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JULY 1977

# VOXO conservationist







Volume 36, Number 7

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**conservationist**

All persons are entitled to full and equal enjoyment of the recreational opportunities, privileges and advantages available in Iowa's great outdoors.

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**Cover:** Yellow River State Forest by Jim Copic.

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Photo by Ken Formanek

# Saylorville Reservoir

**T**HE LONG AWAITED NEWS is here at last. Saylorville Reservoir will be ready for recreational activities this year. Central Iowa anglers are now eyeing this 5,400-acre lake and wondering what it holds in its future for fishing. What species will be available? When will fishing start to get "hot"?

To determine which species need to be stocked in the lake, a pre-impoundment survey was initiated in 1973 to determine the numbers and species of fish in the river above the dam site. Data from this survey revealed an abundant channel catfish population available to expand the fishery following impoundment. Gizzard shad, a forage species essential for maintaining growth of predator gamefish species, was also present in quantity; further stocking would be unnecessary. Several other gamefish species were present, but not in numbers great enough to provide good fishing.





With this information in mind, an extensive stocking program was formulated to bring Saylorville Reservoir into its own as a "hotspot" for fishing. Several popular gamefish species will be stocked to give the anglers as much variety as any lake in the state. Walleye fry stockings began in May 1977 and will continue each succeeding year. Approximately 5.4 million walleye fry will be stocked annually. These are only the first of four large predator species to be introduced into the reservoir.

Largemouth bass fingerlings will be stocked for two successive years at a rate of 100/acre, totaling 1,080,000 fish by 1978. These two plants will establish a good adult bass population and good bass fishing.

Northern pike, a species known to grow well in Red Rock Reservoir, will also be added to the stocking list. Initially, 5,400,000 fry will be placed in the lake, and the numbers and size of fish for future stockings will depend on projected spring reservoir water levels.

A species relatively new to Iowa will be stocked in an attempt to establish a predator in the more open water expanses of the reservoir. The ocean striped bass, the larger growing southern cousin of the white bass or "striper" found in many of our lakes and streams, will be introduced this year. This species has been stocked in Rathbun the last four years but the program is still in its infancy. "Ocean stripers" are capable of attaining weights of 40 pounds or more by feeding on gizzard shad frequenting open water areas. Saylorville will broaden our opportunities in establishing a "striper" fishery.

Two panfish species, white bass and crappie, will complete the

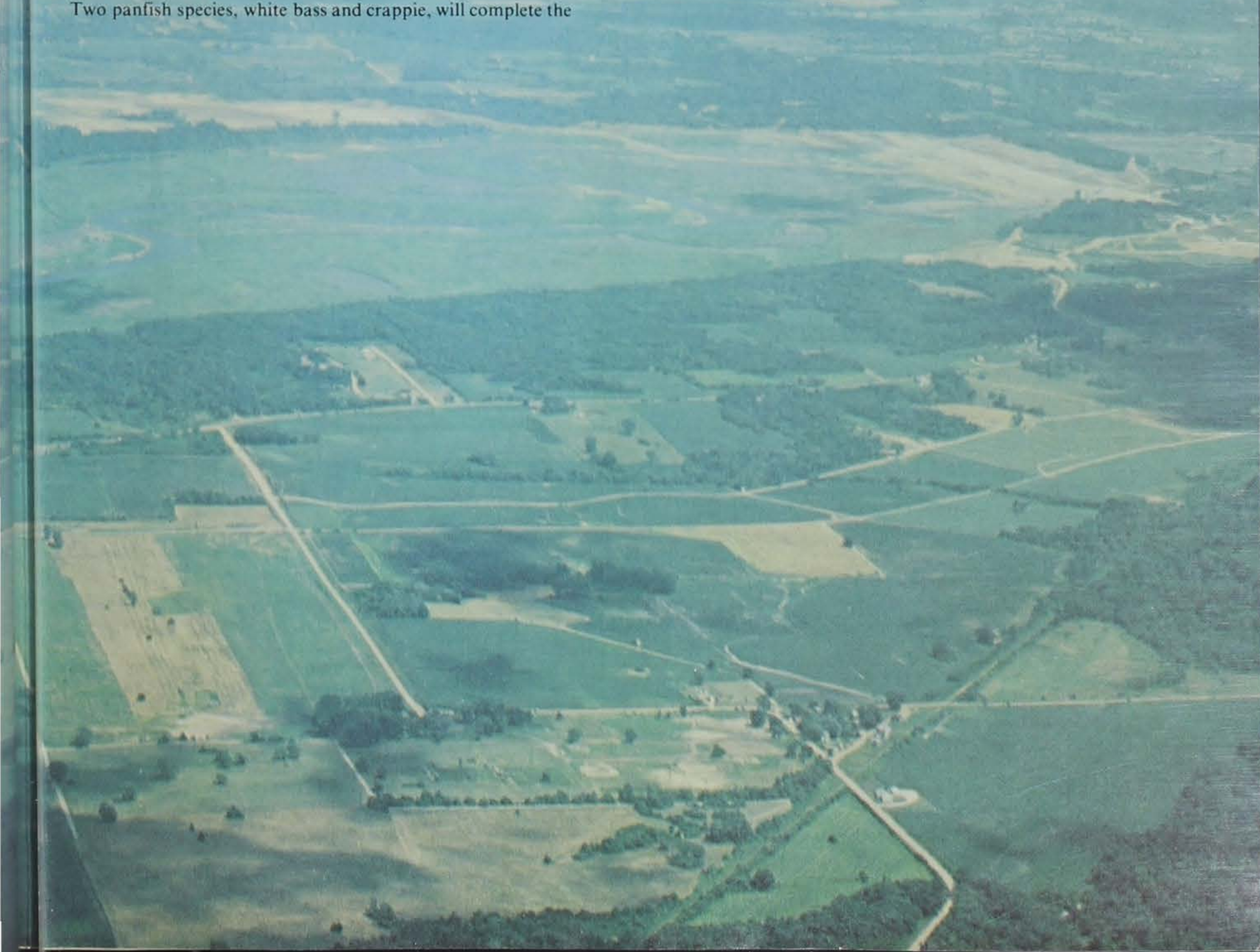
species stocking list. Both have fared well in our other major flood control reservoirs in the state and at certain times of the year make up the bulk of the angling harvest. Adults will be netted from Red Rock and transported to the lake this spring. Since both species successfully reproduce in reservoirs, no further stocking will be required following the original plant.

To accommodate boat fishermen, there are six boat ramps located around the perimeter of the reservoir's pool. Four of these were constructed by the Corps of Engineers; one at the Big Creek Barrier dam. The Conservation Commission has also constructed a ramp at the west end of the Polk City bridge and Polk County has completed one at Jester Park. In addition, there are four Corps ramps on the river above normal reservoir pool in Boone County. These ten boat launches will provide excellent access for area anglers.

To help in locating fish, 18 large brush piles have been constructed at various locations on the reservoir bottom. Each brush pile, which will serve as a structure to attract fish to its locality, is marked with a white cylindrical bouy lettered with the words "Brush Pile".

When will fishing start to pay off? Realistically, for most stocked species, not until the summer of 1979. For channel catfishermen, however, fishing may be better than expected prior to that time since there is already a large natural population in the river.

So get your gear together, anglers, because it won't be long until your newest fishing "hotspot" is ready for action!





