

IOWA OUTDOORS

MAY / JUNE 2016

THE DNR'S MAGAZINE OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION



IN THIS ISSUE

Seek The Splendor Of Shimek Forest

DISCOVER ITS MAGICALLY DIVERSE BIRDS AND BUTTERFLIES

Concert ON THE Prairie

MUSIC • ART • NATURE

Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge
FRIDAY, JUNE 10, 2016

Experience an outdoor concert by The Max Wellman Trio & the breathtaking works of artist Russ Duerksen

Explore the Tallgrass Trail & sample local Iowa wines, hosted by Wines of Iowa

Wander the Visitor Center, get to know the stewards of our refuge & join a silent auction of specialty 'Leopold Benches'

Savor a sumptuous meal provided by local restaurateur Magg Family Catering

Appreciate nature through a guided twilight prairie walk

Seating is limited, \$50 per person
Event registration closes June 3

Register at www.tallgrass.org
or call 515-994-2918



Hosted by
Friends of Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge
PO Box 114 • Prairie City IA • 50228-0114

A SEASON FOR ALL

KEOKUK

IOWA

Iowa's Only National Cemetery

Winter Home for Bald Eagles

Mark Twain Historic Sights

Year-round Birding Trail

Architectural Splendor

Hunt Keokuk Geodes

Historic Lock & Dam

Museums



GeodeFest.org

GEODE
HUNTING

Keokuk Geodes are the most beautiful and sought after of all geodes. The most productive and famous collecting area is within a 35 mile radius of Keokuk.

KEOKUK AREA CONVENTION
& TOURISM BUREAU
www.KeokukIowaTourism.org
319.524.5599

Cruising the Heartland of America

1 & 2-Day Mississippi River Cruises

The Twilight is the most richly appointed Riverboat to be launched in a hundred years. Reminiscent of the Riverboats Mark Twain called "Floating Palaces", the Victorian steamboat architecture inside and out pleases the eye. Let our Captain be your guide to discovering the Upper Mississippi River; home to Eagles, Pelicans, towering bluffs, and historic river towns. Come aboard and step back into time when the riverboat was the most elegant and relaxing way to travel.

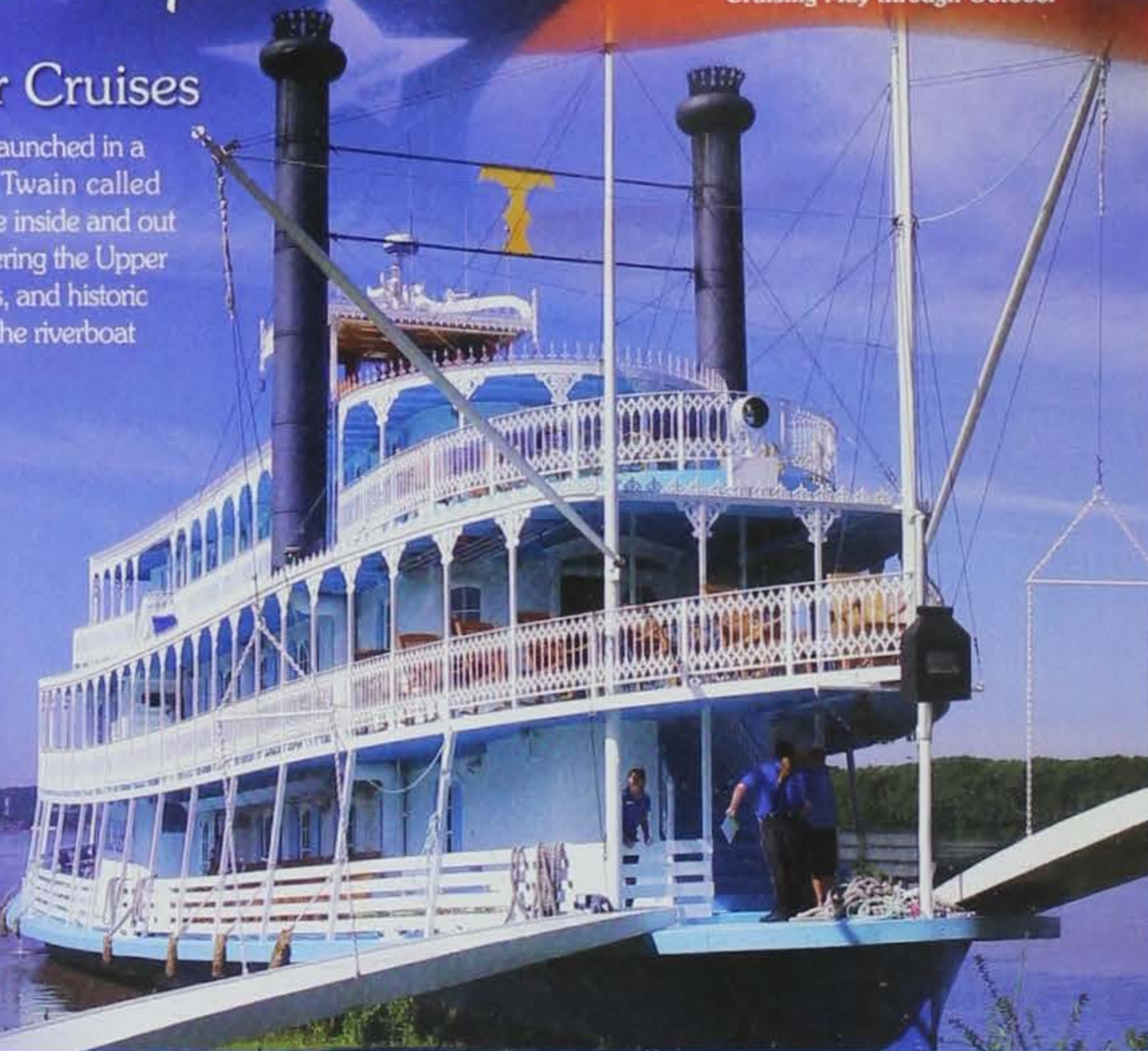
Call 1-800-331-1467
www.RiverboatTwilight.com

2-DAY CRUISE

Departs Quad Cities, Overnight
in Dubuque, IA & Return

1-DAY CRUISE

Departs Dubuque North to
Guttenberg, IA & Return



ABOARD THE RIVERBOAT

TWILIGHT

Cruising May through October

Soaring Splendor Dual Eagle Masterpiece

Stylized
crystalline swirls
inspired by precious
art glass

Evokes the thrill of
flight and a sense
of motion from
every angle

Handsome
woodgrained
base and brass
title plaque

Almost
1 Foot
High!

Shows smaller than
actual size of about
10 inches high.

To glimpse a pair of majestic bald eagles flying in perfect formation is a rare and wonderful sight. High above earthly cares, soaring eagles now inspire this breakthrough sculpture, featuring handsome eagles atop sparkling crystalline swirls of "wind." This meticulously hand-crafted sculpture is individually hand-painted in lifelike detail to capture the wonder of flight in a bold and brilliant new way.



Great Value...Order Today!

Order now at just \$59.99*, payable in three installments of \$19.99, the first due before shipment. There's no risk with our 365-day money-back guarantee. Send no money now, just return the Reservation Application today!

©2004 B&B, Inc. 04-21656-001-00

www.bradfordexchange.com/21656

RESERVATION APPLICATION

SEND NO MONEY NOW

THE
BRADFORD EXCHANGE
"COLLECTIBLES"

9345 Milwaukee Avenue - Niles, IL 60714-1393

YES. Please reserve "Soaring Splendor" for me as described in this announcement. Limit: one per customer. Limit: one per order.

Please Respond Promptly

Mrs. Mr. Ms. _____
Name (Please Print Clearly)

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email (optional) _____

01-21656-001-ES1621

*Plus \$5.99 shipping and service. Limited edition presentation restricted to 200 casting days. Please allow 4-6 weeks after initial payment for shipment. Sales subject to product availability and order acceptance.

Count on
CONCRETE

**DISCOVER IOWA
DISCOVER CONCRETE**



@ConcreteState



515.963.0606
iowaconcretepaving.org



515.965.4575
iowareadymix.org



605.660.6566
antelopecreekwp.com

**Wildlife, Habitat,
Pond, Fishery & Land
Management**



Expert Service from Brett Kleinschmit

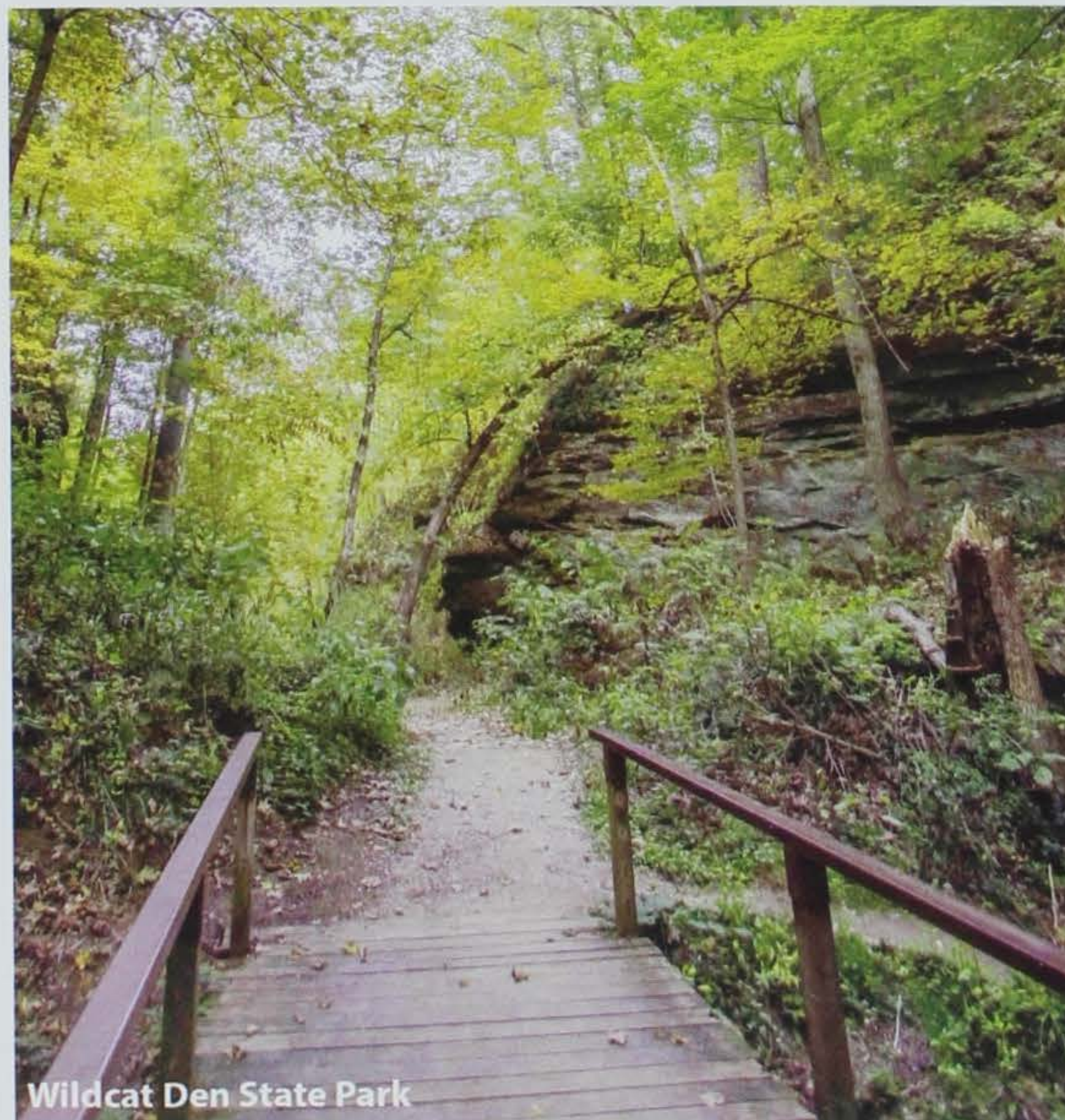


EXPLORE what's happening
in Iowa's Outdoors

FOLLOW US ON
Facebook,
Twitter and Pinterest!



facebook.com/iowadnr
twitter.com/iowadnr
pinterest.com/iowadnr



Wildcat Den State Park

Meetings with
Mother Nature
are...



#THISISIOWA

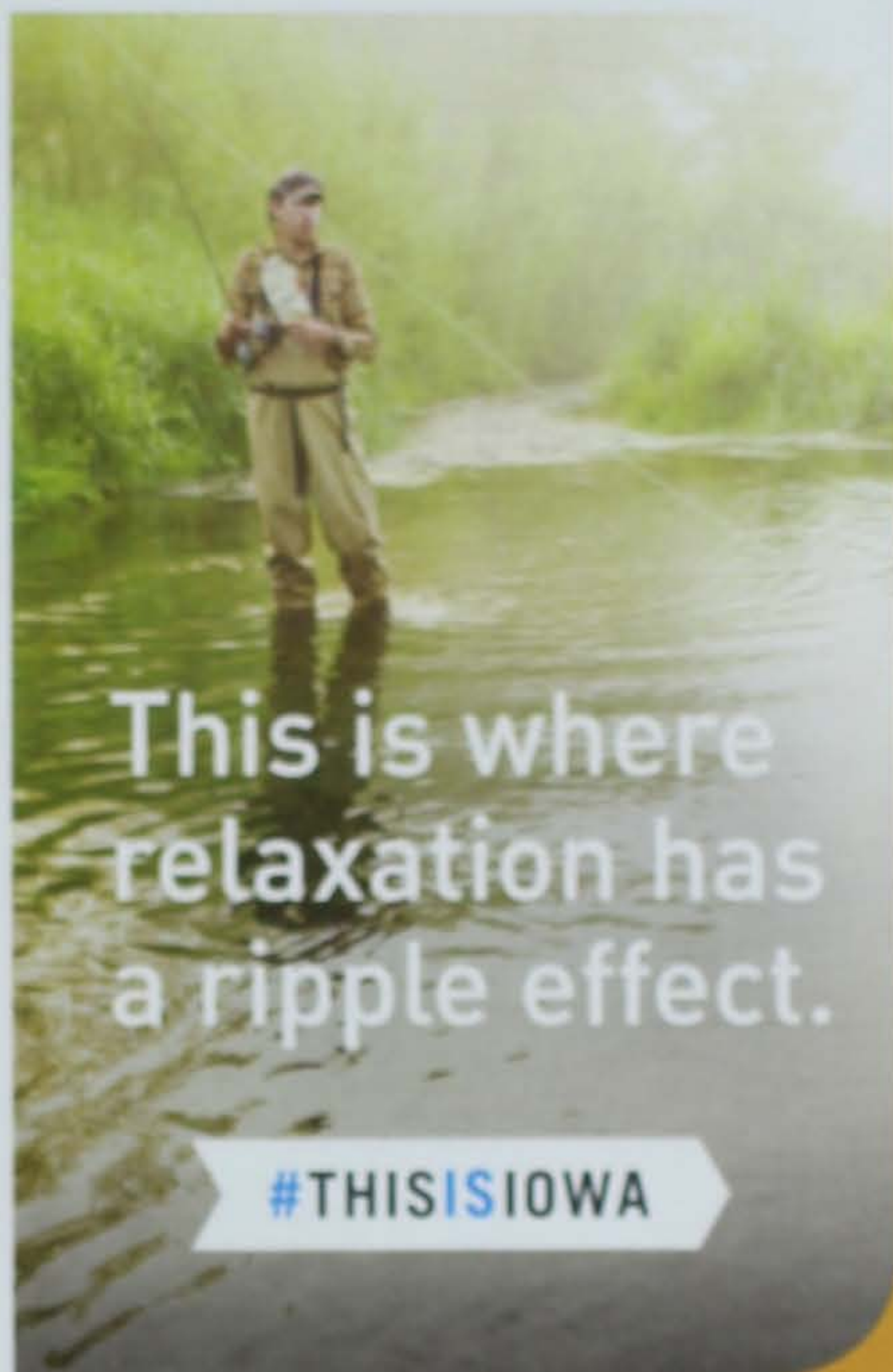
VisitMuscatine.com
563-272-2534



Explore
Wapello County

Adventure Awaits

Greater Ottumwa CVB | 102 Church St. | Ottumwa, IA
641.684.4303 | info@exploreattumwa.com
www.exploreattumwa.com



**This is where
relaxation has
a ripple effect.**

#THISISIOWA

IOWA
OUTDOORS

**BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE
FOR ONLY \$5.00 EACH**



**TO ORDER YOUR ISSUES TODAY
CALL 515-725-8200**

When you get back home after an Iowa getaway, don't be surprised if you and your family feel closer. After all, we have all kinds of activities you'll love sharing together, like fly fishing for wild brown trout in our scenic Driftless Area. Or taking in Okoboji's beauty by parasailing 600 feet above its pristine lakes. Or hiking and biking our trails, like the High Trestle Trail that features a stunning 13-story bridge, one of the tallest trail bridges in the world. In Iowa, you won't just reconnect with nature -- you'll reconnect with each other.

Find a getaway that will bring you closer together at traveliowa.com.

travel
IOWA.
TRAVELIOWA.COM

Contents

MAY / JUNE 2016

FEATURES

28 Merritt Forest

Catch a glimpse of majesty in Merritt State Forest Preserve, the only publicly-owned old growth forest in Iowa.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY BRIAN GIBBS

32 Des Moines Metro Fishing Hotspots

Test these overlooked urban waters for some crazy close-to-home fishing. You just might hook dinner.

BY SHANNON HAFNER

40 Shimek State Forest: of Birds and Butterflies

Grab your binoculars and camera to capture one of the most diverse spring bird migration spectacles in the state and a stunning summer butterfly show.


STORY AND PHOTOS BY TY SMEDES

50 Fishing the Graveyard Shift

A return home sends this author back to the days of his youth trolling the West Nodaway River.

BY DAN MAGNESON





ABOUT THE COVER

A strikingly-marked bird of eastern deciduous forests, the worm-eating warbler's range reaches just into the most southeastern portion of the state. It is often found among the steep slopes of Shimek State Forest's Croton Unit—a migration hotspot for woodland birds. True to its name, it feeds primarily on caterpillars (worms). Read about the birds and butterflies of Shimek on pages 40-49. **BY TY SMEDES**

ABOUT THIS PHOTO

The small, gray tree frog can change colors, ranging from mottled grayish-green to solid green to gray or creamy white. It adapts to its surroundings—much like a chameleon—in seconds. There is no reliable way to tell the eastern and Cope's gray tree frogs—both having statewide distribution—apart. They can commonly be found at Shimek State Forest. **BY TY SMEDES**

Contents

MAY / JUNE 2016



DEPARTMENTS

13 Outdoor Skills

Try these tips for trail-happy kids, restore old raingear and sunguard boats. Get a vitamin D boost from your morel mushrooms. Learn to rid sticky pine sap with ease.

15 Together

Cross hundreds of species off your birding checklist with the help of pros at the first annual Big Day of Birding in Lucas County.

18 Lost in Iowa

Lounge in a deluxe cabin, play on clean lake waters and bask in the serenity of newly-renovated and reenergized Lake Darling State Park.

62 Wild Cuisine

Whip up a succulent rabbit meatloaf with this French-inspired recipe from Des Moines' Le Jardin.

66 Flora & Fauna

This fanciful songbird struts its stuff across Iowa in early spring. Keep an eye out and you might catch a pair dancing in the summer breeding season.

ABOUT THIS PHOTO

This Eastern tailed-blue butterfly is native to Iowa and feeds on various legumes like vetch and clover. Its caterpillars secrete a sugar and protein-rich substance so loved by ants that they protect caterpillars from harm. **BY TY SMEDES**

IOWA OUTDOORS

MAY / JUNE 2016 • VOLUME 10

STAFF

Brian Button - EDITOR
Alan Foster - MANAGING EDITOR
Jake Zweibohmer - ART DIRECTOR
Jessie Brown - COPY EDITOR
Mariah Griffith (Intern), Shannon
Jake Zweibohmer - PHOTOGRAPHER
Julie Tack - MARKETING AND ADVERTISING

STATE PRESERVES ADVISORY BOARD

Wayne Phipps, Jefferson
Loren Christensen, Elk Horn
Inger Lamb, Polk City
Bruce Trautman, Des Moines
Lynn Alex, Iowa City
Leesa McNeil, Sioux City
Dr. Kirk Larsen, Decorah

NATURAL RESOURCE COMMISSION

Margo Underwood, CHAIR, Clear Lake
Dr. Sally Prickett, VICE CHAIR, Glenwood
R. Kim Francisco, SECRETARY, Lucas
Dennis Schemmel, Grimes
Conrad Clement, Cresco

SUBSCRIBER SERVICES 800-368-6868

ADVERTISING OFFICE

Associations Inc. Tonga Vitzthum at 515.669.3010 or TV

DNR EXECUTIVE STAFF

Chuck Clipp - DIRECTOR
Bruce Trautman - DEPUTY DIRECTOR

DIVISION ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Bill Ehm - ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES • Kelley Myers -

DNR Central Office, 515.725.8200 • TTY users contact

Iowa Outdoors (ISSN 0022-0471) is published bimonthly by the Department of Natural Resources.

Periodicals postage paid Des Moines, IA. SUBSCRIPTION RATES: \$24 FOR TWO YEARS AND \$30 FOR THREE YEARS. PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE FOR RENEWALS AND ADDRESS CHANGES. POSTMASTER: Send changes to Iowa Outdoors, 502 E. North St., Des Moines, IA 50319-0034 or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 502 E. North St., Des Moines, IA 50319-0034.

Federal and state regulations prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, marital status, religion, or ancestry. If you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility, we described above, please contact the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of the Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division, 1400 ...

DNR MISSION

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

EDITORIAL MISSION

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

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

DNR volunteer programs help Iowans give back to lands, waters and skies. 515-725-8261 or iowadnr.gov/volunteer

HOW TO DONATE

Charitable giving of land, funds, goods and services greatly enhances Iowa's outdoors. Call Kim Rasler at 515-725-8440.

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT

Support wildlife diversity and REAP: Take your license plates and vehicle registration to your county treasurer's office to buy a pleasant, eagle, goldfinch, deer or trout natural resources plate.



IOWA OUTDOORS

MAY / JUNE 2016 • VOLUME 75 • ISSUE 3

STAFF

Brian Button - EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Alan Foster - MANAGING EDITOR
Jake Zweibohmer - ART DIRECTOR
Jessie Brown - COPY EDITOR
Mariah Griffith (intern), Shannon Hafner - WRITERS
Jake Zweibohmer - PHOTOGRAPHERS
Julie Tack - MARKETING AND PUBLICITY

STATE PRESERVES ADVISORY BOARD

Wayne Phipps, Jefferson
Loren Christensen, Elk Horn
Inger Lamb, Polk City
Bruce Trautman, Des Moines
Lynn Alex, Iowa City
Leesa McNeil, Sioux City
Dr. Kirk Larsen, Decorah

NATURAL RESOURCE COMMISSION

Margo Underwood, CHAIR, Clear Lake
Dr. Sally Prickett, VICE CHAIR, Glenwood
R. Kim Francisco, SECRETARY, LaCrosse
Dennis Schemmel, Grimes
Conrad Clement, Cresco

Marcus Branstad, Des Moines
Phyllis Reimer, Crescent

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COMMISSION

Mary Boote, Des Moines
Nancy Couser, Nevada
Joe Riding, Albia
Ralph Lents, Manly
Cindy Greiman, Garner
Robert Sinclair, Sigourney
Eugene Ver Steeg, Jewett
Chad Ingels, Randallia
LaQuanda Hoskins, LaCrosse

SUBSCRIBER SERVICES 800.361.8072

ADVERTISING OFFICE

Associations Inc. Tonya Vitzthum at 515.669.3010 or TVITZTHUM@ASSOCIATIONSINC.US

DNR EXECUTIVE STAFF

Chuck Gipp - DIRECTOR
Bruce Trautman - DEPUTY DIRECTOR

DIVISION ADMINISTRATORS

Bill Ehm - ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES • Kelley Myers - CONSERVATION AND RECREATION
DNR Central Office, 515.725.8200 • TTY users contact Relay Iowa, 800.735.2942

Iowa Outdoors ISSN 0022-0470 is published bi-monthly by the Department of Natural Resources, 502 E. 9th St., Des Moines, IA 50319. Periodicals postage paid Des Moines, IA. SUBSCRIPTION RATES: \$15 FOR ONE YEAR, \$24 FOR TWO YEARS AND \$30 FOR THREE YEARS. PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE. Include mailing label for renewals and address changes. POSTMASTER: Send changes to Iowa Outdoors, P.O. Box 17911, Boone, IA 50037-0821.

