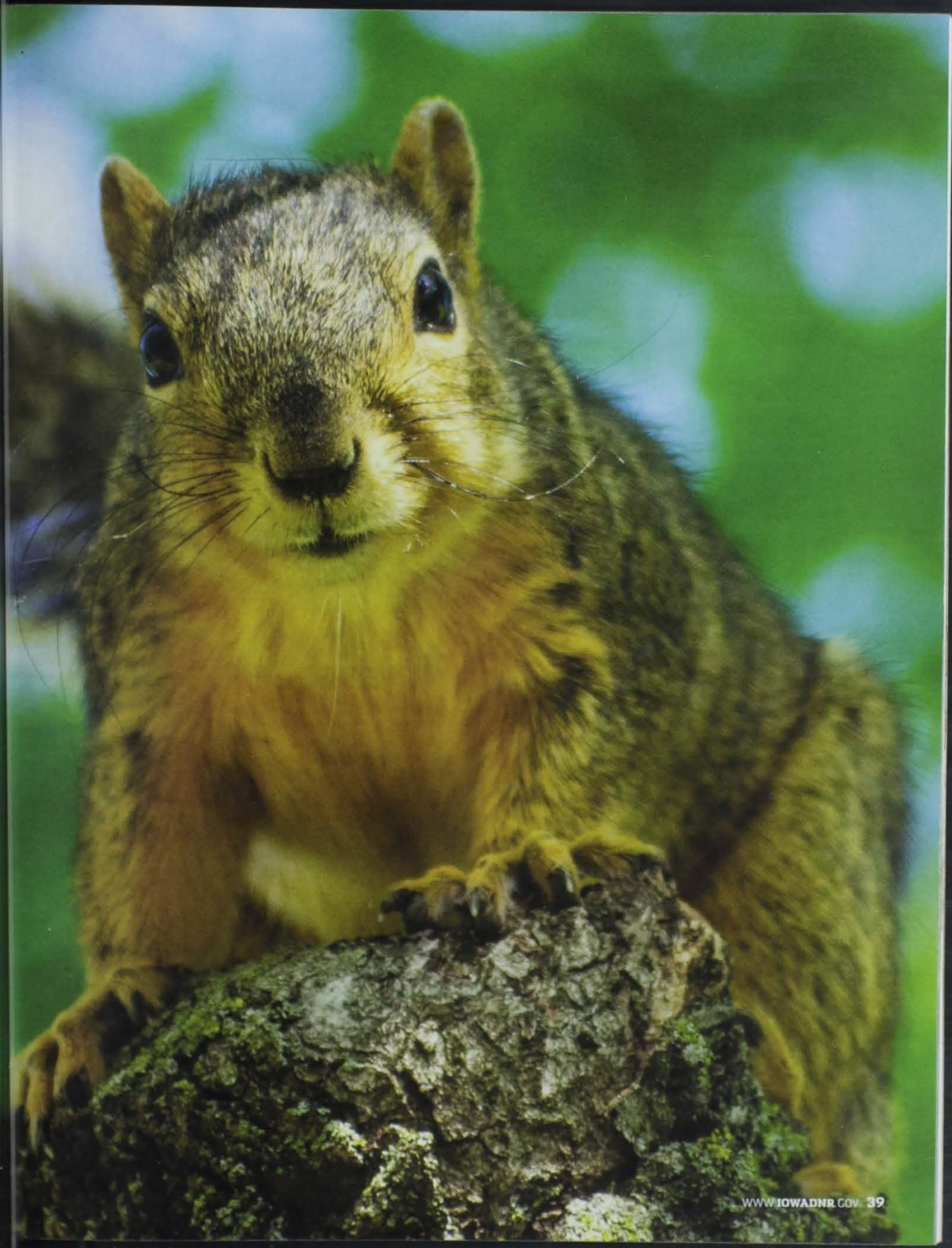
The U.S. Census reported 169,000 Hmong Americans in 2000. The largest regional settlement—more than 24,000—is in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. With a strong hunting tradition, the woodlands of southeast Minnesota and western Wisconsin beckoned. The wooded bluffs of northeast Iowa did likewise.

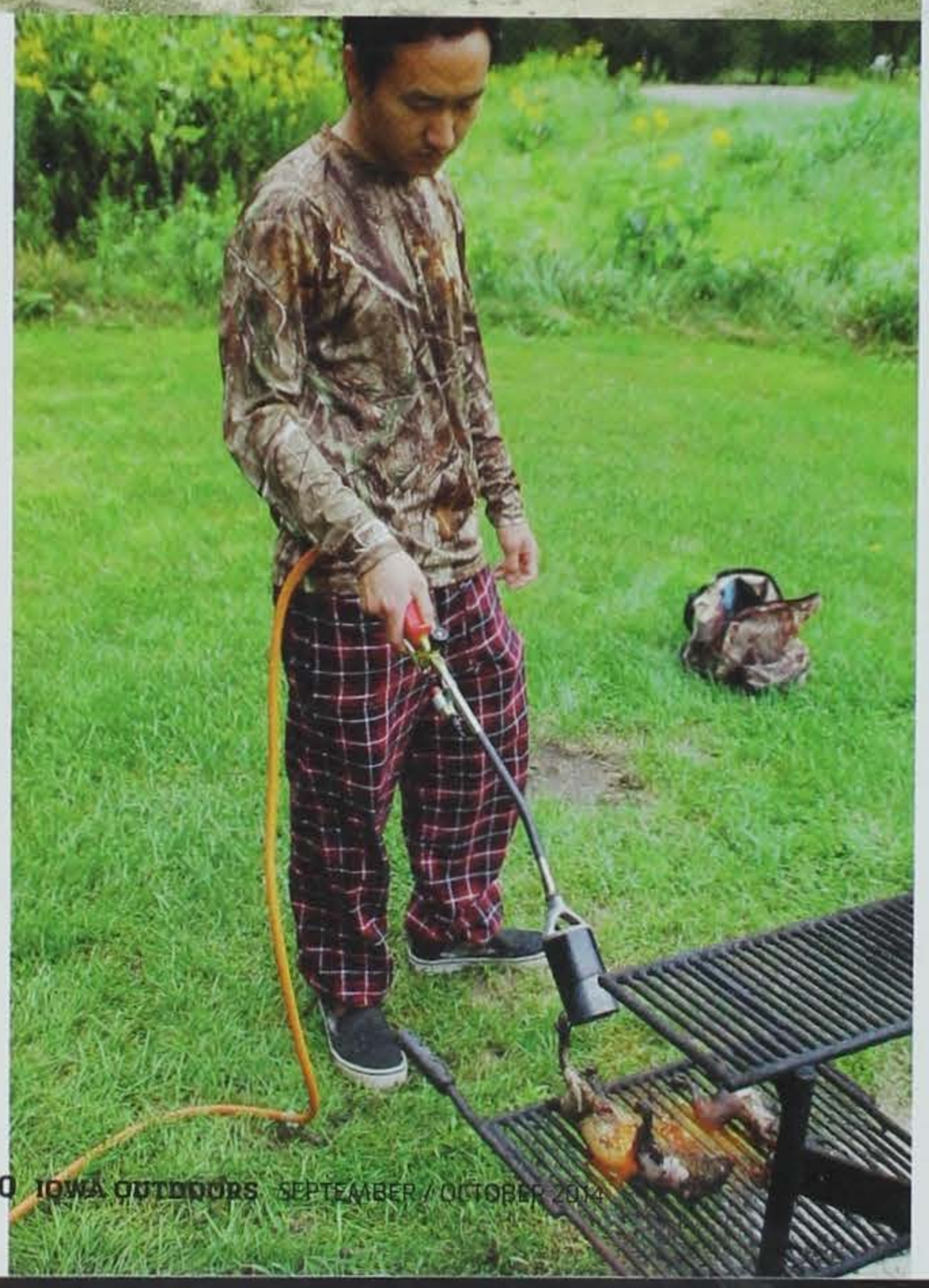
But tradition and ethnic differences, combined with a few isolated venomous interactions between Hmong and white hunters, created a dark side. Most infamous was the killing of six Wisconsin hunters by a Hmong hunter, found on their land, 10 years ago this fall. Adding fuel to the fire two years later, a Hmong hunter was killed by a white Wisconsin hunter. The racial tinderbox smoldered.

"There is a stereotype…a lot of pre-drawn false conclusions," says DNR Conservation Officer Burt Walters, who has been in Clayton County since 2000. "White hunters tell me 'they shoot everything out there.'"

Case in point? A couple years ago, Walters responded to a call of shots fired; deer ran by.

"The Hmong are poaching deer," they said. Pointing toward the dark road a car had driven down, Walters investigated. But inside, a young, white couple were… well,…not poaching.





Squirrel hunting, once among the most popular pursuits in Iowa, was usually done father and son—a few hours at a time. Contrast that with the Hmong who have settled in the Upper Midwest and their multi-day, group outings that revolve around the hunt, food, camping and family togetherness. It is a chance for multiple generations to spend time with one another.

LEFT: Another difference is in squirrel preparation. Most Caucasians skin their game, while the Hmong prefer to leave it on. "We eat the skin. You do the same thing with chicken," says hunter Rich Vang. Often a torch is used to clean the hair from the skin during the preparation.

ABOVE: DNR Conservation Officer Burt Walters answers questions as he checks licenses in a hunting camp at Yellow River State Forest in Allamakee County. Walters has developed a rapport with hunters in northeast Iowa, talking with them through opening weekend of the squirrel season and throughout the fall.

PHOTOS BY JIM ANDERSON

Another time? He pulled in one night as five county deputies planned their next move. It was tense. The report claimed men with guns. Within a few minutes—situation resolved. No guns. "They were collecting firewood," recalled Walters.

Organization Skills Required

It takes a lot of firewood to fuel a camp. We walked into a just-vacated camp at the Sny-Magill public hunting area. Within the quarter-acre clearing, we made out matted down areas where 10 tents had been. He had been here the day before; a couple hammocks were slung between trees, too.

"A lot of them know who I am," says Walters. "One year, there was a boating accident on the river. I didn't make it here. Three or four weeks later, they came back. One of the woman chided me for missing Opening Day."

Are there issues? Violations? Certainly, just as there are with other hunters. "We have quite a few complaints about trespass on private land," says Walters. "I hear, 'I saw them, they were Asian.' But we need more than that. A lot of the (complaints) are along our state forest borders; property line issues. Are the lines marked? Is it intentional? Maybe? Unintentional? Might be."

