



JUNE 1980

conservationist



IOWA CONSERVATIONIST MAGAZINE

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Photograph by Ken Formanek

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Along A Country Road

by Bob Mullen
STATE CONSERVATION OFFICER

Photos by the Author

Wild Rose



Chicory



Wild Iris



Hen Pheasant



Snow Geese

WHAT REACTION does the subject of country roads bring? The normal reaction that country roads are dirty, rough, bumpy, and full of holes. And the ditches along these roads are full of weeds, cans and garbage that are thrown out. A common quote might be "Driving along country roads is dull, nothing but fields and telephone poles." Many people will comment that country roads are dangerous to drive because of the loose gravel, hills, and

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We've all either heard these comments. country roads, ditches really be so bad? down to 30 miles per hour and you will find they are nearly so dangerous to drive. And you will be amazed at all the splendors more you will see. the seemingly endless of ditches have much more than the casual woods and empty cans. less varieties of flowers can be found

growing along most country roads from spring through early fall. Wild flowers will be found, if the ditches haven't been continually and needlessly sprayed for so called weed control. Such needless spraying can be detrimental to wildlife. Many pheasant nests are destroyed by some of these sprays which are absorbed through the egg's shell killing the growing embryo within.

Many people driving along a country road are not aware

of all the wildlife they pass by as they travel. If you watch, you'll probably see a hen pheasant peering out from along a fence line, or a cotton tail rabbit soaking up the sun. If you happen to pass through a timbered area with fields next to the road, you may see deer browsing during the early evening hours. In certain parts of Iowa wild geese can be seen feeding or resting along roadside fields during the spring or fall as they migrate through Iowa.

You'll soon discover that it's not just fields and telephone poles along rural roads. If you'll take time to be aware of the possibilities, you will see there are many views to be enjoyed. A ride through the country can be very serene and enjoyable, if you allow it to be.

The next time you pull up to a stop sign on a country road, come to a full stop and take the time to look around, you just might be surprised at what you'll see.

Dog Fennel



Cottontail Rabbit





One Walked Under The Cuckoo's Nest

Black-billed Cuckoo

by Pat Vissering
WILDLIFE RESEARCH ASSISTANT

ALMOST EVERYONE has found a robin's nest in their backyard or on walks outdoors, but not many people spend their working days looking for bird nests. Several Iowa Conservation Commission research assistants have done just that. For the last two years the Iowa Conservation Commission, working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been conducting a mourning dove nesting ecology study. This study involves locating and monitoring the progress of mourning dove nests from March through October. This has also given us the perfect opportunity to study the nesting of songbirds. The study is designed to intensively search for nests in five different habitat types, each searched one day a week. After a nest is found, its progress is monitored once weekly.

The nest searcher walks systematically through the area, parting the trees and bushes with a long stick carried for that purpose. Enough noise is made in this way to flush the parent bird from its nest, revealing the nest's whereabouts. The nest itself is disturbed as little as possible, a mirror on an extendable pole is often used to observe the contents of inaccessible nests, and pertinent data are recorded. A seemingly simple task, it can tax the searcher both physically and mentally. The small, cupshaped nest identifies a goldfinch, but just what species made that plain stick nest with the bluish speckled eggs? A field guide to bird nests becomes one of the nest searcher's best friends.

Robins nest



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IOWA CONSERVATIO

On Mondays, the osage orange hedge on the perimeter of Red Haw State Park is searched. It's a long way around but it's not a hard walk. Unfortunately, it can be rather unexciting because the osage orange hedge has had both the lowest number of nests and the lowest number of bird species. Doves, grackles and robins seem to be the most frequent nesters. Two house wren nests were found in dead elms along the way, and one vesper sparrow nested in the grass under the trees.

A pine planting at Stephen's State Forest near Lucas is Tuesday's objective. With large numbers of nests and high species diversity, the forest makes for an interesting day's work. Mourning doves nest in large numbers in the red pines and red cedars in the area. Red-winged blackbirds nest in the low, shrubby elms on the edge of a large pond. Grackles, field sparrows, cardinals, catbirds and cuckoos are found with regularity as are goldfinches and cedar waxwings later in the year. A rufous-sided towhee had an unsuccessful nest here last year and a whippoorwill hatched two eggs in a ground nest this year.

On Wednesdays, wildlife plantings of honeysuckle, ninebark, and multi-flora rose hedges with small areas of pine are searched at the Colyn Area (headquarters for the Rathbun Wildlife Unit). Brown thrashers nest extensively in the rose hedges. Doves, field sparrows, cardinals, catbirds and cuckoos also use the hedges for nesting. Green herons have successfully nested in a small group of jack pines for the last two years. A crow's nest was also successful in the jack pines this year. An extremely rare find was a yellow-breasted chat that had a nest in the rose hedge.

The nest searchers quickly learn to hate working on Thursday, as the interior of Red Haw State Park is a difficult area to search. Low, thorny hawthorne mixed with other deciduous trees and with an understory of raspberry vines, briars and waist high poison ivy complicate the habitat. The birds seem to like this vegetation for the nests have been many and varied. Doves, brown thrashers, grackles, robins, catbirds and cuckoos have been found with regularity. Rose-breasted grosbeaks, eastern kingbirds, blue jays and northern orioles have also been found nesting here. Two rufous-sided towhees nested here last year but neither was successful. We even found an early pheasant nest in an open area. They all combine to make the scratches and poison ivy *almost* worth it.

The Friday project is a Christmas tree planting on private land near the Chariton Airport. Closely planted rows of pines have sheltered nests of doves, brown thrashers, robins, cardinals and cuckoos. This year's prize find was the nest of a long-eared owl, a threatened species in Iowa. We were able to monitor the nest's progress until the two chicks fledged. We hope they survive and return to Iowa to nest next year.

Nest searching is hard, dirty and often exhausting work. A chronic use of poison ivy makes a nest searcher easy to identify. But the information gained about the nesting of songbirds is invaluable. The days spent working outside, the chance to photograph nesting birds, and the opportunity to see common and unusual birds in their own habitat have made nest searching a personally rewarding experience as well. After all, some pretty rare species have been seen while nest searching.

For the person who would like to nest search for their own pleasure, all that's needed is a long, stout stick, a good pair of boots, a pair of binoculars and a field guide. Ideal places to find nests are in stands of young pines, especially red pine, and scotch pine with red cedar mixed in. Low growing, shrubby deciduous trees like hawthorn and young elm also make good nesting cover. Walk slowly, keep your eyes and ears open, take care to not disturb the nest, and you too can enjoy the nesting of Iowa's birds.

Ron George



Rose-Breasted Grosbeak

Below: Brown Thrasher. Bottom: Green Herons.

Ron George



Ken Formanek



Canoeing the Cattails

From top to bottom, left to right: Coots, Great Blue Heron, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Least Bittern, Black Terns, Redhead duck nest, Coot hatchlings.

by Roger Sparks

Photos by Ken Formanek



HIDDEN from the highway by waves of cattails, an exciting community thrives in the heart of the marsh. A spring visit gives the canoeist an unusual and refreshing look at life regenerated.

