

IOWA CONSERVATIONIST

VOLUME 2

SEPTEMBER 15, 1943

NUMBER 9

Teach Your Boy And Girl the Use Of Firearms

By WALTER DICK
Dubuque, Iowa

Author's Note: Readers of this article are reminded that under the present war conditions ammunition is available for civilian marksmanship training mainly through the agency of well-equipped supervising organizations. Existing rifle clubs, especially those affiliated with the National Rifle Association of America, are devoting much of their effort to the training of defense guards and to preliminary marksmanship instruction for young men who are likely soon to enter the armed forces and who wish to take advantage of opportunities offered by rifle clubs to obtain preliminary marksmanship training.

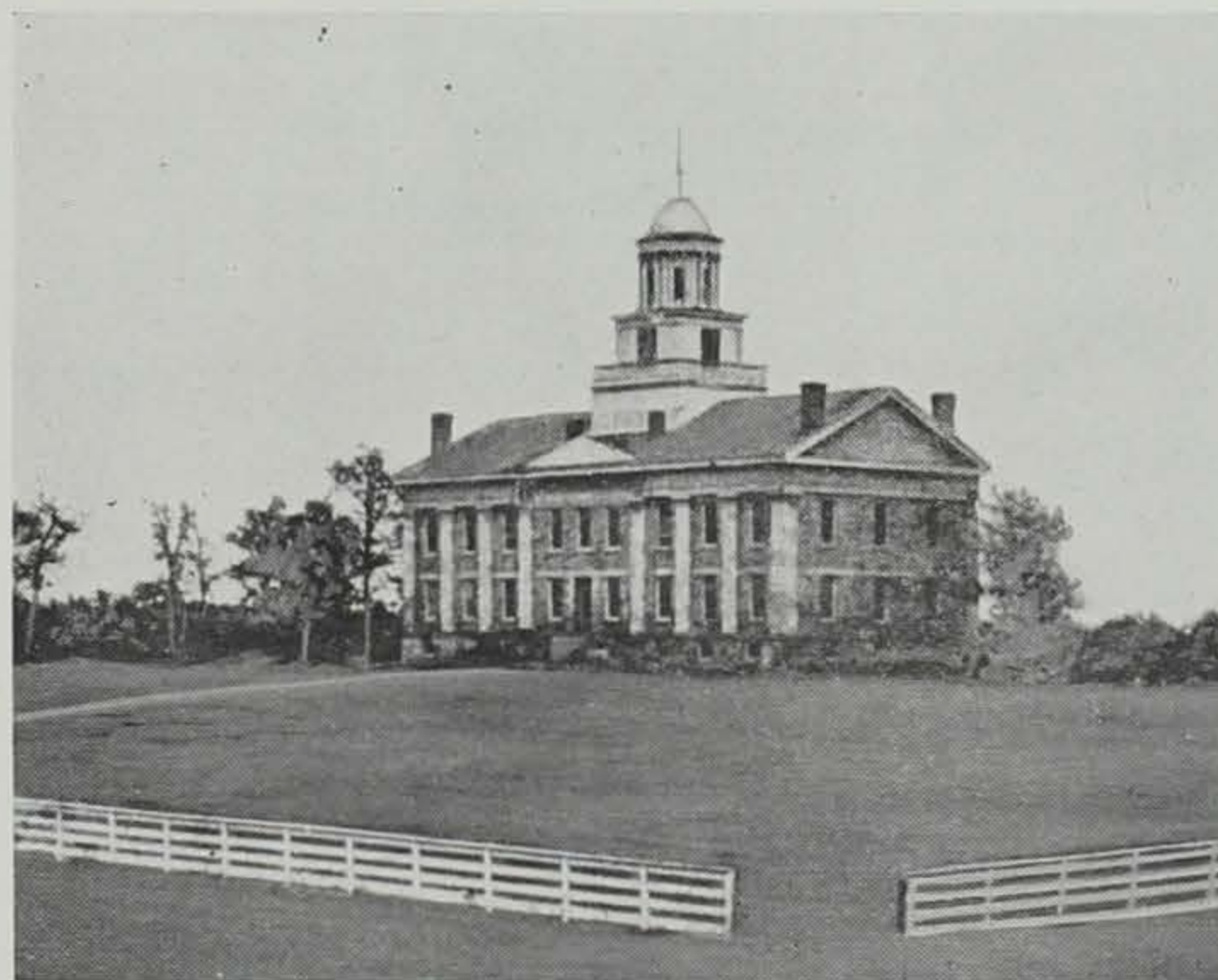
The history of our country inspires in the minds of our youth a desire to emulate the feats credited to our hero pioneers. Men like Daniel Boone, Kit Carson, Davy Crockett, and hosts of other empire builders have left their indelible marks on the pages of the history of our fight for "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness", the same basic objectives for which our people are fighting and working today.

Many of the tales of wonderful marksmanship which were credited to the early Indian fighters, and to some of the more modern figures such as "Wild Bill" Hickok and "Buffalo Bill" Cody, have grown to be almost legendary. The effectiveness of these stories, however, has increased rather than diminished as the legendary characteristics of the tales have grown. We cannot doubt that the marksmanship of these men was so far superior to others of their time that such skill contributed materially toward setting them apart as leaders or otherwise distinguished them from their contemporaries.

In playing "cowboys and Indians", "cops and robbers", or G-men and spies", a boy's initial

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Duck Hunters to Get Going 20 Days Earlier--Season Opens Sept. 25



Photo, State Dept. of History and Archives.

Show above is the old state capitol building at Iowa City, where the uncertain and prolonged birth of wildlife conservation law in Iowa was enacted.

Stiles Gives Brief History of Iowa Wildlife Legislation

By BRUCE F. STILES
Chief, Division Fish and Game

1838

This fertile piece of prairie land on which we live officially became Iowa territory in 1838. The May census of that year revealed a population of 22,859 hardy pioneers.

As a territory Iowa apparently gave no thought to fish and game legislation. After going through the old territorial laws, I find no reference to fish or game. Game and fish were abundant and this small popula-

tion found no need for restrictive legislation.

1846—First G. A.

Iowa was admitted to the Union as a State on December 28, 1846.

1852—Fourth G. A.

The first mention of wildlife on the floor of the Iowa Assembly was in 1852 when a bill was introduced to provide for a bounty on wolves. The bill was treated lightly, and a great deal of laughter was provoked on the Assembly floor during the de-

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Waterfowl May Be Held Longer After Season Ends

For several years large numbers of Iowa duck hunters have advocated an earlier duck season, and this year, at the request of the State Conservation Commission, the Fish and Wildlife Service has granted their appeal and has placed Iowa in the northern zone.

The 1943 season opens at 30 minutes before sunrise September 25 instead of October 15 at sunrise. This is 20 days earlier in the season that legal shooting may commence and 30 minutes earlier in the morning. Daily shooting must stop at sunset as in the past, and the season closes at sunset December 3.

In another liberalization the federal government has extended the time migratory birds legally taken may be held after the close of the season. Sportsmen this year may hold migratory waterfowl 45 days after the close of the season instead of 30 days as in the past.

Except for these changes, regulations governing duck hunting in Iowa are much the same as last year. The use of live decoys is still prohibited.

Because of certain restrictions governing the materials that could be used in building blinds that were in effect a number of years ago, many hunters are now confused as to what materials may be used. The answer is "anything".

A blind may be portable or stationary in the water or on shore,

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Iowa Conservationist

Published Monthly by
THE IOWA STATE CONSERVATION
COMMISSION

10th & Mulberry—Des Moines, Iowa
JAMES R. HARLAN, Editor
F. T. SCHWOB, Director
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CIRCULATION THIS ISSUE - 21,018
Subscription Rate - 40c per year

Subscriptions received at Conservation
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Wildlife Legislation

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bate. The bill was defeated.
1856—Sixth G. A.