# Ruthven Wildlife Unit

by Tom Neal

THE RUTHVEN WILDLIFE UNIT consists of five counties in northwestern Iowa. The land is flat to gently rolling in the eastern part of the Unit (Pocahontas, Clay and Buena Vista Counties) and becomes increasingly hilly as you proceed westward through Cherokee and Plymouth Counties. Soils are of glacial origin except for the deep loess hills of Cherokee and Plymouth Counties.

The Unit is drained primarily by the Little Sioux and Big Sioux Rivers which eventually reach the Missouri, and by the Raccoon River which drains into the Des Moines. The eastern flat to gently rolling part of the Unit is characterized by intensive cash grain farming. The easily erodable hills in the western part of the Unit are more suited to livestock farming, with a mixture of grain crops, pasture and hayland. Wooded areas occur primarily in narrow strips along the Big Sioux and Little Sioux Rivers. Overall, timber is very scarce in the Unit.

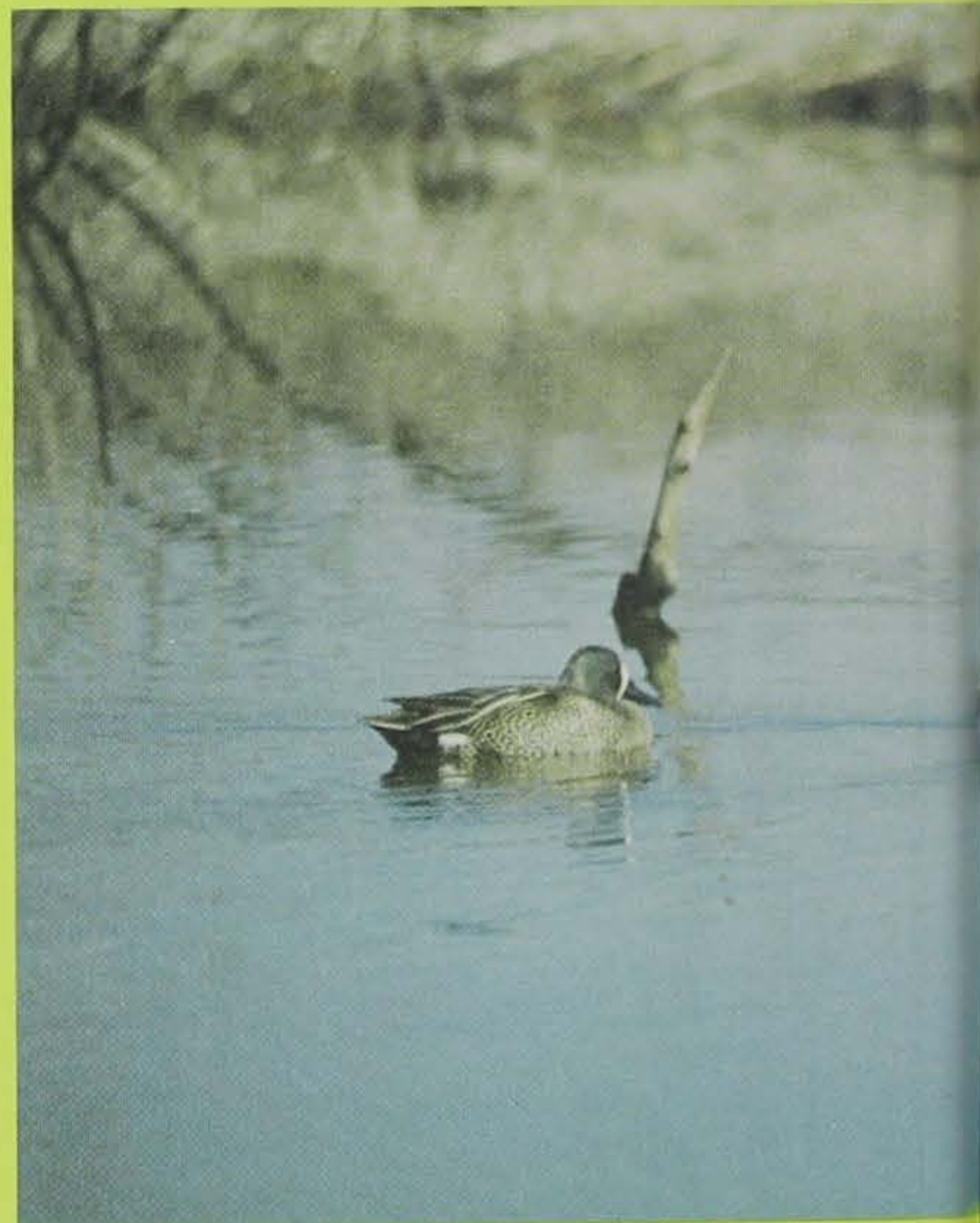
The Ruthven Unit was once in the heart of a vast marsh and wetland complex. Ninety-eight percent of these marshes have been drained for agricultural purposes. The few remaining wetlands are mostly in state ownership. A complex of wetlands that still remains along the Clay and Palo Alto County line (known as the Ruthven Area Marshes) is recognized as the best remaining tract of waterfowl nesting habitat in the state. Careful management of this nesting area is necessary to insure maximum production of ducks and geese. Management may include seeding tall native grasses to provide safe nesting sites, control of muskrat populations which may over harvest the plants ducks depend on and controlled spring burning which kills the undesirable blue grass and encourages tall plants.

A great variety of game birds and animals occur in the unit, each in areas where habitat is suitable. The most sought-after game bird, the ringneck pheasant, was once very abundant in the Unit. It now occurs in the vicinity of widely scattered patches of winter and nesting cover. The pheasant is found throughout the Unit wherever idle fields or small grains provide nesting cover, and dense farm groves or cattail marshes provide protection from winter storms.

Cottontail rabbits are now restricted mostly to areas in town or around farm buildings because of the destruction of their habitat elsewhere. Ungrazed woodlots and brushy draws also support high populations.

Jackrabbits, once very common, are now rather rare in the Unit. Conversion of pasture and hayland to row crops has destroyed much of the habitat of this animal.

Deer are common in wooded valleys and on public hunting areas throughout the Unit. Fox squirrels are common in all wooded areas, farm woodlots and in towns. Raccoons are abundant along watercourses and around old buildings. Red fox occur throughout the Unit. Coyotes are fairly common in the western part of the Unit and less common as you go east.



*Blue-winged Teal (above) and nest (below).*



*Photo by Ken Formanek*

Hungarian partridge occur throughout the Unit in open country. Quail are fairly common wherever suitable brushy habitat occurs, primarily parts of Plymouth, Cherokee, northern Buena Vista and southern Clay Counties.





*Photo by the Author*

Mallards and blue-winged teal nest throughout the Unit along ditches and marshes, with the greatest concentration in the Ruthven area. Other waterfowl which regularly nest in this area include redheads, ruddy ducks and Canada geese. Wood ducks nest wherever hollow trees are found near water.

The popular ringneck pheasant is widespread. Early in the season it is hunted in grassy areas near corn stubble, while late season concentrations are found in thick woodlots, plum thickets and sloughs.

Rabbits are usually shot incidental to pheasant hunting, although many farm groves and ungrazed draws provide huntable populations. Most deer hunting is done in the wooded Little Sioux and Big Sioux river valleys, with scattered deer found in other brushy or wooded areas.