Federal and state regulations prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex or disability. State law also prohibits discrimination on the basis of creed, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, pregnancy or public accommodation. If you believe that you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility as described above, or for more information, write Director DNR, 502 E. 9th St., Des Moines, IA 50319-0034 or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Washington, D.C. 20540.

DNR MISSION

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

EDITORIAL MISSION

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

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

DNR volunteer programs help Iowans give back to lands, waters and skies. 800-725-8200 or iowadnr.gov/volunteer

HOW TO DONATE

Charitable giving of land, funds, goods and services greatly enhances Iowa's outdoors. Call Kim Rader at 800-725-8200.

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT

Support wildlife diversity and DNR! Take your license plates and vehicle registration to your county treasurer's office to buy a pheasant, eagle, goldfinch, deer or trout natural resources plate.

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES

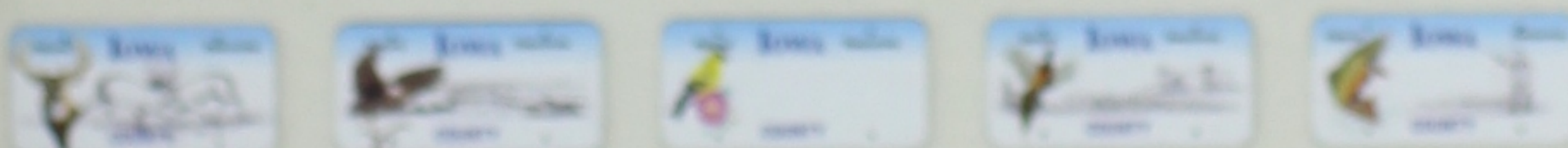
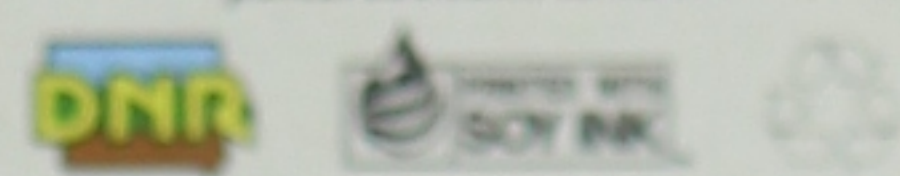
To subscribe, or for any subscription issues or questions, call 1-800-361-8072 Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. or weekends 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information, please have an issue with a mailing label available at time of call. To purchase a single copy for \$5, call 800-725-8200.

LEARN MORE

Buy Iowans, reserve compilations or learn about our environment at iowadnr.gov. See our magazine television show at jgiving.com.



[facebook.com/iowadnr](https://www.facebook.com/iowadnr)
twitter.com/iowadnr
[pinterest.com/iowadnr](https://www.pinterest.com/iowadnr)



Contributors

DAN MAGNESON

grew up in the southwest Iowa 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 the 1950s and 1960s were the absolute golden era of being a kid, and that nowhere on earth was this more true than in Iowa.

BRIAN GIBBS

Clayton County naturalist, has been addicted to wild places ever since his father first took him trout fishing in Yellow River State Forest. His passion for teaching others



about enjoying and conserving natural beauty has led him to work in such scenic places as Glacier National Park. When not teaching, Gibbs is exploring the natural beauty hidden amongst the bluffs and valleys of northeast Iowa.

CANDACE ORD MANROE

is a freelance writer specializing in travel, design and the outdoors. She is the author of 19 books and



numerous articles for national and state magazines and major metropolitan newspapers. Among those are *Texas Highways*, *Better Homes & Gardens*, *Architectural Digest*, *The Dallas Morning News*, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* and *The Des Moines Register*. A former editor for *Traditional Home* and *Country Home* magazines, she enjoys birding, camping and hiking.

TY SMEDES

is a full-time writer and photographer from Urbandale. Ty is published in dozens of nature magazines and teaches photography. His new book, *Iowa's Wild Beauty*, is available at iowan.com or 1-877-899-9977 ext. 211.



Myth Busters

BY MARIAH GRIFFITH PHOTO BY COLIN WEHRLE



VIRAL FACEBOOK POST

The photo, taken on a private pond in southeast Iowa, was sent to the DNR by Colin Wehrle of Moline, Ill., who took the image with his smartphone while fishing. The image, posted on the DNR Facebook page, became a viral hit, prompting hundreds of thousands of views, likes and comments. It attracted coverage in print and television media. No word on how the shy snake reacted to all the hubbub. For up-to-date images, tips, ideas and more, follow DNR's Facebook, Pinterest and Twitter accounts. Learn more at iowadnr.gov.

GIVE THE GIFT THAT LASTS ALL YEAR

6 BIG ISSUES FOR JUST \$15

☐ BILL ME LATER ☐ CHECK ENCLOSED
OR CALL 1-800-361-8073 TO SUBSCRIBE TODAY

only fold
effectively
along its
of its mo
of a garte
contracti
bacteria,
The no
Because
a cottonn
of venom
non-venom
themselves

GIVE THE GIFT THAT LASTS ALL YEAR

6 BIG ISSUES FOR JUST \$15

☐ BILL ME LATER ☐ CHECK ENCLOSED

OR CALL 1-800-361-8072 TO SUBSCRIBE TODAY

SEND GIFT TO:

NAME (please print)

ADDRESS / APT

CITY / STATE / ZIP

FROM:

NAME (please print)

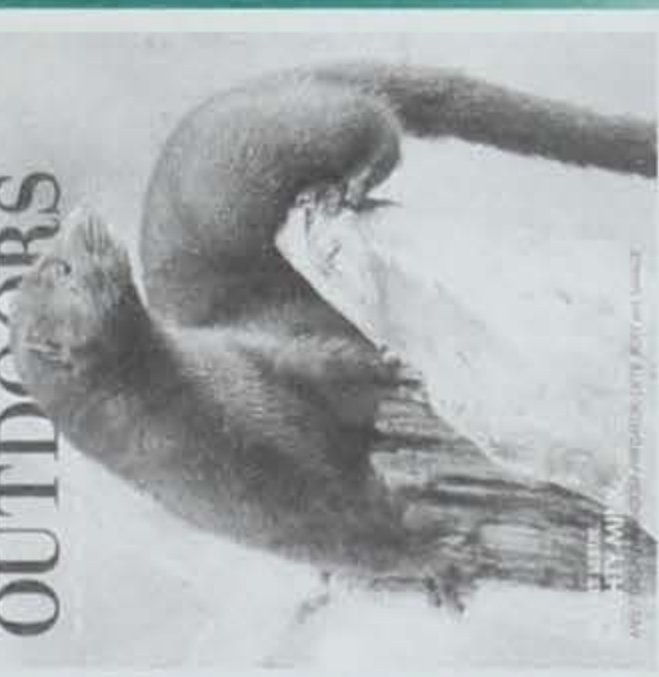
ADDRESS / APT

CITY / STATE / ZIP

U16A

6/15

IOWA
OUTDOORS



please allow 6-8 weeks for delivery

only fold flat in one direction. From the head, the snake effectively walks each side of its lower jaw independently along its prey, using small teeth on the roof and sides of its mouth for traction. (See the illustration above of a garter snake skull.) Once swallowed, muscular contractions move the meal down the long body as bacteria, enzymes and stomach acids digest.

The northern water snake is also a source of myth. Because of its coloration, they are often misidentified as a cottonmouth (aka water moccasin), leading to the belief of venomous swimming snakes in Iowa. Not so. Although non-venomous, northern water snakes are quick to defend themselves and can inflict a bite, so if you see one it's best

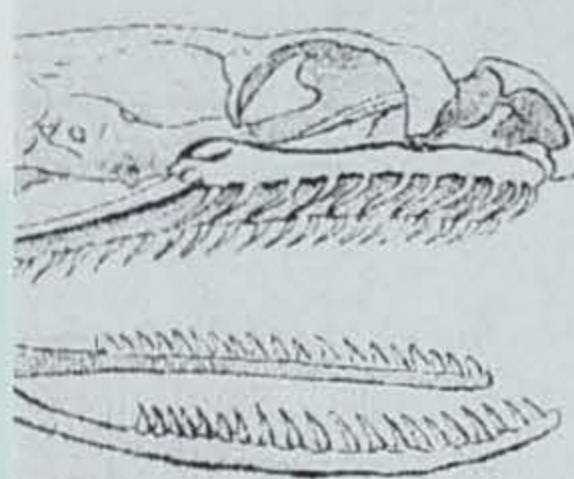
SNAKES AND WATER AREN'T THE SAME?

to observe it and leave it alone. (They are also a protected species, making it illegal to harm, collect or kill.)

DID YOU KNOW?

Of the three water snake species in Iowa, northern water snakes are by far the most abundant, and one of the most common large snakes. Often seen by anglers, some mistake them for the venomous cottonmouth, which is not found in Iowa. This snake is active during daytime, often basking on branches, shrubs, tree roots and along the banks of waterways.

DISLOCATE JAWS?



Always wary, they slip off their basking perch at any sign of danger. Some swim with their heads above water or swim back to shore in a semi-circle. Others dive to the bottom and anchor themselves to logs, branches, rocks or other debris. Most resurface within five minutes, but can remain submerged for an hour and a half.

Northern water snakes actively hunt fish, amphibians, baby turtles, young snakes, worms, leeches, crayfish and mammals. A wider variety of prey is sought during higher temperatures. They eat small meals every day or every other day and patrol the water next to the shore for food. They sometimes swim through a school of small fish with their mouths open to swallow anything they catch or herd fish into the shallows, then create a barrier with a loose coil of their bodies. —source: herpnet.net

PROTECTED SNAKE

Found statewide, except northwest Iowa, the non-venomous northern water snake is a medium to large sized snake, ranging 24 to 42 inches in length with heavy bodies. As one of Iowa's most commonly seen snakes, they are usually seen by anglers, boaters and paddlers. It is illegal to kill or collect this species by law in Iowa.

LEARN MORE: To find a complete online field guide to the amphibians and reptiles of Iowa, visit herpnet.net

GOT A QUESTION?

SEND TO: AskTheExperts@dnr.iowa.gov

Myth Busters

BY MARIAH GRIFFITH PHOTO BY COLIN WEHRLE



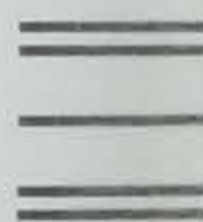
VIRAL FACEBOOK POST

The photo, taken on a private pond in southeast Iowa, was sent to the DNR by Colin Wehrle of Moline, Ill., who took the image with his smartphone while fishing. The image, posted on the DNR Facebook page, became a viral hit, prompting hundreds of thousands of views, likes and comments. It attracted coverage in print and television media. No word on how the shy snake reacted to all the hubbub. For up-to-date images, tips, ideas and more, follow DNR's Facebook, Pinterest and Twitter accounts. Learn more at iowadnr.gov.



IOWA
OUTDOORS

PO BOX 37831
BOONE IA 50037-0831



PLACE
POSTAGE
HERE

NO
MO

A
fter
Apri
last Ma
could ea
Long
equipe
The
to cram
floating
muscles
bone or
Actual
lower ja
very ac
conne
This jo
open ve
degrees
Addition
chin, bot
held toge
tendon. T
to greatly
mouth sid
prey with

Snakes
need then
cannot tea
everything

Snakes
injuries fr
only fold f
effectively
along its p
of its mou
of a garter
contraction
bacteria, e

The non
Because o
a cottonmo
of venomo
non-venom
themselves

NORTHERN WATER SNAKES AND WATER MOCCASINS ARE ONE IN THE SAME?

After this image of an ambitious water snake with a prized catch was posted on the DNR Facebook page last May, thousands of followers wondered if the snake could eat such relatively large prey, and if so, how?

Long story short: yes, but how a snake is so well-equipped to do so is a tad complicated.

The myth that snakes unhinge or dislocate their jaws to cram prey in their mouth is false. A dislocated, free-floating jaw would be useless, as the attached tendons and muscles wouldn't move it without leverage against another bone or joint.

Actually, a snake's lower jaw is set into a very accommodating joint connecting to the upper skull. This joint allows the jaws to open vertically nearly 180 degrees in certain species. Additionally, instead of a bony chin, both sides of the jaw are held together by a stretchy tendon. This allows a snake to greatly expand its jaws and mouth sideways and swallow prey without distressing its bone structure.

Snakes are the only animals with such jaws, and they need them. With no limbs, a snake has little leverage and cannot tear meals into smaller pieces. So it must ingest everything whole.

Snakes learn to eat their catch head-first to avoid injuries from spiny fins, limbs and appendages that only fold flat in one direction. From the head, the snake effectively walks each side of its lower jaw independently along its prey, using small teeth on the roof and sides of its mouth for traction. (See the illustration above of a garter snake skull.) Once swallowed, muscular contractions move the meal down the long body as bacteria, enzymes and stomach acids digest.

The northern water snake is also a source of myth. Because of its coloration, they are often misidentified as a cottonmouth (aka water moccasin), leading to the belief of venomous swimming snakes in Iowa. Not so. Although non-venomous, northern water snakes are quick to defend themselves and can inflict a bite, so if you see one it's best

to observe it and leave it alone. (They are also a protected species, making it illegal to harm, collect or kill.)

DID YOU KNOW?

Of the three water snake species in Iowa, northern water snakes are by far the most abundant, and one of the most common large snakes. Often seen by anglers, some mistake them for the venomous cottonmouth, which is not found in Iowa. This snake is active during daytime, often basking on branches, shrubs, tree roots and along the banks of waterways.

Always wary, they slip off their basking perch at any sign of danger. Some swim with their heads above water or swim back to shore in a semi-circle. Others dive to the bottom and anchor themselves to logs, branches, rocks or other debris. Most resurface within five minutes, but can remain submerged for an hour and a half.

Northern water snakes

actively hunt fish, amphibians, baby turtles, young snakes, worms, leeches, crayfish and mammals. A wider variety of prey is sought during higher temperatures. They eat small meals every day or every other day and patrol the water next to the shore for food. They sometimes swim through a school of small fish with their mouths open to swallow anything they catch or herd fish into the shallows, then create a barrier with a loose coil of their bodies. —source: herpnet.net

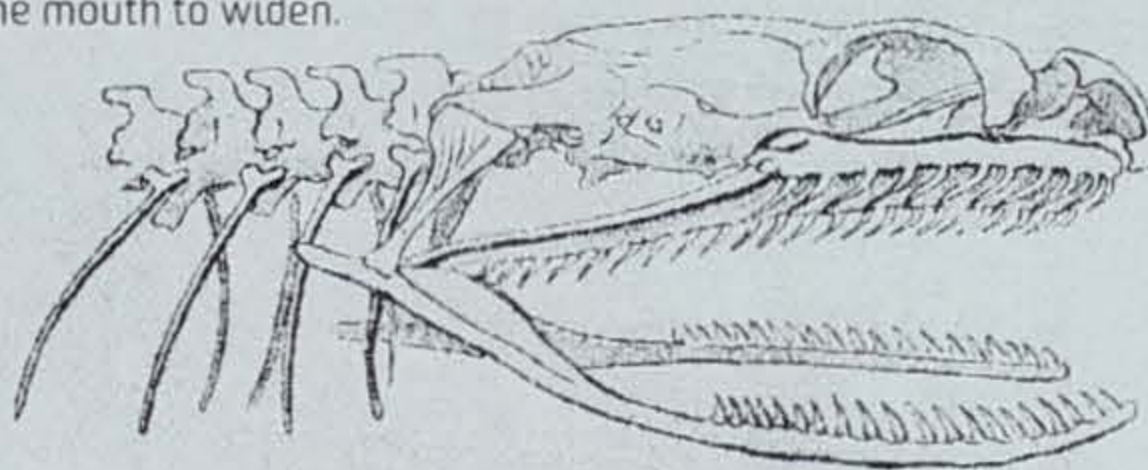
PROTECTED SNAKE

Found statewide, except northwest Iowa, the non-venomous northern water snake is a medium to large sized snake, ranging 24 to 42 inches in length with heavy bodies. As one of Iowa's most commonly seen snakes, they are usually seen by anglers, boaters and paddlers. It is illegal to kill or collect this species by law in Iowa.

LEARN MORE: To find a complete online field guide to the amphibians and reptiles of Iowa, visit herpnet.net

DO SNAKES DISLOCATE THEIR JAWS?

Snakes lack a bony chin to allow the mouth to widen.



Ask THE Expert

BY MARIAH GRIFFITH PHOTO BY TONY MOLINE

Got a question?

Send to: AskTheExperts@dnriowa.gov

WHY DOES SKUNK SPRAY SMELL SO BAD AND WHY IS IT HARD TO GET RID OF?

—Joan, in Black Hawk County

Iowa Striped Skunk Population Facts

In the 1930s, striped skunks were, proportionally, the second most harvested furbearer species in Iowa. The all-time high was set in the 1936-1937 season with a whopping harvest of 153,497 animals. But the annual take has steadily declined since then, dropping below 10,000 by the early 1950s and averaging below 1,000 since 2008. In the 2014-2015 season, just 642 skunks were harvested with an average pelt price of \$4.18.

Based on Iowa Bowhunter Observation Survey data, skunk populations increased slightly in southwest, north-central and northeast Iowa since last year, and decreased in the northwest. Numbers are currently highest in western and south-central Iowa. Survey data indicates that largely stable and decent numbers of skunks live statewide, but low market prices for furs encourage low annual harvests.

Everything about a skunk says, “don’t mess with me.” Their distinctive black and white stripes show they don’t need to hide for safety. If a curious predator doesn’t get that message, the skunk employs an intimidating foot-stamping. If a threatening animal still doesn’t respond to an obvious tail-lifting, the skunk lets loose.

Skunk spray is a liquid produced by the animal’s anal glands containing several types of volatile chemical compounds. The primary stinky compounds are thiols and thioacetates, both rich in sulfur—the same element that makes rotten eggs gag-inducing. Sulfur atoms in thiols and thioacetates also have a lot of stability in the way they bond to other atoms, which is part of the reason the smell is hard to get rid of.

The odor is also hard to rid as skunks can spray so precisely. Using two muscular and independently-rotating nozzles, a skunk can spray a direct stream of oily, sulfurous liquid from its rear at a nearby predator, or choose to release a mist for a general or unpredictable threat. However, skunks generally conserve their spray, which may take more than a week to replenish. They also seem to dislike the stench as well, as adults will not spray

each other for anything except fights between males during mating season. They typically posture and fight for things like territory disputes.

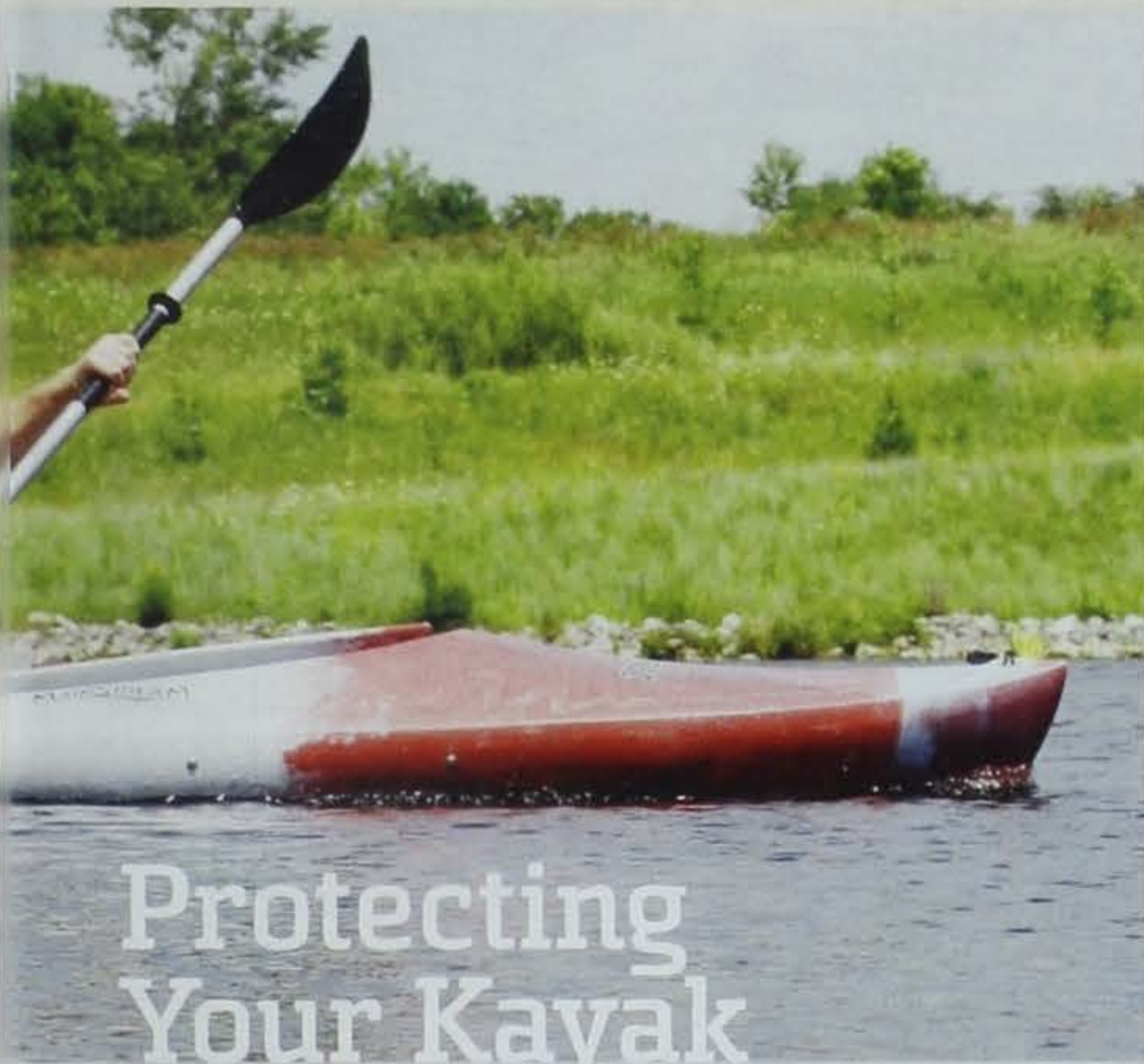
Baby skunks, called kits, can spray from the time they’re born and have been reported to spray each other for fun—stink-bombing a littermate and then running to the other side of the den.

