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Come Home to Iowa's State Parks

State Park Week — June 15-21, 1986

By Doyle D. Adams, Superintendent of State Parks

How would you like to vacation in a cabin in an Iowa state park for a week — FREE! Or camp for a month FREE in any Iowa state park! You can if you are one of the many winners during Iowa's third annual State Park Week which will be celebrated in all Iowa state parks and recreation areas from June 15-21, 1986. All you have to do is fill out a coupon provided, drop it in the box, and sit back and wait. In addition, you could win any number of local prizes given each week.

In keeping with Iowa's Homecoming '86 promotion, this year's State Park Week theme will be "Come Home To Iowa's State Parks." Relocated Iowans (once an Iowan, always an Iowan!) returning and permanent Iowans will find special welcomes in the parks during this special week. Governor Terry Branstad has dedicated the second week of June to Iowa's state parks in a proclamation signed in his office on June 2, 1986.

Of course you will still find the excellent fishing, cozy campgrounds, quiet picnic areas and shelters where you can grill a hotdog under stately oaks and sunny beaches you remember from childhood, but you may find some new innovations also. In addition to new and improved hiking trails, most parks now have self-guided interpretive trails and seasonal naturalists to interpret and

explain what you are seeing. Campgrounds will provide movies on outdoor topics as well as interesting programs on such diverse items as Iowa's prairies, edible wild foods, bird banding and birdwatching, fishing tips, and environmental issues, and you may have a chance to meet Ric-Rac, the Iowa State Park Mascot, or Smokey Bear. Bike trails, horseback riding, and playground equipment are available in many parks; and of course you can always have a game of softball, frisbee or frisbee golf. You may choose to merely sit in the shade with your favorite beverage and reminisce with friends and relatives of past good times in your favorite park.

You will find changes also. You will now be asked to help support your state park and all it has to offer with a \$2 daily fee per car or a \$10 annual fee which permits the use of all of Iowa's state parks for the year. This fee is the same for one person in a car or a van load with all revenue going to the renovation, restoration and preservation of park facilities.

To give you an idea of what to expect in the state parks during this special week, here are some of the highlights:

- Volga River Recreation Area will hold a photo contest with \$300 in prize money and a Volksmarch.

Magazine Rate Increase July 1

We have been providing you the *Iowa Conservationist* at prices below our publishing costs since the magazine began more than 44 years ago. And, we will continue to subsidize this important means of keeping you informed about Iowa's natural resources. But, with costs going up, it is time again for a slight increase in the subscription price. Beginning in July, the price will be \$6 for one year or \$12 for three years. We want you, our current subscribers, to have the opportunity to act now and save by adding to your current subscriptions. Send a check today for \$5 for one year or \$10 for three years to the address at left.

- **Maquoketa Caves** will have the Country Illusions band in concert, evening slide programs, and an old-fashioned ice cream social including horseshoe pitching demonstrations, a photo display and bale races.
- **Black Hawk State Park** will hold a crawdad catch and cookout with marshmallow roast, marsh canoeing and their annual, summer water carnival.
- **Lake Anita** will have a kids' fish day, kids' water fight and other promotions.
- **Wildcat Den State Park** will host an area artistic association with a show of up to ten artists in the park.
- **Lake Macbride State Park** will have a frisbee golf tournament, sand sculpture contest on the beach, fishing contest, belly-flop contest, innertube races and stand-up canoe races.
- **Gull Point State Park** will sponsor a coloring contest for kindergarten children in the area with over \$800 of donated prizes.
- **Stone State Park** will hold a kids' day for kindergarten through sixth grades which will include morning nature hikes, rope making, track casting, a treasure hunt and a snake demonstration.
- **Pilot Knob State Park** will hold a kids fishing contest with prizes.
- **Brushy Creek State Park** will hold a pony express trail ride and supper.
- **Bobwhite State Park** will hold a volleyball tournament followed by a homemade ice cream social and a week-long bird count.
- **Green Valley State Park** will have an adult fishing contest with tagged bass with many prizes, paddleboat and canoe races and an on-land casting contest.
- **Big Creek State Park** will hold a handicapped fishing tournament.
- **Red Haw State Park** will hold a volleyball tournament, a hayrack ride and a square dance.
- **Walnut Woods State Park** will sponsor a fishing contest in the Raccoon River by the park and a birdwatching contest to determine how many different species are in the area.
- **Rock Creek State Park** will sponsor an old trappers' rendezvous.



Ron Johnson

- **Lake Manawa** will have a fishing contest.
- **Viking State Park** will hold a fishing clinic and a square dance.
- **Lake Wapello State Park** will sponsor the great white buffalo hunt (find the white buffalo and win a one-week stay in a Lake Wapello cabin for the month of September).
- **Pikes Peak State Park and Yellow River Unit** will hold a boating and water safety course on the Mississippi for 12-15 year olds.
- **Backbone** will sponsor a fishing clinic.

All of these events and many more will be accompanied by week-long drawings for donated prizes of fishing tackle, camping equipment, food and beverages and cash in the campgrounds, beaches and picnic areas. Beaches will have free days and concessions will offer specials on boats, bait, paddleboats and food items. Also, anyone camping for a week will pay for only six days with the seventh day free.

All of this is to encourage you to come to Iowa's modern state parks to learn what is available and how best you can enjoy them. There is truly something for everyone in Iowa's parks. We issue you a special invitation and hope that everyone will "Come home to Iowa's state parks" during state park week and throughout the year — whether you are a "permanent" or a "relocated" Iowan.

Special Rates For Shelters

To celebrate the "come home to Iowa" theme, enclosed shelters in state parks will be rented at half price during the entire month of July, 1986. These day-use facilities are ideal for reunions and other group gatherings, offering electricity, water, flush toilets, cooking stoves and refrigerators. The following shelters are available by reservations through the park rangers:

	Regular Fee	July-only Fee
A.A. Call	\$40.00	\$20.00
Bellevue (Nelson Unit) . .	\$60.00	\$30.00
Clear Lake	\$50.00	\$25.00
Dolliver (Central & South)	\$25.00	\$12.50
Ft. Defiance	\$25.00	\$12.50
George Wyth	\$40.00	\$20.00
Gull Point	\$60.00	\$30.00
Lacey- Keosauqua	\$25.00	\$12.50
Lake Ahquabi	\$40.00	\$20.00
Lake Keomah	\$40.00	\$20.00
Lake Wapello	\$25.00	\$12.50
Lewis & Clark	\$25.00	\$12.50
Palisades- Kepler	\$50.00	\$25.00
Pammel	\$25.00	\$12.50
Pine Lake	\$40.00	\$20.00
Stone (2 shelters available)	\$50.00	\$25.00
Walnut Woods	\$80.00	\$40.00
Wapsipinicon	\$25.00	\$12.50



Ron Johnson

A Place They Call Springbrook

By Scott Zager

Springbrook State Park is nestled in a part of Iowa born of ancient seas, sculpted by glaciers and inhabited by friendly people. Springbrook is what west-central Iowa is all about, rural and wild; a place where eastern forests end and the great plains begin.

Located in the heart of Guthrie County just above Lake Panorama on the Middle Raccoon River, it is seven miles north of Guthrie Center on Highway 25 and only 50 miles west of Des Moines.

Springbrook is one of the many fine state parks managed by the Iowa Conservation Commission. In 1926, 114 acres were purchased from the King family and was originally called King's Park. Since then, the Commission has purchased more land and

increased the park's size to about 800 acres. The present name came about from spring-fed brooks which maintain the lake and flow through the campground.

The park itself is a glacial moraine, which is a forty-foot high ridge of dirt, sand and boulders that marks the farthest advance of the Wisconsin glacier during Iowa's last Ice Age some 12 to 14 thousand years ago. This ridge resulted from debris heaved ahead of the slowly advancing ice sheet as the glacier leveled the land behind it in much the same way the blade of a bulldozer would.

The forked gorge within the park cuts through this moraine and was formed by the erosional flow of glacial meltwater, as the climate warmed

and the ice receded. This gorge is a Y-shaped floodplain with very steep slopes and is about one hundred feet deep. One arm is the creek bed for Springbrook and the other arm of the gorge contains the impounded lake.

People have probably enjoyed Springbrook for quite some time. Many settlers and farmers surrounding the park have found a great many Indian artifacts while plowing in the spring. On the park's highest elevation in the picnic area are three Indian mounds. From this vantage looking northeast through the trees, the town of Jamaica can be seen some twelve miles away.

During the 1930's the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) built the dam and developed the park with intensive human labor. Many of the buildings were constructed with glacier stones and rough-cut timbers. The shelter house is the best example of this rustic architecture. The CCC camp remains today and is presently rented as a group camp to organizations and family reunions.

Park Facilities

The present-day park includes a fourteen-acre lake with a beautiful sand beach and CCC bathhouse. The private concessionaire provides life-guards, rents boats and sells bait as well as some refreshments. There is a boat ramp on the lake. The 200-site campground is level with many shady areas and is divided into several sections by the junction of the creek with the spillway's tailwaters. There are electrical hook-ups as well as an isolated tent area. All campers are welcome to use the modern showers and modern rest rooms. A trailer dump station is also provided.

The former CCC workers camp is available for rent and is an ideal group-camp facility. Many organizations, scout troops and family reunions take advantage of this resource. The group camp includes eight cabins which sleep 14 each; a dining hall with a completely furnished kitchen; separate showers and rest rooms; plus a large meeting hall. The group camp is separated from other use areas. There is ample space for volleyball, softball and other outdoor activities.

Rental cabins also provide opportunities for individual families to stay "under roof" at Springbrook Park. There are six, one-room cabins that are completely furnished. They have a double bed, a day bed couch, table and chairs, flush toilet, refrigerator, cooking utensils and table settings for six. The cabins are grouped together in a common yard and are just a short walk from the beach.

Reservations are handled at the Springbrook office. The group camp can be reserved for any length of time. The family cabins must be reserved for weekly periods only, beginning Saturday at 4:00 p.m. until check-out time the following Saturday at 2:00 p.m. A twenty-five dollar advance deposit is required to confirm all reservations and is refunded once the facilities are cleaned and left in the condition in which they were found upon arrival. Renters must provide their own bedding, towels and cleaning supplies.

Springbrook State Park also encompasses the Commission's Conservation Education Center, located in the southeast portion of the park. The center has fully heated and air-conditioned classrooms and dormitories. The center's highest priority is to provide a forum for training educators on conservation practices to be taught in their classrooms.

Recreational Activities

There are enough trails at Springbrook to keep hikers busy all day. One of the most popular is the self-guided nature trail that circles the perimeter of the lake. It begins at the west end of the dam next to the boat ramp and ends at the concession building at the beach. It is about a mile long and is fairly easy to walk. The trail traverses several habitats including a marsh that feeds the lake.

Other trails lead to remote corners where a sense of solitude can be found. One such trail leads to a scenic overlook above the sandstone cliff. Others end at hilltop prairies or woodland savannas. The more adventurous can hike up Springbrook Creek beyond the campground to find a beaver dam that is some six feet high and about twenty yards across.

Springbrook Park is known for its wildlife, especially its abundant deer population. People often drive through the park in early morning or evening to see these graceful creatures browsing in the mowed clearings. Herds of deer are commonly seen by winter visitors. Some deer with radio collars and numbered ear tags may be seen. The wildlife section is monitoring the deer's movements to determine their feeding habits and range of their dispersal from the park. One aspect of this study will be to assess the amount of crop damage by the deer herd to neighboring farms. This is the first study of its kind in Iowa and the results of this five-year program should be significant throughout the midwest.

Fishermen will find much to do at Springbrook Park. The small, scenic lake has a balanced population of panfish, catfish and bass. There were no record breakers taken last year, but the lake did yield bass up to six pounds. Catfish of three to four pounds were taken regularly. If river fishing is a favorite, the Middle Raccoon River flows through the southwest portion of the park and there is the boat ramp access.

Fishing is not limited to the park. South of Panora on the Middle Raccoon River, the water gets fast and rocky and is an excellent river for smallmouth bass. It is also an excellent stream for canoeing.

State Park Week

In an attempt to showcase what Iowa's state parks have to offer, the Commission's parks section has established a State Park Week. At Springbrook the event is celebrated with the Great Annual Springbrook Park Bicycle Ride, known as GASP.

