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JANUARY, 1973

conservationist



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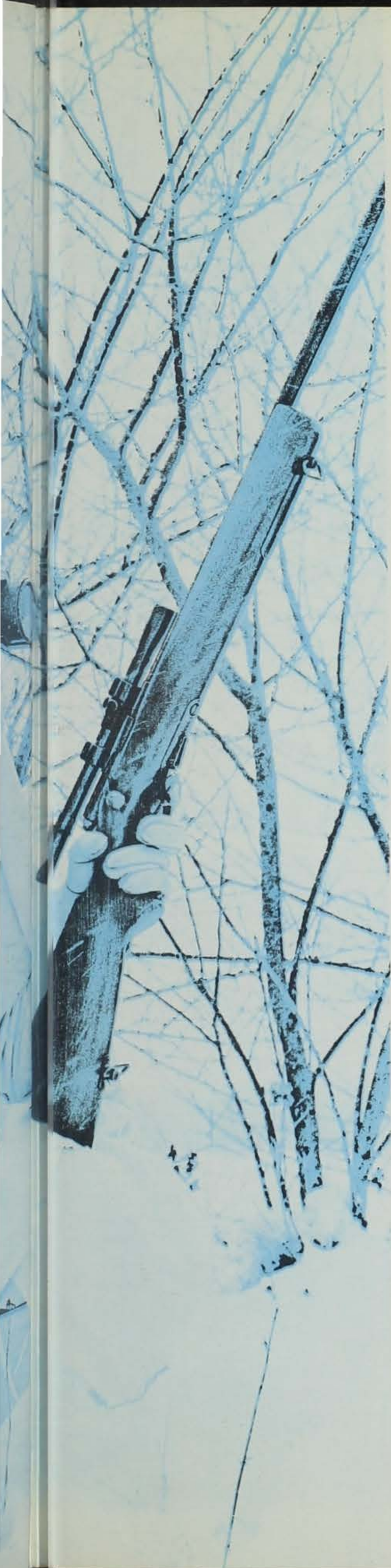
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OL' RED

the sportsmen's winter challenge

By Ron Andrews

State Fur Biologist

Many hunters think Iowa hunting seasons close with the end of the pheasant season on January 1. Such is not the case however, the quail, rabbit and raccoon seasons run into January and February. There is another season that is open from the time the snow covers the ground until the first inkling of the spring thaw.

Reynard Fox is looked upon through many different eyes. He has been slandered and maligned as a culprit, a villain, a chicken and turkey thief, and a pheasant murderer. But fortunately, he is gaining respect with some. To many hunters the sporty qualities of Ol' Red are surpassed by none. The higher fur value the last few years has also led to increased interest in pursuing this fine animal.

Although the season opens in

early September, it takes snow cover before you can hunt Ol' Red effectively. It is not uncommon in the windswept north Iowa snow belt to see more fox hunters than pheasant hunters on late December weekends.

Probably the most popular way is that of the rifleman. Donned in white coveralls, with a scoped rifle slung over his shoulder and wearing a pair of snowshoes, a hunter can find the red fox a very sporting animal. After a freshly fallen snow, find a good looking section of land, look for some fresh fox tracks, and begin pursuit. Generally it is a silent stalk, keeping eyes peeled on fence-rows, weed patches and brush-piles, looking for a dark rusty animal curled in a snug furry ball with its nose planted in its thick-furred tail. Foxes have a unique



characteristic of somehow being alert while sleeping. If not hidden under the protection of cover, they generally sleep on the leeward side of a hill shielded from the wind and looking up occasionally to check for approaching danger. Remember, when approaching a fox from the blind side of the hill, wind currents can alert him of danger.

The riflemen are the hardest of Iowa's hunters, pursuing their quest on the coldest of days. Quite often snow is knee-deep and biting wind and blowing snow sting the face and numb fingers and toes. Watery-eyed and out of breath, these sportsmen many times take shots of 100 yards, 200 yards, or longer hoping for a lucky one to bring Ol' Red down. Pursuing fox in this manner is much like western plains hunting for mule deer or antelope except the target is much smaller, making the challenge greater.

Some hunters prefer to use a predator call and plant themselves in an area where they can see the surrounding countryside. They use the wind currents in their favor and blend themselves in with the background. Then



with the aid of a call they begin making the noise of a rabbit in distress in an attempt to lure Ol' Red into shooting distance.

Other hunters who have succumbed to modern conveniences prefer to "road hunt" foxes. This entails riding down country roads and glassing the sheltered sides of fencelines, hillsides and logpiles hoping to see a red furry lump bedded down for the day. When one is spotted, hunters check the lay of the land and begin approaching the fox. Roadhunters must remember that it is illegal to shoot a rifle from or across a roadway.

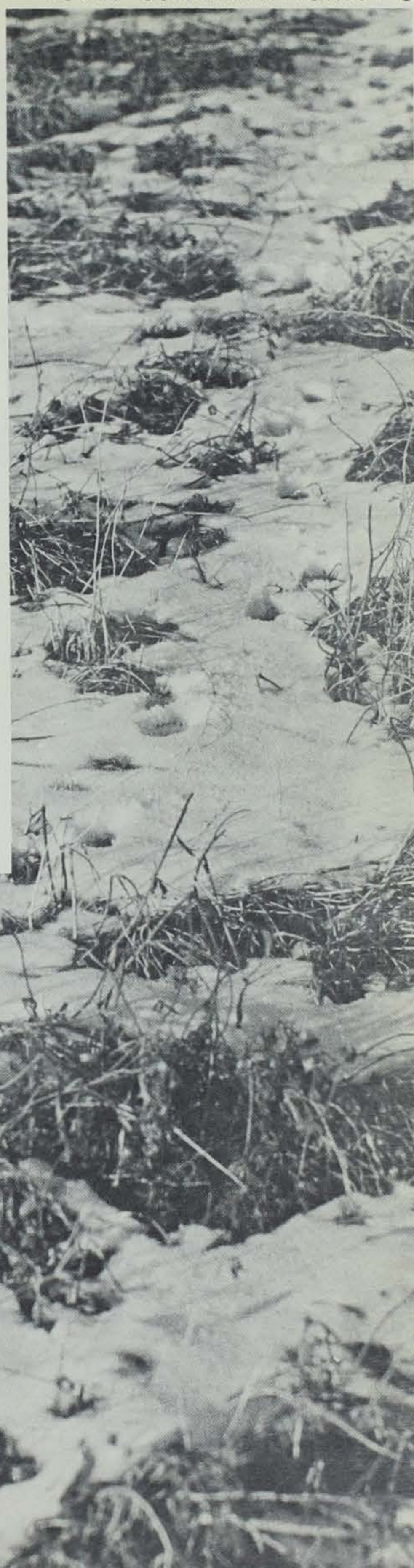
If you desire further challenge, you may use a shotgun and some "double 00" buck loads and stalk the quarry more stealthily. With the higher pelt prices of recent years hunters are returning to the use of a shotgun and this can mean a few more cents in your pocket when the fur buyer comes around.

