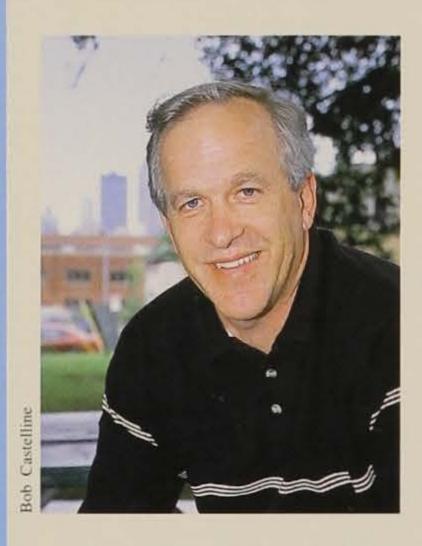
DEPART DE LA CESOURCES



# **FROM THE DIRECTOR**



## From Dumping Grounds To Diamond Fields

Last month, 200 volunteers from around the state converged on the Little Sioux River in northwest Iowa for Project AWARE and picked up 124 cubic yards of That's frustrating and maddening.

For those of you who may not be familiar with Project AWARE, it has now become an annual event where volunteers canoe one of our rivers to pick up trash and share in the camaraderie of improving our natural resources. Along the way, there's plenty of opportunity to not only contribute to improving our environment, but learn a lot at evening programs along the way.

Merry Rankin, the DNR's volunteer coordinator, described this year's trash collection effort.

"With the items that were collected the volunteers could have redecorated a house with the stove, refrigerator, televisions, computer, freezer, washer, dryer, microwave, air conditioner, toilet, sink, carpets, bathroom tile, screen windows, kerosene heater, furnace duct, siding, gutters, shingles, coffee pots, fuse box, mattress, box springs, sofa, fire extinguishdoor handles of dumped vehicles.

"And when all this building and equipping was complete, volunteers pulled from the river all the fixins' for a well-attended celebration bash with countless beer, wine and alcohol bottles, wine glasses, fishing equipment, perfume bottles, propane tanks, BBQ grills, sleds, a boat dock, records, four bicycles, patio furniture and miscellaneous toys — including the metal case of one of the original erector sets and a metal spinner bingo game.

"Current figures show approximately 3 tons of scrap metal collected and only 600 pounds of garbage that was unable to be recycled. Recycling rates are expected to be at least 95 percent."

Those of us who care about the natural resources have to look at these statistics and ask ourselves why we would treat our waterways in this manner. What I try not to think about is the fact that this project covered only about 100 miles - or less than 0.2 percent of the rivers and streams we have in Iowa. That means we have tons and tons more trash still out there along our waterways. Part of the reason I think we see so much of this illegal dumping along our rivers and streams is that these areas tend to be some of the few remaining parts of Iowa that are remote. This remoteness is yet another reason why our waterways need additional attention and protection in a state that has so few natural areas remaining.

trash, enough to fill two dozen dump trucks.

Now tell me, is this good news or bad? These types of events certainly leave me with mixed feelings of both good and bad news.

We obviously still have people who care enough about water quality and our natural resources to make this kind of commitment to help clean things up. They went out and they made a difference.

The flip side, of course, is we obviously still have a lot of people who don't care and continue to view our water resources as nothing more than their own, personal garbage receptacles. ers, joint compound and miscellaneous dishes that were collected.

"The volunteers could have also nicely equipped a farm with the 125 fence posts, 20 55-gallon barrels, barn door, gate, 300-gallon livestock watering tank, 16-hole hog feeder, elevator equipment, barbed wire, panel fencing, feed chutes, chicken waterer, tiling, plow parts, pitchfork, vaccine bottles, and intact farm chemicals and diesel oil that were found.

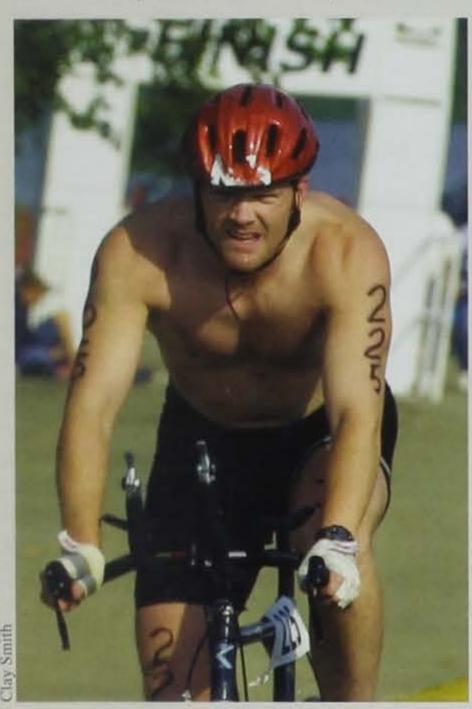
"A nice car could have been constructed as well, as volunteers found the hood, trunk, grill, fenders, bumpers, license plates (1962 and 1975), gas tanks, bucket seat, headlights, rearview mirror and

#### Director's Message

cont. on page 4

ehicles. Iding and olunteers e fixins' ation bash and es, fishing s. proeds, a cycles, aneous il case of sets and le, approxital inds of o be are percent. about the look at rselves vaterways no! 10 this 100 ercent of have in e tons ut there

FRONT COVER: YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD BY LOWELL WASHBURN BACK COVER: BECOME AN OUTDOORS-WOMAN AT THE NEXT BOW WORKSHOP, SEPT. 9-11 (SEE PAGES 38-43)



Departments

# Features

#### BROWNFIELDS: RECLAIMING IOWA'S PAST TO CREATE THE FUTURE

CONSERVATIONIST

by Jessie Rolph Brown

Once eyesores and environmental concerns, abandoned industrial areas are being converted to community centerpieces.

#### NOT JUST A WALK IN THE PARK

by Brian Button

Last year, nearly 300 men and women swam, ran and biked the 24th Annual Big Creek Triathlon. Several Iowa state parks are hosts to these challenging events.

#### O VOLUNTEERS ADD NEW LIFE TO PINE CREEK MILL

by Marilyn "Lyn" Jackson

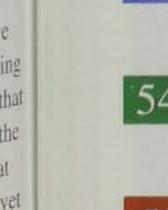
Skills, experience and good old-fashioned hard work by a group of dedicated individuals have breathed new life into a historic landmark.

#### 8 10 SURE-FIRE WAYS TO HELP YOUR KIDS LOVE THE OUTDOORS

by Julie Tack Got kids? Here's how to enjoy the outdoors with your little ones.

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page 4



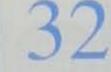
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#### SIGNATURE SPOKESMAN

by Lowell Washburn

Rare to most of Iowa, yellow-headed blackbirds bring their song and dance to northern Iowa marshes.

#### BECOMING AN OUTDOORS-WOMAN

by Christie Vilsack

Iowa's first lady shares a first-hand account of her experience at this outdoor skills camp.

#### WATERFRONT SEAFOOD MARKET DOES WALLEYE RIGHT

by Mick Klemesrud It's a family affair at this West Des Moines eatery.

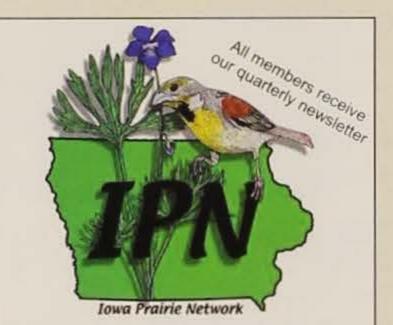
#### GOOSE-HERDING BORDER COLLIE ENJOYS THE GOOD LIFE AT RICE LAKE COUNTRY CLUB

by Lowell Washburn

One north-central country club is enjoying a nearly goose-free golf course, thanks to Roy the border collie.

#### Director's Message cont. from page 2

But we also believe that focus on our rivers is rapidly changing for the better. Kayaking and canoeing are some of the most rapidly growing recreational pursuits we have in Iowa. We



Join the IPN, only \$10/year! Write IPN, PO Box 572, Nevada, IA 50201 or see www.iowaprairienetwork.org have more than 30,000 registered canoes and kayaks in this state, but the actual number is most likely more than 60,000 considering the fastest growing sector of that market involves vessels less than 13-feet long — which don't have to be registered.

Iowa is richly blessed with an abundance of scenic waterways

offering much more potential than dumping spots for refuse. Avid members of the canoeing and kayaking community have been calling for the development of water trails and they are right.

The DNR met with representatives of canoeing and kayaking interests in July to discuss the potential of developing water trails. In 2007, additional revenue will be available through the Marine Fuel Tax and the plan is to use some of that additional funding to develop water trails, including access points, on Iowa rivers and streams.

Looking back, much of our early history revolves around rivers and streams. These waterways were important economic assets by providing commercial transportation. Our rivers and streams offer great potential to once again be important economic assets by providing transportation, this time for recreation.

ROm Jeffrey R. Vonk





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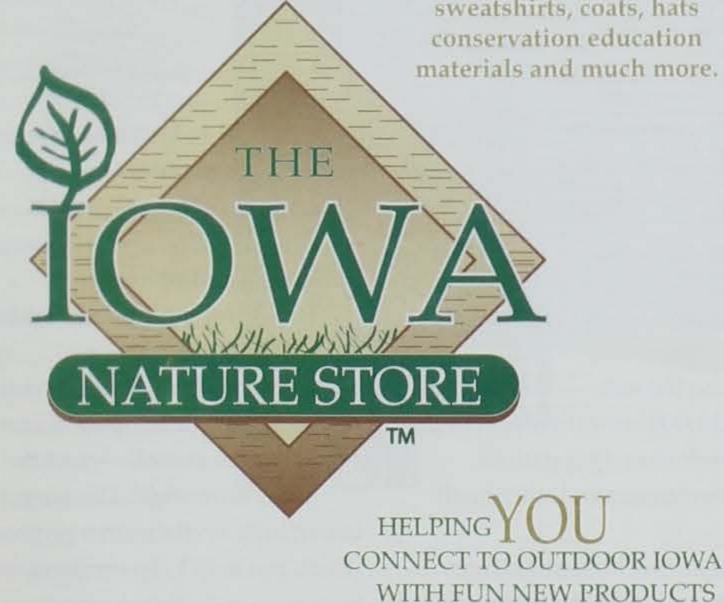
CONSERVATIONIST

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Iowa Conservationist (ISSN 0021-0471) is published bimonthly by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Wallace State Office Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0034. Periodicals postage paid Des Moines, IA. Subscription rates: \$12 for one year, \$18 for two years and \$24 for three years. Prices subject to change without notice. Include mailing label for renewals and address changes. POSTMASTER: Send changes to the lowa Conservationist, Department of Natural Resources, Wallace State Office Building, 502 E. Ninth Ave., Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0034.

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# Reclaiming Iowa's Dast to create the fortune

As a family sails along on bicycles, green grass and wildflowers sway in the wind beside the trail. Squirrels, rabbits and other wildlife peek out from behind trees.

Just a few years ago, the same site — an abandoned factory — was considered a community eyesore and residents worried about possible environmental contamination. Now the site is a reclaimed brownfield, creating new opportunities out of what seemed to be a lost cause.

Across Iowa, a number of abandoned sites are being reborn as community improvement projects, revitalizing communities and improving Iowa's environment.

By Jessie Rolph Brown

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#### What's a brownfield?

Brownfields are abandoned, idled or under-used property where resale or redevelopment has been held back by known or suspected environmental contamination, according to the U.S. Environmental

Brownfields:



Redevelopment

Program

Agency (EPA). Brownfields can be commercial or residential property and may not actually be contaminated

Protection

— but if concerns that the site might have contamination keeps the property from being redeveloped, it's a brownfield.

While most people think of a brownfield as a rundown factory in an industrial urban area — and these do exist across the state — many of the estimated 4,000 brownfield sites in Iowa include closed gas stations, former dry cleaners and other small sites.

In Iowa, most brownfields are generally small, individual sites with real or perceived contamination from petroleum, solvents, asbestos and heavy metals like lead and mercury. Large, small and even economically vibrant communities have brownfield sites.

#### Redevelop and revitalize

Redeveloping a brownfield site can increase green space (undeveloped land or parks) in a community while bringing in another type of green as well — income.

Many brownfield sites are part of community revitalization projects, which can help keep residents and businesses in the community, increase tourism and maintain the economic vitality of local businesses.

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architectural character that can be used to the community's advantage, with the redeveloped site helping turn around neighborhoods and communities. Redevelopment projects can turn brownfields into new businesses, residential buildings or community areas like parks and trails.

As communities grow, many lose green space or expand onto farmland. Redeveloping an existing brownfield site — which is already wired for utilities and transportation — helps save green space, rural areas and resources.

Mayor Jim Erb of Charles City, whose town is redeveloping a former tractor plant site, says that other sites in Iowa could stand to gain from redeveloping brownfields.

"They can make productive use of acres right in the middle of their town," he said.

Leaving a brownfield space to deteriorate could

reduce the value of the

# BROWNFIELDS IN IOWA

Brownfield sites are taking the spotlight in a number of Iowa communities across the state, from Coralville to Des Moines, Cedar Rapids to Sioux City, and all points in between. The following pages highlight a number of brownfield redevelopment projects at different stages. From small areas to an entire riverfront, from the planning process to a proven success story, Iowa communities are working with the DNR to bring long-lost areas back to life.

### ROLFE REUSES A RAILWAY

In the small northwest Iowa town of Rolfe, residents envision a multi-use trail and trailhead park where they once saw deteriorating gasoline storage tanks.

When the city began eyeing six acres of railroad right-of-way to convert into a multi-use trail, a nearby half-acre brownfield site became an option for a trailhead park. The brownfield site was abandoned in the late 1980s, and the owner owed back taxes, giving the city and community improvement group Rolfe Betterment, Inc. a chance to take control of the property.

But the city and group were hesitant. They were concerned about possible contamination from petroleum and heavy metals at the site, which has housed large fuel storage tanks for more than 70 years.



They contacted the DNR, which performed environmental testing. While the DNR found limited groundwater and soil contamination at the site, the contamination shouldn't affect the use of the site as a public park or pose a health risk to residents. With the results of the testing, the city and Rolfe Betterment can now make an informed decision about acquiring the site, which would be the start of a 33-mile trail. "We're excited to get something started," said Lana Pratt, Rolfe city administrator and a member of Rolfe Betterment. "We had to have this (testing report) or nothing would happen. The trail will bring more people to town to see what Rolfe has to offer." The DNR is able to assist small towns like Rolfe - population 675 - that may not have the staff or budget to work on brownfields projects, and get the project off to a running start by resolving any environmental questions about a site.

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#### Taking the first step

A brownfield can remain a brownfield an abandoned site that becomes increasingly more of an eyesore and community embarrassment — if no one takes action. Often, rumors and perceptions of

Brownfields can be redeveloped into community resources, like this multi-use trail.



DNR staff use state-of-the-art equipment to sample and test sites for possible contamination.

effectively than people anticipate."

Brownfield sites can often become rundown, unless someone takes the first step towards redevelopment.

That

someone is normally a local government, nonprofit organization or other group that may wish to acquire the property. If the prospective buyer has a rough plan of how to redevelop the the DNR uses state-of-the-art equipment to evaluate soil and groundwater for possible contamination.

A TBA searches for contamination from hazardous substances and other pollutants, like industrial and dry cleaning solvents, gasoline, petroleum, pesticides, heavy metals including mercury, cadmium and lead, as well as indoor contaminants such as asbestos and lead paint.

Direct exposure to large amounts of these contaminants, or long-term exposure to smaller amounts — from drinking contaminated water or from prolonged skin contact, for example — could lead to increased risks of cancer or other health problems.

 If environmental issues exist at a site, they can often be addressed more quickly and effectively than people anticipate.
 Mel PINS, DNR BROWNFIELDS COORDINATOR

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possible contamination are larger than the facts, making buyers and financial institutions cautious in developing or lending money for a site where potential environmental contamination could result in future legal or liability issues.

"Most redevelopers are looking before they leap," said Mel Pins, coordinator of the DNR's brownfield program. "And rather than redevelop a site where there may or may not be contamination, they search out undeveloped green space because it's easier. We want to encourage folks not to give up before they've started. If environmental issues exist, they can often be addressed more quickly and property in a way that promotes public usage, green space development or economic revitalization, the DNR can provide free assistance.

The DNR can also help private owners, if they can display financial need. However, the DNR will not provide financial assistance to parties potentially responsible for environmental contamination.

## Beginning an environmental investigation

When the owner has a redevelopment plan in mind, the DNR can conduct a targeted brownfield assessment, or TBA. With a TBA,

#### Protecting public health

If the site is contaminated, the DNR can help determine cleanup efforts needed and how to best reuse the site to benefit the environment and public health. Cleanup efforts, depending on the type of contamination, could include

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removing contaminated soil and properly disposing of it in a landfill, installing a system to remove contaminated groundwater or drawing out gas and vapors from soil.

Cost-share grants and loans are available from the DNR and the Iowa Department of Economic Development (IDED) to assist in funding cleanup efforts.

After cleanup is completed, IDED can also help identify resources for job creation, redevelopment and property value improvement.

If contamination does exist at a site, the Iowa Department of Public Health will prepare a public health consultation, a synopsis of any health impacts from contamination found during the DNR's assessment.

The consultation helps explain any risks, which are generally minimal, to local residents. If there is not a direct exposure to the contaminant, there is generally not a risk of a direct health impact. If the site's owners already have some environmental testing data, the DNR can help interpret the results and determine the necessary follow-up actions. residents. This is the case many times if contaminated soil is found — as long as the soil is left undisturbed, and no one is in direct contact with these soils, no immediate health threat exists.

However, what happens if 20 years down the road, a new owner decides to dig a foundation for a building and exposes the contamination?

To prevent this from happening, a land use control can be placed with the property deed, helping to limit possible future exposure to a hazardous substance. For example, if minor groundwater contamination is found at a site, creating a land use control would restrict the placement of drinking water wells on the site at any time in the future.

Land use controls are available by enrolling in the DNR's Land Recycling Program, which also provides direction in cleanup of contamination. The program is voluntary and if appropriate cleanup is completed, or land use controls put in place, the DNR will provide limited liability protection from further regulatory action related to contamination at the site. The agreed upon land use controls and final certificate become a part of the property's legal deed. Having a defined record of these required actions attached to property ownership records can also ease future real estate transactions and liability concerns for future buyers.

But more importantly, it ensures that the site will remain safe for future generations.

Jessie Rolph Brown is an information specialist for the department in Des Moines.

#### EPA FUNDS NATIONAL BROWNFIELDS PROGRAM

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#### Protecting future generations

In some cases, testing can find contamination at a site, but cleanup is not required, as the contamination doesn't pose a direct threat to While the DNR offers assistance for brownfield sites in Iowa, assistance is also available from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) national brownfield program.