So what is the best way to remove skunk odor? Myth says use tomato juice, but that isn’t very successful. An effective wash must chemically grab onto sulfur molecules and wash it away and neutralize thiols by changing them into less odorous compounds. The Humane Society of the United States recommends a mixture of one quart hydrogen peroxide, one teaspoon dishwashing liquid and a quarter cup baking soda for general cleaning. It works on pets, too. Clean sensitive areas such as eyes with cool running water.

Aromatic Meal— Top Predators of Skunks

Vehicles are the leading cause of death for Iowa striped skunks. The skunks’ most successful natural predator—the great horned owl—doesn’t have a sense of smell. Skunks are also prey for coyotes, rogue dogs, occasionally badgers and possibly bobcats, says DNR furbearer biologist Vince Evelsizer.

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



Protecting Your Kayak

Sunlight can harm just about any canoe or kayak hull material, from fiberglass to Royalex to polyethylene—only aluminum canoes are unaffected by ultraviolet rays. Spray on and wipe off a protectant such as Harmony 303, McNett UV Tech or others to add UV protection and prevent fading. Use to also protect flotation bags, PFDs and other gear exposed to sunlight.



How to Remove Pine Sap

Soap and water alone don't cut it. Rub with olive oil or other cooking oil to loosen sap (a few squirts of hand sanitizer works, too), then wash with soap and water. Hand sanitizer can also remove sap from clothing.

Restore Rain Gear

Before replacing costly rain jackets or pants, try restoring them. Like most rainwear, Gore-Tex and other brands use a durable water repellent (DWR) treatment on its outer surface to cause water to bead up and roll off. This clears the fabric so sweat and body heat can pass through from the inside.

Eventually, DWR wears off and water no longer beads. The fabric may absorb water and become heavier.

Test your rainwear by spraying water on its exterior. If it beads up and rolls off or flies off after a shake the DWR is in good shape. If it sits on top and the fabric darkens slightly, water is making its way to the fibers.

To renew DWR, launder according to care instructions and tumble dry or iron using a steam setting. Often, this restores beading. If not, use a spray-on or wash-in DWR treatment revival product from companies such as Granger's, Nikwax, McNett or Penguin.

Suntan Morels For More Vitamin D

Morel mushrooms are low in calories, a good source of fiber and are packed with essential vitamins and minerals, including iron, potassium and vitamin D. Vitamin D helps your body absorb calcium and supports bone health. After picking, put morels in the sun for at least five minutes to ramp up vitamin D levels (similar to human skin, fungi manufacture vitamin D after sunlight exposure). Dehydrate some of spring's bounty to consume next winter, when vitamin D levels tend to be lowest in our bodies.



Fishing Ethics

PHOTO BY JAKE ZWEIBOHMER

THE COMPLETE ANGLER

Fishing With Respect And Honor

Nothing dampens a relaxing day of fishing quicker than a jetty covered in trash or a shoreline littered with fish carcasses. From fishing line to lures, and bait containers to bottles, shoreline litter degrades the experience for those that come later. Litter can be hazardous and unhealthy, can negatively impact wildlife, is wasteful, does not reflect the need to recycle and shows a disrespect for the resource and the people. Follow these guidelines, set forth by the "Tread Lightly" organization, to ensure all enjoy their experience.

- Pack out what you pack in. Carry a trash bag to pick up litter left by others. Better yet, do so in front of others to encourage them to do the same.
- Pack out discarded fishing line. Monofilament line is especially dangerous to wildlife.
- Make sure snagged lures and line are removed if possible.
- Never discard fish entrails in shallows or any area where others can see. Pack out entrails, dispose of in deeper water or discard at least 100 yards away from any lake, trail or camp.
- Dumped bait can introduce unwanted, harmful nuisance species to water bodies, leading to a decline

in the fishery and, in some cases, a costly renovation that impacts the lake for several years. Properly dispose of bait in a trash can or tall grass away from public view.

- If practicing catch-and-release, use barbless single hooks to make release easier. Pinch the barb with a pair of pliers. Keep fish in the water as much as possible, limiting air exposure to under 30 seconds at a time and 60 seconds total. Handle them as little as possible, with wet hands, and release them gently into the water.
- Knotless or rubber mesh nets are much gentler on fish and significantly increase release survival rates.
- For photos, hold fish horizontally—supporting their weight—not vertically, which can cause fatal injuries even if the fish swims away.
- Before and after a trip, wash your gear, watercraft and support vehicle to reduce the spread of invasive species. Remove all plant material from watercraft, motor, trailer and other gear and dispose of on dry land in a garbage container. Drain livewells, bilge water and transom wells at the boat launch prior to leaving. It's the law.
- Organize a "Clean Up Day" at your favorite fishing spot—involve youth in the effort.

The Ethical Angler

- Keeps only the fish he or she needs
- Doesn't pollute—properly disposes of trash and helps clean up litter along waterways
- Observes fishing and boating regulations
- Respects other anglers' and homeowners' rights
- Supports local conservation efforts
- Doesn't release live bait into lakes, streams or rivers
- Promotes the sport of fishing and passes on knowledge and skills to others

GET INVOLVED: BAG IT

Trash along waterways is not only unsightly, it can impact access. Pond owners who routinely deal with trash left behind often deny permission to fish. And recently, Des Moines closed fishing along the downtown Principal Riverwalk due to trash and bait left behind by some anglers. Take a stand against trash and pack out

not only what you pack in, but what others leave behind, with reusable mesh bags provided by the DNR.

The free bags are limited to two—one for the tackle box and one for the boat, canoe or kayak—however those organizing cleanups may order larger quantities. To order, contact **todd.robertson@dnr.iowa.gov** or

515-725-2960 or stop by the Wallace Building, 502 E. 9th Street, Des Moines. If emailing, provide shipping address in the email.

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



ACTIVITIES, TIPS AND EVENTS FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

FROM A TO Z

This issue's column will run the gamut from A to Z—Aedes to Zika—and will also go long...stretching more than 100 years in scope. First, let me share some very good news. The Zika virus-carrying Aedes mosquito is not established in Iowa. So if planning a summer trip to Okoboji, Pine Lake State Park or any other Iowa destination, keep on planning and enjoy our outdoors.

Currently there is a great deal of buzz (pun intended) regarding the Zika virus. Yet our state is fortunate the known ally of the virus, the aforementioned Aedes mosquito, barely wanders as far north as Missouri. According to the Iowa Department of Public Health, the risk of this virus to Iowans is slight, if nonexistent, unless you travel outside the state. If you go to the Caribbean or Central or South America, you need to use mosquito precautions. However, if you are pregnant and planning on traveling these parts of the world they suggest not going. (They would also like to extend their congratulations.) Might I suggest skipping the Olympics and replacing it with your own outdoor exercise at a state park instead?

If you are pregnant or planning on that status, a shorter trip to any Iowa park would be advised, not just as plan B, but plan A. The comment from the IDPH was: "It isn't called the great outdoors for nothing." Sunlight, exercise and even being dormant while relaxing among the trees or floating on the water provide a positive health intervention. Taking precautions against mosquitoes and ticks is always advisable...but quarantining yourself from nature is not.

Now for the long part. In the 1880s, France attempted to build a canal in Panama. The connection between mosquitoes and disease was not known then. More than 20,000 workers died from yellow fever, malaria and accidents, and the French called it quits. We took over in 1904 and began mosquito control programs for worker safety, completing the Panama Canal 10 years later.

The canal achievement, a marvel of its time, was immediately overshadowed by the start of The Great War. So rather than celebrate and learn about the control of mosquitoes and disease, our national attention turned to WWI—the war to end all wars. But the fight against Aedes mosquitoes continued, and in 1947, the public health surveillance of the little bugger for yellow fever research led to the



discovery of the Zika virus in Ugandan monkeys.

Now having ranged over to monkeys, let me scoot to pets. Ask your veterinarian about mosquito, flea and tick control options. And after any romp in the woods or tall grass, check dogs for ticks. (And yourself, too.) It could take 24 to 48 hours for the transmission of an infection, so timely removal of ticks is a crucial pet health ritual.

Who's a good owner...you are...yes you are.

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.



Together HALF DAY ON \$50

BY BRIAN BUTTON PHOTOS BY TY SMEDES



Kentucky warbler

ADD TO YOUR BIRDING LIST IN LUCAS COUNTY AND SUPPORT ECO-TOURISM

Head to one of Iowa's premier birding venues rich in expansive tracts of forest, pockets of tallgrass prairie and loads of bird species—more than 240 to be exact. There's no better way to expand your personal bird checkoff list than attending the first Big Day of Birding event in Lucas County while exploring local camping and sights, too. It's free and everyone from true beginners to lifelong birders will learn tips and skills from experts.

Stephens State Forest already holds some of the largest varieties

of woodland birds in Iowa, especially migrating warblers—those colorful “jewels of the forest” that attract birders from across the state and nation.

The area is so good it boasts two DNR-designated Bird Conservation Areas—also listed as Important Bird Areas under a worldwide program through Great Britain-based Birdlife International.

With three days of activities planned, attendees can spend as much or as little time birding as they wish. For those that have just a few hours, come anytime

Saturday, May 21 (some will start as early as 5 a.m.) to get plugged into a bird team when you arrive. Teams canvas the countryside to identify as many species as they can. It is hoped some previously undocumented species will be discovered. Guides will lead walks and help beginners learn identification tricks.

For those with more time, start at 7 p.m., Friday, May 20 learning about the Big Day of Birding at the Pin Oak Nature Lodge just south of Chariton. The evening includes a film. Then early on Saturday, teams leave the lodge, and continuing into

Hooded warbler



GET HELP TO LAUNCH YOUR PROGRAM

A REAP community education mini-grant is helping Lucas County launch their first Big Day of Birding. The leveraged funds help projects with measureable results that engage Iowans in natural resources, benefitting Iowa's environment and citizens. Grant deadlines are May 15 and Nov. 1. Learn more at iowadnr.gov/reap.

Birding Rendezvous Locale:

PIN OAK MARSH LODGE

Lucas County Conservation Board
45996 Highway 14
(One mile south of Chariton.)
641-774-2438

Area Lodging

RED HAW STATE PARK is one mile east of Chariton on Highway 34 with reservable campsites. Beautiful lake, fishing, trails and more. Reserve at **1-877-IAPARKS** or iowadnr.gov.

HONEY CREEK RESORT STATE PARK is 30 miles southeast of Chariton. For room or cabin reservations, call **877-677-3344** or honeycreekresort.com.

STEPHENS STATE FOREST offers non-modern campsites for \$9 per night. Reserve at **1-877-IAPARKS** or iowadnr.gov.

Local Amenities and Attractions

From famous handmade candies to custom motorcycles or Amish tours, Lucas County has surprises. For details on lodging, food and attractions in Chariton, call the chamber at **641-774-4059** or visit charitonareachambermainstreet.com

DID YOU KNOW?

Birding is one of the most popular outdoor activities nationwide, with an estimated 44 million participants. Birding has more participants nationally than golf and attracts many wildlife enthusiasts in Iowa, too, shows survey data by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. More than 165,000 Iowans took trips away from home specifically to watch birds.



evening, explore the county to search out species. Teams turn in their lists Saturday night, and by Sunday morning, final tallies are presented.

The event promises to not only promote birding to families and individuals with limited birding skills, but for expert birders to share their skills with each other. And your visit helps promote natural area protection and expansion.

County leaders are hosting the event to learn more about local bird species and promote sustainable eco-tourism,

with longer goals of creating local conservation support and more bird habitat over time.

"We recognize our local natural areas are a draw. Lucas County should be a birding destination," says county tourism chair and former DNR interim-director Lyle Asell. "This event will give us a snapshot of what species are here on a given day," he says.

And with great turnout and local support, organizers hope to grow the event into an annual festival, while encouraging local residents,

towns and landowners to further the eco-tourism cause with bird-friendly habitat improvements and conservation awareness.

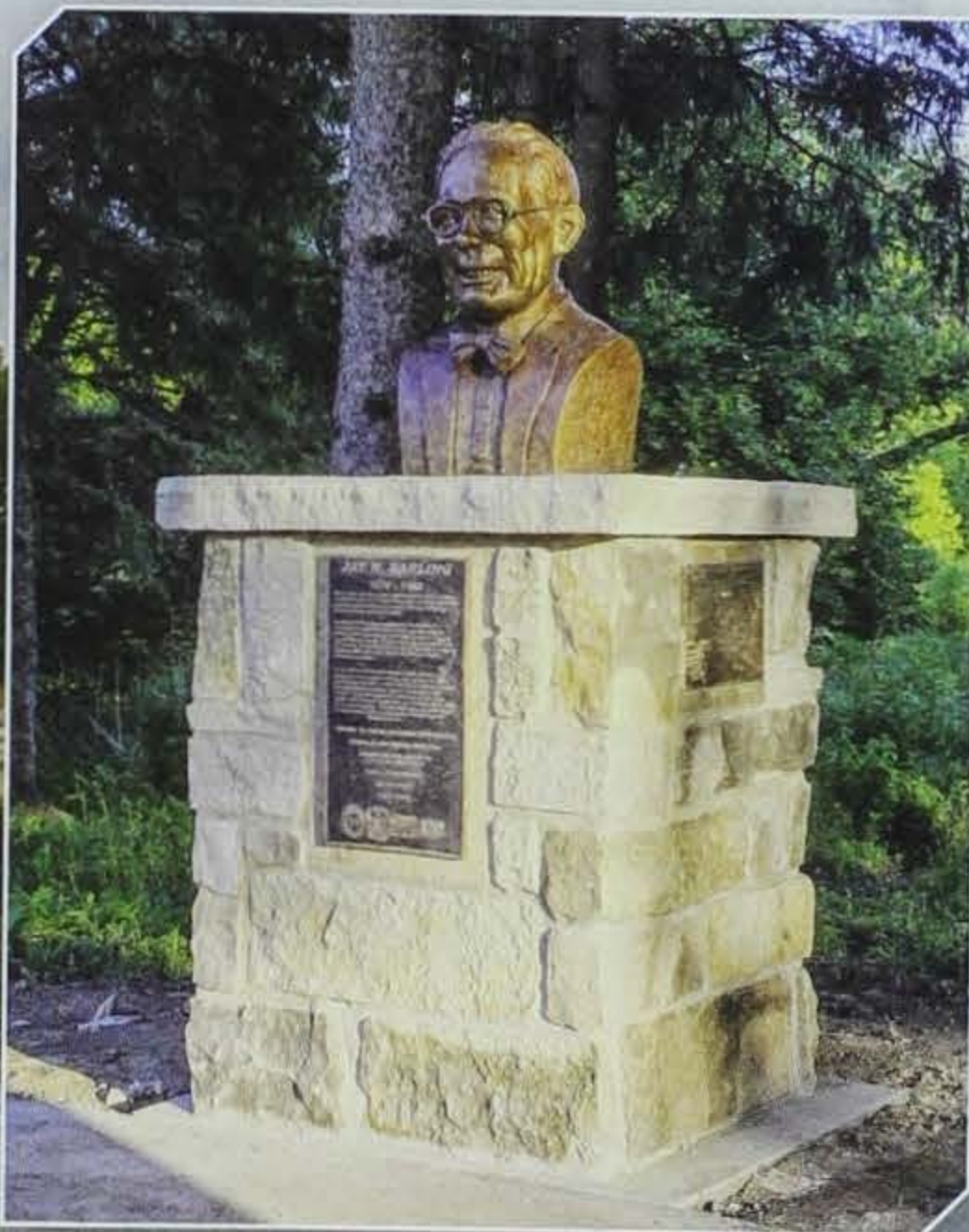
Free T-Shirt for Registrants

Register in advance for the no-cost event and receive a free t-shirt. Some birding materials, such as binoculars, guide books and other supplies provided, but if you have your own, bring them. To register, contact Kris Patrick at **641-774-4059** or charitonchamber@iowatelecom.net.

Welcome Back, Darling

After a \$12 million rehab of its lake, watershed and public facilities, Lake Darling State Park in southeast Iowa officially reopened Sept. 17, 2014. The 66-year-old park and lake are now among the state's most picturesque recreation areas.


Namesake "Ding" Darling must be smiling.



The storm hit abruptly. Rain pelted our skin, coming at us sideways, as we dashed for the cabin. The 300-acre lake, pitted by the downpour, turned the pale color of chewed gum. Wind gusts of 60 miles per hour picked off branches of pine, sycamore and white oak and hurled them to the ground. Casualties piled up in the meadow between our cabin and the lake. Kindling for our next campfire would be easy pickings among the Queen Anne's lace, pea partridge, wild bergamot and prairie

coneflowers, thanks to Mother Nature's special delivery. The most intense moment was a take-no-prisoners lightning strike. We couldn't see it hit the old-growth tree at the east end of the park, splitting and burning it, but its thunderous aftermath was deafening. We felt chastened.

Nicky, my husky bred to run, of course chose that moment to honor his DNA. He streaked past me out the cabin door and disappeared into the smear of wind-born water like an Iditarod contender. Thankfully, the



The 302-acre lake has always been the shining star since the park opened in 1950. But siltation from a large watershed degraded the lake, and park usage declined. After a decade-long renovation project, the lake is back on top. For every 3 acres of lake, there is 1 acre of sediment-trapping pond in the watershed to keep the lake clean. The new ponds are also good places to fish.

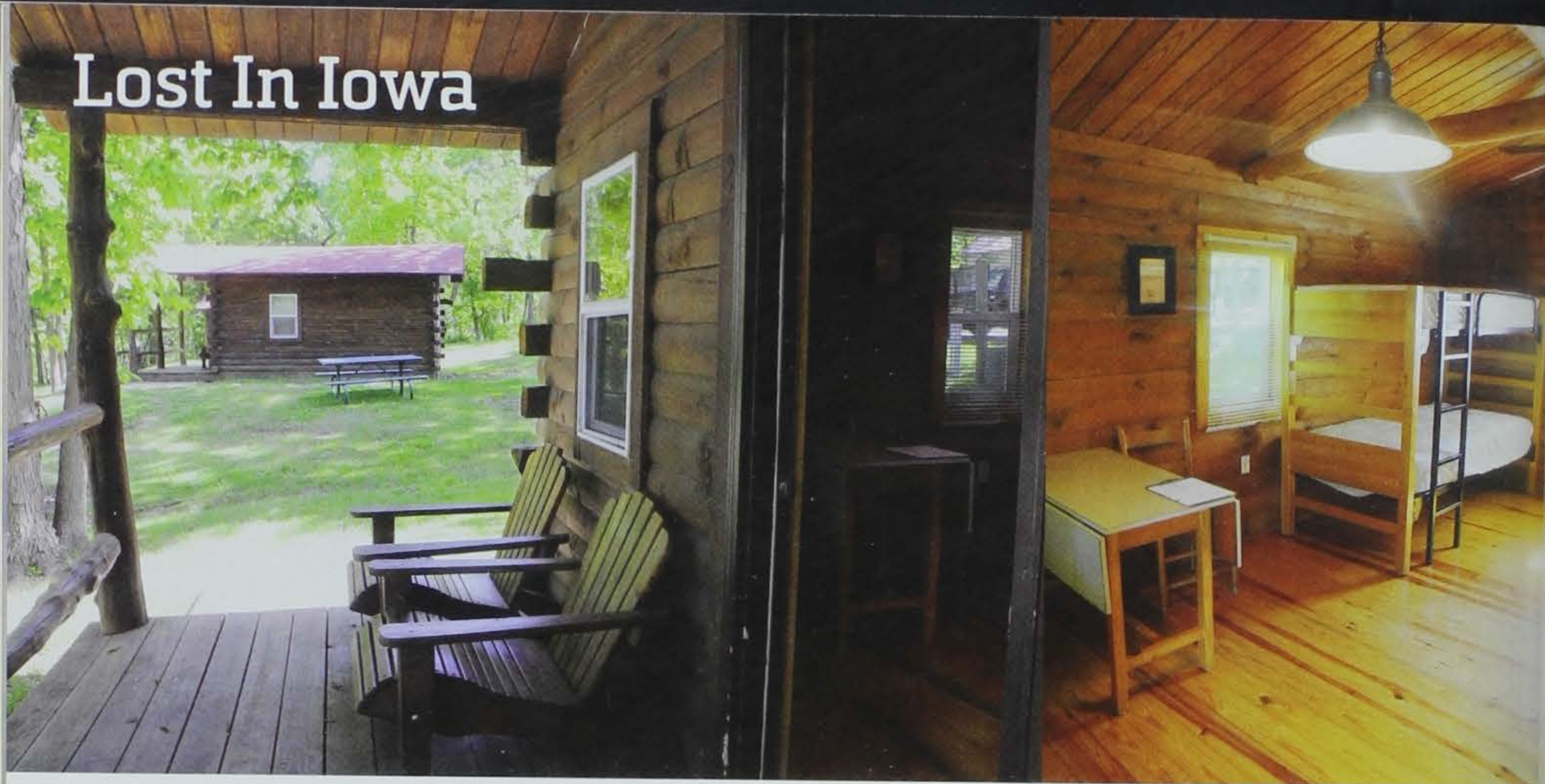
adrenaline-fueled dog search that ensued ended only minutes later, back near the cabin, with Nicky splashing into my vehicle at the same time Park Ranger Zachary Haworth swung by to instruct us on where to seek shelter. By the time the weather sirens sounded, Nicky had been towel-dried, and my companion and I had warmed up in fresh clothes. The worst had passed, so we stayed put. Through the open windows of our one-room pine log cabin, we watched the storm run its course. Wet earth and ozone

smelled delicious. Sans alcohol, we were intoxicated.

It was another perfect day at Lake Darling State Park.

As a weather-lover, only one thing thrills me more than a severe but life-and-property sparing storm, and that's one that occurs at a pristine lake where I'm lucky enough to be camping. Our cabin was one of the five original rentals built at the park in the 1970s. It has electricity, a microwave and a mini-fridge, but its absence of plumbing designates it as a camping cabin. Shower and restroom

Lost In Iowa



Almost everything has changed at Lake Darling State Park during renovation, excluding five original camping cabins, located in the south crook of the Y-shaped lake. They sleep four, with a bunk bed, futon, microwave and mini-fridge. Six new year-round cabins are available perhaps as early as July (check iowadnr.gov for availability.) The new Cottonwood Shelter will accommodate even the largest of family gatherings or social events, and offers a great view of the lake. **OPPOSITE:** Rain events used to turn the lake a chocolate brown, but 27 retention ponds now trap sediment and prevent it from entering the lake. The remarkable difference is evident in water samples taken in 1999 and after watershed work. One improvement anglers will appreciate is a concrete fishing trail that skirts the lakeshore for roughly 1.5 miles. It's perfect for the mobility-impaired and those with young children. Wildlife abound at the southeast Iowa park, including an occasional visit from migrating flocks of pelicans.



