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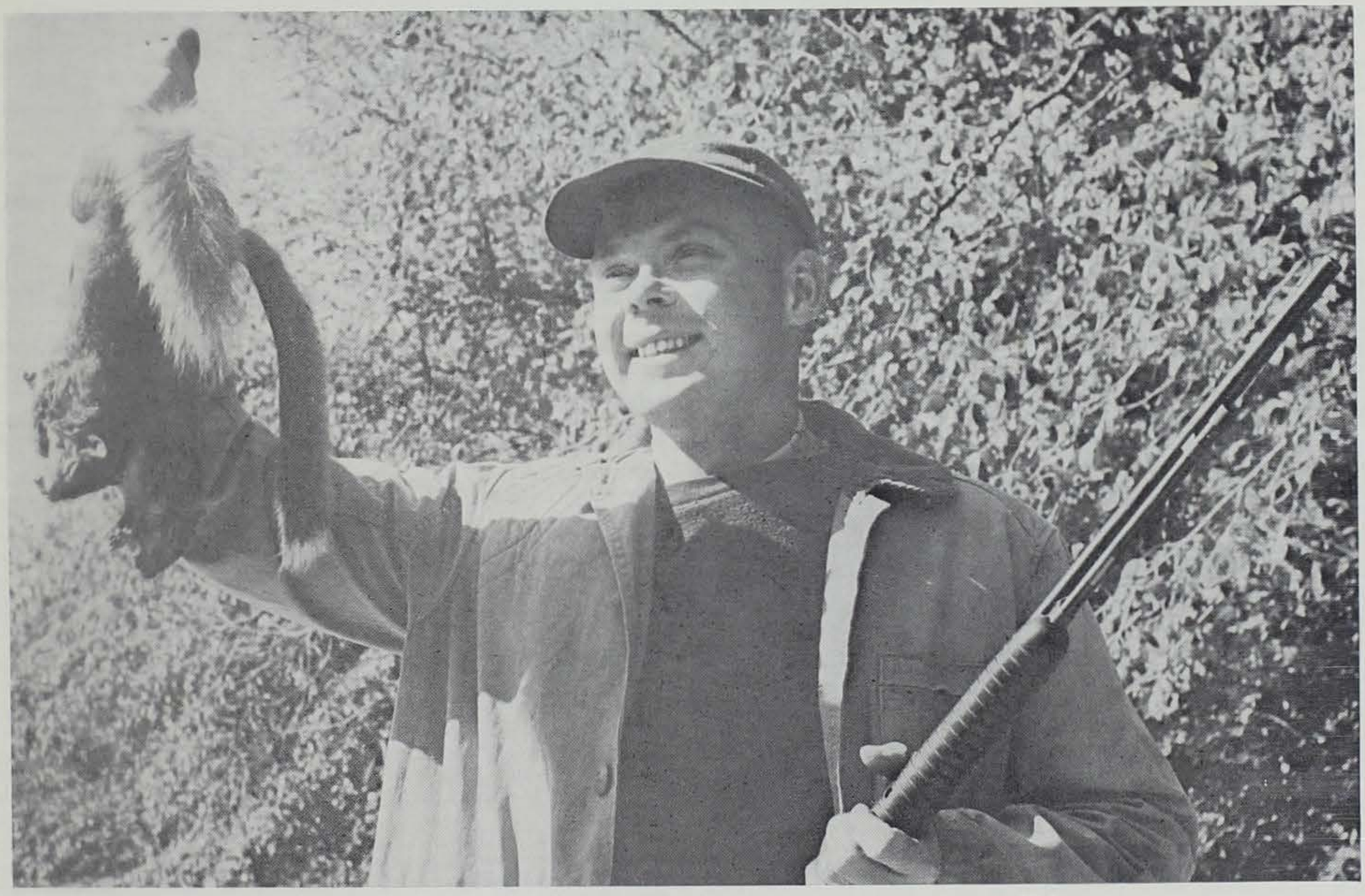
LET'S GO HUNTING



Because squirrels are usually underharvested, they're nearly always plentiful.

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The season on this fellow opens Oct. 28.

By Joe Elstner

It's in full swing again—that time when husbands who were "too tired" to mow the lawn or wash the windows suddenly are able to tramp the fields for miles without rest . . . the time when baseball takes a back seat to buckshot . . . the time when a good way to determine the presence of the men in your house is to check the gun rack.

The season's name is HUNTING, and it's back for its yearly visit. And, according to Iowa Conservation Commission officials, hunters should have little reason to be disappointed as the seasons for each game species merge into one another.

Outlook Good

"The overall hunting outlook is good," says Dr. Gene Klonglan, assistant superintendent of biology. "However, as in most years, hunting success will depend on weather conditions."

Weather, along with the availability of cover, greatly affects populations of game birds and mammals. In turn, hunting seasons are usually adjusted to these annual population fluctuations. Big factors here are the game surveys and censuses conducted by biologists, conservation officers, and rural mail carriers to determine the status of each species.

(Continued on page 75)

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Good numbers of cottontails will be found over all of Iowa.

Ringnecks—A Popular Worry

By Richard Nomsen
Game Biologist

"When does the pheasant season open?—I've seen more pheasants on my farm this year than ever before."

"What happened to the pheasants?—I've seen only three broods of chicks."

"Large broods this year—most of the broods have nine or ten young."

"Pheasant broods appear to be pretty small this year—average may be four or five chicks."

"I think every hen in our part of the state was successful in raising a brood this year."

"We are seeing quite a few hens without chicks in our area."

This all started at the 1967 Iowa State Fair. Thousands of interested fair visitors passed by the Game Section each day, and many paused long enough to discuss the welfare of Iowa's number one game bird—the ringneck pheasant. The comments above include only a few of the many contradictory remarks made voluntarily by farmers and hunters. They were all referring to pheasants in Iowa this year, and each comment was serious and sincere.

People Concerned

When a gaudy game bird such as the ringneck pheasant remains at the top of the popularity list for so many hunters, it's not difficult to understand the sincere concern for this species. Actually, the comments listed are not as contradictory as they seem to appear. The interested observers were speaking of pheasants in their particular area of the state's pheasant range—each one widely separated from the other. And it's possible that each statement describes the situation for that particular part of Iowa's pheasant range.

Iowans are indeed fortunate that pheasants inhabit such a large portion of the Hawkeye State. Winter storm loss, adverse weather during the nesting season, or drastic changes in farming practices affect only portions of Iowa's

(Continued on page 76)

In 1966, 240,000 pheasant hunters stalked Iowa's number one game bird.

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CIRCULATION THIS ISSUE 63,573

IT'S TOUGH!

Iowans who think their state's hunting laws cramp their styles would feel even more hampered in Bavaria, Germany.

According to Marc Cox and Erwin Sias of the *Sioux City Journal,* here are the requirements Bavarian hunters have to meet.