In certain localities, hunters gather with their hounds — Ol' Blue, Duke and Sam — and send them out in quest of a fox. With a keen ear they listen to them strike, pursue and "tree" the animal. These sportsmen enjoy

not so much to see a foxskin on a stretcher, but to listen to the tune of their dogs in pursuit across the hollow.

Few people realize that Ol' Red can be pursued with such a variety of methods. They also fail to realize how much fox hunting, as well as other hunting, has contributed to the economy of certain areas. Thousands of dollars are spent over the state by hunters who devote their time afield in pursuit of the fox. Money spent on food, gas, rifles, shotguns, ammunition, snowshoes, hounds, clothing, and other paraphernalia peculiar to the fox hunter means additional dollars to local economies.

Fox hunting has changed considerably during the last 15 years. It used to be a rarity to come upon the track of another human. Today the tracks of snowmobiles are everywhere. Because of this, a little of the lonely, stark beauty of winter fox hunting has been lost. But the foxes are still out there and a silent stalk, some conniving, and a little luck might still put you in range of an animal whose sharp wits make him winter's toughest challenge. ☆





ICE FISH

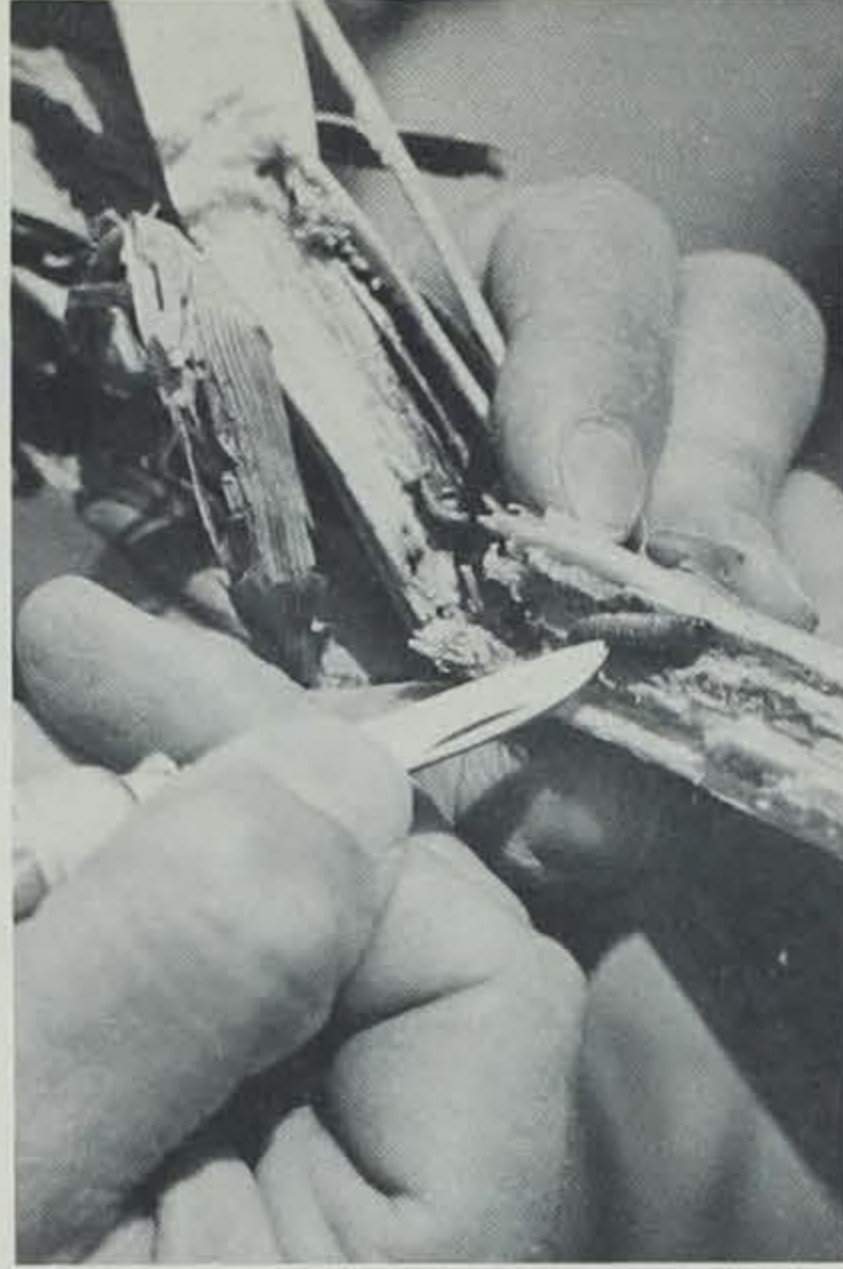
By Roger Sparks

Ice fishing has never really caught on in southwest Iowa. While ice shacks, lean-tos, snowmobiles and anglers cover the Mississippi River and the natural lakes of the northern part of the state, the small impoundments down south see limited activity.

Winter fishermen in southwest Iowa have kept their success a secret. For those interested in large bluegills and crappies, there is no better area anywhere to take them in the winter.

Crappies begin early, immediately after safe ice forms. Look for them in the deepest part of the lake, often near the dam. By mid-January, bluegills are hitting well. Best hours are normally from sunup until about 10 a.m., and the two hours preceeding sunset.

Small lakes are best as fish are more easily found. Keep in mind that locating fish under the ice is similar to finding them in open water. They aren't just everywhere. Early, fish tend to con-



FISHING spotlight s.w. iowa

gregate in the deepest area of the lake; then as winter progresses they begin to locate in bays and around structures near shore, just as in the summer. Look for other fishermen, or concentrations of shacks - these anglers may have found the fish, or perhaps have experienced good fishing there in previous years.

What To Use

Most of the fishing in southern Iowa is for panfish — bluegills and crappies. Any of the miniature ice jigs or "teardrops" baited with small grubs, "mousies" or other larvae are fine. Light monofilament line is important, although lines of less than four pound test aren't necessary.