Squirrels are lightly hunted, but are abundant in most any farm woodlot. Raccoons are abundant throughout the Unit, with most hunting done along creeks and in the larger wooded areas. Fox are hunted throughout the Unit and coyotes are hunted in the western parts.

### *Trapping aids marsh management.*

*Photo by Ken Formanek*



The challenging Hungarian or gray partridge is found throughout the Unit in open areas. This bird is very lightly hunted because of the difficulty of approaching a covey in the open habitat they prefer. Quail are not heavily hunted, but fair populations occur wherever idle fields and brushy thickets remain, mostly along steep stream valleys.

The Raccoon, Little Sioux and Big Sioux rivers provide limited waterfowl hunting. Some waterfowl hunting is also done on farm ponds, private marshes and drainage ditches. Field feeding mallards are hunted mostly in the vicinity of Storm Lake and Round Lake refuge. Geese may be encountered anywhere in the Unit, but best chances are in the vicinity of the larger lakes and marshes. A 63 square mile area in the Ruthven area is closed to Canada goose hunting in order to protect a flock of nesting geese which is being established in the area. The offspring of these geese are released into the wild, and are nesting in many parts of the Unit — the first wild nesting geese in this area in almost 100 years! Canada goose hunting should improve in the Unit as this flock builds up.

The great majority of waterfowl hunting in the Unit is done on the state-owned marshes. The larger marshes often have high concentrations of hunters, particularly on weekends early in the season. Little hunting pressure is experienced on small potholes or larger areas late in the season. Snipe and rails receive little hunting pressure and are often abundant early in the season along marshy shorelines.

Public areas also provide pheasant hunting where grassy areas adjoin private property early in the season, and in the extensive cattail marshes after freeze up. Rabbits, deer, squirrel, fox and raccoon are also taken on public hunting areas in the Unit. Non-game species benefit greatly by the habitat provided by public lands.

*(Continued on Page 15)*



# Pointing Dog Field Trials

By Chuck Kakac

*Photos by Ken Formanek*

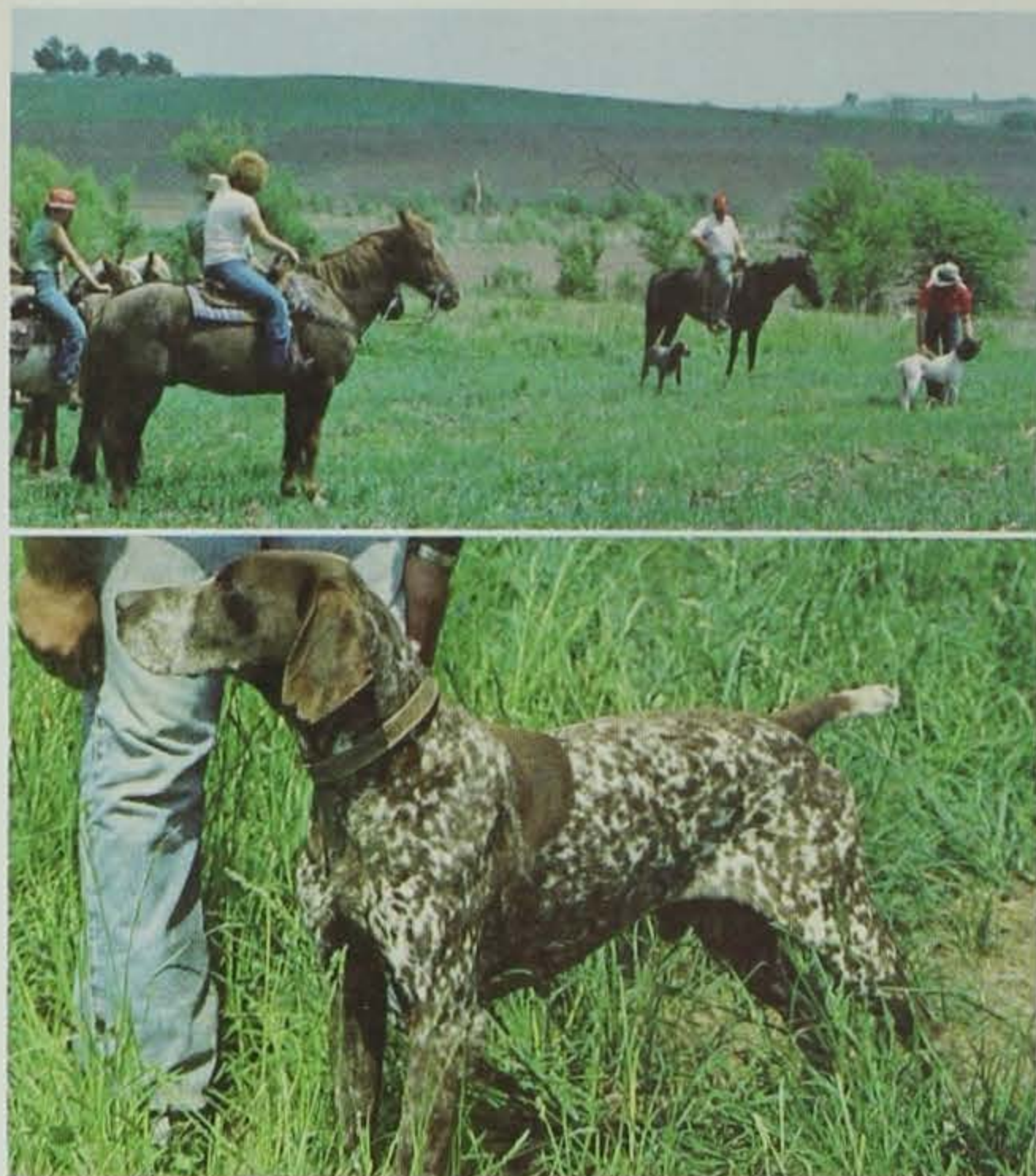
"I've got the best quail dog in the county!" How many times have you heard a hunter claim something similar to this? More times than not this statement is discussed and cussed but never really settled. One way of deciding who has the best dog is by joining a growing group of sportsmen in an activity known as field trialing.

A field trial is a simulated hunting trip at which dogs are run in competition for prizes — usually trophies or ribbons. Before a trial starts, game birds such as pheasants or quail are liberated in "birdy looking" places around a designated course. Dogs are generally run in braces (2 dogs) and each brace is judged by two judges. The dogs are judged on how they search for the birds and their manners in pointing the birds once they find them. There are several categories (stakes) in which a dog may be entered at a field trial. The following is a brief description of some of the stakes and their performance standards:

**Puppy Stake** — For dogs six months of age and under fifteen months of age. Puppies must show desire to hunt, boldness, initiative in covering ground and in searching for game. They need not point.

**Derby Stake** — For dogs six months of age and under two years of age. Derbies must show a keen desire to hunt, be bold and independent, show intelligence in seeking objectives and have the ability to find game. Derbies must point but need not be steady to wing and shot.

**Gun Dog Stake** — For dogs six months of age and over. A gun dog must give a finished performance and *must be under its handler's control at all times*. A gun dog must show intelligence in seeking objectives and have the ability to find game. They must be steady to wing and shot.



**All-Age Stake** — For dogs six months of age and over. An all-age dog must give a finished performance and *must be under reasonable control of its handler*. It must show independence in hunting and should range well out in a forward moving pattern seeking the most promising objectives. The dog must find game and be steady to wing and shot.

