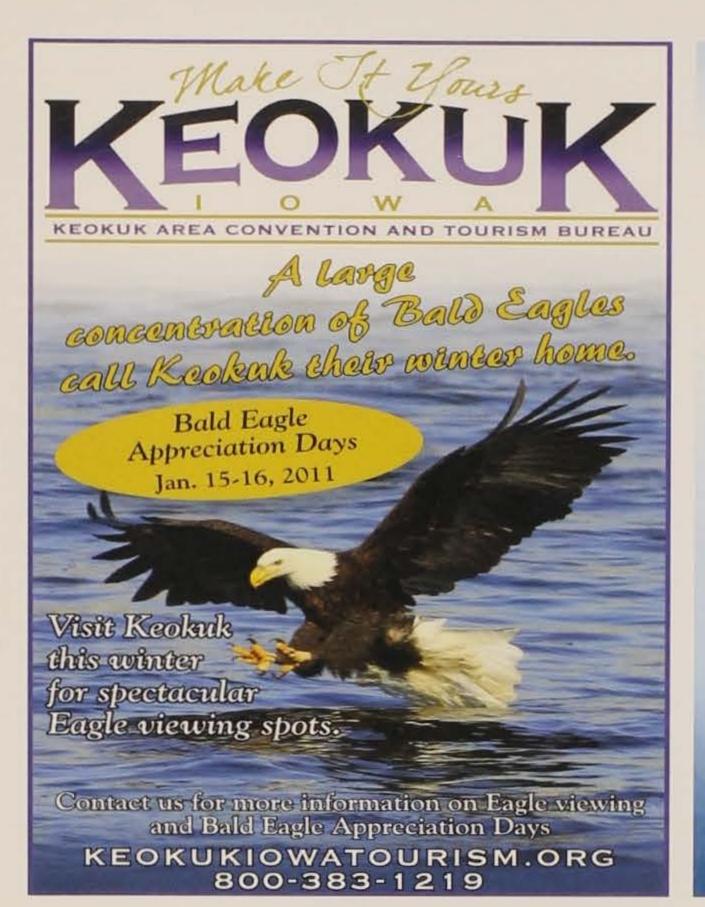
JANUARY / FEBRUARY 201

THE DNR'S MAGAZINE OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION

NONSTOP ADVENTURE TACKLE WINTER HEAD-ON FOR SURREAL SCENERY, SOLITUDE AND FUN





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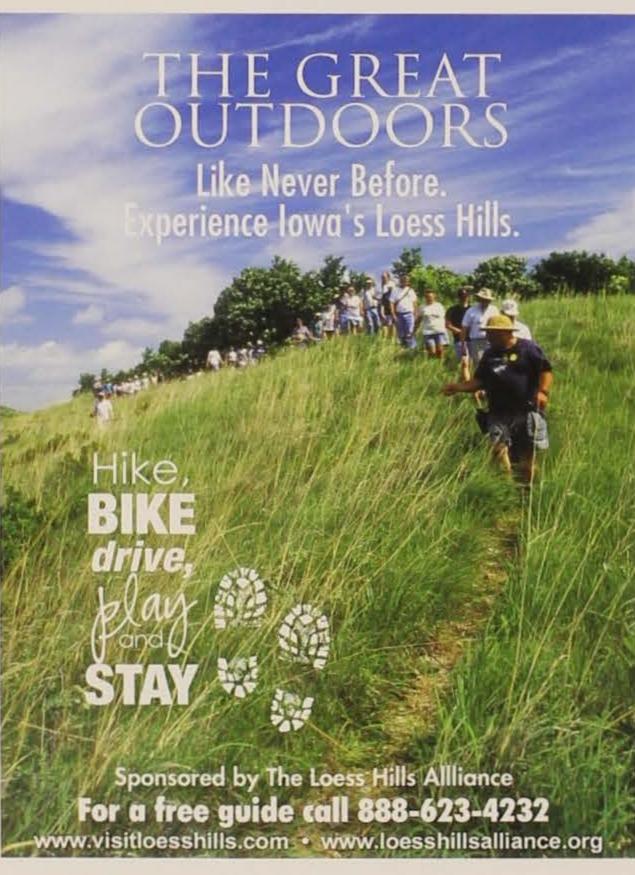
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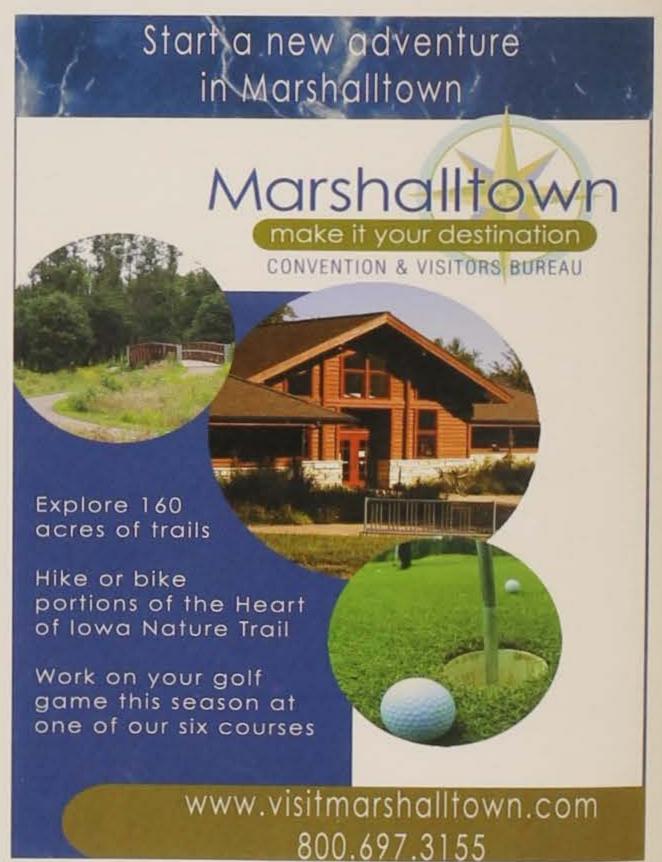
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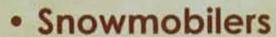
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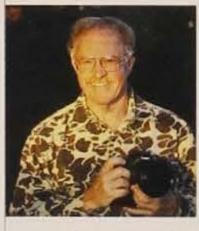
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To conserve and enhance our natural resources in cooperation with individuals and organizations to improve the quality of life for Iowans and ensure a legacy for future generations.

## EDITORIAL MISSION

We strive to open the door to the beauty and uniqueness of Iowa's natural resources, inspire people to get outside and experience Iowa and to motivate outdoor-minded citizens to understand and care for our natural resources.

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## LEARN MORE

Our webpage, www.iowadnr.gov, is loaded with information for all ages and needs. Buy licenses, reserve campsites or learn more about our environment online.







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Peek into the microscopic magic of snow crystals, learn to make slip-proof footwear and stand up on any ice, and discover a comforting winter tea rich in vitamin C.

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In the middle of flat farmland is an unexpected treasure in Hardin County. Pine Lake State Park offers rugged vistas along the Iowa River, ponds full of fish, a labyrinth of trails and some of the nicest cabins in the park system.

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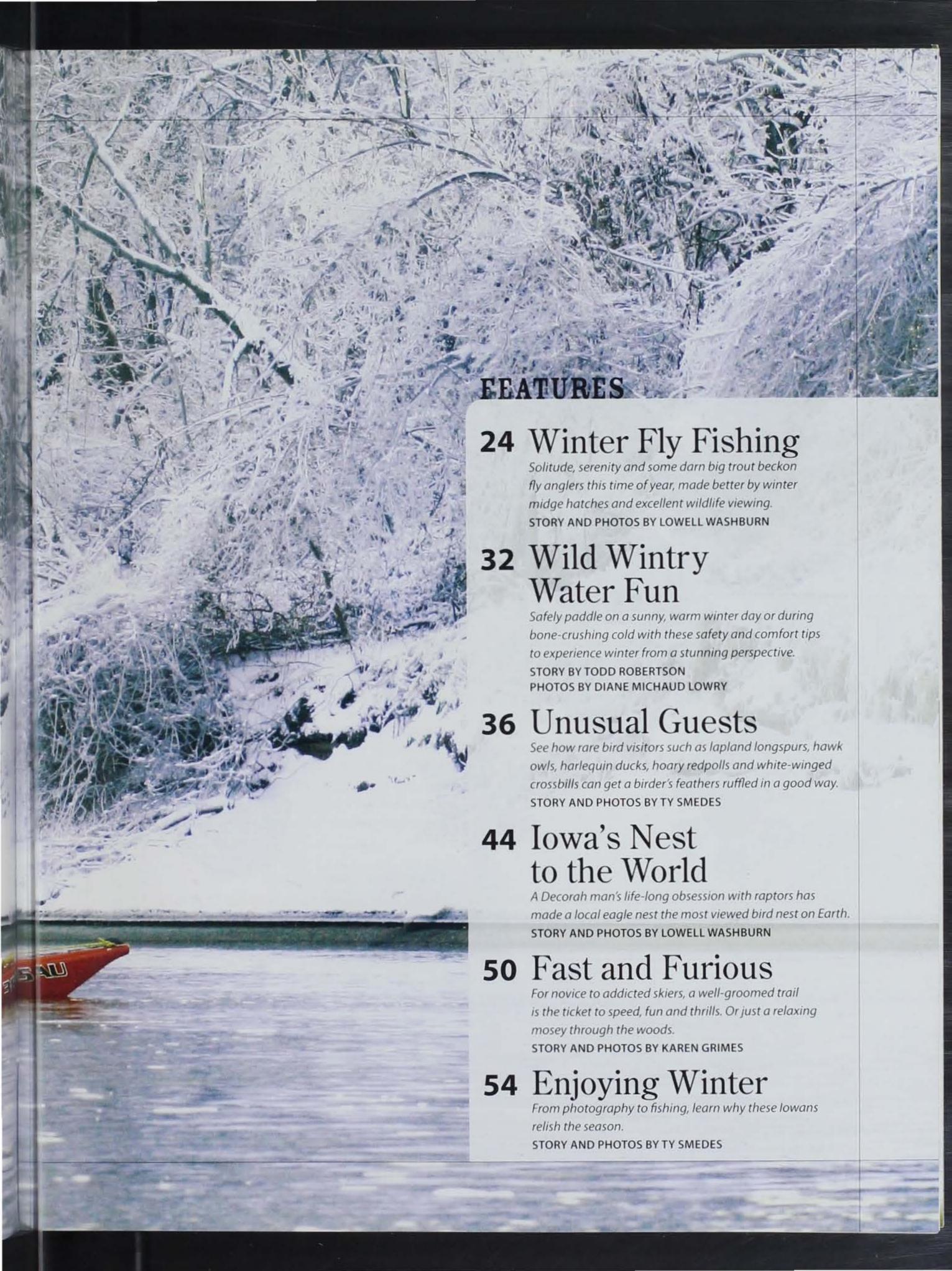
Warm up with Greek-inspired stuffed pheasant breast, savor duck confit and enjoy applewood smoked trout.

## 66 Flora & Fauna

What mammal is an elder by age 2, has 50 teeth, can repair a broken spine and plays a role in medical research?

Photo by Brian Button

## Contents January / PEBRUARY 2011 ABOUT THIS PHOTO AND THE COVER A handful of hardcore and properly geared paddlers make a traditional New Year's Day outing with the motto "Start the Year Out Right" at both Saylorville Dam and Lake Red Rock Dam. Below, paddler Scott Evans of Knoxville explores open water below the Lake Red Rock dam. Photographer Diane Michaud Lowry of Ames captured this image and that of her iced-up cockpit on this issue's cover. Last year, 11 paddlers endured 4°F temperatures and 10 knot northwest winds to paddle 2 miles upstream to the Saylorville Dam and back. "One of my companions yelled into the wind, 'Hey, you're throwing ice at me!' as ice was forming and flying off my paddle with every stroke. It was such a crazy thing to do in those conditions that even though my fingers were frozen I knew I had to try to take a few shots," she says.



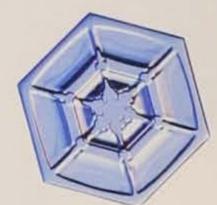
## **ACTIVITIES, TIPS** AND **EVENTS** FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

Microscopic Magic of Snow

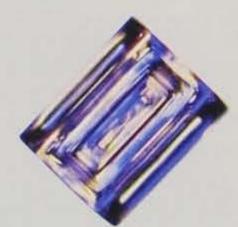
Explore the mysterious realm of crystals with a simple magnifying lens and discover a secret world. Snow crystals grow into different shapes dependent upon temperature and humidity. Why the shapes change so much is still a science mystery. Below is a highly simplified list—some classification systems list up to 80 crystal types.



FERNLIKE DENDRITES Stellar crystals with many sidebranches. Largest of the crystals—the thin, light flakes make powdery, fluffy snow.



HEXAGONAL PLATE CRYSTALS
Six-sided, flat and often found with a range of indents and ridges. Rarely found as perfectly flat.



STELLAR DENDRITES Common, thin

Form during 5° to 28°F temperatures.

six-armed plates. Faces often have

elaborate, symmetrical markings.

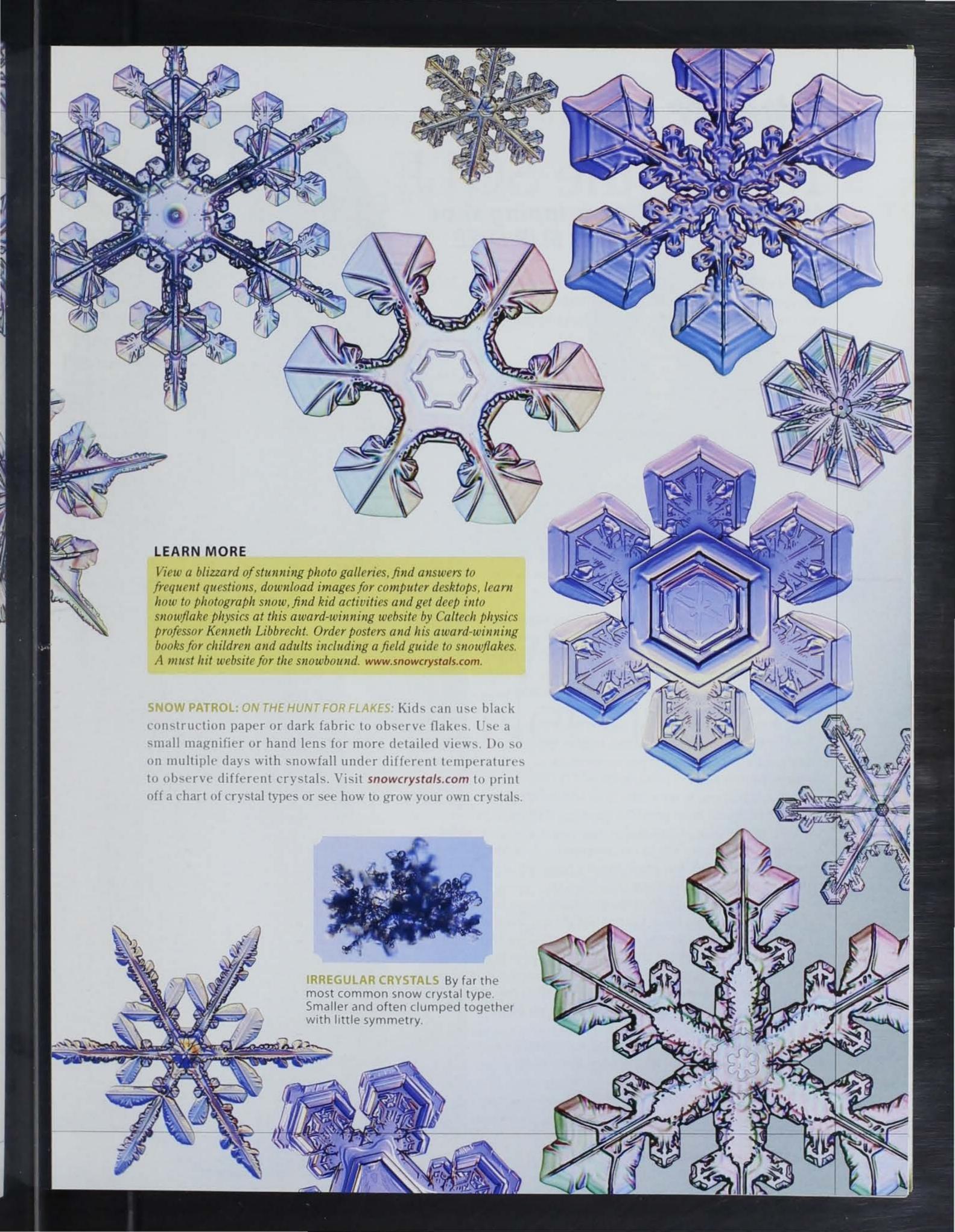
PRISMS Vary by how fast the facets grow, these most basic snow shapes can be thin plates, pencil-like columns or others. Barely seen with naked eye.



capped columns First grow as columns, then are blown higher in clouds where hexagonal plates grow at the ends. Not in every snowfall.



**NEEDLES** Grow at about 23°F. Slender with fine points. Why crystals grow as plates, but change to needles with just a few degree change, is unknown.



Together Half Day On \$50 STORY AND PHOTOS BY BRIAN BUTTON

Rx For the SOLE

Make your own ice-gripping shoe to enjoy wintry walks SLIP-FREE

If this winter proves to be anything like the past several, this project can help prevent falls while letting you walk, hike, run errands or shovel the drive with less likelihood of a bone-jarring slip.