They must:

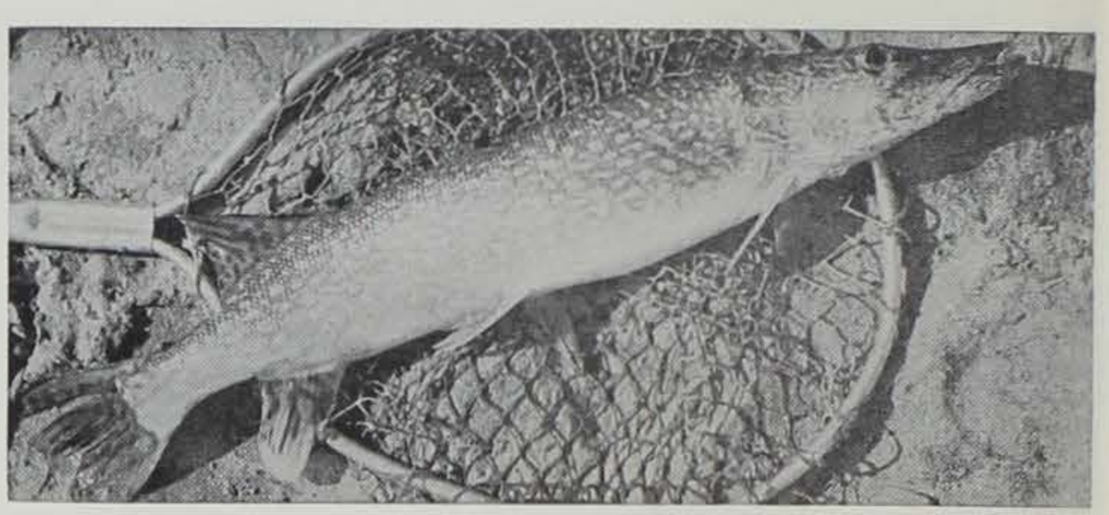
Be 18 years of age or older.

Pass a six-month course in laws, customs, game management and related subjects.

Have $35,000 personal liability insurance.

Have $3,500 property liability insurance.

Hire a qualified guide and get written permission from the landowner.



FISH QUIZ

By Lloyd Huff
State Conservation Officer

1. Which class of minnows make up the majority of the minnow population in most Iowa streams?
2. Which fish was originally called tooth herring because of teeth located on the tongue?
3. Do eels have scales?
4. Are muskellunge native to the Mississippi River?
5. Which sunfish has a bright red spot on the margin of the gill cover and has six or more horizontal wavy bars of turquois or emerald on the sides?
6. In what area in Iowa are the grass pickerel most abundant?
7. In what area in Iowa are attempts made to catch the blue catfish?
8. Which native Iowa fish, both male and female, die after spawning once?
9. Which is the smallest fish in the sunfish family?
10. Which species of fish lives to be 50 years old?

(Answers on page 80)

COMMISSION MINUTES

State Conservation Commission Meeting Held in Clear Lake, Iowa, July 28-29, 1967

Chairman Mike F. Zack administered the Oath of Office to William E. Noble and Edward Weinheimer. Mr. Noble was appointed to serve a six-year term on the Commission, effective July 1, 1967. Mr. Weinheimer was re-appointed to a second six-year term, effective July 1, 1967.

The Staff was authorized to set up a pilot program on Clear Lake this year on the establishment of an inviolate refuge during the waterfowl season through the cooperation of the Fish & Game Division and the Lands & Waters Division.

Land & Waters

The Director was authorized to enter into an agreement with the City of Chariton for securing and furnishing water for Red Haw Lake State Park at a commercial rate.

The application of the Chemplex Construction Corporation for a construction permit was denied.

County Conservation Activities

The request of the Buchanan County Conservation Board to acquire 3.20 acres of land as a gift for the purpose of preserving a wildlife habitat area 10 miles northeast of Independence was approved.

Howard County Conservation Board received approval to acquire 10 acres of land as a gift, with the only cost being a charge of $400.00 per acre for 3 to 4 acres of work land, for the purpose of developing a wildlife habitat area located approximately 3½ miles northwest of Elma.

The Jasper County Conservation Board received approval to acquire 97.65 acres of timber land at a total cost of $14,647.50 located 7 miles west of the town of Baxter.

A motion was made and approved to permit the Pocahontas County Conservation Board to acquire 8.50 acres of land under a renewable 10 year lease at a total cost of $1.00 for the purpose of developing a recreational area joining the southeast corner of the town of Laurens.

Approval was granted the Pottawattamie County Conservation Board to acquire 20 acres of land at a cost of $1,000 per acre, which cost will be shared equally by the State Conservation Commission, for the purpose of developing a Missouri River access area located 2 miles south of Council Bluffs.

Marion County Conservation Board received approval for their development plan and report prepared for their Wilcox Wildlife Preserve located 11 miles southeast of Knoxville.

The request of the Page County Conservation Board for their revised development plan and report prepared for their Pioneer Park Area located 9 miles west of Clarinda was approved.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the request of the Pocahontas County Conservation Board for a Highway 3 safety rest area located 10½ miles west of Pocahontas.

Taylor County Conservation Board received approval of the development plan and report prepared for their Wilson Park Area located 2½ miles south of the town of Lenox.

Webster County's Conservation Board received approval of their revised development plan and report prepared for their Kennedy Park Area located 4 miles north of Fort Dodge.

Jack rabbit hunters should do best in central and northwest Iowa.

LET'S GO HUNTING . . . (Continued from page 73)

The survey results are carefully reviewed by Commission officials, who make season and limit recommendations to the Commission for action. In setting seasons and limits, the Commission tries to give hunters the opportunity to harvest as much of the game surpluses as possible.

Game managers try to keep game populations in balance with the protective cover available. Although the same management techniques can often be used for all game, each species presents a slightly different problem for the Commission's game managers.

Concerning quail, for example, there is no selective shooting of one sex or the other by hunters. However, quail populations are known for their high annual turnovers, and if the surplus is not harvested by hunters, it will be lost to natural causes anyway.

Managing pheasant populations requires Commission personnel to use different techniques. Pheasant populations are not affected by hunting, because only cock birds are taken. Pheasants are polygamous, and so a sex ratio of only one cock bird to 10 hens is more than enough to insure adequate reproduction. The main factors limiting population here are the quantity and quality of winter and nesting cover on hand, and the number of days of good mating weather. If the surplus roosters aren't harvested by hunters, the cock birds will compete with hens for protective cover during severe wintry weather.

Continual Surplus

No matter how great the pheasant harvest, Iowa hunters have never come close to shooting too many roosters. In 1966 they took 64 percent of the available cocks—the same as in 1965, when the total harvest was slightly below average (1.1 million). Even with the extra hunting effort put forth in the very good long seasons of 1963 and 1964, hunters took only 70 to 75 percent of the roosters. They could safely take at least 90 percent.

This means there will always be a surplus of rooster pheasants available for the taking each year, whether the population is at a peak, just average, or even a bit below. They can, and should, furnish the basis for a lot of hunting opportunity.

High annual turnovers, while typical of pheasant and quail populations, are not characteristic of waterfowl. Population levels are determined largely by the quantity and quality of nesting habitat and good nesting weather. Since waterfowl migrate to warmer areas in winter, they rarely suffer a winterkill.

Hunting pressure is a limiting factor in waterfowl populations because it can create a shortage of brood stock for the available nesting areas each spring.

Like upland game bird populations, squirrel and rabbit populations are affected by weather and availability of cover and undergo high yearly turnovers. They're also continually underharvested, however, and so seasons and limits remain long and liberal.

Unlike squirrels and rabbits, deer have no high turnover rates, and can be "stockpiled" from season to season. Caution must be used in managing deer populations, because these larger animals reproduce in much fewer numbers and can be overharvested if regulated poorly.

Let's take a look now at the forecast for individual species this fall and winter.

Squirrels

Not surprisingly, the squirrel outlook is "good this year as always—they're always underharvested," according to Klonglan. Squirrel hunting should be especially good in the timber areas of northeast and southern Iowa. State forests and farm windbreaks will yield many squirrels because of their high density of squirrels per acre.

