



Reuben J. Cogburn, a Labrador retriever belonging to Mike Remund of Tecumseh, patiently waits for the next flight of ducks on a hunt at Langdon Bend Wildlife Management Area near Nemaha. Photo by Eric Fowler.

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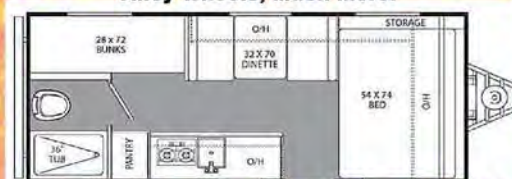
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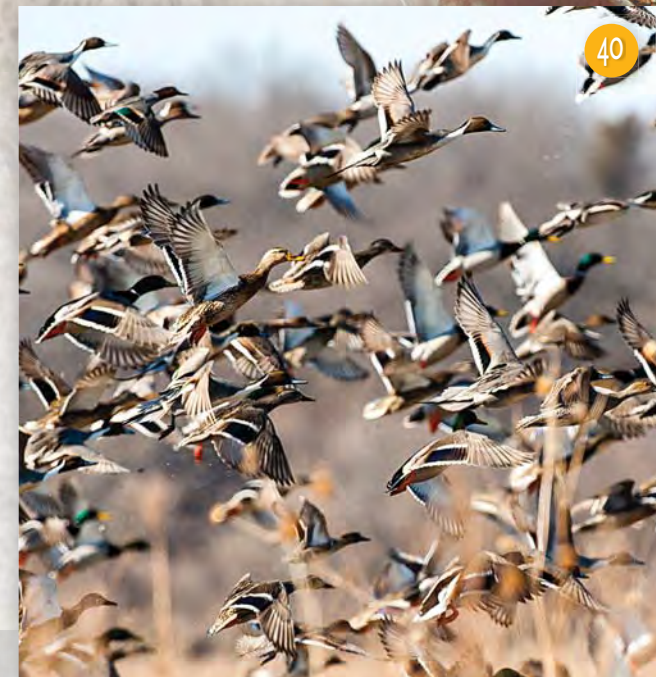
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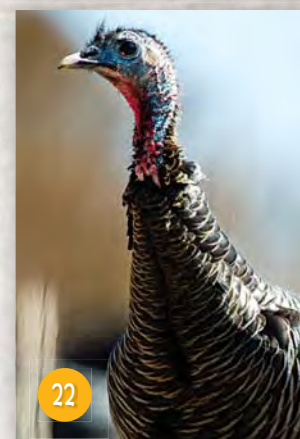
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ON THE WEB...



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Cover: This image of Tatanka Witko "Fool Bull" of the Sicangu Lakota was taken around 1900 by John A. Anderson. See story on page 16. Photo courtesy of Nebraska State Historical Society.

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Comment



Nebraska's Mountain Views

I wanted to bring to your attention something with regard to your August-September "Beautiful Nebraska" edition. In the introduction, the very first sentence reads "Not one of Nebraska's 77,000 square miles of land and water features an ocean or mountain view."

When I saw this comment, as a resident of the Nebraska Panhandle, I knew immediately that this statement is not completely true. There are, in fact, three places in western Nebraska where mountains can be seen in neighboring states.

The first is at Panorama Point, in the southwestern corner of Kimball County, located at an elevation of 5,429 feet, the highest elevated point in Nebraska, and 150 feet higher than

the city of Denver. On a clear day, the Rocky Mountains can be seen from this vantage point.

The next place where a mountain can be seen from Nebraska is at the top of Scotts Bluff National Monument in Scotts Bluff County. Here, Laramie Peak, at an elevation of 10,276 feet, in eastern Wyoming, can be viewed on a clear day.

The last place is in northwestern Nebraska, where views of Harney Peak, at 7,242 feet, can be seen. So, it is possible to view mountains in Nebraska, even if we can't claim any of them as our own.

Sincerely,
Kenneth J. Mayer
via e-mail

Emulating Eric

Ever since I saw Eric Fowler's photo of the tree limbs immersed in the fog at Wildwood Lake in "Beautiful Nebraska" I've been wanting to emulate something similar. The cool temps in early September lent to the perfect conditions so I headed out to Branched Oak one morning and was welcomed by an incredibly dense fog. When the sun began to rise I saw the perfect opportunity, a bare old tree sitting some ways out to the middle of the lake in direct path of the rising sun. I was fortunate enough that there was a cormorant to pose, too. I thought you might appreciate it.

Thanks again for the inspiration, and for keeping *NEBRASKAland* coming to my home each month!

Erik Johnson
Lincoln, Nebraska



A 10-inch Bluegill

My stepson took my 7-year-old son out fishing at Wildwood, which is just north of Branched Oak, and he caught this 10-inch bluegill. I am so proud of him!

Scott W. Shafer
Lincoln, Nebraska



Linda Jacox of Garland won first place photo in the "Wild and Scenic Nebraska" category at the Nebraska State Fair with this west side view of Branched Oak Lake.

Send your comments to:
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Please include your postal address and telephone number.
Letters may be condensed and edited for clarity. Photographs are welcome and will be returned.

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Doe vs. Buck — Which Meat is Better?

By Julie Geiser

The controversy between doe meat versus buck meat is debated every deer season, and there are many factors that determine which meat is really the best.

The age of a deer will make a difference in tenderness. Meat is made of muscle cells connected by collagen, a culprit of tough meat. Because younger deer have less collagen than older deer, shooting a young buck or doe versus an older deer of either sex will result in different meat toughness.

The build-up of lactic acid can also cause a bitter or sour meat taste. Lactic acid forms in the muscle of any deer that has been running. After a shot is made, don't track the animal too soon — if pushed the deer will continue to move, producing more lactic acid in the deer meat. Most wounded deer will go a short distance, bed down and bleed out.

Soon after shooting a deer, rigor mortis, or stiffening of the muscles, will set in for about 24 hours. Butchering or cooking meat at this time leads to tough meat, as the muscles are contracted. If temperatures allow for the deer to be hung (above freezing and below 40 degrees) natural enzymes will begin tenderizing the meat by breaking down collagen. Aging meat like this in cool weather for three to seven days

will enhance the flavor.

If temperatures are not favorable for hanging, quarter and cover meat with ice in a cooler. Coolers are good for transporting (be sure to abide by state laws on transporting) and for aging meat. Keep the plug out of the cooler to allow the melted, bloody water to escape, and add ice as needed until the meat can be processed. Leaving meat in bloody water allows bacteria to start spreading.

A few more tips include:

- Make a clean shot. The more contaminants, including entrails, that come in contact with meat will affect the flavor.
- Keep meat cool. Field dress and open the deer's body cavity in a timely manner. After washing the cavity with cool water, use a stick to prop the body cavity open or, in warm weather, cool the cavity by placing bags of ice in the opening.
- Do not overcook deer meat. Many people overcook venison, making it chewy and dry. Season, marinate and cook deer meat as you would your favorite cut of beef. When grilling, get the grate hot enough to sear the meat surface for three to four minutes, leaving the inside pink while locking in juicy flavors. ■



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Travelogue

By Eric Fowler

Pawnee City

If colorful collections pique your interest, you can find plenty in Pawnee City.

At the **Pawnee City Museum**, you can find the requisite collections of antique farm machinery, 21 buildings, including the home of David Butler, Nebraska's first governor, and a barn donated by Dan Whitney, better known as Larry the Cable Guy. You'll also find colorful collections of 8,400 buttons and 1,600 sets of salt and pepper shakers donated by residents. While not as colorful, the museum is also home to the world's largest barbed wire collection.

Another vibrant assortment can be found at the **Pedal Clinic**, a former church where Bill and Elsie Sunneberg display more than 400 pedal tractors, 250 pedal cars, and numerous wagons, tricycles and bicycles, some dating to 1935, that Bill has restored and will happily show you if you call for an appointment.

The color in **Heavenly Treasures** quilt store is almost blinding. Located in a former Baptist church, Marie Glenn's store draws customers from around the country.

At **Schilling Bridge Winery and Micro Brewery**, the first such combination in the nation, Sharon and Mike Schilling have plenty of colorful drinks to choose from, from a darker Scottish ale to a light golden lager, red, white and rose wines or an even more colorful wine cocktail. The winery hosts many special events, including murder mystery dinners and an annual Ugly Christmas Sweater contest. Stop in on a Friday or Saturday and sample the menu of pizza and wine and beer infused food, including prime rib on Saturdays, but not without a reservation.

You can also grab a bite to eat downtown at the **Adobe Grill**, the **Parkside Café** or "**The W**," where you can get a steak dinner for less than \$10.

Yvonne Dullage will be happy to put you up at **My Blue Heaven** bed and breakfast, the latter of which includes blueberry pancakes served on colorful antique china. You can also rent the rustic **Three Pines Cabin** in town, or stay in a modern cabin surrounded by prairie and overlooking a pond at the **Big Blue Ranch** near Burchard.

The town is surrounded by wildlife management areas open to hunting and hiking, including **Pawnee Prairie**. Anglers can wet a line at **Burchard** or **Iron Horse lakes**, both of which offer camping. You can even putt on sand greens at the **9-hole Fairview Golf Club**.

The town was settled in 1854, when Nebraska was but a territory. The historic court house on the town square of the town was built in 1912. Visit the "Redbud Capital of Nebraska" in April and you can see a tree in bloom on every lot in this town of 866 that is never short on color. ■



Burchard Lake northwest of town

Pawnee City



Salt and pepper shaker collection at the Pawnee City Museum



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Ledger Art

Amy Kucera

The depiction of events through decoration of bison hides has long been a part of artistic expression for Plains Indian people. However, during the late-1800s, the forced removal of tribal people from their homelands onto reservations, as well as eradication of bison herds by Euroamerican settlers required tribal artists to rapidly adapt to changing conditions. Through the access of new materials including pencils, pens and lined record books, a distinctive drawing style coined “ledger art” emerged. View the historic Plains Ledger Art Project collection at Plainsledgerart.org. ■

New Photo Fiction Book From Jeff Kurrus

NEBRASKAland Magazine Editor Jeff Kurrus, following his 2012 Golden Sower Award finalist “Have You Seen Mary?” with Michael Forsberg, has recently released “The Tale of Jacob Swift” with stunning work from award-winning photographer Rob Palmer, as well as a foreword by Dr. Teresa Frink from Chadron State College.

“Jacob” chronicles a year in the life of a swift fox family living on the shortgrass prairie of the Great Plains, including all the challenges and triumphs that this family undergoes.

At 48 pages featuring more than 50 beautiful photographs, it is both an entertaining and educating story for readers of all ages. Visit the Gift Collection in the back of this issue to order your copy. ■



Homemade Knives

By Dylan Tegtmeier, Nebraska Outdoor U!

The trusty pocket knife is the essential tool for many outdoor tasks. With a few common materials, you can even make one at home. You’ll need wood or antler for your knife handle, some steel for your knife blade, and cutting or grinding tools to shape your blade. You will also need a forge and some old motor oil.

The forge is the most complicated and important part of this process. To build one, you’ll need some charcoal, a large metal pan to burn the coal in, a smaller metal container for the wind chamber (a large tin coffee can works well) and an old blow dryer.

