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magazine

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INSPIRING OUTDOOR ADVENTURE SINCE 1926

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2025

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Nebraskaland

2024 Photo Contest



PLUS

Once Bitten • New Year Green • Lunch in the Snow
A Short Walk to the Wild Side • The Blizzard of 1948-49
Full Moon Names • Weathering the Storms • The Last Stop

2025

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Cover: Mark Karrer, of Sioux City, Iowa, won Best of Show in the 2024 Nebraskaland Photo Contest for his image entitled "Nebraska Moonscape." See page 16.

This page: A snowstorm, labeled a "bomb cyclone," makes it difficult for white-tailed deer to move across the landscape in the Pine Ridge of Dawes County. JUSTIN HAAG, NEBRASKALAND

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magazine

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Red foxes will breed through March.
ERIC FOWLER, NEBRASKALAND

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WORKSHOPS

2025 BASIC WORKSHOPS

- JAN 15 Ord | 9:00 am – 3:00 pm CST
@ Jubilee Events and Catering
- JAN 21 Ericson | 9:00 am – 3:00 pm CST
@ Ericson Fire Hall
- JAN 22 Elwood | 9:00 am – 3:00 pm CST
@ Elwood Legion Hall
- JAN 28 O'Neill | 9:00 am – 3:00 pm CST
@ Holt County Extension
- JAN 29 Thedford | 9:00 am – 3:00 pm CST
@ Upper Loup NRD
- JAN 30 Wauneta | 9:00 am – 3:00 pm MST
@ Wauneta Community Building
- FEB 04 Scottsbluff | 9:00 am – 3:00 pm MST
@ North Platte NRD
- FEB 05 Lincoln | 9:00 am – 3:00 pm CST
@ Nebraska Extension in Lancaster County
- MAY 31 Gibbon | 9:00 am – 3:00 pm CST
@ Iain Nicolson Audubon Center

2025 ONLINE WORKSHOPS

- FEB 12 2025 Prescribed Fire Refresher
1:00 pm – 3:00 pm CST
- FEB 18 Burn Plan After-Action Reporting
1:00 pm – 3:00 pm CST
- FEB 26 Training on the Fireline
1:00 pm – 3:00 pm CST

RSVP Visit our webpage for more workshop details and registration

NebraskaPF.com/RxFireWorkshops

Basic workshops provide a solid foundation on the fundamentals of planning and conducting a prescribed fire. No prior experience needed.

\$10 fee includes training materials and a meal.



JOIN A PRESCRIBED BURN ASSOCIATION

Prescribed burn associations are groups of landowners, land managers, and volunteers who share their time, equipment, and expertise to support each other in implementing prescribed fires within their communities. Nebraska has many established burn associations where people can volunteer, as well as opportunities to form new associations where there is a need.

Contact Brian Teeter at 402-219-2572 or bteeter@pheasantsforever.org to find one nearest you or to start your own.

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MOVE, TURKEYS

Tom wild turkeys walk across a white landscape following a spring snow in Sioux County.

JUSTIN HAAG, NEBRASKALAND



A drake mallard, or greenhead, in Clay County. JEFF KURRUS, NEBRASKALAND

NEW YEAR GREEN

By Todd Mills

When most sane duck hunters have given it up for the season, I’m trying to figure out a way to get one more chance at late-season mallards. It can be feast or famine, but for me, fooling just one group is worth the effort.

Trying to find and harvest mallards in late January brings an extra set of challenges. By this point, they’ve seen it all. Decoys, calling and motion decoys aren’t nearly as effective, and unless you get harsh weather, field hunting can be tough as nocturnal feeding has become the norm.

If you can find water and you’ve got time to scout, you can find greenheads. Here are a few tips once you’ve found loafing birds.

Pair Them Up

By early January, most mallards are looking to find a partner. With ducks often traveling in pairs, the most seasoned duck hunter has no chance at fooling them. Decoy set-ups need to be different and adjusted frequently. Setting paired mallards outside the spread can be effective, especially when you’re around a large number of ducks.