If you have never been to a field trial and decide to attend one — be prepared for a shock. It looks more like a rodeo than a dog trial. There are horses everywhere. At most trials, horses are used as a means of conveyance for the judges, dog handlers and by the spectators (called gallery). Horses however, are not a necessity at a trial. In fact, many people handle dogs on foot and plenty of spectators walk as well. But if you plan on being at a trial all day — riding a horse sure beats walking.

Field trials are more than an event to determine who has the best dog. They are also a social outing in which the whole family can participate. Horseback riding, working dogs and enjoying the outdoors are all a part of field trialing. Dog people also enjoy discussing, praising, and even stretching the truth about their common bond — dogs. So if you are contemplating the purchase of a bird dog, stop by a trial and I'm sure you can get many opinions on all breeds of dogs.

The average bird hunter also benefits from field trials. Every hunter's dream is to own a quality hunting dog. These trials enable dog owners to demonstrate the progress made in breeding for practical hunting use, stamina and obedience. While most good field trial dogs make good hunting dogs, very few hunting dogs will make good field trial dogs. Generally the best hunting dogs do come from proven field trial bloodlines.

Dog trials are held at the Red Rock Dog Trial Area both spring and fall. Last year over 1000 bird dogs were run in competitive field trials at Red Rock. If you are interested in "extending the hunting season" by watching good dog work please plan on attending a trial this year. These dog trial people are very engrossed in their hobby, but if you ask, someone will be happy to explain what is going on. After all, it takes a great deal of courage, conviction and pride to place your dog in competition for all to see. □



# Native Prairie Grass Pastures



by **Ronnie R. George**

**WILDLIFE RESEARCH BIOLOGIST**

*Photos by the Author*

**W**ILDLIFE RESEARCH studies throughout the Midwest have shown that alfalfa and red clover hayfields, particularly when in combination with brome-grass, provide preferred nesting cover for ring-necked pheasants. However, large numbers of pheasant nests are destroyed and many hens are killed each year when these fields are harvested for hay during early to mid-June, the peak of the pheasant-hatching season. Compounding this problem is the fact that intensive farming operations and land-use changes in some parts of the

Midwest have virtually eliminated alternate nesting cover in fence rows, grass waterways, small grain fields and wetlands. If another type of nesting cover could be developed, which would be both acceptable to hen pheasants and safe from early-season hay cutting, much of the nesting habitat problem could be solved.

Iowa Conservation Commission wildlife biologists took note during the late 1960's and early 1970's when USDA

Soil Conservation Service personnel in southern Iowa began to recommend the incorporation of warm-season native grasses such as switchgrass, Indian grass, and big bluestem in livestock grazing programs. Native grass pastures were reported to produce high-quality livestock forage during the hot summer months when cool-season grasses such as bluegrass, orchard-grass and fescue were dormant, thereby providing the private livestock producer with an economic incentive for establishing and managing these species.





Switchgrass.



Indian grass.



Little bluestem.

Commission biologists believed native grass pastures might provide suitable pheasant nesting habitat because the dense growth form of native grasses is similar to other types of pheasant nesting cover, and grazing or mowing of warm-season pastures was unlikely to occur before the majority of the pheasant nests had hatched in late June or early July. In addition, the recommended practice of leaving 8 to 10 inches of prairie grass stubble for optimum plant growth should allow sufficient residual cover for nest initiation the following spring. Wildlife biologists in Iowa also hoped prairie grass pastures might provide nesting habitat for bobwhite quail since the bobwhite historically inhabited the forest-prairie edge, and certain types of prairie grass in the southeastern United States are known to provide good quail nesting cover. In 1972, the Iowa Conservation Commission's Upland Wildlife Research Team began evaluating warm-season native prairie grass pastures as nesting habitat for bobwhite quail, ring-necked pheasants, and a variety of other birds.

Pure stands of Blackwell switchgrass, Nebraska 54 Indian grass and Pawnee big bluestem were seeded with the aid of a special grassland drill on nine 5 to 12 acre test plots at the Rathbun Wildlife Area in south-central Iowa during May and June, 1973. Of the three species, switchgrass proved to be the easiest to establish. Plots were mowed in August, 1973, and sprayed with Atrazine at the rate of 2 pounds per acre during April of 1974 and 1976 to reduce competition from weeds and cool-season grasses. Several plots required reseeding and additional study plots on both public and private land were added in subsequent years.

A variety of treatments were applied to study plots in order to simulate private management of warm-season pastures. Treatments included: hay mowing in July, grazing during July and August, and seed harvest in September. Other plots were left undisturbed to provide maximum residual cover the following spring.

Intensive nest searching of the pure stands of switchgrass, Indian grass, and big bluestem began in 1974 and continued through 1976. In addition, mixed stands of these three species and an actual prairie

remnant consisting of an almost pure stand of little bluestem were included in the nesting study. Privately-owned alfalfa/orchard-grass hay meadows in the immediate vicinity of the study area were also searched to provide a direct comparison of nest density and nest success in cool-season hayfields with those of warm-season prairie grass pastures. Most fields were searched twice each year, once in June and once in July. Nest searching was accomplished by a crew walking abreast and parting the vegetation with a stick. Active nests were marked and revisited until the fate of the nest was determined.

A total of 241.2 acres of native grasses were searched during the course of this study, and a total of 137 nests including 57 pheasant, 5 quail, 5 dove, and 70 songbird nests were discovered.

Pheasant nesting densities were highest in mixed native grass, little bluestem, and switchgrass. When pheasant nesting densities in switchgrass are compared with nesting in privately-owned alfalfa/orchard-grass meadows, densities of 27.5 nests/100 acres of switchgrass greatly exceed densities in alfalfa/orchard-grass (16.1 nests/100 acres). In





Nest searching crew in action.



Young meadowlark in switchgrass pasture.



Successful pheasant nest in prairie grass pasture.



Mourning dove nest in switchgrass.



Quail nest in Indian grass.

addition, 11.6 successful nests/100 acres of switchgrass greatly surpasses the nesting success found in cool-season hay meadows where mowing operations in early June destroyed all of the nests and killed 73 percent (8 out of 11) hens nesting in 66.2 acres of privately-owned alfalfa/orchard-grass. Switchgrass is especially important as pheasant nesting cover since stems from the previous year remain erect throughout the winter and provide residual nesting cover in the spring.

Quail nesting densities and nest success were greatest in little bluestem. For mourning doves, the greatest nesting densities and nest success occurred in Indian grass (possibly as a result of a greater amount of bare ground between clumps). Songbird nesting densities were highest in big bluestem. Common nesters identified in this study included red-winged blackbirds, eastern meadowlarks, dickcissels, yellow-throats, and field sparrows.

All of the native grasses evaluated in this study appear to provide acceptable nesting habitat for a variety of upland birds, and all of these grasses could be used for summer pasture. However,

switchgrass is by far the most popular of the native grasses among southern Iowa cattlemen at the present time. Unlike the other native grasses which must be seeded with special equipment, switchgrass can be established with an ordinary grain drill or end-gate seeder, and switchgrass seed is generally less expensive than the seed of other native grasses. While switchgrass may be slightly less productive than some of the other native grasses and cattle may show a tendency to avoid it at first, switchgrass is nevertheless a very desirable pasture grass if it is not grazed too close.

