

Published by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission since 1926

NEBRASKAland

April 2010



Two young boys cast a line from the dock into the evening sky at Wildwood Lake in northern Lancaster County. Photo by Bill Hager.

Published by the



NebraskalandMagazine.com
OutdoorNebraska.org

NebraskalandMagazine.com

\$4.95



0 4>

Joel Sartore's

RARE

Portraits of America's
Endangered Species

INSIDE

Family Camping at State Parks
Fishing for Gillies • Pelicans • Bogbeans
The John J. Dinan Memorial Bird Conservation Area



NEBRASKAland

Volume 88, Number 3, April 2010

FEATURES

- 12 RARE** - Portraits of America's Endangered Species
A profile of Nebraska photographer Joel Sartore's latest book.
TEXT AND PHOTOS BY JOEL SARTORE
- 16 Family Camping in Nebraska State Parks**
Why this year's vacation doesn't have to break the bank.
BY MATTHEW MARX
- 22 In Search of Open Water Gillies**
Often easy to catch and a great gateway fish for beginners of all ages, bluegill can easily be found throughout Nebraska.
TEXT AND PHOTOS BY ERIC FOWLER AND JEFF KURRUS
- 26 The John Dinan Memorial Conservation Area**
A tract of land in south-central Nebraska was purchased to memorialize a former Commission nongame bird program manager. PHOTOS AND TEXT BY MICHAEL FORSBERG
- 32 Bogbean**
This obscure plant seems a bit misnamed.
TEXT AND PHOTOS BY JON FARRAR
- 34 Sublime Beauty** - The American White Pelican
A regular spring and fall migrant in Nebraska, some nonbreeding American white pelicans can be found throughout the state in the summer.
TEXT BY ELIZABETH MACK, PHOTOS BY RICK RASMUSSEN
- 40 Year of the Walleye**
Nebraska's state record walleye was caught almost 40 years ago, but indications are there may be a new record swimming around even as you read this. TEXT AND PHOTOS BY ERIC FOWLER

DEPARTMENTS

Comment	4
Mixed Bag	6
Step Outside	44
Nature Notes	45
Outdoor Business	46
Parks & Places	47
Classifieds	48
Portraits from the Past	50

Cover: This bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) was photographed at Sutton Avian Research Center in Bartlesville, Oklahoma for the book *RARE: Portraits of America's Endangered Species*. See story on page 12. Photo by Joel Sartore. **Opposite:** On a hillside near the Missouri River, a pasque flower breaks free from the woven blanket of prairie thatch as one of the first prairie wildflowers to show itself in the spring. Photo by Michael Forsberg.

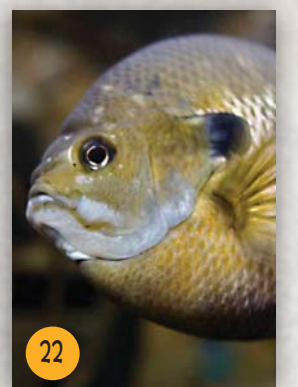
NEBRASKAland (VOL. 88 / NO. 3, ISSN 0028-1964) is published monthly, except for the combined Jan./Feb. and Aug./Sept. issues, by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, 2200 N. 33rd St., Lincoln, NE. Periodicals postage paid at Lincoln, Nebraska, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to NEBRASKAland, P.O. Box 30370, Lincoln, NE 68503-0370.



26



16



22



34

NEBRASKAland

Published by the
Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

Director: Rex Amack
Assistant Directors: Roger Kuhn, Kirk Nelson, Sam Sidner
Information & Education Administrator: Doug Bauch

Commissioners

Chairman: Jerrod Burke, Curtis
Vice Chairman: Mick Jensen, Blair
2nd Vice Chairman: Ron Stave, Waterloo
Dr. Mark Pinkerton, Wilber
Dr. Kent Forney, Lincoln
Lynn Berggren, Broken Bow
Rex Fisher, Omaha
Mark Spurgin, Paxton
Norris Marshall, Kearney

Magazine Staff

Editor: Doug Carroll
Associate Editor: Jeff Kurrus
Art Director: Tim Reigert
Senior Editor: Jon Farrar
Regional Editors: Eric Fowler, Bob Grier
Contributing Editor: Michael Forsberg
Regular Contributors: Bill Hager, Chris Helzer and Lisa Knopp
Photo Librarian: Sarah Johnson
Circulation: Donna Robinson
For address changes and questions about your subscription, e-mail Donna.Robinson@Nebraska.gov or call (800) 632-5263
Marketing/Advertising: For advertising information contact Larson Enterprises e-mail dave@larsonent.com or call (515) 440-2810



NEBRASKAland Magazine
Copyright 2010, all rights reserved.
NEBRASKAland is available on audio cassette from the Nebraska Library Commission Talking Book and Braille Service, Suite 120, 1200 N St., Lincoln, NE 68508. (800) 742-7691. NEBRASKAland Magazine and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission reserve the right to reject any advertising not in keeping with the agency mission.
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-NEB-LAND (632-5263), or go online to: NebraskaLandMagazine.com.



Hunter Hunts His First Goose

Thought you might be interested in this great picture of three young boys holding some big Canada geese.

These birds were harvested in central Nebraska a few days after Thanksgiving and the 10-year-old in the picture got his first goose that day. I've been goose hunting for lots of years, and it is always fun to take any age person out to get their first goose.

Pictured from left to right is seven-year-old Jackson Osentowski of Tulsa, Oklahoma, Hunter Osentowski of Kearney, who had just shot his first goose, and Dalton Dearthmont, a friend who lives near Rose.

Rich Osentowski
Kearney, Nebraska

Kudos to Your Photography

I just received my March issue of your magazine and want to say that the photography (from the cover on) is absolutely superb!! I am also enjoying the accompanying articles.

Shirley Clifton
Lincoln, Nebraska



NEBRASKAland Visitor Letters

We want to thank all 24 readers that sent e-mails and letters for last issue's visitor, a **parson spider** (Herpyllus ecclesiasticus) on page 32 (see page 11 for the winner, rules and next month's hint). Here are just a few of the many wonderful responses we received:

Dear NEBRASKAland,
We found the visitor on page 32 – a spider in the grass near a turkey spur. My husband and I had a competition to see who could first find the "Visitor" in this month's issue. I must admit, it was him. It was pretty tricky this month. I've decided next month I won't tell him the magazine has arrived until after I've spotted it!

Andrea and Curtis Lusch
Plattsmouth, Nebraska

It's on page 32. The print resolution doesn't allow for proper identification, but it's probably either a wolf spider or a parson spider.

So ... how many people have responded with the correct answer and location? I didn't know that such a 'contest' was going on until I picked up my latest issue while sitting on the couch last night. My competitive nature made it something that I couldn't let go until I got my magnifying scope and started looking a bit harder.

This was certainly harder than the

lady bug!

Peter S. Berthelsen
Senior Field Coordinator
Pheasants Forever, Inc. and
Quail Forever
Elba, Nebraska

I think you forgot to send the bug with my issue of NEBRASKAland, or it may be that it really is on the coffee mug on page 11. That seems too easy. Or I guess it could be the maggot Frank Reid is about to put in his mouth on page 30.

If it isn't one of those, then you simply forgot to put one in my copy of the March issue!

Thank you for bringing back so many great memories with this wonderful magazine.

Growing up in Omaha was the best place to grow up. We had so many fishing and hunting experiences in the surrounding area. We even gathered nightcrawlers to sell to make enough money so we could travel outside of our area for vacations.

Thanks again from a former Nebraskan.

Donna Gibson; nee Decker
Hazel Green, Alabama



The parson spider's common name derives from the dorsal abdominal stripe resembling an old-style cravat worn by clergy in the 18th century. They are ground spiders and do not spin webs for prey capture, but are active nocturnal hunters, mostly of other spiders.

Send your comments to:
Doug Carroll, Editor
NEBRASKAland Magazine
P.O. Box 30370
Lincoln, NE 68503
or e-mail Doug.Carroll@Nebraska.gov
Please include your postal address and telephone number.
Letters may be condensed and edited for clarity. Photographs are welcome and will be returned.

Under federal and/or state law, discrimination is prohibited on the basis of race, color, religion, age, gender, marital status, national origin, disability or political affiliation. If you think you have been discriminated against in any program, activity or facility by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission or want more information, contact the Commission in Lincoln, NE, at (402) 471-0641 or the Equal Opportunity Commission, Lincoln, NE, (402) 471-2024, TTY/TDD (402) 471-4693.

Nebraska Game and Parks Commission Offices

Headquarters
2200 N. 33rd Street
Lincoln, NE 68503
Phone (402) 471-0641

District Office I
East Hwy. 2, Box 725
Alliance, NE 69301
Phone (308) 763-2940

District Office II
524 Panzer St., Box 508
Bassett, NE 68714
Phone (402) 684-2921

District Office III
2201 N. 13th St.
Norfolk, NE 68701
Phone (402) 370-3374

District Office IV
301 E. State Farm Rd.
North Platte, NE 69101
Phone (308) 535-8025

District Office VI
1617 First Ave.
Kearney, NE 68847
Phone (308) 865-5310

Omaha Office
1212 Bob Gibson Blvd.
Omaha, NE 68108
Phone (402) 595-2144

Ak-Sar-Ben Aquarium
21502 W. Highway 31
Gretna, NE 68028
Phone (402) 332-3901

World Wide Web site:
www.OutdoorNebraska.org

Conservation Officers by Region

Panhandle	City	Phone (308)	Northeast	City	Phone (402)
Officer			Officer		
Jim Zimmerman (Sup.)	Gering	763-2940	Tom Zimmer (Sup.)	Norfolk	370-3374
Scott Brandt	Gering	631-0663	Dale Davis	Bassett	760-0712
Heath Packett	Gordon	360-0682	Ross Oestmann	Bloomfield	360-0553
Dennis Thompson	Lemoine	289-0755	Steve Oberg	Columbus	910-3366
Dan Zuehlke	Ogallala	289-3399	Daniel Roberts	Fremont	719-1108
Doug Pollard	Oshkosh	778-7101	Jon Reeves	Kennard	889-8508
Frank Miller	Valentine	(402) 389-0444	Marion Shafer	Norfolk	992-7590
Dan Kling	Harrison	430-0572	Pat George	O'Neill	340-0787
			Tim Williams	Neligh	929-0051
			Cory Krause	West Point	380-6410

Southwest	City	Phone (308)	Southeast	City	Phone (402)
Officer			Officer		
Roger Thompson (Sup.)	N. Platte	535-8025			
Ray Dierking	Brkn. Bow	870-0322	Duane Arp (Sup.)	Gretna	332-2965
George Sund	Cambridge	655-0028	Sean McKeehan	Ashland	521-0159
Michael Thome	Cozad	529-8146	William Krause	Auburn	274-8063
Matt Andrews	Elwood	746-2418	Mike Luben	Colon	443-6392
Dirk Greene	Imperial	882-0015	Douglas Kramer	Lincoln	890-6465
Virgil Gosch	McCook	340-2440	Dina Barta	Lincoln	890-6463
Dudley Sorensen	N. Platte	530-0016	Stacey Lewton	Lincoln	890-7140
Rich Routh	Rep. City	920-0367	Levi Krause	Louisville	949-0593
			Russell Mort	Nebr. City	209-1506
			Dan Evasco	Papillion	616-5961
			Jeff Clauson	Waterloo	658-7057

South-central	City	Phone (308)	Administration	City	Phone
Officer					
Jerry Pecha (Sup.)	Kearney	865-5327	Ted Blume (Adm.)	Lincoln	471-5531
Jeff Jones	Clay Center	(402) 762-5022	Craig Stover (Asst.)	Lincoln	471-5532
Terry Brentzel	Doniphan	(402) 469-5795	Wes Loos (Asst.)	Lincoln	471-5591
Randy Pomplun	Fullerton	550-0489	Rod Loos (Asst.)	Ogallala	(308) 284-8056
Darin Gress	Hebron	(402) 768-8665	Murray Johnson	Lincoln	471-5003
Dale Johnson	Kearney	440-3847			
Robert Finke	Milford	(402) 440-3847			

Nebraska Wildlife Crimestoppers 1-800-742-7627

Why So Many? Why So Big?

Elizabeth Mack

“How many leaves? How large? And why?” It is with a child’s fascination that I ask these questions each spring. Luckily, there are many people who know a lot more about leaves than myself. Here are a few of their thoughts:

“Trees with small leaves typically produce more of them,” said Omaha-based arborist Jack Phillips. “In addition, as trees age the number of leaves changes. For example, in a small tree – a seedling – leaves will represent about 60 percent of the tree’s weight.” However, the leaves from a 60-foot-tall tree, such as a mature oak, can number anywhere from 100,000 to 300,000 but represent less than 10 percent of the total weight of the tree.

In addition, even in the most ideal conditions certain tree species will have larger leaves than other species. Bur oak leaves will typically be larger than those of elms, and sycamores will typically be larger than silver maples. However, all leaves can be affected by environmental conditions. By midsummer a tree might have as many leaves, but size depends on the amount of stored energy or starch in the bud that was made the summer before.

When trees are affected by drought, their root systems are affected adversely, and it could take several years for these trees to recover. In contrast, too much moisture due to an excess of precipitation or over-irrigation in the landscape affects trees by driving oxygen that is needed by roots from the soil, causing them to be damaged and die. This, in turn, stresses the entire tree and its growth processes.

Another variable affecting leaf size relates to a leaf’s positioning in the crown. “The ‘sun leaves’ on the top and edges of the crown will be the most representative size and form of the species,” said Nebraska Game and Parks Commission horticulturalist Mike Groenewold, “while the ‘shade leaves’ on the bottom or inside of the crown will usually be larger than those that typically represent the species.”

In their abundance, it is difficult to focus on each particular leaf of a tree. A closer look at each one, however, reveals that every leaf has a unique story to tell.



The Snood

Jeff Kurrus

This spring, more than one successful turkey hunter in Nebraska will look down at their trophy and ask, “Now what’s this thing?” while holding the flap of skin hanging over the beak of the turkey. This fleshy appendage is called a snood, and can be found on both males and females, although it is much more pronounced on males. The snood can be extended or contracted at will and can turn colors, much like the rest of a turkey’s head, when excited or irritated. However, while there are speculations regarding the exact purpose of the snood, including as a way to attract mates, the National Wild Turkey Federation admits that even they are unsure of the precise function of this curious-looking flap of skin.

Chickens and Stars

Doug Carroll

The Nebraska Nature and Visitor Center, formerly known as Crane Meadows Nature Center, will be hosting a “Chicken and Stars” trip to the Sandhills April 9-11.