Tension in the woods? It's not just in Iowa. "I have talked with several Hmong who used to hunt, Caucausian hunters too, who complain about crowding," says Tong Vang, community liaison with the Minnesota DNR. "A Caucausian told me to tell Hmong not to go to Iowa to hunt. I told him he would have to lobby the Legislature to not sell licenses to them. I cannot tell (Hmong) not to go to Iowa when they can buy a license and hunt when they want."

Walters underscores that. "We have a couple thousand Asian hunters here (opening squirrel weekend). They spend a lot of money when they come down here (a nonresident license costs $112. A habitat stamp is another $13. Factor in food, gas and hauling the family along, too). "They have every right to hunt, like everyone else."

Much of the accusations appear rooted in stereotypes of the 18,000 to 20,000 Asian hunters in Minnesota. "There is still the rumor of Asians shooting anything that moves," recounts Vang of the Minnesota DNR. "It is not true. Asians are very careful. They don't just hunt for food, but for sport like everyone else...they are not going out looking for trouble."

He has seen big changes since the 1970s. Teaching young hunters how to handle firearms properly, he says, has decreased Minnesota's hunting accidents. Vang stresses to hunters how it is their job to help preserve wildlife for the future. "I am not just helping Asians, but both sides. If an Asian is wrong, I tell him. Or anyone else for that matter."

And in Iowa? "I haven't (had problems with white hunters). I am different from other people. I don't cross paths," says Yang. "I try to avoid situations. If I know there is a hunter ahead, I turn around; (there are) plenty of woods. I avoid the problem the best I can."

From another campsite, Rich Vang of St. Paul, echoes that caution. "I've been coming to Iowa to hunt squirrels mostly every year—14 or 15 years (with) all my kids and friends. I have had no run-ins with hunters. About 10 years ago, I met a father and son walking in. They were nice."

Vang scouts over the phone, before he arrives. He knew not to bring firewood into Iowa to help prevent the spread of disease and pests. Ahead of his hunting weekend, he goes through the regulations picked up at the sporting goods store. There are 35 Iowa license outlets in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area alone. In 2013, a thousand nonresident Iowa hunting licenses were sold in Minnesota. Or a nonresident can cross into Iowa and buy.

Similar Style—But Food With A Crunch

Vang and other Hmong hunters use the same basic method as traditional Midwest squirrel hunters. Walk a few minutes, then stand quietly—22-caliber rifle ready—to see if a squirrel will come out on a branch. He had not much success himself this weekend—just three squirrels in two days—but overall, the group did well, judged by the haul they were processing to take home.

Now that—processing and preparation—demonstrates a definite cultural divide. I skin and field dress squirrels. In the kitchen? Quarter it, maybe some light breading, then fry or broil it.

Not so in the Hmong camp. Hearing my method, Vang wondered whether any meat remained. "We gut them and singe them; then put them on ice to preserve them as we travel home," he explained. "We eat the skin. You do the same thing with chicken," he points out. "It adds flavor, texture to soup, stews. Sometimes we dry the meat or smoke it."

Ditto for Vang, in the next camp. "They clean up real nice, golden brown," he said of the galvanized metal tub filled with squirrels and ice.

I did wonder about the palatability, with the singeing process over coals and the blackened squirrels. Looking over other golden brown "skin on" squirrels, though, I could see their point. Each of us has a taste acquired through centuries of cultural tradition.

Not wrong. Just different. Tasty.

Are attitudes changing? Yes. "We don't see the fear. Whites used to be scared to death. 'If a Hmong is hunting, I'm done,' they would declare," recalls Walters.

And familiarity is important. "There is a trust issue. It takes awhile before they get to know you as a person, not a badge," he emphasizes. "We are seeing fewer complaints than in the couple years after the Wisconsin shootings. That was a horrible deal. As times goes by, there are not the complaints. It's not fresh in their minds."

Demographics are changing, too. "The younger hunters are not as tenacious as those 30, 35...and older. The younger ones are more familiar with the American culture; (food from) supermarkets," assesses Walters. "You have to understand their culture," he asserts.

And they ours.

Iowa Squirrel Hunting Seasons

Fox and gray squirrel season runs Aug. 30 - Jan. 31, 2015.
No Restrictions on shooting hours.
Bag limit is 6 *(fox and gray squirrels combined)* and possession limit is 12.

Fox squirrels can be found anywhere there are a few acres of trees, but gray squirrels are generally limited to the heavily forested areas in eastern and southern Iowa. Red squirrels exist in Iowa as do flying squirrels, but neither are legal game.

Squirrel hunting is done by either sitting-and-waiting, or by still-hunting.

The sit-and-wait technique is used near likely feeding areas, such as beneath oak, walnut or hickory trees or along corn-forest edges.

The still-hunting technique is employed by slowly walking through forested areas and stopping frequently to watch for feeding squirrels.

The best hunt times are usually morning and afternoon feeding hours.

What About Taste?

Known for the sweetness of the meat, squirrels make fine table fare. Their diet consists heavily on acorns. Early last century, old timers fattened Iowa hogs in the fall by letting them roam oaklands to feast on acorns. The nuts were said to impart a superior, sweet flavor to the meat. Food for thought next time you see a squirrel.

The "Big Five"

Squirrels are an underutilized resource, once considered in the 1950s as part of the "big five game" in Iowa—along with duck, pheasant, quail and rabbit. Today, squirrel hunting opportunities are excellent as hunting pressure is low. Recent estimates put 20,420 squirrel hunters harvesting 117,320 squirrels in Iowa, compared to 1963 when 150,000 hunters harvested over 1.4 million squirrels. Today with fewer people living in rural areas as well as the rise in deer hunting (a resource not available in the early 1950s) squirrel hunting has declined. September squirrel hunting is known for its great weather and ample opportunities with fewer hunters in the woods, so all hunters might wish to revisit this oft-overlooked hunt.

The Joy of *Streams*

BY *GAIL GEORGE* PHOTO BY *BEN CURTIS*

The screen door slammed as the farmer started out to chore. Looking across the road, he did a double-take. A big Belgian draft horse loped down the pasture—with the neighbor kid standing on it! The boy stood tall with a foot on each broad haunch and waved. A few years later, he would see the same young man flying past on an old Indian motorcycle, leaning low over the handlebars. That young man was my dad.

At 91, Dad bent over the handlebars of a walker. It was a trick for him to walk from one end of the house to the other. His memory was ebbing. It rolled back in time like a wave retreating from the shore—the present fading, his 20s and childhood still fresh. On one visit I decided we would do something different. We loaded the car for a trip to Ledges State Park in Boone County.

We drove down the steep curves, past the full-bodied yellow of ash and walnuts that infused the canyon slopes. It felt like summer in September, yet a cold snap was forecast for the next day. I pulled the wheelchair out of the trunk and opened the passenger door. Dad peered up with a gnomish weariness. He found a steady grip for each hand and rocked up to stand. His face turned to the sun like a flower, eyes closed, and he took a deep breath

The cool waters and emerald cliffs of Peas Creek winding through Ledges State Park near Madrid has attracted millions of visitors who dip a toe or two in the shallow waters and breathe in the refreshing air on warm summer and fall days. Peas Creek captured a special place in the heart of the author.

through his nose. I filled my lungs too, detecting the slight dusty smell of leaves beginning to dry. And something else—an essence.

"Oh, wow." Dad sighed. He felt it too—the brightness of summer embodied in the leaves and the air.

"I thought we'd walk the canyon today." I steadied the chair while Dad settled in. A paved road curved through the canyon and dipped down in several places to cross Peas Creek.

"Remember when we came here for picnics when I was little?"

"Oh, yes." Dad replied with his stock answer.

"I remember one time when I was 8 or 9, and we laid right down in the creek, and Joe decided we should slink up the whole length of the stream on our bellies." And we did. At least it seemed like the whole length of the creek when our eyes were level with the water. Maybe it was around one bend, but that didn't matter. We were exploring the wild. The vines and branches became our jungle. We crawled with stealth toward the pool of skittering water striders and minnows. Who knew what else would be lurking there? Our imaginations swirled with the wildness.

I wheeled Dad to one of the fords, looking down the slight incline to the creek. "Hold on—I'm going to let this roll down, to give you a ride." The wheelchair picked up speed, but I didn't let go completely, and there was barely a splash when we hit the creek.

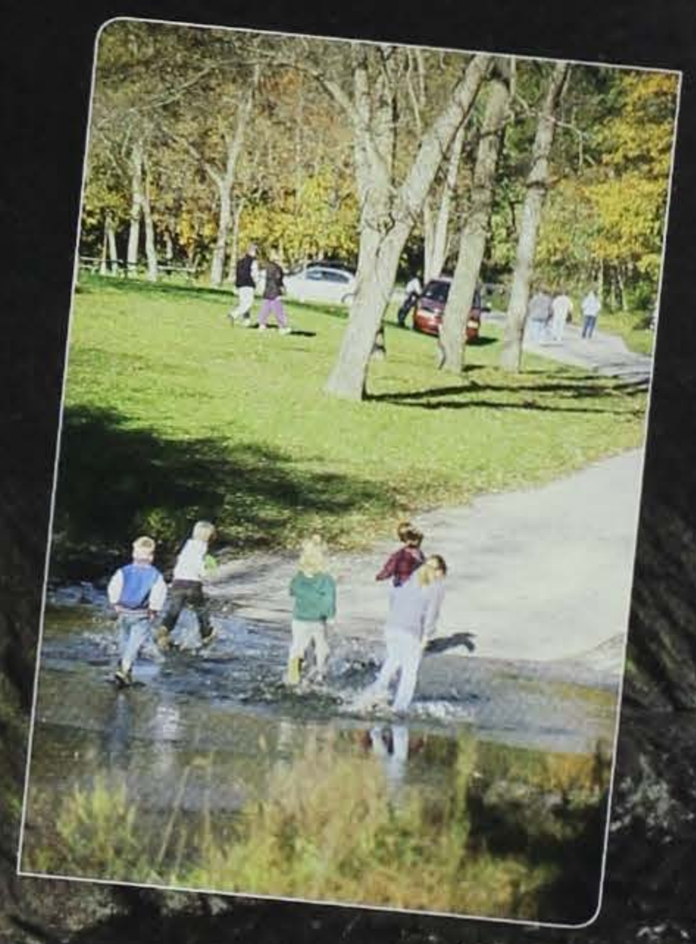
At the next ford, five kids were building small dams with stones from the rock face towering over them. As a car approached, they would yell, "Go fast! Go fast!" Then they screamed with delight when the cold water sprayed over them in a whoosh.

