

July / August 2007

# IOWA OUTDOORS

THE DNR'S MAGAZINE OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION

IN THIS ISSUE:

**FORAGING WILD FOODS ALONG THE WAPSIPINICON**  
IN PURSUIT OF NATURE'S BOUNTY IN GRANT WOOD COUNTRY



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The Walter House was one of Wright's most complete designs, nearly everything at Cedar Rock bears the architect's imprint.

In addition to the house, the wooded 11 acre site contains a boat-house and a fire circle, also designed by Wright.

The Walter House and Visitor Center are open Tuesday—Sunday, May 1—October 31, from 11am-5pm. Guided tours are given each half hour with the last tour departing at 4:30. (A \$3 donation is appreciated.)

The Visitor Center contains information and displays about the life and work of the architect. Please call (319) 934-3572 for information on special group residence tours and visitor center activities.



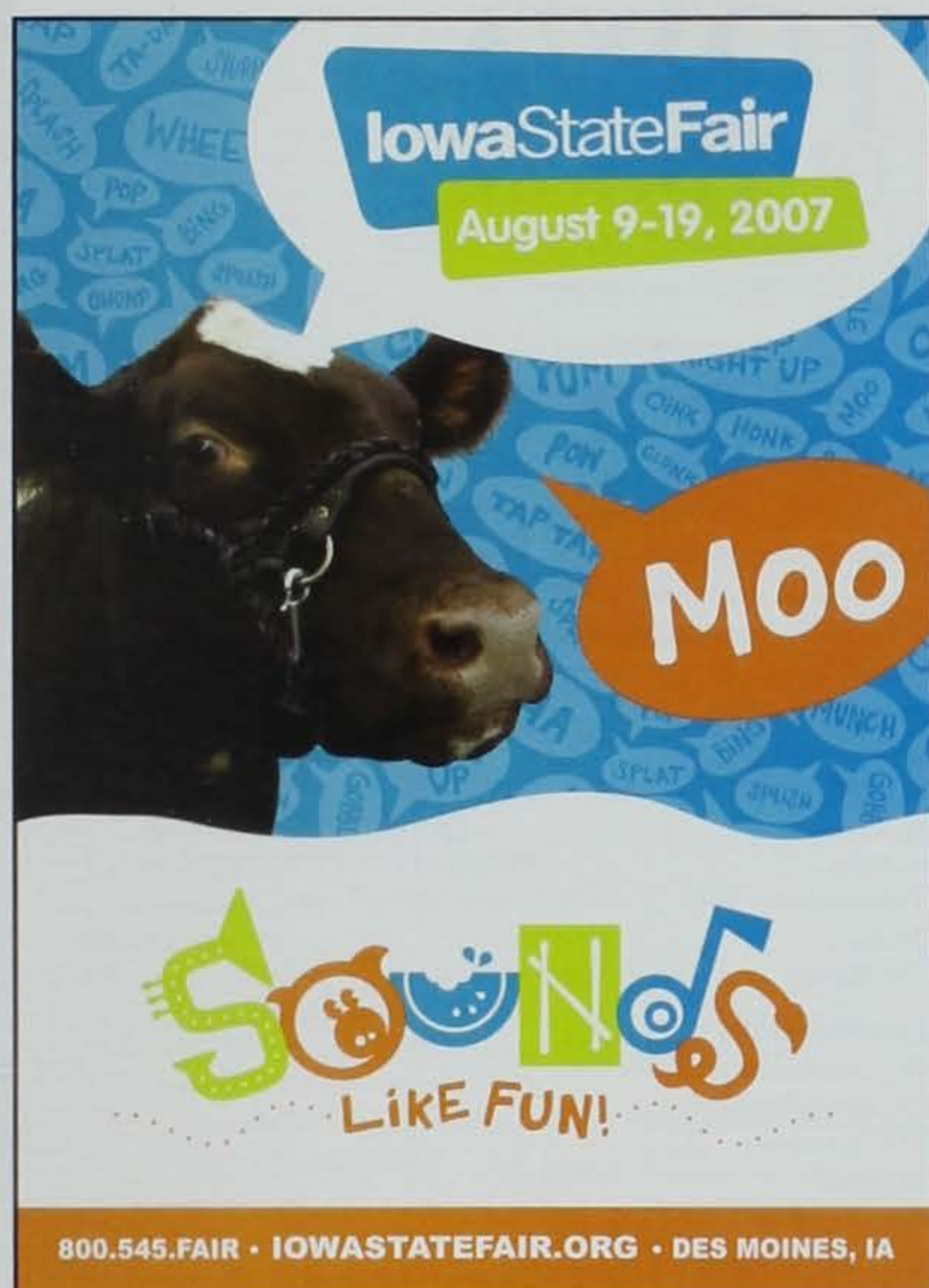
Listed on the National Register of Historical Places



**CedarRock**

The Walter House - Quasqueton, Iowa  
A Usonian Home by Frank Lloyd Wright



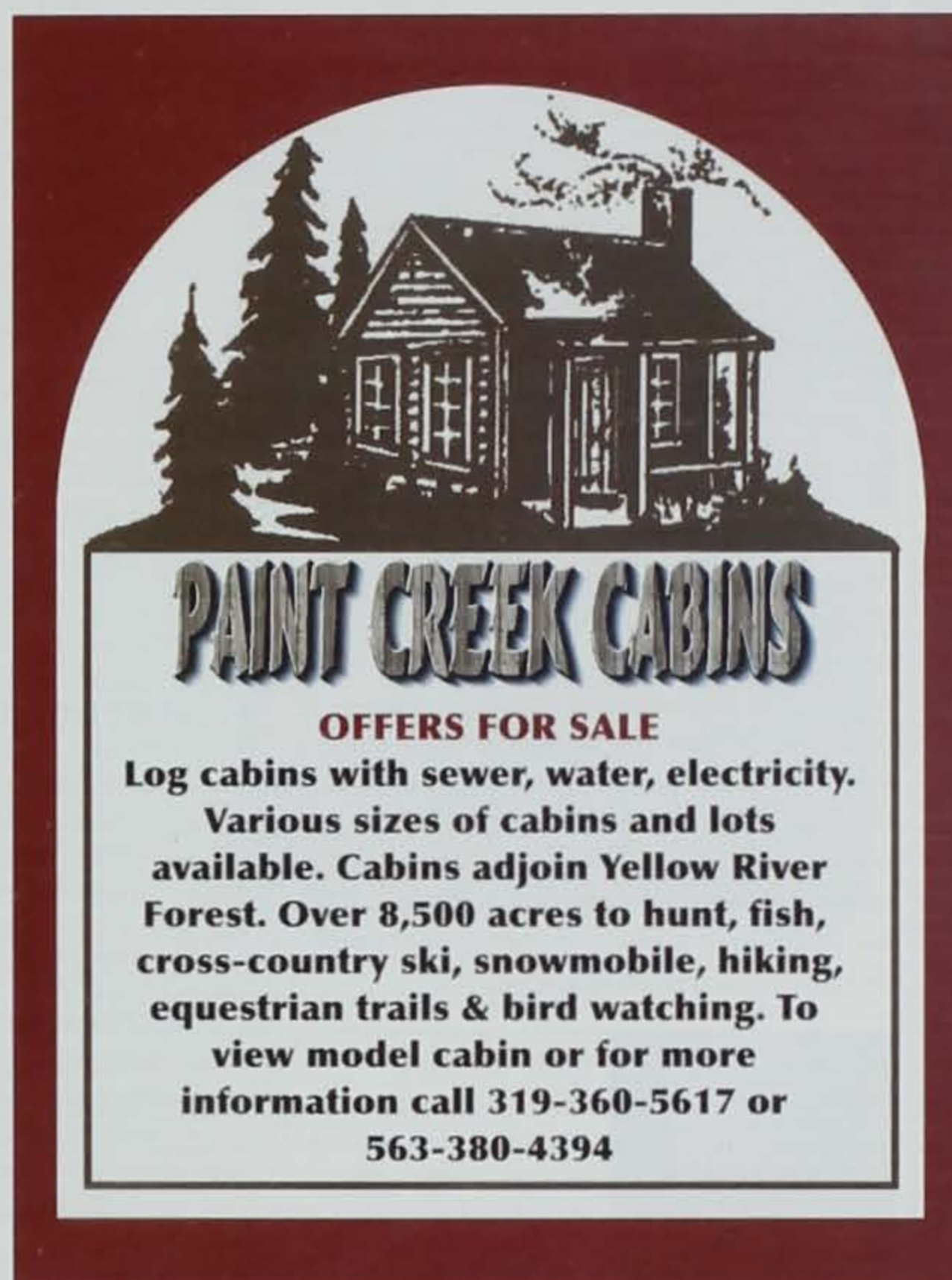


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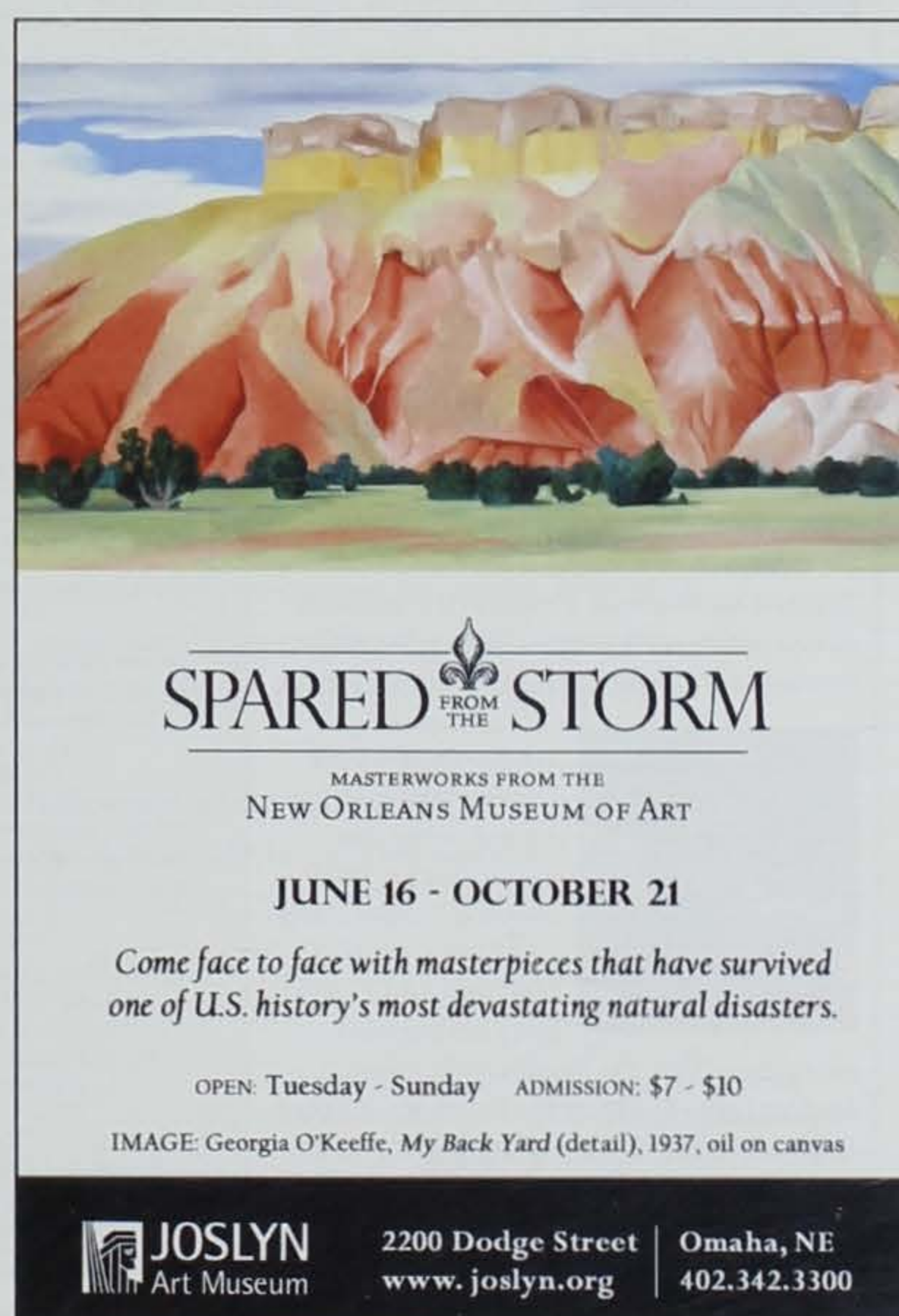
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# CONTRIBUTORS



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Bill Schaefer has been a photography professor at Grand View College in Des Moines since 1980. He lives in Des Moines with his wife

Diane, Grand View College's director of admissions. They both photograph nature and bygone Iowa scenes. Over the past 15 years he worked at a leisurely pace to build a cabin on 10 acres of hardwood forest he owns next to Stephens State Forest in southern Iowa. In 2006, he was nominated to receive a DNR Outstanding Individual Volunteer Award for ten years of mowing and preserving trails in Stephens Forest. His students volunteered for DNR photo projects including the story on page 50. [wschaefer@gvc.edu](mailto:wschaefer@gvc.edu)



## MIKE KREBILL

Mike has spent 40 years foraging the outdoors for wild edibles. A 7th grade science teacher from Keokuk, he's trained more than 300 teachers in

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## SAM SAMUELS

Sam is a freelance writer living in Vermont. He studied writing at The University of Iowa. His articles have appeared in *Smithsonian*,

*Sierra*, *Discover* and *Real Simple* magazines. He's covered everything from coffin-building Trappist monks from Peosta to the invasion of non-native earthworms. Each summer he teaches in the Iowa Summer Writing Festival.



## JENNIFER WILSON

Jennifer Wilson is a travel writer who has written for *Better Homes & Gardens*, *Midwest Living*, *Cooking Light* and *AAA Living*. She's left her tracks

everywhere from the jungles of the Sierra Madres to the forests of the Skunk River Valley. Originally from Colfax, she's now a city slicker with a yard full of prairie plants at home in Des Moines. [wilsonhoff@msn.com](mailto:wilsonhoff@msn.com)

# IOWA OUTDOORS

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## DNR MISSION

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.

## MAKE A DIFFERENCE

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## LEARN MORE

Our webpage, [www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov), is loaded with information for all ages and needs. Buy licenses, reserve campsites or learn more about our environment online.





## EDITOR'S NOTE

I am covered in poison ivy welts, rashes and blisters despite having read and reread our page 50 feature story covering the subject. The irony isn't lost on me. My outbreak came from a fishing jaunt, scrambling through bankside brush while wrestling an 8-pound carp. I never liked catching carp, but this one is in the freezer soon to be brined and smoked, my first attempt at carp cooking.

At the lake an angler asked how the day had gone. I told him of the bass and panfish I'd caught, then admitted to having carp bait on the second rod.

"Don't apologize!" he burst. "I love to catch carp too.

They really fight." He offered a few preparations, reflecting on his fishing days in Ottumwa. About that time the rod exploded and he was right—the fight was on. I've too long ignored this fish. Like the humble carp, there are resources in Iowa unseen and untapped.

Our cover image of Grant Wood's Stone City celebrates Iowa's landscape, its beauty, abundance, order and structure. Grant Wood propelled Iowa images onto the national and international scene during the Depression. He helped reshape America's impression of our landscape and took pains to make the commonplace significant.

It is no accident we sent a wild foods foraging expert and writer out last summer for a weekend canoe trip past Stone City to subsist on gathered foods and share their story. Hidden bounty beckons those with knowledge, curiosity and spirit of adventure to venture beyond commonly pursued fish, deer, pheasant and morel mushrooms. Wild grape, milkweed pods, nuts, arrowhead, and scores of plants offer tasty and nutritious flavors reaped while exploring wild places.

Wild foods are a part of a new appreciation for returning to the land for serenity, self-sufficiency, new tastes and healthy fare. With the popularity of fresh foods at farmer's

markets, wild areas also offer an overlooked smorgasboard, unknown by many who trek the landscape in search of game. I hope our feature sparks an interest in foraging with you, too.

Drop us a letter to the editor at [courier@dnr.state.ia.us](mailto:courier@dnr.state.ia.us). Get outside!



### COMING UP NEXT ISSUE!

Lost in Clayton County

SHELL ROCK RIVER  
BY MOONLIGHT

Deer Hunting Camp

HUNTING FORECAST

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Button".

BRIAN BUTTON, Editor-in-Chief



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BY JOE WILKINSON

#### ABOUT THE COVER

Grant Wood's 1930, *Stone City*, helped shape America's vision of midwest landscapes the same year he painted *American Gothic*. "There are always people or evidence of people in Wood's post-1928 landscapes because he realized the land and people work together," says Cedar Rapids Art Museum director Terence Pitts. "There is never a sense that the farm is any less beautiful than the forest." Subtly simplified, patterns are overdeveloped; perfect rows and immaculate order suggests harmony of nature and man as one with nature. Despite the Depression, no evidence of it appears in his Iowa vision. "It looks as fertile and healthy as a community could look," says Pitts.

Perhaps he was painting the Iowa of his childhood—a simpler Iowa already disappearing by the 1930s. Wood's Stone City Art Colony immersed nearly a hundred artists in the Jones County landscape. Growing up in Cedar Rapids, Wood painted many images of Indian Creek often sold to residents. Our page 22 feature is set at Stone City.

#### ABOUT THIS PHOTO

You can't tell, but this was a cold, windy fall 2006 day of photography for the fishing forecast images used over the last several issues. Taken at Big Creek State Park in Polk County, high winds and an icy start forced the photo shoot into wind-protected coves.





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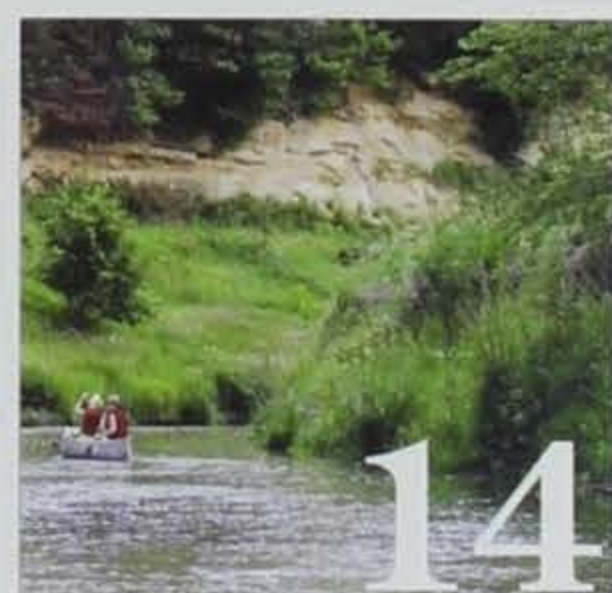
A Japanese inspired spin on walleye. How to make thirst-quenching sumac lemonade.

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## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



By the 1930s, early stories of Iowa had become just that—stories. Early accounts of unsettled prairies, rich in wildlife and latticed with sparkling streams, had vanished. Predictions were made that whitetail deer, wild turkey and others would never again exist in numbers high enough to support hunting seasons.

It was then that a visionary group of citizens placed Iowa at the forefront of conservation efforts in the United States setting the early stage for creation of a citizen-directed system for professional management of fish and wildlife.

Creation of the Iowa Conservation Commission, a predecessor agency to today's Department of Natural Resources, acknowledged that fish and wildlife belong to all Iowans and needed professional management for the benefit of all residents. Today's Natural Resources Commission, a panel of citizens, approves DNR policies for managing public resources including fish and wildlife. This model, started in Iowa, was replicated by nearly every state.

Killing for food is regulated by hunting seasons and bag limits. Killing to protect personal property is regulated by state and federal programs. Only killing for self-defense is unregulated with some burden of proof attached to the individual who did the killing.

We realize wildlife populations occasionally cause problems for individuals in both rural and urban areas. Wildlife damage to agricultural crops and ornamental plantings can be costly. High populations of wildlife can become intolerable, at times creating a nuisance. As the agency responsible for managing wildlife populations, the DNR takes management of overabundant wildlife and situations where wildlife becomes a problem very seriously. We offer effective programs to deal with these, including dedicating two full-time biologists to help manage wildlife nuisance issues.

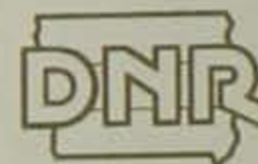
That our natural resources belong to all of us collectively is the key concept that makes the North American model of wildlife conservation an unparalleled success. The result of this democratization of wildlife has embedded in our society a conservation ethic. The list of successes directly attributable to this ethic is long. Wildlife refuges have been established and wild areas preserved. Bald eagles are back from perilously low numbers. River otters, trumpeter swans, sandhill cranes, peregrine falcons, wild turkeys, Canada geese and whitetail deer are more abundant today than 70 years ago due to modern wildlife management.

The North American model has successfully endured despite dramatic changes in the landscape, our society and technology. The current model embodies the collective wisdom of a continent-wide debate carried on openly among many varied stakeholders. The model remains an unparalleled success, providing sustainable development of our natural resources, and part of it started here in Iowa.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Leopold". The signature is stylized and fluid.

RICHARD LEOPOLD, Director of the Iowa DNR





# ACTIVITIES, TIPS AND EVENTS FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

## Earn Your Butterfly Wings

### MAJOR IOWA BUTTERFLY BOOK RELEASED

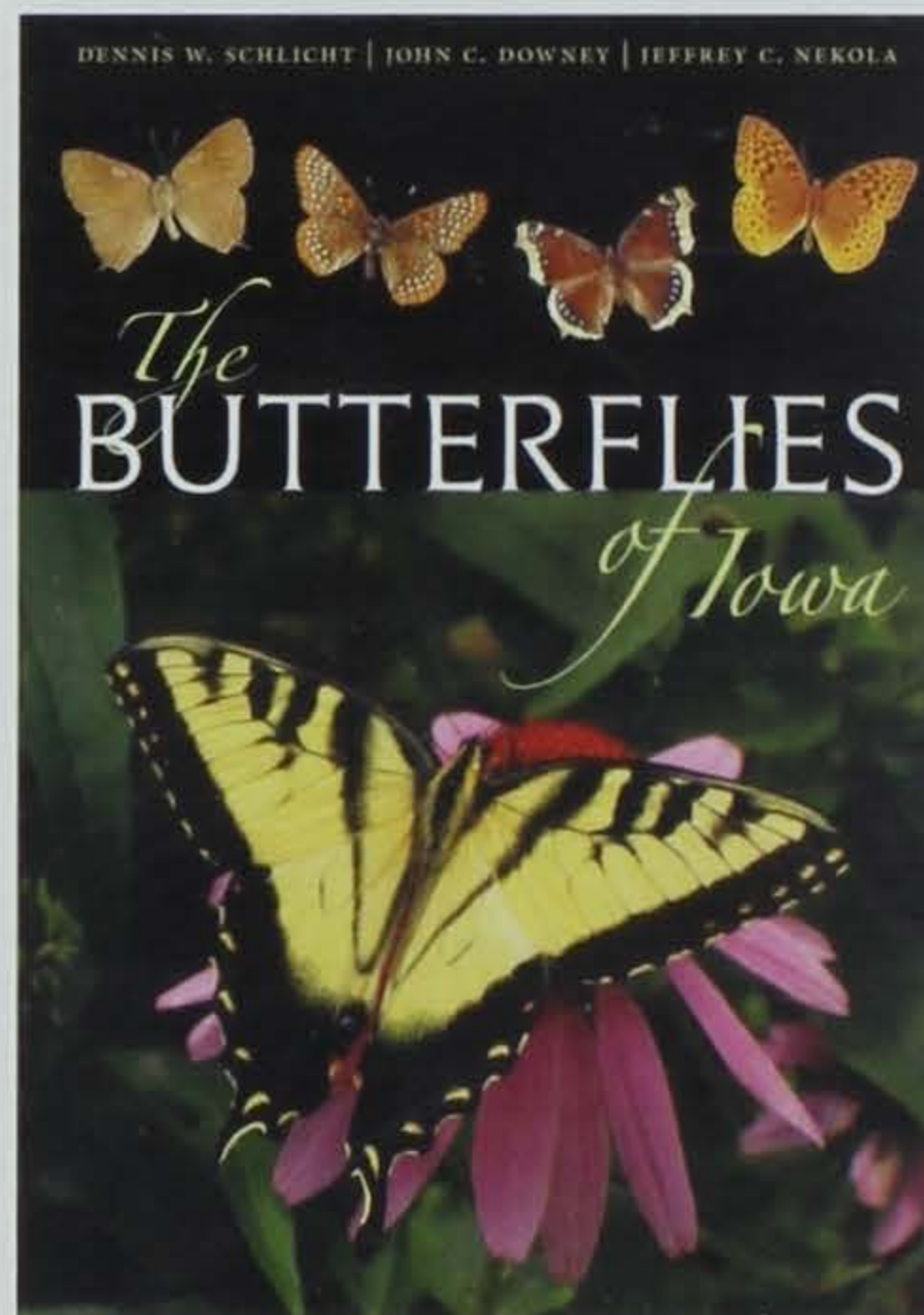
This beautiful, comprehensive guide, many years in the making, is *the* manual for identifying Iowa butterflies as well as 90 percent of butterflies in the Plains states. Loaded with nearly 400 color photographs and more than 100 maps and diagrams, the book is more than an identification guide, offering insights on butterfly habitat, history of Iowa butterfly research and a chapter on creating butterfly gardens.