Field tests conducted at the Shelby-Grundy Experimental Farm in Ringgold County by Frank Schaller and Stan Murdock, Iowa State University agronomists, reveal that switchgrass has crude protein and digestibility values only slightly lower than those of brome-grass when each of the grasses is harvested at comparable stages of maturity. These agronomists also found that the annual dry matter yield for switchgrass usually exceeds that of brome-grass even if the switchgrass is fertilized at lower nitrogen rates. Switchgrass was also found to produce

remarkably well even during dry years.

Steps are now being taken to establish native grasses on wildlife management areas, state parks, county conservation board lands, and public roadsides. However, large-scale establishment of native grasses in Iowa must ultimately depend upon private-landowner acceptance of warm-season native grass pasture as an economically desirable livestock management practice. At the present time more than 4,000 acres of switchgrass pasture has already been established by private landowners in southern Iowa. If one-fourth of permanent pasture in Iowa were eventually converted to switchgrass, this would amount to more than a million and a quarter acres of potential upland wildlife nesting cover. Who knows, with suitable prairie habitat once again available, the haunting, resonant call of the prairie chicken might once again be heard on Iowa booming grounds.

Anyone wishing more information on native grass pastures should contact their local Soil Conservation Service representative or the Wildlife Management Biologist in their area. □



Fig. 1. Pheasant nests per 100 acres of nesting cover.

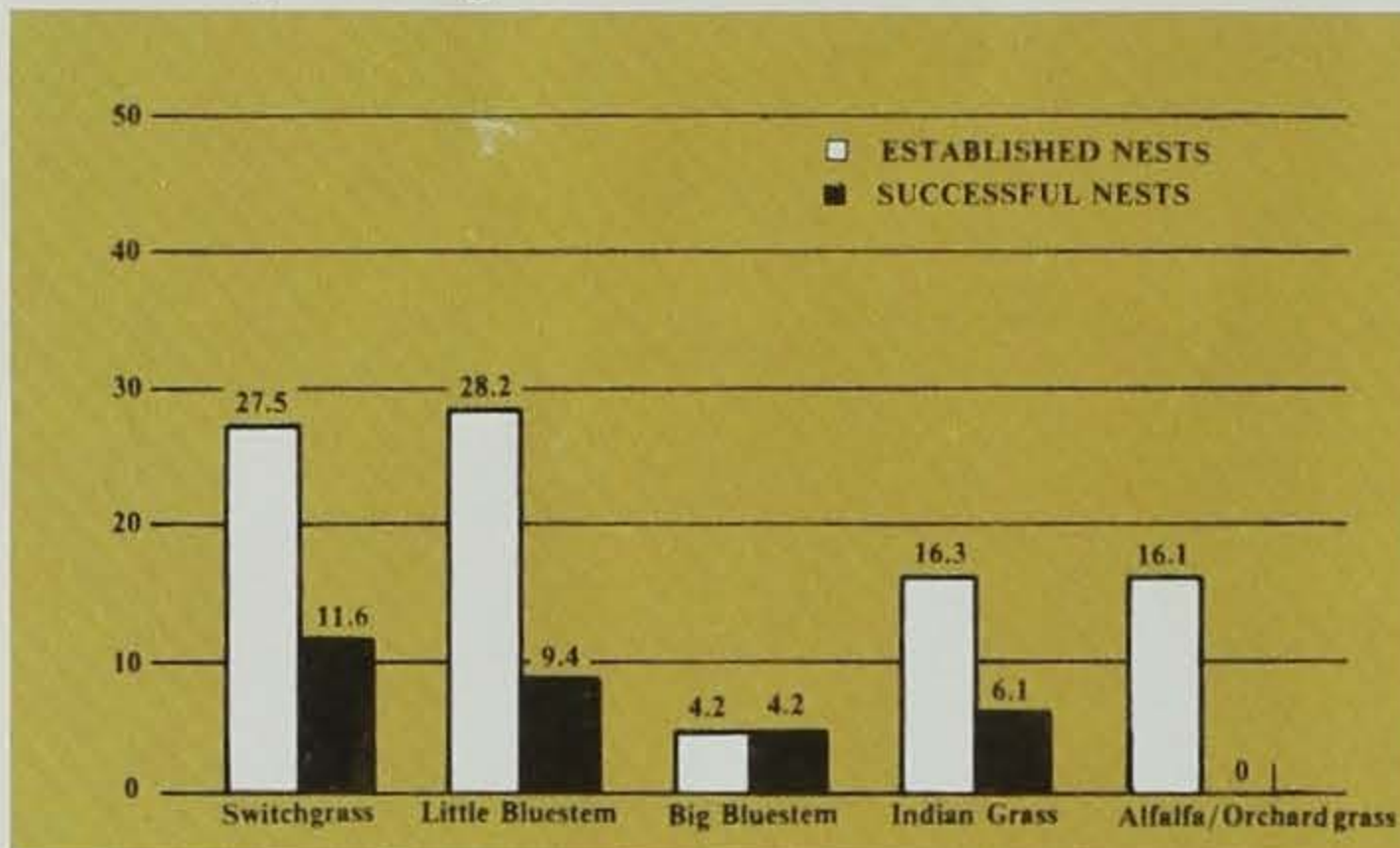


Fig. 2. Songbird nests per 100 acres of nesting cover.

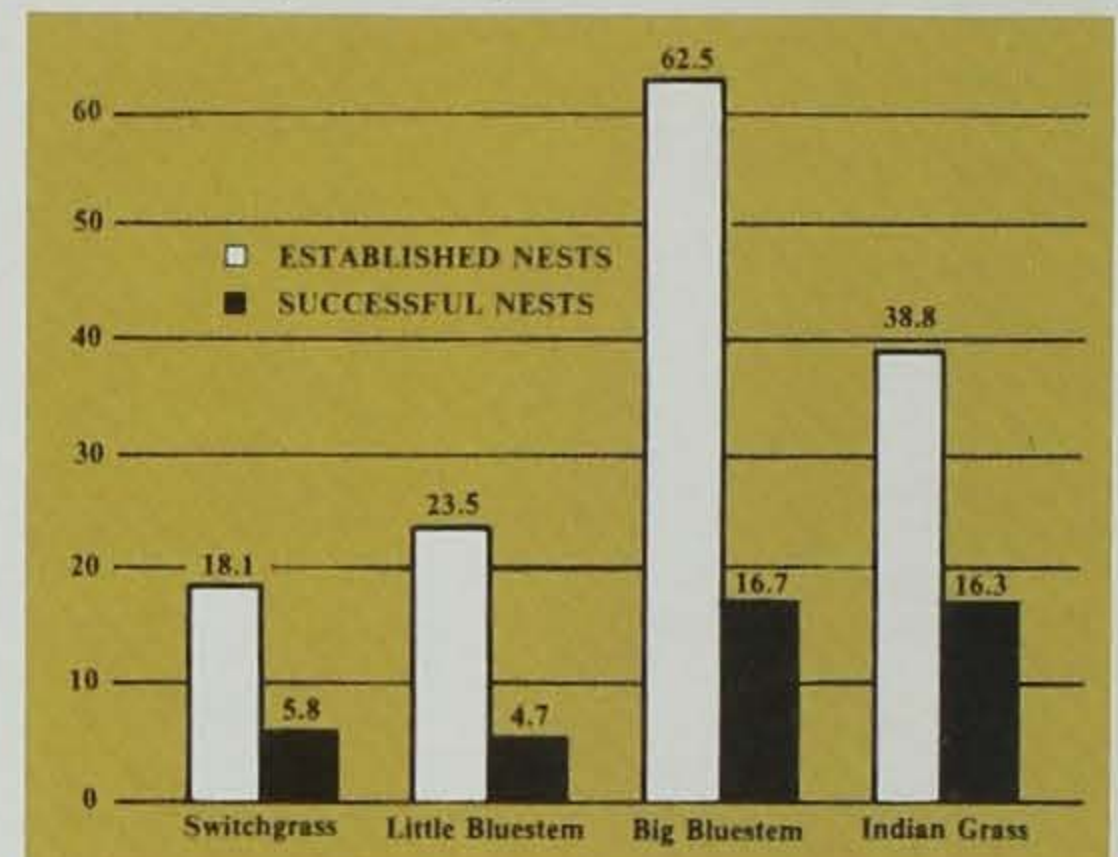


Table 1. Comparison of brome-grass and switchgrass forage at the Shelby-Grundy Experimental Farm in Ringgold County, Iowa (Schaller and Murdock 1974)