Keep your calling to a minimum, and unlike earlier in the year when you work on hens, focus on single drakes. The

drake “hum,” or soft hen quacks, especially early in the day, can be highly effective as they search for a mate.

Winds of Change

In early November, a brisk northwest wind gets every duck hunter fired up. Mid- to late-January is completely different. Already at their wintering grounds, ducks are anxious to get back to their breeding territory. A couple of days with warm temps followed by a south wind can get birds moving north. These birds can be hungry and anxious to find a place to loaf and drink.

Find Water and Find Birds

Quick warm ups can cause bodies of water to open back up, especially if you’re hunting big water or river systems. Look for points and coves that are exposed to wind. Even a small open hole can provide some great gunning.

One word of caution here: If you’re using a dog, make certain they have enough room to retrieve without walking on thin ice. Having your dog walk on thin ice with current or deep water underneath is a recipe for disaster.

NEBRASKA LAND IS IN DEMAND



219.3 ACRES± FILLMORE COUNTY, NE

Situated just outside of Grafton, Nebraska, this exceptional production farm is a rare find for buyers looking to expand their agricultural operations or investors looking to diversify their portfolio. This property, now available for the first time in 142 years, boasts two tracts with excellent accessibility, positioned less than 1/4 mile from Highway 6 and benefitting from good county road access. This highly desirable location ensures easy transportation of equipment, crops, and resources, making it an efficient addition to any operation.



119.17 ACRES± CLAY COUNTY, NE

Just 4.5 miles from Clay Center, Nebraska, and conveniently located near both Highway 41 and 14, this unique property combines productive land with prime waterfowl habitat, offering both income potential and unparalleled recreational opportunities. Accessed by a well-maintained county road, the property includes 45.34 +/- acres in a Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE), recently enhanced to specifically support waterfowl through excavation and seeding. Strategically positioned in the heart of the Rainwater Basin, this land serves as an essential stopover for migratory birds, creating the ultimate location for waterfowl hunting enthusiasts.



186 ACRES± BOYD COUNTY, NE

Welcome to this exceptional Scenic Niobrara River Valley pasture, a property brimming with potential and natural beauty. This expansive pasture boasts multiple stock ponds nestled along the picturesque Niobrara River Breaks, providing vital water sources for both livestock and wildlife.

The tree-lined draws offer excellent cover for the abundant deer and turkey that thrive in this area, making it a hunter’s dream. The property is easily accessible via good road access, with an easement along the neighbor’s drive ensuring convenience for entry.

CONTACT JASON OR LUKE FOR A NO OBLIGATION FREE ANALYSIS.

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This hand-warming pouch, or muff, has become a lifesaver on Nebraska's frigid days. JUSTIN HAAG, NEBRASKALAND

ONCE BITTEN

By Justin Haag

The heater felt so good that January day. As the warm air filled the cab of the truck, the numbness left my body. Well, almost.

As I was warming up after a morning of photographing a Pine Ridge wild turkey capture in sub-zero temperatures, sensitivity was not returning to my right thumb. In hindsight, it shouldn't have been unexpected since the thumb had been outside my fleece glommits all morning, pressing the bone-chilling cold focusing button on the camera.

As I watched my thumb turn black from frostbite in the coming days, it was obvious that I needed to find a better system for keeping my hands warm. It seems my digits have always been quick to get cold, but it happens even quicker as I get older.

I'm glad to report success. A hand-warming pouch, or muff, that hangs by a sling from my neck and a rechargeable hand warmer have been game-changers. Now, whenever my fingers start getting

cold, my hands retreat to a toasty microclimate. In just a few moments, they are ready to return to the camera, ice-fishing rod or other important tool without the numbness experienced so many times before.