The book's three authors pool their talents for impressive results. With more than 40 years of butterfly study, Dennis Schlicht is a biology instructor at Washington High School in Cedar Rapids. The late John Downey, an entomologist and retired chair of the biology department at the University of Northern Iowa, and Jeff Nekola, a biology professor at the University of New Mexico, also authored the book.

Each of Iowa's 118 species is covered, including common and scientific names, adult flight times, number of broods per season, distinguishing features and natural history information such as behavior and food plant preferences. The authors include research and conservation challenges for each species as well as questions and issues facing Iowa butterfly study.

Color photos show male and female adults with top and bottom views. Distribution maps indicate which counties specimens have been collected from known flight times.

A great in-field resource and at-home study, the book offers a checklist, collection information specific to the photographs, glossary, references and index. The authors' meticulous attention to detail, concern for habitat preservation and joyful appreciation of Iowa's natural world make it a valuable and inspiring book.



A cloth version (ISBN 1-58729-532-6) is \$59.95 or paperback (ISBN 1-58729-533-4) is \$29.95. 248 pages. To order: 1-800-621-2736 or [www.uiowapress.org](http://www.uiowapress.org). Available in book stores.



### GET INVOLVED

Visit the North American Butterfly Association to see if events are scheduled in your area or to start a local count. [www.naba.org/counts](http://www.naba.org/counts).

### GET CHILDREN PRIMED FOR COUNTING BUTTERFLIES

In this delightful book, a young daughter and mother search together for a special butterfly, the regal fritillary, in a prairie remnant once belonging to the girl's great-great grandmother, Nora Belle. Nora Belle lived when miles of tallgrass prairie blanketed the land and thousands of regal fritillaries danced over the grasses.

At a restored prairie on land once farmed by Nora Belle, the mother and daughter attend the annual Fourth of July Butterfly Count and make a special discovery. Includes factual information about butterflies and how to identify, attract and watch them. The author acknowledges Dr. Diane Debinski of Iowa State University for her extensive help in assisting with the book.

Illustrator Paul Kratter of California traveled to the Midwest to research the landscape at tallgrass prairie sanctuaries. His powerful paintings capture the wide expanse of billowy clouds, prairies and vast open space with the fresh eyes of a visitor.

Author: Sneed B. Collard III, ISBN 0-8234-1607-0  
Order at [www.holidayhouse.com](http://www.holidayhouse.com) \$16.95



## Fun Fish Art Made Easy

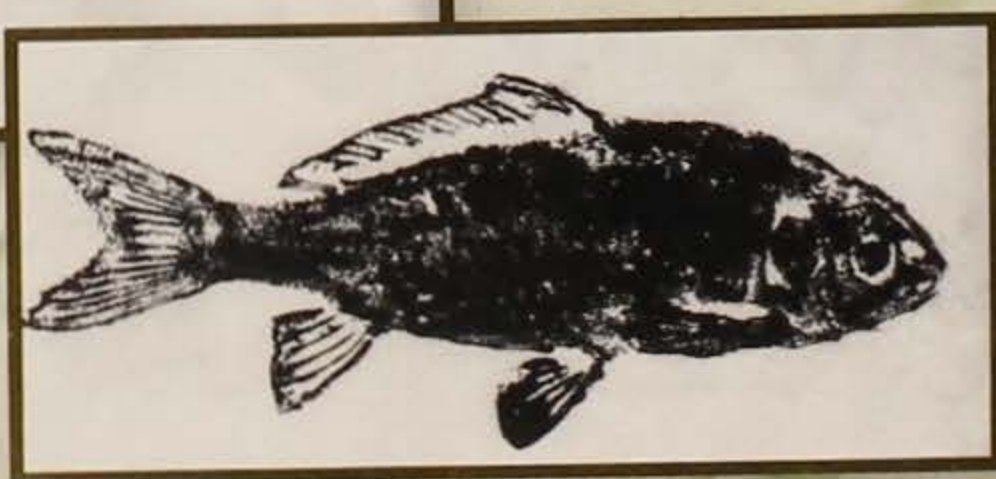
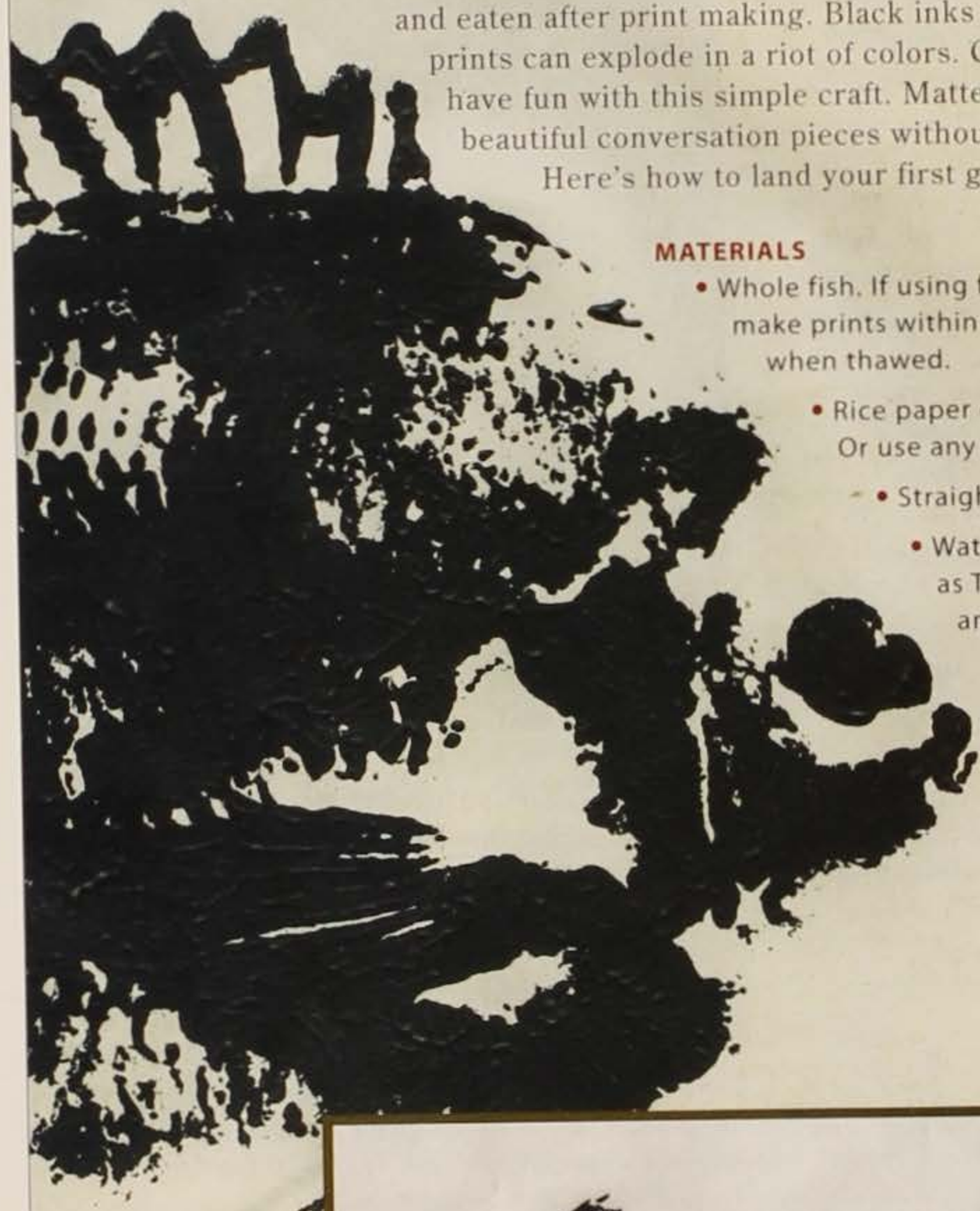
*Hang trophy fish and eat it too!*

### SIX STEPS TO FISH PRINTS

Used by Japanese anglers in the 1800s as a way to record the size and species of their catch before the haul was sent to the fishmonger, gyotaku (gee-oh-tak-oo) is a fast growing activity evolved into an art. Using water-based paints or ink, fish can be washed and eaten after print making. Black inks give a classic, fine art feel, or prints can explode in a riot of colors. Children, families and artisans have fun with this simple craft. Matted and framed, they make beautiful conversation pieces without the cost of taxidermy. Here's how to land your first gyotaku.

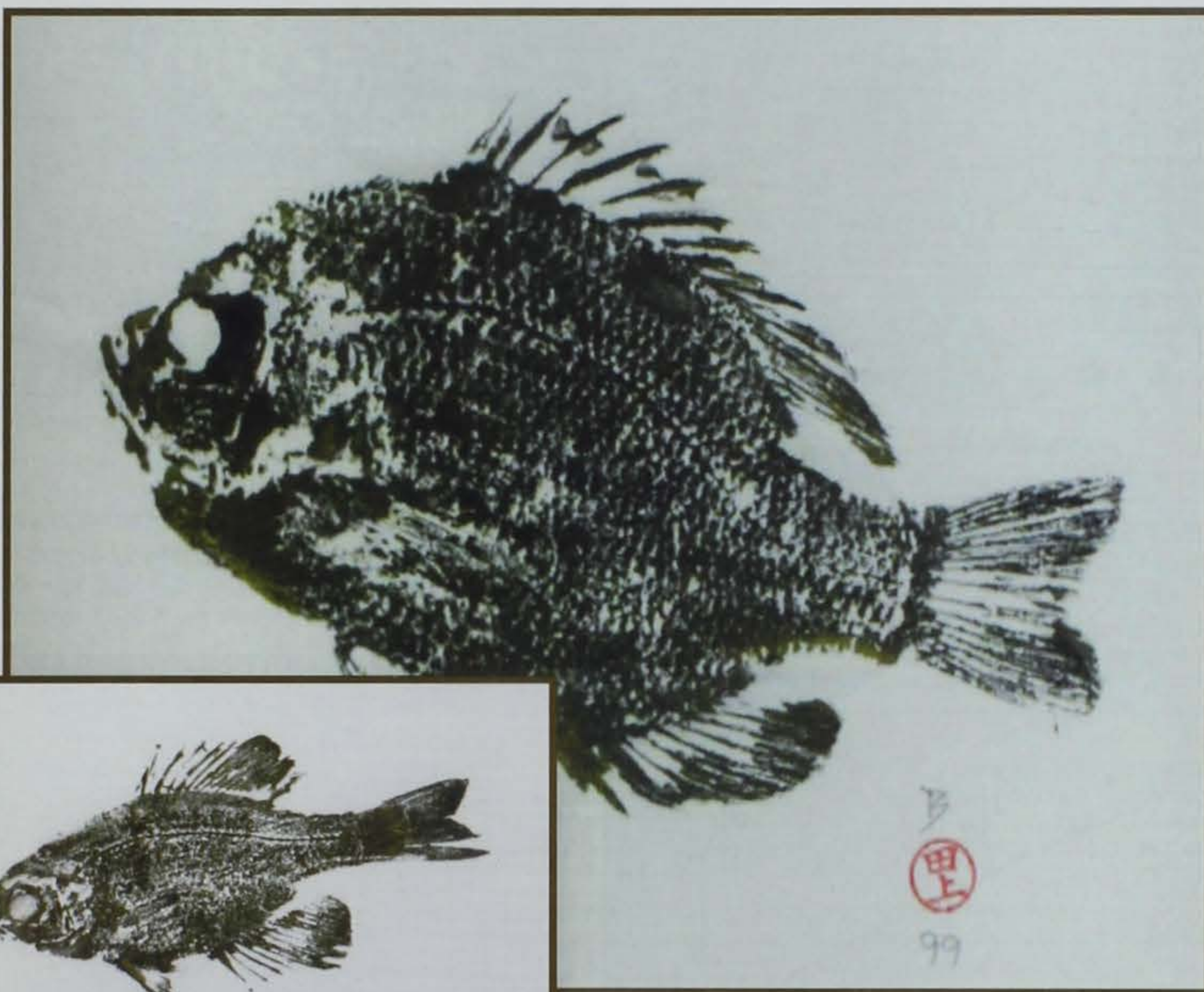
### MATERIALS

- Whole fish. If using fresh-caught fish, keep it cold and make prints within 24 hours. Frozen fish work well when thawed.
- Rice paper or fabric from craft or art store. Or use any acid-free archival paper.
- Straight pins
- Watercolors or water-based ink such as Tempera, block ink, fabric ink or any thick water-soluble ink.
- Paper towels
- Play-Doh® or modeling clay
- Old magazines or newspapers
- Half inch brushes or roller, small detail brush
- Cotton balls
- Hair dryer



GYOTAKU!





**1)** Clean fish. Wash with a few drops of dish detergent and water, or use salt or lemon juice to gently remove slime from body and fins. Dry fish with paper towels.

**2)** Cover work surface with newspapers. Stretch open fins to make them look natural, and secure with straight pins from underside so the pin head doesn't show. Large fins may need support with Play-Doh® or

clay. If the fish is gutted, fill cavity with paper towels. Remove eye or cover with a small amount of cotton.

**3)** Dry the fish. A hair dryer can quicken the process. When dry enough, fins will stay in place once the pins are removed.

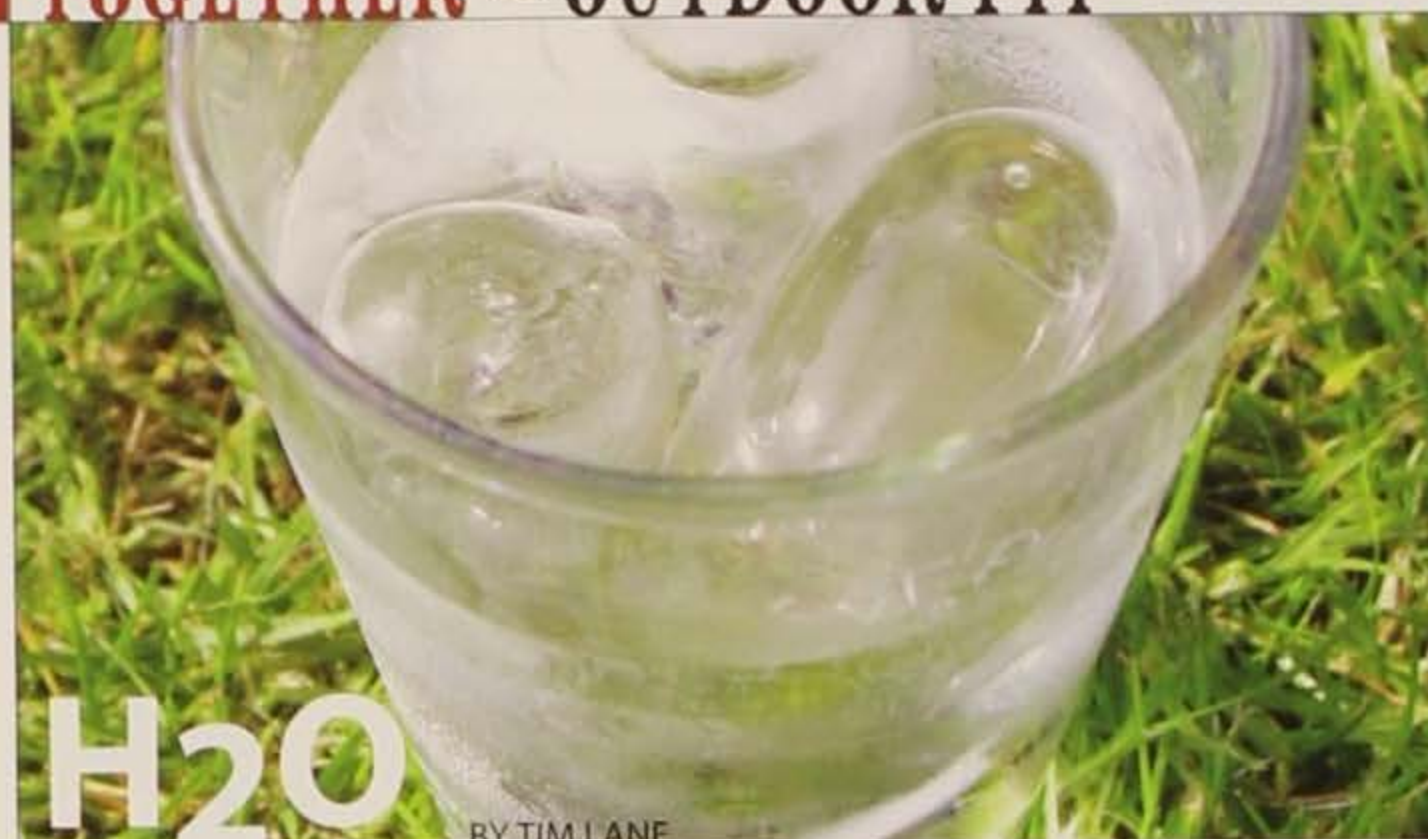
**4)** Apply ink. Brush a thin coat of ink over the entire fish, except the eye. Begin head to tail, then tail to head to ensure ink is under scale edges. If used, remove clay or Play-Doh®. Position paper above fish where you wish print to appear. Drop paper. Avoid smudges by not moving the paper.

**5)** Rub paper against fish, ensuring paper doesn't slide while on the fish. Rub gently, touching all areas of body and fins to transfer ink. Carefully peel off paper. If using different colors, use lightest color first. Paint eye using a small brush. Wash fish and repeat above steps if you have smudges or areas of poor ink transfer. Clean fish of ink and refrigerate or freeze. (See our *Japanese inspired fish recipe* on page 58.)

**6)** Sign your print, matte and frame.



## TOGETHER ~ OUTDOOR FIT



BY TIM LANE

I wish to wade in on the water—the forgotten nutrient. Next to air, it's my favorite substance. I recall my grade school reaction upon learning the body is 75 percent water. I envisioned someone squeezing another person until they ran down a drain. Does this mean that Ms. or Mr. Iowa qualify as great bodies of water? But I digress.

A mere 2 percent drop in one's water supply can trigger dehydration with memory lapses, decreased mental capability and vision impairment. Mild dehydration causes fatigue. Severe cases are life-threatening. Water lubricates, is crucial for cooling and heating the body, helps digestion and waste removal, regulates metabolism and helps prevent disease. Water is a great bargain. Four thousand glasses of tap water costs the same as a six-pack of pop and contain zero calories.

We need to replenish fluids daily, and this increases during summer and outdoor activities. (Wearing loose-fitting clothes and a hat can address skin cancer, keep you cooler and reduce sweating.) If you feel dizzy, take a shade break and drink water.

Dieticians say water needs vary by age, diet, activity level, weather, health, gender and medications. Drink six to eight 8-ounce glasses, or half your weight in ounces daily. Limit soda, caffeine and alcohol. Soda contains sugar and empty calories. Caffeine and alcohol can cause the body to lose water. Increase fluids if exercising or spending time in hot or humid weather. Persons taking certain medications or with some chronic diseases may have to restrict their water intake.

Pale yellow urine indicates proper hydration. You need more fluids if urinating less than four times daily or having dark yellow urine.

Drinks with carbs of four to eight percent by volume are good for intense exercise lasting longer than one hour. Drinks with 10 to 19 grams of total carbohydrate/cup (240 ml), falls in the 4 to 8 percent range. You can make sport drinks by mixing half water and juice.

Consuming sport drinks with carbs and electrolytes during exercise provides fuel for muscles, maintains blood glucose and decreases dehydration risks. These drinks fight muscle cramps by replenishing fluids, sodium and potassium lost in sweat. Avoid milk and yogurts or smoothies prior to and between activities as they can cause nausea.

Read sport drink labels. High-carb drinks (over 20 carb grams per 8 oz. or 240 mL), high-protein sport shakes and juices are good before or after exercise or on recovery days as they are carb-loaded. Use two or more hours before exercise to allow digestion time. During workouts, high-carb drinks pull water from cells and into the stomach, causing cramping.

*Tim Lane is the fitness consultant with the Iowa Department of Public Health. He is also a marathoner, former director of the National Ski Patrol, climber, volleyball coach and cyclist. He has cycled across America once and Iowa 25 times. He's a regular participant in RAGBRAI and developed the Ride Right safety program. Tim also helped design and promotes Lighten Up Iowa.*

## 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 do the deer run away from me?

— CARLOS, visitor to the Springbrook Conservation Education Center

Out of the mouths of youth come excellent observations! Deer run because they are prey. Historically pursued by many animals, they evolved to avoid being eaten with keen senses of smell, sight and hearing and ability to run swiftly. Feeding for short periods at dusk and dawn, they spend the day in safe locations grinding their food as cud to digest it. This allows less exposure to predators while foraging.

Animals are predator, prey or both. Predators like coyotes have forward facing eyes, while eyes of prey animals face outward to scan predators from a wide angle for early detection.

Iowans have the luxury of being the top predator. Most animals run or hide as we approach. Despite this, give wildlife space when observing to minimize disrupting their activities or cause defensive reactions. If you encounter young wildlife, their best chance of survival is to leave them alone and let their parents raise them.





## TIPS, TRICKS, HOW-TO AND MUST-KNOWS TO ENHANCE YOUR OUTDOOR FUN

### Cheek Meat

Tender, tasty and firm, cheek meat is unparalleled in fish cuisine. Considered a delicacy, they command top prices in restaurants and markets—if you can find them. Any larger fish will yield these scallop-like meaty morsels, but walleye cheeks are known best. To remove, gently guide knife tip around circumference of cheek pocket behind the fish's eye, hugging the bone. Flip, and slip knife edge between meat and skin. Continue filleting from skin, or grab exposed cheek meat and pull free.



### ITCH RELIEF

Got a bug bite and out of anti-itch cream? Check the medicine cabinet for Preparation H. It works for those dark, sensitive inflamed tissues and equally well for insect bites. The pain relieving and drying effect shrinks swelling and reduces itching.



### CEDAR FALLS FISH STICKS

*Bob Piper of Cedar Falls shares his secrets*

**MAKE PERFECT FROZEN FISH STICKS TO BAKE OR FRY LATER.** Mix equal parts Shore Lunch® Original Breading Mix and crushed RITZ Crackers. Use walleye, perch, catfish or other filets cut into bite size or larger chunks. Pat dry. Soak fish in soy milk briefly, which is thicker than cow's milk and avoids the cholesterol of an egg wash. Shake off excess milk and roll filet in breading. Cover a cookie sheet with wax paper and place coated filets on top. Place in freezer overnight. This prevents the filets from sticking together. Once frozen, place fish sticks in a freezer bag and store in freezer. **TO COOK**, heat oil to 350° in fryer and add frozen fish sticks. Cook three to five minutes until fish floats. *Piper has never tried it, but is sure the sticks can be oven baked as well.*

#### — GOT A SKILL TO SHARE? —

If we use it we will give you a gift from the Iowa Nature Store. Send to: [OUTDOORSKILLS@DNR.STATE.IA.US](mailto:OUTDOORSKILLS@DNR.STATE.IA.US)



## WHEN FISH POPULATIONS DECLINE, OVER-FISHING IS TO BLAME

MYTH

As anglers it's often easy to point the finger at ourselves, especially when periodic declines in fishing success surface.

In all honesty, if it were possible to remove all anglers from Iowa's waters, the same results would occur. Overfishing simply does not cause Iowa fish populations to crash.

So where's the smoking gun? The answer is broader than one might think.

Experts find poor water quality and habitat deterioration are to blame. Consider the fact that Iowa's lands are vastly dynamic. Intensive use of the landscape results in "leaky" watersheds that deliver sediments and nutrients to lakes. In the short term, poor water quality is the result. Over time, it reduces lake depth, thus impacting the fishery.

Keep in mind, animal populations, fish included, fluctuate in natural cycles. It's just one of many examples of how nature maintains its own agenda.

"The environment has a much greater impact on fish populations than anglers," says Joe Larscheid, natural resource biologist for the DNR. "When you have adverse environmental conditions, all the angler regulations in the world are not going to improve fishing."



## ASK THE EXPERT *-Chad in Dubuque asks, "What are the rules for fishing on private ponds?"*



For many years, game hunters have understood they must ask permission to hunt on a private landowners' property. Oddly enough, some licensed anglers don't seem to understand the same concept.

Year after year, landowners with privately stocked ponds find themselves at odds with anglers who refuse to get permission before fishing on private property. Many anglers feel that because landowners have their ponds stocked by programs like the Iowa Farm Pond Program and they themselves are taxpayers, then they have the right to fish any waters, regardless of permission.

Sadly, these individuals are missing the mark. It's true, the DNR does stock private ponds, but always at the expense of the landowner who pays a state-stocking fee.

Marion Conover, chief of the DNR fisheries bureau, says the point is that no taxpayer dollars are put into stocking fish on private lands. At one time, private stocking costs were covered by fishing license buyers, but no more. That's why it's important for people to respect the fact they are fishing on private property and, like hunting, to get prior permission and to leave the land cleaner than they found it.

Oftentimes, some landowners get a bad taste in their mouth when anglers aren't courteous and leave trash around their waters. Private landowners generally welcome public fishing as long as visitors are courteous. So do what's right—ask permission and remember that your mother does not live at those ponds, so clean it up!