The weekend will include viewing and photography of prairie chickens on some of their courtship leks, as well as chances to do some stargazing and astrophotography.

For more information or to register, call (308) 382-1820 or e-mail info@nebraskanature.org.

Caroline’s Creamy White Chili

By Caroline Gaia

Now I have to confess, I originally made this chili with chicken, but recently found that a turkey breast works just as well. So this spring, try something new. I guarantee it won’t be the last time you do.

- 1 boneless and skinless turkey breast (cut into ½-inch cubes)
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 cans (15½ ounces each) great northern beans, drained
- 1 can (14½ ounces) chicken broth
- 2 cans (4 ounces each) chopped green chilies
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 cup (8 ounces) sour cream
- ½ cup whipping cream

In a large saucepan, sauté turkey, onion and garlic powder in oil until turkey is no longer pink. Add beans, broth, chilies and seasonings. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer uncovered for 30 minutes. Remove from heat, then stir in sour cream and whipping cream. Serve immediately. Yields 5 servings.



NEBRASKA Pheasants Forever & Quail Forever WILDLIFE HABITAT MIXES

*Are you planting wildlife habitat this Spring?
Do you have plans to improve wildlife habitat?*

If your answer is yes, then why not order mixes that are designed by wildlife experts to maximize the success of both the planting and the wildlife. Pheasants Forever’s mixes meet all the requirements of conservation programs and are at the best prices available.



Over 250 species of grasses and wildflowers available. Custom mixtures can be designed to meet your needs. Seed is delivered to you in 6 to 8 working days. Quality customer service that you deserve. Winter Cover Food Plot Mixes that work.



**FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO PLACE AN ORDER
VISIT WWW.NEBRASKAPF.COM OR CALL 308-428-3062**

Officer's Notebook

Those Darn Kids

I was on patrol in the early afternoon around Skyview Lake in Norfolk, using my newly assigned patrol motorcycle. I parked in an area where I could observe who was fishing before I checked for permits. One group caught my eye as I watched three kids fish and run around, accompanied by two adults. I finally observed one of the adults catch a fish and it appeared he was putting it on a stringer but I couldn't tell for sure as a tree was blocking a clear view. I approached the group and asked to look at fishing licenses for the adults. They both showed me their fishing permits, but when asked to see the fish they caught I was told by one adult that he didn't speak English and they had "no fish." I then asked one of the kids that was fishing if he had been catching anything and he gladly told me "yes" and that he had caught the largest fish. When I asked what he did with it, the kid pointed to a blue tackle box and said the fish was in there. I opened the tackle box and found three largemouth bass under the size limit and several bluegill. The father of this child – the one who didn't speak English – now spoke perfect English, admitted to catching the largemouth bass and was issued a citation.



– Tim Williams, Conservation Officer, Neligh

Platte River Art Show

This year's Platte River Art Show will be held April 10-11 at Eugene T. Mahoney State Park near Ashland.

Featuring some of the finest art in the country in a variety of mediums, the show will be open from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Saturday, and from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday. In addition, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission outdoor personality Greg Wagner will do a live broadcast of his Great Outdoor Radio Show from the park's Peter Kiewit Lodge from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. on Saturday.

An Old West Rib Fest featuring barbecue ribs will also be held in conjunction with the art show from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. both days. The cost of the meal is \$5.75 per person.

Turkey Hunting Workshop

A hands-on turkey hunting workshop will be held from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. on April 14 at the Lincoln Izaak Walton League.

Nebraska Game and Parks Commission outdoor specialists and Hunter Education instructors will be on hand to help participants hone their turkey calling skills and pattern their shotguns. Basic skills, biology and safety will be covered in this event, which is open to the entire family. There is no cost for the event, but space must be reserved by contacting Heather Weihe at Heather.Weihe@Nebraska.gov.

CRP and Pivot Corners

According to Tim McCoy, agricultural program manager for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, incentive payments are now available to landowners enrolling cropped pivot corners and/or small crop fields (5-7 acres in size) in the Central Basins Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP).

Landowners could qualify for a one-time \$100 "resource corner area" incentive payment as well as a \$100 bonus incentive payment for enrolling all four corners of a center pivot field.

This would be in addition to annual rental payments of 120 percent of the USDA CRP soil rental rate. Cost share payments are available to meet 80 percent of the seed and planting requirements of the program.

Landowners in the CREP area can enroll at their local Farm Service Agency office, and can contact their local Commission office or Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist for more information.

Whooper Watch

The Crane Trust, located near Wood River, is seeking volunteers for their "Whooper Watch" Program.

Each spring, typically the last two weeks of March through April, most of the wild population of endangered whooping cranes (*Grus americana*) migrates north through the Central Flyway from Texas to Canada, with Nebraska serving as a significant



Outdoor Message Plates

Curtis Schneider of Lincoln has had his message plate since 1997, when he ran an archery shop from his York home that was called Archer's Rest. When he's not bowhunting turkeys in the spring or deer in the fall, this Bowhunter Education Master Instructor keeps his skills sharp on the target range.

If you have a unique outdoor message plate you would like to share, or know someone who does, e-mail a photo (high-resolution, .jpg format only, please) of it to Eric.Fowler@Nebraska.gov, along with your name, hometown and a brief description of the interests expressed on your license plate.

Selective Harvesting for Bluegill

Jeff Kurrus

Because male bluegills generally grow larger than females, they are targeted by anglers on the spawning beds. Big, colorful and aggressive, these fish are an angler's prized catch (See "In Search of Open Water Gillies" on page 24). However, there are other, less known, males that can negatively affect a fishery.

These males resemble the female bluegills, being smaller and less brightly colored. They will also sneak into the nests and fertilize the female eggs.

Because of this, anglers must be careful not to harvest too many of the large, colorful males. "If you do that, what you're left with are those smaller, slow-growing males that will never grow as large as the other males," said Commission fisheries outreach program manager Daryl Bauer. "And you may be left with stunted bluegills because that's all you've left in the population."

To protect those brightly colored trophy bluegills for the future, keep the 6- to 8-inch fish (where allowed), as well as these smaller males, but release those trophies 9 inches and above to preserve future year classes.

stopover location. These majestic birds often stop along the Platte River for rest and rejuvenation before continuing onward to their breeding grounds at Wood Buffalo National Park in Canada.

The wild whooping crane population has increased from an all time low of 16 individuals in 1941 to the current known population of 263. The Crane Trust shares information with federal and state agencies, allowing collaborative efforts in the conservation and protection of this endangered species. Part of this information includes sightings of the birds in Nebraska, many of which are made by volunteers.

Last year, 17 individual whooping cranes were sighted in Hall County, near the Platte River. Additional sightings occurred in Phelps, Kearney, Brown, Custer, Lincoln, Cherry, Fillmore, Gosper, Keha Paha, Garfield, Holt and Rock counties of Nebraska.

If you see a whooping crane in Nebraska, please call the whooper watch line at 1-888-399-2824.

The Crane Trust is located 1 mile south of I-80 exit 305 (Alda) and 1.5 miles east on Whooping Crane Drive.

Here's some tips for identifying a whooping crane

- Whooping cranes are snowy white

and stand more than four feet tall.

- In flight, black wingtips are visible and the neck and the legs are extended.
- Their wingspan is approximately seven feet.
- In good light, you may be able to see the red crown on adult birds.
- Juvenile whoopers have rust and white colored feathers.

DU Chapter Lauded

Each year, Ducks Unlimited publishes "The President's Top 100" – a list of the group's chapters that raise the most grassroots dollars for this national organization's habitat conservation work. This year Nebraska's Burt/Washington County DU chapter made the list as one of the organization's highest fundraising chapters.

"These fundraising events are the backbone of how DU conserves habitat and the volunteers who make up these chapters are the on-the-ground conservationists making a difference for North American waterfowl populations," said John Pope, president of DU. "It takes a lot of effort to crack the Top 100 and these chapters deserve to be congratulated from every person who enjoys the outdoors."

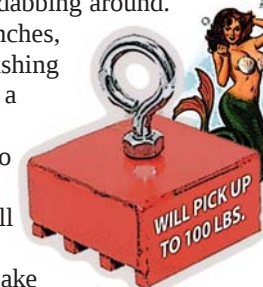
Turpin Time

Dick Turpin

A handy item to have in your fishing boat is one of those good magnets. I have a 100-pounder. Hook a real good line to it ... say 25 or 30 feet ...

and boy howdy, these things around a dock ... you'd be surprised the things you'll pick up just dabbing around.

I've picked up wrenches, cigarette lighters, fishing lures, pliers ... just a myriad of things so this is kind of fun to have. These things really work but I tell you to be careful. I was out once on a lake and hooked on to something ... almost like fighting a fish ... I got it up and I had a beautiful mermaid hooked right by the belt buckle. Wife made me throw her back. ■



NEBRASKAland Visitor Winner and Hint

Last issue's winner of the NEBRASKAland Visitor drawing was Chris Kroeger of Schuyler who found the **parson spider** on page 32.

Readers are encouraged to contact NEBRASKAland within 10 days after this issue's publication with the correct page number and name of this issue's "Visitor" – an insect or bug found in Nebraska that just happened to find its way onto one of the pages of our publication.

We will then gather the correct entries and draw one to win a NEBRASKAland Visitor mug.

To enter each month, e-mail Tim.Reigert@Nebraska.gov with "Visitor" in the subject line of the message or write: NEBRASKAland Visitor 2200 North 33rd Street, Lincoln, NE 68503.

HINT: This month's visitor is not on page 5, 11, 12 or 14.

RARE

Portraits of America's Endangered Species

Text and photos by Joel Sartore

Taking pictures for *National Geographic Magazine* has got to be the greatest job on Earth. Nothing but travel to exotic locales and glamour at every turn, right?

Not quite. Try eating llama head, guinea pig, piranhas, raw seal stomach lining and live beetles. Then see if you like being chased by bees, grizzlies, musk oxen and a variety of bad guys, or being deafened by a fungus, chewed by a flesh-eating parasite and bitten by three dogs at the same time.

Other than that, the job is fabulous.

So why do it?

To tell you a story. And, hopefully, to get you to care.

I've tried to do this in a variety of ways over the years.

Mostly it involves throwing big chunks of time and piles of money covering subjects you've never heard of. If it's a heavy topic, such as endangered species, the hope is always that enough people see it, are moved to take action, and right a wrong here and there.

Surprisingly, an event right here in Lincoln, Nebraska, changed the way that I see things. In 2006, my wife Kathy was diagnosed with breast cancer. With three kids at home, it was time for me to stay put.

Months later, when she started to heal, I began to think to myself, 'Well, now what?' Working for NGM is a bit like



AMERICAN BURYING BEETLE (*NICROPHORUS AMERICANUS*) - ST. LOUIS ZOO

being an astronaut; you fear the day that you're not. You know your life will never again be as exciting or interesting. But oddly enough, just the opposite came true.

On the days that Kathy felt well and with the kids in school, I began to make little day trips. I figured that if I couldn't get to the jungle or the swamps anymore, I'd at least try to do formal studio portraits of captive animals from faraway places.

The Lincoln Children's Zoo gave me my start. I had a used lighting kit and a couple of backgrounds – one black, one white. They brought out a naked mole rat and a pair of blue poison dart frogs. I was hooked.

After years of nothing but long lens pictures of animals in the field, those clean backgrounds bathed in soft light seemed to wash away my all my troubles. No more fleeting glimpses. In my little studio, the animal is right there, going nowhere, eyes sharp as pins. Finally, I could use a wide-angle lens.

This portrait technique was also a great equalizer. Afloat on a black and white sea, all creatures great and small are given the same weight and importance. And personalities emerge: A whooping crane demurs, waiting for her escape from a brightly lit space. Pallid sturgeon with battleship noses



GRAY WOLF (*CANIS LUPUS*) - NEW YORK STATE ZOO, WATERTOWN, NEW YORK



This American peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) was photographed at Raptor Recovery Nebraska near Elmwood, Nebraska.



This **grizzly bear** (*Ursus arctos horribilis*) was photographed at the Sedgwick County Zoo in Wichita, Kansas.

patrol for food. Baby least terns drift off to sleep.

I've specialized in rare species and the reasons they get into trouble, from climate change to habitat loss. But through these portraits, I've learned to appreciate all forms of life, no matter what the politics of the moment may be. All are interesting, have a role to play and deserve to exist. In the grand scheme of things, even prairie dogs count.

Here in Nebraska, we live in a bubble of sorts. Everyone's nice (unless we lose a football game) and we say hello to strangers. Surely all is right in



BLOWOUT PENSTEMON (*PENSTEMON HAYDENII*) - LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

the world. But for some of the oft-ignored creatures you see here, the situation is dire. The Salt Creek tiger beetle is on the brink of extinction due to development. The black-footed ferret is being knocked down once more by plague.

Until humans start to understand, care and reverse our loss of biodiversity and ecosystems, we're only hurting ourselves. Healthy forests regulate rainfall and climate. Grasses bind the soil. Insects pollinate our crops.

Can you imagine a world without songbirds, amphibians or even bees? Unless there's a real change in how we treat nature, you'll see all this and more.

And so it starts here, in the pages of this magazine. From peregrines to penstemon, each has a unique story to tell. But will we care enough to listen?

Only time will tell. ■



SALT CREEK TIGER BEETLE (*CICINDELA NEVADICA LINCOLNIANA*) - UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN.



BLACK-FOOTED FERRET (*MUSTELA NIGRIPES*) - CHEYENNE MOUNTAIN ZOO, COLORADO SPRINGS, COLORADO

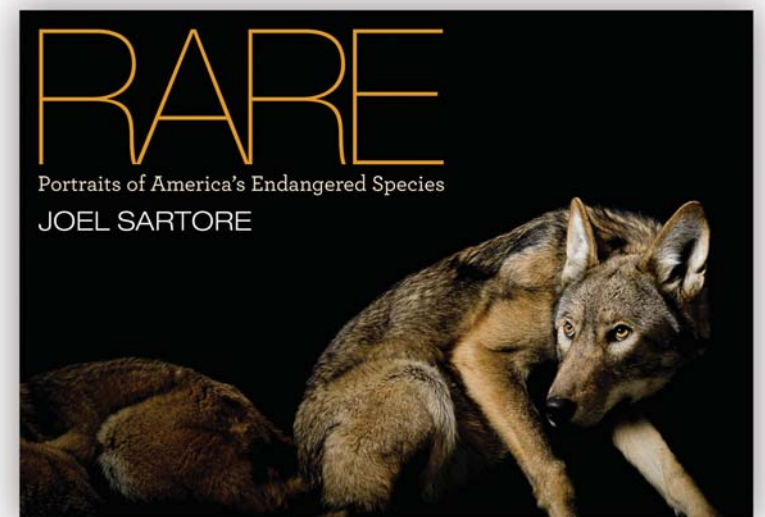


PALLID STURGEON (*SCAPHIRHYNCHUS ALBUS*) - GAVINS POINT NATIONAL FISH HATCHERY, YANKTON, SOUTH DAKOTA



WHOOPING CRANE (*GRUS AMERICANA*) - AUDUBON CENTER FOR RESEARCH OF ENDANGERED SPECIES IN NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA.