Rabbits

Commission officials rate Iowa's rabbit population as "well above average" this year. The highest cottontail concentrations will be found in the southern one-third of the state, but all other parts of Iowa will also have good populations. Jack rabbit distribution is another story, with the highest concentrations in central, west central, and northwest Iowa. Hunting for both species should be good, and, as usual, especially after a snowfall.

"Experience has shown us that rabbit hunting success is higher with more snow cover," Klonglan said. "It's easier then to hunt, and seems to make it more fun—that's why many rabbit hunters don't start until snow comes. Just the same, we think they're missing some good hunting earlier in the season."

Iowa's 66,000 quail hunters enjoyed a record harvest last season of over one million birds.

Quail

Iowa quail hunters should again have a banner season, even after last year's record harvest of over one million quail by about 66,000 hunters. Indications are that another successful quail year is in the offing.

The first estimate production in 1967 is based on returns from the state-wide reports of cooperating rural letter carriers. This late July survey indicates young are numerous. The returns show about 35 quail per 100 miles were seen by carriers. This is about 20 percent more than they reported in 1966. A final report, with more precise figures, will be available in the near future.

All 1967 calculations from quail surveys show good populations exist. Winter survival was good. Spring numbers were high. Summer roadside counts were high. Calling quail heard on over 1,000 listening stops throughout Iowa revealed good breeding populations. The production season has been long in spite of an early spring cold spell. On research areas, calling birds have been actively giving the "Bobwhite" calls since May with a calling peak in late June and in July. This indicates a long production season. Recently on southern Iowa game research routes numerous coveys of young quail have been seen. Some of these are nearly grown—this shows a good early hatch.

Pheasants

Hunters stalking Iowa's number one game bird—the ringneck pheasant—will be following in the wake of the 1966 harvest that was the highest state-wide kill in the nation. This was the second year in the past three years Iowa has had this distinction.

Last year's harvest was about 1,449,000 roosters, matching the average kill in recent years of one and one-fourth to one and one-half million surplus cock birds, with a total nearing two million in peak years.

According to Commission biologists, pheasant hunters in most of Iowa should be about as successful as they were last year. Though the brood stock on hand last spring was one of the best in recent

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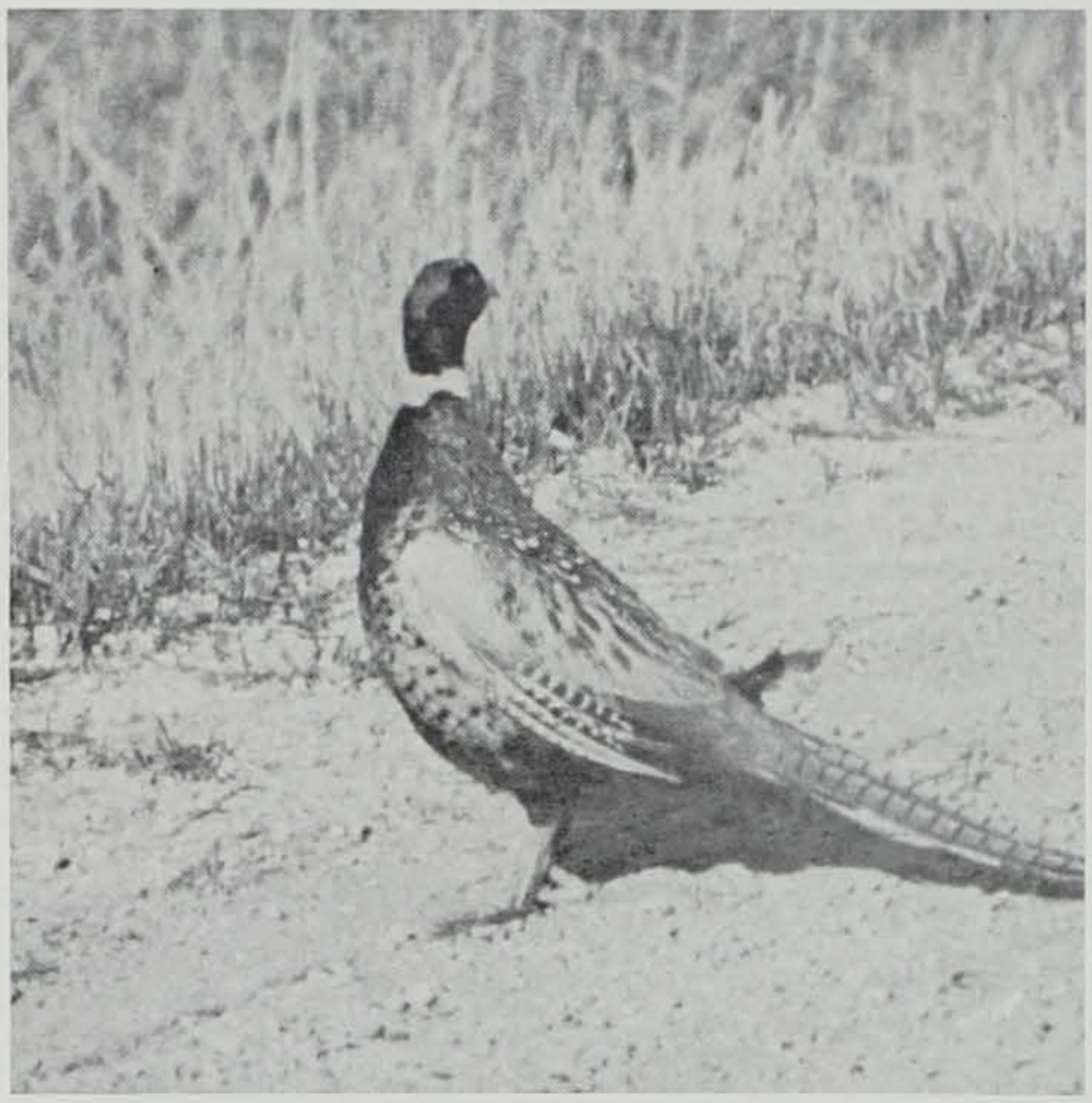

Last year's harvest of 1,500,000 rooster pheasants left plenty to spare for this season.

LET'S GO HUNTING . . . (Continued from page 75)

years, the unfavorable combination of cold and wet weather in May and June held hatching success below normal in some areas, particularly in Iowa's northwest quarter.

The top population areas for 1967 will again be east central and southwest Iowa—areas that have for the past several years had high pheasant concentrations.

Game Superintendent Bob Barratt, talking about the 1967 waterfowl seasons, said "There is little reason to think they won't be good. However, they're tough to predict."

Poor Canadian habitat conditions led to shorter duck seasons and restrictive bag limits.

Ducks

Duck populations are down slightly from peak years, Barratt said, due mainly to poor conditions in Canadian habitat areas. This was reflected in the setting of short seasons and restrictive bag limits on each species.

Habitat and water areas in Iowa are "in good shape," Barratt said, and that barring unfavorable weather, duck hunting should be good.

Barratt emphasized that Iowa's duck management is in a cooperating system with other states and Canada, and that good duck populations for the flyway as a whole are the primary goal. A relative abundance of ducks in a certain area may not be indicative of flyway populations overall, he said.

Geese

Barratt also reported good prospects for goose hunters. Good numbers of geese in widely scattered groups are usually found at the beginning of a season, with populations then tapering off. Toward the season's end, geese will be concentrated mainly at refuges and other gathering points.