Iowa had already existed as a state for more than 10 years before any restrictions were placed on the taking of game in this state. The thought apparently originated in the fertile brain of Senator Charles Foster of Washington, Iowa, who in the Sixth General Assembly introduced Senate File 58, An Act to Protect Game. This prohibited the killing, trapping or ensnaring of any deer, elk, fawn, wild turkey, prairie hen or chicken, between February 1 and July 15, except on one's own property. The bill was considered a little too stringent by some, and an amendment was introduced adding "or for one's own personal use". The amendment was defeated; the bill passed and was signed by the Governor on January 28, 1857. It was published and became a law on February 17, 1857.

1858—Seventh G. A.

In this session of the legisla-



Photo, State Dept. of History and Archives.

Major John F. Lacey, of Oskaloosa, member of the Thirteenth General Assembly in 1870 and later a member of Congress from Iowa. Major Lacey was one of America's truly great conservationists, and author of the act bearing his name which placed interstate shipments of game under federal control.

ture an excellent bill was introduced to provide for a comprehensive survey of the birds and animals of the state. The bill received little support and was overwhelmingly defeated.

From the Journal of the Senate for that year on pp. 170, 247, I find that Senate File 75 was introduced by Senator Davis of Polk County, "A bill for an act to provide an exploration of the ornithology and zoology of the State of Iowa". An appropriation of \$2,200.00 was asked for this bill. It was referred to the Ways and Means Committee, who returned it with the recommendation that the appropriation be reduced to \$1,000.00.

The records show that this bill came up on the floor for discussion at 1:00 o'clock in the morning of March 23, 1858. At that time Mr. Loughbridge moved to take from the table Senate File 75. He also moved to increase the appropriation to \$5,000.00.

The move to increase the appropriation provoked a lot of merriment, and not to be outdone Senator Cook moved to increase the appropriation to \$10,000.00. This provoked further laughter and inspired Senator Patterson to secure the floor and move as follows: "The person authorized to carry out the provisions of this act be required to catch the Giascticutus, the Sandhill Crane, the Katydid and the large mosquito." By this means the bill was ridiculed out of existence, and Loughbridge moved that further consideration of the bill be indefinitely postponed.

This was probably in keeping with public sentiment of the time, but an opportunity was here lost that undoubtedly would have advanced the conservation of our wildlife resources in Iowa by many decades.

1862—Ninth G. A.

This year, 1862, saw the enactment of the first legislation protecting fish in the State of Iowa. A bill passed known as "An Act to Provide for the Preservation of Trout in the Waters of the State". This law provided among other things "That it shall be unlawful for any person to take any trout in any of the waters of the state with any net, seine, weir, basket, spear-grapple, trap or any other device whatsoever, except hook and line". The same bill provided for a closed season on trout "between the 15th day of September and the last day of December in each and every year". To make certain that this law would be respected, the Ninth General Assembly imposed as penalty a fine of \$3.00 for each trout killed, bought, sold or held in possession contrary to law. The bill was approved February 5, 1862.

1864—Tenth G. A.

This session of the legislature received several petitions requesting that fishways be constructed at various dams. No action was taken.

1868—Twelfth G. A.

Previous to this time all matters concerning fish or game had been referred to the Committee on Agriculture in both the House and the Senate. However, on January 25, 1868, the Speaker of the House appointed a special committee on game to serve during the session of the Twelfth General Assembly.

1870—Thirteenth G. A.

The House appointed a special committee on fish. During this session a bill was passed that protected all of the birds of the state except "birds of prey, migratory aquatic birds and food birds", which might be hunted or trapped under the general game laws. Eggs and young were accorded the same protection.

The first legislation in the State of Iowa concerning fish in general was House File 39, which became a law on April 19, 1872. This law prohibited the use of seines, box traps and nets in any waters of the state except those waters termed as bayous. In all other waters fishing was restricted to the use of hooks and lines, spears and snares.

(Continued next month)

Good time to buy that 1943 duck stamp now. The old one expired June 30, you know. Available at post offices and same old price—one buck.

You Can't Tell About Fishermen

(Fill in the blanks with names of birds.)

I stopped in for a ——— with mouthy Bill Cummins last night, and as usual the colored fisherman began to ——— about his fishing ability.

"I'm the ——— of this town," he said as he mopped his ——— with a bandana. "I caught a five-pound smallmouth at the ——— road bridge yesterday."

I pretended not to ——— his yarn, and I soon had him ———. But what started out as a ——— got serious. I explained I was only kidding, but I'll ———, if he didn't ——— on me and start swinging. He would swing, and I ———. It was kind of funny, him ——— like a good fellow in short order. I didn't want to ———, so I gave him a ——— kick in the pants, took hold of his arms, and tied him in a ———. Then I tried to talk some sense into his kinky black head.

"Listen, you old ———, I wasn't ——— you of any glory, and if you continue to act ———, people will think you are a ——— and you'll end up in the ———."

Pretty soon the old ——— got back in a good humor and wanted to sing. I could see then that he was higher than a ———, so I started "Bye Bye, ———," and took off.

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What's the Reaction To This One, Ladies?

The wife of one of the local sportsmen related with great pride to the writer this story of her trot line results. She had accompanied her husband to pull the lines, and the enthusiasm that she displayed was enviable. It must be grand to have a wife that is sympathetic to outdoor sports, especially when the husband is steeped in it. In fact I think any dyed-in-the-wool fisherman or hunter who contemplates taking a wife ought to make diligent inquiry as to her sportmindedness before he marries her. She ought to possess a few cardinal virtues of the woods and stream, as for example: she should delight in digging worms; it should please her equally to scale fish or to clean ducks; she should rejoice in the privilege of arising long before dawn to pack a hunter's lunch and to prepare a breakfast; the depositing of muddy boots or soiled garments on her living room floor should give her no consternation; and she should expect to accompany her husband only on rare occasions. What do you say, ladies? —Bellevue Leader.



Kegster & Tribune Photo.

If your boy or girl has a desire to shoot, by all means provide him or her with an opportunity to gratify that desire under the supervision of a competent instructor.

Teach Youth to Shoot

(Continued from Page 65)

inspiration to accomplish wonderful performances with firearms is cultivated until, eventually, almost every boy (and many girls) attain a degree of enthusiasm which can be satisfied only by possession of a real rifle and an opportunity to use it.

At this stage the child is quite likely to encounter the well-intentioned opposition of at least one of his or her parents, because of the supposedly great danger associated with firearms.

It is not denied that a firearm can be a dangerous implement when in the hands of an individual who is unskilled in its safe and proper use and who is unsupervised in trying to learn how to use it. When in untrained hands a firearm can be extremely dangerous to the user as well as to others. Yet, in the hands of any competent individual, properly trained in its care and use, a rifle, shotgun, pistol or revolver in good mechanical condition is not dangerous, but can be an important factor in the maintenance of law and order and in national defense.

Experience has shown that the pursuit of marksmanship as a sport can be an extremely weighty contribution toward the development and attainment of enviable attributes of character and personality. With no thought of casting reflections upon any form of sport, I know of no other which more effectively promotes the development of clean sportsmanship, tends to develop muscular co-ordination, steady nerves, and a cool mind. I am disposed to go further to say that I have some evidence which tends to indicate that the judicious practice of marksmanship may have the effect of maintaining the marksman's eyesight at a high standard.

It is thus shown that there is a considerable merit in encouraging the pursuit of marksmanship as a sport, not alone for pleasure, but also for other benefits which the shooter may and almost certainly will derive, especially if instruction and practice are conducted properly.

Most of us remember the amusing rhyme of the fond parent's instruction to the child who wished to go swimming, "Hang your clothes on a hickory limb, but don't go near the water." A similar attitude regarding the handling and use of a firearm will just as surely prevent a boy or girl acquiring a knowledge of those fundamentals which can be learned only by handling and using a firearm. It is almost certain that every boy or girl who has the least bit of interest in shooting will at some time have occasion to "go hunting" with another child who has a ".22". Like as not, the owner of the ".22" may have had little or no instruction which would instill a good conception of firearms safety principles.

The occurrence of such an opportunity cannot be prevented or circumvented by a cautious parent depriving his or her child of the privilege of learning how to be safe with a firearm. Denying to an individual an opportunity to learn the safe handling of firearms is just as dangerous to that individual as assuming that "he is old enough" and placing a rifle and cartridges in his hands with no more instruction than "don't point your gun at anybody".

