



A white-tailed buck stands in the North Loup River in southern Cherry County. Photo by Bill Hagar.



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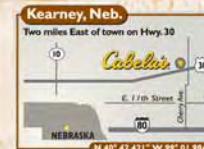
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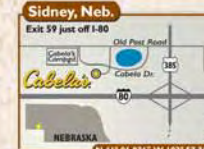
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NEBRASKAland

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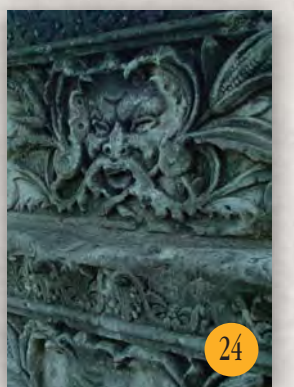
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Cover: Brightly colored rooster pheasants and the chance to show off his home state brings native Nebraskan Jamie Vasa back home whenever possible (see story on page 26). Photo by Jamie Vasa. **Opposite:** An autumn-colored red oak leaf seen on an early morning walk hangs in a Sarpy County field. Photo by Jeff Kurrus.



Aspen Project Set at Smith Falls SP

Visitors to Smith Falls State Park this fall may be greeted by the sounds of chainsaws and the sight of brush piles as work begins on a project to reinvigorate eight stands of aspen trees in the park.

More than a century of fire suppression has allowed eastern red cedar and other trees and shrubs to encroach on these trees, believed to be a hybrid of quaking and big-toothed aspen species. Starved of sunlight, the mother trees in the stand have been producing few suckers (trees that spring up from the roots of the mother tree) and both young and mature trees have been affected by disease. Paper birch trees have also been affected by encroachment from shade-tolerant trees.

The project, a cooperative effort between the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and the National Park Service, is expected to take several years. It will start small with crews clearing trees in and around the groves by hand, but the Commission hopes to obtain a grant from the National Forest Service to fund mechanical clearing and speed the project along. Prescribed fire may be used to stimulate suckering.

The Commission and Park Service also hope to expand the project to include four other aspen stands on nearby private land in the Niobrara River Valley.

Mule Deer Restrictions at Fort Robinson State Park

A significant reduction of their population in Nebraska has led to restrictions aimed at bolstering the state's mule deer herd, according to Todd Nordeen, district wildlife manager at the Game and Parks Commission's office in Alliance.

"For the 2008 deer seasons, a new mule deer special management area that includes Fort Robinson State Park, the nearby Soldier Creek National Wilderness Area, as well as the Peterson and new Fort Robinson Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) provides the opportunity to restrict mule deer harvest on a fairly large tract of the Pine Ridge," Nordeen said.

"For 2008, no harvest of antlerless mule deer will be permitted on the special management area for all weapons and all seasons. Deer hunters will still be able to harvest antlered mule deer and white-tailed deer as their permits allow," he said.

According to Nordeen, the fragmentation of mule deer habitat, the mule deer's visibility in open

terrain and even their tendency to stop and look back before moving out of the hunter's sight, increases the opportunity to harvest mule deer compared to white-tailed deer.

"Hunters, wildlife biologists and wildlife enthusiasts alike see mule deer populations on the decline and increased numbers of white-tailed deer. White-tailed does can breed after their first year and whitetails are much more elusive and difficult to harvest in the habitat they tend to select. Basically, mule deer have been pushed westward into the state's remaining mule deer habitat in the open Sandhills, southwest Nebraska and the Panhandle."

All entrances to the special management unit near Fort Robinson State Park will be signed to identify the new management unit and informational brochures will be available from state park areas in the Pine Ridge as well as from conservation officers and Commission offices.

"Like all of the regulations needed to properly manage Nebraska's wildlife resources, hunter cooperation and understanding plays a critical role in the success of this effort. Our hope is that hunters and others will see increased numbers of mule deer on their traditional western Nebraska ranges." ■



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PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS

Two Guys, Two Hunts, Two Balloons

Jeff Kurrus

While it was the final day of last year's November firearm season, it was Matt's first deer hunt ever. We were sitting five yards apart in a Cass County patch of CRP grass, me with my rifle and him with a shotgun and slugs.

After an hour, we had seen or heard nothing, except for one hot air balloon that appeared on the horizon shortly after sunrise. As we watched for deer, the balloon flew closer. Then closer. Finally, Matt leaned over. "Hey, that balloon is coming right at us." I nodded, half-ignoring him, still looking for deer. A few minutes later, Matt leaned over again. "Hey, I think that balloon is going to crash in our field."

This time I was listening. The rainbow-colored balloon made sporadic loud "pshhhhhhh" sounds as it cleared some power lines, began to lower and came to a hard landing in our field. To our left, a vehicle threw dirt as it barreled across the field and came to a sliding stop at the balloon. A group of guys jumped out – a fold here, a wrap there, and the trucks drove away without a glance in our direction. "Ever happened to you befo...?" Matt started. "Nope."

On the last day of spring turkey season, six months later, Matt and I were hunting on the edge of another field in Cass County and trying hard

to ignore the hot air balloon flying directly toward us.

From where I was sitting, it was close. Yet from where Matt was, the balloon was less than 100 yards above him, its engines turning on every few seconds to keep from crashing into the woods behind him.

When I met back up with him a short time later, after the balloon had disappeared, he was infuriated. Obviously the balloon had interrupted our hunt, once again, but it was kind of amusing, wasn't it?

"Not really," Matt said. "Two toms were 60 yards away, frozen on top of the hill, when that balloon came over. And there are two guys riding in it. So one of them says, 'Hey, look at those two turkeys.' I could hear it plain as day, and the other guy is pointing down at the birds. The two toms sprinted down the hill, flew across the creek, and were gone." He looked down, then back at me again. "Ever happen...?" he started. "Nope."

Quail Instruction CD

Jeff Kurrus

The Wild Quail Habitat Management Course, formed in cooperation between

Progressive Farmer and the University of Kentucky, is a 30-minute CD-ROM instructional course focusing on the management of the bobwhite quail.

The CD provides information on the life cycle of quail, including mating, brood-rearing, and diet. The course also gives information on the effects that predators and hunters have on quail population.

The course's biggest strength is its discussion of land management for quail, including information on agricultural crops, woodlands, food plots, grassland cover, and appropriate brood habitat.

Resembling a PowerPoint slideshow, the visual elements of the CD are not



top-notch, but the instructional elements of the course provide a starting point for developing the type of quail habitat conducive to increasing the population of this steadily decreasing game bird.

People can order the video at www.progressivefarmer.com or by mailing Progressive Farmer, Wild Quail Habitat Management Course, 2204 Lakeshore Drive, Suite 414, Birmingham, AL 35209. The cost is \$19.95 plus \$4.95 for shipping and handling.

Roadside Beauty

Bob Grier

I'll certainly admit to being somewhat of a "road hunter," but not the kind you would imagine – most nature, landscape and wildlife photographers may not readily admit that some of their best shots are taken out of a vehicle, but watching for fall color landscapes and wildlife portraits while driving along state, county and even two-track trail roads can be a low-intensity, successful way to find and approach photo subjects.

For some species, such as state-endangered swift foxes at their natal dens, photographing from a vehicle for a short period in the morning or evening is universally practiced by knowledgeable and ethical wildlife photographers that know human presence around a den site, or a portable blind setup nearby, is the quickest way to attract unnecessary attention and cause stress, even endangering that year's litter of pups.

Photographers in a vehicle should be extremely cautious when approaching wildlife. Cars and trucks are regularly observed by wildlife that may not be alarmed by the vehicle's approach, but safety should be a key consideration when slowing down or stopping to observe and photograph wildlife and the natural world. Watch the vehicle's rearview mirror frequently and always try to park safely well off travel lanes. Even on minimum maintenance county roads there is a chance of other traffic.

Seasoned photographers – even those that won't admit to photographing

from their vehicles – often carry a "window pod" or heavy bean bag or pillow to rest the camera on the vehicle's window frame. Attempting to photograph a possible tornado for a special issue of *NEBRASKALAND Magazine* years ago, I'd set up a tripod close to the driver's window and used a long cable release to trip the camera's shutter because of nearby lightening. Swarms of mosquitoes sometimes require the same technique.

Low-maintenance, yet open, county roads that cross sections of farmland and grassland pastures are often favorite routes of many photographers. Legally passable roads are normally marked. Roadside vegetation – plum thickets for example, and cattail marshes and other wildlife-holding habitat along these often nearly desolate trails usually offer numerous subjects for the camera. County roads in the Pine Ridge, including East and

Broad-winged Hawks Nest in North Platte

By T. J. Walker, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

In late-June, I returned from a day in the field as a North Platte-based Nebraska Game and Parks Commission biologist to find a note on my desk.

"Falcon nest in town...adult birds dive-bombing people and pets at intersection of Maple and E streets."

On the way there I considered what the birds might be. I was certain that I would not find falcons. Probably it was going to be a pair of Cooper's hawks, but I was optimistically hopeful that it might be a Mississippi kite nest, as they have nested in nearby Ogallala for several years and are known for defending their nests.

I located the nest about 20 feet high in an elm tree immediately over the front door of the resident that had

been "attacked." It was small for a raptor nest, just a clump of sticks that looked like something a Cooper's hawk might use. Then one of the adults flew into a nearby tree. My first impression was that it might be a juvenile Cooper's hawk (some barring on the breast, not real pronounced, and a mid-sized raptor), but something didn't look right. The bird was stocky. Cooper's hawks are slender.

It had a short tail. Cooper's hawks have relatively long tails. I also noticed a bright yellow "cere," the portion of the beak adjacent to the feathers between the bird's eyes. Its legs were equally yellow. In flight, the deep wingbeats were definitely not those of a Cooper's and the bars on the tail



PHOTO BY ROCKY HOFMANN

were too thick for an accipiter hawk.

The bird flew around a bit, giving me the opportunity to see the barred tail and blocky wings typical of broad-winged hawks, but I was trying to make the bird into something that made more sense – broad-winged hawks normally nest in deciduous woodlands and are very rare west of the Missouri River Valley. Then came the final piece of evidence: The bird started to call, which instantly brought back memories of a time at Ponca State Park several years ago when I had chased that sound through the bur oak forest trying to get a glimpse of this deciduous woodland species. The bird was indeed a broad-winged hawk, an extremely rare sighting for North Platte, Nebraska.

Joel Jorgensen, nongame bird program manager for the Commission suggested getting photographic documentation, which I got later that day. The telephoto lens also revealed something else – a young bird in the nest. Successful nesting of broad-winged hawks had occurred where the species normally doesn't occur.

On July 17, 2008, I revisited the site and found that the nest had been damaged by a recent thunderstorm that had damaged a lot of trees in town. The young bird was gone, and I did not observe either of the adults. The fate of the young hawk is not known, but it is possible that it did in fact fledge as it was beginning to get wing feathers on July 3, and two weeks had passed. ■



PHOTO BY BOB GRIER

Some of the best landscape and wildlife photos are taken from a vehicle, but make sure you have good camera support.

West Ash Creek, Cottonwood Creek and Sand Creek roads, and Sioux and Dawes county roads on the Oglala National Grasslands, can be very rewarding in the fall and other times of the year.

Sometimes being a "road hunter" isn't necessarily a bad thing.

Hunting the Home Place

Photos and text by Jon Farrar

The opening weekend of the firearm deer season is a family affair for the Colburns. Roots are deep on the ranch that has been in the family for over 100 years.

The Shell convenience store in Valentine was awash in orange two hours before the opening of the 2007 firearm deer season. Hunters streamed in, a thermos in one hand, traveling mug in the other; and emerged minutes later, pockets bulging with Zingers and sandwiches made who knows where and when, vacuum-sealed in plastic clam shells requiring a

Leatherman tool to open. Shiny new four-wheel-drive pickups with nary a brush scratch on a quarter panel rumbled in parking stalls. The stench of spent diesel hung like a cloud over the pavement in the morning calm. ATVs with knobby tires were nestled in the beds of some trucks, other trucks pulled trailers carrying three four-wheelers with gun racks mounted on the handlebars. Had the light been better, and the hunters more comely, the scene had all the makings for a Kawasaki or Honda ATV catalog photo.

At the Colburn ranch on the south side of the Valentine National Wildlife Refuge, opening morning was more serene. Two orange-clad figures stalked slowly through the woodlot behind Keith and Kristi Colburn's house.

Keith's dad, Dean Colburn, was already in the corrals, switch in hand, making sure each twin fall calf had equal time to suck their mother. Dean's wife, Delores, came from the house, then Keith down the lane between the two houses. We milled and talked until sunlight struck the ridgetops to the west, spread down the sidehills and swept across the big meadow to the west. It was balmy for November, already in the mid-

40s at sunrise, with low, scudding clouds that would linger though the day.

There was talk of abundant rains after six or seven years of drought, but the need for more; of the unusually high number of twin calves born earlier that fall; of World War II pilots gone astray on practice bombing runs over the refuge and bomb fragments still found in the pastures. There was talk of lazy hunters who already were patrolling the county road past the Colburn's, hoping for an easy and illegal shot at a deer, and of the morning hunting plans of Keith and Kristi's three children – Seth, Mark and Joni.

Seth, at 20, was the most experienced hunter, having killed a deer every year since he was 14. Mark, 18, a senior in high school, had more interest in organized sports, wrestling in particular, and found time for hunting scarce. For Joni, 16, it was her first deer hunt.

When legal shooting time came, Mark and his spotter, girlfriend Erika Schneider, were already walking the big range of hills in the Farlow pasture on the north side of the ranch, a pasture bordering the refuge. After finding no deer in the woodlot near the house, Seth and Joni shifted their search to a range of choppy hills on the eastern

edge of the ranch. The three young Colburns were the only deer hunters on the ranch, circumstances most deer hunters can only dream about. But having a whole ranch to yourself on opening morning comes at a price the rest of the year and, in the case of the Colburns, a long history.

Deep Roots

The core of the Colburn ranch has been family land for more than 100 years. In 1891, Delores's great-uncle, Gustav Wendler, an immigrant from Germany, homesteaded and filed

a timber claim where the Colburns live today. His brother Max – Seth, Mark and Joni's great-great grandfather – came to America in 1907 with “five good kids and \$100.” The following year, he and his wife, Ida, homesteaded adjacent to Gustav, on the east end of nearby Rat Lake. To help ends meet during their early years, they ran a hunting and fishing resort with cabins, boat rentals and meals in the 1920s and 1930s. In 1932, after Gus was run over and badly injured by a team of horses, Max bought his brother's land. One of Max and Ida's “five good kids” was Gretchen, a feisty, red-headed girl



Seth glasses for mule deer moving back into choppy hills to bed, looking for one he can stalk.



Seth Colburn shot this mule buck on the second day of the season last year.



