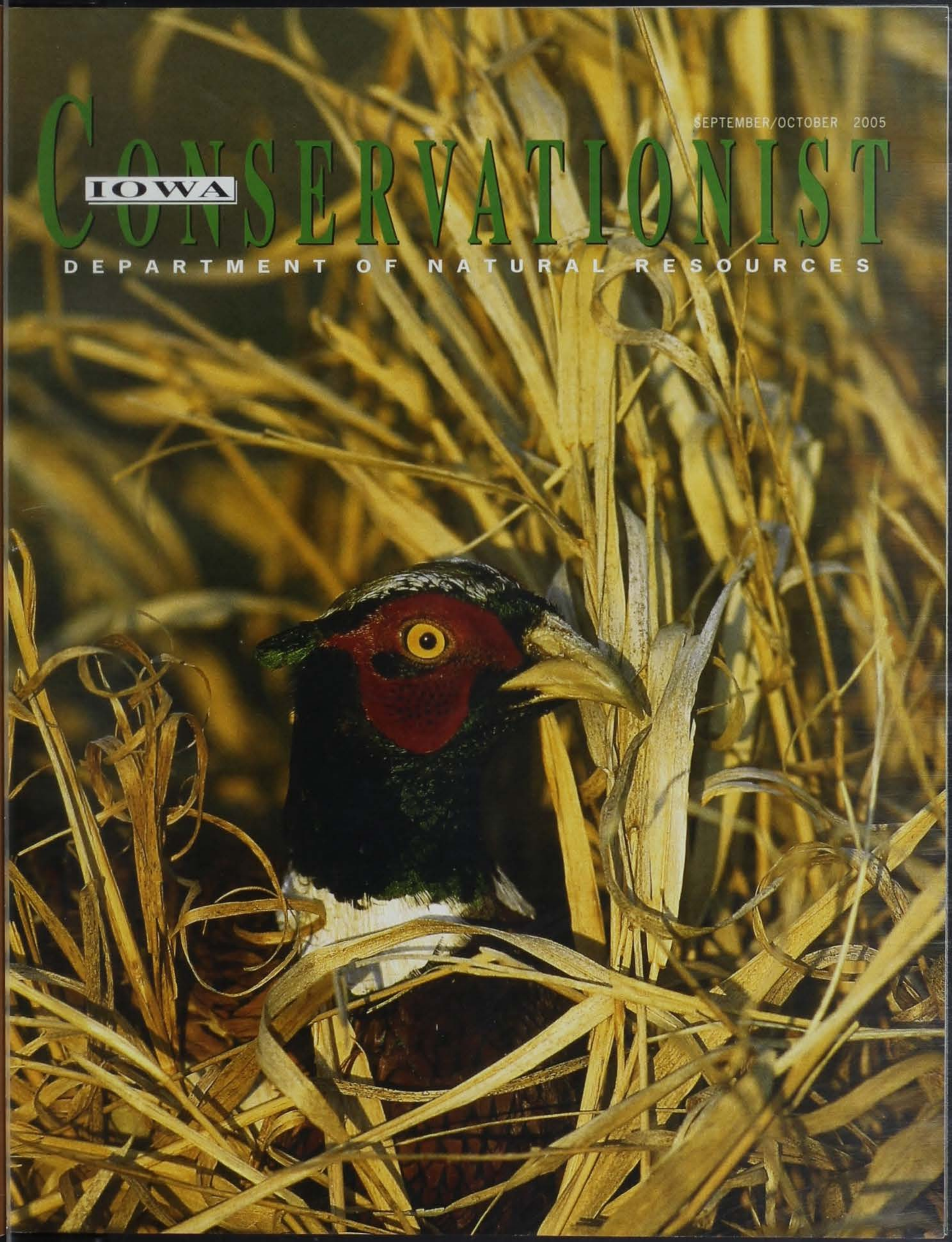
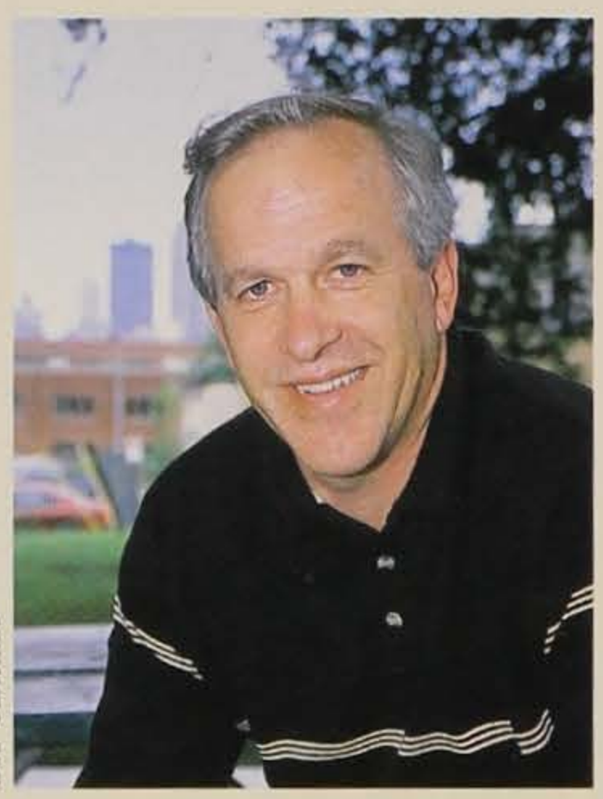


IOWA CONSERVATIONIST

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2005

From the Director



Bob Castelline

It All Comes Down To Numbers

As we head into another glorious Iowa autumn and another hunting season, any experienced deer hunter knows that one of the primary keys to success is to recognize and understand movement patterns. Anyone looking for me last winter could have used the same technique. My predictable movement pattern was back and forth to the Capitol, primarily to talk about deer.

And talk about deer we did. I heard many pleas to reduce the deer herd from the insurance industry, urban residents and agricultural interests. I also heard impassioned pleas from hunters urging restraint from reducing the deer herd too much.

While everyone may have an opinion on what should be done in terms of managing the deer herd and all may have some valid *circumstantial* evidence to support their position, our decisions come down to *numbers* — how many deer are there, where are they, what is the appropriate number for specific regions of the state and what must be done to achieve those levels.

The fact that we have heard concerns from both sides of the issue leaves me hopeful that we are doing something right. Our challenge is to manage deer for the entire state and receiving reaction from both sides tells me that we have been listening to the people of Iowa. The best solutions to find balance usually come from the middle rather than from either of the extreme sides of an issue.

Discussion on the deer population is important, far too important to engage in it in anything less than a rational manner. One of the first factors that needs to be understood is that this is *not* just an issue of population, it is also one of *distribution*. Management of the deer herd centers as much on *where deer are located as it does on how many exist.*

This year, we received intense pressure to reduce deer numbers. Staff recognized that new approaches might have to be taken, but pending final survey information and passage of final legislation, it was not known how much would have to be done or where.

After final deer surveys were completed, it was obvious that more would have to be done in southern and northeast Iowa than just increasing antlerless-only quotas if the deer herd was going to be reduced. New ways had to be found to get hunters to shoot more does in these areas.

A new November antlerless-only season gives hunters a chance to hunt for does outside of their traditional buck hunting time. Allowing rifles in southern Iowa will attract hunters that want to use a rifle. Neither approach was contemplated until final survey information was received.

Of these two major changes, the use of center-fire rifles in the southern two tiers of Iowa counties in a special late January hunt has probably prompted the most attention. Most of the attention has been due to the fact that this is new in the state of Iowa and there are safety concerns associated with high-powered rifles.

Examination of hunter safety statistics for surrounding states that allow both shotgun and rifle hunting indicate about equal numbers of incidents occur with rifles and shotguns. Very few people are shot at a distance with either weapon and shooting non-hunting citizens is nearly non-existent. Most accidents are self-inflicted or to a hunting partner standing nearby whether by rifle

Director's Message

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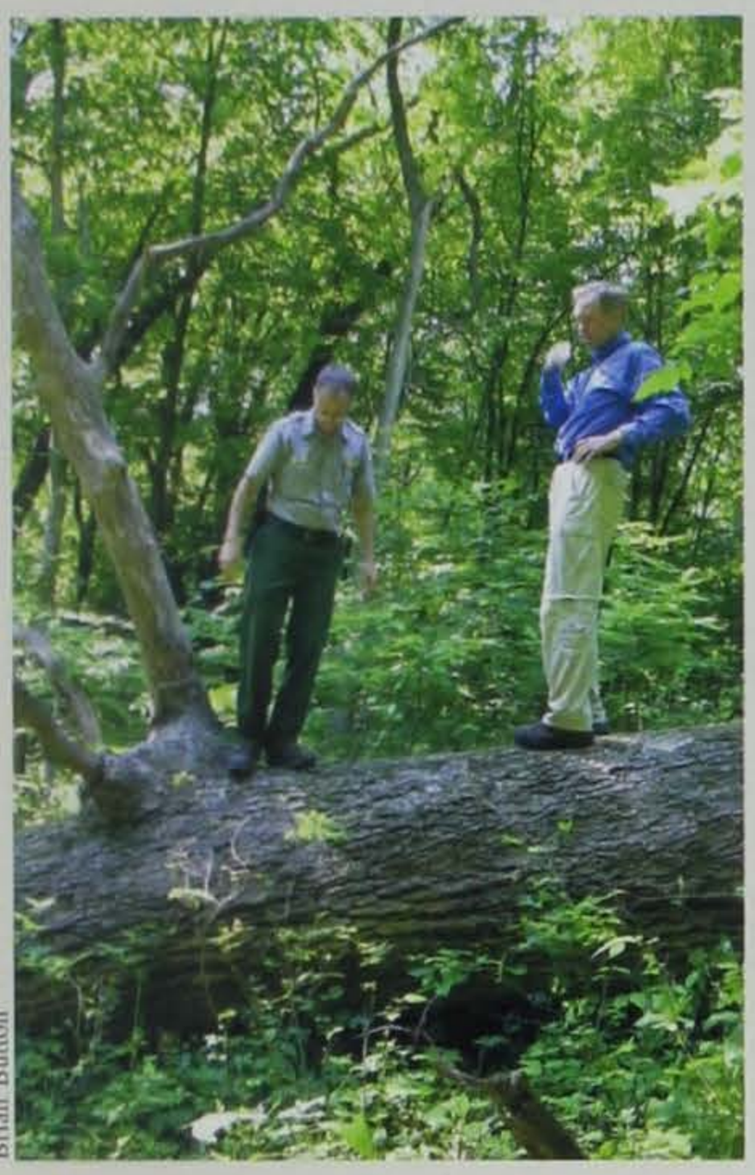
IOWA CONSERVATIONIST

FRONT COVER: PHEASANT BY ROGER A. HILL
BACK COVER: FALL COLOR BY ROGER A. HILL



Brian Button

Departments

Features

Director's Message

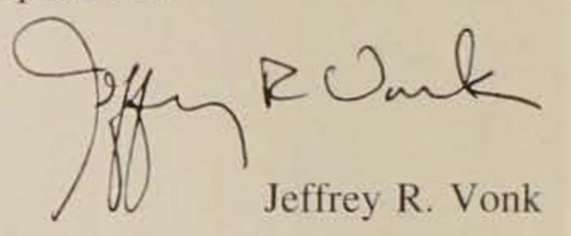
cont. from page 2

or shotgun. The special Iowa season takes place after all usual deer seasons are over. Missouri has allowed deer hunting with rifles right across the state line for decades with no unusual problems.

A major point the non-hunting public often fails to grasp is the economic benefits derived from successful wildlife programs and sustainable wildlife populations. Hunting, fishing and wildlife watching generates about **$1.5 billion** every year for the Iowa economy, much of which occurs in rural parts of our state.

Those are the numbers and some of the decisions based on those numbers. Unfortunately, I believe that we all get so wrapped up in the management decisions, population estimates, harvest numbers and hunting seasons that we sometimes miss the big picture.

Lost in the numbers is the fact that our white-tailed deer are wild and beautiful creatures that need to be valued as such. I hope that in all this herd management talk we always keep the focus on deer as an important, vital component of our Iowa natural environment. Deer truly are a wonderful part of the Iowa experience.



Jeffrey R. Vonk

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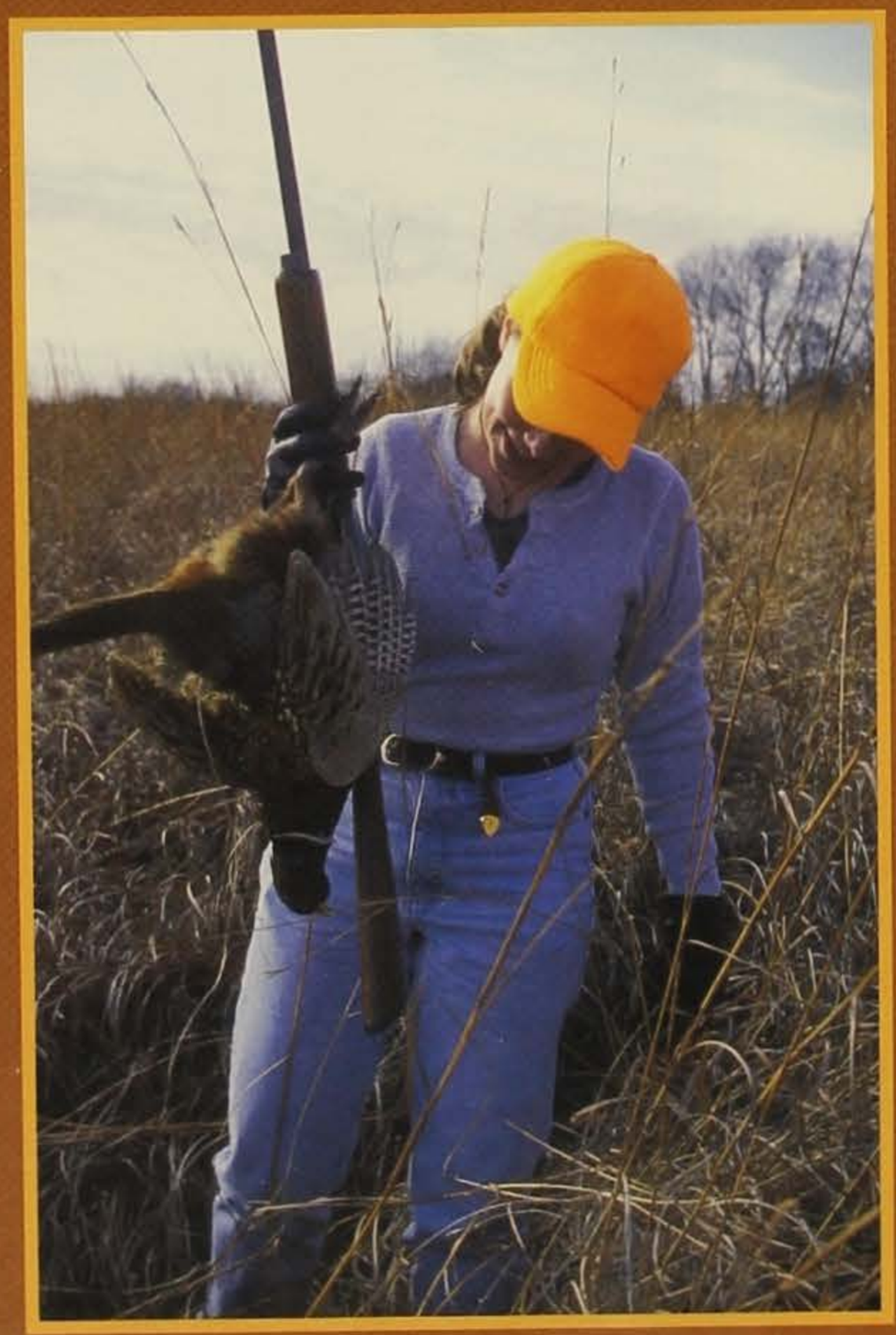
Iowa Hunting 2005

Hunting Prospects for 2005 by Terry W. Little
Photos by Roger A. Hill



Clay Smith

As a long, hot summer fades into memory, the cooler days and nights of fall turn a hunter's thoughts (at least hunters like me) to better days ahead. While we're tuning that bow, cleaning a favorite shotgun or giving pooch a refresher course in hunting dog manners, most of us will be hoping for more productive hunting than last year provided. Unless you are a deer hunter, of course, in which case asking for better hunting is way beyond greedy. Let's review what last year was like and take a glance at what might lie ahead.

Upland Game

A wet spring last year hampered the nesting season for upland game birds, and the pheasant harvest turned out about as predicted - 760,000 birds compared to an excellent 1 million roosters the year before. The early season hunting was OK in northern Iowa and the central part of the state, but mid- to late-season roosters were hard to find nearly everywhere. A warm, dry fall that kept roosters scattered didn't help either. The quail harvest took a similar drop to just 68,000 birds, a setback from an increasing trend in quail abundance that had occurred during the previous 3 years. Wet springs and abundant game birds just don't go hand in hand, a fact most of us knew but had proven to us again. DNR upland game biologist Todd Bogenschutz predicts a better year in 2005.

Last year, Iowa had 32,195 rabbit hunters who harvested 260,000 cottontails and 29,000 squirrel hunters took 234,000 squirrels. While these numbers seem high they are relatively low for Iowa. In the 1960s, Iowa had 170,000 rabbit and 150,000 squirrel hunters and they would harvest 1.4 million squirrels and 2 million rabbits. An unexpected decline in hunter interest in these common game animals is the reason, since rabbits and squirrels are abundant wherever habitat exists.

Waterfowl

Waterfowlers won't feel sorry for the upland bird hunter, however, because most of them will claim, with lots of justification, that last year was the worst in their memory. An average fall flight of ducks was predicted and seasons were again a liberal 60 days with a 6-bird limit. Pintails and canvasback numbers were down and the shortened seasons for them were in place again, but mallards and teal, two of Iowa duck hunters' favorites, were expected to migrate in good numbers. Arctic-nesting goose numbers were down after a late cold spring retarded their hatch, so 10 days were taken off the Canada goose season. There were plenty of locally produced giant Canada geese, and a good flight was predicted from Minnesota and Manitoba. But things didn't work out that way.

As warm and dry as last fall was for the Midwest, it was just as wet for southern Canada. Persistent summer-long rains re-flooded wetlands parched by several years of drought. Longtime friends of mine in south-central Manitoba, an area famed for its goose hunting but not especially good for ducks, claimed it was the wettest summer in their memory. Flooding kept some grain fields from being harvested until late November and mallards and Canada geese covered up those fields. The complaint was the same everywhere in the mid-continent – the Dakotas, Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas and north Missouri – "Where are the ducks?" The answer, at least until it was much too late to help, was "Canada." The duck harvest in the entire Mississippi Flyway

declined by 1 million birds. DNR waterfowl biologist Guy Zenner predicts an improvement back to average seasons in 2005, a monumental increase for most of us. *If, of course, ducks and geese find their way to Iowa again.*

Wild Turkey

The cooperator brood survey, where rural residents and DNR personnel record the number of poults seen with turkey hens during July and August, indicated a 10 percent decrease in turkey reproduction across the state last year. Just over 13,000 fall turkey hunting licenses were sold in 2004, slightly down from 2003, but still above Iowa's five-year average. Hunter success declined to 37 percent, 10 percent below the 10-year average. The decline in turkey production was likely the reason for the lower success rates.

