

# IOWA CONSERVATIONIST

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## THE SOIL BANK AND WILDLIFE

### IS IT GOOD TO EAT?"

By George O. Moore  
Missouri Conservation Commission

If you like fish, all Missouri species are good!

Some of the kinds rated inedible are extra good. I've made a practice of eating every kind of fish catch, which adds up to 41 Missouri varieties.

Of all the 41, my favorite is bowfin, also known as mudfish, grifish and grindle. And this bowfin is a choice subject with which to begin.

The first ones I caught were cleaned not dressed until next day; at that time the flesh was so soft scraped it off the bones and added up with a mess like soft butter. I considered throwing it away but clung to my project of eating.

I molded the flesh into patties while my adventurous wife dipped the patties in beaten egg and cracker crumbs for frying. When they arrived on the table my surprise was pleasant and I looked across at Polly. She said:

"This tastes like the breast of young chicken!"

Bowfin-grindle flesh is dry, not oily, and of mild flavor.

Another type generally discarded is the "shad" which comes in varieties called hickory, gizzard, skipjacks, and mooneye, the last actually being a herring.

A mooneye is a flat, silvery fish with large, colorful eyes, and looks like a stringer—for a few minutes. But it lives very briefly. Handled quickly it can be put in a minnow bucket and kept in the water for a while, but its best use is to clean and dress mooneyes once and put them on ice or in wet moss.

If your fishing trip lasts more than two hours, have ice in your car or boat. When you have a fish that can't be kept alive, dress it once and put it on ice. Fish allowed to die never taste as fresh and good as those dressed promptly. In warm weather bass and bluegill develop a "mossy" flavor. This is on the skin and scales and

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Jim Sherman Photo.

Upland game birds such as this bobwhite quail are limited in many parts of Iowa by lack of cover, and we can't expect increases in game crops until additional habitat is provided. The Soil Bank program can provide it.

### Outlook For This Fall's Quail Hunting

By M. E. Stempel  
Game Biologist

Reports of last year's quail hunting success indicated that the birds were in good supply. The same birds hunted then are now the brood stock that is supplying young for the coming season.

After last hunting season, a count of remaining quail revealed that a large percentage of quail coverts was still occupied. Fall and winter checks showed a slight upward trend over the previous year.

This potential is enough to give

us fine quail hunting this fall. But first, a successful hatching summer is needed. To date, in spite of a late, cold spring, the calling activities of quail, plus reports from persons observing the quail territory, indicate that brooding is off to a good start. While peak quail hatching is in June and July, later broods add much to the supply of birds. Birds that have failed to bring off broods so far may make nesting attempts until mid-October.

In 1954, one of the best quail

(Continued on page 62)

By John Madson

Few programs have held more promise for outdoor Iowa than the Soil Bank Act, yet few have been less well understood.

Although many of our farmers have a good working knowledge of the purpose and mechanisms of the act, most Iowa sportsmen are still hazy on the matter, and on its value to their state and sport.

One of the basic purposes of the Soil Bank Act is to conserve, protect, and establish forest and wildlife resources. As approved last May 28 by the 84th Congress, it simply provides action to "—protect and increase farm income, to protect the national soil, water, forest, and wildlife resources from waste and depletion—"

#### Two Programs

As it now exists, the Soil Bank consists of two major parts, the Acreage Reserve Program and the Conservation Reserve Program. The former is already in effect, and the latter—which will be of greater long-range value to the sportsman—will probably be in practice by autumn.

The acreage reserve program simply allows the farmer to reduce his crop acreage below his regular farm acreage allotments, within such limits as prescribed by the Secretary of Agriculture. The farmer is paid for the acreage taken out of crop production.

He enters into contract with the Department of Agriculture to reduce the acreage planted to certain crops (corn, wheat and in some cases, oats). This land is designated as "acreage reserve" and the owner may not harvest any crop from it or graze livestock on it during the contract period, which is one year. However, upon certification by the Governor of the state, the Secretary of Agriculture may deem it necessary to graze such lands to relieve hardships caused by floods, drought, or other natural disaster. This is the case in 28 Iowa counties which have been proclaimed "drought disaster areas" and in which grazing is allowed on acreage reserves.

Except for such natural emer-

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Jim Sherman Photo.

## PUBLIC RELATIONS HEAD RESIGNS

The resignation of George Worley, Superintendent of Public Relations for the State Conservation Commission, was recently announced by the Commission.

Worley's resignation will be effective September 1, when he will join the staff of Iowa State Teachers' College at Cedar Falls as an assistant professor of biology.

Appointed by the Iowa Conservation Commission as Education Assistant on April 18, 1949, Worley was made head of the Public Relations Section on June 1, 1950. He was responsible for much of the educational material issued by the section, for numerous bulletins, and for countless public appearances.

He was active in organizing the Teachers' Conservation Camp which is held each summer at Springbrook State Park, and was the official representative of the Conservation Commission at the camp.

The baldpate is sometimes called the "thief duck" because of its habit of robbing canvasback and other diving ducks of food. While a canvasback dives to the bottom of a lake to obtain succulent rootstocks, the baldpate will wait for the diver to return to the surface, where he snatches the food from the canvasback's bill and swims rapidly—and triumphantly—away.



A pleasant sight, but one that the Missouri River old-timers would never believe. With controlled flowage, the Mo is playing host to new types of recreation.

## CHANGES ON THE MIGHTY MISSOURI

By John Madson

Until just a few years ago, the Missouri River was about as friendly as a bee-stung bobcat. It ranked high among the nation's killer rivers, and while it was used for navigation and worked by some commercial fishermen, it was almost entirely shunned by pleasure seekers.

It was fickle torrent that changed its bed and channel almost hourly. Little more than liquid mud, it was described as "too thick to navigate and too thin to cultivate" by some old-timers, who also said they could drink its water but had to chew it first.

But most of yesterday's facts and legends must be revised. The Mighty Mo has changed, and while the river is not wholly tamed, many of its teeth have been pulled. And with this change it is rapidly taking its place among Iowa's aquatic playgrounds.

Conservation Officer Jerry Jauron stood on a sandbar in late July, watching a fleet of fancy runabouts charge up and down the channel. One of the boats towed a pair of attractive girl skiers.

"I've been around this river all my life," he said. "If some of the old river rats I've known could see those kids water skiing, they'd die all over again."

### Big Dams

The reason for the skiing, and the reason for a new, growing excitement on the Missouri, lies upstream behind the big channel dams in South Dakota and Montana.

The first of these was Fort Peck, built in Montana in the late 1930's. Then came Garrison, Randall, and finally the new dam at Gavin's Point, completed only last summer.

Although the Fort Peck dam affected the upper waters of the Missouri, it stood above the White

and the Yellowstone, which continued to pour their silt loads into the big river. Changes weren't too apparent until Garrison and Randall were completed, and by 1953 the Missouri had begun to clear rapidly. In 1955, when the huge dam at Gavin's Point became effective, results were pronounced.