"What people often don't understand is that to clean up the water, **you must first address the land.**"



Donald Kline



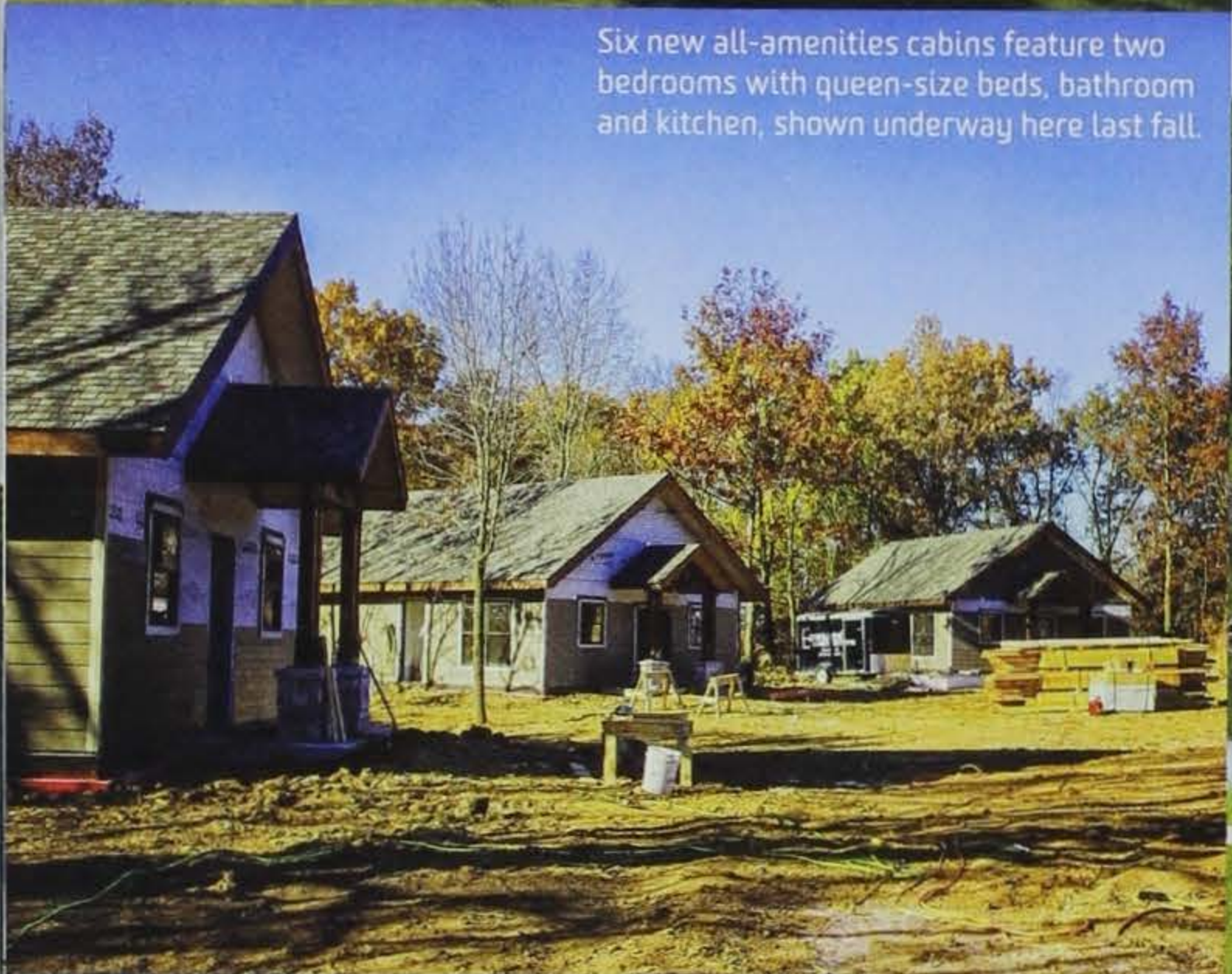
Water samples pre- and post-lake renovation show visible improvements.



Lost In Iowa



Six new all-amenities cabins feature two bedrooms with queen-size beds, bathroom and kitchen, shown underway here last fall.



facilities (the best storm shelter) are just up the hill. The park also has 80 campsites. Since our visit, it has built six new all-amenities-included cabins that are open year-round. "They have two bedrooms with queen-size beds, a bathroom and a kitchen. They are really mini-houses," explains Haworth. They rent for \$85 per night or \$510 for a week.

But I loved our snug camping cabin—a deal at \$35 a night. Nothing could beat the tiny, quasi-primitive place for weathering a storm. And it was revitalizing to finally unplug. No Wi-Fi access or TV gave that evening's reading time a throwback quality. I was Laura Ingalls Wilder. Only instead of reading my novel by lantern, I was using the light from a solar-powered battery-pack/flashlight I'd borrowed from a friend. Propped on pillows I'd brought from home (it's BYO-bedding in the original camping cabins), the palm-size flashlight meant I could turn off the overhead and read from my futon without disturbing my friend sleeping in the bottom bunk just three feet away.

The day of the big storm, the sky had held clear till evening. We'd risen late, tired from our sunset paddle across the lake with Nicky in our park-rental canoe the day before. After cooking breakfast over a campfire, we hiked one of the nearby trails with Nicky on his lead (the park welcomes dogs on leashes.) Then I splintered off to tour the park with Haworth, who's now into his second year as its ranger.

We started near the park entrance, where an information post with kiosks explains the history and wildlife of the park. I'm glad I took the time to read it. I learned about the park's namesake, Jay N. "Ding" Darling (1876-1962), a nationally syndicated, two-time-Pulitzer-Prize-winning *Des Moines Register* political cartoonist, visionary conservationist and resident of Washington County, where the 1,400-acre park is located.

While still working as a cartoonist and rubbing shoulders with heads of state and other elected officials in 1932, Darling was appointed to Iowa's Fish and Game

CAMPING: TRAIL AND RIVER PHOTOS BY CLAY SATTLE; LODGE INTERIOR: PHOTOS BY JENNIFER BLANK

Much came from the Lake Darling non-profit more than improved came from the did beat the ADA-compliance and planning volunteer hours. But the of the all-season large group equipment painted and furnished with gear cooling reused beach house. Commi wildlife greas nation's most an in the c by Darl Survey. Fish & the Iowa Departn is the fa So w County choosing initially prevailed officially terms. "I



Much of the renovation work came thanks to the Friends of Lake Darling State Park. The non-profit volunteer group raised more than \$1 million for park improvements. The luxury cabins came thanks to the group. So did beach improvements, a new ADA-compliant fishing bridge and playground. Group members volunteered countless labor hours for smaller park projects. But the Friends' pride—and that of the park—is the vaulted ceiling all-season lodge, a magnet for large gatherings. The fully-equipped kitchen features hand-painted tiles of the park's flora and fauna. It's also eco-friendly, with geothermal heating and cooling and a fireplace built from reused stones from the original beach house.



Commission. He immediately pushed for research in wildlife conservation and pledged his own money to grease the wheel for outside funding. The result was the nation's first Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit. The most ambitious natural resource program ever undertaken in the country, it was held up as a model for other states by Darling when he became head of the U.S. Biological Survey. The 25-year Iowa conservation plan merged the Fish & Game Commission and the Park Board to create the Iowa Conservation Commission, now known as the Department of Natural Resources. Darling, in a real sense, is the father of the DNR.

So when Honey Creek in Darling's Washington County was dammed to form a new lake in the late 1940s, choosing an appropriate name was a no-brainer. Darling initially balked at the honor, but his Iowa pragmatism prevailed. By the time the new state park and lake were officially dedicated on Sept. 17, 1950, he had come to terms. "I begin to see some virtue in the name 'Darling

Lake on Honey Creek,'" he said. After the dedication by the Iowa Conservation Commission, the lake's two-word name was transposed into Lake Darling to avoid any confusion with a generic "darling lake." (What the media-savvy Darling failed to mention is that after Honey Creek becomes Lake Darling, the overflow spills into the less poetic Skunk River.)

With Ding Darling's legacy fresh in my mind, I had a better appreciation of the eco-sensitive \$12 million rehabilitation the park underwent beginning in 2008, with the draining of the lake. "We drained the lake and addressed changing the watershed to improve the quality of the water," says Haworth. "What people often don't understand is that to clean up the water, you must first address the land."

That involved cooperation from nearby landowners. "The biggest key to improving water quality was the buy-in that we got from the local landowners during the watershed project," says DNR biologist Vance Polton. "Of the 71 landowners in the watershed, 59 of them were

Lost In Iowa

Roadwork AND Cabin Update

Last December, heavy rains impacted the road to those big, beautiful new cabins. Road construction is underway and should be completed by June 30—weather depending. Until then, the new cabins are unavailable for new reservations. Construction for a new road and parking area at the older camping cabins will be completed late September. Check for updates at iowadnr.gov. All other roads, campground, lake and fishing are not impacted and fully accessible.

No stay at Lake Darling State Park is complete without a leisurely lake cruise. Rent a canoe, single or double kayak, fishing kayak, paddleboat or the newest craze—stand up paddleboard—at the lakeside concession stand.



Lost In Iowa



Travel Notes

Lake Darling State Park
111 Lake Darling Road
Brighton, IA 52540
319-694-2323
Find park, lake and trail
maps at iowadnr.gov

involved in at least one of the 162 projects that occurred on private ground. The local landowners worked with our watershed coordinator, Stan Simmons, to solve erosion and nutrient loss problems on their own ground, which is 89 percent of the watershed. This played a major role in improving Lake Darling's water quality. Without the participation of the local landowners, we really could not have accomplished what we did to improve the water quality of the lake," Polton explains.

The clean water sparkled in the sunlight as Haworth and I drove along the shoreline, newly manicured with riprap to prevent erosion, preserve water clarity and provide habitat. A cement angling trail added during the rehab skirts the water for about 1.5 miles. It's wheelchair and baby-stroller friendly and is a beautiful choice for an easy morning or evening stroll. And the swimming beach is sandy.

As we explored the east loop (note the can't-miss bald eagle's nest), I saw the first of 25 fish-stocked retention ponds that are an important part of the park's success. A total of 27 ponds within the park filter sediment and nitrates that would otherwise impact the lake.

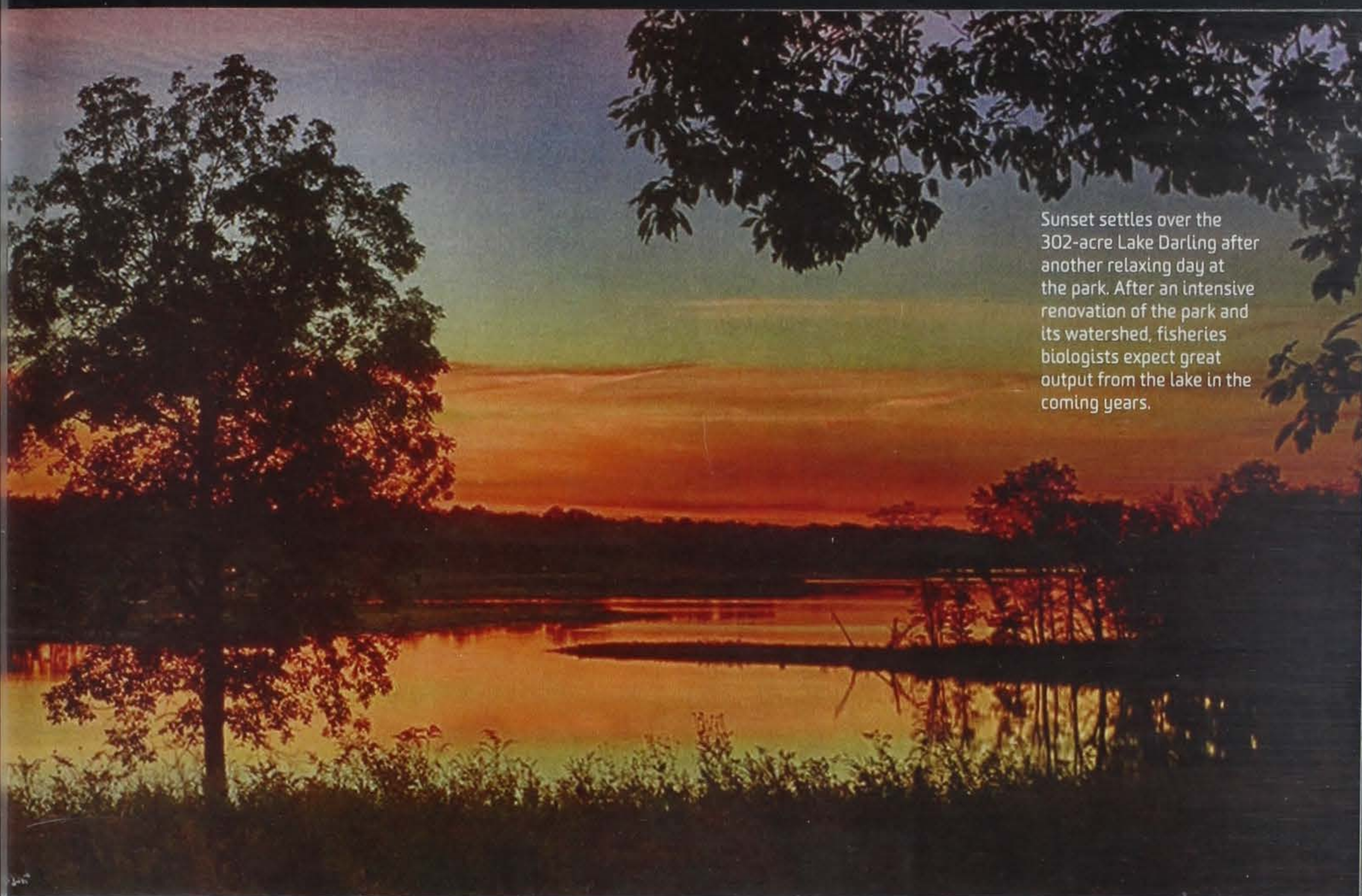
The dam on Honey Creek is at Lake Darling's west end, so an in-lake silt dam at the east end caught me off guard. It stretches out about three-quarters of the width of the lake, then makes a sharp turn to the left, creating an L-shape. "After a big rain, the water will be brown and murky on the right side of the silt dam and crystal clear

on the lake side," says Haworth. This partial dam is one more feature added during the revamp to keep the water quality high.

What struck me most about the park's improvements was the thoughtful effort given to make it easy for visitors to access and enjoy. Not everyone owns a boat or is comfortable renting one to fish. So to improve fishing from land, the shoreline is dotted with limestone-packed bump-outs and 100-foot-long jetties. "These allow you to get closer to deeper water for better fishing," explains Chad Dolan, DNR fisheries biologist.

Dolan had taken me out to a quiet cove the day before for one of the most successful fishing experiences of my life. We had no more than dropped our night crawler-baited lines into the water when, bam, a largemouth bass. Then bluegills and green sunfish. Again and again. Granted, the fish were small. Except for the sunfish, which had survived in the creek, the others were newbies, stocked after the lake refilled. "But they're really fun for kids to fish, and they'll be great for serious fishing later on," says Dolan. The lake is also stocked with black crappie, channel catfish and redear sunfish.

For those who prefer to fish on the water, the lake has two boat ramps, one by the campgrounds and another at the main marina. A variety of rentals are available near the new Cottonwood Shelter: canoes, single and double kayaks, fishing kayaks, row boats, paddleboats and even stand-up



Sunset settles over the 302-acre Lake Darling after another relaxing day at the park. After an intensive renovation of the park and its watershed, fisheries biologists expect great output from the lake in the coming years.

paddleboards—something I'd been wanting to try.

So when Haworth turned his back, I lumbered onto a paddleboard for the first time. Once comfortable in a kneeling position, I got Nicky on board with me, and he sat perfectly still ("Good boy!") as I paddled us around the calm lake. Before I attempted standing—turns out, it's surprisingly easy—I passed Nicky off to my friend. But don't repeat that, please. As far as my other peeps know, I did stand-up paddleboarding with my dog—my story, I'm sticking to it.

Speaking of friends, the park has many. Chief among them is the Friends of Lake Darling, a non-profit group dedicated to improving the park, increasing visitors, raising money (it's already raised more than \$1 million). Those new luxury cabins? All paid for by FLD. "The group also helped this park improve the beach and build an ADA fishing bridge, playground and our year-round lodge for large gatherings," says Tom Basten, Southeast Iowa parks district supervisor. The group also is hands-on. "It provides volunteer labor for smaller park projects," Basten explains.

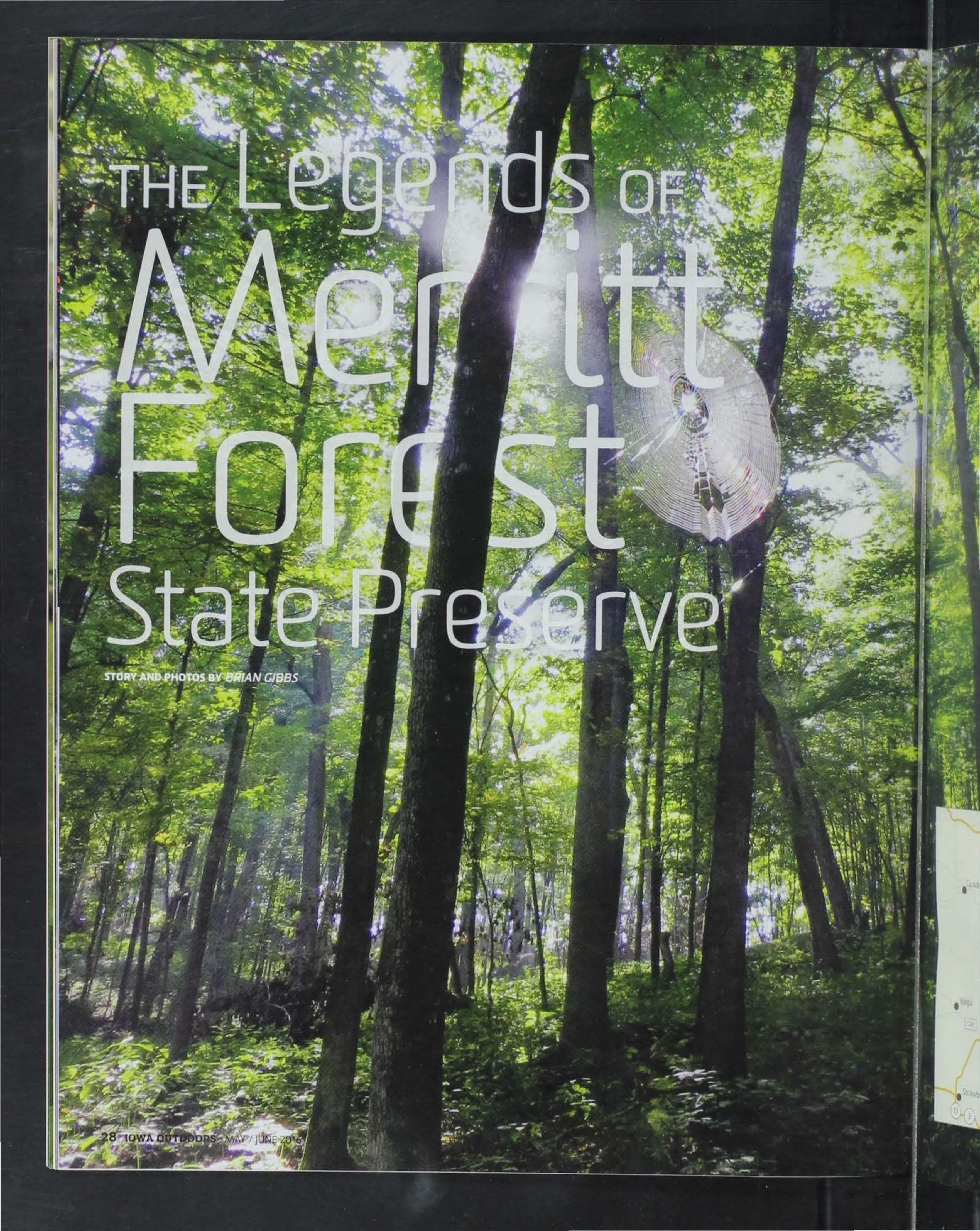
The Friends' pride, and the pride of the park, is the vaulted-ceiling lodge. Not only is it a beauty, but its details expose it as a true labor of love. A fully-loaded kitchen features a backsplash of hand-painted tiles depicting the park's flora and fauna, including wild gooseberry, morel mushrooms and sugar maple. The artist is Dr. Faye Vittetoe, the local veterinarian and president of FLD. Stained-glass windows showcasing goldfinch, buck,

doe, hummingbird, red-bellied woodpecker and other park wildlife hang above the big glass doors overlooking the water and glint in the sunlight. The lodge seats 200 and is a popular wedding site. While I was there, one of its visitors was Yaro Chmelar, who'd attended the 50th anniversary party of friends and returned to show it off to his younger family members. "I can't think of a more wonderful place to gather for a celebration," he tells me.

Ding Darling would appreciate the lodge for two reasons: its eco-friendly geothermal heating and cooling, and its limestone fireplace built from stones salvaged from the park's original beach house.

Another BFF of the park is the local Izaak Walton League. "It's been a great partner for providing kayaks and stand-up boards for the boat rentals, and helping raise money for the concrete ADA fishing trail that runs from the silt dam all the way to the campground," Basten explains. "These groups received their support locally to help with funding, which was matched with grants such as ones provided by the Washington County Riverboat Foundation. All the work that went into the watershed and lake renovation generated excitement and enthusiasm with these groups and partners to focus on park amenities, which led to the improvements. I think Ding Darling would be proud of how it all turned out."

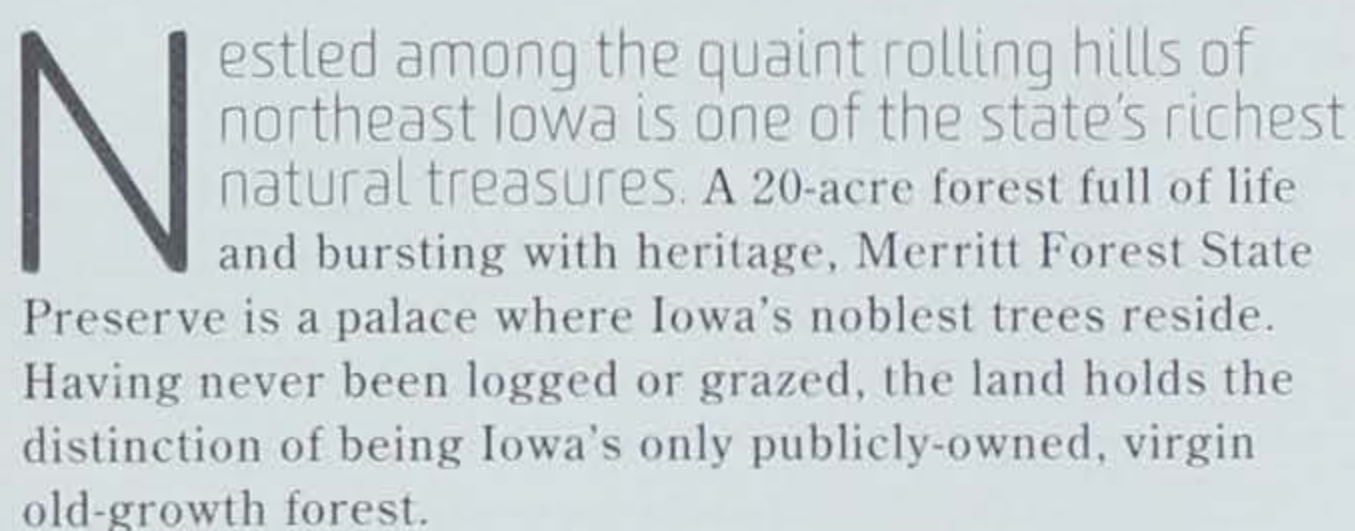
I know he would. I also know I'll be back, rain or shine—hopefully, a little of both. 🐾



THE Legends of Merritt Forest State Preserve

STORY AND PHOTOS BY BRIAN GIBBS





On a cloudless day in late May, I walk through Merritt to admire the legends of this grove. Within seconds of ambling into the forest, I am bedazzled under the canopy of a towering red oak tree. Beside the oak, several large dead trees, long since felled, have turned into nurse logs and are being decomposed by fungi and insects. Looking around, I discover this forest is a factory where pounds of rich soil appear to be born right before my eyes. Listening to the trill of a tree frog, a sunny opening in the dark forest pulls me forward until I run into a spider web dangling between two maple trees.