### SUPPLIES:

- Small container of number six-sized sheet metal screws, either ¼-inch,
   ¾-inch or half-inch. You'll need about 30 to 40 total. We bought a box of
   100 to have extras on hand for future replacements. COST: \$2 TO \$3
- · One pair of footwear such as old hiking boots or running shoes
- · Use a drill with socket driver or socket wrench

THE PROBLEM? Various types of store-bought devices that add traction for footwear fall off and are lost in the snow or their traction lugs pull loose. Not to mention the cost (\$11-\$79).

THE SOLUTION? After two winters of slipping and spending money on three different pairs of neoprene grippers, the editors stumbled across an inexpensive DIY solution.

STEP 1: Select a pair of shoes or boots. Depending upon your desired activity, select footwear to match. The screw shoe was originally created by avid runners, bent on slip-free winter exercise. Depending upon sole thickness, select an appropriate length of sheet metal screw. If using air or gel running shoes, ensure you do not puncture the bladder by errant screw placement.

For winter hikes, errands and snow removal, we selected an old pair of hiking boots. The high ankles help keep snow out of the boot. Fitness buffs looking for safer winter workouts on snow and ice can do the same with a pair of running shoes.

STEP 2: Select the screws. Machine screws work best as the rugged hexagonal head provides traction. Half-inch screws work for most boots. A 3/8-inch screw might also be desired to place in the thinner toe of running shoes. A smaller ¼-inch screw might pull out, but can be easily replaced. If the screws pull out frequently, consider a longer length.

step 3: Secure boot upside down, preferably in a vice. There is no need to drill pilot holes. Place a screw into the nut driver and drill into the boot lugs, raised tread or traction cleats. A socket driver or socket wrench also works. It only takes a few minutes to complete both shoes. If you are really bored, you can use a screwdriver—that will make this easy task more challenging (we don't recommend it). Before wearing, double-check shoe interior for any hint of screw tips poking through.

Before reuse, replace any missing screws or as winter progresses, any screw heads that are worn down.

Learn more at www.skyrunner.com/screwshoe.htm



## Glove Gator

The solution to the bane of snow-loving children everywhere has arrived. The blast of cold snow down mittens and up sleeves from a killer sledding run or massive wipeout is a thing of the past thanks to a durable, stretchy wetsuit material. The GloveGator fits over any mitten or glove to keep it in place and cover that gap that always appears between glove and sleeve. Once installed, you never need to remove the GloveGator from each glove or mitten, just unzip the GloveGator and take off the glove or mitten with the GloveGator still attached. Available in adult sizes for snowblowing, shoveling or for the kid at heart.

Available in sizes XS to XL. \$15.99. Order at 1-877-429-9365 or glovegator.com.



## White Pine Needle Tea

- ½ cup fresh green white pine needles, finely chopped
- · 1.5 pints water
- · Small pot for boiling
- Honey or some other sweetner (optional)

Jacques Cartier, in his book "Voyages to Canada" (1534), credited tea made from pine needles and bark as saving the lives of his ice-stranded crew. Once 110 men strong, scurvy had taken 25 sailors, with 50 more near death and the remainder too weak to bury the dead. They were cured when Quebec Indians shared the tea, and with it, the secret to obtaining Vitamin C in the depths of winter.

To make this mild-tasting tea, harvest the newest, green needles at the branch tips. Finely chop them until you have about 1/2 cup. Add needles to boiling water and simmer 20 minutes, or until water is reduced by about a third.

**CAUTION:** Pregnant women or those planning on becoming pregnant should not consume this tea.

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love research—not doing it mind you, but seeing the results. Recently I was perusing one yet unpublished item out of the University of Illinois. In that study they measured the results of intelligence tests after 20 minutes of Wii and 20 minutes on a treadmill. The 20 minutes on a treadmill resulted in improved test scores while Wii didn't. This surprised me. I would imagine the mental stimulation of a treadmill and Wii would be comparable. Like many in public health, I am encouraged by video options that require activity; while still harboring a notion that the real thing is better.

The question that is left begging here is what would be the result of a 20 minute walk through either a natural or even urban setting? If there are measurable differences between aerobic activity with a video game versus a treadmill, wouldn't 20 minutes in a stimulus-rich environment be better still?

That study needs to be followed up with a new one looking at four groups. One sitting on a couch, one sitting on a couch watching TV, yet another on a treadmill, and the fourth walking or running in an outdoor setting. My theory—I will call it the Lane theory—is that running down an outdoor path will stimulate the brain more than a treadmill workout and that sitting on a couch is actually better for your brain than sitting and watching TV.

I am willing to bet that 90 percent of adult lowans agree with this assumption and yet we place our children in front of TVs at an early age, then drop them off at daycare facilities that offer TV programs, and at some point buy them TVs for their bedrooms.

In another study from the same institution, the fitness level of children was determined and they were assigned to three groups—not fit, moderately fit and very fit. In the next stage they measured the two extreme groups, that is the most and least fit and scanned the brains with magnetic resonance imaging technology to measure the volume of specific areas.

I bet you can guess the results. Youth that were active had larger basal ganglia, hippocampi, and these two areas of the brain seemed to work together better. In layman's terms imagine the basil ganglia as the software of your computer, now think of the hippocampus as your memory bank. For the record I bet that my brain was huge, because when I was a kid I got 20 minutes of activity 20 times a day in the summer and 10 times a day in the winter. Good thing too I needed all the help I could get in that department. (Note to kids... I see opportunity here...tell your parents and teachers you need to go outside to play and it is research-based and will contribute to a better brain.)

Once again I recall the old observation that if the benefits of physical activity could be capsulated in a pill...it'd be worth trillions. I have always understood that activity helps circulate blood to the brain and that increased oxygen helps it function. That is one thing...but creating a better brain is another thing altogether.

According to the researchers the takeaway is clear: More aerobic exercise for young people.

I would say that dovetails well with my message for everyone: move more!

Tim Lane is a nationally recognized authority on public health and physical activity. Last June he and his buddies rode bicycles across Iowa, river to river, in 21 straight hours.

## But Why? Helping adults answer children's nature questions

BY A. JAY WINTER

A. Jay Winter educates up to 20,000 Iowa children each year as the DNR's training specialist at the Springbrook Conservation Education Center.

## Why does it sometimes thunder when it snows?

If you hear a rumble in the distance this winter, it may not be the snowplow plodding along the road. It might actually be thunder.

While most of us consider the warmer months to have a monopoly on thunder and lightning, a thunderstorm can happen any time of year.

"It's really the same thing, just in a colder month," says Mark Schnackenberg, chief meteorologist at KWWL in Waterloo.

For a storm to start brewing, there needs to be instability in the air surrounding the earth (the atmosphere). In the summer, that creates thunder, lightning, heavy rain—maybe even hail or tornadoes.

Come winter, thunderstorms focus on dumping truckloads of snow instead, potentially dropping up to 2 or 3 inches of snow in an hour. Unlike its springtime alter ego, a winter thunderstorm doesn't have the energy to create high winds, hail or tornadoes.

But what about the lightning? It's still there it's just that the lower clouds of winter make it harder to see in those grey skies. In fact, it can't thunder at all without lightning.

"Lightning is a spark that heats the atmosphere quickly. That expansion of air creates thunder," Schnackenberg says.

But thundersnow isn't an everyday thing, which makes it all the more intriguing when it does start rumbling on a January day.

"It happens, on average, about one to three times a year," Schackenberg says.

## New Year's Escape For Couples or Families





CV OR HONIEV CREEV RECORT CTATE BAR

HANIEV ZOFEVEVEVETEDIAR DHATA DV.CI AV CMITH HAMEV ZOFEVANAFFODAOV DHATAC ZAMDY

Lyour significant other or an easy entertainment getaway for the family? Honey Creek Resort State Park offers either with special New Year packages that feature two nights in a traditional lodge room for the nights of Dec. 30 and 31 or Dec. 31 and Jan.

1. This comes with a bottle of sparkling wine, a night of dancing to live entertainment and breakfast for two. All is included in the special \$219 room rate.

However, if you want the kids to tag along, Honey Creek can help. For family enjoyment, receive a two-night say in a lodge room complemented with four water park daily passes and 20 arcade tokens. Complimentary pizza, soda, ice cream and cake are served New Year's Eve from 5:00 to10:00 p.m. at Buccaneer Bay Water Park, all for a special \$219 rate.

During the day, enjoy great winter outdoor activities such as hiking and ice fishing through the resort. As Hannah Wiltmuth of Honey Creek says, "The diversity here is great. There is something for everybody."

For reservation information call 877-677-3344 and ask about the New Year's Eve packages or learn more about the resort at www.honeycreekresort.com.



## WINTER ICE

↑ Iways check ice thickness as you proceed across frozen water. Save time and effort by using a cordless drill and a long wood auger bit of 5/8thsinch width. The drill cuts through thick ice quickly, and the wood auger bit helps remove ice chips to keep the hole open and lessen the chance of the bit sticking.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources follows the general ice safety guidelines tabulated by the Lumbermen's Safety Association and other sources and should be considered rough guidelines only.

- · One inch of ice is not safe
- · Two inches of ice can support one person on foot, under good conditions
- · Three inches of ice can support a group in single file or spread out
- · Four inches supports general use
- · Five inches for snowmobiles.
- · Eight to 12 inches for a car
- Twelve to 15 for a medium truck

Remember, these are general guidelines for clear, solid ice. Other factors affect ice quality and thickness.

## Cross-Country Ski Trail Etiquette



For skiing enthusiasts, nothing beats good snow and a well groomed trail. Non-skiers and skiers alike should be aware of these tips.

- 1) Do not walk on groomed trails and set tracks
- 2) Skate skiers should stay off classic tracks
- 3) Move to side of trail when stopped, rewaxing or resting
- 4) If you fall, fill in any sitzmarks (divots) with snow
- 5) Pass with courtesy, call out "track" to alert fellow skiers
- 6) Don't stop at the bottom of hills or blind corners
- 7) Stay to the right and pass on the left
- 8) Carry out all litter, including any you find
- 9) Yield the trail to skiers that overtake you from behind
- 10) Snowshoe, hike and walk pets off of groomed trails
- 11) Snowmobiles should stay off ski trails
- 12) Move off trail to allow grooming machines to pass

## HAPPY PERIHELION!

It's January in Iowa and baby, its cold outside. There are some misconceptions that during the winter season our sun is farther from the Earth thus making it colder for those of us who spend our winter months in the northern hemisphere. This theory might indeed explain the winter season, if it weren't for the fact that during the same time of year our friends in the southern hemisphere are basking in the sun's warmth—so, we've decided to shed some light on the subject.

On or around Jan. 3rd, the earth is actually closer to the sun than it is on any other day of the year. This is earth's *perihelion* or orbital point of a planet at which it is nearest to the sun. In January, the sun is a mere 91.65 million miles from Earth. In July the Earth orbits 94.2 million miles away from the sun.

So, if we are closer to our heat source in January, why is it so cold? The answer is that shorter rays cause colder days. In January in the northern hemisphere (where we are located) the earth tilts away from the sun—the sun's rays are spread out and hit earth at a lower angle, which reduces the amount of radiant heat absorbed. Also, winter nights are long and winter days are short, which doesn't allow ample time for our hemisphere to warm up.

During our summer, the northern hemisphere is tilted towards the sun and the sun's rays hit at a steeper angle. The light is more concentrated, thus increasing the amount of radiant heat absorbed. Also, the long daylight hours allow more exposure time.

The distance between earth and sun has nothing to do with the seasons—the earth's tilt is the reason for our colder season. Happy perihelion!

Isk The Expert J.C. in Tama asks: "How can it mist on my windshield when it's below freezing?"

Mist and fog may look like smoke, but they are actually tiny droplets of water floating in the air—in essence, clouds that have formed at ground level. Both mist and fog form through condensation, often at night when the air is cooler and can hold moisture. The only difference between the two is their thickness, and how far we can see through them. Fog is thickest and hardest to see through when the air can hold a lot of moisture and it's thinner (or a mist) and easier to see through when the air holds less moisture.

When they fall, these droplets can remain in a liquid state even when air temperatures surrounding them are below freezing. This is why when temperatures are below freezing you may have liquid droplets on your vehicle's window. This occurs because the droplets

need a surface to freeze to (unless temperatures are extremely low—then the droplets can freeze without a surface).

Droplets that are liquid and are below freezing are referred to as supercooled droplets, and when the droplet makes contact with a surface that is below freezing it will turn to ice. If the temperature outside is below freezing, these droplets will not freeze on your vehicle window if the window is warmer than the air temperature, such as when your vehicle has been running with your defrost on. If temperatures outside are below freezing, these droplets will freeze to your vehicle window if it is colder or the same temperature as the air temperature—which is the case if your vehicle has been sitting outside for a period of time without running.

GOT A QUESTION? Send to: ASKTHEEXPERTS@DNR.IOWA.GOV

## Lost In Towa

BY SANDY FLAHIVE PHOTOS BY CLAY SMITH

Four recently remodeled stone and timber cabins accommodate between four and six guests and feature wood fireplaces to stifle the winter chill.

## Paradise Tce



LEFT: Park manager Don Primus keeps an eagle eye on every part and parcel of Pine Lake State Park from the quaint cabins to the winding trails to the hundreds of pine trees. RIGHT: Visible from the Sac and Fox Overlook, the new Highway 20 bridge carries traffic 137 feet above the lowa River.



Winter in Iowa...polar opposite of the state's luscious season of flourishing flower beds, burgeoning crops and cavorting butterflies.

Winter in Iowa...lifeless, desolate, frozen in suspended animation.

To be sure, the wildflowers lie sleeping, the cropland is dormant, and the butterflies are AWOL, but that second portrayal? A lot of hocus-pocus fostered by those who insist on cocooning indoors all winter or bracing for the season by packing shorts and skedaddling south.

What a pity. If they stick around, they'll find winter as full of life as July. All they need do is crawl off the couch, venture boldly beyond the front doorstep and round out their derring-do with a trip to Pine Lake State Park and Hardin County.

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS

In a world doused in white, Don Primus, manager of Pine Lake State Park, greets visitors with a hearty handshake, an accolade for his park and a cliché. "We're an Iowa treasure," he boasts with a frosty breath that dusts his black mustache with silver glitter, "and the best-kept secret in the state." Nevertheless, he acknowledges the latter is a tad understandable. "It's kind of hard to know we're here until you get here," he admits.

True.

Approach Pine Lake—one mile east of the Hardin County seat of Eldora—from any direction and you'll likely meander many miles through rich, flat farmland, wondering, "Really? A state park on this landscape?" Yes, and what a discovery.

That the park is a plum on Iowa's wintry landscape is quickly evident, and when Primus promises, with a broad sweep of his arm, "Experience this just once and you'll be back," the possibility already seems certain. However, the comments of Sheila Allbee, an employee at Casey's General Store in Eldora, seal the deal. "You'll love it," she confirms, but warns, "Better stay a while, though. There are a few things to do here."

No, there's a lot to do here.

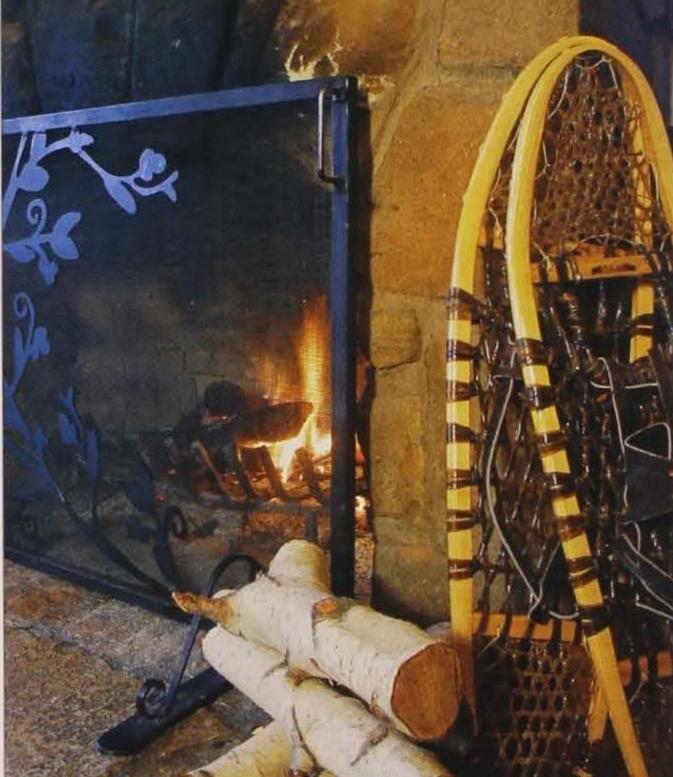
Pine Lake State Park provides the winter adventurer 650 acres of woods garnished with a labyrinth of powdery trails to hike, ski and snowshoe; and spacious, remodeled cabins sporting super-sized stone fireplaces that breathe hickory-tinged heat into every nook and cranny. There's also the pristine Iowa River, caressing the park's west edge; and two lakes, 50-acre Lower Pine and 69-acre Upper Pine, jam-packed with bluegills and crappies daring to be caught through layers of ice. On land and water, the calligraphy of the season, written in the snow via the tracks of an army of rambunctious wildlife, comes across as a personal invitation to their domain.