"They closed the dam last summer," Jauron said, "and the river was dammed until the impounded waters began flowing over the spillway. For a couple of days the Mo practically stopped running, and you could almost spit across the river when they shut off the flowage."

"Then it began to flow over the spillway and the river began to rise again. When it did, I'd never seen the Missouri cleaner."

### Silt Reduced

Not that the Mighty Mo is a

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trout stream. Not even Jerry Jauron would claim that. But its waters are no longer rolling clouds of yellow silt and it isn't any muddier than some central Iowa fishing streams. The spray thrown up by fast boats doesn't look like strong coffee anymore, and is as white as that of any of our larger rivers.

The big silting basins behind the upstream dams are largely responsible for this cleaning up. These basins will fill with silt in time there's no doubt. But until they do, they're allowing the silt load to settle out of the slowed river.

### 72 Boats

Wide recreation use has come with the stabilization and clearing of the Missouri. On a warm, sunny weekend hundreds of pleasure boats operate from Council Bluffs, Omaha, Onawa, Sioux City, and other river towns. One Sunday recently 72 pleasure boats were counted as they cruised past the boat landing at Missouri Valley.

Jauron believes that the best boating on the Missouri is between Omaha and Onawa. Above Onawa the channel narrows, and shallows and underwater bars may block traffic. Some boaters do travel up to Gavin's Point in South Dakota, but it takes some doing and a lot of shear pins if you don't know the river.

The nearer one approaches the Gavin's Point Dam, the clearer the river is said to become. Boaters report seeing the end of an oar in five feet of water. In other years, it was sometimes impossible to see a silver dollar at four inches!

### And Fish

Also changing is the attention given to sport fishing in the river itself. State fish shocking crews have turned up big largemouth bass, northern pike, saugers, crappies and bluegills.

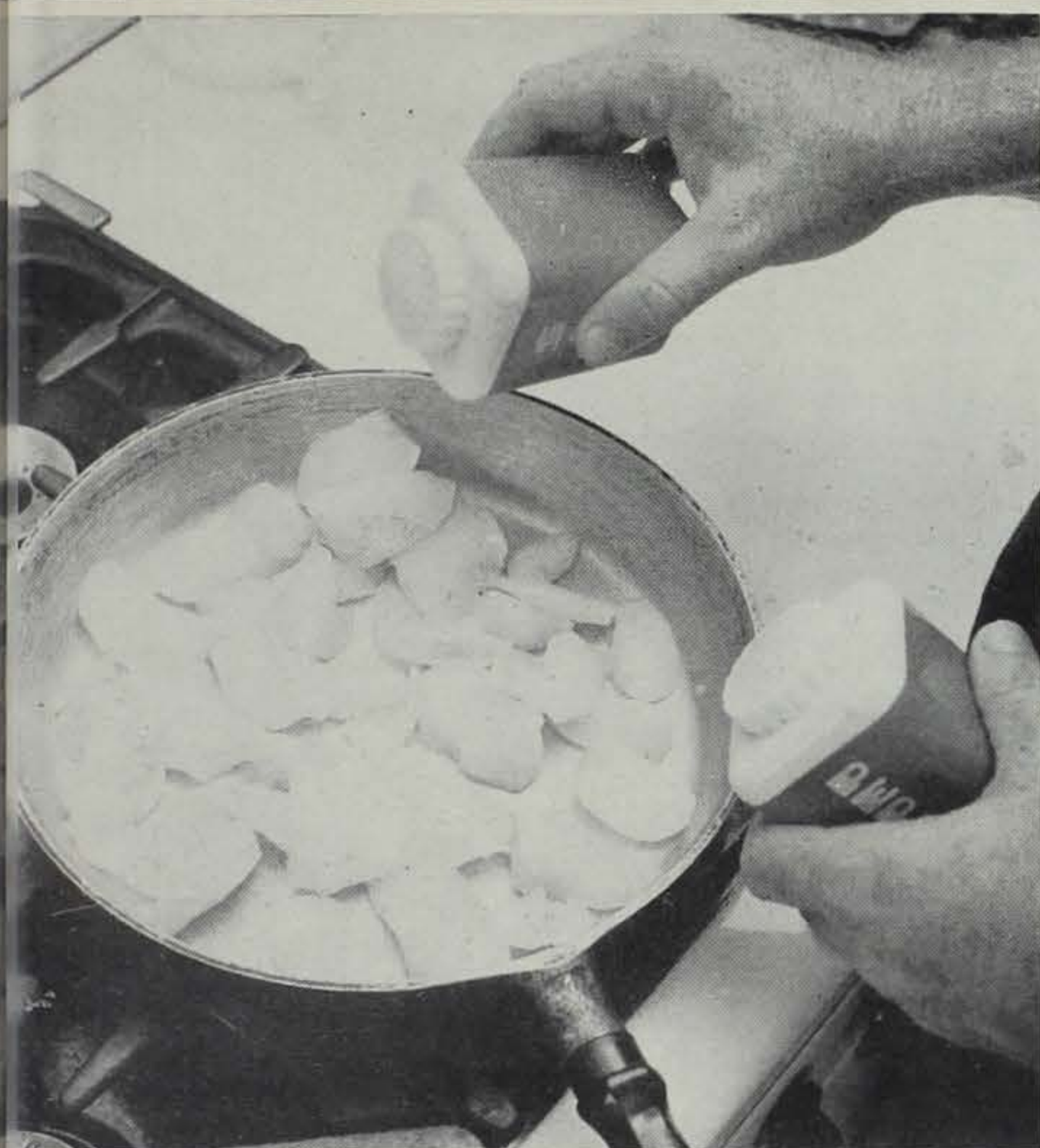
This spring Conservation Officer Dick Jacobson was looking over the big backwater just north of

(Continued on page 64)



Large numbers of pleasure boats are seen these days on the Missouri River. Most of them are being used between Omaha and Sioux City; farther upstream the shallows discourage navigation.





Jim Sherman Photo.  
walleye's "chops" are firm, white meat with no bones. They may be fried plain or dipped in batter and french-fried; either way, they are out of this world.

## A DISH DIVINE

One of the best parts of fishin' is the subsequent feedin', and we'd always thought we had eaten some pretty tasty fish. But early this month we were spoiled by the most excellent piscatorial morsels we've ever stuffed into our big mouth.

At the Potter Cold Storage Packers in Waterloo we met a fellow fisherman named Mel Brown, who is said to be a top man when it comes to cleaning fish. Naturally, the talk turned to fishing.

The subject of catfish "chops" or cheeks came up, and Mel said at a minute, I've got something for you to try." He returned with a round package of frozen walleye cheeks, patiently gleaned over a period of time from big walleyes he had cleaned for other anglers.

The walleye cheeks varied in size, most of them being about two inches in diameter and a half-inch thick—morsels of firm, white boneless meat. We fried them up the next night and they were just as good as they looked.

Bill told us that such "chops" occur in many male fish during the spawning season, including walleyes and trout. We knew that they were found in male catfish, and are now in high demand in commercial catfishing areas.