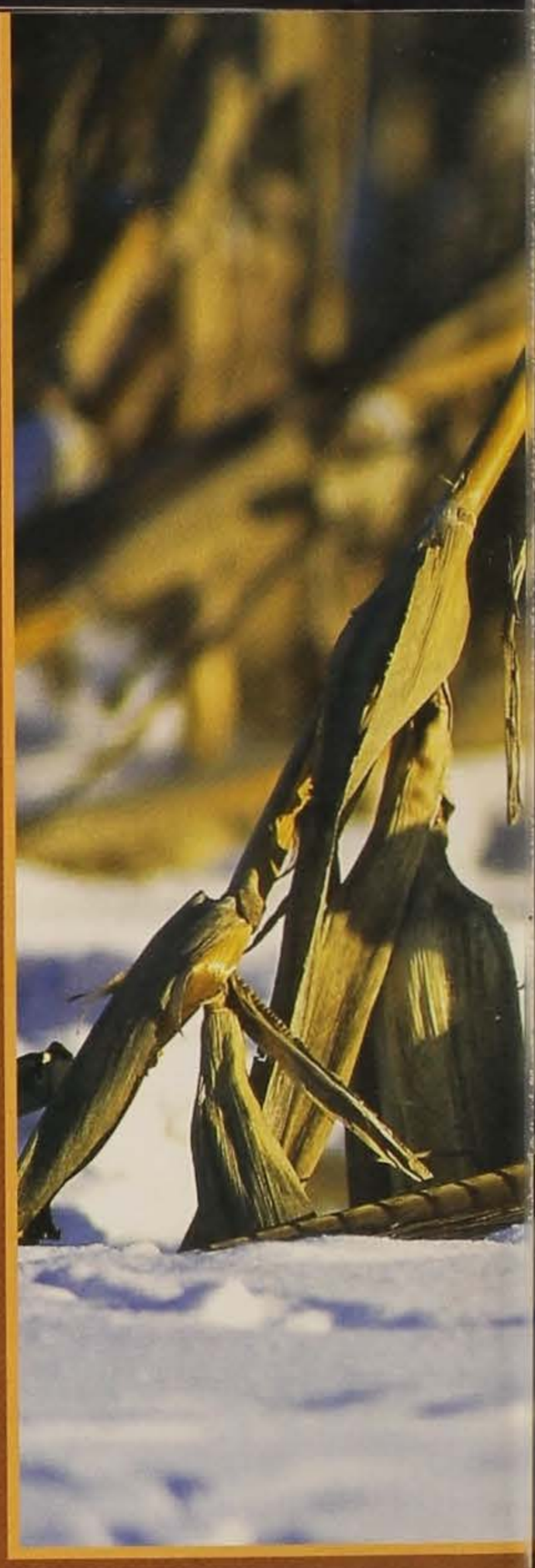
Turkey hunters in western Iowa were the most successful in harvesting a turkey (53 percent success); the least successful hunters were in the central portion of the state (31 percent harvested a turkey). Central Iowa was the hardest hit by rains during the nesting season.

In spite of poorer production last year, wild turkey populations are in excellent shape. The harvest in the 2005 spring season topped 24,000, with an outstanding hunter success rate of 53 percent. This was an increase of more than 2,500 harvested turkeys and of 8 percent in success rates compared to the previous year. DNR wild turkey biologist Todd Gosselink tells why he thinks 2005 could be an even better year.

White-tailed Deer

The report on last year's deer season sounds like a broken record – 353,000 licenses were sold and 194,500 deer were shot – both all-time highs. The DNR was in the second year of a planned, 3-year, 25 percent reduction in the deer herd, so hunting opportunities abounded. Hunters were asked to shoot more does, lots of antlerless licenses were available and the HUSH (Help Us Stop Hunger) program was in its second year. HUSH was started by the DNR to provide an outlet for unwanted venison. For only the second time in modern history, hunters took more does than bucks. This is the short but spectacular version of what happened in 2004. DNR deer biologist Willie Suchy tells of the many changes in store for what looks like another great deer season.

So sharpen up that shooting eye, strengthen those back muscles, and get you and your dog out walking. There is no guarantee – that's why they call it hunting and not killing – but 2005 is shaping up to be a pretty good year. How are you going to do it all in just four short months?



Upland Game

Forecast by Todd Bogenschutz

Prospects for the 2005 pheasant season look much more promising than a year **ago.** Iowa experienced one of the milder winters on record for snowfall and the April-May nesting period was normal for temperature and rainfall. Iowa's pheasants had good winter survival and nesting conditions were very favorable. Localized heavy rains in May and June may have impacted some nesting in parts of southwest and north-central Iowa, but dry weather bodes well for the east-central, central and northeast regions. Early returns from the August Roadside Survey look promising – up 25 to 50 percent in some areas.

Iowa's lower three tiers of counties offer the best quail habitat in the state and thus the best quail hunting opportunities. Most of the better quail habitat exists in the southwest and south-central regions. Mild winters like this past one can lead to large increases in numbers.

Pheasant

Staff and landowners reported good numbers of male quail calling this spring, a sign of good carry-over from the winter. Weather conditions across the southern third of Iowa have been favorable for a good hatch; thus quail enthusiasts should see more quail this fall.

Iowa's cottontail rabbit numbers have been relatively high since 2003 and the mild winter of 2004-05 will likely keep them abundant. The southern third of Iowa usually offers the best rabbit numbers, with east-central and northeast Iowa close behind.

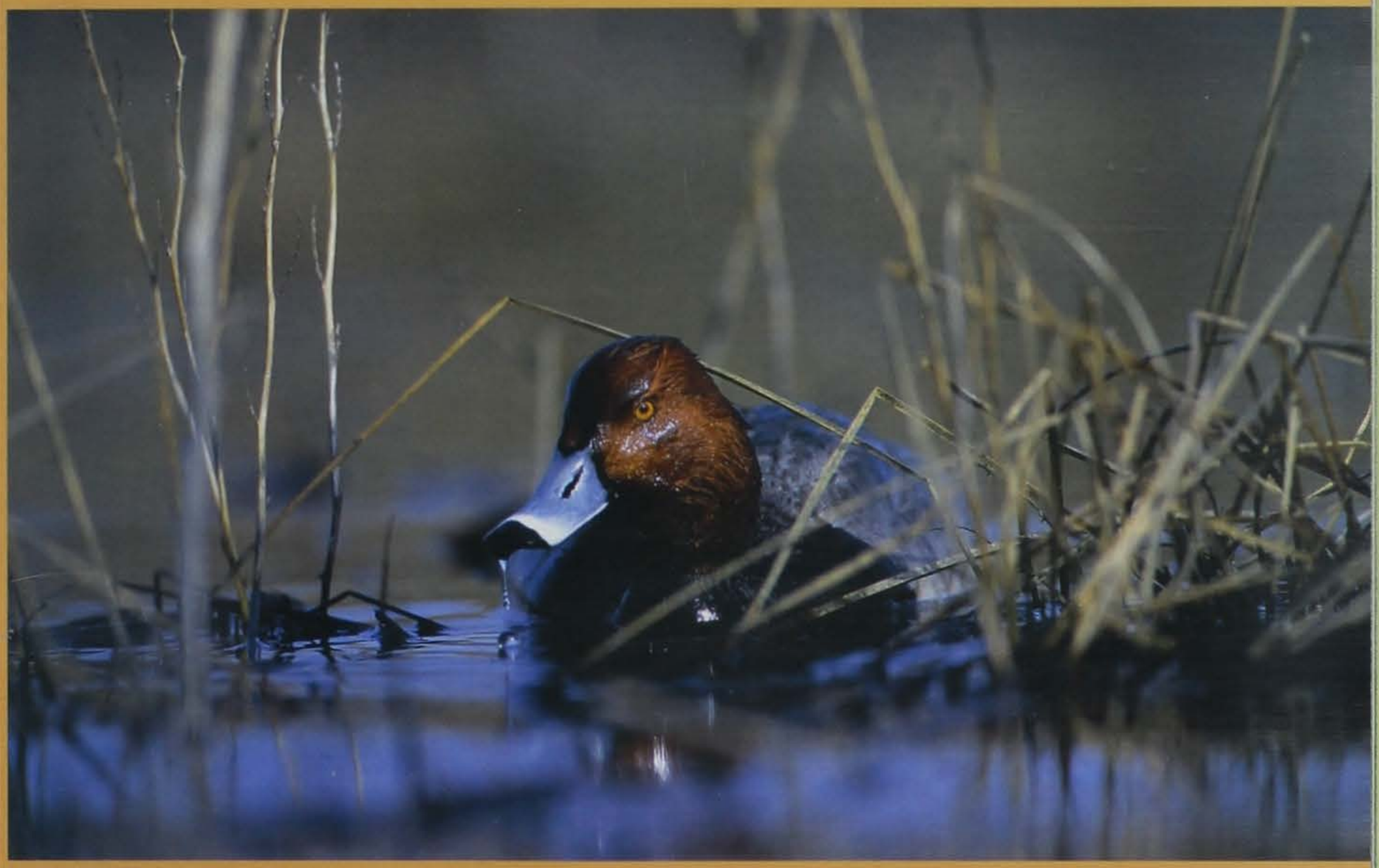
Hungarian partridge and jackrabbits are most common in the northwest, north-central and central regions of Iowa. Both species seem to reproduce best when Iowa experiences drought through out the spring and summer. Given current weather conditions don't expect much change.

If you want information on any upland game species, visit www.iowadnr.com/wildlife/ and look for the August Roadside Survey link.

Quail

Partridge

Excellent
Fair
Good
Poor

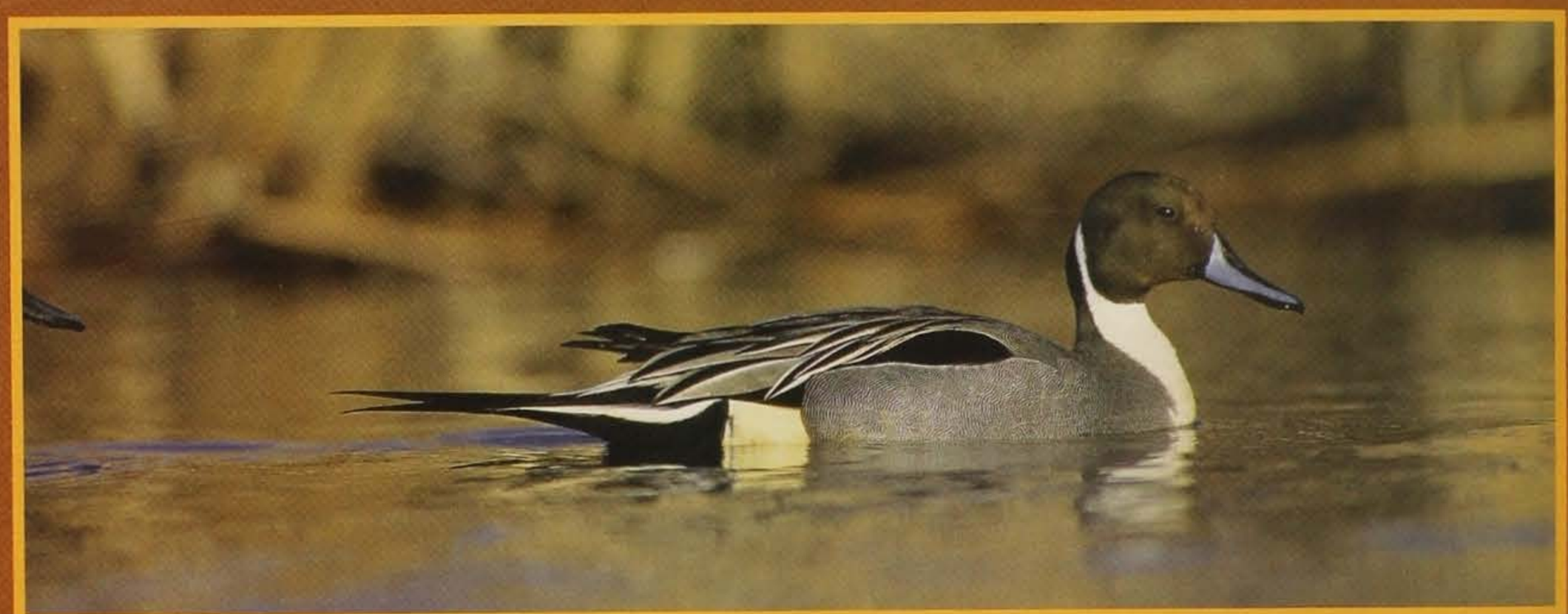


Waterfowl

Forecast by Guy Zenner

Ducks that returned to the Prairie Pothole Region (PPR) of North America this past spring found fair habitat conditions overall. Wetlands in northern Iowa, the Dakotas, Montana, Alberta and Saskatchewan were in fair to poor condition at the beginning of May due to a dry fall, winter and early spring. Well-above average precipitation in late spring recharged wetlands and encouraged good nesting cover growth. A strong renesting effort apparently occurred. Wetlands in Manitoba were in good-to-excellent condition at the start of the breeding season due to above-normal precipitation last fall and remained in good condition. In Minnesota, pond numbers increased 22 percent in 2005 compared to 2004. Overall, the number of ponds in the "duck factory" increased 37 percent over last year. This bodes well for Iowa waterfowlers because these regions produce many of the birds that migrate through Iowa each fall. On the prairies, good water usually translates to more ducks.

An estimated 32 million ducks returned to the prairies and parklands to breed, the same as last year, and just 5 percent below the long-term average. Mallards were 10 percent below their long-term average, while blue-winged teal, redheads and canvasbacks were at their long-term averages. Gadwall, green-winged teal and northern shovelers remained well above their long-term averages. American wigeon and scaup were below their long-term averages; the estimate for scaup was a record low. Northern pintails improved markedly to 17 percent higher than 2003, but still 38 percent below their long-term average.



The fall flight of mallards this year should be similar to 2004, and seasons and bag limits will be the same. Pintails can be taken in the regular duck season, but a 30-day limitation remains on canvasbacks. The bag limit on scaup was reduced from three to two daily, but season dates remain the same.

Canada goose hunting prospects also look good for this coming season. Wetland conditions in Iowa were better than average for nesting geese and a record 25,000 goslings were produced. In Minnesota, Canada goose numbers were 109 percent above the long-term average. A strong fall flight is expected from this region. Canada geese that nest in the northern regions of Manitoba and Ontario found much-improved nesting conditions this past spring and average-to-above-average production is expected this year. As a result, the Canada goose season in Iowa will again be 70-days long and hunters may have better-than-average hunting opportunities this fall.

Hunters need to take special note of the Canada goose season dates by zone this year because the season is now split into three segments in each zone. Hunters requested the change in the season dates to take advantage of Canada goose hunting opportunities that develop later in December.

This fall's waterfowl season prospects should be average, but there will still be many opportunities for memorable hunts. It is important to remember that waterfowl are highly mobile and adaptable, often going well out of their way to take advantage of good habitat conditions on their migrations south. The success of Iowa waterfowlers will ultimately depend upon local wetland habitat conditions and the weather patterns that develop over the upper Midwest this fall. If migration patterns return to normal, a good year should result. Under any circumstances, however, preseason scouting is a must to help ensure a successful outing.

Wild Turkey

Forecast by Todd Gosselink

It's too early for brood survey results as this is being written, but reports of large turkey broods are coming in. Weather conditions during the hatch and shortly after were favorable, and a good hatch and above-average poult survival are expected. Even during years of poor hatches, Iowa's wild turkey population provides ample opportunity for turkey hunting due to the good population numbers across the state.

New regulations this fall will give hunters more opportunity to take advantage of turkey hunting. For the first time the entire state will be open for fall turkey hunting for residents. The previously closed area (northwest Iowa) will be opened as new Zone 9. There will be a quota for this zone to ensure turkeys will not be overharvested. Quotas will remain the same throughout the rest of the state.

Iowa hunters will also be allowed to purchase a third turkey license, if the quota in a zone has not been filled by Nov. 1. In 2004, Zone 4 (southern Iowa) and Zone 6 (northeast Iowa) did not fill their quotas. This will allow avid turkey hunters to take advantage of the under-used turkey resource in these areas of the state.

For the first time, dogs will be allowed in turkey hunting. Traditionally, dogs were used to find and break up turkey flocks, scattering them in different directions, allowing the hunter to call them back. Using dogs for fall hunting the traditional way is once again gaining popularity in the U.S., and this regulation change will allow Iowa hunters to try different methods of fall turkey hunting. Some upland bird hunters that have encountered turkeys while pheasant or quail hunting may try their hand at this new opportunity. They must have a fall turkey hunting license with an unfilled tag in their possession while doing so and must shoot and tag their own turkey.

Hunting turkeys this fall should prove to be excellent. With more areas open to hunt, good turkey numbers, a possible third tag and a good forecast for turkey reproduction, hunters should have another good season. Iowa ranks number one in the nation for the longest fall turkey season, and consistently ranks in the top of the nation for success rates of hunters.

White-tailed Deer

Forecast by Willie Suchy

The deer harvest this fall could top 200,000 for the first time ever if Iowa's hunters take advantage of changes made for this fall's seasons. Two new seasons, more antlerless licenses available and another free license for landowners are all designed to bring the deer population down 25 percent in the next two years.

It is essential that hunters continue to take more does, especially in southern, central, east-central and northeast Iowa where herds need the additional pressure. If the deer herd is not reduced 25 percent by these methods, even greater changes in deer hunting could be coming in the near future.

November antlerless season. The biggest change is a new antlerless deer season during the last weekend of November - Friday (after Thanksgiving), Nov. 25 to Sunday, Nov. 27. The regulations will be the same as during the January antlerless season – deer may be taken with shotgun, muzzleloader, handgun or bow, party hunting is allowed and all hunters will be eligible for this license regardless of any other deer licenses they purchase.

These antlerless licenses will go on sale Nov. 12. If the antlerless license quota for a county has been filled by then, there will be no November season in that county.

Rifles. Another change attracting much attention is, for the first time in modern history, centerfire rifles will be allowed to take deer in Iowa. But there are severe restrictions on when and where centerfire rifles may be used. The January antlerless season will be extended by one week in the southern two tiers of counties (along the Missouri border). During the regular Jan. 11-22 portion of the season centerfire rifles will not be allowed, but hunters can take antlerless deer with a shotgun, muzzleloader, handgun or bow as usual. Rifles, .24 caliber and larger, will be legal only during the extended part of the season, Jan. 23-29, and only in those two tiers of

counties. Deer may be taken with centerfire rifles, shotguns, muzzleloaders, handguns or bows and party hunting is allowed during the extended portion of the season. All hunters are eligible for licenses during this season as well, but each hunter must have an antlerless license with an unfilled tag for the January season in the county where he or she is hunting.

Additional antlerless licenses. The antlerless license quota for this fall was increased to 103,000 or 19,000 more than in 2004. Antlerless quotas were increased in 57 counties mostly in southern and eastern Iowa. Nearly 90 percent of the available licenses were sold in 2004.

HUSH program. This program allows hunters who take a deer to donate it to a food bank to help feed the needy. All a hunter has to do is take the field-dressed deer to a participating locker and fill out a card. The locker processes the deer into ground meat that is picked up and distributed by a local food bank. In 2003 and 2004 the program was limited to central Iowa. A $1 charge was added to all deer licenses for this fall and this fee will allow for the HUSH program to be expanded statewide.

Landowner-tenant licenses. Landowners and tenants who are eligible for reduced-fee deer licenses can obtain an additional antlerless license this fall. One member of the landowner's family and one member of the tenant's family can obtain one any-sex license and one antlerless license for any season and one free antlerless license for the January

How to Identify a Doe During the Antlerless Seasons

Hunters frequently complain about the late antlerless season because some bucks have shed their antlers and are shot by hunters thinking they are taking a doe. In almost every case this can be avoided if hunters are careful in what they shoot.

If you only see a single deer don't shoot unless you have positively identified it as a doe. Many lone deer are bucks, either fawns or yearlings that have shed their antlers. These are often the first deer to come out to feed and are the least wary. Wait until another deer or two show up. This will usually be a family group with a doe and a couple of fawns. The adult doe will be larger than the fawns.

