SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2015

### THE DNR'S MAGAZINE OF CONSERVATION

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### IN THIS ISSUE DUCK TALES A WATERFOWLER'S REFLECTIONS ON TIME OUTDOORS

#### A SEASON FOR ALL



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### "As a senior in high school I didn't know what I wanted to do...

so I googled 'small college in Iowa' and Ellsworth Community College popped up. I saw that it was affordable, so I came to the campus in Iowa Falls and met Professor Nancy Slife and the rest is history.

I love to fish and be outdoors, and to be honest Nancy reminded me of my grandma. She's really nice, and she look after her students like family. She makes sure we do well, and she's good at building our interest and expertise in wildlife a d nature. She's really inspiring!

Nancy got me interested in the Calkins Nature Area & Interpretive Center, and last summer I worked there helping the staff with summer programs, wildlife animal care, exhibit and trail maintenance. This summer I'll be working for Plymouth County Conservation, doing the same type of wor

I plan to transfer to either the University of Wisconsin-Stever Point or Iowa State University. My dream job would be a fish biologist, working in that industry.

What I love about ECC's Conservation Technology program is that classes don't feel like work, they feel like having fun outdoors. I grew up in a small town, and this was a great plac to ease into college. I fell in love with it, and I wish I could go II four years here! Just come to Ellsworth!"

Lee Tapper, Hawarden, IA

ECC Conservation Technology Major, Class of 2015

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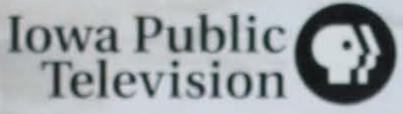
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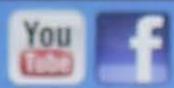
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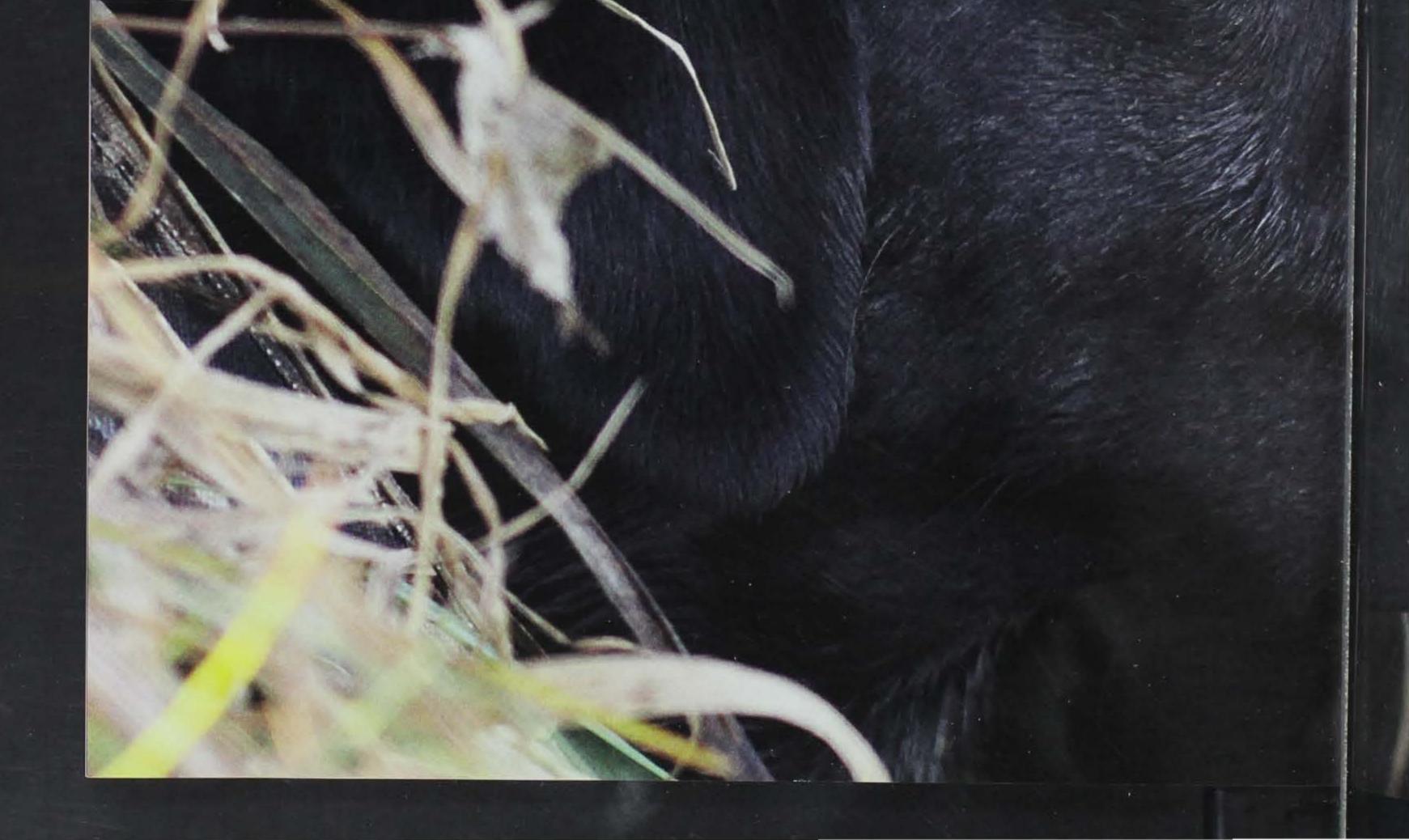




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Take the bite out of bee stings; learn a fall trick for more spring asparagus; fix tent rips the easy way; weather strip your way to better lure organization.

### **18** Lost in Iowa

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### 61 Wild Cuisia

Southern BBQ comes to life right here in Iowa at the Rathbun Lakeshore Grille.

### 66 Flora & Fauna

Despite being one of only two bird species unprotected in Iowa and considered a pest by some, the European starling was revered by the early Greeks and Romans and kept as heralded pets due to their ability to mimic sounds including human speech.

#### ABOUT THE COVER

Every spring and fail the DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge becomes a temporary home to thousands of migratory birds. Peak duck populations can reach as many as 75,000, primarily mailards. By far the most spectacular wildlife event at DeSoto, however, is the fall migration of snow geese, where as many as a half-million birds will stop for a rest. See pages 18-27. PHOTO BY BRIAN BUTTON

#### BOULTHIS PHOTO

The photographer's black Lab, Baileg, intently monitors the sky for incoming honkers on a fall Canada goose field hunt. At just 4 years old when the photo was taken, Bailey had for more than a year been qualified to run All Age Stake field trials, meaning she had already finished first or second to a Qualifying Stake Field Trial. PHOTO BY MARK LASNEK

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STORY AND PHOTOS BY MINDY KRALICEK

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BY SUE O'LOUGHLIN PHOTOS BY SUE O'LOUGHLIN AND THERESA SHAY

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A season of duck hunting creates a lifetime

of memories. BY BILL KLEIN

### 52 A Favorite Uncle

Those lucky enough to have a "favorite uncle" know the influence they possess and the treasured memories they provide.

BY DAN MAGNESON

#### **ABOUT THIS PHOTO**

The sun sets over the Missouri River adjacent the sprawling DeSoto Bend National Wildlife Refuge in western Iowa. The 8,365 acre refuge offers limited hunting, fishing and boating, as well as hiking and prime wildlife viewing. Located 25 miles north of Council Bluffs, the refuge can be accessed via a \$3 daily vehicle pass, \$15 annual pass or purchase of a Federal Duck Stamp or Federal Recreational Lands Pass. Learn more on page 18. PHOTO BY BRIAN BUTTON

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#### SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2015 + VOLUME 74 + ISSUE 5

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### Contributors



DAN MAGNESON grew up in the southwest lowa towns of Red Oak, Shenandoah and Clarinda and today works as a fisheries biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on Washington state's Olympic Peninsula. He believes that the 1950s and 1960s were the absolute golden era of being a kid, and that nowhere on earth was this more true than in lowa.



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#### EDITORIAL MISERON

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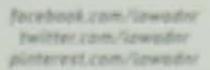
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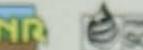
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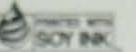
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BILL KLEIN was born and raised in Des Moines, graduated from Dowling Catholic High School and worked for Look magazine in Des Moines. A life-long hunter and angler, his work appears in Outdoor America and many hunting and conservation magazines. He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



Des Moines weiter SANDY FLAHIVE likes discovering the hidden gems in lowa's many nooks and crannies and spending time at her remote cabin neur Stephens State Forent in southern lowa.

### **Myth Busters**

BY MARIAH GRIFFITH PHOTOS BY JAKE ZWEIBOHMER

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

### **OAK TREES KILL OTHER PLANTS** VIA ALLELOPATHY?

Il plants compete for various resources like water, sunlight, Aspace and nutrients. Thus, many species develop chemical defenses to ward off unwanted neighbors.

This competitive emission of growth inhibitors is called allelopathy, and many common species like sycamores, walnuts, poplars, sumac and even Kentucky bluegrass exhibit some allelopathic tendencies. Oaks emit a family of compounds called coumarins, which inhibit some plants germination and growth. That doesn't mean the oak in your backyard is going to kill your flowerbed. Most allelopathy is mild, and only affects certain types of plants in very close proximity to the allelopathic individual. Iowa has 12 native species of oaks, and many of the plants that evolved alongside oaks have no trouble growing beside them. However, certain herbs and grasses are killed by the oaks' coumarins, so the trees may develop a bare patch of soil around their base.

"It's mostly a problem for people that want a pristine yard," said Tivon Feeley, state forest health program leader.

Feeley notes native ornamental grasses may be more severely affected than invasive species like brome, but recommends not planting these heavily competitive species as they are low-quality and can commandeer your yard. Instead, he says spread mulch at the base of an oak every few years, to cover the bare soil and provide nutrients for the tree as the mulch decomposes.

A small amount of pea gravel will also work, but rocks provide virtually no resources, and more than ¼ inch will smother and kill the tree.

# Ask the Expert What fishing bait is legal in Iowa?

A /hile many anglers buy tackle and bait from commercial dealers, others prefer to catch their own. While live bait can be extremely effective, it can also get anglers into hot water if they don't know the bait regulations or cannot correctly identify bait species they collect from public waters.

Bait is defined as, but not limited to, minnows, green sunfish, orange-spotted sunfish, dead gizzard shad, frogs, crayfish, salamanders and mussels. "Minnows" are a common type of bait and the term is used in reference to multiple species. Minnows can be caught with traps up to three feet with a tag showing the user's name, a dip net up to four feet in diameter, a cast net up to 10 feet in diameter or a seine up to 20 feet in length with a minimum 1/4 inch bar measure. Minnows caught in public waters may be

transported for personal use with a sport fishing license. Anglers may also use legally harvested sport fish caught on a hook and line as bait. A bait dealer license is required to sell, give or furnish bait to others.

Fisheries biologist Martin Konrad says regulations prevent the introduction of invasive and undesirable species like zebra mussels and gizzard shad from establishing populations in lakes and other waters.

"Gizzard shad is a native plankton filter feeder that, if released, will outcompete native game fish like bluegill, crappie and bass, eventually leading to smaller sport fish," says Konrad.

For additional information on bait collection, see the current Iowa Fishing Regulations Booklet.

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10 IOWA OUTDOORS SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2015



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



Grab the kids for a weekend of exploring, digging and getting

get to the parking lot take North County Road 0 north out of Hamilton, Ill.

economic effect on the surrounding communities.

your hands dirty at the 11th annual Geode Fest near Keokuk. This year's event is Sept. 25-27, and a great chance to find Iowa's state rock.

Geode Fest is open to all ages, with registration fees of \$20 for a single person and \$30 for families to enjoy five guided geode hunts through private properties and take home a full 5-gallon bucket of geodes. While unassuming from the outside, geodes' hollow inner cavities contain spectacular displays of crystal growth.

"It's not a question of finding them, it's just a question of how many you want to take with you," says event founder Mike Shumate.

Two hunts will be held Friday and Saturday, with one from 8 a.m. to noon and the other 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. The last hunt will be Sunday from 8 a.m. to noon. Bring digging equipment like picks and shovels, bug spray, sunscreen and a 5-gallon bucket, meeting the tour guide at the Chaney Creek Access Area parking lot one hour before the hunt. To Although this year's fest is in Hamilton, III., it is only a 10-minute drive from Keokuk, where the event started as Roctoberfest in 2005.

"The Keokuk area is known for real big, pretty crystals," said Shumate. "Locals say, 'everybody here has plenty of geodes,' but other people around the country don't. We've got the world supply right here."

These sedimentary geodes are abundant for approximately 70 miles around the confluence of the Des Moines and Mississippi rivers, and are known as Keokuk geodes since the city is so close. Geode Fest brings about 1,000 visitors to the area each year from around the country.

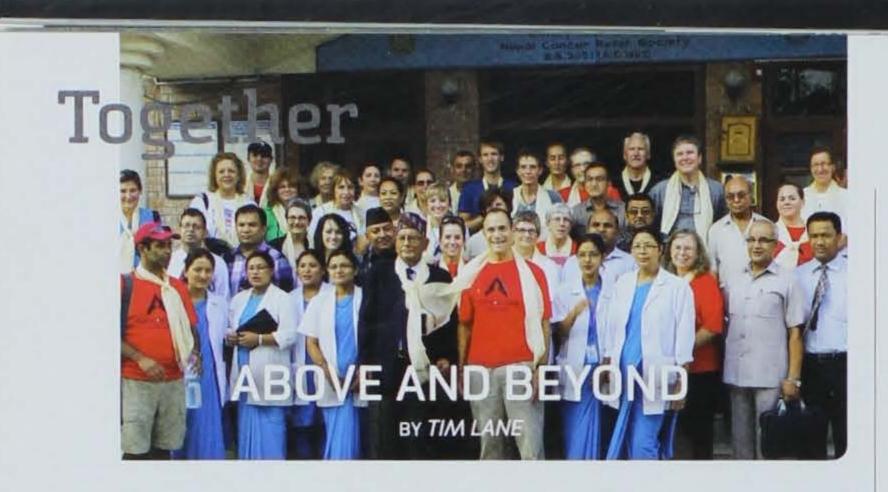
"From February through October, people come from miles around to hunt the 'elusive' geode," says Kirk Brandenberger, Executive Director of the Keokuk Area Convention and Tourism Bureau. He says geodes have become a major part of the city's marketing and have a positive

Tourists aren't the only ones attracted to Keokuk. Waterfowl migrations pass through the Mississippi River valley every year, and bald eagles are a frequent sight in winter. Hike around the river valleys to see these birds and other wildlife before heading home.

Local museums house some particularly large and intricate geode specimens, with the Bevard tri-state collection of Keokuk geodes on display at the Keokuk convention and tourism office.

Visitors can camp at Chatfield County Park just three miles northwest of Keokuk at 3592 Iowa Road. All electrical units were freshly renovated over the summer, and sites can be reserved. The park has fishing, 9-acre lake, boating, hiking trails, swimming areas and beaches and a nearby golf course.

For more about Geode Fest, contact Mike Shumate at 217–491-1075 or mikeshumote@geodefest.org



I magine, if you will, grafting together the DNA of Dr. Mehmet Oz and Sir Edmund Hillary. I have, because that comes close to describing Dr. Richard Deming, pictured above. Several years ago I reported (in this column) my prostate cancer diagnosis. I am in the final stages of radiation treatment under the care of Iowa's crusading cancer clinician.

Surely you have heard of him. Perhaps on the stump where he laments that "more people will die of cancer in the United States in the next two years than have died in combat in all U.S. wars. Yet federal funding for medical research has declined more than 24 percent in inflation-adjusted dollars since 2003, forcing cancer centers to halt promising research."

Or perhaps at a wellness conference or TV interview where he preached: "Studies have shown that cancer patients who engage in vigorous physical activity while undergoing cancer treatment will actually have fewer side effects and better outcomes." If you haven't been undergoing treatment over the last several years, you may have missed that. But I bet you have heard of Dr. Deming's Above and Beyond Cancer Foundation that celebrates life by taking cancer survivors to Mount Everest, Kilimanjaro, Machu Picchu or racing a bike across America.

