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magazine

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Nebraskaland

Volume 99 • No. 1
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For address changes and questions about your subscription, call 800-632-5263

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Rates: \$18 for one year; \$33 for two years; \$44 for three years. Nebraska recipients must add appropriate sales tax. To subscribe call 1-800-NEBLAND (632-5263), or go online to: NebraskalandMagazine.com.

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Prescribed Fire Training Workshops

A series of workshops will be held around the state in 2021 to provide guidance and instruction for completing safe and effective prescribed fires. These workshops are for landowners, resource professionals, volunteer fire departments and others interested in burning. No prior burn experience is necessary to participate.

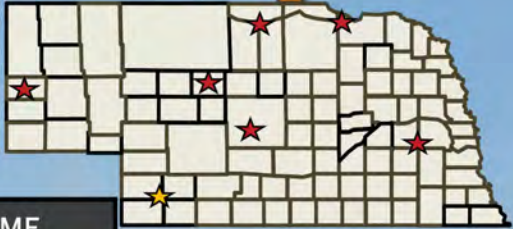


Table with 4 columns: DATE, TOWN, LOCATION, TIME. Rows include workshops in Ainsworth, Broken Bow, Thedford, Niobrara, Scottsbluff, Brainard, and an online course in March.

Introduction to Prescribed Fire



Learn the basics of planning and implementing a prescribed burn on your land

Table with 4 columns: DATE, ADVANCED WORKSHOPS, LOCATION, TIME. Rows include workshops for February 17, April 2021, and TBD.

Registration fee of \$10 for some basic workshops includes meal and training materials. Visit www.NebraskaPF.com or email Ashley at asnelson@pheasantsforever.org to register.

Join a Prescribed Burn Association

Prescribed burn associations are a collection of landowners, land managers, and volunteers who pool time, equipment, and knowledge to help each other get prescribed fire on the ground within their communities. There are many existing burn associations across the state and opportunity for new ones to be formed. Contact Brian Teeter at 402-219-2572 or bteeter@pheasantsforever.org to find one nearest you or to start your own.





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Please include your postal address
and telephone number. Letters may be
condensed and edited. Photographs are
also welcome.



WINTER WILDLIFE

An eastern cottontail rabbit sits on a bed of snow at Metcalf Wildlife Management Area near Hay Springs.

PHOTO BY JUSTIN HAAG



DOGS IN THE SKY

By Martha D. Shulski

Winter is my favorite season. There lies a lot of beauty in the seemingly pulsing landscape as snow-covered ground melts to reveal the browns of winter, only to establish again with the next passing storm. We can see animals much easier without the cover of foliage. The pastel optics of a winter sky are aided by low sun angles and layered clouds, as opposed to the bright intensity of summer. An optical phenomenon visible primarily, but not exclusively, in winter is called “parhelion.”

Better known as sun dogs, these mock suns are in the halo family of optical weather. Sun dogs result from light changing direction, or refracting, as it passes through ice crystals. Similar to rainbows, the frozen plate-shaped crystals act as tiny prisms suspended in cirrus clouds that are cold and at high altitudes.

Parhelias appear in close proximity to the

sun, 22 degrees to be exact, and sometimes the rainbow of colors are distinguishable, though muted. If you look closely, you may see other interesting optics along with these sun dogs.

A halo is a circular feature surrounding the sun with parhelias appearing on the east and west sides. The top of the halo can have arced features extending skyward.

Viewing these complete set of optical illusions is quite rare at middle latitudes. One would need to be in Arctic or Antarctic skies to get the full experience. Until then, when thin and wispy cirrus clouds don our view, look near the low winter sun for these dogs to illuminate the sky.

Martha D. Shulski, at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, is the director of the Nebraska State Climate Office.

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Look for the Peregrine Falcon image on your Nebraska tax return.





PHOTO BY JUSTIN HAAG

HOLEY HUNTER

By Justin Haag

When people say something is needed like a “hole in the head,” usually it is to express it is unnecessary or frivolous. Some predatory fish may take exception to that notion, however.

The northern pike (*Esox lucius*) has many physical characteristics that make it stand out from other species. With a long toothy snout and tube-like, green camouflaged body, it is to no surprise that people have nicknamed this fish the “gator.” Perhaps less noticeable on that head is a series of holes, or pores, that are important to its survival and predatory ways.

Complementing the pike’s razor-sharp teeth, forward-positioned eyes and athletic body, is the fish’s lateral line that helps it detect movement,

vibrations and pressure gradients. All fish have some form of this system, but those pores, which have tiny hairs, make a pike’s lateral line more effective at detecting movement than most other species. Such attributes of the lateral line are referred to as neuromasts.

Another less common but highly sought-after Nebraska predatory fish, the muskellunge (*Esox masquinongy*), also has such pores on its lateral line. In fact, muskies have about double the number of holes — a characteristic that helps give it an edge on the prey when hunting at night.

Whenever landing one of these popular game fish, anglers can probably thank the holes on its head for helping the fish find its way to the hook.

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PHOTO BY JUSTIN HAAG

LATE-SEASON PHEASANTS

By Jeff Kurrus and Gerry Steinauer

Late-season pheasant hunting can be a challenging, but rewarding, adventure. To the hunters' advantage, most others have stowed away their guns for the season and there is less competition. To the pheasants' advantage, the remaining roosters are now well-educated. Here are a few tips to help you bag those wily roosters.

Pay Attention to Your Cover

The chill and snow of winter has pushed birds into dense, insulating cover, so hunt thick grass or weed patches or marshes. Also birds now avoid heavily hunted areas so seek out-of-the-way places such as the back side of a marsh or isolated patches of cover far from parking lots if hunting public lands.

Be Quiet

The slamming of car doors, talking and constantly blowing your dog whistle will send the now skittish roosters running. To trap these prone to run roosters, zig-zag through fields in

an attempt to push them to field edges, or better yet, corners where they will be forced to flush.

An After-Breakfast Hunt

There is no need to rush. Wait until mid-morning to hunt after pheasants have fed in crop fields and settled in mid-day loafing cover where they will be easier to approach.

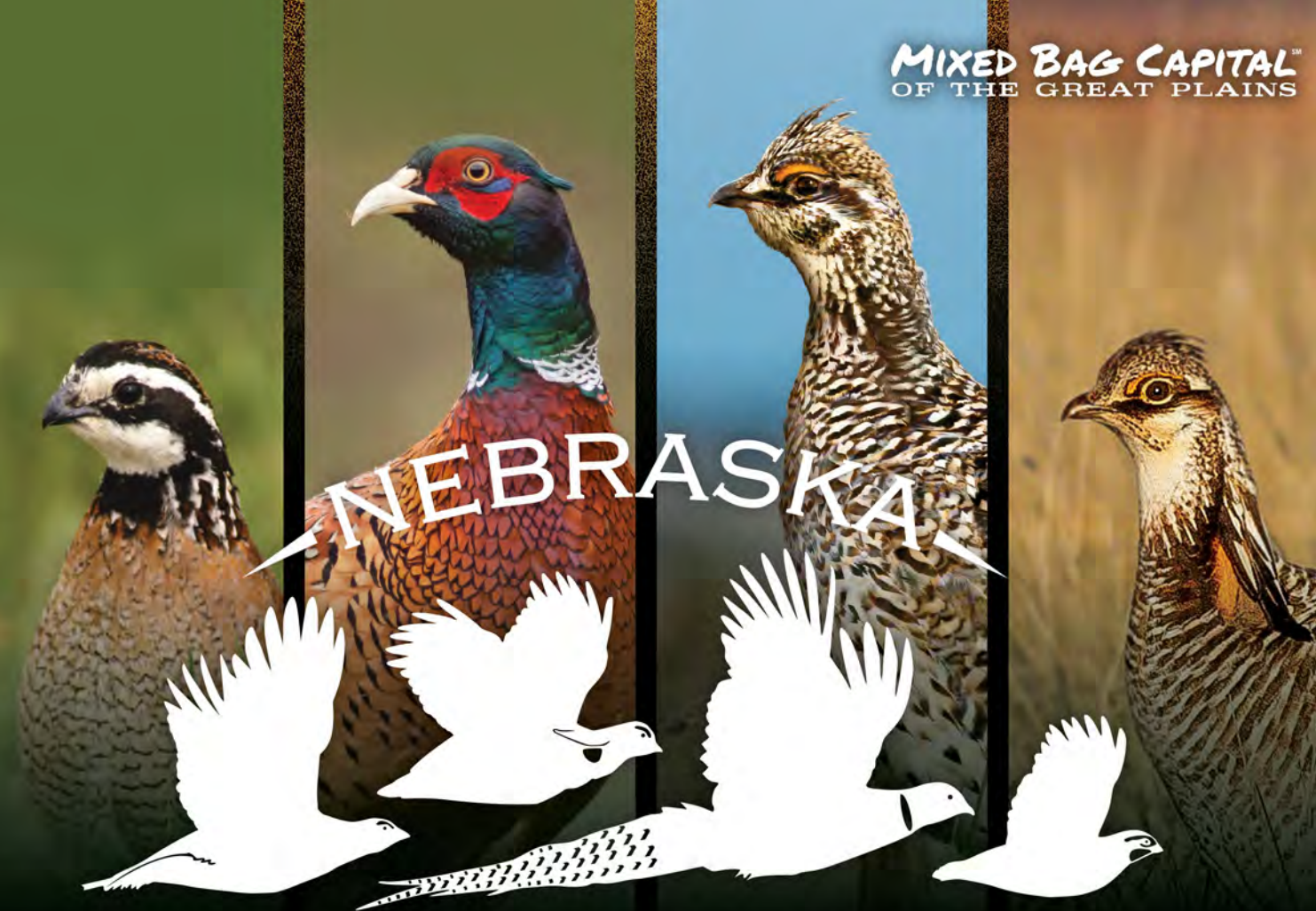
More Bang

Late-season roosters tend to flush a bit farther out, so consider using shells with more bang, perhaps 3-inch magnums with a larger shot size.

After a Snow

In snow, learn to identify fresh rooster tracks, and trail them for a flush.

Lastly, be prepared to walk, there are no easy roosters this time of year.



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PHOTO BY JENNY NGUYEN-WHEATLEY

DUCK (OR GOOSE) AND BEANS

By Jenny Nguyen-Wheatley

Servings: 6

Prep Time: Overnight

Cooking Time: 6 hours

Ingredients:

- 1½ pounds bone-in duck or goose legs
- 1 pound of dried cannellini beans
- Water
- 1 onion, separated
- 1 rib of celery, roughly sliced
- 2 carrots, roughly sliced
- 2 bay leaves
- Olive oil
- 6 ounces of andouille sausage, sliced
- 4 cloves of garlic, minced
- 1 bunch of kale, leaves coarsely chopped
- 1 tablespoon of tomato paste
- 4 sprigs of fresh parsley
- Kosher salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 tablespoon of brown sugar, optional

1. Pour dried beans into a bowl and submerge with water by 2 inches. Stir in 2 tablespoons of salt. Allow to soak for at least for 4 hours and up to 12 hours.

2. In a stock pot, combine duck legs, 8 cups of water, half the onion (reserve the other half for later), celery, carrots and 1 bay leaf. Bring to a simmer and cook on low, partially covered, for about 2 hours and 30 minutes or until tender. Shred meat from bones and set aside/refrigerate until ready to use. Strain stock and discard solids.

For a richer stock, return the bones to the pot and continue simmering for as long as you'd like. However, make sure that you end up with at least 4 cups of stock in the end.