Check to see that the doe you are about to shoot has a *round* head and a *long* nose. Buck fawns have a short nose and the profile of the head looks like a dog. Bucks that have shed their antlers will also be large but the top of their head will be *flat or blocky*. This is where the antlers were attached (the pedicle).

Shed-antler bucks will also have a fuller looking or *blocky chest and neck*. The neck and chest on a doe will be slender and smaller. They look *sleeker and rounder*.

By following these tips and taking just a minute or two you can determine if the deer is a doe or a buck. A good pair of binoculars will help and make it easier to tell as well.

For season dates and bag limits go to www.iowadnr.com, or pick up a copy of *2005/06 Iowa Hunting and Trapping Regulations* at DNR offices and anywhere licenses are sold.

season for their farm unit. They may also purchase two more antlerless licenses for their farm unit for $11. A minimum of two acres must be owned and operated for agricultural purposes before the owner or tenant is eligible for the free licenses.

Deer Hunter Registry. Last fall nearly 800 people signed up on a DNR web site saying they would be willing to hunt antlerless deer if a landowner wanted more hunters. The hunter could pick the counties where they were willing to travel to kill deer. DNR biologists and conservation officers give this list to landowners having deer problems. Although not many contacts were made last year the program is new and not many people know about it. Hopefully it will grow and become more widely used.

Urban and Park Hunts. There are a number of new areas open for management hunts this fall. These management hunts usually limit the number of hunters that are allowed into areas that are normally closed to hunting. These areas include state and county parks and several urban areas. These hunts often have special requirements so get in touch with the local authorities listed in the deer regulations if you are interested in participating.

Suggestions for this fall. As you can see there are many opportunities for deer hunting this fall. For the deer program to accomplish its goal, hunters need to be willing to take does as part of their normal hunt. For archers and muzzleloader hunters, I suggest you obtain both your regular statewide license and an antlerless license for the county where you hunt most often.

Then, take a doe first and be selective on the type of antlered deer you take. Pass up those yearling bucks and take another doe late in the season if you can use the meat or want to donate it to the HUSH program. It will improve your buck hunting in the future.

For hunters who party hunt during the shotgun seasons, have several hunters obtain antlerless licenses in addition to their regular statewide license. Hunters should take some does early and then be selective on the type of antlered deer they kill. They can fill out on does rather than on the yearling bucks. Solitary hunters can obtain an antlerless license just like the archers or muzzleloaders.

If you want more deer hunting opportunity and the area you hunt has plenty of does get an antlerless license for one of the antlerless-only seasons. Most public land that is open to hunting does not have excessive deer numbers. Try to obtain permission on private land where landowners complain about deer numbers. Talk to your local conservation officer or wildlife biologist for suggestions if you have problems finding a place to hunt. Also be selective in the deer you take, especially during the January portion of the antlerless season, as some bucks will have shed their antlers (See sidebar).

Terry Little is the department's wildlife research supervisor in Des Moines. Todd Bogenschutz, Guy Zenner, Todd Gosselink and Willy Suchy are wildlife research biologists for the respective species they forecasted.

There's trouble brewing in southwest Iowa. Exotic Russian hogs have invaded the Riverton Wildlife Unit, and the stage is set for ecological disaster.

Commonly referred to as wild boars, Russian hogs are large, black, bristled, humpbacked animals that, for most of us, are best equated with movies featuring mid-evil hunts and extravagant feasts in royal dining halls. A native of northern European forests, Russian hogs may attain weighs reaching several hundred pounds. Some of these impressive animals have been brought to America and released on pay-to-hunt shooting preserves. Escapees have established wild populations. In Iowa, the Riverton hogs are believed to have escaped from a nearby shooting preserve located in Fremont County.

Russian boars are not your run-of-the-mill pig. They are big, destructive and, outside of their native European environment, they are totally unwanted. In June 2004, Georgia hunting guide Chris Griffin shot and killed a Russian boar that was said to have tipped the scale at nearly 1,000 pounds. If the account was true, the boar would have set a new world record. As photos of the massive creature began to circulate across the Internet, the pig quickly gained international fame. The animal was soon being referred to as Hogzilla. As the story spread, skeptics began to claim that the monster hog was actually a monster hoax. The mystery was forever laid to rest last March, when National Geographic Society scientists analyzed Hogzilla's remains and concluded that the animal had probably weighed around 800 pounds and measured about 8 feet in length. The boar's longest tusk measured nearly 18 inches. The final word was that Hogzilla had indeed easily established a new world's record.

Although new to Iowa, free-roaming hogs have been a decade's-long problem in several southern states. Universally despised, wild hogs are most noted for their incessant rooting and voracious appetites. Often referred to as nature's bulldozer, wild hogs are nothing short of a natural disaster on hooves. When it comes to wreaking havoc on natural ecosystems, nothing does it better. In the South, some wildlife biologists will even go so far as to rank free-roaming hogs in the same category as fire ants, floods and hurricanes.

> "At this point, we don't know how many wild hogs are actually out there, but we are taking the threat very seriously. We've launched a full-scale assault on these animals, and our goal is to completely eradicate the population."
>
> Carl Priebe,
> DNR Wildlife Management Biologist

"In Iowa, we have already received a preview of just how destructive these animals can be, and I think it's safe to say that they've gotten our full attention," said DNR wildlife management biologist Carl Priebe.

A notable example of that destruction occurred last summer when a group of 12 free-roaming hogs invaded a 27-acre corn field. Ravaging the plot like a living whirlwind, the pigs knocked down stocks and destroyed ears throughout the field. When the damage was assessed, it was discovered that the 12 pigs had destroyed a full 65 percent of the crop.

"We've also seen some severe damage to timbered areas," said Priebe. "At one location, we discovered a

Hog wild in Iowa

by Lowell Washburn
Photos by Carl Priebe

DNR battles wild hogs at Riverton Wildlife Unit

full acre and a half of completely bare ground. In that case, it literally looked as if someone had taken a plow through that section of the woods."

In addition to opening fragile woodland soils to erosion and destroying native plant life, foraging hogs also compete with desirable species such as squirrels, wild turkeys and deer for natural food sources such as acorns and other mast crops.

"Whatever these animals come across they'll eat," said Priebe. "If they find acorns, they'll eat those. If they come across a turkey nest, they'll eat the eggs. They'll even eat a fawn."

Unfortunately, it appears as if a wild hog's capacity for destruction is only rivaled by its ability to reproduce. Adult sows routinely pump out two litters of four to eight piglets per year. Within six months, those youngsters are sexually mature and ready to begin producing young of their own. A study conducted in the southern U.S. found that, even with natural mortality, a herd of just 10 free-roaming hogs could build to a population of 2,500 animals within five years.

In Iowa, as elsewhere, wild hogs enjoy no legal protection. There are no bag limits, no closed season, no restriction on weapons. Unfortunately, there are also no case studies of where hunting has been a viable means of hog control.

"Although I've talked to biologists in other states, I haven't been able to find a single case of where hunting has had an effect on populations," said Priebe. "There is some interest (in hunting) and, so far, hunters have killed 13 pigs here. But it seems that for every one or two hogs actually shot, another 9 or 10 become educated.

"These hogs are truly wild and are very sensitive to human presence. After just two days of hunting pressure, the pigs at Riverton had already moved a mile and a half and became completely nocturnal. I think it's obvious that hunting alone won't control them."

Catching wild hogs in baited live-traps may provide greater potential. Earlier this spring, the DNR attempted to lure pigs into a 16-foot-diameter circular walk-in trap baited with corn. The trap was patterned after those currently being used by the Missouri Department of Conservation.

"We set the trap in March, and immediately caught 20 hogs — two mature sows accompanied by 18 young pigs. I thought, no sweat, we can catch these things," said Priebe. "That initial catch was misleading, and it's all been uphill since then."

"One of our major problems is that wild hogs are completely unpredictable. At Forney Lake, we baited a site with corn. When we came back the next day, the hogs had cleaned up every kernel. We rebaited, and planned for success. Two days went by and the pigs never showed. On the third night they returned, completely rooted up a substantial area next to the bait, and never touched a single kernel of corn. That's when I began to realize how challenging this project was going to be."

"The big difference between Iowa and other states is that we're still dealing with a very limited number of hogs. I think there are probably less than 50 animals still at large. There is still a chance that we'll win this thing."

Hunting wild pigs may do more harm than good

by Alan Foster

Carl Priebe used to spend his days overseeing the 20 wildlife management areas in southwest Iowa. That meant making sure the roughly 10,000 acres of public access supported the native waterfowl, upland game and forest animals that flourished there. It meant working with private landowners who wanted the same for the animals on their property.

Now, the Iowa DNR wildlife management biologist and his staff of three have a new assignment — studying, tracking, monitoring and trying to eradicate an animal few ever thought would pose a problem in Iowa — wild hogs. Russian hogs and feral pigs have invaded the Green Hollow Wildlife Area at the Riverton Unit, generally wreaking havoc on the habitat. Across the state, in pockets of southeast Iowa, feral pigs are doing the same.

"We spent most of March doing nothing but pigs," Priebe said, "building traps, checking traps, baiting sites and looking for new bait sites."

And answering phone calls. Lots of them. Since wild pigs are not protected in Iowa, many of the calls came from hunters looking for an opportunity to pursue an animal that previously was only an option at a few pay-to-hunt game farms. And that is causing some consternation to the staff whose goal is to eradicate an animal that is already wreaking havoc on one wildlife area, and is poised to do the same on others if left unchecked.

"In other states, hunting has not proven to be successful in stemming population growth," Priebe said.

In fact, hunting may even be counterproductive.

"If 10 pigs walk out into a field and a hunter shoots one, he's killed one pig but educated nine," he said. "And it appears that hunting pressure tends to turn them nocturnal, and they will move readily if pressured."

"That's why we've resorted to trapping," Priebe said. "In some cases, we have been able to trap multiple pigs, but with hunting, you shoot one and the rest scatter."

It seems to be working. To date, 30 of the 48 pigs removed from the population have been trapped, while only 13 have been shot by hunters. The rest were either captured by other means or killed by motorists on the road. Although the efforts seem to be paying off, Priebe knows the work is not done.

"Research has indicated we are going to have to kill 70 percent of the population each year just to keep pace with the population growth."

Help Is On The Way

by Lowell Washburn

The Landowner Incentive Program Offers New Hope for Iowa's Threatened and Endangered Species

Located smack in the middle of America's bread basket, Iowa contains one of the most altered landscapes in the nation. More than 99 percent of the state's native prairie has been plowed, nearly 95 percent of its wetlands drained, and over half of the original hardwood forest has been logged.

Some wildlife species, such as Canada geese, deer and wild turkeys, have not only learned to adapt and survive these changes, but have indeed made resounding modern-day comebacks. Unfortunately, these are the exceptions. Many of Iowa's plant and wildlife species have not fared as well. Currently, 238 species of native plants and animals cling to an uncertain future as threatened or endangered species. Without immediate aid, many of these species will disappear within our lifetimes.

So much for the bad news. According to the DNR's Kelly Smith, help is on the way.

"In the past, helping endangered species meant acquiring land to protect critical or unique habitats," said Smith. "But recently we have begun to move in a new direction due to a Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) grant from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The federal

Lowell Washburn

LIP grant provides Iowa with more than $1.37 million for a 75 percent cost-share to private landowners who wish to voluntarily protect or enhance habitats used by threatened or endangered species.

"Since most threatened and endangered species exist on privately owned land, the new LIP approach makes perfect sense," said Smith, who is coordinating the effort for Iowa. The state has been divided into nine designated priority areas where rare species are known to exist. Interested landowners receive technical assistance and written guidelines aimed at improving habitats for these threatened or endangered species.

Kevin Andersen is a DNR wildlife biologist stationed at Fairfield in southeast Iowa. Anderson, who is currently assisting landowners in implementing LIP projects on their properties, has already detected some dramatic changes in the way both landowners and professional biologists view endangered species.

"So far, I'm mainly working with landowners on the lower Cedar River floodplain in Muscatine and Louisa counties," said Andersen. "A lot of our work here has focused on reptiles and amphibians and there are a good number of different snake species here. There are several ongoing research projects regarding herps (reptiles and amphibians) and we (DNR) asked what we could do to benefit all species living on the floodplain.

"Most people understand that some species, like the massasauga rattlesnake, are in trouble in Iowa, but what fewer folks realize is that some of the herps that we think of as being common are also showing substantial declines," said Andersen. "When I was a kid, bullsnakes were very very common. It isn't that way anymore, and I'm just flabbergasted at the downturn they've taken during the past 15 or 20 years. The same goes for Blanding's turtles. They're still here, but where biologists say they used to see 10 there's now one."

Much of the habitat work in the lower Cedar River floodplain has focused on grassland plantings on older Wetland Reserve Projects. Following the now famous floods of 1993, most WRPs have been more or less left to themselves with little or no active management. During recent years, the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) has provided prairie plantings on several of the sites. "The next step for these habitats," said Andersen, "will be to

Lowell Washburn

Iowa's eastern massasauga (above) is a candidate for the federal list of threatened and endangered species. The long-eared owl (left) is listed as threatened on Iowa's threatened and endangered species list.

Federally Listed Species

Endangered
Topeka Shiner
Pallid Sturgeon
Indiana Bat
Interior Least Tern
Iowa Pleistocene Snail
Higgin's-Eye Pearly Mussel

Threatened
Piping Plover
Bald Eagle
Mead's Milkweed
Prairie Bush Clover
Northern Monkshood
Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid
Western Prairie Fringed Orchid

Candidate
Dakota Skipper
Eastern Massasauga
Sheepnose Spectacle Case

One objective to prairie management on LIP lands is to open them up to sunlight so that turtles like the Blanding's (far right) and snakes will have places to bask and hunt. Prescribed burning does just that by removing shaded canopies of Reed's canary grass and woody vegetation replacing them with native plants. Improving habitats in this way benefits a wide variety of species — both game and nongame. The Blanding's turtle is currently listed as threatened on Iowa's threatened and endangered species list.

The map below identifies priority areas for the LIP program and some species associated with them.

Series by Kevin Andersen

Eastern Massasauga
Forest
Loess Hills
Lower Cedar Valley
Oak Savannah
Prairie
Timber Rattlesnake
Topeka Shiner
Algific Talus Slopes

work toward diversifying the plant community using LIP cost-share.

"Improving these sites will not only benefit threatened and endangered species, but will also improve habitats for a wide variety of nongame and game species as well," he said.

"One of our objectives will be to open up the prairies to sunlight so that turtles and snakes will have places to bask and hunt. One of the biggest challenges is to get rid of the shaded canopy of Reed's canary grass and replace it with native plant species," added Andersen.

"So far, 10 landowners (in our area) have signed on for LIP cost-share and our initial emphasis has been prescribed burning. Timing is very critical. Down here, we're seeing snails, snakes and bullfrogs becoming active during the first 10 days of March."

"Before we began to concentrate

Lowell Washburn

Landowners interested in LIP should contact LIP coordinator **Kelly Smith** at 515-281-6247 or Kelly.Smith@dnr.state.ia.us or any of the following regional biologists:

Northwest
Kathy Koskovich 712-276-2774 ext 108
Katherine.Koskovich@dnr.state.ia.us
Maury Muhm 712-336-3524
Maury.Muhm@dnr.state.ia.us
North-central
Josh Gansen 515-573-4351
Josh.Gansen@dnr.state.ia.us
Bryan Beukema 641-923-3518
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Greg Schmitt 563-422-6201
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Scott Boose 319-352-4037
Southeast
Kevin Andersen 641-472-8411
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Southwest
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on endangered species work, we would just work around the weather and burn whenever we could. Today, we're really beginning to rethink our strategy. In addition to general grassland management, we also need to look at having the least amount of negative impact on reptiles and amphibians. Things that before seemed relatively simple have become very complex. LIP has made all of us step back and rethink how we do business. Today, we're using every tool in the box and are even inventing some new ones," said Andersen.

Helga McDaniel, a DNR wildlife biologist working with private lands in the south-central region of the state, agrees that LIP is causing everyone to take a step back and rethink some former management practices. In some cases, it also calls for an increased amount of patience.

"So far, I've talked to about 18 landowners and 13 have taken the plunge, which is very encouraging," said McDaniel.

"Most of the work here has been with savannah restoration — which mainly involves the removal of woody invasion and burning. Some landowners are surprised to learn that they don't actually have to be able to identify a threatened or endangered species on their property to be eligible for LIP funding. They just have to have habitats within a priority region. If their habitat matches something where an endangered species (like the slender glass lizard) has been sighted, then we'll do a management plan for that site. Of course, our management plans will also benefit a number of other savannah species like bobwhite quail and barn owls or species of concern like redheaded woodpeckers, Indiana bats and long-eared owls," said McDaniel.

"I think one of our main challenges will be to instill a sense of patience. To make a restoration complete requires a long-term commitment to burning. With savannahs, you see more of a patchy fire than with prairies. There is not the intensity of heat and you have to return to a site more often than with grasslands. It usually takes several fires to get what we're looking for. I know of one private area where the landowners have been burning for 10 years and they're still finding new plants at that site."

From a Single Acorn

Story and photos by Brian Button

Word was out. A smattering of reports indicated an ancient Iowan had died. After 431 years, Iowa's oldest oak tree gave to a windstorm and sprawled out like an immense corpse on the sunlit forest floor. A crushing fall broke the massive trunk in two pieces and separated the crown in an earth-banging final act.

Based on growth ring samples, Iowa's oldest oak tree sprouted in 1573, back when Galileo was a 9-year-old and yet to complete his telescope or thermometer.

Although the tree fell sometime last year, its death had more secrets to give today. John Pearson, DNR's plant ecologist, John Holt, a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers manager at Red Rock Wildlife Management Area, and I hiked amid a torrent of mosquitoes in search of Iowa's eldest oak. It wasn't an easy find. Tucked away on the backside of a steep, trail-less ridge, it took repeated backtracking to locate it.

In the forest fight for supremacy, what we would find — woods filled with other white oaks, the offspring of four-plus centuries of acorn production from an old survivor? After all, imagine how extensive a family tree reaches from a single set of ancestors traced to 1573. How many offspring would this *one* tree leave behind?

The white oak witnessed undreamed of changes. Around 1600, Indians numbered one million on the continent, already greatly reduced by European diseases. Today Polk County alone is half that population. The tree witnessed a changing forest and the march of human knowledge — when it sprouted, most thought Earth the center of the solar system. Lands were discovered, colonies formed, nations born, kingdoms ended and millions killed by disease and warfare. Empires had crumbled, regimes fallen. Natural resources had been extracted and species destroyed with fanaticism. The last few decades of its life saw widespread attempts to restore those same resources.

But first we had to find it. "These are the worst mosquitoes I've seen since the Everglades," mumbles Holt, as we climb out of a wet Des Moines River bottom and bramble through undergrowth at Red Rock Wildlife Management Area near Hartford in northeast Warren County. "We must have hit the hatch just right. It's pretty amazing in a bad sort of way."

Undergrowth snaps and pops under our hiking boots as we jump over a small creek, slogging up the ridgeline, stooping under branches. "Follow the ridge for a while," says Pearson, ahead of us and winding through, over and under growth while batting at a mosquito cloud and rattling off plant names.

Adapted to our hostile climate, Iowa oaks developed natural insecticides and fire resistance. Strong wood and roots resist wind

throw, propelling their famed furniture value. "These long-lived ones have the adaptations to fend off those kinds of stresses for many years," says Pearson, swatting a mosquito. "That's the result of thousands of years of evolution in this spot, encountering the stresses this environment has to offer."