**HAVE AN OUTDOOR OR ENVIRONMENT RELATED QUESTION?** Send questions to "ASK THE EXPERT," IOWA OUTDOORS MAGAZINE, 502 E. 9TH STREET, DES MOINES, IA 50319-0034, or email to: [ASKTHEEXPERT@IOWAOUTDOORS.COM](mailto:ASKTHEEXPERT@IOWAOUTDOORS.COM).





## STIRRING UP LAKE PRIDE

**JEANNE EIBES, CARTER LAKE**

**Carter Lake resident rallies her community around a dying lake**

A century ago, a rerouted Missouri River stranded Carter Lake between two cities, two counties and two states. As the lake's health declined, its unique location between Omaha and its Iowa namesake city created a tangled situation. Enter Jeanne Eibes. Accountant by day, Eibes was sick of the neglected lake in her backyard, which had become a murky dumping ground. "When you look out your back door and see something you're not proud of, you want to do something about it," she says. After a group pulled refrigerators, safes, railroad tracks and other trash from the lake in 2005, Eibes helped form the Carter Lake Preservation Society. Since then, Eibes has attended every public meeting she can to convince city, county and state governments and residents to invest in the lake. With funding and cooperation from these groups, the 600-member preservation society holds annual lake cleanups, installs rain gardens to filter stormwater runoff and improves parks, the shoreline and the watershed, in addition to work by the counties and the City of Carter Lake. "All these things we're doing as a city wouldn't have been done on such a grand scale if not for Jeanne and the preservation society," says Carter Lake Mayor Russ Kramer, who named Eibes the city's Citizen of the Year. "Nobody has made an impact on the quality of life in Carter Lake more than Jeanne Eibes."

## PARKS FOR KIDS

**POLK CITY KIWANIS, POLK CITY**

**Volunteer group improves park to give local kids great recreation**

For almost 20 years, the Polk City Kiwanis has been a jack-of-all-trades to Big Creek State Park, painting picnic tables, building playgrounds, restoring prairie, planting trees and more. "The public probably doesn't know Kiwanis is behind so many improvements at the park, but they notice the work," says Kim Olofson, Big Creek park manager. The Kiwanis' main mission is to serve children. Working with the outdoors fits right in, as the group helps the park and manages trees for the Polk City Little League. "It corresponds to our core value of service by providing kids recreation and time away from the TV. We're very focused on environmental protection and serving the community any way we can," says Doug McKinstry, president of the chapter. The volunteer group's relationship with Big Creek began when member Bill Sharp saw an opportunity to lend a hand, whether it was for trash cleanup or lake projects. "The funds are not very good for state parks, and they need all the help they can get," says Sharp. "It's a project that's good for them and good for us."



**L to R:** Doug McKinstry, Bill Sharp (standing), Ward Mally and Don Hart.



## RESTORING THE RACCOON

**MIKE DELANEY, DES MOINES**

**Paddler sets out to clean up Raccoon River for his grandchildren**

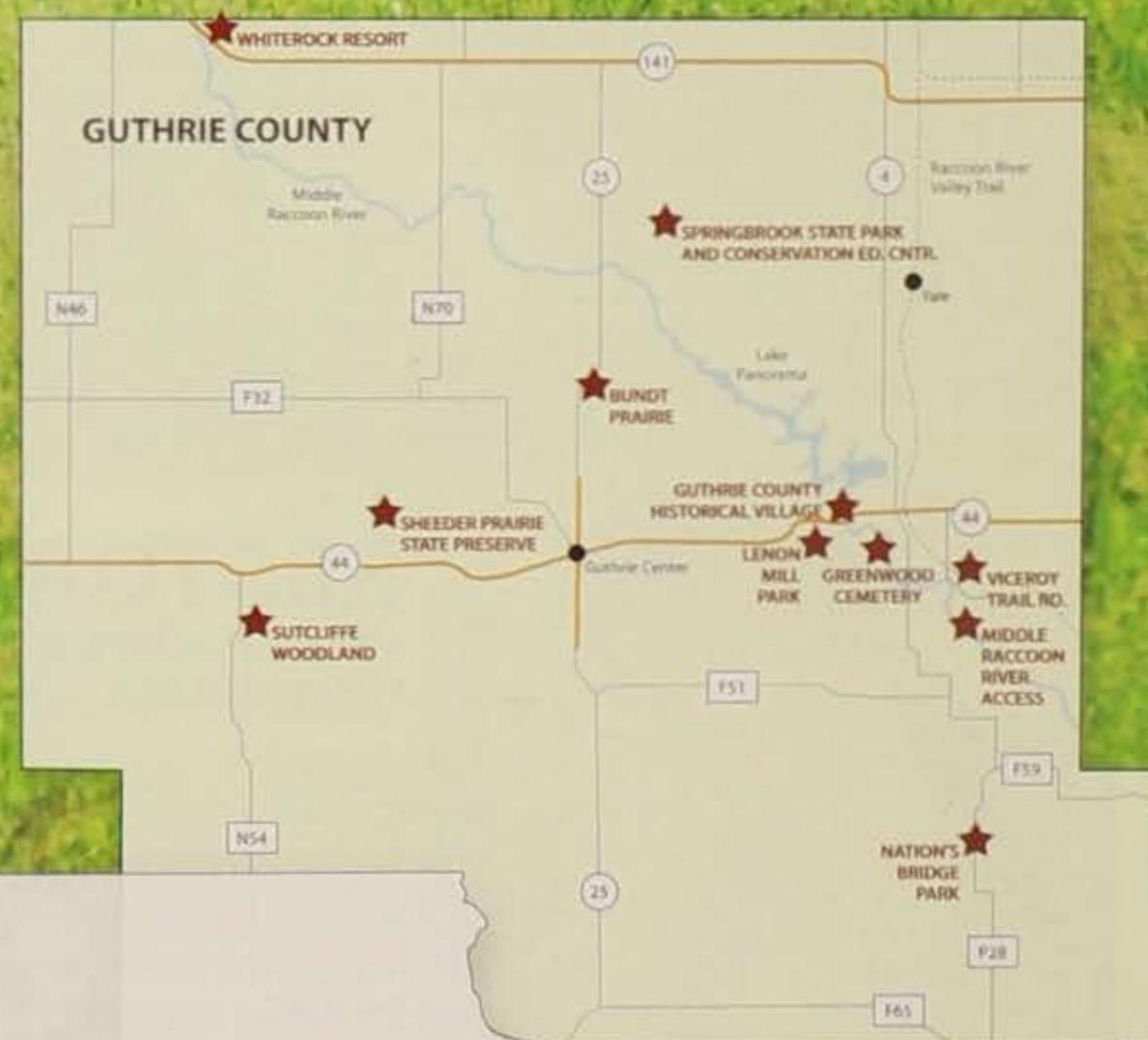
Mike Delaney says he isn't out to save the world, just the Raccoon River, to make it a place for his grandkids to wade. A hunt for a country paddling retreat led him to the Raccoon, where the Des Moines resident built a cabin and restored prairie. Frustrated with pollution and trash floating by, Delaney joined six others to establish the North Raccoon River Watershed Association (NRWA) in 2005. "He got involved on a personal level with the river," says Larry Wilson, vice president of the group. "He's more than words. He doesn't just talk about it, he does it." Now at 170 members, the group focuses on education, recreation and policy issues while getting its hands dirty yanking trash from the water. The association also sponsors water monitoring events and the annual Paddlefest in Adel. "If we can get more people on the river, they'll care more about the pollution and destruction taking place," Delaney says. "People see it (the NRWA) is about actually doing something. We speak up for clean water." A sociology instructor at Des Moines Area Community College for 34 years, Delaney saw a need to connect environmental issues with sociology. He created a course that did just that, and applied his knowledge to the NRWA. "Sociologists have been slow to grapple with environmental problems created by societies," Delaney says. "It's fun to take what I know about sociology to a real world situation and something I really care about."



# The Sleeping Giant of Guthrie County

Thousands of years ago, a glacier skidded to a halt on the land of the Middle Raccoon.

BY JENNIFER WILSON





"This place is a sleeping giant."

Joe Hanner, director of the Guthrie County Conservation Board, trundles his pick-up over an undiscovered piece of paradise less than an hour's drive northwest of Des Moines.

Just outside Panora, Hanner brakes atop one of those iconic Iowa hills where you can see the green spread of cropland so far it seems to evaporate in the humid distance.

Take a look east, it's nothing but flat expanse of Iowa gold. Look west, he says, and you've got a whole different matter. On the other side of the road, the terrain is hilly and plump with trees—the kind of place people generally drive for hours to pitch their tents on.

As always, the story begins with a glacier. A little over 10,000 years ago, the Des Moines lobe of the Wisconsin glacier scraped flat the eastern Dakotas and good hunks of Minnesota, traveling to, well, the east side of this road in Guthrie County.

"It stopped at this very spot," he says. "Basically, this starts the rolling hills of southern Iowa. And it's a really neat deal—but a lot of people don't even think about it."

Though Hanner calls this Glacier Road, it's officially Viceroy Trail, leading visitors to a patch of forested hills in west-central Iowa where the Middle Raccoon River offers surprising riches aside from her beauty. Think walleye, channel cat, panfish and smallmouth bass.

The Raccoon River Valley Trail stretches flat and paved along an old railroad line for mile upon canopied mile, and the camping brings you among any number of critters, from turkey to deer to fox.

"People don't realize there's scenic wild natural areas this close to the metro area," says Hanner.

And when they find out?

Well, that's the sleeping giant of Guthrie County.

### A SHOWOFF OF A RIVER

A rich green blanket covers this chunk of Iowa. Gauzy fluff floats on heavy summer air—a gift from cottonwood trees hemming in the Middle Raccoon.

In a state known for subtle beauty, this short fork of the Raccoon River is a waving prom queen. Rivers like these—riffled, sparkling, shallow, traced by sandbars and woods—are what we dream of when we're stuck at our cubicles at work instead of fishing like we should be.

Entering Guthrie County at Whiterock Resort near Coon Rapids, the Middle Raccoon flows southeast by way of Panora and Lake Panorama, and through Dallas County, where this all-American beauty hits its confluence with the Des Moines River at Principal Park.

Fishing in these clear waters is a grab-bag. "It's pretty crazy to be in western Iowa and have a river where you don't know what you're going to catch," says Hanner.

Paddling a canoe or kayak is a fine way to see its flirty charm. You can put in from Lenon Mill Park in



The Raccoon River Valley trail links Des Moines bikers with Guthrie County. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Springbrook Lake is family friendly with shoreline access, fishing jetties and docks. Only boats with electric motors are allowed.

Panora—quite possibly the state's coolest little in-town campground—and float as far as your lazy side desires.

Catch this spot after a summer rainstorm, and steep rivulets tumble down wooded slopes as mists rise from the water. Nettles look pretty as a carpet when you're safe in the seat of a canoe—just one of the growing things among a lush understory of woodland plants and dense foliage that adds to the Middle Raccoon's feeling of seclusion. Imagine the swirl of color in fall.

"The Middle Raccoon is a really surprising river to find in this part of central Iowa," says Nate Hoogeveen, the Department of Natural Resources' water trails coordinator. "The boulders dotting the channel, the riffles and small rapids, and the deep woods lining its banks really transport to a place that seems way more than 40 minutes from Des Moines."

About now, smallmouth bass are hitting prime time. Hunting season is just around the corner. Whitetail deer, turkey, goose, ducks and small game are on the itinerary.

And prairie. You can always hunt prairie species in Guthrie County.

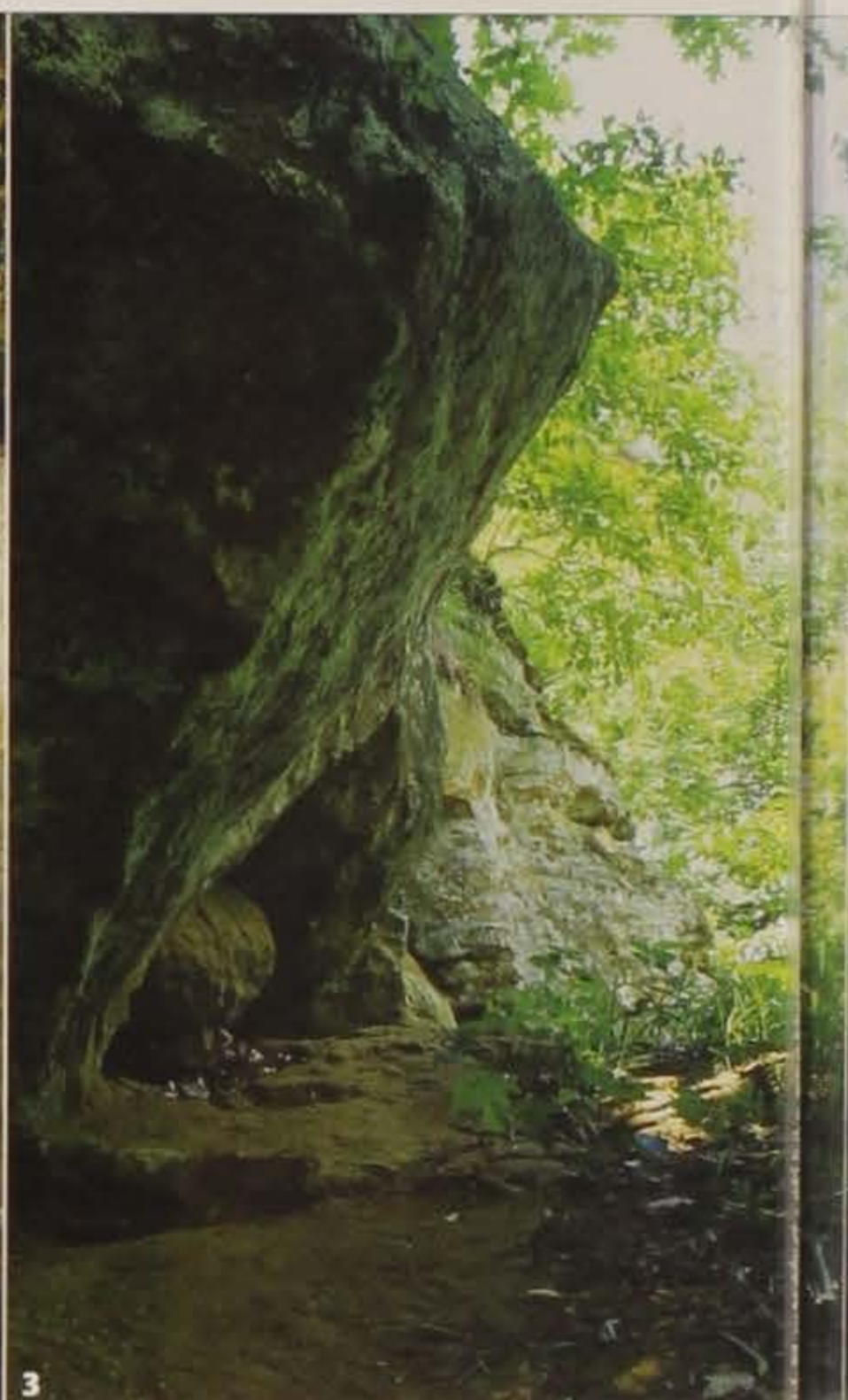
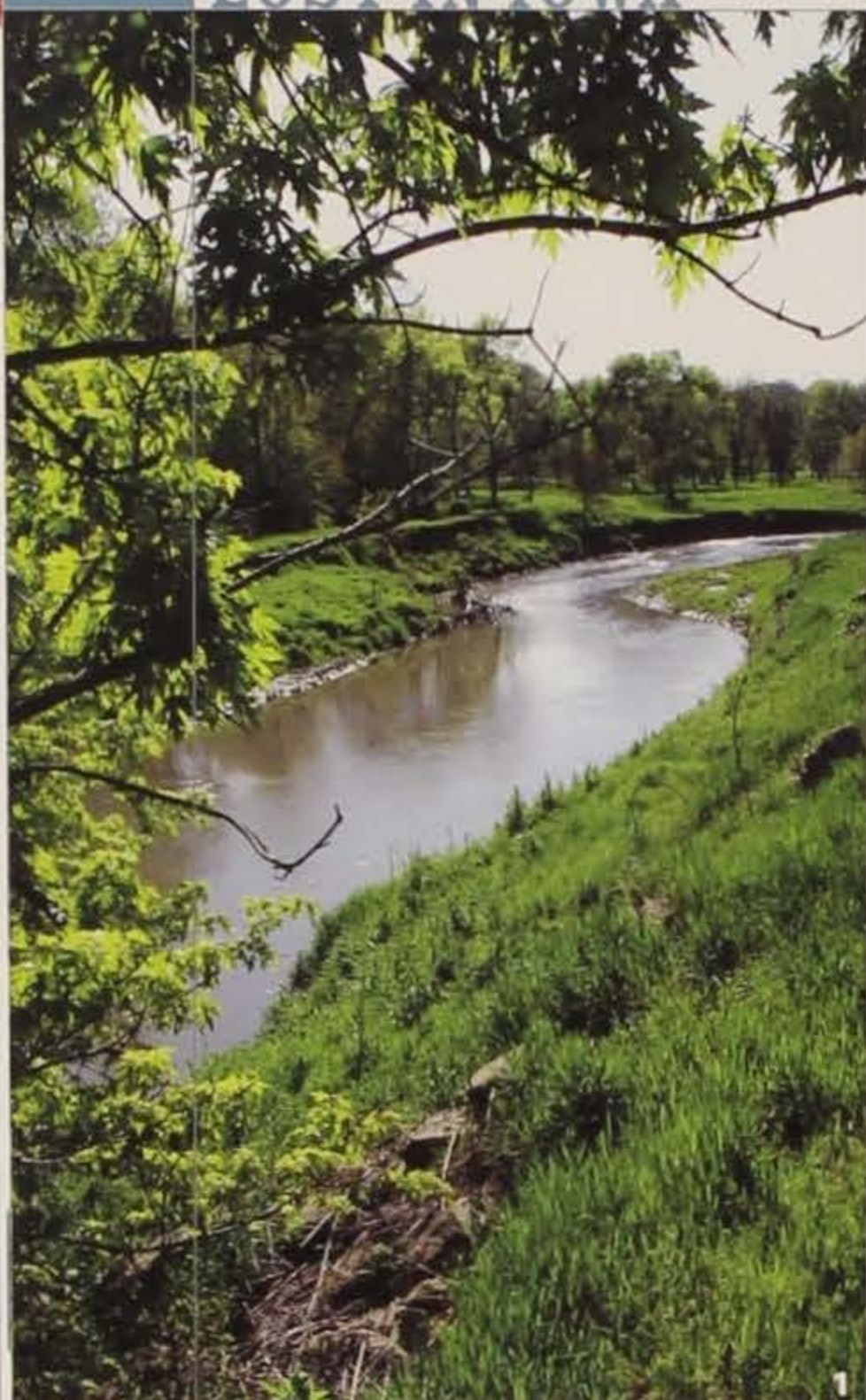
### PRAIRIE VIEWS

In Iowa's late summer, the forbes are on fire. Grasses are heading out. Nature's mood is purple and gold.

Just to the east of Panora, tiny Greenwood Cemetery is bordered on the south by a small chunk of native land. Panora's original settlers platted this land for its dead, and a steep hillside was never any use for a man with a heavy plow.



## LOST IN IOWA



A bit bigger at 3 acres, Bundt Prairie three miles north and a quarter-mile east of Guthrie Center on Nice Avenue is an original native prairie, also unplowed, thanks to its fortune of once hosting a one-room country school.

Along Highway 44, just outside Guthrie Center, walk through the white picket fence of Sheeder Prairie State Preserve to take in nearly 25 acres of untouched land. If you close your eyes, you might capture a distant sense of life a few centuries ago, when 75 percent of our soil was alive with prairie blazing star, compass plant, sunflowers, partridge pea and black-eyed Susan.

"The great black soil we have, we owe all to this," says Hanner, indicating the virgin land. "There's no bad time to visit the prairie, but from the middle of summer to Labor Day Weekend, it really sprouts amazing color and changes weekly."

### THE TRAIL BETWEEN CITY AND COUNTRY

The hard-surface Raccoon River Valley recreational trail links Des Moines metro area bikers and in-line skaters with Guthrie's natural assets. "If you're man or woman enough, you can ride from Jefferson, through Waukee, east into Clive," says Hanner. "Soon you'll be able to go all the way to the (Iowa) Cubs' stadium" at Principal Park.

Canopied by trees, this abandoned railroad-turned-bike trail was developed in 1989 and stretches 56 essentially

flat miles. Mature trees serve as shade and windbreak, giving riders lots of uninterrupted miles. (A note of caution: A few areas north of Panora can be bumpy enough to feel like hitting waves with a speedboat, and a few crossroads have heavy gravel that can be rough on road bikes.) All told, this is a favorite for many cyclists.

"In Panora, there's a wonderful restaurant, Chad's," says avid Des Moines cyclist Deb Wiley. "We'll start early, riding from Waukee, then fill up at Chad's with pancakes, French toast or eggs, and ride back. It's a great way to start a Saturday."

### NATURE AND NURTURE

Iowa's most famous farmers, the Garst family, got their start in Guthrie County, a few miles east of Coon Rapids on Highway 141. Visitors can spend a few hours or days at the famous homestead where Roswell Garst, hybrid seed entrepreneur, invited Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev to tour his farm in 1953.

Read a funny account of the story in the main house library, or just ask granddaughter Liz Garst—she lives on the property. The whole area is now headquarters for Whiterock Conservancy and Resort (formerly Garst Farms Resort, now donated for public use).

The combination working farm/vacation spot is for easygoing travelers who are open to a different





interpretation of the word “resort.” Accommodations are simple farmhouse or cabin structures, some with unusual décor. Campsites are the best deal. At \$8 you can glimpse all Whiterock has to offer—open land, river, fields, woodlands and ponds.

Experts are available by appointment to talk about any number of topics, such as botany, farming or birding—Whiterock and much of northwestern Guthrie County has been designated a state Bird Conservation Area. The 100 million year-old rock formations could turn up dinosaur bones on any given hike. A stargazing field boasts one of the darkest skies in Iowa (and wi-fi access).

“Part of the mission here is to connect people with the environment in a pretty unstructured way,” says Liz Garst.

It’s one of those places where everyone can run free; play in the river, hike trails, fish or schedule hayrack rides. Garst Farms once was known for its full farm breakfasts, but the focus has shifted to conservation and education. That means no more breakfasts.

Whiterock Conservancy and Resort is a work in progress, full of Iowa history and nature-bunny pleasure. But you can get the same at a 920-acre Civillian Conservation Corps-built public area nearby: Springbrook State Park, north of Guthrie Center on 160th Road.

Even if you’re not hiking 12 miles of trails, the turkey, fox and deer will likely make a guest appearance if you

drive through. The 120 campsites lie in a bowl-like valley below the dam of a 17-acre spring-fed lake complete with sandy beach. A basketball court, camp store, horseshoe pit and sand volleyball pit keep everyone entertained if Mother Nature isn’t enough.

But it usually is. Mature trees shade the sites, with a creek running the campground perimeter. Cabins will return next year.

Native American burial mounds rise up in the thick forest. Public hunting grounds ring the park, which holds controlled hunts yearly. But watching the wildlife is the biggest sport.

“Every now and again, I get to see a scarlet tanager,” says park manager Carolyn Hack.

This is a fine resting place in a countrified vacationland, a landscape dotted by black cattle and


**1&2)** Filled with wide-open stretches and narrow scenic passages, the Middle Raccoon River is a magnet for canoers, kayakers and anglers. **3)** Scenic exposures of iron-stained sandstone dot the hill-sides of Guthrie County and Springbrook State Park. The cretaceous rocks were deposited 100 million years ago by a large river system that drained the Appalachian Mountains and flowed to a sea in central Nebraska. **4&5)** The unique divergence of two unique landforms in Guthrie County provide a diverse view of Iowa ecosystems, from prairie remnants to stone-lined creeks and rivers. **6)** Every year thousands of Iowa school children pilgrimage to a unique outdoor classroom, the DNR’s Springbrook Conservation Education Center.



## LOST IN IOWA







The Middle Raccoon River marks the terminus of the Late Wisconsin glacier that advanced into Iowa some 15,000 years ago. Thus, it also is the dividing line for two strikingly different Iowa landforms. Land north of the river is essentially flat, the effects of relatively recent glaciation. To the south marks the upper reaches of the rolling hills of southern Iowa. That union of two landforms makes the Middle Raccoon one of Iowa's most scenic river trails. With a number of good access points along the way, this stretch offers canoeists and kayakers a leisurely get-away-from-it-all atmosphere.



