

# IOWA CONSERVATIONIST

Volume 8

JANUARY 15, 1949

Number 1

## STATE PARKS HOST TO MILLIONS

### FOX TRAPPING THE HILL RIMS

By James R. Harlan  
Assistant Director

Thirty years ago a Des Moines grade school kid, "Squirrel" Edwards, caught a fox on the edge of town and for months his school yard sobriquet was changed to "Fox" Edwards. We Elmwood school kids since kindergarten days had been fed on fox propaganda through Aesop's Fables. Somehow we believed, like the Indian who ate a brave foe's heart in order to inherit his courage, that "Squirrel" had absorbed the deceased animal's sagacity.

Those were the days when Harding's Magazine, the trapper's bible of the times, gave the rare "century" fox trappers who caught one hundred fox per season full page photo spreads and column after column of type.

Always the "century man" was from some far away wilderness in Maine, New York, or other eastern bailiwick. To us city school kids, fed on Aesop's pap, the century trapper shared the hero's throne with King Arthur, Daniel Boone, Sergeant York, and all the other boyhood idols of the time.

Even today, for many of us the fox trapper has retained his air of romance and mystery. My eyes popped when I heard of Bill Nelson's record! I had to go see.

I found Bill at Farmington, his beautiful collection of fox furs, and these facts: 167 fox from November 1 to November 28; 16 fox in one day out of 37 sets; 7 fox in 7 successive sets; and 7 fox trapped in a single set on 7 straight days.

Bill is 40 years old, a native of Van Buren County, and not only a successful trapper but a professional trapper of wide experience. He has trapped from the mountains of California (41 marten in a single season), throughout the northwest, and in northern Minnesota. He makes his livelihood by sale of furs,

(Continued on page 104)



Iowa's state park system played host to more than two and three-fourths million visitors in 1948, eight thousand of whom were rugged outdoor campers. Jim Sherman Photo.

### OFFICERS REVIEW 1948 FISHING SEASON

Tabulation of reports received from state conservation officers throughout the state after the close of the fishing season reveal what the fisherman already knew—sometimes angling was excellent, sometimes fair, and sometimes poor.

Taken as a whole, the reports indicate 1948 was at least average with more fishermen trying their luck. Most of the conservation officers expressed concern about very low water stages with the possibility of widespread winter freeze-outs indicated in their reports.

**Garfield Harker, Jones and Jackson Counties:** "By far the best fishing in five years. Mississippi fishing was excellent, especially below the dam at Bellevue where they started biting in May and held up all summer and fall. Perch, sheepshead, crappie, striped bass were most popular and easily caught. Walleyes hit well with some black bass and catfish. All the way down the river crappies did well with bluegills in some places very plentiful. Bullhead fishing was fair but not real good. Many old timers claim pole and line fishing in the Mississippi the best for 20 years. Commercial fishing was not too good. Maquoketa River fish-

ing phenomenal for catfish during the early part of the season from Maquoketa Dam on down, limit catches the rule rather than the exception. Bass only fair through most of the summer. The Wapsipinicon was poor until fall when smallmouth bass started hitting. Trout fishing as a whole just fair, although the better fishermen thought it was good. Trout streams very heavily fished, making trout harder to catch."

**Kay Setchell, Hamilton and Hardin:** "Late fall rains a life-saver. Skunk and Boone rivers poor on all varieties. Iowa—smallmouth good to excellent; catfish good, fish small; few walleyes, crappie and northerns. Lower Pine Lake—largemouth fishing good; crappie and silvers plentiful but small; bluegills scarce. Bullheads in Goose Lake died during hot weather. The Iowa unusually low. Smallmouths hit in shady pools below riffles. Bass concentrated and hit anything fly fishermen presented. Am concerned about brood stock as a result."

**Gene Newell, Guthrie, Adair, and Union:** "What fishing I have in this territory was not very good due to the extreme dry weather. The rivers are very low. A few catfish and carp. Lake fishing was at a standstill."

**Frank Starr, Cherokee and Buena Vista:** "Walleye fishing in Storm Lake was outstanding with fall fish-

(Continued on page 102)

Ten Cents Per Person Is Total Cost  
To State In 1948

By Wilbur A. Rush  
Superintendent of Parks

The State Conservation Commission is requesting the Fifty-third General Assembly to appropriate \$7,577,290 for the state parks and recreation areas in 1949 and 1950. \$645,290 is requested to operate existing facilities and \$6,932,000 for improvement of facilities in the 87 state parks and for development of additional areas.

Analysis of the requested appropriation for park maintenance funds reveals it to be far below the national average for state and national park upkeep. Figures released by the information service of the Department of Interior show the national average cost per park visitor to be 25 cents.

Compared to this, Iowa spent only eight and a fourth cents per park visitor for both capital improvement and maintenance for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1948. If the maintenance appropriation requested is granted by the legislature, costs for the parks in 1949 and '50 will still be well under the 25 cent national average cost when based on the 1948 attendance figures in Iowa's parks.

The use of Iowa's parks continues to increase year after year. During the first 11 months of 1948, a ten per cent increase in attendance was noted over the entire 12 months of 1947. A total of 2,775,940 visitors utilized the parks and recreational areas during the first 11 months of 1948 as compared to 2,512,644 visitors for the entire year of 1947.

Although Commission records show a decrease in the winter use of state parks, this decrease is offset by a sharp increase in summer attendance. July was the most popular month in 1948 with a total attendance of 748,846 visitors. Unlike the 1947 season when areas having artificial lakes showed the

(Continued on page 103)



## Iowa Conservationist

Published Monthly By

THE IOWA STATE CONSERVATION  
COMMISSION

914 Grand Avenue—Des Moines, Iowa  
(No Rights Reserved)

WM. S. BEARDSLEY, Governor of Iowa

BRUCE F. STILES, Director

JAMES R. HARLAN, Editor

ENID BROWN, Associate Editor

### MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION

E. G. TROST, Chairman.....Fort Dodge  
MRS. ADDISON PARKER.....Des Moines  
E. B. GAUNITZ.....Lansing  
ARTHUR C. GINGERICH.....Wellman  
F. J. POYNEER.....Cedar Rapids  
F. W. MATTES.....Odebolt  
J. D. REYNOLDS.....Creston

CIRCULATION THIS ISSUE.....33,500

Entered as second class matter at the  
Post Office at Des Moines, Iowa, September  
22, 1947, under the Act of August 24,  
1912.

Subscription rate.....40c per year  
3 years for \$1.00

Subscriptions received at Conservation  
Commission, 914 Grand Avenue, Des  
Moines, Iowa. Send cash, check or money  
order.