Ordinarily, the self-taught rifleman neither acquires the true sense of "firearms safety" nor does he attain the peak of his potential efficiency, because he has, very likely, acquired some inefficient shooting habits, and some which may be positively dangerous.

There is only one practical way to safeguard a child against having a firearms accident, and that is to provide him with training and experience, under competent instruction and supervision. He will then understand the capabilities of firearms when properly used and will have a wholesome respect for the dangers involved when firearms are in careless or unskilled hands. If your boy or girl has a desire to shoot, by all means provide him or her with an opportunity to gratify that desire under the supervision of a competent instructor.

It would be folly to attempt to provide a course of instruction in gun handling and marksmanship in the space which is available for this article, and so only an outline of **some** of the principles involved will be attempted.

The rules of SAFETY must always be considered first. They are alike, in virtually all details, for rifle, shotgun or handgun. One of the best lists of firearms safety rules is the set of 10 which a Boy Scout is required to know, understand, and pledge himself to observe as a portion of the requirements to qualify for the Boy Scout Marksmanship Merit Badge.

The safety practices are not readily learned by memorizing, but to borrow another expression from Scouting, we can best "learn by doing". Safety habits with all types of firearms can be taught with a .22 caliber, rim-fire rifle, in connection with the instructions in sighting and trigger squeeze.

Trigger squeeze and sighting can be learned without firing a single cartridge, but these "dry-firing" practices must be conducted just as carefully and seriously as if the shooter's own life were at stake upon the success of every one of his "dry shots". Trigger squeeze is extremely important because it eliminates pulling or jerking the trigger and thereby reduces the shooter's tendency to disturb the aim when discharging the firearm. If at all possible, the beginner should have the benefit of "triangulation practice", which is the most effective way in which to learn to

sight a rifle properly. It will give a student an excellent index to the degree of precision marksmanship which he may hope to attain, disregarding the limitations of accuracy which may exist in the rifle or ammunition.

Mastery of sighting and trigger squeeze in each of the several shooting positions before actually shooting helps greatly in effecting economy in ammunition expenditure. This is an especially important consideration at the present time because of shortage of ammunition supplies.

The first actual shooting with a rifle should be conducted in the prone position because it is the steadiest. It minimizes the shooter's movements and permits him to apply his attention more carefully to "aiming and squeezing". In addition to the greater steadiness which it affords, that position has the added military advantage that the soldier using it has reduced himself to the smallest possible mark for the enemy.

The sitting position, when mastered, is almost as steady as prone. Kneeling is one of the quickest positions to assume to obtain a greater measure of steadiness than is possible while standing. Kneeling and sitting positions often can be taken where prone is out of the question.

Although it is the least steady, standing is also an important position for the soldier or the hunter. A large amount of practice should be taken in this position after the necessary fundamentals of good marksmanship are learned. Its greatest value lies in the fact that one's opportunity to take a quick shot at game is most likely to appear while one is standing or walking.

Promiscuous shooting at tin cans, bottle caps, etc., as a part of the initial training program, under the notion that it is "more practical" than shooting at stationary paper targets is not approved. Shooting at such marks in safe surroundings has its merit and is more or less in the nature of "post graduate" training, but

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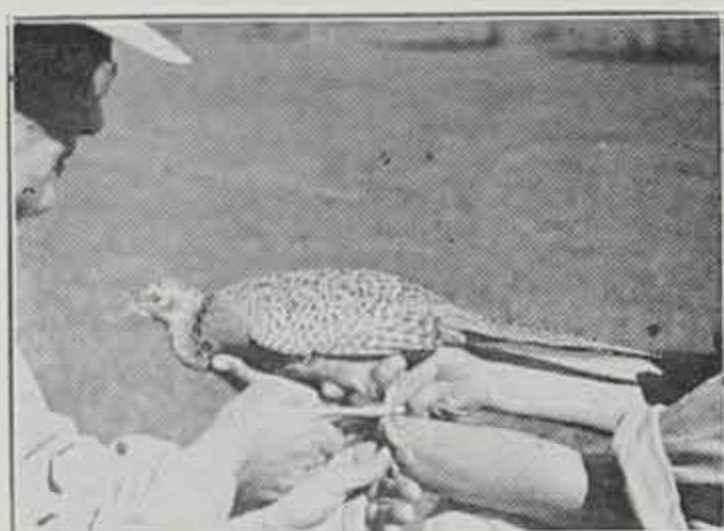
WARDENS' TALES

SHOP TALK FROM THE FIELD

Conservation Officer Frank Tellier, in company with Dr. George Hendrickson of Iowa State College, was investigating spring pheasant damage in Winnebago County. While checking in the field in which they found the greatest damage to seed corn, they heard the farmer call out and then saw him hurrying toward them. The farmer carried under his arm a hen pheasant which he had caught alive on her nest.

"Feel here," he said, indicating the frightened bird's crop, "That is corn." It was suggested that the bird's crop and gizzard be opened and examined.

"Oh, no, you don't," said the farmer, "You can't kill her. She is a nice bird. That corn is from



The frightened little hen was leg-banded and allowed to return to her nest.

my crib. She wouldn't eat seed corn. Let her go so she can go back to her nest."

—WT—

Conservation Officer Ken Madden was checking licenses and came upon a man and two boys, five and 12. After looking at the license, the officer inquired, "How is fishing?"

The man replied, "They were all too short to keep."

The youngest contradicted with, "Oh, no, that one back there in the grass is long enough."

As the officer made out a summons for taking bass out of season, the oldest lad said, "See, Dad, I told you the almanac said it was a bad day to fish."

—WT—

Reverend Laurence Nelson of Bellevue tells this one on Conservation Officer Garfield Harker of Sabula.

Harker had a tough case coming up and was approached by a close friend who jubilantly announced a new arrival in his home. Enthusiastically he remarked, "And he weighs seven pounds."

Wrapped up in his own thoughts, Harker replied automatically, "That's fine. That's legal size, sure enough."



A blind may be portable or stationary in the water or on shore, made of rushes, willows, or driftwood. It may be made of wire, tin, or cloth. A hole in the drier ground may be used. In fact, any material, whether natural or manufactured, is legal to use.

Duck Hunters

(Continued from Page 65)

made of rushes, willows, or driftwood. It may be made of wire, tin, or cloth. A hole in the drier ground may be used. In fact, any material, whether natural or manufactured, is legal to use.

Federal blind regulations prohibit the use of sink boxes and the use of livestock to enable the gunner to approach birds.

A sink box or battery is a wooden or tin device designed to allow the shooter to stand or lie below the water level, and to which wooden wings are attached. It is a movable outfit and is towed from shore into open water and anchored.

A barrel or a tank sunk in a duck marsh in which a hunter stands to keep dry or hide is not construed to be a sink box.

A number of the major Iowa lakes are set up as "open water refuges". In these lakes shooting is permitted in the zone between the ordinary high water mark of the lake to a line 50 yards extended out into the water from said high water mark. In case emergent vegetation is present along the shore line, the zone where hunting is permitted would

Ken Madden says they'll do it every time.

A very small boy was fishing from the dock on Lake Manawa while his dad was getting the boat ready to cross the lake and fish for bass. The youngster caught a sunfish and put it on a stringer. In spite of the lad's objections to moving, the older fisherman took the boy across the lake to teach him to catch bass. After several hours of unproductive fishing, they returned. The lad, when he pulled in his stringer, found a 16-inch bass had swallowed the sunfish.

be between the high water mark and 50 yards out into the lake beyond the emergent vegetation. This establishes the center part of these lakes as a place where birds may rest without molestation.

The so-called "center lake refuge" lakes include Storm Lake, Buena Vista County; Clear Lake, Cerro Gordo County; West Okoboji, Silver, Spirit, and Swan Lakes, Dickinson County; Mud, Tuttle, and West Swan Lakes in Emmet County; Rush, Virgin, and Lost Island Lakes, Palo Alto County; Lake Manawa, Pottawattamie County; and Black Hawk Lake in Sac County.