Best Lakes

According to fish surveys Prairie Rose lake in Shelby County could be one of Iowa's most productive ice fishing lakes. Don Bonneau, district fisheries supervisor, says, "Prairie Rose has an excellent population of large crappies and

bluegills. Largemouth bass up to four pounds could provide a bonus. For some reason, few people fish this lake in the winter. The fish are there and once located should provide fast action."

Lake Anita in Cass County should produce well again this year offering excellent fishing for white crappies. Bluegills are also plentiful with some running to $\frac{3}{4}$ pound, although these jumbos are fewer in number than last season, according to Bonneau. A few big black crappies up to a pound may be found in the average daily catch along with a keeper bass or two. Lake Anita is one of the more popular winter fishing lakes and normal fishing activity indicates the location of fish.

Tiny Cold Springs Lake in Cass County should be an excellent ice fishing pond this winter. After recent control work this lake shows eating-size bluegills and good population of nice crappies.

The lake is only 16 acres so the fish should be easy to find.

Another sleeper, according to Bonneau, is Walnut Creek Marsh in Ringgold County. Located on the Mount Ayr Wildlife Area, this man-made marsh is loaded with bluegills and crappies, and some largemouth bass. The fish are good size and only a handful of anglers have tapped this winter resource.

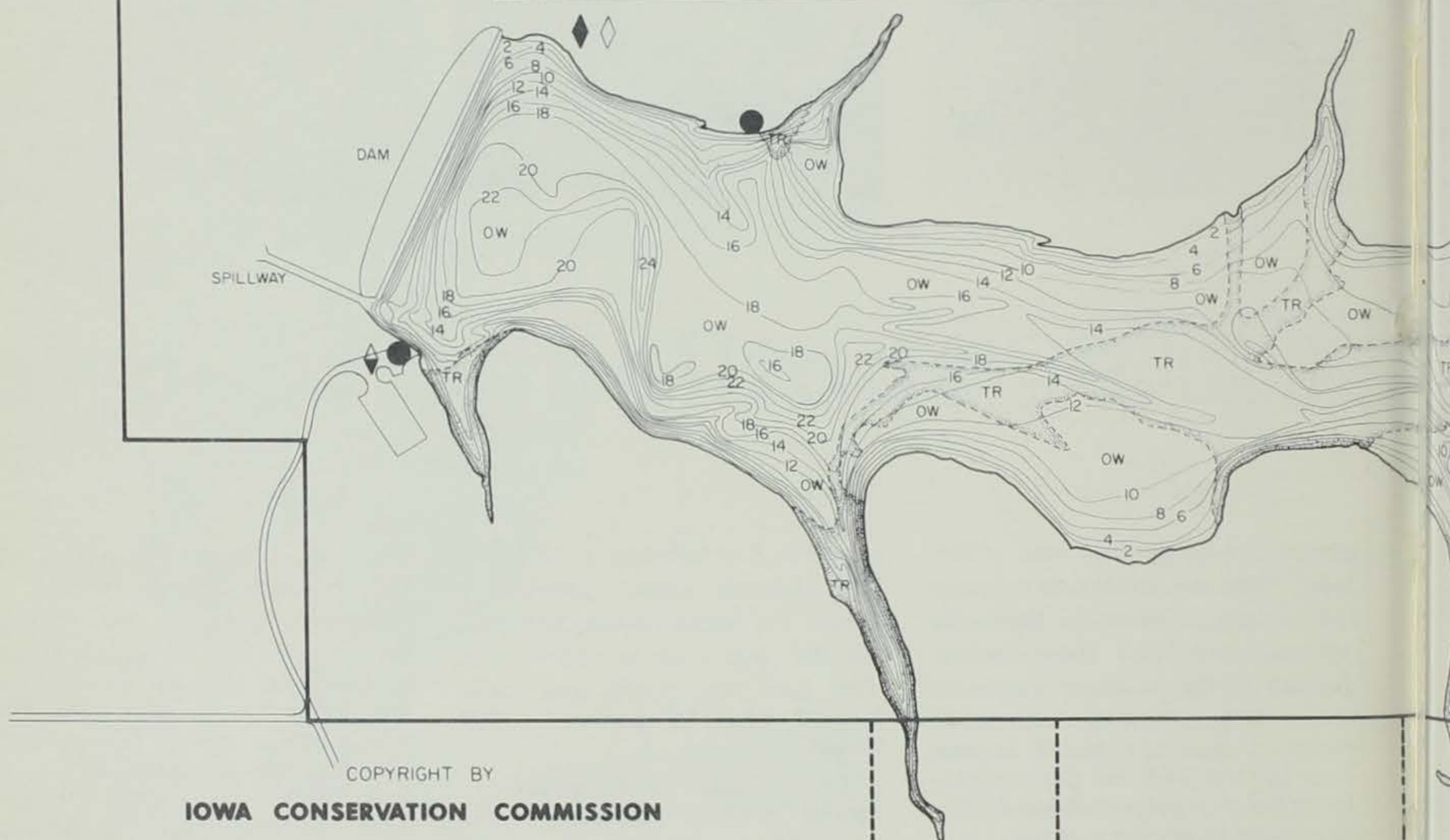
Lake Ahquabi south of Indianola (Warren County) is an old favorite among ice fishermen. Fair size bluegills and nice crappies make up most of the catch, although bass are occasionally taken and Ahquabi anglers always have the chance of hooking a walleye. Finding the fish should be no problem as by January 1, local fishermen have shacks clustered around productive areas.

Most Bays Branch winter crappie fishermen have tales to tell about broken lines. Although crappies are large (up to $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb.)

(Continued on Page 10)