Deer

Iowa's 1967 deer herd should be similar in size to last year's, said Harry Harrison, the Commission's superintendent of biology.

"If there is any population difference, it would be down slightly," he added. "It's difficult to get a good count—about the best we can do is to observe big changes."

Harrison said the new six zone plan's main function will be simply to restrict hunting where deer populations are down, and extend the opportunity where there are more deer.

"We're trying to utilize our deer resource to its greatest extent," he said.

The gun deer season will be Dec. 2, 3 and 4 in zones 1, 2 and 3, and Dec. 2 and 3 in zones 4, 5 and 6. Bowmen may hunt deer from Sept. 30 to Nov. 30, 1967, throughout Iowa. With either method a bag, possession, and season limit of one deer of any age or sex will be in effect.

There you have it—game populations are nearly all up, the hunting outlook is bright, and with a fair shake from the weatherman, few game bags should be empty.

RINGNECKS . . . (Continued from page 74)

pheasant range during any one season. Other areas may not be affected by nature's changes.

State-wide surveys last spring indicated a good breeding population of pheasants in Iowa. Favorable reports were received from all areas of the pheasant range as was expected. The pheasant population had increased during 1966 and the birds wintered well through the relatively mild cold weather season. The state-wide harvest of cocks last fall increased to nearly 1,500,000 ringnecks, with plenty of roosters to spare for the 1967 breeding season. Winter sex ratio counts and harem sizes last spring averaged three hens per cock, which would indicate that two-thirds of the roosters were harvested during the 1966 season. Generally, Iowa hunters shoot between 65-75 percent of the available roosters each fall, well below the 90 percent that could be taken.

Changeable Weather

Weather conditions during April were excellent in Iowa, which tends to promote early nesting. Early nesting usually denotes a successful hatching season. However, a hard freeze the first week of May disrupted nesting activity in parts of Iowa's northern pheasant range, and heavy June rains caused trouble in other areas. Weather patterns returned to more normal conditions in July and August.

Pheasants in such areas of drastic weather changes reacted accordingly. Extreme cold or wet usually results in nest abandonment. Pheasant hens will leave the established nest and begin another nest soon in the same vicinity. Broods of young chicks were being observed in these areas late in August and early September as a result of renesting attempts. This would account for some of the hens seen without broods earlier in the summer.

Extremely heavy rainstorms occasionally take their toll of newly hatched chicks. This is especially true during the middle of June, the peak hatching period. Increased chick mortality would be indicated by a decrease in the average number of chicks per brood.

Need Cover

Pheasants in Iowa are a product of their environment. They require a place to live which includes safe winter cover for the potential brood stock and secure nesting cover to fully utilize their reproductive capacity. Normal or above normal temperatures with near normal rainfall provide the optimum weather conditions for a favorable nesting season. However, the persistent hen pheasant doesn't give up if these conditions are not met. She will renest a second or even third time to try to successfully hatch a clutch of eggs.

The hardy ringnecks will soon be back in season, and all signs point to a typically good Iowa pheasant harvest. One ingredient is missing—that avid pheasant hunter, but there seems to be little doubt that he'll be in abundance when opening day, Nov. 11, arrives.

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HOW TO HUNT PHEASANTS

By Don Cummings
Game Manager

Iowa hunters could safely take 90 percent of the cock pheasants available in a season.

In the hunting of any game species, three techniques are used to put the hunter within shooting range. But, when hunting ringneck pheasants, only the first two are successful.

Method number one is to drive game to the hunter, and number two is to "locate and approach." Hunting pheasants by the last method—letting the birds come to the hunter—is like sitting on a stool in the pasture and waiting for the cows to back up to be milked.

Drive and Block

The first and probably the most popular pheasant technique is the "drive and block" method. With this hunting tactic, several hunters (six to 10) are spaced out to comb as much of a field as possible. The spacing, of course, depends on the amount and type of cover present, but usually a distance of eight to 10 corn rows apart is plenty. At the other end of the field, blockers stand to shoot the birds as they flush ahead of the drivers.

During the first few days of the season, only one or two blockers are needed, for most of the shooting comes from the drivers. This is because the birds are not so wild and will hold in the cover, flushing only when the drivers come near. However, after a ringneck has been shot at once or twice he becomes crafty as a fox and swift of foot. He seems to know instinctively that his greatest safety lies in running, rather than flying, away from the danger. This is the time to increase the number of blockers—to sandwich the pheasants between the hunters.

When the pheasants are wary, the blockers should not get in position until the drivers are ready to move, for the pheasants may shift out at the sides or flush before the hunt is started. The drivers should not walk too fast, but should go slowly and stop frequently, with the blockers remaining very quiet, walking up and down the field until it's covered.

Last Drive Best

The last drive in a cornfield is usually the most productive, for the birds shift to the side not already covered. This drive should be made into the wind to cut down the amount of noise which may spook the birds. Also, if the cornfield has small grassy cover areas in or near it, work the birds into this cover. They will hold better in the grass and will allow the gunners to get ready before the birds flush.

The "drive and block" technique works well on small cover areas where two, three or four are hunting. Weedy or grassy waterways, fence rows, sloughs, small brushy or weedy patches and roadsides are good areas to work out. Remember, the smaller the group the smaller the cover to be hunted.

Hunters using the second method, the locate and approach technique, are at a disadvantage without a dog. However, success is generally good with this technique during the early portion of the season. When using this method, whether hunting alone or with a partner, the hunter proceeds from heavy cover to thin cover to no cover at all. He moves slowly so the birds are not spooked too far ahead by any undue commotion. Many times the birds, aware of the hunter but not alarmed by his slow movement, will move ahead but will not flush until the last few feet of cover.

The "locate and approach" hunting technique works best with a dog.

Hunt Cover Areas

The best places to hunt are the edges of any type of cover. Small waterways, fence rows, ditchbanks, brush and weed patches, and field margins are some of the types of cover that the hunter can work to good advantage.

Pheasants that have been flushed and missed should be marked where they land, to be hunted later.

If the birds are found to be feeding or loafing in the grainfields or other fields with little or no cover, and if they are wild, it would be a good practice to reverse the procedure—push the birds into the heavier cover instead of the thin cover. Usually later in the season when the birds are wild, one or two hunters can spook pheasants out of an area with light cover by the dozens. If the hunters work it right and push the birds into a heavy covered grassy area, the birds may hold and allow the hunters to get within shotgun range.

Remember, in the latter part of the season, Mr. Ringneck has been hunted a few times and has learned to match wits with the best of hunters. To determine what he'll do under any given condition is quite a trick.

Many cock birds have learned that they can escape by sitting tight and letting you walk by. Often the hunter has to kick the birds out from beneath his feet before they will fly. At other times, Mr. Ringneck is more apt to duck immediately into cover, then appear again on the opposite side and fly or race away. A slam of a car door next to a slough may trigger a whole flock's eruption out of the cover, like hornets out of a nest.

Even Distribution

As a rule, during the opening days, the pheasant population is evenly spread out over cornfields, stubble fields, grasslands, hayfields, and marsh edges. Ringnecks feed in early morning and in late afternoon. However, on mornings with heavy dew, the birds may prefer to sun in the open areas, or in the case of rain, stay undercover rather than go out to feed, for pheasants do not like to get wet.

Usually, through the day, they loaf in areas near the croplands where they feed or in the field itself. In late afternoon when the birds have finished feeding, they move to roosting areas such as hay stubble (alfalfa or clover) or grassy areas.

