

CONSERVATIONIST

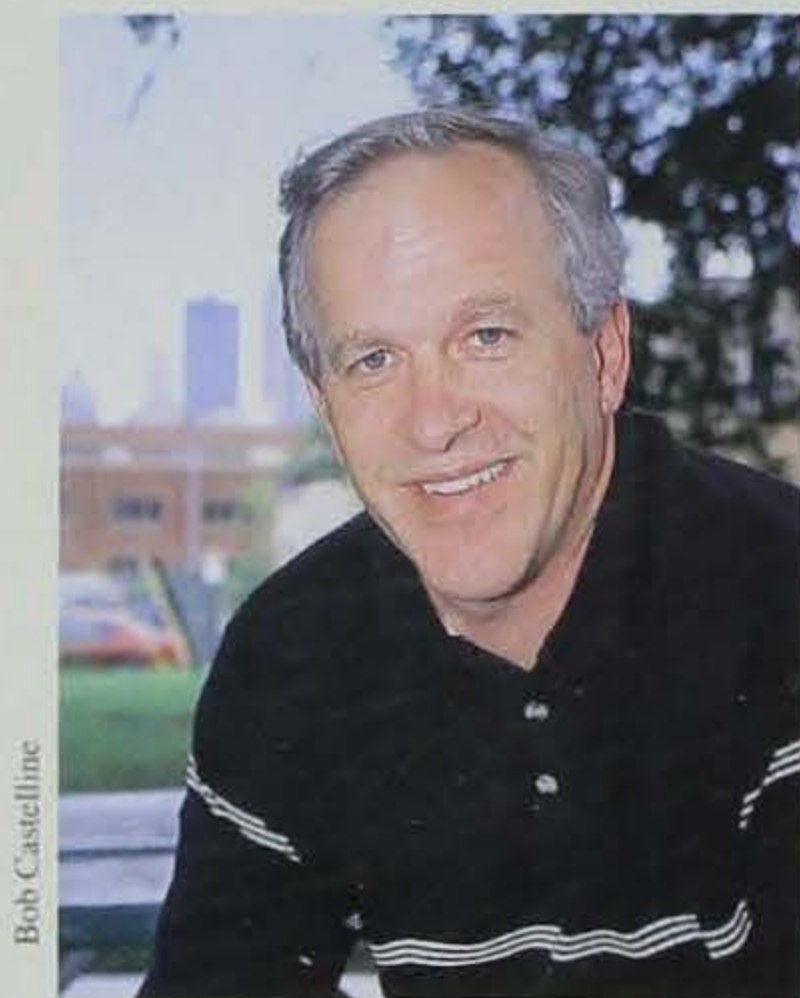
IOWA

MAY/JUNE 2006

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES



FROM THE DIRECTOR



Bob Castelline

2006 Legislative Outcome

As I have written before, each legislative session tends to be a series of peaks and valleys. This year's session, after a rocky start, was firmly in the ascension mode for our natural resources before brakes got firmly applied on the last day.

Let's start with some of the positive accomplishments of this session. New water quality standards were approved after what I believe was a very healthy discussion and self reflection by many citizens in this state. Yes, it will cost more money for some communities to comply with the new standards, but there is help available and these changes are necessary to protect and improve water quality. And yes, there was

also some very focused discussion about the primary sources of many of our water quality issues, particularly the impact of nonpoint-source water pollution caused by runoff.

There was also a substantial commitment of funding for water quality projects that included \$8.6 million for lake restoration, \$5 million for locally initiated watershed projects and \$4 million to assist local communities with wastewater upgrades to meet new water quality standards. We have past success stories in all of these arenas and this investment by the state will lead to more.

It was on the last day of the session that the legislature passed a bill that would prohibit the adoption of rules allowing the DNR some discretion in denying construction permits and manure management plans for livestock operations that would pose an obvious environmental threat.

I'd like to say right up front that many of the objections regarding livestock operations are based on social issues. As legitimate as these social objections might be, the responsibility of the Department of Natural Resources is to protect the environment. That is why the proposed rule very narrowly defines the circumstances in which DNR would have authority to deny a construction permit or require modifications of a manure management plan in situations where the environment is threatened.

Those circumstances are:

- Manure application fields in karst topography that could threaten groundwater.

- Proposed sites or manure application fields in the drainage areas of streams flowing into sinkholes that provide a direct conduit to groundwater.

- Operations proposing unusually large distances where manure would be applied.

- Proposed manure application areas where steep slopes are present and adequate conservation plans are not in place to protect surface water.

- Proposed operations or manure management plans within the catchment area of a public water supply well.

- Proposed operations where manure storage appears insufficient to avoid the need to spread manure on frozen or snow-covered ground.

The discussion on the proposed "department evaluation rule" has prompted spirited debate and encouraged me to research the potential implications of the DNR having this authority. What I found is that in the last four years, more than 2,000 new facilities have been constructed in this state with enough capacity to raise at least an additional 2.5 million pigs. With this rule in place, it would have affected less than 20 of these operations and

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(SEE RELATED STORY ON PAGE 20)
BACK COVER: GORDON SETTER, TEAL,
STRIKES A SOLID POINT (SEE RELATED STORY
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Clay Smith

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only on areas where the potential environmental impact was obvious.

During the same four-year period that production capacity in Iowa has grown by more than 2.5 million pigs, the number of operations has declined by 1,500. Simply put, operations are becoming much larger in size making it that much more critical to ensure that siting and manure applications do not adversely impact Iowa's natural resources.

Throughout the discussion of our proposed rule, I have heard

several references about concentrating "too much power" in the hands of one person — director of the DNR. I believe that at this point, it is justifiable as well to argue that a producer is being given too much power to affect the natural resources of Iowa and its citizens if we do not have the authority in place to stop a proposal that may have obvious and adverse environmental impacts.

Iowa has increased the swine herd by more than a million pigs in the last four years and we are, as most of you know, the top state for hog production. But Iowa ranks 49th of the 50 states in the amount of public land we have available and 48th in the

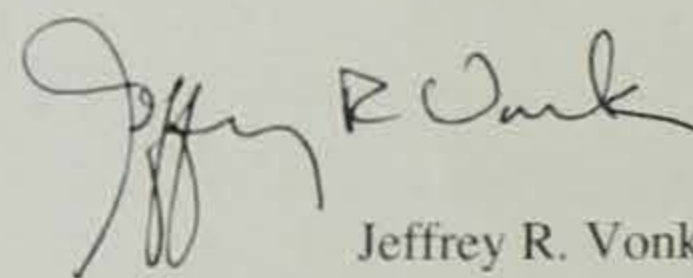
amount of per-capita-spending for the environment. Even more telling, in 2001, (the last year I could find statistics for) Iowa ranked 45th for college graduate retention with only 42 percent staying in the state after graduation.

To me, it appears very obvious that we have devoted far too much of our effort in this state on policy designed at increasing hog numbers and not put nearly enough effort on efforts to retain our best-educated young people.

I firmly believe that improving the quality of life and preserving as much of the rural lifestyle and natural resources that are so unique to Iowa is the key to securing a better economic future for our state.

Passing better water quality standards and providing funding for lake restoration, watershed work and upgrading wastewater treatment facilities are improvements that can provide long-term dividends to our state and its young people. Continuing to allow the construction of large-scale livestock operations that would create an obvious environmental threat is a way we don't want to go.

At least, overall, we're moving in the right direction — even if it is two steps forward and one step back.


Jeffrey R. Vonk

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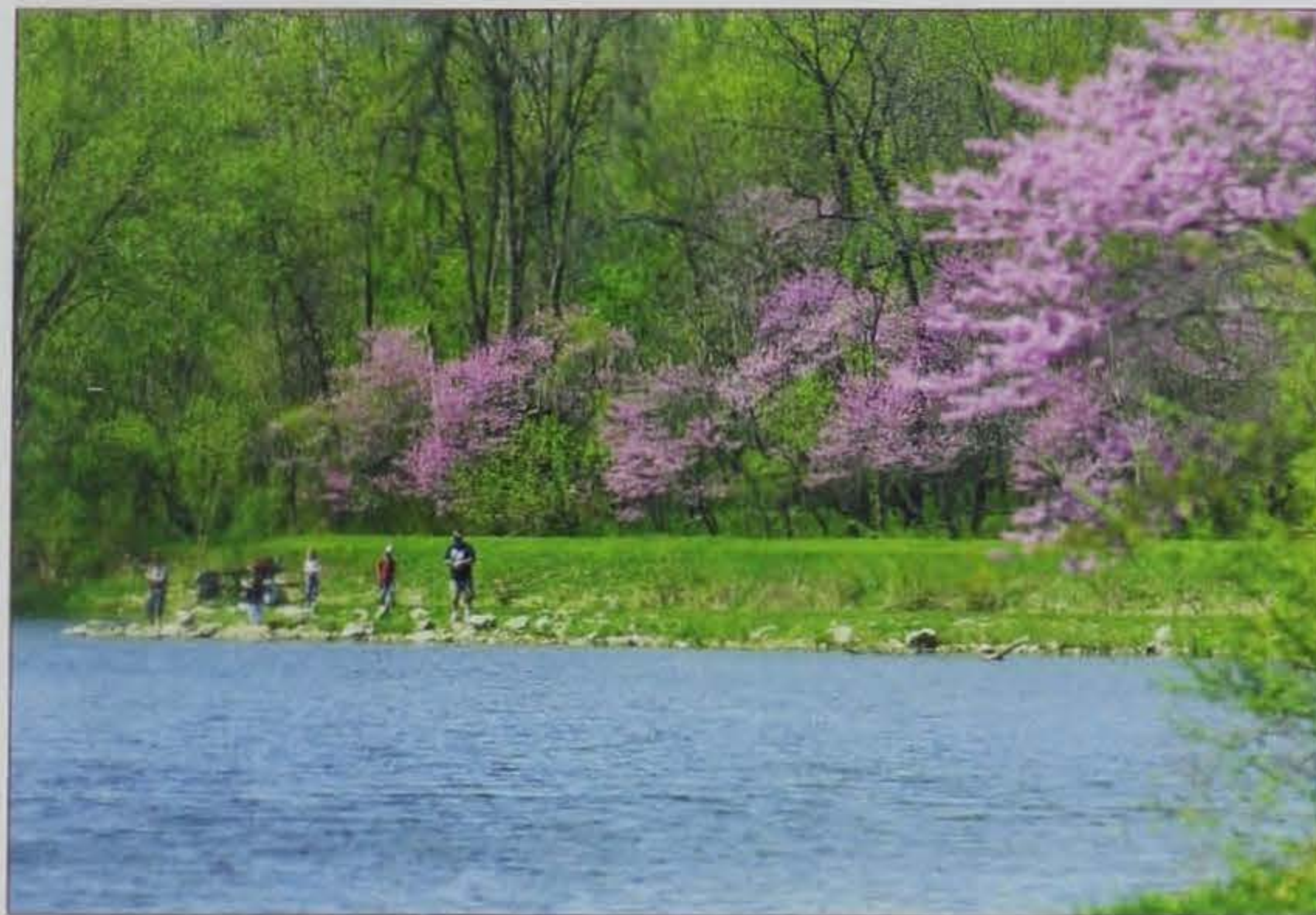
know your state parks

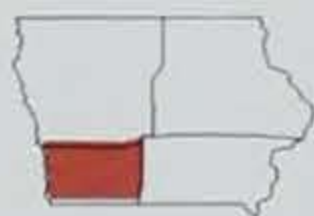
You don't have
to look beyond
your own
backyard to find
scenic beauty,
historic spots
or recreational
opportunities.

Photographs by
Clay Smith

Iowa is sprinkled with great year-round getaway spots, better known as state parks. Some are take-your-breath-away gorgeous, others are simply "places of quiet beauty," as described by Thomas Macbride, who 110 years ago called for the establishment of a state park system. Many Iowans are unaware these parks lie "just around the bend" or tucked in the valley of a neighboring county. Pictured on the following pages are a handful of Iowa's state parks and their unique features, along with a rough location map. How many of these parks or features can you name? Better yet, how many have you visited recently? Photos are identified beginning on page 13.



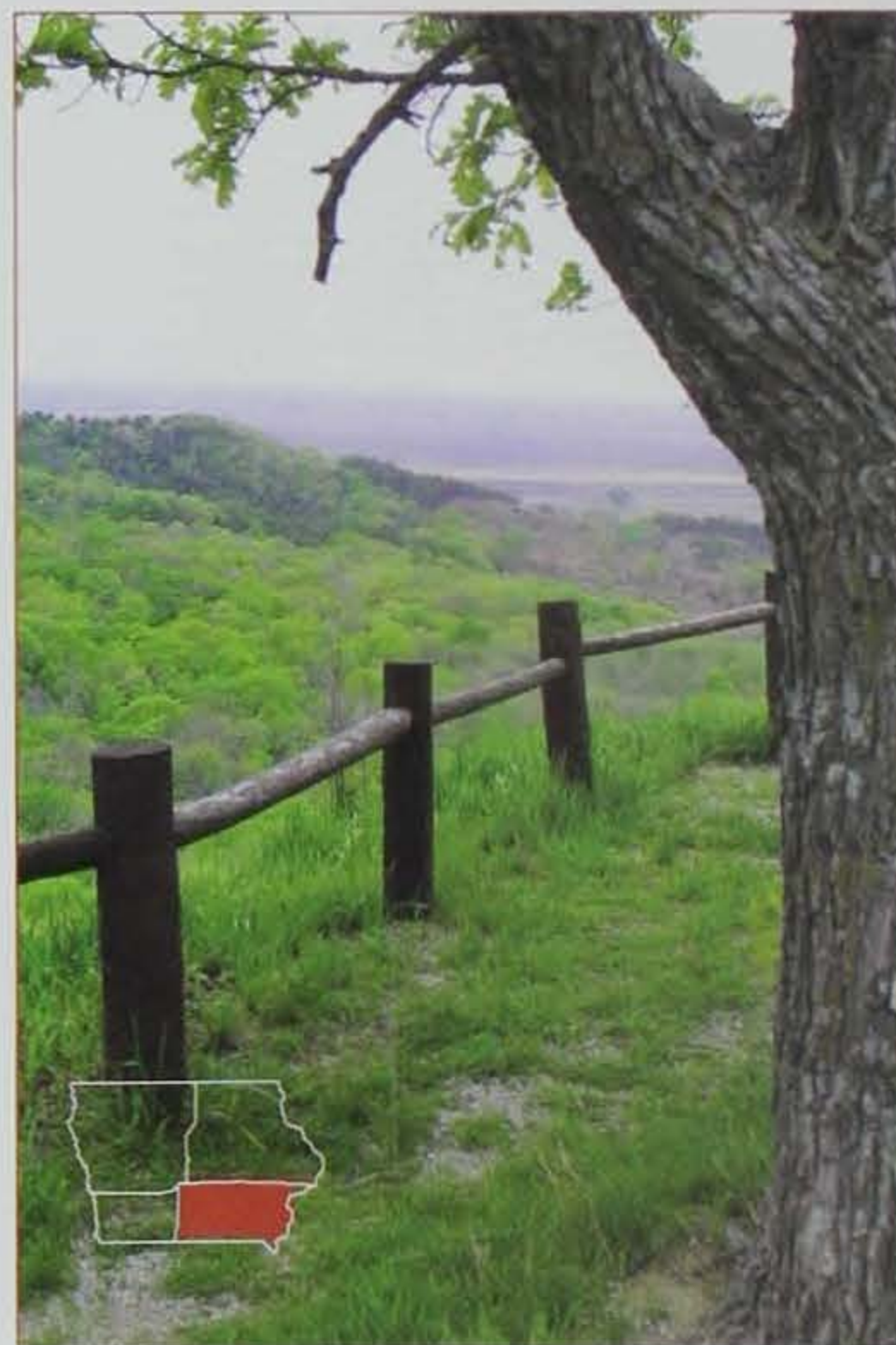


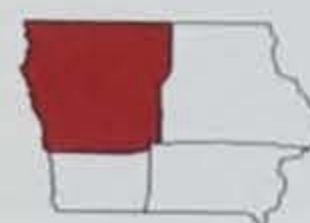
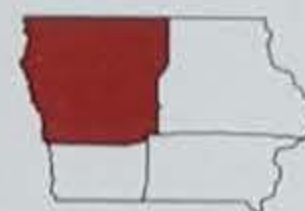
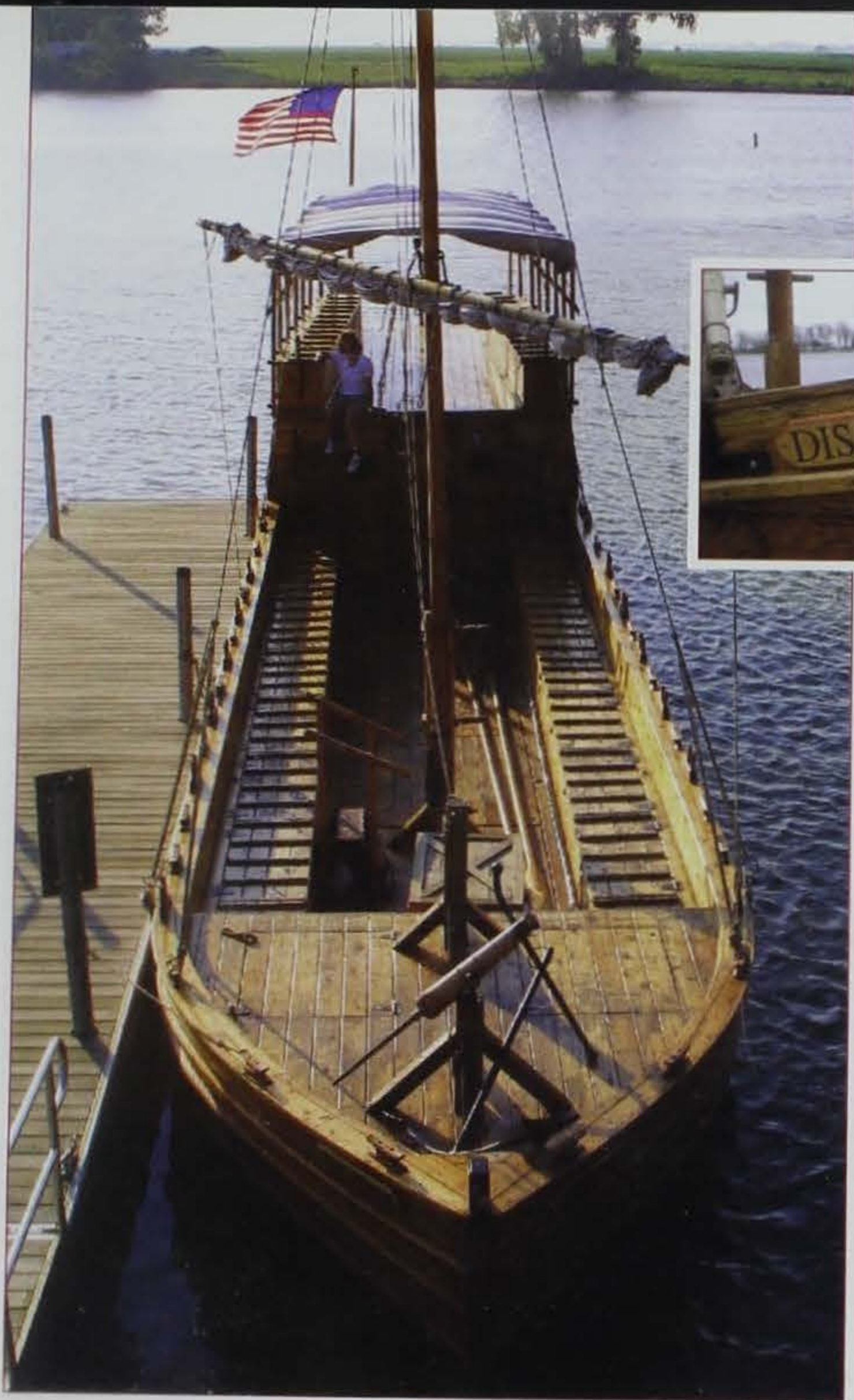


DNR photo



"The public resolve to buy and protect a system of state parks in the 1920s was followed by an unequalled public works effort of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Works Progress Administration of the 1930s. This effort left Iowans a unique legacy of parks, natural areas and recreation facilities . . ."





