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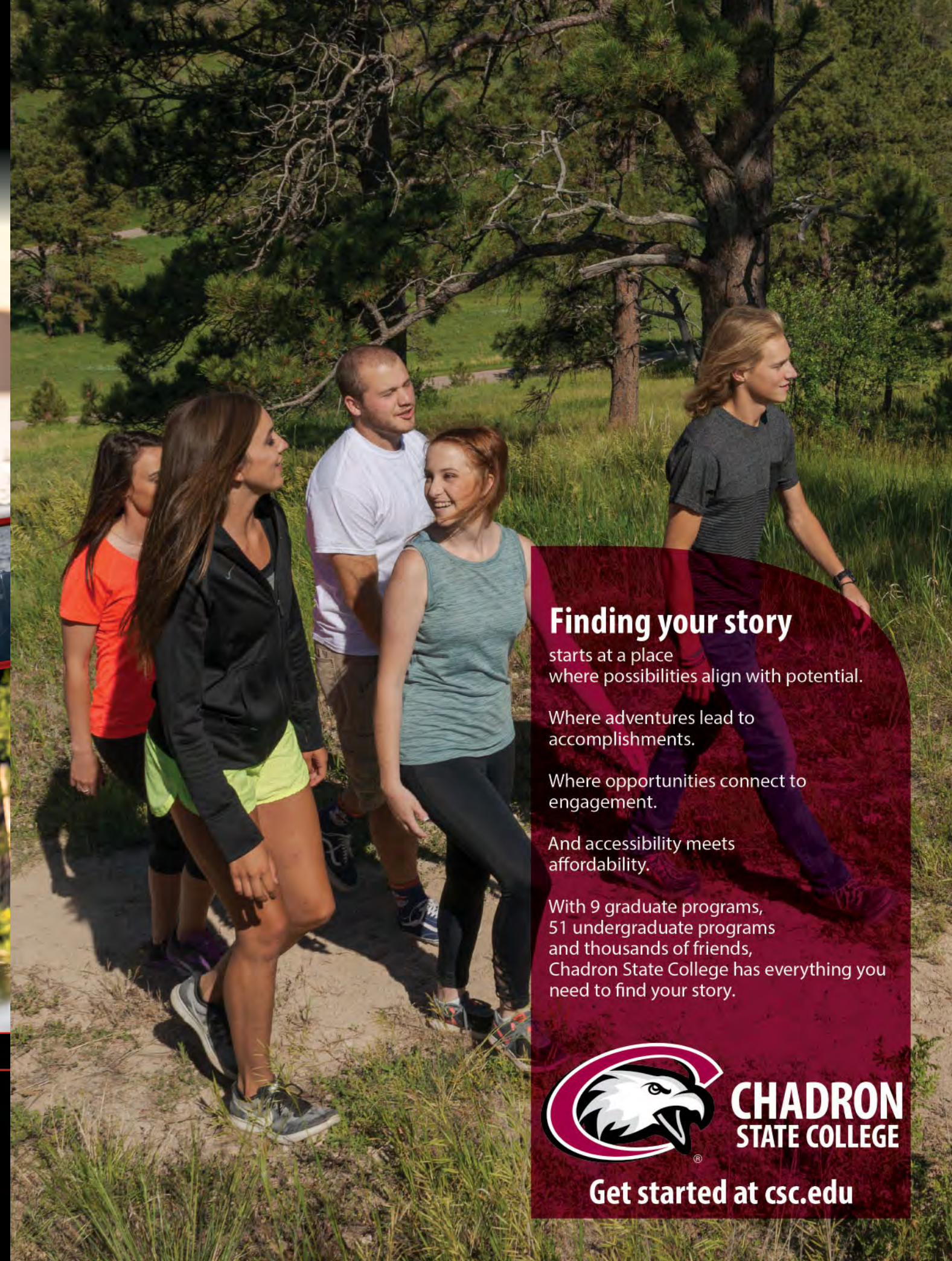


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Cover: The cold water of Sowbelly Creek flows through fall colors and over bedrock in the Pine Ridge.

JUSTIN HAAG, NEBRASKALAND

This page: A Canada goose breaks free from the water’s surface at Wehrspann Wetland near Gretna.

JEFF KURRUS, NEBRASKALAND

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magazine

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2023 FALL CHAPTER BANQUETS

SEP 13 Kearney County PF
SEP 23 Platte River PF (Dawson Co)
SEP 28 Douglas County West PF
NOV 04 Platte County PF
NOV 10 Nuckolls County PF

MORE DATES TO COME!

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2023-24 YOUTH MENTOR HUNT SCHEDULE

SEP 10 Medicine Creek PF (Frontier Co)
SEP 24 Sandhills PF (Brown, Keya Paha, Rock Co)
SEP 30 Seward County PF
OCT 07 Cass County PF
OCT 07 Corn County PF (York Co)
OCT 07 Oregon Trail PF (Scotts Bluff Co)
OCT 14 Cornhusker PF (Lancaster Co)
OCT 14 Dakota/Thurston PF
OCT 14 Elkhorn Valley PF (Madison, Pierce, Stanton Co)
OCT 14 Lewis & Clark PF (Cedar Co)
OCT 14 Niobrara Valley PF (Holt Co)
OCT 14 Saline County PF
OCT 14 Southeast Nebraska PF (Gage Co)
OCT 14 Washington County PF
OCT 20 Cody Ringnecks PF (Lincoln Co)
OCT 21 Douglas County West PF
OCT 21 High Plains PF (Cheyenne Co)
OCT 21 Lower Platte PF (Saunders Co)
OCT 21 Plains Sportsman PF (Red Willow Co)
OCT 21 Platte County PF
DEC 02 Nemaha Valley PF (Nemaha Co)
DEC 02 Nuckolls County PF

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Roger Richters, Utica
A Train Through Staplehurst



Joshua Redwine, Lincoln
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The Milky Way at Minatare



Jim Harriger, Omaha
Juvenile Bald Eagle and Blue Jay — After the Fight

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



ROUNDTOP

An October sunrise at Roundtop, a landform on the Oglala National Grassland in Sioux County.

JUSTIN HAAG, NEBRASKALAND



Conservation officer Kyle Gaston checks the permit of waterfowl hunter Todd Mills of Gretna after a teal hunt in York County.
JEFF KURRUS, NEBRASKALAND

WHAT PERMIT MUST I CARRY?

By Jeff Kurrus

On your next pre-hunting season shopping trip, do you need to add printer paper to the list? Or can you simply access your permits through your mobile device? In Nebraska, it depends on what you're hunting.

Print Big

When hunting Nebraska's big game species — deer, elk and antelope — a printed permit must be carried on your person while hunting.

Go Mobile

This is where it gets easy. If you're not hunting one of the big game species listed above, then all of your permits can be displayed in the GoOutdoorsNE mobile app or saved on your mobile device. That includes small game, fish, resident fur harvest, and waterfowl and habitat stamps. Turkey permits are no different. For turkeys, this permit also must be cancelled via online Telecheck.

You Must Be HIP

Nebraska's Harvest Information Program allows biologists to gather survey information for dove, duck, goose, snipe, rail, coot and woodcock hunters each year. Hunters must register for a number online and know this number if asked by a

conservation officer. The number will print on any applicable permits purchased after registration. However, while no printed copy is required, knowing that number is necessary.

Park Permits

If hunting on state park lands, a park permit sticker is required on the windshield of your vehicle.

But It's My Land

Landowner permits fall under the same regulations for printing big game permits and going mobile with the rest.

The Feds

If hunting ducks or geese, a federal duck stamp is required. If purchased online, an Electronic Duck Stamp receipt allows customers to purchase the stamp and use it immediately. It's valid 45 days from the date of purchase. After 45 days, customers must carry the signed Federal Duck Stamp on their person while hunting.

This hunting season, pay attention to these rules to ensure that when you see a conservation officer coming your way, the only thing you'll be thinking about is sharing stories of your great day afield.

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Darin Hahne, Rusty Rautenberg and Brandon Black of Tilden hunt ducks on a beaver pond at Red Wing Wildlife Management Area in Antelope County. ERIC FOWLER, NEBRASKALAND

CHOOSE YOUR DUCK LIMITS

By Eric Fowler

Prior to 2021, Brandon Black had never hunted ducks. Rusty Rautenberg had, but only occasionally with family. Darin Hahne hadn't since he was in college.

An invitation from a seasoned hunter convinced the trio, all of whom work at Elkhorn Valley Schools in Tilden, to get into, or back into, waterfowl hunting. Their hunt also coincided with the creation of a two-tier duck bag limit system, which hunters can choose a bag limit that doesn't require them to accurately identify ducks on the wing, making it easy for them to strike out on their own.

"That helped a ton last year just because we didn't have to worry about identifying everything at the beginning," Hahne said during a hunt last fall.

Participation in waterfowl hunting declined by 52 percent in Nebraska and South Dakota from 1999 to 2019. In Nebraska, that amounted to 464 fewer hunters per year. The average age of a waterfowl hunter also continued to increase.

In an effort to stabilize or grow numbers, which in turn

supports migratory birds and habitat, research identified three main barriers to waterfowl hunting: lack of places to go, complex regulations and difficulty identifying duck species in flight. The latter isn't easy, especially early in the season in Nebraska, when many birds aren't yet sporting their bright breeding plumage.

"If you're out there a lot, you can see the difference in flight, shape and plumage patterns and color," said John McKinney, waterfowl program manager with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. "But to a novice hunter, that's just a brown duck coming in."

Some people simply don't want to chance shooting a duck they shouldn't, so they don't hunt at all. That led biologists in Nebraska and South Dakota to work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to develop the two-tier system in hopes of encouraging young hunters to try waterfowling and older ones to return. Prior to the season, when hunters register for the Harvest Information Program, required for anyone

The Tiers

A pilot program that began in 2021 sought to grow the number of waterfowl hunters through the creation of two bag-limit categories, or "tiers," which may be selected when duck hunters obtain their Harvest Information Program numbers.

Tier I

The first category, Tier I, is the traditional six-duck limit, including all species and sex requirements. The possession limit of three times the daily bag limit, or 18 ducks, will apply. Find the complete set of requirements in the current Small Game and Waterfowl Guide.

Tier II

The second category, or Tier II, is a three-duck limit with no species or sex restrictions. Hunters will be able to harvest three ducks of any legal species. The possession limit of three times the daily bag limit, or nine ducks, will apply. A HIP number will be required to choose this category.

hunting ducks, geese, doves, coot, snipe, rail or woodcock, they can choose the tier that fits their ability or preference. Tier I hunters can harvest six ducks with certain species and sex restrictions. Tier II hunters can harvest three ducks without the restrictions.