3. Drain and rinse beans. Add beans to a pot and submerge by 2 inches of new water. Add the remaining bay leaf to the pot and bring to a simmer. Cook beans until tender, about 30 minutes. Never allow the pot to come to a hard

boil, which can break the beans.

4. Preheat oven to 250° Fahrenheit. On the stove, add oil to a 4-quart enameled Dutch oven and heat over medium-high. Brown the sausage and shredded duck meat. Chop the remaining onion and sweat with a pinch of salt until translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the minced garlic and cook for 30 seconds. Wilt the kale with another pinch of salt.

5. Drain the cooked beans and bay leaf and add it to the Dutch oven with the other ingredients. Dissolve tomato paste into 1 cup of duck stock and add it to the pot. Add 2 more cups of stock, more or less, to submerge all ingredients. Mix in brown sugar and season to taste with salt. Drop in sprigs of parsley. Cover and braise for 3 hours in a 250° oven.

6. To serve, discard the parsley and bay leaf. Season to taste again. Serve hot with buttered crusty bread on the side. Use leftover stock to thin out leftovers.

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Buttes of the Breakout

Solemn and Scenic

Story and photos by Justin Haag



Bison graze below the Cheyenne Buttes of Fort Robinson State Park. Both stand as a significant reminder of the region's Native American heritage.



A bighorn sheep stands atop a picturesque landform visible from the Cheyenne Butte Trail. Bighorns are attracted to the area’s many peaks and crags.

The Cheyenne Buttes provide one of the most scenic vantage points in the Pine Ridge. They also are forever tied to an event from Fort Robinson State Park’s history as a U.S. Cavalry post and got their name from a notorious event.



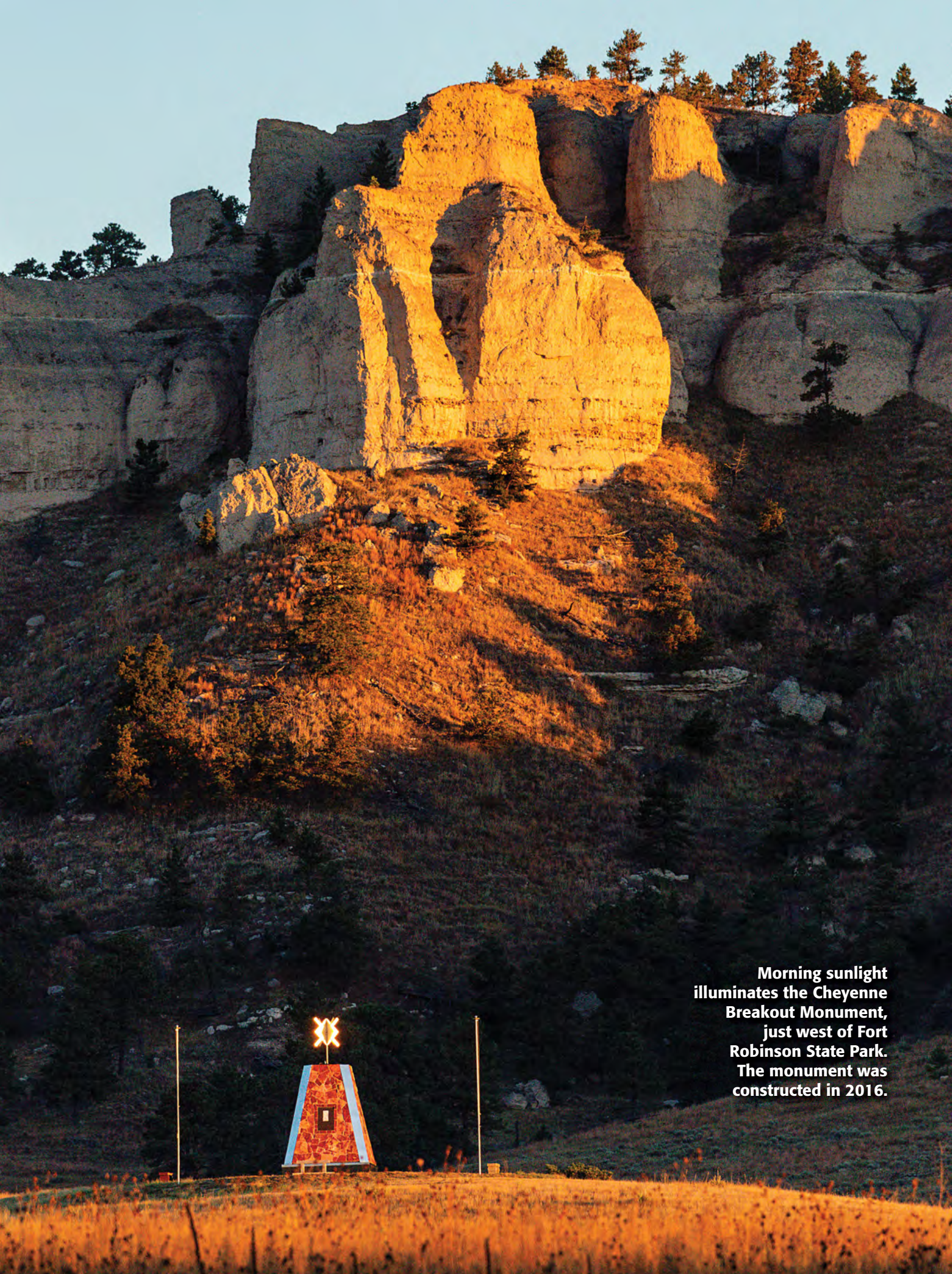
Chief Dull Knife of the Cheyenne.

Historians rate the happenings of Jan. 9, 1879, among the most significant events of the Indian Wars. While that day is certainly important, it is just one day among a period of more than three months. The previous October, the Cavalry intercepted 149 Cheyenne warriors, women and children led by Chief Dull Knife, who were attempting to return to their Powder River region homelands from Darlington Agency in Indian Territory in present-day Oklahoma. After capturing the Cheyennes south of Chadron, the soldiers took them into custody at Fort Robinson. At first, the Cheyennes were allowed to leave the building. By January, however, the situation became dire as officials in Washington, D.C., insisted the group return south, and the Native Americans were just as insistent on moving north. The Cheyennes refused

to return to the southern agency, which by all accounts had become a hellhole, and the officers at Fort Robinson eventually attempted to force them into submission by withholding food, water and firewood. The group was determined to escape, and what happened next would come to be known as the Cheyenne Breakout and the “Fort Robinson massacre.” At about 9 p.m. on that cold January night, after four days of hunger, the Cheyennes busted through the boarded windows of the log barracks. The escape was aided by weapons they had smuggled into the building, and soldiers guarding the barracks became the first casualties of the event. The Cheyennes followed the banks of the White River until they headed north and scaled the cliffs that would later bear their name. Traveling northwesterly, the landscape of the



From the top of the Cheyenne Buttes, visitors get a view of the White Valley. After escaping, the Cheyennes followed the river before heading to higher ground.



Morning sunlight illuminates the Cheyenne Breakout Monument, just west of Fort Robinson State Park. The monument was constructed in 2016.

Pine Ridge helped them avoid the cavalry soldiers.

Some made it as far as a hiding spot on Antelope Creek 35 miles away before soldiers caught up with them, but all of the escapees were eventually either killed or recaptured. The tragedy resulted in the death of 64 of the Native Americans and 11 soldiers.

While most historical materials refer to the event as the Cheyenne Outbreak, modern historians have preferred the term Cheyenne Breakout, as it provides greater respect to the Native Americans and more accurately portrays the event. “Outbreak,” they say, is a term often used to describe disease and has connotations the Cheyennes were the source of the



Fort Robinson visitors can step back to the tense moments of January 1879 at the reconstructed barracks of the Cheyenne Breakout.



From atop the buttes, the grandeur of the Pine Ridge is accentuated by sunrise.



Each winter, the Cheyenne Buttes serve as a reminder of the plight of Dull Knife and his people. In summer, Fort Robinson State Park provides Jeep rides to the fenced area at left.

trouble.

Today, History Nebraska has many resources available at the park to commemorate these events and others of the Indian Wars.

In 2003, the agency reconstructed the barracks where the Cheyennes were held captive, and a striking

monument memorializing the incident was installed below the Cheyenne Buttes on land owned by Chief Dull Knife College just west of the park in 2016. Three historical markers also tell of the events.

Perhaps it is the characteristics of the buttes, which are rugged

enough to provide some of the region’s best bighorn sheep habitat, that best represent the struggle and determination of the Cheyenne people. When standing on the landforms, looking over the White Valley and a herd of bison grazing below, it is fitting to think of that cold night in January

and pay respects to this region’s checkered past.

May the buttes forever carry the Cheyenne name so visitors will not forget the role they played in bringing hope, albeit brief, to a determined group of cold and hungry Native Americans. 🏠

Getting to the Top

Visitors to Fort Robinson State Park need not recreate the physical feat of the Cheyennes to experience these views. They may instead use/hike/ walk the more agreeable Cheyenne Butte Trail. A fenced viewing area is accessible from Smiley Canyon Scenic Drive, about 400 feet above and 1 mile from the road’s easternmost parking lot. In summer, Fort Robinson offers guided Jeep rides to this location.

Outdoor Nebraska

By Renae Blum

Don't let cabin fever get to you. There are still plenty of ways to have fun outdoors and stay active; here are just a few. **N**



Squirrel hunting

Through Jan. 31 | Statewide

Winter can be one of the most fun and rewarding times to hunt Nebraska's fox squirrels. Get outside on a calm, sunny day with family and friends to make memories and bring home meat for delicious squirrel stew. Be stealthy, as squirrels look for movement.



Observe animal tracks

Throughout the month
Statewide

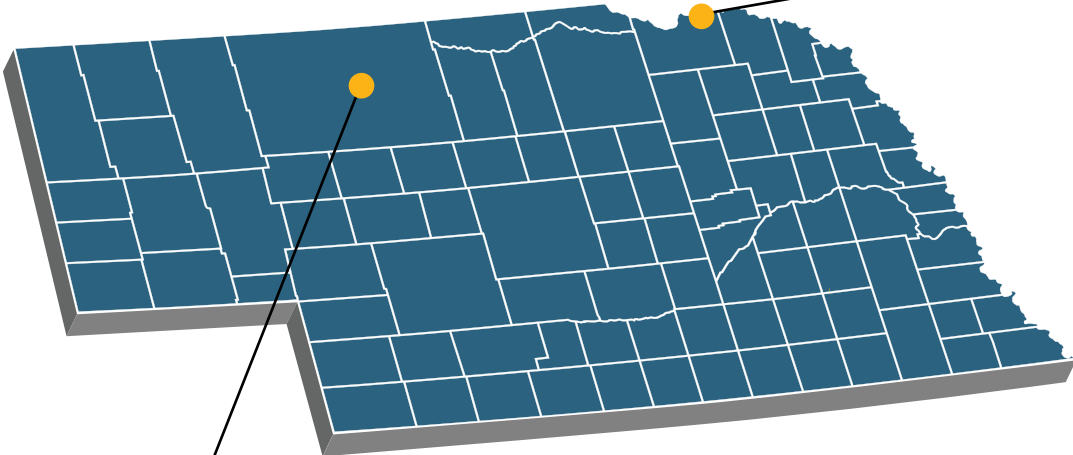
Finding and observing animal tracks in fresh snow can be a fun winter activity. See what you can learn from your observations, noting the tracks' pattern, size, distance between tracks, presence of toes or claws and paw pad shapes. Field guides such as *Scats and Tracks of the Great Plains* by James C. Halfpenny can aid in identification.