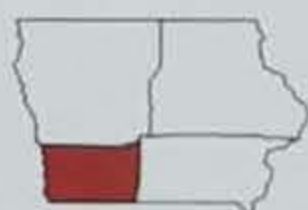
Ken Formanick



"Visit your state parks . . . appreciate the beauty; admire the handiwork of the CCC; enjoy the fishing, camping, hiking and relaxation to be found there. Perhaps most importantly, be grateful for the commitment and imagination of those who founded the system . . ."

— Larry J. Wilson, DNR director 1981-1999
commenting on the 75th anniversary of Iowa's state parks in 1995





Ty Smedes



Ty Smedes

Mark Edwards

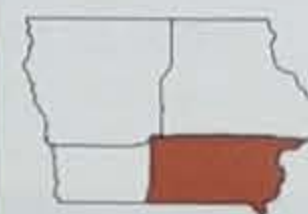


DNR photo





Ken Formanek



state parks they're worth it

There are 87 state parks in Iowa and nearly every Iowan is within an hour's drive of at least one. Some offer historical features, great fishing or other recreational opportunities. All offer significant natural beauty and all are worth getting to know. Visit www.iowadnr.com and click on "state parks" to learn more about your state parks, get maps or make cabin or camping reservations. Now, here are the answers to the photos featured on the previous pages.



AA Call State Park in Kossuth County is one of only two state parks with log lodges, the other being Fort Defiance in Emmet County. AA Call's lodge was originally constructed in 1928 and renovated in 1998.



Pikes Peak State Park in Clayton County boasts one of Iowa's most spectacular views. The overlook gives visitors a breath-taking look at the confluence of the upper Mississippi and Wisconsin rivers.



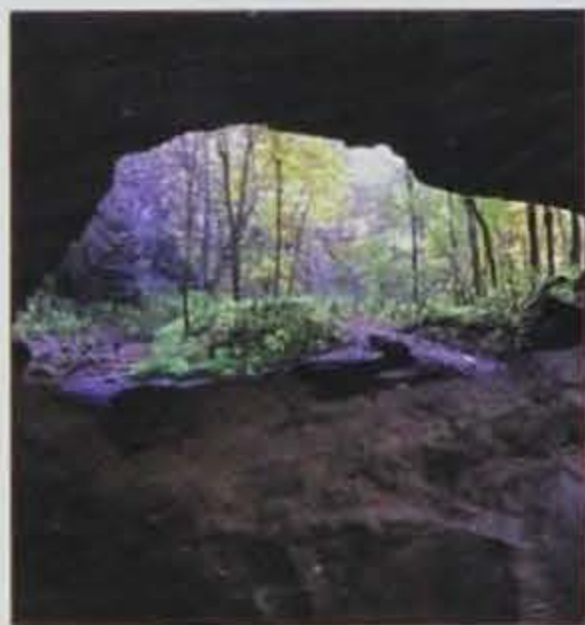
Red Haw State Park in Lucas County can't be beat in April for natural beauty. The park's 72-acre lake is ringed with redbud trees which make a stunning backdrop to an afternoon of spring fishing.



Elinor Bedell State Park in Dickinson County is one of Iowa's newest parks. Dedicated in 2001, the park includes a playground honoring Shelby Duis, a 2-year-old toddler whose death, due to child abuse, made statewide headlines.



Lewis and Clark State Park in Monona County Since 1989, the park has floated its full-size replica of Lewis and Clark's keelboat, *Discovery*. The park hosts an annual festival in June. Stop by for a boat ride.



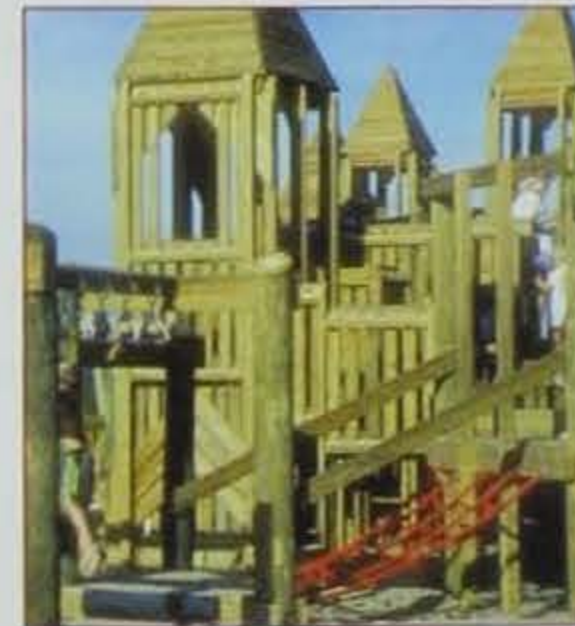
Maquoketa Caves State Park in Jackson County has 13 caves. Dancehall Cave is one-quarter-mile long, has lights and a concrete walkway, and once was the site of local dances, hence the name.



Beeds Lake State Park in Franklin County The lake's spillway was hand-built in 1935 by the men of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and still stands today as testimony to their outstanding craftsmanship.



Geode State Park in Henry County gets its name from Iowa's state rock, the geode. Rock hounds are drawn to the area in search of these crystal treasures, although it is illegal to take them from the park.



Big Creek State Park in Polk County is one of two Iowa state parks with giant wooden play structures. The other is Manawa in Pottawattamie County. Both structures are located near the parks' beaches.



Waubonsie State Park in Fremont County recently increased by 644 acres with the purchase of Camp WaShawtee, a former Girl Scout camp. The park is part of the Lewis and Clark Historic Trail.



Bellevue State Park in Jackson County A community effort put together the largest butterfly garden in Iowa. Volunteers tend 148 plots that attract more than 60 butterfly species.



Wildcat Den State Park in Muscatine County combines natural beauty and preservation of historic structures. Pine Creek Grist Mill, built in 1847, is one of the finest examples of mid-19th Century mills left in the country.



Mines of Spain State Recreation Area in Dubuque County is home to the Julien Dubuque monument. Dubuque received a land grant in 1796 from Spain to work (mine) the land. He designated it as the Mines of Spain.



Pine Lake State Park in Hardin County is home to one of the most scenic bike trails in Iowa. It runs through the park along the lake and is part of the trail that connects the towns of Eldora and Steamboat Rock.



Palisades-Kepler State Park in Linn County sits along the bluffs of the Cedar River. The CCC left a legacy of beautiful stone and timber structures including the park's unique gazebo.



Preparation Canyon State Park in Monona County originally was the site of the Mormon town of Preparation. The trails through the Loess Hills offer hikers a close-hand study of this unique landform.



Pilot Knob in Winnebago County In order to save its beauty, local citizens helped purchase the park in 1921. Pilot Knob contains the second highest point in Iowa and a spectacular view is available from the park's observation tower.



Pammel State Park in Madison County lies along the Middle River. Established on a former mill site in 1923, the park is named after botanist and first chairman of the state board of conservation, Lewis Pammel.

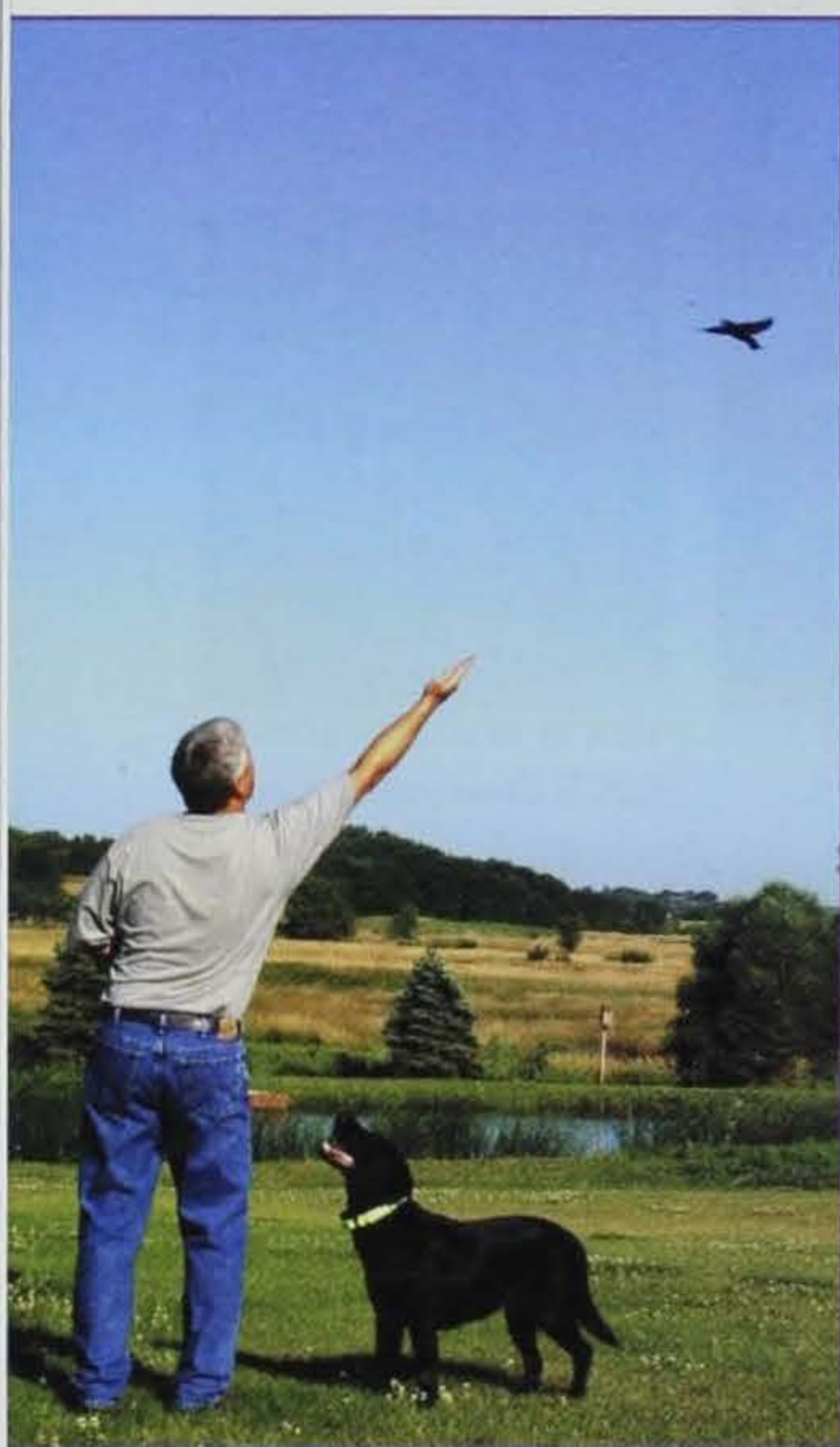


Lake Wapello State Park in Davis County The remodeled CCC stone and timber beach building offers many services including a seasonal restaurant, lake observation deck, picnic pavilion, snacks, bait and tackle.

making a difference

one man's backyard bird project becomes a purple martin paradise

Story and photographs by
Lowell Washburn



Mark Wilkinson's big backyard is a purple martin paradise.

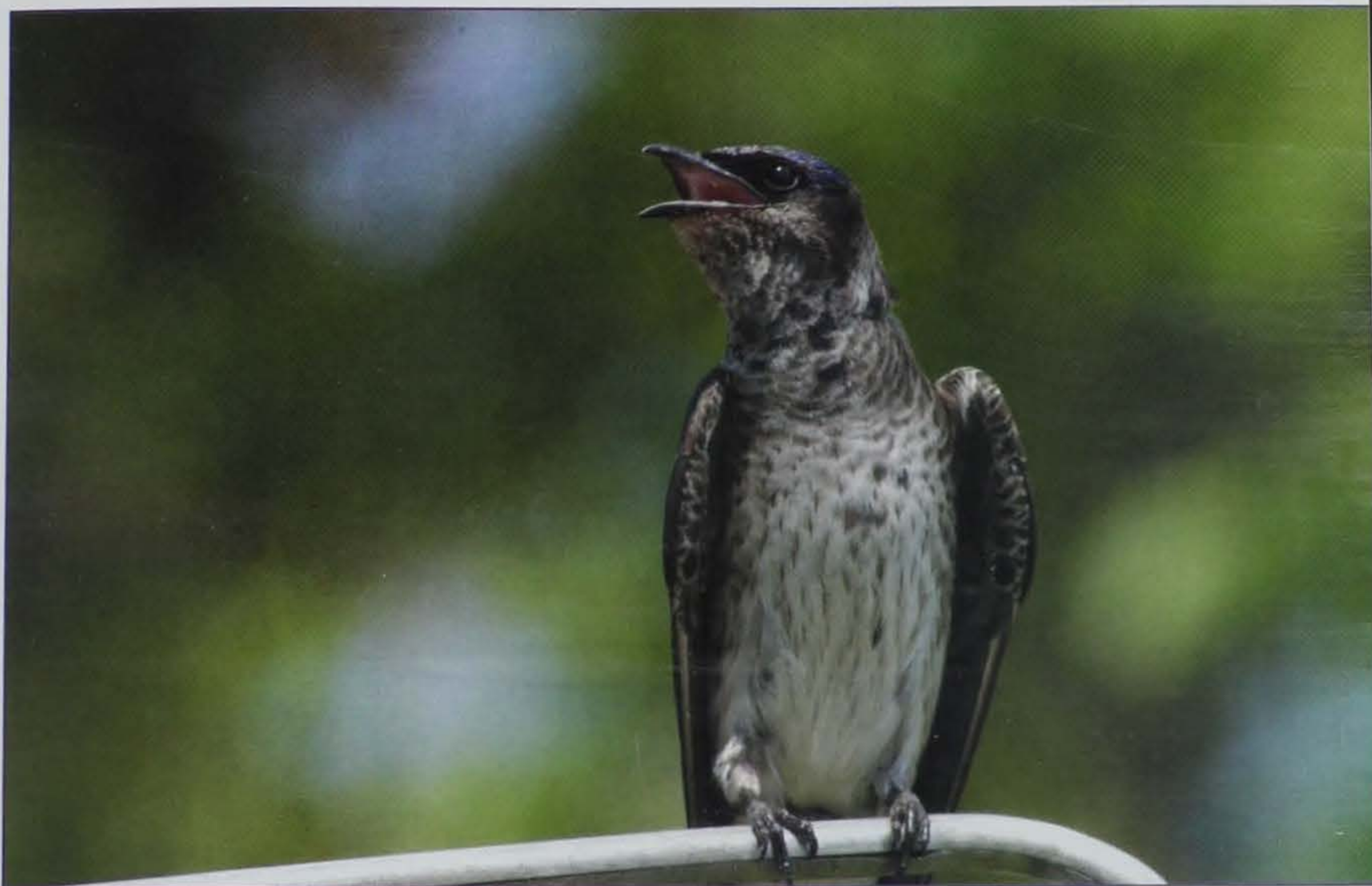
Plenty of open sky for high-speed maneuvering, a cattail-bordered pond for drinking and bathing, nearby grasslands for food. Best of all, there is what purple martins need most — lots and lots of free housing.

By the time mid-summer rolls around, the colony has become a beehive of activity, as scores of adult martins dive, swoop and twitter, while supplying nonstop deliveries of protein-rich insects to their growing young.

It's hard to imagine that this thriving project began just four years ago when Wilkinson decided to install a single factory-made martin house at his Lake Mills home. Prepared for a long wait, Wilkinson was pleasantly surprised when two pairs of martins immediately claimed the apartments as their own. The birds successfully raised young that first summer.

When the martins returned the following spring they brought friends and the colony began to flourish. Before long, the apartments were filled to capacity. Wilkinson installed additional aluminum condos.

■ **Playing Catch** - An adult purple martin flies in for a catch as Mark Wilkinson throws a frozen cricket. When martin flocks returned from South American wintering grounds in the spring of 2005, they were taken by surprise as bitter winds and even measurable snowfall swept across northern Iowa in early May.