Northern Iowa towns of Mallard, Plover and Curlew suggest an Iowa of the past. Although most wetlands were drained years ago, remnants of a vast system of prairie potholes, marshes and sloughs that characterized much of the state still exist. Others were created to form good wetland habitat for nesting and migrating species in the spring, as well as public hunting areas in the fall. While parking lots are often full during October and November, canoeing back into one of these marshes in the spring is an experience the hunter and non-hunter can enjoy in solitude.

When planning a trip, the marsh canoeist selects an area with a good balance of plant life and water. A wetland ideally interspersed with vegetation is most conducive to nesting birds and in May and June the well-balanced marsh literally boils with living things. Common marsh vegetation includes pond weeds, round stem and river bullrushes, and several species of the ever-present cattail. Birds, including black and Forster's terns, American bitterns, great blue herons, green herons, black-crowned night herons, pied-billed grebes, rails, coots, killdeer, willets, lesser yellowlegs, marsh wrens, yellow-headed and red-winged blackbirds, belted kingfishers and three swallows all nest in Iowa's marshes and adjacent uplands. Besides migrating ducks, nesters such as mallards, blue-winged teal, pintails, woodducks, redheads and ruddies may be seen. Many of the northern Iowa marshes serve as refuges for the giant Canada goose and just seeing a 14-pound gander may provide the thrill of the day.

Although viewing wildlife is a main reason for being there, persisting in close observation of nests and nesting birds can be harmful. Canada geese, ducks and some other species may be disturbed by human presence to the point of abandoning the nest site if the intruder lingers. Nests which can be closely scrutinized are those of red-winged and yellow-headed blackbirds. Red-wings will nest in the cattails around the shorelines, rarely over water. The nests of yellow-headed blackbirds may be found entwined in the cattails above water and throughout the marsh.

Wildlife management biologists can be contacted for current water conditions on nearby marshes. They can recommend a good one and give directions to a forgotten world of sparkling clear water, whispering cattails and uncommonly beautiful birds.



Big Sioux Unit

Wildlife Management Biologist (712) 472-3751	
h Lake	336 3 mi. NE Ocheyan
istopherson	535 3 mi. N Superior
lough	
mond Lake	563 6 mi. NW Orleans
tes Lake	378 3 mi. N Spirit Lake

Ruthven Unit

Wildlife Management Biologist (712) 225-4595	
ringer Slough	1,071 3 mi. NW Ruthven
n Green	311 4 mi. E Langdon
lough	

Ingham Unit

Wildlife Management Biologist (712) 362-7222	
eever Lake	359 3 mi. SW Estherville
h Lake	683 5 mi. E Wallingford
e Wing Marsh	160 3 mi. NE Ruthven
e Island Lake	1,104 1 mi. N Emmetsburg
sh Lake	522 6 mi. N Laurens
est Swan Lake	1,043 3 mi. SE Gruver

Rice Lake Unit

Wildlife Management Biologist (515) 324-1819	
gle Lake	919 3 mi. NE Britt
st Twin Lake	493 3 mi. E Kanawha
re Slough	430 5 mi. S Thompson
c Creek Marsh	1,675 3 mi. N Joice
ce Lake	1,831 2 mi. SE Lake Mills
mon Lake	483 4 mi. W Scarville

Big Marsh Unit

Wildlife Management Biologist (515) 456-3730	
entura Marsh	752 NW End of Clear Lake
clntosh Wildlife Area	48 N Shore Clear Lake
g Wall Lake	978 7 mi. SE Clarion
m Lake	466 3 mi. NE Clarion

Sweet Marsh Unit

Wildlife Management Biologist (319) 352-1113	
weet Marsh	1,915 1 mi. E Tripoli

Missouri River Unit

Wildlife Management Biologist (712) 423-2426	
adger Lake	444 3 mi. W Whiting

Black Hawk Unit

Wildlife Management Biologist (712) 297-7824	
outh Twin Lake	600 3 mi. N Rockwell City
unbar Slough	507 5 mi. SW Scranton
oose Lake	456 6 mi. NW Jefferson
ack Hawk Marsh	206 2 mi. S Lake View

Saylorville Unit

Wildlife Management Biologist (515) 432-4320	
endrickson Marsh	601 2 mi. W Rhodes

Otter Creek Unit

Wildlife Management Biologist (515) 747-2278	
ays Branch	797 4 mi. NE Panora
akin Slough	300 2 mi. E Yale

Maquoketa Unit

Wildlife Management Biologist (319) 652-2456	
Iuskrat Slough	366 3 mi. W Olin

Rathbun Unit

Wildlife Management Biologist (515) 774-4918	
rowns Slough	153 7 mi. S Russell

Odessa Unit

Wildlife Management Biologist (319) 523-8319	
one Marsh	701 2 mi. W Conesville

WILDFLOWERS OF THE MONTH

by Dean Roosa

Photos by Randall & Tomma Lou Maas

The poppy family (Papaveraceae) is notorious for supplying powerful addictive drugs though few plants in Iowa belong in

this group. However, two lovely spring wildflowers are in this family and are this month's featured species.

Dutchman's Breeches

(*Dicentra cucullaria*)



One of the most familiar and attractive woodland wildflowers is Dutchman's Breeches (*Dicentra cucullaria*). So-called because of the fancied resemblance of the flower to a billowing pair of "breeches" hanging upside down. It is so distinctive that nearly anyone who likes to be outside can recognize it.

It occurs throughout the state in fairly moist woodlands, blooming in April and May. The leaves are heavily dissected and appear nearly fern-like in shape. The blossoms hang from a drooping, leafless stalk and number from four to ten. Pollinated by

bumblebees, the resulting capsule contains 10 to 20 tiny crested seeds.

Before summer is over the leaves have turned brown, dried up and are no longer part of the woodland scene, but the small pink divided bulbs are still just below the forest duff and will be ready to send up other plants next spring.

The entire plant is poisonous to eat and the toxic material is more concentrated in the bulbs. Normally livestock will not eat this plant — except when food is scarce. Poisoned livestock may act in a way that explains why the plant has a second name — Little Blue Staggers.

Squirrel Corn

(*Dicentra canadensis*)

Closely related to Dutchman's breeches, and with leaves nearly indistinguishable, is Squirrel Corn (*Dicentra canadensis*). However, this species is much less common and is reported from about only ten counties, mainly in eastern Iowa. It is nearly unknown in western and southern Iowa. It, along with the previous species, is closely related to the cultivated Bleeding Heart.

The perennial underground stem consists of a series of small yellow tubers that resemble kernels of corn, hence the common name.

Two plants of the same genus — one exceedingly common, the other quite rare, although they seem to occupy the same ecological niche. Why? To date, it is an unanswered question.

This plant is also poisonous; however, mice like to eat the little golden-yellow tubers and seem to be unaffected by them.