These catfish chops are also delicious, delicate meat. Assistant Director Jim Harlan recently dug into their background, and came up with the following information:

He talked to Jack Erlick of the Lansing Fisheries who has handled catches of commercial fisherman on the Mississippi for 35 years. Jack said that he first no-

ticed catfish chops being used on the Mississippi in about 1944, when he saw some of his fish dressers cutting a chunk of meat out of the heads of catfish. He tried some, and found them delicious.

Commercial fishermen acting as guides for sportsmen have introduced them to the catfish chop. The fame of the morsel spread, and the meat began to appear as a commercial item.

They were first sold at about 35c a pound. They now cost about \$2.50 a pound, if you can buy them. As far as we know, they are available only from Lansing and Harper's Ferry commercial fishermen, particularly in early summer. The chops may be found at any time of year, but are usually larger during the spawning season of the male catfish.

Erlick told Harlan that his dressers use a thin knife, cutting under the flesh to the bone, turning it back, and pulling the meat away from the skin. Each "chop" has the general appearance of scallops.

Most rivermen like to french-fry them in batter. They are firmer in texture than the rest of the fish's flesh, and are tops in table delight.

—J.M.

If fishing a great deal each day with a casting rod and reel, it is wise to clean and oil the reel each evening. For transporting fishing tackle in a car, a small zipper case that fits over the rod handle and reel is invaluable, for more reels are worn out from road dust than are ever ruined by river sand. Worn gears and bearings of "name" reels can usually be replaced from parts obtainable in most tackle stores and sporting goods shops.

## 1956 IOWA DEER HUNTING REGULATIONS

The 1956 Iowa deer season has been set by the State Conservation Commission, with few changes over last year's regulations.

The statewide shotgun season for deer will extend from December 8 through December 9, both dates inclusive. Daily hunting hours for shotguns are from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Shotgun deer hunters will be limited to 6,000, and if applications for shotgun hunting exceed 6,000, a special drawing will be held to determine what hunters receive licenses. Applications for deer licenses must be made before licenses will be issued. The deadline for shotgun license application is October 12. There is no deadline for bow-and-arrow application.

The bow and arrow season for deer will extend from October 13 through November 12, both dates inclusive. Daily hunting hours for bow and arrow are from 6:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. There is no limit on the number of licenses that will be issued to bowhunters.

All counties will be open to deer hunting. For both the bow season and the gun season, the daily bag limit is one deer, with a possession limit of one deer. Any age or sex of deer may be taken.

Deer hunting licenses will cost \$10, and will be issued only to Iowa residents. Owners or tenants of land and their children may hunt, kill and possess one deer without a license on that land, but may not remove the deer from said land in whole or in part unless it is tagged with a locking seal provided on request from the Conservation Commission.

The Conservation Commission will issue two types of licenses this year, one stamped "for shotgun only" and the other "for bow and arrow only." Both licenses will cost \$10. The bowhunting license may not be used during the gun season, and the gun license may not be used for bowhunting. Applications for licenses may be sent immediately to the State Conservation Commission in Des Moines, and must be accompanied by a check or money order for \$10. No shotgun license applications postmarked later than October 12 will be accepted.

A metal locking tag will be issued with the license or on request by the landowner and must be affixed to each deer before the carcass can be transported. All hunters required to purchase licenses must wear a red license number and insignia provided when hunting deer.

Ten, 12, 16 and 20-gauge shotguns shooting rifled slugs only may be used during the two-day gun season, and bows of 40-pound pull or more shooting broadhead arrows only will be permitted during the bow-and-arrow season. The use of dogs, domestic animals, automobiles, aircraft or any mechanical conveyances, salt or bait is prohibited for taking deer.

Biologists report that the deer population is "about the same as last year," or about 14,000 animals.

One of the scientific names of the yellow bass is *interrupta*, taken from the broken, "interrupted" lines on the fish's sides.



Jim Sherman Photo.  
Iowa's bowhunters will have an extra week for deerhunting this fall. Bowhunting for deer has soared in popularity, with 58 Iowans taking their deer by this method last fall.





When our streams go dry, their finny residents may seek refuge in isolated pools or bankside ponds. Such "stream havens" restock the rivers when water levels return to normal.

## STREAM HAVENS SAVE FISH

By Andreas A. Paloumpis  
Iowa Cooperative Fisheries  
Research Unit  
Iowa State College

During the past two years Iowa has experienced severe drought conditions. Many people are aware of the effects of drouth conditions on crops, but what is the effect of the drought on the fish population of the streams?

During a study of Squaw Creek near Ames, it was found that certain types of habitat provided places where the fish survive even when many stretches of the stream were completely dry. These habitats were referred to as "stream havens." The fish that survived in these havens repopulated the stream when water was again present in the stream.

### Isolated

As the water level dropped in the creek the stream was reduced to a series of isolated pools. The fish were concentrated in these remaining water areas. Here they were subjected to the dangers of easy predation and suffocation. Raccoon, heron, and other tracks around drying pools attested to the predatory pressure. These pools do permit some of the fish to survive, however.

The Skunk River also served as an important haven. Fish migrating into Squaw Creek from the Skunk River in the spring to spawn aided in the repopulation of the stream. At times, though, even the fish in the Skunk River must resort to "haven pools" to survive some of the drought periods.

The repopulation of Squaw Creek by fish from the Skunk River following severe winter and drought conditions is very important. Prior to the re-establishment of a continuous flow of water in Squaw

Creek to the Skunk River in March, 1956, only four species of minnows were present in the creek. In June, 1956, after Squaw Creek had connected with the Skunk River, 13 species of fish were collected.

### Creekside Ponds

The ponds which border Squaw Creek and the Skunk River also served as important havens during the drought period. The ponds were not affected by the drastic fluctuations experienced in the stream and the fish population contained within them had a better chance for survival. Floods are necessary to repopulate the stream from such bordering ponds.

Fish havens are also important during flood periods. The smaller tributaries of Squaw Creek and the bordering ponds serve as protection during floods when small fish and fish eggs might otherwise all be swept downstream. Creek chubs were found to be spawning in small tributary streams during the 1954 flood.

The survival of a fish population in Squaw Creek and other intermittent streams is possible only because certain rather limited fish habitats remain even during the most severe catastrophes which overtake the stream as a whole. These limited habitats are the "stream havens" of fish.

The Invasion of hunters for the pheasant season recalls an incident of a year ago when one of them brought to Mrs. Barbara Miller, who dresses game birds on occasion, a plump fowl for plucking. It was a goose, an old, tame gray goose burdened with much fat, but it was evident the proud nimrod really believed he'd bagged a wild one. Since the mistake could not be corrected, Mrs. Miller was the soul of tact; She dressed the bird, handed it over and accepted her fee without saying an embarrassing word.—*Emmetsburg Democrat*

## GOOSE CALLING CONTEST: SEPTEMBER 29-30

Officials of the World's Championship Goose Calling Contest have announced that this year's competition will be held at Missouri Valley on September 30, climaxing a two-day program of parades and other entertainment.