Dr. Deming points out that active lifestyles could have as big an impact on cancer numbers as tobacco cessation. (Inactivity and smoking are somewhat comparable in numbers when it comes to cancerous outcomes.) Dr. Deming does not stop at treating cancer. He works with survivors to not embrace life but to put it in a full nelson and ride it at a frenetic pace... then participate in stress reduction programs such as mindfulness meditation that can reduce anxiety, decrease pain, improve energy levels, boost immune systems and improve quality of life. In other words, "pursue lives of purpose, passion and compassion." Having Dr. Deming as your oncologist is like having Pope Francis as your parish priest. Both are big thinkers and both embrace the planet. As you might suspect, I am developing this column in June and the Pope has just released his monumental encyclical regarding the cancer of denial that is the scourge of Mother Earth. One of the most breathtaking responses was from a Des Moines individual that stated that he respected the Pope, but didn't feel humans are responsible for environmental changes. Wow... I feel every piece of litter changes the environment. You know that old saying "you will be known by the company you keep?" Well, today I want to celebrate those encouraging you to embrace our natural environment, be more active, be more mindful and passionate about life. Yes, that includes Dr. Deming, the Pope and Tim Lane. The good sisters of Saint Francis (who were my primary educators back at Saint Edward's in Waterloo) never would have seen that last sentence coming.

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.

MARLO, AGE 9, IN LINN COUNTY ASKS: Where do dragonflies go in the fall?



Fireflies may be the "it" insect of summer, but dragonflies aren't far behind. These colorful critters flitter along the banks of the pond or creek. But when summer begins to blend into fall, there might not be as many. They're getting ready for winter, and for some dragonflies, that means a long trip south.

For great ways to embrace nature and live, visit Above and Beyond Cancer at *above and beyond cancer.org.* 

TIM LANE is a nationally recognized authority on public health and physical activity. He is past president of the Iowa Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance. Resident dragonflies lay eggs in water during the summer. When ice thaws in the spring, eggs hatch and a new crop of dragonflies emerge (parents won't make it past the freezing temperatures of winter).

But some dragonflies migrate south; some by themselves, some in swarms. Although the green darner's home base is in the United States and Canada, their winter destination remains unknown. They appear to follow a pattern more like songbirds and use the same Atlantic coast flyways as migrating songbirds and hawks. That's not by coincidence. While these hungry raptors spend most of mid-day logging lots of miles, they take full advantage of the dragonfly smorgasbord flying with them later in the day.

Just like southerly-bound waterfowl like to stop off at wetlands and ponds for a rest, dragonflies make an oak or juniper tree their bed and breakfast. But unlike birds, these migrants won't be back in the summer. They'll lay eggs in their southerly home, and that generation will make the trek back north to meet the resident green darners.

### Together

### ASHTON OBSERVATORY

D iscover the amateur astronomer in you and explore the pleasures and benefits of night sky viewing at Ashton Observatory, one of Iowa's premier public observatories.

Make the 20 minute drive northeast of Des Moines and join Des Moines Astronomical Society members as they guide visitors through the cosmos via weekly public viewing nights. Get a satellite view of the constellations of the season while learning "How to View the Night Sky," "Comets and Meteors," "Galaxies and Star Clusters," and "UFOs and Extraterrestrials."

Viewers can get an up close and personal look at the night sky in the heated and air conditioned comforts troops and school field trips can also be arranged.

Located in the Ashton Wildwood Park in Jasper County, the observatory is operated by the Des Moines Astronomical Society (DMAS). As a non-profit organization, DMAS strives to connect people with the cosmos, teaching astronomy and astrophysics to the public. In passing along the fun of amateur astronomy, members hope to promote astronomy and correlate the activities, work and discovery among amateurs and professionals.

#### ASHTON WILDWOOD PARK

8755 W. 122nd St. N., Mingo 641-792-9780 conservation@co.jasper.ia.us Make it a weekend under the dark skies and explore the modest 113-acre Ashton Wildwood Park. The tidy yet surprisingly large campground is tucked into a thick growth of oak and hickory trees. Campsites are primitive without water or electric. Some sites are wedged deeper in the trees and offer a more private experience, while others are slightly more public. Restrooms are also primitive. The lack of modern facilities or a dump station make this location more suitable for tent campers.

PALISADES-DOWS OBSERVATORY, 1365

Ivanhoe Road, Ely (15 miles southeast of Cedar Rapids). Observatory located on the southern edge of Palisades-Kepler State Park. *Cedar-astronomers.org* 

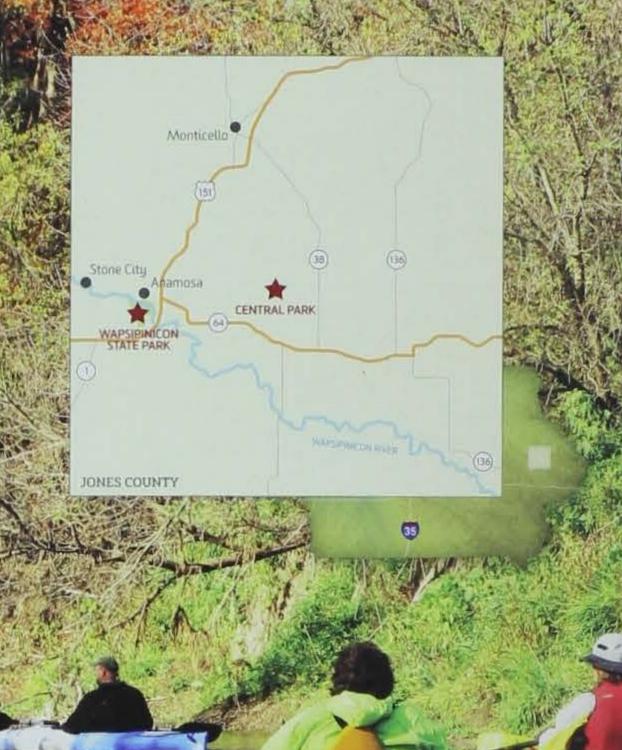
of the twin domed observatory. View stars through state-of-the-art professional-grade telescopes, or bring your own equipment and take advantage of one of several viewing pads. Private viewing for organizations, church groups, scout

Other Places To View The Night Sky WITTE OBSERVATORY, 18832 152 Avenue, Sperry (13 miles north of Burlington). Search "Witte Observatory" at *dmcounty.com*.

WHITEROCK CONSERVANCY, Coon Rapids. Whiterockconservoncy.org. Check the events calendar for the annual Iowa Star Party, usually held in August.

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# **JONES COUNTY** FLOAT



C pectacular fall colors are just a Short drive or bike ride away across the state, but eastern Iowa-with meandering interior rivers and streams sandwiched between towering densely wooded limestone bluffs-might have a legitimate claim to one of the state's best fall foliage shows. And what better way to enjoy the colors than a leisurely float down a placid river stretch. Join Jones County Conservation Board staff as they lead paddlers down a 16-mile stretch of the North Fork of the Maquoketa River. Take a break at the newly acquired North Fork Wildlands, described by district forester Steve Swinconos as "one of those special places, due to the scenic and habitat value." The 72-acre woodland is of mixed age and species, with a wide array of native hardwoods and critical mast-producing trees. Bring a sack lunch to enjoy along a sandbar with newfound friends.

vehicles. Along with a sack lunch, bring snacks, beverages, aquatic footwear, dry bags and extra clothing. Plan on an all-day float. The trip is for experienced paddlers. Registration required by Oct. 9 by contacting Michele Olson at 319-481-7987 or naturalist@co.jones.ia.us. The outing is dependent on weather and river level.

catfishing and spectacular views. Bike the Northeast State Park Bike Route connecting Wapsipinicon, Pikes Peak and Backbone state parks. It you are hearty and healthy, pack your gear and ride the entire 130 mile route, roughing it in campgrounds along the way, or pamper yourself in a bed and breakfast or motel. Located in the heart of Jones County near Center Junction is Central Park, with 71 primitive to fully modern campsites. The 297-acre park has a 25-acre lake loaded with bass, bluegills, crappies and catfish. Shelters, cabins and paddleboats are available for rent. A nature center is open Saturdays and Sundays 1-5 p.m., and during the week when staff is available.

Ind

The Oct. 10 float departs 9 a.m. from the highway D61 Whitewater Bridge. Meet at the bridge at 8 a.m. to shuttle

#### Stick Around After The Float

Make a weekend—a long one if you can—and camp at Wapsipinicon State Park or the Jones County Conservation Board-run Central Park. Although one of Iowa's smaller state parks with 26 campsites, Wapsipinicon is no slouch for activities. Bring the clubs and test the nine-hole golf course inside the park. Multi-use trails lead to Ice Cave, where spelunkers can cool off. And no trip to the Wapsi is complete without a history lesson inside Horse Thief Cave, where local legend has it two notorious horse thieves set up camp and stashed stolen horses inside.

Explore the adjacent Wapsi River, known for its channel and flathead

#### WAPSIPINICON STATE PARK

21301 County Road E34, Anamosa 319-462-2761 Wapsipinicon@dnr.iowa.gov

#### CENTRAL PARK

12515 Central Park Road, Center Junction 563-487-3541 jccb@co.jones.ia.us

# WARREN COUNTY

Make Autumn your favorite season with events by the Warren County Conservation Board to help you make the most of fall. Head to Indianola less than 30 minutes south of Des Moines and relive your childhood when monarch butterflies were a bastion of fall. Go solo or hring the family to spend time alongside Warren County naturalists as they explain the life, plight and miraculous migration to Mexico of the monarch. Another program takes hikers through woodlands while explaining the changes in leaf color.

The first of two monarch tagging programs is Sept. 13 at the Annett Nature Center just outside Lake Ahyuabi State Park. An identical program follows Sept. 19 at Buxton Park Arboretum, Learn the proper way to catch and handle a monarch, determine gender and properly tag them for a national research project. All monarchs are released after tagging. Bring a butterfly net, or share one provided by the conservation board. Both events start at 1 p.m. and last between an hour and an hour and a half. Fallow that up Oct. 15 with a Fall Colors Hike at Grant Park in Indianola. Stroll through the changing woods with Warren County naturalists. to experience the spectacular color show and breathe in the earthy smells of fall. Learn tree species and what causes them to change to the color. they do. Laminate different colored leaves, then hike the woods to find that tree species.

ANNETT NATURE CENTER, 15565 118th Ave., Indianola: search Parks and Trails at worrencccb.org

GRANT PARK 2439 Fenton St. Indianola: search Parks and Trails at worrenceb.org

BUXTON PARK, West Girard and North B Street, search Buxton Park at Indianoloiowo.gov

#### Dickinson County Bee Mo Butterfly Festival

If you are really into pollinators, trek northwest to Dickinson County for the Bee and Butterfly Festival Sept. 4 from 4 to 8 p.m. Tag monarchs and learn to track them online to see if they make it to Mexico this winter. Bring the kids for fun outdoor crafts—decorate butterfly wings to wear and create native seed balls to plant at home—listen to presentations on bees, butterflies and pollinators. Sample local food, play games and listen to bluegrass from local band South 71 Trio.

Pre-register for either event no later than the day before by calling 515-Pat-siss, or register unline through the events calendar at warnscripting.

### 2279 170th Street, Okoboji, 712-33B-4785.





### Together BY MARIAH GRIFFITH

## **OUTDOOR EXPO**

earn to clean a fish, balance on a Lpaddleboard, cook game or shoot a gun for the first time at the Seventh Annual Iowa Outdoors Expo, with more than 50 hands-on activities and demos by experts from across the state.

The event is free, family-friendly and includes everything from minnow races for the kids to a field dressing demo, new this year. Activities are throughout Des Moines' Waterworks Park, with trams providing easy transport between activities.

This annual event is sponsored by the Des Moines Izaak Walton League and the DNR, and is held the weekend of Sept. 26 (National Hunting and Fishing Day) to encourage attendees to get outside all season.

"There is nothing more rewarding than looking at the young faces as they accomplish success," says Des Moines Ikes member and event chair Rick Cerwick. "I've had youth come up and thank me, because when their parents saw how much fun they were having and got involved in sharing the experience, it made this a complete family event." Scheduled activities include favorites like fishing, shooting, archery and canoeing, as well as urban gardening, conservation programs, raptor releases by Save Our Avian Resources (SOAR) and camping and cooking demonstrations. "The whole idea of the event," says co-coordinator Rachel Ladd of the DNR, "is that while we could take one person and show them an activity or sport, if we can get them to come to this event and meet other organizations that do these activities year-round, it gives a better opportunity to stay active."







Where: Des Moines Waterworks Park, 4343 George Flagg Parkway, Des Moines

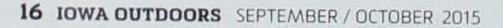
#### When:

Saturday, Sept. 26 from 9 a.m. - 6 p.m. and Sunday, Sept. 27 from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

#### Cost: FREE

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION.

search "Outdoor Expo" at iowadnr.gov or call: Rachel Ladd (515) 729-6037 Rick Cerwick (515) 971-2924



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### **Outdoor Skills**

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

### Lessen the Impact of BEE STINGS

When a bee stings, the stinger and part of the body is detached, continuing to deliveration to the victim. Squeezing the stinger to remove the fingers or tweezers will only force out more venom causing more discomfort. To lessen the amount of venom delivered, use a credit card or similar object to scrape the stinger out.

# Fall Asparagus Sighting

Collected in spring but easiest to locate in fall, look for wild asparagus growing along country roads. In fall, the tall plant turns into a golden colored bush with thin, lacy needle-like foliage. Search fence lines and road banks as you hike or drive. Make a mental note or take a GPS location to return early spring. Seek permission before entering private property.

Weatherstrip FOR Your Tackle

### **Fix Tent Tears**

Easily fix rips, holes and tears in nylon tents with tape and silicon seam sealer such as Sil-Net. The doubles sided repairs are watertight, flexible and strong. First, tightly align sections of torn materials on the outside of the tent, then cover with wide tape. Find the tear from the inside of the tent and apply a heavy bead of sealer. With a finger, rub it into the tear to create a wide seal that extends beyond each side of the tear. Allow to cure overnight. Remove tape and make a second application on the outside.

If you weatherproof yourhouse this fall, save a few pieces of self-adhesive weather stripping for your angling needs. Apply to the side of a boat or tackle box for a handy ture holder



# Along the Wide Missouri...



A s the performance Aunfolds, rave reviews are whispered excitedly among wide-eyed members of the audience:

"Wow! This is awesome!"

"I've never seen anything like it!"

"Amazing! Powerful!"

So...to what dance, musical or sports barnburner are these accolades being so generously bestowed? A presentation of The Royal Ballet of London? A Lincoln Center opera? The Super Bowl?

If those are your guesses, you're way off the mark. Then again, maybe not.

Come to think of it, the heady crowd-pleaser under way is nothing short of a demonstration of grace and precision similar to that exhibited by renowned ballerinas...of vocal ranges that scan the entire musical scale...of the power and agility of the greatest athletes.

But the production at hand has nothing to do with any of these. Rather, it's a spectacular sunrise ascension of thousands of ducks and geese at DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge, nestled in the wide fertile plains along the Missouri River in western Iowa and eastern Nebraska.

For first-timers, the

volley after volley of soaring birds provides a once-in-alifetime memory, but it never fails to dazzle the alreadybaptized as well.

"It's pretty exciting, especially the first time you see it," agrees Kenneth Block, the enthusiastic visitor services manager endowed with encyclopedic knowledge of the wildlife refuge, "but it's been going on since the end of the last ice age. Every fall and spring, sunrise and sunset, this ritual occurs.

"Migrating birds travel a long way going to and from their seasonal destinations," he continues, "from as far away as the Gulf to nesting grounds in the Arctic. Obviously they need a breather now and then—and our main purpose here is to serve as a major resting and feeding area along their traditional flyway. We can easily put them up for all the food and lodging they need. We



### Lost In Iowa

#### Plan Your Visit: DESOTO NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

# Refuge Grounds: Open daily, sunrise to sunset Visitors Center: Open daily, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

(except for certain federal holidays) • Bertrand Museum:

Located in Visitors Center

Valid entry permit required Daily fee: \$3/per vehicle Collected at Visitors Center or Self-Service Fee Stations at entrances • Contact Information:

1434 316th Lane, Missouri Valley, Iowa Desoto@fws.gov; 712-388-4800 fws.gov

#### WILSON ISLAND STATE RECREATION AREA

 Contact Information: 32801 Campground Lane Missouri Valley, Iowa *iowadnr.gov Wilson\_Island@dnr.iowa.gov; 712-642-2069*

#### WILLOW LAKE RECREATION AREA CABINS

May be reserved up to 12 months in advance, on first-come, first-served basis 2 night minimum stay weekends 3 night minimum stay Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day

#### Contact Information:

2725 Easton Trail, Woodbine, Iowa hccb@HarrisonCountyParks.org; 712-647-2785 mycountyparks.com

A male green winged teal takes a break during the exhaustive spring migration from southern states and Mexico to its primary breeding grounds in Canada and Alaska. One of the smallest North American ducks, they are one of the earliest spring and fall migrants and tend to follow the midline of the U.S. Although mallards are the prominent duck visitor to DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge, it's not unheard of to see teal.