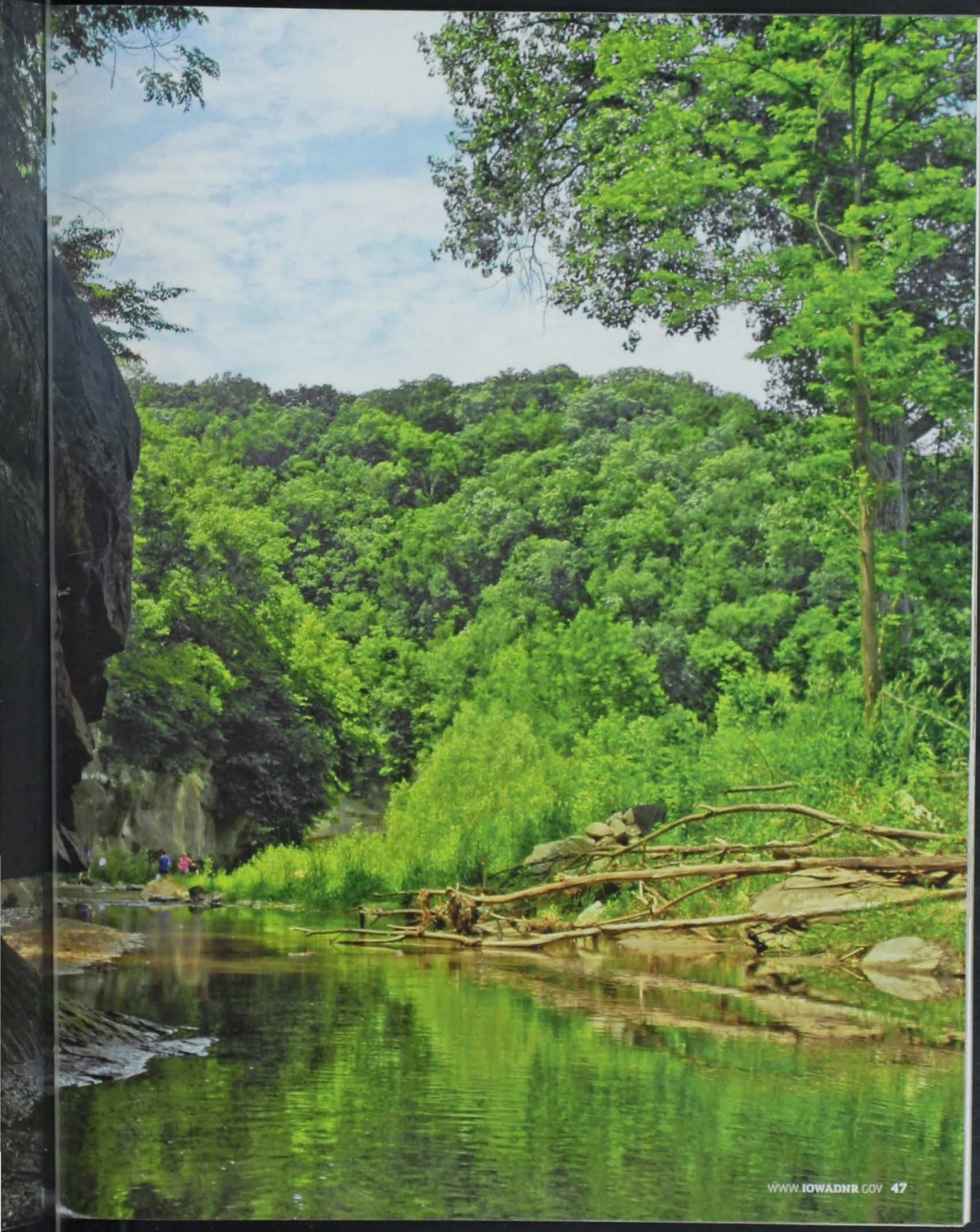
When we started down the slope, I let go of the chair completely this time, but kept my hands just above the handles ready for a catch. I trotted faster and faster behind the rolling chair. I couldn't see Dad's face but all the kids were reflecting a grin, and chanting, "Go, go, go!" And when we hit the water, it was as if the glee of all the toddlers and teenagers through all the years sprayed in an arc from each wheel over his head. And Dad threw his arms up and yelled a long "Whee!"

Over and over, at each ford, the scene repeated. If hikers or kids were standing nearby, they always lit up watching Dad spray and shout.

The next day the cold snap arrived, and I continued to visit Dad weekly through the fall and into the winter. Often he could not remember my name, but he could still come up with, "You were the one that took me to that place with the water," and raise both arms, his eyes sparkling.

Words and names might be elusive, but he remembered the rush of joy.





A Place of Your Own

A tree big and strong enough for a treehouse is a tree worth saving. Here's advice from arborists and treehouse building experts and what three treehouse owners did to minimize impacts on their trees.

BY *MINDY KRALICEK* **PHOTOS BY** *BEN CURTIS*

If you weren't lucky enough to have a place of your own in a tree or other hideaway as a child, it's a good bet you wished you had one.

A private place surrounded by nature is soothing to the soul, and up in the trees is first rate. And, you don't have to be a child to want a place of your own.

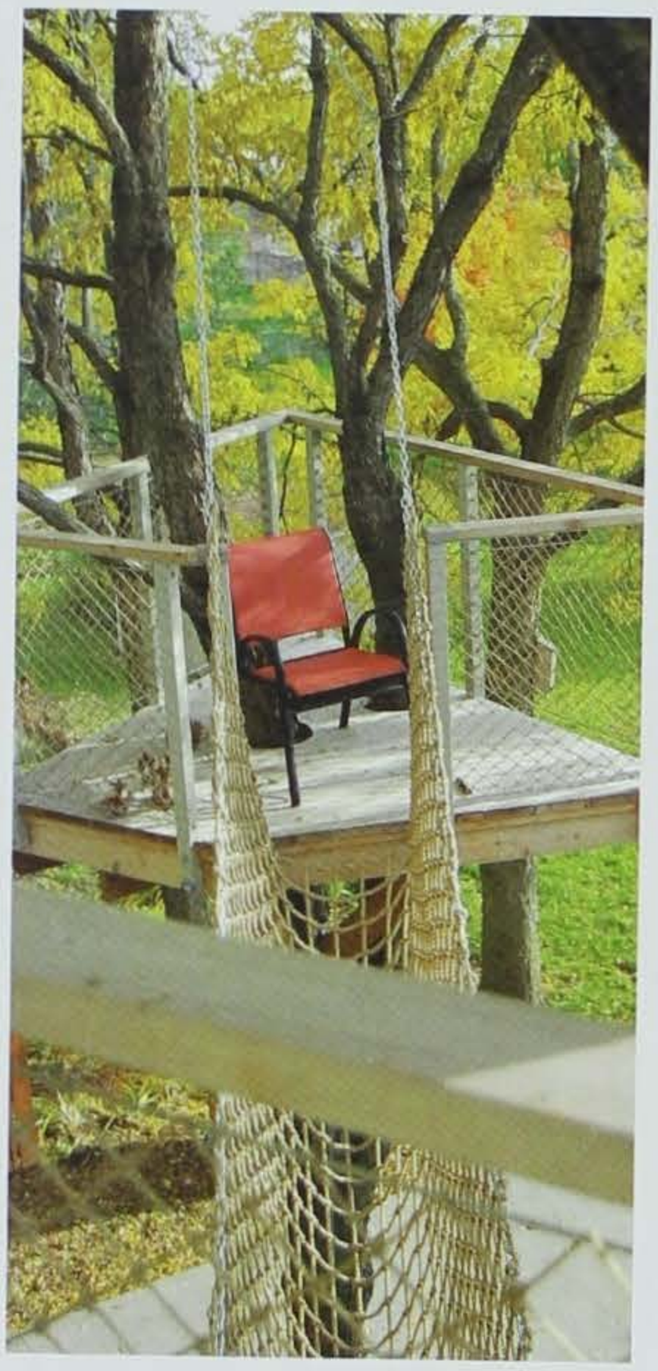
Lynette Rasmussen, an attorney living in Polk County, likes to read and watch squirrels and birds that nest in the trees surrounding her family's treehouse. "It's a great place to go and talk with someone important to you without the distraction of electronics," she says.

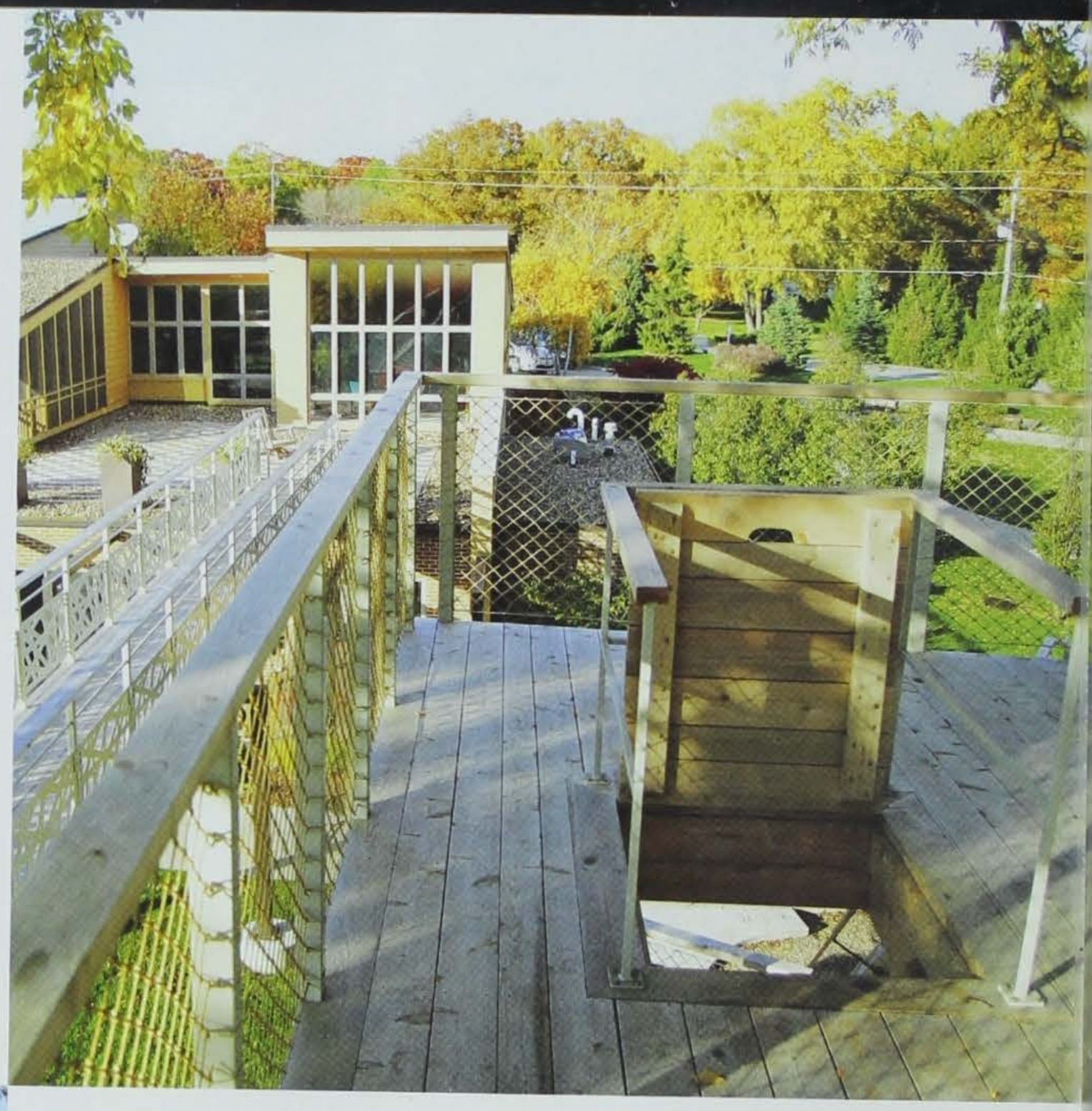
Her children have their friends up in the treehouse, enjoying the outdoors together. Her youngest daughter spends a lot of time in the play structure underneath, jumping from rock to rock, in a swing hanging from one of the beams and loafing in the rope-baggage-style hammock.