During the 2022-2023 duck season, the second for the four-year pilot program, 3,228 hunters, 12 percent of those who registered, chose the Tier II limit, which was higher than expected. According to surveys returned by selected participants, about 1,000 of those individuals actually hunted ducks, averaging 3.6 days in the field and harvesting 4.5 ducks for the entire season, about one-fourth of the harvest of the Tier I hunters.

As expected, 18- to 25-year-olds comprised the largest portion of Tier II participants, but they made up only 15 percent of the total. Participation was spread across all age groups, and the number of hunters 60 and older was a pleasant surprise, a fact that could be attributed to those hunters' aging eyesight as much as their identification skills. The trio from Tilden are in their 40s and 50s, groups that were well represented.

"This was designed as a recruitment tool, but it might end up being more of a reactivation tool, where you have people who used to waterfowl hunt, but, for whatever reason, got out of it, and this is an easier way for them to come back in," McKinney said.

How many new waterfowl hunters were added won't

be known until the numbers are crunched at the end of the four-year pilot program. But the numbers, as well as comments submitted by participants, show the system is indeed attracting new hunters to the sport, McKinney said.

The trio of educators from Tilden didn't shoot a duck the year they signed up for Tier II. Similar to other hunters, warm weather and dry wetlands meant fewer ducks stopped in Nebraska, and they had minimal chances. But they learned a lot and did harvest a few geese, and last fall, opted for Tier 1 and the traditional bag limit.

"We just decided if that's what it is, and if we're going to go shoot one or two ducks, we didn't feel like we were going to be at risk of shooting too many of the same species," Black said.

"Plus, it gives us a reason to learn to identify ducks better," Hahne added, adding another win to this two-tier program.



Rautenberg admires a drake wood duck he harvested at Red Wing WMA. ERIC FOWLER, NEBRASKALAND



These Argentinian empanadas are filled with dove and pork. JENNY NGUYEN-WHEATLEY, NEBRASKALAND

DOVE EMPANADAS

By Jenny Nguyen-Wheatley

Empanadas are Latin America's version of the turnover, usually filled with savory ingredients rather than sweet. It was first brought to Central and South America by the Spanish, and today, there are as many versions of the empanada as there are grandmothers in any given region.

The version I'm offering is associated with Buenos Aires, the capital and largest city of Argentina. The carne suave empanada is typically filled with minced ground meat, peppers and onion, and many recipes include raisins for a touch of sweetness and green olives for a burst of briny flavor. Any ground meat will work in this recipe.

Servings: 15-18 empanadas

Prep Time: 40 minutes

Cooking Time: 1 hour

Ingredients:

- ½ pound of ground dove breasts
- ½ pound fatty ground pork
- 2 packages of Goya Empanada Dough (20 discs)
- Vegetable oil for deep frying

- 1 red bell pepper, diced
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 1 tsp. ground cumin
- 1 tbs. sweet paprika
- 1½ tsp. dried oregano
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- Pinch of cayenne pepper
- 1½ tsp. kosher salt, plus extra
- Freshly cracked black pepper
- ¾ cup low-sodium chicken
- ½ cup golden raisins
- 5 Spanish Queen green olives, rinsed and coarsely chopped

1. Thaw empanada dough in the refrigerator overnight. When ready to cook, heat 1 tablespoon of oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Spread out ground dove and pork into the skillet and allow the bottom to form a crust before stirring and cooking the rest of the way. Then lower heat to medium. Transfer meat to a plate or bowl with a slotted spoon and set aside.

2. In the same pan, add an additional tablespoon of oil, onion,

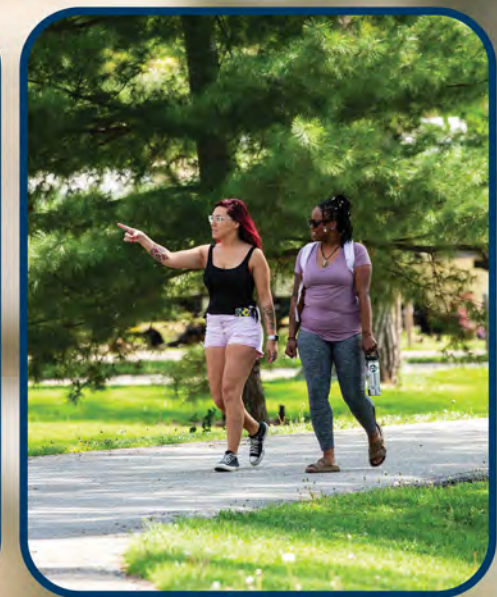
bell pepper and a pinch of salt. Sauté until softened, but do not brown. Then stir in cumin, paprika, oregano and garlic for 30 seconds. Next, return ground meat to the skillet and season with about 1½ teaspoon of kosher salt, freshly cracked black pepper and cayenne pepper to taste. Add chicken stock and simmer until mixture is no longer watery, but still moist, stirring occasionally. Take off heat. Stir in coarsely chopped olives (about ¼ cup) and raisins. Allow mixture to cool before filling empanadas. Mixture could be made a couple days in advance.

3. Place about 2 heaping tablespoons of cooled filling onto each disc of empanada dough. Brush the edge with water and fold over to form half circles. Crimp with a fork. Heat frying oil to 325-350 degrees Fahrenheit. Fry empanadas in batches until golden on both sides and drain. Keep warm in an oven and serve hot. To reheat empanadas, pop them in a 350-degree oven for a few minutes.

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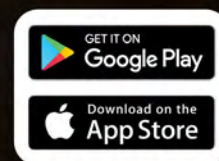
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October Morning on the Niobrara

*Photos and story by
Gerry Steinauer, Botanist*

On an early October day last year, dawn arrived cool and crisp on the central Niobrara River. Although the sun was still below the horizon, its rays painted the eastern sky a light blue and the scattered clouds muted reds and purples. When the orb peaked above the skyline, the bluff tops were first to be illuminated, then the sunlight slowly slid down the valley flanks, finally settling in the floodplain, where it flashed the autumn-yellow leaves of ash and cottonwoods to glittering gold.

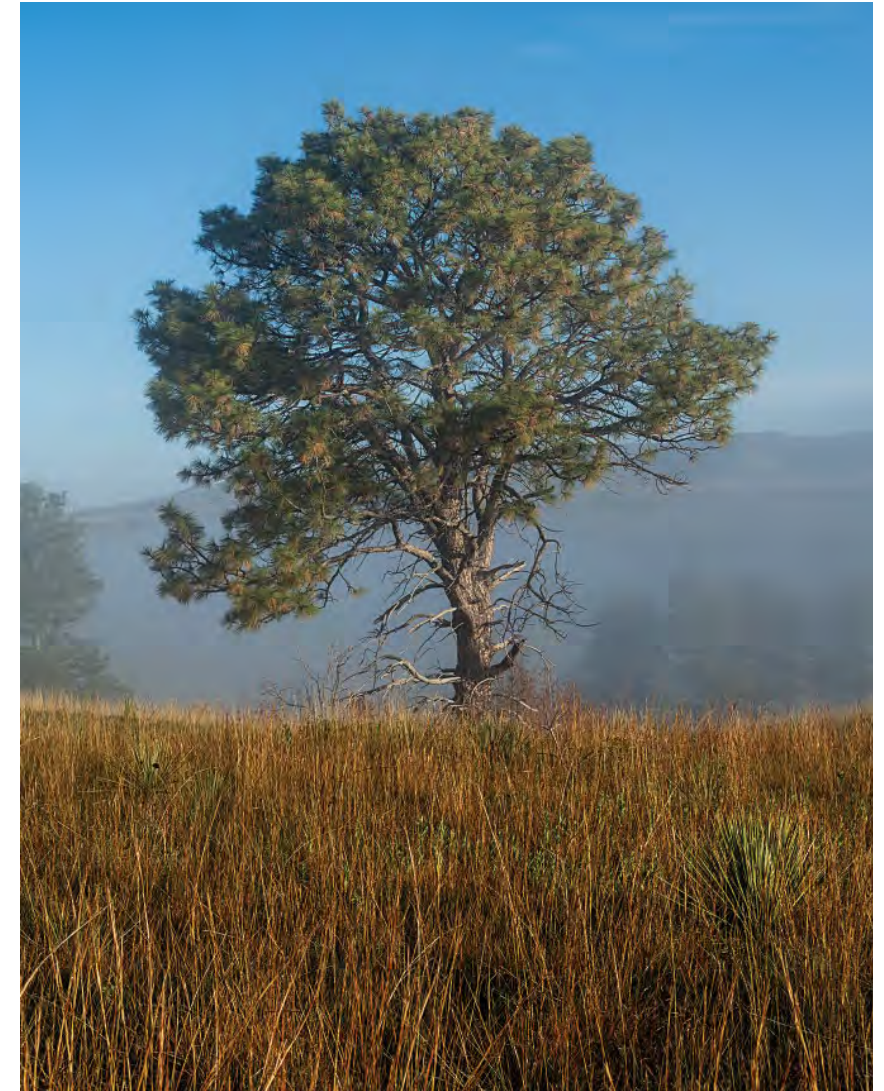
Unlike the floodplain trees, the bur oaks growing on the river terraces and in bluff ravines showed only a hint of fall color, a slight browning between the leaf veins. The hardy oaks had previously dropped their acorns, and early-rising squirrels scurried about the forest floor gathering and stashing the bounty as winter fare. Some of the rodent-buried nuts would sprout roots yet that fall.

In the nearby prairie, frost clung to the dried, browned stems and leaves of grasses and the still-green leaves of late wildflowers, mostly sunflowers, goldenrods and asters. A few of the flowers held lingering blooms; it would be a race to create seed before succumbing to the harder frosts to come.

As daylight filled the valley, a white-tailed deer, after a long night of foraging, waded into the river's shallows and drank before bedding down for the day. Meanwhile, downstream, a lone Canada goose rose from its sandbar roost and flew low up the braided stream, its shrill honking announcing to all that morning had arrived on the Niobrara. 



Early morning sunlight highlights the autumn colors of the central Niobrara River Valley. The red-leaved shrub on the bluff is smooth sumac and the yellow-leaved tree on the floodplain is cottonwood.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

A white-tailed deer wanders through the river's shallows, occasionally pausing to drink.