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have over 8,000 acres of floodplain, the perfect habitat to accommodate them."

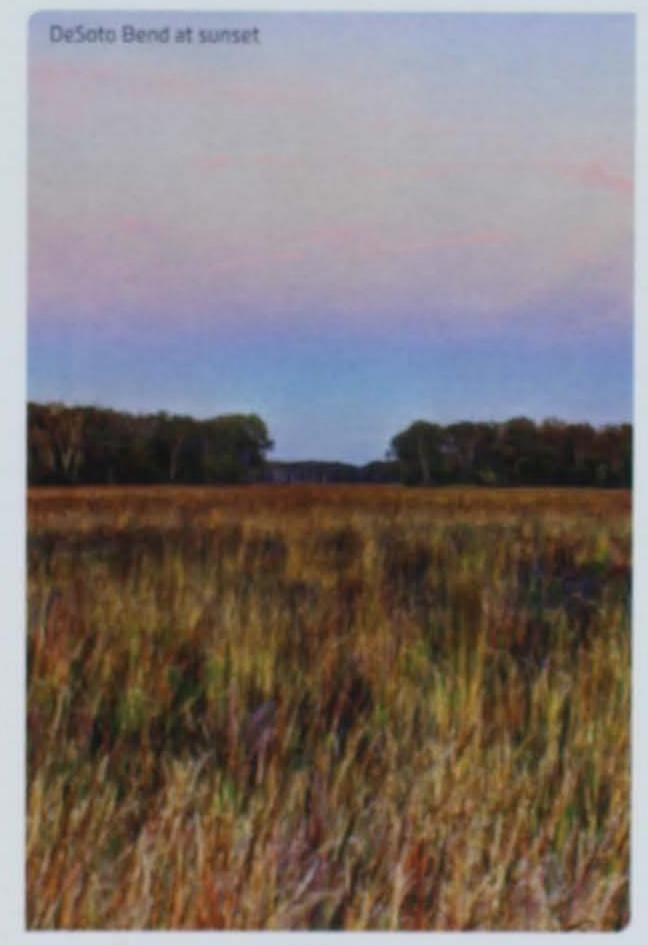
Established in 1958, near Missouri Valley in Harrison County and within sight of western Iowa's wavy Loess Hills, DeSoto refuge is one of more than 500 national wildlife refuges. Under the auspices of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, these treasured properties are protected and managed for waterfowl, fish, wildlife, habitat and more than 40 million annual visitors.

Frequently referred to as DeSoto Bend, named for the nearby town of DeSoto, Neb., and for a now-straightened bend in the Missouri River, the refuge includes (in

addition to a stretch of the river) DeSoto Lake, a 7-milelong oxbow lake created after a river channelization project. Its boundaries also wrap around wetlands, grasslands, bottomland forests and farm land.

If you want to get in on the action at this waterfowl paradise, think late fall and early spring.

"To pinpoint it more precisely, peak time is usually November," advises Block. "October can see a lot of birds here but it also can be hit-or-



display their individual choreographic routines. A little whirring here, some wheeling there, a whole lot of swooping, swooshing, swishing, bobbing, bowing and spinning techniques keep human spectators keyed up in anticipation of lift-off.

The performers' costumes are every bit as unique as their warm-up routines. Some are wrapped in sleek white feathers, others in classic black, still others with a flirty fringe of teal. Some strut green headdresses atop white neckbands and preen around as if demanding, "Get a load of me!" More than a few have drab outfits that only intensify their iridescent purple-blue wing feathers.

> Concentration on the costuming is forgotten as the audio presentation, the most ostentatious part of the take-off, begins. Thousands of beaks produce a raucous cacophony. It's impossible to determine individual contributors to the clamor, but the air is filled with honking, quacking, screeching, cackling, hissing and whistling. Even chuckling and laughing. Listening to the din, one can almost hear the commands, "Outta the way! Comin' through!"

miss, and after Thanksgiving, the populations of ducks and geese fall off pretty dramatically. Spring numbers are almost always less than fall counts, but they still can put on quite a show when they're here in March and early April."

Performance days, regardless of the season, are impossible to predict, but if you're lucky enough to show up early on an "on" day, you're likely to be rewarded with the spectacle of a lifetime. Then the roar of flapping wings prevails—and they're off, rising in what appears to be outlandish joy.

Eventually the dizzying. frenetic exhibition ends—until an equally awe-inspiring sunset display will again transfix a mesmerized audience.

According to Block, it's difficult to calculate the numbers involved."In September, we start seeing an assortment of birds come

Hunker down-just about anywhere on the refuge-and enjoy. It goes pretty much like this:

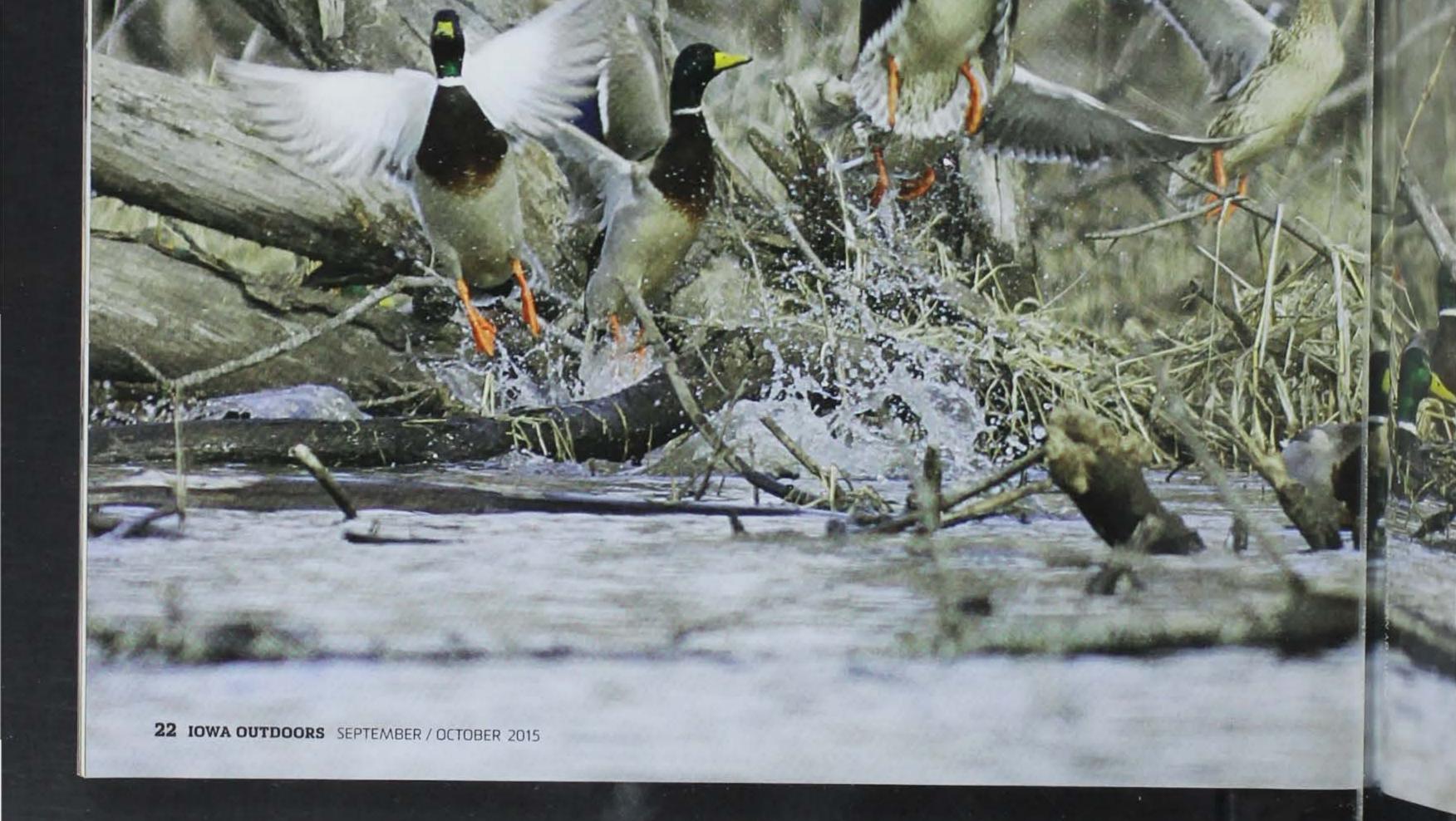
To begin, a filmy veil of fog brushes the marshy stage of the wetlands and the mirror-like surface of the lake, then sweeps slowly upward. As the gauzy tendrils of white evaporate into the atmosphere, they expose a noisy cast of thousands revving up to play their roles in the earlymorning audio-visual extravaganza.

Majestic snow geese, cheeky male mallards, jolly, waddling ducks and a rich variety of other migrators, including warblers, gulls and shorebirds, begin to through in moderate numbers, like egrets, herons and pelicans, but the big attraction comes later with the snow geese. Up to as many as half a million have been reported stopping here in the fall, but those numbers really fluctuate. We had great flocks in 2004, but then it appears migration patterns changed so we haven't reached those numbers in recent years."

As many as 50,000 to 75,000 ducks, mostly mallards, are common during the fall migration. While we want to maintain high populations of all these birds, weather conditions along the flyway and changing migration habits are reasons for significant fluctuation," he says, adding.

# Lost In lowa

While DeSoto Bend National Wildlife Refuge is best known for its snow geese and mallard migrations, the sanctuary boasts an impressive bird checklist of more than 240 species. Large numbers of passerine species—like red-headed woodpeckers, dickcissels and grasshopper sparrows—have been documented. Bald eagle counts can reach 140 birds.







Willow Lake County Park

**ABOVE:** Willow Lake County Park offers small cabins on a hill as well as large, deluxe cabins (see page 27.) **RIGHT:** DeSoto Bend offers history as well as nature. On April 1, 1865, the steamship *Bertrand* sank. It was laden with cargo and headed for expanding mining towns in Montana. In 1968, the wreckage was discovered and excavated over two years. An overlook shows the area where it was entombed under 30 feet of mud. The ship's time capsule of artifacts useful for the frontier and early mining towns are now on full display at the refuge museum.



Visitor Center - Bookstore - Exhibits



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"We actually need a better balance of birds."

The departure of the migrating birds doesn't leave the refuge in a depressed emotional state as if royal guests have come and gone. Not by any means. The void is filled by the winter residency of the bald eagle, especially in the trees bordering the lake. A particularly good venue for all waterfowl is in the warmth of the indoor viewing platform in the Visitors Center, where, it is boasted, "You can get close to 300,000 snow geese and not disturb them."

The diverse habitat of the refuge is home also to songbirds, turkeys, pheasants, quail and woodpeckers. Along the roads and hedges romp the usual line-up of Iowa critters, everything from deer, rabbits, and coyotes to beaver, muskrat and mink.

Though wildlife and waterfowl play major roles in the DeSoto experience, don't believe for one second they are the whole measure of the national refuge. There's so much more, and if you have even an iota of doubt about that, you need a serious one-on-one with 8-year-old Jamison Nicholls, who favors the Bertrand Museum, housed in the environmentally controlled Visitors Center.

"Of course I enjoy seeing the migrating ducks and geese, but actually I have to admit my favorite place is this museum," states the personable and precocious Council Bluffs third-grader. As his father, Tim, stands aside to let his son elaborate, Jamison lays out the Bertrand story with so much animation an enthralled listener can't help but believe there just might be an acting career in store for this delightful young man. His knowledge of the contents of the museum and its focus is dead-on.

The *Bertrand's* saga is romantic...and tragic. By the mid-1800s the Missouri River was a busy thoroughfare for steamboats hauling eager families and goods of every sort to outlying posts involved with the push west of fur traders, settlers and gold miners. But the Big Muddy was not always a willing participant in these adventures, and



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LEFT: The refuge visitor center affords nice views of waterfowl during inclement weather, plus it houses some of the 250,000 items salvaged from the steamship Bertrand, which sank in 1865 its tools, clothing, armaments and food items—all remarkably well preserved are on display in the visitor center.





its shifting channels, sandbars and submerged trees sank or stranded more than 400 steamboats.

Such was the fate of the *Bertrand*, a sternwheeler well-constructed for its 1865 journey up the Missouri from St. Louis to Montana. Nevertheless, 30 miles north of Omaha, it succumbed to the river's inhospitality after getting snagged on a log and sinking in 12 feet of water.

Although everyone on board made it safely to shore, all personal items and cargo were swept away and eventually the Bertrand lay under 30 feet of silt.

For decades, fortune hunters tried to locate and relieve the Bertrand of its reported riches. Finally, in 1968, Omaha salvors Sam Corbino and Jesse Pursell hit pay dirt, finding the wreckage near DeSoto Lake. But no doubt to their chagrin, no booty would land in their pockets because the Bertrand was on federal property and turned over to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

No matter. Expectations of finding a rumored 35,000

pounds of mercury, \$4,000 in gold and 5,000 gallons of whiskey never materialized. However, a plus for posterity, more than 200,000 well-preserved artifacts painting a picture of America's 19th Century frontier were uncovered.

A fun fact: though the whiskey may have been lost, there remained an intact stash of random booze. According to a volunteer imhiber of one sample. "It's still in pretty good shape, but I don't know how good of shape you'll be in afterward." And about another sample that served simultaneously as a popular drink and patent medicine, "If it didn't cure your ailments, you forgot about them."

While young Jamison hangs tight in the museum, exclaiming at length about the intricate model of the Bertrand he's studying, sisters Olivia Guo, 9, and Annika, 5, of Omaha and China, are donned in eagle masks, posing for photos in the educational area of the Visitors Center. With their parents, Jinlan Ni and Haifeng Guo, they've strolled among the many natural and cultural interpretive

### Lost In Iowa

exhibits and wandered into the auditorium where audiovisual presentations depict the area's Missouri River and wildlife conservation history.

"Such a great place to bring the kids for a day," says Guo. "It's the perfect distance from Omaha for an outing."

The point is, even if the waterfowl don't put on their show the day you visit the refuge, there's still a day's worth of activity to enjoy.

#### Rest Yourself at DNR's Wilson Island Campground

Chris Anunson, who arrived at Wilson Island State Recreation Area in Harrison County in 1999, has to love his job because if he didn't he surely would have hung up his park ranger hat after experiencing multiple bouts of flooding.

These weren't your ordinary, run-of-the-mill flooding scenarios. They were massive onslaughts that kept the property under his watch submerged for months at a time.

"In 2011 we had water 5 feet up on tree trunks and 8-feet-deep sediment," says a still-amazed Anunson. "To get here, I had to boat five miles in from the refuge."

But Anunson has weathered the storms and now things are back on track, maybe even better. As a result of the catastrophes, improvements have been made to the secluded recreation area that will prevent such devastating damage in the future: a new shower building, two shelters and higher locations for other facilities and roads.

"So much soil was redeposited here that what was once flat land is now hilly," he remarks.

Wilson Island, named for former Iowa Gov. George Wilson and for the fact it once was an island sandbar, can now be easily accessed through the refuge or directly from Interstate 29.

for a stay at Willow Lake Recreation Area. Under the management of the Harrison County Conservation Board, this divine spot six miles from Woodbine and 11 from Missouri Valley offers everything the heart desires at the end of a packed day.

Scott Nelson, the friendly welcoming face of HCCB, is the type of park ranger who sees to it every visitor knows all the details about the property he oversees.

"We have 220 acres here and the cleanest 26-acre, spring-fed lake you'll ever see," he states. "You can swim, boat (electric motors only), sunbathe, fish, kayak, enjoy just about any water sport here."

No doubt about it, it's a pretty swell recreation area. The RV and tent campsites-41 with electricity, central water and a modern shower house-are spotless. Kids romp on playgrounds in and around the picnic shelters. Hikers scoot along trails through mixed native prairie with sumac and bluestem and scattered woodlands of maples. Hunting for deer, pheasants, quail and waterfowl is open in much of the area, enhanced by food plots. Small impoundments provide wetland habitat.

But it's late, your body aches a good ache after a sweet day and you're ready to pull down the curtain for the night. So Nelson introduces you to his pride and joy, the cabins he maintains, and they are definitely brag-worthy.