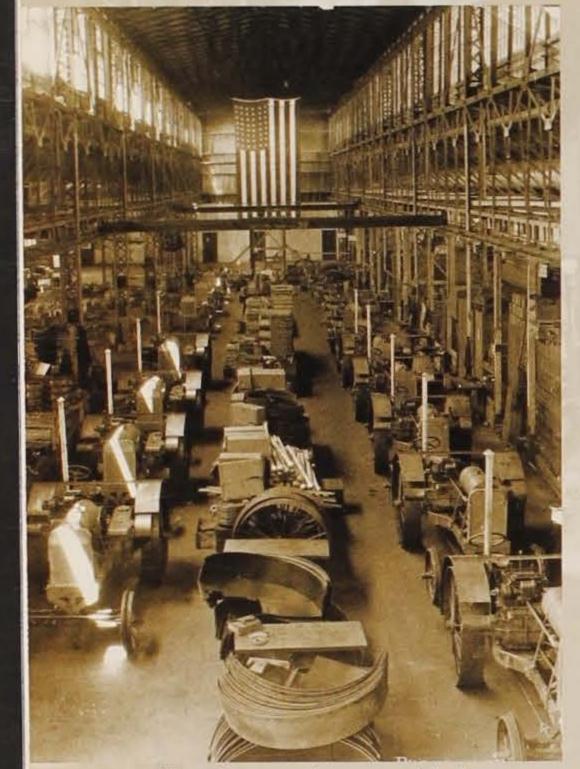
Created in 1995, the EPA brownfield program initially began providing small grants for hundreds of pilot projects. Over the years, those grants have grown with the program, supporting revitalization efforts by funding environmental assessment, cleanup, and job training activities.

Since 1995, the EPA program has awarded 709 assessment grants totaling over \$190 million, 189 revolving loan fund grants worth more than \$165 million, and \$26.8 million for 150 cleanup grants. More than 5,100 properties have had environmental assessment completed through the program. An additional \$75 million in brownfield grants will be awarded to communities in 44 states in 2005. That includes 10 Iowa communities that will receive assessment and cleanup grants totaling more than \$3 million.

The Iowa Brownfield Redevelopment Program is funded by a State Response Program grant received through the authority of the EPA.

## BROWNFIELDS IN IOWA: CHARLES CITY PLOWS AHEAD AT FO

For more than 90 years, the tractor plant on the north side of town helped drive Charles City. Now, concrete slabs and foundations are all that remain of what was once the heart of "America's Hometown." Suspected environmental contamination and bankruptcy of the



Protection Agency, Charles City is working to breathe life back into one of the most important sites in its community.

#### Founders of the tractor

Production on the site began in 1902 with the Hart-Parr Company, known as the "founders of the tractor industry." In 1929, a Hart-Parr merger resulted in the Oliver Farm Equipment Company.

Production continued to expand in Charles City under Oliver, and Oliver sold the company to White Motor Company in 1960.

Over the next 30 years, the factory produced tractors bearing the names of White-Oliver, White and WFE. At its peak in the 1970s, the Charles City plant employed more than 2,600 workers.

Charles City Mayor Jim Erb grew up west of town and watched the

1988, while the foundry and machining operations remained open until July 31, 1993. The buildings were demolished in November 1994, and Allied Products has since filed for bankruptcy.

#### A new opportunity

The site has sat vacant for more than 10 years. Despite interest in the property and some site cleanup done

It's critical we have economic growth, and hopefully with that aesthetics and quality of life will improve as we revitalize that site.

> - JIM ERB, CHARLES CITY MAYOR

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Hart-Parr main assembly line during wartime production in 1918. site owner kept away potential buyers and held back redevelopment projects at the site, which covers 73 acres at the intersection of 13th Avenue and E Street in the north-central Iowa town.

Now, with the help of the DNR and the U.S. Environmental

plant's rise and fall.

"It was the nearest thing to a company town you could imagine," Erb said. "It (the plant) dominated the entire economic landscape. It was a social event on Friday afternoons when everyone went to the bank with their paychecks."

When White Farm Equipment faced bankruptcy in 1987, Allied Products Corporation took over the company, but the plant's days were numbered.

The last tractor produced in Charles City rolled off the line in

in the '80s and '90s, questions about possible environmental contamination kept Allied Products from selling the site.

"It sat there in limbo for a decade (after demolition) and people had the presumption it would be permanently idled because of perceived contamination issues. It was trashy, weeds growing, an eyesore," said Tim Fox, executive director of the Charles City Area Development Corporation (CCADC).

Background photo: Oliver Super 88 diesel tractors roll off the assembly line in Charles City, circa 1955. All photos on this page courtesy of the Floyd County Historical Society unless noted.

# ATFORMER TRACTOR FACTORY SITE

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When bankruptcy court proceedings created the possibility that the CCADC could receive ownership of the site from Allied Products Corporation, the group wanted to make sure it wouldn't be inheriting any significant environmental problems along with the deed to the site.

"The key was when Allied declared bankruptcy," Fox said. "We realized we had a window to get involved."

The CCADC hired an environmental attorney and began investigating ways to acquire the site, but found that environmental testing was costly, especially for a small community like Charles City.

#### Finding answers

The CCADC found its environmental questions could be answered without a large expense through the DNR's Iowa Brownfield Redevelopment Program. willing to step up and spend the money to test the site."

Results of the six-month DNR investigation concluded that the majority of the site had no significant environmental or public health impacts.

Tests found some soil contamination on the east end of the factory, mostly from the disposal of foundry sand. Low levels of groundwater contamination were also found at the site, but tests did not identify any spread of groundwater contamination off-site.

The existing contamination could be properly addressed with capping or covering of those areas, and should not impede redevelopment of the site, said Mel Pins, coordinator of the DNR brownfield program.

#### Looking to the future

After learning that the site has no



Iron mats are all that remain of the assembly line at the former White Farm site.

CCADC hopes to redevelop the site for a business that will meet the needs of the community and create new jobs.

Two railroad lines serve the former White Farm site, making it attractive for any rail-dependent industry, Fox said.

Residential areas surround the site, creating unique redevelopment and community planning opportunities.

"It's critical we have economic

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DNR environmental staff investigated the site using state-ofthe-art equipment to find any possible contamination, then explained what the test results meant for the future of the site and the community.

"The DNR was the key we needed," Erb said. "No one was significant contamination, the CCADC decided to assume ownership of the site on April 1, 2005.

The test results gave credibility to the whole process and made it easier to get permission from the bankruptcy court to proceed with the project, Erb said.

Following the trend of recent development in Charles City, the

growth, and hopefully with that the aesthetics and quality of life will improve as we revitalize that site," said Erb.

Some information in this article courtesy of the Floyd County Historical Society and "A Guide to Hart-Parr, Oliver and White Farm Tractors 1901-1996," by Larry Gay.

> Left: The Oliver/White Farm plant at its peak in the early 1970s, looking west.

Right: The plant in 1996 after demolition of all the factory buildings, looking southeast.





# BROWNFIELDS IN IOWA: AMERICA'S RIVER REJUVENATES THE

Since the 1800s, businesses thrived in north Ice Harbor, an area along the Mississippi River in Dubuque — from the town's beginnings in mining to shipbuilding, leather working, shipping, brewing and manufacturing.

Over the years, non-industrial businesses like a museum, tourist boat, riverboat casino and baseball diamond moved in. But as the years went by, much of the remaining harbor area went unused, and some buildings were abandoned.



America's River, located at the Port of Dubuque, is a campus featuring four major components:

National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium: Features five aquariums, hands-on exhibits, a barge theater and a 1930s steamboat; also an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution. "It was pretty bleak," said Pamela Myhre, economic development planner with the City of Dubuque. "An under-utilized, vacant, dismal property."

A 1984 study showed that the Fourth Street Peninsula area — with Ice Harbor on its north side — was a key economic opportunity to reconnect with the riverfront. Ideas and plans on how to redevelop the Ice Harbor area began to form. Those initial ideas led to plans for a publicuse riverfront and an expanded Mississippi River Museum, and eventually grew into the \$188 million riverfront redevelopment project called America's River.

Now known as the Port of Dubuque, the old Ice Harbor area is home to an entire campus of educational, recreational, historical, environmental and entertainment along the Mississippi River, just east of Main Street in the northeast Iowa town of about 57,000.

#### A new vision

Preventing impacts on the environment was not always the top priority in the long history of industry in Ice Harbor. When plants were left empty, the fear of potential environmental contamination kept away buyers. New businesses instead opted for undeveloped land, or green space, following the urban sprawl to the west of town. Shops from nearby Main Street moved into malls.

Seeing the potential to revitalize the downtown and Ice Harbor areas, the City of Dubuque considered redeveloping the riverfront for public use with an ampitheater and riverwalk in the early 1990s. At the same time, the Dubuque County A site clear creat

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Grand Harbor Resort and Waterpark: The indoor waterpark is the first of its kind in Iowa and the hotel features 194 guest rooms.

Grand River Center: A conference and meeting facility with a grand ballroom, meeting rooms and an exhibition hall.

**Mississippi Riverwalk**: Includes an ampitheatre and plaza, and links with a 44-mile trail that connects America's River to the Field of Dreams in Dyersville. opportunities. The 90-acre site sits

# THE HARBOR. DUBUQUE, IOWA

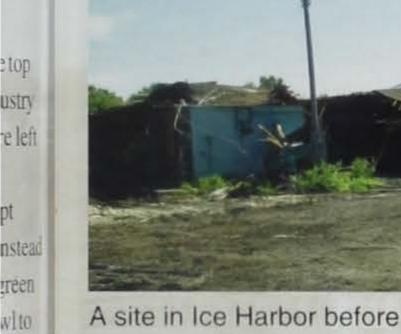
Above: Ice Harbor, circa 1900. Background: Ice Harbor in 1939. Both pictures courtesy of the Dubuque County Historical Society.

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# HE 'GATEWAY TO IOWA' IN DUBUQUE

Historical thought about expanding its Mississippi River Museum.

The two groups joined together with the Dubuque Area Chamber of



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cleanup and redevelopment created the Port of Dubuque.

Commerce and a private partner, Platinum Hospitality, to create a master plan for future growth and development in the Ice Harbor area. With a \$40 million Vision Iowa grant in hand and Platinum Hospitality's ideas for a \$25 million hotel and indoor waterpark, the group began construction in 2001 on the America's Riverproject.

for something better than storage tanks at the gateway to Iowa."

Often, cities may shy away from redeveloping brownfields because of fear of what might be found or what it may cost to clean it up.

However, Dubuque felt the cost of cleanup far outweighed passing up the opportunity of redevelopment. Costs were eased by grants from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and State of Iowa to help conduct environmental assessments and begin cleanup in the north and south Ice Harbor areas.

"This was a huge economic opportunity for the community. Allowing the land to

just sit there with a label of 'brownfield' on it just didn't make sense. It's too valuable to just sit there,"

campus opened in 2002 and 2003, and the redevelopment of the Port of Dubuque goes far beyond aesthetics.

When the entire campus is finished, America's River is expected to support 240 jobs, with more than 425 indirect positions. More than half a million people are expected to visit the site every year.

The success of America's River has spread to surrounding areas, including a boom of activity in the Main Street and historical district areas to the west of the site.

"People are taking pride in it," Myhre said.



Solving contamination issues

Before construction began, the city knew it would have to deal with environmental contamination on a number of the proper lies acquired, including one former oil company site that had a previous release of petroleum into the ground.

"We realized we had a foundry, other various industrial type uses that probably contaminated the ground. We knew we had to do investigative work," Myhre said. "We had a vision

Myrhe said. "The big message is that cities shouldn't be afraid of brownfield sites. They're opportunities." **Besides the** petroleum, soil groundwater and soil contamination was found throughout the peninsula, but all the contamination can be cleaned up or managed.

**Incredible** results Buildings on the America's River

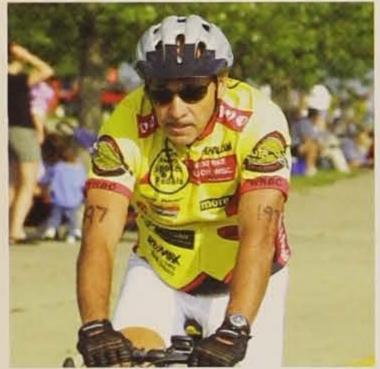
The historic Star Brewery serves as a backdrop for a new ampitheatre at the Port of Dubuque.

Visitors to America's River pass the Grand River Center as they walk along the Mississippi Riverwalk.

# NOT JUST A WALK IN

#### **IOWA PARKS FUEL TRIATHLON MANIA**





#### Article by Brian Button Photos by Clay Smith

Today, a few will get painful, muscle-knotting cramps or get sick, but most will finish strong in a race that demands swimming nearly a mile in open water, cycling 25 miles and finishing with a six-mile run. As if that's not enough, some competed in a similar triathlon just yesterday.

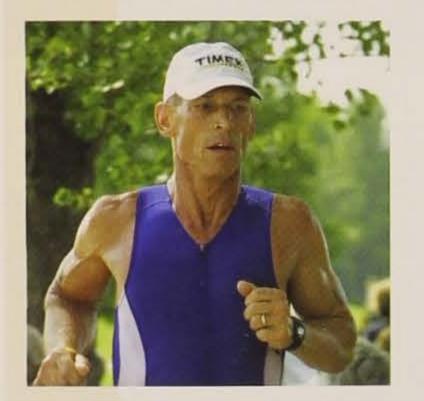
The 24th annual Big Creek Triathlon (2004) is about to begin. Yesterday, a few also raced at the hilly Whaletown Triathlon at Lake Anita State Park, renown for "one of the rougher 10k runs for a triathlon," says Chris Krug of Iowa City, who stroked, cycled and galloped there exactly 24 hours earlier. "The only flat part was the water," agrees Stan Smith of Des Moines, a race volunteer. Getting prepared to go again, another athlete, stiff from yesterday's race, scampers a quick half-mile to loosen up. (It's not yet 7:30a.m.) Nearly 300 racers crowd the beach, clad in streamlined Speedos and sleek wetsuits, milling around in black, green, pink, white or blue swim caps at Big Creek State Park north of Des Moines. The swim caps designate their starting wave based on age, weight, gender or elite status. Some are grinning, loose and nonchalant, others

are keyed up and bouncing nervously, biting lips and stretching arms or pushing swim goggles against eye sockets for a bombproof seal. Some swim a few strokes or stand knee-dee and bent over, splashing to acclimate.

"It's been the weirdest year for triathlons — cold and rainy," says rac volunteer Larry Stout of Ankeny. Fc August, it is almost cold, 66 degrees and overcast with an 8-mile-per-hou kiss of wind that puts goose bumps o muscles. The brisk air lures some into donning a wetsuit they hadn't intended to wear — a choice a few would regret.

It is overcast. The water is gray.

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The sky is battleship gray. Yet the parking lot is crammed with vehicles bristling with armaments of bike racks perched on roofs, trunks and hatchbacks. Triathlons in Iowa parks are gaining popularity, as physically average and way above-average folks use these have-it-all amenity parks to test their stamina and skills.

"Triathlons as a whole have had better attendance over the last few years, and there are more races in Iowa now than a few years ago," says John Snitko of Marion, the race promoter for both today's Big Creek Triathlon and the Pigman Triathlon held at Pleasant Creek State Park near Cedar Rapids. "The number of races has doubled," he says, adding these two races could have twice the competitors, but it would overwhelm the park.

Race time nears. Hearts beat faster as the first wave — the elite crowds at water's edge, while nearby a little girl finishes her sand castle. (These are family-friendly events where kids hold teddy bears as they cheer not only moms or dads, but yes, even a few grandparents.)



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ehad few s in go," erace Creek Finally, an official holds up his firearm and — crack! Pent-up adrenaline fuels racers as they charge 866 acres of water that froths from flailing arms and powerful kicks. Highpitched children's cries of "Go daddy!" pierce the air. Most other racers are lined up on the sidewalk, "It's beev avoiding the cold

avoiding the cold sand to wait the four-minute interval between waves. "As long as I

survive the swim,

"It's been the weirdest year for triathlons - cold and rainy." LARRY STOUT of Ankeny, race volunteer



best only to later have a flattire in the bike race. He forgothis tire repair kittoday, too.) "That's probably a lesson learned," he says, chuckling. For some, facing and conquering anxiety is a feat --- the sometimes disorienting open-water swim complete witha melee of powerful

Tollakson of Hutchinson, Kan., slices through nearly one mile of the wet stuff in 19 minutes flat and storms across the sandy beach, running up to the transition zone to hop on his bike, while far away in the water, most swimmers from later waves look like distant ducks.

The transition zone is marked off by orange plastic snow fencing. Inside, rows of several hundred bicycles sit perched on racks. Minutes later, a beach raid is underway as steady streams of swimmers emerge from the water like an unarmed D-Day invasion running across the grass toward the transition zone. Some, so conditioned, look as if nothing just happened. Others are in pain. One racer gets an aching thigh cramp while emerging from the freshwater swim. Another, wincing and dripping on the sand, stops to pull a severe foot cramp.



I'll be OK," says Jason Marcel of Des Moines, who has been kicked in the nose and has had his goggles knocked off in previous races. He also admits to having "a tendency to swim in circles." But today he's in luck. To help wayward swimmers, eight boats of DNR staff and race volunteers patrol the lake along the rectangular swim route, marked by oversized ball-shaped orange floats. (Marcel would not only survive the swim, but have a personal crashing arms and kicking feet in low-visibility lakes can cause panic for those whose swimming abilities is not their strong suit. "The first time getting kicked throws you for a loop," says Stout, who adds, "You can't help but ingest water in a race like this."

*Crack!* Another firing of the starter's gun, and the next wave pierces the lake.

The first to finish, Trenton "T.J."