## **SETTLING IN**

"The nicest cabins in the parks system," remarks Primus of Pine Creek, Bittersweet, Goldfinch and Sandstone, the stone and timber cottages situated in an idyllic wooded setting where Pine Creek joins the Iowa River. Built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s, as was the park lodge, each houses four to six guests. A peek around confirms the accommodations are exceptionally

## Lost In Towa

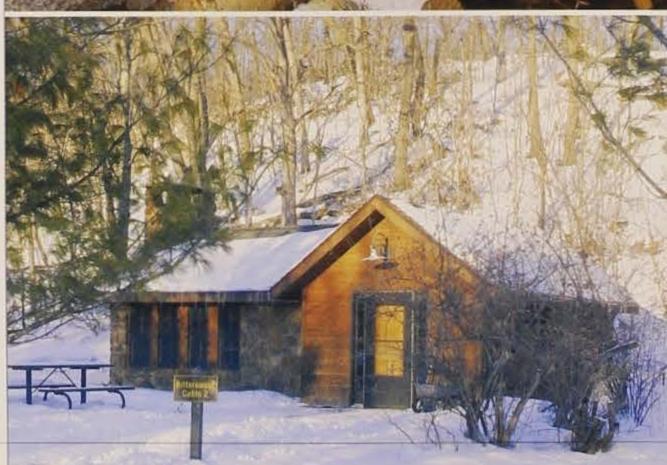




ABOVE AND BELOW: The lowa River Greenbelt through Hardin County is home to three state preserves, rough and rugged chunks of land characterized by a dizzying array of topography, vegetation and wildlife. Hardwood forests, prairie land, meandering waterways, sandstone cliffs, wooded ridges and, in winter, impenetrable snowdrifts entice the hardy wilderness traveler.

LEFT AND BOTTOM: Nothing compares to an overnight stay in the cozy comfort of a Pine Lake State Park cabin. At the juncture of Pine Creek and the lowa River, four impressive stone and timber dwellings huddle contentedly at the base of Hogsback Ridge. All feature a massive, wood-burning, limestone fireplace that provides a toasty welcome after a day of activity in the surrounding winter wonderland. A kitchen with refrigerator and microwave stands at the ready to cool down your beverages and heat up your chili.







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well-maintained. "They're clean when guests arrive, and I expect them to be that way when they leave," Primus declares. Such fastidiousness may account for the impressive occupancy rate; "72 percent, year round."

### **SOLITARY PURSUITS**

Having a cozy home base makes outdoor exploration a pleasing prospect. One of more than 10 miles of park trails, the Hogsback Ridge zigzags along a lofty ridge directly behind the cabins and is a paradise for those who believe there's no such thing as too much snow.

Named for the 250-year-old, most-southern stand of eastern white pine in Iowa, Pine Lake is also blessed with an abundance of deciduous trees. Lifting one's eyes up the trunks of these leafless giants to peer through the upper, nerve-like limbs that slice a cloudless sky into a thousand blue slivers is well worth a pause in the hike.

Encased in snow and ice at the top of the ridge are two of five American Indian burial mounds in the park, evidence of the county's wealth of archaeological sites spanning at least 11,000 years. On both the hike and snowshoe trek that follows, the world is winterstill, except for the rhythmic "squeak-crunch" of the snowshoes. Apparently the two pileated woodpeckers that usually hang around have taken the day off.

## THE PARK SURVIVES

On Aug. 9, 2009, Pine Lake suffered unfathomable devastation when winds and hail snapped stout tree trunks in half, stripped needles off hundreds of pines, and made crew cuts of treetops. "When it was over, 85 percent of the trees were defoliated," Primus laments. "Windows were knocked out in all four cabins, the lodge ceiling was punctured and vehicles parked at our 124 campsites were shattered." Eldora city manager Patrick Rigg describes nature's onslaught as, "winds that literally turned chunks of ice into speeding bullets."

"Baseball-sized bullets," corrects Primus, indicating reforestation projects are in the works.

## ALIVE AS EVER

Although the park was heavily damaged and now firmly in winter's grasp—playground seats resemble molds of meringue, icy zephyrs flit through picnic shelters and the swan pond waits expectantly—the park remains interesting and alive. "We have the big five for habitat," states Primus, "food, water, cover, space and arrangement." Prints in the snow indicate a hubbub of activity by all the usual suspects, with mink and bobcat tracks occasionally adding a little excitement to the mix. Overhead, the always magnificent bald eagles soar.

The diversity of topography in the park—rolling land here, rugged ridges there, the river, lakes and ponds—lends itself to seasonal recreation. In addition to hiking, skiing and snowshoeing, popular activities include snowmobiling, hunting, sightseeing, bird watching and ice fishing.

### ICE ANGLING: ALL THE COMFORTS OF HOME...OR NOT

Three degrees above zero plus 8 mph winds plus dazzling sunshine on the 14-inch ice cover of Lower Pine Lake equals what else? Ice fishing.

The accourrements of this sport can range from the ridiculously down-home to the supremely ostentatious. "I've seen it all," laughs Scott Grummers, DNR fish hatcheries biologist, "from the guy equipped with only a hatchet and rusty bucket to those who haul out heated shelters with television and a wet bar."

Grummer and his wife, Lisa, go about preparing for an ice fishing demonstration like the experts they are. They yank on the Carhartts, boots, hats and mittens; load ice augers, skimmers, rods, bucket, depth finder, underwater viewing system, tackle box and bait onto a sled. They pull the sled to the destination, about a quarter mile from shore in this case.

"Either a manual or motorized auger will work," Scott advises, wielding each with expertise, creating a 6-inch hole with the hand auger about as fast as he bores an 8-inch hole with the gas-powered machine.

While Lisa skims ice shavings out of the holes, Scott prepares the bait. "We'll use a #6 or #8 hook with a teardrop. And these wax worms are good for catching bluegill," he claims. "For crappie, I use minnows."

With lines and bait at the ready, an hour or two of fun begins in earnest. Down the hole goes the line until it becomes slack, at which point Scott raises it about 6 inches. "Sometimes we use the depth finder," comments Lisa, from her perch on the bucket, "but this is fine, too. The fish will come along eventually." It's the perfect attitude for an ice angler on a nippy afternoon.

## WILDERNESS APLENTY

For anyone who surmises the abundance of agricultural land in Hardin County surely means Pine Lake State Park can be its only nugget of wilderness, Wes Wiese, director

## Pine Lake State Park and Hardin County

## PINE LAKE STATE PARK RESERVATIONS

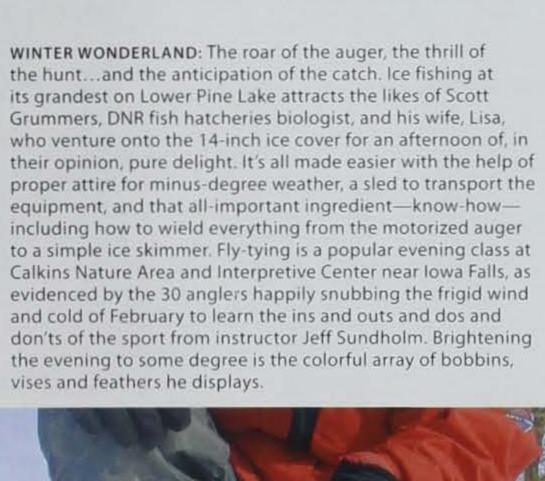
The cabins, lodge, shelters and half the campsites can be reserved by going to www.reserveiaparks.com or 1-877-427-2757.

Pine Creek and Bittersweet cabins accommodate up to six people; Goldfinch and Sandstone cabins up to four.

- Pine Creek cabin is accessible to the mobility-impaired.
- Each cabin features a fireplace, stove, refrigerator, cooking utensils and a restroom with shower. Guests must provide their own dishes, eating utensils, bedding, towels and other camping items.

















## Lost In Towa

of the Hardin County Conservation Board, has a shocking revelation. "The Iowa River Greenbelt through the county is so rich in history, archaeological sites, geological surfaces and scenery that we have 62 individual natural areas and 3,600 acres of timber, prairie, wetlands, parks and campgrounds."

Three state preserves are part of this gold mine. In winter, these rugged parcels can be impenetrable due to snow. Still, the hardy hiker or birdwatcher can venture in far enough, as the DNR's ecologist John Pearson describes, "to connect with something more significant than our ordinary, go-to-work days."

"Mann Wilderness Area Preserve is a good place to take those who think Iowa has no rough or forested land," says Wiese, with good reason. The main feature of its 103 acres is a long, narrow ridge with 350-million-yearold limestone outcrops.

Mainly, hardwood forests dominate the slopes. The 170 species of plants, beds of ferns and symphonies of frogs may be non-existent for the time being, but clearly, coyotes and deer, reveling in their hardiness, are roaming about. Daily conventions of crows and hawks fill not only Mann but all the preserves with the cacophony of life.

Hugging the Iowa River is 122-acre Fallen Rock
Preserve. "This is a whole different world in winter,"
reflects Wiese, almost in wonder, his eyes scanning the
steep sandstone cliffs. "It's mostly hardwood forest with
a few pines, so summer to winter it changes dramatically."

At 25 acres, Hardin City Woodland is the smallest of the three preserves, its name bestowed in recognition of a now-extinct village. It, too, contains steep slopes and an upland forest. Considering the thick wintry blanket, it's hard to believe that in little more than a month, snow trillium will be fighting its way onto the scene.

"I love coming to these areas," says Wiese. "They're not far from nearby towns and yet seem so removed from civilization."

## AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE

It would be a breach of good sense for a wildlife enthusiast to forego a visit to the Sac and Fox Overlook near Steamboat Rock, even if reaching it requires barreling through snowdrifts. Located on a majestic bluff, the overlook affords a 270-degree view of the Iowa River Valley and a glimpse of the U.S. 20 Bridge which carries traffic 137 feet above the river.

Another "must-see" is Calkins Nature Area and Interpretive Center near Iowa Falls. The area comprises 76 acres of woodland, wetland, native prairie and trails, and according to Emily Herring, staff naturalist, "The center's focus is on promoting environmental and conservation education. Through public programs."

One of these is fly-tying, and on a night of unthinkable wind chills, 30 eager anglers, including Ellsworth Community College professor Nancy Slife and her Conservation Technology students, pack into Calkins to learn the skill. "I've been teaching fly-tying throughout Iowa for years," says instructor Jeff Sundholm, busily surveying the colorful paraphernalia in front of him—bobbins, vises, feathers. "You can fly fish anywhere there's water and for any fish. It doesn't have to be trout."

## ONE DOES NOT LIVE BY ACTIVITY ALONE

The funky, art-deco Princess Café and Sweet Shoppe in Iowa Falls goes all out to handle the need for nourishment after vigorous outdoor activity. Not only is its food to die for, but its décor features an expansive marble soda fountain, hand-poured terrazzo floors, neon lights and African mahogany booths.

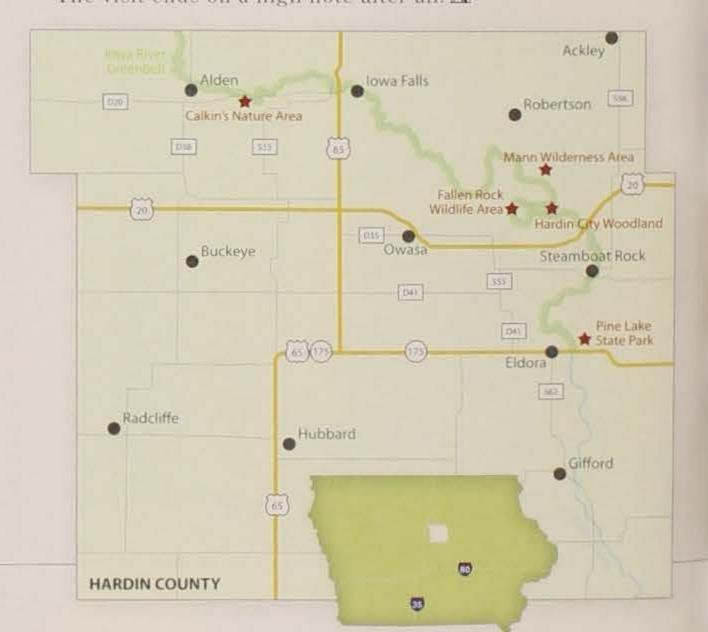
Speaking of food to die for, around the corner is another great dining hangout. Camp David (no, not that Camp David!), named for its owner, features one of the Des Moines Register's "100 things to eat in Iowa before you die:" BBQ Chicken.

## **HEADING OUT**

It's tough leaving Pine Lake State Park and Hardin County. Cramming stuff into the duffle bag and schlepping over Pine Creek Bridge to load the Jeep makes one melancholy—and then, miraculously, birdwatcher Jim Swanson appears on the bridge. A Minnesotan headed for Arkansas to see family, Swanson, intent on the view through his binoculars, is startled by a human interloper but graciously submits to a bit of chit-chat. "I always stop here on my way south," he explains. "I've been looking for the kingfisher. Guess he went south, too."

At that moment the raucous sound of an old-fashioned, ratchet-style noisemaker comes from down the creek.

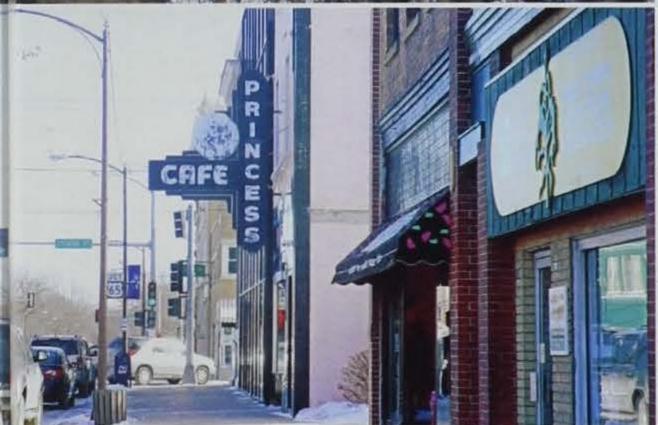
"There he is!" Swanson shouts with glee. The visit ends on a high note after all.







TOP LEFT: Surprising to travelers who frequently must drive through the flat, fertile fields of lowa to get to Hardin County are the massive wooded bluffs high above the lowa River that provide spectacular vistas of a snow-white world. TOP RIGHT: The only way to end a winter's day is to dine at Camp David (in lowa Falls, not Maryland). The restaurant features BBQ chicken, named one of the Des Moines Register's "100 things to eat in lowa before you die." MIDDLE RIGHT: At a mere 25 acres, Hardin City Woodland is the smallest of the three state preserves in the county. Named for what once was a village at the site, its steep slopes and upland forest provide a challenge for even the determined hiker. MIDDLE LEFT AND BELOW: The Princess Café in lowa Falls is renowned for great diner-soda fountain-type food, but an added treat is the surprisingly opulent art-deco décor that makes you want to just sit back and relax for a good long while before trucking out into the cold.

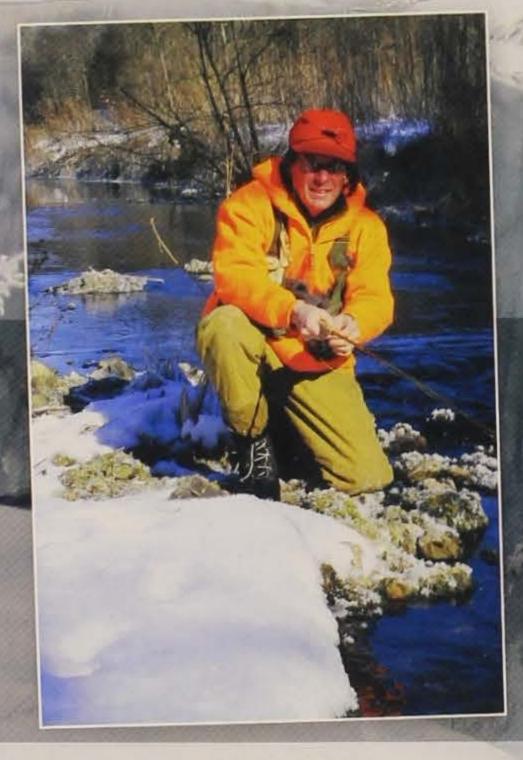








# Spectacular Scenics, Supreme Solitude and Superb Fishing Story and Photos By LOWELL WASHBURN



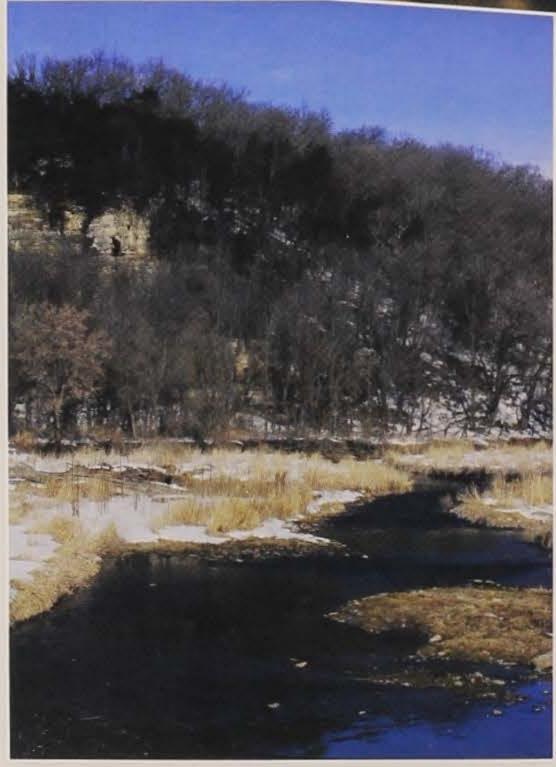
ESIDING IN THE HEART of northeastern lowa's trout country, Decorah's Chris Wasta lives, eats and breathes trout fishing. Avid fly tier, custom rod builder, watershed conservationist and current president of the Driftless Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Wasta never misses an opportunity to improve local fish habitats, promote trout fishing or ply the waters of his favorite cold water streams.