If you're in for rustic, Red Oak, Hemlock and Black Walnut cabins each have one room, sleep up to six, and have heat and AC, microwaves, refrigerators and an outdoor water hydrant and latrine.

While DeSoto Refuge is for daytime use only, Wilson Island, its 544-acre neighbor, offers spacious, shady campgrounds under dense stands of cottonwood trees.

"We're divided into two halves," says Anunson. "Our modern half has showers, flush toilets and all-electric campsites. The non-modern area offers electric sites and two for organized youth camping."

Hunting (for not only deer and duck in the backwater area but also coveted morel mushrooms), fishing, boating and hiking are additional pastimes to be enjoyed at Wilson Island.

Under the stars at night, campers can easily imagine being part of the Lewis and Clark expedition that camped on this same reach of the Missouri River in 1804 on their historic trip to the Pacific.

#### Cabin Solitude at Willow Lake

You've had a day of it watching the spectacular performance of the geese and ducks, visiting the Visitors Center and the Bertrand Museum and exploring Wilson Island. Now, by golly, you're bone-tired.

The big question: where to crash for the night, especially if camping weather has vanished?

You hit the jackpot if you choose to toddle over

Want an upgrade? Head for idyllic Scotch Pine and White Pine, which sleep 12 and 8, respectively. These comfy facilities are located, as one might suspect, in a gorgeous pine grove and flaunt all the amenities of a modern home.

But the whoopty-doo of the Willow Lake experience is a night in the to-die-for King Deluxe cabin, named for a local philanthropist who provided funding for the newly-built facility. The first thing you notice about King Deluxe, which along with Scotch Pine and White Pine is open year round, is its humongous deck graced with multiple picnic tables.

Inside, the offerings are beyond what anyone should expect of a cabin-a kitchen equipped to the nines, three bedrooms accommodating 12 guests, a great room with two futons and an upscale bathroom.

This is not just paradise; this is heaven.

... and so to bed. The autumn sky that promised rain all day starts seeping a bit of mist bearing the final fragrant wafts of the doused campfire. A pesky breeze rouses just enough to plaster a few golden leaves against the floor-toceiling windows of King Deluxe.

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Within minutes, the foggy mind is lulled back to the early morning razzmatazz at the refuge. As full-out sleep descends, geese and ducks rise in a burst ... a barrage...soaring upward...upward...their throaty voices proclaiming outlandish joy. 🜨



In the heart of the Loess Hills six miles west of Woodbine is 220-acre Willow Lake Recreation Area, managed by the Harrison County Conservation Board. With a campground for tenters, the area also has small cabins and several deluxe cabins including King Deluxe, shown here. Nestled in a pine grove on the west side of the 27-acre Lake, the three bedroom cabin with Large deck, full kitchen and bath sleeps 12. Reserve online at mycountyparks.com.

# 12 THINGS TO DO AT HONEY CREEK RESORT STATE PARK THIS FALL

Fall is a beautiful time to escape and enjoy the outdoors at Honey Creek Resort State Park, located in Appanoose County. Leaves begin turning color later in southern lowa and it's a tad warmer, too, come late fall. Here are a dozen unexpected happenings and adventures to enjoy when you visit **BY BRIAN BUTTON** 

#### Fall Harvest Festival • October 30 & 31

A free family festival! The fun starts Friday afternoon making ooey-gooey slime, taking a creepy crawly outdoor hike, designing a mask and a

North Shore Trail by Bike Rent a bicycle to tour wild areas along the new North Shore

pumpkin-carving contest (we provide the pumpkins). On Saturday, make s'mores, wear your costume for a trick-or-treating scavenger hunt, take part in a costume parade and enjoy a hayride around the resort. To learn more about the resort and see upcoming events, visit honeycreekresort.com or call 877-677-3344.

#### Fall Paddling

28 IOWA OUTDOORS SEPTEMBER

Experience Rathbun Lake and learn how to use a stand up paddle board or kayak during naturalist-led water programs. Paddleboard instruction is provided in a one-hour class (boards and PFDs provided). Experienced paddleboarders can join a guide for an hour of sunset paddling along the resort shoreline or kick off the morning with a shoreline paddle on a two-hour guided kayak tour. Check the event calendar for dates and times. Trail. The whole resort is bikefriendly. Guest service staff can help select a bike tailor-made for your riding style. A variety of adult, family and children's bikes are ready to rent.

#### We're Here, Naturally.

Honey Creek Resort's naturalist staff coordinates dozens of planned recreational and nature programs—just ask staff for a schedule when you visit, or go to the resort's events calendar at *honeycreekresort.com* 

#### Morning Yoga

Start your day in a relaxed state by taking a morning yoga class outdoors on the great lawn behind the lodge. This mixed level class is great for beginners and experienced alike. Several mats are available or bring your own.

#### alk Our Trails

The Savannah Ridge trail at Honey Creek Resort is a 3.5-mile trail winding through native prairie and woodland habitats. Enjoy interpretative signs along the way to help understand southern lowa's flora and fauna, or visit a wildlife viewing blind to see native birds and fall migrants.

#### **Fall Fireside Chats**

18

Gather around the large outdoor fire for s'more's and nature stories. And if the weather is inclement, no worries, the event is moved to the lobby to take advantage of the great stone fireplace.

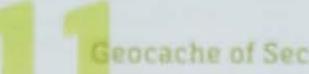


#### 4th Annual Frostbite Open • Oct. 24

It's never too chilly to golf? This annual event is a great way to close out your fall golf season. Your entry includes golf cart, prizes, lunch and a tournament gift. All players receive a free round of golf valid through May 2016. The course also hosts a Cancer Awareness. Tourney Oct. 3. To register, call the pro shop at 877.677.3344 or honeycreekresort.com/golf

#### Taste the weet Buzz

Resort staff began beekeeping this spring. and guests can learn about these remarkable insects from our naturalist while sampling fresh honey.



eocache of Secrets.

njoy Honey Creek's hidden spots with 20 on-site caches. Experienced cachers can search for an extra 200-plus caches around Rathbun Lake. GPS field packs are available for checkout for geomuggles (those new to the fun).

#### tch-Black Starry Skies erfect for Gazing

Take advantage of local dark skies for a bit of stargazing or peer at the harvest moon. Enjoy the stars on your own, or take part in a staff-guided night tour to delve into the constellations, myths and legends of the night sky. Lighting at the resort illuminates downward to preserve the dark sky and give visitors spectacular night views.

#### Nature Center

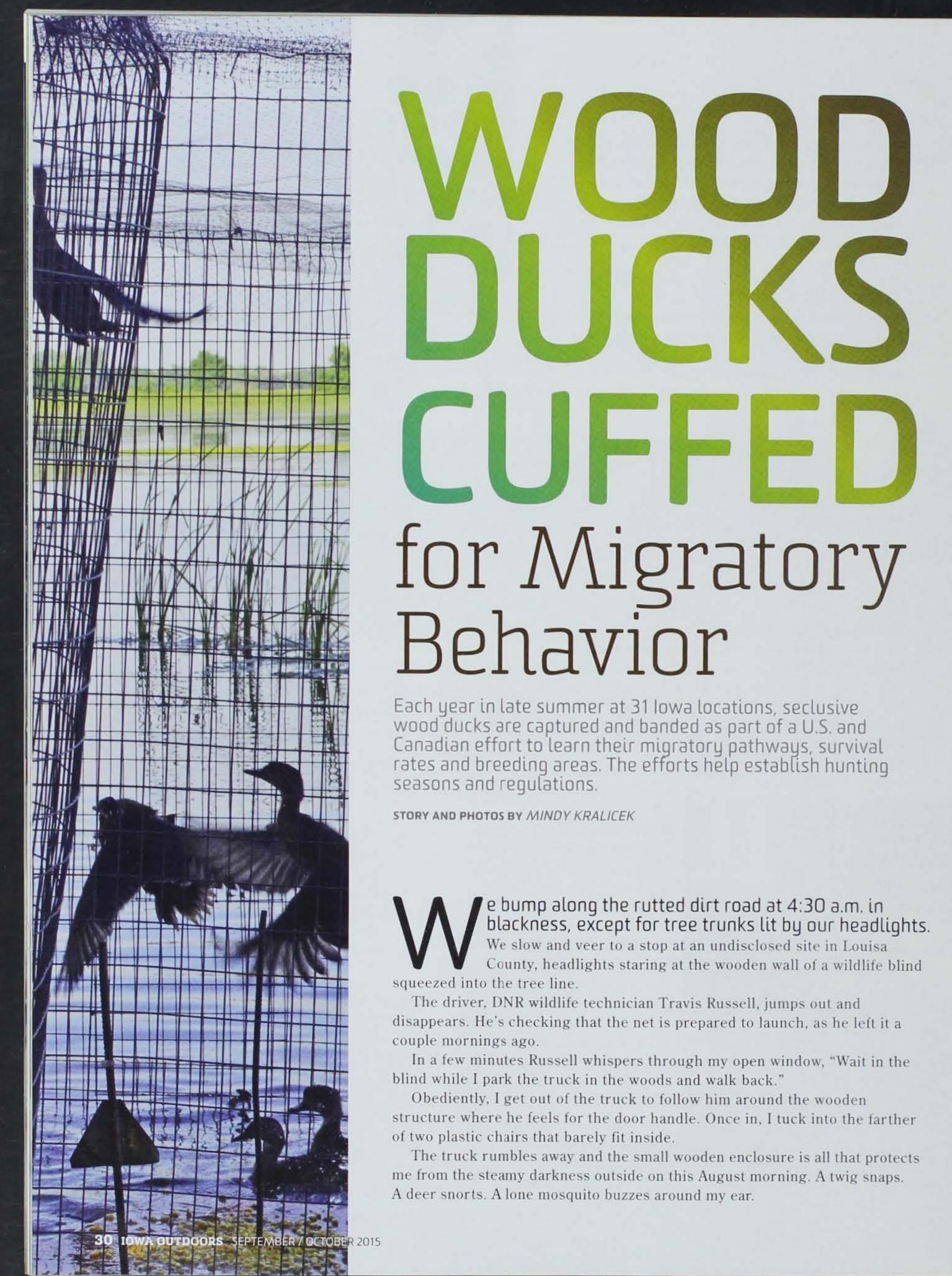
Visit the nature center from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. to get up-close looks at native reptiles, touch mammal furs, get answers from naturalists and learn how the building is powered by the sun.

#### Autumn Special

Two Nights \$249 plus tax Sept. 1 through Nov.1 Package Includes:

- Standard guestroom
- · Four waterpark passes each day
- S20 snack shop voucher
- · Four half-day bike rentals · Free Activities
- To learn more about events or make reservations. go to www.honeycreekresort.com or 1-877-677-3344

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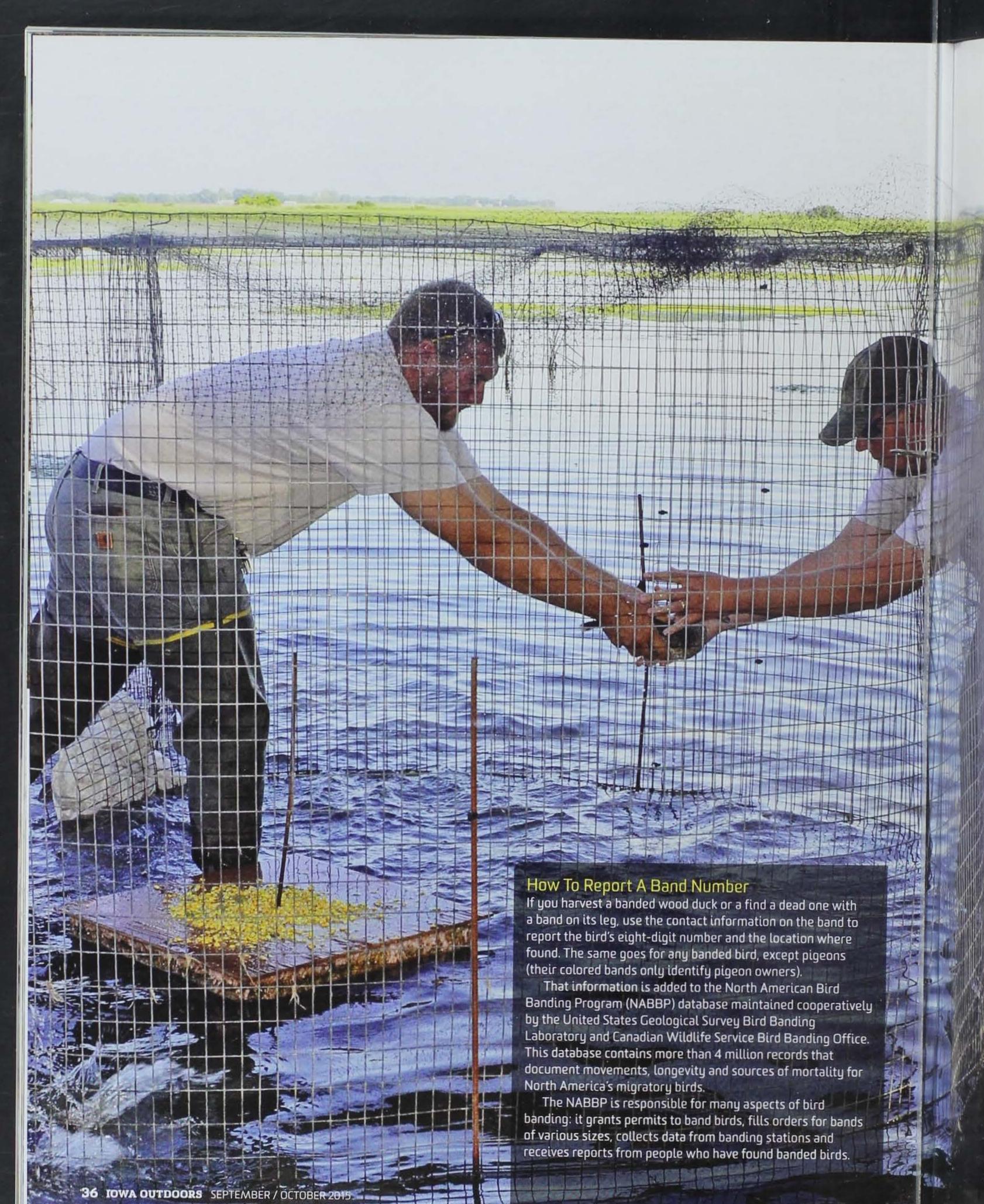
Bird banding has been practiced for punturses and although the process is informational, the real benefit is when the bird or septured or recovered. Reported bands tell researchars migration patters, ranges, torgeoity, and cause of mortality.







Wood ducks, also known as Caroline ducks, are one of the most colorful North American waterfowl. Once a species of great deriver day to habitat tess and unregulated burden. The Mercatory Dird Treaty Act of 1918, and Lines the second and for the artificial resting bows, have been predominated for the birds recovery.



While tocket nets may catch more birds quicker, cages can be effective as well. Fresh corn is left each evening and traps are checked in the morning. The ducks swith into the cage through an underwater, hole to get to bait piled on a wooden platform inside.



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#### Where Are Banded Wood Ducks Found? Sixty one

percent of wood ducks banded here were later harvested in Iowa. The other 39 percent of wood ducks banded in Iowa were later reported in the following states:

Louisiana-13 percent Arkansas-6 percent Texas-4 percent Illinois-4 percent Minnesota-3 percent Missouri-2 percent Mississippi-2 percent Wisconsin-1 percent Oklahoma-1 percent Alabama-1 percent Tennessee-1 percent Georgia-1 percent

#### Learn More

For more information about the bird banding laboratory, visit *pwrc.usgs.gov/bbl.* 

A Different Sort of Duck: Wood ducks have a number of unusual traits not found in other duck species.

 Male wood ducks are one of the most colorful birds in the United States, with feathers of metallic purplish-green, black, white, maroon, blue and tan which are most brilliant during breeding season. In late summer they grow gray feathers with blue markings on wings and have white markings on face and neck. In the fall their colorful plumage returns.

 Wood ducks have webbed feet with strong claws that can grip bark. They will perch on tree branches in bottomland hardwood forests and in winter consume a diet of 75 percent acorns.

 Wood ducks are cavity nesters, often claiming ones used by other birds or animals. They will also use man-made duck boxes to lay and incubate eggs. Sometimes

a female will lay eggs in another wood duck's tree cavity or nest box.