Walking down a slope, crashing through undergrowth, Pearson, ahead of us, swatting at bugs, calls "Yep, there it is! There are the railroad spikes." The downed tree is unique by age as well as by five spikes in the trunk, part of an old tree stand. "Oh my gosh. It's uprooted," he yells. The exposed roots hang high in the air, like distress signals from sailors standing on an exposed keel of an overturned ship. It looks wrong, proof of a violent ending.

It fell hard. It crashed over one small tree, but doesn't get hung in any others. Near it, trees are absent as the oak dominated such a large area, perhaps 75 feet across. It left a vast hole in the otherwise shaded, lush canopy. Now it lay in the bright sunshine, angled down into a gentle ravine. Undergrowth made it a hard find.

Pearson's hand swishes like a horsetail, keeping mosquitoes away. The tree, he says, was eye-catching when you first saw it standing, "Suddenly a big, spreading oak filled up this space before you and told you right away this tree was very different from the rest — a relic of a previous era."

Several years ago in October was the last time he saw it, a much easier find, the forest unshrouded by leaves and undergrowth and mosquito free. Today, we climb onto the downed trunk, walking four feet above the ground. Brown leaves from last summer hang limp and curled like roosting bats. It was *alive* when it blew down.

From our high perch on the massive trunk, we survey the area for offspring; nil at first glance. "The trees that don't survive drop out of the gene pool and the survivors produce more progeny. So this is the end point of a long history" says Pearson.

The conditions under which oaks originated no longer exist. The old oaks grew in an open woodland, or savannah. Today, these conditions are not even a memory for most Iowans; a dense understory of shrubby growth chokes young oaks in favor of shade-tolerant trees. Fire-suppression and loss of traditional grazers like elk have allowed the woods to close in. Succession is making it impossible for oak reproduction. "There simply isn't enough sunlight," he adds.

As the older oaks die and are not replaced, the forest transforms from oaks to something else — maples, basswood, white ash and hackberry.

The death of Iowa's oldest oak tree is more than the death of an elder. "It's a closing of one chapter and an opening of a new one. An ending of the oak forest chapter and the beginning of a new forest of a new

Significant Events During Life of Iowa's Oldest Oak

1573 Iowa's oldest oak tree begins.

1585 Roanoke Colony established by English

1600 Indian population estimated by some at 1 million, already greatly declined by disease from Europeans since 1492

1607 English settle Jamestown

1620 Pilgrims reach Plymouth, Mass. on Mayflower

1630 Estimated colonial population 5,700

1634 French explorer, Jean Nicollet, first European to travel through the Great Lakes, possibly reaches the Mississippi River.

1656 Harvard accepts sun-centered universe only 23 years after Catholic Inquisition of Galileo repudiates it.

1673 Frenchmen Louis Joliet and Jacques Marquette paddle Mississippi River near present day Marquette to Keokuk. A local chief gives his 10-year-old son as a guide

1675 4,000 New Englanders engaged in fishing with 600 ships

1680 Colonial population 155,600

1690 Pierre Le Sueur reports Indian lead mining in the Dubuque area.

1706 Closed deer season on Long Island. Continuous hunting almost eliminates population

1720 French expansion in Mississippi River Valley

1750 Industrial Age begins

1788 Julien Dubuque first permanent European settler in Iowa

1803 Louisiana Purchase doubles size of U.S.

1809 Fort Madison constructed; first U.S. Army outpost in Upper Mississippi Valley

1833 Black Hawk Purchase Treaty, legalized non-Indian settlement in the Iowa Territory begins in earnest.

1833 "I had never rode through a country so full of game." Joseph Street, surveyor, after traveling Turkey, Wapsipinicon and Cedar rivers in northeast Iowa.

1837 John Deere invents steel plow

1840 Iowa has 28 million acres of tallgrass prairie, wetlands and seven million acres of forest that cover nearly 20 percent of the land.

1846 Iowa becomes 29th state. Pop. 96,088. By May, 16,000 Mormons cross Mississippi River into Iowa. Spend following winter near Council Bluffs before beginning Mormon Trail to Utah.

1850 U.S. population 23,191,876. Iowa doubles to 192,914. Eight house

species," says Pearson. While the oldest tree died with a titanic explosive crash — entire oak forests die silently and slowly with little notice.

We see another oak, but it is not an offspring of the ancient white oak. It is a red oak, already overtopped by a honey locust bristling with clusters of six-inch thorns. A selective cut of the locust could release the red oak to let it thrive. Pearson estimates the red oak would be 20 years old if growing in full sun, like a yard, but here in the suppressed light its age may be half a century.

From our high roost on the downed tree, Holt spies seedlings growing atop the ancient fallen oak. When they sprouted, they were growing at the base of the tree, nestled in a dirt-covered depression at the roots, but after the fall they are now four feet above ground. "A doomed tree growing on a dead tree," quips Holt. To look closer, we walk single file along the massive gnarled trunk, over to the exposed roots, climb down and tromp through the growth.

Two cottonwoods and an elm sprouted when the huge oak stood. When it fell, these seedlings were lifted off the forest floor and fell horizontal with the trunk. As proof, we find curved stems as they redirected upward toward the light.

Although dead, the colossal oak will still play an important role. "It's on its way to becoming part of the forest floor," says Pearson. The twisted, gnarled and knotted trunk will be a long-lasting feature, decomposing over decades. It will become a substrate for mosses, lichens, liverworts, mushrooms, insects and microorganisms. "So it will continue to serve the ecosystem, but in a different way."

I kill 12 mosquitoes with one swat to my thigh as we find a white oak seedling, probably an offspring of the ancient. It is tennis ball high. "It has grown and died back several times. And there probably isn't enough light to let it grow to maturity. It will keep trying a few more years and then succumb," says Pearson.

Now oaks are a dominant species, a major feature of the forest community, but they are dwindling as the old oaks die, he continues. "We will be left with the occasional lucky tree germinating in a small opening or on the edge of the new forest, so it will become a very minor part of a new forest."

For thousands of years, elk, bison and fire kept the forests open, preventing dense undergrowth. Indians also harvested trees, helping keep open forests. These factors allowed oak germination. Today's woods are "much shrubbier, much denser, much thicker than in pre-settlement times," explains Pearson, noting that woodlands then were open, the forest floor covered with herbaceous growth such as forest geraniums, bottle-brush grass, sedges and ferns.

Fire also aided burn-proof oaks at the expense of other trees. Even an oak a few inches in diameter can survive a burn. Decades of fire suppression have hindered oak growth.

Fighting the summer heat and clouds of mosquitos, DNR plant ecologist John Pearson (foreground, right) and Army Corps of Engineers manager for Red Rock Reservoir John Holt measure the recently fallen 431-year-old oak.

Examining the ancient oak reveals a large burl or knot with whorled grain as fine as baby hair (page 26 and 31), a healed over old wound, possibly from a broken branch.

sparrows introduced to America from England.

1855 Iowa railroad construction decimates forests for ties, cars and trestles. Six acres of oak needed per mile of track.

1857 Steamboat crews decimate forests to fuel boats. Iowa State Agricultural Society pleas for more careful timber use.

1859 Naturalist Charles Darwin publishes book outlining evolution.

1866-67 Last mountain lion in Iowa killed

1869 Iowa ranks 9th in lumber production. Logs floated from Wisconsin fuel sawmill boomtowns along Iowa's Mississippi River towns. In Clinton, sawdust clogs the river and creates new land.

1870 Iowa population: 1 million.

1871-72 Last elk killed in Iowa. Yellowstone National Park created, world's first.

1876 Last Iowa bear killed

1885-86 Last Iowa wolf killed. Gas car built by German Gottleib Daimler.

1874-75 Arbor Day adopted in Iowa. Iowa's original 7 million forested acres reduced to 2 million.

1874-1900 Iowa largest coal producing state

1887 Boone and Crockett Club formed by Teddy Roosevelt and other conservationists disturbed by decimated wildlife populations.

1893-94 Rise of bicycling for transportation, recreation. Bike sales surge to over 1 million from 20,000 the previous year. Last whooping crane in Iowa

1896 Nobel Prize winning Swedish physicist Svante Arrhenius warns of Global Warming.

1900 U.S. population 75,994,575. Iowa population 2.2 million. Beavers, otters gone from Iowa. Wetlands drained.

1902 It should be "a criminal offence...to allow any species of filth, from hog-lots, barnyards, privies, dead animals or anything of the sort to drain into or find exit in the waters of any lake or stream," early Iowa conservationist, Thomas Macbride.

1909 Henry Ford produces 19,051 Model T cars (25 miles per gallon).

1910 Ninety-seven percent of prairies converted to cropland. Last Iowa lead mine closes.

1914 Once so numerous they "blackened the sky," the last passenger pigeon dies in Cincinnati Zoo.

1916 National Park Service established

1920 Backbone State Park, Iowa's first

1930 Dutch elm disease enters U.S.

1930s Decade long dust bowl

1933 Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) created. By 1942, workers planted *three-billion* trees, built lodges, bathhouses and shelters in many Iowa parks.

1934 First federal duck stamp

Regaining the Oak Forest?

Pearson, who holds masters and doctoral degrees in botany and forestry, notes restoring oak forests is possible with an integrated approach. He lists cutting, thinning, burning and "perhaps some intelligent grazing" working together. With the loss of elk in the mid-1800s, "all we are left with are the poor tools we have available to us, such as cattle. But properly designed and executed, cattle could be used in an ecological way to replicate, mimic some of the effects of elk."

With a cautious tone he clarifies, "I am definitely not advocating the typical woodlot mismanagement we saw on a lot of farms where the cattle were left permanently, but intelligent scheduling of limited grazing." In years past, cattle were hard on new trees and understory species, but the established trees benefited by increased light. When grazing, fire and cutting stopped, nothing prevented the closing of the forest canopy.

The complexities of ecosystem management are poorly recognized by many citizens. "When you buy a car, it comes with an owner's manual and a blueprint of how everything is put together. With these natural species and ecosystems, they don't come with owner's manuals, and we spend our time figuring our how they are put together and how they tick," adds Pearson.

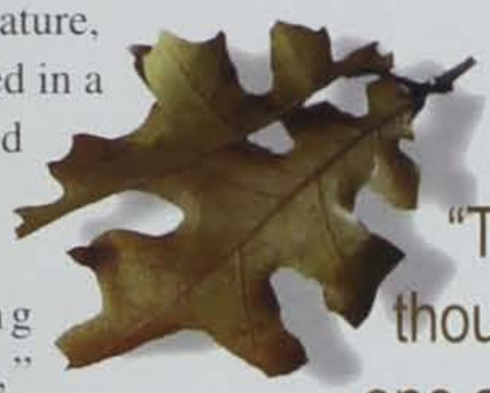
Scientists agree action is needed to restore oak forests, but in reality, there are too few workers to execute the tasks. Managing forests using fire and grazing is a relatively new idea, he adds.

Taking another look at the old oak, we find a waist-sized burl or knot with whorled grain that looks like fine baby hair; it healed over an old wound from a broken branch. At one time, perhaps centuries ago, it branches could knock a hiker in the head 6 feet off the ground. "In order to have branches that low, that big, there had to be a lot of open sunlight," says Pearson, his left shoulder blade covered by 23 mosquitoes.

The great white oak left a few offspring, but their fate is in question.

In recent times, this forest saw

cows grazing. Large, mature honey locusts are abundant. "This was a pasture, the locusts are indicative of it. Now mature, they started in a pasture and matured when pasturing stopped," says Pearson.



"The creation of a thousand forests is in one acorn."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Despite the impressive age of the old oak, it's absent from the DNR's great tree list which gauges size. "There are bigger white oaks," adds Pearson. The tallest oak is a 104-foot swamp white oak in Cedar Falls. An 80-foot white oak is in Pleasant Hill. The champion tree list favors trees grown in yards with full sunlight. "Those trees get bigger than these natural trees growing with competitors in a shady environment." At times, thinking the old trees might break size records, he checked, but a yard tree is always bigger. "There is no contest."

Old trees are valuable because they tell how old the species can become. "I suppose if the storm hadn't come along, it would have lived longer even yet. I would think the number of (oak) trees getting past 450 years would be very small, going on what these trees tell us. But there are a bunch of white oaks in the 200-300 year-old category still doing quite well."

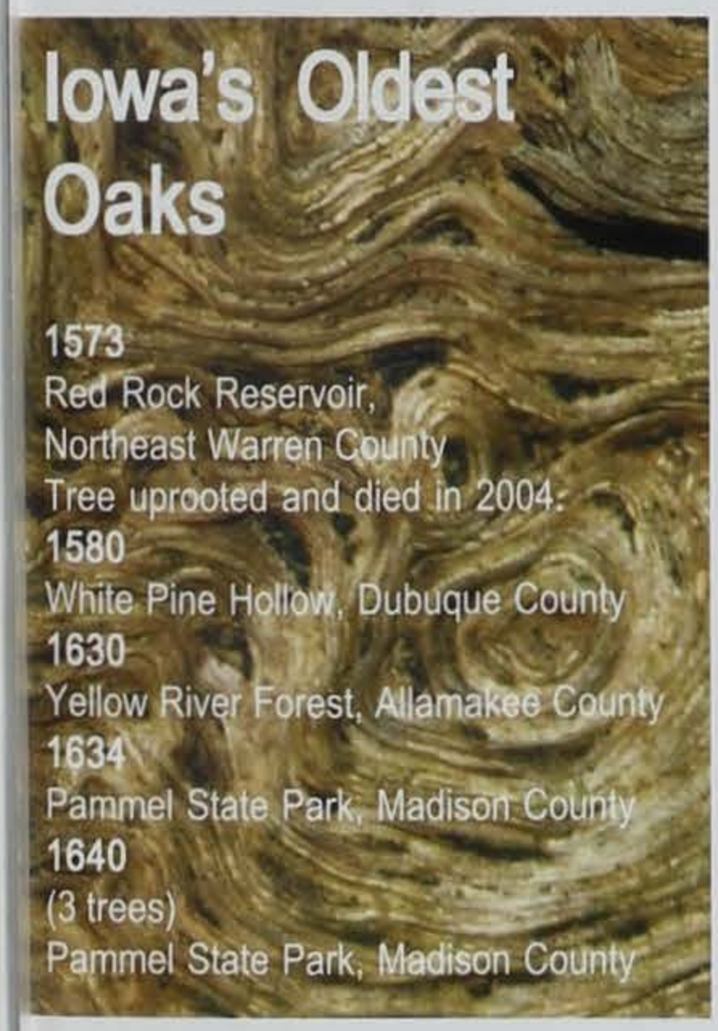
Pearson's sorrow to hear the demise of this oak is also practical. "It confirmed what I knew had to happen. It does signify the closing of an oak forest chapter. It's not just this one tree, but it symbolizes what's going on with the whole forest in general."

It was the oldest oak, but Iowa's oldest tree title rests in Backbone State Park with a 600-year-old eastern red cedar. The newly crowned oldest oak resides in White Pine Hollow in Dubuque County. It is 7 years younger than this one.

In the end, the wind blew it down —a development, a parking lot or other encroachment didn't.

"That's the one nice thing about public property. Even if it changes from one kind of forest to another, at least it's still a forest. Even if we don't do anything else to it, we've done that much of our job by keeping it public space," says Pearson.

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



1970 First Earth Day and widespread concern over environmental pollution. Clean Air Act enacted.

1974 Iowa forests cover just 1.6 million acres from the original 7 million.

1976 Dutch elm disease reduces 77 million elms to 34 million.

1977 Clean Water Act passes.

1979 Iowa's Bottle Bill begins—fosters 92 percent recycling rate, enough cans to fill the UNI Dome in Cedar Falls.

1987 Iowa's Groundwater Protection Act

1990 Neal Smith Wildlife Area established to restore 8,600 acres of prairie, oak savanna, bison and elk near Prairie City.

1993 City of Waverly installs wind turbine, first municipal utility to own and operate in Midwest.

1999 Honda Insight, two-seat hybrid electric vehicle, enters U.S. market (70 mpg)

2005
More than 400 wind turbines in Iowa produce enough power for 130,000 homes and avoid 1.3 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions.

Forests cover 2.1 million acres.

Iowa population 2.9 million. U.S. Population 296,197,617. Nearly 400,000 reside in Polk County, itself nearly half of the entire estimated native population in 1573.

GEOCACHING:

Catching On in Iowa

By Joe Wilkinson
Photos by Clay Smith

You might slog through a muddy riverbank to reach a bridge piling. Maybe you'll bike through a park to reach a hollow tree. It could be a walk across the parking lot or hiking a mountain trail. Whatever the route, geocaching gets you outdoors and curious. And it's catching on.

A sport? A hobby? A game? It's hard to pin down just *what* geocaching is. This combination of satellite technology and old-fashioned shoe leather boasts devoted disciples and casual cachers; hundreds in Iowa, thousands across the country and who knows how many worldwide.

In simple terms, geocaching is a treasure hunt. A container is hidden — typically on public land. The game is to find it. From that point, you make it as simple or as challenging as you desire.

"I have a friend who took two weeks to drive to Florida because he was 'caching' all the way down," laughs Jerry Keys.

Keys, environmental education coordinator for the Story County Conservation Board, stumbled into geocaching about four years ago when he found an ammunition box in a hollow tree at McFarland Park near Ames. Since then, he has recorded 72 finds from Iowa to New York to Texas.

"It's a great pastime, especially when you're traveling, visiting people in other states," offers Keys. "I'm an avid hunter, so I have lots of excuses to get outdoors during fall and winter. In the summer,

though, it's a good excuse to get out again. It's a chance to explore natural areas you otherwise wouldn't."

Critical to the hunt is a global positioning system (GPS) unit and access to web sites that list cache coordinates. From the web site, you select a hunt depending on locale, terrain, degree of difficulty and other factors. For instance, enter your ZIP code and local caches appear. Going on vacation? Punch in your route and you will have a variety of selections.

Tracy Fahrion and her husband, Dan, of Des Moines, worked in some geocaching on their honeymoon this summer.

"We went to Colorado and wanted to break up the long Interstate drive," explains Fahrion. "When we felt like stopping for awhile, we would pick up some coordinates and try to find a cache. There are a ton of them along the Interstate – rest stops, that sort of thing."