As I walk a little further into the forest, the open canopy reveals several large dead red oak trees killed by oak wilt. Oak wilt is a fungus that invades the water tissues, or xylem, of oak trees, either through root grafts connecting nearby oaks or by spore-carrying insects. In response to the fungus, the tree plugs its water-carrying xylem with outgrowths that cause wilting and defoliation. Red oaks are most susceptible to this disease and typically die within four months of infection. Though several of these massive trees have no leaves, they still serve an important role in the forest community by housing and feeding many critters.

Oak wilt trees are a woodpecker's dream. Red-headed and pileated woodpeckers commonly excavate holes



in the trees. Oak wilt is just one of the visible changes happening here in the forest. I notice several large trees topped in a recent windstorm, and the forest floor is a glowing green umbrella of maple seedlings. The forest understory is covered with pole-sized maple and basswood trees, subsequently shading out potential young oak seedlings. Yet, no matter the changes happening in this forest, Merritt is still a place where the tree legends of Iowa can be found. It is like re-visiting an old playground where one feels the childlike magic of being young again.

The rustling of leaves alerts me to fox squirrels mingling on the forest floor. The animals are busy trying to scavenge any leftover acorns from last autumn's mast fruiting. The squirrels may not recognize it yet, but mast fruiting is the forest's way of giving something back to the community. The more acorns produced by the oaks, the more likely some escape predation by squirrels. In turn, the more food available for squirrels increases the likelihood of a mother birthing a larger litter of babies. The generous fruiting of one season reciprocates further into next year when more squirrels will be out looking for less acorns, subjecting them to the claws of a hungry fox or talons of a hunting owl.

Research of mast fruiting has shown trees communicate through tiny fungal threads in the roots called mycorrhizae. These strands interlink trees together causing them to function as one super organism, so that during a mast year, the trees will all thrive as one. Walking through this preserve cultivates an appreciation for the deep roots that support these ancient trees.

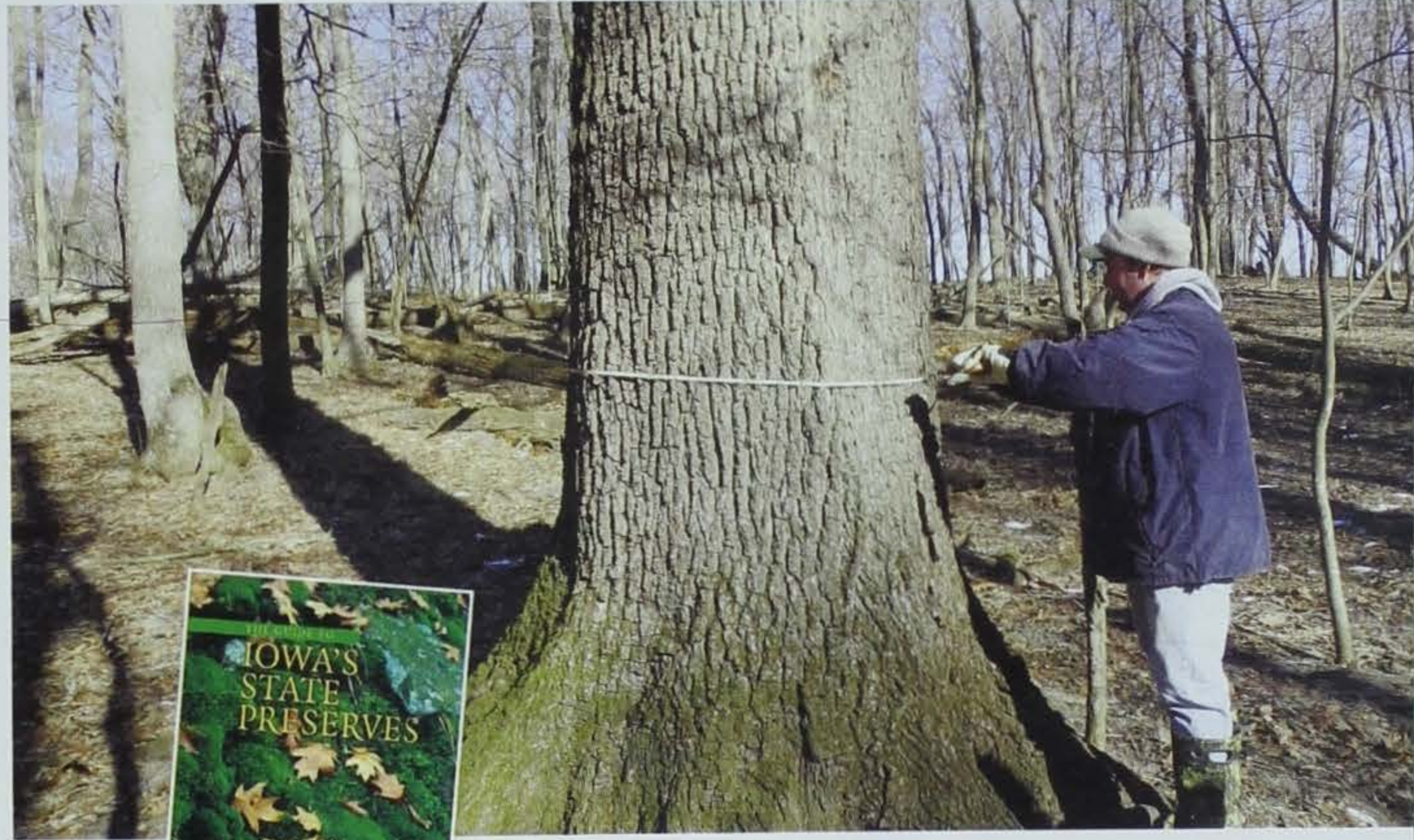
Five trees in Merritt are on Iowa's prestigious Big Tree List. To make the list, trees are ranked on three sets of data: circumference, height and crown spread. According to these measurements, two of the top three sugar maples in Iowa grow in Merritt, with the largest standing 104 feet tall. Also growing in the preserve is the state's second tallest bitternut hickory.

Some of the trees in Merritt are as old as they are tall, many of them existing before the European settlement of Iowa. The majority of mature trees in this preserve are between 100 and 200 years old. Studies done in the 1980s found the woodland contained several trees more than 300 years old, including a 317-year-old white-oak. Having so many large mature trees in this relatively small acreage equates to an incredible amount of board foot volume. Hundreds of wood products could be constructed from Merritt's lumber and a lifetime of winters could be made warmer by its firewood. However, by donating this forest to the state of Iowa in 1968, Gertrude Merritt ensured that the legacy of these ancient trees would be protected as a gift for future generations to enjoy.

A walk in the woods reminds us that like our children, trees are our future. With years of careful tending and respect, they will branch out to become reciprocal gifts of grace and renewal. 🌲



Merritt Forest State Preserve holds a number of accolades to draw visitors. First, it's Iowa's only publicly-owned virgin, old-growth forest. Second, five trees in Merritt are on Iowa's prestigious Big Tree List, including two of the top three sugar maples in the state, the largest 104 feet tall. The second largest bitternut hickory also lives there. Almost 200 plant species grow there, and more than 40 bird species roam.



The Guide to Iowa's State Preserves

The Guide to Iowa's State Preserves, University of Iowa Press, ISBN 0-87745-774-3, \$22. Search "Iowa's State Preserves" at uiowapress.org.

Merritt Forest is a 20-acre old-growth forest located four miles south of Guttenberg in Clayton County. Within the Paleozoic Plateau region, the preserve sits atop a gentle north-facing slope near the head of a large forested valley. Dominated by white and red oak, sugar maple and basswood; blue beech, ironwood, witch hazel, alternate-leaved dogwood and leatherwood also appear in the understory.

Nearly 200 plant species are found

here. Bloodroot, spring beauty and hepatica awake in March. Woodland sedge, bishop's cap, downy yellow violet, blue cohosh toothwort, wood anemone, white trout lily, bellwort, nodding trillium and swamp buttercup dominate in April and May. White-ribbed leaves of numerous puttyroot orchids are conspicuous on the forest floor. Maidenhair, walking, northern lady, bulblet bladder, Goldie's dissected grape, rattlesnake and interrupted ferns blanket the woodland floor.

More than 40 species of birds have been documented at the preserve—Cooper's hawk, wood duck, wild turkey, pileated

woodpecker, tufted titmouse, veery, wood thrush, warbling vireo, red-eyed vireo, American redstart, Canada warbler, scarlet tanager, black-billed cuckoo, Acadian flycatcher and least flycatcher.

Hunting is not permitted.

Check out Turkey River Mounds and White Pine Hollow state preserves while in the area.

DIRECTIONS: From Guttenberg, take Highway 52 south 6 miles to Noble Road. In Millville, turn right (west) onto Noble and proceed 2.5 miles. Preserve is on north side of the road.

Des Moines URBAN Fishing Spots

BY SHANNON HAFNER AND ALAN FOSTER PHOTOS BY CLAY SMITH

Sixty percent of anglers travel no more than 20 miles to fish. For those near Iowa's largest metro, hit these local picks.

(Stay tuned for top spots in more cities in future issues.)

Spend a fun family day fishing at the DMACC campus ponds in Ankeny or West Des Moines. Catch an abundance of bluegill and crappie, along with largemouth bass and channel catfish. Trails, fishing jetties and an accessible pier provide excellent shore fishing access. Look for bluegill and crappies near shoreline rocks. Use small hooks, bobbers and bait and fish close to the rocks in late April and May; iowadnr.gov.

CITY CAMPUS POND, nestled in the center of the West Des Moines City Campus (4200 Mills Civic Pkwy) offers good fishing for bluegill. Shoreline access is good and

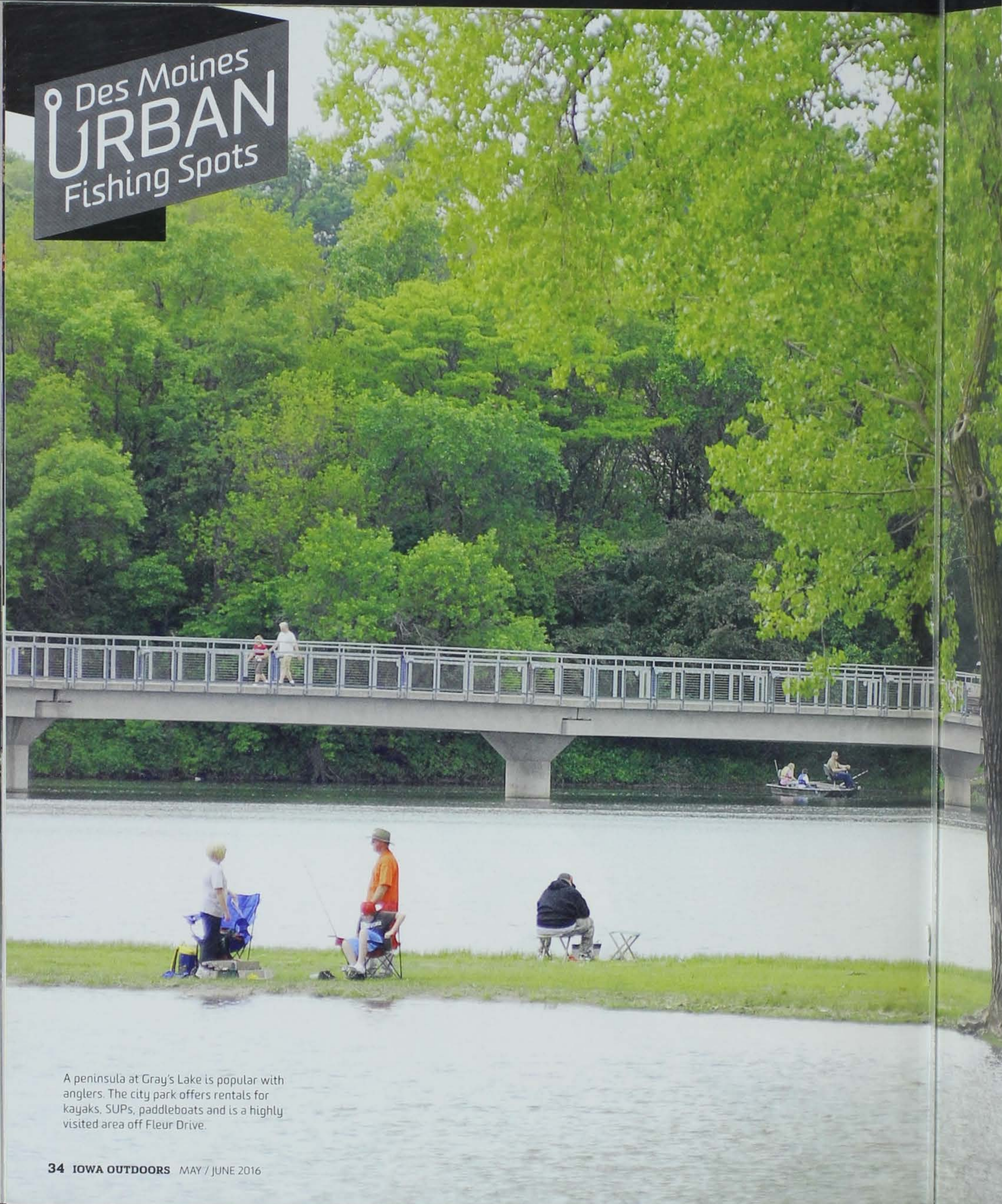
a walking trail surrounds the pond. Native plants along the hillside southeast of the pond help prevent erosion entering the water, improving water quality and providing a beautiful background of vibrant colors.

Recently renovated **FORT DES MOINES POND** is easy to find just southwest of Southridge Mall. Catch bluegill, channel catfish, crappie and largemouth bass. A trail around the lake and fishing pier provide great shoreline access. Take a stroll on the pedestrian bridge over the pond, let the kids play on the playground or learn more about central Iowa trees in the arboretum within Fort Des Moines Park. Numerous park amenities will be added

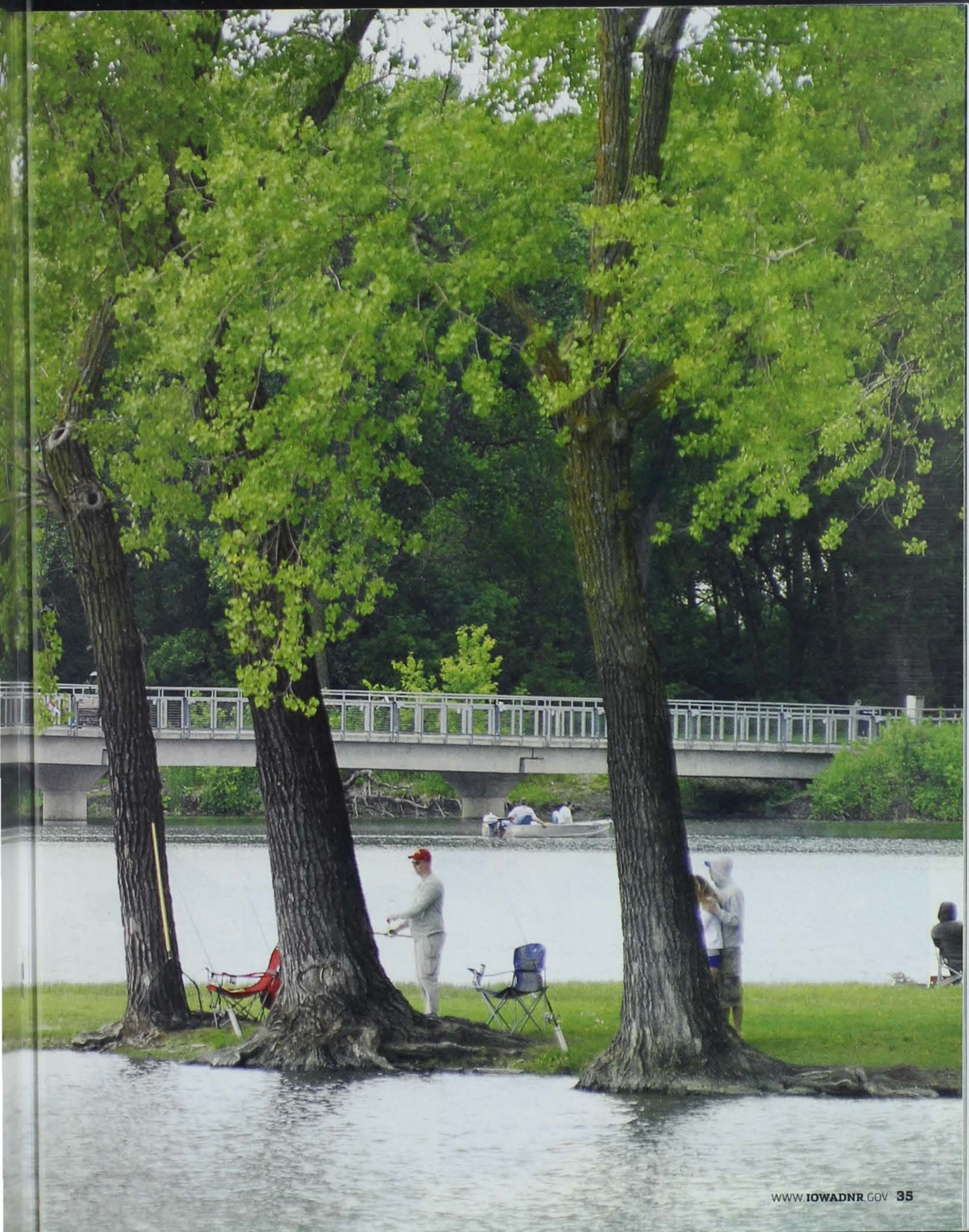
PHOTO BY KEVIN SANDERS



Des Moines URBAN Fishing Spots



A peninsula at Gray's Lake is popular with anglers. The city park offers rentals for kayaks, SUPs, paddleboats and is a highly visited area off Fleur Drive.



Des Moines URBAN Fishing Spots

One doesn't have to drive far in the Polk County metro area to find good fishing opportunities. Numerous city, county and state parks provide close-to-home, quality fishing. Many are undergoing major renovations to make the experience even better. Gray's Lake in downtown Des Moines is one example, not just for the fishing but the boundless other recreational opportunities it provides.



The Gray's Lake pedestrian bridge at night.



this spring and summer, including a new lake drive, an accessible fishing pier, canoe launch, environmental education outdoor classroom, amphitheater and shelter, renovated shelters and playground and enhancements to the peninsula that provides a scenic view of the pond. The park will remain open during construction, however short term closures may be necessary to ensure public safety; search polkcountyiowa.com/conservation.

Get away from the crowds and enjoy the beautiful scenery at **YELLOW BANKS PARK POND**. Fish the jetty, or hang out under the covered dock to get out of the elements. Hike the trails to find a more secluded spot to cast your line. Relax in the open gathering area on top of the dam. Picnic areas overlook the Des Moines River. The boat ramp at Yellow Banks Park provides easy access to the Des Moines River between Des Moines and Lake Red Rock; search polkcountyiowa.com/conservation.

THOMAS MITCHELL POND, nestled in a quiet park three miles southwest of Mitchellville, provides excellent shoreline access. Cast for bluegill, channel catfish and largemouth bass off the fishing piers. A trail surrounds the pond. Kids can burn off energy at the playground. Camp, picnic, hike, watch wildlife or hunt mushrooms; search polkcountyiowa.com/conservation.

Three ponds at **JESTER PARK** on the western shore of Saylorville Lake provide hours of fun for kids and beginner anglers. Catch an abundance of bass, bluegill, green sunfish and crappie. The pond on the north side of the park has fishing jetties and a boardwalk which provides great fishing access. An array of outdoor activities await all ages, including a natural play area for children, camping and rental cabins, equestrian center, golf course and elk and bison wildlife exhibit; search polkcountyiowa.com/conservation.

Anglers with a bit more experience will find a variety of fishing opportunities at **SAYLORVILLE RESERVOIR**.

Shoreline access is available, but a boat is needed to access many areas of the reservoir. White bass, hybrid striped bass (wipers) and channel catfish are the most targeted species. This multi-use recreational area offers camping, a visitor center near the dam, biking and hiking trails and several natural areas; search "Saylorville" at www.mvr.usace.army.mil.

Plan a quick get-away at **BIG CREEK STATE PARK**, just 10 miles north of Des Moines near Polk City on highway 415. Use small tackle and light line to catch aggressive bluegill close to shore at this 866-acre lake in late May and early June. May is also a great month to catch walleye here. Numerous fishing jetties dot the lakeshore, along with a universally accessible fishing pier on the east side of the lake. Big Creek Marina rents fishing boats, pontoons, water bikes, kayaks and more. A paved trail surrounds much of the lake, and there is a large playground near the beach; iowadnr.gov.

Adventurous anglers can find rewards within the river systems in central Iowa. **THE DES MOINES RIVER** is a good resource to focus on in spring (February-May). Catch a diverse mix of walleye, white bass, hybrid striped bass and flathead and channel catfish below riffles and low-head dams. Hardier anglers target the **SCOTT AVENUE AND CENTER STREET DAMS IN DOWNTOWN DES MOINES**. Anglers typically have success fishing below Saylorville and Red Rock reservoirs as well. Multiple boat ramps provide access to the river. The more popular ramps are Sycamore Access in Johnston (NW 66th Ave.), Prospect Park (1225 Prospect Road) and Birdland Park (2100 Saylor Road) in Des Moines and in Pleasant Hill (Vandalia Road).

It's worth a couple hours of fishing at **COPPER CREEK LAKE**, 4390 East University Avenue. It has "decent bluegill and hybrid striped bass," says Steven Konrady, an AmeriCorps member working for the DNR mapping urban fisheries resources. It's one of the few urban fisheries with good white bass populations, introduced to control problematic shad. Lighted trail, playground equipment, shelters, open space, picnic areas and excellent shoreline fishing. Carry-in, non-gas powered, non-inflatable watercraft only; designated launch area; search "Copper Creek" at www.pleasanthilliowa.org.

LAKE PETOCKA is easy to spot just off the diagonal north of Bondurant (520 Pleasant Street NE). It is an amazing catfish fishery, Konrady says, with big fish and plenty of them. And the bluegills have "broken the mold. Some really nice bluegill there." A small borrow pit, it has a small watershed and clear water, so fish tend to grow a little slower. It's one of central Iowa's favorite urban trout fisheries in the winter; search Lake Petocka at cityofbondurant.com, or "trout fishing" at iowadnr.gov.

GRAY'S LAKE in downtown Des Moines is worth a look, not just for the fishing, but the unique opportunities found there. The lake is influenced by flooding of the



Des Moines URBAN Fishing Spots

adjacent Raccoon River, so expect a fair number of riverine species—think non traditional opportunities

like carp and gar. “Change up your game,” Konrady says, and try flyfishing

for carp. The Raccoon also offers some of the best river opportunities in the district, he claims. If fishing slows, there is no shortage of activities to fill the day. The park is known for its 1.9-mile trail, beautifully lit at night, filled with rollerbladers, walkers, runners and bikers and equipped with emergency phones. Bring your kayak or canoe, or rent watercraft (and bikes) from the concession stand. Rent a sailboat and try your hand at this unique adventure. Sign up for a class, like SUP yoga, or sit in on a program, like birding basics, at various times throughout the year. Search Gray’s Lake at dmgov.org.