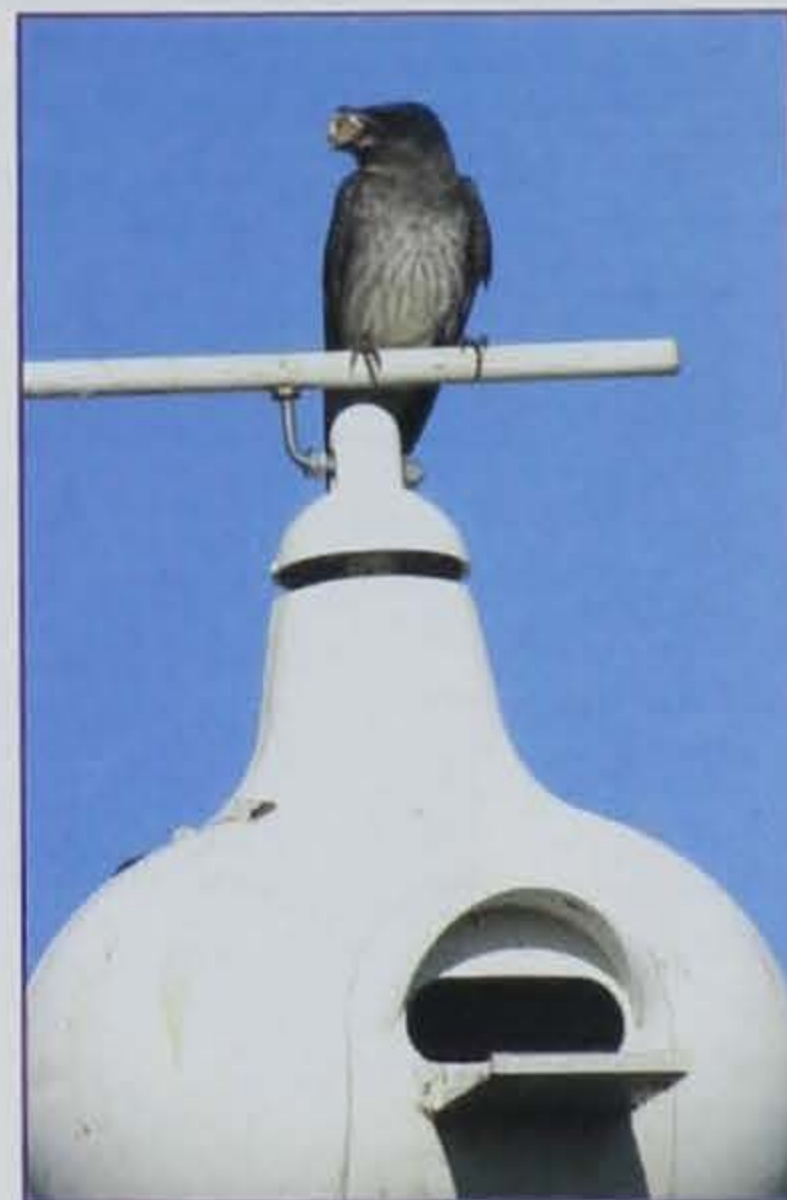


■ A female purple martin arrives at its gourd nest. When early European settlers visited Native American villages, they reported that "the Indians hereabouts frequently attract the black swallows to their villages by the use of dried gourds which are used by the birds for homes. The swallows constant chitterings makes for a most pleasant atmosphere."

"Last spring was really tough on martins," says Wilkinson. "When the temps drop below 48 or 50 degrees there are no insects on the wing, and the birds can only exist for about three days without food. Consequently, there was a quite a bit of mortality across the region last year."

"I heard about feeding frozen crickets and decided to give it a try. It was amazing at how quickly the birds caught on. Once the first martin came in and grabbed one of the (thawed) crickets in the air, the rest caught on immediately. I think feeding crickets saved a lot of breeders that would have perished otherwise."

Although Wilkinson hasn't needed to supplement the martins' diet since, the birds still remember the drill whenever he shows up with a handful of the tasty morsels.





■ Wilkinson uses an electric winch to lower martin houses for inspection as his Labrador retriever, Harley, looks on. Routine maintenance includes removal of unwanted sparrow nests.



After they quickly filled, he added white plastic nesting gourds and finally a second pole featuring more apartment houses and more plastic gourds. Today, the complex has grown to an 80-unit, purple martin mecca. Once again, this popular Winnebago County bird resort is becoming filled to capacity.

"I'm not sure why this particular project has taken off so quickly," said Wilkinson. "I was inspired to become a purple martin landlord by my father-in-law (Don Dearborn of Nevada, Ia.). Although he has lots of

martins now, it took Don six years to get the first birds to nest. When he heard I had martins right away, he was just elated."

Historically, purple martins nested in natural tree cavities across much of North America. But as exotic bird species like house sparrows and starlings began to invade natural sites, nesting martins soon shifted to artificial condos. Wilkinson notes that purple martin survival is now dependent upon human landlords. Even here, martins are still forced to compete with exotic species for space.



An important component to managing a successful colony is the persistent removal of unwanted sparrow nests.

But persistence has its reward. By late July, sparrows have become pretty much a non-issue and Wilkinson can lean back to enjoy the fruits of his labor. It is the peak of the fledging season, and this year's crop of young martins are beginning to emerge. Last summer, more than 250 young martins fledged from this backyard colony.

"This is just a great time of year to watch the birds," says

Wilkinson. "First thing in the morning, they just kind of hang out. Then they start to fly and by mid-morning most will have left for the day. The parents teach the young to catch insects and also take them to visit other colonies. After about two to three weeks on the wing, the young begin to disappear. A lot of them will end up spending the winter in Brazil."

"For me, this is very therapeutic," says Wilkinson. "It's really something to see how these birds live and interact. It just makes you forget about everything else."



■ **Success** - healthy young martins, ready to fledge from nest

One person can make a difference.

To learn more about purple martins and tips on becoming a purple martin landlord, visit the Purple Martin Conservation Association web site at

www.purplemartin.org

a wetland plea

Iowa water quality study examines wetland health

Story and photographs by
Lowell Washburn

Iowa's prairie wetlands are filled with life, beauty and wonder. Acre for acre, square-foot for square-foot, Iowa marshes contain greater species diversity and greater total numbers of life forms than any other ecosystem. In addition to providing critical feeding and breeding grounds for aquatic and migratory wildlife, wetlands also hold and filter our water, aid in flood control and offer profound educational and recreational opportunities.

But more and more of the people who actively use or study Iowa marshes are beginning to voice their concerns that all is not well — that the health of our prairie wetlands may be in decline. Among the most commonly listed concern is that many migratory birds are failing to visit Iowa wetlands in

numbers that are compatible with current populations. The recent change in fall duck migrations is a good example.

As though it only happened yesterday, Iowa's veteran duck hunters can instantly recall the great fall migrations of the late 1970s and early 1980s. For most species, the daily bag limit was 10 ducks per day back then. Once the migration commenced, new flights would sprinkle into the state with each passing cold front. During peak migration days, wetland skies literally filled with birds. When the wind was right and the flight was on, local hunters would often bag a half-dozen ducks or so — and possibly even fill their limits — before heading off for work or school.

Although today's fall flights are similar in number (still estimated at more than 100 million birds), the great clouds of ducks no longer visit

Iowa marshlands. Instead, an apparently increasing number of birds are choosing a migration path that lies west of the Missouri River. Those ducks that do come to Iowa rarely linger as they once did.

Biologists and duck hunters are currently pondering the same question. Why have traditional migration paths changed so dramatically? A dramatic change in agriculture may be part of the reason. In order to find high-energy supplies of field corn, late-season mallards no longer need to include Iowa in their travel plans. Places like South Dakota now offer all the waste corn ducks need.

But that's a small part of the issue. What about the rest of the migration — the majority of those millions of ducks — who fly south during early and mid-autumn? Instead of waste grain, the survival of these birds is dependent on natural marsh



■ *The beauty of Iowa's wetlands may be deceiving. Initial findings by DNR wetland monitoring teams should be cause for concern to all Iowans as the health of our wetlands are in question. Great blue heron (left) and marsh marigold (above).*

■ *Tiger salamander larvae (right).*

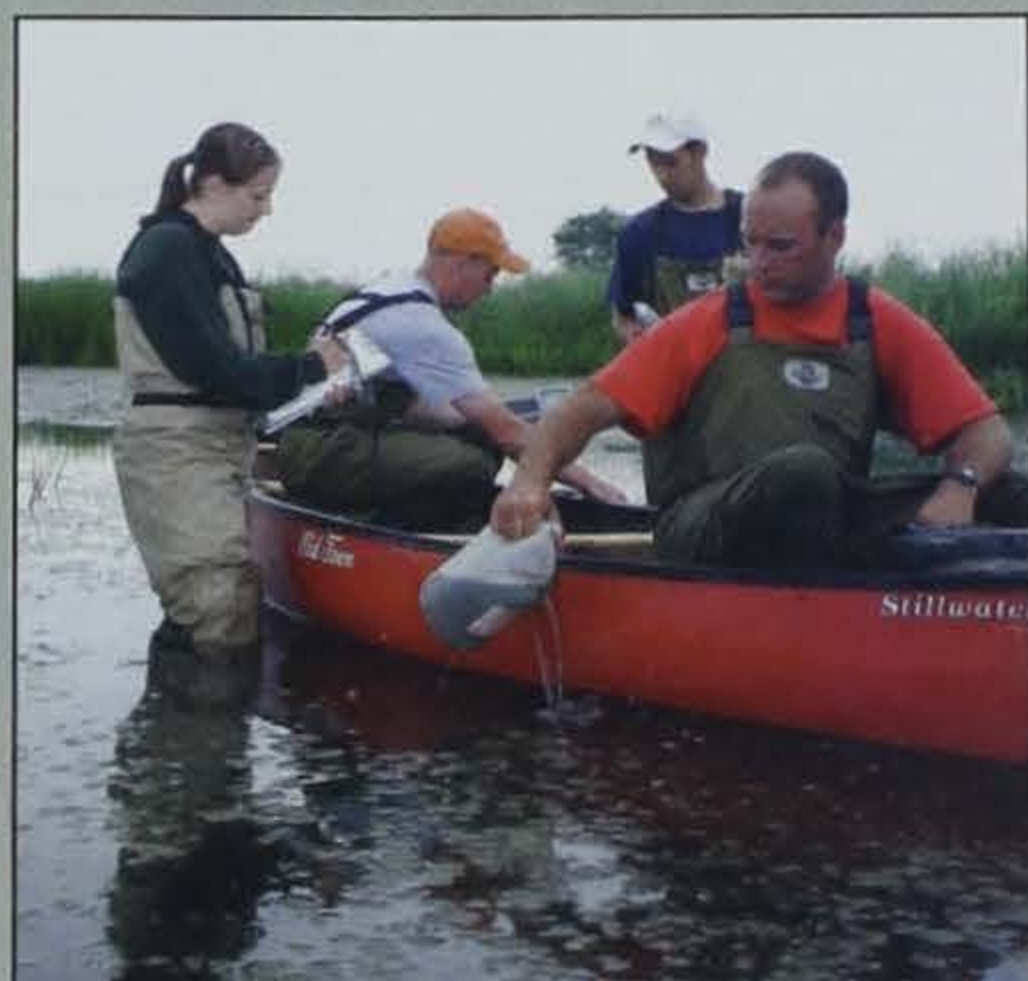
Brock Winkelbauer, on the left, and project manager, Vince Eversizer sift through wetland "mud" for invertebrates (middle right). "Broad diversity at the bottom of the food chain results in diversity at the top," said Eversizer.

Eversizer and Winkelbauer along with Matt Fisher and Lindsay James sample and record aquatic marsh life.



■ *A healthy marsh produces nutrients to not only feed local birds, but migrating birds like the pectoral sandpiper (above). The sandpiper will use the food to get it all the way to the Arctic in the spring.*





foods. As yet, no one can offer a clear explanation as to why the migration paths have shifted for these species or why those southbound ducks that do come to Iowa don't bother to stay. One theory is that ducks can no longer find a square meal on many of our state's wetlands. Migration is physically demanding. Without food, and plenty of it, ducks aren't likely to hang in one place for more than a few hours, if that.

Theories continue, but one thing is certain. The recent and radical change in migration behavior has resulted in a host of recreational consequences. Contemporary hunters — especially the younger ones — may be spending less and less of their leisure time on state wetlands. Some are giving up on ducks altogether.

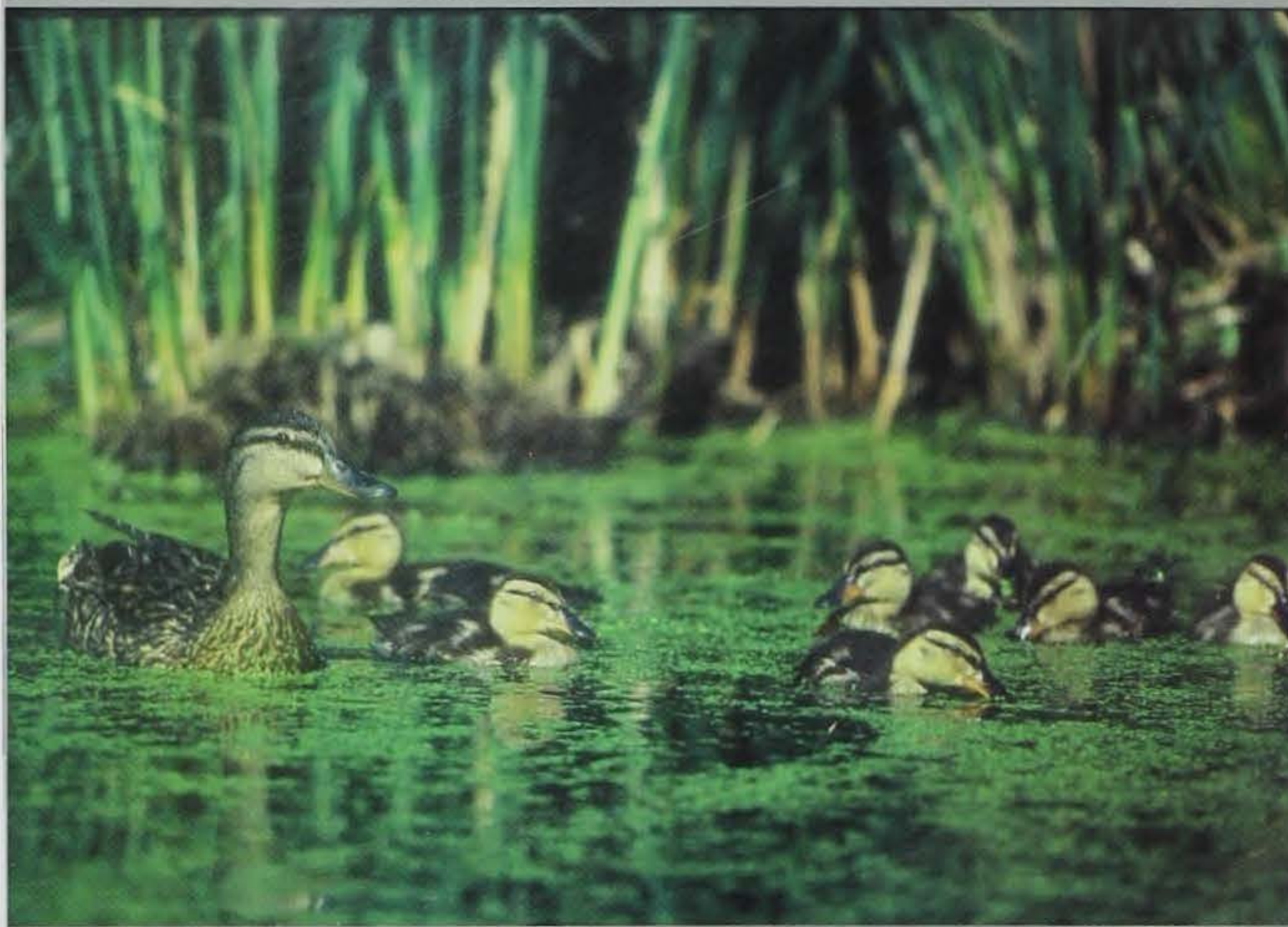
A classic example were the two hunters, probably in their mid-20s, who told me they were "packing it in for good" on

duck hunting. The reason was poor hunting success. They were simply tired, they said, of "trailing boats all over the place, setting a large spread of decoys and then staring at empty skies."

I don't know whether or not the discouraged duo ever followed through with their threat to abandon Iowa duck hunting. What I do know is that the widespread notion that Iowa is in the middle of an ongoing "duck crisis" extends far beyond the opinion of a few disgruntled waterfowl hunters, and that the problem is not limited to the fall migration.

The current scaup dilemma is a good example. Recent investigations have revealed that the alarming, flyway-wide decline in the breeding populations of lesser scaup ducks may actually be the result of poor water quality in Iowa wetlands.

When migrating scaup



arrive during spring migration at Keokuk, on Pool 19 of the upper Mississippi River, their body weights are at or above historic (1980s) levels. Ironically, when those same ducks arrive in northern Minnesota, they have a substantially lower body weight than was recorded 20 years ago.

In other words, northbound scaup are losing, instead of gaining, body reserves as they migrate across Iowa. Those reserves, says scientists, are a critical requirement for successful reproduction. The body weights lost in Iowa are resulting in later nesting dates, reduced clutch size (number of eggs) and reduced survival of adult females. Scientists are now wondering if other species of migratory birds are suffering similar, though less dramatic,

nutritional deficits as they move across the state.

The answer to this, and other questions, may ultimately be provided as the result of intensive water quality and biological examinations currently underway on more than 60 Iowa wetlands. The project was launched last summer and researchers hope the initiative will one day result in a comprehensive, statewide wetland monitoring program.

"Something like this has been needed for a long time, and it's really exciting to be in on the beginning of what will hopefully result in a statewide program," said DNR wetland monitoring biologist Vince Eversizer.

"The project's initial monitoring effort began last summer and we were able to sample 60 permanent and semi-

permanent wetlands on both public and private lands. Our team collected water and sediment samples from each wetland, and those samples were sent to the State Hygienic Lab for testing. The hygienic lab tested against a pretty extensive list of (more than 100) contaminants, which included herbicides, pesticides, phosphorus, nitrogen and heavy metals."

DNR researchers also collected dissolved oxygen and pH readings, recorded water temperatures and measured water conductivity. Once those collections were complete,

the team returned to survey the biological (plants, insects, and fish) aspects of the same marshlands.

The initial results of hygienic lab tests are sobering. Detectable levels of herbicides were discovered in virtually all of the 60 sampled wetlands. Atrazine was present in 97 percent of the wetlands sampled, acetachlor was detected in 80 percent, followed by metolachlor in 77 percent, and alachlor in 60 percent. Other contaminants found in wetland basins included wide-ranging levels of phosphorus and nitrogen.

So what do the findings mean to the overall water quality and the health of Iowa wetlands? At this point, no one can say.

"What we do know is that a diverse (aquatic) plant base is



■ Matt Fisher (front of canoe) and Vince Eversizer collect core samples from a wetland.

essential to a diverse animal base," said Eversizer. "If a wetland receives too many nutrients or contains too many suspended particles that block sunlight, submergent plant life will be choked out and disappear. Nondesirable, nutrient-tolerant plants, such as canary grass, move in to fill the void. When that happens animal diversity will suffer."