Bag and possession limits briefly are:

On the opening day of the season no person may possess any migratory game birds in excess of the daily bag limit.

Daily bag limit on ducks is 10 in the aggregate of all kinds,

included in such limit not more than one wood duck or more than three singly or in the aggregate of redheads and buffle-heads.

Any person at any one time may possess not more than 20 ducks in the aggregate of all kinds, but not more than one wood duck nor over six of either or both of redheads or buffle-heads.

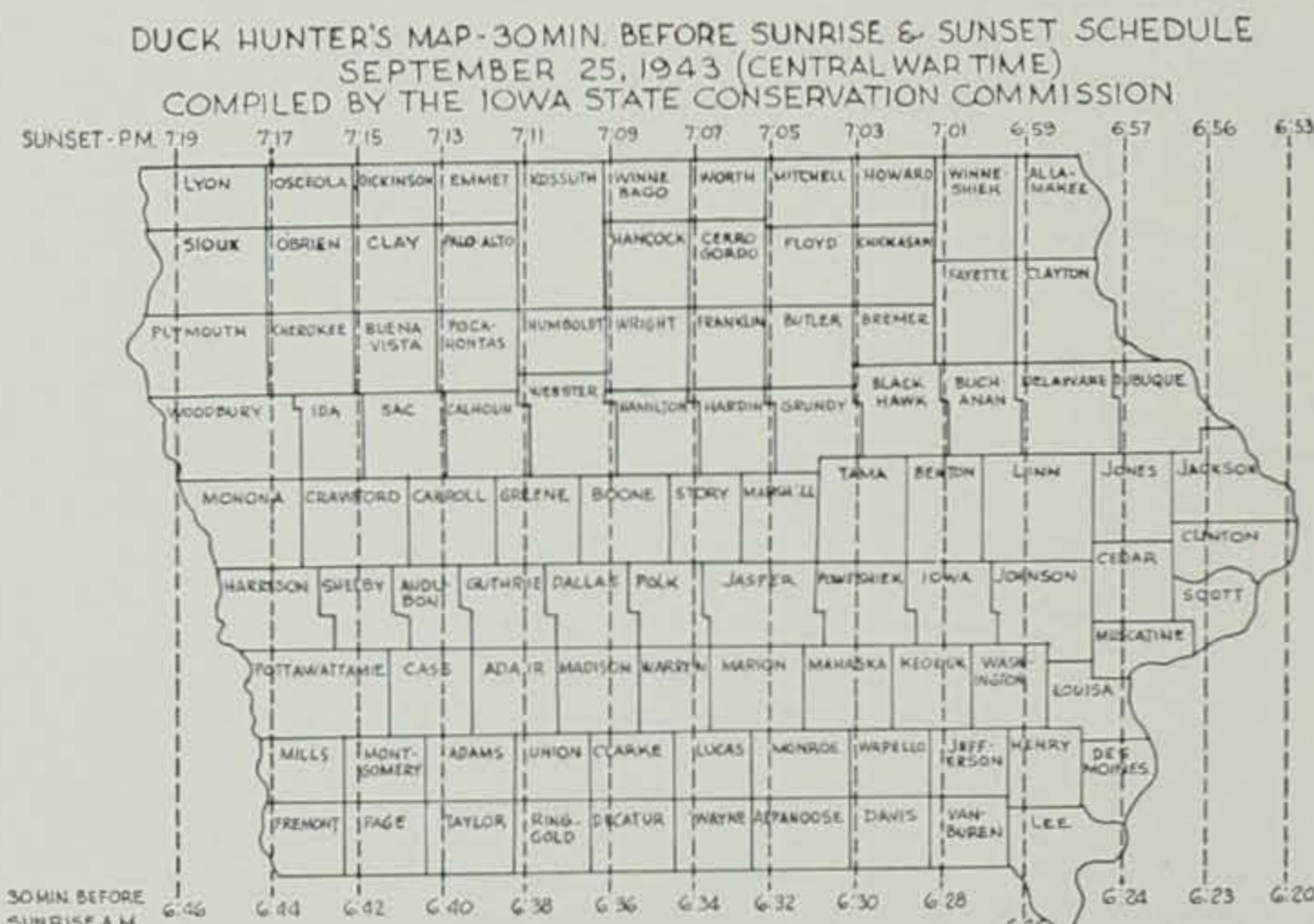
The daily limit on geese and brant is two, but in addition four blue geese may be taken in a day. If blue geese only are taken, the daily bag limit is six. The possession limit on geese other than blue geese is four, but in addition two blue geese are allowed. If only blue geese are taken the possession limit is six of them.

The bag limit for coot is 25 per day, and 25 is the possession limit.

With the earlier opening season, Iowa lakes will be literally teeming with coot. It has been a very bad practice in the past for hunters to wantonly "murder" the coot for the first few days of the open season, more often than not allowing these birds to lie in windrows around the marshes.

This year hunters are encouraged to shoot coot, but to utilize the birds for food. Like the carp, the coot has had a bad name in Iowa. They are, however, delicious to eat, and it is not at all rare to find a hunter in the know who will exchange bird for bird some of the puddle ducks for coot.

One other thing about wanton coot shooting—and, as for that matter, long range shooting at any game—is the ammunition situation. In spite of the fact that as this is written the government has promised a limited amount of sporting ammunition, it will not begin to supply the number of shells that are ordinarily used in the field. Hunters are cautioned not to waste a single shell.



Teach Youth to Shoot

(Continued from Page 67)

for the beginner it is a definite handicap because only by shooting at well-defined targets can the beginner learn of his mistakes and be guided in overcoming undesirable shooting habits.

If at all possible, it is recommended that instruction and practice shooting be conducted on an established rifle range and under the supervision of a competent instructor in marksmanship, preferably a member of the National Rifle Association or of a club affiliated with that association. In the absence of an established rifle range, any site will serve if it provides an adequate backstop to trap the bullets and also provides such other safeguards as may be necessary against ricochets, and to prevent any person walking unobserved into the field of fire.

Like other sports, marksmanship has certain basic "right" ways, and innumerable "wrong" ways. The wrong ways are easier to acquire at the start, especially if the instruction is inadequate. It sometimes happens that the wrong procedures may indicate a better rate of initial progress or improvement, but the shooter who follows carefully the correct practices soon overtakes and surpasses others in proficiency.

So far these remarks have been primarily in regard to "target practice". This is because by this method the shooter has the best opportunity to learn and master the technicalities. Target shooting by itself will not make a successful hunter of game. A skilled target marksman, however, should attain a far better "batting average" than another individual with less technical skill if both individuals have identical regularity of hunting opportunities.

Contrary to the impression which some conservation enthusiasts have, excellent marksmanship actually works in the interest of conservation of game. The highly skilled marksman-hunter expends less ammunition and makes cleaner kills or cleaner misses, with the result that fewer cripples get away.

In the interest of good sportsmanship, safety, conservation, and the general best interest of the boys and girls who show enthusiasm for firearms, do not deny them the privilege of learning to shoot. BUT when you provide a rifle, shotgun or pistol, do not lose sight of the fact that you thereby impose upon yourself an obligation to your child, your neighbor and yourself. That OBLIGATION is that YOU make certain that your boy or girl receives **thorough training** in the **proper use** of the firearm.



Edwin Robinson, author of "Wildlife" in the Sabula Gazette, one of the many commercial fishermen who smoke carp and buffalo. With the public having found out that smoked rough fish are delicious, "Robbie" is having trouble keeping pace with his orders.

Wildlife

By EDWIN ROBINSON

Sabula Gazette

This department "Conservation Columnists", is to give each month a little sketch of one of the columnists who write outdoor columns regularly for newspapers. These writers are widely known for what they write, and we know that you will enjoy these briefs of what and who they are.

I have been asked to write an article for this column—something about myself and the column entitled "Wildlife" I conduct for our local newspaper, the Sabula Gazette. At this sort of thing I am not very good, but here goes.

About myself there is little to tell. I am 40 years old, married to the finest woman on earth, and the proud dad of seven fine kids, five girls and two boys. I am a commercial fisherman, trapper, hunter, guide and what have you? So much for me.