### DOWNY WOODPECKER FINDS CORN BORERS DELICIOUS

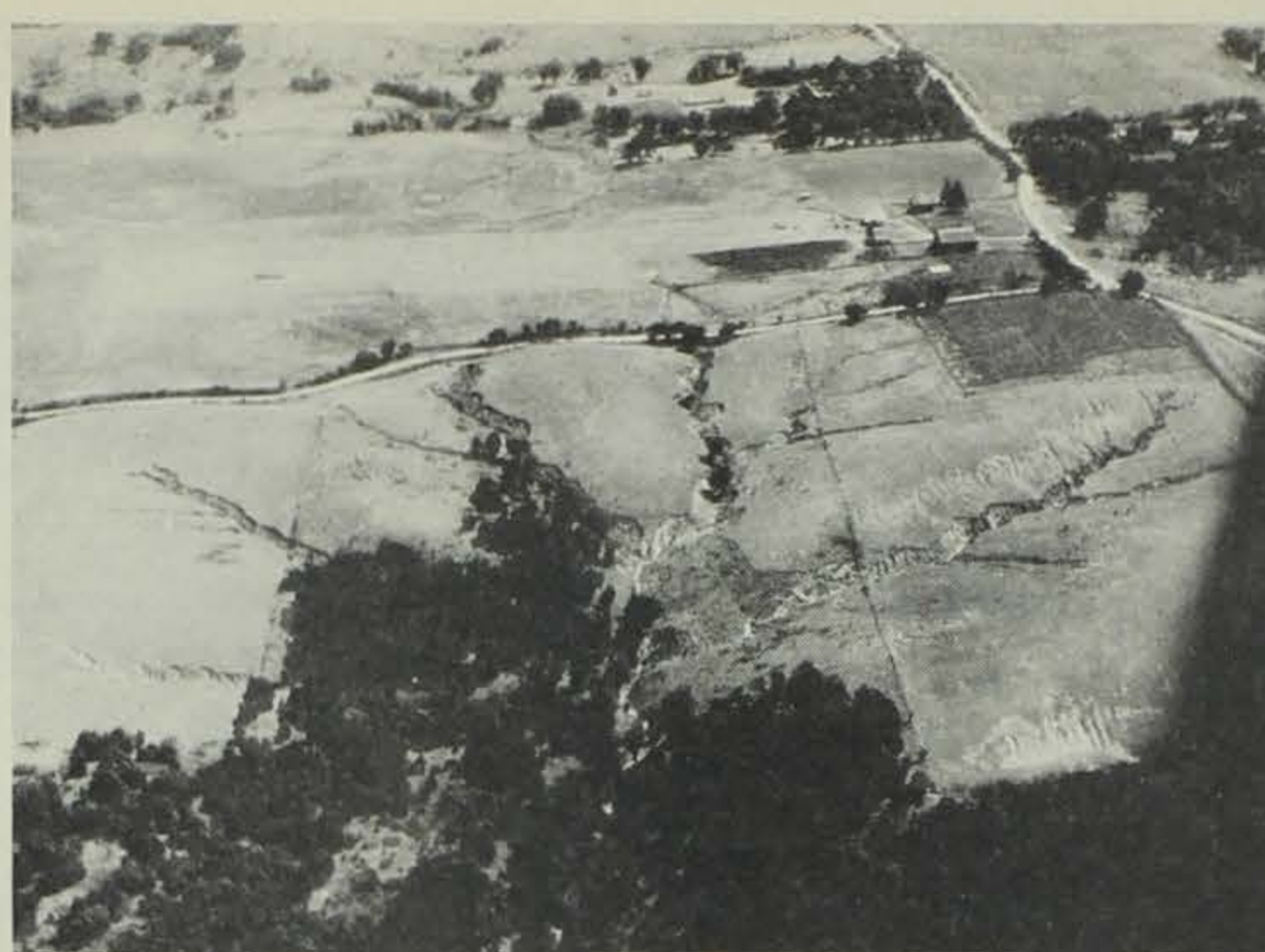
If downy woodpeckers are conspicuous by their absence at your feeding station this winter, do not jump to the conclusion that they have followed their ivory-billed cousins into extinction. The lovable little downy woodpecker is going to town in the country. At least that is the opinion of the Oregon Observer. Phil Smith, entomologist with the Wisconsin State Department of Agriculture, has found the birds hard at work on corn borer control in that state.

Smith watched the downies at work in one field and saw one bird take half a dozen corn borers in three or four minutes. He made a check to determine the extent to which the woodpeckers were feeding on borers and found that they had removed them from two-thirds of all infested stalks examined. In some fields the number was even higher. His survey covered 20 counties and included all those south of a line drawn from Waukesha to St. Croix.

Downy woodpeckers are permanent residents of Iowa as well as Wisconsin. They have an uncanny ability to locate the borer in the corn stalk, according to Smith. His observations indicate that during the last few years this smallest of our woodpeckers has changed his feeding habits and now, to a large extent, at least in Wisconsin, depends on corn borers as an important item in its winter diet.

While the woodpeckers may prove a valuable aid in fighting the corn borer, they cannot be expected to do the job alone, Smith said. Control work in the form of cleaning up stalks and stubble is still very important.

The dollar value of the world's wood production in 1946 was four times as great as the value of coal and one-half the value of all world grain.



For the benefit of all Iowans, Santa Claus could bring greater financial support to the soil conservation program. Soil Conservation Committee Photo.

## CONSERVATIONISTS TO SANTA CLAUS

(An open letter to Mr. S. Claus on behalf of the anglers, hunters, conservationists and conservation department.)

Mr. S. Claus  
North Pole  
Dear Santa:

Along about this time of the year we get to thinking about you, as does everyone else, and since you are a pretty busy fellow with a lot of things on your mind we know that you won't think us presumptuous if we tell you about some things the folks hope you will put in your big bag just before you hitch up those fast-stepping reindeer.

The whole United States, all 130,000,000 of us, want you to bring a national pollution law, a sound flood-control program, the efficient administration of our natural resources, and more soil conservation districts. That's a big order, we know, but if we are to survive as a strong nation you had better put these things in your pack. The last congress gave us a milk-toast pollution bill but since there will be some new faces down in Washington in January we may get a better break and we hope you don't bring those congressmen who voted for that weak pollution bill a single thing for Christmas.

Minnesota and Wisconsin would like a lot of snow, Santa. It was pretty dry up there for a good many weeks and the lakes and streams are so far below normal levels that fish life is endangered and only many feet of fine winter snows can save the situation and restore water levels to a normal point. Lots of our anglers go up there every year and you will be doing them a big favor by putting this item on your list.

Ducks Unlimited, that wonderful organization that is helping to restore our duck population, needs help badly. Folding money would

be the nicest thing to bring them, so put a few fountain pens in your bag to hand out to those fellows who can write the fat checks in order that the good work may go on. Of course that doesn't mean that the one-gallus duck hunter is excused because he isn't and his dollars will be welcome too.

The Iowa Conservation Commission wants a lot of things. They would like to have you bring approval of that ten million dollar budget item for conservation work and new construction in 63 Iowa counties. Some more stuff they would like put in your bag is a friendly legislature so some of the badly needed laws can be enacted such as a better pollution law so that Iowa can have clean streams again, a law to increase the salary of conservation officers, and above all things a good pheasant and quail rearing season next spring and summer.

Davenport's chapter of the Izaak Walton League wants you to bring along 500 new members and a site for a new club house. The boys have the lumber stacked away and are ready to go and with a few more members to help push things the Ikes will have one of the best chapters in Iowa.

Up at Clinton the Waltonians want just enough new members to keep ahead of the Des Moines chapter. A little bit selfish, maybe, but being over here on the eastern fringe of Iowa we have to ask for something for the Clinton Ikes since they are now running neck and neck with Des Moines and they do have a fine bunch of fellows up at Clinton. See what you can do, Santa.

The trout fishermen will be satisfied with more trout water and more trout. That may be a hard order to fill, but low water last season put many streams out of business, so perhaps we should first ask

for a stream improvement program so that there will be more fishable water. It's something to work on at any rate.

There is nothing wrong with the Scott County Sportsmen's Association that a batch of new members wouldn't cure. Maybe you can tuck some memberships in your rucksack, Santa. Those boys need a lift to help them carry on their splendid pheasant and quail rearing program. Costs a lot of money to keep that project going each year and too few sportsmen realize it.

Our pheasants and quail would like a Christmas present of more cover. There is a great lack of it. Not one farm in ten has a suitable cover patch. Multiflora rose plantings will help and we need more of these. Food and water the birds do have, but a roof over their heads is the crying need of the moment. Look the country-side over as you go by, Santa, and you'll see what we mean when we ask for more cover.

The Iowa Coon Hunters Association has not hinted to us what they would like for Christmas, but we are just guessing that a bit of help on that new club house and lake they are constructing down near Blue Grass would be a very fine Christmas present.

This just about covers it, Santa. If we have missed anyone or any group we'll send you a wire in a day or so. Good traveling and we will be looking for you December 24. Remember us to Mrs. Santa.

Sincerely,  
THE NOMAD  
—Davenport Democrat.

### INTER-PLANT FISHING CONTEST PAYS DIVIDENDS

The Viking Pump Company of Cedar Falls inaugurated an inter-plant fishing contest in 1947 that has paid dividends in employee-employer relations, and in a two-year period has produced "some mighty fine fish." During the 1948 season five of the eight records established in 1947 were broken. The prize winner for 1948 was a 14-pound northern pike caught in the Cedar River near Cedar Rapids.