Last year's bike ride was a success with over 60 bicyclists participating from around the state. There was no charge and all participants could register in a free drawing for a new 10-speed bicycle donated by the Sears retail store at Merle Hay Mall in Des Moines. This year's bicycle ride will be held June 14, 1986. It will begin at 9:00 a.m. at the park's entrance. The 43-mile circular route has some hills and includes the local

communities of Bagley, Bayard and Guthrie Center. The roads are mainly blacktop and are well patrolled by the park's staff with assistance from the Guthrie County sheriff's department as well as the rescue squads from Bagley and Bayard. In the evening, the Guthrie County Pork Producers will sell food and beverages and a local bluegrass band will play in the campground.

Another part of the festivities during State Park Week is the living history program by local historian, Tom Cornelius. Tom presents an interpretive history series twice a month throughout the summer. The programs are an effort to roll back the clock to the 1860's to give the audience a feeling of what life was like during that period. The series is presented by a "real" 1860's soldier, as documented by historical accounts, returning from frontier service. He is in uniform of the post-Civil War era.

Nearby, Lake Panorama offers two very fine golf courses and a pro shop open to the public. Sheeder Prairie State Preserve is 25 acres of one of the best examples of dry, upland prairie with over 200 species of flowering plants. Lakin Slough, near Yale, is a natural marsh where one can view seasonal migrations of waterfowl.

A park user permit will be required for all motorized vehicles which remain in the park. The annual permits can be purchased at the park office. A daily permit can be purchased at the park entrance. The money will be used exclusively for renovating and development of state parks. Already Springbrook's fifty-year-old group camp is scheduled for major renovations.

Our state parks are one of the things which make Iowa special. Each park has its own character, yet all are distinctly Iowan. Springbrook State Park, with its many resources is for all to enjoy. It's only natural to have a good time in a place with so much appeal.

Scott Zager is a park attendant at Springbrook State Park. He holds a B.S. degree in environmental studies from Iowa State University.

FARM POND FROGGIN'

By Brian DeVore



Frog legs ready for the pan above are a real delicacy. The size of the bullfrog makes him the favored prey.



Lucinda Jorgenson

I swept the moonlit pond with a bright beam as a late summer mist rose from the inky water, giving an appropriate backdrop to the symphony of deep croaking that was growing in intensity. Suddenly, the beam picked up a pair of eyes in a tangle of moss and weeds near an overhanging bank. I slowly started the stalk like some kind of uncoordinated heron, a "weapon" in one hand and my heart pounding in both ears...

To me, nothing seems to personify the predator/prey relationship as it applies to the hunter and the game quite like bullfrog gigging at night. Frog gigging has everything: the excitement of the night hunt, the suspense of the stalk and finally, the uncertainty of knowing whether frog meat will be a part of your table fair the next day.

Armed with only a spear (gig), a light, a fishing license and a willingness to get wet and muddy, a "frogger" is entering Old Bullfrog's territory and that means playing on this adaptable amphibian's terms. But just like any other activity, the more gigging trips taken, the easier it becomes to nail bullfrogs on a regular basis.

There are various ways to take bullfrogs in Iowa. Some people use boats on small rivers and streams to gig or hand-catch them, while others use a little lure on the end of a fishing pole to snag them.

These methods are quite effective in some areas but in corn country, where ponds and sloughs seem to be the best sources of frogs, I've found gigging with a minimum of equipment and effort seems to work best when hunting alone.

One of the most basic pieces of equipment necessary for gigging is, of course, the "gig." This consists of a fork with three to five prongs and it can be fitted onto the end of a four- to five-foot wooden pole. I have a couple of different gigs and they run less than \$2 each.

Another important accessory is a good light. Any type of lightweight flashlight will work fine but I happen to use a miner's headlamp like the kind used for raccoon hunting. It has a variable beam and it frees my hands for spearing and grabbing.

Another must for anyone expecting to take some frogs home by the end of the evening is some type of game carrier like a fish stringer or a cloth sack. The key here is to have something that attaches to the belt, thus leaving both hands free. It is important to have a good carrier when gigging as those strong muscle twitches that kept ancient physicists so busy can power a dead frog right out of an open container.

My last pieces of equipment are an old pair of cutoff shorts and an even older pair of tennis shoes. Some people use hipboots or chest waders while gigging in deeper water but I've found that when I'm groping around in the darkness of a strange pond, little accidents often occur that make waders very uncomfortable when they are needed the most during the upcoming fall season. Besides, the peak gigging months (July and August) are plenty warm to be sloshing around in water at night with shorts on.

If my equipment for gigging is simple, then my strategy for the sport is just as simple if not more so. All I do is secure permission from several landowners that have some promising looking ponds or swampy areas on their property. When asking permission, I always make it clear that I will be on their property after dark.

When checking for promising areas to gig in, I look for a body of water that has a lot of frog cover such as overhanging banks, weedy mud flats and old tree snags. A surefire way to determine if a puddle is worth gigging is to listen for the characteristic croaks of the bullfrog. The more croaks the better.

A word to the wise here. Even if it has already been determined that an area contains bullfrogs, it is important to check it out during the daytime anyway, since many times a harmless muskrat hole or some submerged barb wire can turn mighty mean once darkness falls.

I like to find many ponds in an area so I can easily walk or drive between them and hit several in one night of hunting.

Once darkness begins to fall, I start cruising the banks, sweeping the water with my light. If there is not too much vegetation along the bank, I can often stay up on dry land. However, a person can miss a lot of good bullfrogs this way, so I usually end up wading in the water a few feet from the bank.

Once my light has picked up a promising set of eyes (frog eyes reflect light quite well), I start a slow and silent stalk of the critter, keeping my beam shined on it the entire time. When I am within four to five feet of the frog, I draw the gig within a foot of its head and jab hard. I don't actually "throw" the gig like many people seem to think but rather hang on to it and jab. I aim for the head for a quick and clean kill.

I usually hunt the entire perimeter of an area and I may go around again if things look promising to pick up on the frogs I may have missed the first time. Even frogs that were quick enough to escape the gig the first time can be picked up later as they seem to have a short memory.

It is important to determine if a bullfrog is big enough to take home for supper before gigging it. There is no closed season on bullfrogs and the

daily limit as well as possession limit is a generous 12. In this area it is difficult to confuse the bullfrog with other species since it is almost always the biggest frog in most watery habitats. However, it takes a bullfrog almost four years to reach maturity, so it is important not to be gigging animals that may be too small to eat anyway.

I usually try to go by the size of the eyes and head since they are often the only visible parts of the bullfrog. Actually, everyone has their own way of gauging sizes and it takes a little practice.

Once a person has got old bulgy eyes in the bag, he or she is well on the way to eating frog meat because it doesn't take much to clean one. I just make a cut somewhere in the middle of the back, grab onto both sides of the incision with my fingers and start pulling. Often the skin will come off in two pieces, but if not it only takes a few tugs here and there to finish the job. All it takes from there is the removal of the head and entrails and Mr. Bullfrog is ready for the frying pan.

Many people remove the tendons at this point or soak the meat in water overnight to take the "kick" out of the muscle when it's being cooked. I guess it just depends on how squeamish the cook is.

Since frogs are so easy to clean and there is so much good meat along the ribs and front legs, I use the whole body when cooking them instead of just the traditional back legs. Some of the bigger bulls really have a lot of good meat on them that people miss when they just cut off the back legs.

Frogs can be fried using either a skillet or a deep fat fryer after they are rolled in some kind of batter. It's hard to describe the taste of frog meat, although I've heard some people describe it as being like chicken. Maybe so, but I've never seen a chicken leg twitch in the skillet.



Illustration by Larry Pool

Brian DeVore of Cumberland, is a graduate of Iowa State University and served an internship with the staff of the Iowa Conservationist. He now is employed by the Des Moines Register.



June is Rivers Month in Iowa

Governor Branstad has proclaimed June 1986 as Rivers Month in Iowa. The proclamation recognizes the many values of Iowa's quality rivers, and urges all Iowans to take advantage of their recreational opportunities. This recognition coincides with American Rivers Month which will be celebrated throughout the nation.

The Office of the Governor, the Iowa Conservation Commission and the Clayton County Conservation Board are co-hosting the "Governor's Invitational Canoe Trip" on the Turkey River near Elkader June 14. Governor Branstad, Larry Wilson (director of the Conservation Commission), and Clay Ash (chairman of the Clayton County Conservation Board) have invited state legislators, state and local agency directors, and heads of special interest groups to join them in the day's activities. These activities are designed to provide Iowa decision-makers with an opportunity to learn and enjoy first-hand some values of the Turkey and other Iowa rivers.

Numerous groups throughout Iowa are also hosting Rivers Month events in June. Activities include canoe trips and races, fishing tournaments, river clean-ups and photo contests. See the calendar on page 10 and watch local newspapers for events.

Recreational Safety Officers Available

The Iowa Conservation Commission now has six recreational safety officers located throughout the state.

The safety officers share duties with other conservation officers as well as coordinate boating, snowmobile and hunter safety activities in their districts.

The recreational safety officers can be contacted at the following addresses and numbers:

Northwest — Denny Philips, 930 East Eighth, Spencer, Iowa 51301; 712/262-6792

Northeast — Randy Edwards, 1978 Carrier Road, Palo, Iowa 52324; 319/396-5922

Southeast — Craig Jackson, 313 East 14th, Tipton, Iowa 52772; 319/886-2203

Southwest — Tom Campbell, Route #2, Box 133, Griswold, Iowa 51535; 712/763-4436

North-Central — Aric Sloterdijk, 3021 Regency, Apt. 83, Ames, Iowa 50010; 515/233-2390

South-Central — Rod Slings, 233 South First, Winterset, Iowa 50273; 515/462-1154

Quail, Pheasant Numbers High

This could be a very good year for Iowa upland game bird enthusiasts.

Iowa Conservation Commission surveys in southern Iowa show high numbers of quail and pheasants made it through the relatively mild winter. If the upcoming nesting season is a good one, Iowa hunters may enjoy one of their best seasons in many years.

A large study area in Decatur and Wayne Counties is used by Commission biologists as a barometer for trends in southern Iowa quail populations.

Pheasant and cottontail rabbit numbers are also monitored during the late-winter study.

The good news is that quail are up 96 percent over last year's count. In 1984, following disastrous winters, bobwhite numbers had dipped to an all-time low. Quail bounced back in 1985 to

fair levels following a mild winter. This year's counts show bobwhite numbers are now well above the 20-year average and comparable to counts during the early 1950's when Iowans enjoyed excellent quail hunting.

Pheasant hunters may also enjoy a big year. Although the Decatur-Wayne area isn't necessarily indicative of the entire state, the study suggests pheasant numbers across southern Iowa at least are up substantially. Surveyors noted a 107 percent increase in pheasants on the two-county area.

A 32-percent increase in cottontail rabbits was also observed.

Commission biologists are hoping for good weather throughout the nesting months. With moderate temperatures and flood-free conditions, 1986 could be a banner year for upland wildlife.

TREE CITY, USA

Nine Iowa cities have been recognized as "Tree City, USA" communities by the National Arbor Day Foundation. They are Iowa City, Fort Dodge, Harlan, Cedar Rapids, Davenport, Cedar Falls, Waterloo, La Porte City, and Ames.

The foundation honors communities with the Tree City, USA designation upon recommendation by state foresters. Communities qualify by having a city tree ordinance, a legal tree governing body, a comprehensive urban forestry program and an observance of Arbor Day.



The Upper Mississippi River Conservation Committee recently presented Kevin Szcodronski with a Special Achievement Award in recognition of his significant contributions to the formulation of the Upper Mississippi River System (UMRS) Environmental Management Program.

Szcodronski's participation on the Upper Mississippi River Basin Commission's Environmental Work Team played a key role in impact assessments and the subsequent preparation of UMRS Master Plan recommendations.



Changes in Snowmobile Registration

It may seem like the wrong time of year to be thinking about snowmobiles, but some changes in registration requirements go into effect July 1, according to Iowa Conservation Commission officials.

First, if a snowmobile registration has not been renewed for at least two full registration periods, no delinquency penalty will be charged. The "reactivation" fee will be the same as for a new registration.

The commission will no longer supply either original or duplicate numbers for any snowmobile. The owner must place stick-on numbers or paint the numbers on the machine.