It will be the sixth annual meeting of the contest.

This year's first prize will be a \$1,000 savings bond and a 34-inch trophy valued at \$250. Second prize is a 14-foot aluminum boat, and third prize is a 12-gauge magnum shotgun. Trophies will also be awarded second and third-place winners. Many other prizes will be awarded to runners-up.

The contest will be held at the Harrison County Fairgrounds in Missouri Valley at the west edge of town. A full program of entertainment is scheduled, including a return engagement of Mr. and Mrs. Ken Beegle of the Remington Arms Company, who will highlight the show with an exhibition of fancy shooting.

A crowd estimated at 7,000 persons attended the contest last year and watched a Lake Charles, Louisiana father-son team take top honors. Clarence and "Dud" Falk, prominent Louisiana game callers, took first and third place in the competition. Second place winner was an Iowan, Don Drustrup of Missouri Valley.

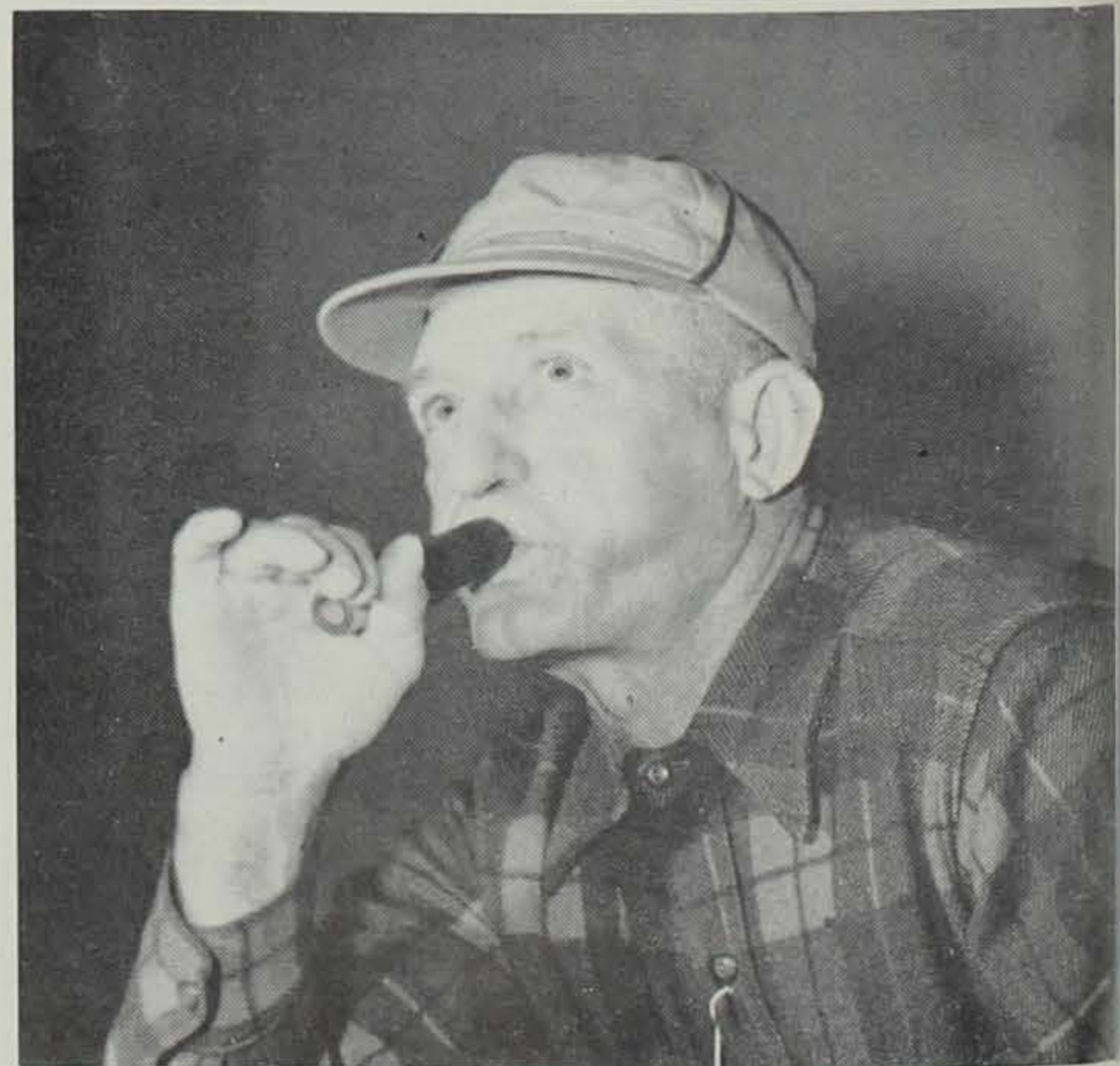
During the first few years of the competition, veteran Iowa goose callers were virtually unchallenged, but competition has become increasingly keen with recent contests. Contest officials report that the Falks will return to defend their titles this year, and may be accompanied by other southern callers.



The champ's trophy is 34 inches high, and is valued at \$250. The best goose caller will also receive a \$1,000 savings bond.

A rattlesnake's age can not be determined by the number of rattles on its tail. Generally, a new "button" is added each time the snake sheds its skin, and this can happen several times a year depending on climate, diet and other conditions.

There is no authentic report of cottonmouths or water moccasins occurring in Iowa. These poisonous, semi-aquatic snakes do occur a short distance south of Iowa in areas of the Mississippi bordering southern Illinois and eastern Missouri.



The world's champion goose caller is Clarence Falk of Lake Charles, Louisiana. His son, Dud Falk, took third place in last year's contest. Both will return in September to defend their titles.





ing in hayfields, the earliest available cover, countless hen pheasants and their nests are destroyed by haying operations. The Soil Bank could alleviate this loss.

## oil Bank . . .

(Continued from page 57)

encies, cropping or grazing of acreage reserves is a violation of contract, and a farmer in violation may forfeit all rights to further payments and may refund all payments previously received by him.

### Cash or Corn

For entering into the acreage reserve program, the farmer is issued negotiable certificates that may be redeemed by the Commodity Credit Corporation for cash or grain, such payment being based on the value of lands in the acreage reserves. The total cash compensation paid to producers for any contract year may not exceed \$50,000,000. At present the acreage reserve program is set up for the years 1956 through 1959.

### No 1956 Game Value

This part of the Soil Bank was set into hurried action, and will have little value to wildlife this year. To date, it has largely consisted of disking, mowing, or cutting immature crops on the acreage reserves. Since most farmers who signed acreage reserve contracts this summer had already planted their fields, destruction of young crops was necessary to fulfill the provisions of the contract.

By early August, 1,203,651 acres

of Iowa farmland were retired under the acreage reserve program. Much of this was in southern Iowa drought areas, where farmers hoped to salvage some income from their withering fields.