A three pound four ounce bass won for Andrew Kadous in that division. Other winners: Walleye, Robert Decker, 5 pounds 8 ounces; Northern Pike, Lloyd Whiteside, 14 pounds; Crappie, tie between Harley Zimmerman and Melvin Whiteside, 1 pound 12 ounces; Trout, Dick Babcock, 1 pound 9 ounces; Carp, W. W. Combs, 13 pounds; Catfish, Andrew Kadous, 10 pounds 8 ounces; Out of state fish (any kind), Arley Bonney, Northern Pike, 18 pounds 8 ounces.

The fluid with which a skunk protects itself has nothing to do with either the urinary or reproductive system, but is secreted by two large glands that lie under the skin near the tail. All the weasel family is supplied with these anal glands, but none can distribute the content with the volume or direction of the skunk.



## MARIJUANA IN THE WILD

There is widespread misinformation about the narcotic effect of hemp that grows so abundantly on the bottomlands in many parts of the state.

A recent paragraph in the Vinton Times under the head, "The Editor's Plow Chair," states: "Benton County could go on an awful binge just by stepping out the door and grabbing a handful of wild hemp, the marijuana plant whose leaves and flowers are smoked by the depraved for the kick. Marijuana is growing in profusion in this county this year, the big weeds which resemble Christmas trees rising six or more feet in the air."

There is about as much "kick" to be had smoking the leaves and flowers of hemp grown in Iowa as there is in smoking corn silks, coffee grounds, or baled hay, and not as much as in smoking tobacco.



Hemp bears an abundance of fleshy seeds that drop throughout the winter, and upon which multitudes of winter birds banquet. Ada Hayden Photo.

Iowa's hemp plant is botanically known as *Cannibis sativa*. Plant chemists advise that this plant when grown in the far south does contain narcotics and is sometimes grown in Latin America for production of illegal drugs.

The plant when grown in temperate climes contains almost none of the narcotic properties present in the plants of the hot, dry countries.

Our hemp plant is not a noxious weed under the state weed law. It is not difficult to control by cutting. It bears large quantities of small seeds that cling tightly, shattering onto the crust of the snow during wintertime, providing exceptionally fine winter feed for all the winter seed eaters. If anything goes on a "jag" from our Iowa "marijuana" plants it will be the tree sparrows or cardinals, mourning doves or bobwhites, and it will be because they over-ate during some river bottom banquet, and not from the effects of any narcotic properties of our hemp plants.



Log raft in a boom in the Mississippi River at Clinton from a photograph made in 1895. State Department of History and Archives Photo.

## SAWDUST GOLD

(Editor's Note: This article is briefed from "Monsanto Magazine" and is of interest to Iowans because of its recollection of Clinton's lumber boom days and because of the importance of a new industrial product based on a true conservation principle—wise use of a natural resource.)

Prodigal man has wasted pyramids of sawdust since he first learned the art of turning sawlogs into lumber. In timber-rich America, this unused resource mattered little until lumber demands outran our forests' ability to replace the drain.

As vast forest areas disappeared and lumber piles dropped lower, far-sighted lumbermen looked speculatively at their sawdust mounds.

In the dawn of the age of synthetics, acute lumber necessities mothered invention! Most recent of these lumber "inventions" and one of the most promising is Prespine, announced recently by Curtis Companies, Incorporated. This "synthetic" wood panel, made from woodwaste and resin, opens a path to a previously untapped lumber source.

Established in 1866, Curtis began manufacture of sash, doors, and other millwork. To Clinton's booming sawmills came timber from Minnesota and Wisconsin via the Mississippi. This unexcelled water artery which linked Clinton with the northwoods made the Iowa town one of the largest mill towns in the world with plentiful lumber at its back door. By the turn of the century, however, the timber stands of Minnesota and Wisconsin could no longer fill the log booms for the mills in Iowa.

As one by one, the columns of mill smoke disappeared from Clinton's sky, it became necessary for manufacturers to have lumber shipped in from other mills.

The search for a way to make sawdust-resin board was begun. Outwardly a relatively simple problem, wood technologists found they had sawed off a knottier chunk than they had at first thought. Unsolved technical ques-

tions and mechanical problems combined to give research men many nostalgic memories of once-inexhaustible forests and plentiful pre-war lumber supplies, but finally the research problem was solved.

Next came the step from laboratory to production. The method that has finally evolved begins with the normal waste of a quality mill which must discard all but top grade lumber for its doors, mantels, trims, sash and other woodwork. From the trimmers, saws and dowsing machines a steady flow of unwanted wood which formerly went only to the powerhouse furnaces now goes into the production of Prespine panels.

In the manufacture of the new product, woodwaste is chewed into fine sawdust, mixed with a synthetic phenolic resin, then with heat and pressure formed into a molded panel.

Remarkably smooth and even



Sawdust gold, formerly waste in the lumber industry, climbs a conveyor on its way to becoming Prespine wood panels. Monsanto Chemical Company Photo.

textured, the panels require a minimum of sanding and edge trimming. From then on they are handled as though they were normal lumber. They can be sawed, nailed, planed just as easily. But in several respects, Prespine goes wood one better. Paint adheres more smoothly; no grain lines mar the smooth surface. Better still, the panels have ten times more resistance to denting than natural wood panels.

It is Prespine's long range future that is most exciting. Here is a process based on a waste material, inexpensive and present in such abundant quantities that many mills have had to fire their boilers inefficiently to rid themselves of it. Here is a "synthetic" wooden panel equal to and, in many respects, better than natural.

What will be the shape of the milling industry when its hundreds of sand-dune-like piles of sawdust find more profitable, useful employment? Suggested immediately are additional "synthetic" boards which are wider, which can be molded like plastics, which with varying resin content might have amazing strength and surface toughness. Counter tops, intricate architectural moldings, sub-flooring, wall paneling, countless uses suggest themselves. So well-founded economically is the sawdust-resin panel that regardless of lumber's availability now or later, manufacture and use of the new material is expected to expand.

No one can hazard a statement that the art of turning woodwaste into fine wood panels will eventually grow into full-blown lumber revolution. Yet many do believe it will revise traditional mill-working practices in plants throughout the country.

So it is that the order is again changing in Clinton. Perhaps it is fitting that the town, once one of the sawmill centers of the nation, may become the hub of a modern day renaissance in the industry to which it owes much of its lively youth.

## NOW IT'S BEAVERS INVADING LOVER'S LANE IN WAVERLY

What will they find next in "Lover's Lane" here in Waverly? Last week it was a deer—now a colony of beavers has been reported within the city limits in the hollow below the old lime quarry.

With so many beavers putting in their appearance in Bremer and Butler counties, and with deer more plentiful than at any time in the last 50 years, this area appears to be developing into the kind of "happy hunting grounds" the Indians used to dream about.

Anyway, there must be something about the atmosphere in Lovers Lane that gets 'em!—Waverly Democrat.

The name "beaver" comes from an old English word "bever" and it is believed that the name is intended to designate the color for which this animal is noted.





"Wing Shots" almost expired at birth last month. The only question received was from Irvin Glau, Denison, Iowa. It is printed below with an answer by Ray Beckman, Chief of Fish and Game. If you have questions on any phase of conservation, send them to the State Conservation Commission, Attention "Wing Shots." Questions of local interest only will be answered by mail. Questions of general interest will be answered in the "Conservationist."

Denison, Iowa  
Route 3,  
December 20, 1948

Dear Sirs:

"Wing Shots" is just what we need in the "Iowa Conservationist." Many outdoorsmen have questions they would like to have answered. I also have one.

What is done with the thousands of dollars that trappers pay for licenses and trap tags? I know some is used for a few rat marshes but what is being done for the mink, beaver, skunk, coon, etc.

Sincerely yours,  
Irvin Glau.

Dear Mr. Glau:

I am glad to answer your recent inquiry addressed to "Wing Shots," "What is done with the thousands of dollars that trappers pay for licenses and trap tags?"

Revenue received from trapping licenses and trap tags for the past nine years has averaged \$16,835 per year. Last year it was \$11,061. This money is placed in the Fish and Game Protection Fund. It is used, together with hunting and fishing license fees, for administration of the Fish and Game Division of the State Conservation Commission. This administration includes protection, propagation, research, land and marsh acquisition and development, and education, all of which are designed to promote better hunting, fishing, and trapping.