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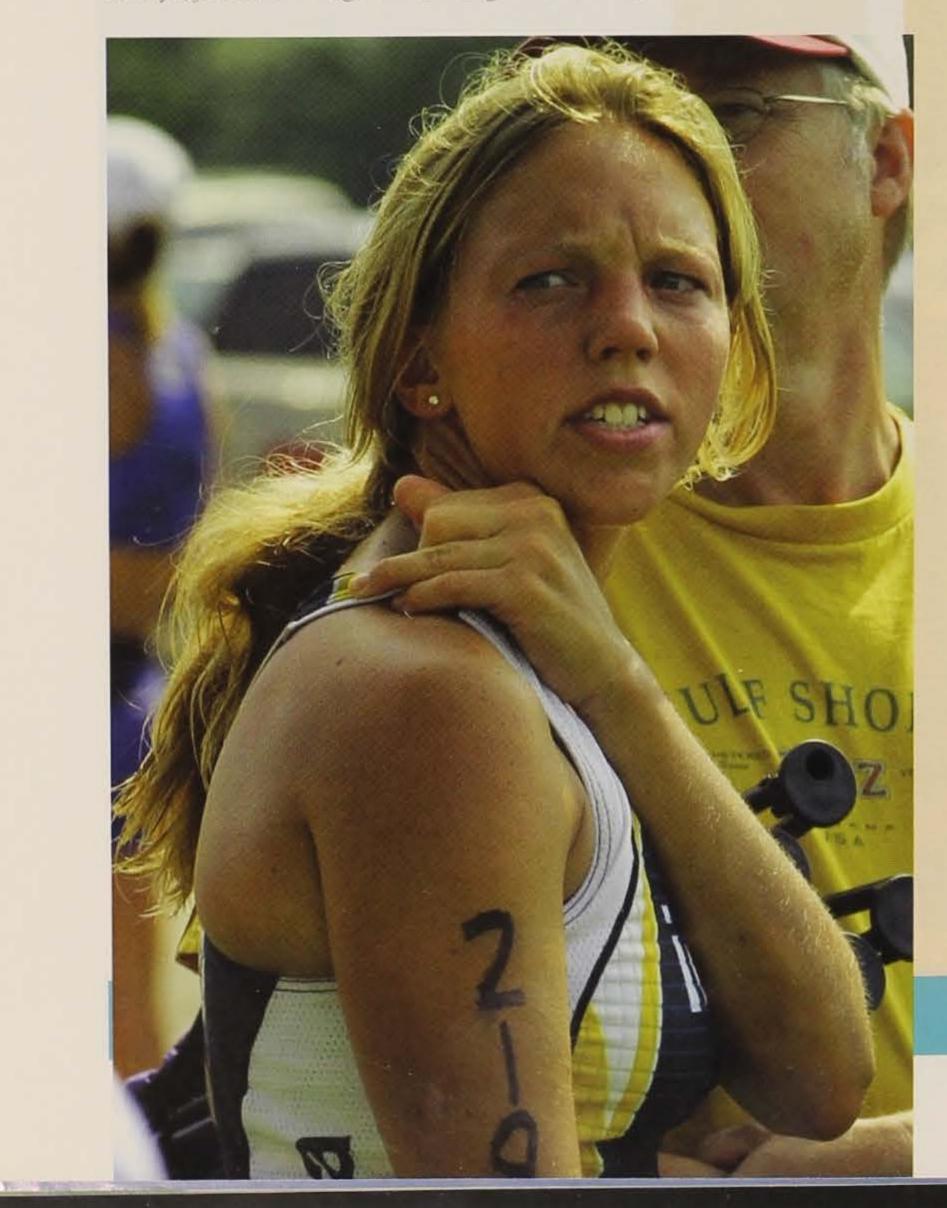
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"Triathlons as a

whole have had better attendance over the last few years, and there are more races in Iowa now than a few years ago."

JOHN SNITKO, race promoter After finding their bikes, many dip their feet into buckets, pans and trays of water to wash off beach sand before putting on socks and cycling shoes. Some are amazingly efficient — the fastest needing just 43 seconds to cycle off — but others take minutes. An arm stuck in a wetsuit or a tussle with a dripping foot and sock cause either curses or laughter at their foibles, but they all cost time. One racer runs to a corner to heave and belch deeply again and again. "Oh man, I swallowed a bunch of water," he says, just on the verge of vomiting. Fortunately he doesn't, but he loses several minutes trying to keep the lake water in his belly. One, running to his bike, slips and lands on his wet, bare back, now covered in recently mowed grass. It costs him time, too.

Most transition smoothly, pulling on vibrant cycling jerseys and hopping onto super-lightweight bikes that can cost several thousand dollars and more. Not everyone is as quick. "I panicked in the water." says a man lying on the grass and babbling to himself between

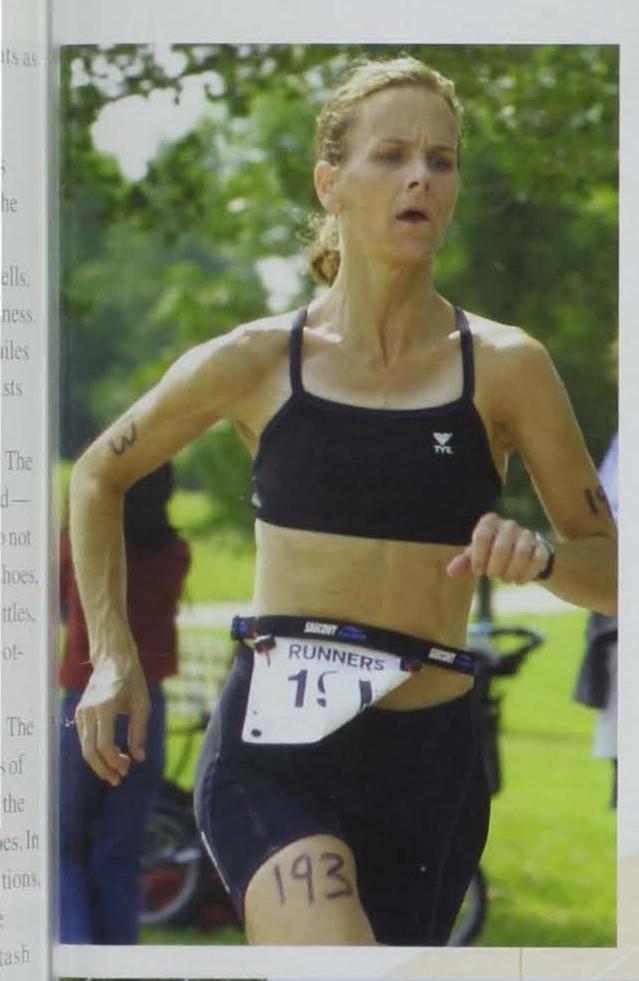


breaths. "Hot, so hot," he rants as he struggles to get out of a tight wetsuit.

As the remaining swimmers struggle, the wind picks up. In the nearby marina, halyards clank against masts like distant cow bells. Sailboats sway against the grayness. The wind speed doubles to 16 miles per hour by 10 a.m. as the cyclists pedal.

The transition zone is quiet. The swimmers are nearly all finishedall but a few stragglers. Two do not finish, their race over. Piles of shoes. wetsuits, towels, bags, water bottles, and the buckets and tubs of footrinse water sit idle, waiting for cyclists to return like a swarm. The cyclists chase across 24.8 miles of county blacktops then return to the park to change into running shoes. In just 14 seconds the leader transitions, again Tollakson, but most take nearly a minute or more to stash bikes and do the shoe switch. The running course spills out over 6.2 miles of the park's black asphalt roads and trails and snakes through a prairie area devoid of shade --- both could be a blistering bake oven under a hot sun that mercifully hides today.

Tollakson finishes the triathlon in one hour, 53 minutes and 49 seconds. nine minutes ahead of the pack and a course record. Most runners, still battling, yet far from the finish, have no hopes or thoughts of winning, and most don't care. For them



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the challenge and rewards of physical fitness and the punch of endorphins is the payoff whether racing as individuals or a relay.

For the athletes aged 16 to 65 that finish the race and crowd around tables piled high with cut oranges and watermelon slices, a few select state parks offer a perfect venue to help Iowans become their best in a unique personal test. As the fruit is chewed to the rinds and the parking lot empties, a tiny voice asks, "Did daddy go fast?"

#### **IOWA'S TRIATHLON STATE PARKS**

#### **Big Creek Triathlon**

Where: Big Creek State Park 11 miles north of Des Moines. When: The 25th annual race is set for August 14 at 8 a.m.

#### **CornMan Triathlon**

Where: Union Grove State Park in northwest Tama County. When: The 9th annual race was held



Brian Button is an information specialist with the department in Des Moines.

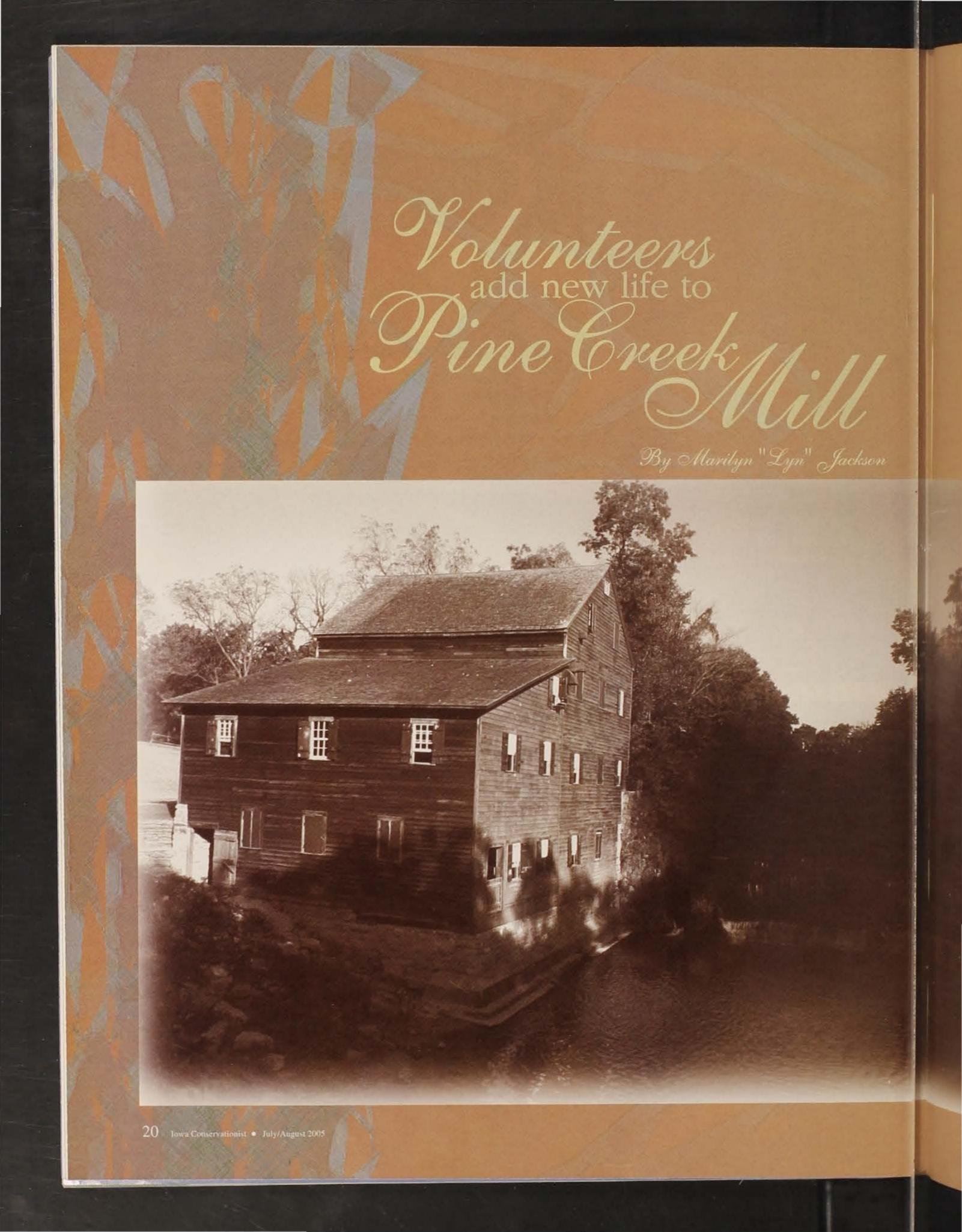
Sunday, July 10.

#### **PigMan Triathlon**

Where: Pleasant Creek State Park 12 miles northwest of Cedar Rapids. When: August 21 half-iron distance (1.2m swim, 56m cycling and 13.1m run.) at 7:30 a.m. Sprint distance (0.5k swim, 25k cycling and 5k run) was run June 5.

#### **Whaletown Triathlon**

Where: Lake Anita State Park is five miles south of I-80 and 12 miles east of Atlantic. When: The 22<sup>nd</sup> running was August 6.



Early on a mild spring morning, six volunteers arrive at the old grist mill in eastern Iowa's Wildcat Den State Park. Dressed in work denims and heavy boots, they assemble tools from a pickup truck while Dave Metz, project coordinator, unlocks the Mill. With friendly banter, they discuss projects and goals for the day.

Dick Clevenger and Scott Gibbs start to replace a threshold at the Mill's entrance, while Joe Clarke heads downstairs to work on powergenerating equipment which runs the Pine Mill's ancient machinery. Bob DeLong, Dan Elder and Jim Tomasson climb rustic stairs to assess a roof leak which may have weakened the structure during winter.

Upstairs, Metz's flashlight illuminates grooves in the 14-inch by 14-inch walnut beams overhead: they are ancient marks — likely made by a hand-held adze when the Mill was built more than 150 years ago. entertainment value, with inviting trails and ancient, scenic rock formations.

• A nearby restored country schoolhouse features historic and nostalgic interest and information.

• The mill's durability and strength will support mechanical restoration and operation — important requisites for bringing the mill back to life.

Jim Ohl, park ranger, is excited about the surge of volunteer interest in the park's old mill. "People develop a sense of ownership when they help maintain their park," he says, adding, "We can use folks of all ages."

Scouts fulfill badge requirements for community service. School groups, church groups, 4-H clubs and other youth crews enjoy some of the dirtiest projects. Ohl smiles as he tells how one group flushed knee-deep mud out of the mill's basement with a fire hose, evicting rodent habitats and wasp nest as well.

Experienced leaders and craftsmen are important to the volunteer network, but the mill friends do much more than raise money to support renovations and upkeep of the mill.

These retirees bring many skills and years of experience in business, industry, factory or farm work. Some drive as far as 40 or 50 miles to volunteer at Pine Mill—spring, summer and fall—because they want to help preserve this exceptional mill as a living history lesson. The Pine Creek Grist Mill is

unique in many ways:

 It is the oldest working mill in Iowa.

It was built and operated by the first Euro-American settler in Muscatine County.
Its setting near Wildcat Den

State Park adds charm and

Friends of Pine Creek Grist Mill offer guided tours, working demonstrations and hands-on pioneer activities; Friends of Melpine School use old photos, film and video to illustrate life at the little country schoolhouse, which was moved from Sweetland Township to a knoll near the mill more than 10 years ago. Both friends groups raise money to keep records, help preserve the area's history and present programs that support the mill in many ways.

#### A Little Mill History

Benjamin Nye, Muscatine County's first Euro-American settler, built the first legally recognized grist mill in Iowa Territory in 1837, and the Territorial Legislature officially authorized his mill in 1839.

The Blackhawk Treaty of 1832 had opened territory to settlers as early as 1834, when Benjamin Nye and his nephew Stephen came from Ohio to claim land in the little valley of Pine Creek, a small tributary of the Mississippi River.

To obtain "legal and lasting title" to a piece of land, a settler had to "break ground" on five acres and to "build and occupy a cabin eight logs high, with a roof" on that site. Having met these conditions, Nye went to St. Louis by steamboat and bought goods to sell at his trading post on the Mississippi River shore near the mouth of Pine Creek.

In the fall of 1834, Nye went back to Ohio to bring his wife Azuba and two young daughters to their new



home. He built a small sawmill on

It is a strong building, with hand-

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Pine Creek, and later, a larger sawmill upstream. When more settlers arrived and pioneers needed more

pioneers needed more foodstuffs, Nye built his first grist mill on Pine Creek.

As the demand for milled grain increased, Nye built a new, larger mill in 1848, downstream from his earlier mills. That mill—widely known as the Pine Creek Grist Mill—is the historic "old mill" which still stands at Wildcat Den State Park today. hewn oak and walnut timbers in its "post-and-beam construction." Its flooring is native oak. The stone foundations are "up to five feet thick" and its milldam was described as "a crib structure with native rock abutments." Power for the grinding wheels came from a large wooden "overshot" wheel in the northeast corner of the mill's basement. The mill was later modernized to produce a finer grade of meal or flour. Sometimes visitors ask Ohl,

"What happened to the old millwheel?" Often these people are sure that his mill was formerly powered by an exterior paddle wheel, but Ohl says, "Not so." He explains that





The Friends of the Pine Creek Grist Mill, along with various service, school and church groups, have worked diligently over the years to restore and preserve the historic importance of the mill, from flushing knee-deep mud from the basement and repairing broken equipment to leading guided tours and working demonstrations. Today, it's considered one of the finest examples of mid-19th century mills left in the country, thanks in great part to all the volunteer work donated over the years.

av Smith

Nye's mill was powered by a flow of water which entered the mill below the dam, turning a wheel located inside the mill's lower level. Why? "It worked better that way, with Tough and brusque, honest and industrious, he was respected in the Pine Mill community. When appointed Justice of the Peace in 1836-37, he was described as "a

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What is a "grist" mill? Webster defines grist as simply grain that has been ground. The name defines the mill's product --- unlike a "sawmill" whose name describes its function (it saws trees to make boards) - or "windmill" and "watermill" which define their sources of power. "Grist" by definition implies a rudimentary process of grinding grain coarsely, as for animal feeds, but the restored Pine Mill machinery now also produces finely-milled flour - for demonstration only.

less log and stump damage during high water," Ohl explains, adding, "Those folks must be thinking of another mill."

Whatever happened to Nye?

rougher sort of pioneer . . . a worthy man . . . fearless as a lion and implacable as an Indian." However, Nye's life ended abruptly in 1852, when he was fatally injured in an



altercation with his son-in-law, George McCoy.

It happened this way: McCoy, who worked for Nye, had eloped with Nye's daughter and an enraged Nye "never forgave nor spoke to McCoy again."

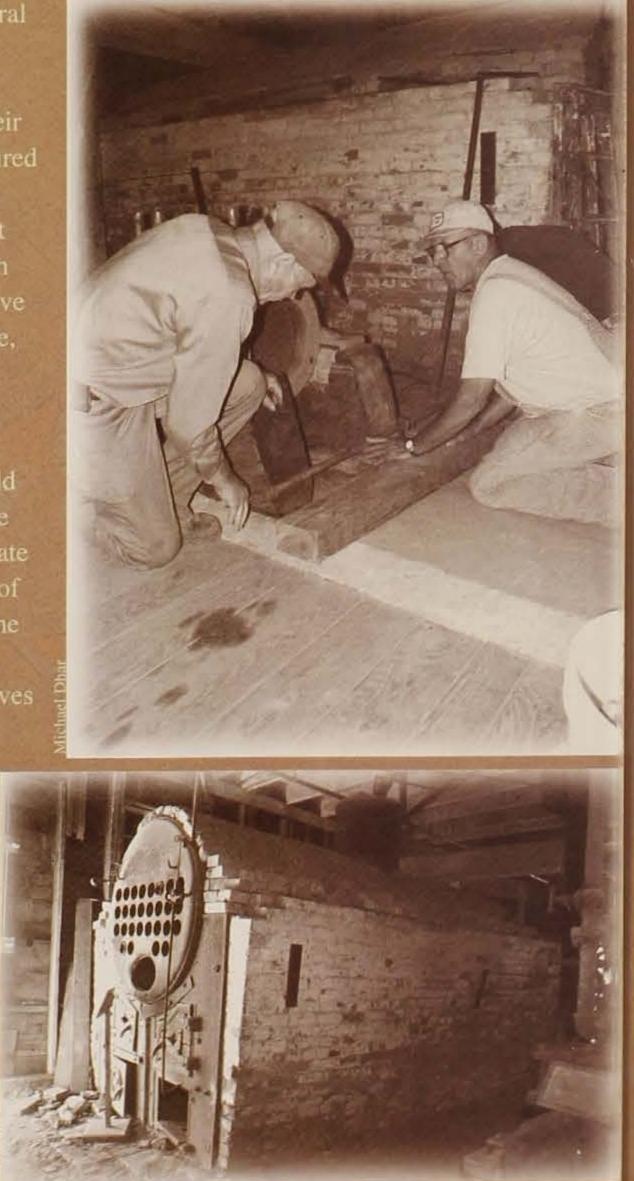
McCoy and his young wife moved to Cedar County, where McCoy was sheriff in 1840. McCoy was described as "a happy and law-abiding citizen" according to one account.