Just across the street is **DES MOINES WATER WORKS PARK**, a major hub connecting hundreds of miles of trails for biking, walking and running. Take a stroll through Arie Den Boer Arboretum, best the last week of April and first week of May when blooming crabapples draw thousands of visitors.

ON THE RADAR

Historically **EASTER LAKE** in southeast Des Moines has suffered poor water quality. Sedimentation reduced the surface size by 48 acres and volume by 24 percent. Excess nutrients, specifically phosphorous, plagued the lake. Sediment and nutrients caused frequent algae blooms and poor water clarity. Elevated bacteria levels forced swimming advisories. Undesirable carp and shad clogged it. Stunted panfish dominated. In short, the lake was impaired.

But changes are on the way, enough so that state and county leaders say this will soon be a destination location—not just for fishing but for family fun.

“There is a lot of hope that it will turn into something pretty amazing,” says Konrady.

Lake levels are currently drawn down to install fish barriers and work on the spillway. Dredging will follow likely this spring, focusing on areas already identified as popular spots by local anglers. Shoreline stabilization and fish habitat construction is next on the timeline. Fish stocking will happen in late 2017 or 2018, according to Mike McGhee, former DNR lake restoration coordinator now working for the Polk County Conservation Board on project oversight and lake restoration. Sediment retention structures and ponds are planned throughout the watershed. Plenty of infrastructure currently exists at Easter Lake, and more is planned, including a 10K trail that is expected to attract competition races.

McGhee says roughly 400,000 visitors currently enjoy Easter Lake—a number expected to grow to 1 to 1.5 million once restoration is complete.

Although fishing will not be allowed until mid-2017, **TERRA LAKE** is the center piece of Johnston’s unique Terra Park (6300 Pioneer Parkway), featuring lots of outdoor recreation options for the whole family. The 8-acre lake was built by the city of Johnston in 2014 and largemouth bass, channel catfish and bluegills were stocked last spring and fall. A temporary fishing ban is in place to allow those fish to spawn and grow. A fishing pier on the east side of the lake provides great fishing access. A large lawn surrounds the lake—perfect for concerts and games. An open-air civic shelter serves

large gatherings, or choose the picnic pavilion for smaller events. An outdoor amphitheater and picnic and lakeside shelters will be added later this year. Kids can hit the playground or peruse the numerous native plantings. Jump on the adjacent bike trail and decide whether to go north through the city, southwest into Urbandale and West Des Moines or east toward downtown Des Moines. Search “Terra Park” at cityofjohnston.com.







Sporting a white iris, the white-eyed vireo is a busy bird of the thickets and is often heard before it is seen. Shimek's Croton Unit is one of the best places in Iowa to view this bird.

I'm
C
re
K
As the
spot th
male K
eye-le
parkin
an out-
steely
tail fro
But no

SHIMEK STATE FOREST

of Birds and Butterflies

STORY AND PHOTOS BY TY SMEDES

This southeast Iowa forest hosts one of our most diverse woodland bird migrations, followed by a stunning summer butterfly show perhaps unequaled anywhere else in the state.

I'm walking a trail at Shimek State Forest's Croton Unit, where the woodland reverberates with the music of singing Kentucky warblers—seemingly everywhere.

As the trail winds along a peaceful stream, I soon spot the black-patched face and neon-yellow body of a male Kentucky warbler atop a nearby shrub, almost at eye-level—busily consuming an insect. Closer to the parking lot, a blue-gray gnat-catcher swiftly darts onto an out-stretched branch hanging above the trail. The steely blue-gray bird conspicuously flicks its white-edged tail from side to side, to scare up insects for breakfast. But no sooner has it vacated the branch when another

gnat-catcher takes its place. Their intense interest in the branch seems too purposeful to be coincidence, and I creep closer for a better look. They're building a nest and it's right over the trail. Spiderwebs and lichens serve as material to build a small, compact nest, which sits on top of the branch and looks like a tree knot. It's the middle of May and woodland bird migration has reached Shimek State Forest, with some staying to nest.

A Forest for Lumber and Adventure Escapades

Shimek State Forest in southeast Iowa's Lee and Van Buren counties has four of its five units located near Farmington. The Keosauqua unit is near Lacey-Keosauqua

State Park, which abuts the town of its namesake. The forest, named after the late Dr. Bohumil Shimek, a University of Iowa professor and one of Iowa's early conservationists, saw its first commercial sales of sawtimber and other lumber products in 1972. Since that time, the forest is also managed not only for forest products, but wildlife habitat, erosion control and watershed protection. Plus, fun abounds here as the deep forest is a haven to hunt, fish, camp, hike, picnic and enjoy the outdoors.

A Migration Hot-Spot for Woodland Birds

On another visit I run into well-known Burlington birder Chuck Fuller. The spring bird migration brings him to Shimek's Donnellson, Farmington and Croton units several times each week.

"My mother learned birding on her own, and her influence started me on the road to birding 50 years ago," Fuller recalls. "I initially visited Shimek with my friend Bob Cecil, about 20 years ago, on a quest to find the elusive worm-eating warbler. I love the Donnellson Unit and always look for pine and hooded warblers there. But the Croton Unit is my favorite, because it's the most productive."

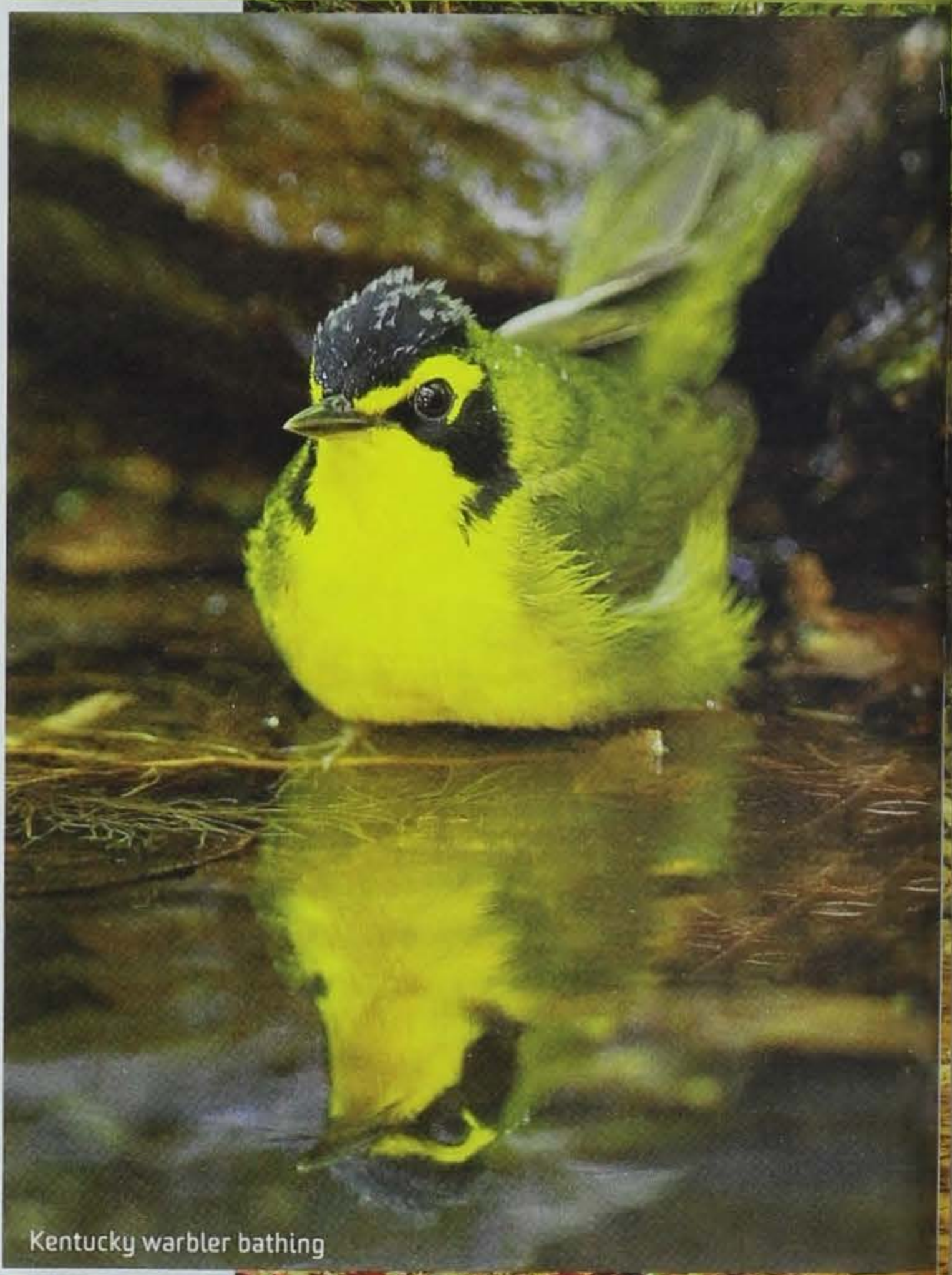
He says Croton has changed through the years, and the birds move as the habitat changed.

"I've gotten to know Croton well over the years and the species that use it," says Fuller, who looks for worm-eating, cerulean and hooded warblers there and is quick to note many other woodland species at Shimek—summer and scarlet tanagers and the much sought after white-eyed vireo.

The next morning, I bump into Karen Viste Sparkman and her husband Stuart while birding in the Croton Unit. They are enjoying a long weekend of birding, which included a Friday stop exploring the hills and forests at Lacey-Keosauqua State Park, as well as the Shimek units located near Farmington on Saturday. Like Fuller, they also visit the Croton Unit because of the reliability of finding worm-eating warblers, as well as yellow-breasted chats, hooded warblers and white-eyed vireos. They recommend walking the western side of Croton, beginning at the intersection of Belfast Road and 150th Avenue northward for about a half-mile. Karen recounts once seeing a pileated woodpecker land close by, with Stuart eyeing a number of bird species all along the road which runs adjacent to a creek. They rely a lot on "birding by ear," which means they are experts at identifying a bird by its call or song, but which can't be seen. Stuart laughingly recalls hearing a Connecticut warbler "that seemed to sing and move all around them," which they never caught sight of. It's a valuable skill to identify birds by their vocalizations, especially in dense forest where birds can go unseen in the leafy canopy and wooded understory.



Cerulean warbler

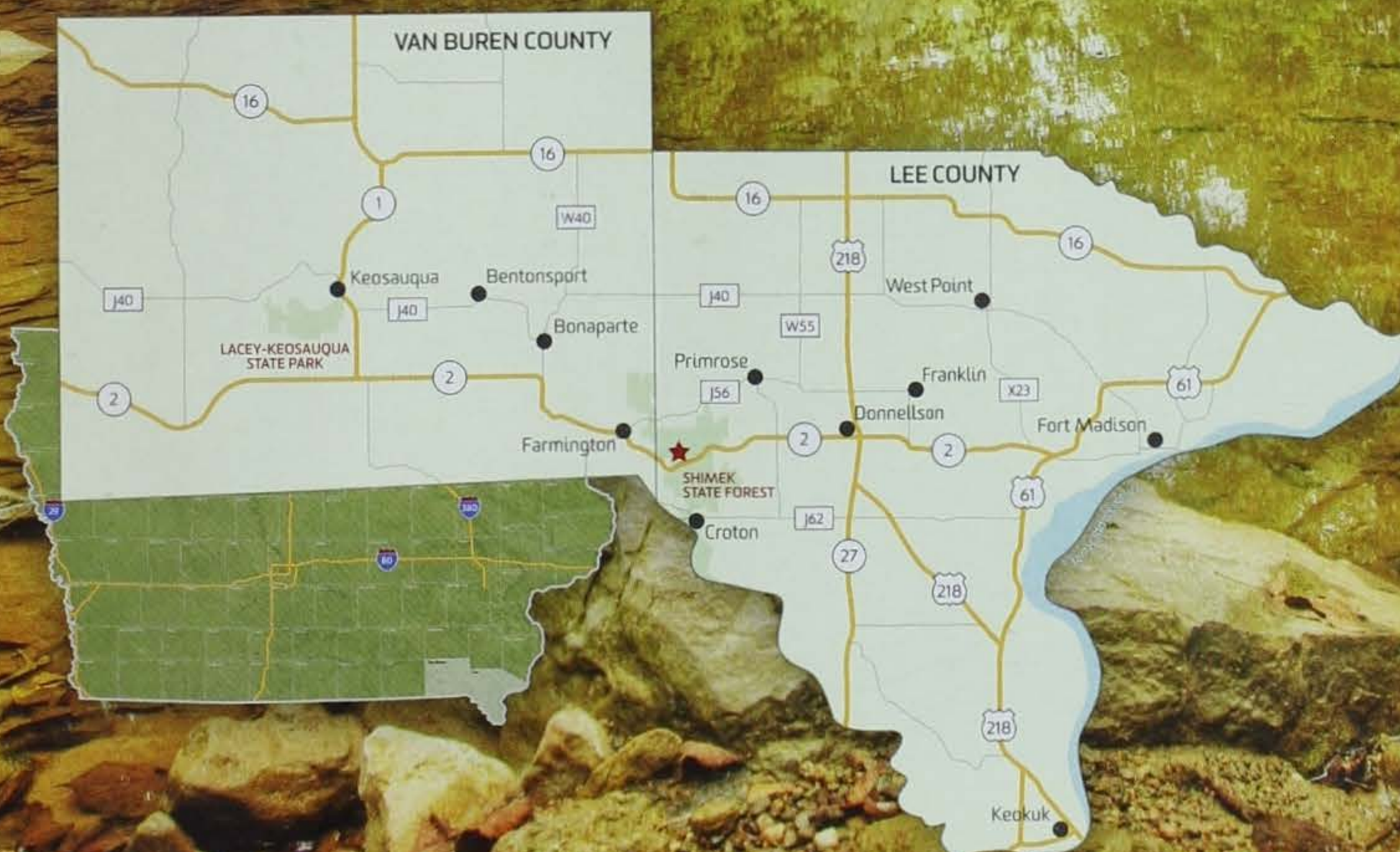


Kentucky warbler bathing



Worm-eating warbler


The Lick Creek Unit's namesake may be the most scenic of the Shimek streams. Rocky ledges line it, while trees form an archway overhead. Declining more rapidly than any other warbler species in the U.S., one of the most reliable populations of curelean warblers can be found at Shimek. The forest's most numerous warbler, the Kentucky, takes a quick bath in a stream. A worm-eating warbler is about to do the same.



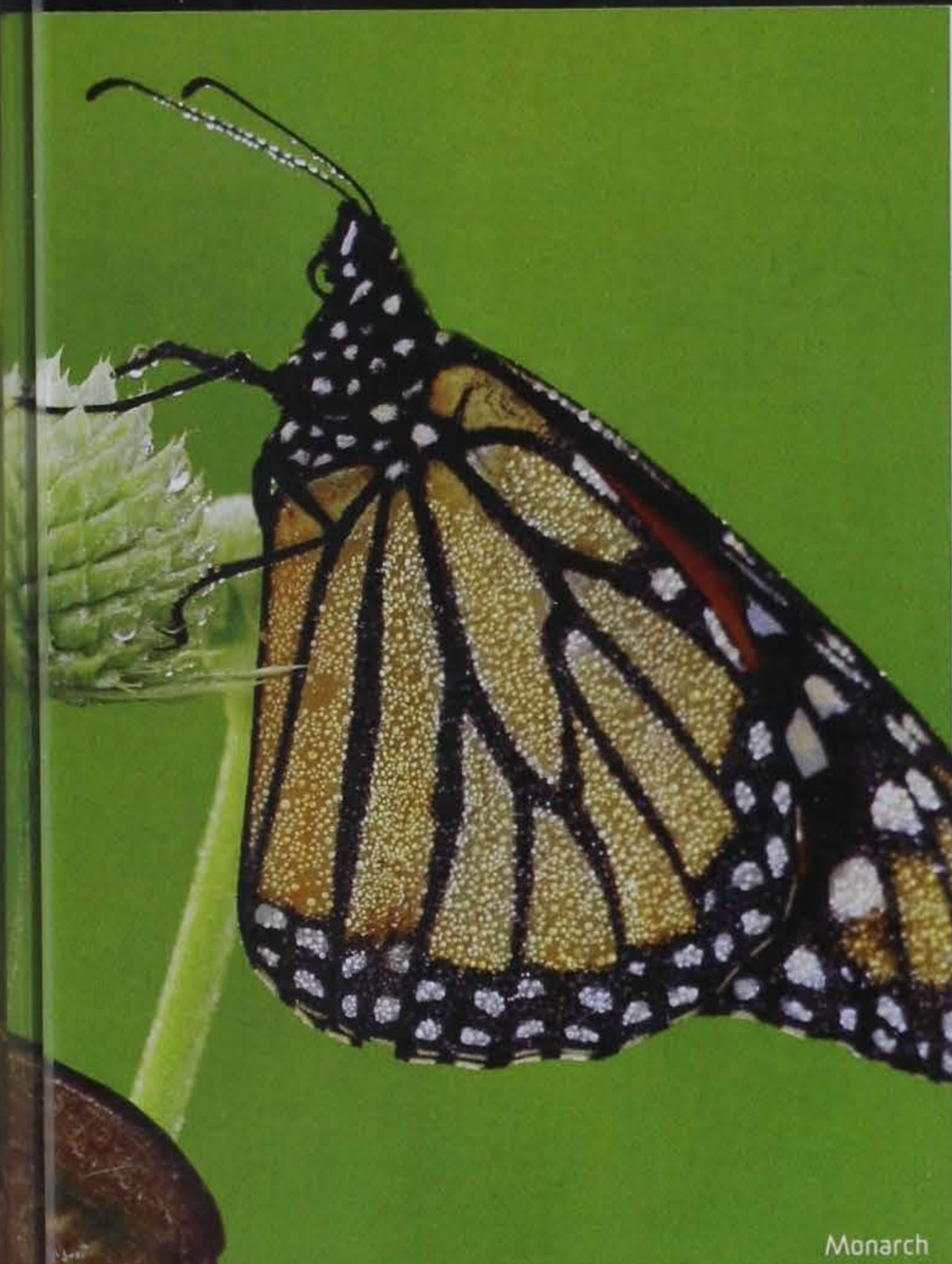
Using spider webs and lichens, a blue-gray gnat catcher builds a small, compact nest atop a branch. As many as 10 woodland warbler species nest at Shimek State Forest.





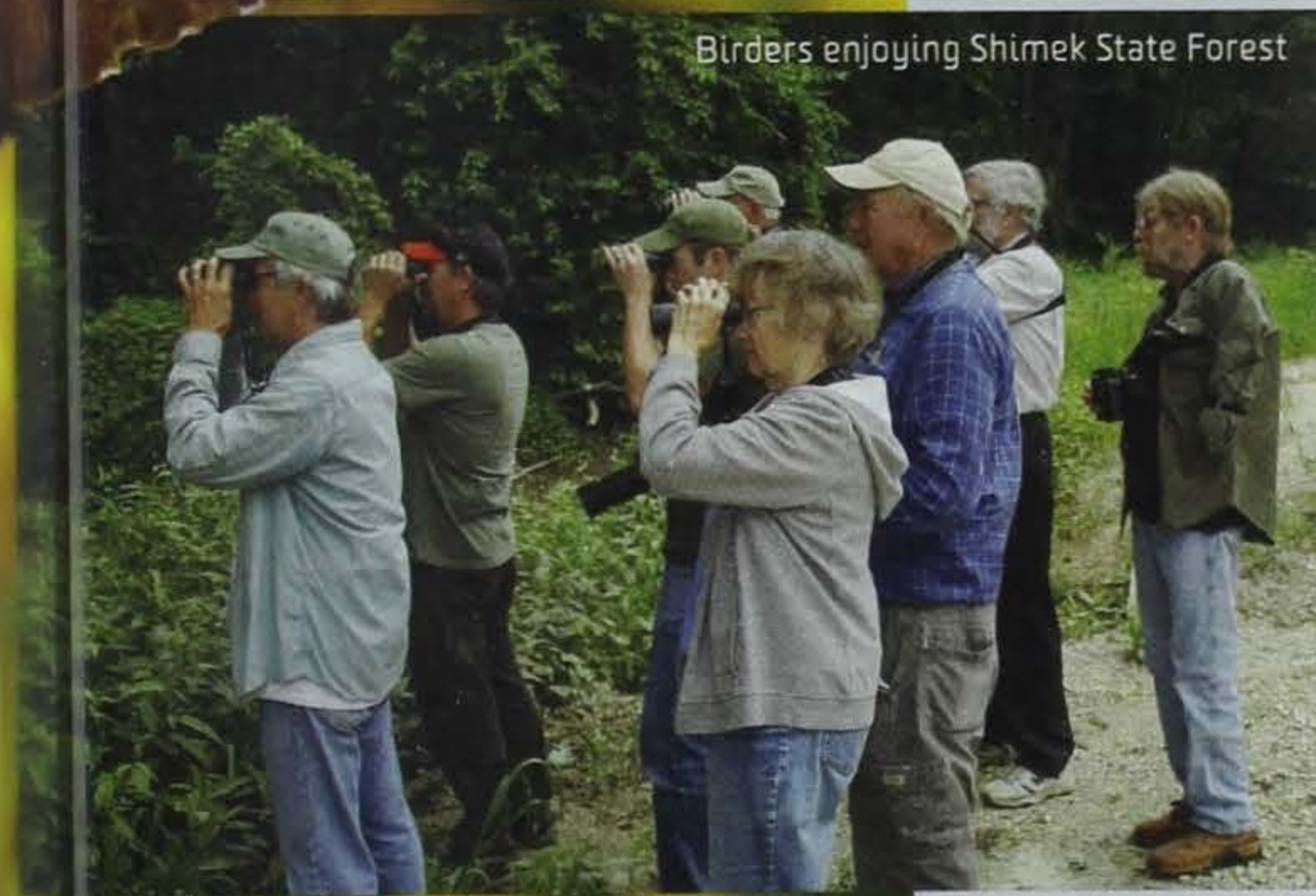
A large black and blue butterfly, likely a Spicebush Swallowtail, is the central focus of the image. It is perched on a yellow flower, with its wings spread wide. The wings are primarily black with a broad blue band across the middle and white spots along the edges. The background is a soft-focus yellow flower.

Shimek State Forest is one of the best locations to view the widest assortments of butterflies in Iowa, according to Solon butterfly expert Chris Edwards. Large blocks of natural habitat and easy public access are two of the main reasons why. Butterfly diversity tends to increase the further south one travels in Iowa. So far, Edwards has documented 70 species at the state forest. Nearly 120 butterfly species inhabit the state.



Monarch

Birders enjoying Shimek State Forest



Coral hairstreak



On the Trail for Iowa's Rarest Woodland Birds

Only a few yards farther down the trail I spot a large warbler with greenish back, strikingly yellow breast and gray face—accented with a prominent white eye-ring. It's a yellow-breasted chat, North America's largest warbler, and an uncommon Iowa nester. The chat is of great interest to Iowa birders, and those who venture here in May have an excellent chance of spotting one in Shimek's Croton Unit. Many birds such as the chat need large forest tracts for successful nesting and experts agree that probably 10 species of woodland warblers (or more) nest here.