Drill a dozen or so air holes in the bottom of the coal container, and drill a wind hole in the side of your coffee tin container toward the bottom (this hole is where you will route your blow dryer to feed air into the forge). Next hook up your blow dryer to your coffee tin and make sure the connection is mostly air tight. Then set your charcoal container on top of the open coffee tin to allow the air to flow up through the holes and into the coals. Once you’ve filled your coal container with charcoal, light it up, leave the blow dryer off for a while and let all the coals ignite completely. Once the coals are grey and black, you can turn on the blow dryer and increase the heat.

Now that your forge is ready, cut the blade shape out of a metal sheet of steel by using a hack saw or cutting torch. Then drill 2-4 holes in the tang, which is the part of the steel where the handle will go. These holes are for your handle pegs, which provide extra strength to your handle. After your holes are drilled, take your blade to a grinding wheel and put an edge and drip guard on your



The author’s completed knife, with antler handle and rivets.

blade, and any other metal shaping you feel is needed. Now is the time to work the metal while it is still soft. After you forge the steel, it will be much harder.

Once your blade is shaped, turn up the heat on your forge and let the metal heat until it is orange or red. You can test the heat with a magnet. If the blade is hot enough, it will not be magnetized. Then quench your blade in your old motor oil. Caution: if the blade is hot enough, it will flame up quite a bit when you quench it. To be safe during the forging process, use a pair of long tongs to handle the blade, or use a wire to hook through one of the holes in the tang. After your blade is forged, polish and sharpen it, then add your finishing touches. Finally, set your oven to 350 degrees and temper the blade for 40 minutes. Allow the blade to cool in the open air and then attach your handle. Your knife is now ready for action. Visit OutdoorU.org and start your own pathway to exciting and memorable experiences in the outdoors. ■

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KNIFE PHOTO BY ERIC FOWLER

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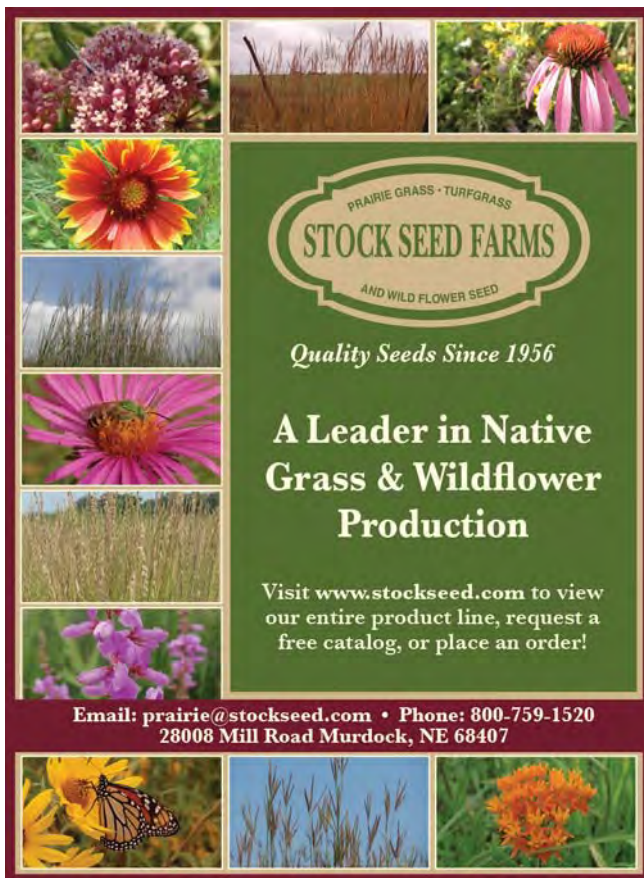
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Passenger Pigeon

Song or calls: Coos along with loud croaking, chattering and clucking noises.

Description: Sexes similar. Long graceful pointed tail; slate-blue head; black bill; and red legs. Slate-gray back with gray-brown to olive-brown tinge; slate-blue rump and lower back; russet or wine red underparts with a white belly. Iridescent feathers on the sides and back of neck with metallic gold or violet glow; and small black spots on wings. Dark tail had white outer edge.

Habitat: Preferred beech-oak-maple forests. Beechnuts and acorns were the favorite foods of passenger pigeons.

Where in Nebraska: Formerly ranged over much of eastern North America. Was a common migrant and summer resident in eastern parts of Nebraska.

Fun Facts: The passenger pigeon was an extremely social animal that liked to live and travel in large groups at all times. A roosting colony could comprise well over 100 million birds and cover more than 800 square miles of forest, with as many as 100 nests per tree.

Additional Information: In the mid-1800s, the population of passenger pigeons was estimated between 3 and 5 billion birds, but the birds were extinct by 1914. ■

To learn about more birds visit NebraskaBirdLibrary.org.



Upland Game Forecast

By Jerry Kane

Nebraska pheasant hunting opportunities in 2014 should be on par with last year or slightly better, according to the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission's upland game hunting outlook.

The consensus among Commission field staff is that habitat conditions have improved across most of the state, providing more suitable nesting and brood-rearing habitat for pheasants. However, spring storms seem to have negatively impacted the pheasant hatch as seen by spring and summer upland game surveys. Replacement nests for those lost to these early storms might yet compensate for some of the losses.

The southwestern and Panhandle regions should have the best pheasant hunting opportunities, with populations beginning to recover from the 2012-2013 drought. Habitat loss in the eastern part of the state continues to be a concern, particularly east of U.S. Highway 81.

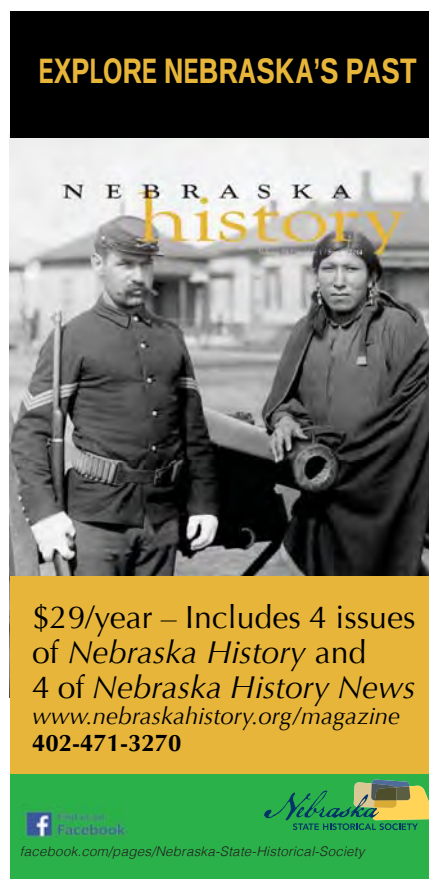
Bobwhite quail abundance was higher across the state based on surveys and field observations. Southeastern Nebraska, especially Johnson, Pawnee and Richardson counties, should offer the best opportunities for hunting quail, but conditions should be good rangewide.

Abundance of grouse is higher in the Sandhills and central part of the state than in any other regions and is higher than 2013 in both regions. ■



View the full upland game hunting outlook report.

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Wingtips by Wild Bird Habitat

The Passenger Pigeon is not the only bird that was common in Nebraska but is now extinct. The Carolina Parakeet, the only parrot native to North America and found along the Missouri River, is also extinct.. These two species were trapped and shot out of existence by the turn of the 19th century.

Today many Nebraska grassland birds face a similar dilemma with populations declining due to loss of habitat.



The ghost of Martha, the last Passenger Pigeon asks: "Have you learned anything from my passing?"

Support Nebraska's non-game wildlife at: <http://outdoornebraska.ne.gov>

Upcoming Events

by Jerry Kane

Contact the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission at 402-471-0641 or visit OutdoorNebraska.org for more information. Visit HuntSafeNebraska.org for a list of hunter education classes and BoatSafeNebraska.org for a list of boating safety classes.

November 1
November late doe/fawn antelope hunting season opens

November 1
Hunting and trapping seasons open for raccoon, Virginia opossum, long-tailed weasel, mink, red fox, gray fox and badger

November 1
Muskrat and beaver trapping seasons open

November 1
Most 2015 annual permits and stamps available for purchase at OutdoorNebraska.org

November 1
Lovin' Dutch Oven
Wildcat Hills Nature Center, Gering, 9 a.m., 308-436-3777

November 1-2
Cornucopia of Crafts
Eugene T. Mahoney State Park (SP), Ashland, 402-944-2523

November 3
Woodcock hunting season closes

November 3
Christmas Dinner Tickets
Tickets go on sale for the historical Christmas dinner at Fort Robinson SP, Crawford, 308-665-2900

November 8
Old Fort Atkinson Candelight Tour
Fort Atkinson State Historical Park, Fort Calhoun, 6 p.m., 402-650-0598

November 9
Virginia and sora rail hunting season closes

November 11
All Game and Parks offices closed in observance of Veterans Day

November 15
First segment of crow hunting season closes

November 16
Special public health hazard order crow hunting opens

November 15-23
November firearm deer hunting season

November 15-23
Restricted statewide buck deer hunting season

November 23
Fort Robinson SP Longhorn and Buffalo Sale
Crawford, 308-665-2900

November 27
Thanksgiving Buffet
Eugene T. Mahoney SP, Ashland, 402-944-2523

November 28
Families on Target
Nebraska Game and Parks Outdoor Education Center, Lincoln, noon, 402-471-6141

November 29
Families on Target
Nebraska Game and Parks Outdoor Education Center, Lincoln, 10 a.m., 402-471-6141

November 30
Dad's Day at the Range
Nebraska Game and Parks Outdoor Education Center, Lincoln, 1 p.m., 402-471-6141

Friendly Fences Increasing after Recent Incentive

By Justin Haag

Landowners in the Panhandle and a portion of north-central Nebraska are enjoying the benefits of a two-year program to install wildlife-friendly fence on their properties.

In 2013-2014, the Game and Parks Commission has awarded an incentive of up to \$1,000 per mile of fencing to landowners in its northwestern district. With a signed contract prior to fence construction, landowners receive incentive funds to help construct wildlife-friendly fences within their property's boundaries and that border other properties.

The deadline for enrollment has passed this year, but the Commission has 19 miles left to award on the grant and is hoping to extend the program next year. The \$50,000 available for the projects was largely funded by a grant from the Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act, the 1937 legislation that created an excise tax on sporting goods to fund wildlife management.

The program was originally limited to landowners of the Pine Ridge and Oglala Grasslands regions, but was expanded in 2014 to include properties of the entire 12-county northwestern district.