Joel Sartore is a contributing photographer for *National Geographic Magazine*, speaker and author of *RARE: Portraits of America's Endangered Species*. To see more of his pictures of threatened and endangered species, go to rarethebook.com.



Family Camping in Nebraska State Parks

Why this year's vacation doesn't have to break the bank

By Matthew Marx

A group of about ten people, including adults and children, are sitting in folding camp chairs around a bright campfire at night. The fire is burning brightly in the center, casting a warm glow. They are on a sandy or gravelly shore next to a calm body of water, which reflects the fire and the dark sky. The background shows a line of trees under a dark night sky. The overall mood is peaceful and cozy.

Under a full moon on a picture-perfect night, Lincolmites Claire and Jeff Valder; Chris, Stephanie, Daniel and Annika Kuchar; Leslie and Travis Pillen; and Kyle Eley relax around a campfire at Wagon Train State Recreation Area near Hickman. Photo by Eric Fowler



PHOTO BY MICHAEL FORSBERG

A sunrise cup of tea is a welcome pleasure for parents who wake up before their children on a Nebraska camping trip.

The red, yellow and purple glow of yet another beautiful Nebraska sunset has given way to the crackle of the campfire, where the kids, happy and weary from a day of fishing and playing, are helping prepare an evening meal of hot dogs and freshly filleted fish. Your new friends from the neighboring campsite have gathered their lawn chairs and brought over graham crackers, chocolate and marshmallows. The laughter is loud and the tall tales are getting taller. This is what a summer vacation is all about. And it didn't mean breaking the bank.

If the cost of travel has you wondering if you can afford a family vacation outside the state this year, camping at one of Nebraska's many excellent state parks can be an inexpensive and fun alternative. Instead of spending thousands of dollars on airline tickets, car rentals, hotels and theme park entrance fees, you can spend a fraction of your usual summer vacation money for a family experience that will bring you closer together, get you more in touch with nature and teach skills that will last a lifetime.

Nebraska is blessed with an incredible state parks system that can be accessed at a very low cost compared to other kinds of vacation activities. There are, however, a few things to carefully consider before planning a state park camping excursion.

Gear

While many of the items you will want to take with you can be found around the house – such as silverware, cups, pillows, blankets and matches – there is some gear you may not have that is indispensable when it comes to successful camping. The most inexpensive way of acquiring gear is simply to borrow it. People who love to camp tend to have quality gear and are usually happy to loan a tent, some

sleeping bags or a camp stove. Your local Boy Scouts troop may also be willing to loan out gear. Both the University of Nebraska-Omaha's Outdoor Venture Center (402-554-2258, www.unomaha.edu/wwwocr/ovc) and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Campus Recreation (402-472-3467, <http://crec.unl.edu/outdoor/rental.shtml>) rent quality gear – including family-sized tents, coolers, stoves and even yard games – to the general public, and have pricing information located on their respective web sites.

Tents and Tarps

If you are buying gear, balance cost and quality. Chances are you won't need an ultra-lightweight, four-season storm tent suitable for surviving Mount Everest, but you also won't want the cheapest tent you can find, which will be practically useless in wet weather and won't last for more than a few seasons anyway. Remember that you are making an investment, so if you buy a tent, do yourself a favor and purchase a good-quality one from a reputable company. That way, if it rains you'll know why you spent the extra money and you'll be happier for it. Properly maintained, a good-quality tent can last for 10 years or more. For a family of four, buy a six-person tent (or larger) – you'll appreciate the extra room. Invest in a tarp to go under your tent to protect the floor from rips and snags, and before you head afield for the first time, set up the tent in the backyard to familiarize yourself with all of its components. It is also a wise idea to use a seam sealer on tents to ensure that extra bit of weather protection – when tents leak, it's usually at the seams.

Sleeping Bags

When hiking in the backwoods for a week, it's a good idea to invest in a lightweight, down-filled, "mummy"-style sleeping bag with a drawstring hood. This is not the case for

camping near your vehicle, however, where weight is not an issue and comfort reigns supreme. Rectangular bags are larger, softer and less expensive than high-tech backpacking bags, and are very comfortable. Sleeping bags are rated by temperature, so a 50-degree bag should be comfortable when the air temperature drops to 50 degrees. I recommend choosing a bag that is rated lower than the lowest temperature you expect, and because a woman's body temperature is generally lower than a man's, ladies may want to choose one rated 5-10 degrees lower. In Nebraska, a 20- to 40-degree bag will work just fine for most summer camping and can be supplemented with blankets in the spring and fall. Buy a bag with synthetic insulation – it's cheaper, stronger, insulates when wet and is non-allergenic. Some rectangular bags can also be zipped together to form a queen-sized bag. Make sure to check the label for this feature and buy two bags with zippers on opposite sides. Some models simply flip over so they can be zipped together. If cost is a pressing issue, you can do away with sleeping bags altogether and just take sheets, blankets and pillows from home.

For an extended backwoods wilderness excursion, expensive sleeping pads (either self-inflating or closed cell) are a good choice for lightweight hiking. But for simple camping, the kids will be comfortable on air pads (which can be manually inflated) or egg-crate foam, which is inexpensive. For Mom and Dad, however, nothing comes close to the comfort of a big air mattress. Again, quality matters. Air mattress technology has come a long way in the last few years and

Estimated Costs

Estimated cost of fees for five days at **Niobrara State Park** for a family of four:

- Park entrance fee (1 year pass, with access to **all** state recreation areas): \$20
- Tent camping (\$9 per night x 5 nights): \$45
- Horse trail rides (\$15 per person x 4 people): \$60
- Swimming at the pool (\$4 per day x 4 people): \$16
- Fishing (\$26 annual resident x 2 adults, kids 16 and under fish free): \$52
- Hiking and enjoying nature: free

Total cost of lodging and fees: \$193

Cost for 5 days lodging and entry fees at **Disneyland**: \$1,711-\$2,697

the cost has come down dramatically. Do you remember the days of accordion-style foot pumps or hours spent light-headed from filling a large air mattress with lung power? Suffer no longer. For convenience, I recommend buying an air mattress with a cordless, built-in pump – it's self-contained and easy to use, as long as you remember the



PHOTO BY ERIC FOWLER

Gary, Ginny and Payton Stratton of Lincoln cook breakfast in the Valley View Flat campground at Calamus Reservoir near Burwell.



During a camping trip with his parents, a youngster focuses on his bait while fishing at Two Rivers State Recreation Area near Yutan.

PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS

Tips for Camping with Kids

- Let the kids help plan activities. Offer different options.
 - Before your trip, read with your kids. Pick books about local animals, outdoor activities or nature. Get a copy of H.A. Rey’s *The Stars*, the best book for any age on identifying constellations. (He’s the author of the *Curious George* books.)
 - Create “merit badges” for campfire building, cooking, tent set-up, fishing and constellation recognition.
 - Have a nightly, around-the-campfire awards ceremony for biggest fish released, best tall tale, funniest animal impersonation, best repair job or sloppiest s’more.
 - Turn off the portable videogames and DVD player. Instead, play I-Spy from pre-generated lists: “I spy a deer hoof print. I spy a circling hawk. I spy a web with a spider in the middle. I spy a Colorado license plate. I spy a park ranger. I spy a . . .”
 - Consider camping with other families. Kids love to play outside with other kids, especially when exploring new places.
 - Make kids responsible for certain chores, such as dishwashing, tent-organizing, and trash collection. Then pair them up with more fun, supervised chores like fire building and fish cleaning. Let kids do chores in pairs or teams.

batteries. The only drawback to an air mattress is the possibility of a puncture. Bringing along a rubber cement patch kit is a good idea, but duct tape will usually work in a pinch as well.

Coolers, Grills, Camp and Hobo Stoves

When camping, there are two things to consider when planning meals: keeping food cool and getting it hot. A cooler full of ice takes care of keeping perishables fresh, and for cooking, many Nebraska state park campsites are outfitted with permanent grills and fire rings. With some charcoal or firewood, this makes cooking camp food such as hamburgers and hot dogs easy. For more elaborate meals, breakfast foods or hot drinks, however, consider taking a camp stove. The classic is the green, briefcase-style Coleman two-burner stove, which is perfect for family camping and can be found cheap at garage sales. If money is tight and you are good with your hands, you can also make a high-efficiency wood-burning “rocket stove,” “hobo stove,” or alcohol-burning “soda can” stove (check Wikipedia online for detailed directions). They’re all fun to make and are great projects for kids (with parental supervision, of course). Most other cooking necessities, such as pots, pans, plates, silverware and cups, can be taken directly from your kitchen or bought for a song at thrift stores.

Food and Water

Choose family meals that can be made quickly in large quantities. Hamburgers, hot dogs, instant oatmeal and pancakes (the “just add water” kind) are all good choices. Consider making more elaborate recipes such as goulash or homemade soup beforehand, freezing them (which helps to keep the cooler cold), and then reheating them at the campsite. It’s a good idea to take plenty of gallon jugs of

clean water with you for drinking, washing dishes and taking cat baths, although some parks offer potable water, showers and even laundry facilities. Check individual parks for available services.

Plan Your Trip

Planning a family vacation should include the whole family; when kids get involved in making decisions, they tend to get excited about activities. The current economic downturn has been hard on many families, but it may be a good reminder that the truly high quality experiences – coming together as a family, playing outside, making new friends, appreciating nature, developing community-building attitudes and learning new skills – are much less expensive than commercial-fueled forms of family entertainment, which our society seems to have strangely adopted as the norm. Perhaps it’s an opportune time to reevaluate what it means to spend quality family time together.

Parks and Activities

Nebraska state parks offer a wide variety of activities, such as fishing, horseback riding and archery, but because not all parks offer the same options, it’s important to do your research. In Nebraska, there are 86 state park and recreation

Activities at State Parks

Activities at Nebraska state parks (check individual park for availability):

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| • Hiking | • Nature tours and workshops |
| • Bird watching | • Rock climbing |
| • Fishing (many parks will loan people free rods, reels, and tackle!) | • Hayrack rides |
| • Photography | • Mountain biking |
| • Horseback riding | • Kayaking |
| • Archery | • Paddleboating |
| • Swimming | • Geocaching |
| • Boating | • Leather and ceramic craft making |
| • Miniature golf | • Historical building tours |

areas, 71 of which offer camping. The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission web site (OutdoorNebraska.org) has plenty of detailed information about each area. Some parks allow patrons to make reservations; others are on a first-come, first-served basis, so make sure to do your homework. Pay special attention to the “Park Fees” area of the web site, which has information about entrance fees, reservation schedules and activities, so you can quickly get an estimate of the total cost of any required fees.

Camping Community

One of the most enjoyable forms of family camping is organizing your vacation with other families, especially those with kids the same ages as yours. Imagine how excited your kids will be when you tell them they get to go on a camping vacation with other kids. And for the parents, it’s nice to have a trusted community of adults with whom to share supervision, meals, gear and stories. Even if your family is going alone, a big part of camping is learning to be in a community, which is essentially what a campground is. In a place like Nebraska, where friendliness abounds, it’s easy for kids to start learning about the importance of community and sharing.

See You Out There

With so many parks from which to choose, it should be easy to find the camping experience that is right for your family. Whether you crave the quiet solitude of fishing and bird-watching, or the excitement of horseback riding and archery, Nebraska has a park to fit your preference. And with a little research and creativity, you can put together a summer vacation that will thrill your family without breaking the bank. ■

Matthew Marx is an English instructor at the University of Nebraska-Omaha. His last feature for *NEBRASKALand Magazine* was “Couple Camping” in the April, 2009 issue.



PHOTO BY MATT HOUSKA

Stargazing is an option for families throughout Nebraska, as seen from this photo taken in the Oglala National Grasslands.

In Search of Open Water Gillies

By Eric Fowler and
Jeff Kurrus



Nebraskan Chad Bright holds a bluegill caught at Mayberry SRA in the southeast part of the state, located near Burchard Lake, another quality bluegill fishery.

PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS

Often easy to catch and a great gateway fish for beginners of all ages, bluegill can easily be found throughout Nebraska. But that doesn't tell the entire story.

"Catching bluegills is nothing," said Nebraska Game and Parks Commission fisheries biologist Daryl Bauer. "Consistently finding big bluegills, now that's another story." It's a story that must answer the questions "Where?" and "How?"

The Spawn

Most serious anglers will say the best time to catch big bluegills is when they are on the spawning beds between late-May and early June. Male bluegills fan out circular-shaped nests on the lake bottom in which females will lay their eggs. The males then guard the eggs until they hatch, attacking anything that comes near these areas. The nests are usually built on sand- or gravel-covered areas in two to six feet of water with escape cover nearby. Without these substrates, bluegills will spawn anywhere with a hard bottom. Where there is one nest, there are often more, and some beds can contain hundreds on nests. In clear water, spawning beds are easy to locate, while in murky water, sometimes the only way to find these areas is to simply fish.

Bluegills spawn when water temperatures are between 67 and 80 degrees. A good time to start searching out spawning beds is around Memorial Day in southeastern Nebraska, a week or two later in western Nebraska. Some fish will even spawn more than once a year. "I didn't think it was possible, but I've seen it happen many times," said Jeff Jackson, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission's district fisheries supervisor for southeastern Nebraska. Revisit the beds as late as July, and you may be able to pull in a few more trophy males.

While big, trophy, colorful male bluegills are often targeted during the spawn, anglers should remember that females can grow big as well. Those fish can often be found in deeper water adjacent to the beds.

On the Lake, Throughout the State

When not on their beds, bluegills will be near a food source. Because these fish mainly feed on aquatic insects, vegetation is a good place to start. Also look at shallow water early and late in the day as fish sun themselves at these depths. If not at these locations, look for fish in deeper water near drop-offs, humps or flooded trees, especially during the summer months.