With the first hint of winter, the pheasants begin to drift toward heavier cover and concentrate in willow thickets, brush patches, sloughs, marshes, railroad right-of-ways and farm windbreaks. The birds will huddle during a snowstorm, and with sunup and clear weather, they will move out to feed. Their tracks in the fresh snow will show their movements very plainly.

Pheasants in the late season may go to the open areas to loaf, such as plowed fields or grazed meadows. Once a hunting partner and I covered almost a complete section of land in prime pheasant territory. We saw very few pheasants and had only one bird. Returning to the car, we found the birds loafing high in the trees around the farm buildings.

Good Dog Helps

Because of Mr. Ringneck's unpredictable behavior, a good hunting dog is a valuable asset to the hunter. Labradors, golden retrievers, springer spaniels and cocker spaniels are some of the breeds of dogs that work well. They bore in hard and fast, forcing the birds to take wing, and they retrieve, which is almost a must in pheasant hunting. A pheasant can carry a lot of lead and unless anchored well when he is shot, he can give some of the best dogs a good foot race.

Pointing dogs are often used for pheasant hunting, such as the English pointer, German shorthaired pointer, and English setter. Some pointers and setters learn to handle pheasants effectively. However, most are not quite as productive as the flushing dogs.

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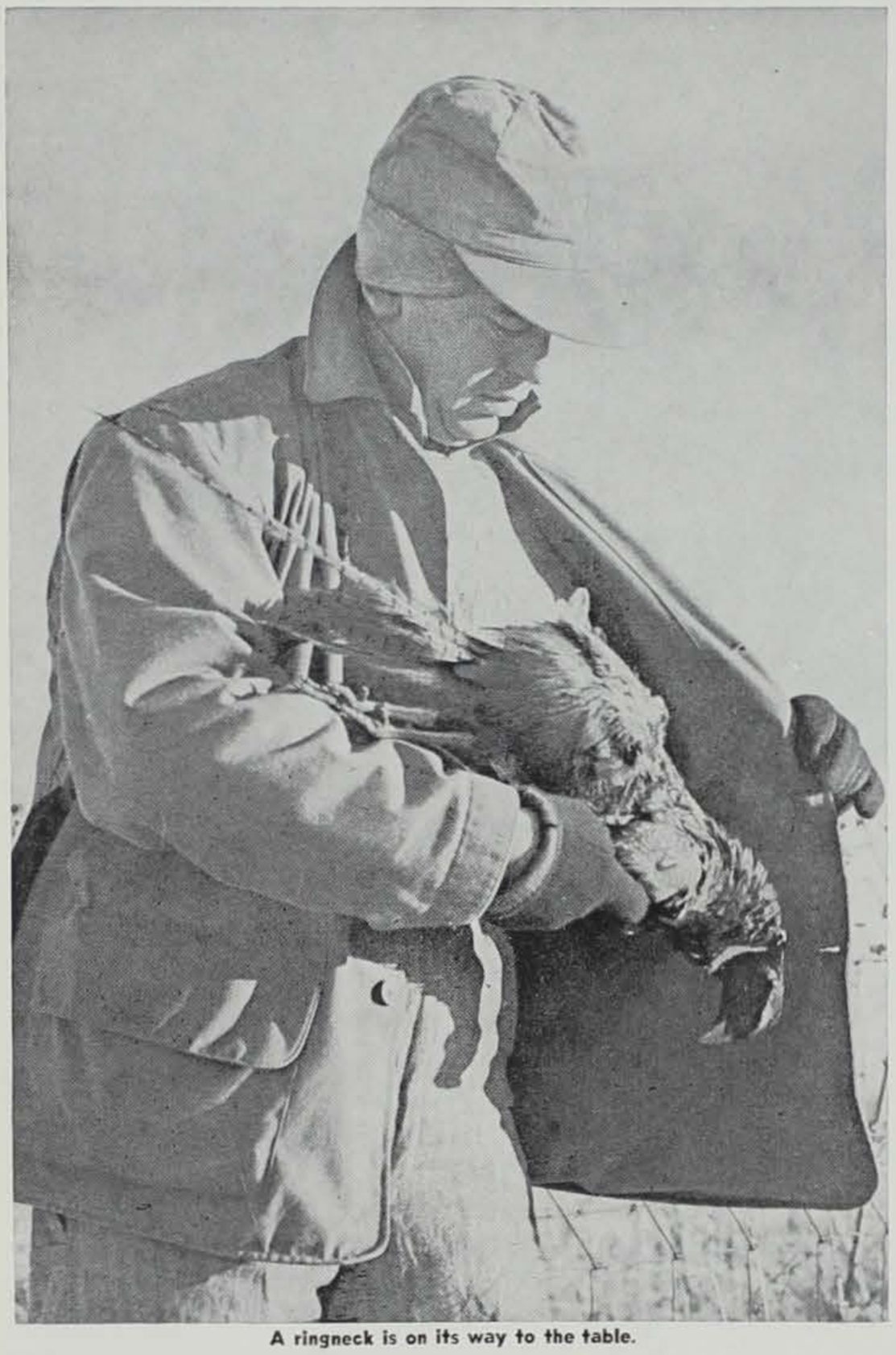
HOW TO HUNT PHEASANTS (Continued from page 77)



A ringneck is on its way to the table.

Pheasants will seldom hold for pointers unless the ground cover is heavy, and hunting a pheasant may drive a pointer to distraction.

For example, a setter goes on point when he locates the pheasant. The pheasant sits a few seconds, then runs a few yards. The dog breaks point, sneaks up to the pheasant, and goes on point again. This may continue until either the bird flushes far out of range or makes it through the field fence and escapes.

Many hunters claim the airborne pheasant is a relatively easy target. This may be true when he gets up under your feet and flies straight away, or rises above your head and seems to hang there. But he does not always present such an easy target. He often gets up behind the hunter, or angles sharply in front of the hunter to make shooting sportier.

Rugged Bird

However, most everyone agrees that a ringneck is a big, rugged bird that "takes a lot of killing." This is why the 12-gauge shotgun and No. 6 shot are so popular with sportsmen. The 20-gauge and the 16-gauge do a fine job during the early part of the season with standard loads, and later on when hunting becomes tough work, they do all right with the heavier loads (magnum shells). If a hunter is going to take the long-range shots that he often gets later on in the season, he should use the big 12's with No. 4 shot.

In preparation for a pheasant hunt, it's best to do some scouting by looking some areas over from a car. When an area which has food and good cover looks appealing, hunters should drive in and ask the farmer for permission to hunt. They should ask him which fields one may hunt, and should thank him before leaving for the privilege of hunting on his property.

This "hunting courtesy" is important, because pheasant hunting is on privately owned land. Ninety-five percent of the land in Iowa is owned in this way. For this reason, the State Conservation Commission opens as much of its game management areas as possible for upland game hunting. About 200 areas totaling 114,000 acres are available. A brochure listing and locating public hunting areas and information on regulations is available from the State Conservation Commission.

WATCH YOUR FIELD MANNERS

"Very few sportsmen like to hunt alone, and most of them welcome congenial shooting partners who speak the same language," says Ted McCawley, manager of public relations for Remington Arms Company, Inc. "Most people are, however, somewhat reluctant to run the risk of getting stuck for a day afield with some thoughtless or careless chap who ignores the niceties of field etiquette or violates the unwritten laws of sportsmanship. They make that mistake with the same individual only once.