	First cutting <sup>a</sup>			Annual yield (1974)	Average yield (1973 - 74)
	Nitrogen lbs/acre	Digestibility %	Crude protein %	Tons/acre	Tons/acre
Brome-grass	0	63.7	12.5	0.47	1.30
	120	67.8	19.0	1.83	2.69
	240	67.4	20.3	2.34	3.23
Switchgrass	0	58.1	9.7	1.80	3.00
	120	62.8	18.4	3.69	4.59
	240	62.8	18.3	3.94	4.66

<sup>a</sup> May 31, 1974: brome-grass  
June 19, 1974: switchgrass

Grazing or mowing below 8 - 10" reduces plant vigor.



Prairie grass response to spring burn.



# IOWA TREES

This is the first of a series of articles on Iowa trees. Each story will contain facts about one or several trees grouped by family of similar growth characteristics. Watch for this series in future

issues of the *Conservationist* and "bone up" on Iowa tree identification. Illustrations are compliments of the U.S. Forest Service.

*Photos by Jerry Leonard*



## *Eastern Redcedar*

Eastern Redcedar is the most widely distributed conifer of tree size in the eastern United States. The Redcedar commonly occurs in all parts of Iowa. It grows as a tall tree or a shrub and any size between, utilizing a wide variety of sites from dry hillsides to swamps. The leaves are scale-like and usually opposite, being smooth, shiny, dark green, and glandular on older foliage. On young foliage, leaves are linear (somewhat needle-like), pointed, and prickly.

The tree is commonly 40-50 feet tall with a trunk diameter of 1-2 feet. The short, slender branches form a compact, pyramidal crown except on very old trees. The bark is light reddish brown, thin, and separating into long, peeling, fibrous strips.

Uses — the Eastern Redcedar is usually available only in fairly small sizes, and generally is quite knotty. Principle use has changed from fence posts to novelty items. Lumber is used where its fragrance and reputed moth-repellent qualities are valued such as in storage chests, closets, and wardrobes. It is also used for millwork, pencils, woodenware, and containers such as buckets.



## *Eastern White Pine*

The White Pine is the only native Iowa pine and is found in the northeast part of the state. It has been planted extensively in eastern and southern Iowa and occasionally in the northeast section. The needles are soft bluish-green, flexible, 3-5 inches long, in bundles of 5, with 3-5 fine white lines on two surfaces of each needle. Needles remain on the tree for two years. Cones are fully grown in the summer of the second season, opening to discharge seeds that autumn.

The tree commonly attains 100 feet in height and 5 feet in diameter, with a tall, straight stem and pyramidal crown. Branches are in definite whorls of long lateral branches. This conifer is long-lived, and has been known to reach heights above 200 feet. This wood is light, straight-grained, easily worked, but not strong. It is used in cabinet work, interior finishes, woodenware, matches, and lumber.

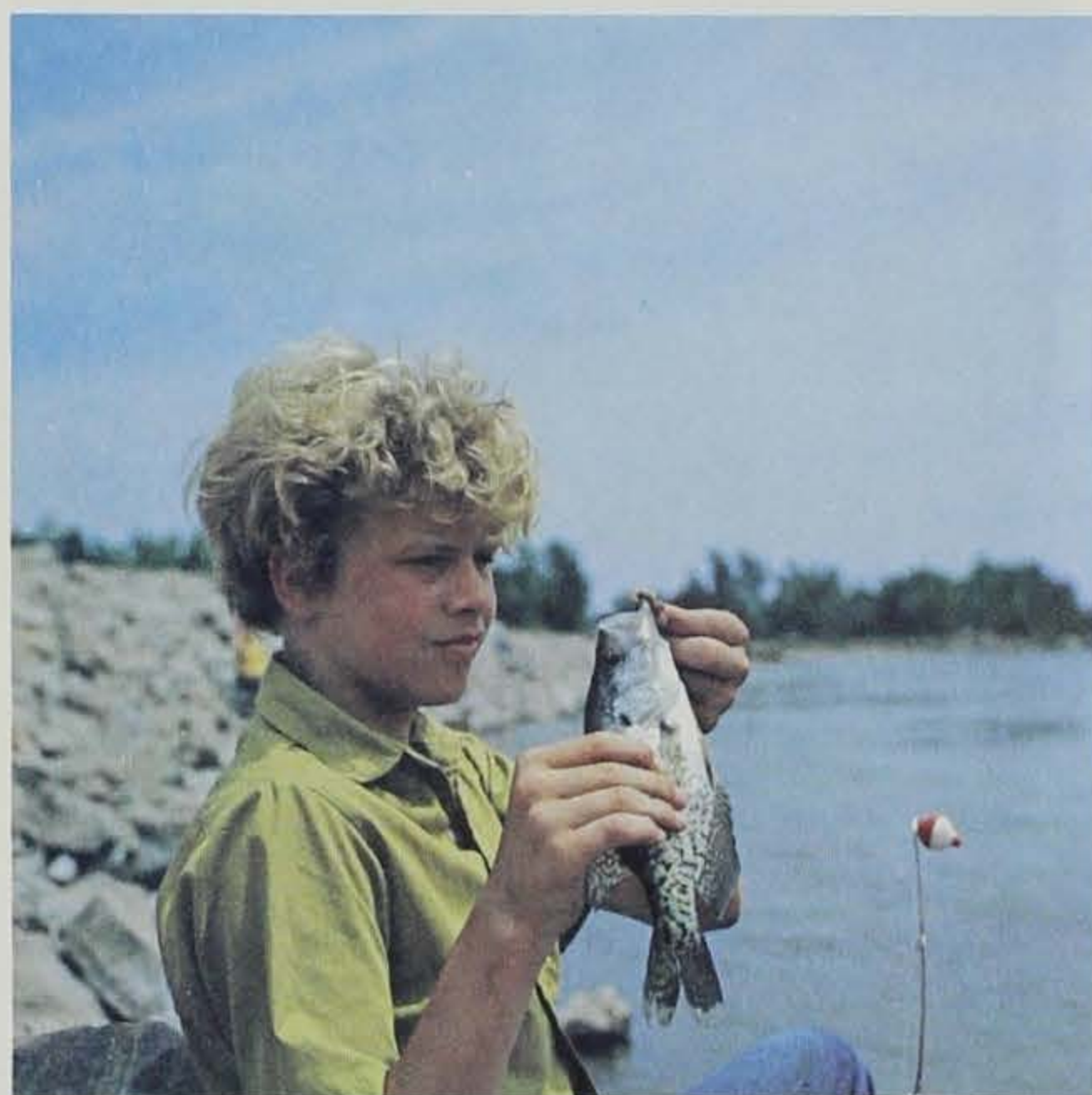
Other conifers commonly *planted* in Iowa include: Red Pine, Scotch Pine, Austrian Pine, Ponderosa Pine, Douglas Fir, Norway Spruce and Black Hills Spruce. □





# A BONANZA for FISHERMEN- "BOOM FISHING"

by Don Bonneau



Remember that very nice stringer of bass you caught from your favorite fishing hole just a few years after it was first stocked with fish? And those panfish! Gee, they were fat and easy to catch! But something happened after two or three years of this excellent fishing and now your catch consists of only a few bass and the panfish seem to be a little smaller.

