

Iowa Natural Heritage

Protecting and restoring Iowa's land, water and wildlife.

**Together,
we do more.**

Welcome!

With your gift, you've become part of the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation community, joining thousands of like-minded and like-hearted people committed to making our Iowa home an even better place.



JOE MCGOVERN
President

Your support is helping INHF protect and restore more of Iowa's beautiful, wild places. Working with willing landowners and forward-thinking organizations, INHF is turning these places into havens for native plants, wildlife and outdoor recreation.

This magazine introduces you to the kinds of conservation accomplishments you can look forward to through Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. As you page through the magazine, you'll get a feel for how exciting and far-reaching our work together is.

Many of our projects are sparked by one Iowan who sees an opportunity or simply wants to make their world a little better. If you have an idea, want to learn more or have questions, I hope you'll contact us.

Again, welcome to Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. We hope you will remain part of the community for years to come.

Thank you!



ON THE COVER

Sunrise highlights wild bergamot, black-eyed Susan and big bluestem at Wickiup Hill Natural Area in Linn County, just outside Cedar Rapids city limits. The area features wetlands, hiking trails and an interactive nature center. *Photo by Gary Harner*



**Iowa
Natural Heritage
Foundation**

*Protecting and restoring Iowa's
land, water and wildlife.*

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INHF works in a variety of ways. Learn about INHF's main focus areas and how members can get involved.



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INHF projects vary in scope, size and goals. Read stories that highlight the different types of projects INHF does, and hear from landowners and partners about how they protected what they love about Iowa through INHF.

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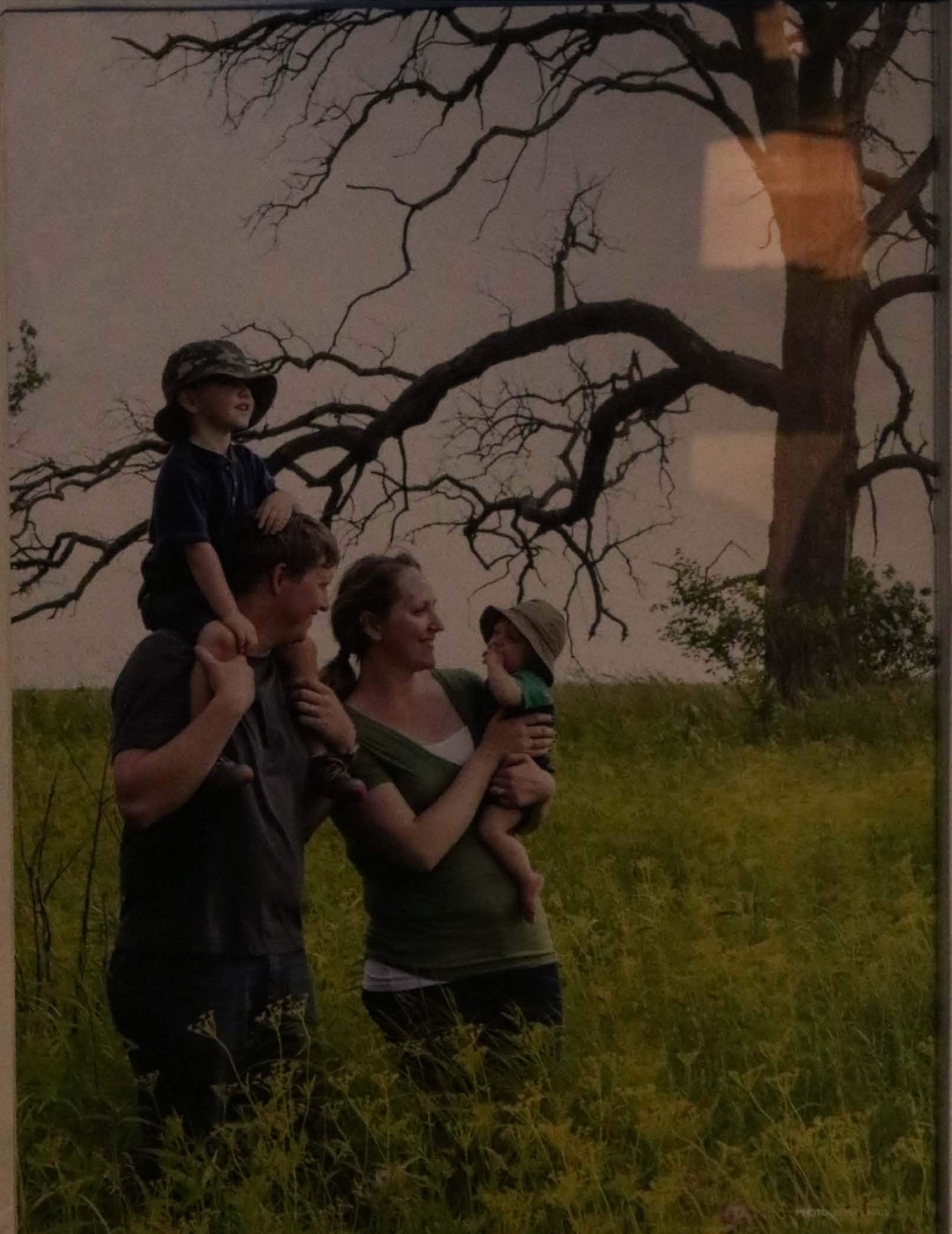
Membership at work

What does your membership gift accomplish in a year? This quick summary of one year's Impact through INHF speaks to Iowans' generosity and commitment to saving Iowa's wild places, reaching more people and creating long-lasting partnerships.

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Connect with us

Find ways to stay connected to INHF and a community of like-minded conservationists in Iowa. Whether your interests lay in volunteering, conservation policy or reaching out to Iowa landowners, your involvement makes a big impact on Iowa's land, people and the work we do together.



OUR MISSION

Protecting and restoring Iowa's land, water and wildlife.

Although INHF's mission is simple, the ways we fulfill it vary greatly. From establishing Iowa's multi-use trails to protecting untouched prairie, the work INHF members and staff do together is far-reaching. It is bound by the idea that together, we can do more. At the center of INHF's mission are the people who are passionate about saving Iowa's wild places — for wildlife, for the health of our state's natural resources and for the next generation of outdoor enthusiasts. We're protecting our home so that others can love it, too. Thank you for joining us in that work.

INHF HISTORY

INHF was founded in 1979, in part because important and threatened natural lands were being offered for sale and the Iowa DNR and county conservation boards (CCBs), who protect recreational land and nature preserves across the state, could not act quickly enough to purchase and protect them. It was painful to watch the loss of woodlands, prairies, wetlands and wildlife — especially those adjacent to treasured public parks and wildlife areas.

INHF quickly began working with private landowners statewide who wanted to sell or donate their land for conservation, and protected those places until the DNR or CCBs could secure funding to buy the land. Many of these lands become open to the public. This niche has remained at the heart of INHF's work since the beginning.

Over the last three decades, Iowans began to work through INHF in other ways, too. Volunteers, donors and partners began to restore as well as protect Iowa's natural places. Volunteers donate thousands of hours a year to helping Iowa's prairies, trails and rivers. Donors are fostering the next generation of Iowa conservation leaders with an endowed internship program that serves 20 college students a year. And INHF works every day with legislators to encourage strong and permanent funding to support conservation throughout the state.

WHO WE SERVE

NATURE in all its beauty and diversity, all across Iowa. We speak and act on behalf of the land, water and wildlife, which have no voices of their own.

FUTURE IOWANS who deserve to inherit clean water, healthy soils, diverse habitat and places to enjoy the outdoors. The special places we permanently protect together, plus a strong land ethic, become our legacy for them — our natural heritage.

PEOPLE who want to take action for Iowa nature. We serve landowners who want to protect their land, donors and volunteers who want to support great projects and see results, and community leaders and agencies who work to create a trail, park or wildlife area. We love to bring these caring achievers together!

INHF'S MAIN FOCUS AREAS

- Permanent land protection
- Multi-use trail establishment
- Active land stewardship
- Conservation policy
- INHF internship program

Learn more about INHF's work on pages 6-7.

What members say:

"I feel I'm doing my part to protect what I love about Iowa."

"You unite like-minded people who can accomplish more as a group than as individuals."

"INHF continues to exhibit the vision necessary to protect and connect the most important large landscapes remaining."

"Membership is a way for me to honor my father who was a self-taught naturalist and a true steward of the land."

WHAT WE DO TOGETHER

An overview of INHF programs and ways members get involved.

PERMANENT LAND PROTECTION

INHF has helped save more than 1,100 diverse and wild places across the state since 1979. "Protect" means working with Iowa landowners who donate or sell their land to INHF, or want to place permanent conservation protection on their land while still owning it. We often work with public agencies to establish public areas. INHF protects all sorts of landscapes: prairies, wetlands, woodlands, agricultural land, lakes and rivers. These places are vital to the health of Iowa's natural landscape and economy, and important to future generations who want wild places to explore. Learn more and support INHF's current protection projects at www.inhf.org.

"We are securing the future of Iowa's natural beauty and resources for generations to come while enjoying it ourselves to the fullest." — INHF MEMBER

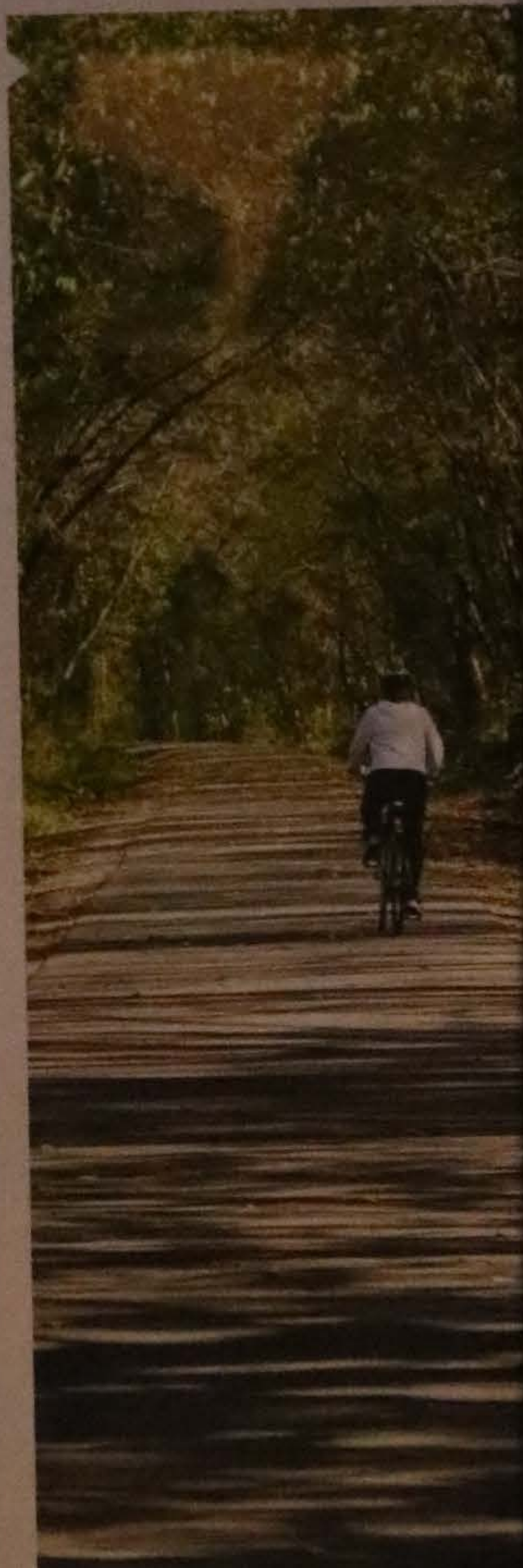
MULTI-USE TRAILS

We see trails as a connection to nature — a recreational and healthy way for people to get outdoors and experience the natural world around them. Trails aren't just corridors — they're linear parks, rich with habitat and wildlife waiting to be discovered.

INHF's first trail projects (the Heritage Trail and Cedar Valley Nature Trail) began in the 1980s. INHF's leadership to convert former railroad corridors into multi-use trails created the momentum that has made Iowa a trails destination. Since then, INHF has helped create over 65 percent of Iowa's rail-trails. Learn more about current INHF trail projects at www.inhf.org.

"We are so lucky to have the bike trail. I don't know what we would do without it!"

— INHF MEMBER





ACTIVE LAND STEWARDSHIP

Permanent protection is just half the story for vulnerable natural places across the state. Land management practices are necessary to remedy the spread of invasive plant and wildlife species which can damage the integrity and resilience of natural lands. INHF has fulltime staff dedicated to restoring land INHF owns or has previously protected, active volunteers giving their time on work days and an annual crew of INHF land stewardship interns who spend the summer restoring wild areas.

"I feel like I — we — can make a difference. My favorite part is working side-by-side, getting to know other people."

— INHF VOLUNTEER

INHF INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

In 1986, INHF hired its first intern. Since then, interns have made huge contributions to INHF's land restoration, communications, policy and trails programs. Now one of the most respected internship programs in the state, nearly 20 office and field interns each year learn about Iowa's native habitats, contribute to active stewardship efforts and bring INHF's work to new audiences. Interns are supported by individual donors, endowments and grants.

"There is nothing more rewarding than admiring the work and the incredible Iowa landscape from the top of a hill that we have just helped restore to prairie."

— FORMER INHF INTERN

CONSERVATION POLICY

Funding is critical to making conservation happen across the state, from protecting our rivers and lakes to creating recreational opportunities for all Iowans.

INHF works on a variety of conservation policies at the state and federal level, including conservation funding initiatives, tax law and incentives, and programs that provide quality of life benefits now and for future generations.

Great conservation incentives like the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) have huge impact on Iowa's soil, water and wildlife — but there's nothing permanent about them. It takes vigilance and a constant voice for these voiceless resources to keep good policies and funding in place.

Stay informed on opportunities to support legislative actions impacting conservation at www.inhf.org.

"Given all the churn for change, it is all the more important for INHF and others to be a voice for respecting, protecting and loving the outdoors upon which all life depends."

— INHF MEMBER



For more information on INHF's work and how you can get involved, visit www.inhf.org.

The building of a state forest

BY ANN ROBINSON

In 1929, Earl Barkley Spencer and his wife, Bess, left 40 central Iowa acres to the state. North of the Des Moines Y Camp in Boone County, you may stumble upon this 40 acres that boasts some of Iowa's most mature oak and hickory trees — some estimated to be as old as 200 or 300 years. Far below their canopy blooms a kaleidoscope of wildflowers. The beautiful Elkhorn Creek flows atop a rocky streambed.

Today, this rugged jewel is the centerpiece around which a 290-acre forest was developed with the help of Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. This Iowa treasure — Barkley Memorial Forest — was expanded in 2010.

"Steep topography, scenic vistas and lush forests make this area alluring for rural subdivision development, so protection here was timely," said Jeff Goerndt, Iowa Department of Natural Resources forests section supervisor. In addition, Heather Jobst, INHF senior land conservation director, says, "State plans from the early 1900s identified this area as having special values that should be protected. It's exciting to now realize that vision."

In addition to the Barkleys' donation, INHF purchased 250 acres surrounding the forest in 2009 to provide access to the forest and to

Barkley Memorial Forest in Boone Co. was expanded in 2010 through INHF to provide access to land previously donated to the state for conservation. Photo by Heather Jobst, INHF

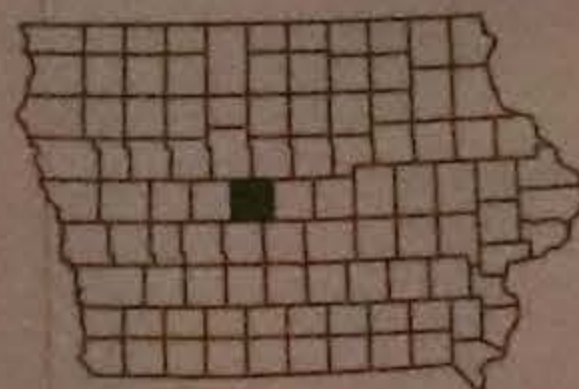
expand the rich wildlife habitat in the area. Both the forest and surrounding land are managed by the Iowa DNR forestry bureau.

Within this corridor, some hard-to-find birds have been spotted, including barred owl, broad-winged hawk, veery, black-billed cuckoo and cerulean warbler. What's more, preliminary surveys identified a number of plants that are on the state's list of Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

Protecting this habitat is the focus of a management plan developed in 2012. The plan emphasizes regenerating oak and protecting the large blocks of land that sensitive wildlife — such as river otter, bobcat and southern flying squirrel — depend on. ☺

Barkley Memorial Forest

Boone County



LAND: 290 acres

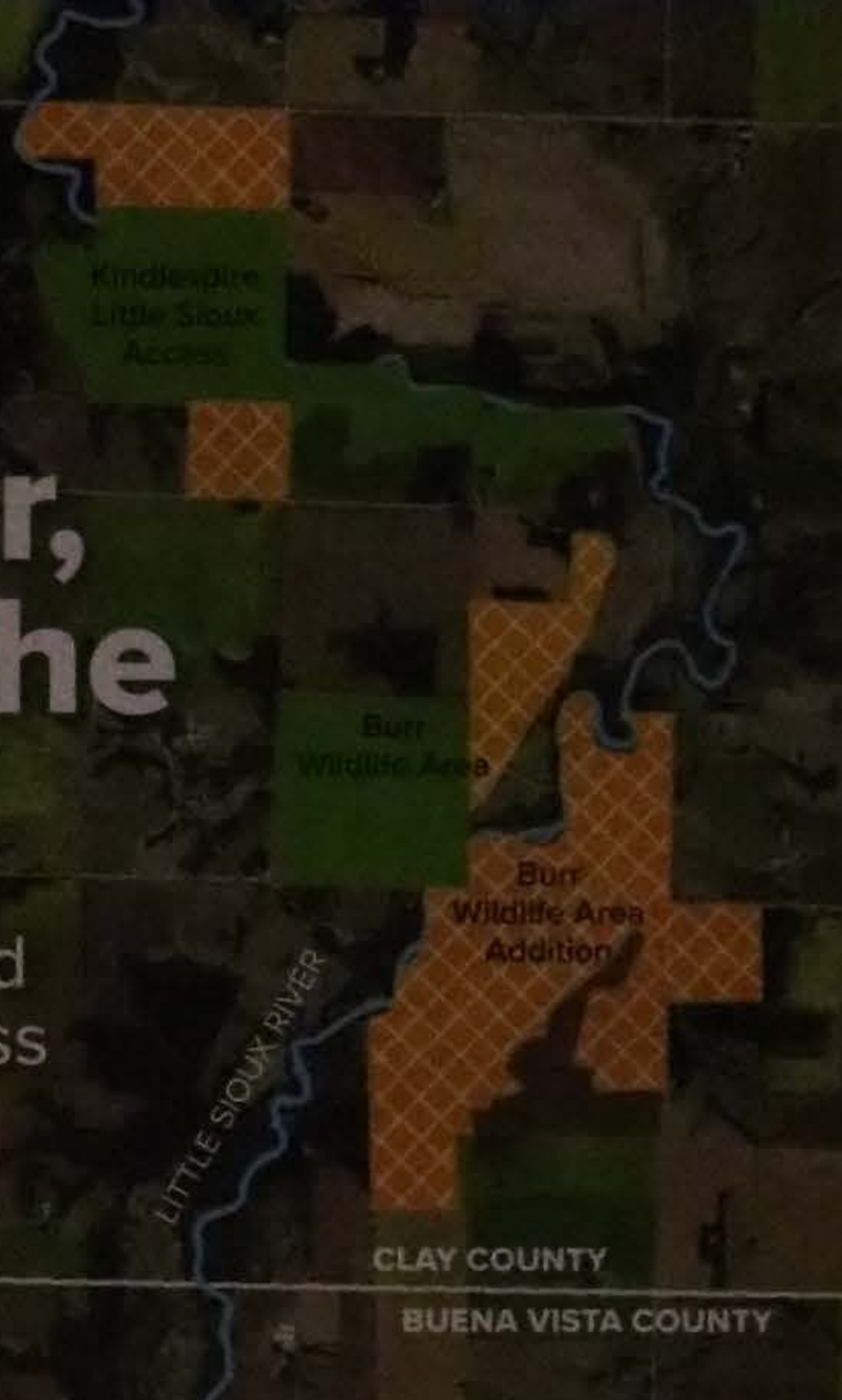
PARTNERS: INHF, Iowa DNR

FUNDING: Iowa Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP); INHF members and donors; the late E.P. Frazier in memory of his father, Kenneth; Dave McBroom



Better water, habitat on the Little Sioux

Addition provides increased protection and public access along scenic waterway



Burr Wildlife Area Addition

Clay County



LAND: 411 acres

SPECIAL FEATURES: Protected Water Area, pioneer cemetery, remnant prairie, wetlands

PARTNERS: INHF, Iowa DNR, Clay CCB

- Public area
- INHF project - now public

BY JOE JAYJACK

Remnant prairie, oak savanna — two of the ecosystems that historically covered Iowa — and a mile-and-a-half of riverfront habitat. Even a pioneer cemetery.

There was a lot to like about this Clay County property that was put on the market in 2014. However, the characteristic that perhaps most compelled Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation and several other organizations to secure the land for conservation and public use is that the land is a part of one of Iowa's five Protected Water Areas (PWAs).

PWAs, designated by the Iowa legislature for their "outstanding cultural and natural resources," are land areas adjacent to stretches of river that contain some of the most scenic spaces in the state. INHF is actively working in all five PWAs. The Clay County property, which was an addition to the Burr Wildlife Area, curves along the east side of the Little Sioux River between Spencer and Linn Grove.

INHF, in cooperation with the Clay County Conservation Board and the Iowa DNR, purchased the land with the intent that it become a public area. The 411-acre property is adjacent to the Burr Wildlife Area, an area formerly protected by INHF. The addition nearly doubles the protected natural land along this corridor, allowing for increased habitat and water quality.

"It's one of those once-in-a-lifetime opportunities to purchase a tract of land that size and with that kind of diversity — with the timber and the native plants and the wetlands," said Dan Heissel, executive director of the Clay CCB. "We're excited to partner with INHF to make this happen."

Part of the property was used as cropland in the river's floodplain. This is being restored with native prairie plants and wetland reconstruction. "Because it's in a floodplain, it's really important to protect this land, and in turn, the water quality of the river," said, Heather Jobst, INHF senior land conservation director.

On a slope above the river valley on the addition is a piece of Clay County history. The Bur Oak Pioneer Cemetery includes at least 65 gravesites, many dating back to the 1860s.

"People comment that the cemetery is not very accessible, so it would be better if it was on public land," said Cindy McGranahan, director of the Parker Historical Society based in Spencer. "It holds a dear place in some people's hearts. I think it's the setting — tucked away among the old bur oak trees."

The Burr Wildlife Area Addition is a great spot for hiking, bird watching and hunting in addition to the water quality benefits restoration of the land provides. 🌿

IOWA'S PROTECTED WATER AREAS

The PWA program designates portions of Iowa waterways for the preservation, protection and enhancement of outstanding natural and cultural resources of water and associated land areas. It provides guidelines for land protection along water corridors.



1. Wapsipinicon River (Sweet Marsh to Mississippi River)
2. Middle Raccoon River (Panora to Redfield)
3. Upper Iowa River (Kendallville to Highway 76)
4. Little Sioux River (Spencer to Linn Grove)
5. Boone River (Brewers Creek to Des Moines River)



Enduring partnership

yields everlasting results

BY TOM WAPLETON, Chief Executive Officer
of Iowa's County Conservation System

IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE WHERE IOWA'S county conservation system would be today without Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation stepping up to partner with us the past nearly-four decades.

Thousands of acres would still be unprotected, once-in-a-lifetime opportunities would have been missed, and those bridges we have collectively built for others to follow would be

far shorter and fewer.

The partnership stories echo a familiar ring — "I got a call today..." or "Someone stopped in the office to let us know about..." Short, simple conversations sharing all to a brief moment in time to do the right thing — to do our jobs of conserving Iowa's diminishing natural resources.

After the initial jubilation about the opportunity subsides, the next overwhelming set of questions is always — "How are we going to pull this off?" "What can we do to stem this development?" "How do we convince people that there is a more important future

“Our joint successes have cemented our resolve to continue. We know that we don’t have to do this by ourselves.”



Hertz Family Woods and Nature Preserve was dedicated in 2012. The private woodland was donated by the Hertz family to INHF and then Story County Conservation to honor Marjory Hertz’s conservation heart. *Photo by INHF*

vision and historic value for the land?” And, most practically and importantly: “How do we put together a timely and attractive funding package that will compel people in positions to make this happen?”

Enter INHF. It’s as if someone in the mid-1970s was listening to our “What if” discussions about an organization that could provide the independent expertise and support we, at the county level, needed to convert these opportunities into reality.

And, what a valuable resource INHF has become to us. Frequently, the very first call that is made by local county conservation officials is to the INHF team. Whether it’s to explore various landowner options, or to solicit insight and assistance for how to best go about acquiring newly available properties, that initial contact with INHF may be the most important step we take.

I look back on those first decades of literally hundreds of projects we’ve partnered with

INHF on across the state with great satisfaction and pride. We’ve celebrated protected lands at countless dedications, ribbon cuttings and other occasions with INHF. We’ve looked at the joy-filled crowds gathered in pastoral lands, shook hands and shared thanks saying, “Well done, friends.”

Our joint successes have cemented our resolve to continue. We know that we don’t have to do this by ourselves. With INHF, we’re in a better position to jump on special opportunities that we simply cannot tackle on our own.

As we strive to secure sustainable funding to support the vast array of unmet needs to protect and enhance Iowa’s natural resources, it’s reassuring to know that our most valuable resource, the INHF team, will stand with us. Together, we are making it possible for all Iowans to hike wooded ridges, paddle clean rivers and explore open prairies — now and forever. 🌿

CREATING CONNECTIONS

Nearly half of INHF’s land protection projects are done in partnership with county conservation leaders. Partnership is a core value for INHF and nearly everything we do is in partnership with community leaders, donors and landowners, as well as conservation agencies. County conservation boards and INHF frequently partner to create county parks, trails and wildlife areas. **Partnerships** often make it easier for landowners to leave their family lands and legacy for public enjoyment.



TRAIL BLAZERS

BY LISA HEIN

Some challenges may seem insurmountable, some projects out of reach. But Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation knows they'll make Iowa a better place, so it takes on even the most imposing challenges — knowing that the continual support of members and donors puts success within grasp.

The High Trestle Trail was one of those projects. Today, it's been featured in hundreds of regional and national publications. It's won multiple awards. It's an established, iconic symbol for Iowa and its trails. And although it seemed to appear overnight, its back story is one of hard work, patience, persistence and lots and lots of teamwork.

Gaining steam since the 1980s

The birth of rails-to-trails projects like the High Trestle Trail dates back to the early '80s, when the idea to convert discontinued railroad lines into multi-use recreational trails gained support through public policy and private collaboration all across the country. It was then that INHF began helping Iowa communities identify and organize the intricate pieces involved in "rail trail" projects with trails like the Heritage Trail, Cedar Valley Nature Trail, Raccoon River Valley Trail and Wabash Trace Nature Trail.

Iowans' enthusiasm over the state's growing trail network sparked INHF's immediate interest in tackling the 25-mile High Trestle Trail project back in 2003, when Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) first proposed discontinuing the stretch of train line between Woodward and Ankeny.

In 2005, UPRR sold the corridor to INHF with a \$3.2 million donation of land value. A steering committee formed, which included

PHOTO: JAMES W. HARRIS

The High Trestle Trail is one of the most popular destinations for families from the Midwest. The 13-story high bridge has made the 25-mile trail world famous. INHF and local leaders worked more than a decade to create the trail and bridge. *Photo by Don Poggensee*



representatives from four counties and five cities along the route who would own and manage portions of the finished trail. Working together with the steering committee, INHF started down the long, arduous road to transform the railway into a trail. And INHF didn't do it alone — many citizens, volunteers, donors, engineers and agencies also invested tremendous time and resources to make the High Trestle Trail a reality.

Success is in the details...and funding

Initial tasks included inventorying the route, finding seed money and negotiating the purchase of the land. But there was a problem: UPRR needed to re-use steel I-beams from a trestle bridge over the Des Moines River for a new bridge near Boone — an unfortunate loss for the trail project, but an important resource for rail transportation in Iowa. So UPRR dismantled and removed the bridge decking, but left 22 massive, 130-ft. tall concrete piers, later dubbed Iowa's Stonehenge.

With guidance from INHF and the steering committee, the project garnered enough state and federal grant funds to begin construction of the trail in 2005. The engineering firm Snyder and Associates designed it, Polk County Engineering oversaw construction and the first two "bookends" were built in Woodward and Ankeny. We were on our way.

Complete the trail, but not the bridge

Then in 2006, Congress provided a big boost with a \$5.5 million appropriation for the project. Combined with the other state and federal grants, the project had enough funds to construct the remaining 20-plus miles of trail or the bridge, but not both. The steering committee chose the trail so that people could

begin enjoying it and its stunning river views, believing the bridge would be rebuilt in time.

Those 20 miles of trail opened to the public in the fall of 2008. The final fundraising task to complete the bridge and scenic overlook was all that remained.

Inspired by artistic trail bridges in Fairfield, Iowa, and Tucson, Arizona, and funded by a small grant from the Iowa Arts Council, the steering committee sought an Iowa artist to develop concepts for the bridge. RDG Dahlquist Art Studios was awarded the design contract and worked with Shuck-Britson, the bridge engineers, to execute it.

Then came the crowning moment in the fundraising efforts: Vision Iowa awarded the project \$1.75 million. Working with an incredible committee of private leaders and many INHF members and donors, nearly 900 Iowans donated \$1 million in just three months through INHF to complete the project. The High Trestle Trail bridge was built, and on April 30, 2011, an estimated 3,000 people celebrated its grand opening.

Surpassed expectations

When we stood on that old UPRR bridge back in 2003, we knew its spectacular views would one day make it a magical place. However, the enthusiasm, excitement and adoration resulting from this project surpassed everyone's expectations.

Every week, the trail attracts thousands of outdoor lovers. Local businesses along the route are growing — and new ones are springing up. Walkers and bikers are taking in the views as they improve their health. What the High Trestle Trail brings to Iowa is incredibly exciting, and it's one more reason that Iowa is the "World Capital of Trails." 🍷

High Trestle Trail

Polk, Story, Boone and Dallas counties



LENGTH: 25 miles

SURFACE: Paved

CITIES: Woodward, Madrid, Slater, Sheldahl, Ankeny

CONNECTING TRAILS: Heart of Iowa Nature Trail

SPECIAL FEATURES: 13-story, 0.5-mile bridge over the Des Moines River



Keep it **WILD**

BY ANITA O'GARA

WHAT'S A CONSERVATION EASEMENT?

A conservation easement is a permanent agreement between a landowner and a qualified conservation group. When a landowner puts a conservation easement on their land, they retain ownership while voluntarily giving up rights that could damage the site's conservation values, like development or mining. Any land uses specifically prohibited by the conservation easement terms are permanent — no future owner may break the terms of the agreement. Easements are one of the most popular private land protection options available.

For more about land protection, visit iowalandoptions.org.

FROM THEIR RIDGE PASTURE, three generations of the DeCook family enjoy a view reminiscent of the mid-1800s — complete with bison grazing on the prairie.

Brothers Dan and Mike DeCook have always been passionate about conservation. So when their parents, Mark and Kay DeCook, wanted to purchase a modest farm two decades ago, Dan and Mike could not have been happier. Dan helped his parents find land that featured expansive fields dotted with woods and prairie. It was the kind of setting that ultimately lured Mike back from Montana, where he had worked with outfitters and cattle ranchers.

Shared goals transform a land
Gradually this joint family venture led them to restore thousands of acres that provide an "ecological profit" that doesn't depend on traditional crop production or dividing and selling land.

Bison roam freely at the DeCook Ranch in Marion and Monroe counties. The ranch is the largest conservation easement held by INHF. Photo by Ron Huelse

The DeCooks had three goals: make a living, restore the land and keep it wild.

Mike says his parents "have been super supportive in switching 400 acres of row crop to all grass, removing manmade structures, moving the ranch to organic cattle production, then to organic grass-fed cattle and now organic grass-fed bison."

In 2011, the family's goal to "keep it wild" was cemented when Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation accepted the donation of a permanent conservation easement, the largest ever accepted by INHF. Through it, INHF is responsible for ensuring that more than 2,100 acres of the DeCooks' land is never developed or subdivided, and that its natural features remain.

"It was a privilege to help this family lock in the restoration they've worked so hard to achieve," INHF President Joe McGovern said. "Their way of tying production, restoration and protection together is magical. They have such foresight."

The DeCooks had three goals: make a living, restore the land and keep it wild.

Since the original easement, both brothers have put a combined 270 acres into additional conservation easement protection in Monroe, Marion and Lucas counties. INHF temporarily held a property adjacent to Mark and Kay's ranch, and sold 139 acres with an easement, continuing to create a protected complex in southern Iowa.

The healing and rebirth of the land continues

Restoration takes time, and plans continue to evolve. Today, the family is working to restore and expand patches of native prairie and oak savanna, restore wetlands, bring back native trees and plants and reintroduce native Iowa species — like bison — to the land.

Dan says, "We want to work with local government to restore wildlife, too. We released a pair of trumpeter swans on the wetland in 2012." The farm also boasts abundant wild turkey, coyote, deer and songbirds.



Dan and Mike DeCook, Mike's young sons and the crew on the day the bison first arrived at the ranch. Photos by Ron Huelse

Mike's young sons are already inheriting their family's appreciation for conservation, and the DeCooks hope they will one day love and care for this land, too. Even if not, they enjoy knowing that the INHF conservation easement assures that their pioneer landscape will always remain. 🦒

DeCook Ranch Conservation Easement

Monroe and Marion Counties



LAND: Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation holds the 2,187-acre permanent conservation easement. The permanent agreement preserves the wildlife habitat and allows grazing.

SPECIAL FEATURES: Woodland, oak savanna, native prairie, wetlands, ponds and grassland pasture

PARTNERS: Mark and Kay DeCook of Pella, with sons Mike and Dan





A new generation of conservation leadership

BY ANITA O'GARA

“Having a paid internship that teaches interns to write grant requests is almost unheard-of.”

— ANDREA
Former INHF program
support intern

For the last three decades, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation has enjoyed a steady stream of young Iowans who join intensely in our work — many for a few months, some for a year. We're committed to this education effort because we see these bright young students use and share what they learn about saving Iowa's natural resources.

We savor the satisfaction of having touched their lives, and we marvel at their impact.

Young at heart

It's easy to see that interns have shaped INHF as surely as INHF shaped their skills and experience. The students keep INHF young at heart: eager and energized, with an eye on the future. And they help ensure INHF is relevant for young adults.

“Ever since I've worked here, students have asked, ‘Why? Why do we do it that way?’” said Joe McGovern, INHF president. “As you explain, you have to think it through — and if you're open to their questions, it leads you to new ideas.”

Interns are bold, on the edge of trends. We

remember when intern Katie Woolm convinced us that INHF needed a presence on the newly-invented World Wide Web — and then Katie built our first website. Other interns have taken INHF to Facebook, Twitter and beyond.

Results on the land

Office interns help save land by preparing press releases and grant requests for our land protection projects. Internships that teach grant proposal writing are rare, but INHF has become adept at it. Students learn a marketable skill while learning in depth about land transactions, agency partnerships, wildlife species, local conservation priorities and the economic impact of natural attractions.

“The gratification one experiences from securing a fully funded conservation project is indescribable,” said former intern Colby Fangman.

Land stewardship interns see their tremendous results on the land every day. They bolster one another's spirits on hot, muggy, buggy days of pulling and cutting invasive plants from prairie or other special

sites. During the physical work of restoring land, they learn in ways not possible in a classroom: identifying native plants, discovering new insects and discussing land management issues.

Interns are inspired by meeting private landowners who have permanently protected the lands they love, and the students' commitment and hard work bring hope to the landowners.

"To see how our work actually mattered, to see how it changed the land and to see all the other life that was there that wasn't before, that has been one of the most rewarding things of being able to work in Iowa," said Mark Wilson, a 2009 land stewardship intern. Today, Mark manages Conservation Corps Iowa, providing land stewardship work experiences to dozens of young adults each year.

Touching lives

INHF has long expected the intern program's impact to grow with time in unforeseeable ways, as interns provide a new generation of conservation leadership in Iowa and beyond. Yes, the internship program helps build job skills in young people, but more importantly, INHF is sharing its passion, values and

commitment with outstanding, creative young people who care. These young leaders will find many ways to take action in the decades ahead.

Some former interns are now conservation professionals with nonprofits or local, state or federal agencies. Five serve on the INHF staff, and one serves on the INHF board of directors. Others are business leaders, volunteers and parents whose conservation ethic affects their business and life decisions, influencing others around them.

INHF often hears that internships are more than a career step; they are an important turning point in interns' lives. Interns mention the mentors and friends they met, the satisfaction of doing important work, the land they appreciated in new ways. They speak of learning professional behavior and rising to meet responsibility: "We pushed each other to learn and grow," Jennifer Rogers said.

"It is essential to keep people, especially young people, in touch with the natural world," former intern Mike Robb said. "I hope that many, many more continue to experience all the wonderful things that this internship program provides."

INHF wholeheartedly agrees. 🌱

"Every day, we went outside and experienced the prairie and other areas hands on. It was fascinating to see it change from day to day and be able to help it succeed where I could."

- BEN
Former INHF statewide
land stewardship intern

INHF INTERNS AT A GLANCE

More than 315 college students have served as INHF interns since the program started in 1986. Two-thirds of our former interns live and work in Iowa today.

Your INHF nature calendar (provided as a member benefit) is designed by an intern. Our blog and Facebook posts and our web pages are usually written by interns.

Thirty prairies and natural lands are healthier with more wildlife every year, thanks to land stewardship interns.

INHF's largest project grants are the summer work for the program support intern. Each year these responsible students bring in hundreds of thousands of dollars in grant funding to protect Iowa's special places.

The R. J. McElroy Trust has sustained the core internship program and assisted its growth, with grants totaling more than \$1 million over three decades. Why? "The McElroy Trust looks for programs that can transform and inspire young people. This program fits the bill," said Stacy Van Gorp, McElroy Trust executive director.

Donors may contribute specifically to the internship program. Internships have even been endowed to honor Richard S. "Sandy" Rhodes, Charles and Helen McLaughlin, and the Svare and Stravers families.

Two distinct styles: Office and field. Year-round, three or four interns work in our office on projects involving communications, design, grant writing and landscape architecture. Each summer, 14 land stewardship interns work across Iowa to remove invasive species and restore permanently protected lands. All INHF internships are paid, out of respect for the students' responsibilities and hard work.

PERMANENTLY PROTECTING A

Loess Hills

TREASURE

BY JOE JAYJACK

The peaceful beauty of oak savanna, woodlands and prairie remnants in the Loess Hills will continue to thrive thanks to John Wanamaker's action to protect this land. Photo by Tim Sproul, INHF

John Wanamaker may not know precisely how many babies he delivered in his career as a doctor, but he can tell you that he has fledged exactly 950 baby bluebirds since he created a bluebird trail in 1993 on his Fremont County property.

This is just one example of the care Wanamaker has taken to protect the land and wildlife on the 411-acre Loess Hills property he inherited from his aunt and uncle in 1989. He and his late wife, Karen, helped preserve this invaluable piece of land through Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation in 2014. The Wanamakers made a generous bargain sale, donating two-thirds of the land's value. The property is now owned by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and managed as Militia Hollow Wildlife Management Area (WMA). The WMA

is adjacent to Waubonsie State Park and is bordered to the west by the Loess Hills Scenic Byway.

Wanamaker and 17 other Iowans were honored in March 2015 at Gift to Iowa's Future Day. Each year, Iowa landowners who donated land or land value for conservation are recognized at the capitol by the governor and Iowa DNR director.

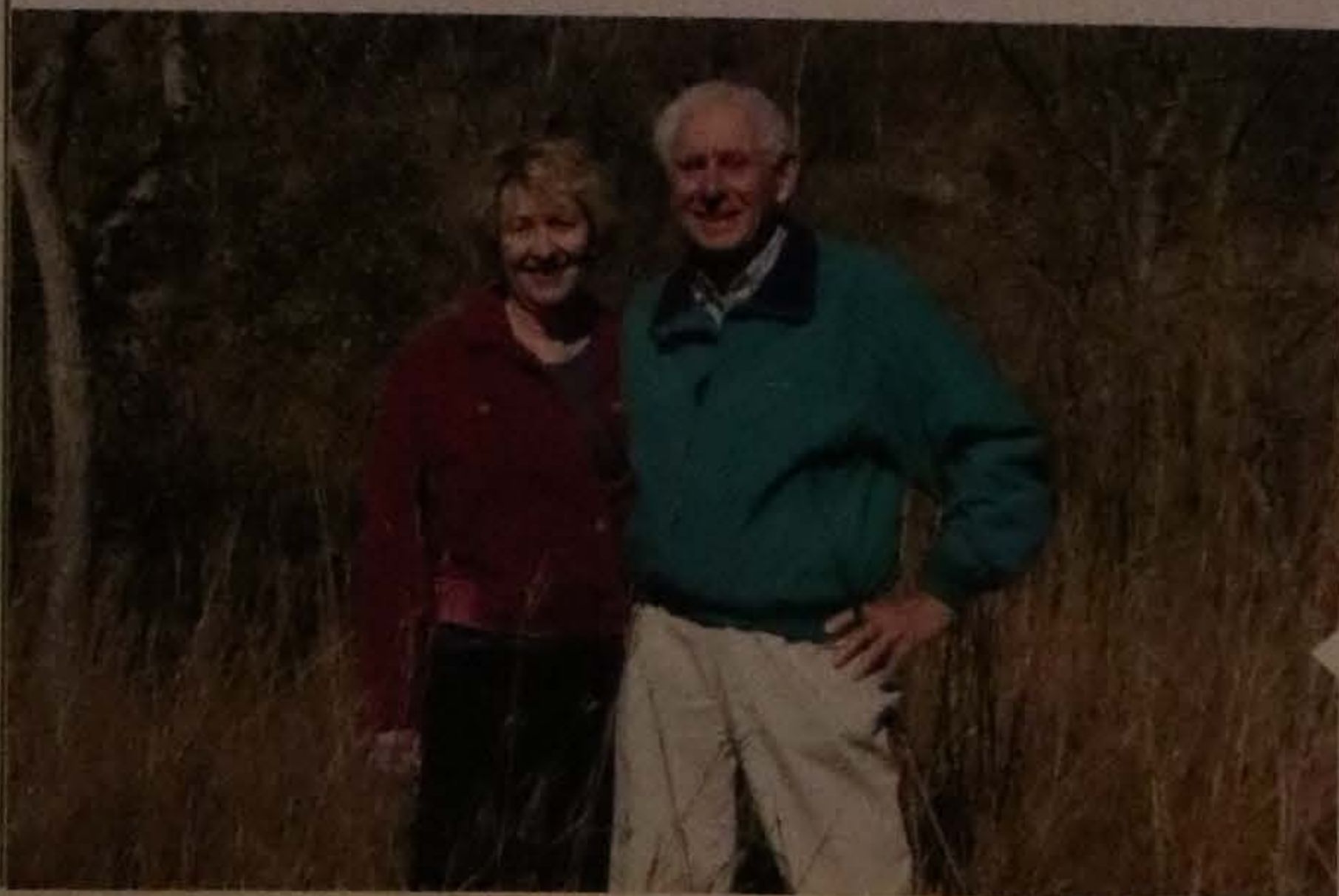
"I want to thank INHF and the DNR for providing the mechanism to make this possible," Wanamaker said at the 2015 event. "If not for INHF, who would have helped us to do what we wanted to do? I don't know how landowners could be sure their land would be permanently protected without the help of INHF and the DNR."

A deep family connection to the land

Wanamaker's connection to this piece of land started long before he retired from medicine in Rock Port, Missouri, and moved here with Karen in the early 1990s. His uncle and aunt, Jack and Jean Good, bought the property in 1938.

"I've been going out there from the time I was seven. It was like a second home to me. We used to ride our bikes out there from town before I could drive," said Wanamaker, who grew up three miles away in Hamburg.

John and Karen on their property in Fremont County. The Wanamakers worked hard to restore the farm they inherited. After Karen's passing, John entrusted their land to INHF for permanent protection. Photo courtesy of John Wanamaker





During their five decades of ownership, the Goods created an extensive path system throughout the property, fenced the pastures for cattle and briefly grew corn on the terraced hilltops. They also dammed a stream to create a large pond. "Many pleasant hours were spent by Jack, Jean, family and friends driving and hiking through the area, cooking at the bluff top cabin and picnicking and paddleboating at the pond," Wanamaker wrote in his personal history of the property.

Jack Good also started the practice of cutting and clearing invasive Eastern red cedar and Autumn olive trees, which Wanamaker continued through his ownership. "(We) have found it an attainable but never-ending goal," he wrote.

Wanamaker may have been a doctor by trade, but he was a self-taught conservationist. He removed most of the interior fencing on the property and through prescribed burns encouraged the return of native prairie. His favorite spot on the property is the bluff ridge that overlooks the Missouri River bottom. "You can see Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri — and on a clear day, you can see Kansas."

Wanamaker's protection of the land was a gradual progression. His personal stewardship of the property over the last few decades has been thoughtful and thorough. Then in 2007, the Wanamakers placed a conservation easement on the land through INHF that ensures the natural state of the land stays intact permanently. Finally, when addressing

the question of who would protect and restore the land after they were gone, the Wanamakers decided to entrust INHF and the Iowa DNR to do so.

Karen passed away in the fall of 2014, and John moved into a house in Hamburg. He trusts that INHF and the Iowa DNR will maintain the land as he hoped.

"I wanted the land to be preserved like it was, and I was afraid if I sold it to a private owner, it would deteriorate and the invasives would come in," he said. "INHF was able to assure me that it would be protected."

He's also hoping the bluebirds are just the start of more wildlife in the area.

"When we first started, the only birds you'd see were house sparrows. By the time we left, there were so many songbirds! The work we did provided more habitat for them. It's wonderful the way the bluebirds have come back." 🐦

Militia Hollow Wildlife Management Area

Fremont County



LAND: 411 acres in the Loess Hills owned and managed by the Iowa DNR

SPECIAL FEATURES: High quality remnant prairie, oak savanna, woodland, scenic vistas and retired hay land

PARTNERS: INHF and Iowa DNR

John's favorite spot on the property is the bluff ridge that overlooks the Missouri River Bottom. "You can see Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri — and on a clear day you can see Kansas." *Photo by Joe Jayjack, INHF*





Inspired by
ANCIENT OAKS

BY ANITA O'GARA

CAL PARROTT SIMPLY WANTED A PLACE TO EXPLORE where he could spend more time in nature and with his photography hobby.

In 1998, he purchased some land near Carson — not knowing it was the first step on a fascinating educational journey and a new door to conservation leadership.

The Parrott household values lifelong learning. Cal and his wife, Frankie, both came from educator households and focused their careers on education. Even so, Cal seems surprised to look back and see how very much he has learned and experienced since buying his land and exploring the big topic of natural resource management.

"I read in the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation magazine about people who were improving their ground, restoring prairie," Cal says. "The concept of land stewardship became strong for me — being good stewards for the small amount of time we're allowed. It was an evolution, an educational journey."

Cal started with the overgrazed pasture, using his background in agronomy and animal nutrition, to improve its health and photograph its recovery. He soon discovered the area was a pastured oak savanna, where native prairie could be coaxed back under the spreading bur oaks.

"One thing led to another," he says. "I heard of people trying to take land back to what it was like when Lewis & Clark came through Iowa. That became a big point of reference for me — those big bur oaks were here in those days."

Reading and talking with others who had successfully restored their land motivated Cal to expand his land restoration project. Chad Graeve served as a catalyst in Cal's restoration journey. As the natural resource specialist for Pottawattamie County Conservation, Chad advises landowners interested in conservation and directs ecological management on county conservation lands. Cal found Chad's progress at Pottawattamie County's Hitchcock Nature

Area inspiring. Chad found Cal's progress with his land equally exciting.

"The strongest form of leadership is leading by example," Graeve said. "Cal wasn't just doing this work on the land for himself. He was doing it for the critters, for his family and friends who came to visit. In this region, if you can't shoot it or earn a dollar from it, most people aren't willing to invest in it. Cal is and did. His restoration set an example for others to watch and consider."

Having found that their land was among the top-ranking sites in the county for ecological value and potential, the Parrotts began working with INHF in 2012 to start the process of turning their land into a public nature area. They donated one-third of the value of the land as a bargain sale to INHF to make the project financially feasible. Pottawattamie County Conservation now owns the site and will continue its restoration. The Parrotts retained use of the land through 2015, giving Cal more time to continue the fun of restoring the site and giving the county time to raise the \$650,000 needed to complete the project.

During this time, Cal continued to provide leadership to the Pottawattamie Conservation Foundation. As a volunteer on their board, Cal is a champion for conservation projects and a leader for the endowment campaign that will help fund the county's natural resource management well into the future. Conservation professionals deeply appreciate this kind of leadership.

"People think the staff of agencies gets things done, but it's community support and leadership that's really needed for continued success," Graeve said.

The land that started this educational journey for Cal is known as Wheeler Grove Conservation Area, reflecting the historic name for this neighborhood. The Parrotts hope people find it a place to learn about nature, take photographs, enjoy the wildlife, fish a little and watch the land return to its roots — just as they have. 🌿

Wheeler Grove

Pottawattamie County



LAND: 248 acres

SPECIAL FEATURES:

Large and diverse hike-in wildlife area for this region, with public fishing, nature and hunting.

PARTNERS: Cal and Frankie Parrott, INHF and Pottawattamie County Conservation

LANDOWNERS OPTIONS

Landowners like the Parrotts can learn about ways landowners permanently protect their land — and the tax benefits of doing so — by visiting INHF's iowalandoptions.org.

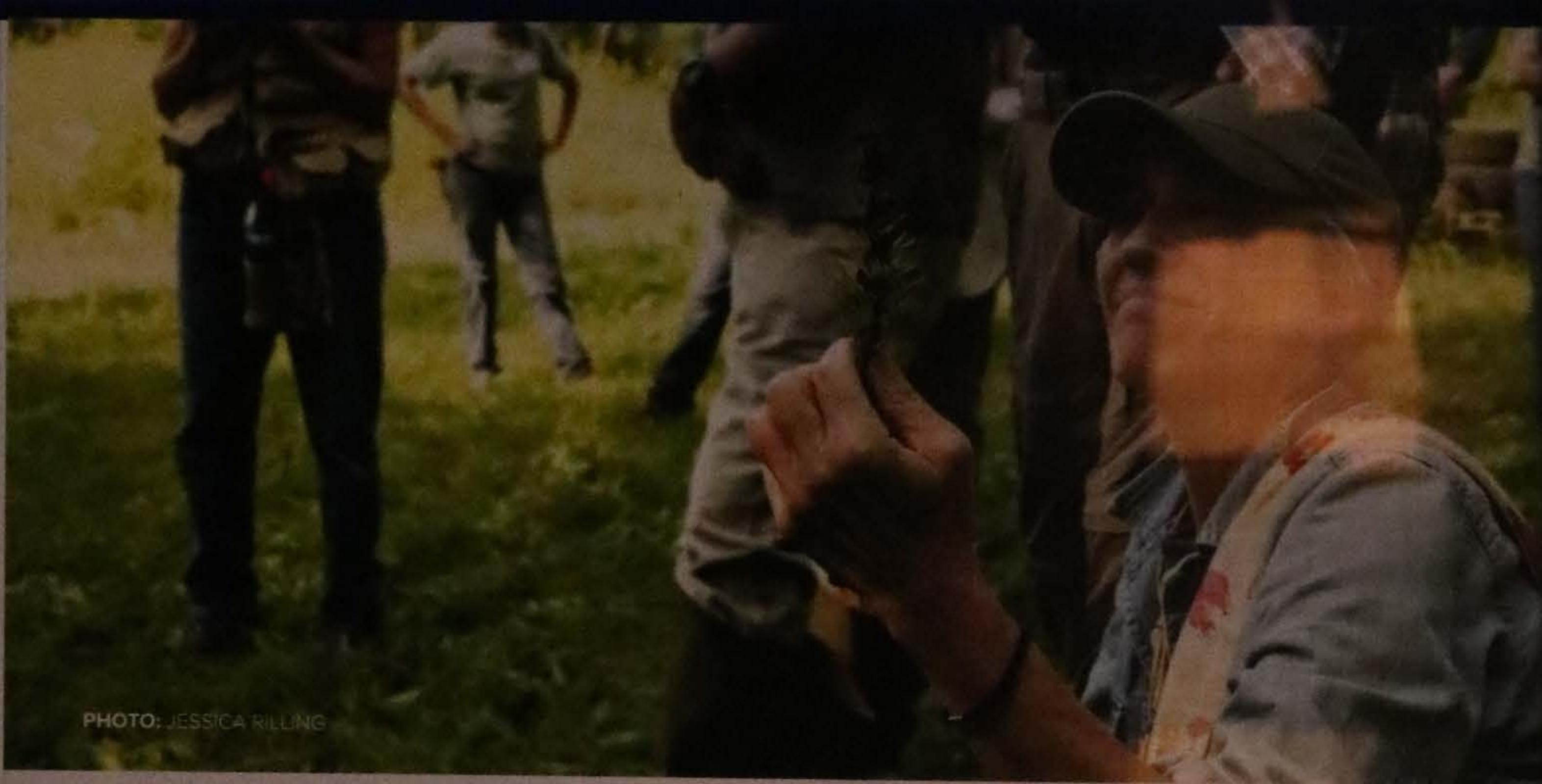


PHOTO: JESSICA RILLING

CONNECT WITH US

There are many ways to get involved with INHF.

VOLUNTEERING

INHF volunteers work on restoring Iowa's wild areas, in our office, at events and in many unique ways. Are you interested in learning more about Iowa's plants and animals, while making a difference? Contact Mary Runkel, INHF volunteer coordinator, at mrunkel@inhf.org or 515-288-1846.

CONSERVATION PUBLIC POLICY

Conservation needs vigilant voices at the state and national level. Are you interested in how you can speak up for conservation policies and funding? Contact Marian Riggs, INHF policy director, at mriggs@inhf.org or 515-288-1846 to learn more.

ON THE LAND

You can feel the permanence when your gift helps create new public nature areas or restore important habitat that will remain and flourish. Want to consider directing your gift to a specific land project, land stewardship or our internships? Contact Abby Hade Terpstra at aterpstra@inhf.org or 515-288-1846 to learn more.

BEGINNING THE LAND CONVERSATION

Landowners deserve to know their options for protecting their Iowa land into the future. Do you want to discuss your land? Or can you open doors to landowners, farm managers, attorneys, financial planners or other professionals who help clients with land decisions? Contact Anita O'Gara at aogara@inhf.org or 515-288-1846 to learn more.

"The most rewarding part of volunteering with INHF was feeling a part of something bigger — not only feeling I'm impacting the future, but knowing I am not the only one who desires to do so."

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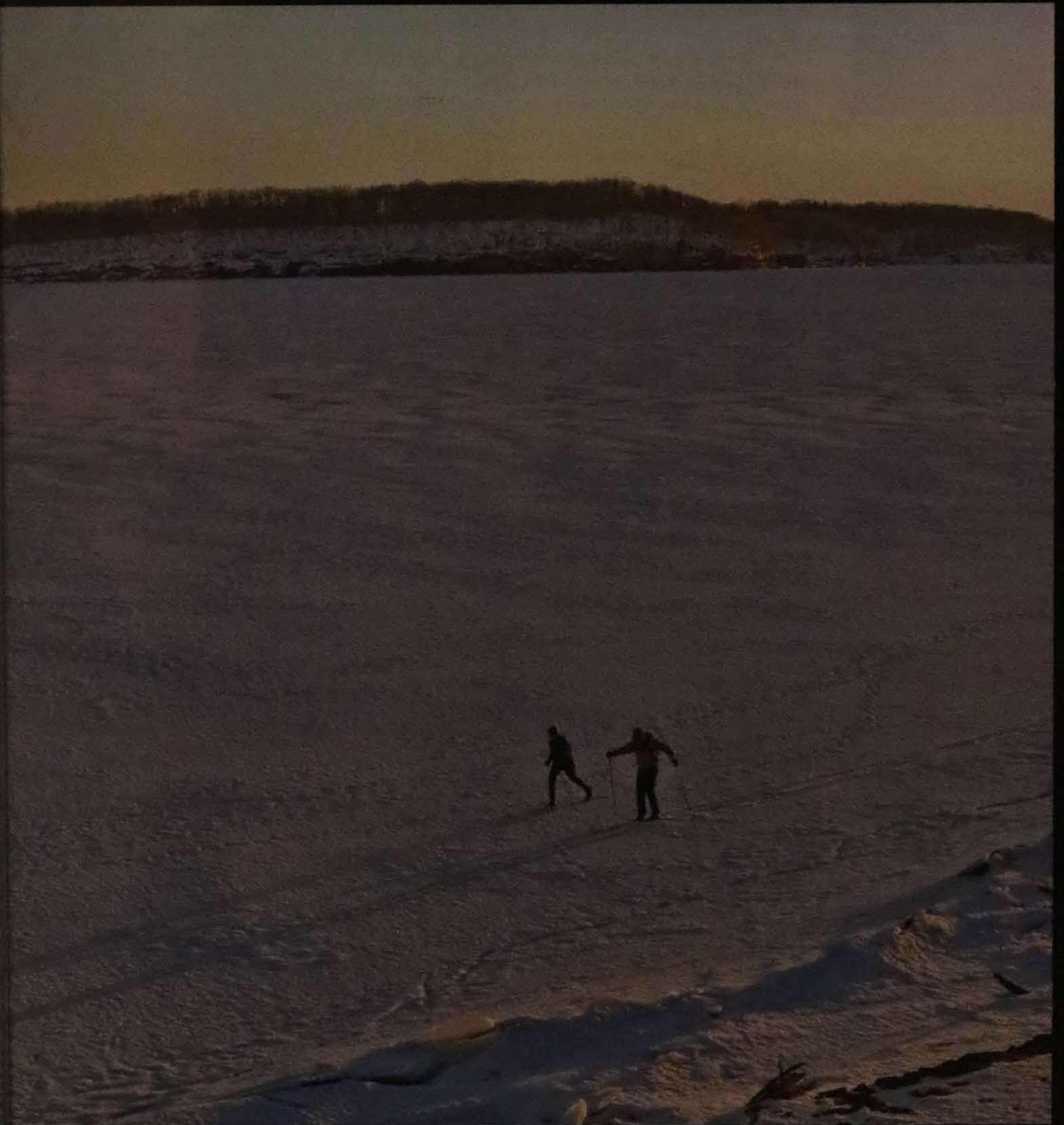
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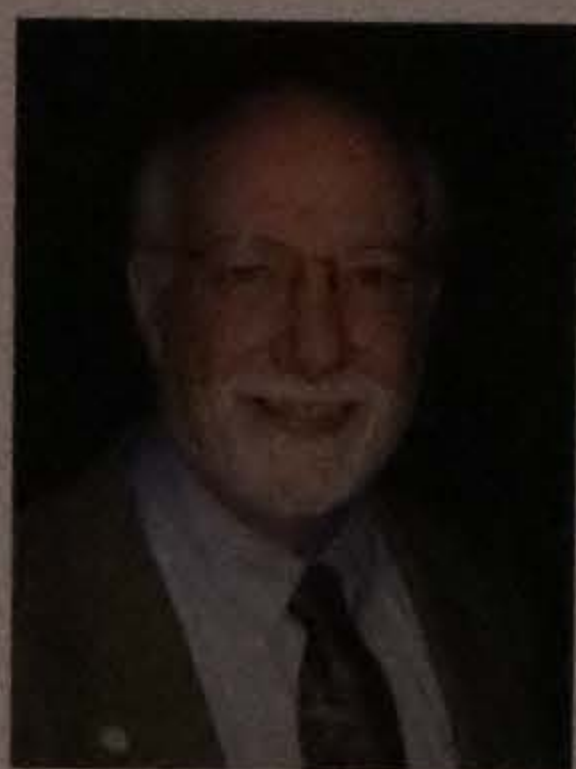
WINTER 2012

Iowa

Natural Heritage

Protecting and restoring Iowa's land, water and wildlife





Mark C. Ackelson,
President

Why conservation matters

Caucus season is here. As the political jargon swirls around us, it's important to remember that conservation is not a party-specific issue. It should be a plank in every party's platform. Conservation impacts economics, wildlife, water quality and quality of life. It cannot be ignored.

This season's magazine highlights the quality-of-life aspect of conservation and the importance of getting our dose of Vitamin N, as in Nature. In her review of Richard Louv's *The Nature Principle*, staffer Ann Robinson explains how being outdoors is not just a luxury, but an imperative for making "us — and our families and society — healthier and happier."

INHF strives to connect people with nature, now and in the future. We expand protected lands as we did with the Mines of Spain, one of our oldest projects to which we recently made a strategic addition. We lead coordinated grassroots conservation efforts as highlighted in the national America's Great Outdoors Initiative. And we connect people to nature through projects like trails and parks. Whether it's through protection, leadership or encouragement, INHF finds opportunities and spaces for you to "embrace winter." Because as Richard Louv says:

"...in an age of rapid environmental, economic, and social transformation, the future will belong to the nature-smart — those individuals, families, businesses, and political leaders who develop a deeper understanding of nature, and who know how to balance the virtual with the real."

Some things transcend political lines.

FEB 11 2013

STATE LIBRARY OF IOWA



Iowa
Natural Heritage
Foundation

The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation protects and restores Iowa's land, water and wildlife.

This statewide, member-supported, non-profit conservation organization's priorities include protecting priority lands, connecting natural landscapes and corridors, restoring natural areas, and engaging Iowans to experience and protect our natural heritage.

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Front Cover: With the sun behind them, the skiers chase their long shadows along the snowy frozen waters of Lake Red Rock near Hickory Ridge. Photo by Diane Michaud Lowry.

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Like what you see in this issue?
Find more at:

www.inhf.org/winter-2012-magazine.cfm

The photographer skillfully places the viewer in the kayak. One can almost see her own breath as she looks out at the rocky outcrop and snow-covered shoreline of the Des Moines River.

Diane Michaud Lowry

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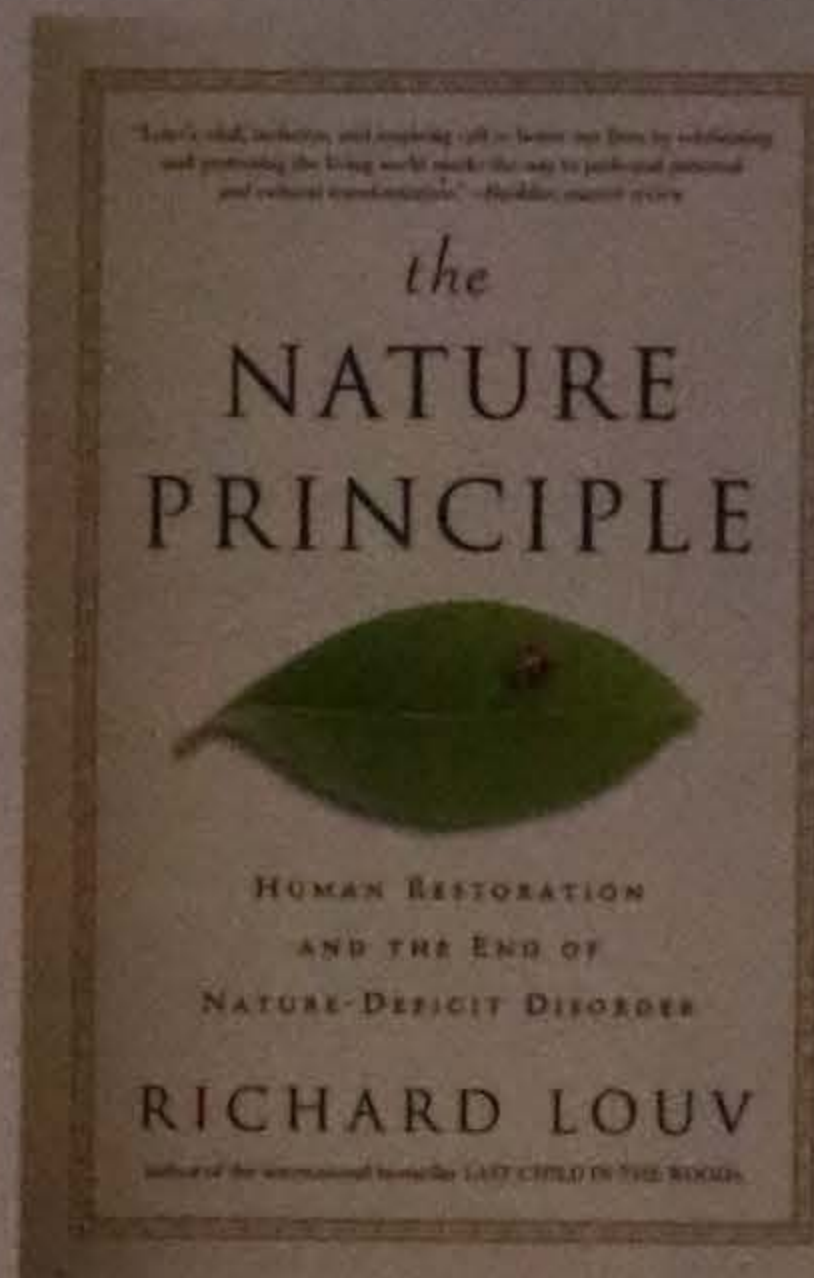
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Vitamin N: We need nature

I crave the outdoors. I suspect you can relate.

Thanks to *The Nature Principle* by Richard Louv, I have new inspiration to get up and get outside. The book's subtitle reads: Human restoration and the end of nature-deficit disorder. In short, Louv argues that "reconnection to the natural world is fundamental to human health, well-being, spirit and survival." Along the way, he tells many hopeful stories about the amazing benefits of the wonder drug, Vitamin N — N for nature.

Think about your last year. I wouldn't be surprised if many of your best moments have been experienced outside. Mine have: Like the day we dedicated Hickory Ridge Camp, topped off by kayaking a quiet cove. Or cycling the High Trestle Trail on a crisp spring morning before crowds came out to enjoy the Grand Celebration. Or wading through a sea of bluestem on a conservation easement site where I looked for late summer blooms and butterflies with two young friends. Such times always leave me invigorated.

The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation makes a great effort to create places where we can get outdoors — and to tell our members of special opportunities to go there together. We instinctively know how important that is, and I believe you do, too. According to Louv, our instincts are good.

What would our lives be like if our days and nights were as immersed in nature as they are in technology? How can each of us help create that life-enhancing world, not only in a hypothetical future, but right now, for our families and for ourselves?

— Richard Louv,
The Nature Principle

Louv's earlier work, *The Last Child in the Woods* started a new educational movement to get kids outdoors in the real world. He showed that outdoor time is essential for children to develop their bodies, powers of observation and sense of self while learning about their parks, neighborhoods and planet.

But what about the grownups? According to Louv, adults are as nature-starved as kids, and just as needy of the benefits of Vitamin N. He offers considerable data to prove that more time outdoors (even time viewing the outdoors) can make us — and our families and society — healthier and happier.

Imagine the possibilities! If we made it a priority to spend even a little more time nourishing our natural cravings for trees, fresh air, bird song and babbling streams, we could transform our personal *and* collective well-being.

I plan to take Louv's prescription. On this sunny late-fall Friday, I'm headed out to hike a northern Iowa woodland. I encourage you to do likewise. After all, it's not just about me or about you. It's our civic duty.

By Ann Y. Robinson, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation Outreach Coordinator.





Diane Michaud Lowry

Our seasonal dose of Vitamin N: Enjoy winter at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt

Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt, just northeast of the Des Moines metro area, stretches over 7,200 acres along 10 miles of the Skunk River in Polk and Jasper counties. This diverse public area offers many opportunities to explore and play in a wild landscape near the city.

Visitors to the Bottoms will find riverine woodlands, stream and wetland habitats, sedge meadows and sandy upland hill prairies and overlooks. Recreational facilities include electric and non-electric campsites, a lodge (called the Longhouse) to rent, picnic areas, seasonal canoe rental, a trap shooting range and more.

The area is also popular with anglers, and a great place to see many kinds of wildlife. Winter species to watch for include weasels, muskrat and deer, or even the federally endangered Plains pocket mouse. When the weather warms up, keep an eye out for rare waterfowl and sandhill cranes once again nesting in the area. With its varied wet and dry landscapes, this area is also richly endowed with native plant species.

More than four miles of hiking trails wind through the bottoms, including several miles groomed for cross-country skiing. The 20-mile Chichaqua Valley bike trail also runs through the south side of the Bottoms, from Bondurant to Baxter.*

The Bottoms is jointly owned by the Polk and Jasper county conservation boards and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. INHF helped create the Greenbelt with 15 additions since 1993, including a brand new 312-acre addition. Along with its wildlife and recreation benefits, keeping this land natural improves local water quality and reduces future flood impacts and costs.

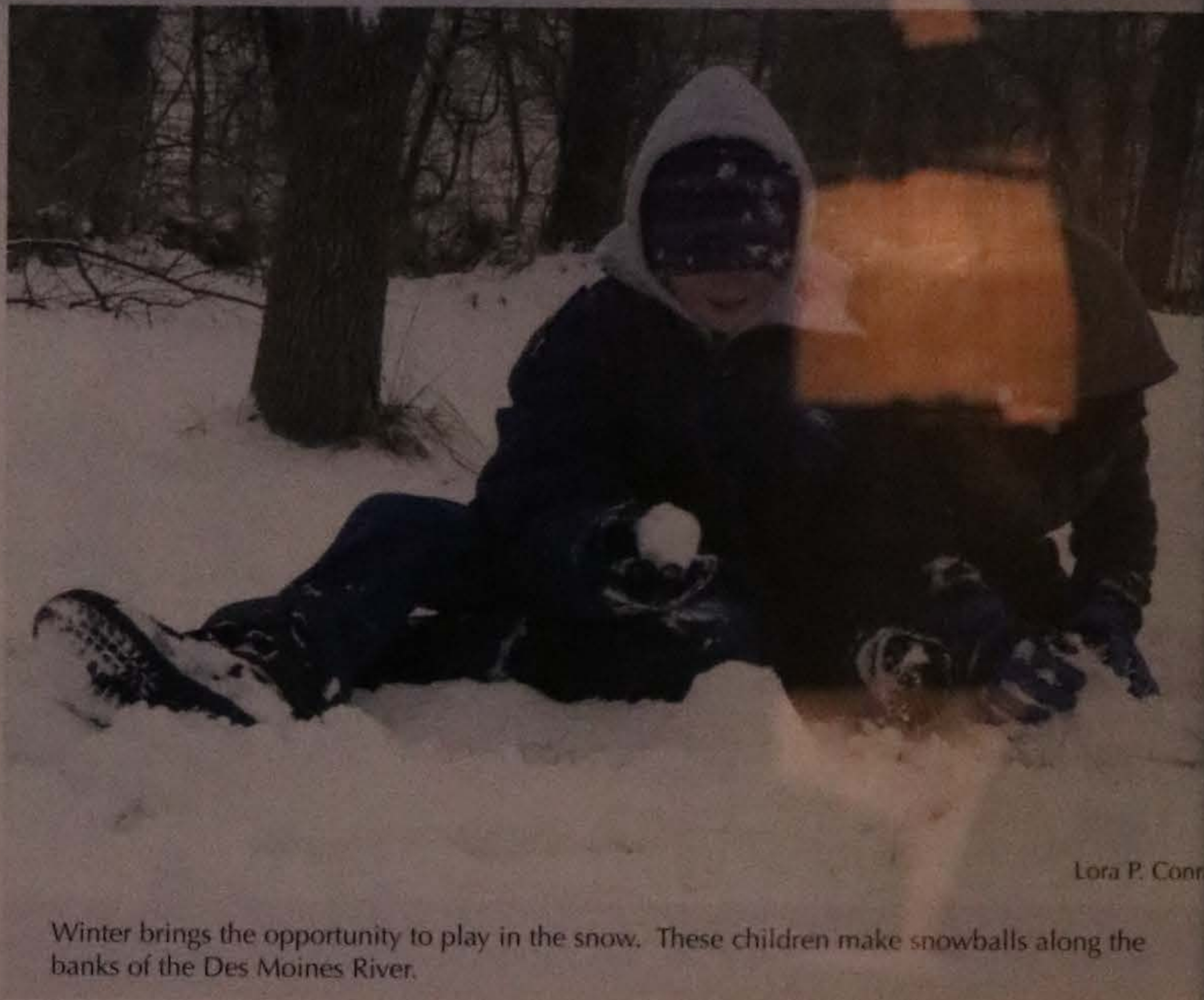
The Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt is located about nine miles east of Ankeny, at 8700 NE 126 Ave., Maxwell, Iowa. For more information and links to maps, visit www.inhf.org/winter-2012-magazine.cfm

*Note: a section of the Chichaqua bike trail is currently closed due to flood damage.

Each season during the coming year, INHF plans to highlight a public area we have helped protect. We will feature Iowa's varied landscapes around the state where you can go to recreate, restore your spirit and senses, and soak up some beneficial Vitamin N, courtesy of Nature.

*Winter
came down
to our home
one night
Quietly
pirouetting in on
silvery-toed
slippers of snow,
And we,
we were children
once again.*

— Bill Morgan, Jr.



Lora P. Conr

Winter brings the opportunity to play in the snow. These children make snowballs along the banks of the Des Moines River.

Embracing Winter

Snow has fallen; the air is still fresh. A hush blankets the land. A cardinal flits across the graying sky, providing a flash of color against the muted backdrop. Winter has arrived.

This year, we invite you to explore winter — to reconnect to this magical season.

Heidi Anderson, a naturalist with Polk County Conservation Board, recommends these three ways to enjoy the season in Polk County.

Snowshoeing

Snowshoeing is a great activity to get your family outdoors. It's easy, relatively inexpensive, burns calories and lets you enjoy the sights of the season. Because

of these and other reasons, the sport's popularity has exploded by 43 percent just from 2006 to 2009, according to Snowsports Industries America.

Parks all over the state provide extensive trails for snowshoeing. Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt in Polk County, for example, offers great wooded trails to explore.

Not sure you want to commit to buying snowshoes? That's OK — many places rent them. Polk County Conservation rents snowshoes at Jester Park for \$7 for the entire day. They even have children's sizes.

Wildlife viewing

The muted, snowy backdrop coupled with bare trees make

winter ideal for spotting wildlife. The majestic bald eagle swooping down to snatch a fish from a hole in an icy river is a memorable winter scene.

Effigy Mounds, just north of Marquette, Iowa, provides an ideal scenic spot to eagle watch. Along this stretch of river, a visitor can spot hundreds of bald eagles as well as golden eagles and red-shouldered hawks. There are great places to see wildlife at state parks and recreation areas all over Iowa.

Cross-country skiing

Cross-country skiing continues to be a favorite winter activity. It works almost every muscle in your body while allowing you a peaceful way to see animal





Lora P. Conrad

While birding, this couple celebrates the season with a glass of bubbly.

acks left by deer, fox or otters. While it requires a little more skill than snowshoeing, cross-country skiing is easy to learn. Many groomed trails exist across the state; *mycountyparks.com* is one place to find a trail near you.

The season may be quieter, more serene. The air is brisk (though all right, it's downright chilly). Perhaps it's not as welcoming as its sister seasons. But, if you slow down, dress warmly and embrace

winter's pace, you may just see the charms that your older self had forgotten.

Looking for more information, ideas and links to get outdoors in your community? Visit www.inhf.org/winter-2012-magazine.cfm to find where you can get your dose of Vitamin N.

By Hannah Inman, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation Director of Communications.



Ron Hueise

The photographer aroused the curiosity of this American mink (*Mustela vison*), out on a foray along a southern Iowa wetland.

Wildlife Viewing Tips

By Heidi Anderson, Polk County Conservation Board Naturalist

- Learn to hide: Animals will act natural if they can't see you. Cars act as a great blind.
- Stop. Look. Listen: You are less likely to disturb wildlife and have a better chance of seeing them if you move slowly and quietly.
- Practice stress reduction: If you see an animal acting nervous, back off and leave it alone. Any undue stress you cause an animal makes it use precious energy that should be used to find food.
- Relax and be patient: Allow yourself enough time to view wildlife. Unlike humans, animals do not have schedules. Wildlife viewing takes patience, a relaxed pace and a little luck.
- Conserve habitat: Help create a better habitat for wildlife by picking up trash, reporting vandalism and sharing with others about the experience you have enjoyed.

For links to information about Iowa's county and state parks, visit www.inhf.org/winter-2012-magazine.cfm



The regions chosen for new national focus by the American's Great Outdoors Initiative have long been priority areas for the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation.

Fresh focus for Iowa's natural treasures

When U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar asked each state to recommend areas where greater federal support could support locally based conservation efforts and also create travel, tourism and outdoor-recreation jobs, INHF took action. We helped organize speakers for a regional listening session with federal officials. We worked with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and other partner groups to pull together our state's priorities, describing them so they would be compelling at a national scale. Then, we sat with federal officials and the Governor to discuss prime conservation opportunities in Iowa.

INHF's highest priorities were our longtime focus areas of the Loess Hills and Mississippi Blufflands. Eventually, federal officials narrowed the suggestions to two sites per state. The choices were announced in late October. In Iowa, the Loess Hills and Prairie Potholes were the winners. Initially disappointed that the Blufflands were

not also recognized, INHF received a pleasant surprise when we learned the Bluffs region had in fact been included as a multi-state regional priority.

American's Great Outdoors Initiative represents a continuing shift in the federal conservation process, moving from a top-down approach to one that emphasizes grassroots cooperation. INHF stands ready to help protect these special landscapes, working through the great partnerships we have built in these areas. The new national designation gives these regions a fresh focus. As we wait to learn more details about the initiative, we hope it will attract resources from the U.S. Department of Interior and the Department of Agriculture to support expanded efforts for permanent protection and sustainable development that landowners and local leaders are seeking.

*America's
Great Outdoors
Initiative
chooses
Loess Hills,
Mississippi Blufflands
and southern
Prairie Potholes as
national priorities.*



Loess Hills

In addition to its concentration of native prairie remnants, the Hills are home to a major international migratory route for wildlife, a national scenic byway and one of the most distinctive landscapes in the world. It is a major part of Iowa's natural heritage – and INHF has worked with partners here to protect more than 8,000 acres, with projects emerging. Read more about our work in the Loess Hills on pages 10-11.



David Zahrt

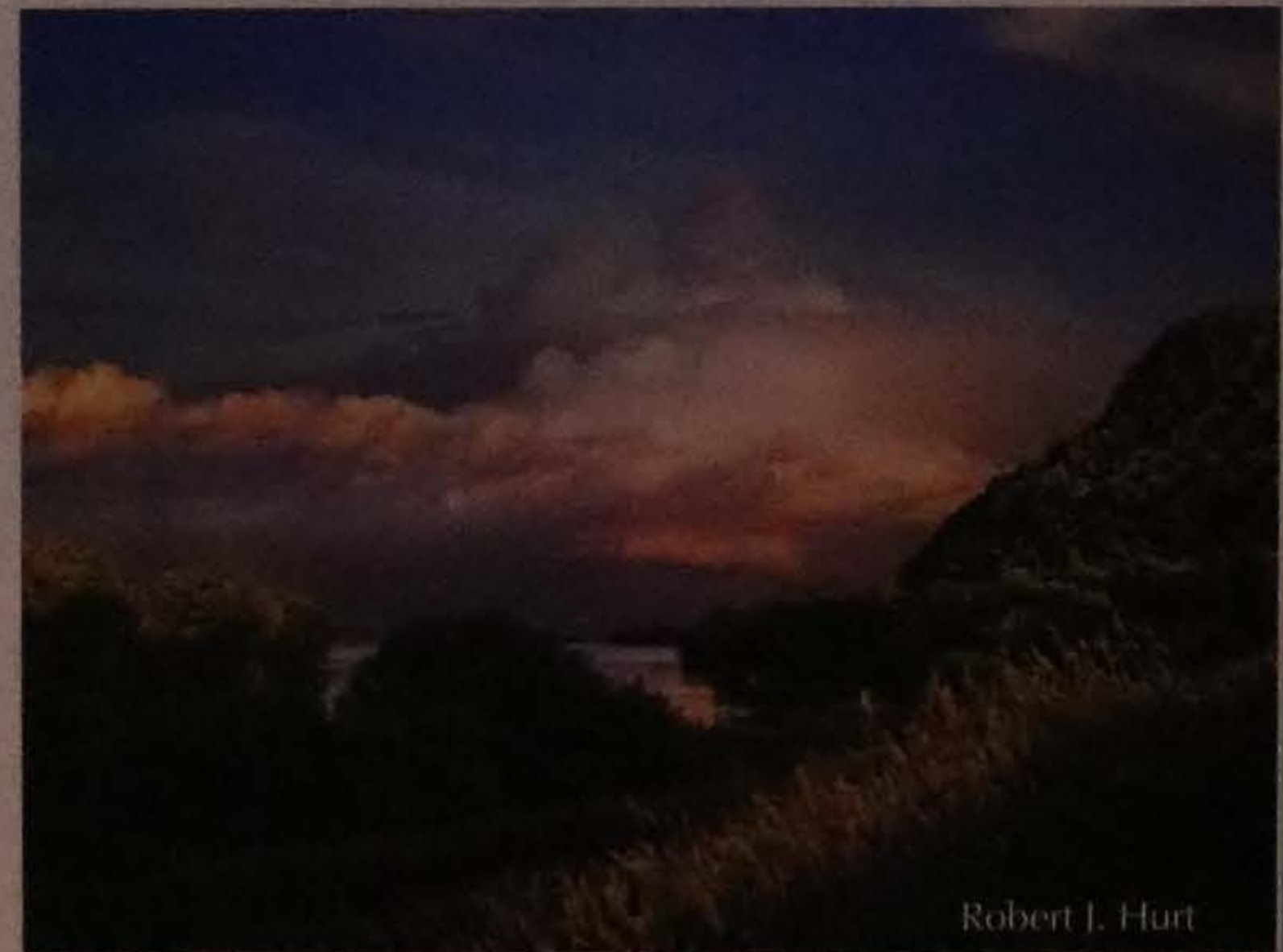
Loess Hills

Mississippi Blufflands

The beauty cannot be overstated. The Mississippi Blufflands' diverse mix of limestone outcrops and tall bluffs, woodlands, prairies, streams, springs, unique geology, important archaeological sites, and scenic beauty inspires awe. This region holds Iowa's largest remaining contiguous tracts of forest that rise above and along the great Mississippi River and its backwaters. But few of the bluffs themselves are permanently protected.

As attractive as the area is to human visitors, it's also important for migratory wildlife. The Blufflands' diverse habitats provide crucial grounds for breeding and migration, especially for neotropical migratory birds that have suffered drastic population declines over the last 25 years. Nineteen species of neotropical migrants that nest within the four-state Blufflands region are endangered, threatened or considered "of special concern."

In addition, the rivers of the Bluffs Country not only provide scenic enjoyment for thousands each year, but also offer outstanding trout fishing. Protecting water quality and scenery along the national Great River Road Scenic Byway are both a crucial part of the campaign to protect this area.



Robert J. Hurt

Mississippi River Bluffs

Prairie Potholes

Naturally formed prairie potholes and their surrounding grasslands support an incredible diversity of birds and other wildlife. The region is especially known for producing 50 to 80 percent of the North American continental duck population each year. Iowa is the southern arm of these prairie potholes and a gateway for waterfowl migrating north and south across North America.

Prairie pothole wetlands and their restoration in critical watersheds also helps improve water quality and reduce flooding. Protecting and restoring wetlands and riparian areas are of particular importance for the Raccoon River, an impaired watershed targeted for special attention. This will also expand the role of the Whiterock Conservancy, a local land trust with strong ties to INHF.



Whiterock Conservancy

Southern Prairie Pothole with American white pelicans (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*)

Mark C. Ackelson, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation President.



Marlene Ehresman

The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation continues to help lead protection of the globally significant Loess Hills landscape, seen here from the Sylvan Runkel State Preserve in Monona County.

Exploring a national treasure: The Loess Hills

When people say Iowa's Loess Hills are "globally significant," they mean it: this landform is one of the two best examples of loess formations in the world. The only other location where the layers of loess are as deep and extensive lies 11,000 miles away in China.

The dramatic angles and bluffs of the Loess Hills stretch over 650,000 acres along the Missouri River, tracing Iowa's western border before gently leveling out in northern Missouri. Windblown loess from receding glaciers created the hills in prehistoric times. Over millennia, weathering has created signature "catstep" hills and valleys where the fragile soil has eroded.

It's easy to see why this landscape — home to over 49 rare native plant and animal species — is a high priority for conservation.

Over 30,000 acres in the region have been permanently protected. The highest priorities are

within Special Landscape Areas established by the National Park Service in 2002. The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation turned its attention to the hills soon after its founding in 1979. Since then, INHF has helped lead efforts to protect more than 8,000 acres in the Loess Hills. INHF's work, in partnership with the Loess Hills Alliance and other private and public entities, was recently recognized by the Department of the Interior when the Loess Hills were included in the America's Great Outdoors Initiative. (See page 8 for more information.)

Three of INHF's land protection projects in the northern Loess Hills are just opening for public exploration — and enjoyment: the Lloyd addition to Five Ridge Prairie State Preserve, the Chytka addition to Stone State Park and the Reese Homestead addition to the Loess Hills Wildlife Management Area.

By Olivia Young, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation Robert R. Buckmaster Communications Intern.





Brian Fankhauser



Brian Fankhauser



David Zahrt

Five Ridge Prairie State Preserve GROWS

feature a place where visitors can hike through woodlands, oak savannas and prairies, passing streams and beaver dams along the way. That vision describes the 156-acre Lloyd addition to Five Ridge Prairie State Preserve in Plymouth County, a natural area that's home to more than 300 plant species, birds and 20 types of mammals.

Such great diversity is rare, even in the Loess Hills. The new addition links land protected by The Nature Conservancy in Iowa to the north and west, making this area a significant, unified habitat so crucial for wildlife species that require larger, unbroken tracts of grassland to survive. The property includes a large area of remnant prairie, and partners have already started returning cropland to prairie.

"We are excited about saving and restoring this property as an example of our native landscape for future generations to enjoy and study," said Dennis Sohl, Director of the Plymouth County Conservation Board (PCCB).

The PCCB now owns and manages the property. Public-private collaboration worked to acquire the land, including INHF and its members, Mona Lloyd, the Loess Hills Alliance, The Nature Conservancy, LeMars Sportsman's Club and Plymouth County Pheasants Forever. Funding sources included a state Wildlife Habitat Stamp Act grant, a federal Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act grant, and bequests from Willie Acklin and Theodore Fariss.

Stone State Park expands

Stone State Park is known for its rugged landscape, interactive nature center and breathtaking views of the Loess Hills. The Chytka property, INHF's eighth addition to the park, expands this haven for nature lovers at the north edge of Sioux City. The 70-acre parcel will enhance the park's existing facilities, which include campgrounds and miles of trails for hiking, biking, horseback riding and snowmobiling.

In addition to a place to play, Stone State Park's new land includes critical grassland habitat that will be restored to prairie, benefiting at least seven bird species of Greatest Conservation Need.

Kevin Pape, Stone State Park Ranger, said goals for the property include ecological restoration and the expansion of a bluebird trail to encourage the species to nest in the park. Visitors should also watch for increasingly rare grassland birds like the grasshopper sparrow and dickcissel.

The site's hillside native prairie remnants also host a number of notable plant species, including silky aster, groundplum and white prairie clover.

Support for the project included INHF members, the prior landowners, private grants from the Loess Hills Alliance and Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, and a state Resource Enhancement and Protection Program (REAP) private-public Open Spaces Acquisition grant.

Reese Homestead saved

Locals know the Reese Homestead north of Turin as both an idyllic bed-and-breakfast and a focal point for area conservation activities. The Monona County site boasts a National Natural Landmark designation because of its high quality prairie and distinctive Missouri River valley wetland. Its farmstead, established in 1856, is also a National Historic Landmark. Now this special place will be open to the public to hike, hunt and enjoy, as an expansion of the Loess Hills Wildlife Management Area.

INHF helped acquire the property's 280 acres and served as interim owner for the Iowa DNR and the Monona County Conservation Board. The MCCB will own and manage the property's historic homestead and cabin. The county plans to develop an environmental education center at the spot along the Loess Hills Scenic Byway. The partners are planning a project dedication in Spring 2012.

"We're glad to help ensure that this bit of Loess Hills beauty and history will remain an attraction to the community and visitors," said Craig Hartman, MCCB chair.

Special thanks go to the former landowners, descendants of Dan and Luella Reese. Major sources of support include INHF members, the Tom Richardson Family, Pheasants Forever, the National Wild Turkey Federation and the Loess Hills Alliance, as well as federal Pittman-Robertson funds and state Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) Open Spaces funds.



REAPing benefits statewide

This year, take time to speak for REAP.

Remind your legislators of REAP's importance to conservation and local economies. This state program helps fund parks and wildlife habitat, soil and water improvements, roadside prairies, historical programs and conservation education all over Iowa. Legislators appropriated \$12 million for REAP in 2011, short of full funding of \$20 million. The money comes from gaming revenues and sales of natural resource license plates.

REAP provided assistance for portions of 27 projects that will benefit natural and cultural resources, trails and tourism. Grant requests continue to greatly exceed the funds available: More than two-thirds of land projects were not funded in 2011. Several partnership projects that INHF is assisting with were included in the list of successful 2011 Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) competitive grants in the cities, counties and private-public categories.

State

- Barkley State Forest addition, Boone County: 68-acre oak-hickory woodland with one-fourth mile of Elkhorn Creek.

County

- Black Hawk County: 88-acre addition of high-quality riparian forest to West Fork Management Unit.
- Dickinson County: 80-acre addition to the Judd Wildlife Area with remnant prairie and fens along the Little Sioux River. (This project was featured in the INHF Fall 2011 magazine.)
- Johnson County: 81-acre high quality natural area that includes a rare, nutrient-poor fen, along with rolling upland prairie and wetlands.
- Pottawattamie County: 26-acre addition to Hitchcock Nature Center features bur oak woodland and savanna.

City

- Dubuque: 52 acre-addition to the Mines of Spain. (See article on page 12.)
- Fayette: 2.5-mile section of a trail linking Fayette with the Volga River Recreation Area.

Help wildlife at tax time

As you file your state taxes, remember Iowa's wildlife. The Fish and Wildlife Fund, formerly known as the Chickadee Checkoff, allows taxpayers to directly support wildlife diversity.

Find the Fish and Wildlife Fund at the end of the state's long tax form on line 58 of both the electronic and paper versions. Every dollar matters: Donate as little as \$1 or as much as you want. Every penny helps save Iowa's nongame wildlife species — from birds to turtles to butterflies — and the amount is tax deductible next year! Find out more at www.inhf.org/winter-2012-magazine.cfm.



Lora P. Conrad

Tribute gifts

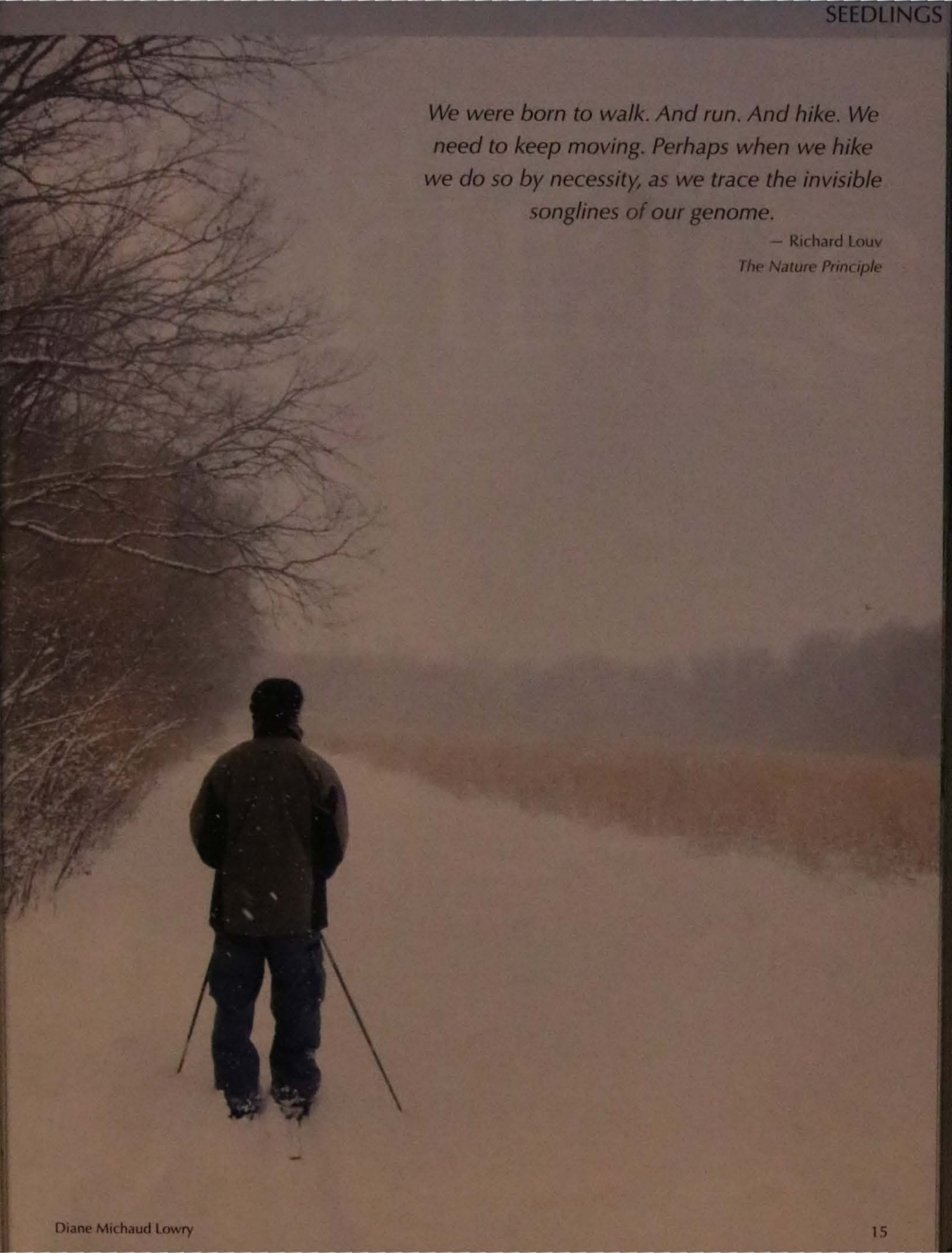
In Memory of

Georgene L. Ackerman
Janet Chapman
Gary Coppess
Louise Fields McFarlane
Betty & Russ Ford
Linn Hall
Helen A. Hybke
Arlene "Jake" Laughlin
Les Licklider
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In Honor of

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Eunice Kuyper Folkerts
Chad Graeve
Michael Myszewski and Martha James
Bob and Patti Jester
Marlen and Shamrae Kemmet
Jan and Tom Lovell
Jerry and Billie Noah
Ed and Cammy Power



A person in winter gear stands in a snowy, misty landscape. The person is seen from behind, wearing a dark jacket and pants, with ski poles. The background is a soft, hazy expanse of snow and bare trees, creating a serene and quiet atmosphere.

*We were born to walk. And run. And hike. We
need to keep moving. Perhaps when we hike
we do so by necessity, as we trace the invisible
songlines of our genome.*

— Richard Louv
The Nature Principle



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Natural Heritage
Foundation

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and visit our website at www.inhf.org*

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Wintery Water. By Mike Inman

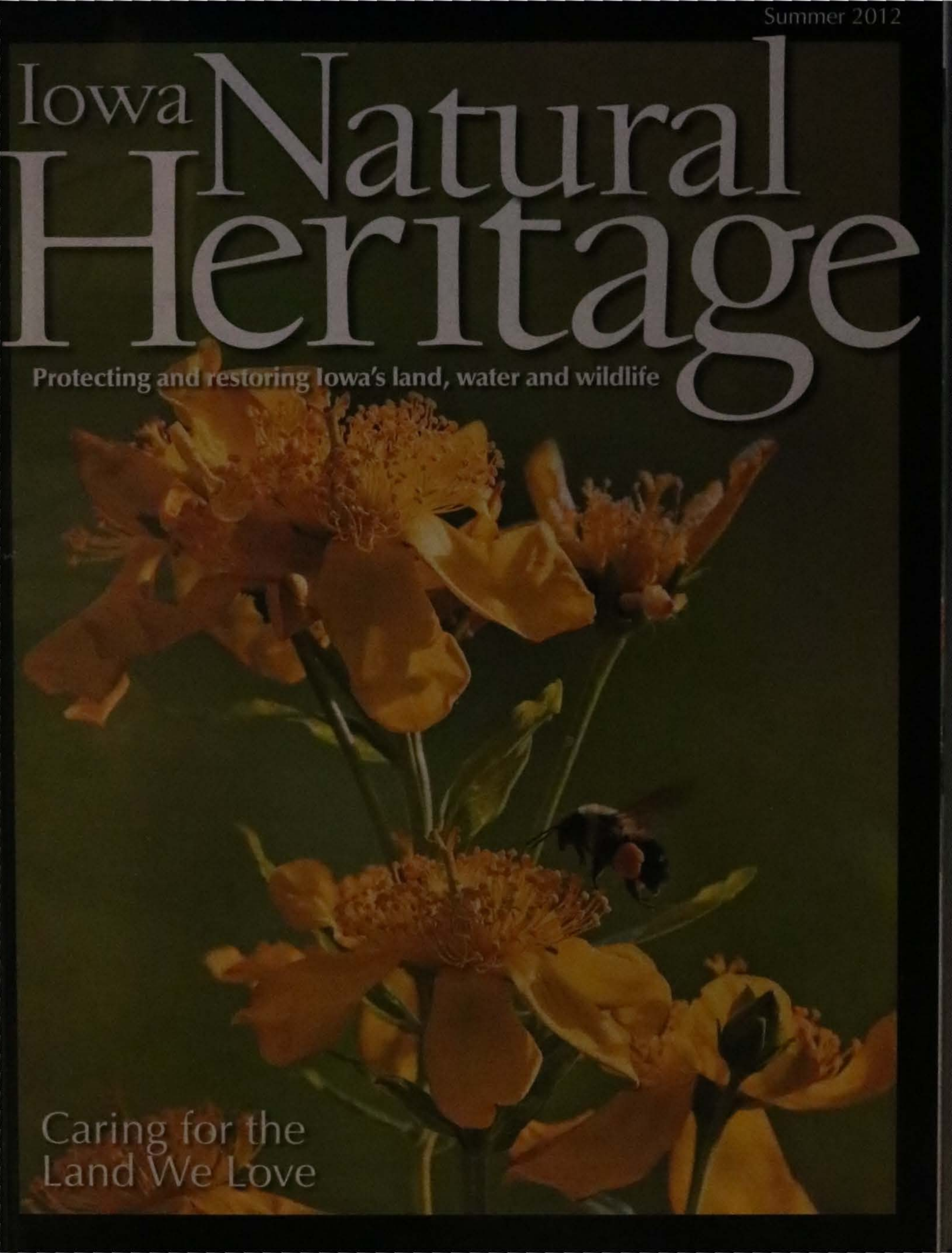


In this season of reflection, we are thankful for your support.
Together we continue to accomplish great things for Iowa's land, water, wildlife and people.
Thank you.

Summer 2012

Iowa Natural Heritage

Protecting and restoring Iowa's land, water and wildlife



Caring for the
Land We Love

OPENING THOUGHTS

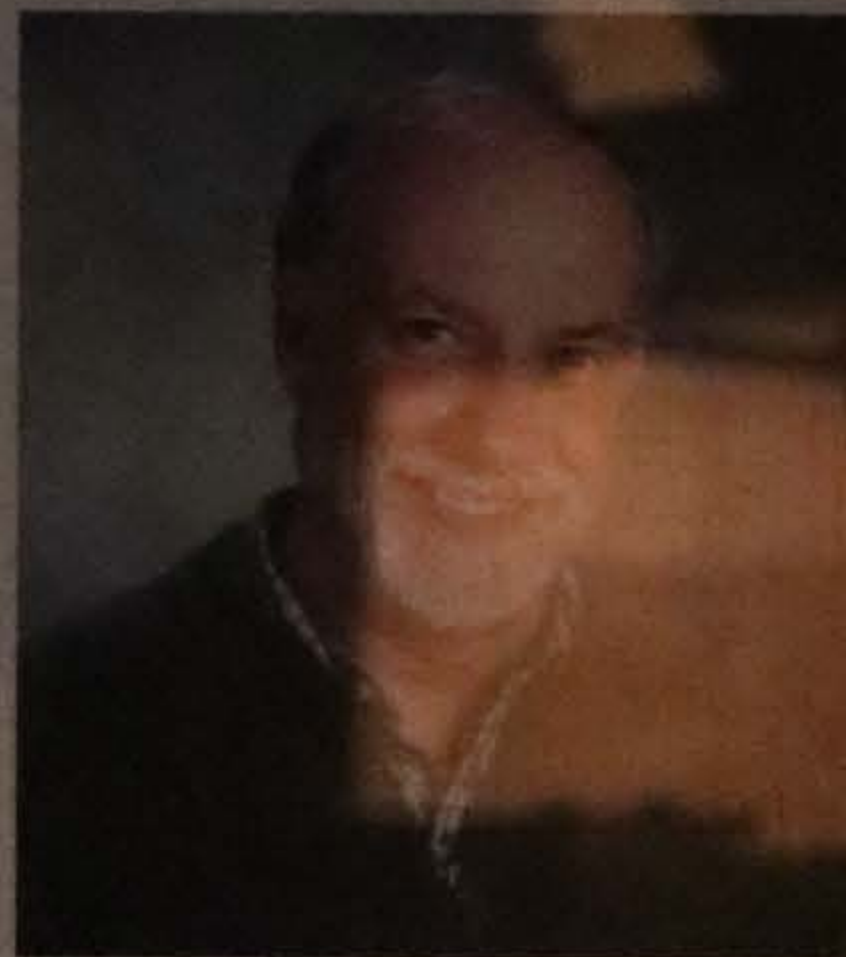
You can't talk about conservation in Iowa without talking about private lands. After all, private citizens own 91 percent of the land in Iowa.

Most of the environmental protection and conservation initiatives in Iowa are voluntary. This means conservation in Iowa depends on educated, conservation-minded individuals and businesses, such as many of you, to protect and manage the land we all love so dearly.

This issue of our magazine is, in a way, an ode to those landowners. On the next few pages, you will read stories from landowners who have a deep connection to their land and have acted to protect it for the generations that will follow. You also will learn how the choices private landowners make are benefiting the public. I hope you enjoy the stories and beautiful photos that accompany them.

These stories reflect the work we get to do and the people we get to meet on a daily basis. It's a pleasure to share them with you.

Your conservation partner,
Mark C. Ackelson, President



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Erin Van Waus *Land Stewardship Associate*

Private Lands
91%

Incorporated Areas 3%
Public Lands 3%
Roads 3%



Iowa
Natural Heritage
Foundation

Our Mission

The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation protects and restores Iowa's land, water and wildlife.

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10 Conservation Easements: A Primer

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11 Private Land. Public Good.

Rusty Bronner is a trendsetter – one of a growing number of private landowners who have protected their land for the benefit of others.

14 Vitamin N: Wonderful Waterway

Flowing into the mighty Mississippi River in northeast Iowa, the Upper Iowa River offers a peaceful retreat for outdoor enthusiasts of all kinds.

15 Looking Out for Iowa

This new section features resources you can use to help you more fully appreciate nature and care for our land, water and wildlife.



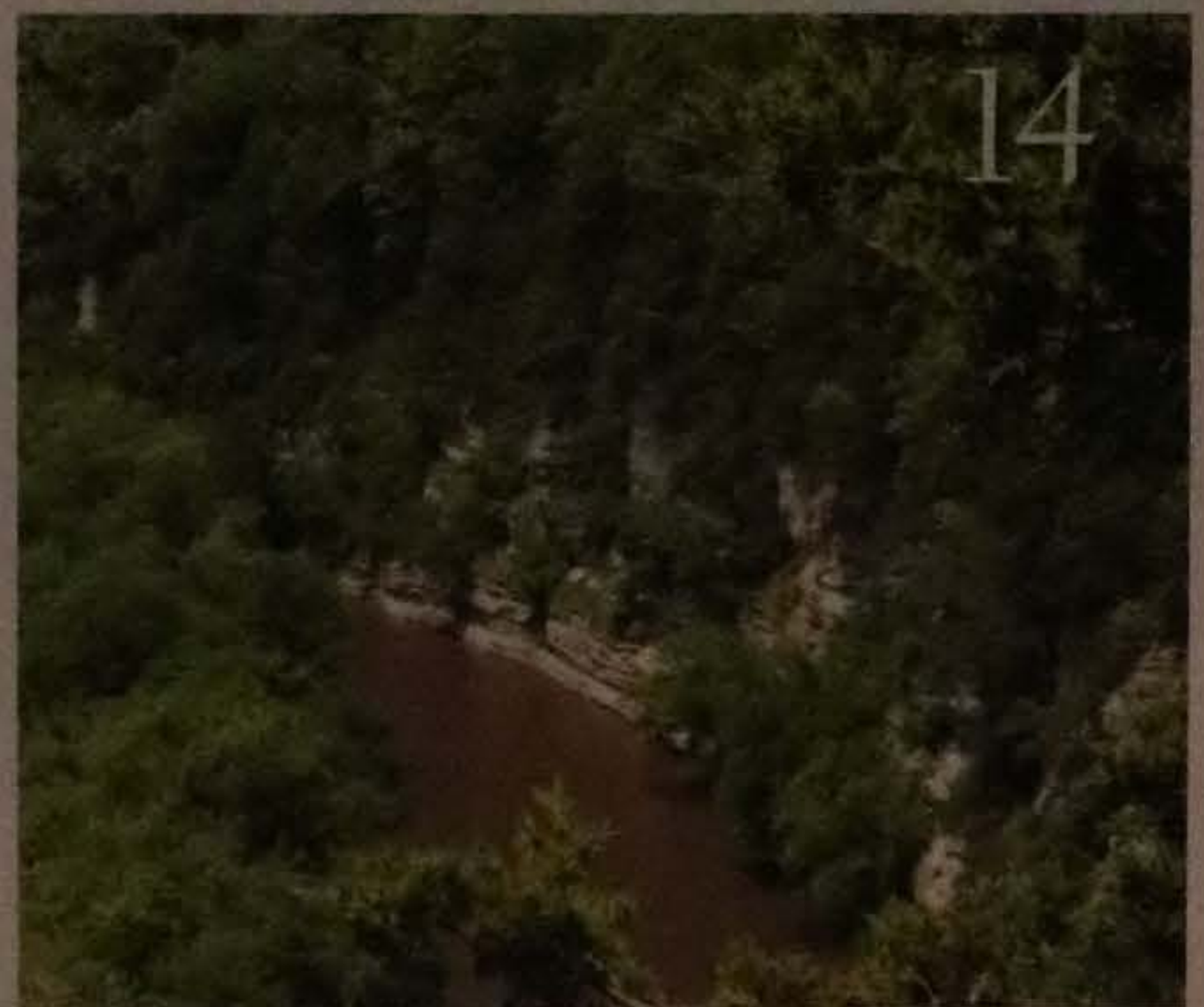
On the cover

A brown-belted bumble bee buzzes near St. John's Wort, collecting large amounts of pollen in its pollen basket. These types of bees are native pollinators in Iowa.

Photo: Gary Hamer

OCT 09 2012

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To understand the deep connection
many Iowans have with their land,
you pretty much have to
experience it yourself.

Iaand

is an
emotional
subject

People who don't own land may struggle to understand why those who do are so strongly connected to it. But if you are an Iowa landowner, you understand. You know first-hand the deep, emotional ties that most landowners have to their land.

If you tend a fourth-generation family farm, you know that the land is much more than its soil. It represents your family roots, your inherited values and decades of hard work that your parents and grandparents devoted to the land and your family.

If you just purchased a woodland or wetland, the land may be the culmination of a dream you've held close since childhood — a place where you know every inch and every critter, and where your spirit is refreshed.

If you have "given birth" to a prairie after much planning, planting, worry, expense and cutting of thistle, you know what

it's like to experience the thrill of creation each time new color bursts or the compass plant shoots above the plant horizon toward the sky.

The *Iowa Natural Heritage* magazine is dedicated to those who — like you — feel a bond to the land and know we are blessed to spend a short time appreciating its wonder. The land was here long before us, and will be here long after us. The best we can do for it is to care for it, ushering it into the future in the best shape possible for others to enjoy.


"There's a lot of pressure for us smaller guys that ain't playing the game." *Rusty Bronner*



Photo: Jessica Kelling

Pioneering Woman

After spending years outside Iowa, deep ties brought Helen Gunderson back to learn more about her rural heritage. As she did, she claimed her identity as an Iowa farmer.




DeElda Heritage Area Pocahontas County

Land: 60 acres of hilly pastureland along Beaver Creek, featuring high-quality remnant native prairie, restored prairie and diverse wildlife.

Donated to INHF by: Helen Gunderson of Ames in honor of her grandmother

For more information: For expanded coverage including photos, links to local history projects and Helen's personal video and photography, visit

 www.inhf.org/summer-2012-magazine.cfm

Helen DeElda Gunderson comes from four generations that farmed Pocahontas County land near Rolfe. Yet when she left for college in the 1960s, she didn't expect to return.

"Although I was away for quite a while with little interest in learning about my land, I had a chronic sense of loss that there was not a place for me in farming," she says. "I had no women role models who farmed. Girls could grow up to be farm wives, but not farmers."

All the while, she was rethinking her views on agricultural sustainability, community, food and feminism. Then, in 1993, Gunderson came home to create a short video documentary as part of a local history project chronicling the disappearance of farmsteads and neighbors, orchards and fencerows. She started a book on the topic and became involved with Practical Farmers of Iowa. Increasingly, she became uncomfortable with how her farmland was being managed

Taking the lead

When once expressing her frustrations, a mentor challenged her. "When are you going to start managing your own land?" At first, Gunderson responded, "I could never do that. That is not how things are done in my family."

That conversation proved a turning point. Gunderson began talking with her father and brother about her desire to manage her land. Her brother Charles was surprisingly receptive and, in time, her dad also came around. She credits Charles for helping teach her about such matters as paying for inputs, marketing crops and negotiating with renters.

Gunderson has made changes. And she feels fortunate to work with a long-time neighbor, Betsy Dahl, who shares her interest in sustainable agriculture and

rents part of Helen's land. Together, they are implementing a more soil-conserving crop rotation and transitioning some of the land to organic crops.

Appreciating what has been lost

Gunderson recalls a time when most of the neighboring farms had hay, livestock, oats and row crops, with vegetable gardens, windbreaks and fruit trees. She remembers when the trees were bulldozed to make way for larger fields. "I liked to ride my horse to a farm we owned where there was a grove along a creek. I would take a picnic and feel like I was in nature. Sadly, most of those places are gone now," says Gunderson.

Her deep appreciation for what used to be inspired her to donate 60 acres of hilly pastureland along Beaver Creek to Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. The land includes high-quality remnant native prairie that survived on portions too steep to easily plow. Closer to the creek, Gunderson has spent years nurturing an expansion of the prairie

restored through the Conservation Reserve Program. The richly diverse land is a haven for increasingly rare butterflies and grassland birds, such as bobolink and dickcissel.

Gunderson says it is a relief to know that this special place – to be called the DeElda Heritage Area, after her grandmother – will be preserved and cared for by INHF, even after she is gone.

Lisa Hein, INHF's Program and Planning Director, responds: "We are honored to work with landowners like Helen, to find permanent options to protect the conservation values of their land. Her generous gift humbles and inspires us."

Gunderson is not only a role model for tomorrow's women landowners, but she also is helping shape the future of the Iowa landscape. She recently described some of the changes taking place on her land as "awesome", which might also be said of the feeling one gets from living out their land ethics. 🌱

By Ann Robinson, Contributing Writer
Photos by Carl Kurtz



Above: Hepatica is an early-blooming spring wildflower that can be found across eastern North America. While the flowers are generally blue or purple, in some areas white or pink shades of hepatica can be found.

Opposite: In 2011, Helen DeElda Gunderson donated 60 acres of her farmland to INHF to protect the land's high-quality remnant prairie, named the DeElda Heritage Area in honor of her grandmother.

Left: On a recent visit to the newly protected DeElda Heritage Area, the land was abuzz with the songs of dickcissel, bobolink and meadowlark, once-common bird species that have become increasingly rare as their grassland habitat has declined.



A Tale of TWO Estates

When you love your land, estate planning is a special responsibility.

It's easy to put off big decisions, such as who will own the land after you, but making that decision can ease your mind. These two stories show how this decision can go painfully awry or, with careful attention, surprisingly well.



Vernet and Esther Soenksen on the land they loved.

A cautionary tale

Rachel Forbes thought she had prepared for the future of her family land. To care for her daughter, her four favorite charities and the land, she established a trust. It specified that each charity would receive a farm while her daughter, Cymbelene Forbes, would retain lifetime use and income from the land. It also specified certain management practices and that the land could not be sold.

But Rachel hadn't discussed her plans with the charities. As a result, two of them could not abide by the terms and declined the gift. The farms passed to Cymbelene instead.

For two years, Cymbelene searched for a partner to provide the permanent conservation her family had wanted. After talking with various conservation groups, she and her advisors found the

right solutions. Recently, Cymbelene donated one of the farms to Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, which would adhere to restrictions while giving her lifetime use and income. She says, "My parents would be proud to know the income from our land will in time support the priceless conservation efforts of INHF for many future generations."


A tale of trust

Vernet and Esther Soenksen told many people their hopes for 11 acres of woodland on their farm near Deloit, their home for six decades. In 1995, they let INHF know that their wills specified that INHF would inherit the woodland. For the next 17 years, INHF staff kept in touch with the Soenksens to note their most current wishes for the land.

When Esther passed away last year, INHF learned the Soenksens had bequeathed the entire farm – not just the woodland – to INHF without restrictions.

INHF's Cheri Grauer works with many people on estate gifts. She says, "We had such respect for Vernet and Esther, and we respect their desire to keep their decision private. Thanks to our long and close relationship with them, they knew about INHF's abilities to own and manage land, and to turn gifts of land into public wildlife areas in partnership with conservation agencies. The Soenksens trusted us to make that decision about their land, keeping their values in mind."

The difference

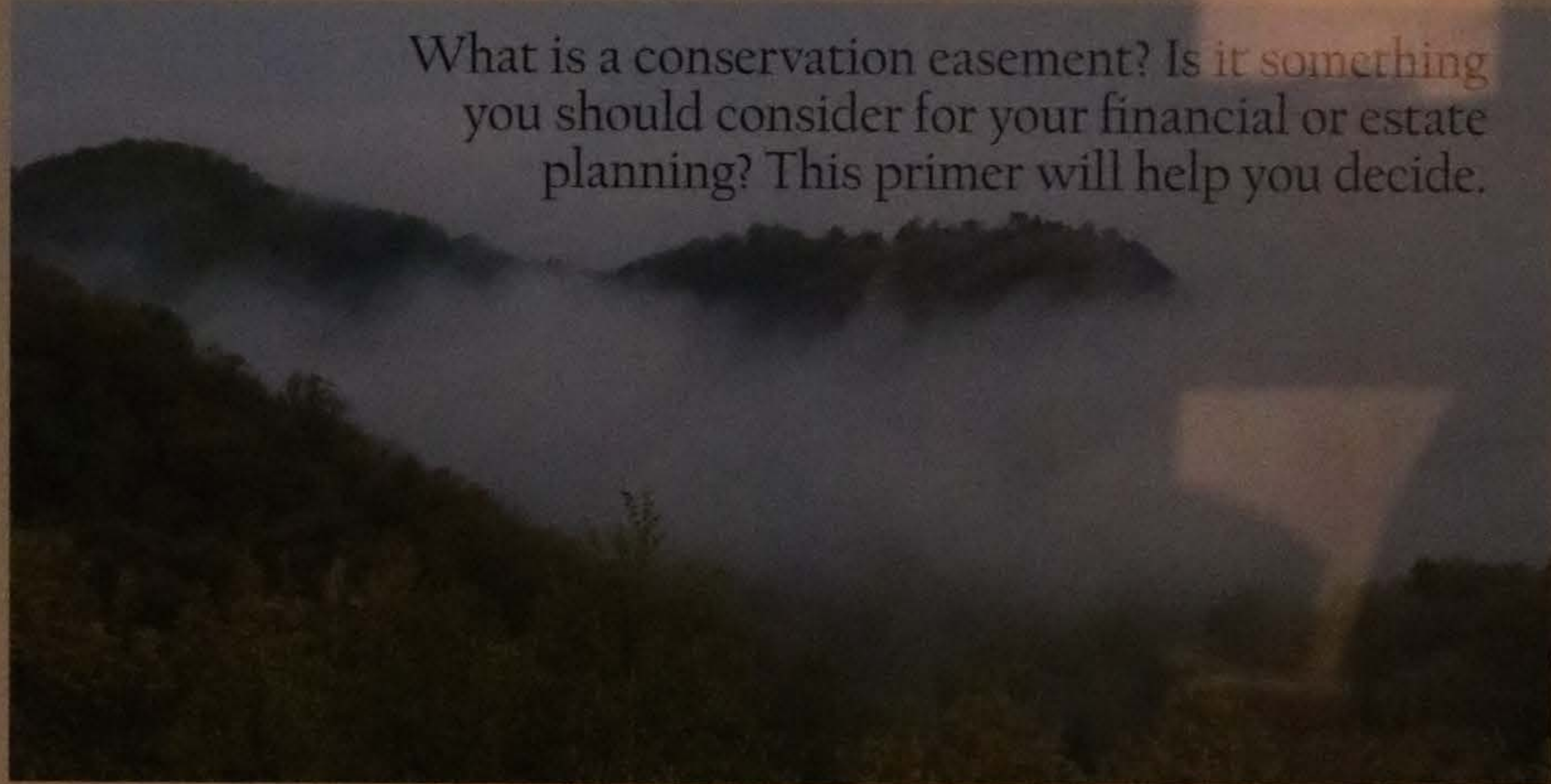
Frequent communication and strong relationships between landowners and inheritors help ensure that desires match, and that estate decisions happen as planned. Talking about land and mortality may not be easy, but it provides the information to help landowners make the best possible estate plans and enjoy tremendous peace of mind. 

Tips for those who love their land

- **Plan Now.** Sadly, too many people who want to protect their land put off estate planning until it's too late. Acting now will help ensure that your wishes are fulfilled.
- **It's easy to start.** A simple will that names a beneficiary creates an immediate safety net for your land. As your plans become more concrete or your wishes or situation change, you can easily change or refine your bequest at any time.
- **Can your family afford to inherit your land?** Keep tabs on estate tax laws. If estate taxes on valuable land are high and the land is your main estate asset, consider a conservation easement, which could lower your estate value and make it possible to pass it on and protect it. (see page 10)
- **Talk with your inheritor(s).** Be sure your beneficiaries know your conservation values, reasons behind management choices and advice for caring for the land. If you bequeath to a non-profit or a conservation agency, discuss your restrictions to ensure that they will be able to honor your wishes.
- **Consider the impact of "Leaving it to the kids".** When parents bequeath land in equal shares to their children without prior discussion, grieving siblings suddenly become business partners who must make land and money decisions together. If siblings cannot agree this can damage family relationships and could force the sale of the land. Advanced planning and preparation together can help.

Conservation Easement: A Primer

What is a conservation easement? Is it something you should consider for your financial or estate planning? This primer will help you decide.





What it is: A conservation easement is a popular, voluntary agreement that protects your land's special features — natural, cultural, historic, agricultural or scenic — while retaining your ownership and use. It's permanent, so future landowners will be restricted in what they can do with the land.

The benefit: With this easement in place, you can sell or bequeath your land without

wondering what will become of it. What peace of mind!

The specifics: An easement agreement is made between the landowner and the easement holder (typically a conservation or cultural group or government agency). The landowner retains land ownership but defines the terms of protection, such as prohibiting development, mining or animal confinement. The easement holder's

main responsibility is to ensure that no landowner ever violates these terms.

 **To learn more,** visit INHF's website specifically for landowners at www.inhf.org/landowners.cfm. You'll find more easement information including financial and tax effects, the process, how to tailor your easement and more. You'll also learn about other ways to permanently conserve land. 

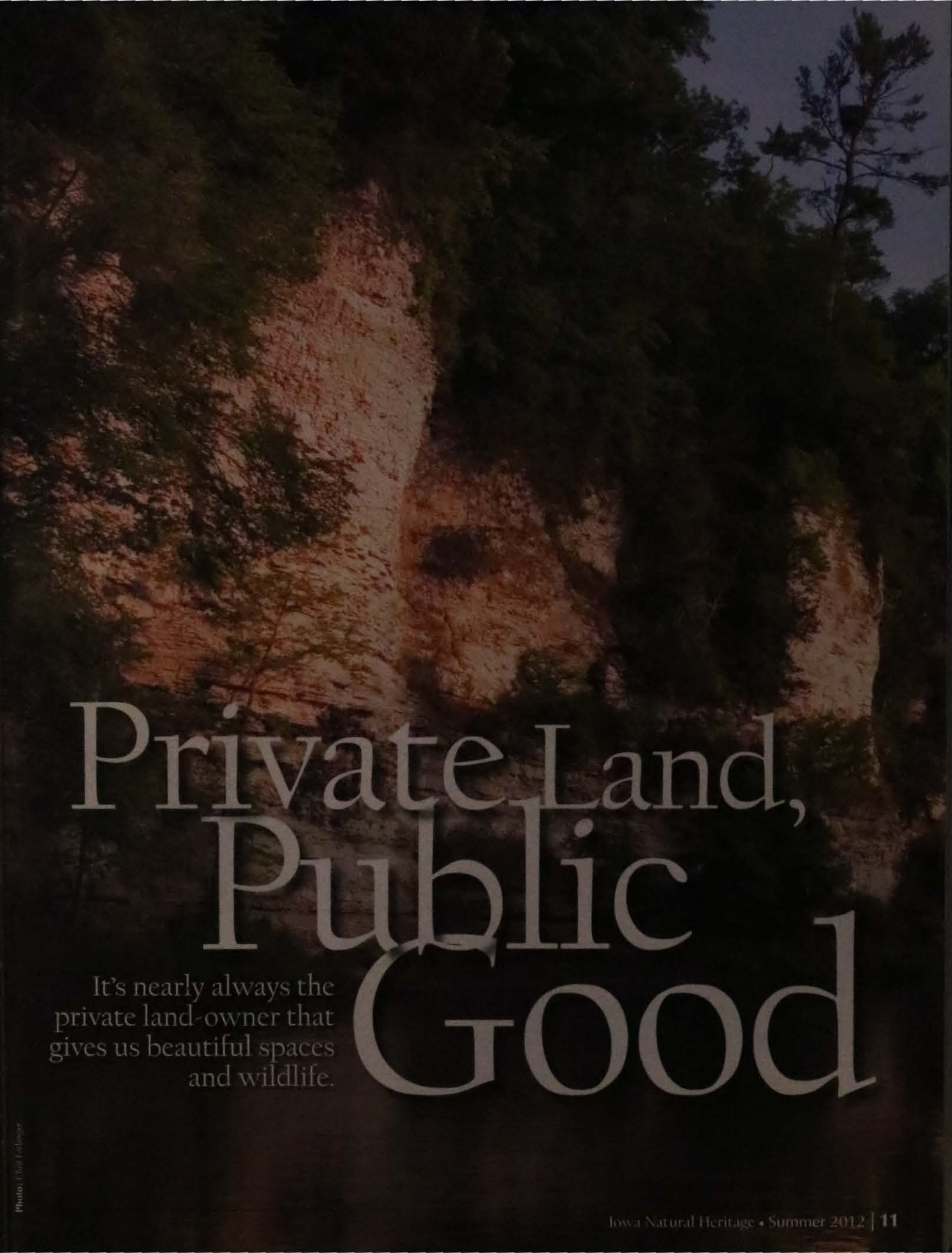
Organizations handle this responsibility differently, but here's how Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation does it:

- INHF tailors the easement specifically to the landowner's goals and the land's needs. Before signing the agreement, INHF inventories and documents the property with photos, maps and notes related to the land's key natural, cultural and scenic resources.
- INHF staff visits easement sites annually to ensure compliance with the agreement.

Visits are scheduled in advance and owners are encouraged to join as staff walks the land.

- If a violation occurs, INHF works with the owner to rectify the activity and restore the land.
- When land is sold or transferred, INHF gets in touch with the new owners to fully explain the easement and its restrictions.





Private Land, Public GOOD

It's nearly always the private land-owner that gives us beautiful spaces and wildlife.

During the farm crisis of the '80s, Rusty Bronner's family came close to losing the farm. But Bronner persevered: He wanted to maintain the second-generation family farm not only for himself, but also for previous generations' legacy and future generations' prosperity. In 2007, he worked with Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation to put a Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program conservation easement on his northeast Iowa property.



Upper Iowa River
Allamakee, Winneshiek and
Howard Counties

One of Iowa's most popular scenic rivers for paddlers. Over the past 24 years, INHF was involved in 15 protection projects along the Upper Iowa River – 1,150 acres became public land and 1,450 acres remain private. As a result, nearly half of the land bordering the 13-mile Chimney Rock and Palisades stretch of river near Bluffton will always remain natural.



www.inhf.org/upper-iowa-river-inhf-role.cfm

Bronner has always lived on the farm. He knows everything about it – every bend of the Upper Iowa River, every limestone formation, every tree. The easement enabled him to do something for it.

Joe McGovern, INHF Land Stewardship Director, says, "Rusty wasn't an investor looking for a tax incentive; he wanted to protect his land for the love of it. He's your typical farmer who understands the land and what it gives to us all."

But when it comes to land conservation,


this "typical farmer" isn't so typical. As Bronner puts it, he's "kind of buckin' the flow." And he's part of a bigger picture — one that includes many landowners who have privately protected the land's beauty and health along the Upper Iowa River for the benefit of the public and wildlife.

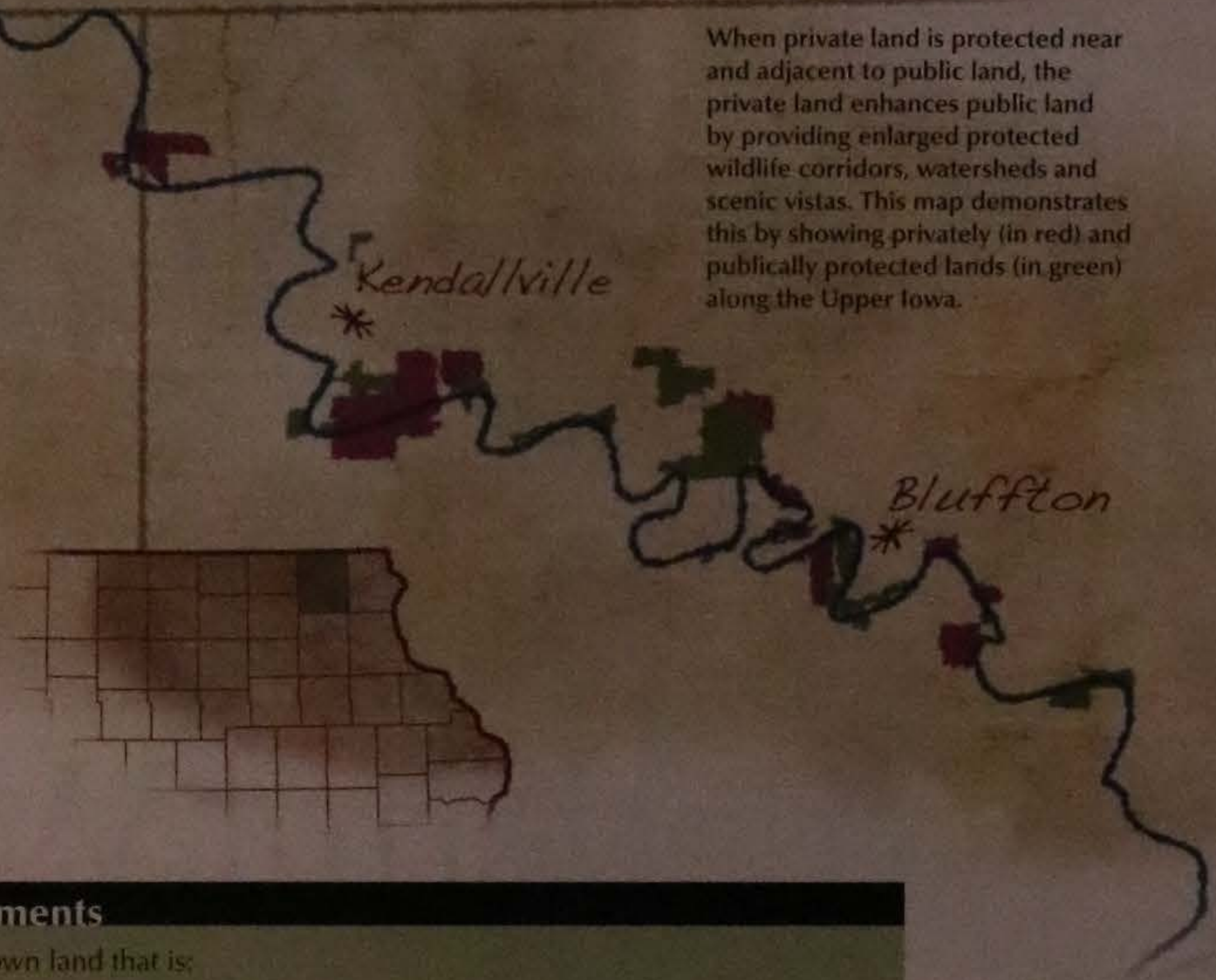
When private land is protected near and adjacent to public land, the private land enhances public land by providing enlarged protected wildlife corridors, watersheds and scenic vistas.

Left to right: Kenny, Reta, Teresa and Rusty Bronner



Through these landowners' great acts, INHF has now protected over 1,450 acres of private land along the Upper Iowa, from Bluffton to Kendallville, in addition to 1,150 acres of public land.

Mark Ackelson, INHF President, says private owner action is crucial to conservation. "The Upper Iowa is such an important public waterway, not only for its beauty, scenic and natural resources, but also for its economic impact on the region and state. The actions of people such as Rusty provide an interesting model of private ownership for public benefit. Without voluntary private conservation action, there would be virtually no conservation in Iowa." 



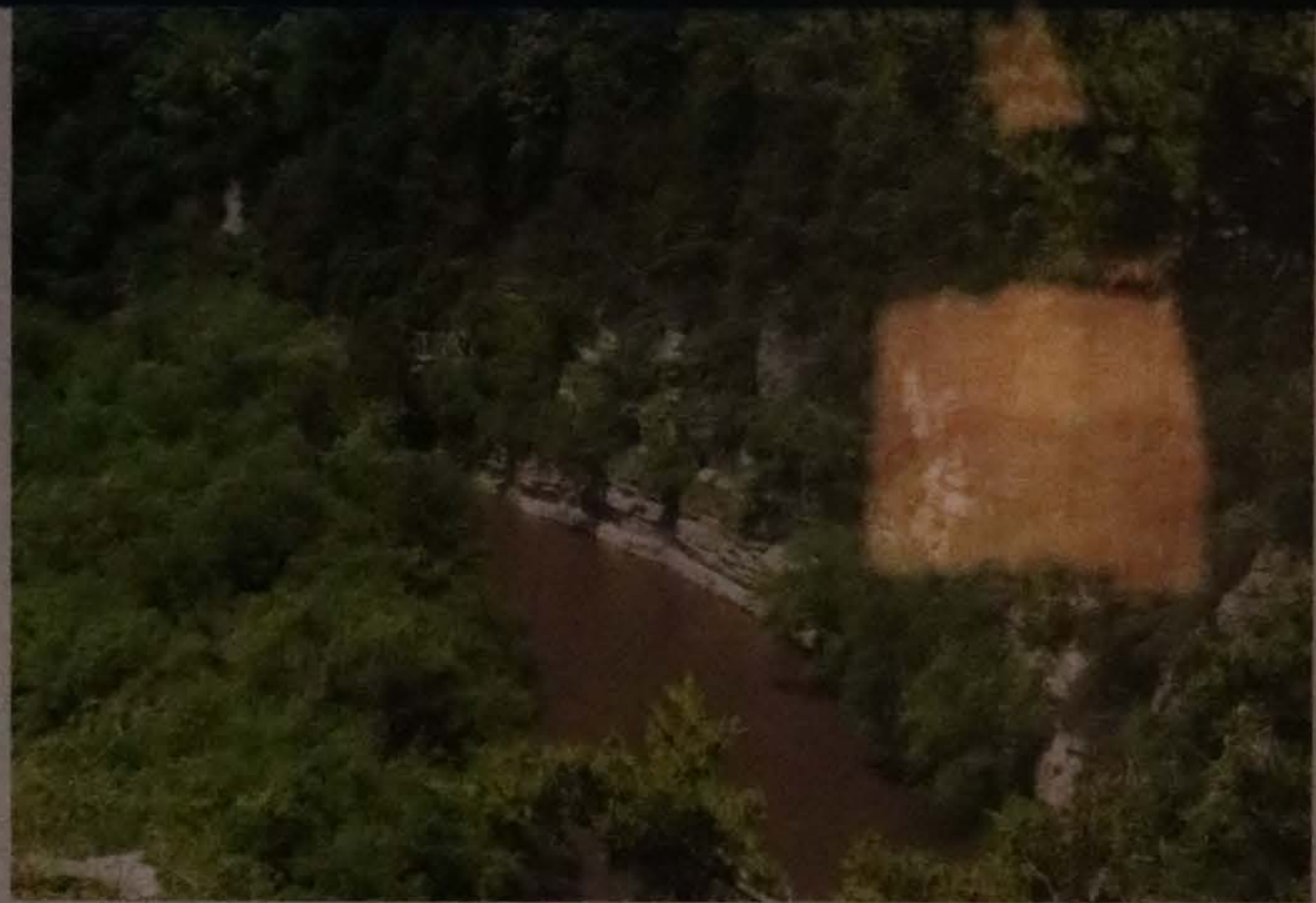
When private land is protected near and adjacent to public land, the private land enhances public land by providing enlarged protected wildlife corridors, watersheds and scenic vistas. This map demonstrates this by showing privately (in red) and publically protected lands (in green) along the Upper Iowa.

Ideal land for conservation easements

Please consider permanent protection if you own land that is:

- **Adjacent to public land** – Natural buffers that enhance wildlife and the human experience at the public site.
- **On scenic routes** – Provides natural views along IDOT Scenic Byways and along rivers.
- **100 to 300 plus-acre natural sites** – Uncommon in some parts of Iowa.
- **High-quality natural sites** – Unplowed native prairies, oak savannas and natural wetlands of any size or areas with many different species.
- **Restorable sites** – Typically on a river, in a floodplain, adjacent to public conservation lands or trails, or connecting to an important point in a lake's watershed. Restoration to woodland, wetland or prairie can help connect and heal the natural landscape.

To learn more about permanent protection for your land, call INHF at 800-475-1846.



Wonderful Waterway

Flowing into the mighty Mississippi River in northeast Iowa, the Upper Iowa River offers a peaceful retreat for outdoor enthusiasts of all kinds. Adding a perfect backdrop is Chimney Rock — quite possibly the area's most stunning feature.



Upper Iowa Facts Allamakee, Winneshiek and Howard Counties

Land: Over 2,600 INHF public and private protect acres along the river between Kendallville and Bluffton.

Main Partners: Private citizens, US Department of Agriculture and Iowa Department of Natural Resources.



www.inhf.org/summer-2012-magazine.cfm

Gazing out over the palisades of northeastern Iowa, one is struck by the beauty of the region's natural features. Among them is the Upper Iowa River, which meanders 110 miles through Howard, Winneshiek and Allamakee counties. The Upper Iowa provides picturesque scenery that includes a wide variety of flora and fauna and terrain ranging from densely wooded bluffs to steep goat prairies. And all of this beauty is punctuated by the towering limestone peaks of Chimney Rock, which reach as high as 280 feet.

The Upper Iowa River has been named one of the country's 100 Greatest Adventures by *National Geographic* magazine. And it isn't just for paddlers; its populations of rainbow, brown and

brook trout and small mouth bass delight anglers as well. All in all, this expansive waterway is an ideal scenic getaway for an afternoon of fishing, canoeing, kayaking or tubing.

Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation has played a critical role in protecting the area surrounding Chimney Rock, located between Kendallville and Bluffton, for 25 years. This included protecting large sections of river corridor through conservation easements. As a result, there are over 1,150 protected acres open for public use and 1,450 private protected acres between Kendallville and Bluffton. Along the entire Upper Iowa River watershed there are more than 12,440 protected public and private acres in three counties.

TRIBUTE GIFTS

IN MEMORY OF

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Amney Pope
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Donald Rathert
John W. Rathert

Caring for the Land You Love

This new section features online resources you can use to help you more fully appreciate nature and care for our land, water and wildlife.

Keep exploring online at www.inhf.org/lookingoutforiowa.cfm

Invasive Species

Invasive species are a huge threat not only to native plants but also to Iowa crops. Find out how to identify and manage non-native plants on your land.

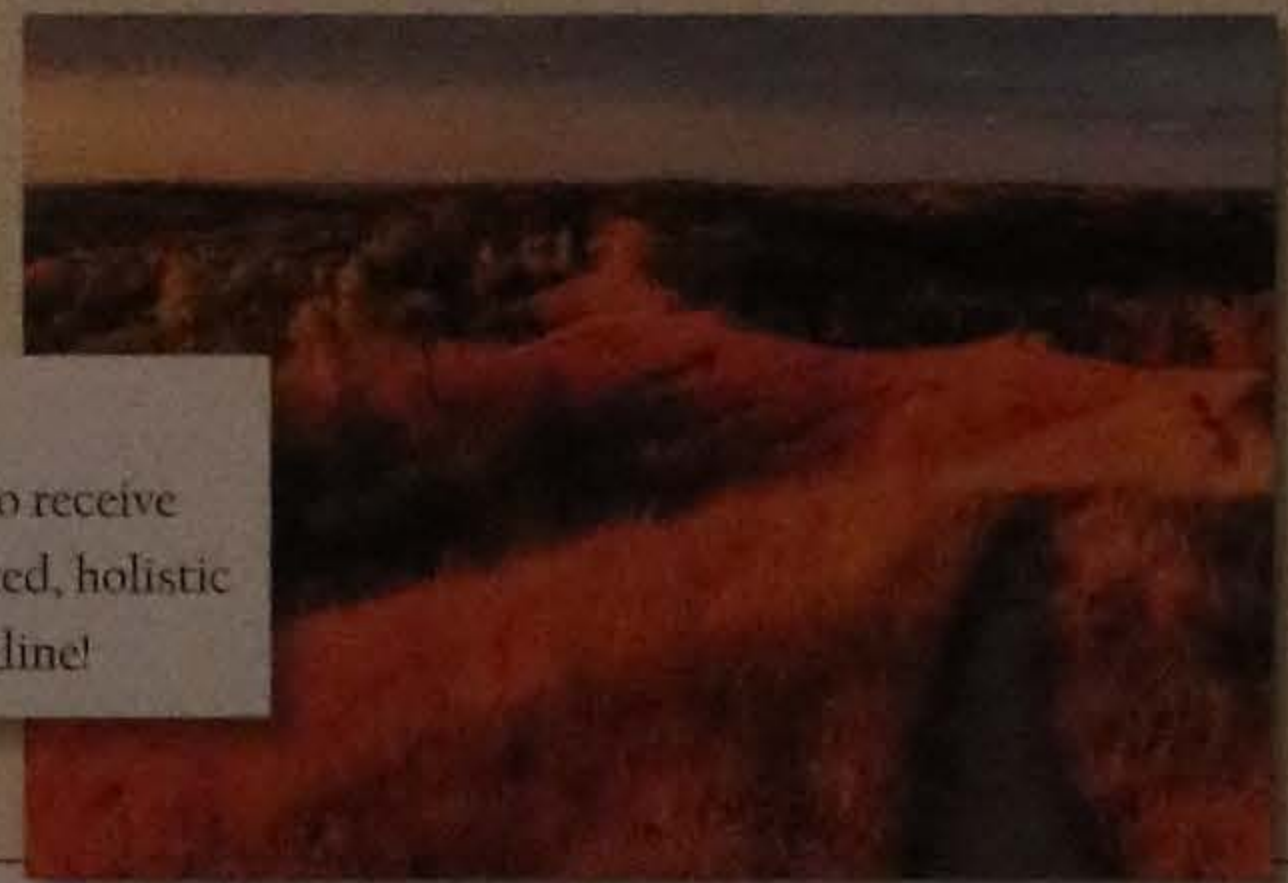


Native Pollinators

Bumblebees and butterflies and flower beetles, oh my! Identifying native pollinators is a crucial aspect of preserving Iowa's bountiful farmlands - but do you know which ones best suit your land?

Conservation Stewardship Program

These little-known and fairly new programs allow farmers to receive payments from the federal government based on the continued, holistic improvement of their land. Is your farm eligible? Find out online!



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 Marjory A. Reeves
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 Donald Rumer
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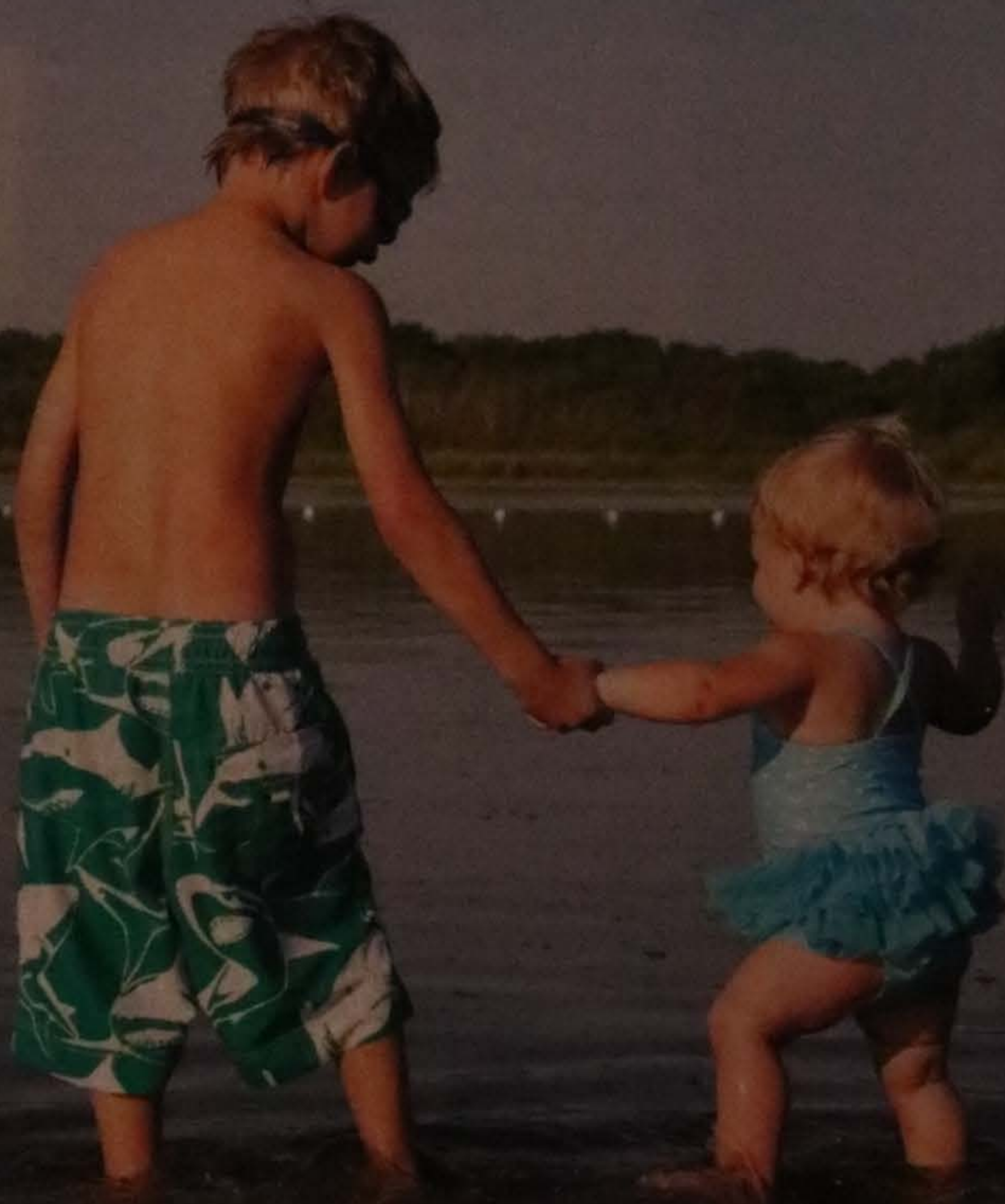


Land ... water ... wildlife ... people.
All strands in the web of life.

If you've enjoyed the content of this magazine and the work we have done, consider a gift to INHF.

Iowa Natural Heritage

Protecting and restoring Iowa's land, water and wildlife



If not now, when?
If not us, who?

FEB 11 2013
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Currently, the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation is supporting the citizens of Polk County in their quest to pass a bond that would fund water quality and conservation projects in Polk County over the next 20 years. This bond, entitled the Polk County Water and Land Legacy Bond, is an important step that represents local citizens taking ownership of conservation in their community.

Carole Reichardt, former chair and current board member for INHF, spoke on behalf of the bond after the Board of Supervisors approved unanimously to place it on the general election ballot November 6th. Below are her eloquent, heartfelt comments. There are no better words to describe why we think this initiative is important, not just for the people of Polk County, but for all Iowans.

"As some of you may know, Iowa has the most altered landscape of all the 50 states – a fact that impacts every corner of Iowa.

Currently, Polk County needs additional resources to enhance the water quality of our rivers, lakes and streams; to protect our sources of clean drinking water; and to help preserve wildlife habitat and natural areas that prevent flooding.

This is a unique point in time that will allow us to fund vitally important projects that will define us – not just for our generation, but for the generations to come.

There will be those that argue that now is not the time. I would like to ask, 'If not now, when? If not us, who?' We owe it to our children and grandchildren to make this investment in our natural resources, to leave a lasting legacy for those who follow."

I am humbled that we have such great people that are members of INHF and the conservation movement. If you would like to find out more about the bond, our position on it and how you can help, please visit our webpage at www.inhf.org/polkvotes.cfm.

Thank you for your continued support.

Your conservation partner,
Mark C. Ackelson, President

- Mark Ackelson *President*
- Ross Baxter *Land Projects Associate*
- Andrea Chase *Trails Coordinator*
- Brian Fankhauser *Blufflands Program Manager*
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Our Mission
The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation protects and restores Iowa's land, water and wildlife.



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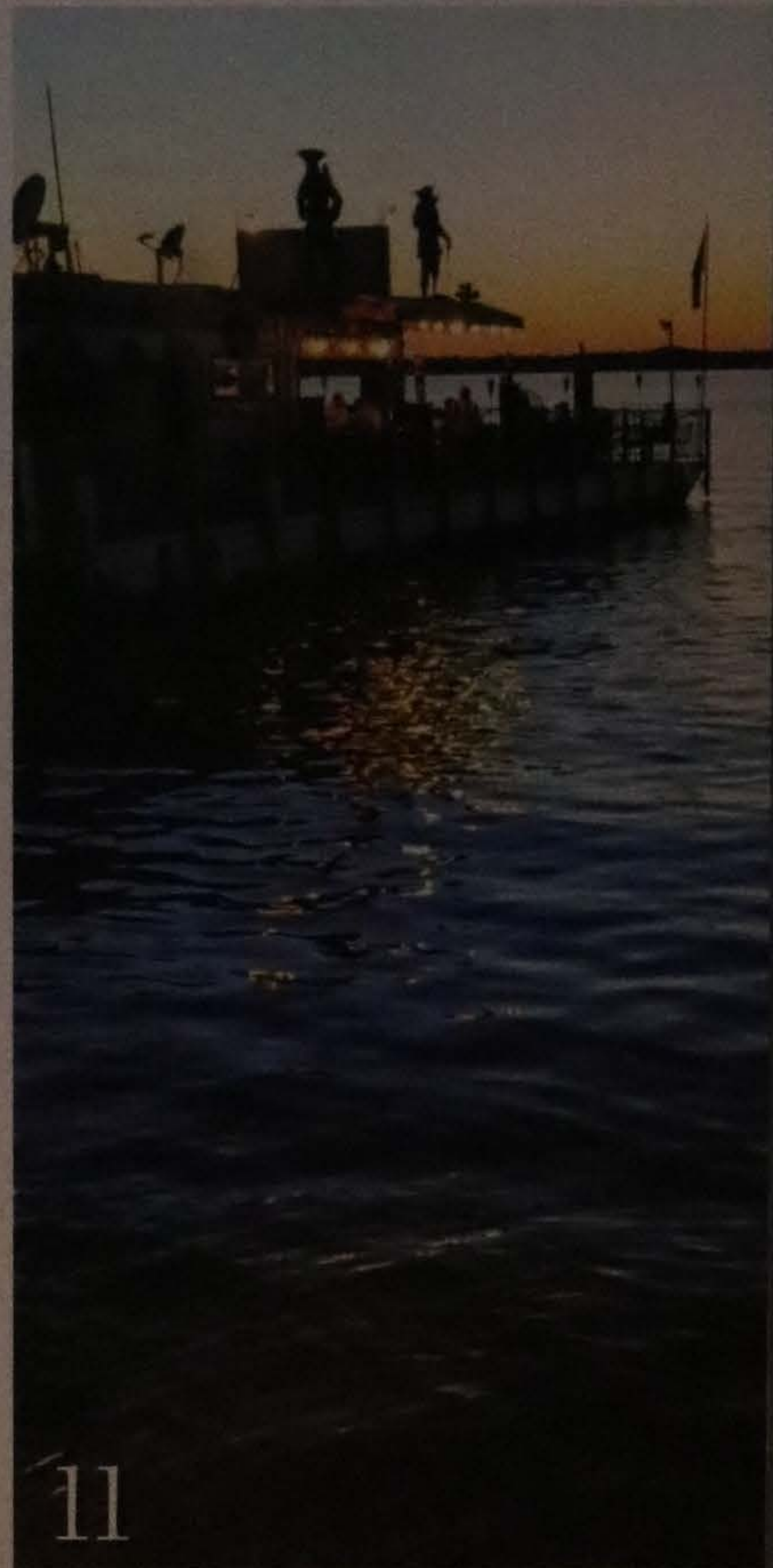
More information about simple practices and projects you can put in place to create natural filters, improve watersheds and recycle water.