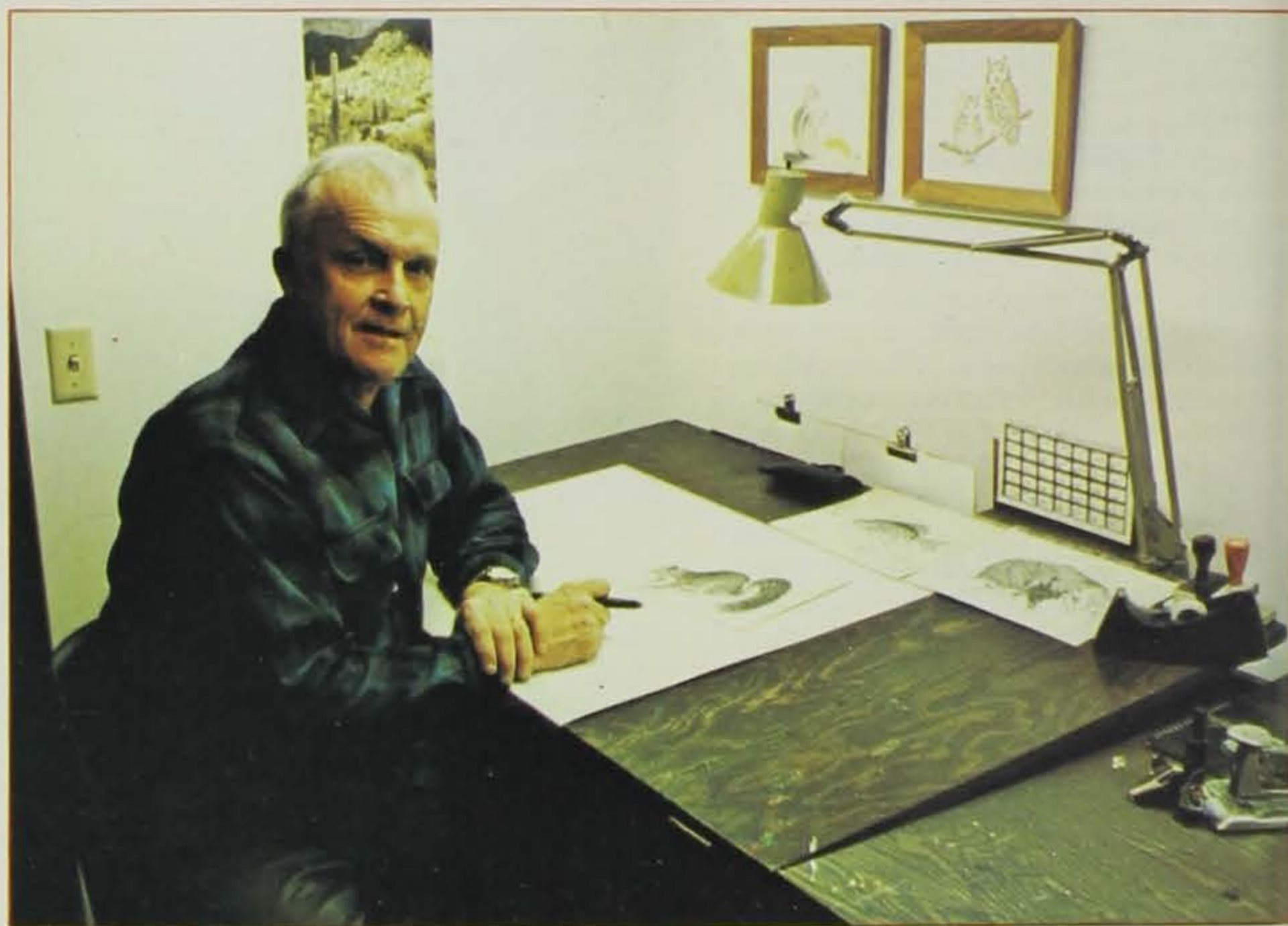


ARTIST/OFFICER RETIRES

Photo by Ron Johnson

FOR MANY YEARS, the artwork of Fish and Wildlife Conservation Officer Jim Baldwin has dressed up Iowa Conservation Commission brochures and booklets. Nearly all the fishing and hunting regulations pamphlets printed during the last three decades have featured his detailed ink drawings. Jim has also contributed hundreds of cartoons and line sketches for use in the Iowa Conservationist magazine and other publications. He did this work on his own time even though meeting important deadlines sometimes meant working well into the night after a tiring day in the field. He never missed a deadline.

Jim Baldwin is retiring from the Commission this month after 30 years of service. As a warden in Marion and Jasper Counties, he is known to be knowledgeable, diligent and fair-minded. Another good officer will replace him. It will be impossible, however to find someone with his artistic skills, willing to donate both time and talent to conservation.



For several of us, Jim has made the job of putting together and publishing printed materials much easier. For many thousands more, his art has stimulated