A morning mist rising from the river tempers the sunlight shining on a bluff-top ponderosa pine.

Acorns litter the floor of a bur oak woodland.

A basswood leaf lies partially submerged in a spring-fed stream that flows from the Niobrara's south bluff onto the floodplain.

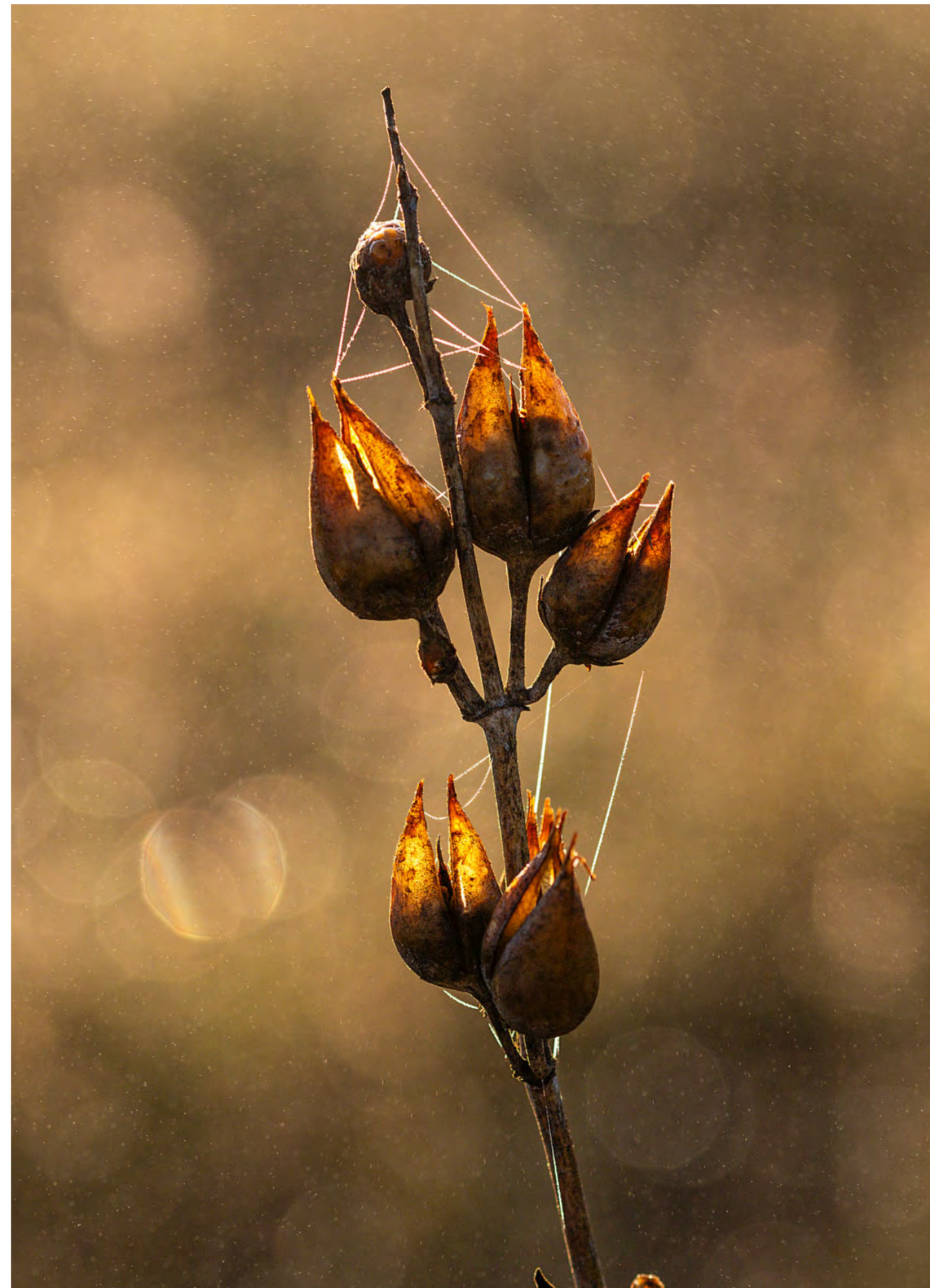


ABOVE: Light reflects off the clouds and onto the Niobrara River at dawn.

LEFT: Frost clings to the leaves and flowers of Texas croton, a wildflower of sandy soils.

RIGHT: A spider's web stretches between the dried seed pods of shell-leaf penstemon, a common wildflower of prairies throughout the state.

Gerry Steinauer is a botanist with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and a regular contributor to Nebraskaland. His first article appeared in the December 1990 issue.



Outdoor Nebraska

By Renae Blum

Ah, fall. Make the most of this beautiful time of year, through hunting, fishing and enjoying seasonal state park events. There's plenty out there to enjoy. 🍂



Look for galls

June through April | Statewide

Ever seen a bump or growth on a plant? It may have been a gall, an abnormal plant growth often caused by insects feeding on or laying eggs on the plant. The most common galls can be found on leaves, but they also form on stems and twigs, as well as buds and flowers. If you're not sure if you've found a gall, you can cut it open; you may see a larva or pupa inside, or it may be hollow and filled with frass, or insect poop, left behind.

CHRIS HELZER



Fall fishing

Throughout the month | Statewide

Many anglers feel the best open-water fishing of the year is upon us. Nebraska's fish feed heavily this month, getting ready for the winter and starting to develop eggs and milt for next year's spawn. With less activity and competition on the water, it's the perfect time to keep your open-water tackle ready a bit longer.

ERIC FOWLER, NEBRASKALAND

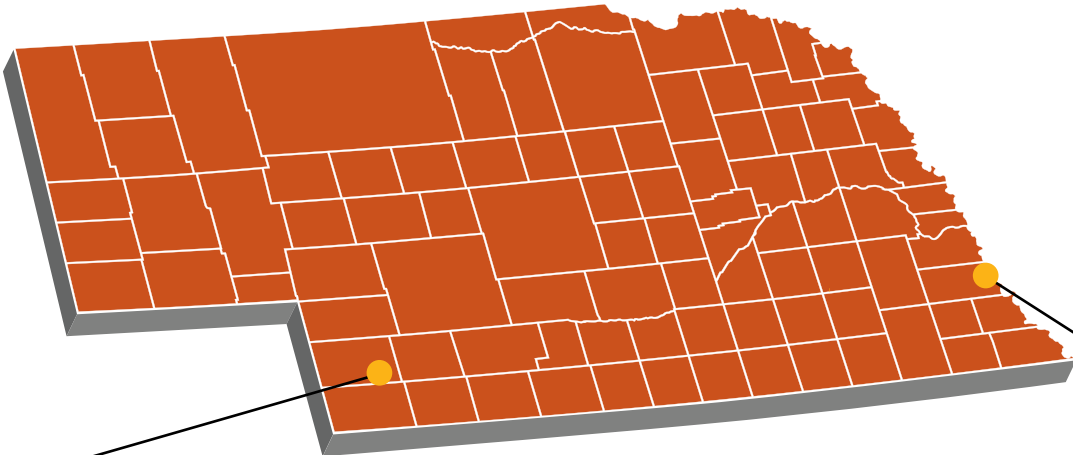


Youth pheasant season

Oct. 21-22 | Statewide

Know someone age 15 or younger who would enjoy pursuing pheasants? Take them into the field for youth pheasant season, giving them the valuable experience they need to create a lifelong love of this game bird. To learn more, visit OutdoorNebraska.gov and search "upland hunting."

ERIC FOWLER, NEBRASKALAND



Haunted Camping at Enders

Oct. 28-29 | Enders State Recreation Area

Get in the Halloween spirit! Make plans to camp at Area A and enter the camper/campsite decorating contest. Other activities this weekend include a haunted trail, games, hayrack ride and pumpkin-carving and costume contests.

ERIC FOWLER, NEBRASKALAND

Living History Weekend at Arbor Lodge

Oct. 14-15, 11 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Arbor Lodge State Historical Park

Peek into Nebraska's past with this special living history weekend, which focuses on the history and talents of the men and women of Arbor Lodge. Explore topics such as farming, business, painting, sewing, needlework, cooking, entertaining, education, railroads and more.

JENNY NGUYEN-WHEATLEY, NEBRASKALAND



Fall Park Getaways

By Renae Blum

Fall has returned with cool breezes, turning leaves and plentiful opportunities to get outdoors. Here are nine Nebraska state park or recreation areas that are prime spots to book a stay and enjoy a fall getaway.

Niobrara State Park

Niobrara State Park is a hidden gem in north-central Nebraska overlooking the confluence of the Missouri and Niobrara rivers; it's perfect for relaxing and recharging in a peaceful, natural setting. This park of rolling hills and trees is also a mecca for wildlife viewing in the fall. Enjoy tent or equestrian camping with scenic river views, RV camping in the modern campground or stay in one of the park's 20 cabins. Each cabin is fully furnished with a kitchen, bathroom with shower and two or three bedrooms. The screened-in porch is perfect for watching the sunrise or sunset while enjoying your cup of joe or a nightcap.

No matter which overnight stay you choose, remember to bring camp games and enjoy a barbecue with the grill and picnic table provided at your spot. Be sure to make time to enjoy the many miles of trails, wildlife viewing and fishing on the river.

Platte River State Park

Quaint Platte River State Park is nestled halfway between Nebraska's two largest cities: Lincoln and Omaha. The park offers a quiet getaway at a modern cabin, glamping cabin or the new state-of-the-art RV campground. Visitors can enjoy the fall colors and wildlife viewing opportunities on more than 14 miles of hiking and biking trails. Children will also enjoy the new playground and



The sun rises over the confluence of the Niobrara and Missouri Rivers at Niobrara State Park in Knox County.
ERIC FOWLER, NEBRASKALAND



zipline swing.

Other activities at the park include picnicking, fishing, recreational sports activities or climbing the observation tower. The Roger G. Sykes Heritage Education Complex offers both novice and experienced shooters the opportunity to practice archery and firearm shooting as well.

Lewis and Clark State Recreation Area

The south side of Lewis and Clark State Recreation Area offers 10 lakeshore cabins with beautiful views of the lake, as well as shoreline fishing. Each cabin features a kitchen, living room, bathroom with shower and two bedrooms. These fully-furnished cabins have a covered front porch, fire ring — and beautiful sunsets. The rock fishing jetties are close to the cabins, providing anglers the opportunity to fish from shore. The park also offers electric and basic camping in several campgrounds along the lake. For boat owners, fall fishing is a perfect time to enjoy the state’s second largest lake. During your stay, hike the trails, watch for wildlife and visit Gavins Point Dam.