Some of Iowa's Best Butterfly Diversity

Solon butterfly expert Chris Edwards considers the greater Shimek area—state forest land as well as nearby roadsides—among the top, if not the best, butterfly habitat in eastern Iowa.

"There are several reasons for this," says Edwards. Large blocks of natural habitat exist—all located in extreme southeastern Iowa. That's important as butterfly diversity generally increases as one travels farther south in Iowa. "Finally, it's readily accessible public land with good roads and, in some areas, trails," he says.

Edwards conducts three Fourth of July Butterfly Counts annually in Iowa City and Shimek and Yellow River state forests.

"I started the Iowa City count in 1999 and have done the Shimek and Yellow River counts annually since 2001. Sometimes I conduct counts alone, and other times I'm joined by friends or acquaintances who share my interest in butterflies," he says.

"As a child I was always interested in nature, birds and animals thanks to the influence of my maternal grandparents. When I was 8, I spent a magical summer chasing and collecting butterflies in the woods and fields near my home. Then I moved on to other things. About 25 years later I spent a lot of time outdoors birding, and that led to a renewed interest in butterflies. I joined the North America Butterfly Association and learned about the count program, and since I enjoy 'citizen scientist' projects, it was right up my alley."

Edwards says the North America Butterfly Association (NABA) sponsors a Butterfly Count Program, which includes spring seasonal counts, Fourth of July counts (which occur anytime in June or July) and fall seasonal counts. The counts are similar to Christmas bird counts in that participants find, identify and count all the butterflies they can within a 15-mile diameter circle, at approximately the same time each year.

"I've found about 70 butterfly species in the Shimek area, either in the state forest itself or along nearby roadsides," he says. (For comparison, during 17 years of statewide observation I've seen 90 butterfly species.) About 120 species are known to occur in Iowa.

Rare resident butterflies at Shimek include

pipevine swallowtail (a very healthy population), harvester, Henry's elfin, Hayhurst's scallopwing and Zabulon skipper. Rare southern strays include zebra swallowtail, spicebush swallowtail, sleepy orange and goatweed leafwing. One may get lucky and observe the state-threatened Byssus skipper on the prairie at the Donnellson Unit.

Edwards finds the best numbers and diversity along the roadsides at the Croton and Donnellson units. Roadsides tend to have more butterflies because they're attracted to the many native (and some non-native) flowering plants along the roads. Many forest butterflies also venture out to gravel roads to obtain minerals in puddles or damp spots. Streams and stream corridors through the forest also attract butterflies for the same reasons. Although most of the state forest habitat is woodland, the Donnellson unit also holds a large reconstructed prairie which is good butterfly habitat, too.

When and Where to see butterflies

Edwards says butterflies can be observed at Shimek from April to October, with different species appearing at varying times, but peak numbers and diversity occur mid-June to mid-September. The best conditions for observation are warm, sunny days, with peak activity generally between 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

"Butterflies are less active in cool, cloudy and especially rainy conditions," he adds.

Changes in a forest or to bird or butterfly populations can happen suddenly or gradually over time, and often go unnoticed to most citizens. But for those with keen eyes and years of experience, they tell a different story. Unfortunately, from birder Chuck Fuller's practiced eyes, "Over the years I'm seeing fewer days with big numbers of birds, compared to when I started birding."

And that is just one reason why bird and butterfly counts are vital—to help track subtle changes over time. Not only are they an adventurous way to get outside and spot colorful species, they can also yield some unexpected stories.

"On my Shimek survey last summer," says Edwards, "I was walking along a roadside looking for butterflies, when a Lee County deputy sheriff drove up and politely asked what I was doing. Satisfied with my response, he wished me well and sped off. Since I've never seen a sheriff's vehicle along this out-of-the-way gravel road, I'm sure a local resident was concerned I was up to no good and requested a drive-by. I would have liked to have seen their expression when they got the call back from the sheriff's office—"What? He's counting butterflies???"

Perhaps we need more naturalists like Fuller, Edwards and the Sparkmans, out there surveying birds and butterflies, so those survey results and their visibility to the public draw attention to our often diminishing wildlife populations. 🐞

Local Facilities

Restaurants—The Donnellson, Farmington, Lick Creek and Croton units are all near the town of Farmington, which has great facilities, including the Bridge Café and Supper Club on Olive Street.

Sporting Goods Supplies

For hunting, fishing and camping supplies, try Farmington's Halbrook's Sporting Goods. On the river at Elm and Front Street.

Camping—The River Valley Lodge & Campground (located just outside Farmington) has a shower house and accommodates equestrian users. Primitive camping is available at the state forest, with 35 sites at Lick Creek, eight at the Farmington Unit and 11 at Donnellson. Modern camping 20 minutes away from the state forest at Lacey-Keosauqua State Park. Make reservations or get all the details at iowadnr.gov.



Tiger swallowtail



**Shimek State Forest
contains several units:**

- Farmington—2,207 acres
- Lick Creek—2,866 acres
- Donnellson—1,330 acres
- Croton—1,827 acres
- Keosauqua—918 acres
- Total forest size—9,148 acres



I
n
in
a
R
on one
Misso
like th
the riv
heart

FISHING THE GRAVEYARD SHIFT

BY DAN MAGNESON

In late spring of 2014, I visited family and friends in my native Iowa and spent time trying to land a big flathead catfish from the West Nodaway River. I knew I stood a better chance of success on one of the big border rivers like the Mississippi or Missouri, or at least one of the larger interior streams like the Iowa or Des Moines. But the West Nodaway was the river of my youth, a river of memories close to both heart and home.

There is a little tributary creek with a series of slow pools just upstream of its mouth from which I hoped to first catch some green sunfish for bait. The sun was dipping beneath the western horizon as I arrived with a little telescoping ultralight rod and reel. The western sky was lavender with blushes of pink, and thin slate-blue clouds stretched through the scene.

I attach a tiny bobber and thread a section of small garden worm onto a small hook and cast into the

pool. Across the river is a broad expanse of blondish, driftwood-strewn sand. A young couple is fishing there, sitting close to a small campfire in the breezy evening, but even closer to each other.

I am reminded, and my thoughts wander to another time, another place, out on the Pacific Coast, this one complete with salt air, the sounds of surf and the scream of seagulls. But it's a surprising similar scene nonetheless. And I remember her sunstreaked hair, those hazel eyes, that golden-toasty tan...

The bobber bounces and dances, then submerges and begins to be pulled from sight, and soon I pull up a little green sunfish between 4 and 5 inches long. Perfect. I fish a little longer and catch a few more of equivalent size. Darkness is falling by the time I rendezvous with a friend and his wife downstream. There is an amazing cottonwood overhead, not so much impressive for its size or girth as for the fact that it is still standing: the roots for several feet beneath the point where the base of the trunk and start of the roots would normally intersect are in contact with nothing but air. The high flood waters have washed away the surrounding soil.

The strong, raunchy odor of rotting fish emanates

from the riprap behind us. I have a stout rod and beefy baitcasting reel, and bait it with one of the sunfish. My buddy and his wife are fishing for channel catfish with pieces of shad. Despite the slow fishing, he remarks that he'd forgotten how enjoyable fishing at the river really was. And he relates an observation made by an acquaintance who fishes the Missouri River, who had noted that most flathead action seems centered around 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning.

The hours pass and still I wait. When using live bait between two-thirds to three-quarters the size of a dollar bill, it "highgrades" potential takers, deliberately excluding smaller specimens. By doing this, the wait can be transformed into a very long one.

Shortly after 1 a.m., my friends depart for home.

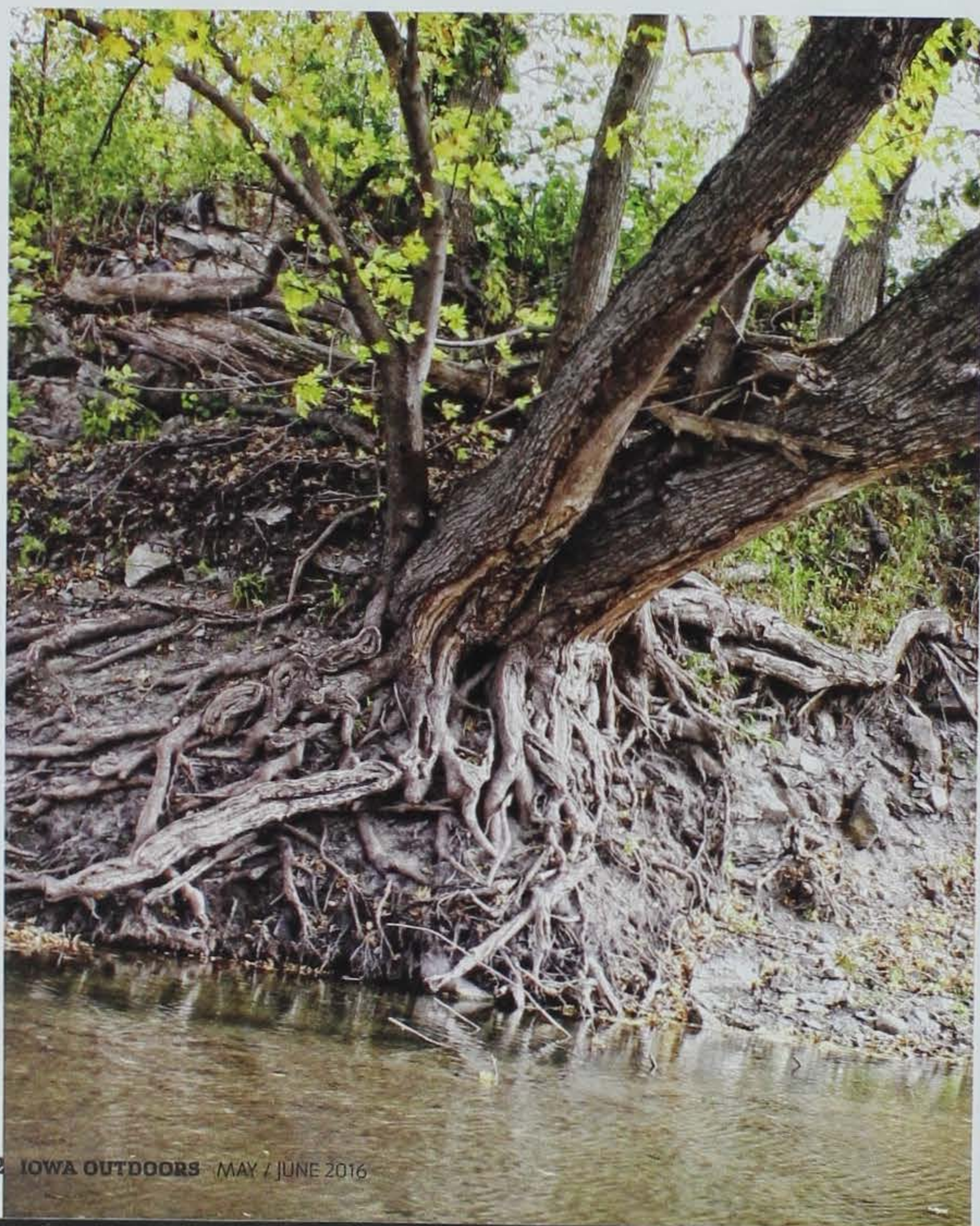
At 2 a.m., I note the couple across and up the river are gone. Their fire has died down to glowing embers, but an occasional burst of strong breeze fans it into ephemeral flame. I'm all alone now.

A friend recently remarked, with a downcast face that the worst part of being by yourself is being stuck with only your thoughts for company. I guess she must be quite the extrovert, because as a bona fide introvert, I revel and even wallow in such time.

Ultimately, I think the lure of the riverbank and flathead fishing is that life slows down so much. It is so very simple, so basic and elemental, almost like a form of asceticism. Life is reduced to its simplest terms. And except for it being strong and sturdy, you need little in the way of gear. But you do have to cultivate a lot of patience. You can unburden and unclutter your mind and are freed to think long, mostly uninterrupted thoughts.

When the bite finally happens, you move from one pleasant state of being to another: from utter relaxation to alert, ardent anticipation.

"Flathead catfish" is the antonym of "hectic" and the antidote for its meaning. Other than the chirp of crickets, there is only the sound of splashing fish periodically punctuating the night. When surrounded by so much quiet, it really startles you when it happens very close by.



TREE PHOTO BY BRIAN BUTTON; FIRE PHOTO BY CLAY SMITH





co
til
fu
sl
Po
ris
be

so
sw
co
lan
clo
the
gna
bal
sits
ato
ligh
low
spic
gro
the
M
thou
natu
N
for f
Min
fore
bein
sout
hum
field
the c
a litt
mag
in th
Th
ricke
inevit
In
and t
that t
collar
peas,
desse
butter
down
fried
My
upside
buzzin
rushin

I've seen no sign of the moon all night, but the constellation Cassiopeia is nearly facing me; I need only tilt my head just a bit left and upward. Craning my head further to the left I see the Big Dipper. Both seem to be slowly rotating in a counterclockwise direction around Polaris as the night wears on. Meanwhile, the Teapot rises from the southeastern sky, hugs the horizon and begins a southwesterly nosedive.

Errant June bugs blunder clumsily into me every so often, and there is a thick swarm of flying insects constantly orbiting the lantern light. When I lean in close to write in my journal, they bounce off my face. A gnat gets run over by my ballpoint pen. The lantern sits on a thin slab of wood atop the sand, and the harsh light projected from such a low angle onto the prowling spiders casts exaggerated, grotesque shadows across the sand beyond.

My stomach growls and my thoughts turn to food—and naturally, catfish as food.

No matter if I were fishing for flatheads up north on the Minnesota River, catfish are forever fixed in my mind as being distinctly and deeply southern. I envision a heavy, humid haze hanging over fields of tobacco and cotton, the call of a bobwhite quail, a little wooden farmhouse, magnolias and mockingbirds in the yard.

There's a vine-covered porch and a swing within, a rickety screen door, the metallic stretch of a spring, the inevitable slap of wood.

Inside the kitchen, Mason jars line the pantry shelves, and the table is covered in red-and-white gingham. Atop that table is a feast: hushpuppies, buttered cornbread, collard greens, grits, fried green tomatoes, black-eyed peas, mashed potatoes and thick gravy. Pecan pie for dessert and a squat, globular glass pitcher of cold buttermilk, beaded with condensation, to wash it all down. And on a big, oval platter in the center of it all, fried catfish...

My rod bounces so hard in its holder that it flips upside down. Then the clicker on the reel makes a buzzing-sizzling sound as the line pays out. A tingly rushing-rising feeling progresses from the tops of my

shoulders up into the sides and back of my neck, then into my scalp.

At 3:45 a.m. I'm wide awake and fully focused on my fishing rod, the rest of the world falling away. I rear back. The line goes taut as a banjo string, the drag moans and the butt of the rod digs into the side of my belly. The fish is finally coming within reach, the rod is bent over in nearly a half-circle when the pressure

suddenly releases. The rod tip reverses direction and shoots upward in the direction of the tree tops. Standing with now-slack line I catch a glimpse of a shadowy apparition about 2.5 to 3 feet long in the murky water. Then it fades back into deeper and darker water.

I quickly bait up and resume my vigil.

An 18-wheeler crosses the bridge downriver. The red and amber lights stun me with their vividly-intense color. It occurs to me that other than the few fireflies now abroad, the dying embers of that distant campfire and the pastel of the brownish-tan sand directly beneath the lantern, I've discerned very little in the way of color since nightfall. It's been a world of black, white and grays.

At 4:23 a.m.,

I'm trying to decide whether

the sky is becoming lighter. Then I notice the strong and steady light of Venus rising straight up from the eastern horizon and at 4:48 a.m., the robins begin calling.

By 5:06 a.m. I hear cardinals and killdeer. A great blue heron silently wings its way downriver over the opposite bank. It's time to gather my gear and pack it in. I walk along the edge of a field of young corn and find my car soaked with dew. No wonder I feel so damp and clammy. It occurs to me that the last time I spent the entire night down at the river was nearly four decades ago, back on my 17th birthday, and coincidentally, in almost the same exact spot.

I start the car and head for home, toward bed, with heavy eyelids but a light heart. And despite the fatigue, I feel curiously younger. 🐸

**"THE LINE GOES
TAUT AS A
BANJO STRING,
THE DRAG
MOANS AND THE
BUTT OF THE
ROD DIGS INTO
THE SIDE OF
MY BELLY. THE
FISH IS FINALLY
COMING WITHIN
REACH..."**

**"I START THE
CAR AND HEAD
FOR HOME,
TOWARD BED,
WITH HEAVY
EYELIDS BUT A
LIGHT HEART.
AND DESPITE
THE FATIGUE, I
FEEL CURIOUSLY
YOUNGER."**

KLOUBEC FISHERIES

Amana, IA
www.kloubecfisheries.com
319-846-2077

- Game Fish for Stocking Ponds & Lakes
- Grass Carp (White Amur)
 - Aeration
 - Feed & Feeders
 - Artificial Habitat
- New Pond and Lake Construction
 - Levy Repair and Dredging
 - All types Excavation Services

www.kloubecearthworks.com



KLOUBEC
earthworks



TRAIL MAP BANDANAS

- Iowa's most popular trail systems
- Accurate — GPS verified trails
- Convenient and easy to carry

Learn more at:

IOWAPARKLANDS.COM



First Street Grille

Iowa's Top 10 Burger
Finalist 3 yrs. Running

Open For Breakfast,
Lunch and Dinner



15 Different Appetizers,
Steak, Seafood,
Sandwiches and Pizza.

Large Beer Selection

719 First Street • Keosauqua, IA
(319)293-6462

LAKE SUGEMA
VAN BUREN COUNTY,
IOWA

Pictures are
worth 1,000
words.

VILLAGES of VAN BUREN
in SE IOWA

www.villagesofvanburen.com
800-868-7822

VAN BUREN WATERSHED



DRIVERS- \$7500 SIGNING BONUS
CLASS A CDL NEEDED!

- Regional Routes with More Home Time
- Weekends OFF!!
- GUARANTEED PAY & \$60k FIRST YEAR!!!
- Medical Benefits on DAY 1!
- Profit Sharing* 401k + match

Call to schedule Interviews
for Tuesday's 3 - 8pm
507-664-3038

McLane Company
1821 SE Hulsizer Drive
Ankeny, IA 50021

The McLane Company is one of the
nation's leading distribution and
logistics companies with 37
distribution facilities nationwide.

All loads dispatch and return to Des
Moines, IA Loads are 16-24 hours
long, & run Mon-Fri.

Email resume:
mnh@mcclaneco.com
or Call Now!
507-664-3038

First
Ever!

Cel
FA

Locomotive
Lights Up!



PLACE
POSTAGE
HERE

IOWA
OUTDOORS

PO BOX 37832
BOONE IA 50037-0832



FEATURING AUTHENTICALLY DETAILED, FULLY-SCULPTED FARMALL TRACTORS!

An exceptional value. An incredible train collection!

Begin your illuminated HO-scale train collection with the Diesel Locomotive. You will be billed the first of three easy payments of \$26.66* before shipment. Soon, you can look forward to adding coordinating *Farmall Delivers Express* cars—including fully-sculpted vintage Farmall tractors—and the **FREE** tracks, power-pack and speed controller ... **a \$100 value!** They will be billed separately each at the same attractive price and sent about one every other month. You can cancel at any time and our best-in-the-business 365-day guarantee assures your satisfaction.

Not available in any store. Act now!

Strong demand is definitely expected. *Send no money now.* Just sign and mail the Reservation Application today!

©2015 CNH America LLC
©Hawthorne Village 14-00185-001-BI2015R

www.bradfordexchange.com/Farmall



ca!
SS



collectible. Not intended for children under 14.

**FREE Tracks, Power-pack and Speed
Controller with Shipments 2 & 3—\$100 Value!**

THE
BRADFORD EXCHANGE

HAWTHORNE VILLAGE DIVISION

9210 N. MARYLAND ST., NILES, IL 60714-1322

Limited-time Offer—Please Respond Promptly

Yes! Please enter my order for one Farmall Delivers Express illuminated electric HO-scale train collection, beginning with the "Diesel Locomotive" as described in this announcement. **SEND NO MONEY NOW.**

Signature

Mrs. Mr. Ms.
Name (PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY)

Address Apt. No.

City State Zip

E-mail

Certificate of Authenticity and
365-day Unconditional Guarantee **917927-E10702**

* Plus \$9.99 shipping and service. All sales subject to acceptance and product availability. Allow 4-6 weeks after initial payment for shipment.

Farming's one tough job. So for over 50 years, America's farmers relied on one tough tractor...Farmall...Red Power. As their advertising proclaimed, they were "Time Proved for Improved Farming." In tribute to these famous tractors that helped grow America, Hawthorne is proud to bring you the *Farmall Delivers Express*.

Authentically detailed.

And Built to Last ... like Farmall Tractors!

You'll be amazed at the wealth of authentic details lavished on each train car, including flat cars featuring fully-sculpted and removable Farmall tractors. And you'll delight in the images of these classic tractors that boldly decorate the train cars, recalling half a century of their service as America's small farm tractor. Masterfully crafted with a solid metal chassis and steel alloy wheels, your *Farmall Delivers Express* will bring you years of enjoyment as you watch its powerful diesel locomotive and cars plow around the tracks.

KLOUBEC FISHERIES

Amana, IA
www.kloubecfisheries.com
319-846-2077

- Game Fish for Stocking Ponds & Lakes
- Grass Carp (White Amur)
 - Aeration
 - Feed & Feeders
 - Artificial Habitat
- New Pond and Lake Construction
 - Levy Repair and Dredging
- All types Excavation Services

www.kloubecearthworks.com



TRAIL MAP BANDANAS

- Iowa's most popular
- Accurate — GPS
- Convenient and easy to use

Learn more

IOWAPARKLANDS



First Street Grille

Iowa's Top 10 Burger
Finalist 3 yrs. Running

Open For Breakfast,
Lunch and Dinner

SUBSCRIBE AND SAVE!

33% off!

THREE YEAR SUBSCRIPTION

☐ 3 YEARS, ONLY \$30

☐ 2 YEARS, ONLY \$24

☐ 1 YEAR, ONLY \$15

☐ BILL ME LATER ☐ CHECK ENCLOSED
OR CALL 1-800-361-8072 TODAY TO SUBSCRIBE
please allow 6 - 8 weeks for delivery

NAME (please print)

ADDRESS / APT.

CITY / STATE / ZIP

6/15

J16A

LAKE SUGEMA
VAN BUREN COUNTY,
IOWA

Pictures are
worth 1,000
words.

VAN BUREN WATERSHED

www.villagesofvanburen.com
800-868-7822

IOWA
OUTDOOR

**IOWA'S BEST
OUTDOOR
MAGAZINE**

For Tuesday 5:30 - 8pm
507-664-3038

McLane Company
1821 SE Hulsizer Drive
Ankeny, IA 50021

The McLane Company is one of the
nation's leading distribution and
logistics companies with 37
distribution facilities nationwide.

All loads dispatch and return to Des
Moines, IA Loads are 16-24 hours
long, & run Mon-Fri.

Email resume:
mnhr@mclaneco.com
or Call Now!
507-664-3038

*First
Ever!*

Celebrating the Tractor that Helped Grow America! **FARMALL DELIVERS EXPRESS**



Illuminated, Real Working HO-Scale Train Collection

**Locomotive
Lights Up!**



Fine collectible. Not intended for children under 14.

