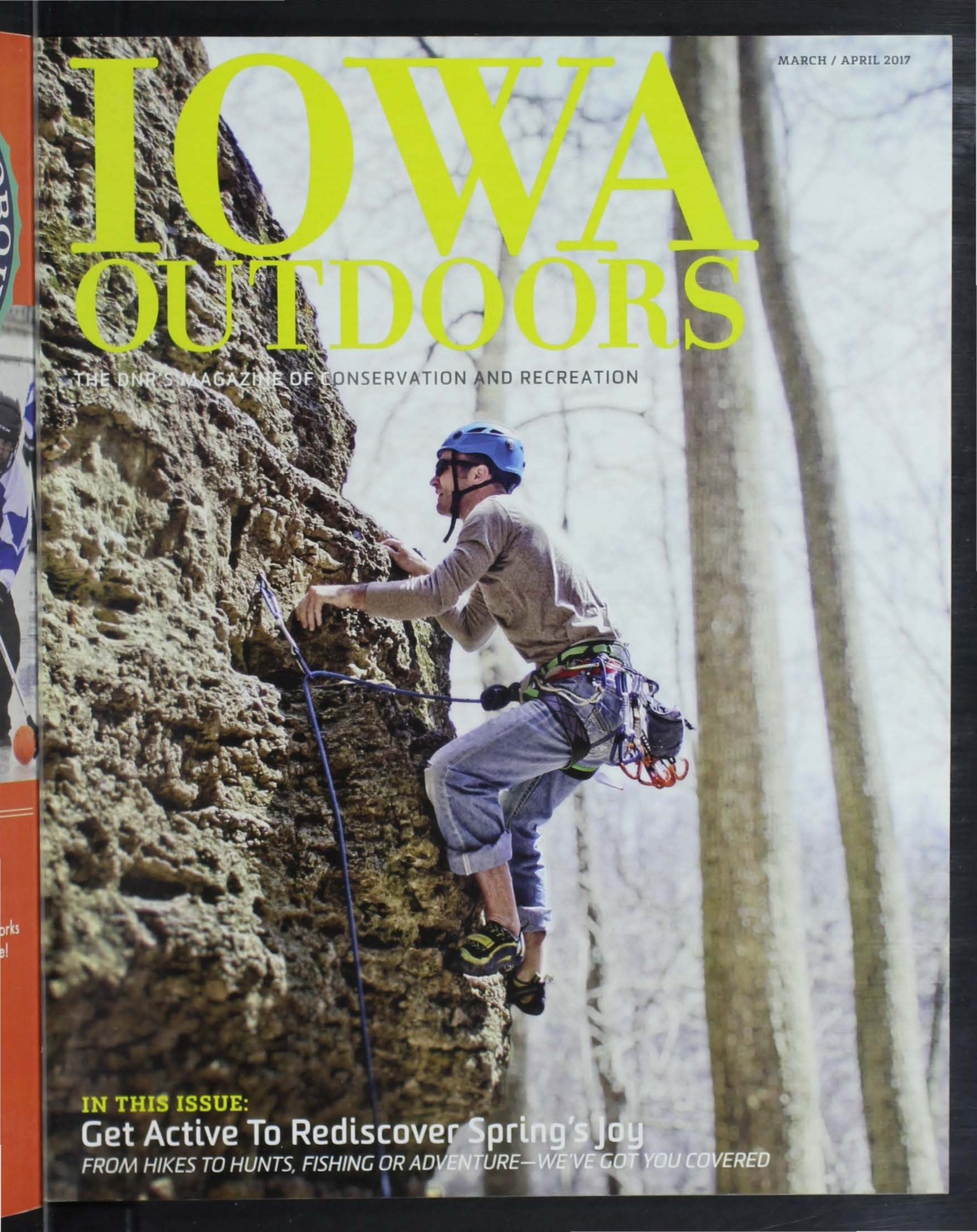


MARCH / APRIL 2017

IOWA OUTDOORS

THE DNR'S MAGAZINE OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION



IN THIS ISSUE:

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FROM HIKES TO HUNTS, FISHING OR ADVENTURE—WE'VE GOT YOU COVERED

A SEASON FOR ALL

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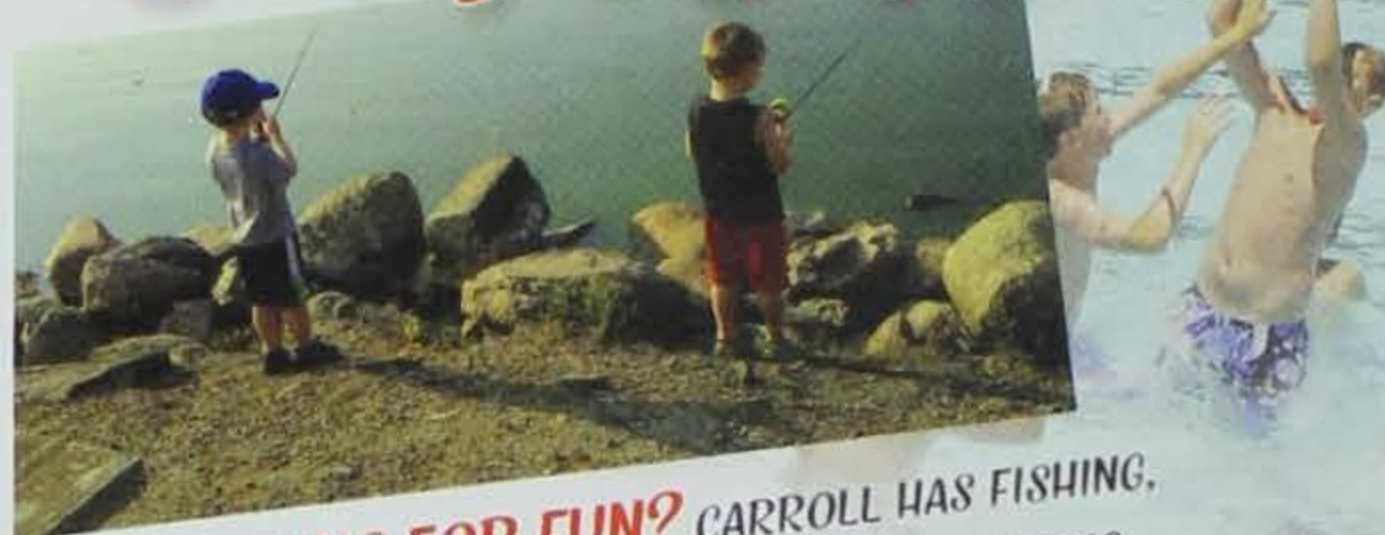
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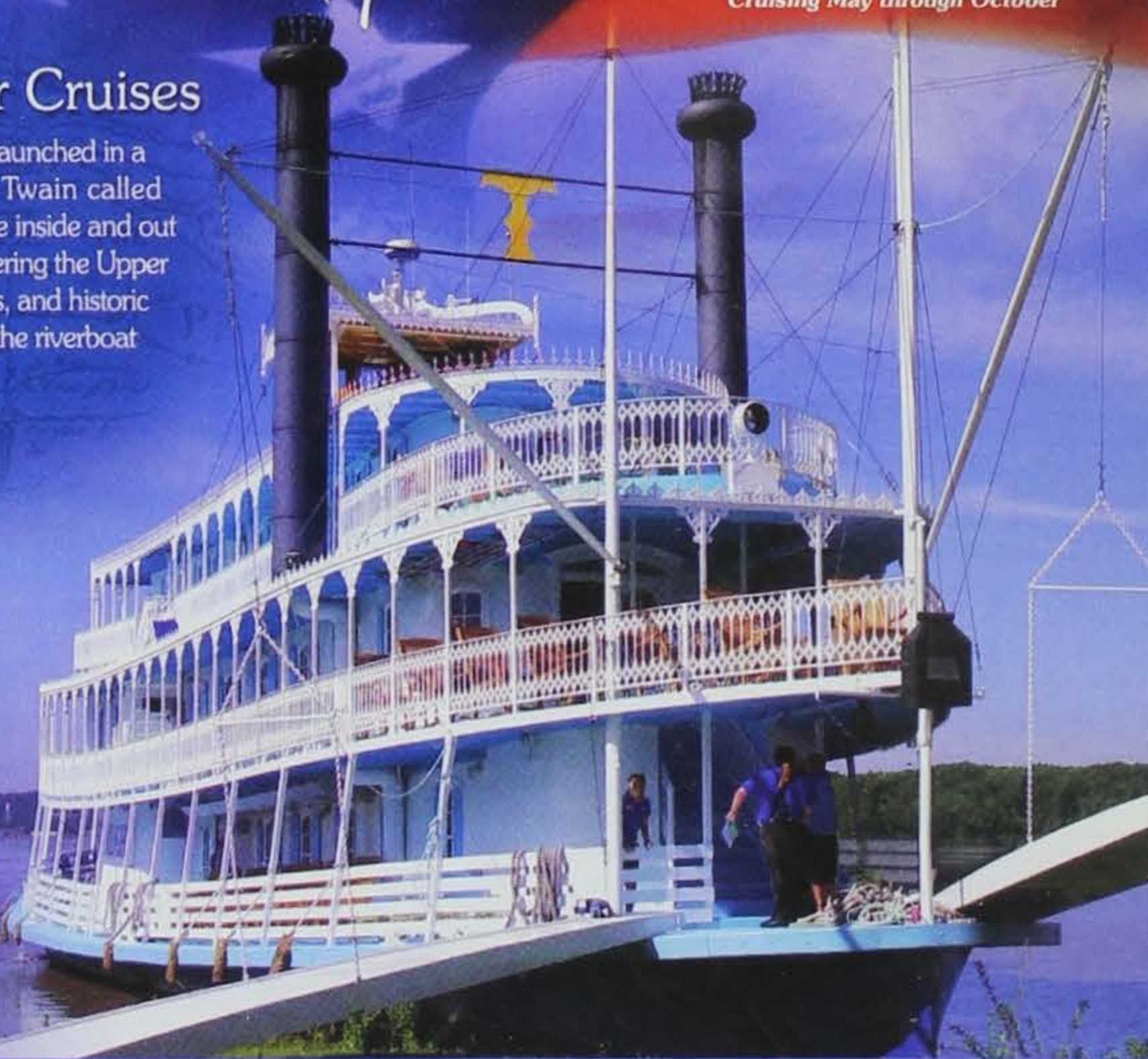


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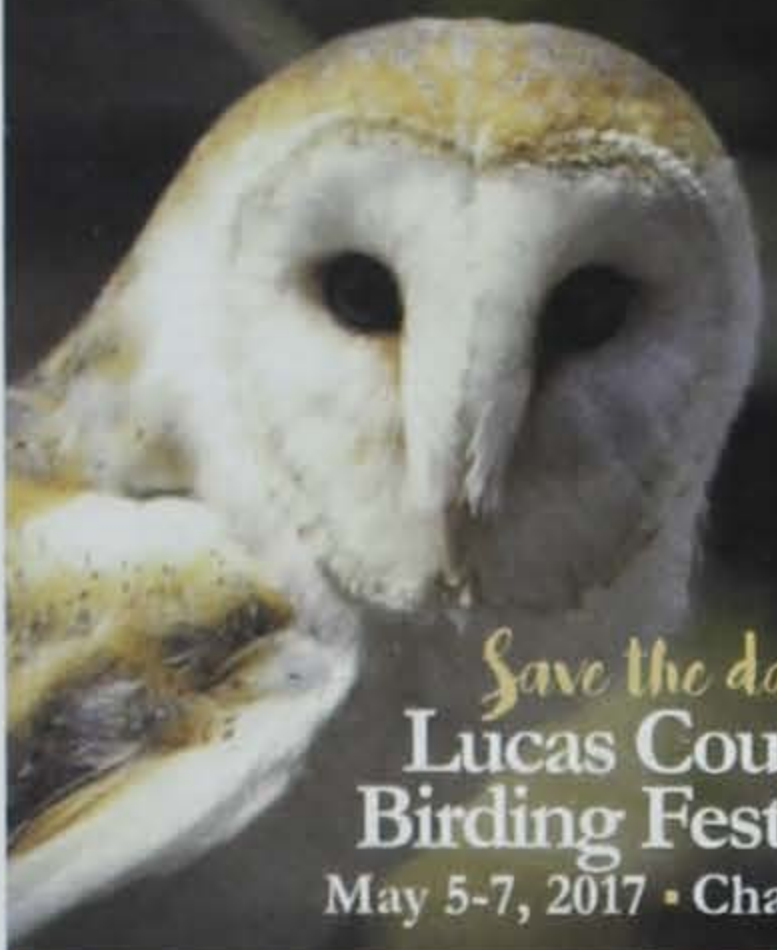
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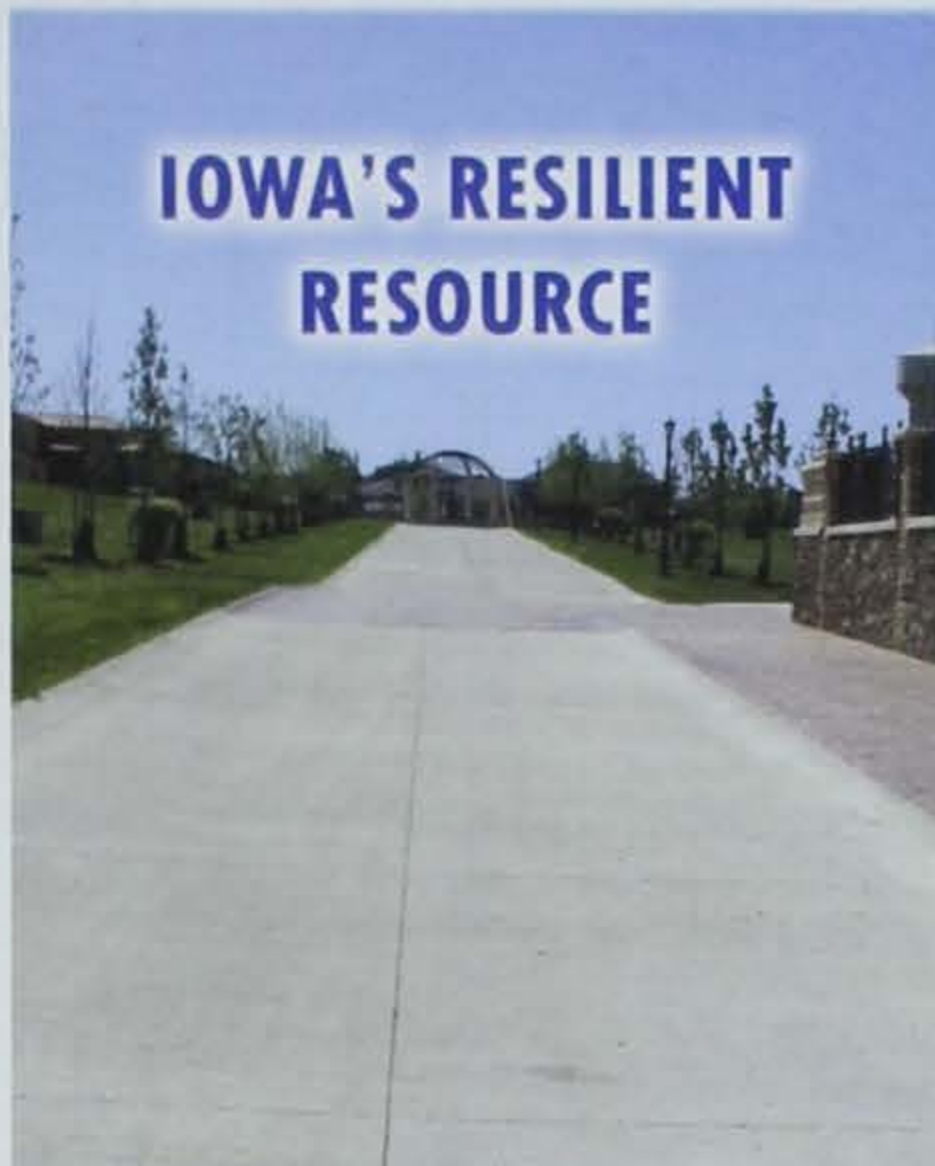
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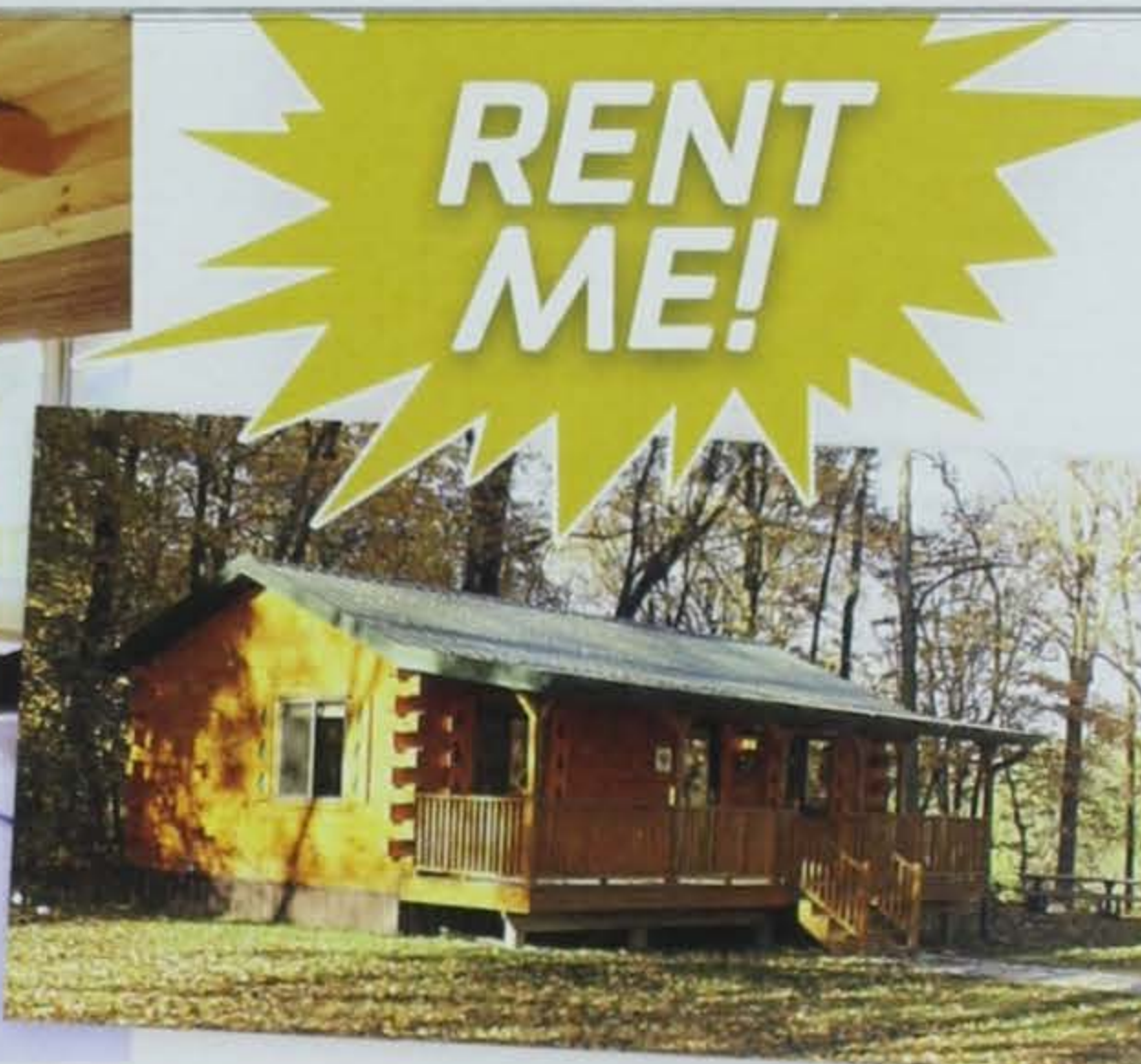
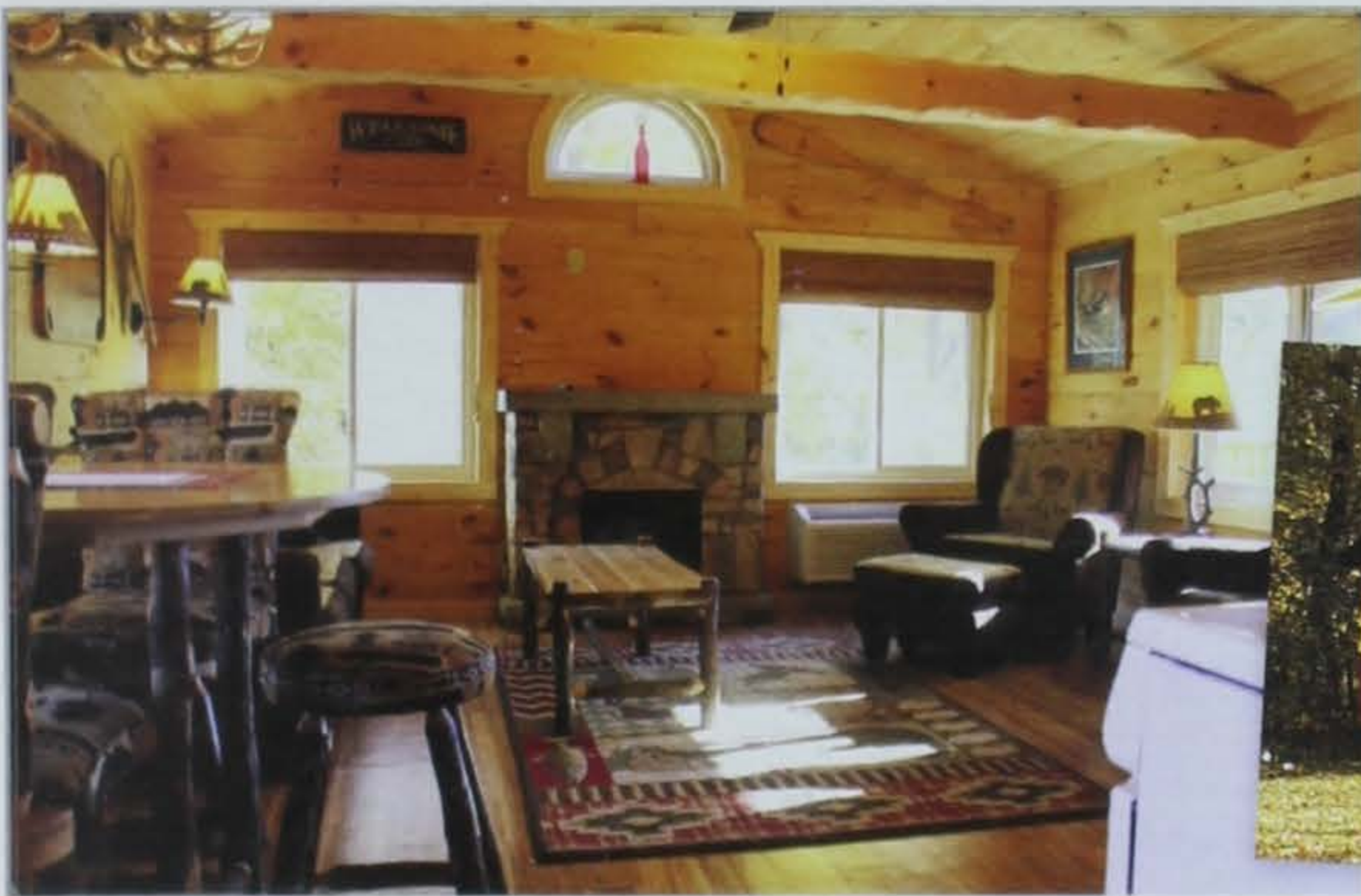


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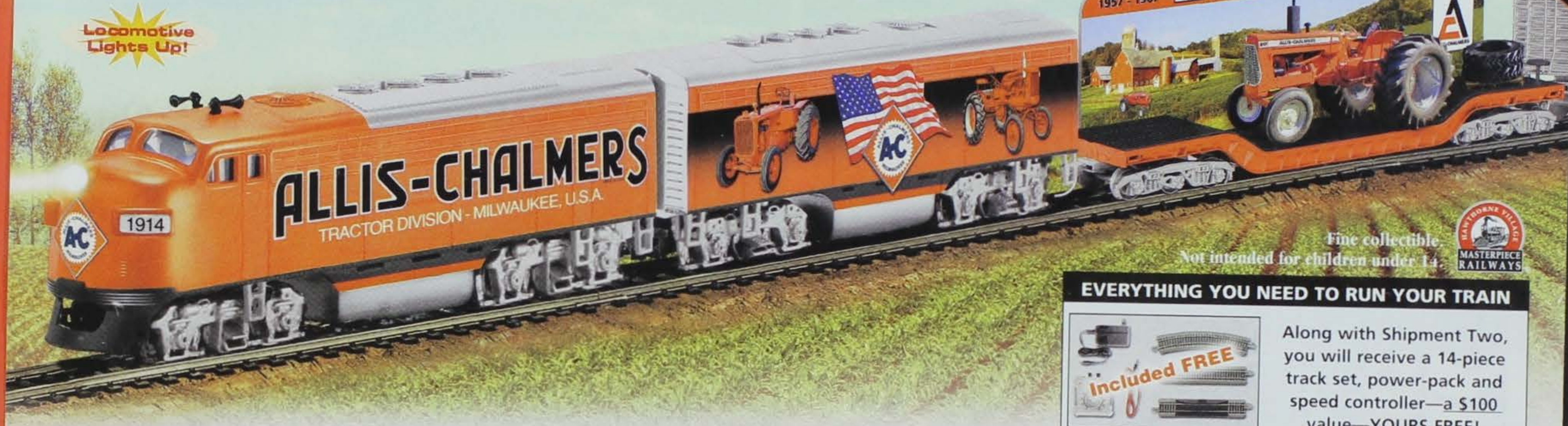
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Add some flash for more spring fishing success; use this proven method to protect your valuable outdoor gear; sleep in for your late-season gobblers; discover the next coming of duct tape.