"One of the basic questions we need to ask is at what level do certain contaminants have an effect. At what level does the presence of herbicides begin to affect invertebrate (insect) life. If herbicides are at a level that disrupts the survival of insect life, then that effect could go all the way to the top of the food chain. It could affect everything."

Because of the continuing decline of scaup populations, scientists from Louisiana to Canada are currently taking a serious, first-time look at the overall health of the wetlands used by waterfowl and other



birds during spring migration. This monumental task encompasses a study area that runs from the mid-western U.S. to western Manitoba, Canada. One of the things avian

■ Researchers are most interested in the population densities of invertebrate animals (left) that provide the critical egg-building nutrients and brood food needed by waterfowl (opposite page) and other migrating birds. Inch for inch, Iowa marshes contain greater species diversity and greater total numbers of life forms than any other ecosystem.

researchers are most interested in are the population densities of invertebrate animals. Invertebrates such as amphipods — a tiny crustacean resembling fairy shrimp — provide the critical, egg-building nutrients needed by scaup and other nesting waterfowl.

The results of this large-scale water quality sampling effort has shown that scaup are currently unable to find the essential food items that were historically available in Iowa wetlands.

"Important aquatic foods have disappeared as our wetlands have become horribly degraded during the past 25 years. This should come as no great surprise since our (Iowa) marshlands are stuck in the middle of the most intensively farmed region in the entire Midwest," said DNR waterfowl biologist Guy Zenner.

"For lesser scaup to maintain the healthy body condition needed for egg production, they must have amphipods. Historically, it was no problem to find that nutritional source in Iowa. Today, wetland water quality has been compromised to the point that amphipods no longer exist in most marshlands. Migrating ducks are now forced to feed on other, more pollutant-tolerant inverts — such as snails," said Zenner. "But even these alternate food sources may be in short supply. Consequently, scaup end up surviving on things like aquatic seeds or bloodworms which are insufficient to increase or even maintain body weights."

Here's the alarming truth. In terms of amphipod, snail, mollusk and other important invertebrate food families, Iowa ranks at the very bottom of all wetland groups examined in an area extending from central Iowa to Canada.

At the same time, Iowa wetlands are at the very top of the list for nitrates, phosphorus levels, rough fish densities and low water clarity.

"I think that everyone living in Iowa should be very dismayed by these findings," said Zenner. "It has now become very evident that our state's wetlands are not as healthy as they appeared at a glance. We've learned that the quality of any Iowa wetland is simply a mirror image of the quality of its watershed. Protecting or improving those watersheds has become our next challenge."

"Wetlands are the kidneys of a watershed," said Eversizer. "They have the ability to filter water and provide tremendous wildlife habitat. Marshlands were a component to most Iowa watersheds, but we've drained more than 90 percent of what we had. What we're doing now is examining the health of the ones that still exist."

"Right now there is a lot of concern over the quality of groundwater and surface water, which makes this study very appropriate. I think people will come to realize that the water quality of our wetlands is not just something that's important to hunters. It's important to all people who live in Iowa."



■ One of the greatest challenges of the DNR's wetland monitoring teams seems to be locating a control or "reference" wetland. The only one that came close to meeting the contaminant-free criteria during last year's research was a basin in the midst of the Union Hills Waterfowl Production Area, a 2,000-plus-acre public complex in Cerro Gordo County (above).

RESULTS OF WETLAND MONITORING ARE CAUSE FOR ALARM

By Lowell Washburn

Researchers are currently engaged in a first-of-its-kind water quality study designed to assess the health of Iowa wetlands. Largely the result of a \$250,000 EPA grant, the study was launched last summer where water and core samples were collected from 60 northern Iowa wetlands. This summer, the study will be expanded to include the central portion of the state.

The results of last year's sampling are cause for alarm. Testing against a list containing 104 separate contaminants, scientists at the State Hygienic Laboratory found that virtually all (97 percent) of the marshlands sampled contained measurable levels of herbicides, pesticides or other chemical contaminants.

Those results should concern everyone. Not just birders, duck hunters or other nature enthusiasts — but every single person who calls Iowa home.

When DNR monitoring teams began collecting samples last summer, one of their greatest challenges was to locate control or "reference" wetlands where scientists could obtain reliable, benchmark comparisons regarding diversity and abundance of aquatic plant and animal life. The only basin that came close to meeting the contaminant-free criteria was located on the Union Hills Waterfowl Production Area, a public 2,000-plus-acre complex of native grassland and prairie potholes.

One of the top questions researchers hope to answer is at what level do chemical or other contaminants begin to have a measurable, negative effect on aquatic life forms. The results of previous investigations suggest many Iowa wetlands have already crossed that line. In a study that compared wetland water quality from across the mid-western U.S. to Manitoba, Canada, it was discovered that Iowa marshes were the most degraded. In other words, the worst of the worst.

As DNR wetland monitoring biologist Vince Eversizer has so eloquently stated, wetlands are the

kidneys of a watershed. They collect, filter and cleanse our water. As contaminants flow in from surrounding landscapes, pollutants are consumed or retained by aquatic plant communities. Pure water exits into adjacent lakes and streams, or percolates downward to recharge vital underground aquifers.

But if wetlands really are the kidneys of our watersheds, just how much stress can they endure before natural processes begin to fail and marshes lose their ability to cleanse impurities?

In the grand scheme of things, is it really that important if we sacrifice some diversity or abundance in certain families of invertebrate marsh life? After all, they are just bugs.

Here's another. Although there is mounting evidence that the life we've already lost in Iowa wetlands is having a profound negative effect on the breeding ecology of lesser scaup ducks, most other waterfowl species seem to be doing OK. Could the loss of a certain kind of duck or tiny water creatures that most of us will never see anyway simply be part of the price of progress? At this point, there is certainly no demonstrable link between contaminated wetland basins, reduced scaup numbers and an increased risk to human health.

If these questions or statements sound vaguely familiar, they should. It is exactly the way a previous generations responded when scientists suggested DDT was impacting the food chain from the bottom up — insects to songbirds, songbirds to predators — and that the cataclysmic decline of peregrine falcons, ospreys and bald eagles was the direct result of better living through chemistry. Following the release of her controversial book *Silent Spring*, author Rachel Carson was ridiculed and discredited. A bitter environmental debate ensued. Passions flared. Evidence grew. And DDT was finally banned in 1972. Decades later medical researchers began to make the link between the use of DDT and cancer in humans. As Eversizer also noted, foul the food chain at the bottom and you affect everything.

Whether or not critics will attempt to minimize or discredit the findings of Iowa's wetland monitoring study remains to be seen. But regardless of how we choose to interpret the information, one thing is certain. None of us can change the truth.

dog trials

north iowa pointing dog field trial draws competitors from across the nation

Story and photographs by
Lowell Washburn

A bird dog field trial is the best place I know where an average guy — like me — can go and observe a large number of highly trained, highly skilled, highly motivated hunting dogs that, after being loosed in pairs, can be followed by a group of spectators riding good horses through open grasslands containing plenty of upland gamebirds which the dogs find and point during judged competition. At least that's my attempt to describe in a single sentence the complex, highly organized activity that, for more than a century, has lured human and canine competitors to the tradition-steeped world of pointing dog field trialing.

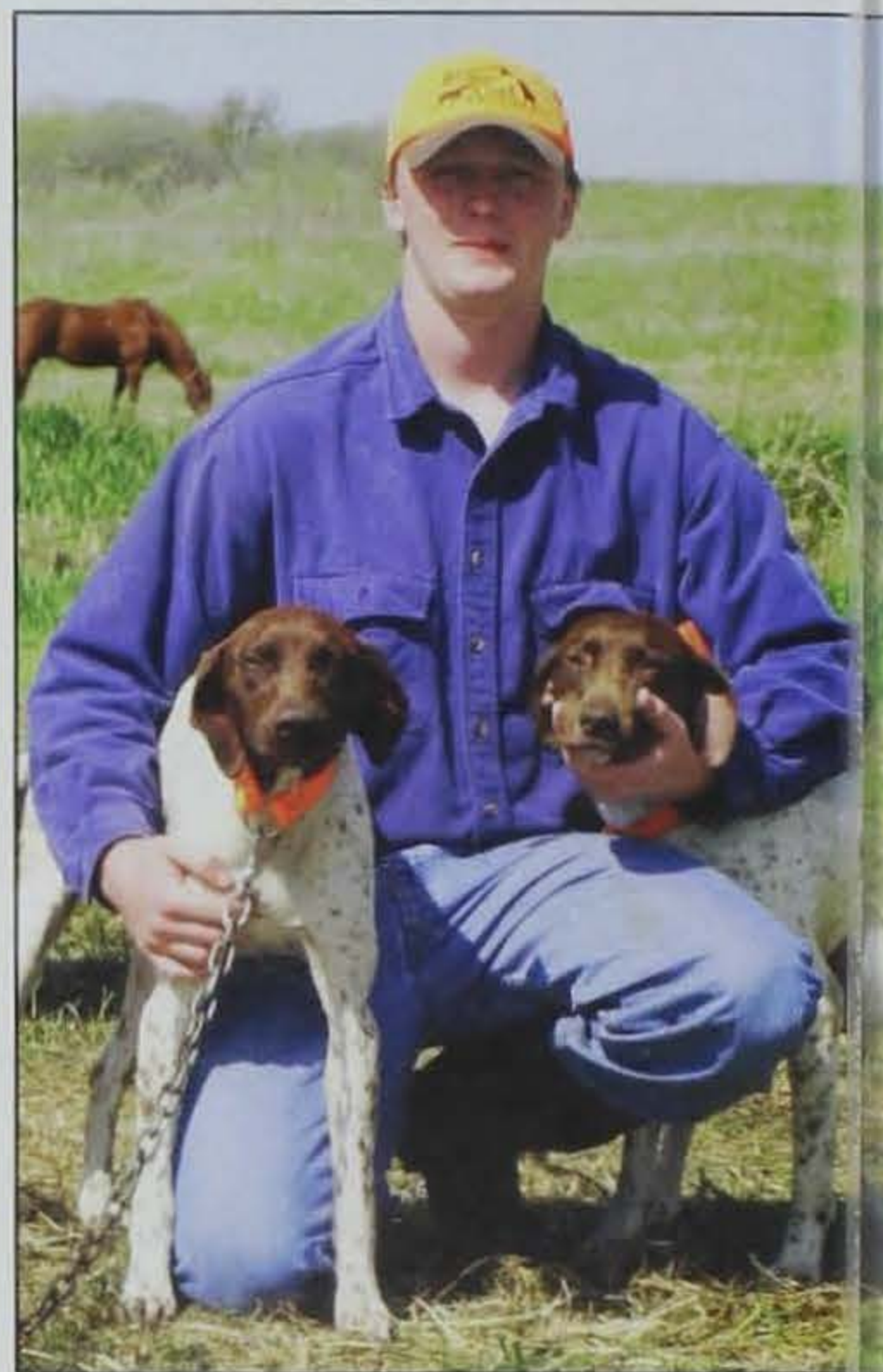
"You'll meet a lot of great people and find all kinds of good stuff here, but field trials are really all about the dogs. Watching the dogs run and do what they're bred to do is the reason we're here," said Cindy Findley, member of the North

Country Gordon Setter Club of Minnesota and official chair for the AKC-licensed Pointing Breed Field Trial held in early May at the Ringneck Acres Hunting Preserve located near Forest City in north-central Iowa.

Field trial competitor Ray Marshall of Stillwater, Minn., agrees that it's all about the dogs.

"I think field trials are a really good way to encourage people to hunt with trained dogs," said Marshall. "Trials offer an opportunity to demonstrate that a dog can find and point game, has good manners around birds, and is steady — a dog that will let you walk around in front of it while it's on point and remain steady once a bird flushes."

Marshall, along with his wife Jackie, has been attending field trials for the past 20 years. They own Irish setters and have won the National Amateur Championship three times with three different dogs. They usually breed one litter of pups per year, and several of




■ Mike Linn, of Rogers, Minn., with German shorthairs Sadie and Susie, trained by Linn's father Clark.

these have also made it to the championship level.

"It's been interesting," said Marshall. "The very first time we entered a trial, my dog eked out a 4th place. To most people it might not have been a big deal since they only gave four places. But I thought it was terrific. I mean I was on cloud nine."

"I remember a guy who came over and said, 'The way I figure, that ribbon is going to cost you around 50 grand.' I was just a beginner and didn't get it. What do you mean, I asked. 'Well,' the guy continued, 'I figure you're hooked pretty good right now. You're going to need to buy a



■ *Prince, a male German wire-haired pointer, was one of 49 dogs representing eight breeds at the North Iowa Pointing Dog Field Trial in May.*

horse, a trailer, a truck. I think you'll spend at least 50 grand, maybe more."

"Looking back, I think he was right," he chuckled.

"I grew up near Atlantic, Iowa, and was attracted to Irish setters back then. I bought a 7-year-old, and he was terrific on pheasants. Then I got a puppy. It sort of mushroomed after that and the trials came later," says Marshall. "Jackie grew up barrel racing horses in North Dakota, and we decided this would be a perfect match — dogs and horses — something we would both enjoy."

"This has been a good, healthy hobby for us and we've had a lot of really great times," said Jackie Marshall. "We're hunters and we trial our dogs in the spring so we can hunt them in the fall. Last season we shot 75 quail over points. I love to cook wild game and, to me, the birds we bag are real gold," she added.

Professional dog trainer Ray Dohse of Wrightsville, Ga., had an extremely busy, as well as productive, time during northern Iowa's weekend dog trial. Handling several dogs owned by himself and others, Dohse won five placements. He won first place in the Open Gun Dog Stake with Lass, a 3-year-old Irish setter owned by Ray and Jackie Marshall.

Considered to be one of the nation's top dog trainers, Dohse is also credited as being the country's premier trainer of working Irish setters, a fact that made his win for Open Gun Dog (where seven pointing breeds compete) doubly sweet.

"A lot of people think that Irish setters are all just show dogs now," said Dohse. "That's not true and there are still good, working dogs out there. They can definitely compete with the other breeds, but you have to find the right ones."

A professional trainer since 1976, Dohse now trains around 100 pointing dogs per year for hunting and field trialing. But unlike many dog owners and even some pros, he believes that a highly motivated field trial competitor can also be a good hunting companion.

"I personally hunt all the dogs I own," said Dohse. "I tell

people that dogs can do both. It's not necessarily just one or the other."

"When people are looking for a dog (puppy) I tell them to go and see the parents. Don't take somebody's word for it. Find out if those dogs really hunt and go from there. My best field trial dogs are also the ones I hunt with."

When not training in the South, Dohse spends much of his time on the road competing in trials across much of the U.S. Spring trials are among his favorites.

"I think spring bird dog trials are the same to bird

■ Professional dog trainers, Ray Dohse of Wrightsville, Ga. (back) and Matt Eder from Brook Park, Minn., prepare to release their dogs at the starting point or break away of the trial.





hunting as catch-and-release is to fishing," said Dohse. "Most of the horseback field trials are nonconsumptive where we're flushing but not killing birds."

"What we're looking for are dogs that will do a good job of finding birds and will hold steady to wing and shot. Dogs find the game and point, the birds fly away, and we all get to ride horses. What could be better?"

■ Ray and Jackie Marshall from Stillwater, Minn., with a brace of their Irish setters.

field trial basics

The American Kennel Club has a strict and demanding set of rules for its licensed Pointing Dog Field Trials. Open trials can be entered by pointing dogs of any breed recognized by the AKC. In a "horseback handling" trial the handlers, judges, and spectators (gallery) follow the dogs on horses.

Dogs compete two at a time (brace) and are run along a predetermined course. The dogs are followed by their handlers, who are followed by the judges, who are followed by the gallery. Spectators may not approach or get in front of the judges. Each handler may also use one assistant (scout) to assist in locating the dog or holding the handler's horse after the dog finds and points a bird. The judges score dogs on several criteria.

Only the handler may handle or communicate with a competing pointer. While running the course, most handlers will "sing" to their dogs — generally a slurring, two-syllable name or verse (such as Hi - Yooo) that urges the dog on and assures the pointer that it's doing a good job.

Pen-raised quail are planted along the course. Dogs may also encounter wild game, such as pheasants. Whether planted or wild, dogs are



expected to handle the situation in good style. When a dog goes on point, the handler signals the judge. When the judges arrive, the handler dismounts and attempts to produce the bird. When the game flushes, the handler fires a blank gun. In the Open Gun Dog and Amateur Gun Dog stakes, a dog is expected to locate game efficiently, point staunchly, exhibit good bird sense and manners, and to hold steady to wing and shot once game is flushed. A dog encountering its brace mate on point must back (or honor) the other dog's point. Standards are somewhat less demanding for puppy and derby stake dogs.