Farming's one tough job. So for over 50 years, America's farmers relied on one tough tractor...*Farmall...Red Power*. As their advertising proclaimed, they were "Time Proved for Improved Farming." In tribute to these famous tractors that helped grow America, Hawthorne is proud to bring you the *Farmall Delivers Express*.

Authentically detailed.

And Built to Last ... like Farmall Tractors!

You'll be amazed at the wealth of authentic details lavished on each train car, including flat cars featuring fully-sculpted and removable Farmall tractors. And you'll delight in the images of these classic tractors that boldly decorate the train cars, recalling half a century of their service as America's small farm tractor. Masterfully crafted with a solid metal chassis and steel alloy wheels, your *Farmall Delivers Express* will bring you years of enjoyment as you watch its powerful diesel locomotive and cars plow around the tracks.

FEATURING AUTHENTICALLY DETAILED, FULLY-SCULPTED FARMALL TRACTORS!

An exceptional value. An incredible train collection!

Begin your illuminated HO-scale train collection with the Diesel Locomotive. You will be billed the first of three easy payments of \$26.66* before shipment. Soon, you can look forward to adding coordinating *Farmall Delivers Express* cars—including fully-sculpted vintage Farmall tractors—and the **FREE** tracks, power-pack and speed controller ... **a \$100 value!** They will be billed separately each at the same attractive price and sent about one every other month. You can cancel at any time and our best-in-the-business 365-day guarantee assures your satisfaction.

Not available in any store. Act now!

Strong demand is definitely expected. *Send no money now.* Just sign and mail the Reservation Application today!

**FREE Tracks, Power-pack and Speed
Controller with Shipments 2 & 3—\$100 Value!**

THE
BRADFORD EXCHANGE

HAWTHORNE VILLAGE DIVISION

9210 N. MARYLAND ST., NILES, IL 60714-1322

Limited-time Offer—Please Respond Promptly

Yes! Please enter my order for one *Farmall Delivers Express* illuminated electric HO-scale train collection, beginning with the "Diesel Locomotive" as described in this announcement. **SEND NO MONEY NOW.**

Signature

Mrs. Mr. Ms.
Name (PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY)

Address

Apt. No.

City

State

Zip

E-mail

Certificate of Authenticity and
365-day Unconditional Guarantee

917927-E10702

* Plus \$9.99 shipping and service. All sales subject to acceptance and product availability. Allow 4-6 weeks after initial payment for shipment.

©2015 CNH America LLC

©Hawthorne Village 14-00185-001-BI2015R

www.bradfordexchange.com/Farmall



DIY CLEANERS—SIMPLE, SAFE SOLUTIONS THAT SAVE MONEY

Save time, money and a trip to the store by making all the cleaners you need with common ingredients. As a bonus, these recipes are often less harmful than chemicals found in commercial cleaners.

DIY Cleaner Basic Ingredients

If you're starting a DIY green cleaner pantry, here are the top ingredients you'll want to have around.

- baking soda • white vinegar
- hydrogen peroxide • Borax
- essential oils, like tea tree, lavender, eucalyptus or lemongrass oils
- Castile soap
- fresh herbs, citrus or citrus peels
- olive or vegetable oil • water

Air Freshener

- 4 tablespoons distilled water
- 1 tablespoon rubbing alcohol (isopropyl) or high proof white clear alcohol
- 15-20 drops essential oil such as tea tree oil, lavender oil, eucalyptus oil or lemongrass oil
- Small spritz bottle (about 3 ounces)
- 1 tablespoon baking soda (optional)
- Citrus peel or aromatic herbs (optional)

Your house can smell like your favorite essential oil without the chemicals in some commercial deodorizers and fresheners. Mix in a small spritz bottle and shake well before use. Adding a tablespoon of baking soda can help the mixture stay emulsified. Add fresh citrus peel or herbs for extra aromatic kick, but be sure to clean your spritz bottle regularly when using fresh ingredients.

Brass and Copper Polisher

- 1 part ketchup
- 1 part salt

This ultra-simple recipe cleans everything from kitchen pans to decorative fixtures

and jewelry. However, it's for used-to-be-shiny surfaces only, not burnished finishes. Simply spread the salt and ketchup on the tarnished item, rub gently with a sponge or cloth and rinse to reveal astounding shine. The acidity of the ketchup helps remove the dull top layer of tarnish while salt helps scrub it away. Keep items shiny longer by rubbing with olive oil after polishing.

Carpet Cleaner

- 1 small spray bottle
- 1 teaspoon dish washing liquid
- 1 tablespoon white vinegar
- 1 cup warm water
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 clean absorbent towel

Pour ingredients into spray bottle over a sink, adding baking soda last. Then, screw on the spray bottle top, spray liberally onto carpet stains and blot with absorbent towel. For difficult stains such as blood, chocolate or wine on a light carpet, simply pour a capful of hydrogen peroxide on the stain, wait for any bubbling to stop and blot with a towel.

Disinfectant Spray

- 1 bottle hydrogen peroxide
- 1 bottle vinegar
- 2 spray bottles

Simplistic, yes, but this disinfectant kills lots of common viruses and bacteria including salmonella and *E. coli*. As a plus, it's safe enough to use on food preparation surfaces. Just spray with one solution, spray with the other and wipe or let it dry. The order in which they are sprayed doesn't change their effect. (Keep the solutions

in separate bottles though—when mixed and stored, they form peracetic acid, which has completely different properties and doesn't clean as well).

Glass Cleaner

- 1/4 cup isopropyl (rubbing) alcohol
- 1/4 cup vinegar
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 2 cups water
- 1 large spritz bottle
- newspaper

Clean windows, mirrors and windshields cheaply with four ingredients. Mix in a spray bottle until the cornstarch is dissolved, spritz and wipe off with a crumpled newspaper (which leaves fewer streaks than a cloth). Vinegar helps dissolve hard water stains, and the alcohol helps keep the finish streak-free. Make sure to shake the bottle well before each use. For extra grubby glass, try adding a higher proportion of vinegar or a few drops of dish soap. Essential oils can also be added for fragrance.

Grout Cleaner

- 7 cups water
- 1/2 cup baking soda
- 1/3 cup lemon juice
- 1/4 cup vinegar
- 1 bucket
- 1 stiff scrub brush

Mix ingredients in an empty bucket until baking soda is completely dissolved. Apply liberally to grout with a sponge, cloth or spritz bottle and wait 15 minutes. Scrub with a stiff brush and rinse clean.

Hand Soap

- 1/2 cup liquid Castile soap
- 1/2 cup boiled water
- 15-30 drops essential oil
- 1 teaspoon vegetable glycerin (optional)

Pour the water into your soap dispenser first to minimize bubbles, and then add the Castile soap and oil. Shake gently before each use. Without the optional glycerin this soap will not be as thick as commercial products, but it still works just as well or better. If you miss the color, add in a few drops of food coloring.

Laundry Soap Powder

- 1 bar grated laundry soap
- 1 cup baking soda or soda ash
- 1 cup Borax
- 1 lidded container

There are a lot of variations on this recipe, so suit it to your liking. First, grate a bar of laundry soap (like Dr. Bronner's, Pure & Natural, Zote or Kirk's Castile) with a cheese grater. Add in the Borax and your chosen washing soda (baking soda, soda ash, washing soda and Oxi-Clean all work, you just need some sort of sodium carbonate component). Mix well. Store finished mix in a lidded container with a small scoop. Small or lightly soiled loads should require 1 tablespoon, and large or heavily soiled loads 2-3 tablespoons. This detergent does work with high

efficiency (HE) washers, which require less sudsy soap, and essential oils can be added for fragrance.

Liquid Dish Soap

- 1 3/4 cups boiling water
- 1 tablespoon Borax
- 1 squirt bottle
- 1 tablespoon grated bar soap (such as solid Castile soap)
- 15-20 drops essential oil (optional)

To start, set water to boil. Combine borax and bar soap in a large glass bowl, pour boiling water over top and stir until soap is completely melted. Add essential oil if desired and cool for 6-8 hours while stirring occasionally. Once the mixture gels, transfer into a squirt bottle.

Rust Remover

- 3 tablespoons salt
- 1 lemon or lime

Spread salt directly on rusted areas and squeeze citrus juice over the top. Wait 2-3 hours and scrub using rind of the fruit. If you need a heavier-duty cleaner, mix 1 cup of Borax, 1 tablespoon cream of tartar and enough hydrogen peroxide to make a thick paste. Apply to affected area, let

sit 30 minutes and wipe clean with a damp cloth.

Wood Polish

- 1/2 cup lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon olive or grapeseed oil
- 1 tablespoon water
- 1 glass jar with seal and lid

Juice one fresh lemon or pour 1/2 cup store-bought juice into a lidded jar, add in the water and oil, seal and shake well. Rub onto wood surface with a soft cloth. If you only have a few items to polish, use the rest of the mixture for salad dressing.

Other Quick DIY Home Fixes

SPATTERED MICROWAVE: Nuke one cup of water for 4 minutes, or until boiling. Keep door closed for another 4 minutes to let steam rehydrate dried food and stains, then wipe away with a sponge. Add lemon juice for extra cleaning power and fresh scent.

SMELLY WASHING MACHINE: Mix 1/4 cup baking soda with 1/4 cup water. Add this and 2 cups white vinegar to a load of whites and wash in hot water. To prevent future odors, allow washing machine to air out after every cycle.



Wild Cuisine KITCHENSIDE

BY ALAN FOSTER PHOTOS BY JAKE ZWEIBOHMER



An avid outdoorsman, owner and chef Tag Grandgeorge likes to spend his free time fishing, camping and floating rivers and lakes. It's obvious where he gets his outdoor ideas from, evident by the *Iowa Outdoors* magazine state fair t-shirt he sported when we arrived for the photo shoot.

Garden-style Rabbit

French cuisine is synonymous with elegance, special occasion date night, elaborate feasts. Originally influenced deeply by Italian cuisine, in the 17th century prominent chefs shifted French cooking away from its foreign influence and down its own indigenous path.

Meals span a couple hours or more—camaraderie meant to be savored as much as the food. Wine is integral—both for drinking and in the cooking. Cheese and sliced meats are prevalent. Rich soups and stews are mainstays. Sautéing, roasting, braising, poaching, broiling—the French find use in all styles.

As daunting as the cuisine sounds, it's really all about following traditional French technique, explains Le Jardin owner and chef Tag Grandgeorge. "Start with a great product and build on it."

That's exactly what Grandgeorge has been doing at his bistro in Beaverdale. His food philosophy is "fresh with inspiration and ideas and an approach that is grounded in proper and basic French technique."

His food embraces several flavor profiles, a product of his 2004 year-long sojourn, first to the mountains of Alsace, France, a gastronomically rich region of his grandfather's origin. Next was a stint as sous chef at the award-winning Terrapin Restaurant Bistro Bar in New York. Back in his home state, he was opening chef at the Grand Piano Bistro.

One thing is for sure, everything set in front of you will be fresh. Like so many other independently-owned restaurants, the focus is on local, seasonal and sustainable. Le Jardin's pantry is stocked with ingredients from the gardens of friends, family, local farmers and regional producers. Grandgeorge brags of the nearly 100 percent scratch kitchen, meaning all

made-fresh ingredients.

Since French meals are meant to be savored over time and good company, menu diversity reflects that. Cheese and cured meat plates are popular to share, or try the regional staple tarte flambée covered in French cheese, smoky bacon and sweet onions. Opt for a dinner omelette, harissa and Parmesan crusted chicken or braised beef short ribs.

For a different take on rabbit, try Grandgeorge's meatloaf.

RABBIT MEATLOAF

2 pounds ground rabbit
1 pound ground pork
1/2 cup finely chopped onion
1 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons pepper
1/2 can tomato paste
1 tablespoon minced garlic
2 eggs
2 tablespoons ground mustard
1/3 cup bread crumbs

Combine ingredients in a large bowl and mix well. Pack firmly in a 9-by-5-by-3-inch loaf pan. Bake at 350° for 1.5 hours. Let cool 10 minutes. Slice and eat. At Le Jardin, Rabbit Meatloaf is glazed with apricot mustard and served with parsnip mashed potatoes, pan gravy and sautéed Brussels sprouts and bacon.

APRICOT MUSTARD

2 tablespoons apricot preserves
3 tablespoons grained mustard
Splash of cider vinegar

Le Jardin Hours:

Wednesday through Saturday, 5 p.m. to close; Sunday 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Reservations recommended. Available for parties, special events and catering. Le Jardin also specializes in servicing motorcoach groups.

2815 Beaver Ave., Des Moines;
515-255-5787. lejardindsm.com.

Warden's Diary

BY ERIKA BILLERBECK



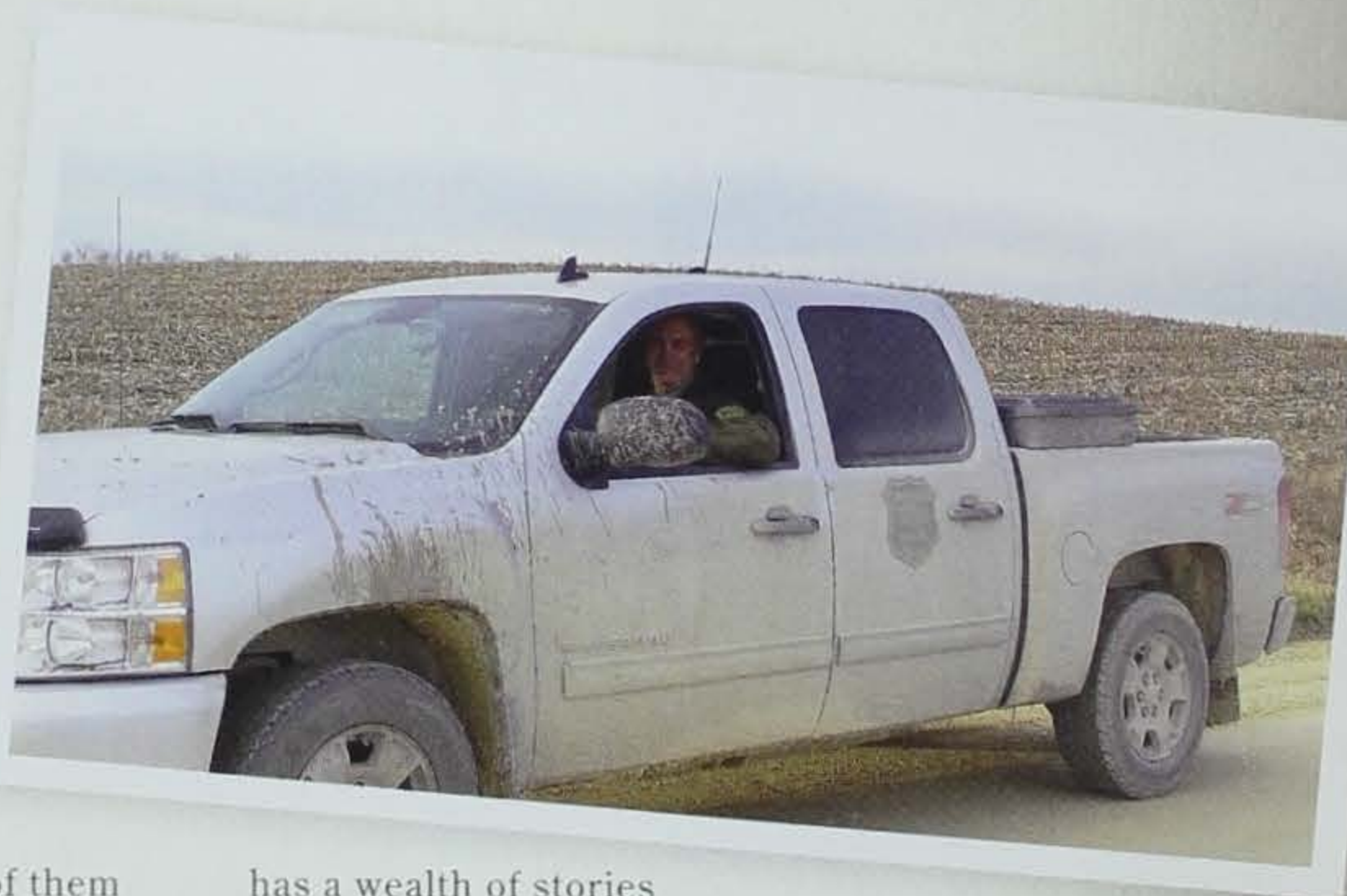
OFFICERS OF IMPACT

Spring is almost here. Just hearing the word "spring" brings to mind woodland wildflowers, morels, gobbling turkeys and warm, fresh air. It's a time for renewal...a time to be happy. And yet, I can't help but feel down in the dumps. It's all Aric's fault...he decided to retire.

Aric Sloterdijk, the long time (loooooonnnnnngggg time) conservation officer for Linn County, has been my unofficial partner for several years. I knew the day would eventually come when he would decide to hang it up. I just wish he would have put it off later.

Of course officers retire every year, and all of them are missed one way or another. Our force is small enough that each officer's work and years of service are deeply appreciated. So much so it isn't uncommon for retired officers' names to come up in every-day conversation. I've heard so many stories about long-retired officers I've never met, it feels as though I worked with them myself. They have reached legendary status. Nobody is ever forgotten...which isn't necessarily always good. It's best if you can be remembered more for the good things you did, rather than for something stupid. Personally, I have concerns about my future reputation.

The first thing Aric said when I told him this column was about him was I should write about all retirees—not just him. Aric never looked for recognition, and never wanted to be the center of attention. But I agree with him. I wish I could write about everyone. Each retiree



has a wealth of stories that could keep me in good material for years—stories involving Mike Macke and Scott Kinseth alone (two guys who retired around the same time as Aric) could keep me busy for a long time.

If I could, I would take a sabbatical and travel the state gathering oodles of stories. But we don't get sabbaticals, and unless I worked closely with them, it wouldn't do their careers justice. Every retired officer influenced the department, the citizens in his or her territory and the natural resources of the state. But an even deeper impression was made on officers who worked with them on a regular basis. Everyone has at least one other officer he or she works with closely, and can rely on day to day. Aric happened to be mine.

It depresses me that I will no longer go on duty and have my phone (displaying "Sloterdijk" on the caller ID)

start ringing. The first thing I would hear almost every time I answered was, "Are you ready for this?" followed by a telling of the latest weird situation he had gotten into. It saddens me that while sitting in a cornfield late at night I will no longer hear 70s music blaring from my police radio as Aric held the microphone to his truck speakers...merely to drive me nuts. It stinks knowing I won't automatically have a partner when we have to pair up during training...even if he did manage to "shoot me" once during a simunitions scenario. It's unfortunate Aric's wife's homemade fudge will never again be generously shared with me during deer season (seriously, I would have hoarded that stuff if I were him.)

I'm not quite sure why he took me under his wing. We have quite different personalities...Aric is outgoing—I'm an introvert. Aric makes quick decisions—I mull things over. Aric is very direct in his approach to cases—I tend to take the long way around. Aric never showed a lack of enthusiasm for this job—I tend to have "off" days. Aric always seems confident—I obsessively worry. But maybe this mismatch is exactly what made things interesting.

Perhaps Aric decided to work with me so often because I regularly called to ask if he recognized names of people I dealt with at the Hawkeye Wildlife Area, just south of Linn County. A good majority of its users are from the Cedar Rapids area. So much so, eventually I would call

Aric to tell him if he couldn't find any hunters in his own county, it was because they were all in mine.

I appreciated Aric's unwavering patience with me and my stupid questions. No matter how stupid the question was, or how many I managed to come up with, he never made me feel stupid for asking. To top it off, he even had the grace to ask for my opinion from time to time. He always had encouraging things to say about the work I was doing, and though he probably never thought twice about it, it was invaluable to me and my often wavering self-confidence.

Perhaps the thing I valued most about Aric was the way he treated everyone with genuine respect and curiosity. There was rarely a day when I worked with him that he didn't ask how my kids were doing. If he knew I was going through something difficult, he wasn't shy asking me to tell him about it. And while those traits make a good friend, when applied to public relations, they also make an outstanding conservation officer.

Law enforcement officers do not always make people happy, and I'm sure there are folks out there a little glad to see Aric retire. But if this is the case, I can guarantee it was never for his lack of regard for them as people. Though his decisions were often made quickly, they were also made equitably and thoughtfully—something not easy to do.

So, to all former officers—enjoy your retirements knowing your careers made a tremendous difference to our state, and your friendships and mentoring made even more of a difference to fellow officers.

And to Aric—I was obviously kidding about the fudge... please feel free to keep sharing with me. I expect a call next deer season. 🐾



Flora & Fauna

BY MARIAH GRIFFITH PHOTO BY RON HUELSE

Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum*

PRETTY BIRD

Waxwings have long delighted birders with their flamboyant feathers and dainty songs. But in the 1960s, scientists started seeing birds with bright orange feathers instead of yellow, and began wondering if the genetics were changing. Thirty years of study later, they found these waxwings were eating red berries of non-native honeysuckles, which affected pigmentation.

WHY THE WAX?

There are only three species of waxwings in the world—two are seen throughout Iowa in winter. Cedar and bohemian waxwings like a variety of habitats, and since they travel in flocks, they're hard to miss. Legend has it they earned their names from the colorful red and yellow edges of their feathers, which appear as though dipped in wax. However, most birders agree the name comes from a waxy red substance on the ends of the secondary feathers. Scientists still debate its function. The last species in the family, the Japanese waxwing, does not produce this secretion.

FRUITY FODDER

Cedar waxwings are one of the few Iowa birds to survive on winter fruit. They eat a variety, but prefer cedar berries. Late in the season, waxwings' love of fruit can lead them to eat fermented berries, with subsequent intoxication and bumbling. Waxwings are experts at grabbing berries—even snatching them while hanging upside down or in flight.

Waxwings add protein-rich insects to their summer diet, but they can also go months eating only berries. They don't regurgitate seeds like other fruit-loving birds, but simply pass them in droppings. Scientists use this unique feature to track their movements.

FANCY FLOWER DANCE

Courting starts with the male, who brings an offering of fruit, flower petals or insects. The female takes the gift in her beak, and both birds bounce toward and away from each other, passing the gift between them several times. The dance ends when the female eats the gift. (To see it, search "cedar waxwing courting" on YouTube.)

Pairs remain monogamous for the breeding season. They scope out nesting areas together, but the female makes the final decision and constructs the nest with little help, making 2,500 trips to collect material, sometimes stealing from other nests to make the job easier.



THE SNARE SHOP

A PASSION FOR THE OUTDOORS

THE COMPLETE STORE FOR THE IOWA OUTDOORSMAN
ARCHERY • HUNTING • FISHING • FIREARMS • AMMO



WE CARRY MUCH MORE THAN JUST TRAPPING SUPPLIES

Check out our ever expanding supply of hunting equipment, clothing, ammo, fishing equipment, live bait and much more.

Stop by our retail store or check out our website.

Store Hours: Monday-Friday 8-6 • Thursday 8-7 • Saturday 8-2 • Closed Sunday

Customer Appreciation Day held every 3rd Saturday in August.

330 S MAIN PO BOX 70 • LIDDERDALE, IA 51452

WWW.SNARESHOP.COM • 712-822-5780

STATE LIBRARY OF IOWA
3 1723 02105 5983



A common inhabitant of all parts of the U.S. except the West Coast, this pearl crescent butterfly nectars on a compass plant. This butterfly was photographed at Lee County's Turkey Run Wildlife Area, adjacent Shimek State Forest's Croton Unit. **BY TY SMEDES**

TH
IN T
Ma
Beaut