Because Iowa trout fishing is most commonly associated with spring and giant hatches of mayflies, many anglers are surprised to learn some of Wasta's most pleasurable outings occur during the dead of winter when frigid temps have driven most folks indoors.









Much of the cold weather allure, says Wasta, is from walking amid rugged winter landscapes that are a northeast Iowa trademark. A deeper satisfaction is derived from the supreme solitude accompanying each new outing. On most days, Wasta has the entire stream to himself, and there's a good chance the only tracks he'll cross are those of mink, deer or turkeys. Best of all, the streamside forays provide ample chances for close and personal encounters with the region's most challenging and sought after fish.

"Although you maybe don't read or hear much about it, winter trout fishing can be very productive and, even in January, I rarely get skunked," says Wasta. "Although you're not likely to catch dozens of fish during a single winter outing, you might be able to catch six or seven trout, which is more than enough to keep you coming back for more."

Winter angling success is temperature-driven and the best time to hit the stream is when air temps hover near freezing. Drop below the mid-teens and iced-up rod guides become a constant aggravation. Get too far above freezing and snowmelt becomes a factor. Although that kind of day might feel great to anglers, even small amounts of runoff chills the water and will shut fish down.

Although Wasta uses a variety of lures, including nymphs, streamers and dry flies, during his winter outings, the Wooly Bugger has become a mainstay. Although this universally popular pattern isn't meant to imitate any specific aquatic creature, it remains a top strike producer in all seasons. Wooly Buggers enable an angler to quickly and thoroughly cover a lot of water under widely varying habitat conditions. After exposing bare fingers to an hour or two of freezing winter temperatures, the luxury of not having to frequently switch lures becomes a huge benefit.

"I catch both brown and brook trout during winter, and these days they are mostly wild produced fish," notes Wasta. "It wasn't all that long ago that we only had five or six streams with naturally spawning trout, but continuing habitat improvements have brought some very positive changes." Today 34 streams hold naturally reproducing, wild trout. "That's a great achievement for watershed conservation, outdoor recreation and clean water."

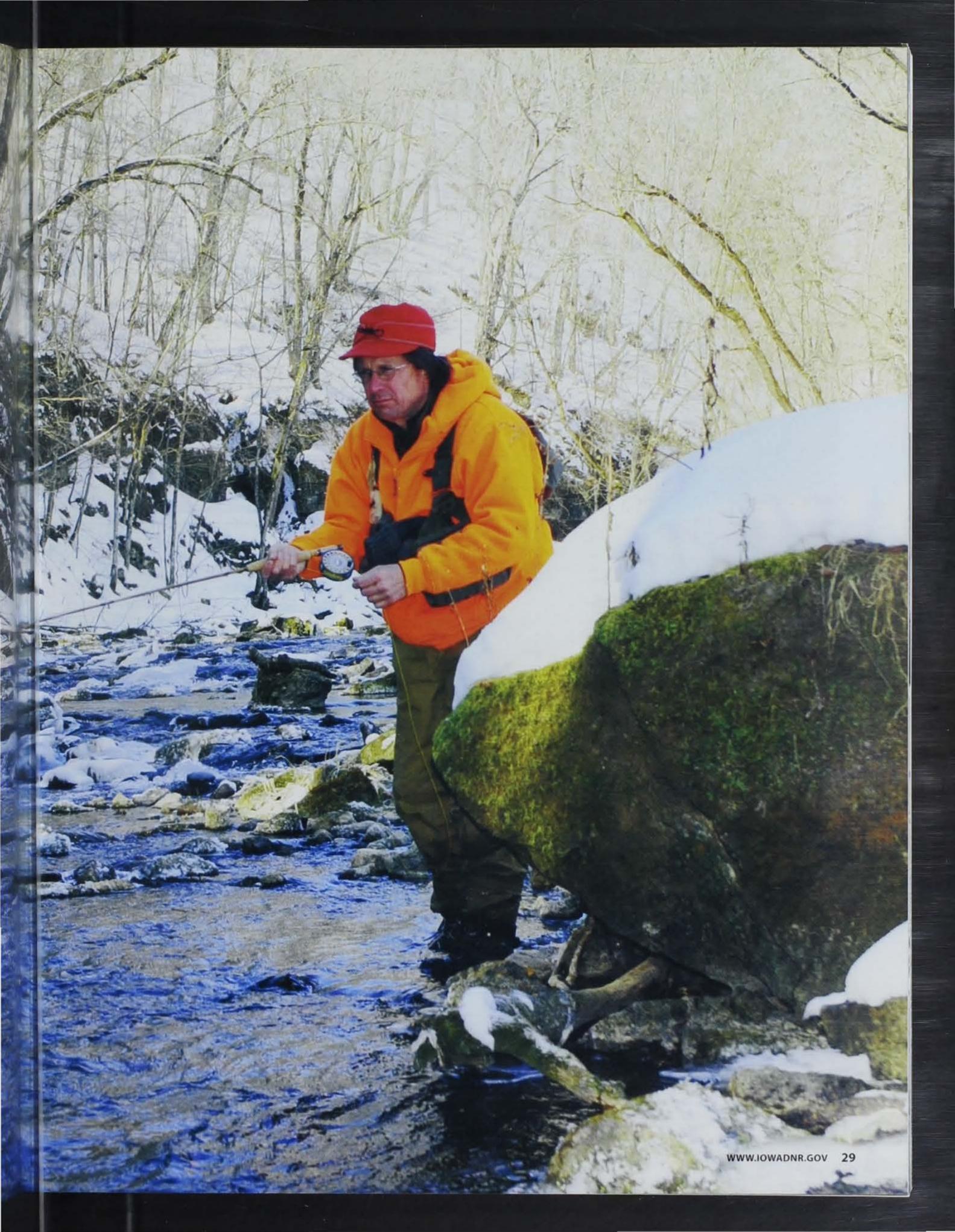
Wasta also catches a lot of rainbow trout, mostly "holdovers" from earlier warm weather stockings.

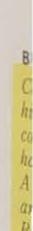
Holdover rainbows become very aggressive to streamers and make for a very exciting trip. "Rainbows spawn in spring and really color up over the winter, which naturally adds to the pleasure of catching one," says Wasta.

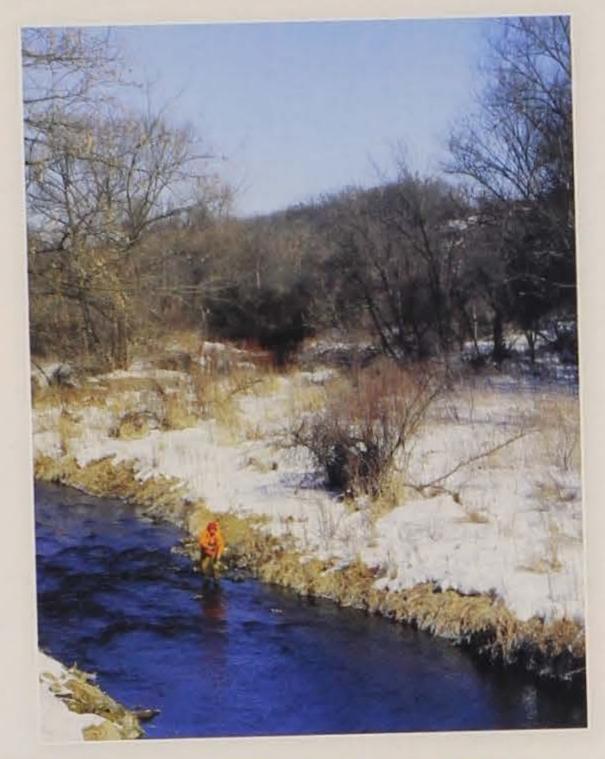
"Many people think of March or even April as being the beginning of Iowa's fly fishing season. What many don't realize is that some very good winter hatches of



While spring trout fishing is more about the hatch, winter fishing is more about the temperature. Days where the mercury hovers around freezing are the best. Any colder, and anglers fight eyelet freeze-up; any warmer, and snowmelt cools the water too much. IOWA OUTDOORS - JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2011









midges occur when temps climb into the 20s." Just a two degree bump in air temperature can trigger a significant hatch and trout immediately start to turn on.

"It's really something to see," says Wasta. "When the midges begin hatching—it really doesn't matter whether it's winter and there's snow on the ground or not—the stream just comes alive. Even in places where it looked like there were no fish present an hour earlier, there will suddenly be a dozen or more fish in a single hole. It's an incredible sight. When that happens, and the trout all start feeding at once, you know you're in for some unbelievable action."

## **URBAN STOCKING PUTS TROUT CLOSE TO HOME**

To hook more lowans on trout fishing, the urban trout program is stocking fish in 11 sites outside the traditional northeast lowa coldwater streams. Now anglers itching to stalk a wary trout can do so without having to trek far.

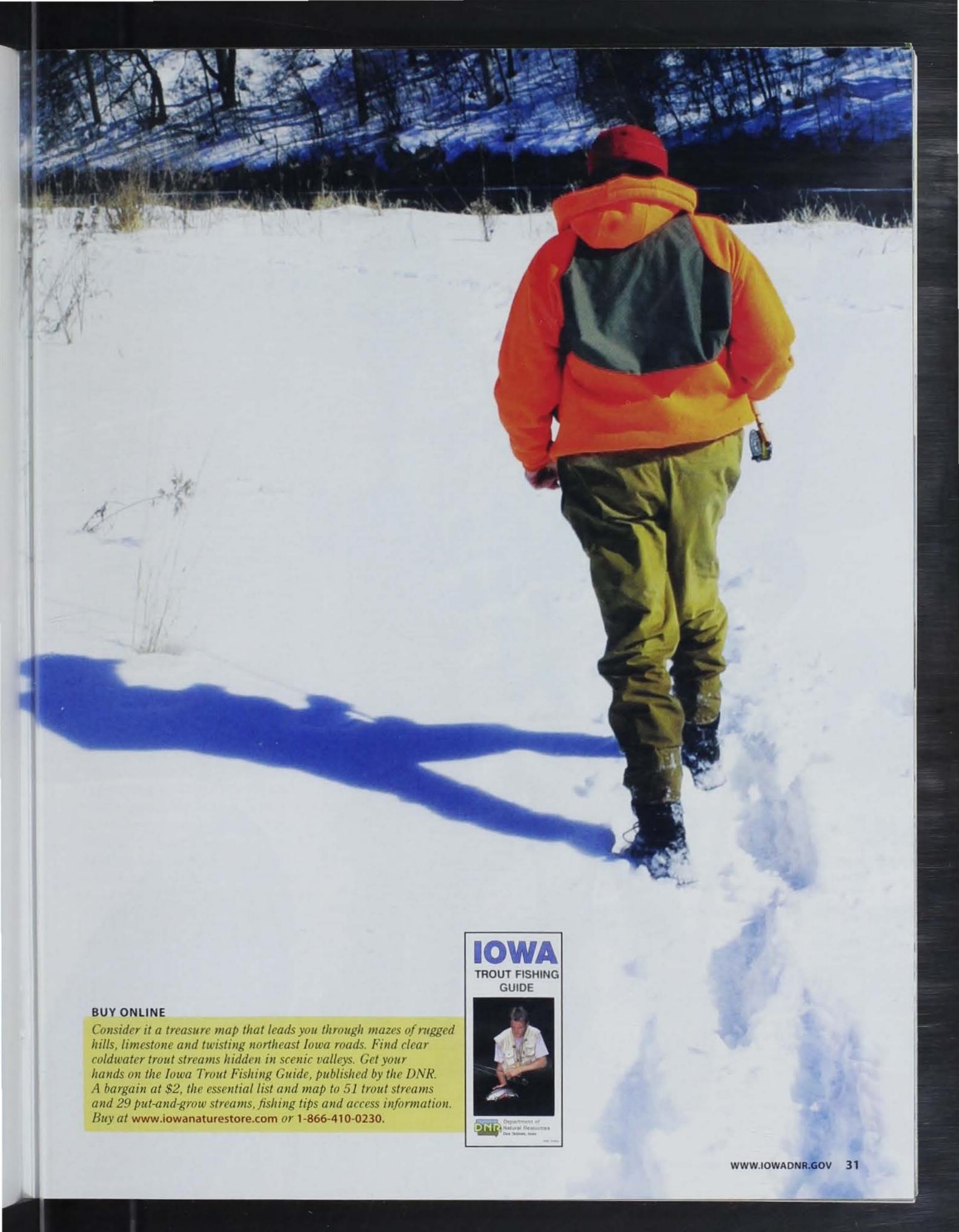
Trout are ideal for small urban lakes and it makes a wonderful family friendly activity or a way to go solo to rejuvenate after work. Each lake is stocked with 1,500 rainbow trout from the Big Spring Hatchery in October or November, with additional trout added in January and March.

Adult anglers need a trout privilege for \$11 in addition to a regular lowa fishing license. The daily bag limit is five. Kids under age 16 do not need a fishing license and can keep trout as part of their parent's five fish daily limit. Children may have their own trout privilege, which allows them to keep their own daily limit of five trout—it is also a kid's license for bragging rights should they bag more than their parent.

Buy a fishing license and trout privilege online at www.iowadnr.gov or stores where licenses are sold. Online purchases have a \$2 convenience fee.

STOCKING SCHEDULE (Subject to weather. For latest stocking information, visit www.iowaDNR.gov)

URBAN AREAS	COUNTY	LAKE	FALL	WINTER	SPRING
Ames (U1)	Story	North Ada Hayden	Nov. 19 (noon)	Jan. or Feb.	
Burlington/Ft. Madison (U2)	Lee	Wilson Lake	Nov. 6 (1 p.m.)		
Cedar Falls (U3)	Black Hawk	North Prairie Lake southwest edge of Cedar Falls		Jan. 8	Apr. 2
Council Bluffs (U4)	Pottawattamie	Big Lake Park (West Lake)	Oct. 21 (2 p.m.)		
Davenport (U5)	Scott	Lake of the Hills ¼ mile west of Davenport	Oct. 16 (10:30 a.m.)		
Des Moines /Indianola (U6)	Warren	Banner Lake South 4½ miles north of Indianola	Nov. 23 (noon)		Apr
Des Moines/Ankeny (U7)	Polk	DMACC Pond	Nov. 18 (noon)	Jan or Feb	
Dubuque (U8)	Dubuque	Heritage Pond 2 miles north of Dubuque		Jan. 15	Apr. 9
Mason City (U9)	Cerro Gordo	Blue Pit south edge of Mason City	Nov. 24	Jan	
Muscatine (U10)	Muscatine	Discovery Park	Nov. 6 (10:30 a.m.)		
Sioux City (U11)	Woodbury	Bacon Creek Lake east edge of Sioux City	Nov. 11 (2 p.m.)		





## /eather BY TODD ROBERTSON PHOTOS BY DIANE LOWRY

N A COLD NOVEMBER DAY IN 2006, I felt the sting of ice-cold river water. After dumping my kayak on the South Raccoon River, I reached up to grab a brittle branch so I could pull myself out of the freezing water. With a crack as loud as thunder, the branch broke and again I was chest high in cold, rushing water. As I grabbed a few more branches, I found that my fumbling fingers were confused and struggled to follow the directions my brain was giving them. After getting to shore and putting on dry clothes, I cursed myself for not being better prepared.

When paddling in cold weather months, safety has to be stepped up a few notches. Expect to dump your boat. It happens. Being mindful and ultra-aware of your surrounding conditions and being prepared for the worst will help you enjoy the perks of wintertime paddling-the awe of multiple bald eagles congregating downstream, wildlife appearing against bare trees or a snow-covered hillside or just relaxing to take in the scenery while paddling through a light shower of snowflakes. Cold weather paddling indeed has rewards, and by following a strict safety preparation routine, your paddling opportunities can be stretched well past the fall season.

## Some Basic Rules for Cold Water Paddling:

Always wear your life jacket.

Your life jacket will not only keep you afloat should you dump your canoe or kayak, but will help keep your body warm in prolonged immersions. Attach a whistle in case you need to alert another paddler for help.