Also, snowmobiles that are operated only in competition special events may be registered in the same manner as other snowmobiles, except the letter "c" will be placed in front of the number. (Example: BB-C618 instead of BB-618). Ma-

chines registered in this manner are exempt from the light, brake, and muffler requirements, but may only be operated in Commission-authorized special events.

New snowmobile registration fees go into effect for the next registration period which begins January 1, 1987. Registrations can be accepted as early as September 1, 1986 for that period. The fees will be as follows:

For new snowmobiles —		
September 1 -		
December 31		
even years	\$25	
(Remainder of current period plus subsequent registration period.)		
January 1 - December 31		
odd years	\$20	
January 1 - August 31		
even years	\$10	
Renewal	\$20	

The delinquency penalty remains at \$2 for each six months or portion thereof.

FEWER DROWNINGS IN 1985

Accidental drownings took 24 lives in Iowa during 1985. This is a reduction from 1984 statistics when 26 drowning incidents occurred.

A breakdown of Iowa Conservation Commission statistics showed that rivers were the most treacherous claiming 13 lives while lakes claimed five. The remaining accidents happened on farm ponds and quarries. Nine of the victims were boating, eight were wading and seven were swimming. Some accidents were alcohol related.

The majority of the drownings occurred during the spring months resulting in 12 lives lost. Eleven occurred during the summer.

According to Sonny Satre, Recreational Safety Coordinator for the Commission, most of the drownings could have

been prevented. Satre gave the following suggestions to prevent future drownings:

1. Learn to swim — it is the number one rule for aquatic safety.
2. Everyone in a boat should wear a personal flotation device — especially small children and nonswimmers.
3. Parents should closely watch their children when near water and have them wear personal flotation devices.
4. Although it is not recommended (especially young children), if you must wade in a stream or river, wade upstream.
5. Avoid alcoholic beverages while engaging in water-related activities. A high percentage of all drowning victims nationally are alcohol related.

Donations

Mark Miles Des Moines	donated labor valued at \$251 for Walnut Woods State Park.
Maquoketa Rotary Club Maquoketa	materials valued at \$900 for playground equipment construction at Maquoketa Caves State Park.
Joe and the Ridge Runners Band Maquoketa	materials valued at \$320 for playground equipment construction at Maquoketa Caves State Park.
Maquoketa Izaak Walton League Maquoketa	materials valued at \$50 for playground equipment construction at Maquoketa Caves State Park.
Marvin Massey Maquoketa	80.5 hours donated labor valued at \$270 for Sagers Museum and park maintenance at Maquoketa Caves State Park.
Goodyear Auto Service Center, Fort Dodge	12 truck rims valued at \$60 for fireplace construction at Brushy Creek State Recreation Area.
Satellite Industries, Inc. Minneapolis, Minnesota	7 months use of portable toilet valued at \$388 for Brushy Creek State Recreation Area.
American Horse Exchange Fort Dodge	publishing of Conservationist article on Brushy Creek valued at \$476 for Brushy Creek State Recreation Area.

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CALENDAR

June, 1986

June	RIVERS MONTH		June 14	Morning Bird Hike 7:00 a.m.	Thorpe Park Hancock County 515/582-5322
June - August	Free Camping at Chichaqua Wildlife Area Nonelectrical, 2-Week Limit	Polk County 515/967-2596	June 14	Raccoon River Clean-Up and Discovery 1:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.	North Raccoon River Carroll County 712/792-4614
June - August	Saturday Night at the Movies and Conservation Programs 2:00 p.m.	Swan Lake Park Carroll County 712/792-4614	June 14	Wild Edibles 2:00 p.m.	McFarland Park Story County 515/232-2516
June and July	Summer Children's Programs	Indian Creek Nature Center Cedar Rapids 319/362-0664	June 14, 27 July 13 August 10, 22	Canoe Trips	Indian Creek Nature Center Cedar Rapids 319/362-0664
June 5, 19	"Flickers and Fritters" 6:30 a.m. Bird Hike	Kennedy Park Webster County 515/576-4258	June 15	Art Alive!	Lake Cornelia Park Wright County Park 515/532-3185
June 6, 7	Halley Comet Viewing 9:30 p.m.	Ashton Wildwood Park Jasper County 515/792-9780	June 15	Fishing Derby	Lake Meyer Nature Center 319/534-7144
June 7	Orienteering Program 10:00 a.m.	McFarland Park Story County 515/232-2516	June 15-21	STATE PARK WEEK	
June 7	Star Party 9:00 p.m.	McFarland Park Story County 515/232-2516	June 16-17	Cedar River Canoe Trip Campout for 5th & 6th Graders	Mitchell County 515/732-5204
June 7	Kids' Fishing Seminar	Saulsbury Bridge Rec. Area Muscatine County 319/649-3379	June 16-20	Uncle Ike Nature Camp	Ikes Clubhouse Marshall County 515/752-3150
June 7	Nature Hike 10:00 a.m.	Carlson Rec. Area Webster County 515/576-4258	June 16-17	Summer Naturalist Canoe Trip and Camp 5th and 6th grade	Mitchell County 515/732-5204
June 7	Breeding Bird Survey 7:30 a.m.	Five Ridge Prairie Plymouth County 712/947-4270	June 17	Nature Night at the Movies 7:00 p.m.	Kennedy Park Webster County 515/576-4258
June 7	Fishing Clinic	Osborne Conservation Education Center Clayton County 319/245-1516	June 18	Nature Photography Seminar 7:00 p.m.	Eldred Sherwood Park Hancock County 515/582-5322
June 7	Outdoor Photography Workshop 1:30 p.m.	Indian Creek Nature Center Cedar Rapids 319/362-0664	June 19	Prairie Walk 7:00 p.m.	Doolittle Prairie Story County 515/232-2516
June 7	Canoe Instruction and Outing 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.	Virgin Lake Palo Alto County 712/837-4866	June 20	Owl Program	Rodgers Park Benton County 319/472-4942
June 7	Gun Dog Training Seminar	Springbrook Conservation Education Center Guthrie County 515/755-3061	June 20	"Tree" Mendous 7:00 p.m.	Dolliver State Park Webster County 515/359-2539
June 7, 18	Bike Ride with a Ranger June 7 4:00 - 6:00 p.m. June 18 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.	Cedar Valley Nature Trail McFarland Park Black Hawk County 319/277-2187	June 20-22	Southwest Iowa's Icaria Lakes fest	Lake Icaria Adams County 515/322-4793
June 7, 21	Park Interpretation Programs	Hickory Hills Park Black Hawk County 319/277-2187	June 21	Canoe Trip 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Story County 515/232-2516
June 8	Canoe Trip Maquoketa River 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Jackson County 319/652-3783	June 21	Raspberry Ride on the Cinder Path Bicycle Trail Meet at Osceola Court- house 8:00 a.m. Meet at Trail Head at Chariton 9:00 a.m.	Clarke County 515/342-3960
June 8	Summer Wildflower Walk 2:00 p.m.	Indian Creek Nature Center Cedar Rapids 319/362-0664	June 21	Conservation Volunteer Day 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Warren County 515/961-6169
June 8	Raptors	Lake Cornelia Park Wright County Park 515/532-3185	June 21	Youth Fishing Clinic 9:00 a.m. - noon	Wright County 515/532-3185
June 8	Canoe The Maquoketa 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Jackson County 319/652-3783	June 21	Canoe Race Middle Raccoon River	Lenon Mill Park Guthrie County 515/755-3061
June 8	Tree-top Philharmonics Bird Walk 6:00 a.m.	Ochee Yahola Park Worth County 515/324-1524	June 22	Raccoon River Float 1:30 - 4:30 p.m.	North Raccoon River Carroll County 712/792-4614
June 8, 22	Wagman Mill Tours 2:00 - 4:30 p.m.	Jasper County 515/792-9780	June 22	3-D Archery Shoot Contest	Hickory Hills Park Black Hawk County 319/342-3350
June 11, 25	Canoeing the Cedar	Black Hawk County 319/277-2187	June 22	Adult Canoe Workshop 1:00 p.m.	Camp Wesley Woods Warren County 515/961-6169
June 13, 27	Friday Night at the Movies	Lake Cornelia Park Wright County 515/532-3185	June 22	Canoe Techniques	Lake Meyer Nature Center 319/534-7144
June 14	"Seasons of a Woodland" Hike 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.	Basswood Rec. Area Palo Alto County 712/837-4866	June 22	The Year of the Tree 2:00 p.m.	Hillview Rec. Area Plymouth County 712/947-4270
June 14	Kids' Fishing Day 9:00 a.m.	Warren County 515/961-6169	June 22	Archery Shoot	Hickory Hills Park Black Hawk County 319/277-2187
June 14	Governor's Invitational Canoe Trip Turkey River Park to Motor Mill Historic Site	Clayton County 319/245-1516	June 22	Sturgis Falls Volksmarch 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Hartman Reserve Nature Center Black Hawk County 319/277-2187
June 14	Fishing Derby 6:00 a.m. - noon	McFarland Park Black Hawk County 319/277-2187	June 23	Christmas Tree Management Field Day	Black Hawk Park Black Hawk County 319/277-2187
June 14	Gun Safety 3:00 - 4:00 p.m.	Black Hawk Park Black Hawk County 319/277-2187	June 25	Artists in the Park 7:00 p.m.	Fontana Park Buchanan County 319/636-2617
			June 28	Canoe Trip - West Des Moines River 9:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.	Palo Alto County 712/837-4866
			June 28	Rededication of Swan Lake Park Carroll County Homecoming '86	Swan Lake Park Carroll County 712/792-4614
			June 28	Summer Prairie Walk 1:00 p.m.	Hamilton Prairie Jackson County 319/652-3783
			June 28	Turkey Foot Canoe Race 9:00 a.m. - noon	Black Hawk County 319/277-2187
			June 29	Edible Wild Plants	Lake Meyer Nature Center 319/534-7144

WARDEN'S

BREAKING STICKS

Summertime is one of my best seasons. I like walking down the riverbank under the shade trees where it's cool and peaceful most of the time.

I had driven down to one of the access areas along the river. There was only one car there, but the sun was warm and I thought I would take a nice hike. I knew a path which led down along the bank and came out on a big sandbar down river.

Walking quietly, I came to the edge of the tall weeds where the sand began and looked out to see who was fishing (old game warden trick).

Across the sand at the waters edge, I saw a man hunkered down behind four rods and reels which were propped up with forked sticks. An Iowa angler is allowed just two poles, so I glanced around to see if he had a partner. Off to my right was a blanket spread out complete with picnic basket, cooler and sleeping sunbather. Only problem was, the sunbather wasn't wearing her top.

Now, being a courteous officer of the law, I quietly stepped back into the tall weeds and found a large dry stick. Stepping down hard brought the desired results of a loud snap. Stepping on one or two more took enough time and when I stepped out, she was sitting up and smiling as she adjusted her top. I nodded as I walked past to check the fisherman. After checking his license, I explained the regulation about more than two fishing rods.

"Oh," he said, "those are hers. She's right back there and has her license in her purse."

Sure enough, she handed me a perfectly good fishing license. Taking it back, she smiled and said, "I'll bet you see a lot of interesting sights walking around quietly in the woods."

I couldn't help but grin and replied, "Yes, I do, but I usually find enough dry sticks to step on so I don't scare anyone too badly."

'S DIARY

By Jerry Hoilien

Suddenly, he figured out what we were talking about and started to laugh.

She looked up at him and said, "What are you laughing about — it's a good thing he didn't come a half hour sooner!"

He was still red-faced when I left!

• • •

In honor of Rivers Month I'd like to share with you a piece of writing that has touched an old warden's heart. It's by a friend of mine, Peggy Burnside of Decorah.

RIVER MAGIC

Your true magic was hidden from me that first day — Winter's velvety white cloak concealed your wild and free natural beauty. Yet even Winter's icy chill could not still the fervent, flowing current within, and seemed to draw me, as if you knew I belonged there.

You have given me a vast new world filled with wonder and beauty to explore. I feel as though my eyes have just been opened and my senses newly awakened. You always give new life to everything around you — to the land with the trees, plants and grasses; to the wildlife, waterfowl, and insects; to the fish that dwell within your waters; to the delicate wildflowers that bloom; and to me — sustaining all of us with your endless bounty.