I still usually wear lightweight running gloves, which allow enough dexterity to press buttons and even work with touch-screen electronics. They provide just enough warmth for most winter days when my hands are outside the muff and are thin enough to layer up with heavier gloves, such as my trusty-but-not-so-trusty old glommits, when temps go from cold to bone-chilling — such as that January day with the turkeys.

Anyone who has had frostbite probably knows the affected area is more sensitive to cold than before, and my thumb is no exception. With the muff-glove-warmer approach, I am more prepared for whatever Old Man Winter and Jack Frost deal me, though. Just wish I'd figured it out sooner.

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A casserole of pheasant, potato, leeks, cheese and cream. JENNY NGUYEN-WHEATLEY, NEBRASKALAND

CREAMY PHEASANT AND POTATO BAKE

By Jenny Nguyen-Wheatley

Seared or poached pheasant breasts will be easiest, but if you plan on using pheasant thighs and/or legs, first cook them in a slow cooker with some broth until they're pull-off-bone tender before adding the meat into the casserole. This is a to-your-taste kind of dish. You can add as much or as little pheasant as you like.

Although you don't technically need a mandolin to slice the potatoes, having one does mean the difference between an "easy" recipe and a labor intensive one.

Servings: 6-8

Prep Time: 20 minutes

Cooking Time: 2 hours

Ingredients:

- 1 cup cooked pheasant meat, diced
- 2 tbsp. butter, separated
- 3 leeks
- 2 pounds Yukon Gold potatoes, plus extra
- 1 tsp. kosher salt, plus extra
- Freshly cracked pepper, to taste
- ½ cup grated mild cheddar cheese

- 1 cup grated Gruyere cheese, plus extra
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 sprig of thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- 1½ cup of heavy creamy
- ¼ tsp. ground nutmeg

1. Trim leeks by cutting off the green tops and root ends. Slice the white/light green parts in half lengthwise and rinse between the layers to remove dirt and sand. Then, thinly slice the leeks. In a pan with a lid, melt 1 tablespoon of butter. Add sliced leeks and a pinch of salt. Cook on low, covered, for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. When leeks become soft, turn off heat and set aside.

2. Peel potatoes and cut into ¼-inch slices with a mandolin (or knife). In a large bowl, toss potato slices with 1 teaspoon of kosher salt and freshly cracked pepper. Grease a 2-quart gratin or casserole dish.

3. Layer about a third of the sliced potato in the bottom of the dish, overlapping them. Then distribute

a third of the cooked leek, half of the pheasant meat, half of the grated cheddar and a third of the grated gruyere. Then repeat with another third of the potato slices, third of the leek, third of the gruyere and remaining pheasant and cheddar. Finally, top off the casserole with remaining potato, leek and gruyere cheese. Grate more gruyere and prepare more potato if needed. Place casserole onto a rimmed cookie sheet and set aside.

4. Preheat oven to 350° Fahrenheit. In the pan where you cooked the leeks, melt a pat of butter with minced garlic, thyme and bay leaf, and stir for 30 seconds over medium-low. Then add heavy cream and ground nutmeg, and simmer for 5 minutes, stirring often. Pour the cream mixture over the potato layers. Cover the casserole with foil and bake for 1 hour and 15 minutes, or until potato becomes tender. Then remove foil and bake longer until golden on top, about 20 minutes. Allow casserole to cool about 10 minutes before serving.

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2024 Photo Contest

While this year's entry format changed, the quality of images in the Nebraskaland Photo Contest did not. With the categories of Scenic, Wildlife, Recreation and Macro, it took hours to teem down the winning images. But it was not without some debating, especially in the Macro and Wildlife categories where several worthy images didn't place.

This year's Best of Show winner, "Nebraska Moonscape," by Mark Karrer of Sioux City, Iowa, was taken at Toadstool Geologic Park in Sioux County.

"I went there because it is considered to be a dark sky area with little light pollution, and I had always wanted to photograph the Milky Way. This was my first attempt."

And a good attempt it was.