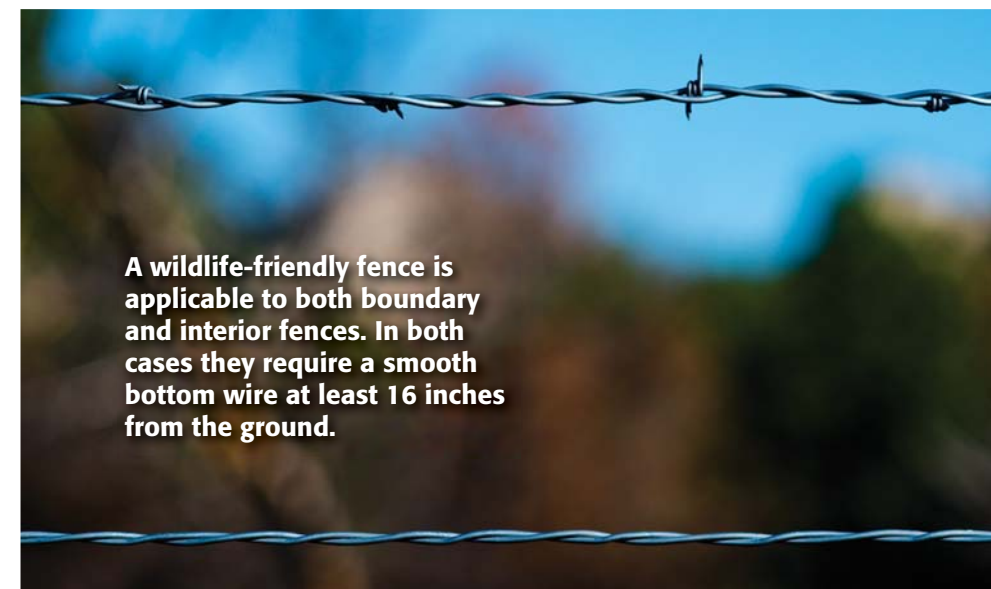
A wildlife-friendly fence design serves its purpose for livestock while allowing wild animals to travel over or under the fence with minimal chance of getting caught.

The program is one of many efforts the Commission makes to help landowners improve wildlife habitat.

"This program promotes fences that are beneficial for both wildlife and landowners," said Shelley Steffl of Chadron, a Game and Parks private lands wildlife biologist. "Not only are animals less likely to become injured, but landowners who install wildlife-friendly fence are likely to encounter fewer costs for maintenance."

To be eligible for the program, barbed-wire boundary fences must be no higher than 42 inches and consist of no more than four wires. Interior barbed-wire fences need no more than three wires at a maximum height of 38 inches. Both interior and boundary fences require a smooth bottom wire 16 inches from the ground and 12 inches between the top two wires.

A design for high-tensile electric fence also was made eligible, with design specifications similar, though not identical, to those of the barbed wire. ■



A wildlife-friendly fence is applicable to both boundary and interior fences. In both cases they require a smooth bottom wire at least 16 inches from the ground.

On the Shelf

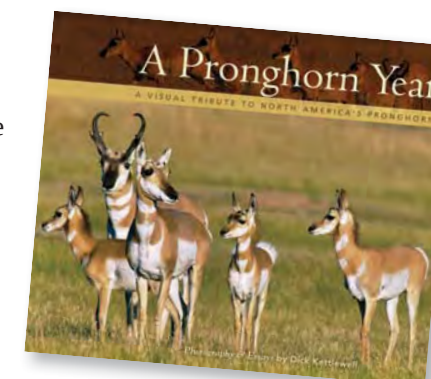
By Justin Haag

"A Pronghorn Year: A Visual Tribute to North America's Pronghorn" chronicles the life of one of the High Plains' most visible, and perhaps misunderstood, game animals.

The new book conveys the pronghorn's excellent speed, eyesight and hardiness for all seasons.

Close-up photos of newborn fawns are among its more than 100 full-color images.

The 80-page book was produced by Dick Kettlewell, a nature photographer and writer from Rapid City, South Dakota, and published by Farcountry Press. ■

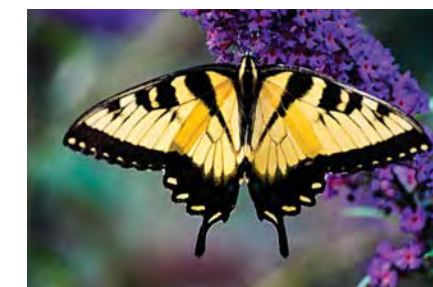


Youth Photo Contest Winners

NEBRASKAland Magazine hosted a photo contest for both adults and youth in the August/September 2014 Beautiful Nebraska Collector's Edition. While the adult category winners were announced in the October issue, below are the 12 and under and 13-17 winners in our youth categories. Congratulations to both Calli Hunter and Emily Uphoff for their winning entries. ■



Calli Hunter, a 16-year-old from Pleasanton, photographed this antler shed this past spring near her home.



Emily Uphoff, a 12-year-old from Lincoln, photographed this swallowtail butterfly in her backyard.

NEBRASKAland Visitor



October's winner of the Visitor drawing was Ray Fansle of Fairfield, Illinois, who found the **Japanese Beetle** on page 14. 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" – a critter found in Nebraska. We will then gather the correct entries and draw one to win a NEBRASKAland Magazine mug. To enter each month, write:

NEBRASKAland Visitor
2200 North 33rd Street,
Lincoln, NE 68503.

Or e-mail:

Tim.Reigert@Nebraska.gov with "Visitor" in the subject line of the message.

HINT: This issue's visitor is not on page 7, 12, 15, 35 or 56.

The Japanese Beetle, (Popillia japonica) is an exotic, invasive insect. It is originally from Japan, but was introduced to the U.S. in 1916. It has become established in parts of Nebraska, primarily in metro areas, and counties along I-80 to North Platte. This shiny beetle is up to ½" long and green, with copper brown colored elytra. A series of white tufts of hair are visible on its abdomen; two tufts on its rear and five on each side. Adults feed on the foliage of a large number of plants, including lindens, roses, and soybeans. Larvae are white grubs, similar to June beetle grubs, and feed on roots. They overwinter as larvae, pupating and emerging as adults in spring, around the time chicory blooms.

Special thanks to Julie Van Meter, State Entomologist, Nebraska Department of Agriculture. Visitor image by Chris Helzer

Bugguide.net is a good site for identification.

Photographers and the Plains Indians

By John E. Carter, Nebraska State Historical Society

Nineteenth-century photographs of American Indians are the dynamic product of a variety of cultural perspectives, individual ambitions, economic factors and personal beliefs. At first glance, the images simply show us depictions of tribal people. But as documents, the photographs raise questions about those

who posed and those who composed, manufactured, sold, bought, exhibited and examined the images.

Photographers

Photography came along in the 1840s just as the United States was expanding into the American West. People were

hungry for images of exotic places and their exotic inhabitants. During the last half of the 19th century many Euroamericans looked on indigenous peoples as a part of that great Wild West, another element to be tamed. People were genuinely curious about these many different cultures and their “strange” ways. Photographers were eager to feed that curiosity and reap the economic benefits from doing so.

The subjects were attired and posed to meet consumer expectations. Prior to 1900, many consumers thought of the Indian as either an enemy or an anthropological curiosity. The photographs are made as though the subjects are specimens, something for study. Compare most portraits of Indians in the 1860s and 1870s with the self-aggrandizing contemporary portraits of Euroamericans and the distinction becomes clear.

In these early photographs, subjects are posed with particular symbolic accessories. Especially prior to 1880, men and boys would often be posed with a weapon or a pipe, symbols of war and peace. With the end of the large scale hostilities after 1880, that stereotype vanished. As Native peoples are confined to reservations they are, in the eyes of the dominant culture, tamed.

Plains Indians

If photographers were inclined to document and/or make money, what motivated the Native subjects? In some cases posing was a simple business transaction; photographers exchanged



This image of Standing Bear, of the Ponca, was captured by Stanley Morrow, circa 1875. Standing Bear is known for leading his people in a march back to Nebraska from Indian Territory, now Oklahoma, in 1879. Here he is posed with a pipe, a symbol of peace.



This photograph of Tatanka Witko “Fool Bull” of the Sicangu (Rosebud) Lakota tribe was taken by John A. Anderson, circa 1900. Anderson’s work is typical of the romantic style of photography that emerged after 1898.



This photograph of an unidentified Pawnee by John F. Jarvis, circa 1870, is typical of photos of Indians prior to 1898. Posing uncomfortably with a sword and revolver, this Pawnee man is photographed more as a specimen than subject.



Albert Bierstadt photographed this Oglala village along the North Platte River in 1859. Bierstadt is well known as the earliest of the Rocky Mountain School of genre painters but he was also an adept photographer. In 1859 he joined Col. Frederick Lander's expedition to relocate portions of the wagon route to the Pacific Ocean. During this journey, Bierstadt took many pictures, including a number of pictures of Plains Indians encountered along the way.

cash or gifts for a few moments in front of the lens.

For others, appearing in photographs was a matter of prestige. Delegations to Washington, D.C. routinely sat for photographs. These people were proud of their role and more than willing to

be memorialized. Some, such as Red Cloud who was photographed regularly, actually controlled the images, carefully choosing attire and hairstyles to fit their political intentions.

Others were entertainers, such as Native Americans traveling with



Omaha Charley Bristol and a group of his performers were photographed by Macy and Doughty of Norfolk, circa 1890. Omaha Charley was a collector and entertainer from Homer who toured the country with his collection of Indian objects. Often groups of Indian entertainers, such as the one pictured here, accompanied him. Bristol stands in the back row, second from the right, sporting an impressive mustache.

Wild West shows, who understood that photographs were part of public relations. And some people tightly controlled and franchised their images. Sitting Bull often sold the pictures himself and charged a dollar for an autograph.

No doubt some images depict unwilling participants, showing people in some form of captivity where they are offered little choice but to cooperate.

A New View in a New Century

The real change in the portrayal of Indians came in 1898 at the Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition in Omaha. The Exposition was to celebrate the closing of the American West and to welcome the industrial and electric age. The Congress of the American Indian at the event was proudly vaunted as the last great gathering of the Red Man.

The original idea of this Congress was educational, to bring together representatives of tribes from across the nation and have them demonstrate their traditional ways. But this was a fair and the reality of demonstration of traditional ways quickly disintegrated into a series of mock battles, which were decidedly more fun for both the performers and the fairgoers.

For the educational effort, the Smithsonian Institution's James Mooney contracted with Frank Rinehart, the Exhibition's official photographer, to photograph as many of the people from as many tribes as possible. These images would go to the Smithsonian to be added to its growing anthropological archive.

Rinehart assigned his assistant, Adolph Muhr, to make the images. Muhr had a keen eye and photographed his subjects not as specimens, but as serious subjects for artistic photographs. Individualized poses and strong lighting created photographs that are at once beautiful and intrinsically interesting.

When the photographs became wildly popular with the fairgoers, Rinehart realized he had a real moneymaker. He reneged on his agreement with the Smithsonian and copyrighted the best work himself. He sent a collection

of clearly inferior photographs to Washington.

Muhr's style revolutionized Indian portraiture. Native Americans no longer represented the savage, but rather became the symbol of America's lost romantic past.

By the 1920s the motion picture began to replace the photograph as the medium for capturing the American West. The era of the large scale photography of American Indians ended. ■

John E. Carter is a senior research associate with the Nebraska State Historical Society. He has been with

the Society since 1976 – first as curator of photographs. John has authored several books, including Eyewitness at Wounded Knee, and Solomon D. Butcher: Photographing the American Dream. John has been enlisted in several projects from documentary filmmaker Ken Burns including The West series, the Prohibition documentary and The National Parks episodes. His first appearance in NEBRASKAland was in 1985.



DAILY NEBRASKAN



Red Cloud poses for a photo with his wife, Mary Good Road, which was taken by Mossman, circa 1900. Red Cloud is clearly the most photographed American Indian in the 19th century. As both a skilled military leader, politician and diplomat, his image was in demand. Red Cloud was sophisticated in how he appeared in photographs, and used that skill to craft his own public image.

NEBRASKA STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, RG2063:27.1

Save a Spike

By Justin Haag

Thoughts have changed regarding the value of bucks with the smallest antlers.