11 Together

Ring in spring with four family-friendly events; build a simple bench with a great feature for watching wildlife; support wildlife diversity with these five beautiful posters, and don't forget the oft-forgotten on your Iowa tax returns.

18 Lost in Iowa

Bust out of the winter blues and warm up with the best waterfowl and bird watching in Lee County.

60 My Backyard

Spruce up the schoolgrounds or your town with 200 free tree seedlings.

ABOUT THIS PHOTO

Several small caves along the bluff face at Jones County's Pictured Rocks Wildlife Management Area attract sightseers from across Iowa. However, caving is limited to protect bats from lethal White Nose Bat Syndrome. Cave visitors need a letter of authorization from the Jones County Conservation Board director. Call 563.487.3541 for more information.

PHOTO BY BRIAN GIBBS

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28 Love of the Woods

Sitting silent and still for long periods of time in the woods allows this turkey hunter's mind to wander. He discovers that nature is what brings him back each year and bagging a bird is a mere fraction of the overall fun and memories.

BY JIM ZOHRER

32 Unplug And Get Outside

Paddle alongside naturalist Brian Gibbs as he welcomes spring with a Jones County float down the Maquoketa River through Pictured Rocks Park and Indian Bluffs.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY BRIAN GIBBS

40 Mission Fishin'

We've done our part stocking a record *156 million fish* last year. Now it's your turn. This year's fishing mission, should you choose to accept it—and you should—is to take a newbie or former angler out fishing to help us recruit and retain more fishing fanatics. Here are top spots in every county to ensure an enjoyable outing!

BY SHANNON HAFNER



50 Spring Quadfecta

Gamble on the right timing to hit the jackpot of the spring quadfecta—turkey, trout, morels and asparagus. Never was there a more quintessential and delectable spring meal.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY RANDY BRENTON

54 Making The Most Of Spring Fishing

Canals, lagoons and marinas are the first lake areas to warm—and where fish congregate right after ice-out. Take advantage of these tips for success to get a jump on early spring fishing.

BY JIM WAHL



ABOUT THE COVER

Pictured Rocks County Park in Jones County is likely the state's most popular rock climbing destination. The 1,138-acre park and wildlife management area along the Maquoketa River is named for the steep limestone bluffs enclosing the narrow river valley. While climbing is a key attraction, the area is also known for smallmouth bass fishing, paddling, hiking, deer and turkey hunting and for fans of woodland wildflowers.

PHOTO BY JASON STIERMAN

ABOUT THIS PHOTO

Keokuk sits along pool 19—the largest on the Mississippi River—which during winter is considered the Ritz Carlton for migrating eagles and ducks. It's arguably the most important layover for canvasbacks, lesser scaup and ringneck ducks. Nearby Shimek State Forest is a designated Bird Conservation Area. But that's not all Lee County offers. Visitors come here from as far as Japan in search of Iowa's state rock—the geode. And Keokuk geodes are the best on earth.

PHOTO BY CLAY SMITH

Contributors



Clear Lake's **RANDY BRENTON** and his family have spent considerable time hunting, fishing, camping and enjoying the outdoors. He is an ophthalmologist, who guides several canoe trips a year on the Upper Iowa River and to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area. He is founder and president of Cattle Creek Christian Camp, a non-profit organization with a camp on the Upper Iowa River.



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.

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

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

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ZIP TIES AND LURE PHOTOS BY KATI BAINTER; CLOCK PHOTO BY JAKE ZWEIBOHMER

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

Add Some Bling For Murky Spring Waters



When water is stained, as it often is in early spring, putting a little flash in your rig could save the day. Replace the rear hook of your jerkbait or crankbait with a spinner blade (the kind used to make walleye worm rigs) on a barrel swivel. You can also slide a spinner blade and clevis ahead of your streamer flies. The extra flash and vibration can help attract fish in murky spring runoff.

Ultimate Gear Protection

Many Iowans spend nearly as much money on outdoor gear as they do time pursuing their passions. Protect those valuable assets and take photos of all your gear—camping, fishing, hunting gear—and make a list of:

- MAKE
- MODEL
- MANUFACTURER
- SERIAL NUMBER
- YEAR OF PURCHASE and
- APPROXIMATE COST or REPLACEMENT VALUE

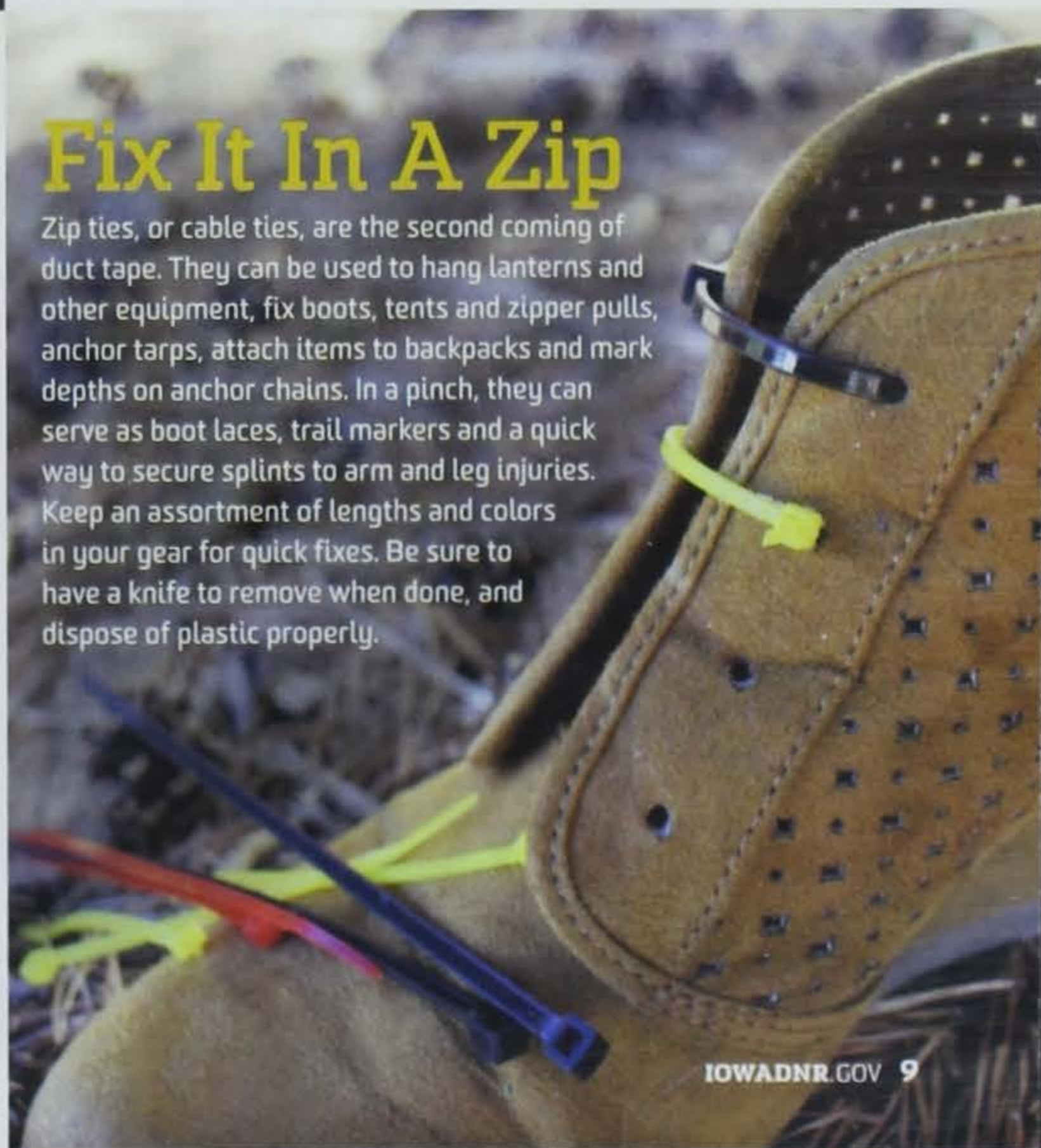
If your items are antiques, have them appraised by a professional. Store the list and photos in a bank safety deposit box. This will make it easier to get reimbursed in case of loss due to theft, fire, flood or tornado.

Tips For Late Season Turkey Hunters

There is nothing like sitting in the woods as the eastern sun rises, listening to birds sing and turkeys gobble, and wrapping a harvest tag around the leg of an early morning tom. But despite what hunting shows portray, occupied toms aren't always that cooperative, especially late season. No problem, *sleep in*. Toms quickly find hens early in the morning and are tough to draw away, and some have learned from experience to keep quiet until later in the day. By mid-morning, many hens have retreated to their nests, leaving toms looking for other hens. Slip into the woods late morning or early afternoon and it will likely just be you and a vulnerable tom.

Fix It In A Zip

Zip ties, or cable ties, are the second coming of duct tape. They can be used to hang lanterns and other equipment, fix boots, tents and zipper pulls, anchor tarps, attach items to backpacks and mark depths on anchor chains. In a pinch, they can serve as boot laces, trail markers and a quick way to secure splints to arm and leg injuries. Keep an assortment of lengths and colors in your gear for quick fixes. Be sure to have a knife to remove when done, and dispose of plastic properly.



THE DNR OWNS TOO MUCH LAND, USES EMINENT DOMAIN AND DOESN'T PAY LAND TAXES. PUBLIC LANDS TAKE HIGH QUALITY FARMLAND OUT OF PRODUCTION.



Little could be further from the truth. Iowa ranks last nationally, having the fewest acres in public ownership. Just 1 percent of Iowa's surface is DNR managed public areas—lakes included. That means less places to recreate, enjoy and play, says DNR Director Chuck Gipp.

Of Iowa's 36 million-plus acres, a little over 370,000 acres are under DNR care. This includes lakes, streams, forests, prairies, preserves, hatcheries, wildlife areas and parks. Since 1990, the DNR has paid taxes on all lands acquired with any funds from the REAP program or wildlife habitat stamps. Last year, the DNR paid \$963,487 in property tax to counties, he says.

Public lands are important. Here's how lands are obtained.

Eminent domain is not used by the DNR. Willing sellers often contact the DNR about a purchase. Typically they want their land permanently protected and available for Iowans to enjoy. Land is also gifted or willed to the DNR for the same purposes.

"We turn down a lot of these offers that do not meet DNR criteria," says Gipp, who notes a planned approach is used. "We don't buy or accept areas on impulse. There must be a large benefit for conservation, recreation or the environment before the DNR accepts the area. We want functional habitats, public access or an area that improves water quality," he says.

Second, it must provide a public benefit and access, and third,

DNR staff must be able to efficiently manage it. For example, are DNR employees located in proximity? Areas adjacent existing public lands are of interest to the DNR as are areas that connect or create wildlife corridors between existing parcels of public lands or greenbelts, he says.

"The vast majority of land purchases are initiated by willing landowners that contact the DNR," says Gipp. Then the area is judged against those criteria.

Often, these areas have low Corn Suitable Ratings, averaging 32 percent. Most ag lands under crop production rate in the 70 to 80 percent range. A majority of acres donated and purchased are forests, marshes, heavily sloped areas and hills, and floodplains bordering rivers and streams—land not compatible to agriculture. The average purchase price per acre is \$2,459. It is not valuable farmland, which had a statewide average value in 2015 of \$7,800, according to Iowa State University data.

More than a third of public land managed by the DNR is classified as highly erodible soils. Forty percent are forested and 14 percent are water and another 17 percent are hydric soils, which are typically non-tillable.

The DNR oversees 370,718 acres. For comparison, land along roadside right-of-ways, such as ditches, totals nearly three times as much land—919,405 acres.

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ACTIVITIES, TIPS AND EVENTS FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

But Why?

Helping adults answer children's nature questions

BY A. JAY WINTER

A. Jay Winter educates thousands of Iowa children each year as the DNR's training specialist at the Springbrook Conservation Education Center.

MIKAYLA, 10, IN MARSHALL COUNTY, ASKS:

Why don't birds' feet get cold in the winter?



Actually, birds do get cold feet, and that is why they don't freeze. It's all about heat exchange in their circulatory systems. As colder blood returns from the feet, it passes warm arterial blood coming from the heart. Heat is exchanged between the two by blood flowing in opposite directions. Blood flowing down is cooled, and blood flowing to the heart is pre-warmed to maintain core heat. The temperature of the feet is close to the temperature of the snow, so very little heat transfers between the two. The feet are just warm enough to avoid frostbite, and the bird's circulation is fast enough that blood doesn't remain long enough in the feet to freeze. In severe cold, a bird may stand on one foot, with the other tucked under feathers. This further reduces heat loss by keeping one foot warm, and the surface area in contact with ice or snow is cut in half.



LET THERE BE LIGHT

It's time for Iowans to learn a valuable lesson from China. When I look to East Asia and particularly The People's Republic, I see a red flag. Six decades ago, less than 20 percent of Chinese were short-sighted, or myopic. Today that number is more than 90 percent. In Seoul, South Korea, the rate is 96.5 percent.

China's largest eye hospital is in the southern city of Guangzhou. It overflows with patients, hard pressed to meet demand. Thousands of children arrive with blurry distance vision caused by myopia.

In the U.S., we are emulating the trend. A National Eye Institute study shows myopia grew from 25 percent of the population (ages 12 to 54) in 1971-72 to an alarming 41.6 percent in 1999-04.

One theory for this condition has always been book work. More than 400 years ago, Johannes Kepler, the German astronomer and optics scientist, thought his own myopic condition was related to the stress of too much reading. This theory has some strong supporting evidence linking education to myopia. For example, a study in the 1990s documented teenage boys in Israel who attended Yeshivas had much higher rates of myopia than others. This theory suggested such prolonged strain impacts the normal growth of the eyeball.

A more accurate explanation owes itself to serendipity. In one Ohio State University College of Optometry study that tracked more than 500 8- and 9-year-olds in California with healthy vision, a question was added as an "afterthought." It asked if they were involved in outdoor sports or activities.

We now have evidence that it wasn't staring at a computer all day, but the lack of nature—in this case, sunlight. In the California study there was a strong preventative factor associated with being outdoors. A much larger study in Australia reinforced the association and the value of being outdoors. For once, physical activity wasn't the answer. One got the benefits whether running or laying on a beach.

I know there is shocking data about cancer, opioid drug overdoses, gun violence and water quality. But here is a wolf statistic that appears in sheep's clothing. A recent study in *Nature* says only 10 percent of teens spend daily time outside! And according to the School of Public Health at Harvard, adults spend more time in cars than outdoors.

You might find the other topics in the previous paragraph more alarming, but not me. The list of negative conditions does not seem to end and seeing us cultivate a generation of kids who get less natural light than mushrooms is just as alarming as those other conditions. The message to our peers and children is simple...take it outside!

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

IT'S SPRINGTIME—REDISCOVER THE JOY OF BEING ACTIVE!

Red Haw State Park, Charlton

12th Annual Nature, Purple Martin Seminar and Workshop in Kalona

Spend a day in Kalona for this fun, informative event and learn about a variety of bird species, nosh on a down-home lunch provided by the local Amish community and spend the afternoon learning about purple martins.

In the past, morning speakers have covered everything from owls, trees, bats and conservation plantings to bluebirds, butterflies and even worms. The day features four speakers, all experts in their field.

"We target people interested with a hands-on interest in conservation," says Jim Walters, event co-chair and president of the Songbird Project in Iowa City. "Large numbers of children and families come," he says, noting past years have seen 150 to 300 attendees.

While morning topics are wide-ranging, the afternoon is focused on purple martins. See displays, browse offerings for bird houses from vendors, hear the keynote speaker, meet other enthusiasts and learn during a Q&A session from those statewide with hands-on purple martin experience. Bring some cash or check for an auction, with proceeds going to charity.

Attend Saturday, March 18. Doors open at 8 a.m. with coffee and donuts and early registrations. Events begin at 9 a.m. and conclude at 3:30 p.m. Just \$2 for adults. Kids 10 and under free. The event is at CAM Iowa Clothing Center (1005 Nutmeg Ave) 1.8 miles north of Kalona and

one mile east off Highway 1. At press time, the agenda was unannounced. For agenda, contact Jim Walters at [319-466-1134](tel:319-466-1134) or email jcmwalt@infionline.net. Agenda also at AltheaRSherman.org.

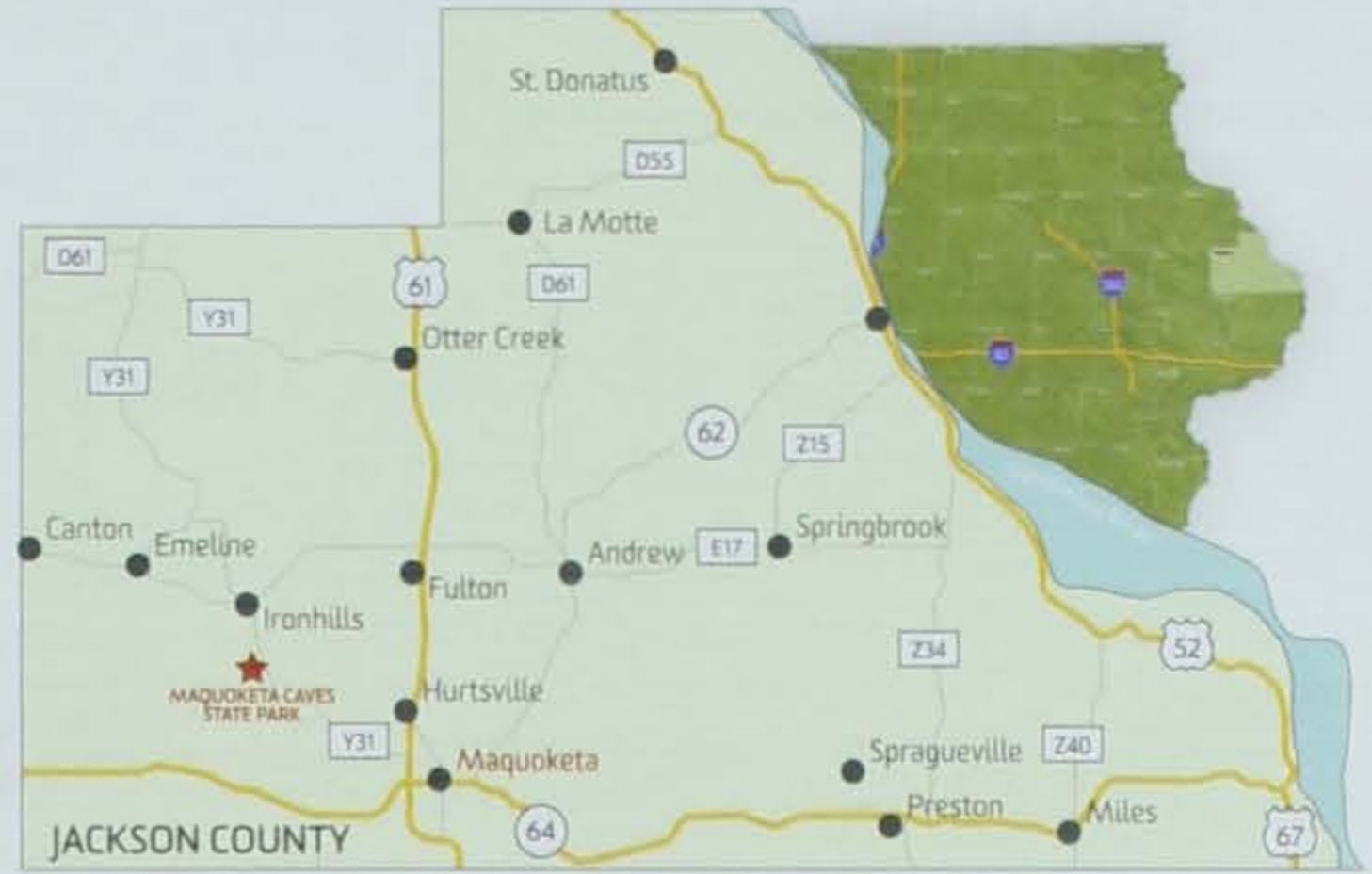
Taste Nature's Sweetness

Enjoy the sticky sweetness of real maple syrup made onsite at the Sixth Annual Pancakes in the Park, April 22 at Maquoketa Caves State Park. Did you know it takes 40 gallons of maple sap to cook down to one gallon of syrup? Park ranger Scott Dykstra knows. He and the park's friends group gear up for this event in mid-February by tapping 30 of the park's maple trees to create up to 20 gallons of syrup. Enjoy sausage and pancakes with maple syrup as well as a variety of programs and activities from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the main shelter. For details call [563-652-5833](tel:563-652-5833). Just \$5 per adult and \$3 for ages 5-12. 10970 98th Street, Maquoketa.

Soak Up Spring Joy with a Flare-up of Redbuds

The showy redbuds are on their way to a peak show at Red Haw State Park. Park manager Mike Schrader says, depending on the weather, prime viewing usually occurs around the third week of April.

"This is really a sight to behold," he says. Before the leaves open on this small native tree, purple-pinkish blooms cover the charcoal-colored branches. Redbuds



can be found throughout much of southern Iowa, but this small state park, just outside of Chariton, has a dense concentration encircling the park's lake. It's worth a drive and creates a dazzling photo op, so pack a picnic lunch and bring the camera. For flower updates call the park at **641-774-5632**. Schrader notes the campground is undergoing a partial renovation with 18 campsites affected. Unaffected sites are open to first come-first serve camping the first or second week of April. Reservations temporarily not accepted until later in May to allow new seeding to establish. Park is at 24550 Highway 34, Chariton.

Stay Busy in Western Iowa

Prairie Rose State Park, located between Omaha and Des Moines, has oodles of diverse, free spring events with naturalist Christina Roelofs.

March 3 7:30 p.m. Go stargazing from the dam. Learn about constellations and their lore. Campfire and marshmallow roast follows. Meet between campsites 80-95 to walk to the dam. Dress in warm layers.

March 19 2 p.m. Take a woodland walk for spring

wildflowers. Sweet William, bloodroot, Dutchman's breeches, phlox, anemone and spring beauty await. Bring a camera. Meet between campsites 80-95.

April 19, April 26, May 3, May 10, May 17, May 24-7:30 a.m. The park's friends group provides granola bars and coffee at the park office, then take a morning stroll to see migrating waterfowl, warblers and songbirds. These Wednesday activities are done by 8:30 a.m. so you can still make it back to work.

April 22 1 p.m. Spend some time on Earth Day paddling the lake to help remove light trash from the shoreline. Bring your own boat, or borrow a canoe and PFD from the park. Meet at the south boat ramp.

April 27, May 25 7 p.m. Meet at the beach parking lot for Thursday night nature walks to ID plants and view wildlife. The hikes continue into September.

Details at the [Friends of Prairie Rose Facebook page](#). Park is 10 miles southeast of Harlan at 680 Road M47.