Ponca State Park

Ponca State Park in northeastern Nebraska is a fall getaway must — a peaceful locale to enjoy great lodging accommodations, forested hills, scenic vistas, wildlife and

Missouri River access. The park is among wooded bluffs along the river and offers breathtaking views and fall foliage.

Ponca has a variety of camping options, from tents and cabins to RV camping, as well as 10 Tentrr sites, a ready-to-go camping option you’ll want to try. The cabins are fully equipped and have all the furnishings of home, and the park’s 1.5-acre pond is stocked with trout each fall. Hike the 22 miles of wooded trails throughout the park, fish the pond for your trout dinner, or practice archery with 3D targets at the Eric Wiebe Memorial Shooting Complex. On Saturday mornings, stop by the shooting complex to learn a new outdoor skill or take part in educational activities in the afternoon.

Places of interest nearby include shopping, restaurants and wineries. Golfers, bring your clubs and enjoy the nine-hole Highland Oaks golf course adjacent to the park.

Medicine Creek State Recreation Area

Medicine Creek State Recreation Area is full of opportunities for fall fun, whether fishing, hunting or both. The shoreline cabins and campground give you a great base camp for both activities. The four cabins are fully furnished and have two bedrooms each, set along the shoreline of the 1,768-acre lake. The campground at Medicine Creek offers both electric campsites and basic tent camping. Take this opportunity to escape the crowds and recharge in a peaceful setting.

TOP LEFT: Fall color at cabins at Weigand-Burbach campground area of Lewis and Clark State Recreation Area.

ERIC FOWLER, NEBRASKALAND

TOP RIGHT: Ponca State Park’s mini-lodge cabins offer year-round accommodations.

JEFF KURRUS, NEBRASKALAND

MIDDLE RIGHT: Fall color and leaves at Shady Bay Campground at Medicine Creek SRA.

JULIE GEISER, NEBRASKALAND

BOTTOM RIGHT: A tipi is on display at Platte River State Park in Cass County.

ERIC FOWLER, NEBRASKALAND





Eugene T. Mahoney State Park

Mahoney is a perfect destination for a fall getaway, with plenty of activities to delight all ages. The park has 57 cabins, and the Peter Kiewit Lodge’s 40 guest rooms offer stunning views and immersion in the Platte River Valley. For those who like to camp, Mahoney offers 148 campsites and modern facilities.

During your stay, hike or bike the paved trail winding through the park or get off-road and traverse the wooded hills of the park. Also, make sure to climb the 75-foot observation tower to enjoy the view of the Platte River Valley. With fewer visitors in the fall, there’s a great opportunity for wildlife viewing and bird watching, and you can fish 10-acre CenturyLink Lake or Baright Lake, which is 4 acres. If the weather doesn’t cooperate, come inside the Owen Marina Craft Center or the park’s Activity Center where there is an indoor playground and rock climbing.

Fort Robinson State Park

Fall provides a serene time of year at Fort Rob when you can discover historical sites, museums and more than 22,000 acres of beautiful Pine Ridge land for hiking, biking and horseback riding. Fort Robinson also offers fishing at several renovated ponds, Soldier Creek and the White River. There’s wildlife viewing, too — everything from pronghorn, deer, and turkey to some great birdwatching.

Guests can stay in historic lodging once used by soldiers and officers stationed at the fort. Comanche Hall can sleep as many as 60 people under one roof, making this park a great choice for family reunions. If you’re seeking a camping experience, Fort Robinson’s campgrounds offer everything from full-service RV to basic tent camping. An equestrian campground allows riders to haul in their own horses or mules.

Chadron State Park

Nebraska’s first state park, Chadron State Park is nestled among the scenic buttes and canyons of Nebraska’s Pine Ridge. Since its founding more than a century ago, it’s remained a popular spot for camping, family reunions and old-fashioned vacations. Activities include fishing in Chadron Creek and the park pond, hiking, biking, playing tennis and target shooting.

The park offers 22 fully-furnished cabins, each with two bedrooms, a bathroom with shower, kitchenette and outdoor charcoal grill and picnic table. Chadron State Park also offers electric campsites and basic tent sites. Smell the pine trees or view the stars when you sit outside your cabin or campsite.



Victoria Springs State Recreation Area

Described as an oasis in the Sandhills, this 60-acre park is a great place to get away from it all — and would make a great writer’s retreat. It is filled with history: Two original log cabins built by a homesteader are still standing, and the area is named after the mineral springs that once supplied bottled water across the country.

In addition to these historic buildings and the scenic setting, Victoria Springs also offers fishing, boating, picnicking and paddleboating. Two cabins are available, as well as RV and tent camping. [N](#)

For more information about these parks, or to make a reservation, visit [OutdoorNebraska.gov](#).

TOP LEFT: Katrina Fairgood, daughter Noriah, and friend Alijah Wilson hike the walking trail at Eugene T. Mahoney State Park in Cass County. JEFF KURRUS, NEBRASKALAND

BOTTOM LEFT: Caroline Ottino of Pueblo, Colorado, rides horseback at Lovers Leap Butte on the eastern edge of Fort Robinson State Park in Dawes County. PHOTO COURTESY OF DORIA PEREZ

TOP RIGHT: Girls play near water at Victoria Springs campground. JULIE GEISER, NEBRASKALAND

BOTTOM RIGHT: An Airstream camper at Chadron State Park’s campground in the fall. JUSTIN HAAG, NEBRASKALAND



A History of the Pawnee Scouts

By Mark van de Logt

The warm summer air on July 30, 1868, was thick with bullets, arrows and the noise of charging Lakota warriors as Major Frank North sought shelter under a low cliff. Cut off from the rest of his command of Pawnee Scouts, his situation was



Fox Chief — later called Ruling His Sun after he moved to Oklahoma in 1873 — and other Pawnee Scouts saved the life of Major Frank North at least once during their U.S. military service.

GILCREASE MUSEUM, TULSA OK

dire.

Then, *Ke wuck oo lah la shar*, which translates to Fox Chief, arrived with other Pawnee Scouts.

“I found Major North and another white officer hiding under a cliff,” Fox Chief recalled many years later. “Major North told me that I had saved them when I came upon them.”

On that day, Major North, buoyed by little hostile activity that year, had taken some scouts toward the Republican River to hunt bison. While chasing the herd, he was surprised by a Lakota-Cheyenne war party. Fox Chief and his friends, who patrolled the Union Pacific Railroad between Wood River Station and Julesburg, Colorado, as part of their service, arrived just in time.

An estimated 1,000 Pawnees served as military allies of the United States between 1864 and 1877, and their military service will be honored at “The Pawnee at Fort Kearny: Share the History, Share the Harvest” on Oct. 7 at Fort Kearny State Historical Park. The 2023 harvest of Pawnee crops also will be celebrated.

Valuable Allies

Pawnee Scouts’ service was made possible by the 1866 Army Reorganization Act, which authorized the Quartermaster Department to annually enlist Native “scouts,” furnish them with guns, horses and uniforms, and pay them the same as



A studio portrait of As-Sau-Taw-Ka (White Horse), a Pawnee scout. 1870 circa. WILLIAM HENRY JACKSON, RG2065

regular troops. Fox Chief was among them; he was nearly 40 years old in February 1868 when he enlisted as a Pawnee Scout by adding his mark on the muster rolls.

“I had a bluish army suit and a black hat,” Fox Chief later recalled. “My hat had a couple of short swords across the front of it [but] I had no stripes on my pants or on my arms.”

The Pawnee Scouts were valuable allies because of their knowledge of terrain, familiarity with Lakota and Cheyenne military tactics, and endurance and hardiness in battle. They eventually were placed under the command of Frank North, a civilian, because he spoke the Pawnee language.

The Pawnee Battalion’s service included guarding Union Pacific Railroad workers in 1867-68, and participating in the 1865 Powder River, 1869 Republican River and 1876 Powder River campaigns. Major battles were won against the Arapaho at Tongue River in 1865, and the Cheyennes at Plum Creek in 1867 and Summit Springs in 1869.

Scouts relied on their own tactics, which utilized the element of surprise and disguise. They also practiced their own war-related ceremonies and customs while in the field. Attempts by some white officers to drill scouts like soldiers were resisted by both the scouts and North.

Individual Pawnees continued to serve as scouts at times when the battalion was inactive. They did more than guide troops through enemy territory — the scouts also spearheaded attacks against enemy encampments, carried dispatches, protected railroad workers and, on several occasions, saved military troops from disaster on the battlefield.

Not For Everyone

However, not all government officials were happy to see Pawnees in uniforms. Quaker agents believed military service hindered their efforts to create peace between Indian tribes and attempts to assimilate the Pawnees.

When the battalion was not re-activated between 1870 and 1875, the Pawnees’ enemies enacted revenge. On Aug. 5, 1873, Brule and Oglala Lakota warriors surprised nearly 400 Pawnee hunters under former Pawnee scout *Ti-ra-wa-hut Re-sa-ru*, or Sky Chief, near present-day Trenton.

The Pawnee warriors were greatly outnumbered, and after several hours of relentless fighting, at least 69 Pawnees lay dead. According to one account, Sky Chief killed his infant son so the baby wouldn’t be killed and mutilated by the Sioux. Sky Chief died while defending his people, and other victims at Massacre Canyon included Fox Chief’s wife and daughter.

Despite desiring revenge, Fox Chief did not sign up for the 1876 campaign that culminated in the “Dull Knife Fight,” during which the Pawnee Scouts and their U.S. allies inflicted a decisive defeat on the Cheyennes. Perhaps he wished to enlist, but Major North rejected him due to his



A portrait of Pawnee military scouts, known as the North Brothers’ Boys for their service with the North Brothers (Frank and Luther North). From left: Roam Chief, Knife Chief, Charley Brave Chief and Young Chief, 1869. HERBERT CODY BLAKE, RG2065

advanced age.

Disbanded

When the Pawnee Battalion was disbanded in 1877, the United States soon forgot the scouts’ sacrifices. Many scouts struggled to get government pensions for their military service. That included Fox Chief, whose name was changed after moving to Oklahoma in 1873. People began calling him Ruling His Sun; by 1928, Ruling His Sun couldn’t remember who gave him that name and, by then, most Pawnees called him Osage.

The name confusion frustrated his attempt to secure a military pension. It took a special act from Congress to grant him a \$20-a-month pension in 1924. The rate increased to \$50 shortly before he died on Oct. 4, 1928, at nearly 100 years old.