*"Well, what happened?"*

A simple question with a slightly more complex answer. Basically though, you were spoiled by your early fishing experience. Your favorite lakes, and for that matter all newly stocked lakes, produce fishing in their early years that cannot be maintained forever. Fishing may remain good or even very good, but it will never return to the "BOOM" fishing of the first two to five years.

Why can't the fisheries biologist manage all our lakes to provide this fantastic boom fishing for the life of the lake? The answer has to do with the lake itself. When first stocked with fish, the lake undergoes a drastic ecological change and this change continues to occur for approximately three years. At the end of this three-year period, the ecology or relationship of the fish to their lake environment reaches an equilibrium. This balance or equilibrium is between the newly-stocked fish and the fish food the lake produces. At the time of stocking, the lake contains an abundance of fish food. Consequently, the fish grow rapidly and, in many cases, twice as fast as growth achieved in older, established lakes. Because of this abundance of food, the newly-stocked fish are ready for the frying pan after only a couple of years' growth. Three to five years later, as the lake matures and competition for food increases, it will take four to six years to grow fish large enough to interest fishermen.

Experience as well as research has proven lakes with an abundance of fish food and fast-growing fish provide the best fishing. It is also a well-known fact that newly-stocked lakes contain the most abundant supply of fish food and the fastest growing fish. Therefore, "BOOM" fishing supplied by a newly and properly stocked lake is the best fishing one can enjoy. Some may label it as super-fishing; but whatever it is called, it won't last indefinitely. Therefore, plan a trip today and experience Iowa's finest fishing. The following table was prepared to assist you by forecasting "BOOM" fishing lakes and detailing their location. The table forecasts Iowa's "BOOM" fishing lakes now through the 1983 fishing season.

It won't last forever, so be one of the lucky ones to get in on this bonanza of fishing. Good luck and good fishing! □

MAP NO.	LAKE	COUNTY	LOCATION	LAKE SIZE (Acres)	YEAR FISH STOCKED	FISH PRESENT	"BOOM" FISHING YEARS
1.	Green Valley	Union	3 mile NW Creston	400	1974	LMB, BLG, cr, CC, BLH	1977-79
2.	Pahoja	Lyon		70		LMB, BLG, CC	1977-79
3.	Easter	Polk	SE side Des Moines	228	1974	LMB, BLG, CC, BLH	1977-79
4.	Icaria	Adams	5 mile North Corning	750	1975	LMB, BLG, CC, LBH, CR, WAL	1978-80
5.	Upper Pine	Hardin	2 mile NE Eldora	101	1976	LMB, BLG, CC	1979-81
6.	Pleasant Creek	Linn	1 mile West Palo	420	1976	LMB, BLG, CC, CR	1979-81
7.	Lock Ayr	Ringgold	1 mile North Mt. Ayr	95	1976	LMB, BLG, CC	1979-81
8.	Crawford Creek Watershed	Ida	2 mile SE Battle Creek	60	1977	LBM, BLG, CC	1980-82
9.	Saylorville Reservoir	Polk	2 mile South Polk City	5,400	1977	LMB, CC, CR, WAL, WB, SB, NP	1980-82
10.	Lower Pine	Hardin	2 mile NE Eldora	65	1978	LMB, BGL, CC	1981-83
11.	Troublesome Creek Watershed	Audubon	3 mile East Exira	70	1978	LMB, BGL, CC	1981-83
12.	Brushy Creek	Webster	3 mile SE Lehigh	750	1978	LMB, BGL, CR, CC, WAL	1981-83
13.	Barnes City	Mahaska	1 mile South Barnes City	145	1978	LMB, BGL, CR, CC	1981-83

\*LMB - Largemouth Bass, BLG - Bluegill, CR - Crappie, CC - Channel Catfish, BLH - Bullhead, WAL - Walleye, WB - White Bass, SB - Striped Bass (Ocean), NP - Northern Pike



# IT'S A SNAP TO CLEAN A SNAPPER

by Larry Pool

*Photos by the Author*

SO, you went and caught a turtle and now you're wondering just what to do with it. Well, some people have got to that point and then gave up and just turned the darned thing loose. Don't do it! You've got some good eating ahead if you'll just finish the job.

The first step is to remove the head before it removes your finger. You can do this by holding the head with a pliers while cutting with a small, regular hunting knife. The only other tools needed are a hammer and chisel for removing the ribs.

Next, cut off the claws or they'll keep pawing at you all night. The rest of the step method is shown in the photographs below. This method is the one used by turtle hunter, John R. Wise of Des Moines, who along with his wife, Dorothy, was kind enough to pose for the pictures and pass along the information.

When the meat has been removed, soak it in salt water for eight hours. Tenderize the meat with a tenderizing hammer and roll in a mixture of flour and tenderizer. Cook as if it were chicken. When you taste the results you'll never hesitate to clean another one. □



Remove the head. Cut skin away from top shell around edge.



Cut around bottom plate.



Cut top and bottom shell apart.



Remove bottom plate by cutting meat away.



Remove legs at joint by cutting to joint and twist.



Skin legs.



Remove tail.



Remove ribs to get loin by cutting ribs with chisel.



Remove neck.



Fillet.



# Warden's diary

by Rex Emerson

LAW ENFORCEMENT SUPERVISOR

THERE WERE A FEW fishermen out along the Skunk River, so I had been checking some licenses. On these hot July days most of the fishermen come out in the evening, as that seems to be when they have the most luck. However, the ones I had been checking in the forenoon did have some nice catfish.

I had just gotten back into my car when a call came on the two-way radio that Bill Beebe, the officer in Louisa County, needed some assistance. He had found three hoop nets in the Iowa River and wanted help to catch whoever was running them. You never know how many people you are going to be involved with on a deal like this, or how intoxicated they are apt to be, so it is always good to have some assistance. We left the cars in the timber and went the remaining five miles by boat.

As we went down the river, Officer Beebe told me about checking a fisherman who had just lost a big walleye. Naturally it was the biggest walleye this fellow had ever seen in his entire life. He had been fishing for crappies with very light tackle, when a huge walleye took his bait. After playing the fish for some time he had managed to get it up to the boat and he grabbed his dip net. However, the dip net was tangled up with his wife's purse and the fish straightened out the hook and got away. He was ready to throw the dip net and his wife's purse out into the lake when he happened to remember the \$200 worth of food stamps in the purse.