But in 1852, while the McCoys were visiting at the Pine Creek family home, a fight erupted between McCoy and Nye, and Nye was fatally injured.

George McCoy was exonerated of blame on a plea of self-defense, and according to one account, "McCoy left for the gold fields of California. He later became a Justice of the Peace and a prominent citizen in a flourishing California town."

Nye's wife died many years later at the original Nye claim on March 4, 1879. Ben Nye, Azuba and others of the community have been laid to rest in a small cemetery not far from the present Pine Creek Mill. Long before that, however, the spectacular rock formations, the trees, wildflowers and rustic trails of the area called "Wildcat Den" had attracted hikers, picnickers and revelers. However, when visitors became habitually rowdy, two sisters, Emma and Clara Brandt, who owned the nearby land, took action to protect their unusual property. They donated much of their woodlands to the state, so the natural

beauty could be officially protected. In addition, at their own expense, they hired and maintained a watchman to prevent further vandalism. In 1918, the Brandts gave more land to the state, and in 1927, as mentioned, the state purchased the tract which included the old Pine Mill, forming the official park rangers, notably the Edgar Kemper family whose lands adjoin much of the park. A daughter, Gladys Kemper Mittman, is an avid and competent historian — a reliable source of information. Son Paul Kemper's family members and friends support and work at countless Pine Mill and Melpine School events. In September the mill's volunteer.



coop Even throu "bool the up piona and s Day" perfo scho tent. gam

Another Nye son-in-law, R.H. Patterson, took over the thriving grist mill.

After Patterson died in 1863, the mill was operated by several other owners, and for many years, milling thrived. A turbine replaced the old wooden water wheel in the basement when a steam engine and other updated machinery were installed, but by 1923 the Pine Mill's business was over. Structure and land were sold to the state in 1927 for \$8,750, and the old mill became part of the newly formed Wildcat Den State Park. new Wildcat Den State Park. (Recent gifts of land have enlarged the park, as well.) Wildcat Den serves Iowa for

education and research as well as for wholesome outdoor activities and fun. Neighbors and other "ad hoc" guardians traditionally watch over the park in cooperation with

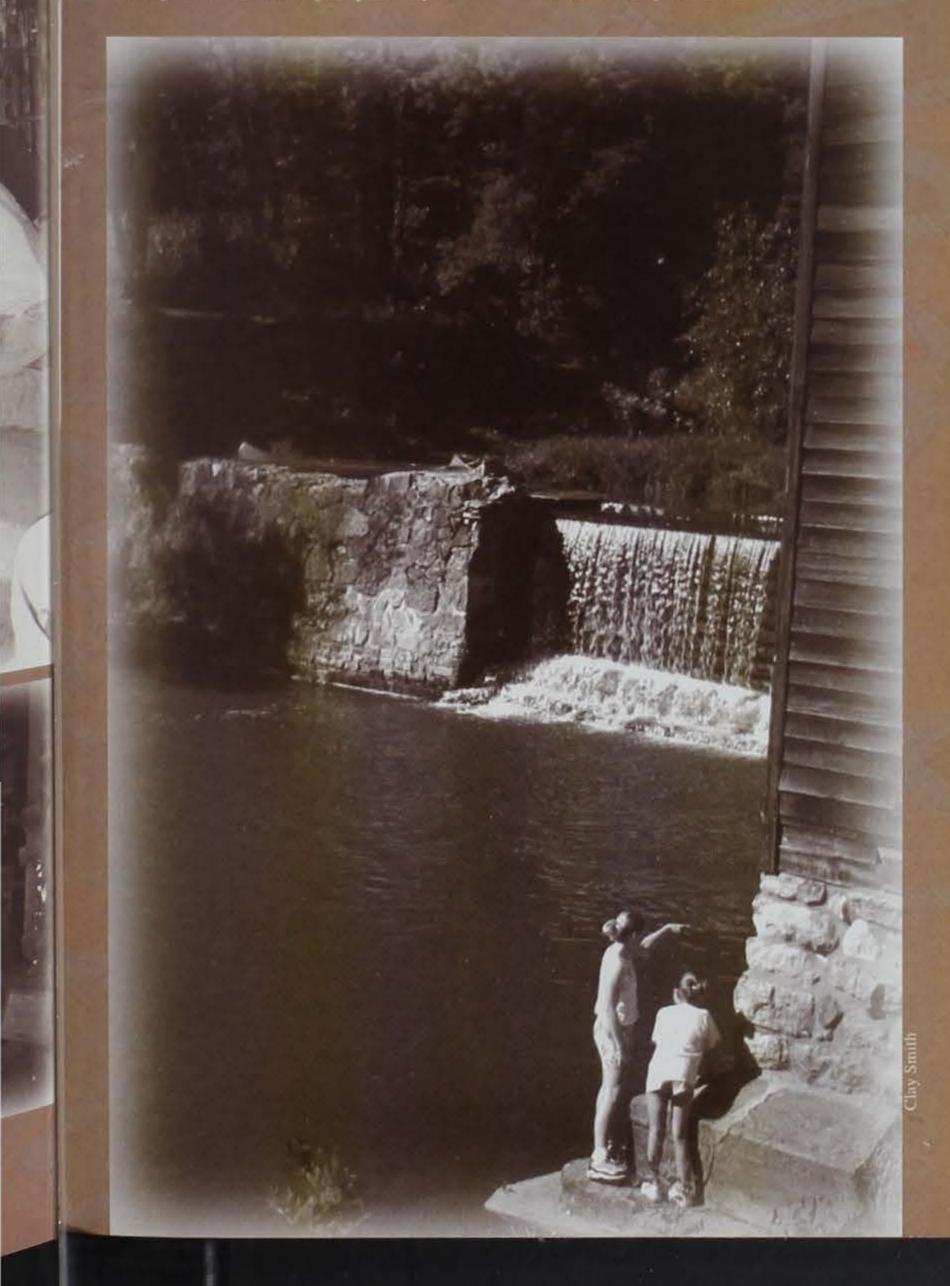
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cooperate in a festival of outdoor fun. Events begin with a trail run throughout the park's scenic trails. A "buckskinners' rendezvous" occupies the upper-level campground, with pioneer arts an crafts, demonstrations and souvenir sales.

Near Pine Creek, "Heritage Day" focuses on pioneer exhibits and performances at the mill and the schoolhouse. Volunteers staff a food tent. Activities include pioneer music, games and crafts. At the "Rubber Ducky Dam Race," people buy

numbered "duckies" to race over the dam for prizes donated by local merchants. With cooperation from so many enthusiasts, Wildcat Den, the Melpine Country School and the Pine Creek Mill serve the State of Iowa in more ways than their forebears might have imagined.

Marilyn Jackson is a freelance writer from Muscatine whose work has appeared in several state and national publications.



This year's Heritage Day at Wildcat Den State Park is Sept. 17 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Guided tours of the mill and the Melpine School will be given, and visitors will actually see the mill at work grinding grain. Food, games, crafts, demonstrations and historical programs will also be available. The celebration will culminate with the annual "Rubber Duck Dam Race."

See page 53 for "Volunteer Corner," featuring Friends of the Pine Creek Grist Mill volunteer Jim Tomassan.

# Iowa's Turn In Poachers Program Celebrates 20 Year

It may have been the sight of thick-bodied whitetail deer, tossed out like trash along a rural gravel road. The animal no doubt would have sported an equally impressive rack - had it still had a head. Or maybe it was the sight of a bald eagle, which once soared majestically over the treetops, now laying in a crumpled, broken heap after taking the brunt of a load of birdshot. Or possibly it was the scene along the river bank, where the angler took his limit of walleyes and left, only to come back a short time later and do it all over again.

The catalyst behind the

#### By Al Foster

dilemma. Residents and state conservation officers in the Land of Enchantment were finding elk and cougars shot and left to rot, or the Iowa Department of Natural Resources)," said Bob Oden, retired Iowa conservation officer and the first Iowa TIP coordinator. "He said stud

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creation of Iowa's Turn In Poachers program may be unclear, but the impetus is not. Sportsmen and sportswomen were tired of seeing *their* natural resources — in many cases the most impressive of the lot — stolen from them.

Some 1,000 miles away, New Mexico natural resource professionals were facing the same elk looking not a whole lot different than the deer above. But New Mexico authorities had already done something to help curb the poaching phenomena, five years earlier.

"I got a call from Al Farris, (then the chief of the Fish and Wildlife Division of the Iowa Conservation Commission, the predecessor to 'What are you doing next week.'"

New Mexico had already implemented its own version of TIP — a first-of-its-kind in the United States — and it was working.

Oden set up shop in the summer of 1983 at the offices of the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, which in 1977 had launched Operation Game Thief. For three days Oden poured over records,

Since New Mexico's pioneering Operation Game Thief program was unveiled in 1977, 48 other states have since adopted a similar program. In fact, the program had been so popular it spawned the Wildlife Violators Compact. Under the compact, licenses suspensions and revocations handed down in any one of the 19 member states — including Iowa — are honored in all participating states.

Although the vast majority of TIP calls involve deer (above), more and more calls are coming in regarding the killing of nongame species (trumpeter swan above right) and the illegal taking of fish (hoop-netted white bass). al etired the e said studied program frameworks and learned everything he could about the program. His studies led to one conclusion.

"It sounded like a good deal, so we said, 'What the hell, let's give it a try."

Oden set to work designing Iowa's version, which like New Mexico's, provided a toll-free number for citizens to report fish and game crimes while remaining anonymous, and offered rewards for callers if a citation or arrest was made. At the 1985 Iowa State Fair, Iowa's Turn In Poachers program was unveiled.

It was an instant hit, although not a necessarily a resounding success.

"Before long the phones started ringing," Oden remembered. "We got calls about everything. 'Did you get the duck season dates set?' They'd complain about someone screwing up their fishing." There were issues of who would man the phone line, which had to be staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week. approved more than \$143,000 in rewards.

"TIP has become a very integral and necessary part of our fish and game enforcement efforts here in the state of Iowa," said Steve Dermand, the current Iowa DNR TIP liaison. "The public's support and willingness to call the TIP line with information that otherwise may have gone undetected — which has clearly been the case — is critical to the success of the program and in putting fish and game



of iowa, Inc.

Iowa's Turn-In-Poachers (TIP) program started in August 1985 in response to citizen concerns over illegally taken fish and game. These citizens, under the unbrella of the private TIP organization and the DNR, recognized the need for an added dimension to fish and game law enforcement in Iowa to aid in the fight against poaching.

The non-profit TIP organization is overseen by sportsmen and women from across Iowa who serve as board members. Each member represents a conservation organization from around the state, including Iowa Bowhunters Association, Izaak Walton League, Pheasants Forever, Iowa Wildlife Federation and others.

Responsibility for the TIP program is shared by TIP and the Department of Natural Resources.

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Today, most of the bugs have been worked out, the calls about issues other than fish and wildlife violations are few, and like New Mexico, it's working. Since 1985, roughly 8,500 calls have been processed and investigated, and the nonprofit private TIP organization and its rewards committee have



The department receives and records reports of fish or game violations through a toll-free telephone number, routes the confidential information to DNR officers for investigation and arranges reward payments to informants through the TIP board. Poachers are thieves stealing Iowans' fish and wildlife resources. As a concerned citizen, photo you can take an active role in helping put fish and wildlife thieves out of business. If you witness or hear of poaching activity call the TIPHOTLINE(1-800-532-2020) and report it immediately. The sooner you call the better the chances of catching the violators.

# IO SURE-FIRE WAYS TO HELP YOUR KIDS (AND GRANDKIDS!) LOVE THE OUTDOORS



have a confession. I shop at Cabela's for the clothes.

Imp

#### ARTICLE BY JULIE TACK PHOTOS BY CLAY SMITH

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I think double-barrel shotguns and shinyspooled fishing rods are nifty, but I've traipsed after my husband through the outdoor sections of many stores, and I admit to knowing very little about certain recreational pursuits.

It's not really my fault. I come from a family that communed with nature by hitting a little white ball through strategically placed willows. (Once, I accidentally plinked a Canada goose that was taking a stroll across the fairway; does that count?)

I will say, I've always enjoyed being out in nature — I just wasn't necessarily groomed for it.

Now here I am, the mother of three young boys. Between soccer games and piano practice, cartoons about weird yellow



sea sponges and baby-food wrestling, I have discovered something very

acorns and squeal at the sight of a garden spider. I want them to squish mud between their toes in a creek, and identify the Big Dipper in a black night sky.

The way I figure it, video games and the Internet will hopefully take a backseat once in while ---when they are older - if I can encourage them to love the outdoors starting right now.

So how does a novice like me get started? First, I needed to turn off the television (insert name of

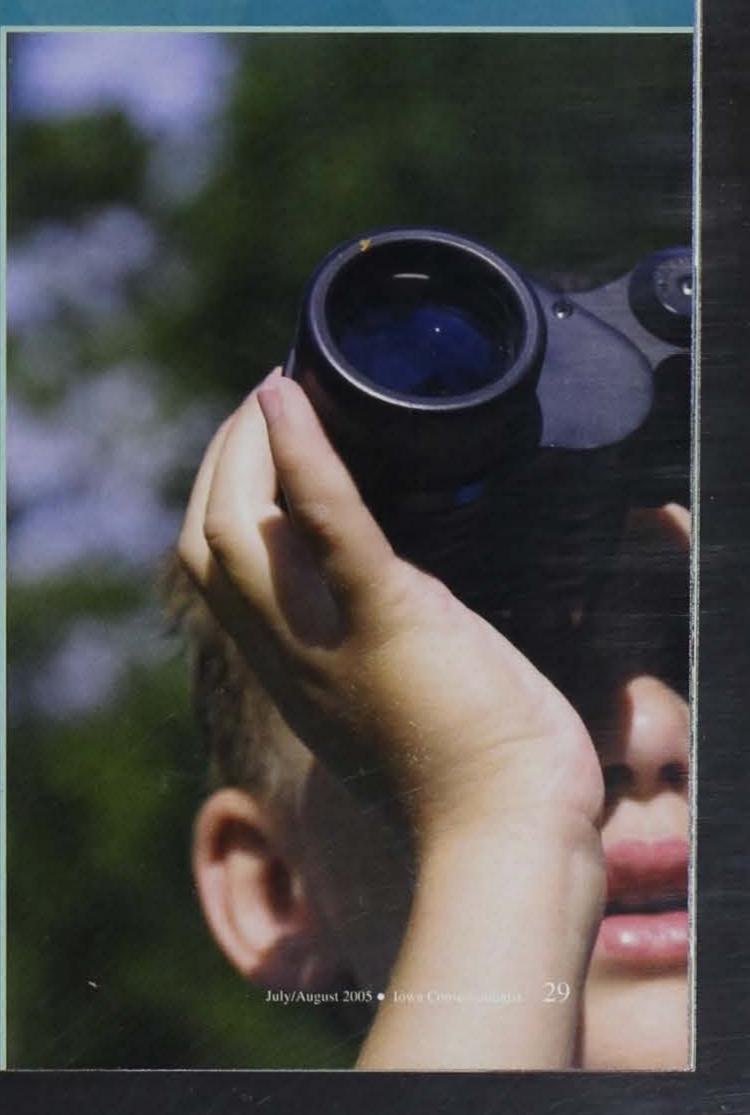
any technology item here) and walk out the front door. The trick is to find

easy, simple-toplan activities. Believe me - if I can do it, so

1. BUY BINOCULARS. This simple piece of equipment is very "cool" to a child. Let him or her use the binoculars to zoom in on a cardinal or spy on a squirrel. Your pursuit of exciting discoveries ("Quick, look at that chipmunk!") will help your kids realize how fun the search can be.

#### 2. PITCH A BACKYARD TENT.

The novelty of this always amazes me. Inevitably, every kid in the neighborhood skips through the tent, laughing and hiding and jumping inside. But your kids get the pride of home ownership. They are the ones who sleep there at night, giggling with a flashlight, listening to crickets, enjoying your company.



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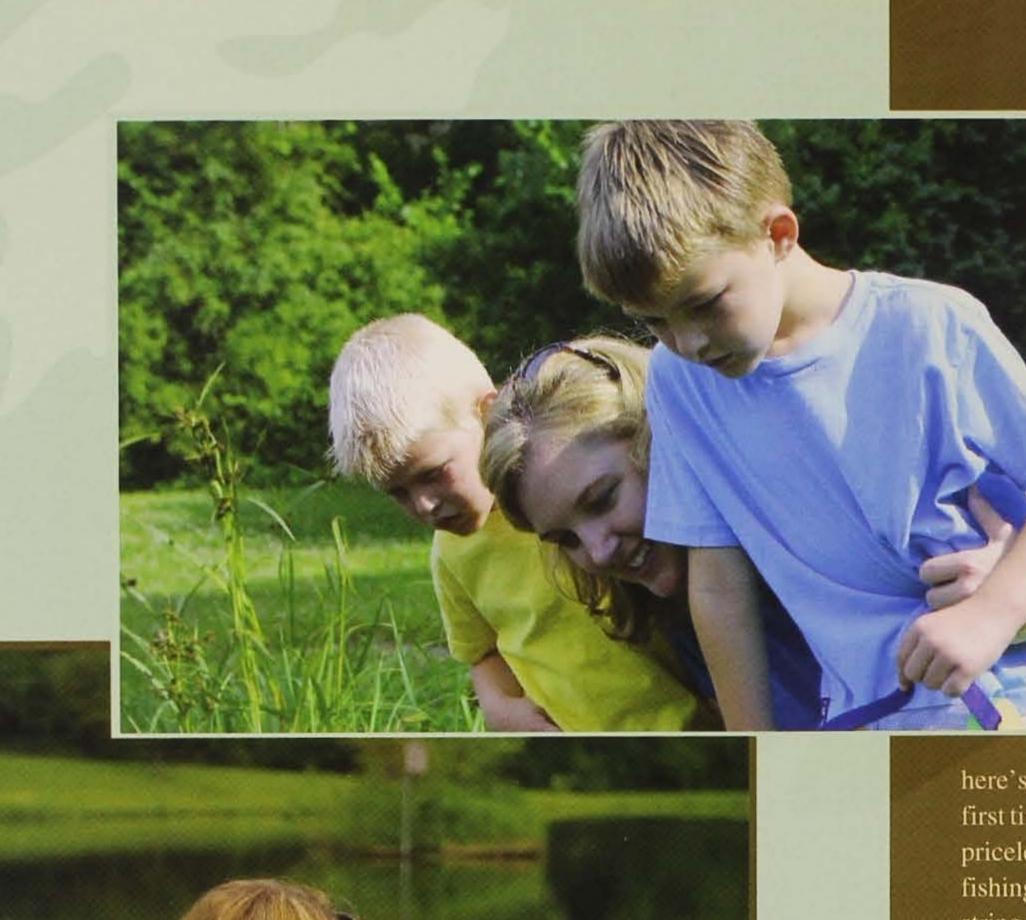
la's

important to me: I want my kids to appreciate the natural world around them.