On opening day, Seth was the guide for his younger sister, Joni Colburn, who was hunting deer for the first time.

everyone called Shorty. Shorty married Clint Hull and the couple had one child, Delores, who married Dean Colburn in 1951 and moved to the ranch. Today, Keith and Kristi operate the ranch with them, and live only 250 yards away, a distance Keith frequently travels on a bicycle with no fenders that leans on the fence in front of his house. Seth, Mark and Joni were not just hunting deer, they were hunting deer on family land, land with as much family history written on it as birth, marriage and death notes in the front of a family bible.

The first deer of the day, a mule deer doe, fell to Mark, who was shooting a

borrowed Model 700 .280-caliber Remington. Keith picked his way up into the range of hills in the ranch pickup, slipping over the lowest ridgecuts and across grassed pockets to within 30 yards of where Mark and Erika were waiting. There are nine saddle horses on the ranch but not a single four-wheeler. “There are probably places for four-wheelers on a ranch,” Keith said, “but once you have one, you start using them for things you shouldn’t.”

There was something wholesomely matter-of-fact about Mark’s decision to shoot a doe on the opening morning of deer season, something akin to raising cattle – you raise meat, you harvest

meat, you eat the meat you raised or, in the case of a cattle ranch, sell it to others to eat. There were no high-fives, no hooting over long shots or massive racks, no comments about shooting a doe on opening morning, only smiles and getting to the business of field dressing the deer. Mark’s account of the hunt was succinct, sparing with his words, a common trait of young men in the Sandhills.

“We drove up to the west end of the pasture,” he recounted, “walked up into the hills and worked our way back east because the wind was out of the southeast, staying off the ridges where deer would see us, working along the

sidehills, easing to the top now and then to look for deer on the other side. We walked about 20 minutes and then saw a nice buck, a mule deer. A little later, we saw four does running across the meadow, all mule deer, and go up into the hills where we had seen the buck. We worked back west, but never saw the four does again. Then all of a sudden we saw four deer, and then a fifth. We worked around through the hills to get closer but they kept moving, grazing. We worked back north though the choppies and saw eight come up a sharp bank. There was a little forkhorn with them but I didn’t see him until after I shot the doe. I didn’t care. I was

Joni’s second shot at a deer was true, the slug passing through both lungs. By dark the second Colburn deer was hanging in the trees behind the house.



Joni missed her first shot ever at a deer on opening morning. “I was pretty shaky,” she confessed at the dinner table. That evening she killed a spike buck at 120 yards.



Mark Colburn and his friend and spotter, Erika Schneider, glass for mule deer on the ranch's north pasture.

either after a big buck or a fat doe.” By noon Mark’s doe was hanging from lariat ropes in a tree behind the house. After a sweep of the high hills in the east pasture without finding deer, Seth and Joni moved their hunt into the Farlow Pasture where Mark had shot his doe. The range of choppy hills, pocked with little grassy pockets, clumps of brush and studded with soapweed, was prescription mule deer habitat. North of the range of hills was the Colburn’s expansive North Meadow, and between the hills and the meadow were tree groves and brush patches where deer could retreat during severe winter weather.

Joni was shooting Seth’s .270-caliber Remington 700. Seth was spotting, carrying only a lightweight rifle bipod he called his “sticks.” He was a deer hunter mature beyond his age, confident of his proficiency and that he would shoot his deer before the weekend ended. His hunting pace was measured, and on this opening day, he was his little sister’s deer guide. After an hour of slipping through the hills, Seth spotted a buck mule deer, a 3-by-3, bedded down on a sidehill and they stalked within 100 yards. By the time Joni had the rifle resting on the bipod, the buck had heard, scented or sighted them and stood broadside.

Joni’s one shot was high and the buck gave no chance for a second. “I was pretty shaky,” Joni later confessed. Opening morning was over. There are palatable advantages to hunting the home place in addition to free rein to an entire ranch and being able to drive a pickup right up to your downed deer, advantages like dinner. Dinner is still the noon meal at the Colburn ranch, and the evening meal is supper. Keith apologized for the dinner before all gathered around the table made long enough to accommodate the multitude by the addition of a card table on the end. “Kind of embarrassing to serve chicken on a cattle ranch,” he

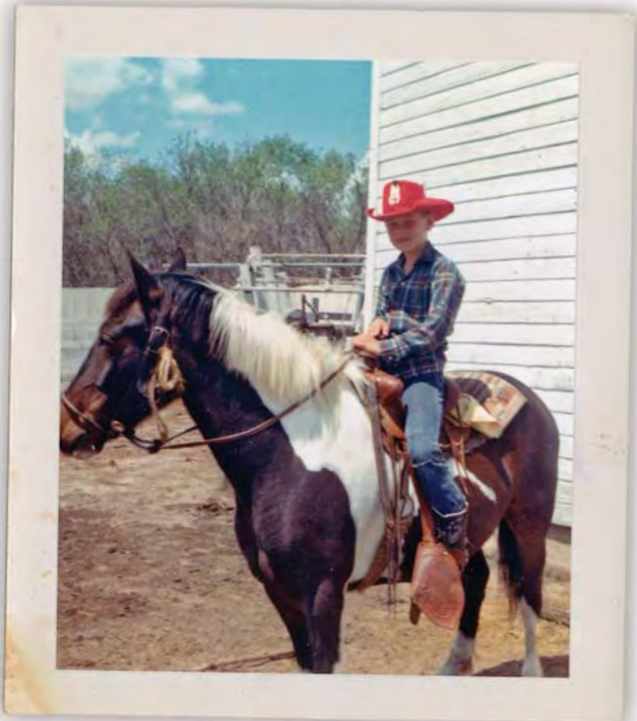
said with a smile. But everyone bellied up and made short work of Kristi’s fried chicken, potatoes and gravy, corn and homemade desserts. There was easy family talk, no discussion of world affairs. It was, well, sort of a traditional Sunday dinner with family on a Saturday, the sort once common, the sort of dinner special enough for a son to bring his girlfriend out from town.

Wind Breaks and Mule Deer

The Colburn ranch has a good mix of bottomland meadows and upland

pastures. Dean and Delores moved to the ranch in 1951. It was not until the next year they saw their first deer, a mule deer. As years passed, whitetails became more abundant until there were about equal numbers of each species, the whitetails staying near the meadows and valleys where there was traditional whitetail habitat – cattails and rushes fringing lakes and marshes – and shelterbelts. Mule deer have been far more abundant than whitetails in the last five or six years. The ranch has more woodlands than most Sandhills ranches. Since the first Wendler Timber Claim plantings in the early 1900s, shelterbelts and woodlots have been planted and nurtured to provide livestock protection. Clint Hull, Delores’s father, served on several conservation boards and associations, and for 14 years headed a tree planting crew. He planted trees to protect livestock on his own ranch and the family has continued planting trees. Even the large branches of dead and fallen trees are put to use. If they’re not burned to warm Keith and Kristi’s house, they’re stacked with a front-end loader to form massive wind breaks where cattle can huddle when wind and snow blows hard from the northwest in winter. Keith only hunted deer once. The story of why was retold after Saturday’s dinner. In 1973, when Keith was 14 and old enough to buy a deer permit, he and Dean hunted from horseback in the big range of hills south of Dads Lake. Keith was riding Sam, a Shetland and quarter horse cross, a “not-too-tall horse,” 800-900 pounds, but with small feet. Keith shot a mule deer buck, they field dressed the animal, threw it over the saddle on Keith’s horse and tied it down.

The horse was accommodating right up to the point of being led home, at which point Sam started spinning in circles. When the deer slid down on one side all hell broke loose, the terrified animal bucking and snorting as it vanished over a ridge. The horse was “sitting like a dog” on top of the deer carcass when Dean and Keith cleared the ridge. Keith walked to the horse to calm it, and the horse spit out a tongue. Keith and Dean thought the horse had bitten its own tongue off in the fray, but when they looked in its mouth, the horse’s tongue was where a horse’s tongue ought to be. The deer, though, was missing its tongue, apparently bitten off by the frantic horse. Both of the horse’s hind feet were caught in the same stirrup explaining why it gave up and sat down. The deer was hauled back to the ranch in a pickup, and Keith never again had the urge to hunt deer. Since then, all dead deer have been hauled home in pickups. By mid-afternoon, Seth and Joni were back in the east pasture’s high



A few years before his one and only deer hunt in 1973, Keith Colburn was photographed on Sam, his Shetland and quarter horse cross. Sam passively accepted having Keith’s deer tied on the saddle, right up to the point of being led home, when he started spinning in circles and the deer slipped loose. Since that day, deer are hauled home in a pickup.



Kristi Colburn takes a snapshot of Joni and her first deer.

hills, easing field glasses and rifle scope over soapweeds on ridges, looking for deer still bedded down before the late day move to feed. Seth was convinced there were deer in the east pasture and they just hadn't found them in the morning. They were sitting on a highpoint glassing when they saw the spike buck moving through the hills. Rut was beginning and even little bucks were on the prowl. Seth and Joni circled ahead, guessing the cuts the buck would take, and were waiting when it emerged 120 yards away. Joni's second shot at a deer was true, the slug passing through both lungs. By dark the second Colburn deer was hanging in the trees behind the house.

Another Balmy Day

Clouds had mostly blown east by dawn of the second day, and again it was unseasonably warm, already 50 degrees at 6 a.m., but with a rising wind shifting from the southwest to the northwest. Seth took a stand at the south end of the east range of hills before shooting time, thinking, as had happened in deer seasons past, that hunters would move deer off the refuge. He had killed his deer just that way the last two or three years. His vigil was short-lived and by the time

the sun had cleared the eastern ridge, he was already bouncing across the north meadow in the 1960 Ford pickup he had repaired and repainted when he was 18 years old. It was a classic ranch flatbed Seth had built, a fencing pickup with more side mirrors than most 18-wheelers, a wood shelf above the windshield for the CB radio and coil-spring seats, mostly lacking any covering. The chrome handle for the spotlight on the cab had been long ago replaced with a pair of vise grips. It was, well, Seth's pickup.

"I pulled out on the meadow next to the high hills to glass," Seth later recounted. "And right away I saw one mule doe, way up on the ridgeline, probably half a mile away. I thought there would be more with her. I stalked back into the hills and got the wind right. Wind was out of the west, blowing pretty hard. I'd go over a hill and glass, then move on. Sometimes you might only take 10 steps and you can see new country, and glass some more. I was just doing that and saw one deer in a pocket on a sidehill. I thought it was probably a mule buck, three-by-three, probably the one Joni hunted yesterday. But I was too far to know for sure.

"I worked a little closer and could see he was pretty decent," Seth continued. "I got settled, lined up on

him, shot and he ran over the hill. I had heard a thump and I saw blood on his side so I knew he wasn't going far. It was a 150-yard shot. He gave me enough time to use my sticks and get steady. When I first spotted him, he hadn't seen me, but when I got up to the next little ridge, he turned and looked toward me, standing broadside, and that's when I fired. There were four does within 30 yards of him in a pocket, getting out of the wind. I didn't see them until I shot. They were bedded down for midday."

Seth's 4-by-4 had a tall and wide rack, but wasn't as heavy-beamed as he would have liked. It was, he said, his second largest deer. He said he would "wait for a nicer one" when

he hunted with a muzzleloader in December.

When Seth drove into the ranch with his deer, Kristi was taking a photo of Joni with her first deer. It was going to be too warm, expected to reach the mid-60s, to let the deer hang and age. In the time it took Seth to drive to the refuge and check in his deer, Keith and Mark had the other two deer cut, packaged and in the freezer. The backstraps had been carefully trimmed out, cut into eight-inch lengths and wrapped. The quarters were carved into assorted roasts and labeled – "Good Top Round Roast," followed by "Almost as Good Near Top Round Roast." The secret to ciphering the package contents would be chronological stacking in the freezer.

By the time Seth returned from the check station it was too late in the morning to process another deer, so it was hoisted up in the machine shop to cool. There was a proper ranch dinner of homegrown beef with brown gravy over potatoes and more homemade desserts, then a rush for everyone to change clothes and drive the 32 miles to town to watch Joni in the high school drama performance of *Arabian Nights' Tale*. Just another opening weekend of the firearm deer season on the Colburn ranch. ■



Keith and Seth hang Seth's deer in the ranch machine shed to cool before being cut and packaged. The deer antlers on the wall are from previous hunts and dead deer found on the ranch over the years.

Wrapped in Bacon

Outdoor recipes even I can do

Text and photos by Jeff Kurrus

Quick and easy. Better yet, quick, easy and tasty. That's how I like to cook, whether with wild game or something harvested at the local grocery store. To me, cooking wild game is especially enjoyable when

doing more than just creating the dishes normally associated with it: deer roast and fish fry. Both are acceptable, yes, but a little variety is also needed for brunch, lunch and dinner guests. Luckily, it doesn't take a pile of recipe

books or a lot of prep time to put a good wild game dish on the table. When done right, quite often guests won't know what they're eating in the first place. Their guesses most certainly will not be anything "wild." Here are some recipes from my modest kitchen that will help keep your freezer empty of game.

Wrapped in Bacon

As the title indicates, this is the quintessential recipe that anyone can do. Take venison backstrap, tenderloin nuggets, breasted dove or duck, and wrap them in bacon. Put a toothpick through the meat to keep the bacon from falling off, and place on the grill. Melt a small bowl of butter in the microwave, and baste the meat each time the grill is opened. Turn the pieces constantly, cooking on low heat to keep the bacon from burning, and cover with salt, pepper and garlic. When the bacon is done, the meat is done. It's that simple. Serve as appetizers, the main course or a midday snack. Regardless of when it is served, I can promise there won't be any left on the table. If there is, the way I look at it, that means more for the cook.

Fish in a Boat

Place boneless fish fillets in an aluminum foil pan, arranging the smaller pieces in the middle with the larger ones on the side. Because one-pan cooking results in the least amount of clean-up, add broccoli, mushrooms and onions with the fish. If available, asparagus, cauliflower, spinach, squash and diced potatoes can also be included. If you grew up like I did, under the notion of "something meat, something yellow, something green," then fish in a boat is so convenient due to the small number of dishes that will need

washing afterward.

Don't salt too much and, if so desired, use lemon pepper instead of black pepper – it'll give this dish a bit more kick. For additional flavor, include strips of bacon, lemon juice or anything else within reach of the cooking pan.

Now the question becomes: Should this meal be cooked in any sort of liquid? Quite simply: How healthy do you want to be? I'll put half a cup of melted butter or olive oil on the fish if I want a bit more taste, but if I'm trying to cook healthier, I'll use water.

Once the mushrooms, onions and fish start to cook, these ingredients will produce enough liquid to keep the fish from burning. However, burning isn't necessarily a bad thing, especially if you're cooking on the grill. If so, leave the pan uncovered and cook until the fish starts to flake apart. Stir constantly, turning the meat over and spicing the underside. It shouldn't take longer than

20 minutes on the grill. If you're out of charcoal or propane, cover the aluminum boat with foil and cook in the oven the same way at 350 degrees, checking it every 15 minutes until the fish is flaking apart.