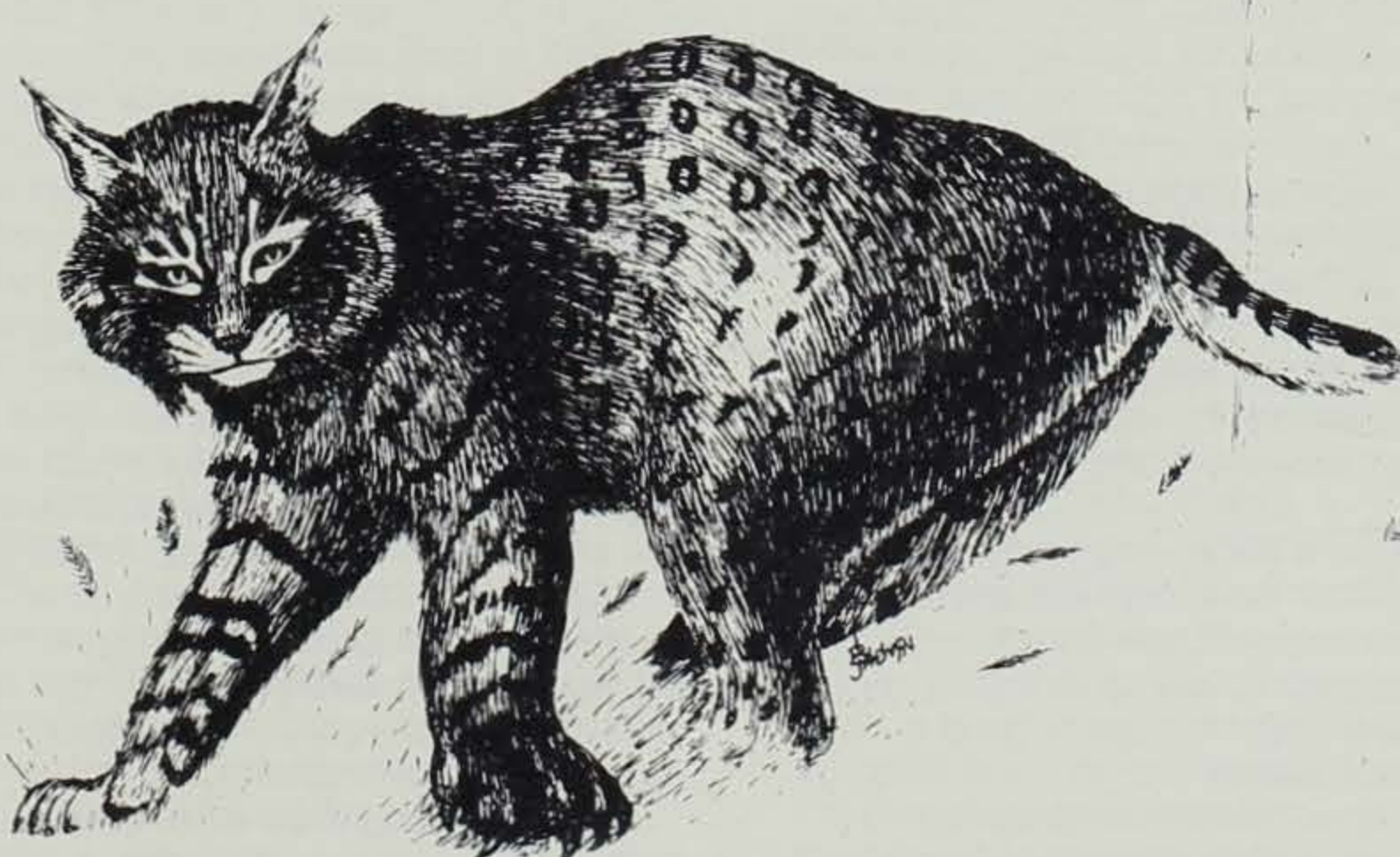
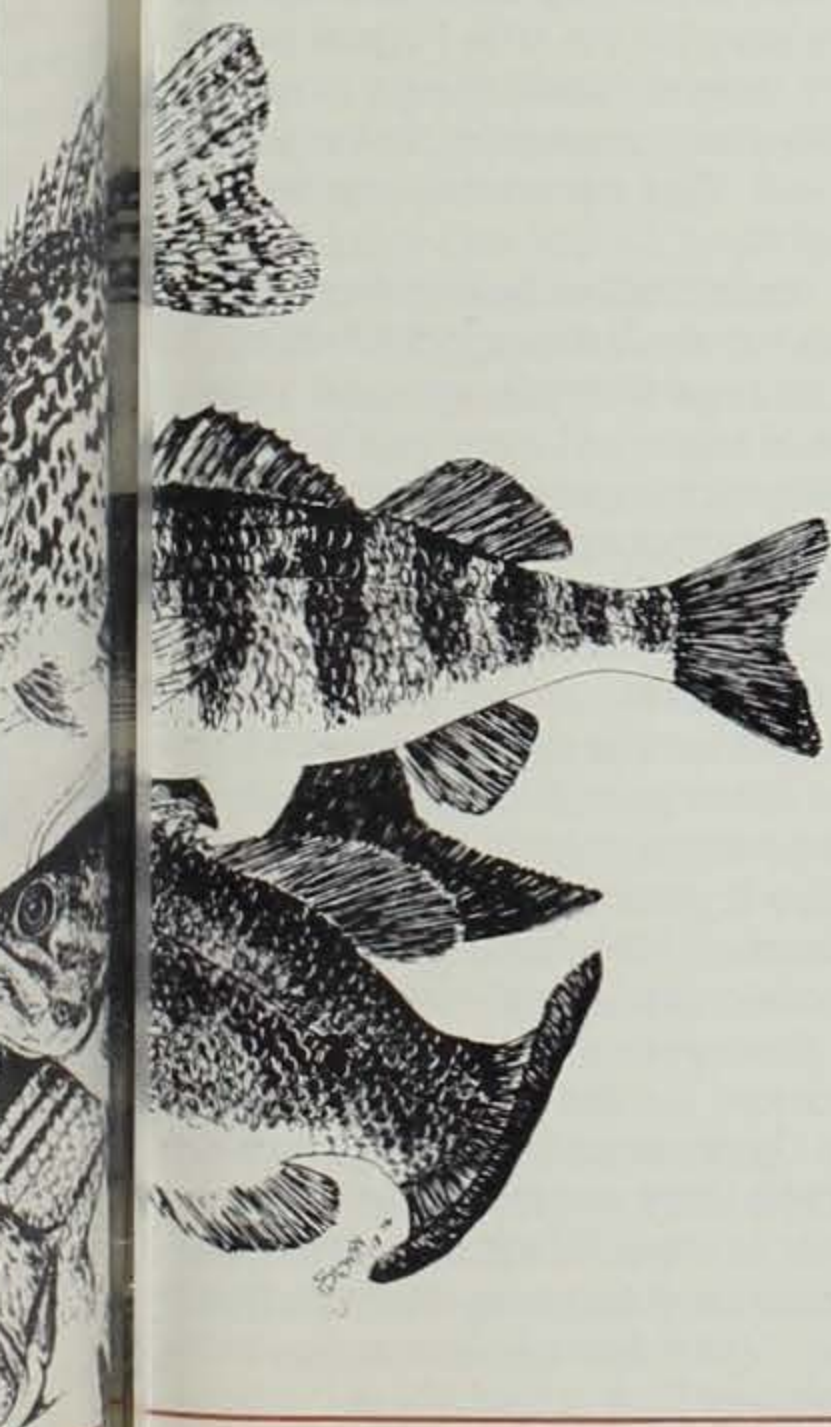
memories of the pleasant sights and rich experiences we value so highly. For this we offer our thanks, our respect and our best wishes for tomorrow.