But northern Iowa also entered the program. In Kossuth County, one of the primary pheasant ranges, over 18,000 acres were retired. Cerro Gordo retired over 7,000 acres, and Hancock over 8,000 acres. Consider the potential game habitat if over a million acres of Iowa cropland are put into cover crops and left that way through spring, summer and fall!

In 1957, acreage reserves that are established at the beginning of the calendar year may not be planted to crops, but may lie fallow for the 12-month contract period. Since the contracts are made annually, they will generally be of a short-term value to wildlife.

There is a possibility that the acreage reserves may be of no value whatever to wildlife. As we understand it, this contract requires the farmer not to crop his reserve, not to harvest it, and not to graze it. If he chooses, he can plow and disk it and leave the naked soil to the tender mercies of sheet erosion.

### The Better Half

The long-range half of the Soil

Bank, and of greatest interest to foresters and fish and game managers, is the Conservation Reserve. Unlike the annual acreage reserve, the conservation reserve contract is made for not less than three years and for no more than fifteen years.

It is designed to —“establish and maintain protective vegetative cover, water storage facilities, and other soil, water, wildlife, or forest-conserving uses on a specific acreage of land regularly used in the production of crops—”

Such acreage must be in addition to land that would normally be left idle. For example, a farmer who normally holds a tract of land idle may not designate this land as “conservation reserve.” He must enter part of his cropland into the reserve, and continue to allow the other lands to remain fallow as he normally would have.

The conservation reserve part of the Soil Bank is not expected to

depending on types of plantings. Planting must include grass and trees, but is not limited to those cover types and may include others.

In return, the Secretary of Agriculture will make an annual payment based on potential crop and land values and which will be a “fair annual payment.” No individual may receive more than \$5,000 a year for conservation reserve payment.

The government also bears part of the costs, including labor, of establishing and maintaining vegetative cover, water storage facilities, or other soil, water, wildlife, or forest-conserving uses. If the contract is for not less than five years, the government may pay up to 80 per cent of the cost of establishing vegetation or water storage facilities.

### Plant Supplies

This is where state conservation departments can enter the picture,



Jim Sherman Photo.

So far, the Soil Bank has consisted of destroying immature crops, necessary to fulfill the provisions of acreage reserve contracts. Farmers entering into these contracts this winter may not plant their 1957 reserves to crops.

be as extensive as the acreage reserve, for total costs of this part of the program may not exceed \$450,000,000.

### Timber, Wildlife Harvests

Areas under conservation reserve contracts may not be grazed until January 1, 1959, or until such later date as provided in the contract. At the end of the contract period—if such lands are grazed—it must be done in accordance with sound pasture management. Until then, no crops may be harvested from the conservation reserve. However, timber may be taken under good forest management, and wildlife and other natural products may be harvested which do not increase food supplies for livestock. The farmer cannot adopt any practice or divert other lands on his farm from conservation in a way tending to defeat the purposes of the contract.

Conservation reserves will be allowed to lie idle for 3 to 15 years,

for the government may purchase or produce conservation materials or services and make them available to the farmer. Federal, state, or local governmental agencies will be reimbursed for the conservation materials and services furnished, including materials from state nurseries and services of nurserymen, foresters, and perhaps even game managers.

The extent of the demand for such materials and services is not yet known, and state conservation agencies are awaiting word from Washington before they can expand nursery production and furnish personnel and services to the program.

Many fish and game departments are expected to enter this phase of the Soil Bank, for it is essentially a vast extension of planting and wildlife programs they have carried on for years. To the sportsman, it may mean a huge total

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oding field areas, planted under the Soil Bank program, would no longer pour silt into streams and lakes. The owner would save land, and open a new door in fish and game management.





Jim Sherman Photo.  
Much of this fall's quail hunting will depend on weather in August and September, which could produce late broods if favorable. Moisture will be an important factor, enabling gun dogs to work well.

## Quail Hunting . . .

(Continued from page 57)  
seasons for several years, it was noted that many of the birds taken had hatched in August and September. When these immature birds got in with older coveys they were unwilling to fly, remaining on the ground and enabling hunters to get near them. In addition, fields were damp. Both factors were in favor of the hunters, and hunting success was high.

As the season advances, however, the hatches become smaller. The largest broods come off in June and July when it is not uncommon to see 15 or 20 birds together. August nests usually contain less than a dozen eggs.

Wet, warm, sunny days encourage reproduction, and this kind of weather would be a boon to south central Iowa where drought this year was followed by heavy rainstorms that were destructive to young quail. Despite this, a number of young birds have been reported there.

During one other summer, there was a violent wind and rainstorm near Bloomfield. It was later found that young quail that would have been little chicks at the time of the storm were not taken that fall by hunters, indicating that the smallest quail had not survived the storm.

During the dry 1930's in Iowa, and more recently in Missouri, it has been found that quail did little more than replace themselves. There were few surplus birds for the gunners to harvest. This year, the Lamoni area had drought of a type that lowers quail production. During dry periods, few young game birds survive. (Remember on the farm when you sprinkled chicken eggs with water during hot, dry weather? The resulting humid condition was favorable, and reduced mortality of eggs and chicks.)

After this drought, some areas had heavy wind and rainstorms, a combination very destructive to young quail. Although most of the quail range later received beneficial rains, dry weather had re-

appeared in a few sections by July 22.

In summary, the southeast has had a good quail hatch this year. The south-central part of the state has had drought and violent summer storms, causing below-normal quail production to date.

A wet August and September, plus warm days, would create a really good supply of young birds for fall shooting over the entire range. Hunters are already assured of good quail shooting in most of the southeast, but it will be above average only if the weather is wet. Quail are extremely wary when it is dry.

## Is It Good to Eat? . . .

(Continued from page 57)  
can be gotten rid of by thorough scraping with a sharp knife, under water or under the faucet.

Anglers often complain that fish from sloughs have a muddy taste, but I've taken carp from very stale water and find none of this taste if the fish is handled properly. But if these fish are allowed to die and the body contents not removed for several hours they will taste "muddy" or worse.

The carp is one of my favorite food fish. Some object to the fine bones but these won't be noticed if the fish is "scored" before cooking. With a very sharp knife cut the flesh deeply, crosswise, at intervals of a quarter inch or closer. You will not O.K. this "Works" until you try it. Even a person who chews food thoroughly can eat carp prepared in this way.

Carp are fun to catch, too. They are very wary but when hooked are likely to be tackle-busters. It's the only fish that has ever jerked a pole out of my hand—and more than once.

Most fishermen consider the various suckers and redhorse good but too bony, but these can be scored like carp and the bones are no trouble.

For best eating, most scale fish over two pounds should be filleted. Lay the fish on a table or board with the head to your left. Hold the head in your left hand and

with a sharp, long-bladed knife cut down behind the gills to the backbone, then turn the knife and slide it along the top of the backbone. The ribs usually sever easily.