After we got to the spot where the hoop nets were, we used a drag hook and pulled one of them up to the surface. It was full of fish. This meant they hadn't been run recently, so we let the net back down and prepared to wait. About a quarter of a mile back we had gone past an old wooden boat with a motor on it, tied to a tree on the bank. It was a good possibility that someone would use that boat to run the nets. Bill Beebe, with his two-way radio, got out onto the bank near the old boat. I took our boat down the river and pulled in behind a point of land that was almost an island, and was across the river from the nets. With the boat out of sight securely tied to a tree, and my gear carried up on the bank, I lay down under a tree to read a magazine. I could see through the pucker brush to the spot where the hoop nets were, and up the other way to the old boat. If someone came to run the nets in a different boat I would have to chase them down in our boat. This could be a long wait. We each had a canteen full of water and some canned beans and fruit. With the number of fish that were in the nets, we figured someone would surely run them within the next twenty-four hours.

Well, I hadn't even gotten to the centerfold of my magazine when Bill called on the radio that a car was coming across the field.

In a few minutes I could see some movement on the bank by the old boat. I grabbed the binoculars for a closer look. A man got into the boat, and just stood there a long time, looking up and down the river. Finally he untied the boat, and still standing up, used an oar to paddle the boat downstream. He was tall and even though he looked to be at least 65 years old he stood straight as a poker. He would take a silent stroke with the oar and then look all around. When he got to the spot where the nets were, he tied up to a snag and stood there as motionless as a blue heron, all the time looking and listening. This was it! This was the man we had been waiting for. I was sure he would be able to hear my heart pounding clear across the river, but finally he seemed satisfied that he was the only one around, and he started to work. With a long handled pike pole he quickly pulled each net into the boat, dumping the catfish into a tub. The nets were reset, and then with one pull of the starter rope he was on his way back to his car.

I called Bill on the radio and told him the nets had been emptied into a tub and the man was on his way back.

As soon as he tied up the boat and had carried the tub of fish up onto the bank where he couldn't dump them, I knew Beebe would have him. I wanted to get over there as soon as possible, just in case there was going to be any trouble. I grabbed the rope my boat was tied up with as I slid down the steep bank. It should have come untied, but it didn't. I almost pulled my shoulder out of joint. A course in knot tying might be in order.

When I did get over to the other bank there was Bill standing with one foot on the tub of fish, his summons book under his arm, trying to get his pipe lit.

The old man said, "I just wanted to get a mess of fish to eat."

He told us about farming this 600 acres most of his life and he had just never taken time to fish with a pole and line. Then he smiled a little and said, "I didn't think you boys could catch me. That was cute, boys, real cute."

All that was left to do was pick up the nets and my gear across the river. Someday I'll get that magazine read.

## Lookin' Back . . .

### IN THE CONSERVATIONIST



Ten years ago the Iowa Conservationist reported that the local chapter of the Wildlife Society had established an "Iowa Conservation Hall of Fame." The first formal inductions into the hall were made and included such familiar names as Ding Darling and Aldo Leopold. Other inductees such as Hayden, MacBride, Pammel, Shimek and Stephens have state areas dedicated to their memory.

Creel surveys conducted on the Mississippi River showed that the bluegill led harvest figures with crappie second and walleye third.



Twenty years ago a special report was made concerning the distribution of Iowa deer killed by methods other than hunting. Highway accidents claimed two-thirds (284) of the deer in this study with the highest losses occurring in November, the rutting season. Wild dogs were confirmed as the villains in only one case while poachers were convicted in 36. A variety of miscellaneous causes took 98 deer.

A Cedar Rapids hotel reported that a wild mallard had tried to check in but after some fuss the duck was captured, refused a room and set free.



Thirty years ago the Conservationist reported on the new laws passed by the previous legislature. There were, of course, laws making it illegal to shoot at a train or kill fish from an aircraft in flight but there were some more easily understood laws as well. The legal way was paved for the restoration of Goose Lake in Greene County. Another law gave the Commission the right to set size limits on fish. Previously this was done by the legislature.

It is interesting to note that a bill to strengthen our anti-pollution laws was proposed by the Commission. It failed to pass.



# CLASSROOM CORNER

by Robert Rye

ADMINISTRATOR, CONSERVATION EDUCATION CENTER



*Butterfly Milkweed.*

*Photo by Ken Formanek*

WHEN A PERSON first has a chance to see a real prairie, it probably looks like just another field. But closer examination will show that it is much more than that.

The prairie's intrinsic beauty is exemplified by its biological and physical diversity. The demonstration area utilized by the Center for this purpose is Sheeder Prairie. It is 25 acres in size with a rolling topography and intersecting drainage ways.

Vegetation follows the topography, so as you walk around Sheeder Prairie you find even greater variety. The drainage ways contain taller-growing species and those restricted to the wetter habitats. The high lands contain plants such as big and little bluestem, Indian grass, lead plant, and porcupine grass. There are over 180 species of plants in this prairie.

The most impressive method of observing the diversity of a prairie is to visit one in spring and again during the early part of August. The contrast is striking as changes occur in flower color, type of plant in flower and plant height.

The Center has made use of both Sheeder Prairie and small patches of prairie within the park boundaries. Studies by groups vary, but the common ones are surveys of types of plants, biomass, soil and types of animals present.

When surveying the types of plants it is observed that there is a greater variety than found in other habitats. Much of this is caused by the length of time the plants have to reproduce. In a forest community the trees soon shade the ground and limit what can grow there. In the prairie the entire summer sun is available. As soon as one plant

flowers, another is there to replace it and adds still another color to the prairie scene.

Biomass studies have also been done. This investigation involves measuring the amount of living matter in a certain amount of space on the prairie and comparing it to a like quantity of forest, meadow or wetland.

One of the favorite plants of the groups studying prairies is the butterfly milkweed. It is one of the showiest of all prairie plants. This striking perennial provides a sharp contrast to its surroundings. It provides us with reddish orange flowers and lance-shaped leaves, which are 2-4 inches long and are softly hairy. Unlike other milkweed, it does not have milky juice in its stem. Because of its color and odor, the herb attracts many insects, including butterflies. Indians collected its tuberous roots and cooked them for food or ate them raw as a medicine.

Plants, like the butterfly milkweed, usually hold the interest of groups long past the time they leave the prairie. If you are taking younger children do not pass up the opportunity to expand on other activities possible in a prairie.

A list of these would include: Is there any erosion in the prairie habitat? What types of non-living things are there in this habitat? What kinds of animals live in the prairie? What kinds of animal homes are found? What types of food are there for animals to eat? What predators are present? How can the prey escape from their enemies?

The history and future of Iowa is interwoven in its prairies. Go take a look for yourself.

## RUTHVEN WILDLIFE UNIT

*(Continued from Page 3)*

Trapping furbearers is an important use of public areas in the Ruthven Unit. The most sought-after furbearers on Unit areas are muskrat, mink, raccoon and beaver. An average of about 11,000 muskrats are trapped annually on Unit areas along with smaller numbers of other furbearers. Muskrat trapping aids in the control of this animal in waterfowl marshes and helps prevent the destruction of waterfowl habitat as well as providing recreation and supplemental income for local trappers.

The Unit's administrative office is in Cherokee and field work headquarters are located near Ruthven. The Unit is responsible for management of wild animals and the habitat that is necessary for them to survive and reproduce.

Individuals and agencies are assisted with wildlife questions and habitat development. Sound wildlife management programs are promoted through public meetings, news media and individual contact. Wildlife surveys are conducted, and 23 public areas totaling nearly 9,000 acres are managed for wildlife production and public use. □





Meadowlark by Jerry Leonard