We thank everyone who participated in this year's contest and look forward to seeing our wonderful state through your eyes next year.

Happy shooting.

Jeff Kurrus, Editor
Nebraskaland Magazine

BEST OF SHOW

Nebraska Moonscape
Mark Karrer, Sioux City, Iowa

SCENIC

FIRST PLACE — Autumn's Glow
Erik Johnson, Lincoln



SECOND PLACE — Grassland Sunset
Isabella Neuhaus, Omaha



THIRD PLACE — Sunset Beach
Derrill Grabenstein, Lincoln

MACRO

FIRST PLACE — Sweat Bee Busy
Kristin R. Hartner, Omaha



MACRO



SECOND PLACE — Golden Glow
Tyler Moore, Omaha



THIRD PLACE — Nature's Symmetry
Kimberly Carroll Steward, Lincoln

RECREATION

FIRST PLACE — The Bridge to Autumn
Tiara Brown, Omaha



RECREATION



THIRD PLACE — Eagle vs. Decoy
Jeff Mullinix, Columbus



SECOND PLACE — The Sky's the Limit
Chelsae Beyer, Bridgeport

WILDLIFE

FIRST PLACE —
Sentinel Sunset
Mark Coe, Elkhorn





SECOND PLACE — The Battle
Rick Rasmussen, Doniphan



THIRD PLACE — The Chosen One
Kacie Clark, Bayard

Outdoor Nebraska

By Renae Blum

You don't have to wait for warmer weather to have fun outdoors. Put on a few extra layers and enjoy activities like ice-fishing, snowshoeing and park events. [N](#)



Go snowshoeing at Fort Robinson State Park

As weather allows | 3.8 miles southwest of Crawford

Don't let snow stop you from enjoying a walk outdoors — go snowshoeing! Fort Robinson State Park, with its natural beauty and numerous miles of hiking trails, is an excellent location for this. Try the 3-mile White River Trail for an easier route. Those looking for a challenge can venture into the Red Cloud and Cheyenne Butte trails. The park has no lodging this time of year, but you can find Airbnbs nearby, and Crawford has a small motel. Watch the weather and call the park ahead of your visit. GETTY IMAGES

Crow hunting

Season is Jan. 11 – March 13 | Statewide

Sharpen your shooting skills with crow season, which is particularly good in February or late winter. Crow hunting is great for youth and allows you to get more hunting in if you're having a slow day hunting waterfowl. Use a "crow fight" sound on your electronic call, and place it 100 to 200 feet away from you. Point the speaker on the caller straight up in the air; the birds will circle that area. JUSTIN HAAG, NEBRASKALAND



Celebrate Valentine's Day at Niobrara State Park

Feb. 7-8 and 14-15 | About 2.5 miles west of Niobrara

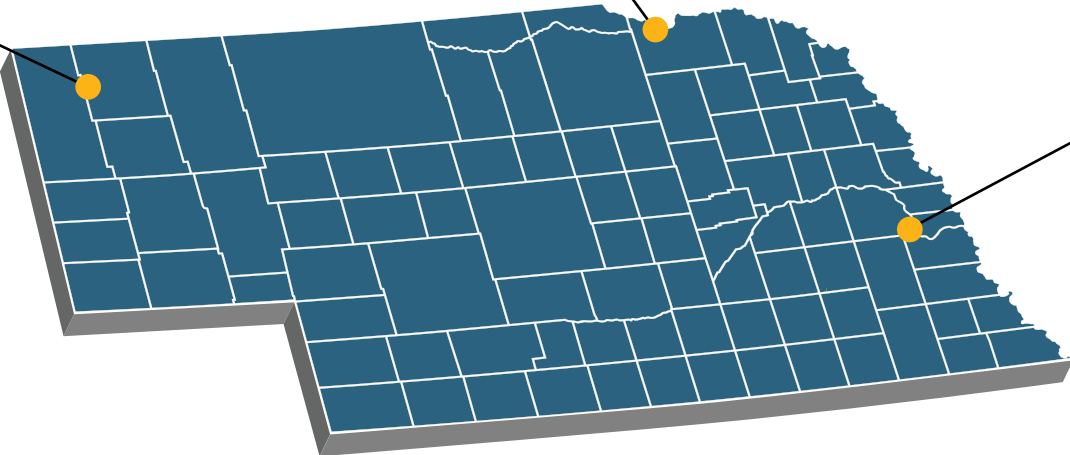
Niobrara State Park is where you go to escape. It's a scenic haven from all the noise and bustle. Take advantage of the park's Valentine's Day special to unlock a 30 percent discount on a minimum two-night stay at one of the park's eight cozy modern cabins, Feb. 7-8 and 14-15. This getaway includes early check-in, late check-out and a complimentary package from local businesses. Reservations are limited; call to book your stay at 402-857-3373. JENNY NGUYEN-WHEATLEY, NEBRASKALAND