· Never paddle alone. Paddle with at least two other paddlers when possible. Large groups are even better. If

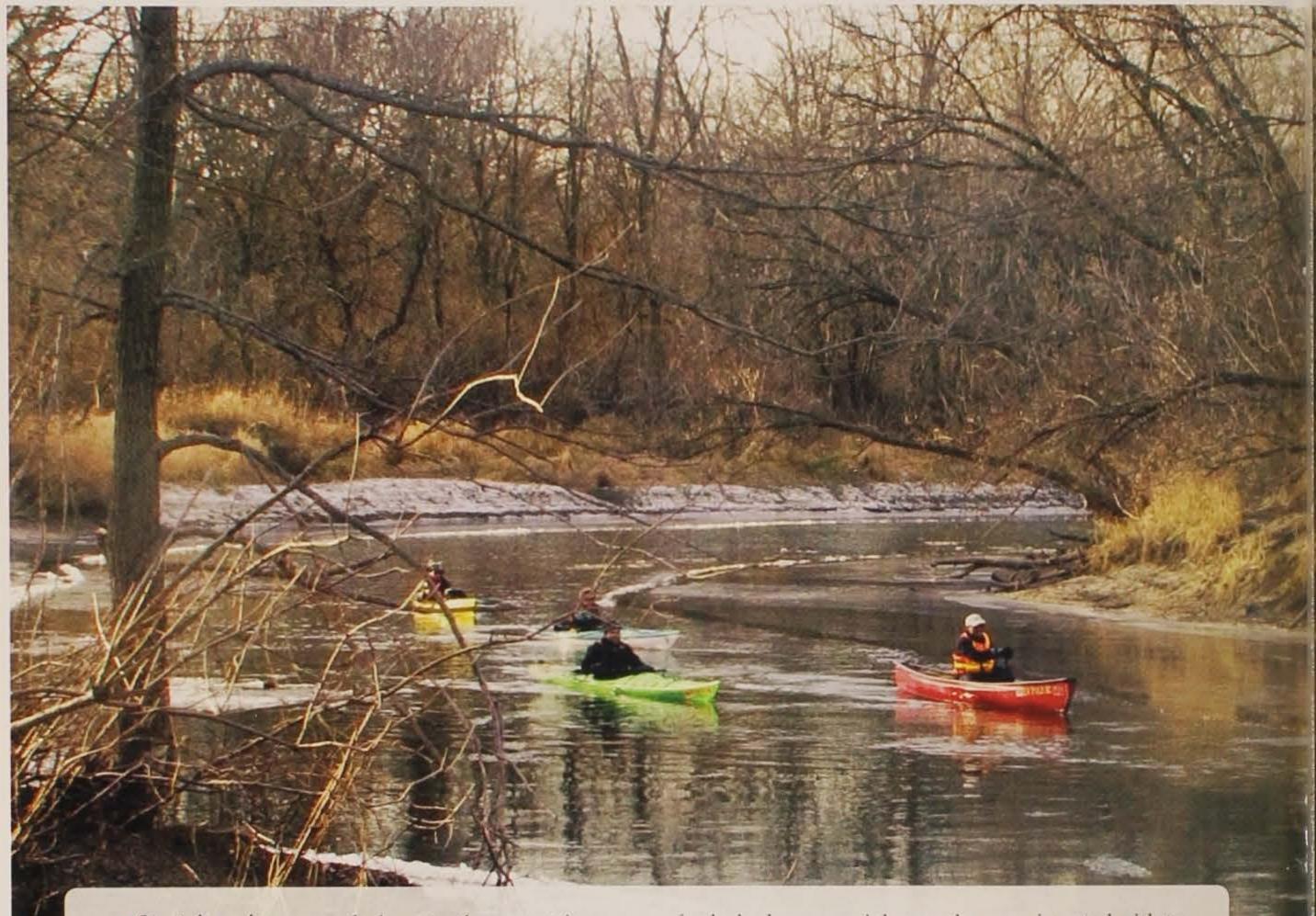
something happens, you have fellow paddlers to assist you. Nobody to paddle with? Join a local paddling club and meet others who also enjoy paddling in colder conditions.

- Practice self and group rescues. Know how to save yourself and others around you.
- Know the weather forecast.
- Know how to recognize the stages of hypothermia.
- · Always take a dry bag with dry clothes and a spare paddle.
- · Prepare for an emergency. Take a cell phone



in a watertight case or small drybag.

· File a float plan. This is something you should do regardless of the weather, but especially in cold weather. Let family and friends know where you are going and what you are doing. They should know when you are expected back and where to look if you don't arrive.



• Stretch and warm up before starting your trip.

Drink a cup of tea or broth from your thermos before paddling and warm up your core. Don't forget your high-energy snacks for the trip.

• Dress in proper layers. Start at the top. A warm wool knit hat will help keep your entire body warm. Remember, cold water cools the body 25 times faster than cold air, and half of your warmth escapes from the top of your head. You'll also need polarized sunglasses. Winter conditions can mean bright surroundings and you will need polarized lenses to see obstructions in the water.

LAYERS. Your base layer should be moisture-wicking material next to the skin. Merino wool, nylon and polypropylene are good for keeping you warm and dry at the same time. NO COTTON EVER! Cotton absorbs water, will not dry and does not insulate when wet.

INSULATING LAYERS. This is for holding in body heat. Wool fabrics are light weight, breathable and insulate when wet.

outer Layer. Outer garments should be water- and windproof. They can be worn to peel off easily if it gets warm or to add easily if it gets too cold. A combination of splash, dry or semi-dry can be experimented with to meet your comfort needs.

EXTREMITIES. Make sure to protect your hands and feet. If your fingers get too cold, you can lose the ability to hold your paddle, use a cell phone or start a fire. If your fingers become useless, you won't be able to change into dry clothes quickly. Neoprene gloves and mittens work well. Many paddlers use Pogies, or gloves that attach to the paddle itself. For feet, wear water socks and insulated water shoes or boots.

YOUR BEST DEFENSE. The most protection you can have is by wearing a wetsuit or dry suit. A dry suit is more expensive but worth every penny. A dry suit keeps you totally dry, while a wetsuit traps water between your skin and suit. The water in a wetsuit will warm to your body's temperature. Remember to wear layers with both as these are not enough to keep you warm by themselves.

USE A SPRAY SKIRT for your kayak or a spray cover for your canoe. These not only trap heat for your lower body, but keep cold water splashes off your lap and body.

PLAN SHORTER TRIPS in late fall, winter and early spring.



## Jowa's Unusual Winter States

STORY AND PHOTOS BY TY SMEDES

T WAS FEB. 14, Valentine's Day, when Paul Hertzel made an extra loop through Worth County, nearly to the Minnesota border, looking for unusual bird species before heading home to Mason City. Then, in the town of Manly, at the intersection of US highways 9 and 65, he saw it. As Hertzel related in the Journal of Iowa Birdlife, "The profile—blunt head, tapered body with long tail, hunched over as it peered down into the grass below—was unmistakable. The

light was fading, but in binoculars, its diagnostic facial features, head stripes, and streaked breast were easy to see at such close range." Hertzel had discovered what was later confirmed to be just the second occurrence of a Northern hawk owl in Iowa. At home, he posted the discovery on the Iowa Ornithologists' Union Internet listsery, and news of the rare find spread quickly.

The Manly Hawk Owl (as he ultimately became known) was visited by hundreds of curious Iowa and out-

Hundreds of curious onlookers flocked north of Mason City to the town of Manly during the winter of 2004-05 to enjoy a rare visitor from the far north—a Northern hawk owl. The owl was discovered just before Christmas and continued to delight sightseers until early April.



of-state travelers. Easily identifiable, the Hawk Owl has the rounded head and blocky body shape of an owl, with the long tail and narrow, pointed wings of a forest hawk. They are somewhat diurnal, which means they often hunt during daylight hours, and use their exceptional hearing to catch small rodents, scurrying beneath the snow. Interesting stories abounded, and one told to local birder Rita Gorenson by Manly resident Dan Yezek, who captured the owl on video over the Christmas holiday, 45 days before it was noticed by Hertzel on Valentine's Day. Gorenson went to his home, viewed the video, and to her astonishment, watched the owl in Yezek's front yard on Elmore Street, on frames dated 24 December, 2004 by the video recorder. The very next scene was Yezek's daughter unwrapping Christmas presents. Clearly, Manly's new neighborhood resident had been noticed, but had gone unidentified for a month and a half. The Northern hawk owl continued as a winter resident,

before vanishing on April 2, 2005, as mysteriously as he had appeared.

Each winter, Iowa's resident birds are joined by a variety of unusual or even rare species that have journeyed south from northern haunts. For many Iowa birders, winter is a time to pay close attention to weather conditions in Iowa, as well as states to the north. An abnormally hard winter in northern Minnesota and Canada, or the scarcity of a particular food source, will sometimes cause these birds to migrate south, sometimes all the way into Iowa. Seasoned bird and weather-

watchers have learned to watch for particular weather patterns, and will expect many birds to migrate one or two days after a cold front, bringing strong north winds and clearing skies. They learn to check locations and habitat that southbound species might prefer, should they arrive in our state.

### FROM THE ARCTIC TO DALLAS COUNTY

The importance of Dallas County's inaugural Christmas bird count could not be overstated, when a hoary redpoll (rare to Iowa) was discovered at the Brenton Arboretum, just southwest of Dallas Center. A bird of the arctic tundra, the hoary redpoll has very fluffy body feathers that help it stay warm in extremely cold temperatures. For

the uninitiated, citizen scientists annually brave snow, wind or rain to take part in Christmas bird counts held throughout the U.S. The Audubon Society and other organizations use data collected in this long-running wildlife census to assess the health of bird populations—and to help guide conservation action. Feeder-watchers, field observers, count compilers and regional editors—everyone who takes part in the Christmas bird count does it for the love of birds and the excitement of friendly competition, and with the knowledge that their efforts are making a difference for science and bird conservation.

Manager Andy Schmitz and local birder Dick Miller were conducting the arboretum's first Christmas bird count on Dec. 16, 2006 when they located a redpoll not far from the arboretum's office. At first glance, it seemed to be a common redpoll, but upon checking their field guides, they both agreed the bird seemed to be lighter in color than it should be. They tallied the bird and placed notification on the Iowa birder listserve, which led other local birders to visit the bird.

A buzz of uncertainty soon reverberated throughout the birding community. Could this be a rare winter visitor

> to central Iowa-a hoary redpoll? Several redpoll experts, some from out of state, and IOU members offered varying opinions. As the controversy continued, it focused on the hoary redpoll's close similarity to the common redpoll seen much more readily in Iowa during winter. As intense interest grew, two eastern Iowa birders visited the redpoll, bringing specialized equipment to make a song recording for comparative purposes to hopefully confirm identification. The physical characteristics of the two redpoll species are so similar that several photos from differing angles were examined before the IOU records committee confirmed the bird to be a hoary. Adel birder Tom

TH

Lawson wrote for the IOU Journal "The redpoll became something of an enigma as rarities go. The hoary, ever true to his Alders, was counted for the Christmas bird count, and the Great Backyard Bird Count. The official known dates he graced Dallas County are 16 December 2006 through 19 February 2007. Unafraid of humans, he took to his paparazzi of birders and photographers in stride. He made USA Today, The Des Moines Register and a host of smaller newspapers. Google, an internet search company even gave him his own classification: 'The Iowa Redpoll.' More than 300









from Alaska and northern Quebec south to Newfoundland and British Columbia. As a voracious feeder of conifer seeds, they use their specialized crossed mandibles to extract seeds from pine cones, often consuming up to 3,000 conifer seeds each day.

On my way to northern Minnesota, I stopped at the Hampton cemetery on a cold February day. It didn't take long to locate a flock of hungry crossbills, feasting

upon pine seeds, beneath a large old conifer. They weren't at all spooky and allowed a slow approach to a distance of nearly 10 feet. Males, females and juvenile birds made up a flock of 15 or more. It was a treat to watch these birds of the Canadian boreal forest casually passing the winter here in Iowa.

Always on the lookout for new winter birds, I decided to make a trip to the Neal Smith Wildlife Refuge near Prairie City on the last day of 2009. A large flock of lapland longspurs (longspur refers to the elongated claw of the hind toe) was known to be foraging in prairie areas that had been burned by refuge staff. A common

songbird of the far north, this bird breeds in the high arctic, where continual summer daylight will cause a breeding male to sing at any hour of the day. Huge longspur flocks winter in open fields across much of the northern United States and southern Canada, with some winter flocks estimated as large as four million birds. As reported on the birding listsery, I found a large flock of Longspurs actively foraging in the prairie area that

had been burned. And although many of the birds were feeding close to the refuge road, they moved away each time I carefully slowed my vehicle to a stop. The distance for good photography was just too far. As I continued driving through the south side of the refuge, a large flock of birds caught my attention. On the shoulder of the road, many birds were actively feeding. When I passed by, I found the birds reluctant to fly, since they were feeding on

Harlequin ducks are small sea ducks that are also found along Rocky Mountain streams. This pair was spotted along the Mississippi River at lock and dam 14, just north of Davenport, and had obviously strayed from their usual haunts. However, they stayed loyal to their new spots, providing viewing and photography opportunities from early February through early April.

a grain spill that had been exposed by deer, which had scraped away the deep snow. Playing a hunch. I decided to park well past the spill and walk back. camera at the ready. I was gambling that these opportunistic foragers had become acclimated to refuge traffic, and would tolerate my slow and steady approach and statuesque posture. Sure enough, in a few minutes I stood alongside the grain spill, photographing the longspurs, which had returned to feed at a distance of no more than 15-20 feet. Longspurs, a mix of sparrows and an occasional horned lark came and went, as I enjoyed and photographed the show.

#### A BOOST FROM BIRDS

Those who judge the economic

impact of outdoor recreation heartily agree that birding activity generates a very positive impact for local economies, and certainly our occasional winter visitors from the north add to that economic boost. And for those nature lovers who experience winter cabin fever, an excursion to see a rare bird from the north-country is a great way to enjoy the Iowa countryside and discover a bird that few Iowans have ever seen.



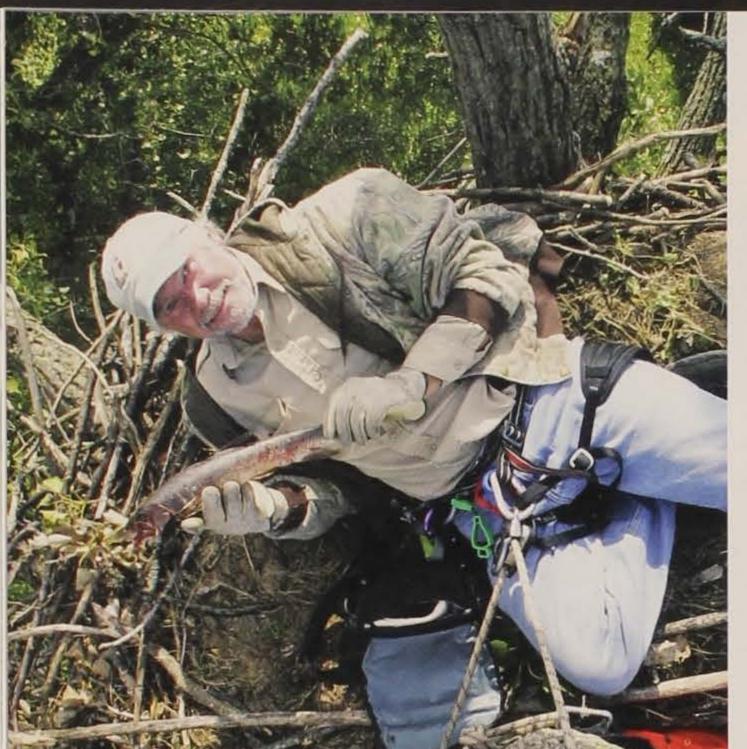


STORY AND PHOTOS BY LOWELL WASHBURN

AJESTIC, POWERFUL AND aloof—the American bald eagle possesses a commanding aura and conveys a sense of presence few wild creatures can hope to match. Whether it's discovered perched or on the wing, the sighting of a fully-plumed adult never fails to elicit awestruck human attention. But when an eagle pair decides to construct a nest, the human attention may be carried to extremes. Occasionally, it goes completely off the chart.

The magnificent pair of adult eagles currently nesting on Willard Holthaus' backyard property line is a classic example. Located across the street from the landmark Decorah State Trout Hatchery, the eagles first constructed their nest and successfully reared a single chick in 2007, recalls Holthaus. As news of the pair's nesting success spread, the easily viewable site quickly became one of the area's most popular outdoor attractions, luring visitors from far and wide.

And then came the webcam. Installed during 2009 by the



#### **GET INVOLVED**

Visit the Decorah eagle nest online at www.raptorresource.org See updated, prerecorded nest videos at youtube.com. See the nest in person and tour the trout hatchery, then cast for trout.

LEFT: Bob Anderson of Decorah holds a sucker found within the eagle nest while installing cameras. BELOW: An image taken from the nest camera shows a small deer head with eaglets. Anderson, who founded the nonprofit Raptor Research Project, installed cameras initially for the public television show Nature. That Emmy-nominated episode helped create a huge Internet following of the camera with people checking in from more than 130 countries. RIGHT: Installing cameras was not easy. A cross bow bolt carrying a small line was shot over a limb above the nest. Climbing ropes were pulled up for Anderson and crew to scale 80 feet.





Decorah-based Raptor Resource Project, the high octane website provides nature enthusiasts with live audio and superb color video by day and nightcam viewing by starlight. Response to the site has bordered the unbelievable. According to Raptor Resource Director Bob Anderson, a respected leader in the raptor reintroduction world (see page 49), the nest camera received more than 3 million hits from 102 countries during its debut season. It was easily one of, if not the most, widely viewed bird nests on planet Earth. Use is expected to go even

higher during this year's nesting season, says Anderson, who is adding tilt, pan and zoom capabilities this year to the equipment. Although there is no limit to how often eagle enthusiasts can visit the Decorah webcam, demand for the site has become so high viewers were automatically disconnected after 15 minutes of camera time.

"It's been amazing," says Holthaus, who although a wildlife viewer himself, admits to being surprised by the widespread interest. "The nest has two different cameras and people can see every detail of what the eagles are doing-flying in and out, adding material to the nest, bringing in food."