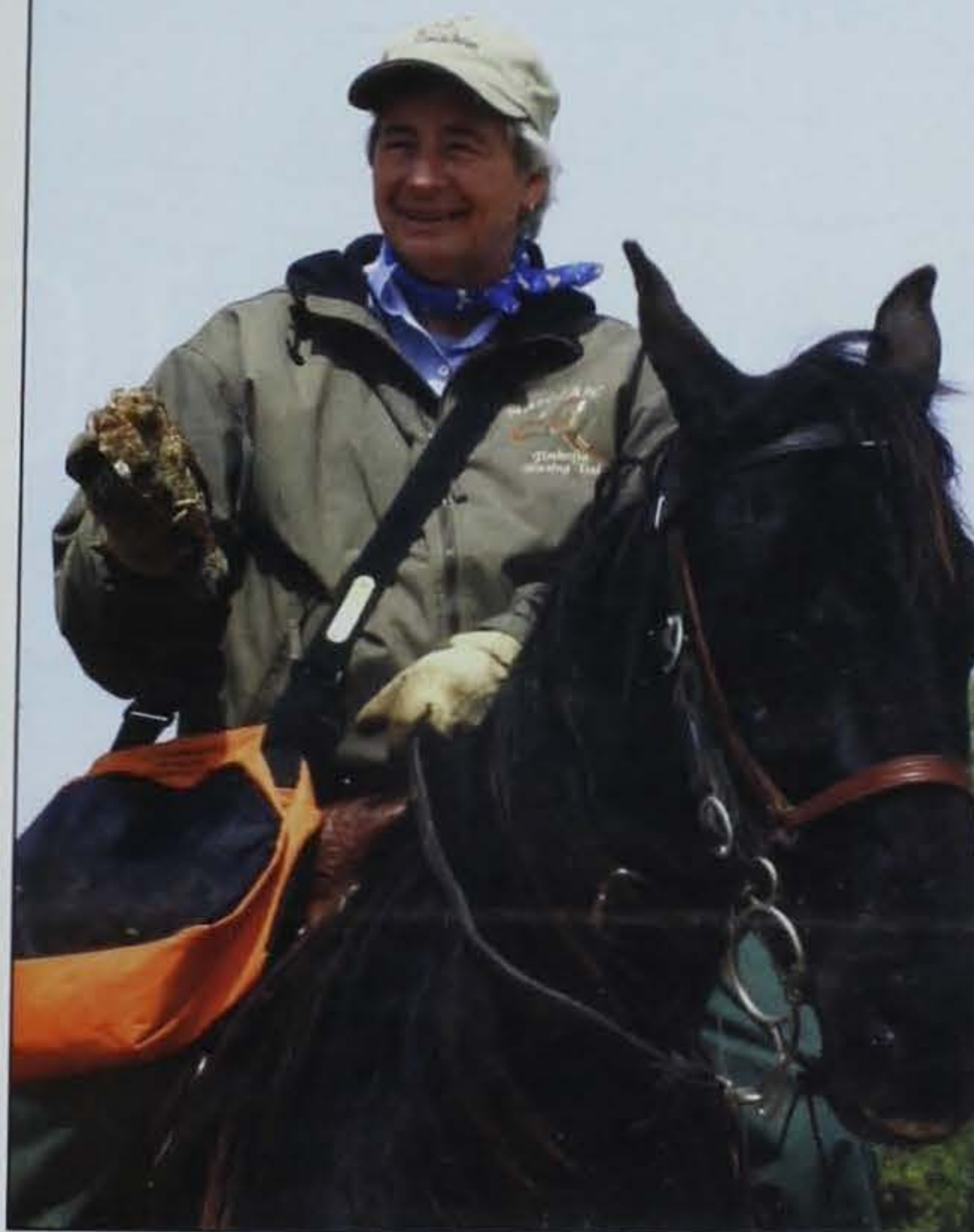


■ *Cindy Findley prepares to place a quail during a recent field trial (upper right). A short pep talk with her Gordon setter, Teal (right) is part of their routine before heading to the field. Findley keeps a close eye on her hunting partner before flushing their quarry (above).*

iowa duo wins national setter championship

Story and photographs by
Lowell Washburn





Although she never would, Clear Lake's Cindy Findley has every right to brag. Last autumn Findley, and her dog Teal, won the national championship as the top amateur duo at the Gordon Setter Club of America National Field Trial Championship. The six-day event was held near Spokane, Wash., where more than 100 of the top U.S. Gordons competed. The duo won the top amateur award after successfully competing against 22 of the nation's top setters. For Findley, it was an unforgettable day.

"Teal had been having a very good year so far, and I was

really hoping for a placement in this event," said Findley. "I was pleasantly surprised with how Teal preformed during the competition. I realized that he had done a very fine job for me, but didn't know that we'd won. I can tell you that it was a pretty great moment when the judge called my name."

Most people are amazed when they learn that Findley didn't even attend a field trial until 2001. Another aspect that makes her national win so incredible, and a subject that Findley is reluctant to discuss, is the fact that she trained the championship dog all by herself. By contrast, most amateur

stake dogs are trained (partly or fully) by professionals and then handled by their owners during competition.

"I like to train my own dog, and I guess it was just him and me," concedes Findley.

"I've had Teal since he was 8 weeks old and we make a good team. He lives with me (in the house) and we spend good time together. He's a very competitive dog, and it's a good feeling to know we got there together."

Findley attributes much of her winning dog's success to genetics — finding a well bred animal that has the right stuff in the first place. She became interested in Gordon setters and obtained Teal through her close friends, Dano and Marianne Morf, who have produced a number of top Gordons at the Prairie Star Kennels near Clear Lake.

"Field trialing has become very important to me," says Findley. "It's so many things. For me it's being out in the sunshine, it's the frosty mornings when you get up and have to break ice for the dogs and horses, it's saddling up and getting ready to ride."

"But most of all, field trials are all about the dogs," she says. "It's for people who love their dogs and love to see them perform. Trials provide an interaction between people, dogs, and horses that is very unique. I love Iowa prairie and I love dogs. This is what really does it for me."

A person is seen from the side, wearing a dark jacket, paddling a wooden canoe on a calm body of water. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow across the sky and reflecting on the water's surface. The canoe is in the foreground, and the water extends to the horizon. The overall mood is peaceful and serene.

paddling iowa: 101

Experiencing Iowa from the seat of a canoe or kayak can be as relaxing or as adventurous as you make it. And when it comes to fun, it's a summer activity that's hard to beat.

Story by Mick Klernesrud

Iowa streams have become a refuge for an increasing number of Iowans willing to leave their plugged-in world and explore what lies just around the bend. It is the peaceful setting that recalls a different time, and allows the 21st Century to see Iowa from the same perspective as her earliest explorers.

Nate Hooegeveen has been an avid paddler since 2001 and is the past president of the Iowa Whitewater Coalition. Hooegeveen, a LeMars native and current coordinator of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources' water trails program, began his paddling on the Little Sioux River in northwest Iowa. He has since paddled most of Iowa's waterways. He says once someone sees the world from a canoe, they want to experience the thrill again and often become hooked.

For beginners, the prime paddling time is from late May to early June because the streams generally have better water levels and the water is warmer.

"You can get started anytime, but it is less frustrating if you are not scraping along," Hooegeveen said.

One of the best ways to try paddling is to go through one of the two dozen outfitters around

the state. Many outfitters will offer some basic training along with established float trips, taking the confusion out of planning a trip. By going with an outfitter, the novice paddler can get the experience of going down a stream with only a minimal investment. Most outfitters charge between \$25 and \$35 for a trip and have all the gear necessary.

A lot of information on paddling Iowa streams is available at www.paddlingiowa.com, including a list of canoe outfitters, paddling clubs, reviews of streams and more. There is also a list of paddling shops on the web site, which offer introductory courses in canoeing and kayaking. The clubs listed can often help with safety issues, local stream projects and helping new paddlers learn from the more experienced members of the paddling community.

Safety on the River

One of the first issues for new paddlers is safety. Rivers are a dynamic system and hazards can change locations from year to year, and new hazards can materialize during high water. To avoid these hazards, good

judgment and common sense can go a long way.

Safety topics usually cover the hazards in the water as well as the water itself. In the early season, the water temperature is fairly cold. When paddling in the early spring, it's a good idea to wear a wetsuit or other appropriate gear that can prevent hypothermia. Paddlers must also be aware of downed trees and other debris, like large barrels or appliances, and fences in the water, which can be particularly dangerous in the case of fast moving water. In Iowa, low-head dams are also a real safety issue. Other tips include always wearing a lifejacket and avoiding alcohol while on the stream.

River Types

In general, Iowa streams are fairly easy to navigate. "The vast majority of water in Iowa is not



even a Class I," Hoogeveen said. But there are a few exceptions.

Class I streams are those with some rapids, but are generally fairly tame. Class II streams offer more challenges and require the paddler to have some boat control ability to not dump the boat. Iowa has a few streams that have Class I and Class II features — streams like Lizard Creek that flows into Fort Dodge, a section of the Yellow River in Allamakee County in northeast Iowa, the Shell Rock in Cerro Gordo County from Plymouth to

water-level dependent. He said some smaller creeks in the Des Moines River watershed can rise to this level.

The last piece of advice is to not overlook creeks. Lizard Creek and Big Cedar Creek offer excellent paddling, Hoogeveen said.

Equipment

Hoogeveen said the amount of enjoyment while paddling is directly related to the comfort of the boat, and he advised potential boat buyers to spend time seeing

the long-term rather than a cost to get started.

Lastly, Hoogeveen said while the attraction of the least expensive boat might be enticing, it may lack the comfort and fit of other models. Sitting in a boat that does not fit well is discouraging and will most likely mean fewer trips.

Selecting and outfitting a boat does not mean going to the poor house. For example, a kayak with paddle, lifejacket, etc., should run about \$500. An entry-level canoe will run between \$400 and \$600. Of course there are models that cost more for more specific purposes. If the canoe will be used primarily for fishing, look for a wider, more stable boat. If there are more portages or longer journeys, canoes made from the lightweight material Kevlar are available, but can cost from around \$1,200 on up.

Getting on the Water Middle Raccoon River

Listed as one of five protected waters of the state, the Middle Raccoon River is a popular destination for paddlers, floaters and anglers. Joe Hanner, director of the Guthrie County Conservation Board, said he gets calls all the time from people asking about the river. He said the number one question the first-timers ask is how long it takes to float. "That's impossible to answer," Hanner said.

The Middle Raccoon River starting at the Lennon Mill Dam in Panora in Guthrie County is a medium-sized river with tremendous access.



Clay Smith

■ **Classes Help** — *For novice paddlers, a class covering the basics and includes time on the water is a good investment. Many paddling shops offer classes, as well as community park and rec departments and county conservation boards. Outdoor skills camps such as Becoming an Outdoors Woman (above) often offer courses in canoeing or kayaking.*

Nora Springs, and the Winnebago River in Mason City.

Class III streams have drops of more than 3 feet, which can swamp an open canoe. Hoogeveen said Iowa can have Class III streams, but they are

what is out there and get a good feel of the actual boat. Sit in the boat, see where your knees hit, he said. Talk to vendors who know something about the boats and spend time with them. Look at the purchase as an investment for

Because it has such tremendous access, a lot of first-time paddlers head to Panora. Hanner's favorite stretch is from Lennon Mill to the Middle Raccoon access. But he also likes the stretch from the Middle Raccoon Access to the Cowles access. "You really can't go wrong either way," he said. For the novice paddler, maybe just float to the P-28 access, which is a fairly short float. "You don't want to bite off more than you can chew," Hanner said.

River traffic increases in June because kids are out of school, and usually the river has a nice flow to it. Raccoon River Outfitters, in Redfield caters to those in need of a canoe (see page 39).

The Middle Coon, as it is known locally, has sections with nice riffles and is nearly always navigable, unless the water level is extremely low which can happen in August and September, or is extremely high in the spring. When the river has a nice flow, there are some boulders that come in to play that would normally be easy to avoid. During high flows, Hanner said he has seen a few canoes turned in to big horseshoes.

Hanner has seen the popularity of the river increase 10 to 15 times since he started working for the board in 1987. People come from Omaha to Des Moines and points beyond to paddle the river and stay in a park.

"I think when you have a high quality river like the Middle Raccoon, people will come to enjoy it. I'm not going to

compare it to northeast Iowa, but it would do well against the rest of the state," Hanner said. "It is very aesthetically pleasing."

The Middle Raccoon River benefits from a fairly steep landscape and from having Lake Panorama upstream. Lake Panorama catches a lot of silt that would normally be in the river.

"As a river, the Middle Raccoon has some of the better water quality in the state in relation to other rivers and that makes it popular for canoeists, kayakers and tubers. The river is also popular from a fish and wildlife standpoint and brings people in because of it," Hanner said. "It's just a nice river to float. It's not very demanding in terms of obstacles."

Paddlers should bring all the required safety equipment, sunscreen, bug spray, extra fluids and possibly a lunch. There are a number of rockbars and sandbars to beach and explore for fossils or to relax.

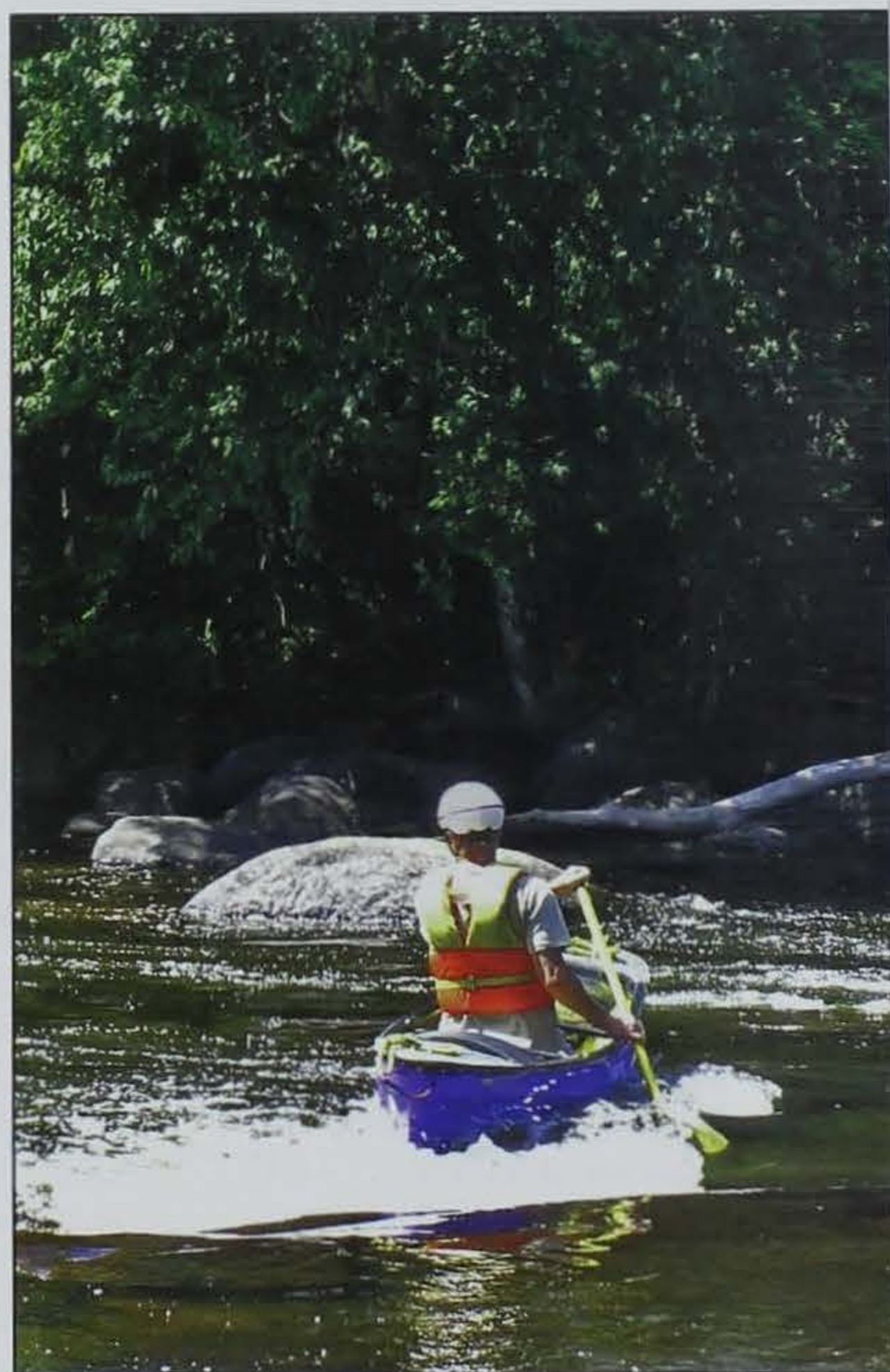
Hanner also recommends for first-timers or novices to review a map and head over a day or two early and drive the area to see what the accesses look like. If planning to fish, bring plenty of small jigs, he said.

The Middle Raccoon River offers a tremendous fishery

— from smallmouth bass in the catch-and-release-only area (Lennon Mill to the Redfield Dam), to walleye, crappies and bluegill. Wildlife abounds in the rugged hills towering over the stream. In the fall, it is common to see bald eagles soaring over the river looking for an easy meal.

Iowa River

Woven into the fabric of north-central Iowa farmland, the Iowa River Greenbelt stands out as an oasis in an otherwise flat patchwork of corn and soybean fields. The greenbelt in Hardin



County is characterized by large stands of timber on both sides of the river, and bluffs rising high above the river valley.

The Iowa River is an easy float for paddlers of all levels of experience and ability with only minimal obstacles. The area has no canoe rental outfitter currently, but Rock and Row River Adventures rents tubes and

"It's like a scaled-down version of the Upper Iowa," Reiken said. "(The greenbelt) is a pretty unique area of the state I believe."

The Hardin and Marshall county conservation boards have developed a brochure on paddling the Iowa River. It shows where the public land is along the way. Reiken said the Hardin

Des Moines River in Van Buren County

Set against the backdrop of the historic villages in Van Buren County, the Des Moines River drifts peacefully through the southeast Iowa bluffs toward Lee County before eventually joining the mighty Mississippi River. This stretch of the Des Moines has excellent access throughout the county and has been designated an Iowa River Trail.

In Van Buren County, the Des Moines River offers an easy float — no falls, rapids or whitewater — with plenty of aesthetics. "Bluffs on both sides, eagles flying overhead, it's pretty," said Joy Hanson, who along with her husband Chuck, own the Mason House Inn in Bentonsport. If the river has a good flow to it, she said all a person has to do is steer the boat. "I've gone a couple of times from Keosauqua to Bentonsport and it's about three hours," she said.

There are few obstacles, although there is an occasional sandbar or tree snag to watch out for. "It's clean and nice and really pretty," Hanson said.

There are longer trips available. The annual two-day Canoe Van Buren County trip is held in June and sponsored by the county conservation board. It attracts hundreds of canoes and kayaks, however, the event will not happen in 2006 because of work on the Keosauqua Bridge over the river.

Hanson said starting Memorial Day, the river begins filling with canoers, kayakers and tubers. Paddling is big business



serves the river from Steamboat Rock through Eldora (see page 39). That stretch of river can be busy with tubers during the heat of the summer, advised Duane Reiken, director of the Hardin County Conservation Board.

The Iowa River from below Iowa Falls to Steamboat Rock is a solitary experience where paddlers can almost get lost in the beauty of the greenbelt. Reiken said the greenbelt follows the Iowa River nearly the entire 54-mile stretch in Hardin County from north of Alden through Union.

County Conservation Board is also working with the Iowa water trails program to install signs marking distance between accesses, facilities available, and picnic tables to allow paddlers to beach and have lunch.

At Camp David's restaurant, which overlooks the Iowa River in Iowa Falls, paddlers can arrange for a float and a meal. The restaurant will rent canoes or tubes and provide transportation to the drop-off point. (See opposite page for details.)

in Van Buren County and the villages fronting the Des Moines River offer campgrounds, bed and breakfasts, hotels and motels catering to paddlers.

She said each town has accesses where paddlers can get out, have a picnic and go antique shopping. "We get a lot of canoers and kayakers who stay here and they just love it," she said.