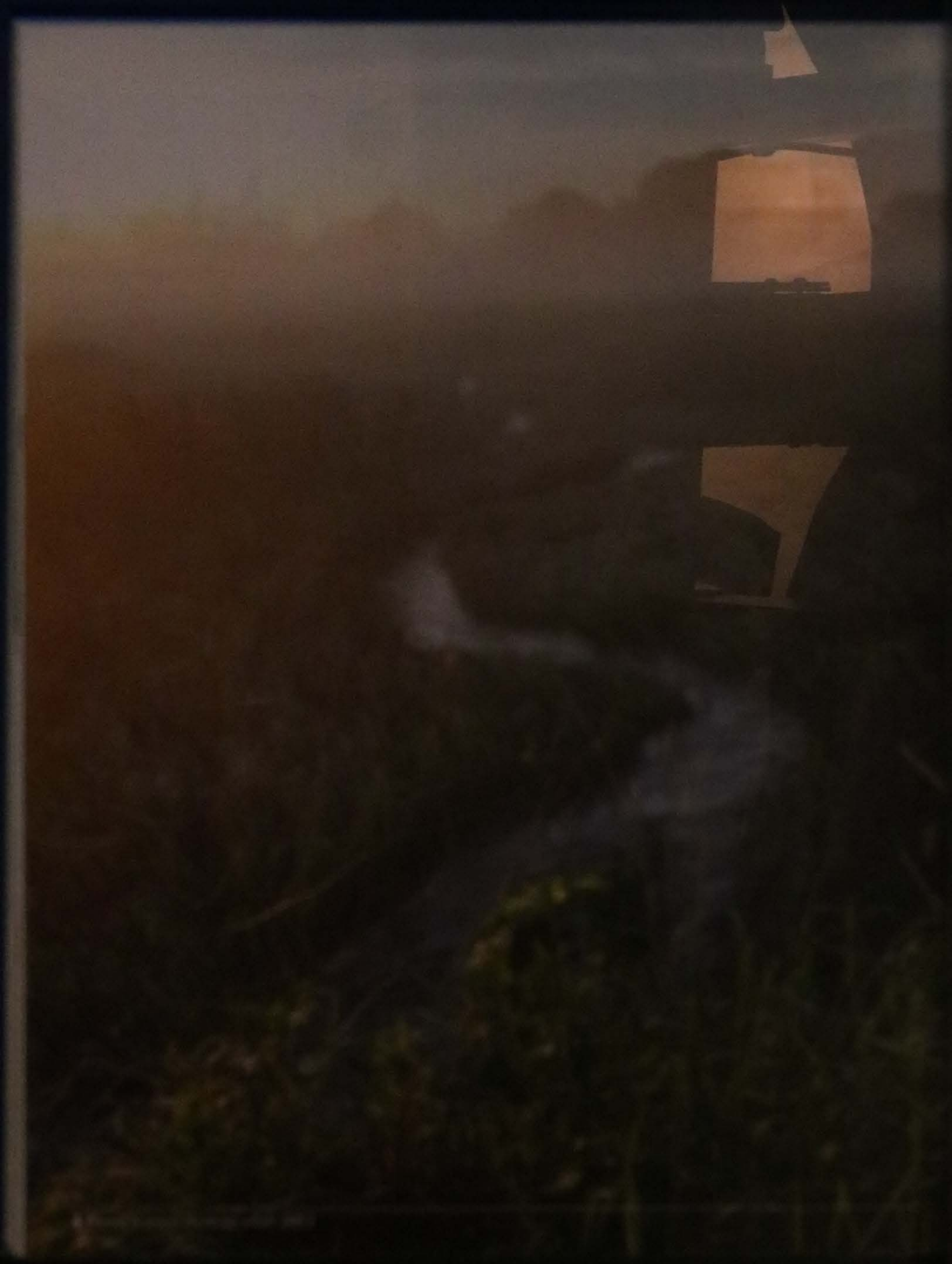


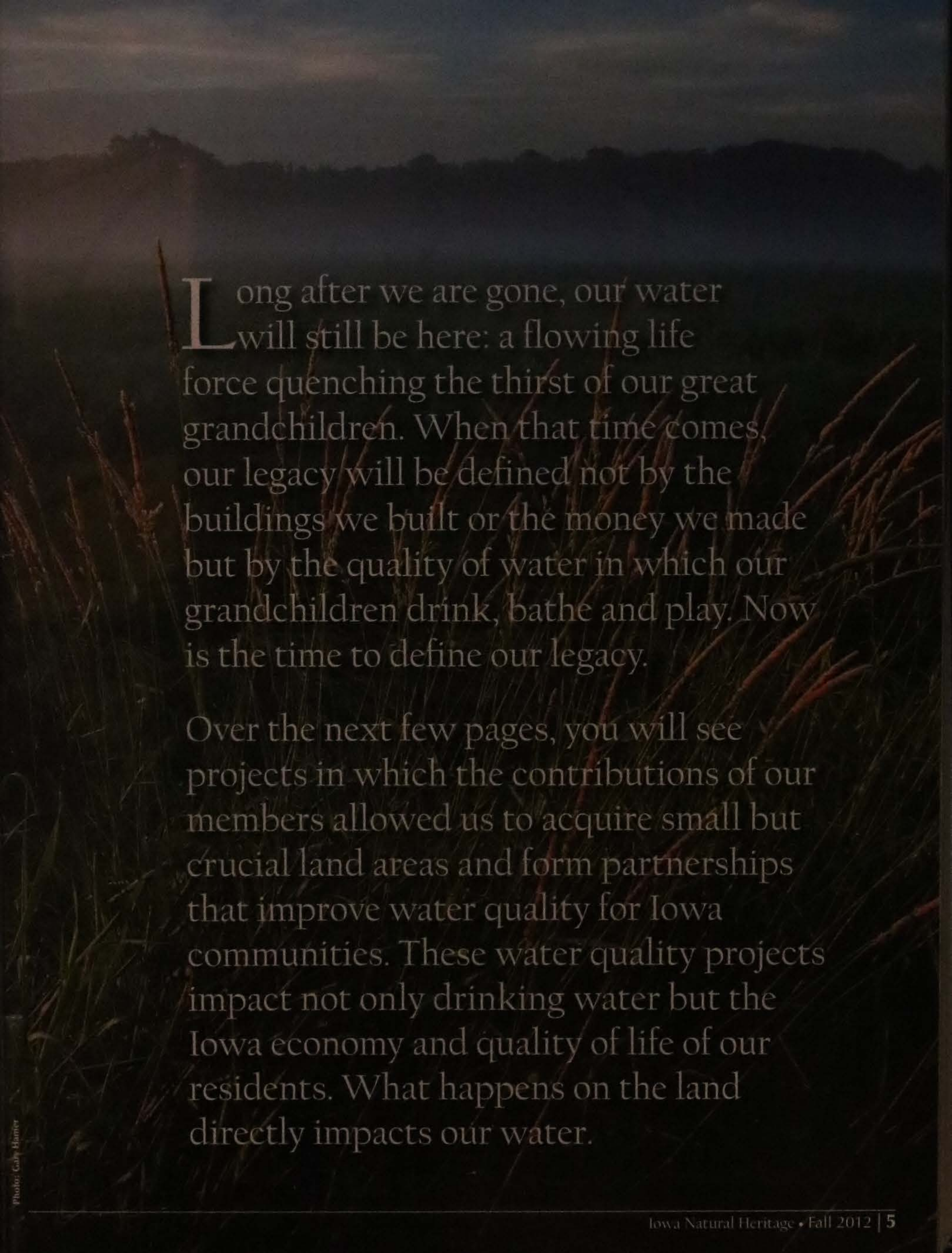
On the cover

Splashing in clear water, wriggling toes into a sandy lake bottom, building sand castles on the beach: These are the tiny yet significant things that create memories children cherish forever. These siblings venture into Blue Heron Lake, the 232-acre lake in West Des Moines' Raccoon River Park.

Photo: Amber Salmon








Long after we are gone, our water will still be here: a flowing life force quenching the thirst of our great grandchildren. When that time comes, our legacy will be defined not by the buildings we built or the money we made but by the quality of water in which our grandchildren drink, bathe and play. Now is the time to define our legacy.

Over the next few pages, you will see projects in which the contributions of our members allowed us to acquire small but crucial land areas and form partnerships that improve water quality for Iowa communities. These water quality projects impact not only drinking water but the Iowa economy and quality of life of our residents. What happens on the land directly impacts our water.

The Right Partners

At the Table




Bishop Farm
Polk County

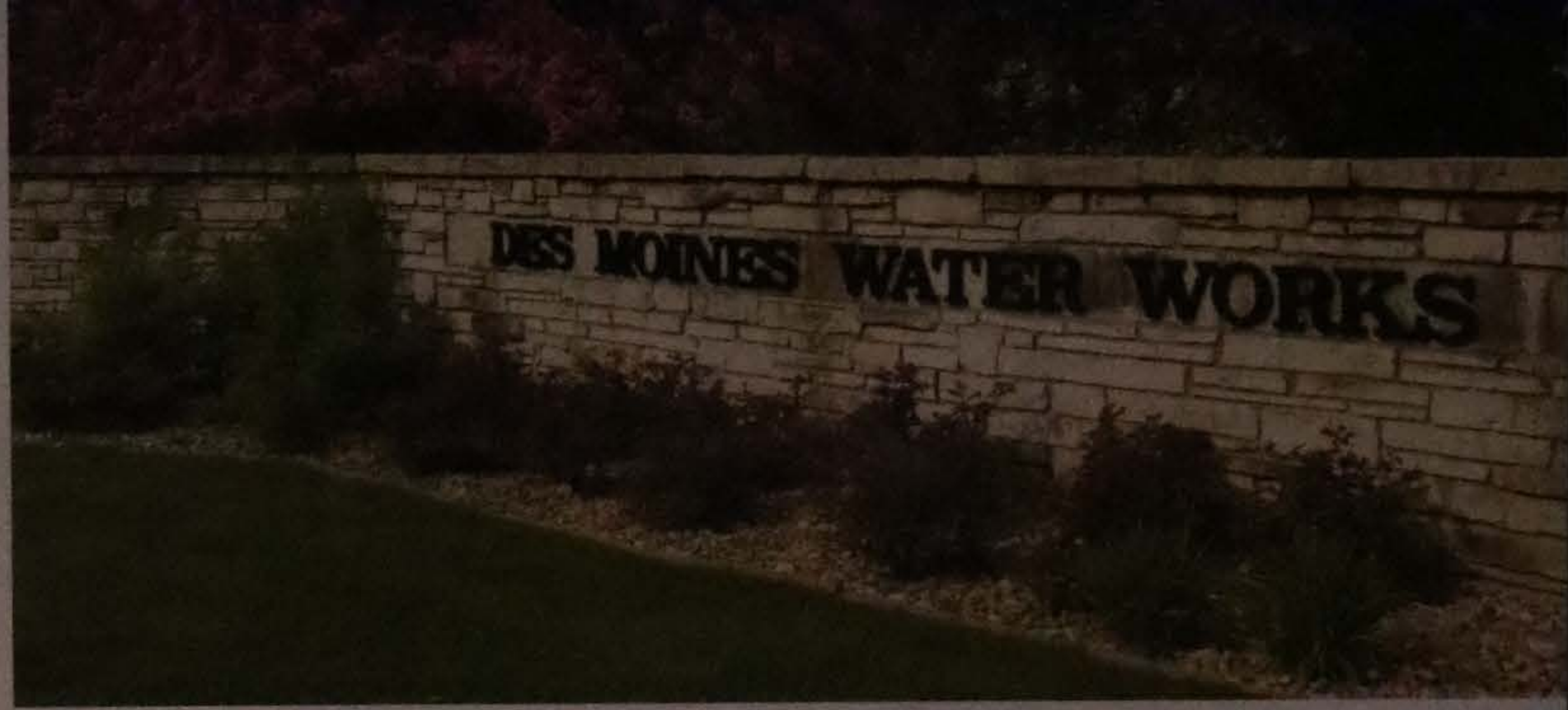
Acres: 214 with 79-acre pond

Main Partners: INHF, DNR and DMWW

Open to the public within one to five years

 www.inhf.org/fall-2012-magazine.cfm

Tucked between Interstate 35 and Highway 5 in West Des Moines is a 214-acre property that will soon impact Des Moines drinking water in a big way.



Starting in 2014, Bishop Farm's pond will become an integral part of the Des Moines Water Works' (DMWW) strategy to provide quality drinking water while utilizing a natural nitrate removal process.

Bishop Farm's pond, formerly a quarry site, is just one of many such old quarry locations that dot Iowa's landscape. This particular site, however, happens to be adjacent to a section of the Raccoon River currently on the Impaired Waters list. Protection of Bishop Farm's pond will help improve water quality and supply safe drinking water to metro residents during peak usage times. It will also provide ample opportunities for recreation and serve as a habitat to many different types of wildlife, including migrating waterfowl and bald eagles.

"Anywhere in the metro area where you have green space is considered valuable," says Tim Gedler, park manager at Walnut Woods State Park. "There are not a lot of urban natural areas left."


Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation has had a long relationship with the Bishop family, and when the property was available in the Betty and Willard Bishop estate, INHF worked with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources to reach agreement on purchase.

"The negotiation process took many months to complete," says Mark Ackelson, president of INHF. "But it's amazing what can happen when we are willing to work together. Bishop Farm's pond is a prime example. With this project there is clean water for the citizens of Des Moines as well as recreational

opportunities for the citizens of West Des Moines and the entire metro area."

INHF collaborated with the DNR and DMWW to ensure that the property was suitable for use through water sampling, site evaluations and other legal work. INHF also conducted the negotiations with the estate.

The Bishop family's dream was to see the area open to the public. Thanks to INHF, the DNR and DMWW, the public will have access to the site in the next one to five years. Bishop Farm's pond will truly exemplify the DMWW slogan, "water you can trust for life," - for recreation, wildlife and life sustenance.

Sometimes improving water quality is as simple as putting the right people at the table. 

By Laura Johnson, Communications Specialist



Opposite: Preserving Bishop Farm's pond will ensure future generations can enjoy this natural area, perfect for a leisurely afternoon paddle.

Top: The Des Moines Water Works will use Bishop Farm's pond as an alternative drinking water source for metro residents during peak water usage times.

Potential savings of \$3,000 per day for Des Moines Water Works

DMWW currently utilizes an old gravel pit pond on the west side of Interstate 35 (affectionately referred to as "Crystal Lake") to facilitate off-stream, biological denitrification of Raccoon River water. River water is pumped into one end of the pond which provides enough detention time for natural, biological denitrification to decrease the nitrate concentration in the river water. The low-nitrate water is then pumped from the pond and utilized as part of the raw water supply for the McMullen Water Treatment Plant (MWTP). The Bishop Farm's pond will be utilized as an additional source of low-nitrate raw water supply for the MWTP. This will save money for DMWW's customers by minimizing or eliminating the need to operate the nitrate removal facility at the Fleur Drive water treatment plant. Each day that the nitrate removal facility does not have to be used will save approximately \$3,000 in operating costs.



The Big

It's simple enough: What we do on the land impacts our water. As hundreds of thousands of acres of Iowa land shift away from CRP and grass cover, Iowa's water quality will degrade.

Change

When I began to discover the hilly regions of Iowa in the early 1980s, this farm girl was amazed to see how many steep crop fields allowed soil to move unimpeded toward the nearest stream. Some landowners relied on terraces or waterways to slow that process; many did not. "Fencerow to fencerow" farming was still in vogue, and conservation wasn't often rewarded.

I traveled regularly through the Loess Hills later that decade as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) grew in popularity. The difference was startling. Steep hillsides were now under green grasses. Entire landscape views changed from corn to grass in no time at all.

I knew this grassland would be home to more wildlife and that the soil would remain in place. I barely considered how this could make the water cleaner.

The pendulum swings

It seemed odd at first that the federal government would pay you annually if you didn't plant row crops on the country's most erosion-prone lands. Ten- or 15-year CRP contracts gave landowners a really simple way to receive a guaranteed income from the land. Many liked the looks of their land "under cover." They liked the wildlife the cover attracted, too. As the CRP contracts expired, many landowners renewed for another term of years.

Federal farm policy has a huge impact on the face of Iowa - the fastest, most widespread impact possible.

Now the trend is pushing the other way

- With high crop prices, more Iowa landowners are planting corn and soybeans on land that had been out of production. According to Farm Service Agency records, in 2011-2012 more than half of the CRP acres that were up for renewal are now cropped! Many grasslands and pastures that were not in CRP have also been converted to row crops.
- CRP contracts expiring in Iowa total 230,000 acres this year ... another 184,000 acres next year ... another 205,000 acres in the two years that follow. At current trends, that could mean a net loss of 325,000 acres of CRP grasslands in just four years. The area of potential grasslands lost is large enough to cover all the farmland in an average county in Iowa.
- Losses have been especially concentrated in northeast, southwest and south central Iowa. Ten counties each lost in the range of

30,000 to 50,000 acres of grassland in just four years, according to The Environmental Working Group report *Plowed Under: How Crop Subsidies Contribute to Habitat Losses*.

- Nationwide, this trend is strongest in middle America -- from the Upper Midwest through Iowa and down to Texas. A total of 23 million acres of grasses and wetlands were converted to cropping or came out of CRP contracts from 2008-2011 nationwide. Loss of that habitat threatens the diversity of our wildlife species, particularly in this region.
- In the Dakotas, grassland and wetland conversion is so rapid and widespread that federal agencies and organizations fear for the impact on migratory birds as essential nesting habitat is lost.

As the nation goes, so goes Iowa

Federal farm policy has a huge impact on the face of Iowa - the fastest, most widespread impact possible. That's why it's especially important for Iowa conservationists to keep abreast and speak out about federal policy proposals.

At the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, we rejoice with each piece of conservation land we're able to restore and protect. We're proud that we've helped *permanently protect* more than 132,000 acres.

Changes in crop prices plus federal policies have led to habitat loss and massive soil loss on hundreds of thousands of acres in just a couple years. It's hard to watch. It's harder when you see the impact on water.

In the steep regions where reversals are most extreme, how will we ever make gains in water quality?

We think of the public money that's gone to landowners for 10 or 20 years or more to keep these highly erodible lands under cover.

An Example

How CRP links to trout stream quality

Of the land that drains into Iowa's spring-fed, coldwater streams, about 100,635 acres are enrolled in CRP.

- Nearly 80 percent of that land is rated "highly erodible" -- with slopes so steep that large amounts of bare soil would be expected to wash away annually.
- As CRP contracts expire and grasses and vegetative cover are converted to row-crop use, you can expect at least a five-fold increase in soil loss on those acres!

Source: Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Where does that soil go?

Much of it would go into the trout streams.


Now the soil conservation the federal government "rented" is going downstream. It was only temporary progress. We're headed back to where we started before CRP.

Permanent, targeted benefits

This is why INHF has consistently encouraged federal farm conservation policies to be more permanent and more targeted.

- Permanent: so that conservation progress doesn't erode along with the soil.
- Targeted: to protect more species and water bodies with the limited funding available.

In the new farm bill discussion, there's funding proposed for easement programs that buy permanent conservation and for regional partnership programs that target some resources where conservation is most needed. Cuts to CRP are proposed, too: you'd likely see 22 percent less land contracted.


Let's keep working for more permanent, targeted public policies and funds, for the sake of the soil and water on which we all depend. We need to get the most benefit from public funding that remains. 

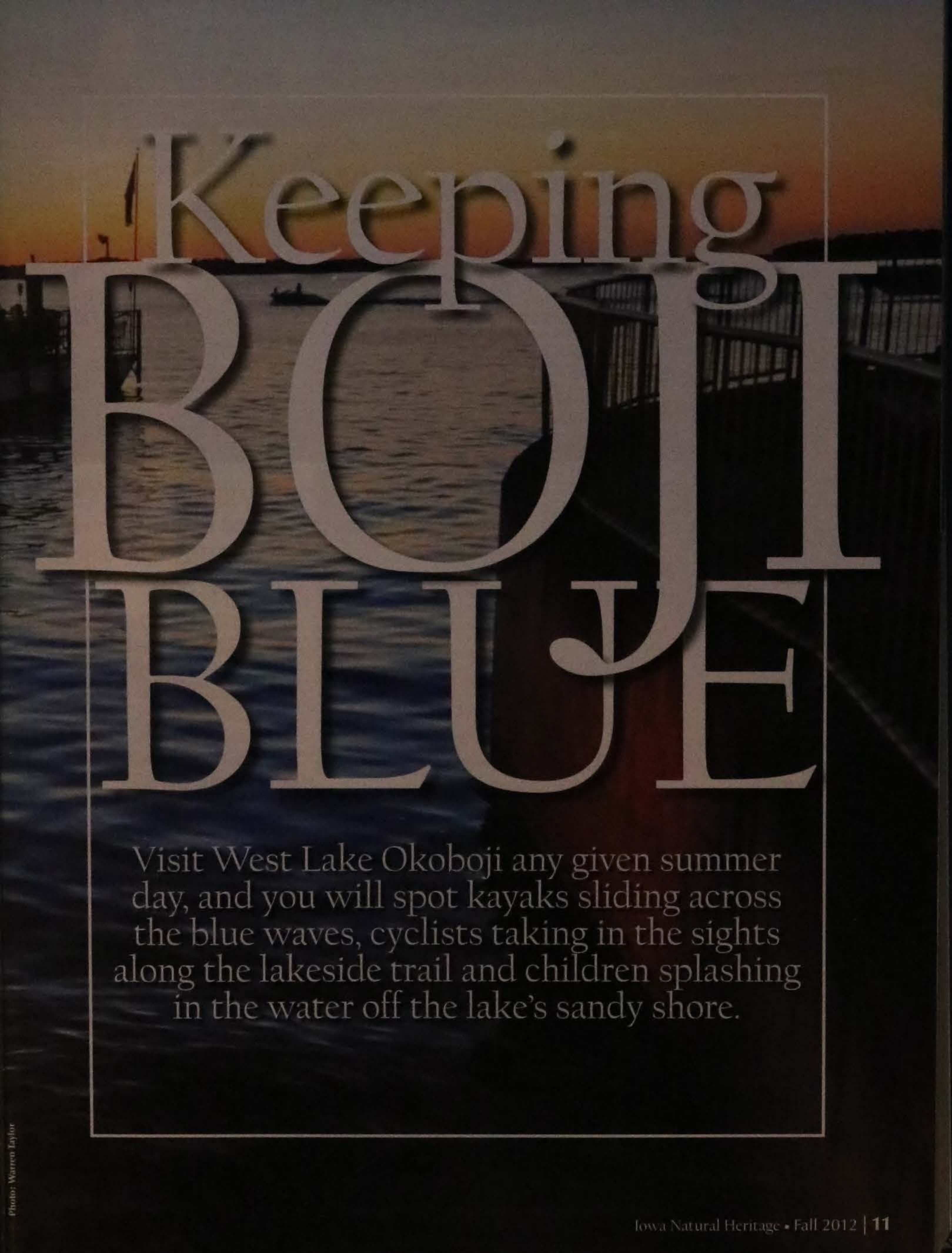
By Anita O'Gara, Vice President, Development and Communications



Allamakee, Winnebago and Tama counties

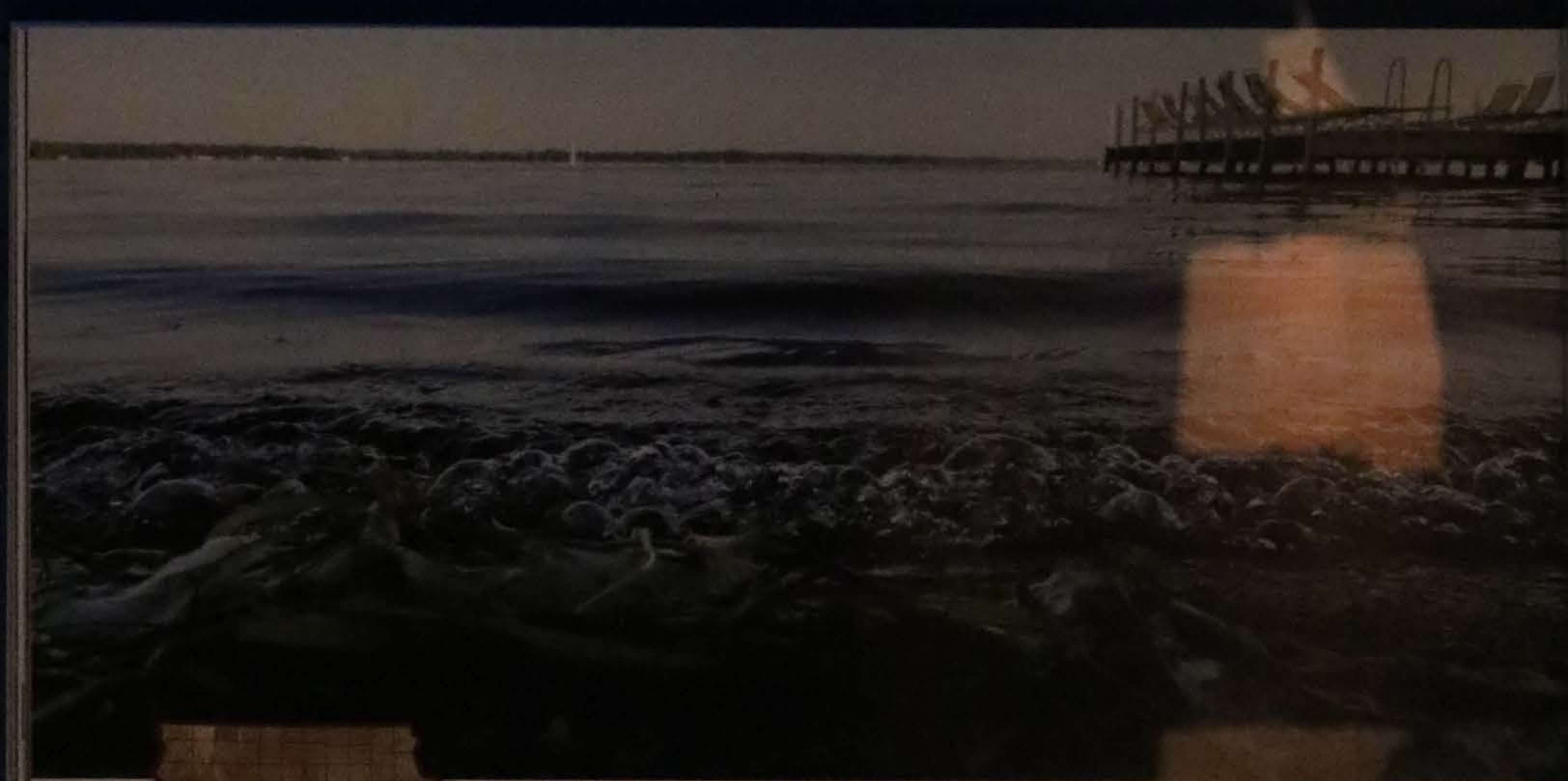
Several current INHF land protection projects were urgently launched because of the conversion or threatened conversion of CRP acres that would damage water quality. Read about Paint Creek Valley, Union Grove Lake, Mount Valley and other land projects for water quality at

 www.inhf.org/fall-2012-magazine.cfm



Keeping BOJOJI BLUE


Visit West Lake Okoboji any given summer day, and you will spot kayaks sliding across the blue waves, cyclists taking in the sights along the lakeside trail and children splashing in the water off the lake's sandy shore.



Lake Okoboji
Dickinson County

Main Partners: INHF, DNR, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Funded by: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Iowa DNR, the Dickinson County Water Quality Commission, the LaVonne and Dale Foote bequest to INHF and other INHF donors

 www.inhf.org/fall-2012-magazine.cfm

Until recently, conservation groups and local community members feared that in the not-so-distant future this blue-water lake would become contaminated with polluted runoff.

"The Lazy Lagoon sub-watershed of West Lake Okoboji has one of the highest sediment delivery rates in the entire Iowa Great Lakes watershed," says Heather Jobst, Land Projects Director at Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. "The sediment carries pollutants – including phosphorous and nitrates – from nearby fields into the lake."

The Iowa Great Lakes Watershed Management Plan found increased sediment levels in the northwest area of West Lake Okoboji. To reverse the effects of the sedimentation and to prevent additional pollutants from entering the water, a \$2.6 million project was launched that will transform about 350 acres of cropland back into natural prairie and wetlands near the

northwest bay of the lake.

The project is a collective effort by INHF and local, state and federal conservation and wildlife agencies with funding coming from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, the Dickinson County Water Quality Commission, the LaVonne and Dale Foote bequest to INHF and numerous additional INHF donors.

The new prairie and wetland areas will help with flood water retention, improve wildlife habitat and return the area to its natural, pre-development state. The restoration will also serve to naturally filter sediment and act like a sponge to absorb pollutants, preventing them from entering the lake.

"These prairie and wetland areas help slow down field runoff," Jobst says. "By the time runoff reaches the lake, most of the pollutants will be filtered out."

Immediate benefits

Models predict that once the project is completed, 90 percent less sediment, 71

Models predict that once the project is completed, 90 percent less sediment, 71 percent less nitrates and 90 percent less phosphorous will enter the lake from this watershed.

percent less nitrates and 90 percent less phosphorous will enter the lake from this watershed. The benefits will begin as soon as the wetlands are finished. Construction is slated to begin in Spring 2013 and finish by late 2013. The area will be open for public use once completed.

The project is made up largely of property obtained from Susan Chapman and Kathy Sebby, as well as land from Peace Properties. Two wetland easements will also be constructed on 12 acres of the Okoboji View Golf Course.


"We have a lot of work to do," says Curt Schnell, one of the owners of the golf course. "But we think that this is a win-win for us and the lake."

Preserving the local economy

West Lake Okoboji, Iowa's deepest natural lake, was formed more than 13,000 years ago from the last glacier to cover the northern part of Iowa. According to local lake expert Greg Drees, the lake is one of only three subterranean spring fed lakes in the world. The 3,847-acre body of water is also one of Iowa's few "Outstanding Iowa Waters."

That designation, as well as the lake-related tourism that forms the economic foundation for the area, has made the quality of the lake a major concern for most residents and businesses.

"I don't think you can underestimate how important a body of water this lake is," Drees says. "It has great economic impact for the area and provides wonderful recreation opportunity. We simply need to protect it."

Through this project, INHF continues its work preserving and restoring natural areas in Iowa. The Foundation has already partnered on 56 projects spanning more than 5,000 acres in Dickinson County alone thanks to generous donors who understand the value of keeping Iowa's land and water clean and protected for future generations. 

By Laura Johnson, Communications Specialist and Tom Witosky, Contributing Writer

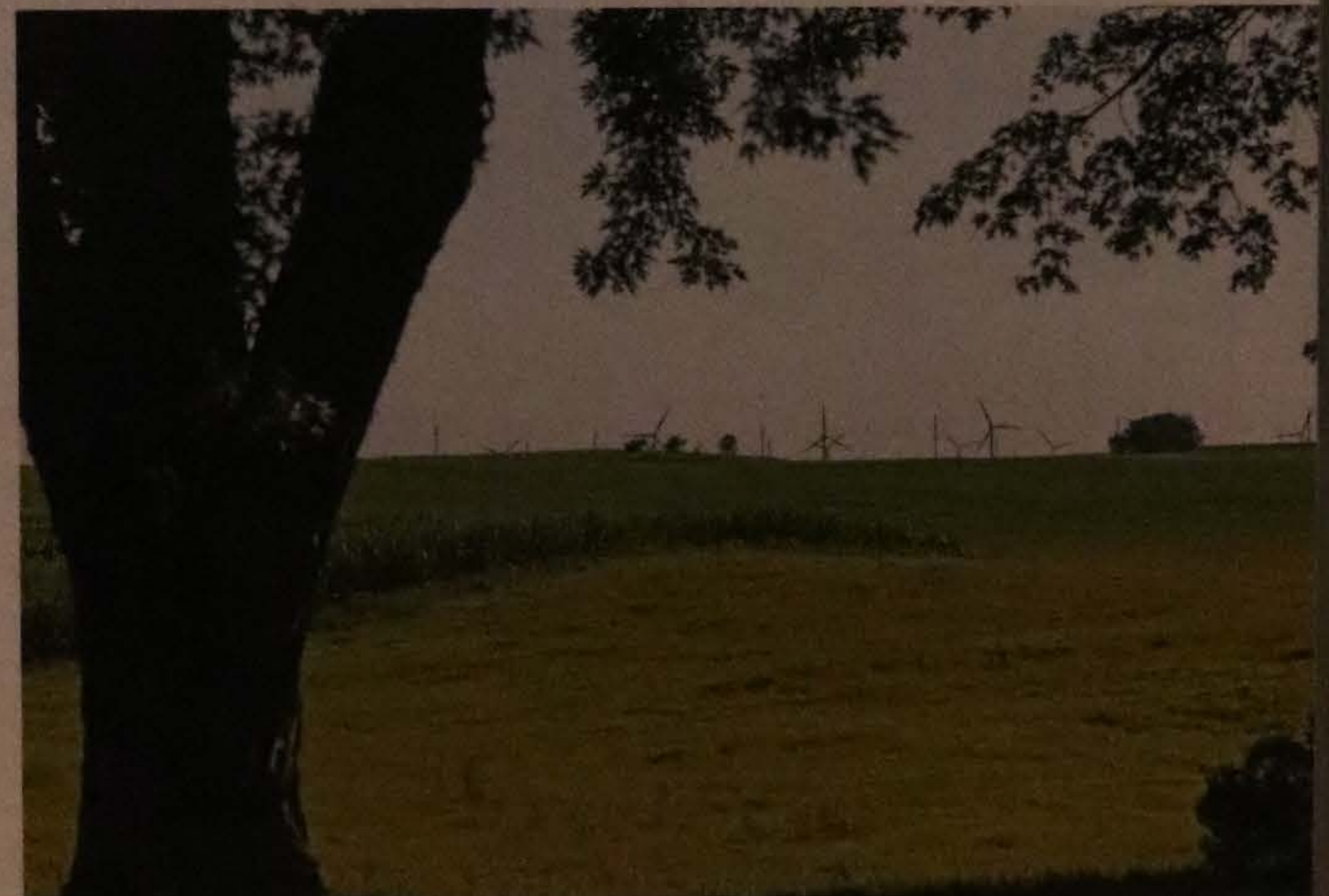




Photo: Courtesy of Polk County Conservation Board

A Favorite Fishing Spot: Restored & Restocked

Whether you're swimming, paddling or fishing, Iowa's bodies of water are prime locations to soak up your daily dose of Vitamin N. But often additional efforts are needed to help maintain water quality and preserve these natural treasures. At Thomas Mitchell Park, a beloved Polk County fishing spot was in danger of collapse until the Polk County Conservation Board (PCCB) stepped in and revitalized the aquatic ecosystem so that generations to come can enjoy fishing in the park's pond.

A Struggling Ecosystem

In 2007, an algae die-off left the six-acre pond at Thomas Mitchell Park virtually devoid of fish. The natural decomposition of dying algae removed oxygen from the water, making it difficult for fish to survive. In addition, erosion and sediment runoff from the nearby watershed caused the pond to become extremely shallow. As a result, the once popular fishing spot could no longer be enjoyed by those who had once frequented its plentiful waters.

The PCCB realized that reducing nonpoint source pollution from the pond's watershed was vital in order to save the body of water. With the help of a number of grants, the board was able to begin restoring the once-bountiful fishing spot.

To reduce nonpoint source water pollution, the pond was dredged, new tile lines were constructed and connected and water control

structures were built. With improved water quality, the pond was restocked with fish and native vegetation was re-established in the area.

100 more years

Now, after four years of restorations and improvements, Thomas Mitchell Park is returning to its former natural beauty. After dredging, sediment in the pond has been reduced by 90 percent - all thanks to dedicated individuals who took a strong interest in the health of the pond.

Come spring of 2013, fishing enthusiasts will be able to return to this much-loved pond for a rejuvenating afternoon in nature. Officials believe that through the improvements made at Thomas Mitchell Park, the life of the pond has been extended by 100 years, allowing fishermen young and old to once again enjoy its waters for generations to come.

Thomas Mitchell Park Facts Polk County

Land: 175 acres

Managed By: Polk County
Conservation Board

Fishing to open Spring 2013



www.inhf.org/fall-2012-magazine.cfm

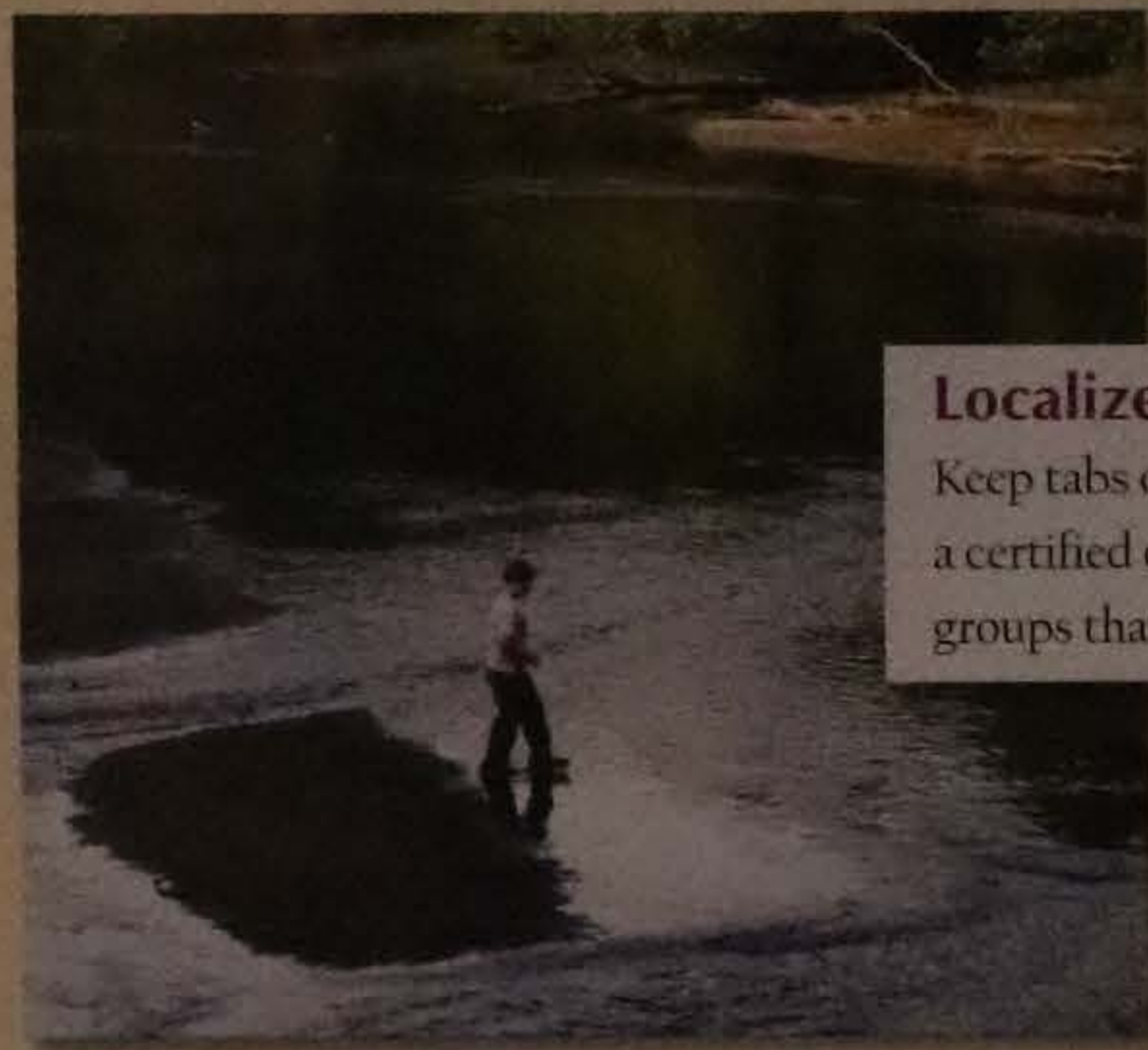
Learn more about Iowa's precious water resources and how you can protect and preserve them for future generations.

Protecting Iowa's Water Resources

Keep exploring online at www.inhf.org/lookingoutforiowa.cfm

Natural Filters

Give water a break. Prevent pollutant-filled runoff from reaching water sources with nature-given filters such as rain gardens, prairie strips and wetlands. Find out more about these and other on-the-ground practices online.



Localized Water Efforts

Keep tabs on the water quality in your part of the state by becoming a certified citizen water monitor or by getting involved with local groups that are working to improve the watershed in your area.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Recycling isn't just for last week's newspapers or empty pop cans. Water can also be recycled. Learn about new ways to reduce, reuse and recycle water that will help keep money in your wallet and give the environment a boost.



TRIBUTE GIFTS

IN MEMORY OF

Sylvan and Kathrine Ames
Norma Anderson Rotterman
Stanley Boeckmann
Dennis Butikofer
Ruth Donnelly

Joyce Engelkes
Birdy Faidley
Betty and Russ Ford
Wayne Gambill
Mary Joan Grover
Hazel Hagan McClintock
Murette Hagen

Lucille Harrington Honu
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Paul Meier
Richard K. Richards
Lucian Roberts
Stan Schoelerman
Carl Shettler

Marlys Southard
Thomas G. Terrall
Emil D. Tisl
Ann Wallace Fleming
Norma Wedemeyer
Bun and Joe Zaletel

IN HONOR OF

Karrie and Brad Bach
Paul Davis
G. David and Trudy Hurd

Christine Lauridsen and Rob Sand
Jerry and Billie Noah
Nancy and Brian Ohlen



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Photos: Kip Ladage

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Russet leaf on sky-blue water —
the essence of autumn.

If you've enjoyed the content of this magazine, consider a gift to INHF to support the work we do together.

Summer 2013

Iowa Natural Heritage

Protecting and restoring Iowa's land, water and wildlife

Nature as Muse
Creating empathy for wild things.

OPENING THOUGHTS



Art takes something — an object, a scene, a landscape, an expression — and holds it up, allowing us to examine ... to wonder ... to think. And, when artists accomplish their goals, their works stir something in us.

In Iowa, where we are surrounded by subtle beauty, artists create works that cause us to pause. They take what we are used to seeing and transform it, urging us to experience it in a new light and context. Conservation could be done without artists, but it wouldn't be the same. Art allows for a new lens, bringing us together and motivating us to do what needs to be done.

As I enter into my second quarter as your new president, I am even more motivated to lead the INHF team, our volunteers and countless supporters to realize our shared vision of an Iowa rich with wild spaces, clear streams and abundant wildlife. I have found beauty in the process, in what is done and is yet to be done. I look forward to continuing on this journey together — for Iowa, for us and for future generations.

Sincerely,
Joe McGovern, INHF President



Our Mission

The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation protects and restores Iowa's land, water and wildlife.

Joe McGovern *President*
Ross Baxter *Land Projects Associate*
Andrea Chase *Trails Coordinator*
Brian Fankhauser *Blufflands Program Manager*
Marian Gelb *Public Policy Coordinator*
Cheri Grauer *Major Gifts Steward*
Diane Graves *Administrative Assistant/ Receptionist*
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From man's earliest artistic expressions, nature has inspired us to honor the beauty around us. Poet Michael Carey pays homage to prairies.

6 Recreating a Slice of Heaven

Sara Lubinski finds wonder and awe along the upper Mississippi River blufflands in northeast Iowa. The Upper Iowa River captured her imagination — and inspired her to interpret this "slice of heaven" through pen and brush.

8 The Red-Tailed Hawk

Nature photographer Ty Smedes helps us see the life journey of a Red-tailed Hawk family through his photos and narrative.

10 Ding Darling Penned the Way

Pulitzer Prize winning Iowa cartoonist Jay N "Ding" Darling used his natural talent and humble character to perpetuate a national conservation movement.

14 Vitamin N: Capturing Passion for Natural Areas

Carl Kurtz's nature photos have a clear purpose — to document and showcase Iowa's wild places in the hope that people will take action to protect natural areas.

15 Looking Out for Iowa: Through Your Lens — INHF's First Digital Photography Contest

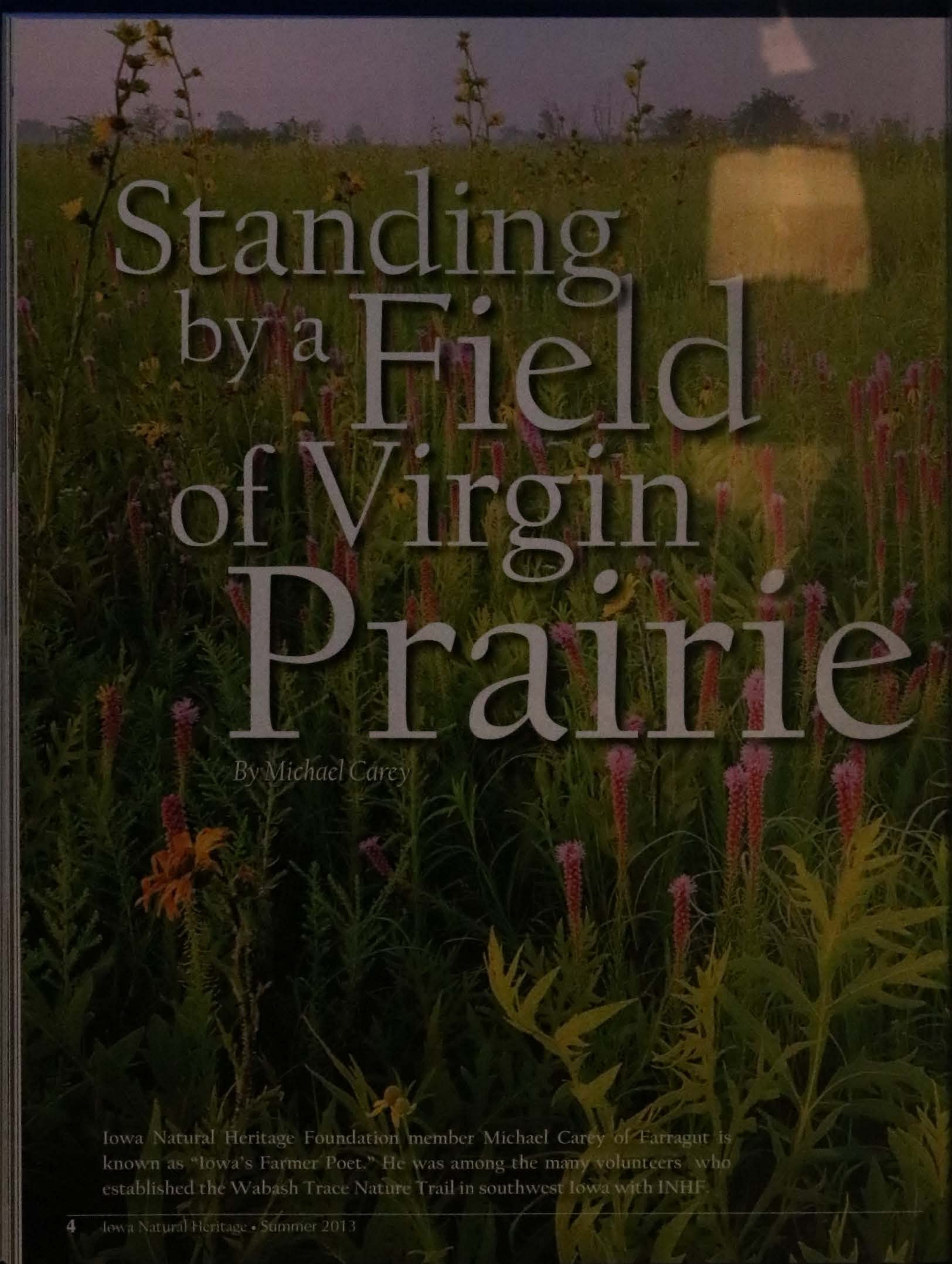
Share your outstanding photos of Iowa's prairies, woodlands, waterways and wildlife with other nature lovers in INHF's first digital photography contest — Through Your Lens.



On the cover

Photographer Gary Hamer interprets sunbeams bathing a woodland floor at Maquoketa Caves State Park in Jackson County. Park visitors will find similar opportunities to record the ethereal beauty of the park's 16 caves.





Standing by a Field of Virgin Prairie.

By Michael Carey

Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation member Michael Carey of Farragut is known as "Iowa's Farmer Poet." He was among the many volunteers who established the Wabash Trace Nature Trail in southwest Iowa with INHF.

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What the sky touches
you see — green, then gold,
then blue — it is what
was here before, rippling
rippling, it is what
is waiting to return.

All farmers know
all grass is flesh
of some kind
and all flesh
is grass, eventually.

How long have
I lived, staring
at my face
not knowing
what I saw;
how many fields
have I entered,
how many airy cathedrals,
not crossing
myself and too
ignorant to kneel?

Recreating a Slice of




In the summer of 2012, artist Sara Lubinski began a two-year sojourn into the upper Mississippi River blufflands: hiking steep, dry “goat” prairies; following cold water creeks; taking in top views and investigating algific talus slopes and the life they support.

From these wanderings, she is creating art. With charcoal, pencil and homemade walnut ink, she draws what she sees, recording both broad panoramas and the diverse, detailed life forms that sustain themselves in these places. Then, sketchbooks in hand, she returns to her Brownsville, Minn., studio to create paintings from her field drawings.

Sara plans to complete more than 50 works of art between June 2012 and October 2013, including paintings, drawings and silverpoints. These will be exhibited with working drawings, artist notes and artifacts in key Midwest locations through 2014. A


companion exhibit will explain the work of land trusts like INHF and the urgent need for us to act now to preserve these special places forever. “It is to the credit of the trusts — all the members and staff and the landowners they connect with — that we have over 50,000 acres protected in this region,” Sara says.

Sara recently explored northeast Iowa as part of her project, seeing most of that region for the first time. View the area’s exceptional natural places through her words below. We hope you enjoy her wonder and awe of our home state as much as we did.



Upper Iowa
Allamakee, Dubuque and
Clayton Counties

To learn more about Sara and to read the full interview, please visit:

 www.inhf.org/summer-2013-magazine.cfm

Heaven

THROUGH SARA'S EYES:

"This fall I have been exploring the Upper Iowa River, driving the gravel roads of northeast Iowa, a landscape of rolling farms and woodlots. By way of introduction, I had a great day riding along with Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation's Brian Fankhauser (based in Decorah), who shared stories with me of the land and its people as he navigated the back roads with familiar ease.

I have no doubt my face expressed amazement at every turn as I witnessed for the first time the deep gorge the river flows through, the rugged outcrops and the goat prairies. The work and cooperation of those who want to see the river valley retain its beauty and to restore its ecological integrity amazed me. I kept thinking of the line from *Field of Dreams*: "Is this heaven? No, it's Iowa." Until now, my experience was mostly limited to driving across the bridge south of New Albin, where the river runs straight and quiet

near the Mississippi River.

Going back to northeast Iowa on my own, I managed to get lost but eventually found my way back to the river. Again I was struck by its scenic beauty and rugged corridor and, in other places, the quiet bends of dark water and tall white pines along the banks.


Rugged beauty protected

The river is a 156-mile-long tributary of the Mississippi River with headwaters in southeast Minnesota and a watershed covering almost 641,000 acres within the Driftless Area. In 2007, INHF protected over 1,224 acres along its corridor and has since cataloged more than 1,100 plant and animal species in the wooded bluffs and limestone outcrops. Other tracts of conserved lands shelter ancient burial mounds, prairies, rocky shorelines of white pines and expansive wetlands.

A place of wildness in need of our care

My fascination with the Upper Iowa, first with the visual beauty and interest in this exceptional resource, has now extended to reading the historical and scientific perspectives and learning that the river that has served humans for centuries is now in need of our care. In return, taking care of the river and its corridor is the best way to take care of our own future as David Faldet describes in his rich narrative, *Oncota Flow* and as INHF prescribes.

Next summer, I plan to kayak the Upper Iowa, experiencing a continuous stretch through remarkable country in a region of Iowa that retains a sense of wildness in its deep ravines, where bald eagles and compass plants are at home.

Wow, this is Iowa! 


By Hannah Inman, Communications Director

You may have watched one hover above a road ditch before it glided to earth, feet extended and talons spread as it targeted a small rodent. The Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) breeds

throughout most of North America and is Iowa's most common hawk. Like many raptors, they aren't picky, and their diet is highly varied, consisting of mice, voles, chipmunks, snakes, rabbits, squirrels and more. And, although the American Toad secretes a toxin, which protects it from most predators, I've witnessed a young Red-tail downing one, with no apparent effects.

Red-tails prefer a habitat of mixed forest and farmlands. They need tall mature trees for nesting and roosting, with most nests

occurring along wooded streams and rivers or in dense stands of timber. They prefer open areas for hunting.

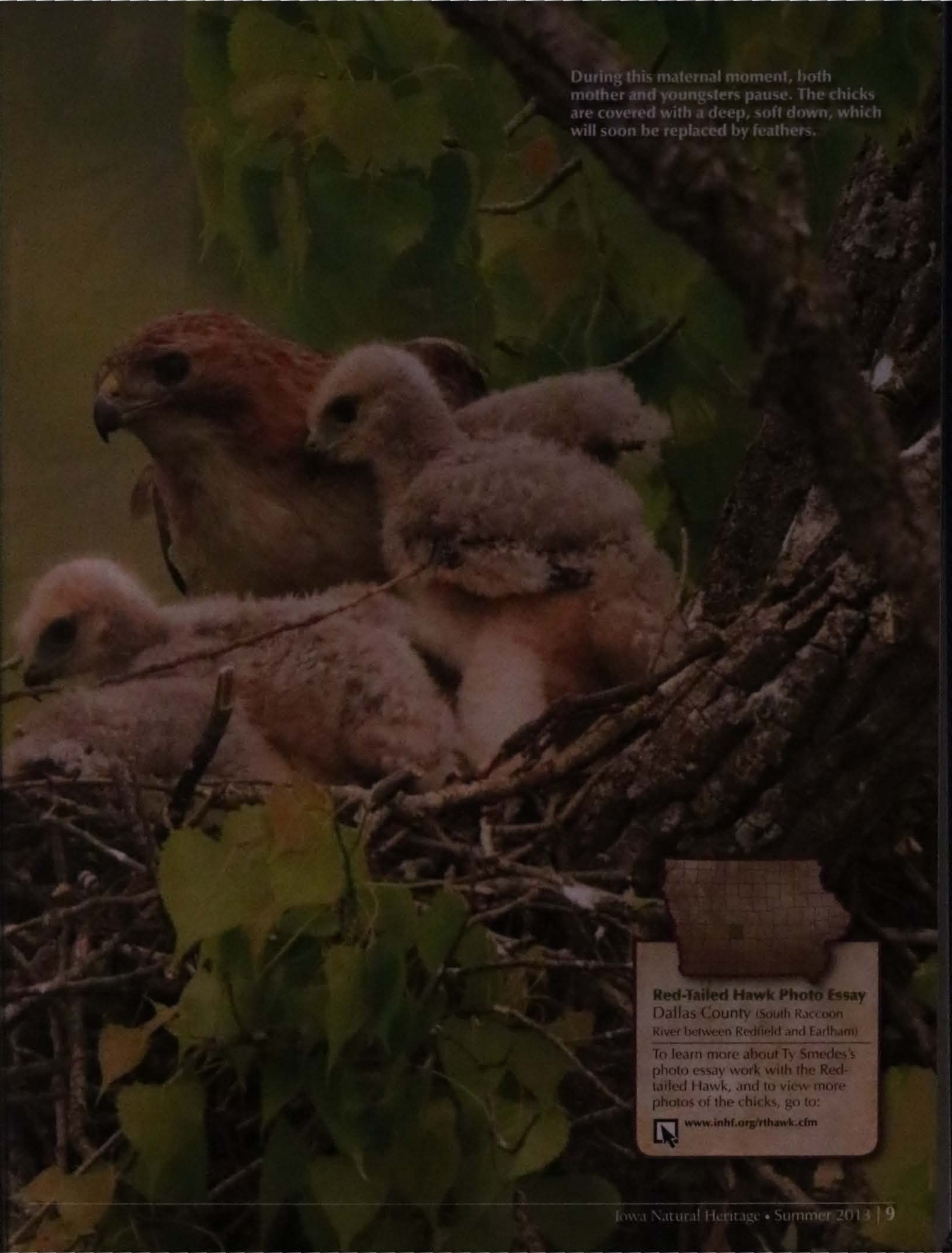
Red-tails are monogamous and may mate for life. The female usually lays two eggs and incubates them during a four-week period, while the male hunts for both of them and brings food to the nest. The young fledge in about six weeks and, with a little help from their parents, will be on their own by the end of summer. 

Story and photos by Ty Smedes


the Red-Tailed Hawk



INHF members have enjoyed professional nature photographer Ty Smedes's photos in our calendar and magazine for two decades. Ty bought his first 35mm camera in 1980. An avid hunter, he enjoys being outdoors in the field, and photography allows him to be there in all seasons. In 1983, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources contacted Ty about publishing his waterfowl photos, which eventually led him to develop an interest in prairies as well. Ty also enjoys taking photos of Iowa agriculture, small towns and cultural events. "My ultimate goal is to help others enjoy, appreciate and value our often fragile and threatened natural eco-systems and natural heritage," Ty said. "Perhaps my photos will cause others to make important choices that will save declining habitats and improve our natural world."

A photograph of a Red-tailed Hawk sitting on a nest made of sticks. The hawk is on the left, looking towards the right. It has reddish-brown feathers on its head and back. There are four fluffy, downy chicks on the nest with the hawk. The chicks are covered in soft, downy feathers. The nest is surrounded by green leaves and branches.

During this maternal moment, both mother and youngsters pause. The chicks are covered with a deep, soft down, which will soon be replaced by feathers.

A map of the state of Iowa is shown in a light brown color. A darker brown callout box is positioned over the southern part of the state, specifically over Dallas County. Below the map, there is a text box containing information about a photo essay.

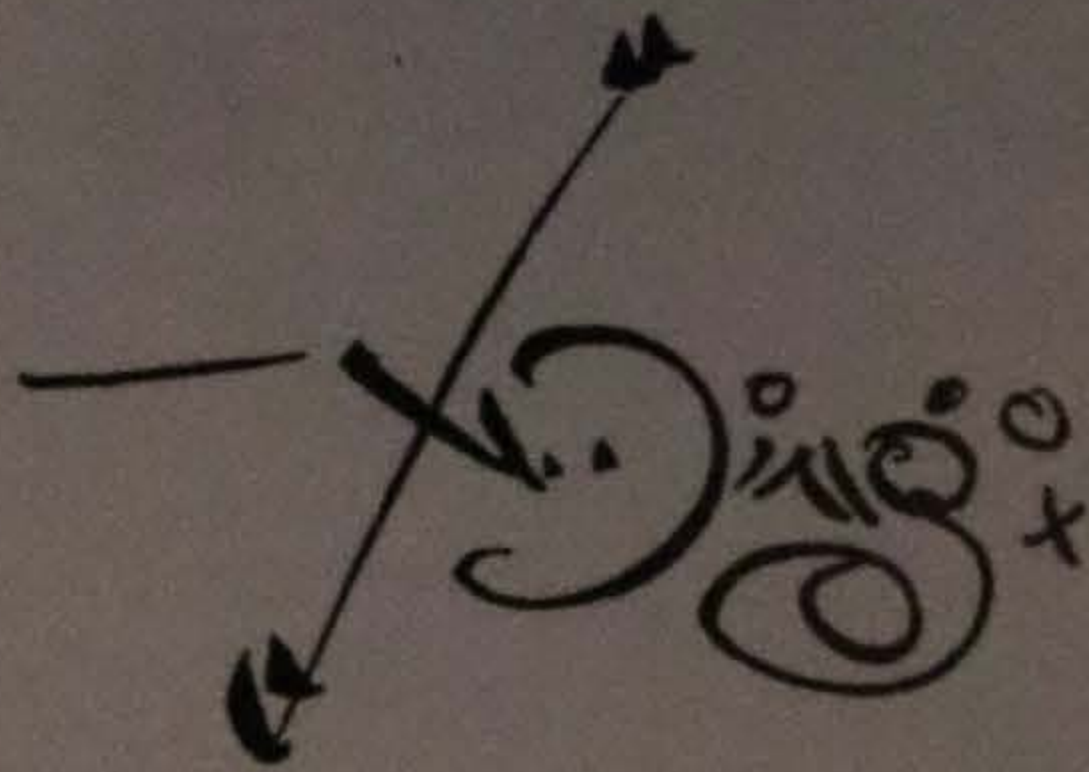
Red-Tailed Hawk Photo Essay

Dallas County (South Raccoon River between Redfield and Earlham)

To learn more about Ty Smedes's photo essay work with the Red-tailed Hawk, and to view more photos of the chicks, go to:



www.inhf.org/rthawk.cfm



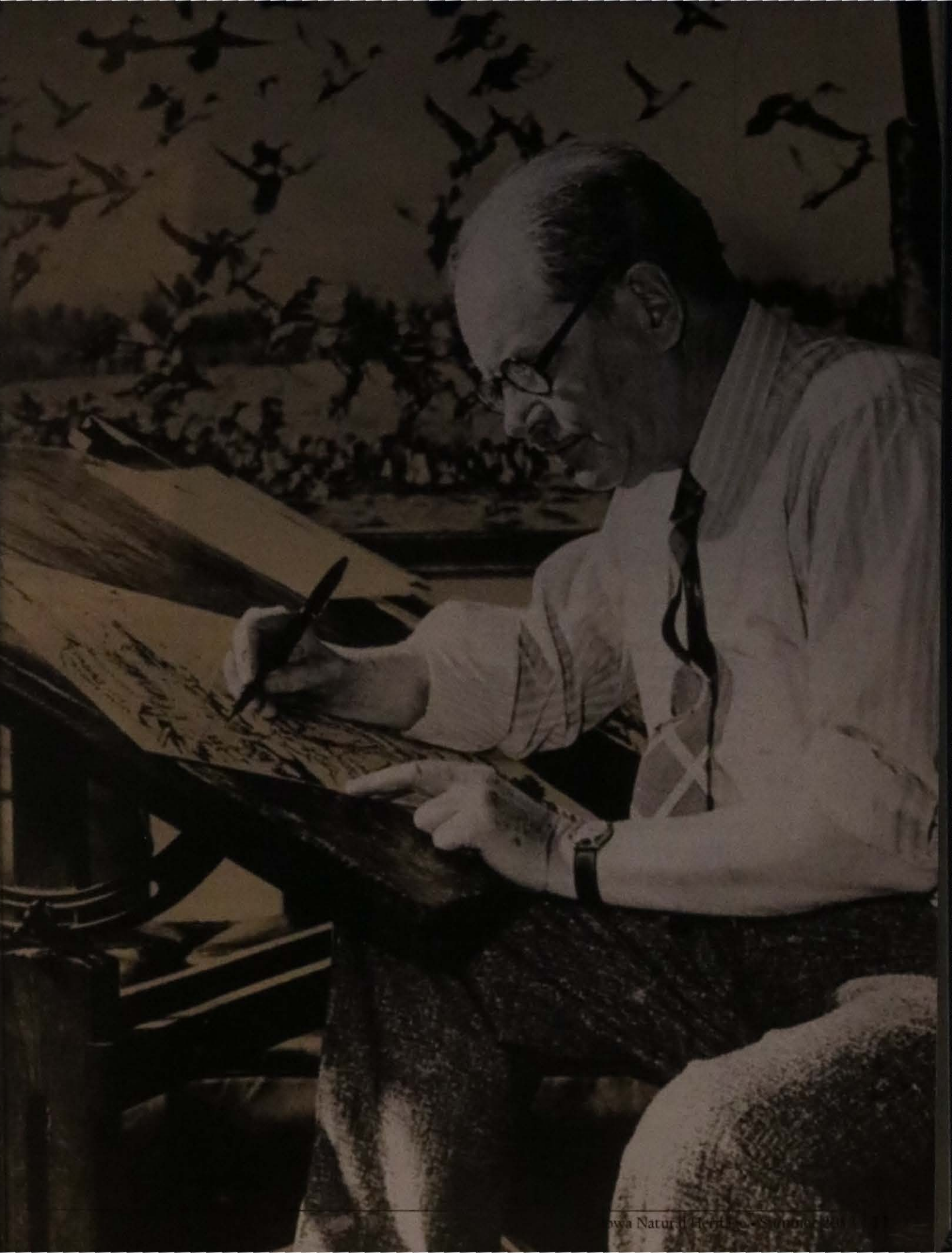
Ding Darling Penned the Way

As far as we know, no line dance, Wii game or smartphone app yet celebrates an Iowan who made his literal mark on and about the earth. But a recent documentary introduces new generations to one of the nation's most vital conservationists — with a twist. Ding Darling founded no conservation days, discovered no new species and won no lotteries to secure a philanthropic legacy. Instead, Ding drew.

America's Darling: The Story of Jay N "Ding" Darling chronicles the life of this two-time Pulitzer Prize winning cartoonist for *The Des Moines Register*. Ding would also lead the U.S. Biological Survey (forerunner of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), help establish the national refuge system, launch the Duck Stamp and so passionately protect a pristine landscape in Florida that it would forever bear his name.

Ding was an exceptional conservationist, a man of renaissance talents and, at the same time, a regular "Joe" who grew up in Sioux City.

"Humility," says *America's Darling* Director Sam Koltinsky, "was one of his greatest strengths." Koltinsky tells the story of visiting Ding's South Carolina grave, half expecting to find a memorial marking the significance of Ding's life and contributions. "But there is no marker," Sam says. "Ding had his goals, he had his visions. The awards did not mean anything to him. His humbleness is a message point we all need to take home with us."



Ding's credit-sharing (or credit-sacrificing) ways worked for him like pen or brush, but just like those tools, they are meaningless without the accompanying vision. "Some people can see things before other people do. They're called leaders," Sam notes. Ding led.

He based his vision in part on the erosion of the past. Ding wished the wilderness days of his Sioux

Right: Roseate Spoonbills, once nearly extinct, preen near a mangrove's edge at the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge on the subtropical barrier island of Sanibel in Florida.

running the U.S. Biological Survey, he helped craft the concept of a network of such tracts, the National Wildlife Refuge System. Today his vision boasts 150 million acres of land and water protected across the country. Every state has at least one national wildlife refuge, with six located in Iowa.

And Ding knew the need to sustain the work of

"...and he could connect with all people. That's the ability we're missing today across a broad spectrum, that ability to work together, to understand each other and compromise."

City childhood were filmed and shown to current residents. This "before and after" would make anyone a conservationist, Ding believed. He understood the power of the visual. And he grasped early the concept of "indicator species" — as wild creatures face over-crowding or habitat loss and die out, human kind is not far behind.

A conservation leader for the nation

But his vision truly flourished in the promise of the future. He saw the potential to save a native piece of the Sanibel Island landscape in Florida and laid the groundwork for its protection. He did not have the money to buy the land. He leased it. Fundraisers worked in his memory to permanently protect part of the largest undeveloped mangrove ecosystem in the U.S., now known as the Jay N "Ding" Darling Wildlife Refuge.

Ding recognized isolated wilderness tracts across the country were of value, and he advocated for a more expansive protection program. In his short two years

conservationists across the country. Instrumental in passage of the "Duck Stamp Act," he sketched the first duck stamp on a quick-at-hand scrap of shirt laundry cardboard. The stamp proceeds have helped protect more than 4.5 million acres of waterfowl habitat.

Closer to home, he served among those conjuring what would become Iowa's county conservation boards. This system of parks and protected lands totals 193,000 acres across the state in 863 beloved sites and supports some of the most vibrant environmental education opportunities in Iowa.

Using his talent for the greater good

But his most enduring accomplishments include not just what he did, but how he did it.

Ding worked with what he knew, what he had at hand. Literally, yes — with brushes, pens, paper (or laundry cardboard) — yet also with an inner reserve, an artful blending of his own tensile strength, integrity and intuition for pragmatic answers.

He used his pen as advocate, truth teller and sometime soothsayer. His cartoons popped off the page with story arcs, memorable messages and a colorful wit no grayscale print could deny. "There's a whimsical side of Darling that's a side I sometimes enjoyed most — that smile and look in his eyes when you knew he was up to something," Sam says. He penned more than 16,000 cartoons that are still relevant today, despite the fact Ding worked primarily during the first half of the last century, adds Sam.

He worked without fear, notes Sam. "Ding was willing to put his artwork out there even before it was finished sometimes. He was willing to take risks and face rejection."

Ding Darling Scholarships

Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation continues to support Iowa environmental education in Ding Darling's name.

After Darling's death in 1962, admirers of Ding formed the J.N. "Ding" Darling Foundation to continue his legacy. For 40 years, the foundation provided annual scholarships for wildlife students at Iowa State University.

In 2005, the Darling Foundation planned to dissolve and worked with INHF to create the Ding Darling Conservation Education Fund at INHF to continue the scholarships and to keep Darling's conservation spirit alive in Iowa through a variety of education activities including scholarships and sponsorship support for the "America's Darling" documentary.



A mentor and partner

He found time to mentor throughout his career. Esteemed wildlife artist Maynard Reece serves as one example, with Ding offering not hollow compliments but useful teaching-critique at Reece's first meeting with Ding. Ding would instruct or inspire many.

Despite his leadership and a penchant for the solo work of an artist, he was an early master of partnerships. In reviewing Ding historical references, his name often links to many others — harkening back, perhaps, to his humility, but also his capacity to cooperate, to get along.

"I think Ding was full of surprises," Sam says. "He loved people, loved making them laugh, and he could connect with all people. That's the ability we're missing today across a broad spectrum, that ability to work together, to understand each other and compromise."

Yet Ding didn't let any of his methods sidetrack his goals. He stayed focused and worked as though "anything can happen and it will happen," according to Sam.


And happen it does, whenever we reach for conservation progress, knowing who we are and using what we know. When we assume we need to play the eloquent speaker, sophisticated policy analyst or world-class scientist to make a difference, we're denying Ding his greatest legacy. Although we certainly need people with the above-mentioned abilities to further conservation,

Ding's story is of a humble man with a sense of humor, an ability to work hard and the good sense to use his skills, his stock in trade to tackle the conservation challenges of his time. He wasn't a rich man, but by playing from his personal strengths, he proved himself a great one.

We all have talents to contribute

We may not have his distinctive talents, but we have our own and have it within us to make meaningful contributions to conservation. The car mechanic who gives hybrid owners a labor discount. The landscaper who masters the rain barrel. The waitress who starts the food waste program. Whether poet or entomologist, councilman or farmer, we all have ways to act, to launch our little piece of vision — with humility and humor, collaboratively, with focus, commitment and our own little twist — whatever it might be.

When we find our own way to bring back a section of cherished stream or protect a favorite woodland, we pay tribute to one of the nation's greatest conservationists and share in his legacy.

"We all need a dose of Ding," Sam observes. Indeed. 

By Pat Boddy of RDG Planning & Design, Contributing Writer

Sources: *America's Darling: The Story of Jay N "Ding" Darling* produced by Sam Koltinsky, Marvo Entertainment Group, 2012; Sam Koltinsky interview—June 2013; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Iowa Association of County Conservation Boards.

Capturing Passion for Natural Areas

Photographers document a memory, an emotion associated with a specific image. They preserve the happiness that develops at the sight of a newborn animal, the peacefulness of a summer sunset and the awe of a new discovery. With a camera and his passion for nature, Carl Kurtz inspires others to consider the importance of natural lands and get a hearty dose of Vitamin N.



Above: Carl Kurtz **Top:** Blue-winged teal, Colo Bogs

Photography evokes emotion.

"A really great photo can move people to get involved in conservation and make them want to protect areas," Carl Kurtz said. "I think it may be one of the most important things we can do to document nature and showcase areas."

For over 40 years, Carl has united his love of nature and eye for capturing nature in its prime.

"I have a longstanding passion for being out in nature," Carl said. "I think it goes back to high school. I liked to hunt and eventually traded the gun for a camera. Nature photography became a bit of a longstanding obsession."

Carl has used this passion to capture thousands of images that show the inter-relationship of parts of nature, including landscapes, waterways, weather and wildlife throughout Iowa's four seasons. On occasion, he makes his way to INHF areas. In spring he

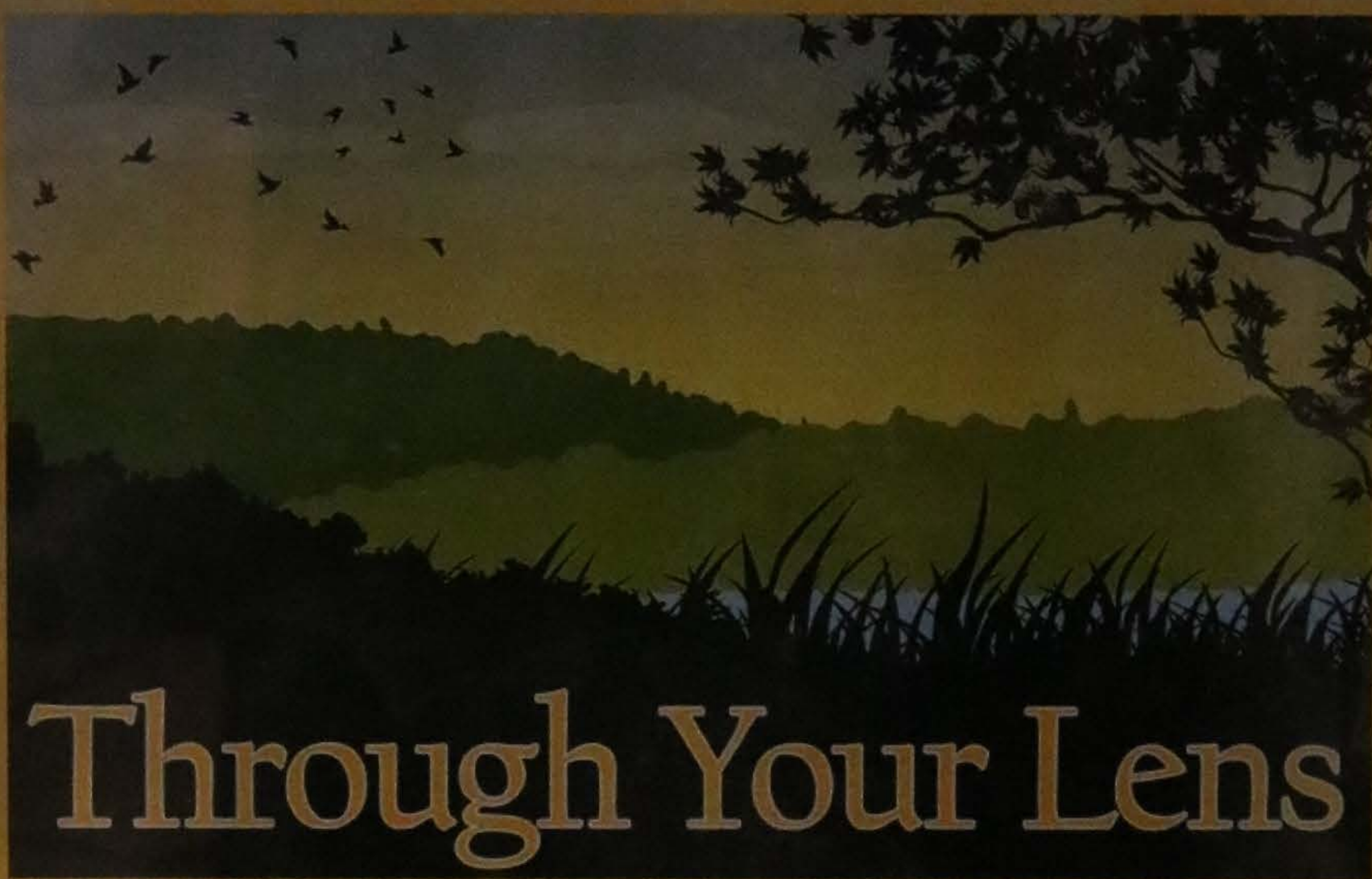
likes to photograph waterfowl at the Colo Bogs Wetland Complex in Story County, an area where INHF helped add 180 acres of protected land in July 2008.

Many photos that appear on the INHF blog, *Off the Beaten Path*, are taken near Kurtz's home. For him, nature photography is about reminding people they can make a connection with and develop an appreciation for their natural surroundings, whether they simply step out their front door or travel halfway across the state.

And, whether you're a serious photographer or simply love to capture Iowa's beauty, taking nature photographs makes each dose of Vitamin N a little different.

"Photography may show you something you didn't see or hadn't noticed, which can be fun, interesting, educational and exciting," Carl said.

By Monica Worsley, Communications Intern



Through Your Lens

INHF 2013 Digital Photography Contest

Share your favorite Iowa nature and wildlife photos for your chance to be featured in the Winter 2014 issue of Iowa Natural Heritage and a prize package that includes a photography shoot with recognized wildlife photographer Ty Smedes.

We'd love to see your images showing people connecting with nature, interesting and unusual wild places in Iowa and diversity of habitats.

Eligibility

The INHF Photography Contest is open to photography enthusiasts at least 18 years of age.

Submission Process & Deadline

Deadline for entries: September 20, 2013. Entrants will upload their image files through the INHF Facebook Photo Contest at www.facebook.com/IowaNaturalHeritage beginning August 19, 2013.

Judging

The judging panel will select approximately ten (10) photos as finalists. The general public will select the Grand Prize Winner by popular vote via Facebook contest from the finalists.

Questions:

Questions and inquiries about contest rules can be emailed to Laura Johnson, Communications Specialist, at ljohnson2@inhf.org.

For full contest submission guidelines and rules, please visit www.inhf.org/2013_PhotoContest.cfm

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Betty M. Ackelson
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Hannelore Rosa
Elizabeth "Lore" Auer
Karl John Behrens
Bob Bevins
Tyler Blake
Harlen Bland

Pete Boge
Chase
Dorothy B. Core
Templeton
Nellie Fay DeCook
Paul Fix
Roger Folven
Linn Hall
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Rick Innis
Rick Kramer
Lindy Krull
Joshua Langkamp
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McLaughlin
Ralph Mendenhall
Katherine Olsen

Marcia Pierson
Wilmer Sedlacek
Donald Slack
Mary Sytsma
Murray Sytsma
Brad Thiede
Daniel C. Todd
Rocky & Christie Weaver
Robert J. Wild

IN HONOR OF

Mark C. Ackelson
Sophia and Oliver
Dautremont
Bruce Ecker
Rhodes J. "Bud" Isenhart
Richard "Andy" Isenhart
Dick McWilliams
Jerry & Billie Noah

Robert Richeson
Susan Salterberg
Doug Watson



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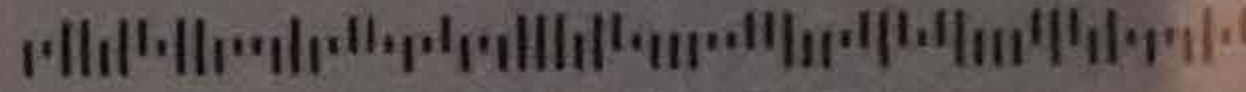


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Art: Dean Biechler

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“Nature is an inspiration. As an artist, I have always been passionate about line. *Summer’s Golds* combines both into a pen and ink drawing representing golden hues of an Iowa late summer prairie and the American Goldfinch (*Carduelis tristis*). The fence is a hint of man’s presence in the landscape.” Dean W. Biechler

If you’ve enjoyed the content of this magazine, consider a gift to INHF to support the work we do together.

Iowa Natural Heritage

Protecting and restoring Iowa's land, water and wildlife

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Connecting
with Nature





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Our mission is clear:
Connecting people to nature
is crucial to our mission to
protect and restore Iowa's
land, water and wildlife.

Without personal, relevant experiences with nature, how can we expect people to value the calming beauty of a remnant prairie or understand the cause and effect of land management practices on water quality?

But as we grow more urban, more fragmented and more digital, it becomes increasingly challenging to make those connections.

Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation is working hard to find opportunities in these challenges. We are finding new approaches to engage people in meaningful ways and connect them to nature. Because once you see a dickcissel on a compass plant, you are hooked.

Through our trails app (page 6), floodplain outreach work (page 8) and volunteer program (page 12), you can learn more about the ways we are bringing people and nature together and engaging people in our work.

We invite you to read and share what moves you to speak out and take action to support conservation in Iowa. Because we know we are not alone, and we will be most powerful together.

Sincerely,
Joe McGovern, INHF President



Our Mission
The Iowa Natural Heritage
Foundation protects and restores
Iowa's land, water and wildlife.

- Joe McGovern *President*
- Ross Baxter *Land Projects Associate*
- Andrea Chase *Trails Coordinator*
- Brian Fankhauser *Blufflands Program Manager*
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On the cover

INHF Volunteer Coordinator, Mary Runkel, clutches a large bunch of garlic mustard that volunteers pulled to help clear Heritage Valley near Decorah of this invasive plant. Garlic mustard can seriously degrade a healthy woodland. See page 12 for more about INHF's new volunteer program. Photo: Ellen MacDonald.



contents

4 Harnessing the Power of Technology and People

New technologies and nature enthusiasts interested in supporting INHF's mission provide meaningful ways to further conservation in Iowa.

6 Iowa By Trail — It's All About Discovery

INHF launches a mobile app and website designed to help bikers, hikers and paddlers learn more about what they encounter along Iowa's trails. The app features historical sites, places to grab a bite or beverage and interesting facts about prairies, streams and woodlands and conservation projects.

8 New Insight into Land and Water

Landowners will soon have access to detailed information forecasting where on their land flooding is likely to erode soil. Armed with computer modeling and aerial photography, INHF staff member Duane Sand can discuss with landowners options for land management practices to minimize the risk to specific land areas.

12 Lend a Helping Hand

INHF's new volunteer program provides another way for people to help protect and restore lands and serve as an advocate for conservation.

13 Powering Sustainability

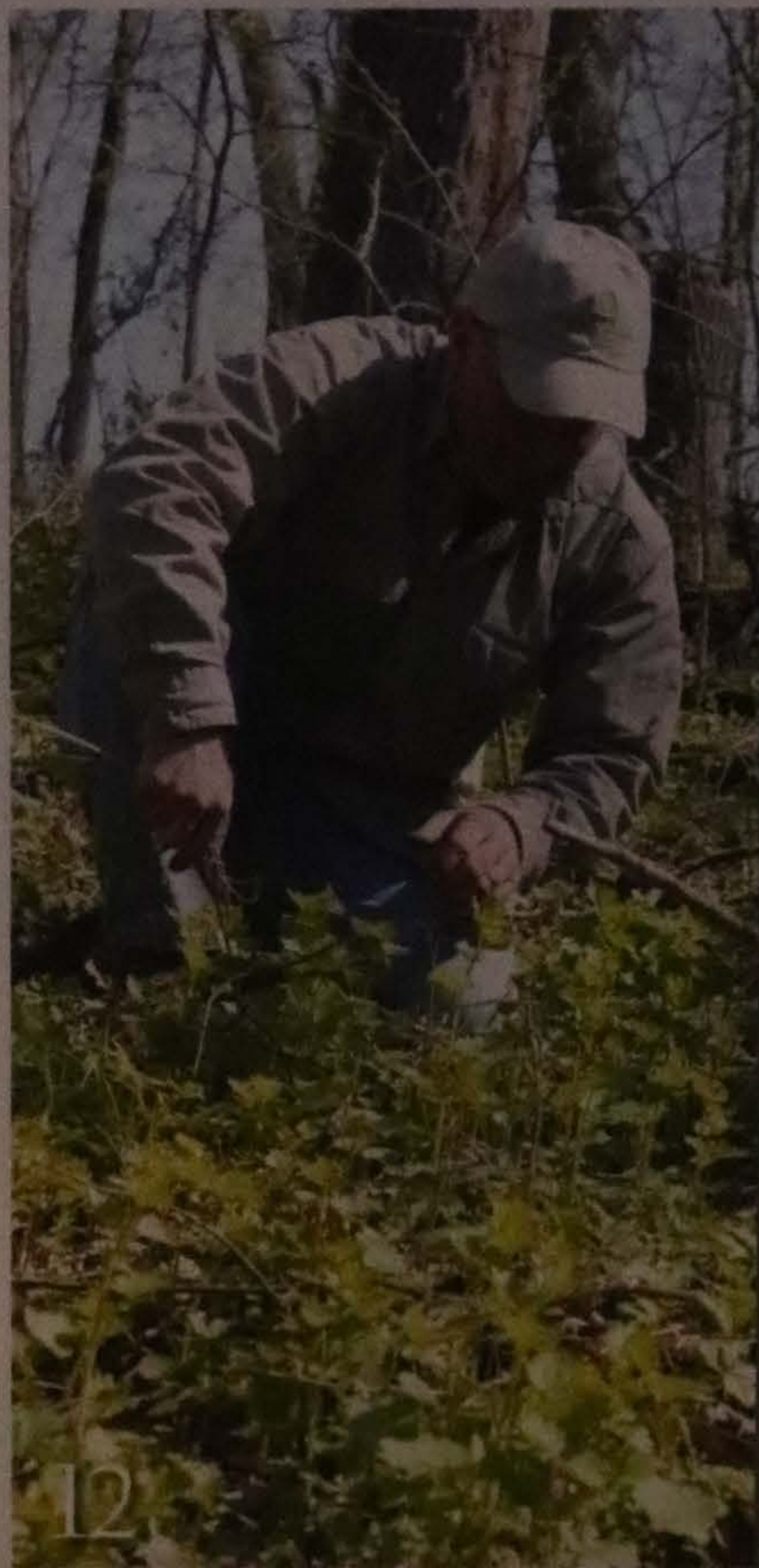
The INHF Bike Generator puts a public face on the power of sustainability and our work with Iowa trails.

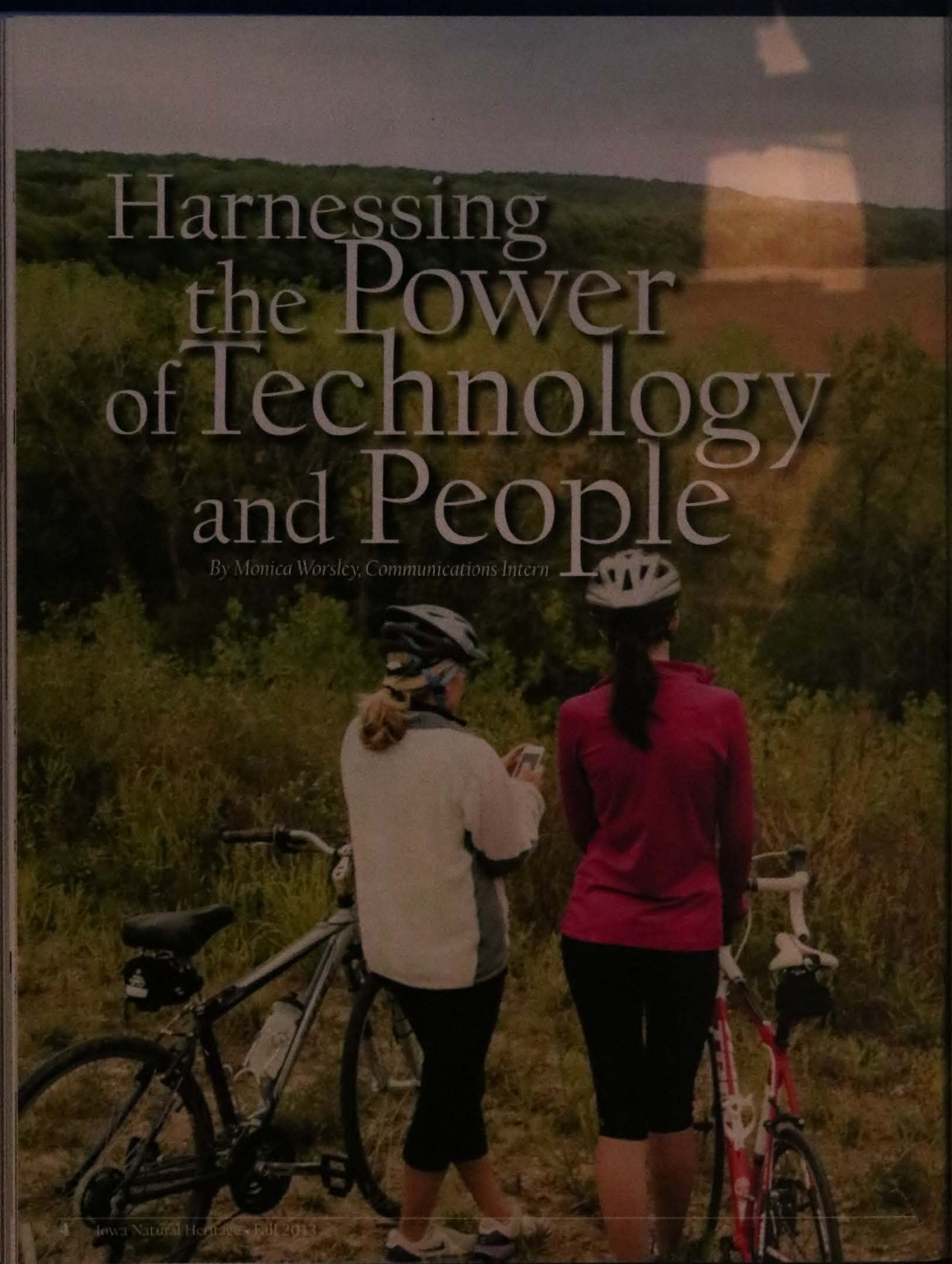
14 Vitamin N: Plant a Tree

Join the volunteer crew to plant trees as part of a land restoration project along the Raccoon River in West Des Moines on November 8th. Volunteers will also learn more about the importance of greenways and their connection to water quality.

15 Looking Out for Iowa

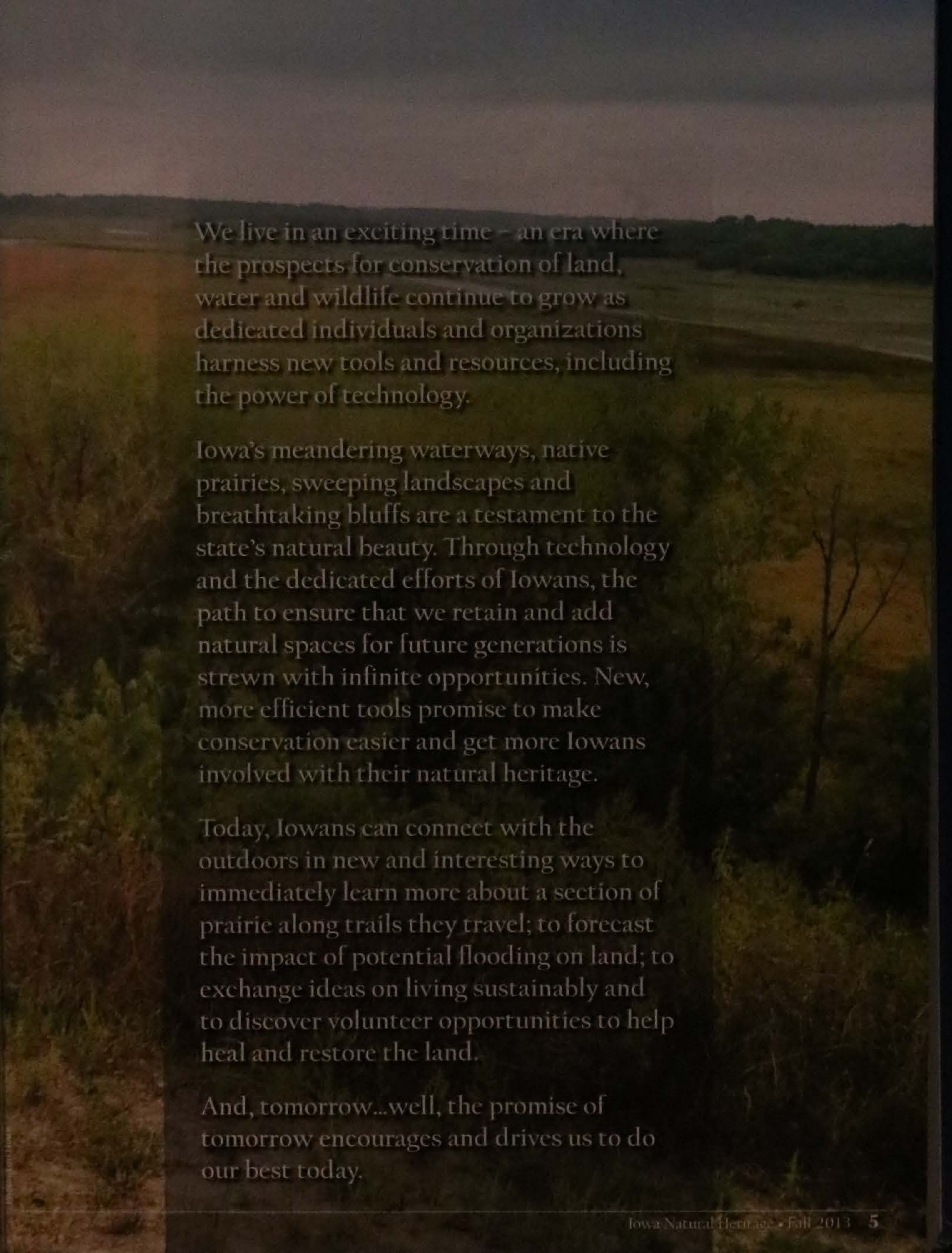
Connect. Interact. Explore. Make your devices a tool for pursuing your passion for nature.



A photograph of two cyclists standing in a grassy field at sunset. The cyclist on the left is wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and a grey helmet, and is looking at a smartphone. The cyclist on the right is wearing a red long-sleeved shirt and a white helmet. Both have their bicycles parked next to them. The background shows a line of trees under a warm, orange sky.

Harnessing the Power of Technology and People

By Monica Worsley, Communications Intern



We live in an exciting time – an era where the prospects for conservation of land, water and wildlife continue to grow as dedicated individuals and organizations harness new tools and resources, including the power of technology.

Iowa's meandering waterways, native prairies, sweeping landscapes and breathtaking bluffs are a testament to the state's natural beauty. Through technology and the dedicated efforts of Iowans, the path to ensure that we retain and add natural spaces for future generations is strewn with infinite opportunities. New, more efficient tools promise to make conservation easier and get more Iowans involved with their natural heritage.

Today, Iowans can connect with the outdoors in new and interesting ways to immediately learn more about a section of prairie along trails they travel; to forecast the impact of potential flooding on land; to exchange ideas on living sustainably and to discover volunteer opportunities to help heal and restore the land.

And, tomorrow...well, the promise of tomorrow encourages and drives us to do our best today.




It's All About Discovery

Launch timeline: The Iowa by Trail website will go live by end of 2013. All of Iowa's trails will be live on the app by the end of Summer 2014.

Funding: \$100,000 has been raised for the website and iOS mobile app version. INHF is currently raising \$60,000 for the Android app version.

Partners: Greater Des Moines Partnership, private donors, Metropolitan Planning Organization (central Iowa), INHF.

Marketing support:
Performance Marketing

 To find out more about the app, visit <http://www.inhf.org/iowabytrail.cfm>.

Three decades ago, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation entered the trail business. As Iowa grew more urban, INHF realized it needed to take a more active role in connecting people to nature.

Trails do that. Trails change communities — getting people outside and engaging them with nature. With trails, people are walking, biking, cross country skiing and rollerblading along woods and prairies and over streams and rivers. They notice the changes along the trail; they spot a species of flower they've never seen before; they take in the rise and fall and clarity of the streams they cross. Trails create the opportunity for people to

appreciate and know their natural area.

It wasn't an easy road, leading the way for Iowa's trail system. Now it seems hard to imagine an Iowa without trails. But early on, there were stiff obstacles and strong objections to building the trails. Perseverance resulted in a vision realized. Iowa now has one of the premiere trail systems in the country, including over 1,800 miles of multi-use trails that have become

tourism destinations. We can proudly stake a claim as "Trails Capital of the World."

But now, INHF is faced with a new challenge in furthering our mission. In a world that is not only increasingly urban, but increasingly fragmented and digital, how do we engage people with nature in this digital age?

INHF President Joe McGovern has found that it works best to meet people where they are. "Many people are using their phones and tablets as an extension of their daily life. Instead of seeing technology as a barrier for people to get out and enjoy nature, what if we use technology to enhance people's nature experience?"


And that's exactly what INHF is doing. INHF is entering the app business. In the spring, INHF will roll out "Iowa by Trail," the all-Iowa trails app for smartphones and complementary website. Once completed, Iowa by Trail will promote Iowa trails and help people engage with their surroundings.

Iowa by Trail will feature:

- an interactive map so that users can geo-locate their position and find the closest trail and points of interest
- tools that keep track of distance, weather, news and events
- the ability to share what they experience along the trail via social sites like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram with friends and followers.

Iowa by Trail will also help connect trail users to the communities they are visiting by locating attractions and services along their route, like local restaurants, museums and natural resource information.

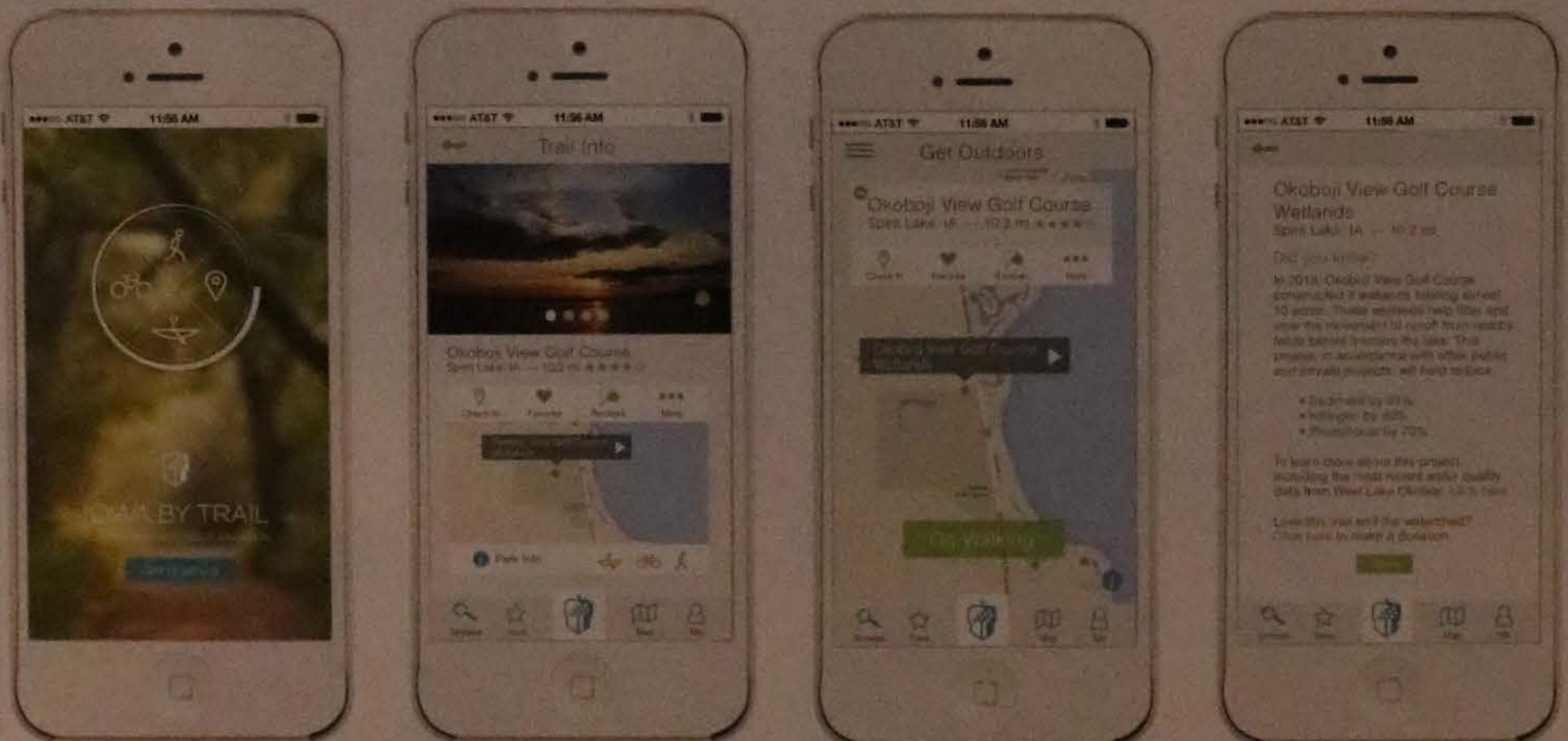
Shift Interactive, a West Des Moines-based digital design company, is developing Iowa by Trail. Chris Burns, with Shift, explains their interest in the project. "This is a project we're really passionate about. We love trails. And we started asking 'what if?' What if we could find out about a site, such as a native prairie, along the trail? What

if we could see nutrient data about the stream we are crossing? What if we could find the next place to stop and get a slice of pizza? The app is not about the map. This app is about the information communities are able to share. This is a communications tool between communities and the people that love them." 

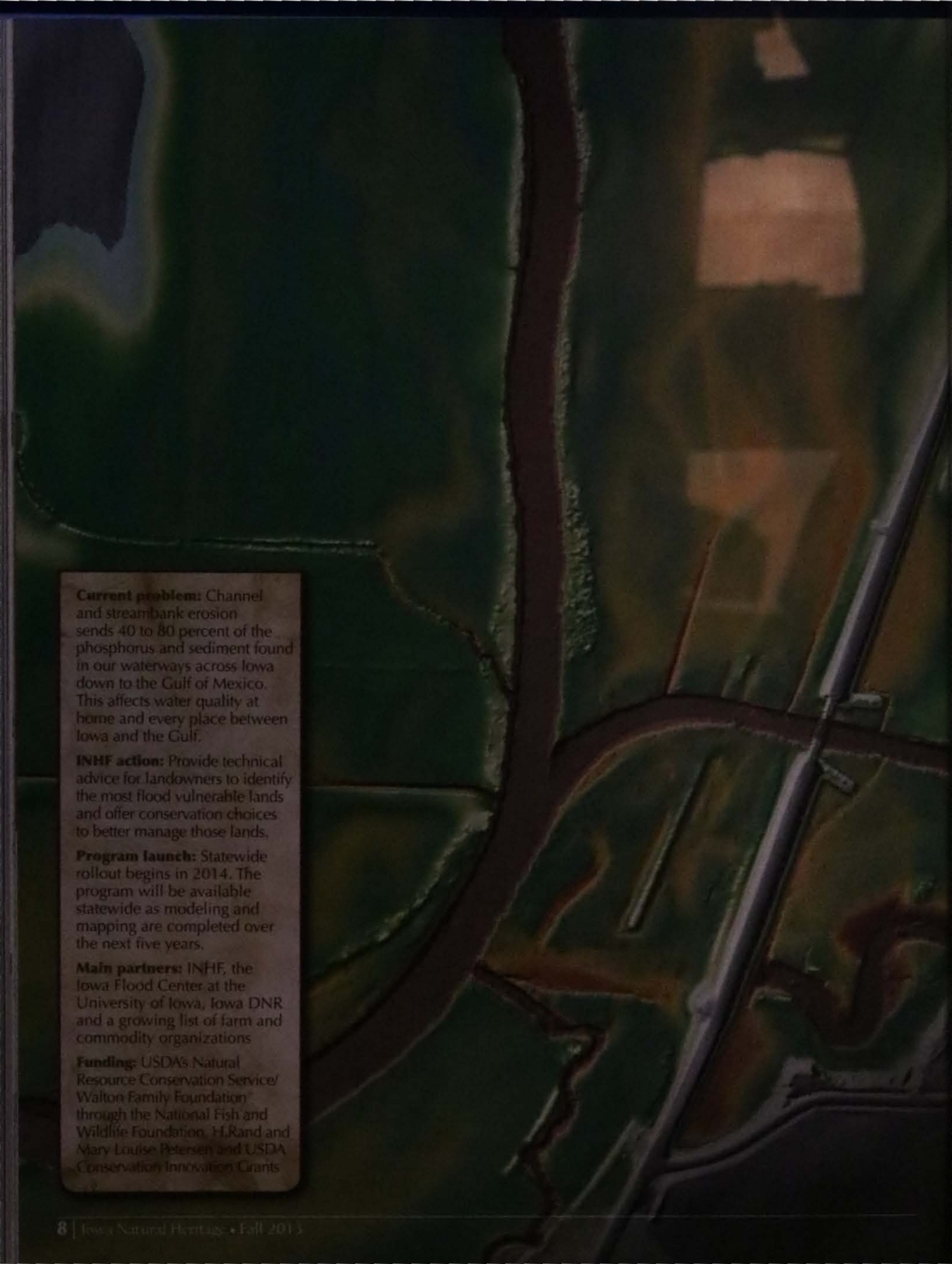
By Hannah Inman, Communications Director

Furthering the Mission

To INHF, the app represents much more than the latest craze. Recently INHF, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and the owners of Okoboji View Golf Course have started constructing 89 acres of wetlands on a 320-acre complex near the Iowa Great Lakes Trail. This project is part of an identified watershed that is moving considerable sediment and pollutants into the water. We forecast this project will reduce the sediment load by 91 percent, the nitrogen level by 90 percent and the phosphorus level by 70 percent.



A sneak preview of the Iowa by Trail app showing the ease of use and how the app will direct people to important conservation information and points of interest.

An aerial photograph showing a river winding through agricultural fields. The fields are divided into various shapes and colors, including green, brown, and tan. A road or canal runs parallel to the river on the right side. The text box is located in the lower-left quadrant of the image.

Current problem: Channel and streambank erosion sends 40 to 80 percent of the phosphorus and sediment found in our waterways across Iowa down to the Gulf of Mexico. This affects water quality at home and every place between Iowa and the Gulf.

INHF action: Provide technical advice for landowners to identify the most flood vulnerable lands and offer conservation choices to better manage those lands.

Program launch: Statewide rollout begins in 2014. The program will be available statewide as modeling and mapping are completed over the next five years.

Main partners: INHF, the Iowa Flood Center at the University of Iowa, Iowa DNR and a growing list of farm and commodity organizations

Funding: USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service/ Walton Family Foundation through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, H.Rand and Mary Louise Petersen and USDA Conservation Innovation Grants

This image produced by the Iowa Flood Center at the University of Iowa depicts a 0.2% risk of water covering the colored areas (the equivalent of a 500-year floodplain). The color shading shows the projected depth of the water in such an event – from shallow edges (pale blue) to increasing depth as the shades darken into green, then orange, then brown near the brown river. The deeper the color, the deeper the water – and the deepest water will likely be the fastest, causing the most scour erosion.



Shallow

Deep

New Insight into Land and Water

As technology provides easy access to more and more data, finding the information you truly need for personal decisions can be like looking for a needle in a haystack.

Powerful Combination

Together, two recent technologies are making the floodplain outreach possible, with far more information than Iowans have ever had. Visually, they let Iowans see boundaries of risk on familiar land.

A new look at land: LiDAR

In 2006, state and federal agencies began pooling resources to create sophisticated topographic information of the entire land and water mass in Iowa. This topographic data results in better decisions when building roads, utilities or other infrastructure — ultimately reducing costs to taxpayers. Known as LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging), the remote sensing method uses aerial flights and pulsed laser light to measure distances to the earth. Measurements taken of every square meter of the landscape provide a precise 3-D image of the shape and surface characteristics of the land. After five years of seasonal flights to collect data and create the database, LiDAR is now available for wider use.

A new look at flood risk

After the floods of 2008 caused massive damage, the Iowa Legislature commissioned the Iowa Flood Center to create detailed watershed modeling that utilizes the LiDAR database. Their product produces layers of maps within floodplains, accurately showing the probable risk to any site in any given year due to flooding. The modeling and mapping is becoming available, county by county, over the next five years.

So when Duane Sand, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation's Public Policy Director, learned that innovative technology would soon take a leap in predicting flood impacts on Iowa's rural lands, he began designing INHF's newest soil and water conservation program — one that will reach out personally to landowners with vital, more accurate information about their land. New flood risk maps soon to come from the Iowa Flood Center will give Iowans a much better picture of flood impact risk. "We'll be able to see where the water flow will be fast enough to destroy productive soil, even destroy the land itself, when the next big flood comes," Duane says.

And we'll see it on enhanced computer imagery showing the shape of the land surface. Extremely

accurate aerial photography underlies the computer modeling, so landowners will be able to easily recognize the risk to their lands.

"For INHF, this is our chance to have a dialogue in rural communities about the impacts of intensive agriculture on the land and to help people consider at what points we may have gone too far in taking out grasslands and woodlands," Duane says.

This new technology will help farmers, landowners, managers and Iowa's land by:

- identifying areas that won't pay their way in farming, where growing corn and soybeans is a high risk for a landowner who wants to protect property value.
- finding landowners who would rather restore soil-holding grasses on high-risk acres to keep that soil from washing away for good.

While most flood information has focused on floodplains where water may rise, this program focuses on floodways: predicted pathways of the fastest and largest quantity of water where the most damage can be expected during floods. Some of Iowa's most fertile soil is on the fringes of a floodplain, and if that land is not in a floodway, it can be well-managed as productive cropland with limited soil loss. The modeling and discussion will look at the boundaries of floodway areas, where perennial crops, such as grasses or trees, are most needed to hold the soil when fast water comes.

Bringing it to farmers and landowners

The modeling and maps are funded primarily through the Department of Housing and Urban Development plus funds from the state and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The maps' focus was on predicting and mitigating risks within communities. While maps and modeling included rural floodways, there was a need to bring this technology to the attention and benefit of rural landowners.

INHF began talking with the Iowa Flood Center at the University of Iowa and other organizations about interpreting map information for rural landowners. INHF also contracted with the Iowa Flood Center to develop methods to pinpoint problem sites that are most in need of permanent vegetation to prevent scouring erosion.

Duane will offer local meetings, to be co-sponsored by business and commodity groups, and trained conservation technicians will help interested landowners interpret the maps and learn about their

INHF welcomes new public policy coordinator

INHF welcomes Marian Riggs Gelb as our new public policy coordinator. Working under Duane Sand's mentorship, Marian will free Duane to shape and manage the new floodplain outreach program. She will oversee the policy that supports the protection of Iowa's land, water and wildlife and work with conservation partners to help create a healthier, sustainable landscape.



Marian's experience as executive director for the Iowa Environmental Council from 2007 to 2012 and her service in other conservation-focused organizations have given her outstanding knowledge of state and federal environmental policy. Marian says, "I am excited to work here and see it as the highest and best use of my knowledge, experience and connections. It will be beneficial to the Foundation and the overall greater good."

Duane's changing role caps his career that's been devoted to saving soil and water. Thirty years ago, he joined INHF to create its soil conservation program. By keeping his eye constantly on policies and trends, he's created a series of cutting-edge programs and policy proposals that address state or national needs to protect soil and water.

Duane shares, "I'm looking forward to meeting landowners, seeing Iowa's wonderful small towns and coffee shops, as the local meetings unfold across Iowa. Policy is hugely important but so are one-on-one conversations where immediate and sometimes lasting decisions for the land are made. This will be very satisfying work!"


options. Duane says, "This is new technical advice for landowners, making it possible for them personally to anticipate the movement and velocity of floodwaters in the most vulnerable areas of their land and to plan conservation choices accordingly." The technical service providers will be certified by the Natural Resources Conservation Service in conservation planning or engineering and trained by the Iowa Flood Center.

"We'll talk about long-term conservation opportunities like Conservation Reserve Program income, Iowa conservation tax credits and other tax incentives that can make it financially attractive to choose pasture or forestry on erosion-prone acres." Duane says, "When landowners conclude that the economic and environmental risks at a site are too great for row crops, we'll be there to share other options."

Exciting impacts for soil and water

When scour erosion tears up a floodway field, it has a serious impact on water quality everywhere downstream. The Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy

Scour erosion, a result of the 2008 flooding at Heritage Valley in Allamakee County. INHF is working to reduce soil erosion and the resulting sedimentation in the Upper Iowa River, stabilize the stream banks, improve water quality and restore land and water habitats.

states that we do not have ways to predict how scour erosion or channel erosion impacts water quality. However, studies conducted elsewhere in the Midwest have found watersheds where 40 to 80 percent of the phosphorus and sediment load in water comes from channel and stream bank erosion. Duane believes, "When Iowans understand the risk of scour erosion during major floods and choose grass or trees for stream banks or floodways, we can prevent enormous amounts of damage to our water quality." 

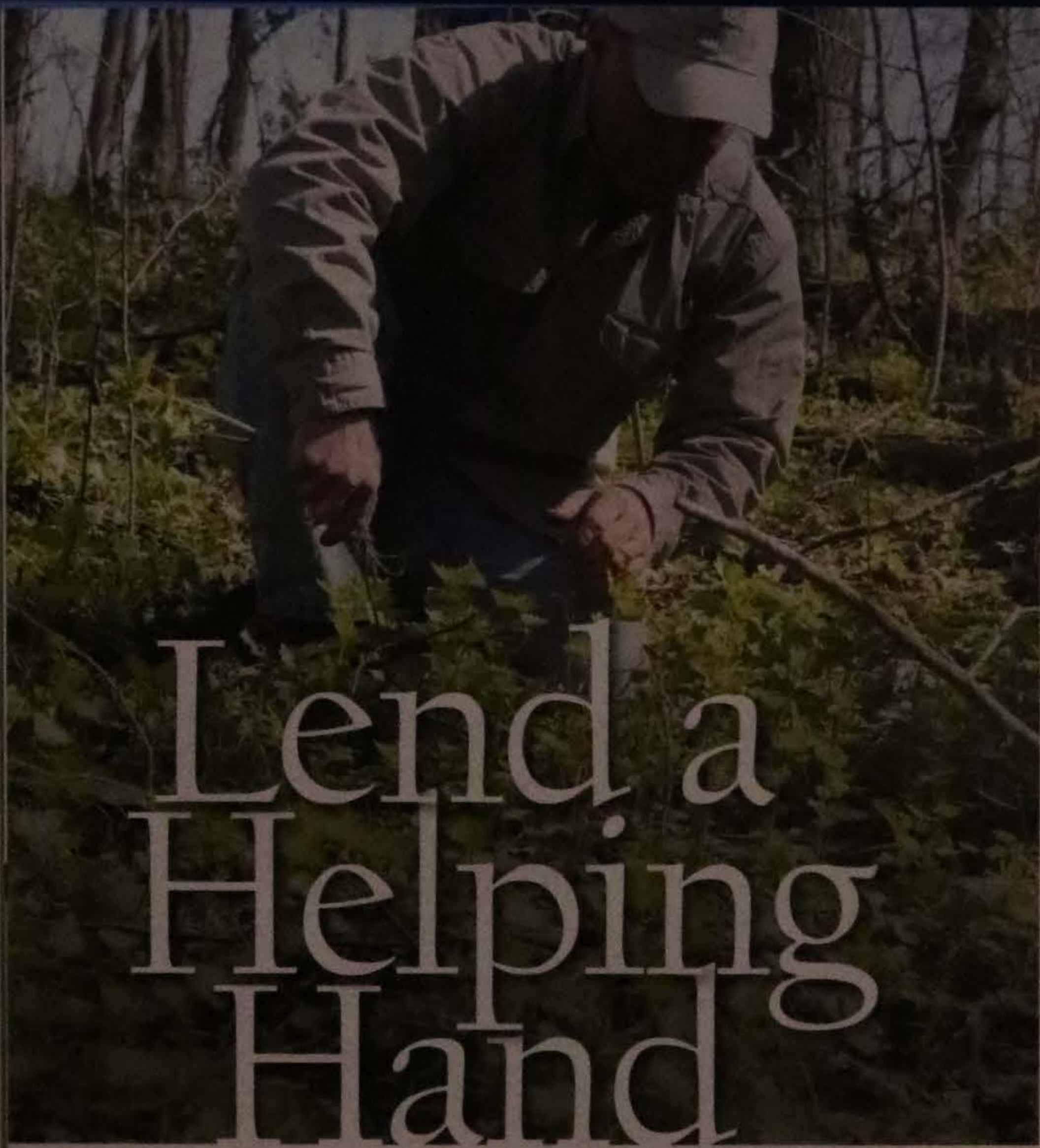
By Anita O'Gara, Vice President and Director of Development

More Iowa-grown conservation technology

We appreciate two other software tools developed by Agren, Inc., an entrepreneurial family business based in Carroll that blends technology, agriculture and the environment.

- 1) Design tools for waterways, ponds and wetlands that streamline the planning process. In about 20 minutes, a technician and landowner can look at all their conservation options with most of the details needed to decide what actions are needed to improve land management.
- 2) A better soil loss calculator. Old systems rely on a soil map and assumed factors inserted into the Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation to predict long-term soil loss. Agren's LIDAR-based tool uses measured field conditions: actual steepness and length of water courses and movement of water. The tool is being field tested with NRCS staff in some counties.





Lend a Helping Hand

A gloved hand reaches down, grips the tall, thin stem and yanks. Other gloved hands do the same.

"We're removing garlic mustard, an invasive species that is taking over many of Iowa's woodlands and oak savannas," says Mary Runkel, volunteer coordinator at Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation.

Mary, Brian Fankhauser, INHF Blufflands program manager; and 13 other people gathered at Heritage Valley, a beautiful, wooded INHF property in northeast Iowa, to kick off the inaugural event of INHF's new volunteer program. Many more events and individual volunteer opportunities are on the horizon.

INHF has worked to restore and protect Iowa's land, water and wildlife as well as educate and engage the public for over 34 years.

"I can think of no better way to spend a day than to spend it volunteering for INHF. Not only are you outside in some of the most beautiful places in Iowa, but you go home happy knowing you have helped, in some small way, preserve our land."

— Carol Thompson, Volunteer

Although our mission remains firm and strong, we're continually developing new ways to foster a stronger connection between people and Iowa's natural places and get more conservation done in Iowa. From that process, the official volunteer program was born.

"The volunteer program is a great way for people who care about Iowa's natural heritage to get involved with us and make a lasting impact on our beautiful state," Mary says.


INHF has had many volunteers since its founding, many of whom are leaders in local land protection or have specialized skills like photography. The implementation of the new volunteer program will organize these volunteers more efficiently, create more opportunities for involvement and encourage new volunteers to join us.

Find your volunteer niche


Volunteer events are created throughout the year to meet needs of the Foundation and the land. Opportunities include outreach at events, land stewardship at Iowa's natural places, communication-related activities, trail work, policy outreach and more. People can sign up either individually or as part of a group.

"There are opportunities to suit all interests and talents," Mary says. "We have volunteers from a variety of backgrounds and a wide range of ages, from six to 81 years old."

And if you don't see a volunteer event or a way to get involved that's appealing to you, just let Mary know.

"We're very open to new ideas and methods of connecting people to the land. Iowa's natural heritage depends on work, commitment and knowledge from everyone." 

By Laura Johnson, Communications Specialist

 To learn more about INHF's volunteer program and how to sign up for individual service or events, visit www.inhf.org/volunteer.cfm.



Powering Sustainability

Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation's Bike Generator has taken Iowa by storm, "powering the party" at many local events, including Des Moines' RAGBRAI stop in July.

The device may not look high-tech — in fact, the bike generator may appear a bit antiquated in its collection of cobbled together parts — but it has grabbed the attention of young and old. It has "stopping" power. People just can't walk by. They pause; they cock their heads; they ask "what's this about?" The INHF Bike Generator puts a public face on the power of sustainability and our work with Iowa trails.

How it works


The 3,000-watt bicycle-powered generator creates a unique power supply by using the pedaling power of riders on three bikes whose chains are attached to a shaft that connects to a generator. The bikes are attached to the baseboard of a trailer via three trainers that keep them in place. As riders pedal, the shaft turns and produces 25 to 30 amps of current that is stored in four

deep-cycle batteries.

Continuous pedaling allows the generator to put out 3,000 watts of power at a steady rate for four hours, powering items such as televisions, charging stations for cell phones, sound equipment and stage monitors.

What's the purpose?

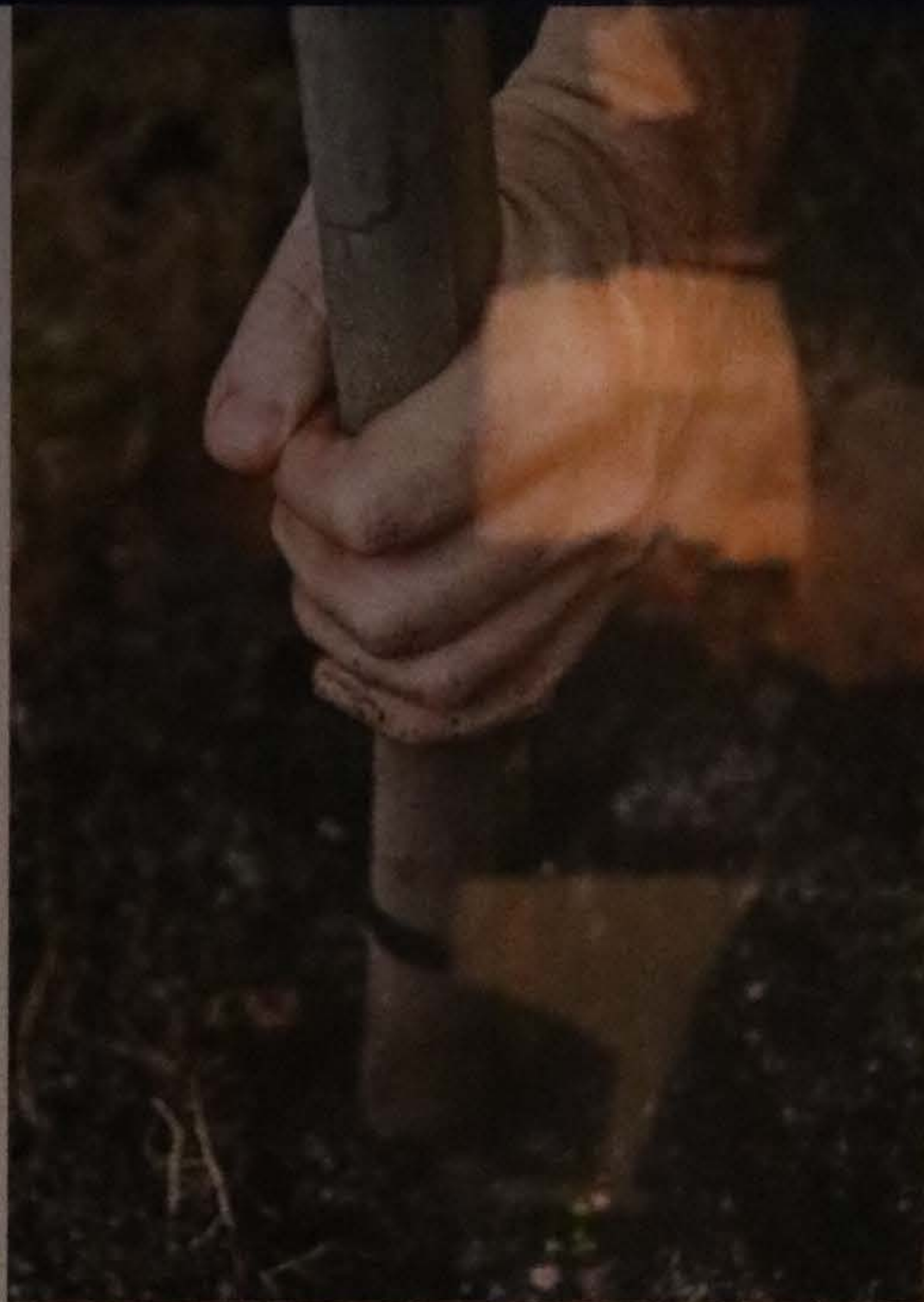
At a time when we face an unprecedented challenge to repair and sustain social and ecological systems, the bike generator helps people experience connections between popular sources of entertainment and their energy costs, while encouraging active living.

Although it may not be practical for every Iowan to fuel their daily energy needs by pedaling, the bike generator is a unique resource to power events with clean energy and to show that incorporating sustainability into everyday life can be easy and fun. 

By Laura Johnson, Communications Specialist



Get Outside Plant a Tree



Get hands-on with nature and breathe in the fresh, fall air with Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation's volunteer crew. Volunteers will join INHF staff and Wells Fargo Green Team volunteers at Raccoon River Bluff, an INHF land restoration project along the Raccoon River near West Des Moines, for an afternoon of tree planting on Friday, November 8.

"This event is a great way to get introduced to INHF's volunteer program and improve the land at the same time," says Mary Runkel, volunteer coordinator at INHF.

Volunteers will plant trees, put down mulch and do other related tasks. The day isn't all about "doing," however, it's also about discovery. Volunteers will learn more about conservation opportunities, including how the river is important for drinking water, the value of greenways, tree identification and information on local species, including the endangered Indiana Bat that was found near the site.

Help protect Des Moines' drinking water source

The Raccoon River is the primary drinking water source for the largest metropolitan region in Iowa, and its protection is critical. Des Moines has

the largest known nitrate removal plant in the country because of the excessive nitrogen in the drinking water due to intensive land use in the watershed. Nearly 800 acres of floodplain, oak-hickory woodland and endangered species habitat are expected to be permanently protected when the Raccoon River Bluff project is completed.

INHF will offer light refreshments at 12:30 p.m., with the orientation beginning at 1:00. All tools will be provided, but we encourage volunteers to bring gloves and a water bottle and to wear outdoor-appropriate clothing and sturdy, close-toed footwear. For more information about the day's event and how to register, visit www.inhf.org/volunteer.cfm.

To find out more about our work at Raccoon River Bluff, visit www.inhf.org/raccoon-river-bluff.cfm.

By Laura Johnson, Communications Specialist



Keep exploring online at
www.inhf.org/lookingoutforiowa.cfm

Find out how connecting with INHF online and on your smartphone can help you explore Iowa's natural areas, unite with Iowa's conservation community and make your devices a tool for pursuing your passion.

Finding New Ways to Interact

Connect

Strengthen your ties — and build new ones — with like-minded people through social media. Check out Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest and INHF's blog, *Off the Beaten Path*, to learn of opportunities to share your love for conserving Iowa's natural areas online and in-person.

Interact

Excited about the new trails app we introduced to you in this issue? You can take advantage of smartphone apps and great websites to enhance your outdoor experiences, obtain more information through online dialogue and use your devices to help you learn something new while enjoying nature and trails.

Share

Share memories, photos and an appreciation for protecting and enhancing Iowa's resources for future generations. We love seeing what you share and offering up our own news and favorite images of Iowans participating in recreation and conservation!

TRIBUTE GIFTS

IN MEMORY OF

Edward Branstad
 Otto the Weimaraner
 Natalie Brenton
 Verna Bright
 Richard L. Brown
 Marcia Ashland Connell
 and James F. Connell
 Susan Connell Magee
 Brad Coulter
 Dean H. Dalziel

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 Brian and Jennifer Leicht
 Dave Moeller
 Jerry & Billie Noah

Mark Runkel
 Mary Runkel
 Nic Runkel
 Tom & Sue Taiber
 Travis Young



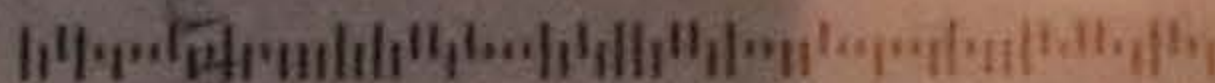
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Photo: Jack Vanden Heuvel

Please share this publication with friends, and visit our website at www.inhf.org.



The amazing monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) weighs less than one gram and travels a 2,000-mile multi-generational migration route twice each year. Photographer Jack Vanden Heuvel captured these monarchs resting at INHF-owned Kothenbeutel Prairie in Franklin County.

If you've enjoyed the content of this magazine, consider a gift to INHF to support the work we do together.

Iowa Natural Heritage

Protecting and restoring Iowa's land, water and wildlife

Passion for
permanent protection



OPENING THOUGHTS



MAY 15 2014

STATE LIBRARY OF IOWA

In this fast-paced, ever-changing world, can we count on any special places that will be here “forever?”

Thanks to partnerships between Iowa landowners and Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, the answer is a resounding yes.

Our spirits tell us, and research reaffirms, that we need natural places to hike, bike and paddle. We need nature to recharge ourselves. Our children need to explore and discover — to breathe in and experience nature. It is in these special natural places where we begin to understand that we are just temporary stewards in an amazing and complex life system.

In this special 35th anniversary year, we celebrate the visionaries who created INHF and those who have guided it to the nationally respected organization it is today. Their stories of protected prairies and woodlands, waterways running more clearly and increased habitat for wildlife give us hope and compel us to do more.

With INHF, landowners and donors can know that their precious gifts are being entrusted to a grateful staff and board of directors who are humbled to be stewards for those who follow.

And that provides peace of mind — in perpetuity.

Sincerely,

Jan Lovell, INHF Board Chair



Iowa
Natural Heritage
Foundation

Our Mission

The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation protects and restores Iowa's land, water and wildlife.

Joe McGovern *President*
Ross Baxter *Land Projects Associate*
Andrea Chase *Trails Coordinator*
Brian Fankhauser *Blufflands Program Manager*
Marian Riess Gelb *Public Policy Director*
Cheri Grauer *Major Gifts Steward*
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Designer: Brian Shearer, Plum Communications



On the cover

Early morning mists rise in Waterman Creek Valley in O'Brien County. Read about the Waterman Creek Wildlife Addition on page 26. Photo: Bruce Morrison.



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4 In Perpetuity

INHF Board Chair, Jan Lovell, shares the story of realizing her family's dream to protect the woods along Clear Lake's south shore.

6 Ebb and Flow: A Better Solution for Farmers, Land and Rivers

Collaboration yields a better flood management solution for farmers, the land and rivers in eastern Iowa.

8 A New Generation of Conservation Leadership

The INHF internship program changes perspectives and, ultimately, lives — nurturing new leaders and influencing INHF programming so that INHF remains relevant to young people.

10 Rails to Trails: Traveling a Historic Route Graced With Scenic Vistas

Trails enthusiasts will soon have the opportunity to bike and hike along the railways the Iowa River Railroad trains traveled in Marshall and Hardin counties.

12 Protecting Shared Memories

When faced with the loss of a treasured Boy Scout camp in Floyd County, area residents rallied to purchase the land and create a public park with the support of INHF.

14 BCAs Provide Perpetual Impact

Iowa's 18 Bird Conservation Areas provide permanent protection and habitat corridors for a wide variety of wildlife, including many migrating bird species.

18 Parks Add Zest to Our Lives

Working with area conservation agencies, INHF has a critical role in expanding conservation areas near parks to create more natural habitat.

21 2013 Annual Report

In partnership with members, donors, landowners and conservation agencies, we protected 51 additional sites and 5,911 acres in 2013. INHF also enhanced outreach and programming — launching a volunteer program, expanding internship opportunities and creating the Mark C. Ackelson Fellowship Fund.

26 Vitamin N: Catch Spring Fever at Waterman Prairie

A visit to Waterman Prairie in northwest Iowa offers nature lovers a feast of natural wonders: glacial bluffs, soaring eagles and grazing bison.

27 Looking Out for Iowa: Three Special Places

Protect. Explore. Learn. Mines of Spain, Wabash Trace Nature Trail and the Iowa River Greenbelt beckon outdoor enthusiasts to discover nature.





In Perpetuity

Our family felt a special kinship with land we owned in the Lone Tree Point area — 101 acres of woods on Clear Lake’s south shore. Yet, after my grandmother passed away the IRS decided that its “highest and best use” was as a development. In spite of our family’s plan that this special place remain a natural habitat, we almost lost it.

And then we heard about Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. We liked their can-do attitude and expertise. Efforts soon focused on drafting a conservation easement, a relatively new tool at that time. We envisioned generations to come enjoying and caring for our beloved area. The process was similar to discussing the care of a family member — it takes thoughtful conversation and a vision for the future. An easement is, after all, permanently binding.

A few years and several revisions later, I was cradling our two-month-old son in my arms at the dedication of the Woodford-Ashland Lone Tree Point Nature Area. A newspaper headline read, “Lone Tree Point protected forever.” Our family and others in attendance breathed a collective sigh of relief. My mom best expressed our family’s wishes at the dedication: “We wish it to remain in its natural state, to protect it for the enjoyment of nature lovers of all ages and as a refuge for wildlife — a place of peace and quiet, away from the hectic world.”

That was almost 22 years ago. Today, the area and an adjoining restored prairie help improve Clear Lake’s water quality as well as provide scarce wildlife habitat for bald eagles, herons and deer. This special, protected property can continue to lend the peace and joy nature brings for future generations — in perpetuity.

Jan Lovell, INHF Board of Directors Chair

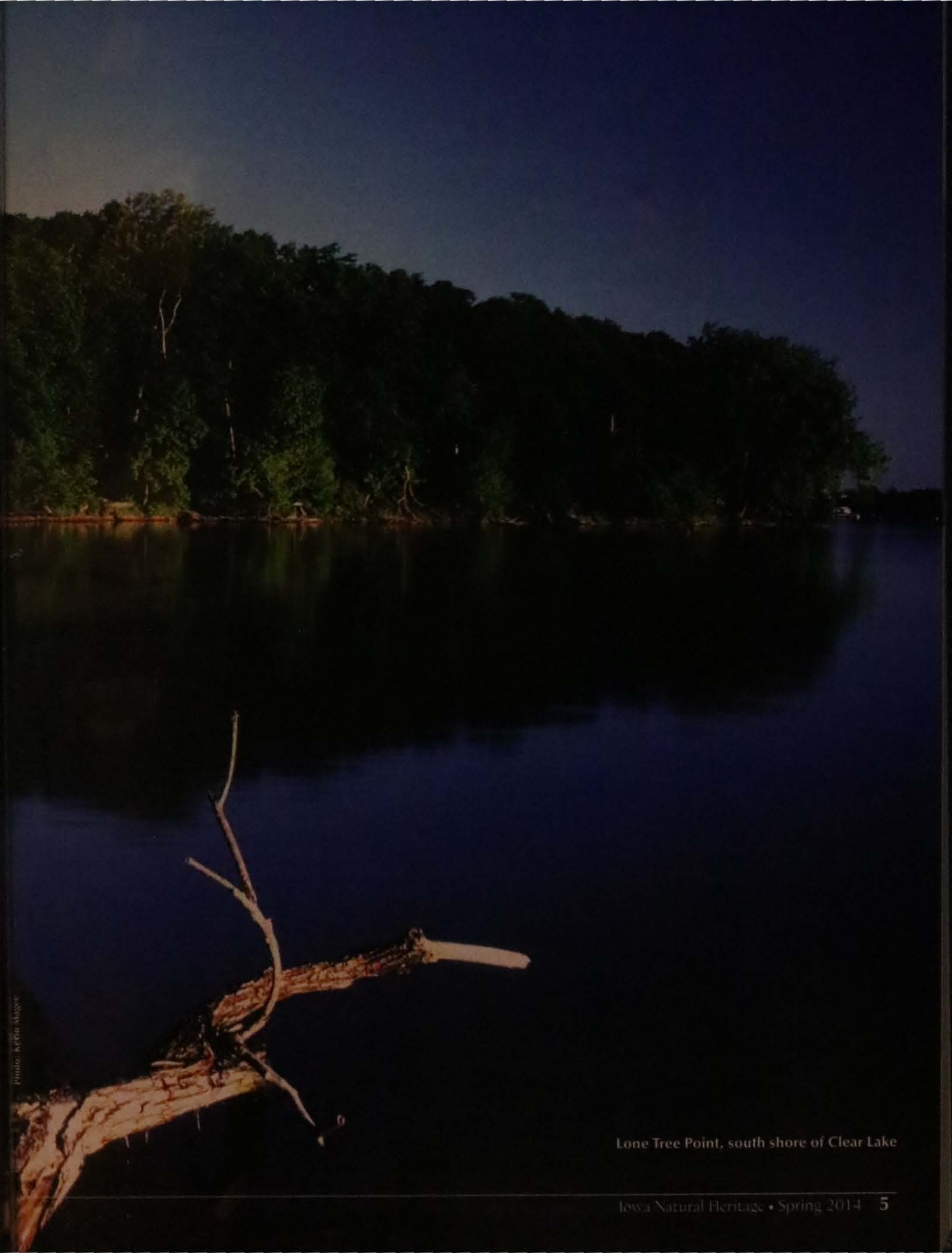


Photo: Kevin Magee

Lone Tree Point, south shore of Clear Lake

“The proposal was a win-win for both landowners and nature.”

Ebb and Flow:

A Better Solution for Farmers, Land and Rivers

In July 2010, amidst extreme flooding, landowners in the Green Island Levee and Drainage District were faced with a tough reality: Cropland in the Maquoketa River's floodplain was underwater, and this time there would be no federal money allocated to repair the broken levees responsible for the high waters.

2010 floods

To make farming possible within a natural floodplain, a series of levees were built in the 1940s to control the flow of the river near where the Maquoketa and Mississippi rivers join. The levees, however, were no match for large amounts of rainfall in the summer of 2010. Water breached the levees. Devastating damage ensued.

For the flooded land to be farmable again, the levees had to be repaired. And the price wasn't cheap. According to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) estimate, repairs would cost nearly \$608,000. Considering the high cost along with the fact that the levee district had received emergency federal financial assistance eight other times for levee breaches in the past 40 years, the USACE determined that the cost of repairs would exceed the benefits they would attain.

Non-structural alternatives

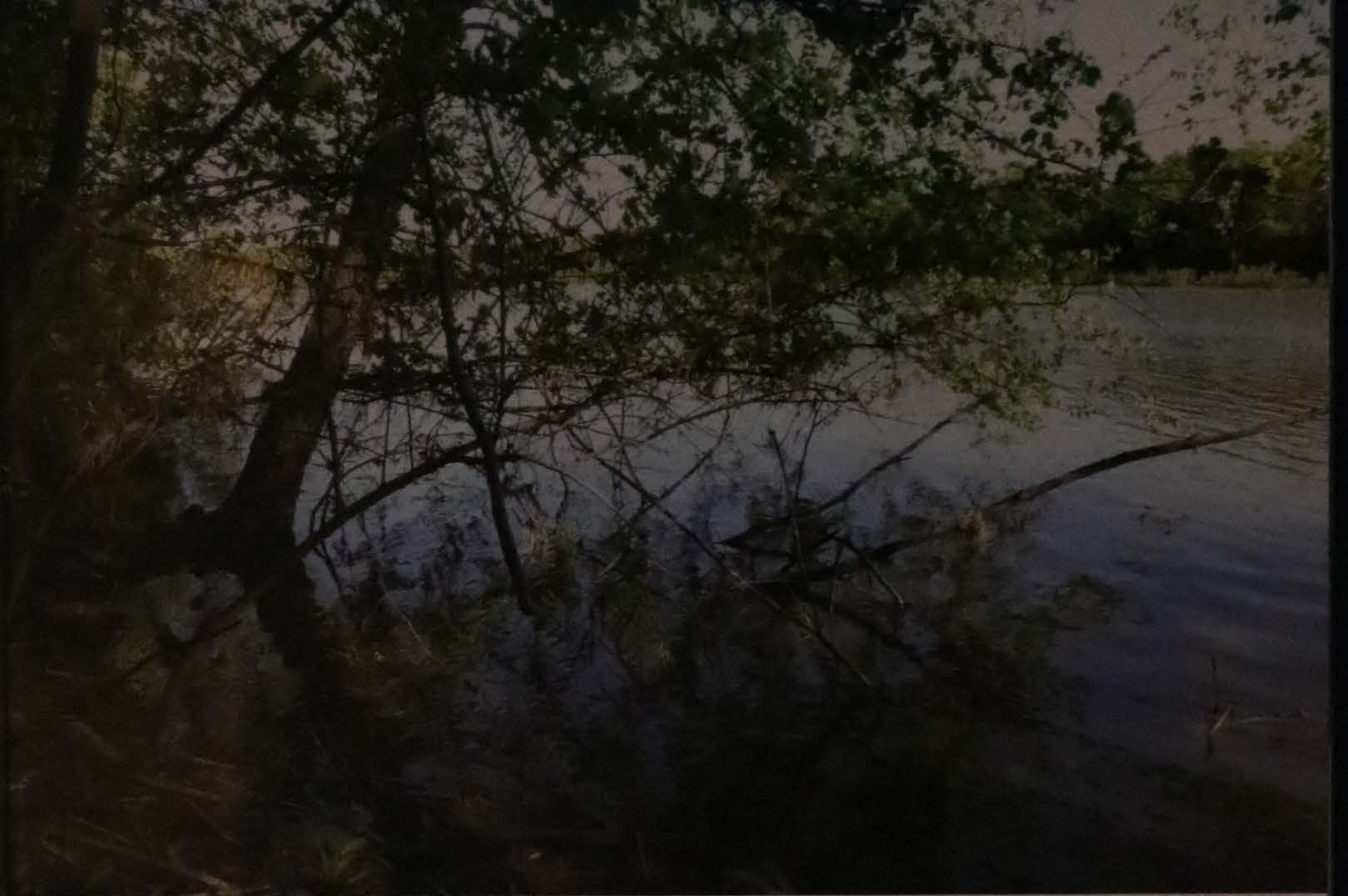
In order to implement the best alternative to fixing the levee, the USACE consulted a variety of groups, including the affected landowners, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Soil and Water Conservation District, county supervisors, county emergency management officials and Levee Watchmen. Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation and the Limestone Bluffs Resource Conservation and Development Area, Inc., along with local conservation organizations, proposed a plan to place the affected lands into the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP). The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Mississippi River Basin Initiative funded the proposal.

“This proposal was a win-win for both landowners and nature,” said Heather Jobst, INHF land projects director. “The farmers were able to sell their flood-prone land and subsequently purchase land more suitable for farming, and the river is able to flow its natural course.”

Five of the six landowners whose properties were affected by the levee breach enrolled their lands into permanent WRP easements, and four enrolled with the intent to sell the property for public ownership once it had gained easement status. INHF agreed to purchase the lands, and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources will assume ownership and management of those properties as part of the Green Island Wildlife Management Area.

Levee District 11, Louisa County

In 2013 INHF continued its work in flooded levee districts through the acquisition of four floodplain properties in Levee District 11 in Louisa County. There, INHF is assisting in the protection and restoration of 412 acres along the Iowa River, including trestled wetlands, wet meadows, herbaceous wetlands, tallgrass prairies, bottomland forests and riparian wetlands. All will become additions to Turtle Bend and Millrace Flats Wildlife Management Areas and will be available for public use. The projects will provide additional permanent habitat for a variety of wetland species, including bird species, reptiles and amphibians. Since 2005, INHF has helped protect 1,800 acres in Levee District 11.



This decision placed permanent easements on 369 contiguous acres of flood-prone land along 1.38 miles of the Maquoketa River near the mouth of the Mississippi.

Improved habitat

The WRP program in the Green Island district not only provided a positive option for landowners but also has given a boost to the area's water quality and natural habitat.


Liberated from the confines of the levee, the Maquoketa River can now ebb and flow in this area within its natural floodplain during periods of high water. The water that's flowing along its banks is also cleaner. When the cropped lands previously flooded from broken levees, the overflow washed sediment and nutrients directly into the river, negatively impacting the water quality. This is no longer the case.

Wildlife, too, has gained ample space in which to thrive. The area now contains a total of 186 acres of tallgrass prairie, 38 acres of deciduous forest and 130 acres of various types of wetland habitats. Added to the Green Island Wildlife Management Area, which is currently 3,625 acres, these lands will provide even more habitat for migratory waterfowl as well as for threatened and endangered species, raptors, herons and egrets.

"The decision to not repair the levees has allowed for natural flood pulses to return to the area," said Mike Griffin, Mississippi River biologist with the Iowa DNR. "Periods of overflow from large water systems, such as the Mississippi, transfer new energy into the floodplain, bringing with it many ecological benefits for species that live there."

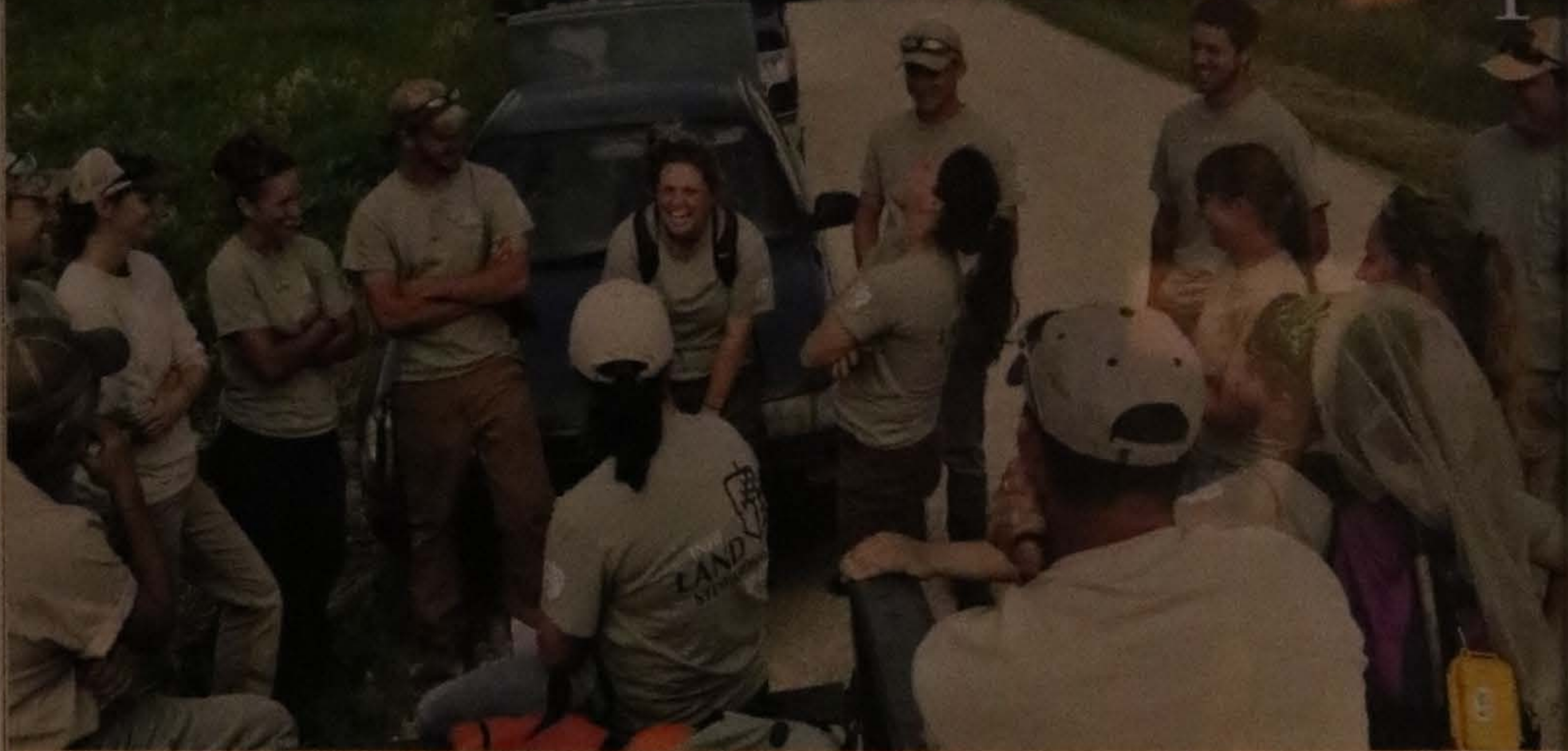
Furthering levee floodplain education

The project will serve as a place of learning. The Iowa DNR, Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences Center and the Iowa Water Science Center plan to conduct scientific case studies for the restoration and management of floodplain lands affected by flooding, including implementing flow, stage and sediment monitoring stations. These studies will also provide methods and models for observing floodplain ecosystems and species.

"The benefits from the Green Island levee sites will have long-lasting impacts for area water and wildlife," Jobst said. "And, other levee areas in Iowa and the Midwest can learn from the methodology and implementation of the Green Island levee project." 

By Laura Johnson, Communications Specialist

A New Generation of Conservation Leadership



"It kick-started my professional life in a way that no other internship could have. We were doing real, deeply significant work, and the passion for the mission was contagious."

"It changed my life and soul forever."

"At the INHF office, I met people who cared about me and my professional development even though I was only there for three months."

These voices of former interns Sydney Algreen, Grant Baker, Nic Young and Courtney Turnis touch a few of the stories our 250 former college interns tell.

For 28 of our 35 years, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation has enjoyed a steady stream of young Iowans who join intensely in our work — many for a few months, some for a year. We're committed to this education effort because we see these bright young Iowans use and share what they learn about saving Iowa's natural resources.

"Whenever I see a prairie, I look longingly and remember my summer with INHF. I remember the lessons I learned, the people I met and the land that I had the privilege of experiencing and improving."

We savor the satisfaction of having touched their lives, and we marvel at their impact.

Young at Heart

At this milestone it's easy to see that interns have shaped INHF as surely as INHF shaped their skills and experience. The students keep us young at heart: eager, energized, with an eye on the future. And they help ensure INHF is relevant for young adults.

"Ever since I've worked here, students have asked,

“Why? Why do we do it that way?” said Joe McGovern, INHF president. “As you explain, you have to think it through — and if you’re open to their questions, it leads you to new ideas.”

Interns are bold, on the edge of trends. We remember when intern Katie Woolm convinced us that INHF needed a presence on the newly-invented World Wide Web — and then Katie built our first website. Other interns have taken INHF to Facebook, Twitter and beyond.

Results on the land

Office interns help save land by preparing promotions and grant requests for our land protection projects. Internships that teach grant proposal writing are rare, but INHF has become adept at it. Students learn a marketable skill while learning in-depth about land transactions, agency partnerships, wildlife species, local conservation priorities and the economic impact of natural attractions.

“The gratification one experiences from securing a fully funded conservation project is indescribable,” said former intern Colby Fangman.

Land stewardship interns see their tremendous results on the land every day. They bolster one another’s spirits on hot, muggy, buggy days of pulling and cutting invasive plants from prairie or other special sites. During the physical work of restoring land, they learn in ways not possible in a classroom: identifying native plants, discovering new insects and discussing land management issues.

Interns are inspired by meeting private landowners who have permanently protected the lands they love, and the students’ commitment and hard work bring hope to the landowners.

Touching lives


INHF has long expected the intern program’s impact to grow with time in unforeseeable ways, as interns provide a new generation of conservation leadership in Iowa and beyond. Yes, the internship program helps build job skills in young people, but more importantly, INHF is sharing its passion, values and commitment with outstanding, creative young people who care. These young leaders will find many ways to take action in the decades ahead.

Some former interns are now conservation professionals with nonprofits or local, state or federal agencies. Four serve on the INHF staff, and one serves on the INHF board of directors. Others are business leaders, volunteers and parents whose conservation

ethic affects their business and life decisions, influencing others around them.

INHF often hears that internships are more than a career step; they are an important turning point in interns’ lives. Interns mention the mentors and friends they met, the satisfaction of doing important work, the Iowa homeland they appreciated in new ways. They speak of learning professional behavior and rising to meet responsibility. “We pushed each other to learn and grow,” Jennifer Rogers said.

Former intern Mike Robb believes, “It is essential to keep people, especially young people, in touch with the natural world. I hope that many, many more continue to experience all the wonderful things that this internship program provides.”

INHF wholeheartedly agrees. 

By Anita O’Gara, Vice President and Development Director

INHF Internships at a Glance

Two distinct styles: office and field. Year-round, three or four interns work as professionals in our office on projects involving communications, design, grant writing and landscape architecture. Each summer, 14 land stewardship interns work across Iowa to remove invasive species and restore permanently protected lands. All INHF internships are paid, out of respect for the students’ responsibilities and hard work.

More than 250 college students have served as INHF interns since the program started in 1986. Two-thirds of our former interns live and work in Iowa today.

Your INHF nature calendar (provided as a member benefit) is designed by an intern. Our blog and Facebook posts and our web pages are usually written by interns.

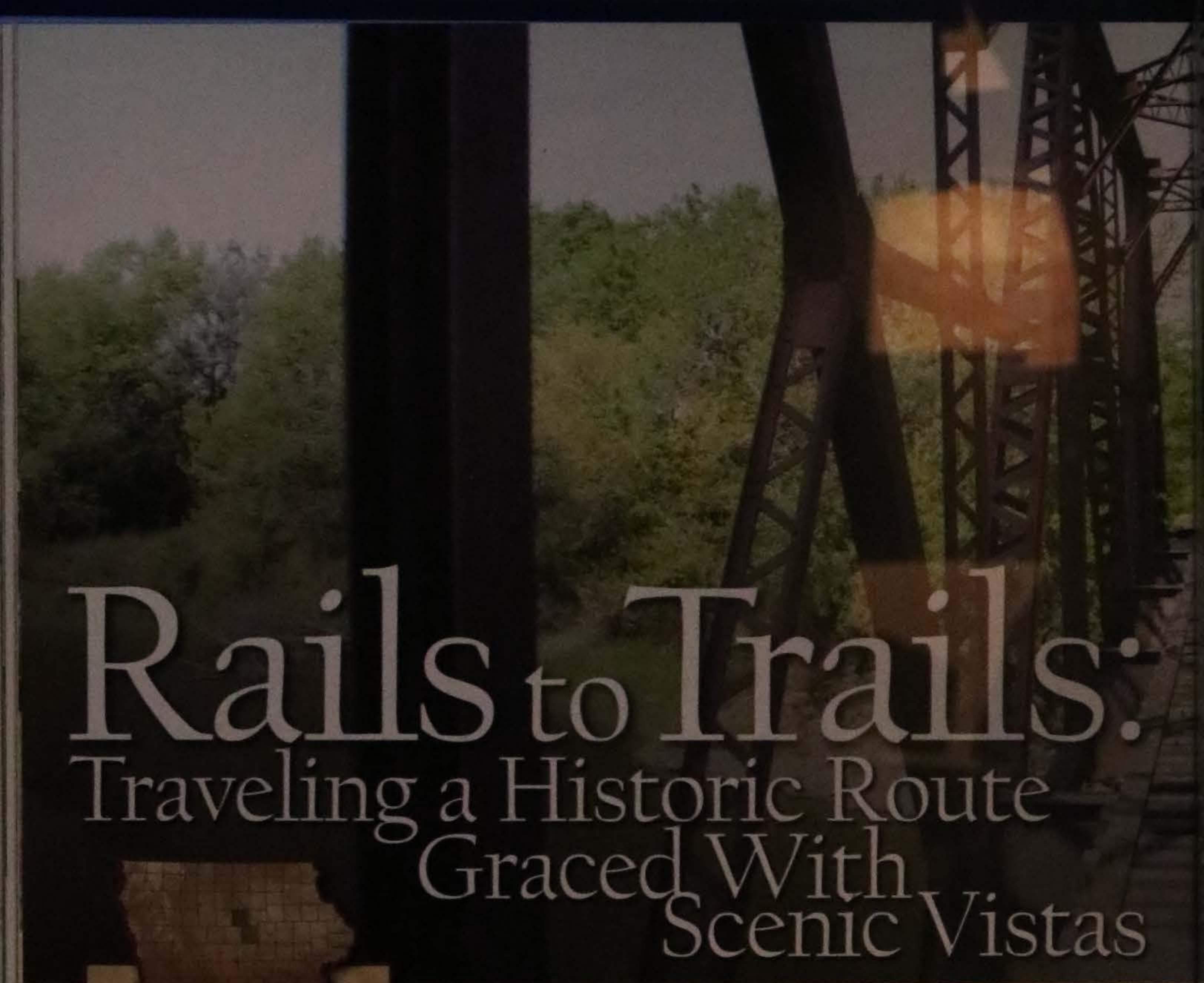
Thirty prairies and natural lands are healthier with more wildlife today, thanks to the 2013 land stewardship interns.

About \$3,300,000 was awarded to six new trails or land protection projects in response to proposals written or assisted by interns in 2013.


The R. J. McElroy Trust has sustained the core internship program and assisted its growth, with grants totaling more than \$1 million over 28 years. Why? “The McElroy Trust looks for programs that can transform and inspire young people. This program fits the bill,” said Stacy Van Gorp, McElroy Trust executive director.

Several donors focus their giving on internships. Named funds provide annual support in honor of Richard S. “Sandy” Rhodes, Charles and Helen McLaughlin, and the Svare and Stravers families. Rose Mary Schwent, Robert Dyas, Norma Denlinger, Kay Bucksbaum and ITC Midwest have given generously in multiple years. Gifts are always welcome!

Intern opportunities are growing. In 2013, we added a three-intern land stewardship crew focused on northeast Iowa land, plus an intern position focused on the unique challenges of trail projects. In 2014, we’re adding one more Blufflands intern, and a new partnership with RDG Planning & Design allows a full-time landscape architecture intern to gain both nonprofit and private firm experience.



Rails to Trails: Traveling a Historic Route Graced With Scenic Vistas




Iowa River Trail

This trail is in its early infancy. Grants, volunteers and supporters of all kinds are needed for this multi-million dollar project.

Trail length: 34 miles

Main partners: INHF, Hardin County, City of Marshalltown, TRAILS, Inc., Hardin County Trails Commission, Iowa River Greenbelt Resource Trust, business and community leaders

Trail ownership: Will transfer to Hardin County and City of Marshalltown.

 For more information on how to support this project or volunteer, visit www.inhf.org/iowarivertrail.cfm.

The nearly 700-mile Central Iowa Trails Network is expected to soon grow by 34 miles. Currently in the early planning stages, the Iowa River Trail (IRT) will connect seven cities (Steamboat Rock, Gifford, Union, Liscomb, Albion, Eldora and Marshalltown) and Hardin and Marshall counties to the Iowa River Greenbelt and the Central Iowa Trail Network.

Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation railbanked and acquired the trail corridor from the Iowa River Railroad (IRR) and assisted Hardin County and the City of Marshalltown in writing a grant to the Iowa Department of Transportation. The grant secured \$775,000 of funding from the competitive State Recreational Trails Program. The amount will be leveraged with land value from IRR and local donations.

"The corridor will transfer to local entities by this spring," said Andrea Chase, INHF trails coordinator. "This is Iowa's next big trail project that will require coordination and support from agencies, volunteers and communities over the next several years."



The proposed trail will run along the entire former IRR corridor, from Marshalltown to Steamboat Rock, in an area known for its scenic qualities and diverse wildlife habitat. Trail users will be able to take in scenic bluffs and wetlands and see species more commonly found in the northeast corner of Iowa. They'll also be able to travel along the historic route of the IRR, which was a vital part of the local economy for 100 years.

Economic boost anticipated

The Iowa River Trail will begin near the Linn Creek Greenbelt in Marshalltown and extend into the Iowa River Greenbelt. Hardin County Conservation Board — one of the first county conservation boards established — created the term Iowa River Greenbelt in the 1950s, and local citizens and community leaders launched an official plan in the late 1980s with INHF's help to identify the natural and cultural resources, describe the region and foster the tradition of conservation and recreation tourism in the county.

"Nearly all local community and business leaders recognize

what an enhancement to economic development and recreational opportunities this beautiful trail will bring," said Joel Greer, secretary of Trails, Inc. and Marshalltown City Council member. "This community has long taken pride in its recreational facilities. We built Iowa's nicest YMCA; we are now renovating Iowa's largest high school gym; and we already have an in-town recreational trail that is part of the transcontinental American Discovery Trail — so this new trail is just another way to attract and retain families who value recreation as a standard of living."

"It's important to preserve this stretch of land because it showcases some of the most scenic land in central Iowa," said Kent Kelsey, vice chair of Hardin County Trails Commission. "Opportunities in Iowa like this are very limited, and we are fortunate to be able to make it happen."

Linking multiple recreation areas


Eighty-seven communities with a total population of over 223,000 people lie within a half-hour drive of the Iowa River Trail. Located in the Iowa River Valley, which is already a recreation destination, the trail will provide even more opportunities to locals and visitors alike for recreation and exploration throughout the year.

For those looking for long-distance exploration, the IRT will immediately link to a variety of local, county, regional and state parks and trails, including: the Iowa River State Water Trail, the Hardin County Regional Trail, Gunderson Trail in Eldora, Bates Trail in Union, Iowa River Scenic Drive, Marshalltown Trail, Pine Lake State Park, Timmons Grove and the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail. The Grimes Nature Center and American Discovery Trail can also be reached by the trail.

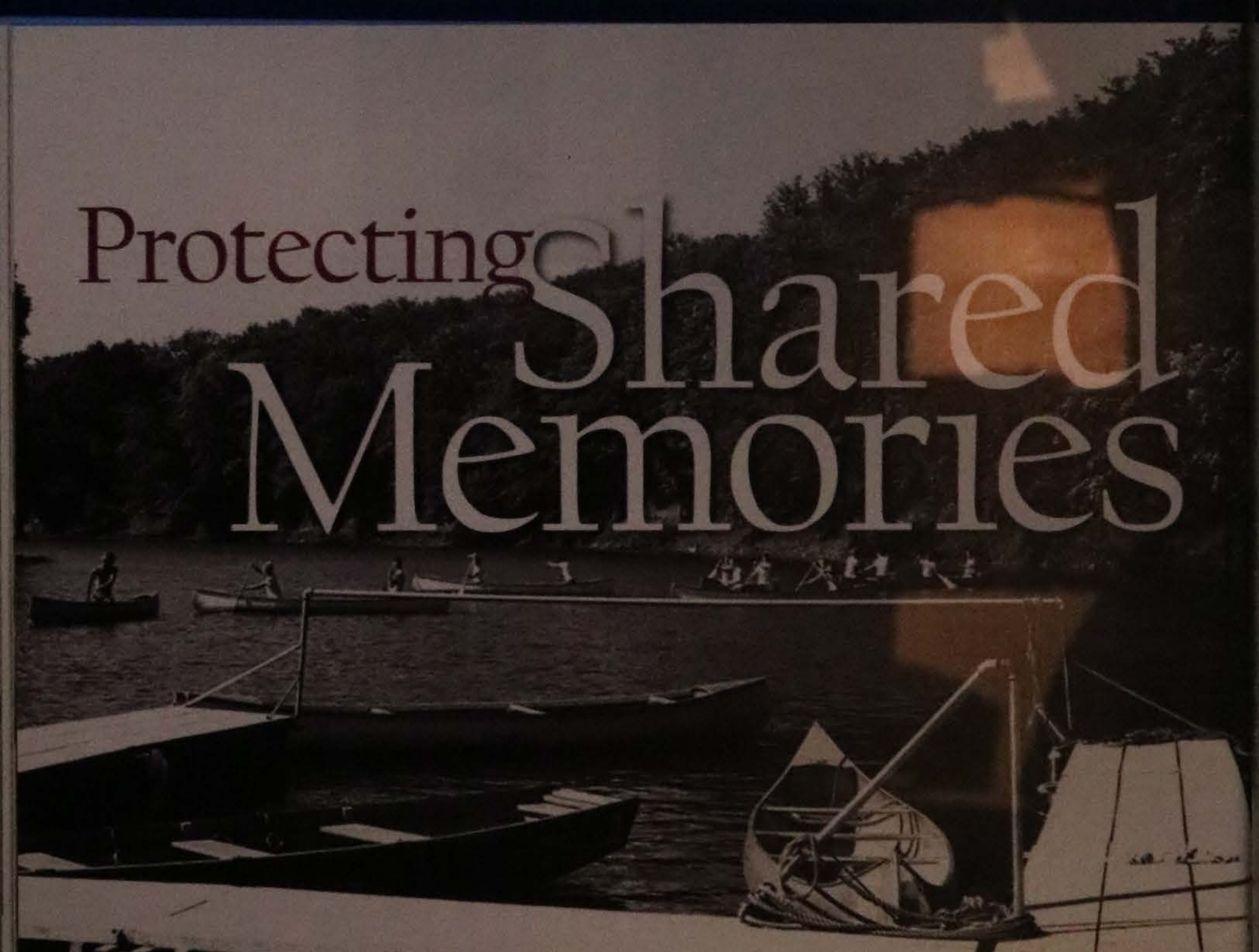
Additionally, the IRT will boost local businesses and economies through recreation tourism. In 2011, Iowa trails attracted 1.8 million visitors who spent roughly \$17.8 million during trail-centered outings.

Connecting habitats through permanent protection

Over 380 acres of land will be permanently protected in a scenic area of central Iowa through the IRT project. The 100-foot wide corridor will connect fragmented habitats and provide natural space for a variety of species, including painted turtles and wild turkeys. The raised rail bed that will be the foundation of the trail will also act as a terrace, preventing topsoil erosion into the Iowa River.

"The recreational, economic and conservation benefits made the Iowa River Trail a must-do project," Chase said. "This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that will see pay-off for generations to come." 

By Laura Johnson, Communications Specialist



Protecting Shared Memories

Special places become personal and emotional, whether we owned them or not. For one of Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation's 51 land protection projects last year, strong memories and deep emotion sparked a fervent community effort that quickly saved a favorite place.

Just north of Marble Rock in northeast Iowa, the Shell Rock River meanders through rolling woods and hills where people hiked, fished and hunted mushrooms or game in the early 1900s. In the 1950s, a few local leaders brought together some neighboring landowners and local donors to put together a 383-acre Boy Scout camp along two miles of the river blessed with majestic trees and abundant wildlife. For six decades, Iowa Scouts and their leaders made memories in nature at the Winnebago Scout Reservation. Sometimes the people of Floyd County also enjoyed the facilities and nature. Common memories made this place a deep part of the heritage and pride in this agricultural county.

Imagine the dismay when the Winnebago Council of the Boy Scouts of America decided it was necessary

to close the camp and sell the land. That's when the community sprang into action to shape its future.

The day after the council's announcement, local people asked INHF to help turn the camp into a county park and wildlife area. The Floyd County Conservation Board was eager to make this happen but lacked funds to take action quickly enough for the Scouts' needs. Everyone believed the funds would come — several families had already made significant pledges.

The Winnebago Council accepted a joint proposal by INHF and Floyd County Conservation Board to purchase the land with this vision: Scouts as well as Iowa families could enjoy this place long into the future. The council even donated a portion of the land value. Leadership from the Floyd County Board of Supervisors

included a \$150,000 county commitment. A state REAP grant was key. At the heart of the project's success are the 153 private donors from this rural county who committed an additional \$150,000 in less than a year.

In some cases, the children and grandchildren of those who established the camp led this new effort for the next generations. INHF member Dennis Haller was a young boy when his father, Arnold, helped establish the camp in the 1950s. Dennis said, "I've never seen anything like this. Many people didn't wait to be asked; they called to see where to send their money. Facebook posts stirred up gifts from around the country. People wanted to protect the integrity of the place they valued."


This project made Dennis proud to be an INHF member. "This project would not have happened if it were not for Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. They brought experience, credibility and quick action to the negotiations. Just as important, they brought hope to those people who were willing to dig deep into their pockets to save this place."

Tosanak Recreation Area

This land will open to the public this spring with a new name: Tosanak. Tosanak (dōe-SHAW-nuk) means "otter" in the language of the Winnebago (Ho-Chunk) tribal peoples who first walked this land. With recreation facilities clustered on just 10 percent of the site, expanses of habitat are now permanently protected where Tosanak's namesake otters and other wildlife will thrive.

Tosanak has the potential to be a destination park, with one-room rustic lodges for rent and new picnic pads waiting under the oaks. Area students will improve the trails, and local organizations are converting one building into a modern rental cabin. More renovations will unfold in years to come, and a designated water trail on the Shell Rock River between Nora Springs and Marble Rock is a possibility.

School groups are scheduled months in advance for outdoor learning with the county naturalist. Scout troops are camping in the woodlands and learning about nature as envisioned.

Brian Fankhauser, INHF Blufflands program manager, is amazed by the local action. "There was so much emotion around this project," Brian said. "It can be difficult to work through deep emotion, but everyone did: the Scouts, the county and the volunteers. The people and their common passion are what I'll always remember about this project." 

By Anita O'Gara, Vice President and Development Director

Another camp project: Ingawanis Woodland

INHF is helping turn a second Boy Scout site near Waverly into a Bremer County Conservation wildlife area. While the Scout camp remains active, Boy Scouts of America chose to sell an adjacent 140-acre woodland to INHF for conservation education programs and recreation. Hiking, birding and mountain biking will be popular activities.

You can help complete the Ingawanis Woodland project with your gift to INHF. About \$400,000 is still needed. Donors gifting \$1,000 or more may choose to be included in permanent donor recognition, and pledges can be paid over one-to-three years.

Tosanak Recreation Area Floyd County

Land: 383 acres with great woodlands along the Shell Rock River

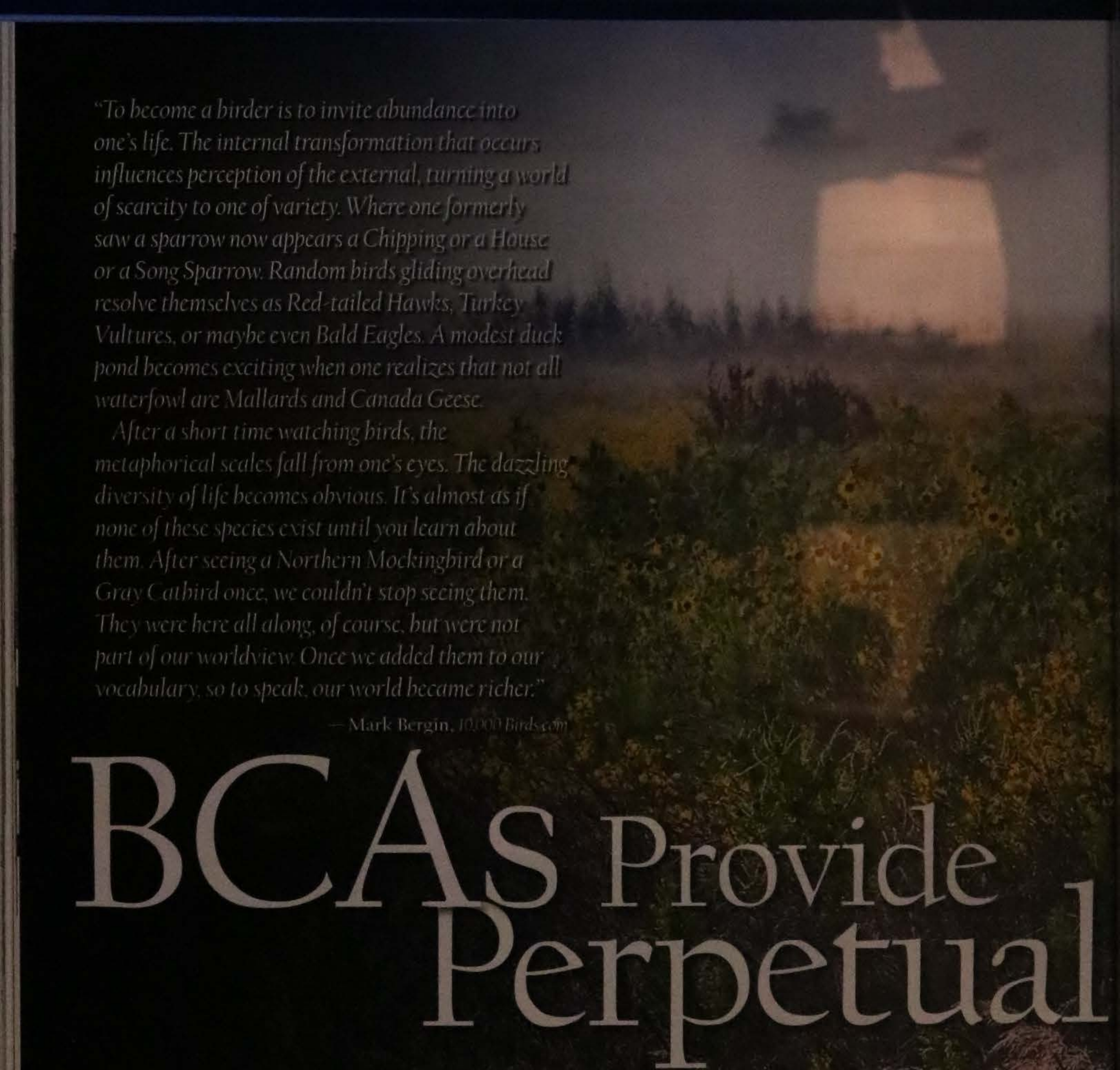
Facilities: rustic lodges and sites for overnight camping and group outings

Main partners: Floyd County Conservation, INHF, Fossil and Prairie Conservation Foundation, local leaders

Funding: State REAP grant, Floyd County, private donors. Land protection funds are complete; gifts for renovations are welcome.



www.inhf.org/spring-2014-magazine.cfm



“To become a birder is to invite abundance into one’s life. The internal transformation that occurs influences perception of the external, turning a world of scarcity to one of variety. Where one formerly saw a sparrow now appears a Chipping or a House or a Song Sparrow. Random birds gliding overhead resolve themselves as Red-tailed Hawks, Turkey Vultures, or maybe even Bald Eagles. A modest duck pond becomes exciting when one realizes that not all waterfowl are Mallards and Canada Geese.

After a short time watching birds, the metaphorical scales fall from one’s eyes. The dazzling diversity of life becomes obvious. It’s almost as if none of these species exist until you learn about them. After seeing a Northern Mockingbird or a Gray Catbird once, we couldn’t stop seeing them. They were here all along, of course, but were not part of our worldview. Once we added them to our vocabulary, so to speak, our world became richer.”

— Mark Bergin, 10,000 Birds.com

BCAs Provide Perpetual

With many bird populations declining alarmingly over the last two decades, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources took a cue from national and international initiatives to conserve all birds in all habitats.

Iowa’s Bird Conservation Area Program (BCA) was established in 2001 to conserve birds breeding in habitats such as savanna, woodland, wetland and grassland and to encourage landscape-oriented conservation.

Since 2001, 18 BCAs have been established within Iowa. INHF has worked within 16 of the 18 BCAs, including 161

projects and 25,372 acres of protection.

“This is true partnership at its finest,” said Joe McGovern, INHF president. “When we see the impact that can be made publically and privately, it’s astounding. INHF has helped protect over 25,000 acres within these BCAs. We are partnering to create permanent corridors



Impact

for healthy land, water and wildlife. This is where perpetual impact is realized.”

Bruce Ehresman, Iowa DNR wildlife diversity bird biologist, said, “Iowa’s BCA Program offers an opportunity for conservation-minded agencies, organizations and individuals to work together for the improvement and conservation of Iowa’s very best bird habitats. INHF has been a crucial partner, helping the BCA program achieve its goals through land protection and land management. It’s this kind of mindful collaboration that helps assure our grandchildren’s grandchildren will, like us, be able to experience the many joys that the sight and songs of birds bring to our lives.”

Chichaqua Neal Smith BCA welcomes spring with a profusion of wildflowers in the bluestem grasslands. Inset: This young Sedge wren is nearly camouflaged as it balances between grassy stems. These petite birds move around a great deal, seeking new nesting areas year after year in short grass and sedge marshes.

About Bird Conservation Areas

There are 18 BCAs in Iowa. INHF has worked in 16 of Iowa’s BCAs. 32% of Iowa’s counties include a BCA.

BCA designation requires:

- Landscape that includes a variety of habitat, including grassland, wetland, woodland and savanna
- At least 10,000 acres of public and/or private protected lands
- 25% of area must include key bird habitat
- 20% of area must include large, core high quality habitat
- Managing blocks of bird habitat of at least 40 acres is encouraged.



To find a printable field checklist for Chichaqua-Neal Smith BCA and the other BCAs, visit <http://www.inhf.org/bca.cfm>.



Top: Gray-headed coneflowers salute spring sun at Chichaqua Prairie. **Above:** Scanning the ground for its next meal, this female Northern harrier glides low over a prairie. **Opposite:** Small white lady's-slipper, part of the Orchid family, is found in wet prairies and meadows. One, and rarely two, flowers grace a stem from May through July.

Chichaqua addition provides a corridor for wildlife

Creating corridors of wildlife habitat is important to INHF. In May 2013, INHF was able to transfer the Shaw Property, a 320-acre addition to the Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt. The property was prime for residential development. Polk County Conservation recognized the property's conservation importance and asked for INHF's help. The addition not only helps to fill in a 700-acre inholding within the greenbelt, but its restoration is also critical to improving the water quality of the Skunk River and the surrounding wetlands. The property also falls within the corridor known as the Chichaqua-Neal Smith BCA. This BCA encompasses about 76,500 acres, 15,000 of which are permanently protected for wildlife. INHF has helped with 28 projects, totaling over 5,000 acres within Chichaqua.

"This property occupies an important landscape position at one of Iowa's premier landscape restoration efforts," said Dennis

Parker, Polk County Conservation executive director. "A good percentage of the upland watershed going into Chichaqua passes through the 300-plus acres. Cleaner water, upland wildlife habitat and diversification of habitat types are all resulting from the acquisition of this land for the public good. We would not have this important piece of the puzzle without the help and patience of INHF."

Birding is a treat at Chichaqua. At a bird blind just west of the Longhouse, you can take a seat and watch birds in their natural setting. Bird feeders are filled regularly to attract birds to the immediate area.

A recently constructed wildlife viewing platform is located at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt adjacent to Hwy 330. This platform area has spotting scopes installed, is easily accessible and has a parking lot and restroom facilities. Due to the variety of habitat, species such as the Short-eared owl, Northern harrier, Upland sandpiper, Sedge wren, Henslow's sparrow and Bobolink can be found within the BCA.

Photo Left: Kurt Humble. Above: Polk County Conservation. Opposite: Robert Barnson

Honoring a prairie legacy


Adjacent to the Cayler Prairie BCA along the Iowa-Minnesota state boundary in north central Dickinson County lies 74 acres of high-quality remnant prairie. Homesteaded by the Bergman and Becker families in the 1860s, it is a result of their love that the prairie is preserved.

Siblings Sam Hunt, Carl Hunt and Harriett Fliss approached INHF about protecting their property with a conservation easement. The siblings wished to solidify their parents' and ancestors' desire to keep the prairie preserved. As Sam explains, "Our ancestors recognized the importance of prairie in keeping this part remnant. We wanted to ensure that the value of our ancestors will be honored."

With less than .1 percent of Iowa's original prairie remaining, the Hunt property represents something very special with high species diversity, including Small white



lady's-slipper, Western prairie fringed orchid and Small fringed gentian. To add to the importance of this easement, the property is surrounded by protected land: the almost 2,000-acre Kettleon Hogsback Wildlife Management Area complex to the west, the north end of West Hottes Lake on the property's southwest corner and a privately owned Wetlands Reserve Program site to the south. Protection of this area is essential for endangered butterfly habitat and nesting grassland birds, such as Dickcissel, Bobolink and Henslow's sparrow.

Land Projects Director Heather Jobst explains why this work is so valuable. "This partnership tells the story of protection in Iowa. There are private landowners all over the state conserving land for future generations. But many are not only doing it on their own; they are enhancing the work already done, benefiting public land. When I think of the block of habitat that is being expanded in this area of the state because of dedicated individuals, that gives me hope for the future of conservation in Iowa." 

By Hannah Inman, Communications Director

BCAs within Iowa

Visit Iowa's 18 BCAs to see a wide variety of migratory and nesting grassland bird species in Iowa. Many of the BCAs provide trails and viewing stands for birders, as well as field checklists. Guided tours and festivals offer opportunities to share your enthusiasm for birding.





Parks

Experiences are invaluable. Experiences lead to realization, to appreciation — especially in the realm of nature. The fragrance of prairie flowers in the spring. The cool break from summer's heat a dip in a lake provides. The peacefulness of a hike through a woodland. Those experiences can't be gained by watching a nature documentary or gazing at a scenic photograph — those just hint at the experiences possible. One needs to venture into the great outdoors, to explore, to immerse in nature to create memories.

That's why Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation focuses on restoring and permanently protecting lands for public enjoyment, as well as privately held properties. INHF has helped protect over 130,000 acres that are now either adjacent to a public area or have created a new space for all to enjoy.

As INHF reflects back on the past 35 years and looks into the future, our work to establish the Kuehn Conservation Area and expand the habitat surrounding Stone State Park stand out as important enhancements to public areas.

Add Zest to our Lives

Expansion of Kuehn Conservation Area

Offering ample opportunities for exploring and education, Kuehn Conservation Area in Dallas County is an important nature hub in central Iowa, located a few miles north of Earlham and west of the Des Moines metro area.

Two future additions to Kuehn will provide improved access for visitors, many of whom travel there from urban areas, to explore and connect with the diverse landscape, which includes prairie, riparian and upland forests, trails and unique geological formations.

Kuehn serves as the main educational facility for Dallas County Conservation and welcomes thousands of school children each year. A variety of public environmental education programs, including bird watching, prairie hikes and archaeological opportunities, draw in visitors as well. The site has ties to Native American history, with many prehistoric

artifacts unearthed at Kuehn on display, and plays host to a Native American celebration each year.

Jerry Kuehn helped INHF and Dallas County Conservation create this area in 1982, and that partnership has expanded the public area several times since. The area is now over 600 acres, most of which is scenic wooded bluffs and river valley along the Middle Raccoon River.

"These additions are important buffers to a wildly popular area that provides thousands of school children and adults with outdoor learning experiences," said Heather Jobst, INHF land projects director. "Many are repeat visitors."

Wynn-Dykstra Easement

Located just north of Sioux City, the 150-acre Wynn-Dykstra Conservation Easement is a key space for protection given its relation to public lands and an urban area. It's adjacent to Stone State Park and Mount Talbot


State Preserve, both of which offer rugged Loess Hills topography for visitors to explore and enjoy on the edge of Sioux City. In an area of expanding development, the park's remnant woodlands and native prairie offer respite in the urban area. Visitors to Stone State Park, which INHF has helped expand several times in recent years, can explore scenic vistas, prairies, woodland valleys and the Big Sioux River.

Although the Wynn-Dykstra easement is not open to the public, it provides an all-important buffer for the park. The area is a prime target for development as urban expansion occurs. Properties next to permanently protected lands are attractive real estate to those wishing for a bit of escape yet close access to an urban area. The designation of the Wynn-Dykstra property as a permanently protected property through the conservation easement program offers the possibility and opportunity to expand the habitat of Stone State Park in the future while immediately preserving the area's natural state.

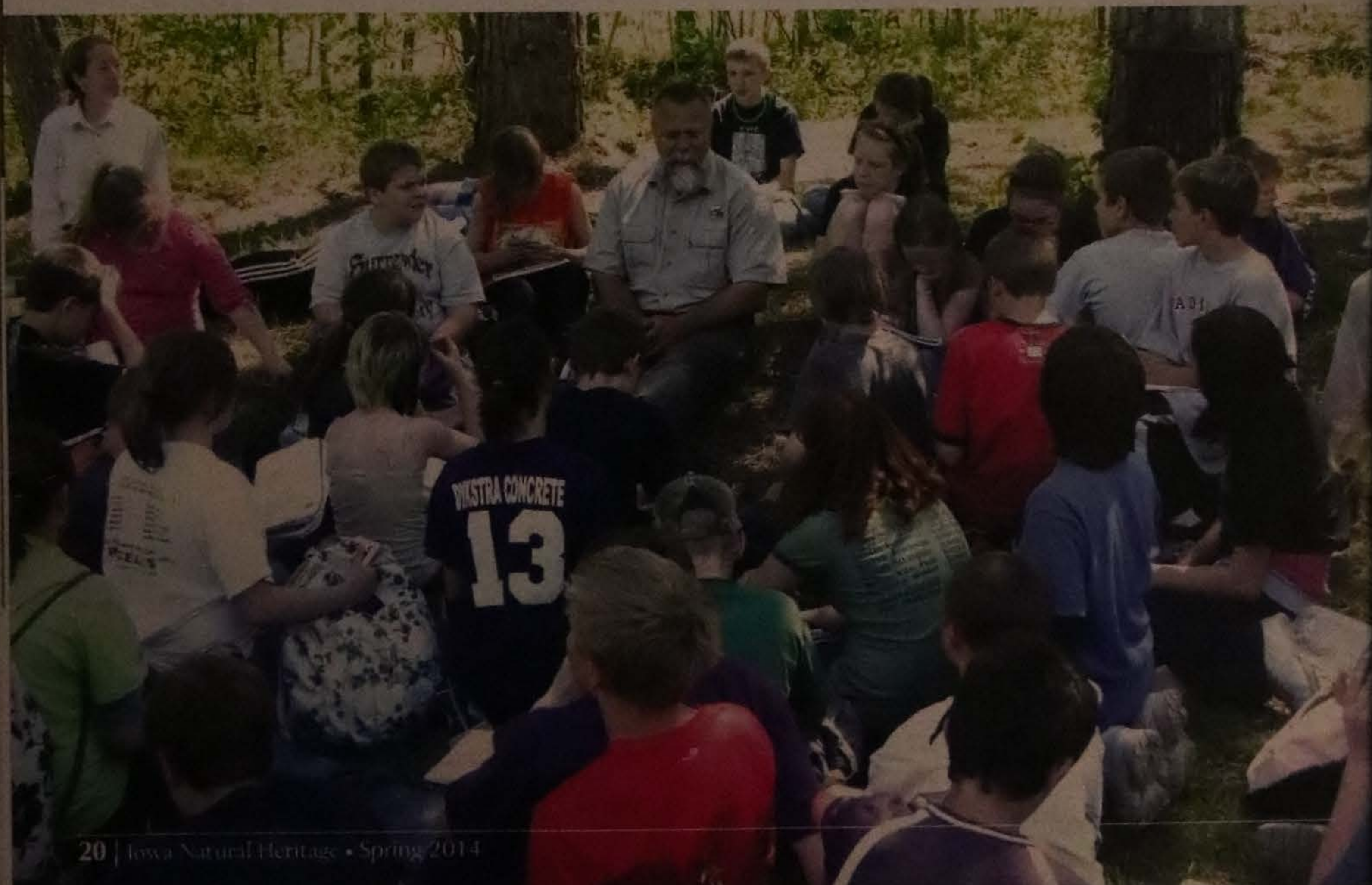
"The significance of the Wynn-Dykstra easement is three-fold," said Tim Sproul, INHF Loess Hills land conservation consultant. "It permanently protects a spectacular natural

resource, provides a buffer of protection to the richly diverse Mount Talbot State Preserve and adds additional features to this urban sanctuary."

The Wynn-Dykstra Conservation Easement contains a variety of wildlife and habitat, including ridges of native prairie, riparian woodland species, bur oak uplands and the rugged landscape and scenic vistas that are characteristic of the Loess Hills. The adjacent Mount Talbot State Preserve has a wealth of rich botanical resources, including more than 75 prairie plants such as Pasque flower, Leadplant and Dotted blazing star. Over 42 species of butterfly fauna, including the Ottoe skipper and Regal fritillary, have also been found on the preserve. Although a species survey has not yet been conducted on the Wynn-Dykstra property, it is likely that many, if not all of the species found on the preserve, will have a presence on the easement as well.

"Dennis Wynn and Debra Dykstra's stewardship of this natural treasure is evident everywhere you look," said Tim. "But their gift of this easement is much more; it's a gift of nature to all Iowans." 

By Laura Johnson, Communications Specialist



An aerial photograph of a dense forest with a stream winding through it. The trees are lush green, and the water reflects the surrounding foliage. The overall tone is natural and serene.

Celebrating 2013

“Working alone, our effectiveness is very limited. By joining forces with other concerned people, we can work together to save the land, resources and wildlife we love. It’s an irreplaceable legacy we can all leave to future generations.”

Helen Coffin, INHF member

2013 Milestones

Thanks to our supporters and partners, we can all celebrate these milestones achieved in 2013.

Volunteer Program **LAUNCHED**

While Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation has always had volunteers, we are now better organized and provide more volunteer opportunities. In 2013, 200 volunteers devoted 1,000 hours toward our mission!

Internship Program **EXPANDED**

With the addition of our new Bucksbaum Trails Intern, plus a new crew of three land stewardship interns devoted to land restoration in the Mississippi River Blufflands, 17 college students served as INHF interns in 2013.

Trails Outreach **BLOSSOMING**

Partners came together to create the Iowa By Trail mobile app that will launch in May 2014, and volunteers were trained specifically to promote Iowa trails at events and conferences.

Mark C. Ackelson Fellowship Fund **ESTABLISHED**

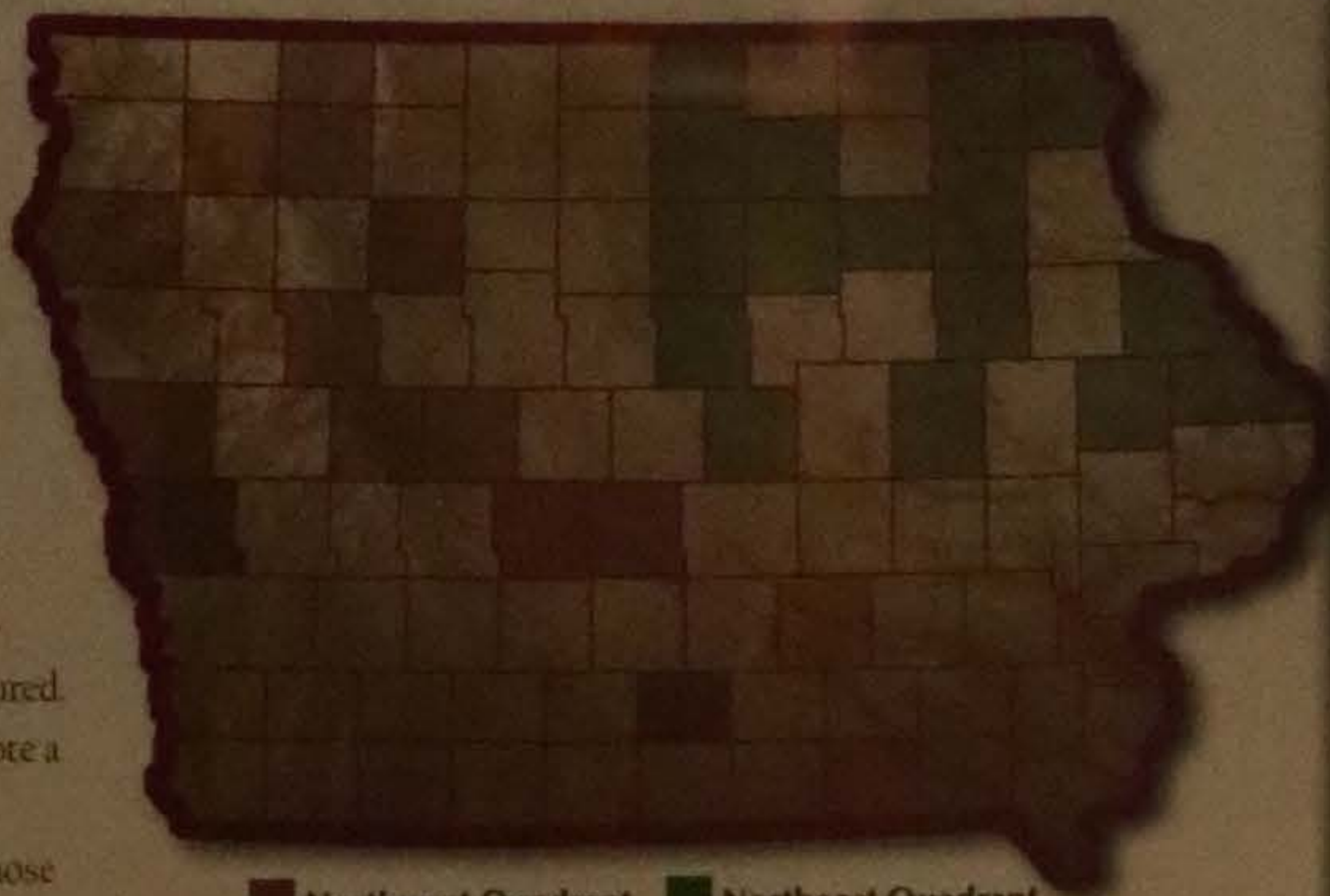
Nearly 400 donors paid tribute to retiring INHF president Mark Ackelson by contributing to this endowment fund that continues his legacy. Each year, an Ackelson fellow will launch his or her conservation career working on a special INHF project.

Iowa Land **PROTECTED**

With your support, INHF protected nearly 6,000 acres at 51 sites in 33 counties in 2013! Together we enhanced and created wildlife areas, trails, parks and wild places that help to improve water quality and provide space for wildlife. Many are public lands where people can connect with nature.

Often the expertise of the foundation staff is fundamental to protecting these lands. We walk landowners through the decisions and steps to donate or sell land for conservation. We sometimes act quickly when landowners must act, then own land for a time — creating the opportunity for permanent protection as funds are secured. We bring our experience and skill to partnership efforts that promote a project, spark contributions and jump-start land restoration.

Our 2013 land projects are described below. Only those sites whose descriptions end with "Now open" are public spaces today.



■ Northwest Quadrant ■ Northeast Quadrant
■ Southwest Quadrant ■ Southeast Quadrant

5,911 Acres Protected. 51 Land Projects.

Prairie Pothole Wetland

- **Chichaqua Bottoms Addition** — a 60-acre addition to the Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt in Polk County. It will eventually be restored to wetland habitat. (Now open)
- **Lizard Lake Addition** — a 121-acre property that will be restored to native grasses and wetlands on the northeast shore of Lizard Lake in Pocahontas County; the property is essential to continuing restoration activities on the lake. (Now open)
- **Fallow Marsh Addition** — 75 acres consisting of restored wetlands and prairie near Fallow Marsh Wildlife Management Area in Palo Alto County.
- **Lizard Lake Addition** — a 119-acre Wetland Reserve Program property adjacent to Lizard Lake in Pocahontas County. The property will benefit the shallow lake restoration activities.

- **Garlock Slough Addition** — a 40-acre wetland and remnant prairie adjacent to Garlock Slough Wildlife Management Area in Dickinson County, protecting the watershed of Garlock Slough and ultimately West Okoboji Lake.
- **Black Hawk Marsh Wildlife Management Area Addition** — 108 acres of wetland and prairie adjacent to Black Hawk Marsh in Sac County.
- **Sac City Wetland Complex Addition** — 32 acres of wetland and prairie in Sac County.
- **Cerro Gordo County** — 148 acres of wetland and prairie near Thornton.
- **Willow Creek Wildlife Area Addition** — 160 acres of wetland and prairie in Greene County.
- **Dickinson County** — a 6-acre Conservation Easement critical to West Okoboji Lake water quality.

Trails

- **Ankeny to Des Moines Trail** — a 77-acre former railroad corridor that creates 6 miles of trail stretching from Ankeny to Des Moines, passing under I-80 and ultimately connecting the High Trestle Trail to the Des Moines trail system.
- **Iowa River Trail** — a 382-acre former railroad corridor that will be converted to a 34-mile multi-use trail in Hardin and Marshall counties.

Diverse Wildlife Area

- **Dubuque County** — a 201-acre donated Conservation Easement located along the north branch of the Maquoketa River featuring restored native prairie and quality woodlands.



Waller Legacy PAYS IT FORWARD

We enjoyed helping Cliff and Jennie Waller protect their beloved 440 acres at Whitewater Canyon in Jones County a decade ago. They never even hinted at their plans to include INHF in their estate plans. The surprise \$1 million legacy we received in 2013 will make so much more land protection possible!

New President WELCOMED

A series of member receptions across Iowa introduced our new president, Joe McGovern, in a personal way. While Joe had worked with INHF for 14 years as land stewardship director, this was his chance to meet many of our members face to face for the first time and to reconnect with others in new ways.

- **Lucas County** — a 200-acre donated Conservation Easement that has a mixture of woodland, oak savanna and reconstructed prairie adjacent to Stephens State Forest.
- **Dickinson County** — a 35-acre pasture along Milford Creek, which eventually flows into the Little Sioux River.
- **Stephens State Forest Addition** — a 111-acre grassland, woodland and wetland restoration adjacent to Stephens State Forest, just south of Lucas in Lucas County.
- **Jones County** — a 95-acre donated Conservation Easement near Eby's Mill Wildlife Management Area in the Maquoketa River watershed.
- **Iverson Bottoms Addition** — a 68-acre grassland and woodland addition to the Iverson Bottoms Wildlife Management Area in Allamakee County.
- **Tosanak Recreation Area** — a 320-acre former Boy Scout camp along the Shell Rock River and north of Marble Rock in Floyd County. The camp will become a park upon transfer to the Floyd County Conservation Board.
- **Lucas County** — a 95-acre donated Conservation Easement with remnant and reconstructed prairie, as well as high quality woodland.
- **Dallas County** — a 394-acre Conservation Easement along the Raccoon River in West Des Moines that protects vital woodland habitat.
- **Stephens State Forest Addition** — a 227-acre property with wetland along Soap Creek and oak hickory woodland, adjacent to Stephens State Forest and Soap Creek Wildlife Area in Davis County.
- **Benton County** — 110 acres of oak hickory woodland and restored prairie that was donated with a reserved life estate.
- **Ingawanis Woodland** — a 142-acre former Boy Scout camp in Bremer County. Ingawanis Woodland is a mixed woodland with over seven miles of soft trails.

State Parks or Preserves

- **Spirit Knoll Preserve Addition** — a 55-acre Loess Hills prairie adjacent to Spirit Knoll Preserve, a prior INHF project now owned by the Iowa DNR in Plymouth County. [Now open]

River Floodplain Restoration

- **Green Island Wildlife Management Area Addition** — a 126-acre property along the Maquoketa River, part of the Green Island Levee

District Project in Jackson County. Restoration will include fostering native grasses and wetland construction to help restore the natural floodplain.

- **McMahon Access Addition** — a 212-acre property along one mile of the North Raccoon River near the McMahon Access in Greene County with reconstructed prairie and wetlands.
- **Turtle Bend Addition** — a 30-acre Wetland Reserve Program property that will provide quality wetland habitat near the Iowa River and the Turtle Bend Wildlife Management Area in Louisa County.
- **Millrace Flats Addition** — a 138-acre wetland with oxbow habitats, north of Wapello and adjacent to Muskrat Lake in Louisa County.
- **Polk County** — 49 acres of pasture and riparian forest along Camp Creek.
- **Big Marsh Addition** — 272 acres being restored to prairie and wetlands in Butler County.
- **Elk Creek Marsh Addition** — 114 acres adjoining Elk Creek Marsh Wildlife Management Area with restored prairie and wetlands along Elk Creek in Worth County.
- **Buchanan County** — a 145-acre donated Conservation Easement protecting oak hickory and riparian woodland and wetlands, in addition to protecting nearly one mile of the Little Wapsipinicon River.
- **West Fork Wildlife Area Addition** — a 42-acre prairie and wetland restoration just south of Aredale in Butler County and less than one mile from the West Fork Wildlife Area.
- **Thorn Apple Woods Addition** — 44 acres of prairie and wetland in Franklin County along the West Fork of the Cedar River.
- **Millrace Flats Wildlife Management Area Addition** — 108 acres of wetland and prairie along the Iowa River with unique habitat for reptiles and amphibians in Louisa County.
- **Mahaska County** — 93 acres of wetlands and prairie in the North Skunk River floodplain in Mahaska County.

Complex Expansion

- **Kuehn Conservation Area Addition** — a 10.5-acre woodland and pasture. It is one of the final inholdings on the Kuehn Conservation Area in Dallas County.

- **Loess Hills State Forest Addition** — a 2-acre property that provides improved access to the Loess Hills State Forest in Harrison County.
- **Waterman Prairie Complex Addition** — a 133-acre prairie and riparian woodland along the Little Sioux River adjacent to the Prairie Heritage Center in O'Brien County.
- **Tigges Wildlife Area Addition** — 11 acres adjacent to the Tigges Wildlife Area in Carroll County.

Native Prairie Protection

- **Dickinson County** — a 75-acre donated Conservation Easement, adjoining the Kettleson-Hogsback Complex. The area is a richly diverse remnant prairie and provides habitat continuity.
- **Dickinson County** — a 149-acre remnant prairie and wetland along one mile of the Little Sioux River.
- **Turin Wildlife Management Area Addition** — an 80-acre property in the Loess Hills; the area features remnant prairie and adjoins Turin Wildlife Management Area in Monona County.
- **Turin Wildlife Management Area Addition** — a 345-acre property in the Loess Hills with diverse remnant prairie that will be an addition to the Turin Wildlife Management Area in Monona County.
- **Plymouth County** — a 150-acre donated Conservation Easement adjacent to Mount Talbot State Preserve in the Loess Hills; the area features many Loess Hills prairie remnants.
- **Palo Alto County** — this 13.5-acre remnant prairie will expand a previously protected prairie.

Woodlands

- **Gilbertson Conservation Area Addition** — a 127-acre property adjacent to the Gilbertson Conservation Area in Fayette County. Restored native prairie and high quality woodlands line the property's limestone bluffs.
- **Kindlespire Wildlife Area Addition** — a 40-acre mostly oak woodland that provides improved access to Kindlespire Wildlife Area in Clay County.
- **Loess Hills State Forest Addition** — a 10-acre woodland addition to the Loess Hills State Forest in Harrison County.
- **Winneshiek County** — a 5-acre donation along the chimney rocks of the Upper Iowa River.

Your dollars at work in 2013



Efficiency

At least 95 percent directly supports Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation projects and services. With less than 2 percent of your gift used for fundraising and only 3 percent for organizational support, INHF is one of the most efficient nonprofits you'll find anywhere!

-  INHF Projects and Services
-  Organizational Support
-  Fundraising

Together, We Have Greater Impact

Thanks to you and 7,000 other dedicated people, INHF put \$16 million to work for Iowa conservation this year.



Legacy gifts received in 2013 totaled \$1.1 million.

Public conservation agencies contributed nearly \$8 million toward partnership land protection projects.

Land owners generously donated land, conservation easements or land value totaling \$4 million.

Specified gifts totaling \$1.6 million funded land projects and programs INHF donors value most.

Membership gifts provided \$1 million in core support for our mission. These essential funds make all of our services possible.



Legacy

We're honored and humbled by legacies bequeathed to INHF. In 2013, we received legacies from 10 devoted Iowans that totaled \$1.1 million.

Most of these gifts help to build our endowment, which provides 8 percent of our budgeted need each year. Some donors direct their legacies to specific purposes, such as permanent protection for the landscapes they have loved most.

We're inspired by 255 people who have told us they've included INHF in their estate plans. We love knowing these people who share a great devotion to nature and our Iowa homeland.

The conservation values of nearly 200 people were honored with memorial tribute gifts last year. These heartfelt gifts put \$118,000 to work for our shared mission in 2013.

The INHF balance sheet is available at www.inhf.org.

Our People: Your Conservation Partners

You

Each of our members and donors is a part of each of our successes in Iowa. More than 7,000 people participate financially in our work, and we appreciate each of you!

Volunteers and Voices

Many people are part of the INHF action in non-financial ways — donating professional skills, leading nature hikes, organizing partnership projects, speaking out on behalf of Iowa conservation when their voices are needed. Thank you!

Staff

Working every day on your behalf to protect Iowa lands, water and wildlife.



Joe McGovern, President; Ross Baxter, Land Projects Associate; Andrea Chase, Trails Coordinator; Brian Fankhauser, Blufflands Program Manager; Marian Riggs Gelb, Public Policy Director; Cheri Grauer, Major Gifts Steward



Diane Graves, Administrative Assistant/Receptionist; Erin Griffin, Events Coordinator and Development Specialist; Lisa Hein, Program and Planning Director; Hannah Inman, Communications Director; Heather Jobst, Land Projects Director; Laura Johnson, Communications Specialist



Melanie Louis, Land Stewardship Assistant; Stacy Nelson, Membership Coordinator; Anita O'Gara, Vice President and Development Director; Andrea Piekarczyk, Program and Development Assistant; Mary Runkel, Volunteer Coordinator; Tylar Samuels, Land Stewardship Specialist



Duane Sand, Floodplain Outreach Coordinator; Ryan Schmidt, Land Stewardship Assistant; Tim Sproul, Loess Hills Land Conservation Consultant; Erin Van Waus, Land Stewardship Director; Kari Walker, Administration Director

Board of Directors

Our dedicated board members provide invaluable strategic leadership, approving our projects and ensuring our strong fiscal management.

- Jan Lovell, Clear Lake, Chair
- David Mackaman, Des Moines, 1st Vice Chair
- Susan Shullaw, Iowa City, 2nd Vice Chair
- Don Beneke, Pocahontas, Secretary
- Wendy Wiedner, Granger, Treasurer
- Garth Adams, Clive
- Peg Armstrong-Gustafson, Waukee
- Woody Brenton, Des Moines
- David Brown, Des Moines
- Bruce Campbell, Cumming
- Michael Daugherty, Dunkerton
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- Paul Easter, Des Moines
- Vern Fish, Waterloo
- John Gray, Sioux City
- Greg Grupp, Sioux City
- Neil Hamilton, Waukee
- Thomas Hoff, Iowa City
- Bob Jester, West Des Moines
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- Katherine Linder, Manson
- Barbara MacGregor, Mason City
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- Edward Power, West Des Moines
- Scott Raecker, Urbandale
- Richard Ramsay, Spirit Lake
- Carole Reichardt, Clive
- Donald Rowen, Des Moines
- Susan Salterberg, Iowa City
- Travis Young, Waterloo
- Joe McGovern, Elkhart, President

Advisors

Offering specific talents, our advisors provide skills and guidance critical to the the success of our most important initiatives.

- Ann Anderson, Des Moines
- Steve Ballenger, Johnston
- Edwin Barker, Knoxville
- Greg Beisker, Des Moines
- Russ Benedict, Pella
- Charles Colby, Clive
- Clark Colby, Urbandale
- Lance Coles, Ankeny
- James Cownie, Des Moines
- Bill Danforth, Shenandoah
- Robert DeMeulenaere, Urbandale
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- George Frampton, Clive
- Dennis Francis, West Des Moines
- William Fultz, Des Moines
- Elizabeth Garst, Coon Rapids
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- E.J. Giovannetti, Des Moines
- Mary Lou Gunderson, Tucson, AZ
- Kirsten Heine, Decorah
- Cindy Hildebrand, Ames
- Ted Hutchison, West Des Moines
- Ben Johnson, West Des Moines
- Paul Johnson, Decorah
- Sharon Krause, West Des Moines
- Tim Krumm, Iowa City
- Sarah Lande, Muscatine
- Robert Longman, Shenandoah
- Brenda Mainwaring, Houston, TX
- Ed Malloy, Fairfield
- Keith McKinley, Osage
- Henry Meyer, Amana
- Elizabeth Neumann, Des Moines
- Calvin Peterson, Rock Island, IL
- Robert Ray, Des Moines
- Maynard Reece, Des Moines
- Ronald Rickman, Davenport
- Michael Riley, West Des Moines
- Thomas Rosburg, Des Moines
- Neal Smith, Des Moines
- Alan Tubbs, Maquoketa
- Eric Turner, West Des Moines
- Jo Ellen Whitney, Des Moines
- Wilbur Wilson, Des Moines
- Geoff Wood, Des Moines
- Bob Woodward, Dubuque
- Richard Young, Waterloo

Interns

College student interns work alongside staff, lending their energy, new ideas and talents to help bring about real conservation progress.

- ### Communications Interns
- Andrea Piekarczyk – Downers Grove, IL
 - Kerri Sorrell – Iowa City, IA
 - Monica Worsley – Cary, IL
- ### Trails Intern
- Josh Mades – Mount Pleasant, IA

- ### Land Stewardship Interns
- Jesse Ayers – Lidderdale, IA
 - Sam Bernard – Galena, IL
 - Kayla Boeding – Hopkinton, IA
 - Tyler Bruck – Manilla, IA
 - Corinne Bulat – Bettendorf, IA
 - Hannah Howard – Muscatine, IA
 - Andrew Jackson – Johnston, IA
 - Eva Jones – Altoona, IA
 - Elizabeth Owens – Homestead, IA
 - Kayla Vance – Davenport, IA

- ### Blufflands Land Stewardship Interns
- Devon Hovey – Decorah, IA
 - Dane Huinker – Decorah, IA
 - Austin Walther – Freeport, IL

Tucked away in northwest Iowa, the Waterman Prairie Complex in O'Brien County is the perfect escape to welcome a fresh and bountiful spring.

Catch Spring Fever

at Waterman Prairie

Waterman Prairie Complex Addition O'Brien County

Land: 134 acres, just off the Glacial Trail Scenic Byway

Managed by: O'Brien County Conservation Board

Main partners: O'Brien County Conservation Board, Little Sioux Valley Conservation Association, State REAP program, O'Brien County Sportsmen's Club, Pheasants Forever, North American Wetlands Conservation Act and private donors

www.inhf.org/spring-2014-magazine.cfm

An eagle flies above the confluence of Waterman Creek and the Little Sioux River, soaring high over the prairie flowers and tall oak trees. It's just one of the many creatures you'll encounter at the Waterman Prairie Complex in northwest Iowa, an area rich with natural wonders — expansive prairie remnants, picturesque glacial bluffs and hundreds of plant and animal species.

Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation recently helped O'Brien County Conservation Board expand the 1,800-acre Waterman Prairie Complex with a 134-acre addition, extending the habitat area for wildlife. The complex is a destination along many migratory bird routes, making it a haven for birders. It's a popular spot for eagle and hawk watching in the late winter and early spring months and hosts plenty of other raptors and birds during spring and summer, including harriers, warblers, sandpipers and Short-eared and Long-eared owls.

Explore the hiking trails and rolling prairie, and you'll stumble on some other creatures. Butterflies mix with the blooms of wildflowers, while a rare bobcat hunts its prey on the complex — a special treat so far northwest in the state.

When you've soaked up the natural beauty outside, head to the Prairie Heritage Center for exhibits on the prairie's history and ecology, to view the bison on the complex and for special displays on weather wonders and insect habitats.

By Kerri Sorrell, Communications Intern

TRIBUTE GIFTS

IN MEMORY OF

Curtis J. Arnelon
Irene Beatty
E.E. "Ernest" Bertschinger
Rudolph Brezina
Dennis Corson
Debra A. Downes
Spencer Etten
Dot & Andy Garber
Kim Gavinski
Gene Gratz

GMHR Mountain's Top
Beggan MH
GMHR HRCH
Mountain's Top
Wooden Nickel MH
Gene Gratz
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Irene Schroeder
Marvin Stover
Mr. & Mrs. Donald Teut
Gary Tonhouse
Gerry Wass

Gary Whetstone
Warren "Shorty" Witt
James O. Willmore
Marvin Ira Woolsey
Lawrence & Evelyn Zabel

IN HONOR OF

GMHR Mountain's
Top Watermark 'n
Woody MH
Neil Hamilton
Sylvia Holbert

INHF staff
David and Janet Kennedy
James McCoy
The men & women
serving in our
armed forces
Patricia Prybl
Robert Richeson
Carol Rogers
Phil Tetzloff
Greg Wettreich Family
Robert Zakeer



Keep exploring online at
www.inhf.org/lookingoutforiowa.cfm

LOOKING OUT FOR

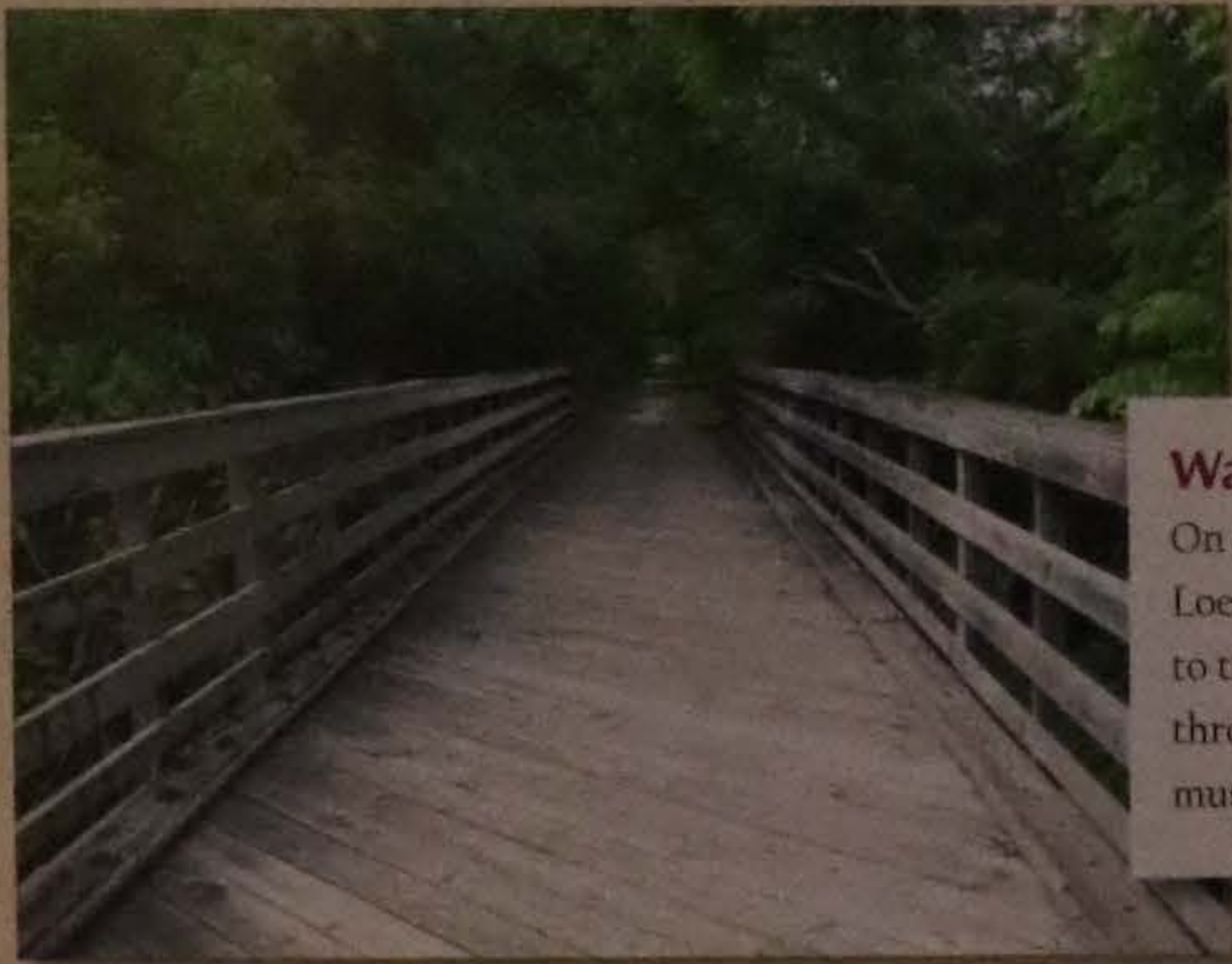
IOWA

Three Special Places

It's spring! Check out these places INHF has had a hand in protecting, establishing and enhancing for Iowans to explore over the last 35 years.

Mines of Spain

The magnificent woods and 3.5 miles of Mississippi River bluffs make the Mines of Spain, just south of Dubuque, one of Iowa's most rich and beautiful natural areas. In 1979, it became INHF's first major project.



Wabash Trace Nature Trail

On this nationally recognized trail, you'll start in the Loess Hills of Council Bluffs and travel 63 miles down to the rolling countryside in southwest Iowa, swinging through eight Iowa towns blessed with historic buildings, museums and natural sites.

Iowa River Greenbelt

The towering limestone and sandstone channel of the Iowa River in Hardin County is just one of the many natural wonders you'll find in the 42-mile stretch of the Greenbelt. Rare and endangered birds, animals and prairie plants call the area from Alden to Union home.





Iowa
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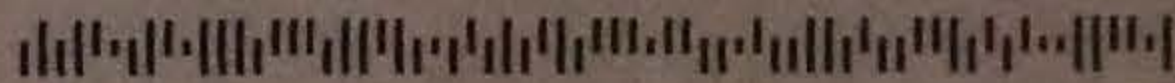


Photo: Gary Hamer

Please share this publication with friends, and visit our website at www.inhf.org.



Look closely! You'll see an Eastern gray treefrog (or possibly a Cope's gray treefrog — their call is the best way to distinguish between the species) nestled in the dew held in the cup of this Michigan lily at Wickiup Hill Natural Area in Linn County. Michigan lilies are native wild lilies found in moist prairies and low open woodlands.

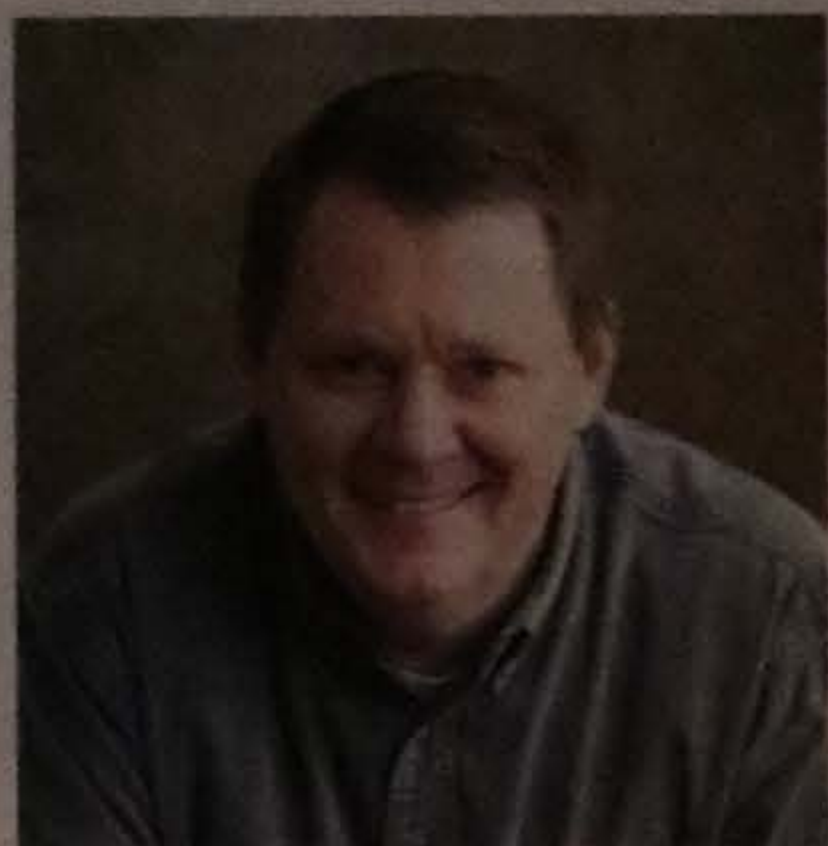
If you've enjoyed the content of this magazine, consider a gift to INHF to support the work we do together.

Iowa Natural Heritage

Protecting and restoring Iowa's land, water and wildlife

Together.
We are stronger.





NOV 04 2014

STATE LIBRARY OF IOWA

As Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation approaches protecting our 150,000th acre, I am humbled knowing that not one of those acres could have been protected without

our countless partners across the state. When planning this edition of the magazine, we were daunted by the challenge of effectively honoring all of our partners. There was no possible way to name and thank every individual and organization that has helped INHF do the work we love to do.

Our partners include numerous private landowners who want to see their conservation legacy become permanent, unsung heroes of Iowa's county conservation system, government agencies and nonprofits working tirelessly to protect Iowa, and all our members and project donors, whether you've been with us one year or every one of our 35-plus years.

So in this issue of *Iowa Natural Heritage*, we attempted to reflect the essence of these vital partnerships by sharing with you some recent projects that highlight the impact of partnering. We hope that you see how important all of our partners are to us. But more importantly, we hope after reading this issue that you believe that together we make a real difference. Because our land, water and wildlife are too important to us, our legacy too precious, to not join together and leave Iowa better than we found it.

Thank you. Your support, your partnership and your conservation ethic matter — now more than ever. We are all in this together and stronger for it.

Sincerely,

Joe McGovern, INHF President



Iowa
Natural Heritage
Foundation

Our Mission

The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation protects and restores Iowa's land, water and wildlife.

- Joe McGovern *President*
- Ross Baxter *Land Projects Associate*
- Andrea Chase *Trails Coordinator*
- Brian Fankhauser *Blufflands Program Manager*
- Marian Riggs Gelb *Public Policy Director*
- Cheri Grauer *Major Gifts Steward*
- Diane Graves *Administrative Assistant/Receptionist*
- Erin Griffin *Events Coordinator and Development Specialist*
- Lisa Hein *Program and Planning Director*
- Hannah Inman *Communications Director*
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On the cover

On a warm August evening, photographer Kip Ladage paddled alone at sunset, taking in the colors rippling across the sky and reflecting off the waters of Martens Lake in Sweet Marsh Wildlife Management Area near Tripoli in Bremer County. Sweet Marsh Wildlife Management Area is one of the top birding areas in northeast Iowa.



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Partners. Without them, we would celebrate far fewer successes. Because of them, we celebrate successes together.

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8 Enduring Partnership Yields Everlasting Results

More than 35 years ago, county conservationists dreamed about an organization that could provide independent expertise and support needed at the county level to work with them on complex conservation opportunities. Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation has fulfilled their hopes.

10 Partnering for a Powerful Voice

A broad coalition of over 130 organizations statewide coordinated their efforts and formed the Iowa Water and Land Legacy (IWILL). IWILL focused first on creating the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund — successfully established in 2010. Now IWILL is refocusing efforts to establish the funding of the Trust Fund.

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Trust established from working together on previous projects positioned local organizations and Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation to act swiftly to protect an important unplowed pastureland.

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Side by Side with Our Partners

As we reflect on the successes of the last 35 years, one thing becomes abundantly clear: None of these things would have been possible had we been working alone. Celebrating our victories also means celebrating our partners.

Rooted in sharing and trust, these partnerships are the best kind of reciprocal relationships. They bring together the time, energy and resources to accomplish feats too great for us to attempt alone. They allow us to take risks, knowing that we will have the support of our partners as we innovate our way through complicated projects. And they provide expertise and key knowledge of local areas to allow for the greatest amount of conservation via the best possible means.

But even more important, our partners share with us their enthusiasm, their verve. They tell us their dreams — sometimes couched in terms of professional mission and other times more personally held. Driven by a mutual passion, we work together toward a shared vision of Iowa — an Iowa with clean water, abundant wildlife and a healthy, diverse landscape.

To our partners, we thank you. This issue of *Iowa Natural Heritage* is dedicated to all of you.

By Andrea Piekarczyk, Program and Development Assistant



Doing More Together

for Dewey's Pasture

Dewey's Pasture Complex
Clay and Palo Alto Counties

Land: 5,800 acres

Managed by: Clay CCB,
Palo Alto CCB, IDNR

Partners: IDNR, Palo Alto
CCB, Clay CCB, private land
owners and U.S. Fish and
Wildlife Service



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Above: A Western painted turtle stretches its striated neck as it climbs onto a reed.

Right: This Least bittern is perfectly perched to snag its next meal.

Partnerships provide the ability to do more. More land protection, more restoration of natural areas, more conservation. The Dewey's Pasture Complex, which straddles the border of Palo Alto and Clay counties, showcases the extent of that "more."

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), Palo Alto County Conservation Board and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service all own pieces of the complex that, in totality, along with land permanently protected by private landowners achieve more conservation together than they could as independent areas. Included in the area are Lost Island Lake, Barringer's Slough, Trumbull Lake and Bluewing Marsh.

"Although the complex is not fully contiguous, the protected land is interconnected and works together from a conservation standpoint," says Heather Jobst, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation land projects director. "Several projects in the area, including the restoration of shallow lakes, would not have been possible if nearby land wasn't already protected."

A growing area

Totaling over 5,800 acres, the Dewey's Pasture Complex includes prairie, wetlands, lakes, upland areas and woodlands. The National Park Service recognizes the area as a National Natural Landmark, only one of seven in Iowa.

INHF has been active in the Dewey's Pasture Complex for the past three decades, most recently adding a 70-acre addition in the spring of 2013. The nine projects INHF has been

involved with throughout the complex total 679 acres, including areas that were crucial to protect for water quality purposes.

"The Dewey's Pasture Complex is an important asset to the region," said Mary Barrick, Palo Alto County Conservation director. "With so many acres, it is home to an abundance of wildlife and acts as a buffer, improving the water quality of Lost Island Lake and the surrounding wetlands."

Sustaining sensitive species

A designated Bird Conservation Area, Dewey's Pasture Complex serves as a nesting site as well as a migratory stopover for waterfowl and upland birds who refuel and gain strength for their long journey to their northern breeding grounds.

"Dewey's Pasture has a long history of being the most important wetland complex in northwestern Iowa because it supports a large diversity of wildlife species, and it is particularly important for birds," said Bruce Ehresman, wildlife diversity bird biologist with the IDNR.

The variety of wetlands, combined with large tracts of prairie grassland, provide food and nesting habitat for 132 species of birds and migration habitat for another 100 bird species, said Bruce. Birds including the King rail, Northern harrier and Short-eared owl, all of which fall under the Iowa's endangered species list, rely on the complex for its spacious habitat.

Many other species of special interest, including the Smooth green snake, Least bittern, Blanding's turtle, Forster's tern, Bobolink, Trumpeter swans and Prairie skinks — a type of lizard, also call the complex home.

"Without conservation partnerships, it is nearly impossible to create a landscape of habitat large enough to sustain area-sensitive species," Bruce said. "By pooling our resources and efforts amongst many conservation partners, we are able to create, maintain and manage landscape scale habitats large enough to sustain most of the remaining native species of this Iowa region, both plant and animal."

Partnerships also allow for habitat connections and corridors and access to pooled resources to more readily improve habitat conditions on large-scale complexes like Dewey's Pasture.

A place to explore and study

The variety of wildlife present on the complex makes it an attractive site for observing different species

of birds, mammals, fish, dragonflies, aquatic invertebrates, moths and plants from the prairie, wetland and woodland areas. Well-known Iowa conservationists including Aldo Leopold, Ada Hayden and Paul Errington have studied at the complex.

"The Dewey's Pasture Wetland Complex serves as recognition of the excellent teamwork of many partners cooperating to emphasize the importance of water quality, which improves habitat for all species of flora and fauna," said Bryan Hellyer wildlife management biologist with the IDNR. "State, federal and county agencies, working together with private conservation organizations and citizens, have made this possible."

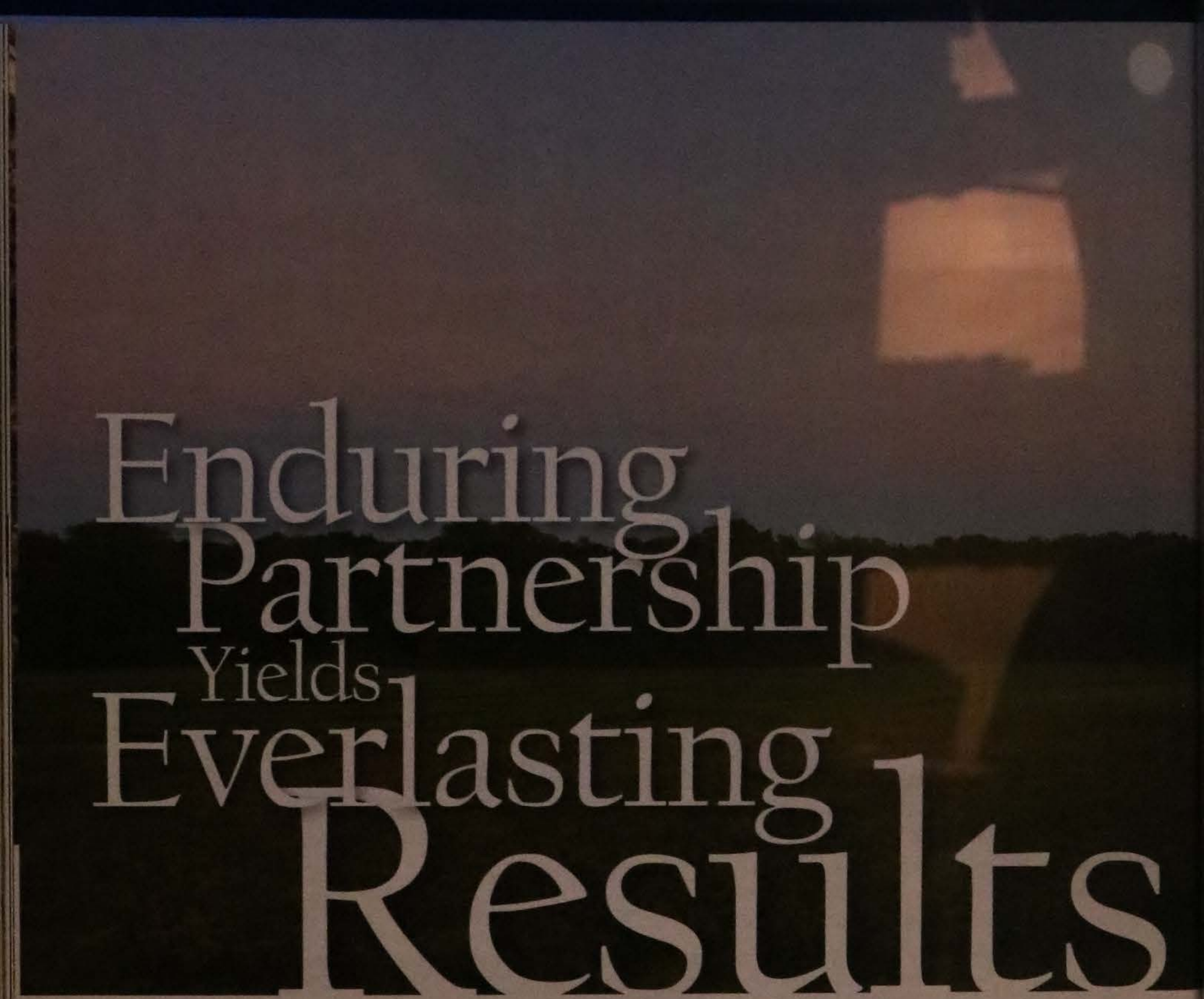
The nearby Lost Island Nature Center, operated by the Palo Alto County Conservation Board, hosts educational programs and recreational opportunities, such as bird hikes and plant and insect identification, for visitors to engage with the surrounding natural areas. Local citizens can even help with species inventory. Trumpeter swan releases and school field trips are also hosted at the complex.

Mary says that it takes the cooperation of many to create successful complexes such as Dewey's Pasture.

"We are fortunate to have an excellent partnership with county, state and federal agencies, INHF and local Pheasants Forever and Ducks Unlimited organizations," Mary said. "Diverse knowledge within the organizations makes for a stronger community and is key to being successful. In addition, it is important to have citizen involvement, and we depend on local groups, as well as individuals and businesses, that volunteer and contribute financially to our programs and projects."

By Laura Johnson, Communications Specialist





Enduring Partnership Yields Everlasting Results

It's hard to imagine where Iowa's county conservation system would be today without Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation stepping up to partner with us the past 35 years. Thousands of acres would still be unprotected, once-in-a-lifetime opportunities would have been missed, and those bridges we have collectively built for others to follow would be far shorter and fewer.

The partnership stories echo a familiar ring — "I got a call today..."; or "Someone stopped in the office to let us know about...". Short, simple conversations alerting all to a brief moment in time to do the right thing — to do our jobs of conserving Iowa's diminishing natural resources. After the initial jubilation about the opportunity subsides, the next overwhelming set of questions is always — "How are we going to pull this off?" "What can we do to stem this development?" "How do we convince people that there is a more important future vision and historic value for the land?" And, most practically and importantly: "How do we put together a timely and attractive funding package that will compel people in positions to make this happen?"

Enter INHF. It's as if someone in the mid-1970s was listening to our "What if" discussions about an organization that could provide the independent expertise and support we, at




County conservation boards and INHF frequently partner to create county parks, trails and wildlife areas. Partnerships often make it easier for landowners to leave their family lands and legacy for public enjoyment. Shown here are the Hertz and Jennett extended families, each celebrating as their lands became Story County wildlife areas through INHF.



the county level, needed to convert these opportunities into reality. And, what a valuable resource INHF has become to us. Frequently, the very first call that is made by local county conservation officials is to the INHF team. Whether it's to explore various landowner options, or to solicit insight and assistance for how to best go about acquiring newly available properties, that initial contact with INHF may be the most important step we take.

I look back on those first 35 years of literally hundreds of projects we've partnered with INHF on across the state with great satisfaction and pride. We've celebrated protected lands at countless dedications, ribbon cuttings and other occasions with INHF. We've looked at the joy-filled crowds gathered in pastoral lands, shook hands and shared thanks saying, "Well done, friends."

Our joint successes have cemented our resolve to continue. We know that we don't have to do this by ourselves. With INHF, we're in a better position to jump on special opportunities that we simply cannot tackle on our own.

As we strive to secure sustainable funding to support the vast array of unmet needs to protect and enhance Iowa's natural resources, it's reassuring to know that our most valuable resource, the INHF team, will stand with us. Together, we are making it possible for all Iowans to hike wooded ridges, paddle clean rivers and explore open prairies — now and forever. 

By Tom Hazelton, Chief Executive Officer for Iowa's County Conservation System, Contributing Writer

*Our joint successes have cemented our resolve to continue.
We know that we don't have to do this by ourselves.*

Tom Hazelton, CEO for Iowa's County Conservation System

Agriculture's Clean Water Alliance | American Fisheries Society, Iowa Chapter
 | American Rivers | Association for Integrated Roadside Management in Iowa |
 Care of Creation Work Group, NE IA Synod, ELCA | Cedar Rapids B.A.S.S. | Cedar
 Rapids Garden Club | Cedar Valley Association for Soft Trails | Central Iowa Trails
 Association | Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines | Conservation Districts
 of Iowa | Creating Great Places | Delta Waterfowl Foundation | Des Moines Audubon
 Society | Des Moines Founders Garden Club | Dubuque Audubon | Dubuque County
 Conservation Society | Ducks Unlimited | Environment Iowa | Environmental Law and
 Policy Center | Foundation for North American Wild Sheep - Iowa Chapter | Friends
 of Dubuque County Conservation Board | Friends of Off Road Cycling | Great Outdoor
 Fund | Great Rivers American Camping Association | Growing Green Communities
 | Hawkeye Fly Fishing Association | Hungry Canyons Alliance | Huntmasters Club |
 Indian Creek Nature Center | International Mountain Biking Assoc. | Iowa Association
 of County Conservation Boards | Iowa Audubon | Iowa B.A.S.S. | Iowa Bicycle Coalitio
 | Iowa Bowhunter Association | Iowa Chapter of the Society of American Foresters |
 Iowa Coalition of Off Road Cycling | Iowa Conservation Alliance | Iowa Conservatio
 Education Coalition | Iowa Dietetic Association Board and Council | Iowa Driftless
 Chapter of Trout Unlimited | Iowa Environmental Council | Iowa Farmer's Union |
 Iowa Heritage and Resource Conservation and Development | Iowa Native Plant Society
 | Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation | Iowa Nursery and Landscape Association |
 Iowa Ornithologists Union | Iowa Park and Recreation Association | Iowa Parks
 Foundation | Iowa Renewable Energy Association | Iowa Rivers Revival | Iowa Soil and
 Water Conservation Society | Iowa State Association of Counties | Iowa Trail Riders
 Association | Iowa Tree Farm Committee | Iowa Whittails Forever | Izaak Walton
 League | Izaak Walton League-Des Moines | Johnson County Heritage Trust | Johnston
 Friends of the Trails | Keep Iowa Beautiful League of Conservation Voters | Linn Area
 Mountain Bike Association | Metropolitan Waste Authority | Missouri Valley Waterfowlers
 Association | National Wild Turkey Federation, Iowa Chapter | 1,000 Friends of Iowa
 | Pheasant's Forever | Prairiewoods Franciscan Spirituality Center | Quad Cities
 Conservation Alliance | Raccoon River Watershed Association | REAP Alliance | Rive
 Action | Rivertown Duck Club | Ruffed Grouse Society of America - Iowa Chapter
 | Safari Club International, Iowa Chapter | Sierra Club, Cedar Wapsie Chapter |
 Sierra Club, Iowa Chapter | Tallgrass Prairie Center | The Community Foundation of
 Greater Dubuque | The Nature Conservancy — Iowa Chapter | Theodore Roosevelt
 Conservation Partnership | Trails Have Our Respect | Trees Forever | Trust for Public
 Land | Upper Great Plains Chapter of Muskies, Inc. | Wallace House Foundation |
 Waterfowl Association of Iowa | Whiterock Conservancy | Whittails Unlimited |
 Wildlife Society, Iowa Chapter | Women, Food and Agriculture | YMCA | AFSCME

The names in this visual represent organizations which worked together in 2010 to pass Iowa's Water and Land Legacy constitutional amendment by 63 percent of Iowa's voters. The 2014/2015 coalition is being developed now. We are hopeful that many of the initial IWILL coalition members will join INHF in this next phase to ensure permanent and reliable funding for water quality, soil conservation and outdoor recreation.

Iowans see protecting our land, water and natural areas as a part of preserving a legacy for future generations. A poll conducted in August 2014 by Public Opinion Strategies found a large majority of Iowans want action by state leaders to support natural resources and outdoor recreation.

Urging leaders to act is the aim of Iowa's Water and Land Legacy (IWILL), an informal coalition of over 130 organizations representing nearly 250,000 members in all of Iowa's 99 counties. These organizations came together and successfully convinced the Iowa General Assembly to approve a constitutional amendment to

A solid foundation for success

IWILL started in 2006, under HF 2797, when Iowa's forward-thinking legislators proposed the creation of an Advisory Committee, composed of representatives from diverse organizations, to research the viability of permanent, reliable funding for our natural resources.

What we do for the land, we do for our children and grandchildren...and their children and grandchildren. This is our legacy. Now is the time. *Joe McGovern, INHF President*

go before Iowa voters in 2010 to create the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund.

In November 2010, 63 percent of Iowa voters supported the creation of this critically important trust fund.

Unfortunately, that was nearly four years ago, and the Trust Fund has not yet seen a source of dollars. It is time for the IWILL coalition to come together again to let the governor and the Legislature know that we want them to fulfill the expectations Iowans expressed when they approved the creation of the Trust Fund. We urge them to make an investment in Iowa's natural resources that's necessary to sustain a vibrant economy, keep our young people in Iowa, retain a lively workforce and keep us all healthy.

The 2010 vote was the culmination of years of research and work by partners spanning multiple disciplines to arrive at the most effective way to support Iowa's natural resources. Once funded, the Trust Fund will provide a constitutionally protected and permanent source of funding for voluntary conservation of our precious agricultural soils and for conserving and enhancing water quality and natural areas, including parks, trails, fish and wildlife habitat.

During their in-depth internal and multi-state research, they did extensive data analysis, held open public meetings, had an economic value study conducted by Iowa State University, did public polling and prepared comprehensive reports to the governor and General Assembly on their findings and the viability and need for dependable funding for our natural resources.

A *Des Moines Register* editorial from November 2, 2006, noted: "Failing to commit to funding of natural resources hurts Iowa. It degrades the quality of life for those of us who live and boat and hunt here. And it undermines attempts to attract people to vacation here. A sustainable investment in the outdoors is a commitment to the future of Iowa."

These guiding thoughts and the Advisory Committee's research led the committee to recommend that the Trust Fund be funded by a fractional increase of the sales tax.



A 3/8th of one cent increase in the sales tax will provide over \$150 million annually to support Iowa's natural resource needs. The needs identified by the Advisory Committee and stakeholders are even more pressing now, nearly a decade later, and include:

- a diverse, healthy environment with cleaner water;
- voluntary conservation of agricultural soils;
- habitat for the broad variety of Iowa's fish, wildlife and natural communities;
- outdoor recreation opportunities close to home where Iowans can enjoy and appreciate healthy activities, nature and Iowa's beauty; and
- visitor attractions that are vital to our economy.

Clear funding strategy


The objective for the 2015 legislative session is to approve legislation that would allow for a revenue enhancement to support the Trust Fund, pairing it with income and/or property tax reductions. That would mean the state would not be taking in additional tax dollars for the Trust Fund.

Reducing bureaucracy and duplication of efforts was at the forefront of the Advisory Committee's thinking when they created its formula. Four of the funding vehicles already have established methods of distributing funds: the REAP program, Lake Restoration, Natural Resources and Soil and Water Protection.

Voluntary conservation incentive programs through the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship include a financial commitment from individual landowners and help to bolster local economies through the money projects bring to local contractors and suppliers. Proper land management is imperative if we are to maintain our rich agricultural heritage.

Polling completed in 2014 demonstrates that Iowans care about water quality and the preservation of our soils and want action from state leaders and policymakers. It took this broad coalition of partners representing conservation, sporting and agricultural groups to pass the constitutional amendment and create the Trust Fund. It is going to take all of these groups coming together again, working in common purpose, to direct dollars to the Trust Fund. It is time to let the decision makers know that we want to fulfill our commitment to future generations by investing appropriately in Iowa's natural resources.

Joe McGovern, INHF president, urges us to remember: "What we do for the land, we do for our children and grandchildren...and their children and grandchildren. This is our legacy. Now is the time." So, if not now, when will we start taking care of this beautiful place we call home?

If you are interested in joining the effort, please visit www.IowaWaterAndLandLegacy.org and pledge your support. 

By Marian Riggs Gelb, Public Policy Director

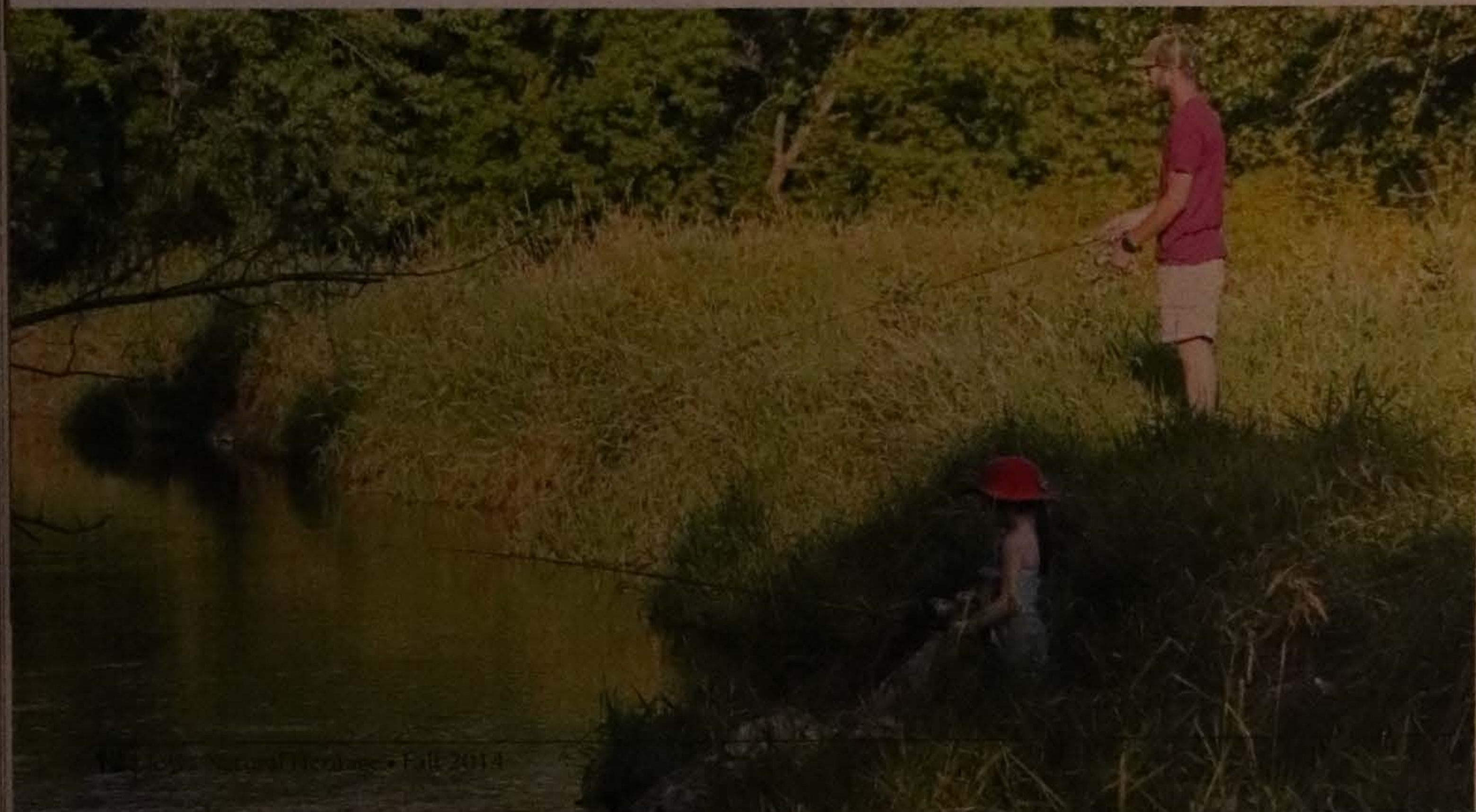



Photo: Mary Runkel

This u-shape section of Otter Creek is called an "oxbow." The Doorenbos property contains several oxbows.




Otter Creek Wildlife Area
Sioux County

Land: 67-acre addition to an existing 275 acres

Managed by: INHF with eventual ownership of Sioux County Conservation Board

Partners: Sioux County Sportsman's Club, Sioux Prairie Chapter of Pheasants Forever, Sioux County Conservation Board

 www.inhf.org/fall-2014-magazine.cfm

Quick Action for Conservation

There was a need in Sioux County. A need for a natural area providing ample space for habitat and recreation. So when a 67-acre property owned by the Doorenbos family in the northeast section of the county came up for sale in March of 2014, several local organizations came together to secure the property for conservation.

"We all agreed that the Doorenbos property wasn't something we could just let go," said Rob Klocke, Sioux County Conservation Board director. "Grant money has become more and more competitive, so local groups pooled funds to secure the land."

The Doorenbos property is adjacent to the 275 protected acres of the Otter Creek Wildlife Area in Sioux County Conservation Board ownership and will expand the size of the habitat available to area wildlife. The land will feature restored prairie and wetland areas, prime for wildlife viewing and hunting, and reestablishing native grasses will provide nesting and winter cover for birds.

Though they would never own the title to the property, the local Sportsman's Club and Sioux Prairie Chapter of Pheasants Forever expressed a large desire to move the project forward and create a new public space for the community and thus contributed the money to place the down payment on the land. Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation quickly bought the property, which will later be transferred to the Sioux County Conservation Board for permanent ownership.

"All of these groups have formed a partnership by working on past projects together," said Heather Jobst, INHF land projects director. "So when the Doorenbos property came up for sale, we were able to come together and act quickly because there was already a level of trust built."


The property is entirely pasture and has never been plowed. With restoration efforts, remnant prairie will likely recover. Otter Creek,

which is a tributary to the Little Rock River where the federally endangered Topeka shiners live, runs along the land. The property contains several oxbows — areas where a meandering section is cut off from the main channel creating a free standing u-shaped body of water that provides ideal habitat for shiners.

"A corridor of water runs through the property, so the protection of the land will maintain and enhance the water quality of the area," said Dan Harskamp, chairman of the land committee for the local Sportsman's Club. "It will also allow for the education of youth in hunting."

The scarcity of public land in the county was a large motivator for the local Pheasants Forever chapter to help secure the property.

"The amount of land open to public use in Sioux County is very minimal; most is in agricultural use and expensive to buy," said Gordon Pottebaum, a Pheasants Forever member and chair of the Sioux County Conservation Board. "We know that this project will take years to reestablish the habitat and complete the project. But we're doing this primarily for those down the road. We want the kids of today to have a place to enjoy and hunt in the future."

This project is still in need of funding before it can be completed and opened to the public. If you would like to donate, visit www.inhf.org/OtterCreek.cfm or call Anita O'Gara, INHF vice president and director of development, at 515-288-1846. 

By Laura Johnson, Communications Specialist

Wabash Trace

One of the prettiest rails-to-trails in America

Breathe in the fresh, crisp fall air — and get a dose of Vitamin N — this season with a visit to the Wabash Trace Nature Trail. This 63-mile trail in southwest Iowa travels through four counties along an old railroad corridor, offering a picturesque journey through the scenic Iowa countryside. *Outside Magazine* once named the Wabash Trace Trail one of the prettiest rails-to-trails in the United States.



Wabash Trace Nature Trail

Cities: Council Bluffs, Mineola, Silver City, Malvern, Imogene, Shenandoah, Coin, Blanchard

Surface: Asphalt in Silver City, Malvern and Shenandoah. Compacted limestone everywhere else.

Partners: Southwest Iowa Nature Trails volunteers, Mills County Conservation Board

www.inhf.org/fall-2014-magazine.cfm

The northern sections of the trail — from Council Bluffs to Shenandoah — feature arched trees that provide a canopy, shielding trail users from wind and sun. The trail travels through the Loess Hills, a unique geological formation type found extensively to such depth and length only in Iowa and China. Traveling south of Shenandoah, the vistas open, and visitors can spot reconstructed prairie, wildlife and native plants. The trail offers paved sections in Silver City, Malvern and Shenandoah with compacted limestone along the rest of the trail which is suitable for many non-motorized activities such as hiking, running, bicycling, bird watching, cross country skiing and more.

Conversion from the Iowa Southern Railroad (and previously the Wabash

Railroad) to the trail began in the late 1980s and early 1990s by Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation and local volunteers and residents who formed a non-profit organization known as SWINT (Southwest Iowa Nature Trails, Inc).

SWINT, a second-generation organization, ensures the protection and maintenance of the trail and its 74 bridges with help from Mills County, private donors and numerous volunteers. SWINT also hosts the annual marathon and other events that keep the trail and the communities along it vibrant and engaged. This fall, plan a trip to explore by tree-canopied trail the budding artists community in Malvern or the revitalized Main Street in Shenandoah.

By Adam Graves, Communications Intern

TRIBUTE GIFTS

IN MEMORY OF

Richard and Patricia Albright
 Laura Jean Archambault
 Mary K. Below
 James R. Bodensteiner
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 Dr. Richard Brandt
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 Irene Sedore Mullenix
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 Steven and Linda Stoll
 Lavonne Troyna
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IN HONOR OF

Mike DeCook
 Russell and Barbara Horn
 Ted and Susan Hutchison
 Robert and Patricia Jester
 The Men and Women serving
 in our armed services
 Seth and Bekah Warburton
 Travis Young



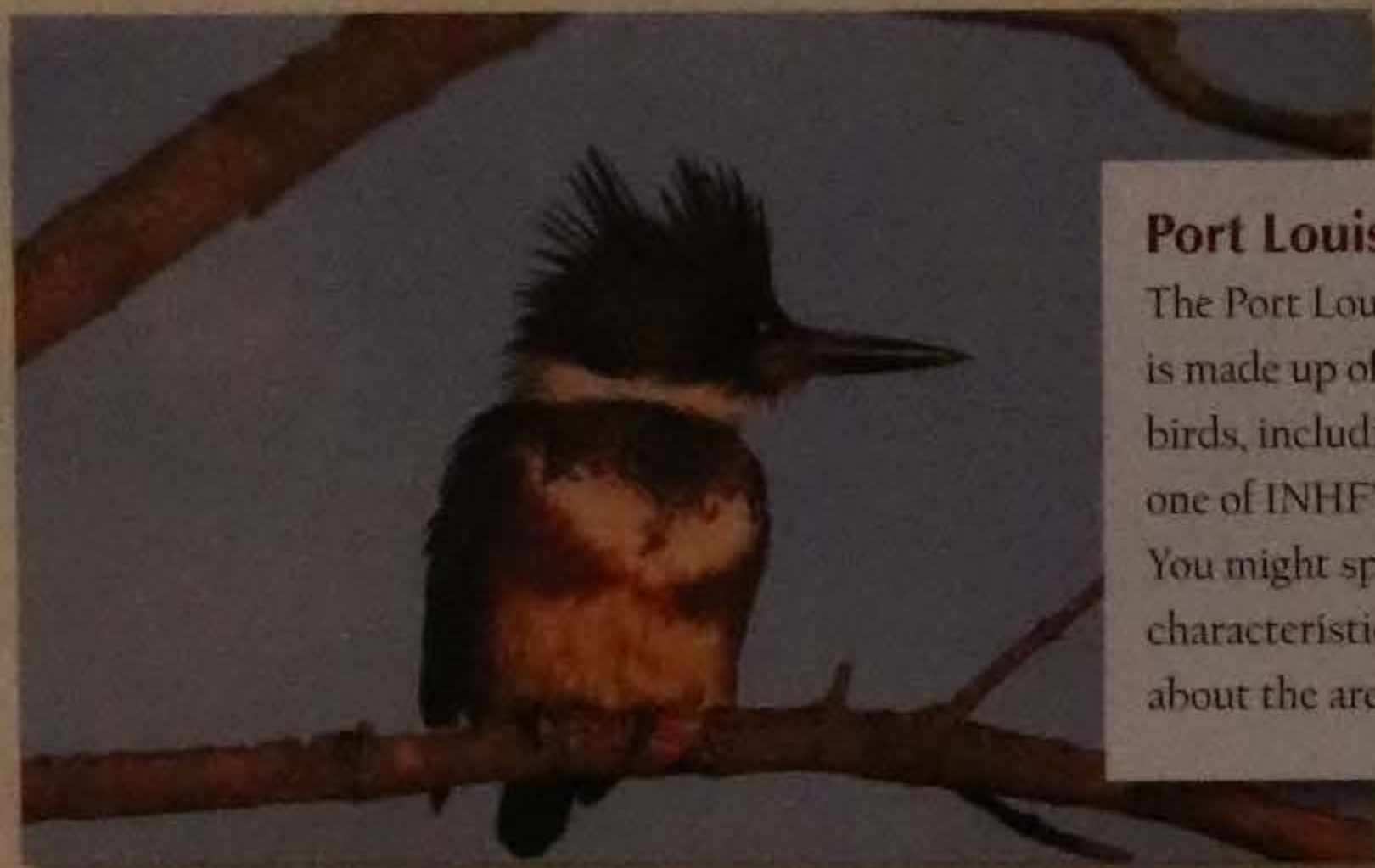
Keep exploring online at
www.inhf.org/lookingoutforiowa.cfm

Great Places for Fall Birding

Although birding is commonly associated with spring and summer months, fall offers plenty of birds to check off your must-see list. Visit the nature areas below for some quality bird watching, whether you're new to birding or an expert birder. Check out www.inhf.org/lookingoutforiowa.cfm for more information on each of these birds.

Dewey's Pasture Complex

Over 5,800 acres of prairie and wetland areas make Dewey's Pasture (see page 13) in Palo Alto and Clay counties an attractive spot for birds. The area has been designated a Bird Conservation Area and cited as an Important Bird Area by the National Audubon Society. Keep an eye out for Northern pintails and Eastern meadowlarks on your visit.



Port Louisa National Wildlife Refuge

The Port Louisa National Wildlife Refuge in Louisa County is made up of three divisions that are managed for migratory birds, including the 2,600-acre Horseshoe Bend Addition, one of INHF's most complex projects in its 35-year history. You might spot the powder blue Belted kingfisher with its characteristic shaggy crest on the top of its head as you roam about the area's trails.

Cedar Valley Nature Trail

As you walk, run, bike or skate along the 52-mile Cedar Valley Nature Trail, see if you can catch a glimpse of a Horned lark or a White-breasted nuthatch. The trail runs along the Cedar River, passing through wooded areas, wetlands and prairies — perfect spots for viewing birds and other wildlife.





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Foundation

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Photo: Stan Buman

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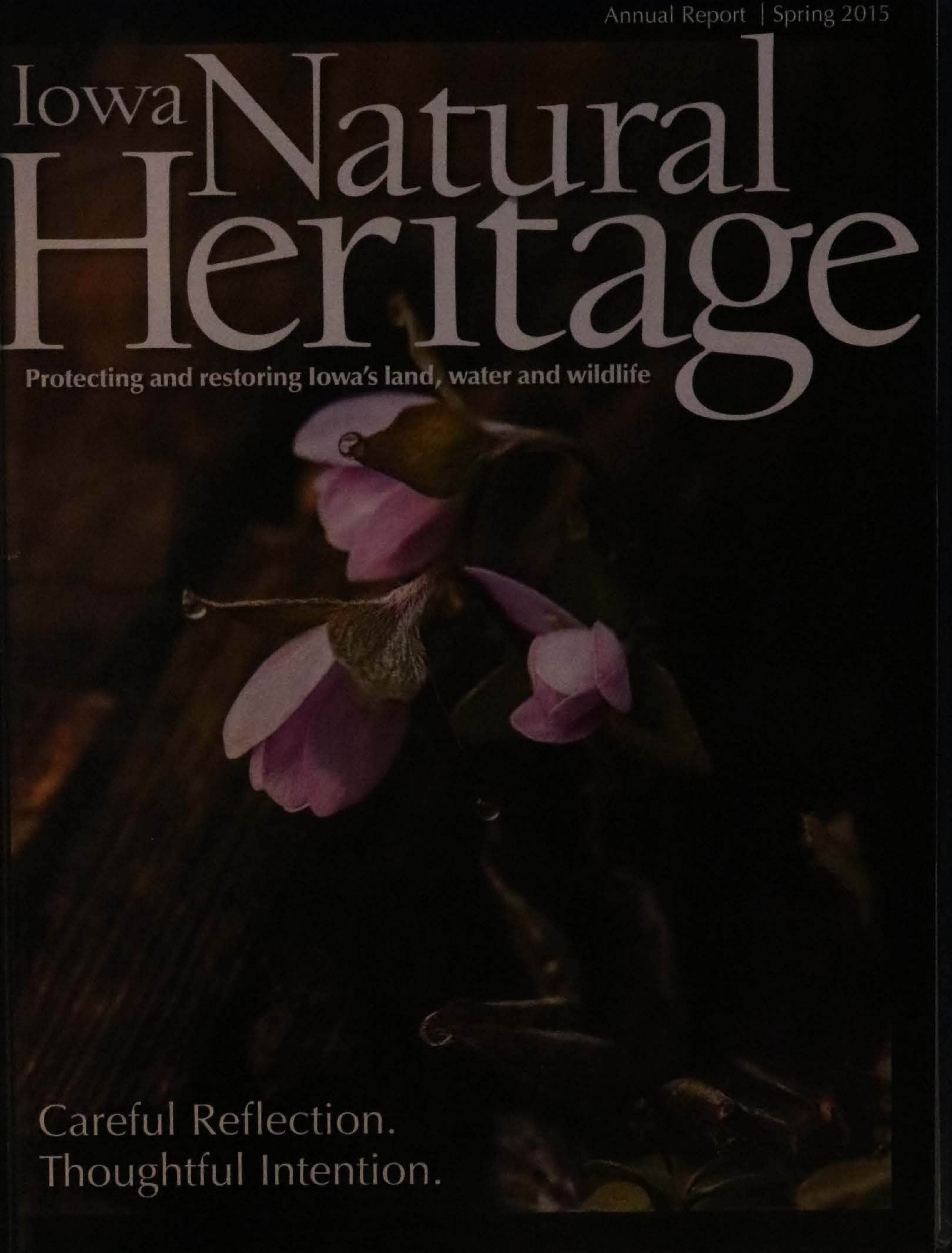
The low sun streaming across a wetland area at Swan Lake State Park in Carroll County burnishes the iridescent feathers of this drake Wood duck — *Aix sponsa* — as it dips its distinctive crested head for a drink. Wood ducks, unlike most other waterfowl, prefer to nest in trees around wetlands.

If you've enjoyed the content of this magazine, consider a gift to INHF to support the work we do together.

Iowa Natural Heritage

Protecting and restoring Iowa's land, water and wildlife

Careful Reflection.
Thoughtful Intention.





MAY 08 2015

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Thoughtful intention.

It is just one of the many hallmarks that I so appreciate about Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation.

It was the underlying principle of last year's lively strategic planning session in which we cast the vision for 2015-2019. An impressive majority of our talented and busy staff and board members from across the state committed to participate in the two-day retreat. The session was bolstered with insightful comments from numerous INHF stakeholders including landowners, donors, members, legislators and staff who were interviewed prior to the retreat.

The exuberant discussions reaffirmed our mission, core work and who we serve. In classic INHF style, the strategic goals are deliberately engaging and forward-moving: Protect — Steward — Connect — Strengthen INHF. In subsequent months, new and creative strategies were crafted to fulfill these goals. Specific actions and even gut level checks were included as regular touchpoints to ensure that the staff work plan, our board work and the regular boots on the ground daily activity continue to mesh with the goals.

And now, in the pages of this spring issue, you get to see your INHF plan come to life with poignant stories. You'll see how that mainstay practice of thoughtful intention, followed by roll-up-our sleeves action, is why landowners entrusted their beloved land to INHF. You'll see how a member made a bequest to INHF because she saw staff connect the dots of land protection, water quality, people, wildlife and improved quality of life. She knew INHF would cascade her gift into a ripple effect of more conservation throughout Iowa.

That earnest desire to fulfill these strategic goals for the well-being of our state and future Iowans is what moves us all forward confidently into the future.

Sincerely,

Jan Lovell, INHF Board Chair



Our Mission

The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation protects and restores Iowa's land, water and wildlife.

- Joe McGovern *President*
- Ross Baxter *Land Projects Specialist*
- Andrea Boulton *Trails Coordinator*
- Jared Bourquin *Blufflands Field Assistant*
- Brian Fankhauser *Blufflands Director*
- Marian Riggs *Celb Public Policy Director*
- Cheri Crauer *Major Gifts Steward*
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On the cover

Hepatica nobilis, commonly known as Liverleaf for its three evenly-sized leaf lobes, blooms in early spring. Fort Defiance State Park near Estherville in Emmet County



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4 Careful Reflection

Joe McGovern, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation president, shares how planning for INHF's future mirrors the thoughtful preparation for restoring land.

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Appraising the past and envisioning the future set the tone for determining INHF's future as detailed in the strategic plan of 2015-2019.

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David Marlow honored the wishes of his wife, Anna, and placed his trust in INHF when he arranged permanent protection and care for the land through a conservation easement.

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Geitel Winakor would be astonished to see the amazing impact her gift is making on Iowa conservation.

21 2014 Annual Report

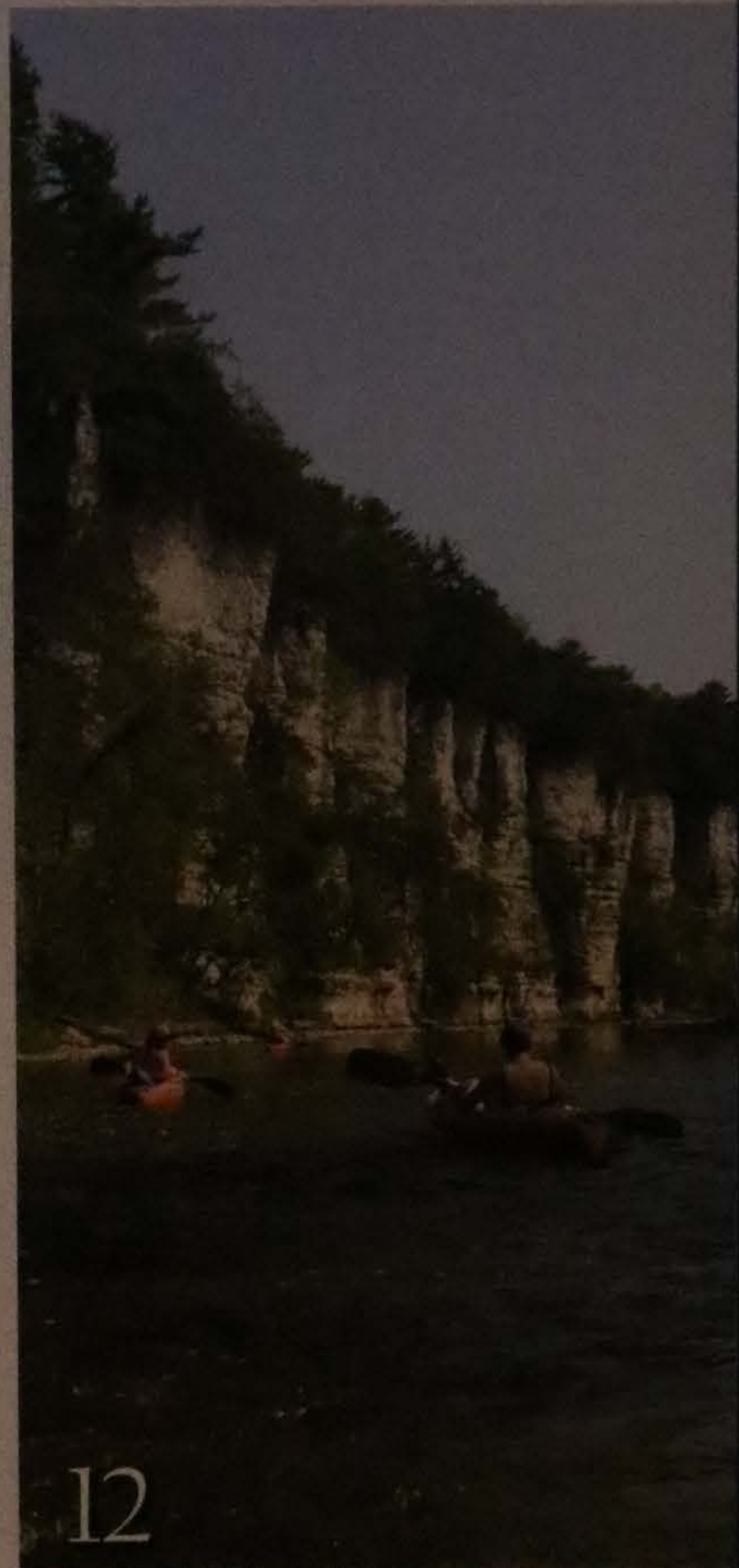
In partnership with members, donors, landowners and conservation agencies, we protected 39 additional sites and 5,340 acres in 2014.

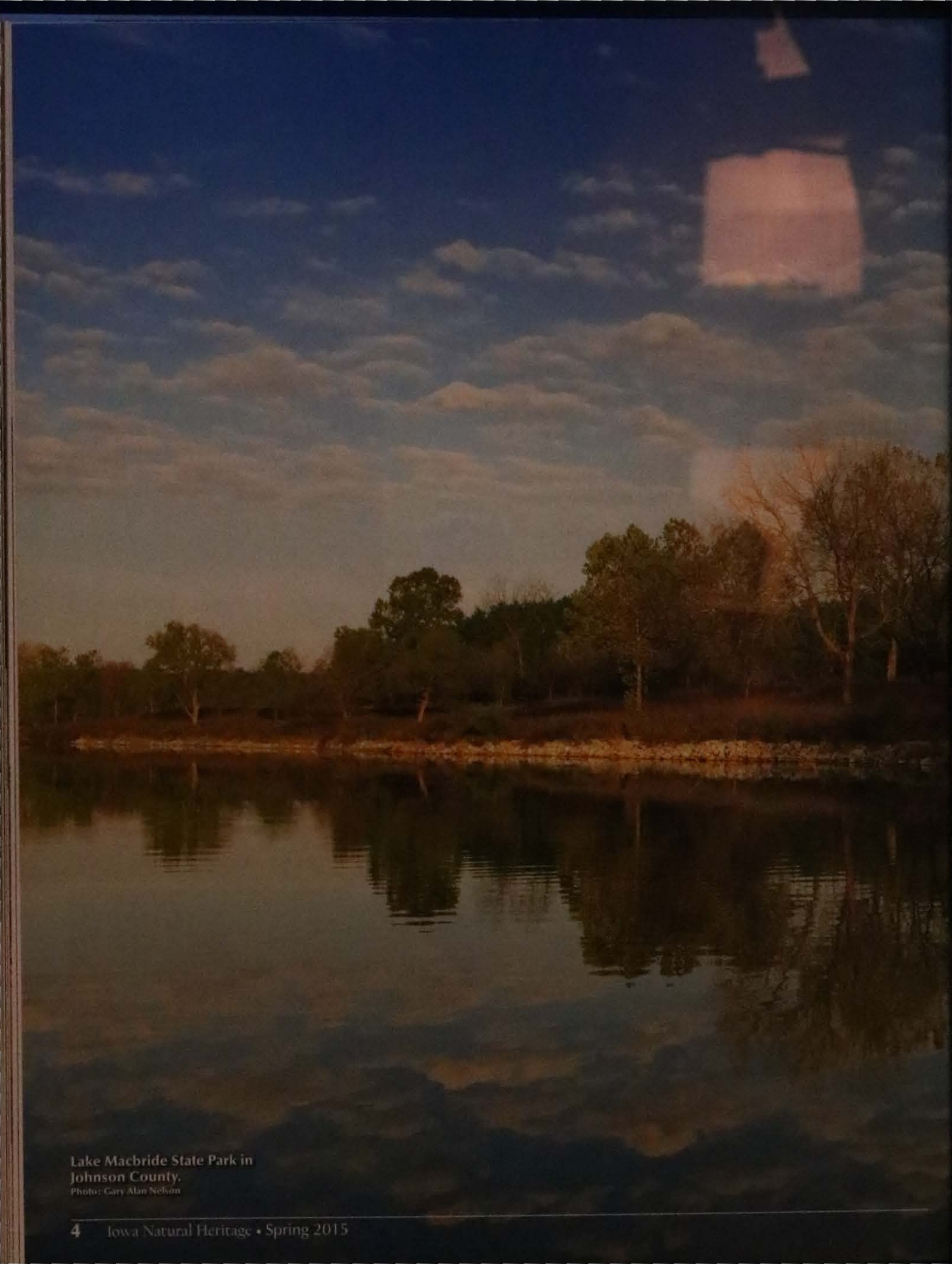
26 Vitamin N: The Cedar Valley Nature Trail

The 52-mile CVNT is one of the very first railroad corridors transformed to a recreation trail in Iowa.

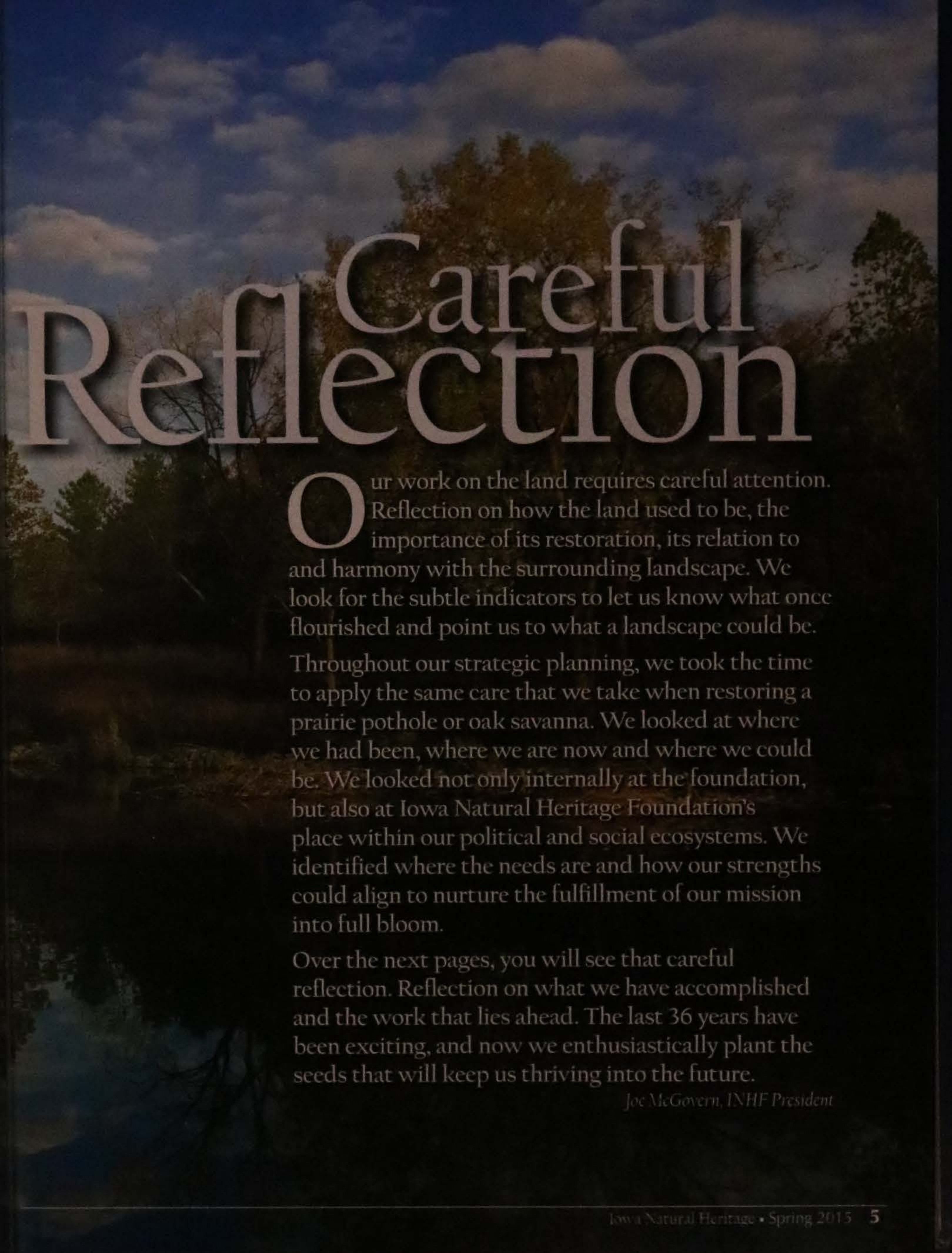
27 Looking Out for Iowa

Take action for nature this spring: plant a pollinator garden, serve on a REAP committee or adopt a park, garden or trail.





Lake Macbride State Park in
Johnson County.
Photo: Gary Alan Nelson

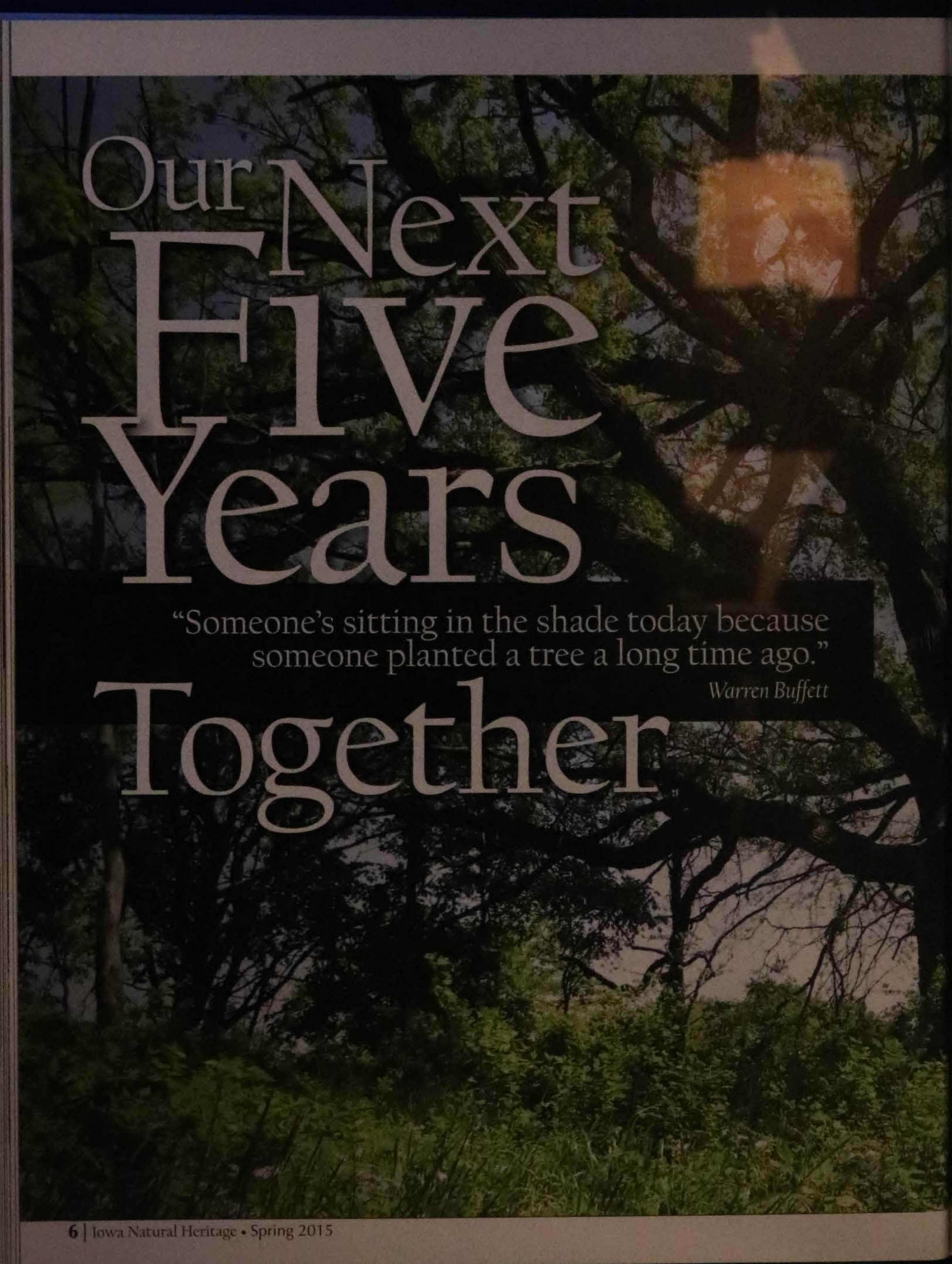


Reflection Careful

Our work on the land requires careful attention. Reflection on how the land used to be, the importance of its restoration, its relation to and harmony with the surrounding landscape. We look for the subtle indicators to let us know what once flourished and point us to what a landscape could be. Throughout our strategic planning, we took the time to apply the same care that we take when restoring a prairie pothole or oak savanna. We looked at where we had been, where we are now and where we could be. We looked not only internally at the foundation, but also at Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation's place within our political and social ecosystems. We identified where the needs are and how our strengths could align to nurture the fulfillment of our mission into full bloom.

Over the next pages, you will see that careful reflection. Reflection on what we have accomplished and the work that lies ahead. The last 36 years have been exciting, and now we enthusiastically plant the seeds that will keep us thriving into the future.

Joe McGovern, INHF President



Our Next
FIVE
Years

“Someone’s sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago.”

Warren Buffett

Together

PROTECT



STEWARD



CONNECT



STRENGTHEN

It's always good to pause and see where you're going:

- To look at the trends and opportunities that are changing all around
- To explore new ideas that hold promise for effective impact
- To re-commit to the things done exceptionally well

Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation board and staff did just that when we recently developed our five-year strategic plan. Solid Ground Consulting, a nationally recognized firm, guided an energizing process. We listened for insights important to members, partners and Iowa leaders, then discussed and planned for future action.

INHF's core work, mission and goals remain constant. Some efforts will receive concentrated energy, and new strategies emerged that can increase our impact.

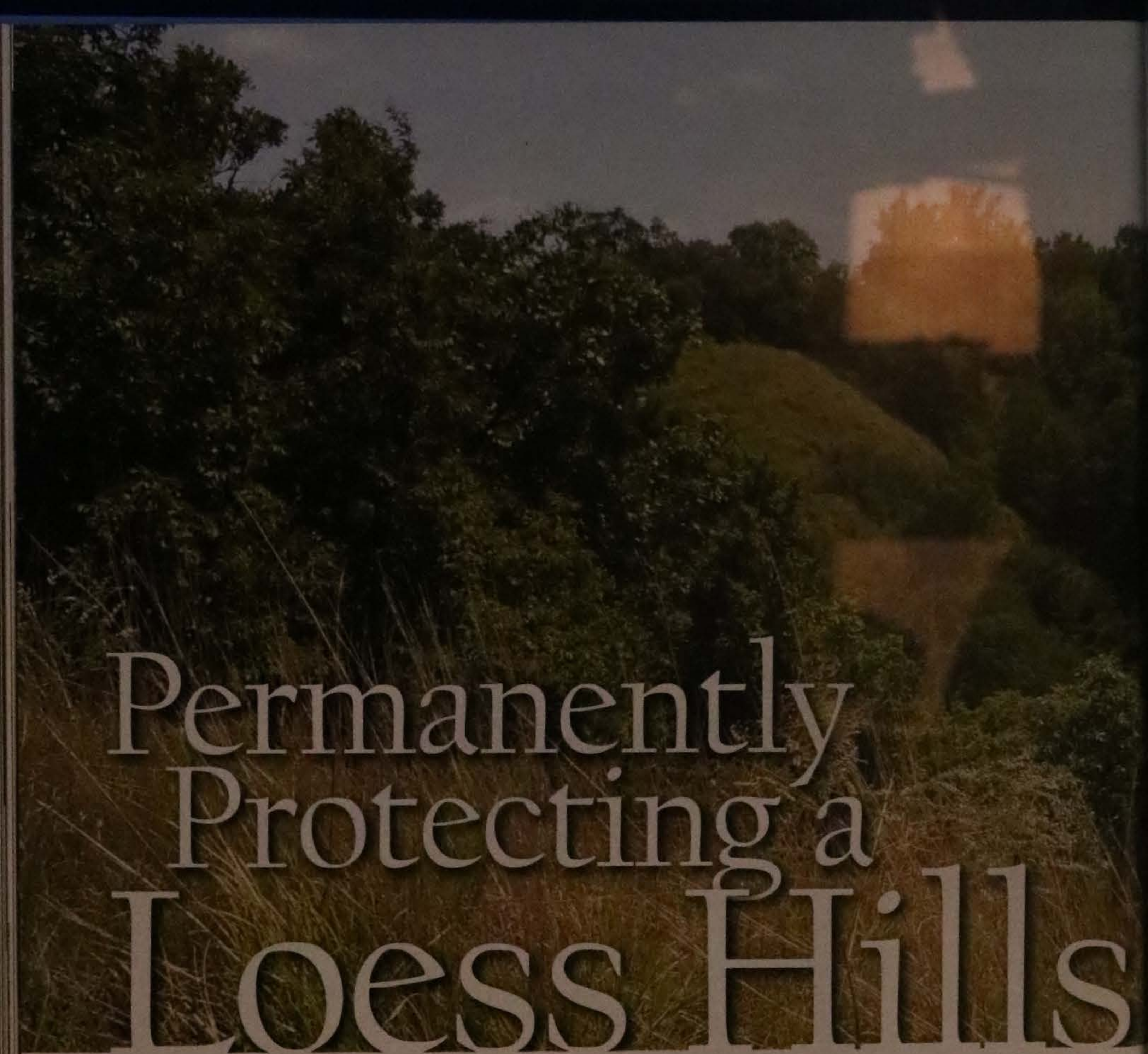
The plan re-affirms who we serve:

- **Nature** in all its beauty and diversity, all across Iowa. We speak and act on behalf of the land, water and wildlife, which have no voices of their own.
- **Future Iowans** who deserve to inherit clean water, healthy soils, diverse habitat and places to enjoy the outdoors. The special places we permanently protect together, plus a strong land ethic, become our legacy for them — our natural heritage.
- **People who want to take action** for Iowa nature. We serve landowners who want to protect their land, donors and volunteers who want to support great projects and see results, and community leaders and agencies who work to create a trail, park or wildlife area. We love to bring these caring achievers together!

The features in this annual report issue focus on examples of actions that uphold the four strategic goals in the INHF 2015-2019 plan:

Protect, Steward, Connect and Strengthen INHF.

Every INHF donor and volunteer is part of this plan's action, and the results belong to all of us. If you want to know more about the plan, contact Lisa Hein at lhein@inhf.org or Anita O'Gara at aogara@inhf.org or call 800-475-1846.



Permanently Protecting a Loess Hills

John Wanamaker may not know precisely how many babies he delivered in his career as a doctor, but he can tell you that he has fledged exactly 950 baby bluebirds since he created a bluebird trail in 1993 on his Fremont County property.

The peaceful beauty of oak savanna, woodlands and prairie remnants in the Loess Hills will continue to thrive thanks to John Wanamaker's action to protect this land.

This is just one example of the care Wanamaker has taken to protect the land and wildlife on the 411-acre Loess Hills property he inherited from his aunt and uncle in 1989. He and his late wife, Karen, helped preserve this invaluable piece of land through a significant bargain sale to Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation in 2014; the Wanamakers donated two-thirds of the land's value. The site will soon transfer to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources to become a wildlife management area. The property is adjacent to Waubonsie State Park and is bordered to the west by the Loess Hills Scenic Byway.

Wanamaker and 17 other Iowans were honored in March at Gift to Iowa's Future Day. Landowners who donated



Eli Slusher Wildlife Management Area

John Wanamaker chose the name to honor the original homesteader on the property, who received his first land grant from President Franklin Pierce in 1853.

County: Fremont

Land: 411 Acres in the Loess Hills

Special features: high quality remnant prairie, oak savanna, woodland, scenic vistas and retired hay land

Partners: INHF, Iowa DNR



www.inhf.org/spring-2015-magazine.cfm



PROTECT

Partner with landowners and conservation organizations to permanently protect important and threatened lands across Iowa, which benefits water, wildlife and people.

Why

Permanent land protection is the heart of Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. Conservation-minded landowners, agencies and leaders rely on INHF for advice, quick action and assistance to save special places. With INHF, landowners know their land is always protected. We bring broad and deep experience to the table, having protected more than 1,000 diverse and wild places since INHF was founded in 1979.

Strategies

Outreach We will make it easier for landowners and their advisors to find us when our services are needed. INHF is experienced in creating conservation legacies through estate planning, land donations, conservation easements and other options.

Lead land protection We will continue the full range of land protection projects, from pristine natural areas to mixed-use working lands. We'll create opportunities to expand public lands with conservation agencies. We'll ensure that conservation easement lands and donated lands are protected in perpetuity according to donors' wishes. We'll focus extra attention on regions where the natural resources are extraordinary and the pressures are high.

How to help

Can you open doors to landowners, farm managers, attorneys or other professionals who help landowners with long-term decisions about their Iowa land? Contact Anita O'Gara at 800-475-1846 or aogara@inhf.org to learn more.

Treasure

land or land value for conservation were presented with certificates of recognition by Lt. Gov. Kim Reynolds and Iowa DNR director Chuck Gipp.

"I want to thank INHF and the DNR for providing the mechanism to make this possible," Wanamaker said at the event. "If not for INHF, who would have helped us to do what we wanted to do? I don't know how landowners could be sure their land would be permanently protected without the help of INHF and the DNR."

A deep family connection to the land

Wanamaker's connection to this piece of land started long before he retired from medicine in Rock Port, Missouri, and moved here with Karen in the early 1990s. His uncle and aunt, Jack and Jean Good, bought the property in 1938.

"I've been going out there from the time I was seven. It was like a second home to me. We used to ride our bikes out there from town before I could drive," said Wanamaker, who grew up three miles away in Hamburg, Iowa.



During their five decades of ownership, the Goods created an extensive path system throughout the property, fenced the pastures for cattle and briefly grew corn on the terraced hilltops. They also dammed a stream to create a large pond. "Many pleasant hours were spent by Jack, Jean, family and friends driving and hiking through the area, cooking at the bluff top cabin and picnicking and paddleboating at the pond," Wanamaker wrote in his personal history of the property.

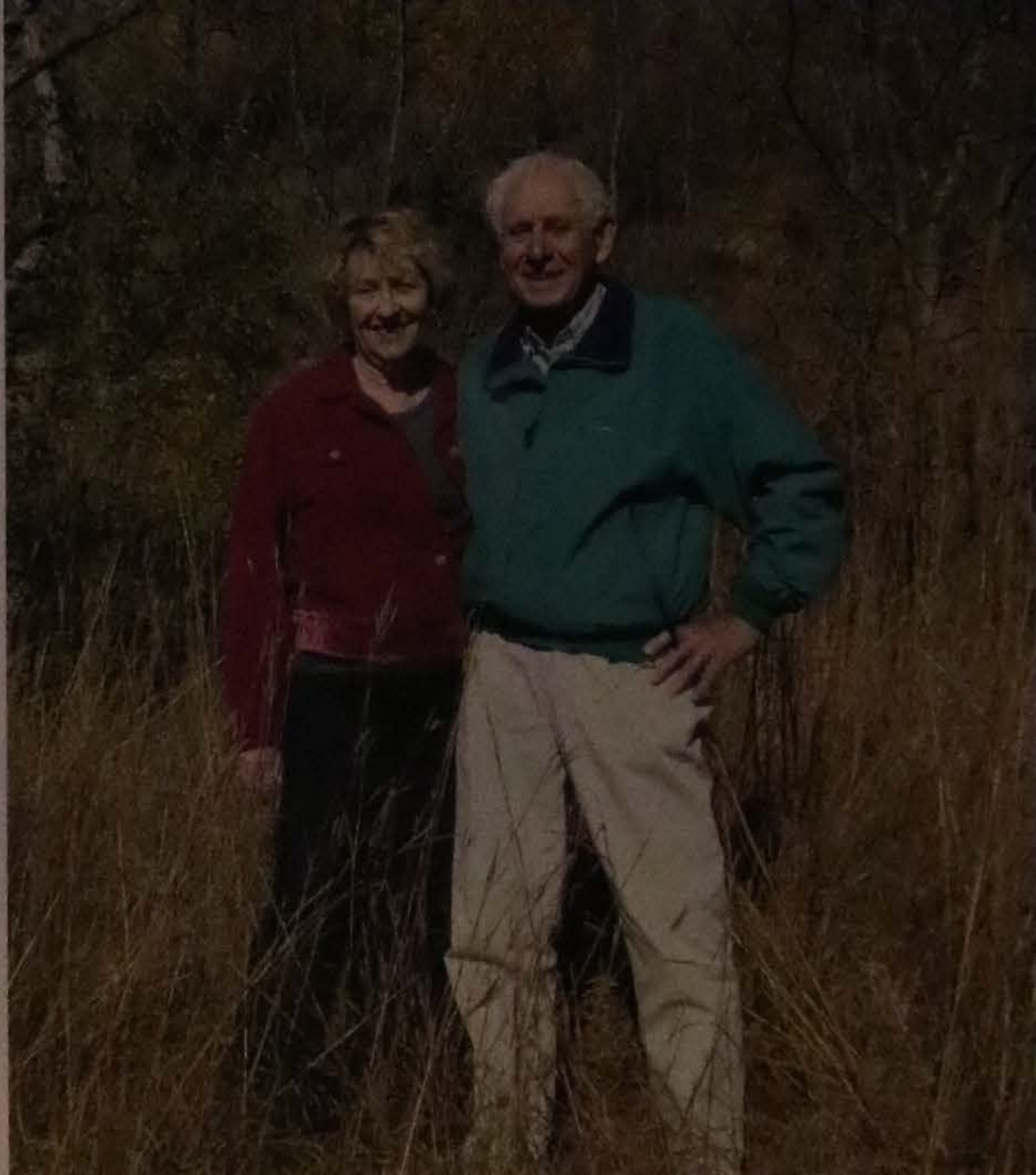
John's favorite spot on the property is the bluff ridge that overlooks the Missouri River bottom. "You can see Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri — and on a clear day you can see Kansas."

Jack Good also started the practice of cutting and clearing invasive Eastern red cedar and Autumn olive trees, which Wanamaker continued through his ownership. "(We) have found it an attainable but never-ending goal," he wrote.

Wanamaker may have been a doctor by trade, but he was a self-taught conservationist. He removed most of the interior fencing on the property and through prescribed burns encouraged the return of native prairie. His favorite spot on the property is the bluff ridge that overlooks the Missouri River bottom. "You can see Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri — and on a clear day, you can see Kansas."

Wanamaker's protection of the land was a gradual progression. His personal stewardship of the property over the last few decades has been thoughtful and thorough. Then in 2007, the Wanamakers placed a conservation easement on the land through INHF that ensures the natural state of the land stays intact in perpetuity. Finally, when addressing the question of who

John and Karen Wanamaker
on their land in 2007.




would protect and restore the land after they were gone, the Wanamakers decided to entrust INHF and the Iowa DNR to do so.

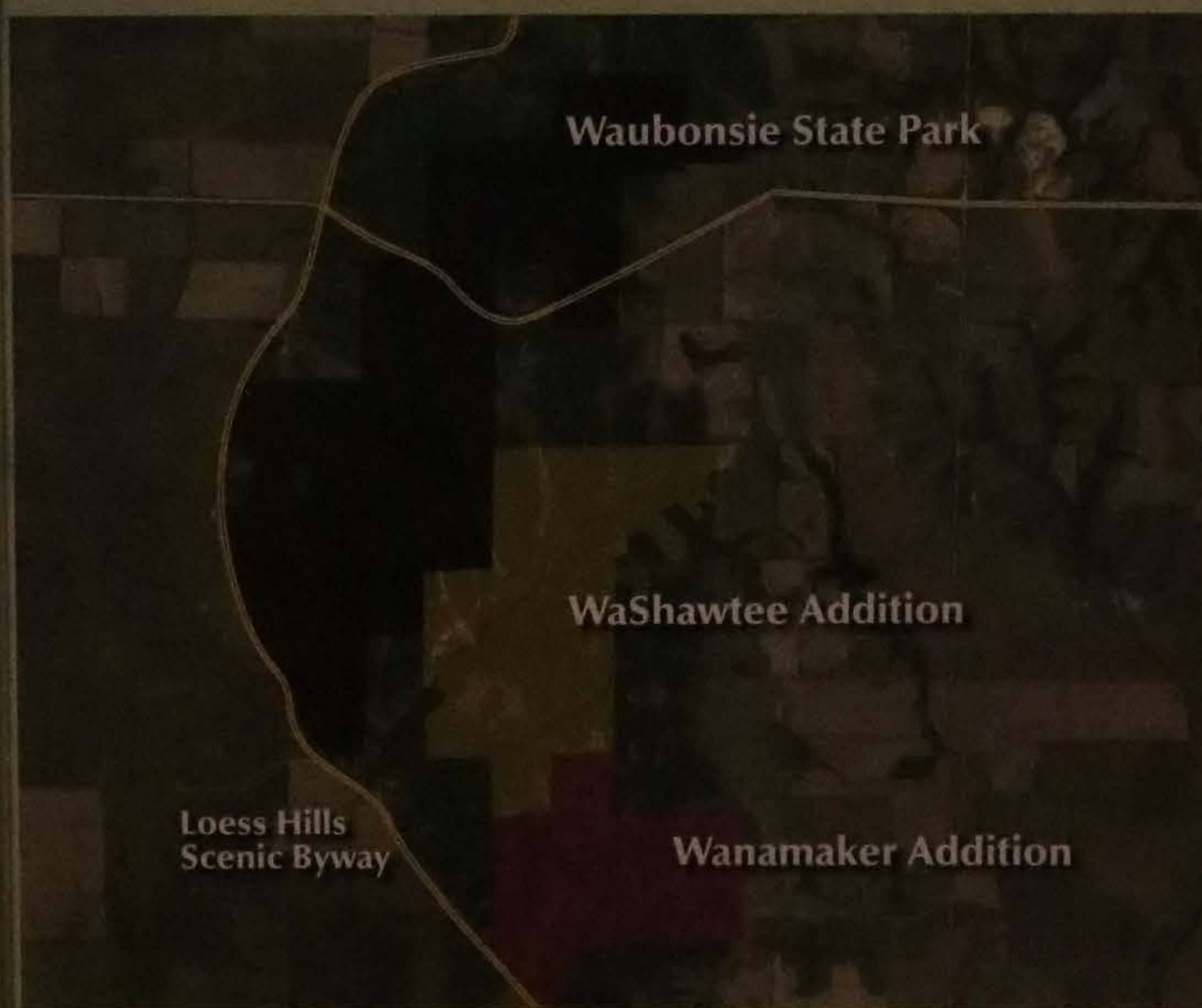
Karen passed away in the fall of 2014, and John moved into a house in Hamburg. He trusts that INHF and the Iowa DNR will maintain the land as he hoped.

"I wanted the land to be preserved like it was, and I was afraid if I sold it to a private owner, it would deteriorate and the invasives would come in," he said. "INHF was able to assure me that it would be protected."

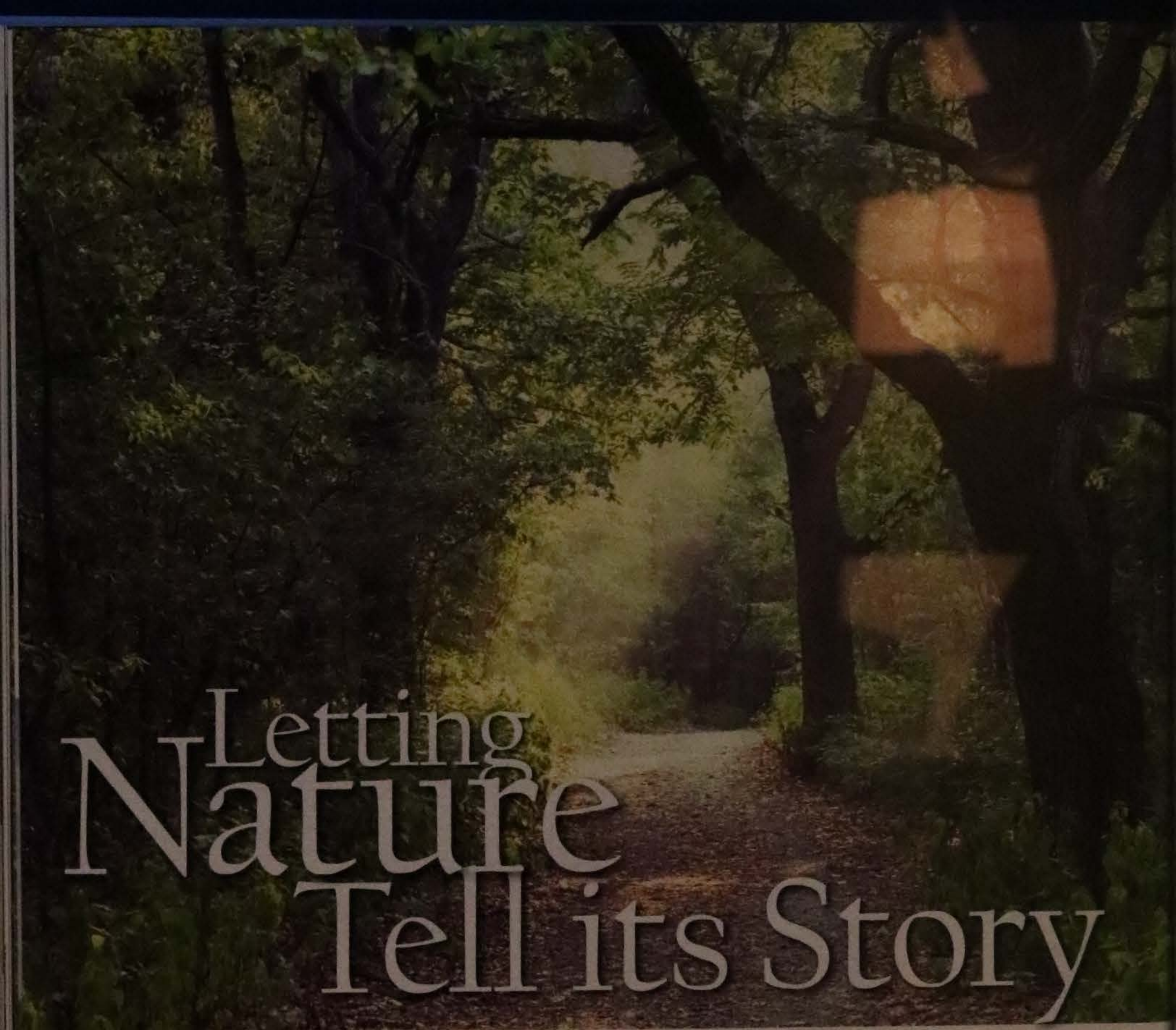
He's also hoping the bluebirds are just the start of more wildlife in the area.

"When we first started, the only birds you'd see were house sparrows. By the time we left, there were so many songbirds! The work we did provided more habitat for them. It's wonderful the way the bluebirds have come back." 

By Joe Jayjack, Communications Specialist



The Wanamaker property is the second piece of land INHF has helped protect in the area in the last decade. In 2005, INHF assisted in the purchase of the former WaShawtee Girl Scout Camp. It has since become part of Waubonsie State Park. By protecting the 411 acres next to an existing 1,958-acre state park, this project will expand the protection of important habitat, open space and ensure scenic beauty in perpetuity.



Letting Nature Tell its Story

With over 1,800 miles of multi-use trails in the state — and thousands more miles of water and soft trails — there are endless opportunities for Iowans to discover new adventures along Iowa's natural corridors.

Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation's Iowa By Trail app, released in May 2014, helps trail-goers navigate trails statewide, as well as discover hidden gems along their route, highlighting local stops in trail communities. These stops are often restaurants, state parks, patches of native prairie or trail amenities. Since its launch, Iowa By Trail has been downloaded by over 6,500 people.

"Bike tourism is such a big market for us, with RAGBRAI and the growing trails scene," said Amy Zeigler, digital marketing manager at the Iowa Tourism Office.

Zeigler has seen an increase in demand for specific trail resources over the last few years, and not just from Iowans. "We get requests all the time for trail maps and what users can do along the trails," said Zeigler. "We're excited to partner with INHF because the resources the foundation has created are vital. It's becoming so much more crucial to market our trails and get visitors and tourists what they want."

Above: This tree-canopied hiking trail winds its way through a Loess Hills woodland in Waubesa State Park in Fremont County.

Opposite: INHF land stewardship interns paddle the Upper Iowa River in Winneshiek County.



CONNECT

Strengthen the connection between conserved places and the people who love them.

Why

The future of Iowa's land and waters depends on the attitudes and actions of Iowans, today and tomorrow. Personally connecting with nature and becoming informed on opportunities is necessary for Iowans to take action. As people become less active outdoors, it is increasingly important to foster that bond and commitment. Many committed Iowans look to INHF for opportunities for action, including ways to work toward policy changes with elected leaders.

Strategies

Invite We'll offer more ways for people to connect with nature and support conservation in Iowa. We will expand and promote the Iowa by Trail app, bringing people closer to nature on trails. We will host gatherings on the land.

Speak up We'll inform and support Iowans who want to influence public issues critical to private, voluntary land conservation. We'll provide a strong non-partisan voice for Iowa conservation in the public arena, including dedicated public funding for Iowa conservation.

How to help

Would you like to help promote the Iowa by Trail app and other ways to experience nature? Contact Kerri Sorrell at ksorrell@inhf.org or 800-475-1846. Or are you interested in how you can speak up for conservation policies and funding? Contact Marian Gelb at mgelb@inhf.org or 800-475-1846 to learn more.

experience Iowa's waterways, though.

"The first time I paddled, my friend took me on the Des Moines River, under the Euclid Street bridge in Des Moines at 6:30 in the morning," said Wenck. "Cars were buzzing by above us, and that's the world I'd always lived in. But right after that bridge, I looked up and saw a bald eagle perched in a cottonwood, at a time when bald eagles hadn't come back yet to Iowa. That was the moment I realized there was a whole new world for Iowa."

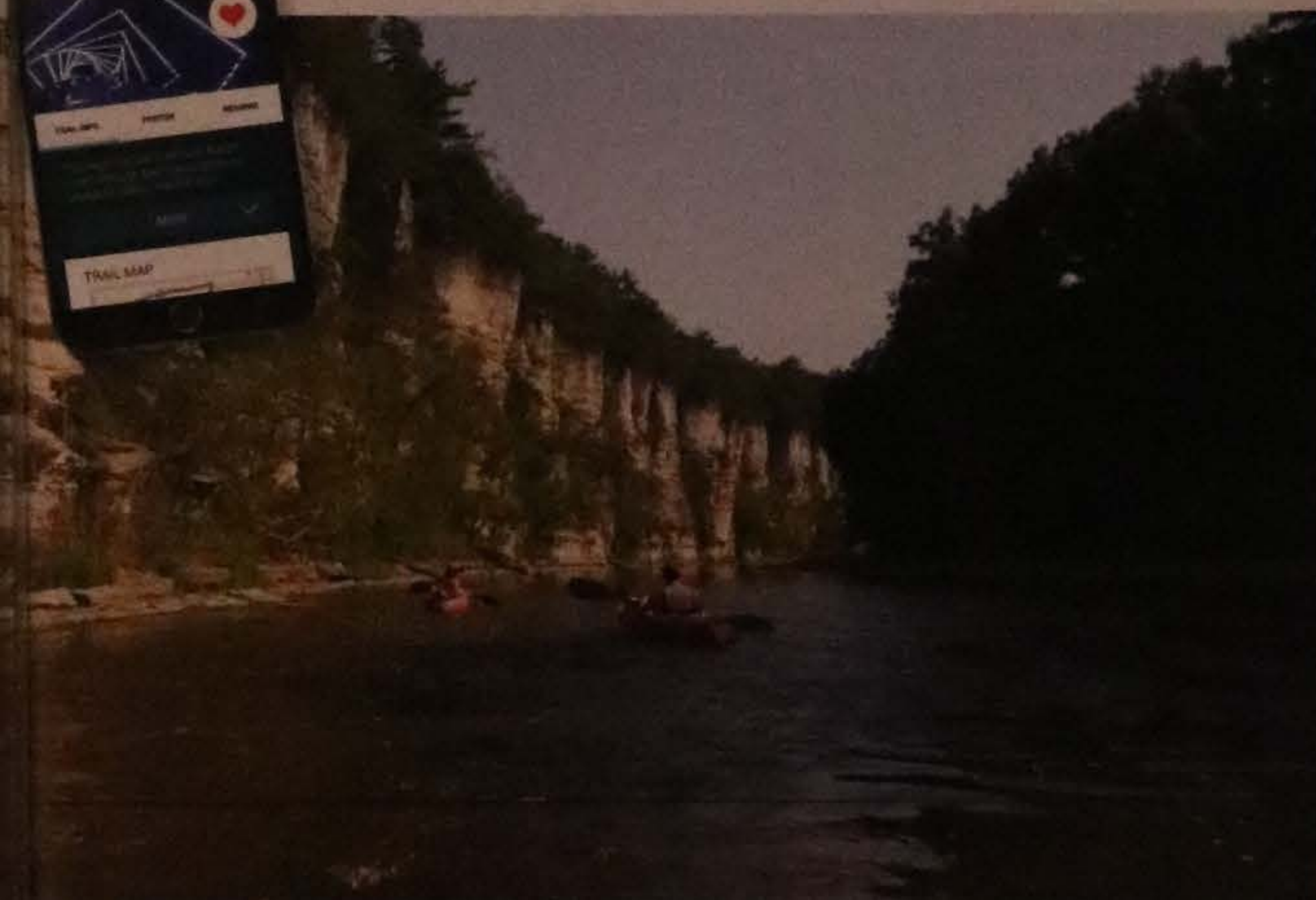
Wenck sees the Iowa By Trail app as a vehicle for this kind of discovery.

"It's as simple as getting people to a place, and natural areas take over from there," said Wenck. "In the conservation world, our overarching goal is to give Iowans the chance to interact with these trails, greenways and natural areas. This app is a way to tell people where to go. After that, nature does the rest."

By Kerri Sorrell, Digital Outreach Assistant

Iowa By Trail

Experience why Iowa is the trails capital of the nation. Find the app in the Apple App Store, the Google Play Store or at IowaByTrail.com





Anna's Place

David Marlow pauses to share a story about how the woods in Boone County were cut for lumber to supply the burgeoning young city of Des Moines in the late 1800s. Thanks to the vision of the Marlows and Dr. JH Gardner, their woods thrive again and are forever protected.

David Marlow climbs the hillside trails, framed all around with oak, hickory, maple, ironwood and walnut trees, with the ease of someone who has made this journey thousands of times, each step leading him to discover something new and connecting him to someone precious.



Marlow's 60 acres of woodland adjoins 80 acres owned by Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation that was a gift from Marlow's father-in-law, Dr. JH Gardner, in 2009. This land, including three pockets of remnant prairie — golden gems tucked among the trees on south-facing slopes — is Marlow's sanctuary. It's a reverent place of woodlands and a crystal, gurgling stream winding its way along the foot of ravines to the Des Moines River. The land offers Marlow soul-restoring respite from power lines, buildings and other icons of industry. "There's a peace and unity here; this is a place where nature is coping."

Marlow shared this land with his wife and partner, Anna Beret Gardner, for over 20 years. They raised their son, Gavin, here. When they first bought this land from Anna's father, "It was a bare slate, and all I could think about was it needed a lot of work," said Marlow. It was Anna who had the vision to build a home that would leave as small a footprint on the land as possible.

The energy-efficient home they built — almost entirely themselves — was designed to bring in natural light, stay warm during bitter winter nights with only a wood stove and circulate cooling breezes during sweltering summer days.

Inspired by nature

This land supported Anna's work as an artist. In the woods, Anna found the inspiration and materials that evolved with her carving and care into artwork full of meaning. An acclaimed artist, she exhibited her works at the Smithsonian Craft Show in Washington, D.C. Marlow has a favorite piece hanging in his living area. "I wouldn't let her sell this one — the soaring eagle here.

Above: Anna's artwork, like this soaring eagle which represented Anna's triumph over breast cancer, was inspired and made from wood found on the their land.

Below: NREM students from Iowa State University work on clearing Eastern red cedars from a wooded hillside during a volunteer day at Anna Gardner Woodland in Boone County.



STEWARD

Ensure the long-term health and benefits of conserved lands.

Why

Permanent protection is just half the story for vulnerable places like native prairie and savanna remnants. Stewardship practices are necessary to remedy the spread of invasive species which can damage the integrity and resilience of natural lands.

INHF is in a unique position to invite more lowans to share in this work at protected places — some permanently entrusted to INHF's care, others in our hands only while awaiting transfer to a conservation agency for public enjoyment.

Strategies

Capacity We will increase land stewardship activity to improve the ecological diversity and health of the natural areas and working lands under INHF care.

Opportunity We will make it possible for more people to experience the land transformation process and have the satisfaction of working together to make a difference for Iowa.

Support We will support public and private landowners in the stewardship of permanently protected lands with help from our land stewardship staff, intern crew and volunteer program.

How to help

Would you like to volunteer on the land? Contact Mary Runkel at mrunkel@inhf.org or 800-475-1846. Are you interested in making a gift to increase land stewardship capacity in Iowa or support the INHF intern program? Contact Anita O'Gara at aogara@inhf.org or 800-475-1846 to learn more.



Its spreading wings are from butternut; the slightly misshapen breasts, created from walnut. The piece represents Anna's triumph over breast cancer."