Ruling His Sun remained fiercely proud of his Pawnee and scout heritage. In 1925, despite his age, he had to

be restrained from fighting several Lakota delegates at the anniversary of the tragedy at Massacre Canyon.

Today, the Pawnee people remember him and fellow *raaripákusu’* as the first Pawnee-American patriots. 

Mark van de Logt is an associate professor of history at Texas A&M University at Qatar and author of “War Party in Blue, Pawnee Scouts in the U.S. Army.”

On Oct. 7 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Fort Kearny State Historical Park and Fort Kearny State Recreation Area will host the “Share the History, Share the Harvest” event honoring the estimated 1,000 Pawnees who served as U.S. military allies from 1864-1877. There is no admission fee, but a Nebraska State Park entry permit is required at both sites.

Sowbelly with Coffee

Special Names for a Special Place

Story and photos by Justin Haag

The scenery alone is worth a trip to this spot in the Pine Ridge. Don't forget the fishing rod, though.

An aerial view of Coffee Park in Sowbelly Canyon in the Pine Ridge area of Sioux County in northwestern Nebraska.

Without knowing better, the name might lead some to assume Sowbelly Creek is a stream of manure oozing from a pig farm. Far from it.

The clear, babbling brook between rugged sandstone buttes in Sioux County represents the best attributes of northwestern Nebraska's Pine Ridge. If it were not located in one of the state's most sparsely populated regions, visitors would surely overrun it. As it is, though, the locals and few others who venture to this spot 3½ miles northeast of Harrison bask in the quiet serenity of a site rich with aesthetics and history.

Sowbelly creek, canyon and road were named for a supposed incident involving Fort Robinson back when it was an important base for the U.S. cavalry and not the bustling state park of today. Legend has it that Fort Robinson



ABOVE: The cool water of Sowbelly Creek, originating from springs not far away, flows over a small waterfall while autumn colors dominate the scene.

LEFT: A bumblebee visits a great blue lobelia flower at Coffee Park.

military scouts of the late 1800s hid for days in the creek’s vicinity while being pursued by Native Americans. When united with a rescue party, the hungry scouts were provided salty bacon, often referred to then as “sowbelly.” Quality aside, a meal is surely notable if a creek is later named for it.

Visitors can access about a half-mile of the creek at the 160-acre Coffee Park. Contrary to any insinuations of the name, a barista is not serving up hot drinks there. Coffee Park is named for a prominent ranch family instrumental in settling the region: specifically Guy H. “Chick” and Ila Coffee, the property’s previous owners. Ila donated the property to the village of Harrison in 1972, the year Chick died. The property was developed in the next four years with money from the Land and Water Conservation Fund and donations. The village owns and maintains the park, which features playground equipment, vault toilets and picnic shelters accented with stone harvested nearby.

The clear, spring-fed coldwater stream has naturally reproducing brown trout and is occasionally stocked with other species. It has long been attractive to anglers, but even more so since the Game and Parks Commission completed a \$40,000 aquatic habitat project there in 2022 with a grant from the Nebraska Environmental Trust.

Where before the stream flowed just a few inches deep, it now moves over rock riffles and into pools up to 5 feet deep. At bends in the stream, anglers now find logs, rocks and other structures that not only prevent erosion but also attract fish.

Three new walk-through Y-gates allow anglers access to the entire public portion of stream without having to cross the barbed-wire fence. Signage has been added at the property boundaries to deter park visitors from trespassing on adjacent private land.

After the creek descends through the



ABOVE: A cottonwood log, harvested from downed timber on site, is among the habitat and erosion control features added to Sowbelly Creek in 2022.

TOP RIGHT: Vance Haug of Chadron reels in a brown trout from Sowbelly Creek.

BOTTOM RIGHT: A brown trout is returned to the cool water of Sowbelly Creek. Brooks and rainbows also have been stocked in the creek, and cutthroats are being considered.

Pine Ridge, it flows into the grasslands to the north before eventually joining Warbonnet Creek — another northwestern Nebraska attraction with rich history and a distinctive name. That’s a whole other story.

People can access Coffee Park by turning east onto Sowbelly Road from Monroe Canyon Road one-half mile north of Harrison. Another scenic way, there is Pants Butte Road that intersects U.S. Highway 20 4 miles

east of Harrison. The route provides incredible views as it winds down the ridge and intersects with Sowbelly Road to the left at the bottom.

The roads are dirt and people are wise to visit when they are dry. No one wants to be stuck in this country, with or without an ample supply of sowbelly and coffee. [N](#)

To learn more about Sowbelly Creek and Coffee Park, visit OutdoorNebraska.gov.



The Baysdorfers

Nebraska's First Aviators

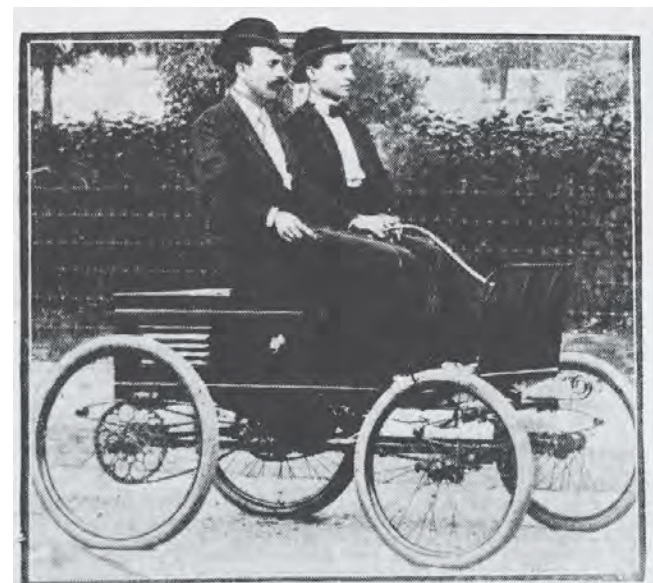
By David L. Bristow, *History Nebraska*

When Charles Baysdorfer prepared for takeoff near Waterloo, he was piloting a homebuilt biplane on its maiden flight, but he hadn't taken any lessons or flown in an airplane before. Manufactured planes and professional training were hard to come by in 1910.

On that day, Nov. 21, however, Baysdorfer became the first Nebraskan pilot and the first to fly a Nebraska-built plane. No one who knew Charles and his brothers would have been at all surprised.

The sons of German immigrants, the Baysdorfer brothers — Otto, Charles and Gus — moved with their parents to Omaha from Davenport, Iowa, in 1887. Otto opened a bicycle shop and learned to repair electrical motors. When local merchant Emil Brandeis bought the city's first "horseless carriage" in 1895, Otto and his younger brothers began designing their own. Built entirely of locally fabricated parts designed by the brothers, the "Ottomobile" was completed in 1898 and became the first Nebraska-built car.

"Instead of a radiator, they had a water tank under the seat," the Omaha World-Herald reported on Nov. 27, 1910,



Two of the Baysdorfer brothers and their "Ottomobile" in 1898. Omaha World-Herald, March 5, 1933.

"and after the car had gone a few miles, this became so hot, that, — well the driver arose and stood up for a time, and let the car stop for a little rest."

The brothers then designed an engine they could mount on a bicycle — one of the city's first motorcycles. A World-Herald profile of Otto on March 5, 1933, also credited the brothers with building the city's first X-ray machine, with operating the "first motion picture machine at the first movie shown here," and with "inventing a sparkplug, a gasoline gauge and various devices which brought them money and acclaim."

Charles left Omaha for four years in the early 1900s, touring the country as a balloonist and parachute jumper. The modern parachute harness had not yet been invented. Parachutists of the day straddled a sling and held onto a trapeze bar. Charles's specialty was the double jump. He would let go of his parachute and free-fall for a few seconds — while onlookers shrieked below — before a second chute

RIGHT: Charles Baysdorfer's first airplane flight, Waterloo, Nebraska. Omaha World-Herald, Nov. 27, 1910.



Charles Baysdorfer, pictured in the Omaha World-Herald, July 19, 1925.

Omaha Daredevils of the Air Find Secret of Air Flying With the New Biplane

Flights on the Field Near Waterloo Demonstrate They Will Make It Go.

Have Ridden in Everything From the Old Gas Balloon to the Latest Thing.

From Waterloo to Omaha Is Likely to Be Their First Long Flight.

The people living between Waterloo, Neb., and Omaha may one of these days not very far off, be out in their back yards hunting for the last blade of green grass for a tender tribute to their horses, when a gentle purring may cause them to gaze up leisurely in anticipation of seeing one of the horses' successful usurpers speeding along the highway.

But their first gaze upward won't be high enough. They will have to raise their eyes to loftier things than a mere puffing, panting old fashioned automobile.

In fact after they have scanned the earth and things horizontally without any explanation, with a louder buzzing in their ears, they will get a higher inspiration, and lifting their noses in a vertical direction may get a final glimpse of the cause of the racket as it swoops off into the blue of the horizon.

The signs of the zodiac, the hypnotic suggestion of the atmospheric conditions, or maybe it's just a little private hunch of one who has been seen, point to the fact that Nebraska is about to have its first cross country aeroplane flight. And that, not by some of the professional aviators who are making flights in various parts of the country, but by Omaha men, who have built their own aeroplane.

The Baysdorfer brothers had one of the very first automobiles in Omaha, making it themselves. A few years later they made a motorcycle, and had one of the first of them in the city. Three and a half years ago they made an airship, a dirigible, and have flown it in many parts of the country.

Now they have just completed the construction of the Baysdorfer-Haight biplane, and Charles and Gus Baysdorfer, with a corps of assistants, have it at Waterloo, and are rapidly getting it in shape for flights, and learning to fly.

First Flights in Air.

Charles and Gus Baysdorfer and Parker Haight, all of Omaha, have constructed this aeroplane. They made it at Seventeenth and Capitol avenue, having labored over it for the past three or four months.

Eight days ago they took it to Waterloo and set it up. Two days later they ran it out on the broad level field on the Noyes farm, two and a half miles north of the town.

None of them had ever flown in an aeroplane. But Charles Baysdorfer has been up in the air in every other kind of a machine, from a taxicab to a hot-air balloon, and he mounted into the seat. He ran the aeroplane across the field twice to see that everything was running smoothly and the third time he elevated the front planes and the air craft leaped into the atmosphere, and sailed along a couple of hundred feet before it alighted and rolled along once more.