Three outfitters — Hawkeye Canoe Rental in Keosauqua, Troublesome Creek in Keosauqua and RiverView Canoes and Campground in Farmington — serve paddlers in the area (see list at right for details). The canoe outfitters offer a variety of services and different drop off points. There are campgrounds along the river or in a number of nearby communities.

Streams for Family Floats

The **Little Sioux River** from Spencer to Correctionville has large tracts of intact prairie and wonderful ridges greeting paddlers as they come around river bends. The Little Sioux is great for paddling and is home to Inkpaduta Canoe Trail — the oldest established canoe trail in the state.

While not particularly challenging, the Little Sioux is an easy-going, slow river with few riffles and lots of sandbars for paddlers to beach and enjoy lunch. Paddlers should be aware of the dam at Linn Grove.

It is also a popular place for spring fishing for walleyes and northern pike. The upper stretch of the Little Sioux also offers good walleye and pike fishing.

outfitters

**Des Moines River
Troublesome Creek Float
Trips,**

Keosauqua
www.troublesome-creek.com

319-293-6424,

319-759-5818

**may service other rivers
in the area**

Offer: canoes

**Hawkeye Canoe Rental,
Keosauqua**

319-293-3897,

319-293-3550

**Riverview Retreat,
Farmington**

www.riverviewhunting.com

319-878-3715

**may service other rivers
in the area**

Offer: canoes

**East Nishnabotna River
Canoesport Outfitters
Nebraska,**

Plattsmouth, Neb.

www.canoesportoutfitters.com

402-296-0522

Offer: canoes and kayaks

**Botna Bend Park,
Hancock**

<http://www.pottcounty.com/html/departments7b.shtml>

712-741-5465

Offer: canoes and shuttles

**Middle Raccoon River
Raccoon River Retreats,
Redfield**

<http://redfieldia.com/retreats.html>

515-833-2636

**Offer: canoes, kayaks and
shuttles**

**Little Sioux River
Summer's Canoe Rental,
Correctionville**

712-372-4774

**Iowa River
Rock 'n Row River
Adventures,**

Eldora

641-858-5516

**Camp David's Restaurant,
Iowa Falls**

641-648-3221

**Offer: canoes or tubes
and transportation to the
drop-off point**

**Maquoketa River
Bickford Canoe Rental,
Canton**

563-652-5855

**Appleby Canoe Rentals,
Monticello**

319-465-3697

Offer: canoes and shuttles

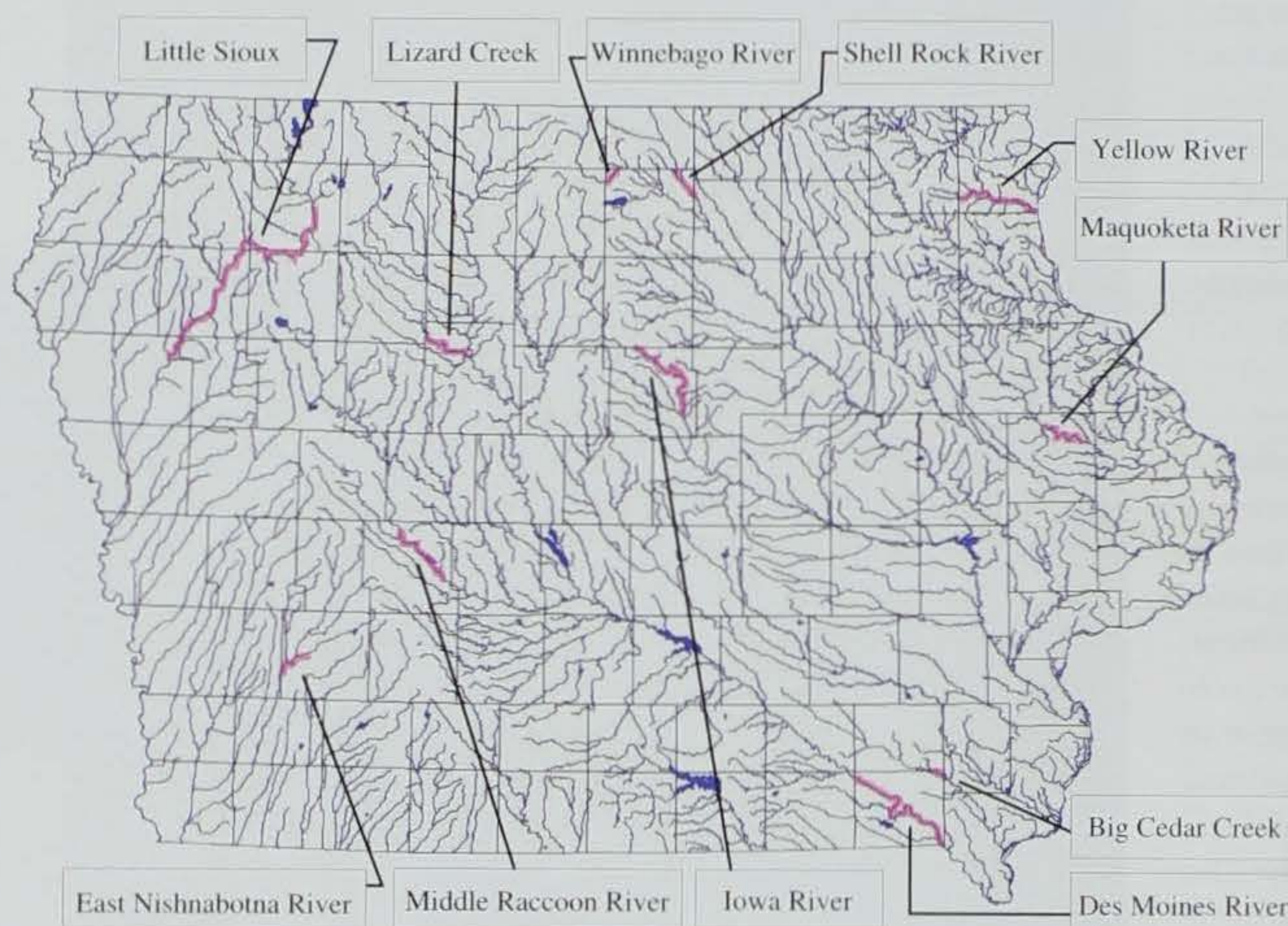
**Yellow River
Big Foot Canoe Rental,
Volney**

www.bigfootcanoerental.com

563-539-4272

**Offer: canoes, kayaks,
and shuttles**

■ *River sections mentioned are highlighted below for approximate locations.*



The **East Nishnabotna River** from Lewis to Griswold is an anomaly for southwest Iowa. "It's a really surprising river for southwest Iowa, where most rivers

There are two places to rent canoes, but the paddlers will be responsible for transporting the boats to and from the river. Paddlers can choose from Botna

Bend Park on the West Nishnabotna and Canoe Sport Outfitters at Plattsmouth, Neb (see page 39).

The **Maquoketa River** at Monticello in Jones County is one of Iowa's flagship stretches of rivers. The stream is hemmed in by marvelous limestone bluffs, especially the pictured rocks area, is easy to paddle with a riffle here and there, has good access and is served by Appleby Canoe Rental (see page 39).

The Maquoketa is shallow for the most part and has a lot of

public land. There are a number of caves along the river that were once wintering homes to black bears. The river offers a wild, scenic feeling as it winds through the county. At Pictured Rocks, paddlers can get out and hike the area. There are sandbars to camp on or to stop for lunch.

Out of the Way Stream

Big Cedar Creek in Jefferson and Van Buren counties in southeast Iowa is a springtime float on a wild little river closed off from the rest of the world. The Big Cedar is a winding river that can cause paddlers to lose their sense of direction. "Which



were channelized in the 1920s and 30s," said Hoogeveen. The access points are on road crossings, but once on the river, it is quite pretty and still meanders in this stretch. The stretch has sandstone outcroppings and ridgelines leading to the river. There is camping at the county-managed Cold Springs State Park.

One mile into the trip is the Nishnabotna Rock Cut where the stream narrows and the sandstone walls hem in the river. Paddlers are not likely to dump the boat here if they stay to the right. "This is really a gem that stands out for folks who live in that part of Iowa," Hoogeveen said.

I maintain is a good thing," Hooegeveen said.

The section from Round Prairie Park to Willow Road is about eight miles and the put-in and take-out accesses are on gravel roads. The accesses can be a bit difficult, but once on the stream, it is a fairly easy paddle. The stream has the same watershed size as the Upper Iowa River at Decorah and has no rapids. It is a spring creek that will drain quickly and can be difficult to travel.

Paddlers will see a number of 10- to 15-foot limestone outcroppings along the section. In late April to early May, paddlers can enjoy blooming redbuds and wildflowers along the banks.

Adventurous Streams

Lizard Creek, a medium-size stream that joins the Des Moines River at Fort Dodge, flows over several ledges and has significant rocks in the riverbed. When the stream flows are just right, it can be challenging for even experience paddlers. Depending on water level, the rapids fall between Class I and Class II.

To get a taste for the rapids, first-time paddlers may want to try their skills on the section from County Road P29 to Hayes Avenue or P41. By going past the P41 takeout, the paddler has committed to facing the larger rapids.

Paddlers will need some level of boat-control skills heading into the lower section to avoid a bridge piling below the Gypsum Mine Rapids. "It's kind of fun," Hooegeveen said, "You come around a corner and see all this frothing water ahead." The higher the water level, the larger

smaller and have a lot of drop. He offers the following to paddlers to test:

The **Yellow River** in Allamakee County can be challenging. The upper stretch has a lesser degree of difficulty, but the lower stretch can be tricky. Big Foot Canoe Rental (see page 39)



Nate Hooegeveen

■ *Given the right water conditions, Lizard Creek offers probably the most adventurous canoeing of any Iowa stream.*

the rapids.

Lizard Creek also has fences crossing the river that must be navigated and paddlers may see cows grazing along the way. The upper stretch is good to navigate and work on skills.

This stretch has tricky turns, but the consequences are not as bad if the boat dumps.

When the water level is just right, the rapids can have waves up to 3 feet high, which will get water in a canoe, Hooegeveen said. Kayaks are the preferred boat in this scenario.

Hooegeveen said the more challenging streams tend to be

serves the Yellow River and the scenery is beautiful.

Cerro Gordo County has two rivers to consider. The **Winnebago River** has numerous ledge drops and plenty of challenges. And the **Shell Rock River** from Plymouth to Rock Falls has several ledges and a broken out dam. At medium-water level, the Shell Rock is fairly easy to navigate. At higher water level, novices will probably be dumping the boat.

Mick Klemesrud is an information specialist for the department in Des Moines.



how to make recycled paper

Papermaking is a simple and fun way to recycle. Once you become comfortable with this basic process, you can start experimenting with different materials and recipes.

Story and photographs by
Karri Wells

Materials

- **Two large empty cans**
Cut both ends out of one can, and one end out of the other.
- **Two pieces of nylon window screen** (available at hardware stores)
Cut screen large enough to cover the diameter of the can.
- **Plastic Canvas** (available at arts and crafts stores)
The plastic canvas serves as a support for the nylon screen. Any rigid material that will allow water to drain through will work as well.
- **Scrap paper**
Feel free to experiment with various papers, just make sure it is free of staples, tape or other foreign objects.
- **Blender**
- **Water**
- **Sponge**
- **Paper towels**
- **Cookie sheet or dishpan** (optional)
Can be placed under cans to catch excess pulp and water.

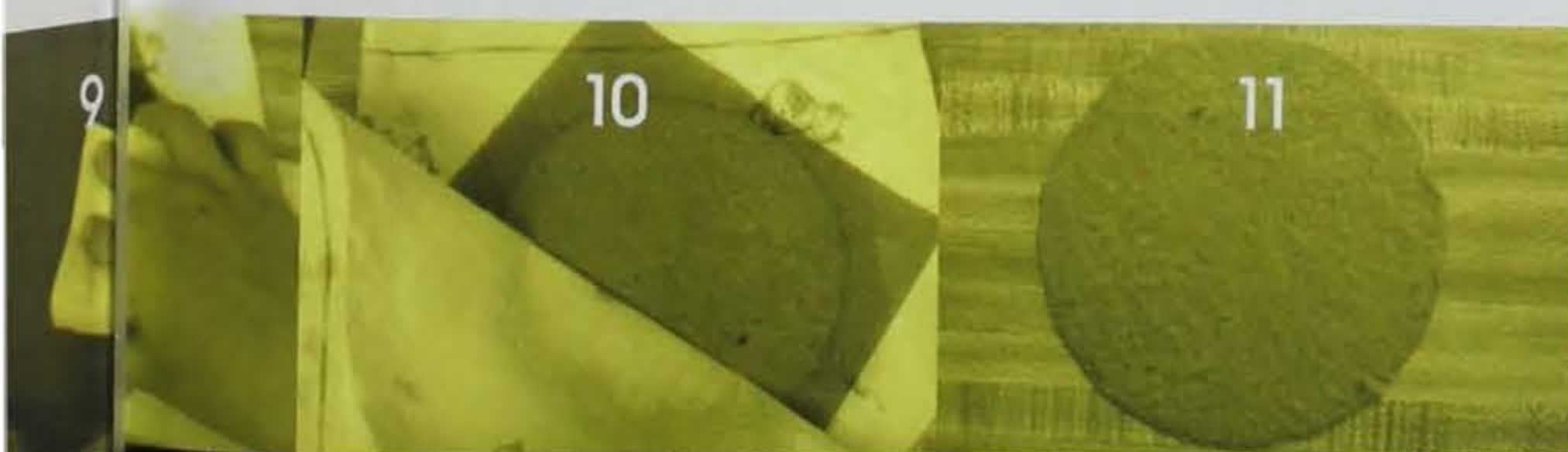


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9



Don't limit yourself to old newspapers and magazines. If it is paper, you can recycle it. Try these:

- Paper bags
- Can or bottle labels
- Gum wrappers
- Gift wrap
- Ticket stubs
- Old cards

Add-ins can create beautiful and unique paper. Stir in one of these once you have created the pulp.

- Glitter
- Grass clippings
- Tea or coffee grounds
- Pressed flowers
- Dry leaves
- Dryer lint
- Small seeds

- Confetti
- Sequins
- Finely torn comics or maps
- Bits of ribbon or string

Use your new paper for:

- Scrapbooking
- Handmade cards
- Holiday decorations

Step 1

Place the first can closed end down on a flat surface.

Step 2

Lay plastic canvas over open end of can.

Step 3

Put nylon screening over plastic canvas.

Step 4

Position open-ended can over nylon screen, lining up edges with the bottom can.

Step 5

Select paper to recycle. Paper should be an inch or two wider than the diameter of the can. Tear paper into small pieces.

(The amount of paper used will determine the thickness of the final product.)

Step 6

Combine torn paper and about three cups of water in blender for 10 to 20 seconds. The resulting mixture is pulp. (Do not over blend. You should still be able to see individual fibers dispersed in the water.)

Step 7

Pour pulp into open-ended can and let water drain off into bottom can.

Step 8

Carefully remove top can. You will see a round layer of pulp resting on the screen.

Step 9

Lift screen and pulp off plastic canvas, and place onto a paper towel. Lay another piece of screen over pulp and blot with sponge to absorb excess water, wringing sponge often. Continue process until no more water can be removed.

Step 10

Carefully remove top screen. The paper will be very delicate at this point. Place paper towel over paper, and flip. Remove second screen and place another paper towel on top. Press the rest of the water out of paper. Continue using new paper towels until little water is removed.

Step 11

Set new paper aside on a flat surface to dry. (May take overnight).

Karri Wells is an information specialist with the department's communication bureau.

Biting Back

Mosquitoes and West Nile Virus are here to stay. But with a few simple precautions, you can take some of the bite out of the summer mosquito season.

Story by Michael Dhar

For nature lovers like Mike and Cathy Wood, summer means the long-awaited return of camping season. Unfortunately, the warm weather and sunny days of June also herald another return: the mosquitoes are back.

In recent years, the annual renaissance of Iowa's little bloodsuckers has taken on a special significance. Serving as the mode of transmission for the newly arrived West Nile Virus, mosquitoes threaten more than their usual annoyance. They can also pose a health risk.

The Woods, who serve as volunteer campground hosts and spend much of their free time outside, face countless hungry mosquitoes every summer. Though not unduly worried about West Nile, the two make sure to protect themselves with bug spray and long sleeves.

"We trail ride all over, bike and we camp just about every weekend," Cathy Wood said. "We're outside quite a bit, so we take some precautions."

Experts recommend similar measures for all Iowa citizens this summer. Outdoors lovers should avoid peak mosquito hours (dawn and dusk during the summer and fall), cover bare skin as much as possible and use insect repellent.

Still, public health officials stress that the chances of catching this new disease remain very low. To date, less than 1/100th of a percent of Iowa's population has been affected, with only 12 deaths.

Iowa's first documented cases of West Nile occurred in 2002, when officials recorded 52 human cases in the state, including two deaths. (Technically, West Nile first dipped a viral toe in Iowa the year before, when scientists detected it in a dead crow near the Illinois border.)

Human incidence in the state peaked in 2003, with 147 confirmed and probable cases, but it has leveled off in recent years. Iowa officials diagnosed 37 people with West Nile last year, two of whom died.

As such statistics suggest,

the illness can pose a bonafied health risk. Such cases usually occur among the elderly or those with weakened immune systems. In all recorded West Nile cases, symptoms have ranged from no response at all, to flu-like symptoms, to extreme fevers, stroke-like effects and damage to nerve cells.

John Leibold, a retired farmer turned realtor in Galena, Ill., spent about two weeks last summer stumbling into office furniture, running his car off the road and generally acting and feeling like a "drunken person."

The amateur gardener had no idea what was wrong with him, and neither did doctors at the first two hospitals to treat him. By the time Dr. John Viner, an infectious disease specialist at Dubuque Internal Medicine, diagnosed Leibold with West Nile Virus, the man had slipped into a blazing fever. He suffered through 106- to 107-degree temperatures for six days.

Leibold remembers very little of what happened to him during that time, though he knows

doctors packed him in ice and few expected him to recover.

"They said, 'You're one of the lucky ones, you got through,'" he said. "If I had waited any longer to go to the hospital, I'd be dead."

Very few people infected with West Nile, however, develop an illness serious enough to endanger their lives, or even warrant a hospital stay, said Dr. Patricia Quinlist, medical director and state epidemiologist with the Iowa Department of Public Health.