BUILD A LEOPOLD BENCH

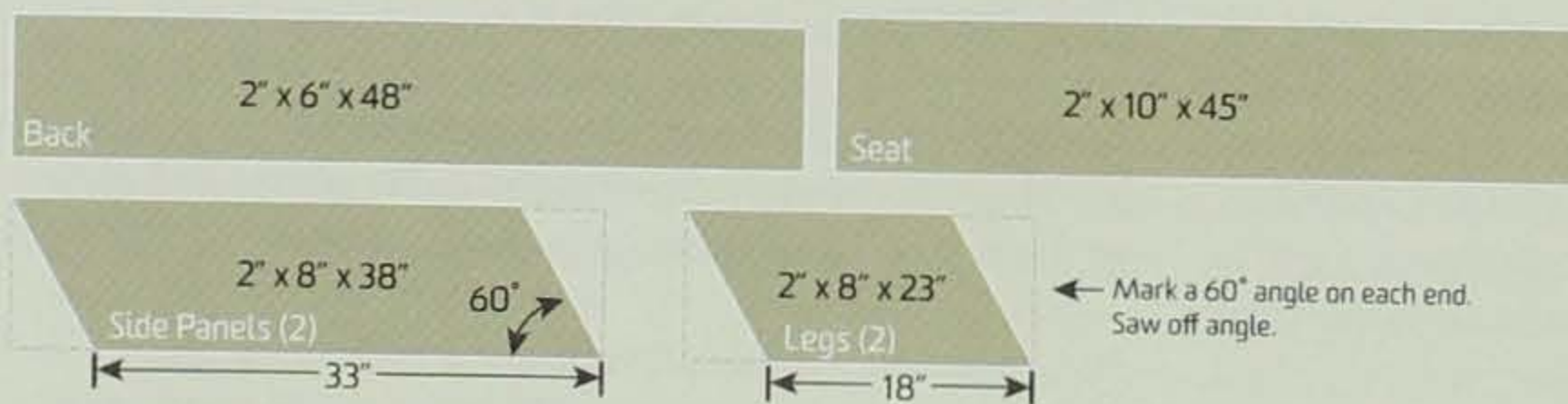
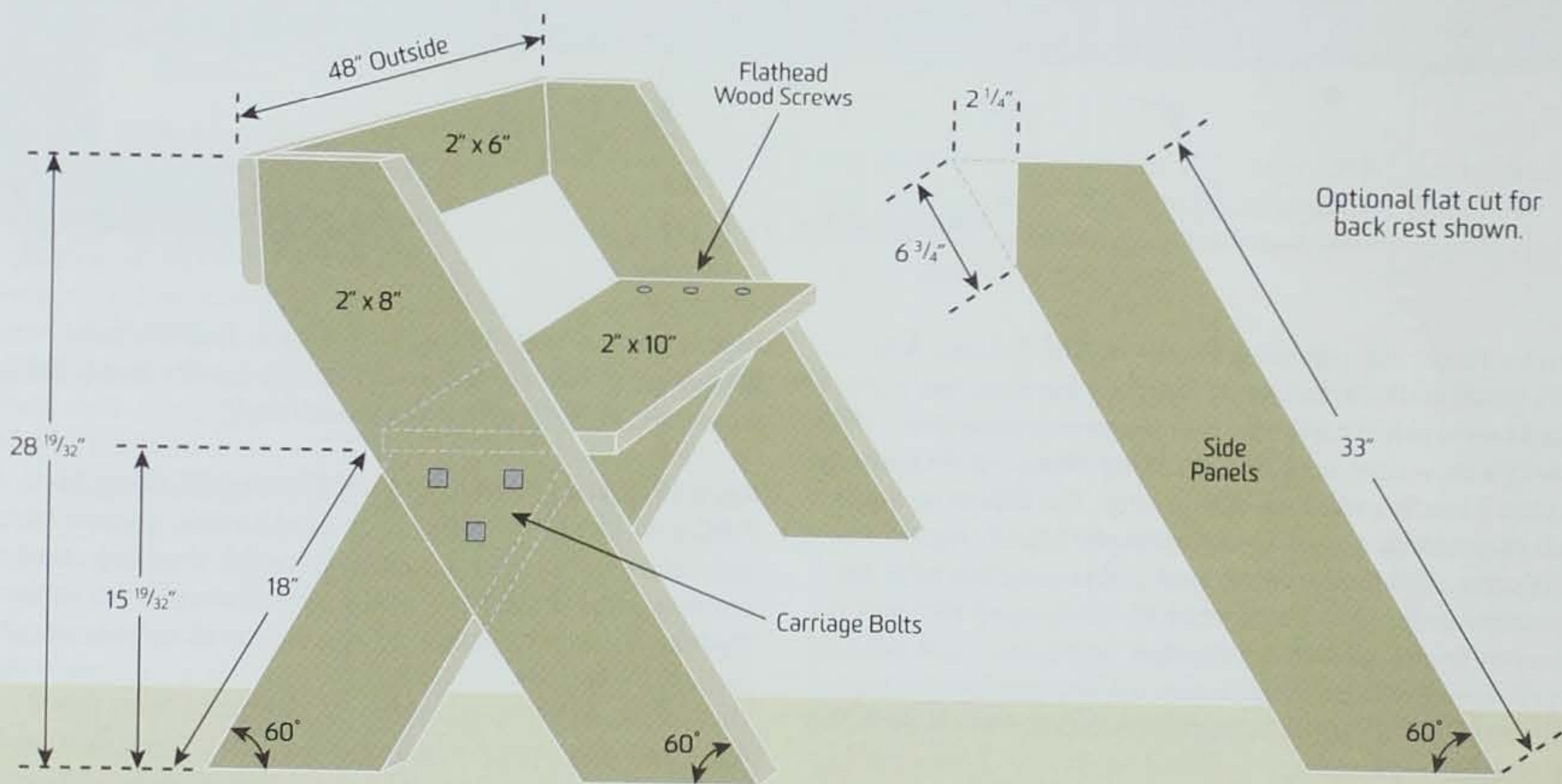
"At 3:30 a.m., with such dignity as I can muster of a July morning, I step from my cabin door, bearing in either hand my emblems of sovereignty, a coffee pot and notebook. I seat myself on a bench, facing the white wake of the morning star. I set the pot beside me. I extract a cup from my shirt front, hoping none will notice its informal mode of transport. I get out my watch, pour coffee, and lay notebook on knee," writes Aldo Leopold in the classic book, *A Sand County Almanac*.

It was here, on his bench, that Leopold often observed the birds, forest and wildlife around him. At first glance, the bench design is indistinguishable from most other benches. But this model holds a functional usefulness not

readily apparent. By sitting backwards with legs through the opening, the backrest now provides a sturdy support for the elbows while using binoculars or cameras to observe nature around you.

It is an easy bench to build, requiring modest skills, materials and about two hours of time. While Leopold never sketched the plans for his, free plans are aplenty online. The bench in the photos was built by DNR staff and displayed at the DNR building at the Iowa State Fair. Its walnut lumber came from the Yellow River State Forest in Allamakee County where it was milled onsite and was inscribed with a well-known Leopold quote—
"Conservation is a state of harmony between men and land."

"Recreational development is a job of not building roads into lovely country, but of building receptivity into the still unlovely human mind."—Aldo Leopold



Materials

- 2 x 6 x 48-inch board for backrest board
- 2 x 10 x 45-inch board for seat
- 2 x 8 x 10-foot boards for sides and legs
- (6) 3/8-inch x 3.5-inch carriage bolts with washers and nuts
- (12) 3/8-inch x 3.5-inch #12 or #14 flathead wood screws



About Aldo Leopold

Aldo Leopold was born in Burlington in 1887. As a boy with a lively interest in studying birds and natural history, he spent hours observing nature and exploring the river bluffs. A top high school student, he studied forestry at Yale University, which offered the nation's first graduate forestry program. Earning a master's degree in 1909, he joined the U.S. Forest Service, still in its infancy, established in 1905 under ardent conservationist, President Theodore Roosevelt.

After just a few years, Leopold became supervisor of the 1.5 million-acre Carson National Forest in New Mexico (which was still a territory). Here, he developed the first comprehensive management plan for the Grand Canyon and wrote the Forest Service's first game and fish handbook. He also proposed the first national wilderness area in the Forest Service system, the Gila Wilderness Area in New Mexico. He later taught at the University of Wisconsin and was at the forefront of wildlife conservation and management. The internationally recognized scientist and gifted writer penned the non-technical classic, *A Sand County Almanac* in 1949, regarded as one of the century's foremost books of the conservation and environmental movement. Using short stories, he examined humanity's relationship to the natural world. Unfortunately, just one week after hearing it was to be published, Leopold died of a heart attack on April 21, 1948 while fighting a wildfire. With more than 2 million copies sold, it has become one of the most respected books about the environment ever published, and Leopold is regarded by many as the most influential conservation thinker of the 20th century.

Learn more at The Leopold Foundation at aldoleopold.org and his hometown group, leopoldheritage.org

Together

GO WILD!

Posters and Check-Off Help Iowa Wildlife

What do monarchs and warblers have in common? They, along with more than 1,000 other birds, reptiles, insects, mammals and amphibians, rely on Iowans to support wildlife diversity initiatives in the state.

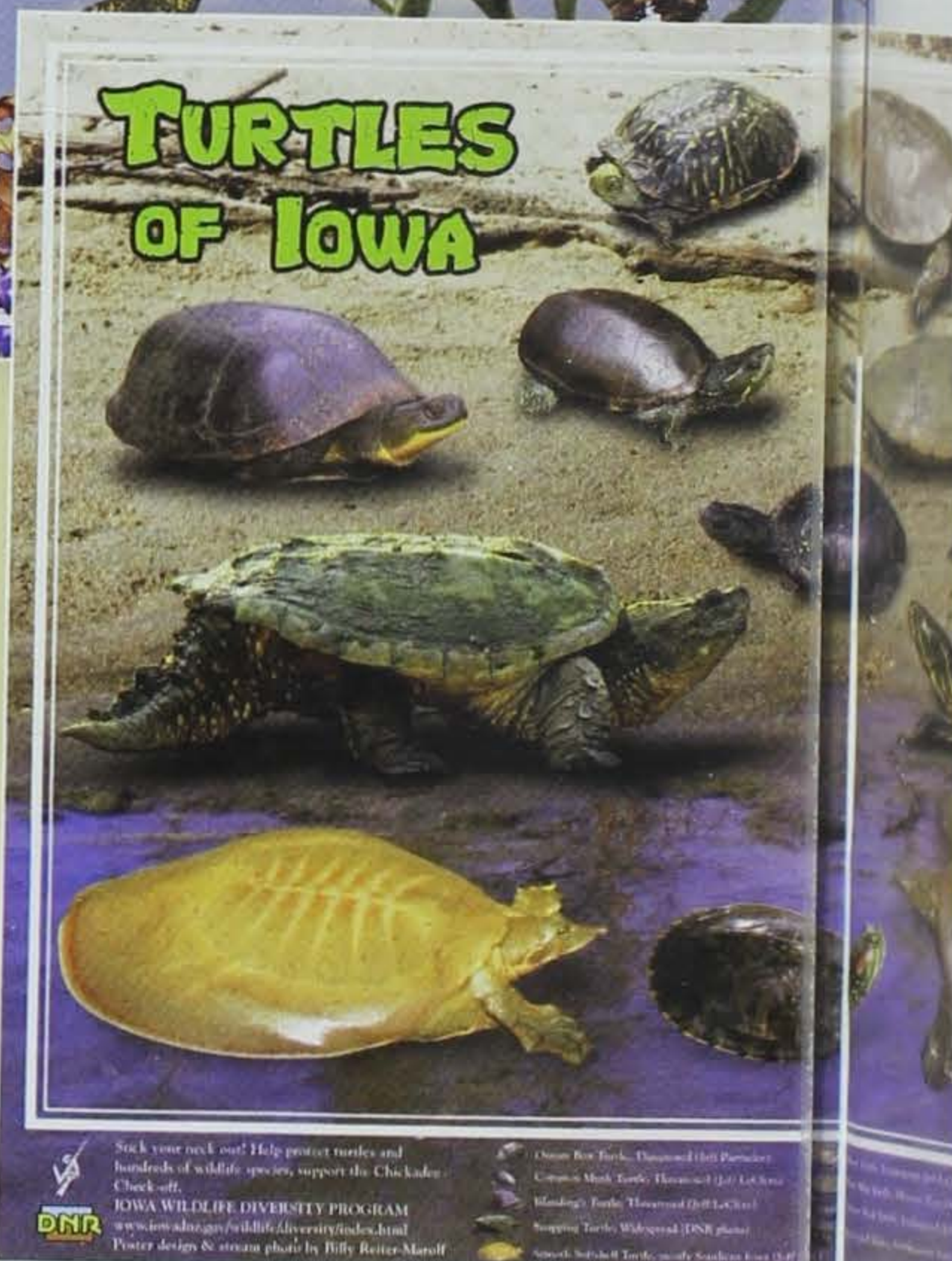
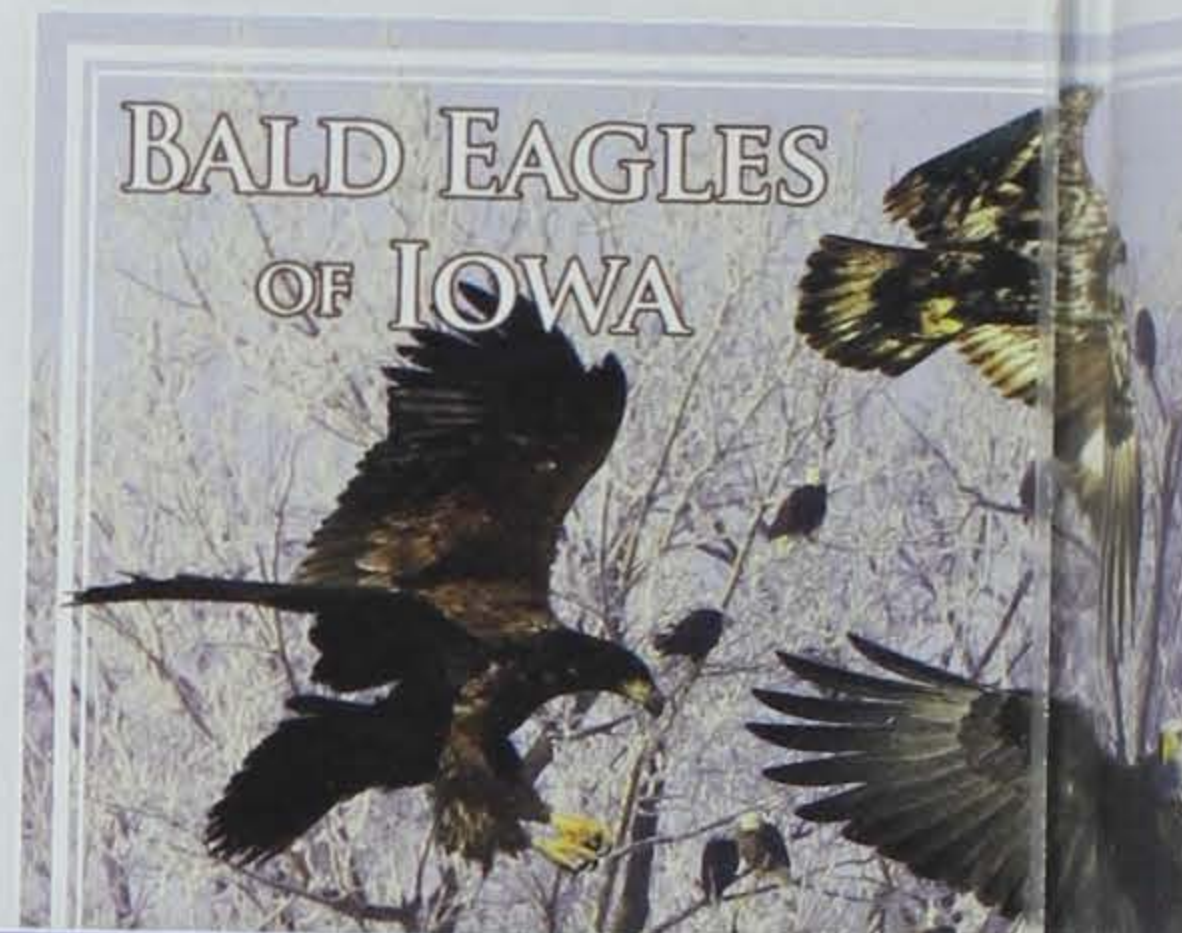
Through research, habitat development, education and special projects that reintroduce threatened or endangered species, Iowa's diversity program protects vulnerable wildlife species and helps keep common species common. Examples of projects include: monarch butterfly monitoring, greater prairie-chicken restoration efforts in southwest Iowa, acoustic surveys for bats and much more.

YOU CAN HELP! Donate on Your Taxes

A critical funding source for the wildlife diversity program is a tax-deductible donation on your state taxes. The donation is called the Fish and Wildlife Fund, known popularly as the "Chickadee Check-off." Last year, Iowans donated about \$132,000. All funds go directly to the diversity program.

"Currently only about half a percent of Iowans donate," says DNR wildlife diversity biologist Stephanie Shepherd. "If every Iowa taxpayer donated just \$1, it would mean \$1.5 million for wildlife and natural resource conservation!"

Be sure to talk to your tax preparer about the Fish and Wildlife Fund, or look for line 57 on Iowa Tax Form 1040 on both the paper and electronic formats. *As with all charitable contributions, these dollars are deductible from next year's taxes.*



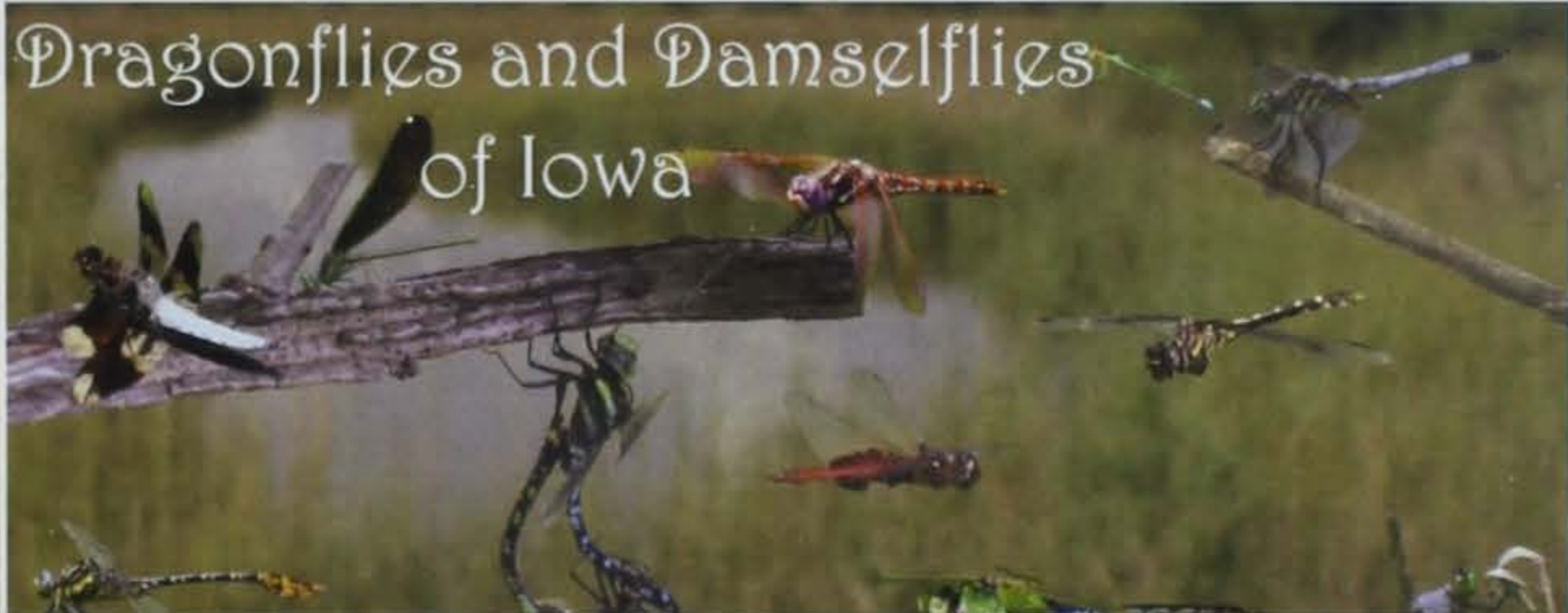
Show Your Love for Critters With a Poster

Magazine readers can support wildlife diversity by ordering a beautiful species-specific poster. Colorful and sized just right, these 16"x20" posters are just \$10 (\$5 if picked up) and include shipping and handling. Free to educators and tax preparers (donation appreciated). Proceeds help support, along with tax donations, the DNR wildlife diversity fund. To order, call the DNR at **515-725-8200** or pick up at the Wallace Building, 502 E. 9th, Des Moines. **Hurry, supplies limited!**

Owls of Iowa



Dragonflies and Damselflies of Iowa



Warblers of Iowa



- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| DNR IOWA WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT
www.iowadnr.gov/wildlife
All wildlife photos by T.J. Smalley, except Grackle illustrated by Joni Davidson and Yellow Warbler by T. John Harty.
Poster design by Bill Kester May 08 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> American Redstart Blue Jay Black and White Black-throated Blue Black-throated Green Blackburnian | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blackpoll Blue-winged Greenlet Canada Cape May Cerulean Christmas-wrenlet Common Yellowthroat Chestnut-crow Goldfinch Hooded Merganser Kentucky Warbler Louisiana Waterthrush Magnolia Warbler Nashville Warbler Northern Parula Northern Waterthrush Orange-crowned Olive-backed Thrush Palm Siskin Pine Warbler Prothonotary Warbler Tennessee Warbler Wilson's Warbler Yellow-throated Vireo Yellow-rumped Warbler Yucatan Parula |
|--|---|---|

Eastern Pond Turtle
Jon J. Johnson

Least Poisoned Damselfly
Wynn Reimann

Basic II plumage
1.5 years

Basic III plumage
1.5 years

Basic IV plumage
1.5 years



Wood Turtle
 Banding Sharpshooters
 Tobacco Spots
 Red-bellied Woodpecker

Painted Bunting
 Purple Finch
 American Goldfinch

South For Spring Break

In Keokuk—Iowa's southernmost city—it's always numerous degrees warmer, so cozy up with eagles, ducks and pelicans and a fancy bed in Lee County.





The Keokuk statue stands in Rand Park where the Sauk Native American Chief is buried. Exactly why the Mississippi River town was named after the chief is unclear, but many believe it was because of his cooperation with the U.S. government to keep peace between Native American people and white settlers, his diplomacy and accomplishments.



Marilyn Engler wants you to know a little about the southeastern Iowa town of Keokuk.

First, says this tour guide aboard the Keokuk River Museum on the sternwheel steamboat *George M. Verity*, Mark Twain once lived here.

Secondly, the town of about 11,000 is named for Keokuck, chief of the Sauk and Fox after Black Hawk. (Engler will tell you, if you're not delicate, that at first Keokuck's head wasn't with him when he was buried here).

Also, adds Engler, hands clasped behind her back, a white blouse and black skirt setting off her captain's cap, Keokuk was once larger than St. Louis, and known as the Gate City of the West. That's why the daily paper is still called the *Daily Gate City*.

Engler can reveal much more about Keokuk and Lee County, but you might investigate this inexpensive road trip yourself to bust the winter blues.

Fowl winter

Keokuk is like many of Iowa's river cities. Housing stock that speaks of glory days long past. Empty storefronts like gap teeth on a once-thriving 1800s brick Main Street.

But the city has other, more promising, river town qualities, too. A storied history, for starters. For example, Lee County was once known as the Half Breed Tract, segregated by white families and those where white (usually French) adventurers, trappers and traders intermarried with Sauk and Fox women. (For more information about the Half-Breed Tract, read <http://iagenweb.org/lee/land/halfbreed/hbttitle.htm>).

There's also a small but spunky population of boosters working hard toward revival with success. The local Siemens energy plant is turning out wind turbine blades 24 hours a day to meet the booming wind energy industry. Harnessing the river, barges will ship the towers to regional destinations.

You have to break through a tough veneer of chain stores to get to the old character of the city. Main Street is long and wide, leading right to the river, with attractive brick buildings. Restaurants, bars and shops are still here, some quite good, including, Fiesta Jalisco Mexican restaurant and Dr. Getwell's Bar and Grill. You can catch a first-run movie in the small-but-still-standing mall if the weather isn't cooperating.

Lost In Iowa



Winter visits will consist largely of birdwatching, with a round of ice-skating at the far end of scenic, historic Grand Avenue, at riverfront Rand Park, where Keokuck is buried at the base of his statue. Stay at one of the B&Bs on Grand for a spot of local history and gourmet breakfast.

In summer, you might stay at rustic Shimek State Forest, also a birding hotspot, with 25 miles of hiking and 27 miles of multi-use trails for horses, bikes and hiking boots.

The Mississippi flows past Keokuk, on what was once a stretch of rapids so perilous that boats had to stop here (thus the boom of the early 1800s). To open to commerce, Congress authorized the construction of a canal and locks along the river's edge, which opened to traffic in 1877. The year 1913 saw the addition of a dam, powerhouse and lock and dry dock.

This is Lock and Dam 19, still the largest on the entire river, and during winter, the equivalent of the Ritz Carlton for migrating bald eagles and ducks.

"It's arguably Middle America's most important layover for migrating canvasback, lesser scaup and ringneck ducks," says Bob Cecil, a Keokuk native and birding expert from Des Moines, who notes the ducks number at least in the tens of thousands, scouring shallow waters for clams, mussels and aquatic vegetation.

Here, the largest concentration of eagles on the river roosts from late December on, scavenging stunned or dead fish shooting through the dam. Keokuk hosts the 34th annual Bald Eagle Appreciation Days January 20-21, 2018 (www.keokukiowatourism.org/eagledays.htm).

Rock hounding

There's another natural treasure in Lee County, if you get here during a thaw. The Keokuk geode found in a 35-mile radius of town is the world's most prized, for the exquisite



variety of minerals in its crystalline interior.

Robert and Andrea Kelly have been collecting and selling rocks for about 11 years. They met and married after bonding over their geode passion.

"Our idea of a good date before we were married was going out and looking for rocks," he chuckles. "It's a truly kind of a gem of a marriage, it is!"

Folks have come to Keokuk from as far as Japan to rock hunt, following river beds via canoe or slogging through water searching the limestone bluffs in which geodes are often imbedded.

"We've walked for miles up creeks and riverbanks," says Robert. "We've climbed riverbanks that shouldn't've been climbed."

Andrea says its best to hunt after a good rain, anywhere the river has cut into the earth. Scout access roads and ask around, securing permission before entering private property.



Keokuk, settled in 1820, sits along the Mississippi River in extreme southeast Iowa near lock and dam 19, the largest along the entire river. It is a mecca for birdwatchers, home to hundreds of bald eagles and a major stopover for migrating waterfowl. The statue of General Samuel Curtis is one of many historical markers dotting the city. Curtis, a Keokuk citizen, was commanding officer during the Civil War battle of Pea Ridge. Since 1913, the Ameren Missouri's Keokuk Energy Center has harnessed the power of the mighty river. Upon opening it was the world's largest single powerhouse electric generating plant.

"It's like mushroom hunting," Andrea says of getting an eye for geodes, noting the peculiar round shape and a cauliflower-like texture on a gray or brown exterior.

For travelers interested in the anatomy of a river town one hundred-some years after the boom, Keokuk is an interesting example. Comfortable restaurants, the dark beauty of river ecology and the glimmer of history is upon it. If you need more reasons to visit, just ask Engler, who's lived here for more than five decades:

"Keokuk is the best little town along the Mississippi!"

Those Crazy Birds

Sure, you're into Pool 19 eagle watching. But what exactly are you watching for? Some facts about our national bird:

- Seventy percent of the eagle's feeding occurs before 9 a.m., so avoid eagle-watching earlier than that.
- Eagles are hardcore scavengers. "I've even seen them

out in the middle of a harvested cornfield, eating a dead deer," says state forester John Byrd.