To find good bluegill waters, start with the Commission's *2010 Fishing Forecast*, which can be found throughout the state at outdoor retailers and at OutdoorNebraska.org. A quick look shows that recently renovated Summit Lake near Tekamah is an excellent choice for large bluegill, as well as Skyview Lake near Norfolk and Walnut Creek Reservoir in Papillion.

When viewing this forecast, also look at the largemouth bass numbers. "If you want big bluegills," said Bauer, "look for lakes with lots of small bass." Bass eat bluegill, and a lot of 10- to 15-inch bass will eat a lot of young of the year bluegill. Bluegill numbers won't be as high in these lakes, but the bluegill that escape the bass and survive will have little competition for food, resulting in faster



DUANE RAVER / USFWS

BLUEGILL, (*Lepomis macrochirus*), are found in warm, weedy waters throughout the state.

growth rates. The inverse is also true: lakes with a few big bass typically have lots of small bluegill. With that in mind, also look at Cheyenne SRA near Wood River, Two Rivers No. 1 near Yutan, Verdon SRA in the southeast, and Coot Shallows near Odessa.

Anglers would also be wise to spend a little time fishing the natural Sandhill lakes in north-central Nebraska, which are so fertile that bluegill have enough food to grow big regardless of the status of their bass population. "Sandhill lakes are as good as any bluegill fisheries in the country," said Bauer. "Your density for fish is lower, but your chance to catch big bluegills increases." While there, fish Duck Lake on the Valentine National Wildlife Refuge (recently renovated Hackberry should also be very good in the years to come), and both Smith lakes – the one south of Rushville and the other on the Crescent Lake National Wildlife Refuge.



PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS

FLY-FISHING IS AN EFFECTIVE technique for catching bluegill during the spawning season in late-May and early June.

“Catching bluegills is nothing. Consistently finding big bluegills, now that’s another story.” – Daryl Bauer, Fisheries Biologist

Lastly, as of date of press, anglers turned in applications for 106 Master Angler bluegill – those fish measuring 10 inches or weighing 1 pound – in 2009. Of those, 62 were caught at private ponds. Do your homework, knock on some doors and you may be able to get permission to these excellent fisheries.

Techniques

For any fish species, the techniques you use to catch them should always relate to what that particular fish eats.

For bluegill, that list is long and includes aquatic and terrestrial insects, leeches, crayfish and even zooplankton. Bluegills will sometimes eat small fish, but for the most part they are sippers. Their mouths are small and are structured for eating small prey. With that in mind, remember that insects are small and don’t move fast, so fish small baits and lures, and fish them slow.

A full or even half a nightcrawler is too large for even a Master Angler-sized bluegill and simply gives small bait stealers something to nibble on

before they find your hook ... if they make it that far. A teardrop jig and waxworm – a perfect combination for catching bluegills through the ice – is often overlooked by summertime anglers. Yet this rig it is just as deadly year-round, and Berkley now produces waxworm-sized Powerbait and Gulp baits that are a suitable substitute when the natural bait isn’t available.

A No. 8 or 10 hook is well suited for small-mouthed bluegills. If you get into fish and tire of unhooking small ones, use a larger No. 6 that only larger fish can swallow. While

their small mouths are well-suited for their feeding habits, they are not for removing fish hooks. Using long-shanked hooks simplifies this task, especially with fish that swallow bait deeply.

Below are some other options for tackle and techniques, and some random thoughts on each:

Bobber: Few anglers can say their first fishing trip didn’t involve a float with a baited hook suspended beneath it. This is fishing in its simplest form, requiring little skill and allowing the angler to see the bite, rather than having to feel it. With all of the high-tech tackle on the market today, bobber fishing is still perhaps the best way to catch bluegills.

Yet for anglers of any age, there are still advantages to adding a high-tech twist to bobber fishing by replacing the age-old, red and white, plastic floats with a slip bobber or pencil float. Slip bobbers allow line to slide freely between the jig or weighted hook and a bobber stop. Anglers can adjust the depth of their presentation by simply sliding the stop up or down their line. Bobber stops are designed to pass through rod guides, which makes landing fish and casting much simpler when fishing at depths greater than 4 feet. When fish are schooled up in 10 feet of water in mid-summer, slip bobbers are a requirement. With neutrally buoyant pencil floats, anglers get the added bonus of being able to detect not only fish that pull the bait down, but those that rise to take it, causing the float to rise as well. Detecting these bites is nearly impossible with common round floats.

Whichever bobber-type you choose, use one no larger than needed to support your hook or lure. When a fish takes a bait below a bobber, it can feel the bobber pulling back and will often spit the bait before you have a chance to set the hook.

Ultralite: Pound for pound, bluegills fight as hard as any fish swimming in Nebraska waters. You can’t truly appreciate this attribute using the same rod-and-reel you do for catfish, bass or walleye. Ultralight spinning tackle with 4-pound test line not only allows you to more effectively present lighter lures required to catch them, it



PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS

WHEN BLUEGILL FISHING, *dry flies can be used while fishing with a fly rod or with a casting bubble.*

also enhances the sheer enjoyment of the fight. Small jigs or a 1/32 oz. Beetle Spin are all you need.

On the Fly: Investing in a fly rod and taking the time to learn how to use it is well worth the effort, and adds an effective and enjoyable twist to bluegill fishing. With a 2- to 5-weight fly rod, use a floating popper or sinking fly on a 4- to 6-pound tippet, or you can even skip the tapered leader in favor of a piece of 4-pound monofilament. Fly tackle is extremely productive when fish are in the shallows or on their beds due to the stealthy presentation it offers. Also, using top-water poppers allows anglers to fish weedbeds that jigs cannot be pulled through. By switching to sinking line, simply adding split shot or using a weighted fly, fly anglers can target bluegills in deeper water. If you are new to fly-fishing, spend a few minutes talking to an expert at a local outdoor retailer and they’ll show you how to get started.

Bubble: If you lack a proper fly rod,

tie a bubble float to the end of your line, add a 4- to 6-foot leader of 4-pound test and a floating popping bug, and you have a poor-man’s fly rod. In a crunch, the weight from the bubble will allow you to use bass-fishing gear without having to carry an ultralite combo. When fishing spawning beds, be sure to cast well beyond the bed and pull your lure back to it, as the splat of a bubble can spook fish.

Regardless of when, where or how you fish, keep one last thing in mind. If you’re not catching big bluegills doing what you’re doing, change something. Depth, bait and location are three places to start. As for the latter, keep in mind that while bluegills are smaller fish, they tend to segregate by size. If you’re catching small bluegills, you should move until you find a school of big ones. Because in the end, it’s not bluegill you’re after. It’s big bluegill. And there are plenty of Nebraska waters that have them. All you have to do is find them. ■



PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS

BANK FISHING IN SHALLOW WATER *is best at sunrise and sunset when bluegill move shallow to take advantage of the sun’s warm rays.*

The John J. Dinan Memorial Bird Conservation Area

Photos and text by Michael Forsberg

Back in early 2006, a 200-acre tract of land along the Platte River in south-central Nebraska was purchased by Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary with the help of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. The acquisition helped complete the protection of another mile of river channel and created an opportunity to restore habitat for at-risk wildlife, especially the threatened and endangered species that rely on the broad, braided river channels of the Platte.



Evening light sets off the silk-like seed hairs of common milkweed.



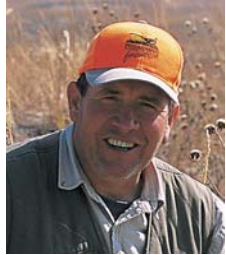
Lights from the city of Kearney glow in the distance at twilight as thousands of sandhill cranes gather on a Platte River roost at the Dinan tract of Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary.

Located immediately upstream of Rowe's western boundary, the site – mostly river channel – already had high conservation value: It contained one of the largest roost sites in the Platte River corridor for sandhill cranes during spring migration and was situated within a five-mile stretch of river which has had more confirmed

whooping crane sightings since 1980 than any other five-mile stretch on the Platte. But like most lands brought under the conservation umbrella in the Platte River Valley in modern times, it was in need of a habitat makeover to combat the combined effects of decades of reduced water flows due to a history of dams and diversion. It

needed to be reshaped to take on the character of the broad-braided, prairie river it once was if it was going to serve the needs of wildlife far into the future.

In late-spring 2006, shortly after its acquisition, a major habitat restoration project began. The Commission, Rowe Sanctuary and several other public and



John Dinan

private partners used federal, state and private conservation dollars to build sandbar islands in the river channel to supply nesting habitat for threatened and endangered least terns and piping plovers, restore backwater sloughs and prairie, and remove the acres of trees and brush that had encroached on the channel since 1940, when upstream dams and diversions first significantly started to alter water flows and change the character of the river and its habitat.

The nest islands were the first ever built on the central Platte. Nearly one mile of

sloughs were sculpted 30 to 40 feet wide, and the removal of 28 acres of trees and brush was part of the 75 acres of mature trees from a former channel and another 60 acres of small cedars from wet meadow prairie that had been removed elsewhere on Rowe property.

By fall 2006 the restoration was complete. Almost as if on cue, a migrating family of three endangered whooping cranes were observed



Above: In early winter a bobcat moves along a game trail connecting river, woodland and prairie.

Opposite: A remote camera captures a federally threatened piping plover and its hours-old chick at the nest on a restored sandbar island in the Platte River channel.

roosting on its restored braided channels and using the newly created prairie sloughs. The following summer, federally threatened piping plovers and endangered least terns nested successfully on the sandbar islands, marking the first time in a decade that either species had been documented nesting in the channel on the Big Bend reach of the Platte. Needless to say, conservation was getting an early return on its investment.

The land was dedicated in April 2007 in memory of the Commission's longtime nongame bird program manager, John Dinan, who died of cancer in 2005 at the age of 51. The John J. Dinan Memorial Bird Conservation Area continues to be a restoration success story and is managed as part of the five miles of river corridor and adjacent lands at Rowe. Now, almost four years later, whooping cranes continue to be seen on this reach of river, least terns and piping plovers have nested successfully on the nesting islands every year since 2007, and its mix of riparian habitats serve

the needs of a vast diversity of both resident and migratory wildlife – everything from cranes to waterfowl, shorebirds to snakes, native fish, otters, mink, bobcat and deer.

Over his 28-year career, John Dinan was keen at identifying threats to the threatened and endangered wildlife he cared so much about. His easy manner, deep knowledge of the natural world and focused, common sense approach also made him just as keenly adept at finding solutions and moving conservation forward. His work and vision on least terns and piping plovers, for



Left: The tine of a white-tailed deer reaches upward out of a foot of snow on restored prairie.

Above: In early fall, a doe pauses along the woodland edge on its way to the river.



example, helped establish the Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership, and his careful field observations helped guide the design of the nesting islands on the site that now honors his memory.

Today, the rich diversity of wildlife on the land that bears Dinan's name is testament to the commitment and impact that he and so many of his colleagues in conservation, past and present, have had working as guardians of the river and its

wildlife, protecting part of our natural heritage here in Nebraska for us and future generations. ■

A NEBRASKALand contributing editor, Lincoln-based wildlife photographer Michael Forsberg's work has appeared in numerous publications, such as *Audubon*, *National Geographic* and *National Wildlife*.

He can be contacted at the Michael Forsberg Gallery, 100 North 8th St., Suite 150, Lincoln, NE 68508. Call (402) 477-5030, or go to www.michaelforsberg.com.



BOGBEAN

Text and photo by Jon Farrar

This obscure plant seems a bit misnamed.

Some common names for plants cannot help but pique your curiosity – spotted touch-me-not (why not touch it?), spotted Joe-Pye weed (who was Joe Pye?), bastard toad-flax (you have to wonder about that entire name) and, one of my favorites, the bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*).

The common name is intriguing because the plant is not in the bean family. In fact, it is the only plant in its genus, meaning it has no close relatives, which is uncommon in the botanical world. Furthermore, Nebraska does not have bogs, yet the “bogbean” grows here. The plant is also known by a host of other common names – buckbean, bog myrtle, bog hop, bog nut, brook bean, bean trefoil (a reference to its leaves being in groups of threes), marsh trefoil, bitter trefoil (a reference to the plant’s bitter properties), water shamrock, marsh clover, moon flower and bitterworm.

Before man interfered, most species of plants were homebodies by nature – seldom found on more than one continent, typically only in specific regions of a continent and often only at very specific sites. The bogbean is native to the northern half of the temperate zone (the band of earth between the tropics and the Arctic) of North America, Asia and Europe. While the species is considered “widespread, abundant, and secure globally,” botanists consider it rare in Nebraska, as it has been found at relatively few sites in the northern Sandhills region where its narrow habitat requirements are met – shallow water or saturated soils, particularly in fens.

Fens are wetlands with highly organic soils composed of peat (partially decomposed plant parts) and muck (decomposing peat) that accumulated over thousands of years in beds that may be many feet thick. In contrast, bogs are found in more moist, cool states and provinces, particularly north and east of Nebraska. Bogs have acidic soils, receive water principally from precipitation and are relatively infertile. Fens are fed by groundwater that has passed through mineral soils and so are richer in nutrients, less acidic and provide a more hospitable environment for plants than bogs.

About 40 fens sites have been identified in Cherry County, and others occur elsewhere in the state. Fens often support plants considered ice-age relics – plants that persisted here even after the glaciers

retreated north and the Great Plains climate became warmer and drier. These plants survived because of the constant seepage of cool groundwater. Sandhills fens support a number of ice-age relic plants – cotton grass (*Eriophorum polystachion*), bog violet (*Viola nephrophylla*), marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*), western red lily (*Lillium philadelphicum*) and others.

Bogbean is a perennial aquatic herb, meaning it lives more than one year, but the above ground portion dies back each autumn. It grows from a creeping rhizome – an underground stem that gives rise to roots and stalks that rise above the ground or above the water surface and bear leaves and flowering stalks.

When growing in shallow water, bogbean may establish dense colonies of substantial extent, but on saturated soils in wet meadows bogbean often appears as solitary plants or in small, localized colonies. Its three somewhat fleshy and smooth leaves are borne on the ends of otherwise leafless stems. The flowers, as many as 30, radiate out from an erect, central stalk. Unopened flowers are pinkish, but when the blossoms open the five petals are white and fringed with cottony hairs.

In Nebraska, bogbean is usually in flower from late-May through June, but it is occasionally found blooming in the summer. The fruit is a remotely bean-like capsule approximately 5/8-inch long and containing many shiny, yellowish-brown seeds. Bogbean spreads both by seeds and its creeping rhizomes.

Throughout history, particularly in Europe, extracts and decoctions from bogbean have been used as a cure for scurvy, rheumatism, gout, a dozen other ailments and to stimulate the appetite. An extract from its bitter-tasting leaves has been used in beer-making, as “bitters” in mixed drinks, and in herbal cigarettes.