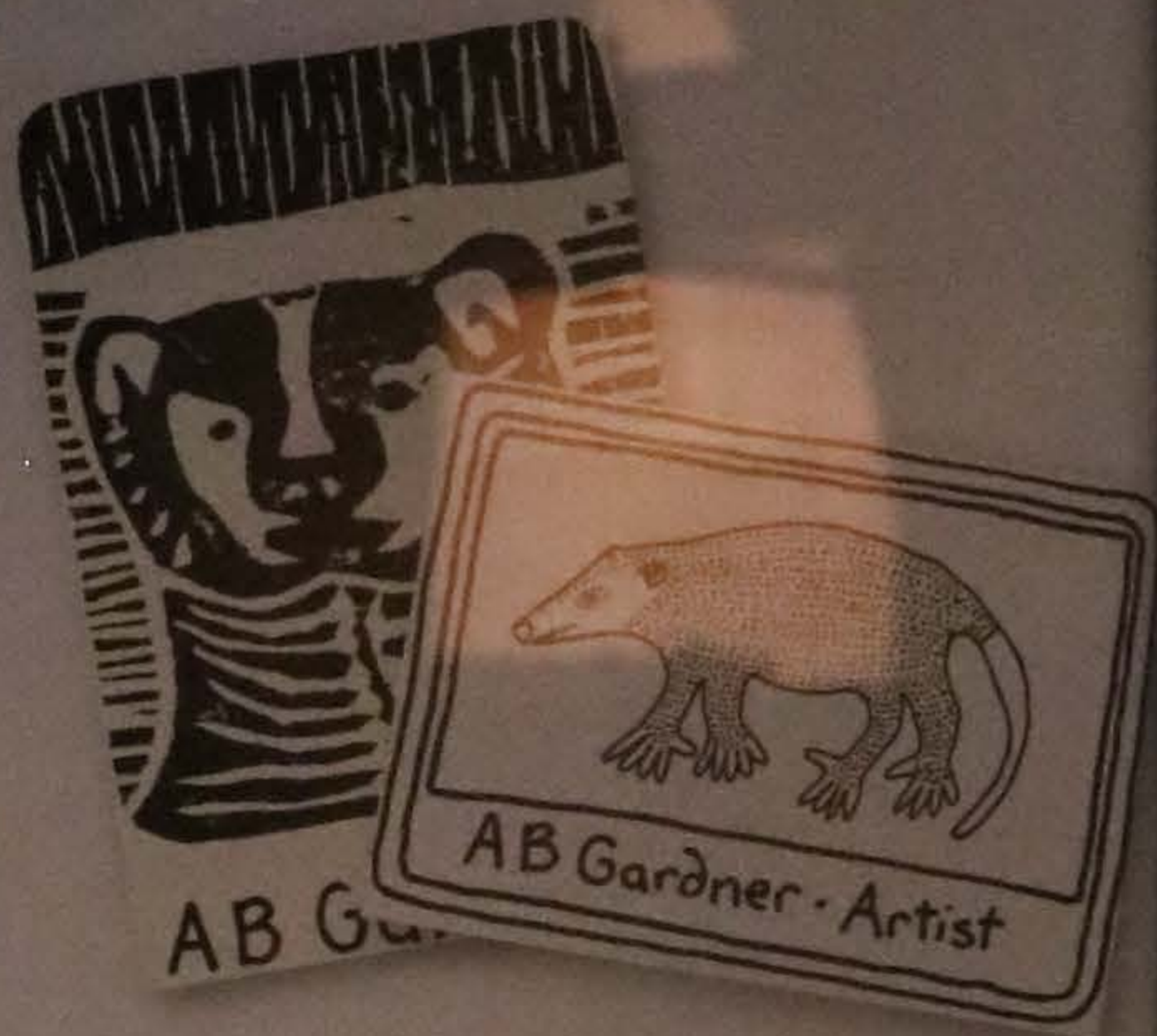
After Anna was diagnosed, she returned to college at Iowa State University and earned a bachelor's degree in biological and premedical illustration and then continued on to earn her master's degree in interdisciplinary graduate studies, specializing in art, English and botany. While at ISU, Anna developed working relationships with the botany and ecology, evolution and organismal biology departments.

As she learned more about sound land management, she began to clear the cedar trees from the remnant prairies on the properties Marlow, she and her father owned.

Continued commitment to care for the land

Today, graduate students from ISU's Natural Resources and Ecology Management program and INHF's land stewardship staff continue Anna's passion to restore this land. Working alongside Marlow, entranced by his stories and inspired by his commitment, a new generation of conservationists nurtures the land toward a state similar to 200 years ago, before westward progress disrupted the natural balance.

This land was important to Anna. So important, that when Anna was faced with recognizing her own mortality — and Marlow's — during her battle against cancer, she made her wish to protect this land clear to her family. Anna passed away in 2006 from a fall. It was Anna's passion for nature as an active conservationist



that prompted Dr. Gardner to donate his 80-acre property in honor of his daughter.

Marlow found support and comfort in continuing to care for the land. He also found joy in sharing his passion for his woods, stream and prairie with INHF land stewardship staff who have worked to restore the remnant prairies, woodland and oak savanna on the neighboring 80 acres. He witnessed INHF's commitment to the land. "They share my vision to recover the land to its natural woodland state."

Relationships strengthen stewardship

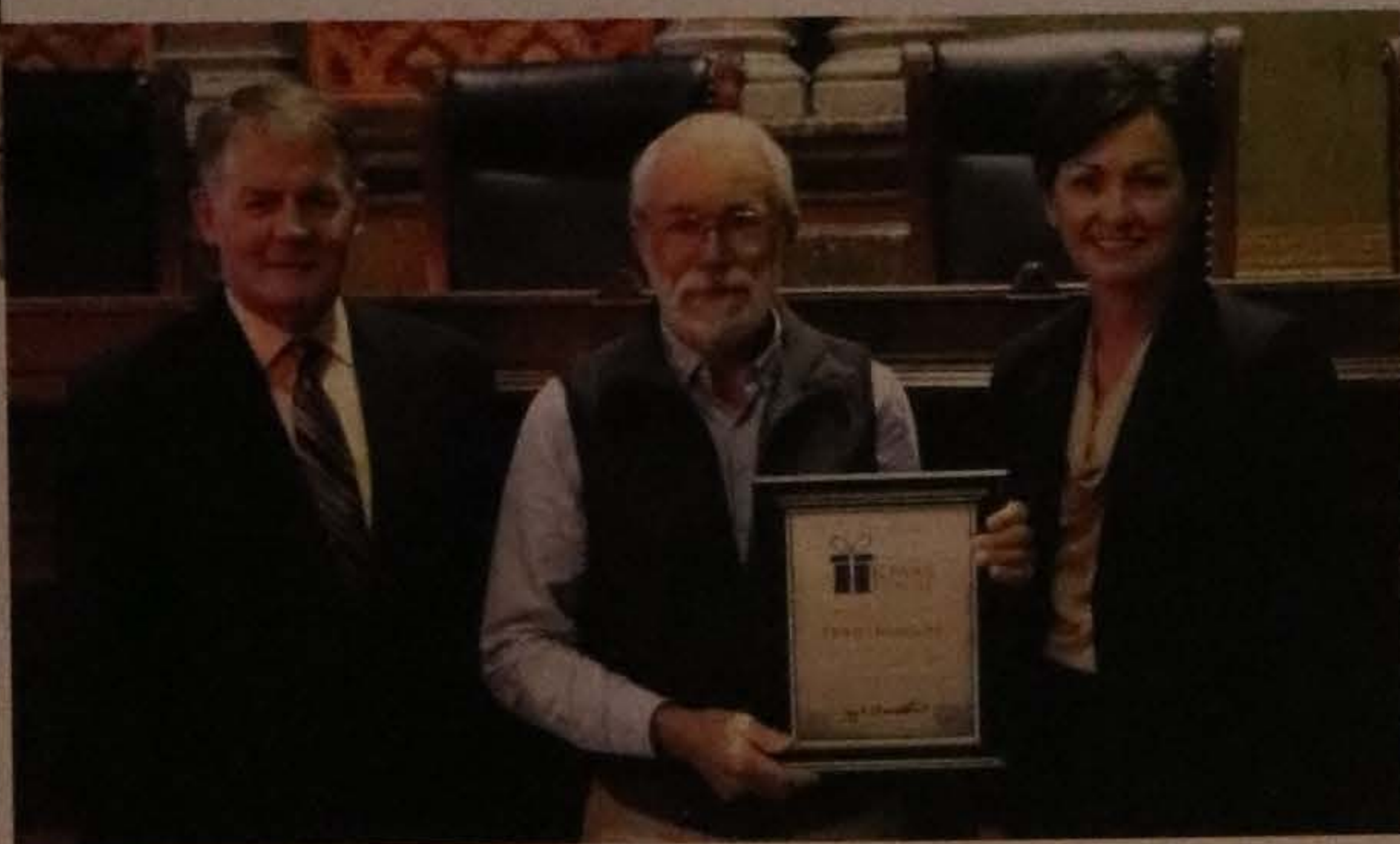
INHF land stewardship specialist Ryan Schmidt and Marlow have forged a partnership and friendship through their work together. Schmidt says, "David has a sincere passion for the land. He's forward thinking and incredibly humble. Listening to his perspectives on caring for his land inspires me to think forward like David in my land stewardship work. I have such great respect for David, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to support his dreams for these woods and prairies."

Marlow considers the relationship with Ryan and other INHF staff special, too. In December 2014, Marlow placed his 60 acres in INHF's permanent care through a conservation easement. The land will remain in his private ownership, but there are permanent protections that will stay with the property in perpetuity. "Their philosophy of working with landowners to understand and focus on the landowners' wishes and the importance of relationships to protecting land is a primary reason I extended our partnership. That and INHF's practices and scale. I felt a real sense of relief knowing that INHF will always care for Anna's and my land."

It comforts Marlow to know that the land will always be

Above: Artwork from Anna's card designs.

Below: Iowa DNR Director Chuck Gipp (left) and Lt. Gov. Kim Reynolds (right) celebrate with David Marlow at Gift to Iowa's Future Day, March 23, 2015.




“I felt a real sense of relief knowing that INHF will always care for Anna’s and my land.”

David Marlow

here for others after him to walk its hillsides, to breathe in its beauty, to help the land thrive. “Whoever winds up with this property when I do move on or whatever...well, I hope they appreciate that I’ve taken the first step to protect this place. I want them to know that you don’t have to donate or put an easement on a thousand acres to make an impact. That you work with and do the best with what you have. It doesn’t end up costing anything. And, it benefits so many.”

Marlow will continue exploring these woods that connect him to Anna. On a full moon, you might find him walking up to Anna’s most treasured place, the highest point on the land, remembering, “Our favorite hikes were winter nights, snow reflecting the moonlight, the trees casting a moon shadow, seeing everything and not seeing anything at all. Yeah, on a snow-covered, full moon night, we walked.” Often, Marlow will select a rock — perhaps from Anna’s collection curated from their

family’s many travels or maybe a rock discovered in a ravine on his land — and carry it along the trail to Anna’s place, that highest point on the land. At the summit, he’ll carefully place the rock along with countless others on a rock pile, faintly resembling a bishop chess piece, that now stands about three feet tall. He does this to remember. “But it’s not the rock pile...it’s the carrying that’s important,” Marlow says, his voice full of emotion.

With a gift and an easement, Anna’s family ensures that this land so sacred to Anna will continue to cope and find its natural state under INHF’s care. Future conservationists will work this land and perhaps, like the Marlows and Gardners before them, will turn their faces to the breeze when they reach Anna’s place and breathe in the stillness, remembering and thanking these families for their vision. 

By Lori Southard Howe, Contributing Writer



Anna Gardner Woodland and David Marlow Easement
Boone County

Land: 140 Acres — 60 acres placed in INHF’s care through a conservation easement adjacent to 80 acres donated in 2009

Special features: remnant prairies, oak savanna, hickory and maple woodlands, a healthy, clear stream that feeds into the Des Moines River and American Indian artifacts



www.inhf.org/spring-2015-magazine.cfm

At the highest point on the Marlow land, David Marlow shows Ryan Schmidt (left) and ISU NREM student Louis Hilgemann (right) a small mammal jaw found during a land stewardship project day.





Geitel's legacy launched our INHF volunteer program, creating opportunities like this native grass seed harvest at Breen Prairie Farm in Jones County.



Lack of a volunteer coordinator was holding the organization back.

Thanks to Winakor's gift, INHF volunteer coordinator Mary Runkel was hired to help new volunteers find their niche and organize events where volunteers can help care for land. The INHF board's choice to use part of Winakor's unrestricted legacy to launch a volunteer program is bringing innovation and many new faces to INHF's work.

To date, more than 300 people have already volunteered with INHF in just two years, and the program continues to bloom. In 2014 alone, 287 people volunteered their time with INHF at 17 events, totaling 1,246 hours of work. Projects ranged from a prairie seed harvest at Breen Prairie Farm in Jones County to a trash pickup around Clear Lake to invasive species removal in the Loess Hills of Monona County.

Lasting impact

Winakor gave to INHF generously each of the 11 years she was a member. Even now, her legacy provides annual support for INHF's work — and it will always do so.

The majority of Winakor's legacy was invested by the INHF board to support future needs. The earnings from her gift provide \$29,000 for INHF's work this year, and

every year, to be used where funds are needed most.

The board chooses to invest most unrestricted bequests in order to increase INHF's stability and capacity to do more for Iowa's land, water and wildlife — now and in the future. For donors, this fiscal discipline ensures that a final gift to the foundation is a truly lasting gift. In a way, it extends and magnifies membership support automatically, year after year.

It's not really the size of any one legacy that matters most. Rather it's the combined power of many legacies that transforms our ability to work for Iowa. Together, past legacy donors continue to provide about a half-million dollars to INHF's work each year — that's nearly one-third of the foundation's basic financial needs.

If you'd like to consider making a legacy gift that is empowering, lasting and even transformational — one that fits your interests and values — contact Cheri Grauer, INHF major gifts steward, at 800-475-1846 or cgrauer@inhf.org.

By Anita O'Gara, Vice President and Development Director



Legacy

Saving regions that bring us joy — places in which we feel we're most at home

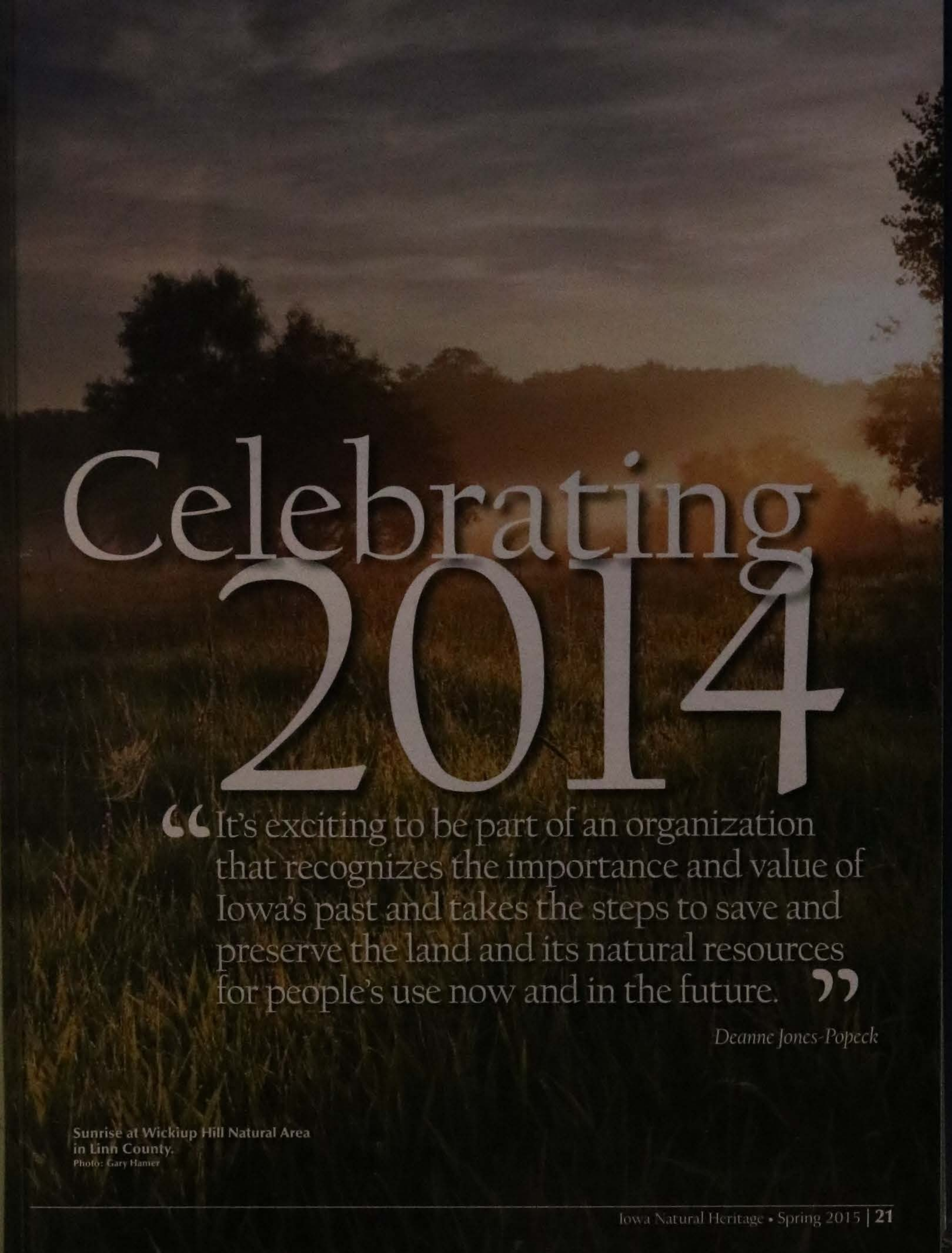
Impact

Ceaselessly extending our support — to protect and restore nature, across Iowa, beyond our lifetimes



Personal

Touching the kinds of land we love best — prairies, wetlands, trails, woodlands, rivers, trout streams ...



Celebrating 2014

“It’s exciting to be part of an organization that recognizes the importance and value of Iowa’s past and takes the steps to save and preserve the land and its natural resources for people’s use now and in the future.”

Deanne Jones-Popeck

Sunrise at Wickiup Hill Natural Area
in Linn County.
Photo: Gary Hamer

Celebrating 2014 Milestones

Thanks to our supporters and partners, we can all celebrate these milestones achieved in 2014.

Strategies DETERMINED

The INHF board and staff assessed trends and opportunities, then creatively strategized ways for the foundation to work with greatest impact in the next five years.

Legacy donors REMEMBERED

Frederick J. Lorenzen, a loyal member who was close to some of our projects in the Quad Cities region, surprised us with an amazingly generous bequest. We remember Fred and so many other special foundation friends with gratitude each time we put their legacies to work for Iowa's land, water, wildlife and people.

Iowa By Trail app LAUNCHED

Iowa's trails are now at your fingertips. We developed this free app and website to encourage people to enjoy the trails INHF has worked so hard to provide as a gateway to nature. Close to 7,000 people are already using the app to explore Iowa.

More than 1,000 places PERMANENTLY PROTECTED

In 2014, INHF surpassed a total of 1,000 places permanently protected through the foundation — special places that will remain natural for future generations to enjoy.

Iowa Land PROTECTED

Members, landowners and partners worked with INHF to protect more than 5,000 acres at 39 sites in 2014. Without your support, the expanded land, water and wildlife protections would not have been realized.

Six of our 2014 projects were conservation easements, which are voluntary agreements that protect a place's special features — natural, cultural, historic, agricultural or scenic — while the landowner retains ownership and use. The agreement is permanent, and INHF visits these sites annually to ensure compliance with current and future landowners.

Three of the 2014 projects were donated to INHF for our long-term care. We are honored by the confidence shown by these landowners, who entrusted the stewardship of their land to INHF. These sites are occasionally shared with the public through volunteer workdays, hikes and other gatherings.

Most of the remaining projects are or will eventually be public lands where people can connect with nature. Those currently open to the public are noted in the descriptions below.

5,340 Acres Protected. 39 Land Projects.

Conservation Features Legend

Woodlands Prairies/Grassland Wetlands Park Streams/Rivers

Conservation Easements

Boone County

76 acres in the Des Moines River corridor including quality oak hickory woodland and grassland. Donated by the Iowa Wildlife Center.

Boone County

6.5 acres consisting of an oak savanna with two converging, wooded ravines that drain into a tributary of the Des Moines River. Donated by Danielle and Don Wirth.

Boone County

60 acres located in the Des Moines River Valley along a major bird migration corridor. Comprised of oak hickory woodland, the property provides for a diversity of wildflowers, sedges, fungi and animals. Donated by David Marlow.

Clayton County

130 acres adjoining Buck Creek Wildlife Area located in the Blufflands region. The area features populations of Canada yew and Balsam fir and protects Buck Creek, a coldwater stream. Donated by Marilyn Keller.

Tama County

150 acres consisting of oak woodland in the Iowa River Valley. The property includes remnant prairie hillsides, oak woodland and small agricultural fields.

Delaware County

139 acres of oak woodland and grassland in the Maquoketa River Valley, less than a half-mile from Hardscrabble Wildlife Area. Donated by Matt and Beth McQuillen.

Donations to INHF

Eagle Prairie Reserve

115 acres of pasture, wetlands and cropland home to a bald eagle nest in Clayton County. Bequeathed by John Eno.

Spring Hill Prairie

80 acres of upland and riparian prairie in Marshall County with more than 120 native species, as well as habitat for Neotropical migratory birds. South Minerva Creek runs through the east half of the property. Donated by Carl and Linda Kurtz.

Perkins Prairie Preserve

30 acres of remnant prairie in Greene County includes an intermittent stream and three wooded draws. The state has designated the area a preserve because of its quality. Donated by Carroll Perkins and Karen Voge-Perkins.

Land Projects

Riverton Wildlife

Management Area Addition

104 acres with restored wetland, sedge meadow and central cordgrass wet prairie along the East Nishnabotna River in Fremont County.

Riverton Wildlife

Management Area Addition

272 acres of wetland and grassland in Fremont County that will enhance waterfowl migration habitat along the East and West Nishnabotna rivers.

Riverton Wildlife

Management Area Addition

77 acres of wetland along the East Nishnabotna River in Fremont County.

Otter Creek Wildlife Area Addition

67 acres of pasture along Otter Creek in Sioux County. Sioux County Conservation Board will restore the remnant prairie.

McMahon Access Addition

24 acres adjacent to the North Raccoon River with habitat for deer, turkey, small mammals and Neotropical migratory birds in Greene County.

Burr Oak Wildlife Area Addition

412 acres of prairie, savanna and cropland along a Protected Water Area on the Little Sioux River in Clay County.

Gunderson Nature Park

12 acres in Eldora that will expand western access to Pine Lake State Park in Hardin County. The land features a naturalscape play area, hiking trails and reconstructed prairie and wetland. Donated by Bob and Mary Lou Gunderson.

Fish Farm Mounds Addition

67 acres of steep woodlands, hill prairies, large pine planting and an open valley in Allamakee County, widening the connection of Fish Farm Mound and Lansing Wildlife Management Area.

First Ackelson Fellow SELECTED

Our first Mark C. Ackelson Fellow, Patrick Snell, supports the Iowa's Water and Land Legacy coalition and its volunteers who want to speak out on behalf of greater funding for Iowa conservation. His work, plus the tribute gifts that endowed the fellowship, honor the commitment of INHF president emeritus Mark Ackelson.

35 years CELEBRATED

Field trips and gatherings were just part of the joy we shared as we marked INHF's 35th anniversary. All our members should feel the satisfaction of having protected and restored nearly 150,000 acres in Iowa because we do this work together. Your support makes it happen.



Garlock Slough Addition

Protecting 40 acres of grassland in Dickinson County adjacent to a wetland flowing into Garlock Slough and then directly into West Okoboji Lake will improve the water quality of the lake. Donated in part by Joe and Gerry Shuck.

Cedar River Crossing Addition

173 acres of wooded floodplain, wetland and cropland along the Cedar River in Johnson County. The property currently has a 20-acre remnant sand prairie, and Johnson County Conservation Board will continue to restore the cropland to native vegetation. [Open to the public]

Bloody Run Wildlife Management Area Addition

78 acres composed of woodland and pasture in Clayton County supporting a population of Cerulean warblers, a bird whose populations have decreased drastically due to habitat loss. Bloody Run Creek, a cold-water trout stream, flows through the southeast corner of the area.

Elm Lake Addition

58 acres of cropland along the shore of Elm Lake in Wright County will provide over 1,500 feet of protected shoreline once restored to native wetland and upland vegetation. [Open to the public]

Eli Slusher Wildlife Management Area

411 acres of the Loess Hills in Fremont County with beautiful oak woodland, scenic vistas and restored prairie. Characterized by a series of steep ridges with narrow crests and very steep side slopes, the Loess Hills are considered the best examples of loess topography in the U.S. and a national treasure. Donated in part by John and Karen Wanamaker.

Camp WaNoKi Outdoor Recreation Area

77 acres of upland woodland along the north bank of the Des Moines River in Webster County just four miles from Ft. Dodge provides habitat for Neotropical migratory birds and woodland mammal species. It will become an outdoor recreation area managed by the Webster County Conservation Board.

Leners Prairie Addition

34 acres in Palo Alto County, with remnant prairie and wetlands, which when combined with two prior INHF projects creates 71 acres of protected remnant prairie.

Swan Lake Basin in the Skunk River Valley

154 acres in Polk County a half-mile west of the Skunk River Channel and two miles north of Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt. The restoration of the site will provide quality wildlife habitat and water quality benefits to the Skunk River valley in an area that is often inundated with floodwaters. [Open to the public]

Turin Prairie Addition

42 acres of Loess Hills prairie and oak savanna located within the Turin Special Landscape Area in Monona County will expand the over-1,000-acre Turin Prairie Complex.

Millrace Flats Wildlife Management Area Addition

127 acres of upland prairie and wetland along the Iowa River in Louisa County.

Protection near Plymouth Rock Wildlife Management Area

A 23-acre bluff property composed of rock outcroppings and woodland in Winneshiek County lying adjacent to the Upper Iowa River. Due to steep slope and northern exposure, maple and basswood trees dominate the woodland community.

Tieville Wildlife Management Area Addition

366 acres in the Missouri River Floodplain in Monona County will provide floodplain connectivity during high river flow events.

Coldwater Creek Wildlife Management Area Addition

96 acres of woodland, grassland and cropland along Coldwater Creek, a cold water trout stream in Winneshiek County adjacent to Coldwater Creek Wildlife Management Area and State Preserve.

Sedan Bottoms Wildlife Management Area Addition

736 acres of woodland and grassland adjacent to Sedan Bottoms Wildlife Management Area along the Chariton River in Appanoose County.

Des Moines River north of Eagle Roost Wildlife Area

281 acres along the Des Moines River in Polk County. The area will eventually be restored and provide habitat for migratory birds and other wetland creatures.

Big Marsh Wildlife Management Area Addition

224 acres near the West Fork of the Cedar River in Butler County. Future restoration of the area will reduce flood impacts from the river and increase an area of contiguous wildlife habitat.

Big Marsh Wildlife Management Area Addition

91 acres of cropland and woodland adjacent to Boylan Creek Wildlife Area in Butler County. Restoration will increase permanent native vegetation in the floodplain.

Buena Vista County Wildlife Management Area

185 acres of wetlands and prairie in a new Wildlife Management Area in Buena Vista County; the property provides habitat for Trumpeter swans and Neotropical migratory birds. [Open to the public]

Rice Lake Wildlife Management Area Addition

100 acres with a wooded slough in Winnebago County. The area will be restored to prairie potholes and upland native prairie, which provide vital habitat for upland species and the reproduction of migratory birds.

Waterman Prairie Addition

184 acres of prairie remnants, glacial bluffs and steep, wooded river valleys along Waterman Creek in O'Brien County. The property ensures a home for the native wildlife species adapted to the tallgrass prairie ecosystem.

Green Island Wildlife Area Addition

34 acres of land which INHF will restore to wetlands and uplands adjacent to the Upper Mississippi River Wildlife and Fish Refuge in Jackson County. The area will expand Green Island Wildlife Area, which supports waterfowl, bald eagles and other shorebird species.


Cedar Rock State Park Addition


This four-acre property was surrounded by public land in Buchanan County. Katherine Brown, David Kress and Lowell and Betty Kress' donation protects and unifies Cedar Rock State Park and adds to the park's developing nature complex along the Wapsipicon River.


Your dollars at work in 2014

Efficiency

At least **94 percent** directly supports Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation projects and services. INHF is one of the most efficient and mission-focused nonprofits you'll find anywhere!

 At least **94 percent** directly supports Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation projects and services.

 **4 percent** of your gift used for organizational support

 **less than 2 percent** of your gift used for fundraising

Together, We Have Greater Impact

Together, we made a **\$17 million impact** for Iowa conservation through INHF in 2014!



15 devoted Iowans donated legacy gifts totaling \$2.1 million. Their vision and commitment will have a large and lasting impact.

Public conservation agencies provided more than \$11 million toward partnership land protection projects.

Landowners generously donated land, conservation easements or land value totaling \$1.4 million.

1,400 donors gave \$1.3 million to specific land projects and programs they value most.

Membership gifts provided \$1 million in unrestricted core support for our mission. These essential funds make all of our services possible.

Volunteers and Voices

Many people are part of the INHF action in non-financial ways — donating professional skills, leading nature hikes, organizing partnership projects and speaking out on behalf of Iowa conservation when their voices are needed. Thank you!

The INHF balance sheet is available at www.inhf.org.

Your Conservation Partners

Staff
Working every day on your behalf to protect Iowa land, water and wildlife.



Joe McGovern
President



Ross Baxter
Land Projects
Specialist



Andrea Boulton
Trails Coordinator



Brian Fankhauser
Blufflands Director



Marian Riggs Gelb
Public Policy Director



Cheri Grauer
Major Gifts Steward



Diane Graves
Administrative
Assistant/Receptionist



Erin Griffin
Events Coordinator and
Development Specialist



Lisa Hein
Program and Planning
Director



Hannah Inman,
Director of
Communications



Joe Jayjack
Communications
Specialist



Heather Jobst
Land Projects
Director



Melanie Louis
Land Stewardship
Assistant



Stacy Nelson
Membership
Coordinator



Anita O'Gara
Vice President
and Development
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Andrea Piekarczyk
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Development Assistant



Mary Runkel
Volunteer
Coordinator



Tylar Samuels
Land Stewardship
Specialist



Duane Sand
Floodplain Outreach
Coordinator



Ryan Schmidt
Land Stewardship
Specialist



Kerri Sorrell
Digital Outreach
Assistant



Tim Sproul
Loess Hills Land
Conservation
Consultant



Erin Van Waus
Land Stewardship
Director



Kari Walker
Administration
Director

Not Pictured
Jered Bourquin
Blufflands Field
Assistant
Laura McVay
Finance Director
Patrick Snell
Mark C. Ackelson
Fellow

Board of Directors

Our dedicated board members provide invaluable strategic leadership, approving our projects and ensuring our strong fiscal management.

Jan Lovell, Clear Lake, Chair
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Susan Shullaw, Iowa City, 2nd Vice Chair
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Carole Reichardt, Clive
Donald Rowen, Des Moines
Susan Salterberg, Iowa City
Travis Young, Waterloo
Joe McGovern, Elkhart, President

Advisors

Offering specific talents, our advisors provide skills and guidance critical to the the success of our most important initiatives.

Ann Anderson, Des Moines
Steve Ballenger, Johnston
Edwin Barker, Knoxville
Greg Beisker, Des Moines
Russ Benedict, Pella
Cindy Burke, Central City
Bruce Campbell, Des Moines
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Eric Turner, West Des Moines
Jo Ellen Whitney, Des Moines
Wilbur Wilson, Des Moines
Geoff Wood, Des Moines
Bob Woodward, Dubuque

Interns

College student interns work alongside staff, lending their energy, new ideas and talents to help bring about real conservation progress.

Communications, Design and Program Interns

Adam Graves, Omaha, NE
Lexi Ruskell, Burnsville, MN
Kerri Sorrell, Iowa City, IA
Sam Wettach, Decorah, IA

Statewide Land Stewardship Interns

Jared Baier, Greenfield, IA
Tonya Dunsmoor, Adel, IA
Alexandra Gustafson, Waukee, IA
Joseph Klingelutz, Iowa City, IA

Tasha Larsen, Cherokee, IA
Derek Miner, Earlham, IA
Henry Moss, Sioux City, IA
Annamarie Oesterreich, Gilbert, IA
Samantha Ramsey, Grinnell, IA

Blufflands Land Stewardship Interns

Kelsey Clampitt, East Lansing, MI
Charles Cunningham, Glendive, MT
Rachel Hainfield, Decorah, IA
Ethan Van Kooten, Pella, IA

Trails Intern

Dylan Schroeder, Mount Vernon, IA

The Cedar Valley Nature Trail

The beginning of a regional trail system

Photo: Black Hawk County Conservation Board

The Cedar Valley Nature Trail (CVNT) gives thousands of users every year the chance to wind through the Cedar River bottomlands along forested banks and through stands of trees punctuated with open vistas. Today, this long, linear park is considered a tourist destination in Iowa, but that wasn't always the case.



Cedar Valley Nature Trail

Counties: Benton, Black Hawk, Buchanan, Linn

Cities: Evansdale, Gilbertville, La Porte City, Brandon, Urbana, Center Point, Lafayette, Hiawatha

Surface: Asphalt and crushed limestone

Partners: INHF, Black Hawk CCB, Linn CCB, Linn County Trails Association, Cedar Valley Trails Partnership

The 52-mile CVNT was one of the first major railroad corridors converted into a trail in Iowa. In 1980, the Illinois Central Railroad decided to abandon its line in the Cedar Falls area, so Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation stepped in to secure the land.

At the request of local partners, INHF helped sort through the complicated legal, real estate and political issues that surround trails. Landowners near the proposed trail were concerned about trespassing, property values and liability issues. "But it's actually providing a place for people to come together and be neighbors, and the small towns along the route benefit from trail users who stop and explore," said Andrea Boulton, INHF trails coordinator.

The CVNT served as a model for rail-to-trails projects around the state, including the Heritage Trail, Raccoon River Valley Trail and High Trestle Trail. INHF has since helped local partners create about 65 percent of Iowa's rail-trails.

The CVNT is an excellent place to observe wildflowers and wildlife. The northern 25 miles of the trail is a designated Audubon Important Bird Area and includes pockets of remnant prairie. The trail is primarily crushed limestone with asphalt for four miles on the southern end and 16 miles on the northern end.

Connecting to the Cedar Valley Lakes trail network in Cedar Falls and Waterloo provides bikers and hikers over 140 miles of paved trails in four counties. Kim Manning, manager of the Cedar Falls Visitors Bureau and a board member of the Cedar Valley Trails Partnership, says about 612,000 trips are taken on the trails a year. The trails loop through urban areas where visitors can find hotels, family restaurants, bustling nightlife and tourist attractions like museums, art galleries and theatres. On the south end of the CVNT, Cedar Rapids has extended the trail through town to connect to the Hoover Nature Trail.

By Stephanie Kocer, special contributor

TRIBUTE GIFTS

IN MEMORY OF

Willard Balk
Ray D. Barr
Harry Bearbower
Marg Beed
Don Beifelspacher
Alberta Berda Brosnahan
James R. Bodensteiner
Natahe & William Brenton
Eleanor Brouette

Stewart Carlson
Junior Christensen
Robert Cook
Kevin Cooper
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Gordon Derr
Roger Desmarais
Zane Dickinson
Gail Droessler
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Robert Grover
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Abigail Adams Chapter DAR
Mark Ackelson
Howard Badger 93 WWII
John and Lavola Lizer
Calla Olson
Walt Ordway



Keep exploring online at
www.inhf.org/lookingoutforiowa.cfm

Take action for nature

1 | Build pollinator habitat

Plant.Grow.Fly. is a butterfly and bee conservation program run by the Blank Park Zoo in Des Moines that encourages and helps people plant butterfly gardens. The zoo provides all the information novice gardeners need to plant quality pollinator habitat, including a region-specific plant list. Once participants plant the garden, they can register it with the zoo and be recognized on the website. They can even name their garden and share what inspired them to plant it.

www.plantgrowfly.com



2 | Join a county REAP committee

Resource Enhancement and Protection committees are local conservation programs through the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, making them the best way for counties to support their local needs. Participating in a REAP committee also allows you to learn more about conservation so you can spread the word to other Iowans about the importance of sound land management, habitat protection, water quality and other environmental issues.

www.iowadnr.gov/Environment/REAP/REAPPublicParticipation/CountyREAPCommittees.aspx

3 | Adopt a resource

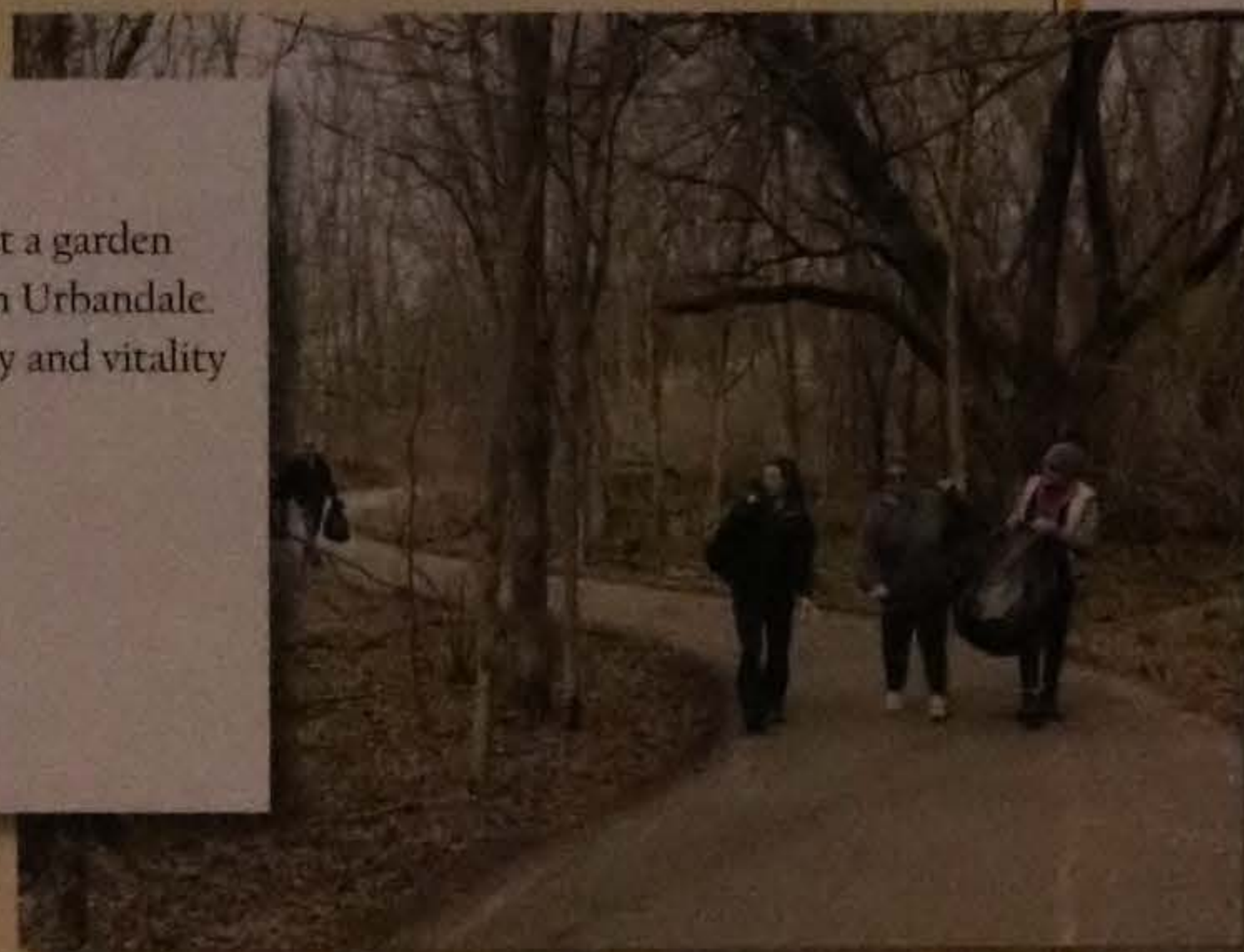
Many communities in Iowa offer adoption programs. You can adopt a garden in Fort Madison, a stream in Johnston, a trail in Grimes or a park in Urbandale. Time spent tending to your new addition helps conserve the beauty and vitality of Iowa's natural resources.

www.fortmadison-ia.com/index.aspx?NID=405

cityofjohnston.com/index.aspx?NID=567

www.urbandale.org/adoptatrail.cfm

www.grimesiowa.gov/ParksandRecreation/Parks/Adopt-A-ParkAdopt-A-TrailProgram.aspx





Iowa
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Foundation

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Photo: Ty Smedes

Leave a legacy of clean water, healthy soil and beautiful outdoor places for those who follow.

To see how estate giving through INHF can help make your vision for Iowa a reality,
contact Cheri Grauer at cgrauer@inhf.org or 800-475-1846.



Photographer Ty Smedes captures maternal magic with this photo of a Gray fox and her kit playfully tussling near Yellow River State Forest in Northeast Iowa. Kits develop motor skills they'll need to survive through rough-housing play. Fun fact: Gray fox can climb straight up a tree, unlike Red fox or coyote.

Please share this publication with friends, and visit our website at www.inhf.org.

Fall 2015

Iowa Natural Heritage

Protecting and restoring Iowa's land, water and wildlife



For Our Land's Health and Legacy

OCT 23 2015



STATE LIBRARY OF IOWA

Conservation happens in so many ways. It can be relatively simple, like planting native pollinator-friendly plants on your land (page 6). It can be complex,

like the Grimes family's decades-long partnership with Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation to bring a natural education area to Marshall County (page 8). Or it can be something in between, like the land the McQuillens restored to a more natural state and permanently protected with a conservation easement in Delaware County (page 12). But it all adds up, and it often begins with private landowners.

When people care about the natural health and legacy of their land, it makes all the difference. INHF works with landowners in so many ways. We offer advice on sound land stewardship practices. We buy land from willing sellers that are often happy to see their land protected. We work side by side with landowners to create a conservation easement that makes sure their special natural land is preserved forever. We help people through the process of donating their land for public benefit and enjoyment. As often as possible, we foster a community of conservation. A great example of this on the grassroots level is the Madison County group, For Lands Sake! (page 7).

In this issue you'll read about decisions made by landowners, big and small, that are creating a better future for Iowa's land, water and wildlife — and in turn, all Iowans. We appreciate your partnerships and your commitment to Iowa's natural resources. We are all in this together, and with your help we are making a difference.

Sincerely,

Joe McGovern, INHF President



Our Mission

Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation protects and restores Iowa's land, water and wildlife.

- Joe McGovern *President*
- Ross Baxter *Land Projects Specialist*
- Andrea Boulton *Trails Coordinator*
- Jered Bourquin *Blufflands Field Assistant*
- Brian Fankhauser *Blufflands Director*
- Marian Riggs Gelb *Public Policy Director*
- Cheri Grauer *Major Gifts Steward*
- Diane Graves *Administrative Assistant and Receptionist*
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- Tim Sproul *Loess Hills Land Conservation Consultant*
- Erin Van Waus *Land Stewardship Director*
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Editor: Lori Howe, Share Marketing
Designer: Brian Shearer, Plum Communications



On the cover

Photographer Jack Venden Heuvel used a wide angle lens to bring the beauty of the virgin prairie into view along with the monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*). Kothenbeutel Heritage Prairie just east of Sheffield in Franklin County.



contents

4 Be Still and Listen

Nature speaks to us in a myriad of ways.

6 Diversity Creates a Haven for Pollinators

M.J. Hatfield devotes her time to studying the function of insects — specifically pollinators — and the prairie habitat she has created in Winneshiek County.

7 For Lands Sake!

The Madison County group of like-minded neighbors and friends come together for a common cause to share with one another what they have learned about sustaining healthy lands.

8 Sharing Their Love for Land

Leonard and Mildred Grimes' dream to share their Marshall County woods and prairies, teach children about conservation and showcase the value of responsible farming practices is now fully realized.

12 Caring for the Land, One Piece at a Time

Matt McQuillen had a plan when he purchased 300-plus acres of upland woodlands interspersed with small areas of reconstructed prairie in Delaware County — to restore and protect the land so future generations can walk its hills and enjoy its beauty.

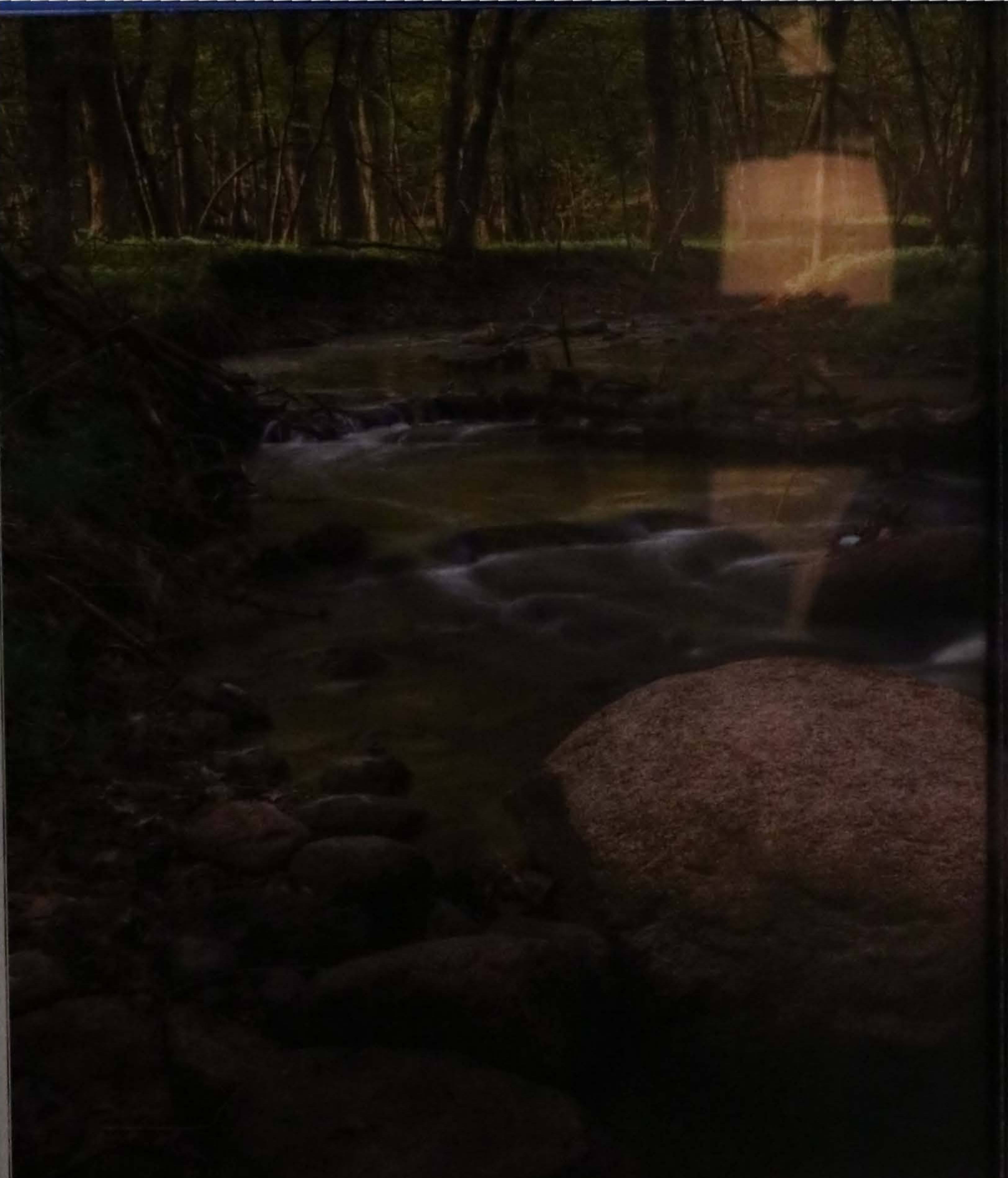
14 Vitamin N: Cedar Rock State Park

People come from all over to tour the main feature of Cedar Rock State Park — the red-tile residence designed by famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright. Guests learn about Cedar Rock's natural features, Iowa history and Wright's architecture at Cedar Rock's visitor center.

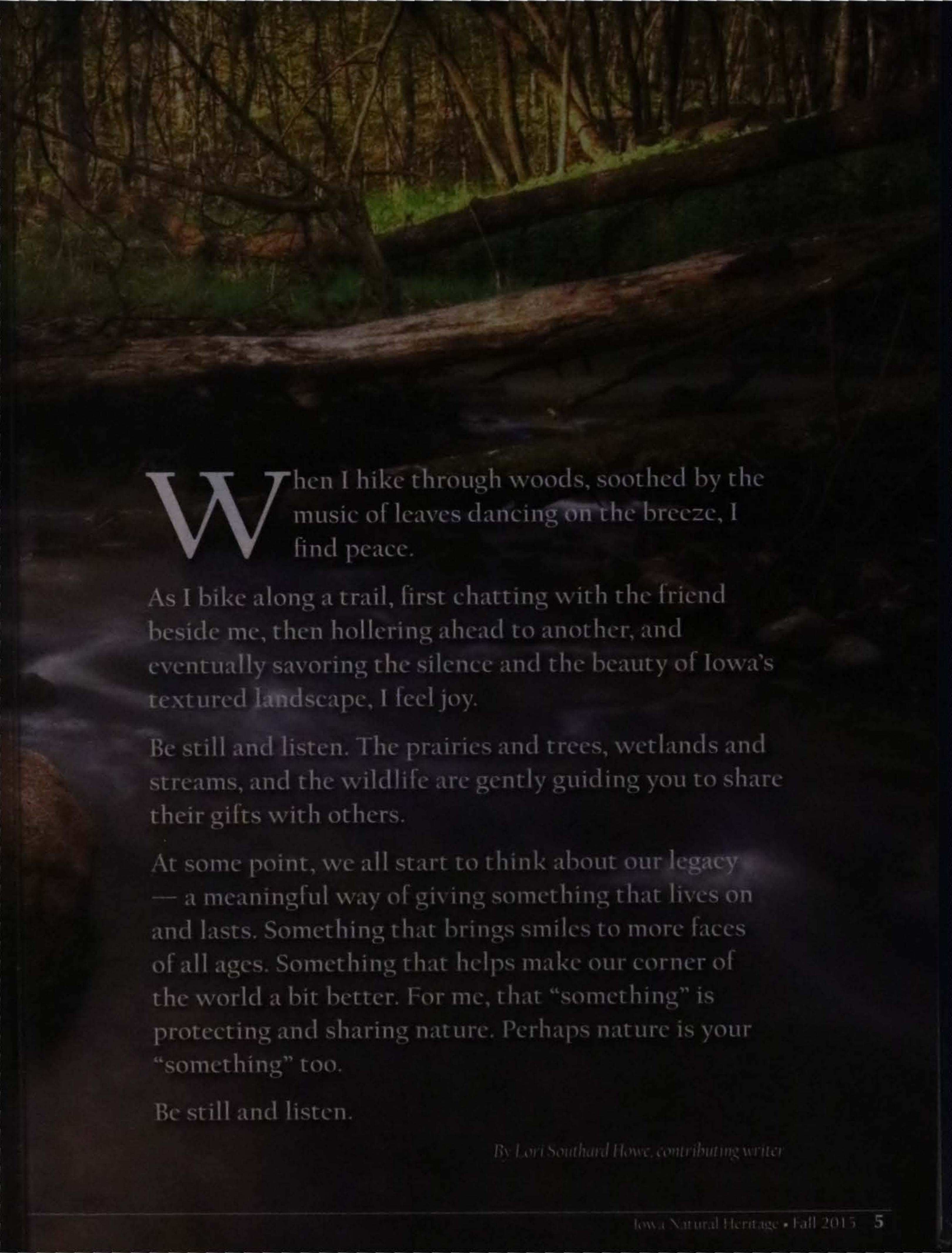
15 Looking Out for Iowa

Develop a green thumb. Save a raptor. Attend a REAP Assembly. Take action for conservation.





Spring Creek, Fort
Defiance State Park,
Emmet County



When I hike through woods, soothed by the music of leaves dancing on the breeze, I find peace.

As I bike along a trail, first chatting with the friend beside me, then hollering ahead to another, and eventually savoring the silence and the beauty of Iowa's textured landscape, I feel joy.

Be still and listen. The prairies and trees, wetlands and streams, and the wildlife are gently guiding you to share their gifts with others.

At some point, we all start to think about our legacy — a meaningful way of giving something that lives on and lasts. Something that brings smiles to more faces of all ages. Something that helps make our corner of the world a bit better. For me, that “something” is protecting and sharing nature. Perhaps nature is your “something” too.

Be still and listen.

By Lori Southard Howe, contributing writer

Diversity creates a haven for pollinators



MJ. Hatfield planted her fake prairie in 1996. “That’s what one of my biologist friends called it, anyway,” the Plymouth Rock resident said. “It was planted with all native seed and plants, but I planted it on crop ground. It wasn’t remnant anything.”

Hatfield did more than just steward her land in Winneshiek County, she and her husband, Richard Mercer, permanently protected the planted prairie and woodland with a conservation easement held by Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. Under her management, every year brought surprises to the 35 acres of “fake” prairie. Then one humid summer day, Hatfield heard frogs calling from the bottom wet field for the first time. “I realized ... the frogs don’t know it’s fake. It got me thinking about what else could live in the prairie.”

Above: Monarch caterpillars only eat milkweed plants, which are also a favorite source of nectar for Monarch butterflies.
Below: The Syrphid fly, which mimics the look of a bee, is one of many insects that help to pollinate blooming spiderwort.

This realization was the beginning of a new calling for Hatfield. “I got into insects to see if there was function on those planted prairies. Could a fake prairie function like a real prairie?” She returned to Iowa State University to study entomology and now devotes her time to unraveling the mysteries of Iowa’s least-known residents.

For Hatfield, understanding insects is essential to understanding and appreciating the natural world. Recent declines in pollinator populations underline the importance of insects and their connection to the rest of life. “We depend on pollinators,” she observed. “If we had to do our own pollination, it simply wouldn’t get done.”

The Monarch butterfly and honey bee are the popular faces of the movement focused on saving pollinators, but thousands of pollinators in Iowa — including beetles, flies and moths, as well as other species of butterflies and native bees — are just as threatened. The key, Hatfield said, is appropriate, diverse habitat. Native plants are best for pollinators, and there simply aren’t enough of them.

Diverse habitat required for pollinators to thrive

For those looking to take more specific action, the pollinators in the most trouble are those that have a narrow range of native plants upon which they depend. The bee species *Andrena geranii*, for example, requires the pollen of Iowa’s native wild geranium to develop properly.

But for many pollinators, Hatfield believes what you plant doesn’t matter much as long as you’re bringing native diversity to the landscape. “Nature abhors a monoculture,” she said. “That’s why they’re so difficult to maintain.”

Instead of a vast expanse of mowed grass, plant prairie. Or just plant native prairie plants you like. “Make your yard or land an attractive haven for insects and birds,” Hatfield recommends. “Plant it, and they will come.”

By Andrea Piekarczyk, Program and Development Assistant



Want to learn more about insects?

Day of Insects — April 9, 2016, Reiman Gardens in Ames
Enjoy a day filled with presentations from professionals, academics, advocates and enthusiasts. From beginners to seasoned veterans, Day of Insects has something for anyone interested in or involved with insects.

Iowa Insects Mailing List

<http://bio.cgrer.uiowa.edu/herbarium/InsectMaList.htm>



For Land's Sake

The threat of an early evening thunderstorm didn't keep the small band of Madison County landowners from scrambling onto the wooded hillsides above Clanton Creek. They were richly rewarded for their efforts. One step into the woodland and they were greeted with an explosion of color and texture — green dragon, hoary puccoon, leather flower, yellow pimpernel and bastard toadflax blanketed the woodland floor.

Suppressed by years of intensive livestock grazing and a tangle of multi-flora rose, iron wood and osage orange, native plant species were provided the chance to thrive again. Removal of livestock, careful thinning of the invading woody species and a late-winter prescribed burn were important steps to improving the privately owned woodland's health. This was woodland restoration in progress.

The tour of this woodland was hosted by For Lands Sake!, a community group taking root in Madison County. Local landowners and conservation professionals are coming together to learn more about the unique natural heritage of Madison County. Their goal is to share knowledge, experience and expertise about how they can nurture and preserve that heritage as individuals and as a group.

Of the same mind and heart — for nature

The initial idea for the group is credited to Nancy Forrest, who has lived on an acreage in Madison County for 20 years. Forrest has moved from vegetable and ornamental gardening to restoring woodlands and reconstructing prairie on the land she and her husband, Michael, own. Call it serendipity or synergy, she

began to meet more and more like-minded and like-hearted people, including her mentor in native plants and landscapes, Roslea Johnson, who for 30 years has owned land with her husband, Bob, in southern Madison County.

Both life-long educators, Forrest and Johnson naturally want to share what they learn through study and personal experience about how to create and sustain a healthy natural habitat. Collaborators by nature and profession, they understand that creating the opportunity for people to come together for a common cause — in this case, land restoration and stewardship — can build community and yield benefits that ripple out beyond this time and place.

For Lands Sake!, though still a fledgling organization, provides a platform for people desiring support for leaving a legacy of diverse, healthy land. Their vision: active land management for healthier ecosystems becomes the standard in Madison County. Members view themselves as land restorationists and stewards actively working to foster and sustain a balanced ecology for themselves and future generations. 🌿

By Cheri Grauer, Major Gifts Steward

Above: Madison County landowners share land stewardship experiences during a hike through a privately owned woodland.

A photograph of an elderly couple, Leonard and Mildred Grimes, standing in a field of tall, golden-brown grass. Leonard is on the left, wearing a dark jacket, a cap, and sunglasses. Mildred is on the right, wearing a dark jacket and smiling. The background shows a soft, hazy landscape under a cloudy sky.

Sharing Their LOVE for

Gathered around the Hill House dining table, the stories flowed about Leonard and Mildred Grimes. “I think Mom was the visionary and Dad was more the implementer” was quickly followed by, “Yet, Dad had vision, too.” A third sibling adds, “And, Mom was out there working right alongside Dad.” Three of Leonard and Mildred’s children and their spouses wove a rich tale of their parents’ journey to create a nature oasis just west of Marshalltown.

Above: Leonard and Mildred Grimes, Hilltop Prairie; 2003.

Below: Spectacular views await visitors when they reach the third level of Mildred’s Tower at Grimes Farm and Conservation Center.



Left: Mildred's Tower and one of the trails that winds through woodlands and prairies on Grimes Farm.

Below: The Conservation Center includes conservation exhibits, meeting space and a kitchen. Nature Discovery Series classes offered at the Conservation Center introduce outdoor enthusiasts to ecology, outdoor cooking, orienteering and a variety of indigenous plants.



Land

Known as the Grimes Farm and Conservation Center, this oasis is managed by the Marshall County Conservation Board (MCCB). The evolution of Grimes Farm was fueled by Leonard and Mildred's vision and realized through their determination. Engaging Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation and MCCB as partners to advise and work alongside them, Leonard and Mildred relied on the expertise and experience the partnership provided.

Love, nature and the seeds of vision

In a schoolhouse near Green Mountain, just northeast of Marshalltown, Leonard Grimes met Mildred Hach. "Mom said when she was a first-grader our dad, a red-headed, freckle-faced kid, started kindergarten, and they were life-long friends ever since," said Carrie, the youngest Grimes daughter.



Grimes Farm and Conservation Center
Marshall County

Land: 160 acres with an education center; oak, hickory, maple and mixed woodlands; wetlands and prairies; hiking trails and Mildred's Tower. Connected to the Marshalltown bike-trail system — part of the American Discovery Trail system linking California to Maryland.

Partners: INHF, MCCB and Friends of Grimes Farms

 For more information about Grimes Farm, visit <http://bit.ly/1NCNdOs> and www.grimesfarm.org

Right: Mildred Grimes leads a group of area school children through one of the prairies.

Below: Mildred and Leonard Grimes; Grimes Farm and Conservation Center, circa 1994.

Leonard and Mildred had much in common: curiosity, intelligence and an appreciation for working hard. Mildred and Leonard married shortly after both graduated from Green Mountain High School.

The next few years took them across the country. After being stationed in New Hampshire while serving in the Marines during World War II, Leonard earned his bachelor's degree at Dartmouth College, followed by a law degree at Harvard University.

The couple returned home to Iowa, and Leonard began practicing law at the firm known today as Grimes, Buck, Schoell, Beach and Hitchins in Marshalltown, where he specialized in estate law. Believing that moving to the country would benefit their younger children, Leonard and Mildred searched for the right property.

From eroded land to natural gem

In 1964, they purchased 160 acres of treeless farmland etched with gullies. Where their parents saw the land as a business venture with little chance of profitability,



Leonard and Mildred saw potential for natural beauty. Their goal was clear: restore most of the land to its original prairie and woodlands, while farming the land suitable for crops in a responsible manner. They purchased adjacent parcels of land as they became available, eventually owning nearly 600 acres.

The work was grueling and seemed never-ending. Yet they experienced great joy in improving the land and imparting their love of land to their children and grandchildren. Working side by side, their children pitching in, they first cleared the land of outbuildings, cars and debris. Over the next several years, Leonard and Mildred led their family in hand planting and nurturing over 200,000 oak, walnut and hickory trees.

In 2006, Mildred wanted to try her hand at creating an "instant forest." Fifteen kinds of tree seeds were spread thickly over 12 acres. Based on a survival of the fittest theory, the most healthy seedlings grew straight and strong. Many of these trees now stand over 25 feet tall in Instant Forest 1. Instant Forest 2 was seeded in 2008 and includes eight acres of healthy trees. With the instant forests, Roger Grimes believes the family has planted over one million trees.

There are also four restored prairies on Grimes Farm: Island, Horseshoe, Upper Hilltop and Lower Hilltop.

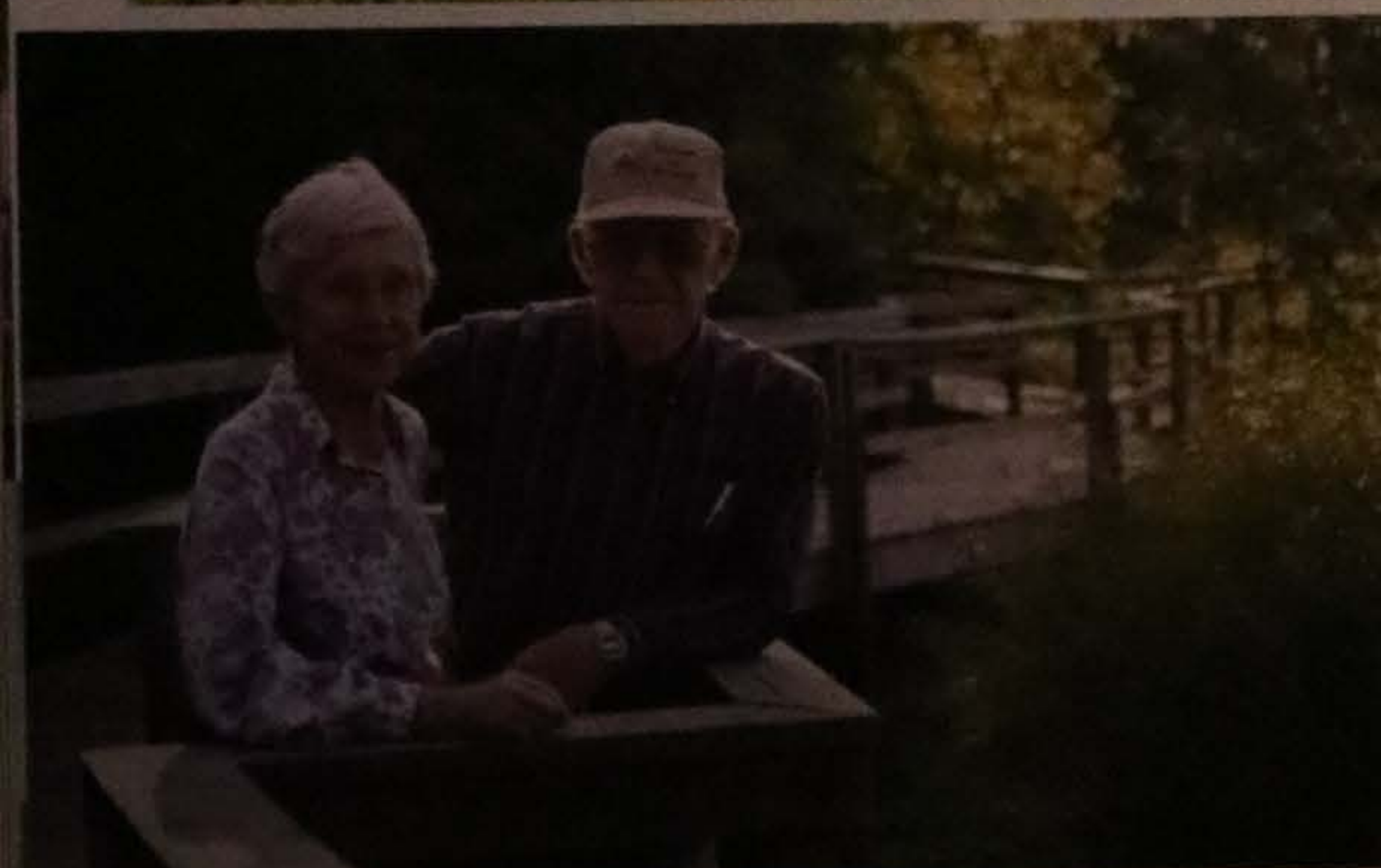
Today, 300 tillable acres are sustainably farmed, with the remaining 300 acres supporting woodlands, wetlands and prairies and serving as the site for the Grimes Farm and Conservation Center.

A passion to teach

Mildred had a teacher's heart. She worked as a music teacher and later as a librarian in Marshall County schools. "From the start, Mom always had the dream of sharing their land to ensure kids had the chance to learn about nature and how the land sustains us all," said Roger.

Mildred initiated a program with area schools to bring elementary children to Grimes Farm. On these field trips, Mildred would lead the way through prairies and woods, delighting when children oohed and ahed at nature's wonders. Carrie continues the nature education tradition, regularly participating in reading programs at the Conservation Center.

Mildred's Tower, erected in 2006 as a memorial to





Mildred who passed away the same year, offers visitors to Grimes Farm views as far as the Story County wind turbines and Marshall County Courthouse. Mildred's Tower stands 40 feet tall and is the second highest point in Marshall County.

Vision realized with astute planning

Leonard and Mildred wanted to provide 160 acres of their land as a place for area citizens to enjoy woodlands and prairies, and learn about nature and responsible farming. They designed a long-term plan with INHF to accomplish this.


First, they donated the land to INHF in four transactions in 1991, 1993, 1995 and 1997. This allowed Leonard and Mildred to spread the benefits of tax deductions over several years, and to retain lifetime use (known as "reserved life estate") of the cropland and their home site.

During those same years, Marshall County conservation leaders and donors were working with the family to plan and raise funds for the education center. INHF transferred to MCCB the portion of land for the building and natural areas.

The final piece of the plan is now in process. With Leonard's passing earlier this year, the cropland and home site will now transfer from INHF to Marshall County. INHF has been able to help MCCB investigate ways to demonstrate conservation farming. After a 25-year relationship with this family and this place, INHF is

pleased to have helped bring their vision to reality.

In a note to the MCCB and INHF dated Jan. 13, 1993, Mildred wrote: "We have been applying many conservation measures to our farm to try to sustain that topsoil for the future. These practices have been of sufficient measure to cause the schools of Marshall County to use the farm as an example when teaching conservation. Hundreds of children have tramped the hillsides as they 'experienced' conservation..."

"Living on the land, close to Nature, and raising our children with those special opportunities has been a privilege for us. May our efforts to preserve, conserve and even restore this farm be of value to those who seek a quiet place for relaxation, contemplation, inspiration and joy." 

By Lori Southard Howe, contributing writer

Reserved Life Estate Benefits

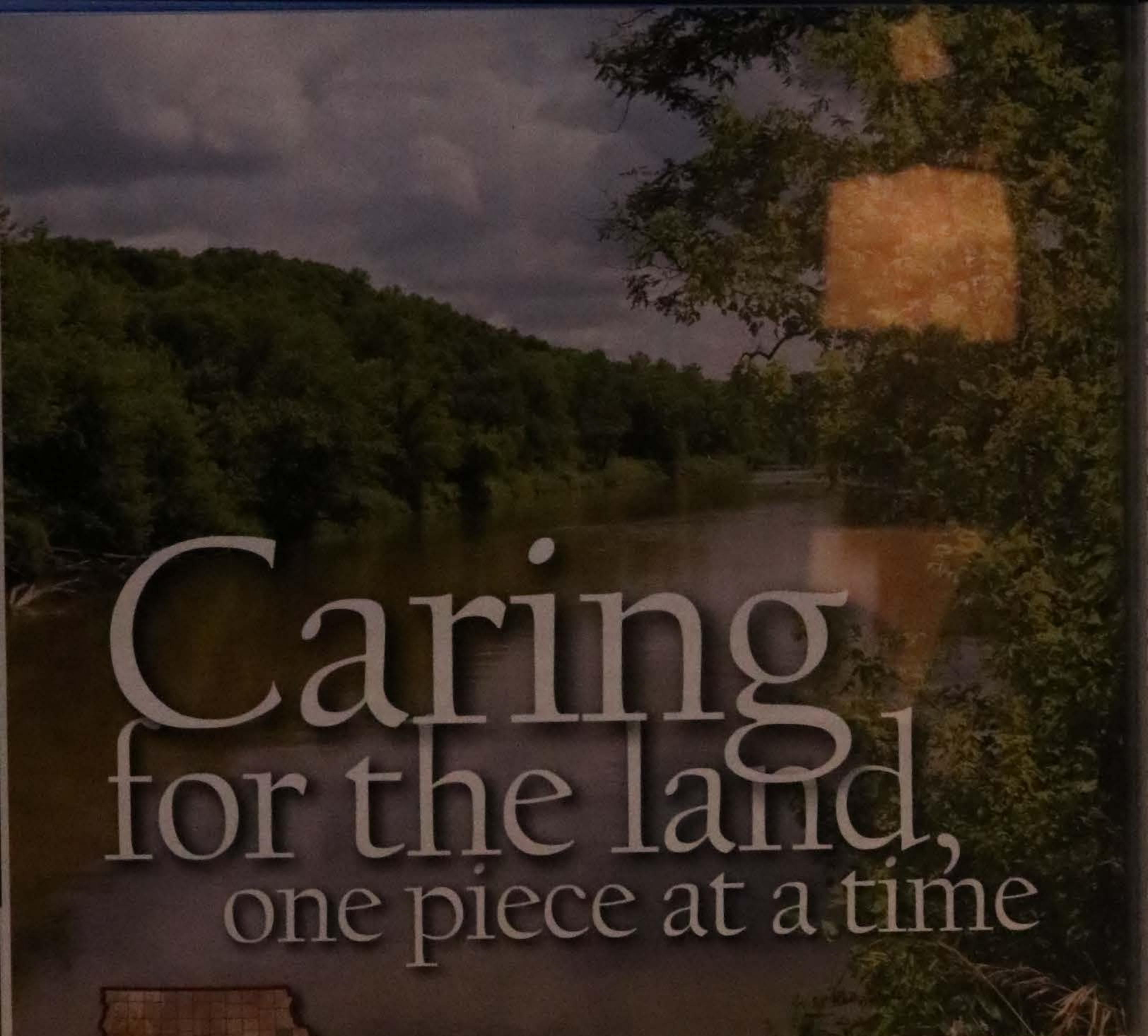
When you donate your land with a reserved life estate, you commit to the gift, while retaining the use of the land during your lifetime.

You can:


- live on the land
- use the land
- obtain income from the land
- designate immediate family members as "life tenants"
- receive potential tax deductions

For more information, visit www.inhf.org/reserved-life-estate.cfm.

To discuss how a reserved life estate may benefit you and your family, contact Anita O'Gara, VP and Director of Development, at 800-475-1846 or aogara@inhf.org.



Caring for the land, one piece at a time



McQuillen Easement Delaware County

Land: 139 acres in donated conservation easement

Special features: Upland woodland, reconstructed prairie and a large watershed that empties into the Maquoketa River



www.inhf.org/fall-2015-magazine.cfm

Matt McQuillen steers his Ranger around his Delaware County property, taking inventory after being away for a while. His wife, Beth, and daughter, Maggie, ride in the bed as their dog runs ahead, knowing the way.

There's the hilltop prairie he planted last year. It's not coming in as well as he hoped, but he thinks a good prescribed burn will help.

There's the sloped former crop field he spent last summer repairing and replanting with native prairie species. "There were gullies up to here," he says, his hand up to his chest. The damage from water runoff had been filled in and the new growth was starting to take hold.

There's the exposed limestone hillside where a previous owner had done some excavation

to sell the rock. "I didn't even want to get it tested," he says, lest he find out the rock was valuable and be tempted to do more of the same.

The McQuillens bought this property, a little over 300 acres along the Maquoketa River, in 2013. It is made up mostly of mature upland woodland, interspersed with reconstructed prairie. They have done a lot of work to bring it back to a more natural state.

Putting in place permanent protection

The biggest step the McQuillens took in protecting the land's natural resources didn't involve moving dirt or spreading seed. Last year, they donated a 139-acre conservation easement on the site to Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. The agreement is binding for the McQuillens and all future owners of the property, allowing them to know the land will be permanently protected. But Matt thinks it will be a while before there are any other owners. "Maggie said to me, 'You'll never sell this place, will you, Dad?' I said, 'No, and neither will you.'"

Matt said they may protect more of the property through easements in the future. The staggering of the easements allows the McQuillens to take full advantage of the tax credits available through the federal Conservation Easement Incentive Act and the Iowa Charitable Conservation Contribution program. Matt's background as an attorney and certified accountant certainly help him to grasp the financial side of the agreement, but money is far from the only reason he's protecting the land.

A heritage of doing the right thing

Matt grew up in nearby Monticello — living in town but always appreciating the outdoors, especially the Maquoketa River greenbelt that runs along the city's northeast side. He wouldn't call his parents conservationists, but they definitely contributed to his conservation ethic. "They always taught me that if you do the right thing for the right reason, things tend to work out."


His love of hunting blossomed into years of conservation work. Matt and the Twin Rivers chapter



Above, Left to Right: Beth, Maggie and Matt McQuillen trek through a prairie they have restored.

of Pheasants Forever have worked to protect numerous sites in the area for habitat, including some in which they partnered with INHF. In 2007, *Field & Stream* magazine named the Twin Rivers Pheasants Forever chapter its Conservation Chapter of the Year. And earlier this year, Matt was recognized at the National Pheasant Fest and Quail Classic as one of seven Conservation Faces of Iowa for his habitat work both on his own land and other sites now open to the public. He has facilitated more than 12 land acquisitions for animal habitat, including Scotch Grove Prairie and Muskrat Slough in Jones County.

Yet, Matt certainly doesn't crave the attention. "Jeff Joens and Bob Sheets — biologists with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources — helped sink in the message that it doesn't matter who gets the credit as long as the work gets done," Matt said.

This is the second conservation easement the McQuillens have donated to INHF. In 2013, the family protected 95 acres farther down the Maquoketa River in Jones County. They have since sold the property, and feel a real sense of satisfaction knowing that the protections remain in place — with the new owners and all future owners. 

By Joe Jayjack, Communications Director

What's a conservation easement?

Conservation easements allow landowners to maintain ownership and certain rights on the land, but prohibit certain practices — such as development, mining or commercial agriculture — that could damage the site's conservation value. The agreement is binding for current and all future owners. The difference in land value before and after the easement is a charitable contribution.

For more information, visit www.inhf.org/conservation-easement-basics.cfm, or contact Heather Jobst at hjobst@inhf.org or 515-288-1846.

Cedar Rock State Park

Overlooking the Wapsipinicon River, the main attraction at Cedar Rock State Park sits unassumingly on a limestone bluff. Designed by American architect Frank Lloyd Wright, the Lowell and Agnes Walter Estate — Cedar Rock — seeks harmony with nature.

Though he worked on other homes in Iowa, only Cedar Rock bears Wright's famous red tile signature, signifying he was completely satisfied with every detail of the house. Only 16 other surviving Wright-designed structures across the country include the signature tile.

Upon his death in 1981, Lowell left Cedar Rock to the Iowa Conservation Commission so that Iowans could enjoy the beauty of the architecturally important home integrated with Buchanan County's woodlands.

Protection of natural land

Since then, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation has helped the Iowa Department of Natural Resources secure 150 acres of land, including woodland and wetlands, to expand the park and protect its natural resources. The park's mixed woodland includes basswood, bitternut hickory and bur oak trees. The Wapsipinicon River flowing through the

park is the longest state-designated Protected Water Area and includes 183 miles of state-designated water trail.

Together with the Friends of Cedar Rock and the Iowa DNR, INHF has helped permanently safeguard Cedar Rock State Park's natural beauty.

Visitors welcome

Cedar Rock State Park offers ample opportunities for wildlife viewing, picnicking, food foraging, hunting, fishing, hiking and birding. Birders will find over 100 species of birds, including rare Canada warblers, brown creepers and Acadian flycatchers.

Guests learn about Cedar Rock's natural features, Iowa history and Wright's architecture at Cedar Rock's visitor center. Schedule a tour of the house by calling 319-934-3572 or emailing cedar_rock@dnr.iowa.gov.

By Taylor Eisenhauer, Communications Intern




Cedar Rock State Park
Buchanan County

Land: 134 acres of state park, 149 acres of adjacent Wildlife Management Area

Managed by: Iowa DNR

Special features: Frank Lloyd Wright-designed house, woodland, wetlands

 www.inhf.org/fall-2015-magazine.cfm

TRIBUTE GIFTS

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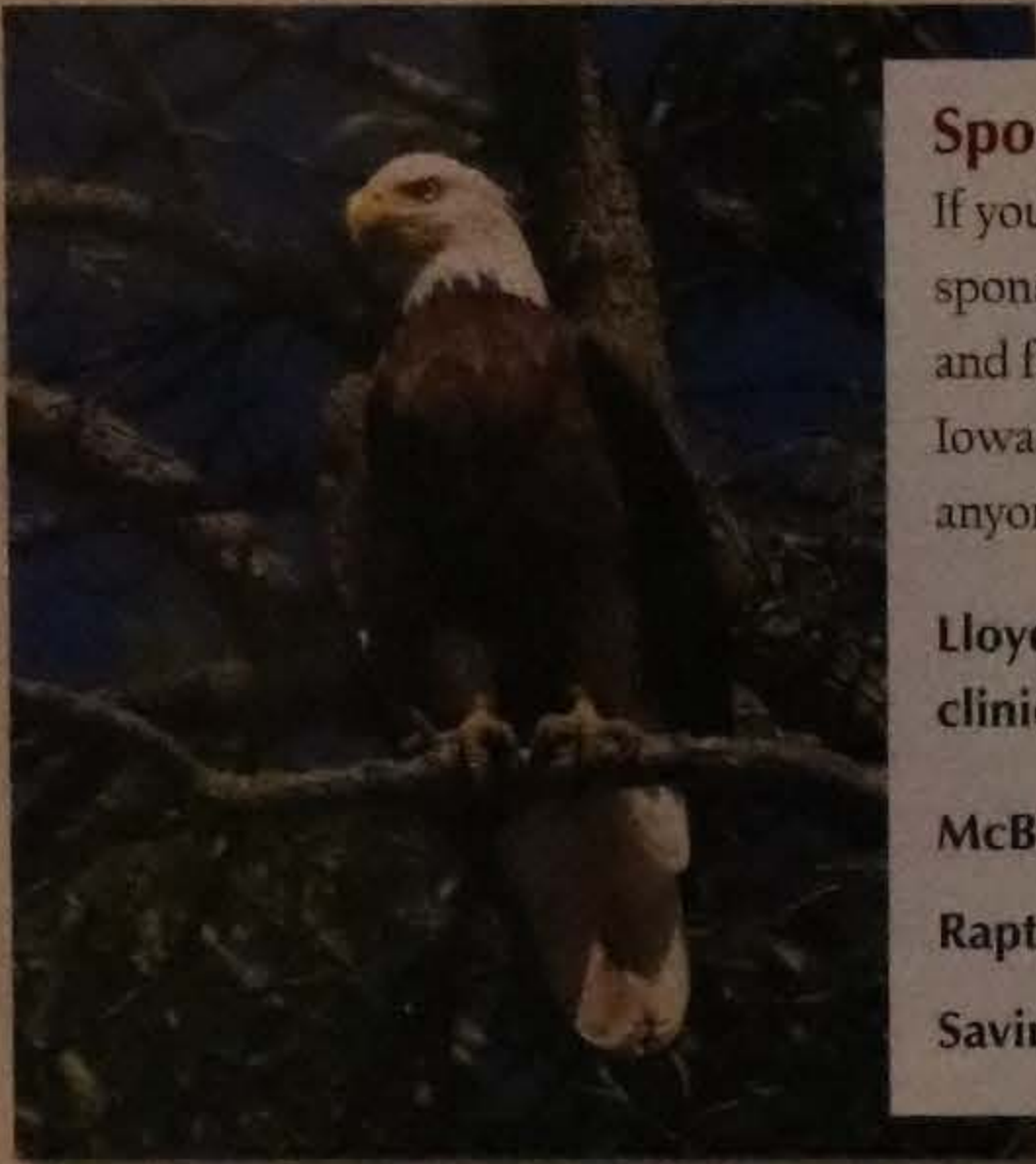
Keep exploring online at
www.inhf.org/lookingoutforiowa.cfm

Take action for conservation

Garden like a master

Gardeners can attend training sessions at over 40 locations around the state — through Iowa State University — to cultivate gardening best practices and attain Master Gardener designation. Online webinars also count toward the 40 hours of training required. Master Gardeners have opportunities to share their expertise to combat invasive plant species, encourage sustainable gardening and instill a passion for conservation in fellow gardeners.

<http://www.mastergardener.iastate.edu/become.html>



Sponsor a raptor

If you're looking for a new way to support conservation in Iowa, try sponsoring a raptor! Endangered or disabled raptors, such as hawks, eagles and falcons, are rehabilitated and featured in educational programs across Iowa. Various organizations have adoption or sponsorship opportunities for anyone interested in getting involved.

Lloyd Veterinary Medical Center: vetmed.iastate.edu/vmc/wildlife-care-clinic/donations-adoptions

McBride Raptor Project: recserv.uiowa.edu/mrp

Raptor Resource Project: www.raptorresource.org/us.htm

Saving Our Avian Resources (SOAR): www.soarraptors.org/help.html

Attend a REAP Assembly

Every two years, Iowans have the chance to learn about and influence the impact of Iowa's Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) program through 18 regional REAP assemblies around the state. REAP assemblies provide Iowans the opportunity to learn about the impact REAP has had in their region, as well as suggest future projects for REAP consideration and changes to REAP policy, programs and funding. Your participation in the assemblies will show your support for the program and help encourage the Iowa Legislature to fully fund REAP.

Find the assembly schedule here: iowadnr.gov/Environment/REAP





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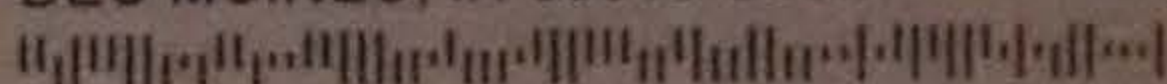


Photo: Ron Huelle

Leave a legacy of clean water, healthy soil
and beautiful outdoor places for those who follow.

To see how estate giving through INHF can help make your vision for Iowa a reality, contact Cheri Grauer at cgrauer@inhf.org or 800-475-1111



Most people are never fortunate enough to see the elusive green heron (*Butorides virescens*) in their wetland habitat. Green herons are excellent fishers, using their superior intelligence to select bait and lure their prey close enough to spear them with their sharp bills.

Please share this publication with friends, and visit our website at www.inhf.org.

Iowa Natural Heritage

Protecting and restoring Iowa's land, water and wildlife



Connections
and complexity

OPENING THOUGHTS



Open your senses. Witness the sun filtering through the leaves. Feel the fresh breeze. Breathe in. Smell the sweet flowers. Notice the colors, the patterns. Listen to the birds. Step barefoot into the stream's cool waters. Iowa's wild places are brimming with nature and beauty — their quiet presence restores our spirits.

This is our work, our passion: to preserve, restore and protect Iowa's wild places. We do not do this work alone. We do it in collaboration with a multitude of individuals and organizations who also embrace a legacy of conservation for those who will follow.

Look inside and read stories about some of the people with whom we have worked:

- Cindy and Kevin Burke worked with Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation to restore and protect their Linn County farm in eastern Iowa — a farm which was the subject of Grant Wood's "Fall Plowing" and was slated to abut a landfill development in the 1990s.
- Marietta Sand Prairie in Marshall County is reborn after INHF staff worked with interns and volunteers to harvest seed that was used to re-establish this rare sand prairie remnant.
- Central Iowa's expanding trail system is the result of countless volunteers who envisioned Iowans safely riding and biking through some of Iowa's most beautiful natural areas.
- More than 900 people donated to Turin Prairie in the Loess Hills of western Iowa's Monona County to help complete a complex project and make the protection of this natural gem a reality.

Enjoy our Spring issue. And, enjoy your time in nature!

Sincerely,
David Mackaman, INHF Board Chair



Our Mission
Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation protects and restores Iowa's land, water and wildlife.

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On the cover

Photographer Bob Lancaster captures the display of spring freshness these wild geraniums offered at Wickiup Hill in Linn County.

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Over 30 years of conservation efforts by multiple landowners and organizations permanently protects the distinct collection of landscapes Iverson Bottoms Wildlife Area offers nature lovers.

10 Writing New Chapters for Central Iowa Trails

New additions are planned to expand central Iowa's trail system, offering more avenues through nature and connecting bikers and hikers to new small town destinations.

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Turin Prairie's numbers are impressive: hundreds of acres, \$2 million, four years in the making. But this Loess Hills treasure offers a sense of place that can't be captured with facts and figures.

18 Marietta: A prairie Years in the Making

Marshall County's Marietta Sand Prairie State Preserve is known as one of Iowa's finest examples of remnant sand prairie.

20 2015 Annual Report

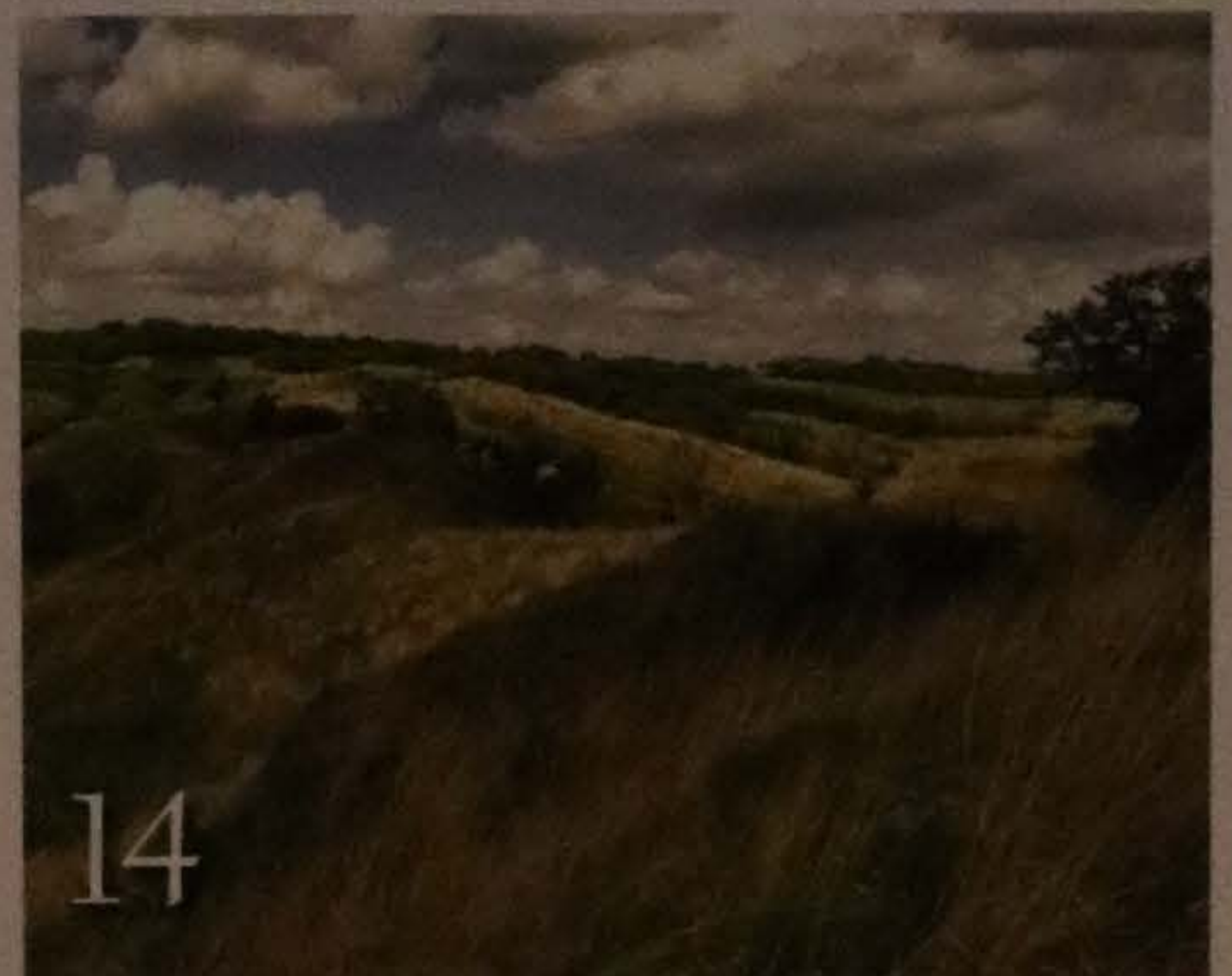
In partnership with members, donors, landowners and conservation agencies, we protected 49 additional sites and 5,300 acres in 2015.

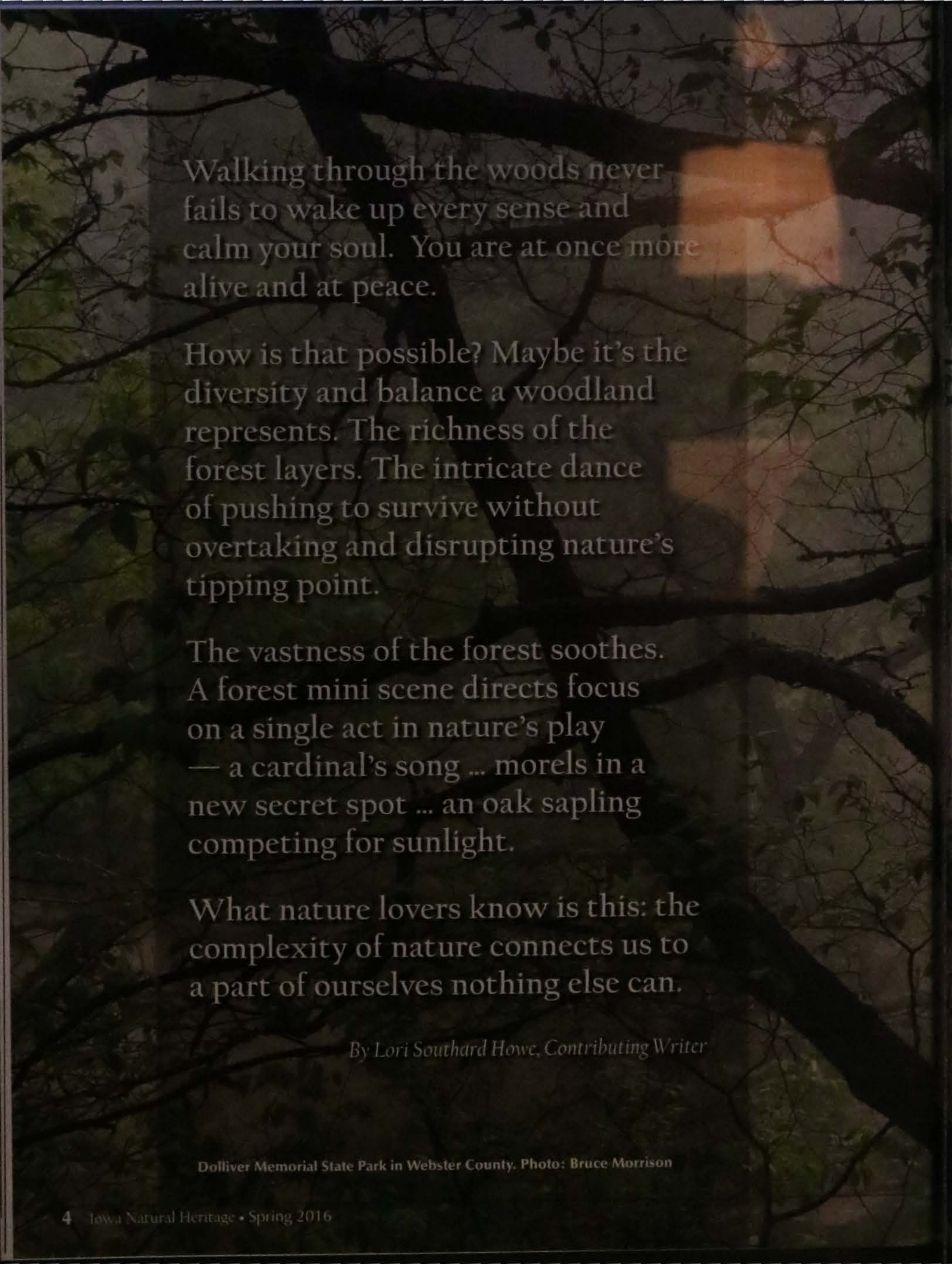
26 Vitamin N: Take a Walk through Ingawanis Woodland

Permanent protection for this former Boy Scout camp means that Iowans in Bremer County will be able to re-connect and reap the benefits of nature for years to come.

27 Looking Out for Iowa

Take action for nature this spring: volunteer for a river cleanup, tell your legislators to fund our natural resources, learn about the watershed in your area.





Walking through the woods never fails to wake up every sense and calm your soul. You are at once more alive and at peace.

How is that possible? Maybe it's the diversity and balance a woodland represents. The richness of the forest layers. The intricate dance of pushing to survive without overtaking and disrupting nature's tipping point.

The vastness of the forest soothes. A forest mini scene directs focus on a single act in nature's play — a cardinal's song ... morels in a new secret spot ... an oak sapling competing for sunlight.

What nature lovers know is this: the complexity of nature connects us to a part of ourselves nothing else can.

By Lori Southard Howe, Contributing Writer

Dolliver Memorial State Park in Webster County. Photo: Bruce Morrison





Everyday Elements of Landscapes Matter

Burke Conservation Easement Linn County

Land: Two conservation easements totaling 157 acres, part of which is in the 123-acre Grant Woods Rural Historic Landscape District

Above: The rolling hills of Cindy and Kevin Burke's Linn County landscape. **Inset:** "Fall Plowing," a 1931 painting by Grant Wood, is part of Deere & Company's permanent corporate art collection. Considered one of Wood's most famous works, "Fall Plowing" is on display through June 2016 at the Figge Art Museum in Davenport.

For Cindy and Kevin Burke, the motivation for permanently protecting land they own in the hill country of Linn County stems from their dedication to paying attention to, valuing, and lifting up the richness of the everyday elements of the landscape in which they live.

As it turns out, some of the elements of that landscape are not so everyday.

Regionalist artist Grant Wood was a frequent visitor to Linn County's hills. Cindy heard a lot of local lore from neighbors when she was a girl, including how the famous Depression-era artist had painted on land her parents came to own and stayed in the house at the end of their road.

Wood, champion of ordinary people and landscapes, painted the scenic fall landscape "Fall Plowing" in 1931. He found a fitting background in what was then the Drumbarger farmstead and a suitable vantage point for capturing the bucolic scene from a hilltop on what is now the Burkes' property. Eighty-five years later, the landscape as viewed from that hilltop still bears a striking resemblance to Woods' view depicted in Fall Plowing ... and the barn is still standing.

Quick action preserved a significant landscape

In the late 1990s, Linn County planned to site a county landfill in their neighborhood which would have compromised what the Burkes suspected were the culturally significant

aspects of their land, involved the condemnation of two neighboring family farms and possibly impacted hundreds of acres of publically owned conservation lands. Cindy and Kevin countered quickly and established the Matsell Area Preservation and Protection group and took steps to have their land registered as a National Historic Landscape. The Grant Woods Fall Plowing Rural Historic Landscape District was listed officially on the National Register of Historic Places in 2003. Cindy recalled how "Those two endeavors crystallized our passion for conserving what is often overlooked, taken for granted or forgotten."

For Cindy that passion was kindled in her childhood. Our family mushroom hunted all over eastern and southern Iowa. I came to love the timbered hillsides and the rivers. I was fascinated by old farmsteads we stumbled onto that had gone to ruin — that time had forgotten. I saw so many of these old places demolished and thought of all the work of women that was ultimately covered over. I wanted to continue the legacy of their work that signified the place they called home."

Heritage gardens are a window to the past

Her desire to continue that legacy has played out in the heritage gardens at the Burke homeplace. The gardens feature more than 500 hosta species, a few hundred species of day lily, scores of iris varieties and ferns of all kinds that Cindy has collected over the years, as well as four lady slippers her brother rescued from a timber that was being leveled.

"Poking around those farmstead ruins I found lovely, often huge patches of happy flowers and I told myself that one day, when I had my own place, I would collect these beauties and those of my mom's friends and relatives. I thought about the women tending to the gardens and imagined they'd be happy to think someone made the effort to carry on the tending of what they'd enjoyed in their lifetimes. It thrills me to think of the miles these plants have traveled and survived and that I could be a part of carrying on their legacy and that now, they can thrive long into the future."


The assurance that the everyday elements of their hill farm will forever thrive stems from the Burkes opting to permanently protect their land by will bequest and through conservation easements with Iowa Natural

Heritage Foundation and the Linn County Conservation Board. The will bequest and easements serve to preserve the biodiversity and wildlife habitat of the land as well as the aesthetic, environmental and other non-economic values for posterity.

It circles back to this for Cindy and Kevin — the everyday elements of landscapes matter.

The setting for Grant Wood's "Fall Plowing", the love women held for their flower gardens; the diligence that Cindy's parents expressed as they assembled parcel by parcel the property that is now in her and Kevin's care; the habitat this now-protected property provides for all manner of wildlife including predatory animals; the way their land fits into and complements the adjacent public Matsell Bridge Natural Area and the even more extensive Wapsipinicon River corridor. Every element matters.


They matter because they are integral parts of a whole. And Cindy and Kevin are committed to not only continuing but expanding their contributions to maintaining the whole — conserving what is often overlooked, taken for granted, forgotten — on land they own, as well as by encouraging more land protection in their neighborhood and in the farther reaches of the Wapsipinicon River.

As Cindy sees it, "We may not be able to do much about the 'state of the world.' There is much, however, we can do here — at home." 

By Cheri Grauer, Donor Relations Director



Left to Right: Al Gates (Cindy's brother), Cindy Burke and Kevin Burke display their bountiful morel harvest from the Burke's land.



Rugged, beautiful land protected by working together

A textbook example of partnerships among private landowners, conservation organizations and government agencies has protected an UN-ordinary natural area in an extraordinary corner of Iowa.

More than 3,000 acres of wild lands — centered on the Iowa Department of Natural Resources' 680-acre Iverson Bottoms Wildlife Area — sprawl across the meandering Upper Iowa River Valley in Allamakee and Winneshiek counties. The complex represents a decades-long effort by Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, the Iowa DNR and conservation-minded landowners.

Goat prairies, limestone ridges, mature woodlands and river bottoms contain diverse wildlife and plant communities. Indian mounds denote earlier peoples' connections to the region. Canoeists, hunters, bird watchers and botanists find areas as wilderness-like as anything in Iowa.

Iowa DNR wildlife biologist Terry Haindfield calls it "the best country in the whole wide world."

"The core is something special for wildlife," he said. Expanses of forest, with farm fields, hill prairies and the Upper Iowa River corridor shelter deer, turkeys, ruffed grouse and songbirds. Wintering deer and golden eagles seek the secluded blufflands. Reclusive bald eagles, timber rattlesnakes, river otters and bobcats find refuge in the rugged Upper Iowa River Valley.

A mix of land stewardship techniques practiced

The unique area requires complex management, Haindfield said. The Iowa DNR stewardship plan protects large woodlands for forest interior bird species, while occasionally using clear-



**Iverson Bottoms
Wildlife Area**
Allamakee and Winneshiek
Counties

Land: 680 acres

Special Features: blufflands,
oak-hickory forests, goat
and hill prairies, and Native
American mounds

Partners: INHF, Iowa DNR



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Above: Brian Fankhauser, INHF blufflands director, hikes along one of the rough limestone ridges that tower above the Iverson land.

cuts to create habitat for grouse and songbirds that need more brush.

Timely harvest of mature oak stands, before maple and basswood take hold, will ensure future mast-rich oak-hickory forests for squirrels, deer and turkeys. Prescribed fire on prairie remnants stimulate grasses and forbs that have been suppressed by encroaching cedar trees, Haindfield said. Land managers also must maintain pleasing viewsheds, avoid damage to steep slopes and protect Native American mounds and other archaeological resources.

Four additions double the protection

The Iverson Bottoms project required many partners. The state acquired the first 338 acres in 1981, using funds from federal excise taxes on hunting and fishing gear, along with Iowa "Open Spaces" funds.

More recently, INHF and Iowa DNR cooperated on four additions that doubled the size of the original Iverson Bottoms area. Using donations from supporters, INHF negotiated land deals that might have been difficult for a state agency constrained by timetables and funding streams.



In 2005, INHF acquired 22 acres at Iverson Bottoms by trading the owner an 18-acre tract in another part of the Allamakee County. The trading partner donated conservation easements on that 18 acres and another 58 acres.

Iowa's Resources Enhancement and Protection (REAP) funds cost-shared two other parcels that INHF purchased in 2011 and 2013.

Iowa DNR also used money from the Protected Water Area (PWA) allocation of REAP, said Todd Bishop, special projects coordinator for the Iowa DNR's wildlife bureau. He and Nate Hoogeveen, director of river programs for the Iowa DNR, put that money toward buying the 212-acre tract that INHF purchased in 2012.


Culturally significant lands

Pat Ryan, son of the late Forrest Ryan, worked with INHF to protect the site, which includes 1.5 miles of Upper Iowa riverfront and half a mile of Pine Creek. His father was passionate about preserving the area — especially the Indian mounds on a bench above the floodplain, Ryan said.

That mound group may be the most prominent Native American site in the region — but certainly not the only one, said Colin Betts, professor of anthropology at Luther College in Decorah.

The Upper Iowa Valley has "a really rich archaeological legacy," Betts said. "There is no doubt that it represented an important location for people going back thousands of years."

Other protected land in the river bottoms area includes 1,224-acre Heritage Valley, which INHF purchased from the estate of Forrest Ryan in 2007. Although not contiguous to Iverson Bottoms, Heritage Valley is just upstream along the Upper Iowa River. The Iowa DNR's 694-acre Pine Creek Wildlife Area connects with Heritage Valley, and the 495-acre Canoe Creek Wildlife Area is only a mile or two farther upstream.

With unusual wildlife and plant communities, scenic vistas, high-quality streams, archeological treasures and corridors connecting public and private conservation areas, the Iverson Bottoms area — and the surrounding Upper Iowa blufflands — showcase Iowa's natural and cultural heritage at its best. 

By Larry Stone, Contributing Writer

Left: Typical to northeast Iowa woodlands and goat prairies, pasque flowers are some of the earliest flowers to bloom in the spring.





Writing New Chapters for Central Iowa Trails

Nearly 40 years ago the Central Iowa trail network got its start with the establishment of the Bill Riley Trail. This short trail links Waterworks Park with Greenwood Park and the neighborhoods near the Des Moines Art Center and the former Science Center of Iowa location. It was a modest beginning named after the famous Iowa State Fair talent scout and television personality who loved trails.

Today the network of trails in central Iowa has grown to include local neighborhood trails as well as long distance regional trails stretching in all directions. The current plan envisions the regional spine extending 70 miles west to Whiterock Conservancy, 45 miles southeast to Lake Red Rock, 80 miles northeast to Pine Lake State Park, 25 miles south to Lake Ahquabi, as well as existing connections to Jefferson, Martensdale and Ames.

The exciting part of this work is the amazing trail loops that have evolved. An eastern metro loop plan was begun in 1995 linking Chichaqua Valley Trail with the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail and the Neal Smith Trail. Large sections of this eastern loop are completed, but in the meantime, a western loop that will connect Neal Smith Trail with the High Trestle Trail and Raccoon River Valley Trail is underway. Finally, Central Iowa trail network is currently pursuing a third major loop linking the Great Western Trail to the Summerset Trail and back into downtown Des Moines.

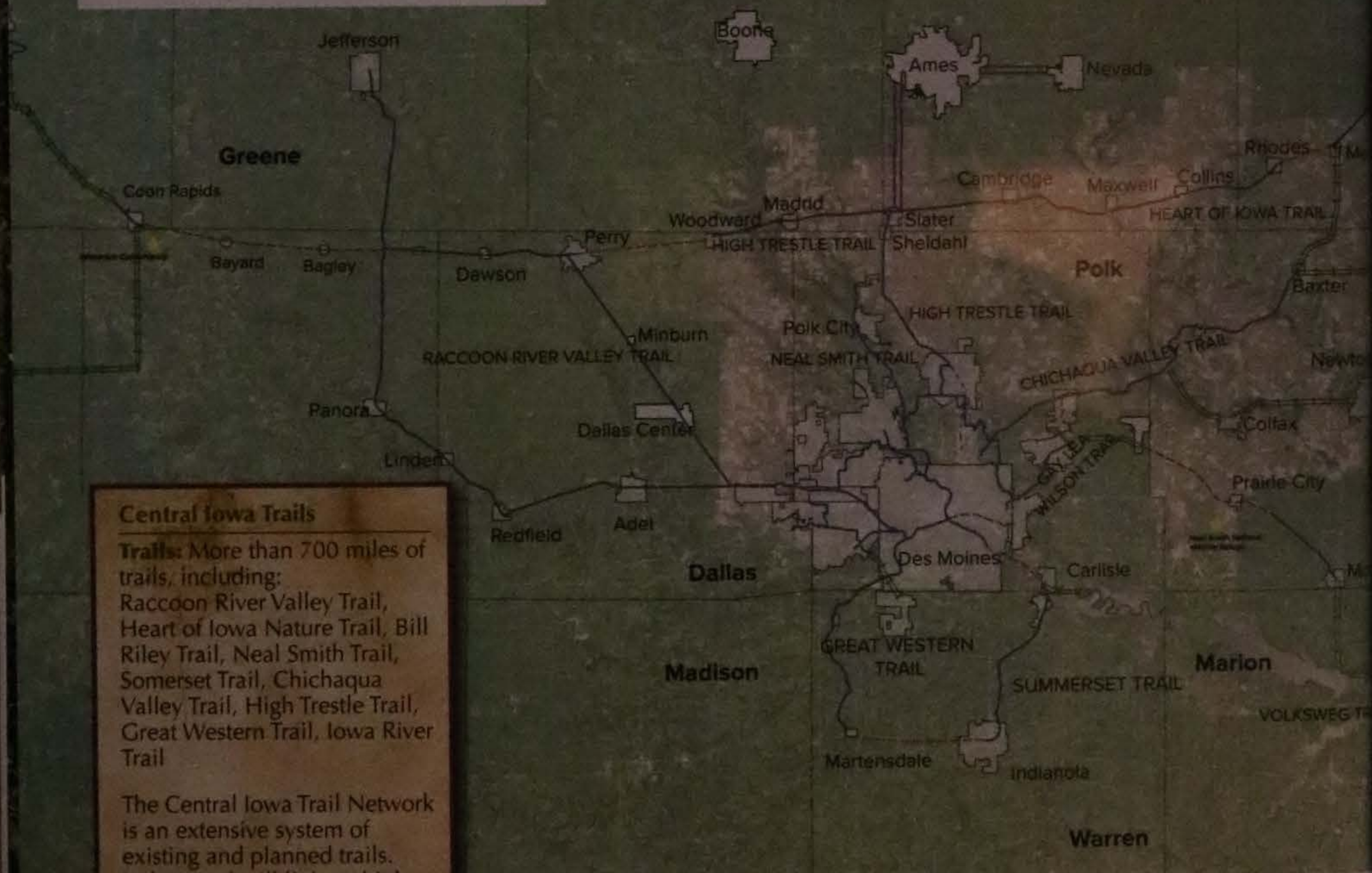
This interconnected system central Iowans enjoy didn't happen by accident. It has taken sincere dedication, planning and tenacity from volunteers, public agency staff, engineers, designers, railroad companies, landowners, project donors and elected officials. Perhaps the most important advocates are trail users, who passionately shout the

Above: The world famous High Trestle Trail provides bikers and hikers breathtaking views of the Des Moines River Valley.

Opposite: Cyclists ride the Raccoon River Valley Trail near Redfield. The RRVT is 89 total miles with a 72-mile interior loop.

Central Iowa Trails

- Completed
- - - - Under Construction Trail
(Acquired right-of-way or near-term construction)
- ==== Paved Shoulder (completed)
- - - - Planned Trail
(Long-term construction plans underway)
- ==== Potential Trail
(May happen one day)



Central Iowa Trails

Trails: More than 700 miles of trails, including: Raccoon River Valley Trail, Heart of Iowa Nature Trail, Bill Riley Trail, Neal Smith Trail, Somerset Trail, Chichaqua Valley Trail, High Trestle Trail, Great Western Trail, Iowa River Trail

The Central Iowa Trail Network is an extensive system of existing and planned trails. It does and will link multiple communities and counties throughout the Des Moines metro area and beyond. The system will eventually have large loops, plus many cross-links, short-cuts and other connections.

What you can do to help: To learn about emerging trails you can support, call Lisa Hein at 515-288-1846 or visit inhf.org/trail-gifts.cfm. Also, get outside and enjoy the trails!

praises for trails.

Trails are some of INHF's most complicated and challenging — yet most rewarding — projects because they touch so many lives and communities. A single trail can take years to complete, not for a lack of enthusiasm, but mostly because funding is so tight and, frankly, establishing a 10-foot wide trail in the most physically altered state in the nation can be daunting. Nearly every inch of Iowa is consumed by some form of development (residential, commercial or agricultural), and very few places are reserved exclusively for outdoor recreation or nature. This is one reason that setting aside railroad corridors for trails is a sensible concept. The railroads existed before most of the agricultural and commercial development, and the railbeds have a solid infrastructure on which to build trails.

Most recent trail additions

The latest additions to the central Iowa trail system have been along such railroad corridors. At the east end of the regional trails network, an 11-mile corridor between Prairie City and Mitchellville was acquired by Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation recently. This corridor will eventually transfer to Jasper County and Prairie City. The project expands and diversifies the recreation opportunities found nearby at the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge, which provides extensive wildlife habitat and educational programming.


At the western end of the central Iowa trail system, INHF secured 6 miles of the former rail corridor between Herndon and Bayard. This corridor was preserved by the previous owners so it would be available as a future trail. It is the first step toward linking the Raccoon River Valley Trail west to Whiterock Conservancy and Coon Rapids.

While the completion of these current projects is likely years away, securing the corridors is key to the projects' success.

It's also sad to think of the corridors lost over the years. For example, INHF was outbid on the effort to acquire an abandoned railroad connection between Marshalltown and Cedar Falls. And another corridor lost would have extended the Great Western Trail all the way to the Missouri border! Yet, while we missed out at an even

greater network, Iowa trails have received international recognition and become a destination for cyclists.

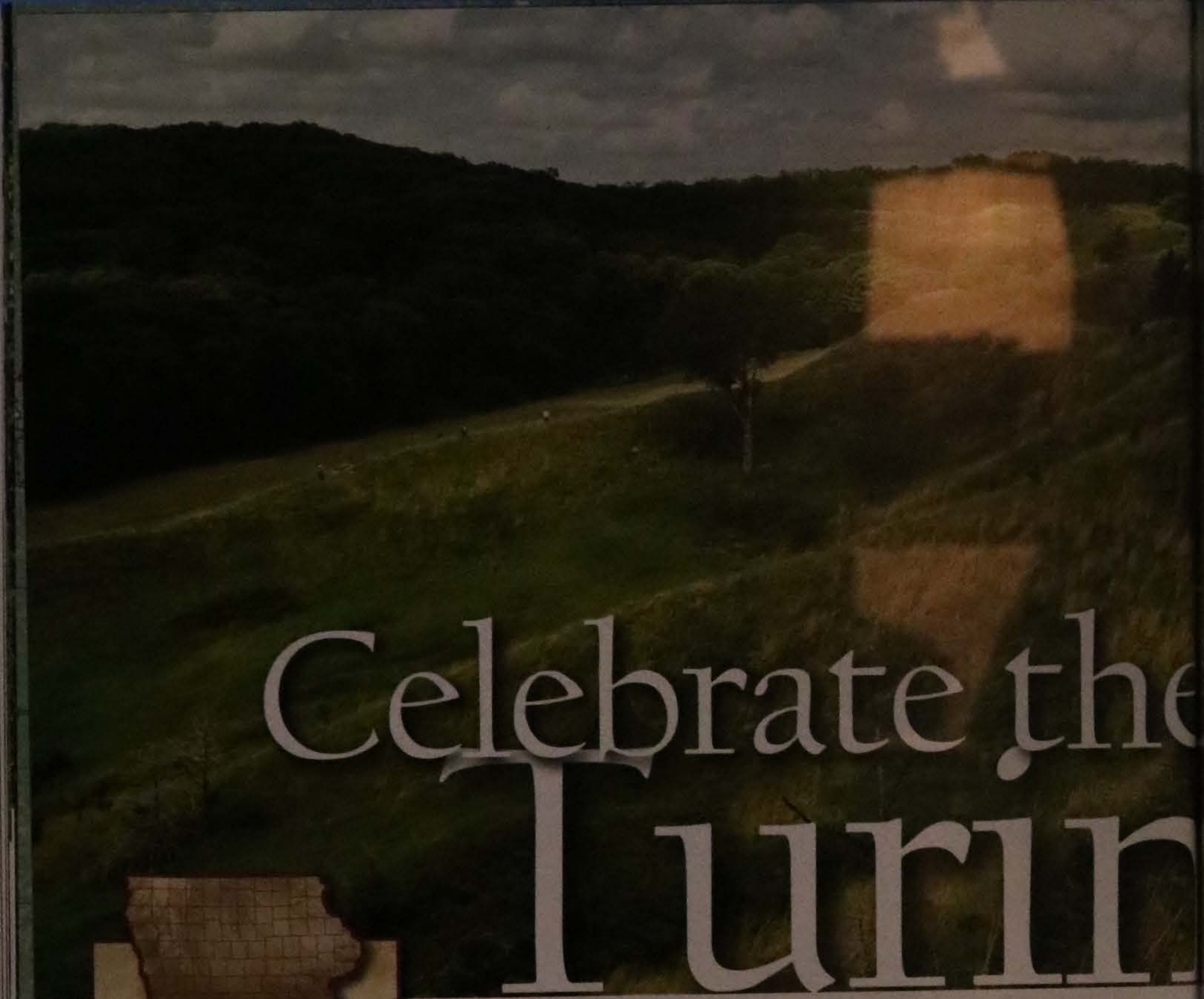
State funding for public acquisition of rail corridors has been possible from state gambling monies that support REAP and the State Recreational Trails fund. Local match funds are provided through private contributions and public agencies.

To complete trails on the corridors recently purchased, it will take diligent work and cooperation. Volunteers, agency staff, engineers and elected officials will pursue grant funding, begin section-by-section construction, hold fundraising events, attend numerous meetings, cut ribbons and watch their children grow as the trails become reality. It is a classic story of trail-building in Iowa that will take years to finish. The result will be an important link in the regional vision to create an interconnected statewide trail system that supports quiet places for people to visit small towns and re-connect with nature. 


By Lisa Hein, Senior Director for Conservation Programs

The 25-mile Neal Smith Trail takes Central Iowa residents from downtown Des Moines to Big Creek State Park in Polk City. Often dominated by views of Saylorville Lake, the trail traverses a range of landscapes, including bottomland, shaded forest, oak uplands and prairie.





Celebrate the Turin



Turin Prairie Monona County

Land: 467 acres added to the Turin Preserve Wildlife Management Area — creating a 1,200-acre block of protected wildlife habitat

Special features: Loess Hills ridges with over 200 acres of high quality native prairies, plus valleys of mixed bur oak woodlands and oak savanna

Partners: INHF, Iowa DNR, and 937 donors, with special thanks to Loess Hills Alliance and Helen A. Ringgenberg



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You sit among the grasses and flowers on the steep slope, with the encompassing blue sky around and above and even below you. Your gaze slides down the graceful multi-textured hillsides, then dances over the treetops huddled in the valleys.

Across the flatlands below and beyond the hills, you can sense the Missouri River and Nebraska on the vague horizon. The sun and breeze caress you. Birdsong beckons amid the hush. You are immersed in nature, not focused on yourself, glad to be a small part of a vast and complex wholeness. That's a sweet moment at Turin Prairie.

It's time to celebrate the magic of this place, the joy of its permanence and the trust and dogged determination required to protect it. Let's pause to appreciate all the people involved in protecting Turin Prairie. Every member of Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation had a hand in this, and nearly 1,000 people reading this magazine gave specifically to protect Turin Prairie.

The Magic of Prairie

Turin Prairie's numbers are impressive: hundreds of acres, \$2 million, four years in the making. But Turin Prairie's story is more about heart than numbers.

Conviction

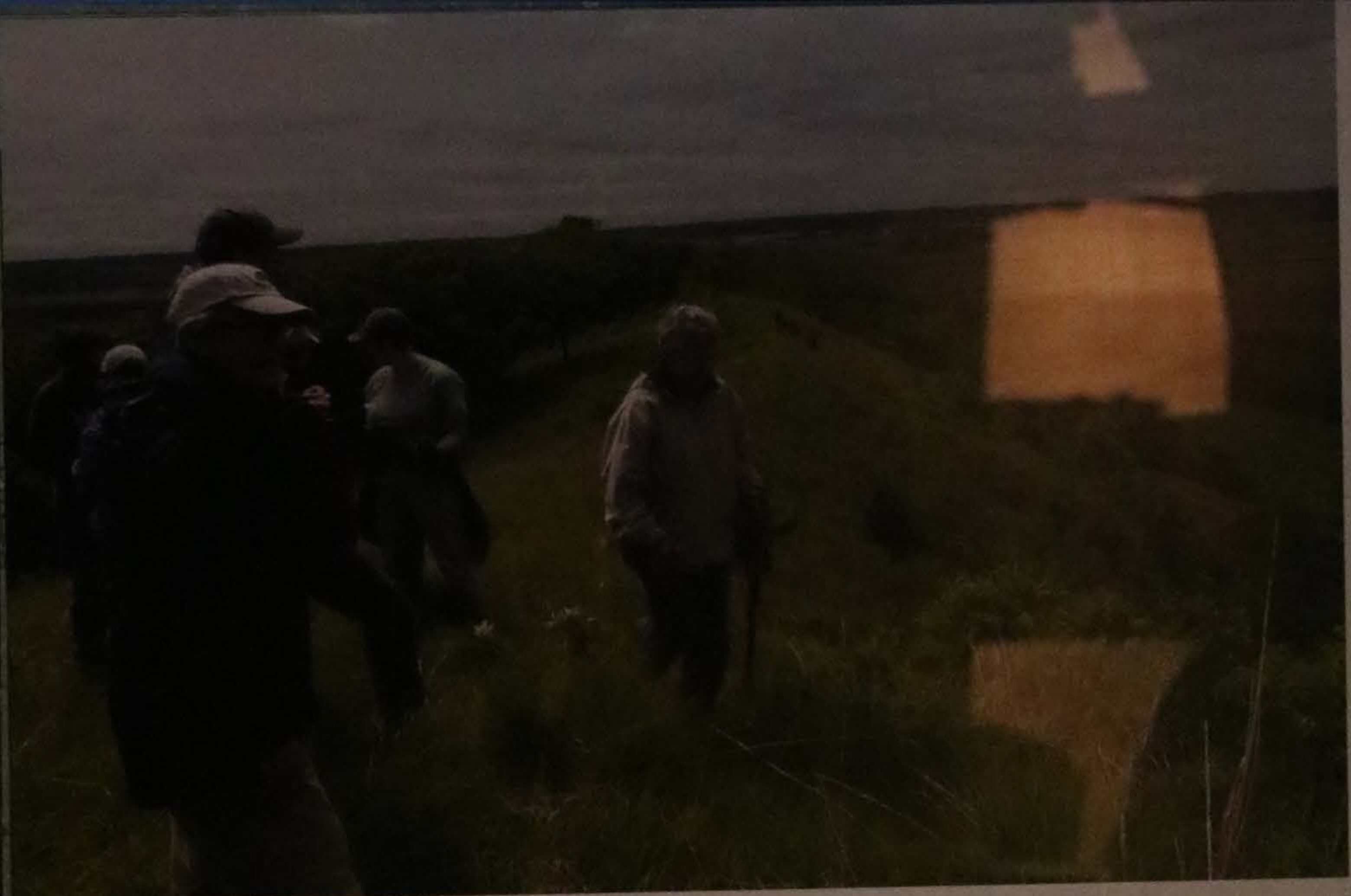
"I'm amazed that it happened." That's how Tim Sproul, INHF Loess Hills land conservation consultant, summed it up. "I kept thinking, 'I don't see how we're going to be able to make this work. But we've got to try. This is really, really, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. We cannot give up on it.'"

This project began with a fairly simple inquiry from Virginia Mathison, who wanted the Iowa Department of Natural Resources to add her 80 acres to the adjoining Turin Preserve Wildlife Management Area. The Iowa DNR asked INHF to purchase and hold the land while they secured funds.

Then there was a surprising leap in scope. Virginia's neighbors, Ron and Connie Christiansen, offered to sell their 345 acres that lay both north and south of the Mathison addition, for the same purpose. Their land was especially rich in high-quality prairie.

It would take nearly \$2 million to protect all this land together — and access to major





financing for this to work. It would take nimbleness and flexibility to be able to serve the landowners' needs in a timely way. It would take vision, excitement and experience to pull the people and resources together for success. And, it would take boldness for the INHF board, staff and the Iowa DNR to commit to this project.

What's it like to face such a challenging opportunity? INHF board member Travis Young, who chaired the board when this project began, explained: "Our board knows how to approach measured risks. Sure, there were unknowns. But our entire board realized it had to be done, and that INHF plays a role that nobody else can. This is what we're here to do. Pursuing big projects like this is not easy, but we're grateful to be able to try. Few organizations even have the opportunity to protect places of this scope. When the goals are big, we like to get the call. We like to talk with the agency, the nonprofit, the landowner who's thinking big, to see if we're the people they'd like to work with.

"Besides, our members trust INHF to take those calculated risks when we need to. Even if a member never steps foot on these places, they know their money is used in good and bold ways. The Foundation has done that for decades."



Left Top: The 2015 Loess Hills Prairie seminar attendees took in fabulous views atop the Turin Prairie hills.

Left Bottom: A young prairie enthusiast looks over the Loess Hills landscape at a recent Loess Hills Prairie Seminar.

Right: Tim Sproul presenting to seminar attendees.

Trust

Big commitments require trust, relationships and experience. People have to count on each other when they take on big-scale projects like Turin Prairie.


INHF and the Iowa DNR counted on one another to bring funding, project management and leadership to Turin Prairie. Based on years of successful partnerships, INHF trusted that the Iowa DNR could secure most of the funding needed from a variety of public sources over several years. INHF committed to raising \$200,000 from private sources.

INHF trusted our members would help. We know we have members who like to help protect Iowa's great places. Every now and then, INHF brings an especially inspiring and challenging project to the attention of its members. Some love to give to a specific place and feel the joy of its protection. More than 10 percent of members gave to Turin Prairie in addition to their membership support. INHF also shared this opportunity beyond its membership, which motivated nearly 600 new people to support the foundation's work.

Donors trusted INHF and the Iowa DNR to complete a land project of this scope and ensure continued stewardship for the prairie.

The late Mildred Ackdin of Sioux City played an important role in this project even beyond her lifetime. Millie trusted INHF with her legacy for Loess Hills protection. Her bequest provided matching funds that encouraged donors to give generously to this project.

INHF's long-time members can be proud, too, that their support has given INHF the stability and experience to build relationships of trust. Only with that bedrock of loyal support has INHF been able to gain the capacity to take on ever-more-challenging projects.

Now, all these people can celebrate our mutual achievement in protecting Turin Prairie. It's amazing just to think there are still places like this in Iowa! It's an honor to protect them together." 

By Anita O'Gara, Vice President



You're invited: A Celebration of Turin Prairie

Saturday, September 24: A Celebration of Turin Prairie will welcome everyone to experience parts of this vast place. Enjoy guided hikes and opportunities for varied interests and abilities, plus a dedication ceremony. INHF staff and board look forward to celebrating with our members. Please come! Watch for more information this summer.

What's so special about Turin Prairie?

It's vast. Photos simply can't capture it. There's way more protected land than you can see from any spot and more than you can explore in a day. By adding 467 acres to the already expansive Turin Preserve and Wildlife Management Area, there are now more than 1,200 rolling acres of protected prairie, woods and hills. This creates only the fourth public site in Iowa where you can visit an expanse of Loess Hills of this scale.

It's rare. Prairie once covered most of Iowa. Today, most remaining native prairies are quite small. In the Loess Hills, many prairies are narrow — following the knife-edge tops of ridges. But at the Turin Prairie addition, more than 200 acres of native prairie spread across the hills and valleys in every direction. It's a green expanse ablaze with wildflowers that intermingle with bur oaks — as good as you will find in this region. Crop fields are being returned to prairie over time, re-uniting the wholeness of this place.

It's silent. Just minutes off Interstate 29, a short hour's drive from Sioux City or Council Bluffs, it's an amazingly quiet place; you'll hear no mechanical noise. The silence becomes a companion. It draws you. Iowans can experience this particular quality of silence only on a large expanse of natural land.

This magical combination helps us imagine how Iowa must have looked and sounded five generations ago. Here, the actions of our members and partners ensure our great-grandchildren will be able to sense their Iowa roots.

Marietta: A prairie years in the making

Under the blue bowl of an early October sky, volunteers of all ages met to harvest prairie seed at Marietta Sand Prairie Preserve in Marshall County. Between sipping apple cider and enjoying the cool, clear day, they collected more than 5 pounds of native prairie seed. It was a day more than 10 years in the making: this was the last of the seed needed to restore the row crop land adjacent to the state preserve.



Marietta Sand Prairie
Preserve
Marshall County

Land: 229 acres

Special Features: rare remnant sand prairie, fen wetland

Partners: Marshall CCB, INHF, Martha-Ellen Tye Foundation, Iowa Prairie Network, Pheasants Forever



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Remnants of native sand prairie are even rarer than tallgrass prairie remnants.

Amidst Iowa's lush tallgrass prairies, there are a few dry sand prairies that support a rich mix of plant, animal, bird and insect life distinctly their own. Remnants of native sand prairie are even rarer than tallgrass prairie remnants. Marietta Sand Prairie State Preserve, a designated wildlife management area, is known as one of Iowa's finest remaining examples of remnant sand prairie. But at just 17 acres, it faced constant pressure from invasive weeds and pesticide drift from surrounding land. Moreover, it wasn't large enough to support the most sensitive, threatened species — like grassland birds needing large tracts of prairie grasses to successfully reproduce and thrive.

So, in 2005 when the opportunity arose to purchase the 211 acres next to the state preserve — an area including remnant sand prairie, a fen wetland and sandy and lowland crop fields — Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation immediately seized the chance. INHF president Joe McGovern, who was land stewardship director when the project began, reflected that INHF could have simply bought the remnant prairie areas of the adjoining land. Instead, INHF decided to protect the entire area, crop fields and all, bringing together a group of strong and passionate partners to restore this land around the state preserve.

"It will take years to establish the prairie and some care and attention long-term to keep it whole and healthy," McGovern said at the time of the purchase. "But it's worth a little time and cost to do it right." So even after the land protection was complete, INHF stayed involved in the restoration of the prairie — dedicating hundreds of staff and volunteer hours to picking and planting.

Reestablishing prairie on the crop ground was a deliberate process. INHF and Marshall County Conservation Board (CCB) knew that the time and attention was key to establishing the high quality planting the area deserved. As Marshall CCB director Mike Stegmann observed, "in any natural area, it is critically important to provide as much diversity as possible to support insect, bird and animal life." Though

efforts at managing the area will continue through mowing and prescribed burns by Marshall CCB, the results so far, Stegmann says, have been "exquisite."

A satisfying day

On the last Friday in January 2016, a small group of INHF staff members and interns braved the cold to spread the last handfuls of prairie seed at Marietta Sand Prairie Preserve. Despite the rawness of the day, the sun was bright, and the wind only helped in scattering the fluffs of seed — gathered by those fall volunteers only a few months before — across the wide, white fields.

All of the prairie seed used to restore the crop fields adjacent to the state preserve came from other prairie remnants. The prairie seed used to restore the sandy crop fields was gathered from the state preserve itself — largely by volunteers, whose dedication and hard work bring continual energy and excitement to the project.

Indeed, Marietta Sand Prairie is the type of project that draws support from all corners, bringing together an incredible diversity of groups. Multiple chapters of Pheasants Forever contributed their support, and the Iowa Prairie Network donated the proceeds of their annual auction. A \$50,000 challenge grant from the Martha-Ellen Tye Foundation in Marshalltown inspired individual donations from across the state. This outpouring of support helped Marshall CCB secure a \$200,000 county Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) grant for the project.

And, for the majority of contributors, their involvement with Marietta Sand Prairie did not end with the purchase of the addition. "Lots of donors have come out and helped us gather seed, and they have visited throughout the restoration process," Mike Stegmann said. "Something about Marietta touches people in an unexpected way. I think it's the beauty and peacefulness of the place. In Iowa, we don't have an ocean or beachfront where you can let your mind wander. We have the prairie." 🌿

By Andrea Pickarczyk, Grants Coordinator



Above: In January, INHF staffers spread prairie seed, including this common milkweed, on the last section of Marietta Sand Prairie Preserve to be restored.

Opposite: The Marietta Sand Prairie has blossomed into a diverse mix of grasses and forbs after years of restoration work.

INHF seemed like the logical choice to ensure that the work we have done to preserve natural areas is continued.

Roslea Johnson

Our goal is to help build an even stronger community of people who appreciate and enjoy nature.

Bob Johnson

Celebrating 2015 Milestones

The Johnsons are the kind of people who make the engine turn at Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. In this Annual Report, you'll read about all the projects on which INHF worked in 2015. The land, water and wildlife protection that drives our mission. But none of these are possible without the people — members, donors, volunteers, partners, board and staff — that contribute their time, resources and knowledge to conservation in Iowa. So let's celebrate a few of the people that helped us to reach milestones in 2015.



Gov. Terry Branstad, left, and Iowa DNR Director Chuck Gipp, right, honored Bob and Roslea Johnson for their donation at Gift to Iowa's Future Recognition Day.

150,000 acres protected

When Bob and Roslea Johnson donated part of their Madison County farm to Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, they had no idea that their generosity would help INHF reach a major milestone: 150,000 acres protected statewide. Since 1979, INHF has worked to protect Iowa's landscape through the expansion of publicly-owned lands, the placement of conservation easements on privately-owned property and the piecing together of miles-long trail projects. It is the foresight and dedication of many private landowners like the Johnsons that helps to make the work possible.

New stewardship crew formed

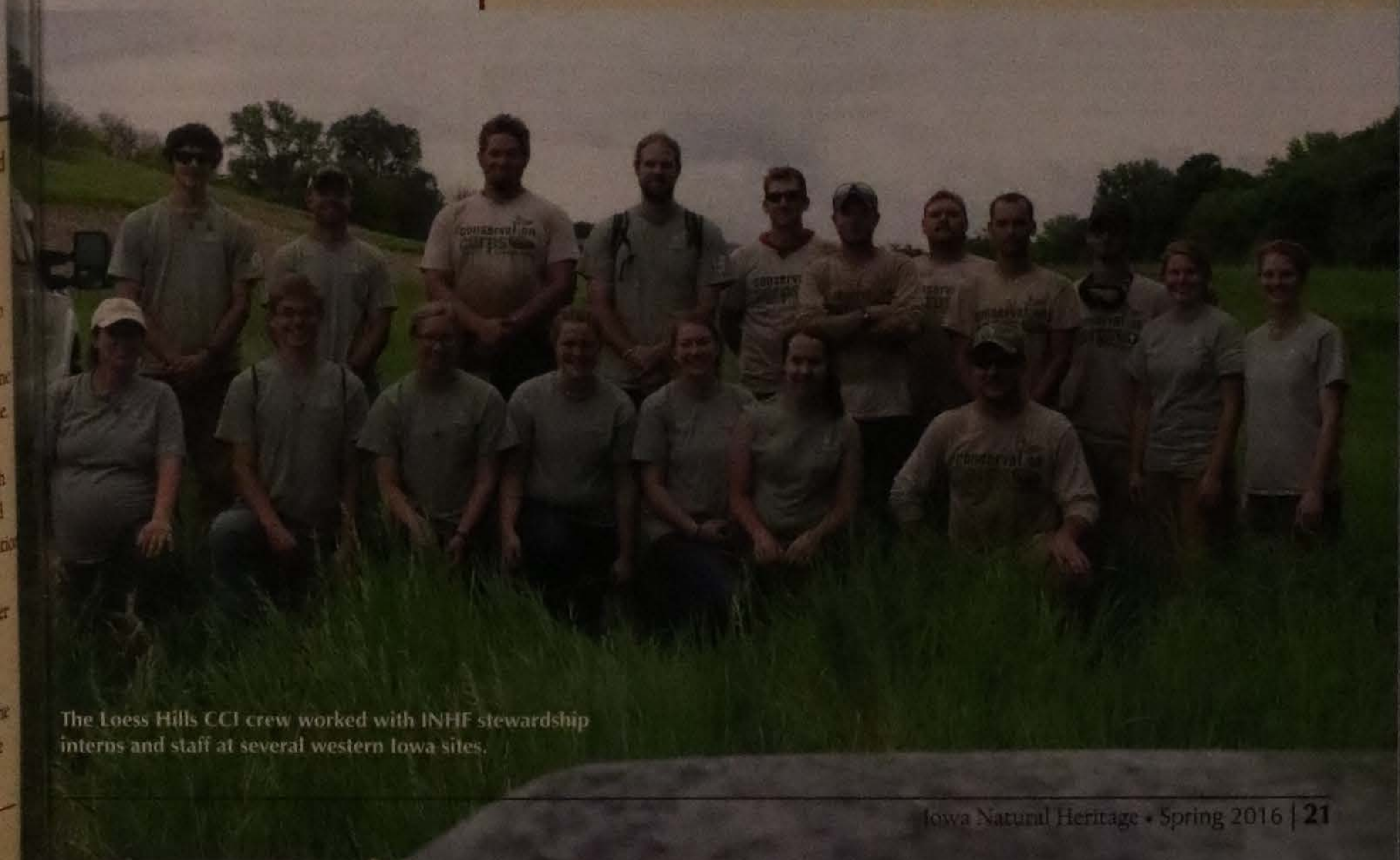
INHF worked with the Conservation Corps of Iowa (CCI) to create a new six-person crew focused on restoring the ecological health of the Loess Hills. The Loess Hills CCI crew received financial or organization support from INHF, CCI, the Pottawattamie County Conservation Board, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Iowa DNR Wildlife Diversity Program, the Iowa Prairie Network and the Loess Hills Alliance. In addition, many organizations and landowners contracted with the fledgling crew as they devoted more than 8,000 person-hours toward improving the health of the land in 2015. The initiative was so successful that the Loess Hills CCI crew is now a permanent, self-supported part of CCI, which has a reputation for accomplishing high quality, hands-on environmental stewardship work, while providing service-learning opportunities for young adults.



Sand retires having created legacy of conservation

In 1981, just two years after Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation was formed, Duane Sand offered to create a soil and water program for INHF — and said he'd find the funding to support it. So he began seeking grant support for great ideas and creating a model of working for the next three decades: matching fresh concepts with foundations that believed in the need, the ideas and in Duane's capability. He'd be the first to say he didn't do any of these alone — but if you follow the threads, you'll find Duane at the heart of these conservation actions with his ideas, strategies or funding sources: on-farm demonstrations of reduced tillage, fertilizer or pesticide use; Conservation Reserve Program and Wetlands Reserve Program; helping landowners close agricultural drainage wells; passage of the Iowa Conservation Contribution Tax Credit for donations of land for conservation and much, much more. Duane recently retired from full-time work with INHF after 34 years, but he created a legacy of invaluable conservation programs and inspiring strategic thinking.

Photo: INHF staff



The Loess Hills CCI crew worked with INHF stewardship interns and staff at several western Iowa sites.

Iowa land PROTECTED in 2015

Your membership and gifts to Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation truly do expand land, water and wildlife conservation in Iowa.

INHF worked with landowners, members and partners to permanently protect more than 5,000 acres at 49 locations across the state in 2015.

A majority of our 2015 land projects are — or will eventually be — lands open to the public where everyone can explore and enjoy their natural features. Those projects are or will be owned and managed by the following: 27 by the Iowa DNR; 13 by county conservation boards; two by cities; and one by a national wildlife refuge.

Five projects in 2015 were conservation easements — agreements between landowners and INHF that permanently protect land and its special features — preserving landowner use and ownership. These voluntary agreements are permanent, with INHF visiting the sites annually to ensure compliance with current and future landowners.

One couple donated their land to INHF, entrusting us with its long-term care. Sites like this may be shared with the public through work days, tours and other events.

5,300 Acres Protected. 49 Land Projects.

Conservation Features Legend

Woodlands Prairies/Grassland Wetlands Park Streams/Rivers

Conservation Easements

Dubuque County

105-acre conservation easement protects wildlife habitat along the North Fork of the Maquoketa River corridor. The easement protects a mixture of prairie reconstruction on former agricultural fields, mature oak-hickory woodland and west-facing slopes above the river. Small caves, steep bluffs and rock outcroppings line the protected riverbank. Donated by Dave and Rita Dudley.

Guthrie County

120-acre conservation easement protects the prairie, woodland, wildflowers and wildlife habitat on this restored natural area in rural Guthrie County. Donated by Eugene and Marva DeBoer.

Jones County

92-acre conservation easement protects wildlife habitat and improve the water quality of the impaired Maquoketa River. The parcel is close to other conservation projects, including Eby's Mill Wildlife Area and Indian Bluffs and Pictured Rocks Wildlife Management Area. Donated by Kyle Tobiason.

Linn County

80-acre conservation easement protects the wildlife habitat, scenic beauty and open space character of the property. The easement is adjacent to another easement the Burkes completed in 2010. Both easements act as buffers to the Matsell Bridge Natural Area and protection of perennial habitat has a positive impact on the Wapsipinicon River watershed. Donated by Cindy and Kevin Burke.

Madison County

150-acre conservation easement protects wildlife habitat, preserve prairie and conserve open space characteristics of the rolling hills in the Southern Iowa Drift Plain. The property includes remnant and reconstructed prairie, a pond, wooded creek valleys and open space, which provides valuable habitat for pollinators and grassland species. Donated by Ben and Loline Johnson.

Land Donations to INHF

Madison County

Bob and Roslea Johnson donated 60 acres of their Madison County farm to INHF. The Johnsons' donation ensures protection for unusual plants and provides a refuge for the abundant wildlife including deer, turkeys, bobcats, dragonflies and butterflies. The Johnsons worked to restore the former quarry site for cattle grazing, but along the way, they discovered prairie remnants. The couple has put in years of work to steward, protect and connect the remnant pieces.

Land Projects

Sedan Bottoms Addition

116-acre addition to Sedan Bottoms, part of a Bird Conservation Area in Appanoose County. The land is being restored to habitat for deer, turkey, neotropical migratory birds and other non-game species.

West Fork Forest Access Addition

56 acres of floodplain woodland along the West Fork of the Cedar River in Butler County. Protection ensures continuation of the land's water quality benefits, such as filtration and flood control.

Big Marsh WMA* Addition

224-acre area restored to wetland and prairie with a diverse array of forbs and grasses. The land provides excellent habitat for upland and wetland bird species.

Big Marsh WMA Addition

38-acre addition to Big Marsh Wildlife Management Area in Butler County being restored to wetlands and prairie.

Big Marsh WMA Addition

67 acres of riparian timber along the West Fork of the Cedar River, and an addition to Big Marsh Wildlife Management Area in Butler County.

*WMA = Wildlife Management Area

Big Marsh WMA Addition

20 acre-addition to the Big Marsh Wildlife Management Area in Butler County. The land is being restored back to wetlands and native grasses, benefiting water quality and wildlife habitat.

Big Marsh WMA Addition

172-acre area intertwined with one mile of the West Fork of the Cedar River — one of several rivers listed on Iowa's Impaired Waters list. The land protects water quality, and also lies adjacent to Big Marsh Wildlife Management Area.

Clear Lake WMA

59-acres adjacent to Clear Lake State Park in Cerro Gordo County lies in Clear Lake's watershed and will be restored to prairie and wetland.

Hewitt-Ensign Hollow WMA Addition

74-acre area with cold water trout stream adjacent to the Hewitt-Ensign Hollow Wildlife Management Area in Clayton County.

Ringneck Marsh Wildlife Area Addition

80 acres of timber, grassland and floodplain of the Wapsipinicon River — a state-designated Protected Water Area. The land lies adjacent to the 264-acre Ringneck Marsh Wildlife Area in Clinton County.

Garlock Slough Addition

44-acre wetland and remnant prairie addition to the Garlock Slough Wildlife Management Area in Dickinson County, which protects and improves the water quality in West Okoboji Lake.

Dugout Creek Addition

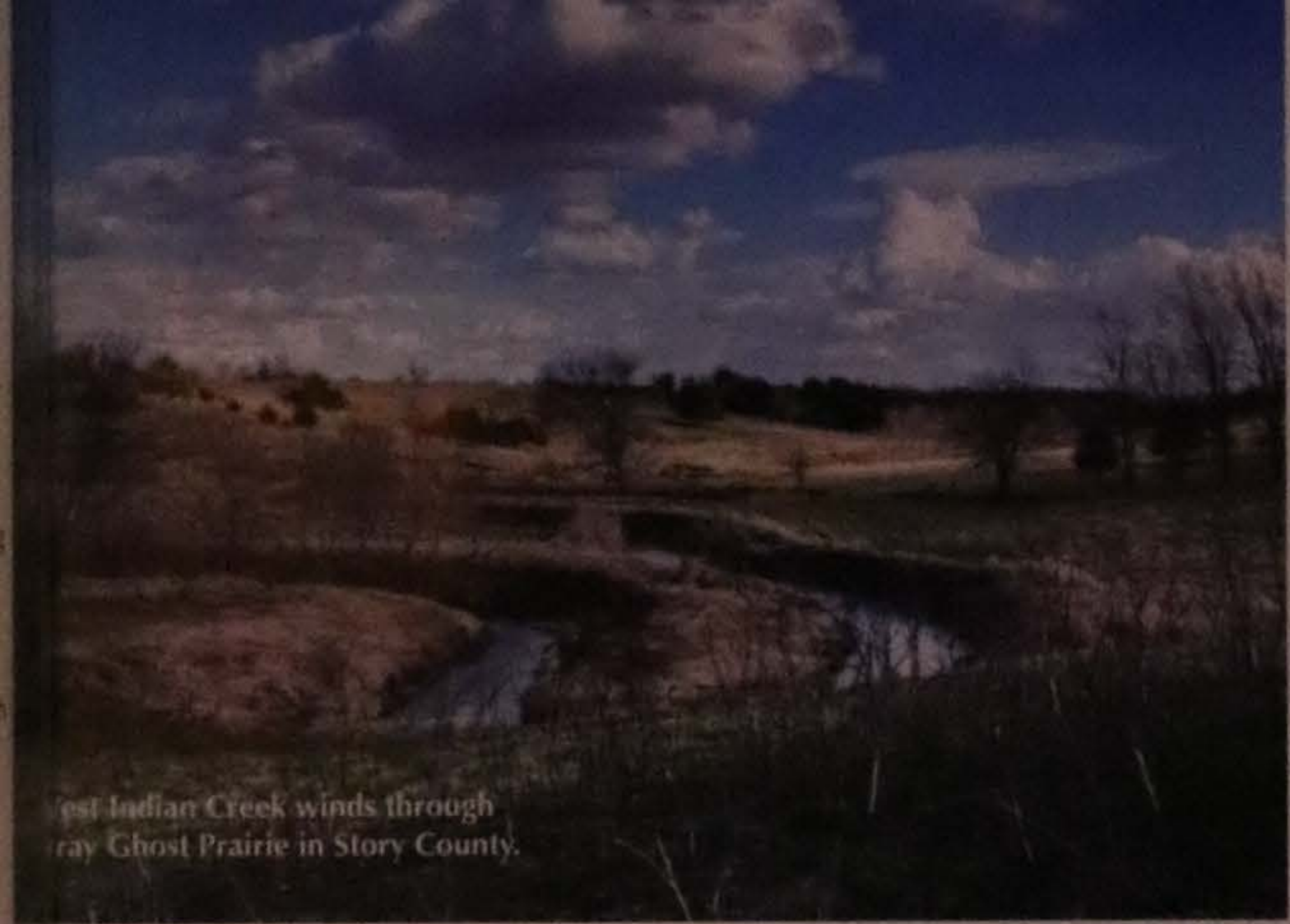
80-acre addition to the Dugout Creek complex in Dickinson County. The land lies within the Yager Slough/Dugout Creek Prairie Pothole Joint Venture Priority Area and contains remnant prairie.

Twelve Mile Lake Addition

53-acre addition to 12 Mile Lake in Emmet County that serves as an upland buffer and provides public access to the lake.

Fayette County

94 acres of quality remnant prairie, reconstructed prairie, wetlands and a stream.



West Indian Creek winds through Gray Ghost Prairie in Story County.

Biscuitroot Ridge

Rosie Hall protected a piece of the Loess Hills with a bargain sale of her 159-acre property in Fremont County. The land contains State Endangered Species biscuitroot and two other plants listed as state Special Concern species.

North Raccoon River WMA Addition

144 acres of riparian woodland, cropland and swamp white oak timber along the North Raccoon River in Greene County.

Ruth Hanson Wildlife Area Addition

160 acres of riparian habitat along the North Raccoon River makes up the Ruth Hanson Wildlife area Addition in Greene County. The land offers valuable woodland habitat to game species.

Springbrook State Park Addition

48-acres adjacent to Springbrook State Park in Guthrie County. The land is sloping oak-hickory woodland, but is being restored to rare Oak Savanna habitat.

Raccoon River Valley Trail Extension

Shippers Consortium, Inc. donated approximately 7.3 miles of the former Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad line in Guthrie County. The land will go toward creating a spur on the Raccoon River Valley Trail from Herndon to Coon Rapids, thus connecting central Iowa's trail system to the mountain bike trails and other outdoor opportunities at Whiterock Conservancy.

Bays Branch WMA Addition

94 acres of rolling pasture adjacent to the Bays Branch Wildlife Management Area in Guthrie County.

Hamilton County

128 acres being restored to wetland and prairie. The land is improving the Boone River watershed and is situated near the 266-acre Bauer Slough Complex.

Gardin County

237-acre wetland basin located within the Prairie Pothole region. The sites wetland and upland areas are being restored, creating critical wildlife nesting habitat.

Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge Addition

47-acre addition to the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge in Jasper County is being restored to native tallgrass prairie which will provide upland habitat for migratory birds, mammals and reptiles.

Pechman Creek Delta

380-acre area along the Iowa River in Johnson County has enough habitat to be a wildlife mecca. The land also benefits migrating water fowl and water quality.

Wapello Bottoms WMA Addition

73-acre area surrounded on all sides by public land in Louisa County. The land is being restored with native species, and protection is greatly improving water quality.

Winford WMA Addition

283-acre area restored to prairie and wetlands along the South Skunk River in Mahaska County that provides habitat for nesting birds and other wildlife.

Mahaska County

202 acres of reconstructed prairie, row crop and riparian timber lie adjacent to the South Skunk River. Protection of the land ensures water quality benefits are permanent.

Pony Creek Addition

30-acre addition of Loess Hills to Pony Creek Park in Mills County, home to the Mills County Conservation Board headquarters and nature center.

Monona County

222 acres being restored to wetlands and prairie uplands, which will further benefit migrating birds.

Loess Hills State Forest Addition

68-acre addition of prairie and bur oak woodland to the Loess Hills State Forest in Monona County.

Watson Heritage Area Addition

40-acre addition to Watson Heritage Area in Palo Alto County. The land has a kettle hole, a geologic feature that is formed when a block of ice separates from a glacier and is subsequently buried.

White Horse WMA Addition

Hallett Materials transferred a 303-acre property to INHF in a bargain sale. The parcel lies along a stretch of the North Raccoon River that is listed on Iowa's Impaired Waters List. The area provides significant public hunting and fishing opportunities.

White Horse WMA Addition

30 acres along the North Raccoon River. The land features native grassland seedings and wetland improvements.

Gray Ghost Prairie

Lorna Sellberg transferred her 49-acre property, a mix of pasture and remnant prairie, to INHF in a bargain sale. The property is intersected by the West Indian Creek, and permanent protection will directly benefit the creek's watershed. Sellberg improved the native prairie, and looks forward to the day the land is in public ownership.

Wapello County

81-acre area with second generation oak/hickory timber and meadow. The remaining woodland area is good wildlife habitat for woodland species, like Red headed woodpeckers, grey squirrel, wild turkey and bobcat.

Winnebago County

130-acre area comprised mostly of wetlands is being restored to wetland and prairie uplands to provide excellent habitat for migratory birds.

Winnebago River Greenbelt: Tenold Tract

55 acres of grassland along the Winnebago River—which falls along a designated State Water Trail. The land expands the protected complex along the Winnebago River in Winnebago County.

Wood Duck Marsh WMA Addition

32-acres wetland addition to Wood Duck Marsh Wildlife Management Area in Winnebago County.

North Bear Complex Addition

113-acre blend of woodland, cropland and high-quality cold water trout stream along North Bear Creek in Winneshiek County.

Curtin Timber Addition

120 acres of woodland adjacent to the Little Sioux River floodplain in Woodbury County that contains abundant wildflowers and wildlife.

Rice Lake Addition

21 acres, the majority of which is quality bur oak woodland. The land lies within a Prairie Pothole Joint Venture area and provides a quality buffer to Rice Lake in Worth County.

Big Wall Lake Addition

130-acre addition to Big Wall Lake in Wright County being restored to wetlands and uplands. In addition to closing an agricultural drainage well, the land protects Big Wall Lake's water quality and provides additional upland habitat for wildlife.

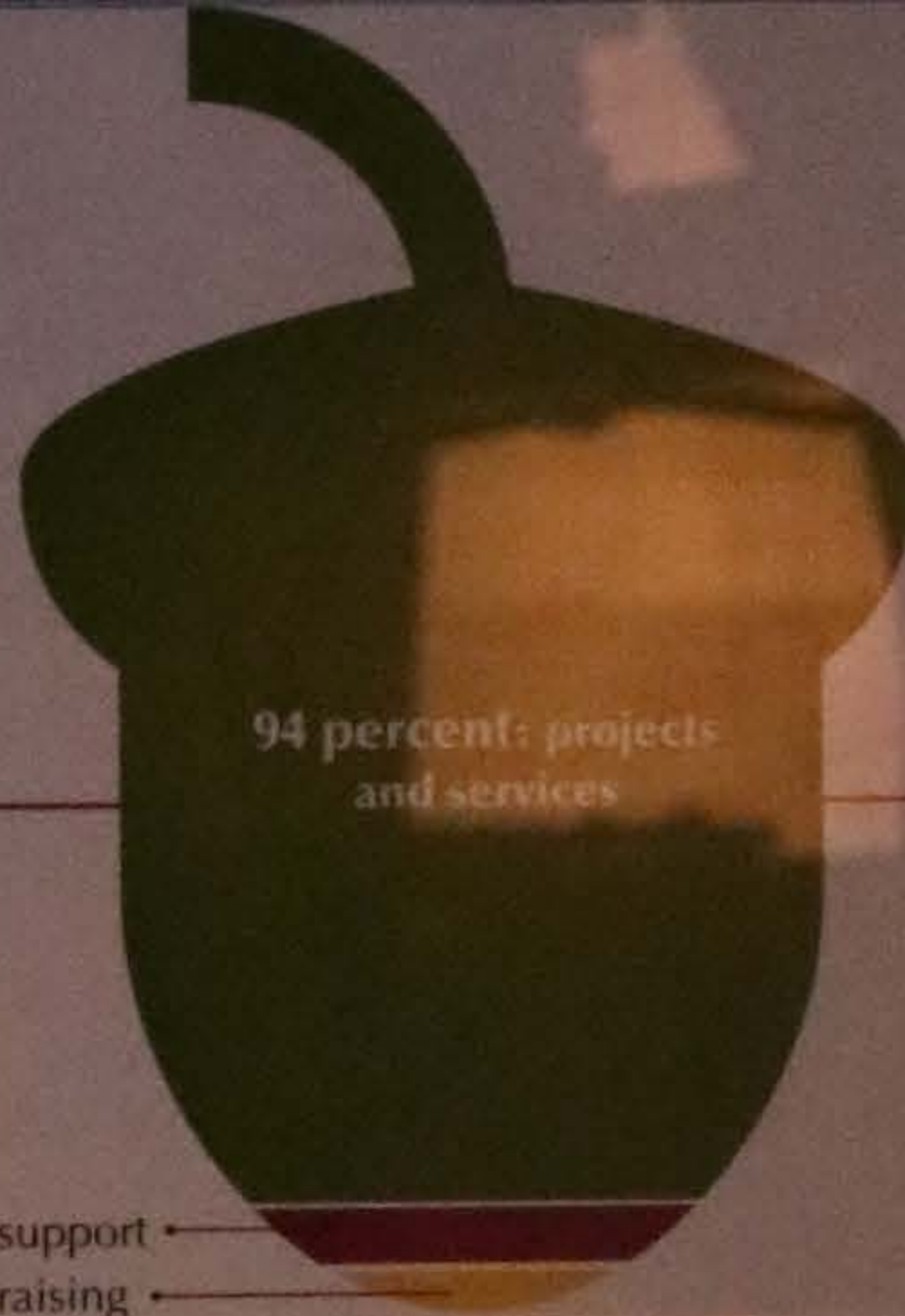
Belmond Trail Link

3/4 of a mile link to connect the developing Prairieland Trail in Wright County to the existing Franklin Grove Heritage Trail in Belmond.

Your dollars at work in 2015

Efficiency

At least 94 percent directly supports Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation projects and services. INHF is one of the most efficient and mission-focused nonprofits you'll find anywhere!