## LOST IN IOWA



corn that rises and falls like piano keys. Here in this region undiscovered by many, the two faces of Iowa show themselves—farm and forest—in shades of brown, green and gold. From a shady campsite under a dark sky, the silence of open space is broken only by flowing water and the heavy sigh of summer wind through bottomland trees. 🌳

### IF YOU GO:

#### WHERE TO EAT OR DRINK:

- **Chad's Restaurant.** Located in the recently restored historic Hotel Panora, Chad's is a solid bet for good coffee and light lunch. The Reuben sandwich has a wide fan following. 204 W. Main St., Panora. **641-755-4554.**
- **Carmen's.** A local favorite for Mexican food. 316 NE 3rd St., Panora. **641-755-2525.**
- **PJ's Drive-In.** Right on the Raccoon River Valley Trail, known for fries and shakes among the bike crowd. 600 E. Main St., Panora. **641-755-4264.**
- **44 Drive-In.** Trail users like "44" for convenience, but the locals will steer you here for ice cream. Highway 44 on the west side of downtown Panora. **641-755-3377.**
- **B & M Tavern.** Short for Bernard and Mildred, who opened this tap in the 1930s. Wet your whistle here, or at Fuzzy's a few doors down. 110 W. Main St., Panora. **641-755-2455.**

#### WHERE TO STAY:

- **Lenon Mill Park.** A little surprise of a park, right in Panora and plopped right next to a dam on the Middle Raccoon, with six RV sites and 10 to 12 campsites. No showers, but all the scenery—that dam sounds a lot like the ocean at night. \$12 sites with electric, \$9 without. Camp free on Thursdays. Guthrie County Conservation Board, 206 W. South St., Panora. **641-755-3061;** [www.guthriecounty.org/gccb](http://www.guthriecounty.org/gccb)
- **Springbrook State Park.** 920 acres and 120 campsites, with a working campstore (firewood, ice, some groceries and other necessities). Wireless internet access within range of campstore. Sites \$6-\$16. 2437 160th Rd., Guthrie Center, **641-747-3591;** [www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov).
- **Nation's Bridge Park.** Five miles north of Stuart on P28, this nicely kept 81-acre park with showers and flush toilets is shaded by mature trees. A mile-long hiking trail through oak and hickory timber is manageable for kids. \$12 sites with electric, \$9 without. Camp free on Thursdays. Guthrie County Conservation Board, 206 W. South St., Panora. **641-755-3061;** [www.guthriecounty.org/gccb](http://www.guthriecounty.org/gccb)
- **Whiterock Conservancy and Resort.** Lodging, camping and nature study. Canoe, inner tube and shuttle services, themed tours, ATV rental, all available at extra cost by





1&2) Several prairie remnants in Guthrie County, including Sheeder and Bundt prairies, offer pristine views of what a large part Iowa used to be. 3,4&5) The southern portion of Guthrie County, recognized as the upper reaches of the rolling hills of southern Iowa, is heavily wooded. The area abounds with wildlife, including deer, red and gray fox, raccoon, beaver, muskrat, wild turkey and river otters. Almost every bird species that visits Iowa can be seen here, like scarlet tanagers (pictured), snow geese, bald eagles, and occasionally, pelicans and ospreys.



arrangement. Rooms in the homestead house \$55-\$105, other cottages from \$140 per night, primitive river cabin \$60 per night. Whiterock Conservancy, 1390 Hwy. 141, Coon Rapids; <http://whiterockconservancy.org>.

#### WHAT TO DO:

- **Canoe the Middle Raccoon River.** Use an outfitter in Redfield (offering canoe/kayak/trailer rentals for \$15-\$20, or just use the \$7-\$10 shuttle service—Raccoon River Retreats, 711 Bridge St., 515-833-2636), or go it alone (for directions to river accesses: [www.guthriecountytourism.com/Things\\_to\\_do.htm](http://www.guthriecountytourism.com/Things_to_do.htm)). It's a nice float either way, with lots of trees and sandbars. With questions about river wildlife and access, contact Guthrie County's amicable natural resources manager Brad Halterman: 641-755-3061.
- **Prairie watching.** July and August are peak times for color. Greenwood Cemetery Prairie, Bundt Prairie, Guthrie County Conservation Board, 206 W. South St., Panora. 641-755-3061; [www.guthriecounty.org/gccb](http://www.guthriecounty.org/gccb). Sheeder Prairie State Preserve, [www.iowadnr.com/preserves/index.html](http://www.iowadnr.com/preserves/index.html).
- **Nature hiking.** Twelve miles of trails in Springbrook State Recreation Area for wildlife. The 55-acre wildlife refuge of Sutcliffe Woodland, with a stocked fishing pond, and a self-guided interpreted trail past native shrubs,

flowers and plants. Seven miles west of Guthrie Center on Highway 44, one mile south of the highway. Guthrie County Conservation Board, 206 W. South St., Panora.

641-755-3061; [www.guthriecounty.org/gccb](http://www.guthriecounty.org/gccb)

- **Fishing the Middle Raccoon.** Anywhere you find the river, smallmouth bass are out there big time in late summer. Try an ultralight spinning outfit for fun, with live bait or artificial lures. You can float the river, or walk stretches where it's shallow. It's nice to head out of Lenon Mill Park, or the Middle Raccoon River Access in Jackson Township, on 248th Trail, just off County Road P28.


- **Riding the Raccoon River Valley Recreational Trail.** 56 miles for biking, hiking or leaf-peeping. \$2/day, \$10/year; [www.raccoonrivervalleytrail.org](http://www.raccoonrivervalleytrail.org).

- **Guthrie County Historical Village.** A sanctuary for endangered buildings, this 4.5-acre complex just south of Panora's town square shows visitors what the county looked like at the turn of the 19th-century, complete with country school, log cabin and caboose. \$2 for adults, \$1 for kids. 206 W. South St., Panora. 641-755-2989; [www.panora.org/museum](http://www.panora.org/museum).

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Guthrie County Tourism; 641-755-2989, [www.guthriecountytourism.com](http://www.guthriecountytourism.com).



A photograph showing a person from behind, wearing a red long-sleeved shirt and a white baseball cap, paddling a canoe on a river. The river is surrounded by dense green trees, and the water reflects the surrounding foliage. The person is holding a yellow paddle.

Unlike the much wider nearby Cedar River, the Wapsipinicon treats paddlers on hot summer days to refreshing shady stretches. The narrow valley provides visual interest with rocky bluffs, says Krebill. Here, writer Sam Samuels paddles in shade to escape triple digit heat indices upstream from Stone City. "It was a pleasant thing to do on a warm summer day. People were swimming, playing with their dogs and fishing to escape the heat. Whole families, teenagers and others made use of the river that day. It was a heavily used section. We were also in parts wild with eagles. There was no one around. It was a great feeling...a feeling that you were in the wilderness," says Krebill.





# Foraging Wild Iowa

BY SAM HOOPER SAMUELS

A Vermonter and wild food expert spend a Wapsipinicon weekend living off the land in Grant Wood Country.

"I think the prudent thing is to take care of the body first," says Mike Krebill as we empty a seemingly bottomless vanload of food, cooking gear, camping equipment, and bottle after bottle of drinking water from the back of his white Plymouth Voyager, supplies for our weekend canoe trip down the Wapsipinicon River.

For the next two days I will paddle hard, learn much, sweat quarts, and eat strangely but very, very well. Krebill, my guide, my teacher, and my cook for the trip, is a forager. He likes to find his meals in the woods or on a river. Every dish we share this weekend will consist in whole or in part of foods plucked from the Iowa wild.

Take care of the body. Clearly Krebill takes excellent care of his own. He needs no help to lift the canoe off the top of the car and right it on the ground. Lean and strong, he seems to be just limbering up for paddling in 110-degree heat indexes the 17 miles to Stone City by tomorrow evening. Under a baseball cap, his close-cropped hair is steely grey, his jaw line firm. His shoes are sturdy but with

lots of holes to let out water after the inevitable wade. "May the Forest Be With You," says his tee shirt. He turns 64 in a few weeks. I've just turned 46 and am already feeling phantom muscle soreness in anticipation of the paddling ahead.

Searching my childhood memories, I can recall the craggy face of Euell Gibbons, the Texas-born author of *Stalking the Wild Asparagus*, in television commercials for Grape Nuts cereal. "Did you know that many parts of a pine tree are edible?" Gibbons would ask, nibbling the crunchy nuggets straight from his hand. He passed away in 1975 but left behind a generation of disciples curious to feast on acorns and cattail rhizomes, a small but enthusiastic wild-food foraging subculture of which Krebill is a leader. On Gibbons's death, the National Wild Foods Association began inducting members into its Hall of Fame. One of this year's inductees was Krebill.

Krebill owns close to 200 books on wild edibles. In his 40 years as a naturalist and forager, he's led more than 2,100 nature walks. An award winning seventh grade science teacher in Keokuk and former Michigan Teacher of the Year, Krebill has trained more than 300 teachers in

Mike Krebill





outdoor lore. He can start a fire by friction in seven seconds. The record is six and a half. His BABWA bread (Banana, Acorn, Black Walnut, Apple) once took first prize in a national wild foods contest. There's a loaf in our cooler.

Traveling with Krebill, you're never far from "a nice nibble."

By the side of the road, he picks through a nondescript patch of tall weeds like a shopper surveying the produce section. After a minute, he emerges with a handful of spindly seed heads, which he breaks open to release the pungent odor of garlic mustard seeds. In his other hand is a bouquet of lilac-colored flowers with tubular petals and pointed leaves.

"Crush those leaves and smell your fingers," he says. "What does that remind you of?"

There's no mistaking the scent of oregano. This is a prairie plant with many names, including horse mint and bee balm. According to Krebill it's a wild relative of oregano, and it makes a fairly drinkable cup of tea.

"I was thinking of some of these to accouter the fish," Krebill says, "should we be so fortunate."

Amazingly, Krebill himself has no sense of smell. He lost it to an illness. Maybe that's why he enjoys carpeting his palette with so many varied flavors.

"These are white mulberries," Krebill points out growing from a tree near the boat ramp. They look like ghosts of blackberries, with a mild sweetness and a soft, almost starchy texture. While Krebill ties the last bits of camping gear down to the canoe's thwarts, I stand at the tree plucking berries and jamming them into my mouth like a bear taking on calories.

The boat is ready. Krebill takes the stern, I take the bow, and we set out to find our dinner. For a novice angler like me, Krebill has brought along his classic Zebco Model 33 reel, a nearly indestructible old workhorse that's easy to learn on. With a little expert coaching, by midday I'm placing my lure right where I want it about two-thirds of the time, sneaking it under low-hanging branches into promising pools.

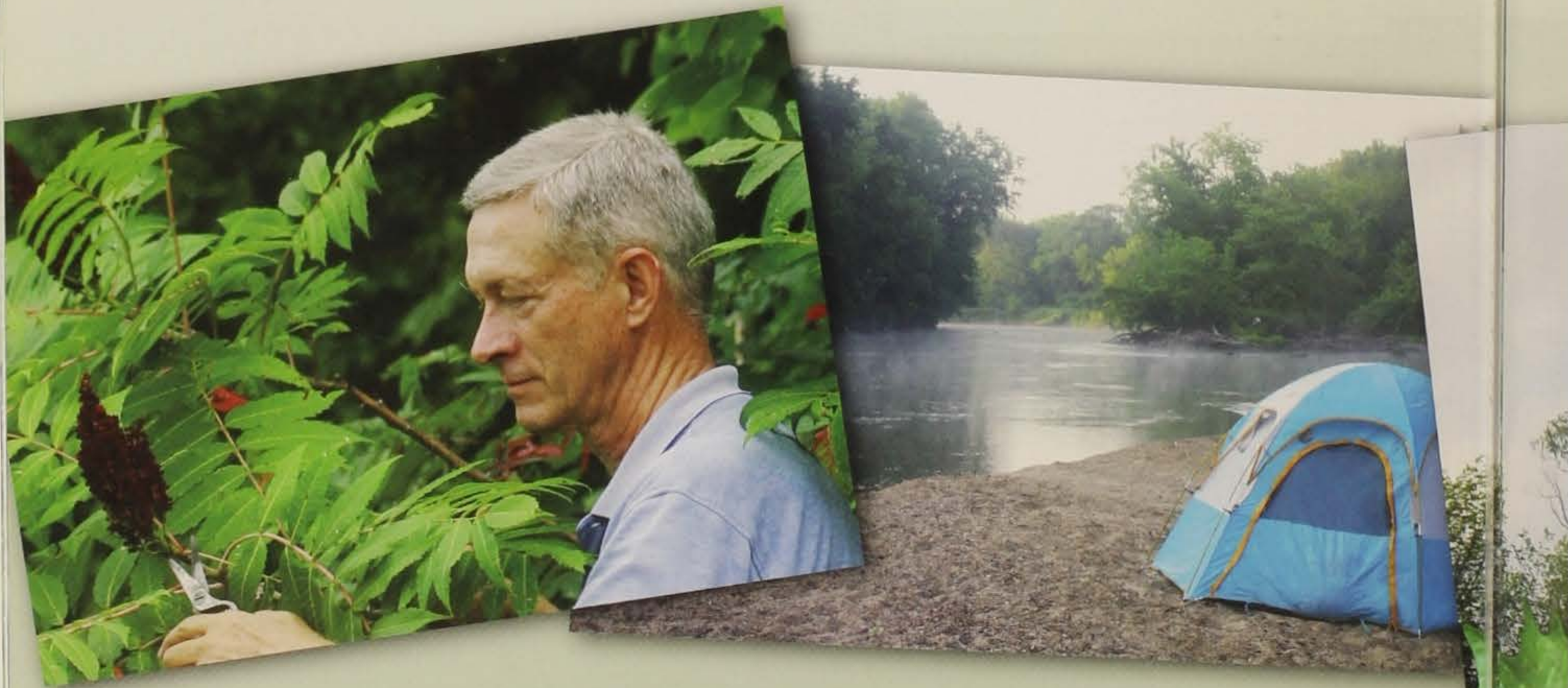
Well, it's nearly indestructible. After a few hours I've managed to jam the Model 33 irretrievably. We drift for a while as Krebill dismantles and tries to fix it. To preserve our fishing time, he decides to fix it later at home and hands me one of the spare rods he's brought for just this occasion.

"We're not going to let one problem dampen our enthusiasm," he says. "You always have to have a plan B." This, I will learn, is one of Krebill's great maxims. As the weekend progresses, there are few situations for which he hasn't prepared in advance, few setbacks for which he hasn't got a contingency plan.

We fish the morning away, sharing the river with feathered competitors. Kingfishers dart across the river. A great blue heron lifts from its sand bar and with a few flaps of its great wings ascends to a treetop several hundred feet down the river.

Time for lunch. We drag the canoe up onto a likely sand bar and unpack my first foraged meal.

More of a practical man than a purist, Krebill has gathered and prepared some of the food with his own two hands, but allowed some store-bought foods onto the menu



Krebill snips dark red fruiting heads of smooth sumac to prepare thirst-quenching sumac lemonade. In research this year, Krebill's Keokuk 7th grade students found the sourest berries make the best beverage. **RIGHT:** Early morning mist swirls over the Wapsi. Safety is essential as rivers can rise quickly with heavy rains. To prevent sand from entering the tent and food, Krebill uses a large tarp on sandbars and removing shoes before entering the makeshift food prep area or tent.



provided they can arguably be called "wild." Our main course is summer sausage made with Iowa buffalo meat, yielding a distinctly less fatty sausage than I'm used to.

Hazelnuts figure prominently in this lunch. Roasted, they're mixed into a high-energy gorp along with other nuts and bits of chocolate. But I find myself more partial to the raw hazelnuts. These were a last-minute find, something Krebill spotted growing on a bush on his way from somewhere to somewhere else. Each raw hazelnut looks like a tight little rose. With some effort, I peel the stiff outer leaves away to reveal the nut itself, a whitish-green nugget in a shell just soft enough for me to crush and remove with my fingers. Its nutty flavor is subtler than the roasted ones. Not crackly like a peanut, it's more crunchy like the core of a raw broccoli stem, a moist, yielding hardness.

We wash all this down with sumac lemonade, a clear red concoction that contains sumac but no lemon. I know sumac as a pervasive, weedy tree that is the bane of prairie preservationists. I've seen its dark, purplish-red berry clusters, looking like miniature Christmas trees growing at the end of each branch. But I've never experienced the refreshing sourness they contain, which Krebill has extracted by steeping them in boiling water in a cheesecloth pouch, a technique he calls the "giant teabag method." (Later at home, I'll spend the next three weekends gathering these clusters with my 8-year-old son and making sumac lemonade, which we bottle and pack in our lunches for school and work.)

No lunch is complete without dessert. Ours ends with shagbark snickerdoodles, a classic cookie recipe that Krebill has doctored by the addition of shagbark hickory nuts. For a final cool-down, he produces an ice-cube tray of wild grape popsicles.

"The summer grape is ripe now," Krebill says. All around us, he points out trees dripping with grape vines that escaped my notice before. "But it has an aftertaste from the calcium tartrate crystals inside it."

I'm beginning to see why he won that teaching award. Practically each moment is another chance to share knowledge. In his company, the landscape that seemed before to be merely pretty now takes on definition and purpose. To rid our popsicles of the offending tartrate, Krebill explains, he simmered the grapes for 20 minutes, strained them, then sugared and froze the resulting purple liquor.

"It might not be home free, but there will be less tartrate," he says. Under the day's intense heat, even in a sealed cooler our popsicles have turned into wild grape slushies. We adapt. Eaten with a spoon instead of on a stick, they're still cold and bracingly sour. Without, as far as I can tell, a tartrate crystal in sight.

Back on the river, we return to the business of casting for our supper. By about 3:00, we have sighted our first bald eagle but still have no fish.

Not every plant is good for eating. Some are good for other things, and others should be avoided. Every stretch of the varied riparian corridor offers some plant with a

**LEFT:** Treetop heron skitters downstream all day in advance of paddlers. Garlic mustard, below left, offers natural herb flavoring to food. **RIGHT:** Grant Wood's famed Stone City.









different use or hazard to Krebill's studied eye. There's mullein, a tall, spiky plant with fuzzy leaves and yellow flowers that the Indians used to cure asthma, and which is still used by herbalists as a treatment for respiratory ailments. There's stinging nettle with its coating of fine hairs, each a hypodermic needle filled with a strong irritant. There's Indian dogbane, also known as Indian hemp because its outer peel produces a tough, sinewy fiber the Indians twined together for cordage and fishing lines. We pull the canoe to the bank, and Krebill harvests a few stems to show me how it's done. Using only his hands, he produces a short length of braided cord too tough for me to snap. Through the breaks in its skin, the plant oozes a milky white sap. Our hands are sticky with the stuff.

Our friend the blue heron keeps just ahead of us, playing an all-day game of keep away. Each time we get close, it takes off and disappears down river.

By 4:30, I wonder what plan B is in the event of no fish. Then Krebill's bobber dips into the water. A minute later, he's using his needle-nose pliers to extract the hook from the mouth of a 14-inch channel catfish. Working cautiously, he grips the fish with his thumb and fingers tucked behind its pectoral fins, pressing his palm against the dorsal fin to keep it flattened to avoid the sharp, venomous spines. I lift the cooler lid, Krebill tosses the fish in, and down goes the lid.

I never catch a thing. Krebill catches two more channel cats. Fish for dinner.

## From where we sit, it's hard to believe that this river is really a narrow ribbon of wilderness snaking through the expanse of Iowa's cultivated farm fields.

By now I'm ready for it. Krebill has been filling me with calories steadily all day, but the river seems to suck them out of me even faster. He knows of a fine sandbar around mile 10 to set up camp. It seems never to arrive.

The last time I canoed this distance was as a Boy Scout about 30 years ago. There's a section of deltoid muscle, right along the front edge of each shoulder, that is killing me. It's the part in charge of pulling the paddle up and out of the water at the end of each stroke. Krebill has been letting me choose when we switch sides with our paddles. For the past hour or so, I've been switching sides every few minutes, letting that muscle have a rest and giving the good arm a turn.

Now there is no more good arm. No good leg either, just two cramped Slinkies that may or may not bear my weight if I ever give them a chance on dry land again.

Finally the sandbar arrives. Wide and flat, it's a fine spot for a meal and to spend the night. But there is work to do before we can have that dinner.

"If we don't do it," Krebill says, "it probably won't get done." From the kitchen gear, he extracts a prized

filleting knife in an ornately-stamped leather sheath. He's fashioned a lightweight, flexible cutting board from two sheets of textured plastic stapled together. Kneeling in the sand, he chooses a fish.

"Look at this," he says, pointing to the underside of the fish's chin. "It's a leach." Alongside the cat's fleshy barbels is what looks like an extra whisker, only shorter and darker. We are not the first to get a meal from this particular catfish. Unperturbed, Krebill coaxes the meat from the bones in large, clean fillets.

"One time as I was doing this," Krebill says, "I dropped a fish head and bones on the sand. A bald eagle dropped down next to me and carried it off." Today, he dumps the carcasses far from camp for some scavenging animal to make a meal of.

Meanwhile, I've been playing sous-chef, shredding wild oregano leaves, hauling dishwater up from the river, and assembling the requisite pots, pans, and utensils. Rummaging through the foods Krebill packed, I come across a shiny foil package.

"What's this?" I ask.

"That," Krebill says, "is insurance."

It's a vacuum-packed, mass-produced envelope of precooked grocery-store white meat chicken, which thankfully we do not open. Plan B. Take care of the body.

Stretching our legs out on the tarp that is our dining room, we dig in. The catfish, coated with a breadcrumb crust, pan fried, and sprinkled with our aromatic roadside oregano, is as moist and flaky as only a fish that was

cruising the river two hours ago can be. Krebill's BABWA bread marries the sweetness of standard banana bread with the strong woodsy flavor of ground walnuts and acorns. For our greens, we've par-boiled a mess of arrowhead leaves, slightly spinachy but with a firm texture.

The biggest surprise to my tongue is lightly boiled milkweed pods. I've seen these in the wild in their mature state, dried out and bursting with feathery seeds. These are younger, green and tender. Their outer skin bristles with soft, pointy spines that tickle my tongue. When I break one open in my mouth, the inside is filled with mild-flavored seeds, each the size of a tiny caviar egg.

From where we sit, it's hard to believe that this river is really a narrow ribbon of wilderness snaking through the expanse of Iowa's cultivated farm fields. Our Iowa, the one Krebill and I are experiencing today, seems the polar opposite of the Iowa just outside our view, just beyond the river's wild edge. The fields beyond the trees here are the picture of efficiency in food production: managed, mechanized, uniform. But our Iowa, the Wapsi with its endless surprises and flavors, is a diverse culinary mess.





As I'm learning, it is an enormous job to extract a day's food from it, and the rewards are great but unpredictable.

"Foraging takes an immense amount of time," Krebill says. I can only guess how many hours it took him to gather the ingredients for today's meals. The hickory nuts alone are tremendously laborious to crack.

"People who lived by foraging did it in all their waking hours," Krebill muses. "For each food, they had to ask themselves, 'Was it worth the effort?'"

My answer, as I wrap myself around a spoonful of chocolate mousse improved by wild black raspberries and wash it down with a swig of wild mint tea leaves, is yes.

That night, lying on a thin inflatable pad on the hard sand, I look up at the stars through the screens of our tent and listen to the distinctive call of a barred owl: "Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you—all?"

The next morning, fortified by a breakfast of wild rice and hickory nuts drenched in maple syrup, we get back on the water to find trouble.

A few weeks ago, Krebill canoed this same stretch of the Wapsi and encountered a tangle of fallen trees in the river between our campsite and where we will stop for lunch. Since then it's gotten much worse. Up to now, we've had to skirt around the occasional fallen tree or slip through a gap between two messes of branches. This

time, there is no between, just branches.

Our first attempt is to hug the left bank. It's a dead end. Back-paddling hard against the current, we back out by a few yards. We each grab a branch of a fallen tree and hang on. Temporarily anchored, we stop to study the river. Krebill considers our options, searching for plan B.

"In some situations, we would portage here," Krebill says. The problem is the topography. The river bank is high and steep, hollowed out by water to form a bluff that overhangs the river. One of us would have to climb up this dirt wall and stand at the top while the other passed each item up to him. I picture myself holding that heavy canvas rucksack over my head while standing in the canoe. Somehow this mental movie always ends with the canoe upside-down and me and all that equipment in the river.

There may be better places to unload up river. The current here is fairly fast, so to do that we would have to paddle hard for some distance against it. We'd also have a much further distance to carry all that equipment over land.

Looking at the tangled trees, Krebill analyzes them in search of a path. To paddle through this mess, we would have to go back into the same cul de sac we just backed out of, then turn hard right and paddle across the river and upstream through a narrow corridor that zigzags between two fallen trees. This seems promising, but dangerous. It could pin us sideways against the tree trunk.

That's plans A, B, and C, none terribly appealing. Slowly, a fourth begins to occur to Krebill. This is what we do.



Writer Sam Samuels seeks relief from 110-degree heat indexes near the Matsell Road Bridge. Trees and limbs are lodged under bridge girders and cables, testimony to high, powerful floods. Above, arrowhead grows in shallow ponds and marshes, but none were found along the 17-mile trip due to scouring floodwaters. Krebill prepacked arrowhead and cattail for the voyage. Peeled and used like potatoes, arrowhead tubers are worked loose by wading and using the feet or a long-handled tool. Tubers float upon release for easy harvest.



We make our way slowly back into the cul de sac, but do not turn. Instead, we pull in our paddles and Krebill grabs the branches of the upstream tree. Hand over hand, Krebill monkey-bars along the branches, moving us slowly across the current until we reach the gap ahead. My role in this maneuver is to record it for the public.

At last, we reach a narrow gap in the downstream side of this labyrinth, nose into it, and pause for a moment before tackling the last hard run to open water.

Behind us is one danger narrowly avoided. Just ahead is another. Krebill is still hanging on to a tree to keep us from being swept forward and possibly smashed against a gnarled mess of lumber. Maybe it's not the final assault on Everest, but by my standards this qualifies as a breather in the middle of a dicey situation.