I want them to pop the crowns off

can you. Here are 10 sure-fire ways to get your kids - or grandkids - to love the outdoors.





#### 3. CREATE A NATURE PHOTO COLLAGE.

Purchase a disposable camera for each kid and tell them to take pictures of things in nature — birds, bugs, clouds, tree bark. The let them make their own poster or booklet. It is fun and creative at the same tim — a double dose of feel-goo family time.

#### 4. INVEST IN DOUGH BALLS, CORN OR

**WORMS.** Yep, take them fishing. To consider me an expert angler is laughable, bu

here's what I know: a kid's scream the first time he or she catches a bluegill is priceless. So go find an age-appropriat 7. No fishing pole, have your local bait shop string on 6-pound fishing line and buy meters some worms. In a half-hour of fishing, your kids will love being outside, even no fish are caught.

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#### 5. VISIT A NEW-TO-YOU NATURE AREA. As an adult, the

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surprising and interesting discoveries you make when exploring a new park will get your kids excited too. Your assignment: Get a map, draw a circle with a 30-mile radius around your home. In that circle, look for a park you have never visited. Grab some snacks, get the kids and go. You won't be disappointed.

6. GO ON A BUG HUNT. Do you think millipedes, grasshoppers, beetles and spiders are, well, gross and creepy? Chances are, so do your kids - which is what makes them so interesting. More than once I have turned over a stone and jumped because of the hair-raising crawler underneath. Kids think this is hilarious.

7. MAKE A WINTER

**CAMPFIRE.** My in-laws introduced me to this idea and it is well worth the small effort. Bundle up your family on a snowy, sunny afternoon and visit a nearby county or state park that has

newer neighborhood and we are some of the only people who have a bird feeder and birdbath in our backyard. The consequence? A menagerie of feathered friends visits us every morning. This spring, we watched one finch family and two robin families build nests in our trees. Our boys were eyewitnesses to the birth and survival of

these fledglings. It's cute and educational at the same time.

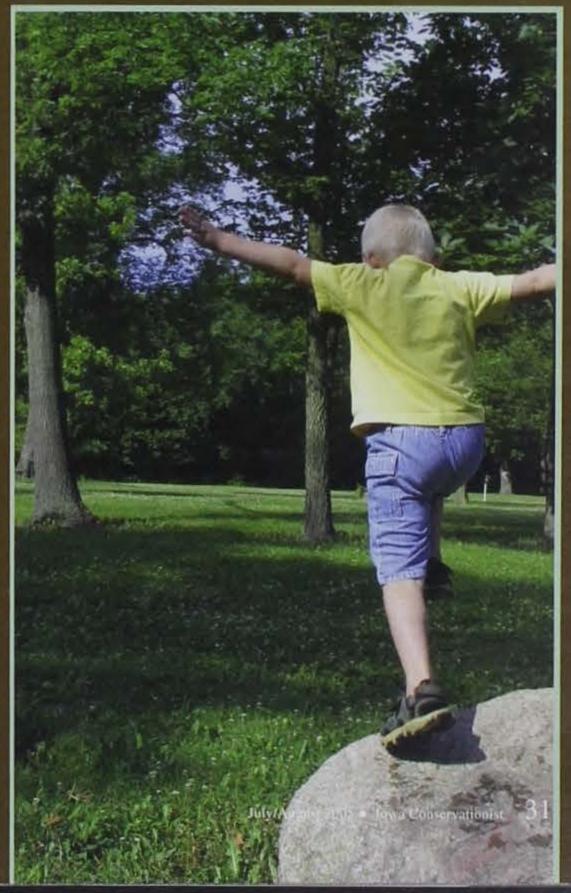
#### **10. TAKE A NIGHT** TIME WALK. When

was the last time you spent an hour outside after dark, just enjoying the sights and sounds? How about your kids? Whether you go to a nature area or just hike around your block encountering stars, hooting birds and

mentioned in this story was not hurt; just surprised. (I never said I was a good golfer).

Julie Tack is the mother of Seth, 7, Dain, 4 and Grant, 6 months; and if this is not enough, she is also an information specialist with the department in Des Moines.





campfire rings. Take along some firewood, marshmallows, roasting sticks and a thermos of hot chocolate. Parks are usually deserted this time of year, and the beauty and wonder of being nearly alone in the outdoors is inspiring.

8. PLAN A SILLY-WORD SCAVENGER HUNT. Make a list of a dozen descriptive words: smooth, prickly, tiny, smelly, bumpy, lovely, yummy, noisy, etc. Then, have your kids search for items in nature that fit these descriptions. They will surprise you with their imaginations!

9. BE A BACKYARD BIRD WATCHER. My family lives in a

nighttime animals, it is as special as any daytime pursuit. Don't forget bug spray.

My message is quite simple: you don't need to be an expert to cultivate a nature lover in your family. Your kids will develop the hobbies that last a lifetime - bird watching and trout fishing, deer hunting and trail riding-if they feel comfortable and excited about what waits for them outdoors.

By the way, the goose

#### Article and photos by Lowell Washburn

nch for inch, square foot for square foot, no Iowa ecosystem hosts a greater abundance of life than the prairie marsh.

Summer is the time of renewal. And although our native wetlands teem with countless varieties of plant, insect, mammal, reptile and amphibian life; it is the birds that clearly command our attentions. Of all the bird species that inhabit our state's marshlands, perhaps none is more unique or intriguing than the yellow-headed blackbird.

Rare or nonexistent across much of the state, yellowheads are most common in northern Iowa's 35-

county, prairie pothole region. True colony nesters, they provide the human observer with a fascinating opportunity to study complex bird behavior and social interactions. I have enjoyed observing, photographing and taking notes on Iowa yellowhead colonies for nearly 40 years. I learn something each time out, and there is still much about the species' life-style I don't understand. What I can say is that an active breeding colony is one of the very best reasons I know to visit the summer marsh.

On the northern wetlands, the annual cycle begins around mid-April. The males are the first to make their appearance, and lose no time in staking their claims. Initial boundary disputes are both immediate and intense. Most battles are settled quickly and community order is established.



Female yellowhead gathers nest material.

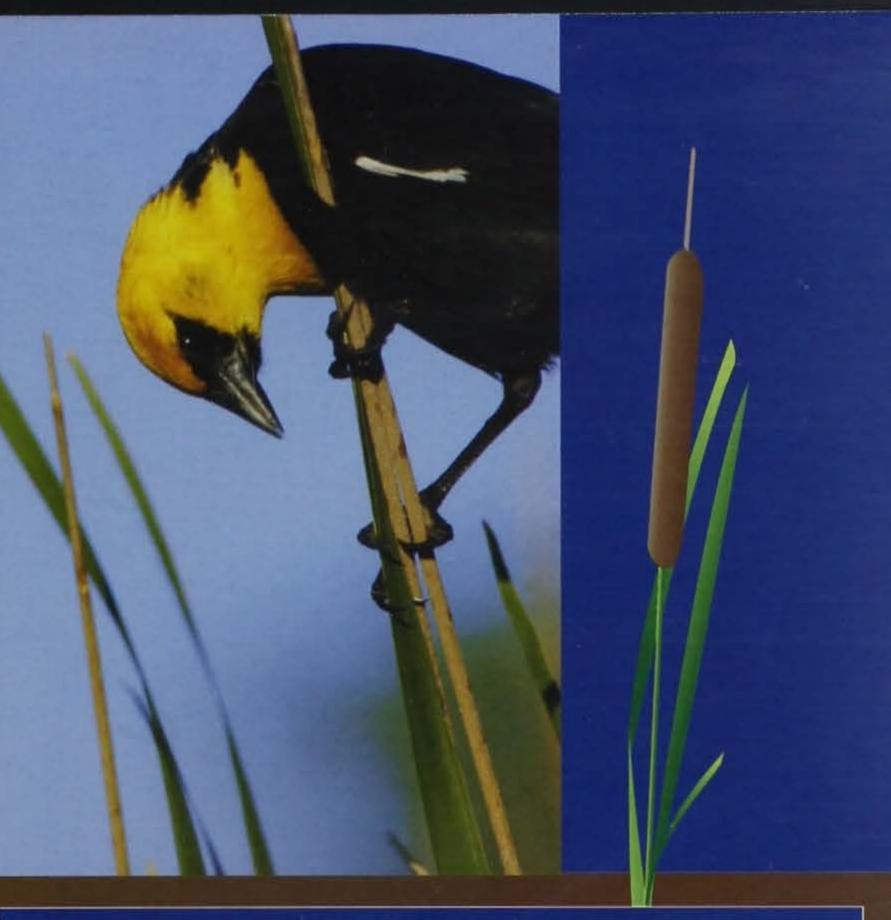
# Signature SPOKESMAN

Unique in Appearance and Behavior, the Yellow-Headed Blackbird is the Voice of the Summer Wetland



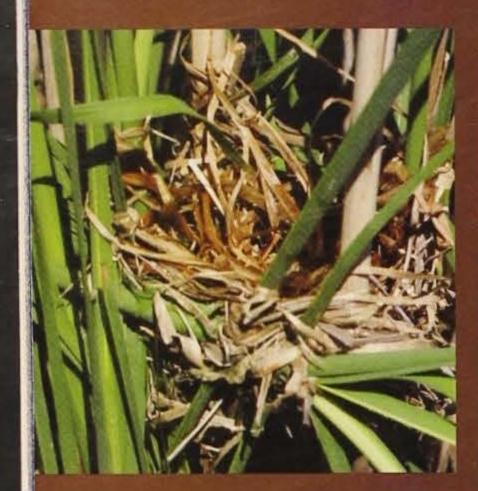






A male yellow-headed blackbird looks on as his mate begins nest construction in a cattail marsh. Individual colonies may contain more than a hundred nests. Most are located within feet, and sometimes inches, of their neighbors.





successful in being chosen by one or more females. The nest of the yellowhead is always located over water, and it is the female who selects the site. Although males seem to take an interest in nest building, I have never seen one contribute to the effort. Construction begins as the female collects coarse, waterlogged sedges which she carefully weaves around several stalks of cattails. A sturdy platform soon emerges which ultimately provides the cornerstone for the sturdy, 9-inch basket. As sunlight evaporates the moisture, this inner foundation shrinks and is drawn tight to its cattail anchor. The completed nest is a work of art. The female soon deposits her first egg, sometimes within hours of finishing the structure. Incubation normally lasts 12 days.

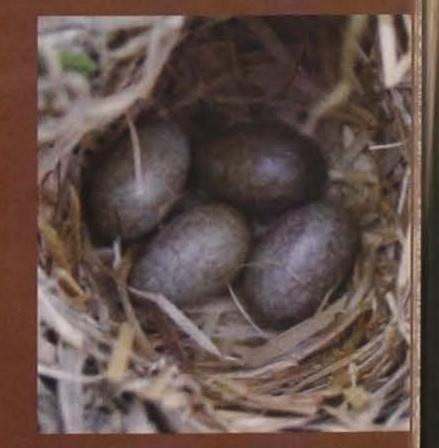
Of all the migratory bird species that make Iowa their summer home, perhaps none is more facinating than the highly social, colonial-nesting yellow-headed blackbird. After 40 years of observing the complex life history of these unique wetland inhabitants, the author considers them to be one of the very best reasons to visit the summer marsh.



supply a large percentage of the take. As the day warms, these solarpowered creatures become harder to catch and the birds switch to slower varieties of insects. Some authors have reported that the males assist in feeding nestlings. However, in the colonies I've personally observed, I have never seen the males bring so much as a single insect to the nest. Within 12 to 14 days of hatching, the young yellowheads begin to fledge. As is the case with many birds, they leave the nest well in advance of being able to fend for themselves. Initial flights are wobbly and generally conclude with a crash landing into a nearby wall of cattails. The fledgling

promptly grasps a foot full of cattail

and waits for mom to bring more food.

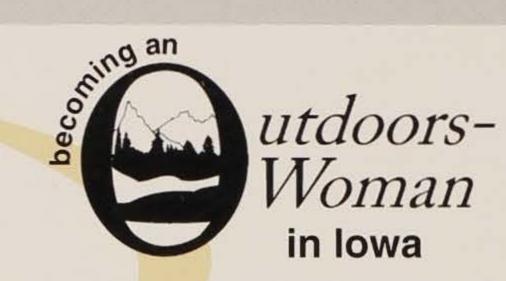


Once the young have hatched, the colony becomes an extremely busy place. Adults forage throughout the day, and may travel a half-mile or more to obtain food for their offspring. During early morning, dragonflies often

Wing and tail feathers continue to rapidly develop. By late summer the young are self-sufficient and ready to accompany the adults on the southward migration. As the last yellowheads depart for the winter, the marsh becomes strangely silent.

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## a course for Women

who want to learn the skills and joys of life in the OUTCOOTS

#### By Christie Vilsack • Photos by Clay Smith

The following piece was written by first lady Christie Vilsack for Chuck Offenberger's website after attending the 2004 Becoming an Outdoors-Woman workshop. Registration is currently underway for this year's workshop Sept. 9-11. Se e page 43 for details.









GUTHRIE CENTER, IOWA – Hooked around at the hundred other outdoor woman wannabes assembled at the Springbrook State Park Conservation Education Center near this west central Iowa town last weekend.

We were all there as enrollees in a "Becoming an Outdoor Woman" class, an international program offered in Iowa by the Department of Natural Resources. Across North America, more than 80 weekend workshops like this are held each year.

I was surprised that there weren't more of us who looked like we'd starred on a basketball team 20 years ago or like we'd worn spandex biking shorts in the past two weeks. At the fun run the first night, most of us



chose to walk. We were ordinary women of all walks of life and all ages, but each of us came with a unique story, a reason for wanting to learn to shoot a wild turkey, use a compass or pilot a kayak.

If the others were surprised that I was among them, they got over it when they realized I was no more or less proficient than anyone else, but willing to try. "I'm the only one in my family who doesn't know how to hunt," I explained, and that was enough.

We didn't have to sleep on the ground or scavenge for food in the forest. We stayed eight to a room and our biggest hardship was adapting to those who snored. One woman brought her own pillow and stuffed animal. Another wore a sweatshirt that read, "The Second Amendment: the original Homeland Security."

For me, the weekend was an

escape from makeup, pantyhose and earrings. For others it was a chance to finish the newest Patricia Cornwell novel or walk in the woods. The food was good, and everyone enjoyed the break from fixing meals.

My first class was "Intro to Firearms." That's where I met Rev. Vicki Roller of Pella. When she and her husband retired, they moved back to Iowa, where they'd been raised. Vicki's husband had served the City of Seattle, Washington, as a police officer on water patrol. Vicki is a Methodist minister, who fills in when churches need an interim pastor, most recently in Gowrie, Iowa.

The Rollers had only been back in Iowa for two years when Vicki's husband died suddenly. She sold his boats, because she couldn't imagine that she'd ever use them, but she couldn't bring herself to sell his gun collection. She decided, instead, to learn to use them. She'd had no time or interest before. She had never handled or shot a gun. She also signed up for the basic shotgun class and also for basic motorboat. By the end of the weekend, she was wishing she hadn't sold the boats.

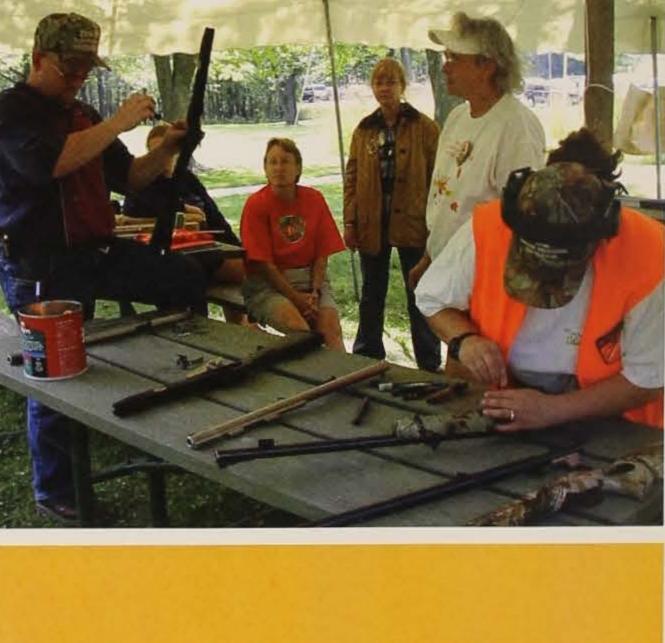
Chris Vollmer, 20, of Waverly was everybody's buddy. She flexed her muscles and told me about an accident she had on her bike that required stitches. For three years, Chris and her mother, Bev, have come to the "BOW" weekend. Chris is a young woman with special needs, but she can shoot a bow and cast a line as well as anybody.

Angie Poland, another 20-yearold, of Iowa Falls was also in my hunter safety and basic shotgun classes. She came with her aunt Debbie Poland, of Grundy Center, one of several mother-daughter or aunt-niece combinations in our group. Angie o busines have a aren tr We get few wo fishing stores. Ou

works i DNR p about h store, o "Do yo husban Mo more co from a more co teachin shotgun Sor "BOW

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Most of us agreed that we'd be more comfortable buying firearms from a woman, just as many of us are more comfortable with a woman teaching us to handle and shoot a shotgun. Some women enrolled in the

"BOW" weekend because their husbands don't have the patience to

Angie does custodial work for a local

business and baby-sits. She'd like to

have a better job, she says, but there

aren't many jobs available right now.

We get into a discussion about how

few women work in the hunting and

fishing departments of sporting goods

Our instructor Joli Vollers, who

works for the Iowa DNR and trains

DNR personnel to use firearms, told

about her visit to a sporting goods

store, out of uniform, to buy a gun.

husband wants?" the clerk asked.