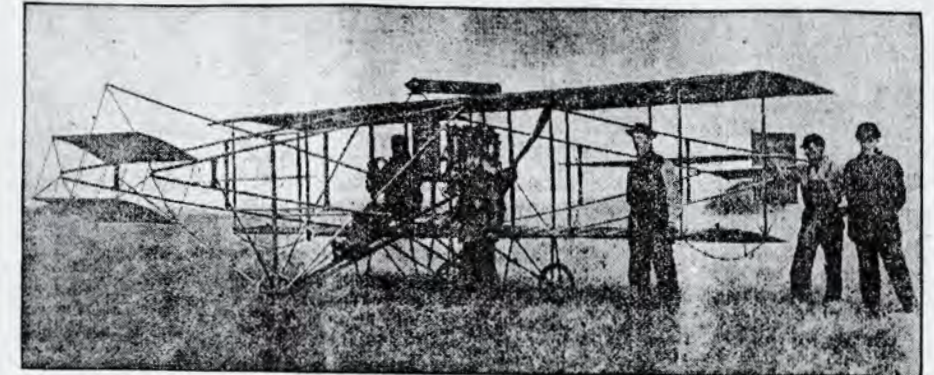
"Well," quoth Charles. "That's the best kind of air riding I ever did. Give us some more," and several more times he tried it, taking short flights not far above the ground.

Now Baysdorfer and Baysdorfer, and Haight, have joined their left hands together, extended their rights into the atmosphere they are bent on subduing and solemnly swore that with the weather permitting they will make the aeroplane come back to Omaha on its own wing, and not packed up in the boxes in which it went down to its Waterloo.

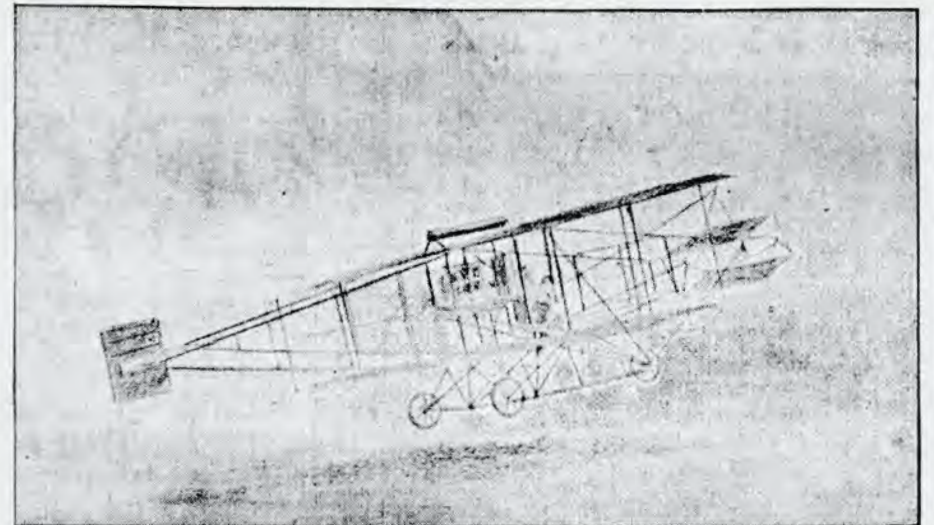
In other words the men intend to make a cross-country flight of the twenty-two miles to Omaha and let the aeroplane's wings flutter at the city's front door. Various men are considering offering a prize for a flight of this kind, as has been done in the east.

The aeroplane is of the ordinary Voisin type of biplane, and in many respects is similar to the Curtiss machine. It has a fifty-six-horse power motor, and a seven-foot propeller. The planes are thirty-one feet long by four and a half feet wide. From the front planes to the rudder is a distance of twenty-eight feet. The men made the biplane in their Omaha shop. The motor and propeller were all shipped.

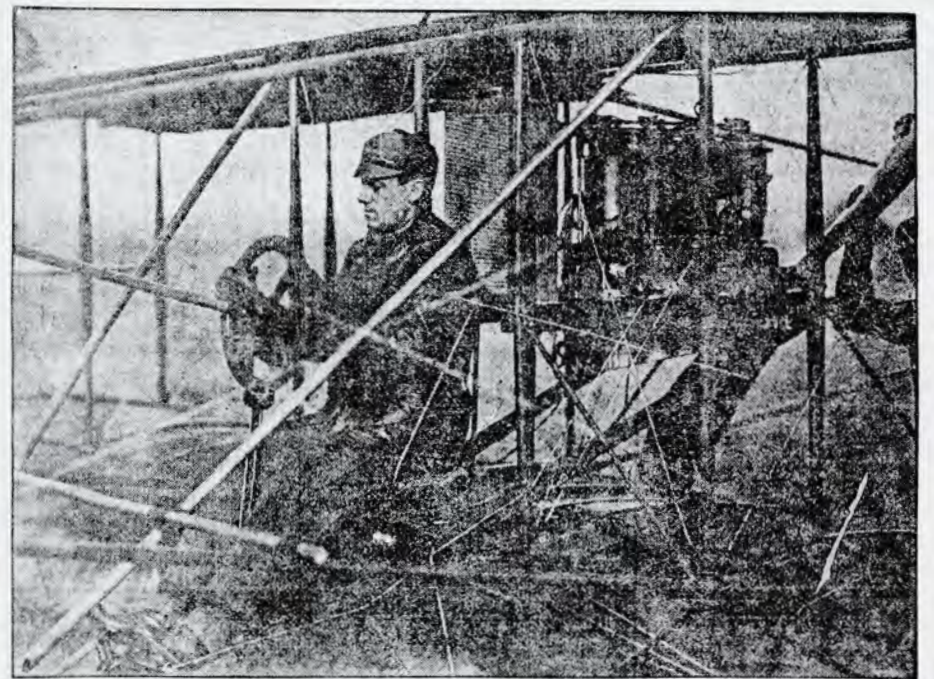
Scenes of the Omaha Airship Flights at Waterloo



Charles Baysdorfer Ready For a Flight.



Just After Leaving the Ground.



Gus Baysdorfer in Aeroplane.



Charles Baysdorfer piloting the Comet during Omaha's Ak-Sar-Ben carnival, Oct. 3, 1907. Postcard reads "Air-ship making ascension from 'King's Highway', Omaha Neb." HISTORY NEBRASKA, RG3348-6-30



Two months before Baysdorfer's first flight, Arch Hoxsey survived crashing his Wright flyer into an animal barn at the Nebraska State Fair on Sept. 6, 1910. Hoxsey died in Los Angeles on Dec. 31 while trying to set a flight altitude record. Although not from Nebraska himself, Hoxsey shares a cemetery plot with his father in Atkinson, Nebraska.

HISTORY NEBRASKA, RG3542-111-9

opened.

After Charles returned to Omaha in 1907, the brothers built a dirigible airship — yet another Nebraska first. The Comet's hydrogen-filled silk gasbag was 52 feet long and only capable of lifting one man. Its eight-horsepower engine left it vulnerable to strong winds. Flying above the city on Oct. 3, Charles was swept southward over the Missouri River. Dropping to treetop level, he called to a fisherman below to row out and catch the rope.

"Pull your own damned rope!" the man called back.

Other fishermen were more generous and brought the airship down safely. A few weeks later, the Baysdorfers entered the Comet in an airship race in St. Louis, but its engine failed and the wind carried it to an inglorious landing half a mile off course.

Within a few years, the Baysdorfers turned their attention to airplanes. The aviation craze was in full swing when the first "aeroplanes" flew in Nebraska in 1910. Glenn Curtiss — rival of the Wright Brothers — led a five-day air show July 23-27 in Omaha. On Sept. 6, Arch Hoxsey, of the Wright flying team, crashed his plane into a stable at the Nebraska State Fair in Lincoln, walking away with minor injuries.

The Baysdorfers' first plane was based on Glenn Curtiss's design. Otto and Gus worked with the Curtiss mechanics during the Omaha air show, and Curtiss himself visited the Baysdorfer's shop while he was in town. The brothers built

everything but the motor and propeller at their Omaha shop.

After the first flights at Waterloo, Charles and Gus made some other Nebraska flights in 1911, but soon left the state to tour with a nationally known aviation team. Charles was still flying in 1912 when the New York World interviewed his wife, Artye, for a Sept. 7 article "Constant Agony for the Wives of the Aviators."

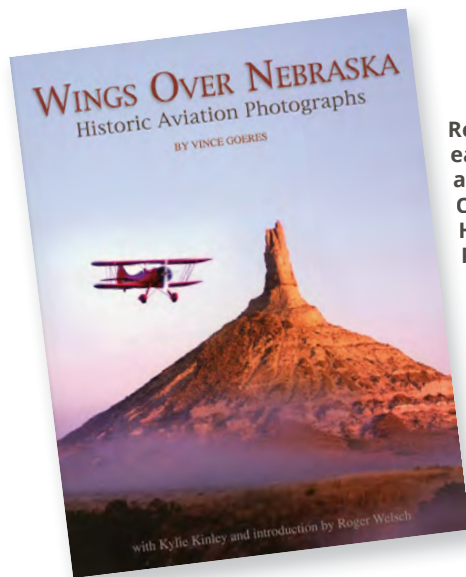
By this time, so many prominent aviators had died in crashes that there was serious talk of banning public exhibition flights. Like most adventurers' wives of the era, Artye expressed confidence in her "sensible" and "cool-headed" husband, even while admitting that "I simply cannot go to the field and watch him go up. ... I just have to shut my eyes and clench my fists and keep telling myself that he is all right and that he will come back safely."

Young women were attracted to pilots, Artye said, but she warned that it was better to admire a pilot from the grandstand "than to keep wondering all the time how long it will be before your only remaining comfort will be to sit dressed in black with nothing but his picture and his press clippings to comfort you!"

A year later, Charles crashed into a mountain in Vermont while doing stunt flying for the movie "The Battle in the Clouds." His engine failed during a mock bombing run. He suffered burns and a broken leg, but Artye's worst fears were not realized. Charles survived, gave up flying and became a



A Wright flyer at the Nebraska State Fair, 1910. HISTORY NEBRASKA, RG3356-10-5



Read more about early Nebraska aviation in “Wings Over Nebraska: Historic Aviation Photographs,” by Vince Goeres with Kylie Kinley.

commercial fisherman in Florida.

“I lost everything when I fell in Vermont nine years ago,” Charles told the World-Herald in 1925. “I was in the hospital six months, and my spine is still out of alignment from that fall.”