The \$17,000 contributed by trappers each year falls far short of paying the trappers' share of expenses.

Last year \$262,300 was budgeted for conservation officers' expenses in carrying out the law enforcement program throughout the state. The \$11,000 contributed by trappers in license fees was far from being enough to pay the cost of time spent by conservation officers on patrol work on fur-bearing animals.

Considerable time and effort are spent on fur animal management. One important phase has been beaver management. Beaver only a few years ago were extinct in Iowa and now they may be found in all of the counties in the state and they are quite numerous in many localities. This program necessitated live trapping, transporting,

and releasing beaver throughout the state. In addition to this, raccoon and other fur-bearers are released throughout Iowa.

Many thousands of dollars are spent each year in the acquisition and development of public land, lake, and marsh areas, which provide additional habitat for fur-bearers and which can only result in additional revenue for trappers.

Six thousand dollars is allocated to the Iowa Cooperative Research Unit at Iowa State College for game studies, part of which is used for studies on fur-bearing animals. This is in addition to the many surveys and investigations conducted by our own biology section in the Fish and Game Division.

Fur-bearing animals always receive an important place in our educational program. Most of our exhibits include both live fur-bearing animals and tanned skins.

For a long time the Conservation Commission has believed that the trapper has not paid his full share of the cost of the game conservation program but has benefited directly by increased fur crops made possible by expenditure of the hunter's and fisherman's license dollar.

Thanking you for your letter, I am

Yours very truly,  
Ray W. Beckman, Chief  
Division of Fish and Game.

#### AROUND IOWA

Marlin Hinrichs of Rockwell City is drinking bitter tea these days. All during the duck hunting season, he failed to bag a single one and was twitted right merrily by his wife. The other morning as Mrs. Hinrich was out walking she had to dodge to avoid a flying duck. The duck landed a few feet away. Mrs. Hinrichs caught it and presented it to her husband.

Rumors of "ghost squirrels" in the cemetery at Waukon were partially verified last week, when Harold Smith caught one of the critters—a white-bodied, red-tailed squirrel.

Near Mystic, a purebred bird dog, "Sam's Air Liner," found a covey of quail as he crossed a railroad track and froze "on point," just as a Burlington train rounded the curve. Sam, true to his training, held his point and died beneath the wheels of the train. He was owned by Ernest Talbert. —**Dubuque Telegraph Herald.**

#### BIRD TOWNS

Northern Iowa has two towns, Curlew and Plover, that perpetuate the names of two bird families that once migrated through Iowa and Minnesota by the millions—curlews and plovers. These two towns were named by an early railroad president who hunted curlews and golden plover in that part of the state which was originally a level prairie dotted with ponds and small swamps. —**Ruthven Free Press.**



Iowa keeps an accurate count of furs taken by trappers. The five-year total, 1943-47, was three and one-third million animals valued at ten and one-third million dollars.

### THIRTY MILLION FUR SKINS PRODUCED YEARLY IN U. S.

American fur trappers and fur farmers produce about 30 million pelts each year, according to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Frank G. Ashbrook, in charge of the service's wild fur animal investigations, explained that the figure represents a five-year average of the annual fur catch in the United States. Lack of statistics from some of the states and differences in state methods of obtaining production reports from fur trappers made it impossible to release specific, nation-wide figures, he said.

Muskrat rates highest in wild fur production. The average yearly take ranges from 18 million to 20 million pelts. Opossum is next highest, with an average yearly take ranging from two and a half million to three million. Other important fur-bearing species: skunk, two million to two and a half million pelts; raccoon, one million to one and a half million; foxes, 900,000 to one million; mink, 700,000 to 800,000.

About one-sixth of total U. S. fur production is obtained from animals raised in captivity. Almost 425,000 pelts are harvested yearly by fur farmers from minks and their mutations, and almost 250,000 from silver foxes and their mutations.

The average annual raw fur crop is worth \$125,000,000 to the coun-

try's trappers and farmers, the Service said. It yields an average annual income of about \$500,000,000 to the retail fur trade.

Most recent statistics on total fur-animal catches indicate that Louisiana, Wisconsin, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, and Minnesota are the country's leading fur producing states.

Iowa keeps an accurate count of furs taken by trappers and had a five-year total, 1943-47, of 3,315,006 animals valued at \$10,345,744.24.

Although the United States is one of the chief fur-producing countries in the world, it does not produce enough furs to meet more than half its own demand.

#### ANOTHER EEL STORY

An eel in the Halsingborg Museum, Sweden, is more than eighty-five years old. It was captured by two boys from a nearby creek in 1863 and given to the museum where it has lived continuously in public view. This eel, which has outlived both of its captors, is said to be the oldest fish in point of years of aquarium service found anywhere in the world. Currently, it is suffering from a cancerous growth which the ichthyologists are not able to cure. —**Maryland Tidewater News.**

Early French explorers called the skunk "Bete Puante" or "stinking beast," probably after the accounts given of it by F. Gabriele Sagard-Theodart in 1636 in his *Histori de Canada*.

Wildlife is a product of the land and as patterns of land use change, so do wildlife populations.





"Quietly unannounced a light colored fawn came nosing its way across the corner of the field toward us."

## DEER VALUE If You Like It

By Margaret Pollock

The Clay County farmer said, "Come on out some night just before sundown and see our wild deer. They come out of the woods along the river at sundown and feed in my cornfield. Last night the neighbors and their children saw ten deer there."

We accepted the invitation hoping against hope that we'd really see some of them. We've been writing for years about other people seeing them around here, even way back when Cornwall Wilson startled the community with the story that he'd seen a wild deer at our Okoboji lakes; and a little later when Alden Avery and Don Burlington announced that they had seen one cross the road in front of their car near the Louder Bridge just north of the Woodcliff. We've

written many stories about deer on information from B. I. Severson, the conservation officer.

### Deer Creep Out

Now we were invited to see wild deer creep out of the woods at sundown and feed on a 17 acre cornfield surrounded by woods. It is a field that has been picked, but there is enough feed left to attract the deer and the farmer says he'll not plow the acres until next spring so the wild animals may have the feed this winter.

Our party followed the corn rows toward the growing darkness of the far woods and looking over our shoulders, saw the blackness of other trees silhouetted against the red of the evening sky. Bending the tall weed stalks apart, we climbed a fence and selected a spot in the woods which would secret us from view but still give us good vision of the field.

Then we waited! And waited. Silently—or rather talking in hushed tones. The red faded out of the sky. The farmer's dog howled in the distance. We heard the squawk of an occasional pheasant. Through the deepening darkness came the farmer's voice calling his hogs.

A full moon crept upward from the horizon and shone through branches of naked trees. We grew completely silent, listening and watching. Our ears and eyes were straining as we watched the edge of the woods along the cornfield. We grew more and more doubtful that we were going to see deer. Our hopes had been high that we might see ten like the neighbors had seen the night previously. As the time wore on we'd have gladly settled for the sight of just one deer.

### About Give Up

We about gave up hopes. But we decided if we circled back through the woods and up to the

edge of the cornfield at a distant point our sight of the cornfield would be better. We had looked so intently at the field from our first vantage point that as the darkness came on, we could almost see imaginary big objects feeding in the field.

We circled deep back through the woods. Then suddenly as we were far from the view of the cornfield, we heard a crashing, thundering noise as though a herd of elephants were crashing through the woods and out into the cornfield a block away. We stood transfixed. Our hearts sank. Why weren't we back at our first vantage place? It couldn't possibly be anything else but the deer and here we were a good half block from view of the cornfield. When we moved, the dry leaves and the twigs underfoot made loud noises which we were sure would frighten the deer away—but we decided to make our way back to our old place, noise or no noise. Arriving there, nothing was in sight.

The moon now had risen higher in the sky, spotlighted the field. We waited and waited and waited. Hoping against hope but sure that we'd missed our opportunity. THEN, quietly, unannounced came a light colored fawn nosing its way across the corner of the field toward us. He came quite close and although there was a screen of weeds between us and the baby deer, we felt as though we could almost stretch out a hand for him to lick. Then the baby turned, without knowing we were there and returned quietly to the woods.