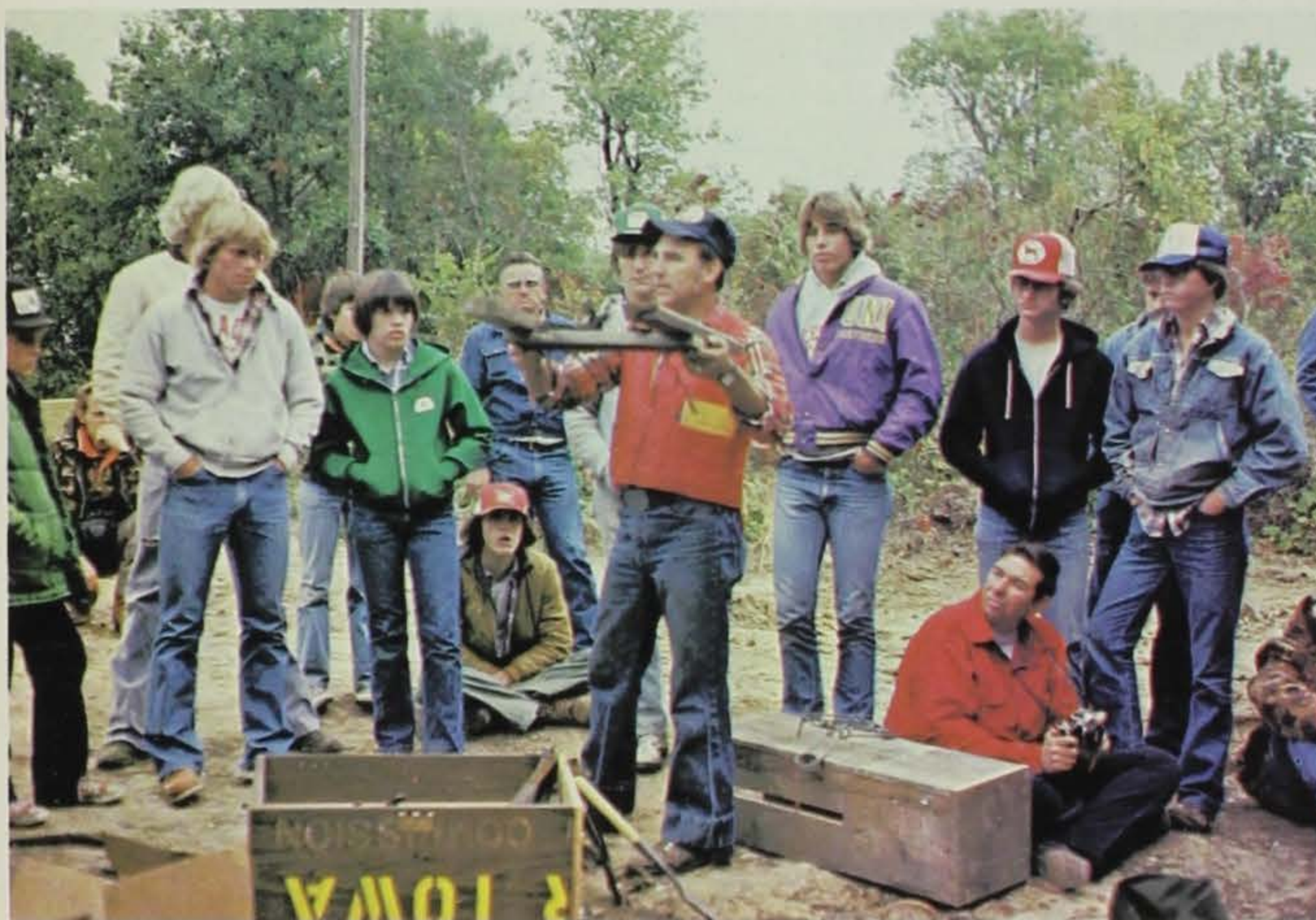
These pages display some examples of Jim Baldwin's artwork appearing in Conservation Publications during the past 30 years.





"Hilbert's always coming home with something new and fascinating."





Students becoming associated with proper trapping equipment.

Learning trap setting technique



Gun safety class.

FURBEARER SCHOOL - A WORTHWHILE TRIP

by Donald Sievers

Photos by Ron Johnson

THE ALARM RANG. It was 4:00 a.m. and I jumped out of bed, pulled on my clothes and ran downstairs for breakfast. Mom was already up, the bacon and eggs smelled like heaven as I walked into the kitchen.

"Good morning Mom, is Dad up yet?"

"Yes, he's out putting your gear in the car — sit down and eat so you'll be ready to go. I don't understand why you want to get up at 4:00 a.m. and travel 100 miles just to go to a Furbearer School."

I sat down and began to devour everything in sight. My mind was on the hunting and trapping seasons

which would open next month. I had had problems last season on my trapline. The muskrats in our pond were burrowing into the dam, causing the structure to be weakened. Dad didn't want to lose the pond, so I volunteered to trap them. That would give me a chance to use the traps Dad had used when he was young. Was I in for a surprise, there was more to trapping than being strong enough to set traps. The muskrats' burrows started 3 to 4 feet under the water. I only caught three muskrats.

"Ready?" Dad yelled, sticking his head in the door.

"Let's go," I said, "Bye Mom, see

you Sunday afternoon."

As I climbed into the pickup I was rechecking the gear I had packed. Clothes, hip boots, raingear, flashlight, notebook, yep, all there. Settling into the front seat, my thoughts again returned to hunting and trapping. I really enjoyed the time I spent outside. There were so many things to learn.

"What do you expect to learn at the school?" Dad asked, interrupting my thoughts.

"I hope to learn how to help with the muskrats in the pond," I said. Maybe I can learn about some other animals too.

"Why do you want to trap? Have you ever thought about the animals?"

"Yes," I said, "Isn't it also important to get rid of the muskrats before they ruin the pond?"

"But don't the muskrats have a right to be in the pond?"

I was silent.

"See if you can answer the question on Sunday," Dad said. "You might as well sleep until we get there, it'll be two hours yet."

I looked out the window thinking of what Dad had said. Dad used to trap, didn't he want me to also . . . ?

"We're there," Dad said shaking my knee and arousing me from deep sleep. "Let's find out where you will be staying."

technique
Beaver set.



class.
Various box traps.



Josh, this wasn't what I had expected, the buildings were new and everything looked so clean. A lady checked my name off a list, took my \$1.00, told me where to pick up laundry, and which dorm I was to stay. "Class starts at 9:00 a.m. in Pin K," she said.

Bunk beds, carpet, clean dorms. I wouldn't believe it. Having to make my bed was an experience but I did a pretty good job if I do say so myself. Dad left, threatening not to return if I didn't go. I went to the classrooms with two other guys from my room. They had driven all the way from Northeast Iowa. A lot of guys who were from all over the state. It made me feel lucky to be so close, 100 miles wasn't so bad after all.

A man from the Conservation Education Center welcomed us and introduced the speakers. First we learned about the furbearers in Iowa from Tom Berkley, a wildlife supervisor and predator control specialist from the Iowa Conservation Commission. Sure I was glad I had remembered my textbook.

The next class was on choosing proper trapping equipment. Pete Askins of Woodstream Corporation in Pennsylvania told us about the different types of traps to use for catching furbearers. He showed a float to use in

farm ponds for muskrats. I sketched that one and asked questions about it. Maybe I had found the answer to our problems. What I remember most from his program was when he said, "If you don't have respect or knowledge about the animals you have no business trapping them."

After lunch we were shown different humane sets to use and prevent damage to the animals. Both home made and boughten box traps were shown and explained to us by Jamie Beyer. He used them to trap animals for the Veterinary Research Lab in Ames. They would work great in barns or areas where there were pets nearby.

Mr. Berkley explained a set used for catching fox, it had often been used when fox were causing problems in the fifties. That was before a disease called mange caused their numbers to decrease. He travels all over the state to teach farmers how to prevent fox and coyotes from getting their livestock by explaining how to trap the problem animals.

Ken Kelm from Missouri explained how to trap beaver. It is illegal to use the large conibear traps on beaver slides unless they are entirely under water in Iowa. He explained ways of using leg hold traps and drowning slides to drown the animals. Our neighbor's cornfield was flooded last

fall by beaver and he couldn't get his crops out. I was going to tell him what I learned.

Two men from Kansas involved with predator control were also there. Ed Boggess explained how they made sets for problems coyotes. The other man named Bob Henderson was so tall he could have set my traps without getting his knees wet.

After the demonstrations on proper trap setting we divided into teams and left to set a trapline. Each team had an instructor who explained different sets and helped us while we made them.