Otto and Gus remained in Omaha, where the World-Herald profiled them now and then as local heroes of invention. In a July 10, 1949, interview, Gus told a reporter of Charles’s latest invention: an anti-whirl fishing float that prevented backlash. “Charley ... just loves to fish,” Gus said. The daredevil-turned-fisherman died in 1962 at age 84, the last of the Baysdorfer brothers, and having outlived his wife, Artye, by 30 years. [N](#)

Visit History Nebraska’s website at history.nebraska.gov.

BELOW: Though Baysdorfer made a powered flight first, the best-known early Nebraska aviators are the Savidge Brothers of Ewing. They built their first glider in 1907 and made their first powered flight in May 1911. They barnstormed Nebraska and the Midwest until Matt Savidge (shown here at the controls) died in a crash in 1916.

UPPER RIGHT: A Curtiss “aeroplane” at the Nebraska State Fair, 1910. The Baysdorfers modeled their plane on Glenn Curtiss’s design, which had different controls than the rival Wright flyer. HISTORY NEBRASKA, RG2929-0-390



The Sneaky Invasion of Non-native Cattails

Story and photos by Chris Helzer

Most people reading this probably look at wetlands or lakes with dense accumulations of cattails without thinking twice. After all, cattails are native to Nebraska, and they're a perfectly normal and healthy part of a wetland ecosystem. Right?

I have bad news. An evil transformation has taken place right beneath our noses. Cattails are no longer benign wetland plants that accent the margins of our favorite water bodies. They've become an aggressive occupying force that has invaded many of our state's best aquatic habitats. Within those wetlands and lakes, as well as slower-moving rivers and streams, this new version of cattail spreads in dense formations. As it does, it chokes out other wetland vegetation and smothers the open water habitat needed by waterfowl and many other wildlife species.

How Did This Happen?

Here's the quick answer: The native broad-leaved cattail species (*Typha latifolia*) has been replaced by an invasive cattail species from the east called narrow-leaved cattail (*Typha angustifolia*). The invader can displace the native species, but it can also hybridize with it, forming an equally, if not more, aggressive organism (*Typha x glauca*). The invasion has progressed so far that it's become difficult to find a stand of native broad-leaved cattails in Nebraska.

Because the two species look very similar and the invasion has happened gradually, it's happened with very little fanfare. Unfortunately, that means there's been little resistance put up by most land managers and landowners, and many of our state's best wet habitats are rapidly declining in habitat quality. That's not universally true, of course. In the Rainwater Basin region, for example, habitat managers have long been fighting against cattails, along with other serious invaders like reed canarygrass that also form thick monocultures at the expense of waterfowl and other wildlife habitat. Other localized skirmishes with cattails are taking place as well, but not at a scale that has slowed the broader invasion.

Narrowleaf cattails at the Nature Conservancy's Platte River Prairies.





Narrowleaf cattail seeds at the Nature Conservancy's Platte River Prairies.

Invasive cattails haven't yet reached all the lakes and wetlands across the state, but that result is starting to feel like an inevitability. The best resistance strategy is to employ a search-and-destroy tactic in wetlands where the invaders are just starting to gain a foothold. Spot-spraying with aquatic-labeled herbicides can kill the plants, but that needs to happen when the first small populations appear to prevent them from mushrooming into massive hordes that defy easy solutions.

Once cattails have taken over a substantial portion of a wetland, the objective of a land manager has to switch from eradication to suppression. After several years of establishment, those large populations seem to be immune to complete destruction. Even a few stems that escape a control treatment can quickly initiate a population recovery. More importantly, cattails produce a tremendous amount of seed, which can germinate and fill the space created by its now-dead predecessors. Suppression of large cattail invasions, at least as we currently understand the situation, is a long-term commitment.

Two broad kinds of approaches are generally used to suppress big masses of cattails. The first is the use of an aquatic-labeled herbicide to directly kill the plants. The

second is to reduce the storage of carbohydrates by the plants and then either drown them or otherwise kill them when they're weakened. Those two approaches can be combined, of course, to enhance the effectiveness of herbicide treatments by reducing the vigor of cattails before spraying them.

The use of herbicides often comes with collateral damage. In many cases, the goal isn't simply to eradicate the cattails, but to replace them with a more diverse plant community, at least along wetland and stream banks. Spraying herbicides that kill both the cattails and their potential replacements isn't ideal, but it may sometimes be the best available option. Most importantly, it's crucial to ensure that herbicides used (and any surfactants or other additives) are labeled for aquatic use and don't negatively impact wildlife, including invertebrates, in the area.

The spring growth of cattails is fueled by carbohydrates stored during the previous growing season. After that pulse of spring growth depletes carbohydrate reserves, the plants spend the rest of the summer trying to rebuild them. Interrupting the summer growth of cattails with practices such as repeated grazing, mowing, disking or others can limit the reserves cattails carry into the winter. In playa

wetlands or other sites that often dry up over the summer, those practices are much easier. Other wetlands hold water through most summers, making it much more difficult to attack cattails at that time of year.

If plants can be weakened during the previous summer, it becomes more feasible to drown them the following spring. While it seems illogical that a plant growing in water can drown, cattails need access to oxygen in the air to survive. In the spring, cattails can grow for a little while without oxygen, but need to extend their leaves above the water as soon as possible. The speed and amount of growth they can manage without oxygen is tied to their carbohydrate reserves. If the plants start the season underwater with low reserves of carbohydrates, they may not be able to grow fast or tall enough to break the water's surface before they drown.

In addition to the energy they get from stored carbohydrates, cattails have one other hack for growing underwater. If the previous year's dead stems are present, those porous stalks have air trapped within them. Cattails can draw oxygen from those stalks to make more efficient use of their carbohydrates and grow quickly. If those old stalks

have been removed, however, cattails that start their year underwater are at a big disadvantage.

The reliance of cattails on last year's stalks provides an important opportunity for land managers. In addition to reducing stored carbohydrate levels, managers can also burn or mow any stalks left after the end of one growing season so they won't be there at the beginning of the next. If cattail plants are low on energy reserves and don't have their backup option for accessing oxygen, it might only take a few inches of water above the base of the plants to drown them.

One of the more active and experimental fights against large scale cattail invasions in the Sandhills is taking place at the Valentine National Wildlife Refuge. Staff there have been employing a variety of strategies to reduce the size, density and impact of cattail patches to improve habitat and provide better food resources for migratory birds. Treatments include grazing, mowing, prescribed fire and herbicides, and combinations of those treatments seem to show the most promise. The results so far have ranged from disappointing to spectacular, but it's still too early to know why some treatments seem to be effective in one place but not another.



Natural resource professionals look at the results of various cattail suppression strategies at Valentine National Wildlife Refuge.



Cattails have invaded many Sandhills wetlands, like this one at the Valentine National Wildlife Refuge.

During the summer of 2022, the refuge hosted a field day for wildlife biologists and land managers from across the state. That group visited numerous examples of cattail suppression attempts and discussed how to apply what was being learned to future efforts, both in the Sandhills and beyond. While there was a lot of inconsistency in the effectiveness of treatments, there was also cause for optimism. As an example, the tour stopped at a site that had been a monoculture of cattails for decades but was now covered with a broad diversity of wetland plants, including

a few native cattails. It wasn't clear why that particular treatment had worked there, but not elsewhere, but it was inspiring to see the capacity of wetlands to recover if given the chance.

It's difficult to prescribe specific approaches for cattail control right now because we still have a lot to learn. What does seem clear is that even the most successful control results on large-scale cattail invasions will be temporary. It will take consistent and repeated efforts to prevent a cattail monoculture from rising again. However, we're continually

improving our techniques and some of the approaches (e.g., grazing) may end up paying for themselves.

While the challenge is great, the cost of doing nothing may be catastrophic. Nebraska has some of the most incredible wetlands on the continent, and they provide tremendous benefits, both to wildlife and people. Saving them from a devastating invasion seems well worthwhile. 

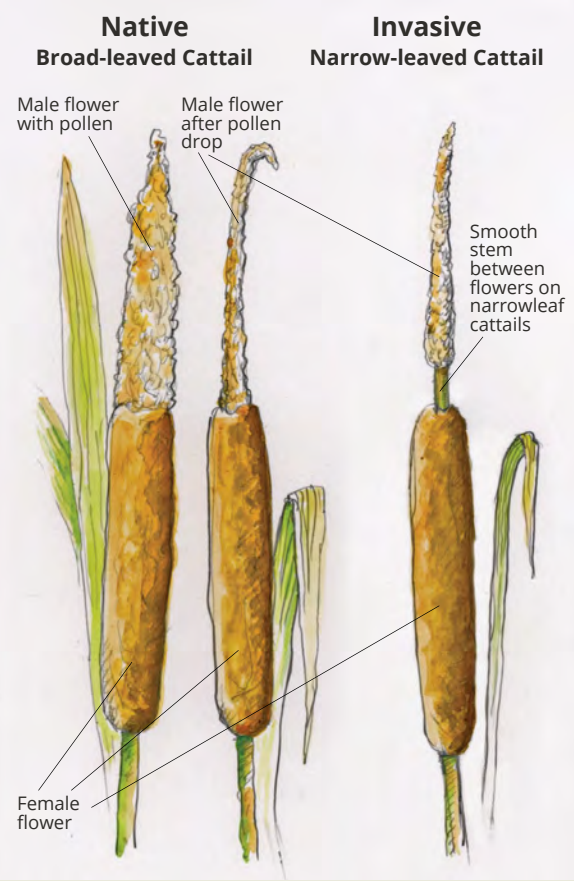
Chris Helzer is the Nature Conservancy's director of science in Nebraska.

Knowing Which Cattails are Native and Which are Invasive

Distinguishing native broad-leaved cattails from invasive cattails can be difficult, but the best clue can be found on the flowering stem. All cattail flower spikes have a section of female flowers, which resembles a hot dog, and a section of male flowers above that. The male flowers drop off after their pollen has been released, leaving what looks like a rough or wrinkled section of stem.

The native broad-leaved cattails have no gap between their female and male flower spikes.

Narrow-leaved and hybrid cattails, both of which are invasive, have a gap of ½ inch to 4 inches between the bottom (female) and top (male) flower spikes. Unfortunately, cattails — especially hybrid cattails — don't always make flowers, so the best identification characteristic might not be present. If you're facing a large, dense colony of cattails that has spread over time, working to suppress that colony is probably a good idea.