There's long been a debate in hunting circles about the value of spike deer – the yearling bucks with merely two straight points for antlers. While much of the thinking used to be that it's best to sacrifice those small bucks in an effort to improve herd genetics and reduce competition, most wildlife managers have now surmised it's best to hold off on pulling the trigger and see how those racks turn out in a few years.

Todd Nordeen, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission big game research and disease program manager, said many variables go into the development of quality deer, including genetics, nutrition, good health and the ability to survive to old age. Some of those spikes occasionally turn into giants, he said.

James Kroll, a college professor and director of the Institute for White-tailed Deer Management and Research in Texas, has conducted extensive research to back up the notion. The institute observed thousands of wild bucks in its landmark study and found no statistical difference in antlers at maturity between yearlings with spikes and those with forked antlers.

Kroll is certain it's more important to provide proper nutrition instead of worrying about genetics. Deer are similar to people in that they develop at different paces. "The kid who is smaller than his classmates in the first grade may be the biggest kid in his graduating class," Kroll said.

Bob Bentley, who manages his property north of Rushville with trophy deer in mind, said he has followed the issue of culling spikes during the past three decades and has witnessed a turnaround in thinking. He and his fellow hunters let the spikes walk. He said the biggest factor for antler size is age, especially with whitetails.

"A lot of whitetail doe fawns get bred at 6-8 months old and their buck yearlings don't have time to catch up with those that were bred to mature does," he said.

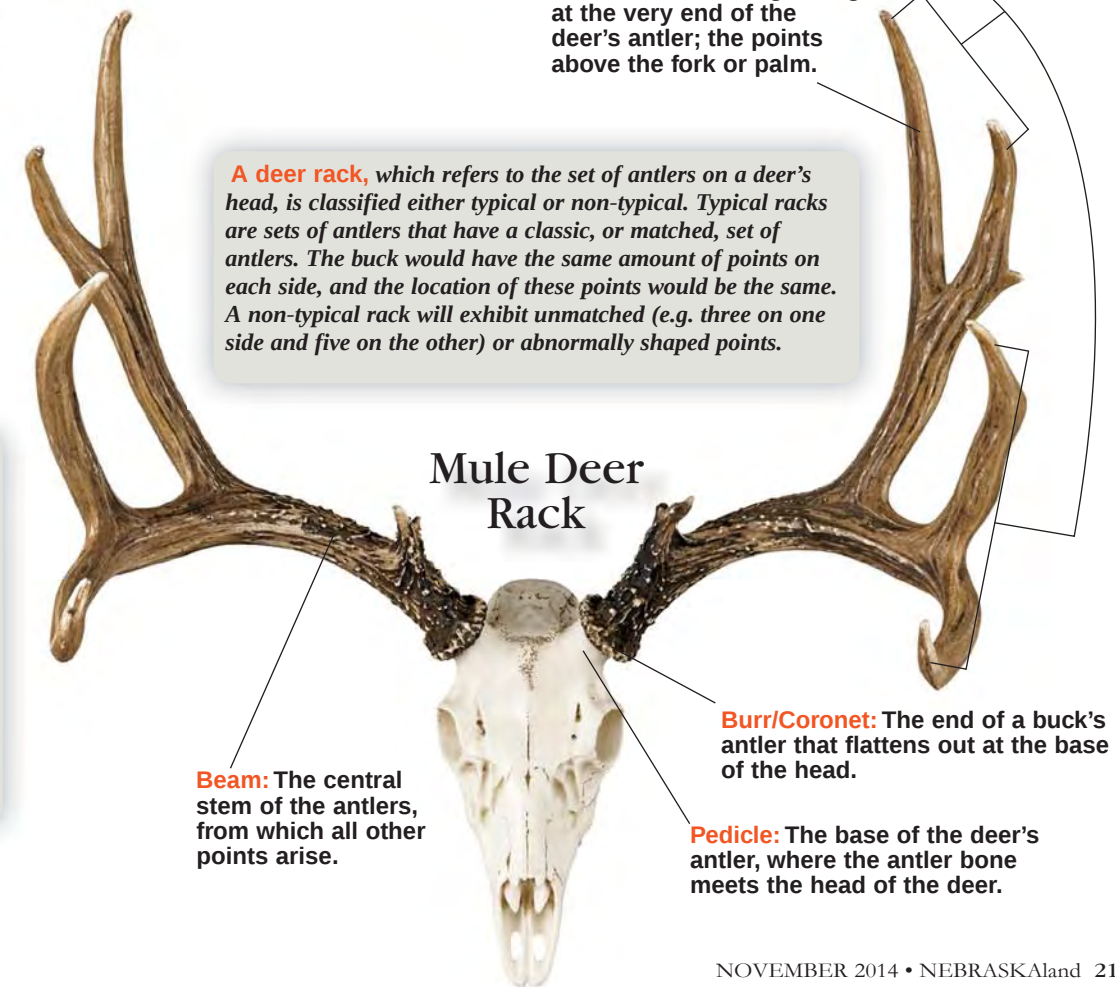
Nordeen said the best bet for improving the quality of a deer herd remains in removing females to control numbers and damage to habitat.

"You can remove some bucks and could remove spikes from a herd, as well, but you may want to consider what the bucks will be like from age 2-4 before removing them." ■



White-tailed Deer Rack

Anatomy of a Deer Antler



Mule Deer Rack

A deer rack, which refers to the set of antlers on a deer's head, is classified either typical or non-typical. Typical racks are sets of antlers that have a classic, or matched, set of antlers. The buck would have the same amount of points on each side, and the location of these points would be the same. A non-typical rack will exhibit unmatched (e.g. three on one side and five on the other) or abnormally shaped points.

Why G? Many experienced deer hunters know the difference between a G2, G3, and beyond. But why G? The answer is simple. The labels on the Boone & Crockett scoring sheet where tines are assessed is in section G of the form.



PHOTO BY JUSTIN HAAG

DEER MOUNT IMAGES COURTESY OF CABELA'S, WWW.CABELA'S.COM

Falling for Turkey

Harvesting turkeys in autumn – the traditional approach?

By Justin Haag

When it comes to turkey hunting, the first thing the average hunter thinks about is a gobbler coming in at full strut toward a yelp call and decoy on a spring morning. When fall arrives, however, turkey often loses favor in many hunters' minds to deer, pheasant and waterfowl.

What many fail to realize is that fall turkey hunting, whether with bow or shotgun, was once just as preferred and should still be just as attractive.

Nebraska's abundance of birds, a long season that runs from September 15 to December 31, and generous bag limits are among the state's most enticing attributes. Perhaps the most notable difference between Nebraska's fall and spring regulations involves sex. While only toms can be hunted in the spring, the hen becomes fair game in the fall and two birds of either sex can be harvested with each permit. Turkeys can be found on both private and public lands, especially in places with water that also provide areas to nest, loaf, feed and roost. Many of Nebraska's state wildlife management areas, which are open to the public, have just what the birds are seeking.

Putting the sneak on turkeys at a particular piece of property not only provides the opportunity to harvest a couple of birds, but also presents the opportunity to explore and get to know the land and at a time when the properties generally have less pressure from other turkey hunters. Not to mention, the countryside, adorned with the changing leaves of a crisp autumn day, serves as the ideal hunting backdrop.

Fall turkey hunting does require a little different approach than that of spring when hunters are able to capitalize on the toms' desire to court a willing hen. Most hunters resort to a spot-and-stalk approach, but others have success with calls. In the fall, turkeys are more attracted to gobblers and clucks than the hens' mating sounds that are used in spring.

OPPOSITE: Roger Christianson (front) and Denny Hall scout the area along the White River during their annual Pine Ridge turkey hunt.



PHOTO BY JENNY NGUYEN

During the fall season, two turkeys of either sex may be harvested with each permit.

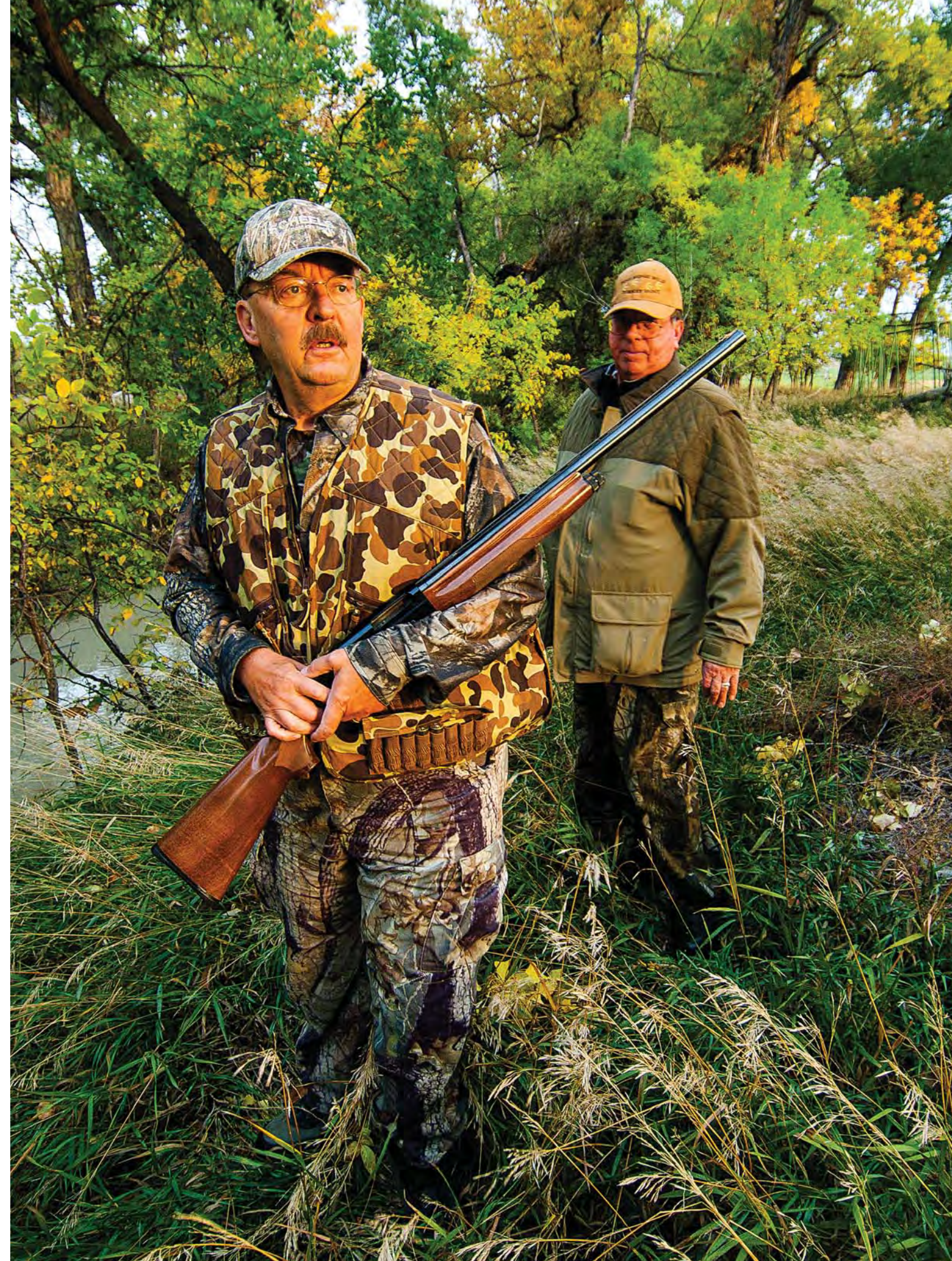


PHOTO BY JUSTIN HAAG



PHOTO BY JUSTIN HAAG

A tom turkey walks a fence line along Table Road southeast of Chadron.