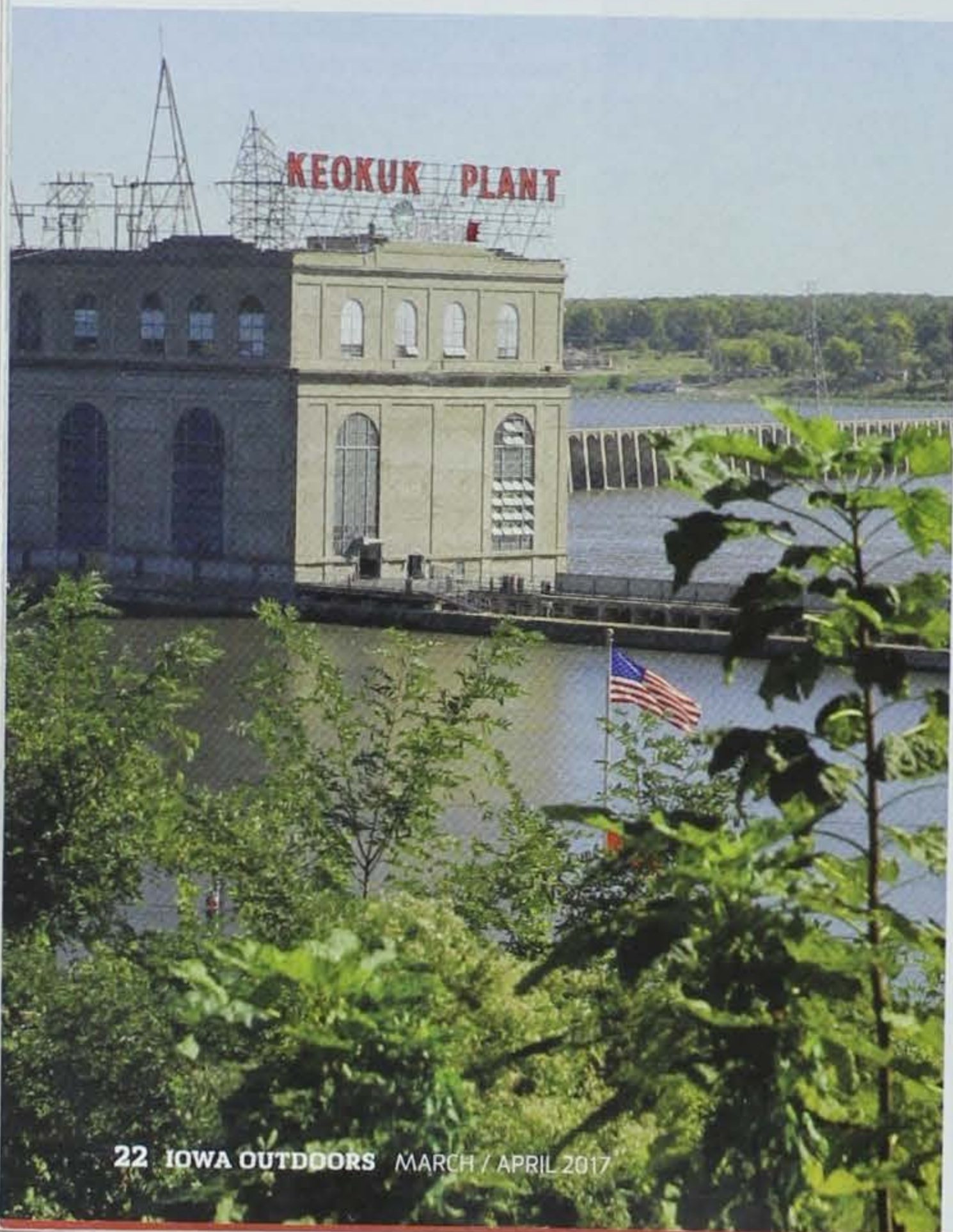
- You can age an eagle by the proportion of black to white on the wings and tail. They don't get their white head and tail until they're 4 to 5 years old.
- Most serious birders consider eagles too common to be of interest. This is good news, considering eagles were endangered just decades ago.

Birding for Beginners

Lee County's Shimek State Forest is a designated Bird Conservation Area. According to birding expert Bob Cecil, the beginner needs only gas in the car and a bird guide. His suggestions, which can be purchased at Birdwatching's website, www.birdwatching.com; 641-472-7256, in Fairfield, Iowa:

- *The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America*

Lost In Iowa



Get fascinating insight into river history with a tour of the George M. Verity River Museum. Originally christened the S.S. Thorpe, the Verity's maiden voyage in 1927 was a major turning point in American transportation history and marked the development of towboat and barge transportation on the Upper Mississippi River. The largest electric generating plant in the world when built in 1913, the Keokuk Plant remains the largest privately-owned hydroelectric dam on the river. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Discover what it was like to live in the American Queen Anne architecture era of the 1880s to 1910s with a stay at the opulent Grand Anne Bed and Breakfast. Built in 1897, the 22-room mansion stands as one of the best preserved examples of the Queen Anne Revival style of domestic architecture. Sitting on a bluff 200 feet above the Mississippi River, the elegant and relaxing B&B is on the National Register of Historic Places.



THE GRAND ANNE

Lost In Iowa



TOP LEFT: Keokuk was home to five military hospitals during the Civil War, mainly due to the ease of transporting casualties up the Mississippi River and the presence of the College of Physicians and Surgeons. Thus, Keokuk was home to one of 14 national cemeteries authorized by the U.S. Congress. **LEFT:** With a main street that leads to the river, Keokuk boasts 18 sites on the National Register of Historic Places. **RIGHT:** Although geodes are found all over the world, the greatest abundance and variety is found around Keokuk. **UPPER MIDDLE AND RIGHT:** Memorial Weekend in Keokuk means the Back Alley Bandfest where homeowners open their garages porches and backyards to visiting bands.

- *National Geographic's Field Guide to Birds of North America*
- *Peterson's Guide for Birds of Eastern and Central North America*

Binoculars aren't necessary for beginners, but if you're in the market, Cecil says you can get an excellent pair for around \$300. "It's almost an imperceptible difference between those and what you spend \$1,000 on," he says. If you don't want to research, stick with a brand you've heard of, such as Nikon.

For more information, contact the Iowa Ornithologists Union (www.iowabirds.org).

When You Go:

LODGING:

THE GRAND ANNE. Upscale, impeccably restored Queen Anne style home across the street from the river. 816 Grand Ave., **800-524-6310**.

THE EAGLE'S NEST. Just a short distance away, this two-

bedroom, 1,600-square-foot penthouse is like medicine for the mind, body and soul. This fully-equipped apartment sits high above the banks of the Mississippi River. Private rooftop patio for sunbathing or stargazing. 1229 Grand Ave., **319-524-8643**.

DINING:

OGO'S, MONTROSE. Great little restaurant in a teensy river town, with fish and a buffet right on the river. 129 S. First Street. **319-463-7261**.

THE CELLAR, Keokuk. Eat at this tenderloin and burgers joint with the gigantic window and you'll get a great view of eagles on the river, too. 29 S. Second Street. **319-524-4040**.

OTHERS:

GEORGE M. VERITY RIVER MUSEUM, \$4 admission, and you can get a geode there, too. **319-524-4765**.



SHIMEK STATE FOREST, Contact forester John Byrd at [319-878-3811](tel:319-878-3811) or e-mail at john.byrd@dnr.iowa.gov. Find forest maps and details at lowadnr.gov.

Keokuk Water Works

When you get to Keokuk, pour yourself a glass of tap water. Keokuk Water Works plant supervisor Sherri Samuels is confident that her award-winning water beats any bottled stuff.

"And I'm a water connoisseur," she grins.

Call ahead to tour the inner workings of one of Iowa's best treatment facilities, which turns up to 28 million gallons of river water daily into some of the state's best drink. Built into 345-million-year-old limestone bluffs, the building is just as interesting as the purification process.

The plant is located on the riverfront near the George M. Verity Museum. [319-524-5285](tel:319-524-5285). 🐾

Geode Hunting Tips

- Bring along digging tools such as trowels, crowbars, chisels or hammers, to dislodge geode formations from limestone.
- Though there is no limit in Iowa on how many geodes you can take with you, please respect this Iowa treasure and take only a few home.

Lost In Iowa



When the new U.S. 136 highway bridge in Keokuk replaced the long-standing existing bridge in 1985, the upper deck of the historic swing span bridge was refurbished as an observation deck. The deck provides a great view of the river and migrating birds, Lock and Dam 19, the George M. Verity Museum and Victory Park. The deck features benches, picnic tables and is a great spot to view wintering bald eagles.







Love of THE Woods

Hunting brought him to the woods,
but nature keeps him going back.

BY JIM ZOHRER PHOTOS BY LOWELL WASHBURN

Some of my most memorable experiences in the outdoors have occurred while quietly sitting in the predawn cold, waiting for nature to wake up. My senses are never more keen than when straining to hear that first early gobble from a treed bird, or to hear the wing beats as it flaps down to the ground. My eyes water as I scan the woods to see any sign of movement.

This past turkey season, the first movement I saw was

a female wood duck flying from tree to tree searching for the perfect cavity to lay her precious cargo of eggs. Shortly after her departure, the robins began singing their early morning song. Within minutes, I could see movement all over the woods. From my vantage point, on the edge of a small clearing, I could see five fox squirrels busily feeding and doing what squirrels do. One watched me for some time, no doubt wondering what that camouflaged lump was on the floor of the woods. He must

have decided I was no threat because he eventually came down and scratched for acorns within 10 feet of me. When something scared him, I looked up the ridge and saw a large dark figure moving slowly but steadily my way. I could tell it was a turkey—a big turkey.

I raised my shotgun into position and waited. The bird walked to within 15 yards of me and stopped. At that range, I could see it was a jake. Its glossy black feathers, reddish head and telltale small beard indicated this was a legal bird to shoot. I watched him over the top of my gun barrel, debating whether I should take this young bird or wait for an old gobbler.

My thoughts were interrupted by a puff of wind in my face and the sudden appearance in my line of sight. A small ruby-crowned kinglet had landed on my gun barrel, not 10 inches from my face. After a few moments, it flitted off, apparently never knowing that what it had been sitting on was not a branch.

Within seconds, a turkey gobbled directly up the ravine from where I sat. I took this as an omen, telling me not to shoot this young bird. I held my position and watched the jake slowly walk off, unaware of how

close he came to being Sunday dinner.

I relaxed my tense posture a little and waited for the gobbler to appear. He never did. After 20 minutes, I settled back down to my vigil. When the sun started to warm the ground, I noticed movement in the leaves. On closer inspection I could see ants, hundreds of ants—everywhere. My first thought was, "Great! They are going to crawl into my clothes and bite me all over."

Since I didn't want to move during this prime time for turkeys, I decided to just sit and keep my eyes on those

little critters. The longer I watched, the more I realized this was not a randomly moving horde of ants. Each ant appeared to be on patrol, searching each grain of soil and every particle of leaf for food. The search pattern was perfect, and each ant went about its business without interruption. I thought, "How orderly nature is when you take the

"My thoughts were interrupted by a puff of wind in my face and the sudden appearance in my line of sight. A small ruby-crowned kinglet had landed on my gun barrel, not 10 inches from my face."



time to look closely.”

My concentration was interrupted by the crass squawks of two great blue herons as they flew up the river. I always thought they sounded more like what prehistoric pterodactyls must have sounded than birds.

After about four hours in the same spot, I decided to move to a sunny ridge where I had previously seen turkeys feeding in mid-day. I made myself a nest in the top of a fallen oak tree and began my wait. The occasional sound from my box call brought no response from turkeys in the area. After two hours without seeing a bird, the lack of sleep started to settle in and my mind began to drift. I looked at the huge red oak tree lying before me. It is hard to explain, but a definite feeling of sadness swept over me. I thought how this magnificent tree must have stood here in the woods, a part of this community for more than a hundred years, but now it was dead. It undoubtedly served as a home for many birds and squirrels over the years. I am sure it also did its part to propagate its own species through the production of acorns. I wondered if any human eyes ever looked on this tree and appreciated its beauty and value. The more I thought the more I realized it didn't matter if some human did or did not appreciate the value. Even dead and lying down across the forest floor, it was still a valuable tree—valuable to the natural system here. Even in death it was providing food and shelter for thousands of organisms—worms, ants, boring insects, fungi, lichen,

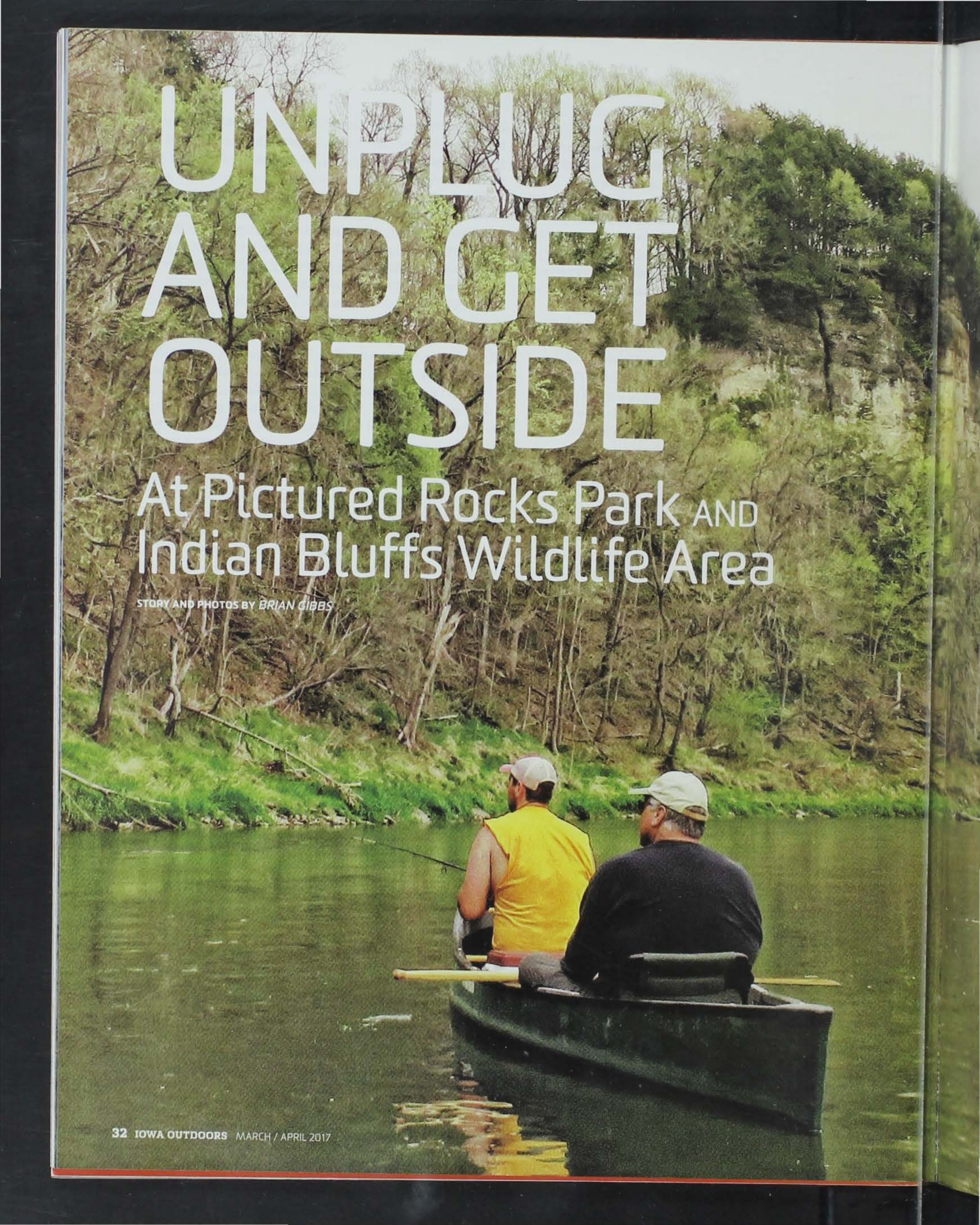
birds and many more. It would, over time, slowly return to the soil to give life to new generations of plants and animals. I was no longer sad, but appreciated how perfect natural systems are.

Why hadn't I thought of this before? Maybe I just never took the time. My time in the woods, courtesy of my turkey hunting license, was paying me dividends even without firing a shot. I love turkey hunting...not just killing a wild turkey, although getting your bird is a part of the hunt. What I love is the hunting, the anticipation, the preparation and the process. The fact is, most city dwellers, like myself, just do not take the time to spend real quiet time in the woods. A turkey hunting license dictates which days we will be in the woods. It is then that we get out in the big timber and just sit, watch and listen.

I didn't get my turkey that day but I did the next. Looking back on my hunt, I realized it's not the final moments of the hunt I will remember most. It's the quiet moments I spent close to nature that remain in my memory.

Hunting is what brought me into the woods, but it is nature that keeps me going back. When is the last time you spent a 14-hour day just sitting in a natural area observing life around you? It is not something many of us ever do, let alone often, but we should. It affords such a different mindset from the short-attention spans created by time on the internet, Twitter and Facebook. The peace and appreciation for nature you feel are something you will never forget. 🐾



A photograph of two people in a canoe on a river, with a dense forest on the bank in the background. The scene is captured from a rear perspective, showing the two individuals in the foreground of the canoe. The person on the left is wearing a bright yellow sleeveless shirt and a light-colored baseball cap. The person on the right is wearing a dark long-sleeved shirt and a light-colored baseball cap. They are both looking towards the river ahead. The water is calm and reflects the surrounding greenery. The background is a steep bank covered in a thick forest of trees with vibrant green foliage, suggesting a spring or early summer setting. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and natural.

UNPLUG AND GET OUTSIDE

At Pictured Rocks Park AND
Indian Bluffs Wildlife Area

STORY AND PHOTOS BY *BRIAN GIBBS*



It's April, and I'm about to paddle a new stretch of river with a group of old friends. The air smells like a cross between fresh-tilled soil and woodland wildflowers.

A warm-to-the-touch south wind amplifies the cacophony of red-winged blackbirds. The charming melody of eastern bluebirds drifts into the trees. The bird's tiny feet cling to green sprouts which have passed the long test of a dormant winter. Last year's buds seem to have burst open overnight, turning the forest into a living maze of green lattice. This natural beauty unthaws my cabin fever and makes my head fizzy with happiness.

The first oar through the cool clear water sends ripples of excitement down my spine. I've never canoed the Maquoketa River from Monticello to Pictured Rocks Park/Indian Bluffs, but trust the stream will get me there safely. The first few miles of the river below Monticello slowly meander through a pastoral landscape. The meager pace of the river and soft scenery of farmhouses, fields and bottomlands allow me to ease into the year's first float. I choose to focus on fishing. I pull out a fishing pole my father made me for Christmas and rig it with a black and white swimbait. The water feels too cool for smallmouth, but the walleyes might be biting.

I position my boat out of the current and tie off on a downed tree. Several whitetailed deer run through the woods, and just downstream a beaver slips into the water. I dip my paddle into the hole. The 6 foot oar can't touch bottom. Good water quality, great depth and solid structure; there has to be fish here.

I spend several minutes vertical jigging in the pool and wind up catching nothing but a few silver maple limbs. In similar holes, I repeat the routine and get the same fishless results. I tuck the pole away and let the river carry me downstream.

After three miles of paddling, the Maquoketa feels more like a wild and scenic river than a farmland stream. The entire composition of the river changes. The bottom shifts from sand to rock, riffles become more numerous, farms give way to trees, concrete rip-rap banks cede to 400,000-year-old limestone bluffs. It's easy to see why this stretch of river has been designated an Iowa Water Trail.

Relaxing in my kayak, I spy several raptors soaring on thermals. The birds circle higher and higher. The raspy chatter of an eagle echoes through the canyon. The eagle lands downstream in a tree and for the first time on this trip, I sense the river has transported me into a verdant paradise.

There are more trees than my wandering eye can count. It's an invigorating feeling to be flanked by thousands of the finest oxygen-producing organisms in the world. I take a deep breath in and notice an eerie white and blue glow coming from downstream. My heartbeat races with curiosity. I paddle faster, my



excitement for the sparkle of spring is cooled by the splashes of river water.

Along the river bank, the eerie white bark of massive sycamores blends in with chalky limestone bluffs. Growing at the base of trees, as far as the eye can see, are carpets of bluebells. I land my kayak and take a few moments to relish in the sweet smelling sight. I snap a photograph and paddle quickly down river, hopeful to catch up with my friends before they take out at Pictured Rocks.

When I catch up to the group, they are fishing behind several boulders the size of Volkswagen vans. White blooms of anemones and bishop's cap cover the top of the mossy stones, making the rocks look more like snowcapped peaks than limestone boulders. Further up the bluffs, the forest floor is gilded in patches of bellwort flowers. Candy cane-looking blooms of spring beauties sweeten the delicious scene. I'm busy photographing all the flowers and lose track of my group for a second time. It isn't until I hear my friend yell "walleye" from downstream that I lift my head out of the flowers, grin and hit the water paddling again.

The beauty of the Maquoketa in the Pictured Rocks area makes it difficult to focus on any one aspect of the dynamic stream. I rest my paddle across my kayak and let the river take me on a journey. The flow of the river makes me feel like I'm lost in an aquatic alphabet. The stream produces short stretches of I runs, then sharp L turns with long S curves. Deeply dissected valleys produce small streams that flow like veins into the artery of the pulsing Maquoketa.

Over the sound of bubbling riffles, pileated woodpeckers are drumming, and a green-crowned night heron is patiently stalking the pool behind the riffle. There may be no more relaxing way to experience the excitement of springtime in Iowa than by floating a river. I paddle into a fantastic looking fishing hole, cast a minnow into the water and, WHAM! Something drills the lure on the fall into the water.

From the strong tug and quick run, I know it's a nice smallmouth. The heron and the fish take off downstream. In a rush, I forgot to anchor my boat, and the light drag on my pole means the fish has lots of room to run. Before I can re-position my kayak, the fight of the fish takes me into the swift water. The current takes me downriver. I tighten my drag and slowly begin reeling in the fish, but the animal is feeling spry from a languid winter. The line goes light, then the bass rises a foot out of the water.

I'm rusty at fishing from the long winter lay off, and this peppy bass requires all my patience. In excitement, I bump my kayak paddle off the boat and into the river. Resting the fishing pole between my legs I grab the oar and resume the pursuit. After several minutes of give and take, I land the old brown bass, take a photograph and set it free. Several rounds of cheers come from my friends, then we carry on downstream.

We are almost to our takeout point when I spot two colorful circles on the bluff. Paddling closer, I notice the red and yellow shapes are inching up the cliff. Using my camera lens, I see the colors are helmets from rock climbers. A few hundred yards beyond the climbers, a large limestone rock with the words Painted Rock indicate the river takeout.

The takeout is well-signed and neatly maintained. After loading the boat, I walk down the trail and nearly a dozen cars from varying states are in the parking lot. A few families are having picnics in the new shelter house, while the other visitors are out hiking or rock climbing.

The trail to the rock walls is in great shape and several informative kiosks provide information about both the climbing routes and natural history of the area. Down the trail, I watch in amazement at several people scaling a precipitous rock cliff. The climbers inform me this ascent is called the Iowa Gallery and features a handful of exciting routes to climb. The group directs me to look up the Iowa Climbers group on Facebook. From here, I am put in contact with Iowa climber Joe Stark.

Joe has spent nearly a decade climbing in the Pictured Rocks Park/Indian Bluff areas and wrote the *Pictured Rocks Climbing Guide*. In the guide, Stark uses photos of the 11 bolted rock features to show the correct routes to nearly 60 separate climbs in the park. Stark has invested a lot of time climbing and teaching others about Pictured Rocks.

"Pictured Rocks holds a special place in my heart," he exclaims. Stark says his favorite memories in the park are the fall trail day events hosted by the Iowa Climbers Coalition (ICC). "It's always a great feeling leaving the park in better condition than we found it."

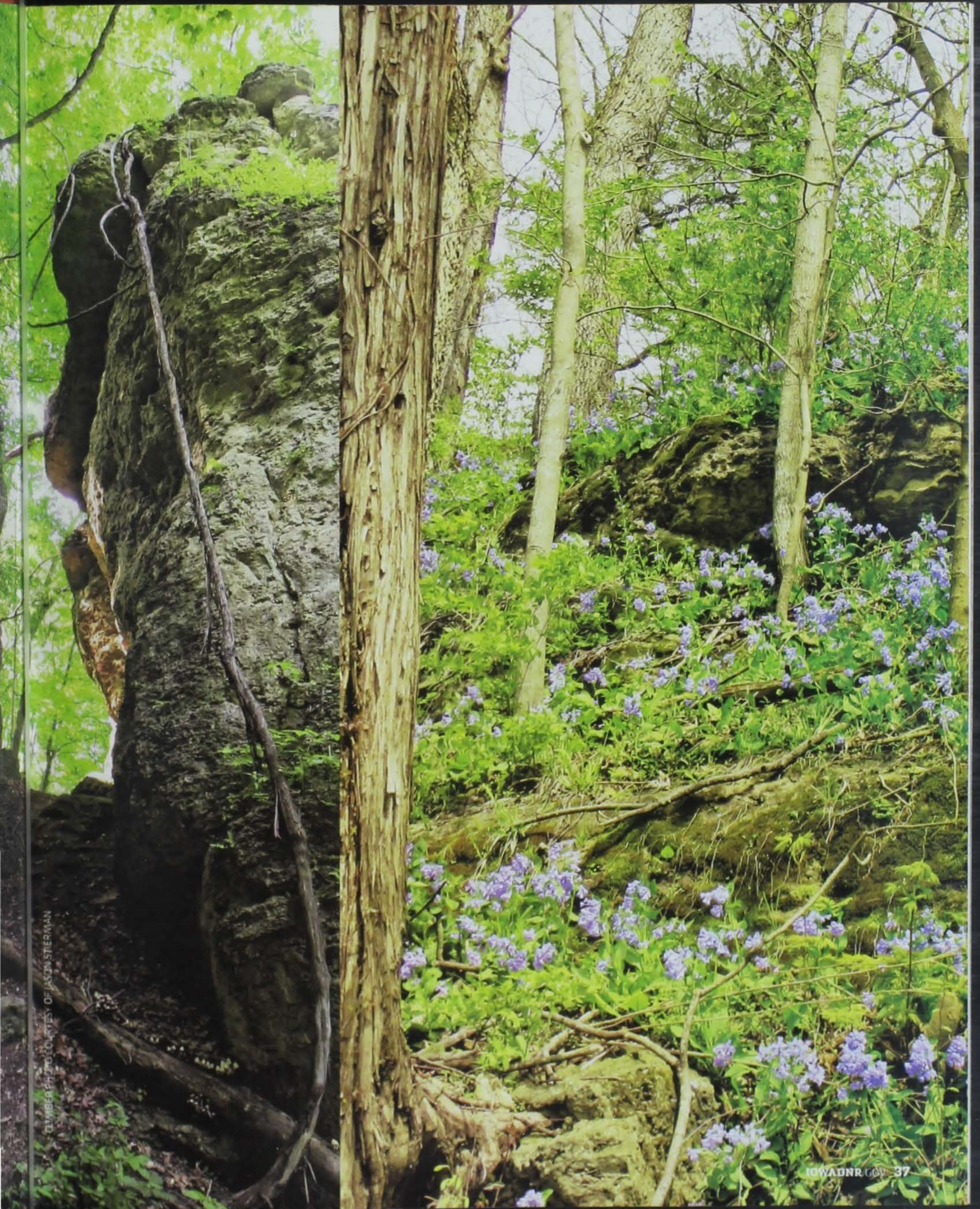
Partnerships in Motion

ICC is a non-profit group dedicated to the grass-root effort of preserving Iowa climbing. The group networks with land managers to promote good relationships with the climbing community and maintains climbing access in Iowa. ICC board president, Allan Grau, says the group typically has 20 to 30 people who show up to help at the Pictured Rocks field days. "It's been great both for users of the park and as a way to help build the climbing community," says Grau.