In fact, the majority of infected individuals never feel sick enough to see a doctor, she said. Public health officials know from tests of blood donors that many people contract the virus without suffering a single symptom.

On rare occasions, however, the illness progresses to a severe state and can cause encephalitis (damage to nerve cells in the brain) or meningitis (damage to the coverings of the brain and spinal cord). Risk of this more serious form of the disease increases for people over the age of 50, Quinlist said, though children can fall seriously ill with West Nile, too.

The disease has also made its presence felt in the animal world. In fact, West Nile primarily infects birds and only rarely makes its way into humans. Crows, blue jays and similar birds suffer from the illness most severely and most frequently. When West Nile first appeared in the United States, officials made rough estimates of its incidence by counting dead crows.

In addition, some bird species carry the virus without suffering

any symptoms. A recent study in Iowa showed that roughly 20 percent of the state's pheasants carry West Nile in their blood streams. These birds, unlike crows, suffer no apparent adverse effects from the virus.

Concerned hunters can rest assured that these infected pheasants, when handled properly, pose little danger to people. Theoretically, the virus could move from infected pheasant blood into a cut on a hunter's hand, though this is extremely unlikely. For one thing, studies have shown that the birds remain actively infected for an average of only 2.7 days.



By wearing latex gloves when dressing pheasants, hunters can eliminate this already minor risk, said Lyle Asell, DNR assistant to the director for agriculture and the environment.

Non-avian creatures can also contract West Nile. Most significantly in the United States, horses catch the disease relatively frequently.

Last year, officials documented 17 cases of West Nile in horses, significantly down from the peak equine incidence of 1,142 cases in 2002. The availability of a horse vaccine has contributed to that swift decline. (No such vaccine yet exists for humans.) Horse owners are advised to protect their animals with the vaccine.

Deer and most other wild mammals, by contrast, face a comparatively miniscule risk from West Nile, Asell said. As

a result, wildlife officials do not devote many resources to the illness, he said. Ailments like foot and mouth and chronic wasting disease, on the other hand, call for vigilant monitoring



and emergency response plans.

"West Nile just hasn't been a big concern from a wildlife population standpoint," Asell said. "It travels by mosquito, not by contact between animals, and the results are not nearly as damaging."

Concerns about West Nile, therefore, center mostly on its potential incidence among

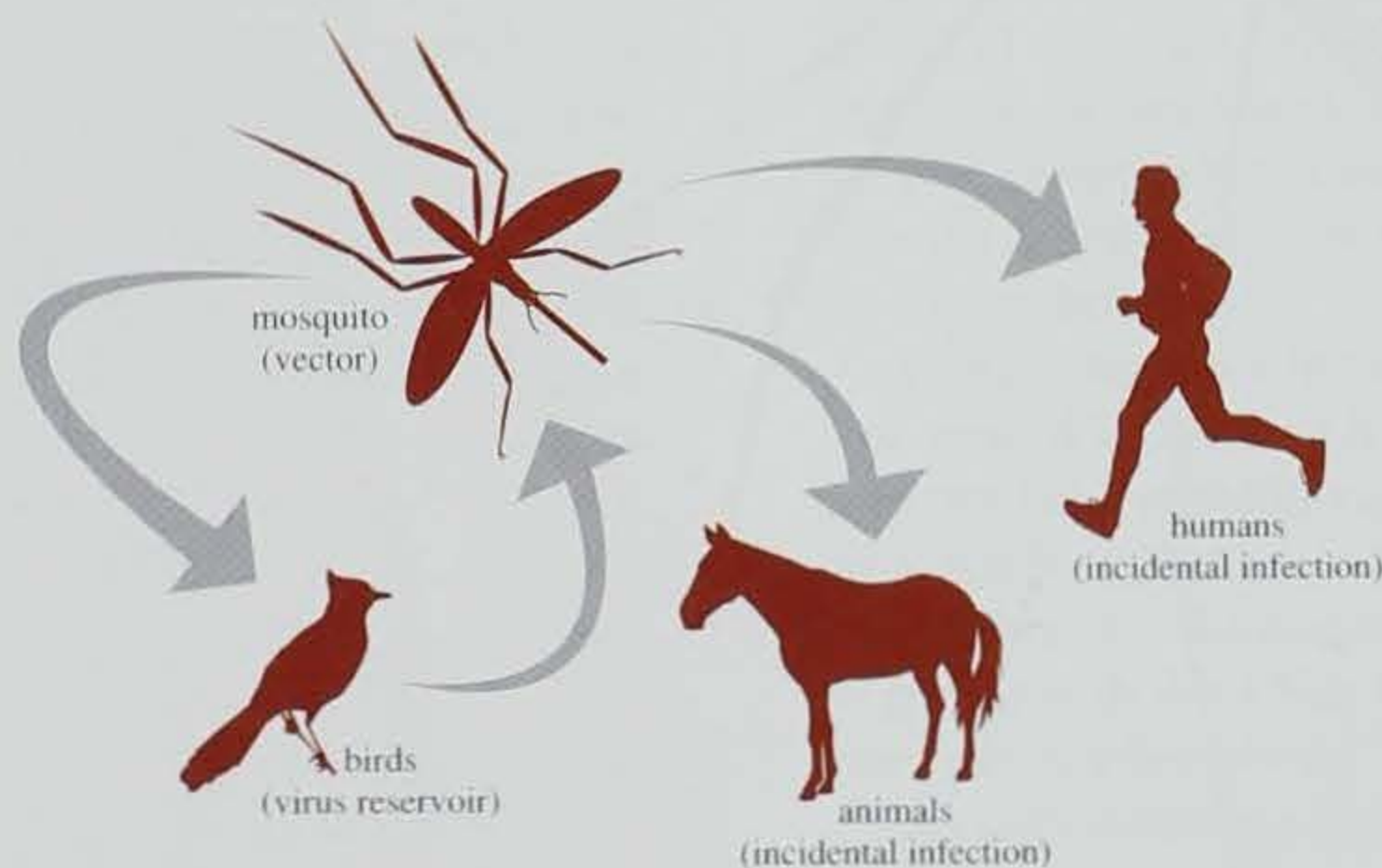
humans. To combat this risk, officials advise prudent precautionary measures at both the citizen and governmental level.

Individuals can best protect themselves by investing in bug sprays. The most useful repellents contain DEET, though picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus and permethrin also provide protection.

Officials advise, however, to follow proper instructions when using such sprays: Don't apply them to open wounds, never spray them on small children and only use the necessary strength.

The concentration of DEET in various sprays, Quinlist cautions, does not determine the repellent's power. A spray with a 10 percent DEET concentration offends mosquitoes just as much as does a 30 percent mixture. The higher concentration simply means the spray will last longer.

West Nile Virus Transmission Cycle



West Nile Virus can infect wild birds, which serve as reservoirs for the virus. The cycle begins when mosquitoes bite infected birds to feed on their blood, and then carry the virus in their salivary glands. The insects can then transmit the virus when they bite other birds, other animals and people. Humans and animals other than birds are called incidental hosts — although not part of the transmission cycle, they can get ill from West Nile Virus infection.

Center for Disease Control and Prevention

Lower concentrations can also be reapplied for longer periods of exposure.

At the governmental level, cities and towns can protect their citizens by reducing mosquito populations. To this end, several governments spray their towns with "adulticides" — poisons aimed at killing adult mosquitoes — and some conduct targeted application of "larvicides" — poisons that block the development of mosquito larvae.

Of the two methods, the second reaps more benefits, said Dr. Kenneth Holscher, associate entomology professor at Iowa State University. It's most effective to prevent mosquito populations before they hatch, he said. Adulticide spraying can also create a "logistical nightmare," since many homeowners ask that sprayers skip over their property, Holscher said.

Regardless of such requests, adulticides pose very little danger to humans, other animals or birds, he said. The sprays contain minute levels of nerve poison which, when used properly, will only harm insects.

To combat mosquito populations before they even form, many cities seek out and eliminate the insects' breeding grounds. *Culex pipiens*, the species of mosquito most likely to spread West Nile to humans, breeds in floodwaters, preferring to do its business in dirty, standing pools of water.

As a result, cities can reduce the risk of West Nile transmission by draining, filling or otherwise eliminating spots that habitually collect water.

Buckets and tires provide ideal breeding grounds for the *Culex*, described as a "container breeder." Getting rid of scrap tires and other trash, therefore, not only clears up eyesores, it can also help with mosquito control, said Mel Pins, DNR environmental specialist.

Tires, especially, can produce swarms of mosquitoes. The lips collect dirty water and the black surfaces absorb heat, making the tires into mosquito-larvae incubators.

"The typical tire laying there can hold two to three gallons of water," Pins said. "That can be enough to breed thousands of mosquitoes."

While artificial water-collectors like buckets and tires pose a problem, natural ecosystems such as lakes and wetlands can actually offer benefits. Wetlands, for example, can help reduce *Culex* populations by attracting and supporting predators such as dragonflies, water striders and diving beetles, along with various birds and fish.

"In a balanced ecosystem, there are plenty of predators to eat mosquitoes," Pins said. "In man-made containers, there are no frogs, fish or other fauna to keep down the mosquito population."

At the individual level, private citizens can deprive the *Culex* of breeding grounds by removing or regularly emptying scrap tires, old buckets and other rainwater collection sites from backyards. Homeowners should also remove clogs from rain gutters.

protect yourself

- 1 When going outdoors, apply insect repellent containing DEET to bare skin and clothing. Mosquitoes may bite through thin clothing. Products containing 10 percent or less DEET are the most appropriate for children aged 2-12 years. Always follow product instructions when using repellent.
- 2 Wear loose-fitting clothing that covers legs and arms while in areas where mosquitoes are likely to be present.
- 3 To the extent possible, avoid outdoor activities between dusk and dawn, when mosquito activity is greatest.
- 4 Ensure that window and door screens are in good repair and that other routes of mosquito access to buildings and living spaces are blocked.
- 5 Clean out clogged rain gutters to avoid collecting water where mosquitoes can lay eggs.
- 6 At least once or twice a week, empty water from flowerpots, pet food and water dishes, birdbaths, swimming pool covers, and other items that collect water.

information from the FDA



Ty Snedden

■ *West Nile Virus primarily affects birds - most notably bluejays, crows and cardinals. The public can help monitor West Nile in the state by contacting their local public health officials when they find a dead bird.*

While some government officials seek to constrain mosquito populations, others focus on monitoring the occurrence of West Nile itself. The Iowa Department of Public Health collects information about the virus' occurrence in people, mosquitoes, birds and horses. Such data collection provides

an early-warning system for the disease's arrival each season, Quinlist said.

As part of this effort, scientists maintain flocks of "sentinel" chickens across the state, checking them for cases of West Nile and related viruses. Other professionals trap mosquitoes and test them.

The public can aid such efforts to monitor the disease by contacting their local public health officials when they find dead birds, particularly dead crows or blue jays.

Since humans can't catch West Nile until birds and mosquitoes catch it first, the virus' incidence among non-human species provides useful information, Quinlist said. Scientists can better understand how it spreads and when it starts each season.

From work done before now, however, officials already know a great deal about the virus' transmission patterns. For instance, humans can't catch it from animals or other people (aside from the extremely unlikely possibility of transmission through blood-to-blood contact). In fact, once the virus gets into a human being or a horse, it basically reaches a dead end and won't pass on to another organism.

West Nile primarily affects birds. It thrives inside feathered creatures, proliferating to such an extent that a mosquito can pick up the virus and take it somewhere else. This can't happen with humans or horses, however. West Nile viruses reproduce less successfully in these mammalian bodies, so there are much fewer viruses available for mosquitoes to collect and transmit.

The path of transmission to a human, therefore, almost always follows the same pattern: bird-mosquito-person. *Culex pipiens* tends to feed on birds,

but will also drink human blood on occasion. This species, then, serves as the delivery vehicle, or "vector," for West Nile transmission into humans. (See page 46 for cycle diagram)

An alternative, though less common, route of transmission occurs via the *Aedes vexans* mosquito. This bug usually bites people, but will sometimes nick a bird. Again, human transmission occurs when an insect feeds first on an infected bird and afterwards on a human.

Mosquitoes play such an important role in West Nile transmission, in fact, that some scientists blame them for bringing the virus to America. West Nile, long known in Middle Eastern countries, first appeared in the United States in 1999. It might have made the trip aboard a mosquito, who in turn hitched a ride on an international flight, said Lyric Bartholomay, assistant professor of medical entomology at Iowa State University.

Insects take such trips more often than one would think, she said. In 2003, Bartholomay took a return flight to the United States after working for a time in Egypt. Clinging to the walls of the airplane cabin, she spotted four little specks of black, identified them as *Culex pipiens* mosquitoes (using a trained entomologist's eye), trapped two in a cup and brought them home for testing.

The critters carried no illnesses, but they were in fact *Culex*, capable of transmitting West Nile or some other disease.

Because of the key role

mosquitoes play in West Nile transmission, and due to the absence of any human vaccine, preventing bites remains the best way to protect against the virus. And, as spring gives way to summer, the prime season for bites will soon arrive.

The danger from West Nile-carrying mosquitoes will peak in late summer and early fall, Quinlist said.

Depending on weather, the risk can last well into October. Mosquitoes, and the dangerous payload some of them may carry, won't go away until a few hard frosts hit in late fall, Bartholomay said.

In coming years, expect West Nile to return as regularly as the mosquitoes that spread it. The virus is a new guest to Iowa but not a temporary one.

"It's an important virus that won't go away very soon," Viner said. "It's probably entrenched for the very near future."

Since it first arrived in New York in 1999, killing off a slew of zoo birds and crows before infecting humans, West Nile has spread across the continent quickly. As happened in Iowa, when the disease first strikes an area, it reaches a peak level of incidence fairly soon.

Afterwards, the illness causes less damage to its victims, as both host and virus adapt to one another. As a result, the number of sick individuals will lessen until equilibrium is reached, with a stable number of people and animals infected every year.

The disease will continue to pose a threat to humans,

albeit minor, even if that threat diminishes slightly. Only the development of a human vaccine will completely eliminate the danger. Until then, the advice remains the same: don't get bit.

Michael Dhar is a communications specialist with the department's AmeriCorps program in Des Moines.



Clay Smith

■ Discarded tires are mosquito havens, providing warm, wet environments that serve as ideal breeding grounds. Properly disposing of or emptying any vessel that can hold water will help reduce mosquito infestations in your backyard.



governor's environmental excellence awards

Look for the two
Environmental
Excellence
Award winners
to be featured
in upcoming
issues of the *Iowa
Conservationist*.

Story by Jill Cornell
Photographs by Clay Smith

Governor Tom Vilsack honored eight Iowa organizations and businesses with environmental excellence awards this spring. The recognition is part of a statewide program paying tribute to Iowans for their leadership and innovation in protecting Iowa's natural resources.

"I am proud to recognize these Iowans for taking active roles in protecting our natural resources," Vilsack said. "Their leadership serves as a model in implementing environmental sustainability across the state of Iowa."

The awards program recognizes comprehensive environmental programs by organizations and businesses, along with special project awards in water quality, air quality, waste management, habitat restoration/development and energy efficiency/renewable energy. The winners were chosen from nearly 30 nominations.



Complete details about each award winner and the awards program are available at www.iowadnr.com.

The awards are sponsored by the Governor's Office, the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, the Department of Economic Development, the Department of Education, the Department of Public Health and the Iowa Waste Reduction Center.

Governor's Iowa Environmental Excellence Award

Environmental Excellence Award

Farmland Foods, Inc., Denison
Iowa Renewable Energy Association, Iowa City



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Consumers Energy, Marshalltown
Thorland Company, Cedar Rapids



Special Recognition in Water Quality

Dr. Walter Cunningham School for Excellence
4th Grade Expanded Learning Program, Waterloo
Skunk River Navy, Ames
Jefferson, Keokuk & Washington
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Special Recognition in Waste Management

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Oct. 1 - Jan. 31

seven days a week, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (CST)

Each campsite has a photo and detailed description on the web site.

Each campground has a map including which sites are reservable, and a layout of the campground facilities.

Online reservations may be paid for by credit/debit card only. Phone-in reservations must be paid for by credit/debit card, check, money order or camping coupons.

An equal number and type of campsites will be available using the traditional method of first come, first served.



a Cass County classic

Story by Mick Klemesrud
Photographs by Clay Smith



From humble beginnings as a “drinks only” roadhouse born in a barn at the end of WWII, the Redwood Steakhouse is a classic old school supper club.

Over the past 50 years, the establishment has been bought and sold, began serving food, expanded three times and undergone renovations. Since

1970, the Redwood Steakhouse has earned a reputation as one of the best places to eat in southwest Iowa and earned a loyal following from Des Moines to Omaha.

In fact, a handful of loyal customers will fly — yes, fly — to the grass airstrip in Anita just to eat at the Redwood. The Redwood was also featured on the ABC news magazine 20/20 April 21 during a segment on rekindling the romance in a marriage. It was the favorite restaurant of the woman in the couple featured.

The signature item on the menu is homemade onion rings, and owners Lee and Jo Ann Poepppe are protective of the recipe. The Poeppes purchased the Redwood in 1970 on a Friday the 13th and opened the doors on April 1. Superstitious? Nope.

Although one would think the top-selling menu item at a steakhouse would be the obvious,



Redwood Steakhouse

1087 White Pole Road

Anita, Iowa

Reservations are recommended

712-762-3530

5 p.m. to 10 p.m. 7 days a week

www.redwoodsteakhouse.com

the favorite fare is fish. Lee Poepppe said they sell a lot of cod and red snapper, but also offer walleye, mahi mahi, lobster and catfish. "The old timers like the bone in (catfish)," he said. They also offer it as a filet.

"The best fish in the world is crappies (caught) ice fishing, but that's not on the menu," Jo Ann Poepppe added.

For the magazine, the Poeppes cooked walleye with their signature buttermilk base used for onion rings, then dredged the filets in a fine cracker meal.

The filets were fried golden brown and served with a stack of the tasty rings and a baked potato.

"So, what's in the buttermilk base?" I asked, trying one last time to get the recipe.

"The secret stays in the kitchen," Poepppe said.



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Park is located 1 mile east of Dennison, Iowa on Hwy. 30,
then 1 mile North on Yellow Smoke Road.

VOLUNTEER CORNER

Tree-lovers make Iowa greener

by Michael Dhar

It's not a question many people would think to ask, but Dale Plath could answer it: How many 10-foot bur oak trees fit inside a Volkswagen?

The answer is one...but just barely.