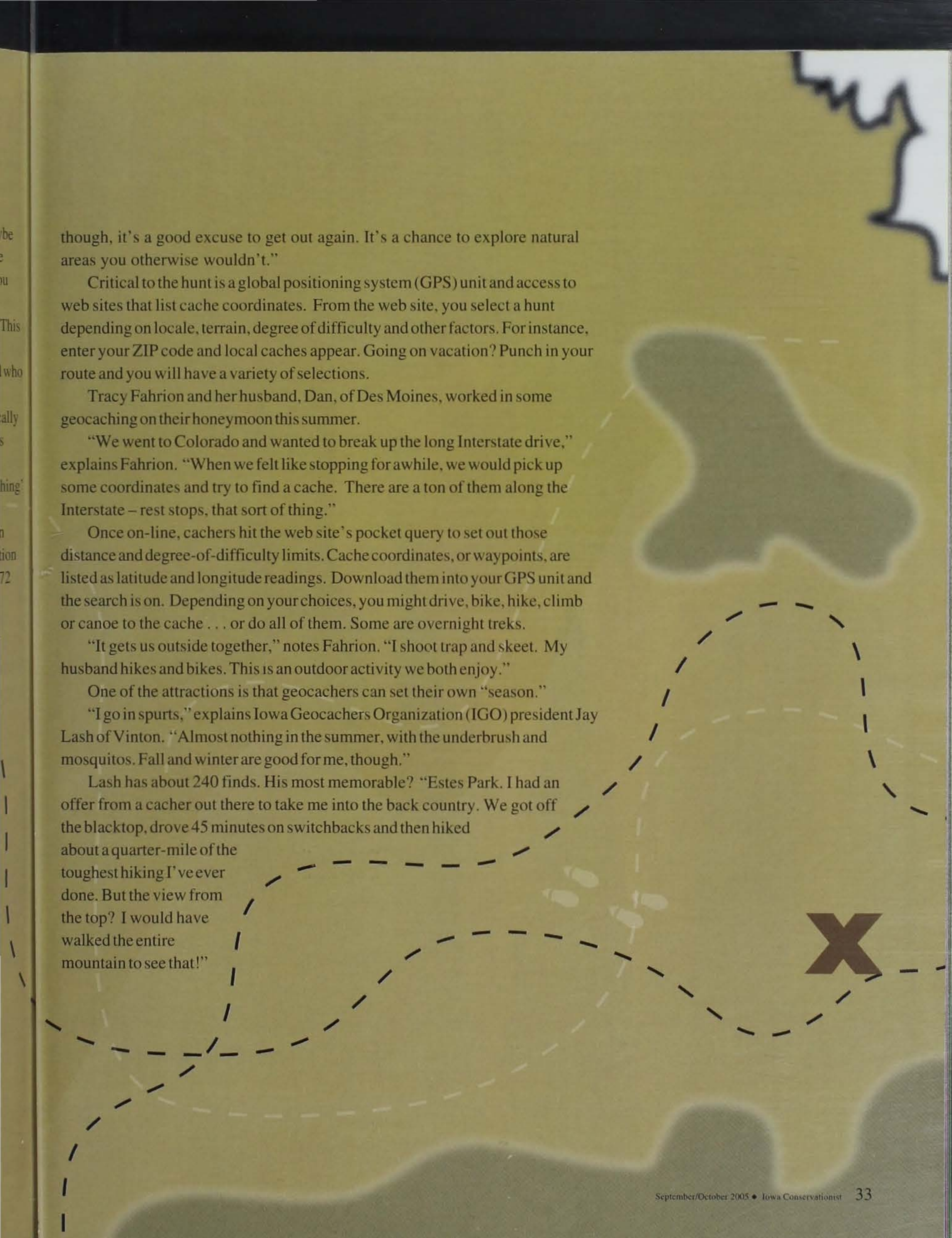
Once on-line, cachers hit the web site's pocket query to set out those distance and degree-of-difficulty limits. Cache coordinates, or waypoints, are listed as latitude and longitude readings. Download them into your GPS unit and the search is on. Depending on your choices, you might drive, bike, hike, climb or canoe to the cache . . . or do all of them. Some are overnight treks.

"It gets us outside together," notes Fahrion. "I shoot trap and skeet. My husband hikes and bikes. This is an outdoor activity we both enjoy."

One of the attractions is that geocachers can set their own "season."

"I go in spurts," explains Iowa Geocachers Organization (IGO) president Jay Lash of Vinton. "Almost nothing in the summer, with the underbrush and mosquitos. Fall and winter are good for me, though."

Lash has about 240 finds. His most memorable? "Estes Park. I had an offer from a cacher out there to take me into the back country. We got off the blacktop, drove 45 minutes on switchbacks and then hiked about a quarter-mile of the toughest hiking I've ever done. But the view from the top? I would have walked the entire mountain to see that!"



Even with the cache coordinates, don't expect to walk right up to it. Your GPS gets you there, but the cache is not designed to stand out.

"Nine times out of 10, you can walk to within 50 feet . . . even three feet of it," says Fahrion. "We were looking for a micro cache once. We looked all over a playground, but couldn't find it until we started looking *under* stuff. There it was — an eraser-sized container and a magnet holding it to the bottom of some playground equipment."

For many caches, the key is to hide it in plain sight. "Once, we had tracked it into a woodlot but could not find it. We spent a half hour looking," recalls Keys. "Finally, my 12-year-old niece asked, 'how long has that owl been sitting on that branch?' It was ingenious. They had wired a plastic owl to a tree branch."

Another time, an electrical wiring conduit just didn't look right, as it led out from a road sign. Keys' suspicion paid off when he found the microcache inside the out-of-place pipe.

Caches come in all sizes. A favorite is an ammunition or dry storage box – the kind stocked at most outdoor stores. Caches are tucked in, above, behind or over hollow trees, logs, rocks, overhangs, buildings and other features of the terrain. Inside, a logbook is standard issue, allowing successful cachers to list when they found it and any other notes. Some have room for jokes or observations about the search or the surrounding scenery. Most caches offer trinkets – key chains, plastic toys, erasers, puzzles, coins – anything lending itself to the "treasure" aspect of the hunt. And caching etiquette dictates anyone *taking* a trinket replaces it with one of their own.

Part of the challenge is placing a cache or finding one without alerting "muggles" – people not aware of the caching community.

"We had tracked one all the way to the Botanical Center (in downtown Des Moines) but we had to wait a half hour for all the people to wander away," remembers Fahrion. "Sometimes you have to be stealthy – wait it out."

Cacher chivalry dictates that the cache and

Geocaching requires downloading coordinates from a web site to a GPS unit (opposite page) and using the hand-held global positioning system to locate a cache. It is a high-tech treasure hunt even the biggest kid can't resist.

location not be altered. Someone unfamiliar with the pastime might move it or even leave with it.

But what is the attraction? For most cachers, it is the thrill of the hunt, the satisfaction of solving a mystery. The more serious cachers want that FTF, or "first-to-find" status on a new site. Though Fahrion has fun with it, she laughs when asked if she is "hard-core."

"Not really," she smiles. "Some people spend all hours checking the web site for new caches. We just go in our spare time."

As the on-line-outdoor phenomenon takes root, the opportunities grow, too. Letterboxes (clues are used rather than satellite coordinates), travel bugs (trinkets are relayed to predetermined destinations) and virtual caches (a location or landmark) are catching on, too. This summer, geocachers nationwide converged for Geowoodstock III, in Florida. Plans are in the works for 'IV' in Texas in 2006. Weekend outings are held in state and county parks; with special caches set for the event and field trips offered to pre-existing sites. Competition levels peak. New friends are made.

And who are they? "Many of the geocachers we deal with are college age people. Others are young families – maybe with a child or two who come out to spend some family-time together," assesses Jerry Reisinger, Department of Natural Resources parks

supervisor for northeast Iowa. "Those are demographics we want to attract."

Whether they see themselves as outdoor fans who go on-line, or computer techies who step outside, geocachers combine two worlds.

"Kids have grown away from the environment with computers and video games – watching nature shows on TV," assesses Keys. "This is the merger of the technical with nature. Using GPS and satellites to go outdoors? How cool is that?"

Just as often, the lure of the trinkets or of the challenge of finding a new place is too much for most overgrown kids to pass up.

"We have found so many parks while geocaching that we never knew existed," admits Fahrion. "It's a treasure hunt! What kid doesn't like a treasure hunt?"

Joe Wilkinson is an information specialist for the department in Iowa City.

Dan and Tracy Fahrion with a typical cache. Like this one, a cache may include a log book, pencil and a variety of trinkets (opposite page).

A Little History

Mention geocaching and you still draw a blank stare from most people. However, it is catching on. Its history is rather short. Originally designed by the U.S. military to improve security, global positioning systems had "gone global" by 2000, with applications in navigation, telecommunications and other industries. Background information from www.geocaching.com traces it to a May 1, 2000 executive order from the Clinton Administration, which removed commercial signal degradation (called Select Availability) from GPS. This allowed private entities to use technology to pinpoint locations much more accurately.

The site says the first geocache was planted outside Portland, Oregon by Dave Ulmer and posted on-line two days later. Within three days, it had been visited twice, the first by Mike Teague. Teague built a personal web site to document the containers. A few weeks later, Jeremy Irish visited the site, found the cache, and approached Teague with ideas for a new web site, maps and a way to maintain cache sites. Though there had been some "hunting" using satellite coordinates in Finland since the 1980s, geocaching in the U.S. was born. Late this summer, one web site claimed that nearly 193,000 caches were active in 217 countries. Another tallied 750 Iowa caches.

"The Iowa Geocachers Organization (IGO) has taken the lead as Iowa's voice for geocachers," says President Jay Lash or Vinton says it helps centralize information; tips about caching, new hunts, weekend get togethers. The group also works with the DNR and local recreation and conservation agencies as they set up guidelines for use of public areas.

GEOCACHING 101: GETTING STARTED

Learning more about geocaching is just a mouse click away. Many groups and individual cachers have devoted web sites to their new recreation. In Iowa, the Iowa Geocachers Organization (IGO) web site, and several others are helpful in learning about the game, finding cache sites and promoting regional or statewide get-togethers.

Among them:
www.iowageocachers.org
www.geocaching.com
www.gpgeocaching.com
www.wikipedia.org
www.geocacher-u.com

STATE PARKS: GEOCACHE HOTBEDS

Iowa's state parks and recreation areas host more than 12 million visitors a year. With the surge in geocaching, the crowd is growing.

"I first heard about it at a parks conference in Indiana three or four years ago. It was already in full swing across the nation," recalls Jerry Reisinger, DNR parks supervisor for northeast Iowa. "I came back, pulled up a couple web sites and checked. There were already caches in our state parks. (We) didn't know anything about them."

Hoping to stay ahead of the curve, Reisinger and several state and county park officials reviewed the need for regulating geocaching.

"Geocaching brings in more people to our parks that might never be there otherwise. It's a good, fun park activity. We have had nothing but positive reaction," offers Reisinger. "At the same time, we want to make sure the activity meshed with park management."

Reisinger points out that some parks or state preserves have sensitive areas – perhaps a slope with threatened or endangered plant species that could be harmed by too much foot traffic. Others with archeological or cultural landmarks best observed and not climbed on. Some park areas, such as bluffs, ledges and other terrain features, can be unsafe under the wrong circumstances. And periodic management tools, such as controlled burns, would ruin a cache.

The result is a geocaching policy that is followed now by state park officials. Various city and county parks departments have similar guidelines.

"I would say almost all our state parks have a geocache somewhere," says Reisinger. "We simply ask that someone come to us with the coordinates and other details. We review the location, make sure the cache meets our criteria and we keep track of it. Our staff goes on-line periodically, to make sure it is still active. If we find one that is unknown or illegal, we can get that listing removed until it is reviewed."

The park policy is under review by other DNR bureaus, which oversee state forests, wildlife areas and fishing areas.

Haley Dunn
Iowa's home-grown shooting star

by Karen Grimes
Photos by Clay Smith

Iowa's Haley Dunn has the legendary Annie Oakley beat.

Just five feet tall, Annie Oakley was the star attraction of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show for 17 years during the late 1800s. She could shoot a tossed dime from 90 feet away.

Annie shot her first exhibition at age 16 and was entertaining presidents and royalty with her shooting skills by age 25. Her sharpshooting with pistol, rifle and shotgun fascinated audiences and made her name synonymous with shooting and entertainment.

An Entertainer

Eddyville native Haley Dunn has her beat — winning the Iowa Ladies Sporting Clay Championship at age 14 and rubbing shoulders with President Bush and Congressman Leonard Boswell by age 15.

Now she's 20 and shoots International Skeet competitively. She's taking her second shot at the Olympics and has performed exhibition shoots in front of Governor Tom Vilsack. She's just finished a spring and summer shooting schedule that has placed her in the top 10 in three International Skeet competitions held in Korea, Italy and Serbia. She will be one of only 10 women skeet shooters invited to the World Cup finals in November, to be held in the United Arab Emirates.

An Emerging Star

Like Annie Oakley, Haley started hunting rabbits and other small game with a .22 rifle when she was very young. By the time she turned 10, her father had started a new business, Steelclay Shooting Sports. Haley not only worked in the business, lugging around 25-pound boxes of clay pigeons, she also developed a love for shotgunning.

Her passion for the shooting sports has taken her to six state championships in sporting clays, followed by competitive skeet shooting in 13 countries. She has competed in the Junior Olympics, been an alternate to the 2004 Olympics in Athens, Greece, and hopes to compete in the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, China.

Her father and coach, Larry, noticed early on that she had the attitude, the drive and the common sense to become a world-class shooter. When Haley asked for a 12-gauge shotgun, saying that she knew she could shoot better with a bigger gun, Larry gave her one, knowing that it was too heavy for her. He predicted

that she wouldn't last 100-rounds. But Haley proved him wrong when she brought him a winning score card, saying, "See. Eleven better."

Today she shoots an individually fitted, 12-gauge Beretta DT10 over-and-under with 28-inch barrels and an open choke.

When Larry noticed that at age 14, Haley was shooting better than many experienced guys, he told her she had a lot of natural talent. "You're a good kid. You can go a long ways if you want to do it," he said.

Haley wanted to be like Kim Rhode, her idol and the 2004 Olympic Gold medalist, 2000 Olympic bronze medalist and 1996 Olympic gold medalist in double trap. Haley was 13 when she met Kim at the Ames Izaak Walton League in 1999.

"You're a good kid. You can go a long ways if you want to do it."

Larry Dunn
father and coach

Larry laughs now and said that he promised her he would take her as far as she could go, but he should have said, "I'll take you as far as the money goes." Raising money is a constant theme for all Olympic hopefuls.

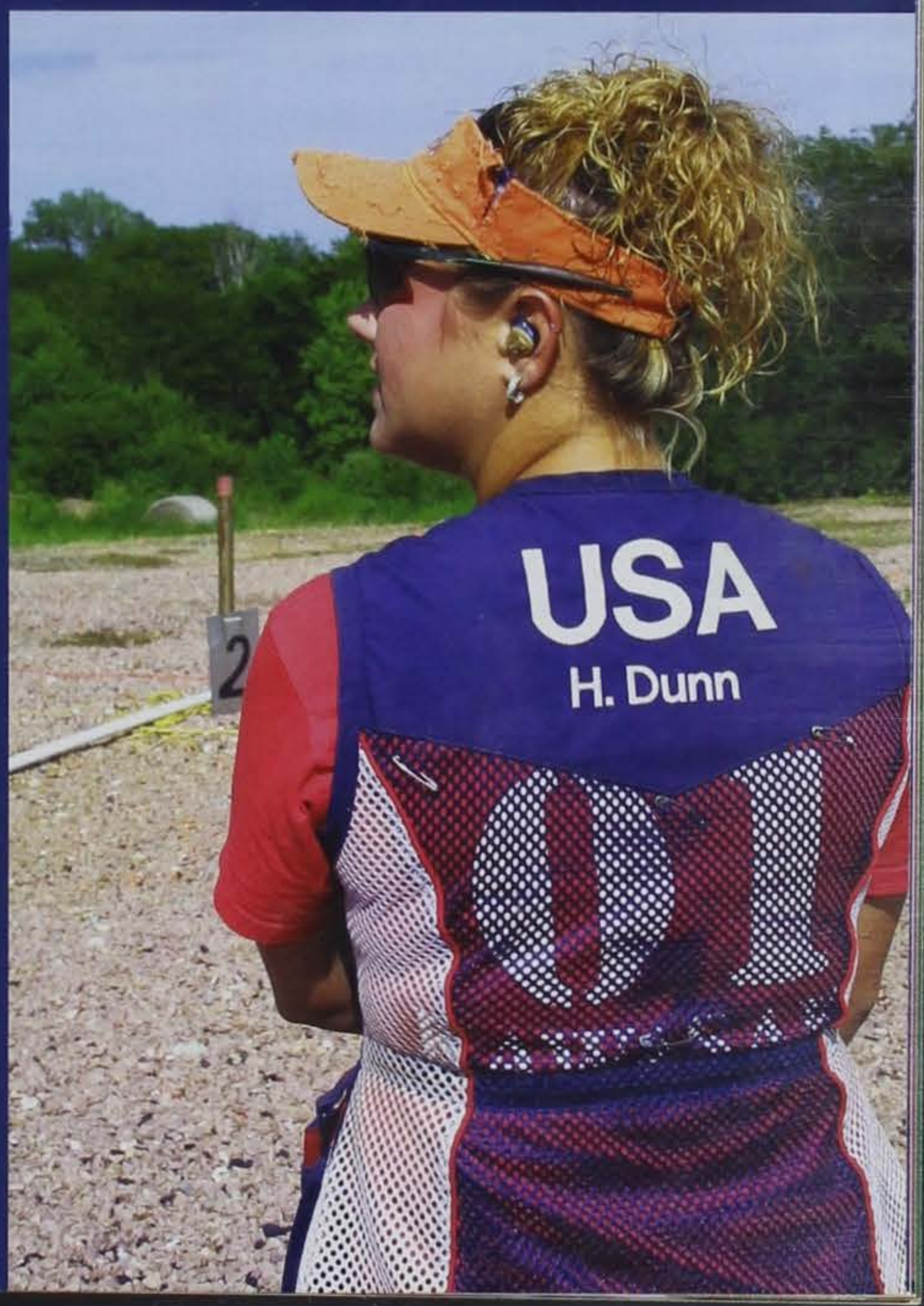
With Haley shooting 100 to 150 clay targets four or five days a week, the cost of clay pigeons, range fees and shotgun shells can be prohibitive. Shotgun shells alone can cost $80 to $150 just for one week of practice. Then add on extensive travel and competition fees.

Camp of the Stars

When Haley won her first of six sporting clay championships at age 15, she was invited to shoot in the Junior Olympics. She and her dad traveled to the national training camp at Colorado Springs a week before training started, so that Haley could learn how to shoot International Skeet.

"I'd never shot International Skeet. I didn't know the rules," she said. Her first stop was a visit with Lloyd Woodhouse, national Olympic shooting coach who said, "So you want to come shoot for me?"

Woodhouse asked her three questions: "Are you doing this for you or for your dad? Can you learn to shoot International Skeet? Do you want to go to Cairo, Egypt?"



The target for International Skeet is just a little larger than a regular clay pigeon. It's also thinner, harder and flies 15 miles-per-hour faster than in American Skeet. "You need to hit 'em solid," Haley says.

About 20 million Americans enjoy recreational shooting such as trap, skeet, handgun and sporting clays. Sporting clays is the closest thing to actual field shooting. Many shooters affectionately call it, "golfing with a shotgun," since it involves walking a large area as if hunting. Targets emerge at different distances and angles, simulating the movements of ducks, grouse, rabbits and other wild game.

Shooting targets became an Olympic sport in 1896 and ranks seventh for American medals in the Olympics.

Haley's answers were, "For me. Yes. And, yes."

Larry said when he left Haley, he turned and looked back at this kid standing between Woodhouse and another coach who Larry describes as a "huge Greco-Roman wrestler." Larry went out to the parking lot and bawled, "Who would leave his 15-year-old, 100-pound daughter with these people?" But leave her, he did.

After that, Haley learned the rules and strategies for International Skeet fast, and shot a 50-straight during her first day with Woodhouse. But the Junior Olympics camp was not all fun. Haley remembers feeling uncomfortable around some of the older athletes who teased her about being a shooter. She ate alone. To the older shooters — busy with jobs, school and shooting — she was just one more junior shooter, not yet a rising star.

Junior Olympics Champion

But Haley's winning streak began that year, when she won the silver at the Junior Olympics. She's won every Junior Olympics since then, and will compete for the fifth and last time as a Junior in Puerto Rico in November at the Championships of the Americas. Next year, she will be ineligible after she turns 21.

Practice and Perfection

Haley scarcely took a break between her first Junior Olympics in 2000 and going to Athens, Greece, as an Olympic alternate in 2004. For years she has shot 125 rounds a day — that's 125 times of lifting an 8-pound shotgun, aiming, shooting and figuring out what went right or what went wrong.

For eye-hand coordination, she spent hours focusing on a tiny dot pasted onto a ceiling fan, learning to follow the dot all the way around, then speeding up the fan and trying again.