ICC works closely with the DNR and Jones County Conservation Board to ensure the safety of climbers, while also helping to minimize damage to park resources. Jones County park ranger John Klein says climbing at Pictured Rocks Park is nothing new. "Rock climbing has been taking place for over 30 years at Pictured Rocks Park. In its early stages it was an unknown, unregulated sport occurring in a wildlife management area. Historically, there was very little maintenance of the bolting and anchors in the park."

Today, however, the three organizations have worked together to develop a management agreement that





CLIMBER PHOTO COURTESY OF JASON STIERMAN

outlines maintenance of current climbing routes.

Through this innovative agreement, ICC annually maintains the bolts and fixed hardware at Pictured Rocks Park. The agreement is also used to outline future development of new climbing walls and routes. Klein says in order for any of these walls or routes to be approved, they must pass through an advisory committee. Allowing and promoting rock climbing within a wildlife management area that was originally acquired through sportsman dollars is a slightly contentious, if not progressive, concept. However, Klein says that ICC "has done a great job at making the area safer and has been respectful towards public property. They have been a fantastic group to work with."

For example, in 2009, a trail day was hosted with the Maquoketa River Water Trail Project. The workday featured an incredible amount of collaboration that included staff from the Jones County Conservation Board, local DNR staff and the DNR trails crew, the Iowa Grotto, ICC, Camp Courageous staff and the public.

The day involved construction and readjustment of an improved pedestrian trail leading to the Indian Bluffs Cave at Pictured Rocks. During this event, the DNR trails crew moved more than 200 tons of material—by hand—to establish a new access trail. In 2015, the ICC did volunteer trail work leading up to individual routes along the bluff face at Pictured Rocks and erected an informational climbing route sign.

Within the next few years, the groups will work together to update and improve trail access at the highly popular "Comic Gallery." Part of the project will be funded through a \$25,000 trail development grant ICC secured from Recreation Education Industries (REI). REI has one store in Iowa, added by the national retailer in West Des Moines in 2015.

Exploring Indian Bluffs

In the weeks that followed the float trip, I couldn't stop thinking about hiking the Indian Bluffs area adjacent to Pictured Rocks. To get into the 830-acre state-run wildlife management area, I spend the better part of a June morning driving miles of twisty, hilly gravel roads. I try to use the Google maps app on my phone, but resort to the reliable Iowa Gazetteer. The gravel road into Indian Bluffs provides three entry points into the park, but ultimately the main road dead ends at the Maquoketa River.

Explorations near the river lead me to several primitive riverside campsites which users can occupy for up to 14 consecutive days. The Leave No Trace ethos strongly applies at these scenic sites. I take a non-maintained path along the rock bluffs and observe several rock climbing bolts on the limestone wall; unlike Pictured Rocks, this area receives less climbing traffic. The faint trail meanders through a mature bottomland forest and eventually follows a small sandy stream known as Jordan Creek.

Up from the trail, giant boulders are covered in walking and maiden hair ferns. Clumps of mosses cling to crevasses in the cliffs, and sentinel gnarly red cedars spiral from the topmost bluffs. A "keyyah" from the forest-loving red-shouldered hawk echoes overhead. After an hour of hiking, the early summer heat and humidity prompts me to pause against a shady north facing rock wall.

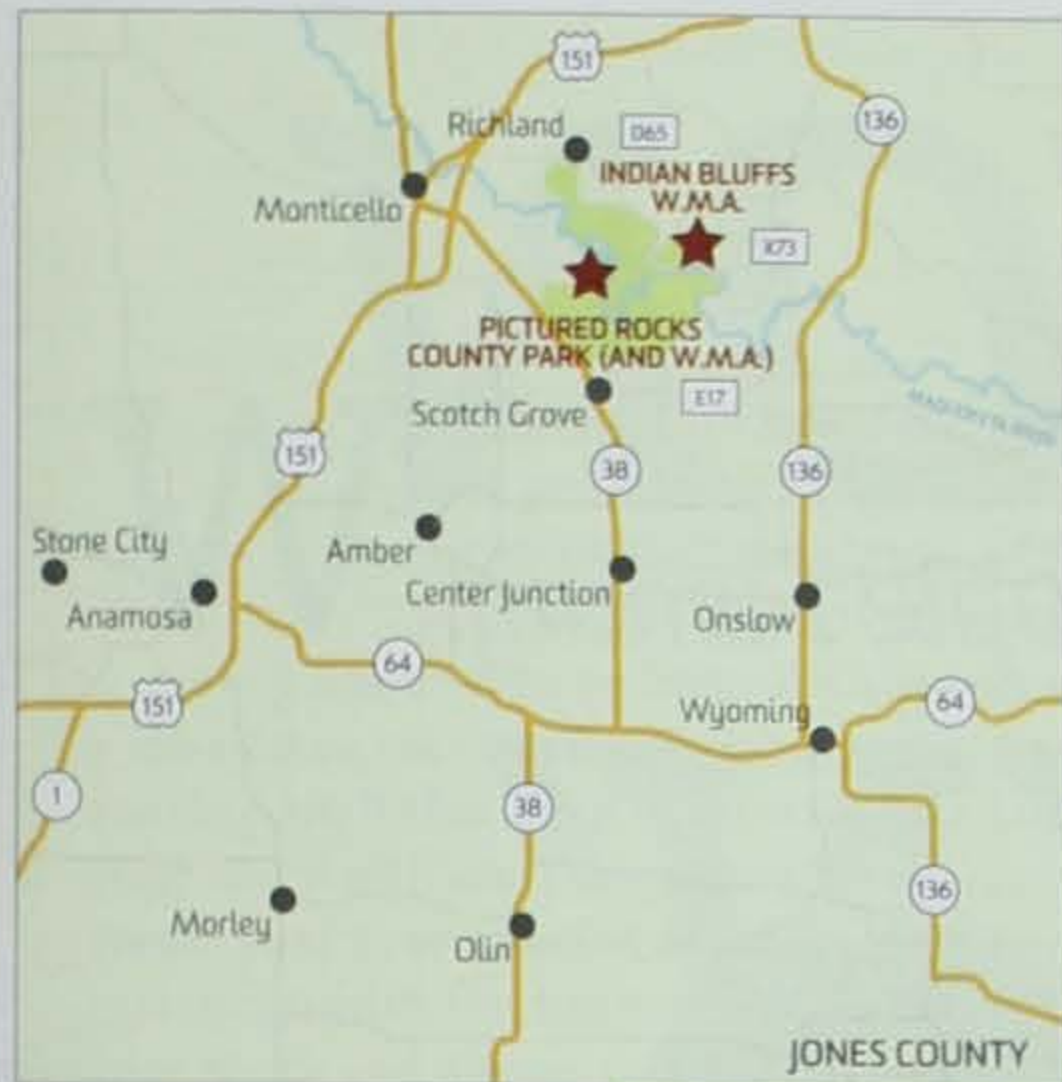
My hand goes numb when I set it on a tuft of soft moss. Inspecting the scene closer, I place my body up against a small opening in a rock and discover an algific, or cold air, slope. These fragile micro-habitats are typically found further north in Iowa, however the karst topography and northeast aspect of the rock faces allow them to exist at Indian Bluffs. The slopes are home to delicate species and are closed to rock climbing.

By mid-afternoon, I've lost the hiking trail and wander through the warm summer woods with an enthusiasm for the unknown. No map, no compass, just the thrill of discovery. I let my eyes do the walking and find it difficult to leave the inspiration of the bluffs. Trekking in their giant shadows makes me feel as if I'm the only one to have ever set foot in this valley. The buzzy trill of a cerulean warbler and the "peetsah" song from an acadian flycatcher awake me from my sylvan dream. Without any binoculars it is difficult to spot the birds. By song, I locate the acadian perched on an ironwood tree above the small stream. The cerulean is hiding in the massive canopy of a nearby oak. The birds propel me to climb higher.

I find an opening between the bluffs and begin the slow laborious ascent. It's not an easy climb—there are lots of uneven rocks and the shaded earth is thick with leaf litter. I slip once and grab onto the closest thing available: a fist full of stinging nettles. My fingers turn into burning needles of fire. I break off a small piece of jewelweed and rub the juice over my sting. I carry on paying more attention to where my feet and hands settle.

Uninterrupted views of the surrounding valley greet me at the summit of a large rock precipice known as Chimney Rock. The ruggedness of this place makes it hard to believe I am still in Iowa. I pause for a moment to catch my breath. A flock of turkeys takes flight into the depths of the woods; I follow suit. On the journey through the upland woods, countless breath-catching moments occur: sunlight through forest canopy, deer bedded down, mushrooms on rotten logs, everything old seemed new again.

Back at the car, I'm amazed to learn I was only gone for 3.5 hours. Even though I hadn't eaten on the trail, my body felt rich in adventure and alive in the discovery of a new place to recreate. I take to the gravel road with a newfound appreciation for the wilds of Iowa. When I reach cell service on the highway, my phone rings with news from the "real world." I shut the device off and carry home a heart full of smiles. 🐾



Additional Information:

Jones County Conservation Board manages Pictured Rocks Park. The park is part of the larger state-run Pictured Rocks Wildlife Management Area. Downstream, the Pictured Rocks unit connects with Indian Bluffs Wildlife Management Area. Together they encompass nearly 1,500 acres of public forest that protects six miles of Maquoketa River. With its variety of outdoor recreation pursuits, this publicly-owned treasure may be Iowa's best version of a National Recreation Area.

MISSION

We Need You to Get More People Fishing.

FISHIN'

BY SHANNON HAFNER

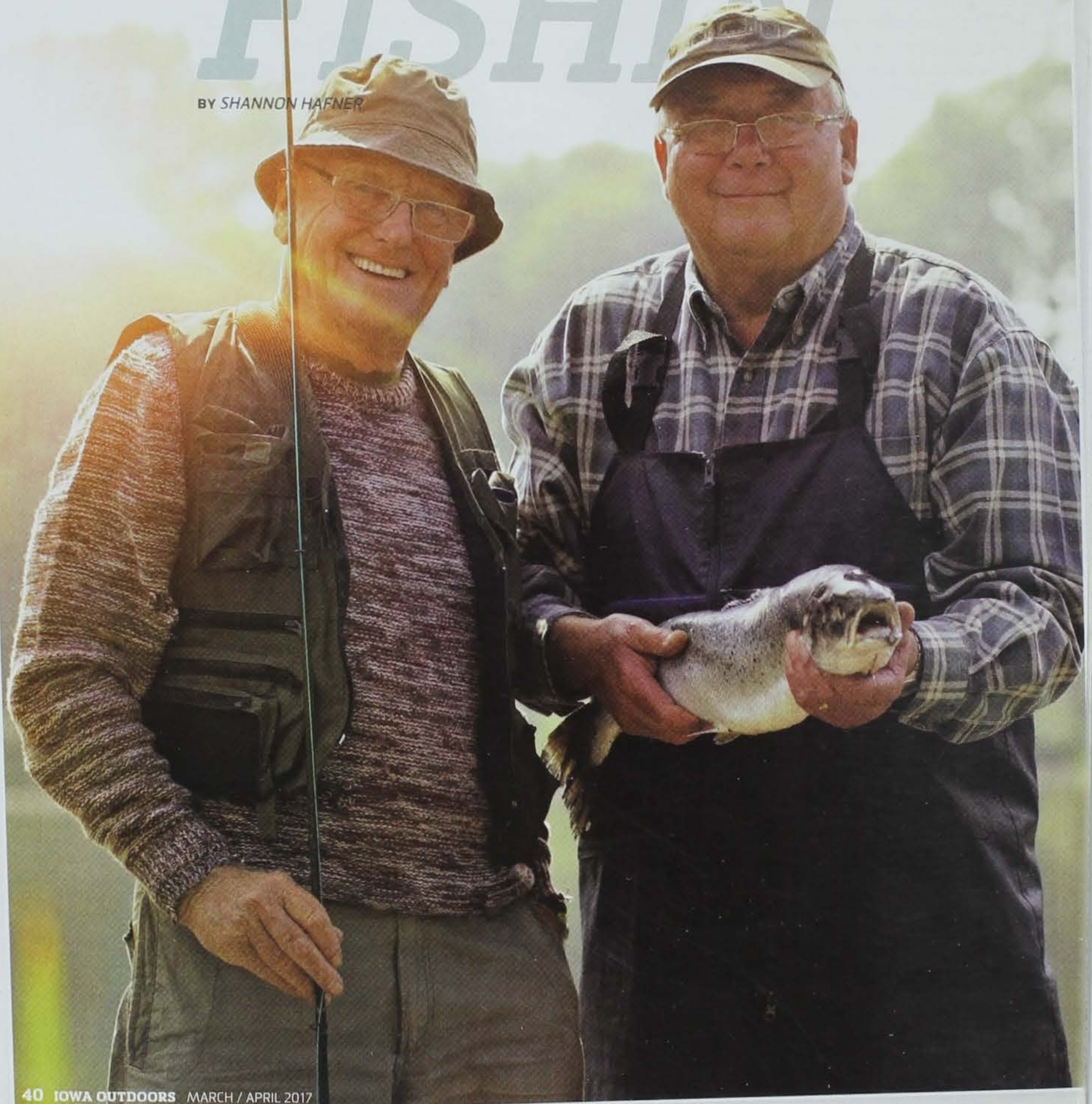


PHOTO: JEFFREY W. HARRIS

We released a *record 156 million fish* last year, renovated a gob of lakes, increased fish habitat, added angler access and improved water quality.

Now it's your turn to help. We are recruiting you on a mission to take someone fishing. A kid perhaps. Or another adult that hasn't cast a line for eons. Then share your story with us. Take your pick—write us a letter, an email, post your mission to DNR's Facebook, Twitter or Instagram with the hashtag **#MISSIONFISHIN**, or send your story and photos to *Iowa Outdoors*.

Succeed in your mission and you help introduce a new group of anglers. Frankly, those *extra license sales add desperately needed revenue* in yet another series of years of dwindling state budget allocations to the DNR for natural resources. License revenue is reinvested to improve fishing, access, habitat, stocking and more.

Anyway you slice it, this mission is about getting out, having fun and bringing many new anglers along for the journey.

And here are 99 counties—*full of fish*—raring for you to tackle with "Mission Fishin'."

ADAIR—Create family fishing memories at Mormon Trail Lake. Don't miss the spring crappie spawn. Great shore fishing and jetties make it easy to catch crappie, bluegill, largemouth, walleye and channel cats. The county park has a beach, picnic shelters and camping.

ADAMS—Spring crappie fishing was phenomenal last year at Lake Icaria north of Corning. Excellent shore access and jetties make it simple to find fish. Channel cat are abundant and easy to catch. Troll crankbaits along the dam or points for 20-inch-plus walleye, or cast the fish mounds or cedar tree piles with jigs or plastics for largemouth, some exceeding 20 inches. The well-maintained county park has camping, rental cabins, nature trails and a beach.

ALLAMAKEE—Wonderous Yellow River State Forest is heaven for new anglers to trout fish Paint or Little Paint creeks. From easy-to-get-to places to adventurous treks, there's a perfect spot for everyone. Wild brown, stocked rainbow and brook trout challenge beginners and experts. Camping, hiking and equestrian activities also available.

APPANOOSE—Lake Rathbun is Iowa's perennial crappie hotspot. Anglers catch them by the dozens. White bass and hybrid striped bass fishing is tough to beat—perfect for newbies. It will be a successful year for 9- to 12-inch crappies, especially mid-May to mid-June.

AUDUBON—Littlefield Lake, the county's only public lake, offers well-manicured shore access. Catch 15- to

20-inch-plus channel cats, 8-inch bluegill and 9- to 10-inch crappie. Bring the family for camping, a beach, playground, trails and a live bison display.

BENTON—Keep new anglers busy catching and releasing 8- to 12-inch bass (15-inch minimum) at Hannen Lake, southwest of Blairstown. Find excellent shore access at fishing piers and jetties. Shoreside campsites let you fish right outside your camper. Hike through 180 acres of woodland and prairie surrounding the lake, or cool off at the beach.

BLACK HAWK—Hit the Cedar River for great walleye, smallmouth and channel cats. Use jigs tipped with minnows or crawlers during spring. Crankbaits in summer and fall, or a crawler fished near bottom. Shore fishing is good with downtown Waterloo access, several city parks, Black Hawk County Park and George Wyth State Park. Small boats are best due to shallows in some channels. Launch from ramps at Black Hawk County Park and Island Park to fish upstream of the Cedar Falls dam, or George Wyth State Park and Cedar Bend Park for access between the Cedar Falls and Waterloo dams.

BOONE—Bring the family to Don Williams Lake to catch plenty of 8- to 10-inch crappie. Dock fishing is good, especially late April and May when crappies spawn. From a boat, drift jigs down the middle of the lake during the mid-summer bite. A campground, beach, golf course and cabins offer added outdoor fun.

BREMER—The Cedar River near Plainfield and Waverly has a hot walleye bite. Great access to good catfishing and bonus smallmouth bass and northern pike. Sweet Marsh near Tripoli is worth a visit, too.

BUCHANAN—Self-sustaining northern pike and smallmouth bass thrive in the scenic Wapsipinicon River. Ten public access points provide easy access to lots of pike and smallies as well as walleye and channel cat. Shallow water can make motorboat navigation difficult, so paddle or walk-in—think adventure fishing, folks.

BUENA VISTA—Loaded with public access and family-friendly parks, playgrounds and restrooms, Storm Lake is perfect for kids and parents. Have fun catching and releasing slot-limit walleye (17 to 22 inches); lots of keeper size walleye too. Use live minnows under a slip bobber or white twister tails from shore, or toss or troll shad-colored crankbaits April through June. Anything silver works since shad and emerald shiners are the main forage fish. After ice-out, try shad guts or cut bait on windblown shores for channel cat.

#MISSIONFISHIN

BUTLER—Find lots of nice smallmouth and walleye in the Shell Rock River as last year's flood kept anglers away. Trophy walleye up to 28 inches and lots of 15- to 20-inchers abound. Float while casting jigs, crankbaits or live baits, or use small Jon boats. Look for schooled fish in the spring below dams, obstructions and cobbles. Cast a jig and crawler, or try crankbaits during summer.

CALHOUN—Hook memories and small yellow bass at North Twin Lake. Shore access along Featherston Park makes taking kids easy. Stay the night at rental cabins and cook up a steamy plate of fresh walleye or catfish. Venture to South Twin Lake for a hot bullhead bite.

CARROLL—Invite friends or bring the family to Swan Lake. Stay on the action with several jetties around the lake—many have habitat structure within casting distance. Reel in lots of nice-sized bluegill and crappie. Stay comfortable inside the enclosed fish house.

CASS—New anglers have lots of summer fun drift fishing for bluegill and crappie at Lake Anita. It's easy fishing without casting or bobbers. Lots of 8- to 9-inch bluegill and 8- to 10-inch crappie. Hang a 1/32nd ounce jig tipped with worm over the side, let out 30 feet of line and drift with the wind. A 4-mile paved trail winds around the lake. The campground is one of the most popular in southwest Iowa.

CEDAR—Just 20 miles from Iowa City, Cedar Valley County Park offers lake and river fishing. Cast for bluegill in limestone quarries or try catfishing the Cedar River. A concrete boat ramp provides quick river access. Enjoy the view, camp, picnic or hike the trails.

CERRO GORDO—Great shore and boat angling at Clear Lake, one of Iowa's better walleye fisheries. Catch 14- to 20-inch walleyes (14-inch minimum), with rod-bending trophies running 8 pounds-plus. Good yellow bass fishing and improved chances for crappie and yellow perch. A handy fish cleaning station is available at McIntosh Woods State Park.

CHEROKEE—Experience river channel catfish and walleye angling on the Little Sioux River. Channel cats run 2 to 6 pounds and walleyes span 15 to 25 inches. Try cut bait for cats and twisters for walleyes, or float a live chub for both. Find great shore access and a boat ramp at Wescott Park in Cherokee. Head down the road to Spring Lake for pond fishing. This old gravel pit has lots of shore access and a variety of fish species in its depths.

CHICKASAW—Twin Ponds Park is a 15 minute drive southwest from New Hampton. Nestled within the 157-acre

park is a nature center with beautiful educational displays. The Wapsipinicon River splits the park. Catch largemouth, channel cat and bluegill in two small ponds. The pond north of the nature center has a ramp for boats with electric motors. Watch waterfowl and wildlife from a bird blind. Explore woodland, prairie and wetlands while hiking.

CLARKE—Spend an afternoon fishing Q Pond in a small city park in northwest Osceola. Plenty of bluegill, some over 8 inches, and 7- to 11-inch crappie. Cast along brush piles on the east side and near the dam.

CLAY—Spencer's Stolley Pond is family fishing nirvana. Catch crappie and yellow bass, or hit the Little Sioux River that meanders through the park. A trail surrounds the pond and connects to riverside city trails and through historic downtown. Handicapped-accessible dock, picnic area, restrooms and shelter.

CLAYTON—Bring along a pole to Big Springs Trout hatchery and enjoy trout fishing the adjacent Turkey River and hatchery ponds. Primitive camping on the river banks.

CLINTON—Killdeer Lake between DeWitt and Clinton is an old favorite. Enjoy solitude catching largemouth, bluegill and catfish. Good shore access. Catfish exceeding 17 inches are possible. One of southeast Iowa's few places to catch yellow perch—great for new anglers. Use a softshell crayfish tail fished on a small hook under a bobber for catfish or a small jig tipped with a spike for perch or bluegill.

CRAWFORD—Enjoy a day fishing Yellow Smoke Park Lake with someone who hasn't fished in a while. Nab challenging monster-sized bluegill that run 9.5-inch-plus. Largemouth provide a lot of catch-and-release action (10- to 14-inch fish) with the chance to hook a lunker. Admire very clean water from the paved lakeside trail, big swimming beach or water's edge campground.

DALLAS—Avoid crowds and traffic by escaping to rural Beaver Lake. Boat anglers find good panfishing at this small lake full of timber. Abundant crappies, mostly 7 to 9 inches, with some 10- to 11-inchers. Bluegill numbers are strong, with 7- to 9-inch fish.

DAVIS—Escape to beautiful Lake Wapello State Park for unmatched bass fishing. Good bluegill (6- to 8-inch) and improving crappie numbers (up to 9 inches). Several miles of trails around the lake and through the park. Shaded picnic areas, family cabins and a revamped, rebuilt campground reopening in 2017.

DECATUR—The bluegill bite was hot last fall at Little

River Watershed Lake west of Leon. Lots of 8-inch-plus bluegill were caught from brush piles. Slowly troll jigs tipped with twister tails or Lindy Rigs with live bait along rock structure or mud flats for spring walleye (16 to 20 inches). Cast crankbaits along weed lines or plastics near cedar piles for summer bass (some over 20 inches). The lake features several fishing jetties, camping and rental cabins.

DELAWARE—Anglers of all skills are successful at Backbone State Park. Clear, cold-water Richmond Springs is popular for trout fishing. Keeper brook and rainbow trout stocked weekly April through October. Use small spinners, jigs, prepared baits or flyfish. Easy trails surround the stream. Running through the heart of the park, the Maquoketa River yields brown trout in upstream areas and smallmouth bass below Backbone Lake. The lake has easy access for small bluegill, crappie, largemouth and white sucker. Hike trails, picnic, camp, paddle or watch wildlife.

DES MOINES—The many ponds on Big Hollow Recreation Area south of Mediapolis offer outstanding fishing. Stocked with bluegill, largemouth bass and channel catfish, a few have good crappie populations. Hot panfish bite around mid- to late May. Bait a small hook with a chunk of worm and fish it under a bobber, or cast a small curlytail jig tipped with a spike.

DICKINSON—Anglers of all skills have plenty of fun at East and West Okoboji lakes. Excellent angling available from docks or by boat. Great yellow bass fishing and good numbers of yellow perch, channel cat, bluegill, crappie and walleye. Smallmouth fishing is some of the Midwest's best. "Anglers cleaned more fish last summer than ever," says biologist Mike Hawkins.