"This is an edible plant," Krebill says, noticing something creeping on the dead tree to which he's clinging for our two dear lives.

At this moment, I recognize a quality in Krebill's speech reminiscent of the voice of an airline pilot coming over the public address system. It's that slow, measured tone that throws a gentle blanket of calm over every situation, the kind of voice that never loses its don't-worry-this-happens-to-me-all-the-time confidence, regardless of whether it's telling you (a) that the flight attendant will be by shortly with the beverage cart or (b) that this might be an opportune moment to strap on your parachute. Somehow I know it's all going to come out all right.

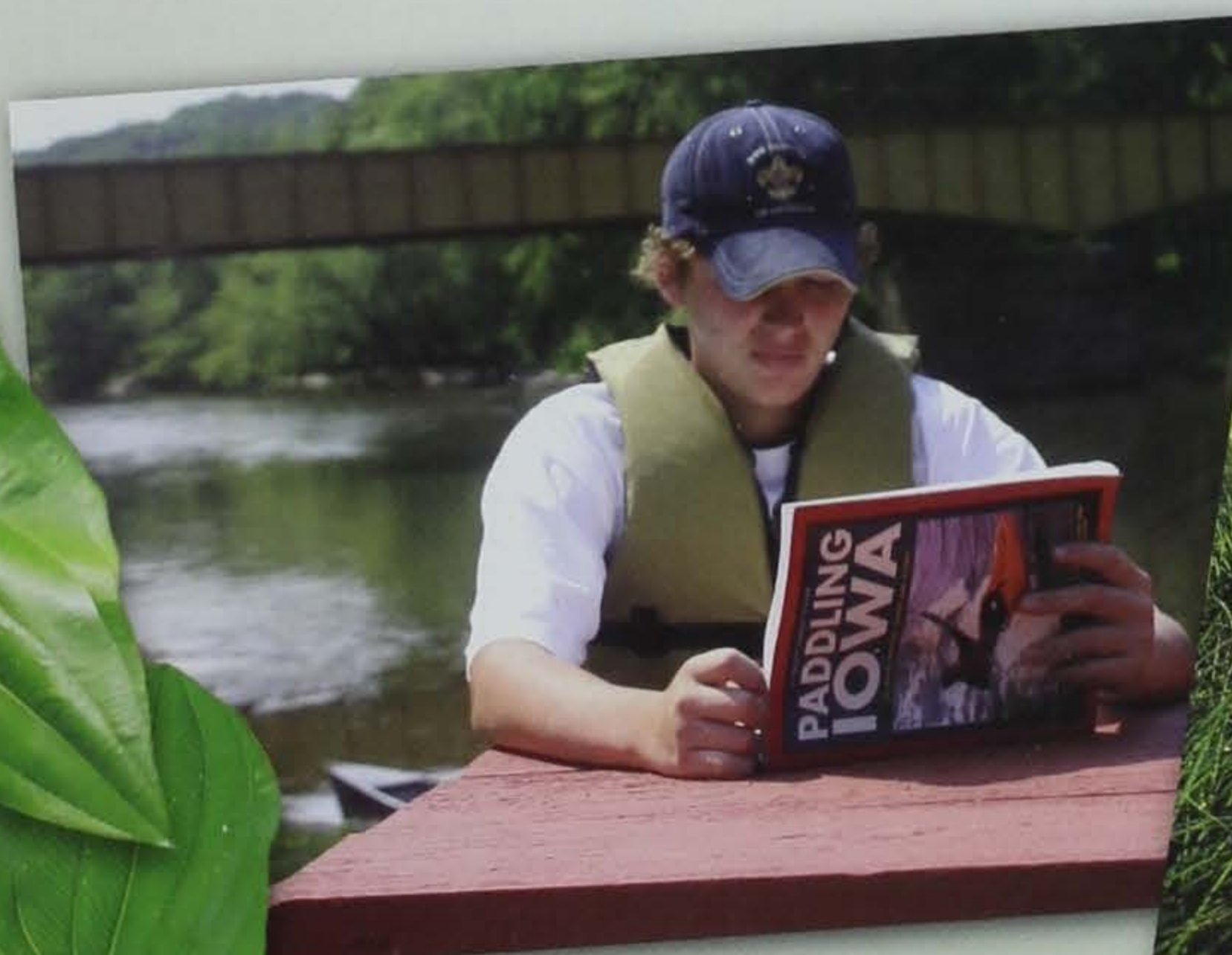
"It's a ground cherry," Krebill says, "very much like a tomatillo. They're poisonous if they're not ripe, which unfortunately these are not. Otherwise this would be a nice pleasant nibble."

Krebill lets go of the tree, releasing us into the current. We paddle as hard to the left as we can and just make it around that last tangle of branches, home free. After that, it's nothing but wild blackberries and smoked venison jerky all the way to Stone City.

At the end of our trip, after the gear is stowed and we're back to civilization, Krebill has offered to provide me with one more dinner, this time at a real restaurant. I scan the menu. Chicken. Pork. Beef. I contemplate ordering milkweed pods, just to see how our cheery waitress will react, but think better of it. We both order the Wiener schnitzel. It is unobjectionable.

A few days later, I'm home in Vermont, on my way from somewhere to somewhere else, I notice for the first time a broad-leaved vine inching along the edge of a cement porch I pass almost every day: wild grape. I find a nice, reddish Y-shaped tendril and, just like Krebill showed me, tear it off and chew it, releasing a burst of sour flavor that makes my salivary glands gush.

At the back of my mind, I can almost hear a slow, quiet voice saying, "That's a nice thirst quencher." 🐻



Keokuk sophomore Adam White, a senior patrol leader with Boy Scout Troop 43, studies on an exploratory trip with foraging expert and science teacher Mike Krebill before Krebill and writer Sam Samuels paddled the river weeks later. **RIGHT:** Mullein, an herb used to treat cough, sore throat and asthma symptoms.





# Hookin' Hot Summer Cats

## Simple tips for catching Ol' Whiskers

BY MICK KLEMESRUD PHOTO BY CLAY SMITH

*In the hazy heat of summer, channel catfish are generally the most active and accessible game fish in Iowa lakes and streams. And one of the most popular.*

### THE MENU

In streams, soft, sticky prepared cheese baits on sponges or devil worms are top producers. Use the smallest slip sinker possible to hold the offering in place, a longer rod and 8-pound test line. A snap swivel makes changing sponges or devil worms fast and keeps the slip sinker off the bait.

In lakes, prepared baits, chicken liver, frogs or live minnows or chubs are great cat food. Live bait is preferred by anglers prowling for big lake cats.

### FINDING THE CAT LAIR

In streams, look for eddies, fallen trees or brush piles, below riffles or the outside bends of rivers, where the water is deeper. Avoid inside bends, especially near sandbars. You don't need to throw the bait to the middle of the stream; give it a short toss and let the current take it to a resting place.

If there's no nibble in 15 minutes, it's time to move. Also try below navigation and wing dams on the Mississippi River.

Lakes stratify, or form layers, this time of year, with cool, oxygen-deprived waters sinking to the bottom. Therefore, do not fish in water deeper than 8 to 10 feet. Target areas with vegetation. Fish the upper ends of the larger reservoirs where the water is shallow.

### CATS PLAY ALL DAY

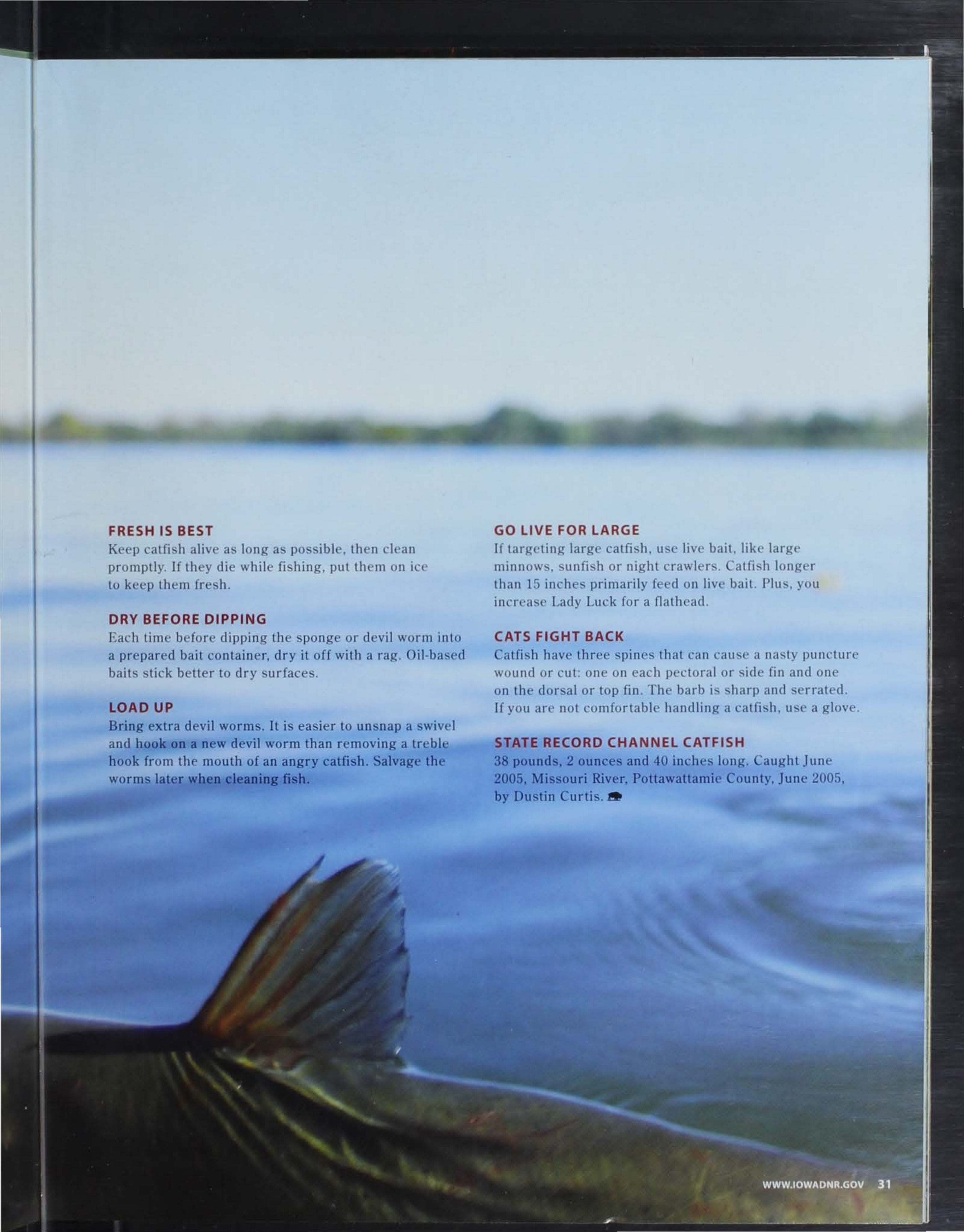
The July-August catfish bite is all day. Even during the hottest mid-day period, cats feed. It is easier on the angler to fish the cooler mornings or evenings.

### LIMITS

Stream: 15 catfish daily, 30 possession

Lake: 8 catfish daily, 16 possession





### **FRESH IS BEST**

Keep catfish alive as long as possible, then clean promptly. If they die while fishing, put them on ice to keep them fresh.

### **DRY BEFORE DIPPING**

Each time before dipping the sponge or devil worm into a prepared bait container, dry it off with a rag. Oil-based baits stick better to dry surfaces.

### **LOAD UP**

Bring extra devil worms. It is easier to unsnap a swivel and hook on a new devil worm than removing a treble hook from the mouth of an angry catfish. Salvage the worms later when cleaning fish.

### **GO LIVE FOR LARGE**

If targeting large catfish, use live bait, like large minnows, sunfish or night crawlers. Catfish longer than 15 inches primarily feed on live bait. Plus, you increase Lady Luck for a flathead.

### **CATS FIGHT BACK**

Catfish have three spines that can cause a nasty puncture wound or cut: one on each pectoral or side fin and one on the dorsal or top fin. The barb is sharp and serrated. If you are not comfortable handling a catfish, use a glove.

### **STATE RECORD CHANNEL CATFISH**

38 pounds, 2 ounces and 40 inches long. Caught June 2005, Missouri River, Pottawattamie County, June 2005, by Dustin Curtis. 🐟

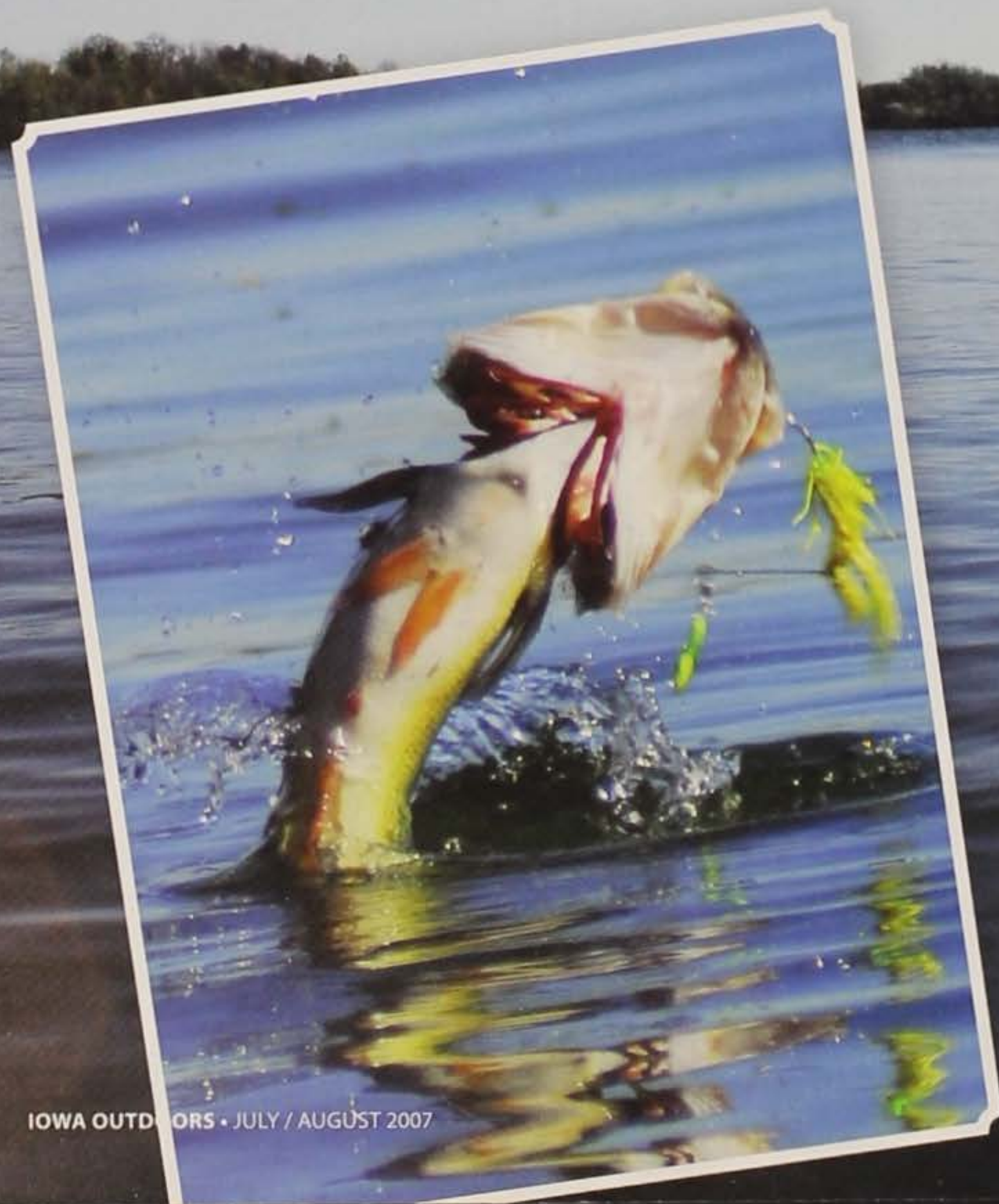


FISHING



*forecast*  
2007

SUMMER







Part  
3 of 3

# LAZY Days of Summer

Heat doesn't mean fishing defeat,  
just a changed game plan.

BY MICK KLEMESRUD PHOTOS BY CLAY SMITH

**T**he annual ice-out buffet has long been cleared, the much anticipated spawn is but a distant memory, the sun has set on another fantastic spring fishing season. Now things get a little tricky. Good fishing isn't over, but you may have to work a little harder, and fish a little smarter to fill the livewell.

As summer heat takes hold, anglers need to keep in mind most lakes develop a thermocline—no oxygen below a certain depth, usually between 5 feet to 12 feet below the surface. Fish need oxygen, so angling below the thermocline is futile. Summer is also a good time to explore trout streams with unannounced stockings, such as the Little Turkey, Little Mill, the Maquoketa and others.

Catfish zero in on cheese, stink and blood baits, and bass are glued to areas with cover. Most successful fishing moves to cooler early mornings or evenings. Iowa rivers are channel catfish factories and all southwest Iowa lakes have good catfish populations.

In the Cedar River at Cedar Rapids, fish above and below the dams with shad or night crawlers for channel catfish. Fish from 2 to 6 pounds are available. Use stink bait for 14- to 18-inch channel catfish at Kent Park and stink bait or liver for 2- to 4- pound channel catfish at Union Grove. Lake Darling, Geode and Odessa will have excellent catfishing.

Float the West Fork of the Des Moines, Little Sioux and Big Sioux rivers and fish snag piles. The Iowa River between Alden and Iowa Falls and the Boone River below Webster City offer excellent channel catfish fishing.





## JULY

Channel catfish and drum bite all summer long in Mississippi River pools 12, 13 and 14. Fish side channels, on top of and between wing dams. Use a night crawler for either species, or stink bait for catfish. Fishing success depends upon water levels.

In Mississippi River pools 16 to 19, big log jams with current means an opportunity for flatheads. Use heavy tackle and live bait—bullheads, bluegills or carp. Flatheads will also be around wing dams in the summer.

At Willow Creek, use a night crawler under a bobber, or a top-water lure or rubber worm in evenings for largemouth bass. Volga Lake and Lake Meyer offer good numbers of 14- to 18-inch largemouth, with some up to 20 inches. Use plugs, spinners or plastics near cedar tree piles or standing timber. Location is more important than presentation.

As stream flows clear and water levels stabilize, fish spread out. The Volga, Turkey, Upper Iowa and Cedar rivers have excellent smallmouth bass fishing from riffles to deeper pools, almost any type of habitat in these streams holds fish. Float streams and fish as you go. Use jigs—darker colors with clear water and lighter jigs with stained water. Tip with live bait, or use crankbaits with silver and black or imitation crawdads. There is also a chance to catch rock bass, northern pike, walleyes, crappies or channel catfish. "You might be targeting

smallmouth bass, but you have a chance at a mixed bag," says DNR biologist Bill Kalishek.

Northern pike become predictable in summer heat. Look for cold water springs or where trout streams enter the Upper Mississippi River. A good way to find a spring is to look for clear water when the river is muddy. Pike will look for the coolest water available. If fishing is slow, use a small jig and fish slowly. If fishing for pike during the hot months, be prepared to keep them. These large fish are already under stress from the warm water and do not stand much of a chance for survival after a long battle with an angler. Immediately put them on ice. All pools of the Mississippi River have northern pike, but pools 9 to 14 have better numbers.

Muskie stocking at Clear Lake is paying off with a nice population of 35- to 40-inch fish and a good number over 40 inches. Troll #5 or #7 size or larger crankbaits along Billy's Reef, Gilmores, the north shore, the island and Dodges Point. Muskies will feed near shallow rocky areas holding young fish then drop off to deeper water.

Mississippi River levels are coming down and fish are heading to areas with current—the main river channel, a tail-water with current or a gate or tube. Largemouth bass and bluegills will search for higher oxygen levels and food. Fish eddies off current, behind a log in a side channel, mouths of backwaters or current breaks, rocky











points and the inside edge near the shore of wing dams. Deeper backwaters hold fish, too.

Schools of white bass chase minnows with seagulls following the melee. Watch for seagulls to find bass and head there. White bass and wipers will chase shad at Lake Macbride. Cast a shallow running crankbait into the schools or troll through them for fast action. There are a lot of 17-inch fish available in Macbride, and huge numbers of big white bass at Lake Red Rock and Saylorville. "Talk about a fighting fish," says biologist Paul Sleeper.

Walleyes head to wing dams in July. Fish upstream sides of wing dams. If the river is high, fish closer to shore; if low, fish toward current. Troll with a three-way rig and piece of night crawler. Add a spinner blade to the three-way for an occasional smallmouth. Trolling wing dams is not easy and if you can't troll, anchor and cast to the area.

If the kids are itching to go fishing in July, head to Crawford Creek Lake, just south of Battle Creek, in Ida County. Late afternoon and evening fishing is best. Suspend a piece of night crawler or wax worm on a salt and pepper tube jig 8 to 10 feet down and drift across the lake. The fish are easily marked on a depth finder. This is a popular way to catch bluegills and crappies in southwest Iowa lakes, too. Crawford Creek has brittle naiad, an invasive plant, so be sure to remove any and all vegetation from boats and trailers before leaving.

Fishing for all species is good in Diamond Lake, near Montezuma. Bluegills will be near brush piles.

## AUGUST

In late August, renovated lakes in southwest Iowa should have excellent fishing. Although the fish will not be huge, anglers will find tremendous fishing at Binder Reservoir, Lake Icaria, Lake of Three Fires and Twelve Mile Lake through fall. "Bass, walleyes, bluegills, all of acceptable sizes—these renovated lakes are really going to be something," says biologist Gary Sobotka.

Crappie fishing at Beeds Lake, Upper and Lower Pine lakes and Briggs Woods is consistent drift fishing a 1/32-ounce yellow and white tube jig 4 to 6 feet below the surface. Use 4-pound test line. Lake Belva Deer has good bluegill fishing. The lake will stratify, so fish between 15 and 20 feet deep, just above the thermocline.



Missouri River flatheads are active August through October. Fish around wing dikes, scour holes, on top of submerged dikes or along dike fronts with larger chubs, sunfish or bullheads.

At Lake Wapello, it's time for channel catfish. The number of 7-pound and larger catfish is huge, according to biologist Mark Flammang. Wapello will stratify, so do not fish deeper than 8 to 10 feet. Use stink bait or liver. Catfish will bite at Lake Darling all day, but early and late is the best fishing.

North Twin Lake has a big class of 10- to 12-inch yellow bass. Fish in the shade created by docks, primarily on the east shore, along outside edges of weed lines and either side of the shallow bars. Use a tube jig and cut bait. A little wind will make for better fishing.

Storm Lake has a tremendous channel catfish population. Use 2- to 3-inch crayfish in shallow, rocky areas at Chautauqua when winds blow in to shore. Crush crayfish shells slightly to scent the water. "If you crush the shell, you'll probably catch 50 percent more fish than if you don't," says biologist Lannie Miller. Catfish will be in tight, so fish no further out than 20 yards. Late afternoons to just after sundown has the best fishing. Use the same technique at Frank Starr park on the west shore.

Sudden increases in river flows will trigger a catfish bite at Lake Delhi, the Cedar and its larger tributaries—Beaver Creek, Black Hawk Creek and the West Fork of the Cedar. The Maquoketa below Manchester and the Wapsipinicon rivers are all good for channel catfish.