Even by raptor standards, the male is a proficient hunter providing his mate with an abundant supply of fish, rabbits, squirrels

and pigeon. During one extraordinary foray, the bird was filmed as it approached a pond and accomplished the astounding feat of simultaneously snagging two trout in a single swoop before returning to the nest carrying a fish in each foot. At times, the male's extreme commitment to caring for his family has leaned toward the bizarre—like the day the winged predator added a cat belonging to Holthaus' brother to the daily menu—providing the pet with a one-way ticket to the eagles' treetop lair.

"The eagles keep adding to the nest, and you can





Ridgeway

WINNESHIEK COUNTY

watch them carrying in sticks," notes Holthaus. "The nest is now around 6 feet in diameter, and the guy who installed the cameras actually laid down and stretched out across it. It's that big.

"They're a proud bird and the eagles have done well," he adds. "They laid one egg the first year, two the second and three eggs last year. So far, they've raised a baby from every single egg. This year, the female has already laid two eggs."

"The eagles' nest is a big deal and has become a real phenomena," says across-the-street neighbor and Decorah Trout Hatchery Manager Brian Malaise. "I've even heard them referred to as the 'Rock Stars of the Fish Hatchery,' and I don't think that's an exaggeration. The birds developed an almost cult-like following, and many people have adopted the eagles as their own. It's almost like family.

"The nest is located just across the road from here

and it has definitely increased the number of people visiting the trout hatchery," says Malaise. "Weekends can be incredible. Normally, I can feed all of the trout we're rearing in about 20 minutes. Now it can take up to two hours to feed the fish with a majority of that time spent

Calmar

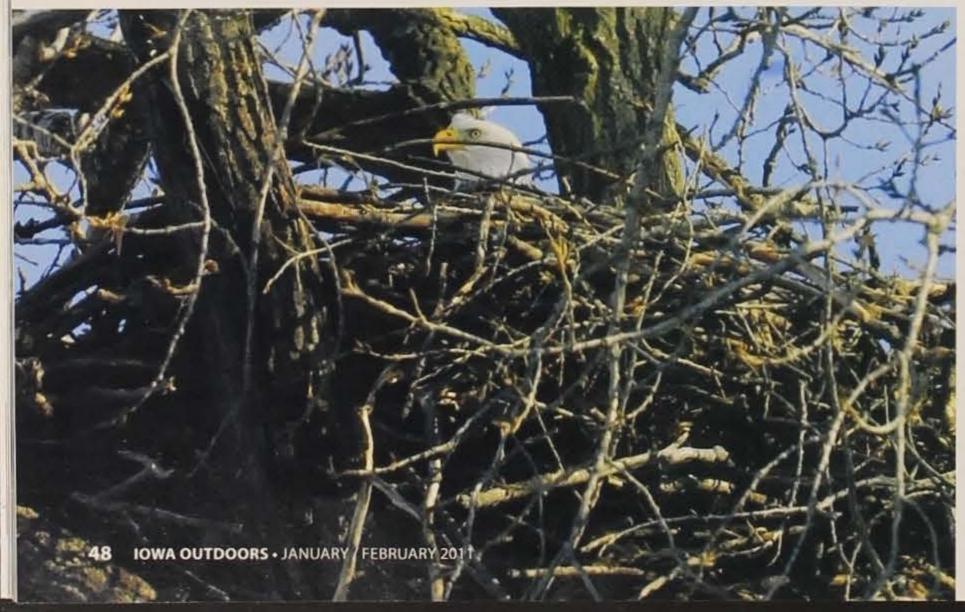
Festina

answering questions about eagles."

Ossian

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Not many years ago, people didn't see bald eagles and there were no nests in Iowa. Now the nest cameras are "capturing things that will really help increase our knowledge of these amazing birds-things you can't see from the ground-like the female turning her eggs every 15 minutes. The infrared is also amazing. People see deer mice walking around the nest at night (although the nest is approximately 80 feet above the ground), and at least one flying squirrel has been seen up there. The nest cameras have been an incredible addition," says Malaise. 🗪



# Man on a Mission

#### One Iowan's Work to Save Raptors and Bring Nests to Life Online

Bob Anderson's passion for raptors did not begin, nor does it end, with bald eagles. The Decorah man is on a decades-old mission, one that began with a single-minded, all-consuming purpose to see a secure, free-ranging population of peregrine falcons restored to North America. Add operating a series of nest cameras broadcast on the Internet, and these tasks have kept him clearly focused for nearly four decades. Back in the late 1980s, Anderson was among only a dozen or so individuals in the nation that possessed the dermination and talent to artificially produce and rear significant numbers of peregrine falcons in captivity. It was those birds that provided the means for scientists to embark upon one of the most ambitious and far-sighted wildlife recovery programs in history.

Peregrines once nested across the U.S. and Canada, but their numbers declined sharply after World War II and widespread use of the pesticide DDT. By the mid-1960s they vanished from the eastern half of the U.S. and were destined to extinction.

However, in 1972, two events occurred that would avert tragedy. First, DDT was banned in the U.S. Second, an American falconer, Tom Cade, was successful in artificially hatching a peregrine at Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y. The first hatchling was followed by others, and Cade became caught up in the dream of returning captive-reared falcons to the wild to reoccupy the now empty peregrine nests known as eyries. Anderson was intrigued.

"You have to understand that I grew up thinking I would never even be able to see a wild peregrine during my lifetime," says Anderson. "When I heard what Cade was doing, I became totally captivated."

Anderson made several trips from his then home in Minnesota to visit Cade at Cornell's "peregrine paradise." Soon, he too was obsessed with the vision of restoring wild, free-flying peregrines to the American landscape.

By the late 1970s, several other falconers across the country became smitten with restoring falcons to the wild.

It was a group of private citizens who essentially said, "Let's pool our resources and put our personal hunting birds together and try to produce some young that could survive in the wild," says Anderson. "At first, we were just scoffed at by the scientific community. They said falconers were just looking for an excuse to play with the last few peregrines."

Leading ornithologists and even the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service were very skeptical.

"Now that I look back on it, I guess the idea of rearing one of the continent's wildest and most critically endangered forms of wildlife in captivity and in significant quantities did sound pretty far out," laughs Anderson.

By now, he had begun to experiment with producing large falcons in captivity himself. Although he could not find a source of peregrines, he produced a 'prairie falcon' chick in 1975.

"I knew in my heart that this dream of restoring peregrines could become reality, and at that moment I knew I had to be a part of it." In 1979, he sold his new suburban home outside Minneapolis to move into an old farm house. The house didn't matter. He wanted the acreage to begin building peregrine breeding facilities for birds he didn't have.

"I had no idea where the stock would come from. I just had to believe that it could come," he says.

To complicate an already difficult undertaking, he decided to



concentrate on producing anatum peregrines, the subspecies that historically nested in the Midwest. "I've felt all along that we would have the best chance for success if we tried to duplicate what naturally occurred here," he says. But pure anatum peregrines were extremely rare, not something you could pick up at the local pet store. After four years of dead ends, Anderson continued searching. Finally, in 1983, he imported two pure anatum peregrines from British Columbia and later, a third pair from within the U.S.

It was a painful process. "Essentially I had to trade my personal gyrfalcon and some of its babies for the peregrines," he says. "That really hurt at the time, and some people said I was crazy. But in the end it was all worth it. At that time, obtaining peregrine falcons was about the equivalent of trying to get a pair of California condors today. The fact that we got the birds at all is really quite remarkable."

Pain yielded success. By 1988, he produced more than 70 peregrines, releasing most of them into the wild. By now the physical and mental stress of producing peregrines while holding down a full-time career became impractical.

"My wife Kathy told me that I'd have to make a choice," says Anderson. "I could see she was right. We chose the falcons."

After 18 years at the 3M Corporation, he guit to devote his time to peregrine recovery and produced another 77 falcons over the next few years.

In addition to physical exhaustion, his work became a financial liability. As the number of breeding birds increased, so too did the need for expensive housing, incubators, lab and other equipment. Food costs escalated beyond \$10,000 a year.

"It was apparent that producing birds for conservation had put me in a rather precarious position," he says. However, in spite of obstacles, he stayed upbeat, focusing on images of falcons now nesting across the Midwest. He also conducted the first survey of Lake Superior cliffs for suitable nest sites, mapping 80 miles of shorelines alone from a 14-foot boat. He crisscrossed the midwest, logging thousands of miles to install nest boxes on smokestacks and cliffs.

He is a man consumed by a passion. To see that desire fulfilled he invested his time and all material possessions to play a signigicant role in reestablishing a wild population of falcons. He remains an unsung hero of that endeavor. Americans owe this lowan a debt that will likely remain unpaid, but whose dividends will be reaped by generations to come. Bob Anderson is a man on a mission.



# Ski On

The Quest for Perfect Snow

STORY AND PHOTOS BY KAREN GRIMES

LEAR, CRISP AIR. Invigorating.
Ice crystals sparkle on the ground, mirroring
the stars as they disappear in the pale
morning sunlight.

Quiet enfolds the countryside. Except for a puzzling wide swath of combed snow, only animal tracks disturb the powder dusting of fresh-fallen snowflakes.

With each step, the snow crunches. Then the distant humming of a motor breaks the stillness. The hum turns to a gentle roar. A headlamp emerges on the horizon, gleaming out of the woods. Soon, exhaust drifts through the pristine air.

#### LOOK OUT FOR THE MAN ON A MISSION

Tom Wilton, avid cross-country skier and DNR water quality specialist, rides his snowmobile, in apparent defiance of all rules banning motorized vehicles on the ski trail. In this case, however, it's permitted, because he pulls a Trail Tenderizer behind his machine. Made by Tidd Tech, Ltd., in Fraser, Colo., the tenderizer turns newly fallen or thawed snow into a smooth, firm base for cross-country skiers. A nicely patterned corrugated surface fans out behind him. It's "fresh corduroy," Wilton points out.

On this pristine February morning, Wilton donates two to four hours for the betterment of cross-country skiing. At Big Creek State Park near Polk City, it's a labor of love. He repeats it once, twice or maybe three times a week, depending on the weather, throughout the winter.

The long winter of 2009-2010 began early with the first significant snowfalls in December. High snowfalls and continually cold temperatures made it heaven for skiers, according to State Climatologist Harry Hillaker. Des Moines broke, and nearly doubled, the record for



the most consecutive days of 5 inches or more of snow on the ground, a good depth for skiing. "For here, it's quite unusual," he says.

For Wilton and other members of the Lakeside Nordic Ski Club, it was an exceptionally good winter for skiing and a busy one for trail maintenance. Members donated money and long hours to provide a groomed trail and quality cross-country skiing experiences in the park, not only for themselves, but anyone wishing to ski.

This Saturday morning Wilton meets his compatriot, fellow trail groomer Kevin Moss, speeding around the 3-mile course. Sharing a passion for skiing and a devotion to the groomed trail, they take turns with the tenderizer, sharing the work to compact the snowy trails. Starting after the first few inches of snow falls, they continue to groom every time a thaw weakens the snow surface or another few inches of snow accumulates.



The tenderizer creates a skating lane, or track, in the center of the trail. The teeth beneath the groomer break up any ice. Plastic combs on the back leave a beautiful pattern of small furrows, the fresh corduroy so desired by skiers.

As trail groomers, Wilton and Moss accommodate two types of skiers. In addition to the wide trail of corduroy, after several passes with the tenderizer, they lower auxiliary equipment, weight it down with two concrete blocks and carve out two parallel furrows in the snow on the edge of the corduroy. About eight inches apart, these grooves are used by classic-style skiers to achieve speed and stay on course.

Compacted snow and a firm surface make skate skiing a different experience than the traditional classic skiing technique. Instead of striding straight ahead, skate skiers skim over the firm surface, gliding tip of the ski to tail, like an ice skater, building up speed as they push off to the side and slightly back.

Wilton and Moss are devoted skate skiers, traveling as fast as their age and conditioning permits. Like many serious athletes, they took up skiing to maintain their fitness level during the long winter months.

"The glide. The glide. It's all about the glide," Moss says. Of his grooming efforts, "I do it so I can ski. It's a whole different class of skiing from the classical cross-country. It's easier. Smoother. Faster."

"It's an exhilarating feeling," Wilton concurs. "A groomed trail makes for a feeling of effortlessness."

Still the groomed trail has its limitations, consigning skating skiers to a predetermined path. The classic skier has more autonomy, with freedom to explore an interesting track, scenery or byway. "A lot of people like the off-trail nature experience of classic skiing," Moss says.

Regardless of their skiing preferences, both men remember the '80s as the heydays of skiing, with plentiful snow. Then came the '90s, when serious skiers had to travel to the northlands because snow and cold weather were sparse.

Those were the years when "our skis sat in the corners at home," Wilton says.

Rejoicing in the heavy snowfalls of the last few years, Wilton and Moss look forward to competing in upcoming races: the 50 kilometer American Birkebeiner cross-country marathon in Haywood, Wis., and the Vasaloppet in Mora, Minn.

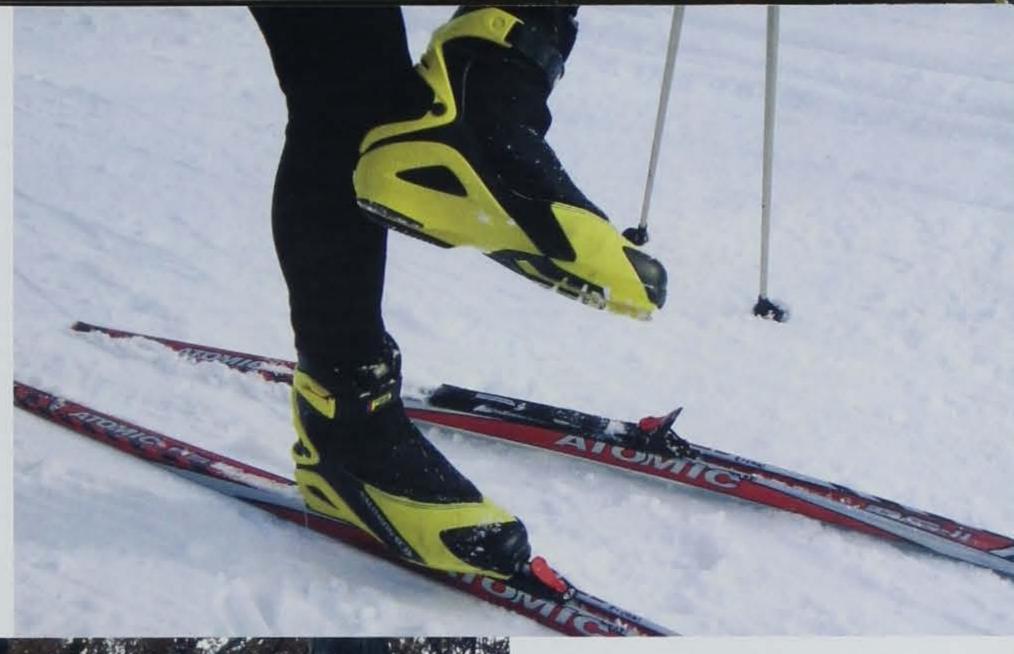
#### THE BIG SNOWS

Do the recent snowy winters herald more years of skiing paradise? No one can predict the snowfalls of upcoming years with much accuracy. "Too little data," Hillaker says. "Generally, when you go out and talk to people, it seems to be universal everywhere, across all age groups—virtually everyone believes it doesn't snow as much as it used to. But it's just people's perceptions. They remember probably the worst winters and recall them as typical. But in the long-term, there's really not much trend. Overall they tend to even out," he says.

Historically, Iowa had some of its worst winters when people were moving into the state in the 1880s. "The winter of 1935-36 was also really nasty. Much of rural Iowa was virtually isolated for six weeks," Hillaker says. "Again, late in the 1970s, three consecutive winters set record cold temperatures."

What about snow conditions for the next few winters? Hillaker doesn't have any assurances, but is somewhat optimistic for skiers and pessimistic for snow shovelers. "We're in a weather pattern now dominated by La Niña," he says. "La Niña is known for colder, snowier winters as a periodic cooling in the tropical ocean surface occurs from South America to New Zealand and Australia. This usually makes summers warmer and winters colder. It doesn't guarantee it, but the odds lie that way."

Good news for skiing aficionados. Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow.



For those hooked on exhilaration, nothing makes the winter pass faster than crosscountry skiing. Moving beyond the beginner level, an empassioned skier will travel hundreds of miles for snow, dreams of speed and perfect technique while sleeping, and thrives on endorphins from the renowned cardiovascular and wholebody workout.

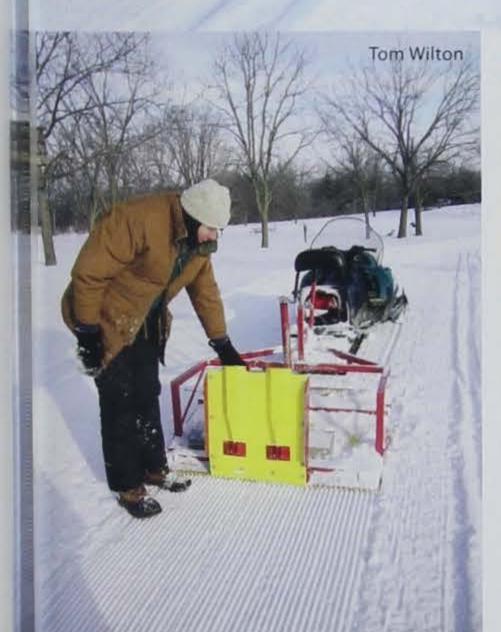


#### **Finding Groomed Trails**

Cross-country skiing is as close to flying as you can get on two feet. Check these websites for lessons, equipment, rentals, trail conditions and more. Check local and state parks, golf courses and recreation areas for groomed trails, although you can blaze your own trail on any public land.

lowa skiing blog and trail info website: http://iowaski.blogspot.com/

Adelman's skinny ski website (all things cross-country skiing in the upper Midwest) http://www.skinnyski.com/







# Just Say to Winter Cabin Fever

Four Ways to Embrace the Season

STORY AND PHOTOS BY TY SMEDES

ABIN FEVER IS A REAL CONDITION.