The chances of seeing a bogbean in flower in Nebraska are remote unless one searches for them in just the right places, although a Sandhills rancher mowing hay too near a lake or marsh might catch a glimpse of them just before his tractor sinks in up to its axles. Colonies of bogbeans look somewhat like an aquatic weed patch, but upon close examination the lavishly fringed flowers are a delight. ■



Sublime Beauty

The American White Pelican

Text by Elizabeth Mack
Photos by Rick Rasmussen

Imagine looking up into a blue Nebraska sky and seeing hundreds of white pelicans gliding through the air, their massive, black-tipped wings carrying them effortlessly over the prairie below. Lewis and Clark observed just such a mesmerizing scene as their expedition made its way along the Missouri River more than 200 years ago, noting upwards of 5,000 white pelicans feeding on a river sandbar as they traveled along what would one day become Nebraska's eastern edge.

A regular spring and fall migrant in Nebraska, the American white pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) can be found across the state, usually after lakes are clear of ice in early April. White pelicans found in Nebraska during the summer, however, are nonbreeding birds, as their nesting grounds are farther north. Researchers and biologists studying the white pelican note that nearly half of the population breeds at four major colonies along the Great Plains: Chase Lake National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in central North Dakota, Bitter Lake in northeastern South Dakota, Medicine Lake in Montana and Marsh Lake in Minnesota. The closest breeding population of white pelicans, however, is just north of Nebraska, at LaCreek NWR near Martell, South Dakota.

The American white pelican normally breeds in large colonies, with sometimes upwards of several thousand nesting pairs in one area during a breeding season. White pelicans

east of the Rockies usually breed in the Northern Great Plains and migrate along the Mississippi River, wintering in the lower Mississippi River Valley and along the Gulf of Mexico. As many as 30,000 breed at Chase Lake NWR, one of the largest breeding colonies for white pelicans in North America.

According to Joel Jorgensen, nongame bird program manager for the Nebraska Game and Park Commission, the white pelicans' lazy fall migration can last for several months, and stragglers have been sighted as late as December, with some overwintering in the state: "White pelicans have successfully overwintered almost every year at the Sutherland Reservoir cooling pond in the last few decades. Lake Ogallala is another site where pelicans seem to consistently pause during migration and end up staying. But that can often end up being a bad decision."

Jorgensen explained that for whatever reason those few birds don't migrate, whether due to illness, weakness or other conditions, the consequence is often fatal and some of the birds that remain in Nebraska do not survive the state's harsh winters. However, Jorgensen said, those pelicans that stay at Sutherland's cooling pond, where heated water is discharged from the nearby power plant, do fairly well.

White pelicans, one of North America's largest birds, cover great distances during their migration. Birds banded at Chase Lake NWR have been recovered as far south as El Salvador and Nicaragua, although most pelicans summering in the northern Great Plains winter along the Gulf Coast, mainly in Mississippi and Louisiana.

Pelicans fly cross-country at high

altitudes to maximize their soaring performance. Although their massive wings – more than nine feet across from wing tip to wing tip – are not built for speed, pelicans can easily ride thermal updrafts, gliding with relatively little effort expended. On long distance flights, pelicans practice formation flying (the V-pattern of flying so commonly seen in flocks of geese). This aerodynamically efficient mode of flying is further enhanced by the pelicans' flapping and gliding in coordinated harmony, which also can improve their flight efficiency by reducing turbulence.

Other large birds fly with their neck extended, but the white pelican is one of the few to fly with its head pulled back onto its body. Paul Johnsgard, Foundation Professor Emeritus of Biological Sciences at the University of Nebraska and one of America's leading ornithologists, reasons: "Because of the weight of the head, with its long and heavy beak and pouch, it is less tiring to carry the head back on the shoulders, and it may move the center of gravity back somewhat, improving flight stability." In flight, the white pelican displays the same plumage pattern as snow

geese and whooping cranes – all white with black wingtips – and is often confused with them. Pelicans, however, flap their wings much more slowly than geese or cranes, and the pelican's distinctive yellow-orange bill should distinguish it from other large, white birds.

White pelicans do not plunge dive for their prey like brown pelicans, the only other pelican species found in the United States; instead, they simply swim along the water surface, scooping up their favorite food – carp, suckers, crayfish, salamanders and chubs. In the Nebraska Sandhills, bullheads and minnows are also an important food source. White pelicans can eat up to four pounds of fish a day (one adult can eat upwards of 40 percent of its own body mass a day during the breeding season), trapping the fish in their large bills and landing them in their substantial, bucket-like pouches. As the pelican lifts its fish-filled bill, water slowly drains from the pouch. On occasions they feed in synchronized groups, trapping schools of fish in shallow water.

Shallow lakes and marshes are attractive feeding grounds



American white pelicans loaf in early morning light on a gravel bar at Calamus State Recreation Area near Burwell.



With powerful wingbeats, a white pelican lifts off at Calamus SRA.



for white pelicans, and once they find a waterbody that suits their needs, they will settle in until it’s time to move to a new location with a full stock of food. Some of Nebraska’s reservoirs that regularly attract migrating or nonbreeding pelicans during the spring and summer months include Branched Oak Reservoir outside of Lincoln, and Lake

Pelican Reproduction Facts

- White pelicans typically lay a two-egg clutch.
- White pelicans nest only on the ground, in subtle depressions 2-3 feet across and only a few inches high.
- Both parents incubate the eggs with the help of their large webbed feet.
- Once eggs begin to hatch, they are shifted to the top of the feet, probably to avoid crushing.
- Eggs are hatched 2-3 days apart; the older bird being stronger will often be the only one to survive.
- Newly hatched chicks are blind, featherless and totally dependant on their parents for survival.
- Parents feed their young by regurgitating semi-digested food.
- Adults feeding young will fly up to 100 miles a day to forage for food.

McConaughy and Lake Ogalalla in Keith County, as well as Clear Creek Wildlife Management Area just to the northwest, which is considered to have one of the largest and most diverse birding populations in the Great Plains. Located in south-central Nebraska, Harlan County Reservoir is also home to large numbers of white pelicans and other migrating birds every year, including Canada geese, ducks and even the rare gull or two. With more than 13,000 acres of water, Harlan County is the southernmost large body of water in Nebraska, so it’s usually the first in the state to see the migrating birds each spring. The lakes and marshes on Valentine NWR in north-central Nebraska are attractive summer feeding grounds for white pelicans. Although they’ve been known to lay eggs at Valentine NWR, there are no records of successful nesting there. When asked if it would be likely or possible for white pelicans to nest in Nebraska, Johnsgard stated: “I would think that pelicans might be able to nest in Nebraska, but Lake McConaughy fluctuates too much to allow it, even though its fish population supports a large number of summering, mostly immature, pelicans. Some of the larger lakes at the Crescent Lake or Valentine refuges might have the sandy islands that they would need . . . I have only seen them nesting on fairly large marshes or lakes where there is little human disturbance, often in association with cormorants. Pelicans need low, sandy or gravelly islands on lakes or large marshes where there is very little water fluctuation. I doubt if many such conditions exist in the state.” Research biologists at Chase Lake in North Dakota studying their populations have been banding white pelicans for years, and many of those banded birds have turned up in

Nebraska. Tommy King, research wildlife biologist with the USDA National Wildlife Research Center, said: “We’ve been color banding pre-fledged American white pelicans at Chase Lake since the summer of 2000 for a research study looking at colony dynamics of the species.” According to King’s research, sustained productivity at this and the other three major Plains’ colonies is crucial to the entire white pelican population. Because white pelicans are colonial breeders, they are especially vulnerable to disturbances such as severe weather events, human disturbance, predation of colony nesting sites and disease. In recent years, researchers have zeroed in on one potentially catastrophic disease to the white pelican – West Nile virus. Marsha Sovada, a research wildlife biologist with Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center in North Dakota, has been studying the impact of West Nile virus on the white pelican. According to her research, unusually large numbers of near-fledging white pelicans have tested positive for the disease at the four major northern Plains’ breeding colonies ever since West Nile virus first arrived in the region back in 2002. Sovada’s research noted West Nile virus in pelican chicks following a seasonal rise of the mosquito (*Culex tarsalis*) that carries the disease. Mortality rates fell dramatically in 2006, but that was probably attributable to near drought conditions in the region and, hence, lower mosquito populations. Sovada said researchers have found that it’s the pelican chicks, not the adults, that seem susceptible to the virus: “Among colonial species, pelicans were the first documented to have such high rates of chick mortality attributed to West Nile virus.” No adult pelicans with West Nile have been found at any of the colonies. Sovada and

other biologists are now investigating the possibility the virus could be transmitted bird-to-bird, but as of yet, no definitive conclusions have been made. Fertility and reproduction success of American white pelicans plummeted during the hard-pesticide era (1940s-1970s) and many breeding colonies vanished. Additionally, biologists are finding that suitable nesting habitat free of human disturbance is rapidly declining across the United States. White pelicans were listed as endangered in Canada for years, but the protection of nesting colonies there has resulted in populations increasing, so they have been removed from the endangered status. However, in other places, such as the state of Washington, the white pelican has been disappearing from historic breeding areas and is still considered endangered. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) identifies three major factors limiting the success of white pelicans: habitat destruction, utilization of wetlands and lakes for other purposes (irrigation, hydroelectricity, waterfowl production), and human and predator disturbance of nesting colonies. In 2004, Chase Lake NWR experienced a total nest abandonment on one of their major white pelican nesting peninsulas. None of the abandoned eggs or chicks survived. The USFWS manager at Chase NWR, Natoma Buskness, believes a pair of coyotes was the cause: “We found a coyote den on the peninsula where the abandonment took place. The white pelicans have returned to Chase, but will not return to that peninsula, even though we have removed the den. We are confident that coyote predation was the cause, though we can never be 100 percent sure.” In Washington, where white pelican populations had been falling, habitat destruction is one of the leading factors



A white pelican carefully uses its large bill to preen its feathers.

contributing to their endangerment. However, according to Madonna Luers, Public Information Officer for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, their numbers are finally showing some improvement, with the number of breeding pairs up: “The increase in breeding pairs might be due to improvements in the past decade in areas where we have lots of non-breeding bird use. A good example is the Yakima River, which was cleaned up, mostly through irrigation system changes, in a multi-agency effort. Water

clarity (which helps the birds fish) has improved and toxins in sediments have been reduced as well.”

Protective legislation and improved conservation efforts have contributed to reversing population declines in other areas as well. Tommy King speculates the increase may be due to a number of factors, including the expansion of the aquaculture industry in the southeastern United States, which may be helping more pelicans in the east survive the winter by providing an abundant food source. However, the resulting conflicts with catfish farms are causing concern.

According to the National Wildlife Research Center, the production of farm-raised catfish has increased dramatically in the last 25 years. Because of the high fish-stocking rates, the ponds provide an attractive foraging environment for the white pelican, which causes a significant economic loss for catfish producers. Additionally, white pelicans have been identified as one of the hosts of commercial catfish parasites which have been responsible for the loss of entire catfish populations.

“The American white pelican transmittal of the trematode parasite remains a major problem for catfish producers in the Southeast,” according to King, who, along with other researchers, estimates production losses of \$27.1 million for Mississippi catfish farmers alone due to the parasites. Although King states that pelicans cannot be totally prevented from foraging on catfish ponds, he believes their foraging can be greatly reduced.

Although the white pelican population seems to be increasing in some areas east of the Rockies while

decreasing in others, King said researchers can’t be sure without a continental survey: “We don’t know what effect the disease problem is having, but it appears they are still moving eastward into new areas. But because there is no funding to do a thorough survey, we don’t really know what is going on with the white pelican population.”

Before any questions about the pelican population can be answered, King said, researchers must first accurately determine how many there are now. But that will take

money, which is in short supply when it comes to pelicans:

“Everybody likes these birds, even the fish farmers, though they’d rather not have them eat their fish. But when it comes time for funding, there is apparently no interest, and with the economic times the way they are, it’s probably only going to get worse.”

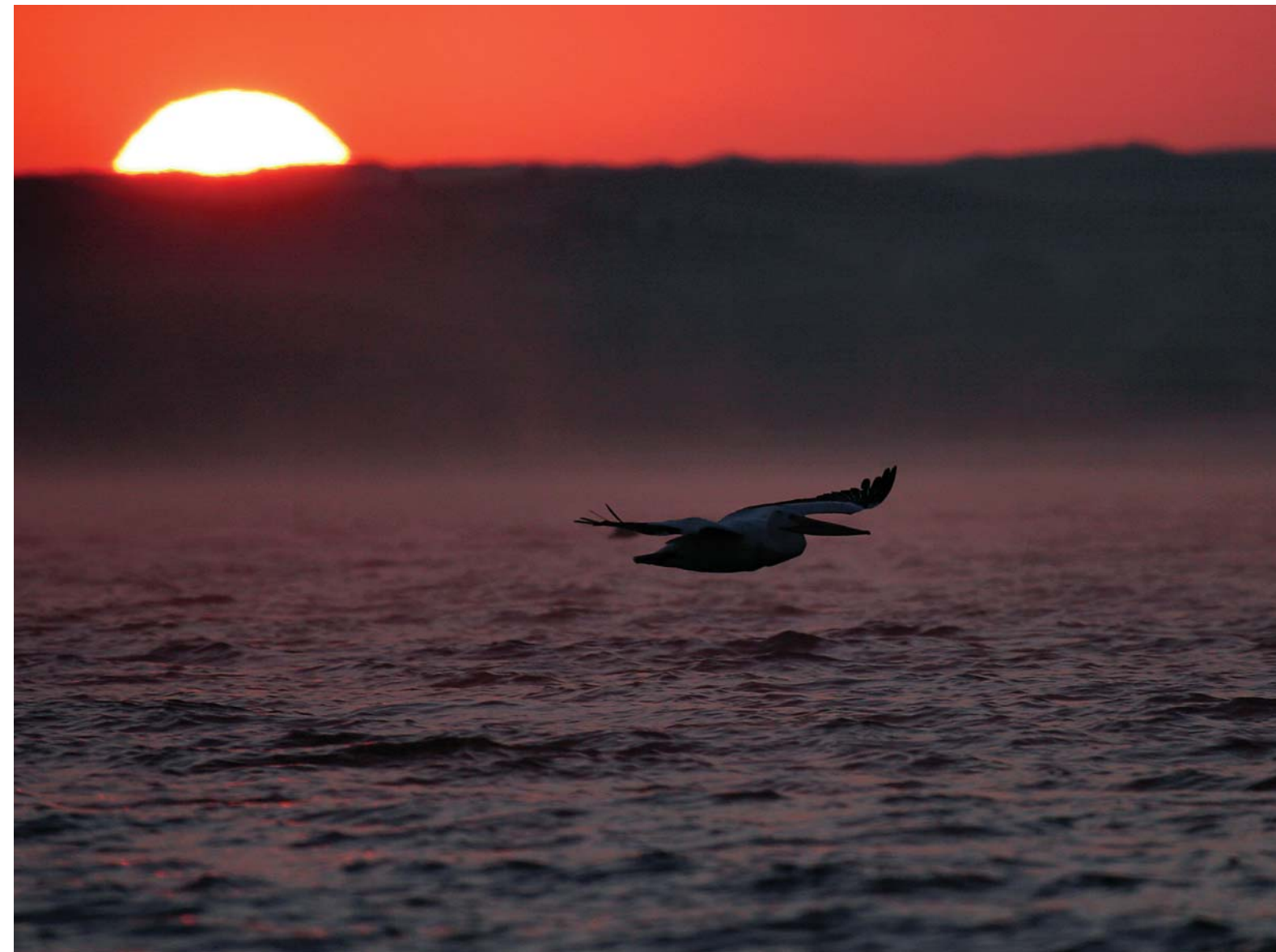
For now, American white pelicans remain a majestic presence across the Great Plains, just as they were in the time of Lewis and Clark. Masters of aerial precision, a graceful, gliding procession of white pelicans is truly a remarkable sight to behold. ■

Tommy King, Research Wildlife Biologist with the National Wildlife Research Center would like to request that any banded White Pelican sighting please be turned in to the Bird Banding Lab at:

<http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbl/homepage/recwobnd.cfm>.