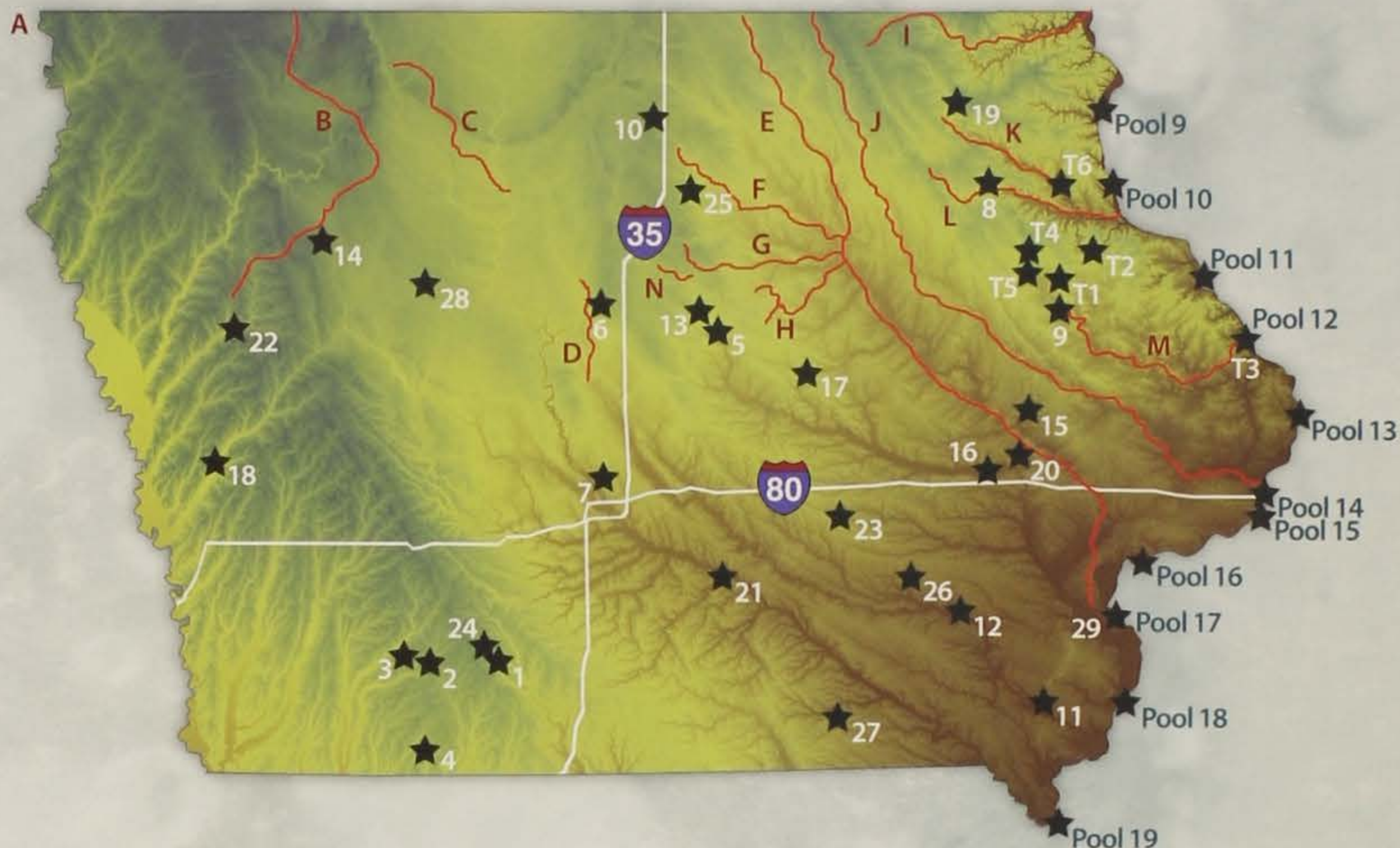
Trout fishing is good at Bailey's Ford, Backbone and the Turkey River below the Big Springs hatchery near Elkader.

Stay tuned to the next issue for the best fall fishing in Iowa. 🐟



# FISHING HOLE FINDER

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- 12) LAKE DARLING
- 13) UPPER PINE LAKE
- 14) STORM LAKE

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- 18) WILLOW CREEK
- 19) LAKE MEYER
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- 22) CRAWFORD CREEK
- 23) DIAMOND LAKE
- 24) TWELVE MILE LAKE
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- 28) NORTH TWIN LAKE
- 29) LAKE ODESSA
- A) BIG SIOUX RIVER
- B) LITTLE SIOUX RIVER
- C) WEST FORK  
DES MOINES RIVER
- D) BOONE RIVER
- E) CEDAR RIVER
- F) WEST FORK CEDAR RIVER
- G) BEAVER CREEK
- H) BLACKHAWK CREEK
- I) UPPER IOWA RIVER
- J) WAPSIPINICON RIVER
- K) TURKEY RIVER

- L) VOLGA RIVER
- M) MAQUOKETA  
(BELOW MANCHESTER)
- N) IOWA RIVER
- TROUT WATERS
- T1) BAILEY'S FORD
- T2) LITTLE TURKEY
- T3) LITTLE MILL
- T4) MAQUOKETA RIVER
- T5) RICHMOND SPRINGS  
(BACKBONE)
- T6) TURKEY RIVER,  
BIG SPRING HATCHERY



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# grazing for prairie


While resting their pastures, cattlemen help restore public grasslands

BY KAREN GRIMES PHOTOS BY CLAY SMITH

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

[WWW.IOWADNR.GOV](http://WWW.IOWADNR.GOV) 39





On this 65-acre pasture on the backside of the Loess Hills State Forest, 44 heifers raise their heads as Ben Anderson drives his small red pick-up into the field. Anderson didn't have to call. Soon these young, half-wild animals run toward the truck, eager to munch on the Purina nuggets he'd brought.

"Bring back the bison" is not the modern mantra. But "bring back the prairie grass" is. And the modern bison is this herd of black Angus heifers, grazing a mixed brome grass and prairie pasture on state forest land in the loess hills.

Once covered with a sea of what residents call "red grass," in pioneer days, the loess hills wore a carpet of little and big bluestem, dotted with colorful patches of prairie forbs. Prairie fires burned encroaching trees, limiting wooded areas. Migrant bison munched prairie grasses and rubbed trunks, destroying even large trees.

Today, many hills have lost their grass cover, sporting a cap of woodlands dominated in places by unwelcome cedar trees. But an innovative effort to restore prairie partners cattle

producers with publicly owned pasture and savannah.

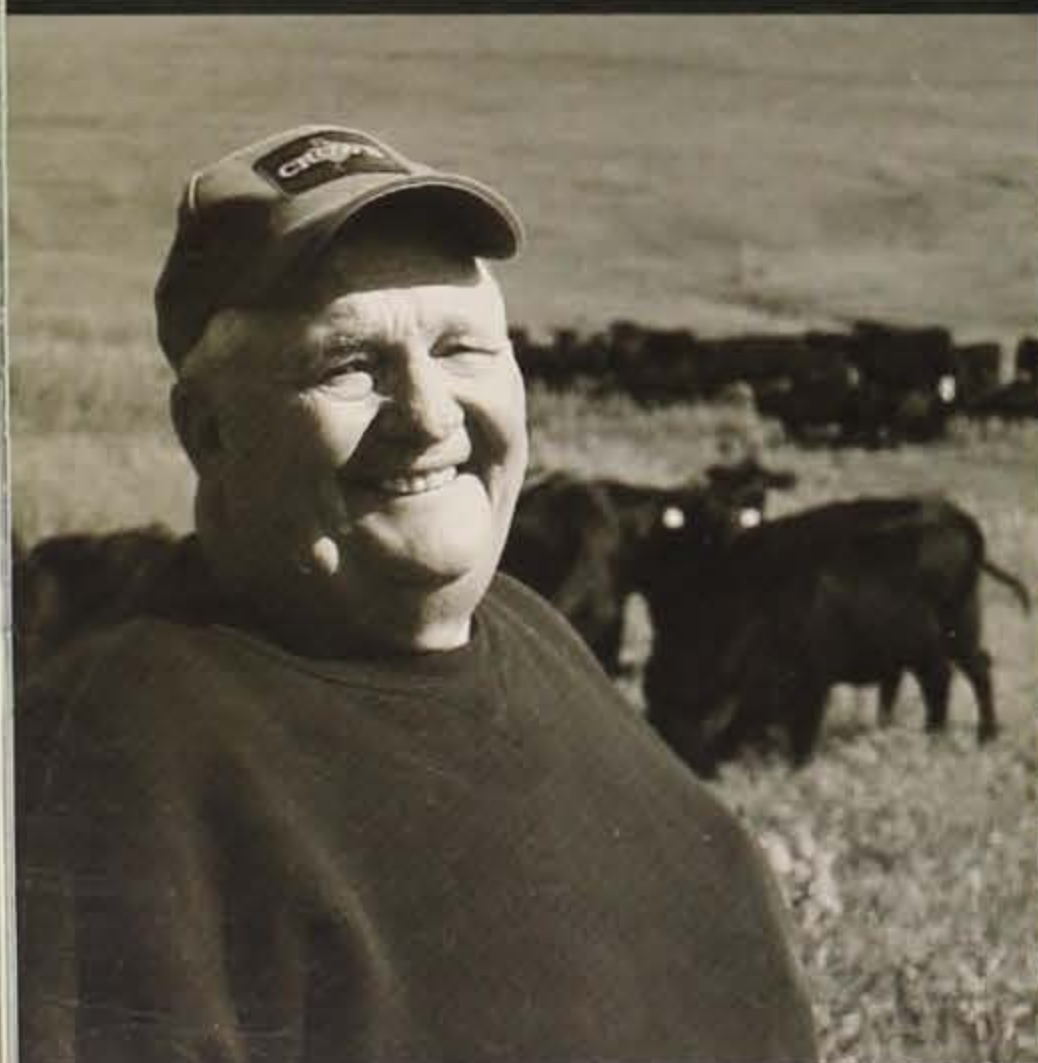
The first partners were Ben Anderson, who owns a cow-calf operation near Pisgah, and the DNR, which provides two pastures near the Pisgah and Little Sioux units of the Loess Hills State Forest. When the Loess Hills Alliance and Agren, Inc., a consulting firm in Carroll, advertised the new Loess Hills Grassbank program in 2006, Anderson was interested in this trade of forage for conservation.

Austin Sewell, a forage specialist from Agren, made a deal requiring Anderson to move cattle to two DNR-owned pastures, provide temporary fencing and water, pay a modest grazing rights fee, and improve his own pasture.

For Anderson, the offer was a lifesaver. Pregnant heifers had calves due in January. After four years of drought, he was feeding hay last July because the brown, dry grass crunched underfoot. Keeping cows there would require reseeding the pasture.

The DNR gains, too, says Kathy Koskovich, a DNR

***"Overgrazing changes pastures to less productive plants and can cause erosion. The Loess Hills Grassbank program is a good example of how to restore prairie grasses and improve the land."***







wildlife biologist who chairs the Loess Hills Alliance Stewardship committee. "We can use timely and intense grazing techniques that can be beneficial to native prairie remnants," she says. "Grazing cattle can add heterogeneity to pasture that is attractive to many species of birds by providing a mix of plant species and heights."

Area Forester Brent Olson has a wait-and-see attitude. "There's definitely potential for the project," but he's concerned thistles may return to sites where they've been removed. And, Olson wants to watch how grass depths, erosion control and timing of the grazing are monitored, and how much the producers improve their grasslands.

Anderson is concerned about overgrazing and erosion, too. He knows the fragile nature of loess, saying that some call them "sugar soils" as they melt away when it rains.

He and Sewell kept the cattle spread out to prevent overgrazing, with feed bunks in the pasture middle and water and mineral blocks at either end.

Sewell pointed out a large, healthy patch of western

ragweed, *ambrosia psilostachya*, which competes better with native tall grasses under grazed conditions. "Did you know that this is the number one quail food in the United States?" he asked. It's also important for other grassland birds.

He and Anderson pointed, too, at the fenceline where healthy sumac appeared across the fence, and only stripped, bare stems appeared in the pasture. Cattle won't usually eat sumac, but they've set back this encroaching species—at least last summer.

Both knew this is the first of a three-year pilot, and their actions would affect the program's success. Anderson said there is no down side for him, but he was concerned about getting the cattle out on time. "I didn't have holding pens established," he said. "And, there's a \$500 penalty per day if they are not out."

Anderson trained his heifers to come when he brought Purina nuggets, so he could take them home on time, where his newly rested pasture would be ready to graze this spring. 🐄

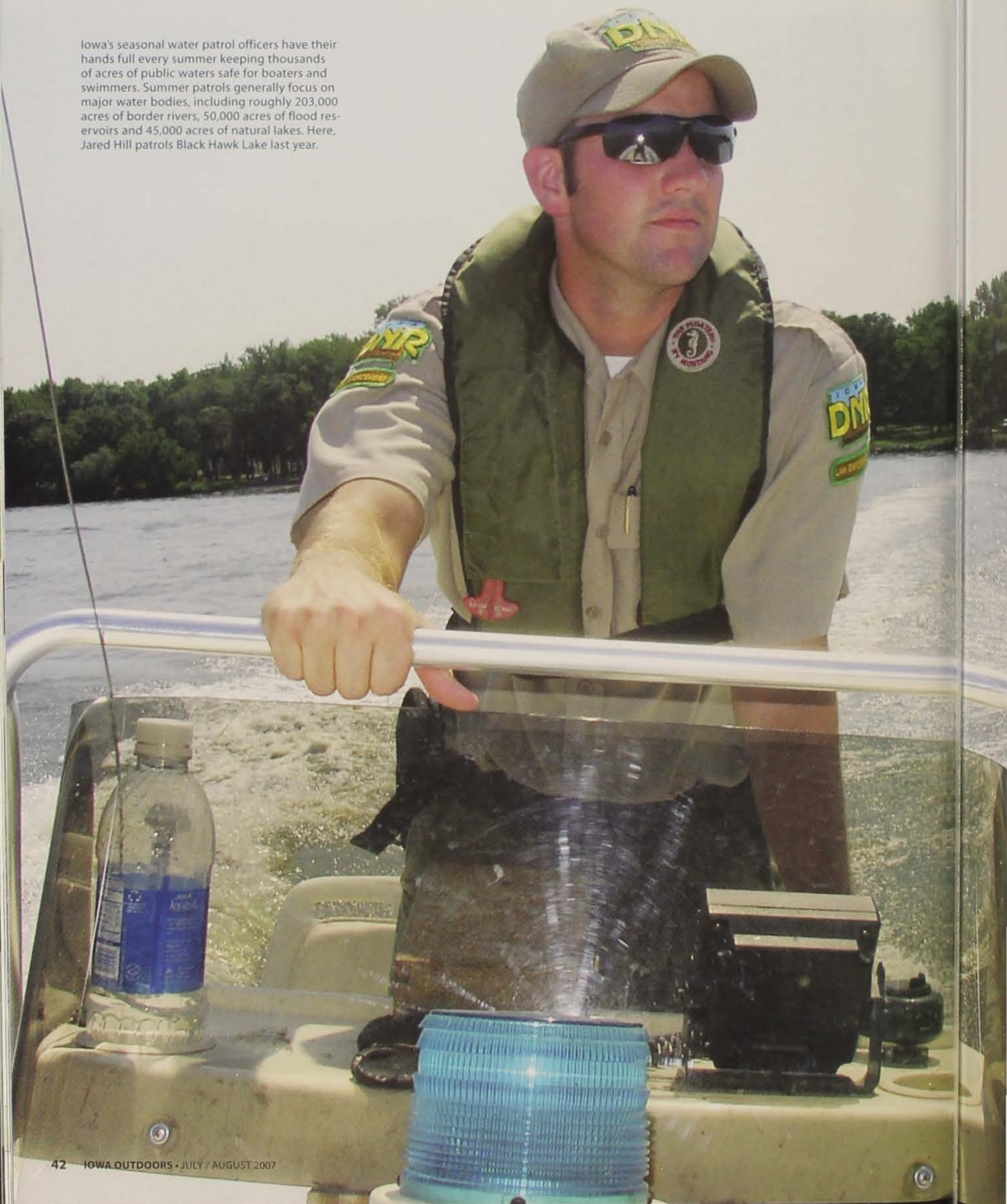
**Loess Hills Grassbank Project is designed to improve both private and public grasslands."**



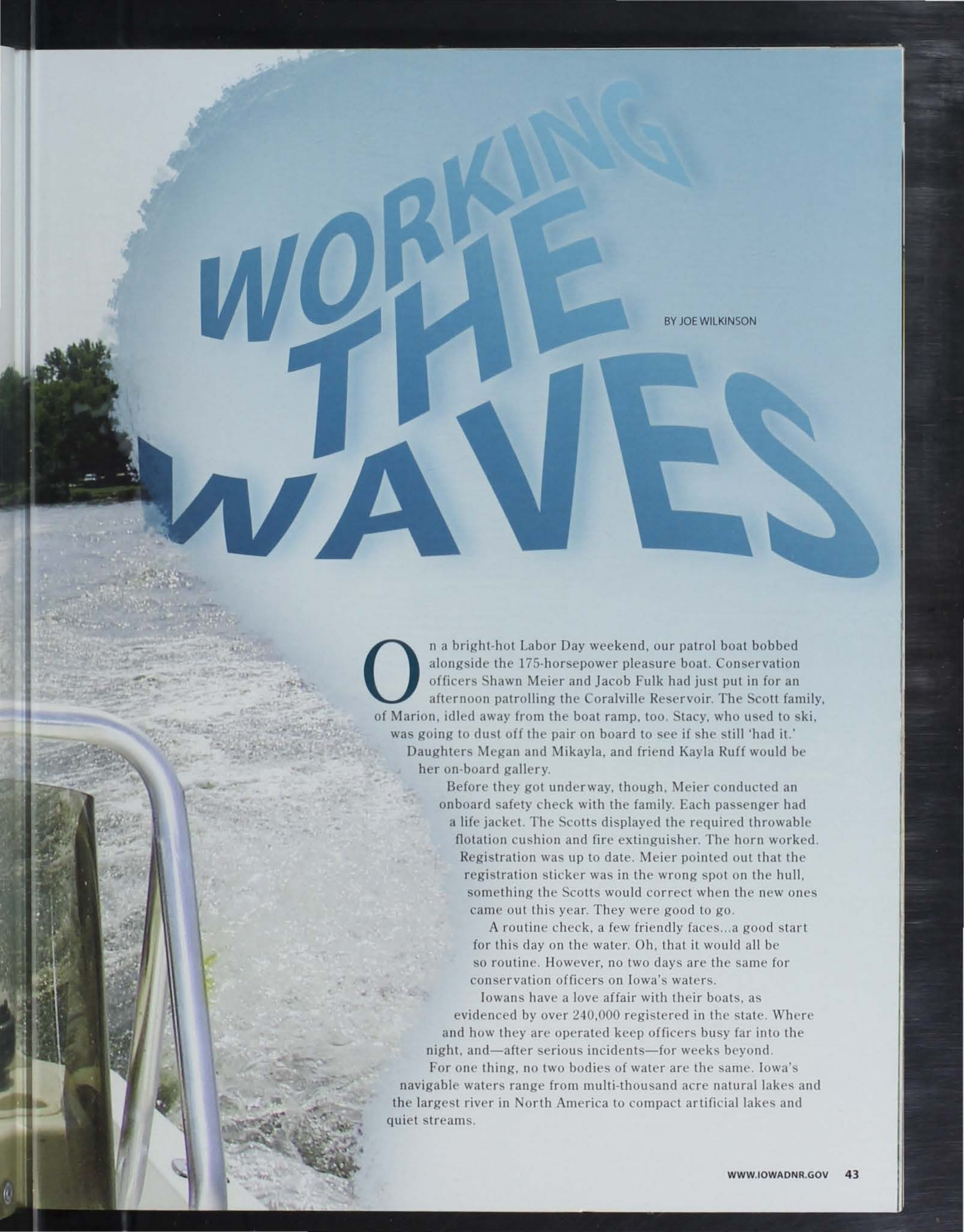
**FROM LEFT:** Producer Ben Anderson was eager to try grassbanking last summer after four years of drought depleted his forage. Anderson was able to improve pasture at home while his black Angus heifers moved to publicly-owned pasture to help keep woody vegetation at bay. Cat steps form on steep slopes as loess soils slip and move downhill. The Loess Hills Grass Bank combines high tech solar-powered electric fences with historic grazing to manage pastureland. Check Agren's web site, [www.agren-inc.com](http://www.agren-inc.com), to join a Pasture Walk in August. Grazed area on the right shows how managed grazing improves grasslands by lessening woody plants.



Iowa's seasonal water patrol officers have their hands full every summer keeping thousands of acres of public waters safe for boaters and swimmers. Summer patrols generally focus on major water bodies, including roughly 203,000 acres of border rivers, 50,000 acres of flood reservoirs and 45,000 acres of natural lakes. Here, Jared Hill patrols Black Hawk Lake last year.







# WORKING THE WAVES

BY JOE WILKINSON

**O**n a bright-hot Labor Day weekend, our patrol boat bobbed alongside the 175-horsepower pleasure boat. Conservation officers Shawn Meier and Jacob Fulk had just put in for an afternoon patrolling the Coralville Reservoir. The Scott family, of Marion, idled away from the boat ramp, too. Stacy, who used to ski, was going to dust off the pair on board to see if she still 'had it.' Daughters Megan and Mikayla, and friend Kayla Ruff would be her on-board gallery.

Before they got underway, though, Meier conducted an onboard safety check with the family. Each passenger had a life jacket. The Scotts displayed the required throwable flotation cushion and fire extinguisher. The horn worked. Registration was up to date. Meier pointed out that the registration sticker was in the wrong spot on the hull, something the Scotts would correct when the new ones came out this year. They were good to go.

A routine check, a few friendly faces...a good start for this day on the water. Oh, that it would all be so routine. However, no two days are the same for conservation officers on Iowa's waters.

Iowans have a love affair with their boats, as evidenced by over 240,000 registered in the state. Where and how they are operated keep officers busy far into the night, and—after serious incidents—for weeks beyond.

For one thing, no two bodies of water are the same. Iowa's navigable waters range from multi-thousand acre natural lakes and the largest river in North America to compact artificial lakes and quiet streams.



Virtually every major water body in the state has its own "Party Cove"—congested areas of boaters, swimmers and revelers—creating potential enforcement issues for water patrol and water safety officers. While most boaters are content relaxing and enjoying Iowa's water resources, when too much sun and alcohol mix, problems can surface.




Larger, eastern Iowa rivers, with their fluctuating currents, levels and constant changes in scenery attract everything from canoes and kayaks to cruise boats and commercial barges on the Mississippi River. On northwest Iowa's Great Lakes, virtually every lakefront property has a boat docked. High horsepower pleasure craft may pull a couple water skiers, while a couple anglers work a lake flat for yellow perch. Personal watercraft jet across waves, as operators feel wind in their faces. Lakeside bars and restaurants extend boating into the wee hours. Across southern and central Iowa, smaller tree lined lakes allow no wake fishing trips and quiet water wanderings. Iowa's four large flood control reservoirs feature busy summer

boat ramps and full service marinas and restaurants, catering to boats of all designs.

Water recreation means fun in the outdoors. Sometimes, though, that fun can interfere with someone else's good time or safety. That's when these workers of the waves step in.

"Up here, there are lots of bars on the lake open until 1:30 or 2 o'clock. We definitely need enforcement until the last (of the boaters) go home," says DNR conservation officer Gary Owen. He oversees 11 water patrol officers across the lakes, around the clock. Some late night patrols will be near drinking haunts at closing time. The patrols don't try to hide, either. In addition





#### BOAT REGISTRATION FEES

Iowans no doubt noticed a rise in boat registration fees this spring, the first increase levied in 23 years. The fee, which also raised the registration period from two years to three, is expected to generate \$960,000 in additional revenue. Funds from the increase—approved by the 2005 Iowa Legislature and implemented this year—are earmarked for a comprehensive boating safety program, education and control of invasive aquatic species, additional water patrol officers and enhancement of water trails.

to the mounted siren and light bar, each craft has three distinct, vertical black stripes on the side. "Law enforcement" is spelled out in large letters.

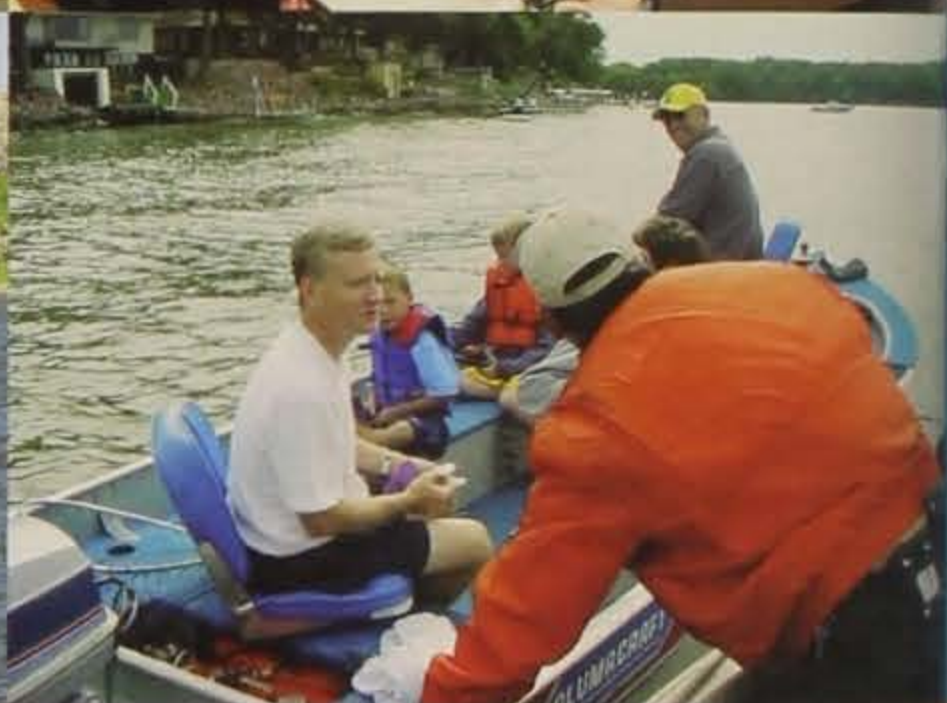
"When you're on the highway and you see a trooper, what's the first thing you do? You slow down," says Owen. "As boaters come out of the places at closing time, it's 'Is there a patrol boat out in the bay?' Voices carry over water. We hear it all the time." Owen says boating while intoxicated cases have stayed about the same over the last dozen years or so, but designated boat drivers have increased.

The 12,700 interconnected acres of West and East Okoboji, Minnewashta, Upper and Lower Gar Lakes, as well as nearby Big Spirit Lake, are the major recreation

features in northwest Iowa. Through the winter, about 35,000 people live around the lakes in Dickinson County. By the 4th of July, that swells to 150,000. "A regular summer weekend is very busy. By the 4th of July, it's almost out of control," offers Owen.