Now, she's more confident of her physical capabilities and follows the advice of more experienced shooters by taking a break from practicing after returning from a major shoot. After a trip to Belgrade, Serbia, in July, "I didn't pick up my gun, except for sporting clays, for two weeks," she said.

Mental Readiness

Instead, she concentrates on her mental readiness for competition, working to learn the best way that she can reach the "zone." The zone is that state of intense concentration and focus where the clay pigeon is a blur until it bursts into a thousand tiny motes, each one reflecting light. The place where background sounds and movements fade away, and only the powdered pigeon is visible.

A junior at the University of Missouri in Columbia, when Haley is home now, she works for her coach and dad, Larry (upper left). She has the same job she had in high school — guiding hunters, loading the clay pigeons into the trap thrower or taking folks through the sporting clays range. As an avid hunter, Haley's down time might include a round of sporting clays or the pursuit of anything from deer to wild turkey.

"Pull," she calls. Boom. Shatter.

"Pull." Boom. Dust .

"Pull." Boom. Powder.

At least for this year, she's the number one lady skeet shooter in the United States after winning the fall and spring selection matches for the world championship team. "I've gotten where I want to be in the states," she says, "but I'm not where I want to be in the world yet."

On those long trips back from Finland, Greece, Brazil, and 10 other countries, she has much time to think. Her thoughts revolve around, "I should have done this. When I get home, I'll work on that."

"Ninety-nine percent of my shooting now is in my head. You know you can do better," she says. "You learn something new every time, and that's what you work on."

When Haley is falling behind in competition, she tells herself that she has the advantage and is in the perfect place to intimidate her opponents. "Just smash the target, literally smash it," Haley tells herself. "She'll be watching and know that she has to do it, too." With focus and determination like that, Haley's aim at the 2008 Olympics looks like a sure shot.

Karen Grimes is an information specialist with the department in Des Moines.

Jump Starts

for Would-Be Olympic Shooting Stars

There are plenty of opportunities for young people interested in the shooting sports. The DNR offers several programs that can help.

Boys age 12 to 15 can hone their outdoor skills at the *Hunting and Conservation Camp for Boys* held north of Guthrie Center at Springbrook Conservation Education Center each year. Boys can shoot shotguns, rifles, bow and arrows, and muzzleloaders while they learn other outdoor skills. Sponsored by the DNR and Pheasants Forever, registration is through the local Pheasants Forever chapter or directly at the education center. Contact the education center at (515) 747-8383 ext. 11 for more information.

A similar program called *Outdoor Journey for Girls* is designed to introduce outdoor skills to girls ages 12 to 15. Shooting and archery are just two of the skills offered, with canoeing, camping, orienteering and much more. The 2006 programs will be held June 14-16 and Aug. 2-4. Girls who complete the three-day workshop will receive their certificate in the Iowa Hunter Education Program. Sponsored by the DNR, Pheasants Forever and Iowa Women in Natural Resources the workshop is at Springbrook Conservation Education Center. More information can be requested at outdoorjourneyia@yahoo.com.

For young people with some experience, the *Iowa Youth Hunter Education Challenge* is a weekend competitive event held each June at the 4-H Education and Natural Resources Center in Madrid. Iowa youth can compete in four shooting events: shotgun, small-bore rifle, muzzleloading rifle and archery. There are four other competitive events, too. Events are held for juniors (ages 12 to 14) and seniors (ages 15 to 18). Participants can register as individuals or as one of a five-member team, but must be Iowa residents and have passed a hunter education class.

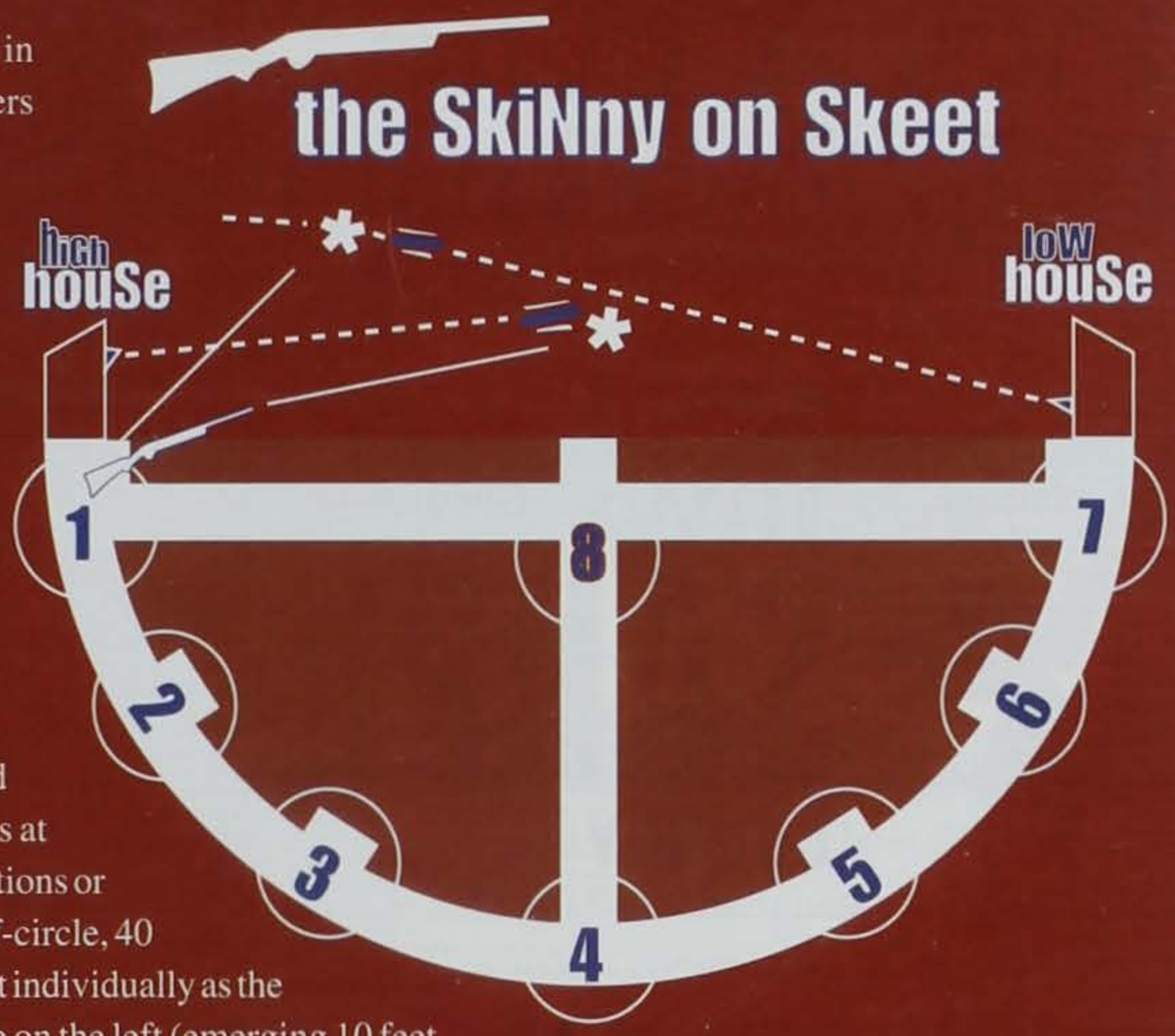
The challenge is cosponsored by the DNR, Iowa State University Extension Wildlife Programs and the Iowa 4-H Safety and Education in Shooting Sports program. Adult volunteers are always welcome. Shotgunner Haley Dunn has participated both as a youth and later as a speaker, sharing her success story.

Other opportunities are available locally through Izaak Walton Leagues and other public and private gun clubs. Clubs will vary in what they offer and may provide American trap or skeet, sporting clays, and private or group lessons.

More information is available on the DNR web site at www.iowadnr.com/education/citizens.html#camps.

the SkiNny on Skeet

The game of skeet was invented in Massachusetts around 1920 by hunters who set up a portable trap thrower, then shot at targets from 12 positions around it. Originally called "around-the-clock" shooting, the stations were reduced to a half-circle when a neighbor reportedly complained about shot falling on his chicken house. A second trap thrower was added, and in 1926 the new sport was named "skeet," Scandinavian for "shoot" as the result of a national contest.



Today, a round of skeet is played by five shooters, as they fire 25 shots at clay targets from eight different positions or stations laid out in the shape of a half-circle, 40 yards in diameter. The shooters shoot individually as the targets are thrown from a high house on the left (emerging 10 feet above the ground) and from a low house on the right (emerging three and one-half feet above the ground).

In American Skeet, targets are shot first from the high house, then the low house. Shooters take aim at doubles thrown from both houses at four of the stations. Shooters can pre-mount their guns, holding the butt of the gun up to their shoulders as they call for the bird, which emerges almost instantaneously. Scores of 25 out of 25 are common.

International Skeet is a more difficult game and it's the form of skeet shot in the Olympics and outside America. In International Skeet, doubles are shot at every station except Station 8. The clay pigeon target is larger, thinner, faster and made of harder clay. After the shooter calls for the bird, there can be a random delay of up to three seconds. Shooters are required to keep the butt of the gun below their waistline until they see the target emerge from one of the houses. Even among competitive shooters, scores of 25 out of 25 are a rarity.

Poised and ready to shoot from Station 7, Haley calls for the targets. One clay pigeon will blast out of the low house near her right elbow. The other clay pigeon will erupt from the high house and come sailing across the field towards her. Her challenge is to wait up to three seconds until the birds appear, then raise her gun and shoot them both.

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Greg Bordignon
Artist of the new pheasant and eagle plates.

Bordignon is the art director at Jym Bag Company, Cedar Rapids. His outdoor art appears under the trade name North American Outfitter on hundreds of thousands of t-shirts and sweatshirts across the country. Bordignon began painting wildlife art in 1992, and his work has been featured in many DNR publications, as well as habitat and trout stamps. His passion for hunting, fishing and the outdoors has driven him to support the efforts of conservation organizations around the Midwest. For more information about Bordignon work contact Bordignon Ink, 630 Grand Court, Robins, Iowa 52328; (319)743-0874. www.bordignonink.com

Where the money goes

$35 of the plate cost and $10 of the renewal go to the Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) program. Much of the financial support for REAP comes from gaming revenues, but an important part is from the natural resources plate.

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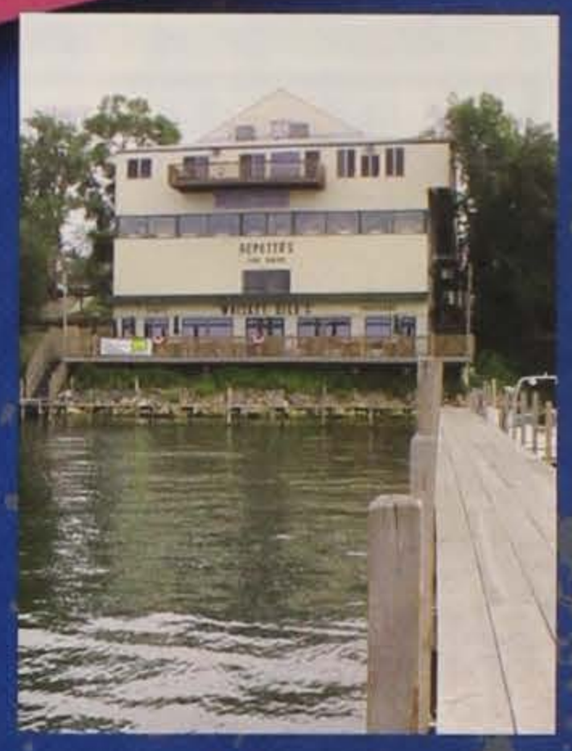
Debonair Duck

by Mick Klemesrud
photos by Clay Smith



Pan-Seared Breast of Iowa Mallard
Port Wine Demi-Glace
Classic Red Skin Smashed Potatoes
Fresh Asparagus and Raspberries
(2 portions)

2 (4- to 5-ounce) Iowa mallard breasts, skinned
seasoned flour
2 pats whole butter

Sauce:
2 cans beef broth
½ cup port wine
1 pat whole butter

Potatoes:
6 medium baby new potatoes
4 cups water
1 T Kosher salt
½ cup hot milk
1 pat butter
1 teaspoon Kosher salt

Asparagus:
10 spears fresh asparagus
2 cups water
1 tablespoon Kosher salt

Seasoned Flour:
½ cup all-purpose flour
2 teaspoon Kosher salt
Mix together thoroughly, set aside.

Place the new potatoes in a sauce pan with the water and tablespoon of salt. Bring them to a boil and simmer until tender, about 20-25 minutes. Strain the water and mash the potatoes with a heavy wire whisk. Add the hot milk, butter and salt. Keep hot.

Bring the water for the asparagus to a boil. Break off the bottom of the stem of the asparagus. By bending the stem of asparagus, it will break off at the point that the top will be tender. Discard the bottom of the stem as it will be tough and woody in texture. Place the asparagus spears in the boiling salted water for 3-4 minutes to cook.

In a sauté pan place the butter on high heat to pan-sear the duck breasts. Dredge the duck in the seasoned flour and shake off the excess flour. Discard the flour after using. Once the butter begins to brown slightly place the floured duck breasts in the butter. Sear one side on high heat for 3-4 minutes or until thoroughly browned. Turn the breasts over and reduce the heat to medium high. Cook on this side 2-3 minutes more to achieve medium-rare in doneness. Remove the duck breasts and place them in a warm place to rest. Resting the meat will reduce the amount of juice that will drain from the meat when slicing. Rest until the sauce is complete. To make the sauce, add the port wine to the hot sauté pan deglazing the pan. Reduce the wine by half and add the beef broth. Reduce this mixture until it starts to thicken. Whisk in the butter and strain the sauce before serving.

Artfully arrange the plate and slice the duck breasts to serve. Garnish the plate with fresh raspberries. They are very complimentary to the port wine demi-glace.

Enjoy!

Standing in the dining room as executive chef/owner Tom Wiley, of Gepetto's, plates a mallard breast in the 105-year-old Central Emporium with the pressed-tin ceiling and century-old exposed support posts, you get the feeling that maybe you should have worn a tie. With a full-Windsor knot. And dress shoes. Not just any dress shoes . . . wingtips. This place is old school swanky.

Wiley paired the Iowa mallard with classic red skin potatoes, fresh asparagus tips and red raspberries. He finished the plate with a port wine demi-glace. With duck or other wild game, Wiley said sometimes simple preparation is best. He said fruits and berries are usually available during hunting season and compliment game nicely. He added red raspberries as a compliment to the port wine sauce, saying the combination really makes the duck pop.

Chef Tom has been trying new items on his menu, including offering a 12-ounce buffalo ribeye last spring that received a moderate reception. He said his focus is on fresh, seasonal items and he offers a new menu every three months. The next menu was due out in October.

Although the Central Emporium has only housed a restaurant since the 1970s, and has been Gepetto's since 2000, it feels like a place that has been here as long as the walleyes nearby in West Lake Okoboji. And forget the real estate, the lake-side alone is worth a million bucks.

Wiley has been a chef for 19 years. He received his associate degree in culinary arts in 1995 from Johnson and Wales University, in Charleston, S.C. and has been working in the Iowa Great Lakes area since.

Gepetto's Restaurant
In The Central Emporium
144 Lake Shore Drive
Arnolds Park, Iowa 51331
712-332-2474
Available for Private Events
and Catering
Reservations Recommended
Open daily at 5 p.m.

Governor's Iowa Environmental Excellence Awards

Cedar Falls Utilities

by Jill Cornell
Photos by Clay Smith

This past April, four Iowa businesses and organizations were recognized for their comprehensive environmental programs. Following is the second in a series featuring the four Governor's Environmental Excellence Award winners.

As a leader in the development of renewable energy sources across the state of Iowa, Cedar Falls Utilities continues to research new ways of increasing its renewable energy portfolio to reduce the environmental impact of generating power in Cedar Falls. Part of the utility's proactive approach has been studying the efficiency of its facility and finding environmentally friendly fuel alternatives.

"We have been researching various alternative sources to increase our use of renewable energy," said Jim Krieg, general manager of Cedar Falls Utilities. "From wind power to switchgrass, we are committed to improving our environment and providing these resources to our customers."

Cedar Falls Utilities was a leader in the development of the Iowa Distributed Wind Generation Project (IDWGP) in Hancock County, in conjunction with six other municipal utilities from Algona, Ellsworth, Estherville, Fonda, Montezuma and Westfield. This consortium of municipal utilities was the first of its kind in Iowa and built a wind-generating facility in 1998. The project consists of three 750-kilowatt wind turbines, for a site capacity of 2,250 kilowatts hours; Cedar Falls' share is about 67 percent.

Currently, the utility's renewable energy sources account for 6 percent of the total electric demand in Cedar Falls. The board of trustees has set a goal to raise that figure up to 10 percentby 2010.

Another source of renewable energy that Cedar Falls Utilities has considered is biomass fuel. The utility has run test burns of the fuel, specifically corn pellets, in a generating turbine at its power plant.

In addition to testing biomass fuel, the plant has scheduled upgrades to improve its efficiency and impact on the environment. The utility will install a cloth bag house to reduce particulate matter emissions at one of its generating units.

Cedar Falls Utilities is a charter member of the National Voluntary Greenhouse Gas Reporting movement, which was formed in the early 1990s.

The utility has annually tracked and reported carbon dioxide emissions and reductions. Since 1990, the utility has reduced carbon dioxide emissions by .05 tons per megawatt-hour, while electric generation has increased nearly 50 percent during the same time period.

The utility's economic results have been equally impressive. Cedar Falls saved more than 10,000 tons of coal and more than $391,000 by using wind energy in 2003. Even though the utility has increased its investment in wind energy, it maintains the lowest residential electric rates when compared to 20 other peer communities in Iowa.

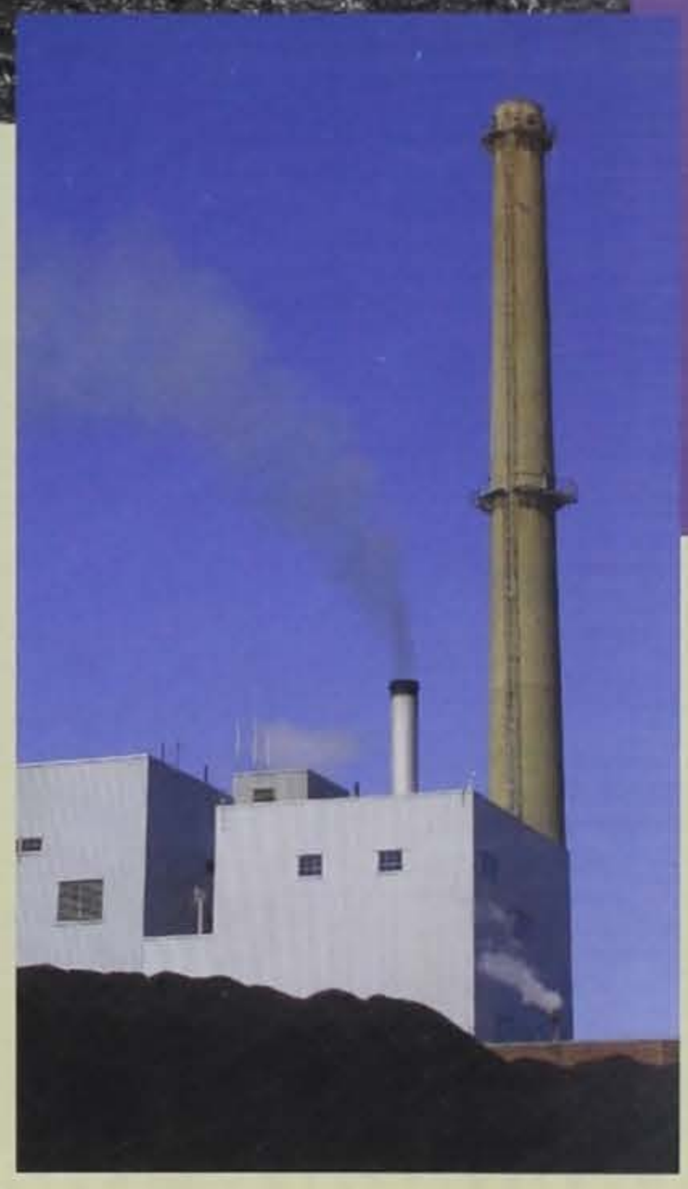
"We have been a leader in Iowa with our environmental initiatives, while still maintaining competitive rates," said Krieg. "Our renewable energy and energy efficiency programs help us plan for our future energy needs and protect the environment at the same time."