For Jacob Mueller, it was a house built on posts 14 years ago by his grandfather especially for him, his brother and his cousin. It was tucked into the evergreen windbreak on his grandfather's farm in Jones County.

"My grandfather knew we loved the outdoors and climbing trees and he did something about that. He built this house for us in the trees. It touches my heart when I think about that. We played in it a lot. It was where our adventures began," says Mueller.

Brent Nie, an architect, built a half-dozen structures in trees as a kid. "I'd see a tree





One of the personal touches in the Kurt and Lynette Rasmussen treehouse in Johnston is the Denmark flag floor pattern on one level (Lynette is Honorary Danish Consul of Des Moines.) A level designed to contemplate nature or read a book is accessed by a rope bridge. The metal bridge from the house to the treehouse is a tribute to Kurt's bridge building career. The railing detail replicates the stadium design for the Beijing Olympics, an event the family attended. Outdoor furniture is placed in the large social level of the treehouse.

Rope cargo net also serves as a hammock.

that would start me thinking about different ways to build a tree fort and then I'd build it. It was a compulsion."

As a college student at Iowa State University, Nie designed and built a treehouse for a class with the goal of not impacting the chosen tree.

"The treehouse is in a huge oak overlooking a pond on my uncle's land in Greene County, a very peaceful place," says Nie. "A few feet from the oak trunk is a red cedar—a natural ladder to climb to the lowest platform in the oak. My class project partner and I climbed up and down those cedar branches hundreds of times during construction. Even in my sleep I climbed those branches. Although I didn't get to use the treehouse myself, I built it thinking someday another kid will discover it and explore the tree."

Tree stressors

Rick Tagtow, executive director of the Midwestern Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture and a consultant in arboriculture and urban forestry, is not supportive of attaching structures to live trees, although he understands the attraction.

"As an arborist, I see trees under a lot of stress, especially in urban areas. Away from their natural environment—the forest—they are placed where the soil is probably compacted from construction equipment. They have to compete for water with thick grass lawns and a flower bed planted over their root system. They may be sprayed by passing vehicles with chemicals used to melt ice. If planted under or near electrical and telephone lines, trees may get topped or major branches chopped off. They are exposed to various air pollutants. A driveway may cover part of their root system.

"Trees are often treated as if they are short-term plants; yet the value of a tree improves as it grows older," advocates Tagtow. "A tree that's 100 years old and properly cared for provides a lot of benefits—especially in cities where they contribute to cooling in the summer, protect animals and people from rain and wind, provide food and shelter for wildlife and are beautiful to look at."

If you're close to making a decision to build a treehouse, here are some important considerations.

Ask Yourself A Lot Of Questions

If you intend to build a treehouse in the city, first make sure there are no ordinances or building codes pertaining to building treehouses. You may be required to obtain a building permit, although Mark Tomb, director of membership services for the Iowa League of Cities, is not aware of specific cities that have had this concern.

"However, if the place you plan to build a treehouse could impact your neighbors' view, privacy or fencing, talk it over with them before you begin," advises Tomb. "They may be just as excited about it as you are and offer to help; or they may be completely put off by the idea, in which case it is good that you asked before causing tension with your neighbors."

Decide what the treehouse will be used for, how often, how long and by whom.

How much weight will it need to support? An average 8-foot by 8-foot treehouse will need to be supported by a hardwood tree that has a trunk diameter of 12 inches or more.

What special features do you want? A roof, walkway, bridge, swing or climbing rope?

What safety and security provisions should be made? You may want the treehouse away from public view to reduce the temptation for others to vandalize or be in the treehouse without permission.

Best Trees For Supporting Treehouses

What tree species support a treehouse best? In Iowa, the recommended trees are maple (sugar or red), hickory, black cherry, oak, eastern red cedar and apple.

You may have problems with ash or elm (diseases and insects will impact its strength), black walnut or sycamore (brittle branches), cottonwood (weak-wooded), birch (short life span and weak branches) or poplar and aspen (shallow roots).

Is the tree healthy with a strong root system and shaped so that a treehouse is feasible? Trees should have a healthy canopy, leaves that are green and supple and a root crown that resembles the end of a trumpet. Inspect selected trees for wood-eating insects and signs of disease. Be sure the trunk has not been damaged by lawn mowers and weed-whackers. Such injury could weaken or kill the tree eventually.

The soil underneath the tree canopy should not be compacted. Soil compaction and trenching, digging or adding fill dirt within tree root zones often cause future tree health problems and weaken the root system.

Another consideration is strong winds. A tree in a forest will experience less wind than a tree out in the open.

Tree root systems

Tagtow points out the fallacy of thinking tree roots are as deep as the tree is high. "The depth of most tree roots is less than 12 inches in the soil. The vast majority of fibrous roots that take up water and nutrients into the tree are in the top six inches of soil.

"Another fallacy is that tree roots go out to the tree's drip line. That's not true either. Many tree species grow roots laterally much farther than the height of the tree."

There is no particular regular branching pattern for roots like there is for branches and leaves above ground. Lateral roots arise from tissue on the outside of larger roots. The root cap protects each root tip as it is forced through the soil. Right behind the root tip are root hairs which are fine outgrowths of single cells where water and nutrients are absorbed. Root hairs live for a few weeks and then are cast off.

Removing fine roots here and there will probably not

cause the tree a problem, but don't hack through major roots an inch thick or thicker in order to place treehouse support posts. That is likely to weaken the tree.

The tree should dictate the plan

Consider various structure options for the treehouse. Two, three or even four trees may be used to support a treehouse and distribute the weight load. The house could be supported by posts in the ground and a tree, or by posts alone. The strongest branches on a tree grow at about a 90-degree angle to the trunk, if you plan to have more than one level for your treehouse.

When you have made some decisions, it's time to sketch out ideas and plan the size, materials, hardware and tools you'll need. Although there are plenty of plans in books and on the Internet, the plan should be designed for the tree. Don't try to make your tree fit a chosen design.

Bring in an arborist

The planning stage is a good time to bring in an arborist. An arborist can help determine if the tree selected is healthy and strong enough to support a treehouse and help with pruning decisions to open up the tree for construction to minimize health impacts. He or she may suggest plan changes to make your treehouse safer, or if you need posts to support the treehouse, an arborist can tell you where to place those to minimize damage to the tree's roots. They have the safety equipment and skills to perform tree pruning as well.

If you will use one tree with multiple trunks, the arborist may suggest tying the trunks together with cabling above your treehouse. Follow the arborist's instructions, as they are trained in this kind of work.

Before construction begins

Estimate the cost. You may find you need to adjust the plan to fit the treehouse budget.

Remove dead wood and snags from the branches and prune the tree. Clear debris and vegetation away from the tree's root system—as far out as the tree's branches. This helps the roots breathe and prevents competition for nutrients and water.

Spread a couple of inches of compost or deciduous mulch if it's a deciduous tree, or cedar mulch if it's under a cedar tree.

If your treehouse will be large or will block rain from reaching the tree's roots, buy a soaker hose to use occasionally below the tree. Do not irrigate the tree trunk directly.

Do all the work on the treehouse that you can on the ground. It's a whole lot easier to do it there than in a tree.

Rasmussen Treehouse

When the Rasmussen children outgrew their playset in the backyard, parents Kurt and Lynette began contemplating how they could enjoy the backyard more themselves, along with their teenagers, preteen and friends. The family was big on camping and exploring the outdoors, making their own fun and respecting and appreciating nature. Both adults had treehouses as children, and expressed their common dream of a treehouse like the one in the Disney film, *Swiss Family Robinson*.

They contacted Silent Rivers architects and designers and shared their desires.

"They took our ideas and came back with great spaces for us to entertain and enjoy peaceful relaxation. There is a swinging bridge and a rope bridge, playscape underneath, a hatch entry to one of the levels, plus they added several details in the design that personalized the structure just for us," says Kurt.

Designer Tyson Leyendecker explains his design process and minimizing the impact on trees.

"It wasn't a linear process. The area had a large elm tree, and Kentucky coffeetrees where we were to build the treehouse. There was Dutch elm disease in the neighborhood, so we had the elm treated. The arborist with Wright Tree Service guided the pruning before construction began. They also reinforced weak crotches in the elm and coffeetrees. We decided to build a two-tiered, freestanding platform as the strength of the elm was too questionable.