iowa
lakes
charted

MIAMI LAKE



LEGEND

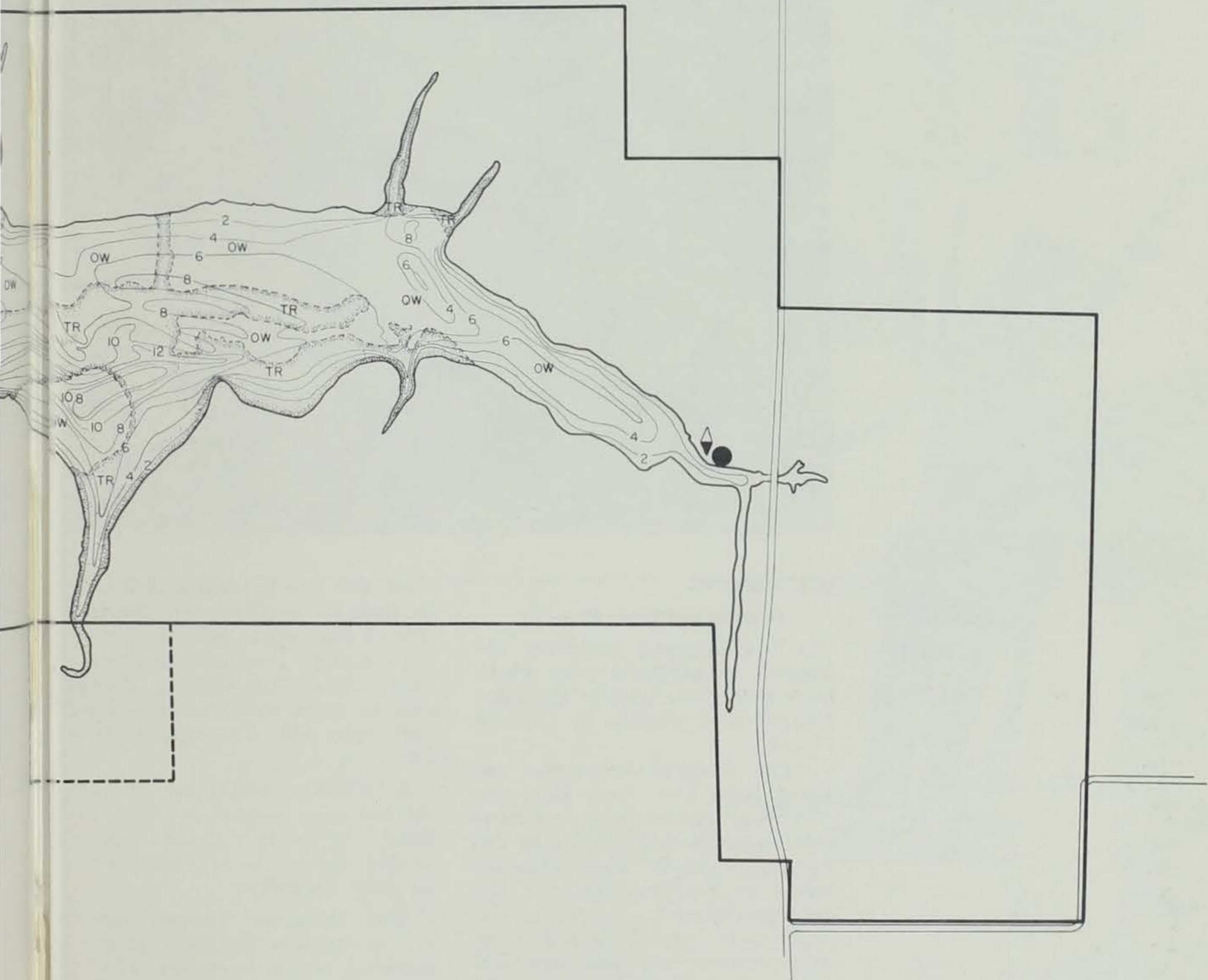
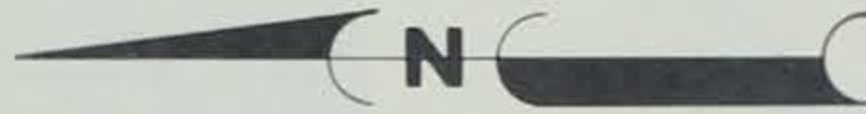
- STATE OWNED LAND
- SECTION CORNER
- PUBLIC PARK
- PUBLIC ACCESS
- PUBLIC CAMPING
- BOAT LAUNCHING RAMP
- BOAT LIVERY
- ROCK REEF
- SCATTERED ROCK AND GRAVEL
- SUBMERGENT VEGETATION
- EMERGENT VEGETATION
- MK MUCK
- SD SAND
- BM BENCH MARK
- TR TREES
- OW OPEN WATER

NOTES

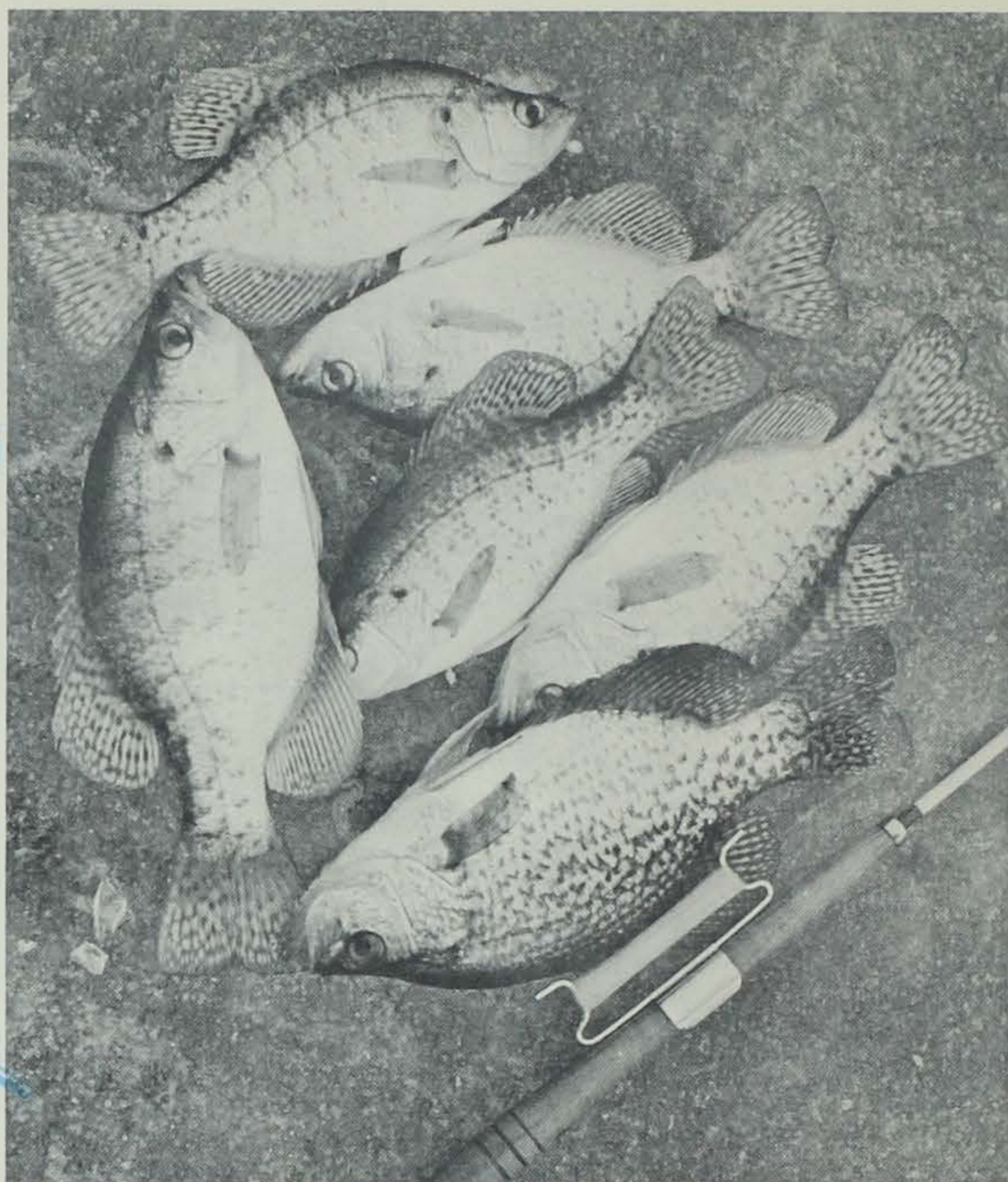
SOUNDINGS DONE WITH RECORDING
FATHOMETER, BY E.T. ROSE 1972.
SOUNDINGS ADJUSTED TO CREST
ELEVATION.
MAX. DEPTH OF 24'
5.5 MILES OF SHORELINE
135.5 ACRES OF WATER