Cedar Falls residents have been major contributors in the utility's ability to purchase wind energy. Through the Harvest the Wind program, residents can support the utility's use of renewable energy in blocks of 100 kWh for about $2.50 per month. In 2003, Cedar Falls Utilities was recognized by the Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities for having the highest number of customers of any municipal utility in Iowa who participate in a renewable energy program.

Another program Cedar Falls Utilities started to help mitigate carbon dioxide emission is Cedar Falls TREES. Cedar Falls TREES is a non-profit organization established to promote environmental awareness, energy conservation and community involvement through education, tree planting and care programs within the city. Since 1993, more than 2,800 trees have been planted in Cedar Falls with assistance from Cedar Falls TREES.

"Our commitment to renewable energy and other programs only enhances the quality of life in Cedar Falls," said Krieg. "By reducing emissions, we all get to live in a cleaner environment."

Cedar Falls Utilities



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

Cedar Falls Utilities conducts a biomass test burn (left). A joint partnership created the Hancock County Wind Farm (top) to help the utility work toward its goal of reducing its reliance on coal for electricity (bottom).

Look Out!
Low Bird!

Last year 30 people per 100,000 were injured while playing badminton.*

Compare that to hunting.

Hunting related firearms injuries are at an all-time low at 6 per 100,000 participants.

In fact, you are safer in the woods with a loaded firearm and other hunters, than you are driving to or from your hunting destination!

The International Hunter Education Association is involved, not only with the prevention of hunting injuries, but is also responsible for educating today's hunters on the basics of hunting responsibilities, ethics, landowner relations and more. The IHEA also serves as a clearing house of information and ideas concerning wildlife conservation.

The IHEA has over 70,000 volunteer instructors and 69 member agencies worldwide. Please visit our website and see what you can learn and how you can make a difference.

*Source: National Safety Council, 1994

INTERNATIONAL HUNTER EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

IHEA™

Responsible Hunting

www.ihea.com

THE MISSION OF THE IHEA IS TO CONTINUE THE HERITAGE OF HUNTING WORLDWIDE BY DEVELOPING SAFE, RESPONSIBLE AND KNOWLEDGEABLE HUNTERS.

Volunteer Corner

Volunteers teach joy of (safe) hunting

by Michael Dhar

Before he was a hunter, Cliff Rooney was a dog.

The retired Des Moines school teacher learned to hunt from his father, who taught the boy slowly and safely. At age seven, Rooney acted as "dog number two" on hunting trips. He scared up game in the brush, but did not carry a gun. Later, Rooney's father let him carry an empty rifle, then fire one shot at cans and finally shoot at live game.

These days, the former "hunting dog" serves as a volunteer instructor with the DNR's hunter education program. He helps teach hundreds of kids and adults about safe hunting every year, drawing on those early experiences with his father.

"I love watching the kids have success, watching them laugh and get excited," Rooney said. "It's a real thrill for me."

Every year, roughly 1,800 volunteer instructors serve with the hunter education program. State law mandates anyone born after 1967 must pass the course before purchasing a hunting license. Volunteers make it possible to graduate from 12,000 to 15,000 students every year.

"These volunteers serve because they love the outdoors and because they want to share their knowledge," said DNR recreation safety program supervisor Rod Slings.

Michael Dhar

Hunter ed instructor Cliff Rooney

"They're dedicated to hunting and working to continue the heritage of hunting in Iowa," he said. "And they get the satisfaction of teaching someone to be safe."

Most hunter education students are between the ages of 12 and 15, though many adults take the course as well, Slings said. Bill Radnish, who first taught hunter safety classes to Boy Scouts in the 1950s, has helped students of all ages.

"I've had fathers sit in on classes before they pick up their kid," he said. "And they thank me afterwards because they've forgotten a lot of things. Hunter safety is important to everyone."

In many of the courses, different instructors teach different units. By trading off teachers, the program keeps instruction fresh and interesting, Radnish said.

Rooney, though he doesn't deputize his students as hunting dogs, still employs unique methods for keeping the audience engaged. The energetic former high school teacher gestures broadly when he speaks and frequently slips jokes into his lectures.

"If you see a track and you don't know if it's a rabbit or a squirrel, here's how you tell," Rooney told one class. "If the trail goes up to a tree and it disappears, it was a squirrel."

Rooney usually helps with four to five classes a year, dropping in to teach units on wildlife identification and game care. Most courses meet two evenings and a Saturday, for a total of 10 to 14, hours covering various topics.

The course's primary focus always goes back to safety, however, said Radnish, who volunteers as an instructor 20 to 25 times a year across Polk County.

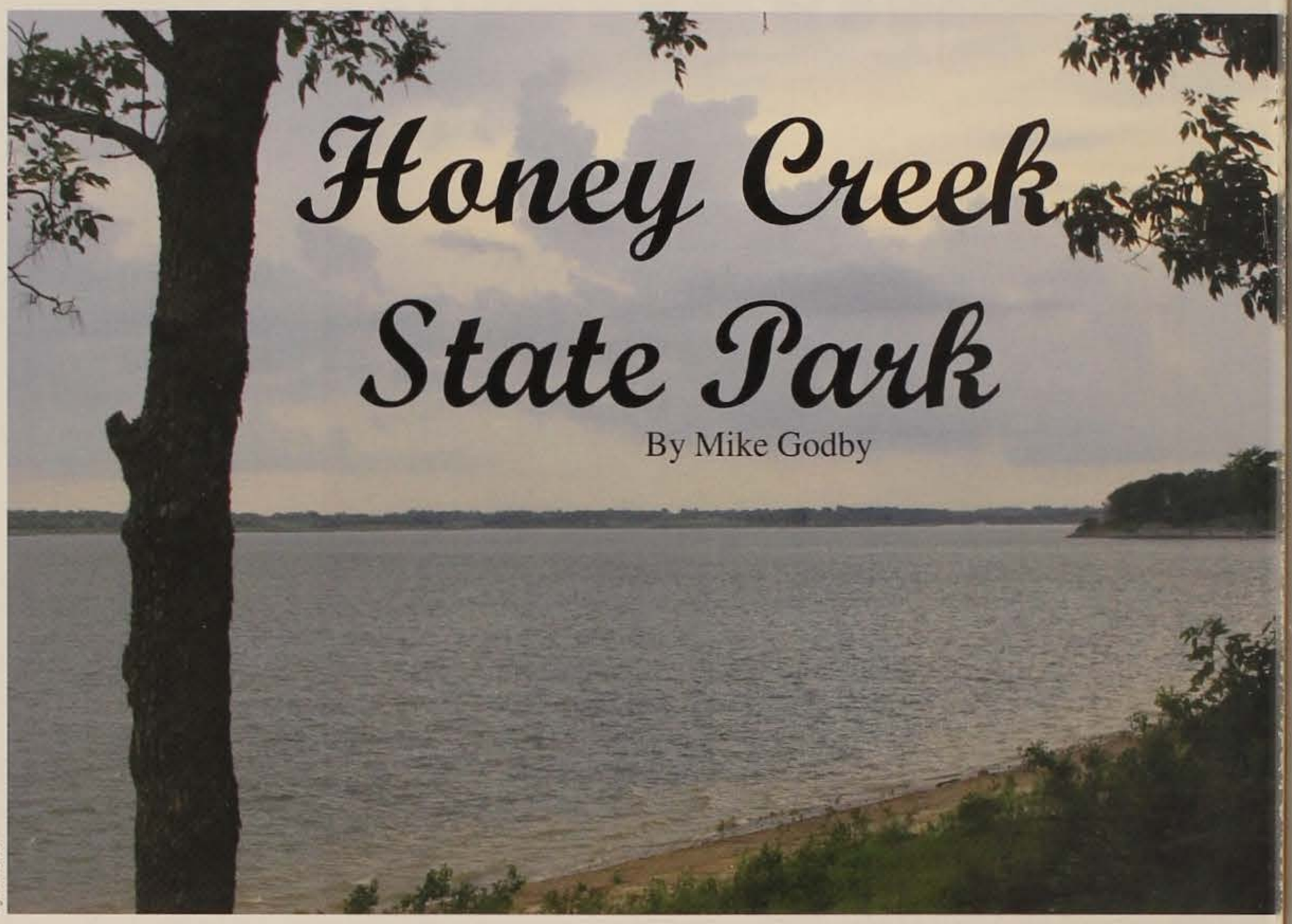
"If we can get these kids, and a lot of adults, to do the right thing, it's better for all of us," he said.

Volunteer Opportunities

Find our new events calendar and many new volunteer opportunities at: www.keepersoftheland.org

Honey Creek State Park

By Mike Godby



Ty Smedes

Resting on ridges towering over the shores of Lake Rathbun, the view from Honey Creek State Park rivals that from some of our nation's most beautiful natural sites.

Add in the seemingly endless acres of forests, lakes, rivers and savannahs, and there is an abundance of outdoor recreation opportunities both inside and outside the park throughout all seasons.

While winter snows may slow activities at some parks, all it does at Honey Creek is change the mode of transportation. Main roads are bladed in the winter, allowing campers full access to the only year-round campground at Lake Rathbun. There is a heated shower house, which also serves as a source of drinking water during the winter.

The campground is used as a base for the many activities throughout the winter. A winter evening can be spent at one of the park's ponds ice skating, followed by a fire in a grill at a picnic area beside the pond.

Although the snowmobile trail only runs from the park entrance to the campground, it ties the campground to 26 miles of trails, making the campground an excellent starting point for a trail ride experience. Wildlife viewing and natural scenes are a favorite of this trail, as well as the joy of running your machine through the wooded and grassland areas by the lake. The trail is maintained by the Rathbun Snow Riders and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. More information about the use of the trail can be found at the club's web site,

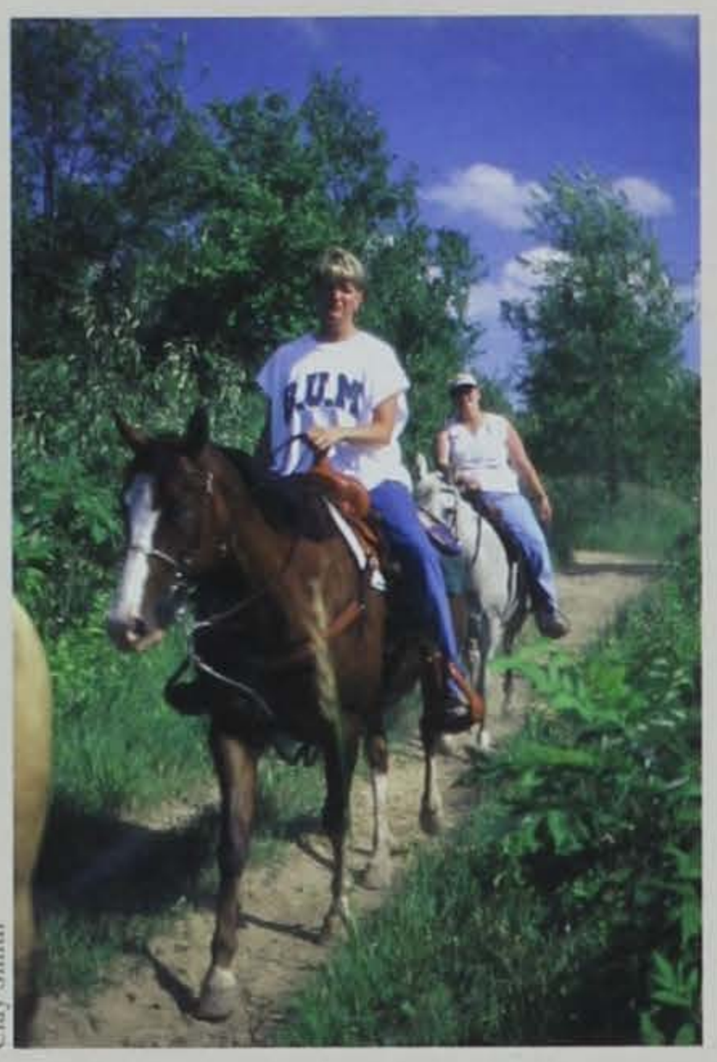
The Dark Skies Locator web site indicates this area has exceptional viewing of stars and planetary movements due to low light pollution. Obstacle-free

viewing for telescopes from lake overlooks and shelters make this a great place for an evening of learning and entertainment.

The abundance and size of Rathbun crappies draws ice anglers from across the Midwest. Stay in the campground and fish in Honey Creek's bay, or use the park's central location for reaching other parts of Lake Rathbun. Trails throughout the park offer access to the lake's shore to get the angler to where the fish are waiting. Bait shops and local stores can provide bait and advice for fishing the lake.

Many hunting areas are within easy reach from Honey Creek. Upland bird, deer and turkey hunting are considered to be some of the best. The newly constructed heated/air conditioned camping cabins give year-round accommodations to hunters, fisherman and park users.

Spring and summer in the park bring warmer weather and people are usually anxious to be outside again. Crappie fishing calls to those who enjoy the thrill of casting a line and reeling in the catch-of-the-day. Evening lures the catfisherman to the shores of the "high-water" boat ramp, where fishing is open 24 hours a day. For those who like to get on the water to fish from a boat or just enjoy the boating experience, the lighted main boat ramp provides six lanes and plenty of parking for vehicles and trailers. Honey Creek's bay offers easy portage by protecting the ramps from wind and waves. A fish-cleaning dock is available at the main boat ramp to fillet that catch.



Clay Smith

Programs are offered throughout the year at the park. Orienteering, campfire talks and children's games in the campground, to hay rides exploring evening animal life, are a few of the topics covered throughout the summer. If an organized group would like a program scheduled, contact one of the park staff.

Fruit, berry and morel mushroom hunters can be found combing the woodland edges throughout the spring and summer. Secret caches are explored and the bounties are plentiful.

Hiking trails guide travelers to the edge of the lakeshore or to a longer trail that follows the shoreline of the lake. The hike is moderate and offers access points for fishing, a tour of the woodlands or a chance to view the numerous birds of the area. An interpretive trail describes mounds constructed during the Woodland Period. Three factors that charcterize the Woodland Period are cultivated plants, ceramics and earthen mounds. These mounds exist in the park and can be seen beside the trail.

Ty Smedes

Angler's flock to Rathbun Lake for it's great walleye, crappie and catfishing. The 21 miles of multi-use trails host a variety of activities year-round (above).

Parks Profile

An information center at the beginning of the trail depicts possible scenes from this time period showing tools, the appearance of the people and their life. It is a self-guided trail and is rated as an easy hike.

Many people come to use the ATV trail located outside the park at the west end of Lake Rathbun. A local ATV club maintains the trail.

What would summer be without a picnic in the park? Honey Creek offers several areas to accommodate individuals or groups. Three open shelters are situated near the edge of the ridge offering great views of the lake and boating activities. These shelters can be used on a "first-come first-served" basis or can be reserved. Shelters have been used for family reunions and weddings, providing plenty of space and a beautiful lake backdrop.

Roger A. Hill

In the fall, the park offers the excitement of cooler weather and the opportunity to get away from the crowds. People can be found walking the shore collecting weathered wood for carving or making decorations. Hickory nuts a tasty addition to any recipe. Although the oak/hickory woodlands do not provide much leaf color, the fall prairie plants are still showing and remind us of the summer heat. Many animals are attracted to these savannahs and prairies for the food and protection. Butterflies and other insects, reptiles, amphibians and birds can be seen flashing their color throughout the grassland. Many of these creatures are rare in Iowa, and make for an interesting find.

To maintain the park in a condition that is inviting to the public and attracts wildlife, park staff relies on the efforts of volunteers. Some volunteers build, monitor and maintain bluebird houses, list bird sightings or offer to work on trails and boat docks. If you have an interest or special talent you would like to offer, please contact the park office.

Honey Creek State Park has something to offer everyone at anytime of year. Plan a visit to enjoy the views, wildlife or activities. This is your park. Take the time to get to know it well and discover Iowa's natural heritage.

Mike Godby is the park co-manager at Honey Creek State Park.

The Honey Creek area offers plenty of public hunting opportunities (above), while camping is popular year-around.

Clay Smith

HONEY CREEK STATE PARK AT A GLANCE

LOCATION: Honey Creek is approximately 24 miles from Albia and Centerville, 12 miles from Moravia and four miles from Iconium.

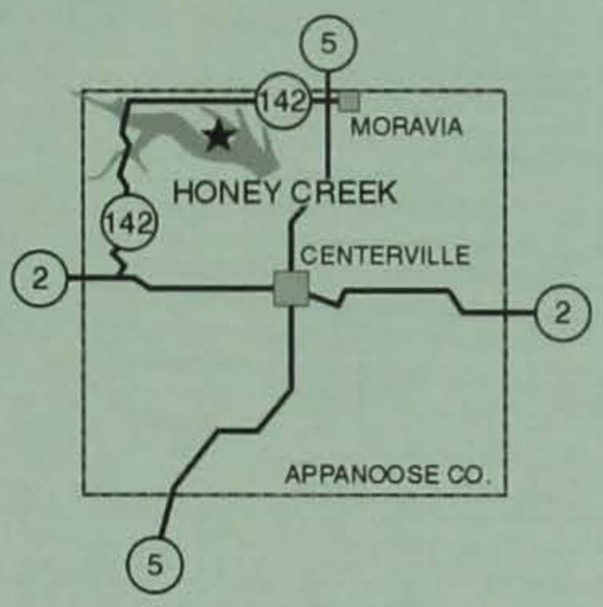
PICKNICKING: Open picnic shelters are located at scenic points overlooking the lake and may be reserved for a fee through the park manager.

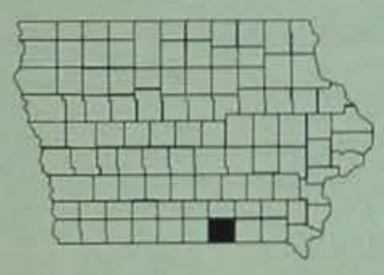
CAMPING: Honey Creek has 155 modern campsites, including 28 with full recreational vehicle hookups (sewer, water, electricity) and 80 with electrical hookups. Showers, rest rooms and a trailer dump station are also available. Electricity is available year-round and the shower facility is heated in the winter. The 28 full-hookup sites are closed during the winter.

TRAILS: There are 26 miles of multi-use trails, along with the Woodland Interpretive Trail. The interpretive trails includes information about early Native Americans who inhabited the area. There is a display detailng the history of Honey Creek located at the beginning of the interpretive trail.