You have become my peace — my solace. You seem to sense my many moods and know my every need. When I am lonely, you are always there to hear my cries. When I am sad, you take my tears to your heart and tenderly wash them away. When I am filled with turmoil, you drain it out of me and carry it away in your current. When I am restless, your gentle rhythm lulls me and fills me with calm. And when I am happy, your spirit soars with mine in a song of joy.

I'm beginning to learn your many

faces. Some are easy to read, yet others you try to disguise. In early Spring, when your swirling waters burst out of their banks, it would seem as though you are angry at being awakened from a quiet, Winter's rest. I know you are merely "cleaning house", washing away the debris left by Winter, and making ready to welcome Spring. When Spring finally arrives, you bubble and frolic in the joy of awakening new life. In Summer, you appear to be lazy, smugly content in the knowledge that you are giving pleasure to so many. In late Fall, you seem to withdraw and become quiet, as if making ready to sleep. Instead, I know you are saddened by the signs of approaching Winter, the seeming loss of life around you, and you must anticipate the loneliness yet to come.

Although many things around you have completed their life-cycle, and to some you might appear to be asleep under Winter's white blanket, I have come to know that you never really sleep, and that you will never really die. Even though your features may alter, and you can deceive some with your changing expressions, your flowing spirit remains constant. Perhaps that is your hold on me.

I am in awe of your beauty and respectful of your power. I rely upon your soothing strength, and I am grateful for all your wonders — they fill my life.

You have cast your spell on me and captured my being — I am part of you as you are part of me. Under your spell, my eyes have new vision, my senses explode, and my spirit soars to new heights — I am free!!



Jeffrey Baker

Firearms Engraving

By Bob Mullen



Photos by Bob Mullen

Gene Swanson, above, is a master engraver from Iowa. Firearms at right were engraved (from left to right) by James Meek, Swanson, the Browning factory in Belgium, and the last two by Donna Hughes.



Firearm engraving is truly fine art when properly executed. Too often, people do not appreciate it or understand what is involved in this ancient art form.

Early hunters put reminders of their hunts, as pictures, on the walls of caves. These early drawings brought pride to the hunter, and they felt the drawings would help in the success of future hunting trips.

Early man's hunting implements consisted of crude spears made from sharpened sticks or pointed stones attached to the end of wooden sticks. Crude as these early weapons were, the early hunters would adorn them with feathers or small pieces of hide from their kills, symbols of pride.

The Chinese are credited with the invention of the first firearms during the eleventh or twelfth century. These first guns were little more than small, hand-held cannons. Such firearms were cumbersome and crudely made by today's standards, but were embellished with what would be considered the first firearm engraving.

From these early firearms to today's, we can find a common denominator. Fine engraving was and is desirable on the metal surfaces of firearms.

Early firearm actions, such as the matchlock, wheellock, snaphance and miquet, were ornately engraved and carried lavish precious-metal inlays. Such early firearms were only to be afforded by the wealthy nobles and aristocrats of the time. Today's hunter may also adorn his firearm with artistic engraving and precious-metal inlays.

The owner of a finely engraved firearm receives pleasure for a lifetime, and that pleasure increases



with usage, as will the firearm's value if the piece is properly cared for.

Excellent engraving on a firearm is the result of the skill and patience of a craftsman in gunmaking. Engravers look at their work as sculpture, with much preparation and planning being necessary before the first cut is made. The engraver must be able to take a client's idea and transform it to a pattern with a pencil sketch within the lines of a firearm. The engraver must be able to work not only on a smooth straight surface, but on irregular surfaces and different types of metals. The creative design must encompass even the screws and pins on a firearm's surfaces.

Today's engraver still uses the same basic tools that were used over 300 years ago by the early engravers. The biggest change an engraver of the past would notice today would be the hardness of steel. In the past, firearms were made from softer steels. Today's guns are made of very hard steels such as stainless steel, which is difficult to engrave.

The tools of the engraver are scribe, shader, graver, chasers, small hammers, vice, grinding wheels and sharpening stone, magnifying glasses and microscope. Quality engraving depends on the engraver's experience in usage of these tools as well as artistic ability. Proper lighting and good eyesight are essential.

There are several types of engraving used on firearms today. Designs are rolled, punched, photo engraved and etched with acid. But none of these can compare to fine-quality hand engraving.

There are three types of hand engraving. Fine line engraving takes in scroll and scenes. This type of engraving tends to be flat and not

lifelike in scenes, as it laces the intricate detail and depth of deep-relief engraving. In deep relief, the engraver cuts away metal to provide a deeper background. Deep relief would be compared to sculpture. In deep-relief engraving, the forms will have more lifelike qualities than fine line engraving. Bank-note engraving does not utilize the cutting away of metal as in deep-relief engraving. Bank-note engraving utilizes narrow furrows and dots placed in the metal's surface. This type of engraving allows detailed re-creation of wildlife scenes. This type of engraving allows the greatest amount of minute detail by the use of fine lines and dots to create lifelike shading. Expertly done bank-note engraving looks like a quality photograph which has been transposed to the metal's surface.

The best of engraving requires closer inspection than we can provide with the naked eye. A magnifying glass helps appreciate top quality engraving.

Iowa has its share of firearm engravers. This author had the opportunity to visit and see the work of three of Iowa's engravers. Unfortunately, time was not available to visit or correspond with every quality firearm engraver in Iowa.

A name well known among the fraternity of engravers and gunsmiths is that of master engraver James B. Meek. Meek is an accomplished artist, photographer, custom firearm builder and master engraver. His top quality professional engraving is recognized as art to be highly prized by their owners. Meek authored the book *The Art of Engraving*, which is the recognized authoritative book on the subject of engraving. *The Art of Engraving* is

published and available from Brownell's at Montezuma, Iowa.

Another of Iowa's firearm engravers is Donna Hughes. She had been involved with art prior to becoming interested in engraving. Hughes started with a copy of *The Art of Engraving* and practiced six to ten hours a day. She views engraving on firearms as a challenging art form. She feels that as different gems have different characteristics, so do individual firearms. Hardness of the steel, being one characteristic, varies with each make of gun, and may vary within an individual piece.

Meek's book also influenced another of Iowa's firearm engravers. Gene Swanson was given a copy by his father. He feels that becoming an accomplished engraver involves years of practice and a definite enthusiasm for engraving as an art form. Swanson also feels a complete knowledge of wildlife and plants is essential to accuracy and detail. A good working knowledge of metals and their characteristics, plus the ability to work with tools that are properly sharpened are essential to producing quality engraving, he says.

These and other engravers receive more than monetary satisfaction for their work. No two pieces are alike. The fortunate owner of a firearm with quality engraving has the pleasure of using and enjoying a piece of quality, working art.

Bob Mullen has been with the Commission since January 1971 as a fish and game conservation officer. He is a graduate of Northwest Missouri State University with a B.S. degree in agronomy and horticulture.



WALK-IN BROWNS

By Gaige Wunder

Iowa brown trout anglers are using their feet to improve their fishing. A number of northeast Iowa streams are now being stocked with fingerling or adult brown trout in areas accessible only by a healthy hike. Trout anglers willing to "foot" the extra distance are rewarded with older, wiser browns that provide a thoroughly challenging experience.

Plants of brown trout are made on three distinct stream types, which differ from the traditional streams.

These are put-and-grow streams, special-regulation areas and limited-stocking, walk-in streams.

The put-and-grow brown trout program has been around since the late 1960's and has produced browns of exceptional size. Annual plants of two-inch fingerlings are made in May in these streams to maintain good brown populations. Although many of the put-and-grow streams appear to be lacking in quality or too small to support them, brown trout are amaz-

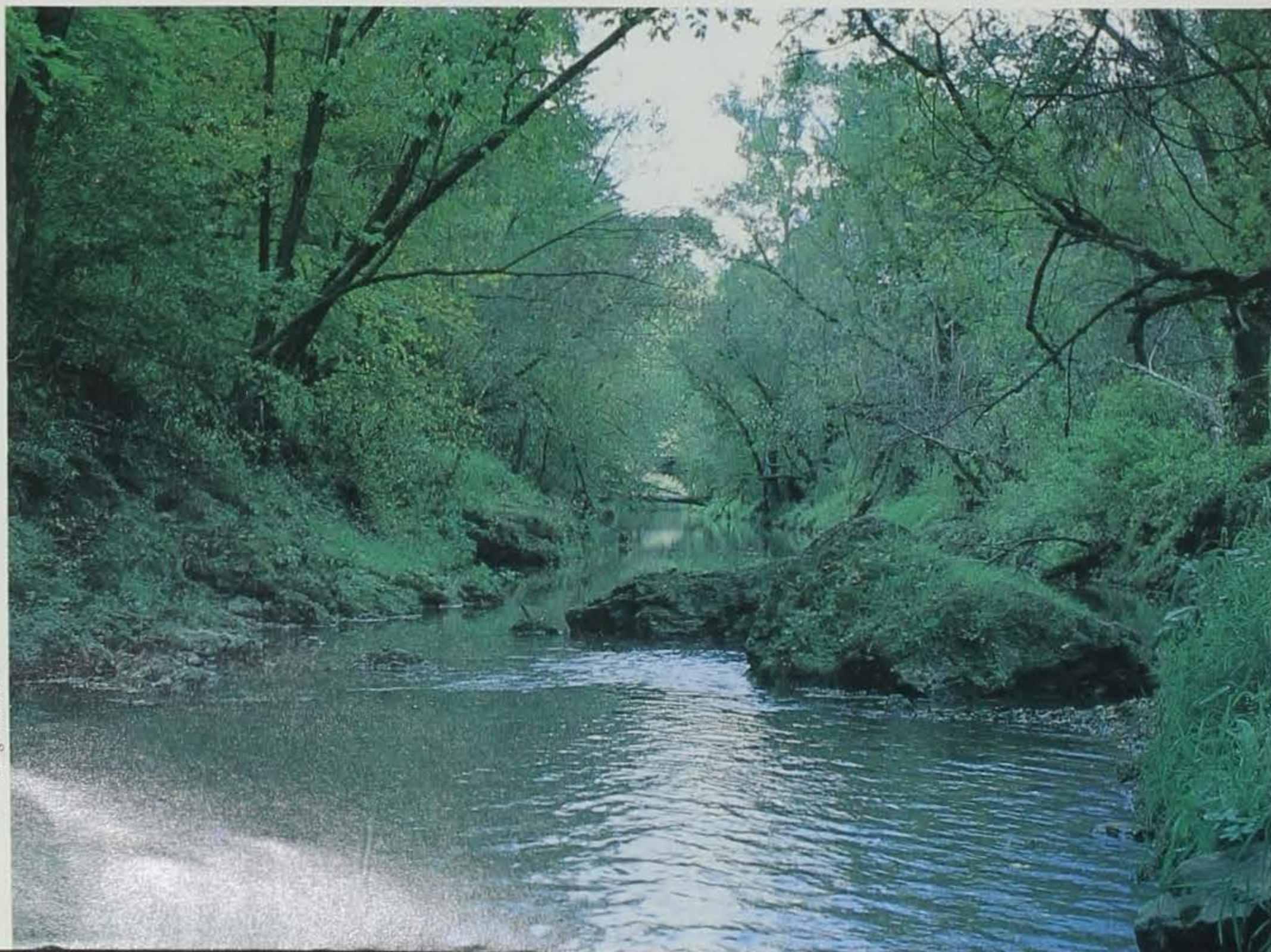
ingly tough and soon establish themselves as permanent stream residents. Nutrients from the rich surrounding Iowa land supports an abundance of natural food items for the trout, and within a few short years following their introduction, many grow to tackle-busting size. An important point to remember is that the majority of the put-and-grow streams flow through private property and are walk-in access in the purest sense of the word. Landowner permission to fish these streams is a legal requirement, and helps to preserve good landowner relations and future access to these streams.

Two larger streams that are managed as walk-in, special-regulation brown trout fisheries are upper French Creek and a central segment of Bloody Run Creek. Both stream segments are stocked once annually with fingerlings to maintain brown trout populations. Special regulations have been put into effect on these two stream segments to provide browns some protection from over-harvest and anglers with a good chance at a large fish. These regulations include permitting only artificial lures; no natural baits such as minnows, worms, or cheese are allowed. In addition, there is a fourteen-inch size limit and all browns under this length must be immediately released. These special regulations are

Brown trout, like the one at right, are available to anglers who are willing to walk in. Bloody Run Creek, below, is one special-regulation stream.