Because I like it when all the ingredients combine together, I don't mind my fillets turning into chunks of fish and vegetables. Once it's cooked, serve in bowls or plates, but leave a little shredded cheese on the table beside the finishing dish – it's a good topper to a great meal of fish and veggies.

One word of warning: Before making this meal, learn how to fillet fish properly. Get a book, watch a video, watch a friend. If your friend tells you that it's hard to get all the bones out of the fillets, find a new friend to watch. No one, and I mean no one, wants to eat fish fillets with the thought in their mind that bones might be included.

Garlic, Pepper and Salt

It's amazing what a combination of these three ingredients can do for cooking. Garlic, either fresh, in a granulated form or combined with salt, gives the meat just enough flavor without overburdening it.

Remember, the meat itself and the taste from the grill is going to provide most of the flavor needed. Pepper will give a little bit of a kick, but don't use too much. Salt is key, but due to health concerns, also use in moderation.

Too little salt is always best. When serving time comes, put spices on the table and let people know a limited amount of salt was used. This will make everyone that much more comfortable if they feel your "wild" game is just too darn bland.



Deer (pictured), duck and dove are just a few of the game meats perfect for wrapping in bacon and cooking on the grill.



Clean-up is simple when one-pan cooking fish fillets and vegetables on the grill.



Shredded deer shoulder is an excellent potluck dish for holiday parties.

Shredded Shoulder

I don't want this to sound too darn elementary, but it'll be hard not to. Preheat the oven to 250 degrees. While it's heating, place the deer shoulder (see sidebar) in a roasting pan that has sides at least three inches deep, because the meat will lose a bit of moisture as it cooks. How much exactly? I'm not sure, but it's not enough to flow over a 3-inch roasting pan.

Apply garlic, salt, pepper and include enough water to cover the entire bottom of the pan. No more than a couple of cups. Cover with aluminum foil and place in the oven. For how long? Again, I'm not exactly sure, but what I usually do is start it as soon as I wake up in the morning, allow it to cook throughout the day, and take it out at suppertime, somewhere in the 5 to 6 o'clock hour. The shoulder is done when the meat can easily be pulled off the bone with a fork.

Once the meat is taken out, uncover it and give it about 15 minutes to cool, then completely separate the meat from the bone, also discarding any small pieces of sinew and fat that are found.

The meat should now be in relatively large chunks. Pull these apart until they resemble pulled or shredded pork. Dump any remaining fluid from the pan and place the pulled meat back into it. Add a little more salt, pepper,

garlic, onions, perhaps some sliced mushrooms, finish it off with four tablespoons of butter and place, uncovered, on the grill. As it cooks, constantly turn it over – you're looking for a smoky taste to the meat, and time on the grill will aid this. Cook as long as you want. Five minutes, 10, 15 – the longer cooked, the crispier the meat edges will become.

This recipe should serve four to six people and works best when cooked with another deer shoulder and eaten while watching football. Add chips,

Shoulders versus Hindquarters?

Shredded shoulder is a great recipe to use because it's hard to separate from the bone using a knife. It can be done, but the hindquarters are much better for separating into jerky, roasts, steaks, etc. If you don't want to spend a lot of time trimming from the hindquarters, however, remove the major cuts and then save the remainder to slow cook the same way as the shoulder meat. Delicious.

maybe even a little barbecue sauce or sour cream, and the afternoon is set. It also makes a great potluck dish, allowing you to serve wild game to the masses. In the unlikely event that there is any meat left over, freeze in sandwich bags and bring along on your next fishing trip. Place these on top of the cooler at sunrise, and they will be thawed by lunchtime, making a great midday snack.

Deer and Onions

Take one of the larger cuts of meat, such as a muscle from the hindquarters, and cut it into chicken nugget-sized

chunks. Combine in a plastic bag with diced onions and flour and shake well.

On the stovetop, cover the bottom of a pan with cooking oil, less than 1/8-inch deep. Place the floured chunks in the pan, salt, pepper, then cook on medium heat. Cover the dish to maintain the meat's moisture and turn often.

The meat sometimes soaks up a lot of the oil on the bottom of the pan and, if not watched, can begin to burn rather quickly. Combat this by adding a little butter while cooking if there is limited or no moisture in the pan bottom. The meat should give off a little moisture as it cooks, as should the onions, but you don't want the meat crispy outside and undercooked inside. Lastly, water can be substituted for butter if a healthy meal is desired.

Once the meat is cooked, uncover the pan and cook until the meat's edges are crispy enough for your liking.

Crockpot Goose

Place goose drumsticks and breasts into a crockpot before work. Cover with two cans of cream-of-mushroom soup and cook on low heat. Go to work or call in sick. When you return later that evening, turn off the crockpot and start preparing the side dishes.

A baked potato in the microwave and a can of green beans cooked on the stove are some of the easiest. Pull the meat from the crockpot and allow it to cool, but keep the crockpot on low because the mushroom soup is now mushroom gravy. Serve the breasts to wild game newcomers, and keep the drummies, and their bones, for yourself.

Steel Shot

Because steel shot tends to stay in waterfowl meat quite often, make sure the meat has been checked thoroughly before giving it to others. If there are any concerns that there may be some pellets left in the meat, let guests know. Tell them to eat it relatively slowly and not to bite down too hard. Also tell them that the meat will be so tender at this point that biting down hard is pointless in the first place.



A nice alternative to a bacon and egg breakfast is a turkey and bacon brunch.

Turkey and Bacon Brunch

My wife cuts up food as if she is cooking for royalty. I cut up food as if I'm running the last diner on earth and there's never an empty seat. For my wife, the prep time for this meal would be 20 minutes. For me, it takes less than five.

Start by frying four strips of bacon in a pan on medium or high heat, covering it to keep moisture in the pan. As the bacon cooks, take those five minutes to slice onions, peel potatoes and cut a wild turkey breast into bite-sized pieces. When the bacon is done, remove it and add the potatoes, onions, and turkey nuggets to the pan.

Cook these on medium, covered, for 10 minutes, continually flipping to keep them from burning. Once cooked, uncover, re-add the cooked bacon and crisp the edges for five more minutes. When no one is looking, get a fork and taste a piece of potato. If it's soft and trying to get crispy on the edges, then everything in the pan will be ready.

I've always liked this as a brunch dish. Sort of a late-morning breakfast, either in the duck blind or just having left it. Serve with a couple of biscuits and save the side-dish greens for dinner. If the turkey is a bit too dry for your taste, half a can of cream-of-mushroom soup or a thin covering of sour cream should wet it perfectly.

There are a growing number of people who don't want to cook because they think it's too difficult and takes too long, especially when a drive-thru window is so much easier to manage. How many hunters or anglers do you know that give their game away because they don't know how to cook it? How many others throw away meat each year because it's been freezer-burned? None of that is necessary, especially when there are so many ways to cook without spending hours doing it or days reading about it.

Quick and easy, I promised. If you haven't tried these, do so. You'll quickly find out that the "tasty" takes care of itself. ■



When cooking geese, serve breast meat to guests but keep the bony drummies for yourself.

LOOKING AT LICHENS

By Lisa Knopp

Observing one of the least known and understood organisms on Earth.

I set a bright lamp in the middle of my kitchen table. Beneath it I spread white paper. Then I don the +325-strength magnifying glasses from the \$9.99 rack at the drug store. I wear low-level magnifiers when I read, but these super-magnifiers are so strong that they blur anything that isn't right beneath my nose. On the white background I set pieces of trees, rocks and a wooden board. With my super-magnifiers, I see that each item hosts a garden of lichens.

Seeing lichens is easier than identifying them. The bookstore I frequent doesn't have a single book about lichens in stock. The public library has one field guide to the lichens, copyright 1969, with black-and-white drawings instead of the color photos I need. References to lichens are plentiful on the internet, yet most sites admit to one or more of the following: (1) identification is difficult without a compound microscope and chemicals best used in a laboratory with a fume hood (I have none of these); (2) the featured lichens were collected from heaths, bogs, and sea cliffs (I suspect a limited correspondence between the lichens of

guessing at species' names. I decide that in the absence of certain identification, I'll provide my own name for a specimen. This is an invigorating challenge, since some lichens have unique, evocative common names: powder-headed birdbone; wrinkled wrinkle; blood-spattered beard; hammered crottle; antlered perfume and fairy barf.

Lichen is a curious organism – or rather, a dual organism. It's produced by the union of a fungus, an organism that absorbs nutrients from organic matter and that reproduces by spores, and an alga, an organism that lacks true leaves, roots or stems but, like other plants, can convert sunlight and carbon dioxide into carbohydrates. When we behold the lichen, 90 to 95 percent of what we see is fungus. Dispersed among the fungus's hyphae or threads are the green algal cells. Through photosynthesis, the alga

makes the carbohydrates that the fungus cannot; the spongelike fungus supplies water and nutrients and provides the structure that holds the alga and protects it from plant-eaters. In the past, textbooks identified this relationship as an example of mutualism, an association that benefits

different organisms and harms neither. But now experts believe that, at least in some cases, the fungus can't live without the alga but the alga can live without the fungus. In other

words, the fungus is a parasite and the alga, a host and hostage.

When I look at lichens, I don't think in terms of fungus and alga, mutualism or parasitism. Rather, what I see is beauty and mystery. Consider the locust twig in my collection. One side is lichen-free, but the other side bears a Lilliputian forest. Most of the patches of lichen are gray-green, radiating outward from a center point, the edges scalloped or lobed like livers, lungs and some leaves. Most lobes are overlapping, but along the edge they are free-standing and I can peel them off with tweezers. When I look at the colony with my naked eyes, I see dark dots on the gray-green patches and a single cup filled to the brim with something black. But with my super-magnifiers, I see that in the center of the lobes are dozens of tiny gray-green goblets filled with black, as well as that large conspicuous cup. These are the lichen's spore-producing, reproductive structures.

Perhaps this particular lichen is the common greenshield, an apt name since the body, or thallus, is green, the leaves are shield-like and it's definitely common. Once I became aware of this lichen, I noticed it growing on most mature trees in my neighborhood. Fructose or leafy lichens, which includes greenshield, are attached to the substrate by rhizines – tiny, hyphal cords I cannot see even with my super-magnifiers. The rhizines don't harm the tree yet are strong enough to hold the lichen in place through the seasons and centuries. In the absence of other food, deer will eat this lichen; hummingbirds and peewees line their nests with it. I watch a tiny insect creep beneath a lobe. Apparently, some creatures find shelter there, too.

Growing near the tip of the twig is a single patch of tall, bright green lichen whose reproductive cups are brimming with bright orange. Since I can't find anything in the black-and-white field

guide that comes close to what I see, I bring forth my own names for this lichen: Flaming Chalice, Hot Lava Tarts, Blazing Buttons. Also striking is the bright yellow-orange lichen growing on decaying bark or boards – *Candelaria concolor*, or candleflame. The duller lichen in my collection is the flat, gray-white crustlike lichen that I find on tree trunks and rocks, a species of *Lecanora*, perhaps. This lichen, which is embedded in the substrate, can cover such wide areas that the tree trunk looks as if it had been whitewashed.

Since I can't remove some lichens to take home for a closer look, I take my super-magnifiers to them. In Roberts Park, a 20-minute walk from my house, I study two pieces of ornamental stone stacked atop each other and resting on a cement base near the parking lot. These were the capstones on Lincoln Normal University, which once stood near 56th and South Streets. But time, weather and vandalism have taken their toll: Parts of the faces of two ghouls and a mermaidlike creature, as well as the flourishes surrounding them, are missing. Many of the initials carved in stone by lovers or hopefuls are now indecipherable. But the lichens – a greenshield or a close relative, a gray-white crustose, and something chartreuse and branching – are thriving.

Lichen is a pioneer plant, which means that it's the first to colonize places that other plants find hostile, such as the disturbed or denuded landscape following a glacier, volcano, or fire. The lichen releases acids that over time break down the rock on which it lives, turning the rock into soil, eventually creating an environment that is hospitable to mosses, ferns and flowering plants. Someday, violets might bloom in the soil that the lichens make from these capstones.

Compared to watching cranes or chasing tornados, looking at lichens may appear to be a dull and uninspiring pastime, yet everything I've learned about lichens proves otherwise. Lichens are an ancient lifeform, first appearing in the fossil record about 400 million years ago. They grow slowly (with a typical growth rate of 40-160 inches per millennium, they're not the bindweeds of the plant world) and can live for thousands of years. They can