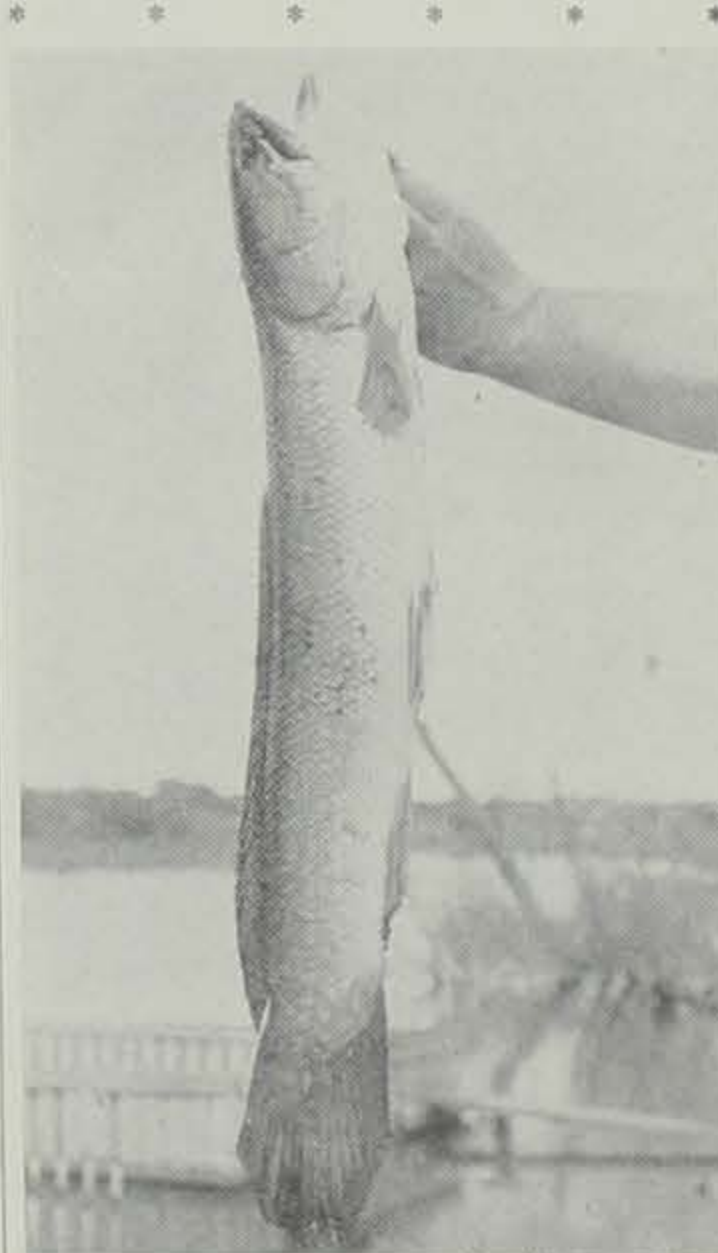
Turn your fish over and repeat the operation, then take these two slabs of fish and lay them on the board, tail to your left and skin side down. Start your knife a quarter-inch from the tail, leaving a "ridge" of meat that you can get a grip on with your fingers, and slide the knife along between skin and flesh, holding the knife blade close down against the board. For something special cut these fillets into strips the size of two fingers, dip in beaten egg, shake up in a paper bag containing a mixture of half flour and half cornmeal, with salt, and fry till well browned.

I consider gar the most questionable for eating, but when gar is all I catch then gar is what I eat. They have a skin like a stove pipe and the easiest way of dressing them is to chop into short sections with a hatchet. Then a sharp knife run around under the skin will let the meat drop out ready to use. It should be cut small and cooked more than other fish.

For dressing catfish I use pliers. Grip the head of the fish with your left hand, nip the skin at the bony projections behind the gills and strip the skin down either side. Cut the flesh top and bottom behind the gills, twist off the head, and scrape the body cavity. Be sure to stun the fish with your pliers before beginning work.

Small fish from little creeks are fun to catch on light tackle, and are excellent eating—creek chubs, river chubs, shiners, dough-bellies, muckle-heads.

Here's hoping you catch a lot of fish—and don't throw any of them away until you try proper handling—and eating.



Jim Sherman Photo.  
Of the 41 fish species eaten by the author, he ranks the bowfin or dogfish as tops. He made "grindburgers" that tasted like chicken.

## Wardens Tales

Shop Talk from the Field

Frank Starr, Conservation Officer at Storm Lake, sent in the unusual accompanying picture of Mrs. John Gilchrist of Cherokee and a deformed catfish that she recently hooked in Spring Lake in Greene County.

Ruby and John Gilchrist have taken many catfish, but none quite



like this one. It was caught on chicken entrails and weighed 6 pounds, 4 ounces.

Fish are sometimes taken from lakes where they have been scarred by outboard motor props. No such scar is evident in this photograph, and it is possible that the catfish was deformed as a fingerling. However, it appears to be in good flesh and healthy condition.

Something's always happening down in Mills and Montgomery counties, Conservation Officer Christie Hein's home territory.

Christie was crating some raccoons for the state fair, and one of the animals was not being very cooperative. He'd just get most of the 'coon in the crate and would begin to shut the lid when a foot would come out through the opening and Br'er 'Coon would pull himself out of the box.

At first it was funny, but after a time Christie began getting a little irked. Which was about the time a small voice piped up at Christie's elbow, and one of the junior Heins commented "Daddy, that 'coon just has too many feet!"

The July issue of the CONSERVATIONIST included a Warden's Tale from Commissioner Deg Reynolds of Creston, who told of an angler catching two 1 1/4-pound bass at the same time on a small black plug in Green Valley Lake.

Two weeks later, the editor went fishing in Green Valley Lake, at the same time of day, and with the same make and color of plug. And what happened? Two 1 1/4-pound bass caught at the same time on one cast!

Trouble is, no one believes such a story, and we'd be better off if it had never happened—





res' looking at you: Old Jug O' Rum himself. Our largest frog, the big green bullfrog has no spots, and may stretch-measure 14 inches.

## BULLFROGGIN': THE HYBRID SPORT

No one is quite sure whether it could be called "frog hunting" or "frog fishing." It probably depends on how you go about it. And however you go about it, it's none of our other field sports. Iowa's main table frog is the bullfrog, which reaches generous proportions in southern and eastern parts of the state. This is the largest American frog and may reach a total length of 15 inches. Such giants are rare this far north and Iowa froglegs that measure 7 inches are big ones.

In spite of his size, or perhaps because of it, the bullfrog is quite shy and is seldom found far from water. He does most of his still-hunting along the margins of streams and ponds, has a voracious appetite, and may take almost anything he can swallow. One Missouri frog hunter has reported cutting open a bullfrog and finding a small, living turtle. This appetite may be his downfall.

According to Dr. Kenneth Carlander, bullfrogs were apparently native only to southern and southwestern Iowa and to the Mississippi River counties, but the species has spread and can be found in many parts of Iowa, including streams, farm ponds and artificial lakes.