DUBUQUE—The great Mississippi River is the go-to spot, known here for great bass, bluegill, catfish, crappie, freshwater drum, sauger and walleye. Shore fishing is limited, so most angling is by boat. Hit Lock and Dam 11 tailwaters in March and early April for peak sauger and walleye action. Use heavy river jigs or pull three-way rigs tipped with minnows. The nearest put-ins are ramps at Hawthorne Street or Chaplin Schmitt. Hotspots transition during summer as side-channels and main channel borders heat-up for channel cat and freshwater drum along wing dams, downed trees and off-current



flats. Easy access to the best side-channel and wing dam water is at Massey Park boat ramp south of Dubuque. Find largemouth, bluegill and crappie in side channels and main channel borders late spring through fall, and in backwaters fall through early spring. Backwaters are available year-round near Mud Lake Park boat ramp on Dubuque's north side, or from Massey Park's ramp in open water months. Use a slip bobber rig near brush or rock habitat tipped with nightcrawlers for bluegill and bass, or minnows for crappie and bass. Not a boater? Fish the main channel border upstream from Hawthorne Street ramps when river levels are not high.

EMMET—Lots of access along the West Fork of the Des Moines River makes walleye and catfishing easy. Great locale for canoe or kayak angling.

FAYETTE—Anglers exhilarate while floating the Volga

#MISSIONFISHIN

River casting for smallmouth, rock bass and several sucker species. Multiple accesses at Volga Lake State Park make river fishing a snap. Stay the weekend at the campgrounds.

FLOYD—Rudd Lake, off Highway 18 east of Rudd, offers a 12-acre lake with hard surface ramp, trail, picnic area, playground and a beach. Plenty of largemouth, channel cat and bluegill await anglers from shore or boat. City campground, too.

FRANKLIN—Enjoy peaceful fishing with family and friends at Beeds Lake State Park near Hampton. Come in the spring for 6.5- to 7.5-inch bluegill and 7- to 9-inch crappie. Catch a few 6- to 8-inch yellow bass too. Several jetties scattered around the lake and a fishing pier on the south shore. A 2-mile trail follows the lakeshore.

FREMONT—Try summer flathead catfishing on the Missouri River with an experienced river angler. Use live green sunfish or creek chubs in pools below wing dams. Move often to find feeding fish; 20-inch-plus catfish are common, with chances for trophy 40-pounders.

GREENE—Easily catch lots of catfish at Spring Lake anywhere from shore—or even fish right from your camper. Burn off that big fish meal at the park swim beach and roller skating rink.

GRUNDY—Grundy County's newest recreation area, Grundy County Lake, is easily found south of the Highway 20 and T-55 interchange in Dike. Catch 6- to 7-inch bluegill and 12- to 16-inch largemouth bass (15-inch minimum). Fish the jetties or pier.

GUTHRIE—Springbrook Lake is great for kayak fishing. Catch 7- to 8-inch bluegills, 9- to 10-inch crappie, largemouth and channel cat. Three jetties along the nature trail, which winds around the lake. Camping and a rental cabin.

HAMILTON—Good access from jetties and lakeside trails at Briggs Woods Lake make it family-friendly. Cast for crappie, catfish, largemouth bass and bluegill. End the day with 18 holes of golf or a long hike in timbered forest.

HANCOCK—Trails abound at Crystal Lake—easy access for newbies and great for adventure-angler hikes to remote areas. Catch bluegill and crappie in May/early June. Easy access with two jetties (one off Main Street) and a long stretch of shore open through the county park and campground.

HARDIN—Head to Upper and Lower Pine lakes near Eldora for spring bluegill and crappie. Largemouth action heats up in these two scenic lakes in late spring and summer. Pine Lake State Park, one of Iowa's earliest state parks, has camping, cabins, swim beach and more than 10 miles of trails around the lakes.

HARRISON—Willow Lake, in the heart of the Loess Hills, is a family get-away. Extremely clear water—be careful not to spook the fish. Jetties and pier provide boat-free access to deeper water. Plan a weekend trip by using the cabins or campground.



HENRY—Enjoy a variety of fishing on the Skunk River near Lowell. Well-known for excellent flathead and channel catfish populations, use a live green sunfish under a large bobber, stink baits, cut baits or nightcrawlers. Good drum populations are exciting for new anglers. Try small jigs or worms fished under a bobber. Stephenson Park has restrooms, camping and boat ramp.

HOWARD—Vernon Springs Park on the Turkey River, south of Cresco, boasts a 17-acre lake with boat access and bass, pike, walleye, crappie and bluegill. Enjoy Prairie's Edge Nature Center, an open picnic shelter, modern restrooms, camping and hiking.

HUMBOLDT—West Fork Des Moines River. Great public access at the Rutland dam and through Humboldt city parks for walleye, smallmouth and channel cats. Good shore casting from Frank Gotch County Park south of Humboldt.

IDA—Crawford Creek holds jumbo bluegill, large crappie and an occasional big perch (plus a solid largemouth population). A popular fishing spot, it's one of the area's larger impoundments at 62 acres. Jetties and docks make access easy. Lakeshore rental cabins available from the county.

IOWA—Cast for master angler-size redear sunfish (10-inch-plus) at Lake Iowa north of Millersburg. Good bluegill and crappie fishing too. Trails meander around the lake through native prairies and woodlands or run along shore for easy access. Quiet, well-maintained county campground, beach and nature center with a large butterfly garden and bird observation blind.

JACKSON—Lots of public access to popular areas on Mississippi River pools 12 and 13 for walleye, channel cat, crappie, bluegill and drum. Good opportunity for springtime sauger and walleye, and summertime bass, bluegill, catfish, crappie and drum. Easy boat access below dam at Bellevue—a pretty rivertown with blufftop camping and vistas at Bellevue State Park south of town. A small hook tipped with a nightcrawler and weighted with a sinker or split-shot will catch most species. Find shore access below the dam as well as near the DNR fisheries station, Pleasant Creek and Green Island. Good access to the Mighty Miss above the dam and amenities at Spruce Creek County Park, too.

JASPER—Fantastic bluegill and crappie fishing await at this 28-acre lake inside the county-owned Jacob Krumm Nature Preserve. Cast for almost 13-inch crappies and 9-inch bluegills. A mowed trail rings the lake with access made even easier with a north end fishing pier. Located in eastern Jasper County, one mile north of Lynnville exit on I-80. Follow Jacob Avenue east to entrance.

JEFFERSON—Bluegill bite all summer at Jefferson County Park Pond in Fairfield. Catch lots of bluegills. Most run 6.5 to 7 inches. Bring tackle to target many species—bass and channel catfishing is also good. Jefferson County Park has a campground, restroom, shelters and a nature center.

JOHNSON—Lake Macbride State Park offers great fishing for all ages and skills. Haul in bluegill, walleye, channel catfish and crappie. Cast for trophy wipers (10-pounds-plus) and catch-and-release 30-inch-plus muskies (40-inch minimum). Multi-use trails wind for miles around the lake. Pontoon, motorboat, canoe, paddle boat or kayak rentals available.

JONES—Venture to Wapsipinicon State Park south of Anamosa for excellent river fishing for walleye, smallmouth and channel cat, especially below the dam near the park entrance. Camping, hiking trails, lodge rental, playground and a golf course available.

KEOKUK—Belva Deer Park Pond, on the north side of the dam at Lake Belva Deer near Sigourney, has excellent shore access with a trail around it. Bass, bluegill, redear sunfish and channel cats provide excellent fishing for kids, beginners and anglers who haven't cast a line for a while. ADA fishing pier on the east shore, restrooms and gravel boat ramp. Fish for large green sunfish along the rocks on the dam; use a chunk of worm under a bobber.

KOSSUTH—Smith Lake north of Algona is loaded with spring crappie and bluegill over 9 inches. Bass have an 18-inch minimum, so large fish abound. Enjoy a variety of outdoor activities at Water's Edge Nature Center on the west shore. Campgrounds, fishing docks, playgrounds, boat ramp, jetty and a couple beaches keep everyone enthralled.

LEE—The county and DNR greatly improved Wilson Lake near Fort Madison. It now has excellent water clarity. Many cedar tree piles, rock and old road culverts were placed to provide cover and feeding areas. Excellent fishing for spawning bluegill and largemouth. Find bluegills on spawning beds in shallow water and suspended in submerged brush. Try small jigs or a chunk of nightcrawler under a bobber. Stocked with trout each spring and fall; few anglers leave without their limit of five trout.

LINN—Spend a quiet afternoon at scenic Pinicon Ridge Park west of Central City. Cast for smallmouth, walleye and northern pike in the Wapsipinicon River. Paddle secluded backwaters. Climb the observation tower for a view of the Wapsi valley, or tour 5-acre Alexander Wildlife Area. Hiking trails, camping, playground and boat ramp.

#MISSIONFISHIN

LOUISA—Off the beaten path, Virginia Grove Recreation Area Pond is accessible from U.S. Highway 78 east of Morning Sun—signs mark the way. Great place to bring new anglers—usually uncrowded. Stocked with largemouth, bluegill and channel cats. Use chicken liver on a medium to large hook under a bobber for catfish. Nightcrawlers are always good back-up. The pond is isolated from the campground, restrooms, playground and hiking trails.

LUCAS—Known for great bluegill fishing, Red Haw State Park features 8.5- to 9-inch bluegills and redear up to 11 inches. Loads of quality largemouth and crappies, too. Shady campground overlooks the lake, picnic areas by water's edge and a multi-use trail. The oft-overlooked Williamson Pond, east of Highway 14 near Williamson, boasts some of southern Iowa's best crappie fishing.

LYON—Lake Pahoja, inside one of the premiere northwest Iowa county parks, is tailored for kids or beginners. Amazing largemouth bass, bluegill and channel catfishing. A 3.5-mile concrete trail surrounds the lake. Rental cabins overlook the lake. Paddle boat, canoe and kayak rentals and swimming beach.

MADISON—Fish the Middle River at historic Pammel State Park, which is run by the county. Channel and flathead catfishing is excellent, especially below the ford. Stand atop a natural limestone ridge more than 100 feet high to watch the river flow in four directions. Hike five miles of trail winding through woodlands. Iowa's only highway tunnel runs under the ridge.

MAHASKA—A bass angler's vivid dream, Hawthorn Lake south of Barnes City has huge populations up to 20 inches. Catch 25 fish a day. Abundant channel cat with some greater than 4 pounds. Crappie up to 9 inches and muskies up to 40 inches. Try the road grade, shallows on either end of the dam or the arm opposite the dam for spawning bluegills. Extend your fishing day at nearby White Oak Conservation Area Lake near Rose Hill.

MARION—Explore the Whitebreast arm and marina at Red Rock Reservoir for crappie that push 14 inches. White bass and hybrid striped bass fishing can be really exciting. Watch for gulls hovering over surfacing baitfish and toss silver or white lures into the frenzy. Try fishing below the dam February through May.

MARSHALL—Find superb largemouth bass, bluegill and channel cat fishing at recently renovated Green Castle Recreation Area. Several jetties for easy access. Great place to fish from a canoe or kayak as motorized boats are not allowed. Picnic areas, hiking trails and universally-accessible facilities.

MILLS—Plenty of bluegill and crappie at Glenwood Park Pond keep anglers of all ages busy. Well stocked with catfish (14- to 17-inches). Try also for black bullheads, green sunfish and 18-inch-plus largemouth.

MITCHELL—Halvorson Park near St. Ansgar provides easy Cedar River access. Recent shoreline habitat improvements attract a variety of species within casting distance. A boat ramp complements abundant shoreline access at the 10-acre park. Camping, swim beach, playground, picnic shelters and modern restroom facilities.

MONONA—Escape to Oldham Lake outside Soldier for peaceful fishing. Good numbers of 8- to 10-inch crappie and nice bluegill (7.5 to 8 inches). It's best fished from a small boat, float tube, canoe or kayak.

MONROE—A fishing favorite, Lake Miami is one of the fastest improving lakes around with bluegill almost 9 inches. Good largemouth bass fishing with 16-inch fish common. Crappies are improving. A short drive south, the upper and lower Albia Reservoir has amazing bluegill fishing with 10-inch fish. The city park has ramps and shore access.

MONTGOMERY—Escape to East Hacklebarney Lake, a small lake off the beaten path. Go in May when bluegills and redear sunfish are bedding in the shallows. Cast toward shore with small 1/32nd-ounce jigs or hang a half a crawler 18 inches under a bobber to find the beds.

MUSCATINE—Discovery Park Pond near Muscatine features excellent bluegill, largemouth bass and channel cat fishing. Great shore access around the pond and large accessible pier. Try a chunk of nightcrawler for gills or chicken liver for cats under a bobber. Catch bass with a variety of lures, from rubber worms to topwaters to Beetle Spins. Trout stocked spring and fall. Try flashy spinners for hungry recently-stocked trout; dough baits, corn or other scented baits work best after trout settle in. Stroll to Heron Hideaway Pond located behind the Environmental Discovery Center. New anglers will enjoy the center's large aquarium with Iowa fish species.

O'BRIEN—Dog Creek is a perfect escape with pretty views for an afternoon of fishing. Renovated in 2014, bass are a bit small but abundant. Good numbers of nice-sized bluegills are being sampled. Great shore access and a jetty. The park, along the Glacial Trail Scenic Byway, abuts some of the best prairie in northwest Iowa.

OSCEOLA—Ocheyedan Pond offers unique fishing. This small former surface mine has decent largemouth, bluegill and catfish. Good shore access, picnic area, beach and trails.

PHOTO BY JAKE ZWIERHOFF/MEN

PAGE—Catfish up to 26 inches were caught last fall at Rapp Park north of Shenandoah. Good-sized crappie and largemouth bass over 17 inches also await. Enjoy camping, trails and picnics after fishing this county park.

PALO ALTO—Five Island Lake, one of Iowa's bigger natural lakes, has good numbers of crappie, walleye and a newly established yellow bass population. Great shore access with handicapped-accessible pier and shoreline. The state park, run by the county, located at Town Bay (south end of town), has camping spaces available.

PLYMOUTH—Hillview Recreational Area, nestled in the Loess Hills, is a scenic fishing getaway. Good bluegill, largemouth bass and channel cat fishing. Several trails wind through oak forests, prairies and around the pond. Swim beach, primitive and modern camping and cabins.

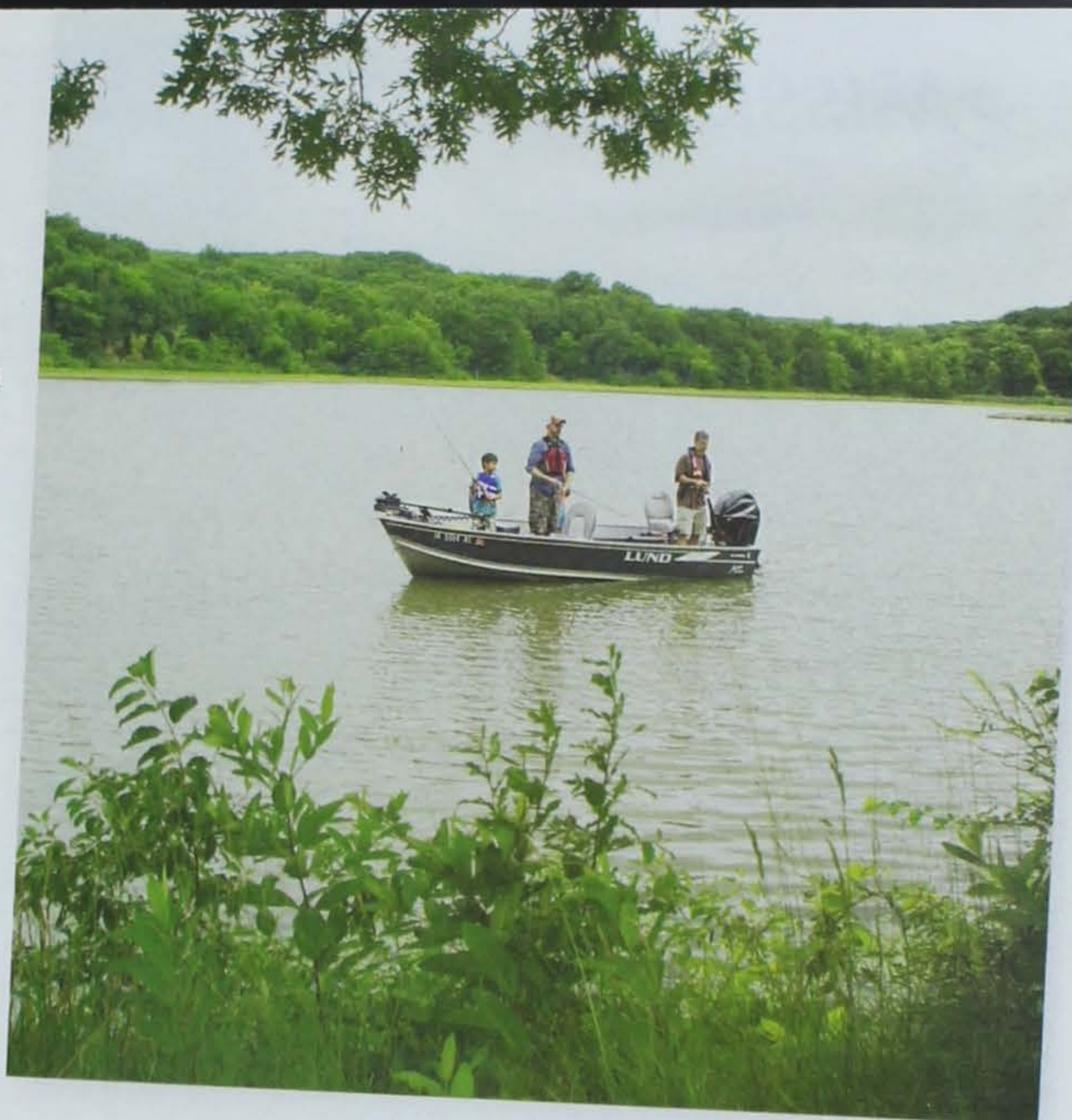
POCAHONTAS—Have fun canoe or kayak fishing for perch and northerns at newly renovated Lizard Lake. Keep your eyes on the abundant habitat for excellent wildlife viewing.

POLK—Stocked walleye at Big Creek State Park the past five years have survived well. Now reaching "eater size," the bite should be good for 15- to 20-inch walleye in upcoming years. Hit the post-spawn bite May through June.

POTTAWATTAMIE—Lake Manawa is a favorite spot of anglers young and old. Crappie fishing is expected to improve in 2017 based on last year's netting survey. Find 9- and 10-inch black crappies spawning in the rocks in May. Stocked with walleye, wipers and channel cat. Paddle boat, paddle board and kayak and canoe rentals at the beach concessionaire.

POWESHIEK—Catch lots of 7- to 9-inch crappie at Diamond Lake west of Montezuma. Excellent access with 11 jetties. Fish from your camper in some areas. Fish cleaning station, paved trails, playground and many picnic spots. Boats with electric trolling motors only allowed on the lake.

RINGGOLD—Gravel spawning beds and rock piles recently added to Fife's Grove Park Pond north of Mount Ayr provide more spots to catch bluegill, bass, wipers, channel catfish and crappie. Great shore access with a gazebo in a well-maintained county park. Explore a historic one-room log cabin nestled in an oak savanna



where many trees are more than 150 years old.

SAC—Black Hawk Lake, renovated in 2012, has great fishing for all ages. Walleye fishing last spring was phenomenal with anglers taking home limits throughout May. Try right off of Ice House Point (part of Black Hawk State Park) for 8-inch bluegill and 8- to 10-inch crappies. Catch dozens of largemouth bass per trip. Many channel cat exceed 4 pounds. Set the drag and hook a muskie for an incredible fight. Half the shore is public, with plenty of trails, parks and new playground.

SCOTT—Lake of the Hills, Davenport, is the largest lake in the West Lake Park Complex. Good bass, bluegill, crappie and channel catfish. Panfish are a bit small, but easily caught. Largemouth over 17 inches possible. Many large broodstock largemouth bass, retired from the Fairport Hatchery, have been stocked over the years. Try crankbaits fished along rocky areas. Channel cat over 18 inches await lucky anglers; use chicken liver under a bobber.

SHELBY—Prairie Rose Lake, nestled among scenic hills southeast of Harlan, has excellent bass, channel catfish, bluegill and crappie fishing. Bluegills are big and the crappie population is developing fast. Abundant bass provide great catch-and-release fishing (15-inch minimum length limit). Fish the rock piles and reefs added during 2012 renovation. Shore access is limited with lots of aquatic plant habitat, so fish from a boat, kayak or jetty.

#MISSIONFISHIN

SIoux—Find good numbers of bass, bluegill and cats, and improved shore access, at Big Sioux Recreational Area. Concrete ramp for easy access to the Big Sioux River.

STORY—Find good numbers of bluegill and bass in Dakins Lake, north of Zearing and stocked in 2014. Bluegills are now up to 9 inches. Excellent shore access makes it a great pick for beginners. Camping available, so take the family.

TAMA—Yellow bass fishing is hot at Otter Creek Lake near Toledo. Catch 7- to 9-inch yellow bass close to shore around Memorial Day. Bluegill, bass and crappie available. Fish cleaning station near the ramp. Hike the 3-mile scenic lake trail, visit the 2-acre native prairie or tour the nature center.

TAYLOR—Spend a fun family day at Lake of Three Fires State Park, the region's most scenic, northeast of Bedford. Catch 9.5- to 10-inch crappie with some over 12 inches, largemouth over 17 inches and bluegill up to 8. Eight miles of trails, a large picnic area under trees near shore, sandy beach with playground and rental cabins.

UNION—Hit Summit Lake on the west side of Creston for prize catches of 10-inch yellow perch, 8- to 10-inch crappies and 8- to 9-inch bluegills. Fish brush piles by the jetty or along the Highway 25 bridge. Shore access limited, so bring a boat. A concrete boat ramp and adjacent fishing jetty just off the Summit Lake Bridge on State Highway 25 offers easy all-weather access.

VAN BUREN—Lake Sugema is loaded with county park amenities for families and campers, plus excellent largemouth, crappie and bluegill fishing. A great hiking trail leads to popular, pretty Lacey-Keosauqua State Park. Cast for just about any species on the Des Moines River next to the park, then stroll the rustic Villages of Van Buren County—a tourism destination.

WAPELLO—The Des Moines River features excellent channel and flathead catfishing, especially below the hydropower dam. Also great fishing for walleye, white bass and hybrid striped bass. Sturgeon put up a fight and are willing to bite in the spring. Bounce a crawler and slip sinker off the bottom.

WARREN—Lake Ahquabi State Park is a family destination five miles south of Indianola. A fishing pier, numerous jetties and trails provide great access. Catch bluegill, redear sunfish and crappie late April through early June. Hop across the road to the south for largemouth bass or channel catfish in Hooper Pond.

WASHINGTON—Thomas Marr Lake, near Ainsworth, is perfect for new anglers. A paved trail loops around the

lake. Lots of submerged brush within casting distance of shore. Two jetties provide access to deeper water. Stocked with largemouth, bluegill, redear sunfish, channel cat and crappie. A few anglers had great success last summer using topwater baits that mimicked water snakes. Venture to Marr Park Pond to cast off the covered pier, visit the nature center or spend a night camping.

WAYNE—Excellent largemouth fishing at Humeston Reservoir will rekindle the joy of fishing for anyone who hasn't dipped a line lately. Lots of bass up to 22 inches. Great crappie angling with fish up to 12 inches. Catch plenty of bluegill up to 9 inches. Nearby Seymour Reservoir is also a good bet for bluegill and crappie.

WEBSTER—Brushy Creek, Iowa's secret walleye hotspot, has monster catfish and 40-inch-plus muskie. Cast off the foot bridges for walleye. Bass, bluegill and crappie fishing is also good. Jetties provide easy access. Lots of habitat to explore by boat.

WINNEBAGO—Get away to quiet Lake Catherine, nestled in timber west of Forest City. Catch nice-sized bluegill in the spring and channel cat and largemouth as water warms. Two fishing jetties and a handicapped-accessible pier provide easy access. Enjoy lake views from the cabin.

WINNESHIEK—Take someone new fishing to Lake Meyer. At 40 acres, it has plenty of water to pursue bluegill, crappie and largemouth. A concrete ramp provides easy boat use in addition to abundant shore access. Multiple fish attractors added during a recent drawdown provide lots of fishing spots. The park offers picnic areas, campground, playground and trails.

WOODBURY—Little Sioux Park Lake offers easy fishing and camping fun. This abandoned gravel mine turned fishing and swimming hole has extremely clear water. Plenty of shore access. Find 7.5- to 8-inch bluegill in the "arms" of the pit sitting on nests in springtime. Largemouth bass and channel cat lurk below begging to be caught. Hop over to the Little Sioux River adjacent the park for walleye and bigger catfish.

WORTH—Bluegill and yellow perch fishing was fabulous at Silver Lake last year. Nice largemouth, some 15 to 17 inches, are coming on strong after renovations in 2013. Two jetties and a concrete ramp provide access. Spend the night at the county park on the north shore.

WRIGHT—Channel catfishing is excellent at Lake Cornelia off the north end jetty and north shore. Catch nice-size bluegill, 6- to 8-inch yellow bass and an occasional walleye. Hike the lake trails or spend a night at a lakeside camp. 🐾



PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF MAAS TER ANGLER PROGRAM. REMAINING PHOTOS BY JAKE ZWEIFSHAMER

A photograph of a wild turkey in a forest. The turkey is in the foreground, facing right, with its characteristic blue and red head and neck. The background is filled with green undergrowth and tree trunks, suggesting a spring forest setting.

A SPRING QUADFECTA

STORY AND PHOTOS BY RANDY BRENTON



As a teenager, I received my first book on gathering wild food for a birthday present. *Stalking the Wild Asparagus*, a book by Euell Gibbons, gave me a start in reaping where I did not sow. Hunting, fishing and gathering wild foods have been favorite activities of mine for years.

For this Iowan and outdoor lover, the spring trifecta is turkey, trout and morels. For others, crappies are part of the trio.