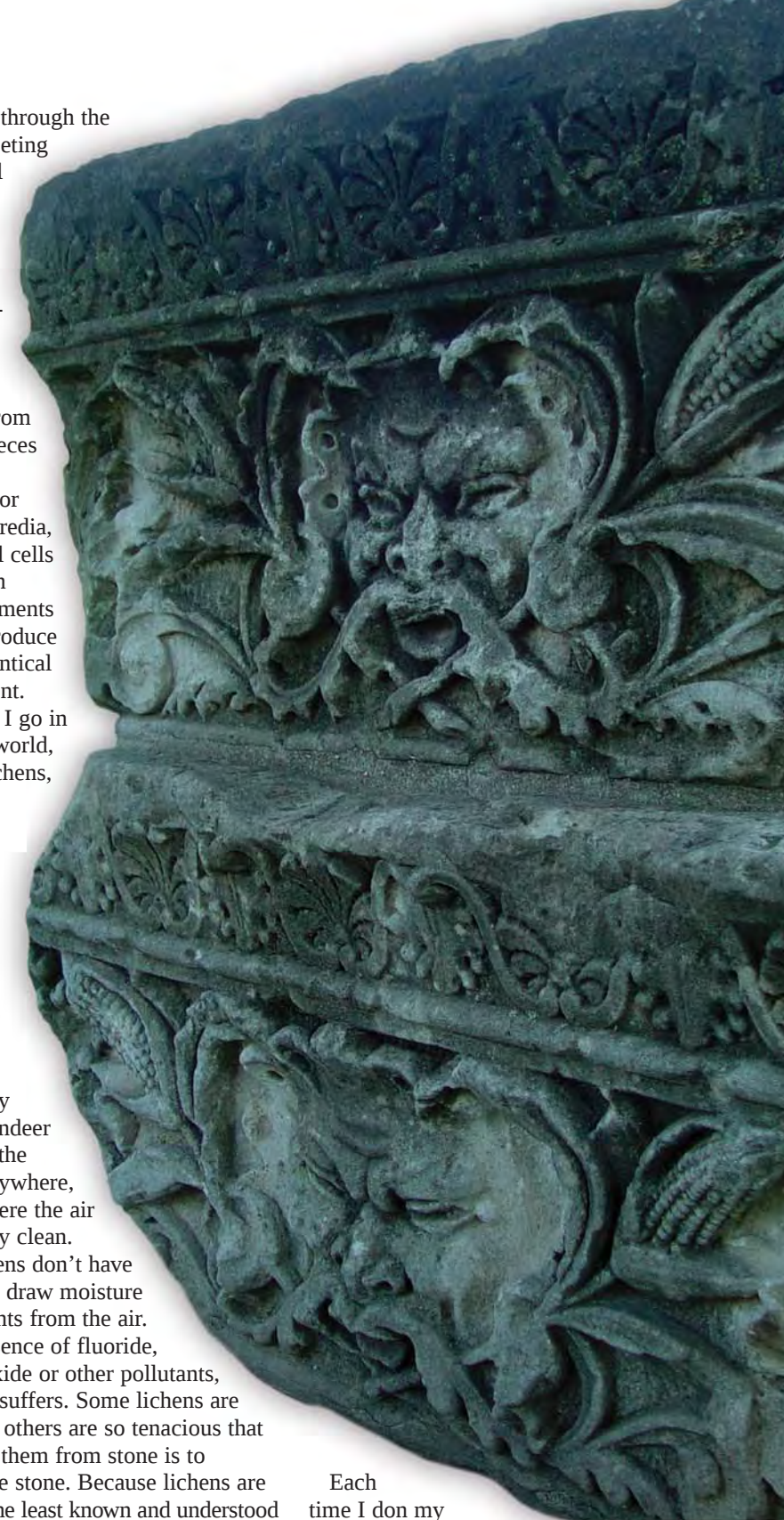
reproduce through the chance meeting of a fungal spore and an algal cell, or through fragmentation (I could grow colonies from the tiny pieces that I've collected) or through soredia, a few algal cells wrapped in fungal filaments that can produce a plant identical to the parent. Anywhere I go in this wide world, I'll find lichens, from the bright orange ones that coat desert rocks to the vast mats of reindeer lichens (incorrectly called "reindeer moss") in the Arctic. Anywhere, that is, where the air is relatively clean. Since lichens don't have roots, they draw moisture and nutrients from the air. In the presence of fluoride, sulfur dioxide or other pollutants, the lichen suffers. Some lichens are fragile but others are so tenacious that to remove them from stone is to damage the stone. Because lichens are probably the least known and understood organisms on Earth, no one knows how many species there are, though experts estimate 20,000 to 25,000. That means abundant opportunities for exploring the unknown. Perhaps there's even a lichen in my neighborhood waiting to be discovered and named. *Cladonia knoppis* – Lisa's lichen.

Each time I don my super-magnifiers and look at lichens, I place myself in the presence of beauty and mystery. There's nothing dull or uninspiring about that. ■

Lisa Knopp is a teacher and writer who lives in Lincoln.



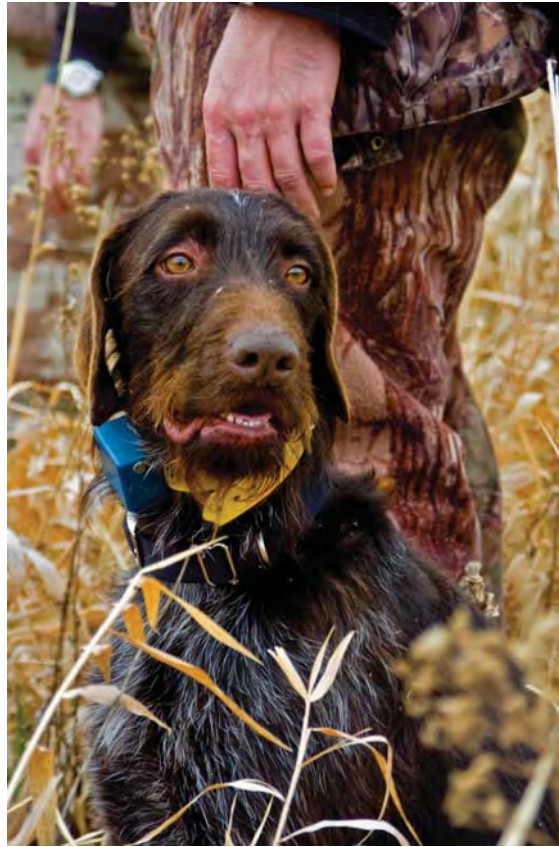
Great Britain and the Great Plains); (3) the identifier is not an expert, so is merely



PHOTOS BY TIM REIGERT

Home to Nebraska

Text and photos by Jamie Vasa



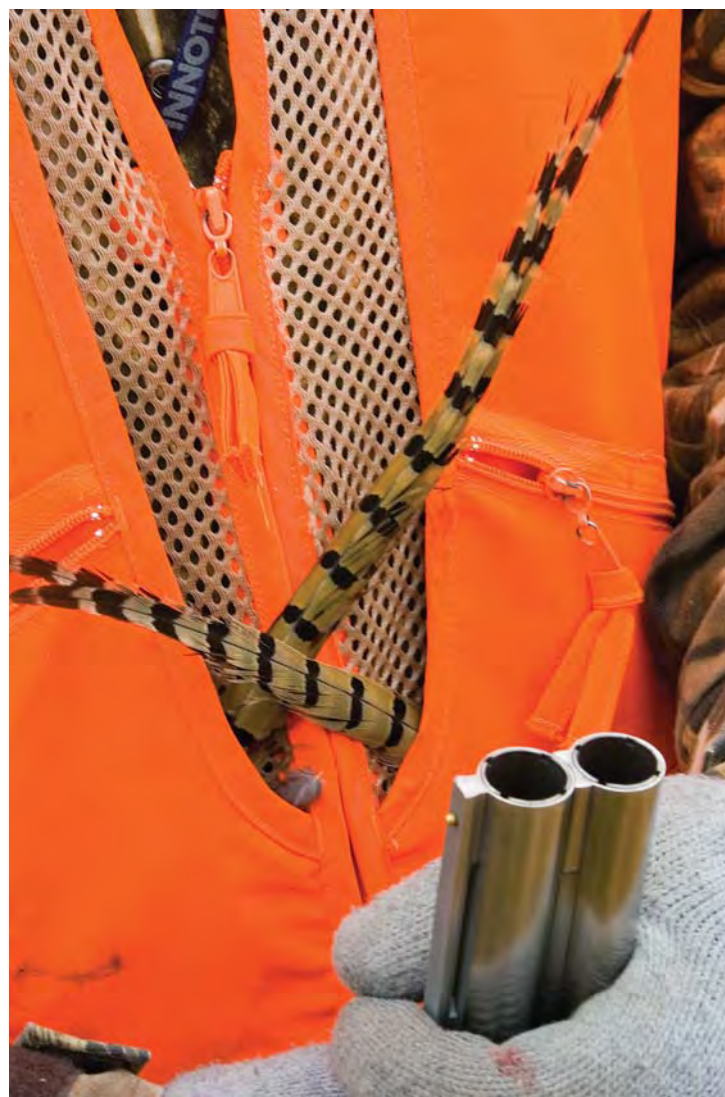
“Hey it’s good to be back home again.” These words from a John Denver song always go through my mind when I come to Nebraska, and it’s hard to explain the emotions they invoke. Growing up in the heartland, I never dreamed of moving away – I thought my place in life was etched in stone, or should I say, the sandy-loam fields of Keith County.

When opportunity knocked, however, I had to move on. Now I only return during the holidays and special occasions, mostly to visit family and friends, but sometimes to show new friends my home state and the fantastic hunting opportunities it bestows.

Every November, Jamie Vasa returns to the fields of Nebraska to hunt wild pheasants. It is a pilgrimage he shares with friends – new and old.



ABOVE: KERRY DYKSTRA OF OGDEN, UTAH, PUSHES AN UNCUT, WEEDY CORNFIELD SOUTH OF ELSIE.
OPPOSITE: ARROW, A GERMAN DRAHTHAAR, WAITS FOR ANOTHER PHEASANT DRIVE TO BEGIN.



ABOVE: LEFT TO RIGHT, LARRY RIGGS, BRETT SKINNER, SCOTT SAXTON, TOM JASNOCH AND KERRY DYKSTRA DISCUSS THEIR NEXT DRIVE WHILE HUNTING THE WEST END OF LAKE MCCONAUGHY. OPPOSITE, TOP: A 12-GAUGE AND NO. 6 SHOT IS ALL YOU NEED TO BRING DOWN A PHEASANT. OPPOSITE, BOTTOM: THE SHINY OVER-AND-UNDER SHOTGUN OF OGALLALA'S TOM JASNOCH BROUGHT DOWN A PAIR OF ROOSTERS.

There are few places in our country where you can still hunt wild pheasants, and I'm proud that Nebraska has been able to maintain a healthy pheasant population. Many states, such as Utah, where I lived for 16 years, once had excellent pheasant hunting, but due to the lack of quality habitat, people now mainly hunt pen-raised birds released just a few days before

the week-long hunt.

I now work and reside in Ontario, Canada, where the problem is similar. A large quantity of land with no suitable habitat, plus the overuse of farm chemicals, has all but eliminated the pheasant. There is still a season, but only for pen-raised birds, and I just can't get myself to take part in a canned hunt such as that.

My desire to walk down a long, weedy fencerow is still strong, however, and my usual, boastful self just can't keep from bragging about the abundance of stubble-busting roosters where I come from. The new acquaintances I have met outside of Nebraska have been quick to pick up on these sometimes over-exaggerations, but luckily I've been able to say

"I told you so" after leading several groups of hunters through the fields of my past and introducing them to my native heritage. The rewards have been not only birds for the table but the creation of some long-lasting friendships and more memories to share during future adventures.

“Coming home to Nebraska with new friends to show them where I lived – the old farm, the old stompin’ grounds – and introduce them to my old huntin’ buddies is very satisfying.”



ABOVE: LARRY RIGGS OF OGDEN, UTAH, WALKS A CRP FIELD NEAR AN OLD ABANDONED HOMESTEAD IN PERKINS COUNTY. BELOW: DOGS THAT LOOK “BIRDY” OFTEN INDICATE THE IMMINENT EXPLOSION OF TAKEOFF. OPPOSITE: EVIDENCE OF A SUCCESSFUL HUNT.



Coming home to Nebraska with new friends to show them where I lived – the old farm, the old stompin’ grounds – and introduce them to my old huntin’ buddies is very satisfying. In my youth I spent many days traipsing through the brush in Eagle Canyon on the west end of Lake Mac, including days when I should have been in class. I’ve ripped

my jeans walking fencerows, felt lost walking through acres of CRP grass, walked around irrigation pits and lagoons, up and down tree rows and shelterbelts, have been slapped by willows and overcome by cattails. Now I get to drag my friends down the same torturous trails. This is where I show them how I was made. In Nebraska. ■

Saving Fish for Fishermen

By Jon Farrar

For more than 50 years, Nebraska's game and fish department's seining crew salvaged fish for stocking and sale.



It was a concept born in a simpler time, a time of practical solutions and cheap labor – salvage fish from waters where they will perish and stock them in waters where they will flourish to provide sport fishing, or sell them at low cost to feed the hungry. Out of that concept the state's seining crew struggled to life, blossomed and died; but for more than 50 years it was one of the Nebraska game and fish department's most popular missions – saving fish for fishermen. Ironically, the seining crew grew from the Nebraska Fish Commission established in 1879 to rear fish in hatcheries for stocking, and in the end it would in part be the efficiency of the state's hatchery system that led to its demise.

The Fish Commission seined native fish for broodstock in the late-1800s, although many of the fish reared in hatcheries came from sources outside of Nebraska and from private hatcheries within the state. The first fish exhibit at the State Fair was in 1885 (a tradition continuing to this day) and large specimen fish were seined and held for display. But the first mention of "salvaging" fish for stocking did not appear until the 1896 annual report of the Board of Fish Commissioners.

"During the June rise the Platte and Missouri rivers usually overflow their banks, and deposit large numbers of fish in the overflow ponds on the adjacent lowlands," hatchery superintendent W.J. O'Brien reported. "When the water recedes the ponds dry up and the fish perish." O'Brien and his crew traveled in the Commission's railcar, designed and equipped with tanks to transport fish, to "the strip of land lying between the junction of the Platte and Missouri rivers, near La Platte [between Bellevue and Plattsmouth]" and seined "about 2,000 fish of various kinds, mostly bass, croppies, catfish, carp and a few pike." All of the fish were stocked in Steverson's Lake in southwestern Cherry County. "This method of rescuing fish from overflow ponds is carried on by Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin State Fish Commissions," O'Brien continued, "also by the National Fish Commission, and is considered one of the most important branches of their work."

O'Brien and his small crew continued to salvage stranded fish in subsequent years but it was little more than a token effort. In his 1903-04 report to the governor, after noting that approximately 7,000 fish had been rescued from receding floodwaters near Plattsmouth, he made his pitch for additional money for more fish salvaging work. O'Brien wrote that if all the carp, buffalo and bullheads he had found in ponds had been seined, "it would have required the services of a crew of three or four men and the fish car at least three or four months each year, and with the limited funds at my disposal I could not incur this expense, although there is no doubt of the value and feasibility of this work."

Not until the 1911 legislative session was O'Brien's plea for annual fish salvage operations funded when lawmakers provided \$3,000 "for the purpose of conservation and transferring fish" from floodwaters. Two years later, O'Brien reported on his work: "Overflow ponds along the Missouri

The Commission first seined fish from under the ice during World War I. The technique was still being used in the late-1960s. Winter seining kept the crew busy the year-round, was easier on some lakes than during open-water seasons, and fish were believed to be in better flesh in the winter.



Two seining crew men break ice on a Sandhills lake to reach nets set for spawning northern pike to be used for hatchery production.

and Platte rivers were examined, and when found to contain fish enough to justify the expense, [the] same have been seined and the fish distributed to living water" In addition to salvaging fish stranded in floodwaters, O'Brien's crew seined fish from floodplain lakes being drained to create cropland. Clark's Lake near La Platte was nearly dry during the summer of 1911. "A shanty and holding ponds were built at this point and a crew maintained for over two months seining the past fall," O'Brien wrote, "and this work will be continued the coming spring, as it is the intention of the landowners to entirely drain this slough to benefit the adjoining lands." Over 60,000 crappie were removed and "a large number of Bass, Bullheads, Sunfish, and Carp."

Carp to Cash

O'Brien, long a champion of stocking carp as a "food fish for the masses," defended the salvaging of carp and buffalo. "Some of our anglers will likely criticize me for saving these coarse fish, but this branch of the fish and game department should not be conducted altogether for the benefit of the angler, but in the interests of the greatest good to the greatest number, and while up to the present this department has received little revenue from the seining of coarse fish; in my opinion the time is ripe for a change." At the end of the 1913-14 biennium, he reported "\$1,000 has been turned into our fish hatchery cash fund from the sale of Carp and Buffalo fish, while fully as many coarse fish were given away as were sold."