Spellbound, we waited silently for more action. We thought we could hear other animals in the dark woods. After many minutes, the deliberate plod, plod, plod of slow moving hoofs came toward us. We turned silently without moving our feet to peer into the direction of the plodding hoofs. Through the woods came a big buck deer. Tramp, tramp, tramp! Impervious to our presence, he passed within 40 feet of us and continued through the woods. The sound of his hoofs disappeared.

We waited silently. Probably ten minutes passed. Then from the distance into which the buck disappeared came the deliberate "plod, plod, plod," growing louder. This time, he came even closer to us and passed on into the direction from which he had originally come. He had moved through an opening in the trees flooded with moonlight and almost as light as day.

A baby deer and a great big buck! We couldn't ask or hope for more but we waited and waited. We were about to return to the farmer's house when a medium sized doe with a dark coat moved out of the trees and into the cornfield just in front of us. We watched and watched until she had fed and picked her way into the distance. A watch in the party,

(Continued on page 103)

## FISH BRINGS ITS OWN HOOK

Editor, "Iowa Conservationist"

Dear Mr. Harlan:

I have had many strange and unusual experiences while hunting and fishing, such as seeing a snake charm and catch a good sized bullfrog, catch a hell-diver on a trot line, kill two ducks with one shot which were flying in opposite directions (unintentionally) while they crossed in flight, catching (at two different times at least) a fish which was swallowing or eating another fish that I had already caught on a hook, etc., but while these are somewhat unusual they are all very probable and have possibly happened to other hunters and fishers. But I recently had one that I imagine never happened before and more than probably will never again happen accidentally.

September 1st, this year, my son Lloyd H. Jr. and I were fishing in a private lake of which I am a member and we had baited a trot line and were running it when we took off a 22-inch channel cat (three pounds) which had graciously furnished his own hook.

The dorsal fin had become damaged or deformed in some way and the tip end of about one-half inch was bent over in a perfect hook about twice the size of a large darning needle hook. This hook had become engaged, not with the hook on the dropline, but through the loop which held the fish on the dropline. The enclosed sketch is as near as I can illustrate it. The fleshy skin which protrudes on the rear side of the dorsal fin (the top of which was entirely gone) furnished a sort of safety catch to close up the open end of the hook.

My theory is that the fish was pulling at the bait on the hook next to this one and just backed into the loop which was about one and one-half inches long, for there is no way he could have engaged himself while swimming forward as the deformed hook was open to the rear. That in itself makes it the more spectacular for if it were open to the front it would have been more easily engaged with anything in which it came into contact.

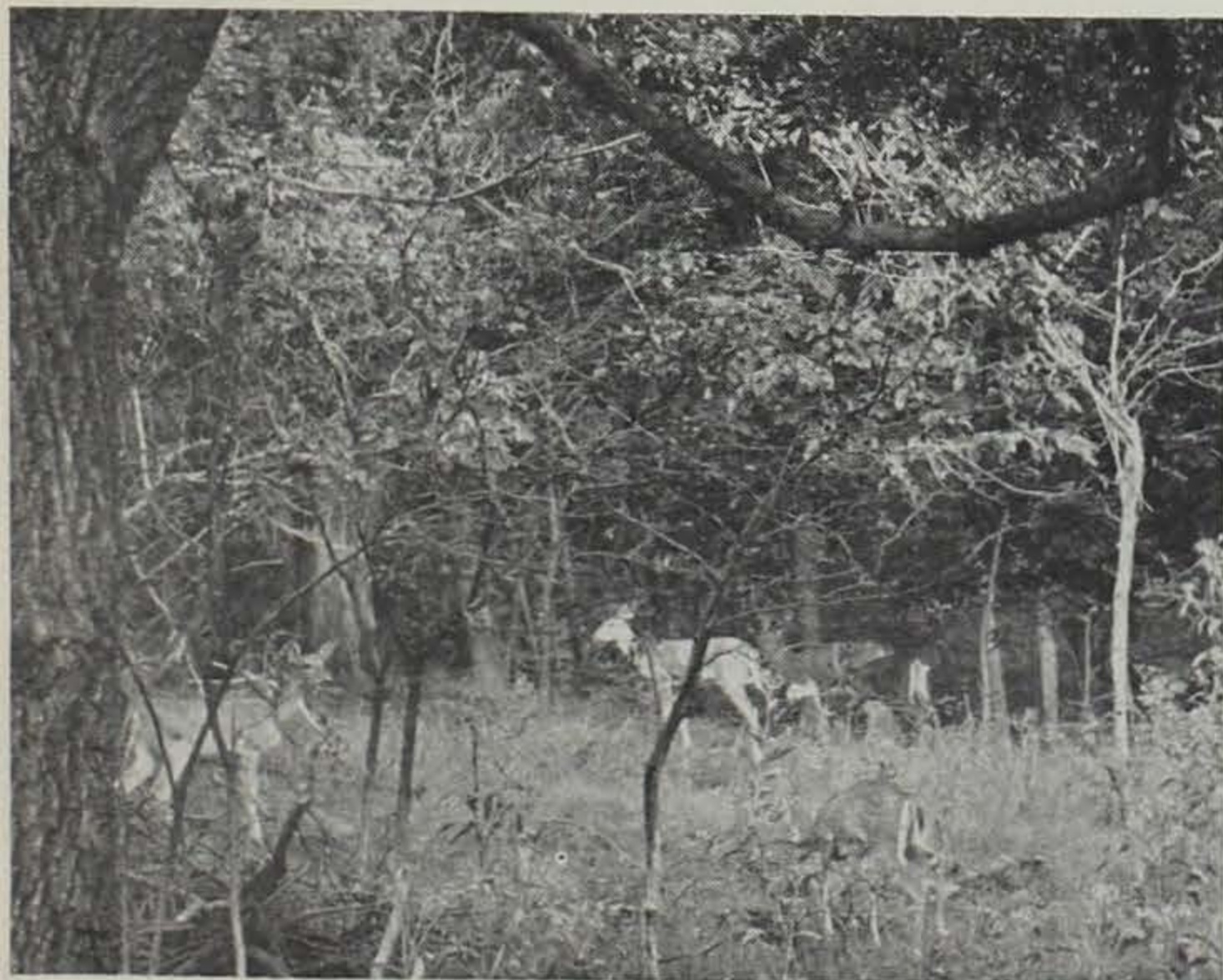
The fish had no mark of a hook on his body nor in his mouth of any kind. He could have been caught just as he was without the hook being on the line.

I showed this fish to several people here and have preserved the bent fin, but no one except my son and I actually saw the fish on the line. Many of my good friends here look at me very questioningly when I tell them this "fish story" and I am afraid that some of them at least doubt the statements.

I myself wonder if this has ever happened before or will ever again accidentally.

Sincerely

(s) Lloyd H. Black  
Decatur County Recorder  
Leon, Iowa



By far the greatest value of deer in Iowa is esthetic. Their continued increase will soon pose a major game management problem.





Never before in the state's history have so many of our citizens found rest and relaxation fishing in our lakes and streams. Jim Sherman Photo.

## Officers Review . . .

(Continued from page 97)  
ing peak. Eight hundred and forty-nine walleyes taken from boats at one livery during October, largest 11 pounds, dozens 9 and 10. Good bullhead fishing. Crappies not on a par with last year. Silvers provided lots of sport—rather small. Catfishing on the Little Sioux River very good again. Many large walleyes taken in vicinity of Linn Grove.

**Charlie Adamson, Scott:** "Fishing in the Wapsie not as good as last year. Mississippi River has been low this summer and clear. Good catches of walleye pike below the two dams. Some good bass. In the backwaters good crappie fishing. I believe this year was the best pole and line fishing in years on the Mississippi. Commercial fishing has been poor."

**Verl Holmes, Sac and Ida:** "Bullhead fishing at Black Hawk Lake poor. Those caught nice size and condition. Bluegills fair, large fish. Crappies provided the best fishing here this year. Some nice largemouth bass. Few perch. Raccoon River is dangerously low. Catfishing has been good with some nice small-mouth bass taken. Little Sioux very low. Catfishing good."