(The author would like to note the scientific and population information was taken from Paul Johnsgard’s Cormorants, Darters, and Pelicans of the World; Jon Farrar’s Birding Nebraska; Sharpe, Silcock and Jorgensen’s Birds of Nebraska; Tommy King’s Interaction Between the American White Pelican and Aquaculture in the Southeastern US; and The National Audubon Society’s Waterbirds.

Elizabeth Mack is a freelance writer living in Omaha. Her last feature story in NEBRASKALAND Magazine was November 2009: “Pigeons – The Most Misunderstood Bird.”



As dawn’s sun clears the horizon, a solitary pelican leaves its roost and flies out to find some breakfast at Calamus SRA.

Year of the Walleye

By Eric Fowler

Nebraska's state record walleye was caught almost 40 years ago, but indications are there may be a new record swimming around even as you read this.

Of the 50 hook-and-line records on the books in Nebraska, only six have stood longer than the 16 pound, 2 ounce walleye Herbert Cutshall of Ogallala landed on Lake McConaughy in July 1971. Of those, only one – a 10 lb.-11 oz. largemouth bass caught in 1965 – ranks with walleye among the top five game fish most sought by anglers.

Will the state walleye record ever be broken? Nebraska Game and Parks Commission fisheries biologists say based on some recent catches, it could. And if it is, it will most likely happen in one of two waters: the unchannelized Missouri River in Boyd County or Lake McConaughy.

Of the two locations, the odds may be better on the Missouri River. In March of 2009, an 18-pound, egg-laden female was caught in gill nets set by biologists studying paddlefish below Fort Randall Dam, just five miles from the Nebraska state line. In the same net, they caught a 15-pound walleye, and in July they netted another that weighed 15-9. All fish were released and could still be alive and even larger. Another fish caught in the Fort Randall tailwaters in November 2002 matched Nebraska's record and set a new one for South Dakota.

"There are some mega-giant walleye up there in the Fort Randall tailwaters,"

said Brenda Pracheil, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln graduate student who led the Commission's sampling crew.

Jeff Schuckman, who manages northeastern Nebraska fisheries from the Commission's Norfolk office, said tagging studies have shown walleye do indeed move up and down that reach of the Missouri River, some long distances. Fish tagged in the Fort Randall tailwaters have been caught as far downriver as Lewis and Clark Lake and vice versa, although most fish stay where they were tagged.

"There's an opportunity for a big walleye anywhere in that system up there," Schuckman said, adding that while fish tend to stack up below the reservoirs, there are also sections of the river downstream from the dam that are also good walleye fisheries, especially the area where the Missouri first flows into Nebraska.

Above: Randy Richards of North Platte holds a 32-inch, 14.98-pound walleye he caught from Lake McConaughy last April, the second largest walleye submitted for a Master Angler award in 2009.

Right: Brenda Pracheil holds the 18-pound walleye a fisheries research crew caught in the Missouri River below Fort Randall Dam last March, a photo Pracheil says doesn't do the fish justice.



A lucky angler could pull a state record walleye from Lake McConaughy this year.

PHOTO BY BOB GRIER

Daryl Bauer, fisheries outreach program manager for the Commission, said of all the state's reservoirs, McConaughy has the best chance of producing a new record, largely because three fish caught there in recent years came within a pound of the mark: a 15-8 walleye in 2008 and a 15-4 in 2009, both of which were kept, and a 35-incher that was released in 2001 after tipping the angler's scale at 15-12.

Being the state's largest reservoir, Big Mac also has the most walleye, upping the odds that one can live long enough

to grow to record proportions. And the introduction of alewife into the reservoir in 1986 to help alleviate the boom-and-bust cycles that can come with gizzard shad, McConaughy's primary prey fish to that point, "literally super-sized everything" in the lake, helping walleye grow fast and fat, Bauer said.

The Commission gives Master Angler awards for kept walleye weighing eight pounds or more or released fish measuring 28 inches or longer. While a walleye can reach eight pounds in just six years in ideal habitat conditions stocked with abundant food, Bauer said it takes eight to 10 years for most to reach that size, and it may take 15 to 20 years for a walleye to reach state-record proportions.

Historic sampling records have shown that good walleye fishing in McConaughy is tied to lake levels, said Bauer. When the lake is full, reproduction is high and results in good fishing in the years that follow.

Cutshall's fish could have been the product of the first high-water period at the lake, Bauer said. While Kingsley Dam was completed and Lake McConaughy began filling in 1941, the reservoir didn't reach capacity until 1951. Twenty years later, Nebraska's walleye record was set.

Another high-water period stretched from 1983 to 1987, resulting in the

highest walleye abundance to date in 1988. In 1996, the number of trophy walleye caught in Big Mac began to take off, and between 1997 and 2002, an average of 333 Master Angler awards were issued annually, making it one of the best walleye fisheries in the Midwest. Bauer said those fish, which included a 15-pounder caught in 1996, were likely survivors from excellent production in the late 1980s that grew up on alewives. "I expected that if we were going to bust the record, the early 2000s were probably the best time," Bauer said.

While that window of opportunity closed, another appears to be opening. Drawn to what seemed at the time to be abysmally low levels in 1991, Big Mac's water rose significantly in 1993 and stayed there through 1999, again producing an abundance of walleye. "We're 17 years out from that," Bauer said, "so that's probably those 15-pound fish we're seeing now."

Bauer is happy to see those big fish being caught. He'd worried chances weren't as good at setting a new record this time around due to the nature of the recent drought-induced, record low water levels at Lake McConaughy. At the same time, however, with lake levels now recovering and expected to be the highest since 2000, the stage is also being set for another glut of big walleye in the years to come.

Record Walleye



Nebraska's walleye record ranks favorably among other midwestern states, according to Daryl Bauer, fisheries outreach program manager for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

The list below contains all Midwestern walleye records as well as those from other states that top Nebraska's. In an apples to apples comparison on habitat, only Colorado and Wyoming top Nebraska. Bauer said the records from southeastern states, including Missouri, are from a larger strain of walleye. As one would expect, records from traditional walleye-belt states such as Minnesota are bigger than Nebraska's. As for Montana and other points to the west, Bauer said those fish grow bigger than ours thanks to a diet of trout.

State	Weight	Year
Kansas	13.16	1996
Iowa	14.5	1986
North Dakota	15.75	1959
Nebraska	16.13	1971
South Dakota	16.13	2002
New Mexico	16.56	1989
New York	16.56	2009
Michigan	17.19	1951
Idaho	17.38	2006
Wyoming	17.42	1991
Minnesota	17.5	1979
Pennsylvania	17.56	1980
Montana	17.75	2007
Wisconsin	18	1933
Colorado	18.81	1997
West Virginia	18.97	2004
Oregon	19.15	1990
Washington	19.3	2007
Missouri	21.1	1988
Kentucky	21.5	1958
Arkansas	22.69	1982
Tennessee	25.0	1960

Whether the next record walleye is swimming in Big Mac, the Missouri River or somewhere else, setting it may come down to timing. The 18-pound walleye biologists netted in the



PHOTO COURTESY OF BRENDA PRACHEIL

PHOTO COURTESY OF RANDY RICHARDS

EXCERPTED FROM 2009 FRESHWATER FISHING HALL OF FAME OFFICIAL WORLD AND USA STATE FRESHWATER ANGLING RECORDS

A Big Year at Big Mac?

If the weather cooperates and anglers can pattern the fish, Lake McConaughy could produce an astounding number of big walleye this year and maybe even a new state record.

When Nebraska Game and Parks Commission biologists set gill nets there last fall, they collected more fish longer than 25 inches than any other lake in the state ... way more.

Biologists averaged a total of 27 fish per gill net at Big Mac last fall, fourth highest in the state behind Swanson, Maloney and Sutherland reservoirs. But roughly one third of those fish were 25 inches or longer, a third 20 to 25 inches and another third 15 to 20 inches. According to a formula developed to estimate the total number of walleye in Lake McConaughy, there are more than 400,000 fish 15 inches or longer waiting to be caught.

"I anticipate a lot of Master Angler awards this year," said Daryl Eichner, district fisheries supervisor in charge of McConaughy and other southwestern Nebraska reservoirs, referring to awards issued by the Commission for trophy fish.

While the fall sampling haul was impressive, Eichner said the one night last April that biologists spent netting females to collect eggs for use in hatchery production was even more impressive: In just nine sets, biologists caught more than 140 females, most weighing eight pounds or more. For comparison, the best night last spring at Merritt Reservoir, the state's top lake for egg collection, produced 99 females on 32 sets.

That said, anglers haven't had nearly as much luck as biologists when it came to catching fish at Big Mac the past two years, causing some to wonder if the lake's fishery might have crashed due to extended drawdown caused by drought. Angler success measured by creel surveys was down sharply in 2008

and 2009, both in the number of fish caught and the number harvested. And only 29 Master Angler awards for walleye were earned at the lake in 2009, well below the average of 333 per year awarded from 1997 to 2002.

However, said Eichner, "Those numbers don't represent what's out there."

That may be in part to Master Angler-sized walleye being so common in McConaughy in recent years that many anglers aren't worried about getting a certificate. "I'm one of them," said Kerry Keane of Gering, who guides at Lake McConaughy and last year caught or guided anglers to 35 to 40 Master Angler-sized fish that were not submitted for awards, including one or two a day during a hot fall bite. "I haven't turned in a Master Angler for years, and I really need to, because I know the biologists like to have that data."

Eichner said several factors may have played into the overall drop in fishing success at Lake McConaughy the past two years, most notably cool spring weather and rising water levels.

The walleye fishing at Big Mac typically picks up in April when the fish stage and spawn on Kingsley Dam. Following a post-spawn lull of a week or two, the walleye bite picks up in the western half of the reservoir as water temperatures rise. From early May into June, anglers usually have the best luck drifting leeches or nightcrawlers on Lindy rigs or worm harnesses in shallow water, and catch a few fish on trolled spinner rigs or crankbaits. In July, walleye fishing slows as the fish move to deeper water. As fall approaches, success improves as fish look to fatten up for winter, but by then, fishing pressure has declined substantially.

In 2008 and 2009, however, the water was slow to

warm and the May/June bite simply never took off, Eichner said. "There would be little flurries of a hot bite, but then we would get hit by a storm front with wind and cool temperatures and the bite would die down and it would be dead for a week or more."

Keane agreed. "Last year was good once it warmed up and stabilized, but that didn't happen until mid-July. The May and June bite was horrible."

Rising water levels are a blessing and curse. Extended drought and low inflows caused the lake to dip to a record-low elevation, but reduced irrigation releases by Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District, timely rains and increased runoff from the North Platte River basin have brought water levels up 40 feet since 2006, including a 15-foot rise since February 2009. Central engineer Cory Steinke projects the lake will rise another 10 feet prior to this year's irrigation season, bringing it to within 15 feet of full pool and to 77 percent of capacity, the highest it's been since 2000.

"There's only so much carrying capacity, so fish populations adjusted accordingly," Eichner said of the low water years. "Now we're going to return to something that resembles a full McConaughy and the fish are going to have a lot more elbow room."

And with rising water expected to flood 5,000 acres of trees that grew on the exposed lakebed during the drawdown, "it's going to make it more challenging to get those fish out of shallow water on the western part of the lake," Eichner said. "It's going to be work. The guys are going into that brush, trying to find

some gaps, but it's going to be very difficult not to snag up."

The decline in angler success has helped keep walleye numbers up in Lake McConaughy, which is good considering walleye recruitment was poor the past two years, despite the stocking of 2.2 million fingerlings and 3.5 million fry.

"The 1- to 3-year-old walleye are there, but my concern is they're not there in strength," Eichner said. Poor shad reproduction and low lake levels could be to blame, Eichner said, but he hopes increasing the stocking rate in the lake this year will result in a strong year class.

Eichner's concern, however, plays into future years. For now, at least, things are shaping up for a big year for big walleye at Big Mac.

Walleye Over 15 inches in Lake McConaughy

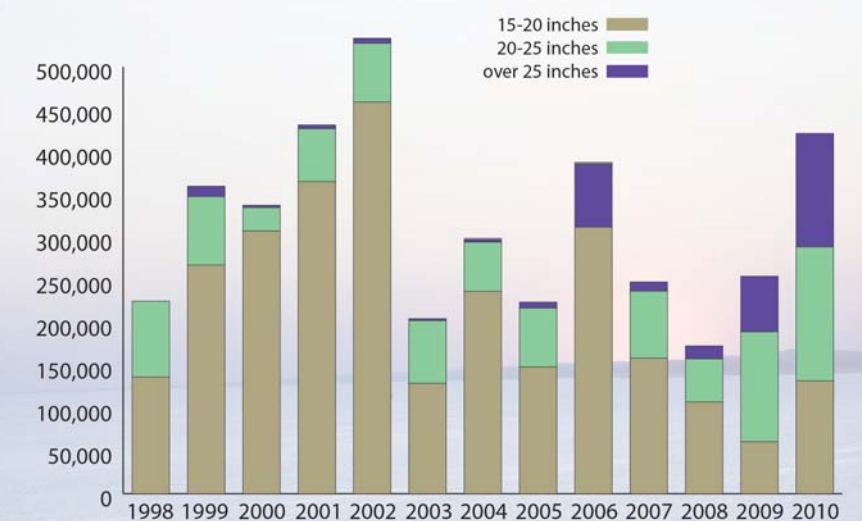


CHART GRAPHICS BY STEVE OHARE



Anglers fish Lake McConaughy near Kingsley Dam.