"In [the] future I would recommend that none be distributed free, but that all fish be sold at a nominal price," O'Brien continued. "I may be over-optimistic on this, but I am firmly of the opinion that if all the Carp now in our streams and lakes could be taken and properly marketed, there would be enough value therein to reimburse the state for every dollar paid for fish propagation in the past twenty years, and the employees of this commission should be empowered to do all seining where it is deemed necessary for the benefit of the game fish, and the proceeds of the sale of these fish, over expense of conducting the work, should be paid into a fish and game fund for the support of this department."



Paul Todd, center, worked on the seining crew for 42 years, retiring in 1971 when it was disbanded. His first paycheck was for \$100 per month.

In the years that followed, O’Brien’s campaign to expand fish salvaging work was increasingly viewed with favor. By 1918, the name of the “Conservation of Fish” program was changed to “Seining and Conservation of Fish.” The budget was increased, but only to \$4,000 per year. O’Brien’s seining crew seemed to be everywhere, rescuing fish threatened by summer drought and fish threatened in winter with suffocation because of heavy snow cover on iced-over, shallow lakes, leading to oxygen deprivation. Portions of the Platte and Republican rivers that withered during droughty summer months, “leaving thousands of fish stranded in holes,” were seined, as were periodically drained irrigation ditches. “There are enough bullheads going to waste in the overflow ponds along the Missouri River every year to stock every mill pond in our State,” O’Brien wrote, “and with meat at its present price, this waste should be stopped.”

With the onset of World War I, support for O’Brien’s program of feeding the masses with salvaged fish became a patriotic mission, but at the same time he had a barebones budget for his seining crew. “Soon after the declaration of war, both the State [and] the National Food Administrations urgently requested this department to place as many fish on the market as possible,” O’Brien wrote in his report to the governor in 1918, “so as to supply a cheap and nutritious article of food, and a crew of men has been engaged in this work the greater part of the time for the past 18 months.” O’Brien reported that the high cost of labor and cost of equipment made the effort difficult, but still they marketed about 125,000 pounds of carp and buffalo at two to ten cents per pound. O’Brien was convinced the work could be done less expensively by “hiring a crew on a percentage basis,” which in the future the Commission did do in some cases. Additional funding was not forthcoming, even after the war, and by 1920, O’Brien had resorted “to volunteer help” seining, sorting and preparing salvaged fish for stocking. Salvaged fish were distributed “to communities which were interested in obtaining them in carload shipments,” communities that would pay transportation costs. Bass, bullheads, crappies and sunfish were the principal species requested.

First Seining Crew

The words “seining crew” first appeared in O’Brien’s 1922 report. Salvaging efforts, he wrote, were still not carried out on a “sufficient scale” for lack of adequate funding. But he noted the seining crew had become of a “permanent nature” and carried “on the work in an efficient manner in many different parts of the state,” and that a “seining crew could be utilized from early spring until late fall.” Up to this time, much of the salvage crew’s work had been rescuing threatened fish in the eastern part of the state. By the early 1920s, O’Brien had his eye on the fish-rich lakes of the Sandhills, many of them shallow, thus susceptible to winter-kills, and overpopulated with stunted bullheads, a popular fish in eastern waters. Ironically,

O’Brien, a hatchery man through and through, came to see the efficiency of allowing nature to rear fish for stocking. He proposed establishing fish-holding substations in the Sandhills “rather than the expenditure of large sums of money for the purchase of new fish hatcheries.”

Recognition of the value of a state seining crew grew during the mid- and late-1920s. In 1919, the formerly, independent Game and Fish Commission was reduced to a bureau within the state Department of Agriculture, where the idea of “harvesting” was warmly received. Nebraska chapters of the Izaak Walton League also endorsed stocking salvaged fish, and local chapters often furnished men and transportation at their own expense to support the work. Still, the effort remained small because of inadequate funding. O’Brien reported in the August 1926 issue of *Outdoor Nebraska* that a crew of four men had been “almost constantly employed for the past five months, seining drying up ponds and lake beds and transferring fish to living waters.” He reported more than 300,000 fish had been moved to “suitable surroundings,” a larger number of salvaged fish than during



Seining crew member Doug Thompson holds a large, salvaged catfish to be stocked in a Sandhills lake.



Carp seined from southwestern reservoirs or the Sandhills were often kept in a “holding pond” by Lake Maloney south of North Platte. In this photo, taken in 1969, the carp have been seined again and are being loaded with a winch and boom to be stocked.

any year in the preceding 25. “Two crews were kept busy most of each summer taking fish from ponds, irrigation ditches and lakes, where there was danger of fish freezing out and transferring them to other waters,” O’Brien reported in 1928.

The legislature removed game and fish responsibilities from the state Department of Agriculture in 1929 and created an independent Game, Forestation and Parks Commission. That year the new Commission authorized the expenditure of \$20,000 for the construction of a modern fish “holding and distribution” plant on the state fairgrounds in Lincoln; complete with “... tanks for the holding of several carloads of fish, together with [rail] trackage and unloading platforms for the fish car, storerooms for seines and other equipment, an office and rooms for employee’s quarters.” That facility became the headquarters of the seining crew. The October 1929 issue of *Outdoor Nebraska* stated that henceforth no more private contracts for the removal of rough fish would be granted, all such work would be done by the Commission, and set an incredibly unrealistic goal: “The State Seining Crews will remove all coarse fish from Nebraska lakes.”

Holding ponds were constructed four miles east of Havelock in Lancaster County in 1931, where “hundreds of thousands of bullheads from over-stocked sand hill lakes” could be held and fed before being distributed to ponds and lakes in eastern Nebraska. The previous year, 309,000 adult bullheads had been seined from Sandhills lakes and stocked

in eastern waters.

Lee Hudleson, seining crew foreman, wrote in a 1933 report to the governor that the Commission “has found it advisable to carry on salvage work as it is cheaper to save the fish which nature hatches than it is to propagate them at the state hatcheries. This work has been greatly enlarged during the past three years and proper equipment furnished in order to carry on the work.” In addition to salvaging threatened game fish, “the same crew is used for the removal of coarse fish from such water where they are a menace to game fish.” Hudleson reported that in 1932, “some million game fish” were transplanted to more secure waters and 161,580 pounds of “coarse fish” seined and sold.

As drought settled over Nebraska in the 1930s, withering rivers, lakes and ponds, the seining crew’s work grew, especially in Sandhills’ lakes. A January 1933 *Outdoor Nebraska* article noted that carp seined from Moon Lake in Brown County were “too small to sell on eastern markets as the price secured would not even pay transportation costs” and so were given away “for charitable purposes.” Several hundred thousand pounds were given to people in north-central Nebraska, “and a carload shipped to Omaha to the needy”

In 1935, the Commission’s seining crew was composed of 10 fulltime employees. Lee Hudleson was the crew’s supervisor and Paul Todd the foreman. Hudleson was paid \$150 monthly, Todd \$110. Truck drivers’ and seine operators’ wages ranged from \$75 to \$110 monthly depending on their experience and years of service. By 1940, the seining crew’s budget was



Seining crew members and game wardens pose in front of their Lincoln headquarters in 1934 with illegal nets confiscated on the Missouri River. Left to right: Charles Herling, Lee Hudleson, Mickey Gray, Paul Todd, Rudy Fick, Lloyd Winkelman and Ed Lake.

still only a shoestring \$10,000 per year. C.R. “Rudy” Fick briefly worked on the seining crew in the early-1930s, and being new in the job was paid only \$75 per month. During the Depression years, though, any job was a good job, even though the work was hard and required the men to be away from home much of the year.

“We had a lot of fun,” Fick recalled in a 1987 interview, three years before his death by drowning in the Missouri River. “You had to make your own fun. Didn’t have any wages. One good thing, you had an expense account that paid for your eating. We ate T-bone steaks every night, you could get ‘em for 65 cents, nice big T-bones for 65 cents, and all the trimmings with ‘em. That seining crew was heavy eaters. Those guys worked hard.”

Fick recalled a time when the crew was seining in the Hyannis area and staying at the hotel. “I was up in Hudleson’s room and he got a letter from O’Connell. O’Connell was Chief of the Commission, an old army officer, a colonel but he was sharper than a tack. Dry as hell, never talked very much. Hudleson’s board bill on his crew was acomin’ pretty high, so O’Connell writes him a letter and says, ‘it seems to me you hire enormous eaters on your crew.’ I laughed out loud ‘cause I knew O’Connell was just teasing him, you know. Hudleson hadn’t gotten it. It made Hudleson mad.”

The Commission’s seining crew was often used for work other than salvaging fish. Fick recalled the crew floated the Missouri River with game wardens searching for illegal fish nets. The use of seines, hoop nets and trammel nets by

commercial fishermen was legal on the Missouri River for the harvest of catfish and rough fish, provided they were licensed and each device bore a metal tag issued by the Commission. Many fishermen, including some netting fish for the market, blatantly ignored the law. “We’d start at Yankton, South Dakota, the first day of September, and float clear to Rulo.” Nets were found by dragging “clinker hooks” through holes and chutes that were likely locations for nets. Unlicensed nets and traps were confiscated and destroyed.

World War II

As during World War I, carp were promoted by the federal government as patriotic protein for those still at home during World War II, and the Commission was again asked to provide rough fish to the public at minimal cost. And as before, that request came at the same time the Commission was slashing its budget and losing young men to the armed services. In 1943, the Commission’s board of directors suggested “... key individuals in relation to the food production program especially on the seining crew” be deferred from the draft.

As a cost-saving measure, the Commission stopped purchasing fish from private hatcheries for stocking in 1942. With the money saved it purchased a new truck to transport fish and additional seining equipment “to carry on this salvage work for at least eighteen months regardless of the ban on the purchase of new trucks and tires,” wrote acting Commission secretary W. Lytle in the Winter 1942 issue of

Outdoor Nebraska. He reported that nearly five million game fish were rescued and stocked in other waters that year.

In addition to seining fish for stocking elsewhere in the state, the small crews seined as many rough fish for the market as they could. “The members of this department were at somewhat of a loss when the [federal] government issued a request that Nebraska produce a million and a quarter pounds of carp for her own people,” Paul Gilbert, Secretary of the Game, Forestation and Parks Commission wrote in an August 1943 *Outdoor Nebraska* article. At the time, the seining crews had only been able to gather about 10,000 pounds, fish that were sold for 10 cents per pound to the public.

In 1943, the Lincoln-based seining crew was divided. One crew remained stationed in Lincoln under Lee Hudleson, the other moved to North Platte with Paul Todd in charge. “The large number of reservoirs and irrigation projects in the state has made it necessary to establish a seining crew in the western part of the state to salvage fish that would otherwise be lost in the irrigation ditches and to control the large number of rough fish being produced in the reservoirs,” the Spring 1945 *Outdoor Nebraska* article reported.

The total number of men on the seining crews was nearly halved during the war. In 1943, Gilbert listed their equipment as one large truck, a pickup, one large transport tank truck, an 8-by-18-foot barge, a 2,000-foot net and a pair of gasoline winches.

“The huge net is piled in the floating barge and is laboriously played out as the barge makes a wide circle of the area to be seined,” Gilbert recounted of a typical open-water seining operation. “The 2,000 feet of net, being set by hand under motor power derived from two pair of strong arms, takes a good part of the morning. In fact, if difficulties arise, as they often do, a good part of the day may be spent in this procedure. The large gas winches are then started and with the help of willing strong arms the huge net is gradually pulled toward the bank in an ever decreasing circle, trapping all the members of the finny tribe that may have had the unfortunate fate of being in that locality when the net was lowered [around] them. If the net is not mudded down because of heavy silt in the bottom of the lake and if it is not caught and mangled by sharp snags and submerged junk the circle will be reduced to the point where large and small fish of every kind will start breaking water, thrilling hearts of nearby anglers unaccustomed to such a sight.”

Gilbert wrote that 1,100 to 1,200 pounds of rough fish were then placed in the tanks of the transport truck, and the tanks fed oxygen to sustain the fish on their journey to concrete holding tanks on the State Fairgrounds in Lincoln. A small sign at the fairground entrance was posted when a new shipment of carp arrived. The public could select the fish they wanted to purchase or just request so many pounds; and, as Gilbert wrote, “another fish is on its way to replace the meat being used by our boys across the big lake” as part



Charlie Koester is pictured using a “pulling jack” gas motor winch built with a Model A Ford transmission and rear end to pull in a net set under the ice in 1959.

of the “Carp for Victory” campaign. Almost five million fish were salvaged in 1942. In addition to seining rough fish for the war effort, the crew also ran hoop nets baited with cheese in the Missouri, Platte and Niobrara rivers for catfish to stock inland. Because of their unique skills, seining crew members were often called upon for more gruesome work than dragging for illegal fish nets and traps. “An undesirable phase of this crew’s activities is the attempted salvage of bodies when drowning accidents occur,” the 1952 annual report noted. And the seining crew was occasionally called on to assist with rescue work during severe floods.

Seining Under Ice

“The first winter seining in this state was done during the war,” George G. Koster, Chief Deputy Commissioner for the Game and Fish Commission, was quoted as saying in a January 29, 1922 *Omaha World-Herald* article. It was undertaken “to give employment to idle men and help reduce the high cost of living.” The article included photos of men seining Quinnebaugh Lake southeast of Decatur in Burt County. Buffalo, carp and quillbacks were taken, game fish immediately returned to the water, and gar thrown on the ice to die. The rough fish were sold to an Omaha dealer for 5 to 10 cents per pound, depending on the size of the fish, and resold in meat markets at 17 to 18 cents per pound. That seining operation was done by contractors, with 25 percent of the proceeds going to the state game fund. Once the Commission’s seining crew was formalized, seining under ice was done most, if not all, years until the crew was disbanded. There were good reasons for seining under ice – it kept the crew busy year-round, it was easier working on ice than in muddy Sandhills’ lakes, and the fish salvaged were believed to be in better flesh.

“The biggest haul we ever had was at Johnson Lake in 1967 – 128,000 pounds of carp in one haul from under the ice,” recalled Larry Zadina, who started working on the North Platte seining crew in 1959 when just out of high school. Charlie Koester, who was on the seining crew briefly in the mid-1950s, came back in 1957 and remained on the



When seining under ice, the net, sometimes as long as 2,400 feet, was pulled onto the ice through a 16-by-10-foot hole and fish removed with dip nets. The height of the net used was tailored to the depth of the water.

crew until it was disbanded, recalls using a 36-foot-tall net for seining deep reservoirs such as Johnson Lake.