**Jock Graham, Monroe and Appanoose:** "Catfishing excellent May, June, July. Poor after water became too low. Bass, crappie pretty good through June, July—not so good in August. Good again in September and October."

**Ecil Benson, Lee and Van Buren:** "Pole and line fishing was poor, perhaps due to lowest water in the Des Moines and Skunk rivers since 1934. Pole and line fishing fairly good in the Mississippi at various times."

**W. W. Trussell, Woodbury:** "Fishing picture in Woodbury the darkest in ten years. Largemouth bass disappeared in Browns Lake. No bullheads taken. Only fair population of northern pike. Hot weather brought water temperature to 89 degrees with heavy kill of fish."

**Maurice Jensen, Clinton and Cedar:** "Fishing poor but picked up about the first of October with crappie, bass, walleye starting the upswing. Water in the inland streams very low."

**Jack Stevens, Cerro Gordo:** "Clear Lake—walleyes fair, northern fair to good, crappie fair to good, bluegills fair, largemouth bass fair, smallmouth bass fair to poor, perch fair to good, silver bass fair to good in June and July, yellow bass exceptionally good throughout the season. Winnebago River—catfish, bullhead, northern pike, and black bass fishing was fair to good first part of the season. In the middle part of the season thousands of fish were killed by D.D.T. blown from flyspray trucks and airplanes spraying for corn borers. Mason City industrial waste and pollution from Forest City canning factory heavy."

**Walt Harvey, Grundy and Marshall:** "Catfishing in the Iowa River was excellent throughout the season, best for several years. Small-

mouth very good. Catfishing good, largest catfish around 12 pounds—many 5 to 10. More carp fishermen out this year, especially more women. Minnows plentiful, frogs scarce.



Juvenile delinquency and the multiple psychosis of civilization are not by-products of those hours spent fishing.

Fishing pressure heaviest I've ever seen."

**Vern Shaffer, Ringgold, Decatur and Clarke:** "Catfishing in the Grand River poor. Only a few periods of good bullhead and bass fishing in the artificial impoundments. Farm pond fishing only fair. We have lost fish in several farm ponds from grasshopper spraying this fall."

**Elden Stempel, Page, Taylor, and Adams:** "West Nodaway River bullhead fishing fair. Good fishermen took plenty of catfish. Middle and East Nodaway fair bullhead fishing, good catfishing for experienced anglers. Corning Reservoir, fair fishing. Lennox Reservoir, not too good. Lake of Three Fires, excellent fishing to large numbers of fishermen. Tarkios and 102 rivers only fair because of low water. Farm ponds furnished some good fishing. Plenty of small frogs for bait."

**Bill Middleswart, Pottawattamie:** "Commercial fishing in the Missouri River way below normal. Lake Manawa produced large catfish up to 12 pounds early in the season. Bass and crappie fishing was good until late summer. Bullhead fishing only fair but large sized fish."

**L. E. Lemke, Lucas and Wayne:** "Crappie, bass and bluegill fishing fair to good in old city reservoir and Red Haw Hill Lake. Corydon Reservoir provided good channel catfish-

ing. Bullheads stocked in Corydon, Harvard, and Seymour reservoirs in July didn't bite well. Same holds true for Humeston Reservoir."

**Glen Harris, Monona and Crawford:** "As a whole fishing has been poor in my territory the past season. The commercial fishermen along the Missouri complained of poor early fishing, a little better this fall. Little Sioux failed to produce the usual amount of catfish."

**Dave Fisher, Des Moines and Henry:** "Skunk River very low. Catfishing fair to good. Iowa Slough—good bullhead, crappie fishing; bass fishing fair. Noticeable increase in small catfish in Skunk River this year. Mississippi River pole and line fishing was fair. Below Dam 18 results were good."

**Harold Johnson, Sioux and Plymouth:** "Bullhead fishing in Rock River and Big Sioux very good early in the season. Catfishing in these two streams fair. Sioux Center Gravel Pit—crappie and bass good early part of the season. Bullheads poor all year. LeMars City Pits—bass, crappie fishing not very good. Alton Gravel Pit—good bullhead fishing all year."

**Ben Jackson, Clay and Palo Alto:** "Lost Island—excellent bullhead fishing spring and summer, fair fall. Walleye pike fishing poor. Fish large sized. Perch fishing better than a year ago. Northern pike fishing poor. Silver Lake—bullhead and perch fishing good, northern pike fair. Five Island Lake—bullhead fishing good in spring, crappie fishing fair, northern pike poor. Trumbull Lake—big bullheads in fair numbers during the fall. Little Sioux River—catfishing fair to good, walleyes poor. River very low. West Branch Des Moines River—all fishing very poor. Water very low and heavily polluted. Fish and minnows died this fall. Elk, Virgin and Rush lakes—bullhead fishing poor. Rush and Elk heavily infested with carp. Dan Green Slough—good bullhead fishing."

**A. E. McMahon, Carroll and Greene:** "Catfishing good, as usual. Bass better than average. Carp fair to good. Some walleyes reported which is very unusual. Low water levels cause for a great deal of alarm."

**Wendell Simonson, Kossuth:** "East Branch Des Moines River—northern pike fishing good in spring and summer. Catfishing and walleye fishing fair to good in late fall. Bullhead fishing poor in Union Slough. Rivers and streams dangerously low."

**Tom Johnston, Mahaska and Keokuk:** "Fishing was poor this season. There just weren't enough fish for the hordes of people who flocked in here from everywhere. Sundays and holidays the river banks were lined with people like a city street. Water was very low. I didn't find a single fisherman with his limit of catfish all summer."

**Frank Tucker, Cass and Audubon:** "No water, no fish."

**Bill Ellerbrock, Mills, Montgomery, and Freemont:** "Fishing was poor. Bullhead fishing good in Forney's Slough till hot weather. The Nodaway produced a few good fish early in the season, the remaining streams very few."

**Dan Nichols, Muscatine and Louisa:** "Catfishing on the Cedar and Iowa rivers has been poor this year. Walleye fishing in the Mississippi below Dam 16 at Muscatine has been excellent, in fact the best we have ever had. Even the amateur got his limit easily this fall. Walleye fishing also fair below Dam 17. Bass fishing poor at Lake Odessa. Big crappies taken after October 1. Crappie fishing at the breaks on the Mississippi fair until October 1, then excellent. Commercial fishing very poor this season."

**Floyd Rokenbrodt, Pocahontas and Humboldt:** "Catfishing held up well all summer. Walleyes good in September and October. Smallmouth fishing only fair in September and October but big fish. Northern fair, best in September. East and West branches of the Des Moines River very low. Looks bad for fish if we have a hard freeze-up. Little Clear Lake perch fishing very good this fall. Lake low, may have bad loss this winter."

**George Kaufman, Allamakee and Clayton:** "Fishing on the Mississippi River excellent this year. More fishermen than I ever saw before catching fish. Bluegills, crappies, largemouth, silvers and walleyes head the list. Smallmouth came back some but didn't see a limit. Bullheads came back strong. Fishing started off good early and was good all summer due to an even pool stage. This was caused by a dry summer and the engineers did not have so much water to play with. Inland streams are not so good, too low, everyone going to the Old Mississippi. Trout fair. Fishing good at the present time if you can stand the cold."

**Jim Gregory, Lyon, Osceola, and O'Brien:** "On the whole, fishing in the Big Rock and Big Sioux was not as good as last year. Bullhead fishing good during May and June. Fishing at Mill Creek State Park not as good as in former years. Little Sioux River, Little Rock, and Otter Creek not as good as last year."

**Frank Porter, Bremer and Black Hawk:** "Catfishing very good opening day and for a short time thereafter. Midsummer drought almost wrecked catfishing. Crappie good most of the season. Bass good to average. Walleye slow during the summer months, good in the fall with northern pike behaving the same. Rock bass, sunfish average. Carp fishing has been exceptionally heavy with a large catch this year. Some old timers stated that the

(Continued on page 103)



Bobber dancing.