GRAPHIC SCALE IN MILES



MIAMI LAKE
MONROE COUNTY



ICE FISHING . . .

(Continued from Page 7)

the line snapping incidents are blamed on northern pike which have done very well in the lake, located near Panora in Guthrie County.

"The Crappie fishermen use fairly light line," says Bonneau, "and they seldom land northerns over three pounds. Until now the fishermen have been satisfied with the big crappies, but the lake now holds lots of pike in the eight to ten pound class. Fishing with heavier equipment and using large chubs for bait could do the trick."

Build a Portable Ice Shelter

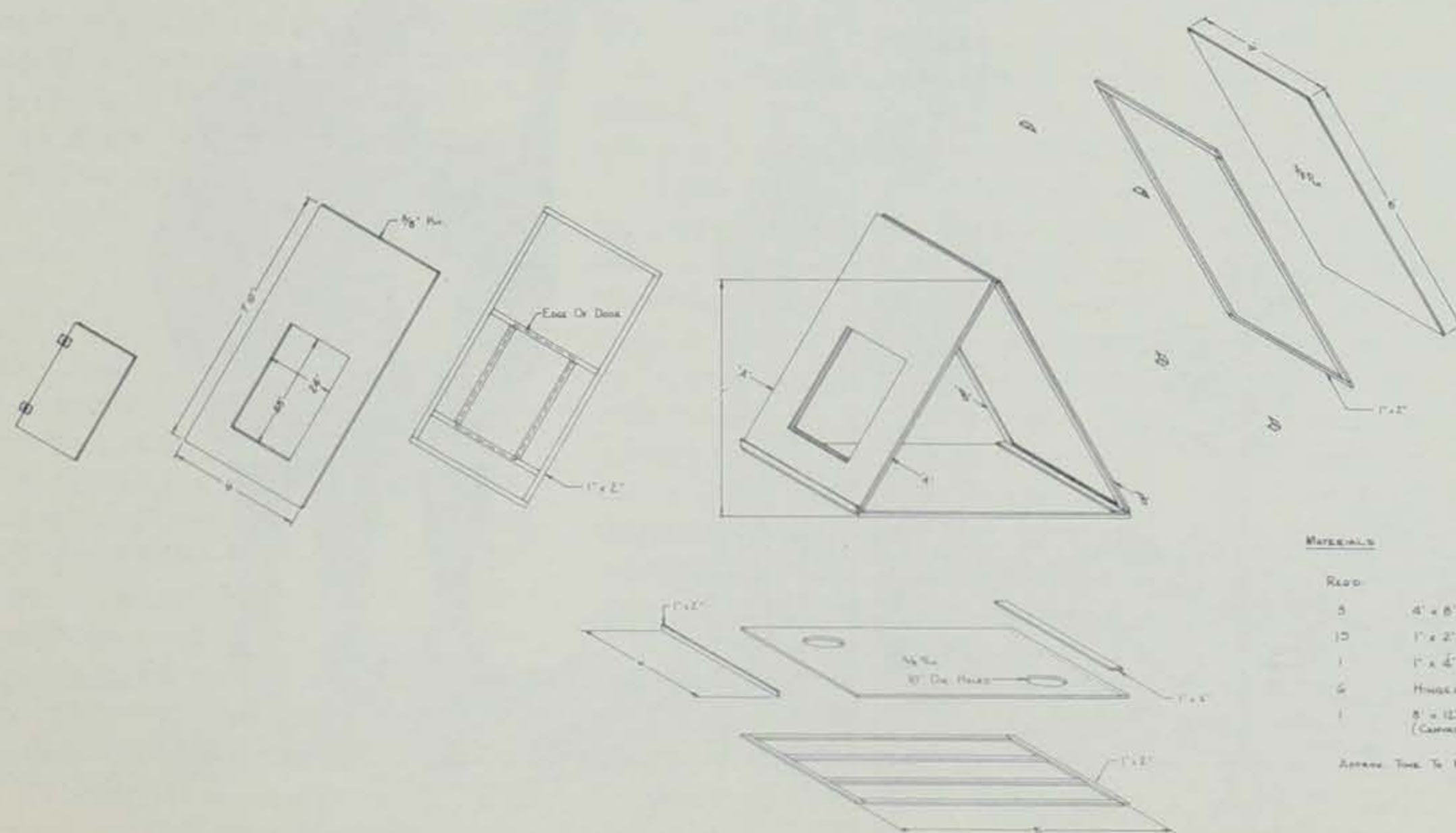
A portable shelter can make things warmer, easier, and more interesting. Besides eliminating the chills, a lightweight folding shelter makes an excellent sled on which the bucket (seat), rods,

lines, bait and hopefully, fish can be transported. Then too, the inside of the shelter is dark allowing visibility (through the holes) well below the surface. Being able to watch the hooked fish as they fight adds dimension to the fun.

A two-man, triangular shaped shelter (see plans) is easy to build, lightweight, and easily hauled to the lake in a pickup or on a car top carrier.

The triangular shaped sides are enclosed with black plastic material, poplin or canvas, which folds easily between the sides.