Snowmobiling at Lewis and Clark State Recreation Area

As weather conditions allow

A select number of Nebraska state parks offer snowmobiling. If you're deciding where to go, Lewis and Clark may be a good pick: It's the only one with groomed snowmobiling trails. Enjoy beautiful winter scenery and some good camping and fishing, too. Riders must stay on designated snowmobile trails.



Ice-fishing at Merritt Reservoir

As weather conditions allow

Merritt Reservoir is a traditional ice-fishing favorite, with a variety of species that provide good action, including crappie and other panfish, large catfish, walleye and perhaps pike or muskie. Crappie is the No. 1 draw and for good reason: The reservoir has always had a good population of larger crappie.



Make outdoors New Year's resolutions

Throughout the month | Statewide

Now is a great time to start planning a healthy, active year outdoors. That might mean making a fishing or hunting bucket list for 2021, writing a list of state parks and trails to explore, or sketching out fitness goals for you and your hunting dog. Have fun and make resolutions you'll want to keep.



Snow goose shot over
a farm pond on private
land in Burt County.

PHOTO BY JENNY NGUYEN-WHEATLEY

HUNTING LATE-SEASON WATERFOWL

By Jenny Nguyen-Wheatley

Hunting the late-waterfowl season is not for the faint of heart. Thick ice, biting temperatures and freezing equipment are only a few things that the most die-hard of waterfowl hunters have to contend with in January and February. I talked to four of these hunters, who provided insight on how to best cope with hunting in harsh winter conditions.

Julie Geiser is a public information officer and *Nebraskaland* regional editor for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. She has spent more than 30 years hunting waterfowl and learning their patterns, calls and how to lure them into a decoy spread throughout the hunting season.

Terry Bisgard of Omaha has been hunting waterfowl for over 35 years. He recalls shooting his first duck at 16 and is now passing on the tradition to his two young sons, Caden and Cody.

Scott Wessel is a Commission private lands biologist out of the Norfolk office. His waterfowl hunting experience began 50 years ago on a small reservoir in northeastern Nebraska. Today, Wessel mostly hunts Sandhill lakes and larger rivers. Although a lot has changed over the years, the anticipation of sunrises in the blind with family, friends and dogs is as great a pull for him today as it was when he was young.

Ross Juelfs has more than 30 years of experience hunting the North Platte River. His guiding career began 25 years ago with his father at the Stanco Ranch near Lisco. Juelfs is currently head guide and hunting manager for Cheyenne Ridge Outfitters near Scottsbluff, where he has worked for 13 years.

Where to Hunt

Larger bodies of water, sloughs and warm-water creeks are the last to freeze. Public reservoirs, such as Calamus, Merritt and McConaughy, and larger Sandhills lakes in western Nebraska are attractive during the late-waterfowl season for this reason.

“The wind makes the waves bigger on big water, which keeps off the ice,” says Terry Bisgard. “I like to set up on the north to northwest side of a lake because that’s where the

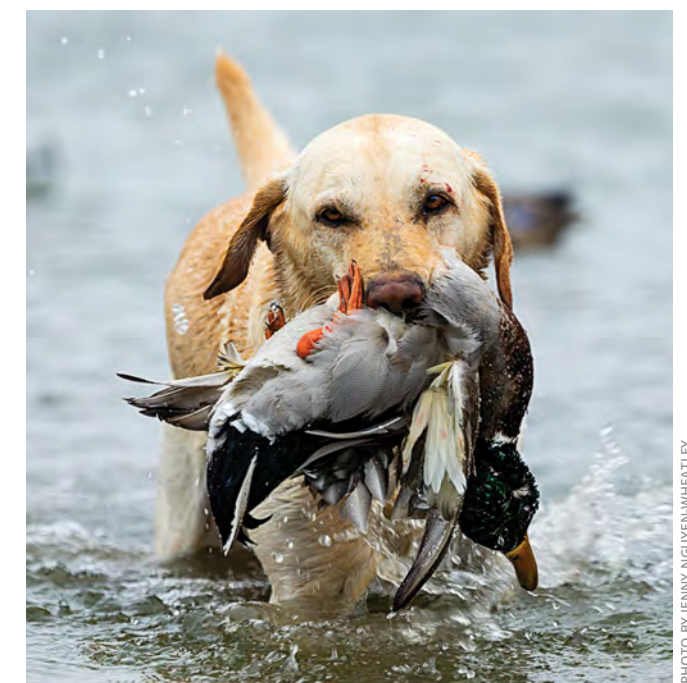
birds will be coming in toward the late season.”

Rivers also can produce good hunting, that is until they freeze or form too much slush, says Julie Geiser. “Having said that, if temperatures do warm during the day, river slush melts and will attract ducks and geese during the afternoons,” she says.

Ross Juelfs, who is usually limited to hunting and guiding on smaller bodies of water along the Platte River, looks to small warm-water creeks and sloughs close to food sources.

Non-traditional areas include farm ponds and stock dams where ducks wouldn’t normally be found, says Scott Wessel.

“If you can gain access, most people will walk in, flush birds simply by their presence, and then set out decoys and wait for them to return,” he says. “Birds that concentrate in areas like that ‘feel’ secure and will often return and decoy readily.”



Labrador retriever “Bub” retrieves a mallard out of the water. Bub belongs to Terry Bisgard of Omaha.

PHOTO BY JENNY NGUYEN-WHEATLEY



Haider Kazem of Lincoln calls in ducks while hunting at Pawnee Lake State Recreation Area. PHOTO BY JENNY NGUYEN-WHEATLEY

Before hunting cornfields, Wessel recommends scouting to look for a field that the birds are using or one that is located along a direct flight line from a roost. Spinning wing decoys and field decoys work well in this case, and camouflaging with a layout blind is important. However, there is one caveat when hunting “roost” sites.

“Hunting roost sites like this is usually a one-and-done affair. Once they’ve been shot at, they won’t likely return soon or at all,” says Wessel. “Furthermore, if there are significant numbers of birds using the site, hunting there may negatively impact other hunter success in the area — particularly for field hunters.”



Ice, frost and snow make decoys look unnatural to birds flying overhead. During the late season, Terry Bisgard of Omaha leaves his blind as often as every two hours to clean decoys. PHOTO BY JENNY NGUYEN-WHEATLEY



Jake and Keith Jadowski, originally from Ralston, Nebraska, hunt ducks and geese on the Elkhorn River near Tilden. PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS

Calling

Birds will respond to calls differently later in the season than earlier. Geiser’s tactic is to do what they do. Bisgard prefers the minimalist’s route. Juelfs takes a more proactive approach.

“Birds can get educated as the season goes on, and I usually go by how much the ducks or geese are talking, calling as much or as little as they are,” says Geiser. “If you see birds a ways off, call to let them know where you are, and then watch their body language, listen to their calling and mimic them.”

Like Geiser, Bisgard also emphasizes reading the birds, but typically during the late season, he says, “The less calling I do, the better success I usually have. Use soft, low-end type calling, more feed chuckles and maybe soft quacking, because it’s colder and the newer ducks coming in will be hungry. The ducks that are here already are going to be stale, so they’re used to hearing it by then from other hunters. Sometimes I don’t call at all. I just let the motion of the decoys do the work.”

Juelfs tends to call more aggressively later in the season, hoping to trigger a response from a lonely drake mallard.

“Ducks can be very responsive later in the season as they begin their pair bonding and courtship rituals,” he says.

Breaking Ice

Ice is a challenge during the late season. Keeping water open and preventing ice from forming on decoys, which can make them look unnatural, requires a watchful eye.

“Hunting on big reservoirs can be tricky, but if you have a barge, those boats can break through the ice if it’s not too thick,” says Geiser. “Bank hunting can be done near spillways — if legal to hunt there — and other areas with running water that keep the water open. We do have an underwater turbine at our private pond that keeps the water rotating, and it keeps a large area open. We always have heaters running that keep our gear from freezing up.”

“An ice eater works well if you have electricity,” says Wessel. “Open up as big an area as you can upwind of your blind so you can place decoys there and encourage ducks to approach in front of the blind.”

Wessel also uses a spade or spud bar to break ice and move it out of sight, which keeps his hands from getting wet.

“Don’t leave decoys out overnight if there is a risk of icing in or even a heavy frost. Shiny, frozen decoys or those covered with frost don’t look natural,” says Wessel.

Bisgard breaks ice in large circles and slides it underneath the ice.

“It looks more natural. I don’t like shiny broken edges reflecting in the sun,” he says. “If the ice is thick, I’ll only make a small circle. I also set decoys on the ice. I put sleeper or resting decoys around the ice hole, just to make it look more natural and this will also help cover the shiny jagged edges of the ice. When waterfowl see other birds sleeping or resting, it gives them confidence. They’ll see these birds

relaxing, and they’ll want to come down.”

Bisgard keeps a close eye for ice forming on decoys. He goes out every couple of hours to clean ice off the decoys’ bills.

Decoys

“For geese during the late season, hunters may need to work the wind more with their decoy spreads,” says Geiser. “Geese will decoy and land coming into the wind.”

If birds are decoy-shy, Geiser suggests moving the decoy spread away from your pit or blind, in a location that would force birds to fly over you as they are looking at your spread.

Also consider competition with other hunters. Wessel utilizes a bigger spread when there are other hunters in the area, “but a few decoys will work if pressure is light.” He also bunches decoys closer together during colder conditions, which simulates natural behavior.

“I always place goose decoys upwind of ducks,” says Wessel. “I believe, but don’t know this for a fact, that geese



From his personal blind overlooking the Platte River, a Labrador retriever awaits the next volley of shots from his handlers.

PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS



PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS

Hunters carry out duck decoys after a waterfowl hunt in Hall County on the Platte River.

will fly over ducks but ducks don’t like to fly over geese as they approach a landing site. That was what I read a long time ago in Ralf Coykendall’s book *Duck Decoys: And How to Rig Them*.”

Wessel also transitions from using a mixed flock of decoys — widgeon, gadwall, pintail, teal and mallards — to mostly mallard and a few green-winged teal later in the season, as most of the early to mid-season migrants have long headed south.

“Honestly, I think I’ve killed just as many ducks over mallard decoys as I do now with really nice ‘other duck decoys,’” says Wessel. Full-body, non-floating duck decoys and sleeper goose decoys placed on the ice can be effective if you have a way to retrieve downed birds, but be careful of thin ice, he warned.

Bisgard also uses sleeper and resting decoys, especially during conditions of thick ice where you can’t make a big hole.

“If there’s no ice, I’ll add two or three dozen more decoys to my spread to create a bigger profile. I also like motion decoys to create a more natural look,” says Bisgard.

Juelfs, who typically hunts smaller water, tends to run smaller and more realistic spreads later in the season.

“I feel that calling will get a better response than a large decoy spread,” says Juelfs.

Camouflage

Geiser reminds hunters to touch up their blinds and pits toward the middle or end of the waterfowl season. Focus on lids, which birds tend to notice first. Collect corn stalks



PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS

When hunting during the winter, it is mandatory to constantly clean the snow off of the decoys.

or other matching vegetation to blend in your blind with its surroundings. However, don't use phragmites for any blind construction, as the plant is highly invasive, outcompetes native plants and displaces some native animals. Also, don't make too many paths or tire tracks leading to your blind, she says.

Bisgard gives himself time to scout before hunting. He takes photos of potential hunting spots and studies them to camouflage his boat blind before the hunt.

"If I'm hunting in the Sandhills, I like brush cover. Can't go wrong with Mossy Oak shadow grass — it's my favorite," says Bisgard. "I also put a camo vest on my dog to help break him or her up. Keep the dog still. You don't want any unwanted motion in your blind."