The column I write for the Sabula Gazette is prompted by my appreciation of the many wild things of field, forest and stream in this good state of Iowa that I have come to know so well. It is my desire to pass along this knowledge for what it may be worth, in the hope that it may in some small way further our important program of conservation.

I have stood amid the desolate stump patches of some of our largest timber belts after the woodsman had passed through with his axe, and the destruction wrought left me sick at heart.

I have seen a century of nature's toil destroyed by a few

strokes of the saw. I have seen the wasted monarchs of the forest lie dead and rotting upon the earth from which they sprang, and with them lay the homes of the wood duck, the squirrel, raccoon, opossum, wild bee and songbirds.

I have seen our timber laid waste under the guise of flood control, our fur-producing and migratory bird-producing areas drained and plowed up, and our streams polluted with sewage until the fish died or were rendered unfit for food.

All of these things have I witnessed in my 40 years of life, and all of them are tragic to every American who loves the outdoors, and who among us does not?

Being a person who exploits wildlife for a livelihood, I perhaps, more than most people, fully realize that the surplus, and only the surplus, can be taken from year to year if we would maintain a proper balance in the wildlife of our great country. This is why I enjoy writing this column which I choose to call "Wildlife".

We, the people of Iowa, are fortunate in having in the employment of our Conservation Commission as fine a group of public servants as may be found anywhere in the country. These men, both in the field and in the administrative office, are competent and sincere in the discharge of their duties, and in the past decade great strides have been made in Iowa in the field of conservation through their efforts. Few states, if any, can boast of closer cooperation between sportsmen and their fish and game commission.

Although I do not always see eye to eye with the commission,

Wartime Fishing

Imagine a conference on procurement in Washington a few days after Pearl Harbor and someone saying, "What kind of fishing tackle shall we give our fighting men?"

Yes, American armed forces have now adopted, after months of study, a fishing kit weighing three pounds that will be standard equipment on all rubber lifeboats, and which unquestionably will save many lives. It is a well-thought-out outfit that will catch fish in salt water anywhere. In waterproof printed instructions with the kit, the government points out that one cannot die of hunger or thirst as long as fresh fish can be obtained.

What the armed services failed to provide at the outset of the war, man's ingenuity did. Nothing has been more impressive in the sagas of men who have traveled thousands of miles in open rubber boats than the inventiveness by which they have contrived to get fish from the sea. The crudest kind of makeshifts seemed to turn the trick.

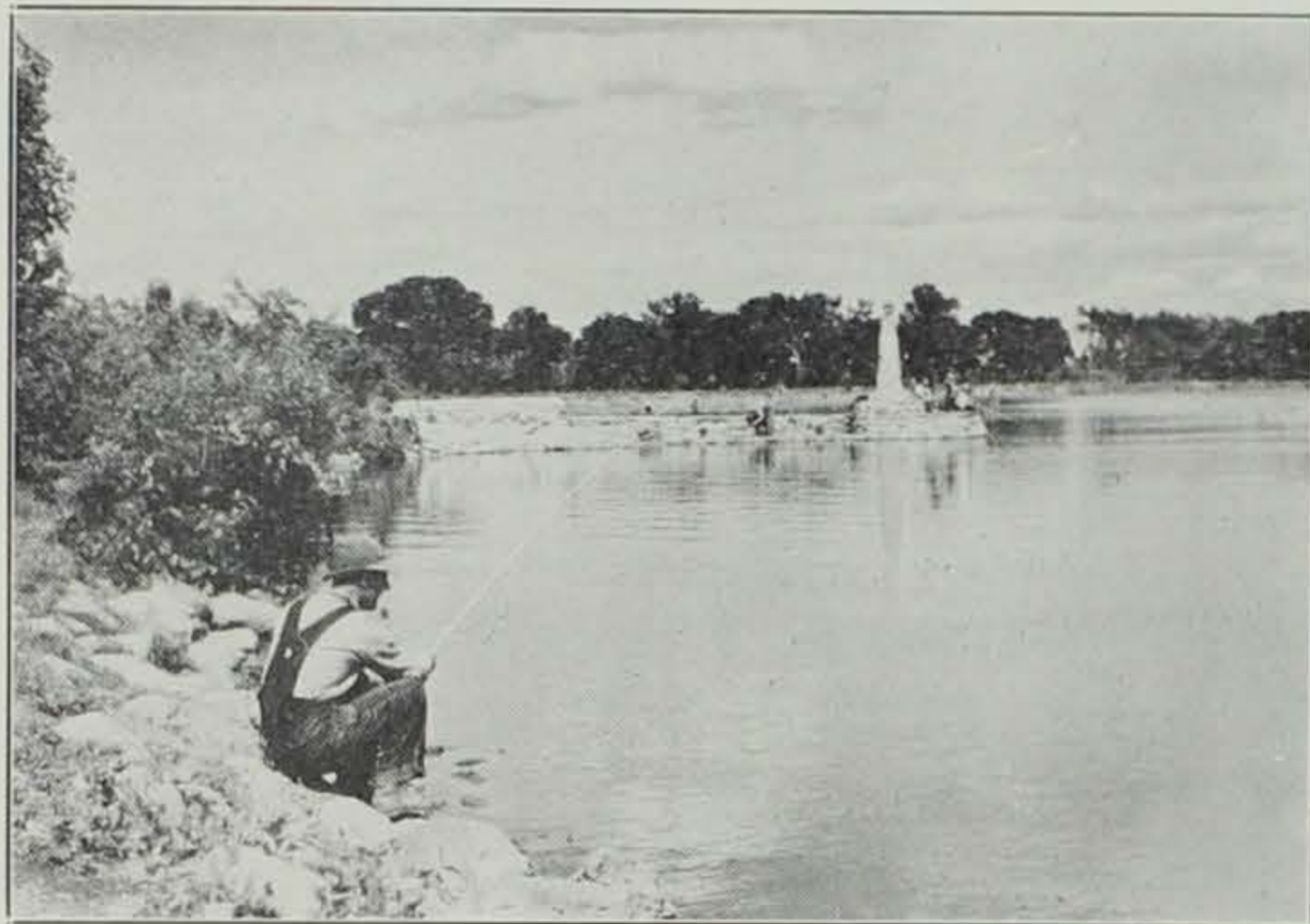
Rickenbacker used his hat as a dip net. He wrung a gull's neck and used the gull for both food and bait. Men have speared small sharks with jackknives. The rubber boat in which an air corps major floated dead into Natal Harbor recently contained a colonel's insignia pin bent into a crude fish hook—and fish bones.

So now the need for these crude contrivances is past. But the future may bring many thrilling tales of battles with denizens of the deep beginning, "Fishing from a rubber boat."—Clinton Herald.

The marsh hawk's habitat is not limited to marshes as the name would indicate. It is commonly found on the Middle Western prairies.

and I do reserve the right at all times to criticize, I firmly believe that our fish and game commission is doing a splendid job, and I know that the going is not always smooth. And to give credit where credit is due, I must also say that the program of education being conducted by many of the enforcement officers has done and is doing more to further the cause of conservation among our young people than the old-fashioned, hard-boiled tactics would ever have accomplished.

We all know that to teach an illiterate adult to read and write is indeed near an impossibility. In teaching conservation of our natural resources the same principle applies. Take the youth and teach him the gospel of outdoors, which is "Take only the surplus", and you have gone a long way toward establishing a conservation-minded citizen.



Fishing keeps men fit—and fit men build good bombers

: * * * * *

The man you see here is a loyal American. He is the kind of man who will work six gruelling days a week helping us to build the big, sleek bombers that will carry bad news to Tokyo and Berlin. Being a normal man, he gets tired, for work in a modern war plant is a high-speed proposition. Some relaxation and recreation are vitally important.

If I could have my way, every man and woman on the production line would spend every seventh day in the outdoors, hunting or fishing preferably, but out in the open where they can best restore their mental and bodily energies. Much of the present-day absenteeism in war - production plants is directly due to a failure of these energies, brought on by too many hours and too many days spent on the job without the proper kind of rest. Actually, there is a very small amount of deliberate, willful absenteeism in our war production.