PHOTO BY ERIC FOWLER

Missouri River last spring was just 29 inches long. No girth measurement was taken, but the pre-spawn female was so fat it was "like holding a football," said Pracheil. "It was unbelievable. I've never seen anything like it. And we've caught a lot of big walleye."

While some may scoff at the notion that a 29-inch fish could weigh that much, Bauer said fish put on more girth than length as they age. He said the eggs the fish was carrying likely weighed between one and two pounds, meaning that the fish's post-spawn weight could still top either the Nebraska or South Dakota record. Master Angler data from McConaughy

shows 29-inch walleye weighing up to 13 pounds and a 27-incher weighing 12.

"Body mass, fat ... even what it had for supper the night before could have an influence on weight," Bauer said.

"When you talk about a state record-sized fish, that's not just a big fish, that's an exceptionally big fish. That's the rarest of the rare," Bauer said. "So habitat conditions have to be good, if not ideal. You've got to have a heckuva lot of prey to eat, and I'll tell you that in most cases those exceptionally big fish are relatively fast growing. But even if they're fast growers, they've got to live for a pretty good length of time to reach record proportions. And that

means they've got to escape anglers for a pretty good length of time."

The latter point took at least two potential record setters out of the equation. Given another year or two, the 15-pound walleyes caught in Big Mac in recent years might have topped 16-2. Bauer always encourages anglers to release the big ones, and says he would turn a 15-pounder back himself after snapping a few photos and taking measurements for a graphite mount. "But I'm not going to be a catch-and-release Nazi over something like that," said Bauer. "I know how danged excited you're going to be, because I would be too. That is a fish of a lifetime. A

15-pound walleye? That's unheard of."

And if an angler's scale shows he's holding a potential state record, Bauer said there is little chance that fish will survive the required trip to a certified scale and inspection by a biologist.

"Are you going to kill that fish to have a state record?" he said. "Heck yes! And have my name in all the newspapers? Yes! Almost everybody would tell you that."

So if you're looking to be the next record holder, spend some time on McConaughy or the Missouri River, and you never know. If a few fish have grown to or near a record weight, others have as well. ■

Turkey Loads for Kids

Not all recoils are created equal.

By Eric Fowler

Few people would consider the .30-06 Springfield a good caliber for a young or small-framed deer hunter – the recoil might be enough to forever impart a case of the flinches.

Yet without even thinking about it, many turkey hunting guides send this same class of hunters into the field with a shotshell load that packs a much bigger punch and leads to similar results. “If you flinch when pulling the trigger, it is very difficult to hit the head and neck of a turkey,” said Kit Hams, big game program manager with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

Store shelves are littered with a variety of magnum turkey loads, but peruse the numerous ballistics and recoil charts available online and you’ll find that the felt recoil of some is intense. A 2-ounce magnum 12-gauge load, for example, delivers 46 foot-pounds of recoil energy, nearly equaling that of a .458 Winchester, a popular rifle cartridge for game such as elephants and Cape buffalo. Even a standard 1¼-ounce, 12-gauge game load delivers more recoil than some .30-06 cartridges. “I don’t see the need for that kind of firepower,” Hams said.

A standard 12- or 20-gauge trap load with 7⁄8 to 1½ ounces of 7½ shot is a better choice for smaller hunters. While those loads still have more recoil than a .243 Winchester, a popular starter rifle, they are certainly more manageable than any magnum, and plenty deadly. Hams said if these loads can break blue rocks at 40 yards, they have plenty of pattern density and energy to kill a turkey at 30 yards or less.

The key when selecting a turkey load is to pattern several, see which performs adequately within a given range, and then take shots only within that range.

To pattern a shotgun, fire different loads at targets placed at ranges of 15 to 40 yards and select one that is capable of putting at least six pellets in the turkey’s head and neck. In Nebraska, shot sizes from No. 2 to No. 7½ are legal for turkey hunting. Larger shot delivers more energy at longer range,

but has a lower pattern density. Aftermarket turkey choke tubes that are tighter than full can bring the pattern density to acceptable levels, but at shorter ranges, the pattern from these chokes can be too tight. A standard full choke will work, but at close ranges, a modified choke may be a better choice, giving a beginning hunter room for error.

Turkey targets are available at most outdoor retailers, but hunters can print their own from several web sites, including the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission’s. For the latter, simply type “turkey target” in the search box. Free targets are also available at most Commission offices.

For first time hunters, the practice that comes with patterning a shotgun will be invaluable when that big gobbler steps into range. And Johnny or will be so excited, they won’t even notice the recoil. ■

Turkey permits are \$5 for those age 15 and under. Also, there is no minimum age to hunt turkeys in Nebraska.

Rifle vs. Shotgun Recoil Comparison			
Firearm (gauge/caliber)	Bullet/Shot (grains/ounces)	Gun Weight (pounds)	Recoil (foot-pounds)
.243 Win.	100 gr	7.5	10.9
20 GA	7⁄8 oz.	6.5	12.2
20 GA	1 oz.	6.5	16.2
12 GA	1½ oz.	7.5	18.2
.270	130 gr.	8	20.1
20 GA	1¼ oz.	6.5	23.2
.30-06 Spgfld.	180 gr.	8	23.5
12 GA	1¼ oz.	7.5	26.9
12 GA	1½ oz.	7.5	28.9
12 GA	1½ oz.	7.5	33.7
.338 Win.	225 gr.	9	34.6
.375 H&H	270 gr.	10	36.2
12 GA	1½ oz.	7.5	40.4
12 GA	2 oz.	7.5	46.0
.458 Win.	510 gr	10	51.1
12 GA	2¼ oz.	8	60.6

Data compiled by Kit Hams using common loads and the recoil formula found in the Lyman Reloading Handbook. Recoil values can vary widely with changes to powder charge, velocity and gun weight. Auto-loading shotguns will absorb some of the felt recoil, which also factors in recoil velocity. Online calculators can be used to determine the recoil of your load.



To find out which loads work best in your gun, pattern your shotgun using a turkey target.

Spittle Bugs

A little spittle goes a long way for this beguiling bug.

By Chris Helzer

One of my favorite things to show kids on nature hikes is spittle bug froth on the stem of plants. I always tell them the same thing – spittle bugs make the froth to keep them from drying out and to protect them from predators while they feed on the sap of the plant. It’s a fine story, but short and incomplete.

In this case, the longer story is worth telling. Spittle bugs are small members of the order of true bugs (*Hemiptera*), along with cicadas, aphids and boxelder bugs. They are often ¼-inch in length as full-grown adults and tend to hop rather than fly, although they have functional wings. Spittle bugs are also sometimes called froghoppers because their heads resemble those of frogs if you look really closely. Like other true bugs, they have sucking mouth parts, and spittle bugs feed by inserting their strawlike beak into plants and sucking out the juices.

And that’s where the story starts to get interesting. If you remember your high-school biology, plants have two types of tissue that transport nutrients: xylem and phloem. Most sap-sucking insects feed on the nutrient-rich phloem, which transports sugars made by photosynthesis to the rest of the plant. Spittle bugs, on the other hand, feed on xylem, which transports nutrients captured by the roots. Xylem is much less nutrient-rich than phloem, so it takes a lot more of it to get the proper amount of amino acids the spittle bugs need for growth and development.

Processing large amounts of liquid through one’s body is a challenge for any of us, but spittle bug nymphs turn their extra effluent into something useful. As they feed, the nymphs excrete excess liquid out their anus. On the way out, the liquid is mixed with another substance that increases its surface viscosity. The mixture is forced

out of the body under pressure, mixes with air and forms bubbles – up to 80 bubbles per minute in some species. As the bubbles emerge, the nymph reaches back with its legs and pulls the bubbles forward and over its back to



Inside this frothy mass of bubbles, a tiny spittle bug nymph feeds on the sap of a rosinweed plant.

create the foamy glob from which the insect gets its name.

Of course, because the bubbles come out the wrong end to be called spit, the term “spittle bug” is not technically correct. (Maybe the technically-correct alternatives are even worse?) However, the appearance of the foamy glob does look much like someone hocked a particularly good loogie, so to speak. Whatever you call it, the glob does seem to serve several important purposes, including protection from desiccation, temperature extremes and predation.

Spittle bugs of various species can be found on almost any kind of plant that has a stem, including grasses,

broad-leaved plants, and trees. In some cases they are considered pests, probably more because the “spittle” is disgusting to gardeners rather than the bugs actually causing much harm to plants. Two exceptions may be that spittle bugs can cause lower yields and smaller fruits in strawberries, and can increase the risk of diseases to pine trees.

Recently, an article in the journal *Nature* provides one more interesting fact about spittle bugs – they’re champion jumpers. In fact, they make the previous champions, fleas, look bad by comparison. One British species of spittle bug, only ¼ of an inch in size, can jump two feet in the air! In case that doesn’t immediately sound impressive to you, consider this – that would be the equivalent of you jumping over the Gateway Arch in St. Louis. As an additional comparison, in order to make that jump, spittle bugs have to take off with more than 400 times the force of gravity (fleas only manage a measly 135 times). Humans can generally only handle three times the force of gravity (3 G’s) before passing out.

The next time I show a group of fourth graders some spittle bug froth I might add the information about how high spittle bugs can jump to my short story. Otherwise, I’ll probably skip the rest of the longer story – partly because of time, but mostly because even the short story provides more than enough fodder for bathroom humor to kids that age. Talking in depth about spittle bugs to people that still giggle about bubbles in the bathtub is probably a bad idea. ■

Chris Helzer is a regular contributor to NEBRASKALAND. He is the Eastern Nebraska Program Director for The Nature Conservancy.



Volunteers Across Nebraska

Outdoor opportunities abound for those willing to help.

By Bob Grier

Volunteers are increasingly important contributors to the outdoor recreational experiences enjoyed by the millions of visitors that come each year to Nebraska's 86 state parks,

scheduled for May 8," said Ridder, "but volunteer projects begin earlier and continue throughout the spring and summer on many areas across the state."

The Take Pride projects are not limited to state parks system – volunteers can work with Commission biologists on critical habitat work on wildlife management areas and public fishing waters statewide.

By April, a list of volunteer projects under the umbrella of the national volunteer day activities will be listed on the state parks web site at OutdoorNebraska.org.

The campground host program operates May 1 through September 15 each year at the larger state park and recreation area campgrounds throughout Nebraska. Campground

hosts welcome visitors, acquaint them with park facilities and act as liaisons with park staff. Individuals over 18 years old may serve as campground hosts, but volunteer hosts must be willing

to spend a minimum of two weeks at the park, with a maximum of four weeks. Hosts receive free camping with electrical hookups and the use of other park facilities, including shower houses if available.

"There are nearly 30 participating campground areas requiring hosts," said Ridder, "and more information about the program is available on the state parks web site or in the campground host brochure available at most state parks and Commission offices. We're seeing increasing interest each year from volunteers that wish to become hosts, and the park system's current need is to provide hosts on campgrounds scattered across western Nebraska."

More information about the state park volunteer programs is available on the Commission's web site or by calling Suzanne Ridder at (402) 471-1623. Volunteers can also register for different programs on the web site's volunteer pages, found by first selecting the "State Parks" link at the top of the OutdoorNebraska.org home page, then the "I Want To" link on the upper right of the parks division's home page. ■



PHOTO BY DEB KENNEDY

Members of a Chadron Boy Scouts troop plant trees at Fort Robinson State Park near Crawford.

state historical parks, state recreational areas and state recreational trails. In the current era of stretched budgets and limited resources, these volunteers have become a critical component in protecting and preserving one of the best state park systems in the country.

"The Nebraska state park volunteer programs include the national Take Pride in America Day annual events each spring and summer, as well as the VIP program – Volunteers In the Parks – and the popular campground host program on state park campgrounds," said Suzanne Ridder, an administrative assistant with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission's parks division.

As always, volunteers are needed this year to help carry out a wide variety of important projects at state parks across Nebraska, including tree planting, trail maintenance, trail marker/sign repair and replacement, improving handicap access, and shoreline, roadside and trailside cleanups.

"The official Take Pride in America Day (a day dedicated to volunteer events across the country) for 2010 is



PHOTO BY SUZANNE RIDDER

Michelle Cangelosi and Lindsay Larson paint picnic tables at Branched Oak State Recreation Area near Raymond.

St. Deroin Cemetery

The last remains are a schoolhouse and cemetery at Indian Cave State Park.

By Jon Farrar

William Cutler, in *Andreas' History of the State of Nebraska* published in 1882, wrote that the town of Deroin was founded on the bank of the Missouri River in 1854 by Robert Hawke, Joseph Deroin and others. The town was later renamed "Saint Deroin" to boost the town's appeal, suggesting the prosperous downstream towns of St. Joseph and St. Louis.

Deroin, the son of a French trapper and Oto woman, was born near Bellevue in 1819 and moved to the largest remaining Oto village near the mouth of the Platte River in 1836. He moved to a 640-acre tract of land in Nemaha and Richardson counties in 1842 on the 138,000-acre Nemaha Half-Breed Reservation, established by the 1830 Treaty of Prairie du Chien. The reservation was created for homeless offspring of trappers who married Native Americans, including Omaha, Iowa, Oto, Yankton Sioux and Santee Sioux. During its early days, the reservation was home for about 230 residents of mixed heritage, including 111 orphans. Deroin apparently operated a trading post on the site before the town of Deroin was established. Deroin's trading post became a general store for the sale of goods to the Oto Indians residing on the reservation. Deroin was killed in 1858 while attempting to collect \$6 for a pig from a settler. His attacker was tried and acquitted.

In 1859, Judge A. J. Ritter opened a general merchandise store with his son; and a post office was established in 1861 with Ritter appointed postmaster. A schoolhouse and flouring-mill were built in 1868. St. Deroin was an



PHOTO BY JON FARRAR

The St. Deroin cemetery was established in 1866.

important shipping point for grain, and a ferry shuttled passengers and goods across the Missouri River. The town prospered in the 1870s, reaching its high point with a population at about 300 and nearly 20 businesses, including two blacksmith shops, saw and grist mills, and a hotel. Three physicians were in residence. By the 1880s, only about 90 people still resided in the little river town.