Other Considerations

Although obvious, make sure to wear enough layers and take advantage of hand and foot warmers during the late season. Hypothermia is a real risk. Geiser always checks her hip boots and chest waders for leaks before hunting. Bisgard switches to wearing Cordura waders with 1,600-gram Thinsulate.

"I go for the 4-in-1 jacket — you can always peel off later. You need that protective outer shell to keep the wind, snow and rain out," says Bisgard. "I have a pair of rubber gloves that go up to my elbows to pick up decoys in cold water. Many hunters make the mistake of choosing gear with a camouflage pattern they like, but it's only water resistant and not waterproof. Spend the extra money on waterproof gear for when conditions are rough."

As for the gun, Geiser prefers pump shotguns over semi-auto loaders, which are generally foolproof. Semi-autos can malfunction if they freeze.

Bisgard checks over his gun before hunting, making sure the action is free and working. He warns against over-oiling a gun before hunting in cold weather.

"The oil can get stiff in the cold, and the action won't work," he says. "Your gun jamming up is the last thing you want when the birds start come in. For late-season hunting, I only use a light layer of oil when I need to clean my gun."

Geiser and her husband keep a small hand broom in the pit to dust decoys off if there is frost on them or if it's snowing.

In extreme weather, bring plenty of food and account for emergency scenarios. [N](#)

Weather and Late-season Waterfowl

By Todd Mills

Nothing can impact a late-season waterfowl hunt like a weather change. When most hunters may be packing away their gear, I'm usually busy checking weather forecasts and looking for that perfect storm that can turn an ordinary late-season hunt into a barrel burner.

During the month of January and early February, most birds have reached their wintering grounds. You'll no longer be waiting on a migration event, but instead packing on the miles scouting and waiting on the weather to get them out of their daily routine. By this time, they've seen it all and heard it all, so every advantage you can get needs to be jumped on. Normally, for me, it's a drastic weather event that can do that.

Over the course of the 40 years that I have been chasing ducks and geese, the following three tips seem to have paid off the most. Of course, these are late-season waterfowl — so no theory is bullet proof.

Tip #1 - Nocturnal Blues

When planning a late-season trip, the first thing I'll look at is the moon phase. Because of pressure, birds will tend to feed by the moon during late season and come out right before sunset. Particularly if it's cold, they'll sit most of the day and conserve energy before putting on the food bag. No matter if hunting field or water, birds that go nocturnal are almost impossible to hunt.

Tip #2 - Moisture and Wind

One of the best late-season hunts I had was on the Missouri River right before a snow event and arctic cold blast behind it. The day started with freezing rain and turned to all snow later in the day. In what I would later refer to as "survival mode," birds were in a frenzy to get food before it was covered up with ice and snow. You could literally stand up in the blind that day and they wouldn't flinch. Late-season birds can be yarded up in safe havens, so if you find a field they are using nearby and open water in that path, it can be money.

If you're hunting big water, which is normally the case late in the year for us, wind can be your friend. Birds don't like to sit in open water with high wind, so they will peel off and head back into coves out of the wind. Note of caution here: Anything over 25 mph is not only dangerous for you, but also shooting birds can be challenging at best. Choose your spot wisely on days like that.

Tip #3 - Southerly Reverse

By late January, birds are anxious to get back to their breeding grounds. A warm up followed by a strong south wind can provide what us

waterfowlers like to call a "reverse migration." With our weather patterns being very mild in the last decade, you can experience this as early as mid-January and as late as February as most goose seasons are still open. Timing is everything here, so watch the weather closely and be ready for some magnificent shooting if you hit it just right.

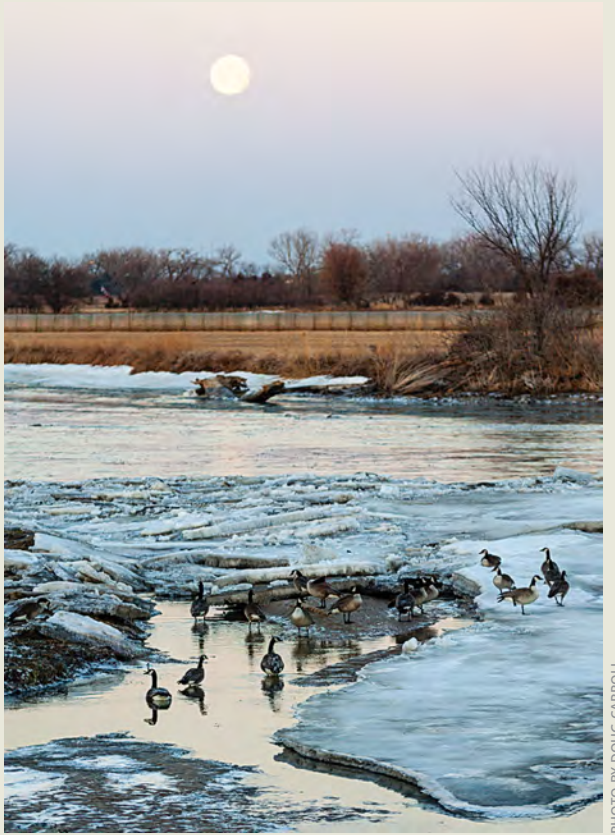


PHOTO BY DOUG CARROLL

A full moon rises while Canada geese loaf in an iced-over spot of water on the Platte River in February.

The Long Winters

By David L. Bristow, History Nebraska

Nebraska's harshest winters have produced stories of tragedy and heroism, but for most people, getting through those long, cold months is more a matter of patience and making do.

Before four-wheel drive and snowplows, a hard winter meant isolation for farm families. Maxine Kessinger recalled the brutal winter of 1936, when she was a 22-year-old farm wife and mother of three, living 7 miles from Rosalie:

"Every road, even highways were drifted shut for weeks. The scoop shovel was the only equipment to open the roads. Some never opened until the spring thaws came and melted the snow. The Kinning Store, a mile east of us, ran out of supplies, as no trucks could get through. Sometimes, several neighbors joined forces and with team and bobsled going across fields, cutting fences to make it to town for needed supplies such as groceries, cold or flu remedies, maybe a little

coal to enhance the supply of green wood we were trying to burn — and of course they would bring the mail. Sometimes a two-week bundle had accumulated as the rural mail carrier couldn't even get out of the city limits."

It wasn't so easy within city limits, either. The U.S. Postal Service has long boasted that it is stopped by "neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night." South of Marquette in Aurora, Wayne Arthur Shaneyfelt worked as a mail carrier from the 1930s into the 1970s. When he started, carriers on city routes had no vehicles, so he walked their entire routes twice a day — about 12 to 15 miles in all.

Writing for *I Remember... Family Stories from Hamilton County, Nebraska* (1999), Shaneyfelt recalled that the "roughest day" of his long career was during his first winter on the job. Aurora didn't require people to scoop their sidewalks, and every house had a mailbox on the front porch. That



This early 1900s photo is a mystery. Marquette never had much more than 300 people at its peak in 1930. Such a quantity of mailbags may not have been for local delivery. They might have been pulled from a stuck Burlington train after a heavy snow. History Nebraska RG3828-5-1



A locomotive-driven snowplow approaches Kilgore, Cherry County, in January 1949. History Nebraska RG1259-0-15

morning he waded through 2-foot-deep snow — and did it again that afternoon. Everyone on his route received their mail.

Young people, meanwhile, have always had a different perspective on winter hardships. During the legendary winter of 1949, Charlie Wright was 16 years old and stayed at his uncle's farm northeast of Scottsbluff.

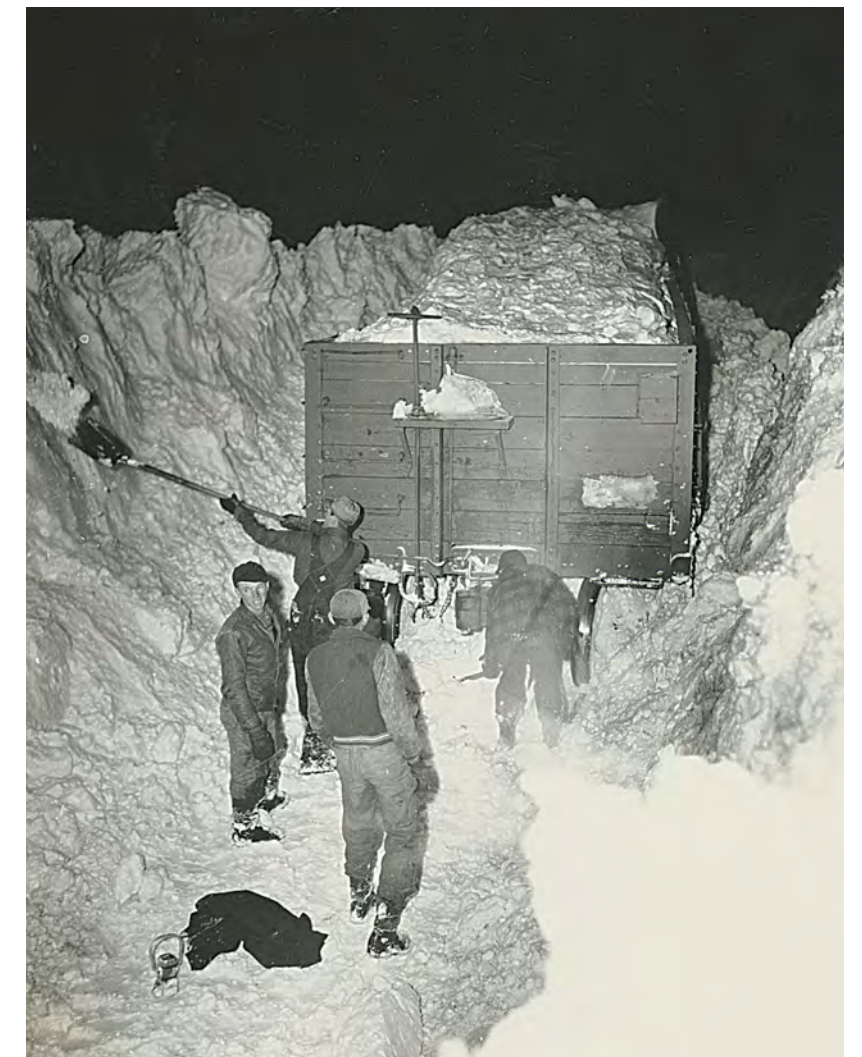
Wright says the farmhouse was well stocked with food, including a freezer full of mallard ducks they had shot in November and December.

"We enjoyed roast duck for just about every noon meal until the county graders were able to plow us out," he recalls.

One day, "By 2:30 it was snowing so hard that you could not see the power pole about 20 feet south of the house. The cousins were playing poker and paid little attention to the storm. [But Uncle Mart and Aunt Doris] lacked confidence in our ability to ride out the storm, particularly if we lost electric power that was necessary to operate the oil furnace. This was OK with us because Uncle Mart could teach us some more poker games."

They didn't lose power, but Wright says he learned "at least 75 different poker games" that winter, "enough to last me through six years of college and two years of active duty in the Navy." 

Visit [History Nebraska's website](http://HistoryNebraska.org) at history.nebraska.gov.



Clearing railroad tracks. Handwritten on reverse side: "Snow! Chadron, Neb Feb 1949." History Nebraska RG3139-0-161

It's Snow on-the-Mountain

Story and photos by Gerry Steinauer

This past summer while taking a break during a plant survey in the loess hills of Custer County, my glance settled on a distant prairie hilltop. “That’s strange; it’s white,” I thought. For a second or two my mind imagined snow. Then, I snapped back to reality, “It’s August, dummy.” After a few more moments of squinting and pondering, it all made sense. “It’s a big patch of snow-on-the-mountain.” The person who named the plant may have had a similar experience.