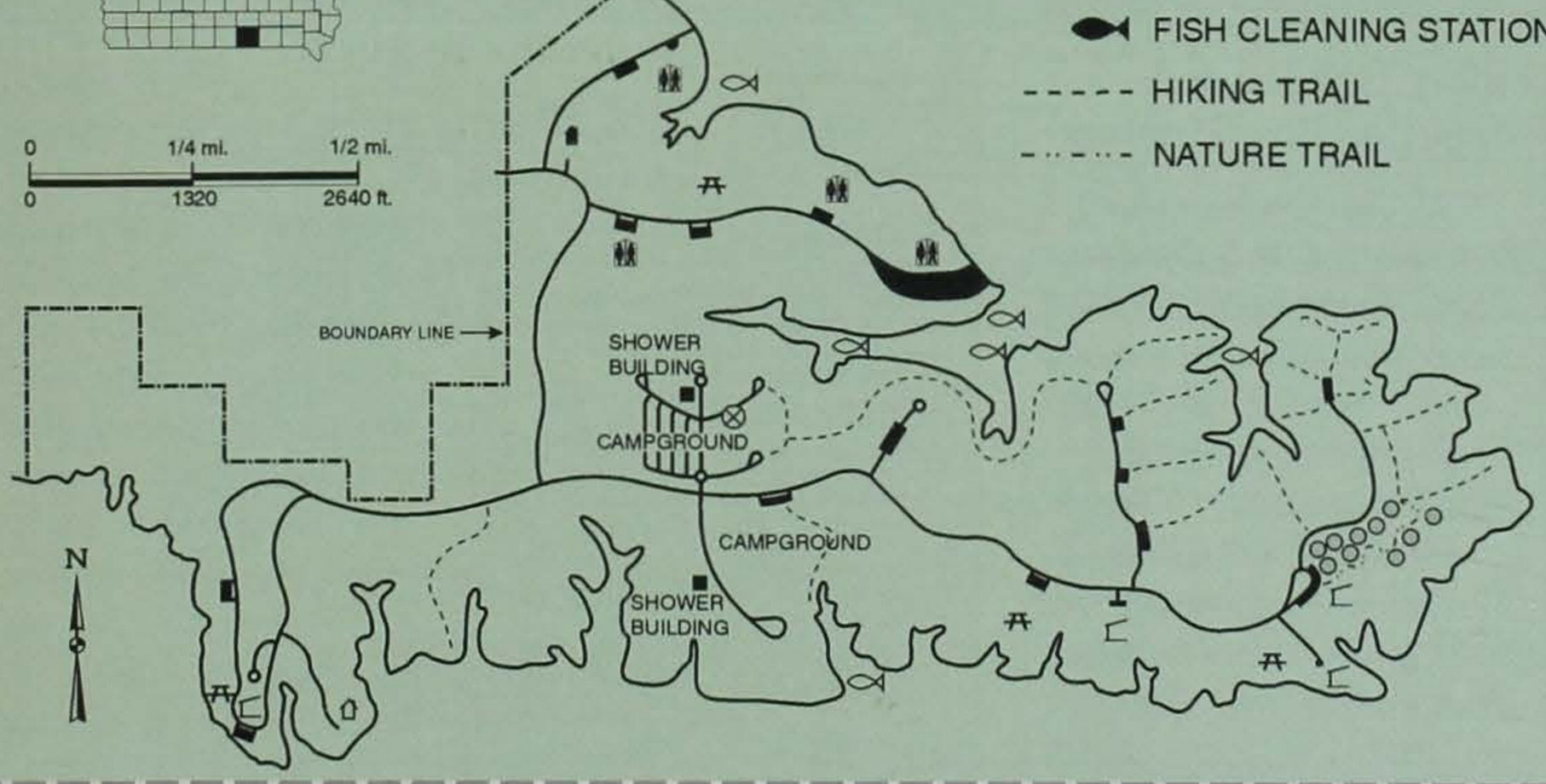
LAKE ACTIVITIES: Rathbun Lake is very popular with sailboaters, power boaters, water skiers and anglers. Crappie, walleye and channel catfish are the top targets. There are excellent boat ramps and convenienty located fish-cleaning stations.

CONTACT: Honey Creek State Park, 12194 Honey Creek Pl., Moravia, Iowa 52571-8879; (641) 724-3729; Honey_Creek@dnr.state.ia.us.





PARK RANGER
PARK ATTENDENT
INDIAN MOUNDS
PICNIC AREA
REST ROOM
SHELTER
TRAILER DUMP DECK
BOAT RAMP
FISH ATTRACTOR
FISH CLEANING STATION
HIKING TRAIL
NATURE TRAIL



Conservation Update

Help Us Stop Hunger Program Expands; DNR Hopes To Collect 5,000 Deer

A popular state program designed to encourage the harvest of more deer and help feed less-fortunate Iowans is growing, and the DNR hopes Iowa hunters will step up their support of the program.

Iowa's Help Us Stop Hunger (HUSH) is expanding statewide, with a goal of collecting 5,000 deer provided by hunters who voluntarily donate legally harvested deer. Considering a deer typically yields about 50 pounds of meat, reaching the goal of 5,000 would provide 1 million quarter-pound servings of ground venison, which is dispersed through the Food Bank of Iowa, according DNR HUSH coordinator Ross Harrison.

HUSH was designed to encourage deer hunters, who would normally stop hunting after they had enough venison, to continue hunting and donate their extra deer to Iowans in need. Any of the 95 participating lockers throughout the state receive the deer from hunters and process it into ground venison. The Food Bank of Iowa coordinates delivery of the venison to those in need through several hundred social service agencies.

Roger A. Hill

In its first two pilot years, Harrison said HUSH received about 3,100 deer from hunters in roughly the central one-half of the state. The effort was funded mostly by donations with additional help from the DNR. The Iowa legislature has now added a $1 deer license surcharge that will generate more than $325,000, enough to expand the program statewide.

Deer hunters can find a HUSH locker near them by going to www.iowahush.com, or through a brochure available whereever licenses are sold.

Safety Harnesses A Must For Bow Hunters

With the bow season well underway and the peak of the rut just around the corner, deer hunters should remember that having — and more importantly using — a good-quality safety harness is essential.

Rod Slings, recreational safety coordinator with the DNR, offered a few simple tree stand tips to help prevent falls.

- ✓ Always use a safety harness or other fall restraint system when ever using a tree stand.
- ✓ Inspect the equipment and only use equipment that is in good condition.
- ✓ Securely attach the tree stand no more than 10 to 12 feet high in the tree.
- ✓ Use an equipment haul line to raise and lower the equipment.
- ✓ Maintain a short tether to the tree, only allowing enough slack to turn to shoot.
- ✓ File a hunting plan. Leave a note saying where you are and when you will return.
- ✓ Carry a cell phone to use in case trouble arises.

Iowa Peregrine Falcon Numbers Soar To New Highs In 2005

Lowell Washburn

It's been another record nesting season for Iowa's rapidly recovering population of peregrine falcons. The most exciting news, of course, is wild free-flying peregrines are once again returning to rear their young on the cliff face ledges of the upper Mississippi River. The outlook is even brighter considering additional pairs are currently nesting on the artificial rock walls of power company smokestacks, metro bridge supports and city office buildings.

The fact these dynamic, winged hunters have returned to reclaim ancient territories is no accident. Modern-day populations are the direct result of an all-out recovery effort involving an incredible network of unpaid volunteers, college students and wildlife professionals, who secured and released captive-reared young falcons into the wild, and then nurtured those fledglings as they learned to fly, hunt and ultimately achieve independence. Survivors of those releases became the founders of the modern-day, wild populations of today.

This spring, there were 11 active peregrine territories in Iowa, resulting in seven successful nestings that produced 21 young. A new record, it is more than twice the number of baby peregrines produced just two or three years ago. Because some of the state's most desirable cliff ledges are located along the more remote stretches of the upper Mississippi, there could easily be additional nesting peregrines that have escaped human detection.

Modern-day populations are the direct result of an all out recovery effort involving an incredible network of unpaid volunteers, college students and wildlife professionals.

Much of the credit for this successful conservation endeavor can be attributed to the Iowa Peregrine Falcon Recovery Team — a group of unpaid volunteer raptor enthusiasts from across the state. During a five-year period, the team was solely responsible for releasing 105 fledgling peregrines in Iowa. The group received around $40,000 from the DNR and generated more than $90,000 from the private sector through fund-raising efforts.

Iowa's final release of captive-reared, baby falcons occurred during the summer of 2000. Five years later, a growing population continues to set a new production record with each passing summer. Better yet, wild offspring are now being produced by wild (instead of captive-reared) parents.

Modern-day peregrines appear to have regained a firm foothold on their historic range. It now becomes our collective responsibility to make certain this incredible native bird species doesn't vanish for a second time.

Conservation Update

DNR Programs Help Public Facilities Conserve Energy As Fuel Prices Soar

With energy costs soaring, nearly everyone is feeling the pinch — especially public-sector facilities. The DNR energy section has three programs that can help these facilities make energy management decisions and improvements.

The State of Iowa Facilities Improvement Corporation (SIFIC) is a non-profit corporation that contracts with the DNR for its staffing needs and facilitates the use of lease-purchase financing for energy management improvement projects in state agencies. SIFIC is a full-service program that provides project identification and analysis, financing arrangements, construction management and monitoring of energy savings.

The program has worked with the Department of Human Services since 1986 to improve the Glenwood Resource Center in Glenwood. The total investment in the center's energy management improvement projects is $2,249,379 with annual savings of $402,097. The simple payback on these projects is 5.6 years.

The Iowa Energy Bank Program helps public-sector and non-profit facilities — such as school districts, local governments, hospitals, and private and community colleges — make energy management improvements. The program provides technical assistance to help managers or engineers make wise energy decisions, and low-interest financing is also available to pay for the improvements.

The Iowa Energy Bank developed a partnership with the Des Moines Community School District to make energy management improvements. With a total investment of $1,812,745, the school district reaps savings of $361,851 per year. The payback on the district's investment is within five years.

Iowa Clean Cities works with public and private fleets to advance the use of hybrid-electric and alternative-fuel vehicles. Technical, financial and planning assistance is available through the Iowa Clean Cities program.

For additional information on these and other DNR energy programs, visit www.iowadnr.com and click on "Energy" or call (515) 281-4367.

Unique Private, Public Partnership Creates Largest Solar Array In State

Cedar Rapids is now home to the state's largest solar array, thanks to a unique partnership involving local, state and federal governments, organizations and businesses.

The solar array is located on top of the Kouba Building near the corner of Third Street and 10th Avenue in southeast Cedar Rapids. The building is part of a brownfield redevelopment area adjacent to the Downtown Bohemian Commercial Historic District. The array is capable of generating 7,200 watts of electricity.

Clay Smith

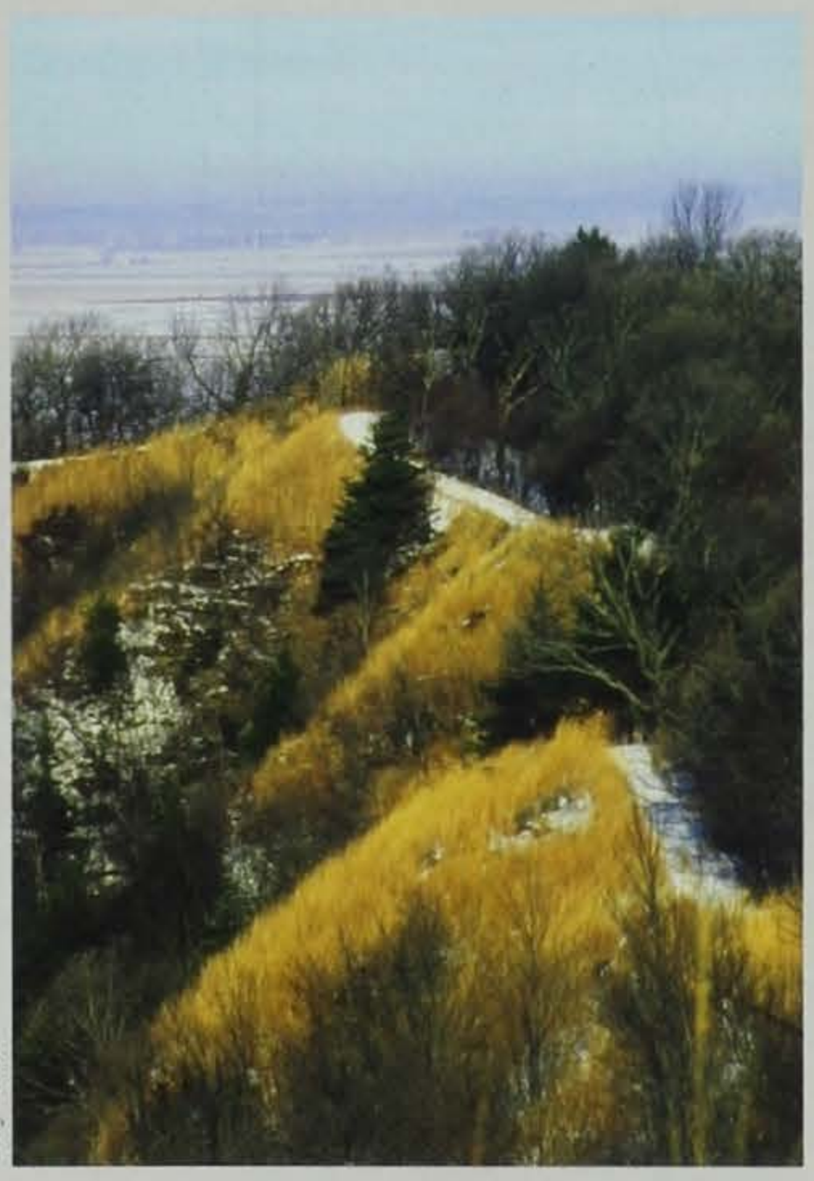
"Not only will the solar array serve as a viable source of energy for Cedar Rapids, but the entire public will also benefit from an interactive solar-powered kiosk near the Kouba Building," said Brian Tormey, chief of the DNR's Energy and Waste Management Bureau.

The New Bohemia Solar Project is a partnership effort between the Iowa DNR, Iowa Renewable Energy Association, Alliant Energy-Interstate Power and Light Company, the City of Cedar Rapids, and the Thorland Company, with funding provided by the U.S. Department of Energy.

Waubonsie State Park Growing With Recent Purchase Of Former Girl Scout Camp

State park officials are celebrating the recent purchase of the 646-acre former Girl Scout Camp Wa-Shawtee, adjacent to Waubonsie State Park, which will increase the park size by 52 percent. The expansion is expected to generate a regional economic impact of at least $1.8 million per year.

"This is probably the most significant addition to a state park in a generation," said Kevin Szcodronski, chief of the DNR's State Parks Bureau. The park will increase in size from 1,254 acres to around 1,900 acres.



Clay Smith

The recent purchase of the Girl Scout Camp Wa-Shawtee, adjacent to Waubonsie State Park, will increase the size of the park by 52 percent.

The property has significant natural value. It contains one of the largest contiguous woodlands in the Loess Hills region and is home to approximately 17 percent of the Waubonsie Special Landscape Area with clusters of exemplary prairie and geological features, identified as a priority for protection by the National Park Service. The purchase includes 11 buildings, most of which will be used as rental cabins, and a swimming pool.

The property was purchased from Edward Marshall for $2.1 million. The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation was an integral partner in the purchase, spending hundreds of hours over the last three years and thousands of dollars to facilitate the purchase.

Mark Ackelson, president of the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, also praised Marshall, who not only donated an additional 65 acres for use as a camp for terminally ill children, but also rebuffed significantly higher offers from developers.

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. 9th St., Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0034.

Natural Resource Commission:

- November 10
  Des Moines
- December 8
  Des Moines

Environmental Protection Commission:

- November 21
  Urbandale
- December 19
  Urbandale

State Preserves Advisory Board:

- October meeting
  Cancelled

Warden's Diary

Not All Fun and Games

by Chuck Humeston

This is something you may not want to hear, but unfortunately it happens. And, it seems like it happens with increasing frequency since I started in this business.

The next time you think, "I'd like to do what you do because I like to hunt and fish, keep it in mind it's not all fun and games.

It was late fall, and I had been working outside my territory helping a fellow officer. It had been a long day, as most of them are that time of the year. Shooting hours were over, the sun was setting and I was heading home. I decided to stop at a convenience store for a cup of coffee to ward off the chill, envisioning a quiet evening at home.

It was not to be.

I walked in the store and there was a group of people inside. Some were at the check out with a quick pizza for Sunday night dinner and some with other odds and ends. I noticed one guy eyeing me. Actually, glaring at me is a better description. You tend to pick up on those things pretty quickly the longer you are in the profession. I ignored him, filled my coffee cup and headed for the cash register thinking, "I don't know what his problem is and I just want to get home."

But, that wasn't to be either. The minute I got to the counter he was right behind me, and away he went. For me, and for all to hear, he started in with a litany of less-than-complimentary comments concerning the officer I was assisting and what he was going to do to him. I had paid for my coffee, I didn't appreciate threats against officers and I had listened to just about enough. I turned around, looked at him and said, "If you've got a complaint, maybe you should say those things to his face." Things got quiet and you could tell people were getting uncomfortable. He started in again, most of which didn't make any sense and that's when I could tell a lot of this was alcohol-fueled.

I walked out to my squad and decided if he got behind the wheel, then I could do some business with him. He came out with his 12-pack, got into the passenger seat and they headed out. I headed the opposite way toward home.

About 20 minutes later, the radio squawked. Regular readers should be familiar with the name Arlen Throne, because I have written about him before. Arlen is retired now, but he was one of those officers who had the mojo. He was always getting into something.

That night, Arlen had stopped a car whose occupants were checking traps along the road. As Arlen approached, the door flew open, and a guy took off running — a fairly obvious clue that something is amiss. Arlen called for assistance.

My coffee went out the window, and I whipped my squad around and turned on the lights. So much for my quiet evening, but when a fellow officer needs help, that's all I need to know.

I arrived quickly and I could see Arlen's headlights out in a field with a guy running in front of his squad. The guy appeared to be running in circles. Arlen could have gotten out of his car, but he showed his experience by "working smarter, not harder." It wasn't what you would call a high-speed chase. Arlen told me on the radio the guy appeared to be heading for a farmstead by the road. I drove into the farmyard, got out and decided to wait for Arlen to herd the guy to me.

I walked to a fence opening. The chase was getting closer and closer. I started yelling for the guy to stop. Arlen just kept

driving behind him, keeping the runner in his headlights. He ran through the gate where I was standing. I looked at him. "Oh no," I thought. Yes, it was my new-found friend from the convenience store.

I kept yelling "Stop!" He didn't listen. I could see what was coming. As he ran up to me, his right arm came up, his hand balled into a fist and the punch came at me. I blocked it with my left arm, grabbed him, spun him around and pushed him into the fence. Lest you think I'm a martial arts expert, remember the suspect had been running for about 20 minutes and he was somewhat alcohol-dulled. I think my granddaughter could have blocked that punch.

I waited for him to come up fighting. To my surprise (I later found from past experience on his part) he "assumed the position," with his feet spread apart and his hands outstretched grabbing the woven wire fence. He was laughing. By now Arlen had arrived and I had my handcuffs out. The problem was now the guy would not let go of the fence. It was turning into a semi-wrestling match, trying to get the guy's hand off the fence. I grabbed him by the waist, lifting him up off the ground intending to move him off the fence when I heard Arlen, yelling, "Chuck, stop stop!" I had the guy up in the air. But, the fence had come off the post and it was coming with us. I set him back down. He still wouldn't let go. We waited for another officer to arrive, and we pried the guy's hands off the fence and handcuffed him.

By now some deputies arrived to help us and we walked the guy to one of their cars. The whole time the guy is telling me what he would do to me if he could get the handcuffs off. You get the idea. I put him in the back seat and shut the door.

Before the deputy drove him to jail, we decided to remove my handcuffs and replace them with the deputy's. We opened the door thinking, "Here we go again."

He was passed out asleep in the back seat. I got in my car and headed home. I had had enough "fun and games" for one day.