• Wood ducks are born with feathers. Within 24 hours of hatching, hatchlings can climb up the inside of the nest cavity and fall to freedom. They are raised in the water.

 Sometimes a female will adopt hatchlings (on the ground) which have lost their mother.

 During egg-laying season, females switch to a diet of about 80 percent insects to meet daily protein needs.
 While incubating eggs, they switch back to high energy seeds.

• Wood ducks rarely dive for food. They peck or dabble at foods on the water surface, at the edge of wetlands and on nonaquatic and aquatic insects. Although they like corn, they rarely forage in farm fields unless shallowly flooded.

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### Why band wood ducks?

Because wood ducks prefer wooded wetlands and tree-lined slow-moving rivers, they can't be studied from the air as many ducks and goese are. The banding of wood ducks provides information about the movement patterns of the species, where they go to breed, what their migration pathway is and where they stag in winter. As a harvested bird, wood duck banding provides important information to develop hunting regulations and bag limits at the flyway level. Banding is also used to estimate survival rates of young and adults.

"The wood ducks in lowa tend to concentrate in the Mississippi Alluvial Valley," says Al Hancock, wood duck banding coordinator. "Every state in the region receives the same regulation framework package. The only difference between states may be a special season. This is determined by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in cooperation with the Mississippi Flyway Council."

Data from 2000 through 2003 show 61 percent of wood ducks banded in Iowa were later recovered here (See sidebar opposite page).

DNR staff banded 3,355 wood ducks in 31 locations across lowa in 2013. Approximately 58 percent were males and 42 percent females.

"Year-to-year success at a banding site varies," says Hancock. "Water level is the biggest factor, and the availability of alternate foods is another. If acorns have a high mast year and an early drop, corn doesn't entice the ducks. However, our dispersed banding effort helps. Where one area in lowa encounters difficulties, other units take up the slack," he says. "Fortunately, we have a dedicated staff. They increase their effort and time to complete the task at hand, often donating personal time to do it."

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The first day of November looked to be a promising day. I had the morning off to go trout fishing and the weather was cooperating. Like most people, I don't go fishing nearly often enough so I wanted to share my outing with someone. My husband and kids would all be at work. The grandkids were in school or at the sitter's. As I considered my options, my husband's uncle came to mind.

Don "Cos" Coselman, 92, was an avid angler throughout his life. He ice fished and spent much of the open water season sitting on the bench of a johnboat tied up to snags or floating slowly along to the hum of a trolling motor. This was somewhat surprising because, when he was drafted into the U.S. Army after graduating high school, he spent 21 days on a ship heading toward Europe and was seasick the entire 21 days.

Cos fished for any and all species, but he was a very adept trout fisherman until recent years left him. unsteady. After falling into the stream a year or so earlier, Cos decided he couldn't go fishing alone and his tackle box began collecting dust. I almost took it personally, however, when he hesitated before accepting my offer to go fishing. I don't know if it was because I'd called him out of the blue or because his fishing partners were usually men, but after a bit of prodding. I convinced Costo join me. When I asked him where we should go, he instantly said Otter Creek, a trout stream just two miles. east of West Union. He knew this clear, coldwater stream held trout in deep holes and it had easy access which allowed parking right next to the stream. When I arrived at his house that day, the first thing Cos said was, "You're early." I was early, but I was excited to get the day started. Next he said, "You know, you'll have to watch me. I might pass out on you." Hmm. "Let's not do that," I encouraged. As he finished tying his favorite trout lure onto his line, a "road runner" he called it, I looked around his workroom. The walls were paneled and dark, but he took a few minutes to show me his bench where his fly tying supplies were kept. When his eyes were younger and his hands steadier, he'd enjoyed tying flies to mimic the insect hatches and bugs he saw along the stream. Now, everything was covered in a light layer of dust. He confessed in a quiet voice filled with sadness that he hadn't had much interest in tying flies since his beloved wife passed away four years earlier. To lighten the mood. I picked up his fishing pole and gear as he grasped his cane and we headed out the door. I knew he was keeping an eye on me to make sure I didn't snap the end of the pole off when I loaded it into my small car. I helped him climb in and handed him his seat buckle, and we headed off to Otter Creek

The morning was cool but mild for late fall, and I dutifully followed Cos' directions to the stream. Otter Creek is one of two trout streams in Echo Valley State Park. Otter slips



Age knows no boundaries, evident by one of the last fishing trips the author took with her husband's uncle. The day spent along a northeast lowa trout stream brought back the kid in his heart.

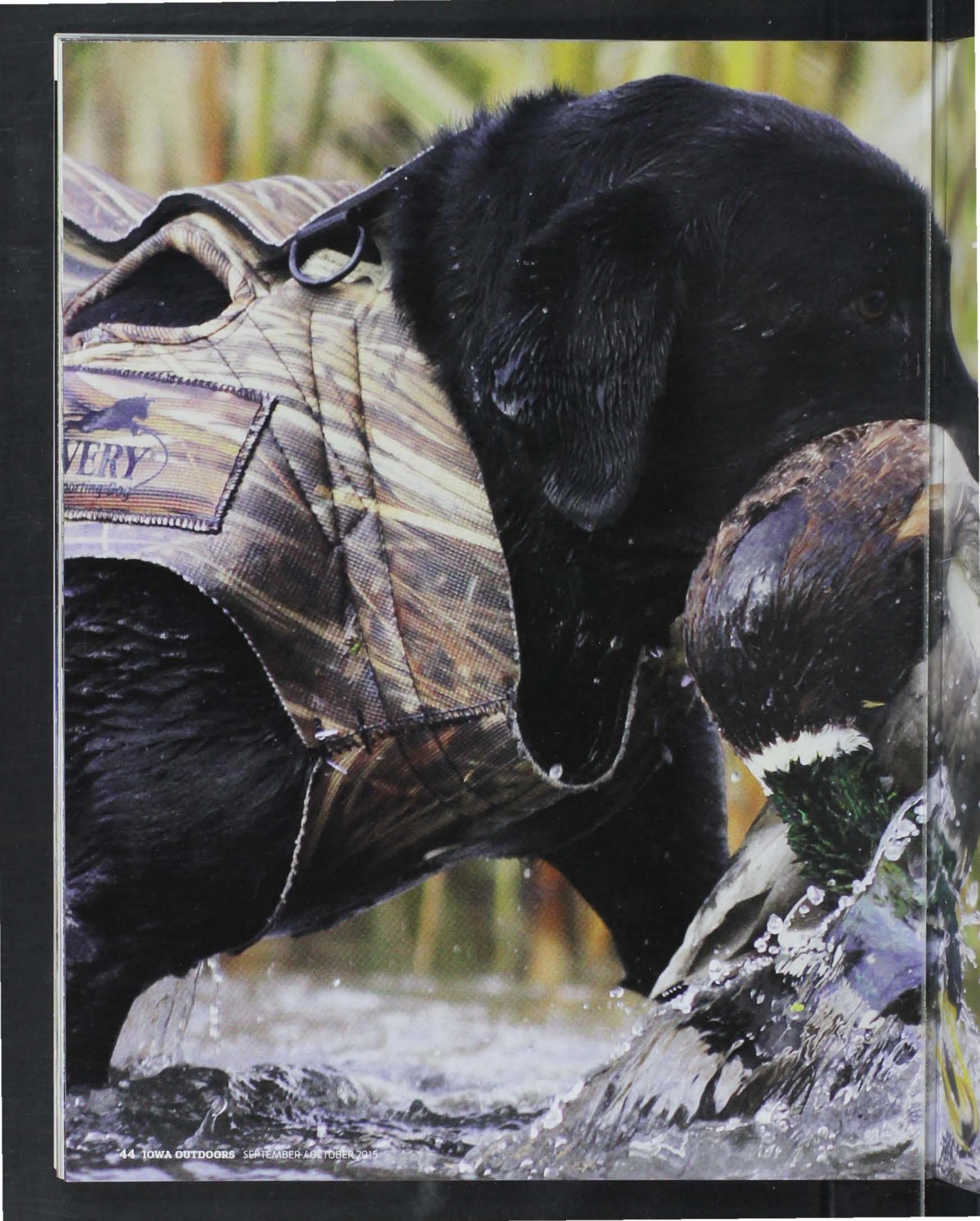
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along and under the base of a picture-sque limestone bluff topped with trees with vines and roots clinging along the edges. I was able to park the car just a short distance from the water and quickly grabbed lawn chairs to position next. to the stream to allow Cos to sit while fishing. Next I held tightly to Cos' arm, and we made our way down a slight slope to water's edge. Cos' movements were slow but deliberate as he surveyed the stream under the brim of his favorite fishing cap. I think he was casting before I finished emptying the car. He knew where and how he wanted his fly to land in the water and it wasn't long before rainbow trout were rising to look at his offering. At first, neither one of us could get more than a light nibble, but eventually the trout became more interested after we switched from lures to PowerBait. Time after time, we thought we had one hooked only to have it throw the hook just as we were hoisting it from the water. Eventually, either we improved our technique or the trout were less careful and we started to land our fish. Each time Cos landed a shimmering rainbow trout, his eyes lit up and a huge grin spread across his face. Usually he could slip the hook out on his own, but occasionally I gave him a hand with the slippery rainbow, and we bucketed the trout in a five-gallon pail I'd brought along.

Cos out-fished me as I knew he would. When he reached his limit of five for the day, we stowed away our gear and cleaned his catch. We'd been fishing for a little more than two hours and during that time he'd barely sat down and never once touched his cane. He also didn't talk much. We were there to fish, not talk, but on the way back to his house we shared some laughs. as he talked of previous fishing excursions he'd been a part of As I helped him out of my car, he gave me a hug and thanked me for taking him fishing. I saw him into his house and leaned his pole next to the door where he liked to keep it. He told me he was going to cook the trout for supper. We often hear the phrase "take a kid fishing." We need to remember there is a kid inside each of us and we never outgrow our love of the outdoors. Just being outdoors is good for the soul no matter what age you are. So once again, the next year, Cos and I went fishing on a beautiful fall day. We were less successful at catching fish, but the time spent fishing was wonderful. On our way home after that excursion, Cos pointed to a pasture of cattle and said, "We should have known we weren't going to catch fish today! The fish don't bite when the cows are laying down." Who knew? In 2014, Cos' health began to fail him and in March 2015, Donald "Cos" Coselman passed away quietly. Amongst the memorabilia his family gathered to capture his almost 95 years on earth were his fishing pole, his favorite fishing cap and pictures of him fishing with family, relatives and friends. Cos' nephew, Father Dan Kirby, shared in his funeral homily that he identified Cos as "The Fishing Uncle."

Who can you take fishing today? Who can you make a lifetime memory with? Don't overlook those older kids? Now, grab your phone and make a call. It's time to go fishin?



# Waterfowler Bonus

BY BILL KLEIN

P atience and well-chosen camouflage are my tickets to the best of fall's outdoor show. I enter the scene as an intruder, but my camouflage clothing and sheltering blinds make me a neutral part of the landscape. Like spots on a whitetail fawn, the drab patterns of brown, green, black and dead grass keep me hidden, treating me to front-row views of the joys of nature.

My fleece pullover mimics the greens of a still-living cornstalk. It warmed me last year on an early-season goose hunt. The bugs of summer were finally on the wane that chilly mid-September morning. Geese could be heard for miles through the still air, but none came near. I stuck my head through the last row of 8-foot-tall cornstalks and scanned the hayfield where my decoys stood. Fifty yards down the line a whitetail doe was doing the same thing, sniffing the air for danger. Then a pair of fawns exploded out of the corn and past her. They looked like a kaleidoscope of creams and tans through my



binoculars. But when their exuberance took them too far, the doe called them back. I couldn't hear the calls but they were visible in the deer's frosty breath. The fawns reluctantly returned to their mother's side.

By mid-October my Labrador, Doc, was dozing under an Indian summer sun on the floor of my duck boat. I was clad in camo, still favoring green. Inches away, a marsh wren, his tail erect like a setter on point, scolded my dog awake. He bounced from cattail to cattail without using his wings. Then he disappeared into the ochre maze when my bored Labrador lunged at him. I watched a flock of loosely connected crows a half-mile long. They were flying from roost to feeding ground and, as they flew over the slough, red-winged blackbirds shot up at them from the cattails like tracer rounds from anti-aircraft guns. The blackbirds were still protecting long-empty nests. Then some barn swallows took this opportunity to sweep the water, gathering fuel for their flights south.

### A Fitful Hunt

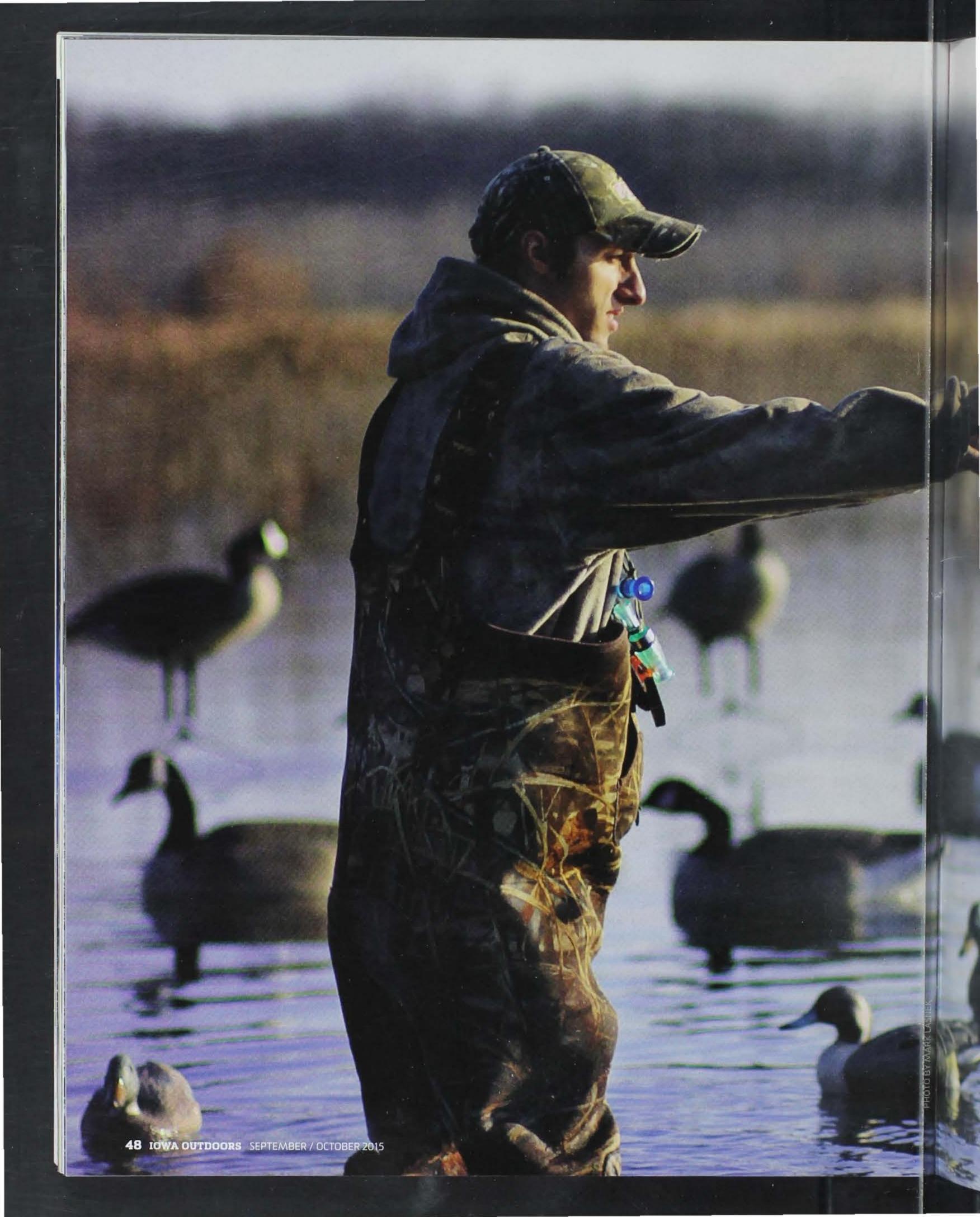
I returned to the duck swamps later in October when a teachers' conference released my 13-year-old son from the jail of junior high. Our hunting lodge was an ancient World War I canvas tent. Its failing umbrella contraption made for hunched-over cooking and dressing. During the first night a visiting barn cat, drawn to our camp by leftover spaghetti, padded around atop the tent. This was fine with my son until a midnight thunderstorm backlit the cat in freaky flashes.