Gaige Wunder



Gaige Wunder



Ken Formanick

enforced only on the stream segments marked with yellow and brown signs as special, brown-trout areas.

Five walk-in trout streams are stocked only with ten- to twelve-inch adult browns, but the stocking frequency ranges from every other week to once a month. This longer stocking interval improves the quality of the trout and provides a more challenging target for anglers. These limited-stocking brown trout streams are North Cedar, Pine, Little Turkey, Big Mill, Upper Swiss Valley and a segment of the Maquoketa River. They are managed as walk-in areas and are accessible only on foot from publicly owned parking lots or from county roads above and below the stocked areas. The streams are located in beautiful, rugged valleys and can be far from the beaten path so expect considerable effort in fishing them, especially on North Cedar and Little Turkey Creeks. Again, it is important to note that not all of these streams are completely in public ownership and there are some sections not open to public fishing.

Gaige Wunder is a fisheries management biologist at Decorah. He holds a B.S. degree from Iowa State University and has worked for the Commission since 1969.

NITROGEN

By Mike Larkin, Hatchery Manager

Trout anglers should be alarmed about the future of their sport. Cold-water springs feeding many trout hatcheries across the United States, including Iowa trout hatcheries, are rapidly being polluted by a chemical gas that is lethal to fish. The culprit is nitrogen.

During the last five years all three Iowa trout hatcheries have noticed a dramatic rise in problems caused by nitrogen gas. Visitors at Iowa's trout hatcheries are beginning to see stocking-size fish with one eye protruding from the socket. This condition, called pop-eye is caused by nitrogen gas accumulating behind the eye. Eventually the pressure forces the eyeball out of the socket. This condition is not fatal but does cause blindness. Pop-eye has been observed in trout hatcheries for some time but in the last few years the percent of fish having this condition has increased more than tenfold.

Another serious problem being noticed is gas bubbles on the fish's gills. These bubbles prevent efficient transfer of oxygen through the gill to the bloodstream, causing the fish to work harder to breathe. The harder the fish works the more stress it experiences and the more susceptible it is to a fatal disease. Last spring we experienced for the first time rainbow trout fry, newly hatched fish, that could not sink. They floated like a bobber because of nitrogen gas bubbles on them. If not acted upon immediately, these fish would have died. The more serious problems are associated with gas levels in excess of 120 percent. At this point, gas bubbles form in the bloodstream, in the mouth, on the skin and fins, plus in internal organs and cause death.

Nitrogen gas at levels up to 100 percent saturation is not a threat to fish life. As the gas saturation increases from about 103 percent to 120 percent its threat to fish increases. Currently Iowa is not experiencing gas levels in this range, but we are rapidly approaching it.

The exact source has not been determined. The most severe problems are occurring in agricultural

A THREAT TO THE TROUT PROGRAM

areas where large amounts of nitrogen fertilizer are being applied to row crops. It may well be that some of the nitrogen fertilizer is passing through the soil to underground water.

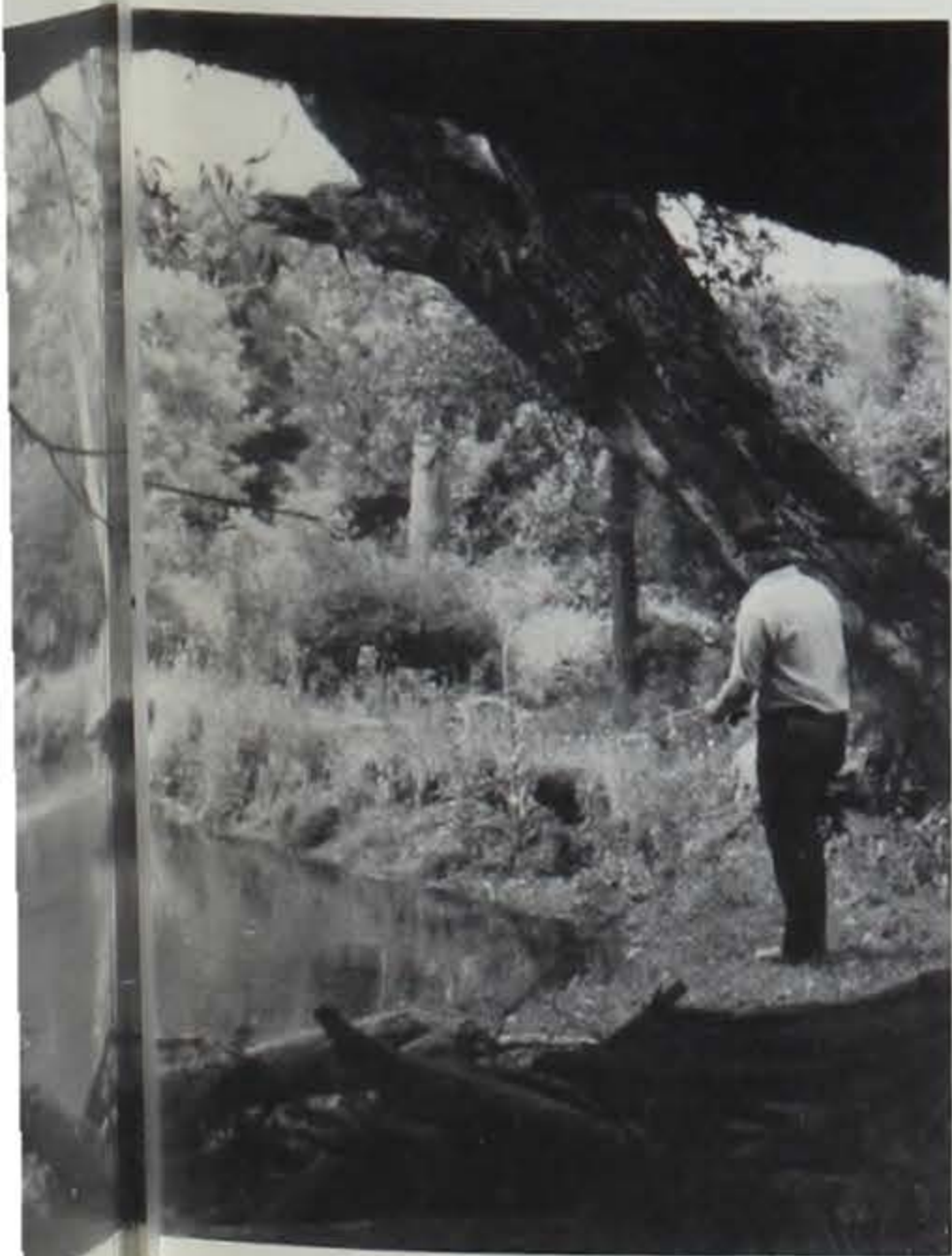
A permanent solution to the problem is years away, if it is ever solved, so that the Iowa Conservation Commission must resort to short-term solutions to reduce the problem. Aerators are being used that spray water into the air, breaking it into small droplets so that the nitrogen gas can escape into the air. This solution is expensive but moderately effective. Other solutions efficient in reducing nitrogen, gas supersaturation and increasing the oxygen gas concentration are being investigated. Installation and operation of this system, or any system, will be expensive and will increase the cost of rearing trout.

It is quite possible that unless a long-term solution to the nitrogen gas problem is found sometime in the future, the cost of stripping it from Iowa's cold-water springs could make trout production cost-prohibitive.

Although this problem is most evident in Iowa's trout hatcheries, a note of concern for warm-water fish production must be expressed. Early stages of nitrogen gas supersaturation are appearing in hatcheries using lake water.



Excessive nitrogen gas in the water causes the appearance of gas bubbles on the gills of trout, often resulting in death.



Twenty-seven Years a Warden

By Chuck Humeston

For twenty-seven years, Bill Basler was a conservation officer. I spent a morning with Bill, talking with him and his wife, Bea, listening to their experiences.

In February, 1941, Bill Basler entered the U. S. Army, serving in the military police. At the outbreak of World War II, he transferred to the Army Air Corps. Bill loved to fly calling it, "one of the best experiences."

But through those days of being transferred from base to base as a flight instructor and finally as a flight engineer instructor on the B-29 bomber, a love for something else was luring him — his love for the outdoors. During those many hours in the sky, he decided he wanted to become a game warden.

As a boy growing up in Lohrville, Iowa, Bill was taken by his father hunting, fishing and trapping even though, Bill laughed, "I was probably more a nuisance than help." But his father tried to instill an appreciation of the outdoors in his children, and those outings were successful to that end.

Immediately upon leaving the Air Corps, First Lieutenant Basler applied to be a conservation officer. It was a long hiring process beginning with a test. "It was a college entrance exam we took at the statehouse," Bill recalled.

"They graded the tests, called back the top scorers, and asked us to go to school at Camp Dodge northwest of Des Moines. We went to school for a week."

At the Camp Dodge school were lectures, more tests and interviews.

"The interviews — I don't know how many they booted out with that. I think somebody dug into our backgrounds, and if they found out anything bad it was brought up at this meeting. My best friend went in ahead of me and I've never seen him since. They washed him out for some reason."

After school, Bill was again put on a list. After almost a year, he was

offered a position as a conservation officer which Bill accepted beginning a career with his first assignment in Cedar and Jones Counties, later in Dickinson County and finally in Palo Alto and Kossuth Counties.

At an annual salary of \$2,700 per year, Bill's training consisted of spending four weeks working with other officers. "I was given report forms, a badge, a boat and five-horsepower outboard motor. We didn't have uniforms," he said of those first days.

"We had little, if any, equipment. We used our own cars. Mine was a '47 Chevrolet. We bought our own siren and red light. Around 1954, I was issued a state car. It had no radio. Dickinson County bought me my first two-way radio."

Bill's first duty was to learn his territory.

"My supervisor said, 'I don't care if you don't write a ticket for six months, get out there and get acquainted with the people.' That was good advice."

"Our job was anything related to the Conservation Commission. We were expected to be experts on all aspects of hunting and fishing," Bill noted. "And I think most of us were. We carried a fishing pole in the boat most of the time and certainly a shotgun in the car."

"We had no set schedule," Bill said of the work hours. "In those days, we seldom took a day off. We thought nothing of working around the clock on a trapper suspected of violating. In eleven years at Spirit Lake, I don't think I took eleven weekends off."

Bill worked the long hours because he loved the job. But were those hours tough on a man with a family? "It's a hard family life," Bill's wife Bea said. "The public doesn't realize the long hours."

Bea remembered church and school activities she attended alone because her husband was on the job. She helped. "I would write out licenses," Bea said. "On opening day, there would be a line at our door. I took lots of phone messages. I was

asked questions about laws."

Bea also recalled worrying when Bill would be late getting home or wondering if someone he had arrested "would take it out on me or the children." But she said those things were accepted as "part of something Bill wanted to do, and I supported it."

Bill related many experiences about his years as an officer. "What I liked the most was associating with hunters and fishermen. Sportsmen, as a rule, are generally a good class of people."

"You had to treat everyone alike. Public relations was, and still should be, the biggest share of the job. I always tried to treat anyone I ticketed like we could have a cup of coffee later."

"The public," Bill said, "seems to think wardens are sneaky." However, the nature of fish and game enforcement does not always lend itself to conventional methods. He illustrated this with a problem he had at the Lake Minnewashta Dam in Dickinson County where, Bill said, an officer could work "twenty-four hours a day, three hundred sixty-five days a year."

"The bullheads would congregate against a screen at the dam, and I knew people were dipping down there," Bill recalled. But he could not catch them illegally netting the fish. "I knew it was going on, so one night I had Miles Cameron come over, and he rode to the Minnewashta Dam with me. He sat in the front seat, but when we got there, he scrunched way down so he wasn't visible. I got out to check licenses and came back to the car. I lighted a cigarette. I had the dome light so it wouldn't work. I opened the door and handed the cigarette to Miles and dropped down on my hands and knees and crawled around the car to the lakeshore. Miles puffed on the cigarette awhile then turned the car around and drove out."

"I could still see the taillights driving out when they started dipping. He came back in thirty minutes, and by then I had a whole pile of them."