ARTWORK: TIM REIGERT, NEBRASKALAND

MEET BIG SNAP DADDY

By Renae Blum

Meet the star of Schramm Education Center's aquarium, Big Snap Daddy. Weighing 98 pounds, he is considered the world's largest common snapping turtle. He is also estimated to be over 90 years old. In the wild, common snapping turtles live an average of 30 years and grow to be about 35 pounds.

Learn more about this remarkable creature from Schramm Park superintendent and aquarium director Tony Korth.



Big Snap Daddy is a 98-pound common snapping turtle, believed to be the largest in the world. You can see him at Schramm Education Center. JEFF KURRUS, NEBRASKALAND

How did Big Snap come to be at Schramm?

An angler caught him from the Missouri River near Peru, Nebraska. The angler originally planned to eat him but decided that because the turtle was so large, he wanted to share him and let other people see him. He was 47 pounds when he was donated to us for display.

How long has he been at the Schramm aquarium?

Big Snap has been with us since the mid-1990s. We

celebrate his hatch day in September every year. Because Nebraska snapping turtles typically hatch between August and October, we are estimating he hatched during that time.

How did you measure his age?

Dr. Dennis Ferraro, a University of Nebraska-Lincoln herpetologist, was able to estimate his age by looking at his carapace, his caudal and tomia wear, as well as his size at capture.

What does Big Snap eat?

He is fed several times a week, and he gets fish and raw meat. Roadkill deer seems to be his favorite. Common snapping turtles are omnivores, so they'll eat whatever they can, including plants, meat and carrion.

How do you feed him?

We have a long set of tongs that allow us to drop his food in front of him safely.

How do you design a living space that's appropriate for a turtle like him?

Good lighting and good water quality is a must for keeping any turtle. The tank has an excellent filtration system, and we remove any uneaten food as soon as possible to keep the water clean. Although he is not normally very active, we like to have plenty of space for him. The aquarium that Big Snap calls home is 600 gallons. We also built him a ledge that he seems to enjoy hanging out under.

Is he kept with other species?

We do have goldfish in the tank with him, and they clean up after him. They pick algae off his shell, and they eat some of the small bits of food that he won't eat. They all seem to get along together quite well.

What's his personality like?

He is still as aggressive as the day we received him, so we must be extra careful with him if we're feeding him or if we need to be in the tank with him for cleaning.

He's probably my favorite animal, mostly because of our history together — I've worked here over 30 years, and he's been with us almost all of that time — and because he is so impressive in size.

Schramm Education Center is located at 21502 West Highway 31 in Gretna and is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Learn more at OutdoorNebraska.gov.



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OFF THE SPOOKY PATH

By Renae Blum and Jeff Kurrus



Visitors take part in the pumpkin roll contest during the annual Spooktacular event at Branched Oak State Recreation Area in Lancaster County. ERIC FOWLER, NEBRASKALAND

Experience Halloween in a unique way — at a Nebraska state park. Upcoming events across the state combine all the fun of Halloween with a beautiful, scenic outdoor setting. From haunted hayrack rides to pumpkin carving, trick-or-treating and ghostly trails, there is something for visitors of all ages to enjoy. Here are some of our favorite events this year.

Friday, Oct. 13

Trick-or-Treat at the Town – Indian Cave State Park

5:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m. – Follow the decorated trail through the old town of St. Deroin to find candy and perhaps a ghost or two.

Saturday, Oct. 14

Brewing with Fun – Eugene T. Mahoney State Park

2 p.m.-4 p.m. at Kountze Memorial Theater – Get dressed up in your favorite costume and join the costume parade. Stay to carve pumpkins and check out the decorated campsites.

Halloween at Fremont Lakes – Fremont Lakes State Recreation Area

5 p.m.-7 p.m. – Can your campsite come out on top in the decorating contest? Kids are invited to participate in trick-or-treating as well.

Hallowfest – Ponca State Park

From a pumpkin roll obstacle course to haunted hayrack rides, you don't want to miss the 25th anniversary of Ponca's Hallowfest. Campsite and cabin decorating contests will take place as well. Reserve your spot for the hayrack rides on Monday, October 9, at 8 a.m.

Halloween Haunt – Johnson Lake State Recreation Area

This event features plenty of fun for the kids in the family, with everything from pumpkin painting to kids' games

and trick-or-treating. Small prizes will be awarded to winners of the campsite decorating contest.

Saturday, Oct. 21

Pumpkin Carvers Event – Calamus State Recreation Area

9:30 a.m.-10 p.m. – Pumpkins are the star of the show at this event, with a pumpkin rolling competition and pumpkin carving. Visitors can also enjoy decorated campsites and trick-or-treating.

Jack-O-Lantern Junk and Craft Market – Indian Cave State Park

10 a.m.-5 p.m. – Find a unique treasure at this event, where vendors will be selling everything from A to Z. At 11 a.m., the Pink Pumpkin Walk will raise money for cancer. Join us from 3:30-5 p.m. for the Trick-or-Treat by the Buses event.

Halloween in the Hollow – Ash Hollow State Historical Park

2 p.m.-6 p.m. – Celebrate Halloween with the ghosts of the Oregon Trail. Events include pumpkin picking, hayrack rides and a scavenger hunt. The costume contest begins at 4:30 p.m. At 5 p.m., Trunk or Treat, sponsored by Game and Parks conservation officers, area EMS and law enforcement, will begin.

Spooktacular – Branched Oak State Recreation Area

3:30 p.m.-9 p.m. at the Middle Oak Campground – Bring the whole family to enjoy pumpkin rolling and carving, a costume contest and a campsite decorating contest. There will also be a haunted hayrack ride, but tickets must be purchased in advance. Call 402-783-3400 for more information.

Hallowfest – Ponca State Park

The second weekend of Ponca's 25th anniversary of Hallowfest will also include a pumpkin roll obstacle course, campsite and cabin decorating contests and haunted hayrack rides. Reservations for the hayrack rides take place on Monday, October 9, at 8 a.m.

Friday, Oct. 28 - Saturday, Oct. 29

Vintage Halloween – Arbor Lodge State Historical Park

11 a.m. – 4 p.m. – Step back in time to see Halloween history, customs and games at Arbor Lodge Mansion, the jewel of this beautiful, and spooky, state historical park.

Haunted Camping – Enders State Recreation Area

Wander the haunted trail, enjoy fall breezes on a hayrack ride and compete in a campsite decorating contest at the Area A campground.

Please note: These aren't the only areas in Nebraska's state park system that will be hosting Halloween events this year. For a complete list, visit Calendar.OutdoorNebraska.gov. And always remember — where there are campsites, there are campsite decorations.

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Catfishing at Two Rivers, circa 1979
 Your October 2022 issue is another keeper. The catfish picture got me to consider a family photo from the 1970s. Uncle Mick Stewart is displaying the trout he and nephew, Bob Hladik Jr., caught at Two Rivers trout lake circa 1979. Today, Mick and Bob’s dad, Bob Hladik Sr. (me), encourage first-time anglers to join them at Mick and Bob’s Fall Fish Camps at area lakes.
 – Bob Hladik, Omaha



Deer hunting near Oconto, 1985
 From the late 1970s into the early 2000s, many days were filled with hunting anything from dove, duck, geese, pheasant, turkey and whitetail. These photos were taken approximately November 1985 northeast of Oconto in central Nebraska. In the photo (left to right) are Jim Stumpf (my dad), Pete Hess and Quentin Moore. Not pictured is Tom Moore (Quentin’s son), who harvested the fourth whitetail buck and took this photo. These guys would travel most of the state and venture into Wyoming, Colorado, Utah and Alaska. Pete and Quentin are now hunting in the great outdoors in heaven and are missed here, but not forgotten. It’s a shame they didn’t take more pictures. Dad would be thrilled.
 – Jeff Stumpf, Omaha

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 2000. 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. Text may be edited and photos adjusted for reproduction. All photos will be returned.



Flathead catfishing, Genoa, 1974
 On Saturday, Sept. 21,1974, Emil “Buddy” Drozd and Charlie “Chief” Drozd decided to try their luck fishing. The day turned successful with the fishermen landing flathead catfish weighing 51, 37 and 33 pounds respectfully. Buddy and Chief were lifelong anglers in Genoa.
 – Emil Drozd, Genoa



A Nebraska mallard hunt
 Mallards near Valley in the 1970s. Left to right: Gary Dross, Omaha; L.J. Stark (me) and Bob Cameron, both from Prior Lake, Minnesota.
 – Lowell J. Stark, Prior Lake, Minnesota

Pheasant hunting in the 1930s
 My grandpa, Fred Mihulka, and his son, Ray, are pictured here with the Brunken family relatives along with a few salesmen for an Omaha auto parts company. Grandpa Fred could fire a shotgun from the hip. He duck hunted on the Platte and Loup rivers with wooden decoys. The tradition followed through the generations and my son and I duck and goose hunt regularly.
 – Keith Milhulka, Columbus





TYLER MOORE

PROTECTING THE FLOCK

By Tyler Moore, Bellevue University

With more than 15,000 described species of ants, as noted in “Bolton’s Catalogue of the Ants of the World,” these organisms are among the world’s most successful and represent a total estimated biomass of 12 megatons. They have also long been the subject of amateur naturalists and scientists, with perhaps no behavior more intriguing than the “farming” of aphids.

Aphids are commonly known to gardeners as a pest. They suck nutritious juices from plant stems, causing crop damage and transmitting plant diseases. This plant-sucking characteristic is precisely why ants value aphids.

Ants have been shown to raise aphids in order to harvest their sugar-rich waste secretions known as honeydew. This relationship is symbiotic, because aphid colonies collapse when ants are removed.

So, what benefit do the ants provide the aphids? Ants are not the only species hungry for the sugary rich fluids of aphids. Instead of consuming the honeydew, predaceous insects, such as lady beetles or syrphid fly larvae, squish aphids and suck out their juices. Ants protect their flock of aphids by aggressively warding off aphid predators. In fact, aphids have been shown to secrete dopamine in their honeydew to increase ant

aggression.

I watched this syrphid fly larva capture, squish and desiccate this aphid over the course of several minutes. All the while, a pair of ants patrolled the larva and sampled its scents with their antennae.

I did not witness any aggression toward the syrphid fly larva by the ants. Perhaps the single aphid casualty was an acceptable loss. Or, alternatively, perhaps the ants had already returned to the colony with a pheromone trail leading back to the larva. If so, I would not expect the syrphid fly to last much longer.

Even the most voracious insects are no match for a colony of ants.

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