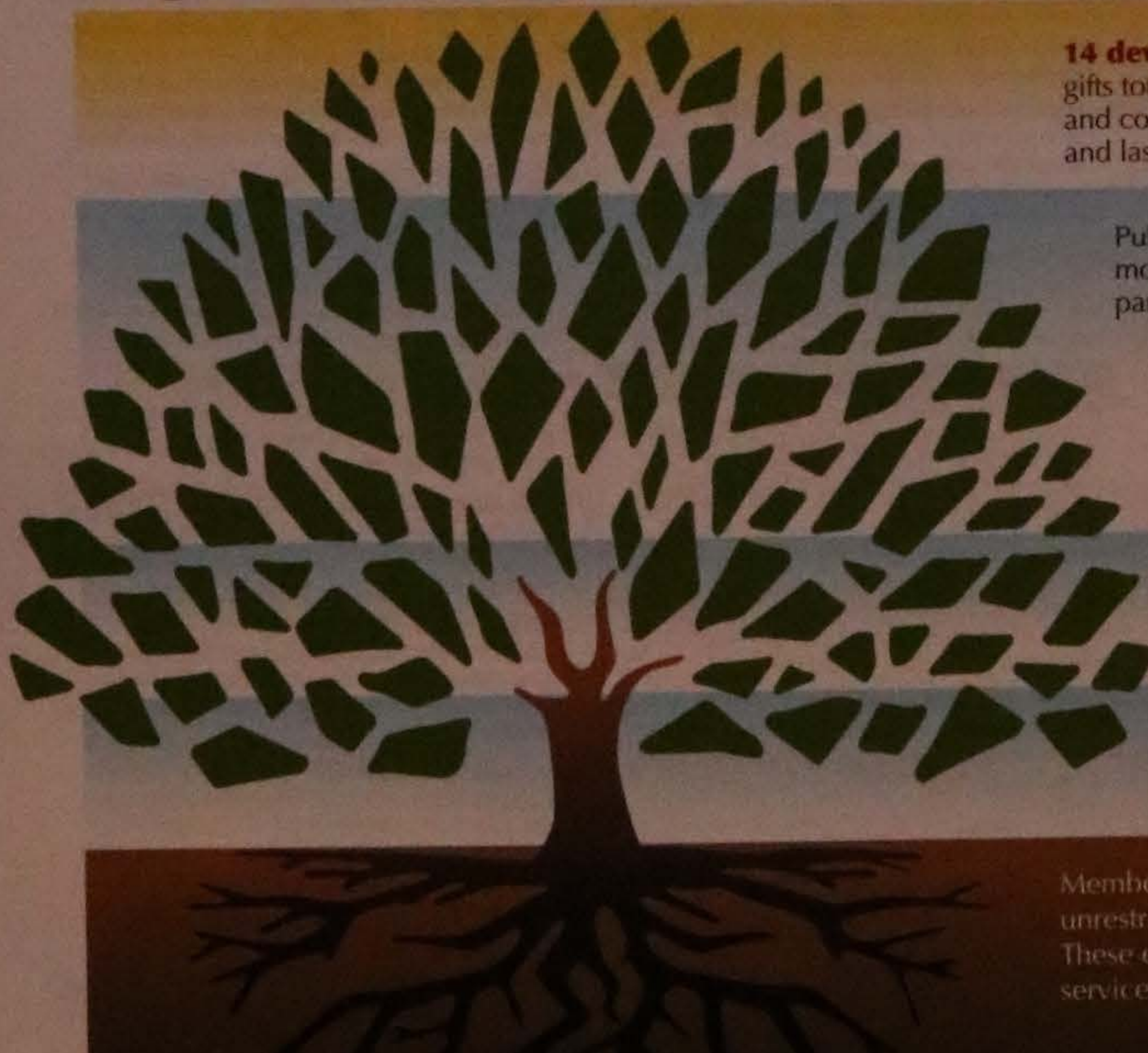


4 percent: organizational support

Less than 2 percent: fundraising

Together, We Have Greater Impact

Together, we made a \$22 million impact for Iowa conservation through INHF in 2015!



14 devoted Iowans donated legacy gifts totaling \$3.3 million. Their vision and commitment will have a large and lasting impact.

Public conservation agencies provided more than \$15 million toward partnership land protection projects.

Landowners generously donated land, conservation easements or land value totaling \$1.5 million.

1,050 donors gave \$1.3 million to specific land projects and programs they value most.

Membership gifts provided \$1 million in unrestricted core support for our mission. These essential funds make all of our services possible.

Volunteers and Voices

Many people are part of the INHF action in non-financial ways — donating professional skills, leading nature hikes, organizing partnership projects and speaking out on behalf of Iowa conservation when their voices are needed. Thank you!

The INHF balance sheet is available at www.inhf.org.

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Working every day on your behalf to protect and restore Iowa's land, water and wildlife.



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Our dedicated board members provide invaluable strategic leadership, approving our projects and ensuring our strong fiscal management.

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Interns

College student interns work alongside staff, lending their energy, ideas and talents to help bring about real conservation progress.

Office Interns

Katie Bandurski, Milwaukee, WI - Communications
Kristen Daily, Orange City, IA - Grant writing
Phong Duong, Clinton, IA - Design
Rachel Dupree, Wyoming, MN - Communications
Taylor Eisenhauer, Herrin, IL - Communications
Kelsea Graham, Kansas City, MO - Design
Chris Holmquist, Brookings, SD - Landscape architecture
Samantha Olson, Des Moines, IA - Floodplain outreach
Lexi Ruskell, Burnsville, MN - Design
Allison Walk, Greenfield, IA - Trails

Blufflands Land Stewardship Interns

Lauren Mordini, Wheaton, IL
Tori Hartman, Decorah, IA
Sarah Klein, Henry, IL
Eddie Conrad, Sigourney, IA

Statewide Land Stewardship Interns

Amy Andrews, Shellsburg, IA
Zach Burhenn, Ames, IA
Megan Dietrich, Williamsburg, IA
Jacob Hill, Newton, IA
Sarah Leichty, Rochester, IA
Matthew Monahan, Woodbine, IA
Dustin Oaks, Ankeny, IA
Olivia Rauen, Epworth, IA
Lauren White, Maxwell, IA

Take a Walk through Ingawanis Woodlands



Sharp-lobed hepatica blooms in early spring.

Few things clear a cluttered mind better than a walk through the woods. More Iowans are now able to re-connect and reap the benefits of nature thanks to the protection of Ingawanis Woodland in Bremer County.



Ingawanis Woodlands Bremer County

Land: 140 acres of upland woodland

Recreational opportunities: hiking, cross-country and equestrian trails, birdwatching, single track mountain bike trail, nature education programs

Partners: INHF, Bremer CCB, Whitetails Unlimited, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Iowa DNR



www.inhf.org/spring-2016-magazine.cfm

The 140-acre area was formerly part of a Boy Scout camp. When the scouts decided to sell a portion of their land for financial reasons, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation and the Bremer County Conservation Board jumped at the opportunity, then worked for three years to fund and convert the ready-made recreation area to a county park.

Ingawanis Woodland provides crucial conservation value to the county and to the critters that call the property home. Permanent protection safeguards rare plant species, preserves bird habitat and improves water quality along the Cedar River.

"Having something along the river was important to us," said Heather Gamm, naturalist for the Bremer County Conservation Board. "It's such a nice tract with so many acres; we didn't want to see it divided up."

Ingawanis Woodland boasts year-round recreational activities, making it a destination for nature lovers. Ingawanis' 7 miles of soft trails attract hikers, bikers and skiers. Plus, the park's quality migratory bird habitat gives birdwatchers the chance to spot 80 diverse species, including bald eagles and

yellow-billed cuckoos.

The property plays a part in educating visitors about the importance of conservation. Ingawanis' lodge serves as a mecca for environmental education activities, meetings and events in Bremer County.

"We have never had a place that is indoors where we could have a school group or any type of meeting," Gamm said. "We've been able to offer additional environmental education programs."

Funding for Ingawanis Woodland came in part from private donations and grants but primarily from a 2015 Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) grant. In an incredibly competitive field, Ingawanis not only received funding but was the top scoring county project across the state.

Ingawanis Woodland truly has something for everyone — explorers, bird watchers and nature-lovers of all kinds. Enjoy a picnic in the meadow or find serenity on a walk in the woods. No matter the activity, time at Ingawanis is time well spent.

By Katie Bandurski, Communications Intern



Keep exploring online at www.inhf.org/lookingoutforiowa.cfm

Take action for nature

Volunteer: Clean up the river

It's time to get your hands dirty. Join the Iowa Department of Natural Resources for Project AWARE, a five-day cleanup of the Lower Des Moines River. Volunteers of all ages will paddle down the river, loading trash in their canoes as they go. After a day on the water, participants return to designated campsites for educational programming. This community event unites nature lovers and creates awareness for watershed protection. Project AWARE 2016 will take place July 11-15.

Visit www.iowadnr.gov/aware for more information.



Advocate: Tell legislators to fund the Trust

Attend a candidate forum (and bring a friend), or call or write to your legislators and the governor to tell them you want funding for the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund. Tell them you understand this means a 3/8 of one cent sales tax increase, and that you think it is a sound investment in the future of Iowa's land, water and wildlife and our state's economy.

Learn more at www.iowaswaterandlandlegacy.org

Learn: Discover conservation in your watershed

Clean Water Iowa, an initiative of the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, educates Iowans of all types — farmers, homeowners and industry leaders — about the importance of water conservation. From restored wetlands to permeable pavers, learn about the best water practices and where you can see conservation demonstration projects in your watershed.

Visit www.cleanwateriowa.org to get started.



TRIBUTE GIFTS

IN HONOR OF

Pam Abarr
Bruce Ecker
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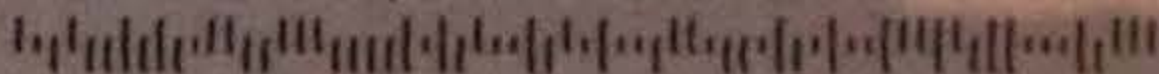


Photo:TV Smales

Leave a legacy of clean water, healthy soil and beautiful outdoor places for those who follow.

To see how estate giving through INHF can help make your vision for Iowa a reality,
contact Cheri Grauer at cgrauer@inhf.org or 800-475-1846.



This trio of striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*) kits are cute enough to draw you near. But, you may want to rethink how close you get; kits as young as eight days old are capable of spraying someone they perceive as a threat. Wildlife trivia: the name "mephitis" is derived from the Latin word "mephit," meaning "bad odor."

Please share this publication with friends, and visit our website at www.inhf.org.

55 WINTER 2010

Iowa Natural Heritage

Protecting and restoring Iowa's land, water and wildlife.

Rediscovering
wildness

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OPENING THOUGHTS

STATE LIBRARY OF IOWA

Saving a place for wildness

As James Dinsmore noted in the opening of his book "A Country So Full of Game," Iowa's early European settlers marvelled at the abundance of wildlife in the state. In 1833, Indian agent Joseph Street wrote "I had never rode through a country so full of game." Iowa's origins are wild — a land once covered by waving prairie grass, free-flowing water and scattered oak savannas.



JOE MCGOVERN
President

Though most of the state has been "tamed" in one way or another, there are still pockets of beautiful, wild land. There is no wilderness, in the strictest sense of the word, but there is wildness. Growing up, I found that wildness tromping with friends through the Boone River valley just outside Eagle Grove. Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation revels in helping people find those wild places and connect to a bit of wildness in themselves.

With your support, we're able to protect and restore the wild parts of Iowa (and, sometimes, just outside of Iowa). In this issue, you'll read about places in which we've returned wildness. A former golf course. A closed limestone mine. Continually-flooded cropland. Working with willing landowners and forward-thinking organizations, INHF is turning these places into havens for native plants and wildlife.

Beginning with this issue, we have also expanded the size of the magazine and added a few new regular content features. Thanks to members like you, we have been able to protect more than 150,000 acres in our 37-year history. We want to be better able to share the work that you are helping us to do. So, thank you. I hope you'll enjoy this magazine, and that you'll get outdoors to reconnect to wildness.



ON THE COVER

A summer sunset illuminates Whorled milkweed and Hoary vervain over the newest addition to Pony Creek Park in Mills County. INHF worked with Mills CCB on the 30-acre addition, which will soon be open to the public.
Photo by Nathan Houck



Protecting and restoring Iowa's land, water and wildlife.

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Circulation 10,000

Articles appearing in Iowa Natural Heritage may be reprinted with permission of the publisher.

14

Partners in unlikely places

One third of the world's Indiana bats call a cave outside Hannibal, Mo., home. Through a unique partnership, INHF is helping ensure those bats can remain, safe from human and development pressure.

8

IWILL: A homegrown solution

As the next legislative session approaches, water quality is in the spotlight. Iowans are ready for a solution, and reflect on the need for funding the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund.



10

Bringing wildness back to Clear Lake

Striking a balance between tourism and conservation is vital for Clear Lake's economic and environmental future. The Pedelty family is taking steps to convert a former shoreline golf course into a nature and wildlife haven.

20

Reconstructing one of Iowa's largest wetland complexes

When consistent flooding turned agricultural returns bleak in the '90s along the Cedar River, the Wetland Reserve Program helped create one of the largest habitat hubs in the state.

DEPARTMENTS

- 2 Opening Thoughts
- 4 Through Your Lens
- 6 Field Notes
- 22 Looking Out for Iowa
- 23 Get Outdoors

“The nitrogen in our DNA, the calcium in our teeth, the iron in our blood, the carbon in our apple pies were made in the interiors of collapsing stars. We are made of starstuff.”

- Carl Sagan

My RAGBRAI team this year came from all over: Chicago, Denver, Texas, Ames, New York. Each day, they'd share the discoveries they'd made in our state. And each night, as we sat around camp, I'd hear the same thing: "Wow...look at your stars."

We don't purport to claim them, but the constellations and cosmos are as much a part of the Iowa landscape as any prairie, field or river. But as we become more urbanized, the vastness of that quintessential Iowa night sky is threatened. It's happening nationally, too: Light pollution is impacting wildlife and the way we interact with the natural world.

The International Dark Sky Association aims to combat the trend. They're working to bring wildness back to Earth's most important light show — and remind us what we're all made of.

— KERRI SORRELL
communications specialist

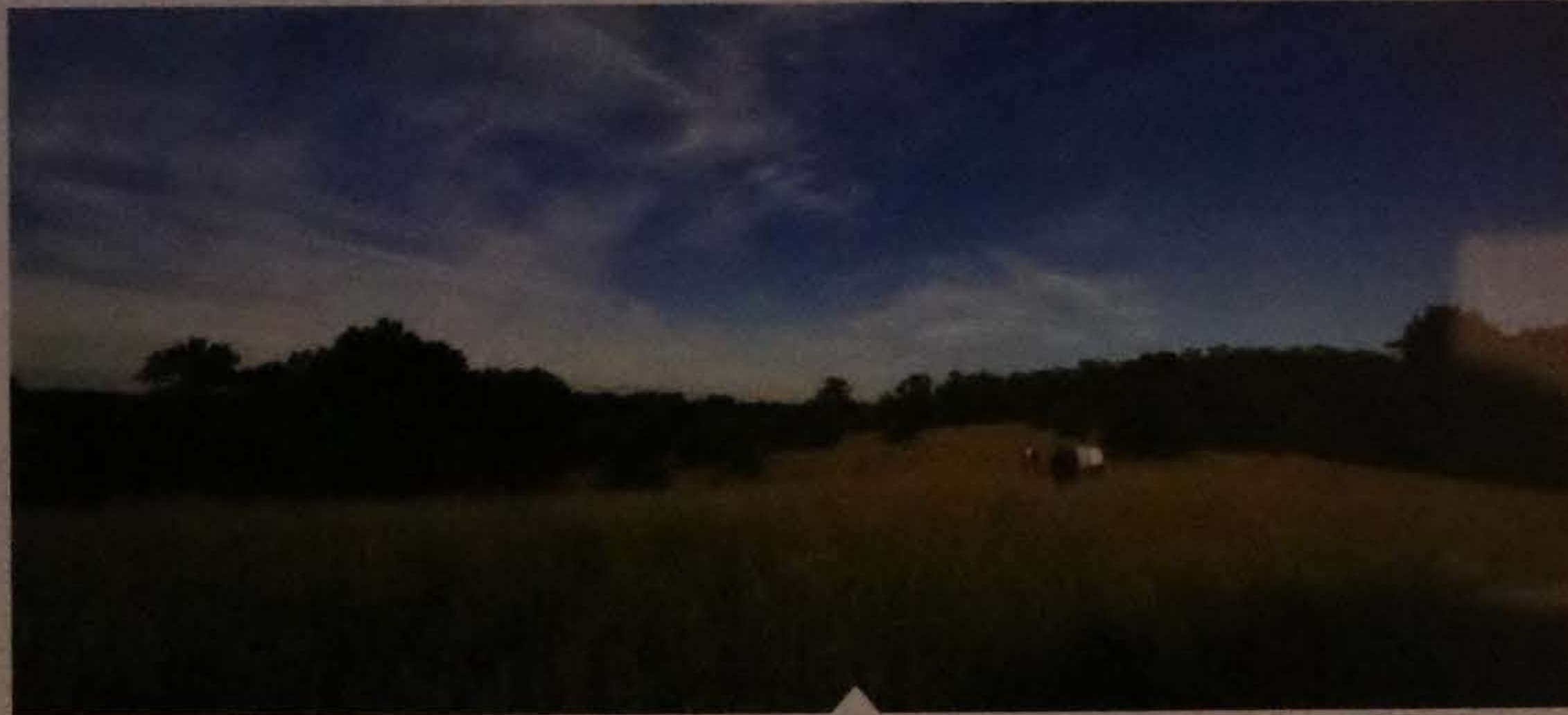


A fresh look

You may have noticed this issue of *Iowa Natural Heritage* looks a little different — and that it's a little heavier. Beginning with this issue, we expanded the size of our magazine from 16 pages to 24 pages and introduced new designs and new regular features, such as the Field Notes section

you're currently reading. This was all done with the goal of keeping you better informed on INHF projects and conservation in Iowa, in a way that conveys its natural beauty. We hope you'll enjoy it.

— JOE JAYJACK, *communications director*



852 acres added to Sedan Bottoms Wildlife Management Area

Nestled in southern Appanoose County, Sedan Bottoms Wildlife Management Area is a protected paradise. Prairies, oak savannas, forests and floodplains along the Chariton River make up this unique natural haven. Two recent INHF acquisitions — a 736-acre addition and a 116-acre property — are part of a large land transfer to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources that added 852 acres to the northern part of the WMA.

One of the additions is a mix of oak-hickory woodland, grassland and remnant prairie. The land hosts several plant and wildlife species, including milkweed, Indiangrass and the federally endangered Indiana bat. The land, like the rest of Sedan Bottoms, provides ample avian habitat. The site is a Bird Conservation Area (BCA), and several species, including those of Greatest Conservation Need, find a home here. Visitors have the chance to spot one of the 253 species recorded at the BCA, including Red-headed woodpeckers, Cerulean

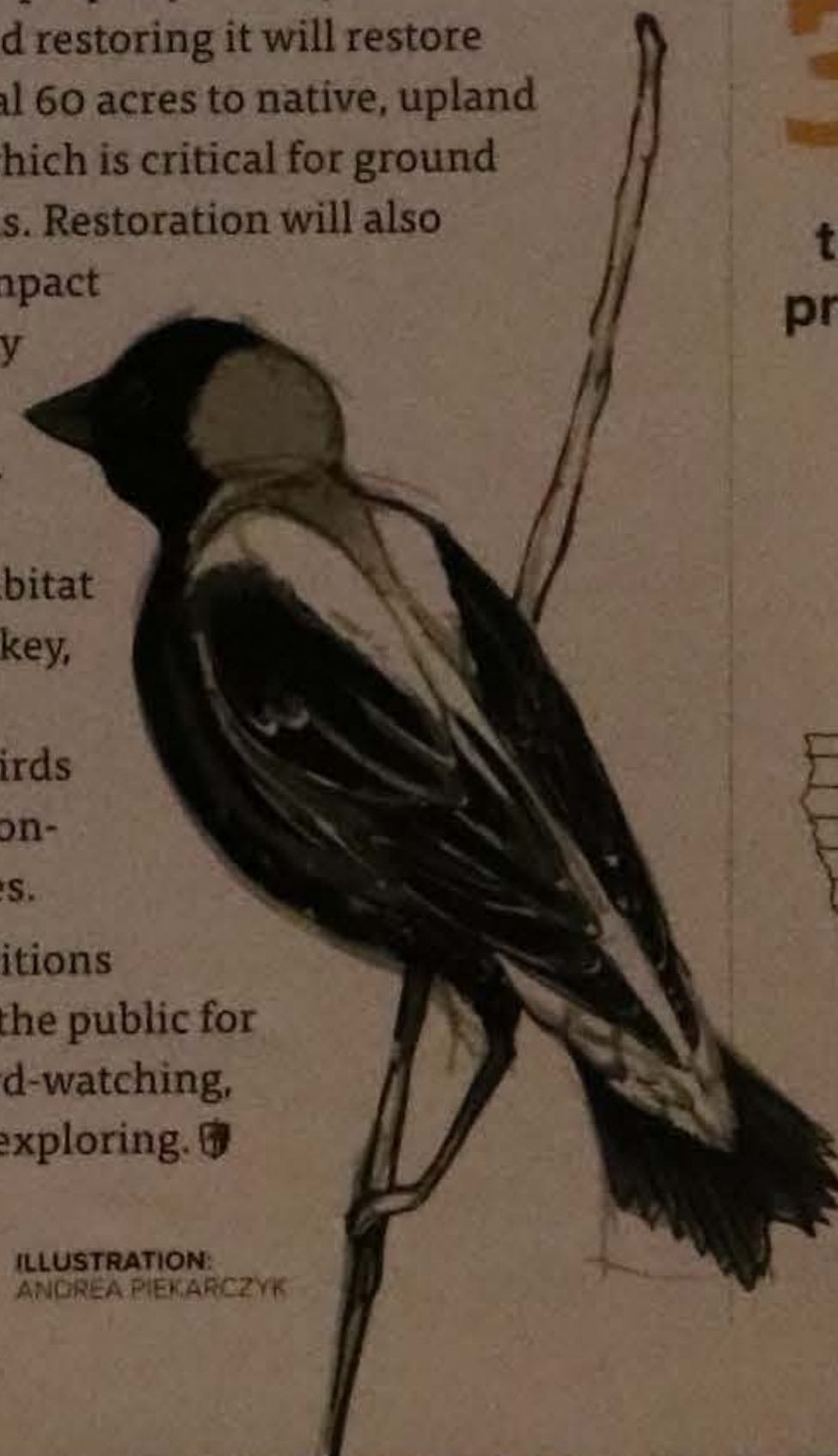
INHF staff and interns hike an addition to Sedan Bottoms WMA in Appanoose Co. *Photo by Lexi Ruskeil*

warblers and Bobolinks (pictured below).

The other property lies adjacent to the addition, and restoring it will restore an additional 60 acres to native, upland habitat — which is critical for ground nesting birds. Restoration will also positively impact water quality and reduce soil erosion. The land is excellent habitat for deer, turkey, neotropical migratory birds and other non-game species.

Both additions are open to the public for hunting, bird-watching, hiking and exploring. 🦋

ILLUSTRATION:
ANDREA PIEKARCZYK



INHF BURN SEASON BY THE NUMBERS

Once upon a time, Native Americans and lightning storms caused restorative fire to roar across Iowa's prairied landscape. These days, INHF and other conservation groups use prescribed fires to replenish and manage local ecosystems. Here's a look at INHF's spring of heated restoration:

344
acres
treated with
prescribed fire

13
counties
benefited



20
burn days

UPCOMING EVENTS

SEPT. 15
Back to Your Roots Hike
Kothenbeutel Prairie, Franklin Co.

Learn about native species from Land Stewardship Director Ryan Schmidt as part of Prairie Heritage Week

SEPT. 17
Snyder Farm Seed Harvest
Elkhart, Polk Co.

Celebrate INHF's Snyder Farm's 25th anniversary with a seed harvest, tours and lunch. Spots are limited.

SEPT. 24
Turin Prairie Dedication
Onawa, Monona Co.

Help us dedicate the exquisite Turin Prairie in the Loess Hills, now open to the public, with bird hikes, a program and a seed harvest.

OCT. 1
Friends and Family Seed Harvest
Heritage Valley, Allamakee Co.

See northeast Iowa's fall beauty during this family-friendly event.

OCT. 1
Seed Harvest and Cider
Perkins Prairie Preserve, Greene Co.

Join us for a seed harvest, followed by a trip to Deen's Apple Orchard.

For more information, visit www.inhf.org.

Connecting natural areas in Guthrie County

Adjacent to both Springbrook State Park and Springbrook Wildlife Management Area (WMA), a 48-acre addition marries both natural areas. Together, they create a complex of over 1,413 total acres and provide permanent wildlife and woodland habitat.

The addition is high-quality oak-hickory woodland teeming with opportunity. Historic aerial photos indicate that the property was once oak savanna, and after invasive species are removed, the savanna should recover.

Many native species have been found on or near the property, including Porcupine grass, the federally endangered Indiana bat and the state-endangered barn owl. The land is also part of the Southern Iowa Drift Plain, and thus its tallgrass prairie with steep hills and valleys support many game species.

The area is open to the public, and it is an excellent site for bird-watching, exploring, hunting or just enjoying time in nature. 🌿



An addition to both Springbrook State Park and Springbrook WMA in Guthrie County, shown in yellow, connects the two natural areas. The addition is now open to the public.



“Conservation is never the effort of one person, it’s the effort of many people together willing to get their hands in the dirt.”

— TAYLOR DIDESCH
2016 Summer Statewide Land Stewardship Intern

This summer, 13 college students used their time and talents to restore Iowa’s wild places. The INHF land stewardship interns, made up of 9 statewide and 4 Blufflands interns, spend 12 weeks doing intense restoration work throughout the state and receive educational experiences to help progress their conservation and natural resource knowledge.

INHF awarded grant for Monarch work

INHF is administering a \$250,000 grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation’s (NFWF) Monarch Butterfly Conservation Fund. The 2015-2016 grant allows for the expansion and restoration of Iowa native prairie habitat along two main corridors: I-35 in central Iowa and the Loess Hills of western Iowa. INHF has been working with many partners to permanently protect land, construct new prairie habitat, remove invasive species and improve existing prairie habitat. The goal is to create large blocks of permanently protected habitat for monarchs and other pollinators, along with smaller “connecting” pieces on both public and private land. INHF and our partners have applied for grant funding from NFWF for 2017-2018. 🌿



PHOTO: KRISTY HALL

Working for conservation action

This legislative session, Iowa's natural resources are at the top of the priority list.

BY MARIAN E. RIGGS

At the start of the 2016 legislative session, Gov. Terry Branstad announced a proposal to address water quality that he called his biggest and boldest proposal ever, but it did not find support from both chambers. After several other proposals, the session adjourned without reaching a compromise on how to best address these concerns.

Between now and the November election, Iowans have an opportunity to make our natural resources an issue on which candidates must take a position.

At Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, we are focused on all of Iowa's natural resources: from keeping our agricultural soils in place to improving habitat for fish and wildlife; from building and maintaining recreational trails to protecting and improving Iowa's water quality. Water quality is about protecting the source waters from contamination so that they are

clean for drinking as well as for habitat and recreation. It is about Iowa's quality of life.

We believe that Iowa already has a solution that was vetted by the voters in 2010. Now we need legislative action to increase the state sales tax by 3/8th of one cent to start funding the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund.

Once funded, the Trust Fund will generate approximately \$180 million annually that is constitutionally protected. These funds will be distributed according to a formula that ensures the money supports Iowa's natural resource base from the municipal level to the state level.

These funds will support Iowa's quality of life, improve our wildlife habitat to generate the economic activity that is associated with hunting, fishing and biking, and help to ensure that Iowa's young people remain in Iowa and we can meet our future workforce needs. 🍷

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Legislators need to hear from their constituents that they support increasing the sales tax by 3/8th of a cent to fund the Trust Fund. It is never easy to raise the sales tax and it won't happen until they know that their constituents support it.

Go to a legislative forum, invite your friends and family to go with you, and ask your legislator or candidate if they would support increasing the sales tax to support our natural resources. A letter, an email or a call is also a great way to let your legislators know that you support funding the Trust Fund.

Visit iowaswaterand-landlegacy.org to learn more about the Trust Fund and find resources to help you talk to your legislators.

IOWANS: THE SOLUTION IS THE TRUST FUND



CHRIS LEE
Executive Director, Des Moines County Conservation

"If we don't create the parks and build the necessary amenities people need when they visit them, where will those people go to make the kinds of memories that can only be made in the great outdoors? It is incumbent upon us to care for our natural resources. Does it require investment? Certainly. But it's an investment in ourselves. In our families. In our futures. The best time to act was when the trust was first established. We'd be nearly a billion dollars better off today if we had. But the second best time to act is now. Leave a legacy. Fund the Trust. Now."

"How much longer do we have to wait to get dedicated, long term funding to implement the Nutrient Reduction Strategy? We have determined that IWILL (the Trust Fund) is the solution that will provide the significant resources necessary to expand the efforts already underway to protect and restore our natural resources and continue to provide those resources year in and year out. I have four children, and I believe it is important for Iowa to invest additional resources to improve our quality of life and recreational opportunities so that our kids want to stay in Iowa to raise their families."



KIRK LEEDS
CEO, Iowa Soybean Association



NEIL HAMILTON
*Emeritus Director of the Agricultural Law Center, Drake University Law School
Board member, INHF*

"Passing a sales tax increase to fund natural resource protection is perhaps the most important action we can take to secure a healthy and productive future for Iowa. This critical step will build on the legacy of stewardship begun last century by Iowa leaders like Ding Darling, Henry Wallace and Aldo Leopold. New state funds are essential to help us reverse the shameful levels of soil loss, water quality degradation and habitat destruction now being experienced in some parts of our state."

"We are well on the way to having a number of effective Iowa water solutions. What is missing is revenue in amounts essential to achieving the "critical mass" necessary to make public-private partnerships feasible. A good start would be funding The Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund. That funding alone would make us a serious player in moving these solutions forward up and down Iowa watersheds."



JIM ERB
Mayor, Charles City

"When we talk about real progress for healthy streams and rivers in Iowa, we know we have to look at the big picture. Funding the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund would make complex natural resource management with an emphasis in water quality improvement a reality for our state. Iowa is the most altered state in the U.S. and roughly half of our rivers, lakes and streams fail to meet water quality standards. Steady revenue means more projects affecting more communities and more opportunities for all of us to work together to protect, restore and enjoy Iowa's rivers."



MOLLY HANSON
*Executive Director,
Iowa Rivers Revival*

"As a millennial who recently returned to Iowa to plant roots and pursue a career in telecommunications, I hold both a personal and a professional stake in the funding of the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund. From a professional perspective, funding the trust would provide the recreation and quality of life to bring other millennials — and their skilled, economically stimulating jobs — back to Iowa. From a personal perspective, I want my future children and grandchildren to be able to hunt, fish, hike, bike, and kayak and to experience the joy of stewarding that which God has entrusted to us. This can't wait any longer."

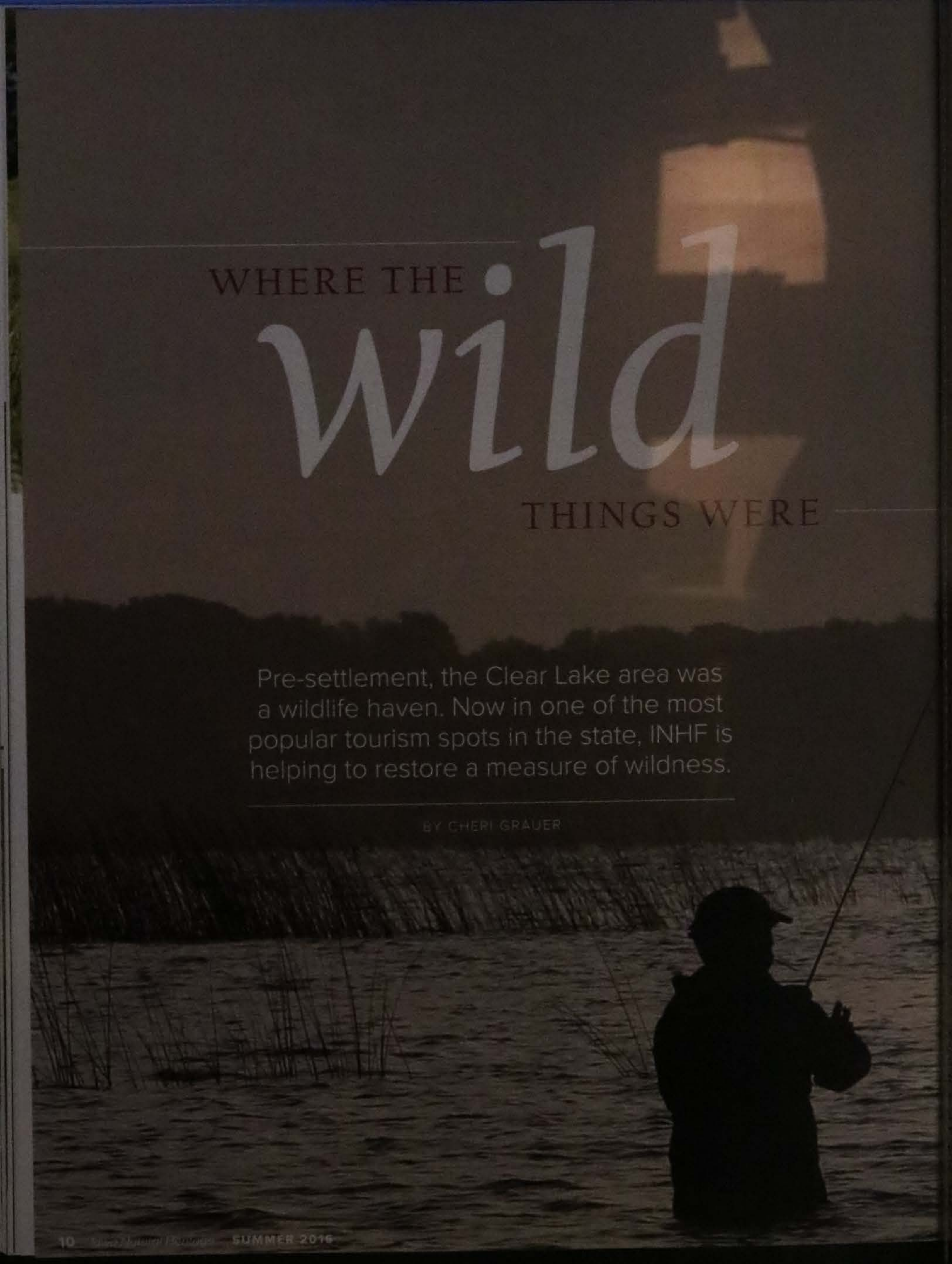


CHRIS LOVELL
*Business Development
Manager, CL Tel*

"The Greater Des Moines Partnership is a strong supporter of the Iowa's Water and Land Legacy Coalition. The Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund would provide a permanent funding source to implement the recommendations of the Iowa Soil and Water Future Task Force and the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy to significantly improve water quality across our state. It also would help fund trails and other outdoor recreational amenities that are critical to attracting and retaining a high quality workforce."



JAY BYERS
CEO, Greater Des Moines Partnership

A person is silhouetted against a sunset sky, standing in a body of water and holding a fishing rod. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The water is dark with some reeds visible in the foreground. The overall mood is peaceful and nostalgic.

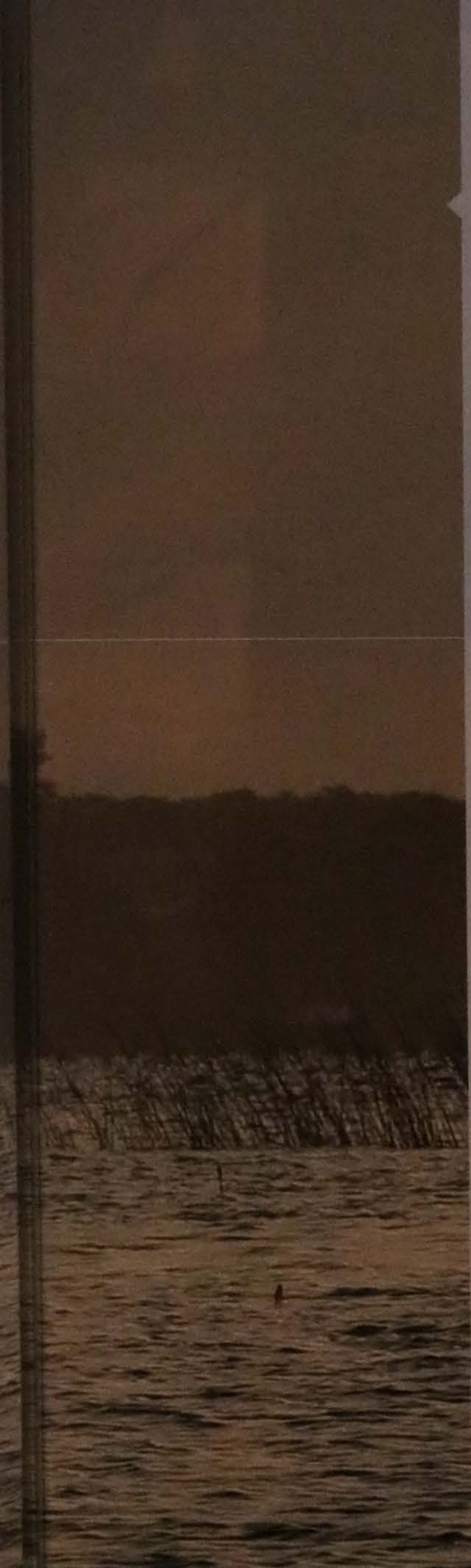
WHERE THE

wild

THINGS WERE

Pre-settlement, the Clear Lake area was a wildlife haven. Now in one of the most popular tourism spots in the state, INHF is helping to restore a measure of wildness.

BY CHERI GRAUER



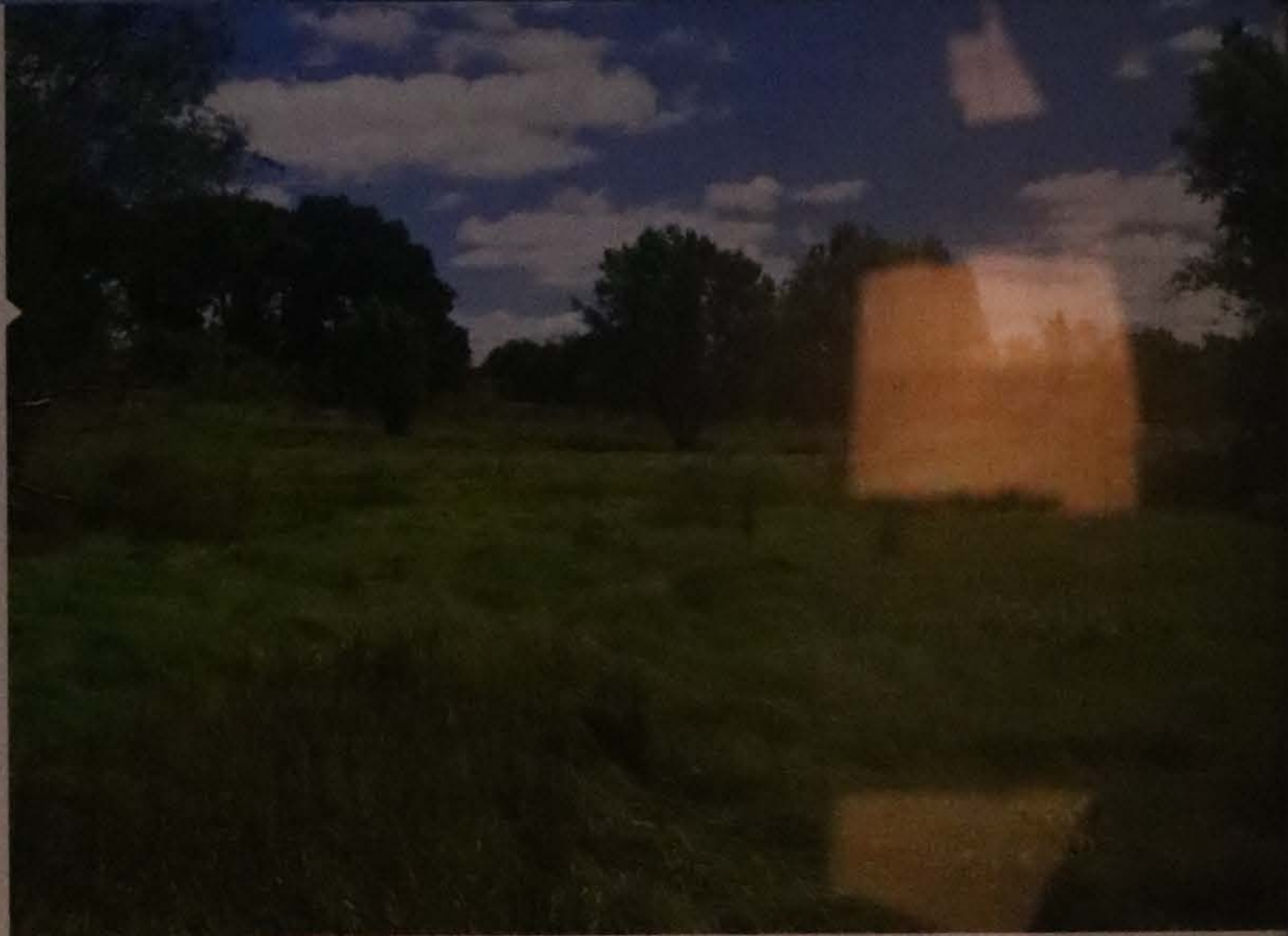
One of Iowa's most popular tourist destinations, Clear Lake has seen agriculture and development impact surrounding wild areas. Ongoing protection efforts aim to enhance Clear Lake's long-term health. *Photo by Tim Ackerman*

Early accounts of Clear Lake, a spring-fed lake with origins in the last glacial period, tell of its use as a favorite summer camping ground of the Sioux and Winnebago peoples. By the mid-1800s, tales of the beautiful lake with plentiful fish and wildlife had captured the attention and imagination of Euro-American settlers. In short order, what had been a wild and vast wetland-pocked prairie ecosystem, replete with a dizzying array of native plants and animals, was being domesticated.

An 1895 Cerro Gordo County plat book depicts the parceling of the land surrounding the lake for agricultural purposes. By the early 1900s more and more land was being tilled to enhance drainage. The peatlands in the area, high in organic matter and perennially wet, were especially difficult to farm and especially productive once drained. Advances in tile drainage seemingly removed the last limitation to agricultural intensification in this part of the state.

The "town end" of Clear Lake quickly boasted hotels, then restaurants with big dance floors, a casino and later an amusement park. Houses and summer cottages began to sprout up along the shoreline. Clear Lake State Park, featuring picnic areas and a swimming beach, was created for public use and enjoyment. Clear Lake was fast becoming a favorite summer playground for tourists and year-round residents alike. Over time, more intensive and extensive agriculture, more

Restoration on the Pedelty property, a former golf course, will see restored wetland, prairie and savanna and will benefit the area's many bird and non-game species. Photo by Ross Baxter, INHF.



“I can remember canoeing and water skiing through mats of algae.”

- MARK PEDELTY

residential development on the lakeshore and growing recreational use of the lake pushed even harder against the remaining wildlife and wildlife habitat.

The bulrush beds began to recede, shoreline erosion increased, nutrients entering the lake from agricultural lands compromised water quality and upland bird populations declined with the continued loss of nesting habitat in the surrounding countryside.

These wake-up calls alerted people to the importance of natural habitat for both wildlife and for human well-being. In particular, residents of Clear Lake became more aware of the connection between protecting and restoring wetland and other natural habitats and enhancing water quality. Conservation

organizations and concerned individuals stepped up to respond — which brings us to a very recent effort to reclaim some wildness for the Clear Lake region.

Restoring a wild place

Early in 2015, the Pedelty family approached INHF to see if together we could reclaim a little more wildness on the south side of Clear Lake.

A portion of a farm previously owned by Holmes, Jane (Duesenberg) Pedelty, Jo Pedelty, and her sons HJ and Adam Pedelty, had for 30 years been leased to a local family for use as a par three golf course. Growing awareness of local water quality concerns — and of the importance of wetlands to water quality — led the Pedelty family to reconsider that use.

RESTORING A MEASURE OF WILDNESS

1924

Creation of Clear Lake State Park on the south shore of Clear Lake

EARLY 1900s–1940

Multiple additions to Ventura Marsh Wildlife Management Area

1925

Lakwa Wildlife Management Area established

1943

Establishment of McIntosh State Park on north side of the lake

1950–56

Association for the Preservation of Clear Lake creates a sanitary sewer system and district around the lake to address pollution issues

1972

Donation of Woodford Island by the Ashland family to the State of Iowa and establishment of the McIntosh Marsh Wildlife Management Area

1985

Purchase by The Nature Conservancy of a 36-acre wet prairie known as Hoffman Prairie — home to 150 native plant species and rare butterflies

1992

Donation of a conservation easement by Jim and Marcia Connell and family to INHF permanently protects Woodford-Ashland Lone Tree Point, which includes wetlands and more than a mile of shoreline

1995-PRESENT

CLEAR (Clear Lake Enhancement and Restoration) Project, a community-led project to improve the lake's water quality

Sharing some of his family history, Mark Pedelty related that both the Pedelty and Duesenberg families have had a long connection with Clear Lake.

"Like other Clear Lake families, our lives revolved around the lake when I was growing up. When I was a kid there was nothing better than jumping into the lake after a day of working at the family cattle auction market. On the less positive side, I remember canoeing and water skiing through mats of algae back when we were letting too much phosphorous from fertilizers and other pollutants stream into the lake. Given how central the lake was to all of us then, water quality as well as lake recreation is very important to us now."

Pedelty went on to note, "The community and local stewards have done a great job of cleaning up Clear Lake in recent years. Restoring and reconnecting another wetland might help that effort. We are thankful that organizations like INHF and the Iowa DNR are around to do this important work. We'd like to be part of that local work."

According to T.J. Herrick, Iowa DNR wildlife biologist, once INHF transfers this property to the Iowa DNR, the process of turning the Pedelty family's vision into reality will begin. The Iowa DNR will reconstruct a five to eight-acre wetland basin and will restore native prairie and savanna in the upland portions of the property. The area will be managed for wildlife and available for public use and enjoyment.

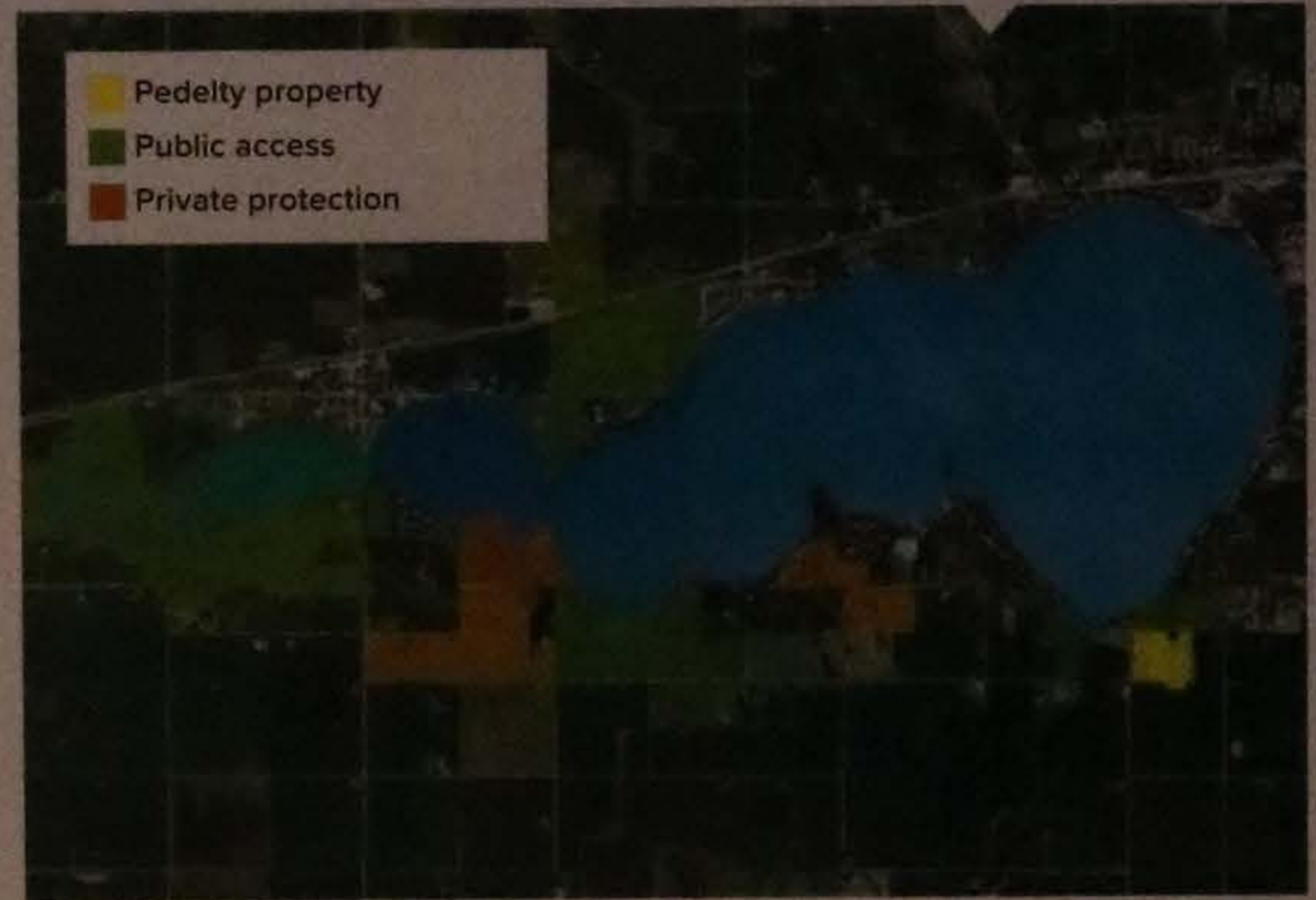
When restored, the wetland, prairie and

savanna will complement the many other efforts that have helped retain or return elements of wildness to Clear Lake.

"We look forward to seeing this 60-acre parcel restored to wetland as it was before the '80s, before it was tiled and partially drained. Once restored, it will again provide essential environmental services, including filtering the water entering Clear Lake," Pedelty said.

"We want the wetland to once again provide habitat for birds and other wildlife, while also offering some recreational opportunities for local residents and visitors to the lake, such as birding and hiking and a convenient connection to the state park, just across the street." 🌿

A look at wider protection efforts around Clear Lake.



2001

Lake restoration feasibility study completed by ISU

2002

INHF works with four families to protect and expand the 60-acre Miller's Marsh on Clear Lake's south side

2003

INHF works with the Lovell family to restore prairie and wetlands at the 190-acre Sisters Prairie adjacent to the Lone Tree Point conservation easement property

2004

Purchase of one of the last undeveloped shorelines and 26 acres of woodland and wetland habitat near the Ventura Grade by INHF and conservation partners, creating the Ventura Cove Woodland

2007

Max Clausen donates his 250-acre farm adjacent to Lone Tree Point, including 2,750 feet of undeveloped shoreline, known now as Clausen's Cove, to The Nature Conservancy

2008-09

Lake restoration dredging takes place

2010-11

Ventura Marsh restored

2015

INHF works with the Pedelty family to protect and restore wetlands on a 60-acre parcel which neighbors Lekwa Wildlife Management Area and Clear Lake State Park

2016

CLEAR Project partners with Iowa DNR to begin an oak savanna restoration on approximately 16 acres of forested area within McIntosh Woods State Park

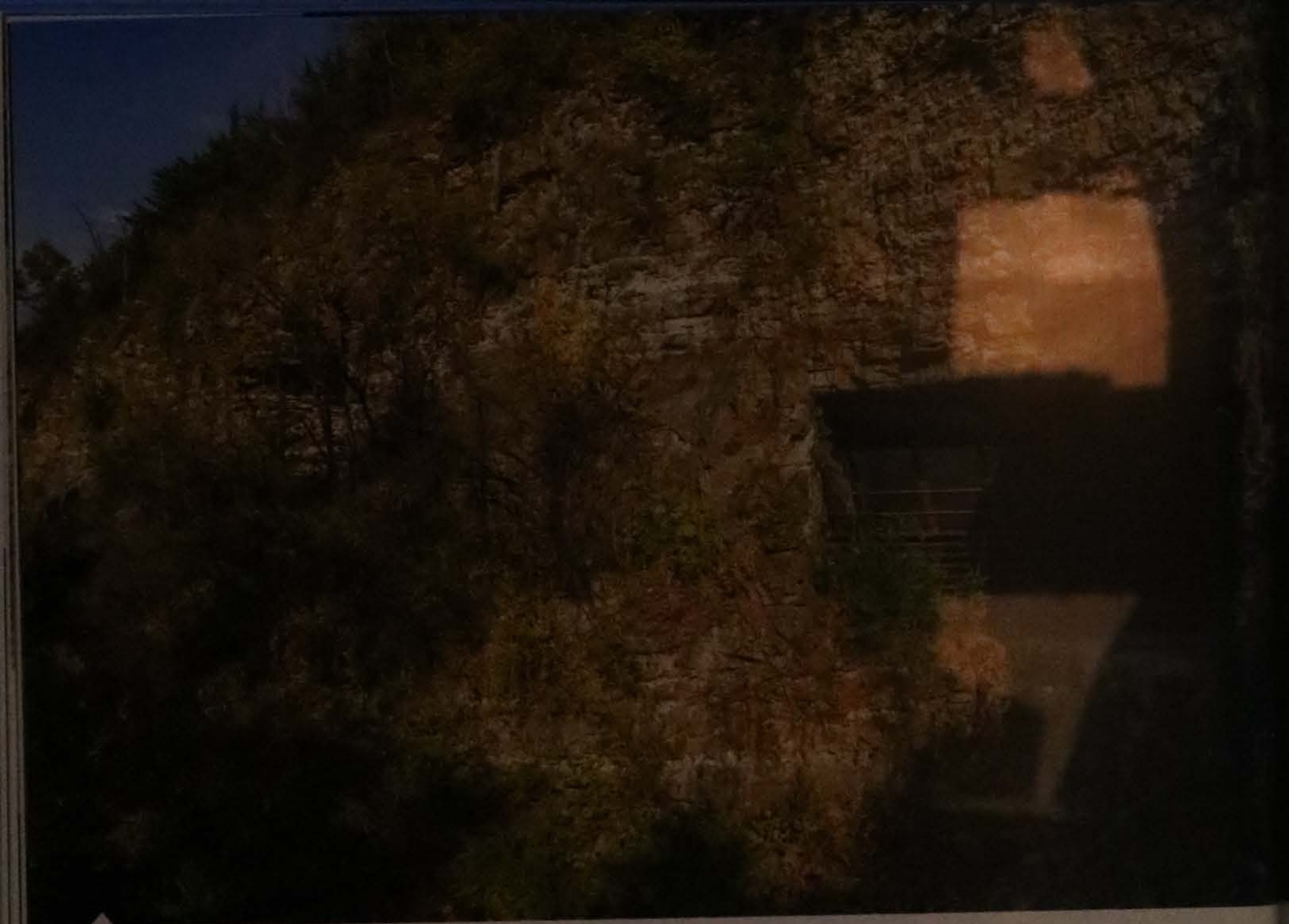


IN THE *midnight* HOUR

A rare opportunity to protect a federally endangered and native Iowa bat species pushes INHF beyond state borders.

Walking into the dark, yawning entrance of the enormous cave system in Hannibal, Missouri, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation Conservation Easement Director Erin Van Waus was not quite sure what to expect. Accompanied by INHF President Joe McGovern and staff members from The Conservation Fund (TCF), Van Waus entered the caves through their largest

BY ANDREA PIEKARCZYK



A former limestone mine just outside the city of Hannibal, Mo., the newly-protected cave system has 34 openings, all featuring custom-designed, bat-friendly gates. The property was protected as part of a mitigation package for the Flanagan South Pipeline Project. Photo courtesy of The Conservation Fund

entrance: a gaping maw in the side of a hill, large enough for two trucks to drive into side by side.

McGovern and Van Waus' trip to Missouri was at the invitation of TCF, which had requested INHF's assistance with an unusual and exciting project: protecting a former limestone mine providing hibernation habitat for an estimated 168,000 Indiana bats — one third of the known population of this federally endangered species. It is the largest maternal colony of Indiana bats in the world, making the caves' protection of critical importance.

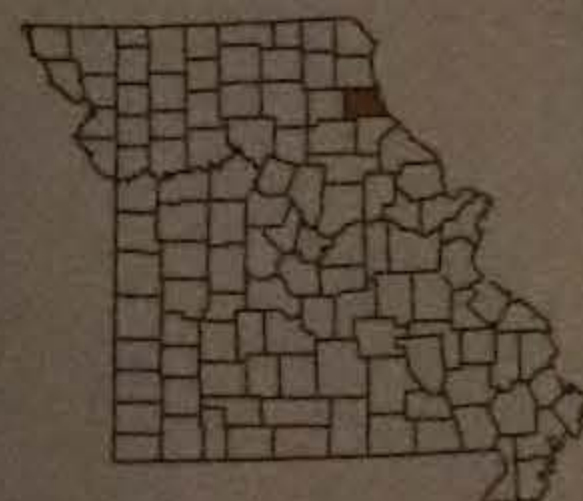
Around the time of the caves' discovery, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) personnel were negotiating a unique and precedent-setting mitigation package for the Flanagan South Pipeline Project that runs from Illinois

to Oklahoma through Missouri. The USFWS established measures for avoiding and minimizing impacts to bat and migratory bird habitat from the 600-mile pipeline. Where habitat destruction was unavoidable, the Service worked with the energy company to establish a \$22 million fund to compensate for the habitat loss.

The USFWS partnered with TCF to implement a major land protection and restoration program using these funds to benefit migratory birds and threatened and endangered species, including Indiana bats. TCF is a nonprofit that operates on a national scale to advance both conservation goals and economic development. The protection of the former Lime Kiln Mine in Hannibal was chosen as the highest priority project because of its significance to Indiana bats.

Sodalis Nature Preserve

Marion County, Mo.



INHF holds the conservation easement on the property on the southern end of Hannibal, Mo., city limits.

LAND: 185 acres

SPECIAL FEATURES: Cave system, woodland

PARTNERS: INHF, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, The Conservation Fund, City of Hannibal, Mo.

After nearly a year of negotiations, TCF was able to purchase the main body of the mine and the surrounding 185 acres of gently rolling woodland. It is, Van Waus later noted, "truly amazing that a place so beautiful and important [for a species like the Indiana bat] could come from something as intrusive as limestone mining." Together, the project partners decided to rename the Lime Kiln Mine complex after the scientific name for the Indiana bat, *Myotis sodalis*. They decided to call it Sodalis Nature Preserve.

The world's leading bat gate designer, Jerry Fant of Karst Solutions, was hired to build bat-friendly gates across each of the caves' 34 entrances. From the great, yawning mouth to the smallest of crevices, each opening was protected with a custom-designed gate. Cave systems are fragile and complex, so it was necessary to preserve the airflow into the tunnels while also protecting the bats from human intrusion.

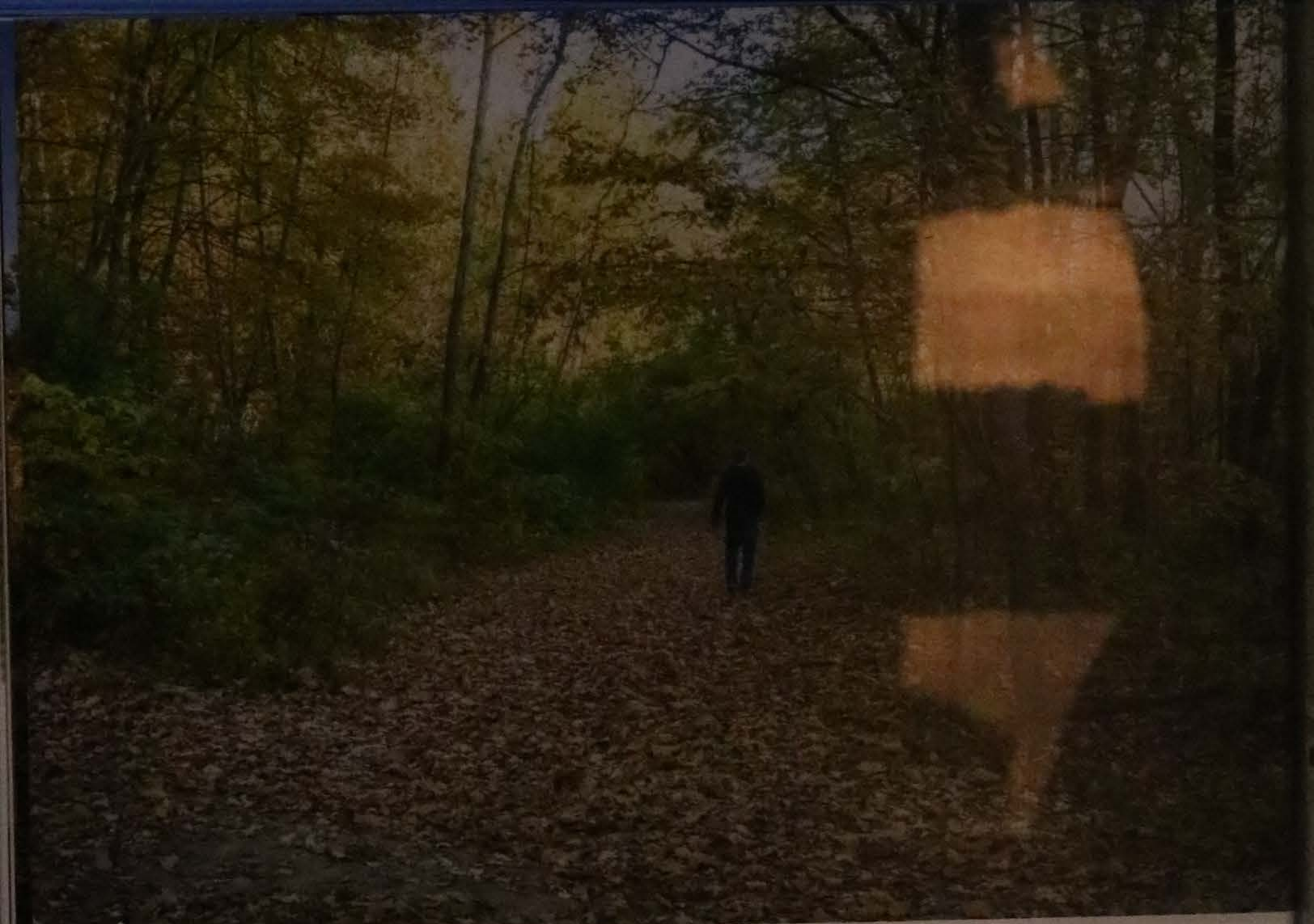
Sending out the bat signal

Because of the incredible importance of the Sodalis Nature Preserve hibernaculum, TCF was seeking multiple layers of protection to preserve the area in its natural state. Since TCF does not hold property, the first challenge was finding an entity willing to own the caves and surrounding land. The City of Hannibal embraced the opportunity with gusto.

TCF Midwest Project Director Clint Miller, the driving force behind the project, approached INHF to hold a conservation easement on the property. This easement ensures that the Sodalis Nature Preserve will be permanently safeguarded from development, while still allowing local use of trails in the surrounding woodland and giving USFWS access to the bat caves for research purposes. Miller was particularly excited by this opportunity to have "public recreation and endangered species conservation both benefiting from the same effort." The two, he



A gate crafted into the cave's limestone walls keeps human visitors away but allows bats to fly in and out with ease. Keeping the cave secluded from human presence is especially important during hibernation season.
Photo by Erin Van Waus, INHF



Beyond the cave system and the habitat benefits it provides, Sodalis Nature Preserve sits on 185 acres of woodland on the southern end of Hannibal city limits and includes more than two miles of trails. The Preserve offers research and recreational opportunities for scientists, city residents and visitors. *Photo courtesy of The Conservation Fund*

said, "can be complimentary."

And the residents of Hannibal proved exactly that, quickly falling in love with the bats as well as the new space for recreation. At a spring event focused on the end of the bats' hibernation season, waiting crowds cheered the first tiny animal as it fluttered forth from the mouth of the cave, through the bat gate and into the twinkling twilight.

To gain a fuller sense of the project, McGovern and Van Waus traveled to Hannibal to meet with the project partners and see the caves for themselves. The cave system at Sodalis Nature Preserve is man-made, blasted into the landscape by the dynamite used by limestone miners. The tunnels are a vast, twisting maze of caverns and crevices that

follow no natural logic.

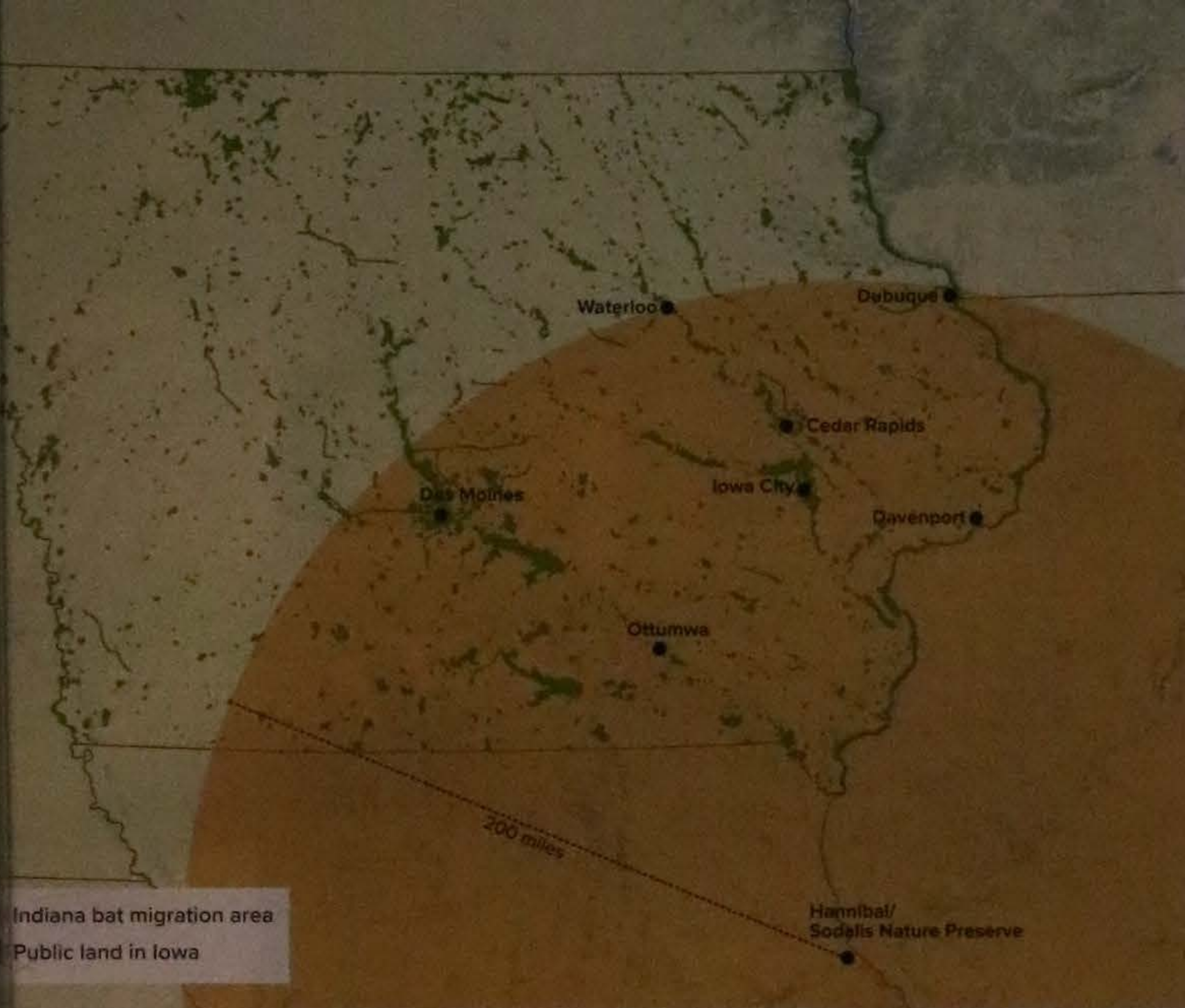
What Van Waus remembers most vividly is the darkness. "Walking into that, it's amazing how quickly you can get into complete darkness," she recalled. "You don't realize that it's happening because you have a flashlight... But only 100 yards in, everything is completely black."

The group moved quietly, so as not to disturb the hibernating bats. Playing flashlight beams across the cavern ceilings above, the explorers soon found what they were looking for: small clusters of Indiana bats, huddled closely together. Well, relatively small — each grouping contained 100-300 of the bats, and they can cluster in the thousands. The bats seen that day represent only a small portion of the colony at Sodalis Nature Preserve, which numbers in the hundreds of thousands.

Why INHF?

But why INHF? We are, after all, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, and Sodalis Nature

The Sodalis Nature Preserve houses an estimated 168,000 hibernating Indiana bats — one third of the world's known population.



Indiana bats migrate up to 200 miles from their chosen hibernacula. Many of the bats that live and breed in Iowa are likely to originate from Sodalis Nature Preserve.

Indiana bat migration area
Public land in Iowa

ILLUSTRATION: ANDREA PIEKARCZYK

FAST FACTS INDIANA BATS

Bats can get a bad reputation as blood-sucking disease-carrying pests, but for the Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*) these myths couldn't be farther from the truth. These cute creatures have dark brown fur, small ears and a wingspan stretching nearly a foot, and are an important native species.

The bat's Latin name, *Myotis sodalis*, refers to the species' small, mouse-like ears (*Myotis* = mouse-ear) and their tendency to cluster together (*sodalis* = companion).

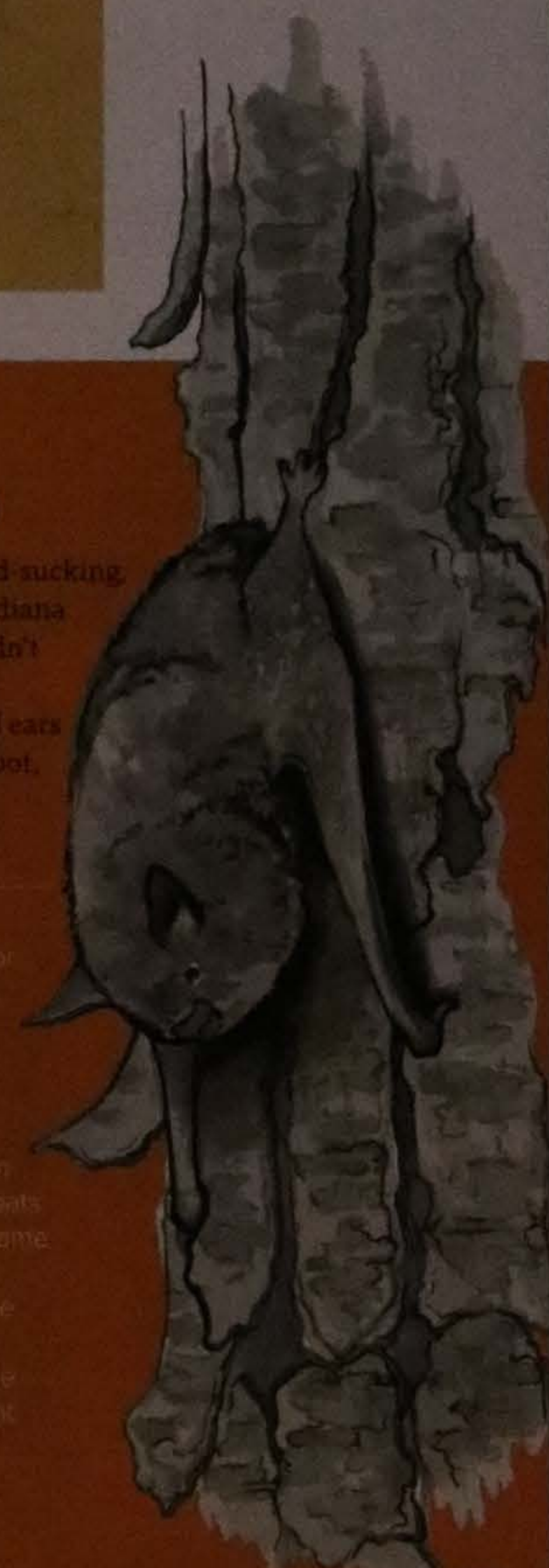
Indiana bats eat up to half their body weight in insects every night.

The bats are endangered for many reasons, including their tendency to cluster and hibernate together. When thousands of bats reside in the same cave, it makes it easier for one disturbance or disease to wipe out a significant portion of the population.

Preserve is in Missouri. The reasons are twofold. First and foremost, TCF needed a strong and stable land trust to hold the conservation easement and bat gate maintenance fund. When considering regional partners, Miller was attracted by INHF's "long history, accredited status and experience dealing with complicated projects." He said, "I had high confidence in INHF handling such an important project."

INHF staff and board members believe the protection of the preserve significantly impacts Iowa wildlife, despite its location in Missouri. Indiana bats may migrate up to 200 miles from their hibernacula, which means that many of the *Sodalis* bats fly to Iowa to live and breed during the rest of the year.

Sodalis Nature Preserve was born from innovation, perseverance and, most of all, partnership. Appropriately, while *sodalis* is the species name of the Indiana bat, it is also the Latin word for "companion." INHF is grateful for new friends in unusual places who invite us to greater challenges and opportunities to protect Iowa and its wildlife. 🦇



A win for **WILDLIFE** & landowners

Big Marsh Wildlife Management Area

Butler County



LAND: Currently 6,100 acres, with INHF preparing to transfer more to the Iowa DNR

SPECIAL FEATURES: Restored wetlands, timber and grassland

PARTNERS: INHF, Iowa DNR, Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Butler County Conservation Board

BY JOE JAYJACK

WETLANDS EXIST IN THE MIDDLE. The transition between upland and bodies of water. The sponge, or filter, for water as it loses elevation and makes its way into our rivers and lakes.

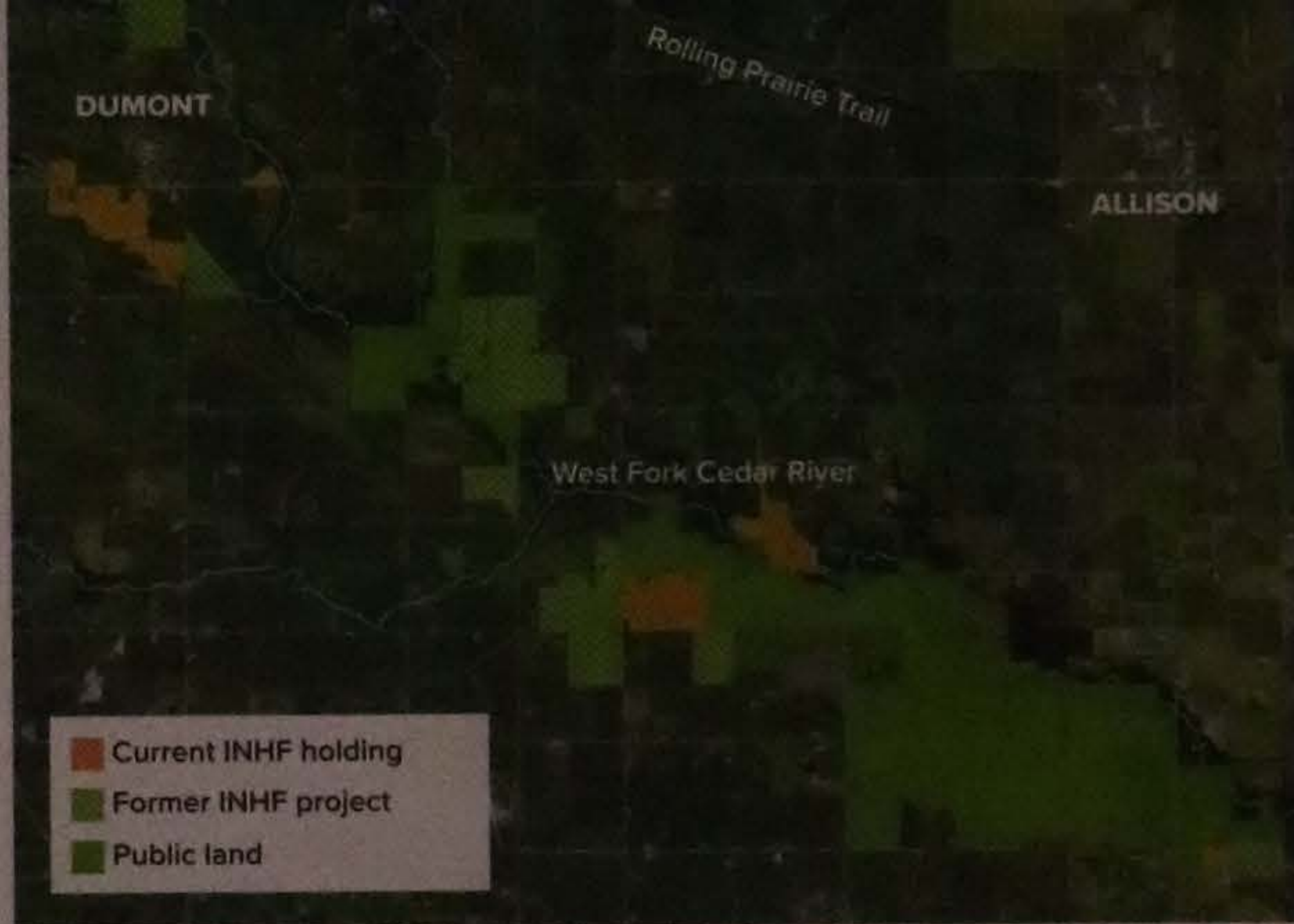
Wetlands are vital to water quality and home to wildlife, including most of Iowa's threatened and endangered species. Prior to European settlement, wetlands covered 4 to 6 million acres, or about 11 percent of Iowa's surface area. In the last 150 years, nearly 95 percent of those wetlands have been drained for agriculture or development.

Today, one of the largest wetland complexes in the state is Big Marsh Wildlife Management Area in Butler County, managed by the Iowa DNR. Spreading out along the floodplain of the West Fork Cedar River downstream from Dumont, Big Marsh encompasses more than 6,000 acres. Adjacent public land makes the complex more than 7,000 acres of protected habitat. But it wasn't always that way. Most of Big Marsh is made up of restored grassland and wetlands — former agricultural land that has been returned to its more natural state.

Restoration in the area is focused around the Iowa-Cedar Headwaters Wetland Initiative, a partnership project of the Iowa DNR, the USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) that aims to protect and restore wetlands near the headwaters of the Iowa and Cedar rivers. In 2012, USFWS provided a \$3.8 million grant that allowed landowners in the area to enroll in the Wetland Reserve Program, a voluntary program that allows landowners to protect or restore wetlands on their property that are often in marginal agricultural areas.

"It was such a popular program with the landowners, that within about six to eight

Blue-winged teal are frequent nesters in the Big Marsh complex and are one of the first ducks to migrate south for the winter. Photo by Joe Jayjack, INHF



weeks, that \$3.8 million was gone," said Jason Auel, the DNR Wildlife Biologist in the region.


"Landowners were sick and tired of fighting the river and getting flooded out. It used to be that seven out of 10 years they could get a crop. Then starting in the '90s when it got wetter, they were lucky to get a crop two to three times out of 10 years."

Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation has played an important role in purchasing land from willing landowners that were enrolled in WRP, which is now called Wetlands Reserve Easement. Those landowners often used the money to buy more productive agricultural land elsewhere. INHF would then hold the property until the Iowa DNR could purchase it.

INHF has worked on 15 projects in the complex in the last five years, helping to expand the protected land in and around Big Marsh by more than 2,300 acres. In 2015 alone, INHF purchased five sites totaling more than 500 acres that will eventually transfer to the Iowa DNR.

"There are only a handful of places in the state that have more than 7,000 acres of public wildlife habitat," said Ross Baxter, land projects director at INHF.

Big Marsh is a major stopover for migrating waterfowl, and has a healthy population of deer and pheasant, making it a popular spot for hunters. The complex also includes three waterfowl refuge areas totaling about 350 acres, and is home to river otters and Blanding's turtles, a state threatened species.

"All this additional ground has created more area for recreation and more habitat for wildlife," Auel said. "It's exciting to see a rebound in some of our animal populations." 

WETLANDS RESERVE PROGRAM

(Now known as Wetlands Reserve Easement)

- A nationwide voluntary program
- Offers payment, based on agricultural value, for restored wetlands that have previously been drained and converted to agricultural uses.
- Pays up to 100 percent reimbursement for restoration costs.
- Lets landowners retain control of access and maintain ownership of land.
- Allows for land to be sold, subject to a permanent easement.
- Provides additional benefits of improved water quality, enhanced habitat for wildlife, reduced soil erosion, reduced flooding and improved water supply.

For more information on wetland easements in Iowa, contact the Iowa NRCS office at 855-261-3544 or visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/wrp/

LEAVING A LEGACY

Lorenzen bequest provides \$100,000 of annual support

It was a day like any other, until we opened the mail.

That's when Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation learned the surprising magnitude of the legacy that long-time member Frederick Jens Lorenzen of Davenport provided for Iowa conservation.

As an outdoor writer for the *Quad-City Times*, and through three decades of voluntary leadership on the Scott County Conservation Board, Lorenzen devoted himself to local conservation. His estate reflected his values: He directed 10 percent to the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center and 30 percent to Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. INHF invested his bequest for lasting support.

Could Fred have imagined his impact? His bequest is providing \$100,000 in flexible support to our mission — this year, next year, every year. With this sure support, Fred continues to make INHF more able and confident to take on what needs to be done. We can all be deeply grateful to Fred.

— ANITA O'GARA, vice president



Fred Lorenzen served for more than 30 years on the Scott County Conservation Board. His bequest to INHF is providing lasting support to Scott County and beyond. Photo courtesy of Scott County Conservation Board

“INHF is something we should have had 75 years ago. Good works such as yours have been needed a long time.”

— FRED LORENZEN

CONSERVATION TIP

Reduce light pollution to help nature's nocturnal creatures

Take a step outside and you'll notice that the blanket of night may no longer be quite so dark. Light pollution, or the inappropriate use of artificial light at night, makes it more difficult to see the natural night sky. According to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, bats, moths, owls and other nocturnal critters are forced to change their behavior when artificial light shines. Artificial light can impact a nocturnal creature's vision, breeding cycle and migration pattern.

There are a few steps we can take to reduce the effects of light pollution, including turning off unnecessary lights. For lights that must stay on, the FWC recommends mounting low to minimize light trespass, shielding the bulb or lens that is giving off light and using long wavelength light sources, like ambers and reds.



Not only can light pollution make it harder to view stars at night, it can also affect the behavior of nocturnal animals. Photo by Nathan Houck

A fund for Iowa's wild places

The Wild Places Trust Fund supports INHF's ability to serve as the permanent home for specific Iowa lands that are set aside for the benefit of wild things. The fund makes it possible for INHF Wild Places to be financially self-sustaining — even when these lands produce no income. To learn more about how you can contribute to the Wild Places Trust Fund, contact Anita O'Gara at 515-288-1846, ext. 18, or aogara@inhf.org.

TRIBUTE GIFTS

IN HONOR OF

Pam Abarr
Paul and Jeannette Davis
Bill Dodson
Bob Elzer
Cathy Irvine
Pat & Paul Johnson
Jan Lovell
Bruce Mountain
Benji Nichols & John Wilmes
Rand and Mary Louise Petersen

Brad Rottler
Barb Schroeder
Wendy Tripp
Marie Zakeer

IN MEMORY OF

Frances Benson
Richard Brown
Steve Christensen
Andrew Crane
Charlie Cutler
Randy Delagardelle

Wade Franck
Ron Gianville
Patricia Goldsberry
Linn A. Hall
Duane Hanson
Estelle Hetzler
David Irvine
Wade Jones
George Ladd
Gene Mahr
Ronald D. McGrew
Roland & Virginia Nelson

Darlene J. O'Brien
Denny Reynolds
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James E. Sabelka
Bob "Schmitt" Schmitt
Darrell C. Shaeter
Alex Sharer
Kent Sheeley
Claude & Lois Smith
Susan Standley
Donna Stark

Bart Steele
Lorraine Strack
Johnny Struthers
Mary Sytsma
Murry & Lizzie Sytsma
Tulsa
Jim Unsworth
Robert H. Van Zante
Dean Wagner
Bernard Wendel
Fern Willard

Find more Iowa places to explore at www.inhfblog.org

Nahant Marsh — once a shooting range — provides a perfect landscape for education programs, popular with many Davenport-area schoolchildren. Photo courtesy of Nahant Marsh

An oasis brought to life

BY KATIE BANDURSKI

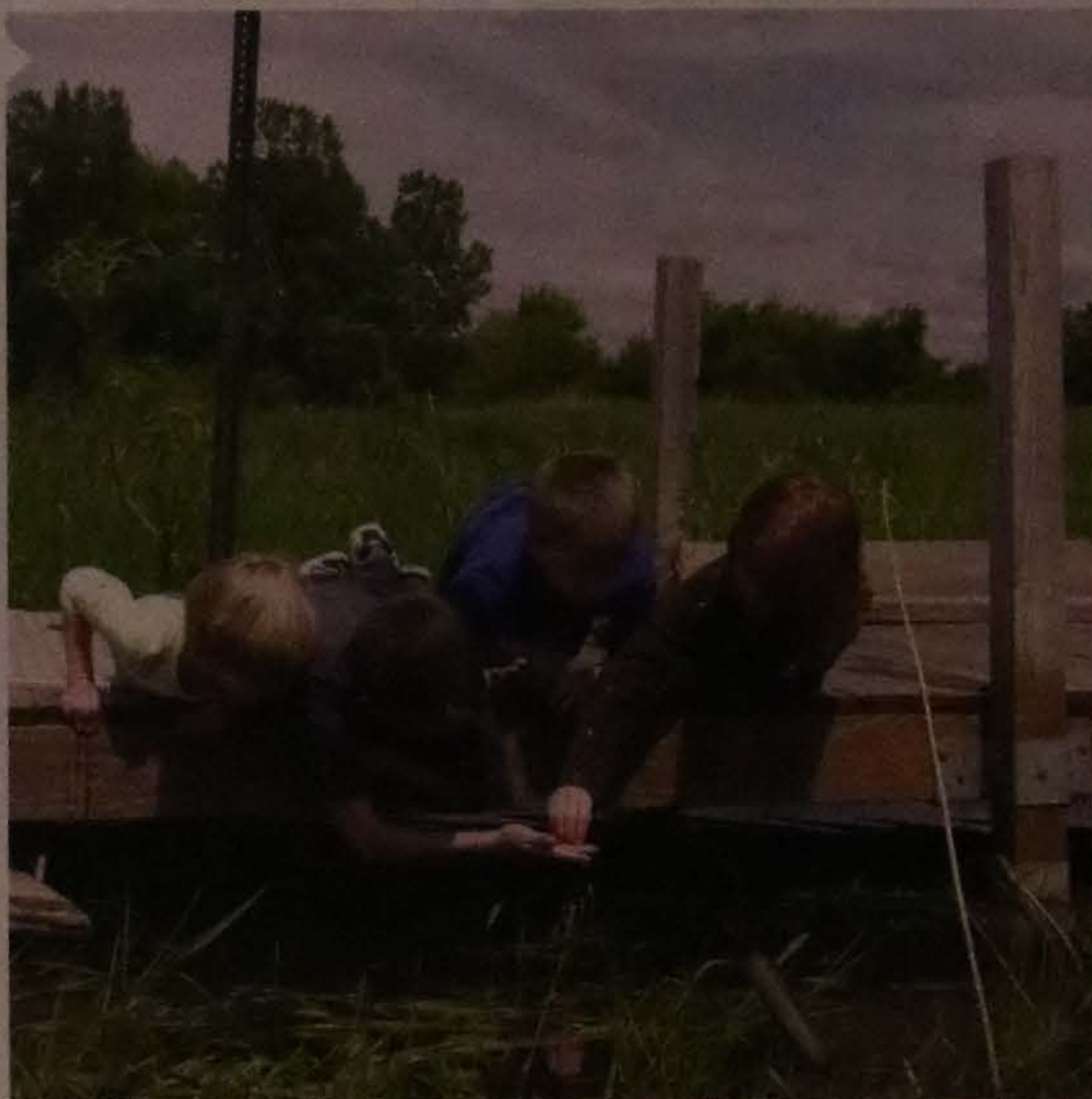
Nestled within the bustling city of Davenport is a 265-acre environmental haven. For over 400 plant species and numerous animals, birds, fish and insects, Nahant Marsh is home. But it hasn't always been the protected oasis it is today.

Between 1969 and the late 1990s, a part of Nahant Marsh was owned by the Quad Cities Trap and Skeet Club. Although an escape for recreational shooters, the range proved dangerous for wildlife. Most of the lead shot ended up in the marsh, and as time wore on, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) began to observe sick and dying waterfowl.

With the help of many partners, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation was able to acquire the initial Nahant Marsh property and has assisted with several additions.

"It's the largest intact wetland on the upper Mississippi," Brian Ritter, executive director of Nahant Marsh said, "and it's amazing it's in the city limits of Davenport because most wetlands, even near the edge of town, were destroyed."

The rare marsh combines a variety of different ecosystems, including sand prairie, mesic prairie and sedge meadow, Ritter said. Differences in elevation and soil types allow for



a greater variety of plant and animal life, including the state threatened Blanding's turtle and Copperbelly water snake.

Visitors can spend a day exploring the wild preserve, biking, hiking or watching for one of the over 150 species of birds that flock to Nahant. The marsh's interpretive education center makes it a popular destination for school groups and nature lovers of all ages.


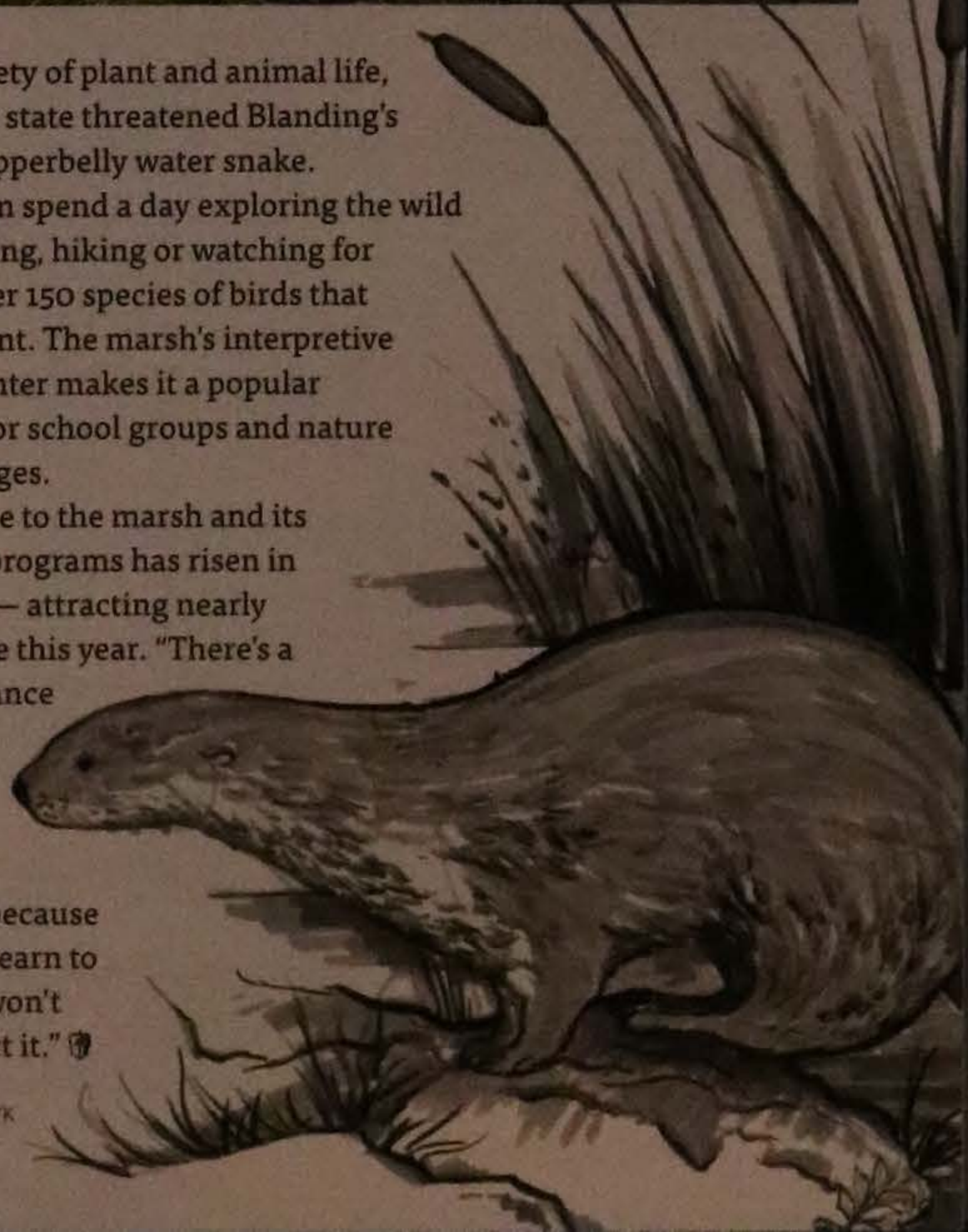
Attendance to the marsh and its educational programs has risen in recent years — attracting nearly 15,000 people this year. "There's a huge importance in getting people connected with nature," Ritter said, "because if they don't learn to love it, they won't love to protect it." 

ILLUSTRATION: ANDREA PIEKARCZYK





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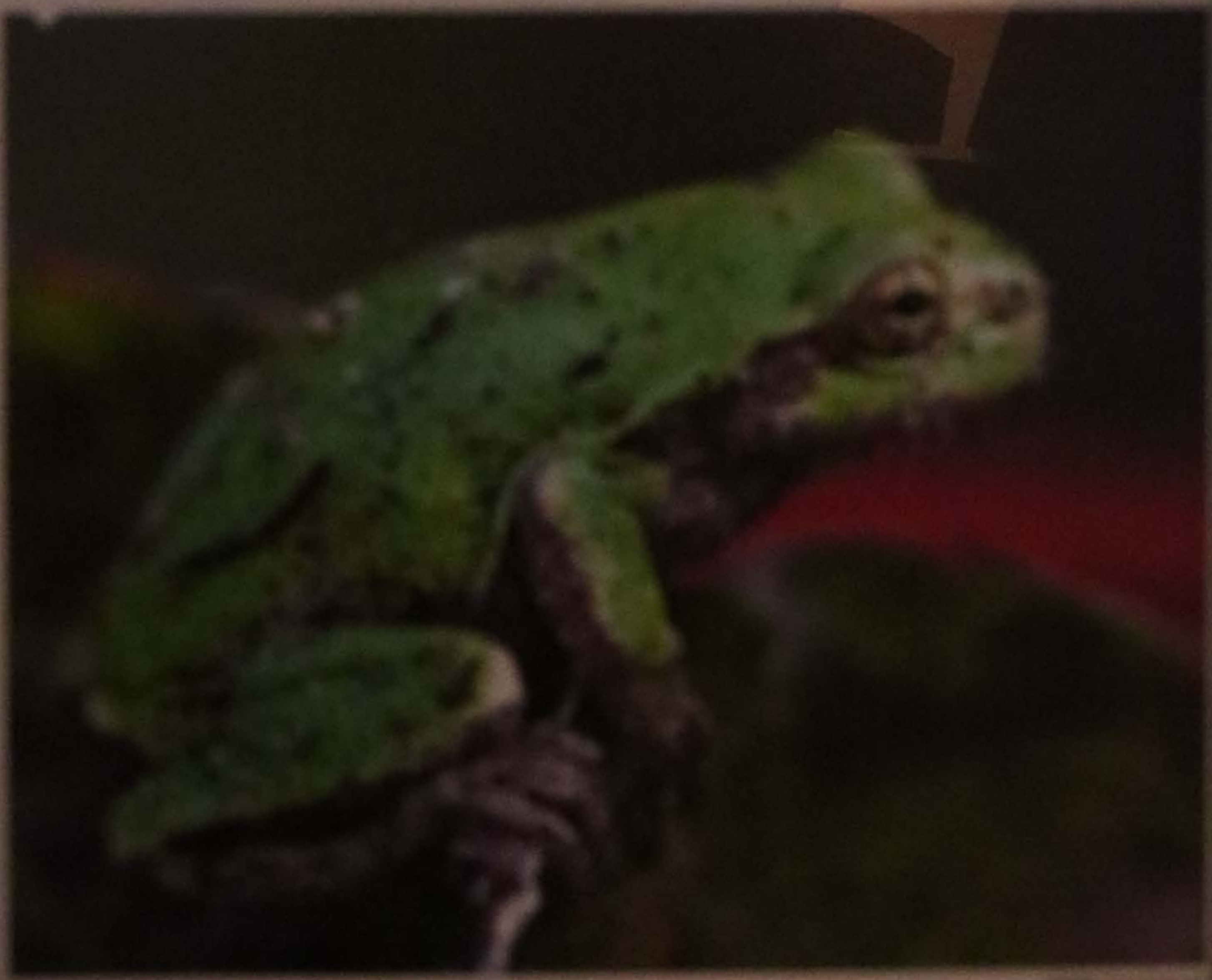


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Iowa Natural Heritage

Protecting and restoring Iowa's land, water and wildlife



A home for the wild

OPENING THOUGHTS



When I think about the work that Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation does, it is helpful to put it in the context of our mission: To protect and restore Iowa's land, water and wildlife.

Our mission guides all our decisions and everything we do — where we work, with whom we create partnerships, how we complete a project. It also helps us to measure our progress. The condition of the land, water and wildlife is the best indicator of the health of our collective home, and with your help we are creating positive change on the landscape.

In this issue, we focus on projects and people that are making a difference in the health and abundance of Iowa's wildlife:

- a couple that has made careers out of caring for Iowa's animals (page 6)
- a well-known animal ecology professor that made a gift to protect habitat along a major bird migration stopover (page 8)
- one of Iowa's reclusive native cats making a comeback (page 12)
- a state forest addition in northeast Iowa that protects a threatened bird species and two miles of trout stream (page 14)

These are a few of the successes we have celebrated recently, but we have a long way to go. Our water and soil quality is a source of controversy, and wildlife habitat is often an afterthought. We know how to fix these things, and there is already a system in place to fund it: the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund.

The Trust Fund is the permanent, reliable, substantial and immediate funding source that our state's natural resources need and deserve. Now it is up to the legislature to listen to voters and fill the Trust Fund. You can help make that happen. Call or write your legislators. Come to Environmental Lobby Day at the Capitol on March 22. Tell your elected officials funding the Trust Fund is important to you and to future generations that will benefit from it. Let our generation be known for putting in place conservation solutions and improving the quality of life for ALL of Iowa's residents.

Sincerely,

Joe McGovern, INHF President



Our Mission
Iowa Natural Heritage
Foundation protects and restores
Iowa's land, water and wildlife.

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On the cover

Photographer Stan Buman found this northern saw-whet owl roosting in a red cedar tree in a short ravine on his farm near Dedham.



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Without nature, we lose a little of ourselves.

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Jim and Pat Dinsmore wanted to leave a legacy of healthier Iowa land. Their gift enabled protecting an additional 130 acres adjacent to Big Wall Lake Wildlife Management Area, an important stopover for migrating waterfowl.

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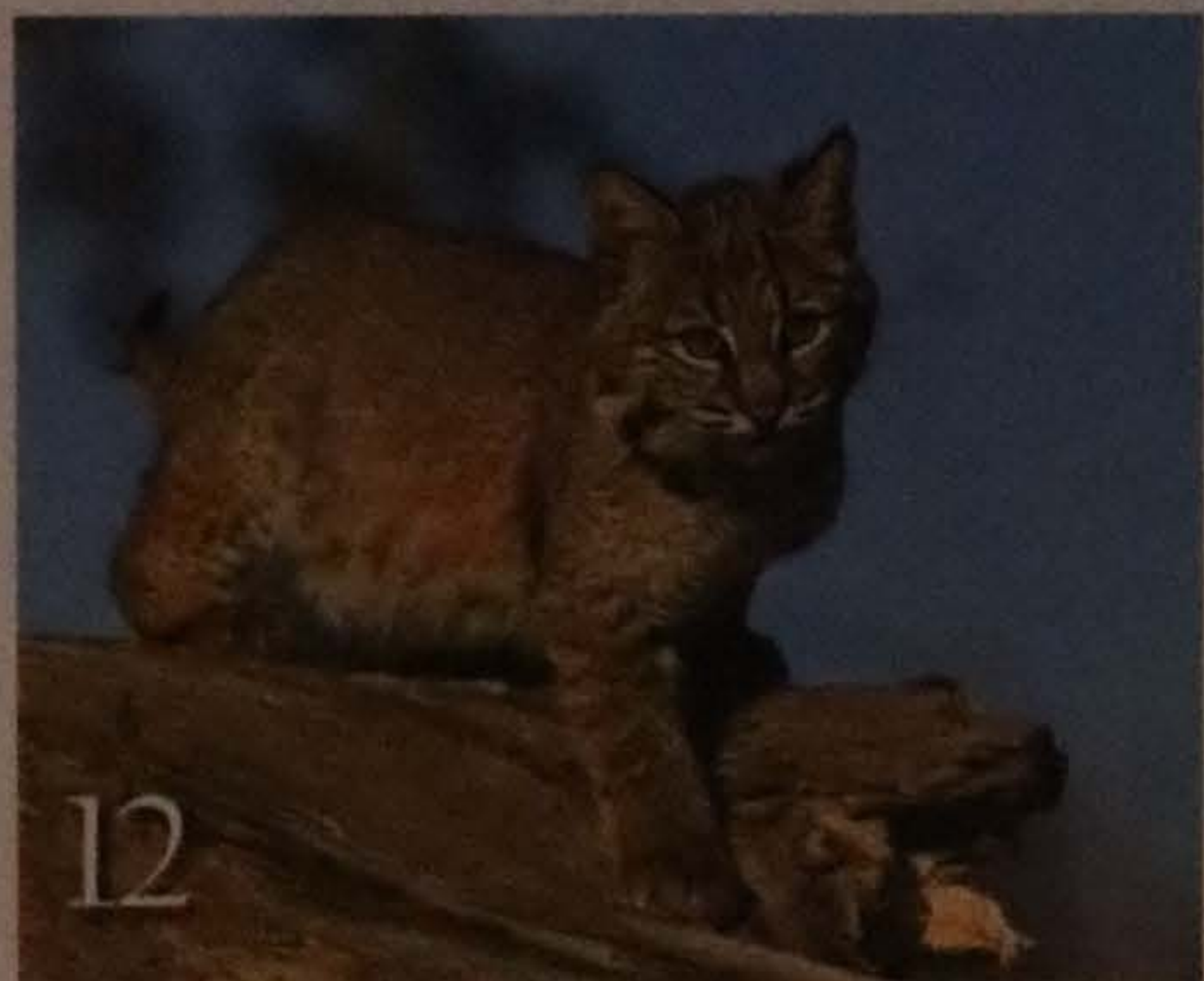
Expansion of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) in the 1990s provided more of the rough habitat — wooded river corridors and brushy undergrowth — ideal for bobcats to once again thrive in Iowa.

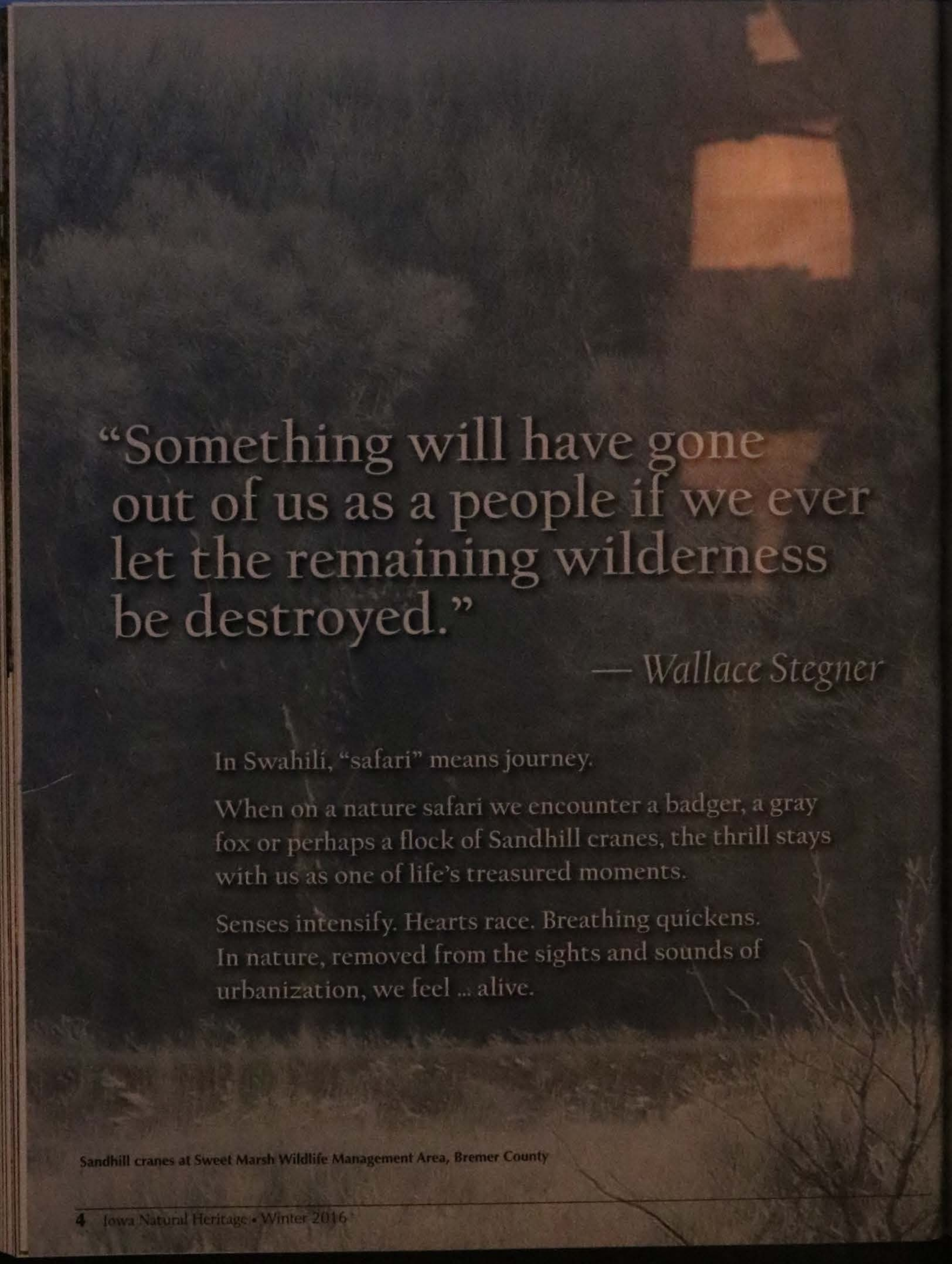
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This 368-acre addition to Yellow River State Forest is home to the largest concentration of cerulean warblers in the U.S.

15 Looking Out for Iowa: You Can Help Wildlife Thrive

Learn more about how you can help injured animals, improve habitat on your land and advocate for conservation and outdoor recreation in Iowa.





“Something will have gone
out of us as a people if we ever
let the remaining wilderness
be destroyed.”

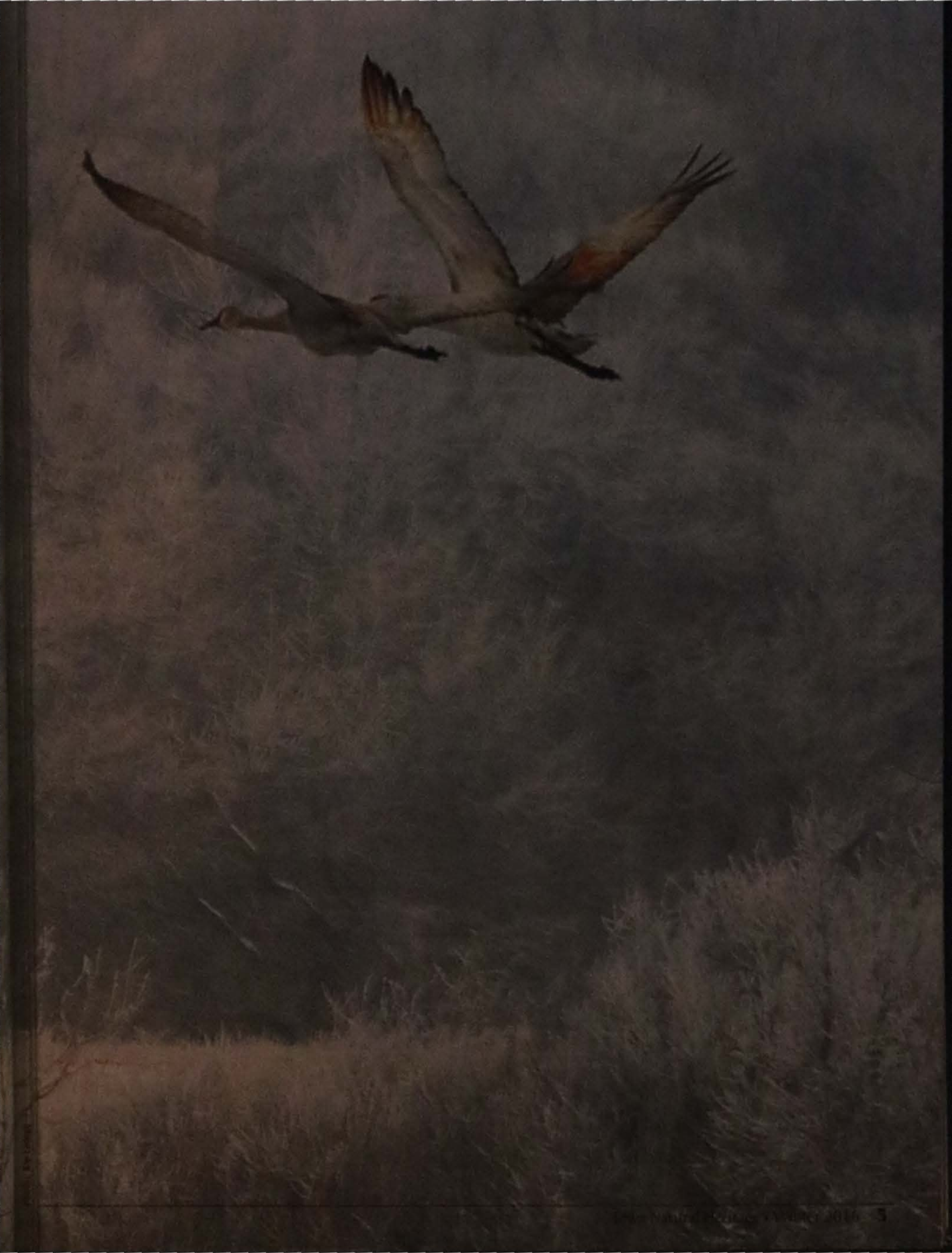
— *Wallace Stegner*

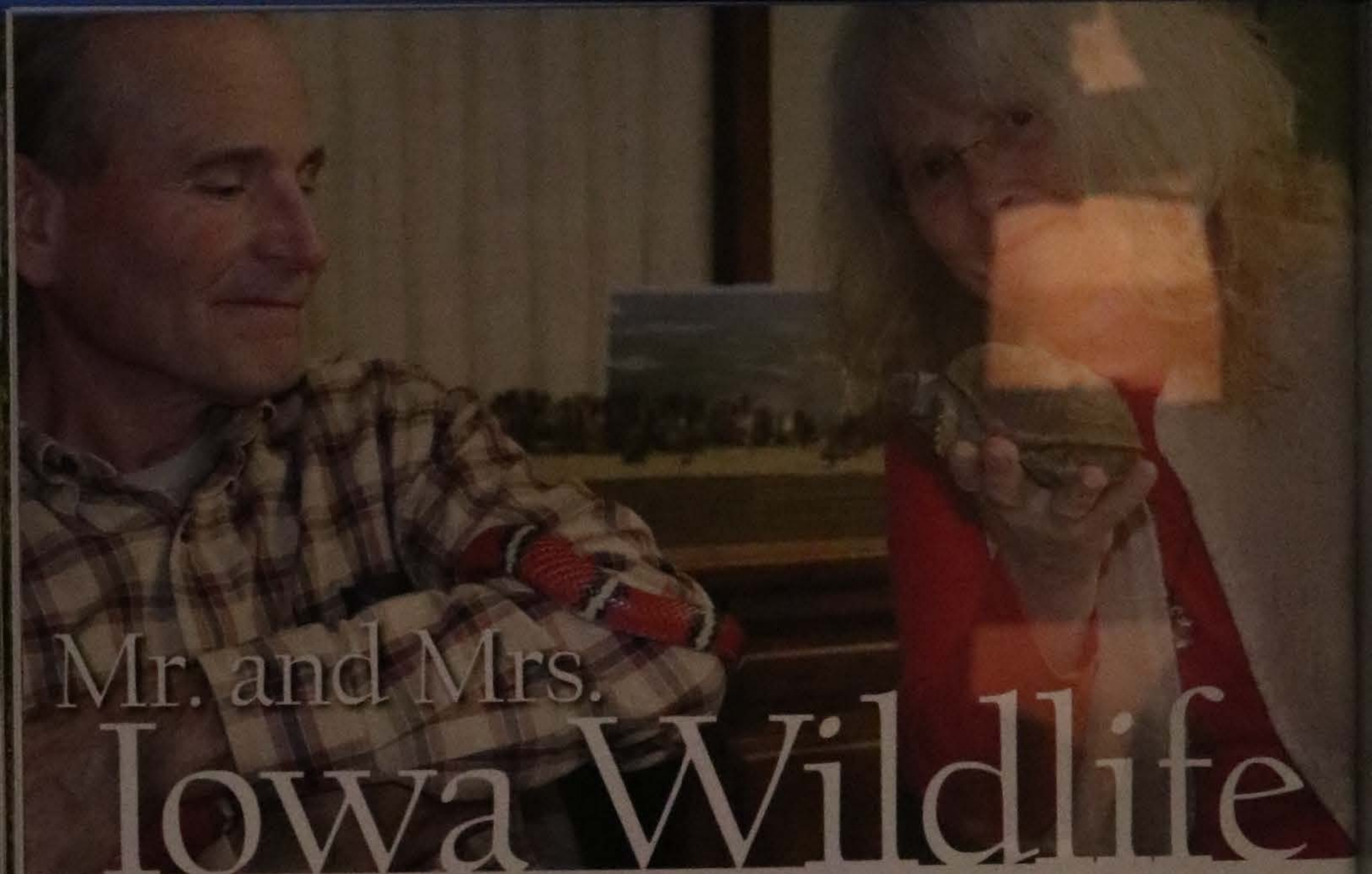
In Swahili, “safari” means journey.

When on a nature safari we encounter a badger, a gray fox or perhaps a flock of Sandhill cranes, the thrill stays with us as one of life’s treasured moments.

Senses intensify. Hearts race. Breathing quickens. In nature, removed from the sights and sounds of urbanization, we feel ... alive.

Sandhill cranes at Sweet Marsh Wildlife Management Area, Bremer County





Mr. and Mrs. Iowa Wildlife

Sitting around a table at the Iowa Wildlife Center offices in Ames, Bruce and Marlene Ehresman were eager to talk about anything except themselves. But after a bit of coaxing, the beloved conservationists began to open up about the challenges — and rewards — of a shared “wild life.”

Above: Bruce Ehresman cradles a banded female milk snake (*Lampropeltis triangulum*) the Iowa DNR rescued from illegal pet captivity. Milk snakes are listed as a state protected species. A male ornate box turtle (*Terrapene ornate*), listed as a state threatened species, perches on Marlene Ehresman's palm. It is illegal to take either of these species out of the wild and into captivity.

Professionally, Bruce Ehresman works for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources as a wildlife diversity program biologist (he cares for all the critters you can't hunt, fish or trap), and he is a renowned Iowa bird expert. Marlene Ehresman was a program and planning associate at Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation for over a decade and is now the executive director of the Iowa Wildlife Center (IWC), a wildlife rehabilitation and environmental education organization. Collaborating both in and out of the field, the Ehresmans celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary this past November. “Our professional lives have been greatly improved by our partnership — our marriage. We're better professionals and better people for it,” Marlene said.

The value in individual wild animals

The couple has worked together on wildlife rehabilitation ever since Bruce brought the first injured wild animal home to Marlene in 1980. “After that, I devoted my energy to helping individual animals, while

Bruce dedicated himself to working with populations,” Marlene said. “Along the way, I encountered some people who didn't think working with individuals was worth it. They thought everything had to be on a population level to have an impact.”

This is a perspective with which the Ehresmans fundamentally disagree. “Not everyone in the public understands population dynamics,” explained Bruce. Marlene agreed, noting that the plight of a single animal is often more resonant than that of the population. Animals that can no longer survive in the wild are often placed on special permits at wildlife rehabilitation centers or nature centers and used for education, so efforts on the behalf of these individuals can have far-reaching impacts on the public's understanding of wildlife.

It was with this in mind that Marlene started the IWC in 2007, made possible by a gift from the Alma Natura Trust. INHF handled this and other early donations and finances while IWC applied to incorporate as a nonprofit. The center's mission is to

provide professional wildlife rehabilitation services for native Iowa species, environmental education and wildlife assistance skills training. Revealing the real need for IWC's work, every year has brought greater numbers and diversity of animals to Marlene's door.

WildWay — a new home for IWC

Wildlife rehabilitation is a field where fervor is seldom equaled by available funding. IWC is currently fueled largely by volunteers. Volunteers are constructing the organization's first building, bolt by bolt, at WildWay — IWC's future home. Bruce described WildWay as "an ideal place to release wildlife." Located in the Des Moines River corridor in Boone County, the 76-acre property is incredibly diverse, with prairies, woods and wet areas. INHF holds a conservation easement on WildWay, ensuring the special area's permanent protection.

Wildlife rehabilitators see many sick and injured animals brought for treatment, so they are uniquely able to help the conservation community find links to what may be causing the problems. Marlene recalls finding a sick robin as a child, observing that now she knows it was probably suffering from the effects of DDT. Likewise, the Ehresmans remember when songbirds began to come in either sick or dying from other early pesticide use.

"It's all connected," Marlene said. This, the Ehresmans agreed, is why understanding Iowa's wild inhabitants is so important: Wildlife is a key piece of the state's biodiversity and the larger ecosystem that links us all. "For humans to think we're apart from nature is just silliness," Bruce reflected, noting that the concept of humans as a part of nature is actually relatively new — evolving over the last few decades. "We need to develop

“We need to develop an ecological conscience. Once people understand our role and relationship with the natural world, we can really get things done.”

Bruce Ehresman

an ecological conscience. Once people understand our role and relationship with the natural world, we can really get things done.”

Habitat loss presents challenges for wildlife

Habitat loss remains one of the greatest challenges facing Iowa's wildlife, and it is for this reason that the Ehresmans consider their continuing partnership with INHF to be so important. "We have eliminated huge numbers of wildlife through such massive conversion," said Bruce. "You can't take away 85-90 percent of the habitat and expect to maintain the same wildlife diversity." What drives him is the evidence that shows that even a small amount of habitat, in the right place, can support an incredible degree of biodiversity. This knowledge fuels Bruce's work establishing Bird Conservation Areas across the state — projects that have flourished thanks to the strong relationship between the Iowa DNR and INHF.

The Ehresmans acknowledge it is difficult to keep moving forward in the face of so many challenges. But, Bruce remains an optimist. "You have to be," Marlene gently chided him. "Otherwise you wouldn't still be doing what you do." For the dynamic couple, every morning is a new opportunity to make a difference. Marlene offered, "when you wake up, and your heart is filled with hope, it really does seem like anything is possible." 🍀


By Andrea Piekarczyk, Grants Coordinator

Below: IWC provides professional wildlife rescue and rehabilitation, as well as education about Iowa's native wildlife and their habitats. The organization is nearly finished building a truly "green" clinic and education center at WildWay, IWC's future home. To help complete this exciting step, or to donate to IWC's operating fund, visit the Iowa Wildlife Center page at altruo.us.





A complex of protection around a wildlife



Big Wall Lake Complex Wright County

This three-phase, multi-year, \$3 million project is one step closer to completion.

Land: 570 acres

Special features: Restored wetlands and prairie

Partners: INHF, Iowa DNR, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Pheasants Forever



www.inhf.org/winter-2016-magazine.cfm

Jim and Pat Dinsmore had been making a difference in the lives of students for years. Now they wanted to make a difference on the land, leaving a legacy of a healthier natural Iowa.

Jim was an animal ecology professor at Iowa State University for almost three decades. He retired in 2002, having tutored and mentored many in the Iowa conservation community. The Dinsmores have also been giving scholarships to animal ecology students at ISU for 13 years. They recently starting searching for land in Iowa they could help protect and restore.

“We wanted to do something that we could look at while we’re still alive and find an area that matches our interests. I’ve always been associated with wetlands and wetland birds,” Jim said.

That search led them to Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, and, eventually, Big Wall Lake in Wright County. The Dinsmores pledged a gift to INHF in 2010 that enabled the purchase of a 130-acre addition to Big Wall Lake Wildlife Management Area last year. The James

Above: Duck season at Big Wall Lake, October 2015.



haven

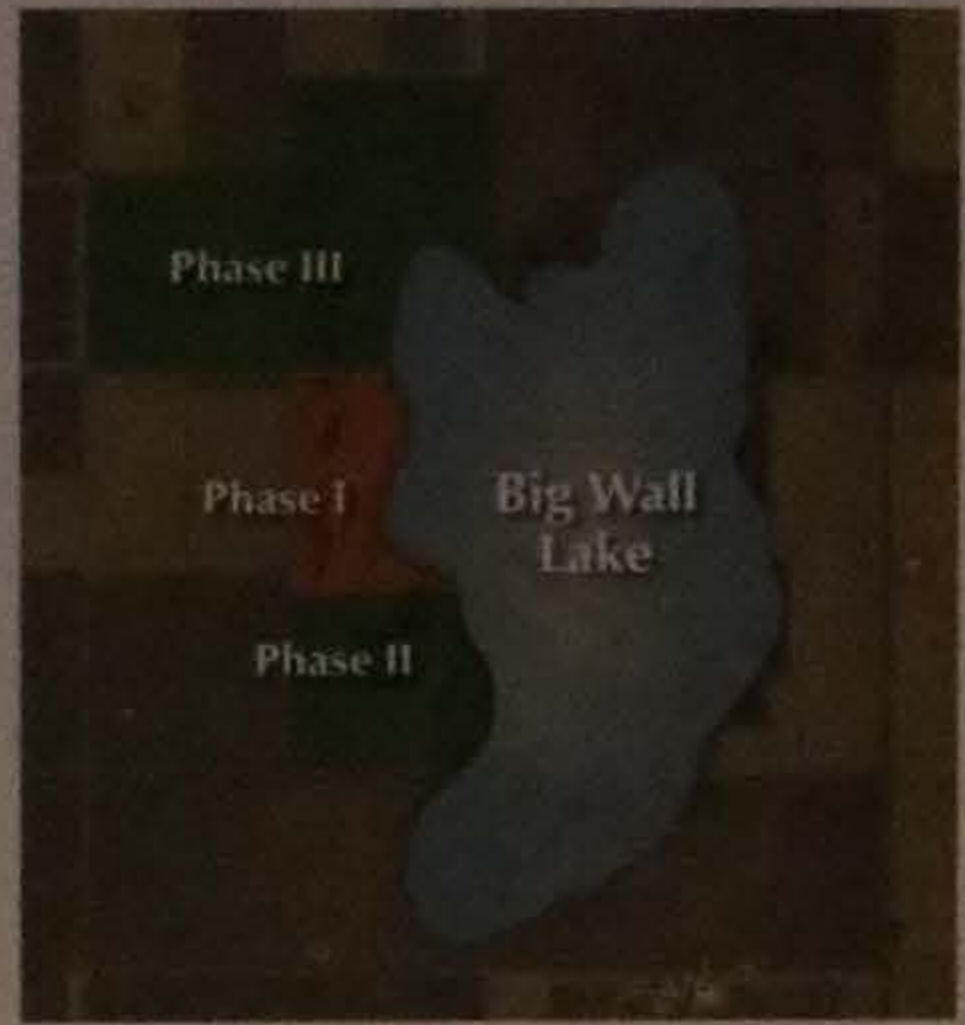
and Patricia Dinsmore Tract will eventually transfer to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and become part of the growing complex of public land surrounding the 978-acre shallow water lake that is an important stopover on a major flyway for migrating waterfowl. "INHF is famous for giving people a way for their gift to make a difference," Jim said. Big Wall Lake is a beautiful natural marsh. To think there is potential to improve on that complex, that's exciting. This could be the start of something that could be much larger."

The changing lake landscape

Small hunting cabins dot the southeast shore of the lake, which has been the case for more than a century. A 1916 report by the Iowa State Highway Commission notes, "A small pleasure resort and several cottages are found in the grove south of the lake. ... Hunters from surrounding counties use the lake during open season. Considerable wild rice grows in its waters, which makes it a favorite feeding ground for ducks and geese."

The report recommended against draining the lake, which had been requested by nearby landowners. The lake remained, but its water quality steadily declined over the years. According to Iowa DNR Wildlife Biologist TJ Herrick, it had become an open water system

Big Wall Lake Wildlife Management Area Complex



■ INHF Owned ■ Public Land (Iowa DNR)



INHF president Joe McGovern (left) presents James and Patricia Dinsmore with the Brush of Excellence award for their lifelong contributions to conserving Iowa's land and water. James and Patricia Dinsmore tract dedication; October 15, 2015, Big Wall Lake Wildlife Management Area.

INHF Awards Dinsmores with Brush of Excellence

INHF awarded James and Patricia Dinsmore the Brush of Excellence Award for their lifetime achievements in conservation and contributions to conserving Iowa's land and water at the dedication of the Dinsmore Tract in October 2015.

The award is a framed paintbrush that was once owned and used by famed cartoonist and conservation leader Jay N. "Ding" Darling (1876-1962), whose art and actions helped shape America's conservation ethic. The brush was given by Kip Koss, Darling's grandson, to Samuel Koltinsky, the producer of "America's Darling: The Story of Jay N. Ding Darling". Koltinsky presented the framed brush to INHF on May 19, 2015.

"Gifting of these brushes — 'The Brush of Excellence' — signifies extraordinary stewardship of the land and the wise use of our natural resources. It is with great honor that I present this brush in remembrance of both the Darling and Koss legacies," Koltinsky said during the ceremony.

INHF will award the Brush of Excellence to deserving Iowa conservationists whose talents, persistence and excellence echo Ding Darling's legacy of inspiring conservation action. The award will travel, presented on loan to the current honoree. The Dinsmores are the first to receive the award.

"Jim is a noted author on Iowa birds and wildlife, known especially for guiding research about the wildlife benefits of wetland restoration," said INHF President Joe McGovern. "But what really stands out is the care and encouragement that Jim and Pat gave to his wildlife biology students at Iowa State University. Ding Darling gave lots of 'wake-up calls' about wildlife to Americans a century ago. Jim 'woke up' countless students and launched so many young people toward conservation careers."

Jim Dinsmore is also well known for his 1994 book "A Country So Full of Game," an account of the wildlife present in Iowa at the time of early European settlement.

By Rachel Dupree, Communications Intern

that suffered from static high water levels. By the beginning of this century, it was added to the state's list of impaired waterways.

Big Wall underwent a major restoration starting in 2006. The removal of carp and other rough fish combined with increased outflow on the lake allowed aquatic plants to thrive. Herrick said the restoration was a success, returning the lake to more of a hemi-marsh — a mix of emergent vegetation and submersed plant life that is favored by water-dependent birds and amphibians. The lake was removed from the impaired list in 2012, allowing the Iowa DNR to focus on watershed management and protection on the land surrounding the lake.

Planning a prairie pothole system

In 2011, INHF purchased an adjacent 99-acre property (Phase I) on which the cropland was restored to wetland and grassland under the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP). That property has since transferred to the Iowa DNR and is the first piece of what will become a much larger complex on the west side of the lake. After restoration on the Dinsmore Tract (Phase II) is completed and transferred to the Iowa DNR, the next piece will be a 341-acre property (Phase III) on the northwest corner of the lake. The Dinsmores also made a contribution to that tract, and INHF is currently raising funds to make the transfer to the Iowa DNR possible.

"This project is incredibly important," said Herrick. "For years, until INHF purchased that first piece, there was zero upland habitat around the lake."

Since the Iowa DNR began restoration on the first tract, Herrick said they've seen a lot of wildlife return to the area, including nesting wetland and upland birds. And, importantly, "The water quality is night and day different. It has really improved."

The Iowa DNR plans to manage the complex as a prairie pothole system as "close to historic conditions as possible," that will help to filter the water more before it reaches the lake. On the Dinsmore Tract, there are plans to re-establish an oak savanna and remove a 1930s-era land berm that will help to grow the lake by

Putting places like this on the landscape is so important. Not only for the habitat, but for the people. Kayakers, hunters, bird watchers — they'll all benefit.

TJ Herrick, Iowa DNR Wildlife Biologist

10-35 acres. They will also plug two existing agricultural drainage wells — an outdated drainage system that allows surface runoff and tile drainage from cropland to discharge directly into groundwater aquifers.

Herrick said this upland restoration could make Big Wall Lake a destination spot for pheasant hunters in addition to the duck-hunting haven it has always been. "It's down there in an area that couldn't be more intensively agriculture, but you have this pocket of wildlife habitat," Herrick said. "Putting places like this on the landscape is so important. Not only for the



habitat, but for people. Kayakers, hunters, bird watchers — they'll all benefit."

The Dinsmore tract was dedicated at a ceremony in October 2015, which was attended by many of Jim's former students, including INHF President Joe McGovern. "This tract would not have been possible without Jim and Pat," McGovern said. "This is creating a buffer around Big Wall Lake, and it will have a tremendous impact on wildlife habitat and water quality."

By Joe Jayjack, Communications Director


A pair of mallards perches on an icy shoreline, just beyond the grasses which contribute to excellent hemi-marsh habitat that attracts waterfowl.





Faust Heritage Area
Appanoose and Monroe
counties

Land: 623 acres
Special features: Remnant
prairie, oak savanna

 www.inhl.org/winter-2016-magazine.cfm

‘Comeback Cats

Above: A young bobcat scans for prey from his elevated vantage point in a riparian woodland.

Below: Faust Heritage Area offers suitable habitat that attracts small prey and predators, including bobcats, coyotes, and gray and red foxes.



A feline motion causes the deer hunter to quickly turn his gaze east. Catching the sudden movement, the animal freezes, then swivels to gaze at the hunter, revealing its distinctive cheek ruffs. “Finally,” the hunter sighs. “A bobcat.”

Secretive and elusive creatures, bobcats generally travel and hunt alone, except during spring breeding season. They instinctively fear people and will chart a path to avoid close encounters.

Bobcats (*Lynx rufus*) are the most widely distributed native cats in North America. But by the 1970s, the bobcat population in Iowa had declined to such an alarming level — primarily as a result of unregulated trapping and hunting and loss of habitat in the 1900s — that they were listed as an Endangered Species in 1977.

State wildlife biologists correctly believed that if protected, the remaining breeding population in southern Iowa would thrive and disperse.

Habitat is key

Iowa’s southern counties provide bobcats ideal habitat: wooded river corridors and stands of timber with brushy undergrowth and distinct edges along open areas. This type of rough land attracts rabbits, squirrels, voles and mice — bobcats’ favorite prey. Ambush predators, bobcats use thick vegetation to hide and wait for prey to wander close enough for them to pounce or stalk their prey from a short distance.

By 2007, the bobcat population in Iowa had grown in the southern counties sufficiently for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources to permit limited trapping and hunting. Today, regulated trapping and hunting is available in 35 southern and western counties.

Vince Eveltizer, Iowa DNR furbearer and wetland biologist, estimates the current Iowa bobcat population at 4,500 – 6,500 and says the population is growing and spreading. He credits the expansion of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) participation in the 1990s for providing more habitat bobcats needed to thrive. Recovery has been slower in central and northern counties, where working lands dominate the landscape, resulting in limited prey and reduced cover that bobcats require.

Faust Heritage Area is a haven for wildlife, including bobcats

Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation owns and is restoring 123 acres of land in Appanoose and Monroe counties known as Faust Heritage Area.

In 1997, Dr. David Faust and his wife, Patricia, consulted INHF about their “rough farm.” They were moving, and Dr. Faust wanted to ensure their land would always be protected and well managed. Eventually, they offered to donate two-thirds of its value if INHF could compensate the other third, confident the land they loved would remain wild — forever. Funding from a bequest from Richard S. “Sandy” Rhodes II made that possible.

INHF land stewardship crews and conservation corps teams have cleared undergrowth from the oak savanna and opened up remnant prairies to sunshine. Prescribed burns have reinvigorated native plant growth, including Indian paintbrush, prairie violet and native sedges and grasses. Three ponds have been installed, along with stream buffers in Faust Heritage Area — which is a part of the Soap Creek Watershed — to slow the flow of water and minimize soil erosion.

USDA cost share programs including the Wildlife Habitat Incentive program have provided funding for multi-year projects to improve habitat and attract a variety of wildlife. Bobcats, along with coyotes and red and gray foxes now roam and hunt this land. Several bird species including, bald eagles, woodcocks and bluebirds have also returned to the area.

Bobcats are a deserving native species

and like Faust Heritage Area provides habitat predators at the top of the Iowa wildlife chain require to survive. The resurgence of these native cats resurrects part of our heritage.

Some bird hunters inaccurately believe bobcats are responsible for the decline in Iowa’s gamebird

population, but research shows birds comprise only five percent of a bobcat’s diet. And, some people fear bobcats will attack people. Eveltizer assures “there is no attack on humans by bobcats on record in Iowa’s history. Bobcats fear humans, we do not need to fear bobcats.”

If out hiking or hunting you cross paths with a bobcat, count yourself lucky. You’ve witnessed something many outdoors enthusiasts spend a lifetime pursuing. 🐾

By Lori Southard Howe, Contributing Writer

Below: Elusive, yet social, river otters thrive in complex habitats with good water quality that provide plentiful prey such as crayfish, mollusks and ducklings.



River otters thrive in Nahant Marsh

North American river otters (*Lutra canadensis*) were abundant in Iowa until unregulated trapping, habitat loss and water quality degradation drastically reduced river otter numbers.

Charismatic, social mammals, otters thrive in marshes and bottomland forests with meandering waterways. This type of complex habitat is intricately varied, including log jams and brush piles otters seek for their homes.

In the 1900s, rivers were straightened and drainage ditches cut to carve out more land for agriculture. This reduced populations of fish, ducklings, frogs, crayfish and mussels, which comprise the otters’ food source.

Active and intermittent re-introduction of river otters began in 1985. Sixteen otters from Louisiana were released at Red Rock Reservoir. Between 1985 and 2005 a total of 345 otters were released in Iowa. Wetland restoration and other conservation projects provided habitat that encouraged otters to disperse throughout Iowa.

Now, almost every county has a sustainable otter breeding population. The Iowa otter population is estimated at 6,000 – 8,000.

North American river otters often frequent Nahant Marsh, the 225-acre wetland in the southwest part of the Quad Cities. The marsh is one of the largest urban wetlands in the U.S.

The fact that Nahant Marsh exists is a bit of a miracle. Lead pollution was poisoning wildlife and plants to the extent that the area was designated as a Superfund site in the late 1990s. The Environmental Protection Agency completed a \$2-million cleanup in 1999 on the condition that it be permanently protected for education purposes. That is why INHF holds conservation easements here and has been a partner in transforming and expanding the education site. Knowing that otters thrive here is a bonus.

Paint Creek Valley

Seeing isn't necessarily believing — at least at Paint Creek Valley. The 368-acre addition to Yellow River State Forest in Allamakee County is home to the largest concentration of cerulean warblers in the U.S., according to the Audubon Society.

The cerulean warbler is a little blue and white bird with a distinct call, but they are often evasive to the eye. Their numbers have declined 70 percent in the past 40 years, yet a population is thriving in northeastern Iowa. Paint Creek Valley and the surrounding area is designated as the Effigy Mounds Yellow River Forest Bird Conservation Area, making it Iowa's first Globally Important Bird Area.

Ceruleans flock to Paint Creek because the park hosts an abundance of their preferred natural habitat, including cottonwood trees, bluffs and wet-soil insects. They're hard to spot because the blue of their backs blends into the sky, and their white bellies match the cloud cover.

Paint Creek Valley also includes two miles of fishable trout stream, which is populated with wild brown trout. "We are delighted to get 200 yards, let alone two miles," said Tom Murray

of the Driftless Chapter of Trout Unlimited at Paint Creek Valley's dedication last May.

Protection of Paint Creek Valley has been a decade in the making. The former landowner wanted to permanently protect the area but couldn't find the right solution before his death in 2009. The land went to auction, and Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation was outbid. It wasn't until 2011, when the land was up for sale again, that INHF was able to acquire it. Private funding, REAP grants and more than a dozen birding and fishing groups across the state made it possible for the \$14 million project to transfer to the Iowa DNR, expanding Yellow River State Forest.

Anglers and bird watchers alike have reason to celebrate the acquisition of Paint Creek Valley, as do hikers, hunters and those who simply love the great outdoors.

By Katie Bandurski, Communications Intern



Paint Creek Valley
Allamakee County

Land: 368-acre addition to Yellow River State Forest

Special features: Trout stream, algal talus slope

Managed by: Iowa DNR

www.inhf.org/winter-2016-magazine.cfm

TRIBUTE GIFTS

IN MEMORY OF

- Roger Adams
- Marie Andersen
- Stephen J. Atherton
- Mary Banks
- Gary Beckwith
- Ben
- Erica Berrier
- Dale Birkenholz
- Jean Braley
- Olivia Bruns
- Clarence "Dutch" Bunda
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- Herb Conlon
- Susan K. Connell-Magee
- Pat Comaney
- Robert W. Embree
- Marion and LolaBelle Flint
- Gene & Ag Forey
- Wade Franck

- Lyle Fuller
- Michel Fuller
- Raymond Gasser
- GMHR Mountain's Top Beggar MH
- GMHR HRCH\ Mountain's Top Wooden Nickel MH
- Ann Goitschalk
- Gerald "Jerry" Grapp
- Colleen Grover
- Walter Hack
- Debra Harberts
- Ruthanne Harstad
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- Bruce Ecker
- Larry and Peggy Fletcher
- Forrest Friedow and Nathan Marcy
- The Garst Family
- GMHR Mountain's Top Watermarking Woody
- Lucy Griffin
- Carol Gustine Rogers Representative Christopher C. Hall
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Keep exploring online at
www.inhf.org/lookingoutforiowa.cfm

LOOKING OUT FOR

IOWA

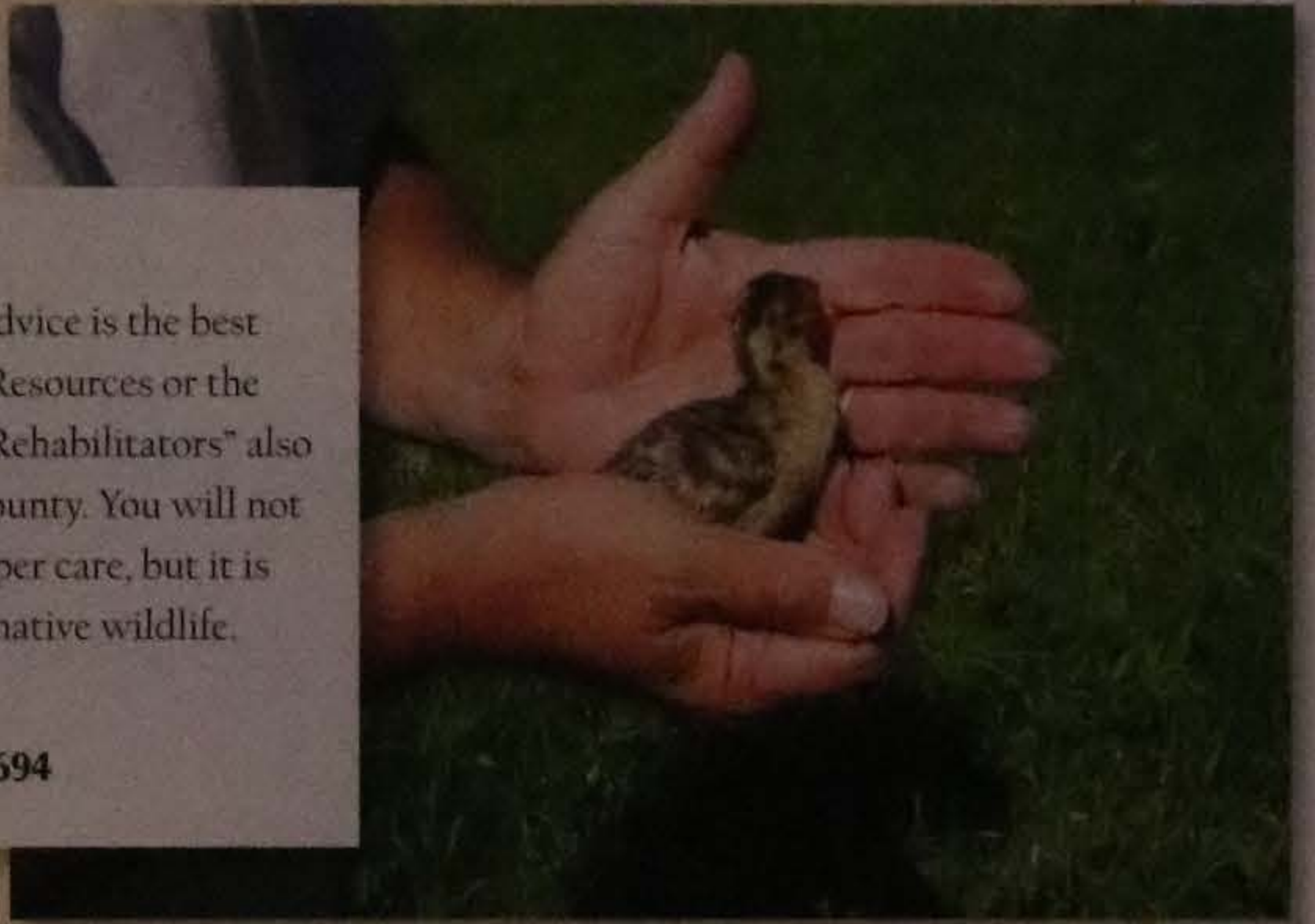
You can help wildlife thrive

Help injured animals

If you come across an injured wild animal, seeking expert advice is the best course of action. Contact the Iowa Department of Natural Resources or the Iowa Wildlife Center. An online search for "Iowa Wildlife Rehabilitators" also leads you to a list of certified rehabilitators, organized by county. You will not be reprimanded for assisting an injured animal to get it proper care, but it is important to know certain laws regulate the possession of native wildlife.

iowawildlifecenter.org, 515-233-1379

iowadnr.gov/Conservation/Iowa-Wildlife, 515-725-8694



Advocate for IWILL

Show your support for funding the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund by signing the IWILL pledge, contacting your legislators or attending Environmental Lobby Day/REAP Day at the state Capitol on March 22.

iowawaterandlandlegacy.org

Improve habitat on your land

The Iowa DNR Wildlife Bureau maintains a Private Lands Program with a focused effort to enroll landowners in conservation programs across the state. This private lands effort involves contacting and advising landowners about possible conservation practices that could be put into place on their lands including wetlands, shelterbelts, winter food plots, native grass seedings and tree plantings.

iowadnr.gov/Conservation/Wildlife-Landowner-Assistance





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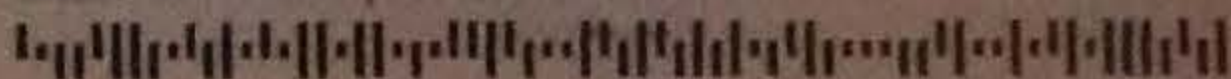


Photo: Carl Kurtz

Leave a legacy of clean water, healthy soil
and beautiful outdoor places for those who follow.

To see how estate giving through INHF can help make your vision for Iowa a reality, contact Cheri Grauer at cgrauer@inhf.org or 800-475-1



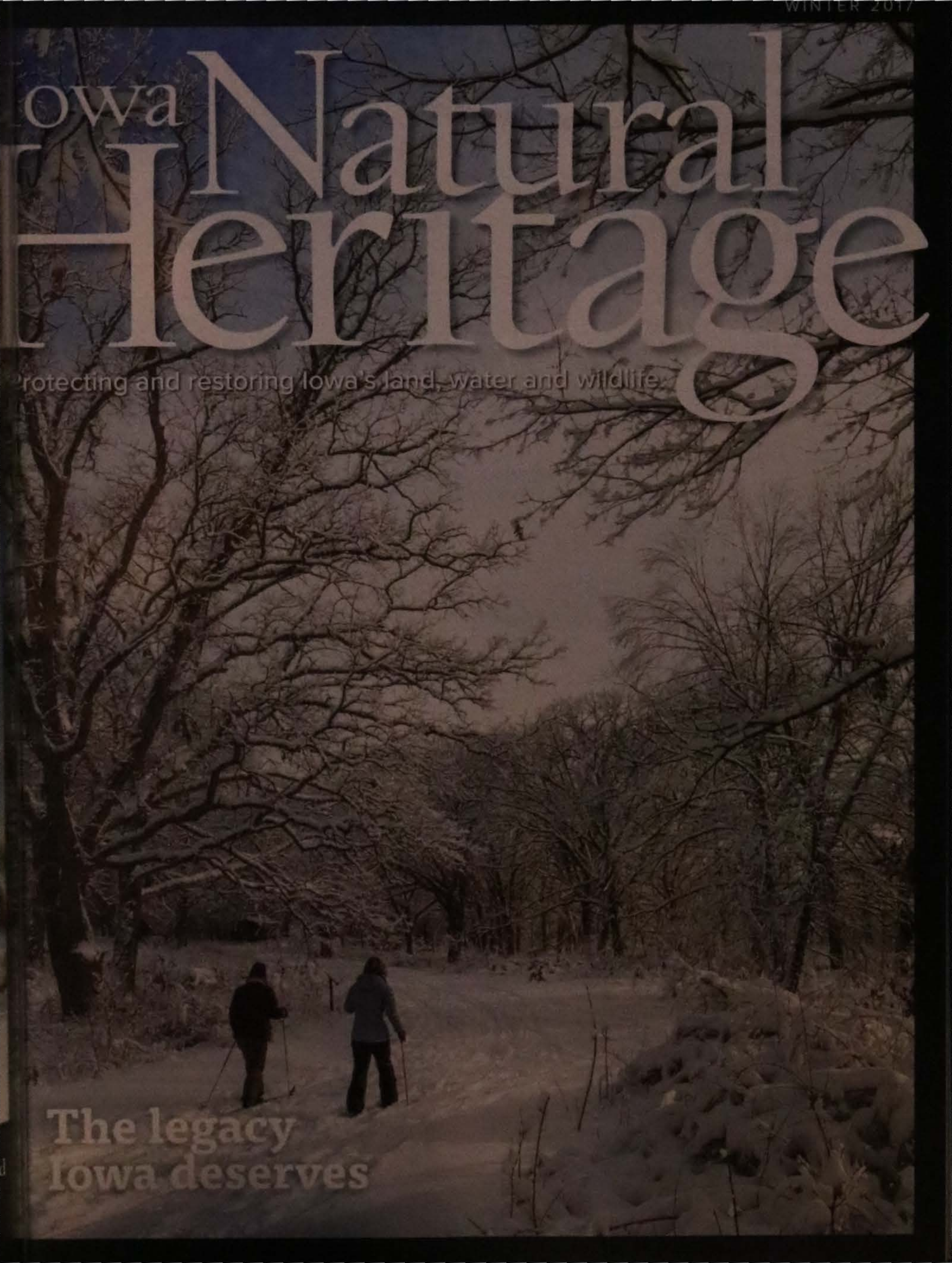
Muskrats (*Ondatra zibethicus*) are wetlands' lumberjacks, felling cattails and other emergent vegetation. They use their sharp incisors to cut the stalks, eating the tubers and using the stalks to build their domed winter lodges. Muskrat activity triggers seasonal wetland cycles, affecting the variety of plants and the amount of open water.

Please share this publication with friends, and visit our website at www.inhf.org.

Iowa Natural Heritage

Protecting and restoring Iowa's land, water and wildlife

The legacy
Iowa deserves



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An investment in our future

What is conservation to you? Conservation can be restoring a prairie for pollinators, turning an abandoned railway into a linear park, protecting a little-known but culturally significant edible plant or improving the soil-saving practices on a farm. These are a few of the ways INHF is helping Iowans achieve their own brand of conservation.



JOE MCGOVERN
President

It's always exciting to see these projects become reality. But we also know that we, as a state, could be doing so much more to protect and restore our land, water and wildlife. We have that opportunity now. By funding the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund, our elected officials could leave a legacy of clean water, healthy soils, enhanced wildlife habitat and increased outdoor recreation opportunities. Voters approved the creation of the trust fund in 2010, and recent polling still shows that Iowans want to make this investment in our future.

In this issue, we'll show you the types of projects that could be funded by the trust fund, which will generate approximately \$180 million per year when filled. That's the beauty of funding the trust fund: The programs are already in place, and there is a backlog of unmet needs. Now the legislature and governor have the opportunity to create immediate, sustainable funding that would change the future of conservation in Iowa.

This investment is about our quality of life. It's about cleaner water, abundant wildlife and healthy soil. It's about more access to outdoor recreation to create a healthier Iowa — the kind of place where more people want to live, work and raise a family. Learn more about the trust fund at www.iowaswaterandlandlegacy.org, and help us make Iowa a better place for generations to come.



ON THE COVER

Cross country skiing is one of many ways people can enjoy Wickup Hill Natural Area in Linn County. INHF has worked with the Linn CCB to protect more than 1,300 acres in and around Wickup Hill. *Photo by Gary Hamer*



Protecting and restoring Iowa's land, water and wildlife.

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A walk in the wild

INHF and the Iowa DNR are partnering to create a new public area in Madison and Clarke counties that is beautiful, vast and wild. The 1,013-acre WMA will be a haven for plants, animals and people.

10

Striking a healthy balance

When Bobbie Lanz bequeathed her Jasper County farm, INHF was presented with an opportunity. What has resulted is an increase in conservation practices on the farm while maintaining a profitable operation.

12

A trail of two cities

A 3.5-mile trail between Jewell and Ellsworth in Hamilton County is about more than a strip of asphalt. This project has brought the communities together and is making them more healthy, vibrant places to live.

19

Protecting Biscuitroot Bluff

Rosie Hall's bargain sale of her property in the Loess Hills of Fremont County helped create a new public area and protect the threatened biscuitroot, a plant with natural and historical significance.

20

Cultivating a natural legacy

Norm and Susan West have been improving the natural landscape of their Buchanan County property for decades. It is now permanently protected through a conservation easement with INHF.

DEPARTMENTS

- 2 Opening Thoughts
- 4 Through Your Lens
- 6 Field Notes
- 22 Looking Out for Iowa
- 23 Get Outdoors

“There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature — the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter.”

– Rachel Carson

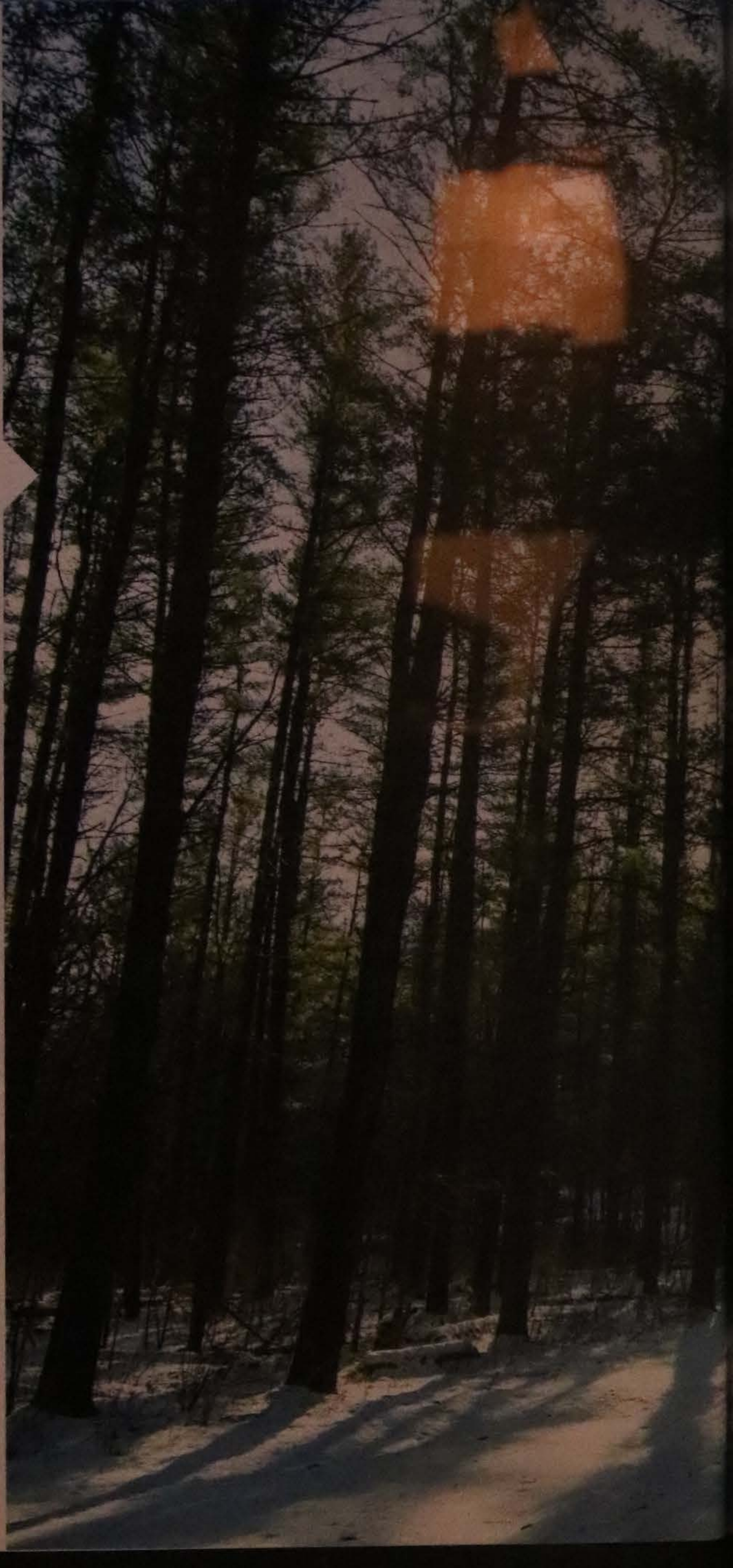
Yellow River State Forest isn't like the Iowa most imagine. A landscape sidestepped by glaciers swaps rolling prairie and endless sky for limestone bluffs and ice cold trout streams. To me, it's heaven.