Plath learned this, along with a few other slightly more practical facts about trees, while serving as an Iowa DNR forestry volunteer. He helped with Operation ReLeaf, one of the department's many programs offering volunteer opportunities.

Plath served at a community tree distribution event, where utility company customers receive reduced-cost trees. Volunteers help set up the events, bag mulch, answer questions and, at times, load trees into some rather small cars.

Aside from such amusing challenges, Operation ReLeaf provides a great benefit, Plath said. "It was a ball. We had a great time and environmentally, it's fantastic."

Operation ReLeaf draws on the resources of the DNR, county conservation boards and Alliant Energy Company, which funds the program. Like all of the DNR's forestry service programs, Operation ReLeaf gets everyday citizens involved in tree stewardship.

"Volunteers are a real dramatic asset to us, in being advocates for

forestry," said forestry bureau chief John Walkowiak. "They are also hands-on help in reforestation and managing our forestry resources."

In addition to Operation ReLeaf, the DNR offers Plant Some Shade, a similar effort funded by MidAmerican Energy Company. In the DNR's Trees for Kids and Trees for Teens

various funding sources.

"We have a very lovely campus and people comment about it," said second grade teacher Marilyn Bayless.

Another volunteer's passion for reforestation transformed the better part of his hometown. Dr. Michael Giudici initiated "Operation Greenway" 14 years ago in the Quad Cities. After more than a decade helping fund and plant roughly 15,000 trees, the group now focuses mostly on tree-care.

"Not too many volunteer groups continue for so long that they can progress to pruning and no longer need to plant," said Daytonport city arborist Keith Majors.

Statewide, more than 100,000 volunteers, students and teachers took part in forestry programs last year, contributing more than 57,000 volunteer hours.

"These volunteers have meant everything for forestry," Majors said. "They've allowed forestry to go from just maintenance to reforestation."



programs, Iowa students help with plantings on school grounds.

Not all forestry volunteers spend their time digging in the dirt, however. Some help monitor gypsy moths, an invasive species of concern to Iowa's oak trees. Reporting any moths they find, the volunteers help officials find the pest before outbreaks occur.

Drawing on a different "green" resource, the DNR also promotes forestry volunteerism through grants. The Shenandoah K-8 school has been a major recipient, planting more than 200 trees and nearly as many shrubs with the assistance of

Summer Volunteer Activities

* Find details on these and other forestry opportunities at:
www.iowadnr.com/forestry

* Help your favorite state park! Find park volunteer opportunities at: www.iowadnr.com/volunteer/opps/oppsint/parks.html

* Find our online events calendar at: www.keepersoftheland.org

CONSERVATION UPDATE

Farm Ponds Still Some Of The Best — And Misunderstood — Fisheries

Farm ponds offer some of the best fishing in Iowa year-around, often producing the largest bass and biggest stringers of bluegills

places to take the family for an afternoon of quality fishing.

As popular as they are, though, they are often equally misunderstood by anglers.

For example, farm ponds are privately owned, so anglers must receive permission from the landowner or the farming tenant before they enter the property. A common misconception is that if the Iowa Department of Natural Resources stocked the pond, it is open to public fishing. Not true.

"We sell fish at the cost of production to landowners with new or renovated ponds that meet certain minimum criteria. There is no doubt that farm ponds are popular places to fish," said Marion Conover, chief of the

Iowa DNR's fisheries bureau.

"We know that each year licensed anglers take more than 1 million fishing trips to Iowa farm ponds."

Another common misconception involves who needs a license when fishing a farm pond. All anglers, excluding the landowner, tenant or their minor children, are required to have a current fishing license to fish on ponds.

Farm pond anglers must also adhere to possession limits matching those on lakes, but size limits do not apply. All other Iowa fishing regulations apply when fishing farm ponds or other private waters.

To find out more about stocking and managing farm ponds, go to www.iowadnr.com/fish/index.html and click on "Farm Pond Information."



Mark Flammang

of any waters of the state. With more than 80,000 farm ponds in Iowa, they provide hours of exciting fishing opportunities in a secluded setting, and are perfect

Summerset State Park Shooting Range Closes For Reconstruction

The shooting range at Summerset State Park, located five miles south of Des Moines in Warren County, is closed for reconstruction. The range will reopen when construction is completed but no later than Sept. 1.

The project includes removing the shooting tubes and installing a new system of shooting booths, building a shelter over the entire shooting area and installing a building for a concessionaire to run the range. There will also be a new handicap-accessible walkway to the target area and four new trap machines added for the shotgun portion of the range. The project is estimated to cost \$536,000.



Clay Smith

Deer Populations Declining On Heels Of Another Record Harvest

Iowa deer hunters harvested more than 210,000 deer during the 2005-2006 season, an increase of 17,000 from 2004 and the third year in a row of dramatic increased harvests.

Willie Suchy, state deer biologist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, said hunters are doing what was asked of them by shooting more does. Ninety percent of the increased kill was due to more does being taken. Does made up 56 percent of the total deer harvest, the third straight year significantly more does were harvested than bucks.

"Adding the November antlerless season and the extra weekend during the January antlerless season in the southern tiers of counties really added to the antlerless deer harvest last year," Suchy said. "This is the third year of the effort to harvest more does, and we are seeing the population come down." The previous record deer harvest before the effort to take more does was an estimated 136,655 in 2001.

Suchy said when you put the harvest survey data together with the population indexes, the projected deer population looks to be on track to meet management goals. The number of deer sighted on the spring spotlight surveys



Roger Hill

was down 8 percent. Winter aerial counts showed an 18 percent decline, although conditions for the aerial surveys were less than ideal which may have impacted the numbers. Road-killed deer counts also declined 6 percent in 2005.

"We are getting deer numbers down to the department's goal in some areas and should be there in other areas in a year or so. The antlerless quota could come down substantially in the next couple of years," he said.

Suchy said that deer numbers may still be higher than preferred in southern and northeast Iowa, but in north-central and northwest Iowa, hunters will see fewer antlerless deer licenses, or an elimination of extra antlerless licenses for this fall. He said there would still be special hunts in parks and in urban areas to control local deer numbers.

Campers Urged To Get Firewood Locally

A non-native beetle decimating ash tree stands in three nearby states has state and federal forestry experts urging campers to leave their firewood at home and instead obtain it locally.

Experts in Michigan, Indiana, Ohio and Ontario are currently battling emerald ash borer, a tiny green beetle unintentionally introduced to the United States from Asia. Since its discovery in 2002, the insect has killed more than 20 million ash trees in the three states alone. Deb McCullough, research entomologist at Michigan State University, said "in many cases, the spread of emerald ash borer has been traced to the transportation of infested firewood to campsites and cabins."

In fact, the infested states have enacted stringent rules on bringing wood into parks. Wisconsin and South Dakota have banned out-of-state firewood altogether.

Forestry officials with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and Iowa State University Extension Entomology say the emerald ash borer has been found in the state.

"Plenty of firewood is available locally at our state or county parks and has a lower risk of introducing unwanted pests," said John Walkowiak, chief of the DNR's forestry bureau.

CONSERVATION UPDATE



Matt Brewer

Tree Topping Leads To Ugly, Unhealthy Trees

Homeowners faced with large trees or branches hanging over their homes often consider “tree topping” to control size. But arborists and foresters agree that tree topping — the severe cutting back or removal of almost all branches off maturing trees to allow them to sprout back — leads to an ugly, unhealthy and unsafe tree.

“Topping is the absolute worst thing you can do for the health of your tree,” said John Walkowiak, chief of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources forestry bureau. “For many years, areas around the state have been spared this poor practice of tree topping, but recently tree topping is gaining again in visibility. Topping trees creates large wounds that never seal over, thereby exposing internal tree wood to decay. The resulting sprouts that occur after tree topping are weak and often unsightly.”

Homeowners concerned about tree size or overhanging branches should contact qualified professional arborists who can give recommendations from proper pruning to tree removal needs. Walkowiak said homeowners should seek written bids from as many tree care companies available in the area, ask for references from past work and call to check the references.

“Many Iowa arborists are members of the Iowa Arborists Association, International Society of Arboriculture or other professional organizations. These organizations have codes of ethics that tree topping is not a recommended practice,” Walkowiak said.

For more information about proper tree care go to www.treesaregood.com or contact your local county extension office or DNR forester at www.iowadnr.com/forestry/

Iowa Peregrine Falcon Pairs Produce Young

Ten pairs of peregrine falcons have been reported across Iowa this spring, with four pairs producing young. Hatchling peregrines have been reported at Cedar Rapids, Mid American headquarters in Davenport, Louisa Generating Station near Louisa and Alliant Energy Plant at Chillicothe.

Bob Anderson, director of the Raptor Resource Project, reported two wild peregrine nests at a bluff near Lansing and Leo’s Bluff near Waukon Junction had been predated. Any setback of lost clutches of eggs is unsettling. Losses are particularly disappointing at the natural sites, where peregrines have pioneered their return to the rocks of northeast Iowa.

A new peregrine pair in Des Moines is believed to have replaced the birds at American Republic Insurance building. However, their eggs were laid on concrete where incubation was impaired. Four inches of pea gravel has been added to the site to provide structure for eggs and the capability to keep the eggs dry. The site should be all set for nesting next spring. Peregrine pairs on two bridges at the Quad Cities were provided nest trays with pea gravel. It is hoped they will use trays to keep eggs secure on the I-80 bridge and similarly on the I-280 bridge downstream from downtown Davenport.

Time Running Out For Landowners With Expiring Conservation Reserve Program Contracts

Landowners with existing Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts that expire in 2008, 2009 or 2010 have until June 30 to continue their contracts. Landowners can automatically renew or extend their contracts at the local Farm Service Agency.

FSA has offered two choices to these existing contract holders:

- Re-enroll the most vulnerable soils. Contracts will be offered for 10 to 15 years under a revised rental rate. Landowners will have to maintain the cover by disking or burning in the middle of the new contract.

- Extend contracts for land that is less erosive or has a less beneficial cover type. Extensions are offered for two to five years at the existing rental rate.

"The contract offers guaranteed income on marginal land where yields are typically less than on land more suitable for cropping," said Lyle Asell, special assistant for agriculture at the DNR. "Leaving it in CRP is certainly more beneficial for wildlife and water quality."

Producers will need to compare the costs of converting the CRP

land to cropland and farming it with a conservation plan against the benefits of having it in CRP. On steep hills or poorly drained soils, CRP may be more attractive because of the restrictions of the conservation plan.

At stake in Iowa are more than 800,000 cropland acres that are currently planted to grass, grass-forb combinations or trees.

Call the DNR at (515) 281-5918 to find the biologist or forester that serves your county. Or, stop by your local FSA, NRCS or SWCD office for more information.



Photo courtesy of USDA NRCS

Landowners with Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts that expire in 2008, 2009 or 2010 have until June 30 to renew or extend their agreements.

Upcoming NRC and EPC Meetings

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

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

Natural Resource Commission:

- July
No meeting
- Aug. 10
Kent Park
(Indiangrass Hills)
- September 14
Loess Hills
- October 12
Dubuque

Environmental Protection Commission:

- July 17
Urbandale
- August 21
Urbandale
- September 18
Urbandale
- October 16
Loess Hills

WARDEN'S DIARY



Favorite Boating Myths

by Chuck Humeston

One of my annual rites of spring, other than stumbling through the woods trying to determine why mushrooms grow, is pulling the boat out of storage and getting it ready for another season of water patrol.

I have to admit I enjoy working on the water. It generates a lot of the "I-can't-believe-I-get-paid-to-do-this" thoughts.

But it can be frustrating, because after all these years, I know the problems I routinely see most likely won't change much. Those who work in this profession see the same things — some good, some not so good — over and over again. The results of a mistake on the water can be disastrous.

I have found mistakes are most often made for two reasons. The first is a lack of knowledge. Time after time I've stopped someone on the water, pointed to a buoy and asked "Do you know

what that means, or do you know how far away you have to be from that other boat?" Often the reply is "No," or one of my personal favorites, "This is my first time boating." In many cases, that's pretty obvious. Fortunately, new requirements in boating safety education and certification are helping change that.

Secondly, some are so wrapped up in the recreational end of it they don't stay alert, cautious or careful. When that's the case, it doesn't take much for an outing to end in disaster.

I realize it's sun, fun and time off from hectic everyday life. And I understand no one likes to be told, in front of their friends and family, they've committed a violation. The fact remains, though, conservation officers are out there to do a job, and that's to make Iowa waters safe.

If you ever feel the desire to berate an officer for not getting a break, consider two things before you do. First, if we're going to ignore violations and unsafe actions, then we might as well stay home.

Second, giving out a piece of

paper that costs someone their hard-earned money isn't the high water mark of our day either. We'd much rather not have to stop anyone.

Although it may not be the highlight of our job, it can sometimes be the most entertaining. The excuses and stories we hear can be quite entertaining. Here are just a few.

"I don't need a fire extinguisher. There's water all around me. If there's a fire, I'll jump out of the boat."

I understand the concept here, but the truth is a boat fire is a very real possibility. You take a boat filled with fuel and electrical line, and it doesn't take much to spark a fire if ventilation is poor. And why would you want to jump overboard if you can extinguish the fire quickly with a marine fire extinguisher? But, it won't do you any good if it's not in the boat. And what are they going to do when you go over the side yelling "Every man for himself?" In that case, I hope you were wearing your life

jacket when you jumped. If you're alone in a remote spot, you might be treading water for awhile.

That's another one of my favorite comments echoed time and time again.

"I don't need a life jacket. I can swim."

Famous last words. The truth is a boat accident usually happens very quickly without time to react. Your boat can capsize or tip over very quickly and violently. One moment you are enjoying the fun and sun, and the next you are in the water wondering "What happened?" You may have been hit by another boat, or you may have hit an object. Chances are you will be knocked unconscious. Hopefully the sudden submersion, the stark impact of cold water and the involuntary inhaling of water does not cause you to panic. Your life jacket will be the single most important factor in saving your life. At the very least, make sure it is out and available. Better yet, wear it. In a sudden, unexpected accident, time doesn't magically stop so you can put on your life jacket. It's often the same with seat belts and motorcycle helmets.

It seems some live by the code that it's their body, their

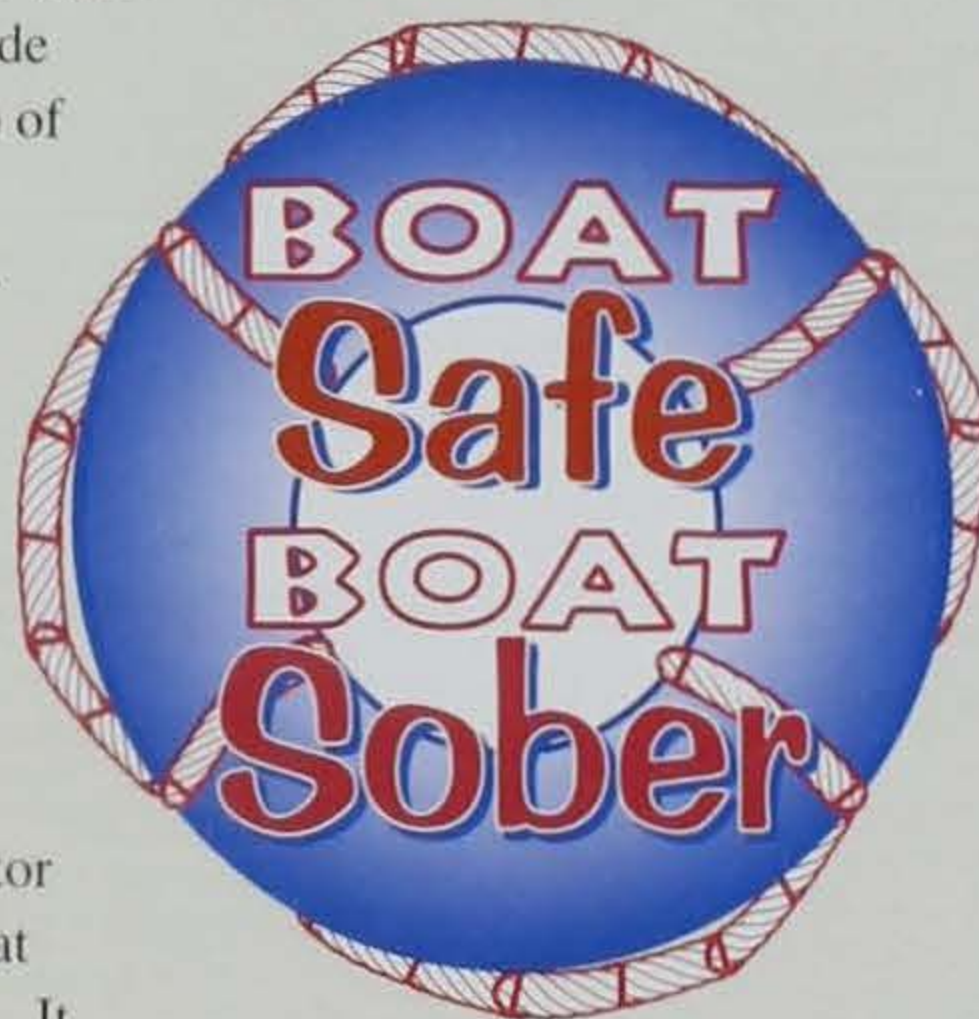
business, and we all have to go sometime." I can agree with the third part of it, but the first two don't hold much water. Outdoor recreations carry a certain amount of risk, but why increase it by failing to take action? Plus, others get involved in the aftermath real quick, particularly your family and friends who will be grieving needlessly because a simple act of putting on a PFD could have saved you.

Another common belief is **"A few drinks won't bother me."**

I like a drink once in awhile myself, but there are times where alcohol has no place. I ride motorcycles with a group of friends. We have a rule. You drink, you don't ride. Not even one. Personally I don't see where operating a boat is any different. Admittedly, I'm jaded by what I've seen. Sadly, there are some who view boats and alcohol as related activity. Like motor vehicles, half the fatal boat accidents involve alcohol. It doesn't take much. The wind, waves and sun magnify the effects. We have new laws dealing with the intoxicated boater. I don't know how else to say it other than we are looking to take intoxicated boat operators off the water.

Although an accident can happen to anyone, experienced boaters are involved in far fewer. These operators are usually easy to spot. Like a good motorcyclist, they drive as if no one else can see them. They don't take chances. They are defensive and courteous. They are informed and knowledgeable. They respect the water. And, I can't help but notice, they always seem to be enjoying themselves.

Remember, be safe, have fun and help me go home smiling too.



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State Documents Center
Miller Building
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