If, however, men on the production line are allowed to work for many days at a stretch, they finally reach a point where neither mind nor body will function properly, and as a result we can expect both mistakes and accidents, brought on by reflexes which have been slowed up by fatigue. Such men must then take time off, and only too often they spend this time in places of amusement where not only is the air far from pure, but where overindulgence is brought on by the very exhaustion of their minds and bodies. As a result, when their day of liberty is over, they are unfit to return to the job. Not only do they fail to do a full job of work on the production line, but they actually become menaces to their fellow workmen and to the war effort. How much better it would be if these men would get out into the open country, in the sunlight and pure air, in the quiet of hills and streams and lakes!

Those of us who know and love

You Can't Tell About Fishermen

I stopped in for a CHAT with mouthy Bill Cummins last night, and as usual the colored fisherman began to CROW about his fishing ability.

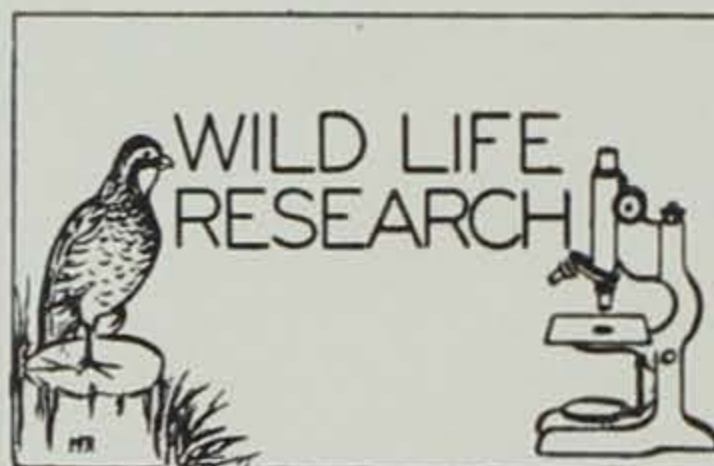
"I'm the KINGFISHER of this town," he said as he mopped his BALDPATE with a bandana. "I caught a five-pound smallmouth at the RAILroad bridge yesterday."

I pretended not to SWALLOW his yarn, and I soon had him RAVEN. But what started out as a LARK got serious. I explained I was only kidding, but I'll SWAN, if he didn't TERN on me and start swinging. He would swing, and I WOOD DUCK. It was kind of funny, his PUFFIN like a good fellow in short order. I didn't want to WHIP-POORWILL, so I gave him a SWIFT kick in the pants, took hold of his arms, and tied him in a KNOT. Then I tried to talk some sense into his kinky black head.

"Listen, you old LOON, I wasn't ROBIN you of any glory, and if you continue to act CUCKOO, people will think you are a BOOBY and you'll end up in the NUTHATCH."

Pretty soon the old COOT got back in a good humor and wanted to sing. I could see then that he was higher than a KITE, so I started, "Bye Bye, BLACKBIRD," and took off.

our outdoor America are well aware of the mental and physical benefits of fishing and hunting, the easing of taut nerves and the healthy tiredness after a day in the open air. Fishing is one of the things that keep men fit—and fit men build good bombers!—Glenn L. Martin, Field and Stream magazine.



By DR. PAUL L. ERRINGTON

Leader, Project No. 498, Ecology of the Muskrat

Mink Predation Upon Muskrats

One of the oldest and bitterest controversies in fur management has related to predation by a valuable fur-bearer, the mink, upon another, the muskrat.

This predation has at the same time such plain and such obscure aspects and is tied up so closely with complex natural phenomena that we need not wonder at the conflicting statements that have been made by honest and intelligent outdoorsmen. Still many things about it are understood imperfectly if at all, but nine years of field studies of mink-muskrat relationships in Iowa now give us a detailed as well as a broad background for conclusions.

The findings from these and other investigations bearing upon the problem may here be summarized.

It was found that muskrats in strange environment, those exposed by drought, and those engaged in much fighting among themselves were especially vulnerable to predation. With a few exceptions, variations in kinds and numbers of wild predators resident had little apparent influence on the total amount of mortality suffered by a local muskrat population. Because of adjustments automatically taking place in both reproductive and loss rates of the muskrats, a very large proportion of the depredations of minks simply did not seem to count. In other words, the predation we have been in the habit of thinking of as a limiting factor in the ecology of the muskrats didn't really do much limiting. Even when entire population groups were annihilated through the agency of mink predation, such predation usually only substituted for some other type of mortality, and in its absence, something else, notably muskrat vs. muskrat strife, tended to bring about a similar end result.

Let us now consider mink predation upon muskrats according to seasons of the year.

Dispersal of mature or maturing muskrats from wintering to breeding quarters in March often meant extensive movements on land and into unfamiliar or hostile environment, which movements were accompanied by varying losses. In April and May,

evidences of mink predation around marshy retreats became conspicuous, but the victims were chiefly the surplus, unmated, battered, wandering male muskrats that are typically lost in many localities, whether through predatory enemies, motor traffic, or other agencies. Conversely, adult muskrats, once they were settled in breeding territories, got along pretty well.

As in late spring, adults established in regular residence suffered, in early summer, slight loss from predatory enemies, including minks, unless forced to try to live under critical disadvantage, for example, during drought emergencies. Some old muskrats demonstrated their ability to stay alive all summer, or longer, in dry marshes intensively hunted over by predators.

Immature muskrats suffered most from minks when drought conditions were acute and when states of overpopulation prevailed in their habitats. It is true that losses of young through the preying of minks may be nothing less than spectacular when circumstances favor easy predation, but the severest losses of young accompanied rather than governed the directions taken by population curves. If populations of young were fundamentally insecure, their losses tended to occur through several agencies, singly or combined. If mink predation was severe, other losses had a tendency to diminish in proportion; lessening of mortality through predation was largely offset by increased killing of young by older muskrats or by increased miscellaneous losses. Within limitations imposed by human exploitation for fur, climate, food, water, and cover, the muskrat's own psychological reactions, instead of its fecundity or the pressure of its enemies, seemed to be the primary regulator of its local rates of increase during the breeding season. Crowded adults not only killed more young but also were known to stop breeding ahead of schedule; but poor success in the rearing of early litters stimulated prolonged, late-season breeding.

The interval between the end of the breeding season in late July and August and the hard

(Continued to Page 72, Column 4)



One of the oldest and bitterest controversies in fur management has related to predation by the number two fur-bearer, the mink, upon the number one fur-bearer, the muskrat.

Superintendent E. B. Speaker Tells of True Pikes of Iowa

By E. B. SPEAKER

Superintendent of Fisheries

In previous issues of the Conservationist you have become acquainted with several prominent families of the fish kingdom. Come now the pikes, three in all, including the diminutive western mud pickerel, the noble northern pike, and the mightiest of all fresh water fishes, the muskellunge.

The mud pickerel once established residence in many of our inland streams, but with the advent of the plow he has been forced to move his family to the more placid waters of the lower Mississippi. Aside from the bent pin of the small boy, the little fish is comparatively safe from human predators since he rarely reaches 13 inches. As a matter of fact, he is not recognized at all under our state laws because of his Tom Thumb proportions and rare occurrence.

The northern, great northern pike, bronze back, pickerel, or jack fish (call it what you may, but the scientist prefers to call it the common pike) has not been so particular in its choice of environs and is widely distributed through the sovereign state of Iowa. Its preference is weedy areas, but it can be reconciled to other waters providing an abundance of food is available to satisfy its enormous appetite. In weedless areas the fishes are less numerous since spawning conditions are not as favorable and favorite foods exist in smaller quantities.

The muskellunge, almost as scarce in Iowa as radium, lures hundreds of our enthusiastic fishermen into the north woods of our neighboring states and Canada. This giant member of the pike family has been reported from Iowa only a few times in the past 50 years. The last authentic record was an old warrior weighing 39 $\frac{3}{4}$ pounds, taken from Clear Lake in Cerro Gordo County in 1939.