"Do you know what kind of gun your

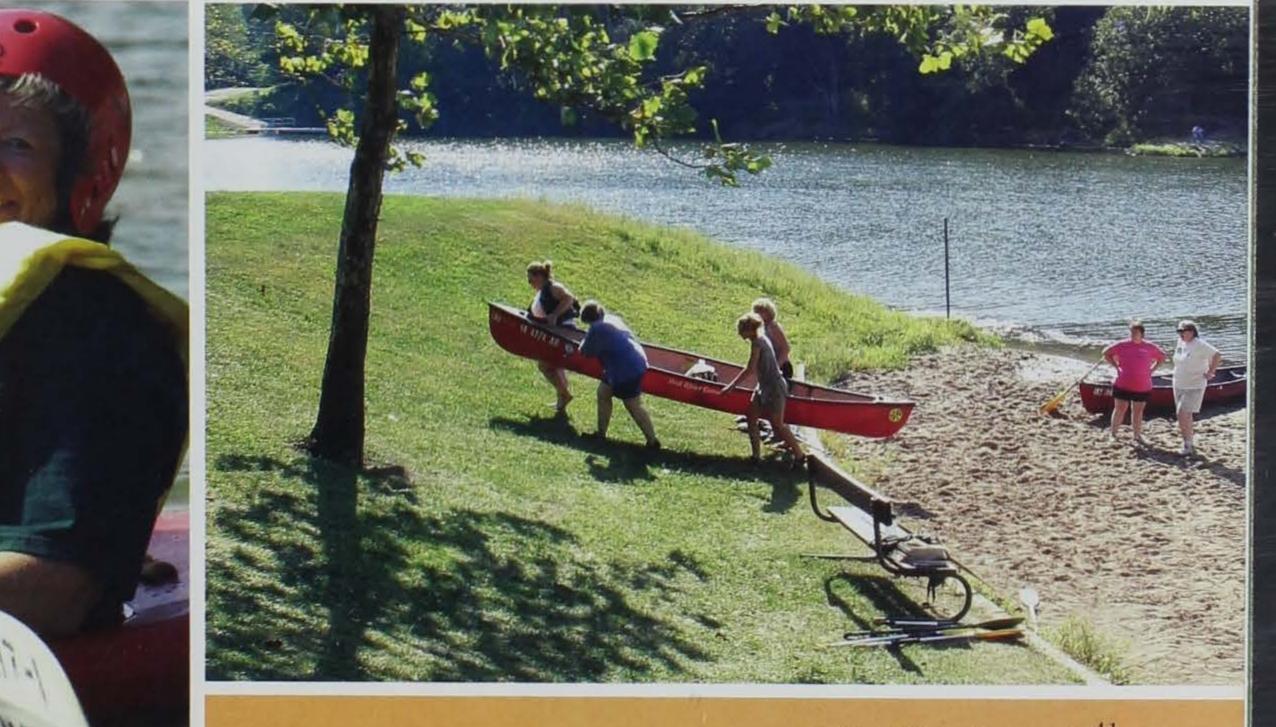
teach them. Others had bad experiences as children when their fathers didn't show them how to hold a gun and the kickback left bruises. Some of us simply weren't interested in hunting and fishing as children.

Joli and Carol Heaverlo, the Ida County Extension Education director, made everyone feel comfortable during shotgun class. They made sure we each found a comfortable shooting position, and then let us shoot a time or two to get the feel before we aimed at clay pigeons.

When I was finally comfortable, I shouted, "Pull!" and followed the orange disc with the barrel of my semi-automatic 20-gauge as it arched across the blue sky. I pulled the trigger and the target fell, whole, into the cornfield. I couldn't seem to follow through, and I missed several more. Then I heard the class cheer and I looked over to see who had hit her target. "You did it!" shouted Joli. "I did?" I said, incredulous. "But I didn't see it!"

The woman beside me got tearyeyed when she shattered her first target. She's a good shot, but she confessed later that she doesn't think she can kill anything.

Unlike most of us, Cynthia Schaeffer of Cedar Rapids couldn't wait to get her hands on a shotgun. She was one of a few experienced hunters in the class. She raised the gun and fired, raised and fired, shattering both targets. She grinned and begged for more. She and her husband moved here a few years ago from Kansas. They like to hunt doves, so they travel to her in-laws' in Missouri during the season since we don't have a dove season in Iowa. Doves fly faster than quail and pheasant and are a more difficult target, which is why Cynthia likes



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hunting them. It takes quite a few for a meal, but they're good eating she assures me.

Another hunter told Cynthia that while she enjoys hunting quail and pheasant, she wouldn't shoot doves. "There's just something about doves," she says, her voice trailing off. We've been warned not to talk politics since being an outdoor woman involves many points of view. Some women are here to take classes in Dutch oven cooking, bird watching and nature photography.

More difficult than shooting the shotgun, learning to start the outboard motor or casting a fish line was backing the boat trailer, which was part of the motorboat class Saturday morning. This challenge provoked the most humorous husband/wife stories. We practiced with a garden tractor and a small trailer before we tackled the pickup. Turn the wheel in the direction you want the trailer to go, the instructor coached. Easier said than done. In theory I understood it, but having to back a boat trailer to the water's edge with a crowd watching was like teeing off in front of the golf clubhouse. We hollered encouragement to one another and tried not to worry if we backed over a few of those orange cones.

Christine Kirpes from Cedar Rapids was my motorboat partner. She's a mother and scout leader. She works at Cedar Valley Nature Center. In her job and her volunteer work, she interacts with girls who don't know outdoor skills. Many of the women volunteering as Girl Scout leaders don't know outdoor skills, either. Christine grew up in a family that camped and boated, but she never had to back a trailer or steer the boat. She wants a level of competency that will enable her to teach outdoor skills to her own and others' children.

That's why it's such a good idea that the DNR, Women in Natural Resources and Pheasants Forever sponsor a program called "Outdoor Journey for Girls" twice each summer. At these weekends, girls age 12-to-15 learn outdoor recreational skills. Pheasants Forever chapters pay for the girls to attend.

Friday evening, a naturalist showed us how to call a barred owl. We didn't convince any to answer, but we learned a lot about these predators of the night with big eyes and small brains.

I rose early Saturday morning for a bird walk with Hank Zaletel who has just written a book about the birds of Story County. I saw my first yellow throat and catbird.

That night we ate deep fried

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catfish and toasted marshmallows for s'mores. As I stared into the fire listening to the buzz of crickets and locusts, I felt a serenity that I've missed in my tightly scheduled, very public life.

On Sunday, I was psyched for catching my first fish during my lake fishing class.

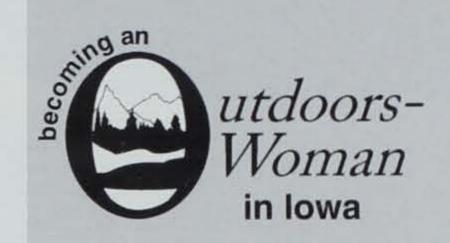
My partner agreed to help me cast if I baited her hook with worms. Our instructor was determined that we catch something. The previous day, the fish were really biting for the river fishing class, but not today, not for everyone.

Our instructor escorted us to a place near logs jutting out of the water. He threw in his line and immediately pulled out a bass. The women in a nearby boat eventually caught a 15-inch bass, and a few people by the dam caught crappie, but it wasn't my lucky day. No fish, not even a nibble. It was still fun puttering around the lake in a bass buggy, practicing my casting.

Becoming an outdoor woman is an ongoing process. This is just a start. I'll be back next year to take bird dog basics, archery, basic canoe and to catch that fish.

By the way, if you want to join the group next year, between September 9-11, contact Julie Sparks at the Iowa DNR. You can e-mail her at Julie.Sparks@dnr.state.ia.us See you there.

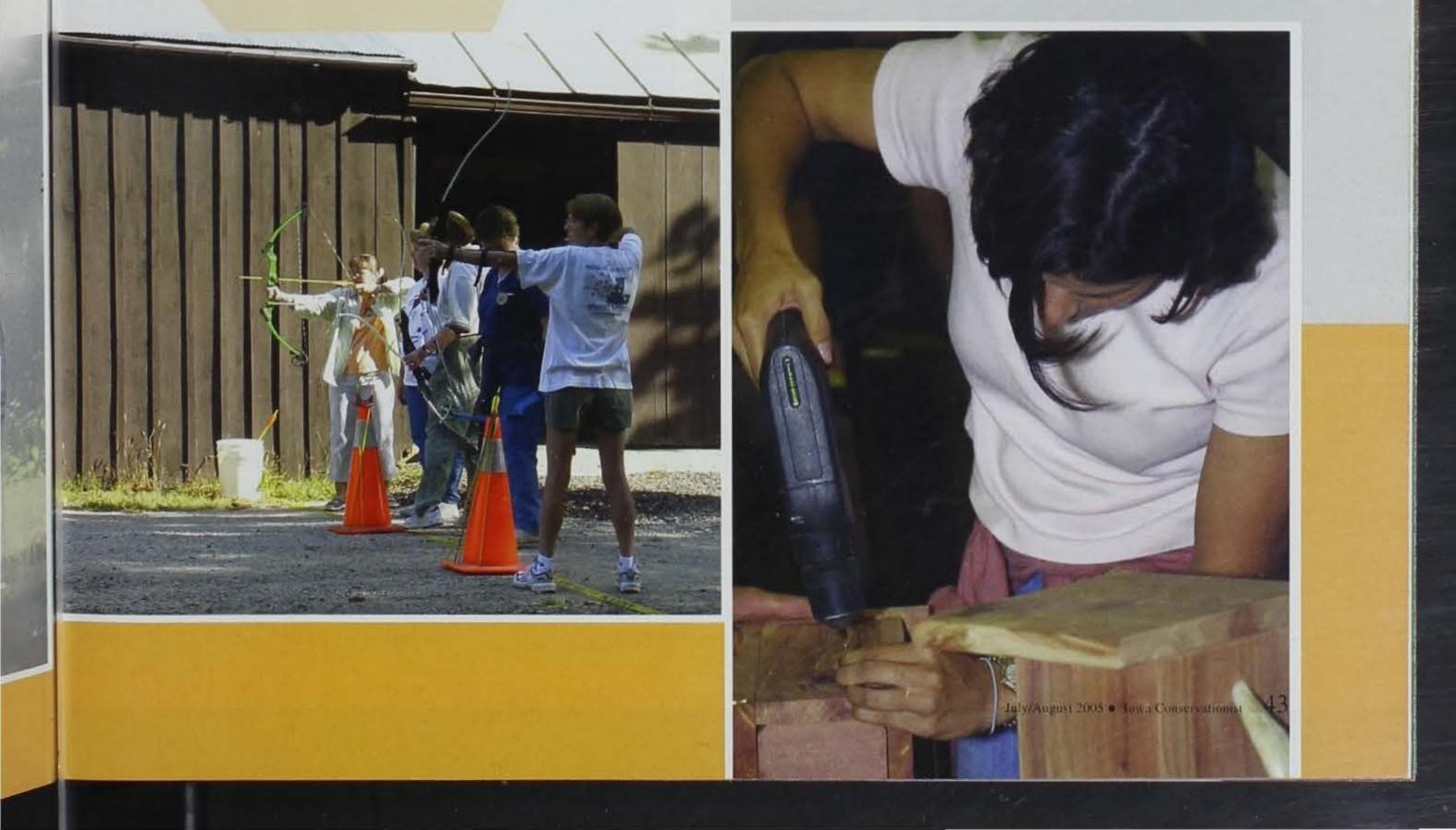
Christie Vilsack, first lady of Iowa, writes her column every other week for Chuck Offenberger's Internet site <u>www.Offenburger.com</u> This column appeared Sept. 20, 2004.



This year's workshop will be held Sept. 9-11, 2005 at the Springbrook

Conservation Education Center, near Guthrie Center, Iowa

Registration forms are available online at **www.iowadnr.com** (Click on the Becoming an Outdoors-Woman logo) or by contacting Julie Sparks at 515-281-6159 or julie.sparks@dnr.state.ia.us



Governor's Iowa Environmental Excellence Awards

Textron Fastening Systems

This past April,four Iowa businesses andorganizations wereorganizations wererecognized for theirtocomprehensiveenvironmental programs.Following is the first in aSeries featuring the fourorGovernor's Environmentalto<tht>totot

s a global leader in the production of fastening and assembly products for clients in more than 100 countries around the world, Textron Fastening Systems, in Decorah, has shown that a commitment to the environment equals smart business sense. "Making environmental improvements has been a continuous process for us," said Dave Drilling, industrial engineer. "Our main priority has been to focus on those projects that save us the most money. An environmental project with cost reductions is an easy way - and the right way - for us to meet our bottom line."

By Jill Cornell Photos by Clay Smith

construction, electronics, power tools, domestic appliances, health care products and sports equipment.

Textron has initiated partnerships with other organizations and agencies to continually improve its impact on the environment. The company developed an Environmental Management System (EMS) to demonstrate its commitment and has participated in other EMS programs. Through

Textron's

benefited from having participated in the P2 Intern Program," said Drilling. "The students come into our plant with AN EN Commit Tex sustain environ throug at the compaint paint n reduce paint u



Textron's Decorah plant produces more than 10 million fasteners per day for computer hardware, automobiles, participation in the Iowa DNR's Pollution Prevention (P2) Summer Intern Program, the company targeted several projects that have saved more than \$77,000 on an annual basis. The DNR program places college students in Iowa companies with the goal of preventing pollution at its source.

"Textron has greatly

no preconceived notions of how to do things, and they give us a fresh look at new technologies. Along with their energy, the interns have brilliant ideas and bring their resilience to the table. This combination makes a huge difference in what we are able to accomplish — overall, the program has been very successful for us."

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#### An Environmental Commitment

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Textron has achieved sustainable economic and environmental results through a variety of projects at the Decorah plant. The company recently installed a paint mixing system that reduced the amount of paint used by almost 33

> percent, with cost savings of more than \$22,000 per year. The 1998 installation of air coolers for the plant's heat treat furnaces has saved \$392,000. This change also reduced water consumption by more than 308 million gallons. The company

recycles cardboard, paper and plastic pallets by the ton, light bulbs and used oil. The company helps local schools and organizations by donating used materials for their reuse.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

#### An Environmental Ethic

In 2002, Textron Fastening Systems achieved ISO 14001 certification from the U.S. Environmental Protection



curtailed its electrical use by more than 1.9 million kWh, which in turn reduced  $CO_2$ emissions by more than 3.8 million pounds a year.

Besides source-reduction efforts, Textron has focused on ways to divert other wastes from the landfill. Through scrap metal recycling, the company has saved more than \$92,000. Textron also Agency, signifying it meets high environmental standards. During the company's audit for certification, Textron was named "Best Practice" for the detail and thoroughness of its environmental impact and aspect rating process.

Textron's strong environmental ethic at the Decorah plant is due, in large part, to the dedication of its employees.

"The awareness of our employees has made the greatest impact," said Drilling. "Above anything else, it has been a priority. Not only do we think about the environment at work, but when we all go home, it's the same thing."

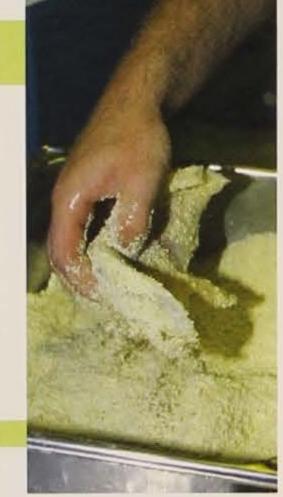


Jill Cornell is an information specialist with the department in Des Moines.

T Bansburg

Textron recycles oil as part of its daily operations (left). The plant installed air coolers (top) for its heat treat furnaces, which saved \$392,000. A paint mixing system (above) reduced paint use by almost 33 percent.

## All in the Family Waterfront Seafood Market Does Walleye Right



## A Constant of the second of th

Hanke (father) is the owner; Shawn, Sr. (son) runs the fish market;

Waterfront Seafood Market has

been at the same location at 29th

and University in West Des Moines

for all of its 21 years. The business,

which has expanded three times to

meet customer demand, is home to

three generations of Hankes --- Ted

Article by Mick Klemesrud . Photos by Clay Smith

The fish market and restaurant offers fresh salmon, halibut, tuna, walleye and gulf shrimp. When Hanke first opened the fish market, the fish sent to the Midwest was poor quality because the prevailing belief was that Midwesterners didn't know quality seafood. After the suppliers had the fish rejected a few times, they got the message.

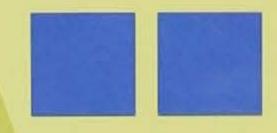
Haus said the market buys fish directly from boats that only spend

A restau shoreonion night i Every specia crawfi occasi fish bo all the



Jennifer Haus (daughter) manages the restaurant; and Shawn, Jr. (grandson) is the cook. And yes, they do fish. "When I grew up, all I thought you could eat was walleye or perch," Haus said. one day on the water. She said day boats offer the freshest fish and over the years, they have gotten to know each other pretty well.

Early on, Hanke opened a small sandwich counter in the back of the market that only offered a fish sandwich and chips. The little sandwich counter was a hit and became so popular that it was expanded three times, becoming the full-sized restaurant it is today.



At least four times a year, the restaurant features walleye cooked shore-lunch-style — pan-fried with onions and sliced potatoes. Monday night means all-you-can-eat catfish. Every Wednesday is the weekly special — sockeye salmon, crawfish, whatever is in season. On occasion there is the Door County fish boil. At Waterfront, it's all fish, all the time.

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Waterfront Potato Breading 1/3 cup potato flakes 1/3 cup flour 1/3 cup bread crumbs Salt Pepper

This mixture was used on the walleye Waterfront did for us. It works well with nearly all fish you want to pan fry. Simply coat the damp fillet and fry. Waterfront uses a soybased butter substitute. Our fillet was caught at Three-Mile Lake in Union County.

Waterfront Seafood Market and Restaurant 29th and University in the Clock Tower Square West Des Moines 515-223-5106



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## Marketplace



We shall never achieve harmony with land, any more than we shall achieve absolute justice or liberty for people. In these higher aspirations, the important thing is not to achieve but to strive.



We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.

A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.

- Aldo Leopold



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problem you can't outrun. Or, climb right over. With the largest V-twin engine in its class, it more than lives up to its name.

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Get into the LURE of Iowa and make "reel" family memories this year. "takemefishing" Go to www.iowadnr.com









Roy and country club course manager Bob Berger stroll a nearly goose-free Rice Lake Country Club.



d Roy is the friendliest guy you'll ever meet. He loves people, he loves life, and above all, he loves his job. And why wouldn't he be happy?

Roy has never been in debt, has never received a bill in the mail, spends most of his year on the golf course and chases wild geese whenever he feels like it.

Although Roy has only been in town for about a year now, it seems that everyone already knows him. Up on Main Street, the local residents — at least those who gather at the Grand Cafe each day for morning coffee — agree Roy is leading a dog's life. It's hard for anyone to argue the point. You see, Roy really is a dog — a high-test, purebred border collie to be exact.

Roy is currently a full time employee of Winnebago County's Rice Lake Country Club. Located near the south shore of Rice Lake, the country club is an 18-hole, 125-acre, public golf course. Beautifully landscaped and interspersed with crystal clear ponds, it is a golfer's paradise.