"If you are fortunate enough this season to be invited to go hunting with an experienced gunner who knows how and where to take game, watch your step carefully," advises McCawley. "You can rest assured that your every action is being observed and while your friend will probably make every effort to give you the best of everything, you can just bet your bottom dollar that you're on probation with him just the same.

Courtesies Involved

"There are a few little courtesies which make up proper hunting demeanor and which, if observed, will put you in solid with your companion. They'll come naturally after a while, even if their importance is not immediately obvious. Your observance of them will make the day far more pleasant not only for your host, but for you, too.

"Above all, never take a chance. Observe all the rules of safety, even though your companion doesn't. You'll impress him with your caution.

"Give your companion all the breaks. The accepted practice is to alternate on single shots. The easiest way to make your host angry is to try to 'wipe his eye.'

"Find out which side your companion shoots from and then take the other side. Never shoot at birds flying your companion's way. It is an act of discourtesy to shoot across a gunner's front unless you know his gun is empty. Then explain your action to him.

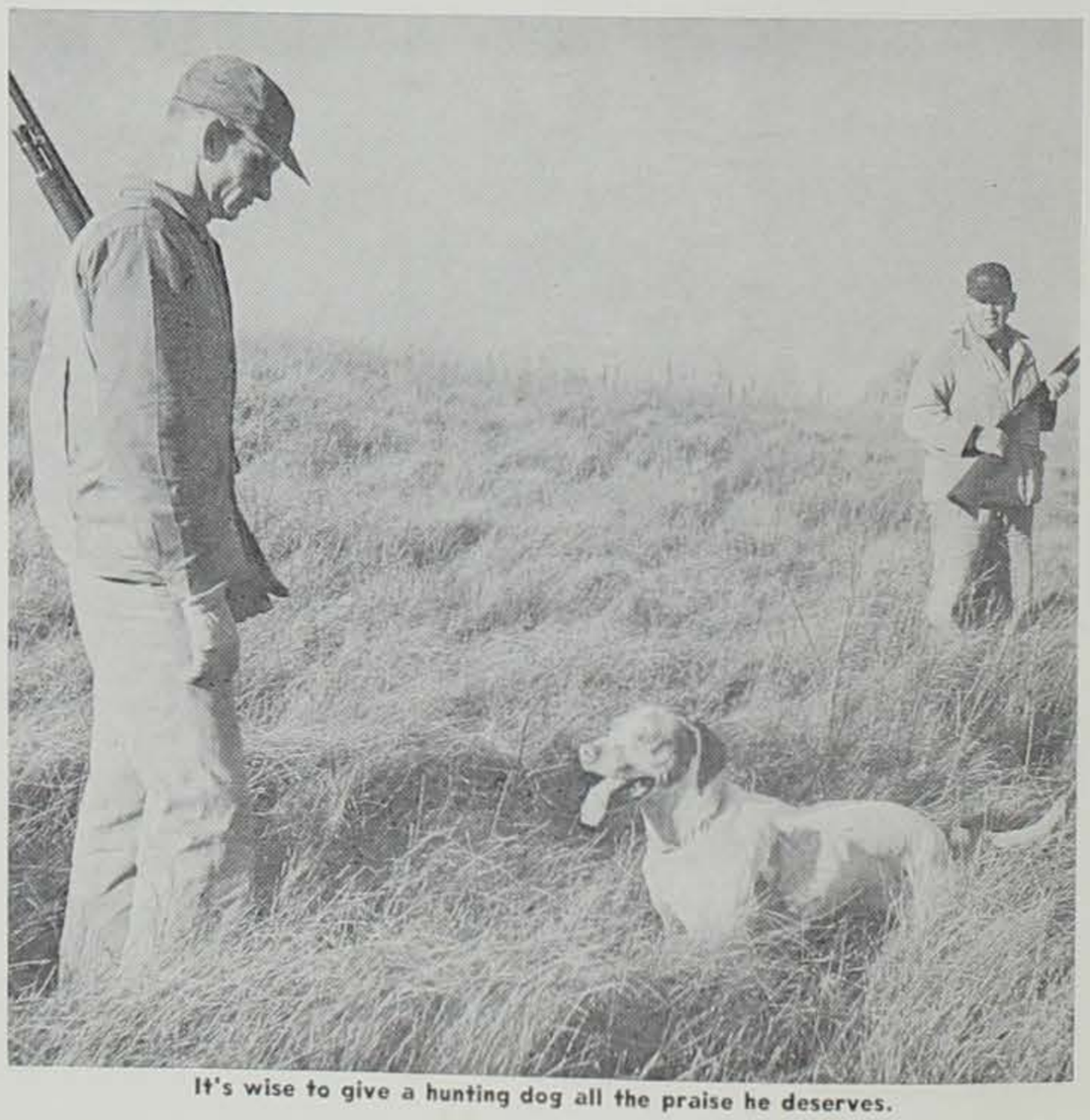
"Don't claim birds you are not absolutely sure you killed. If there's the slightest doubt, don't run the risk of being branded a 'claimer.' If your companion is 'built that way,' you'll soon find it out.

Praise Dog

Don't try to handle your companion's dogs. And never criticize the dog's faults. Praise his good work and ignore the bad. Give the dog a chance to retrieve your bird. Look for it yourself only if absolutely necessary.

"And never hunt in your friend's favorite spot which he has shown you, unless he is along or you have his consent. Violation of this courtesy has led to the ending of many fine friendships.

"There is an old saying to the effect that 'if you want to find out about a man, get him in a poker game or take him hunting.' Remember it when you accept that invitation and see that you so conduct yourself as to warrant a repeat engagement. It's a safe bet that the word will get around and you won't be long lacking for gunning partners."—*Remington News Letter.*



It's wise to give a hunting dog all the praise he deserves.

DUCK HUNTERS — DISAPPOINTED

Richard Bishop
Waterfowl Biologist

Reports following the setting of the 1966 waterfowl season were optimistic. Hunters were told that the duck populations were swinging upward and if conditions were favorable, lenient bag limits for 1967 would be in order.

This information stated that regulations for the 1966 season would allow for an increased breeding population of mallards in the spring of 1967. Water conditions in Canada were favorable at that time and with an increased breeding population and good water conditions the 1967 Mississippi Flyway fall population of mallards and some other ducks should show considerable increases. With this expected increase in the fall flight of mallards and other species, the 1967 waterfowl season could be less restrictive, hunters thought, possibly permitting a four-duck limit with no restrictions on mallards. The majority of the duck hunters were willing to be conservative in 1966 in order to have a larger bag limit of mallards in 1967.

Good Reports

Reports in the spring of 1967 indicated somewhat increased breeding populations across Canada were present and that water conditions were ideal. This set the stage for positive thinking for a good hunting season with larger numbers of migrating ducks. Most hunters were sure that 1967 regulations would see more than two mallards in the daily bag and many were hoping for four.

The time then came for the season setting meeting which was held in St. Louis, Missouri, during the first week of August. At this time a few reports were coming out from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service and some state departments that the duck population was in bad shape and that a more restrictive duck season than in 1966 would be necessary to keep from shooting into the present breeding population.

This sudden shock to the optimistic duck hunter was considerable because this was the first time he had heard any reports that were not optimistic. The 1967 season regulations did not turn out as restrictive as they possibly might have. A 40-day season was set, allowing a bag limit of four ducks of which no more than two could be mallards, and of which no more than one could be a wood duck or a canvasback.