The fish plates accompanying this article are used through the courtesy of the Illinois Natural History Survey, and the drawings were furnished by Dr. Louis A. Krumholtz of the University of Michigan.



WESTERN MUD PICKEREL
(*Esox vermiculatus*)

This little pickerel rarely exceeds 13 inches in length. The color is green or greenish gray with dark bars or bands. There are 12 rays in the dorsal fin and

12 rays in the anal fin. It prefers weedy areas over mud bottoms and is found, as far as we know, only in and near the Mississippi River. Spawning occurs in April or May in shallow, weedy areas. The food consists of small fishes, frogs, and aquatic insects. Its diminutive size precludes its becoming an important game fish.



COMMON PIKE
(*Esox lucius*)

The common or northern pike attains a length of four feet and a weight of over 30 pounds. The color is bluish or greenish gray, and the markings are in the form of light spots. These light markings distinguish it from the mud pickerel and muskellunge, both of which have dark bars or bands. The young of the common pike are long and slender and are popularly mis-called pickerel or "snakes". The adults develop a thickness, a heaviness of body, that causes them to often be mis-called muskellunge. There are 15 or 16 rays in the dorsal fin and 14 or 15 in the anal of the common pike.

This fish prefers cool, weedy lakes and streams. Spawning occurs in March or April, immediately after the ice disappears. Parent fish migrate into very shallow areas and deposit the eggs on vegetation. After spawning they return to deeper water and leave the eggs unprotected during the 12- to 14-day incubation period. Unfortunately many marshes are of a very temporary nature in Iowa and frequently go dry before the eggs hatch.

The food consists chiefly of fishes, frogs, and aquatic insects, although all manner of items have been extracted from their stomachs. Some authorities claim considerable numbers of ducklings are taken each year, particularly in marsh areas which are intensively managed for maximum game production. Their enormous appetite renders the northern pike vulnerable to anglers. They are taken with spoon hooks, spinner-flies, dare-devil type lures, large and small wooden plugs, and a wide variety of live baits, including minnows, frogs, and large chubs.

The common pike is not generally stocked in Iowa waters. A few are transplanted to areas where they are native and the angling demand is heavy.

There are many small bones, particularly in the smaller fishes,

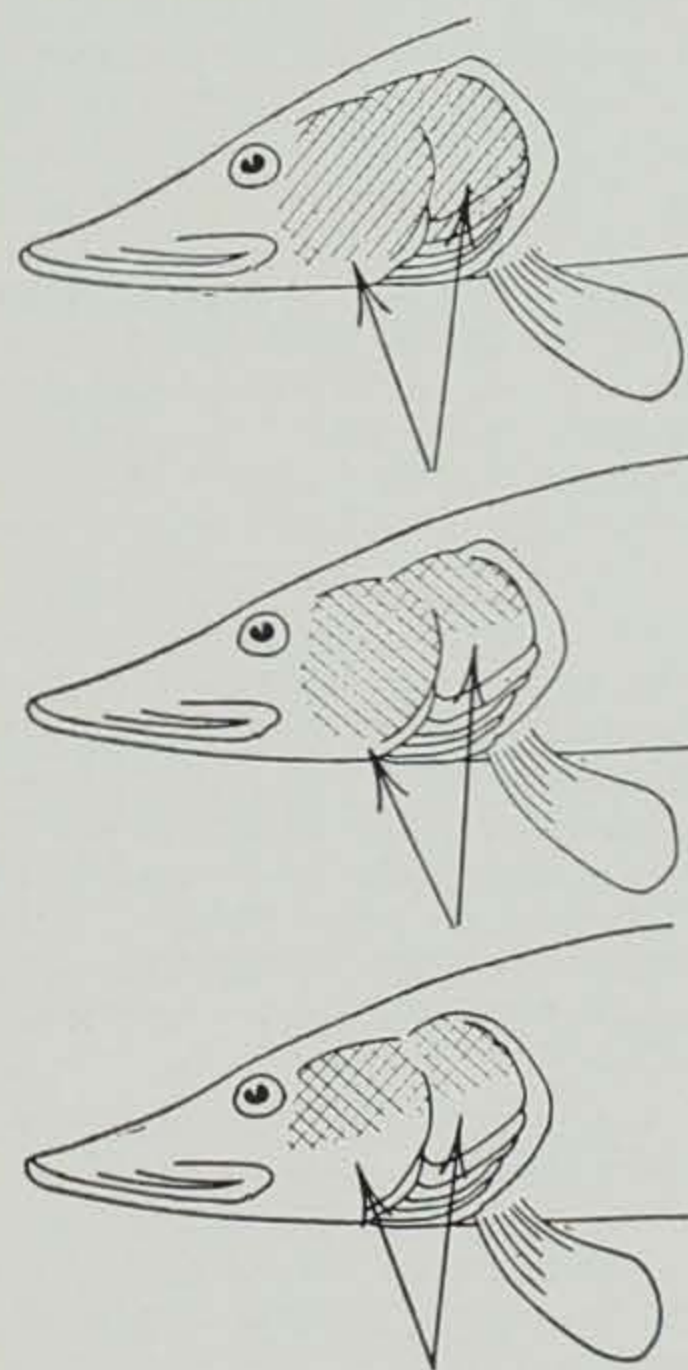
but the flesh is good and delicately flavored.



TIGER MUSKELLUNGE
(*Esox masquinongy immaculatus*)

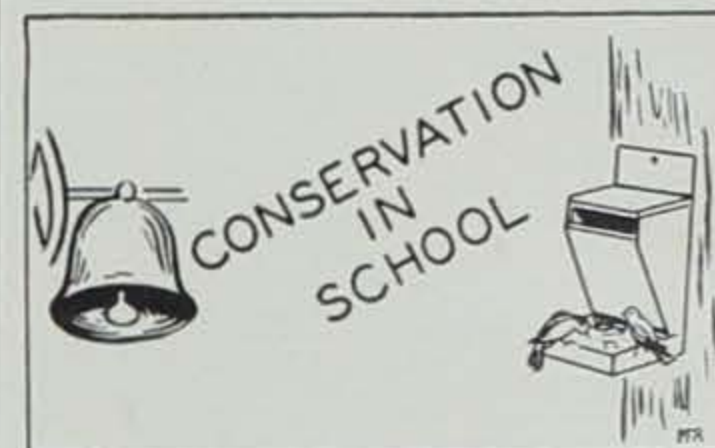
The muskellunge has reached a length of nearly six feet and a weight of over 70 pounds. The largest Iowa record, to our knowledge, was the 39 $\frac{3}{4}$ pound specimen from Clear Lake. This fish measured 54 inches in total length. In Iowa it is of no importance to the anglers because of its rare occurrence. In Wisconsin, Minnesota, Ontario, New York, and other states it is prized most highly, and efforts are being made to restore and increase its range. Like the northern pike it is ferocious in its feeding habits. It is becoming scarce in many areas. Muskellunge usually reach the 30-inch legal size limit in the fifth or sixth summers. In a report by Schneberger and Juday in 1935 one individual lived to be 20 years old.

The following diagram and key have been included for your convenience:



Top to bottom: western mud pickerel, northern pike, muskellunge.

1. Cheeks and opercles fully scaled
Branchiostegals* 11 to 13
Mandibular pores** 4
Rows of scales in lateral line, less than 115
Dark overmarkings or bands
Western mud pickerel
(*Esox vermiculatus*)
2. Cheeks fully scaled, opercles scaleless below
Branchiostegals* 14 to 16
Mandibular pores** 5
Rows of scales in lateral line, about 125
Light overmarkings or spots



By WALTER BAKER
Stewart Junior High, Ottumwa

Last spring one of the grade teachers had her pupils out for a picnic in one of the Ottumwa parks. Suddenly one of the boys called out, "Here's a snake!"

The response was immediate. The girls screamed. The boys grabbed sticks and rocks and gathered for the kill. The teacher, sensing a chance to get in a bit of conservation in the raw, called to the boys not to kill the reptile.

Now the only way that this teacher liked snakes was "over the hill and far away". But the pupils didn't know this. She asked them what kind of a snake it was. One of the boys thought it was a water moccasin, another thought a bullsnake, others a gartersnake, and so it turned out to be.