A native annual found statewide, snow-on-the-mountain (*Euphorbia marginata*) thrives in disturbed habitats, such as abandoned farm fields, roadsides and prairie dog towns. The hilltop that temporarily baffled my senses had recently been cleared of eastern red-cedars and its exposed



Snow-on-the-mountain contains a latex sap that can irritate the lips, eyes and skin of herbivores, as well as sensitive humans.

soil provided an ideal seed bed for this opportunistic plant.

Bleeds White

Cut the stem or leaf of snow-on-the-mountain and it bleeds a white, latex sap. The sap, which congeals after a few minutes exposure to air, contains bitter-tasting and irritating chemicals known as diterpenes. When the sap comes in contact with the mouth, eyes or skin of herbivores, it can cause inflammation and blistering and dissuades grazing of the plant. Avoided by livestock, snow-on-the-mountain is also abundant in many overgrazed pastures. Old reports, whether fact or fiction, claimed that cowboys used its sap to brand cattle.

Although an irritant to humans sensitive to diterpenes, Great Plains tribes used snow-on-the-mountain as medicine. The Lakota, for example, used its crushed leaves as a liniment for swellings. Because of its sap’s resemblance to milk, the Lakota also made a tea from the plant to treat mothers with insufficient breast milk. The Lakota have two names for snow-on-the-mountain. One name, “asan’pi peju’ta,” translates to milk medicine, the other, “ito’pta sa’pa tapeju’ta” translates to black-footed ferret’s medicine; the plant was abundant in prairie dog towns where the now-endangered ferret once lived and thrived. The animal is sacred to the Lakota.



Snow-on-the-mountain growing in native prairie at Pressey Wildlife Management Area in Custer County. When viewed from a distance, large patches of the plant appear as snow.

Strange Flowers

Having no real sepals and petals, individual male and female snow-on-the-mountain flowers are incredibly small and simple. The male flowers, for instance, consist of a single, short pollen-bearing anther with a tiny bract at its base. Most plants with simple, non-showy flowers, such as the ragweeds and lamb’s quarters, produce prolific pollen that is randomly dispersed by the wind — not snow-on-the-mountain and other members

of the *Euphorbia* genus. Through evolution, they have rearranged their simple flowers into a complex structure known as a cyathium. Located on branch tips, the cyathia appear and function like a single, showy flower to attract insect pollinators, which are more efficient at pollination than the wind.

A cyathium’s cup-like base holds a single centrally-located female flower surrounded by several series of male flowers. To entice pollinators, four olive-green, nectar-producing glands

with white, petal-like appendages ring the cup’s rim. The plant’s upper leaves have broad white margins, further adding to the cyathias’ flower-like appearance and providing the plant’s snowy color.

Its showy upper leaves have allowed the relatively pest- and disease-free snow-on-the-mountain to be sold and grown as an ornamental, more so in decades past. What better way to bring a breath of coolness to your sultry summer yard than to plant snow-on-the-mountain? 🌱



A cluster of snow-on-the-mountain cyathia.

Carp Roundup

Story and photos by Eric Fowler

Cattle drives are an important part of one chapter of Nebraska's history. For about 20 years in the late-1800s, cowboys on horseback would push huge herds of longhorns from Texas to Nebraska, where the animals were loaded on trains and shipped to feed a growing nation.

Cattle drives and roundups remain a part of everyday life on ranches throughout the state today. It's a pretty simple process, where cowboys on horseback, ATVs or pickups push the cows from one place to another. But sometimes a stubborn old cow, or a few of them, just won't do what you want them to.

Fish drives, on the other hand, are new to the state. In December 2019, what may be the first fish drive conducted in Nebraska was held at Hanson Lake No. 3 near Plattsmouth. The drive used sound and electricity to push invasive, non-native Asian

carp into a bay where they could be seined. And while this roundup was fairly successful in doing so, capturing 25,000 pounds of mostly silver carp, just like in a cattle drive, some of the fish didn't do what they were supposed to do.

ASIAN CARP have found their way into every tributary of the Missouri River in Nebraska, including the Platte, Elkhorn, Loup or Nemaha rivers, swimming upstream until a dam keeps them from going farther. Just as they found their way into Hanson Lake, they have found their way into other lakes as well, especially during historic flooding in 2019.

"Anything that got flooded at that time has the potential of having these Asian carp in it, whether it's a sandpit or a pond or a quarry pit that was close to the river," said Jeff Blaser, private waters specialist with the Nebraska

Game and Parks Commission.

Blaser has taken calls from quite a few lake associations on the subject. He first worked with the folks at Hanson Lake in 2011 when white perch and silver carp appeared after flooding. Then again in 2018.

For those that live in the houses that line the shore of this 44-acre sandpit lake, the arrival of the fish, especially the silver carp, was not welcome. Silver carp are easily startled and are known to respond to disturbances ranging from thrown rocks to passing motorboats by jumping up to 10 feet out of the water.

"They've just been a real nuisance jumping into boats and hitting people," said Kevin Eastman, a member of the

homeowners association. "People are scared to go tubing and skiing and stuff because they might jump up and hit somebody and hurt them real bad." Several people have been hit by "flying fish," but none seriously injured.

With the possible liability involved, the association hired Jeff Reidemann, a commercial fisherman from Minnesota, to seine the lake in 2018. While that operation did remove about 8,000 pounds of Asian carp, estimated to be 20 percent of the total present, obstructions on the lake bottom, including an old truck, snagged the nets and limited the success.

The bright side to these invasions is that unlike common carp, Asian carp do not, except in rare circumstances,

reproduce in still water. Their eggs and larvae must drift for some time to be viable. When Blaser aged the fish that were harvested, he found year classes that didn't match flooding events. Blaser suggested they check any inlet and outlet structures. When they did, they found an outlet used to control lake levels dumped into a ditch that led straight to the Platte River and was not fitted with screens to keep fish out. When water levels were high, "Those older fish and the young of the year fish were finding that and following it up into the sandpit," Blaser said.

The outlet has since been modified with a pump station and backflow preventer to keep fish out.

In 2019, the association brought

the seining company back, along with Tony Havranek of WSB Engineering, a Minnesota company. Havranek brought with him a plan adopted from similar work being conducted to drive and round up Asian Carp in the United States.

DUANE CHAPMAN of the U.S. Geological Survey in Columbia, Missouri, has been working on the biology and control of Asian carp since 2002. Through that work, he has developed relationships with fisheries biologists in China, where these carp species are raised commercially. While working on a book with one of those biologists, one of harvest techniques used by the Chinese, the



A commercial fishing crew from Minnesota pulls in a seine containing 25,000 pounds of fish, mostly silver carp, from Hanson Lake No. 3 following two days of work in December 2019 that used sound and electricity to drive the fish into a bay.



Silver carp netted from an electrofishing boat in Hansen Lake fill a tub.



Disturbed by an electrofishing boat manned by Kevin Eastman, a Hanson Lake homeowner and Tony Havranek, a biologist with WSB Engineering in Minnesota, a silver carp jumps out of the water.

Unified Method, jumped out at him. He traveled to China in 2015 with another biologist and a commercial fisherman to learn more about it.

There, floodplain lakes along the Yangtze River covering thousands of acres are used as aquaculture facilities. Each year, during the course of a few months, fishermen start at one end of the lake and drive fish to the other. “They get out there in these wooden boats and tiny, funky outboard motors and make a lot of noise and try and chase them out,” Chapman said. As they move fish from an area, they set a series of block nets, suspended from a “forest of bamboo” poles driven into the lakebed to keep fish from returning. When a cell is cleared of fish, they play “leapfrog” with the nets, moving them

down the lake. At the other end of the lake, they net fish each day and deliver them to the market live, satisfying the demand but not overwhelming it. Fishermen are disappointed if by year’s end they don’t capture at least 85 percent of the fish in a lake.

Back in the states, Chapman and others tweaked the method to speed up the process. “We don’t really want to spend 3½ months catching a little bit of the fish every day,” he said. Rather than simply rely on the sound of boat motors, they added sound from underwater speakers and electrofishing boats.

Electrofishing, a method used to sample game fish by stunning them with a light charge of electricity and netting them when they float to the

surface, doesn’t work well with silver and bighead carp. Those species sense the charge and swim from it. Knowing that, biologists have modified the electrodes to create a wide field and reduce the charge when driving fish. “We don’t want to stun anything, not even the native fish or the carp, we just want to tickle them,” Chapman said.

The first test of the method came in 2016 on a 5-mile long, 500-acre sandpit lake southwest of Chicago along Illinois River, where biologists are fighting to keep silver and bighead carp from finding their way into Lake Michigan. Before the test, acoustic transmitters were implanted in carp and receivers placed throughout the lake to measure the effectiveness. When the speakers were turned on,

fish moved the entire length of the lake in a matter of hours. “The distance that we’re able to push these fish and the rapidity with which were able to do it is frankly amazing,” Chapman said.

“The great advantage we have with this method when it comes to bycatch is most of our native fish don’t run away from the sound like the carp do.”

Using sound, electricity and block nets to drive the fish to a capture area, state and federal biologists and commercial fishermen removed 100,000 pounds of silver and bighead carp.

Similar efforts have since been conducted on other lakes in Illinois, a section of the Illinois River, bays of Kentucky Lake, and several lakes in Missouri. At Creve Coeur Lake, a 2,100-acre lake in suburban St. Louis, biologists and commercial fishermen spent three weeks in 2018 driving fish and setting nets and, in the end, removed about 47,000 silver and bighead carp, weighing 225,000

pounds. Many more fish were released from the trap nets when ice storms and scheduling conflicts ended the project.

Not only had the Asian carp become a nuisance to kayakers and other users of Creve Couer, they also had decimated what was a premier crappie fishery. Chapman suspected several years ago that crappies would be the game fish most affected by Asian carp, and that is coming to fruition.

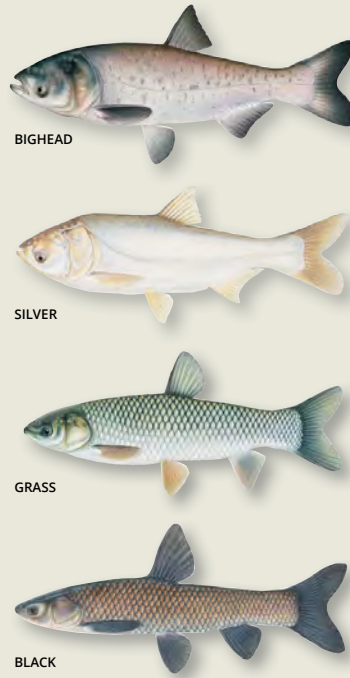
“In all of these floodplain lakes, when they get Asian carp in them, the crappie catch goes through the floor eventually,” he said. The reason, he believes, is reduced recruitment because 2- to 4-inch crappie compete directly with large carp for that zooplankton resource. The year carp were removed, crappie recruitment was the best it had been since their arrival, and officials are now working on a barrier to keep the invasive fish out for good after the next roundup.

The effects Asian carp can have on a fishery were evident at Lake Yankton, located below Gavins Point Dam. When silver and bighead carp and other rough fish invaded the border water during flooding on the Missouri River in 2011, the game fish populations collapsed. By the time the lake was renovated in 2014, rough fish, primarily silver carp, made up 90 percent of the biomass. Bass, panfish, catfish and walleye, as well as aquatic vegetation, have since thrived.