If you've never been, it's a sight to behold, especially in the winter. I spent the first day of the year there, hiking snow-covered trails over streams and through the conifers. Unlocking the sublimity of this place is simple with just a sturdy pair of boots.

INHF recently completed a 40-acre addition to the forest. The tract adds timber and significant public access to the area's south side, expanding recreation opportunities for the wild-seekers among us.

Yellow River State Forest is known by many as Iowa's crown public jewel. It's convenient when part of your job is protecting the places Iowans love.

— KERRI SORRELL,
Communications specialist





Hikers explore Yellow River State Forest on this year's First Day Hike, one of 30+ hikes hosted at Iowa public areas to celebrate the new year. Photo by IAHF, Kevin Sorrell



Two popular trout streams protected in northeast Iowa

With the acquisition of two Winneshiek County properties, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation is helping improve trout habitat and expand the public use of trout streams in northeast Iowa.

Until recently, areas along two of the state's highest quality trout streams were conditionally open to the public based on an informal agreement between the property owners and the Iowa DNR.

By purchasing just over 96 acres along Coldwater Creek, INHF hopes to increase the size of the Coldwater Creek Wildlife Management Area by 30 percent, protecting valuable habitat and ensuring the stream remains accessible to the public. This area is popular for trout fishing because of its natural supply of brown trout and stock of rainbow and brook trout.

INHF purchased 96 acres along Coldwater Creek in Winneshiek County. Photo by Jered Bourquin, INHF

A little less than half a mile of Coldwater Creek flows through the property, which also contains woodland, grassland and cropland. How the surrounding land is treated is especially important since trout need high quality water to survive.

An area along part of North Bear Creek, one of the highest quality trout streams in northeast Iowa, according to a former DNR Fisheries Biologist, will also be protected. The stream is surrounded by cropland and natural area, which includes native woodland and restored prairie. The North Bear Creek access will also be transferred to the Iowa DNR for future management.

"Both landowners had an agreement with the DNR to allow public fishing access on there already," said Heather Jobst, INHF senior land conservation director. "And in both cases, the landowner passed away without any permanent agreement in place. INHF had the chance to protect great habitat and also ensure Iowans can experience these places into the future." 🌿



ILLUSTRATION: ANDREA PIEKARCZYK

UPCOMING EVENTS

MARCH 22-23

Iowa Water Conference
Iowa State University

A conference to discuss relevant water issues across Iowa. This year's theme is Watershed Management: Partnerships for Progress.

MARCH 29

Environmental Lobby Day
Iowa Capitol building

Join Iowa's conservation and environmental advocacy groups to learn more about environmental action happening in Iowa and show your support for Iowa's natural resources.

APRIL 11

Natural Resources & Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund Lobby Day
Iowa Capitol building

Speak with your legislators about why you support creating a sustainable and protected revenue stream for Iowa's natural resources.

MAY 6

Heritage Valley Garlic Mustard Pull
Allamakee Co.

Join INHF for a day of land care, community building, exercise and fun at a northeast Iowa ecological preserve not usually open to the public.

For more information, visit www.inhf.org.

INHF president a "Person to Watch" in 2017

INHF President Joe McGovern was chosen as one of The Des Moines Register's "15 People to Watch in 2017" in January. The profile, featured on the paper's front page, referenced McGovern's coalition building and leadership in the state's water quality discussion as reasons for the distinction. McGovern's message? "We need to get outdoors."

"It is an amazing opportunity to work on funding the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund, which in my opinion is the largest conservation event the state of Iowa has ever seen."

— BROOKS VANDERBEEK, INHF Mark C. Ackelson Fellow

Last fall, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation welcomed Brooks VanDerBeek to the team as our Mark C. Ackelson Fellow.

Endowed by INHF in honor of its former president, the fellowship gives Brooks the chance to work with conservation leaders, with a focus on the Iowa's Water and Land Legacy coalition. For the next several months, he is helping develop and implement a strategy to fund the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund.



Prairie, wetlands protected at Silver Lake in Palo Alto County

In August 2016, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation purchased 185 acres adjacent to Silver Lake in Palo Alto County. The property consists of wetlands, meadow and prairie that will undergo a five-year restoration.

Silver Lake is a 648-acre area open to fishing, picnicking and boating. This new area contains significant shoreline along Silver Lake, and will improve the lake's water quality with restored wetlands and prairie reconstruction.

"A major portion of the water flowing into Silver Lake flows through this property, so from a water quality standpoint, restoring this area allows for natural filtering of the water that feeds into the lake," said Heather Jobst, INHF's senior land conservation director.

In the eight wetland areas, plant species such as blue flag iris and monkey flower will be protected. In prairie areas, silver leaf scurf pea and porcupine grass are among the vegetation that will benefit from reconstruction. While the land is currently broken into pieces by small fields, restoration will create a



INHF is working with the Iowa DNR to add 185 acres of protected land around Silver Lake in Palo Alto County to help water quality. Photo by Heather Jobst, INHF

contiguous piece of land more beneficial to sustaining the property and the ecosystem and recreation it supports.

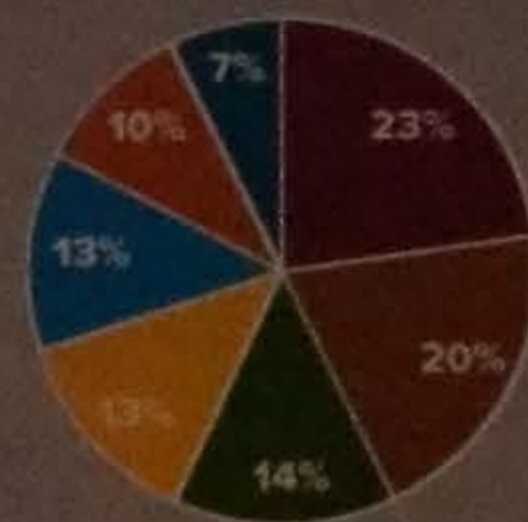
By protecting Silver Lake for future generations, INHF and the Iowa DNR are ensuring that its legacy as a valuable area for animals, plants and human visitors remains intact. The property is planned to be transferred to the Iowa DNR for management within a year.

IN THIS ISSUE

Throughout this issue, you'll notice an accompanying fact box with each article, detailing the specifics of each piece of the formula of the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund — which will generate an estimated \$180 million per year once funded.

Each story in this magazine is an example of projects the trust fund would support: on the ground conservation work making huge impacts for Iowa's communities and natural resources.

FORMULA BREAKDOWN:



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Soil Conservation and Water Protection pg. 10


Watershed Protection pg. 20

Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) pg. 19

Local conservation partnerships pg. 23

Trails pg. 12

Lake Restoration pg. 8



Restoring Iowa's **SHALLOW LAKES**

BY SARAH LEBLANC
Communications intern | commintern@inhf.org

Iowa's natural shallow lakes might not be fit for adventurous water sports, but that doesn't mean they have nothing to offer. Consisting of rich but fragile ecosystems reliant on a balance of plants, nutrients and aquatic life, shallow lakes provide opportunities for fishing, hunting, exploration and chances to view native wildlife.

Shallow lakes are bodies of water ranging 6-8 feet at their deepest points. Before human intervention, they could be self-sustaining, going through natural low water cycles and ensuring that the ecosystem maintained a balance of species. Plants were free to grow — rooting sediment to the bottom of the water and keeping it healthy for the species that inhabit the lake. But significant landscape changes around these lakes and the presence of invasive species threaten the continued existence of these ecosystems. That's why the Iowa DNR has a lake restoration program, and Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation has been able to help protect important land around these restoration projects.

The Iowa DNR takes a triangular approach to the lake restoration process, focusing on monitoring, assessment and restoration when tackling projects. To determine which properties are in most dire need of restoration,

the Iowa DNR conducts fish surveys, notes the amount of migratory waterfowl or ducks that are moving through the area and looks for the presence of vegetation.

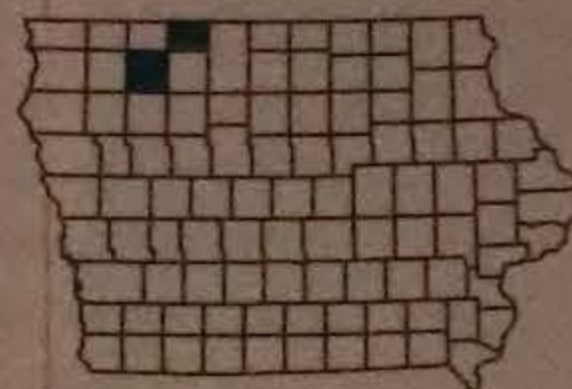
Along with restoring shallow lakes, the Iowa DNR and INHF are managing the land surrounding the water and manufacturing the natural cycles of these lakes. Lakes undergo dry cycles and droughts to eliminate unwanted populations, restore plant life and create a better habitat for the plant and wildlife species that visit them. The Iowa DNR helps to replicate these cycles by engaging in drawdowns in the fall, which drain the water from the lakes and kill fish under the ice in winter.

"The common carp (or other undesirable fish) do two things to the lake: They stir up the bottom sediments, and they like to root up any plants that are there or disturb them in a way so that no plants grow," said Michelle Balmer with the Iowa DNR's lake restoration program. "If we can remove those fish from the lake and go through a cycle of drawdown and then refilling, we can promote a lot of that aquatic vegetation growth and improve habitat."

INHF works to protect land around shallow lakes across the state. In northwest Iowa, Emmet County's Eagle Lake is an example of

Eagle Lake & Elk Lake

Clay and Emmet counties



EAGLE LAKE: INHF purchased three properties around the lake, the most recent in 2011, totalling more than 300 acres. The land has since transferred to the Iowa DNR.

ELK LAKE: INHF recently purchased 58 acres adjacent to the lake that will eventually be transferred to the Iowa DNR to become part of the Elk Lake State Game Management Area.

A shallow lake restoration at Big Wall Lake in Wright County allowed native plants to return and create excellent wildlife habitat, especially for migrating waterfowl. INHF helped protect 570 acres around the lake to create a buffer that helps water quality and aquatic life in the lake. Photo by Kerri Sorrell, INHF

a healthy shallow lake. INHF has purchased three pieces of land around Eagle Lake, the most recent in 2011. Since those pieces were made public, the land has provided a buffer to the lake, and Eagle Lake has been free of undesirable fish and maintained a stable ecosystem.

The addition of this land expanded the wildlife management area to 870 acres. It is a popular spot for hunting and wildlife viewing, and by protecting and restoring the land around Eagle Lake, INHF, the Iowa DNR and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have ensured that this piece of the Prairie Pothole region will improve water quality and remain intact for future generations.

In contrast, the 262-acre Elk Lake in Clay County is in poorer condition. According to Iowa DNR Wildlife Management Biologist Bryan Hellyer, the lake lacks aquatic vegetation, which, along with nutrient loading from the watershed and the presence of undesirable fish, leaves the water in a murky and unhealthy state. Unless a shallow lake management plan is implemented or the lake undergoes a natural drought, Elk Lake will remain anchored to an unproductive cycle.

"Iowa's shallow lake restoration projects are important because these natural shallow lakes require disturbance in order to keep them healthy and diverse, similar to prairies that receive prescribed fire or conservation grazing," Hellyer said.

INHF recently purchased 58 acres of land adjacent to Elk Lake, including 1,200 feet of shoreline. When this land is transferred to the Iowa DNR, restored natural vegetation could slow the flow of sediment and provide a filter for the water entering the lake.

"What happens on the land around the lake, in the watershed, has a huge impact on the quality of the water within the lake," said Heather Jobst, INHF senior land conservation director.

- Public access
- INHF project

Eagle Lake Emmet County



Elk Lake Clay County



Iowa's shallow lakes contain fragile and diverse ecosystems. This means that what happens in their watersheds and along their shorelines has a big impact on the lakes. Partnerships like those between INHF, Iowa DNR, other conservation agencies and local communities help to protect and maintain these lakes to improve water quality, create habitat and provide Iowans with opportunities to hunt, fish and view wildlife. 🦉

FORMULA BREAKDOWN:



LAKE RESTORATION

Projected annual funding: \$12.6 million

Healthy lakes not only benefit the state's wildlife and plant ecosystems, but are some of Iowa's top tourist attractions. The Iowa legislature created the Lake Restoration Program, which aims to increase the health and safety of Iowa's lakes, involve local communities in restoration projects and remove bodies of water from the state's Impaired Waters list. The trust fund would create an account to support this existing program.

Potential projects

- Trust fund money would help improve the ongoing restoration efforts at 35 priority lakes as determined by the Iowa DNR's lake restoration plan.
- Money would also help implement restoration of 93 significant public lakes by 2030.

It is estimated that completed restoration projects have seen an on-average five year return on investment. Each restoration project has a specific goal of having a positive return. Clear Lake in Cerro Gordo County saw an increase of \$25 million per year in recreational spending after its restoration.

Healthy BALANCE

BY ANITA O'GARA
Vice president | aogara@inhf.org

Lanz Heritage Farm Jasper County



LAND: 192 acres
bequeathed to Iowa
Natural Heritage
Foundation

SPECIAL FEATURES:
Cropland, restored prairie

PARTNERS: INHF, tenant
farmer, Natural Resources
Conservation Service

Read more about Lanz
Heritage Farm and
how to donate land for
conservation at [www.
iowaLandOptions.org](http://www.iowaLandOptions.org)
or by calling INHF
at 515-288-1846.

Every Iowa farmer has opportunities to improve our soil and water — for today, and for the future. “City folk” who own land have the same opportunity. And that’s the biggest gift Bobbie Lanz gave to the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation: the opportunity to practice how conservation and farming fit together.

Bobbie bequeathed to INHF 192 acres of cropland near Newton a few years ago. Bobbie never spoke with INHF about her intentions, and her will mentioned no restrictions. INHF staff and board set out to live up to this woman’s generous trust.

INHF began to try to understand this land and its needs. There were areas that could benefit from conservation practices. Where was the most soil leaving this rolling farm and entering the nearby stream? Ross Langmaid, the young tenant who had been farming the land (and still does), showed INHF certain cropped hillsides that were losing topsoil. Rain would move soil from the fields into the stream that runs through the property. This wasn’t helping the water quality — here or downstream — and the soil being lost would never grow crops here again.

One answer: Plant native prairie grasses on the steepest sloped sections and along the stream, and retain agriculture on the uplands. The hillside planting would hold that soil in place. As a bonus, the grasses and forbs would create places for wildlife to thrive on this farm once again.

The steeply sloped hillsides on Lanz Heritage Farm in Jasper County were enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program after the land was bequeathed to INHF. The permanent vegetation on those hillsides has vastly slowed erosion and soil loss and created additional wildlife habitat. Below, you can see before and after the hillside was planted to grasses and forbs. *INHF photos*





These became INHF's first steps as farmland owners — the first of many conservation opportunities. The farm income from this land helps INHF do more to care for this farm, including utilizing prescribed fire to enhance the prairies and to restore and protect other lands.

A simple action and its impact

INHF chose to create an especially diverse prairie planting using prairie species specific to the local ecosystem. Three steeply sloped areas are now under cover using this prairie mix.

Langmaid helps manage the weeds while native flowers and grasses become established, and has donated his time and expertise to help repair eroded areas and seed new grass waterways in the sloped fields. He continues to rent the cropland under a lease that includes conservation goals.

Like many Iowa landowners, INHF enrolled specific acres into the federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), a ten-year commitment to retire the land from crop production. This helps the farm provide income comparable to what it would have provided without the natural restoration.

Such payments encourage landowners to consider conservation. But the benefits on the land go far beyond the payment. Professional estimates predict that erosion on the slopes will be reduced to just 0.4 tons of soil per acre, down from 4.5 to 7.1 tons per acre before conservation practices were in place.

An ISU graduate student hopes to study just

how much the buffer will support grassland birds. Even without the study, it's clear the buffer benefits the wildlife, the stream and the South Skunk River where the stream eventually flows. INHF staff have spotted pheasants, Eastern meadowlark and other grassland birds beginning to make themselves at home here.

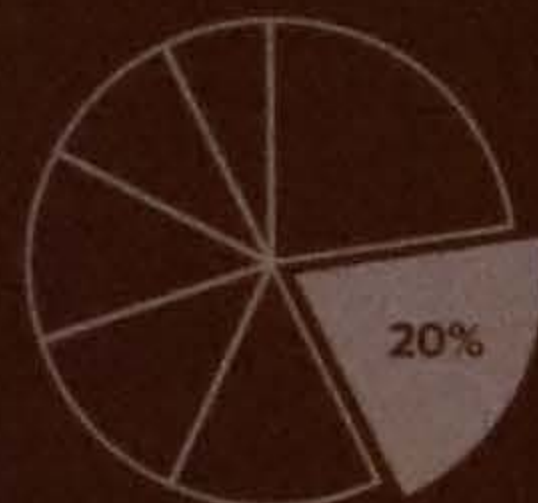
Continuous improvement

Ryan Schmidt, INHF land stewardship director, empathizes with Iowa farmers who want to do more conservation and are trying to find the path or the funds to do so.

"Lanz Heritage Farm is not a showpiece or a demonstration. It's a work in progress," Schmidt said. "We want to continually find the next way we can benefit wildlife, soil and water while continuing to farm the land. We're exploring cover crops, a stream buffer and a small, targeted wetland to retain and clean the water. There are plenty of hurdles or delays when you try something new. Still, if you're persistent toward the goal of improving land for farming and for conservation simultaneously, you only get better at it over time."

INHF President Joe McGovern added, "That's the attitude we want to encourage all across Iowa's landscape. It would make such a difference if every landowner and every farm tenant truly considered soil health, water quality, and wildlife along with decisions on tillage, seed, fertilizer and tiling. The more our public policies support that effort and that attitude, the better Iowa will become." 🌱

FORMULA BREAKDOWN:



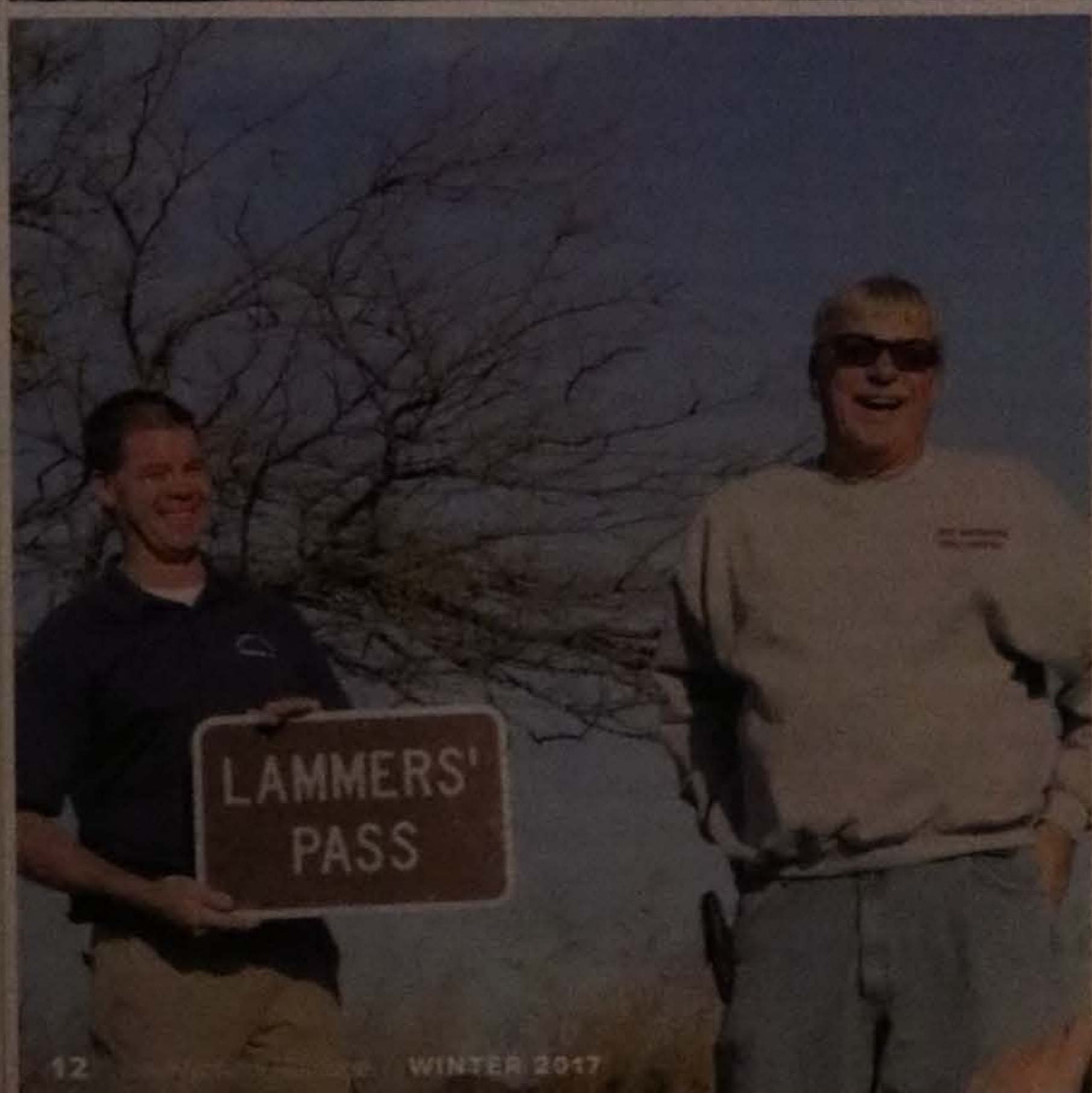
SOIL CONSERVATION AND WATER PROTECTION

**Projected annual
funding:** \$36 million

The most important way to safeguard the state's natural treasures and sustain Iowa's agricultural production is protecting our precious soil and water resources. This portion of the trust fund focuses on making voluntary land management and conservation programs more accessible to farmers and landowners.

Potential projects

- Expansion of the Conservation Practices Revolving No-Interest Loan Program, which allows landowners to fund conservation measures like terraces, buffer strips and erosion control.
- Watershed assessments to reduce sediment and nutrient runoff and protect Iowa's roads and bridges.
- Closing high-priority agricultural drainage wells to protect aquifers and drinking water sources.
- Creating a statewide demonstration and education program for landowners interested in land management options.
- Expanding wetlands in critical watersheds.



A TRAIL OF TWO CITIES

BY ANDREA PIEKARCZYK
Grants coordinator | apiekarczyk@inhf.org

The story of the JewEllsworth Trail begins with the farm crisis of the early 1980s. For Rick Young, city councilman and lifelong resident of Jewell, the crisis was the beginning of the end for Iowa's small rural communities. In Hamilton County, dwindling populations devastated cities long defined by hard work and heart. Those who remained, like Young, dedicated themselves to finding new opportunities for their communities — even crazy ideas like building a trail along the old railroad corridor between the central Iowa cities of Jewell and Ellsworth.

"It was about 2006 that we found out the rail line was being abandoned, and the community got together to discuss it," Young said. "I looked around at all of us sitting there — we were in our fifties and sixties, farmers, rednecks... and we said, we're not 'trail people.' Trail people are young — they bike, they run. But we also said, if this is going to be good for our community, we have to get on board."

Brian Lammers, director of Hamilton

The JewEllsworth Trail runs between the towns of Jewell and Ellsworth in Hamilton County. Clockwise from top shows the finished trail, the groundbreaking and the dedication of a portion of the trail named after Hamilton CCB director Brian Lammers. Photos courtesy of Hamilton County.

County Conservation Board, recommended the local committee get in touch with Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation for guidance on how to bring a trail project to life. Once INHF was on board, Young said, things really started happening.

From concept to reality

In March 2006, the Union Pacific Railroad officially filed for the abandonment of the 3.2-mile corridor between the cities of Jewell and Ellsworth. Thanks to a State Transportation Enhancement grant, the two communities and Hamilton County were able to rail bank and purchase the discontinued rail line later that year.

In addition to the Union Pacific Railroad corridor, four more properties were needed to span the space between the cities, connecting downtown to downtown. Prairie Land Co-op, Heartland Co-op and the Anderson Lake Sportsmen's Club donated a total of 6.7 acres to bring the trail to Jewell and Ellsworth city limits.

The final piece of trail property in Jewell was sold at a reduced price to connect the planned trail to the existing Jewell Jubilee Trail. With these additions, the future JewEllsworth Trail

ANDERSON GOOSE LAKE
(PRIVATELY OWNED)



JEWELL



CREEK CROSSING
(JEWELL)



JewEllsworth Trail

Hamilton County



LAND: 3.5-mile hard-surface trail between Jewell and Ellsworth along former Union Pacific railroad line

PARTNERS: INHF, Hamilton CCB, State Recreational Trails Program, private donors, Prairie Land Co-op, Heartland Co-op, Anderson Lake Sportsmen's Club, cities of Jewell and Ellsworth

corridor now totaled 3.5 miles.

The generosity of these groups and individuals, and their commitment to a shared vision, was only the beginning of the fierce dedication the communities would demonstrate to the trail project over the next decade.

A waiting game

The JewEllsworth Trail was originally slated to be complete by 2008, but hoped-for grant funding did not materialize. From a funding perspective, INHF Trails and Greenways Director Andrea Boulton explained, the project was in a tough spot. Since the land for the trail was purchased, there was no threat of losing the connection. At the state level, precious few dollars are available for trail building: Money usually goes to regional projects or trails connecting large population centers.

"It might be logical," Boulton said, "but it meant that this smaller project, and the two communities putting their hearts and souls into making it happen, were getting left behind." Jewell and Ellsworth's proposed grants missed the cut again and again, largely due to state grant program shortfalls. But the communities' resolve never wavered, said Lammers. "Both cities [were] 100 percent in support of the project. They were instrumental

in public support and conducting private fundraising projects." From selling cookies to placing donation boxes in the local ice cream shop, the people of Jewell and Ellsworth did everything possible within their financial means.

More than just a trail

How could a decade-long obstacle course possibly be worth the struggle? When asked, Rick Young's answer was immediate: "Heart disease: It's the number one killer in Iowa. It's in my family and my wife's." From Young's perspective, trails are a good value towards public health, both mental and physical. "And 10 years ago, that's the last thing I would have said," he emphasized.

The data backs Young up: Public open spaces (like trails and parks) have a powerfully positive impact on people's activity levels. Studies show that adults living within half a mile of a public open space visit parks and exercise more often. And people who use public open spaces are nearly three times more likely than their peers to exercise at recommended levels. This is especially critical in states like Iowa, where two-thirds of adults and children don't get enough daily activity, said Seth Johnson of the American Heart Association Iowa. "Access is half the battle,"



ELLSWORTH

WHAT YOU'LL SEE ALONG THE JEWELLSWORTH TRAIL

For a virtual tour of the trail, visit www.inhf.org/blog/jewellsworth

said Johnson. "Having trails in place gives people more opportunities to get outdoors."

Trails are also more than a recreational resource. For Jewell and Ellsworth, the Jewellsworth trail will serve as a safe transportation alternative for individuals and families living in the two communities. Kids can use the trail to travel from Ellsworth to county schools in Jewell, avoiding the hazards of Highway 175.

Coffee shops and restaurants, like Sweet Treats Homemade Ice Cream in Jewell and Down Home Restaurant in Ellsworth, make the trail a perfect activity for families to enjoy in the evening or on a weekend afternoon. "We're expecting a positive financial impact from walkers and trail users," Mike Miller, Sweet Treats owner, said. The Jewellsworth Trail provides a chance for visitors and residents alike to get out and see what the community has to offer.

For Boulton, this economic activity is another reward of trail building. "Maybe it wasn't just the trail that did this, but the trail was a catalyst for change," Boulton said. "Trails are these communities refusing to sit and wait for something to happen. It's them saying, we need to make something happen. We need to move forward, not forgetting the way things were, but looking clearly towards the future."

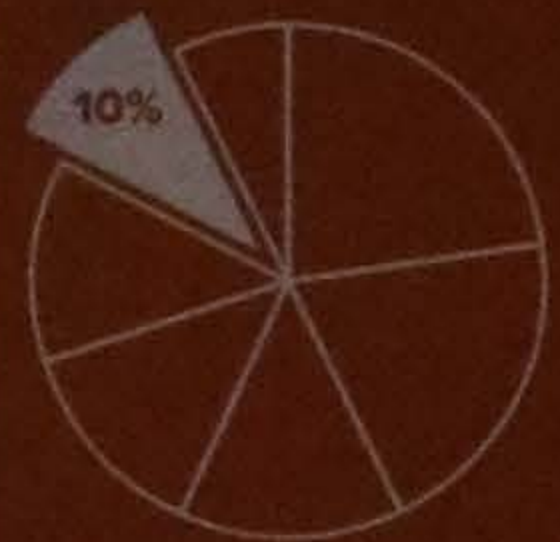
Looking towards the future is exactly what the people of Hamilton County are doing.

"We want the best for our people, and we'll do whatever possible to make that happen," said Young. "The trail is a fantastic thing for our community. And when one community is successful, that success will be carried on to other communities."

In 2013, cost-share funding for the Jewellsworth Trail finally came through in the form of a State Recreational Trails grant. It was an incredible moment. Lammers credits the funding to years of dedication and partnership finally paying off: "Over that time, working relationships turned into friendships... and that was really instrumental in getting this project done."

The first time Young set foot on the finished trail it — well, it wasn't quite finished. "The trail was paved, but the finishing touches were still being put on," he said. "That was the first time I ever really experienced it as it is now. We had named one portion of the trail 'Lammers' Pass,' in honor of Brian Lammers and all he did to make the project happen. I was scoping out a place to put the sign, and as I was taking it all in..." Young paused, emotional. "I felt like I was watching that last scene in 'The Natural' with Robert Redford. He hits that home run, and everyone cheers." A victory for all. 🏆

FORMULA BREAKDOWN:



TRAILS

Projected annual funding: \$18 million

Trails have become an increasing driver of economic boom in Iowa, connecting rural towns and bringing tourists to recreational areas and local businesses. Trails are also helping Iowans stay healthy in safe, linear parklands. Trails are the kind of quality of life projects that attract young, vibrant workforces to Iowa — and keep them engaged in their community.

Potential projects

- The 4.2-mile Iowa Great Lakes Connection Trail would connect the city of Spencer up to the Clay County/Dickinson County line. Then a planned 3.8-mile extension would connect this to the Iowa Great Lakes Spine Trail in Milford.
- The Fort Madison Middle School Connector is part of the Connecting Fort Madison! project. This extension would run to Fort Madison Middle School and provide safe walking and biking for the area's schoolchildren.
- Trails funding can also be allocated for the maintenance of existing trails and the establishment and maintenance of the state's water trails.

a walk in the **WILD**

BY HEATHER JOBST
Senior land conservation director | hjobst@inhf.org

Hiking through the woods on a warm June evening, dodging mosquitoes, I felt a sense of anxiety start to creep in. INHF had just taken a chance to protect a large, road-less area in southern Madison County. There was evidence indicating significant wildlife and plant species, like the threatened Red-shouldered hawk, inhabited the area. But were those same species on this property?

This night we were looking for bats. A small animal often vilified by humans but important to a healthy landscape. With Central College biology professor and INHF advisor Dr. Russ Benedict and several Central College students, we scouted a suitable study location and were

soon scurrying to set up fine mesh nets before the sun set and the bats become active.

Soon, someone found a Northern Prairie Skink, a small, brown lizard whose tail will break off if attacked. Then the Scarlet Tanagers, a brilliantly red neotropical migratory bird with jet-black wings that requires large blocks of woodland, started singing. At dusk a Whip-poor-will started its unmistakable song and a smile crept across my face. In a short time and on a small corner of this 1,013-acre property, we had already crossed paths with several species, many considered to be Species of Greatest Conservation Need by the Iowa DNR, telling us this is a special place.



Almost as if they were saying thank you for protecting their special home.

A vast wildness

Southern Madison County is considered by many a hidden gem with its rugged, wooded topography. Spend any time in the neighborhood and you will soon find a feeling of wildness. With the Jeffersonian Public Land Survey System determining Iowa's road system, there are few places where you are more than a half mile from a road. But this area is more than two miles wide and has no through roads. These roadless areas deliver a sense of uninterrupted wildness that is rare in Iowa, yet so important in our connection with nature. Here you can hear the wind through the prairie grasses, turkeys looking for food under a layer of oak leaves and squirrels chasing each other through the trees.

INHF and the Iowa DNR are working together to protect this special place, Heritage Hills, for Iowans and the creatures that live here. Increased recreation opportunities in central Iowa, as well as opportunities for a

wilderness-like experience, are among the most frequent requests to the Iowa DNR from the public. Coupled with 1,013 acres of oak-hickory woodland, remnant prairie, grasslands and cropland, the importance of protecting this vast landscape becomes more evident, and is creating a connected natural area with existing public land. Less than a half mile away is Madison County Conservation's Clanton Creek Natural Resource Area, an 1,100-acre area popular with hikers and hunters.

Nick Palaia, wildlife biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration (WSFR) program, visited the property as a potential funding partner. "When I first heard about this property, I was excited by its size and proximity to the Des Moines area, allowing for several people to visit at once and not trip over each other," said Palaia. "Many memories will be created here."

Visitors will be able to hike the expansive

Heritage Hills

Madison and Clarke counties



LAND: 1,013 acres purchased by INHF that will be transferred to the Iowa DNR in phases

SPECIAL FEATURES: Oak-hickory woodland, remnant prairie, grasslands, cropland

PARTNERS: INHF, Iowa DNR, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Private financial support is welcome

property and observe the abundant wildlife in search of a wild experience. A successful hunter will get a backcountry experience and the satisfaction of hauling their harvest over rugged terrain.

The future of Heritage Hills

"With its mature forests and a creek that remains in a fairly natural state, this area is an important part of a broader landscape in south-central Iowa," said Dr. Benedict. "It is a great place with the potential to be amazing." That's where the partnership between INHF and Iowa DNR comes in.

Over the next few years, INHF will work with the Iowa DNR to secure the funds needed to transfer this property into public ownership, restore the upland areas to prairie for uninterrupted habitat and rehabilitate the remnant prairie.

Palaia was immediately struck by the surrounding grassland landscape filled with grazing cattle. "When I was a kid, my brother and I used to count cattle out our respective sides of the car. Whoever counted the most got a candy bar. Now you can drive the same stretch and count none. The ability to easily

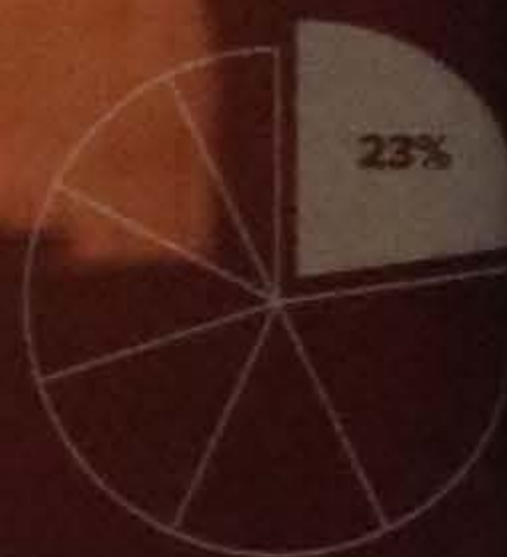
bring in cattle to graze will enhance restoration of the prairie and grasslands and contribute to a working landscape," said Palaia.

That June evening, five Northern Long-eared bats, a federally threatened species, and one Indiana bat, a federally endangered species, visited us. The Indiana bats likely hibernate in the former mines at Sodalis Nature Preserve in Hannibal, Mo., a site INHF recently helped protect due to its significance as a hibernation site for Indiana bats and other bat species.

The midnight hike out was humid and still warm. Worn-out from the long night and the day's heat, I noticed the night sky was filled with brilliant stars and heard the crickets and cicadas calling. Despite the feeling of exhaustion, there was relief and satisfaction about the chance INHF took along with an overwhelming excitement wondering what other wildlife lives here. 🦇

The topography and landscape of Heritage Hills is extremely diverse. Below, a tributary to the south fork of Clanton Creek runs through the property, only half a mile away from Clanton Creek Recreational Area. Photo by Joe Jayjack, INHF. Map by INHF.

FORMULA BREAKDOWN



NATURAL RESOURCES

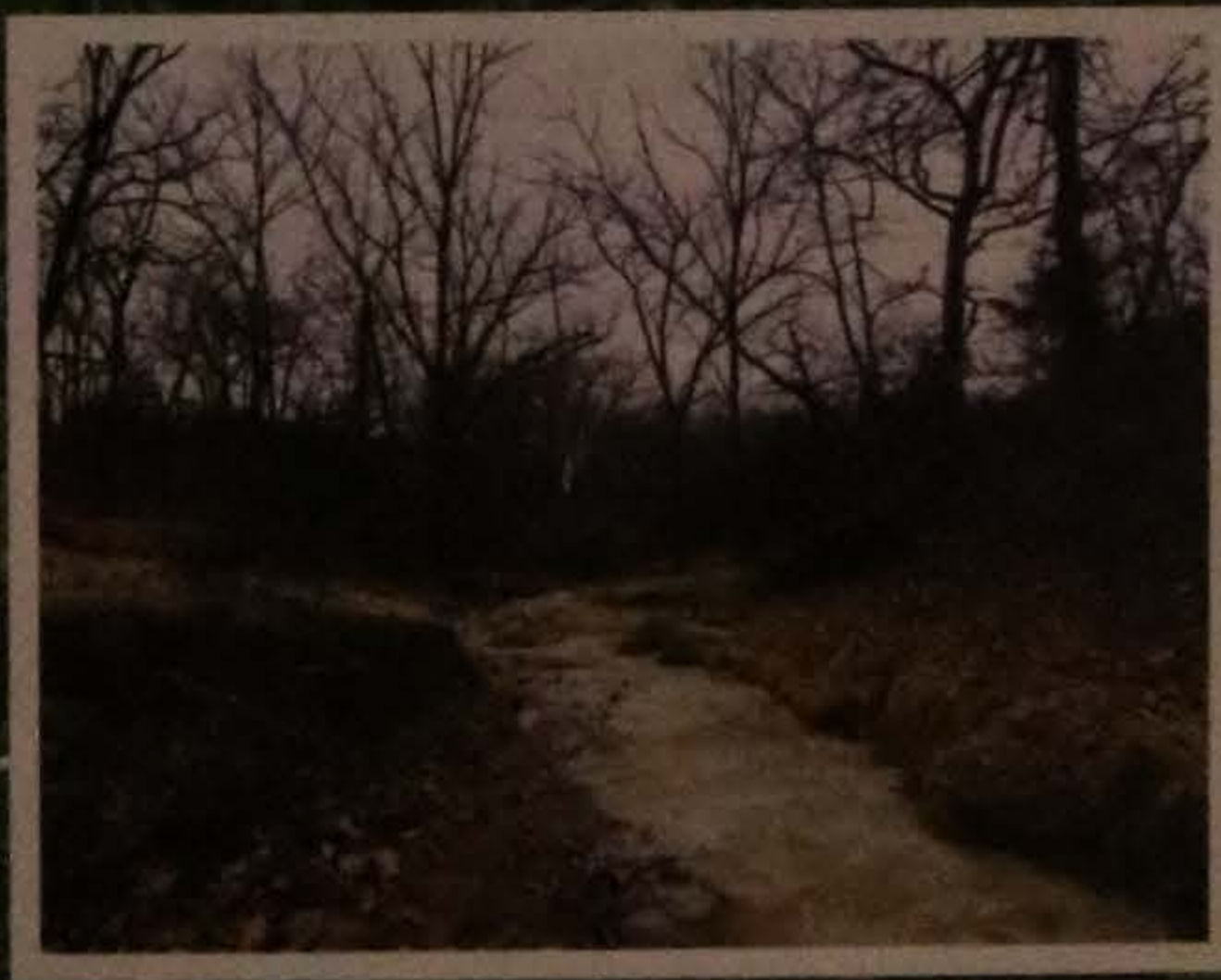
Projected annual funding: \$41.4 million

This section of the trust fund formula covers a variety of project focuses, from establishing and improving publicly owned land to creating more outdoor educational opportunities for Iowa's youth and increasing wildlife diversity throughout the state.

Potential projects

- Increase number of educational and environmental programs for youth and families at state natural areas, with an increased presence in small rural communities.
- Develop natural resource demonstration areas within state parks, forests and wildlife areas.
- Expand outreach efforts to link Iowa landowners to federal and state conservation programs.
- Modernize critical infrastructure (water, sewer, roads) in public lands.
- Establish and improve hiking and water trails.
- Strengthen statewide volunteer programs, like Keepers of the Land, Project AWARE, AmeriCorps and IOWATER.

Public access
INHF project



MADISON COUNTY
CLARKE COUNTY



Biscuitroot Bluff in Fremont County is a new wildlife management area in the Loess Hills made possible by a bargain sale from Rosie Hall to INHF. It will soon be transferred to the Iowa DNR. *Photo by Ross Baxter, INHF*

Protecting Biscuitroot Bluff

BY MARY RUNKEL
Volunteer coordinator | mrunkel@inhf.org

Even from the road, it's easy to see the steep ridges with tentacle-like arms that make up Biscuitroot Bluff. Along the Loess Hills National Scenic Byway, the Fremont County property is an excellent example of two Loess Hills landscapes: steep, open prairie and mature oak woodland. It's also one of three areas in the state where Biscuitroot can be found, a plant with natural and historical significance and the namesake of the soon-to-be-public area.

Rosie Hall sold Biscuitroot Bluff to Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation in 2015, donating a portion of the land's value to ensure its protection. Hall was prompted to do so after an alarming hospitalization left her eager to honor the wishes of her late husband, Phil.

"My husband was a great conservationist," Hall said. "Before he left us, he asked me to try and protect at least the part of the land with the Biscuitroot on it — to take care of it if I could."

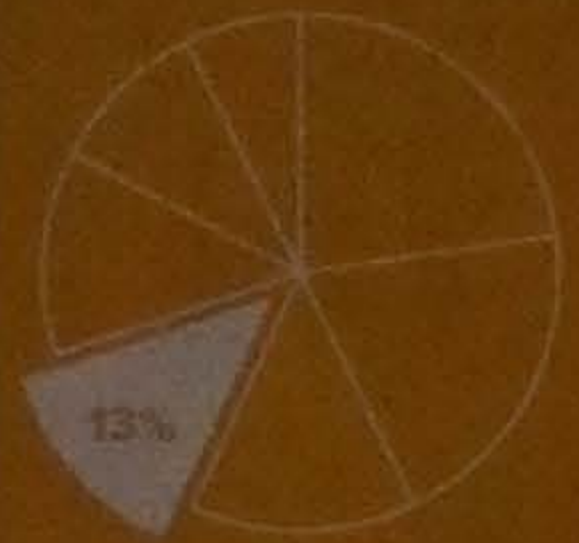
She originally thought the donation would be about 10 acres — to protect the sensitive area where the Biscuitroot was found. But after connecting with Tim Sproul, INHF Loess Hills land conservation consultant, she decided to sell all 159 acres of her and Phil's land. In 2017, the property will be transferred to the Iowa DNR, thanks to a REAP Public/Private Open

Spaces grant. The Iowa DNR will own and manage it long-term as a wildlife management area. "The integrity of this place, including the Biscuitroot, will be protected forever," Sproul said. Rosie is happy that people will get to enjoy the area.

"Biscuitroot Bluff is a showcase example of the great story of Iowa's natural history and is the kind of special area that the REAP Open Spaces Program was designed to protect," said Heather Jobst, INHF senior land conservation director. Biscuitroot Bluff is located within the 4,249-acre Waubonsie Special Landscape Area and is identified by the National Park Service as a high priority area for protection. It is home to several plant species of special concern and offers 360 degree views of the surrounding Loess Hills landscape. "You don't have to be an expert to notice its vast bluffs and unique 'peak and saddle' topography, even from a distance," said Sproul.

The land is culturally significant as well. Biscuitroot was a very important item of trade between the Native Americans and the Lewis and Clark expedition. Biscuitroot was peeled, dried and ground to create a flour that was pressed into cakes that "tasted of stale biscuits." Biscuitroot, now a state endangered species, provides a special connection to Iowa's natural and cultural heritage. 🍪

FORMULA BREAKDOWN:



RESOURCE ENHANCEMENT AND PROTECTION (REAP)

Projected annual funding:
\$23.4 million

Created by Governor Branstad in 1989, Iowa's REAP program invests in the state's natural and cultural resources. REAP often provides partial or a majority of funding for local community conservation and historic preservation projects, with private donors providing the rest. Through these private donations, REAP is able to leverage the state investment by two to three times.

Potential projects

- The Iowa River Trail will eventually run 34 miles from Marshalltown to Steamboat Rock, connecting seven cities and two counties in the Iowa River Greenbelt to the Central Iowa Trail Network.
- An addition to Russell Wildlife Area in Mahaska County will protect important wetland, woodland and floodplain habitat. The private owners of the property had protected a significant portion of the 202 acres along the South Skunk River with the Conservation Reserve Program. The property will be managed by Mahaska County Conservation.



As nature **INTENDED**

BY SARAH LEBLANC

Communications intern | commintern@inhf.org

BETWEEN THE MELODIC RIPPLING of the Little Wapsipinicon River and the call of eagles overhead, it isn't hard to understand why Norm and Susan West have worked tirelessly to ensure that their piece of Buchanan County land remains permanently protected.

The Wests have spent their lives nurturing a passion for conservation. Since buying their property in 1985, they have managed to preserve native timber, wetland and prairie as ideal habitat for wildlife.

In 2013, the Wests permanently protected 145 acres of their land through a conservation easement with Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, prohibiting the construction of roads, buildings or other disruptions to the natural state of the land while keeping it in private ownership. The sprawling natural landscape is decorated with pockets of upland and riparian woodlands, oxbow wetlands and reconstructed prairie. Bullsnake, sandhill crane, northern harrier and red-headed woodpecker are several species of 12 considered to be of greatest conservation need that call these varied habitats home.

"We feel that our property is uncommonly good wildlife habitat — the large area of timber, the river, the creek, the slough, the many food-bearing species, the isolation from roads and houses," Norm said. "We believe it's a treasure that should be guarded."

Located in the Wapsipinicon River Bird Conservation Area, the property is popular for numerous bird species. They nest in the trees and often visit the Wests' yard, where Susan takes joy in feeding them. The Wests have also seen larger animals such as deer, coyote, fox and badger in different areas on the land.

With such diversity in landscape, the Wests have more than one priority when it comes to their goals for the land.

"Soil erosion should be virtually non-existent, thus protecting water quality," Norm

said. "Runoff or infiltration of fertilizer and chemicals should be virtually non-existent. We can't clean up pollution from other places, but hopefully we can prevent adding to it."

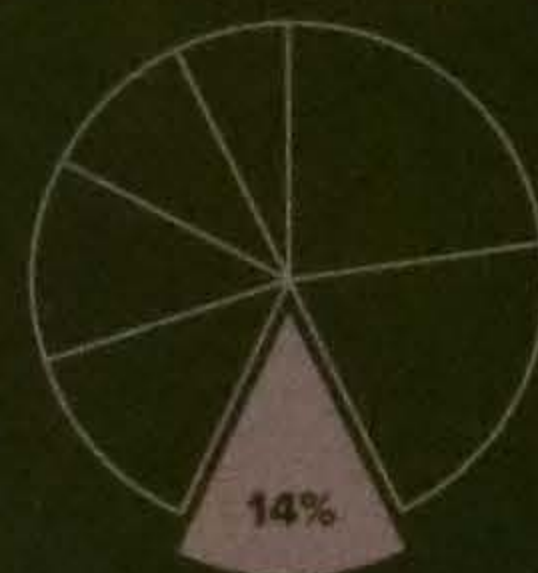
Improving water quality is a crucial goal for the Wests. They've planted about 65 acres of trees on former cropland, beginning over 25 years ago on the steepest slopes. They've also established small areas of prairie, and before retiring from farming, they established five grassed waterways and a filter strip. Now all former cropland is in conservation. During this restoration, 90 acres of native timber has remained undisturbed.

Featuring almost a mile of the Little Wapsipinicon River and located near other conservation areas managed by the Buchanan County Conservation Board, the Wests have helped shape the future of the land. Susan hopes to restore the area to "natural succession," as opposed to intervention, to achieve human ideals such as oak-hickory or savanna. Norm would like to see it used to educate younger generations on the importance of environmental conservation work and the beauty of nature.

By permanently protecting the land, the Wests are making a statement that, for them, conservation is more important than profit. Their biggest project was in 2011 when they put the last of their cropland into the Conservation Reserve Program and planted 39,000 trees. The trees were planted with wildlife in mind, with several species producing fruit or nuts. Bur oak, walnut, swamp oak and black oak are among the 40 species growing under the Wests' supervision.

Living in the midst of a landscape left as nature intended, among species that rely on the preservation of this habitat for their survival, it's easy to understand why the Wests take such pride in the land they are protecting. 🌿

FORMULA BREAKDOWN:



WATERSHED PROTECTION

Projected annual funding:
\$25.2 million

With Iowans increasingly worried about the state's water quality, the watershed protection portion of the trust fund aims to deliver real results as identified by the state's Nutrient Reduction Strategy. This funding would make it easier for Iowans to access funds and resources to organize local watershed projects.

Potential projects

- Completion of a statewide regional watershed assessment that creates a long-term comprehensive state water quality plan.
- Floodplain protection and wetland construction to reduce the negative impacts of future flooding on residents, businesses and soil quality.
- Creation of watershed management authorities to assess flood risks in watersheds.
- Ground cover and other conservation practice programs for better water retention and natural filtering.

Norm and Susan West have spent decades improving the landscape on their Buchanan County property and protected it with a conservation easement. Photo by Erin Van Waus, INHF

LEAVING A LEGACY

Living Lands Fellowship

As Jon Steege worked alongside young summer employees at Fayette County Conservation, he saw how difficult it was for many to find steady work in conservation. "I thought if only they could have a few months after college to add experience to their resumes while they look for a job, they'd have a better chance at a conservation career."

When Jon and Kathy Steege shared the idea with Joe McGovern, they learned INHF had a similar dream. The Steeges made a ten-year pledge to launch INHF's new Living Lands Fellowship.

Jon shared, "I'm not physically able to work on the land like I used to, planting trees or burning prairie. But I can help someone else do those things that will make a difference on the land. We're feeling good about that!"

Gifts to the Living Lands Fellowship are welcome. Or, if you have an idea you'd like to explore, contact Cheri Grauer at 515-288-1846 or cgrauer@inhf.org.

CONSERVATION TIP

Take advantage of early-flowing sap this year

Across the state, tree sap has started flowing a bit early this year. Typically, maple trees will start to flow anywhere from mid-February to early March, when temperatures fluctuate within trees during the freeze/thaw weeks of late winter.

Harvesting this sap for syrup is simple and joyful. Sugar and black maples have the highest sugar content in their sap, but you can also tap silver and red maples and box elder. You'll need some basic tools to start tapping: Store bought spiles (taps) or homemade spiles will do the trick. Drill a hole into the "sapwood" of the outer trunk — about 1.5" to 2" deep — with a 7/16" diameter drill bit. Hook a food safe bucket or bag to the spile and let the sap flow!

Tree diameter will determine the number of suitable spiles. For a tree 10-15 inches in diameter, use only one spile. You can increase spiles with an increase in diameter: two for 16-20 inches, three for 21-25 inches and four for 26+ inches. Avoid tapping areas where branches have been cut off or damaged. And use large roots and branches to your advantage — the sap flow between them will be excellent.

Be sure to check your collections regularly. Sap to syrup ratio runs about five gallons of sap for one pint of boiled down syrup. Once your collection is complete, boil down and enjoy!

— RYAN RIEGER, Tama County Conservation technician & park ranger, former INHF land stewardship intern



Harvesting sap from maple trees is a classic Iowa winter activity when temperatures start to warm. Tapping requires minimal supplies, with a season that lasts about six weeks. Photo courtesy of Ryan Rieger

TRIBUTE GIFTS

IN MEMORY OF

Roger Adams
James Barrett
Gary Beckwith
Alberta Benda Brosnahan
Erica Bernier
Larry Beving
Bruce Campbell
Matthew Caugffron
Everett and Arlene Chandler
George W. Chickering
Howard and Gladys Coffin
Mark and Kay Crowl
Charlie Cutler
Laverne & Charlene Cutsforth
Harry Waldemar Dani III
Dick Donnelly
Randy Duncan
Mary M. Dunphy
Robert Eids
Curt Evans
Nancy Evans

John and Phyllis Eveland
Mary Ann Fels
Kelli K. Feske
Wade Franck
Elma E. Geater
GMHR Mountain's Top Beggar MH
GMHR HRCH Mountain's Top
Wooden Nickel MH
Cynthia Levy
Gregory Guetzko
Margaret Hanson
James Hertz, Jr.
Richard A. Hoppin
Bill Johnson
Gary Kiefer
Barbara A. Kimm
Arnold Klemme and Harvey Schaeffer
Dr. Albert Kollasch
Jane LaMor
Nick Glenn Lilleberg
Lincoln

Marcene Lynch
Richard W "Dick" Lynch
John B. Mackaman
Ralph Mendenhall
Ida Ruth Miller
Roland and Virginia Nelson
Merrill and Gladys Nichols
David Noll
Pete Oberfoell
Lonmer V. Olson
Mike Olson
Walt Ordway
Mary Jane Pearson
Nancy Perry
Mary Patricia Pollestrini
Dr. James Rathe
Don and Luella Rease
Robert Remert
Denny Reynolds
Richard K. Richards
Richard Rigby
Dan Ring
The Ritzes
Jim Rohweder
Walter L. Sour
Mrs. Scherner

Douglas Schlesier
Martina Schmitz
Rose Mary Schwent
Hejen Stanek Rinke
Bart Steele
David Steffens
Mary Brosnahan Terpstra
Brad A. Thiede
Mike Trettin
Frances Vaughn
Al Wagner
Otha & Lole Wearin
Eugene Wester
Marilyn Wiles
Keith Wilgenbusch
Dan Zollars

IN HONOR OF

Dr. Shakun Advani
Don Beneke
Iowa Cyclists
David and Diana Diersen
Paul Easter
Robert Flemin
Kenton Frank
The Garst Family

GMHR Mountain's Top Watermarking
Woody
Bryce Gonzales
Carol Gustine Rogers
James and Mary Gustine
Mr and Mrs. Howard Hughes
Patti and Bob Jester
Ben and Loline Johnson
Chuck Johnson Family
Dr. Charles A. Johnson
Joann and William Kauten
Laurie Klosterboer
Andrea Kraushaar
Dave and Jane Kums
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Carole Reichardt
Mr and Mrs. Gary Sewin
Melissa Serenda
Jim and Jan Sutherland
Ken and Pat Thomsen
Ray and Pamela Torresdel
Tom and Sandy Walker
Marie Zakeer

Find more Iowa places to explore at www.inhf.org/blogILLUSTRATION:
ANDREA PIEKARCZYK

Spotting America's raptor

BY SARAH LEBLANC

Communications intern | commintern@inhf.org

In the mid-20th century, bald eagles were threatened with extinction due to pesticide use and habitat loss. Now, the number of eagle nests across the country continues to grow, and in Iowa, eagle watching during the winter has become a rewarding activity with each glimpse of a bald eagle soaring overhead.

Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation has worked on several projects that feature prime locations for eagle watching in the winter. These areas are usually close to open water, such as river corridors or dams where the birds of prey can easily find and catch fish.

Iowa River Corridor *Johnson Co.*
With a trail curling with the river's bends, this corridor is a prime spot for eagle watching. Birders can either travel to the corridor to park and view the eagles, or take advantage of the 14-mile trail and look for the majestic species.

Prairie Heritage Center *O'Brien Co.*
The center's location near the Little Sioux River makes eagle-watching easy. The center hosts eagle-watching events that feature presentations by experts. INHF completed a 133-acre addition to the complex and

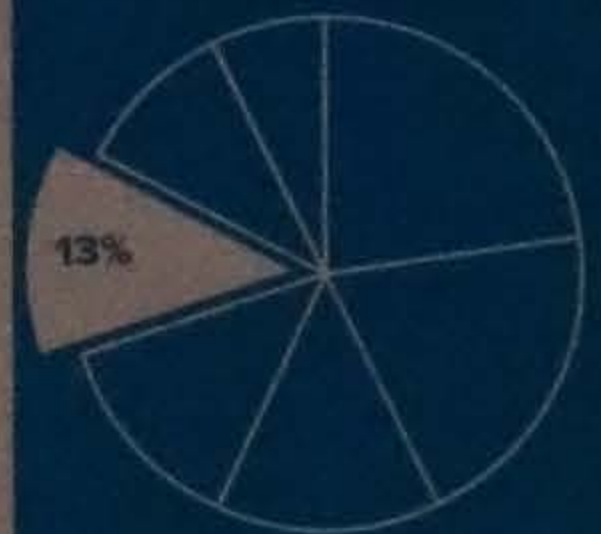
Waterman Wildlife Area in 2014.

Camp Wanoki *Webster Co.*
A former girls' day camp, this 77-acre area sits along the Des Moines River near Fort Dodge. With direct access to the river and prime woodland eagle habitat, you're almost sure to catch a glimpse.

Wilson's Woods *Black Hawk Co.*
Black Hawk County's most recent public area features public access for over 2,000 feet of shoreline along the Wapsipinicon River just east of Dunkerton, and is recognized by the Iowa DNR as an important Bird Conservation Area (BCA). Also a great spot, Mickey Fox Wildlife Area is right across the county line in Buchanan County.

Mines of Spain *Dubuque Co.*
Located on the Mississippi River, this recreational area offers access to eagle watching along the waterfront from the bluffs, or while hiking or skiing across the land. The Mines of Spain are featured as one of Iowa's "Watchable Wildlife Areas," with chances to spot white-tailed deer, bobcats and red-shouldered hawks along with bald eagles. 🦅

FORMULA BREAKDOWN:



LOCAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIPS

Projected annual funding:
\$23.4 million

Conservation in Iowa happens through partnership — this is especially true at the local level. This portion of the formula focuses on supporting local conservation and recreation projects for education and infrastructure. These monies can only be obtained by county conservation boards, nongovernmental nonprofits and cities.

Potential projects

- Providing interpretive programs for youth and underserved populations, like older students, elderly groups and young parents.
- Development and maintenance of parks and nature facilities, like trails, campgrounds, nature centers and playgrounds to encourage the use of local parks and natural areas.
- Coordination of more citizen-science projects, like water quality testing or soil sampling, and increased outreach opportunities between local naturalists and Iowa school teachers.



Iowa
Natural Heritage
Foundation

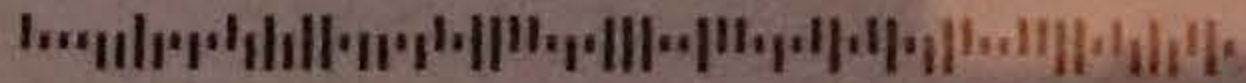
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Naturally occurring ice stalagmites (sometimes referred to as spikes or candles) form inside Maquoketa Caves State Park in Jackson County. These rare formations are created when cold air pressure pushes standing water upward, building from the bottom up. The smooth ridges are shaped by warmer air flowing through the cave system. Similar formations called ice spikes can occur in ice cube trays.
Photo by Nathan Hauck

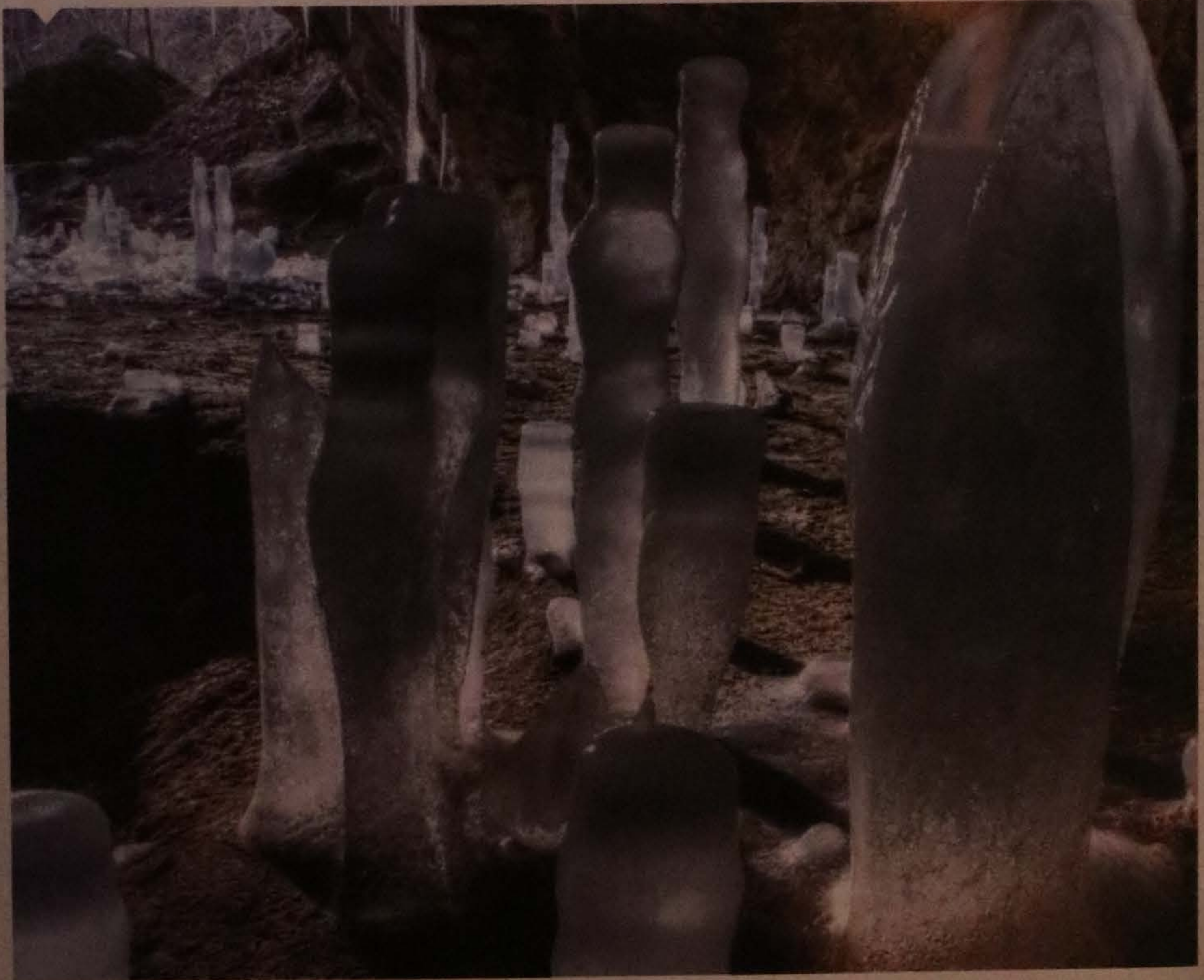
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Leave a legacy of clean water, healthy soil and beautiful outdoor places for those who follow.

To see how estate giving through INHF can help make your vision for Iowa a reality, contact Cheri Grauer at cgrauer@inhf.org or 515-288-1846.



Iowa Natural Heritage

Protecting and restoring Iowa's land, water and wildlife.

**Small projects,
big impact**

Small projects, big impact

Small species can be a bellwether for the health of an ecosystem. When INHF was working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to restore oxbows in tributaries of the Raccoon River in the early 2000s, one of the first signs of success was the return of the Topeka Shiner, a small minnow less than three inches long. Even things too small to see with the naked eye, like the billions of microorganisms that live in the soil of your no-till field, are signs of vitality.



JOE MCGOVERN
President

In this issue, we're celebrating the small stuff: the small pollinators that contribute to a healthy environment, the small easements that protect vast scenic beauty and the small natural areas that have a big impact on communities. It's often easy to see the value of a large landscape protected, but it's important to recognize the value of small natural areas that improve our quality of life, too.

Nature is resilient, and our job is providing the opportunity for nature to recover and thrive. Similarly, people are resilient, but I believe we need nature in order to recharge. It doesn't always have to be a grand landscape. For many of us, a patch of remnant prairie along a country road or a green space in a sea of concrete can be just what the doctor ordered. Just watch some of our most important "small projects" — our children. They'll find the nearest creek to splash into, log to jump over or flower to stick their nose in, and it will brighten their mood in an instant.

Nature should be available, and accessible, to everybody. Even in an urban landscape, a little bit of wildness should be part of everyday life. With your help, we're making that happen more and more. Thank you for making these small projects with big impact possible.



ON THE COVER

A juniper hairstreak rests on butterfly milkweed. The butterfly is relatively uncommon and depends on the cedar trees of western and eastern Iowa. Photo by Ron Hueise

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No species too small

Iowa's landscapes provide a home to an amazing array of animal species. Some of the species are now threatened. Learn more about some of the smallest creatures INHF works to protect.

DEPARTMENTS

- 2 Opening Thoughts
- 4 Through Your Lens
- 6 Field Notes
- 22 Looking Out for Iowa
- 23 Get Outdoors

8

Modest to mighty

INHF has worked on plenty of large projects, but sometimes it's the smallest ones that make the biggest difference. Take a look at some of INHF's "smallest" accomplishments — and just how big their impact can be.

10

Preserving Iowa's views

Conservation protects beautiful places to live and play, but also places to see. The Chimney Rocks conservation easement is a prime example of how protection can safeguard wildlife habitat, as well as the scenic beauty that makes Iowa special.

16

Deep roots: A look at remnant prairie

What makes remnant prairie so special? Take a look at Iowa's untouched areas and discover the diversity that can thrive in these pristine places.

19

The prairie provides

Solitaire Ridge in northeast Iowa is a hotbed for natural goodness. Its steep slopes look out over the Upper Iowa River, and its unstirred prairies are providing the seeds for healthier habitats across the area.

20

Community meets conservation

Bob and Mary Lou Gunderson had a dream for Eldora — an area where young and old could enjoy nature in the city center. Now, the Gunderson Nature Park is helping connect Iowans to Hardin County's outdoor treasures.

**“I am myself
and what is
around me; and
if I do not save
it, it shall not
save me.”**

- José Ortega y Gasset

Some of my most vivid memories from childhood are of being outside. I'm sure you have them, too — catching fireflies, finding fossils, dew on the bottoms of your feet.

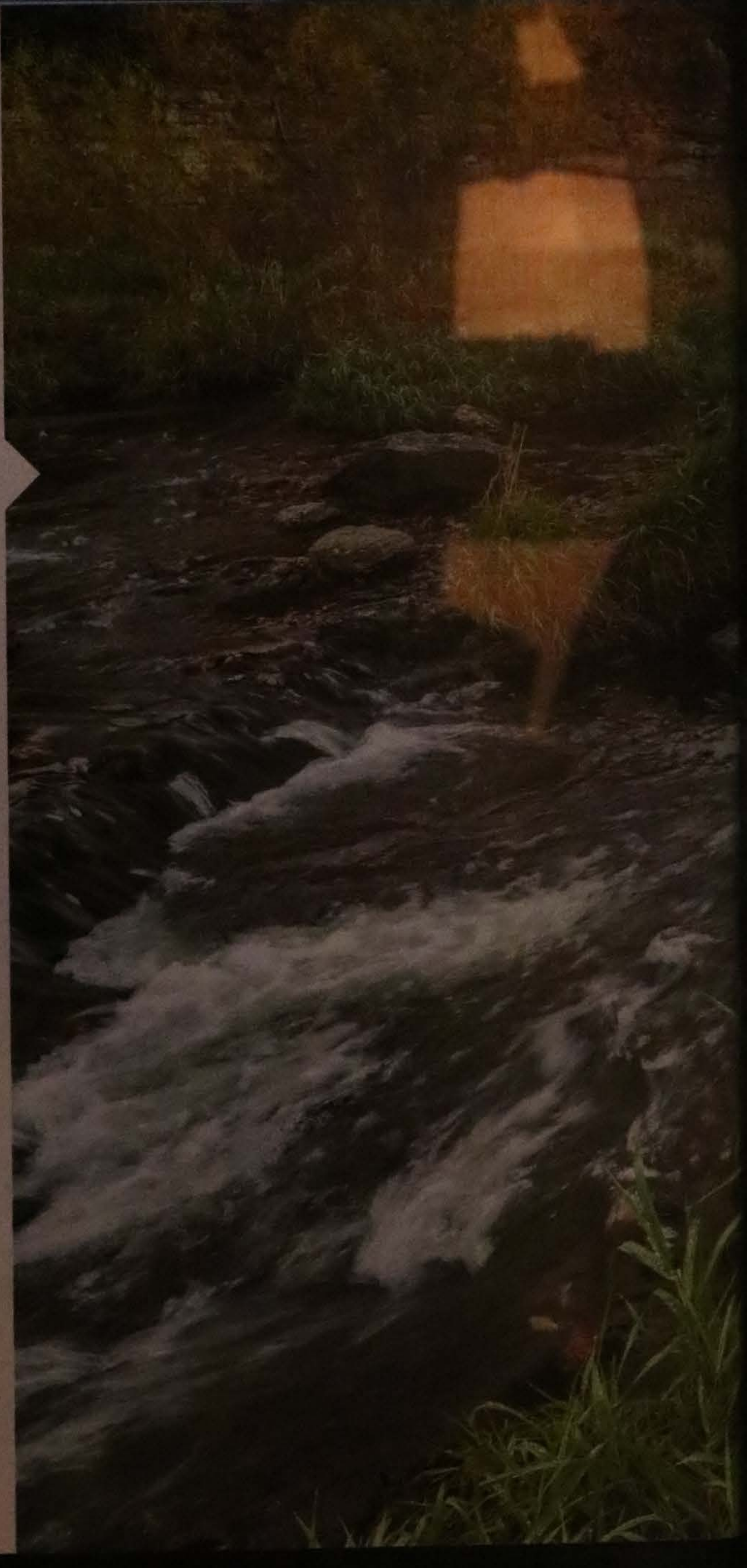
When you're a child, everything in nature is new, every discovery wholly revolutionary. Even the smallest places, sounds, feelings and smells are larger than life.

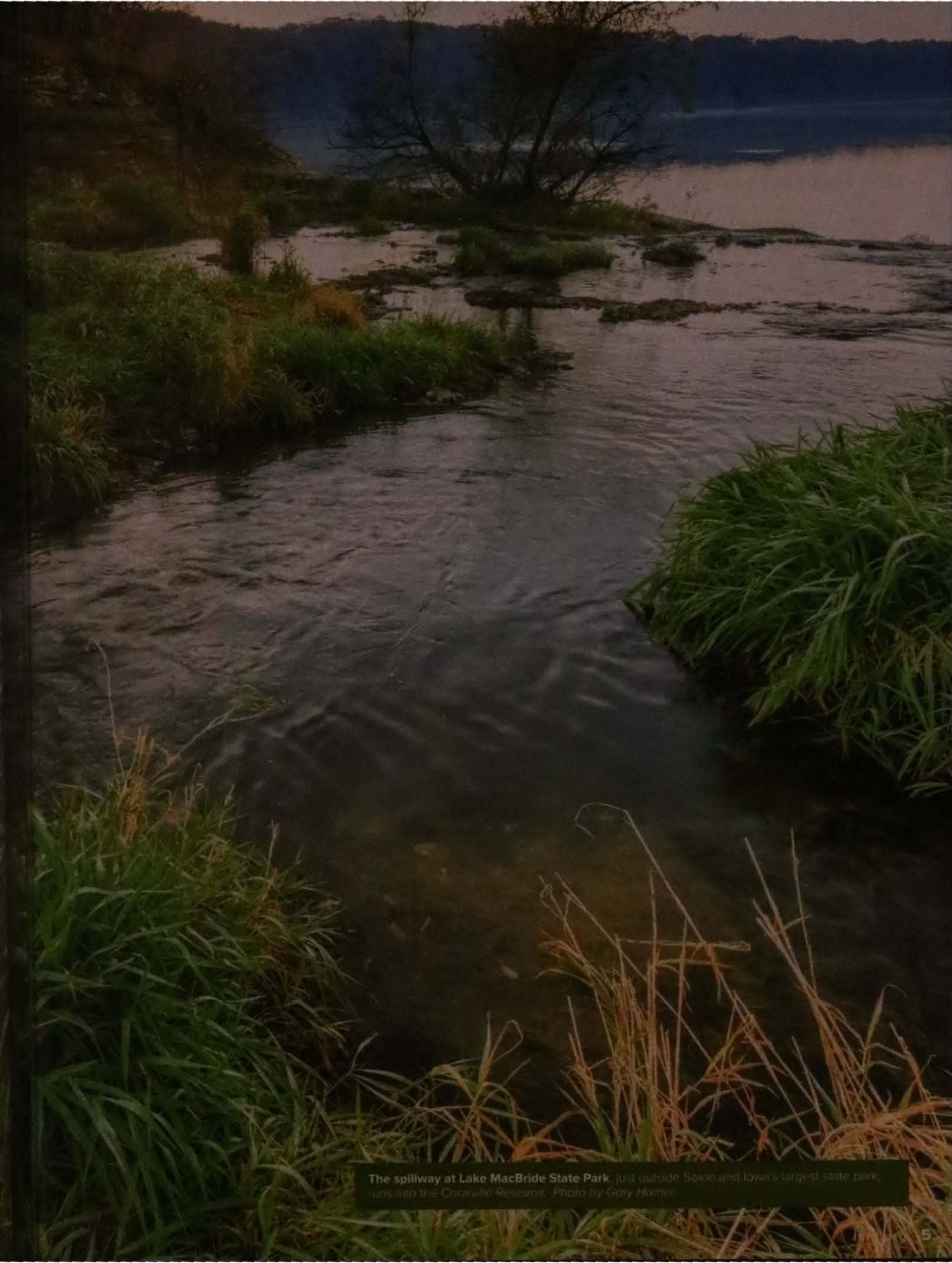
Going back to those places I visited as a kid now provides its own sort of solace. I reflect often on the places that shaped me — Lake MacBride, the Maquoketa caves, the trails through my elementary school's ravine. These places introduced a city kid to the natural world. What a blessing.

Even now, years later, they're still my teachers. They are constantly reminding me that there is more left to discover. I go back into that mindspace and see the world around me with a fresh lens, ripe for something new. I'm a kid again.

It's exciting knowing those places are still there, ready for the young eyes of small adventurers.

— KERRI SORRELL,
Communications specialist





The spillway at Lake MacBride State Park, just outside Solon and Iowa's largest state park, runs into the Coralville Reservoir. *Photo by Gary Hamer*

Carole Teator joins INHF with focus on eastern Iowa

INHF is excited to welcome Carole Teator as its first Eastern Iowa Program Manager. Carole will work on INHF projects and partnerships around Waterloo/Cedar Falls, Cedar Rapids, Iowa City and the Quad Cities.

"With 40 percent of the state's population in this area, we're excited to have Carole there to work closely with landowners, our donors and partners," said INHF President Joe McGovern.

Carole was a program intern at INHF in 1996 while pursuing her masters degree in Community and Regional Planning at Iowa State University. She also has a masters in English and taught for five years at Loras College in Dubuque.

"I helped students form an environmental club [at Loras] and I realized that my passion was work that betters the planet," Carole said. "I went back to school for my community and regional planning degree as sort of a backdoor into conservation."

After interning with INHF, Carole had an assistantship working on a land use plan revision in Linn County and then worked at Trees Forever.

"I'm really excited to be the representative of INHF in eastern Iowa because as a member,

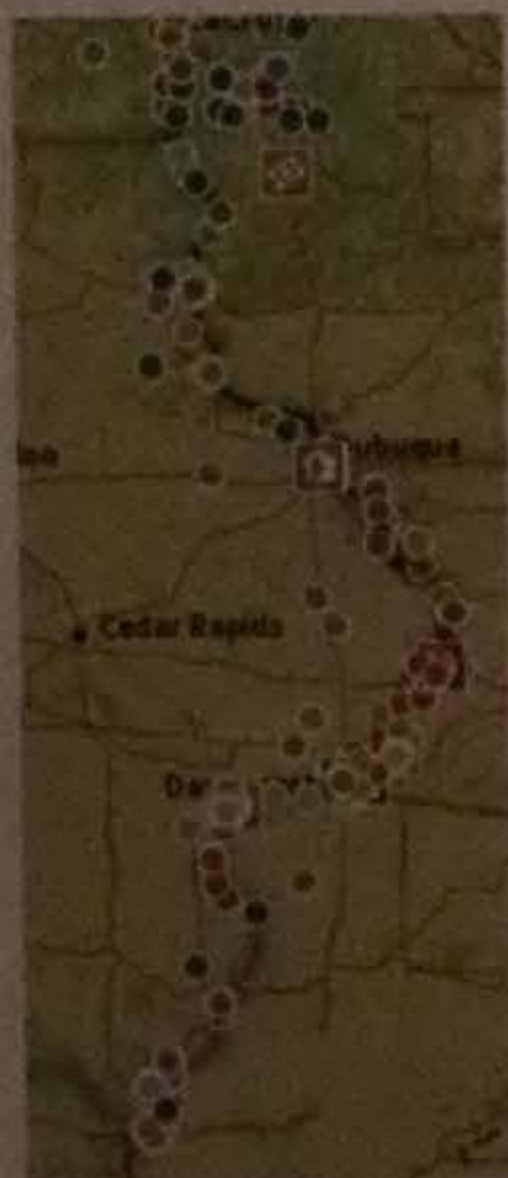


Carole Teator joins the INHF staff as the new Eastern Iowa Program Manager. Carole will work with partners and landowners in and around Cedar Rapids, Iowa City, Waterloo/Cedar Falls and the Quad Cities. Photo by INHF

I feel like there's a lot of opportunity there to connect with people," Carole said.

"I think INHF has a fantastic reputation in the conservation community because of the integrity and the quality of the work that we do," Carole said. "I can't wait to get out and talk to members and landowners that we work with, and to get out onto the land and be outside in nature with people."

Carole will work from her home in Cedar Rapids. To contact Carole or welcome her to the team, email cteator@inhf.org or call 319-775-0737. INHF will also be hosting "Meet Carole" events in Eastern Iowa throughout the fall. Learn more at www.inhf.org/events.



National Geographic explores the Mississippi River Trail

Spanning over 2,000 miles, the mighty Mississippi River gives Iowa its eastern border. Less familiar to many Iowans may be the 300 miles along the river that make up Iowa's portion of the Mississippi River Trail (MRT).

The MRT has been a decades-long project to create a continuous bike route from Minnesota to Louisiana on each side of the river. The route in each of the 10 states is made up of a combination of designated bike paths, on-street bike lanes and paved roads.

The MRT originally collaborated with partners across Iowa, including Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, and has now gained

the attention of National Geographic to promote geotourism, tourism that highlights environmental and heritage-based landmarks.

The partnership between the MRT and National Geographic highlights natural areas of interest along the trail, creating an interactive map that includes lakes, trails and conservation areas. Nahant Marsh Education Center in Davenport, the Running River Trail System in Muscatine and the Port Louisa National Wildlife Refuge near Wapella are featured spots in Iowa, with more areas continuously popping up on the map.

More information about the project and other highlighted areas can be found at www.mississippiriver.natgeotourism.com.

UPCOMING
EVENTS**AUG. 22**

Hike at Reeds Run Wildlife Area

Spirit Lake, Dickinson Co.
Get to know Reeds Run Wildlife Area, 43 acres of restored wetland and prairie off the shore of Big Spirit Lake.

SEPT. 14

Hike
Kotherbeutel Prairie

Sheffield, Franklin Co.
Celebrate Iowa Prairie Heritage Week with a hike at Kotherbeutel Prairie, led by INHF's Ryan Schmidt. Don't miss the opportunity to explore this prairie in its autumn glory.

SEPT. 30

Seeds & Cider at Heritage Valley

Allamakee Co.
Celebrate fall by hand-harvesting prairie seed at INHF's Heritage Valley property, followed by warm apple cider.

OCT. 7

Lend a Hand on the Land: A Prairie Seed Harvest

Elkhart, Polk Co.
Welcome fall with a family seed harvest at INHF's Snyder Heritage Farm. This annual event is hosted by five Iowa land trusts. RSVPs requested.

For more information, visit www.inhf.org.



Addition to Diamond Lake Complex beneficial for Dickinson County

Until recently, the Diamond Lake Complex in Dickinson County surrounded 13 acres of private property, accessible by a single county road that crossed the Little Sioux River over a county-owned access bridge. The 1910 bridge was in need of replacement, a project that would cost Dickinson County an estimated \$500,000-\$600,000.

INHF saw an opportunity to add to the complex of public land — and save the county money by avoiding having to repair the bridge.

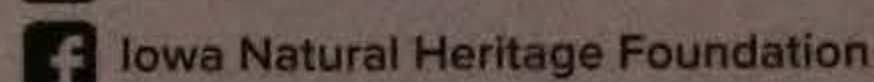
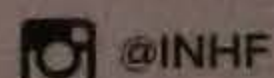
"It was just kind of a no-brainer for us to make the land open to the public and allow fishers and hunters to enjoy it," said Dan Eckert, the Dickinson County engineer. "And if we can save potentially five or six-hundred-thousand dollars on a bridge by being a participant in this, it made sense."

Working with the estate of the previous owner, INHF purchased the land, which will be owned by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and managed by the Iowa DNR. Dickinson County will clean up the land in preparation for restoration of wildlife habitat.

"By adding this area to the complex, it benefits the habitat for species, increases opportunities for hunting and fishing and simplifies management," said Heather Jobst, INHF senior land conservation director. "The combination of the county and conservation agencies isn't normally a partnership that anyone would think about, but it's good for conservation and good for the county." 🐸

Follow INHF's summer intern adventures on social media

This summer, 19 interns brought their hard work and talents to INHF's office and outdoor spaces. They explored new places and learned about Iowa's landscapes. See their adventures and learn more about their summer with the [#inhfintern](#) tag on Instagram and Facebook!



New greenspace in Osceola creates safe route between park and school

The City of Osceola and Clarke County Conservation Board are excited about an opportunity to preserve green space and encourage kids to spend more time outside in nature.

A trail between Clarke Community Elementary School and East Lake Park had been a dream for the community for a long time, so INHF was eager to help when Clarke County Conservation said there was a chance to work with the landowner that held the land between them.

Earlier this year, INHF purchased a 17-acre parcel between the school and lake, bringing the connection to the popular park one step closer to reality. The eventual trail will create a more direct route for school children to experience the park's educational opportunities.

"We do field trips with the grade school kids and they either have to be bussed out to the park or they have to take the long way around, which is probably a mile and a half to two miles along busy Highway 34," said Scott Kent, the director of Clarke County Conservation Board.

INHF currently owns the property with plans for a later resale to the City of Osceola or Clarke County Conservation Board. INHF is also assisting in applying for public grants that could help fund the project. Currently, the property is hay and woodland, and INHF will be working with the county conservation board to convert the hay area to native prairie. 🐸

MODEST TO MIGHTY

BY KATY HEGGEN
Communications Consultant | kheggen@inhf.org

From little acorns, mighty oaks grow. Whether it's connecting a trail, creating habitat for some of Iowa's smallest wildlife, or restoring a patch of prairie, some of INHF's tiniest projects have a huge impact. Here's a look at some of INHF's "smallest" accomplishments:

A HANDFUL:

The amount of prairie seed collected at prairie seed harvests, which can make all the difference in the diversity of a prairie restoration. Read more about Solitaire Ridge and its role in the distribution of native prairie seed on [page 19](#).

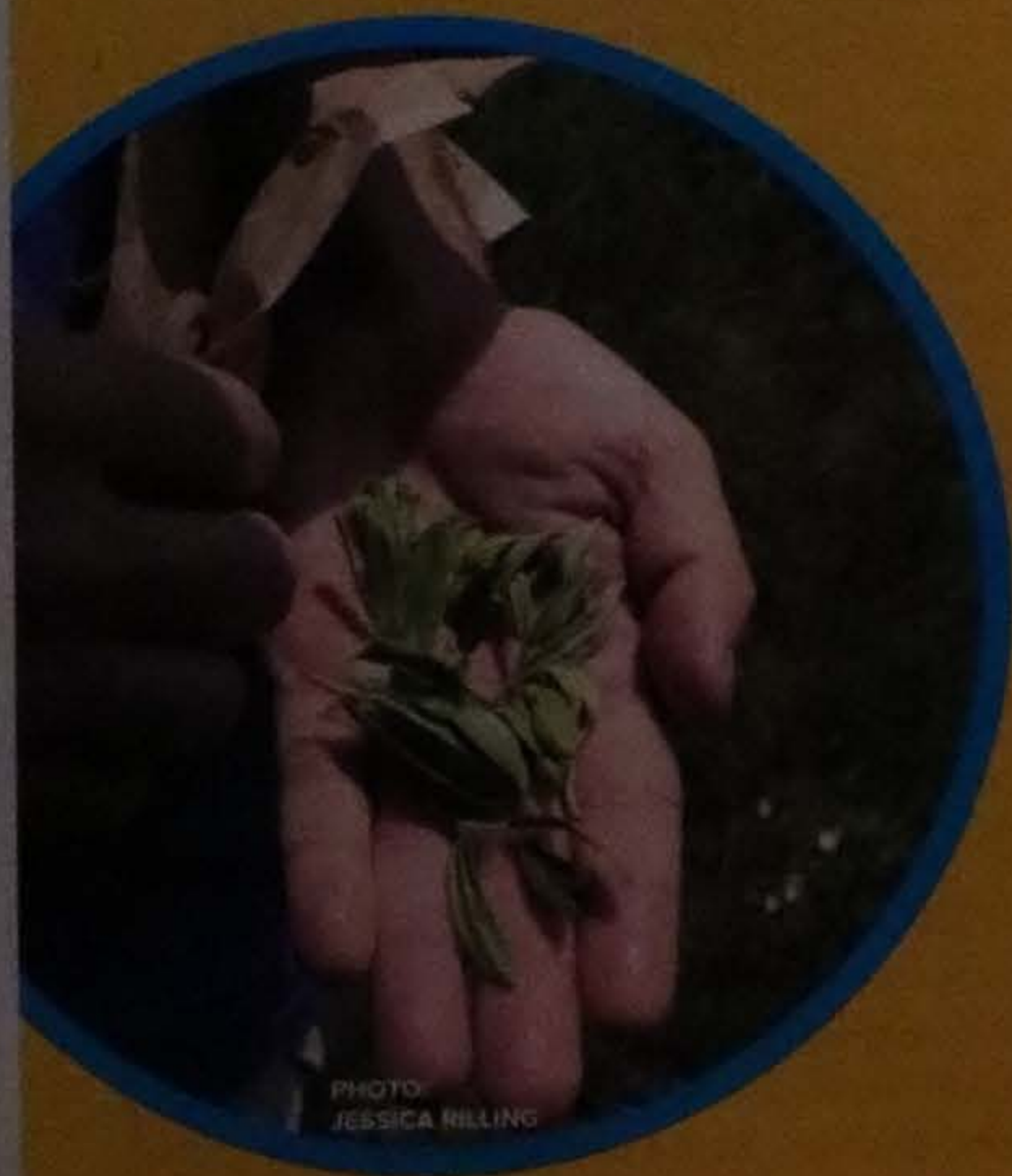


PHOTO:
JESSICA HILLING

4 inches:

The average height of the Pasque flower, a popular spring bloom that can be found on several INHF properties — one of many tiny, hidden forms of life our members help protect.



PHOTO: BRUCE MORRISON

LESS THAN ONE DAY:

The length of time INHF owned two properties — Neff Wetland in Jefferson county and Kal-Den Farms in Polk County — before transferring them to local partners. Land projects can move fast, and public agencies often rely on INHF to hold properties while a funding plan is put in place, which can sometimes take years. But occasionally, INHF can hold land for a short amount of time to benefit both the landowner and the public agency that will eventually own it.

Less than 0.1%:

The percentage of remnant prairie remaining in Iowa. At one time, approximately 75-80% of Iowa's landscape was covered in prairie. Read more about remnant prairie on page 16.



PHOTO: BRUCE MORRISON



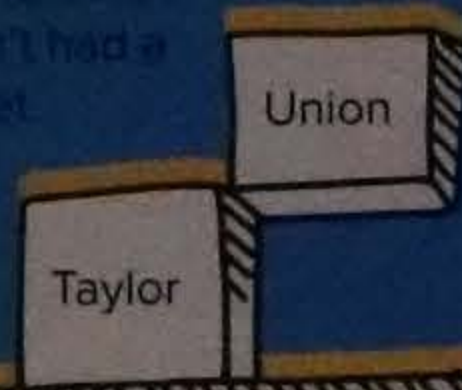
Ida

1/2 acre:

The size of INHF's two smallest projects to date: Woodward Depot, a half-acre trailhead connecting the City of Woodward to the High Trestle Trail in Dallas County; and Wherry Lot, a half-acre trail segment along the Wapsi Great Western Trail in Mitchell County.

4:

The number of counties — Henry, Ida, Taylor and Union — INHF hasn't had a project in...yet.



Union



Henry



6 INCHES:

The average length of a Northern prairie skink, a small, smooth lizard with striking stripes and a long tail. Northern prairie skinks have been spotted on several INHF properties. *Photo by Bill Witt*



LESS THAN 1/2 ACRE:

The size of INHF's smallest prescribed burns to date. These burns happened in stages on four remnant prairies on portions of a landlocked property in Boone County, giving these small, isolated parcels of prairie an opportunity to thrive. *Photo by INHF*



1:

The number of interns in INHF's first class of interns in 1986. Since then, the Internship program has grown to include nearly two dozen internships a year in areas ranging from land stewardship and landscape architecture to communications, graphic design and grant writing. To date, an astounding 331 INHF interns have helped shape Iowa's landscape. *Photo by INHF*

1.5 hours

The average length of time of a RAVE (Random Acts of Volunteering for Earth), a pop-up style event that brings together INHF volunteers to make a serious impact in a small amount of time. Visit www.inhf.org/volunteer/RAVE to learn more.



Chimney Rock, INHF's first conservation easement, is the highlight of a float on the Upper Iowa River. Marked by its towering limestone bluffs, the area is forever protected from development or other activities that would harm its scenic value. Photo by INHF

In that time, rivers have carved deep valleys through the forested landscape.

In doing so, these rivers — particularly the Upper Iowa River — created remarkable rock formations, including Chimney Rock. Rising

steeply along the Upper Iowa, Chimney Rock has a stark regality that sets it apart. It is “probably the focal point of the canoe trip between Kendallville and Bluffton,” says INHF Conservation Easement Director Erin Van Waus. But few who come to paddle this stretch of river, one of the most scenic in the state, likely know that Chimney Rock is protected by a conservation easement held by INHF.

The Chimney Rock conservation easement includes a 16-acre strip of limestone bluff and steep bluff prairie along the Upper Iowa River. The easement is measured from the river's thalweg — a term referring to the line drawn to join the lowest points along the length of a streambed, defining its deepest channel. Historically, thalwegs have been used to define legal boundaries along waterways.

Incredibly, Chimney Rock conservation easement — which turned 30 years old in June 2017 — was INHF's first ever conservation easement. It was “a very defined and deliberate first easement,” said INHF President Joe McGovern. Chimney Rock set the tone for INHF's continuing protection efforts in northeast Iowa: holding conservation easements has allowed INHF to build local relationships, making possible the quilt of

WHAT A VIEW

BY ANDREA PIEKARCZYK
Grants coordinator | apiekarczyk@inhf.org

In a state of gently rolling hills and far-away horizons, northeast Iowa is set apart by its dense woodlands and craggy limestone bluffs.

Just as landforms like the Loess Hills or the Prairie Pothole region were shaped by glacial activity, the Driftless region is shaped by the lack thereof. It's been nearly a million years since the last glaciers moved through the area.

Viewsheds frequently provide more than striking scenery: they are a frame through which we understand and appreciate a landscape.

conservation that blankets the area along the Upper Iowa River.

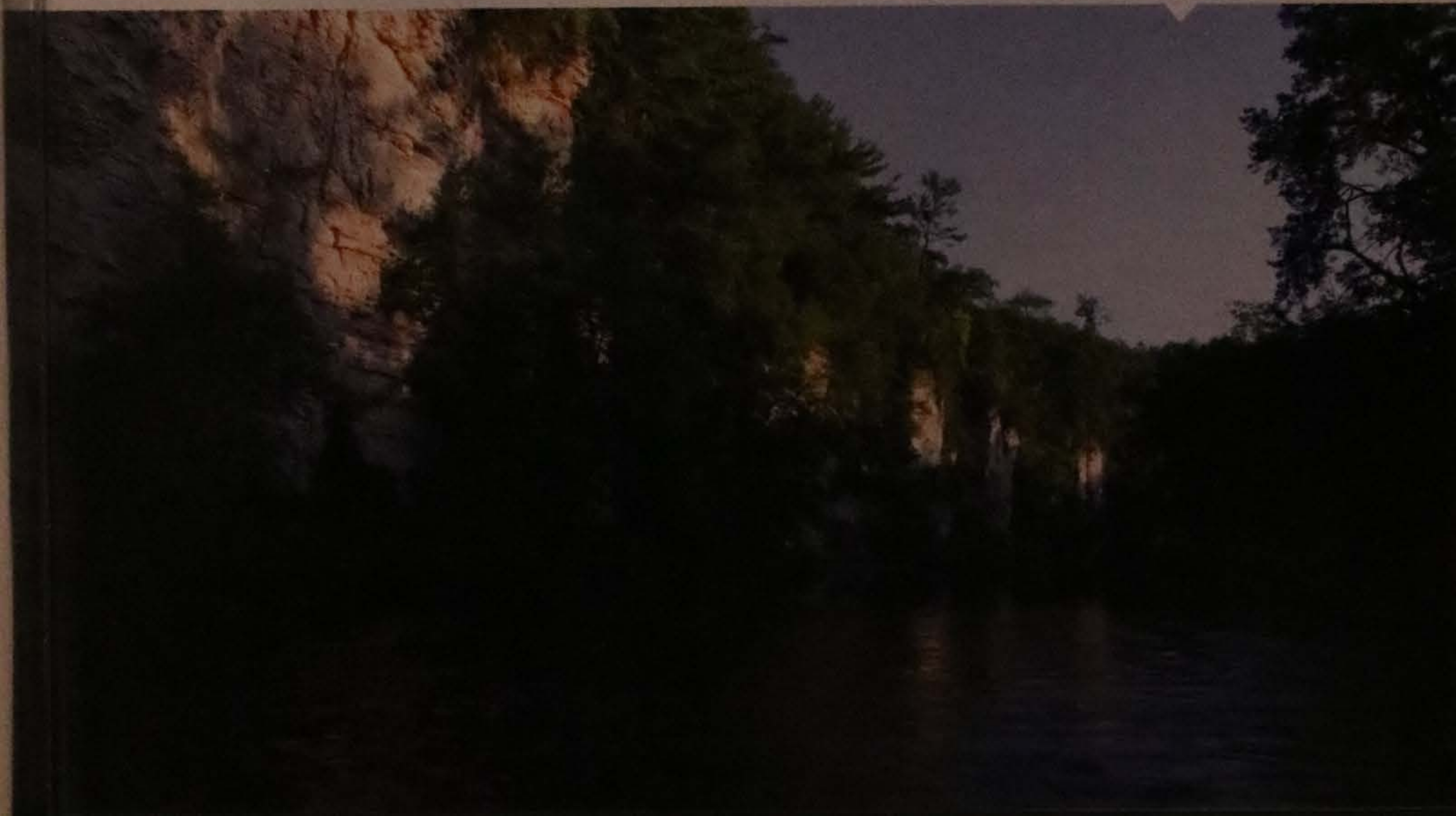
In 2001, the current owners of Chimney Rock decided to expand the protection of the area, discussing how best to do so with INHF staff. Brothers Bill and David Heine donated a new conservation easement on 100 more acres along the Upper Iowa, covering the existing Chimney Rock conservation easement and giving it an additional layer of protection. At the same time, the new easement (called Chimney Rock Ranch) also included wildlife habitat and a cold water trout stream.

Protecting Chimney Rock helped INHF's fledgling conservation easement program understand how important conservation easements, though privately owned, were for public benefit. "There's no greater public benefit than protecting scenic beauty along the most canoed river in Iowa," McGovern said.

Preserving the Upper Iowa's viewshed — a term that describes the visible landscape from a certain point — is a critical part of the river's conservation. Likewise, northeast Iowa's distinctive natural beauty is integral to the region's identity. Viewsheds frequently provide more than striking scenery: they are a frame through which we understand and appreciate a landscape. Chimney Rock is truly unique; its degradation or destruction would be devastating.

"Iowa doesn't necessarily have true wilderness, but we can still have *wildness*," said McGovern, paraphrasing former Natural Resources Conservation Service Director and Iowa DNR Director Paul Johnson. "Rivers are our last vestige of wildness, especially the Upper Iowa." 🍷

Protecting Chimney Rock was about more than safeguarding its physical natural resources — it also protected the view that thousands of paddlers see every year in northeast Iowa. INHF often works to protect viewsheds, especially in areas known for scenic beauty. This not only provides recreationists with an unobstructed scenic view, but maintains some of the wildness of outdoor experiences. Photo by Clint Farlinger



NO SPECIES too small

Iowa was once home to an amazing array of animal species, providing habitat to a diverse mix of mammals, birds, reptiles and insects. Some of these species are now threatened. Learn more about some of the smallest creatures INHF works to protect.

BY ABBY HADE TERPSTRA
Development specialist | aterpstra@inhf.org

Rusty Patched Bumblebee

Bombus affinis

Federally Endangered as of 2017

The Rusty Patched Bumblebee lives in colonies with a single queen and female workers. It is found in grasslands with abundant flowers April through September and nests underground or in grass clumps.

The range of the bee once spread throughout the upper midwest and northeast, but has significantly declined as the grasslands and tallgrass prairie habitats have been destroyed, fragmented or degraded. Since 2000, the bee has been seen in only 13 of the 28 states in its range. It has been documented in Black Hawk, Clayton, Johnson and Winneshiek counties in Iowa.

When you think of a bumblebee, this is what you think of — black head, yellow fuzzy body, with the males and workers having the rust-colored patch on their backs that gives the bee its name.

This brand new endangered designation will definitely impact management strategies as we begin to understand what the bee

needs. For example, burn schedules may alter to ensure that the bees are out of hibernation before last year's dry grasses are lit. And this new designation will open up even more public education opportunities on the plight of our native pollinators.

INHF is already involved in many actions around protecting pollinators and their needed habitats, including co-sponsoring a recent

Linn County Landowner Forum on how to add pollinator habitat to your land and protect the pollinator habitat you already have. "To have an impact, we'll need to work with private landowners," said Joe McGovern, INHF president. "Luckily that's one of our specialties."

The Iowa Monarch Conservation Consortium, which includes INHF, formed in 2015 to support monarch butterfly recovery in Iowa and North America.

The monarch has become the mascot of the native pollinator's plight and is currently under review to be added as a federally endangered species. The protection of pollinator habitat that is good for Rusty Patched Bumblebees will be good for monarchs too, no doubt. And the protection of native pollinators is certainly key to protecting many other species.

Photo by Ilona L.



GLOSSARY

Endangered Species

Any species of fish, plant or wildlife which is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant part of its range.

Threatened Species

Any species which is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

Species of Special Concern

Any species about which problems of status or distribution are suspected, but not documented.

Experimental Population

Species treated as Threatened Species on public land, for consultation purposes, and as species proposed for listing on private land.

Definitions from U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and Iowa Department of Natural Resources



Topeka Shiner

Notropis topeka

Federally Endangered in 1998, changed to Experimental Population in 2013

State Threatened

The Topeka Shiner is a small minnow less than three inches long, silvery-green with a dark stripe down the side and a pearly belly. It lives in pooling areas of small prairie streams in the central United States that have good water quality and cool-to-moderate temperatures. The Topeka Shiner lives in 13 of the 36 Iowa counties where it once was found, with populations restricted to the North Raccoon River and its tributaries. Smaller populations can currently be found in the Boone, Rock and Little Rock rivers.

This little fish is fighting against habitat destruction, especially of river oxbows (bends), from sedimentation caused by development and in-stream gravel mining, changes in water quality, predatory fish, stream channelization and dam construction.

INHF worked with private landowners and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) along West Buttrick Creek in the early 2000s to restore oxbows that would support Topeka Shiners. "Almost immediately three landowners stepped forward to volunteer," said INHF President Joe McGovern, who was land stewardship director at that time. Once cleared of silt, these naturally occurring pooling places along historic creek beds fill with groundwater. "Not long after restoration, we searched and found shiners in there, just like that," McGovern said. "It was a great and quick success."

Photo by INHF



Smooth Green Snake

Opheodrys vernalis

State Species of Special Concern

Beautifully bright green with a light yellow or cream underbelly, the smooth green snake grows 12 to 22 inches long. They live in grassy moist meadows, prairies or clearings of coniferous pine forests and hibernate in rock crevasses or burrows. Smooth green snakes are non-venomous and are one of the few snake species that eat only insects, preferring crickets, grasshoppers and smooth caterpillars.

Fewer than 10 populations of smooth green snakes are left in Iowa due to habitat fragmentation and destruction, human captivity and especially its sensitivity to pesticides.

INHF land stewardship interns have been lucky enough to encounter smooth green snakes while working at Wildin Heritage Prairie, an 80-acre property that INHF owns in Kossuth County. When INHF purchased the land from an estate in 2002, it had never been drained or plowed, though it did have a history of grazing. A cluster of small prairie potholes and high quality remnant sedge meadow prairie held many species of conservation interest that INHF has worked to protect and restore.

"Sometimes you have to take a chance on the land," said Heather Jobst, INHF senior land conservation director. "It was grazed for so long, but we took the chance and now there is a significant species living there."

Photo by Ashley Tubbs



Henslow's Sparrow

Ammodramus henslowii

State Threatened

A shy and secretive bird with an underwhelming song delivered from a low perch, Henslow's Sparrow's distinction lies in its plumage — bold streaking on its back, wings and throat, and an olive head with dark eyelines and whisker marks.

The habitat needs of Henslow's Sparrow are not well understood, as often this loner can't be found in an area that seems to be suitable. Fields, meadows and grasslands greater than 100 acres in the Great Lakes region with no grazing or haying are seemingly preferred.

Large tracts of established, undisturbed grassland are rare in Iowa. The loss and fragmentation of the prairie, along with trees invading these open spaces, has contributed to the sparrow's decline.

Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge in Prairie City is the largest tallgrass prairie reconstruction in the nation at 5,600 acres. It recently grew for the first time in over a decade when INHF and Friends of Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge helped with the purchase of a property surrounded on three sides by the refuge. Putting together a large, uninterrupted piece of prairie will continue to offer picky birds like Henslow's Sparrow a safe place to live. Next time you're at Neal Smith NWR, listen closely for the easily-missed "feeble hiccup" of song from this little brown bird.

Photo by Tom Benson

Wood Turtle

Glyptemys insculpta

Federally under review

State Endangered

The wood turtle has a knobby shell with plates bearing patterns like the growth rings of a tree. Its rough skin warms from dark brown at the toes to the glow of burnished cedar wood near the shell. The plastron (the shell that covers the belly) is a rich orangey-yellow with black splotches. A wood turtle's tail can be as long as its shell.

Wood turtles are found in the Great Lakes region of the United States and Canada. In Iowa, they are only in the northeast corner along the Cedar River. They need clear streams, rivers or woodland ponds that are near forests.

Since these turtles don't always lay eggs every year, and only eight to 10 eggs are in a clutch, they reproduce very slowly. They need space and time in the right conditions to establish and breed.

When a 55-acre property in Butler County came up for auction in 2015, Butler County Conservation Board (BCCB) knew it had exciting potential. The floodplain woodland was right next to their West Fork Forest Access on the West Fork of the Cedar River and, in addition to providing water quality benefits, would provide great habitat for deer, turkey, small mammals, amphibians and reptiles. A known population of wood turtles have been found in Big Marsh Wildlife Area, a public area just north of the property, and were tracked by University of Northern Iowa's Dr. Jeff Tamplin, to the property.

INHF held the land for BCCB until funding was secured. A collaborative grant with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is creating wood turtle habitat in the area by restoring the woodland, clearing invasive species and encouraging bur oak growth.

"Hopefully this will entice a few turtles to nest on the property," said Ross Baxter, INHF land projects director. "Adding to the scope of habitat possibilities will give these wood turtles a place to spread to."

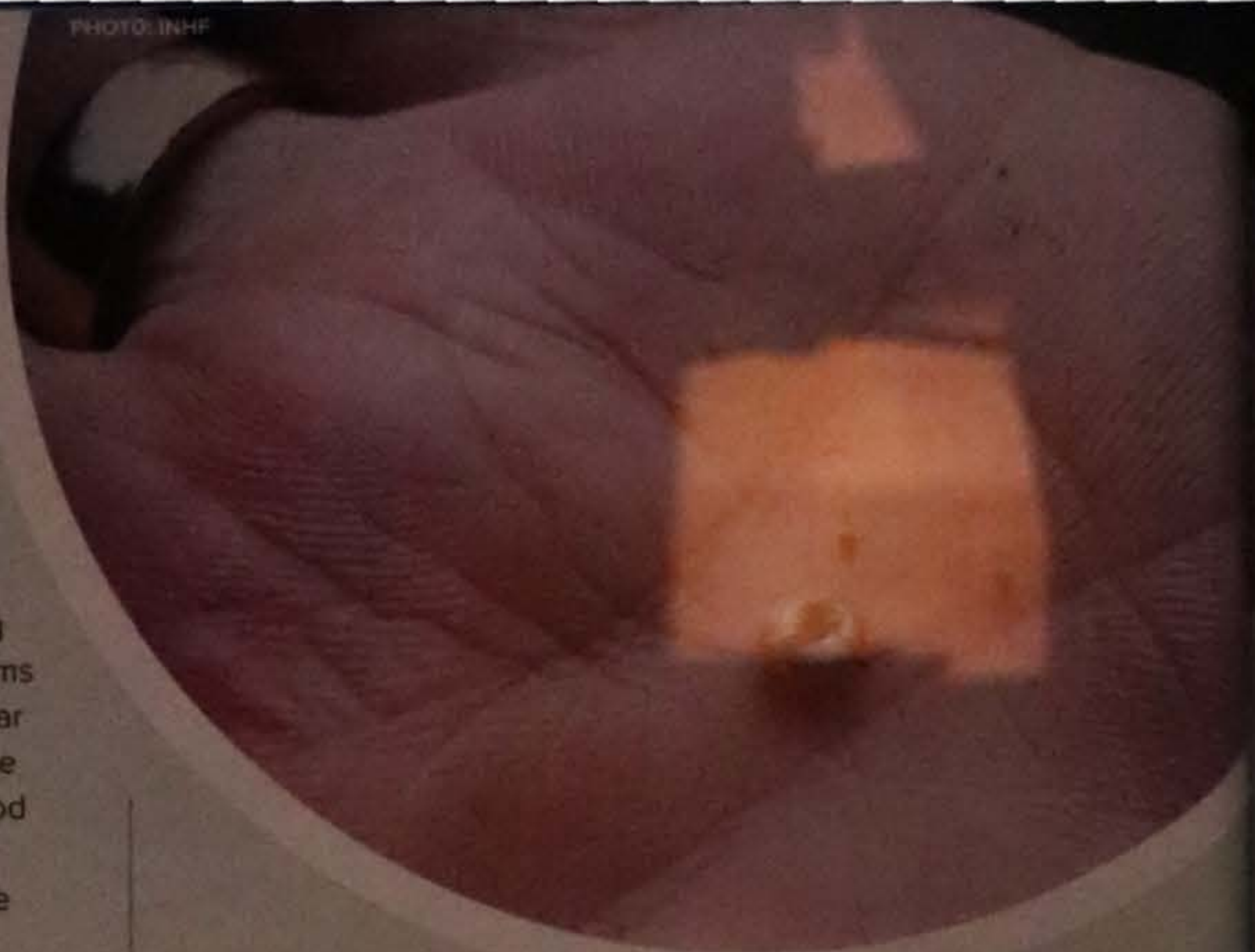


PHOTO: INHF

Iowa Pleistocene Snail

Discus macclintocki

Federally Endangered as of 1978

State Endangered

This minute snail carries a brown or greenish white, tightly coiled shell that is less than ¼" in diameter. It is found on algific talus slopes — rare, moist hillsides where temperatures stay cool even in the summer from air and water flowing past underground ice through cracks in the slope. Nationally, there are only 31 sites where the Pleistocene Snail has been found. All but one of those sites are in Iowa, and those sites are only in Clayton, Clinton, Dubuque, Fayette and Jackson counties.

"Preservation and management of algific talus slope landscapes is vital to protect potential snail populations, as well as other species that need those slopes," said Brian Fankhauser, INHF blufflands director. Management efforts include controlling invasive species like Garlic mustard, bush honeysuckle and European buckthorn; preventing grazing on the steep, fragile slopes that can easily be damaged by livestock walking across them; and preventing logging activities on or across the slopes since dragging logs damages the soils and unique plant communities.

INHF worked in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to hire four temporary technicians in 2014 and six in 2015 for a statewide snail monitoring effort. "These technicians were an integral part of the USFWS's Recovery Plan," said Erin Van Waus, INHF conservation easement director. While INHF has helped protect algific talus slopes in Winneshiek and Allamakee counties, so far there's been no documentation of Pleistocene Snails on those areas. "They won't be there if we don't protect the habitat," said Heather Jobst, INHF senior land conservation director. "It's a first step."

This is one of many species that depend on a very specific habitat, like the Fitch's Elephanthopper that was recently found at INHF's Heritage Valley in Allamakee County. That rare insect is only found in high-quality native prairie.



PHOTO: USFWS

Prairie Bush Clover

Lespedeza leptostachya

Federally Threatened as of 1987

State Threatened

Prairie Bush Clover is in the pea family and is also known as Slender-Leaved Bush Clover. The spindly plant with a silver sheen grows 9-18 inches tall. A loosely arranged open spike of pale pink flowers blooms in mid-July for a short time. Its characteristic silvery green seed pods form even from flowers that don't fully open.

Found in Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota and Wisconsin in dry and tallgrass prairies with damp to well-drained soil, the type of prairie land where prairie bush clover once thrived is the same land that is highly coveted for crop ground. Many surviving populations are clinging to the edges of areas that are too steep for plowing. More than 60 percent of the known populations of prairie bush clover are on private land, where landowners are practicing light grazing, haying or are intentionally preserving a prairie remnant.

Dickinson County Conservation Board added 79 acres to the Judd Wildlife Area in 2013 with INHF's help. This permanently protected a high quality remnant prairie, a tributary of the Little Sioux River and two fens, the rarest type of wetlands found in Iowa. Because the habitats on the property transition from very wet (hydric) to mesic prairie to very dry (xeric), the diversity in both plant and animal species is amazing. Surveys identified the federally threatened prairie bush clover along with three bird species of greatest conservation need, two rare minnows and eleven other plant species of special concern, including the state threatened Desert Biscuitroot. Such rich diversity is worth preserving.



PHOTO: USFWS

Northern Long-Eared Bat

Myotis septentrionalis

Federally Threatened as of 2015

This small and richly furred brown bat is about three inches long with a nine to ten inch wingspan. Its name comes from its ears, which are indeed longer than the ears of other bats in the *Myotis* genus.

This bat's range extends widely, covering the eastern United States from the Florida panhandle up and extending into Canada's lower territories. In the summer you can find long-eared bats roosting in colonies or singly under bark or in cavities and crevasses of trees and snags. Winter hibernation happens in caves or mines.

The largest threat to these bats comes from a fungal disease known as White Nose Syndrome. Populations in the northeastern United States have seen 99% decimation. While there is currently no official Iowa DNR designation for Northern long-eared bats in Iowa, it is listed in the Iowa Wildlife Action Plan as a species of greatest conservation need, recognizing how critical it is to take action before White Nose arrives.

We've learned much about bat needs already from the protection of another federally Endangered Species, the Indiana bat. INHF helped protect the Sodalis Nature Preserve in Hannibal, Mo. — a winter hibernaculum for hundreds of thousands of Indiana bats as well as other bat species, including the long-eared. Long-eared and Indiana bats have been found during a recent survey of the 1,000+-acre Heritage Hills in central Iowa, which is in the process of transferring from INHF to the Iowa DNR. "Managing for one bat species is, luckily, managing for the other," said Ryan Schmidt, INHF land stewardship director. 🦇



PHOTO: USFWS



deep ROOTS

A closer look at remnant prairie, Iowa's rarest landscape.

BY KATY HEGGEN
Communications consultant | kheggen@inhf.org

Heather Jobst has seen her fair share of remnant prairies — more than most. But every time she steps onto one, the effect is still the same.

“There’s something magical about being at those places,” said Jobst, INHF senior land conservation director. “You start thinking about how long it’s been there, about the history of that place. Remnant prairies have a way of bringing us back, of reminding us where we are.”

By simple definition, remnant prairie is true native prairie. Unlike restored or reconstructed prairies, which have been reestablished or returned to prairie, prairie remnants are fragments of the original, pre-settlement prairie landscape.

“First and foremost, it’s a piece that has not been greatly disturbed and has maintained some of its original vegetation,” said Dr. Daryl Smith, founder and former director of the Tallgrass Prairie Center. “The quality of remnants varies considerably, but when I think of remnant prairies, I think of prairies that have remained relatively intact.”

Historically, prairie once covered 75 to 80 percent of Iowa’s landscape. Now, less than 0.1 percent of that original prairie remains, scattered throughout small pockets across the state.

“Native prairie is overwhelmingly rare in Iowa,” said INHF President Joe McGovern. “We must do everything we can to preserve this important part of our natural history that is so fundamental to our future.”

The Loess Hills contain the largest amount

of prairie remnants remaining in Iowa. Pristine native prairies can also be found in the rolling hills of southern and south central Iowa, the prairie pothole region of northern Iowa, and the blufflands of eastern Iowa.

“Remnant prairies tend to be found in areas where the landscape was too steep, rocky or wet to farm,” said John Pearson, an ecologist with the Iowa DNR. “Of course, there are exceptions to those extremes.”

At 240 acres, Hayden Prairie State Preserve in Howard County — a favorite of both Pearson and Smith — is the largest prairie remnant in Iowa outside the Loess Hills. Bursting with an incredible array of wildflowers, prairie grasses and an abundance of wildlife, this public prairie preserve offers an amazing glimpse into Iowa’s prairie past. While the size of Hayden Prairie is unique — remnant prairies in Iowa tend to be small and isolated — the diversity found there is not.

“The ecological diversity in any remnant prairie — regardless of size — is noticeably different,” said INHF Land Stewardship Director Ryan Schmidt. “You see it in the soils, plants and animals. Nowhere else in the state can you find that level of diversity; it’s got it all.”

At minimum, remnant prairies are home to approximately 100 species of prairie plants — some with roots known to reach depths of 20 feet. High quality prairie remnants can contain in excess of 300 species of prairie plants. In contrast, a reconstructed prairie can have between 20–100 plant species. Remnants also provide critical habitat for a wide variety of threatened and endangered wildlife including large and small mammals, birds, pollinators, reptiles and insects.

That diversity, which has developed over thousands of years, is also incredibly difficult to recreate. Soil conditions, micro climate and

◀ *Canada anemone* bloom at Doolittle Prairie State Preserve in Story County. Doolittle Prairie is one of just a handful of untouched remnant prairies remaining in Iowa. Photo by Kerri Sorrell, INHF

the sheer volume of species that manage to coexist are unique to remnants. Native seed can be incredibly difficult to collect due to size — some as small as 100,000 seeds per ounce — and availability, and many varieties are difficult to germinate and grow.

“Prairies are amazingly complex,” Schmidt said. “These ecological communities have been together for so long — the interactions happening within that ecosystem are unbelievable. Remnants are both the model and measurement for success in prairie restoration and reconstruction, but they’re impossible to replicate.”

While remnant prairies occupy a small percentage of Iowa land, the benefits they offer to the larger landscape extend far beyond their own acreage. In addition to providing wildlife habitat, remnants slow and filter water, protect soil health, offer open space and cultural value. They also provide access to native prairie seed, which can be collected to support and expand prairie research and restoration projects.

The scarcity of remnant prairie, coupled with the inherent challenges in and opportunities for prairie restoration, make these beautiful lands a high protection priority for INHF. Prairies may no longer dominate Iowa’s landscape, but their roots run deep, and the remnants that remain are persistent.

“When you consider everything we’ve done to alter the landscape of Iowa and you find a prairie that has persevered, you can’t help but think that there has to be a lot of resiliency in that,” said Jobst. 🐾

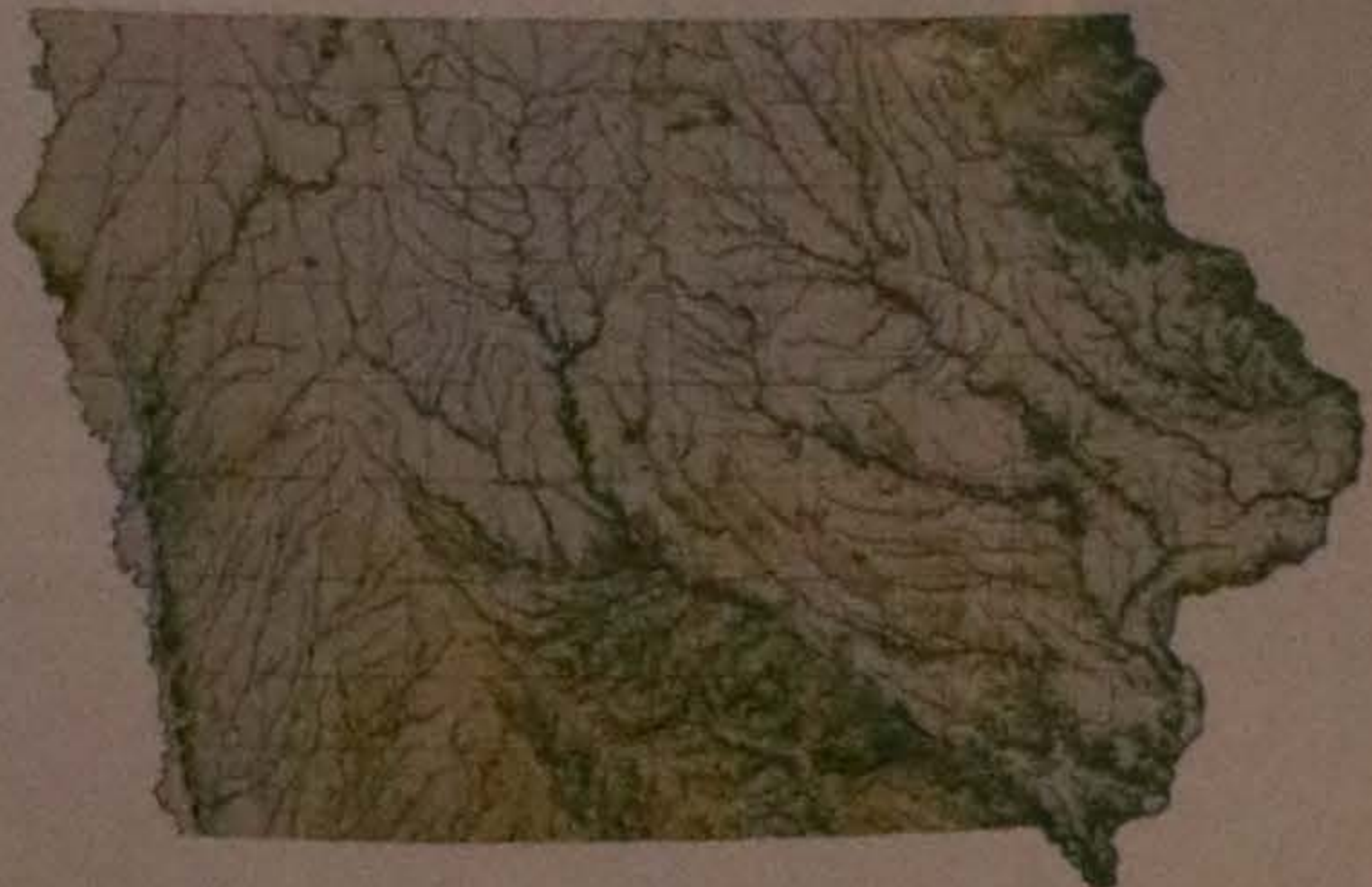
IOWA'S CHANGED LANDSCAPE

Below is a comparison of historic and modern land cover in Iowa. It's estimated that 80 percent of the state was once covered by prairie, the largest percentage in the nation. Today, less than one-tenth of one percent of Iowa's native prairie remains, mostly existing in small, untouched parcels. Maps by INHF.

1830s-1850s (original land survey)



2009



MAP LEGEND

- Prairie (map 1) / Grass/Pasture (map 2)
- Woodlands/Brush
- Wetlands & Rivers
- Corn & soybeans
- Human settlement

EXPLORE IOWA'S REMNANTS

Here's a look at some of our favorite remnant prairies in Iowa.

Doolittle Prairie Preserve

Located in Story County, Doolittle Prairie is a 40-acre expanse of pothole prairie rich in prairie wildflowers and grasses. The property is divided into two tracts, the northern tract, which is owned and managed by the Iowa DNR and Story County Conservation Board, and the southern tract, owned by Story County Conservation Board, which was purchased with the help of INHF.

Turin Prairie

A short one-hour drive from Council Bluffs or Sioux City, Turin Prairie encompasses 467 acres, including 200 acres of high quality native prairie, in the heart of the Loess Hills. Nearly 1,000 people contributed to help INHF and partners permanently protect this pristine prairie.

Bernau Prairie

In 2010, Bernau Prairie in Kossuth County was the largest known unprotected native “black soil” prairie left in Iowa, measuring 125 acres. It gained permanent protection through INHF conservation easements in 2011.

The prairie provides

BY KATY HEGGEN

Communications consultant | kheggen@inhf.org

Climbing up Solitaire Ridge, one is struck by the sheer scale of it. Rising above the River Bluffs Scenic Byway, the limestone escarpment stands out among the surrounding hillsides, woodland and river valleys, a crown of rock atop its ridge.

Summiting that ridge, one encounters another stunning view, not of the valley below — which to be clear, is spectacular — but of the 30-acre remnant prairie that runs down the steep, south-facing slopes overlooking the Upper Iowa River.

“It’s not what people typically think of when they think of northeast Iowa,” said Blufflands Director Brian Fankhauser. “It’s so different from everything else in the area.”

But Solitaire Ridge, also known as Mile Long Prairie, is more representative of parts of the area’s true topography than many realize.

Hillside prairies used to be common in northeast Iowa, especially in Allamakee County, where Solitaire Ridge is located. Over the years, they’ve been invaded by native and non-native trees and brush, which have shaded them out.

“It’s rare to see such a large hill prairie,” said Fankhauser. “The size, quality and location among a complex of other protected land in the area made permanently protecting this place a priority for INHF.”

Solitaire Ridge provides scenic beauty, habitat and open space, but its remnant prairies also provide another incredible resource: native prairie seed.

In recent years, INHF interns, volunteers and staff have harvested native prairie seed from Solitaire Ridge and nearby Heritage Valley. Last year, Fankhauser and Blufflands Assistant Jered Bourquin used that seed to plant 1.5 acres of prairie on former cropland below the ridge. That planting was expanded to include an additional 1.5 acres this spring. Eventually, five acres will be planted to prairie.

The project is a partnership between INHF, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and the Prairie Resource Center. Seed collected at Solitaire Ridge will be sent to the Prairie Research Center to be stored, cleaned and redistributed to other prairie restorations in the area. Not only does this aid those projects, it creates a bridge between them.

“Prairies can be pretty isolated,” Fankhauser said. “You can never recreate those remnants, but by taking seed from this site and planting it in some of those projects, we can help reconnect them.”

Standing on top of Solitaire Ridge, you can’t but help but ponder the significance of the place. And because the prairie provides, more of Iowa is beginning to look like this once again. 🌿

Solitaire Ridge got its name from the Townsend Solitaire, a songbird rarely seen in Iowa, spotted on the property by retired Iowa DNR Botanist Dean Roosa.

▲ Located west of Waukon in Allamakee County, Solitaire Ridge, also known as “Mile Long Prairie,” encompasses nearly 30 acres of remnant prairie running down steep, south facing slopes adjacent to the Upper Iowa River.

BELOW: Timber rattlesnakes, one of three rattlesnakes found in Iowa, hide in the cool crevices of a cedar tree. Photos by INHF



COMMUNITY *meets* CONSERVATION

Gunderson Nature Park in Eldora is bringing young and old together outside.

BY LISA HEIN
Senior Director for Conservation Programs
lheing@inhf.org



The 12-acre setting that is now Gunderson Nature Park in Eldora has had a variety of purposes since Bob and Mary Lou Gunderson bought the land in the 1960s.

The Gundersons initially ran a cow and calf operation on the land, "to help our kids learn about hard work, agriculture and operating a business," said Bob. After a drop in the cattle market, the land became a Christmas tree farm and then transitioned into prairie and wetland: a private outdoor adventure area, and habitat once familiar to Hardin County.

Having grown up playing outdoors and in the woods, both Bob and Mary value nature as a place to play, grow and learn. As a businessman, Bob believes that access to public outdoor recreation areas attract potential employees and retain a quality workforce.

Today, this re-created native ecosystem is no longer limited to private access. It has become a public nature park for young and old to play, walk, listen and explore. Located next to Pine Lake State Park and the Iowa River Greenbelt, the park weaves nature into the edge of town

Pine Lake State Park

Gunderson Woods

Gunderson Nature Park

In spring of 2016, individual volunteers and local high schoolers helped tackle invasive plant species and plant over 300 trees at Gunderson Nature Park in Eldora. Photo by INHF, map by INHF



Bob and Mary Lou Gunderson dreamed of a community space where residents could enjoy the outdoors. Bob sees experiences to get outside as vital to retaining families and workers in small town Iowa. Their dream became a reality in 2015 when Gunderson Nature Park opened to the public in Eldora, in city limits right next to Pine Lake State Park. *Photos by INHF*



while serving as a gateway to the state park.

“We’re very proud of the efforts that groups, individuals and the county have pursued to protect wild areas along the Iowa River Greenbelt over the years,” said Bob. “This project has been one of the most satisfying activities we’ve ever been involved in.”

In the last couple of years, the site has changed dramatically: While the expanded prairie and savanna restoration dominate the site, the park also offers a paved loop trail and informational displays for visitors. Last year, volunteers helped plant over 300 trees at the park. Plans for this coming year call for establishing a wetland-viewing platform, and placing climbing boulders and a few benches along the trail. There is plenty of restored habitat that offers free-range fun for school kids to explore; and the paved trail provides a secure walking facility for all, especially some older and mobility-challenged persons who live in the neighborhood.

The concepts of nature play and the bond between human health and spending time outdoors inspired the park design prepared by Ritland + Kuiper Landscape Architects. Reduced stress, improved focus and creativity, faster healing, and increased environmental literacy are just some of the many benefits of getting outdoors.

With less than 1% of the land in Hardin County in public ownership, having easily accessible places for all ages and income

levels is vital for human health and wellbeing. Gunderson Nature Park helps bring nature a little closer to home. 🌿

Park improvements and the transition to public ownership is being guided by INHF and the City of Eldora with considerable financial support from public and private sources, including a state Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) grant, Hardin County Community Endowment Foundation, Barlow Family Foundation, Iowa Grocery Association, 100+ Women Who Care – Hardin County, the Throssel Family, Wood Family Foundation, over 120 individuals and Bob and Mary Lou Gunderson.

Gunderson Nature Park

Hardin County



LAND: 12 acres of former agricultural ground transitioned into a community green space, bordering Pine Lake State Park, Gunderson Woods and the Iowa River Greenbelt

SPECIAL FEATURES: Prairie and wetland reconstructions, paved trails, tree plantings, informational displays, bird and wetland species

CONSERVATION TIP

Showers bring need for rain gardens

In many communities, on both commercial and residential properties, you may be seeing more rain gardens. The goal of rain gardens is to intercept water from impervious surfaces. They can be beautiful, are easily installed and can filter the water that runs off your roof or downspout. But before you start building, there are a couple of things to keep in mind.



Rain gardens are just one way for homeowners to install conservation practices in their yard. Gardens help filter excess water and reduce run-off.

The basic purpose of a rain garden, at least in urban areas, is to slow down and absorb excess water to reduce flooding, yard damage and runoff and filter pollutants.

"Rain gardens are one way that residential dwellers can do something for conservation in their own backyard," said Lisa Hein, INHF senior director for conservation programs. "A rain garden helps to provide a sponge for the water coming off your roof, from the downspout, driveways and patios before entering the storm sewer and river."

When planting your rain garden, native grasses and flowers work best, as they grow deep roots that absorb water and can pull moisture from the soil when it's dry. You can also include species that bloom year round, but be sure that they tolerate periodic wet conditions. By planting rain gardens, communities and landowners are helping to improve Iowa's water quality. Storm water runoff can carry pollutants, sediment and litter directly into rivers, lakes and creeks, even if there's not a body of water nearby. By absorbing potential runoff your yard produces, rain gardens help limit the high and low flows of rivers that can erode soil or cause banks to flood.

Rain gardens aren't just beautiful landscaping projects — they can be successful tools for conservation that brighten up your property. If you want to find out more about how to create your own rain garden, see the Iowa Rain Garden Design and Installation Manual at www.iowaagriculture.gov/press/pdfs/RainGardenManual.pdf.

LEAVING A LEGACY

Just the right fit

Robert Eller enjoyed several interactions with INHF's work over the years — mostly having to do with the waters, woodlands and bluffs of northeast Iowa. Among those were the projects expanding Effigy Mounds National Monument, INHF's ongoing land protection efforts along the Upper Iowa River and INHF's decades-long focus on safeguarding the Mississippi River Blufflands.

Last year, we received word of Mr. Eller's passing and his having named INHF a beneficiary of his estate. He'd specified that he wanted his bequest to go toward "land acquisition purposes for a worthy heritage project." What more natural place to direct his gift than toward Heritage Valley (pictured) on the Upper Iowa River? Here, through his legacy, he joins others in protecting a magnificently wild place that will connect people to nature through INHF for years to come. His legacy of beauty and wildness will enrich lives.

— CHERI GRAUER, Donor relations director



TRIBUTE GIFTS

IN MEMORY OF

Our four Allamakee County Parents
Janice Barr
Jack Bruch
Clarence Bitterman
Phil Bloch
Patricia Breimeyerich
Richard Brown
David Buchanan
Aric & Ryan Campbell
Harold "Bud" Carpenter
Kathryn "Kate" Caughron
LTE (Rep David C. Cottingham)

Norma Covey
Charlie Coffer
Becky Dolecheck
Robert William Dyar
Norma Field
Roger Fisher
Cynthia Levy
Benjamin F. Gingham, Jr.
Douglas Hamilton
Barbara Ann Harris
Keith Alan Jones
Lester N. Knudson
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Ronald D. McGee

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Lucy Moore Butcher
Neil Joseph Murphy
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Roland & Virginia Nelson
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Robert V. Olson
James P. Pipet
Dale E. Reedy
Emma Roskam
Kent Sheeley
John F. Shephard III
Jon Stoege

Mary Sytsma
Murry & Lizzie Sytsma
Marty Thobe
Nancy Thompson
Marjorie Veenma VanZee
Robert Warland
Phyllis Willis
Madene Zarr

IN HONOR OF

Mark Ackerson
John Biege
Bob Boedensteimer
Dandy Brown

Bruce Ecker
Larry & Rose Hilgendorf
Joe and Linda Jerome
Laurie Klosterbock
Gary & Carol Lehman
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Bret McFarlin & Teva and Flynn Dawson
Pat Scharbaum
James and Janet Sutherland
Barb Thompson
Lynne Wallace
Ron & Shirley Webb

Find more Iowa places to explore at www.inhf.org/blog

Greenway connects two state parks

BY HALEY HODGES

Communications intern | comminternhaley@inhf.org

This summer and fall, enjoy Iowa's quintessential luscious greenways along the Sauk Rail Trail in western Iowa. The trail provides an escape into vivid and changing landscapes while running 33 miles through five cities, two counties and two state parks.

This year, the trail is celebrating its tenth anniversary as a part of the National Trails System.

"To see the community ownership of this trail in continuing to care for it, to add to it, to promote it, to organize rides on it and really treat it as a treasure of their region says a lot about the appreciation that people have for this trail," said Andrea Boulton, INHF trails and greenways director.

The trail is open to bikers, pedestrians, joggers, roller skaters and in the winter allows snowmobiling and cross-country skiing. Following the popular trend of converting out-of-commission railways into trails, a portion of Sauk Rail Trail features an old railroad bed.

The trail takes users along the Middle Raccoon River, crossing it



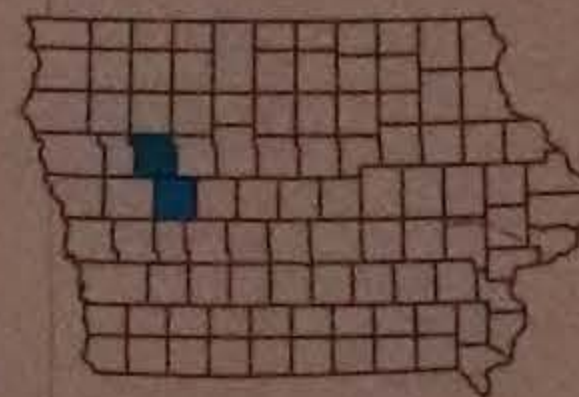
Running through Carroll and Sac counties, the Sauk Rail Trail totals 33 miles and connects two state parks in western Iowa. Photo by Robert Buman

on multiple occasions. The trip passes by fields of wind turbines, crops, flowers and areas that seem so deep within nature that users may forget they were passing through a town just minutes before. Along with Swan Lake and Blackhawk State Park, the trail passes Wall Lake and the Hazel Brush Wildlife Area.

Other features along the trail include camping facilities and beaches at either of the state park endpoints, as well as local restaurants throughout the communities along the route. 🚲

Sauk Rail Trail

Carroll and Sac counties

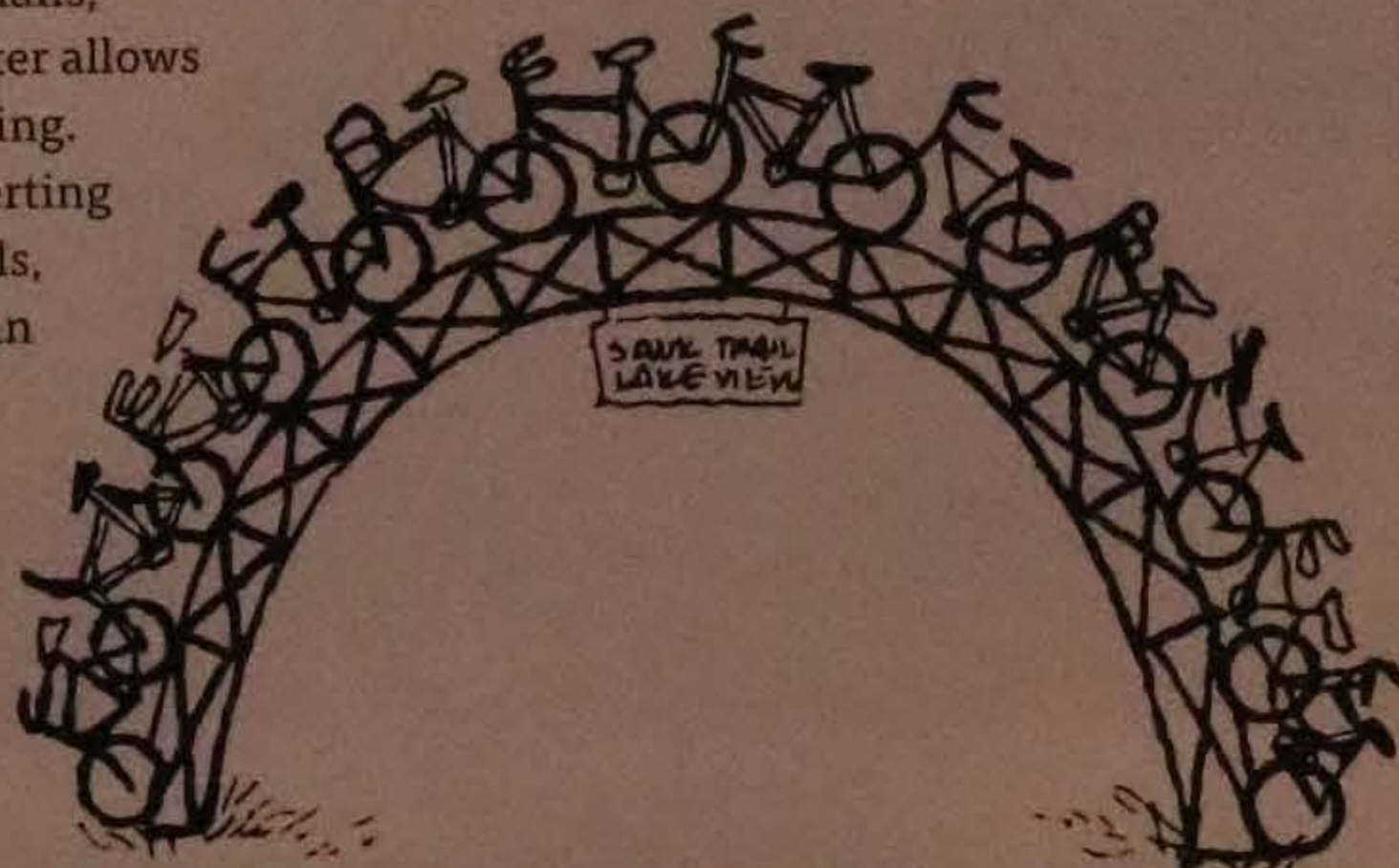


LAND: 33-mile trail connecting Swan Lake State Park to Blackhawk State Park

SPECIAL FEATURES:

Runs through the Hazelbrush Wildlife Area, as well as several natural prairies, wetlands, timber, and agricultural land

ILLUSTRATION:
ANDREA PIEKARCZYK





Iowa
Natural Heritage
Foundation

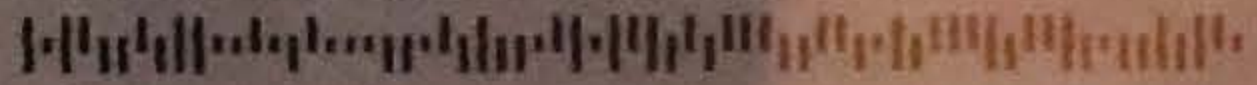
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Cumulonimbus clouds stretch out over the landscape during a July sunset. These towering clouds often signify intense weather approaching, and can grow to 39,000 feet in height with the assistance of warm weather updrafts.
Photo by Craig Hemsath

Leave a legacy of clean water, healthy soil and beautiful outdoor places for future generations.

To see how including INHF in your will or trust can help make your vision for Iowa a reality, contact Cheri Grauer at cgrauer@inhf.org or 515-288-1846.



Iowa Natural Heritage

Protecting and restoring Iowa's land, water and wildlife.

**The value of
public land**



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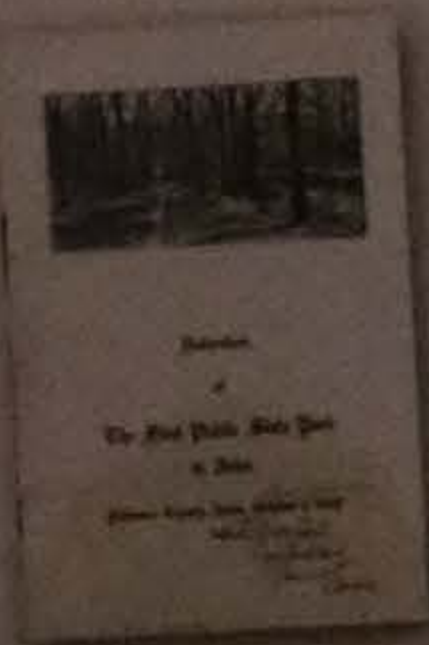
RECEIVED

A gift to Iowa's future



JOE MCGOVERN
President

Not too long ago, an INHF member and conservation easement landowner shared with us an original program from the dedication of Backbone State Park. It was 100 years ago, in 1917, that the State Fish and Game warden recommended that part of the hunters license fund be applied to the purchase of this area in Delaware County. That set in motion the establishment and dedication of Iowa's first state park.



None of the people that helped establish Backbone are still alive, but we can visit that park today thanks to their vision. At the time, they were figuring out public land protection before there was a path to do it. It was the same reason INHF was founded in 1979. Cities, county

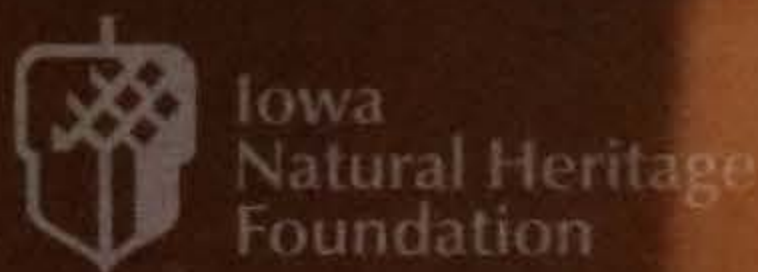
conservation boards and the Iowa DNR weren't always able to act fast enough to secure land that would offer great public benefit, so INHF was created to fill that role. That remains at the heart of our mission: partnering with organizations and landowners to permanently protect important land to benefit water, wildlife and people.

That is why we continue to push hard for funding the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund. The 2018 legislative session will start soon, and the legislature has the opportunity to meet our state's biggest natural resources challenges — water quality, soil health, wildlife habitat and the demand for more parks and trails — by raising the sales tax and funding the trust fund.

In this issue, we celebrate public land in Iowa and look to the future. Public land is a gift to future generations. With your support, and your vision, we continue to help make that legacy possible. Thank you.

ON THE COVER

An expansive Cottonwood tree makes its presence known in a floodplain timber at Ft. Defiance State Park in Emmet County.
Photo by Daniel Ruf



Protecting and restoring Iowa's land, water and wildlife.

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A History of REAP

Iowa's Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) program is one of the most important funding sources for natural resource protection in Iowa. Nearing 30 years since it began, INHF takes a look at how the historic program came to be, and the impact it's had on Iowa's communities.

DEPARTMENTS

- 2 Opening Thoughts
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- 6 Field Notes
- 22 Looking Out for Iowa
- 23 Get Outdoors

8

A closer look: Public land in Iowa

Only a small percentage of Iowa's 36 million acres are open to the public. INHF takes a closer look at what that land looks like, how Iowans get outdoors and the value public land brings to the state.

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River rediscovery

It's been a hard few decades for some of Iowa's river communities. Now, these towns are going back to the river, hoping tourism and natural resource protection will revitalize the places they call home.

13

The trail factor

Trails are more than just connection routes — they provide multiple benefits to Iowa's communities. Now, Iowa-based companies and organizations are recognizing the value trails bring to their customers and employees — and are investing in Iowa's trail future.

18

Liquid assets

John and Susan Aschenbrenner were looking to diversify their investments. The asset they acquired — 212 acres in Clarke County — is now poised to protect Osceola's drinking water and increase public land.

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The land we love

What does public land mean to us as Iowans? An INHF member explores his relationship with public land in his area.

“The world seems likely to last a long, long time, and we ought to make a provision for the future.”

- James Bryce

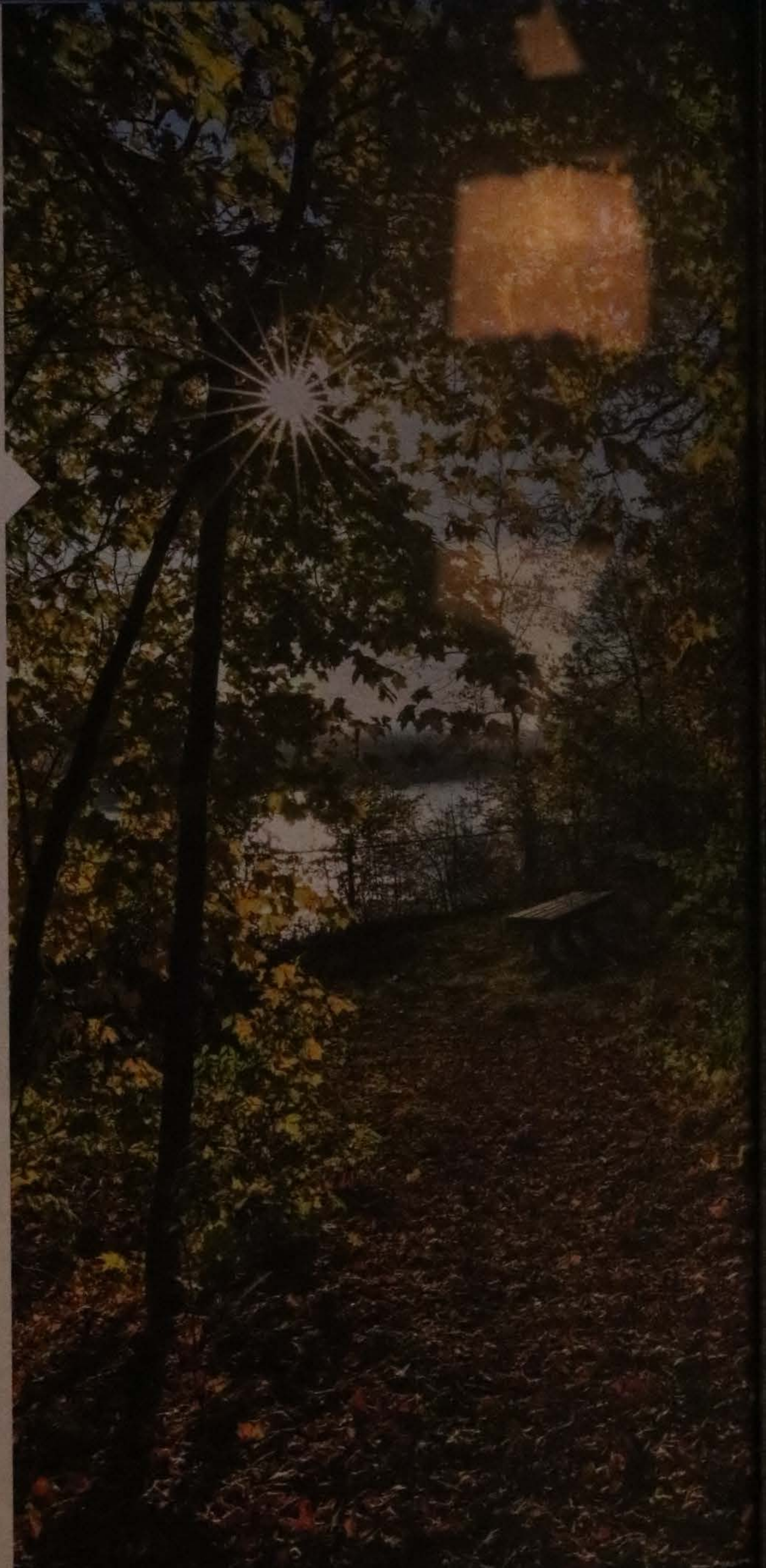
Ambassador Bryce said the words above in complimenting the United States on the creation of its first national parks. They were also cited as inspiration for Iowa’s state board of conservation when setting out to establish a state parks system.

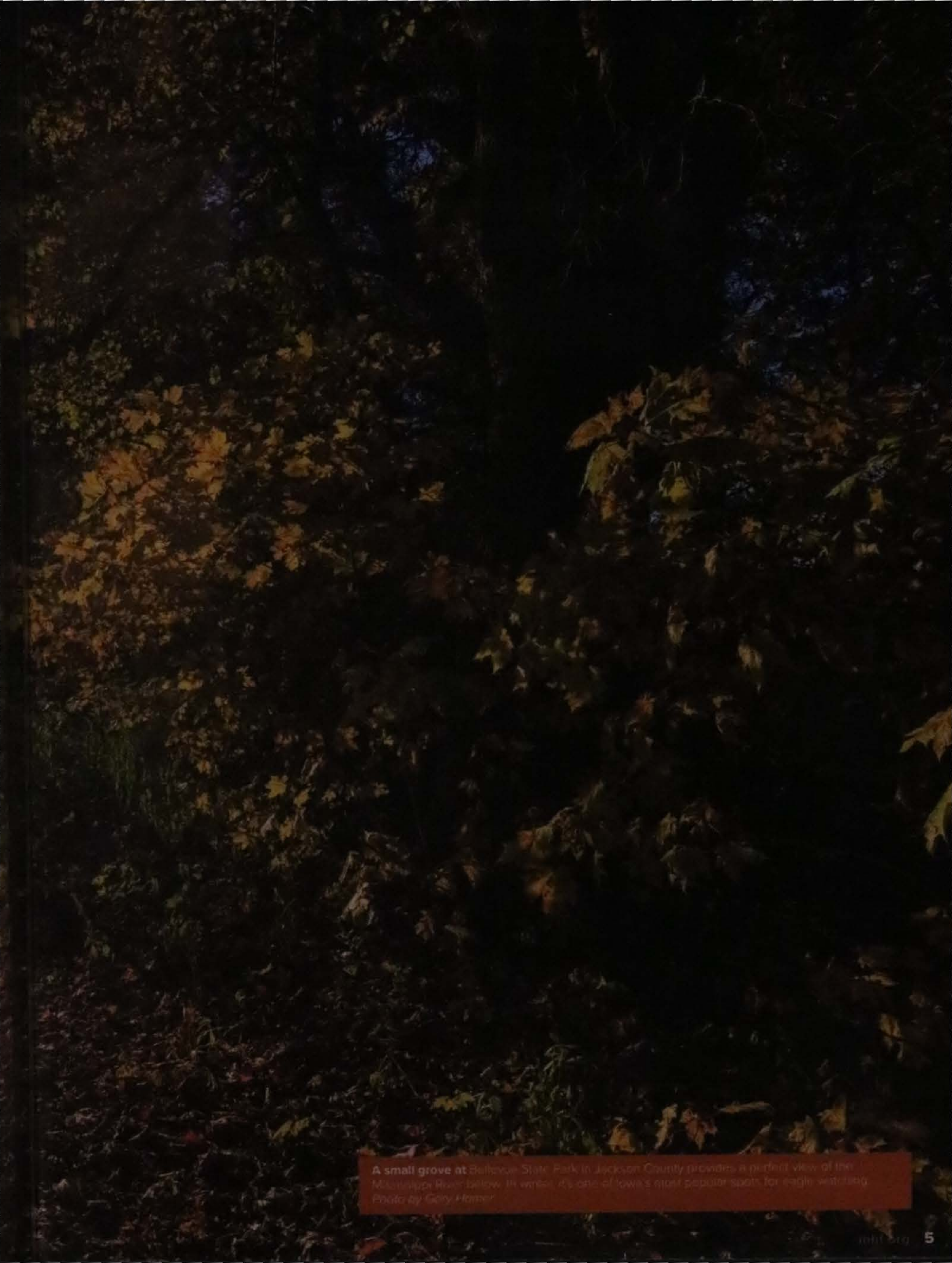
The board’s secretary, Edgar R. Harlan, wrote, “...in 1919, there were not ten acres of public woods, waterlandings or open prairies, in the state, unless in cities. Not a game could be played, a shot fired, a race run, a fly cast or a lunch spread, unless in cities or on dusty highways unless the enjoyment was a trespass or was through the consent of private owners.”

So, nearly a century ago, the commission set out to acquire lands — from willing sellers or donors, just as today — “to increase their scope and restore their uses for science, art and recreation.”

Iowa’s state parks are the wild gems in a state rich with natural resources. We are fortunate for the foresight of Iowans like these and the dedicated work of their successors.

— JOE JAYJACK,
Communications director





A small grove at Balcones State Park in Jackson County provides a perfect view of the Mississippi River below. In winter, it's one of Iowa's most popular spots for eagle-watching.
Photo by Gary Hamer

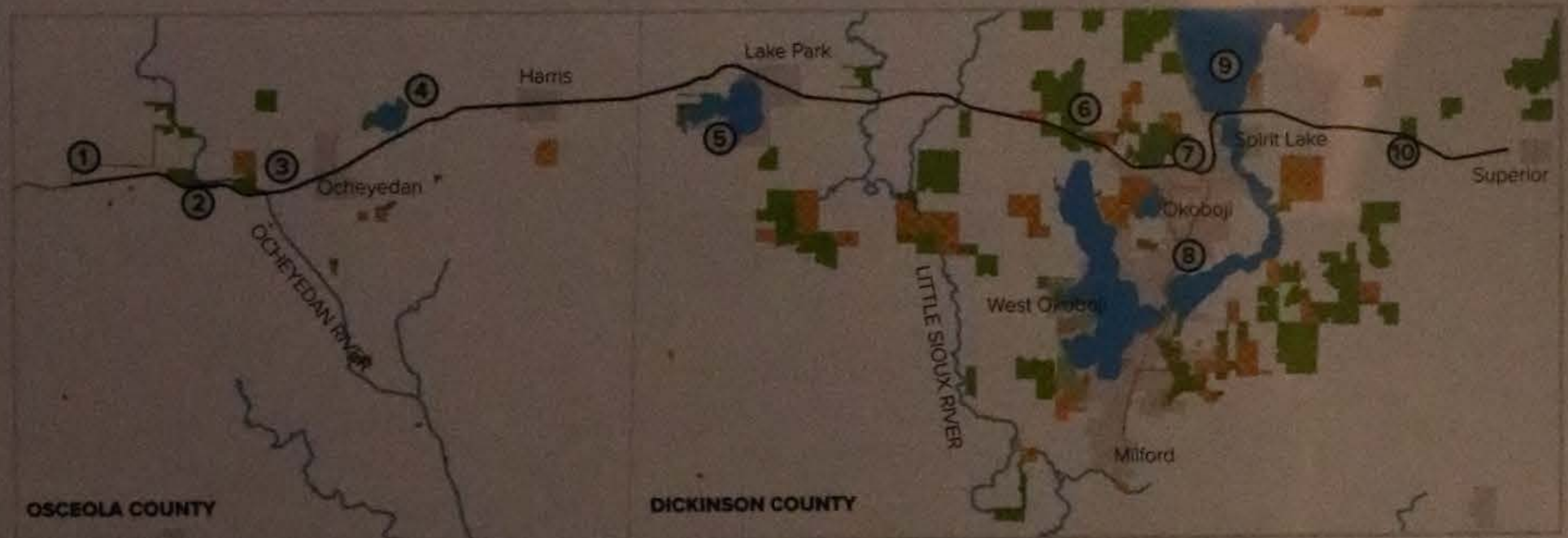
New greenway will connect eight public areas in Dickinson County

After nearly a decade of coordination, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation has transferred ownership of 37 miles of corridor slated to become a new trail and greenway system in Dickinson and Osceola counties.