I hunt in northeast Iowa, so I attempt to complete the trout trifecta most years, but the timing of the morels is usually most challenging. Last year was the first year I attempted a spring quadfecta: a turkey, a limit of trout,



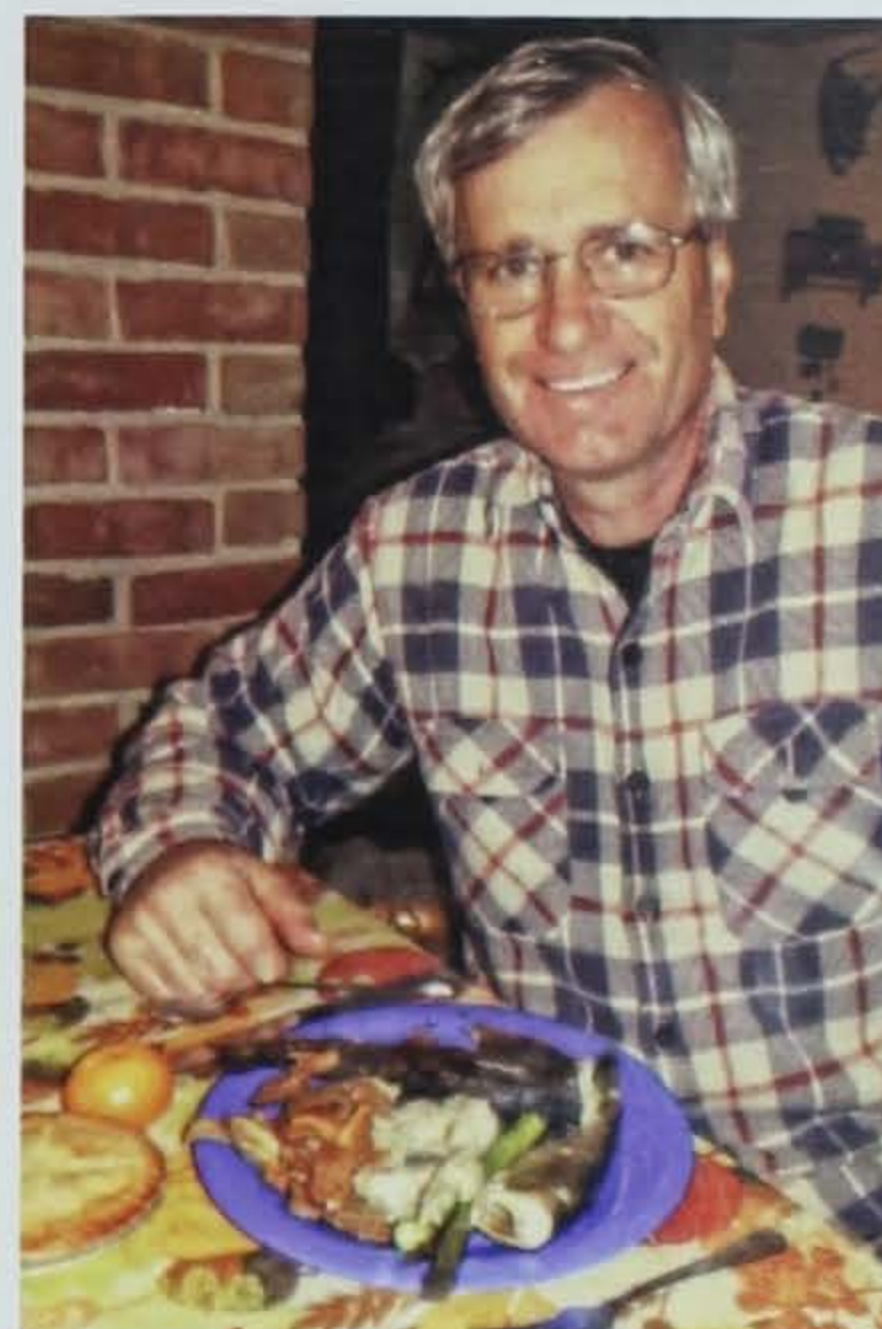
Completing an Iowa spring quadfecta is challenging at best. It requires creeling a limit of five finicky trout. Wild asparagus might be next, if you know where to look. It's easiest to find them in the fall when the plants are large, noticeable and golden and make a note of their location for spring. Finding a bag of morels, dependant not only on time of year, but heat and moisture at just the right time, might be most difficult. Bagging a wild turkey is limited to the framework of the season you choose to hunt. Author Randy Brenton accomplished that feat not only once, but twice last year, once during third turkey season and once during fourth. He and longtime hunting partner Carlyle Dalen were treated to one of the most quintessential Iowa spring wild edible meals imaginable.

morels and wild asparagus. I had the idea of adding the asparagus last year after having a delicious asparagus and morel mushroom pizza at a local Decorah restaurant.

Starting with the turkey. I went at daybreak to the top of a ridge of walnut trees and started calling. After an hour, a tom answered me. He came closer, but hung up about 100 yards out. I called infrequently, but each time I called, he would answer, hoping my hen decoys would “come to him.” After about 45 minutes of this stalemate, two larger toms came in silently to see what all the chatter was about. Both were racing each other to my strutting tom decoy. Waiting only for separation of the two, I got a nice clear head shot. The second tom hung around long enough for me to get a few photos of him.

Next, the trout. Most of the time, when I'm trout fishing, it is about the joy of catching a finicky trout from behind a rock. Today, I was determined to get a limit. Coldwater Creek in Winneshiek County is one of my favorite streams, with many pools to choose from and usually enough trout for good action. This day I was in luck. The first pool I tried gave me a nice trout and I had my five trout in a few hours.

The morels were a challenge because it was still a little too early in the season. Oak leaves were the size of squirrels' ears—the criteria my grandfather used to tell if morels would be out. Another marker is the blooms of mayapples which were, unfortunately, only budding out at this time. Going to several places which had morels in



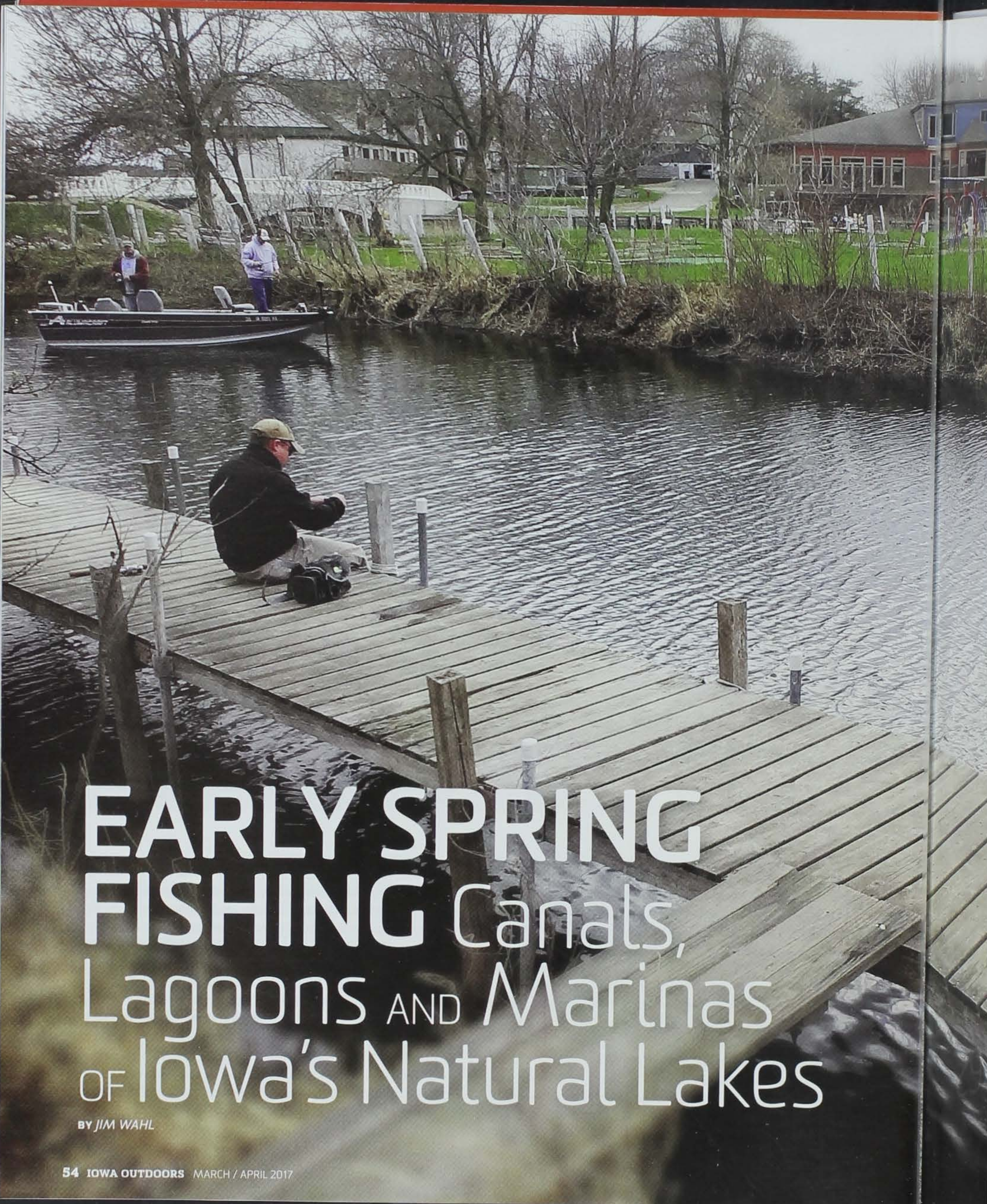
the past, I did score a small batch of small gray morels. It was definitely too early for the larger yellow morels.

Asparagus grows wild in many ditches in Iowa and if you know where to look, this is the easy part of a "quadfecta." I make a mental note of locations of asparagus in the fall when the plants are large and noticeable after they turn golden. Sometimes the brushy tops are still visible in the spring. After I picked some spears, it was time to start cooking. I called my friend Carlyle to join me. He too had shot his turkey and was working on catching some trout.

I put some olive oil on a griddle and cooked the trout and turkey first. The turkey was cut in small strips seasoned with poultry seasoning. The trout was sprinkled with Greek

seasoning. One can dip them in flour to make the skin easier to peel. Once the trout were cooking, I put the asparagus spears on the same griddle. Mushrooms sautéed in butter is my favorite way to eat morels, but again, they can also be coated in flour or cracker crumbs. I cut the morels in half and soaked them in salt water before cooking them. I put some butter on one end of the griddle to melt and finally placed the morels on. When the morels start to shrink, they are ready to eat. So I was cooking all four on the same griddle with butter at one end and olive oil at the other.

Carlyle and I had quite a feast, eating the quadfecta as a meal from one pan. This was the first time for such a meal in many years of turkey hunting. Although the meal was great, the best part was enjoying Iowa in the spring. The sights and sounds of the woods in spring is a delight to the senses. 🍄



EARLY SPRING FISHING Canals, Lagoons AND Marinas OF Iowa's Natural Lakes

BY JIM WAHL



The glacial lakes of northwest Iowa were formed by the scouring action of the Wisconsin glacier which retreated from Iowa about 13,000 years ago. As the great ice sheet slowly melted and retreated, the area filled with water and created Iowa's natural lakes.

Although these lakes remain natural in many ways, several have been altered as human development increased along their shorelines. Canals, lagoons and marinas are all waterways constructed by humans, breaking the natural shoreline to provide boat access and quiet harbor to the main lake basin. Not all of the natural lakes have canals, but most larger lakes do, and in some instances there are several on one lake.

Throughout the years, opportunistic anglers have discovered how productive these side channels can be. Although nearly all species of fish use the canals, members of the sunfish family appear to have the greatest attraction. Largemouth bass, crappie and bluegill are frequently taken. These species will readily use the quiet, warm, mud-bottomed habitat of these canals.

Here are the secrets to capitalize on fishing natural lake canal systems.

Spring is the optimal season to fish canals. Shortly after ice-out, fish begin to congregate there. Depending on the weather, this usually occurs in early April. Don't wait too long after the ice leaves the lake because you may miss some of the hottest action. This is particularly true for crappies. In many cases, some of the best crappie angling takes place during the first warm weather after ice-out.

Most biologists believe the initial movement of fish into the canals is for feeding and not spawning migration. In Storm Lake and Black Hawk Lake, crappies move into the canals to take advantage of plentiful gizzard shad. In West Okoboji and Clear Lake, crappies and bass may feed on spottail shiners or young panfish attracted to the canal's warmer water. Because canals are shallow (6 feet deep or less) and have a mud bottom, they heat-up quickly. Water

in the canal may be as much as 10 degrees warmer than the main lake.

Ed Thelen, an avid bass angler from Spirit Lake, says he tries to find the warmest water in the canal when fishing bass in the early spring. A temperature difference of even a couple degrees can often mean the difference between a successful or unsuccessful trip. When searching for the warmest water in the canal, start near the back end. This area will be generally, but not always, warmer. Wind direction plays an important role and can move warm water into unlikely spots if strong enough.

Thelen also recommends fishing during the warmest part of the day for early-season bass. Typically, the most consistent results for him through the years have been between 3 and 4 p.m. each day. Keep in mind that fish are cold-blooded animals, so the warmer spring temperatures

and warmer waters mean more active fish.

A jig with pork rind is Thelen's favorite bass bait when water temperatures are cool. As the water warms, he suggests trying spinnerbaits or plastic worms. Although these are preferred baits, Thelen says crankbaits should not be overlooked. Plugs retrieved quickly along riprapped shoreline or in the open water of a canal can be particularly effective.

Because canals are made by humans, they are somewhat lacking in natural cover. There is, however, no shortage of artificial habitat. Docks, boat hoists and riprapped banks provide attractive cover for bass and panfish. Bass are very structure-oriented and will use nearly all docks and hoists. According to Thelen, the key to fishing canal structure is figuring out which part of the dock or hoist bass are holding on, and then making the proper presentation to trigger a strike.



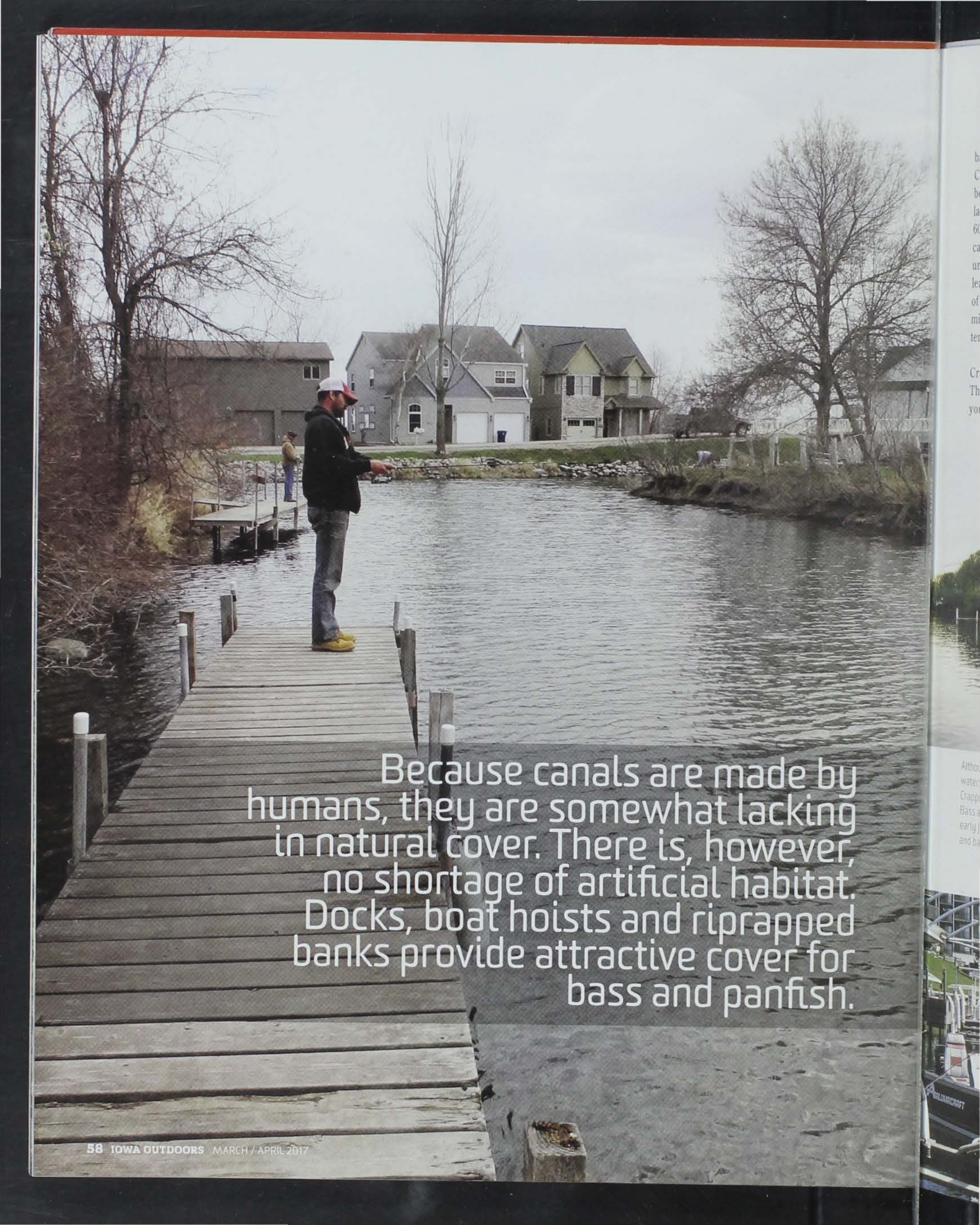
Fish on! Shallow depths found in canals, marinas and lagoons are often as much as 10 degrees warmer than the main lake on Iowa's larger natural waterbodies. These areas are hot spots for early spring fishing through the spawn. Some of the hottest action is right after ice-out. Fish these often overlooked spots for tremendous success. Pinpoint smaller areas in these waters, searching for the warmest spots to make the action all the more intense and memorable.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ED THELEN



DRL/BASS PHOTO COURTESY ED THELEN BOYS/FISH COURTESY MIKE HAWKINS

A man wearing a dark jacket, jeans, and a white cap with a red brim stands on a wooden dock extending into a canal. He is holding a fishing rod and looking towards the water. In the background, there are several large, modern houses with grey roofs and white garage doors. Bare trees line the banks of the canal, and the sky is overcast. The dock is made of weathered wooden planks and has several wooden posts with white caps. The water in the canal is calm with some ripples.

Because canals are made by humans, they are somewhat lacking in natural cover. There is, however, no shortage of artificial habitat. Docks, boat hoists and riprapped banks provide attractive cover for bass and panfish.

Although initial movements into the canals are to feed, bass, crappie and bluegill will remain there to spawn. Crappie spawn in May when water temperatures range between 60 and 68 degrees. Bass are next to spawn from late May to early June in water temperatures between 60 and 70 degrees. Both crappies and bass will leave the canals shortly after spawning, and generally don't return until the following spring. Thelen says that bass usually leave the canals by mid-June. Bluegill are the last members of the sunfish family to spawn. Normally beginning in mid-June, the spawning may continue through July in water temperatures between 65 and 75 degrees.

When fishing for crappies, stay close to structures. Crappies love to hang in the shade of a dock or hoist. They are typically suspended off the bottom, so keep your bait up. Some anglers prefer to use a small bobber

to keep the bait above feeding crappies.

Bluegills feed closer to the bottom than crappies and are less structure-oriented. In fact, Thelen recommends trying away from the docks and hoists, particularly early in the season. Bluegills also tolerate warmer water and will stay in the canal for a longer period of time. Bluegills are frequently taken during early ice on the Okoboji canals.

If you haven't explored fishing in natural lake canals, consider trying it this year. Concentrate your efforts during the spring and don't wait too long after ice-out. Anglers should also remember to respect private property. The water in the canal is open to public use—however, docks, hoists and shorelines in many instances are private. If you are unsure, check first to avoid any trespassing problems. 🐾



Although initial early spring movement by fish into these warm, shallow waters is to feed, bass, crappie and bluegill will remain to spawn. Crappie spawn first in May in 60 to 68 degree water temperatures. Bass are next when temps hit 60 to 70 degrees, often in late May to early June. Bluegills are last to spawn, typically in mid-June. Crappies and bass leave these areas and head to the main lake after the spawn.



Free Tree Seedlings for Schools AND Communities— HURRY, ORDER NOW!



Beautify and enhance neighborhoods with free seedlings through the DNR's Trees for Kids program.

Each school building and community may order one free packet consisting of 200 bare-root seedlings, 50 each of four selected species. The seedlings are delivered in April or May and are generally used as part of Earth Week celebrations. Many are distributed to students, family, staff and community residents. Others are planted on school grounds and in parks, or used as part of educational programs. Orders will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis until 200 packets are requested—so order quickly.

“Most people probably aren’t thinking about planting right now,” says Laura Wagner, DNR Trees for Kids Coordinator. “But because this program and our packets are so popular, we encourage folks to order early to get the best selections.”

Schools and communities need to complete a simple application form, and those receiving packets are asked to email at least one photo of the trees being planted and a short paragraph indicating where and why they were planted. No other requirements are necessary.

Application deadline is April 1. The application form, packet sheets with species photos and information, and instructions can be found at iowadnr.gov/urbanforestry by clicking on “Trees For Kids Earth Month Celebration.”

Choose From These Packets

Fall Color—Trees and shrubs with vibrant fall color include aroniaberry, highbush cranberry, red oak and sugar maple.

Fastest Forest—Great along streams and wet areas. These species—cottonwood, hybrid poplar, silver maple and sycamore—grow at least 3 feet per year.

Pollinator Packet—vital host species for butterflies and other pollinators include arrowhead, buttonbush, chokecherry and serviceberry.

Privacy Packet—Great to use as a visual barrier or along a fence line with redosier dogwood, river birch, eastern white pine and white spruce.

Spring Flowers—Create spring color with these flowering shrubs and small trees such as highbush cranberry, redbud, serviceberry and wild plum.

Storm Resistant Packet—These trees resist breakage from wind and ice storms with northern pecan, shagbark hickory, swamp white oak and white oak.

Wild Edible Packet—Enjoy an edible landscape of aroniaberry, elderberry, serviceberry and wild plum.

Trees for Kids is a DNR program with funding by Alliant Energy, MidAmerican Energy, Black Hills Energy, ITC, Trees Forever, Iowa Woodland Owners Association and Iowa Tree Farm Committee, and administered by the DNR Forestry Bureau.

For more information, contact Laura Wagner,
DNR Trees for Kids Coordinator, at 515-725-8456
or laura.wagner@dnr.iowa.gov.





Details on Each Species

Aroniaberry, a shrub, is sought for its bright red fall color, white spring flowers and its value as a nectar source for butterflies and other pollinators. It is desired for its edible purple berries which are very high in antioxidants.

Arrowwood Viburnum is a shrub admired for its beautiful fall color, its spring flowers and value as a nectar source and larval host for butterflies and other pollinators, including spring azure, striped hairstreak, red spotted purple admiral and white-hairstreak butterflies. Songbirds enjoy the berries.

Buttonbush Shrub has great value as a nectar source and larval host for butterflies and other pollinators, including the silver spotted skipper, Horace's duskywing and titan sphinx moth. It yields white flowers in late summer.

Chokecherry Fruit: small red cherries that must be cooked for human consumption. Makes excellent jams, jellies, sauces and pies. White flowers in late summer. Similar to a black cherry tree but smaller. This shrub is a valuable nectar source and larval host for butterflies and other pollinators, including the Eastern tiger swallowtail, coral hairstreak, striped hairstreak and wild cherry sphinx.

Cottonwood is very fast growing—more than 3-feet per year before topping out at heights up to 100-feet. A perfect tree along streams and in wet areas, one tree can intercept nearly 406,000 gallons of water during its life.

Eastern White Pine soars to 75-foot heights. It has soft, long needles and is the only pine native to Iowa. Cone seeds are eaten by many birds, including chickadees, nuthatches, finches and red-bellied woodpeckers. The tree is a host for the pine elfin butterfly.

Elderberry is an important over-wintering plant for native pollinators, as well as a great nectar source for butterflies. Its fruit is used to make jellies, jams, sauces and wine, and the purple berries support songbirds. It yields snowy white, flat-topped flowers.

Highbush Cranberry produces large

displays of white spring flowers with showy red and purple fall color and bright red winter berries. They are nectar and larval host for butterflies such as striped hairstreak, eastern tiger swallowtail, red-spotted purple admiral and wild cherry sphinx.

Hybrid Poplar is a cross between cottonwood and black poplar. This seedless variety quickly grows into a tall, narrow, short-lived tree.

Northern Pecan: Height 70 to 100 feet; yields delicious, edible nuts for people and wildlife. This storm-resistant shade tree has beautiful wood used in woodworking. Trees are hardy throughout Iowa, but nutmeat may not fully develop north of Interstate 80. Important larval host species for butterflies, including hickory hairstreak.

Red Oak is valued for its red fall color and its acorns, which are important to wildlife. The tree also is a larval host for many butterflies.

Redbud offers showy lavender and pink flowers in spring. A small tree with low, horizontal branching on an umbrella-like spreading crown, it provides nectar for zebra swallowtails and other butterflies.

Redosier Dogwood is known for its bright red stems in winter, and makes a great living snow fence or visual barrier on a property edge. It is a nectar source for many butterfly species, including azure butterflies, and boasts cream-colored spring flowers.

River Birch has peeling bark. An important species along rivers and streams, it filters contaminants out of water and slows flooding. One river birch tree can intercept 248,000 gallons of water over its lifetime.

Serviceberry, also known as Juneberry, is well-loved by songbirds and butterflies. Its white spring flowers, red and purple June fruit and orange-red fall color gives it colorful three-season interest.

Shagbark Hickory has delicious nuts used in baking and coveted by wildlife. The shaggy bark peels in long, tough curls along its trunk. It is a tall, narrow-crowned tree usually found on upland sites with oaks. It is exceedingly storm resistant, and tolerates clay soils. It is a larval host

for many pollinators, including hickory hairstreak, banded hairstreak, luna moth and polyphemus moth.