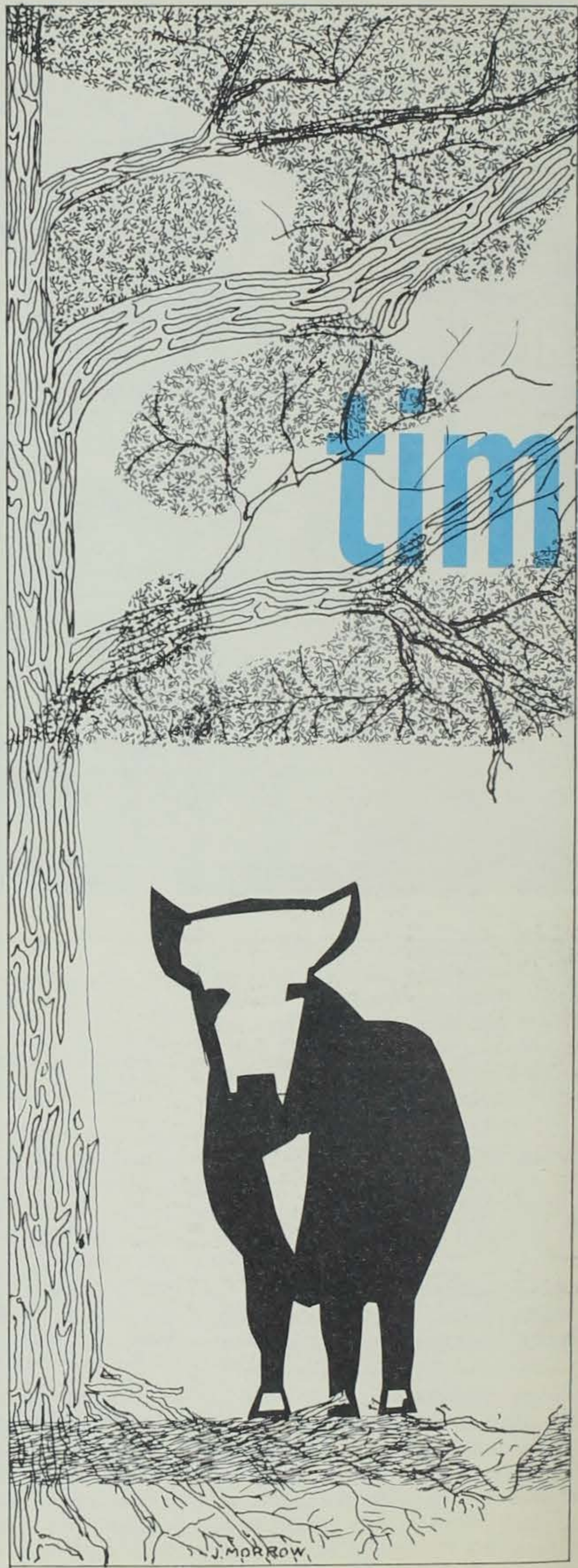
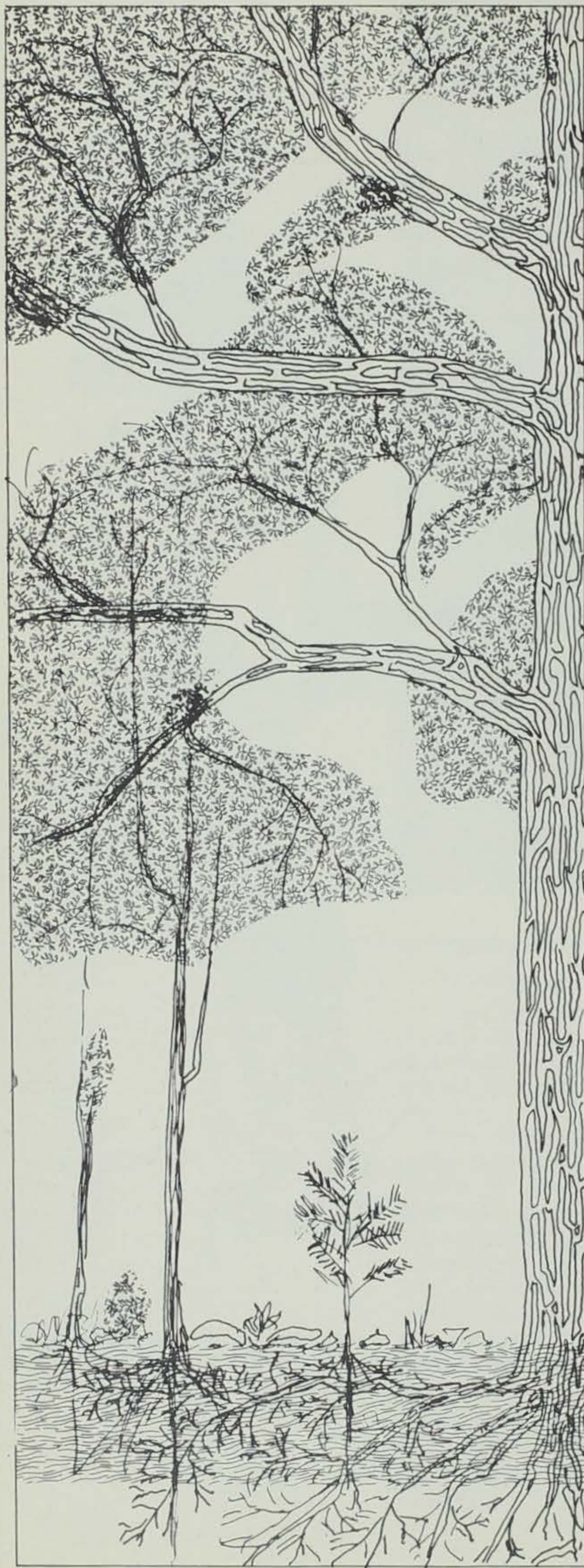
The Plywood shelter shown here costs about \$30 to build, although a simple, less sturdy structure can be thrown together for less than \$20. Either way it sure makes things more comfortable for a couple of never-say-die fishermen. ☆



MATERIALS

REQD.	
5	4' x 8' x 1/2" Plywood
10	1' x 2' x 8'
1	1' x 4' x 4'
6	Hinges
1	8' x 12' Canvas (Canvas Attached To "A" And "B" Eaves Only)

Approx. Time To Build: 15 Hours



Iowa's fading timberland

By Bruce Plum
District Forester

If only one conservation practice was to be used to improve Iowa's timberland which one would accomplish the most? Less harvesting of trees for products? Planting trees in open areas of the woods? Setting aside more forest land for parks? Plant two trees for each one cut? Or building fence?