A fitful night followed by a soggy hunt sent us to a cabin at a nearby lake to dry out. While hanging dripping camo gear on knotty pine beams, we noticed a flock of cormorants in the bay just outside the window. They were strung out in a crescent-moon line and swimming fast for shore. We pulled on waders and crept through the reeds to investigate. Then, as if signaled by a single remote control, all two dozen cormorants submerged in unison. When they resurfaced quite near shore, each had a fish. A living seine.

### Green Becomes Passé

The following week I was alone again in a duck blind fashioned from cattails with no chlorophyll left. Late season camo was definitely in style. Duckless skies focused my attention on the only activity around—a gravel road a block away and it was rush hour in the country. First a school bus picked up pig-tailed passengers. Then an ammonium nitrate spreader, bouncing along on super fat tires. Next the milk truck used a succession of lower gears to slow for the turn





The success of a hunt is not just measured by game in the bag, but also memories in the heart and soul. A late fail hunt for the author and his dog is proof of that, as the game bag was light, but the sights, sounds and smells lingered a lifetime.



### Goshawk and Mink

By mid-November last year, all the shallow sloughs were locked in ice. Refusing to accept defeat, I hunted a deeper pond for waterfowl while camouflaged in a half-dozen layers of clothing featuring dead-grass color. By now most songbirds had departed for southern stages. Ice formed in rings around my mallard decoys and a few floating weeds. A northern goshawk patrolled the shoreline with his flap-flap-flap sail flight.

into the farmyard. Ten minutes later a pint-sized terrier escorted the gleaming milk truck down the road, making mock charges at its tires. He emerged from the dust cloud prancing proudly-another successful defense of the dairy farm. Then he tracked an interesting scent into the ditch, lunged at something and started digging furiously into the soft bank. I dug out my binoculars to watch. Suddenly it was like a scene from a Saturday morning TV cartoon. Two balls of fur going round and round, then the high-pitched yelp-yelp of a terrier in pain. He raced for home with a badger in hot pursuit. Halloween weekend marked a passage for my son. He opted to forego trick-or-treating and hunt ducks with me. But a camo costume, complete with makeup, was part of his scheme. I indulged him and we both painted our faces in the pre-dawn darkness using the dome-lit rear-view mirror. As we trudged to a makeshift blind on the shores of a nearly dry pothole, a brilliant meteorite flared out of the western sky. Directly overhead it split in two, each half disappearing over a different horizon. We continued to the blind on trembling knees. As the dimmer switch of dawn lit the mist rising from our pothole, we could see shadowy white birds everywhere in front of us. Snow geese? My son poked his green and black nose through the cattails. "Egrets" he lamented. Snowy egrets were scattered throughout the remaining two inches of water, probing the mud for trapped fish and frogs. Dozens were skewering panicked bullheads and tiger frogs, like shooting fish in a barrel.

Suddenly a dark brown head popped up amid my decoys. A mink. It eased effortlessly onto a shelf of ice and slinked its way into a muskrat house. Then the mink dove into a pocket of open water, emerging seconds later with a ravaged rat. Leaving its prey atop the house, it raced to another opening. Same result. Then a third, before the mink disappeared entirely, leaving all three muskrats behind. It was caching a few meals before the next cold front made underwater hunting impossible.

Now the goshawk hovered above. It called and went into a steep dive. At first I thought it wanted the mink's muskrat meals. But no, his target seemed to be me! I cowered with my arms over my head, peeking just in time to see its talons sink into the plastic shell of a duck decoy.

Doc barked. I screamed. The decoy went airborne, its anchor swinging crazily behind the goshawk. The bird flexed its primary feathers for altitude, reaching heights of about 20 feet before deciding this was not worth the effort. It dropped the decoy, sending it crashing through thin ice.

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### Sly as a Fox

Before driving home from that late-season duck hunt, I rested against a giant round bale of marsh hay on the

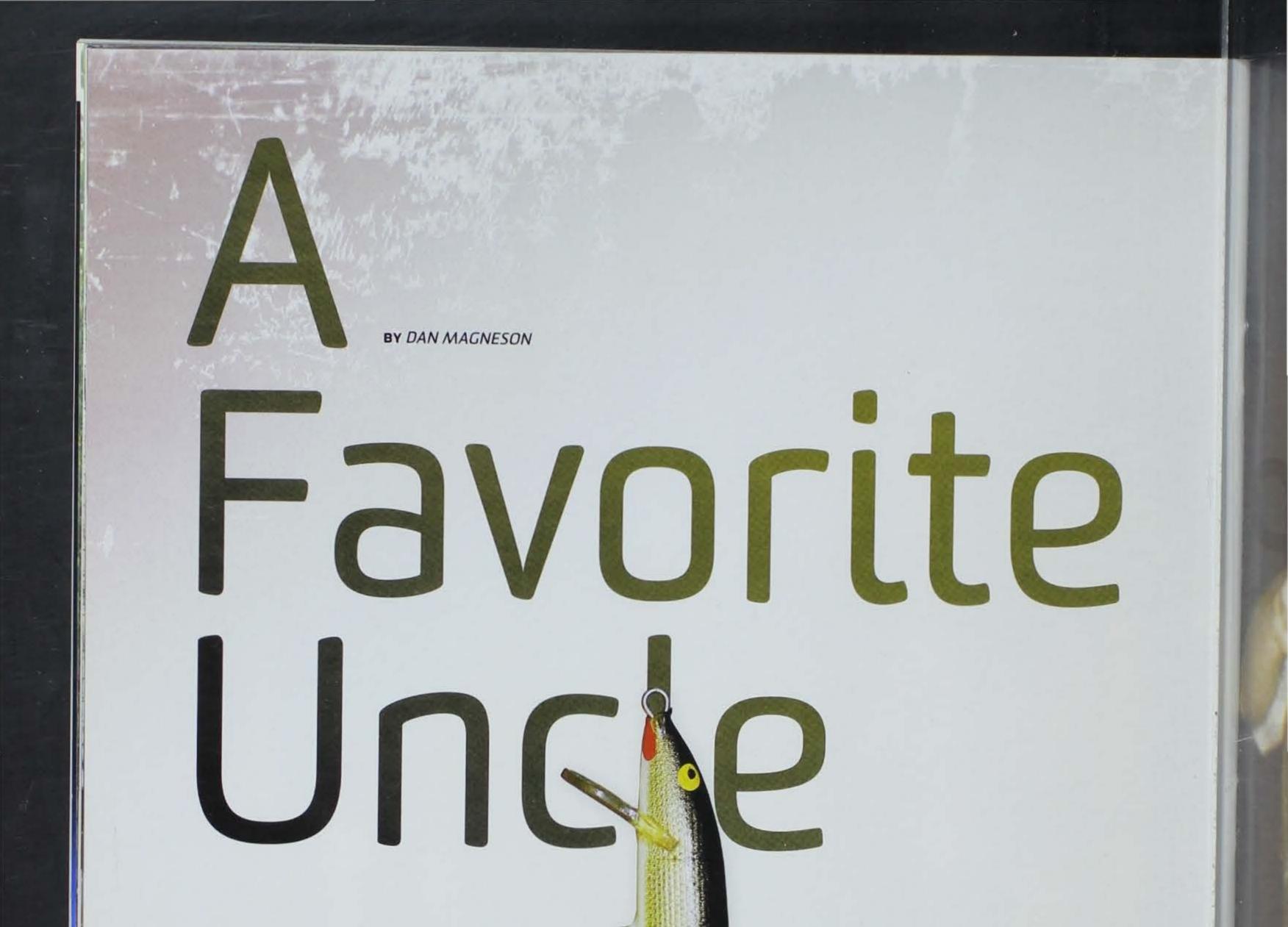


shore of the slough. My dog and I shared the sunset and a turkey sandwich. A mid-level deck of clouds was resplendent in end-of-day bues. Then a soft guttural growl from Doc interrupted my reverie. We both peeked around the corner of the bale. A red fox approached, its puffy tail luminous in the low light. I hushed my dog and watched the fox hunt toward us, stopping a scant 50 feet away. It sat and stared at the weeds, unaware of Doc and me. After two or three minutes of statue-still patience,

a if

the fox suddenly launched itself into the air in an arching attack. Its nose and forepaws hit the ground in unison. Field mouse was its dinner.

With darkness now falling heavily on the prairie, Doc and I headed for my truck, my shoulders hunched against the biting cold. The fox's patience had scored dinner, while our game bag was empty. But patience and camouflage had served up several beautiful memories, now seared into our souls.



f you are lucky, during the course of your life, you'll run into a few people who exert a profound influence on you, and leave you with loads of treasured memories.

And if you are luckier still, they will turn out to be one of your relatives.

I have had a lot of really great male relatives, but like so many others, they seemed consumed and held captive by the demands of their jobs. Not so for one of my uncles. He operated a bulldozer for a small construction outfit, but wasn't one to place the pursuit of money over quality time spent outdoors. While so many others slaved and strived to get further ahead, he was pretty content with life as it was. Had he been born 100 or 200 years earlier, he likely would have been a mountain man, a beaver trapper or maybe a market hunter.

Being around him and his family was always fun and

never boring. They had a house full of hunting, fishing and camping gear, and an ever-changing menagerie of critters like snapping turtles and raccoons. I couldn't wait to go visit them, nor ever wanted to go home later. The lifestyle of my dreams was straight out of the movie *My Side of the Mountain*, and so in my youthful view, my uncle sure had his priorities straight.

He and his hunting buddies had hounds too, lots of them. Mostly Walkers, I think, but with a smattering of blueticks, redbones and black-andtans thrown in too.

When I got a little older, I would go up on weekends and join their quests for red foxes and coyotes. One year in particular I recall it would start snowing every Friday night and quit before Saturday morning, creating perfect conditions for that brand of hunting when you awoke in the predawn blackness. You'd go out under that vast blanket of stars and start





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loading up for the hunt. You'd experience that deep-down shaking and shuddering shiver, the kind that emanates from the very pith of your being, and you couldn't imagine ever warming up. But you suffered in silence because you knew better than to ever complain about the bitter cold. Dawn gave way to the bright light of morning, and the twinkle of stars overhead was replaced by frost sparkling all around. When you found a fresh track and turned the hounds loose, you forgot all about the frigid cold.

My uncle never really treated or talked down to us like we were kids-he would place trust in youeven loan you a sharp knife to use. He had a brother who was blind, and around the picnic table at the campsite one night, the brother and I wanted to go fishing. Given the man's blindness, taking the lantern along wouldn't have much helped. I was still pretty young myself, but my uncle took me aside and said to watch out for his brother that night. I helped guide the brother down a long and steep expanse of large and loose riprap to the swift and deep river below. I experienced no luck at all with those walleyes, but saw my partner's rod arcing upward against the sky's pale moonlight a few times that night, and every fish was a large one. He would ask what it was he had caught, and grinned when I confirmed it was indeed a walleye-a big one at that. We climbed and clambered back up that slope and back to camp, both of us arriving in one piece.

not at all a male chauvinist, telling me eons ago that he thought that we should elect a woman as president of the United States, because with a woman at the helm "things would probably run a whole lot better."

He taught me how to choose the right piece of willow to make a bank pole for catching channel catfish, the best location to situate it and the slickest way to catch a big bullfrog. He had an uncanny sense of direction; I can't count the number of times we were

> out in the middle of nowhere when the weak winter sun failed us way too early. He would walk swiftly and surely through the darkness, emerging from the timber right back at where his truck was parked, and at just about the exact time he said we would get there too.

When a little kid hooks a big fish, many a time I've witnessed their dads greedily wrestling the pole from their hands and landing the fish themselves. Not so my uncle: he'd always give you the best chance when fishing, advising you to

Years later, when I graduated high school, my congratulatory card from my uncle contained the greatest largess; why is it the people who have the least to give are always the most generous with what they do have?

And in other ways, he was far ahead of his own years and peers. As such, he was good for me during my formative years. He was remarkably free of bias, an exceedingly tolerant, inclusive, unbigoted, unprejudiced person. He was also

"try casting over there by that old stump." Or he would give you the best chance for a shot when hunting, offering "why don't you walk that draw? But be sure to walk in from the other direction, or the birds will be flying right into that low sun." One summer, he took his son and I north. We stayed at a lakeside house owned by one of his old friends, and early the next morning my cousin and I pushed a tiny rowboat through the mucky mud into the mist-shrouded lake. Working parallel to the shoreline, we cast our lures to the edges and pockets along the bulrushes, cattails and lilypads. It was stone-still except for the red-winged blackbirds and their distinctive song, a trill that is melodious and mechanical at the same time.

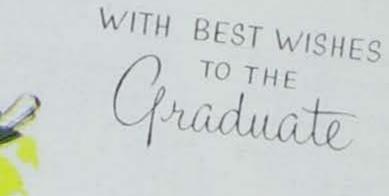
> Later in the morning, my uncle and his buddy motored up to us in a sleek powerboat, inquiring how we'd done. We hefted a stringer of fish heavy with largemouth bass and northern pike, and he was as impressed as we were proud.

There was a relatively-new lake near

his home, and we'd fish it in the spring for crappies. He had grown up roaming and hunting that country long before the lake was created, becoming intimately familiar with it in the process. He had no sophisticated electronic gear to peer beneath the

lake's surface—and didn't need it. He knew where the now-submerged wild plum thickets and cloistered clumps of red cedar stood, and we would dance little white jigs amongst them and thus pried a lot of beautiful, speckled and whitishsilvery crappies over the years.

You would like to think that maybe you in turn had a positive influence on the older generation, and several years ago I saw some evidence of just that. My uncle had erstwhile witnessed me entering the



Daniel Magneson Jour thoughtailness and gift in Remembrance of our father is greatly appreciated. Dad really enjoyed your visit with him at the nursing Home, with him at the nursing Home, and many other times you spent with him he would talk about you often. Don't be a stranger.



and upright against the snow, fading to a muted grayish above as the diffusion of intertwining smaller branches blended together. You would hear the baying of the hounds, sounding at the same time excited yet mournful, pulsing and echoing through those frozen hills. "Stand right here against this tree trunk so it helps to break up your silhouette," my uncle would

coach me, "just keep your eyes open and don't make a sound or move a muscle. He's gonna be comin' right this way."

And so it really pained me late last spring to visit

### field of fish and wildlife conservation, and various other nieces and nephews—and then their children

and nephews—and then their children too—becoming, among other things, a park ranger, a veterinarian, and to boot, counting numerous teachers among their ranks.

Nearly a decade ago, on a visit back to the Midwest, I met my uncle for breakfast at a local restaurant. One of his old cronies came up and started giving him a hard time about his apparently new bass fishing philosophy. "I hear you've been letting your fish go. Have you forgotten that fish are for eating?" My uncle lamely and sheepishly hemmed and hawed and then changed the subject altogether. I just about fell out of my chair. Somewhere along the line, my uncle had quietly experienced a change of heart and evolved into a catch-and-release bass fisherman.