“I’ll never forget seining in Maloney one time,” said Zadina. “We put the seine out that morning, under the ice, and people came out there to watch us. A guy came up to me and he says, ‘When did you put the seine in there? Did you do that last fall?’ I said, ‘No, we just did it this morning.’ He says, ‘You’re so full of it,’ and he walked off. He thought we put it in there last fall and waited for it to freeze. Most people wouldn’t believe you could run a seine under ice unless they saw it.”

The technique for seining under ice apparently changed little from World War I through the 1960s. An article in the Winter 1951 issue of *Outdoor Nebraska*, probably authored by Paul Todd, described the difficult-to-describe procedure.

“Some of the winter equipment used consists of ice chisels, pike poles, ice tongs and a needle. The needles are made



Even in the 1960s, ice chisels, not augers, were used to make holes to feed the seining net under the ice. They were so sharp “you could practically shave with them,” Larry Zadina recalled.

from 1-by-4-inch boards, 16 feet long. Enough of these boards are nailed together until the total length of the needle is about 75 feet.

“After completing the needle, the crew moves out on the ice a long distance from shore. There, with the use of ice chisels and saws, a 16-foot-long, 10-foot-wide hole is cut in the ice. Additional holes – about 18 inches in diameter – are cut every 75 feet apart on both sides of the main hole in the direction the net is going to be spread out.

“The needle is threaded through the large hole and maneuvered towards the nearest 18-inch hole. A long rope is fastened to one end of the needle. One end of the seine, tied to the rope, is fed into the large hole as the needle is pushed from one hole in the ice to another. The other end of the seine is fastened and moved along in the same manner, only in the opposite direction. The needles are pulled from one hole to another by the use of pike poles – a long wooden pole with an iron hook on one end.

“All these holes were lined up pretty straight until the corner. However wide your net was, you would stretch it that far – when using a 2,400-foot long seine, the net is pulled about 1,000 feet in each direction from the main hole. When this is completed, the net is moved at right angles across the lake in the same manner as followed in laying out the net, using the needle and 18-inch holes that had been drilled in the direction of shore. The seine is pulled in about 400 feet at a time by power winches attached to the rope and then the winch is moved back and the procedure repeated. When the net is worked near shore, another 16-by-10-foot hole is cut in the ice. Both ends of the seine are pulled out through this large hole by either truck power or by hand until only the bag of the net remains in the icy water. The bag of the seines is heavy and loaded with fish, which are removed with dip nets.”

Even in Zadina’s time, holes were cut by hand with ice chisels. “Everybody had their own ice chisel,” he said. “That tool was very important to a seining crew guy. Nobody

messed with your chisel, because if they dulled it, it was twice the work cutting the holes. You could practically shave with them.”

Both the 1922 *Omaha World-Herald* article and a July 1928 *Outdoor Nebraska* article mentioned a total of about one-half mile of net being deployed under ice. Zadina said in his time they had 300-foot-long nets and as many could be connected as they wanted, with power take-offs on two trucks being used to take up the net. The most dreaded event when seining under the ice was the net hanging up on a snag. Sometimes the net could be pulled though without damage, sometimes the net would tear, allowing fish to escape, and other times a hole would have to be cut in the ice to free the net. Occasionally, the net could not be freed.

“We were up to Lake Minatare one time,” Koester recalled, “and it was a beautiful morning, pretty cold but no wind and it looked like it would be a nice day. We just got the net under the ice and you could feel the wind change, and kind of see snow start coming across the lake. It was a big old blizzard. We had the net under the ice, we couldn’t stop. We started pulling the net out the hole and got it snagged. God knows what they put in some of those lakes we seined. A lot of times you could see the corks underneath the ice and you could tell where the big bend was, where it was snagged. You would just chop some holes and start pulling up on it, but we couldn’t get that net up. Todd pulled his pocketknife and cut the lead line in two, and we took it out that way. We walked off the ice at 8 o’clock that night.”

The Heydays

Even after World War II and growing Commission budgets, the Salvage and Distribution crew continued to operate with only a handful of men. Hudleson left the Commission in June 1945 to take a job promoting Storz beer and guiding during the waterfowl seasons at Art Storz’s famous Ducklore lodge near Lisco. Commission records are not complete enough to confirm, but apparently the Lincoln seining crew was disbanded at about the same time. Only Todd’s six-man crew in North Platte remained to conduct the fish salvage and distribution work. After the war, the Commission increasingly used its budget hiring fish and game biologists and conducting research.

Although few in number, the seining crew accomplished an amazing amount of work. Gilbert reported that in 1947, more than 10,000 catfish were trapped in the Missouri River and stocked in inland waters, 2.5 million fish were seined “from waters no longer suitable for fish and placed in proper lakes and streams,” and more than 130,000 pounds of rough fish were seined and sold for nearly \$8,000 dollars.

By the early 1950s, enough men were added that two small crews, each with a foreman, were formed, both working out of North Platte. In 1954, the income from the sale of rough fish was reported to be “nearly three times the cost of removing and transporting the fish.” Part of the reason the seining crew showed a profit, though, was because of low wages paid. “The big problem in the enlargement or improvement of this crew is the difficulty in keeping men on the crew,” Paul Todd wrote in his 1955 annual report. “This

“Man for man, they struggle with gigantic seines and nets during all hours of the day and night. They remove rough fish from ice-covered lakes and ponds during the winter months when blizzards roar and few others choose to venture outdoors. They trap catfish in the treacherous Missouri river during the early spring and fall months when wet, cold weather is prevalent. They seine fish from overcrowded waters throughout the year, sometimes having to work and trudge in knee-deep mud. They stock salvaged fish during the summer when the hot, broiling sun beats down, coloring the shirtless and perspiring huskies with a deep coat of tan.”

– Winter 1951 *Outdoor Nebraska*

is probably the hardest and most disagreeable work within the department, and all personnel are away from home most of the time. Many men become discouraged within a year or two and look for other work. It takes from one to two years



Periodically the settling basin below Harlan County Dam was drained to inspect the structure. The seining crew salvaged the stranded fish to be stocked in the reservoir or elsewhere.



Carp were placed in wooden boxes, each box holding about 150 pounds of fish, loaded on a homemade sled and dragged across the ice to be loaded on trucks to be transported for stocking or sale to fish distributors.

to train a man in this work and new men are being trained almost constantly. It is felt by older members of the crew that the present salary plan is one reason for this turnover.”

In 1956, the seining crew moved into new quarters at the hatchery site south of North Platte. The top floor of a two-story brick building attached to the new district office building was used for making and repairing nets, the lower story for equipment maintenance. Not only did the crew make and repair their own nets, shop foreman Lloyd Winkelman made redwood boats for the seining crew. Most were 14 to 16 feet long and five to six feet wide at the beams, although a larger, 18-foot redwood boat was built for use on the Missouri River.

“The seining crew make all their nets,” Todd wrote in his 1955 annual report. “Webbing rope, corks and preservative is purchased in large lots and nets are made up in sections so that a net can be made available in a short time for any size lake. Hoop nets are made the same way. This year 2,400 feet of 30-foot-deep seine was made and five sets of five nets from 10 to 200 feet long were made. All nets are rehung and treated at least once a year to prolong their life.” The seining crew was still making its own nets when it was disbanded.

With the construction of irrigation reservoirs in south-central Nebraska after World War II, an increasingly important work for the seining crew was seining and salvaging fish from treacherous irrigation canals each fall before they froze. Seining bullheads from overcrowded Sandhills’ lakes for stocking in eastern waters continued to occupy many days each year. By the 1950s, the number of carp seined and sold was declining, and most of the catch was used to stock eastern waters not capable of supporting game fish, but Zadina

recalls truckloads of carp being shipped to Omaha, some eventually landing on plates at Joe Tess’s, a fresh fish market and tavern café that has featured carp on its menu since the 1930s. Zadina remembers the buyer showing up when the crew was winter seining in a two-ton truck with plywood sides. “We would fill that thing up with carp, no water. He would just haul them that way. It was cold enough they didn’t spoil. When he got to Omaha, he’d clean them.” Stoller Fisheries at Spirit Lake, Iowa, was another regular buyer of carp seined in Nebraska. In 1954, carp brought 10 cents per pound; buffalo, 15 cents; shad, quillback and small carp, 20 to 30 cents per hundredweight. During the mid-1960s, rough fish were also sold to mink breeders and as hog food.

Without actually seeing the seining crew work, it is almost impossible to comprehend how efficient they were. Zadina recalled his crew seining a 300-acre lake in Brown County. “We threw the net around that lake,” he recalls, “and we had four fish trucks setting there. We filled all four trucks in one day with bullheads that were hauled to lakes by Omaha and stocked. We seined the second day and got as many as the first. We seined that lake four times that week and every day we got all the tank trucks could haul.”

Almost everyone who stayed with the Commission’s seining crew for long came to see the work as being part of a special group of men. The work was extremely hard, often under miserable conditions, and the hours long and erratic.

“We had more fun than a barrel full of monkeys ever thought of having,” Zadina said, “but we worked hard, oh hell we worked hard.” When the crew was seining Sandhills’ lakes in the summer, much of the work was done in a foot of

water over three feet of muck. Bullheads were unloaded into washtubs on the waterside of the cattails or bulrushes, walked to shore and dumped in the tank trucks. Carp were moved in wooden boxes, each box holding about 150 pounds of carp. It was little wonder that most of the seining crew preferred seining under the ice in winter when a sled could be pulled across the ice to move fish.

Zadina’s first monthly paycheck when he started with the seining crew in 1959 was \$197.60. “I thought I was the richest son-of-a-gun in the world,” he recalled. Zadina said it only cost a dollar or two a night to stay in small town hotels, rooms with one bathroom at the end of the hall for everyone on that floor. “We would go down to the local café and have breakfast. A short stack and a cup of coffee were 20 cents in ’59, and \$1.25 would buy you supper anyplace, you know. Nothing real fancy, but a lot of times you could get a rib steak or a hamburger steak for a buck.”

“I would leave town on Monday morning with \$20 in my pocket and come home at the end of the week with some money still in my pocket, and we’d drink a little beer and play cards at night sometimes,” Koester said. “Can you believe that? We didn’t come back to town for lunch so we’d pool our resources and buy a loaf of bread, some lunch meat and pop.”

“You got paid once a month, and it had to last a month,” Zadina remembered. “We had guys, you know, couldn’t even afford to go out for \$20 worth at a time. Todd would float those guys loans.”

Beginning of the End

The seining crew was increasingly pressed into service doing work other than removing rough fish in the 1960s, such as helping fisheries biologists doing sampling and research studies. As needed they helped stock hatchery-reared fish, netting spawning fish for hatchery production, and transporting fish from federal hatcheries or when fish were traded with other states.

During the early and mid-1960s, the seining crew was probably at its peak, with two or three crews totaling nearly 20 men. But times were changing. Fish management biologists were not enamored with seining fish for stocking or to remove rough fish. By the end of the 1950s, fish-killing chemicals such as rotenone were coming into favor to eliminate unwanted rough fish, allowing the pond or lake to be stocked with game fish. Hatcheries were becoming more efficient and the cost of maintaining a large seining crew and its equipment year-round was escalating. As in the rest of the world, science and mechanization was replacing old-fashion elbow grease. The size



Boats and nets were made by the seining crew. Boats were fashioned of redwood and typically 14 to 16 feet long.

of the seining crew shrank during the late-1960s, and they were increasingly doing work other than salvaging fish.

“The Salvage and Distribution crew, which in earlier years served a valuable function in hauling catchable fish from western Nebraska to heavily-fished waters of eastern Nebraska, was discontinued,” the 1970 Nebraska Game and Parks Commission annual report noted. “New fish-producing water in the east and changing circumstances rendered the operation largely unnecessary.” Actually, the seining crew did not cease to exist until July 1, 1971. Most of the nine remaining crew members took jobs elsewhere within the Commission. Paul Todd started as a seining crew worker in 1929, was promoted to crew foreman, and in 1943 named as the seining crew’s superintendent. He remained in that position until the crew was disbanded, and retired in 1971. His first paycheck was \$100 per month, his last \$880 per month. Lloyd Winkelman who started in 1935, had been with the seining crew nearly as long. Today the once popular seining crew is now no more than memories and fading photographs.

“A friend of mine, Ralph Jennings, he was on the seining crew,” Koester said in a 2007 interview, “he said he still has dreams, and if he does, it’s usually about working on the seining crew. I do the same once in a while. There wasn’t any work quite like it.” ■



The seining crew was mostly composed of young men who worked hard and played hard. In the 1959 photo above, a young Ralph Jennings dumps a tub of water on another crew member.

Bridgeport State Recreation Area

Text and photos by Bob Grier

Relatively small in size, this Panhandle destination is big in popularity for fishermen, campers and enthusiasts of water sports.

From the air, Bridgeport State Recreation Area (SRA) offers an alluring, oasis-like scene – a central, 50-acre lake surrounding a forested island and four other lakes, each treelined and accessible from the park’s circular interior road. With only 78 total surface acres of water and 126 acres of North Platte River riparian habitat, Bridgeport SRA is relatively small, but it’s still one of the Panhandle’s most popular destinations for fishermen, water skiers, campers, swimmers, hunters and others.

Located on the northwestern edge of Bridgeport, the area’s five sandpit

lakes were formed by the Lyman-Richie Corporation’s sand and gravel operation that began less than 30 years after the town was established on the south banks of the North Platte River in 1900. The company’s Bridgeport operation hit its zenith during World War II, supplying aggregate for emergency wartime construction projects, including the three main runways for the Army airfield in Alliance that alone totaled more than 1.4 million square feet of asphalt.

In 1944, Lyman-Richie moved their mining operations less than a half-mile to the west, leaving the property’s

future to far-sighted community leaders that began working after the war to preserve the attractive site’s recreation potential. In 1952, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission purchased the land and water from Lyman-Richie and began creating the SRA that exists there today. This area’s tremendous use throughout the year by a multitude of local and regional visitors belies its modest size and humble beginnings.

It’s surprising that the area’s main lake – circularly shaped, with seven large bays formed along its outer shoreline and a diamond-shaped island carved in the middle – wasn’t specifically

designed as a recreation lake. Yet with the exception of two narrow channels at the east and west end of the island, the lake’s shape is ideal for water sports and attracts skiers and other water enthusiasts from northeastern Colorado, southeastern Wyoming and across the Nebraska Panhandle.

The main lake is open to power boating in a counter-clockwise direction only and cautionary buoy markers are placed at the narrow, shallow channels at each end of the lake as well as around an unsupervised swim beach on the lake’s southeastern shore. Camper pads and a short access road were recently added along the middle lake’s northern shore and RV and tent campers continue to use both shaded and open shorelines throughout the recreation area for primitive campsites. The main lake’s boat ramp and dock is located near the recreation area’s entrance at its southwestern corner.



Shade trees, a sandy beach and a camping spot near the shoreline combine to make an unbeatable combination for fun on a summer weekend.