### Gigging

One of the main frog-hunting places in Iowa is in the tangled, swampy, backwater areas of the Mississippi, where the big amphibians are usually hunted at night with spotlights. This is almost always done by boat, rowing slowly in a likely area and picking up reflections of frogs' eyes in the dark and then "gigging" the crea-

tures with a frog spear. A boat can get close to bullfrogs at night, and in some parts of the south large numbers of bullfrogs are speared for the market.

### "Fly Fishing"

An effective but more unusual method is by "fishing" with a long fly rod or cane pole during the day. The time-honored bait is a small strip of red flannel on a small fish hook. Dangled before a bullfrog's nose, it produces results. However, the traditional red flannel is not necessary, and almost any artificial fly or panfish "bug" will

do as well.

This "frog fishing" can be done at almost any time of the day when there is good light. We usually do it by scanning areas of the bank with field glasses, spotting the motionless frogs and marking them down by nearby landmarks. Although they may be hunted by simply ambling along the shore, the frogs may be resting below a low bank or overhang and are difficult to see until it's too late.

Once the frogs are spotted, we slip along the bank until we're directly behind them and then dangle a small fly or lure over the bank in the general vicinity of the frog. Big frogs will sometimes strike a lure instantly; at other times they must be teased a little. When we first took a big frog by this method we expected quite a scrap. However, the frog was easily hoisted up on the bank with little resistance.

### Protected

Bullfrogs are listed in Iowa's fishing regulations as a protected species, with a daily catch limit of 12 and a possession limit of 12. The 1956 bullfrog season extends from May 12 to November 30.

A big bullfrog's legs may be almost as large as the drumsticks of a chicken, and in the opinion of many are much better eating. Although the big hind legs are the main fare, some frog hunters also use the backs and front legs of larger frogs. The skin is easily stripped off, and cleaning a mess of froglegs requires only a few minutes.

A favorite cooking method is frying the froglegs just as you might fry a young chicken. The legs may also be breaded, dipped in batter, or deep-fat fried. They are delicate and fine-flavored, and

rank with lobsters in many plush restaurants.

Bullfroggin' hits its zenith in the southern states where bullfrogs are quite common and reach their largest size. Generally, they are not heavily hunted in Iowa except in local areas where they occur in fair numbers. But they can provide delicious rations, and a unique sport that helps make life interesting. J. M.

## DECRIES ROADSIDE SPRAYING

R R 1

Wever, Iowa

Gentlemen:

We subscribe to your *Conservationist*. The whole family, including my wife and daughter, like it very much, but my two boys re-read it many times.

But! I didn't write this letter to praise you. It is simply to ask why you constantly preach on cover for wildlife, preservation of trees, and keeping down erosion, yet do nothing about county road crews spraying the country roads with weed and brush killer.

We live on Skunk River and perhaps you are familiar with the beautiful rough country around here. We have many beautiful small side roads that used to be a wonderful treat to drive—or walk along—either in winter or summer.

The trees were so thick that they formed a tunnel over the road, and on the roadside were wild plum, ash, dogwood, locust and many trees not common in heavy woods. Under the trees were bloodroot and many other wild flowers and mushrooms. But since they've started the spraying program, these roads are only a smear of yellow clay and dead trees. Beautiful, white-limbed sycamores were even killed.

We don't blame the power companies—it wasn't them. I contacted the county agricultural agent but he wasn't interested. If you people have any power at all, please practice what you preach.

Our whole family loves nature. We know how to enjoy it. We love to hunt and pick mushrooms, black berries, gather nuts and wild plums, and find wild flowers (without picking them) and look them up in our flower books. I only hope that my grandchildren have the same opportunity. But I feel it is up to people like you gentlemen to preserve nature for them.

My voice is small and weak, for I am just a laboring man with no position or political influence, so there isn't much I can do.

You people have strong voices—please use them.

Sincerely,  
(Signed) Eston E. Ross

## IMPROVING SCENERY

Mark Twain, lover of the American outdoors and a pretty good man with a hook and line, once said: "Nothing helps scenery like ham and eggs."



The leopard frog is a good food species, but is generally not hunted for food since most specimens are too small to furnish big drumsticks.



## Soil Bank . . .

(Continued from page 61)

acreage relieved from cultivation and planted to vital wildlife cover.

### Weak Link

Game managers have long known that the weakest link in the chain of game production is lack of suitable nesting, escape and wintering cover. One of the greatest losses sustained by Iowa pheasants is not during the hunting season, but during the early nesting season when hens are forced to nest in hayfields for want of more suitable cover. Thousands of hen pheasants, and their eggs and broods, are destroyed during spring and early summer laying.

The autumnal and winter collapse of rabbit population is largely due to lack of suitable cover. A cottontail caught in the open with little cover during the winter is easy prey for cold, malnutrition, and predation. The same is true of quail, which may be sharply reduced in their northern Iowa ranges by a severe winter.

For almost any Iowa game species, large total acreages of retired land planted to trees, semi-permanent game cover, or even to annual cover crops could be of incalculable value.

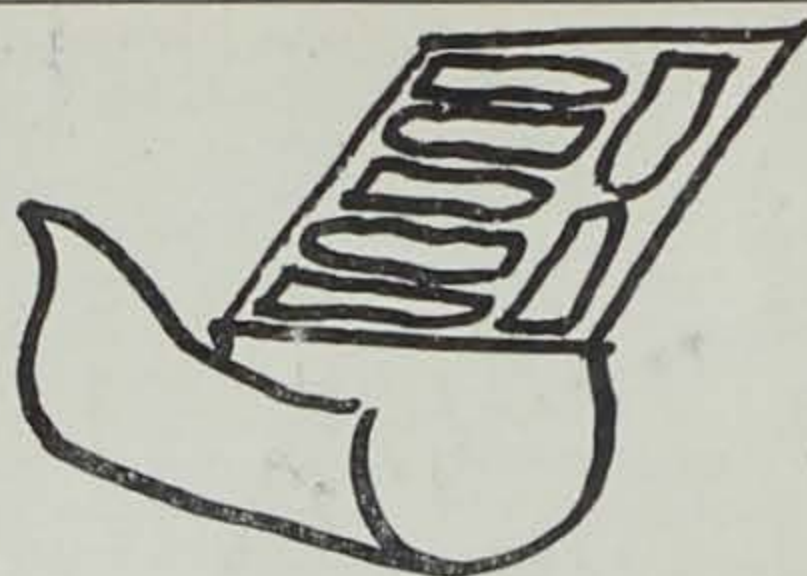
### Erosion Check

Many present Iowa croplands would benefit for lack of cultivation. Many eroding areas now in crops would be healed by protective cover planted under the Soil Bank. It will probably be such marginal croplands that will first be placed in the conservation reserves. Ideally, this could result in great reduction of erosion and aid in checking wasteful runoff, erosion, and siltation of lakes and rivers. It all depends of course, on the extent of lands entered under Soil Bank contracts. The value of the program will depend on the farmers who accept it.

### Word To Sportsmen

Sportsmen have a big stake in the Soil Bank Program. In its fullest form, the act can be a fulfillment of an old dream of foresters, conservationists, and thinking sportsmen. But only if the farmer enters into the contract.