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#### ARTICLE AND PHOTOS I

## GOOSE-HERDING BORDER COLLE ENJOYS THE GOOD LIFE AT RICE LAKE COUNTRY CLUB



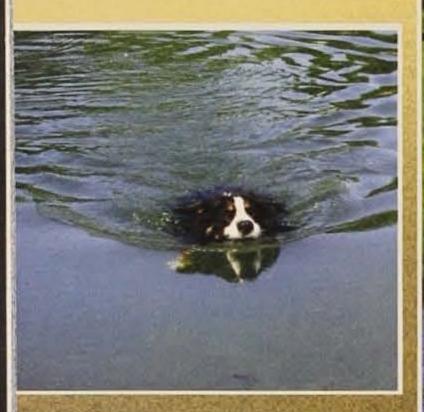
numbers of sightseers and hunters, the geese have a significant and positive impact on local economies while providing widespread recreational opportunities. But when a large number of those same honkers drop by to visit the local country club, they



Rice Lake is also home to Iowa's largest concentration of Canada geese. During late autumn, peak numbers may reach, and sometimes exceed, 45,000 birds. Attracting large are no longer viewed as an asset. "At times, the geese have really become a problem here," says Bob Berger, course manager for the Rice Lake Country Club.

"During the summer, the geese leave droppings

which make them unpopular with members and may have resulted in some loss of business. During fall and winter, goose numbers build and that's when the birds can inflict severe





damage to the course." In November 2003, Berger reported a flock containing more than 4,000 Canada geese on a single fairway. The grazing honkers took some spots right down to the dirt, and dog arrived fully trained, and even came with a warranty that promised the collie would faithfully execute his duties.

"Once Roy arrived, it was mainly a matter of making him feel at home and

Roy is a herder and not a hunter. When goose families with young goslings walk onto the course, the collie's focus is to move rather than catch the flightless youngsters.

With one full year of professional

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around 30 percent of two greens were completely destroyed.

"We tried things like shell crackers, but the geese were too smart and caught on," said Berger. "Then John Hunchis, who is one of our board members, saw where people in other parts of the country were using dogs to herd geese. He lives next to the course and offered to house a dog if the country club wanted to get one."

The board met and decided to give the idea a try. In June 2004, Roy was purchased for \$3,300 from Kuyendall's, a North Carolina kennel that specializes in training border collies to herd problem Canadas. The get used to the new surroundings," said Berger. "We didn't need to teach him anything about herding, he already knew that."

"Most of the work here has been done around ponds because that's where the geese like to be. Roy has been great around water. The trainers in North Carolina said he's the best swimmer they've ever seen, and we believe it."

"Once a flock is chased into a pond, Roy jumps right in after them. The geese usually separate. Roy picks the one he wants and herds it until the bird gives up and flies off. Once that bird leaves, he picks another." Berger is quick to point out that goose herding under his belt, Roy is currently receiving rave reviews. There are no more goose droppings near the ponds, on greens or on golf shoes. Total turf damage has been reduced by an astounding 99 percent.

"I think the geese are getting the message," said Berger. "As long as Roy is on the course, the program is working. In June (2005) we only observed geese about once a week, which is a dramatic decrease from what we've had in the past."

"Our members are very happy. I don't think there's any doubt this dog will pay for itself."



### **Retired Volunteer Helps Save** 19th Century Mill

by Michael Dhar

During his time in the Navy, Jim Tomasson got pretty good at fixing things. He served as an electrician on the USS Kittiwake ASR 13, a submarine rescue ship.

Some 40 years later, Tomasson came to the aid of another structure badly in need of repair and taking on water. In 1997, the retired electrician joined a team of volunteers working to restore and rebuild an old mill in Wildcat Den State Park — (see companion article on page 20).

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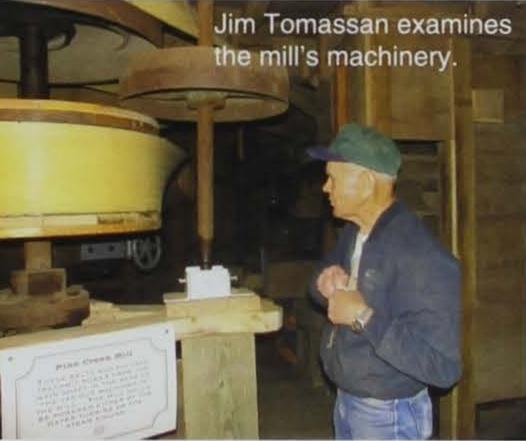
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Today, the mill is considered one of the finest examples of mid-19th century mills left in the country, thanks in great park to the Friends of the Pine Creek Grist Mill. The volunteer group formed in 1996 to restore the 1848 structure, which had decayed and filled with mud over the years. Tomasson joined the effort in 1997. Since then, Tomasson has volunteered an average of 14 hours a week. In 2004, he was nominated for a DNR Keepers of the Land volunteer award for his efforts. He has been instrumental in the project, said fellow volunteer Bob DeLong. Tomasson's expertise as an electrician saved the volunteers from hiring an outside professional. Tomasson wired all the mill's overhead lighting and installed an electric motor to help power the machines (A 1970-era dam lowered Pine Creek's water level, making the electric motor necessary at times).

Like the other volunteers, however, Tomasson has done a little bit of everything — including carpentry and machine-work. He is



a tireless volunteer, said Dave Metz, vice-president of the friends group.

"He could outwork you and me

DeLong said. "We've just got to figure out the flow of grain."

DeLong and Tomasson both came to the mill with a background

in antique restoration. That experience refurbishing old furniture first drew Tomasson to the mill project, he said.

"I enjoy restoring anything," he said. "To take something and to be able to restore it, I really enjoy that. This (mill) has been a real challenge."

In the nine years since they began work, the volunteers have converted the mill from a mudfilled wreck into a living, functioning piece of history. Still, a lot of work remains to be done, DeLong said.

"It'll never finish," he said. "It'll need ongoing work. We hope someone else will take an interest."

both," Metz said of the 76-year-old Tomasson. "Like all the guys here, he's not intimidated. If they see something not working, they say 'We can fix that.' Even if they don't know what it is."

While refurbishing the old structure, Tomasson and the other volunteers have run across a number of unidentifiable items. Even today, after they've reconstructed most of the mill's machines, they find mysterious objects. A box-shaped item with a rotating center currently has them baffled. They also face the ongoing mystery of how all the grain chutes fit together.

"We've got no pictures of the inside of the original mill,"

Volunteer Opportunities

Learn about our volunteer Friends
Groups at: <u>www.iowadnr.com/</u>
volunteer/friendspage.html

• Volunteers will construct the 2005 Riverse trash sculpture during the Iowa State Fair (Aug. 11-21). Details at: www.iowaprojectaware.com

• IOWATER has water monitoring workshops planned this summer. Visit www.iowater.net for details.

 Find our new events calendar and many new volunteer opportunities at: <u>www.keepersoftheland.org</u>

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## **PARKS PROFILE**

CIntosh Woods State Park is one of many versatile recreation areas in the state of Iowa managed by the Department of Natural Resources. It is located in north-central Iowa near the town of Ventura, on the northwest shore of Clear Lake. The nearby lake,

providinga wonderful scenic vista for park visitors, enhances the natural beauty of the woods. Many species of trees can be found in this 60-acre wooded tract with a large array of recreational opportunities availablecamping, boating, fishing, picnicking, cross country

receded, it left a large natural depression in its wake, forming what is now Clear Lake.

One of the first human intrusions into the area around Clear Lake can be traced to the Sioux and Winnebago. They were among the first people to enjoy the scenic beauty of the area. Traces government drew a boundary line across the northern territory of Iowa. The Sioux were forbidden to come within 20 miles of the line from the north and the Winnebago were to stay at least 20 miles to the south. This created a strip of neutral territory 40 miles wide with Clear Lake in the middle. Despite



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skiing, snowmobiling, wildlife viewing and hiking.

The history of McIntosh Woods begins millions of years ago. Three major glaciers covered the Clear Lake area — the Nebraskan, the Kansan and the Wisconsin. As the last of these of their encampments are found on the land occupied by the park. The Sioux and the Winnebago tribes were deadly enemies and had continuous wars prior to Iowa's statehood in 1847. In an effort to resolve the conflict between the tribes, the federal

the federal intervention, tensions between the two tribes continued until around 1857 and limited the early movement of settlers into the area.

The first-known visitors of European decent were two buffalo hunters, Rufus Clark and a man

Article and photos by Tammy Domonoske

# McIntosh M STATE P

named Billings, who arrived in
1849. Their stay, however, was
short lived due to the hostilities
between the Sioux and
Winnebago. In the summer of
1851, Joseph Hewitt and James
Dickerson brought their families
from Strawberry Point and
became the first permanent
settlers around Clear Lake.

In 1908, Charley Kaster began the first taxi service on the lake. When anyone wanted to go to Clear Lake or Ventura on a shopping trip, a message was sent to him. He would pick up passengers on their dock to take them to their destination and bring them back. He and his wife Winnie operated the first boat rental business on the lake. It was located on the sandbar at McIntosh Point Anna and owned by the state. There was a creek running through from the west and toward the Big Lake, which is where it emptied. In the early 1900s, the state raised the outlet on the east end of Clear Lake and dredged a channel between McIntosh and Lone Tree. This move, along with the flowing creek, created what is known as "The Little Lake," near Ventura.

As the town of Clear Lake grew and became a thriving community, public pressure resulted in the purchase and establishment of Clear Lake State Park in 1924 for camping and recreational use. Over the next two decades, it became apparent to locals that another park was needed on the lake to satisfy the increasing demand for recreational opportunities. A committee was appointed to select a site and make arrangements for the land purchase. A 60-acre tract on the northwest

shore of the lake was selected. The land that currently makes up McIntosh Woods State Park was purchased from Mrs. Rose M. McIntosh, a descendent of early

pioneer stock, in July 1943 for \$30,000.

In August of 1943, a master plan for the development of McIntosh Woods was conceived. Early improvements consisted of an entrance to the park,



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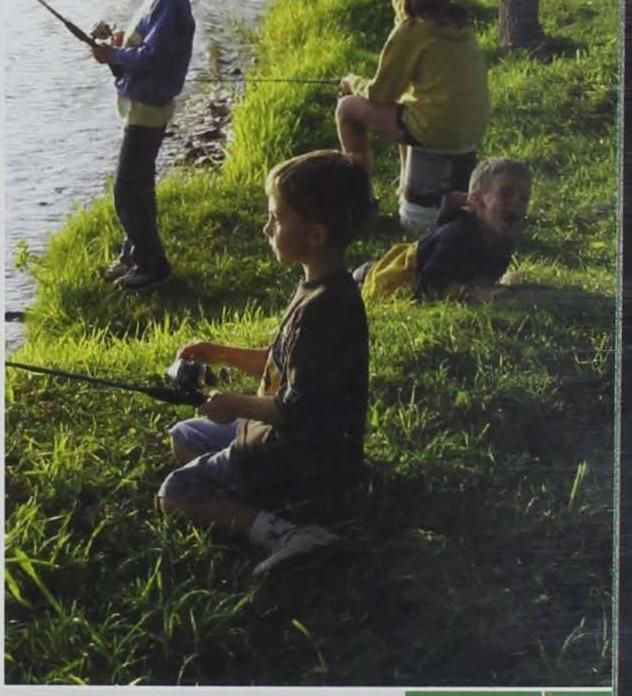
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facing east. What is now referred to as "The Little Lake" didn't exist at that time. That area was pastureland used by Kaster's sister

# I WOODS PARK



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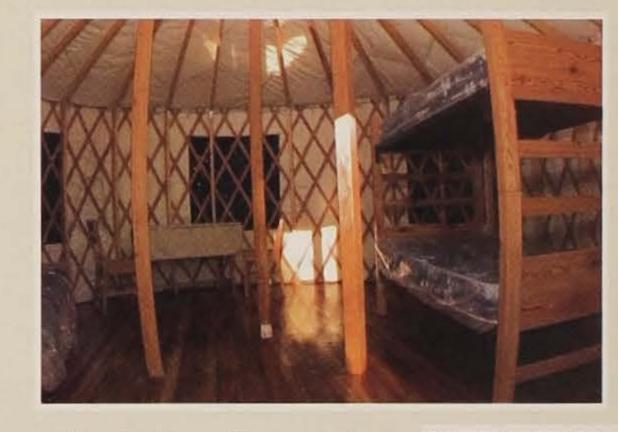
## **PARKS PROFILE**

a road with two parking areas, an open shelter and picnic area, a dock in front of the picnic area and the eventual development of a playfield and hiking trails.

McIntosh Woods State Park was dedicated on Aug. 12, 1944 as part of the Governor's Day celebration in Clear Lake. Iowa Conservation Commission Chairman Fred. J. Poyner presented the park to then Gov. Bourke B. Hickenlooper in a formal ceremony.

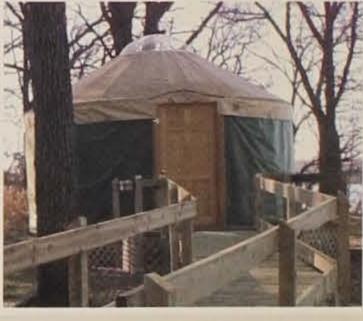
Since it dedication, McIntosh Woods State Park has gone through a number of changes and improvements. These improvements continue today. Two yurt cabins were constructed in 2000. For those wondering what a "yurt" is, they are designed similar to a structure

#### Bluebells



used by the Mongolian nomads of northern Asia. They are a circular structure on a wooden deck with a vinyl roof and sidewalls. They have proven to be a very popular addition to the area. The yurts are full every weekend throughout the summer. They overlook the lake and provide renters a unique overnight accommodation. The yurt cabins are unique to McIntosh Woods, and are the only two used for overnight stays in Iowa state parks. A new playground (swings) was installed in the camping area in 2002. A new playground area near the beach was installed in 2003. A local Eagle Scout constructed a beach shade/picnic shelter during the fall of 2004. Future improvements include construction of new shower and rest room facility where the yurts are located, various road pavings and improvements to the parking lot at the Ventura access satellite area. McIntosh Woods State Park provides excellent recreational opportunities for people of all ages and walks of life. Camping

Yurts are unique to McIntosh Woods and provide an alternative to tents or RVs.



is very popular, with sites full most weekends throughout the summer. Fishing is best during early spring, fall and winter, with primary species including yellow bass, walleyes and of course, bullheads. During the summer the lake is extremely busy with boaters and water skiers. Whether it is spring, summer, fall or winter one can find recreational activities at McIntosh. From hiking, camping, swimming, boating, picnicking, wildlife observation, fishing, snowmobiling, cross country skiing, snowshoeing and ice fishing, McIntosh has it all.

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Tammy Domonoske is the park manager at McIntosh Woods State Park.

### MCINTOSH WOODS STATE PARK AT A GLANCE

LOCATION: Located between the cities of Clear Lake and Ventura.

PICKNICKING: McIntosh Woods State Park is a popular spot for picnickers. The grassy and shaded picnic areas are ideal for a family cookout.

CAMPING: McIntosh Woods State Park features a campground that was extensively renovated in the early 1980s. The campground has 49 campsites, 45 with electricity. A modern rest room and shower building are present, as well as a playground.

TRAILS: A one-mile nature trail takes visitors into the heart of McIntosh Woods and signs describe different features of the park.

LAKE ACTIVITIES: McIntosh Woods State Park is one of the major boating access points for Clear Lake. A modern boat ramp is present with an extensive paved area for vehicle and trailer parking. Clear Lake is very popular with anglers of all ages. A variety of fish may be taken in Clear Lake; everything from bluegills and crappies to bass and northerns. To assist anglers and enhance the experience, a modern fish-cleaning station is located near the boat ramp at McIntosh Woods.

FUN FACTS: Visitors to McIntosh Woods may stay in one of two yurts available for rent. The "yurt" or "ger" as it is often referred to is based on a nomadic shelter used in Central Asia. It is a 16-foot circular tent structure with a wood frame, lattice walls and a vinyl covering. The yurt also has windows, a clear dome on the roof and a framed door.

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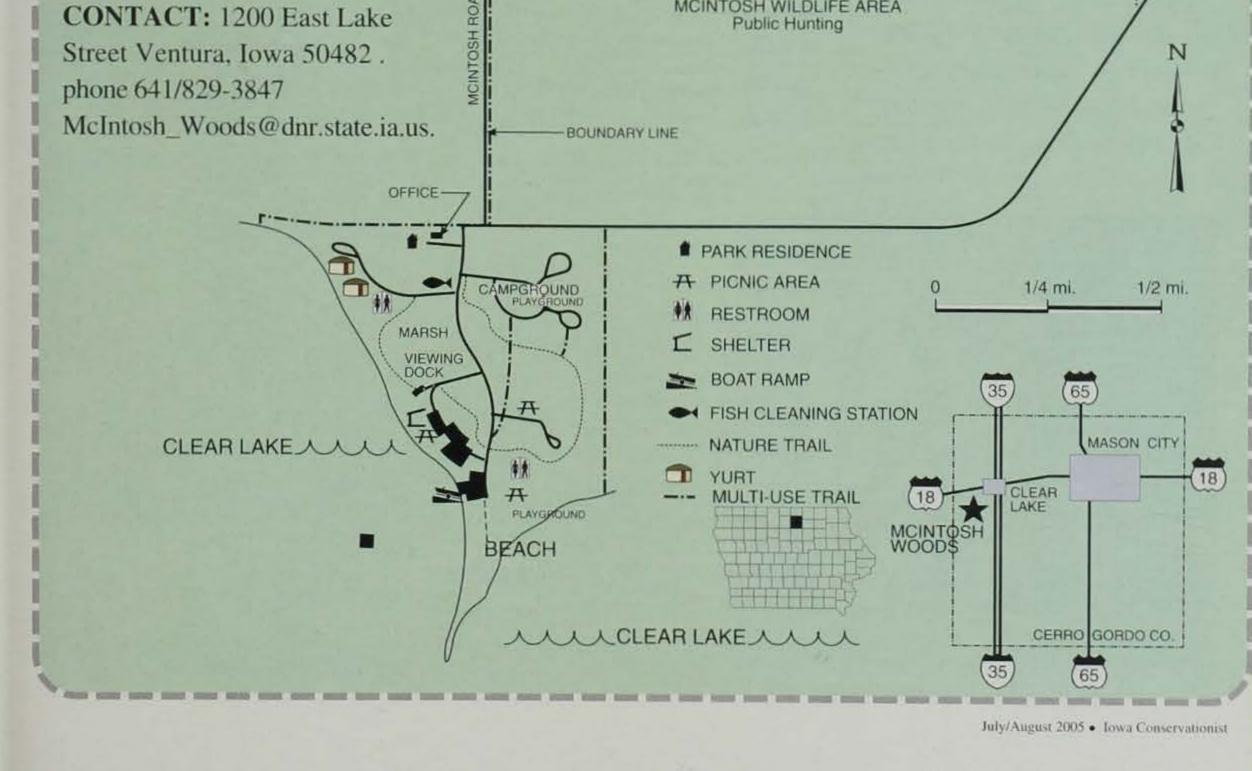
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MCINTOSH WILDLIFE AREA



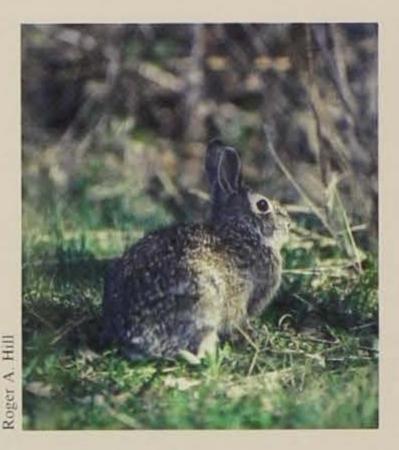
## **CONSERVATION UPDATE**

#### Upland Survey Underway; Results Posted In September

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) annual survey of upland game populations is underway with wildlife biologists and conservation officers driving more than 200, 30-mile roadside routes statewide between Aug. 1-15.