To many the least likely solution would be to build more fence. Why would fence be considered a conservation practice? If the fence is built to exclude livestock from the timber this timber would be able to stand on its own indefinitely. Even clear cutting would not destroy this forest because adequate reproduction would always be available where there has been no livestock. Indeed some of our finest oak timbers in Iowa are a result of clear cutting fifty or more years ago. These woodlands were not grazed and were able to recover rapidly from a seemingly wanton abuse. Livestock not only destroy the woodland, but they are intense competitors with wildlife and cause erosion of the soil.

Probably more damage has been done to Iowa's woodlands by grazing than from cutting, in-

sects, disease and fire put together. What makes grazing so destructive? First of all our native timber is incapable of providing adequate forage for livestock. In search of forage livestock eat tree seedlings, trample the soil and injure roots of larger trees.

The hundreds of seedlings per acre on the forest floor is nature's provision for reforestation as the older trees die. Without these seedlings there are no trees to take the place of the ones that die. Where the seedlings are kept grazed off, thorny brush will take the place of the larger trees that pass on.

Compaction of the soil by hooves of livestock is the most insidious form of forest destruction. Over several hundred years the forest builds a soil profile which is an astonishingly large sponge. The soil has developed great porosity due to burrowing creatures and rotting roots of plants. The upper layer is laced with organic material rich in nutrients for tree development. This is capped off with a layer of recently deposited organic material which protects the bare soil from the elements of weather. To appreciate this sponge affect one must walk on a forest floor never traversed by livestock. The ground is soft and spongy even in dry weather.

In most cases this sponge is so effective that the heaviest of rains are completely absorbed by it. This assures the trees of obtaining enough water for vigorous growth and the balance replenishes the underground water supply. If this sponge is destroyed by compaction, a heavy rainfall will result in fast run off. This subsequently starves the trees of the water they need, washes off important nutrients for tree development and deposits silt in streams making them unfit for fish habitat. Trees whose vigor is reduced are more susceptible to insect and disease attack as well as physiological deterioration.

Heavy grazing will bring about root damage to the trees. Compaction of the soil damages

feeder roots. A large root protruding near the base of a tree can be damaged easily by a hoof knocking off a piece of bark. This leaves an entry for wood rotting fungi which will rot the tree from within.

Woodland makes poor pasture. Its grazing capacity is so low that it can take up to twenty acres of woodland to equal one acre of improved pasture in forage value. Livestock are subjected to poisonous plants while grazing timber.

Some land owners are encouraged by loans to bulldoze off timber to make better pasture. Most of the time this money could be better spent improving existing open pastures. Few pastures in Iowa are being managed to their fullest potential. Apparently the cleared land, no matter how steep, gives a psychological uplift to both the owner and lender.

One excuse for using woodland for pasture or for clearing woodland is to help pay the taxes. Iowa is very fortunate in having the forest reserve law which allows tax reduction on timber not being grazed. It provides for valuation to be reduced to \$4.00 per acre for ungrazed timberland with at least 200 trees per acre. This far sighted law has been on the books for more than a half century. That long ago Iowa legislature was early in its recognition of the need for environmental improvement. The land owners of Iowa have not yet caught up with this particular concept as witnessed by the use of the law. A little over 100,000 acres of Iowa's 2,500,000 acres of timber are in forest reserve.

One excuse for not fencing the timber is the expense of the fencing material. The Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS) has a cost sharing practice where they will pay 80% of the cost of fencing materials up to \$3.50 per rod to protect woodland from grazing.

The tools are here to allow Iowa's forest land to be rehabilitated. Time is running short as our timbers slowly revert to brush then finally given the coup-de-grace with the bulldozer.

fallacies of firearms storage

Chances are most shooting sportsmen have cleaned and placed in storage at least one firearm, probably more, and are satisfied their firearms are protected until the next hunting season.

In so doing, many have given their guns the utmost attention, or so they think. They've taken every possible precaution against evils from without, giving no thought to the damage they have invited from within.

Certain procedures still persist in the minds of gun owners when it comes to storing firearms, unfortunately some of these procedures are wrong. Shooters believe in shielding guns from the elements, wrapping them up tightly so that not even a particle of dust can penetrate their protective covering. In following this procedure, shooters are encouraging a more deadly enemy — rust.

A gun that's been sealed in an airtight contain, whether a regular case or a sleeve of plastic, is sure to sweat when temperatures change, resulting in rust and corrosion on all metal parts. The same chemical reaction takes place when the muzzle of a firearm is plugged with a rag or cork to keep out the dust. The result is a pitted bore.

Another mistake the overly-protective gun owner makes in cleaning his firearms is to apply too much oil to moving parts. If he doesn't remember to wipe them clean next fall when temperatures drop, he winds up with a jammed gun.

Such are the fallacies of gun cleaning and storage. Proper procedure calls for a thorough cleaning of the bore and all movable parts, followed by a light coating of oil on the latter.

Under no circumstances should the muzzle of a firearm be

plugged. This cuts off air circulation and invites condensation. The same is true of airtight storage containers, including gun cabinets. Make sure yours is ventilated. (Incidentally, if the plug slips into the barrel and is forgotten, a dangerous situation is created. The next time the gun is fired it could ruin the barrel, or worse.)

A gun case with a partially open zipper may seem to be a solution to the condensation problem, but there's another hazard to consider. Fur liners in such carrying cases will drain the oil from wood stocks.

What is the best procedure? Store your guns in a cool, dry area of the house, either in a ventilated cabinet or closet, or on a wall rack. Wipe them occasionally with a silicon or oily cloth. That's all the protection they need. ☆

measure that 1972 RACK

Iowa deer hunters who bag trophy bucks this season are encouraged to have the racks measured by certified Boone & Crockett or Pope and Young measurers. Qualifying entries will be included in the Iowa Conservation Commission's Official Record Racks list.

Archery killed deer are measured by Pope and Young scores, while white-tails taken by firearms are scored on Boone and Crockett standards.

Iowa Conservation Commission award certificates will be presented in four classes. These classes and the minimum score for each are:

Shotgun - Muzzleloader

Typical White-tail ----140 points
Nontypical White-tail--160 points

Archery

Typical White-tail ----115 points
Nontypical White-tail--120 points

Shrinkage in varying degrees takes place when antlers dry out. For that reason hunters must wait 60 days or more before having a rack officially measured.