## Officers Review ...

(Continued from page 102)

Cedar River was lower than they ever remember."

**Don Kriebel, Warren and Marion:** "Catfishing was good in the rivers until low water state. Carp fishing remained good throughout the season. A lot of large bass were caught in July in Lake Ahquabi. Crappies and bluegills, at least the larger ones, were slow to hit in this lake."

**Wesley Ashby, Iowa and Johnson:** "Catfishing in the Iowa, Skunk, and Cedar was exceptionally good throughout the season with good walleye catches in the Iowa and Cedar after cool weather set in. Crappie, bass and bluegill were good early in Lake MacBride with bass fishing mediocre the rest of the season."

**Eugene Goeders, Calhoun and Webster:** "We had a fairly good season. River fishing produced good smallmouth bass and pike fishing. Catfishing was not as good as expected. Lake fishing at Twin Lakes turned in good bullheads, large-mouth bass, perch, and crappie fishing."

**Warren Wilson, Boone and Story:** "Catfish dismal. Walleyes—best season in years. Northerns poor. Bass fair. Carp hit good at the end of the summer."

**Joe Hopkins, Mitchell and Floyd:** "Crappie fishing has been pretty good above the dam at Charles City in the Big Cedar. Northerns scarce as are walleyes. Very few catfish taken. Smallmouth bass fishing has been good and a few large rainbows have been taken in the vicinity of Osage in the Little Cedar. Smallmouth bass were biting very well this fall. Wapsie River fishing fair to poor. Spring Creek has a large carry-over of trout. Shellrock River—very little doing."

**Earl Saxton, Franklin and Butler:** "In general smallmouth bass fishing poor, catfishing fair. Northern pike not so hot. Walleyes poor to good late in the fall in the Shellrock River. Fishing in Beeds Lake poor with many largemouth bass just under the limit."

**Dwight Morse, Dickinson:** "Generally speaking the fishing in Dickinson County was good with the exception of the latter part of July through to the middle of September. Walleye fishing in the major lakes, including Spirit, East and West Okoboji, was good. Silver bass were slower than in 1947. Northern pike fishing picked up and can be classified as good. Panfishing species and bullheads were fair to good most of the season. A tremendous increase in the number of fishermen."

**Cecil J. Schomer, Wapello and Davis:** "Fishing in Lake Wapello was very good on crappie but only

average on largemouth bass and bluegill. Carp constituted the best fishing on the Des Moines River, catfish were only fair. In the city reservoir at Bloomfield best results were reported on bluegills and bullheads. Fair catch on largemouth."

**Frank Tellier, Dubuque:** "Pole and line fishing in the Mississippi on the whole was much better this year. More panfish were taken. Also quite a few white perch. Late in the fall striped bass hit very well but were small. Catfishing not as good as last year. On the inland streams catfish take was smaller. Quite a few smallmouth bass were taken from White Water and Little Maquoketa creeks late in summer. Walleye fishing was poor in the Mississippi this fall—very few taken, mostly small."

**Lloyd Huff, Polk County:** "Catfishing in the Des Moines and Raccoon rivers was good in the early part of the season. Fishing success declined sharply when the streams were low. Carp fishing was good most of the season with the early part of the season producing excellent results. A tremendous increase in the number of carp fishermen. Impounding reservoir opened to fishing in the middle part of the season—bluegill fishing excellent, bass fishing good to fair. Very few crappies taken. Gray's Lake produced good crappie fishing. Raccoon Valley Lake had fair crappie, bluegill, bass."

**Jim Becker, Buchanan and Delaware:** "I would say fishing this year can be rated as fair with no outstanding success on any one species."

**Jerry Jauron, Harrison and Shelby:** "Fishing in Noble's Lake and the Little Sioux River was below average."

**Dwight Bramon, Washington and Jefferson:** "I think it was a rather poor season on the Skunk River. It was pretty good in the early part of the season but very poor later as the water level dropped. Bass fishing was fair, crappie fishing poor at the Fairfield Reservoir."

**Tom Berkley, Madison and Dallas:** "Madison County had fair catfishing early in the season for a short while. Dallas County—fair early fishing. River dropped to very low stage and fishing was poor throughout the summer and fall. Old timers reported the poorest fishing in years."

**Bill Ayres, Tama and Benton:** "Fishing in Benton and Tama counties the past season has been quite productive with catfishing in the number one place. Late in the season I saw some fine catches of walleyes and crappies. There were good early catches of smallmouth bass in the smaller streams such as Wolf and Bear creeks. Union Grove Lake only fair. I believe there has been good reproduction of bass, bluegill, and crappie in some of the streams this year."



Crowded park facilities are definitely blighting the recreational value of the state park system. The public who foots the bill demand constantly that state park facilities be increased and better maintained. Jim Sherman Photo.

## State Parks ...

(Continued from page 97)

greatest attendance, the largest increase in patronage was noted in areas like Ledges, Stone Park, Dolliver Memorial, and other smaller areas where water recreation facilities were not available. Lake Manawa and Clear Lake, outstanding water recreation areas, however, continued to be the most popular spots in the state, with Lake Manawa showing an all time peak attendance for the season of 274,130.

Cabin use and camping showed approximately the same percentage of increase as park attendance. Twenty-three thousand eight hundred and ninety-seven visitor camping days were recorded for family cabins and 8,008 for tent camping. Group camping figures remained about the same as 1947 because during both 1947 and 1948 group camps were filled to capacity during the entire camping season.

Lodge use also showed no increase over 1947, principally because the most heavily used lodge in the park system, at Walnut Woods, was unavailable for most of the season due to flood damage which occurred at the beginning of the year. Other lodges showed some increase to offset this loss.

The 19 state park concessions showed an all time high in receipts, totaling \$101,439 as compared to \$99,204.51 for the 1947 season. These concessions are leased by individuals operating under contract with the Conservation Commission. The concessions pay an average of five per cent of gross income to the state as rental on facilities.

There is no question but that Iowans will continue to show increased interest in their state recreational facilities, already taxed to capacity in most areas. The public

who must "foot the bill" demand constantly that the state park facilities be increased and better maintained. In the vernacular, ladies and gentlemen, that costs dough.

## Deer Value ...

(Continued from page 101)

scrutinized in the moonlight, said 6:30.

### Seen After

Back in the light of the farmer's living room, he and his family told incidents of seeing the deer. One evening at dusk, the farmer turned into his driveway and there in front of him was a buck and doe. Over two fences they sailed like grace itself. The family has come upon them along the roadside. When the men were picking corn, a deer cut across the field within a few yards of the picker.

Those farm people love those deer and why shouldn't they. They are as pretty and as graceful animals as God ever made. And when we departed the farmer looked directly at me and requested, "Please don't publicize our deer. We want to keep them as pets. Publicity might bring the hunters in." Such a request is like putting skids under a newspaper person. And although Iowa protects its deer with a strict penalty for anyone shooting them, we were so deeply appreciative to the farmer of his invitation, I promised I wouldn't for the world reveal the location of these deer. So, dear reader, unless that farmer favors you with an invitation, "Come out some day just before sundown and see our deer," I'm afraid you'll never know where they are—not from our lips, anyway. We made a promise.—*Spencer Times*.

There are 20,000 known species of fish.



Although the 1948 fishing season was at least average, bass fishing in most south Iowa reservoirs was definitely below par. Jim Sherman Photo.





The simple bait hole set takes fox and coyote with unbelievable ease. Bill Nelson shows one of the sets in which he took 167 fox in 28 days by this method.

## Fox Trapping . . .

(Continued from page 97)

a wide assortment of scents and lures, a postage stamp size trapping booklet, personal trapping instructions, and by raising gladiolas during the off-season.

We left Farmington at freezing dawn, Nelson, one of his student trappers, Conservation Officer Ecil Benson, and I. Bill's traps were set in hill territory on Rock Creek, ten miles northeast of town.

Fifty yards from our parked car on a timber pasture trail was the first set, containing a beautiful little gray fox. It was dispatched mercifully quick by a sharp rap on the nose and a compression of the unconscious animal's lungs by Bill's foot, and the trap reset.