Residents of northern latitudes sometimes suffer from a malady called cabin fever. Our often harsh and seemingly long winters have been known to cause inactivity, weight gain, withdrawal and sleep disturbance (often diagnosed as the winter blues) cabin fever and more severe forms of winter depression like seasonal affective disorder. Cabin fever can be brought on by factors like severe storms and confined spaces,

lack of exposure to sunlight and can manifest itself as boredom, irritability and loss of sleep. It strikes most often during our long, sometimes severe winters, but can affect a person anytime of year, according to research experts.

## THE CURE—TAKE UP AN OUTDOOR WINTER ACTIVITY

Time spent outdoors can help alleviate, if not eliminate, the problem. Sure, you can use a light therapy lamp to get some more daylight, which might help, but also try an outdoor winter activity, even on a cold winter day. Dress in warm layers, and enjoy the amount of available daylight we do have. Many Iowans relish the time outdoors. Physical exercise is beneficial any time of year, and outdoor winter activities can create both a sense of purpose and accomplishment.





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Knowing that nature's gifts are often fleeting, and with camera gear stowed, I carefully drove to several pre-determined locations. During the next two hours I captured many great images, and felt privileged to preserve winter's most precious moments. I continued to photograph many sparkling wonders, until a gentle breeze and warming temperatures began to take away what nature so graciously allowed me to witness and record. This special moment in time had passed.

#### CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING

As skiers glide through the snow enjoying the winter scenery, they also benefit from the workout. According to the Cross Country Ski Areas Association, cross-country skiing offers a low-risk, low-impact aerobic form of exercise, and it burns more calories per hour than any other sport. Numerous medical professionals advocate it as the best cardiovascular fitness activity.

For Johnston resident Ginger Solberg, the arrival of a fresh winter snow means one thing—time to get out the cross-country skis. Solberg started skiing with a college friend some 35 years ago, eventually putting her young family on skis. She remembers skiing Iowa's Loess Hills, north of Sioux City, well before the area became The Nature Conservancy's Broken Kettle Grasslands Preserve. Her family hasn't stopped skiing, and all three of her children continue the sport, although one daughter must journey from her Florida home, while the other travels from Seattle, to join her brother and mother in Iowa. Christmas get-togethers now include a family skiing tradition involving three generations.

Solberg found skis for every family member by hitting garage sales and watching Craigslist.com for used skis. Her family doesn't have to travel far to find ski trails, since nearby Jester Park and Big Creek State Park both offer groomed trails. And as a resident of Johnston's Green Meadows development, Solberg can ski from her front door to Johnston's 156-acre Beaver Creek Natural Resources Area, which has been preserved in an undeveloped state.

She still uses her original Norwegian-made skis, which often generate comments from other skiers, and she notes that "skiing is simply a great way to get some winter exercise, enjoy the beauty of a fresh snow and enjoy the wildlife that one may see along the way—not to mention the family camaraderie."

#### **ICE FISHING**

For Urbandale barber Jason Taylor, the thickening ice on nearby lakes means one thing—it's time to get out



the ice fishing equipment. Taylor began ice fishing about 15 years ago when a customer invited him along. He recalls thinking "it was the craziest thing I'd ever done, using just a spud-bar to create holes in the ice on Spirit Lake. The outing was successful, and we did catch eight to 10 perch. I knew I was hooked when I came home and bought my own equipment, and went back again." His equipment list now includes "a couple of ice shacks, fish-finders, augers, an underwater camera and a GPS.

"Fish are active during winter, and I actually catch more fish through the ice than I do during the rest of the year. Getting over the top of a fish-holding structure is much easier in winter than it is during the summer when fishing from a boat," he says.

Taylor enjoys fishing for panfish, but recalls his largest fish taken through the ice was an 8-pound channel cat. He enthusiastically says, "it's a great way to start kids fishing," and recalls pulling his twin 3-year-old boys around the lake on a sled when the action slowed. It's now a multi-generation affair and his boys (now 8) often enjoy accompanying their dad to a nearby lake. Taylor's grandfather, Omar, even joins them on occasion.

One of Taylor's favorite ice fishing memories includes a day at Badger Creek Lake in Dallas County. The ice was slick, there was no snowcover, and the wind was brisk. Another fisherman brought his shack onto the ice, and sat it up, not far from Taylor. As the day wore on, the wind picked up and Taylor watched as the lone fisherman and his shack began sliding down the lake at the mercy of the powerful wind. His neighbor was persistent—he moved the shack back into position, and tried again. Taylor watched the fisherman and his shack blow by two more times before finally giving up and leaving.

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#### LATE WINTER HUNTING

Having grown up on a farm near the Amanas, well-known Ankeny wildlife artist Larry Zach says, "I just always did outdoor things, and I come from a family of several generations of farmers and hunters. Hunting and fishing helped feed the family in the old days. I enjoy carrying on the family tradition, and our whole family participates in winter hunting activities." Regarding the cold winter weather that many Iowans dread, Zach likes to quote an old saying, "there is no such thing as bad weather—just inappropriately dressed people."

The Zach family treasures many fond memories of late-winter hunts, and he says the late muzzleloader season for deer "is a great time to bring your kids along, and coach them on reading deer behavior." Zach recalls a late-season muzzleloader hunt that included his



10-year-old son and 7-year-old daughter. It was a snowy day, and Zach's son Chris had just shot a deer. Chris' sister April was so excited she immediately wanted to run from the blind and begin tracking the deer. Zach often videos family activities and had just recorded his son's shot, so to keep his young daughter occupied for a few moments, he handed the camera to Chris. He then asked April to practice her dance lessons, while Chris recorded her performance. Knowing the deer could be wounded, and a second shot might be needed, Zach needed time to reload the muzzle-loader before following the animal's trail. Once reloaded, Zach took video of April and Chris following the deer's tracks through the snow. The Zach family tradition lives on, and although Chris is now grown and lives in Washington D.C., he plans to join the family for a late-season deer hunt.

Zach sums up his thoughts about winter hunting opportunities by saying he feels that hunters who don't venture out during winter are missing a great opportunity to increase their nature skills.

"The more you are out there, the more you will observe, and the more you will learn about nature and the outdoors. If you don't understand much about nature and ecology, it's like walking into an art gallery where 9 out of 10 paintings are turned backwards," says Zach.

#### Learn about Winter Photography

Here are some helpful websites with information to get started:

- · www.outdooreyes.com/photo18.php3
- www.my-photo-blog.com/winter-photography-8-great-tips

#### Know Where to Where to Cross-Country Ski

lowa has 49 cross-country ski trails covering 569 miles. The longest trail (68 miles) is in Stephens State Forest in south-central lowa. Brushy Creek, near Fort Dodge, covers 50 miles, while the Yellow River Forest, located in northeast lowa, has a skiing trail of 45 miles. In central lowa, Big Creek State Park has 3 miles of groomed trails. For a full list of DNR trails and mileages check:

www.iowadnr.gov/trails/xskiing.html

#### Get Started with Ice Fishing

Learn about lowa ice fishing equipment, see where to go, and learn techniques online:

- · www.iowadnr.gov/education/files/icefish.pdf
- http://iowagameandfish.com/fishing/icefishing-fishing/

#### Winter Hunting—Know the Seasons and Dates

To learn winter hunting dates and regulations, check the 2010–2011 Hunting and Trapping Regulations at:

· www.iowadnr.gov/law/regs.html

# LIGHTEN UP THE WINTER BLUES

During the lengthened darkness of winter, people tend to spend more time indoors, using lighting and home electronics to ward off winter blues. Incorporate these easy tips to save money on utility bills, reduce carbon emissions and live more comfortably.



#### LIGHTING FACTS

- Lighting consumes up to 34 percent of electricity in the United States.
- CFL and LED bulbs require a quarter to one-tenth the amount of energy required by incandescent bulbs.
- LED and CFL bulbs are now widely available online and at many local hardware stores.
- No need to light the entire room? Use task lighting instead of brightly lighting the whole space.
- If every household replaced its most often-used incandescent lightbulbs with CFLs, electricity use for lighting could be cut in half.
- Need light outdoors? Use lights with a photocell or motion sensor. They only turn on when someone is around to use the light. Ensure that outdoor lighting is well designed by focusing light downward where needed. Light directed skyward is wasted. This can help offset the need for higher wattage bulbs and protects wonderful views of the winter nighttime skies by reducing light pollution.

#### THE ILLUMINATING TRUTH ON BULBS

 Incandescent
 CFL
 LED

 COST: \$1.25
 COST: \$5.58
 COST: \$29.97

 WATTS: 60
 WATTS: 14
 WATTS: 6

 LIFE: 1,200 hrs.
 LIFE: 10,000 hrs.
 LIFE: 60,000 hrs.

#### **PHANTOM PHIGHTERS**

• Electronics account for about 20 percent of your energy bills, and the usage can come from unexpected sources. In the average home, a growing percentage of electricity for

electronics and appliances is consumed while the products are off. This is known as "phantom" energy loss.

- Avoid wasting energy by unplugging electronics or use a power strip that can be turned off when not in use.
- Unplug chargers when batteries, phones or other rechargeable items are fully charged, or the chargers are not in use.
- In the future, consider purchasing electronics that are devoid of clocks and other standby devices that consume phantom electricity.

#### GET YOUR GAME ON

EACH YEAR, Wii, Xbox and Playstation gaming systems use about the same amount of energy as the City of San Diego, the eighth largest U.S. city.

- Use a DVD player to watch movies versus playing the DVD through the gaming console. A DVD player uses about 24 times less energy than its gaming counterpart.
- Turn off your game console when you're finished playing. Leaving it on 24/7 costs about \$134 in energy a year for a Playstation 3.

#### **NOT A PRETTY PICTURE**

According to Alliant Energy, If every family in the U.S. home had just one digital picture frame, five new 250 megawatt power plants would be required to keep up with the electrical demand.

BY ALAN FOSTER PHOTO BY BRIAN BUTTON



# Stuffed Pheasant Breast

Bag the rice and can the cream of mushroom soup and turn your everyday pheasant dinner into something that makes your friends and family ask, "Where did you go to culinary school?" This easy-to-make, Greek-infused stuffing complements the subtle flavor of pheasant breast. Make sure to make extra though, because the stuffing can stand alone as a side dish.

#### INGREDIENTS

4 pheasant breasts

1 cup bottled Greek salad dressing for marinade, or make your own by combining three parts olive oil, one part red wine vinegar, a teaspoon of oregano, and salt and pepper to taste. Two garlic cloves, minced, or 1 teaspoon store-bought minced garlic

3 to 4 tablespoons capers
Half a small red onion, diced
I box couscous
One 8-ounce carton feta cheese

#### DIRECTIONS

Greek seasoning

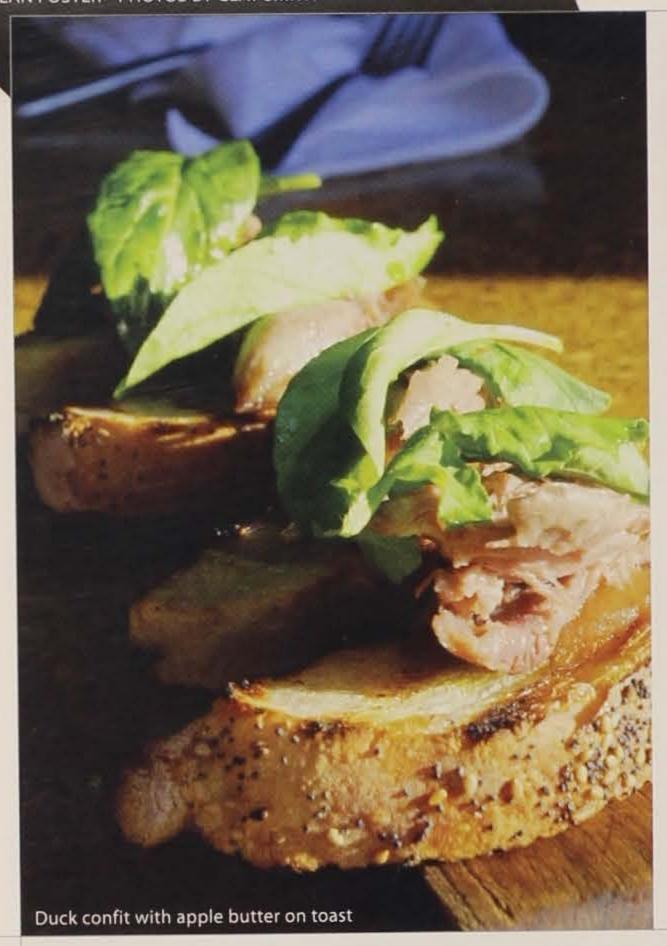
Using a sharp filet knife, create a pocket in each breast. Marinate pheasant in the dressing for 30 to 60 minutes in the refrigerator. Sauté onions and garlic in 1 tablespoon olive oil until soft and translucent. Meanwhile, prepare couscous per label directions. Add onions and capers (see below for ways to kick it up). Once the mixture has cooled slightly, add feta cheese and fold gently. Add salt, pepper and Greek seasoning (available in most grocery store spice aisles) to taste. Gently stuff pheasant breasts with mixture. Secure openings with toothpicks. Bake in butter-lined casserole dish for 30 to 40 minutes at 350°F until juices run clear. Serve with Greek salad and warm leftover stuffing mix.

#### KICK IT UP

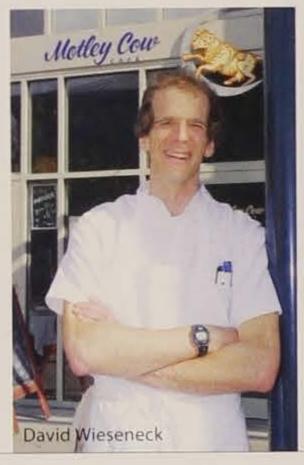
- Use chicken broth instead of water to prepare the couscous
- Substitute diced Greek kalamata olives or black olives instead of capers
- Add 1/3 to half a cup jarred bruschetta sauce, roasted red peppers or sun-dried tomatoes to stuffing
- Try Iowa produced goat's milk feta cheese or flavored feta cheese from the grocer's aisle
- · Add a dash or two of red pepper flakes for heat
- With a toothpick, secure slices of pancetta or bacon over breast and stuffing to maintain moistness.

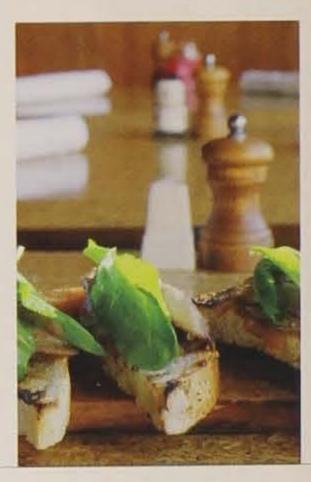
# Wild Tuisine Kitchenside

BY ALAN FOSTER PHOTOS BY CLAY SMITH









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Delicate Duck and Tempting Trout

STEP INSIDE THE MOTLEY COW CAFÉ IN DOWNTOWN IOWA CITY AND ONE WORD COMES TO MIND: SIMPLE, SIMPLE, YET QUAINT, SIMPLE, YET AMIABLE, SIMPLE, YET ALLURING.

Sample any of the ever-changing dishes, and the same thoughts prevail. Simple, yet oh so fresh. Simple, yet full of flavor. Simple, yet completely satisfying.

"Local, simple food," owner and chef David Wieseneck describes his approach. "Manipulating the food as little as possible."

Very little product travels far to end up on the plates of the 82-seat café. Almost all the meat is produced locally, and 85 percent of the produce comes from Johnson County.

"You know what's being put into it...the animal, the soil," says Wieseneck. "It keeps money for your neighbors. Socially it makes sense. Economically it makes sense."

#### APPLEWOOD-SMOKED RAINBOW TROUT WITH RADISH, POTATO AND PARSLEY SALAD

Remove heads, tails and entrails.
Rinse and dry well. Mix five parts
kosher salt to one part sugar and coat
the meat generously. If you have a
baker's rack, put the fish on it in the
fridge for a couple of days to create
a dried surface on the meat, blotting
with a towel halfway through.

Soak a pound or two of apple or other food-friendly wood chips in water the day before smoking.

Drain chips. If you don't have a smoker, start a fire in a barbeque, and put the wood chips in the base of a heavy duty pan (one that will fit the baker's rack). Place the pan over the heat and cover with another pan, aluminum foil or barbeque lid. The idea is to maximize smoke and minimize heat. Check for doneness after 15 minutes. Pull the fish from the heat when firm and flaky.

Make a salad of cut radishes, cut boiled potatoes, whole leaf Italian parsley and capers. Dress with olive oil, lemon juice, salt and pepper. Remove the fish filet from the skin, and plate with a salad.