"There are two other platforms attached to coffee trees: one tree has a platform attached to it by a custom-made bracket that allows for a small amount of movement. The other is attached to a tree with a beam and supported by two additional wooden posts that angle together at the ground. Four braces help strengthen the beam attachment to the tree."

The playscape is shallowly mulched with pea gravel that allows rain to soak through to the tree roots. Additional trees were planted near the structures to get some height before the elm tree succumbs to the inevitable.

Mueller's Post House

Working from a mental plan, 70-year-old Dale Mueller built an 8-foot by 6-foot house from tubular steel, insulated it and paneled the inside for his three grandsons. It features a front porch, recycled sliding plastic windows and a spring-closure door. At the beginning he intended to move it to his son's place in Des Moines for placement in a cottonwood tree, but it became bigger and heavier (600 pounds) as it was completed, so instead Mueller and his son Marlon used a skid-loader to place it onto four 8-foot treated posts in 3.5-foot holes dug below the frost line. Using brown colored steel siding, the house blends into the windbreak of evergreen trees at the family farm near Monticello.

"My brother and I went crazy when we saw it," says Jacob Mueller, an 8-year-old at the time with a 6-year-old brother, Andrew. "We'd spend all day in and out of that house, even eating lunch in it. It was our own house up in

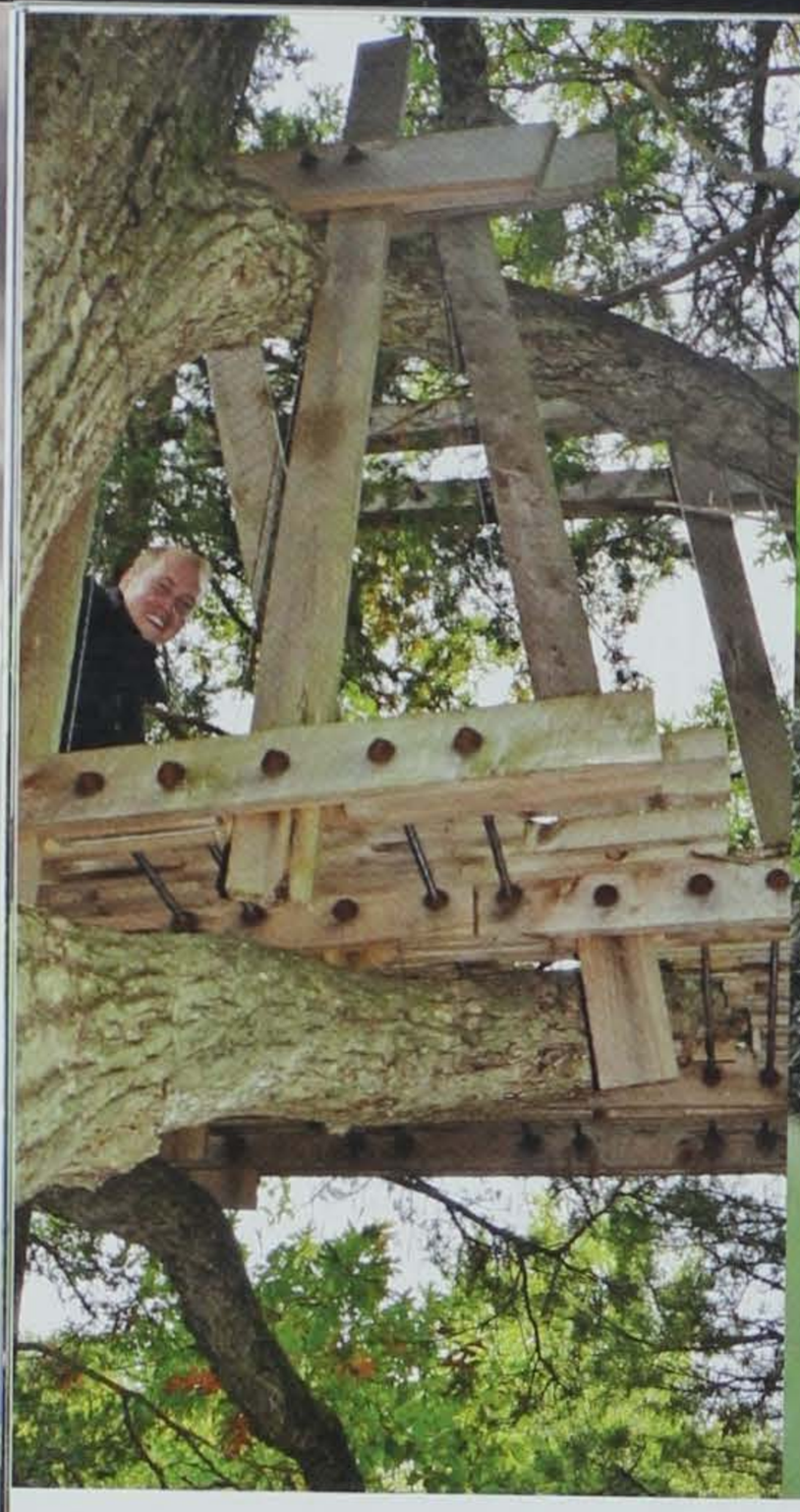
Treehouse Building Dos

- Keep bark damage to a minimum. If living tree tissue is exposed to insects, bacteria or fungi, it could weaken the tree or even cause tree death.
- Use a wedged piece of wood shaped to fit against the support and the tree. Never cut pieces out of the tree to allow supports to fit better. The wedge puts less stress on the support when the bolt is tightened.
- Allow a 2-inch gap around the tree if it passes through the treehouse floor. Add at least a 3-inch gap around the tree if it passes through the roof (more gap needed if the tree flexes much in the wind).
- Use the minimum number of joints necessary between the treehouse and the tree. Use bolts that will take at least three times the projected weight of materials and occupants to attach supports to the trees. Use only one bolt per support.
- If you need to use a flexible joint for the trunk, use a "J" bracket or box bracket. A metal plate should be fitted to the underside of the beam to avoid damage to the beam with wear. The beam is then free to slide in one direction easily.
- A bracket system with sliding plates is recommended for treehouses built in multiple trees.
- Post supports should be set in concrete, either secured directly in the concrete, or set a post bracket. Keep the base of the concrete below the frost line to avoid problems from ground expansion and shifting.

Don'ts

- Do not tie straps or ropes around the tree to support a treehouse. These will remove protective bark or girdle (cut off the flow of nutrients to) the tree over time.
- Do not place bolts less than 12-inches apart vertically and 12-inches apart horizontally. If bolts are spaced close together in the tree trunk, these will inhibit the tree's cambium layer from spreading needed nutrients and water.
- Do not fix walls or parts of the roof to branches passing through the treehouse. A level platform should support the house framework.
- Although there are examples of trees growing around items like wire or metal objects, this is not a risk to take in treehouse construction. Make sure nothing prevents the tree's growth.

Set in a Jones County windbreak, Dale Mueller, below, welded a ring on the roof so it could be hoisted and placed on posts. **RIGHT:** Jacob Mueller and cousin Josh Piece on the deck. Dale, the grandfather, died in 2012. "He built it because he loved us and it is a legacy that will be there for other kids to enjoy, too," says Jacob.



Brent Nie in his tree structure at his uncle's farm in Greene County. A turnbuckle is used to tighten the cable pieces to the correct tension as the cable stretches over time. An eastern redcedar serves as a ladder to access the structure. Branches supporting the floors are close to the recommended 90 degree angle that indicates the strongest branches of the tree. Plenty of space was left around a branch to sway and grow through the floor. Spaces in the floor allow water, leaves and small branches to drop to the ground.

Nie was part of the design team that built a solar house, which ranked highly in the 2009 solar decathlon competition in Washington, DC. The house is exhibited at Honey Creek Resort State Park.

the trees."

Cousin Josh Pierce lived a mile from his grandfather and helped build the metal house.

"My grandfather taught me welding and metal work on that treehouse (Pierce was also 8 at the time). It was a giant structure to me. When he decided it was to go in the windbreak, he welded caps on the bottom of the structure to place over the posts my uncle put in.

"The inside was 5 feet high," continues Pierce. "I was the tallest, so it was only a few months before I had to duck to get around in it, but that was part of the experience. When we were up in the house, we were in the 'timber.' We played cowboys and Indians, riding horses through the forests and mountains in our collective imaginations.

"Now I'm in my senior year at the University of Wyoming, majoring in ag business. In the summer of 2011, I had the chance to work for a Yukon outfitter (in Canada) as a hunting assistant and guide. The place was a hundred miles from a paved road, so we drove the horses over the mountain terrain to the lodge on horseback. I had a lariat and gun packed alongside my saddle and was riding across some rough land. We swam across rivers hanging onto the saddle horns of our horses. I got a chance to live those imagined adventures we had as kids.

"I can still picture that metal treehouse. It was a place that set our imaginations free."

Nie's cabled treehouse

It's probably a quarter-mile walk from the county road and there's no farmhouse on Brent Nie's uncle's land. Gigantic trees surround a pond. Nested in a giant oak is Nie's concept of what a treehouse should be: a structure that incorporates the existing circulation and qualities of a tree that make a person want to be in a tree.

"It seems people want to be in a tree, but they don't know how," says Nie. "They know how to be on the ground, so they construct a house in a tree that is like a house on the ground. Once they enter that type of treehouse, they might as well forget they are in a tree.

"I wanted to design something that uses architecture to reinforce the qualities of climbing and inhabiting a tree. I wanted a treehouse that behaved and could be experienced as part of the tree."

We step on the spacious treehouse platform after climbing the limbs of the cedar tree. A breeze filters through our hair and gently stirs the oak leaves. "This really is peaceful," says Nie softly, as his gaze follows a cable structure through the branches and out to the wooded hillside beyond.

"It's interesting to be back after four years to see how my ideas worked out. My project partner and I cut cedar planks for the floor. Cedar contains natural protective oils so the wood doesn't require a preservative. The wood was bright purple-red when we installed it. The spaces between the boards allow rain, leaves and twigs to fall through to the ground, and it is a constant reminder that we are off the ground and in a space unlike any other. The wood has weathered to blend with the bark of the tree. So have the bolt heads. I didn't want shiny bolts, so I avoided using galvanized bolts where they weren't needed.

"The weathered wood blends in with its surroundings, yet still stands out—like an old weathered hay wagon sitting in a fence row. It just looks like it belongs there.

"I didn't want to put any holes in the tree so we used a cable system over branches to support the floors. A problem was how to keep the cable from biting into the bark of the branches. We decided to keep the cable between blocks of wood to serve as buffers. We figured wood against wood would be less destructive, and it looks like that has worked out in these four years. I can see the cables need some adjusting.