CONSIDERABLY smaller in size, the work at Hansen Lake No. 3 wouldn’t require the manpower or equipment needed at other operations. The first afternoon on the lake, Havranek, Riedmann and their crews used boats with side-scan sonar to survey the lake. A shallow bay on the east end of the lake where they planned to net the fish was devoid of them. A narrow channel connects this bay to the main lake where sonar found several large schools of Asian carp. Using boats equipped with underwater speakers, they drove fish out of the western portion of the lake and left speakers

Four species of carp — bighead, silver, grass and black — were brought to the United States in the 1960s and 1970s. All but black carp were brought in to control algae and vegetation in fish farms in Arkansas. The black carp, which feeds on snails and mussels, arrived in a shipment of grass carp stock.

Asian carp escaped during flooding or accidental releases and have since spread throughout the Mississippi River and its tributaries, including the Missouri, Ohio and Illinois rivers. Silver carp, the most abundant and most annoying of the species due to their predication to jump as high as 10 feet out of the water when startled, especially by a passing boat, are believed to be present in at least 17 states.

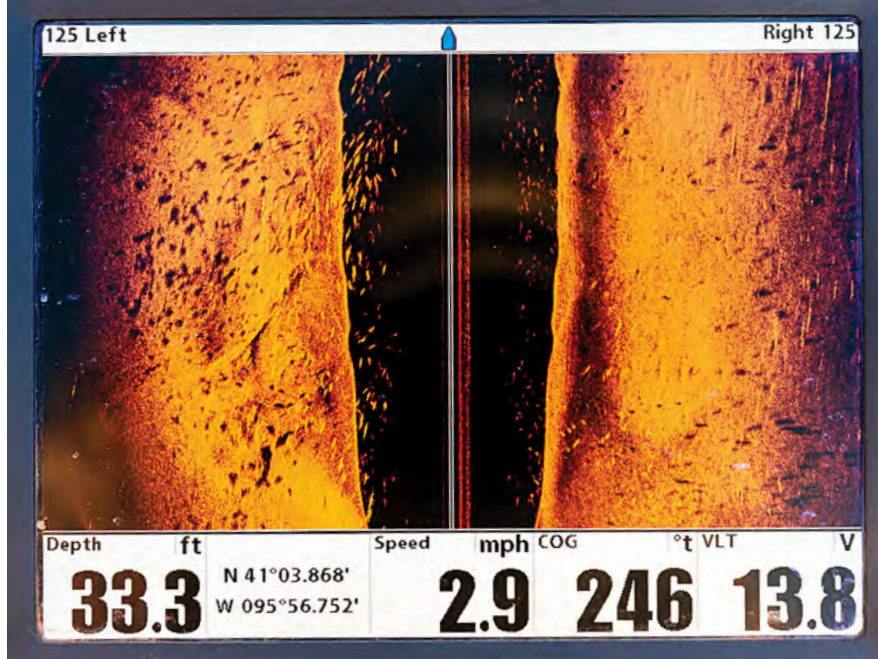


running overnight on the west shore.

The next day, they again used sound to again push fish east before setting a block net across the middle of the lake. Gill nets were set on the ends of the net and behind a small hole beneath it in an area that was deeper than the net. They continued to use sound and an electrofishing boat to drive fish east before leaving speakers running on the block net overnight.



Tony Havranek of WSB Engineering in Minnesota deploys an underwater speaker used to drive Asian carp in Hanson Lake.



The fish-shaped marks in this side-scan sonar image are large schools of silver carp in Hanson Lake.

On the third and final morning, after scans found numerous fish in the east bay, a block net was set to close it off from the main lake. A 1,250-foot seine was wrapped around the bay, and crews pulled in 26,000 pounds of fish, 80 percent of which were silver carp, 14 percent bighead carp, and the remainder bigmouth and smallmouth buffalo, common carp, grass carp and gar. Follow-up scans found that some fish had found their way under the block net and into the west portion of the lake and others remained in the eastern portion of the main lake, but they estimated that about one third of the rough fish biomass was removed.

Happy with the results in what was a learning experience for each of the parties involved, they are hoping to try again this winter. “This time, I’m going to bring enough net to make three different blocks and really try to crowd those fish into that eastern part of the lake,” Havranak said.

Eastman said there were noticeably fewer jumping fish at the lake this past summer. “If they can get 80 percent of what’s left or so, I think that would be a win.” Residents are already hopeful they can improve the fishery, and last year more than tripled their typical budget for fish stocking.

THE WORK at Hanson Lake was Havranek’s first attempt at driving

silver and bighead carp with sound. Most of his fisheries management work involves common carp. Last winter, he worked with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and commercial fishermen on a suburban lake in Minneapolis on a project to remove common carp. With radio tags in fish, they knew where a large number of fish wintered. Because the shallow bay was strewn with boulders, it could not be seined. They used underwater speakers to drive fish from the area, monitoring the movement of tagged fish. Weeks later, they used



Tim Adams, part of commercial fishing crew from Minnesota, checks the contents of a seine.

a block net to cut off their escape route and directed fish into a seine, capturing 12,000 pounds. Havranek used speakers to move carp at other times during the year, and while there would be substantial logistics and planning involved, he sees potential for use elsewhere to manage carp populations.

As for using sound to drive and harvest Asian carp in floodplain lakes, “This is a no-brainer that this is going to be an incredible tool,” Chapman said.

It would be impossible to use it in the Missouri or other large rivers due to the current and debris present, Chapman said. But if suitable netting areas could be cleared of debris, it may be possible to harvest fish in tributaries with sufficient depth and low velocities, like the mouth of the Big Nemaha River. “You could drive these fish up and down there like cattle,” he said.

Like cattle, there will always be fish that don’t want to cooperate. Unlike cattle, which are easy to see breaking from the herd, it’s harder to see fish making a break underwater, even with today’s high-tech fish finders. But it’s certainly a promising control technique.

So, yee-haw! Get along little fishy! 🐟

Asian Carp’s Status in Nebraska

Since first appearing in the Missouri River in Nebraska in 1996, Asian carp have spread up every tributary as far as they can, in most cases only stopping when blocked by a dam.

Silver and bighead carp have been found on the Platte River as far west as Lexington, the Elkhorn as far as Neligh, the Loup as far as Burwell and the Big Nemaha as far as Tecumseh. The invasive fish are found in smaller tributaries, including Salt Creek, a Platte tributary, and other waters in its watershed.

Fisheries biologists want to know how many smaller tributaries Asian carp have infested and how far upstream they have moved. But surveying small streams is time-intensive work. They hope a new technology that tests water for environmental DNA will help. DNA is naturally released into the water by fish, and the tests can identify the species present in an area or farther upstream. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln is testing the process, with funding for the work provided by a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service grant through the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

When more is known about the range of silver and bighead carp, biologists will be able to identify areas of concern and take measures to remove them or keep them out of sensitive areas where they could out-compete native fish for food. Little research has been done on the effects of Asian carp on native fish in Nebraska, but biologists have noticed a slight decline in the body condition of paddlefish, another filter feeding fish found in the

Missouri River.

Other recent research by the university found major



Asian carp are found in larger rivers throughout eastern Nebraska. They are also found in many tributaries of the Missouri River and the Salt Creek watershed.



Tim McCoy, assistant director of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, watches silver carp jump around his boat at the mouth of the Little Nemaha River on a river tour in 2013.

tributaries are likely the primary habitat for silver and bighead carp, which use the swift, deep channelized Missouri River to move between the smaller rivers. The fish are still numerous in the Missouri, especially in backwaters and slack water areas behind training dikes, and below Gavins Point Dam. Biologists are happy the fish haven’t made it past that point, something that would open the Niobrara River and others to the species and become a headache for recreational boating in Lewis and Clark Lake. The only way they could make it farther upstream is if unknowing anglers using small fish for bait moved them.

For questions or to report sightings of Asian carp or other aquatic invasive species, contact Kristopher Stahr at ngpc.ais@nebraska.gov or 531-500-3746.

Nebraska Game and Parks Commission fisheries biologists Thad Huenemann, Kirk Steffensen, Jeff Schuckman, Brad Newcomb and Jeff Jackson, and Mark Pegg, a fisheries ecology professor in the University of Nebraska-Lincoln School of Natural Resources, contributed to this report.

Celebrate the Nebraska State Parks 100th Anniversary with Us



By Christy Firestone

For decades, visitors from around the globe have enjoyed all that Nebraska's state parks have to offer, from camping, fishing, hiking and boating to wildlife viewing, living history and more. Whether you are a curious child, nature lover, outdoors enthusiast or history buff, Nebraska's state parks offer something to enjoy year-round.

2021 is a special year for us. One hundred years ago, Chadron State Park, the first Nebraska state park, was founded, making this the 100th anniversary of our state parks system. We invite you to join Nebraska Game and Parks for a special yearlong celebration that honors our parks' rich history and traditions and highlights current fun opportunities, while looking ahead to an exciting future. Nebraska state parks are working in collaboration with partners and sponsors to develop special programming, events and commemorative items to celebrate this milestone.

Here are a few ways you can join in the celebration this year:

Explore the opportunities. Go to YourNEParks100.org for information and education, events, parks history and interactive activities such as downloadable coloring pages, interactive maps and other ways to share your parks memories and stories. Find us on social media with the hashtag #NEParks100.

Kick off the year with a 2021 commemorative state park permit. This year's state park permits received an eye-catching upgrade, with a beautiful photo of Chadron State Park. Buy a permit and enjoy access to state parks during this special year.



Swimming beach at Chadron State Park, circa late 1930s.

Visit a state park for a fun event. The centennial celebration will include 100 themed events across the state, including organized hikes, educational events, fun runs, car shows and more.

Challenge Yourself. A new challenge, Your Parks Adventure, will inspire guests to share their park experiences and build lifelong memories with the chance to win exciting experiences and prizes. Or, take part in the state's popular official Nebraska Travel Passport program and visit each of the featured parks for a chance to win prizes from Nebraska Tourism.

Watch engaging stories about our parks' history. Tune in to a special documentary on Nebraska Educational Television showcasing Nebraska's state historical parks, airing in late spring 2021. Stay tuned for more information on this special show.

Play games to win prizes. In collaboration with Nebraska Lottery, a new scratch lottery ticket celebrating

the centennial will be available in late spring 2021. Players have a chance to win up to \$40,000, as well as various outdoor experiences and other great prizes. Lottery funds benefit the Nebraska Environmental Trust, which invests in conservation.

Learn about nature. Habitat tours across the state will give an in-depth look at the ecology of the state park lands that Nebraska Game and Parks manages.

Collect some gear. Through a partnership with GROW Nebraska, merchandise celebrating the centennial including T-shirts, stickers and more will be available for sale online. A series of collectible "challenge" coins will be distributed throughout the state for guests to earn and collect while participating in events and online contests.

Celebrate history. A traveling history trailer featuring artifacts from the state park system will share a hands-on experience of the parks system's rich history at events across the state. Also, a time capsule recording the state parks system as it is today will be sealed in a commemoration ceremony, to be opened in 100 years. The capsule will remain on display at a state historical park location.

Take advantage of opportunities for students. Educational programs for students will highlight the relationship between outdoor recreation and the natural

world. Lesson plans and virtual workshops will be available for elementary school educators. With a special centennial video challenge, middle and high-school students can submit a one- to two-minute video about their favorite state park memory, making sure to highlight the people, place or experience that made it memorable. Winners will receive prizes.

Get involved. The centennial celebration will include 100 hours of coordinated volunteer projects to build community relationships through giving. Tree plantings also will be coordinated across the state to commemorate the centennial milestone while adding to the beautification and preservation of park landscapes. [N](https://www.nebraska.gov)

To learn more, go to YourNEParks100.org.



Nebraska's State Historical Parks, including Arbor Lodge, will be featured on a Nebraska Educational Television documentary.