Attend Cold Days, Warm Hearts event

Jan. 11, 1-3 p.m. | Eugene T. Mahoney State Park

Get outdoors for a fun, family-friendly winter activity — and maybe try ice-fishing for the first time. Meet at Owen Marina to enjoy winter crafts, nature programs with park naturalists and potentially ice-fishing and s'mores if the weather allows. Both ice-fishing gear and instruction will be provided. Food specials, including hot dogs, chips, hot chocolate and popcorn, will be available for a small fee. JEFF KURRUS, NEBRASKALAND



Introduce a kid to ice-fishing

As safe ice allows | Statewide

Ice-fishing is a fantastic opportunity for kids to get out of the house and have fun on the ice. Do some planning to make it a great experience: Choose a day with pleasant weather and bring snacks. Dress appropriately, with warm clothes, boots and extra gloves. An ice shelter brings added comfort if you have it. If the fish aren't biting, kids can still have fun throwing snowballs, ice skating, playing tag or tossing a ball around. JUSTIN HAAG, NEBRASKALAND



LUNCH IN THE SNOW

A Cure for Cabin Fever

Story and photos by Jenny Nguyen-Wheatley

Every January or February, I come down with the dreaded, mind-numbing angst of cabin fever. I don't have motor oil in my veins, as I've heard said about tough Nebraskans, so when extremely cold temperatures strike and the roads are bad, I might stay inside for days, fighting the urge to rip out my hair. So, on those rare nice days — and by “nice,” I mean the wind isn't howling and the temperature is above 30 degrees — I make the effort to get outside.

Last winter was especially brutal. After back-to-back snowstorms and frigid conditions in January, the weather finally broke. Missing the ability to cook outside, my husband, Rick, and I bundled up and spent an afternoon at Two Rivers State Recreation Area to enjoy lunch in the snow.

Using a deer sled, we dragged wood and cooking gear from the truck, dug out a fire ring and as the venison stew heated, Rick and I stood back to enjoy the warmth of the fire while soaking up the special kind of silence only heard in winter. Although I have visited Two Rivers on numerous occasions, January offered a stark contrast to the activity and noise of the high season. Not a soul was in sight. No tent or camper obstructed my view. It was one of those rare windless days. Despite my general feelings about winter, that particular afternoon was by no means unpleasant. While sipping from my hot mug of Irish breakfast, I felt a wave of

relief after what seemed like the longest, most stifling bout of cabin fever in my nearly 12 years of living in Nebraska.

And lunch? Hot food simply tastes better when the weather is cold. Here are tips for enjoying a meal in the snow.

Building a Campfire

To build a campfire, you need to build heat gradually, and the three main components are tinder, kindling and wood. In the winter, don't count on being able to find dried sticks

and leaves, especially after a recent snow. Instead, avoid the frustration of having to ignite a wet fire starter by bringing your own tinder and kindling.