"We left space for a dead limb to come through the floor. We decided to leave it so it could be used as a seat. Now, I'm afraid the limb might break and damage the structure.

"There's another small platform about 8 feet higher above our heads," points out Nie. "I wanted a higher structure to encourage a person to climb higher and prolong the experience."

Another feature of Nie's treehouse is that it was built to be adjusted as the tree grows, by removing sections.

The tree experience

Whether it nurtures imaginations, builds skills and confidence, opens minds to experiencing nature, teaches biology and physics or provides a place to share time with someone important to you, a place of your own in the outdoors is an important experience at any age.

If you build a treehouse, build with regard to the tree's nutrient and water circulatory system, growth and movement in wind. A tree cared for properly is a testimony to the enduring qualities of nature and a symbol of hope for the future.

Treehouse Resources

The Treehouse Guide provides plans, tutorials and advice on treehouse construction. The author is an arborist. The website is *thetreehouseguide.com*.

A website advertising treehouses designed and built by Jonathon Fairoaks, a certified arborist out of Pennsylvania with knowledge of cabling and rigging trees for treehouses, is available at *http://livingtreeonline.com*.

For custom brackets to support braces and beams, go to *http://treehouses.com/joomla/index.php/construction/garnier-limb-parts*

To find a certified arborist, go to the International Society of Arboriculture's website at *www.isa-arbor.com/foca/findarborist.aspx*

BY *BRIAN BUTTON* PHOTOS BY *BEN CURTIS*

MAXIMIZING FALL COLOR AT HOME With Art-Based Theory

"All colors are the friends of their neighbors and the lovers of their opposites." — Marc Chagall, (1887-1985) artist, speaking of the color wheel.

Create your own showcase of fall colors with concepts from the art world. Like great paintings that use contrast, complimentary colors and textures to accentuate the canvas—in a yard setting, that lonely but lovely solitary tree, when paired with others—becomes a masterpiece, especially as fall colors arrive.

"We often get calls on what is good to plant," says DNR urban forest coordinator Emma Hanigan. "Everyone wants maple trees. Personally, I see beauty in all fall color—that's what makes fall a wonderful time of year." For Hanigan, helping homeowners diversify their trees not only enhances fall beauty, but creates a balanced urban forest. "We are trying to promote tree diversity through fall color selection," she says, mindful that when residents and communities heavily load the same tree species, disease outbreaks can be catastrophic.

To create masterpieces of fall color:

CONTRAST—Warm colors contrast when set against cool, green foliage. Contrast accentuates colors, makes them more vibrant so they really pop

How to Buy Uncommon Trees

Most big box stores and nurseries sell common, high demand trees, catering to public demand. The homeowner's affinity towards maples has led to a glut of the oft-planted tree. About 40 percent of Iowa's street trees are maples—and that poses risks. "We shouldn't put all of our chips on maples," or any tree in disproportionate numbers, says Emma Hanigan, DNR urban forestry coordinator. "Too many of one species spells potential disaster for disease outbreak and catastrophic tree losses. We want a mix of trees for contrasting colors, textures, aesthetics and forest health."

Contact your nursery to order lesser-sold trees. Several times a year, nurseries order stock from growers and they can obtain the trees. But try to order early, or order this fall to plant in the spring, she advises. Patience after all, is a virtue, especially with long-lived trees. But beauty is the reward.

visually. They are opposites on the color wheel, or complimentary colors, which are most pleasing to the eye. In essence, they bring out the best in each other. Colors next to each other on the color wheel are also pleasing to the eye, which helps define why the reds, oranges and yellows of fall paired together are striking.

Placed near each other, they accentuate and build upon each other. A maple tree in fall, while beautiful, is made all the more dramatic by other trees or shrubbery that may hold onto green leaves while the maple is aflame in red. Again, red and green are opposite on the color wheel, a balance of complimentary colors.

TEXTURE—Different trees have varying leaf shapes, heights, bark colorations, leaf surfaces and fall colors that make yardscapes more visually appealing with depth, shape, form and tone.

LONGEVITY—With variations in plantings, a homeowner benefits from colors changing over time. "We do this in gardens, with early spring bulbs and flowers that bloom all summer," she says. Then fall mums round out the year. The same can be

Learn More

Go to ***iowadnr.gov*** and search "tree list" for more information about DNR-recommended trees for Iowa. Includes cultivar and species names; some have links to photos and additional details on best growing conditions and tree characteristics.

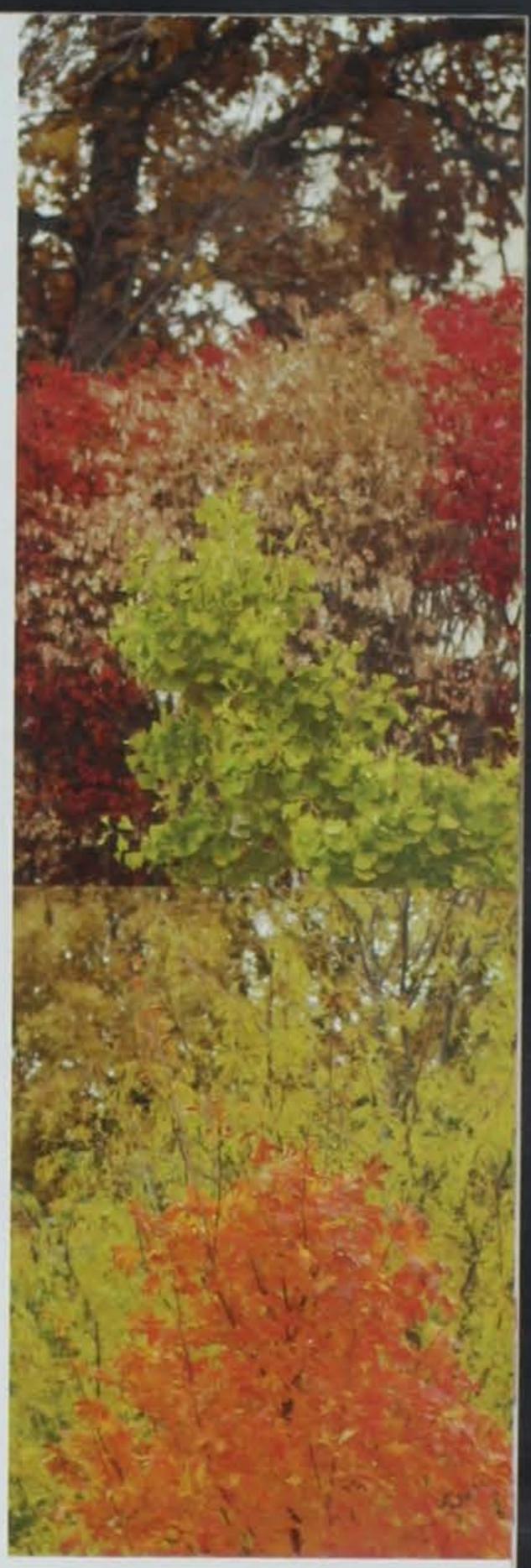
Be Shovel Ready

Fall is great for tree planting. Operation ReLeaf and Plant Some Shade are two residential tree programs offering high quality trees at reduced prices. Alliant Energy's Operation ReLeaf offers 3- to 8-foot trees for $25. (***alliantenergy.com/releaf*** or call Laura Wagner at ***515-281-6749***). MidAmerican Energy customers can purchase trees through Plant Some Shade for $30 (***midamericanenergy.com/iowa_plantsomeshade*** or ***800-434-4017***).

Suggested Pairings for Contrast, Texture and Color that Last

Serviceberry with blackgum and bur oak will provide variety in height and shape. Each will enhance the other. Bur oak provides cool greens while the other species are in color and will turn color last. Serviceberry adds understory color beneath the oak. And the medium-height blackgum with its pyramidal shape will add texture and brilliant deep reds to burgundy colors.

Pairing white oak and honey locust with dogwood or redbud underneath will yield different timing to fall colors. Honey locust offers warm, yellow fall colors first, enhanced by the cool green foliage of dogwood or redbud. Dogwood changes next, from green to orange to red, and the white oak will finish off with its deep purple to brown colors and its leaves will last the longest.



done with fall color. "One can prolong the fall color season." The key is selections of trees and shrubs that change colors early-, mid- and late-fall. When they turn at different rates, color is prolonged and the desired warm and cool opposites exist.

Suggested Tree Pairings

Many homes may have one tree. Use these suggested pairings to enhance fall color. For example, an existing tree with yellow or orange fall foliage would benefit with a Norway maple planted nearby to add deep reds.

The goal should be to strive for four categories, says Hanigan:

COOL GREENS—Trees that hold their greenery while nearby trees are ablaze in color add contrast. Bur oaks retain green leaves quite late, providing a cool contrast to warm fall colors. Conifers are an obvious choice, too. She advises avoiding blue spruce—too many disease issues—and suggests Norway spruce, white pine or concolor fir instead.

DAB THE YELLOW PALETTE—For homes lacking warm, yellow fall colors, consider gingko, honey locust or London planetree. The DNR-recommended gingkos listed online are male cultivars—devoid of the smelly fruits which many homeowners find unpleasant.

ORANGES—For yards lacking orange colors, add a clump serviceberry shrub. The plant delights with spring flowers and in June, berries for birds.

DEEP REDS—Add red or white oak, blackgum or musclewood for a smack of red. Blackgum gives texture all season with its smooth, glossy leaves that turn brilliant red-orange to burgundy. Its small berries provide an important fuel for migrating fall birds. Musclewood (American hornbeam, *Carpinus caroliniana*) also adds texture with the unusual, rippled bark with grey to blue undertones that provides visual texture in winter. As a small, understory tree native to Iowa woodlands, it is uncommon in yard settings and perfect for limited space and creating privacy in yards.

Myth Busters

BY *SHELENE CODNER*

Use of commercial compost starters depends on the goals of the gardener. According to Amy Buckendahl, DNR environmental specialist, commercial compost activators are not necessary, although they are super-charged with microbes that accelerate the breakdown of materials in the compost pile. They can reduce the time for compost to "mature" or finish.

Fundamentally, compost piles depend on two components to produce high-quality soil amendments. They are the materials being composted and the ability to reach optimum temperatures (140 to 160 degrees). A well-made compost pile heats naturally and consists of carbon (brown items such as dead leaves, straw, wood chips, paper) and nitrogen materials (greens like food waste, green leaves, garden waste and horse manure).