To some extent, farmers are gamblers. This year the average Iowa farmer is being paid \$44 for every acre in his acreage reserve. However, in a normal year he might gamble on having good crops, on the premise that his land would yield him more than \$44 an acre if planted. In which case he would plant his lands and not enter the acreage reserve. In good years he might be reluctant to enter the conservation reserve program, which would tie up acreage for at least 3 years. The inducement of land retirement payments and the proposition of reducing surplus farm commodities may not be enough for some farmers. Perhaps, in some such cases, the sportsman can help convince them of the benefits and value of land retirement.



## A FOX-FUR SLEEPING ROBE

A unique magazine was sent to the Commission offices recently by Dr. Paul Errington of Iowa State College. It was the *Sevensk Jakt* or "Swedish Hunter," an outdoor publication printed in Sweden.

Contained in the issue was an article by Elsa Haglund entitled "Get A Fox Blanket!" With the help of Mrs. Catherine McChesney of the Conservation Commission, a translation was made. Here's the text:

"Many seasons ago the fox-fur robe was popular with the wanderers, as well as the down robe.

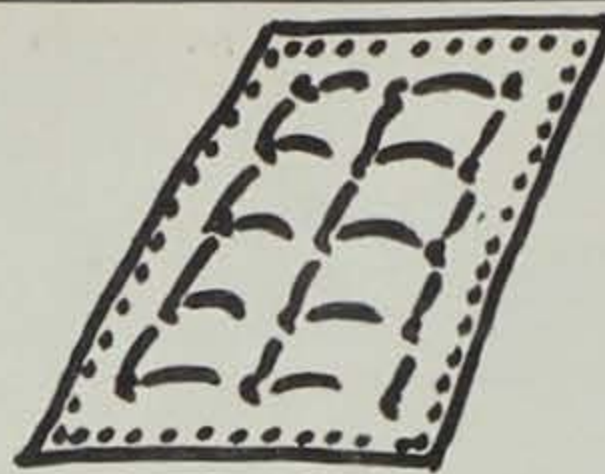
In the writer's opinion, Iowa sportsmen should do everything they can to promote the principles of the Soil Bank. The individual should familiarize himself with the program, become an active advocate of the principles of wise land retirement and conservation, and become active in selling them.

### May Be The Answer

With extensive cooperation by landowners, the Soil Bank could be the answer to many game management problems and be of infinite importance to the Iowa hunter and fisherman. Even if the program is not widely embraced, and even if it undergoes political juggling, it is difficult to foresee any ill effects on fish, game, forest and soil. Its benefits will be a matter of degree, but it is a happy situation in which fish and game stocks can hardly suffer.

Under either phase of the Soil Bank, effects on our fish and game will not be immediate. Under the acreage reserve, no importance benefits will probably be noticed until at least next fall, and possibly not until the autumn of 1958. The fruits of the long-range conservation reserve program will probably appear even later. A program as extensive as the Soil Bank cannot be activated overnight, and even if it was it would require some time for state fish and game departments to effectively join in the work.

If widely accepted, the program can affect Iowa's farm economy and our outdoor sports profoundly. It will not mean an immediate facelifting for Iowa or any other state. But it's a beginning, and a hopeful sign that at last we may be learning to live in harmony with our land.



It compared well with the down robes used for children.

"The stomach skin is more widely used, but fur robes intended as gifts should include the back skins. I used a backing material that was a type of sailcloth; a piece about 48 inches wide and 12 feet long was just right for 7 skins." (Skins were sewn to only one half the material, as shown.)

"I cut the skins on the centerline of the stomach, taking off head and feet. They were laid for one day in the warm sun on a table and cured." (Evidently the author did not tan them!)

"The material was laid out on the table. Five pelts were laid crossways on it and the remaining two skins were laid lengthways along the edge to fill the remainder of one-half of the backing cloth. The skins were then sewed tightly to the material. They were given a good DDT treatment, then the other half of the backing material was folded over the skins and the entire outside of the blanket was sewn together. The fox-fur robe was then quilted together in places, making a warm, light robe that weighs only 1.65 kilos. (about 3½ pounds).

"This outfit serves well in the winter especially when sleeping on the ground, and is both warm and windproof. Fox fur is better in some respects than down, for it does not pack and mat as you sleep on it."

The author went on to remark that she plans to make a sleeping bag next time, probably using two of these fox-fur quilts.

This might be an interesting project for an Iowa fox hunter or trapper who keeps his pelts and is reluctant to dispose of them at current market rates. One thing is certain: it gets colder in Sweden than it does in Iowa, so it might be a piece of equipment worth trying. If any of our readers makes such a blanket, we'd be interested in hearing about it. J. M.

Contrary to popular opinion, it is not necessary to split a crow's tongue to teach it to talk. Pet crows can speak many simple words without any treatment, and are among our most intelligent birds.

The alligator snapping turtle of the deep south "decoys" fish with its open mouth. This turtle's tongue is fleshy and white, and lures hungry fish into the open jaws of the waiting turtle.

## Mighty Missouri . . .

(Continued from page 58)

Decatur City Bridge near Onawa. Hundreds of acres in extent, it is often as clear as any central Iowa sand pit. Dick noticed what he thought was a sunken log, and as he walked closer the thing moved a bit.

"It was a northern pike lying in the shallows, evidently for spawning," Dick said. "It was about forty inches long, and we stared at each other a moment before it swam off. Man, was I shook!"

In the past year, fishermen seining minnows tell of finding increasing numbers of northern pike fingerlings, and the state shocking crews have turned up some good northern.

So far, there is little fishing with artificial lures in the Missouri. It doesn't have the extensive backwaters of the Mississippi, and consists mainly of channel and vast sandbars. However, future engineering developments may create more man-made oxbow lakes which should be quite clear and provide excellent sportfishing.

Most of the fishing now is in the main channel for catfish and sauger, and in the areas around the extensive pile dikes that protect the river's banks. In a stabilized river where silt loads are held at low levels, the eddies around these great pilings might afford excellent fishing for bass, panfish and other game species.

### Ducks and Pike

As river levels remain fairly static, vegetation has begun to appear in the shallows of some areas. During the past year fairly extensive growths of bullrush and other sedges have emerged in coves and backwaters, and they may be attractive to waterfowl and serve as spawning and cover areas for many species of game fish. This growth may already have had some effect on waterfowl. Jauron has noticed this summer—for the first time—broods of young wood ducks, mallards, pintails and bluewing teal on the Missouri.

To most of us, the surprising thing is the increased use of the river by pleasure boaters. There are now public boat landings at Council Bluffs, Missouri Valley, Mondamin, and Sioux City. Another landing is being planned at Onawa.

From these landings all sizes and descriptions of boats are launched, and it is not unusual to see family groups on the river. Some of the boats are piloted by lone women. Unheard of twenty years ago!

The Mighty Missouri is still dangerous, as is any large river. But it isn't the threat it once was, and its reign of terror has passed for the time being. With that passing, Iowans are finding new water recreation in a place where man never expected it.