Iowa Taxidermist Association

By Peggy Hays

Bill remembered a man climbing over his back to get at a gun Bill had taken from him for a night-time deer violation. He remembered when he finally decided a sidearm was necessary to do the job.

I heard over the police radio to be on the lookout for a certain car license. The occupants were thought to be armed and dangerous. I just jotted it down, but I hadn't gone very far until I met them."

Bill followed the car around Lake West Okoboji and through the city of Spirit Lake. He called for help, but none was available. He continued to follow the car.

"Eventually, Jim Bonnstetter, a highway patrolman, came roaring around me and stopped them. I didn't have a gun, so I didn't know how I was going to help him. I pulled my car to the far side of the road and pointed it at them. If something happened, I was going to broadside them. They had a .357 in the front seat. That's when I decided I needed a gun."

It was a tool he didn't like wearing. "I can't explain why," Bill said. "I knew I wasn't going to use it except to protect myself or someone else."

The heartache came in tragic drownings, boat accidents and gun accidents.

He talked about three boys hunting with a .22 rifle shooting at a wagon in a field. A shot went over the wagon striking a young boy riding a bicycle along a drainage ditch. The boy died of his injuries. "Those things shake you up really bad," Bill slowly said.

Bill retired in 1979. He and Bea live in Ruthven where he fishes, traps and hunts ducks, geese and fox.

"One of the best parts of the job was the people you worked with," he spoke of his fellow officers.

Yes, the job has changed over the years, but Bill said the past officers who worked so hard to see that Iowa's resources were protected and those who carry on the task today have something still in common, "a fantastic desire to do the job."

Chuck Humeston is a conservation officer for Palo Alto and Kossuth Counties. He holds degrees in journalism and geography from the University of Iowa.

The water churns as that lunker fights to break your line. Determination and patience finally win! The bass is yours and you picture him hanging on your office wall.

Back to reality! Where do you take a prize fish to be mounted? Could a taxidermist recreate that moment of exhilaration when the bass broke the water and jumped with your line in his mouth?

Many times throughout the year sportsmen everywhere are faced with the same decision just noted. It may be a turkey, fish, deer, elk, fox, bear, duck, or any other of the various wildlife people love. The choice is always the same — do you just want it mounted in a standard pose or do you want a realistic piece to enjoy for years to come?

Members of the Iowa Taxidermist Association are striving to give the public the best quality work available. Several have won ribbons in other state and national competitions. Iowa taxidermists won 13 ribbons at the 1985 World Competition. There are IITA members from all corners of Iowa. To be a member, one must be interested in the advancement of taxidermy and hold an Iowa taxidermy license as issued by the Iowa Conservation Commission. Both amateur and professional members are included.

The purposes of the IITA as stated in the organizational bylaws are to promote and advance the art of taxidermy and related fields.

The IITA also encourages its individual members' participation in civic, charitable and educational activities.

Many people can compare mounts on display at a competition and single out the better one without knowing why it stands above the others. Compare the mount to the live animal and the difference is readily apparent. An animal's eyes, ears, and facial expression must match the posture of the body. An alert face and a relaxed body posture just don't go together. They must always be balanced. Look out your window and

check the stance of birds sitting on a fence or a wire. Watch how the squirrel comes down the tree or sits on the limb. Examine your fish when it comes out of the water. Note the symmetry of the body and detail on the head. Ask your taxidermist about his or her reference materials. Discuss any ideas of what you expect in your mount — positioning, habitat materials if desired or overall appearance.

Field care is of primary importance to a trophy mount. What happens in the field often destroys the real beauty of the specimen. One of the most prevalent mistakes is slashing the throat of a game head. This is not necessary and can destroy an otherwise beautiful cape. Fish are quick to lose color and a color snapshot at the time of catch can be a help. Fin and tails are problems if not treated carefully. Birds have beautiful plumage and delicate colorations on feet and bills. Blood stains can discolor and cause damage if not cared for properly. Mammals also have their special problems with fur and blood stains. Repairs can always be made but a little knowledge gained visiting the taxidermist before you hunt or fish for the trophy beforehand helps you and your taxidermist do a better job.

The Iowa Taxidermist Association holds an annual show and competition in March or April of each year. This year's competition was held in conjunction with the Iowa Sports and Vacation Show at Veteran's Auditorium in Des Moines. Both amateur and professional classes had entries. Out-of-state competitors were present for the first time. Categories established in both classes are mammals, game heads, birds, fish and freeze-dry. Professional taxidermists drawn from the World Taxidermy Competition pool of judges judged entries. This was an excellent opportunity to see quality work and ask questions of competent Iowa Taxidermist Association members.

Peggy Hays assists her husband Clark, of Hays Taxidermy, Mt. Pleasant.

NATURE TALE FOR KIDS

Lagica, the Not-So-Swift Chimney Swift



By Dean M. Roosa

It was April 17 in St. Louis. A huge group of chimney swifts were circling the city as the sun cast its final glow on the Mississippi River valley.

As dusk came steadily on, the swifts were drawn like a magnet to a large chimney of an abandoned factory on the river shore. Around and around they flew, as if reluctant to bid farewell to the pleasant April evening air and drop into the chimney for the night. More swifts were drawn by the circling swarm and the clicking noise they made as they circled. They began to draw the interest of the townsfolk below. Soon, one swift changed the altitude of his flight and fluttered into the chimney. This provided the trigger for another to follow, then another. In minutes, the swifts were dropping into the chimney faster than the bystanders could count. Finally, over 1,200 swifts were clinging to the rough chimney wall, and this is where they would spend the night just as they had spent the previous night in an unused smokestack in Memphis.

Dawn found the entire flock swooping over St. Louis, capturing flying insects. Shortly, the swifts headed north along the river. Late

the next evening, the swifts were circling over Davenport where they again entertained citizens with their spectacle of dropping into a warehouse chimney on the edge of downtown.

The flock began to decrease in size as smaller groups left to go across the state. One flock was circling Cedar Falls a day later; another flock followed the Des Moines River valley. By early May, a small flock had reached northwest Iowa where a pair established a territory on the campus of a biological field station. The pair began to construct a nest in the chimney of one of the stone-sided laboratories. The long trip was over.

The nest of the chimney swift consists of sticks glued together and glued to the chimney wall by the bird's sticky saliva. After this was done, two eggs were laid and incubation began. A few days later, a third egg was laid, sort of as an afterthought. A dozen students each day used the lab and eventually the noise of the adults fluttering to the nest attracted attention. Each day students would peer upward into the chimney from the fireplace below; this was upsetting at first, but as incubation progressed, the adults learned to ignore the faces.

Hatching of the first two eggs occurred, and the chattering of the young as they were fed attracted even more attention. But the nest was 20 feet up in the chimney, so the increased attention was of little importance to the swifts. Days later, the third egg hatched, and the new hatchling nearly got smothered by the two older nestlings. This late hatchling, Lagica, grew slowly because he could not compete well for food.

Before long, the two older nestlings had clambered to the edge of the chimney. Eventually, they launched themselves into the air to become the embodiment of grace which is bestowed upon the entire order of swifts. Lagica, several days younger and quite small, was nearly forgotten by the adults in their excitement of seeing their young on the wing.

Lagica was fed occasionally, and eventually grew to a size and strength that he began to think about leaving the nest. It took two days for him to gather the courage to follow his nest mates into the air. When he did, the flight was not the grace and beauty of a typical swift, but much slower, more cautious — sort of like the hovering flight often done by barn swallows near their nest.

Lagica's parents would swoop toward their youngest, urging him to fly faster, but to no avail. Swifts feed by capturing insects in their wide mouths as they fly. Lagica flew so slowly and carefully that he caught very few insects and began to lose weight.

Lagica became the campus curiosity, and students and visitors alike would watch and remark on how slowly the swift flew. Try as he might, he simply could not fly as fast as a normal swift. Finally, in mid-June a student found Lagica on the ground too weak to fly. Lagica was taken to the ornithology teacher who examined the scared, weakened swift, then prescribed a special diet. Once on this diet, the little swift regained his strength rapidly and a week later was the main attraction as students gathered around to see his release. First Lagica was banded with leg band number 51-00931. Tossed into the air, he immediately took to wing. Whatever was in the diet, it seemed to be just what a slow-flying swift needed. Around and around over the heads of the students he flew, faster and faster, higher and higher. He saw his parents over the nearby field and buzzed past them. They blinked in surprise! Their weakling last-hatched youngster was master of the air.

Lagica fed on insects on the campus and over the lake all summer. In late August, he joined a small flock of swifts from Minnesota and headed down the valley of the Des Moines River. A week later, he was part of a massive swarm of swifts circling over the Mississippi River. Towards dusk, they were drawn like a magnet to an ancient smokestack in St. Louis. Here they entertained the citizens of this river town just as his parents had five months earlier, and just as hundreds of generations of swifts had done before.

Lagica spent the winter in Peru. On the way back north in April, he and 300 other swifts chose a low chimney in Memphis. To their surprise, at dawn they found the top of the chimney sealed off with screen. Then with great rustling, the screen was removed and a special trap installed. They were scared from the chimney and caught in soft bags, from which they were taken and fitted with Fish and Wildlife Service leg bands. Lagica was already banded so this information was recorded. When he was released, the experience was immediately forgotten.

On he flew to Iowa — on to a small town close to his birthplace. He lived an uneventful summer, raising a family and then heading south. Lagica repeated this miracle of migration several times, using the broad Mississippi River valley and Des Moines River valley as his guideposts.

Just last summer, a student was walking across the campus of the field station in northwest Iowa. He saw a small brown clump of feathers lying on the path. He hurriedly took the small bird to the ornithology professor, but it was no use. Lagica had graced the air one final time. Then the band on Lagica's leg was noticed. The professor read the letter and gazed across the lake — this was the same bird he had doctored back to health several years ago. After a productive life, Lagica had returned to the place of his birth.

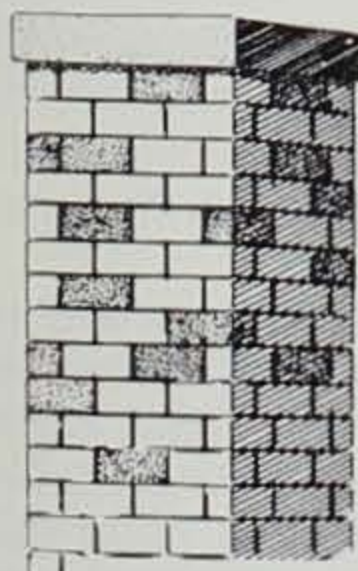


Illustration by Brian Bemisdarfer



Kenneth Fomanek

Wildflower of the Month

BLUE FLAG

Iris virginica

By Dean M. Roosa

Growing at the edges of marshes, at streamsides and in moist soil statewide is a wildflower very familiar to almost everyone. It closely resembles a domestic plant that is grown around many of our homes. It is the wild iris (*Iris virginica*), also called blue flag and fleur-de-lis. It is always a pleasant surprise to find this splash of blue nestled at the marsh edge, often growing among and overtopped by cattails or bulrushes, but always growing as a clump.

The narrow, sword-shaped leaves may be an inch wide and up to three feet long, with a graceful curve. The blue-violet flowers resemble the domestic iris, but with the segments more slender and generally smaller. The sepals have a yellow midrib which expands to a bright yellow patch at the base. The fruit is a three-lobed, oblong capsule with two rows

of seeds in each lobe. The rhizome is horizontal, fleshy, with many small light-colored roots attached.

This wetland plant was used by native Americans to treat earache, sore eyes, and respiratory problems. Pioneers pounded the boiled root into pulp and applied it as a dressing to reduce swelling. It provides some cover for wetland wildlife, but is of little food value.

The royal emblem (fleur-de-lis) of France is represented by an Iris.

In North America, it grows from Newfoundland to Manitoba, south to Florida and Arkansas. Here in Iowa, it grows statewide, but is much more common in the lakes region of northwest and north-central portions of the state. This lovely wetland plant blooms from May to July, so now would be a good time to search it out as a new wildflower friend.