According to Cornell University, the ideal carbon to nitrogen ratio is 30:1. This ratio, along with regular turning and watering, creates the warm environment microbes desire to convert materials into rich soil amendments. Typical moisture content of the pile is between 30 to 60 percent—moist to the touch, but dry enough to squeeze with your hands without causing droplets.

However, not all compost piles are created equally, and not all people manage their compost piles the same. If materials are taking a long time to break down or are not heating up, it could require more turning to provide oxygen and to mix the materials, adjusting moisture content or the pile may be carbon heavy and nitrogen poor. A commercial activator may help these situations.

Commercial activators are generally nitrogen rich and come in various forms—solids, liquids, powders and concentrates. But there are also nitrogen sources such as horse manure or additional green plant matter, says Buckendahl.

"Regardless of turn-around time," she says, "you would be hard pressed to find finished compost that is detrimental to gardens or landscapes, but do be mindful of the materials you put in the pile." Buckendahl says to avoid using meat and dairy products. "They can be composted, but odor attracts unwanted guests."

For more tips, see *http://compost.css.cornell.edu/* or Amy Buckendahl, *amy.buckendahl@dnr.iowa.gov, 515-281-8150.*

GOT A QUESTION?
SEND TO: *AskTheExperts@dnr.iowa.gov*

Ask The Expert

BY *SHELENE CODNER*

Dave in Linn County asks: ***Do dogs and cats get poison ivy on their tongue from licking their fur?***

Recently a rash of questions has oozed up on whether pets can "get" poison ivy or "give" it to humans. Considering that poison ivy and related weeds are the most common cause of allergic reactions in the U.S., we've been itching to get to the root of this issue. So let's get to the stem of the problem.

In reality, humans don't "get" poison ivy, what they "get," or what is transferred from the plant, is urushiol oil (you-ROO-shee-all), which is also found in poison oak and sumac. The rash results from oil contacting skin. Roughly 85 percent of people develop rashes. Urushiol can transfer to skin from clothing, backpacks, camping gear and other items. Skin-to-skin transfer between humans is possible, but unlikely as oils absorb into skin quickly.

According to Lisa Olsen, DVM, and emergency and critical care clinician at Iowa State University and Iowa Veterinary Specialties, after contact, it is rare for pets to have symptoms—pet hair serves as a buffer between the oil and their skin. But, she says, "oil may be present on the animal's coat and pet-to-human transfer is possible." She says to contact a vet if you notice a rash, lesion or other abnormality on your pet. She says short-hair dogs and cats are more susceptible due to the lack of protective coats.

If your pet has contacted urushiol plants, rinse or bathe your pet while minding your own safety.

For a fact sheet regarding signs and treatment of poison ivy go to *www.idph.state.ia.us/az_index.asp*. To identify and remove urushiol plants visit *http://extension.missouri.edu/p/G4880*. For critical care veterinary questions, contact Lisa Olsen, DVM, *lolsen@iastate.edu, 515-294-4900.*

BY ALAN FOSTER

Squirrel Stew

Nothing staves off the chill of a late fall hunt more than a hearty bowl of stew. While there are hundreds of variations of this classic, this one calls for what was once one of the most popular game animals in Iowa—squirrel. The sweet meat and fall root vegetables pair well with the acidic red wine.

PHOTO BY ISTOCKPHOTO.COM

SQUIRREL STEW

Two large squirrels or three smaller ones, quartered
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
1/4 cup flour
1 teaspoon dried thyme
4 cloves garlic, minced
1 bay leaf
Salt and pepper to taste
1 large onion, diced
1 cup red wine or 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
3 cups beef broth
4 cups root vegetables (carrots, parsnips, turnips or rutabaga) or seasonal squash
Two stalks celery
1 can diced tomatoes
Three large potatoes, skin on or off
1 tablespoon dried parsley
1 cup peas

In large Dutch oven, brown squirrel over medium-high heat in two tablespoons vegetable oil. Remove and set aside. Add onions and sauté until soft, about five minutes. Reduce heat to medium low and add flour. Cook for two minutes, stirring often so it doesn't burn. Add garlic and deglaze pan with red wine. If not using wine, deglaze with one cup of the beef broth. Let simmer five minutes to thicken. Add remaining seasonings, broth, squirrel and Worcestershire sauce (if not using wine) and cook covered, on low, for one hour. Add vegetables, chopped in 1-inch cubes, and simmer 30 minutes until meat and vegetables are tender. Remove meat from bones and return to stew. Serve with crusty bread.

Wild Cuisine *KITCHENSIDE*

BY *ALAN FOSTER* **PHOTOS BY** *JAKE ZWEIBOHMER*

Des Moines' newest restaurant is setting Ingersoll Ave. on fire, adding contemporary cuisine to a strip already rich in dining diversity. Eatery A dishes up Old World food with hints of Spain, Morocco, Egypt and Italy, but its wood-fired pizza takes center stage. Sure, sausage and mushrooms are available, but think outside the cardboard box and try the fig, proscuitto and greens pizza. Hours Tue.-Thurs. 3-11 p.m.; Fri.-Sat. 3 p.m.-12 a.m.; Sunday 3-10 p.m. 2932 Ingersoll Ave.

515-282-8085; eateryadsm.com.

Eatery-A
Rabbit Loins and Polenta Cake

Every city in Iowa is focused on revitalization, welcoming visitors to dine, shop and stay. Downtown Des Moines is a leader, revamping the East Village, creating the Principal Riverwalk and making the entire central city a focal point. Few lead the way more than Ingersoll Avenue, where some of the most diverse restaurants, dive bars, upscale lounges and coffee shops can be found within a mile's walk. The newest is Eatery A, a bustling spot on a busy thoroughfare that challenges the taste buds as much as the vocabulary. Accessible from anywhere downtown via trails and bike-friendly Ingersoll, small plates to share are encouraged. But here, brick oven pizza is the star. Bring the smartphone, though, to decide between the mortadella, guanciale or merquez sausage, or ask any of the seasoned staff. Here, food is simple, yet refined, artful—an experiment in flavor. Be forewarned, this place is hopping; whether it's 400 diners on a weekend or a few dozen less during the week. It's common to have patrons waiting in the parking lot...15 minutes before opening...on a weekday. Reservations advised. Enjoy a craft beer, shipped in from across the country—or just a short distance away from Confluence—or a cocktail made with local spirits and eastern flavors, like pomegranate, basil, mint and ginger. And the decor in the dining room is as classy as the fare. Walls are decorated with salvaged wood from what was, before owner Jason Simon took over, a video store.

RABBIT BRINE

1/3 cup apple cider vinegar
6 cups water
2 cups basil, chopped
6 tablespoons salt
2 tablespoons sugar
6 tablespoons garlic, minced

Combine ingredients. Marinate rabbit overnight in refrigerator.

RABBIT LOIN

12 rabbit loins from six rabbits
1 to 1.5 pounds thin sliced bacon

Slow-cook bacon until almost done. Wrap each loin in a slice of bacon, securing with toothpicks soaked in water for at least 30 minutes. Roast in 350° oven about 40 minutes, or until internal temperature reaches 150°. Let rest 10 minutes and serve.

OLIVE OIL AND POLENTA CAKE

6 eggs
1 3/4 cups sugar
14 tablespoons butter, melted
1 3/4 cups extra virgin olive oil
1 1/4 cups polenta
1 cup all purpose flour
2 tablespoons baking powder
2 teaspoons salt
zest of two oranges and two lemons
pistachios to taste

Mix eggs and sugar until dissolved. Add butter and olive oil. Slowly incorporate dry ingredients until smooth. Fold in nuts. Bake in 9-inch round pan at 350° until golden brown and inserted toothpick comes out clean.

Warden's Diary

BY *ERIKA BILLERBECK*

King of Weasels

I refer to it as "weaseling"—the act of trying to get out of a ticket. There are many tactics weasels employ in their attempts to shirk responsibility. The most obvious include: asking for a warning, blaming someone else or running away as quickly as possible. However, the weasel's toolbox contains more subtle tools, including: distraction, compliments, name dropping and the quick apology, quick fix tactic. These maneuvers involve quick thinking and excessive amounts of rambling conversation to draw the warden's attention from the matter at hand. All four put together would sound something like this:

Warden: "Looks like your boat registration is expired."

Weasel: "Really? Thanks for letting me know, I'll get that fixed right away. You want to look at our life jackets? We have plenty of those! The wife wanted to get the neoprene kind, but I told her that we shouldn't spend so much on something we aren't going to really wear anyway, so we got a giant bag of the orange kind. Not so comfortable, but you can't beat the price!"

Warden: "And while you're getting the life jackets, can I take a look in your live well?"

Weasel: "And I've been meaning to call Shawn Meier—you know him? I went to high school with him and he works for you guys now, well I guess you probably already know that. Anyway, I saw him out here on the Fourth of July and I wanted to compliment him on how well you guys handled the crowd. Take a look at this ding I took on the port side here by some idiot that backed into me. Probably drunk. How many drunks did you haul off anyway?"

And on and on.

I begin to get aggravated when the weasel turns to their status for a little help. Instead of dropping another warden's name, he decides to use his own. Dropping your own name is a method used primarily by high-profile people in the community, a politician or maybe a CEO of a big company. Most often the person starts with, "Do you know who I am?" The most annoying of all is when the "weasel" turns into a "badger." "Badging" is when another law enforcement officer "inadvertently" shows the warden their badge, or simply asks for "professional courtesy" to get out of a ticket.

I don't want to perpetuate the myth that extending professional courtesy is a common practice. *It is not.* But I can tell you about one incident I'll never forget.

It was pheasant opener and I was driving past a wildlife area when I saw a couple hunters walking through a field. One hunter didn't have a lick of blaze orange on, so I decided to stop and talk to them. We chatted for a while and they retrieved their hunting licenses. Things were perfectly harmonious until I said, "Well, we do have one problem. You need to be wearing some blaze orange." And then it happened—the hunter pulled out a badge bearing the name of a police department of a nearby city. Then, as if I didn't understand his point perfectly well, he added, "I'm a cop if it makes a difference."

It didn't.

I went on to explain to him that I don't issue warnings for safety-oriented violations, especially one as important as wearing blaze orange. I asked to see his driver's license. His face turned red and he seemed to be holding his breath for an abnormally long time.