Our team set traps for muskrat, beaver, raccoon, mink, fox and coyote. I hope we would catch something. The fur was going to be used to replace those in the Conservation Commissions fur cases that were in bad shape.

We got back at 5:30 p.m. and that left me just enough time to clean up and get in line for dinner. I didn't want to be last in a line of 75.

At 7:30 p.m., Jerry Hoilien, a Conservation Officer, explained the laws relating to furbearers, hunting and trapping. I never knew there were so many. They are not all completely listed in the hunting and trapping synopsis brochure, so hunters and trappers should read the laws themselves to become familiar with them. (continued next page)

Mr. Kelm presented a program on trapping beaver and coyotes. He explained the problems Missouri has and how they handle them. I had heard of many of the same problems occurring in Iowa.

We closed the first day with films after which bed sounded pretty good. At six in the morning we had to be up to go check the traplines and I wasn't going to miss anything.

Our trapline yielded one muskrat. Everyone had hoped for more, but then we weren't suppose to be there to catch all the fur we could, just learn the proper ways to set and increase our knowledge about furbearers.

The area we trapped was owned by the Central Iowa Power Company. George Ohm who worked for them and who trapped the area in the fall was at the school. We were lucky to find someone who would let others learn by trapping in their area.

Our next class was on pelt preparation. Hollis Perrin of Corning explained how to skin and prepare hides so they would be worth more money. Many of the furs young hunters and trappers brought to him weren't taken care of properly and some had to be thrown away. He demonstrated on the muskrats, raccoon and skunk which we had caught and a road killed coyote he had picked up. The skunk didn't even stink.

Dick Jorgenson of Iowa State University explained ways to release non-target animals from traps. He showed alot of equipment that was easy to make and use. If people check their traplines regularly, non-target animals can usually be released unharmed.

Dick Moore, a coyote hunter, and Bob Spencer, a trapper, talked about conflicts between sportsmen. They both agreed that most problems are caused by people who were uneducated about the resource and those who didn't respect the landowner's rights. Unfortunately, a few bad eggs give the rest of us bad names.

Frank Cownie of Cownies' Furs explained how raw furs were manufactured into coats. I didn't know there was so much work involved. He brought a mink coat for us to look at. It sure was pretty. I'll bet Mom would have liked that for Christmas. Six thousands dollars was out of my price range though.

After lunch we had classes on Furbearer Management and Research in Iowa by Ron Andrews, the Furbearer Biologist with the Conservation Commission. He told us about the things the Commission was doing to insure lowans of future furbearer populations. One of the important

points he mentioned was living by the three R's; respect for the resource, respect for property, and respect for the rights of others.

Ed Boggess talked to us about ethics and public relations. He stressed the importance of the trapper's respect and responsibilities for themselves, others, laws, and the resource. Methods of preventing problems caused by poor sportsmanship were also discussed.

After that we pulled all of the traps except for coyote and beaver. It was disappointing not to leave them out but there wasn't any sense in leaving them set because we had caught examples of most of the common furbearers.

When we got back Charles Olofson, the Hunter Safety Coordinator with the Conservation Commission and George Hemmen, a Conservation Officer, explained about rifles and shotguns and safe hunting. We got to trap shoot and target practice with 22's. I never could hit anything with my rifle and I found out why. Although I was right-handed, my left eye was dominant. That means I was aiming with my left eye but shooting right handed. After they helped me, I hit four of five clay targets and put three of five in the bull's-eye with the 22.

I even had my picture taken. Ron Johnson, the Conservation Commission's photographer, was taking pictures for a slide presentation to show about the school. Hollywood here I come.

After dinner Mr. Henderson from Kansas explained how to call predators. He told stories about when he called predators. Wow! Were they good. Made me want to try it yet that night.

Floyd Cummings and Larry Gray of Jefferson, Harold Sheeder of Guthrie Center and Bob Starr of Panora brought dogs and took us coon hunting. It was my first coon hunt. I was glad to have brought my flashlight so I could see where I was going. We treed a raccoon in about 20 minutes. You could even tell when the dogs were running and when they had the coon up a tree. One of the other groups' dog got into a fight with a skunk. Sure was glad I wasn't there or I'd have probably got sprayed like one of the kids did.

I didn't think I would ever get up in the morning to check traps but I was the first one up. We got to switch groups so I went to an area that was flooded by water. Beaver had dammed up the creek and there was a lot of corn and beans under water. We caught two beaver.

After breakfast we had a real interesting talk on sportsmanship. Next Bob Gubser told us about keeping

records. I didn't know I should keep track of trapping expenses so I could deduct losses for income tax. My 4-H projects put me over last year. Wish I would have known it then.

Our last speaker was Leighton Philips. He told us about selling furs and about auctions that were held for selling furs. He also mentioned about the importance of joining sporting organizations to insure our grand-children of the right to do what we can today. Many people don't understand about the stress man puts on the environment and our resources and they want our hunting and trapping privileges taken away.

After lunch Dad came to pick me up. It was good to see him again. On the way home I told him of the things I had learned and the answer to his question about the muskrats in the pond. Yes the muskrats did have a right to be in the pond, but the pond was capable of holding only so many muskrats. Left uncontrolled they would use every part of the pond they could including the dam. The only natural controls regulating their numbers were disease, predation, and starvation. After there become too many muskrats they would die off from one of these natural controls, more would move in and the cycle would start all over. By trapping the surplus muskrats we could prevent over population on the pond and save the pond dam.

The fur could be harvested and sold and I could save the money for college. As long as I respected the muskrats and was a responsible sportsman there would always be muskrats, a pond, and a good sportsman.

It was worth the money I spent, the time it took and the 100 miles. There was even a chance I would go back next year. I sure was lucky.

The Furbearer Resource School was sponsored by the Iowa Conservation Commission, Iowa Sheep Council, Iowa State Coonhunters, Inc., Iowa Trappers Association, Northeast Iowa Furtakers Chapter 16, and Southwest Iowa Furtakers, Chapter 16-A. The purpose of the school was to educate young lowans about their Furbearer Resources.

Application forms were made available to all Junior and Senior High Schools in the state. Permission from parents and the school district were necessary before students could attend.

The registration fee of \$25.00 covered lodging for two nights and meals. If you have questions about the Furbearer Resource School or about hunting and trapping as a renewable natural resource contact the Conservation Education Center.

Stalking Elephant Tracks for Bluegill

by Joe Schwartz

Photos by the Author

HAVE YOU EVER WALKED along the shoreline of a lake or pond in early summer and noticed dinner plate-sized depressions in the shallow water? Close examination will reveal these "elephant tracks" to be the nests of spawning bluegills. Often nests are found in colonies, with the nests so close together only a small ridge separates each one. The fish occupying these nests are mostly males. The males only come to the nest when they are ready to spawn. After the female releases the eggs and the male fertilizes them, she swims off to deeper water. The male remains to protect the eggs until the small fish hatch and move off.