The first trap and all the rest we visited were bait hole sets with certain refinements, most important of which was the use of an antifreeze.

Bill's antifreeze, a secret sold with his little trapping booklet, was a white powder mixed into the soil in which the trap was set. He said he knew half a dozen ways to keep a trap working in the ground after freezing weather but believed this method was best of all, allowing the trap to spring smoothly even in temperatures as cold as 20 degrees below.

In making the bait hole set, Trapper Nelson proceeds about as follows: With a carving fork used as a digging tool, a slanted hole about eight inches deep and four inches in diameter is dug; at the same time he loosens enough dirt in front of the hole to conceal a number two under-spring trap. The trap stake is then driven into the soil underneath the trap. A liberal supply of antifreeze is sprinkled in the bottom of the trap bed and

mixed into the soil. A sheet of waxed paper is placed in the depression in front of the bait hole and the trap firmly seated on the waxed paper. Next a piece of waxed paper is placed over the trap pan but under the trap jaws.

Pulverized dirt, taken from the bait hole and mixed with antifreeze, is sprinkled over the trap. The whole area then is neatly brushed with the fork tines so that the area concealing the trap is flush with the surrounding land.

A rancid piece of treated bait the size of an egg is placed in the bottom of the bait hole. A "call scent" is placed on a weed stem nearby, a drop of "gland scent" on the lip of the bait hole, then the immediate area around the trap liberally sprinkled with fox urine.

When Br'er Fox, working his way through the area, generally traveling just under the hill rims, gets a whiff of the call lure he comes to the set site to investigate. Getting closer he scents the rancid bait in the hole which he hopes to take out, not to eat but to carry a little distance away to roll in.

If all is in order as he approaches to shove his nose into the hole in the ground, the trap springs, and the fox is caught by a front foot.

Trapper Nelson, in making his sets, traps an area of about a mile square each five or six miles up the valley. Fox follow definite trails and crossings that the experienced trapper or hunter knows by instinct, almost as well as the fox. The hunting areas of a fox are about four or five miles square, consequently, most of the fox in a vicinity come within range of one of Bill's odiferous sets.

In observing location of most of Bill's sets, they definitely followed a pattern just under the crest of

the hills, for the red fox in open pastures and worn out fields and for the gray fox in brushy or timbered areas. Key sets where fox were taken day after day were taken at "crossings" mysterious to the amateur. Even these sets were definitely under the hill crest, well up out of the valley on the side hill.

Bill is a sharp student and a storehouse of fox knowledge. When questioned on fox food habits he made the following statement:

"Rabbits and mice, when both are available, make up the bulk of fox diet. When rabbits are scarce as they are here now, mice are the principal animal food of fox. In the summer a vixen with cubs will raise Cain with a farmer's chickens and once she has the chicken stealing habit she will continue as long as this food is available.

"Red fox do little if any harm to quail but do take an occasional pheasant. The gray fox, more cat-like than the red, does take some quail, especially in the late summer when the young are about three-quarters grown."

When I told Trapper Nelson the story of how "Squirrel" Edwards became a local hero when he caught a fox, he laughed a little and said, "Any youngster who can catch a dozen skunks can catch a dozen fox with less effort if he has a little know-how. As he becomes a little more experienced he can easily catch 50 before freezing weather. When he whips the cold weather set there is almost no limit to the number he can catch. One hundred fox per year ain't what she used to be."

As Benny and I shook goodbye with Bill, the modest trapper had a far-away look in his eye and said, "Fox trapping is great sport, and



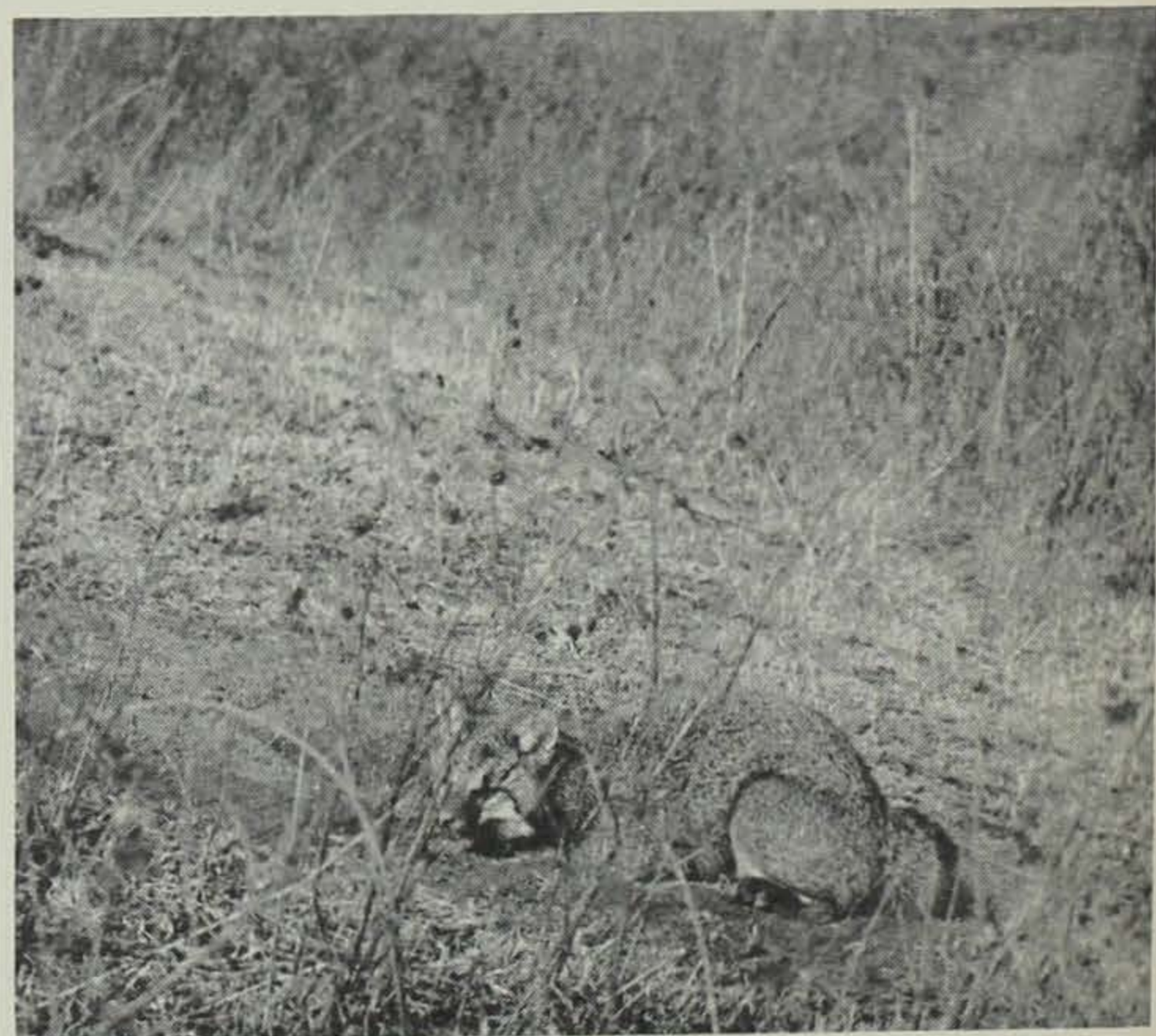
Mrs. Bill Nelson proudly displays a sample of her husband's beautifully handled red and gray fox pelts.

I know at least one trapper who could take 500 fox per season right here in Iowa if he worked real hard."

## CLEAN TILLAGE

One modern farm practice I oppose is "clean tillage." I'm against it because it doesn't provide protective cover for wildlife. I like to see some thickets and brush patches on a farm, for then I know my friends, the song and game birds, the rabbits, squirrels, and other wild forest-and-meadow creatures can find haven. —Decorah Public Opinion.

World production of wood in 1946 was 1,410,000 cubic meters of round wood, weighing 1,000,000,000 metric tons.



Fox sets are generally made a few yards below the crest of hills. Here is a gray fox in a typical set location for grays. One-third of all fox taken in this area were of this species.