Silver Maple filters nitrates and pollutants from surface water along streams and floodplains, and helps reduce flooding. One tree can intercept 440,376 gallons of rainwater over its life.

Sugar Maple is prized for its fall orange, red and golden yellow colors. It has a pleasing form with an oval, rounded crown. It also provides nectar and is a larval host for many butterflies, moths and other pollinators, including the imperial, luna, lo and polyphemus moths.

Sycamore have large, plate-sized leaves, and exfoliating bark as it matures. Sycamore is a very fast growing species, which plays an important role filtering nitrates and other pollutants from surface water along streams and floodplains and helping reduce flooding.

Swamp White Oak is tolerant of clay sites, wet sites and also has good drought and storm damage resistance. It is an important wildlife tree and a larval host for many butterflies.

White Oak has beautiful purple and red fall color, and is resistant to storm damage. It is an important wildlife tree for acorns, and as a larval host for butterflies, including sleepy duskywing, Edward's hairstreak, hickory hairstreak, striped hairstreak, and Juvenal's duskywing. "...Oaks are the quintessential wildlife plant: no other plant genus supports more species of butterflies and moths, thus providing more types of bird food, than the mighty oak." —Douglas, W. Tallamy, "Bringing Nature Home."

White Spruce are perfect for home-grown Christmas trees and provide excellent winter wildlife cover. They are ill-suited to windbreak planting, as they are prone to fungal disease in crowded conditions.

Wild Plum's yellow and red fruit fuels songbirds and wildlife and makes great jellies and jams. Wild plum is an important nectar source and larval host for many butterfly species, including tiger swallowtail.

BY ERIKA BILLERBECK



The UNFORTUNATE Mr. Murphy

Nobody wakes up in the morning expecting to end up in the emergency room. *Fortunately*, we usually don't—sometimes owing to precautions we take. Unless you are especially pessimistic, you don't choose your clothes for the day based on how they will look to paramedics who respond to your car accident, but you do wear your seatbelt. You don't skip lunch so you can save room for hospital cafeteria food, but you do try to choose something healthy to stave off a heart attack. You don't prematurely call an ambulance to be fitted for an arm cast when Mother Nature drops a nice layer of ice on your driveway, but you do salt the cement. *Unfortunately*, even with the best of intentions, bad things still happen. This was the case with a bow hunter I will call "Mr. Murphy."

Fortunately, the morning Mr. Murphy decided to hunt was an ideal day to be afield. It was cloudy but pleasant, with a light breeze and plenty of deer in the timber.

Unfortunately, Mr. Murphy had a fear of heights. He used to feel nervous sitting high in his tree stand. But his daughter had given him a safety harness the year before, and he used it religiously. Being safely strapped in allowed him to enjoy his surroundings without constant fear of plummeting to his death.

Fortunately, Mr. Murphy only had to sit in his stand about 25 minutes before he saw a deer walking toward him from a nearby bean field. *Unfortunately*, the deer was a doe, and though he wouldn't admit it to anyone, he really wanted to shoot a big buck. Mr. Murphy reminded himself that hunting was about more than just shooting a big deer, and quickly shook away the disappointment he felt for the lack of antlers on the deer, which was now only

about 50 yards away.

The doe continued down the trail, inching closer to Mr. Murphy's stand. Mr. Murphy's breath quickened and he started to sweat. *Unfortunately*, Mr. Murphy suffered from asthma, so any physical exertion left him breathless. He took some slow, deep breaths and to gain control before needing his inhaler, which he accidentally left at home.

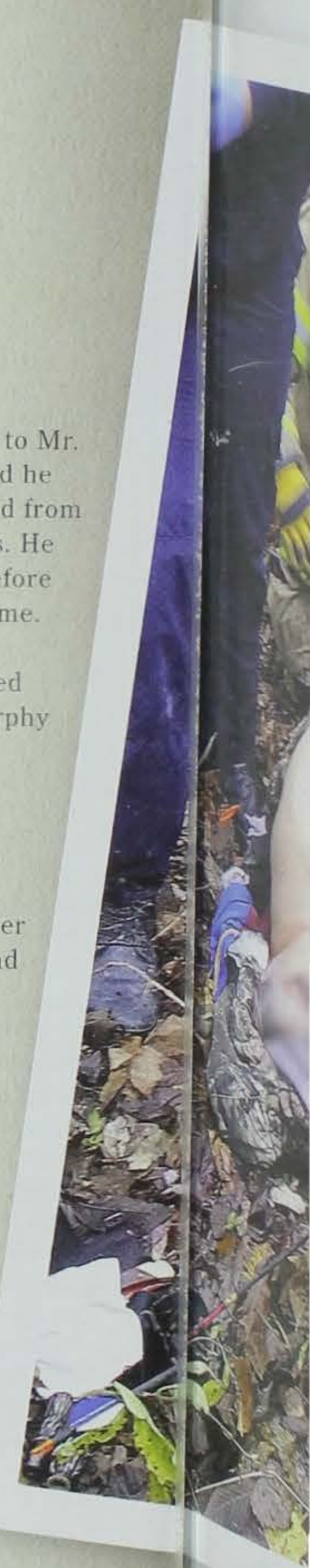
Unfortunately, Mr. Murphy was so entranced by watching the deer that he forgot he hadn't yet nocked an arrow. Slowly, he reached for his quiver. Mr. Murphy managed to nock an arrow and draw just as the doe came inside of 30 yards.

Unfortunately, as soon as Mr. Murphy pulled the trigger on his release, he wished he could take the shot back. He knew that it was hurried and that he should've let the deer get closer. *Fortunately*, the deer reacted as though it had been struck. It stumbled and crashed through the woods.

Mr. Murphy waited in his stand for a few minutes, then decided it best to give the deer a little time—the last thing he wanted to do was chase it further away.

Mr. Murphy's stomach growled. He looked at his watch and saw that it was lunch time. He decided to drive home and grab a bite to eat before returning to look for the doe.

After lunch, Mr. Murphy returned to his tree stand and started searching the ground. *Fortunately*, Mr. Murphy found a small spot of blood. Mr. Murphy continued scanning the ground hoping for more evidence of a blood



trail. *Unfortunately*, the trail didn't continue past the initial spot.

Mr. Murphy decided to start wandering around the woods, hoping he would find the doe. *Fortunately*, he did. She was bedded down near the top of a ravine. *Unfortunately*, Mr. Murphy's arrow was embedded in the deer which was still fully conscious. It was horrible shot placement—a completely non-lethal hit.

Fortunately, he brought his bow along. Mr. Murphy took a deep breath, drew back and released.

Unfortunately, he missed. The dazed deer continued to look at him. Mr. Murphy looked at

his quiver. *Unfortunately*, he was out of arrows. A quick mental assessment of his pockets led Mr. Murphy to one last option. *Fortunately*, Mr. Murphy had a buck knife.

With his knife in one hand and his bow in the other, Mr. Murphy cautiously approached the doe. Just as he got within a foot of her, she leapt at Mr. Murphy, hooves lashing. One of her legs struck Mr. Murphy in the chest. *Fortunately*, he did not lose his grip on the knife. *Unfortunately*, he also didn't lose grip on his bow, which made for a very awkward wrestling match as the deer and Mr. Murphy tangled together 60 yards down the ravine, coming to rest at the bottom.

Fortunately, by the time they reached the bottom of the hill, Mr. Murphy was on top of the deer and still in possession of his knife. He slashed out with his knife and made fierce contact with the deer's neck. The deer was finally dead. *Unfortunately*, Mr. Murphy was barely able to breathe. The doe's hooves left a dent in Mr. Murphy's chest, and the exertion from the fight left him almost immobile. *Fortunately*, the only other piece of equipment Mr. Murphy carried with him was a cell phone. He dialed his son who called 911.

When the local conservation officer heard the medical call on the radio for a person attacked by a deer, he turned on his lights and siren and sped towards the scene...all the while envisioning the pile of paperwork that surely awaited him. When he and the paramedics arrived, they found Mr. Murphy lying at the bottom of the hill. He was prone and motionless on top of a doe, still holding his knife and bow. *Fortunately*, Mr. Murphy was still conscious and breathing. The paramedics loaded Mr. Murphy into an ambulance and transported him to the hospital. The conservation officer followed, and interviewed Mr. Murphy in his hospital room.

Fortunately, Mr. Murphy only sustained minor injuries and was released from the hospital that night. And *Fortunately*, for the conservation officer, since the scenario didn't meet the definition of a "hunting incident," there was no pile of paperwork that he so dreaded. And *Fortunately*, the conservation officer called his co-worker tasked with writing *Warden's Diary* to tell her the story of the *unfortunate*, Mr. Murphy. And *fortunately*, she was in need of something to write about. And *fortunately*, she met the deadline. 🐾



Admiration & Legacy

BY JESSIE ROLPH BROWN AND MARIAH GRIFFITH

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



John Klein

SIGNING THE STREAMS

EFFORT CREATES AWARENESS AND STRENGTHENS RURAL IDENTITY

Thousands of motorists drive over Iowa's waterways, big and small, each day. But unless it's a major river, most people are crossing these streams unaware of what's below.

The DNR, in partnership with the Iowa Department of Transportation, has been placing signs identifying creek crossings at bridges along state and federal highways the past four years.

"We all live in a watershed, but not many people are aware of which one or even what a watershed is," says Steve Hopkins with the DNR's Watershed Improvement Program. "We want people to understand more about the creeks they cross over every day, and drawing attention to them with these signs is a great first step."

In phase one of the project, the DNR worked with the DOT's Tim Crouch and Kurtis Younkin to install signs at almost 40 stream crossings in nine different watersheds: Big Creek Lake, Badger Creek Lake, Dry Run Creek, Duck Creek, Easter Lake, Lake Geode, Lake Rathbun, Silver Creek and Tete des Morts Creek. All nine watersheds had active watershed improvement projects, funded by the DNR through the EPA's Section 319 nonpoint source program.

Phase two focused on placing creek crossing signs on all federal and state highways in the Turkey, Boone and Floyd river basins. More than 60 locations received signs, including creeks and river tributaries, like the Little Turkey River, that had not been signed before.

"We hope that by increasing Iowans' awareness of the waters they travel over, they can better understand issues affecting local water quality and what residents can do to improve conditions," Hopkins says.

In western Iowa, John Klein has led the charge to help draw attention to local streams. While it's now a volunteer effort for the retired former Missouri and Mississippi Divide Resource Conservation and Development NRCS coordinator, it all began on the job back in 2010.

"We wanted, naturally enough, people to know the significance of their watersheds, and their streams. The signs give rural areas a name—that bridge with signs becomes a landmark, and having that area identification is important to rural people and how they develop personal concern about their watershed," says Klein. "It also explains the greater geologic history of glaciers that shaped their lands. It helped explain why landforms were so different east and north of Carroll than south and west, where the glaciers stopped."

Thanks to his efforts, and the work of many partner groups, 83 stream crossings in Audubon, Guthrie, Carroll, Pottawattamie and Clarke counties now boast creek signs, with more planned.

"Each sign up is a victory for conservation," says Klein. "It is great environmental education that lasts for years, hopefully long past my life. It makes people better understand their place in the watershed and natural landscape. I am hoping that with the signs installed, that it will make the work of naturalists, park rangers and science teachers easier in the future when they explain the importance of watershed level management."

CREEK RESTORATIONS

**DRY RUN CREEK, CEDAR FALLS
AND BEE BRANCH CREEK, DUBUQUE**

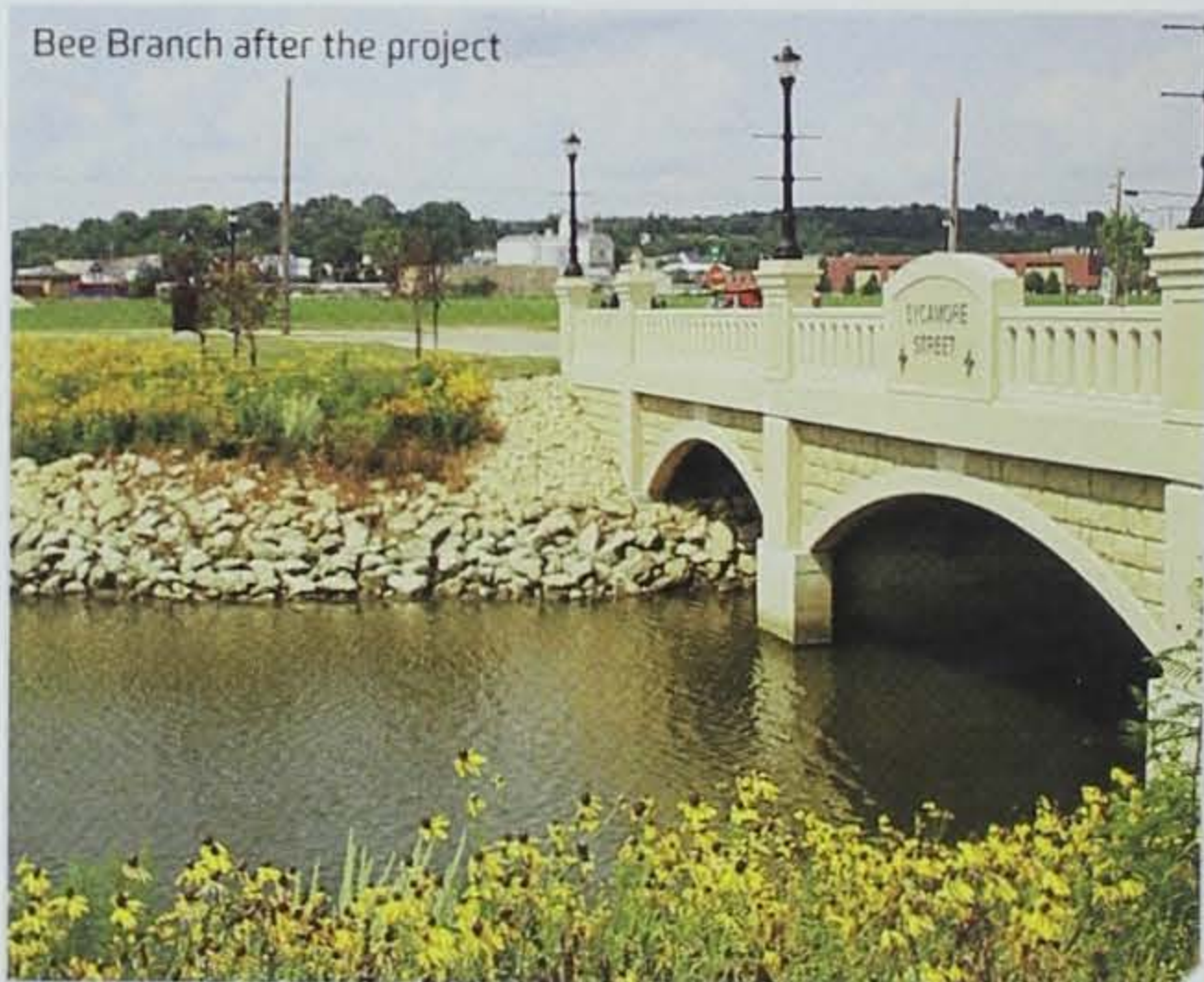
Two restoration projects have revamped miles of forgotten waterways in eastern and central Iowa into veritable community amenities.

In Cedar Falls, Dry Run Creek used to be a steep-sided, regularly-flooded, muddy stream running through the University of Northern Iowa campus. In 2002 it was designated an impaired water body, with levels of aquatic life so low and bacteria levels so high it merited federal grant funds for improvement. These and funds contributed by the local community and university led to a beautiful restoration starting in 2004, turning sharp, muddy banks into gentle slopes lined with native vegetation. Other measures were implemented to soak up runoff and slow down the rate at which water entered the stream, including installation of permeable pavers, rain gardens, bioretention cells, etc. These practices prevent 100 tons of sediment runoff from reaching Dry Run Creek annually, and the university has expressed interest in restorations along more of the creek.

"We haven't done much river restoration in the state, but Dry Run Creek has been one of the earliest successes," says former DNR worker Mary Skopec. "The goal is to simultaneously beautify waterways and make them more biologically functional, and this is a great example of that honest-to-goodness natural restoration we hope for."

In Dubuque, Bee Branch Creek used to be a mile-long buried storm sewer that hid water flow under the street and flooded regularly after heavy rains. The city decided that had to change after a particularly bad flood in 1999, which forced area residents to evacuate shelter in the midst of a tornado warning. After extensive consideration, a citizen advisory committee recommended "daylighting" the creek in 2004. This process would bring the stream to a more natural, uncovered state surrounded by floodplain, and hopefully alleviate the pollution and extensive damages that came with past floods.

The restoration's landscape design developed over several years, and construction on the southern portion was completed in 2011. Construction on the northern section is in progress, and expected to conclude in 2017. The daylighting process makes the once-underground waterway accessible, and a multiuse trail is planned to run alongside the length of the creek. In the completed lower section, a 2014 fish assessment found 14 native species of fish, indicating high quality for a waterway so new.



Bee Branch after the project

PHOTO OF BEE BRANCH CREEK COURTESY CITY OF DUBUQUE; SIGN PHOTO COURTESY JOHN KLEIN

ADOPTING A HIGHWAY JUST GOT EASIER

2016 Adopt-A-Highway

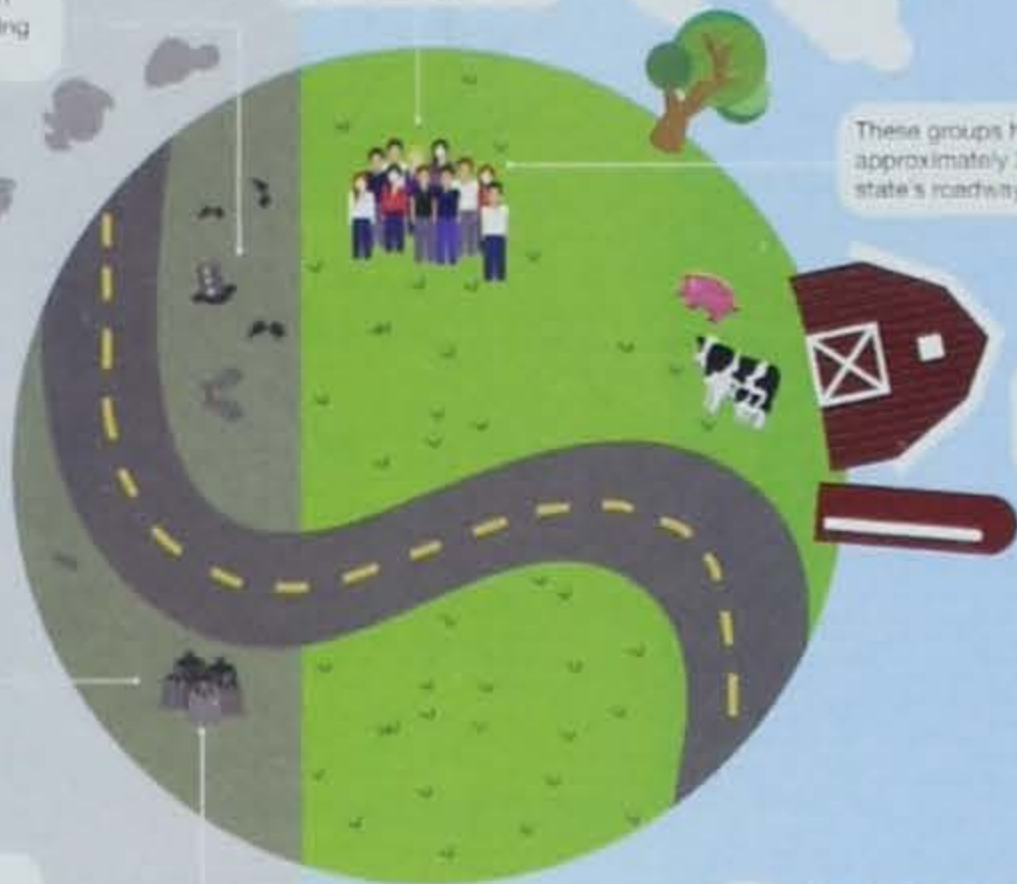
Iowa DOT employees spent an additional 210,318 hours picking up litter from the roadways.

An average of 1,247 groups participate in Iowa's Adopt-A-Highway program each year.

These groups help keep approximately 27% of the state's roadways litter-free.

Iowa DOT employees spent 1,073 hours disposing of trash picked up by Adopt-A-Highway volunteers.

In 2016, volunteers collected approximately 1,972 bags of litter.



The end of winter is in sight and thoughts of spring cleaning are on the minds of the Iowa Department of Transportation. The agency is revamping its popular Adopt-A-Highway program to make it even easier for individuals or groups to help keep Iowa roadsides beautiful.

Developed decades ago, the AAH program was an innovative way to get community groups involved in cleaning Iowa's roadsides. The successful program provides a meaningful public service project for groups, families and individuals across Iowa, while reducing the amount of Iowa DOT staff time needed for litter pick up, allowing them time to complete other maintenance tasks.

A new online system streamlines the AAH sign-up process. Anyone interested in seeing which roadsides are available for adoption can simply go to www.iowadot.gov and search for Adopt a Highway. The easy-to-follow web site will guide you through the sign-up process.

What to expect after you sign up

You can participate in a variety of activities including litter removal and planting and/or maintenance of trees, shrubs, wildflowers and native grasses on your adopted stretch of roadway. AAH activities reduce litter along highways, enhance the environment, beautify roadsides and build community support for anti-litter and highway beautification programs. Litter removal is automatically included in every Adopt-A-Highway sponsorship, even if the main project may be landscaping or another activity. New ideas on how to beautify Iowa's roadsides are encouraged.

Groups or individuals adopting highway sections are responsible for that roadside for a minimum of two years. Litter removal must be done at least twice a year or as necessary to keep the area clean. Litter pickup on primary roads must include both sides of the highway. Interstate highway litter pickup will be on one side of the highway.

A minimum adoption distance is 0.5 mile for special project work. However, adoption of at least 2 miles is required for litter pickup. Sponsors must be willing to separate litter according to the requirements of the landfill used by the local Iowa DOT maintenance garage. The sponsor may retain any recyclables and take them to a recycler of the sponsor's choice. Signs are erected by the Iowa DOT at no cost to the sponsor to recognize the adopting groups or individuals. The sign features our state flower, the wild rose.

Benefits to our environment

Caring for roadsides not only makes them more attractive to the traveling public, but also makes major improvements in our environment. Grassy roadsides provide habitat for ground nesting birds, such as pheasants, quail, meadowlarks, and many other songbirds. Roadsides provide excellent habitat for other wildlife. Many roadside plantings provide a source of food for wildlife.

Over the last 30 years the Iowa DOT has planted millions of trees, shrubs and wildflowers to better protect our environment and add to the enjoyment of those who travel in Iowa. Litter is a blight on those beautiful roadsides. We need your help to keep Iowa beautiful.



Cooper's Hawk

Cooper's hawks (*Accipiter cooperii*) are one of Iowa's three accipiter species. (*Accipiter* is Latin for hawk, and these species are primarily woodland raptors.) The Cooper's hawk primarily dines on other birds. It's the most widespread accipiter on the continent, with a range seasonally stretching from Panama to the southern tier of Canadian provinces.



BODY DOUBLE

Cooper's hawks are nearly identical to sharp-shinned hawks. Even experienced birders waffle on identifying them at a glance. Adults of both are primarily blue-gray from the back with rufous barring underneath and red eyes. In flight, Cooper's tails are more rounded than sharp-shinned hawks, and Cooper's heads appear larger. When perched, look for the Cooper's blocky head, or the dark beret-type marking on their heads—they have a lighter section at the nape of their necks that sharp-shinned lack. Juveniles of both have similar plumage patterns, but Cooper's belly markings are darker and their tails are more barred.

DANGEROUS AERIAL AMBUSH

To catch small- to medium-sized birds, Cooper's hawks perch and wait or prowl forest edges. Relatively long tails and short wings allow them to dodge tree trunks and limbs during chase, but careening through forests at nearly 60 mph is risky business. A study of 300-plus hawk skeletons found 23 percent with healed chest fractures, presumably from flying into trees.

COMPRESSION KILL

Cooper's hawks can't dispatch prey quickly because they lack a beak notch, or tomial tooth, to separate prey's vertebrae. Instead, they squeeze prey in their sharp talons or hold and drown prey underwater. They eat about 12 percent of their weight daily to sustain their high metabolic demands. Preferring meals of pigeons, robins, doves and jays, they also eat small rodents like chipmunks—even amphibians, fish or small reptiles. They frequent bird feeders for an easy catch and will chase ground-dwelling mammals on foot. Adapting well to urban life, they dart between buildings to take pigeons and doves. (Nestlings can contract parasitic diseases from too much dove in their diet.)

EARLY TRIALS AGAINST MORTALITY


After hatching, nestlings face the most perilous year of life. Despite seven weeks of parental care, they may be eaten by a variety of predators (including other Cooper's hawks). They may fall from the nest or starve to death if they cannot quickly learn to fend for themselves. Like many raptors, 70 to 80 percent perish before reaching adulthood and sexual maturity at 2 years old.

CAVORTING WITH CANNIBALS

Males have a dangerous breeding season as approaching a female could get them eaten. (Females are a third larger than males.) To attract a mate, males display submissive behavior—flying in large, slow arcs until his love interest calls out reassurance before coming closer. Males construct a 2-foot wide, 8-inch deep nest. The pair are monogamous for the season. Females lay two to six eggs and spend 30 days incubating as the male hunts.

NO DDT FOR ME

Numbers plummeted in the mid-1900s due to DDT. This toxic pesticide caused abnormally thin egg shells—likely to break under the weight of incubating females.



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ABOUT THIS PHOTO

A pasque flower blooms at Preparation Canyon State Park, west of Moorehead in the Loess Hills of Monona County. These hardy plants are among spring's earliest wildflowers to bloom.

PHOTO BY TY SMEDES

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