Smoking Fish the Easy Way

By Robert Middendorf

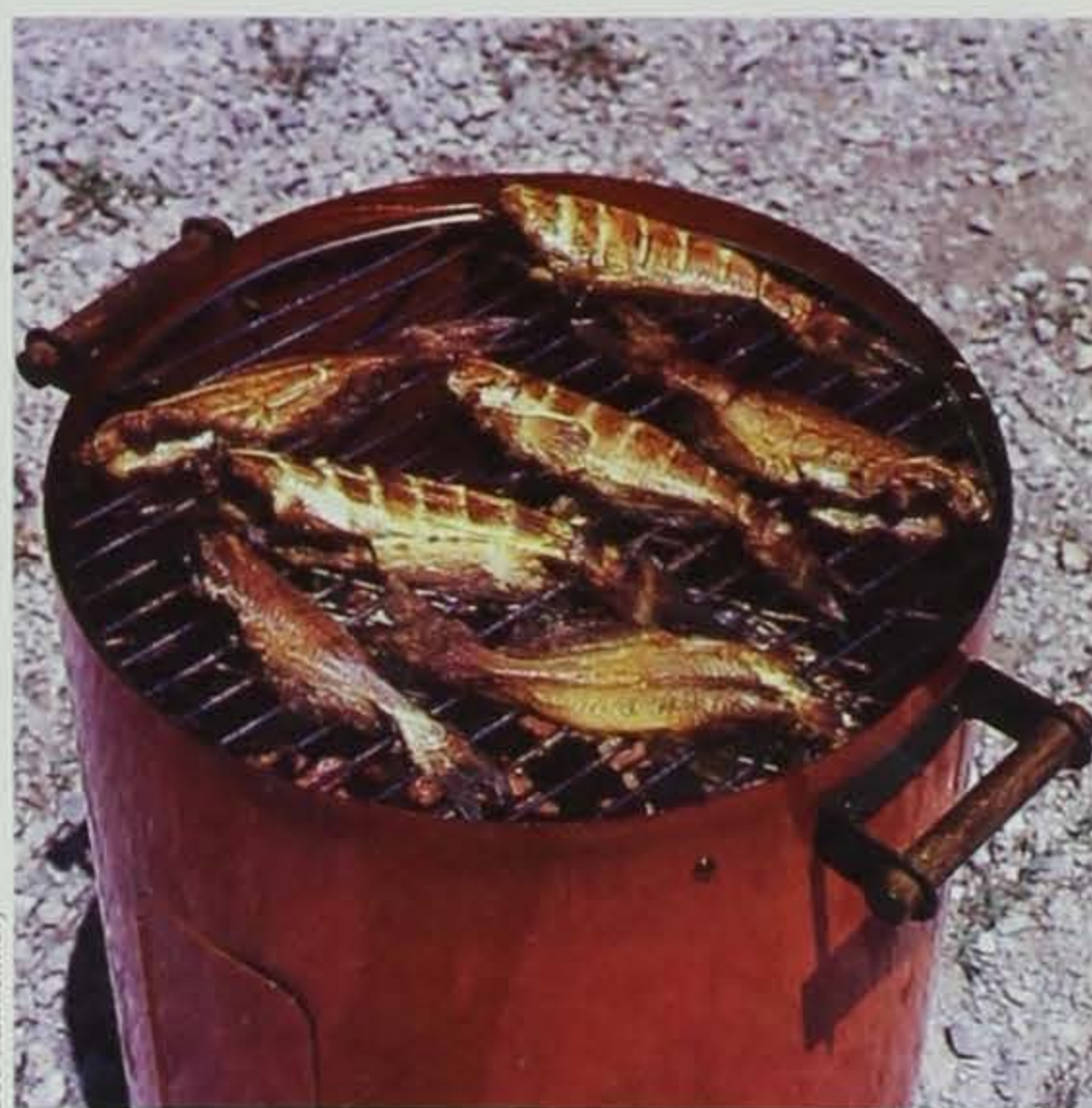
One of man's earliest methods for preserving meat and fish for future use was to cure it over an open, smoky fire. With modern technology we have a wide variety of structures that house the food for the heat and smoke curing process.

Many of these structures, or smokers as they are called, have been home constructed using masonry blocks, old refrigerators, or wooden frames. All of these smokers involve a good deal of effort, time and materials to construct. Also, they require almost constant attendance to maintain a uniform wood heat source.

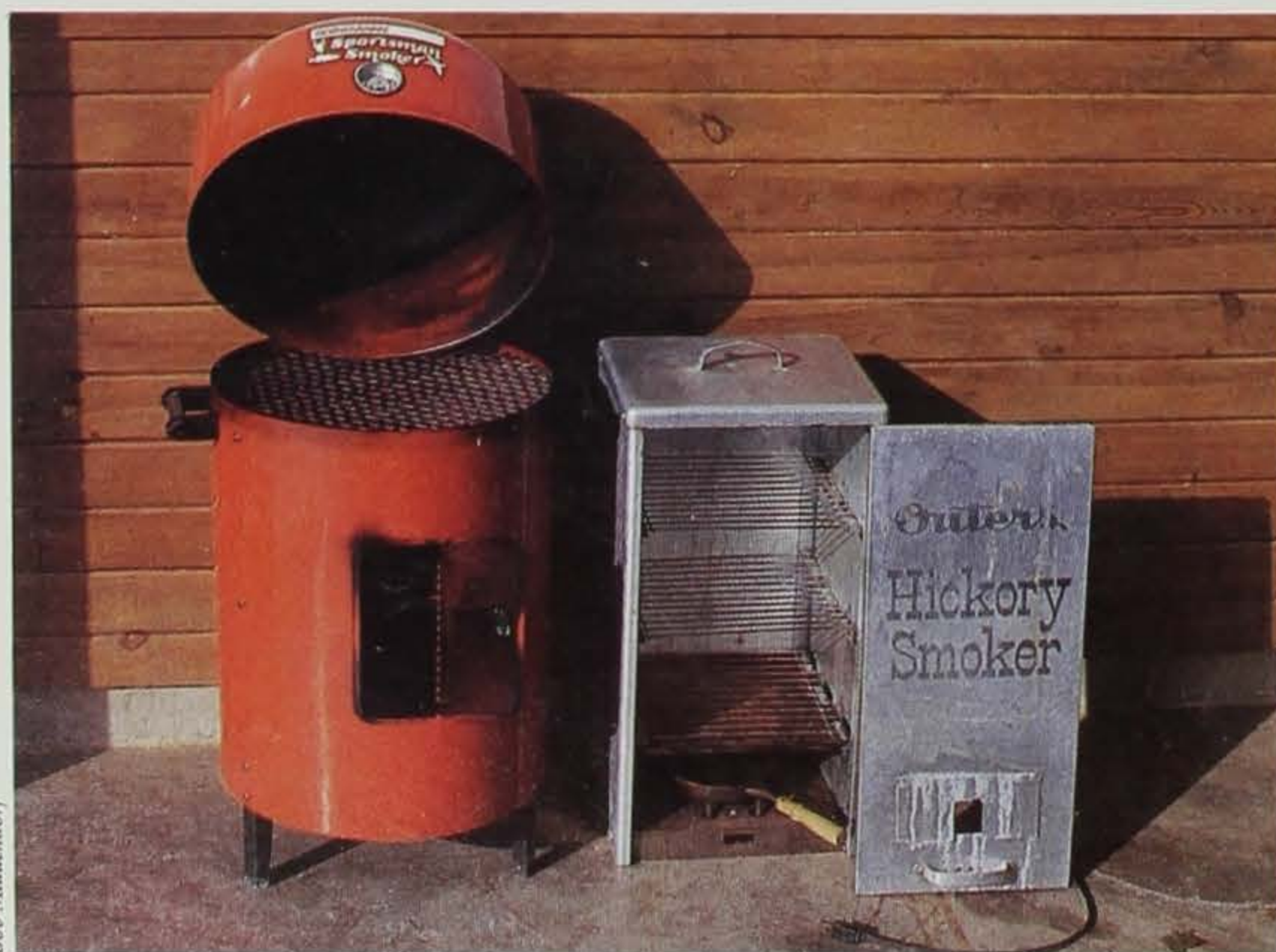
There is an easy way to enter the art of smoking without going through the lengthy involvement of construction and maintenance of a large unit. In recent years several types of small metal commercial units have been introduced that are inexpensive and portable. They are excellent for a person starting a smoking career. These small, commercial units are inexpensive, costing 40 to 60 dollars. Once started, these smokers require minimal effort to maintain a proper heat and smoking environment. And when smoking is finished, these compact units are easily cleaned and stored for next time.

Two heat sources used in portable smokers are charcoal briquettes and electricity with wood chips used to add the smoked flavor. Electrical units are equipped with a thermostat to provide a constant, low-temperature heat source. Moist wood shavings must be added periodically to maintain a smoky environment. Charcoal units require four to five pounds of briquettes which create more heat than is needed, so a pan of water is placed over the glowing briquettes to keep the smoking compartment moist. Pieces of hardwood are added to the charcoal so these units require little or no attendance while smoking. Whichever heat source is used, each will do an excellent job.

Most food can be smoked to enhance its flavor. Common recipes include smoking cheese, vegetables, nuts, meats and fish, so the possibilities are endless. Being a fisheries biologist, my interest has been



Bob Middendorf



Bob Middendorf

directed towards smoking fish. Most species are suitable but catfish and carp are probably the most widely used. Methods and procedures for preparation depend on the size of the fish. Small fish may be left whole while larger fish must be either split lengthwise or steaked to allow the smoke to penetrate all the flesh. The skin should be left on if possible to prevent the fish from dehydrating and sticking to the rack while in the smoker. Brining consists of soaking the meat for eight to twelve hours in a salt solution or a prepared brine. After brining, the meat should be air-dried for 30 minutes and then placed in the smoker.

Basic Fish Brine

2 gallons water
4 cups salt
½ lb. dark brown sugar

Pour the water in a nonmetallic container and dissolve salt and brown sugar. Place fish in the mixture so all pieces are covered and set in a refrigerator overnight. For added flavor, garlic salt, onion salt, lemon juice, ground tarragon leaves or soy sauce may be added to suit individual taste. To add a sweeter taste, brown sugar may be sprinkled on the meat while in the smoker.

Place the pieces on the racks in the smoker with the skin side down. Leave some space between pieces to allow for good air circulation. Remove the fish from the smoker when the surface has a reddish color and the flesh flakes when pierced with a fork, after approximately two to four hours in a water smoker or eight to twelve hours in a dry smoker, depending on the size of fish.

With a small investment and a little experimentation anyone can develop a perfect recipe that can turn a catch into a unique delicacy.

Robert Middendorf is a fisheries management biologist at Solon. He is a native of Lansing and has been with the Commission since 1948.

County Conservation Board Feature

House Sparrow

Friend or Foe?

By Ellen Lipp

So often, we are faced with the dilemma of house sparrows at our feeders. Should we, or should we not feed them?

If we choose not to feed these birds, will they fly into a snow drift and starve to death? Will our guilty conscience forever plague us with memories of happy little sparrows flitting around our yards?

The choice is up to you. But let me tell you a little bit about the house sparrow before you make up your mind.

House sparrows are a prime example of competitors. They compete with bluebirds, tree swallows, house wrens and purple martins.

What do they compete for? Housing. House sparrows nest in tree cavities, woodpecker holes and bird boxes "denying native, hole-nesting species a place in which to reproduce" (*The Encyclopedia of North American Wildlife* by Stanley Klien).

Their favorite spots to make nests are nesting boxes. We've put up many bluebird boxes around the Lime Creek Nature Center in hopes of attracting the beautiful native bluebird. Unfortunately, house sparrows often move in first.

Sometimes, house sparrows move into nest sites already occupied by other birds. They can "evict" the ten-

ants, destroy any eggs, throw out nesting material and actually attack any young in the nest. It has been documented that bluebirds and house finch chicks have been brutally pecked and killed by these aggressive birds.

Besides destroying nests and songbirds, house sparrows have been known to damage crops. They can tear open corn husks and eat grain from various other seed heads. In the spring, house sparrows also feed on fruit buds of pear, apple, peach, plum and cherry trees as well as currants and grape vines.

House sparrows can be useful. They do eat harmful insects such as aphids, Japanese beetles, canker worms, locusts, tent caterpillars, moths and certain weevils. However, a study done by E. R. Kalamabach in 1984 reveals that over 95 percent of the diet of adult house sparrows consists of vegetable matter such as millet, corn and other grains.

Do house sparrows eat enough harmful insects to be claimed a benefit? You decide.