Staff will be surveying pheasants, quail, rabbits and partride.

The August Roadside Survey, as it is called, "is the DNR's main tool for determining whether our fall populations will be up or down from the previous year," said Todd Bogenschutz, upland wildlife research biologist for the DNR. Routes start at sunrise on mornings with heavy dew and are driven primarily on gravel roads because of lower traffic volume. A heavy dew causes hens to move their broods to the gravel roadsides to dry off before



feeding, allowing them to be counted easily.

Routes are driven over the same roads each year so that the information is comparable with previous years. According to Bogenschutz, the survey is the best indicator of what hunters will find this fall.

"Historically, when the roadside counts are compared to the small game harvest figures, they parallel each other nicely," Bogenschutz said. However, since the survey depends on heavy dew for consistent results, hot dry weather in August can negatively impact the results.

#### **Furbearer Status Sought** For Mountain Lion

The Department of Natural Resources will seek "furbearer" status for mountain lions in the wake of appearances of the big cat in Iowa the last few years.

The state's Natural Resources Commission has instructed staff of the DNR to pursue approval in the Iowa Legislature for the classification, which would allow the agency to establish regulations such as a season and limits on killing mountain lions. The same status will be sought for black bears.

Three of the big cats have been killed in the last three years in Iowa. Several others have been confirmed by tracks. Another was photographed by a trail camera. Numerous unconfirmed sightings have been fielded by DNR officials as well. The re-emergence of the mountain lion, or cougar, prompted a petition to place the animal on the state's endangered species list. However, commissioners were told that there was little public support for "endangered list" status. DNR wildlife staff will work with conservation and agriculture advocates in the coming months to come up with acceptable wording. A key area will be to eliminate indiscriminate killing of the wild cats, yet allow landowners to protect themselves, their family, property, pets and livestock if threatened.

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Final results of the survey will be compiled in late August and will be released in early September. Small game hunters interested in this year's counts can log on to www.iowadnr.com and receive an e-mail notification when the roadside results have been posted. televisi 50 tires three to much n objects house, i party ai pounds could n Art who hel sculptui last yea year's p

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#### Project AWARE Tackles Little Sioux River; 124 Cubic Yards Of Trash Removed From River

The last of roughly 200 volunteers went home muddy, tired and proud that warm Saturday in late June as the third annual Project AWARE (A Watershed Awareness River Expedition) came to a close on the Little Sioux River.

Volunteers pulled a record 124 cubic-yards of trash from the Little Sioux River—enough to fill nearly 23.5, 10-wheel dump trucks. Participants pulled out teers at the Iowa State Fair and Clay County Fair will help Williamson turn much of the collected scrap metal into art.

As in past years, the 2005 edition of Project AWARE invited volunteers to spend as little as a day or as long as a week paddling the river, camping, collecting garbage and learning about natural resources. The program tackled the Little Sioux River between

#### Iowa Birders Urged To Report Bluebird Nestbox, Trail Results

The eastern bluebird is a colorful thrush of open forest edges. It whistles its gentle, musical "*chir-wi*" or soft "*tru-ally*" near open grassy parks, fields, roadsides and old orchards.

Cavities in scattered old oaks and elms across the plains and along forest edges were once home to the bluebird. Lacking the tools of woodpeckers and squirrels, the bluebird is a secondary tenant, waiting for these excavators to make (and then leave) suitable nest holes. Today, most of these old snags are gone, cut for fuel, farm ground or sightliness. Deprived of nesting sites and hunting grounds of short grasses, the bluebird needs our help.

Nest boxes provide bluebirds



televisions, an erector set, roughly 50 tires, a lawn mower, a hubcap, three tons of scrap metal and much more. They collected objects sufficient to furnish a house, equip a farm, entertain a party and build a car. Only 600pounds of the collected garbage could not be recycled.

Artist David Williamson who helped volunteers construct a sculpture from garbage collected last year — spoke about this year's proposed artwork. VolunMilford and Cherokee from June 18 to 25.

Organized by two programs within the Iowa Department of Natural Resources — the IOWATER citizen water quality monitoring program and the Keepers of the Land volunteer program — Project AWARE invites volunteers to take a stand for water quality. Project AWARE participants "make a difference, one stretch of river, one piece of trash at a time." homes where feeding, but not nesting, habitat is available. You can construct them from plans available on the DNR's website. Boxes need not be works of art, and they are excellent "rainy day" or group activity projects.

Those who do construct and maintain bluebird boxes and bluebird trails are urged to report their experiences with others. Bluebird report forms, as well as bluebird box construction plans, are available at www.iowadnr.com/wildlife/files/ bbird. Forms should be returned to Jaclyn Hill, 2946 Ubben Ave., Ellsworth, Iowa 50075.

## **CONSERVATION UPDATE**



#### **Iowa SWAP Grant Recipient Earns National Award**

With the goal of reducing the amount of solid waste generated and landfilled in Iowa, the DNR's Solid Waste Alternatives Program (SWAP) has helped many Iowa public and private groups, individuals and local governments by providing financial assistance through a competitive process. The program's success is evident in the recent national recognition of a West Des Moines company. Corell Recycling was recently named the Best Concrete and Asphalt Recycling Facility in the nation from the Construction Materials Recycling Association (CMRA). The organization annually recognizes one outstanding company in the country demonstrating the best practices in recycling concrete and asphalt into reusable aggregate, in safety procedures and in annual volumes.

recycled products," said Tom Anderson, senior environmental specialist at the DNR.

In 1995, Corell Recycling received a zero-interest loan from the DNR's Landfill Alternatives Financial Assistance Program (now known as SWAP). Corell used the funds to purchase a larger crusher and other equipment that enabled it to more than double its processing capability and to meet U.S. Department of Transportation specifications. In 2004, the company produced approximately 250,000 tons of reusable products. Corell Recycling has provided various recycled materials for several projects in the Des Moines metro area including the Iowa Events Center and reconstruction of Sec Taylor Field. SWAP has awarded 488 grants totaling \$57 million since 1988. Application forms for SWAP grants are available at www.iowadnr.com/waste/ financial/.

#### DNR Monitoring Air During Smog Season

Smog season is here, the time of year when air pollution can form in hot temperatures and bright sunshine, and the Department of Natural Resources is actively monitoring pollution levels, say state officials.

"The state has nearly a dozen ozone monitors across lowa that run April through September the time of year when heat and strong sunlight can cook vehicle exhaust, factory emissions, fumes and chemicals to form ozone smog," said Brian Button, DNR air information specialist.

He said summer smog levels can make air quality unhealthy for some people such as children and asthmatics if they are outdoors for long periods of time exercising, working or playing. He said large areas of the state can be affected and that pollutants can be blown into Iowa from other parts of the nation. On high pollution days, minimizing vigorous outdoor activity is good advice, Button said, especially for sensitive populations. Iowans can help minimize emissions by conserving electricity, properly maintaining vehicles and reducing driving. "Those efficiency actions are also money savers," he said.

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"Corell Recycling serves as a model for other companies that have begun this type of recycling and has shown the value of State air quality conditions are posted at www.iowacleanair.com. National data is posted at www.airnow.gov.

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#### Water Quality Loan Fund Provides Low-cost Financing To Address Non-point Pollution

The Iowa Water Quality Loan Fund brings to Iowa a new source of low-cost financing for farmers and landowners, livestock producers, businesses, homeowners, community groups, watershed organizations and others.

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The programs of the Iowa Water Quality Loan Fund can help Iowans address "nonpoint" sources that are polluting our streams and lakes. One of Iowa's largest sources of water quality problems is polluted runoff from agricultural operations, urban construc-

available through the Iowa Water Quality Loan Fund for any type of project that will improve water quality by addressing non-point source pollution. The Iowa Water Quality Loan Fund:

Offers four programs to target Iowa's water quality problems and provide financing to address them.

Is ready when you are. Project and loan applications can be submitted at any time during the year, and turnaround time is quick.

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#### Upcoming NRC and EPC Meetings

The dates and locations have been set for the following meetings of the Natural Resource Commission and Environmental Protection Commission of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

Agendas are set approximately 10 days prior to the scheduled meeting date. For additional information, contact the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Wallace State Office Building, 502 E. 9<sup>th</sup> St., Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0034.

#### Natural Resource Commission:

- August 11
  - Clear Lake
- September 8
   Brushy Creek area
   October 13
   Northeast Iowa

inadequate septic systems and other areas.

tion sites,

Since this non-point source pollution comes in many forms, it can be addressed through a wide variety of practices and technologies and financed through the loan programs. Best of all, when water quality is protected, many other benefits are created, including prevention of soil loss, increased land value, improved fish and wildlife habitat and enhanced opportunities for economic development.

Low-interest loans are

• Complements other funding sources. If you have a grant or other funding, you can use a loan to provide your share of the project.

For more information about the loan fund, and to determine who to contact for more information regarding the various programs covered under the Water Quality Loan Fund, visit www.iowasrf.com. Environmental Protection Commission:

- August15 Urbandale
- September 19
   Urbandale
- October 17
   Urbandale

State Preserves Advisory Board:

October 10-11
 Dixon

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## WARDEN'S DIARY



Hone of those moments in the outdoors where everything comes together? I struggle to find the word I'm looking for, but it's one of those times where you look around and think, "Yeah, this is what I'm talking about. This is it!"

Thinking about it, I wonder if the search for those experiences is why we who love the outdoors keep going there. It's those times and experiences when instantly, everything is so good, so perfect, that you look around, and say, "This is it. For as long as I can remember, I've wanted to go trout fishing in the Rocky Mountains. Sure, I can fish for trout in Iowa, but I wanted the picture you see in the books, the snow-covered mountain peaks, the rapids crashing over the rocks, the aspen reflecting off the clear mountain lake.

## **Full Circle**

#### by Chuck Humeston

I have a son at Colorado State in Ft. Collins. We would talk on the phone, and once in awhile he'd talk about getting some time off and heading up the Poudre River trout fishing. We'd hang up, and I'd think, "Wish I was there." Finally, I couldn't take it anymore. It was time to do it. I called him, and said, "Pick a week."

I blocked out my vacation days and bought the airline tickets. Although I had handed down my first fly rod - one my dad had given me - to him, we decided to fish ultra light. "I have all the gear you'll need, Dad." Still, I packed my trusty "Ugly Stick," with the old Mitchell spinning reel. It's not a high-tech outfit, and doesn't have many bells and whistles, but I still like the feel of fiberglass, and the Mitchell is about as foolproof as it gets. Besides, it was the only rig I could fit in my check-on luggage.

license and an assortment of Kastmasters. Another stop to stock the cooler, and we were on our way upriver, past the front range, and into the high country.

The past winter had seen the earliest opening in history for ski resorts. The melting snow was causing the river to run furiously on its way to the flat lands. I opened the window just so I could hear it crash against the rocks. Every now and then we would pass an access, and I'd ask, "Here?"

"Not here, Dad. We want to get above the kayakers and the tubers."

And, they were out in

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But, like most of us, work kept interfering with my personal life. Too busy, too far, not enough time, you name the excuse. I landed in Denver on an absolutely beautiful May day. I picked up a car, and headed up I-25 to Ft. Collins.

The next day we headed out, stopping at Jax. Jax is one of those outdoors stores where you wish you had unlimited time and a bank account to match. I bought a fishing force. The ride looked like a thrill. We drove higher into the peaks, and into the National Forest. Finally, we stopped at a parking area above a deep cutbank next to the river bend. We climbed down. It didn't take me long to feel the elevation while I was climbing.

A few casts, and I looked over at Tom who was reeling in a trout. I worked the riffles and the eddies behind the big boulders. Nothing. There was so much runoff from the mountains that we figured the river was just too murky. "I've got another spot," Tom said.

We climbed back up the bank to the car and headed up a gravel lane. The road, absent of guardrails, grew steeper and steeper. Finally, as I thought, "He's lost, but he's not telling me," we came out of the trees. In front of us was the bluest lake I had ever seen. We took out our rigs, and looked out at the water. There were rises all over the surface. We looked at each other and grinned.

By now weather was moving in. It was one of those mountain storms where you see the lightning bolts, and it looks like you could touch them. The thunder rolls and echoes off the mountains and down the valleys. We hiked around the lake and stopped. "This is usually a good spot." I quietly stepped out on a large boulder at the water's edge. I opened the bail and lightly held pressure on the line. The Kastmaster sailed toward the water, landing with a small splash. I let it sink until the rings disappeared and started to retrieve. WHAM! My line tightened, and the rod tip dove. I pulled back slightly to keep the line

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tight. Suddenly, the water boiled, and the trout broke the surface, shining in the sun retreating in the face of the approaching storm. It fell back into the water, and my line went slack. I missed it! I looked over at Tom. He was busy removing a trout from his hook.

I got the hang of it after that. How good was the fishing? ing mountains and the rocky outcroppings jutting over the shore. I looked over at my son who was putting another trout on the stringer. He looked up at me. "That's enough for dinner, Dad, do you want to go?"

I had to admit I was kind of glad to hear it, as it was becoming work in the elevation. But would a dad admit that? No, really I never

> wanted to leave. It was the experience I had pictured in my mind.

I remembered the times fishing with my dad --times I would never forget. I remembered the times I had taken Tom fishing to Iowa farm ponds watching him attack bass. I wondered if this trip with me would be one he would never forget. I realized this time, he had become the teacher, and I had become the student. Life had come full circle. It had all come together in that moment for me. I would never forget it.

I realized this time, he had become the teacher, and I had become the student. Life had come full circle.

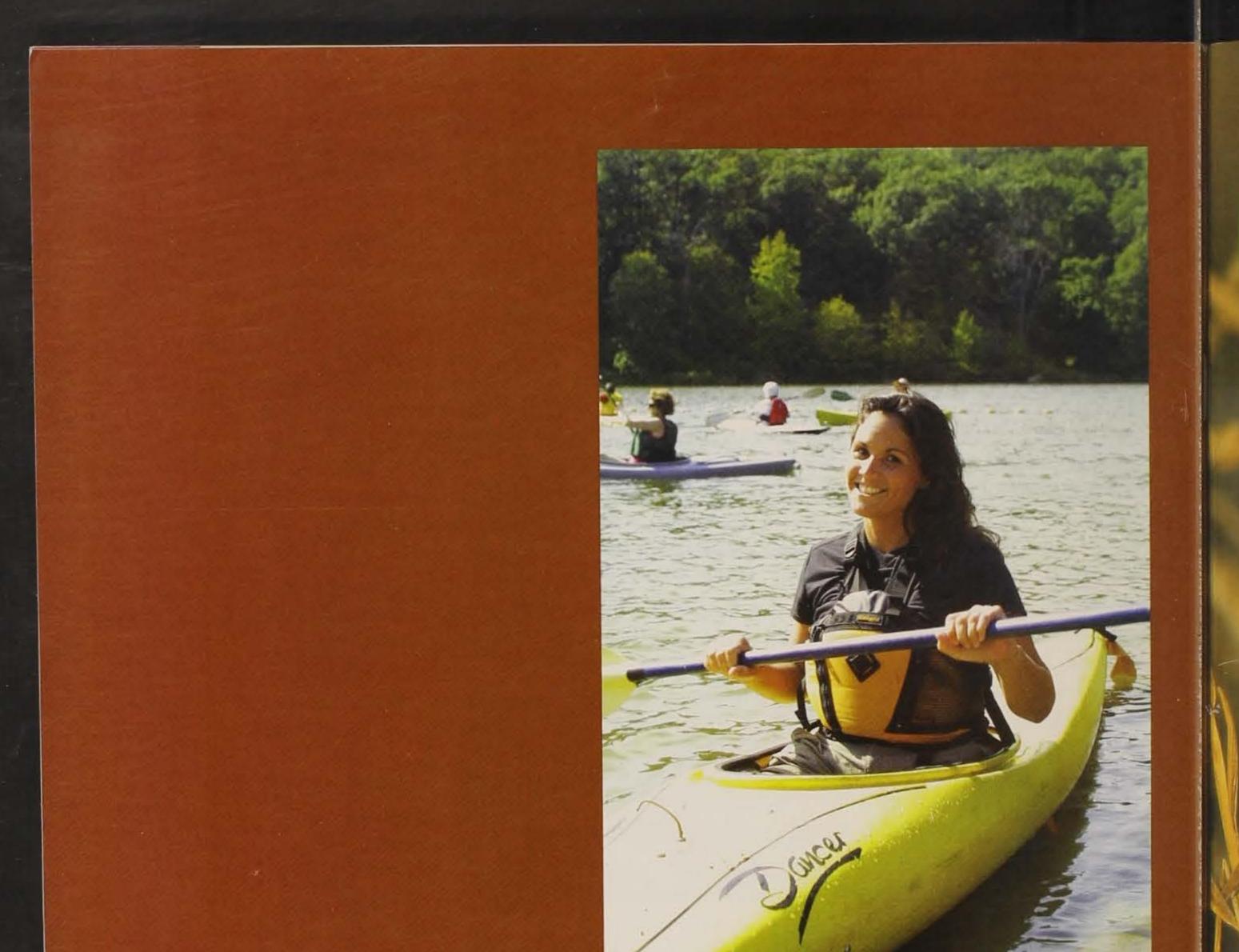
> Well, when the storm hit and the hail started bouncing off our heads we looked at each other, and yelled, "Keep fishing!"

> The storm passed and stillness fell over the lake. I was in the middle of a retrieve and I stopped. A falcon dove out of the sky, splashed down on a rise, and lifted off with a trout in its talons. It gently landed in a tree.

> Behind it a mountain peak still bore its snow cover giving way to the aspens further down the slope. I looked at the lake. The water was so clear, reflecting the beauty of the surround

I took in a deep breath of mountain air and looked out over the vista.

"I'm ready. Let's go home and cook 'em up."



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