PHOTO BY JUSTIN HAAG

Roger Christianson looks for turkeys from a high vantage point in the Pine Ridge southeast of Chadron.

Some hunters even get their dogs into the act, using flushing breeds to break up tightly grouped flocks so they can be called back into shooting range. Others use pointers to locate birds that have been pushed into tall grass.

Despite today's popular notions, historians will tell you that America's turkey hunting tradition is really rooted in the fall and winter. As the months got colder, after all, food became scarce for the settlers who most likely didn't care when a bird was shot, as long as it fed the family.

More recently, Nebraskans have enjoyed hunting turkeys in autumn since not long after birds were reintroduced to the Pine Ridge in the late '50s and early '60s. The northwestern region was the first to have a season in the state.

With thousands of acres of public land and renowned population of the Merriam's subspecies, the Pine Ridge

is still considered to be a mecca for turkey hunters. The population of the big birds has now exponentially expanded throughout the state, providing ample hunting opportunities from border to border.

Regardless of the many reasons to hunt turkeys in the fall, statistics still show that Nebraskans, like most of the nation's hunters, prefer to hunt gobblers in the spring. About 35,000 hunt the state's spring season compared to a third of that number in the fall.

But the success rates of fall hunters prove that this could be the best time to harvest a bird.

Of survey responders, 66 percent of fall hunters reported success while about half of youth hunters killed a bird. Those numbers even exceed the success rates of the state's spring hunters.

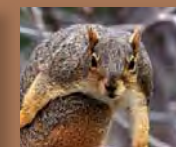
With an abundance of birds and two seasons to chase them, Nebraska's turkey population is one of the great success stories in wildlife management during the past half-century.

If you're looking to put a bird on the table for the holidays, don't resort to Butterball as your only option. Nebraskans can take the other traditional route: a fall turkey. ■

NEBRASKAland Regional Editor Justin Haag was raised in southwestern Nebraska, where he developed a love for fishing and hunting. He lives in Chadron with his wife and two kids.



A Mixed Bag



In the same areas that offer good turkey habitat, many other in-season game species reside. Dove, squirrel and prairie grouse, for instance, can be pursued during all or parts of the fall turkey season, offering prospects for an impressive mixed bag hunt.

NEBRASKAland PHOTOS

Nebraska's Plant Diversity

A Botanical Rivalry

By Gerry Steinauer, Botanist, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

While surfing the web for what some of my friends consider “nerdy botany stuff,” I ran across a ranking of the 50 U.S. states based on native plant diversity. The list, compiled by NatureServe, an organization that tracks biodiversity, tallied all vascular plants, such as ferns, grasses, wildflowers and trees, recorded for each state.

California topped the list with a whopping 5,418 species, followed by Texas with 4,509 species and Arizona with 3,512 species. Scrolling down, I found Nebraska at 45th with 1,561 species. Bringing up the rear was North Dakota with 1,201 species. For comparison, here’s how neighboring states ranked:

No. 14: Colorado - 2,550 species
No. 21: Wyoming - 2,286 species
No. 29: Missouri - 2,095 species
No. 39: Kansas - 1,778 species
No. 44: Iowa - 1,583 species
No. 46: South Dakota - 1,504 species

While examining the list, I could not help but notice that northern Plains’ states, including Nebraska, were low on the list while mountainous and southern states ruled the upper echelons. Considering the primary factors that shape a region’s plant diversity – size, climate, topography and geology – this makes perfect sense, at least to a nerdy botanist.

Factors Influencing Plant Diversity

Large states, such as highly-ranked California and Texas, both more than twice the size of Nebraska, usually encompass a wide range of climates and landforms and, therefore, a diversity of plant habitats and species. Whereas, tiny Rhode Island, a mainly forested state 50 times smaller than Nebraska, ranked 47th largely because of its small size. Then there is Alaska, the biggest of states – more than eight

times the size of Nebraska – ranked lower on the list at 48th, suggesting factors other than size may influence a region’s floral richness.

Botanists have long known that plant species richness is higher in warmer and moister regions, though they are not exactly sure why. This principal explains cold Alaska’s low plant diversity, and, closer to home, why Nebraska has a richer flora than our northern neighbor South Dakota, and a more depauperate flora than our southern neighbor Kansas. The native deciduous tree flora of our Missouri



Wind flower, a short, early blooming perennial, grows on a Platte River bluff mixed-grass prairie in Hamilton County. It is one of over 1,500 vascular plants native to Nebraska.



The Missouri River bluff woodlands at Indian Cave State Park in southeastern Nebraska glow in shades of autumn. The deciduous tree flora of the woodlands becomes less diverse northward as precipitation decreases and temperatures become cooler, but richer southward as precipitation increases and temperatures become warmer.

River bluff woodlands illustrates this principal. From the Kansas border northward to Omaha, where annual precipitation ranges between 30 to 34 inches, the woodlands contain 25 tree species, such as oaks and hickories. Whereas, from Omaha northward to the South Dakota border, where annual precipitation ranges from 24 to 30 inches and temperatures are cooler, the woodlands support 13 tree species.

With regard to topography Nebraska is relatively flat, just ask any Coloradan. This flatness limits our diversity of plant communities when compared to mountainous or other regions with marked elevation, temperature and moisture gradients. Prior to Euroamerican settlement, Nebraska’s rolling hills and plains were prairie-covered with tallgrass prairie in the moister east, sand prairie in the Sandhills, and mixed-grass prairie in the drier west. In areas of the Panhandle, annual precipitation drops

to less than 16 inches. Occupying a small percentage of our landscape were deciduous woodlands mostly in eastern stream valleys, pine woodlands on rocky western escarpments and wetlands in stream valleys and other lowlands.

The northern mountains of species-rich California provide a rather stark contrast of habitat diversity. There, coniferous rain forests grow on cloud-shrouded coastal slopes receiving an incredible 120 inches of annual precipitation. Up slope, stunted tundra plants inhabit frigid peaks, while eastward in the mountains’ rain shadow are found dry woodlands, grasslands, sagebrush scrub and desert each with a distinct flora. On top of this, unusual soils derived from mountain rocks further diversify the region’s habitats. The Golden State’s rare serpentine soils, which lack essential nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus, alone sustain more than 250 highly

specialized species that grow only on these soils. Nearly one-third of California’s native plants are endemic to the state, meaning they are found nowhere else, whereas Nebraska has no endemic plants.

Further bolstering a region’s plant diversity, mountains can buffer against extinctions during periods of climate change. During the Ice Age’s many glacial advances, most lasting thousands of years, many species growing in California’s mountains survived the cold by simply migrating downslope into warmer habitats. By comparison, when glacial chill descended upon the Great Plains – a mere 14,000 years ago, the southern front of the Wisconsin glacier was perched at Nebraska’s northeastern border, and during previous glacial advances hundreds of feet of ice buried portions of eastern Nebraska – our pre-glacial flora was forced southward hundreds or more miles to survive.



The Norden Bridge spans the Niobrara River on The Nature Conservancy's 56,000-acre Niobrara Valley Preserve located in north-central Nebraska. The Preserve is one of Nebraska's botanical hotspots supporting over 580 plant species.



Blowout penstemon, an endangered species adapted to open sand habitats, was once thought endemic to the Nebraska Sandhills until discovered in Wyoming in 1996.

During the Wisconsin glaciation, spruce woodlands and dry grasslands composed of present-day northern species occupied our state.

About 14,000 years ago, as the climate warmed and the glacier retreated northward, the displaced species began a long, slow migration northward. Our present flora has formed mostly from these returning

migrants. And because our flora is young, evolution has lacked time to shape from it new species unique to our state's habitats, whereas California's flora has stayed in relative place for millions of years allowing endemics to evolve, adding to its richness. Blowout penstemon, an endangered species adapted to open sand habitats, was once thought endemic to the Nebraska Sandhills. In 1996, however, the lovely blue-blossomed plant was discovered in Carbon County, Wyoming, and with that find, and much to my dismay, Nebraska lost claim to its one and only endemic plant.

The richness of Nebraska's present flora is greatest where rugged terrain with varied geology and soils, similar to mountains (though on a smaller scale), promote habitat diversity.

Perhaps most botanically diverse is the Niobrara River Valley in north-central Nebraska. Here, in the early 1980s, botanists inventorying The Nature Conservancy's newly established 56,000-acre Niobrara Valley Preserve located east of Valentine, recorded an amazing 581 plant species, including some non-native species. Most abundant were grasses (81 species), members of the sunflower family (80 species) and sedges (40 species).

The Niobrara River flows west to east for more than 400 miles from its headwaters in eastern Wyoming

to its mouth at the Missouri River in Knox County. Over the millennia, plant species have used the deeply-incised and moist valley as a migration corridor across the dry Great Plains. Today, many far-flung migrants still survive in the Central Niobrara Valley because of the region's unique geology, forming a hodgepodge of plant communities and species found nowhere else. Here, western pine woodlands, at the eastern limit of their range, grow on the rocky, dry north river bluff and breaks, while eastern deciduous woodlands occupy the cool,

shaded and sandy south bluff. Northern paper birch forests, relicts from glacial times, survive in the deep and cooler, spring-fed canyons that dissect the south bluff. Sand prairie, with many species of southern origin, cloak the dry sand dunes that border the south bluff, while northern mixed-grass prairie cover the loamy flats north of the valley. And finally, western outliers of tallgrass prairie, as well as cottonwood forests and wetlands, occupy the moist valley bottom.

Also among Nebraska's botanical hotspots are areas of the Sandhills

where high dunes intermingle with wetland-rich valleys. In 2006, for instance, my brother Bob Steinauer, also a botanist, found 429 native plant species and 75 non-natives growing on the 72,000-acre Valentine National Wildlife Refuge located in central Cherry County. Here, sand prairie cloaks the high dunes while the valleys support lush wet meadows, marshes and rare fens, spring-fed wetlands with peat and muck soils. Growing in the fens' cool, saturated soils, Bob found bog bean, fen tussock sedge and other glacial relict species not found in other

Nebraska wetland types.

As through geologic time, Nebraska's present day flora is ever changing. Since Euroamerican settlement in the mid-1800s, for example, Nebraska has lost dozens of native species, most to habitat destruction. Among the vanished are crested woodfern, collected once from a "shrubby Sandhills marsh" in 1893 and lady fern, collected several times in Long Pine Canyon in the 1890s. Neither species has been seen in Nebraska since. These ferns as well as other extirpated species perhaps



Due to its diverse topography and geology the Wildcat Hills escarpment in Scotts Bluff County supports an array of plant communities including mixed-grass prairie, sandsage prairie, shrublands, pine woodland, badlands and rock outcrops and therefore has a rich flora.