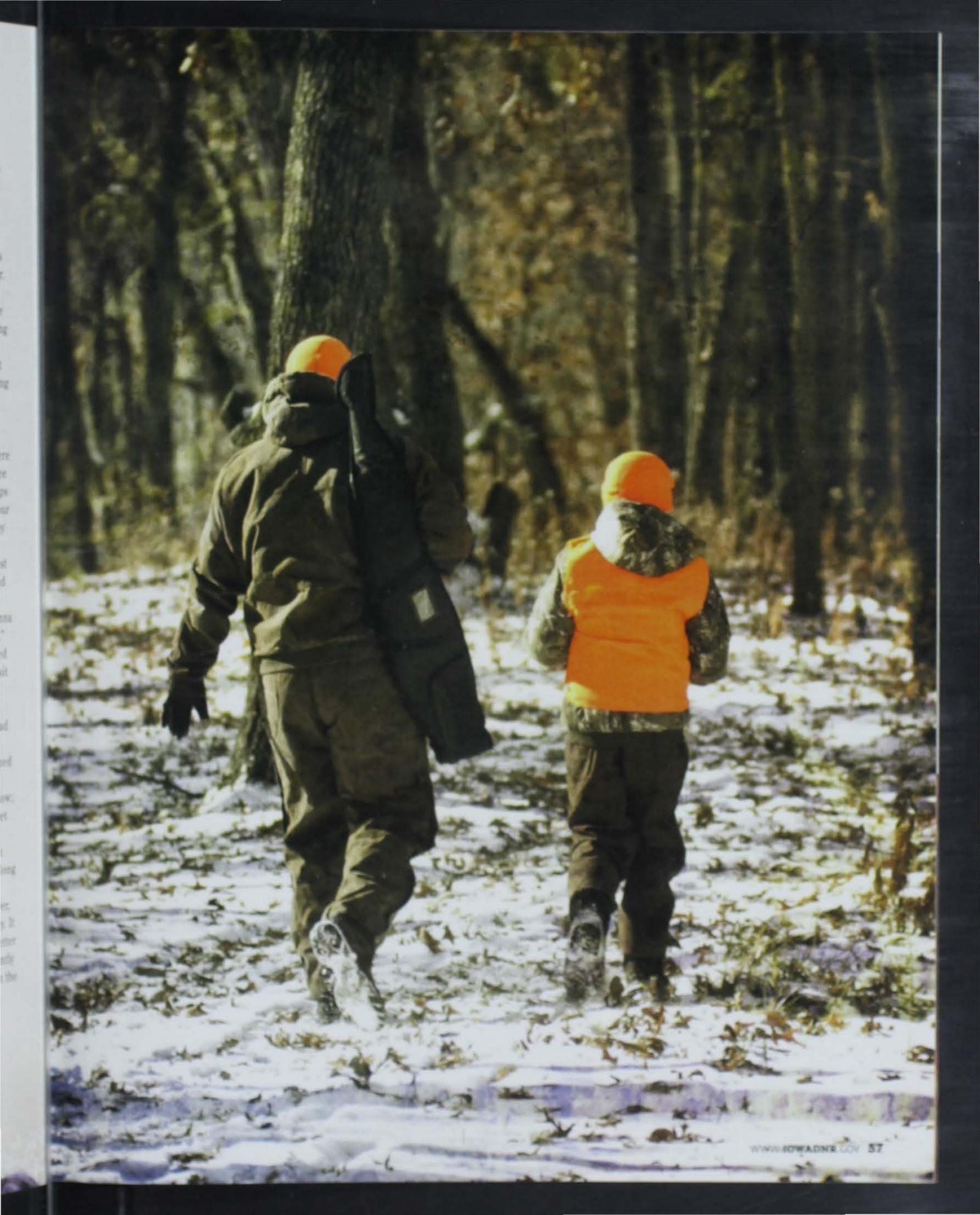
But it was those winter hunts with the hounds that remain the most vivid in my mind. The dark and naked trunks of the distant oak and hickories standing so stark him in a nursing home. He had been a stout and solid guy, having once had

arms like most guys' legs. But time, age and now the cancer had taken their toll. The legs of the accomplished outdoorsman that I had so faithfully followed through the woods and fields all those times were unreliable now; these days he had a little electric cart with which to get around. He and I didn't speak of it, but we both knew

> this would probably be our last visit together. And it was, for not very long afterwards he was gone.

> > Later, after the funeral was over, I received a card from his family. It somehow leaves me feeling better to know that he had apparently remembered things much the same as I had.

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My BRIAN BUTTON

# EDIBLE I ANDSCAPING S

Turn yardscapes into foodscapes with trees, shrubs, herbs and vegetables that not only attract birds and wildlife, but put delicious, fresh and nutritious foods and flavors at your doorstep. Homegrown fruit, nuts, vegetables and herbs harvested at their peak are impossible to beat for quality, taste and nutrition. And you don't need an orchard or huge garden plot. These plants add diversity and color to yards, livening up properties with texture, fragrance and aesthetically pleasing variations in heights, shapes and leaf surfaces.

"The edible landscape idea comes back full circle to why trees were planted in towns in the first place," says DNR urban forester Emma Hanigan, who notes people historically wanted fruits and nuts where they lived. "Plant things that you can use to give a fun purpose."

Fall is a perfect time to plant trees and shrubs (even carrots, beets, chard, radishes and turnips for a late harvest). Be S Fall i plant maga one o

### Fruit Trees

Typically smaller than shade trees, fruit trees don't require a lot of space. Apples, generally the most popular American fruit, come in countless varieties. Good cultivars for Iowa are ENTERPRISE, FREEDOM, LIBERTY, MACFREE, PRISTINE, REDFREE and SUNDANCE. Overall, pear trees are the easiest popular fruit to grow. Their form, bloom and leaves also make them valuable landscape additions. Two different varieties of trees are needed to pollinate and fruit unless otherwise noted. Cultivars: LUSCIOUS, PATTEN and SUMMERCRISP. Cherry tree cultivars include MESABI, METEOR, MONTMORENCY and NORTH STAR. Plum trees are small and yield attractive, fragrant blooms before fruiting midsummer. Cultivars: TOKA, SUPERIOR, MOUNT ROYAL. Chilled pawpaws were George Washington's favorite dessert with their sweet

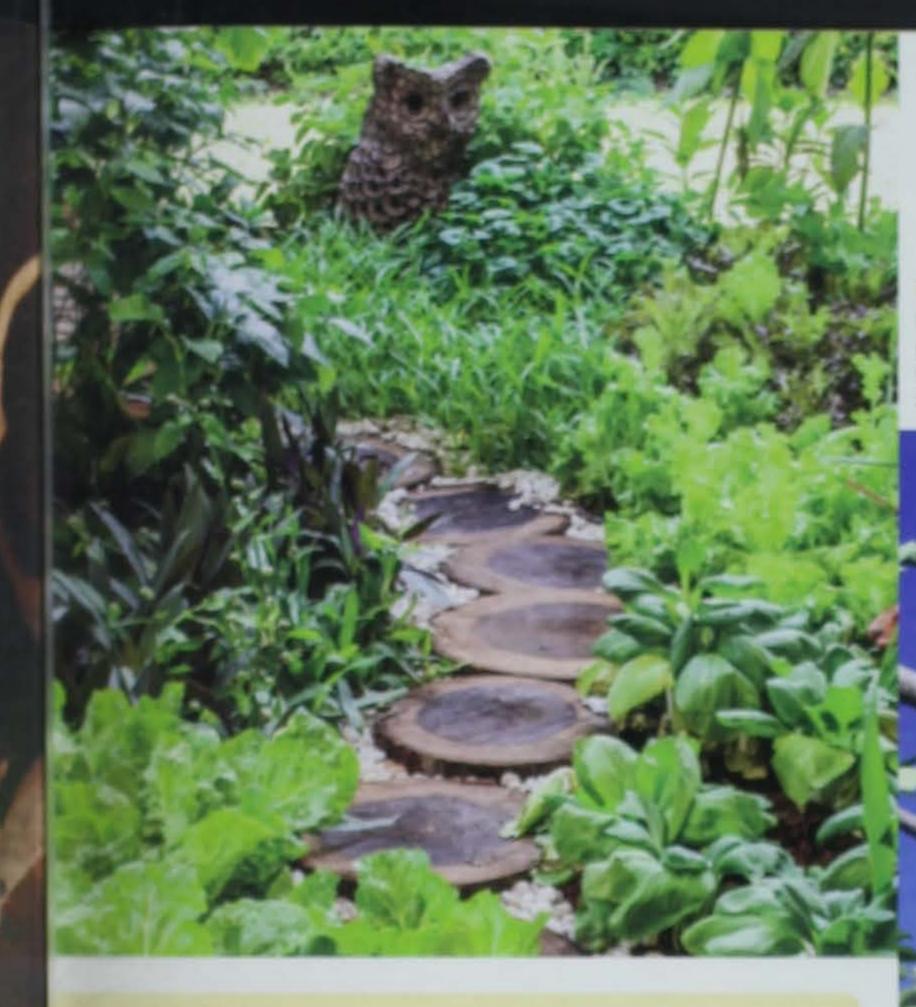
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State Forest Nursery for Bulk Orders The DNR's state forest nursery sells bulk orders of seedlings at affordable prices. Several species mentioned in this article are available including pecan, aronia or black chokeberry, hazelnut, serviceberry or Juneberry, wild plum, black walnut, elderberry, black cherry and shagbark and shellbark hickory. Excellent for large plantings, order a "Create-a-Packet" for \$110 which includes 200 trees or shrubs (50 each of four species of your choice.) Other bulk options of 100 plants available. Learn more at 800-865-2477 or iowatreeplanting.com. and P prices trees 515-7 throu lowa\_

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### LEARN MORE

Iowa State University Extension provides excellent guidance on growing edibles in Iowa. Find tips ranging from site selection, growing, maintenance and harvest at www.yardandgarden.extension.lastate.edu

### Be Shovel Ready

Fail is great for tree planting. This year two popular residential tree planting programs through utilities will offer fruit trees. (At time of magazine printing, the final selections were not made, but for sure one or more of the following will be available: apple, pear, cherry, plum, persimmon, serviceberry or hickory. **OPERATION RELEAF** and **PLANT SOME SHADE** offer 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 **515-725-8456**.) MidAmerican Energy customers can purchase trees through Plant Some Shade for \$30. (midamericanenergy.com/ lawa\_plantsomeshade or call Evan Miller at \$15-725-8455.)

custard-like flavor akin to banana or mango. Once established, they require little care. Rarely bothered by pests or disease, they bear fruit in a variety of soils and climates. Two plants are needed for pollination. For beauty, persimmons trees have it all with large magnolia-like leaves, pretty fruit and showy fall colors deserving of a prestigious location in the yard. Ease-of-care and abundant fall fruit are great bonuses.

### Nut Trees and Shrubs

PECAN TREES need well-drained soil and take up to five years before producing nuts. About 10 feet high. the HAZELNUT SHRUB needs full sun. Their nuts can be eaten raw or roasted. Wildlife too, find the nuts delicious. SHAGBARK HICKORY has a beautiful textured bark and yields edible nuts important to wildlife, and great snacks for people, too.

### Berries

BLUEBERRIES are delicious and full of antioxidants. They require amendments such as peat or sulfur to increase soil acidity. Iowa State University Extension has a list of cultivars and growing tips. ARONIA OR BLACK CHOKEBERRY BERRIES have become popular in

health food stores for their antioxidant properties, high vitamin content and flavor. The shrub has nice white flowers. ELDERBERRIES are good for jams and jellies. SERVICEBERRY provide spring flowers, fruit in June and give fall color with orange-colored leaves. Plants are available in clump or tree form.

### Adding Flavor to Flower Beds

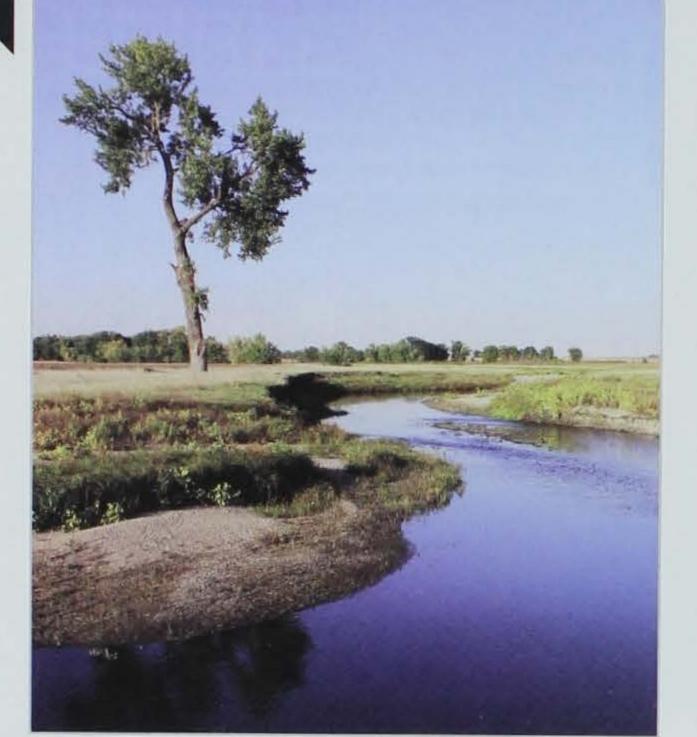
Flavorful fresh herbs outshine expensive store-bought spices. Their flowers attract pollinators, too. BASIL, DILL, TARRAGON, THYME, MINT, OREGANO and CHIVES are all easy to grow and attractive additions to containers or beds. LEAF LETTUCES, CARROTS, KALE and COLORFUL SWISS CHARD can all be mixed in to existing flower beds to provide pleasing changes in texture and complementary and contrasting colors.



### Admiration & Legacy

BY JESSIE ROLPH BROWN

Find a volunteer project or post your own event at www.iowodnr.gov/volunteer or call 515-725-8261.



### BE A PART OF THE OTTER **CREEK RESTORATION** SIOUX COUNTY

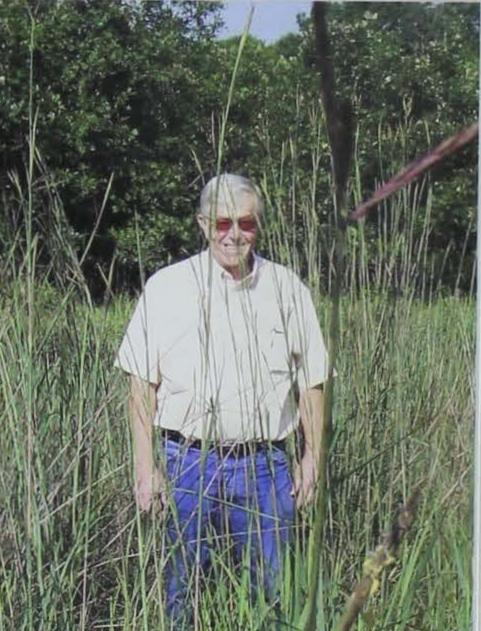
Additional help needed to open land to public for wildlife viewing, hunting and habitat improvements

### A LITTLE PIECE OF HEAVEN **BOB MARTIN, ARISPE**

Landowner makes changes to benefit woodlands, wildlife and water quality

Year by year, Bob Martin has done some work on his woodland near the Union and Ringgold county line, improving on it and adding acres since he bought his first parcel back in 1993. The 70-year-old grew up hunting and fishing on a Minnesota farm, and wanted his own land to hunt on. But he quickly saw the land—now at about 1,500 acres with 600 of those forested—needed some help and began working with DNR district forester Randy Goerndt to create a woodland management plan to benefit timber, water quality and wildlife. He was a bit apprehensive that some of the management practices, like stream buffers, would work to slow erosion. "I didn't think the buffers would work, and I didn't realize how significant it was," Martin says. "I looked around and there were needs. At first I didn't know what it would be like, but it sure paid off." Martin's work improved the timber quality, but several ponds and food plots step up the benefits to water quality and for wildlife and he's seeing less erosion on his land. "What is unique about his property is that all but about 180 acres in crops is being managed for wildlife habitat, mostly for deer, turkeys, quail and pheasants," says Goerndt. "The combination of forests, native grasses and tree plantings has maximized wildlife habitat diversity. and protected and improved water quality. This is an outstanding example of what active management can do." Stocking a few of those ponds means some fun fishing, too, especially when kids make a field trip to the land. Kids arrive with Scout troops and the National Wild Turkey Federation to camp, hike trails through the timber, fish and just connect with nature. "The kids that come out don't know what the outdoors is," says Martin, who claims membership in about every wildlife organization in the area. Needless to say he was glad to see wildlife thriving on his land, especially deer and pheasant. "I grew up an outdoors person and I am still that way," he says. "It's just been so much fun." There's no doubt the work has paid off, which also led to some well-deserved recognition. "Bob is a very active person and has involved himself personally in most of the forest improvement practices on his properties," says Goerndt. "In fact, his work has been so outstanding that he has won the Iowa Woodland Owner of the Year award twice, most recently in 2014."

When 67 acres of pasture—land never plowed—came up for sale in Sloux County, local conservation and hunting groups knew they had to act. The county needed an area with lots of space for hunting, habitat and recreation. A number of local partners came together to ensure the land, purchased by the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation from the Doorenbos family, was secured for conservation. The area is adjacent to the 275-acre Otter Creek Wildlife Area, which will add habitat for prairie and wetland wildlife, setting the stage for great wildlife viewing and hunting. And since the land has never been plowed, there's a good chance that remnant prairie—sitting dormant underground for decades waiting to return—will thrive again with restoration efforts. Otter Creek runs through the area, a tributary to the Little Rock River, home to federally endangered Topeka shiner fish. Oxbow lakes on the property also offer habitat for shiners. Making changes on the land will help protect water quality in the creek and oxbows, which is critically important to shiners and other wildlife. In addition, the tract will provide hunting access in an area without much public land, helping young hunters and those new to the sport find a place to start. But before the land can be transferred to the Sioux County Conservation Board and opened to the public, more work is needed. While local outdoors and hunting groups have already provided some funding, additional donations are required to help match grants. If you would like to donate and make this addition to Otter Creek a reality, contact Anita O'Gara with the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation at 1-800-475-1846 or AOgara@inhf.org.