Stand along the 'canal' during peak season and 600 to 800 boats pass between East and West Okoboji in an hour. "There isn't a set schedule. It's not '8 to 4' here," says Owen of a typical summer week. "By 7 or 7:30 Friday morning, we are at the lake patrol station, making sure the boats are ready to go. Fridays and Saturdays, we'll be on the water until 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning. At times, it's almost '24/7' coverage from Memorial Day weekend through the summer."





Everybody in the Great Lakes water patrol is on the clock from Friday through Sunday. Officers get a couple days off during the week, but the rolling schedule keeps someone on duty nearly every hour daily. The quiet period might be from 5 a.m. to 6 a.m. if there's no paperwork to finish.

Across Iowa, while most boaters spend hours on the water with no problems, there are a few violations. Some occur over and over.

"Speed and distance. Statewide, that's definitely the number one violation on the water," states Meier, without hesitation. "It causes most of our boat crashes."

Much like a street driver, there are laws watercraft operators must know. "We find that the person is either paying (too much) attention to the people on board or staring in one direction, when a violation occurs," says Meier. "It should be just like defensive driving out on the road. You have to be aware of other boats around you and what you are going to do in a given situation."

Patrols are geared to preventing accidents, although they still happen. "Boat crash? They're the worst," admits

Meier. "Heading to a call, you're thinking 'how many are injured? How are we going to get help to them? There are only three locations (on Coralville Reservoir) where we can land a helicopter.'"

On scene, it's not like a road accident. There are no skid marks; no twisted fender or glass to provide clues. The scene is not going to be the same (by the time you get there)," underscores Meier. "If there is a death, it could be several days of stress for the victim's family, as well as for the officer. You think of your own family. You feel helpless at some point."

It also means long hours re-creating the accident scene for reports. Even with minor property damage accidents, it can be weeks before reports are finished. If someone is injured, or dies, it can be several months. Sometimes, it gets personal. "You get to know the victim, through all the witness or family interviews," says Meier somberly. "I know officers who have gone to the funeral, because of the acquaintance they developed with the family."

Fortunately, those days are far from routine. On a good day, officers will come across the Tgrefts. Dave and Terri, from Sioux City, were visiting their son, Scott,





Patrolling Iowa's water may seem like the perfect way to spend a summer, but water patrol officers have myriad routine tasks outside normal water patrol that consume their days. Checking fishing licenses, boat registration compliance and sound levels (right) are just as important as educating boaters and making sure safety equipment is in order. **OPPOSITE PAGE FAR LEFT:** 2006 water patrol staff. **LOWER RIGHT:** Water patrol officers often face challenging days, as officers Matt Bruner (left) and Bill Wineland discovered July 23, 2005. On routine patrol at Saylorville Reservoir late that afternoon, the two noticed an unoccupied personal watercraft and a lifejacket floating nearby. The officers quickly realized the jacket was keeping a young boating accident victim afloat. The victim, not breathing and without a pulse, was pulled to shore where chest compressions were initiated. After a few tense minutes, the victim began breathing and was airlifted to a local hospital where he made a full recovery. Wineland continued to patrol Saylorville waters during the summer, while Bruner is now a full-time state conservation officer for the DNR.



who had recently moved to Iowa City. While Dave and Scott fished along the dam from each end of the little V-bottom, Terri worked on her Christmas cross-stitching. "I'm never going to live this down, now," she conceded. But there was no reason not to pursue her hobby in the midday sun. Besides, at that point she had boated as many keepers as her son and husband...none. Meier pointed up the channel to a better catfish spot. Their luck would change. In the meantime, Scott ended up with a copy of the hunting regulations and answers from the officers to a few bow and goose hunting questions. After all, fall seasons were just weeks away.

Downstream, Officers Fulk and Meier came across Steve Powell in his bass boat. It was a rare trip for the Quad Cities area angler, but he'd already made a friend out on the reservoir, and returned to fish with him on nearby Lake Macbride. "You meet so many nice people on the water," said Powell.

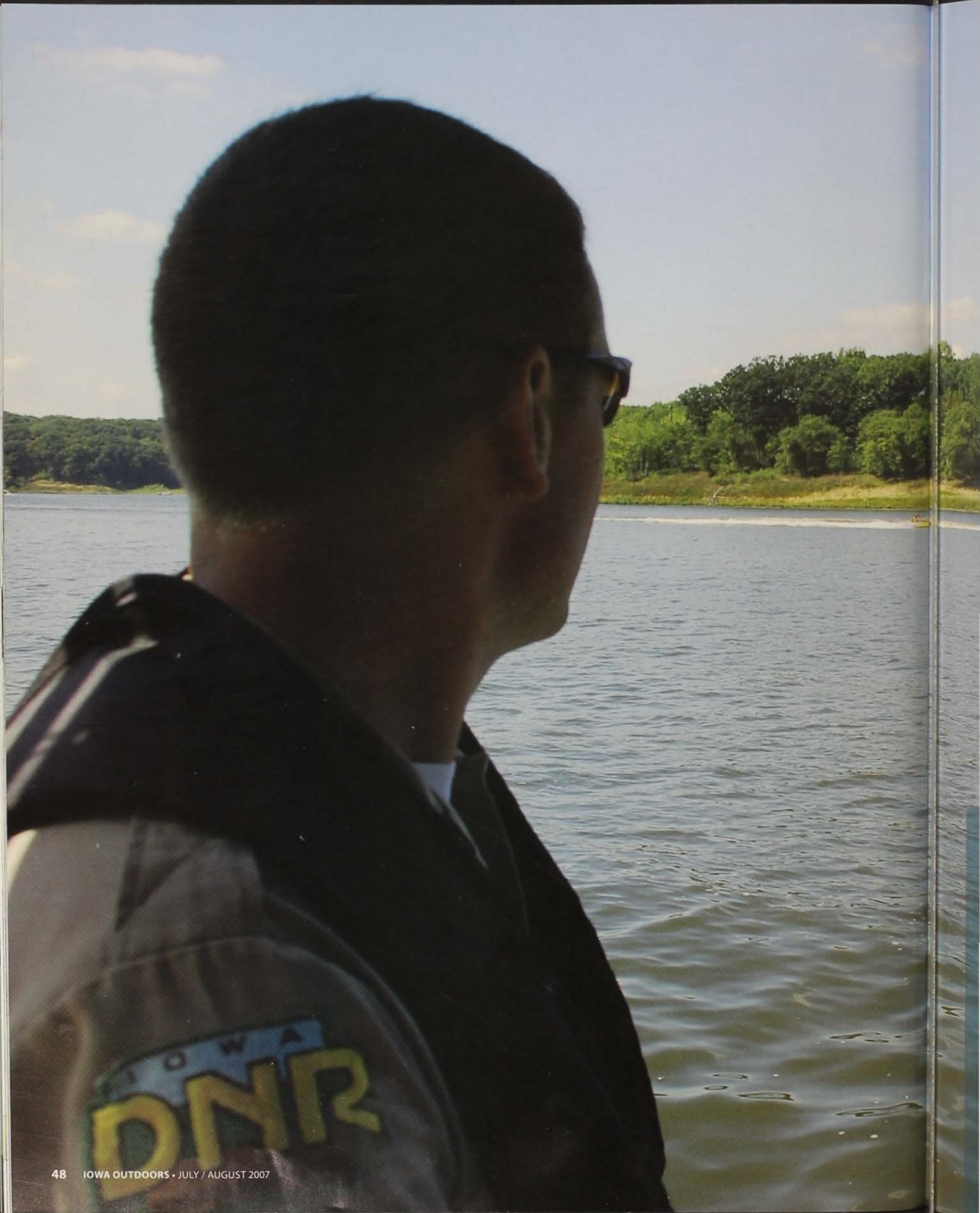
A few minutes away, a routine swing through Party Cove was quiet. Maybe it was too late in the season, but the few boaters in the Cove were laid back. It's rarely

like that in the heat of summer. Though usually no big problem, the mix of good times, hours in the sun and emptying beer coolers have the potential to flare up.


Just about every sizable water has its own Party Cove. On the Lakes, it's near Gull Point. "It is not uncommon to have 100-plus boats out there," says Owen of a midsummer weekend. "We patrol it pretty heavily, for instance, over the 4th of July. One of the problems is everybody rafts together and congregates on one boat. That often leads to more intoxication and less compliance." The crowd can be dispersed by officers reminding the owner that he doesn't have nearly enough life jackets for those on board. "If there's a problem boat; if (conduct) is getting out of hand and the clothes are coming off, we'll step in and deal with it," says Owen.

Spend much time on Iowa's lakes or streams and you'll cross watery paths with them. It's usually a friendly salute as they cross your bow. It might be a tow back to the dock if you have trouble. The interaction is usually as serious as the boater wants to make it...with these workers of the waves. 🐾









### SPEED AND DISTANCE

In Iowa, it is illegal to operate a craft at more than five miles per hour, within 100 feet of another boat underway at five mph or less. If that other craft is going faster than five mph, it is still illegal to go more than five mph, if within 50 feet. Similar restrictions are in place when vision is obstructed such as in fog or at night or within 100 yards of shore on inland lakes or federal impoundments such as reservoirs.

### NIGHT BOATING SLOWS DOWN

Boaters on Iowa's Great Lakes now must watch their 'top end' after dark. A 25 mph speed limit is in effect on Dickinson County lakes one half hour after sunset until sunrise. Over four years, there were 31 night boating accidents with 12 on the Great Lakes.

Supporters felt limits were needed to provide more reaction time in nighttime. "It takes 3/4 of a second under normal conditions to perceive and avoid (a problem). When impaired, that doubles. Add to that, the loss of peripheral and depth vision at night, especially when determining distance. There are no brakes on a boat," says Owen.

Area communities provided tremendous support for the change. The push was precipitated by a fatal nighttime crash in August, 2005 on West Lake Okoboji. Perry resident Michael J. Brosnahan was killed when his boat was struck by a hit-and-run operator. The subject, Justin Nearman, was eventually located, and plead guilty to operating a boat while intoxicated resulting in the death of another person. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison, five suspended, and five years probation.

Lake Delhi in Delaware County is the only other lake with reduced night speeds.



A close-up photograph of a hand holding a pink plastic bottle of calamine lotion. The bottle has a black screw cap. The label on the bottle is pink and features the title 'THE LONG, HOT, ITCHY SUMMER' in large, bold, black letters. Below the title, in smaller text, it says 'BY JOE WILKINSON' and 'PHOTOS BY BILL SCHAEFER, ED.D.' followed by 'GRANDVIEW COLLEGE'. Further down, it reads 'CALAMINE LOTION' and '4 FL OZ (118 mL)'. At the bottom of the label, it says 'IOWA OUTDOORS BRAND' next to a small leaf logo. The background consists of several broad, diagonal light rays emanating from the top right corner, creating a bright, airy atmosphere.

# THE LONG, HOT, ITCHY SUMMER

BY JOE WILKINSON  
PHOTOS BY BILL SCHAEFER, ED.D.  
GRANDVIEW COLLEGE

CALAMINE LOTION  
4 FL OZ (118 mL)  
IOWA OUTDOORS BRAND





## TAKE THE STING OUT OF YOUR SUMMER ADVENTURES. SEE WHAT PLANTS BITE BACK AND WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU "GET THE ITCH."

There can't be a worse feeling. **THE ITCH. THE BURN, ALMOST SIZZLING AT TIMES.** The ugly blotches and blisters on your arms, your legs...anywhere you contacted it. **POISON IVY.**

As the reddish dots spread over days, then turn into fluid-filled blisters and eventually scabs and scars, your skin becomes super sensitive. At first, it itches so badly you must scratch. Yet, to touch it is painful. Hot water, the lightest layer of clothing, even the air sometimes; any friction grates your skin, nerve endings and even your short-term mental health. Your blister-encrusted arms feel heavy. There seems to be no mercy for those of us afflicted by poison ivy.

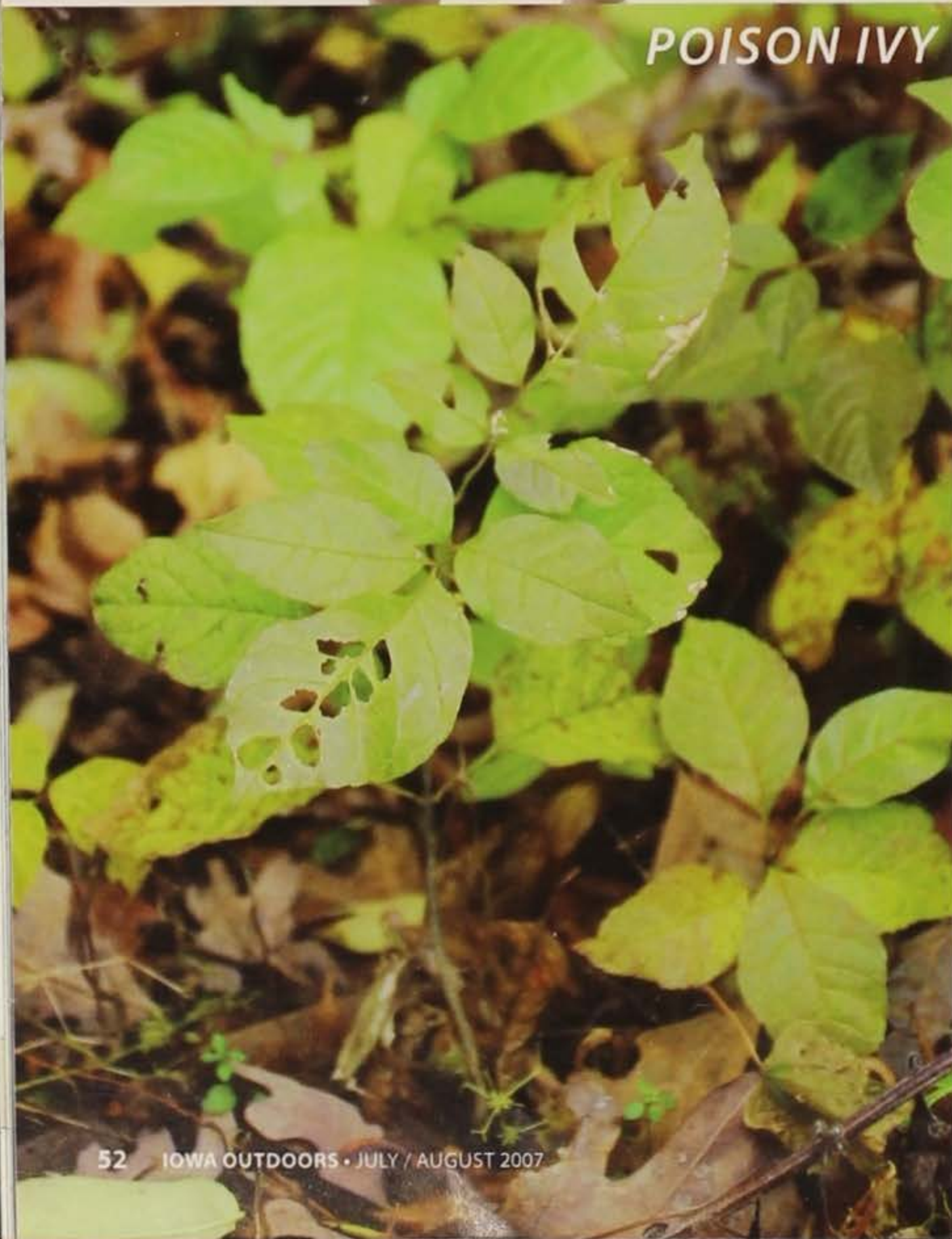
CONTINUED ON PAGE 54.







POISON IVY



POISON IVY



PHOTOS: POISON IVY BY JOE WILKINSON; WILD PARSNIP BY CLAY SMITH; NETTLE BY PATRICK J. ALEXANDER





NETTLE



WILD PARSNIP







# How much of a punch does poison ivy pack?

**THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF DERMATOLOGY SAYS ONE BILLIONTH OF A GRAM OF THE DREADED SAP IS ENOUGH TO CAUSE A RASH.**

The “leaves of three” get plenty of blame for hot weather itching, and deservedly so. But a variety of plants, from **WILD PARSNIP** to **NETTLES**, turn summer recreation into summer suffering for some. Various sources claim 60 to 90 percent of Americans are susceptible to poison ivy. Many of them—I’m one—are magnets for the stuff.

The ugly, itchy rash will go away in a few days. Treat it quickly to reduce the itching and misery. Dress properly, and avoid the obvious patches, bushes, vines and leaves and you might dodge the itchy bullet. And modern medicine answers the call, too. It’s not just “slather it with calamine lotion” anymore. Prescription medication, pre- or post-contact lotions, and various creams, oral applications and patches offer help from “the ivy.”

## START FROM SCRATCH

Where does all that misery originate? Those reddish to light green to waxy, dark green leaves seem harmless. In the fall, the reddish-tinged green foliage is actually quite pretty. But it’s not something to pick and take home to Mom. “The resin in poison ivy is very potent and elicits an allergic reaction,” explains Dr. Mary Stone, a dermatology professor at the University of Iowa’s Carver College of Medicine. “The first time you are exposed, your body typically won’t break out. Your immune system learns to recognize it, though.” That’s why a 4-year-old playing in

it might not develop a rash. Subsequent exposure, though, may cause breakouts. And it can get more severe over time.

That’s all a chronic poison ivy-sufferer needs to hear. I paid my dues the first 20 or 30 exposures. Or 40. So, while a significant minority—and the extra young—might not break out, others may scratch at a mere picture of poison ivy.

Count me in the latter group. By the time I was 13 or 14, I had poison ivy every month of the year. Winter? Yep. Stood downwind of a burning pile of brush. Smoke is a carrier. So are pets. I’m sure wrestling with my dog, Topper, after a day wandering in the fields and creeks caused a few outbreaks.

On the positive side, I could really gross out my five sisters and amaze neighbors with my temporary yet severe cases of leprosy. Nighttime was often a living hell, clean sheets every night turned pink by morning

as the thick layers of calamine lotion rubbed off with my tossing and moaning. My brother, laying a few feet away, still has nightmares. Yet, except for my youngest sister, I can’t recall any of them getting it. Guess I took the bullet for the family.

## OIL OF TURMOIL

“The oil from the plant can be passed along to you from secondary agents; garden tools, clothing, even pet fur,” says Stone. “A lot of times, that oil can turn black or brown. That could be a clue, but if it’s on a garden tool, it could look like dirt, too.” And don’t expect it to fade over time. Stone says the sap or urushiols can raise a rash for a year or more. That would explain a sudden facial outbreak one winter. I hadn’t been outside or anywhere near an itchy cache of leaves or brush. With a little mental backtracking, I figured out the rash around my eyes—sort of an itchy, blotchy raccoon pattern—matched the wool facemask I had wore a few days before. The last time I’d used it was the previous deer season. The resin remained active for 13 months.

Short of being one of the lucky immune few, or taking a desk job and spending free time in the house, how do you avoid it? Wash. And wash fast. The less time offending urushiols spend on exposed skin, the less severe the reaction. Common soap and water works well. So do pre- or post-exposure treatments, creams or other products



## OUCH! NETTLES

A subtle scratch, followed by instant itching and burning. The culprit: **STINGING NETTLES**. An herbaceous, perennial flowering plant, it is one of the first forest floor dwellers to emerge in the spring. There are two species, says DNR plant ecologist John Pearson. Stinging nettles (*Urtica dioica*) prefers sunny areas, while wood nettles (*Laportea canadensis*) leans toward shadier spots.

Covered in tiny hairs along stems and leaves, the hollow hairs release an irritating formic acid when brushed against. Like hundreds of tiny needles, the result is an intense itch and white, blotchy spots. Discomfort depends on skin sensitivity, but can last a few minutes up to 24 hours.

If you're a budding botanist, find a healthy jewelweed, break the stem and apply the sap to affected areas, Pearson says. Although in a pinch, human spit has been said to alleviate some discomfort, baking soda and water paste works better. Keep a vial of the cooking companion on hikes to ward off itchy outbreaks.

Despite their painful bite, stinging nettles aren't the devil in waiting. Red admiral butterflies covet these plants to provide a quick, easy meal for emerging offspring. Steeped in several changes of water, nettles are a tasty substitute for tea leaves or an alternative to a spinach salad. And don't throw the boil away. The water, loaded with formic acid, makes a good organic pesticide against mites and aphids.

## PICK YOUR POISON

Poison ivy so often gets the rap when the bubbly, painful rashes show their evil side. But in recent years, **WILD PARSNIP** has taken up the villain's cloak. The culprit for painful breakouts when poison ivy is nowhere to be found, this Eurasian import is often found in road ditches and out-of-the-way corners of yards and wild areas or disturbed areas where it spreads. With 5 to 15 sawtoothed-edged leaflets, the little rosettes hug the ground the first year or two, eventually growing to 4 feet or so. And it can be vicious.

The deal breaker between wild parsnip and poison ivy is sunlight. As you walk through a patch of parsnip, leaves and sturdy stems leave scratches on exposed skin. It's "sap," called psoralen, reacts with sunlight. Too much psoralen and sun, and you'll have red, streaky—and painful—outbreaks. "Wild parsnip will cause a streaky rash," says Stone. "To the expert eye, it looks different. It's not as 'blistering' as poison ivy." The experts refer to it as "phytophotodermatitis," a very long word that means the plant reacts with sunlight to make your skin itch. That short Latin lesson might put your mind at ease, but your dermis is screaming in pain. The blotches are an allergic reaction, so treatments similar to poison ivy work.

applied to exposed skin. *Do not take a bath. The damaging urushiols on your skin will mix with the steeping warm water, entering open pores. Instead, rinse with cool tapwater or shower.*

When urushiols make contact with skin, it triggers an immune response. That "contact dermatitis" occurs as the urushiol makes its way through your skin. Your system metabolizes it and immune cells move to fight the foreign substance—the antigen. The inflammatory signals, or cytokines, alert white blood cells to fight the antigens. Sounds very efficient, but there is tissue damage; the reddish, blotchy rash that breaks out on your skin.

Most topical treatments are drying agents, aimed at reducing discomfort. A step up in treatment involves oral or injected medication, like anti-inflammatories and steroids. "Those more severe cases require an anti-inflammatory. They help suppress the immune reaction," says Stone.

Those offending leaves, or vines, may have directly contacted one patch of skin. Or maybe urushiols on your fingers brushed across your face an hour later. Your delayed sensitivity will keep skin from breaking out for hours...or days. You don't "get it" from the weepy blisters that break and ooze the disgusting liquid onto other areas. That's a common misconception, says Stone. However, you should still keep them clean, even lightly wrapping in gauze to avoid infection.

You can stay indoors and avoid the stuff. The best advice, though, to avoid a long, hot itchy summer is to stay alert, wash quickly and remember all the surfaces the oils might inhabit while enjoying your time outdoors. Just remember, protect the "skin you're in." 🐼



## FIREFLIES

Few lowans have never chased, or at least marveled at, the illumescent grandeur of fireflies. The warm, quiet of a summer night is interrupted by a momentary flash of light...then another...and another, until the night sky erupts in a brilliant explosion of strobos. It's what summer nights are made of.

### WHAT'S BUGGING YOU

Fireflies, or lightningbugs, are neither flies nor mere bugs. They are beetles, part of the world's largest scientific family containing some 300,000 species. There are 124 species of fireflies alone in the U.S. and Canada, says Donald Lewis of Iowa State University's Department of Entomology, found primarily from the middle of Kansas eastward.

### LET THERE BE LIGHT

Chemical and enzyme reactions illuminate the firefly. It's a "cold" light, Lewis says. In fact, nearly all of the firefly's light is given off as light, compared to only 10 percent of a standard light bulb, the rest of which is wasted as heat. (Imagine the energy savings if scientists could capture and use this phenomenon). How a firefly turns its light on and off is still up for debate.



### BETCHA DIDN'T KNOW

Fireflies in flight are most likely males; those perched on vegetation are females. Courtship typically involves the male flying and flashing his "calling card." If the female's light response is affirmative, the male descends to mate. The firefly is the state insect of Pennsylvania and Tennessee. Ancient Chinese captured fireflies in transparent containers for use as short-term lanterns.

### JUST LIKE MY PARENTS

Firefly larvae spend their days lounging under moist ground clutter, like bark, mulch and loose soil. They feed on small insects, snails and slugs. Roughly  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch, they have six legs and are brown on top and creamy white on bottom. Like their parents, larvae are also luminescent—possibly a defense mechanism against predation.

### DON'T BE FOOLED

Although fireflies use their light primarily for love, some use it for sinister means. Female members of the genus *Photuris* mimic the flash pattern of their genus *Photinus* cousins, hoping to "steal away" the love struck male. If successful, she eats him.

### COME HITHER, MY LOVE

The light is used to attract mates during courtship. Each species' pattern is genetically fixed and distinctive, differing slightly in number, duration, interval between flashes and even height from ground, Lewis says. It's one way male and female members of the same species identify and mate with each other. Simply put, if the response mirrors the flirtation, love is in the air.





## Wild Sumac Lemonade

A REFRESHINGLY TART, WILD FORAGED SUMMER TREAT

*Inspired by our wild foods adventure feature story on page 22, harvesting sumac fruit to make this invigorating drink is a perfect way to spend a summer afternoon. Forager Mike Krebill of Keokuk shares his favorite method.*

**G**ather berry clusters from staghorn sumac or smooth sumac trees in late summer, enough for four cups of berries. The clusters resemble dark red miniature Christmas trees, with the staghorn variety covered in fine fuzz. Cut stems just below the berry clusters.