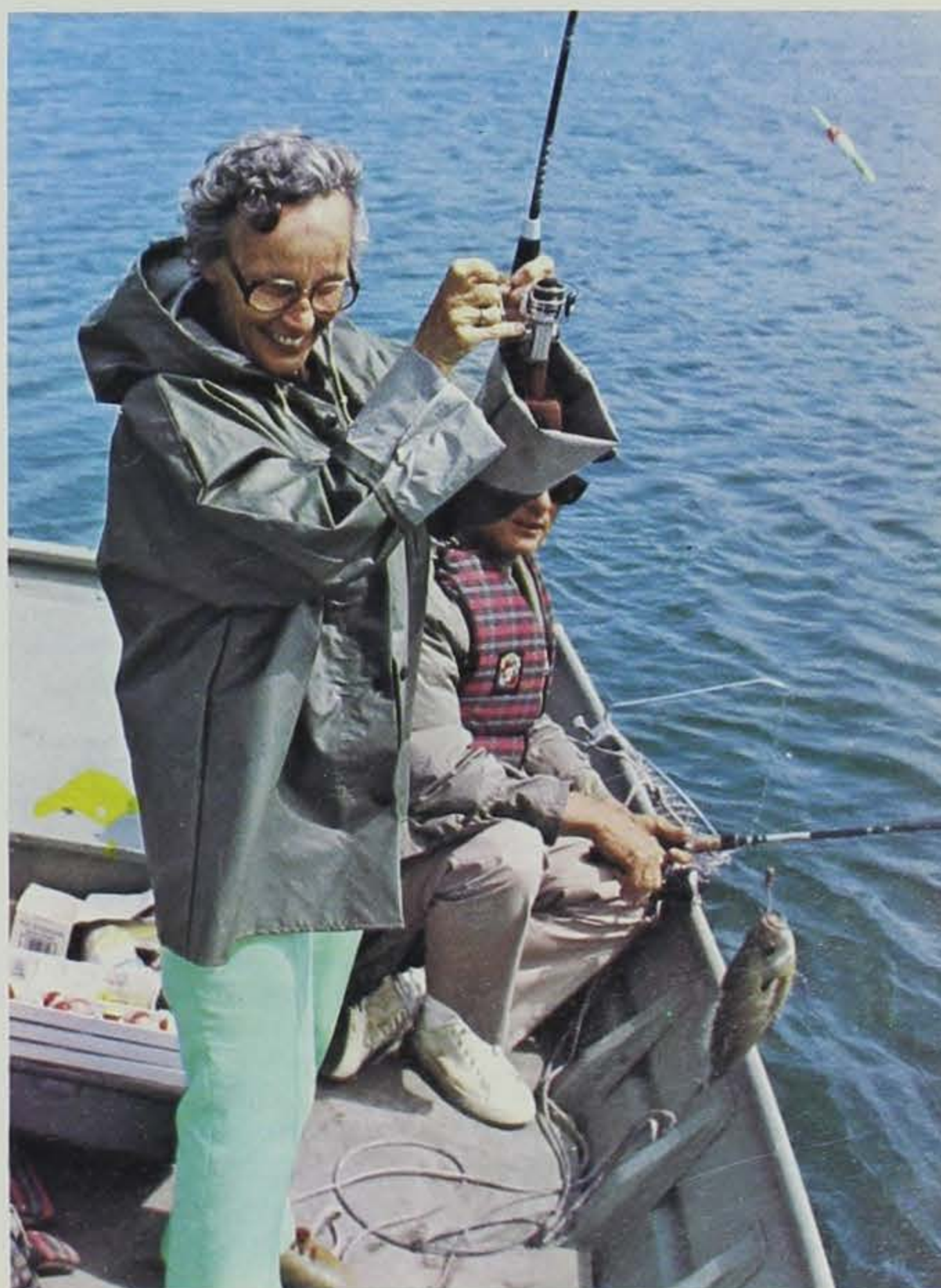
So what does all this have to do with a fisherman out to catch a mess of bluegills for supper? Well, bluegill spawning beds are the best place to quickly catch a lot of bluegills. In addition, bluegills caught from nests generally are the largest found in the lake or pond because spawning males chase away all smaller fish.

Locate the nests by slowly stalking the shoreline and looking for the tell-tale depressions. Boat fishermen can slowly cruise the edge looking for nests or small wakes caused by aggressive male bluegills chasing other fish from the area. Polaroid sunglasses are a great help in spotting spawning activity because they reduce glare. Bluegills tend to nest in the same area year after year, so it pays to mark the spot on your lake map or make a mental note of each specific area. Once nests are located the fisherman should not get any closer than a comfortable casting distance so as not to scare the fish to deep water. If the fish are "spooked" they will be back after a short wait.

Aggressive male bluegills will hit about any bait pulled through their nest. A small jig or number 6 hook baited with a worm combined with a float set at 1 to 3 feet, depending on the depth of water, are both common and effective baits. Ultralight gear with four pound test line produces the most sporty action.

Some concerned fishermen may disapprove of catching spawning fish, believing doing so may limit reproduction, and eventually result in poor fishing. This is not true. Bluegills have a very high reproductive ability and, therefore, it takes relatively few spawning fish to produce enough offspring to maintain a satisfactory population in a lake or pond. In fact, bluegills grow fastest in waters where a large harvest takes place.

Bluegills spawn several times throughout the summer, but late May through early June is the best time to stalk the elephant tracks for bluegill.



Small White Ladyslipper

(*Cypripedium candidum*)

by Dean M. Roosa
STATE ECOLOGIST

TOO BEAUTIFUL to leave alone. I suspect those five words sum up the plight of many of our rare species. People like to possess things of beauty and this includes many of our native orchids. The Small White Ladyslipper (*Cypripedium candidum*) is the smallest of the three ladyslippers that are found in Iowa. Once found around potholes on most Iowa prairies, it has decreased markedly during the tenure of Man in Iowa to a point where there are now fewer than ten known populations.

A sensitive species that requires rather specific conditions such as acid soil, permanently wet conditions and specific pollinators, this species has retreated before the heavy, land-managing hand of man. An ephemeral species, it blooms for a short time around the first of June. The soil in which it grows is subject to compression and the species may be adversely impacted by human foot traffic.



Undoubtedly this tiny beauty gave a measure of joy to our ancestors who crossed the unforgiving prairie; it yet may give a measure of joy to those who care enough to search it out and enjoy it without damaging it. Will it be around to provide a measure of joy to those who follow us? — it's our responsibility to assure that it is.

Classroom Corner

by Bob Rye

CONSERVATION EDUCATION is the study of the wise use of our natural resources. There are many ideas on what this study includes. I recently came across the idea of sprouts, suckers and epicormic

Photo by Roy Hatcher



Very likely this large branch began life as an epicormic sprout.

growth. Does this idea fit the mold? Of course it fits.

Our job is to help Iowans make wise decisions regarding our resources. To make these decisions, people must gather information on specific subjects. One such subject concerns the sprouts, suckers and epicormic growth I mentioned above.