A wildflower-rich tallgrass prairie on the rugged Missouri River breaks in Knox County.

were rare in Nebraska even at the time of settlement hastening their disappearance. Still other species teeter on the brink of extirpation. In 2002, for instance, my brother and I found what we thought was our state's last surviving pale gentian. Botanists had last seen the yellowish-white blooming gentian in the 1930s in Nemaha and Otoe counties. During two return visits to the prairie in the years following, we failed to find the gentian. We presumed the plant was now extirpated from Nebraska, but this past August, Krista Lang, a Northern Prairies Land Trust woodland ecologist working at Indian

Cave State Park, found two patches of pale gentian growing on a ridgetop in the park. Once prairie-covered, the high hill is now overrun with brush and non-native grasses, though the gentian has somehow survived. Seed from the plants will be sown in other areas of the park.

Occasionally, botanists still discover native species previously unrecorded for our state. As a young botanist, my first new state record was wild lily-of-the-valley, a species generally of more northern and montane habitats and whose nearest populations are in the Black Hills. While hiking a maze



Pale gentian was thought extirpated from Nebraska until rediscovered this past August at Indian Cave State Park.



High prairie-covered sand dunes overlook Dads Lake on the 72,000-acre Valentine National Wildlife Refuge in Cherry County. The Refuge's dry sand prairies and lush wetlands are home to nearly 430 native plant species.

of wooded, spring-fed canyons on the Niobrara Valley Preserve, I stumbled upon a colony of about 20 plants huddled on a creek bank. This was in the days before GPS, and when I finally found my way out of the canyons, back to my truck and looked at a map, I could not pinpoint the plants' location. I have since trudged the steep-banked, log-snarled canyons several times in a vain search for the now lost colony.

For my brother, a landmark year in our sibling botanical rivalry was during 2010 when he discovered three new state records – Pumpelly's brome, Richardson's brome and heartleaf arnica – all from Warbonnet Canyon located at the western edge of the Pine Ridge escarpment near the Wyoming border. Here, he also found striped coral-root, an orchid last collected in Nebraska in 1890 also from Warbonnet Canyon. The western Pine Ridge rises to over 5,200 feet in elevation providing suitable habitat for these montane species,

unable to survive eastward on the descending Ridge. These plants also grow in the nearby Black Hills.

For botanists, it is now far easier, though not nearly as ego-pleasing, to discover non-native plant species new to the state than new native species. These newcomers are mainly unintentional introductions or escaped ornamental and forage plants originating from Europe or Asia. Though most are rather benign in their new home, some such as dandelions, yellow nutsedge and bindweed become pests in lawns, gardens or crop fields, while others, such as smooth brome and Siberian elm, aggressively invade wild lands displacing native flora. More than 400 non-native plants now grow outside of cultivation in Nebraska, a number that unfortunately will continue to grow.

Though our native flora is not among the richest in the land, Nebraskans need not fret. Our native plants form picturesque prairies, woodlands and wetlands that sustain wildlife, build soils and provide other benefits on the landscape. Surely this is something for which we can all be proud. ■



View NatureServe's state rankings by vascular plant diversity.



A Short Fall

Photos and story by Justin Haag

When fall arrives in northwestern Nebraska, the already scenic landscape takes on a whole new beauty. You'd better be quick, however. Autumn's splendor often succumbs to Old Man Winter quickly in these parts.



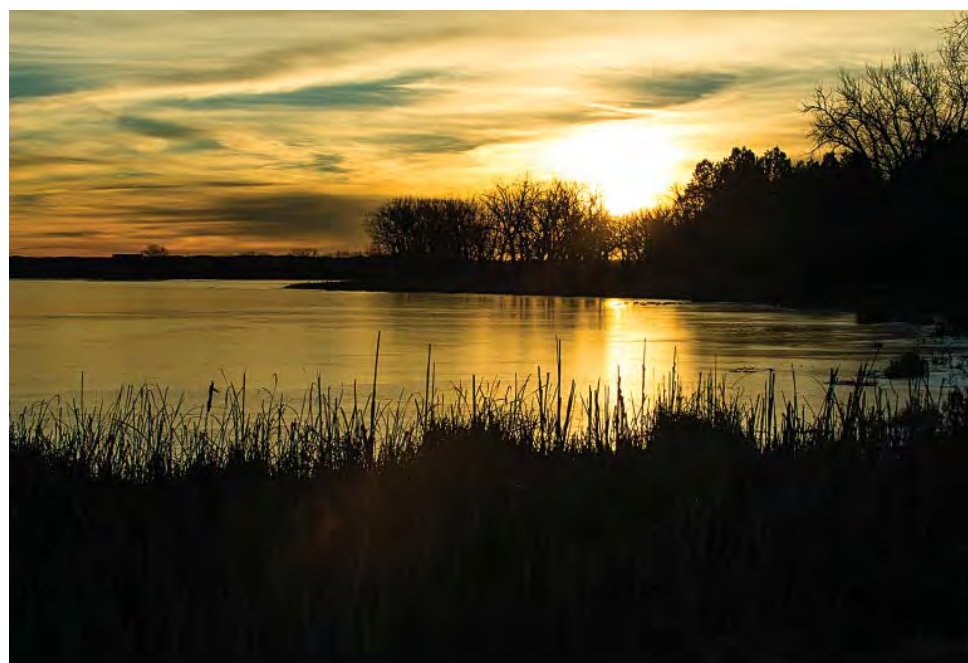
While bees still visit sunflowers in the Pine Ridge, the seeds of bluestem are dispersing at Fort Robinson State Park, and leaves from cottonwood trees fall in Chadron Creek at Chadron State Park.



More frequently, the scene is decorated with snow and frost, whether on the backs of bison at Fort Robinson State Park, on leaves and dried sunflowers at Ponderosa Wildlife Management Area and the Nebraska National Forest, or on grass at Box Butte State Recreation Area.



It's early November, and the same roads of the Nebraska National Forest southeast of Chadron that were covered with fall colors just a month prior are now adorned in white.



As November gives way to December, the chill in the air prompts ice to begin forming at wildlife management areas, whether it be along the rocky shore of Whitney Lake in Dawes County or among the bulrushes at Smith Lake south of Rushville. It comes to the joy of ice fishermen but disdain of those missing the fall colors and warmer days. ■

LANGDON BEND

WETLANDS WORK IS ATTRACTING DUCKS AND HUNTERS

Story and photos by Eric Fowler

Work to dam and channelize the Missouri River during the past century erased more than 500,000 acres of fish and wildlife habitat

below Sioux City, Iowa. While considerable work has been done since the late 1980s to restore some of the lost habitat, efforts have focused primarily on creating shallow-water habitat that is connected to the river.

Little has been done to restore the shallow wetlands that once dotted the Missouri's floodplain, a fact that makes the wetlands that have been restored at Langdon Bend Wildlife Management Area near Nemaha unique. Add in the

opportunity waterfowlers now have to hunt ducks and geese in these shallow water areas flooded with well water in the fall, including some flooded corn, and the wetlands are even more unique.

Langdon Bend is a 1,779 acre property owned by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers and managed by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. It is one of 16 such properties in Nebraska and one of 70 in the channelized reach of the river, which also includes Iowa, Kansas and Missouri, that have restored under the Missouri River Recovery Program. All of the land purchased by the Corps



Low berms built on Langdon Bend Wildlife Management Area near Nemaha hold back natural precipitation as well as pumped well water to create wetland habitat that is lacking on the floodplain along the channelized portion of the Missouri River.



Clint Sejkora of Burchard and Grant Brueggemann of Peru hunt from standing corn flooded by well water to provide wetland habitat for ducks and hunters at Langdon Bend WMA.

under this program – about 55,000 acres, including 10,500 in Nebraska – has been bought from willing sellers, most of whom are happy to divest themselves of flood-prone land and the challenges it presents.

Below the Platte River in Nebraska, levees built by the Corps and farmers to protect farmland in the riverbottom from flooding line both sides of the river. Nearly all of the mitigation projects are located on the riverward side of these levees. There, the Corps has restored chutes and backwaters to create shallow water habitat to benefit

the endangered pallid sturgeon and least tern and the threatened piping plover. Such was the case at Langdon Bend, where a 1.5-mile long backwater was completed in 2000 on the 750 acres of land located on the inside the levee.

Before the river's banks were stabilized, its course channelized, and the levees and dams built, the river meandered dramatically, constantly carving land from one bank and depositing it on another. Created by that constant movement of the channel and by occasional overbank flooding

caused by winter ice jams and by spring and summer rises of the river, was a floodplain pocked with many shallow wetlands and occasional oxbow lakes. These low spots were filled by rain or, when the river was high, either directly connected to the river or by groundwater seeping up from below. Some wetlands have persisted since the river was channelized, but many were lost as farmland was ditched and drained and many others disappeared as they filled with soil.

Now the Missouri River rarely gets outside of its banks above the mouth

of the Platte River. Below the Platte, flooding does occur on occasion, but rarely does the water get beyond the levees. Between them, it deposits sand and silt, filling most depressional



Langdon Bend Wildlife Management Area is located one-half mile east of Nemaha.



Mike Remund of Tecumseh and his Labrador, Reuben J. Cogburn, retrieve ducks from flooded corn at Langdon Bend WMA.

wetlands that had existed and raising the land further from the water table, making it almost impossible for those to fill from beneath.

The 1,034 acres located on the landward side of the levee at Langdon Bend offered the Corps and the Commission the opportunity to recreate some of those lost wetlands, something Scott Luedtke, southeast district habitat program manager with the Commission, said the agency always looks to do when land is acquired. Discussions on wetland development at Langdon began well before the Corps transferred the management of the property to the Commission in 2004. With soil surveys showing where wetlands had previously existed on the site, and that the soils in those areas were capable of holding water, the agencies began working on a plan to pump and keep it there.

In the first phase of the project, completed in 2009, low berms were constructed to form three wetland cells covering about 220 acres. Three wells, connected by a pipeline, can be used to fill the cells either individually or collectively. Water control structures installed at outlets to the cells can be opened or closed to capture or release pumped water or rainwater as necessary. A drainage ditch that bisects

the floodplain was widened to create additional wetland habitat but kept functional to protect adjacent property owners.

Since the Commission took over management of Langdon Bend, the Corps has purchased an additional 496 acres south of the original property it acquired in 1955. Work began this year on two more wetland cells on this new property that will create about 70 acres of additional wetland habitat.

“Like a lot of these floodplains, they have a fairly flat slope, so you can put very low level berms up and be able to pond a lot of water if you have the right soils,” Luedtke said.

Pumping water to maintain wetlands for migratory birds in the spring and fall is not unique to Commission wildlife management areas: it does so often in the Rainwater Basin when Mother Nature does not fill those wetlands. How the wetlands at Langdon Bend are being managed, however, is another unique aspect of this project.

The land in each cell is farmed one year and left fallow the next, allowing annual weeds to flourish. If needed, the



A pair of wood ducks paddle through a flooded corn field at Langdon Bend during the spring.

pumps are turned on each fall and spring to flood at least two of the cells.

Pumping begins in late August to provide water for ducks and hunters during the teal season in early September, said Mike Remund, who manages Langdon Bend and other wildlife management areas in

southeastern Nebraska. Pumps are shut off in September and as water recedes, the open mudflats attract migrating shorebirds. Pumps are turned back on before the regular duck season opens in October, and the wetlands attract teal, gadwall, wigeon, some mallards and other early migrators in the first months of the waterfowl season.