Ellen Lipp is with the Cerro Gordo County Conservation Board as naturalist at the Lime Creek Nature Center. She holds a masters degree in wildlife biology from Colorado State University.

By Ron Williams

In 1801 when Thomas Jefferson was sworn into office as President of the United States, he carried with him a dream of expanding the United States and of mounting an exploratory expedition to the new lands west of the Mississippi River.

The U.S. at this time was entirely east of the Mississippi River and Jefferson, like many others of the day, saw the need for westward expansion, hopefully to the Pacific Ocean. The Louisiana Territory, a vast region between the Mississippi and the Rocky Mountains, had been transferred from France to Spain in 1762. Jefferson learned in 1801 that Spain planned to cede the area back to France. When Louisiana belonged to Spain, it offered no great threat to the United States, but under Napoleon, it might block American expansion and threaten American democracy.

In December 1802 Jefferson, foreseeing that the U.S. might acquire this area, asked Congress for funds to finance an exploratory expedition of the Louisiana Territory. Then, in early 1803, when the U.S. actually acquired the territory from France, the expedition was already fairly well planned and was put into action within a few months. Jefferson selected his young secretary, Meriweather Lewis, to head the expedition and Lewis, in turn, asked a close friend, William Clark, to assist. Although the route they took up the Missouri River, over the mountains to the Columbia, and on to the Pacific Ocean never became the trade route to the Pacific that was proposed, the expedition was one of the most successful exploratory forces in U.S. history and the Missouri River became one of the major "highways" to western development.

As with modern space exploration, the efforts of many people, both directly and indirectly, contributed to the success of this mission. Much of the history has been little understood or forgotten.

In the early summer of 1985, the Iowa Conservation Commission's staff at Lewis and Clark State Park near Onawa, and the Onawa Cham-

LEWIS AND CLARK HISTORY REKINDLED STATE PARK



Photos by James Scheffler

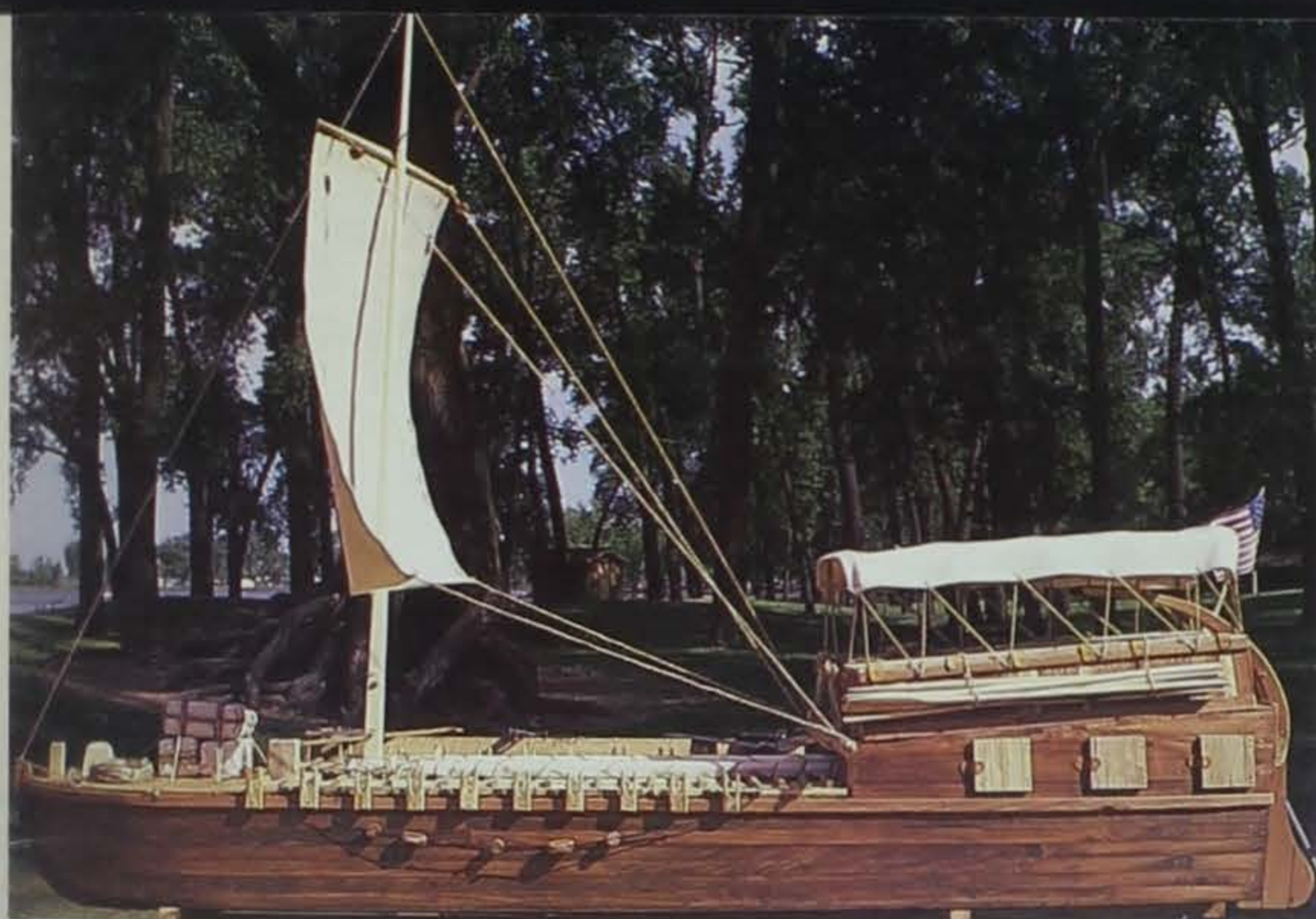
ber of Commerce undertook a living history event at Lewis and Clark State Park in order to relive some of the Lewis and Clark story for the public to enjoy. The park lies on the west shore of Blue Lake, a Missouri River oxbow now, and the main channel of the river in August 1804 when Lewis and Clark camped there.

Films and presentations were given relating to the Lewis and Clark expedition and early river history. A 1/12 scale model of the keelboat used by the expedition was researched, built, and donated to the commission by Butch Bouvier of Council Bluffs for the festival. Many buckskinner/living history buffs were on hand to demonstrate early period weapons, lodgings, dress, cooking, crafts, and trade wares. An organized black powder novelty shoot was open to the general public to compete for prizes with authentic rifles and pistols. The park lodge was turned into a temporary museum of Lewis and

Clark era artifacts and memorabilia.

Along with these historic representations, some other types of activities were also enjoyed by the public. These included: a fishing tournament, a bluegrass music festival, a "fun run," pancake feed, quilt display, and early period activities and competitions for kids. One of the highlights of the extremely hot weekend was the distribution of 1,500 Eskimo Pies by the Eskimo Pie Corporation of Richmond, Virginia. (For trivia buffs, the Eskimo Pie was born in Onawa in the early 1900's.) All in all, the weekend turned out to be very fun-filled as well as educational, with over 10,000 people enjoying the various events.

The 1986 Onawa, Lewis and Clark Festival will be held June 6, 7, and 8. Some new activities such as a bigger quilt show, canoe "dugout," and wooden raft races are being promoted and the staff at Lewis and Clark State Park is always receptive



Ron Williams is a park ranger at Lewis and Clark State Park. He holds a B.S. degree in outdoor recreation resources from Iowa State University. He has been with the Commission since 1973.

Buckskinner, far left, with trade blanket displaying early 19th century items. Keel boat, left, is a model of Lewis and Clark expedition's Discovery. Dug-out canoeists enjoy Blue Lake. Below, loading of a musket from Lewis and Clark era is demonstrated.

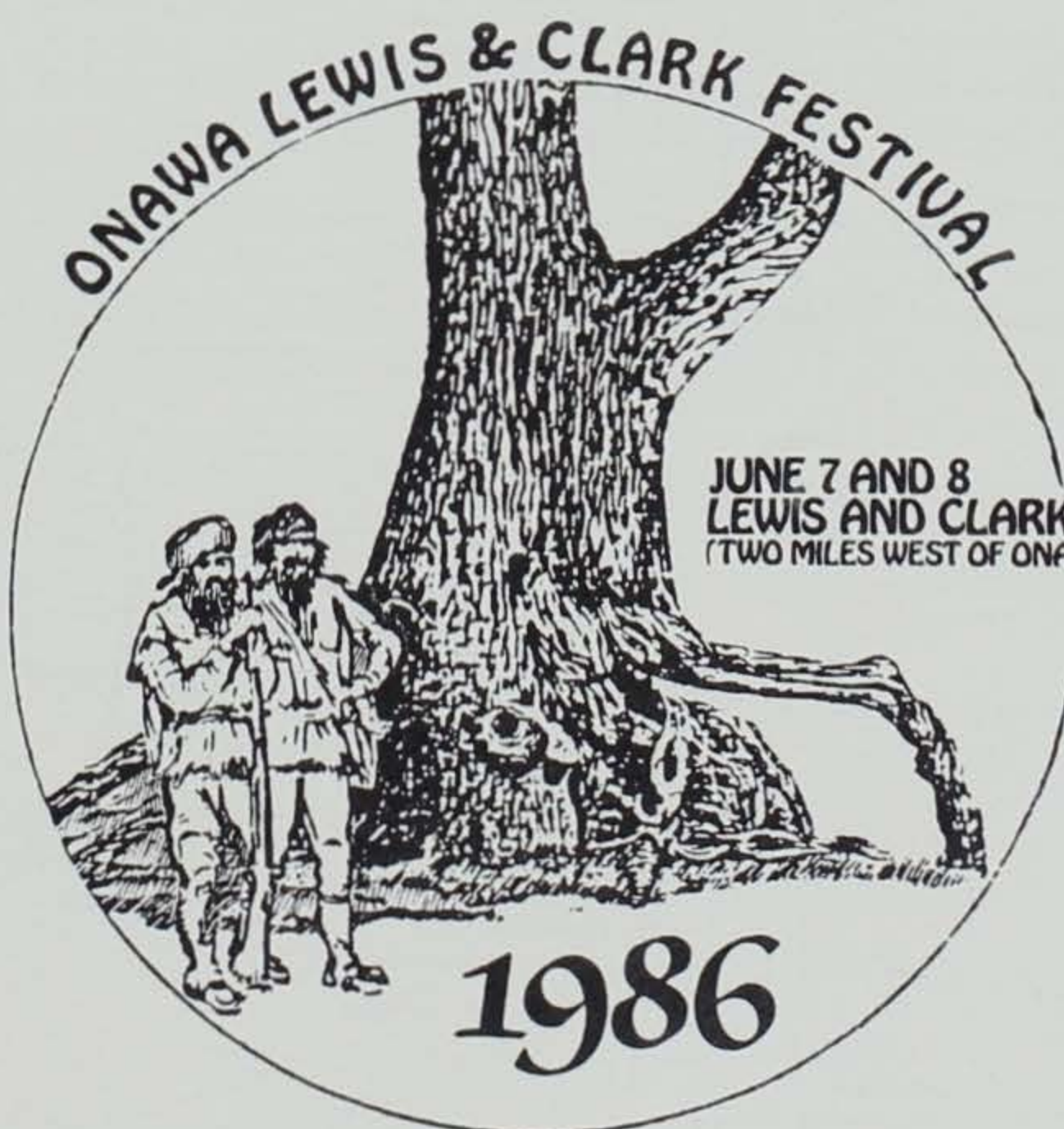


to more Early American craft displays and artifacts representative of the Lewis and Clark era.

One of the offshoots of the festival has been the construction of a full scale, 55-foot-long replica of the unique keelboat used by the expedition. This vessel is being built out of solid oak (like the original) provided by the Conservation Commission's forestry section. Once completed, it will remain on permanent display at the park for the public to view.

The boat is being built by Bouvier and a group of local volunteers who have formed a non-profit corporation, "The Friends of Discovery," for the promotion, solicitation of donations, and actual construction of the replica. Funding for the project is entirely from donations. The group hopes to have the boat completed in time for the 1987 festival.

For further information, please contact the park ranger at Lewis and Clark State Park, Onawa, Ia. 51040.



JUNE 7 AND 8
LEWIS AND CLARK STATE PARK
(TWO MILES WEST OF ONAWA'S I-29 INTERCHANGE.)