Many people think of sprouts as new shoots that develop from a stump when a tree is cut or food such as bean sprouts or bamboo shoots. However, new shoots called root suckers also develop from the roots of trees. Shoots developing on the trunk or limbs of a tree under certain conditions are called epicormic branches. Frequently, seedlings are cut off by animals or killed back by unfavorable growing conditions. If new shoots develop they are called seedling sprouts.

These kinds of new shoots have several things in common. They develop primarily from pre-formed dormant buds or occasionally from injury-induced adventitious (found out of normal place)

buds. Stimulation of buds to produce shoots is determined by internal chemical growth and regulators influenced by external conditions. Some tree species differ considerably from others in their capacity to produce one or more kinds of new shoots. New shoots may be desirable or undesirable depending upon why they grew.

Normally, buds form a stem or a root in one growing season and develop into new branches or roots the next. Only the terminal bud and some adjacent buds actually produce branches. Other buds may remain dormant for one or many years.

According to the auxin theory of growth regulation, dormant buds remain dormant because each year growth begins first in tips of stems or roots. At the same time, complex organic chemicals called auxins are produced in the stem or root tips. These auxins move down the stem or back from the root tip and inhibit the growth of buds below or behind the tip.

If a stem or root tip is cut-off, or injured by environmental conditions, the inhibitory auxin source is eliminated and dormant

buds become active. Growth regulating explanations are never simple. This is why the word "theory" is used to describe the currently known or suspected aspects of the phenomenon.

Sprouts growing out of a stump after the tree has been cut can often provide a major component of a new forest stand. These sprouts utilize part of the root system of the former tree, exhibit very rapid initial growth, and tend to dominate the space around them. This is very advantageous when these are a desired species.

The epicormic shoots are desirable when they renew the crown of a tree damaged by ice or snow. They are not desirable when the tops have been deliberately removed for electric lines. They also may or may not be desirable in producing Christmas trees, hardwoods or fruit trees.

If a fuller specimen is desired, cropping the epicormic shoot will produce that effect. Uncropped epicormic shoots result in taller, less "branched out" trees.

With this information many wise decisions can be made on producing specific shapes or products from trees.

LOOKIN' BACK

Ten Years Ago



the Iowa Conservationist featured an article on boating safety. This year just as ten years ago many Iowans will be injured or

lose their lives in boating mishaps. Most of these accidents could be avoided if operators knew their boat's limitations, operated them safely and used the proper and required equipment.

New laws which went into effect in 1970 included one which required the registration of snowmobiles and one which protected birds of prey with a continuous closed season.

Fifty Years Ago



the magazine ran a story on the stocking of northern pike in Iowa waters. Fisheries biologists were using a new system of

"opening" female pike in order to pump their eggs for hatchery use. Injections of pituitary extract from males were doing the job and the whole northern stocking program refitted.

One farmer in northern Iowa was worried about the wind blowing away his topsoil. He planted a complete farm shelterbelt which naturally took some ground out of production. He expected to make it up by increased yield as had other farmers. How much of our soil do you think has blown away in the last twenty years?

Thirty Years Ago



the Conservationist was after smallmouth bass with streamer flies. We haven't heard much about these for awhile. Do you

suppose some youngster will pull one out and use it one of these days? Could be the hottest lure around — again.

State geologist Samuel Calvin reported that when the land, which is now Iowa, permanently pulled itself from the sea the climate was similar to southern Louisiana. The weather was wasted, however, since man was not living here at the time. In fact, he wasn't to be found anywhere yet.

Warden's Diary

by Rex Emerson

LAW ENFORCEMENT SUPERVISOR

ON MY WAY TO WORK with one of the other officers I stopped in to see my old friend who lives down by the river. As usual he had the coffee pot on and had the news that his wife's brother was getting married again. He said, "This makes four times. He should start a new business of 'wash and wear' wedding suits."

When the old man's wife went out of the room he said, "You know, if you are going to pull the wool over your wife's eyes, be sure you are using a good year."

After this bit of advice I finished my cup of coffee and went on my way.

The other officer and I met at a predetermined time and place where the road came close to the river. We hadn't used our radios because of the numerous monitors around the country whereby people can hear every word we say and would know where we were working. However, there wasn't a boat landing there and it is quite a job getting a sixteen foot flatboat into the water over the bank. We put in here because our car would have been seen at a public landing.

While we were struggling with the boat, motor and gas cans a car pulled up and a man stuck his head out of the window and asked where he could buy a fishing license. We told him they had licenses at the hardware store in town, just two miles back down the road. No doubt they had come right past it.

After we had launched the boat and loaded all our gear into it, we put on our life jackets and started on patrol. The other officer was running the motor and I was in the front end watching the river bank for illegal lines, or for fishermen whom I could check for licenses. The first mile down the river didn't

show much sign of activity. Then, suddenly I saw some movement on the bank up ahead. A quick hand motion let the other officer know I wanted him to slow the motor down. With the binoculars it was easy to see three fishermen on the bank about two hundred yards downstream. It was also noted that all three had fishing poles in their hands. We swung in close to the bank and continued on towards them. When we were about one hundred yards from them they saw us and one man quickly laid his pole down as if it had suddenly burned his fingers. He had an angelic look on his face as we nosed the boat up to the bank right in front of him.

It was the same fellow who had asked us where he could get a license. He hadn't gone back to town to get a license because he thought we were taking the boat out of the water instead of putting it in when he saw us. He would have been money ahead if he had purchased a license.

On down the river we cut off some illegal bank lines which didn't have anyone's name and address attached to them. We checked several throw lines that had name tags on them to see if they were using more than the legal limit of five throw lines and no more than a total of fifteen hooks per person on such lines.

We came to a county park where several pole and line fishermen were sitting on the bank, so we tied up the boat and checked licenses on foot. We enjoy visiting with people about their fishing, but we are always alert to something that's not quite right. As one man pulled out his fishing license I asked him where he lived.

His reply was, "Keokuk".

The way he pronounced it made an alarm go off in my

head. My next question was, "Have you lived there very long?"

His answer was, "Yes, all of my life."

When he showed me a resident fishing license I asked for more identification and informed him he was not from Keokuk. He was from out of state and trying to get by on a less expensive resident license.

He never did know what tipped me off, but he picked the wrong city to call his home. The fine people who live in Keokuk have a way of pronouncing "Keokuk" that no outsider can imitate.

There are quite a few towns and cities where this same thing holds true. The people who live there have their own way of pronouncing their home town name. If you don't believe it just ask someone from Camanche, Iowa where they are from.

We stopped the boat to eat lunch close to a little side stream. Just as we poured the coffee, a boat came motoring out of the small stream. It was loaded with corrugated culverts about six feet long with one end of each mashed shut. There was hardly room for the two men in the boat. They had planned on putting them into the river and tying the open end to a tree with telephone wire. The flathead catfish would use them to lay their eggs in. By quickly pulling the culvert up they could catch the big flathead. This would be illegal.

When they saw us, they quickly rolled the culverts into the river and tried to get away. But it just wasn't their day. We charged them with littering.

At the end of the day we found it was a lot harder getting our boat out and up over that river bank than it had been putting it in.



Elk Rock State Park by Jerry Leonard