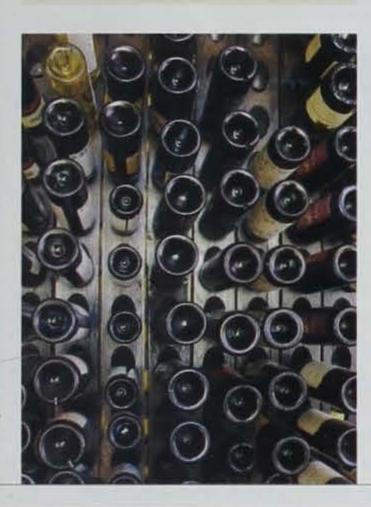
#### Motley Cow

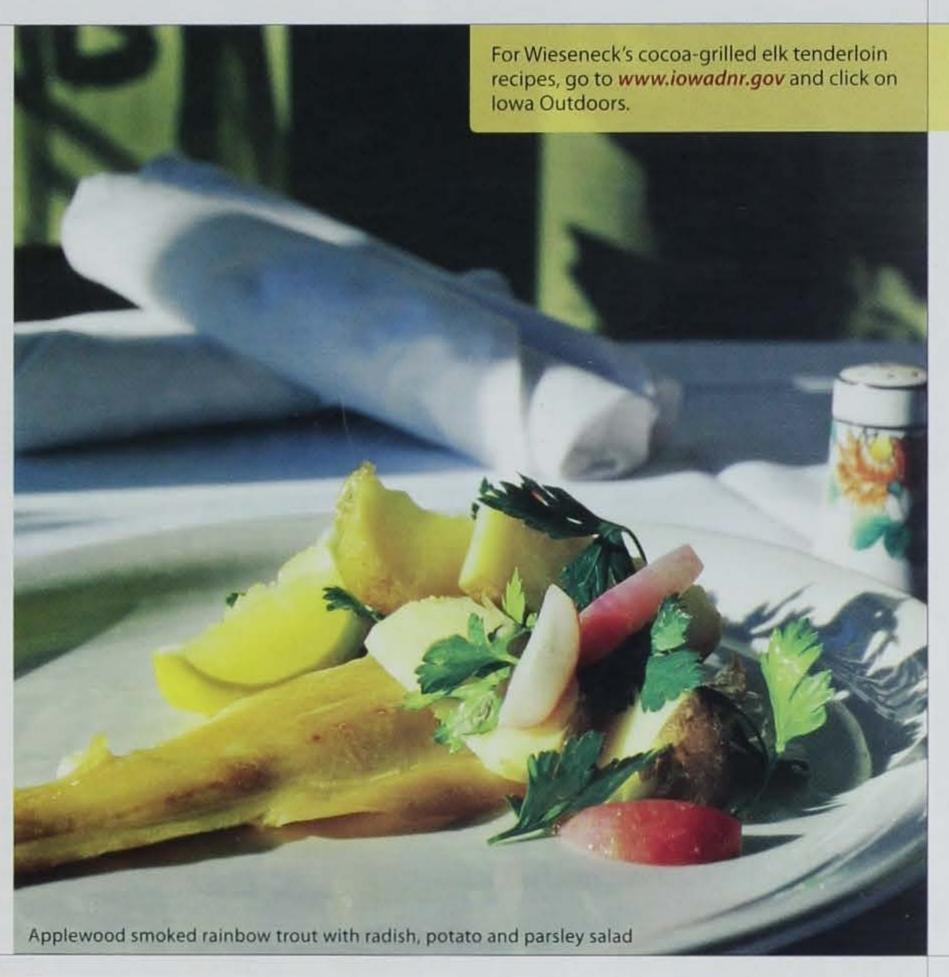
160 North Linn Street lowa City 319.688.9177 www.motleycowcafe.com

#### **HOURS:**

Lunch Monday-Friday 11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Dinner Monday-Saturday 5 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Sunday Brunch 9:30 a.m.- 2 p.m.





Change comes to The Motley Cow menu weekly. "The change," the owner says, "matches the weather" and the seasonal choices. This particular week—as the fall colors peaked and the first hard frost was imminent—local duck liver paté, butternut squash salad with parmigiano, walnuts and campari (an alcoholic apéritif) and pan-roasted coho salmon with pumpkin ravioli and coriander broth were served. And you just have to stop by for Sunday brunch and try the homemade apple butter and local fruit jams.

#### DUCK LEG CONFIT WITH APPLE BUTTER ON TOAST

Confit is a centuries-old preservation process that entails salt-curing meat, usually duck, goose or pork, then poaching it in its own fat. It is both hearty and elegant, so it makes a great dinner party appetizer. You'll need a load of duck fat, enough to cover the meat while it's stored. Make sure to collect all skin and extra fat from the duck, and render in the oven for a couple of hours at 275° F. Strain and reserve the fat.

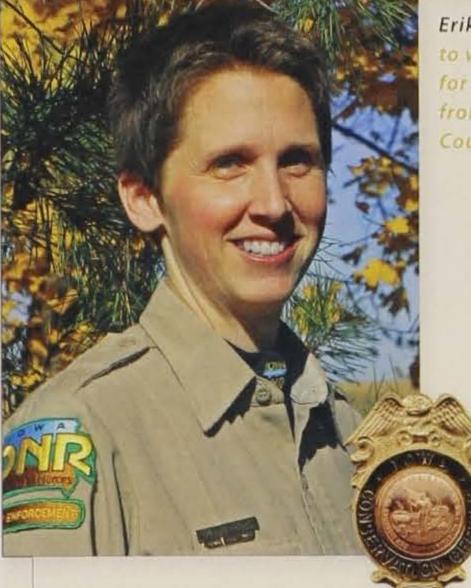
Butcher ducks, keeping the leg and thigh joints intact. Rinse well and dry, and lay them single layer in a non-reactive pan, skin side up. Coat the meat liberally with salt, about 1/3 ounce per pound, and scatter with crushed garlic cloves, bay leaves and juniper berries. Cover with plastic wrap, and place a well-fitting pan squarely down on the legs. Place in the fridge for two to four days. Check every day to make sure the legs have salt on them—much of it will dissolve and create a brine. When the legs feel firm, rinse them off, dry with a towel and return to the pan, skin side up. Cover with duck fat and bake at 200°F for eight hours, until meat is tender and the fat is clear. Cool in the fat, cover and store in the refrigerator.

To serve, warm slightly, shred meat and serve on toast with apple butter and arugula.

#### APPLE BUTTER

12 apples, cored and chopped
1 cup water
½ cup apple cider vinegar
2 cups sugar
cinnamon
cloves

Place ingredients in a pan and cook over medium heat for one hour, stirring regularly and reducing heat when the water is gone. Puree in a blender or food processor and return to the heat for an hour. Should have the consistency of very thick applesauce. Can be stored for up to three weeks in the refrigerator.



to write Warden's Diary, taking over for Chuck Humeston, who retired from the DNR. She lives in Johnson County and began her career in 2000.

# Intentional Interference

66 You don't understand, I DON'T WANT HIM HERE!" he barked.

"You don't understand that you don't have a choice he is in the public road right-of-way," I replied.

"I asked him to go someplace else," he said, stepping towards me. "He has thousands of places he can set traps where people want their raccoons caught. I find what he's doing repugnant and immoral! I pay taxes on half the roadway, and I do not want him here!"

Close enough now to catch a puff of breath in my face, I asked, "Could you back up a little, sir?" I sighed and explained again, "It doesn't matter if you don't want him here, nor does it matter if you disagree with trapping. The road right-of-way is not your property, and he doesn't need your permission to trap it."

"If he traps here again, I'll destroy the traps and take legal action against him."

"If you do, I'll charge you with interference with lawful trapping."

"Then I guess I'll sue you too!"

This was going nowhere. Nothing I could say was going to convince this landowner that the trapper had just as much right to the ditch as he did.

Most of the laws that conservation officers enforce are designed to protect the natural resources by dissuading people from illegally hunting, trapping or fishing. But there is one law specifically designed to protect the people doing it right. When this law first came into existence, I predicted there wouldn't be much occasion to use it. Judging by this particular trapping season

though, I fear I was mistaken.

Two weeks after the above conversation took place, I received a call from another trapper who informed me that someone was tampering with his traps.

"Let me guess, your sets are on 300th St.?" I said, groaning as I thought about dealing with the same irate landowner again.

"No, they're on James Avenue," he replied. "Why? Are you having trouble over there?"

"You could say that."

That afternoon I met the trapper at a bridge where his traps had been set. He rattled through the traps in the back of his truck and snagged out two—what was left of them anyway—for my inspection. The traps were pancaked flat, and the chains used to anchor the traps in place had been snipped short.

It didn't take long to come up with a suspect. There was a "No Trespassing" sign lodged directly into the gravel roadway, apparently to stop people from walking down to the creek below the bridge. Identical signs were strung along a barbed wire fence the length of the adjacent private property.

I decided to set up a trail camera in an attempt to photograph the vandal. The following three days, the trapper discovered rocks the size of raccoons on top of his traps, but no photos of the perpetrator. Just as I was beginning to wonder if a ghost was responsible, our luck turned.

My telephone rang. When I answered, a voice excitedly whispered, "Erika, he's walking up to my truck!"



"I'm on my way," I replied.

By the time I arrived, the trapper was in his truck and the scowling landowner was pacing back and forth in his yard. The trapper informed me that he was checking his traps when the landowner confronted him and admitted to meddling with his traps.

The landowner tromped over to me and immediately started grousing, "We can't keep him out of here! He just ignores my 'No Trespassing' signs!"

"The road right-of-way is public property."

"He needs to ask my permission," he said, apparently ignoring my explanation. "He probably has *thousands* of other places he can go."

This was beginning to feel like déjà vu. The debate continued along the same vein until the landowner told me he wanted me to discuss the matter with his wife. At his house, he introduced me by pointing and ranting about the "lies" I'd been telling. I explained the situation to his wife and pointed out the relevant section of the regulation booklet.

She read the section carefully, sighed, then said, "Well dear, it does look pretty black and white."

I felt like cheering, but decided against it. Instead, I waited silently for his reaction. He sat glowering at the floor for a moment, then reached for my pen and grudgingly signed the ticket.

Afterwards, I thought about the similarities between the two landowners. Both appeared to be law-abiding citizens. When it came to ruining someone's traps, however, they had no qualms about breaking the law. It seemed as though they believed it was their right to do so and their opinions about the morality of trapping reinforced their decisions. That, of course, is one reason we have laws...to discourage people from taking action based solely on their personal feelings.

I'm legally responsible for maintaining the sidewalk in front of my house, Does that mean I can post "No Trespassing" signs on it? Of course not, Does my opinion about the morality of environmentally harmful gas-guzzlers justify deflating the tires of every Hummer in the mall parking lot? Nope.

Where do we draw the line?
There are times I'd like to cuff the person at the store who rudely yaks away on their cell phone while obliviously holding up the checkout line. I'd take just a teensy bit of delight in using a roll of duct tape on folks who refuse to use their

"inside voice" in movie theaters.

Then there are people who...well,
you get the idea.

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# Flora & Fauna

BY KATHLEEN WILLEM PHOTO BY KEN SLADE

# VIRGINIA OPOSSUM (Didelphis virginiana) The Virginia opossum got its name more than 400 years ago from famous Jamestown founder Captain John Smith. It comes from

The Virginia opossum got its name more than 400 years ago from famous Jamestown founder Captain John Smith. It comes from the Algonquian term "apasum," meaning "white animal." Opossum are common in lowa yet often overlooked. But these mammals have many astounding qualities. From aging studies to cancer research, many scientists believe the opossum could provide information for important medical advances.

#### SENIOR CITIZENS BY AGE 2

Opossum age very quickly and have only a one- to two-year life span. By year two, signs of aging—such as a loss of body mass and eyesight—begin to appear. Because of their short life span, they have been used in studies to learn more about how mammals age and clues to alter the aging process in humans.

#### PLAYING DEAD

When threatened, opossum will often play dead or "play 'possum." The opossum puts itself in a coma-like state in which it becomes stiff, drools and slows its breathing. It can remain in this state for up to four hours.

#### THE PEARLY WHITES

Opossum have more teeth than any other land mammal. A fully grown adult has 50 teeth. They use them to eat just about anything. Fruit, grain and seeds are common, but they also eat insects, birds, small reptiles and scavenged material, such as garbage and road kill.

#### WHAT'S THAT YOU GOT IN YOUR POCKET

Opossum are marsupials, meaning they carry their young in a pouch. Young are born about two weeks after fertilization and must make the difficult crawl to the mother's pouch on their own. At birth, opossum weigh a mere .0056 ounces. The young stay in the pouch for two to three months after birth.

#### BROKEN BACK? NO PROBLEM

Newborns have a unique ability to repair spinal cord injuries. Scientists are trying to learn how in hopes of enhancing the livelihood of humans with spinal cord injuries.

#### SEARCHING FOR A CURE

Studies relating to the cause, progression and treatment of melanoma cancer have been conducted on opossum. Scientists have also successfully transplanted human cancer cells into opossum, which could lead to more effective cancer treatments.

#### NO SICK DAYS

The opossum immune system is very robust with immunities to many viruses such as parvo virus, distemper, rabies and various snake venoms.

BY JESSIE ROLPH BROWN PHOTOS BY CLAY SMITH

#### A CONSERVATION COMMITMENT

**ERV KLAAS, AMES** 

Retiree works tirelessly to protect natural resources in central lowa

Erv Klaas beams, calling out names of dragonflies and wildflowers as he walks the lakeshore in Ames' Ada Hayden Heritage Park with about 25 others. He drove the creation of this park, saving the former quarry lake from development. While this may be the crowning achievement of the retiree's volunteer work, it's just the tip of the iceberg. The former wildlife research biologist and Iowa State University emeritus professor has served three terms as a soil and water conservation district commissioner. He's been caretaker to restored prairie and promoted urban conservation, planting a rain garden in his front yard. He's educating central lowans on making their communities more sustainable. "He's just a jewel of a community resource on environmental issues," says Nancy Carroll, Ames Parks and Recreation director. "Erv's a tireless volunteer and always steps up when leadership is needed." For Klaas, the conservation work is "an ethical and moral commitment I've made my entire life. It'll never stop until I die. I'll do what I can!" When a drought hit in 2000, Klaas walked the dry Squaw Creek bed from Ames to the Skunk River, seeing the drought's destruction and the need to look at the stream from a watershed level. The Squaw Creek Watershed Coalition was born shortly thereafter, and he's been collecting water samples ever since, calling attention to problems in the creek and promoting the value of the creek to the community. "People look at these rivers as being sewers; a place to throw things and dump things. That's what we have to change. So people recognize our rivers and streams are assets," he says.



L to R: Jim Rasmuson, Marge Schrader, Marilyn Bruns and Bob Rasmuson

#### **GOING HOME TO MOTHER NATURE**

RASMUSON FAMILY, BRITT

Five siblings see their mother's conservation vision through



After a 60-some-year detour as a pasture and cropland, a 30-acre Hancock County wetland has returned to its roots. The Rasmuson family of Britt worked to fulfill their mother's vision of restoring "Wood Lake" after her sudden passing in 2006. Conservation has "always been a thing in our family," says Bob Rasmuson, whose great-grandfather began farming the land 120 years ago. Even so, he helped drain and tile the wetland as a kid. "It was quite a hard job to farm, a nuisance. It needed to go back to Mother Nature," Rasmuson says. So he and his four siblings sold 113 acres of the farm, including the wetland, to the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, which turned the land over to the DNR. They worked with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to restore the wetland. The Rasmusons' efforts protect the wetland, two smaller wetlands, an oak savanna and other important habitat. About 50 acres will serve as a wildlife refuge for migrating birds. The land will be open to outdoor enthusiasts and, outside the refuge, will be open for public hunting at the family's request. "It's a tremendous effort. It means a lot to wildlife and water quality," says Jason Moore, the local NRCS district conservationist who worked with the family. "You don't get very many of these (kinds of projects) in your career." The wetland has already re-vegetated and refilled, drawing muskrats and other critters. "Just to know that it will stay as it is forever-that's reward enough for us," Rasmuson says.

#### **CLASS CARES FOR COVEYS**

MEDIAPOLIS COMMUNITY SCHOOL SIXTH GRADE, MEDIAPOLIS Classroom quail habitat project garners national recognition

A project hatched by lowa sixth graders to help wildlife has caught the attention of one famous mouse. "Operation: Save the Quail" began in a Mediapolis classroom, ending up at Disneyland as the national grand prize winner of Disney's Planet Challenge. When teacher Julie Schnedler first heard of the competition, she met with Chris Lee of the Des Moines County Conservation Board (CCB) for some ideas. The class landed on the quail project and hit the library. When two girls found facts on raising quail, the class hatched chicks with an incubator. "Don't be afraid to get out there and be a learner with your students," says Schnedler. "I didn't know anything about quail when we started."The class of 66 shared its findings with the community, presenting skits, tacking up posters and writing an article for the paper. Each student wrote to the local Pheasants Forever chapter, explaining their project and why they needed the group's help. The chapter voted to fund the entire effort. "It directly affects habitat, it fit the mission of the chapter and the fact it was such a cool project for the youth," says Lee, also a PF member. The class took to Luckenbill Woods, east of town, to identify plants and plan for the 18-acre habitat restoration. After the CCB did a controlled burn, the students planted new prairie plants and shrubs. The undertaking beat out thousands of classrooms nationwide to win the Disney Planet Challenge, and each future sixth grade class will help maintain the effort—while creating its own unique project.