Sumac flavor varies widely. The finished product may require no sweetening or as much as a full cup of sweetener.

- 1) Pick berries off fruit heads until you have four cups. Pick through to remove any caterpillars. Place in strainer and shake over a wastebasket to remove any dirt or dried flower parts.
- 2) Crisscross two pieces of cheesecloth at right angles. Place cleaned berries in the middle, draw up sides and tie with string to form giant tea bag.
- 3) Place bag in pitcher and cover with one quart boiling water. Dunk until water turns dark, clear red. Add one quart cold water.
- 4) Sweeten to taste with honey or sugar. Refrigerate.

Iowa has four sumac varieties, one shown right. Iowa is devoid of poison sumac, a variety found in northern Minnesota and Wisconsin with white berries. All parts of the poison variety can cause an allergic reaction and should be avoided.





## WILD CUISINE ~ KITCHENSIDE

BY BRIAN BUTTON PHOTOS BY CLAY SMITH



Tempura fried walleye with Asian slaw and ginger-wasabi aioli

Fish is taken seriously at Taki Japanese Steakhouse, from the specialty \$400 sushi cutting boards to jet-fresh Hawaiian Island bluefin tuna, snapper and marlin flown in every Friday for the weekend crowd. The seriousness stops with the entertaining atmosphere. "It's like a party. It's about having fun. It's kind of like we are hanging out with patrons," says Tim Yasunaga, one of three owners, all college buddies who moved to Des Moines from Illinois in 2002. Fun happens at the Teppanyaki grill, where Iowa steak, chicken, pork and, of course, seafood are grilled at a large table in front of awed guests. From eclectic sushi creations such as the volcano and spicy scallop to noodle dishes served on the outside patio, there is something for all tastes, including 64 wines, green tea and 15 varieties of saki.



Chef Derek Eidson

### A Japanese Twist for Walleye

#### TEMPURA FRIED WALLEYE WITH ASIAN SLAW AND GINGER-WASABI AIOLI

"Walleye is one of the best frying fish there is, so I put a Japanese twist on it. It is easy enough that readers can do it at home," says chef Derek Eidson. Club soda gives the batter an extra light texture. Aioli, a classic mayonnaise sauce, has an Asian zing with the ginger-wasabi.

##### TEMPURA BATTER

- $\frac{2}{3}$  cup flour
- $\frac{2}{3}$  cup cornstarch
- 1 cup soda water
- 1 pinch salt and pepper

Combine dry ingredients in bowl. Stir in cold soda water. The batter should be slightly thicker than buttermilk.

##### ASIAN SLAW

- 1 small head Napa cabbage
- 1 carrot
- 4 green onions

##### FOR DRESSING

- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup vinegar
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 cup sesame oil

Julienne cut cabbage, carrot and green onions lengthwise and mix in a bowl. In separate bowl, combine vinegar, soy sauce and sugar. Slowly whisk in the sesame oil to create an emulsion. Add to the slaw and toss well.

##### GINGER-WASABI AIOLI

- $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups Japanese or regular mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh ginger
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 4 green onions chopped (green tops only)
- $1\frac{1}{2}$  lemons (juiced)
- 1 tablespoon wasabi
- salt and pepper to taste

Whisk together all ingredients in a bowl. Refrigerate for at least one hour. You can adjust the heat by adding more or less wasabi. The longer the aioli is refrigerated, the more time the flavors have to meld, resulting in a better aioli.



Chef Eidson's twist on walleye comes from a connection to the land. "My grandparents lived on Sun Valley Lake in southern Iowa," a spring fed beauty, he says. "I fished a lot down there for walleye, catfish and bluegills. The water is very, very clear."

A saltwater aquarium holds trigger and puffer fish adding ambience. In addition to Tim Yasunaga, other partners include Kha, who handles the sharpest knives with ease and grace. (No fish stands a chance.) Chuckee, another partner, offers a charismatic cooking style to get crowds roaring. A back room is made semi-private with a wall with rising bubbles set in blue light. Four chefs work eight Teppanyaki grills for up to 10 patrons each. "It's a good way for people to get to know and meet people," says Eidson, clad in Taki's black uniform. The sushi bar features traditional and creative cuisine with a cheery staff encouraging diners to try new tastes.



**HAVE A GOOD RECIPE OF WILD FOODS TO SHARE? Send to: [WILDCUISINE@DNR.STATE.IA.US](mailto:WILDCUISINE@DNR.STATE.IA.US)**

#### FOR THE WALLEYE

Preheat oil. Frying can be done in a fryer or in a large pot on the stove. Dredge fish in flour, then dip in batter, making sure to completely coat the fish. Place directly into 325° vegetable oil. You may have to turn the fish to achieve browning on both sides. The fish should cook in about four minutes, depending on thickness. Remove from oil and drain on paper towels. If using stove top, be sure not to fill the pot more than half full with oil to prevent spilling over. Use a frying thermometer to keep a constant oil temperature.

*Serves two as an entree or four as a starter.*



**TAKI JAPANESE STEAKHOUSE**  
2677 86th Street Suite 2601  
Urbandale

#### RESERVATIONS:

Taken for Teppanyaki grill

**HOURS:** LUNCH: 11 a.m.-2 p.m.  
Tuesdays-Friday; DINNER:  
5 p.m.-10 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday  
and 5-9 p.m. Sunday-Monday.

**LIQUOR:** Bar with full wine list.

**SMOKE FREE GRILL.**  
**SMOKING IN BAR.**

滝  
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515-331-3030  
[www.takisteakhouse.com](http://www.takisteakhouse.com)



# Pollinators on the Prowl

Pollination is one of those things that just happens. Year after year gardens produce fruits and vegetables, fruit trees grow apples and asparagus sprouts. Bees play an essential part, but in the last six months a mysterious threat has killed honey bee colonies in 27 states. Commercial beekeepers hit by the malady have lost 50 to 90 percent of their colonies and some agricultural producers are worried it could affect crops, too.

Colony Collapse Disorder affects European honey bees and was first noticed in Florida last November. It has scientists scrambling to find answers, wondering how the decline will affect pollination of more than 90 fruit and vegetable crops.

Will it affect your summer garden? The short answer is no. While introduced European honey bees are important pollinators, native bees were here before the Mayflower landed. Bees and plants evolved together over a long time,

producing about 3,500 species of native bees in America.

Unlike European bees, most native bees are non-colony loners lacking highly specialized worker, drone and queen jobs. Most live solitary lives where each female bee cares for her own young.

"These solitary bees do the heavy lifting in the pollination of plants, more so than the European honey bee," says Dr. Keith Summerville, assistant professor of environmental sciences and policy at Drake University.

Summerville says Iowans shouldn't worry about garden pollination. "Three or four families of solitary bees pollinate a wide range of plants," he says.

Native, solitary bees not only pollinate plants, allowing flowers and fruit to grow, most are non aggressive, lacking communal nests to defend. Most sting only when cornered, but it's usually mild versus honey bees' stings.





#### HOW TO ATTRACT SOLITARY BEES TO YOUR GARDEN:

Plant nectar sources. "One of the best ways to attract solitary bees is to plant a wide variety of flowers that bloom at different times," says Summerville. Native flowers are best such as coneflower, bee balm, blazing star and others.

Repel insect pests. Plants that naturally repel insect pests decrease pesticide use. "If you plant marigolds around your garden, they secrete a chemical that is unattractive to other insects," Summerville says. Planting vegetables in alternative rows or intercropping can also make your garden less attractive to pests. "The more obvious you make a plant, by planting a large spread of the same species, the more attractive it is to pests," he says.

Be careful and slow to use pesticides. Make sure that you have a problem before spraying. "Indiscriminate spraying which is not targeted at a specific pest can have unintended consequences," Summerville says. "In my garden, I use pyrethrin-based chemicals. These are contact chemicals which must be sprayed on the target insect. They are not as effective, but they biodegrade in a day," he adds.

Keep your yard on the wild side. Many solitary bees need nesting and watering areas close to feeding areas. Leave bare spots in the yard, stacks of brush or rock and sources of food and water to attract bees.

#### POLLINATION 101

In Iowa, European honey bees pollinate an estimated 90 percent of the apple, strawberry and raspberry crop and about 80 percent of the melon, pumpkin, cucumber and squash crop.

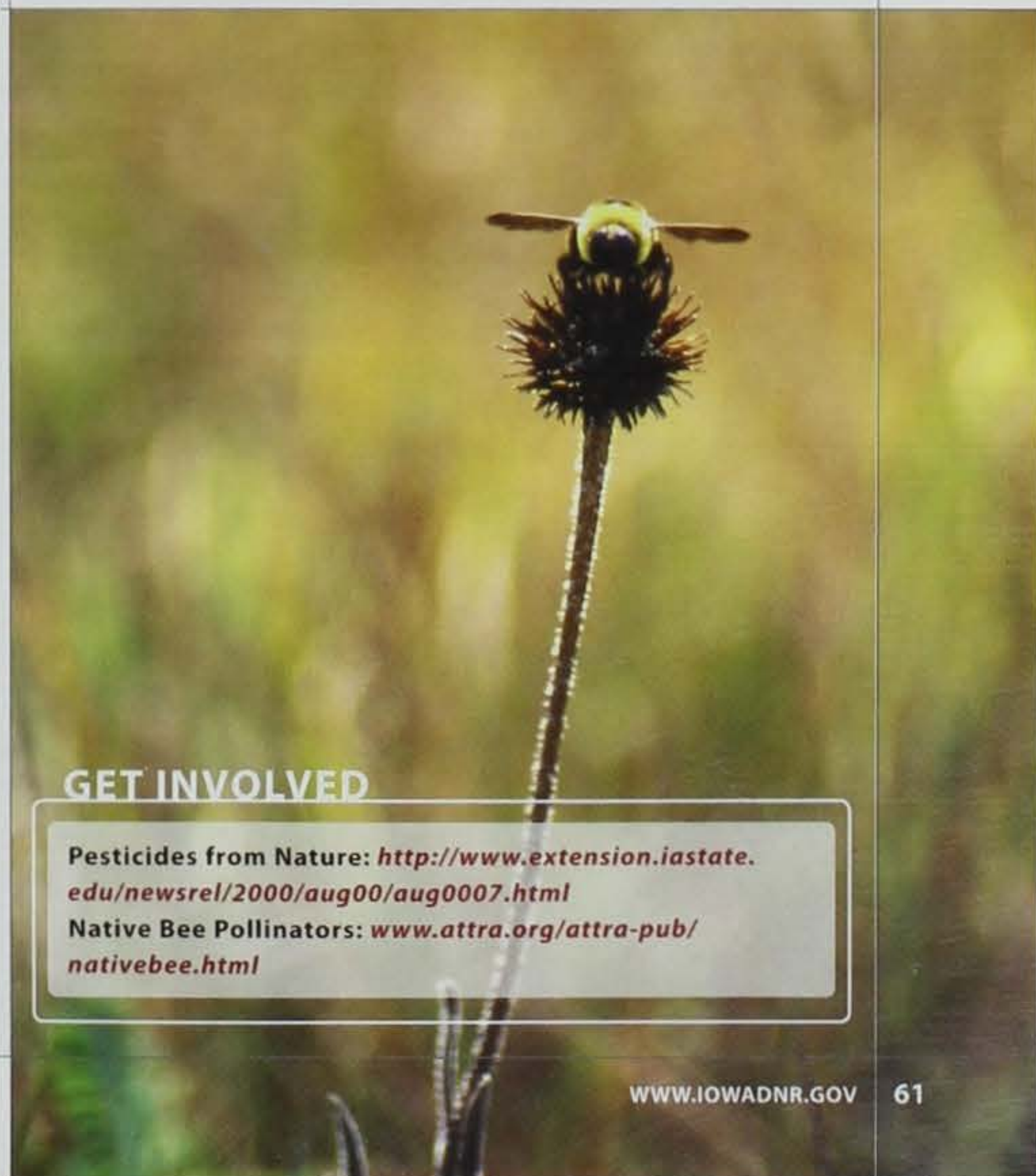
While crops like corn and oats are pollinated by the wind, most crops need bees. Although honey bees provide only 5 percent of soybean pollination, that's worth \$88 million. Bees transport pollen to an ova, allowing plants to produce fruit, vegetables, nuts or seeds.

#### A DYING BREED? HONEY BEES BUZZ OFF

Beekeepers around the U.S. fear their bees aren't returning home. No one knows exactly what is happening, but in 24 states including Iowa, when workers leave, a thriving colony can rapidly decline to just the queen bee, a few sickly adult bees and the young brood bees.

When a colony collapses, adult workers are apparently unable to find their way back to the hive. The few remaining bees are infested with a variety of diseases, fungus infections and parasites, along with suppressed immune systems, puzzling scientists and leading to one theory that stress is the cause. Other theories include pathogens, fungus, pesticides, chemicals or a combination of factors may interact to weaken colonies.

One theory under investigation is the sub-lethal effects insecticides may have impairing the bees' navigation systems. While neonicotinoid pesticides are safe for humans, they are highly toxic to honey bees and other pollinators. 🐝



#### GET INVOLVED

Pesticides from Nature: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/newsrel/2000/aug00/aug0007.html>

Native Bee Pollinators: [www.attra.org/attra-pub/nativebee.html](http://www.attra.org/attra-pub/nativebee.html)



## WHAT'S HAPPENING IN IOWA

### Davenport Schools and Pella Corp. Win National Energy Awards



#### DAVENPORT COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

**BACK ROW (L-R):** Richard Walker, Mid American Energy Company-Commercial Program; Bill Good DCSD, Director of Operations; Kathleen Hogan, Director Climate Protection Partnerships Division, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; Ralph Johanson, DCSD School Board Member. **FRONT ROW (L-R):** Donna Neppi Cooper, DCSD Operations Supervisor; Mike Loehr, The Trane Company, Account Manager, Equipment

An Iowa business and school were recognized as national leaders in energy efficiency by receiving Energy Star Awards.

The two were among more than 80 nationwide recipients chosen from 9,000 Energy Star partners. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Department of Energy awards recognize businesses and organizations for reducing greenhouse gas emissions through energy efficiency.

The Davenport Community School District was named partner of the year in energy management for assessing school energy performance and making improvements. The third largest Iowa school district serves 16,000 students and saved \$1.5 million in energy costs since 2003.

"It's better to spend that money on students rather than unnecessary energy costs," said Bill Good, district director of operations. "It shows our community that we respect and value our limited resources."

The district goes beyond physical improvements by awarding 15 new computers each year to schools that reduce energy use. High school science classes monitor their building's energy use and perform energy audits.

Pella Corporation, based in Pella was named partner of the year as a product manufacturer for increasing energy efficiency in American homes with its windows and doors. In 2006, Pella Corp. increased its sales of Energy Star qualified products by 112 percent, despite residential construction market declines.

"This award continues to make me feel great to work for a company like Pella, where decisions are made from the customer's perspective," said Chris Madigan, Pella's retail segment business manager, adding that they look at benefits to a customer's savings, comfort level in the home and environmental impact.

Pella Corp. also uses education to help customers learn about energy efficiency. "The Energy Star program synchronizes well with a long-standing part of our corporate culture at Pella—environmental stewardship," said John Woestman, a code expert with Pella Corp.

In 2006, Energy Star helped Americans saved \$14 billion on energy and avoided greenhouse gas emissions equaling 25 million vehicles.

### BOYS HUNTING AND CONSERVATION CAMP

Hands-on mentoring providing by DNR and Pheasants Forever staff offer boys ages 12-15 an outdoor educational experience. Learn about dog training, firearm skills, bird banding, animal calls, fishing and more. Cost is often offset by the local Pheasants Forever chapter. For more information contact your local Pheasants Forever chapter or the DNR's Ajay Winter at **641-747-8383** or **AJayWinter@dnr.state.ia.us**.





## MORE EMISSION-FREE WIND TO POWER IOWA, AND THE IOWA STATE FAIRGROUNDS

MidAmerican Energy plans to add up to 540 megawatts of wind energy and, thanks to voluntary contributions from customers, construct a wind turbine on the Iowa State Fairgrounds. Plans are subject to Iowa Utilities Board approval.

Avoided emissions from the initiative, combined with the company's current projects, are equivalent to removing more than 682,000, or 43 percent, of Iowa's vehicles from the road.

Gov. Chester Culver praised the efforts. "We are not the only state working towards energy independence. We must maintain the leadership we have worked so hard to develop; we must compete and do so aggressively; and I challenge regulators, business professionals and utility companies to add another 1,015 megawatts of renewable energy to bring Iowa to 2,015 megawatts by 2015."

MidAmerican Energy operates 323 wind turbines in Iowa to generate 459.5 megawatts, enough to power 144,000 homes.

Upon completing a 123-megawatt project in Pocahontas County this year, Iowa will have more than 1,000 megawatts of wind energy.

Iowa is third in wind power, behind Texas and California, and MidAmerican Energy owns more wind energy facilities than any other utility in the nation.

MidAmerican Energy hopes to complete a turbine at the Iowa State Fairgrounds in time to educate fair-goers about wind energy while generating the equivalent of one quarter of the electricity needed by the fair, said fair manager Gary Slater.

The state fair turbine will be built in part through customer donations to MidAmerican Energy's Renewable Advantage program. The program gives MidAmerican customers a way to voluntarily support renewable energy generation. Since its inception in 2004, more than \$150,000 has been donated.

## Get Your Girls Outdoors

Outdoor Journey for Girls introduces 12-15 year olds to Iowa's outdoors. Experts lead programs from basic outdoor skills to canoeing, hunting and fishing.

The three-day, two-night camp is supportive, fun and educational. Participants are Hunter Safety certified upon completion. Dates: July 17-19 in Waterloo, and June 13-15 and August 1-3 at the Springbrook Conservation Education Center in Guthrie County.

The \$100 fee covers meals, t-shirt, education materials and lodging. Limited sponsorships available through Pheasants Forever and Iowa Women in Natural Resources. Learn more or register at [WWW.IOWADNR.GOV/OJ/INDEX.HTML](http://WWW.IOWADNR.GOV/OJ/INDEX.HTML).

2006 Outdoor Journey for Girls



## WARTBURG-WAVERLY SPORTS AND WELLNESS CENTER TO USE WIND POWER

Wartburg College in Waverly gave \$2 million to Waverly Light and Power to purchase a wind turbine to offset carbon-based energy in the new Wartburg-Waverly Sports and Wellness Center.

"Wartburg joins the ranks of energy innovators today and sets a classic example of community. This is a major commitment to environmental responsibility not only for Wartburg, but for Waverly as well," said Glenn Cannon, general manager of Waverly Light and Power, who has been recognized nationally for his wind energy efforts.

Using wind power to offset energy used in the 200,000-square-foot center is innovative, said college president Jack Ohle. "This project puts the college in the company of only a handful of institutions across the nation that have made similar commitments to this type of renewable energy," he added.







## LOOK OUT KNOXVILLE...

You CAN teach an old dog new tricks

Over the years if there's one constant I've found in this job, it's training. It seems like every time we turn around we're heading for some kind of training session.

Much is the cycle year after year. State and federal regulations mandate some training. Some center around sending trainers to training to be trained in how to train. Some can seem routine to us, but the problem is those subjects are usually preparation for when the routine becomes not so routine.

So, when I was told I would be going to Law Enforcement Driving Techniques, I had my usual response to being told I'm going to training which is, "You've got to be kidding me." And in this case I thought, "I've been driving for almost 40 years, and now, all of a sudden, you're telling me I don't know how to drive?"

Little did I know I would soon find out that I didn't know how to drive!

I was never a gearhead in my younger days. I went to high school in the hey day of the muscle car, but my car didn't have much muscle. Unless you took a run at them, it was all my '69 Volkswagen Beetle could do to get up hills. And it was great for Iowa's climate, as it had a forced air heater—meaning if you weren't moving, there was no air being forced.

I didn't fare much better when I received my first squad car. My 1980 Plymouth Volare with a slant six could hardly have been termed a police interceptor. The only things it could intercept were snow drifts, and they didn't have to be very high to stop you.

Now that I'm in a position of training new officers myself, I tell them if they're going to be seriously injured on the job, odds are it will be behind the wheel of the patrol vehicle.

Unfortunately, with the amount of miles we

travel, and situations we encounter, we've had our share of careers ended and lives lost.

It may appear exciting on TV to be in a high speed pursuit. I've had my share of them. Some officers may even like them, but they are usually the ones who have never been in one. But, like I said, "I've had my share of them. I'm a good driver." That's fine. This training made me better.

In a nutshell, Law Enforcement Driving Techniques, or LEDT—we tend to use acronyms for everything—is a high performance driving course. Negotiating curves, correcting skids, emergency braking and evasive maneuvering are just a few techniques where your driving skills are constantly pushed to the max.

Like I told one officer who had not taken the training yet, "Remember all the things your Dad told you he'd better never catch you doing with the car?"

"Well for three days you get to do those things."

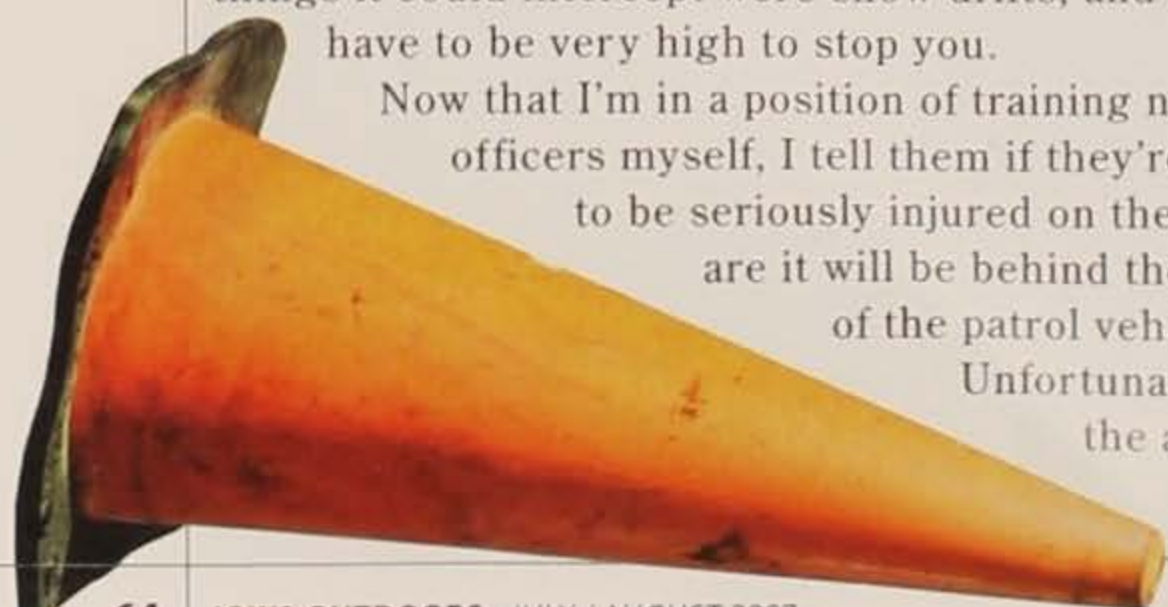
One of the exercises required negotiating a line of cones by driving between them without swinging too wide and without knocking over any cones. It progresses in speed to the point where sometimes you spin-out off the course. Just when I thought I had it down my instructor told me to do it again. No problem I thought. Then he said, "Backwards."

"Backwards?"


"Backwards."

The training culminates with driving a marked course complete with straightaways, curves, S-turns and hairpin corners, all while pursuing another vehicle. No NASCAR here, this is more than left turns. It puts together all the skills you've learned. It also must be done without knocking over a single orange cone. It must be done perfectly.

My first run was in the evening. I did three laps with my instructor constantly imploring me, "faster." I finished and thought, "Look out Knoxville"—until I turned around





A photograph of a driving course. In the foreground, several large orange traffic cones are positioned on a track with red and white diagonal stripes. The track curves to the right. In the background, more orange cones are visible on a green grassy field under a clear sky.

and saw the single cone lying sideways at the last curve in my my last lap. Too dark to continue, I went to bed with visions of falling orange cones. Everywhere I looked I saw orange. I thought it was deer season again. Orange cones became the center of my universe.

I tried again the next day without blemish. Relief. I returned home and my wife asked what I learned. I fought the urge to go for a ride to say, "Watch this!" However, the next day we drove through Dubuque. I came to an intersection as another driver came up to the stop sign. He looked at me.

"He won't," I thought. "He is!"

The other car pulled out in front of me, and I instinctively floored my anti-lock brakes while performing the evasive maneuver I learned.

"This stuff really works!" I thought.

Like a lot of training, these are skills we hope to never use. I always say the difference between our job and professional sports is we practice and practice, but we hope we don't have to play the game. But, when things go bad, it can save a life. 🐘





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State Documents Center  
Miller Building  
Des Moines, Iowa

Grant Wood (American, 1892-1942), *Stone City, Iowa*, 1930, oil on wood panel. Collection of Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Neb. Gift of the Art Institute of Omaha, 1930.

Cover art: detail of *Stone City, Iowa*, 1930 by Grant Wood Art  
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