"You're really going to do it aren't you?" he asked me in an eerily calm voice as he was digging in his pocket for his wallet. "You're going to write me a ticket."

Was this a rhetorical question? I didn't answer.

"You know, I help out 'DNR officer Jim' all the time," he said. I knew it wouldn't take long before he plunked another officer's name into the conversation. "I help him out and you won't do the same? You know, you've got to be *the* lowest cop in the world to be writing me a ticket, you know that? You won't even give me any professional courtesy?" he said. His voice was rising in pitch and volume. This wasn't good.

I took his license and walked back to my truck. After I was finished writing the citation I returned to him. For the next five minutes, the things he said to me were too vile to be printed in a family magazine. Spittle spewed from his lips as he gave me the worst dressing down of my career, and it all ended with the lame threat, "I can guarantee that any conservation officer that drives through (name of town) is going to get a speeding ticket."

I bit my tongue really hard, and walked back to my truck, thinking that someday maybe I'd take a spin through his town just to see...when it dawned on me that the town he mentioned did not match the name of the city on the badge. In fact, his best friend, "officer Jim," wasn't even in the same county as the city named on the badge. I decided to call "Officer Jim."

"Who?" Jim asked.

"You know, your number one helper..." I repeated the name.

Finally Jim figured it out. He said he believed the officer was a new hire—with the police department only a couple months. He told me he'd check into it.

Later that afternoon, the hunter's boss, the chief of police, called me. He wanted to hear about my encounter with his officer. I described the incident. I asked the chief if he knew why the officer would be displaying a badge from another city. He said that he had already checked with that city's chief and found that the guy had been hired by that department prior to his current position, but that he hadn't made it through the probationary training period due to "anger management" problems. Big surprise.

I think the term "professional courtesy" is a misnomer. Anyone in law enforcement knows that it isn't always easy to write someone a ticket. Most cops also know what it feels like to be berated by someone from the public. In my opinion, a cop who demonstrates true "professional courtesy" would behave toward the officer in the same way they would want someone to behave to them. Remember the golden rule?

Most cops don't feel they are above the law. But bad eggs are in every profession, and law enforcement is no exception. But I firmly believe there are more good cops out there than bad. Everyone messes up sometimes. I'm the first to admit of times when I've been running late and may have fudged the speed limit. But to say that it is OK because I'm an officer is absurd. It is like watching someone smack a kid across the back of the head and explain, "Oh, don't worry. It's OK—I'm a day care provider." When I get badged and the person says, "I'm a cop if it makes a difference," I want to scream, "You should know better!"

So, to any law enforcement officers that I may have cited without knowing "who you were"...thank you. Not for violating the law, but for demonstrating true "professional courtesy" and leaving your badge in your pocket.

And by the way—the hunter from this story didn't make it through his second probationary period either. Big surprise.

Admiration & Legacy

BY *JESSIE ROLPH BROWN*

Find a volunteer project or post your own event at *www.iowadnr.gov/volunteer* or call *515-242-5074*.

PUSHING PENCILS AND PEDALS

BIKE TO SCHOOL DAY, STATEWIDE —
Helping kids get active

Long past are the days of walking to school a mile uphill—both ways. But for many kids today, schedules, distance or a lack of a safe route to school keep them from biking or walking to school. Bike to School Day, along with its sister event, Walk to School Day, helps kids overcome those challenges. More than 30 Iowa school districts participated in Bike to School Day in 2014, its third year. Some schools offer prizes, some organize volunteers to bike the route with students and some plan other healthy living events alongside the bike day. At St. Joseph Community School in New Hampton, a Catholic school which serves in-town and rural kids, students met in a park and rode together to school with their principal, physical education teacher, parents, the parish priest and police officers. "The kids said, 'we should do this every day.' It set a nice tone for the day," says principal Christina Carlton. Following the ride, the kids made snacks with a bike-powered blender. "It gets them exercise, provides a safe route to school and shows kids to value movement," says Kyle Lewis, a physical education teacher at Sioux City's Spalding Park Elementary. The school runs a walking school bus weekly in fall and spring where parent volunteers walk a route with kids. Bike to School Day follows a similar format. "Parents loved it. They said that that's the one day of the week I don't have a problem getting my kids going," Lewis said. The benefits extend beyond exercise—it also reduces emissions from cars idling in front of schools. "There are benefits all around. Communities come together to celebrate these events," says Milly Ortiz with the Iowa Department of Transportation's Iowa Safe Routes to School program.

ALL IN THE FAMILY

HERTZ FAMILY, NEVADA
Family donates beloved woodland to Story County for residents to enjoy

Embracing their mother's love of nature and their family's commitment to conservation, the Hertz family has opened its private refuge to all Iowans. Carl and Marjory Hertz acquired 21 acres south of Nevada in 1951, taking it out of pasture, and Marjory tended to the woodland plants—especially her beloved showy orchids—for another 58 years. The Hertzes wanted to protect the land and keep it out of development. "It's a place where we always took walks as kids," says Tom Hertz. While Carl and Marjory were still alive, the family began making plans to donate the woodland, which features 21 different tree species. "We had made the decision to preserve the land on our own," says Randy Hertz. "This gave us the chance of how best to do that." By donating the land, Story County Conservation will manage it as a preserve, using prescribed fire and other methods to keep invasive species at bay and help native plants thrive. But before the family handed over the land, they built a parking lot, walking path, smaller trails and placed boulders along trails as resting points. They planted high-diversity prairie as a buffer between agricultural land and a new housing subdivision and did work to control erosion on the ravine's feeder streams. "We, as Hertz Farm Management, try to be leaders in new techniques, trying to protect the soil," says Tom. When they donated the land—with 43 family members attending the dedication—the area was ready for use. "They went way beyond," says Steve Lekwa, who worked with the family before he retired as Story County Conservation director. "They were not only generous in donating, but generous in planning with the county so it would be a usable area for the public right from the start. They turned over quite an area."

TROUT 101

TROUT IN THE CLASSROOM, DECORAH
Kids learn about trout and clean water while raising fish from eggs

Some classes have a pet hamster or guinea pig. But some northeast Iowa classes have trout—and they're raising them from eggs and releasing them in Iowa streams. A national Trout Unlimited program, Trout in the Classroom, allows students to raise fish and learn about their habitat and the importance of clean water. The Driftless Chapter of Trout Unlimited, covering six northeast Iowa counties, usually funds the tank and equipment, while the DNR provides trout eggs, fish food and technical expertise. "When you look at our Driftless Trout Unlimited group, I'm one of the young guys at age 48," says chapter president Kent Kleckner. "It's the idea of getting some exposure to the youngest generation and getting them interested in what it takes to keep our water clean and safe for trout." Ryan Rahmiller, a teacher at Charles City Middle School and Trout Unlimited member, thought the program would fit well with a unit on human-environment interaction. Students talk about the nearby Spring Creek watershed, sources of pollution, a trout's life and trout across America, while also caring for the young trout, taking water tests and cleaning the tank. "Trout serve as a real-life example of the relationship between humans and the environment," says Rahmiller, who also started a fly fishing club at the school. "It's a good program to get kids involved. They'll never remember a worksheet, but they'll think about the actions they take."

Rahmiller's wife Amanda, also a teacher at Charles City Middle School and TU member, now leads the trout program there. Last year, she moved the fish release to the Decorah fish hatchery, where students took a tour, fished, took water samples and more. "There are lots of students interested in the outdoors, but they don't get those opportunities in school," she says. "Students enjoy things that are hands-on and have a real-world aspect to it." They're also quick to tell their parents about what they're learning, making the project the talk of the community. Folks on the street would often stop to ask about the trout, says recently retired Decorah Middle School teacher Meg Storkamp. "We learned a lot about the resource in our area, and it was just a very engaging activity," Storkamp said. "Because it's in your backyard, kids might not appreciate trout streams. This helps them relate to why we want to care for this resource."

BIKE TO SCHOOL PHOTO COURTESY CHRISTINA CARLTON; DECORAH PHOTO BY JESSICA RILLING

BY *ALAN FOSTER* PHOTO BY *BEN CURTIS*

Periodical Cicada *(Magicicada sp)*

They don't bite, sting or attack gardens, yet they are feared by many. But they should be revered, says Donald Lewis, professor of entomology at Iowa State University, especially this year with the return of the 17-year cicada. High in protein, low in carbs and fat and gluten-free, cicadas supplement diets in Asia and Latin America.

A periodical cicada molts from its nymphal stage and will remain cream-colored for about an hour before the exoskeleton hardens.

A LONG WAY TO GO

Larvae spend the majority of their decade-and-a-half life underground, only to live five to six weeks above ground. They emerge late spring, focused on mating and laying eggs. When eggs hatch in six to eight weeks, larvae burrow underground to feed on tree root sap until emergence. Adults and larvae feed only moderately on plant and root fluids—not greatly affecting plant and tree health. They are North America's longest living insect.

BROOD BREAKDOWN

Periodical cicadas emerge somewhere in the eastern U.S. every year. Five of the 17-year classes are now extinct, according to Lewis. Of the 13-year classes, only three remain. Iowa has three major periodical emergences—a 17-year cicada that emerged this year and another emerging in 2024, primarily in southeast Iowa; and a 13-year brood that will emerge next year.

PERFECT SYNCHRONIZATION

Periodical cicadas are synchronized to appear in mass numbers, up to 1.5 million per acre of woods, according to Lewis. As many as 40,000 may cover a single tree. The spectacle is even more impressive by the volume of the distinct buzzing sound. The loudest, largest gatherings attract the most responsive females.

SAFETY IN NUMBERS

Periodical cicadas have adapted for survival through predator satiation, where prey occur at such high densities, the probability of an individual organism being consumed is minimal. When flooded with prey, predators can only consume so much. The phenomenon is not unlike masting, where plant communities produce high numbers of seeds to ensure survival.

NAME THAT TUNE

Unlike grasshoppers and crickets, cicadas do not rub two body parts together to make sound. Instead, adult males possess two ribbed membranes called tymbals, one on each side of their first abdominal segment. By contracting the tymbal muscle, cicadas buckle the membrane inward, producing a loud click. As the membrane snaps back, it clicks again. The two tymbals click alternately.

IT'S ALL IN THE EYES

Like many insects, periodical cicadas have two sets of eyes—a set of large, red compound eyes on the side of their head, and three small, red simple eyes in between. Compound eyes are multifaceted and allow for vision. Simple eyes detect only light and darkness.

INSET PHOTO BY JAMES BARNHARDT

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