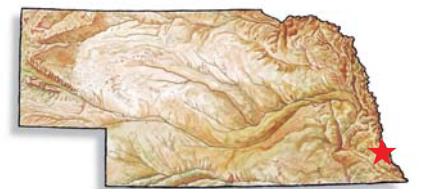
In 1903 the Burlington Railroad was completed through the nearby towns of Shubert and Nemaha City, carrying passengers and freight faster than by river boat, and St. Deroin was left to wither. The final blow to St. Deroin was a flood in 1911, washing most of the town downstream. Some buildings

survived and were moved from the floodplain to the foot of the bluffs. By the 1920s the town had been abandoned except for the school and graveyard. The school was used until 1944.

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission acquired the first tract of land in 1962 to establish Indian Cave State Park. Today the park covers more than 3,000 acres, most of which is wooded Missouri River bluffs, and the former site of St. Deroin. The school was restored by the Commission in 1978.

The only other remnant of the once prosperous river town is the St. Deroin cemetery, where residents were first interred in 1866. As with many cemeteries, legends are attached to St. Deroin's. One is that Joseph Deroin was buried there atop his horse. Another legend tells that A.J. Ritter lost an arm while using dynamite to stun fish. His arm was buried west of the town. When Ritter died he was buried in the St. Deroin cemetery. It once was told by locals that Ritter occasionally arose from his grave at night in

search of his arm. Many of the old tombstones are still standing, and the cemetery is a favorite stop for park visitors. ■



Indian Cave State Park is located 10 miles south of Brownville and 5 miles east on S 64E. A pristine area devoted to camping, hiking, backpacking, picnicking, nature and wilderness activities, it has 3,052 rugged acres bordering the Missouri River in Richardson County. Park entry permit required.

ATTRACTIONS/EVENTS

WILDERNESS SURVIVAL CLASS - Start a fire with the bow-drill method, build a survival shelter, be introduced to primitive traps, cordage, flint knapping, edible and medicinal plants, water location and purification, and much more! Go to www.greatplainstracker.com.

BOOKS/PUBLICATIONS/VIDEOS

EXPLORE NEBRASKA art, history, culture and the

GUN DOG TRAINING

All Sporting Breeds

All dogs worked on foot – no horses. Obedience included. Midwest's finest facilities.

Started and trained dogs for sale.

"Training for hunters by hunters."

Wilderness Kennels
Henry Sader-Lincoln, NE
(402) 423-4212

www.wildernesskennels.com

great outdoors with a subscription to Nebraska Life Magazine. One year (six issues) for \$21 or two years (12 issues) just \$38. Phone (800) 777-6159, write us at 206 W Norfolk Ave, Norfolk NE 68702-0819 or visit www.NebraskaLife.com. Makes a great gift.

DOGS

PLUM CREEK KENNEL. German shorthairs, stud service, puppies and started dogs. Training for all pointing breeds. Specialize in training the handler as well as the dog. Wayne Clark, Percival, Iowa (near Omaha) (712) 529-4238, clarks1@iowatelecom.net.

DUCKDAWG RETRIEVERS - Raising exceptional hunting yellow and black Labradors. Puppies raised in our home. 30-month, written health guarantee. Stud service: GRHRCH UN DuckDawg's Eba Roll the Dice and GRHRCH UH McMac Magic Eyes A'Smilin MH. The first Grand Hunting Retriever Champions in Nebraska. www.duckdawg.com Ron Green, DVM and Libby Milroy, North Platte, NE (308) 534-3659

AT STUD: GRHRCH UH Platte's TNT Duckdawg Dozer MH. First yellow Labrador in the state of Kansas to earn his Grand, Upland and Master titles. Seventy pounds of muscle, exceptional marker and blind runner Dozer is available for breeding to approved females. Natural breeding requires a brucellosis test on females. Chilled semen available. Stud Fee \$600. Contact owner Tom Phillips at (785) 635-5776 or trainer/handler - Chris Jobman at (308) 249-0707, www.flatlanderkennels.com.

PREMIER GUNDOGS TRAINING KENNEL: Expecting two litters of Labrador retriever puppies in February and March. Gundog training for all pointers, hunting retrievers and spaniels. Dale and Kris Taylor: (402) 787-2048, www.premieryundogs.com.

FLATLANDER KENNELS INC. Bayard, NE Full-time retriever training facility for the serious hunter or AKC and HRC hunt tester. Trainer of Nebraska's first and only GRHRCH's! Super Retriever Series competitor and a member of Avery's Team Waterdog. Training available for all levels of hunt tests and gundogs. Chris Jobman: (308) 249-0707, www.flatlanderkennels.com.

HAVE CANADIAN-WHEPPEL FEMALE PUDEL-POINTER, sired by German import, want to raise pups. Looking for male dog to breed. dfattig@gmail.com

FISH/FISHING

FISH FOR SALE. Catfish, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, perch, crappie, bluegill, walleye, rainbow trout, grass carp, minnows. Pleasant Valley Fish Farm, 27851 U.S. Highway 83, McCook, NE 69001. (308) 345-6599.

NEBRASKA LAKE MANAGEMENT. Biological lake surveys, fish stocking, rough fish control, lake aeration, algae control, aquatic weed control. Rob Hofpar, Aquatic Biologist, licensed, insured and qualified. (402) 784-6005 Valparaiso - (888) 850-2460 www.nelakes.net.

FOOD/GIFTS/HOME

HOME BREWING/BEER AND WINEMAKING. Fermenter's Supply, 8410 K Plaza, Suite #10, Omaha, NE 68127. Phone orders only, (888) 655-2739. Advice line (402) 593-9171. www.fermenterssupply.com.

CABIN/BUILDING/HOME Design and Construction. Full-line building materials. Schreier's Lumber Company - Verdigr, NE. "Over 100 years experience" schrlmbr@gpcom.net (402) 668-2624.

GUIDES/OUTFITTERS

CANOE - KAYAK - TUBE RENTALS on the beautiful Niobrara River with Dryland Aquatics at Sparks, Nebraska. Your Niobrara River Specialist. (800) 337-3119. www.drylandaquatics.com. info@drylandaquatics.com.

GUNS/SHOOTING/ARCHERY

GUNS – Browning, Benelli, Winchester, Ruger, etc. 1700 guns, buy-sell-trade (402) 729-6112, Bedlan's, Fairbury, NE 68352. www.bedlans.com.

OUTDOOR EQUIPMENT

IS PERFORMANCE IMPORTANT? For the finest canoes and accessories look to Great Plains Canoe Co., 205 Main, Springfield, NE 68059. Phone (402) 253-2000.

PHOTOGRAPHY

NEBRASKA WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHIC PRINTS. Matted. Go to inplainssight.homestead.com. "The more you buy, the quicker my wife can retire!"

VACATIONS/RESORTS

FOR FISHING AND HUNTING accommodations. Guided pheasant hunts. Jefco Inn, South Cornell St., Gordon, NE 69343 (308) 282-2935.

THE OLDE MAIN STREET INN. A historic bed and breakfast listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Beautiful dining room with fireplace. Featuring prime rib, buffalo, seafood, homemade soups, chilis and desserts. 115 Main Street, Chadron NE 69337 (308) 432-3380. www.chadron.com/oldemain.

DIAMOND B TROUT RESORT, Orchard, Nebraska. Lodge, cabins, spring-fed lakes, playground equipment, paddleboats. Great for families, groups, hunters. Book your cabin now! Call for brochure (800) 974-3002. www.diamondbtroutresort.com.

MILL IRON V LODGING has modern cabins for your vacation pleasure. We are located near Verdigr, NE in turkey country. Each cabin offers privacy, view and a birdwatcher's paradise. Stay with us for a COUNTRY EXPERIENCE. (402) 668-7488. www.milliron-v-lodging.com. jpeinrem@gpcom.net.

BIG BLUE RANCH & LODGE - Enjoy fishing, hunting, hiking, birdwatching and ranch adventures on 2000+ acre cattle ranch in southeastern Nebraska. Beautiful log cabin, with fireplaces, kitchens & big covered porches, overlooks 20-acre lake. www.bigblueranch.com (402) 730-3643.

HIGH PLAINS HOMESTEAD, Home of the Drifter Cookshack & Bunkhouse – An Old-West Cow-Town is slowly coming alive on the windswept prairie of northwest Nebraska. Rejuvenate your spirit through a wide variety of activities amongst the ruggedness and

beauty that is only limited by your imagination. Popular activities include day family outings, bunkhouse cabin overnight stays, hunting, birding, stargazing, fossil hunting and the trails that are available for mountain biking & horseback riding. Great cowboy cookin' at the Cookshack. Visit: www.highplainshomestead.com. Call: (888) 365-2592.

WINEMAKER'S LOFT at Sage Hill Vineyard: comfortable accommodations fit 4-6 in rustic Rock Creek Valley, Parks, NE. Southwestern Nebraska's most ideal lodging for hunting, fishing, birding and wine touring. (308) 423-2062 or (308) 423-9463, walkers@bwtelcom.net, www.nebraskawines.com.

WANTED

WANT TO VISIT WITH someone about training bird dogs for Quail partridge prairie chickens. Public areas where you can ride horses and camp. Rich Thornton (515) 231 2465, rdfoxtrout@hotmail.com.

Classified Rates: 85¢ per word, minimum \$15. Closing: First business day six weeks before issue date. Classified ads are accepted on a first-come, first-served, space-available basis. Classified Ads, NEBRASKALand Magazine, P.O. Box 30370, Lincoln, NE 68503-0370. Telephone (402) 471-5473. Fax: (402) 471-1984. E-mail: ngpc.classifieds@nebraska.gov. Ads are posted online at NebraskalandMagazine.com at no additional charge.

Attention Subscribers Wanting to Renew Online!

Since the switchover to our new internet system, some customers have had a little trouble while trying to renew or order a subscription at NEBRASKALandMagazine.com. Even if you are a current subscriber, the first time you use the new system you will have to click on "Register & Checkout" under "New Customers" (see below). Once you are registered, you can then enter the site as a "Returning Customer" and log in to renew or subscribe for the first time.

Official Nebraska Government Website

NEBRASKA GAME PARKS

FREE Outdoor Updates

Track Your Order | Returns | Shipping Info | FAQ | 1-800-742-0056 | Questions? |

Now In: Checkout

Product Categories: Donations, Gift Catalog, Gift Certificates, Magazines, Sale Items, Stamps

Help & Info: Our new Outdoor Nebraska Store uses the latest technology and most up-to-date security measures to ensure your information remains secure. Any questions about our redesigned store may be directed to our staff.

Returning Customers: If you already have an account, please sign in using your E-Mail address and password below.

New Customers: **Register & Checkout**

Email Address: _____

Password: _____

*Enter security code below:

Sign In & Checkout

Forget your password? [click here](#)

1
First click on "Register & Checkout" under "New Customers"

2
Then enter the site as a "Returning Customer" and log in to renew your subscription or subscribe for the first time.

THE NEED TO EXPLORE.

arts | public policy | humanities | environment | social issues

www.prairiefirenewspaper.com

PRAIRIE FIRE | newspaper
the progressive voice of the great plains



▲ This is a picture of the two Pancake boys – Glenn (left), about five years old, and Jim, about seven, with their father Arthur (Art) from Omaha. This was in the summer of 1947 at Louisville lakes with a stringer of bullheads.

Jim says that in one of the lakes they stocked trout later on. He told me that the rods they used were fashioned by their father from old car radio antennas. They were then, and still are, avid outdoorsmen. The boys now are in their late-60s and still going strong in Tennessee. Both are very active deer and bird hunters. Glenn now owns about 50 acres with his wife that is groomed exclusively for wildlife.

Jim has a large timber lease with some friends, primarily for deer hunting, with about ten acres planted to sunflowers for mourning dove and other wildlife. Both have fond memories of their childhood in Nebraska with their other brother Van and sister Carol, who also reside in Tennessee.

– Jerry Pecha, Kearney, Nebraska



▲ This photo of four friends with a limit of green-winged teal was taken in 1948 after a day of puddle jumping farm ponds near McCool Junction.

We all went to Crete High School and are all still living – just in different parts of the country now.

Pictured left to right are: Marvin Gifford, who last hunted in 2002; Bob Mahacek, who still likes to hunt and fish, has six Master Angler Awards and still goes deer hunting every year; Karl Nedela, who traded in his shotgun for bigger guns serving as a gunner in the Korean War and VietNam; and myself, Harold Neihart, still hunting pheasants and turkeys and RV camping.

– Harold Neihart, Omaha, Nebraska

► I have worked for Nebraska tourism for the past 13 years, most of the time at the Nebraska-Omaha Travel Information Center in Omaha.

A few years ago, a lady asked me if a Nebraska native could have a free Nebraska road map. We talked for a few minutes and she told me that she had grown up in Custer County near Oconto. I told her that I hunted in the Oconto area and we talked about sod houses and growing up in Custer County.

Later, I received a package from her (she lives in Ohio) containing several pictures of her just after WWII at her uncle's sod house near Oconto. Later, I found out where it was located and went out to the house. It was still standing but in bad shape. She also included a copy of a journal that her grandmother had written while she and her family moved from back east to Custer County in the 1890s.

One of the most interesting things she sent me was an original postcard of a wolf that had been killed near Oconto. I'm not sure of the year but looks to be from the early part of the 20th century. Interesting that it was called a "buffalo wolf."

I enjoy the Portraits from the Past and the hunting heritage of Nebraska.

– Bob Benson, Omaha, Nebraska



Send contributions to: Portraits from the Past, NEBRASKALAND Magazine, P.O. Box 30370, Lincoln, NE 68503-0370. Or e-mail to tim.reigert@nebraska.gov. Photos should show people enjoying Nebraska outdoor activities, such as camping, boating, hunting or fishing, and must have been taken before 1980. We will give priority to unusual photos or activities. When possible, please include a story about the photograph and identify the people, places and approximate date it was taken. Photos will be returned.



The Gift of a Lifetime

Treat your special hunter or angler with the gift that last as a lifetime. . . a Nebraska lifetime permit. Lifetime permits remain valid even if the holder leaves the state. A great gift for graduation, Father's Day and birthdays.

For pricing and information go to www.OutdoorNebraska.org
For VISA and MasterCard orders call toll-free

1-800-742-0056

Lifetime permits are now available for nonresidents as well as residents.

NEBRASKA
— GAME  PARKS —

www.OutdoorNebraska.org