In 2008, contractors and park employees removed large numbers of Russian olive trees that restricted recreational access to the main lake’s shorelines. The project improved access, although a few anglers discovered their favorite shaded

shoreline that had attracted largemouth bass disappeared along with the Russian olive trees, hopefully to be replaced someday with fewer, but larger, cottonwood trees.

“Typically, sandpit lakes are less productive fisheries,” says Tony Munter, a Nebraska Game and Parks Commission fisheries biologist in Alliance. “Lakes formed by mining operations are usually deep with steep banks and don’t have attendant shallow areas, the vegetation needed for spawning or the productive habitat required for the aquatic organisms that form the critical base component for all varieties of aquatic life and larger game fish.”

According to Munter, the five lakes at Bridgeport SRA offer fisheries managers diversity and room for a variety of management options, including the use of floating fish feeders and even experimental and unconventional stocking mixes to increase fishing success. Fisheries biologists have added automated floating feeders on the northwest, southwest, southeast and main lakes. The floating feeders dispense pellets to help replace the lake’s low food supply, and catchable channel catfish are stocked annually along with smaller numbers of bluegill and largemouth bass. Several of the lakes



David Zinke of Golden, Colorado, sprays water as he makes a hard cut while slalom skiing at Bridgeport State Recreation Area.



Kelly Zinke of Golden, Colorado, skims across the surface of Bridgeport SRA's main lake.

also have existing populations of black crappie and sunfish.

"The northwest lake is popularly known as the area's 'trout lake,' and we've stocked catchable rainbow trout

in the early spring each year from the Commission's hatchery system," said Munter. "We continue to maintain the northwest lake for trout, but we've also stocked largemouth bass. Anglers are also enjoying good panfishing for bluegill, usually in the spring before the summer heat takes its toll on fishing success.

"The smaller and shallower northeast lake, as well as the southwest and southeast lakes, are primarily managed for channel catfish, and although we haven't stocked black crappie and sunfish, those species are still present within the recreation area.

"Additionally, the main lake has been stocked with wipers since 2005," Munter added. "We hope the wiper population will provide an additional trophy fish, as this lake also has

a population of gizzard shad to provide forage for these sporty hybrids. We received reports this year of 18- to 20-inch wipers being caught. It would be great if more anglers had the

opportunity to tie into a hard-charging wiper or one of the lake's larger channel catfish or trophy-sized largemouth bass. The main lake also holds a few large, 'carry-over' trout from earlier stockings as well.

"Sandpit lakes typically make it difficult to manage populations of largemouth bass and bluegill," Munter continued. "It's difficult to maintain consistent reproduction in steep-sided sandpit lakes and it is additionally difficult with the very clear water and lack of cover for bluegill and other prey species to find adequate cover.

"With that said, our ongoing sampling of the middle lake continues to find a population of above-average size largemouth bass – not a large number of fish, but largemouth bass that are attractive to fishermen. The relatively short growing season here in the Panhandle has an additional effect on the lake's ability to support largemouth bass."

Annual sampling efforts by the Commission's fisheries division also find channel catfish up to 20 pounds at Bridgeport SRA, and special regulations there – a daily bag of three channel catfish with only one



Nine-year-old Cheyenne Nickel of Sidney enjoys fishing at Bridgeport SRA's northeast lake. Each of the recreation area's five lakes are stocked with catchable catfish, and the northwest lake receives spring and early summer stockings of rainbow trout.

fish more than 18 inches in length – are designed to preserve this trophy channel catfish fishery for as many anglers as possible, said Munter.

In addition to fishing, Bridgeport SRA also provides a small amount of limited hunting. Although rifles and handguns cannot be used there, hunting with muzzleloaders, shotguns and archery equipment is permitted beginning on the first Tuesday following Labor Day until the end of the spring wild turkey season, but cannot be done within 100 yards of picnic areas, campgrounds, boat ramps or parking lots.

A foot trail beginning at the parking area at the northwest lake leads to the nearby North Platte River channel, providing canoe and kayak access to the river throughout the year as well as to the recreation area's riparian habitat for hunting.

"We see a limited amount of waterfowl hunting on the area each year," says Jim Zimmerman, district law enforcement supervisor based at the Commission's district office in Alliance, "but hunters need to remember that while daily waterfowl blinds may be installed and used on Bridgeport SRA, the blinds must be removed at the end of each hunting day."

While the fall and winter hunting access is limited, the impact of this popular state recreation area is unchallenged. "The state recreation area here is a major drawing card for our small community and businesses," says Bridgeport mayor Jack Berg. "Our family enjoys going out there all summer long, the park's visitors are a major asset for our local business community and the nearby recreation

area is very popular with our residents. Imagine the opportunity to walk a few blocks from your home to enjoy the cool, clear water, shaded campsites and the opportunity to fish without the need to travel. The park continues to improve with the recent Russian olive removal and continuing campsite development, but we've always had a special place in our hearts for the recreation area." ■



Bridgeport SRA's five lakes, including the southeast, northeast and main lake in the foreground, with the northwest and southwest lakes hidden on the area's western (upper) edge, attract park visitors from all across the region.



Colorado's Cole Wise (left), Jason Roth, and Annalise Roth cool off during one of their families' yearly extended weekends at Bridgeport SRA.

The Other Turkey Season

With little competition and great scenery, fall is a great time to hunt turkeys.

By Aaron Hershberger, Outdoor Education Specialist

Thanks to some of the largest populations in recent history, Nebraska hunters have enjoyed some of the best wild turkey hunting in the world in recent years. However, most are not taking full advantage of the state's largest upland bird. Despite impressive populations and a long, liberal season,

few hunters take the opportunity to chase turkeys in October, November and December. While Nebraska's spring turkey season sees 30,000-plus hunters taking to the fields each year, only about a third of this number pursues them in the fall.

This, however, might make the fall season the state's best kept secret in

hunting as well as the very best time to give the wild turkey a go. Think about it – very little, if any, competition from other hunters, even on public access lands; a season that runs more than 2½ months for shotgunners and even longer for archery hunters; the opportunity to harvest two birds on each of the two permits that fall turkey

hunters are allowed; and, best of all, a chance to experience the fun of challenging the craftiest bird in the woods.

Only minimal equipment is needed and most hunters, especially spring turkey hunters, are already geared up for battle with these big birds. All you really need besides your permits and habitat stamp (if required) is a shotgun or bow shooting the required size of shot or broadhead (see *2008 Fall Turkey Season Regulations*) and maybe some camouflage or drab-colored clothes. Sure, you can spend a bunch more on

ground blinds, decoys and several types of calls, but you don't have to if you don't want to. Many fall turkey hunters are very successful with just the items listed above.

As far as tactics are concerned, it doesn't matter if you are hunting in the spring or fall, you must first find the birds and the best places to look involve food. When the season opens in October, birds might be keying in on insects and plant seeds that are available. As mast-producing trees, especially oaks, begin to drop their bounty, the birds will spend more time scratching for mast in and along wooded areas. Birds will also spend time in harvested fields as they become available, feeding on waste grains, especially in colder weather.

Because of the number of wild turkeys in Nebraska, and the fact that you can harvest either sex in the fall, finding birds isn't all that difficult. In fact, in good turkey areas you can often find them by driving backroads and keeping your eye out for the dark birds feeding in fields. This can be especially productive in the morning and early evenings. Also, be sure to hike likely looking spots, especially wooded ones, as they can reveal travel routes and roosting sites. Look for feathers, droppings and scratchings, which can cover large areas.

In the fall you are most likely to encounter turkeys that are in flocks. Interestingly, there is often a pattern to a flock of wild turkeys – hens with birds of the year; young toms with other young toms; and mature toms with mature toms. Knowing which is which can increase your chance at harvesting a bird, as each presents unique opportunities. Hens and nearly full-grown, young-of-the-year birds can be the most exciting, as they are very vocal and have a keen interest in staying together. Young toms can be just as fun and during some occasions in the fall can be hunted just like it was the spring breeding season. Flocks of old toms can be some of the most challenging quarry, as their urge to stay together is not always strong.

Once you find the birds, you now get to choose how you want to hunt them. The simplest method involves sitting down along a feeding area or travel path and waiting for the birds to come past. If you have done your scouting, this can be pretty easy and might be the best method for pursuing mature toms. If you want to use a turkey call, some clucking and yelping can help speed the process along.

Perhaps the most traditional method of fall turkey hunting is to bust up a flock of turkeys and then set up to call them back together. This can be very exciting with hens and young-of-the-year, as they have a strong desire to regroup. For those that like to call, the use of kee-kees, whistles and whines is very effective. One of the more challenging aspects of this type of hunting is getting the birds to separate from one another when you bust them up – just getting all the turkeys to fly off in the same direction does not help. This is best done by sneaking up as closely as you can, then running into the flock shouting and hands waving – you want to make a lot of noise and surprise the snoods right off them. (Obviously, when busting turkeys in this way, you will need to place your firearm or bow in a safe spot, away from the excitement – just don't forget where you put it.) In Nebraska, dogs can also be useful in breaking up a turkey flock. Then find a comfortable place to sit nearby, maybe even in the direction that a bird went, wait a minute or two and then start calling like a lost turkey looking for a flockmate.

Sneaking up on turkeys, when done safely, can be effective, but is very difficult due to the number of eyes that are available to spot danger in a turkey flock. Also, identify what you are stalking and avoid keying in on sound alone, just in case there happens to be another hunter nearby.

Turkey hunters in Nebraska have never had it as good as they do right now, so grab your gear and take advantage of the fall turkey season, one of the best times of the year to be in the woods – the “other turkey season.” ■



Fall is one of the prettiest, and best, times of the year to hunt wild turkeys in Nebraska.

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Powder Creek Reservoir

New NRD lake will provide good fishing in northeastern Nebraska.

By Eric Fowler

Thanks to the construction of flood control reservoirs, northeastern

Nebraska anglers have gained a few new fishing holes in the past 20 years or so. The latest, Powder Creek Reservoir near Newcastle, is starting to come into its own.

The Lewis and Clark Natural Resources District built the reservoir on Powder Creek as part of its 55,000-acre Aowa Creek Watershed flood control project, but worked with Nebraska Game and Parks Commission fisheries biologists and Olsson Associates engineers to ensure fishing and recreation were a priority in the design of the 108-acre lake. About \$310,000 of federal Sport Fish Restoration program funds went into the \$2 million project.

Included in the reservoir's design were two sediment dikes to keep silt out of the main lake; islands, jetties and offshore breakwaters to increase the kind of shoreline habitat preferred by largemouth bass and bluegill, reduce shoreline erosion and improve angler access; and underwater rock and gravel shoals and shoreline gravel beds to provide spawning habitat for walleye, bass and bluegills.

Soil was scraped from the lakebed in strategic locations to increase the amount of deep water available to fish, including several spots on the west bank near standing trees that should be attractive to the crappie that were stocked in the reservoir for the first time this year. The soil that was removed was used to build islands, jetties and breakwaters, and also to terrace a hillside on the west side of the lake to control erosion while warm-season grasses became established. Most trees along the



creek were left standing to provide fish habitat, and those that were removed were piled in the lake bottom to provide more fish habitat.

Steve Satra, a program specialist with the Commission's fisheries division, said many of the features used at Powder Creek Reservoir are included in Aquatic Habitat Program lake rehabilitation projects to correct problems that have led to poor water quality and fishing in aging reservoirs. "If you build them into new lakes from the start, you can extend the useful life of that lake," Satra said, adding that the structures are cheaper to build with dry soil scraped from a cornfield than silty muck scraped from a lakebed.

One such structure is the main sediment dike that separates the upper third of the lake from the rest. Water can pass over the dike following heavy rains, but also flows through a culvert. The culvert allows fish to pass back and forth, but is also raised off the bottom to slow the movement of sediment into the main lake. Two boat ramps provide access to both portions of the lake.

The development of the fishery is slightly behind what biologists had hoped for, thanks to the presence of black bullheads and green sunfish that washed into the reservoir with heavy rains that fell about the time it

was completed. Those species outcompeted the initial stocking of largemouth bass and bluegill, but Jeff Schuckman, district fisheries biologist in the Commission's Norfolk office, said numerous adult bass, catfish, walleye and northern pike stocked in the lake since, and the development of additional stockings of bass and

bluegill fingerlings, are bringing the predator and prey population back into balance. "Everything appears to be growing pretty well," he said.

And that initial flush of bullheads is providing excellent fishing. "You can take the kids over there and catch bullheads and have a ball," Schuckman said.

The development of camping facilities at the lake has also come slowly, but Terry Julesgard, resource technician with the NRD, said the campground opened for business this year. Six of the 32 camper pads on the lake's east side have picnic tables and fire rings installed and more will be added each year as funds become available, as will water and electricity. The NRD and the Commission's wildlife division will maintain the area. There are no entry or camping fees charged at the area.

Hunting is allowed on the area, which holds deer, pheasants, quail, cottontails and waterfowl. ■



Powder Creek Reservoir is located 2 miles east and 4 miles south of Newcastle in Dixon County.

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Portraits from the Past



This picture was taken after a pheasant hunting trip on the Gunder Qualset ranch along Beaver Creek near Petersburg, Nebraska in the fall of 1941. My uncle Omer Qualset (left) is using his Model 97 12-gauge. I am holding my new Mossberg bolt-action .410 three shot. Omer was wearing hip waders because our hunt was along the Beaver and in and around the marshes. At that time, hens were legal and it appears we each had three pheasants. Because times were tough and money for shells was short, Omer would brag about getting two ducks with one shell when we jumped ducks along the Beaver and in the Sandhills blowout ponds early in the season.

— Bill Hamilton, Ankeny, Iowa



This picture is of my brother Herbert Johnson (left) of Fairfield, Nebraska, taken around 1930. With him is J. Neihman of Clay Center, Nebraska, who owned a drugstore there. They liked to go hunting. Looks like they got their pheasants and had fun.

Our father was Herman Johnson and we lived near Fairfield on a farm. I am Herbert's younger sister, Lois (Johnson) Dilky. They are all deceased now except me. I get NEBRASKALand Magazine and have for a long time. My husband, Raymond (deceased now seven years), and I have lived north of Big Springs for over 60 years.

— Lois Dilky, Big Springs, Nebraska



Pictured is my father, James A. "Jim" Ott, of South Sioux City, Nebraska. Originally from Hooper, and a lifelong resident of this great state, Dad was an avid outdoorsman his entire life. In his early days, he ran trap lines along the Elkhorn River and Logan Creek in Dodge County, and his

bounty was varied. The proceeds received from the sale of numerous mink, muskrat and raccoon pelts were often used to buy Christmas gifts for his family. He was the founder of our annual November deer hunt, which in 30-plus years has morphed into a family reunion of sorts.

Dad passed away in May 2007, one month shy of his 76th birthday.