"The Iowa Great Lakes area is already a destination, so adding an extensive trail will give people one more reason to go visit," said Andrea Boulton, INHF trails and greenways director. "You don't have to just go to the lakes anymore, you can start in Sibley or Allendorf and make a whole weekend out of it."

In the expanded northwest Iowa trail network, the east-west trail connects with the existing Spine Trail, which originally connected Milford to Spirit Lake and is expanding along Big Spirit Lake to link with the Jackson County Trail in Minnesota. On its western end, the new corridor will connect with the existing Winkel Trail between Allendorf and Sibley, creating a network to take users anywhere from Sibley to Superior and through the Iowa Great Lakes region.

This new project will connect eight public natural areas in the region including Welch Lake Wildlife Management Area (WMA), the Jemmerson Slough Complex, East Okoboji Slough, Rush Lake and Rush Lake WMA and the Spring Run Wetland Complex. 🌿



LEGEND

- Public recreation area
- Land previously protected by INHF
- Lakes/Rivers
- Dickinson-Osceola Trail (planned route)
- City limits

TRAILSIDE POINTS OF INTEREST

- ① Ed Winkel Memorial Trail
- ② Wolter's Prairie
- ③ Swolve Wildlife Management Area (WMA)
- ④ Rush Lake & Rush Lake WMA
- ⑤ Silver Lake, Silver Lake WMA, Trapper's Bay State Park, Silver Lake Fen State Preserve
- ⑥ Welch Lake WMA
- ⑦ Jemmerson Slough
- ⑧ Spine Trail
- ⑨ Spirit Lake & East Okoboji Slough WMA
- ⑩ Spring Run Wetland Complex

Melanie Louis new volunteer coordinator

INHF is excited to welcome Melanie Louis as its new volunteer coordinator. In her new role, Melanie will organize opportunities for people across the state to connect with the land and each other.

"I am excited to continue building the volunteer program, open INHF to new partnerships and explore ways to get more people involved with INHF," Melanie said.

Melanie first worked for INHF as a statewide

land stewardship summer intern in 2011. She later joined INHF's land stewardship department. Through that work, she discovered her true passion: getting people outdoors.

"I've had the privilege of working with so many bright and motivated students through INHF's internship program," Melanie said. "Having had that deeply rewarding experience, I am looking forward to creating meaningful relationships with our volunteers and furthering INHF's mission together." 🌿



Green Island Levee District protects against future flooding

After two levees broke along the Maquoketa River in Jackson County, local government began exploring more natural solutions to help mitigate future flooding.

"Our rivers historically had natural buffers to help hold water during floods," said Ross Baxter, INHF land projects director. "Returning these areas to their original state saves costs on infrastructure and protects from future flood damage."

Rather than pay to fix the levees, INHF worked with the Iowa DNR and Army Corps to expand the Green Island Wildlife Management Area. Together, INHF and the Iowa DNR bought and restored four properties along the river to recreate the area as a floodplain.

"Ultimately it made more financial sense to buy, protect and restore the land than fix the levee and continue to farm the flood-prone land," said Baxter. 🌿

Davenport woman wins INHF's Hagie Heritage Award

Davenport resident Kathy Wine is the 2017 Lawrence and Eula Hagie Heritage Award winner, an award given annually by INHF. The award recognizes Iowans who have demonstrated outstanding commitment to conservation and the natural environment and inspire others to do the same.

"There's an opportunity in Iowa to create a culture of conservation if we stay at it," Wine said. "When we started recycling everybody got involved in it and when they do it now, they feel like environmentalists. If we can get to that critical mass with conservation, we'll be doing the same thing — creating a culture in which everyone considers themselves a conservationist."

Wine started River Action, a volunteer organization turned non-profit focused on the environmental, cultural and economic vitality of the Mississippi River. Wine and River Action's work connects the Quad Cities community to the Mississippi River and promotes improved water quality and environmental education.

"For over 30 years, Kathy's vision, hard work and capacity to engage others has raised awareness of the Mississippi's resources, enhanced access to the river, improved and

Pheasants Forever helps protect public hunting and recreation area in Mahaska County

Local sportsmen, conservation groups and private donors were able to help protect a sizable area for public hunting and recreation in Mahaska County this summer, with partnership from Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation.

The 202-acre addition to the Russell Wildlife Management Area is adjacent to the Mahaska County Conservation headquarters and protects significant floodplain habitat along the South Skunk River. The Mahaska County Pheasants Forever (PF) chapter led fundraising efforts to make the property public.

"This property was enrolled in the



Kathy Wine of Davenport is this year's Hagie Heritage Award winner, nominated for her work along the Mississippi River.

protected its ecosystem and deepened the commitment of local Iowans and others to the Big River's protection," wrote Daniel Ray, one of Wine's nominators.

The Hagie Heritage Award was established by Janice Hagie Shindel and Ila Jeanne Hagie Logan of in honor of their parents, Lawrence and Eula Hagie. 🌿

Conservation Reserve Program, and this protection effort ensures that this great natural area stays permanently protected for habitat, hunting and recreation," said Ross Baxter, INHF land projects director.

The project received Habitat Stamp funding, a federal grant program administered through states for game habitat protection. Support from the Mahaska County Conservation Board and the Mahaska County PF chapter was joined by PF chapters from Warren, Marshall and Jasper counties, as well as from the Iowa State University, North Polk and Cedar Creek chapters. Additional support came from the Pella Rolscreen Foundation, the English River Chapter of Whitetails Unlimited and a national grant from Whitetails Unlimited. 🌿

A CLOSER LOOK:

PUBLIC LAND IN IOWA

What does public land look like in Iowa? And what value does it bring to the state? A closer look at where Iowans get outdoors, the economic impact of public recreation lands and how Iowa compares to other states.

BY BEN GRAUER
Outreach intern | outreachinternben@inhf.org

LAND USAGE IN IOWA

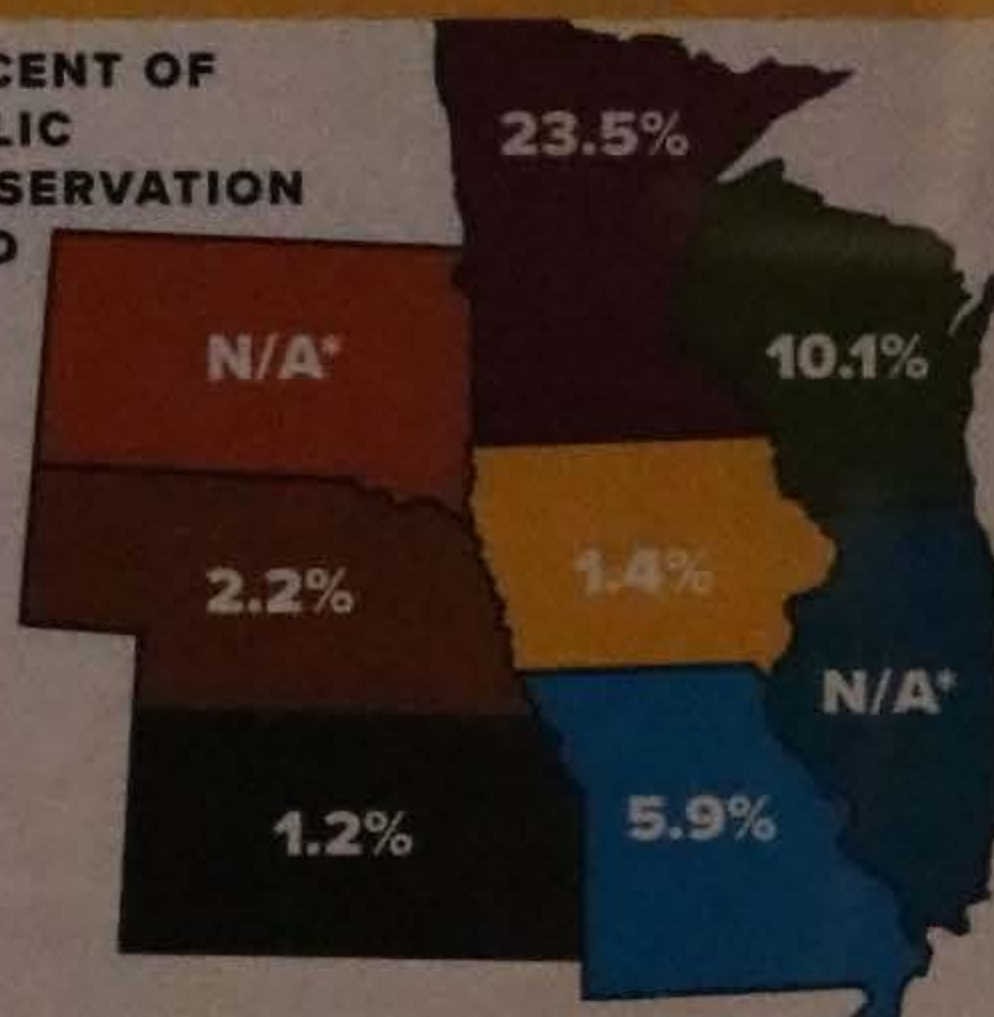
LAND TYPE	ACRES	%
Corn/soybeans	24,750,000	68.7
Pasture/Hay	3,104,500	8.6
Developed	2,668,000	7.4
Forest	2,486,000	6.9
CRP/WRP	1,787,000	5.0
Wetland	672,000	1.9
Open water	501,200	1.4
Other	34,174	0.1
Total	36,002,874	100



Source: Iowa State Extension & Outreach, USDA

HOW DOES IOWA COMPARE?

PERCENT OF PUBLIC CONSERVATION LAND



PUBLIC CONSERVATION LAND (IN ACRES)

STATE	STATE-OWNED	FEDERAL**	TOTAL
Minnesota	8,563,900	3,495,893	12,059,793
Wisconsin	1,724,160	1,793,699	3,517,859
South Dakota	N/A*	2,649,416	-
Missouri	1,636,598	975,000	2,611,598
Nebraska	545,309	546,976	1,092,285
Kansas	366,068	272,987	639,055
Iowa	372,000	122,650	494,650
Illinois	N/A*	411,319	-

*State data not available

**Land owned by the Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service and Department of Defense.

Sources: Congressional Research Service, "Federal Land Ownership: Overview and Data"; Iowa Wildlife Action plan, 2015; Nebraska Game and Parks; Wisconsin DNR; Minnesota DNR; Missouri Department of Conservation; Kansas Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

IOWANS & THE OUTDOORS

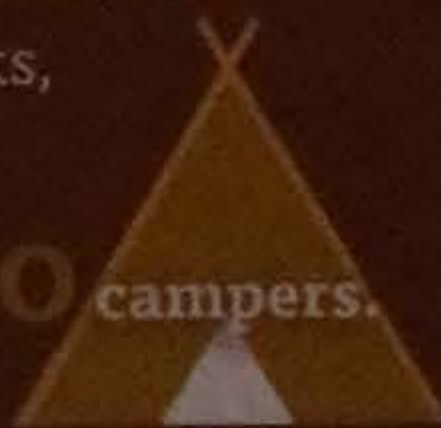
In 2016, there were

15,543,000

visits to Iowa state parks,

including

326,000 campers.



MOST VISITED STATE PARKS IN IOWA

- Gull Point State Park complex**
Okoboji, Dickinson Co.
- Lake Manawa State Park**
Council Bluffs, Pottawattamie Co.
- McIntosh Woods State Park**
Ventura/Clear Lake, Cerro Gordo Co.
- Lake Ahquabi State Park**
Indianola, Warren Co.
- Lake Macbride State Park**
Safon, Johnson Co.
- Ledges State Park**
Boone, Boone Co.
- Viking Lake State Park**
Stanon, Montgomery Co.
- Big Creek State Park**
Polk City, Polk Co.
- George Wyth State Park**
Waterloo, Black Hawk Co.
- Honey Creek Resort**
Moravia, Appanoose Co.

Source: Iowa Department of Natural Resources

● Only **46%** of Iowa children live with in a half-mile of a public park. Studies have shown that children with access to parks and programming experience less significant increases in overall body mass index (BMI), an indicator of health.



PUBLIC LAND'S ECONOMIC IMPACT

Outdoor recreation in Iowa supports

83,000
direct jobs.

and

\$8.7 billion

in consumer spending annually.

Source: Outdoor Industry Association

The **#1** and **#3** reasons visitors come to Iowa are for

Scenery/Nature
(80.7%) and
Outdoor adventure
(62.4%)

Source: Iowa Economic Development Authority

NATURAL RESOURCE FUNDING

There are currently

\$673.3 million

in unfunded water quality, soil conservation, outdoor recreation, trail and wildlife habitat projects across the state.

Source: Iowa's Water and Land Legacy coalition, 2016

When funded by the Iowa legislature, the **Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund** would provide

\$187.5 million
annually

for conservation and recreation in Iowa.

Watershed Protection: **\$26.3M** Lake Restoration: **\$13.1M**
Soil Conservation and Water Protection: **\$37.5M** Trails: **\$18.7M**
Natural Resources/Public land: **\$43.1M** REAP: **\$24.4M**
Local conservation partnerships: **\$24.4M**

BACK TO THE RIVER

Long ago, Iowa's booming towns were built on rivers. Now, after a hard few decades and steady decline, those same rivers are giving communities new life.

BY KATY HEGGEN
Communications consultant | kheggen@inhf.org

“If you build it,
they will come.”

This familiar “Field of Dreams” reference tends to elicit eye-rolls from long-time Iowans who have heard their fair share of fictitious Shoeless Joe Jackson quotes.

But as more small towns across the state begin to look to the natural resources in their own backyard as an opportunity to revitalize their community, it’s hard not to think that perhaps Ray Kinsella was on to something.

“Most residential towns in Iowa were founded on a river or railroad,” said INHF Trails and Greenways Director Andrea Boulton. “The role of both — especially in small towns — has changed. Often you’re left with areas in the middle of town that aren’t as appealing as they could be.”

But the potential is there. And with a little vision, proper support and a lot of determination, natural features that once brought life and economic activity to these communities, can again.

Asking “what if?”

That is precisely the question that was posed in Manchester, a charming town on the banks of the Maquoketa River in northeastern Iowa. In 2008, a small group of residents formed a committee to make city improvements. During a brainstorming session, the seed of an idea — a whitewater park right through the heart of downtown — took root.

“They didn’t want Manchester to become a ghost town,” said Molly Hanson, executive director of Iowa Rivers Revival, a nonprofit river education and advocacy organization that awarded Manchester ‘Iowa River Town of the Year’ in 2015, the same year the park opened. “They took a look around and asked ‘what are our assets? What can we embrace and enhance that’s already here?’ When you look at all the options, the ones that tend to rise to the top are natural resources.”

And embrace it they did. Manchester set to work building the largest whitewater park in Iowa, an 800-foot course and access point that invites all — recreationists and spectators alike — to get back to the river. By removing the existing low head dam (structures that disrupt the natural flow of rivers and can be dangerous for river users), constructing the course and restoring the shoreline,

Manchester was able to reclaim its riverbank to benefit conservation, outdoor recreation opportunities, the community and the local economy.

Such was also the case in Charles City, a quaint town on the Cedar River in northeast Iowa, which became the home of Iowa’s first whitewater park in 2011. Last year, the town was an overnight stop for both RAGBRAI and Project AWARE (A Watershed Awareness River Expedition).

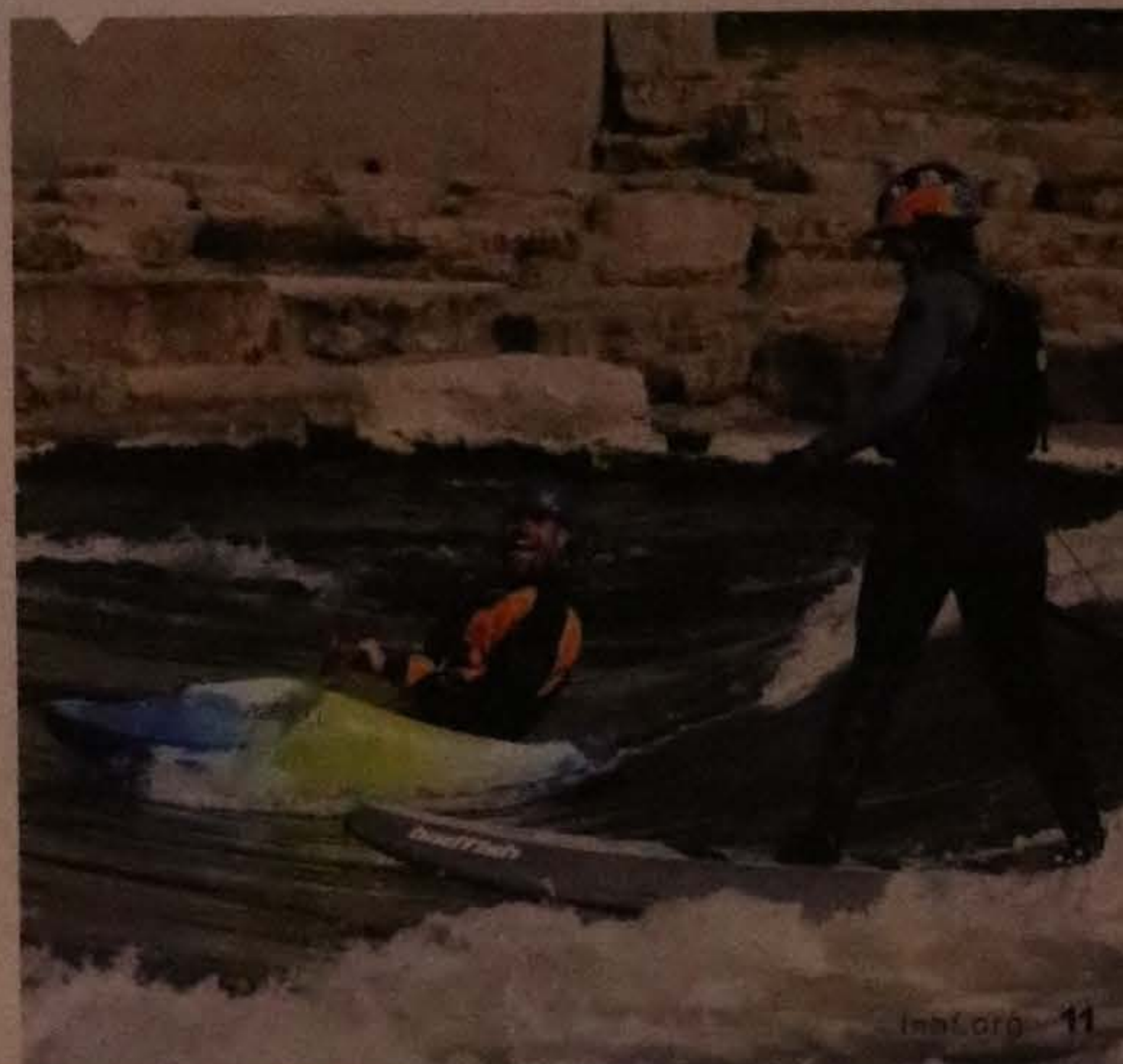
Elkader, an inviting town in northeast Iowa along the Turkey River, opened an impressive course in 2014. The project, which was seized as an opportunity to reclaim the town’s relationship to the river following the record-setting 2008 floods, is yet another example of Iowa ingenuity.

“The river has always been there, it’s not something brand new,” said Hanson. “It’s a shift. It’s an adaptation. They’re re-embracing an old identity.”

On all three projects, residents and city officials worked together to build community support, source technical assistance and secure funding from state grants and private donations — many from the community itself.

“Those are the projects we’ve seen be most successful,” said Boulton. “When the community invests their time,

A whitewater course constructed on the Cedar River in Charles City is helping Iowans rediscover a neglected water corridor. Paddlers, tubers and anglers alike take to the rapids for a bit of fun and new experience. Photo by Emily Reed, GearJunkie



A 1950s photograph shows a constructed dam along the Maquoketa River in Manchester. Manchester removed the dam in the heart of downtown to build a popular whitewater park (middle). Photos courtesy of Manchester White Water Park

energy and resources into a project like this, other things start happening there, too.”

Building a destination

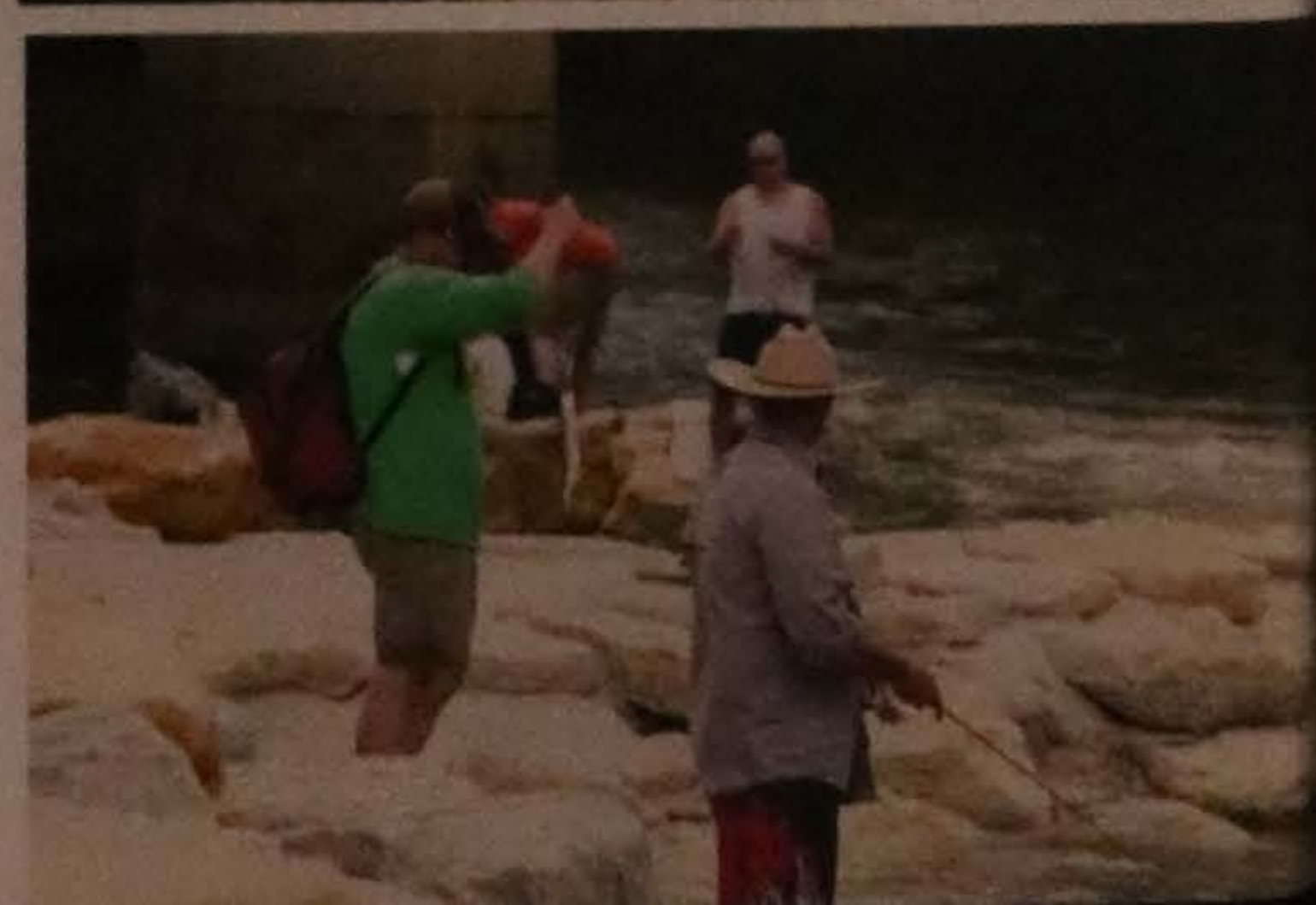
These and other conservation projects, including the state’s nearly 8,000 miles of multi-use biking, hiking and water trails; parks; campsites; nature preserves — many made possible in part by Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation — are helping make Iowa an eco-tourism destination. So are the businesses like outdoor outfitters, microbreweries, local restaurants and other establishments that support and enhance these experiences for residents and visitors.

According to the Outdoor Industry Association, Iowa’s outdoor recreation economy generates \$8.7 billion in consumer spending, 83,000 direct jobs and \$649 million in state and local tax revenue. Travel Iowa recently found that the number one and three reasons visitors travel to Iowa are nature, scenery and outdoor adventure.

“People want to have an experience. The more things there are to do in an area, the more likely they are to go there,” said INHF Senior Land Conservation Director Heather Jobst. “When you get enough of these projects in one part of the state, that creates outdoor recreation corridors, which attracts more people and opportunities. There’s so much more here than people realize, and it’s worth investing in.”

Interest in outdoor recreation opportunities is high, funding requests consistently outnumber available dollars and an increasing number of projects are gaining local and national attention. However, state funding to help support these projects has remained relatively stagnant, and in many cases has dramatically decreased. Last year, the Iowa legislature zeroed out funding for water trails and dam mitigation. The recreational trail budget is down to \$1 million. REAP funding was cut from \$16 million to \$12 million, and seven years after its creation, the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund still sits empty.

“Investments in public land and Iowa’s outdoors are in fact investments in Iowa and its communities,” Boulton says. “It’s a reason to come here. Live here. Stay here. Explore here. A place to have an adventure.” A place that makes you wonder if this is, indeed, heaven. 🍷





The trail factor

BY BEN GRAUER

Outreach Intern | outreachinternben@inhf.org

Many Iowans hit the state's multi-use trails looking for an outdoor experience or to get a little exercise in. It's one of the reasons Iowa is receiving recognition for its extensive trails system, and why Des Moines and its surrounding areas were the fastest growing metro in the midwest in 2016. And now, companies and organizations that call Iowa home are starting to take notice of the multiple benefits Iowa's trails have to offer.

"Trails offer such a wide variety of community benefits," said Andrea Boulton, INHF trails and greenways director. "They're a free, accessible place for exercising, for being with family, for exploring a town and for being outdoors. Those are the kinds of opportunities Iowans are looking for near their homes."

The quality of life benefits resulting from trail development isn't unnoticed by Iowa-based business and foundations, which have started investing in trail projects across the state. Companies like the Principal Financial Group Foundation, Inc. and The Wellmark Foundation are two examples that have invested millions of dollars, in the interest of their employees and the people they serve.

"We know from evidence that when you put those trails in, you expand the economic development opportunities of that town or community — that includes our employee population," said Mandi McReynolds, social impact manager at the Principal Financial Group Foundation, Inc.

The Wellmark Foundation, the charitable branch of Wellmark Blue Cross Blue Shield,

sees investment in trail infrastructure through a public health lens.

"The Wellmark Foundation invests in trail projects because we want to encourage physical activity and active lifestyles," said Becky Wampler Bland, executive director of The Wellmark Foundation. "The mere presence of a trail removes a barrier for those looking to find a safe place in which to be physically active."

Over the last decade, The Wellmark Foundation has invested over \$190,000 through INHF into local trail-related projects, like the High Trestle Trail and INHF's Iowa By Trail app. The Principal Financial Group Foundation, Inc. has invested in community projects like the Principal Riverwalk in downtown Des Moines.

"When a community has great quality of life and overall well-being, it naturally leads to having a reliable and skilled work force," said Bland. "This leads to economic development, which then leads to greater quality of life. These attributes feed on each other and snowball in a positive way for the community and its residents."

While Boulton stresses that "trails are not a magic bullet," she is excited by the opportunities created through the investment of organizations like Principal and Wellmark.

"In times when public funding sources have been unreliable, their understanding of the value of our trail resources is vital," said Boulton. "Money spent on trail projects is not squandered. They make happier, healthier people and communities." 🌱

"We know from evidence that when you put those trails in, you expand the economic development of that town or that community."

— MANDI McREYNOLDS, PRINCIPAL FINANCIAL GROUP FOUNDATION, INC.

A history of REAP

At almost three decades old, Iowa's REAP program continues to boost the state.

BY ANDREA PIEKARCZYK
Grants coordinator | apiekarczyk@inhf.org

One hundred green lights came on in the room. Not a single red light was among them. It was all systems go for what was about to become landmark legislation in the State of Iowa. Its formal name is Resource Enhancement And Protection. Most people simply call it REAP. – REAP History by Iowa DNR

On Tuesday, April 25, 1989, all 100 members of Iowa's House of Representatives voted "yea" on Iowa's Resource Enhancement And Protection (REAP) Act. No party lines were drawn, and 100 green lights lit up the room. Gov. Terry Branstad signed the bill into law on May 27, 1989, and the REAP legislation became effective immediately.

Even at the time, the support of REAP was extraordinary.

"The most heartening thing about it was that... when it went through the legislature there wasn't anyone against it," remembers INHF President Emeritus Mark Ackelson. "It was nearly unanimous, and even then things didn't happen unanimously."

The foundation for REAP came from a

special legislative study committee devoted to recreation, tourism and leisure. Established in 1985, the committee worked for two years before submitting its final recommendations in 1987.

Representatives from 25 private conservation-related organizations worked with interested legislators to design the REAP formula. INHF was one of those organizations, which would collectively become known as the REAP Alliance. For Ackelson, the cooperation of so many different organizations was vital to the bill's passage. "We were going to stand together as individuals and organizations for Iowa's land and wildlife, and not allow ourselves to be pitted against each other in appropriations," he recalled.

The REAP Alliance still exists today,



SHOW YOUR SUPPORT FOR REAP!

Until Jan. 6, take a photo with an official "Funded by REAP" sign at your favorite place to get outdoors, post it on social media and use the hashtag #REAPworks (and tag The REAP Alliance) for a chance to win a \$100 giftcard to Sportsman's Warehouse and other outdoor gear.

Gov. Terry Branstad signs Iowa's Resource Enhancement and Protection bill into law in 1989. Since its inception, REAP has invested over \$360 million in natural resource and historic preservation projects in Iowa. Photo from INHF files



**“It’s about ‘and.’
Not agriculture or
conservation, not natural
or cultural resources, not
cities or rural areas —
REAP is about ‘and.’”**

TAMMIE KRAUSMAN

encompassing 38 different partners, including recreation, conservation, historical preservation and sporting organizations — all dedicated to supporting the REAP program. For Iowa DNR REAP Coordinator Tammie Krausman, these relationships are essential to the identity of the program.

“I think my favorite part of REAP is that it was developed by such a diverse partnership, so REAP really includes everything,” said Krausman “It goes back to the fundamental: we want to do all these different things. So we’re going to go in together to get more for all of us. And we’re going to figure out who needs what, and we’re going to stick to that.”

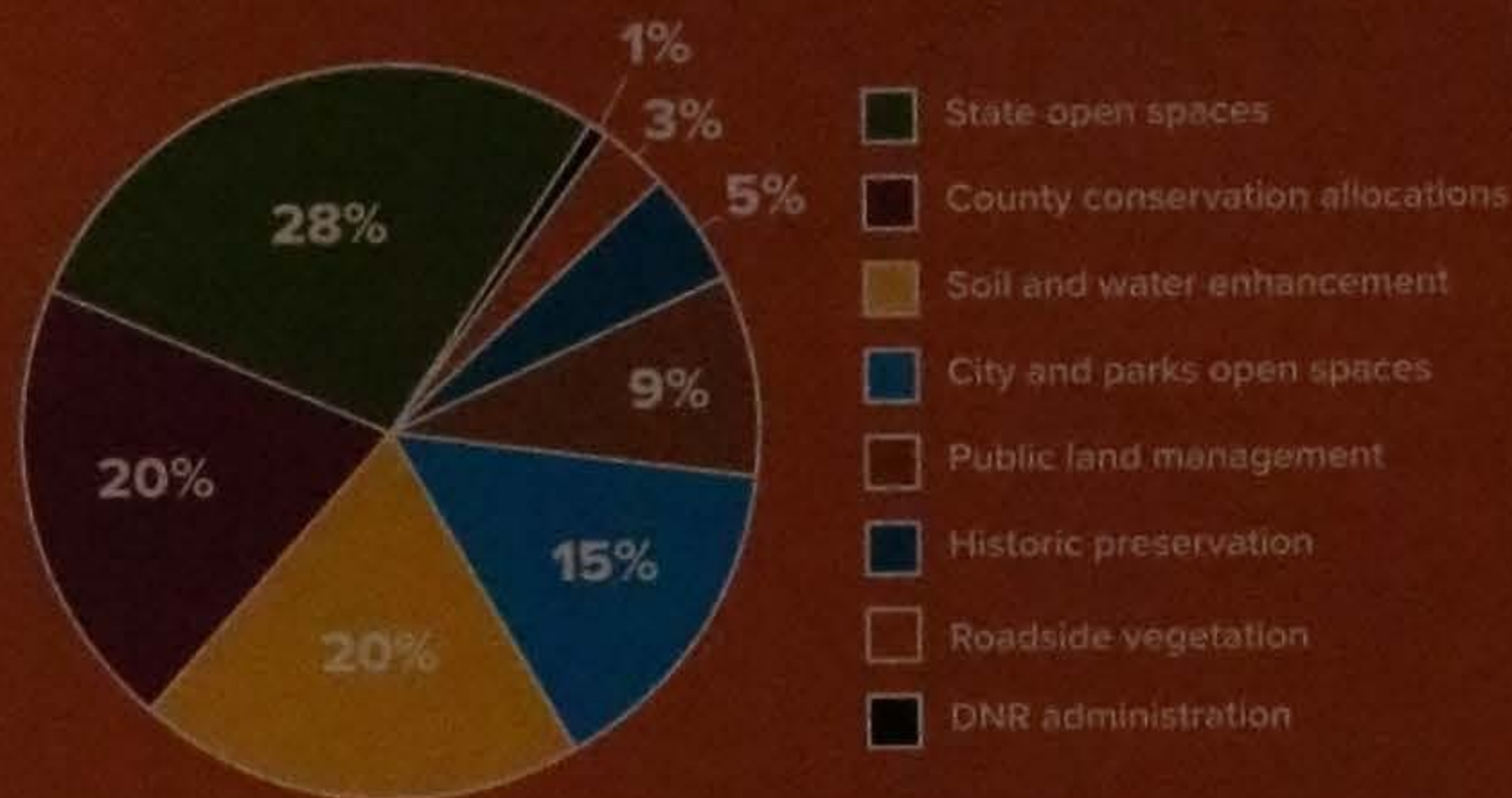
A win for everyone

Every year, Krausman gets to see the ideas that Iowa counties have for their communities. REAP was, and continues to be, about preserving and elevating the best Iowa has to offer. “It’s about ‘and,’” Krausman said. “Not agriculture or conservation, not natural or cultural resources, not cities or rural areas — REAP is about ‘and.’”

The focus on ‘and’ is made possible by the REAP formula — one of the law’s most groundbreaking elements. That it remains unchanged, and continues to function as originally designed, speaks to the care and consideration of the bill’s creators.

THE REAP FORMULA

Iowa’s REAP program supports a variety of natural and cultural projects throughout the state each year. REAP funding is determined annually by the Iowa legislature. Here’s how the money’s spent:



*First \$350,000 goes to Conservation Education

- **State Open Spaces:** Purchases and protects land for public ownership & use. Property taxes are paid on public land purchased with REAP.
- **County Conservation:** Each county conservation board gets an allocation from REAP for general operating funds.
- **Soil and Water Enhancement:** Implements agricultural and urban water quality improvement projects in all of Iowa’s 100 Soil and Water Conservation Districts.
- **City Parks and Open Spaces:** Develops parks, multi-purpose trails, park shelters, fishing access and restored habitat in cities of all sizes.
- **Public land management:** Trail renovation, shower and restroom replacement, repairs to lodges, shelters and cabins in Iowa’s public areas.
- **Historic preservation:** Preserves historical areas/locations across the state.
- **Roadside vegetation:** Preservation, establishment and maintenance of native vegetation along Iowa’s roadsides.



Iowa's REAP program provides needed money for cities, counties and the state to complete natural resource and community development projects. The Meredith Trail in Des Moines is just one example of thousands of REAP projects across the state. Photo by Kerri Sorrell, INHF



REAP funding is dedicated to a broad range of interests, encompassing public land protection, historic preservation, cost-share programs with farmers that enhance water quality and soil conservation, community projects and conservation education. With so many pockets of support, the REAP program manages to be at once generous and economical. In its nearly 30 years, REAP has invested over \$360 million in Iowa's communities and counties, large and small. Often, that investment (through grants and allocations) is matched locally to nearly triple the financial impact of REAP every year.

"REAP touches every county and it is available to every municipality, regardless of size. It encourages the private sector to be involved — the leverage involved is tremendous," Ackelson said.

INHF Vice President Anita O'Gara agreed: "The use of the money is so vetted in this program. Everything is so carefully done, you can trace where every dollar went — and that's true of all of REAP."

Democracy in action

REAP is designed for constant evaluation and

O'Donnell Fen in Franklin Co. received a 2017 REAP State Open Spaces grant. The area protects a rare Iowa landscape and provides water filtration to nearby Beads Lake. Photo by Nathan Houck

feedback — rare for any government program. Individual counties each have a REAP committee to coordinate REAP projects; this committee also develops a county REAP plan to help guide future REAP projects. Iowans may participate in regional REAP assemblies, which take place every two years in September and October. Here, all REAP programs and associated projects are presented. Opportunities for regional REAP projects are identified and participants can recommend changes to REAP policies, programs and funding.

To O’Gara, the REAP program is democracy in action. “Everyone has an opportunity to speak up for their priorities in conservation. All of us can help shape the conservation priorities close to home. Hundreds of people have a say. The grant processes are open and competitive, so we see how these public funds are being spent for the greatest impact for the people and the land.”

Building Iowa’s future

Looking toward the future, it seems likely that REAP will continue supporting Iowa’s natural and cultural resources. Krausman thinks this is because the program’s creators “really nailed what about Iowa is good and how it works... it’s the way everyone works together.” With a little financial help from REAP, small communities can leverage big resources to showcase what makes them special.

“The key to rural economic development is that people need to have a high quality of life,” Krausman said. “As more individuals are able to work remotely, the question becomes: Where do I want to have my family, where do I want to live, what can I do when I’m done with work?” Iowa communities have so many opportunities to offer; REAP just helps them shine.

“REAP is one of those rare programs where everybody benefits — it’s not just one portion of the state,” said Joe McGovern, INHF president. “Continuing the tradition of REAP and providing it full funding is one of the best things the legislature can do to ensure the health and vibrancy of Iowa’s communities.”

RECENT REAP PROJECTS

Much of REAP’s funding is allocated through a competitive grant process. Each year, INHF submits and assists with several land protection projects for REAP grant consideration. Here are a few that have recently been funded.

O’DONNELL FEN Franklin County

Just outside Beeds Lake State Park, the O’Donnell Fen was an extraordinary opportunity to protect one of Iowa’s rarest natural landscapes. A fen is a type of wetland that has standing water year-round and is low enough to collect and hold surface water as well as rainfall. Because of heavy agriculture and tiling, most of Iowa’s fens have been drained. This particular fen lies along Spring Creek and provides excellent natural water filtration for the recreational Beeds Lake, which in recent years has been declared to be impaired due to algae and bacteria pollution. Beyond the water quality benefits of protecting fens, these unique areas are also hosts to endangered and rare plant and animal species. Two plant species on Iowa’s Threatened and Endangered list call O’Donnell Fen home, along with five species of birds, with the potential for 11 more species. The area including the fen was awarded a REAP grant in 2017 and will be open to the public, managed by Franklin County Conservation.



BOTNA BOTTOMS Fremont County

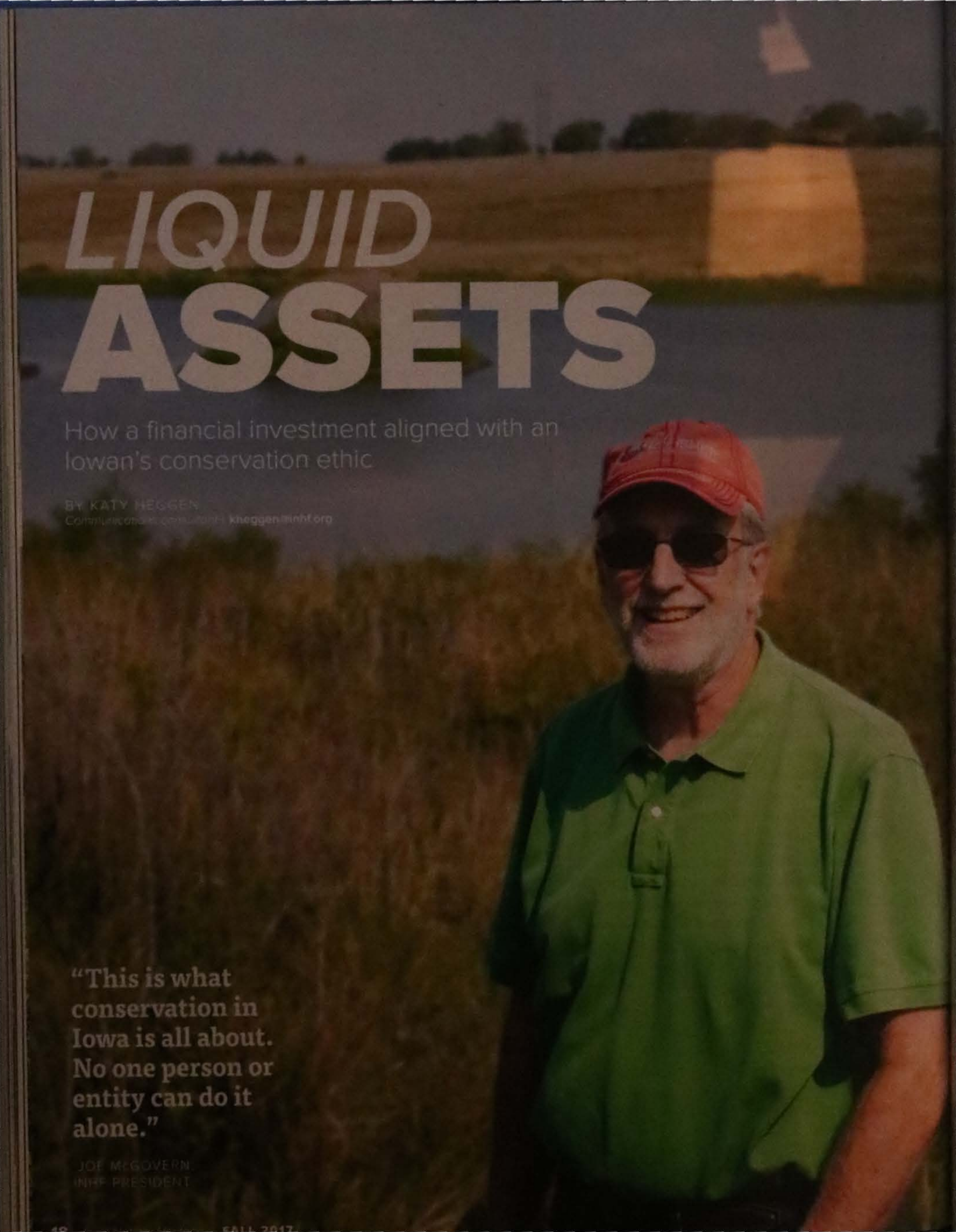
Just outside of Farragut, Botna Bottoms lies along the East Nishnabotna River in southwest Iowa. This 181-acre area is dotted with prairie, wetland and meadow and is just up river from the Riverton Wildlife Management Area. Fremont County is home to one of Iowa’s only breeding Sandhill crane populations, making Botna Bottoms an important addition to the county’s public land for migrating bird nesting and habitat. The area is also home to the state threatened Blanding’s turtle. Botna Bottoms was awarded a REAP grant in 2016 and will be owned and managed by the Iowa DNR.



DICKINSON-OSCEOLA TRAIL Dickinson & Osceola counties

Along a former rail line, a 34-mile greenway spanning two northwest Iowa counties is fated to become another exciting feature of the Iowa Great Lakes region. The future trail, which will connect to the existing Spine Trail from Millford, will run through or near eight publicly protected recreation areas. The project was awarded a REAP grant in 2017. Find out more and view a map on page 5.



A photograph of a man with a grey beard and sunglasses, wearing a red baseball cap and a green polo shirt. He is standing in a field of tall grass. In the background, there is a large wooden barn and a line of trees under a clear sky.

LIQUID ASSETS

How a financial investment aligned with an Iowan's conservation ethic

BY KATY HEGGEN

Communications consultant | kheggen@iinhf.org

"This is what conservation in Iowa is all about. No one person or entity can do it alone."

JOE MCGOVERN
IINH PRESIDENT

WHEN JOHN AND SUSAN ASCHENBRENNER PURCHASED 212 ACRES just outside Osceola in Clarke County, they had dreams of creating a hobby farm. The property would provide a home for their horses, a place to get away and be a great way to diversify their investments.

However, after deciding the horses would be too far away from the family's home in the Des Moines metro, they started thinking about other options.

"It isn't good farm land, and I wasn't having a lot of luck finding a tenant that shared my vision," John said. "At that point, I decided to put it in the Conservation Reserve Program."

John planted native grasses on over half the property. He built a couple of ponds so the family could fish. It was around this time that John was talking with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), who asked if he would ever consider building a wetland on the property.

This excited John, an avid outdoorsman and the current board chair of The Nature Conservancy in Iowa. And what began as a way to diversify his portfolio began to reveal itself as an opportunity to invest in something much larger.

The Aschenbrenners' land is located northwest of town at the headwaters of West Lake, a 320-acre public lake that is also the drinking water source for the City of Osceola and parts of Clarke County. Two-thirds of the water that flows into the lake flows through the Aschenbrenners' land.

"John and Susan's land has a huge impact on the water quality of West Lake," said INHF Conservation Easement Director Erin Van Waus. "The lake is susceptible to high levels



of atrazine, a common herbicide, and was included on the 2015 Iowa Impaired Waters list."

In 2012, the 23-acre wetland was built with assistance from the NRCS and Southern Iowa Development and Conservation Authority. The massive wetland, which utilizes a rock chute dam to help control the flow of water leaving the wetland and entering the lake, captures approximately 2,850 tons of sediment and 3,700 pounds of phosphorus per year. Experts estimate it's helped expand the life expectancy of the lake by as much as 20 years. The wetland and other conservation practices on the property also provide incredible wildlife habitat and recreation opportunities.

The Aschenbrenners were keen to permanently protect the property. It was also important to them to share this special place and all it has to offer with others. Working with Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, the Aschenbrenners placed a conservation easement on the land. The easement made it more financially possible for the Iowa DNR to purchase the land and open it to the public.

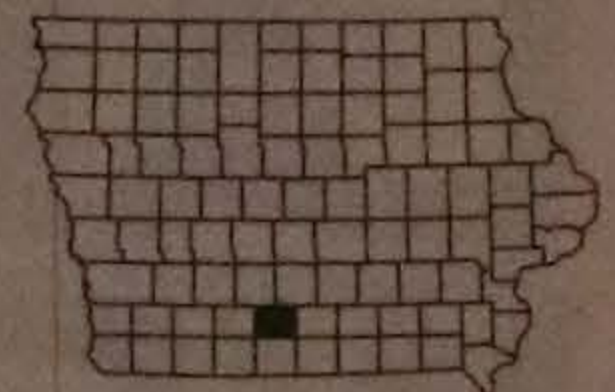
"This is a great example of a lot of different entities working together to find innovative ways to achieve multiple goals," said INHF President Joe McGovern. "This is what conservation in Iowa is all about. No one person or entity can do it alone."

For John, it just felt like the right thing to do. "I have found so much enjoyment throughout my life fishing, hunting and exploring Iowa's outdoors," John said. "We come to love, understand and appreciate nature by experiencing it. I want others to have that opportunity." 🌿

John and Susan Aschenbrenner's Clarke County property filters two-thirds of the water that flows to West Lake. The city of Osceola draws its drinking water from the lake. John and Susan worked with INHF and the Iowa DNR to permanently protect their land for natural benefits and public enjoyment. Map by INHF

Aschenbrenner farm

Clarke County



LAND: 212 acres just outside of Osceola city limits and bordering West Lake. Will be owned and managed by the Iowa DNR.

SPECIAL FEATURES: Reconstructed wetlands and grassland, rock chute dam, wildlife habitat

PARTNERS: John and Susan Aschenbrenner, INHF, Iowa DNR, NRCS, Southern Iowa Development and Conservation Authority



THIS LAND WE LOVE

BY MATT HAUGE
Special to INHF

Discussing the value of land is a complicated thing. We all know the typical metrics: measures like average sale price or the corn suitability rating have their place. But price or economic potential, of course, are just one facet of value. Iowa conservationist Aldo Leopold was talking about this when he famously observed “when we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.”

In articulating his “land ethic,” Leopold was issuing a call to action that many of us see as central to the business of conservation. Discussion about Leopold often turns very quickly to the second part of that statement — things people are doing (or not doing) to protect the land. While that’s understandable, it’s important not to skip the first part of the statement — seeing land “as a community to which we belong.”

To do that, let me take you to a piece of county conservation land a little under an hour from where I live — Kuehn Conservation Area in Dallas County. In the Middle Raccoon River valley, this is a place of great restorative value to me. I love to visit for fun, but I have also used this as a place of reflection in more difficult moments. So for me, there are three routes down into the river valley — regular, steeper and “somebody’s in a mood today,” (which involves clamoring down a creekbed).

When I have not been able to find the words, or know which way to go, being in this place has offered a sense



PHOTO: MATT HAUGE

of understanding and direction — that time will pass, circumstances will change and the way will come.

The fact is, the land (as a community of things living there) struggles too, and it overcomes challenges. Invasive plants creep down the hillside and onto the prairie. They seem to choke out everything for a season, but the next year is better. A blizzard comes and tears down limbs all along the river. The rains rip away soil ten or twelve feet deep to make a new bend in the creek. These things for the land are wrenching and painful. They are also a reminder that bad things, tough moments — difficulty — is part of life.

And, mercifully, so is redemption. Relief, re-growth and restoration. There is always a way forward. Even death and decay in the woods are beautiful. Once I climbed up on top of a big rotten log and found that my shoes sank right into the bark — rarely have I walked on softer ground. If there were a clearer metaphor for the old giving way to the new, I have yet to find it.

In this place, things bloom when they are ready; the sun and the rain are in charge, not my plans for when I can visit. Some people celebrate the first day their kids go back to school, I celebrate the first day of yellow flower season. We all have our own things, I guess. Sometimes when I have been in this place, I have seen perhaps a million flowers bloom. It's exhilarating when the timing works because each one of those little flowers has survived a lot to sing — albeit briefly — in a great chorus of yellow September

flowers. It's distressing to arrive late and find the moment has passed.

In this place, I am not in control, and other stories are going on that are more important than mine. Once in the snow I found the perfect imprint of a hawk's wings, and a few drops of blood where it had swept up a mouse. What a dramatic scene it must have been!

In this place, everything is interrelated and the relationships are quite readily apparent. It's astonishing, really, that the whole thing is perpetually in motion, fueled by the sun. Tapping into that sense of interconnectedness, and ultimately of community, has been a great source of brightness in my life. It is fulfilling to be part of something wonderful.

It's even more astonishing, and not incidental to my purpose here, to remind you that this is public land. You have as much access to this place and this community as we all do, and you are part of it just as much as I am. That's an incredible opportunity, and just by living here you are invited to experience the deep and abiding value of this place. Once you do, I hope you will find a renewed inspiration to use it with love and respect. 🌻

An Iowa native, Matt Hauge is an INHF member currently living in West Des Moines. Member Jerry Kuehn and INHF helped vision and establish Kuehn Conservation Area in 1982 and have worked to expand the area over the last three decades.

LEAVING A LEGACY

For nature close to home

"...to further the purposes of the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation in Dickinson County..."

Those were the only instructions LaVonne & Dale Foote provided to guide the use of their generous, surprise bequest to INHF. Known as the "Bird Lady of the Lakes," LaVonne was a charter member of the Northern Iowa Prairie Chapter of the Audubon Society. She'd asked two close birding friends to be available to INHF as we made decisions on how

best to use the bequest. Over the past few years, it's been satisfying to direct some of this legacy to help establish ten new protected lands (so far) in Dickinson County — public lands that will always benefit birds, other wildlife and nature lovers. As we complete Reeds Run Wildlife Area at Big Spirit Lake, it will be a pleasure to list the Footes among the most generous donors to the project.

— CHERI GRAUER, donor relations director

CONSERVATION TIP

How to predict an acorn crop

Do you have sprawling oaks in your yard or near your land? Have you noticed a variance in acorn numbers from year to year? There's a scientific reason for that.

Every species of oak tree, about 90 in North America, produces and drops acorns. There are many uses for acorns — eating, planting new oaks, decorations — and an average oak tree, during a good year, can drop over 7,000 acorns. But how many acorns an oak tree drops is dependent on a lot of factors, most importantly weather. The variance is also hyper-localized.

Boom years for acorns are called "mast" years — mast being the fruit and seed volume of forest trees — and are influenced heavily by weather during the pollination season. Oak tree flowers are pollinated by wind and are open for a very short period in the spring. Unpredictable late spring frosts can wipe out the chance for a large acorn crop, as can summer drought. But when the conditions are right in the spring and summer, you can expect a bountiful supply of acorns come fall. And along with them, a bountiful supply of critters, like squirrels and mice, too.

Experiencing a boom year? Good news — you may be able to collect stray acorns (ones that the squirrels haven't gotten yet!) and overwinter the acorns in a cool place for planting in the spring. 🌱



In boom years, or "mast" years, a mature oak tree can drop over 7,000 acorns. The number changes yearly and is largely dependent on the weather. Photo by Kip Ladage

TRIBUTE GIFTS

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Rocky Casini
Jerry Chelle Sr.
Susan Connell-Magee
Frank Dahn
George Dafland
Bill Dodson
Dr. E.D. and Helen Farwell
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Find more Iowa places to explore at www.inhf.org/blog

Nock an arrow this changing season

BY HALEY HODGES

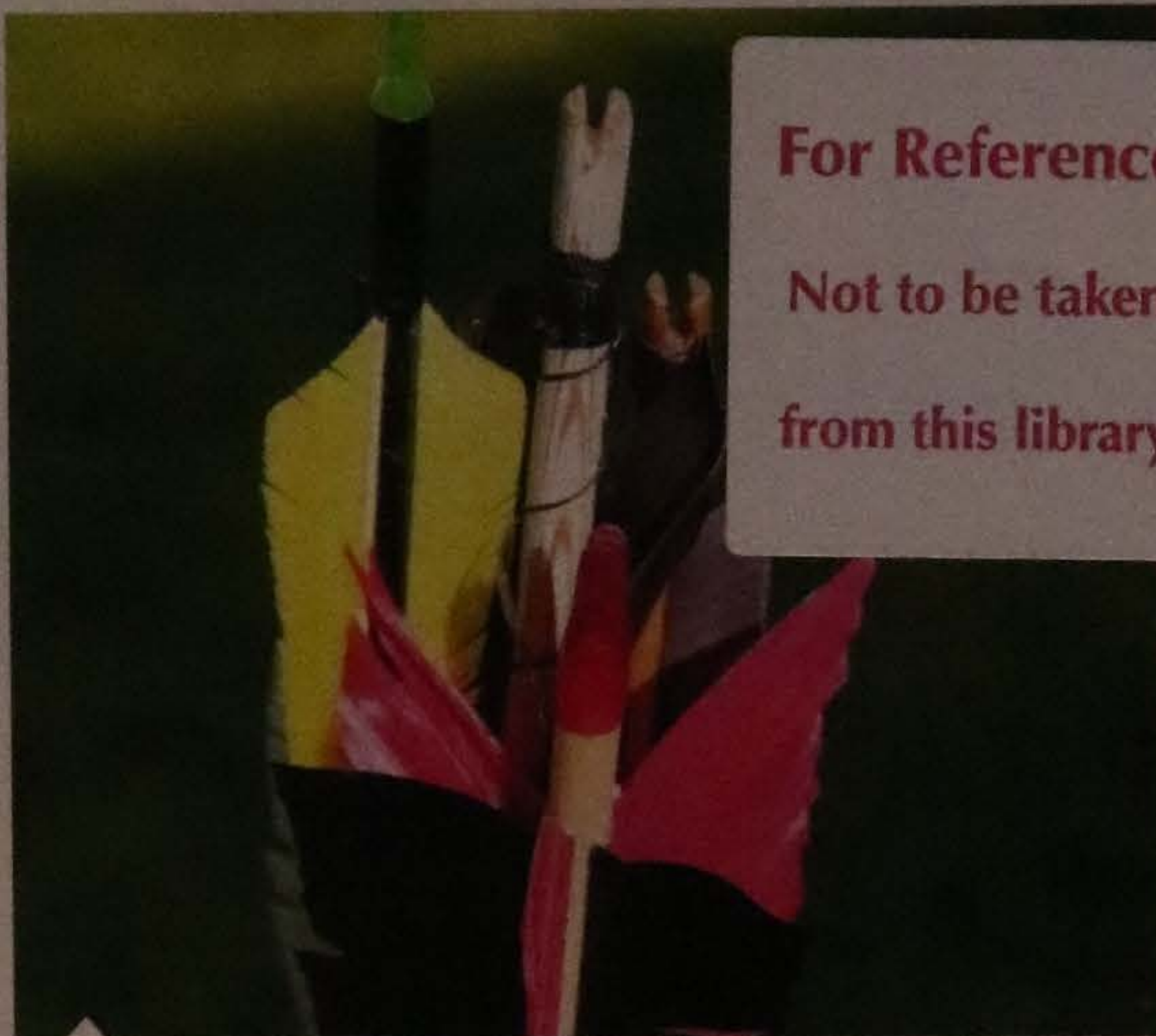
Communications intern | comminternhaley@inhf.org

When the leaves begin to drop and the air gets a chill, outdoors enthusiasts across the state look for peaceful ways to be outside. Bow hunting and archery are popular go-tos for enjoying a bit of solitude and discovering Iowa's varied landscapes. Not an experienced archer? No worries — Iowa has you covered.

Starting at a young age, many students in Iowa schools are introduced to archery in physical education classes. Those with a particular affinity or who want to pursue the sport more can take to public archery ranges across the state to hone their skills.

The Butch Olofson Shooting Range is a public range just outside Polk City that was recently renovated to include archery targets, including a 3D range. Other public archery ranges can be hard to come by in Iowa as most are owned privately, but the Iowa DNR does manage a few, including at MacBride State Park. More location information is available online.

If you're a hunter, try bow hunting on for size: a new way to experience the tactical



For Reference

Not to be taken

from this library

Explore Iowa's public hunting areas or try your hand on public archery ranges this fall and winter. Iowa offers free archery and bow hunting instruction across the state.

thrills of hunting. Iowa only requires that archers take a hunter education certification course, although an additional program specific to bow hunting is recommended.

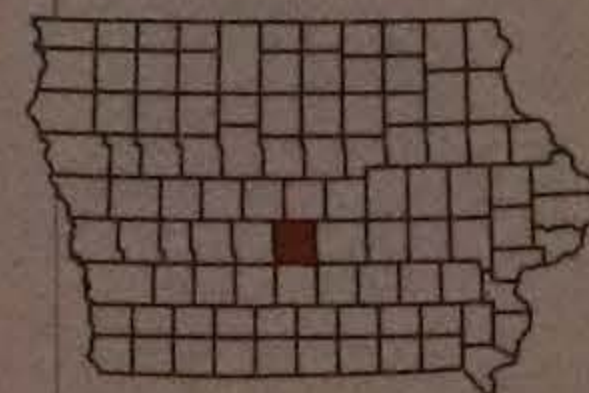
"In Iowa, we have two ways you can take hunter training, either in a classroom or online," said Donise Peterson, archery coordinator at the Iowa DNR. "I would highly recommend going through the online education course — there's no field day required and you have access to interactive tutorials."

The course walks you through the basics of bow hunting, including how to safely hunt from tree stands, which arrows and points to select for your desired game and environment, judging distances, correct shot placement on different animals and more.

Bow hunting season opened in Iowa on October 1 and stays open until December 1, then opens again from December 18 to January 10. 🏹

Butch Olofson Shooting Range

Polk County



SPECIAL FEATURES:

Archery target range, including a new 3D archery range, shotgun range with throwers for trap & skeet, rifle/handgun range, 50-person classroom

SAFETY RULES:

Children welcome with adult supervision, no alcohol or smoking permitted, ear and eye protection required on gun ranges



Iowa
Natural Heritage
Foundation

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Des Moines, IA 50309

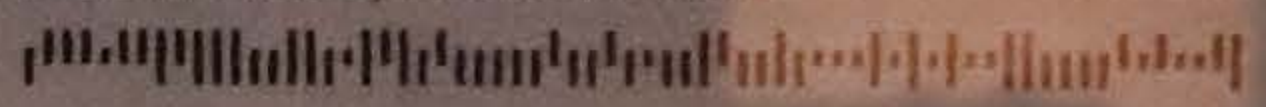


A young volunteer dutifully collects prairie seed at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt during a moonlight seed harvest hosted by INHF and Polk County Conservation this September. Over 100 volunteers gathered to enjoy the fall prairie and help gather native prairie seed for future prairie plantings. Prairie seed is collected in the fall and stored outside through the winter in preparation for late winter and early spring plantings. *Photo by Joe Jayjack, INHF*

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Protecting and restoring Iowa's land, water and wildlife.



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Protecting sites important to Iowa's early humans is all about collaboration **12**

Deep roots
A family looks toward their farm's future **20**

Hidden treasure
Building central Iowa's largest public area **18**

Shared values make it possible



JOE MCGOVERN
President

I started talking with the Jewell family about protecting their farm outside Decorah nearly 15 years ago. We viewed the land from slightly different perspectives. The Jewells loved their land and wanted to protect the future of their generations-old farming tradition. INHF wanted to protect the natural areas along the Upper Iowa River from growing development pressure. But we shared a vision for sustainable land stewardship, open spaces and scenic beauty. Most importantly, we shared values. We both valued the land, we valued the water and we valued future generations.

What came out of that shared vision was a partnership, along with the NRCS, to permanently protect their farm with the largest Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) in the state of Iowa. This certainly wasn't a quick transaction. It was a decade-and-a-half old relationship built on trust, honesty and shared values. A long-term conversation with a family about the future of their land isn't uncommon for INHF. These are big decisions, and they require thoughtful consideration. But sharing common goals and values are what make these projects possible.

Stories throughout this issue illustrate the values that are natural to Iowans. Iowans value healthy land and clean water. Iowans value history and culture. Iowans value wildlife and the protection of its habitat.

Iowa is my home. I grew up here, and my wife and I have raised our children here. I want to make sure that it is a place they're proud to call home. We have work to do. But we are fortunate that there are so many Iowans that share our values and are working together to make Iowa a better place.

ON THE COVER

A dark-eyed junco on the hunt for food in Carroll County. These birds travel in large flocks in the winter and usually hop rather than walk when on the ground. *Photo by Stan Buman*



Protecting and restoring Iowa's land, water and wildlife.

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12

Protecting something sacred

Iowa is the ancestral home of many Native American tribes. Historic, cultural and spiritual sites — and the surrounding lands — still hold significant meaning for many native communities in Iowa and beyond. INHF takes a look at the part land protection plays in safeguarding these special places.

8

The time for sustainable funding is now

INHF works on a number of state and federal conservation policy issues, including advocating for funding for the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund.

10

Protecting pollinators

Linn County is quickly becoming a leader in the movement to boost the monarch butterfly population. Take a look at how diverse partners are working together to make eastern Iowa more monarch-friendly.

18

Building Chichaqua

Nature is abundant in Iowa's most populous county; if you know where to look.

20

All in the family

Bobby Jewell wanted to keep his farm in the family. It was with conservation and the longevity of their family's farm operation in mind that the Jewells donated an agricultural land easement on 696 acres in Winneshiek County.

DEPARTMENTS

- 2** Opening Thoughts
- 4** Through Your Lens
- 6** Field Notes
- 22** Looking Out for Iowa
- 23** Get Outdoors

“Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication.”

– Leonardo da Vinci

I’m one of those rare Midwesterners that actually looks forward to winter. By late fall, while everyone else is dreading the drop in temperature and impending ice and snow, I’m already getting impatient for the first frost of the season.

As a native Minnesotan, my affinity for the frigid is part nostalgia, part Scandinavian pride and if I’m honest, probably a healthy dose of selective memory. But it’s also rooted in an appreciation for a more minimalist landscape.

A walk in a winter wood like this one, snow crunching underfoot, reveals a kind of uncomplicated beauty. One that has a way of quieting the mind and bringing things into focus. It’s nature’s way of compelling us to see and appreciate the “simple” things.

— KATY HEGGEN,
Communications assistant

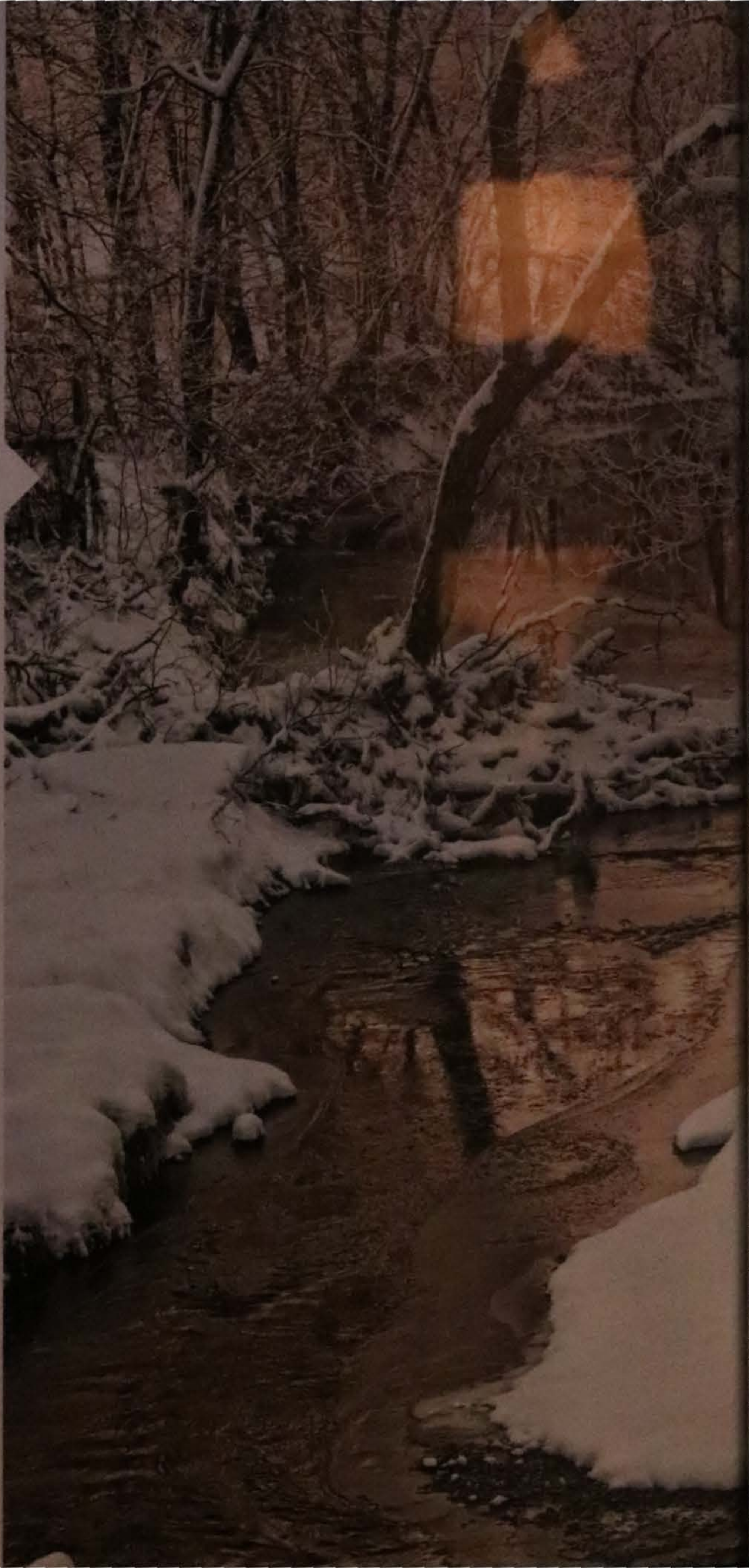




Photo by Gary Tanhouse



In Iowa's southwest corner, Pony Creek Park, the headquarters of Mills County Conservation, grew by 30 acres. INHF helped acquire and transfer the land, which features a lodge used regularly for yoga classes. Photo by Nathan Houck

Mills County Conservation headquarters expands

This fall, Pony Creek Park, the headquarters of Mills County Conservation, expanded by an additional 30 acres. INHF helped acquire the land from Allen and Margaret Hahn in 2015. The purchase of the addition was aided by a \$100,000 donation through INHF by Marilyn and Jim Schroer, friends of the Hahns.

The Hahns spent many years actively restoring the land on their own to native vegetation, including areas of prairie and timber. There are several buildings on the

property and a small lodge will remain open and available for volunteer-led yoga classes.

"It's a nice balance between conservation and recreation," said Lisa Hein, INHF senior director for conservation programs. "The physical, natural and spiritual connections to the land are a great benefit to the folks who lived there and people who visit."

Mills County Conservation conducts most of its outdoor education programming and provides numerous recreational opportunities, including camping, hiking and fishing, at the now 80-acre Pony Creek Park. 🐾

After 17 years, looking back and moving forward

Friends,

The close of another year is just past. And fast approaching for me is the close of a long and spirited run with Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation.

Seventeen years ago, I joined the staff to support those considering a bequest or other planned gift to INHF.

Since then, I've traveled thousands of miles of interstate and back roads, met scores of conservation-minded people and stepped foot on many hundreds of acres of Iowa's woodlands, wetlands and prairies.

Today and every day, I offer my heartfelt thanks for all that has shaped my life and my life's work; the relationships I've had the privilege of fostering here at INHF are

foremost among them. I am most grateful to have had the opportunity to participate in this great work for our good earth with wonderful people like you — INHF members, partners, volunteers, board and staff alike.

Wishing you peace and every good,
Cheri Grauer

Cheri



Abby Hade Terpstra succeeds Cheri as INHF's new Donor Relations Director. Contact her at aterpstra@inhf.org or 515-288-1846, ext. 15.

UPCOMING EVENTS

MARCH 8
Volunteer Brush removal at Snyder

Snyder Heritage Farm, Polk Co.

Help restore native landscapes at INHF-owned Snyder Heritage Farm. Volunteers will help remove non-native and invasive plant species to help a healthy landscape thrive. No experience necessary, tools provided.

MARCH 21
Environmental Lobby Day

Iowa State Capitol, Des Moines

Join Iowa's conservation and environmental advocacy groups to learn more about environmental action happening in Iowa and show your support for Iowa's REAP Program.

APRIL 28
Annual Garlic Mustard Pull at Heritage Valley

Heritage Valley, Allamakee Co.

Join INHF staff and other volunteers for our annual northeast Iowa Garlic Mustard Pull! Help eradicate this invasive plant while enjoying company and the outdoors. Family friendly!

For more information, visit www.inhf.org.

INHF staff grows in 2018

Three new additions to the INHF staff will increase capacity in 2018.

Katy Heggen (right in picture below) joins INHF as the new communications assistant. Katy worked with INHF as a communications consultant for nearly a year before transitioning into a permanent post. Katy previously worked for the Iowa Environmental Council. Find her work in the magazine, online and at INHF and partner events.

Jessica Riebkes Clough has joined the land staff as the new land projects assistant. Jessica first worked as INHF's grant writing intern in the summer of 2016. She worked at the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge in summer 2017 and worked part-time with INHF's conservation easement and land stewardship departments in 2016 and 2017. In her new position, Jessica will help complete INHF-held conservation easements and assist the INHF land projects team with protection projects throughout the state.

"I'm passionate about land conservation but I'm also passionate about helping people. I feel that INHF is the right place for those to meet," said Jessica.

Derek Miner started Jan. 1 as INHF's new land stewardship associate. Derek will work to restore natural areas on INHF-owned-and-protected land. Derek was an INHF statewide land stewardship intern in the summer of 2014. Prior to joining INHF, Derek worked with the Iowa DNR in western Iowa. During summers, Derek will help to supervise INHF's team of statewide land stewardship interns.

"I love the idea of working with the interns," said Derek. "I remember going back to areas I worked on as an intern and seeing the prairie coming back. Going back to that spot helped me know that this work is valuable." 🌱



River habitat and wetlands protected along Wapsipinicon River

Just outside Oxford Junction in Jones County, a 190-acre property has transferred through INHF to the Iowa DNR. The

property, which lies along the Wapsipinicon River, includes former pasture, cropland and riparian (river-adjacent) habitat within the Wapsi floodplain. Due to the proximity to the river — Iowa's largest of five Protected Water Areas, recognition of high quality corridors — protecting the property will help provide numerous water quality and habitat benefits.

The area is marked by a unique relationship between the water and the land that creates an uncommon but successful ecosystem.

"The property has savanna pasture in the riparian floodplain, which you don't see very often," said Ross Baxter, INHF land projects director. "There are a lot of quality trees, swamp white oaks and sycamores on this property. That type of habitat is rare."

Much of the property is relatively unbroken, resulting in several small oxbows and wetland depressions, as well as a large oxbow on the eastern edge of the acreage. An oxbow is a natural bend in a river that supports many fish and water-bound species.

The property is adjacent to another 166-acre property the Iowa DNR recently acquired, and near land owned by the Eastern Iowa Conservation Foundation, a conservation group focused in Dubuque, Delaware and Jones counties.

"The protection of these three areas brings a 410-acre block of protected land for wildlife and water quality benefit," said Baxter. "Working in partnership to protect smaller areas is a great way to build larger complexes over time." 🌱



190 acres of river and wetland habitat was protected by INHF and the Iowa DNR in Jones County along the Wapsipinicon River. The area features rare pasture and woodland habitat, as well as river oxbows (bends in the river) that are quality habitat for fish species. The piece is near 220 acres of protected land. Photo by Ross Baxter, INHF

Wapsipinicon River floodplain protection

Jones County



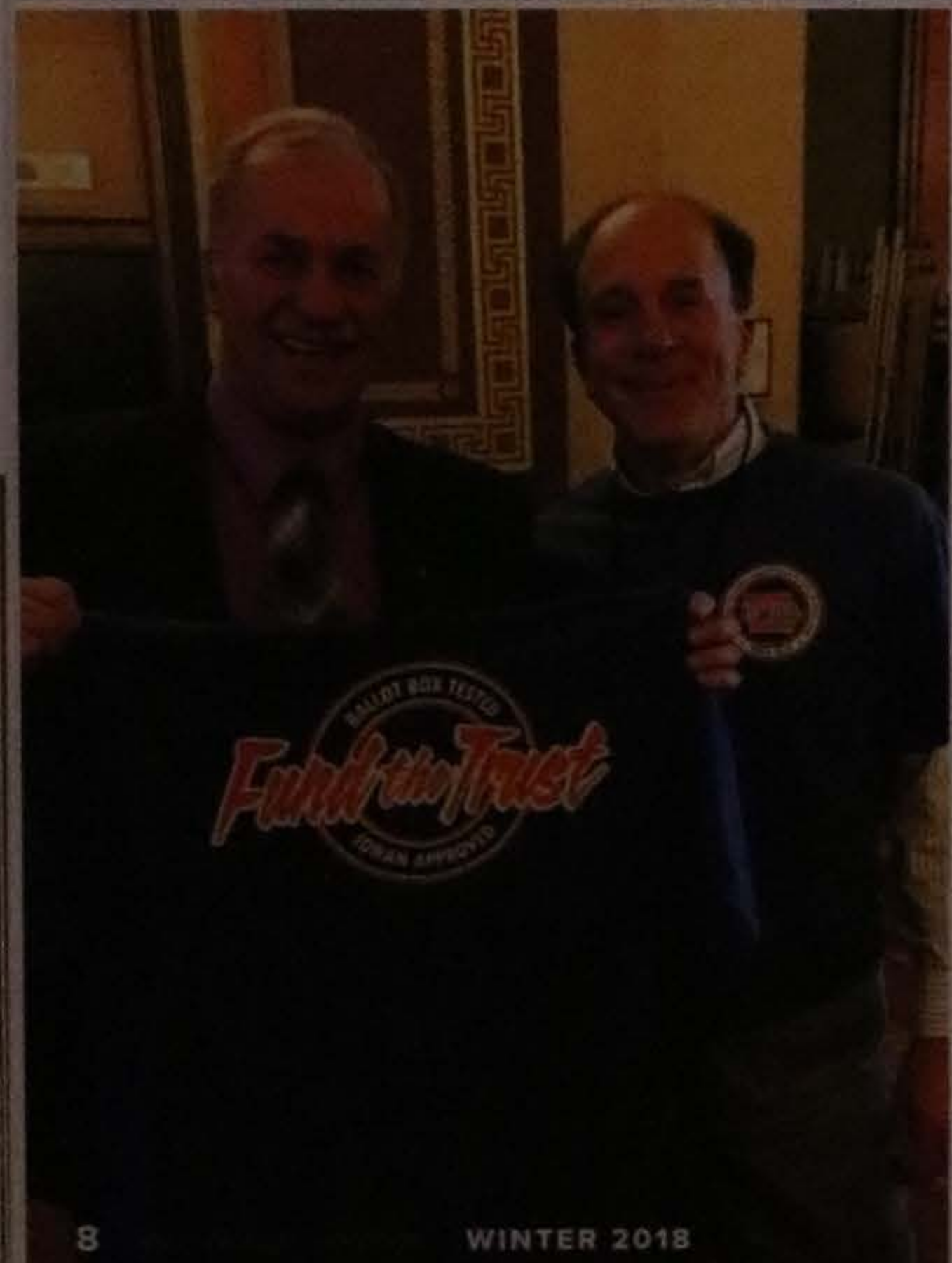
LAND: 190 acres along the Wapsipinicon River in Jones County, just outside Oxford Junction

SPECIAL FEATURES: Savanna pasture, river floodplain, healthy woodland, river oxbows, wetland depressions. The Wapsipinicon is one of Iowa's five Protected Water Areas.

PARTNERS: INHF, Iowa DNR



The work of policy advocacy may seem far removed from the prairies, wetlands and woodlands that INHF works to protect, but it has a profound impact.



Time is now for conservation action

BY JOE JAYJACK
Communications director | jjayjack@inhf.org

On Feb. 12, hundreds of people gathered in the rotunda of the State Capitol Building to demand permanent, reliable funding for clean water, healthy soils, wildlife habitat and outdoor recreation.

As their chants to "Fund the Trust!" rang up through the dome and into the legislative chambers, it was an energizing scene.

The work of policy advocacy may seem far removed from the prairies, wetlands and woodlands that INHF works to protect, but it has a profound impact. INHF works hard to "give a voice to the voiceless," said President Joe McGovern.

INHF provides leadership, educational support and communication to advocate to policy makers the importance of protecting Iowa's land, water and wildlife. We work to ensure that the state agencies protecting natural resources have the necessary funding to carry out their missions.

The work is important to INHF because it is important to partners like the Iowa DNR, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, county conservation boards and private landowners. But mostly, the work is important to INHF because it is important to Iowa.

Here are some of the priorities INHF is working on this legislative session:

Fund the Trust

INHF continues to advocate for funding the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund, which was created by a statewide vote in 2010 but has yet to be funded by the legislature. When funded by a 3/8 of a cent sales tax increase, the Trust Fund would generate more than \$187 million per year through a permanent and constitutionally protected funding source.

Recent polling done by Iowa's Water and Land Legacy Coalition shows that 69 percent of likely voters in Iowa support funding the Trust Fund with an increase in the state sales tax. The public show of support at the Capitol on Fund the Trust Day reinforces the fact that this is an investment Iowans want to make for our quality of life.

REAP Program

Past INHF presidents Gerry Schnepf and Mark Ackelson were involved in the initial planning of the REAP program, which began in 1989. INHF annually advocates for fully funding the program at the \$20 million level. Most years, funding falls short of this need.

REAP funding is dedicated to a broad range of areas, encompassing historic preservation, conservation education, wildlife habitat and soil and water enhancement. It has invested more than \$360 million in communities in all 99 counties in Iowa. However, the program has been around longer than most legislators, and it is important to remind them of the positive impact it has had on our state and advocate for its funding.

Recreational trails

INHF staff is engaged in local, state and federal policy that impacts multi-use trails. We provide educational information to elected leaders — enabling them to make informed decisions on funding, access and much more.

At a state level, INHF provides information to Iowa legislators to support increased funding for the Department of Transportation's State Recreational Trails grant program, which provides funding for the acquisition and development of many of Iowa's trails. Funding for this program has dropped from \$6 million in 2014 to just \$1 million in 2017. 📍

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Legislators need to hear from their constituents that they support increasing the sales tax by 3/8th of a cent to fund the Trust Fund. The most effective thing you can do to advocate for our natural resources is to visit, call or write to your legislators. Tell them why investment in Iowa's natural resources is important to you, personally.

You can also join INHF at Environmental Lobby Day/REAP Day at the Capitol on March 22. The event, which begins at 9 a.m., is an opportunity for organizations and individuals to advocate for conservation policies and funding.

To learn more about INHF's policy work or how you can help, contact Joe Jayjack at jjayjack@inhf.org or 515-288-1846. To learn more about IWILL and the Trust Fund, visit iowaswaterand-landlegacy.org.



BUTTERFLY BOOST

Pollinator protection looking to surge in eastern Iowa.

BY CAROLE TEATOR
Eastern Iowa Program Manager | cteator@inhf.org

IF MONARCH BUTTERFLIES could rate the top places to dine and rest in the Midwest, Eastern Iowa's Linn County would make a run for the top spot.

Hundreds of Linn County residents, corporations, organizations and local governments are laying out the welcome mat for monarchs and other pollinators, working

together to plant and care for milkweed and other native plants that the butterflies need throughout their lifecycle. The City of Cedar Rapids has committed to planting 1,000 acres of monarch-supporting native plants on public land throughout the city by 2022. The nonprofit Monarch Research Project (MRP), based in Linn County, has challenged the county's private landowners to plant another 9,000 acres of native plants over the next 10 years.

"This is a collaborative effort," says Clark

“It’s nice to help people realize that they can implement important conservation efforts no matter where they live.”

JOE MCGOVERN,
INHF PRESIDENT

McLeod, co-founder of the Monarch Research Project. “We need all hands on deck if we hope to re-establish the monarch population.”

INHF has a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to help with cost-share for the city and county monarch habitat plantings. Also in the past year, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation partnered with MRP and other local conservation organizations to offer workshops to landowners interested in making their land more monarch-friendly. And landowners responded: More than 500 individuals attended the two workshops, offered in the spring and fall of 2017.

“Attendance at the Linn County events has been amazing,” said INHF Vice President Anita O’Gara. “It’s exciting to see so many passionate landowners looking to make a difference to help monarch populations and other wildlife, and try conservation on their own land.”

When asked what she hoped to learn by attending the Linn Landowner Forum, Linn County landowner Cynthia Monroe said, “I wasn’t sure. I just wanted to support any efforts to preserve and restore our land.”

Landowners with more than three acres were specifically invited to the spring workshop. Featured speakers shared their experiences restoring large- and small-scale prairies, as well as their motivation for permanently protecting their land to ensure monarch habitat into the future.

“We are in this for the long-haul,” said INHF President Joe McGovern. “We want to help landowners plant and care for native plants today, and explore ways to protect their land for habitat for decades to come. We’re thankful

for the partnership with the Monarch Research Project that’s bringing conservation to Iowans on an accessible scale.”

The second workshop was promoted especially to landowners with one to five acres of land. Sessions included how to plant and care for prairies, how to manage woodland invasive plants and how to adopt roadways to establish micro-prairies. Those who attended the fall workshop were also provided Iowa ecotype prairie seeds to establish 200-square-foot micro-prairies on their property.

“It’s nice to help people realize that they can implement important conservation efforts no matter where they live,” said McGovern. “Monarchs aren’t picky. Every effort counts.”

Plans have already begun for 2018 workshops for Linn County landowners. Partners know, however, that 10,000 acres is not enough to fully help the monarch. MRP hopes to replicate Linn County’s successes elsewhere. The goal is for monarchs to return, as well as generations of their offspring, not only to Linn County, but throughout the Midwest. 🦋

Landowners from Linn County participate in a workshop about creating pollinator habitat in their own backyards. In partnership with The Monarch Research Project, INHF is helping the county reach 10,000 acres of pollinator and monarch butterfly habitat. The project hopes to expand into other parts of the state soon. Photo by Carole Teator, INHF

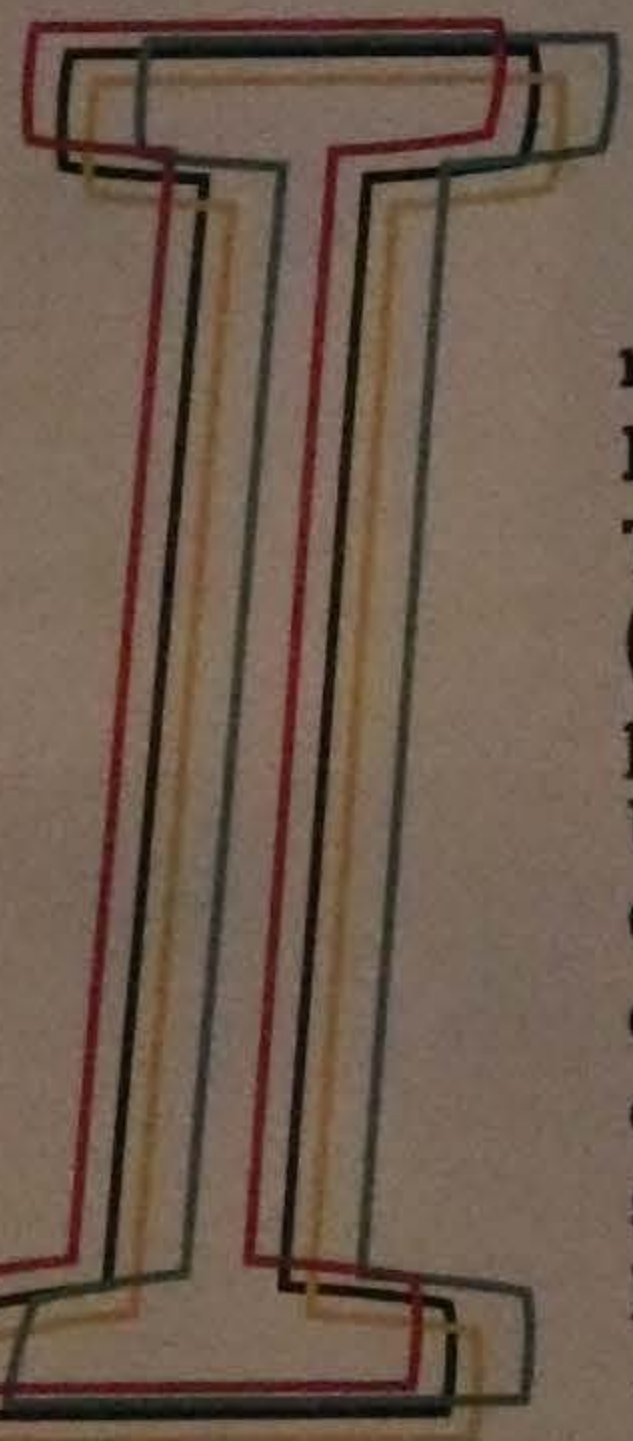
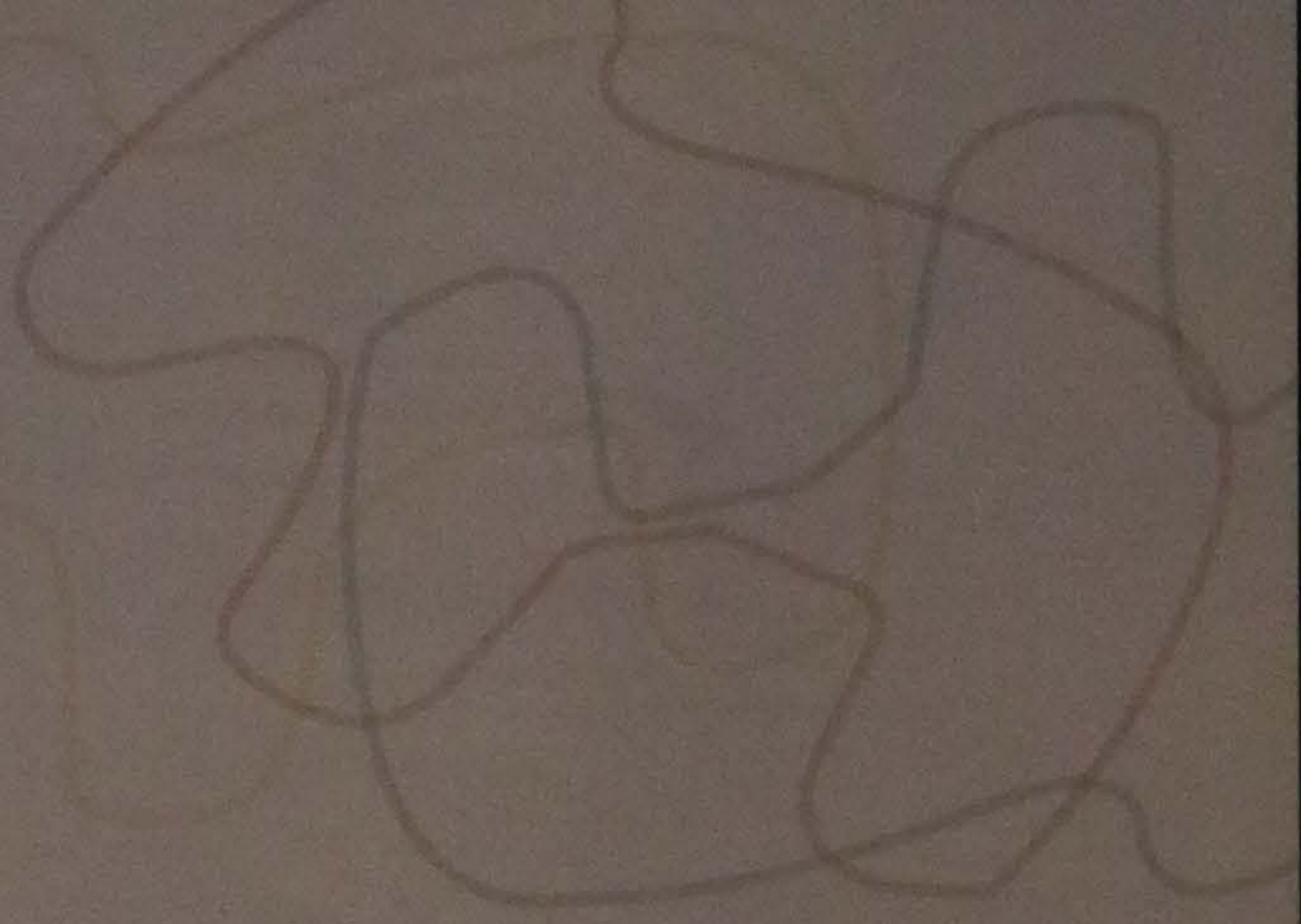


“IT’S NOT
JUST A
PLACE,

IT’S PART OF
WHO WE ARE.

IT’S ALL
CONNECTED.”

BY KATH HEDDEN
Communications Director | MaggenFood.org



In 2013, the Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT) was preparing to expand US 20 in Woodbury County when a team of archaeologists came across something they hadn't anticipated — geoglyphs.

Geoglyphs are human-made designs etched into the ground. They vary in size, construction and subject, and are often best appreciated from an aerial perspective. Among the geoglyphs rediscovered in western Iowa was an effigy of a bison measuring approximately 50 feet from head to tail. With both above and below ground components, the geoglyphs in Woodbury County are unique, and the first of their kind to be rediscovered in the state.

"Although we don't know for sure what the people who made these shapes intended, we know that their location on the landscape is as important as the symbols," said Tribal Historic Preservation Officer Lance Foster, Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska, who was featured in *Lands that Shape Us*, a video IDOT created about the project.

The Loess Hills and surrounding area have been home

to several Native American tribes throughout history, including the Omaha, Ponca, Ioway, Dakota and Sioux tribes, among others. Woodbury County is especially rich in Native American sites of historic, cultural and spiritual significance.

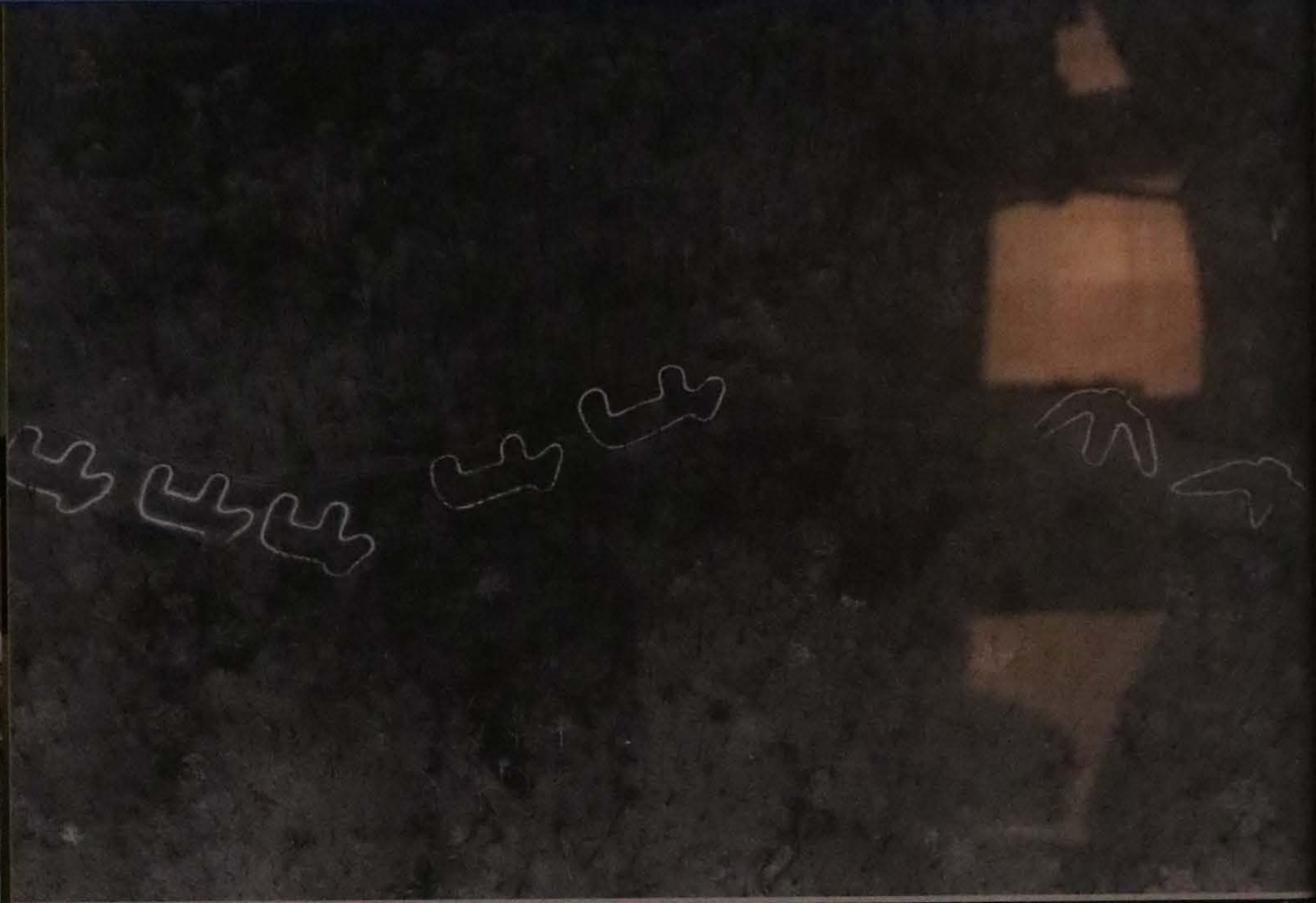
Preserving the past, protecting the future

While state and federal law provides protections for some kinds of Native American sites — burial grounds, for example — others are open to interpretation. Modern land protection plays an important role in safeguarding these special places.

"The vast majority of land in Iowa is privately owned," said State Archaeologist John Doershuk, who oversees the Office of the State Archaeologist at the University of Iowa. "One of the best ways to permanently protect these sites — on public and private land — is conservation easements. The past is a nonrenewable resource. If we're going to learn anything from it, we need to preserve it. We all benefit from being good stewards of these lands."

Beyond conservation easements, public protection of such places can also safeguard their important cultural and natural resources. In 2017, INHF purchased 90 acres of woodland in Woodbury County. The land — characterized by stunning valleys, slopes and deep deposits of loess soil — will be part of a larger complex of protected land in the area that includes the rediscovered geoglyphs.

Like fragile habitats, some Native American land features are better left alone, out of respect for their cultural significance or to avoid causing damage to the site. As such, while the Office of the State Archaeologist maintains a database of archaeological sites, information about



sensitive native sites is not public.

"We were not told the exact location of the geoglyphs they found, but they are either on property adjacent to our purchase or on this and other adjacent lands," said recently retired WCCB Director Rick Schneider. "We have great interest in helping protect and preserve these sites."

The land will be open to the public and managed by Woodbury County Conservation once fundraising for the project is complete.

Common ground

While the earth works found in Woodbury County were unique, the presence of Native American land features on properties INHF has helped protect and preserve is not.

Native American sites including burial grounds, spiritual sites and villages can be found across the state. These places — and the surrounding lands — still hold significant meaning for native communities not only in Iowa, but across the Midwest and beyond.

"There are twenty-six tribes we currently work with that have an interest in and connection to Iowa," said Doershuk. "Many of those tribes don't live here anymore, but still feel that this is their historical homeland and that the features found here are an active part of their culture today."

"For us, everything is in a circle," said Tribal Historic Preservation Officer Samantha Odegard, Upper Sioux Community. "It's not just a place, it's part of who we are. It's all connected. The more we know about the site, the more we know about our history, culture and spirituality. The more we know about those things, the more we know ourselves."



Many of those tribes don't live here anymore, but still feel that this is their historical homeland and that the features found here are an active part of their culture today."

— JOHN DOERSHUK, STATE ARCHAEOLOGIST

Many of these lands also hold great natural value.

"If you think about the areas that native communities inhabited, they're usually in beautiful spots located in strategic positions near waterways, on high points, etc.," said INHF Senior Land Conservation Director Heather Jobst.

INHF has worked to protect areas of Native American significance many times. Effigy Mounds National Monument in Allamakee County, Kuehn Conservation Area in Dallas County, O'Brien County's Waterman Prairie and INHF's Heritage Valley in Allamakee County are all areas protected by INHF that are home to Native American features and importance.

"These places are universally found to be beautiful and significant, and are often areas we would be protecting even if those Native American features weren't there," said Jobst. "The fact that they are makes the project all the more important."

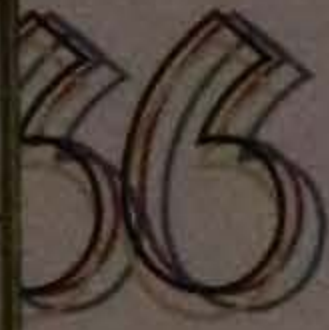
Collaboration is key

How these lands are protected and managed and in consultation with whom is as important as what is being protected and why.

"It comes down to listening to us," said Odegard. "We provide the best information we can, but sometimes all we can say is 'it needs to be protected.' It's hard to take those things on faith, but there are reasons for those things."

IDOT and the Federal Highway Administration consulted with several Native American sovereign nations on the US 20 expansion — as required by state and federal law — both

Native American mounds and other historic markers of pre-European settlement life can be found across Iowa. These "earth works" are often huge in scale — sometimes unrecognizable from plain view. But aerial shots like the one above show us the intention and importance of these sites. *Top photo courtesy of Effigy Mounds National Monument; bottom photo by Clint Farlinger*



It comes down to listening to us. We provide the best information we can, but sometimes all we can say is 'it needs to be protected.' It's hard to take those things on faith, but there are reasons for those things."

SAMANTHA ODEGARD,
TRIBAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER,
UPPER SIOUX COMMUNITY

before and after the Woodbury County geoglyphs were discovered.

"My role at IDOT is heavily focused on consultation efforts," said Brennan Dolan, a cultural resource manager and archaeologist at IDOT, who worked on the US 20 project. "I do a lot of site visits, interact with tribes, other archaeologists, public officials and others to share project information and make sure we're not impacting something we shouldn't be impacting. Consultation is a collaborative process."

"Whether you're a state agency like IDOT, land trust or private landowner, if you own property of any magnitude, by default, you're a cultural resources manager," said Dolan. "We have a responsibility to say 'we have a resource of cultural significance, who should we talk to?'"

Meaningful interpretations

Like protection, interpretation on Native American land features is most meaningful when informed by the descendants of those whose history, culture and beliefs it seeks to interpret.

Prairie Awakening is an annual event featuring Native American song, dance and storytelling held each fall at Kuehn Conservation Area in Dallas County, which is home to several Native American sites.

"We created this idea that we're going to awaken the prairie, and as we awaken that, we ourselves will reawaken our connections to the land," said Chris Adkins, an environmental education coordinator and naturalist with the Dallas County Conservation Board (DCCB).

Prairie Awakening is held each year at Kuehn Conservation Area in Dallas County. The area has significance to local and historic Native American tribes, and the event celebrates the human connection to the Iowa landscape. Photos courtesy of Chris Adkins, Dallas County Conservation

Prairie Awakening began when Adkins and his colleagues traveled to native communities around the Midwest, inviting tribal elders to return to Iowa be a part of Prairie Awakening. They were led by Maria (Running Moccasins) Pearson, an Ames-based activist and leader in the passage of landmark state and federal legislation that provided protections for Native American human remains and their repatriation.

Robert Knuth and Irma White have been instrumental in Prairie Awakening since its beginning nearly 20 years ago. Both were close friends of Pearson, who passed away in 2003, and have served on state advisory committees focused on Native American affairs.

For them, Prairie Awakening is a way of creating a greater understanding, appreciation and respect for these places and the people, culture and values that are part of it.

"It's a living history," said White, a member of the Omaha and Winnebago tribes of Nebraska. "It's a way of teaching, sharing knowledge and passing it on to the next generation."

It's also a way to connect people to the land and their effect on it.

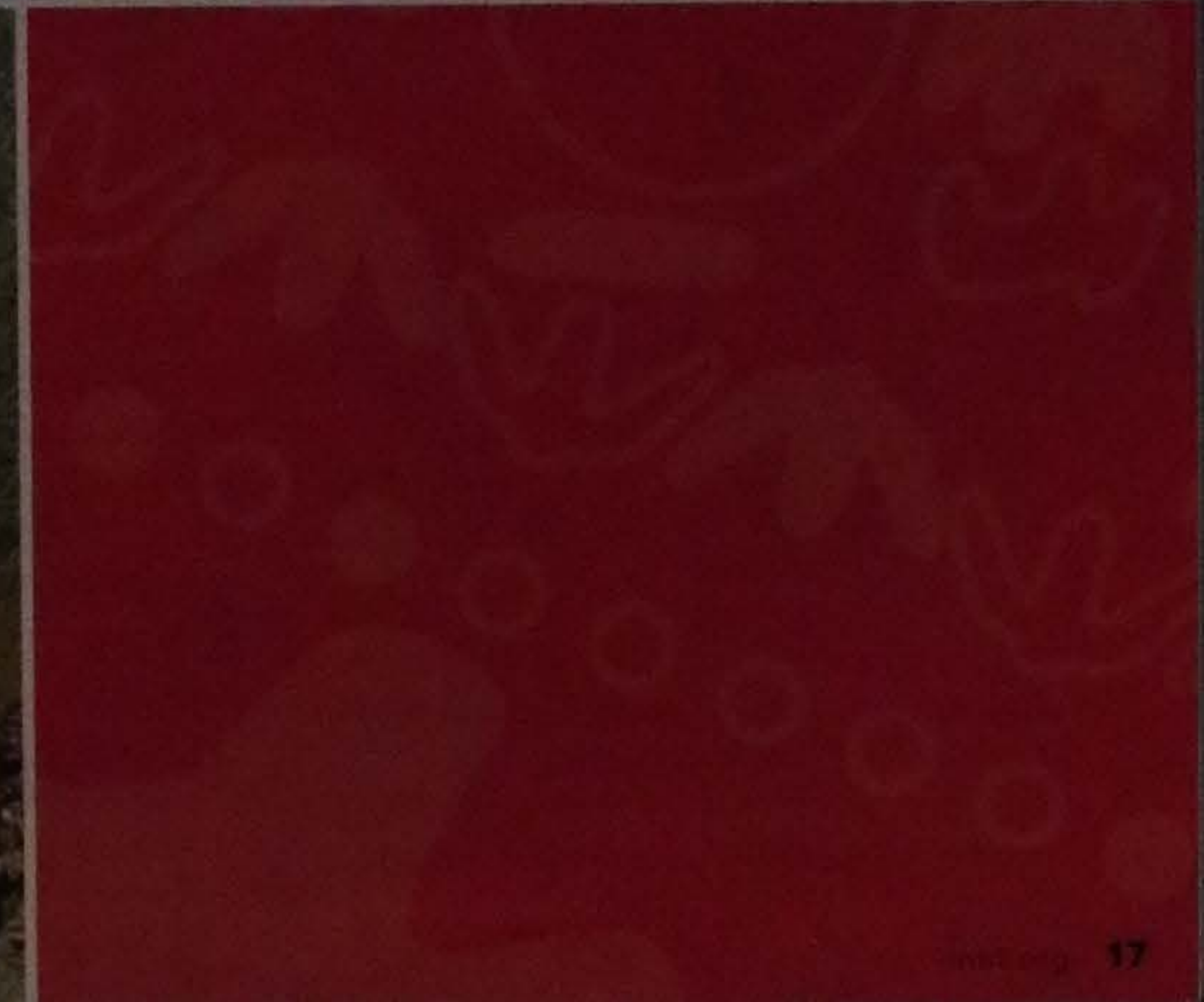
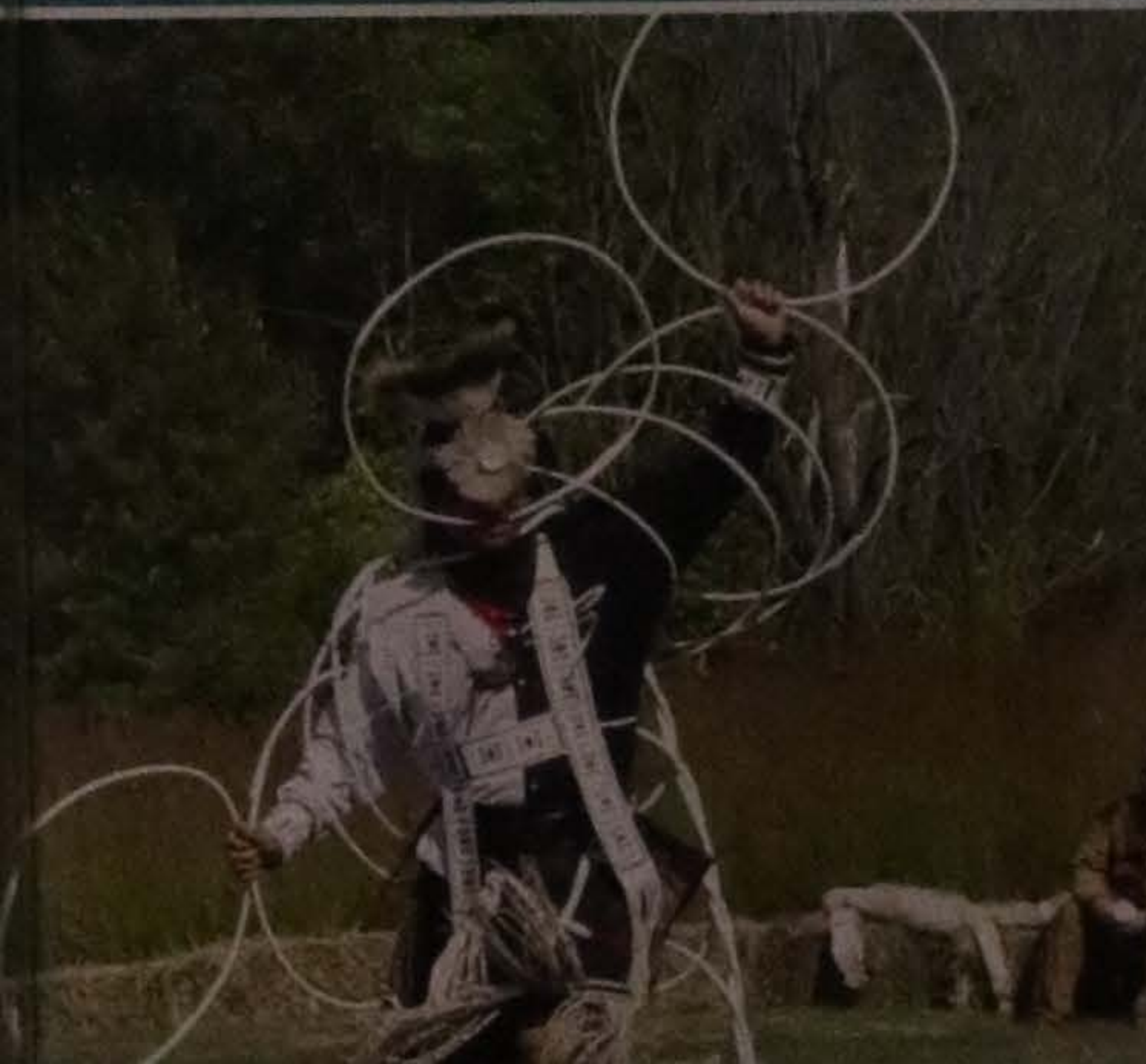
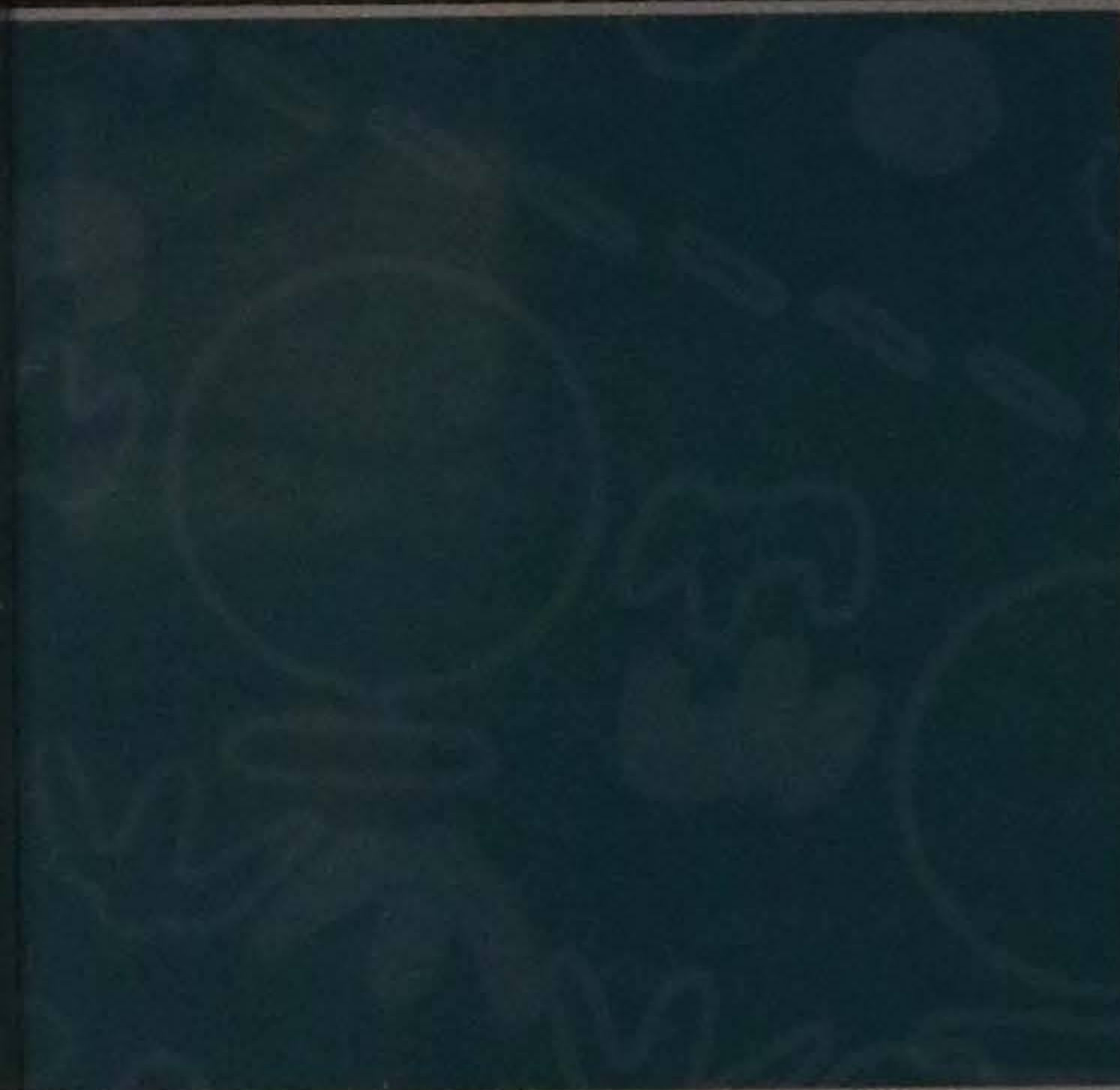
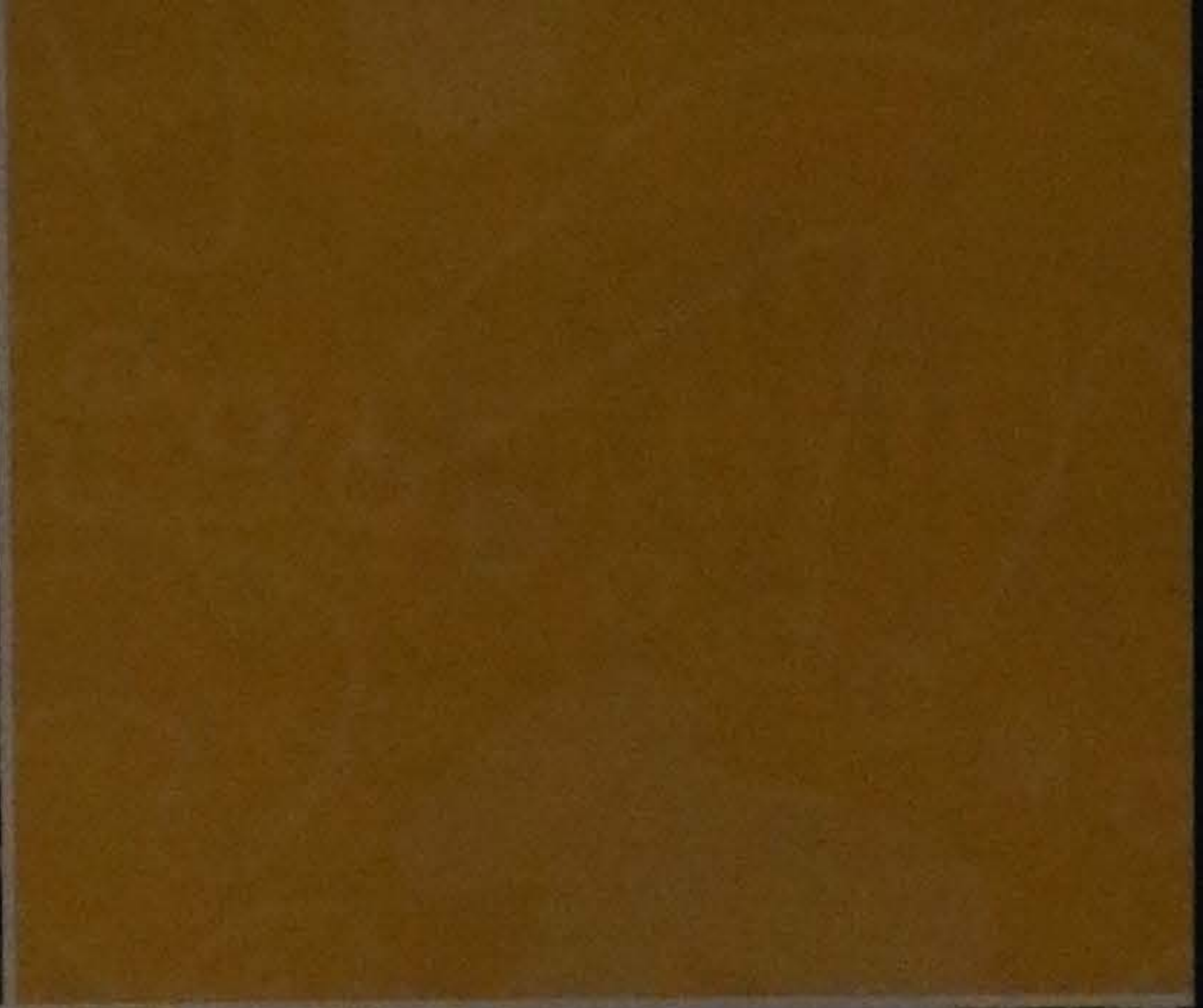
"When you're part of something and understand it, you don't desecrate it," said Knuth, a member of the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate. "You begin to realize that the effect is like a stone in the water, the ripples go out."

Shaped by the land

Adkins often asks people to close their eyes and picture the wildest place they've ever been. He's heard all kinds of responses over the years, but there's one feature rarely included in the descriptions: people.

"Humans are part of this landscape, not separate from it," said Adkins. "Often times, when we think about the places we gravitate to, there's something about that place helps us connect and remember. Until we start viewing ourselves as part of that place, we'll never re-inhabit that place or part of ourselves."

These significant places are worth protecting, for many different people and reasons. We all play a part in the history of these wild areas — and hopefully can find and re-root ourselves in the strong sense of place. 🌿



BUILDING CHICHAQUA

Nature is abundant in Iowa's most populous county, if you know where to look.

BY KATY HEGGEN
Communications assistant | kheggen@inhf.org

SOMETIMES, THE BEST THINGS ARE FOUND IN UNEXPECTED PLACES. This is certainly true of Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt, a 9,000+ acre natural area tucked into the northern corners of Polk and Jasper counties.

When the Polk County Conservation Board (PCCB) acquired the first parcel of land that would become Chichaqua in 1960, its intention was to restore and preserve the old oxbows (a natural u-shaped bend in a river) of the Skunk River, which had been straightened in the early 1900s to improve agricultural opportunities. Fast forward and today Chichaqua is a 9,000+ acre nature lover's dream, encompassing a stunning collection of remnant and reconstructed prairies, woodlands, wetlands,

marshes, oxbows and backwaters stretching nearly ten miles along the Skunk River.

It is also home to a diverse array of flora and fauna, including bobcats, river otters, sandhill cranes and many other species not commonly seen in this, or in some instances, any other part of the state. Chichaqua also boasts a variety of recreational opportunities including hiking trails, campsites, places to paddle, hunt, fish, cross-country ski, snowshoe and watch wildlife. The craziest part? Many central Iowans aren't aware it exists.

"If I had a dollar for every person that came up to me and said, 'I had no idea this place was here'," said Doug Sheeley, a conversation ecologist with PCCB, which manages Chichaqua along with the Iowa DNR. "It's big enough and remote enough that you can kind of forget where you are and imagine what it would have originally been like. That's not something we have the opportunity to do a lot in Iowa," said Sheeley.

The sheer size of Chichaqua — the largest

Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt

Polk & Jasper counties



LAND: 9,000+ acres 30 minutes from Des Moines in Polk and Jasper counties

SPECIAL FEATURES: Remnant and reconstructed prairies, waterfowl and migratory bird habitat, woodlands, wetlands, marshes, oxbows along the Skunk River

PARTNERS: Central Iowa Sierra Club, City of Des Moines, Great Outdoors Foundation, Des Moines Audubon, Ducks Unlimited, INHF, Iowa DOT, Izaak Walton League, Mid-Iowa Retriever's Club, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Pheasants Forver, Polk County Board of Supervisors, Iowa's REAP program, Wildlife Habitat Stamp Fund grants, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, PCCB, Iowa DNR, Ted Fariss Estate

expanse of public land in Polk County by far — as well as the scope of restoration and diversity of species found there, make it unique. Perhaps the only thing more impressive than Chichaqua itself is the partnerships it represents.

“Chichaqua started small like all of PCCB’s properties. Over time, it’s gotten quite large by Iowa standards. A lot of that is thanks to partners that have stepped up to help make that possible. It’s not something any entity can accomplish on its own,” said Sheeley.

INHF entered the Chichaqua story after the floods in 1993, when it purchased the Lost Turtle addition, a 133-acre property that became an addition to Chichaqua near Engeldinger Marsh. In the 25 years since, INHF has helped PCCB and the Iowa DNR acquire over 30 additions to the Greenbelt, protecting over 6,000 acres — much of it marginal or flood-prone farm ground.

“Chichaqua is one of the longest ongoing projects INHF has been involved with,” said INHF Land Projects Director Ross Baxter. “It’s also one of the strongest partnerships we’ve had.”

Just in the last five years, INHF has helped secure three additions to Chichaqua — Swan Lake (2014), Big Ravine (2016) and Crane Meadows (2017).

Located two miles north of Chichaqua, Swan Lake is 154 acres in the center of what was once Swan Lake, a remnant lake and surrounding wetland complex. The Natural Resources Conservation Service had already built five wetlands on the land. Once fully restored, the property will provide wildlife habitat, improve water quality and help reduce flooding in the Skunk River valley, which is prone to flooding. PCCB hopes it will be the first piece in what could eventually become a larger wetland complex in the area.

Big Ravine encompasses 73 acres on the northeast side of Chichaqua, characterized by steep upland woodlands and ravines that slope

toward the Skunk River. Like Swan Lake, once fully restored, Big Ravine will also provide significant benefits to the watershed, slowing the flow of sediments to wetlands downstream.

At 348 acres, Crane Meadows is the largest and perhaps most exciting of the recent additions, due in large part to the presence of mature swamp white oak savanna. Swamp white oak savannas, which are home to a unique set of species, were once common in midwestern floodplains but are now extremely rare.

Crane Meadows also includes part of the Skunk’s former river channel, which along with the adjacent oxbows, will be restored to wetland habitat. Opportunities exist to restore other parts to a mix of native grasses and wetlands, all of which will provide benefits to wildlife, reduce soil loss and increase groundwater filtration during floods. Located on the north edge of Chichaqua, it provides a stepping stone between Chichaqua and Swan Lake.

These three additions and Chichaqua as a whole exemplify what can be accomplished by a partnership-driven, step-by-step approach.

“That’s kind of how things have gone out here,” said Sheeley. “As opportunities come along, we can fill in the in-between pieces. INHF has been and continues to be a big part of that.”

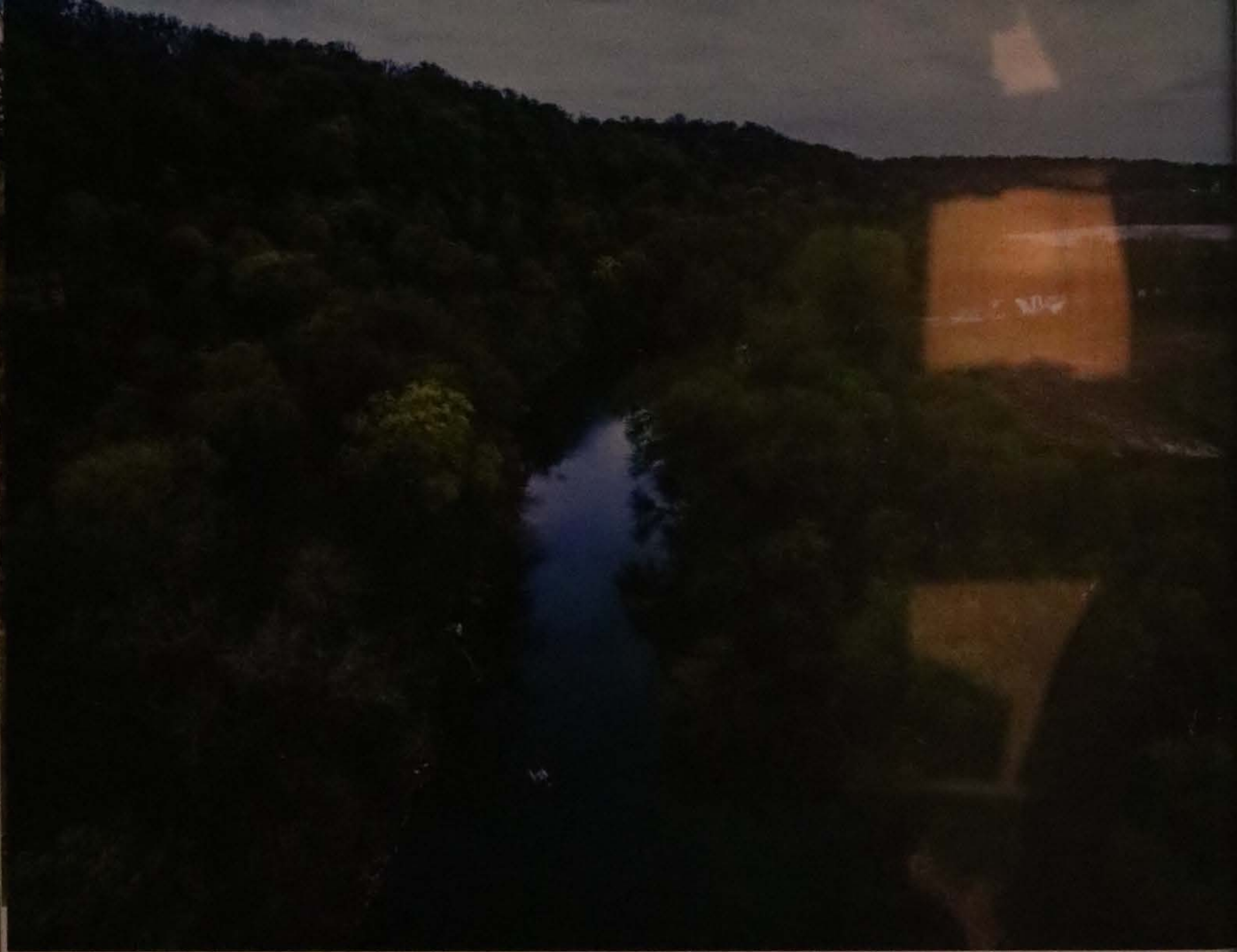
Crane Meadows is one of three additions to Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt INHF has completed in the last five years. Over the course of Chichaqua’s 30+ year history, INHF has helped expand the wild areas of Chichaqua by more than 6,000 acres. Chichaqua is the largest expanse of protected habitat and natural land in central Iowa. Above is a map of planned restoration for the new area.

LEGEND

- 1 Skunk River – Existing
- 2 Skunk River – Historic
- 3 Riparian corridor – Existing
- 4 Riparian corridor – Proposed
- 5 Oxbow wetlands
- 6 Mesic prairie
- 7 Wet-mesic prairie
- 8 Semi-permanent wetlands
- 9 Seasonal wetlands
- 10 Access road

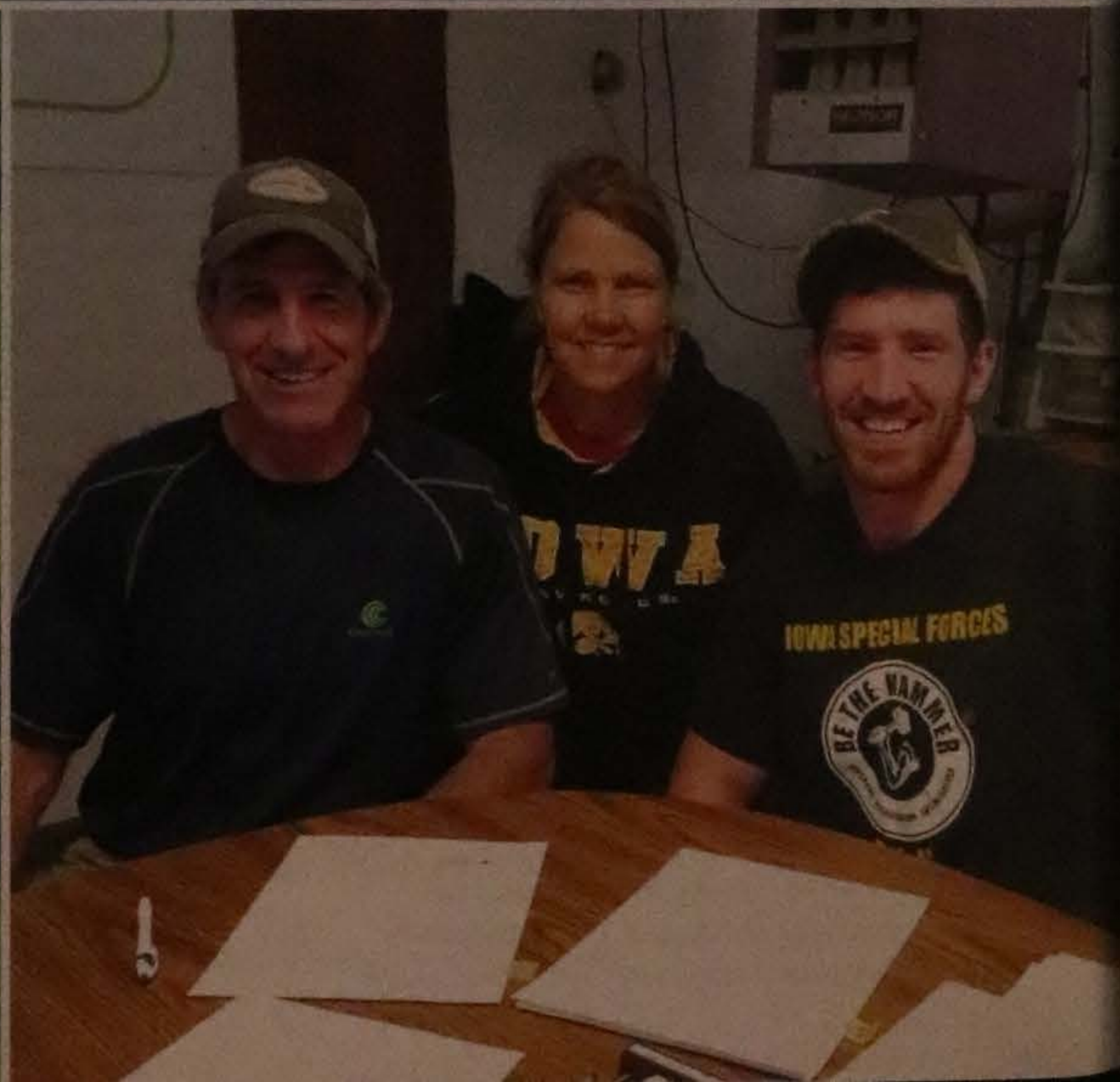
Map courtesy of Polk County Conservation





“This is a great example of finding common ground with farmers and producers for a shared vision.”

JOE MCGOVERN



All in the FAMILY

BY KERRI SORRELL

Communications specialist | ksorrell@inhf.org

Bobby Jewell grew up on the edge of Decorah, hunting, fishing and watching his dad wrangle Brown Swiss dairy cows on a farm rich with adventure.

It was a little boy's heaven, and he certainly wasn't the first or last Jewell to think so. Five generations of Jewells have watched the family farm transform and grow. If they have their way, a few more generations might do the same.

"We've always felt blessed to live where we do," said Bobby. "It doesn't get much better than where we're at."

The farm that raised the Jewells now encompasses nearly 1,200 acres just outside city limits — a mix of row crop, pasture, timber and floodplain. The Upper Iowa River meanders through it, along with a small stretch of Ten Mile Creek and three springs. The Jewells have raised cattle since the early '70s and turkeys since 1958 (transitioning to organic in 2001). Bobby's father was a seed corn dealer and sold feed and farm equipment. "We've always thought diversification was the answer, and still do," said Bobby. It's a farm dotted in a long history of innovation and stewardship.

In 2017, Bobby and family finalized a permanent protection plan for their family farm that had been brewing for almost 15 years. With conservation and the longevity of their family's operation in mind, the Jewells signed an Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) with INHF and the Natural Resources Conservation Service on 696 acres. The federal ALE program, formerly the Farm and

Ranch Protection Program (FRPP), aims to protect working lands, and is specifically focused on encouraging and implementing conservation and sustainable agricultural practices. Since 1995, INHF has helped complete more than 20 ALE/FRPP land easements across the state. The Jewell's ALE is the largest such protection in the state of Iowa.

"It's hard to protect almost any land in Iowa without an agricultural component — it's the landscape of our state," said Brian Fankhauser, INHF blufflands program director. "We worked with the Jewells for many years to find the right balance of conservation and agriculture, in a way that was financially feasible for their farm operation."

"We realized what was so special about our place was how it is right now," said Bobby. "Protecting the land assured us that if we ever felt the temptation to sell, it couldn't be developed or have its wildness taken away."

Bobby has passed on his love for the land to his four children — Jessica, Samantha, Robby and Josey — with the hopes they'd take care of the farm, too. Robby now manages the farm with his dad, and has big plans for the future.

"The [ALE] program has really focused us on sustainable agriculture and putting the environment and soil first," said Robby. "In the end, it's the land that makes the money and it needs to be managed properly."

The Jewells are looking forward: plans to experiment with cover crops, no-till farming, mob density grazing (rotating cattle in tight patterns to prevent overgrazing) and expanding their organic crop operation are already in the works.

"What struck me most about the family is their love of natural resources, love of the area and their dedication to thinking big for agriculture and conservation," said INHF President Joe McGovern. "They want to stay a viable ag operation. We wanted to see the natural areas thrive, too. This is a great example of finding common ground with farmers and producers for a shared vision."

"My dad handed this farm down to me, and I'm handing it down to Robby, and hopefully he'll hand it down to his kids," said Bobby.

"Not having this place wouldn't be right," said Robby. And as he starts in on his ideas for year-round cover crops and soil retention, he explains that "you always have to have a living root in the ground." Maybe he's not just talking about crops. 🌱

The Jewell family has a rich history of farming and enjoying the outdoors on their 1,200-acre farm just outside of Decorah, dotted by timber, wildlife and the Upper Iowa River. In 2017, the Jewells protected 696 acres of their farm through an Agricultural Land Easement, the largest ever completed in Iowa. Top photo courtesy of Robby Jewell; bottom left and right by Brian Fankhauser, INHF

LEAVING A LEGACY

Family matters

Dr. Albert Kollasch was a lover of Iowa's nature. By profession he was a physician; by hobby an avid gardener, a charter member of Belmond Trees Forever and a restorer of prairie. His 55-acre bequest in Clayton County came to INHF in 2016. While he placed no restrictions on the land, he was confident in INHF's commitment to follow his intent for conservation.

Mary Lou Burke, Dr. Kollasch's sister, lives in Massachusetts with her husband, Barry. Longtime members of INHF, their interest was sparked by INHF's Heritage Valley in Allamakee County, just north of where Dr. Kollasch lived. They decided to honor him with a gift in his name to the project. "After all, INHF is in the family now," Mary Lou said.

The Burkes didn't stop there. This year another project — an addition to Big Wall Lake in Wright County — caught their eye. Dr. Kollasch's memory was again honored with a gift by his family.

"We are always happy to contribute to the preservation of natural areas in our home state of Iowa," said Barry. And INHF is always happy to help build a family's conservation legacy.

— ABBY HADE TERPSTRA, donor relations director

CONSERVATION TIP

Bird-friendly Iowa

Winter in Iowa is often characterized by words like quiet, calm and still. However, those with an eye on the sky know that it is anything but, particularly when many birds begin making their way back to and through Iowa on their way north. Here are a few tips on how to score a front row seat:

Add habitat: Whether you're working with a hundred acres or a postage stamp-sized backyard, no effort to create bird-friendly habitat is too small. Native trees, shrubs, wildflowers and grasses provide a wide variety of species with year-round food, shelter and places to hide from predators. Contact your local naturalist to find the best plant species for the birds you're hoping to see.

Food sources: By and large, most species will find food on their own, especially in areas where habitat is abundant. However, bird feeders stocked with high energy seed can be great for attracting smaller seed-eating species. Just be cognizant of placing them in areas that provide cover from predators.

Shelter: Bird houses can be vital to cavity nesting birds in the winter, providing necessary shelter during colder months. Blue birds, house wrens, black capped chickadees and many others will be grateful for the place to land.



PHOTO BY ED SIEMS

To learn more about migratory birds and other species that can be found throughout the year in Iowa, visit www.iowadnr.gov/conservation/iowas-wildlife.

TRIBUTE GIFTS

IN MEMORY OF

Deke and Maxine
Steve Atherton
Don Avenson
Charles H & Alta G. Bair
Gary Beckwith
Alberta Brosnanan
John Bergren
Erica Bernier
Bob Bettie
Larry Beving
David Boehm
Miriam Boyd
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John Buckton
Richard Cole Jr.
Raymond E "Bud" Cooper
Howard "Butch" Cox
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Margaret Woods
Dan Zollars

IN HONOR OF

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Gregg & Peg Armstrong
Gustafson
Peg Armstrong-Gustafson
Betsy Baumann
Mary Massey Baumann
Brady Belcher
Donald A. Beneke
Dick Boyd
Patti Cale-Finnegan
Todd Fattand
Tae Garst Family
GMHR Mountain's Top
Watermark'n Woody MH
GMHR Mountain's Top
Woody's Sage
Carol Gueline Rogers
Steve Hopkins
Patti & Bob Jester

Joe's big buck
Robert Jolly
Bill & Joann Kautek
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Laurie Klosterboer
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Dan Rasmussen
Governor Bob & Billie Ray
The Rice Family
Susan Salterberg
John Sorenson
Nate Springer
The Thome Family
Kathy Wine
Kirsten Winter

Find more Iowa places to explore at www.inhf.org/blog

Tracking stories in the snow

BY HALEY HODGES

Communications intern | comminternhaley@inhf.org

Don't let the cold weather and snow deter you from getting outside during Iowa's frosty winters. Exploring your local parks during the winter months can lead to some unexpected discoveries. Fresh snow makes for an easy way to spot animal tracks. Though tracking is a hobby that can be accomplished year round, tracks through a blanket of snow can be easy to follow and identify in good conditions.

The best time for tracking is early in the morning or later in the evening, as many animals are most active during those times and their tracks are likely to be fresh. The softer morning or evening light from the sun also makes it easier to spot tracks than the harsh light mid-day.

Common tracks found in Iowa would be those of deer, rabbits, pheasants, wild turkeys, foxes, coyotes and, if you're lucky,



Put on your scouting gear and learn to identify tracks in snow and spring mud. There are tracking many resources to take along for the adventure. *Photo by Tim Ackarman*

bobcats. Specific field guides can help identify between one print and another. Establish the classification of animal by identifying between hoof, talon and paw tracks. Different species, or even different aged animals, will also have more unique gaits, which can help identify the animal.

Finding good places to locate different animal tracks can vary but public wildlife management areas in your area are a good place to start. Most of Iowa's common species are easily found in any large, open areas, including yards, so tracking can be accomplished everywhere for families and experienced scouts alike. 🐾

ILLUSTRATIONS
BY ANDREA
PIEKARCZYK



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Foundation

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Bald eagles fly high over much of Iowa during the winter, scouting for prey and open water. Look along the banks of most Iowa rivers and you'll see groups of eagles (and the occasional red tail hawk) perched in bare tree branches. Since their classification as an Endangered Species in 1978, eagles have made a resounding recovery, with nesting pairs in the lower 48 moving from 417 in 1963 to over 9,000 in 2006. Recovery of bald eagle numbers has been especially pronounced in the Midwest, with the Mississippi River being one of the best eagle spotting locales in the country. *Photo by John Ford*

Leave a legacy of clean water, healthy soil and beautiful outdoor places for future generations.
To see how including INHF in your will or trust can help make your vision for Iowa a reality, contact Anita O'Gara at aogara@inhf.org or 515-288-1846.



Iowa Natural Heritage

Protecting and restoring Iowa's land, water and wildlife.



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OF IOWA

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THE LAND GIVES BACK

A family opens their farm to restoration and the community **12**

Re-wilding

Restoring a former mine site to its natural beginnings **10**

History of trust

A unique partnership allows for large-scale protection in the Loess Hills **16**

Together, more is possible



JOE MCGOVERN
President

The strength of INHF is in its partnerships. We are restoring worn out lands to a more wild state, like the mine reclamation we worked on with the DeCook family (page 10). We are engaging with landowners and their communities in new ways, like the protection of Danamere Farms (page 12). We are creating new kinds of relationships with other conservation groups, like the work being done at Green Hill Ranch with The Nature Conservancy in Iowa (page 16).

There is much work to be done on soil conservation, the quality of our water, the accessibility of wild, natural places to most Iowans and the amount of wildlife habitat in our state. In spite of these challenges, we are seeing landowners and organizations step up. But we all can recognize the pace of conservation has to increase, not stagnate.

There is more pressure on landowners and producers than ever, with volatile markets and increasingly extreme weather events. How are we going to respond to the next great flood or severe drought, especially when status quo conservation funding doesn't meet the challenges that already exist? The answer is that we have to work together to create a more resilient landscape.

Because of you, INHF is uniquely positioned to help make that happen. Your support — and the partnerships it fosters — protects vulnerable landscapes and preserves natural areas for future generations. We can't thank you enough for that. And we hope the stories in this magazine of what those partnerships produce makes you as proud as we are.

ON THE COVER

A snow trillium peaks through the spring landscape in Madison County. The delicate flowers have long been considered one of the first signs of spring. *Photo by Jacob Pitzenberger*



Protecting and restoring Iowa's land, water and wildlife.

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12

Home away from home

A 177-acre farm has been in Rob and Susan Fleming's family for many years, but with permanent protection through INHF, the land is finding new purpose. Through conserving their farm's natural qualities, Rob and Susan hope to reconnect the community to nature.

8

The value of a trail

The High Trestle Trail provides more than just a place to enjoy the outdoors — it also plays a major role in driving the local economy.

10

Reclaiming wildness

Exposed former mines have a damaging impact on Iowa's landscape. However, a family's partnership with INHF allowed an opportunity to return a former mine in southern Iowa to its natural state.

16

Partnering for protection

Large-scale land conservation requires partnership and cooperation. Take a look at how a unique property in the Loess Hills brought multiple organizations together to protect a classic landscape.

20

Opening doors for nature

INHF's vision for community involvement in conservation is expanding to become a more diverse and inclusive effort.

DEPARTMENTS

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- 23 Get Outdoors

RECEIVED

MAY 04 2018

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“The beautiful spring came; and when Nature resumes her loveliness, the human soul is apt to revive also.”

- Harriet Ann Jacobs

March is a weird time to work in a conservation office, especially when you're what we call a "land person" — someone who primarily works outside. After a long winter, you can almost feel the stored energy radiating off those itching to get outside. People walk around anxiously, gazing longingly out windows — it's the precipice of a change in the season.

This spring has been particularly tough. At a certain point, it's just painful to see our land stewardship team inside — there are only so many promises of warmer days ahead you can give them. Spring to them means fire season, probably one of the most natural connections a human can make with nature. I don't blame them for bursting at the seams.

Fire is essential to a natural landscape — a tool for nature to refresh, protect itself and welcome new life. It is a distinct end and beginning, and ushers in a full season ahead. After a few years of observation, I think I can safely say it's essential for some humans, too.

— KERRI SORRELL
Communications specialist





This spring, INHF joined 26 partner organizations in the Loess Hills for an annual cooperative burn. The weeklong effort was able to burn over 1,200 acres of public and private land in southwest Iowa. *Photo courtesy of Andrew Batt, Iowa Public Television*



Protection of Prairie Creek ensures water quality benefits for Boone River

Twisting through Humboldt County is a babbling stream known as Prairie Creek. For many species of birds and fish, including the federally endangered Topeka Shiner, Prairie Creek provides excellent habitat, and its direct relationship with the adjacent Boone River allows it to play a major role in water quality.

So when Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation received the opportunity to protect 390 acres of floodplain surrounding Prairie Creek, the project became an instant priority.

"The water quality benefits are a huge part of the land's importance," said Ross Baxter, INHF land projects director. "Prairie Creek flows into the Boone River, which is a significant natural resource, so any protection of the tributaries is important. If we can restore and keep the surrounding land in native vegetation, it will reduce sediment and runoff flowing into Prairie Creek, which ultimately would deposit into the Boone River."

The land, mostly made up of woods and floodprone crop ground, provides a sanctuary for many forms of wildlife in the area. According to Baxter, when the area floods regularly, the land is a popular spot for

The Prairie Creek watershed feeds into the Boone River, and is an important area for migrating birds and other waterfowl. INHF recently acquired 390 acres of Prairie Creek floodplain to protect the wildlife and water quality of the area. *Photos by Ross Baxter, INHF*

waterfowl and other birds to rest during their migratory travels.

"Prairie Creek floods pretty regularly in the spring, which provides a great resting place for migrating birds," Baxter said. "One day when we were out there, about 30 acres were seasonally flooded, and probably over 1,000 ducks and geese were out there, including a pair of trumpeter swans."

Because of the land's location in Humboldt County, it provides public rare access to wildlife habitat in an area that otherwise has little outdoor recreation land to offer. This new natural space will provide public access for bird watching, hiking and hunting to Iowans. The area will eventually transfer to the Humboldt County Conservation Board for ongoing ownership and management. 🦆



UPCOMING EVENTS

MAY 5
 Into the Wild,
 Out with the
 Mustard

*Heritage Valley,
 Allamakee Co.*

Join us for this 6th annual event to hand-pull garlic mustard, one of the most invasive non-native plants in Iowa. Explore INHF's Heritage Valley, a 1,200-acre nature preserve outside of Decorah. Coffee, lunch and snacks are provided for this family-friendly event!

MAY 15
 Iowa Trail Ale
 Launch Party
*Peace Tree Des
 Moines Branch,
 Polk Co.*

In celebration of National Trails Day, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation has partnered with Peace Tree Brewing Co., REI and Polk County Conservation to bring you the re-launch of the Iowa Trail Ale! Join us as we tap the first keg.

JUNE 2
 National
 Trails Day
*Jester Park,
 Polk Co.*

Celebrate National Trails Day with us and help finish new trails around Jester Park's Discovery Pond. After the trail work, gather together for music, food and a pint. Free camping for all volunteers.

For more
 information, visit
www.inhf.org.



BIRD FRIENDLY IOWA

To learn more about the Bird Friendly Iowa program, visit www.birdfriendlyiowa.org.

2018 is the Year of the Bird

2018 marks the 100th anniversary of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, arguably the most important national bird protection law ever passed. Over the past century, the law has protected countless birds from human activities. However, birds aren't completely safe — due to oil spills, high-tension power lines and loss of habitat, many bird populations are declining across the globe.

To raise awareness for bird protection, *National Geographic* has named 2018 the "Year of the Bird." The magazine will feature stories and content focused on avian life and how to get involved in the bird protection movement.

The effort is taking hold in Iowa as well. INHF knows that land conservation plays a big role in protecting birds by providing habitat, and works with landowners across the state to preserve land that provides spaces for migrating and native birds.

INHF has recently collaborated with

partners like Trees Forever, Iowa Audubon, Iowa Ornithologists Union and interested individuals to kick-start the Bird Friendly Iowa (BFI) program, which aims to help Iowa communities better protect avian life in their area.

BFI sets criteria for cities and towns to reach Bird Friendly designation. The criteria includes creating habitat on public lands, educating the community on birds and their needs and reducing threats to bird populations (two of the biggest culprits are buildings made of glass and outdoor cats). Waterloo was the first city to reach Bird Friendly Iowa designation, with more towns submitting applications soon.

"Even if you don't consider yourself a conservationist, birds are a unique and important part of wildlife," says Carole Teator, INHF eastern Iowa program manager. "Birds bring nature to your front yard; they are parts of nature that people respond to." 🐦

INHF welcomes new northeast Iowa staffer

Logan Wood joined the INHF staff in March as the Blufflands Field Assistant to help INHF's protection and stewardship activities in northeast Iowa.

"We're excited for Logan to help further our land stewardship objectives and help INHF complete its mission of protecting and restoring land, water and wildlife," Blufflands Associate Jered Bourquin says. "Particularly, we hope to utilize Logan's skills in prescribed fire and invasive species control."

Logan is a native of Waukon, Iowa and his family still farms in Allamakee County. He graduated from Upper Iowa University in 2017 with a Bachelor of Science degree. Prior to working for INHF, he worked for a local seeding company doing various natural resource restoration activities.

"I'm excited to learn and see how we can give back to nature," Logan said. "The goal is to have this land around for future generations, and I'm excited to be a part of the small steps in restoration and bringing everything together." 🐦



"The goal is to have this land around for future generations, and I'm excited to be a part of the small steps in restoration and bringing everything together."

— LOGAN WOOD, BLUFFLANDS FIELD ASSISTANT

INHF annual report coming in May

Notice something missing from this magazine? Starting this year, you can expect an extra publication in your mailbox — INHF's new annual report.

Traditionally, our annual report has been incorporated into the spring magazine. This year, we're switching it up. Next month, you'll receive the new annual report, filled with stories of protection accomplishments our members have made throughout the year.

A trail's IMPACT



PHOTO BY DON POGGENSEE

In late 2017, INHF commissioned an economic impact study of the High Trestle Trail, one of central Iowa's most popular multi-use trails. The study shows that beyond its public health and recreational benefits, the trail is a big player in driving the local economy. See some statistics from the report below:

250,000

average yearly visits to the trail

135 jobs

supported by annual trail user spending

\$7.7 million

annual value of the trail to Dallas and Boone counties

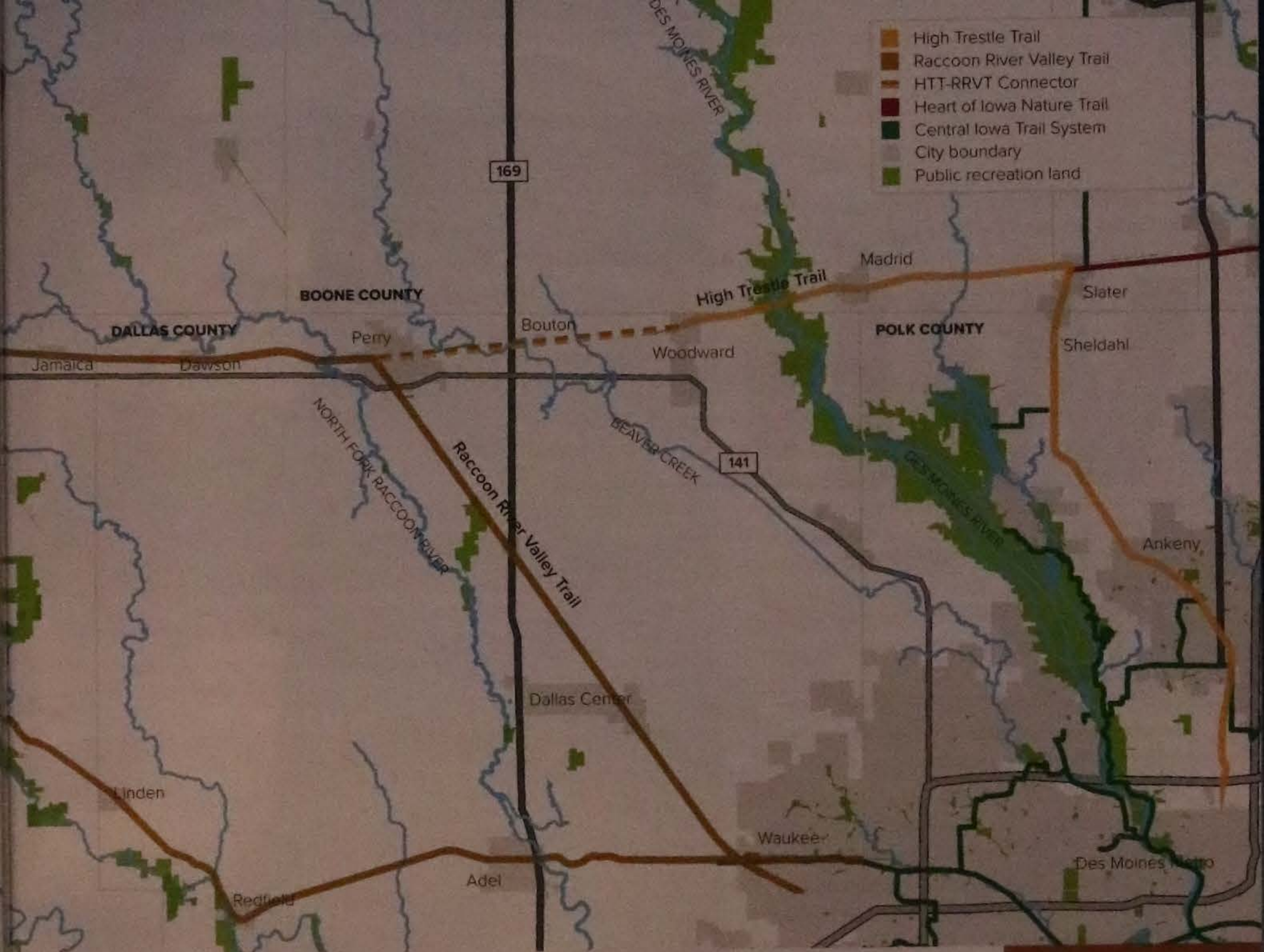
\$6,718,607

average trail user direct spending in Dallas and Boone counties

ESTIMATED TRAIL USER PURCHASES BY CATEGORY

SPENDING CATEGORY	TOTAL PURCHASES (\$)
Dining and drinking	3,055,255
Food (retail)	1,319,594
Sporting goods (retail)	519,467
Gen. merchandise (retail)	128,020
Bike repair	465,304
Lodging	984,772
Other services	246,193
Total	6,718,607

Source: High Trestle Trail Valuation & Economic Impact Analysis, November 2017
(conducted by Iowa State University College of Science and Technology CyBiz Lab Team)



Connecting the trails

INHF is helping connect two major trails in central Iowa.