Controlled Shooting Areas

An Adventure Story

Story and photos by Julie Geiser

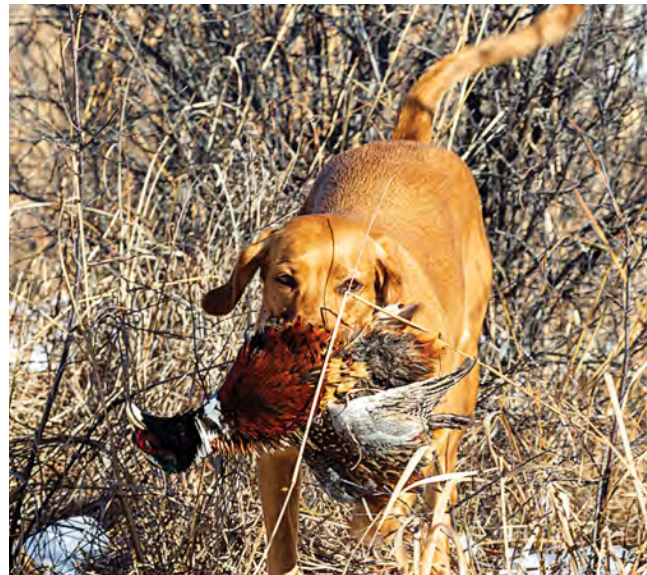
Controlled shooting areas have been popping up over the landscape for several years now, and hunters are taking advantage of the opportunities available at these places.

Wanting to try it, our family made a trip to Camp George just north of Arnold. This trip was a good way to spend some quality time together while doing what we all love: hunting. Having never been to one of these areas, none of us really knew what to expect, but we were excited to see how a controlled shooting area works.

Traveling to the area we had time to talk about the hunt and crack jokes about who was going to shoot the most, miss the most and burn the most shells. As we crested the hills leading to Camp George, I noticed the abundance of great habitat and cover on the property. It looked like a place that would naturally hold pheasants, quail and grouse. When we arrived, Lester and George Mills, father-son partners at Camp George, were there to greet us and tell us about the hunt.



Camp George Controlled Shooting Area is located north of Arnold in Custer County. The CSA offers hunters abundant populations of wild pheasants, quail and sharp-tailed grouse, in addition to released pen-raised birds.



Lester explained that they have a variety of cover on the property including CRP, food plots and tree strips. There are large populations of wild pheasants, quail and sharp-tailed grouse along with pen-raised pheasants, quail and chukars at the controlled shooting area. Before we arrived, George had stocked pheasants and quail, which were the species we chose to hunt on that day.

As we worked our way through the first field, we traveled slowly as I watched my dog become birdy; her nose was leading her to a scent, and her tail started wagging faster and in a circular motion. Seconds later came the flush of a rooster followed by a single shotgun blast from our son and my dog's first upland retrieve. To see my dog bring back her first bird was almost like watching a child's first step, and I was feeling giddy at that point.

As we worked our way through some shrub and tree groves, I noticed that small paths had been mowed, making it easy to walk in while keeping a very natural look and feel to the area with plenty of places for game birds to hide. I, for one, liked walking these cut paths; as an aging hunter, I still have a lot of hop to my step, but this sure made for easier walking.

As we continued through several fields, my dog and my husband's dog got on many birds. A few single and double pheasants flushed, along with flurries of quail, providing us with some great shooting and a little joking about missed shots.

As we hunted, I couldn't help but think of how this was a



Opposite: The author's dog, Tikka, retrieves her first pheasant on this family hunting trip to a controlled shooting area. Above: Poking fun at each other, brothers-in-law Galen Kreifels, left, Dillon Geiser and James Erickson make it look like Geiser shot all the birds.

great opportunity to get my young dog on birds. It was also a great field experience that I can apply to hunting walk-in public hunting areas. Furthermore, the hunt was good for my husband's more-experienced dog as a tune-up for the rest of the upland season. For our family, it was a great way to spend time in the field together making lasting memories.

The hunting season on controlled shooting areas is an extended one that runs Sept. 1 through April 15 every year, which gives hunters more time in the field. New hunters, especially, might find the extra time useful to gain experience and to train their dog. [N](#)

For more information about controlled shooting areas in Nebraska, visit OutdoorNebraska.gov/csa/.



Tom Geiser checks out the feathers on a bird he shot at Camp George.

IT'S SUGARING TIME

By Roger Welsch

Over the years, I've been lucky enough to have friends in the Northeast — Vermont, Connecticut or one of the other curiously shaped little states up that way that I probably wouldn't be able to identify on a map. And sometimes in the late spring, I get a heavy package from one or two of them and know this is a friendship I need to keep in good order because it's sugaring time. There are plenty of substitutes for maple syrup, but there is nothing like real maple syrup.

One spring, about 20 years ago, I got to thinking (a process Linda has learned to dread) and recalled reading that the Native Americans of the upper Missouri Valley used to gather maple sap and boil it down to syrup, candy or sugar — except they were tapping box elders, a member of the maple (*Acer*) family. Sugar maples carry a relatively high content of sugar in their sap when it rises in the early spring, but there is nonetheless sugar content in the sap of other members of the maple family, too. And I thought to myself, "Self, around 1980 you planted a lot of silver maples down in the old slough by the river. I wonder ...".

So I bought a couple of spiles (the little pipes needed for tapping trees for sap), a hand drill, some gallon jugs and headed down through the woods where I found that my maples had done quite well over the years. About 50 of them were still growing strong and sturdy in the moist bottom ground and following helpful directions from my friends in the "Mysterious East," I set five taps.

The next morning, I went down again into the woods to see if maybe I had a cup or two of sap in my jugs, whereupon I learned of the generosity of the genus *Acer*. The jugs were filled to overflowing. So I replaced them, and brought the five full ones up to the house.

Later that day I went back down, still uncertain of how productive those trees would be and, oh boy, the jugs were full again. So, for four or five days I was like a bee in springtime, making hourly trips to check my taps and the rest of the day trying to locate more plastic jugs.

I knew that it took a lot of sap to boil down to syrup because I had visited sugaring operations in the East as a tourist,

but of course, those operations were professional; they knew what they were doing, and they had the right kind of equipment to do the job. I, on the other hand, was bumbling my way, boiling down sap on the kitchen stove and trying to learn what heat worked best and finding, to my chagrin, that it's a good idea to keep your eye on the product because one moment it is watery sap, then for a brief moment lovely amber syrup, and then suddenly a sticky taffy that so far as I can tell bonds with metals like a good weld.

Over the next few days, I also learned that when cooking down maple sap, there is apparently a fog of maple sap that spreads and settles on everything within 500 yards. Pots and pans coated with maple lacquer piled up in the sink. A dark gloom was cast over the distaff side of the marriage.

When my first and only sugaring season ended, I had several quarts of superb maple syrup from my own maple trees, a few cups of gooey taffy (absolutely delicious) and a direct order from the Queen of Our Kitchen that if ever again I sugared maples, the cooking

would be done outside, well removed from the house. And downwind.

I've decided instead to tenderly foster my friendship with friends in the Northeast and leave my maples to themselves. But if you are unmarried, or want to be, I recommend that you try making your own maple syrup during the spring thaw.

Information about silver maples: <https://bit.ly/2WsxtGR>

Tapping sap trees: <https://bit.ly/3nIBSaB>

Making syrup: <https://bit.ly/3nD5GPW>

Equipment for tapping trees for sap is simple and inexpensive, but difficult to find in Nebraska where mapling is not a common practice. However, hobbyist kits can be found easily online for \$25-50.

Roger Welsch is an author, humorist, folklorist and a former essayist for CBS News Sunday Morning. He has been contributing to Nebraskaland Magazine since 1977.



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MAKING A WILDLIFE CHARCUTERIE BOARD

By Julie Geiser

Charcuterie (pronounced SHär'kōōdərē or "shahr-ku-tuh-ree") boards have become popular in the past couple of years. Putting one together with harvested meat can be fun and may give you some new wild game recipes. Charcuterie is a French word that describes varieties of cold-cooked or cured meats that are the rock stars of a charcuterie board. Served with cheese, crackers, bread, fruits and vegetables,

the sky is the limit when making a simple or elaborate board. After harvesting deer and waterfowl, my family processes meat into summer sausage and corned and smoked meats, which are great for charcuterie boards. I also wanted to try some new meat spreads; I found a duck pâté recipe through a Google search that fit the bill. Start by making a list of the meats to

put on a board, then use a combination of hard and soft cheeses. Pre-cut hard cheese into cracker-size pieces that make it easy to grab and go. Fill the bare areas of the board with fresh and dried fruits that will pair well with the selected meats and cheeses. Blueberries, grapes, apple slices, figs, dates, dried apricots and mangos will help fill the board and give it some character and different flavors. There is no right or wrong way to fill a charcuterie board, so be creative. The board can be large plates, platters, cutting boards, wood serving boards or whatever you have at home. Add different sizes of bowls to the board for dips, honey, jams and spreads or even nuts, olives or berries; the bowls will break up the space, making all the components of the board look nice.

Start arranging the food items by placing the bowls on the board, using them to prop up the meats, crackers and cut cheese as needed. Meats can be rolled, folded or fanned among crumbled or sliced cheese for a touch of flair. Keep texture, shape, color and flavor in mind when deciding where to place things. Don't worry about filling in all the extra space on the board yet. After the larger items are on the board, fill the space with more neutral items like nuts, berries, crackers, fruits or vegetables. After putting everything together, this board (pictured) consisted of two types of deer summer sausage — one jalapeno and one plain, deer jerky, corned goose, elk sticks, duck pâté, pickled wild asparagus with carrots and cauliflower, green olives, homemade and store-bought crackers, homemade apricot jam, blueberries, dried apricots and mangos, four different cheeses, mixed nuts and some sprigs of minty wild henbit.



PHOTO BY JULIE GEISER

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THE FISH THAT NEARLY KILLED ME

By Jeff Kurrus

Kevin Green shouldn't have been smiling like he was in this image. You can clearly see why if you've ever been on the ice and the conditions look like they do in the background of the picture.

We were treading on thin ice.

It was late February, and we had one more day to get out, so we took a bucket of minnows to one of our favorite farm ponds in eastern Nebraska. The action was fierce. The higher the sun became, and the warmer the air got, the hotter the largemouth bass action became. It was not a good combination.

By mid-afternoon, the fishing got even hotter. Two-pounders, like this one in the image, were being replaced by fours, and the hard edges of our ice holes were being replaced by soft, smooth underwater versions because we were fishing in a layer of ice beneath a growing layer of water.

Finally, we had to leave. We couldn't take any more chances even though we had never caught fish so big, and so often, so quickly.

I was the first to walk out and broke through for the first time ever. I went up to my knees less than 2 feet from the bank.

When I turned around to look at Kevin, who is about 6 inches taller than me and outweighs me by 40 pounds, his eyes said it all: Which way do I go?

"This way," I told him. "It held me this far and it's shallower here than over there."

As he made his way toward me, remnants of good ice tried their best to hold his weight. Then the entire pond started to move under his feet. He continued to shuffle his feet in my direction.

Then he broke through.

He fell to the waist and the breath was taken from him immediately. Sucking in air, he tried to balance all of the equipment from his sled before it also went through that hole.

But he was lucky. The water was at a depth where he could stand. Soaking wet, he lumbered out.

Obviously, this situation could have gone much worse. Kevin is one of the most physically fit people I know, but if our location was in the middle of the lake instead of the edge, I can only imagine how much worse this day would have gone.

You can always tell yourself you'll leave when the ice starts to seem unsafe, but will you when the fish won't stop biting? We did, but almost too late.



PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS

Daryl Bauer, fisheries outreach program manager for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, has the following tips for late-season ice-fishing:

- Ice thins and worsens near shore first, especially near areas exposed to the afternoon sun. Be especially careful when you start seeing weak ice in those areas.
- Four-inch-thick ice may be fine for early in the season, but it may not be enough late in the season. Use a spud bar to check ice thickness and hardness.
- Be careful around objects, such as logs, standing trees or rocks. Anything that might absorb more warmth from the sun can result in weaker ice adjacent to it.
- Check ice conditions throughout the day with a spud bar. On a warm day on late ice, conditions can change by the hour, and that is especially true if the wind is blowing.
- Be careful about getting on the ice early in the day, then fishing all day. After a warm day, you might find it hard to get off the ice where it was no problem in the morning.
- Other than a spud bar, have other safety gear, such as ice picks, close at hand. Fishing late ice with a partner is recommended.

"There will come a day, maybe even a time during a day, when you just have to walk away from the ice, so be safe," Bauer said.

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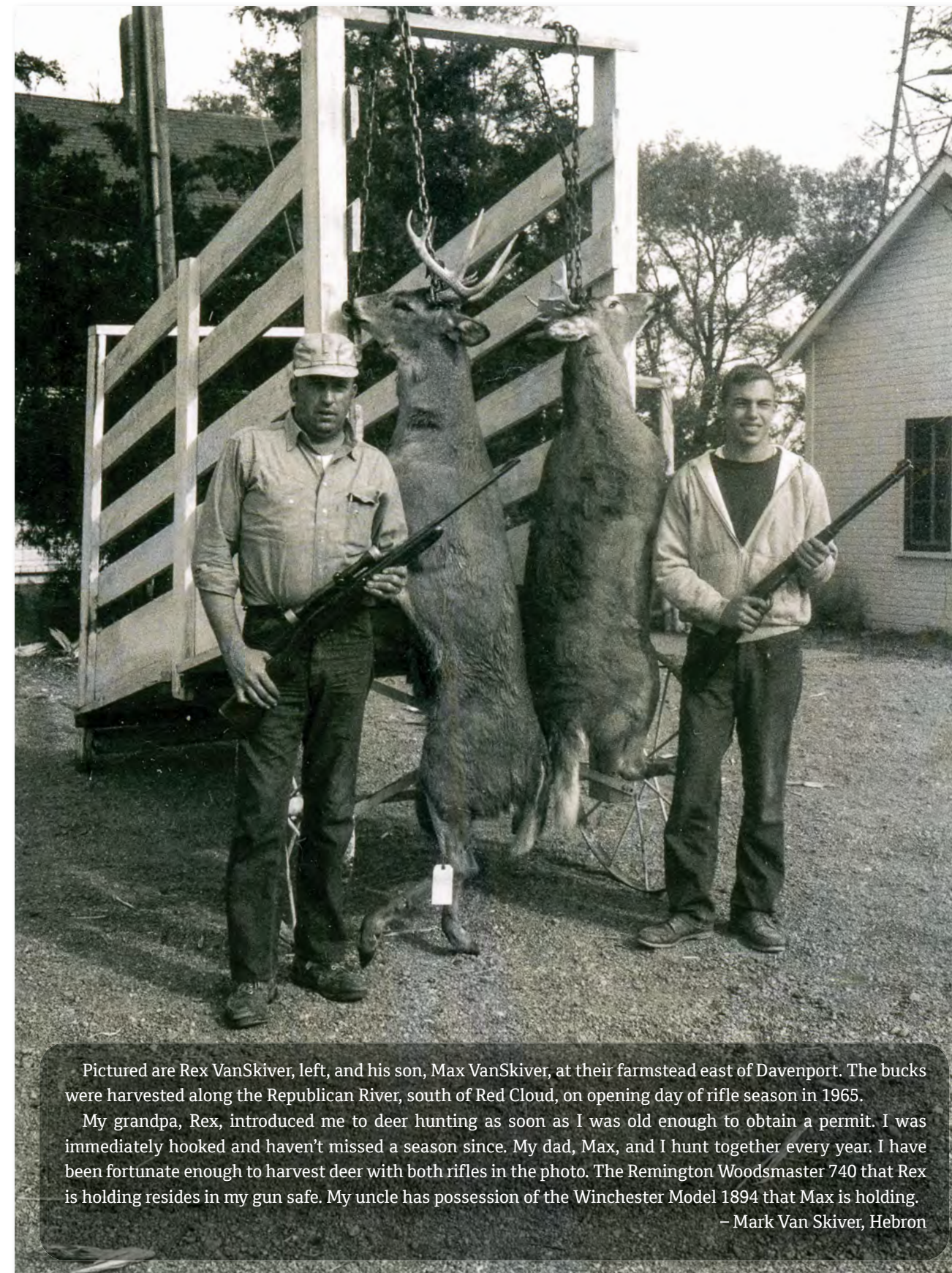
Our successful deer hunt in 1972 while hunting near Butte. This picture was taken on my brother's farm in McLean. From left: me; my son, Brent; our friend Harold Strelow of Pierce; and my brother, Leonard, of McLean. I still enjoy hunting with my son on our farm near Pierce.

I have enjoyed reading the magazine for many years and look forward to getting it.

– Willie Wesemann, Pierce

My grandpa, Louis N. Hathaway, ran a liquor and sporting goods store in Auburn. One side was the liquor, the other side guns, fishing poles, etc., with deer heads and big fish mounted on the walls. Of course, I liked the candy counter with 5-cent salted nut rolls, Clove and Black Jack gum. Every fall he went hunting with some buddies — all we ever knew was it was “out west” in Nebraska. I’d say this picture was taken in the ‘50s, possibly ‘60s. Grandpa is in the middle and the other two men are unknown.

– Sharon Porter, Lincoln



Pictured are Rex VanSkiver, left, and his son, Max VanSkiver, at their farmstead east of Davenport. The bucks were harvested along the Republican River, south of Red Cloud, on opening day of rifle season in 1965.

My grandpa, Rex, introduced me to deer hunting as soon as I was old enough to obtain a permit. I was immediately hooked and haven't missed a season since. My dad, Max, and I hunt together every year. I have been fortunate enough to harvest deer with both rifles in the photo. The Remington Woodsmaster 740 that Rex is holding resides in my gun safe. My uncle has possession of the Winchester Model 1894 that Max is holding.

– Mark Van Skiver, Hebron



PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS



PHOTO BY ERIC FOWLER

ONEUPSMANSHIP

By Jeff Kurrus

I had a shot at beating Eric Fowler. And a shot is all I could ask for.

Snow pushed into eastern Nebraska on February 23, 2019, and by the afternoon, there were blizzard conditions. Conditions so bad that I had the absolutely logical thought that Fowler might sit this one out since he had spent a long number of days in the field that winter and might just want to kick back and enjoy the snow falling down from his living room window.

Fowler works hard at his photos. From using sun angle apps and math equations that resemble calculus to capture his photos, I've always admired his desire to improve his craft. But his efforts aren't limited to the office. He'll lie on his stomach for hours in sub-zero temperatures to get photos of mallards on the roost or walk umpteen miles in the Sandhills to get to a spot

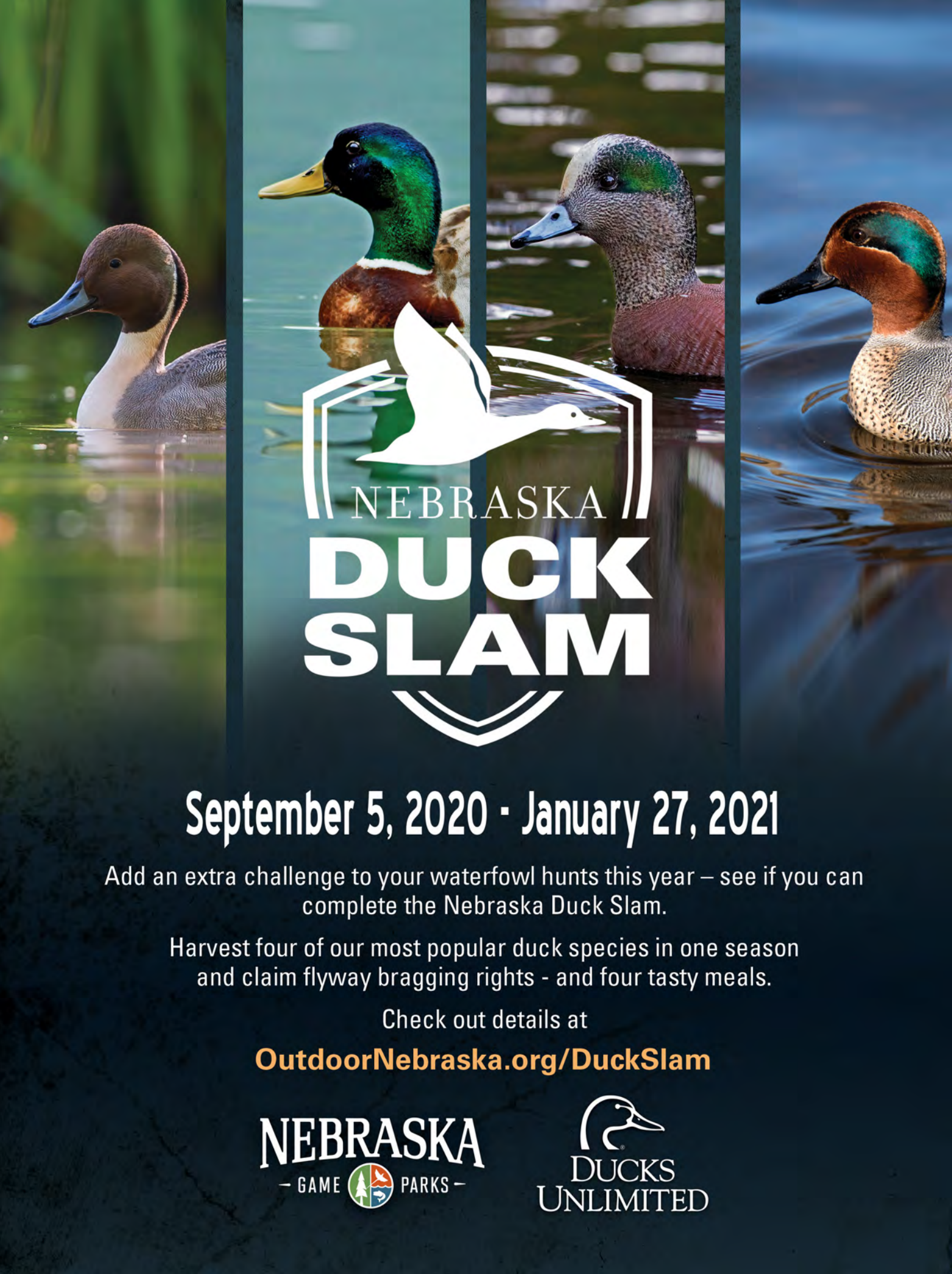
that hopefully no one has photographed from before.

For me, this was my one chance to get him — then come back and ask him if he shot during the blizzard. So I headed east from my house a mere 3 miles to photograph Canada geese at Wehrspann Wetland. Because of the conditions and my well-known weather softness through the office, I stayed there for 30 minutes — just long enough to come back with a photo on Monday morning.

In my mind, I had at least one win under my belt because he had, in fact, not ventured out into the cold that day.

Then I found out the reason why. He already had his allotted blizzard photography assignment done for the week, capturing white-tailed deer in a Hall County field.

Well ... at least we tied.





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