Pumping schedules are dependent in part on when crops are harvested from the wetland cells, and Remund said tenants have made an effort to get crops on the wetland cells picked as soon as possible. When corn is planted in the wetlands, a portion is left standing in strips, and Remund turns the pumps back on in November to flood that crop, which becomes a magnet for mallards that come through in late November and early December, and the hunters who pursue them.

“I’m not concerned about flooding the corn until we get those late season mallards,” Remund said. “We’ve got so much barnyard grass and foxtail and other annuals over there right now, those early birds are going to have plenty of high energy stuff to eat.”

“That flooded corn is why I hunt it,” said Clint Sejkora, a Burchard native who started hunting the area when attending Peru State College, located a few miles north of the area. “There’s not very much of that in the state, and there’s really no hunting pressure. You get a lot birds moving up and down the river.”

Pumping resumes in February to provide water for ducks, geese and shorebirds heading back north. Mallards, pintails and snow geese have been showing up in droves.

“We see a lot of snow geese,” Remund said. “At one time last year we had about 150,000 of them down there. They weren’t there for long, but they found that flooded corn and had a



An immature bald eagle buzzes a flock of mostly mallards stopped on a wetland at Langdon Bend during the spring migration.



Sejkora fires at ducks making a pass over his decoys on a wetland at Langdon Bend during a November hunt.

heyday for about three days.

“If the birdwatcher wants to go and observe birds, spring is the time to go. When the migration is at its peak, there are mallards and pintails sitting right next to road, and you can get all of the pictures you want.”

Control structures can be closed in cells that are not being farmed to capture rainfall or snowmelt at any time of the year. There have been years since the project was completed in which no pumping was required to keep water in the wetlands. In other years, however, it has been so dry that pumping was not feasible. Precipitation is a big part of that equation, but so is the level of the Missouri River, Remund said. Higher river levels mean higher groundwater and less time needed to saturate the soil and start pooling water.

“Even though we have the ability to pump, we’re still at the mercy of Mother Nature,” Remund said. “Langdon doesn’t have those heavy clay soils like they do in the Rainwater Basin soils that really hold water. We

can pump a cell up and if it’s a dry year like it was a couple years ago, we can go back two days later and it will be dry.

“Some duck hunters think if you’ve got a well you should be able to pump water any time and go shoot ducks, but that’s not always the case. In some years it’s just not cost effective.”

While income from agricultural leases on the WMA provide cash to operate the pumps, maintaining early successional habitat is the reason the wetland cells are being farmed. This type of habitat is rich in annual grasses and forbs that are considered weeds by some, which is why it is often lacking in today’s agricultural landscape. But these “weeds” produce seeds and attract insects that feed a variety of wildlife, especially grassland birds.

“We have pheasants on these river areas and it’s simply because of that wetland associated vegetation ... the forbs, smartweed, sunflowers, barnyard grass, foxtail,” said Remund. “There are always some pockets of cattails and bulrushes and prairie cord grass that

give them some heavy winter cover, too.

“We have a lot of annual weeds, and it’s the size of the area that really makes it click as far as the upland game value. You get those big weed fields and you get a lot of bugs and annual weed seeds and you get pheasants. It’s tough to walk. Some of those sunflowers will grow 12 to 15 feet tall or more. But the guys who work for them can have some success on pheasants there.”

The early successional habitat complements a diversity of other habitats found at Langdon Bend and the adjacent 160-acre Aspinwall Bend Wildlife Management Area, including wetland and warm-season grasslands and both mature and early-successional riverbottom woodlands.

“I couldn’t begin to name all the songbirds, raptors, furbearers, all kinds of things associated with wetlands, grasslands, the Missouri River and that backwater area, that are using the area,” said Remund.

The woodlands on the area and



Teal circle a wetland as well water, pumped to provide wetland habitat during the spring migration, pours from a pipeline riser.

those at Aspinwall are located on the riverward side of the levee and home to turkeys and white-tailed deer, providing other opportunities for hunters. Anglers regularly ply the waters of the Missouri and the mouth of the Little Nemaha River at Aspinwall for catfish.

Because flooding can quickly erase habitat work on the unprotected side of the levee – restored grasslands were killed during historic flooding in 2011 – no major habitat work is done there apart from prescribed fire and farming to maintain open areas. Even the backwater, completed by the Corps in 2001, has suffered from flooding, having been closed off from the river and partially filled by silt and sand. Rather than reopen the mouth, planning is underway to convert it to a flow-through chute by extending the channel to the river.

On the protected side of the levee at Langdon Bend, Remund is using agriculture, water and fire to control trees and shrubs that can quickly overtake the wetlands and grasslands, and also to keep cattails from overtaking the wetlands. More of the area will be planted to permanent grass cover in the years to come, including a high diversity mix of warm- and cool-season grasses and forbs like big and little bluestem, wheatgrass, Virginia and Canada wild rye and others in the lower end of the current wetland project.

The diversity of habitats at Langdon Bend, especially the wetland habitat,

is an important part of a much larger habitat picture as seen by migratory birds. The property is only 20 miles as the duck flies from Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge, an important stopover for migrating waterfowl, especially snow geese in the spring, at Mound City, Missouri. And there are now 185 Wetlands Reserve Program Projects, some similar to the wetland work at Langdon Bend, that have been completed by landowners in the Missouri River Valley in Nebraska. With the river hugging the bluff line so closely in Nebraska, especially south of the Platte River, “we have a limited amount of floodplain accessible to do this kind of work,” said Luedtke. “We felt that Langdon Bend was a place to emphasize that due to its proximity to all of these other wetland habitats in the lower corridor.”

This is the first project like this the Commission has undertaken, and one of only a few pumping projects the Corps has completed under the Missouri River Recovery Program. A similar project is found at Benedictine Bottoms near Atchison, Kansas. As such, Remund said they are still learning how to best manage the system for habitat, wildlife and hunters.

“We’re still in the early stages of just trying to figure out how everything works,” he said. “And we’re getting a little better at it each year.”

The ducks and hunters have noticed. ■

Missouri River Recovery Program

The Missouri River floodplain covers 1.9 million acres between Sioux City, Iowa, and its mouth at St. Louis. During the last century, channelization and bank stabilization of that reach of the river, roughly a third of its 2,341 miles, by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the development that followed erased an estimated 168,000 acres of aquatic habitat and 354,000 acres of adjacent riverine habitat. Nearly 20 percent of the combined losses were in Nebraska.

Six massive dams built by the Corps, inundating another third of the river’s course, have controlled flooding and changed the historic flow of the river. All of these changes have drastically altered the river ecosystem to the detriment of flora and fauna:

- 51 of 67 native fish species are now rare, uncommon or decreasing.
- Reproduction of cottonwoods, historically the dominant floodplain tree, largely has ceased in many reaches of the river.
- Aquatic insects, a key link in the food chain, have been reduced by 70 percent.

The Missouri River Recovery Program is an effort to replace some of the habitat lost to the Corps projects and help restore fish and wildlife, especially threatened and endangered species like the pallid sturgeon, least tern and piping plover.

This program includes development of emergent sandbar, shallow water, wetland and terrestrial habitat, as well as monitoring to ensure the work is effective.

While some of this habitat work was already being done by the Corps, much is being done in response to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Biological Opinion, released in 2000 and amended in 2003, that said the Corps operations of the river must change to prevent other species from being listed as threatened or endangered.



Great-tailed Grackles

Opportunists for a modern world.

By Joel Jorgensen

As I pumped gas at a convenience store at the Interstate 80 York interchange, I watched several large blackbirds with absurdly long tails standing on the open pavement, foraging in the small strips of grass and making raucous sounds in the few scraggly ornamental trees between the highway and a service road. This spot seemed to be a long way from idyllic natural habitat and most of my fellow travelers appeared not to notice the birds. However, there is a story about these birds and why they are at this location at this point in time.

The birds, **great-tailed grackles**, are now fairly common, albeit local, residents in Nebraska.

Great-tailed grackles are not necessarily pretty, but they are distinctive. Males are glossy black with purple iridescence. From the tip of their large bills to the tip of their long tails males total 16 or 17 inches. Females are smaller and browner.

Great-tailed grackle males are also vocal. They have a repertoire of odd sounds which to refer to any part as musical or a song would be generous. But it is not this species' appearance or their vocalizations that is the real story, here.

The great-tailed grackle is an opportunistic species. Few other native animals have been as successful exploiting changes made by humans to the environment over the past hundred years as this species does. When the first settlers cut across Nebraska, up until the early 20th century, great-tailed grackles barely reached the southern border of the United States. The birds' distribution was restricted to Mexico and points south. It was not until the mid-20th century that this species rapidly increased and expanded its range northward. The great-tailed grackle was first recorded in Nebraska in 1976 and found nesting one year later near Hastings.

Now, a few decades later, great-tailed grackles are



The great-tailed grackle.



The common grackle.

fixtures of the state's bird life. Interestingly, the species is typically found nesting in two types of habitats: marshes with emergent vegetation and environs bustling human development, such as interstate interchanges or along the busiest parts of Cornhusker Highway in Lincoln. The reason great-tailed grackles thrive in these two habitats boils down to resources. Wetlands are, in an ecological sense, high-productive systems, but a collection of fast food restaurants and gas stations are also productive, at least from the great-tailed grackle's point-of-view. Humans are messy and the bits of refuse or food that do not find the proper repository are quickly located and consumed. The constant stream of vehicles also carries dead or dying insects. Great-tailed grackles are typically not found in suburban environs that are frequented by the more numerous and smaller common grackle.

The story of the great-tailed grackle is one of success in the face of change. Habitat loss has indeed reduced many wildlife species' populations. Even though habitats are destroyed and lost, the space is not. Something else takes the place of natural habitat. Prairies become gas stations and fast food restaurants, wetlands become cornfields and so on. Even though human development has limited biodiversity, it is habitat for a few opportunistic species such as the great-tailed grackle. It is something to keep in mind the next time you are pumping gas and happen to glance over at a large blackbird with an absurdly long tail consuming a discarded French fry on the pavement. ■

Joel Jorgensen is the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission's Nongame Bird Program Manager.



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◀ This picture was taken in 1969 by the local newsmen from Elm Creek with a Polaroid camera of Jim Amsberry (pictured on the left) who has since passed – and Larry Amsberry (myself) now age 82.

We were hunting on the Platte River south of Elm Creek and had shot our limit of mallards when we came up with these lesser Canadas.

Lesser Canadas were a real treat because at the time there were very few geese on the Platte River.

– Larry Amsberry,
Ansley, Nebraska

▼ As a subscriber to NEBRASKAland, we enjoy the Portraits from the Past. The enclosed photo was labeled mid-60s near Bow Valley, Nebraska.

Pictured left to right are: Uncle Wayne Schlecht; cousin Dick Schlecht and brother Robert Bathke – all of Norfolk, Nebraska.

– Shirley M. Tscharner,
Jackson, California



Please
Send Us Your
Portraits

We are running out!

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.

Ridin' Dirty

By Pat Molini, Commission Wildlife District Manager

I'm a dog technician. I feed and water three yellow labs as well as walk them twice a day, even though two of them are supposedly owned by my daughters. VinnyChuckyHildy we call them collectively, the way one might combine the names of twins to make it easier on everyone, and recently I found out just how much I love them.