By the time the teacher arrived on the scene she had laid out a plan for helping the pupils to understand why they should PROTECT the beneficial snakes. Skillfully she changed their thoughts from killing to curiosity and then to protection. One of the more daring girls who had "heard" that snakes were slimy touched it and found to her surprise that what she had "heard" was wrong.

Needless to say, the next week's science lessons were mostly about snakes, what species were found around Ottumwa, how they lived, and how each was beneficial (or dangerous, as in the case of the rattler).

But wildlife conservation means not only protecting the beneficial. It also includes a study of conditions which make for an increase of species beneficial. Were it not for the birds this world would be difficult to live in, for pests, unchecked, would soon take over.

In the lower grades birds are
(Continued to Page 72, Column 1)

Common or northern pike
(*Esox lucius*)

3. Lower half of cheeks and opercles scaleless
Branchiostegals* 17 to 19
Mandibular pores** 6 to 8
Rows of scales in lateral line, over 140
Dark overmarkings or bars
Muskellunge

(*Esox masquinongy immaculatus*)

* The elongate bones lying in a membrane just below the gill-cover.

** A series of small holes along the lower side of each lower jaw.



One of the topics discussed in school is the contamination of rivers and how our sources of drinking water become polluted. Then follow studies of how these dangers can be eliminated.

Conservation In School

(Continued from Page 71)

studied chiefly for the interest which they provoke. The young minds cannot grasp their economic status, but now and then the opportunity does present itself for showing ways which birds help us. Pupils like the dramatic.

One of the best ways for dramatizing the value of birds is to watch them going about their daily business of living. Many of the schools put out feeding shelves, nesting boxes, nesting materials, and the like. Pupils report on what they see the birds doing—hunting in the branches for worms, in the grasses for weed seeds, or catching insects in the air. Gradually they learn how the birds are helping us, and how they can help to increase the birds.

As the pupils grow older they learn the value of birds, including hawks and owls. One of their greatest surprises is to learn that there is no such species as a "chicken hawk", that some individual hawks, like some individual people, become thieves and have to be dealt with accordingly.

In the grade which studies migration, some time is taken to study game laws and WHY they are important. During the fall they study how bag limits for game birds aid in making it possible for us to continue to have hunting from year to year. When winter comes the pupils study about the fur bearing animals. In the upper grades this takes the form of laws about trapping.

Soon after spring begins the boys (and their dads) get out the old rod and reel, and down to their favorite fishing hole they go. The "fishin' fever" quickly makes itself felt in school. So-o-o, the natural outcome is that from grades one to seven a period of time has been allotted to the study of fishes. The lower grades spend their time seeing how a fish moves, breathes, etc. Higher up grades take up such topics as "Iowa Fishes", "Fish Hatcheries", and "How can the supply of native fishes be increased?"

Up to a few years ago children were apparently brought up to fear policemen. Recently offi-

cers have been coming into our schools to give talks and show pictures of their work. Gradually the pupils are coming to the realization that these men are their pals and not boogie-men.

In the spring our grade pupils get out into the fields and timber. Almost everyone has seen other people picking far more wild flowers than they can use. Often before the flowers are in the vases at home they wilt and are thrown away, and no one has received any benefit from them. The pupils are shown the fallacy of this and are taught why they should not pull up the plants by the roots.

Rather than teach the negative side of flower conservation, they are shown how to display fewer flowers to a greater advantage. Both children and flowers benefit by this. Thus, by taking only what they need, and by leaving the roots to replenish the supply, they come to realize, as it were, "how to have their cake and eat it".

And maybe you don't think the pupils can do a lot of thinking on their own. One subject discussed under the heading "Iowa Fishes", and also "City Water Supplies", is "The Contamination of Our Rivers". Generally the topic opens with how our sources of drinking water become polluted. Then follows how these dangers can be eliminated. When they see in our state examples of neglect or indifference in this matter, they come in with the question, "Why don't they do something about it?"

The higher elementary grades study a little about the conservation of our soil and flood control. Of course they do not go into the study very far, but the basis for further study is laid down. To begin with they learn about the factors that make floods. Then follow possible remedies and, lastly, what steps are being taken to alleviate the dangers.

We have here in southeast Iowa many good examples of flood control in practice. Many individual farmers have dammed up the gullies on their farms, thus checking the runoff at the source. A good many of our people are "killing two birds with one stone" and using the backwater for a pond in which they raise food fishes. The older boys become quite interested in these new fishing spots.

There are many more conservation phases studied in the elementary grades, but one more might not be amiss. It is the establishment of state parks for the recreation of the general public, and for the conservation of our native game and other forms of plant and animal life. It is hard to ascertain the extent to which the public is really cog-



In Ottumwa, as in most other schools, word has got out that hawks and owls are greatly beneficial, that only occasionally some individuals, "like some individual people, become thieves and have to be dealt with accordingly".

nizant of the far-reaching effects of this work.

It is much like seed planted in the ground. Years hence, when many of our native plants and animals have vanished with the advance of civilization, these islands will be their sanctuary, their refuge. The establishment of the parks is not of the spectacular, the melodramatic. Their development does not have the tentative popular appeal that the saving of the buffalo and the grizzly bear has had. But as time goes on the public will come to realize that these areas are very valuable developments.

So, in our study of conservation, we try to help the pupils to look into the future. The boys and girls will all too soon be the adults of tomorrow. If they can be taught the full use and care of our natural resources today, then the dividends paid in the time to come will be many fold.

It's none too early to get out those decoys and give them a fresh coat of paint if they need it. Check those anchor lines and see if they have rotted where they attach to the anchor. A good way to prevent such rotting is to replace metal line fasteners with a loop cut from a strip of rawhide or old leather shoe. Remember the duck season opens earlier this year. Have everything ready for that opening morning September 25.

The first mention of wildlife on the floor of the Iowa General Assembly was in 1852, six years after the state was admitted to the Union. A bill was introduced at that time to provide for a bounty on wolves. Amid many wisecracks and much hilarity, the bill was defeated.

Only 5,000 copies of the new duck book "Waterfowl in Iowa" are being printed. "Waterfowl in Iowa" is available from the State Conservation Commission prepaid for one dollar.

Wildlife Research

(Continued from Page 70)

frosts of late September and October was a period marked by the least fighting among muskrat populations noted in the course of the year-to-year observations. This comparative peace was reflected by light mink predation, except when muskrats were drought-exposed, evicted by floods, or for any reason wandering about the countryside.

Cold weather vulnerability to minks of dried-out and transient muskrats was pronounced, but such animals were so inevitably doomed that it made scant difference if minks killed them or if they met another fate. Nevertheless, severe mink predation was occasionally experienced by muskrat populations that were evidently wintering with fair security except from this cause.

In the latter instances, top-heavy densities of the muskrats seemed to be the main explanation for the severity of the mink predation. There is increasing evidence that, even in populations that are generally well accommodated by their environment, certain individual muskrats are restless and insecure, hence vulnerable to minks throughout the winter. As spring approaches, population tensions mount, sometimes weeks before any sign of fighting or dispersal, and increased attention from minks follows very naturally. A tendency for losses from fighting, predation, etc., to be light in spring if heavy in late winter, and vice versa, suggests that much the same classes of individuals are eliminated, whether their doom overtakes them early or late.

On the whole, anything that was conducive to instability in muskrat populations increased their vulnerability to predators, and losses had a way of running their course largely irrespective of what or how many predators did the preying. Most predation, therefore, should be looked upon not as an unbalancing factor in itself but merely as a symptom of unbalance.

From the standpoint of practical fur management, subjecting the mink to drastic control does not offer promise of materially adding to the revenue from muskrat pelts in Iowa where the muskrat trapping is done in fall and early winter. On the other hand, where muskrat trapping is done in spring, reduction of minks by mid-winter should aid in bolstering high densities of muskrats long enough to permit utilization by man. Whichever system is used, management and harvesting of minks and muskrats alike on a sustained yield basis should be better economics than intentional destruction of one wild fur resource for the sake of doubtful benefit to the other.