This season is approximately the same as in 1966 except for five fewer days in the season and one less wood duck and canvasback allowed in the daily bag. Hunters may shoot four of any species of ducks except for the three species mentioned here.

Behind the Scenes

Now for those people still in shock, here is the story of how this happened. The water conditions in Canada improved considerably in 1965. It was decided that then was the time to try and build back the mallard population. (The reason I put emphasis on the mallard is because it is the most highly prized duck in the Mississippi Flyway, and the majority of the hunters hunt mainly for mallards. During the past few years, poor reproduction and over-shooting caused the mallard population to drop to an all time low. For these reasons the hunting regulations are based primarily around the mallard.)

The 14 states in the Mississippi Flyway decided to increase the breeding population of mallards, hopefully, to the numbers experienced in the good years of the late fifties. Thus, a very restrictive season was established in 1965. Better reproduction than was expected, along with a lower kill of mallards, indicated a pronounced increase in the 1966 breeding season, and the Fish and Wildlife Service surveys showed good reproduction. It was the will of the majority of the 14 states to be relatively conservative in 1966 so we could send back a yet larger breeding population in 1967 to take advantage of the ideal water conditions in Canada. If all went well and production was good, the hunters could probably enjoy at least three mallards in the daily bag in the fall of 1967.

This is the point at which things started to go amiss. Production surveys in 1966 for some reason showed a higher reproduction index than actually was the case, and the result was that the 1966 fall flight of mallards was not as large as expected. In conjunction with a lower fall flight than was expected, the number of hunters increased 17 percent and the mallard kill increased 75 percent over 1965.

Large Kill

We expected a larger kill but not quite as large as was the case. Ideal hunting conditions up and down the flyway were partly responsible for this increase in kill. The wood duck kill went up 43 percent, which is a considerable figure for wood ducks. This larger season kill and smaller fall flight than was expected reduced the calculated increase of mallards and some other species of ducks on the breeding grounds in the spring of 1967.

The 1967 spring breeding pair surveys still indicated an 11 percent increase over the spring of 1966, but this is 42 percent below the peak breeding population in the late fifties. We did get an increase, but not as large as we had hoped for. Except for the late cold spring which caused some early nest losses, conditions still looked good well into the breeding season.

The middle of July found some areas in Saskatchewan becoming critically low on water because no rainfall had been recorded since early spring. These drought conditions continued and in some areas most of the production of young was wiped out. July brood surveys revealed poor production across most of Canada. This was attributed to the early cold weather and lack of summer rainfall. This low production brought us to the sad realization that the 1967 fall flight would be less than that of 1966. So all our hopes and plans were cancelled by the ill-fate of old man weather. This brings us up to date and you can see now why more lenient bag limits are not in the cards.

Cutback Necessary

If the next generation of hunters is going to enjoy even limited waterfowl shooting, many hunters of today will have to adjust their thinking. When waterfowl populations are low, no matter what the reason, a cutback in the fall kill is necessary to insure an adequate brood stock the next year. Waterfowl hunters have a considerable responsibility to their resource, and they should insist on regulations that will not harvest too many ducks. Ducks have different population regulators than do upland game birds. While Iowa has never overshot its cock pheasants, ducks can be severely over-harvested due to the differences in behavior of the bird plus environmental effects.

We as duck hunters must realize the basic situation—that duck hunting depends on summer reproduction and reproduction depends on the water conditions in the northern United States and Canada, and that too lenient regulations can over-harvest the population. Duck hunters in the Mississippi Flyway will likely never see the time they can legally shoot over four mallards daily. Most duck hunters of the future will probably be happy with a limit of two mallards. The "good old days" of duck shooting are gone, just as the days of horse-drawn farm equipment. Time brings changes, and we must live with them.

HUNTING SEASONS

(All dates inclusive)

Pheasant—Nov. 11, 1967—Jan 1, 1968
Ducks — Oct. 21, 1967 — Nov. 29, 1967
Geese — Sept. 30, 1967 — Dec. 8, 1967
Coot—Oct. 21, 1967—Nov. 29, 1967
Squirrel — Sept. 9, 1967 — Jan. 1, 1968
Rabbit — Sept. 9, 1967 — Feb. 18, 1968
Raccoon—Oct. 28, 1967—Feb. 28, 1968
Bobwhite Quail — Oct. 21, 1967 — Jan. 28, 1968
Wilson Snipe — Oct. 7, 1967—Nov. 25, 1967

TREE ORDERS ACCEPTED AT EARLIER DATE

By John Stokes
State Forester

Orders for trees and shrubs to be planted this spring will be accepted beginning October 15, 1967, by the State Conservation Commission. The earlier date for accepting tree orders will allow a more orderly processing of individual tree orders by the Commission Office and state nursery. The hardwood and conifer seedlings plus wildlife shrub plants will be shipped or can be picked up from the forest nursery at Ames, Iowa, sometime between the latter part of March and early May. No exact shipping date can be set due to weather and nursery operating delays. Each person placing an order will be notified prior to shipment of the trees by the nursery.

The conifer seedlings, including the various species of pines, are usually the most popular with Iowa landowners. A table, included in this issue, shows the seedlings available, cost and ordering procedure. Landowners may pick up their seedlings at the nursery if they wish. They should wait until notified their order is ready before calling for trees. Orders not scheduled for nursery pick up will be shipped prepaid by the available commercial carrier assuring the quickest possible delivery of nursery stock to the purchaser. Shipping charge must accompany the order when applicable. Three percent sales tax is required only on the cost of the seedlings ordered.

By studying existing plantations, foresters have indications of which pine trees will do the best in certain soil types and conditions. The Conservation Commission has 10 District Foresters located at Adel, Chariton, Marshalltown, Anamosa, Fairfield, Muscatine, Le Mars, Charles City, Red Oak and Elkader who assist landowners in choosing species to plant and other timber management problems. The Anamosa District presently has a vacancy. Efforts are underway to fill this position. The foresters also assist landowners in signing up under the County ASC Program. The tree planting practice, A-7, under this program assists landowners by paying part of the cost involved in clearing for tree planting, land preparation, the actual planting and fencing where needed. Additional information may be obtained from your County ASC Office, District Forester, or other Commission Employees.

Trees for sale from the State Forest Nursery are to be used for forest land and game area plantings. The trees cannot be used for ornamental, shade or other landscape purposes and may be used for windbreaks only when the area planted will be at last 200 feet in width and 300 feet in length. A new practice under the ASC program G-4, allows the landowners to plant game shrubs to provide low cover plants in existing windbreaks. The shrubs used under this Federal Cost-Sharing practice, however, must be purchased from a commercial nursery. Trees grown by the State and shipped from the State Forest Nursery cannot be used.