Deer hunters possessing trophy racks taken in Iowa should contact the Iowa Conservation Commission, Information and Education Section, 300 Fourth Street, Des Moines, Iowa 50319, and we will forward official scorers who may be contacted. ☆

Classroom Corner

By Curt Powell

Administrator

Conservation Education Center



FILL HOLES IN A SMALL SECTION OF LOG WITH SUET MIXED WITH GRAIN OR SUNFLOWER SEEDS. SMALL SHALLOW CANS FILLED WITH THE SAME AND TACKED ON TREES IS ALSO GOOD.



A PIECE OF SUET ~AN EAR OF CORN WILL ATTRACT THE BLUE JAY AND WOODPECKERS.



FOR THE SEED EATERS A MIXTURE OF SUNFLOWER SEEDS ~CRACKED CORN AND PEANUT HEARTS IS VERY GOOD.



When snow covers the ground where do wild creatures find something to eat? Do they scratch away the snow and hope to find something beneath it? Most wild creatures are fairly well-equipped for survival during the winter months. Many have migrated to other parts of the world, but many others spend their winter months in Iowa and provide us with entertainment.

Winter can be especially severe on some of the many birds that stay in Iowa. These creatures offer a great deal of pleasure to man with their lilting songs and colorful cavalcades of plumage. Wouldn't it be a good project to feed the birds, attract them to your area, and enjoy them all winter?

Each winter a project called "Operation Tid-bits" is carried on

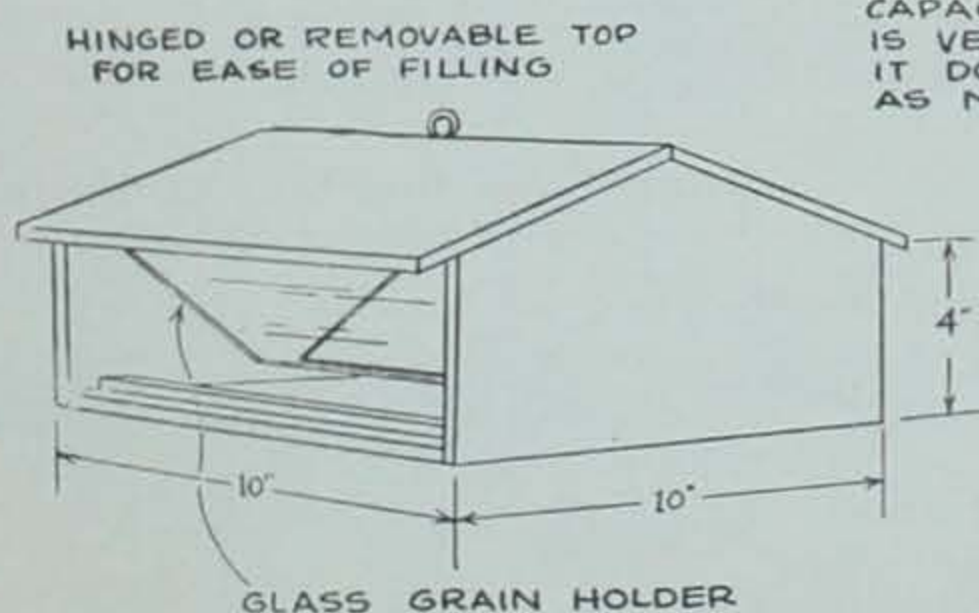
to provide food for the birds wintering in Iowa. We have provided a few drawings which may give you some ideas on the type of feeder you might build for the birds in your area.

There are many commercial feeds that you might buy to fill these feeders with. Suet (white animal fat) is also very good to place outside for them. Be certain to place your feeders close to shrubs or trees so that your feathered guests can fly into the branches for protection and shelter.

One thing to remember: once you have started to place food out for the birds, continue to do so, as they become accustomed to returning to the same place for food!

Drake University of Des Moines will be offering a short course this summer at the Con-

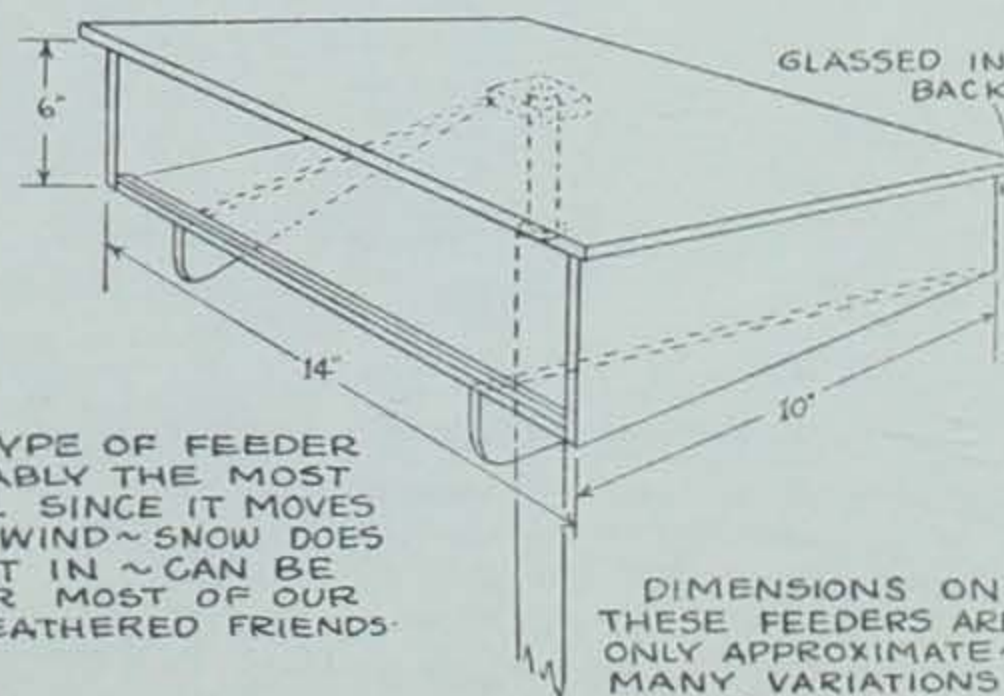
servation Education Center, Guthrie Center, Iowa. The course is entitled "Science Education 131; Elements of Environmental Education." The dates offered: Section 201 — July 23 to August 1 and Section 202 — August 1 to August 11. The course is a combination of classroom and field study utilizing the natural settings of lake, wetlands, prairie, and forest with application of content to environmental education strategies and curriculum. The course provides three hours credit. This course is being offered in cooperation with Drake, the Iowa Conservation Commission and the National Park Service. For more information and reservations contact the Conservation Education Center, Route 1, Box 138C, Guthrie Center, Iowa 50115 or Dr. Robert Vanden Branden, Drake University, Des Moines, Iowa 50311. ☆



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