— Damon Ott, South Sioux City, Nebraska

Pictured is my brother, Warren Kennedy, and my sister, Virginia, in 1945. My dad, Dave Kennedy, and my two brothers, Warren and Don, took a rubber raft out on Sutherland Reservoir fishing. Dad put the anchor overboard and they put their cane poles in the water. After fishing a while with varying luck, Warren got a big fish on. Now a big fish on a cane pole in a boat with no motor and no net can be interesting. Dad was afraid the line was ready to break (you can't let line out on a cane pole) so he told Don to pull up the anchor before the fish was able to break the line. Then they went for a ride, letting the fish pull them around. Now even a big fish can't pull around a rubber raft with a full-grown man and two boys for very long. Soon Dad was able to paddle the boat to shore where they pulled up the biggest Northern pike they had ever seen.

Bill Kallhoff was on the bank and came over to see what all the excitement was about. He decided to teach the boys how dangerous a Northern pike's teeth can be by pointing them out. At that point the fish decided to do a demonstration of its own and clamped down on Bill's fingers so tight Dad had to use a pliers to get him off. Pretty good lesson, and a pretty big fish.

— Eugenia Kennedy, Central City, Nebraska



Send contributions to: Portraits from the Past, NEBRASKALand Magazine, P.O. Box 30370, Lincoln, NE 68503-0370. Photos should show people enjoying Nebraska outdoor activities, such as camping, boating, hunting or fishing, and must have been taken before 1970. 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.

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Season Two – \$6.95 VID-3208 (Was \$8.95 - save \$2.00!)

Season Three – \$8.95 VID-3210

Season Four – \$8.95 VID-3218

First three seasons – \$15.95 VID-3211 (Save \$5.90 on the bundle)

All four seasons – \$23.99 VID-3219 (Save \$6.81 on the bundle)

NEBRASKALAND MUG

This attractive, 11-ounce, white ceramic mug features a dark green handle and halo. A green waterfowl imprint is on both sides.

Ceramic Mug – \$4.50 MUG-2005

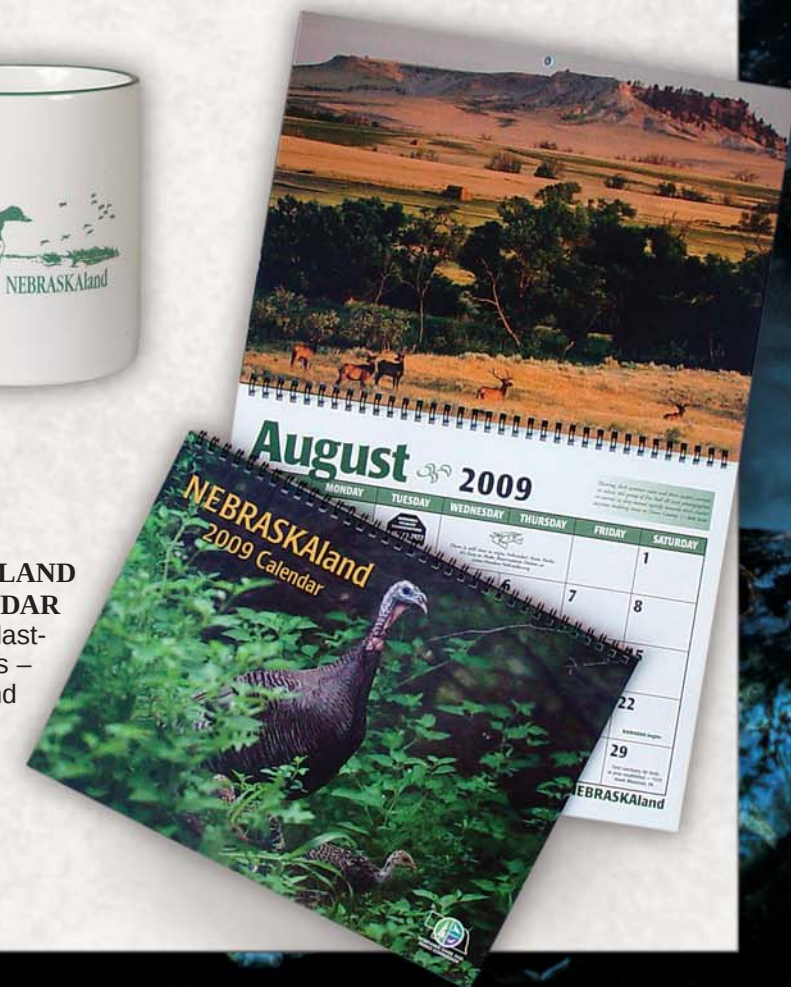
Set of 4 – \$16 MUG-2006



2009 NEBRASKALAND CALENDAR

The NEBRASKALand Calendar is a lasting reminder to friends and relatives – whether near or far away – of you and of home. Spectacular, full-color, all-Nebraska photos highlight every month. A tremendous value.

\$9.95 CAL-2009



Save up to 70% off NEBRASKAland

Get a three-year subscription to save the most!

Now you can save 70% off the cover price of NEBRASKAland when you subscribe for three years! Don't miss out on this award-winning magazine about Nebraska!

Get it for yourself and send it to the special people on your gift list. Every issue is filled with breathtaking photographs and informative, entertaining articles about Nebraska's outdoor activities, history, parklands, people and wildlife.

\$18 for one year SUB-2901

(Great value – 64% off the cover price – 10 issues)

\$33 for two years SUB-2902

(Better value – 66% off the cover price – 20 issues)

\$44 for three years SUB-2903

(Best value – 70% off the cover price – 30 issues)



Trail Tales Magazine

The Award-Winning Outdoor Magazine Just For Kids

Eight colorful, 16-page issues of Trail Tales, four each year, feature puzzles, games, drawings, photos and interesting articles about nature, Nebraska and the outdoors. Send Trail Tales to a youngster, just \$15 for two school years.

\$8 for one year SUB-2920

\$15 for two years SUB-2921

(4 issues each year)



NEBRASKAland and Trail Tales Magazines

Reading material for the whole family to enjoy! Get both publications shipped to one address and save!

\$40 for two years SUB-2926 (you save \$8.00!)

(20 issues of NEBRASKAland Magazine and 8 issues of Trail Tales Magazine – two years worth)



WILD GAME COOKBOOK

This 183-page cookbook, bound in a durable 6-inch by 9-inch vinyl cover, includes 158 recipes sure to tantalize the appetite of all outdoor lovers. Also illustrated with artwork. Bon appetit!

\$2 PUB-2710 (Originally \$12.95)

FORT HARTSUFF NEBRASKA DVD

This DVD is a historic review of Fort Hartsuff from 1874 to present day. Highlights include a look at fort structures and their purpose, the infantryman's uniform and the process of baking bread at the fort's brick oven.

\$6.95 VID-3215



NEBRASKA LIFETIME PERMITS

A great gift for grandchildren or graduates!

Treat someone special to the gift that lasts a lifetime . . . a Nebraska Lifetime Permit. Available to Nebraska residents and nonresidents, it is the ultimate gift for any hunter or angler and an investment in the future. All funds go into escrow, with the interest used to help support wildlife and fisheries management programs.

Lifetime Hunt Residents

(0-5 years old) \$126
(6-15 years old) \$186
(16-45 years old) \$286
(46+ years old) \$186

Nonresidents
(0-16 years old) \$626
(17+ years old) \$1,001

Lifetime Fish Residents

(0-5 years old) \$276
(6-15 years old) \$326
(16-45 years old) \$426
(46+ years old) \$326

Nonresidents
(0-16 years old) \$551
(17+ years old) \$851

Lifetime Hunt and Fish Residents

(0-5 years old) \$376
(6-15 years old) \$501
(16-45 years old) \$646
(46+ years old) \$501

Nonresidents
(0-16 years old) \$1,076
(17+ years old) \$1,601

Lifetime Habitat Stamp

\$320

Lifetime Waterfowl Stamp

\$100

Lifetime permits prices good through December 31, 2008



2009 NEBRASKA PARK PERMIT

Visit more than 80 beautiful state park and recreation areas across the state.

Annual Park Permit – \$20

Duplicate Park Permit – \$10



2009 NEBRASKA MIGRATORY WATERFOWL STAMP

This stamp is required for all waterfowl hunters who are nonresidents and all Nebraska waterfowlers who are 16 years old and older. Money raised from the sale of these stamps will be used to improve waterfowl habitat and increase duck and goose populations in the state.

Waterfowl Stamp – \$5



ANNUAL HUNT AND FISH PERMITS

Hunting for just the right gift for your special hunter? Fishing for the perfect present for your favorite angler? Hunting and fishing permits are passports to outdoor fun, and the ideal gifts for that hard-to-buy-for outdoor enthusiast on your list.

Prices include agent issuing fee.

PERMIT

Resident Hunt and Fish Permit.....\$37.50

Resident Hunt Permit\$14

Resident Fish Permit.....\$26

Nonresident Hunt Permit\$81

Nonresident Fish Permit.....\$58



2009 WILDLIFE HABITAT STAMP

Required of resident hunters and trappers ages 16 and older and all nonresidents. Not required for hunters age 69 and over or veterans age 64 and older who are holders of a valid fee-exempt permit.

Habitat Stamp – \$16



NEBRASKA GAME AND PARKS BUCKS COUPONS

The perfect gift for all outdoor enthusiasts, these "bucks" may be used to purchase any Nebraska Game and Parks Commission merchandise, including subscriptions and permits. Available only in booklets with five \$5 certificates. **\$25 MIS-1919**

These certificates will be accepted by all Nebraska Game and Parks offices where Nebraska Game and Parks goods and services are sold. These certificates cannot be exchanged for cash.



2009 Gift Collection Order Form

To order: mail this form to the address below, fax it to (402) 471-1984, call toll-free 1-800-742-0056 using your VISA or MasterCard, or go to [NebraskalandGifts.com](#). Charges for hunting and fishing permits will appear on credit card statements as separate transactions from other purchases. For delivery by Christmas, orders must be received by December 16, 2008.

Your Name _____

City/State/ZIP _____

Address _____

Phone (8 a.m. – 5 p.m.) _____

Permits *Permits good for their calendar year. For example, a 2008 permit expires December 31, 2008*

Please provide the following information about the people for whom any fishing and/or hunting permits are ordered on this form or on another sheet of paper. The last four digits of a permit holder's Social Security Number (SSN) are required for all hunting and fishing permits.

Name _____

Last 4 digits SSN _____

Address _____

City/State/ZIP _____

Date of Birth: Month _____ Day _____ Year _____ Sex _____ Height _____

Weight _____ Hair Color _____ Eye Color _____

TYPE OF PERMIT(S) _____

Name _____

Last 4 digits SSN _____

Address _____

City/State/ZIP _____

Date of Birth: Month _____ Day _____ Year _____ Sex _____ Height _____

Weight _____ Hair Color _____ Eye Color _____

TYPE OF PERMIT(S) _____

NEBRASKAland Magazine Subscriptions

For subscriptions to NEBRASKAland Magazine, please call toll-free 1-800-632-5263 or go online to [NebraskalandMagazine.com](#)

NEBRASKA PARK PERMITS

QTY	PARK PERMIT TYPE	FEE	TOTAL AMOUNT
_____	Annual Park Permit`	\$20	_____
_____	Duplicate Park Permit	\$10	_____

HUNTING AND FISHING PERMITS

QTY	PERMITS & STAMPS	2008	2009	TOTALS
_____	Resident Hunt and Fish Permit	\$37.50 ☐	\$37.50 ☐	_____
_____	Resident Hunt Permit	\$14.00 ☐	\$14.00 ☐	_____
_____	Resident Fish Permit	\$26.00 ☐	\$26.00 ☐	_____
_____	Resident Fur Harvest Permit	\$16.00 ☐	\$16.00 ☐	_____
_____	Nonresident Fish Permit	\$58.00 ☐	\$58.00 ☐	_____
_____	Nonresident Hunt Permit	\$81.00 ☐	\$81.00 ☐	_____
_____	Migratory Waterfowl Stamp	\$5.00 ☐	\$5.00 ☐	_____
_____	Habitat Stamp <i>(required with all hunting permits)</i>	\$16.00 ☐	\$16.00 ☐	_____
_____	Lifetime Hunt Permit (resident)	see previous page		_____
_____	Lifetime Hunt Permit (nonresident)	see previous page		_____
_____	Lifetime Fish Permit (resident)	see previous page		_____
_____	Lifetime Fish Permit (nonresident)	see previous page		_____
_____	Lifetime Hunt and Fish Permit (resident)	see previous page		_____
_____	Lifetime Hunt and Fish Permit (nonresident)	see previous page		_____
_____	Lifetime Habitat Stamp	\$320.00 ☐		_____
_____	Lifetime Nebraska Waterfowl Stamp	\$100.00 ☐		_____

Prices include agent issuing fee where applicable. No sales tax on permits and stamps.

TOTAL PERMIT ORDER \$ _____

Enter this total on the PERMITS and STAMPS line below.

Gift Items *Enter totals for gift items below on line A*

Nebraska residents please add state and local sales tax on the following items.

QUANTITY	ITEM NUMBER	ITEM DESCRIPTION	COLOR	UNIT PRICE	TOTAL AMOUNT

Mail order form with your payment to:
NEBRASKAland Gifts
P.O. Box 30370, Lincoln, NE 68503-0370

PAYMENT METHOD

☐ Check ☐ Money Order ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard

Credit Card Number _____

Security code (3 digits on back of card) _____

Expiration Date _____

Daytime Phone _____

Shipping and Handling Charges
\$0.00 – 10.00\$3.95
10.01 – 25.005.95
25.01 – 50.007.95
50.01 – 75.0010.15
75.01 – 100.0010.95
100.01 and overFREE
Shipping and handling not required for subscriptions, permits, and stamps.
For overseas shipping please call about extra mailing fees that may apply.

(A) GIFT ITEMS \$ _____

SHIPPING & HANDLING CHARGES Not required for permits, stamps & subscriptions \$ _____

SUBSCRIPTIONS \$ _____

SALES TAX \$ _____

PERMITS & STAMPS \$ _____

TOTAL ALL ITEMS \$ _____

For additional orders provide information on another sheet of paper. Please provide complete mailing information for items to be sent to additional addresses.

Order online at **NebraskalandGifts.com** (more items available online - some 90% off!)



STEP OUTSIDE IN NEBRASKA



Someone you know is just waiting to discover the exciting outdoor experience that's so much a part of your life - hunting. Invite friends or family on your next hunting trip.

Help them look for rubs, scrapes and other signs and you'll share more than the excitement of the hunt. You'll be spending quality time together creating memories, and encouraging a love of the wildlife and the outdoors which will last a lifetime.

In addition, they'll come to understand that hunters are true conservationists. Step outside with friends or family and blaze a trail for life.