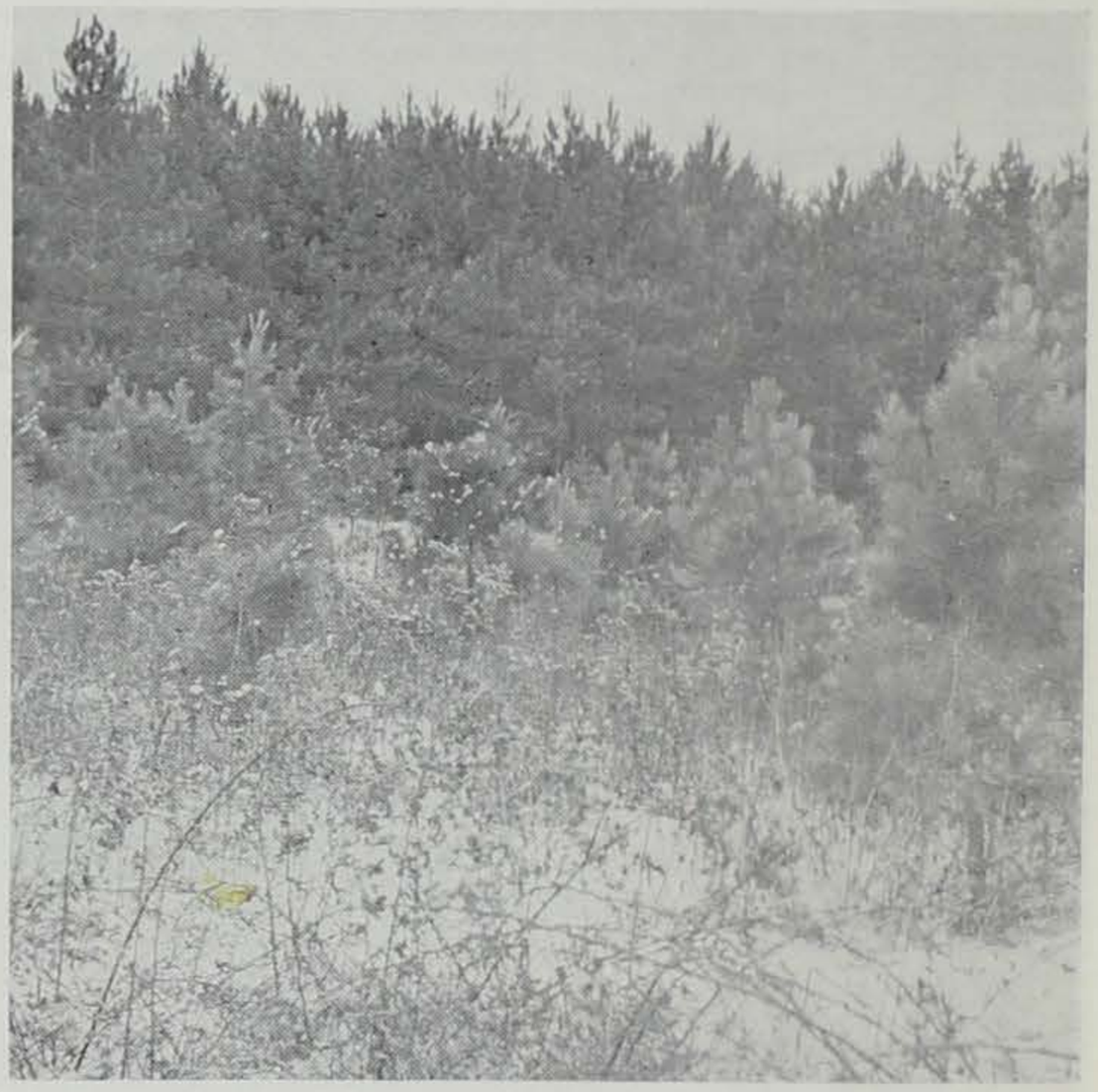
Planting trees as recommended by Commission Foresters means a return to production of idle submarginal farm land, isolated areas and hillsides that erode easily and other lands where trees provide the most desirable type of vegetative cover. The trees will provide many benefits including erosion control, financial return, wildlife cover and aesthetic values which bring the greatest satisfaction to many landowners.

SPECIAL NOTICE

(1) Official order blanks must be used to place orders. They are available from Commission employees, Soil Conservation Service Offices, County Extension Directors and ASCS County Offices.
(2) The nursery reserves the right to substitute species of a suitable type if a shortage occurs.
(3) Payment for nursery stock must accompany the order and include sales tax (3 percent). Also shipping charges for orders to be shipped.
(4) Minimum order accepted is for **500** trees and shrubs. Individual species of trees and shrubs must be ordered in multiples of **250**. The wildlife packet may be ordered singly.
(5) Maximum order for black walnut seedlings will be **1500** per landowner. A special minimum of **50** has been set for this species with multiples of **50** thereafter until the maximum is reached in order to supply as many landowners as possible.
(6) Orders will be accepted for species until the supply is exhausted.

TREES PER ACRE AT DIFFERENT SPACINGS

5′ x 5′ — 1,742	5′ x 6′ — 1,452
6′ x 6′ — 1,210	6′ x 7′ — 1,037
7′ x 7′ — 889	8′ x 8′ — 681



Red pine (rear) and multiflora rose (foreground) are among the trees and shrubs offered for sale by the Commission for cover plantings.

TREES AND SHRUBS AVAILABLE FOR FARM PLANTING
SPRING OF 1968
STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION
EAST SEVENTH AND COURT AVENUE
DES MOINES, IOWA 50308

SPECIES	AGE CLASS	PRICE FOR: 250	500	750	1,000
Austrian Pine	2-0	$6.25	$12.50	$18.75	$25.00
European Larch	2-0	6.25	12.50	18.75	25.00
Jack Pine	2-0	6.25	12.50	18.75	25.00
Ponderosa Pine	2-0	6.25	12.50	18.75	25.00
Red Pine	3-0	6.25	12.50	18.75	25.00
White Pine	3-0	6.25	12.50	18.75	25.00
Norway Spruce	3-0	6.25	12.50	18.75	25.00
Green Ash	1-0	4.50	9.00	13.50	18.00
Red Oak	1-0	4.50	9.00	13.50	18.00
White Oak	1-0	4.50	9.00	13.50	18.00
Black Walnut (seedlings)	1-0	5.00	10.00	15.00	20.00
Multiflora Rose	1-0	5.00	10.00	15.00	20.00
Dogwood	1-0	4.50	9.00	13.50	18.00
Honeysuckle	1-0	4.50	9.00	13.50	18.00
Ninebark	1-0	4.50	9.00	13.50	18.00

SPECIAL WILDLIFE PACKET . . . $5.00

This pasket contains 250 plants including 50 evergreens, 25 honeysuckle, 25 ninebark, 25 Russian olive, 25 wild grape, 25 multiflora rose and 75 other plants beneficial to wildlife. Illustrative suggestions for odd areas and farm pond plantings will be furnished with each packet.

CURRENT TABLE OF PREPAID SHIPPING COST

Number of Plants	Number of Wildlife Packets	Shipping Cost
250	1	$2.00
500	2	2.30
750	3	2.65
1,000	4	2.90
1,250	5	3.25
1,500	6	3.45
1,750	7	3.75
2,000	8	3.90
2,250	9	4.00
2,500	10	4.06
2,750		4.19
3,000		6.19
3,250		6.49
3,500		6.84
3,750		7.09
4,000		7.44
4,250		7.64
4,500		7.94
4,750		8.09
5,000		8.19

On orders greater than 5,000, contact the Conservation Commission for shipping rates.

FISH QUIZ ANSWERS

1. The shiners. There are 20 species and 4 subspecies native to Iowa waters.
2. The mooneye.
3. Yes, they are imbedded in the skin giving the fish a slick velvety appearance.
4. No, a few are occasionally reported which undoubtedly come in from Wisconsin or possibly Minnesota waters.
5. Pumpkinseed.
6. Southeast Iowa.
7. The lower part of the Missouri River.
8. The American eel. They return to salt water and reproduce only in the tropical Atlantic Ocean.
9. The orange spotted sunfish. Three year old females ready to spawn that were less than 2½ inches long have been observed.
10. The lake sturgeon.