BY JOE JAYJACK
 Communications director | jjayjack@inhf.org

Construction crews will break ground this year on a trail that connects two of Iowa's most popular trails — but the project still has a long way to go.

The connector trail between the Raccoon River Valley Trail (RRVT) in Perry and the High Trestle Trail (HTT) in Woodward will be 9 miles long when finished. The first mile-and-a-half will be paved this year heading east out of Perry. INHF helped in the planning, land acquisition and fundraising of both the RRVT and HTT, and is doing so with the connector.

The route for the connection, which will go through the small town of Bouton, will include a mix of former railroad corridor, rural road

right of way and newly acquired land.

The \$4.8 million project is more than halfway funded thanks to generous community organizations and private donors.

"Getting these two trails connected will do so much for the communities along the trails and the people that use them," said INHF Trails and Greenways Director Andrea Boulton.

"These trails are public recreation facilities, and they are big economic drivers for these communities."

The 89-mile RRVT and the 25-mile HTT, once connected, will create multiple options for giant loops that connect into the greater Des Moines trail system. 📍

HOW YOU CAN HELP

The connector trail is a \$4.8 million project, including purchase of the corridor, planning and construction. More than \$2.6 million has already been raised through public grants and private donations, including more than 400 people that have donated through INHF.

You can help make this connection a reality by visiting www.inhf.org/connect-the-trails to learn more about the project and to donate.

RETURN TO WILD

BY KATY HEGGEN

Communications assistant | kheggen@inhf.org

“IOWA” AND “MINING” are not words commonly associated with one another, at least not anymore. But in some parts of the state, the two have a long history that has left its mark on the natural landscape.

Coal mining in Iowa dates back to the 1840s, most present in the southern and southeastern part of the state. It peaked in the early 1980s before production declined and ceased in 1994, but remnants of that activity remain.

Most abandoned mines in Iowa are surface mines, where mining cuts coal from above the surface, leaving behind pits and piles of earth, some stretching for acres. Left unaddressed, these sites can cause serious damage.

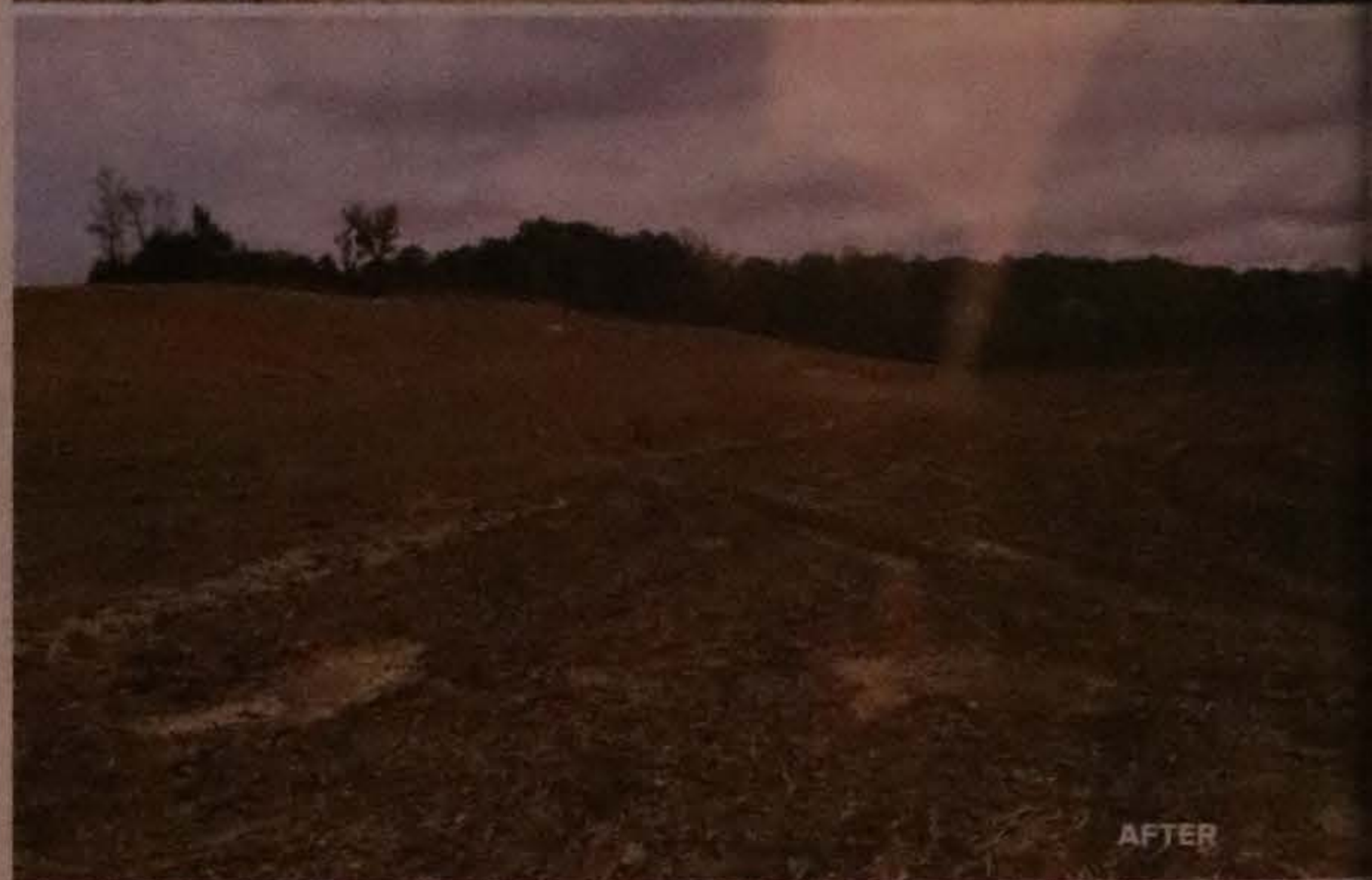
“Spoil material is very erosive,” said Randy Cooney, a project coordinator with the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS). “Materials from barren spoil piles can get into waterways, erode gullies, clog streams and stunt vegetation growth — if anything grows at all.”

The DeCook family’s land in Marion County is home to several abandoned mine sites. Most have managed to blend into the landscape, but one site in particular needed help.

“It didn’t look very good,” Mike DeCook said. “There were big bare spoils, next to no vegetation and a small pond at the bottom of the gulch that you could tell was acidic. Of course, we were concerned about water quality. We thought this would be a good area to reclaim and make better.”



BEFORE



AFTER



PRAIRIE SEEDING

In southern Iowa, Mike and Dan DeCook have been restoring a former mine site on their property through a federal program. Coal mining ceased in Iowa in 1994, but exposed former mines can create hazardous and barren environments. The reclamation process is seen to the left. INHF helped seed the area to prairie in early 2018. Photos courtesy of Mike DeCook and Derek Miner (INHF)

In 1977, Congress passed the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA). SMCRA created the Abandoned Mines Land (AML) Reclamation Program, which collects a reclamation fee on each ton of coal produced in the U.S. and deposits it into a trust. These funds are allocated to IDALS for mine reclamation projects.

"There are over 300 abandoned mine sites in Iowa," Cooney said. "To date, we've reclaimed about 100."

"With these projects, the land is privately owned, but there's a community benefit, too," said Anna Bruen, executive director of Pathfinders RC&D, which has partnered with IDALS to help secure funding and support for more than 40 mine reclamations. "Reclaiming these sites protects public health, preserves our waterways and enhances soil health. It's about being good stewards of the land."

Mike, his brother, Dan, and their parents, Mark and Kay, have spent the last two decades re-wilding their lands. To date, INHF holds permanent conservation easements on 2,700 acres owned by the DeCooks in Monroe, Marion and Lucas counties. It was important to them that the way they approached the project fit with their larger vision for the land.

"We wanted to mimic nature as much as

possible," Mike said. "We tried the best we could to get it as close to what it might have looked like before coal mining."

Focusing on a natural hydrology design — one of only three mine reclamation sites in the state to feature a natural design — Mike worked with Cooney and INHF to regrade the area and do a 16-acre prairie seeding.

"This was a unique opportunity for us to get natural land back on the landscape, but what really excited me about this project was all the partnerships," said INHF Land Stewardship Director Ryan Schmidt. "More and more we're finding creative, non-traditional partnership opportunities are required to get restoration done. No individual or public or private entity can do it alone."

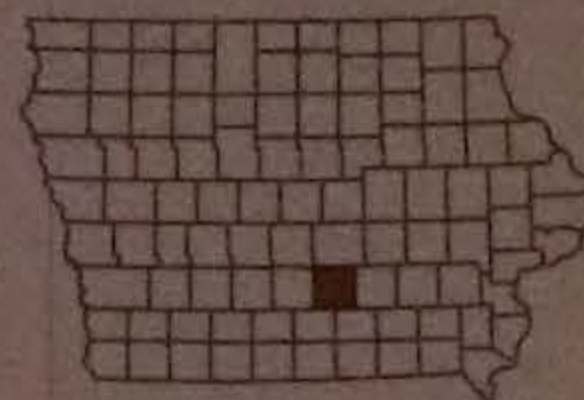
Today, the site is hardly recognizable. Barren spoil piles, eroded gullies and clogged streams have been replaced with strategically graded slopes, rock structures and wetlands — all built to mimic nature. INHF helped seed the prairie — which includes more than 75 native species — this past February. Mike plans to plant additional oaks on the northeast corner. He's looking forward to watching everything and all it represents take root.

"Visually, the flow of the landscape looks a lot better," Mike said. "When I walk around this place now, I just think about how important our natural heritage is. So much of Iowa's land has been converted. It's really rewarding to re-wild it." 🌱

Want to learn more about mine reclamation?
Find more info online at
www.iowaagriculture.gov/soilconservation.

DeCook Mine Reclamation

Marion County



LAND: Private former coal mining area on the DeCook Ranch in Marion County

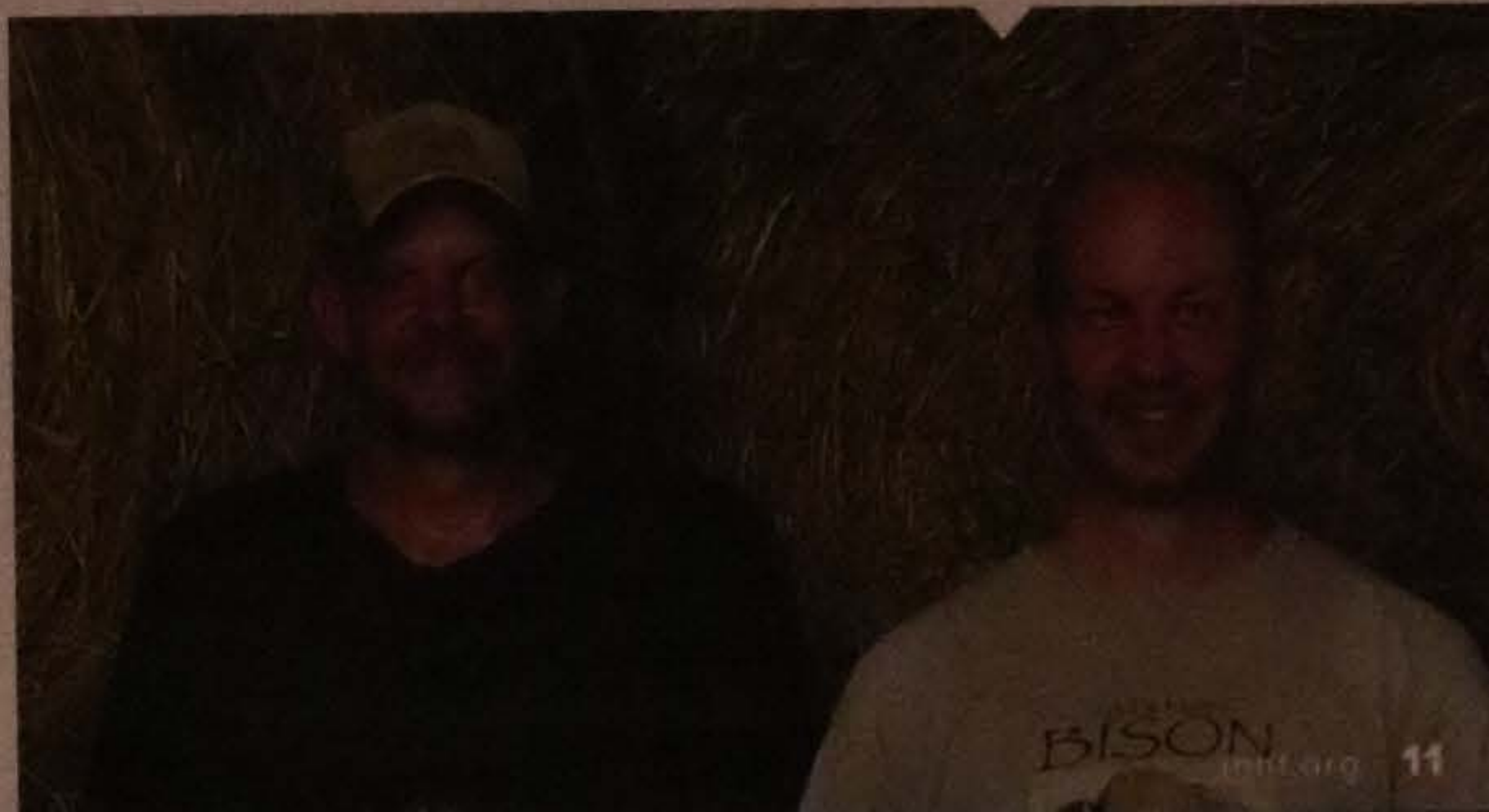
SPECIAL FEATURES: Former surface mine, replanted prairie and potential oak savanna planting

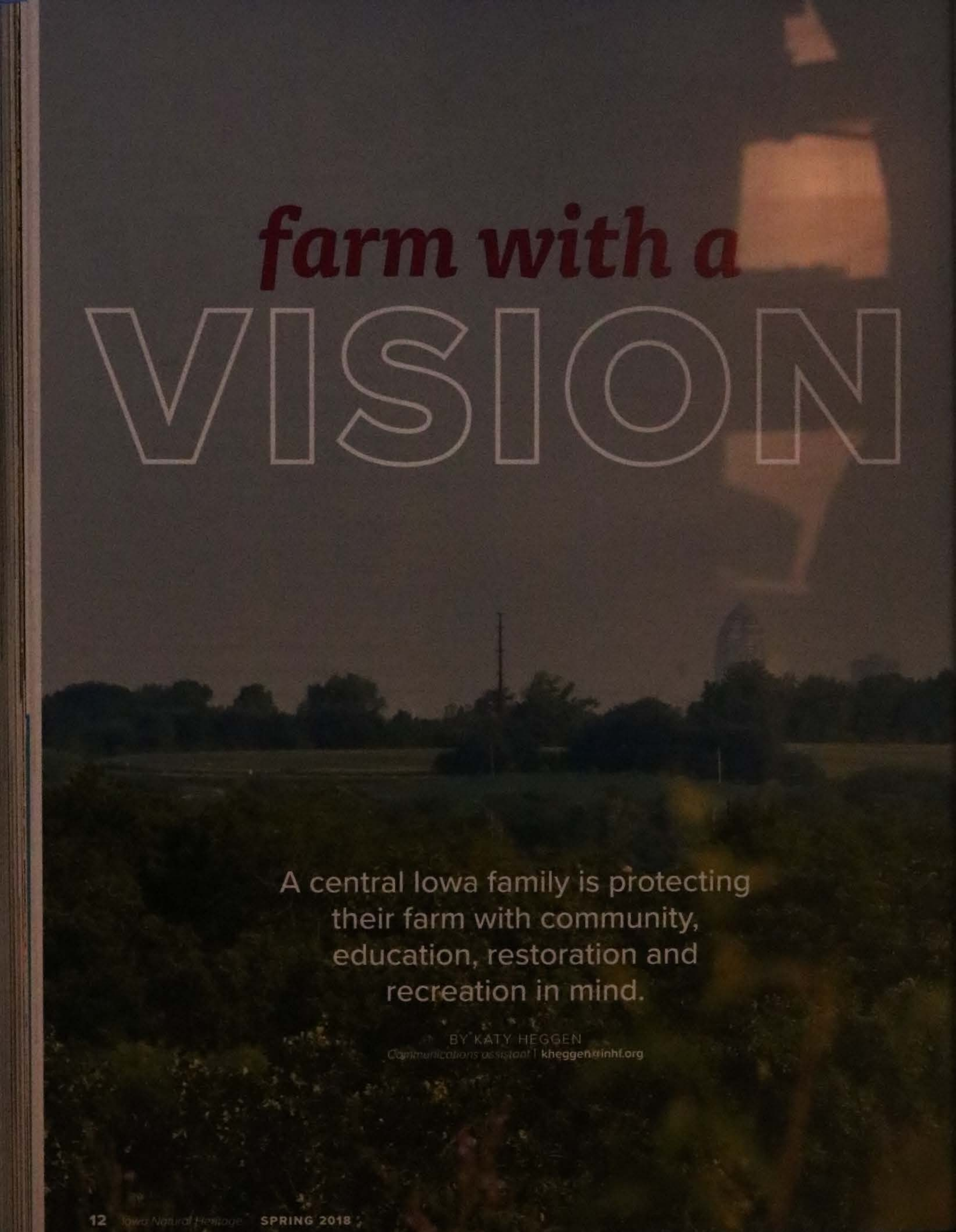
PARTNERS: DeCook Family, IDALS, INHF, Marion County Engineers Office, Marion County Soil and Water Conservation District Office of Surface Mining and Regulatory Enforcement, Pathfinders RC&D, Red Rock Environmental Education Fund, USDA NRCS, U.S. Department of the Interior

Brothers Mike and Dan DeCook, with their parents Mark and Kay, have worked with INHF for decades to protect over 2,700 acres in southern Iowa, returning it to natural landscape and running an organic bison operation. Their mine reclamation project is their latest restoration project. Photo by Ron Huelse

"When I walk around this place now, I just think about how important our natural heritage is. So much of Iowa's land has been converted. It's really rewarding to re-wild it."

- MIKE DeCOOK





farm with a

VISION

A central Iowa family is protecting their farm with community, education, restoration and recreation in mind.

BY KATY HEGGEN
Communications assistant | kheggen@inhf.org

In a part of the state where wide open spaces are becoming increasingly scarce, at 117 acres, Rob and Susan Fleming's family farm near Carlisle stands out. But it's not just the land itself that's extraordinary — it's what's happening there.

Danamere Farms is redefining what a natural area means for central Iowa. It's home to classic Iowa natural features, like native and restored prairie, woodland and oak savanna. A public trail runs through the north side of the property. Beginning farmers grow local foods and have reintroduced sustainable agriculture practices to the landscape. The land has served as an outdoor classroom for the neighboring middle school. Through a partnership with INHF, the land is now permanently protected.

And Rob and Susan are just getting started.

A home away from home

Rob grew up on Danamere Farms alongside his two brothers, Jim and Erik. The farm was purchased by his grandfather, Erik "Lindy" Lindhart, a Danish expatriate, in the late 1920s. Rob's parents, Bob and Ann, took over the farm in the 1950s. Both were active community leaders and dedicated conservationists. Ann was an Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation founding board member, board chair and long-time advisor, and both she and Bob were stalwart supporters.

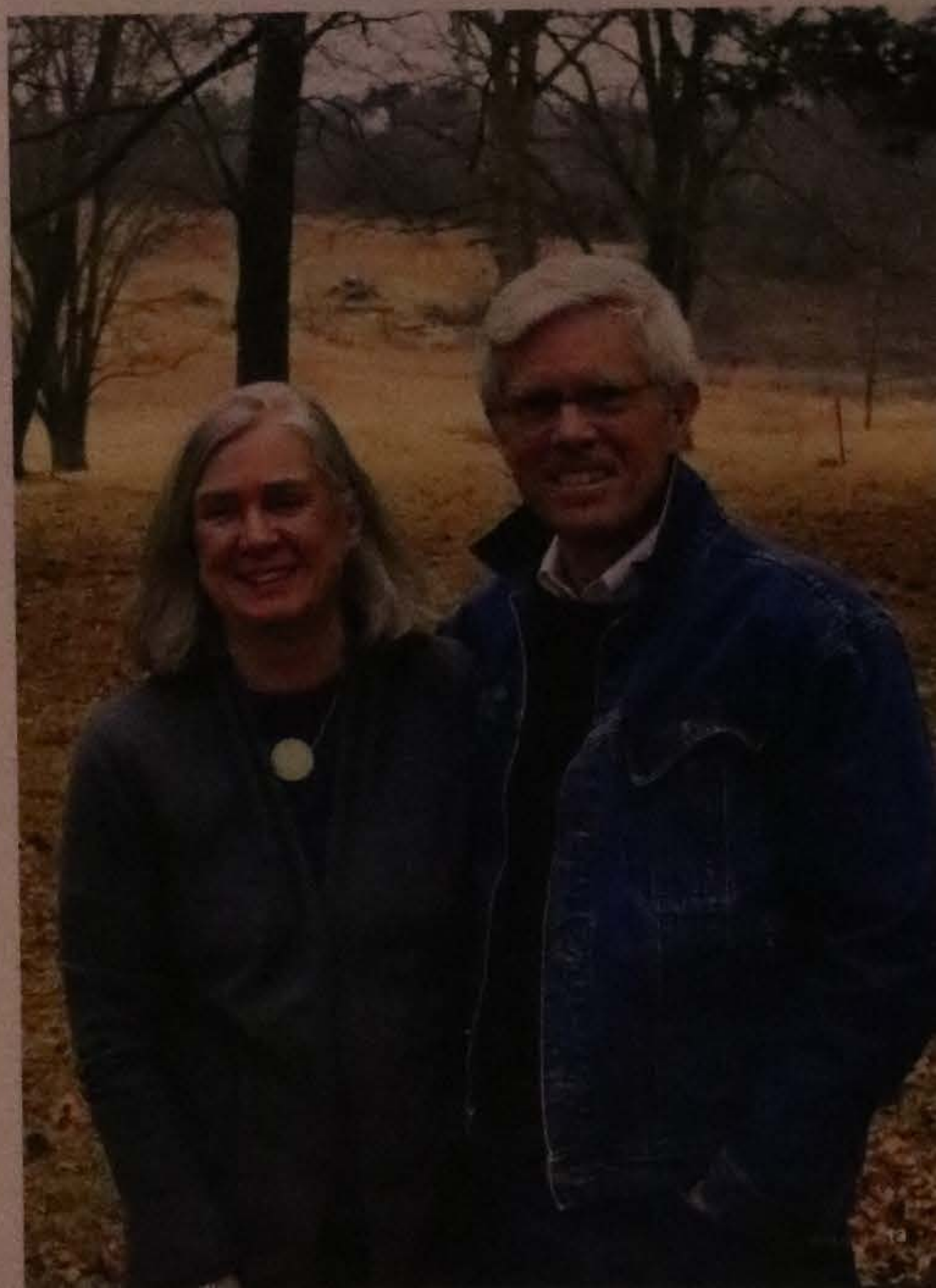
Ann's 2012 obituary traced the family's agricultural roots: "Ann was the great-granddaughter of Henry ("Uncle Henry") Wallace and Nancy Cantwell Wallace, founders and editors of the agricultural journal, *Wallace's Farmer*. Her paternal grandfather was Henry Cantwell Wallace, Editor of *Wallace's Farmer* and, at the time of his death,

United States Secretary of Agriculture. Her uncle was Henry Agard Wallace, Vice President of the United States of America, U. S. Secretary of Agriculture, and U. S. Secretary of Commerce."

Rob left Iowa to attend grad school on the east coast, eventually settling in Philadelphia where he, Susan and their three grown daughters still live, but his interest in the farm and its future always remained.

"I'm absolutely in love with this place," he said. "I would hate to see it developed. It's just too beautiful."

The family returned to Iowa frequently over the years, and when Ann passed away five years after Bob, Rob gained ownership of the beloved family farm and began creating a master conservation plan for Danamere Farms.



◀ **With a view of the Des Moines skyline,** Susan and Rob Fleming's (right) Carlisle farm has been in the family a long time. Now, they're looking to share the farm's recreation and natural resources with their community. Photos by Genna Clemen and Joe Jayjack, INHF



ABOVE: Rob Fleming signs a conservation easement on his family's farm in Carlisle. **TOP:** Danamere Farms, although a private farm, is a home for the community — a city trail runs through the farm, middle school children are invited to explore its many landscapes and refugee families make use of its ample farm ground. *Photos by Genna Clemen and Joe Jayjack, INHF*

“The family is always thinking about how others can enjoy their beautiful family farm. There are so many things that make it special.”

— ERIN VAN WAUS,
INHF CONSERVATION EASEMENT DIRECTOR

Three Goals, Many Partners

Rob and Susan had three goals in mind when they took over care of Danamere Farms: restoration, recreation and education. For all the projects they've tackled, conservation and community have been at the forefront.

Rob's parents took the land out of row-crop production in 2005 and began working with INHF to restore parts of the property to prairie. Rob and Susan have continued to restore the land with help from neighbors, friends and independent contractors.

“The goal is to have as much open landscape that gets as close to its pre-settlement condition as possible,” Rob said. “We don't live here fulltime, so it's a slow process, but it's coming along.”

Rob's passionate about restoring the land, but it's the projects — restoration and otherwise — that present opportunities to bring new faces to explore, experience and steward the land that he and Susan are most excited about.

“The family is always thinking about how others can enjoy their beautiful family farm,” said INHF Conservation Easement Director Erin Van Waus. “There are so many things that make this place special.”

Two years ago, Rob and Susan began renting two acres of land to Congera Alex, a refugee from Burundi, through Lutheran Services in Iowa's (LSI) Global Greens program. Global Greens reconnects former refugee farmers with land as they build their new lives in the U.S. Together with his wife, Chantal Marie, Alex grows local foods and produce they grew in Africa.

“Gardening as a family group has been an integral part of our lives since the time we were born,” Alex told LSI. “We enjoy spending time together in the garden and passing



along this important part of our cultural heritage to our children in our new country.”

In the past, Danamere Farms has served as an outdoor classroom for students at Carlisle Middle School, which is located on neighboring land that was once part of the farm. The teacher leading the project recently retired. Rob and Susan hope to re-establish the partnership so students in the Carlisle School District can once again learn from the land in their own backyard.

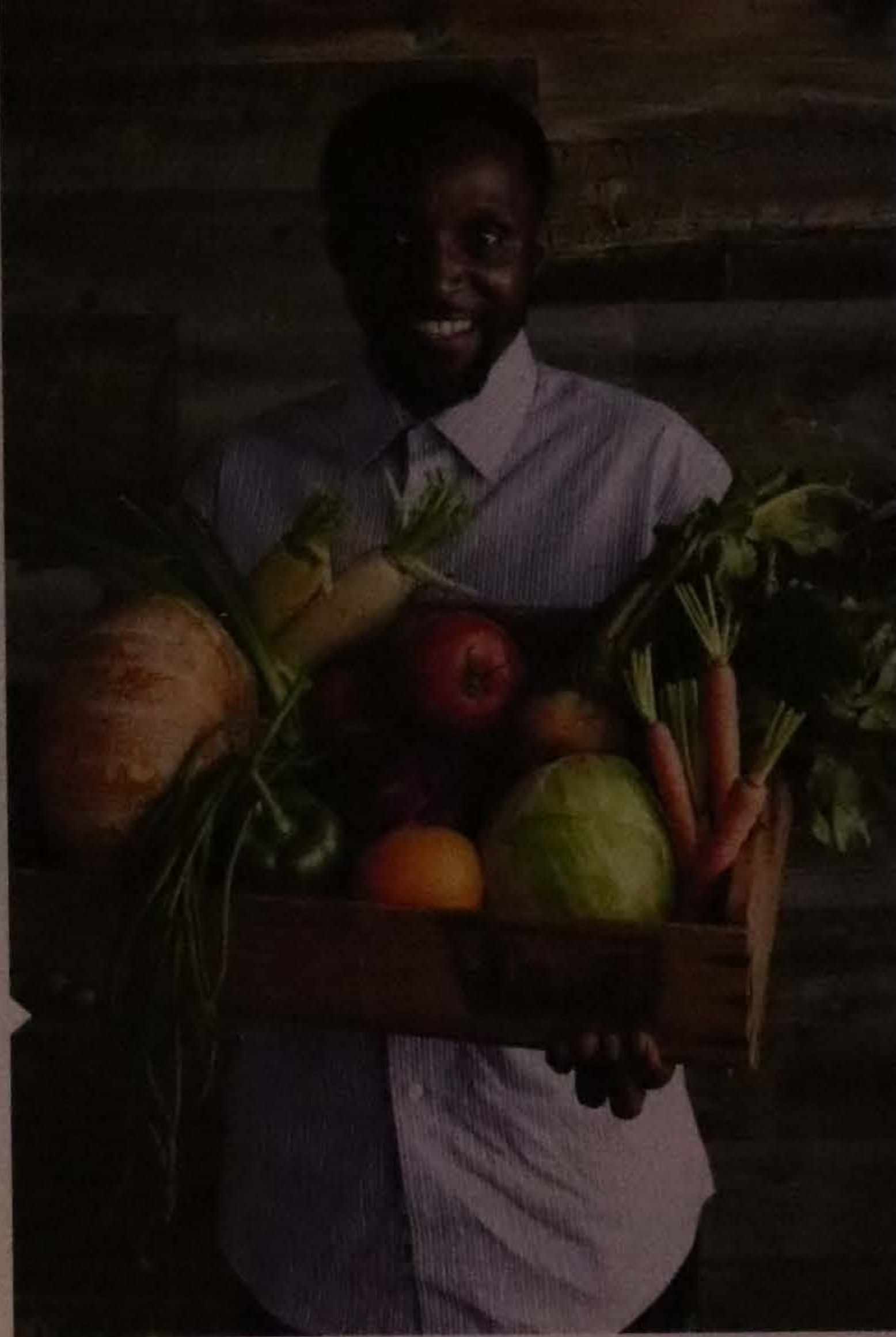
Rob is particularly proud of the community trail that runs through the property offering cyclists, joggers and families scenic views of the landscape and the distant Des Moines skyline. He and Susan donated land to the City of Carlisle to help complete the project, and Rob, a landscape architect, worked with RDG Planning & Design to finalize the design. The trail is a link between the Summerset Trail in Indianola and Scotch Ridge Nature Park, and will someday link to Des Moines’s Easter Lake and the Central Iowa Trail System.

“INHF and other land trusts are increasingly interested in community conservation — a balanced approach to land conservation that includes more people and seeks to meet the needs of the community. Danamere Farms is a great example,” Van Waus said.

Permanent Protection

These projects embody an approach Rob learned through

Congera Alex, a refugee from Burundi, holds a harvest from his garden, located on Danamere Farms. Rob and Susan have partnered with Lutheran Services in Iowa’s Global Greens program to reconnect refugee farms with land and help them make a livelihood. *Photo courtesy of LSI*



his family, on the farm and in his career.

“Anytime you build something, it’s a collaborative effort with lots of different entities,” he said. “Danamere Farms is kind of my capstone project. This is the land ethic I was trained in.”

Rob and Susan’s capstone is not yet complete, but they’re pleased to know it will always be protected. Last year, they donated a conservation easement to INHF, ensuring Danamere Farms will always be a place for conservation and community.

“I think it was always in the back of my parents’ minds that I might do something like this,” Rob said. “They didn’t require it of me, but they trusted that I would do it after they were gone. It was in the back of the whole family’s mind to preserve it.”

As Rob and Susan envision their farm’s future, they’re excited about the ways INHF can help expand all Danamere Farms has to offer.

“When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect,” wrote Aldo Leopold. Perhaps the same is true when a community



Loess is more

A groundbreaking partnership is helping create one of the Council Bluffs area's largest protected recreation areas.

BY ANDREA PIEKARCZYK
Grants coordinator | apiekarczyk@inhf.org

VISITING GREEN HILL RANCH FOR THE FIRST TIME, Graham McGaffin said the property's expansiveness struck him. "It can be difficult to imagine the scope of a place [like this]."

"It's the southern Loess Hills, so it's steep. And five hundred acres is big, but it feels bigger," says McGaffin.

As Loess Hills Project Director for The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in Iowa, McGaffin is plenty familiar with the scale of the region — from terraces lining hillsides to razor-edged prairie ridgetops that stretch for miles. The scenery is breathtaking, with vistas unlike those found anywhere else in the world.

Green Hill Ranch is 506 acres of classic Loess Hills topography — peak-and-saddle cascading hills, oak savanna and pockets of remnant prairie. The protection of Green Hill Ranch is a milestone for both INHF and TNC, who have partnered for the first time in this way to protect it, and is a destination in waiting for Iowans to explore and wander.

"You come off the highway and you don't even see half the property. You climb up, and



there's an oak-lined ridgetop. From there, you can see Folsom Point, and then beyond Folsom Point, the skyscrapers of Omaha," said McGaffin.

"You have that awareness, that you are where you are — I mean, there's 900,000 people just there. But then, if you turn and look out to the east, there's this steep valley; it catches you off guard. There's a 75-foot drop, and suddenly you're in a valley with a spring. You're totally secluded."

Standing there for the first time, McGaffin said, "The vision that came to me was, 'Wow, this could be really cool as public land.' This could give people — if they're hunting, hiking or birding — seclusion and an opportunity to

get away from it all. You feel miles away from the highway and the metro."

In reality, Green Hill Ranch is only a few minutes drive from Council Bluffs. Split between Pottawattamie and Mills counties in southwestern Iowa, the 506-acre property follows the Loess Hills National Scenic Byway for nearly two miles, along one of its most-traveled stretches. It's an area familiar to INHF for protection. Across the road is TNC's Folsom Point Preserve, which protects one of the largest remaining contiguous prairie remnants in the southern Loess Hills. Together, Green Hill Ranch and Folsom Point protect nearly

Green Hill Ranch

Pottawattamie & Mills counties

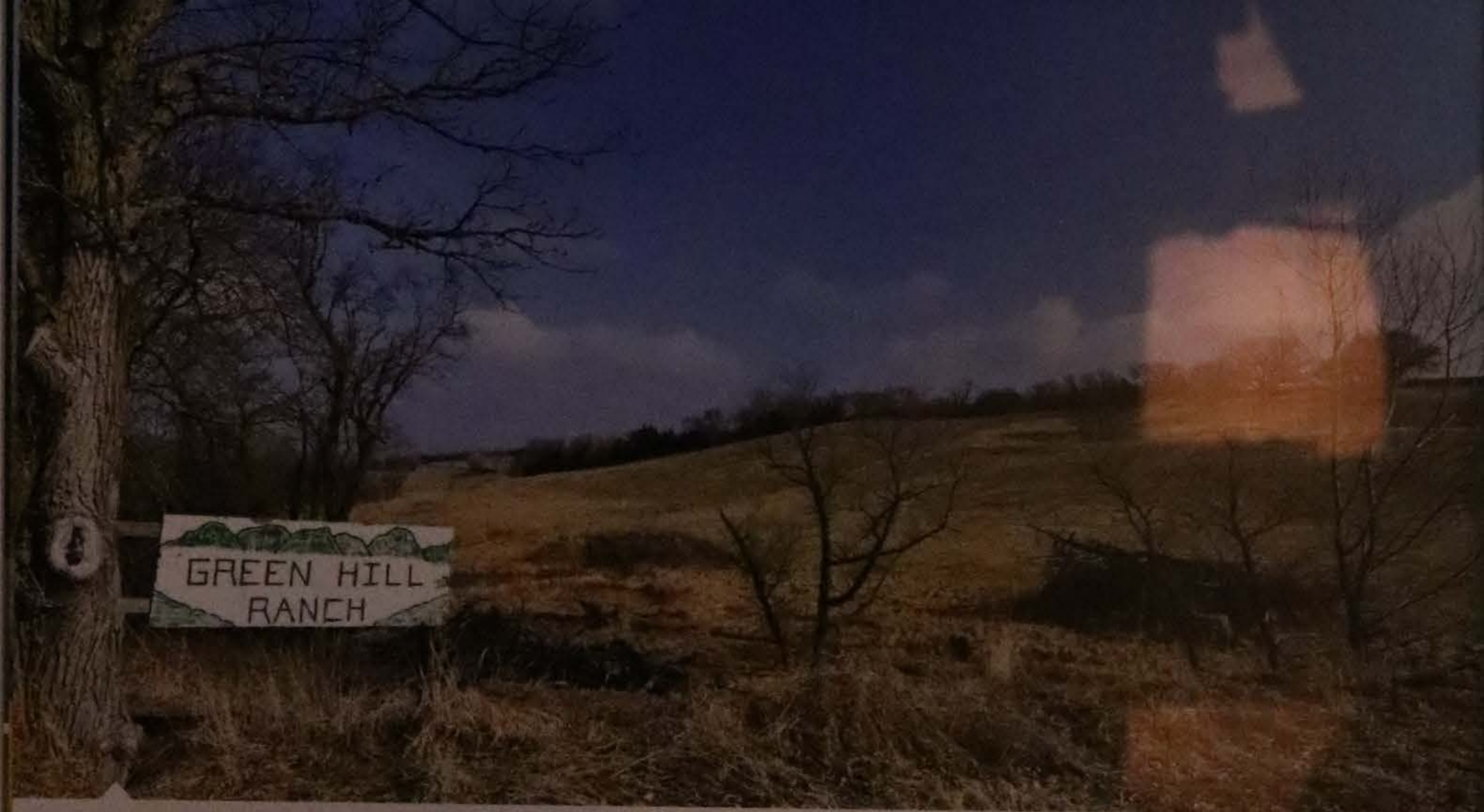


LAND 506 acres of prairie and cropland southeast of Council Bluffs city limits

SPECIAL FEATURES

Reconstructed and remnant prairie, reconstructed ponds, oak savanna, Loess peak-and-saddle topography, view of Omaha skyline

PARTNERS INHF, The Nature Conservancy in Iowa, Iowa DNR, Pottawattamie County Conservation Board, Mills County Conservation Board



Green Hill Ranch lies along the Loess Hills Scenic Byway, just across the road from Folsom Point Preserve, owned by The Nature Conservancy in Iowa (TNC). The project is INHF's first joint project of its kind with TNC and protects 506 acres of classic Loess Hills landscape — rolling hills, remnant prairie and oak savanna. Photos by Kerri Sorrell, INHF

800 acres of natural land and wildlife habitat.

However, the size of Green Hill Ranch and its proximity to Council Bluffs presented an obstacle: a price tag of \$2.8 million.

In November 2016, Heather Jobst, INHF senior land conservation director, and McGaffin took advantage of a clear, mild day to visit the property together. "We walked the property for a few hours and talked about how we could make this happen," McGaffin remembered. For Jobst, the decision was simple. "Being there, deciding to protect it was obvious."

Both knew protecting Green Hill Ranch alone would be very difficult. But together, INHF and TNC knew protecting the special natural area would be possible.

Protecting Green Hill Ranch required something entirely new for both INHF and TNC. In June 2017, both organizations purchased the property together. The property will eventually be transferred to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (Iowa DNR) for ownership, management and public benefit. INHF and TNC are equal partners in

the project, telling Green Hill Ranch's story and pursuing grants and fundraising opportunities both individually and in concert.

"Our relationship as the two largest private conservation organizations in Iowa has really grown over the years, and we saw this as the next step in the evolution of that relationship: to be joint partners on a project," said McGaffin. Jobst agreed: "INHF and TNC have supported and worked together in the past, but never exactly like this — full protection partners."

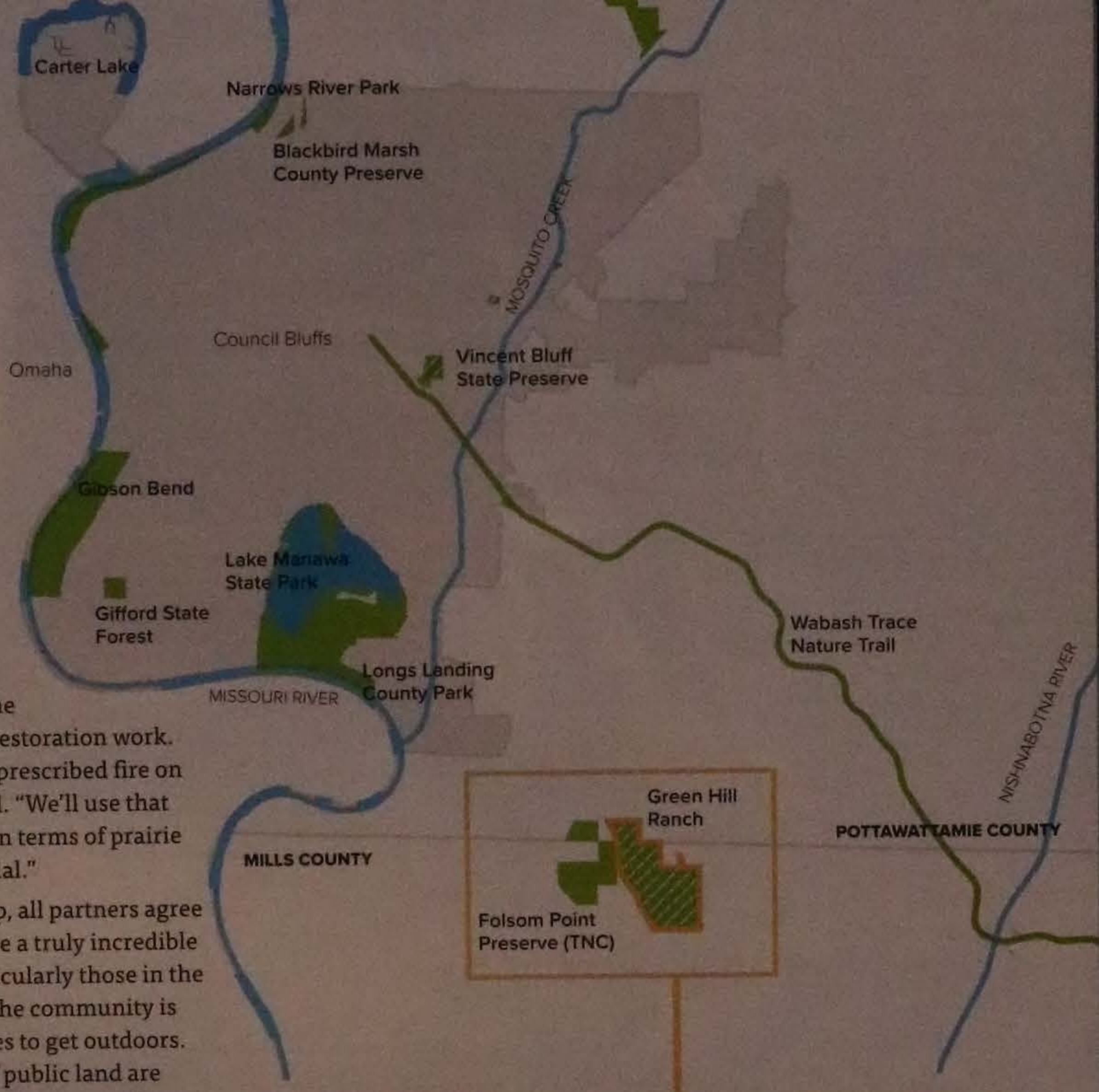
The Iowa DNR is another key partner in the project — they will eventually accept ownership and management of the property once fundraising is complete. While INHF often works like this with the Iowa DNR, this is the first such collaboration between TNC and the Iowa DNR.

With the Iowa DNR taking the lead, Pottawattamie and Mills county conservation boards will also take on active roles in the restoration of Green Hill Ranch. Currently the property contains cropland and pasture, with pockets of oak woodland, savanna and

"In order to do a land protection project of this scale in Iowa, partnership is critical. It's that history of trust that makes this possible."

HEATHER JOBST,
INHF SENIOR
LAND
CONSERVATION
DIRECTOR

Protecting Green Hill Ranch nearly doubles the amount of public land available to the Council Bluffs area, just outside city limits and along the Loess Hills Scenic Byway. Several other INHF projects, including Vincent Bluff State Preserve and the Wabash Trace Nature Trail, are frequent outdoor attractions in the area as well. *Map by INHF*



remnant prairie remaining. Matt Dollison, Nishnabotna Wildlife Unit Biologist for the Iowa DNR, will oversee the restoration work.

“Our first step will be to get prescribed fire on it, late in the spring,” he said. “We’ll use that tool to see what’s out there in terms of prairie remnant restoration potential.”

Once in public ownership, all partners agree that Green Hill Ranch will be a truly incredible resource for Iowans — particularly those in the Council Bluffs area, where the community is eager for more opportunities to get outdoors. Right now, only 518 acres of public land are available to nearby residents — an area the protection of Green Hill Ranch will nearly double.

“We talk a lot about getting people outdoors, and I think it’s important that we look at how we’re increasing opportunities for people to do that,” said Jobst. “In order to do a land protection project of this scale in Iowa, partnership is critical. We’ve built strong partnerships over time — and they turn into more than partnerships, they’re relationships. It’s that history of trust that makes this possible.”



Green Hill Ranch, INHF’s joint project with The Nature Conservancy in Iowa, may be familiar to area residents. This section of the Loess Hills Scenic Byway is one of the busiest stretches, but you’re hardly aware as you hike its hills and prairies. The Omaha skyline is visible from the property, a reminder that Green Hill Ranch is an expansive area of protection and recreation for two population centers. *Map by INHF*

YOU CAN HELP

Pledges or donations to restore and protect Green Hill Ranch can be directed to INHF.

Visit www.inhf.org or contact Abby Hade Terpstra, aterpstra@inhf.org or 515-288-1846, with any questions about support or recognition.

More than half the needed funds have already been raised. Thanks to those providing major support, including the Iowa West Foundation, state and federal grants and sportsmen fees that support habitat protection.



PHOTO BY DIANE LOWRY

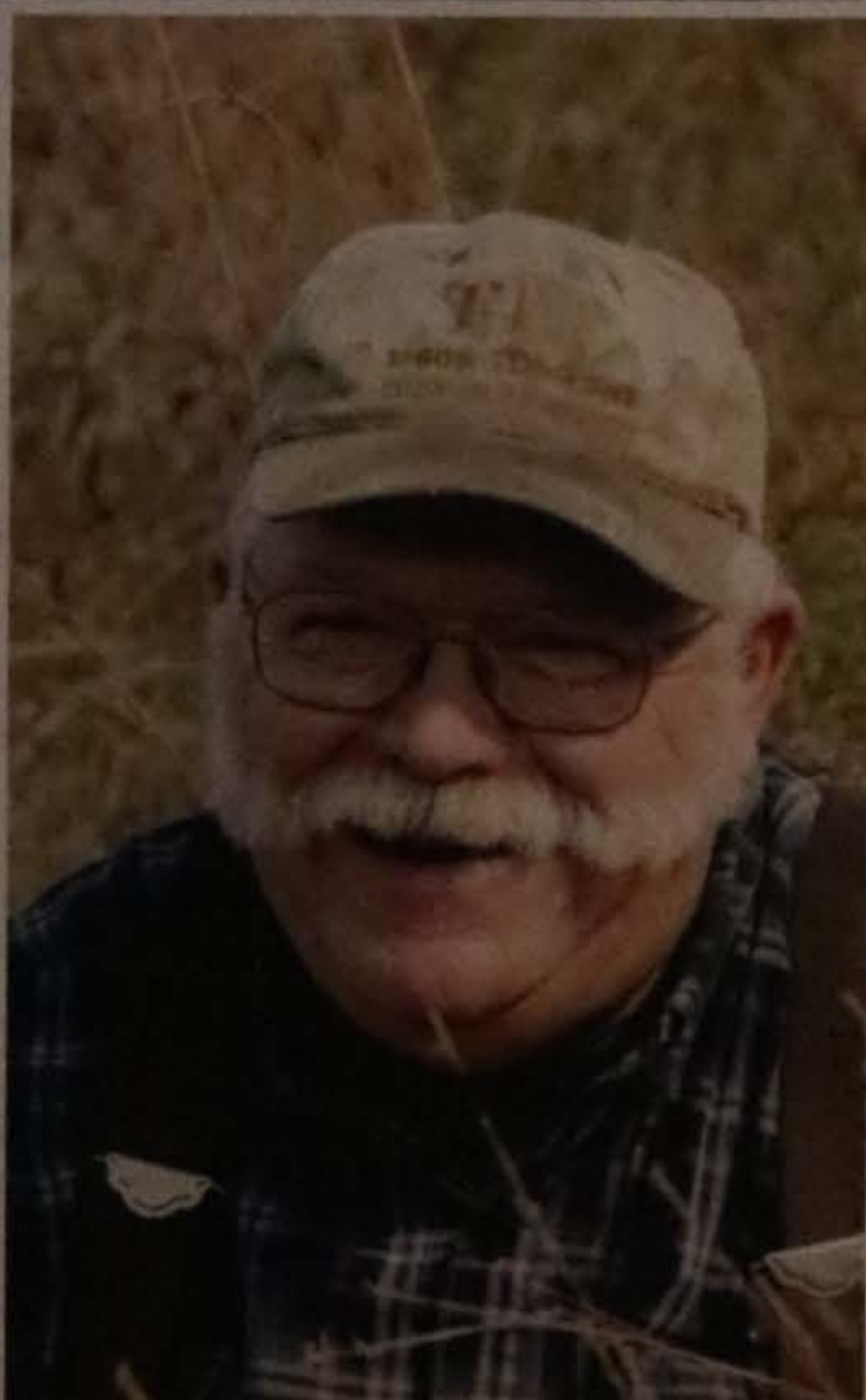


PHOTO BY LORA CONTRA

OPENING MORE DOORS FOR CONSERVATION

BY KERRI SORRELL
Communications specialist | ksorrell@inhf.org

INHF's mission is clear: To protect and restore Iowa's land, water and wildlife. On the surface it seems pretty cut and dried, and over the course of the last few decades, that mission has been carried out in a variety of ways. And no matter how INHF's work manifests, our goals remain steadfast: Protect land, build partnerships and nurture the conservation ethic of Iowa.

As we look ahead to the future, we've been asking ourselves: What does it mean to serve Iowa? Who are we serving? How can we do more? How can we do better?

At INHF, we operate under the truth that nature and the outdoors are an inalienable right. All Iowans — all humans — should be afforded access and benefits of the natural world. We work hard to create outdoor spaces where people, wildlife and the landscape can breathe easier. We also believe it is our responsibility to ask: Is access to public land and its benefits truly available to everyone?

Inspired by an initiative of the national Land Trust Alliance, INHF has been thinking about how we carry out our mission, and how the work of our members, board and staff might benefit more people, places and communities.

"Community Conservation" is an evolving approach to conservation: one that recognizes the importance of people to a place, and strives to include them in the vision and protection of our natural lands. It recognizes that the face of conservation is changing: new generations are growing

up in a world with less interaction with natural areas and without all the wonder and discovery that come with it. And finally, it recognizes that there are people and communities that are left out of the conversation of land protection, and that understanding their perspectives is vital to the work.

It's an approach that we're eager to engage in. To us, spotlighting the ideals and vision of community conservation is opening new doors: to learn from new people, to be more innovative and agile in the projects we take on, to explore the ways people interact with nature and to ensure that the values and needs of all Iowans are reflected in what natural spaces are protected. We want to do more, and our vision is expanding to build a larger, more inclusive and more diverse conservation community.

How that looks in the years to come is still evolving: We're exploring ways to work in more areas (metro centers, along our rivers, counties with very little protected land), with more people (refugee communities, new partner organizations, school groups and beyond) and in different ways (how can conservation help address other issues, like lack of housing, food access or mental health?) How can we make conservation more relevant to all Iowans, and keep the values of nature and natural resources strong in Iowa?

We don't want to do this work alone, and we're excited to hear your stories about what nature and Iowa mean to you. We're excited to share stories of new projects and partners (some you've found in this magazine), and to continue the push forward to ensure all Iowans can have nature in their lives. We hope you'll share in this renewed vision. 🌿

To learn more about Community Conservation, visit www.landtrustalliance.org/topics/community-conservation.

Our vision is expanding to build a larger, more inclusive and more diverse conservation community.

CONSERVATION TIP

Make your lawn a good neighbor

As a society, we have a strange relationship with our lawns. Michael Braungart once stated, "The average lawn is an interesting beast: People plant it, then douse it with artificial fertilizers and dangerous pesticides... all so that they can hack and mow what they encouraged to grow. And woe to the small yellow flower that rears its head!" There is a pressure to be a good neighbor, to keep our lawns looking a certain way. Ironically, we might be better neighbors if we ditched the spraying and embraced diversity — dandelions do no harm, but pesticides can.

Studies have shown that runoff from urban turf has a measurable contribution to water quality. Pesticides found in Iowa waterways can harm wildlife health and habitat —

aquatic ecosystems are very fragile and runoff from urban turf can kill them. Alternately, lawns allowed to harbor biodiversity and small plant communities (including clover, violets, dandelions, etc.) provide excellent habitat for urban pollinators.

Want to learn more about a statewide initiative to reduce urban pesticides and promote wildlife, water and child health? Visit Good Neighbor Iowa's website at www.GoodNeighborIowa.org, or find them on Facebook.

— AUDREY TRAN LAM,
Good Neighbor Iowa program manager



Good Neighbor Iowa is highlighting the benefits of leaving lawns more natural — from increased wildlife habitat to water quality and health. Photo courtesy of Good Neighbor Iowa

LEAVING A LEGACY

Quiet, lasting support

Janet Wilson was born and raised in Iowa, earned her law degree from the University of Denver, and devoted her career to legislative support services in Colorado, Nevada and Iowa. She was an active traveler and avid learner. Paula, Janet's second cousin, describes Janet as "an amazing woman. Elegant, stately, who cared for others and shared generously." Janet was quietly a member of Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation for 15 years before her passing, and she surprised us by listing INHF among several other organizations in her will.

We are honored to be a recipient of Janet's generosity. An unrestricted gift like Janet's makes possible the full depth

and breadth of the work INHF undertakes. It underpins every success preserving or restoring a piece of land, every event where Iowans learn more about and grow closer to nature, every opportunity to advance that we are able to pursue. Janet's gift is ensuring that INHF will continue on.

"Janet loved the land, cared about water, loved animals and wildlife. And she valued people who shared those values with her," said Paula.

Janet, we promise to carry your values with us into the future.

— ABBY HADE TERPSTRA, *donor relations director*

TRIBUTE GIFTS

IN MEMORY OF

Robert Aldrich
William Allen
Stephen J. Atherton
James Bodensterner
Joyce Bratten
Susan K. Connell-Morgan
Margaret Conrad
Charlie Culler
Robert E. "Bob" Culler

Polly Demoy
Marla Jo Griffith
Don Hach
Kay Hanson/Your Mom
Matthew C. Howe
Gene Jahncke
Elwood Kleese
Jane LaMarr
Glenn Leggott
Ronald D. McGrew

Jack McMullen
Aaron Nelson
Todd Nichols
Tim O'Connor
Clare and Arnold Olsen
Gerrit Roskam
Habelle and Earl Sallerberg
Jeanne Joy Samuels
Harold & Elma Schiel
Kent Shaeley

Faith Shinkle
Leroy "Stoney" Stone
Maxine Teague
Edgar Trout
William Carl Toecke
Carson VandeVenter
Mary Weiland
Camille Woods

IN HONOR OF

Mark Ackelson
Walter Armstrong
Tom & JoAnne Beasley
Patti Cale-Finnegan
Cheri Grauer
Janet Pech

Find more Iowa places to explore at www.inhf.org/blog

Trout flies line the ground during springtime at Coldwater Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Winneshiek County. Coldwater Creek is just one of 472 WMAs across the state where Iowans can have secluded nature experiences. Photo by Ross Baxter, INHF

Iowa's hidden gems

BY SAMANTHA JONES
Communications Intern | commintern@inhf.org

With spring coming into full season and the promise of warm weather ahead, Iowans are eagerly looking for new outdoor adventure spots across the state. Locations offering scenic views, hiking trails and other outdoor attractions become an instant hit as fair weather becomes more frequent, but many Iowans are unaware of the lesser-known pockets of public land in their areas.

For a more secluded and wild experience than state or county parks, look to the state's Wildlife Management Areas (WMA). The Iowa DNR manages 472 such areas that encompass over 375,000 acres of public land. WMAs are great spots for hunters, and outside of the regular hunting seasons, open areas ripe for exploration.

Coldwater Creek Wildlife Management Area near Decorah is one such place that has managed to capture the heart of many an outdoor enthusiast. Known for its trout stream, Coldwater Creek provides excellent fishing opportunities, supporting brown, rainbow and

brook trout. Additionally, it offers hiking trails, bird watching and a chance to glimpse spring wildflowers, creating the perfect place to soak up the sun and enjoy nature.

Last year, when a property next to the wildlife management area went up for sale, INHF stepped up to ensure protection of the land and its continued public use. The property, which expanded the size of the public recreation area by nearly 30 percent, gave INHF the opportunity to preserve water quality benefits for Coldwater Creek.

INHF Land Projects Director Ross Baxter says that the scenic value of Coldwater Creek and the recreational activities are what makes it so critical for conservation.

"In the spring when the ephemeral flowers are blooming, and there's a cold water spring that feeds the creek, it's a beautiful walk up there," Baxter said. "We wanted to protect the water quality of the stream and preserve the land and wildlife in an area that gets a significant amount of use by local residents and others from around the state." 🐾



Coldwater Creek Wildlife Management Area

Winneshiek County



LAND: 232 acres of restored grassland open to public recreation and hunting

SPECIAL FEATURES: Coldwater Creek trout stream, natural spring, wildflowers, hiking trails

PARTNERS: INHF, Iowa DNR

To find a WMA near you, visit www.iowadnr.gov.



Iowa
Natural Heritage
Foundation

505 5th Ave., Suite 444
Des Moines, IA 50309



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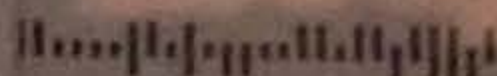
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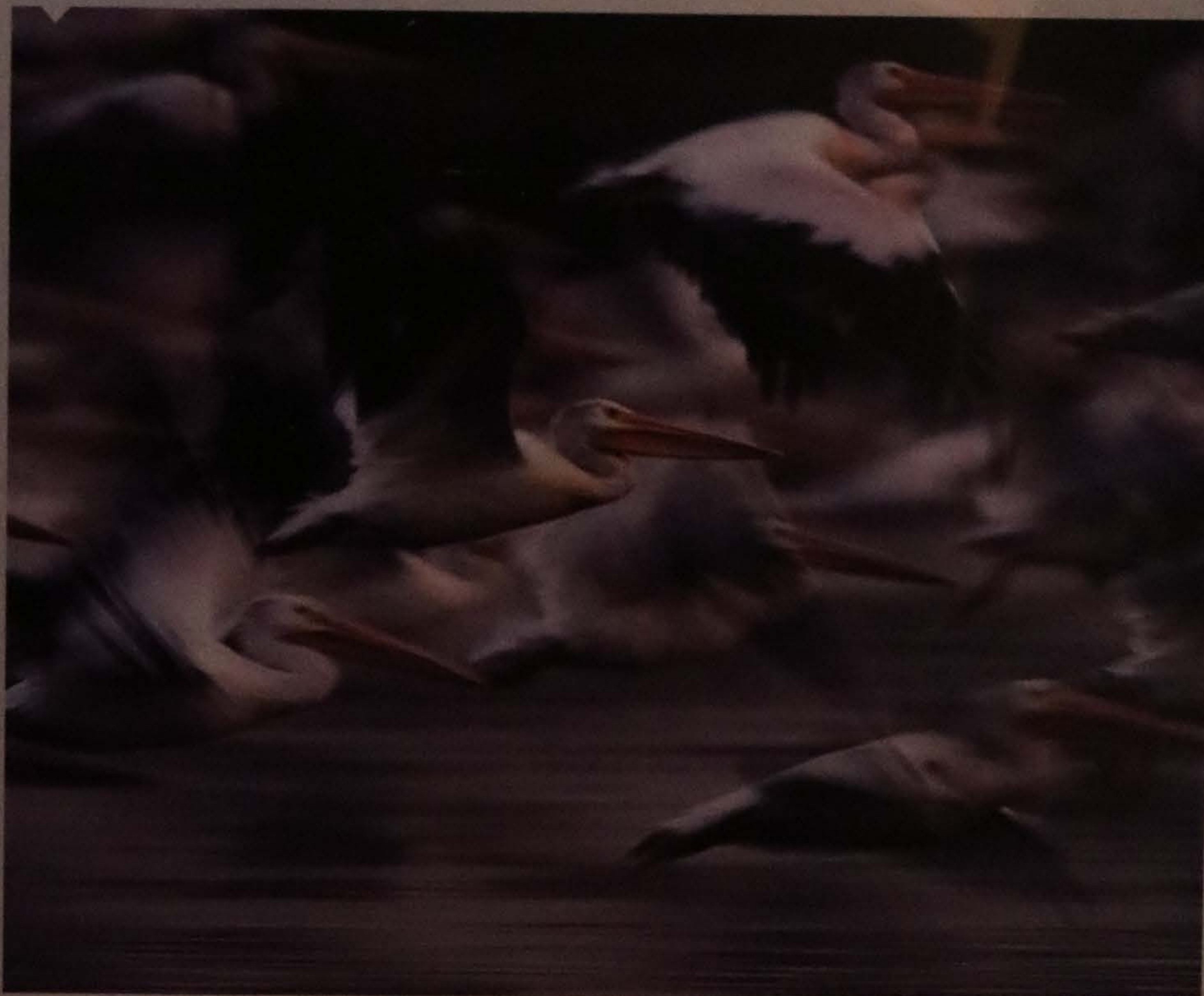
from this library



A flock of American white pelicans takes flight. Pelicans can be spotted in Iowa in the spring and fall, as they make their way to and from their breeding grounds in the Canadian Rockies. You'll often find them along bodies of water, like lakes and rivers, across the state. Their migration happens a few weeks after sandhill cranes and snow geese travel through the Midwest. *Photo by Tim Ackarman*

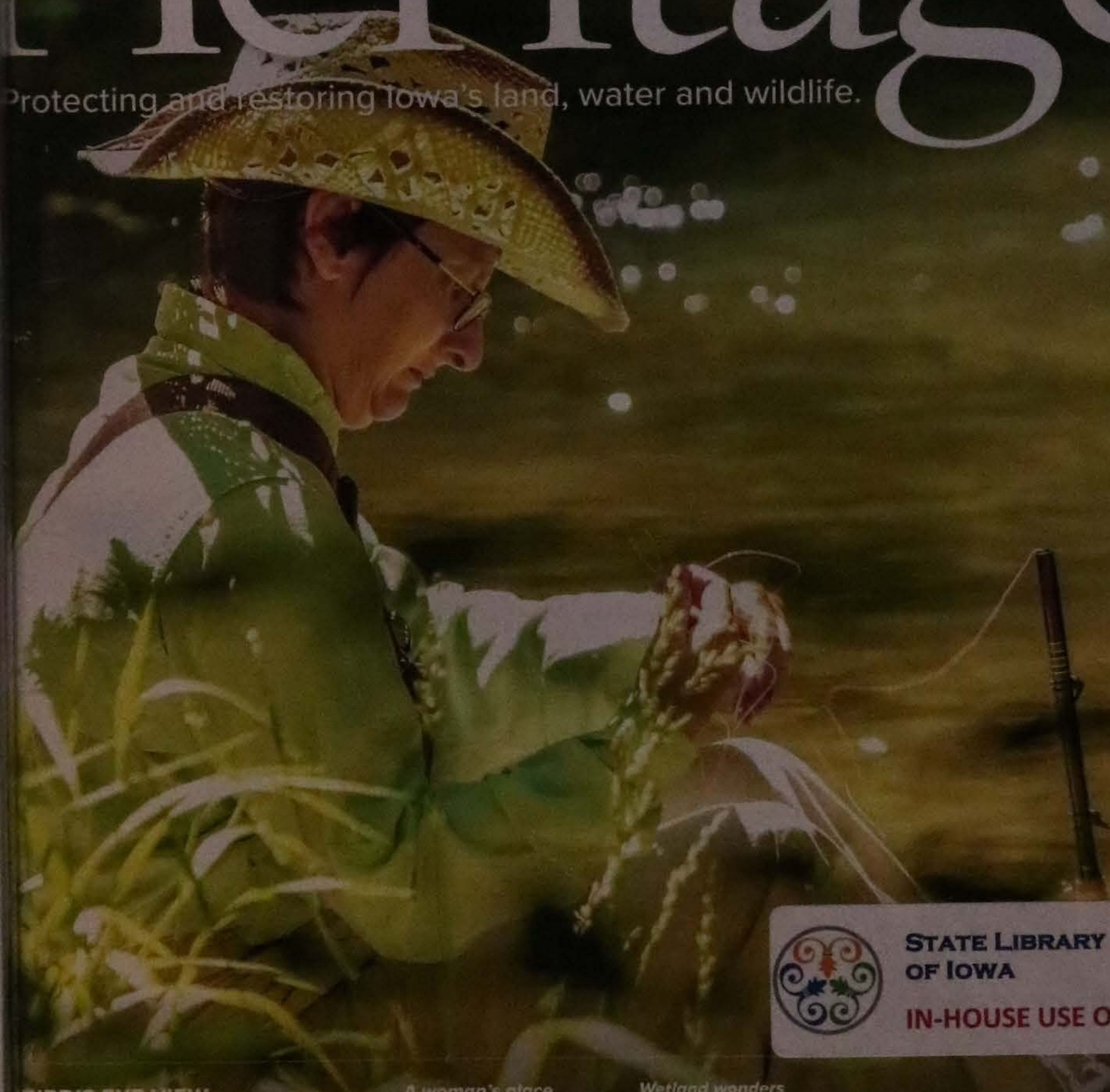
Leave a legacy of clean water, healthy soil and beautiful outdoor places for future generations.

To see how including INHF in your will or trust can help make your vision for Iowa a reality, contact Anita O'Gara at aogara@inhf.org or 515-288-1846.



Iowa Natural Heritage

Protecting and restoring Iowa's land, water and wildlife.



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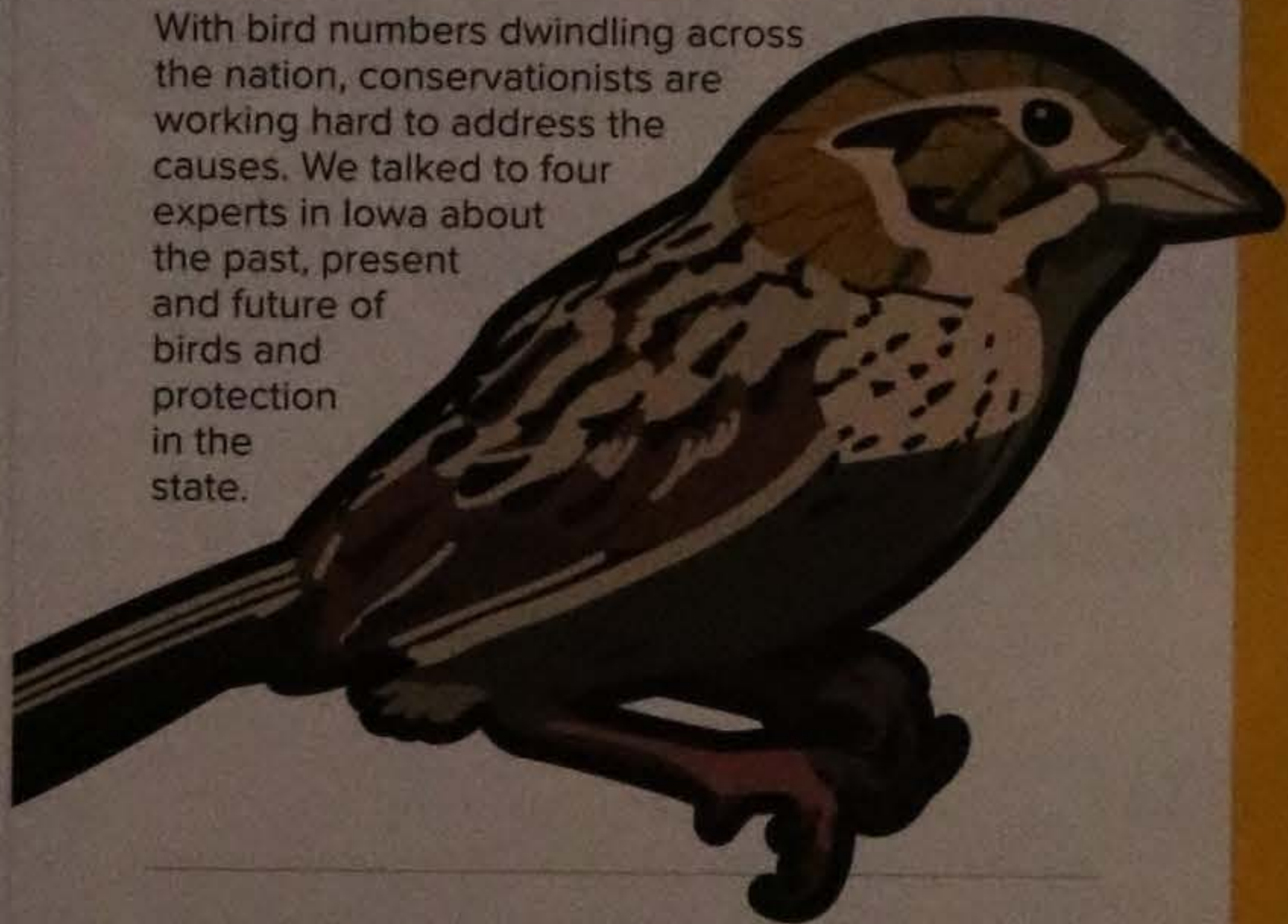
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For the birds

With bird numbers dwindling across the nation, conservationists are working hard to address the causes. We talked to four experts in Iowa about the past, present and future of birds and protection in the state.



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This rare type of wetland is also one of the most diverse. Discover Iowa's fens for yourself.

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A donation of land is making educational opportunities a reality for UNI students.

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For more than a century, the Ferguson Timber has given life to an extended family. Now, the family is ensuring its future.

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ON THE COVER

An angler fly fishes in Backbone State Park, Iowa's first state park, in northeast Iowa. *Photo by Leslie McKibben*



Iowa
Natural Heritage
Foundation

Protecting and restoring Iowa's land, water and wildlife.

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Gov. Ray's legacy lives on in INHF's work

Since his passing on July 8, Governor Robert Ray has rightly been remembered for his leadership, vision and compassion in making Iowa a better place. Part of that legacy was his creation of Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation in 1979 to serve as a new way to get more conservation done in Iowa.



JOE MCGOVERN
President

I was nine years old when INHF was created by Gov. Ray. I was busy being a kid, fishing and playing in creeks in north central Iowa. I had no idea that an organization was being launched that would help protect and restore the thing I loved — nature.

Some years after INHF was founded, Gov. Ray remembered the creation of a new model to deliver conservation in Iowa: "Gerry Schnepf [INHF's first president] was the one who first

brought the idea to me. It didn't take me long to jump on it and say 'I think we've got the seed of a great opportunity.' And so the idea was to develop a method by which the public sector could work with the private sector where they would trust the people and would not hesitate to convey their property and preservation to the private concern."

INHF has grown in ways that would have been hard to imagine in 1979, thanks to leaders like Gerry Schnepf and Mark Ackelson. Now, nearly 40 years later, I am blessed to be a part of such a wonderful organization.

Gov. Ray was a man that brought people together to find solutions. He knew Iowa needed to do more for conservation, and he found a way to make it happen. As our state faces more threats to our natural resources and increasingly extreme weather events, his action, courage and vision should serve as a model for our current leaders.

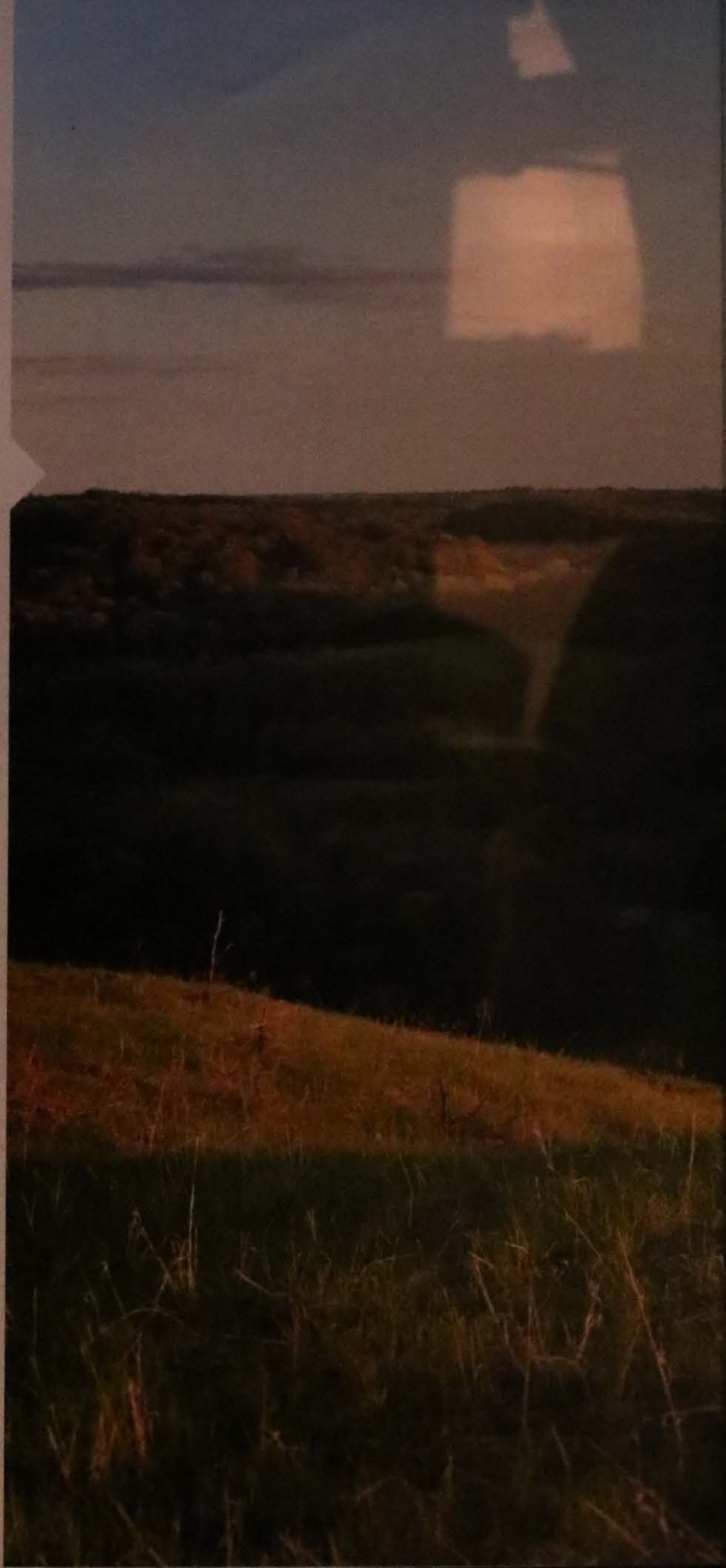
His passing is a melancholy moment, but we can see his legacy everywhere. On the landscape, there is healthier farmland, more wetlands, more parks, more natural areas for wildlife and outdoor recreation because of his foresight. INHF is here because of him, and we are forever grateful. Thank you, Governor Ray.

Gov. Robert Ray, second from left, was instrumental in the creation of INHF in 1979. He is pictured here with founding board member Bob Buckmaster, far left; INHF's first executive director, Gerry Schnepf, second from right; and founding board member Daniel Krumm, far right. In talking about the creation of INHF, Ray said, "Iowa's rich in natural resources. And sometimes, when you're rich in anything, you have a tendency to squander it. In Iowa, we took our land and our forests for granted. We produced food like no one else in the world could do without much concern of what the effects would be for the next generation. It was a time when we were beginning to be conscious of the need to protect our natural resources."

“We said to ourselves, ‘Who’s going to give to this?’ But if you’ve been to the property, you know why. It’s such a special place. I’ve said to people — Heritage Valley speaks for itself. And it says, ‘This is us.’ This is the ‘we,’ this is the shared heritage that we all love and that we all want to protect.”

- Susan Shullaw,
INHF Board Chair

This spring, 1,100 people protected an incredibly special place. It’s an easy number to remember, because Heritage Valley is home to 1,100 species of plants and animals. Because of you, these species, donors and so many Iowans now and in the future are all intertwined in this magnificent place forever. Thank you.





Heritage Valley, a 1,200-acre nature preserve just northeast of Decorah, was protected by donors across the state this spring. Heritage Valley will be owned and managed by INHF. Three miles of the Upper Iowa River carve through its bluffs. *Photo by Kerri Sorrell, INHF*



- Past INHF protection projects
- Public recreation land
- River/stream

The Heissel Addition to the Kindlespire Complex in Clay County has been transferred to the county conservation board. The area protects water quality around the Little Sioux River and is home to restored and remnant prairie. Map by INHF.

Public recreation access added in Clay County

This summer, 412 acres will be added to the 253-acre Kindlespire Complex near Sioux Rapids in Clay County, expanding public recreation land, increasing wildlife habitat and providing greater protection to the Little Sioux River watershed. INHF assisted in acquiring the property in 2014 and has transferred ownership to the Clay County Conservation Board (Clay CCB).

The addition, made up of reconstructed and remnant prairie, lies along the Little Sioux River, benefits the river's water quality and is home to diverse prairie species. A historical

pioneer-era cemetery is also on the property.

"We were amazed by the habitat diversity, native prairie plant ecology, watershed protection opportunities and many other environmental features [of the land]," said Clay CCB Director Will Horsley. "The goal was to acquire the property, implement a wildlife habitat plan and, in time, offer one of the finest public recreational areas in the state."

The addition to the public recreational area will be known as the Heissel Addition, honoring former Clay CCB Director Dan Heissel. Visitors to the area can participate in numerous recreational activities, including hiking, bird-watching, canoeing, hunting and fishing. 🐾

INHF collaboration creates new trail crew

Iowa's trails are a hub for exercise and outdoor exploration, but they are also important for protecting natural land and habitat across the state. This summer, these natural spaces surrounding Iowa's trails will receive some much-needed restoration with the help of a new trails crew created through Conservation Corps of Iowa (CCI) and INHF.

The partnership arose because of interest from trail users wanting to see more natural resource and habitat management along Iowa's trails. Cities and counties sometimes lack the resources to make that happen. To address the problem, INHF worked with CCI, a program

that provides conservation opportunities to young adults, to create a trails crew to provide the trail management these areas needed. Made up of five young conservationists and one crew chief, the CCI trails crew is spending 11 weeks this summer removing invasive species and restoring habitat along Iowa trails. Local entities have hired the crew on contract.

"It's inspiring to see young people getting involved in restoring Iowa's land, water and wildlife," said INHF President Joe McGovern. "Conservation is a group effort, and the CCI trails crew is an excellent example of people working together to protect Iowa's natural resources." 🐾

UPCOMING EVENTS

AUG. 16

Up Cycle Stewards

Gray's Lake, Des Moines, Ia.

Join INHF, Trees Forever and the City of Des Moines to remove invasive species from Gray's Lake for future "upcycling" — leading to animals at Blank Park Zoo. Learn to identify invasive plants and help give back.

AUG. 24

Jordan Wildlife Area dedication
Story County

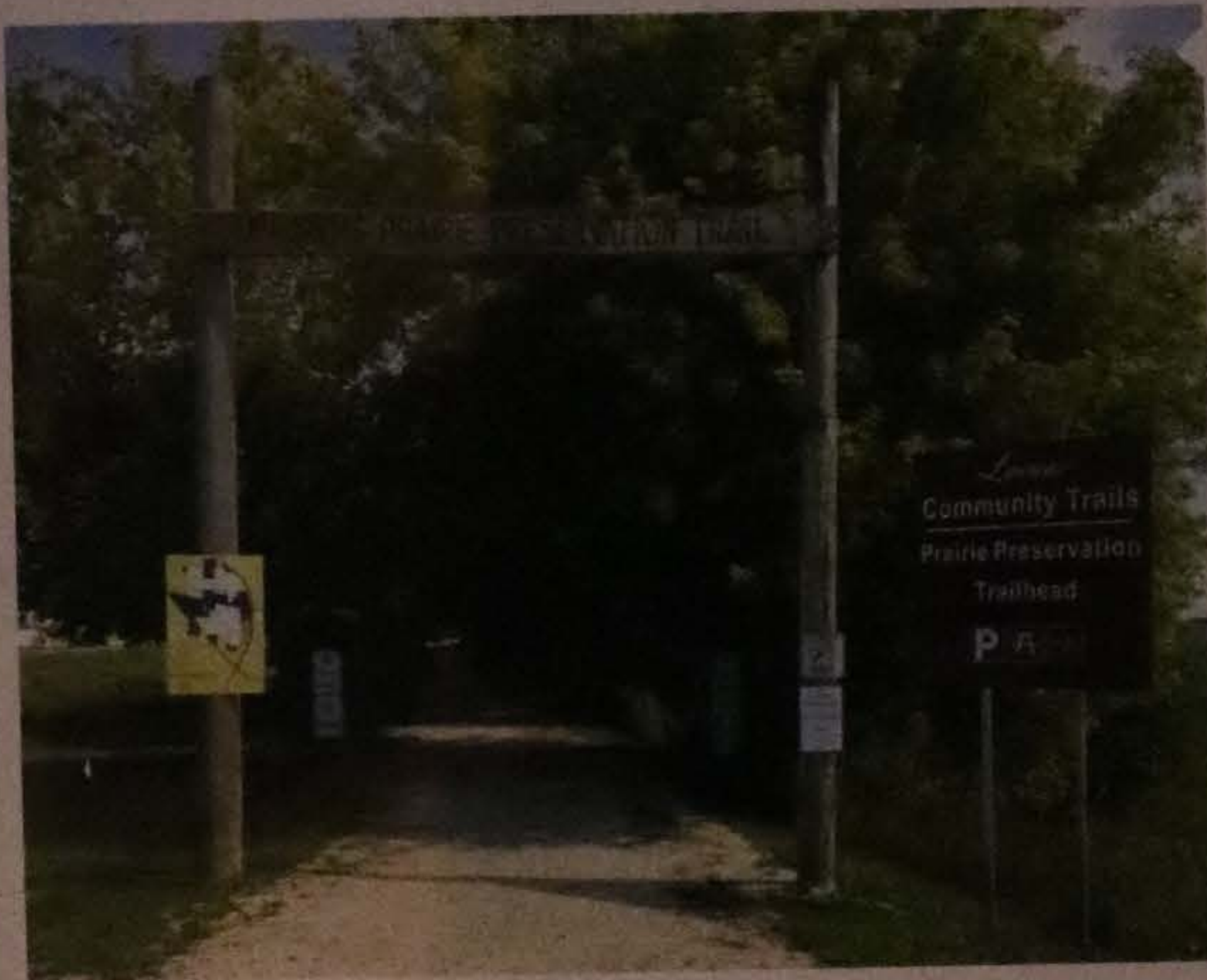
Help us dedicate a new 175-acre wildlife area outside of Ames, protected through INHF members. Explore the restored prairie and river habitats along the South Skunk River.

SEPT. 27-30

Loess Hills Parks & Peaks Bicycle Tour
Western Iowa

Travel by bike from Stone State Park to Waubesa State Park and every peak and saddle in between. Explore the Missouri River bottom and the heart of the hills to breathtaking ridgetop views, rich with historic and cultural sites along the way. Registration required.

For more information, visit www.inhf.org.



New linear park coming to city of Laurens

A stroll along a trail can be an opportunity to relax and be refreshed by nature. Recently, INHF and the City of Laurens began a journey to create even more outdoor recreation spaces by transforming a discontinued rail corridor into a linear park for the community.

The two-mile trail, which will stretch from the northwest side of Laurens to an area outside of town, provides access to nature that neighborhoods in the area currently don't have. Connecting through the city to the Three

Rivers Trail, this new section will create a route over 32 miles long once completed. Here, people will be able to walk, run or bike using the community's new dock-less bike-sharing system.

Plans are already in the works to create

a recreational area at the end of the trail — an oasis for the community to enjoy and explore the outdoors.

"The idea is to encourage an active lifestyle and connect folks to nature," said Andrea Boulton, INHF trails and greenways director. "People will be able to walk right outside their door, get some exercise, and when they get to the end of the trail, there's a place to sit and relax before they come back."

Construction of the trail is slated to begin in 2019, after fundraising and engineering plans are completed. 🚲

An extension of the Laurens Prairie Preservation Trail will bring recreation and nature to residents of the city of Laurens. *Photo by Andrea Boulton, INHF*

Laurens Trail extension

Pocahontas County



LAND: Two miles of discontinued rail corridor on the northwest side of the city of Laurens

SPECIAL FEATURES: Restored prairie habitat, connection to the Three Rivers Trail, dockless bike-sharing system

PARTNERS: City of Laurens, INHF

15 interns join INHF for the summer

This summer, 15 INHF interns are putting their time and talents into practice through protecting Iowa's wild places. For 12 weeks, seven statewide land stewardship interns, five northeast Iowa land stewardship interns and three office interns are exploring new places and developing a greater appreciation for Iowa's land, water and wildlife. Interns are on the land, removing invasive species and restoring landscapes, and in the office, helping with grant applications and communications.

Follow the interns on their summer adventures with the hashtag #INHFintern on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

"I'm excited for this summer to learn more about prairie and what species were around historically... [The land stewardship internship] gives me a chance to reflect on the landscape's profound effects on daily life and the natural connection between us and it."

- MAGGIE LOERY, 2018 STATEWIDE LAND STEWARDSHIP INTERN



Wetland **WONDERS**

As one of the rarest landscape types in Iowa, fens are a mystery to most Iowans. Discover their beauty and diversity.

BY HEATHER JOBST
Senior land conservation director | hjobst@inhf.org

PHOTO BY CLINT FARLINGER

Fens, a rare type of wetland in Iowa, exhibit diverse and unique plant communities. Many of the state's fens are remote, but a high priority for natural resource protection. Photo by Jack Vanden Heuvel



Ray and Patti Hamilton love discovering mother nature's gems, spending hours identifying remnant prairies, wetlands, savannas and cold air slopes throughout Iowa. Over the years, their love led them to protect several of these gems across the state. When their friend Jeff Nekola, mentioned a high-quality fen wetland in Fayette County could be coming up for purchase, Ray and Patti quickly agreed this rare property was one of those gems that needed to be protected.

We all know a wetland when we see it. The lily-packed pond perfect for catching frogs. The marsh surrounded by cattails where you like to hunt ducks. The soggy spot in the pasture that never seems to dry up, that spot in the field that floods out every year. Wetlands once covered upwards of 6 million acres of Iowa. Today, there are less than 5% of those original, high-quality wetlands remaining.

Fens — a specific type of wetland — are one of the more unusual habitats in Iowa, with roughly 300 known fens scattered throughout the state. At first sight, a fen resembles that part of the pasture that is perpetually flooded and well-loved. With water soaked ground, the grasses and flowers present in fens are concentrated in sporadic earthy mounds surrounded by puddles of water.

Found mostly in northwest and north central Iowa, fens are different from other wetlands in that they're fed by groundwater, instead of rain or other sources. Comprised of soil made of partially decomposed plant material, or "peat," fens can be saturated year-round. Unevenly rising hummocky mounds of dirt are a classic characteristic of a fen landscape, and can be bouncy, giving the feeling of walking on a waterbed. The water chemistry of fens is special, limiting

the occurrence of certain plants while others flourish and can be found only in a fen environment.

"Fens have some of the most uncommon and unique plant communities in Iowa," said Brian Fankhauser, INHF blufflands director. "Because of their wet nature, many of them have been spared the plow. They provide a small oasis for rare plants adapted to the soil chemistry associated with fens."

After years of ownership and restoration work on the Fayette County fen, Ray, Patti and Jeff realized they needed to think about protecting the longevity of the fen's future. Their time and energy to devote to care of these gems was waning.

"This fen is a nice gemstone — a diamond," said Ray. "We knew it was a natural thing to protect this fen, but the next step is what comes after our ownership."

Ray and Patti decided to donate their portion of the 29-acre fen property to INHF to ensure this diamond forever shines. "We know it needs a high degree of oversight and care in the long run," said Ray. "Having INHF here for long term responsibility of management and protection is the critical last step in protection." 🍀

EXPLORE IOWA'S FENS

SILVER LAKE FEN

Silver Lake Fen in Dickinson County is an easily-accessible preserve on the southwest shore of Silver Lake. The fen supports a diverse plant and animal community including orchids, snails and over 100 plant species.

FOREVER FEN

Forever Fen, located a mile west of Beeds Lake State Park in Franklin County, is home to a wide variety of plant and animal species, some of which are Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Visitors can observe wildlife and go on nature walks near the fen.

HARTLEY HERITAGE FEN

Visitors to Hartley Heritage Fen in Jasper County can learn more about fens and restoration through a variety of educational programs and prairie hikes throughout the year. The site is also an excellent place to view wildlife such as deer, pheasants and a variety of birds and butterflies.

All three fens were protected through INHF.

Planting SEASON

BY SAMANTHA JONES

Communications intern | comminternsamantha@inhf.org



A UNI student spreads prairie seed during the dedication of Irvine Prairie in Johnson County. Photo courtesy of the UNI Foundation

Irvine Prairie

Benton County



LAND: 77 acres of cropland in Benton County with conservation easement

SPECIAL FEATURES: Cropland will be restored to native prairie and its use donated to the University of Northern Iowa for educational purposes

PARTNERS: Cathy Irvine, INHF, UNI Foundation, Tallgrass Prairie Center

We come and go, but the land is always here. And the people who love and understand it are the people to whom it belongs — for a little while.

— Willa Cather

Cathy Irvine's love of the land first sprouted in her early years as she grew up exploring under a wide-open country sky. Raised on a farm, the daily dependence upon the natural world and the hours spent working in it instilled a deep sense of awe toward the land.

As she grew older, that fondness for the natural world and the constant pull of the outdoors developed into a sense of responsibility in stewarding it properly. One dream she and her husband, David, shared was to restore 77 acres of cropland on their property in Benton County into a flourishing prairie.

"Prairie has always resonated with us,"

Cathy says. "We read 'Where the Sky Began' by John Madson, which tells what it was like in Iowa before settlement. It talks about riding across the prairies, settlers only being able to see above the prairie grasses because they were on horseback. It just sparked our interest and love for native Iowa landscapes."

They wanted others to be able to encounter the wildness of Iowa prairie, too. But the idea of restoring such a large piece of land to prairie was a daunting one. For years, it remained a vague hope far on the horizon — something to undertake when the timing was right.

In honor of her late husband, Cathy decided it was time to finally make their dream for the land a reality. A former teacher, she reached out to the Tallgrass Prairie Center at the University of Northern Iowa (UNI) with interest in donating the land for educational purposes, allowing students to learn through the restoration process.

"It was the educational component that could come from donating our land — giving the students an opportunity to work and find projects — that really sparked my attention," Cathy said. "I want others to discover that love



INHF President Joe McGovern speaks at the dedication of Irvine Prairie. Cathy Irvine donated the land to INHF and UNI's Tallgrass Prairie Center for educational purposes, fulfilling a dream she shared with her husband. *Photo courtesy of the UNI Foundation*

of the land, just being out in it and wanting to preserve it.”

Cathy wanted to consider all of the layers of protection the property might need well into the future. With foresight, she wanted to ensure that the land stayed out of development and away from undesired agricultural practices.

To give her land a broader horizon, Cathy turned to INHF for a solution. Together, Cathy and INHF worked to determine the best possible option for her land while still giving UNI the freedom to use the land for educational purposes. To ensure it always remained a prairie, INHF placed a conservation easement on the land, restricting its use and implementing a 5-year restoration plan to see Cathy's dream come to completion.

“Cathy has this amazing vision for her land,” says Erin Van Waus, INHF conservation easement director. “We wanted to come alongside her and help protect that vision, no matter who owns it.”

Now, others will be able to encounter the wildness of Iowa prairie, too. As the Tallgrass Prairie Center spends the next five years

growing and maintaining the prairie, UNI students and nearby communities can learn hands-on about restoration and the natural world — planting seeds of appreciation for Iowa's natural landscapes and a desire to see them protected.

“That's the exciting part for us,” Van Waus says. “We get to see this land in action, we get to see it restored and seeded to prairie, but we also get to see the land used by students and their chance to learn through the process of restoration.”

Cathy Irvine donated her land in Benton County for UNI's Tallgrass Prairie Center to use as a restoration demonstration and future educational spot for UNI students. To ensure its longterm protection, Cathy donated the land to INHF, and INHF transferred the property to UNI with a conservation easement. *Photo courtesy of the UNI Foundation*





As the years went on, Nimrod purchased additional wooded lots, expanding his family's land. His son, David, continued the tradition, trading land with his sisters and neighbors to increase his share of the forest.

"You'd want to have a bit of timber for firewood, but they just acquired it and acquired it.

I'm sure their neighbors thought they were nuts," said Greg Twedt, Nimrod's great-great-grandson. "I've spent time speculating on why they did that, and the only thing I can come up with is they must've liked it."

In the 1930s, David considered donating the timber to the state, but in the end, it remained in the family. The land was handed down through generations, and although the farmland was eventually divided among the family, the timber remained whole and largely undisturbed.

David's daughters, Janie and Reba, inherited the land from their father. Each built a house on a corner of the timber and raised their children under the canopy. Those children had children of their own, and each year, families return to the forest to hike, camp, cross-country ski and hear stories of the timber together. These experiences helped solidify a strong commitment to conservation.

"I think it's just a family value that's always been there," said Lisa Mills-LaValle. "It goes back generations. I can't attribute it to any one person or thing."

Sensing a need to keep the timber intact as the family grew, Janie and Reba's children decided to create a family corporation to own and manage the land: Timberland, Inc. Sixteen shareholders — all members of the extended family — meet once a year to talk about the

THE FAMILY TREES

BY KATY HEGGEN
Communications assistant | kheggen@inhf.org

Descendants of the Ferguson family are well acquainted with their family trees — all 600 acres of them.

Trying to separate the century-and-a-half history of Ferguson Timber, a native woodland near Marshalltown, from that of the family would be fruitless — the two are intertwined, and both are better for it.

Deep roots

The history of Ferguson Timber dates back to 1854 when Nimrod Ferguson purchased a land grant from the U.S. government. Like many homesteaders establishing roots in Iowa at the time, Ferguson built a home and began farming his land.

timber, vote on board business and to enjoy the trees together. Doing so has kept the forest — and the family — close.

A working woodland

Ferguson Timber is an impressive oak-hickory woodland interrupted only by the meandering Iowa River. Bald eagles, red-tailed hawks and other large raptors nest among the branches. Other wildlife including bobcats, turkey and deer walk the forest floor.

"I've spent the last decade traveling all around the state, and in my non-forester opinion, this is the nicest woodland I've seen," said INHF Conservation Easement Specialist Tylar Samuels.

For more than 20 years, Greg has acted as forest manager, meticulously caring for the woodland, removing invasive species, conducting prescribed burns and sustainably harvesting trees. A forestry management plan created and updated with the Iowa DNR has helped keep the woodland thriving.

"Two hundred years ago it was very easy to grow beautiful stands of oaks in Iowa," wrote Twedt. "This is no longer the case. But we here in the Ferguson Timber have been trying... and we have been reasonably successful."

Just as the family's approach to managing the timber has evolved over the years, so too

has its outlook on protection.

In the mid-nineties, the family donated a joint conservation easement on 409 acres to INHF and the Marshall County Conservation Board. Lisa credits Greg and her father, Larry Mills, for urging the family to permanently protect the timber.

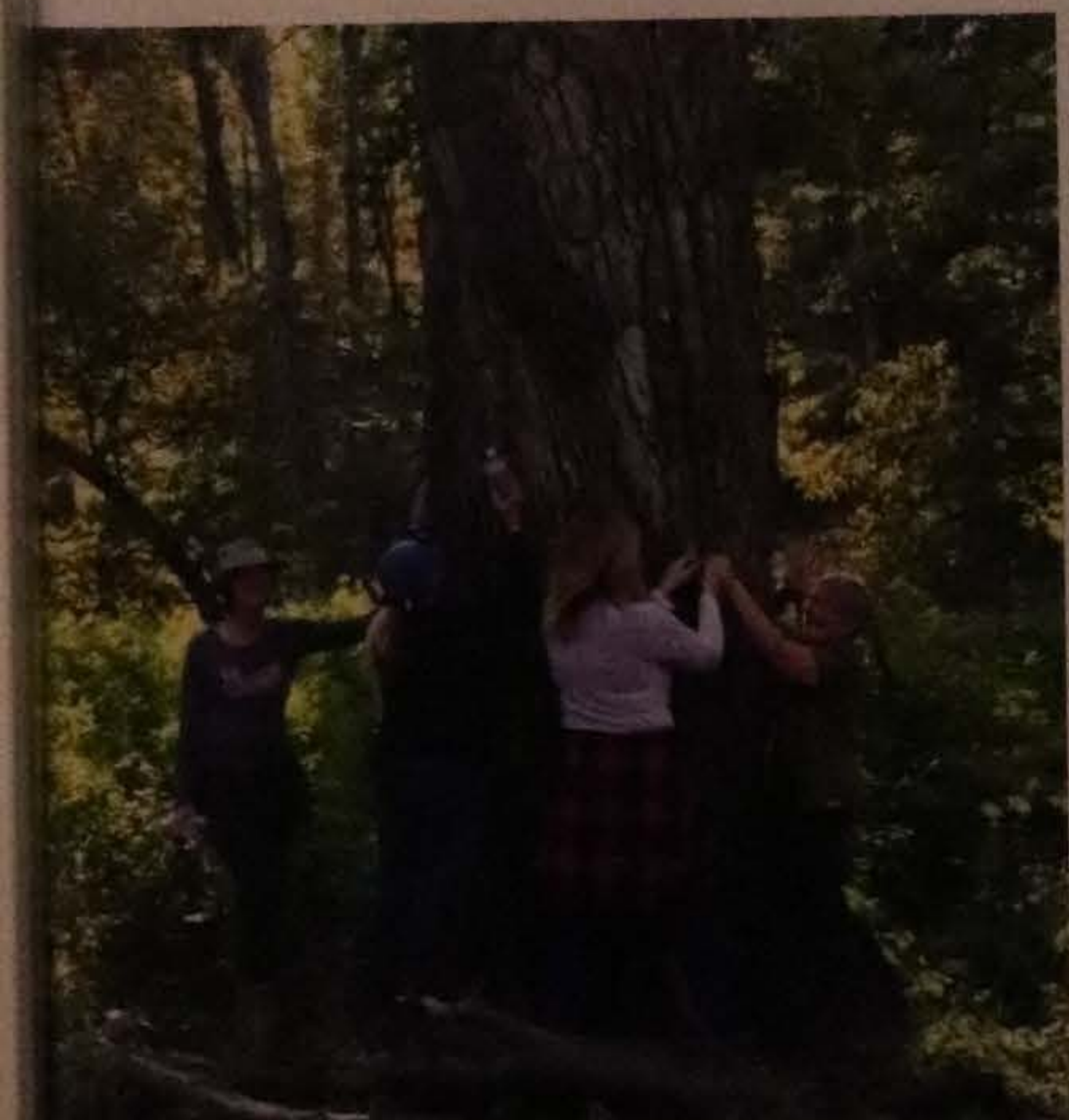
Last year, Timberland, Inc. donated another conservation easement on 40 acres next to the original donation. Other members of the family, including the Twedts and the Oldhams, donated conservation easements on two adjoining properties, collectively creating a 492-acre complex of wildlife habitat. Already, the family is discussing potential opportunities for future protection.

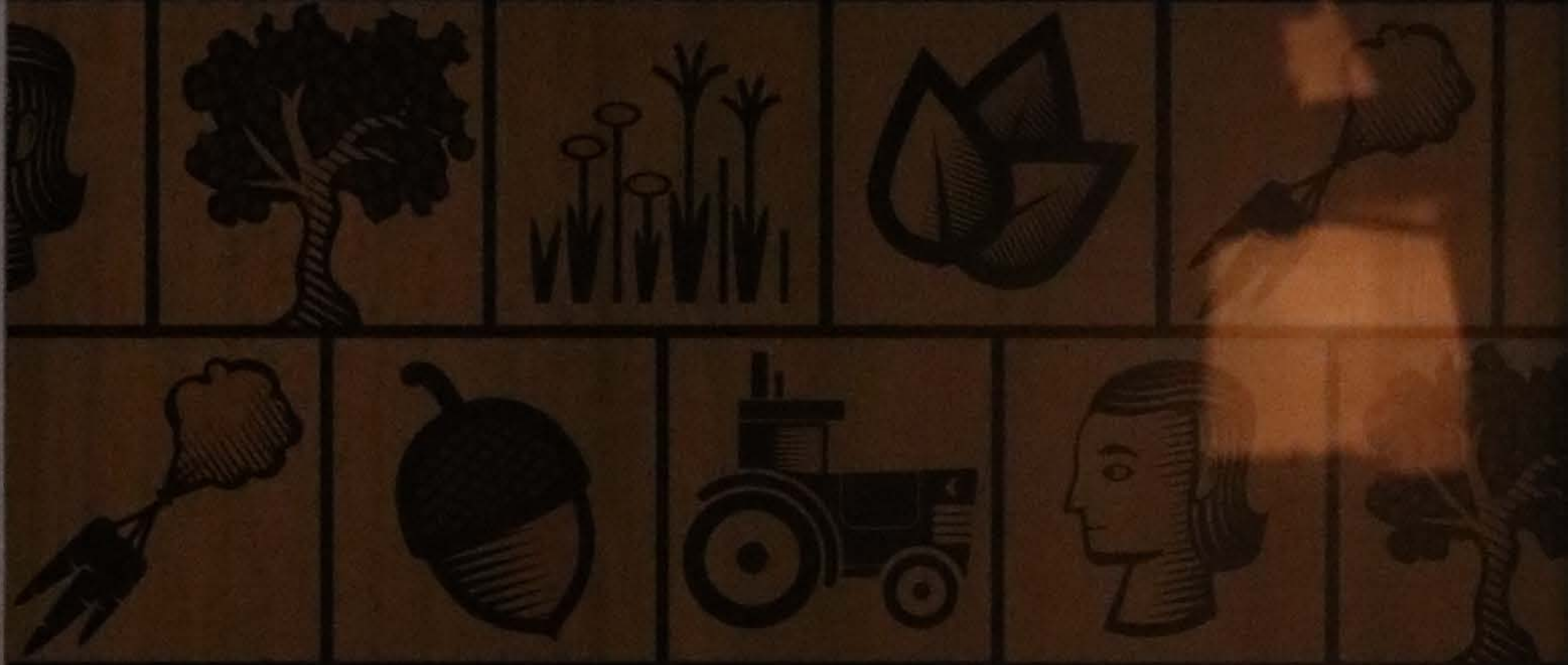
New growth

With such a long-standing land ethic, it's no surprise that the family's commitment to conservation endures. A new generation of leaders has begun to take root, ready to create their own legacy on the land, just as their parents and grandparents before them.

"I just love how everything seems to coexist," said Mills-LaValle. "As I walk through the woods, I think about the generations before me and the generations after, and just marvel at the majesty of all this stuff growing together." 🌱

Generations of the Ferguson family have spent time building, restoring and exploring their family timber in central Iowa. Yearly gatherings bring the extended family together to enjoy the trees. Sensing a need to keep the timber intact as the family grew, the family created a corporation to own and manage the land. Timberland, Inc. has worked with INHF and the Marshall County Conservation Board over the years to protect portions of their family's land, creating a 492-acre complex of wildlife habitat. Below, a trail marker honors Nimrod Ferguson, the patriarch that first bought and managed the timber. *Photos courtesy of Greg Twedt*





A WOMAN'S PLACE

BY KATY HEGGEN
Communications consultant | kheggen@inhf.org

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARC BRAULT

“I want you to be my eyes into the future,” wrote Daisy Whitham, the first landowner to partner with INHF to permanently protect her land. Daisy entrusted INHF with Whitham Woods, a 130-acre woodland near Fairfield, ensuring it would always be a natural area.

In the nearly four decades since, INHF has worked with landowners across the state to permanently protect Iowa’s wild and working lands. Many of these landowners have been — and continue to be — women. While their stories have always been an essential part of ours, stories of women on the land have

been historically underrepresented.

As a growing number of women own, co-own and make decisions about the future of land in Iowa, increasing attention is being given not only to their stories, but to the stories of the women who came before them, and those forging ahead.

Shaping Iowa's landscape

Nearly half of farmland in Iowa — 47 percent — is now owned or co-owned by women, per a 2012 Iowa State University report. People over the age of 65 now own over 56 percent of Iowa farmland, and with half of Iowa's working lands slated to transfer in the coming years, unprecedented shifts are possible.

On the national level, an estimated 70 percent of U.S. farmland will change hands over the next two decades, and it's projected that 75 percent of that land will go to women. To what extent that projection will hold true for Iowa remains to be seen, but several Iowa organizations have observed an increase in women taking an active interest in owning, managing and working the land.

"We've definitely seen shifts in our landowner demographics," said Sally Worley, executive director of Practical Farmers of Iowa (PFI), an organization that equips farmers to build resilient farms and communities. "We're going through this huge land transfer right now. With that, we're seeing more farmland owned by elderly women who are outliving their spouses, and parents that are giving land more equitably to their children."

The Women Food and Agriculture Network (WFAN), an organization that engages women in building an ecological and just food and agricultural system, has also noted a growing interest among the younger generation.

"Younger women are coming to our events," said Carole Schutte, coordinator of WFAN's Women Caring for the Land program, a program designed to serve women farmland owners who are interested in learning more about conservation. "When we started this program, we assumed we'd have women in their eighties and nineties. They're coming, but we also have women in their twenties, thirties and forties."

PFI and WFAN have also seen increased interest in conservation among the landowners they work with, particularly women.

"A lot of women landowners seem to be really interested in adding a conservation component to their farmland," Worley said.

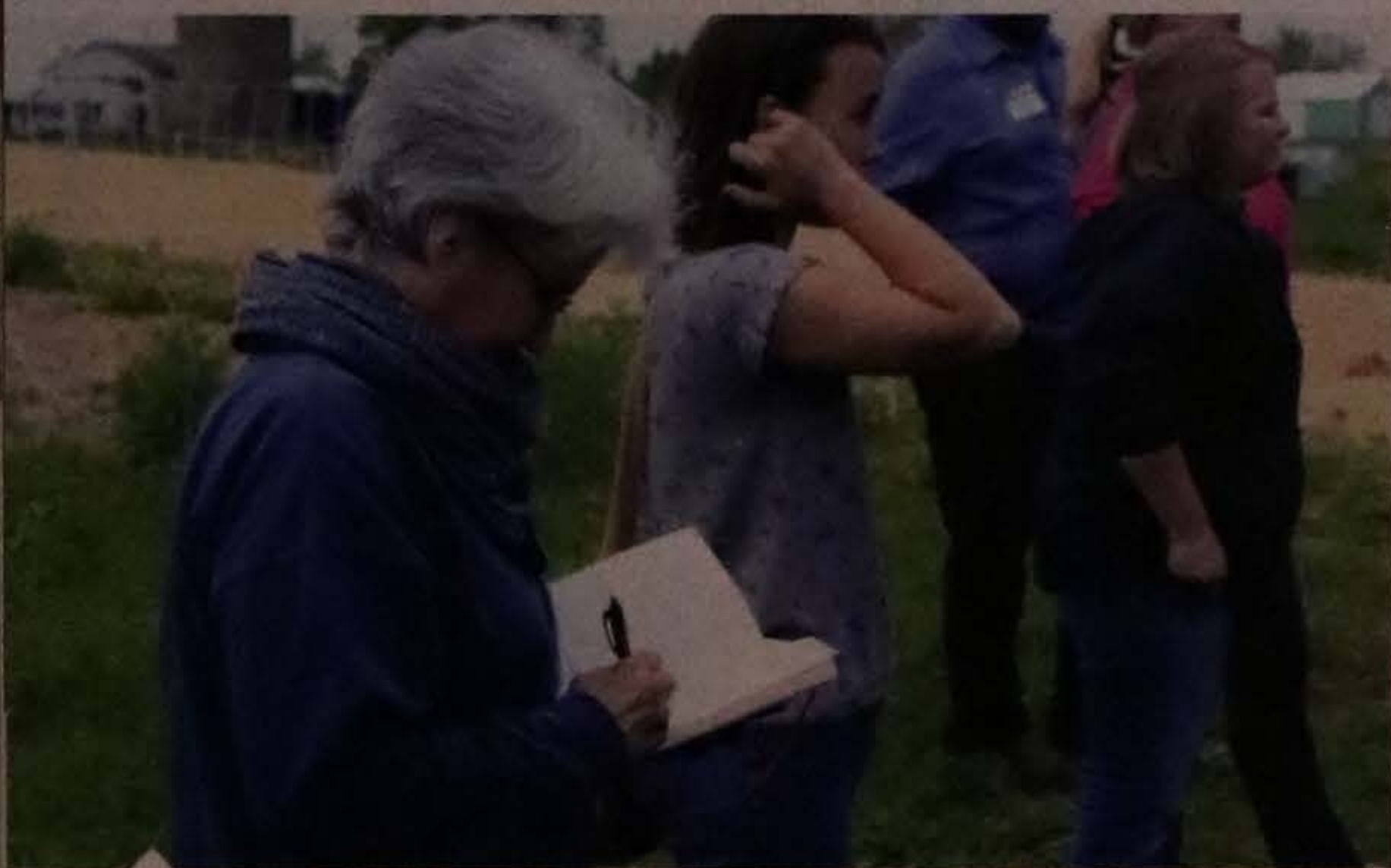
"Over the years, we've had the opportunity to work with many women who have been leaders in land protection. This is not new. This is merely a continuation of an existing trend."

— ANITA O'GARA, INHF VICE PRESIDENT

"In my opinion, the biggest trend is not more women who own land, it's more women who want to work the land or be more involved in making decisions," said INHF Vice President Anita O'Gara. "We're hearing from more female landowners who are eager to learn about land, conservation and protection. I sense an increasing boldness about standing up for land so it can be passed forward with pride."

Chris Henning, a landowner from Cooper, IA, is just one woman who has worked with Practical Farmers of Iowa (PFI), an organization reimagining agriculture in Iowa. PFI continues to work with more women as significant demographic changes and land transfers take place across the state. Photo courtesy of Practical Farmers of Iowa





Interested women attend a field day with Women Food and Agriculture Network (WFAN). A WFAN program, Women Caring for the Land serves women farmland owners who are interested in learning more about conservation. WFAN has seen the program grow to include many younger women, a trend representing the shift of land management decisions and interest from the next generations. *Photo courtesy of Ash Bruxvoort, WFAN*

Urban lots to open prairies

Cindy Hildebrand developed a love for untamed places in an unconventional setting: exploring vacant lots in the Detroit suburbs.

“Free-range childhoods were the norm, and the vacant lots with all sorts of interesting stuff that came up to my waist were much more interesting than the parks with their short, mowed grass,” Hildebrand said.

When Cindy moved to Iowa for grad school, she was eager to explore the prairie.

“I was pretty naïve then,” said Hildebrand. “As I crossed the river into Iowa, I was looking around for the prairie and I saw crops, crops and more crops. It took me a few years to grasp that what I was seeing was where the prairie used to be.”

Eventually, she found her way to Doolittle Prairie in Story County.

“I loved the wildness, tall grasses and flowers. There’s something about the prairie being so accessible — it’s right there at waist level. I also felt a certain protectiveness. This landscape had been so huge, and now it exists in tiny fragments. It’s so important to protect the little bits that are left,” she said.

Hildebrand and her husband, Roger Maddux, began volunteering at Doolittle Prairie, collecting native prairie seed. It wasn’t long before they decided they wanted a place of their own where they could do prairie reconstruction.

In 1994, Cindy and Roger purchased 72 acres in Story County containing never-plowed prairie remnants. Led by Cindy, the couple has spent the last 25 years creating what INHF President Joe McGovern calls “one of the most admirable prairie restorations around Iowa.” The couple donated a 72-acre conservation easement on the property — now known as Grant Ridge — to INHF in 2005, ensuring the prairie will always be protected.

Cindy and Roger have since donated two other conservation easements on other properties. They intend to gift these and other restored lands to INHF.

“Collectively, it’s been a life-transforming experience,” said Hildebrand. “We don’t have kids. Our land is our legacy.”

Rethinking Agriculture

Helen Gunderson is not the first woman in her family to have land in her own name. That distinction belongs her grandmother, DeElda Lighter Gunderson, a rare thing in a time when women's names

were missing on most land titles. But Helen is the first to redefine her place on the land, and in that regard, she is a trailblazer in her own right.

"I always had this expectation that the land would be handed down to my five siblings and me. That's not an automatic thing in most families," Gunderson said.

Still, growing up, she never felt like there was a place for her in farming.

"I felt pretty lost as a child," Gunderson said. "I didn't see a role for me in farming in the future, and didn't really want to step into the limited roles that were available to women."

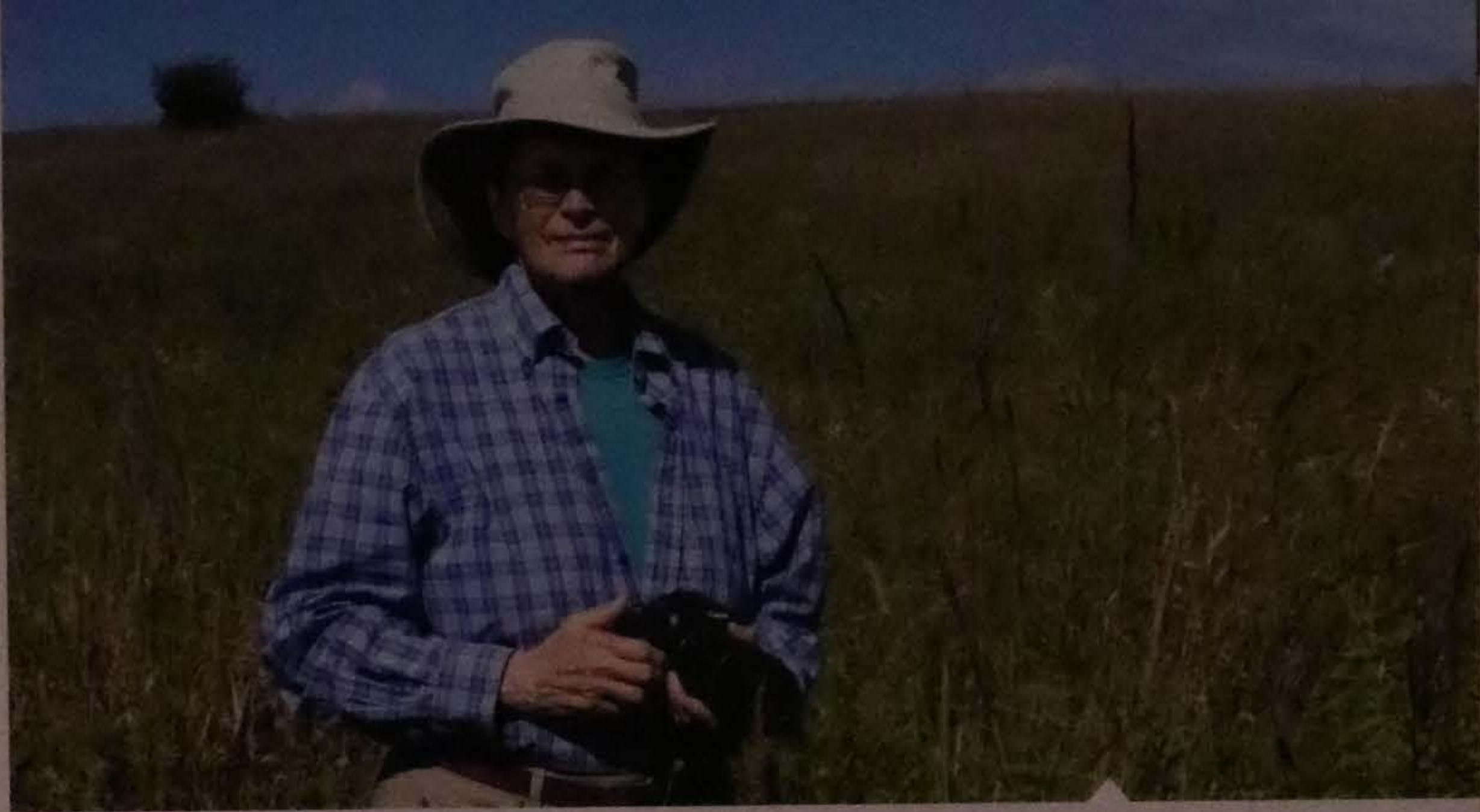
So she left. When Helen inherited her share of the farm from her grandmother, her brother, who had been groomed to farm from a young age, managed her land in her absence.

In adulthood, Helen became passionate about local foods, sustainable agriculture and community, and as a result, frustrated with the way her land was being farmed. When a friend asked when she was going to start managing her own land, she balked.

"I said, 'Oh, I can't do that, that's not how things are done in our family where it is expected that men will make the decisions.'"

But the more she thought about it, the more Helen realized not only was she qualified, she was compelled. That was nearly 25 years ago. Helen's been managing the land ever since.

She's shifted part of her land away from conventional agriculture to practices that serve her values and her bottom line. She rents land to a family friend, Betsy Dahl, who shares



her commitment to sustainable agriculture. Helen and Betsy harvested their first certified organic crop last fall — an achievement Helen is especially proud of. Helen grows an assortment of organic fruits and vegetables at her home in Ames, raises chickens and regularly invites students, neighbors and curious passersby to come learn about what she's doing.


In 2011, Helen donated 60 acres of permanent pasture, CRP and crop land to INHF. It's now known as DeElda Heritage Area. Five years later, she donated the adjoining 180 acres to INHF with a reserved life estate, giving her lifetime use and income.

In redefining the land, Helen has also redefined herself and her place in the culture of agriculture.

"I'm glad for the journey and happy with where I'm at, but I'm always looking ahead and asking myself what more can I do," Gunderson said. "It's a continuum."

Sowing the future

Cindy, Helen and other women like them have reshaped the landscape, and in doing so, the stories of women on the land. They're part of a growing group of women in agriculture and conservation being recognized for their leadership.

"There have always been women on the land," said O'Gara. "Over the years, we've had the opportunity to work with many women who have been leaders in land protection. This is not new. This is merely a continuation of an existing trend." 

BELOW:

Helen Gunderson on her farm in Pocahontas County. Gunderson inherited the land from her grandmother. Her brother managed the land until she came back to manage it herself. Helen has since transitioned the land from conventional agriculture, infusing her passion for the land and conservation into her management priorities. Photo by Erin Van Waus, INHF

OPPOSITE LEFT: Cindy Hildebrand and Roger Maddux sit on their restored prairie in Story County. They developed a love of prairie and seed collecting in the '80s, leading to future protection and restoration of Iowa prairie. Photo by Bill Witt



FOR THE BIRDS

BY JOE JAYJACK
Communications director | jjayjack@inhf.org

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARC BRAULT

T

he Henslow's sparrow is a small, quiet grassland bird. Perched on a wispy stalk of prairie grass, it calls out a short "tsilick." It's hard to see and harder to hear.

But when we talked with four "bird people" about the past, present and future of birds in Iowa, they all mentioned the Henslow's sparrow. The bird's numbers have plummeted in Iowa with a loss of expansive grassland habitat. So if you see one, it's a treasure.

2018 is the Year of the Bird, designated by National Geographic and the Audubon Society. INHF spoke with bird conservation leaders in Iowa to understand where we've come from and where we're headed.

GLOSSARY

BCA: Bird Conservation Area

BFI: Bird Friendly Iowa

CARA: Conservation and Reinvestment Act

CRP: Conservation Reserve Program

IBA: Important Bird Area

Non-game: Species of animals that aren't legally hunted, trapped or fished

BEGINNINGS

Dr. Jim Dinsmore: When I was a kid, I was interested in birds. My parents encouraged me. When I came to ISU, I started as a math major, but then bumped into some kids that were studying fish and wildlife management. I learned you didn't have to be a hunter or a game warden if you wanted to work with wildlife. Then my focus became ecology and biology.

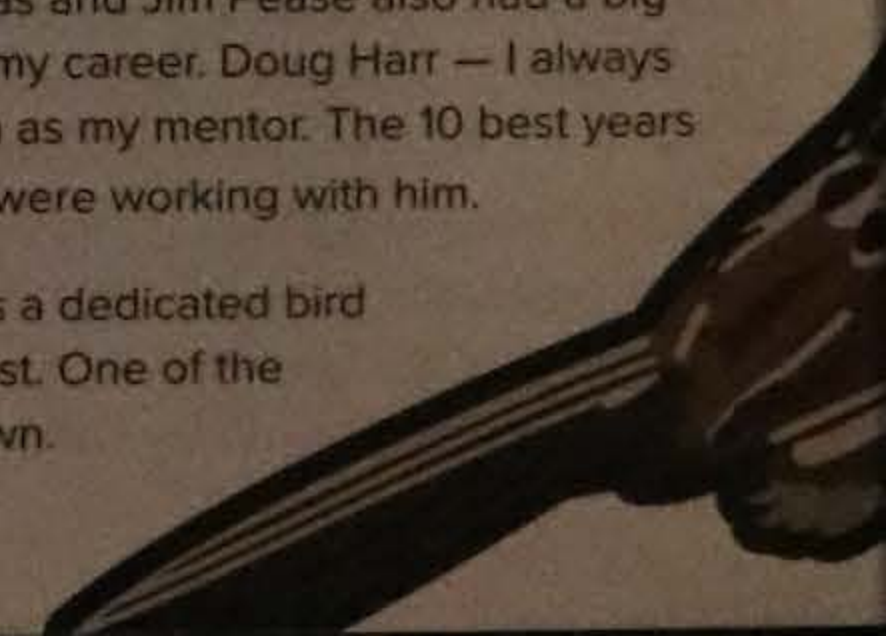
Doug Harr: When we lived in Washington state, we were in the country. Dad built a little ranch house in a 2-acre grove looking at Mt. Rainier. When we moved to Minnesota, we lived on an acreage on a marshy lake north of Minneapolis. We had loons nesting on the marsh. I was enamored by the outdoors. It was just in the family bloodlines.

Dr. Karen Kinkead: I'm from Tennessee. When I was young, there was a park ranger, and I thought what he did was so cool. He would go into the

schools with animals and take us on hikes. I'm not a birder, but birds are a big part of my job. I did my PhD on amphibian responses to wetland restoration. Then when I was pretty far along in my schooling, Dave Otis, who is from Iowa, was my advisor at Clemson. That's how I ended up in Iowa.

Bruce Ehresman: Gladys Black, the Bird Lady, had a huge influence on me. Fran Hammerstrom and her husband Frederick were grad students of Aldo Leopold. She wrote "Birding with a Purpose" and "My Double Life." My wife Marlene and I got to meet them in the '80s. Jim Dinsmore had a huge influence on me and my ability to identify birds. Erv Klaas and Jim Pease also had a big influence on my career. Doug Harr — I always introduce him as my mentor. The 10 best years of my career were working with him.

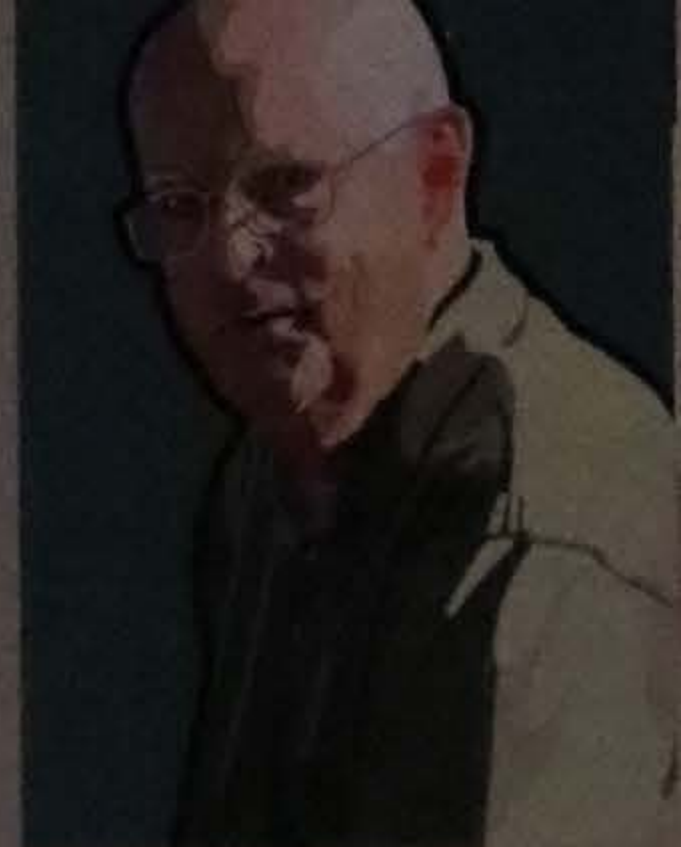
Harr: Bruce is a dedicated bird conservationist. One of the best I've known.



Bruce Ehresman retired this spring after a 41-year career with the Iowa DNR, most recently serving as a wildlife diversity biologist. Ehresman is a renowned Iowa bird expert, and his wife Marlene is the executive director of the Iowa Wildlife Center.



Dr. Jim Dinsmore is well known for his 1994 book "A Country So Full of Game." He was an animal ecology professor at Iowa State University from 1975-2002 and taught many people that work in conservation in Iowa today, including several INHF staff members.



Kinkead: I've been really surprised at how Iowa played a role in the development of wildlife laws. Between John Lacey, Aldo Leopold, Ding Darling and others, Iowans have played a huge role, especially for a state with such a small amount of public land.

Ehresman: Dean Roosa was one of Iowa's first State Ecologists. He helped initiate protection for Iowa's non-game species and was instrumental in helping the Iowa legislature create Iowa's Endangered Species Act in 1975. Dean set the stage for the existence of Iowa's Nongame/Wildlife Diversity Program, which was initiated in the early 1980s. Dean is a visionary, and I continue to be inspired by his actions.

Harr: In 1972, I started with the Iowa Conservation Commission, which became the DNR, as a biologist in northwest Iowa. One of the things I tried to do as a wildlife management biologist was integrate practices that would benefit more than just pheasants, deer and geese. Practices that would help all species, including birds.

Dinsmore: I came back to ISU in 1975, and the next 10 years or so were pretty bleak years for wildlife. Agriculture was king. "Fence row to fence row" was the mantra. There just wasn't much money for buying habitat. That changed in the '80s with the Farm Bill and CRP (Conservation Reserve Program). And there was a growing interest in non-game wildlife at the DNR. I think in the 1990s we had some really good years.

There was quite a bit of money for conservation and habitat. INHF was one of the key players in that.

WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN

In 2000, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill known as the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA) that

◀ HENSLOW'S SPARROW



would have provided permanent, protected funding for wildlife diversity to states. That funding would have prioritized non-game species, including birds. The U.S. Senate was on track to pass the bill when the terror attacks of Sept. 11, 2001 happened. Priorities shifted to homeland security and anti-terror funding, and CARA never materialized.

At the urging of the national Teaming With Wildlife Coalition, Congress and the President created the State Wildlife Grants Program, which provides federal money to every state and territory for conservation, aimed at preventing wildlife from becoming endangered. Currently, Iowa receives about \$500,000-\$600,000, which must be matched by state funds. A condition of receiving the funding is the production of a wildlife action plan. Dinsmore, Harr and Ehresman (and INHF staff) all contributed to Iowa's first Wildlife Action Plan, which was published in 2006. As the current Wildlife Diversity Coordinator at the DNR, Kinkead uses the Wildlife Action Plan as the basis for her work.

Ehresman: Right now, there are more conservation officers that care about wildlife diversity than at any time in my career. 50 percent of our time used to be dedicated to finding funding for wildlife diversity. The fact that every state now has a Wildlife Action Plan has greatly benefited wildlife diversity. Once we did that, it changed the focus for wildlife management.

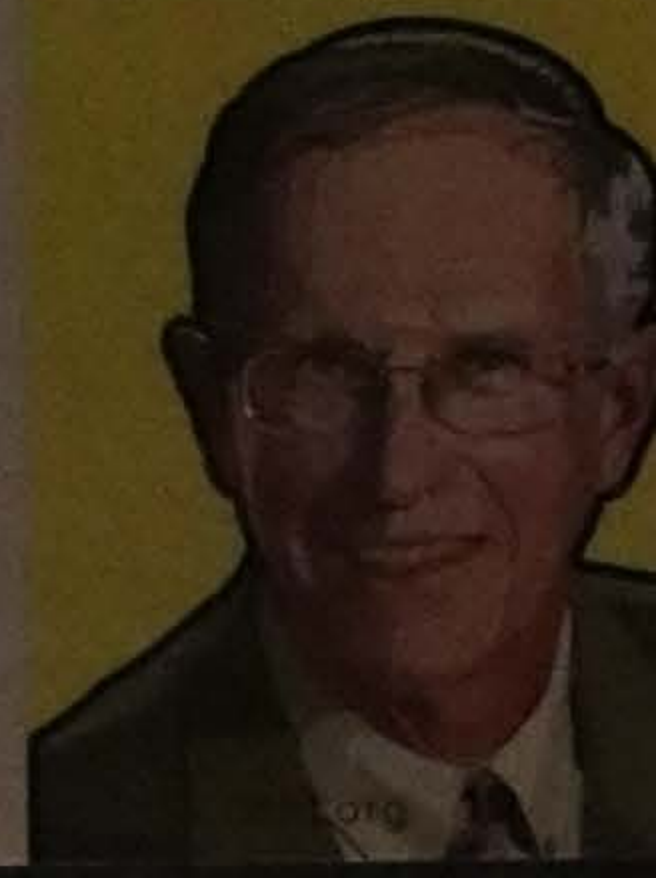
Dinsmore: Bruce and I worked together developing the list of birds and their importance for the Action Plan. The feds said that you need to have a plan for what you are doing with these species. We had to have some kind of monitoring program.

Kinkead: I was first hired by the DNR to develop their MSIM (Multiple Species Inventory and Monitoring) program. [One of the pilot areas for the MSIM program was INHF's Snyder Heritage Farm in Polk County.] Now, as the coordinator for

Dr. Karen Kinkead is the current Wildlife Diversity Program coordinator for the Iowa DNR. She developed Iowa's Multiple Species Inventory and Monitoring (MSIM) program, which is integral to monitoring bird populations and the Iowa Wildlife Action Plan.



Doug Harr is the president of Iowa Audubon. He worked at the Iowa DNR for more than three decades as a wildlife biologist and as Wildlife Diversity Program coordinator for eight years before retiring in 2010.





◀ WOOD DUCK

wildlife diversity, we see our role as ensuring that species exist into the future — that our children and grandchildren have an opportunity to see these species. The idea was that we use holistic, science-based management for all species.

BCAs

Because of significant declines in a large number of bird species, the DNR created Bird Conservation Areas (BCAs) in the early 2000s. Ehresman wrote the BCA guidance document, which states, "The concept of the BCA is based on research that suggests that bird populations respond to landscape-level conditions and, therefore, require landscape-oriented conservation efforts."

BCAs are made up of at least 10,000 acres of public and private land. In those 10,000 acres, at least 20 percent should be permanently protected, high quality habitat. INHF has done permanent protection projects in 23 of Iowa's 25 BCAs, working with both public agencies and private landowners to protect 37,000 acres.

Ehresman: My goal, before I retired, was to have at least 25 BCAs established, and to focus on the very best habitat that remains. I ended up staying on a couple extra years to get that done.

Harr: I helped Bruce put together many of the BCAs for the state. Because I served as a representative for national Audubon, which designates areas as Important Bird Areas (IBA),

we began looking at ways to integrate these two programs. Whenever we were looking at a BCA, if there were any IBAs within them, we made the boundaries the same. Two of those areas have been named Globally Important Bird Areas: Effigy Mounds/Yellow River State Forest because of the Cerulean Warbler population and Kellerton Grasslands BCA because of the Henslow's sparrow.

Ehresman: The average number of birds species in a BCA is 219, which is pretty good for Iowa. In all BCAs combined, the land is about 16 percent permanently protected right now. The target is 20. It's good that INHF has been so involved.

BIRD FRIENDLY IOWA

Harr and Ehresman recently helped spearhead the creation of Bird Friendly Iowa (BFI). A partnership of Iowa conservation groups, — including INHF — BFI aims to help Iowa communities better protect avian life. BFI sets criteria in order to be designated a bird friendly community that falls into three categories: protecting, restoring and enhancing bird habitat; reducing threats to birds; and educating and engaging people in birding and conservation. Waterloo was named the first Bird Friendly community in Iowa this past fall.

Harr: My good friend, Ric Zarwell, came up with the idea from Bird City Wisconsin. Bruce and I had also talked about doing something to enhance bird habitat in cities.

Ehresman: In these larger cities with river corridors, its amazing the number of birds that show up in surveys. And if you don't reduce the

SANDHILL CRANE



BIRD'S EYE VIEW

1896

The last passenger pigeon is seen in Iowa.

1918

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act is passed, establishing the foundation for the nation's wildlife refuge system.

1931

Jay N. "Ding" Darling is appointed to the first Iowa Fish & Game Commission.

1934

FDR appoints Ding Darling, Aldo Leopold and Thomas Beck to help dwindling waterfowl populations. They create the Duck Stamp, and push Congress to pass the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Act.

1949

Leopold's "A Sand County Almanac" is published, a year after the author died, criticizing the harm that humans do to natural systems.

1973

The federal Endangered Species Act is passed.

1975

The Iowa Endangered Species Act is passed.

EARLY '80s

The Iowa DNR establishes a wildlife diversity program that focuses on habitat protection for non-game species.

threats, everything else you do is pointless. There may be up to 3.7 billion birds killed by cats every year in the U.S. And another billion killed by flying into windows.

Harr: We're aimed not just at cities. We'll start out with communities, and then look at ways we can expand to campuses, businesses, maybe counties. We're trying to make people in Iowa realize how big an economic development impact it can have. The amount of money brought into Iowa for birding and wildlife watching is more than hunting and fishing combined. A lot of people don't realize that.

THE FUTURE

The future of bird populations in Iowa depends on the state of bird habitat in Iowa. And the state of bird habitat relies on education, coordination and funding. There is currently a bill making it's way through the U.S. Congress called Recovering America's Wildlife Act that would redirect \$1.3 billion annually in revenues from energy and mineral development on federal lands to wildlife conservation. If the Iowa legislature funds the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund, there would be matching funds to complement it.

Kinkead: That would be a game changer in Iowa. Permanent, dedicated funding for wildlife diversity. It would allow us to more fully implement the Wildlife Action Plan.

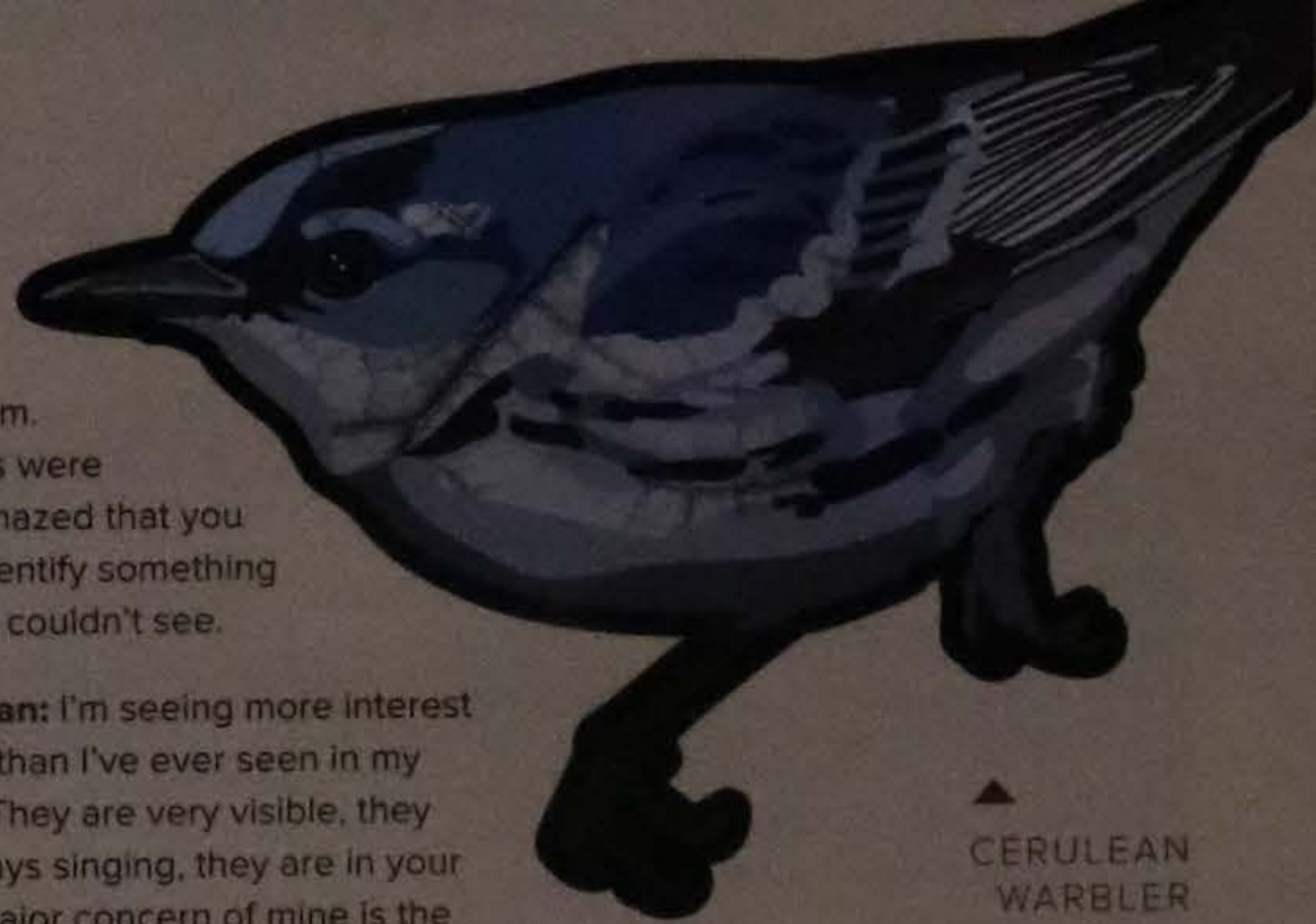
Dinsmore: There is something special about getting students out in the field and actually listening for birds, instead of just being in the

classroom. Students were really amazed that you could identify something that you couldn't see.

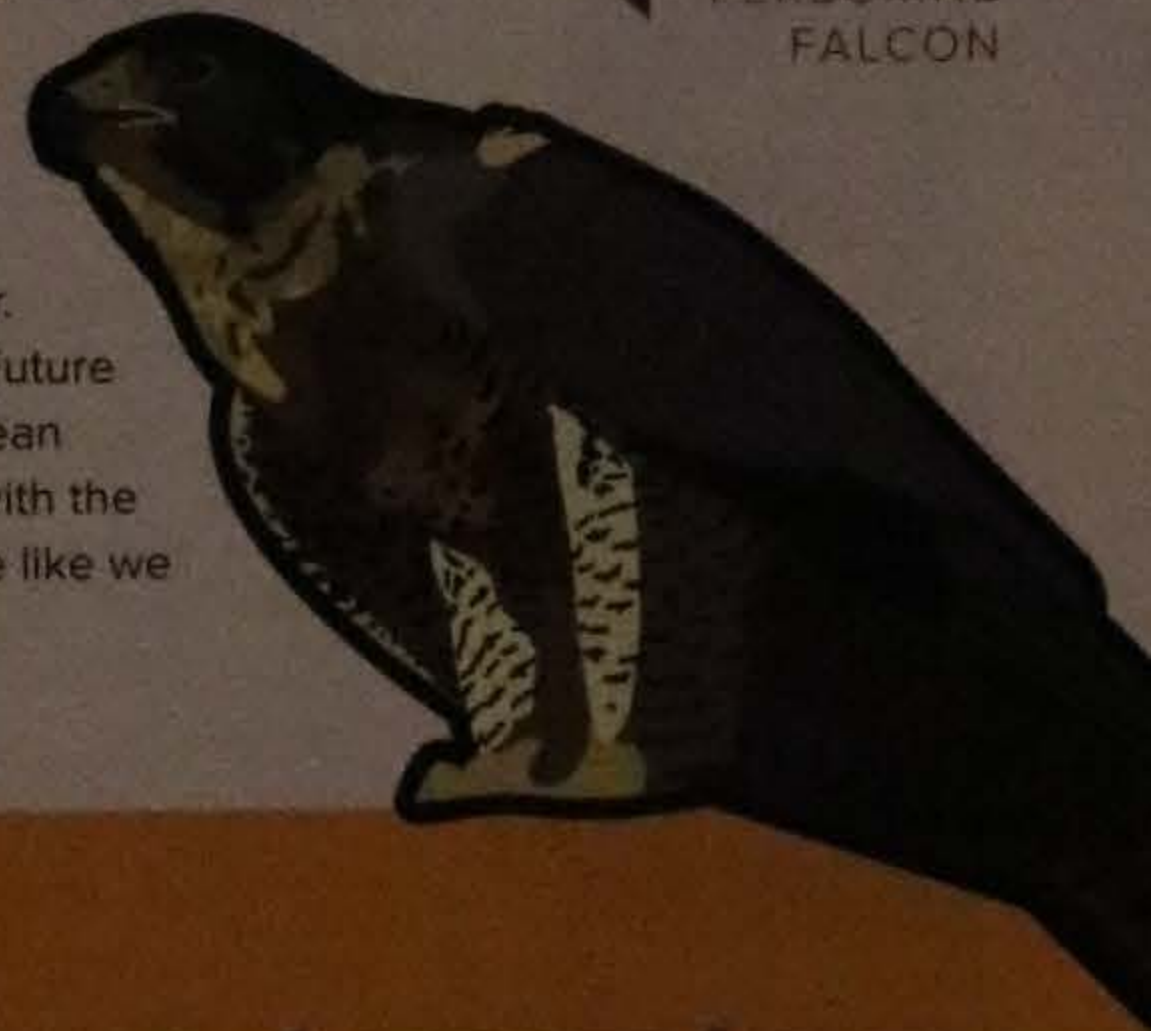
Ehresman: I'm seeing more interest in birds than I've ever seen in my career. They are very visible, they are always singing, they are in your life. A major concern of mine is the lack of environmental education and public outreach within the DNR. The state can't keep cutting budgets, staff and programs and expect the same results. My best hope is in young people. I think we can start turning things around. But until people value what's in their back yard, they aren't going to advocate for it.

Harr: In Iowa, just like nationwide, bird watching is expanding. People that go out and see habitat loss are getting concerned. We're going to see more and more birding groups partnering to get conservation done. I've got some hope for that in the future. With programs like Bird Friendly Iowa, we're going to get more people educated and interested in birds.

Ehresman: There's a quote from Dean Roosa — "Our quality of life is dependent on diversity. We cannot have continued diversity if we allow inhabitants of our earth to slowly disappear. The choice is not simply ours. Future Iowans have every right to a clean environment and one replete with the diversity of plant and animal life like we have enjoyed."



▲ CERULEAN WARBLER



◀ PEREGRINE FALCON

1985

The federal Farm Bill is passed, establishing the modern Conservation Reserve Program, which pays farmers to restore marginal cropland to wildlife habitat.

1989

Iowa passes the Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) Act, which has since provided more than \$360 million to Iowa communities, including for vital bird habitat protection.

2001

Sept. 11 terror attacks put an end to program that would have provided permanent, sustainable funding for wildlife diversity to states. In its place, the State Wildlife Grants Program is established.

2006

Iowa publishes its first Wildlife Action Plan.

2010

Iowans pass a constitutional amendment to create the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund. The fund remains empty until the Iowa legislature passes a sales tax increase of at least 3/8 of a cent.

2014-17

Two areas in Iowa are named Globally Important Bird Areas, for the protection of the dwindling Cerulean Warbler and Henslow's Sparrow populations.

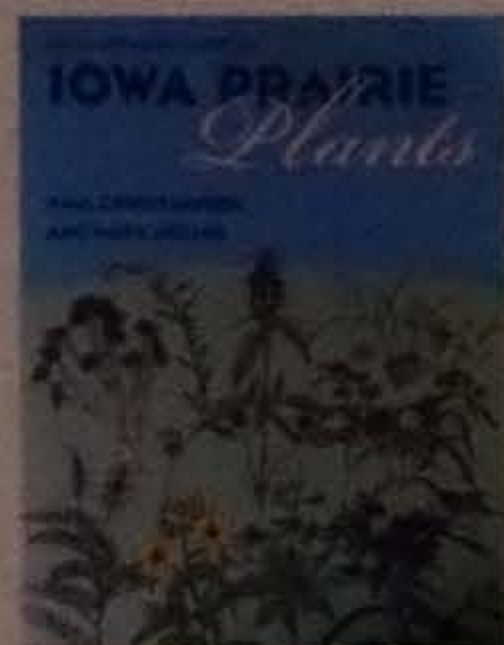
TODAY

44 percent of Iowa's bird species are in steep decline because of a loss of habitat.

CONSERVATION TIP

Become an Iowa plant expert

Summer is an amazing time to explore Iowa's outdoors and learn about the plant life that makes up its landscapes. It can be tricky to identify plant species in the wild, but with help of some handy references, you can master the craft in no time. Below, find recommendations for the best field guides to help you discover more of Iowa's wildness.



An Illustrated Guide to Iowa Prairie Plants

By Paul Christiansen and Mark Müller

An easy-to-use manual, complete with technical illustrations, this guide is a staple of any good conservation book collection. This guide provides a detailed look into Iowa's tallgrass prairie landscape.



Forest and Shade Trees of Iowa

By Peter J. Van Der Linden and Donald R. Farrar

A comprehensive guide to the native and introduced tree species in the state, this book is full of helpful, detailed photos to aid in identification. Written by two Iowa legends, this guide has been a go-to for conservationists for years.



Wildflowers of Iowa series

By Sylvan T. Runkel, Alvin F. Bull and Dean M. Roosa

Looking for knowledge in all of Iowa's landscapes? This series covers all types of woodland, prairie and wetland flower species found in Iowa.

LEAVING A LEGACY

Millie of Sioux City

Marlys Mildred Acklin of Sioux City loved the uniqueness of the Loess Hills landscape. She also loved celebrating the Fourth of July on the family farm near the Raccoon River. Her bequest to INHF, received in 2007, was directed for the care and preservation of land in these treasured areas.

In the eleven years that have followed, Millie's legacy helped create the Ruth Hanson Wildlife Area and an addition to the Horseshoe Bend Wildlife Area in Greene County, added Acklin Ridge to Stone State Park in Woodbury County, and protected two parcels of rare Loess Hills prairie in Monona County.

Millie's gift has protected over 340 acres of the landscapes she held dear, and will continue touching the lives of countless Iowans who get to experience these special places thanks to her generosity.

— ABBY HADE TERPSTRA, Donor Relations Director



TRIBUTE GIFTS

IN MEMORY OF

Alice and Gary Anderson
Denny Bernholtz
Harry Dahl III
Arlene Erusha

Luke Haller
Edna Hartwig
Joe Jenkins
James Edmond
Karl Kanzok

Barbara Kimm
Donal Kofron
Donald Krug
Robert 'Lucky' Luckeson
Mariyn Munson

Marvin E. Rohlf
Isabelle & Earl Salterberg
Kent Sheeley
Carl Simonson
Randy South

Lizzie Sytsma
Mary Sytsma
Murry Sytsma
Larry Torgerson
Bryce Werling
Miriam S. Woods

Find more Iowa places to explore at www.inhf.org/blog

Two of Iowans' favorite activities — biking and paddling — are easy to combine along Iowa's waterways. Photo by Tim Ackarman

Pedal Paddle Trails

BY SAMANTHA JONES
Communications Intern | commintern@inhf.org

Grab a paddle and dip your toes into new outdoor adventures this summer. Pedal-paddling, a combination of biking and kayaking/canoeing is a refreshing way to explore Iowa's natural corridors. Drop off your bike downstream, drive to the put-in and paddle down the river. Once you arrive at the take-out, shuttle yourself back to the starting point by hopping on your bike and riding along the trail.

"Pedaling and paddling allow Iowans to experience two categories of Iowa's most wild places — our rivers and our multiuse trails," said Lisa Hein, INHF senior director of conservation programs.

Iowa offers a wide variety of locations to try pedal/paddling — whether it's your first time on the water or you're a seasoned professional. In Des Moines, bike along the Neal Smith trail, then paddle down the Des Moines River — there are several outfitters to rent kayaks or canoes if you don't have your own. Or, spend part of the day on the Upper Iowa River, followed by an afternoon biking the Prairie



Farmer Trail in Decorah.

Pedal/paddling is a rapidly developing activity in Iowa. The Des Moines Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is expanding local trail routes, while the city of Waterloo plans to build a whitewater park, making it even easier to combine biking and paddling.

"There's a philosophy that the more people you get outside, the more people will appreciate natural resources," said Andrea Boulton, INHF trails and greenways director. "Pedal/paddle trails provide that connection between people and the natural resources, and an interest in learning more about them." 🌿

ILLUSTRATIONS
BY MARC BRAULT



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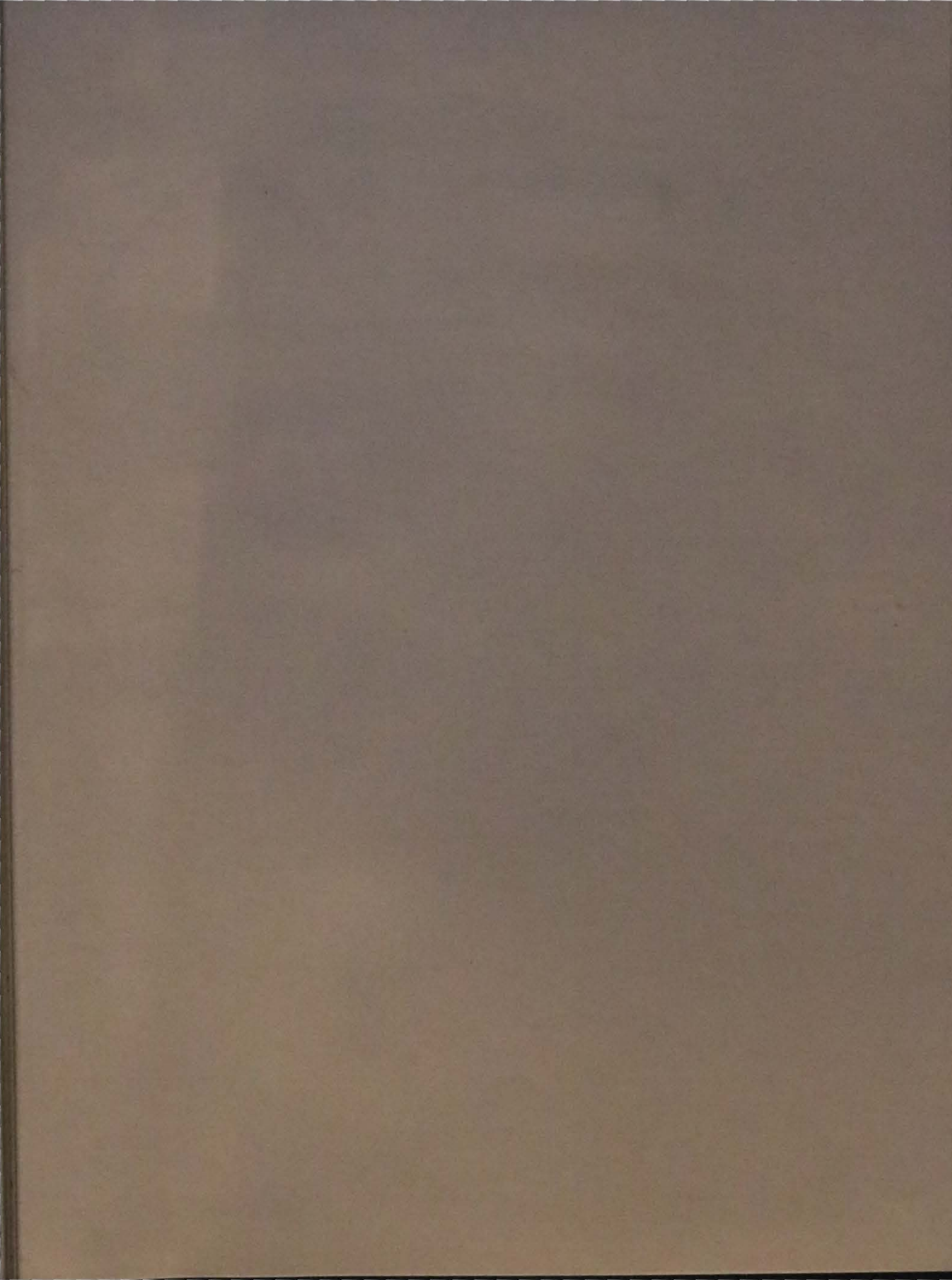


Wild bergamot is a familiar, showy flower in summer Iowa prairies. Known by many common names, like Bee Balm, it is an excellent attractor of native and bumble bees and other pollinators. The white, pink and lavender blooms are edible to humans, and have long been used in teas and different medicines. The minty leaves were believed to be especially good for respiratory ailments. *Photo by Nathan Houck*

Leave a legacy of clean water, healthy soil and beautiful outdoor places for future generations.

To see how including INHF in your will or trust can help in the your vision for Iowa's future, contact Anita G. Gane at anitagane@inhf.org or 515-281-1545.





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