It was at the conclusion of an evening walk on the frigid, frozen minimum-maintenance road I live on. As I often do after the walks, I allowed the dogs extra time to “sniff and pee” across the yard. Seeing my neighbor Troy outside having a smoke, all three dogs ran in his direction. But only one dog, Vinny, ran out of Troy's garage with a three-ounce box of mouse poison in his mouth, spilling the blue/green granules all the way out. Chucky and Hildy were lapping up, what they felt, was their share of the granules as they followed behind. Vinny sat the box down and began to eat his ration. Finally, I realized what I was witnessing and stopped the feast.

Then the dreaded uh-oh's started. Should I rush them to a vet? Hell, how about a regular hospital? I kenneled them and started my Internet search engine steamin' full speed ahead with searching “dog ate mouse poison,” “how to treat dog ate mouse poison,” “how much mouse poison can kill a dog,” and onward. Later my vet told me the worst thing I could have done is searched the Internet for answers. She was absolutely correct. My family doctor has cautioned me against this same quest for medical knowledge via the internet.

It all scared me but I did find a forum with one post recommending hydrogen peroxide to make the dogs vomit. The problem was, which was the same reoccurring problem I had with the Internet search, it only gave me part of the information and left out critical details like how much. In fact one other post said to be careful giving your dog hydrogen peroxide because it can kill your dog. It's also important to note that I couldn't get connected with an emergency vet. Also, doing the math with a 3-ounce box of poison minus Hildy's share minus Chucky's share minus Vinny's share minus the ounce or so left in the box plus the amount spilled on the driveway equaled that I was “sort of sure” they individually didn't get much.

I called my vet first thing the next morning and drove them the 25 miles to get them treated. Step one, I was told, is to inject the dogs with something that will cause them to defecate and regurgitate and will take around 20 minutes to half an hour. The vet wanted to see how much of the blue/green coloration was in their feces and/or vomit, which would give an idea how much they got and how much treatment they need. Step two: take them out in the yard and let them complete step one. After each finished in the yard, I examined their output with a stick and, to my relief, no blue/green color. Awesome news especially considering my vet said that the new poisons are longer lasting and, because they inhibit the blood's ability to clot, a treatment of Vitamin K is needed for three to five weeks. She gave me the price of one

bottle of pills needed for one dog for five days, and again I did some math. It could have been a \$600-plus bill to treat the three of them.

She gave each a shot of Vitamin K and directed me to watch them for signs of sickness. Also, Hildy gave us a “warning gargle” like she might throw up. The vet said “you might want to take that one out into the yard before you leave, she may not be done.” No problem – we were all used to the sniff and pee regimen.

I loaded them up in my 1998 four door Saturn. Good car, one broken side mirror and not one of the four windows rolls down anymore, but still goes from point A to point B like no other. We got down the road about 5 miles and Vinny vomited. No big deal. The seats were covered with old rugs and towels. I pulled over, flipped the pile into a ditch and we were back on the road in minutes. Another mile down the road and Chucky vomited. Again – no reason for alarm.

Back on the road, and then more vomit came. This time Hildy filled up the cup holders and between the seats. Then Chucky spewed on the back of the passenger seat. I was beginning to go into shock. Hildy then vomited on my right leg, while Vinny added another pile on my right shoulder that rolled down my chest and back. But I was still optimistic. It didn't smell bad. It was only wet dog food.

Then Vinny lifted his tail and defecated onto the rear door, which prompted me, broken windows and all, to prop the door open with my left knee while driving down the highway to take in some much needed oxygen. Meanwhile, I was beginning to lose track of the vomit piles amassing all over the car. I begged for the dogs to hold on just a few minutes longer. I was within a quarter mile of a public hunting area, so seconds were precious at this point. However, seconds were too long to wait. All three continued to decorate the doors and seats of the car.

I got them out onto the public hunting area and, at this time, must apologize to anyone who walked there shortly after. You couldn't walk five steps without having to dodge a pile of something offensive. All this excitement must have made the gang thirsty. They lapped up water from the wetlands and 30 seconds later it sounded like toilets flushing when they vomited it up. But eventually, the tide finally turned. By the time I got home, I had never been so happy to kennel my three dogs.

As for my poor Saturn, no vehicle should have to endure what that one did. I opened the doors and squirted the chunks out with a hose, then scrubbed everything with soap before rinsing it out. Envision trying to clean foamy, slimy dog food from that crack between your seat and the mantel/cup holders.

While my youngest daughter didn't believe me the next morning on the way to school when she asked what the stains and smell were from and I replied “I spilt my coffee,” this will be good news for my oldest daughter. Once people get word of this story, there's no way any of her friends will want to ride in her Saturn.

And all because I really love my dogs. ■



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Smoked Trout Pâté with Horseradish

By Jenny Nguyen

When it comes to preparation and taste, trout is obviously different from other fish in Nebraska. It's fatty and reminiscent of salmon, which is a fish that people either love or hate. Often too small and bony to filet, trout are best cooked whole. Now that can be a problem – fry it, grill it or even wrap it in bacon, chances are, your family members won't have anything to do with dinner that can stare back at them. You may smoke a couple for yourself, but sadly, end up feeding the rest to the cat. Cats and the rest of the world don't mind eating around fish bones, but apparently most Americans do.

Trout is one of the healthiest fish you can eat. High in omega-3 fatty acids and relatively low in fat and cholesterol, trout is a good substitute for more fatty proteins like beef or pork. But before I continue, I have to admit that the recipe I'm going to give you below will throw out all those health benefits. With all that delicious cream cheese to temper the "strong" flavor of trout, hopefully this recipe will get more people to at least try it, and perhaps work their way up to eating whole trout, preferably via healthier cooking methods such as grilling, baking or smoking.

Consider this, I once paid \$30 to eat one steelhead (rainbow) trout at the Grey Plume in Omaha. Although it was excellent, a \$30 annual fishing permit still sounds a lot better to me. It's November, and our fisheries biologists have made their fall rounds stocking thousands of pan-size trout in waters near you. The fish are out there for easy taking, waiting for you to take them home and make them into pâté.

Servings: 6

Prep Time: 20 minutes

Ingredients:

- 2 14" smoked trout, or equivalent
- 4 ounces of cream cheese, softened
- 3 green onions, chopped

- 2 to 3 tablespoons of fresh parsley, chopped
- zest and juice of 1 lemon
- ¼ teaspoon of fresh ground horseradish, or to taste
- salt and pepper, to taste

1. Use your favorite recipe for smoked trout, or buy a brine kit from the store. Once smoked trout is cooled, peel off the skin and pick off as much meat from the bones as possible, paying special attention to pin bones. Place meat in a medium size bowl, then add cream cheese, lemon juice, lemon zest, onion, parsley, horseradish and pepper. Mix well and taste before adding any salt. Cover bowl and place in the refrigerator for the mixture to firm up before serving.

2. Serve in a sandwich or spread over crackers and toast. To make the sandwich in the photo, you will need ciabatta bread, mozzarella cheese slices, artichoke and tomato antipasto spread (from Hy-Vee), lettuce and tomato slices. Spread antipasto on the bottom bun and cover with cheese slices. Toast top and bottom buns until warmed and cheese has melted. Then fill sandwich



Watch for trout bones when you make this pâté.

with a good helping of the trout pâté, tomato slices and lettuce. Serve sandwiches or spread with gherkins. ■

This recipe and photograph originally appeared on Jenny's Food for Hunters blog at Foodforhunters.com.

Read Jenny's NEBRASKAland blog "Midland Musings."



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"Martha," a **passenger pigeon** named after George Washington's wife, was the last of her kind. Immediately following her death in 1914 at the Cincinnati Zoological Gardens, she was packed in an enormous 300-pound block of ice and shipped to the Smithsonian.

No More Passenger Pigeons

When I was a boy, I had a Time-Life book called *The Birds*. In it was a section showing the few U.S. species we'd already lost to extinction; the great auk, the Carolina parakeet, the heath hen. The biggest picture though was reserved for the passenger pigeon, and for good reason. Once numbering three billion or more, this species flew in vast flocks, sometimes over Nebraska, passing overhead for days at a time. Witnesses described seeing a "feathered river in the sky."

Our hungry, growing nation also saw them as delicious and inexhaustible, and market hunted them to near extinction in about 50 years.

From 3 billion passenger pigeons to none. I still can't believe it.

Martha died 100 years ago, on September 1, 1914. Her demise proved to be a watershed event.

People finally began to care about the fate of our nation's wildlife. Conservation groups sprang up, including those formed by hunters to protect habitat, allowing many species to flourish including grassland birds and waterfowl.

Today, it's up to all of us to be good stewards. With appropriate hunting regulations long in place, the key going forward is that we must preserve habitat for all living species if we want to see them stick around in the coming decades. Specifically, this means allowing dead timber to stand for cavity nesting birds like woodpeckers, and not plowing under milkweed-laden prairies that support monarch butterflies. Wetlands are critically important to preserve as well, nurturing everything from frogs to waterfowl.

We cannot count on our neighbors to do this for us. From now on, landowners who care must step forward and do their parts. There can never be another passenger pigeon.

Joel Sartore
September 12, 2014



NEBRASKAland

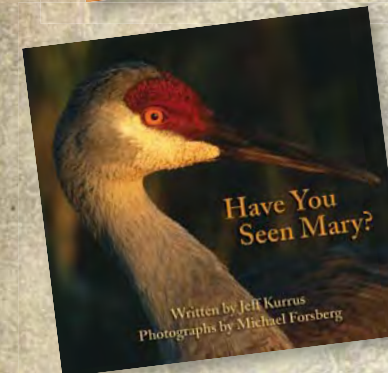
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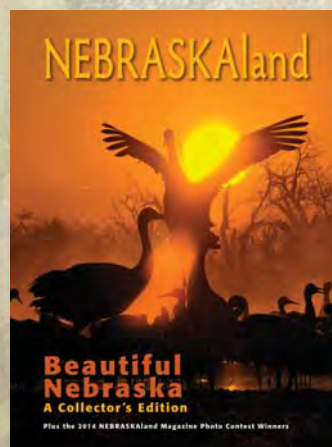
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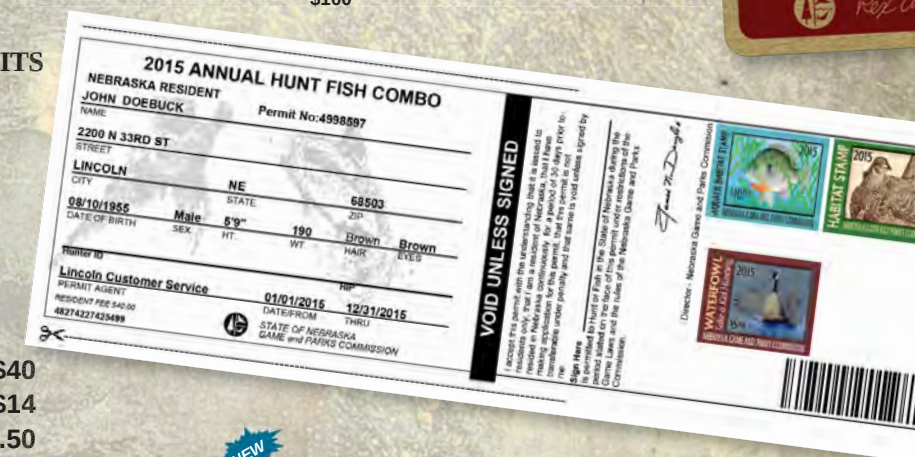
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