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Wild Cuisine CAMPSIDE

## Apple Goose

While some may turn their nose up at eating wild foods because of the perceived gaminess, done right, wild game can provide some of the tastiest and healthiest options at the dinner table.

Wild game has a distinctive flavor, from the mild ring-necked pheasant to the stronger Canada goose. The key is in how it is cleaned, cared for and cooked. Field dress and cool the meat as soon as possible after the hunt. Once home, rinse off the meat, and remove any shot. Trim damaged meat. Process as soon as possible.

The key to succulent wild game is how it is cooked. Wild game by nature is extremely lean, and older animals are likely a bit tougher and better suited for braising, stewing and casseroles. Younger birds turn out moist and tender on the grill or in the oven if plucked, leaving skin intact.

Equally important for flavorful dishes is finding a balance between the type of meat and the enhancements. Mild game like wild turkey and pheasants handle bolder seasonings like Italian, sage, basil and rosemary. Robust meats like venison, goose and ducks pair well with sweet additions, like teriyaki, fruit and wine.

Try this wild goose favorite of DNR outdoor educator Ajay Winter when the fall birds are flying and the apples are dropping.

### SWEET APPLE GOOSE

I V2 pounds apples, favorite variety I goose breast V4 cup brown sugar Seasoned flour Oil

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Peel, core and thinly slice apples, Mix apples with brown sugar and refrigerate overnight, up to 24 hours. This will soften the apples and produce syrup. Cut goose into chunks. Roll in seasoned flour and brown in mediumhot oil. Do not overcook. Add apple and brown sugar mixture with a little water and simmer until goose is cooked through and apples have softened. Serve with white rice.

# Wild Cuisine KITCHENSIDE BY ALAN FOSTER PHOTOS BY KATI BAINTER

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### Rathbun Lakeshore Grille

There's as much going on at Honey Creek Resort State Park and the hotel's signature Rathbun Lakeshore Grille than what goes into this recipe. But trust us, in both cases, it's worth trying out. Play a round of golf. catch a few monster crappies, take a long walk on the abundant, winding trail system or just relax lakeside for some good ol' natural vitamin D. When you're done, head into the Grille for a grilled-to-perfection steak, a homemade pizza or a half-pound Rolling Cove burger. Wash it down with a pint of Iowa brew. Former chef Robert Newell, with more than 45 years experience in the culinary business, took an Iowa summer icon-sweet corn-and married it with a fall favorite-turkey. And he did it with flare, borrowing from a couple of regional BBQ styles. Sweet, saucy turkey and coleslaw. Think of it as Kansas City meets Memphis. Finish off that spring wild turkey-or freeze some sweet corn for that fall bird or pheasant-and discover what it tastes like when the Midwest meets the Deep South.

#### CORN PANCAKES

3/4 cup all-purpose flour 3/4 cup yellow cornmeal 2 teaspoons baking powder 1/8 teaspoon salt 1 1/3 cups low-fat buttermilk 1 cup corn 1/2 cup shredded parmesan cheese 1/2 cup egg, scrambled 1/4 cup thinly sliced green onions 1/4 cup chopped red sweet pepper 2 tablespoons canola oil 1 tablespoon fresh parsley 1 tablespoon olive oil

In a large bowl, mix flour, cornmeal, baking powder and salt. In a medium bowl, whisk buttermilk, corn, parmesan cheese, egg, green onions, sweet pepper, canola oil and parsley. Make a well in the dry mixture and pour in buttermilk mixture. Stir until well mixed. Lightly coat a nonstick griddle with olive oil and preheat to medium. Pour a half cup of batter on griddle for each cake. Cook until bubbles form, about four minutes. Flip and cook an additional one to two minutes. Top each pancake with a half-cup turkey mix and coleslaw.

### MILD RED BBQ SAUCE

20 ounces shredded cooked turkey 2/3 cups water 1/2 cup chopped onion (about one small medium onion) Half a 6-ounce can tomato paste 1/4 cup cider vinegar 2 tablespoons honey 1 tablespoon molasses 1 tablespoon yellow mustard 1 tablespoon Vorcestershire sauce 1 teaspoon chill powder

Combine ingredients in medium saucepan and bring to a boil. Simmer uncovered 15 to 20 minutes or until onion is tender and sauce is thickened. Add shredded turkey to sauce, salt to taste and heat through.

### Rathbun Lakeshore Grill Hours:

HOURS ARE: Breakfast, Monday-Saturday, 7-11 a.m., followed by lunch until 2 p.m. Dinner is Sunday through Thursday, 5-9 p.m. and Friday and Saturday 5-10 p.m. Sunday breakfast buffet is 7-11 a.m., followed by Sunday brunch, which includes breakfast buffet, until 2 p.m. 12633 Resort Drive, Morovia: 641-724-1430. Honeycreekresort.com

### CORN PANCAKES WITH BBQ PULLED TURKEY AND COLESLAW

### COLSESLAW

Half a 14-ounce bag shredded coleslaw mix, about 2.5 cups 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh jalapeno 1 tablespoon fresh parsley V2 cup mayo 3 tablespoons sugar 2 tablespoons sugar 2 tablespoons lime juice

In a medium bowl, combine coleslaw mix, jalapeno and parsley. In a small bowl, mix mayonnaise, lime juice and cumin. Add to coleslaw mix, incorporate evenly, cover and chill until serving.

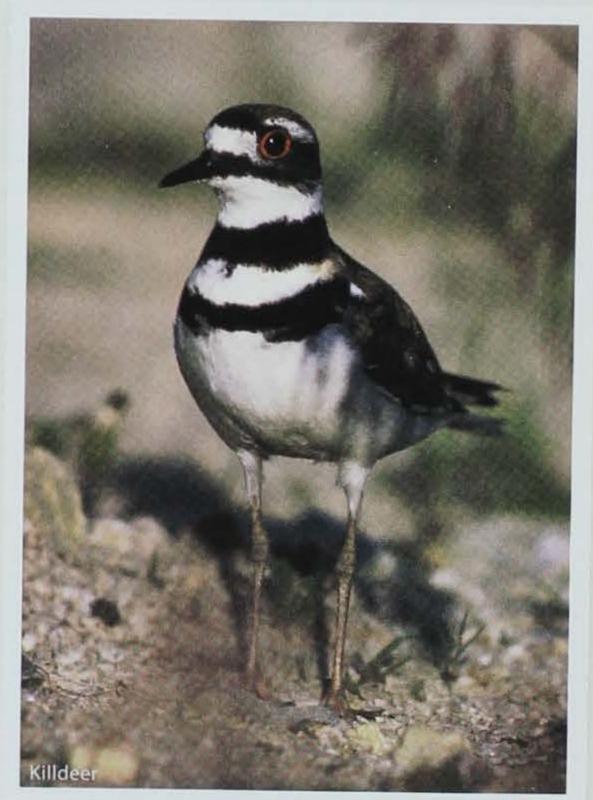


### Warden's Diary

BY ERIKA BILLERBECK PHOTOS BY LOWELL WASHBURN

# Where Did the Summer Go?

The transition from summer to fall is never smooth for me. My summers are a blur of drunk drivers, drug cases, fishing violations, boat accidents, ATV shenanigans and general mayhem. With the opening of the dove hunting season, Labor Day weekend meant both the end of summer and the beginning of the hunting season all wrapped into one. Unfortunately, my body disagreed with this schedule. I had spent the previous three nights out until 2 a.m. with three separate drunk driving arrests, a child endangerment case and a domestic assault that occurred at the very wildlife area where I should have been working at sunrise on Labor Day.



windshield as Dave pointed out the guilty party. The sunflower field was lined with about 40 hunters, but the group I was interested in consisted of five adults and two kids. As I watched them through binoculars, they watched me back, pointing to my truck and talking with each other.

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So, on Monday, at 8 a.m. (long past sunrise), I was still drooling on my pillow when

my phone rang. Dave Kutz, a natural resource technician in my area, had witnessed a dove hunter kill a killdeer. A killdeer is a shorebird, much like a plover. It is most definitely not a dove, and is a protected non-game species.

I hung up, tried to disguise my bedhead hairdo, and responded to the Hawkeye Wildlife Area. Dave was waiting for me in the parking lot. Shot pellets rained down on my "I think they know who I am," I said.

"Yeah, they've been watching me too," Dave said.

Dave, pointing to the field, said the killdeer had fallen into an area containing tall, thick grass and weeds. It was going to be tough to find the small bird, especially without a dog.

"Well, I guess I'll get this over with," I said to Dave as I stepped from my truck.

I trudged through the grass until I reached the hunting party.

"Any idea why I came out to talk to you guys?" I asked,

giving them a chance to be honest. All five men just stared at me until one of them mumbled, "No, not really."

"Well, it seems that someone in this group shot a killdeer. There is a DNR wildlife employee sitting in the parking lot who watched you do it," I prompted, hoping for a confession. More blank stares. Though nobody uttered a confession, they hadn't denied it either—a good sign. I told the hunters it was apparent they knew about the killdeer since it was the one bird they failed to retrieve. I reminded them that the eyewitness, who was willing to appear in court, watched the whole thing.

"Do you know which one of you shot it?" I asked.

"Well, we were all shooting at everything," one hunter answered. This definitely seemed to be an accurate statement.

"I think I did it," came a tiny voice from somewhere near my knees. I looked down and there looking up at me through coke bottle glasses was a small boy clad in camouflage clothes two sizes too big. The boy was clutching a BB gun and looking sadly up at me from under the brim of his oversized hat.

As soon as I looked at the boy my heart broke. I've seen it happen one too many times—the moment, where a kid beats an adult to the punch. The mistake could have been a hunting ethics teaching moment. The adult could have fessed up, admitted guilt and taught a young hunter how to take responsibility for his actions. Instead, the adult lies through his teeth while the youngster takes on the role of the real man.

It was evident the boy thought his BB gun was just as lethal as the adults' shotguns. If I were to hazard a guess, I would say the hunters, after shooting the killdeer, probably talked about the problem and decided everything that was flying," one lady told me.

Eventually I gave up looking for the killdeer. With four separate eye witnesses, I felt confident enough to charge the hunter, even without the evidence. A seasonal patrol officer and I drove to the grandfather's house.

"Did you find the bird?" the grandfather asked.

I explained I hadn't found it, but was going to search again with a dog. I told him four people were willing to be witnesses in court if needed. After giving him the citation, we were making small-talk.

"What is a killdeer anyway?" he asked.

I described what a killdeer looked like, and summed it up by telling him the important thing was it wasn't even close to a dove. As we were standing there talking, he pointed up at a bird overhead and asked if it was a killdeer.

"Nope. That's a meadowlark," I answered. Obviously this guy was in need of a bird guide.

As we were leaving the hunter's driveway, Dave called again. He was searching the weeds where the group had been hunting and found a kingbird that had been shot and tossed.

"What's a kingbird look like," the seasonal officer asked me as we drove back.

"It doesn't look anything like a dove," I said.

We headed back to the wildlife area with a dog and

to leave it lay.

I tried my best to reassure the boy it hadn't been his fault. I thanked him for trying to take responsibility for a mistake that wasn't his.

"Well, if someone has to take the blame, I guess you can charge me," the grandfather grumbled, a little too late to make him a martyr.

I knew it would take a while to find the bird, so I took down the grandfather's information and told him we would meet later. The hunting group left. As I searched for the bird, three other hunters came forward to let me know they too had seen the killdeer incident.

"Not only that, they were shooting at searched for the killdeer. The search was futile and I was frustrated. I got back to

> my truck and drove to the boat ramp. There were still a couple of good boating hours left on Labor Day, and despite the drunk drivers and boating chaos on the reservoir. I still wasn't quite ready for hunting season. I decided to make the summer last one more day.

### Flora & Fauna BY BRIAN BUTTON

European Starlings are small to medium-sized birds in the family *Sturnidae*, which comes from the Latin word for starling, *sturnus*. Starlings are strong fliers, able to reach 48 mph. As an invasive species, these aggressive birds are considered pests by many. Regardless, they do have some unusual attributes.

### **RELEASE INTO U.S.**

One hundred starlings were released in New York's Central Park in the early 1890s by a group bent on bringing all birds mentioned in Shakespeare's works to America. By the 1940s, starlings expanded to every state. The North American population, now more than 200 million, are direct descendents of these birds. This lack of genetic diversity has had little effect so far. Their population increased from 1966-1976, but has since stabilized, even slightly declined, perhaps due to limited nesting sites.

### UNIQUE BILL

While most bills are only used to clamp down, starlings also possess strong jaw muscles to forcefully open the bill. They search for prey—such as grubs or insects—in the soil, insert and open the bill to widen the insect hole and expose the meal. The bill can also change colors. It is yellow during the breeding season in both males and females, then turns black. Melanin, a black pigment, causes the dark color, and carotenoid pigments are responsible for the yellow coloration. Carotenoids are absorbed from their diet.

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### STAR QUALITY VOCALS

Starlings have diverse and complex vocalizations, and can even embed sounds from their surroundings into calls, including car alarms and ringing telephones. They can warble, whistle, chatter, make liquid sounds, harsh trills and rattles, and imitate meadowlarks, jays, sparrows, flickers, cowbirds and hawks among others. Whistled songs are a few seconds long, often used between males. Warbled songs can go on for more than a minute-mainly directed at females.

TIPS TO KEEP FROM FEEDERS Starlings can quickly empty a bird feeder or consume a suet cake. Since they have difficulty landing on small perches, homeowners can stymie starlings by shortening the feeder perches. (Many songbirds do not need large perches.) Starlings also have difficulty clinging upside down, so attach suet cages to the undersides of feeders or hanging boards.

### UNPROTECTED

Because starlings are exempt from the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, some people keep them as caged pets and teach them words. (Hear them talk on youtube.com, search "talking starling.") Their nests, eggs, young and adults may be removed or destroyed at any time.

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#### LET ME SPEAK

As long ago as the fifth century B.C., the Greeks and Romans kept starlings as caged birds and taught them to imitate human speech. The Roman naturalist, Pliny the Elder, claimed starlings could learn to speak whole sentences in Latin and Greek. Mozart's pet starling could sing part of his Plano Concerto in G Major. He became attached to the bird and gave it an elaborate funeral when it died three years later.

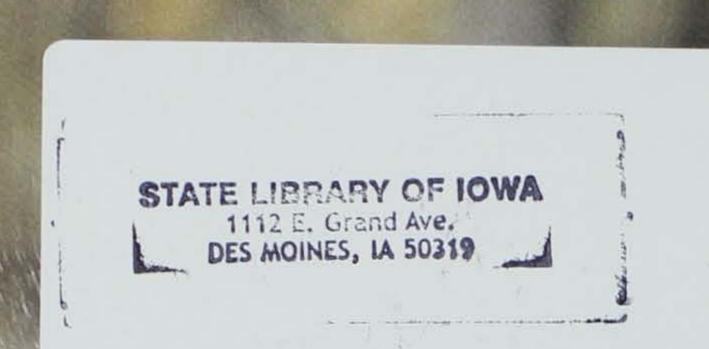
### FLOCKS AND MURMURATIONS

As starlings gather, they participate in a murmuration—a huge flock that shape-shifts in the sky as if a swirling liquid mass. The cloud of birds moves and twists unpredictably like a single being. Often the behavior is sparked by a predator like a hawk or peregrine falcon, and the flock moves for evasion. There is safety in numbers, so individuals do not scatter, but move as an intelligent cloud, changing direction simultaneously (To see online, go to ynstude com and search "murmuration")

### DIET AND FEEDING

Starlings eat just about everything, especially insects, fruits and grains. They've been observed feeding on fermenting fruit, which led to speculation about intoxication. But laboratory experiments found they possess enzymes that allow them to quickly break down alcohol. The length of their intestinal tract varies by season. It is shorter in summer for protein-rich insect diets and longer in the winter to digest seeds. They can taste salt, sugars, citric acid and tannins (bitter compounds in acorns). They can tell the difference between sucrose (table sugar) versus other sugars—helpful since they cannot digest sucrose.





DeSoto Bend National Wildlife Area, nestled along the Missouri River flyway, offers spectacular concentrations of waterfowl, along with camping at the adjacent Wilson Island State Park. Get all the details to set your own adventure on page 16. **PHOTO BY MARK LASNEK** 