Old newspaper, paper grocery bags, dryer lint and cotton balls make good tinder because they ignite quickly. For kindling, buy fatwood fire starter, which are sticks of pitch pine that are impregnated with resin and are highly flammable. Use only local wood to prevent the spread of pests and make sure the wood is dry. Lastly, bring a shovel in case you need to dig out

snow inside the fire ring.

First, assemble the tinder and kindling: Lay down several pieces of fatwood side by side, with an inch or two of space in between them. Then lay the same number of fatwood sticks on top perpendicular, with space in between — the spacing is important for airflow. Next, place pieces of tinder on top of the fatwood. Then lay pieces of fatwood around the tinder



The three main components of building a campfire are tinder, kindling and wood. Use local wood only to prevent the spread of pests.

Venison heart stew heating over an open bed of coals on a winter's day. Pre-made biscuits warm up easily near the fire.





Rick Wheatley of Omaha builds a campfire with fatwood fire starter, dryer lint and local wood. He brought a shovel to dig out a fire ring full of snow. A deer sled makes easy work of dragging gear over the snow.

like a teepee. Use matches or a lighter to ignite the tinder, which should catch quickly. When the tinder gets hot enough, it will ignite the fatwood. Add more tinder as needed to increase heat. Once the fatwood is burning well, you can then add firewood on top, but only a couple pieces at first. If needed, add more

fatwood to keep the heat going until the firewood starts taking. Then add more wood as needed. Allow the wood to burn, while enjoying the warmth, conversation and coffee. When the flames die down and the wood starts to look more like embers of coal, that's when your campfire is ready for cooking.

Equipment

In addition to the items previously mentioned, and whatever dinnerware and utensils you need, don't forget the following:

- Over-the-fire grill grate, if applicable
- Dutch oven or cast-iron pan
- Lid lifter
- Mixing/serving spoons, ladle or tongs
- Heat resistant gloves
- Tea kettle
- Percolator or French press
- Paper towels
- Trash bag

Also, don't let poor clothing decisions dampen your meal outdoors. As with any outdoor winter activity, wear clothing and shoes that are warm and will keep you dry. Although Rick, being old school, will opt for jeans every time, I prefer wearing waterproof or water-resistant pants to keep from



Wheatley adds more fatwood to the fire to help it along.

getting wet if I have to kneel in the snow while tending to the food and fire.

What to Cook

Winter outdoor cooking is not the time and place for fancy culinary tricks. Pick food that is hot, filling and easy to cook or warm up — don't keep people waiting. Your companions will be more willing to stay out longer if their bellies are full and warm. Stew, soup or chili are good choices because you can prepare them at home, and they're one-pot meals. Pack it up



Choose cast iron for campfire cooking. It will stand up to the rigors of the outdoors and the test of time.

in leak-proof containers and simply reheat it in a Dutch oven when you get to your destination. If you've got leftover stew or soup sitting in the freezer, this is the time to use it. Stir often if your stew or chili is on the thicker side to prevent the bottom from scorching. Prebake biscuits and breads at home. Wrap them in foil to prevent blackening from the campfire soot while reheating. A hot beverage is a must. If you're not a coffee snob and can do without a French press, bring a large thermos of ready-made coffee. Spiced cider or hot mulled wine might be appreciated, too, where alcohol is allowed. Bring a kettle for boiling water if offering tea bags or instant hot chocolate or coffee. Have everyone bring their own insulated mugs to keep down the trash, as park services might not be fully available this time of year. After lunch, provide marshmallows for making s'mores. Add more wood to the hot embers to get the fire going again.



Serve food that you can prep at home and easily reheat on the campfire, such as stew, soup or chili.

Clean-Up

Pack out leftover food and trash. If you need to clean out a pot or mug, use the snow. While you'll still have to give your cooking gear a proper once-over at home, snow is slightly abrasive and will help remove most food particles. To prevent rust, clean and dry cast iron thoroughly, and lightly coat it with oil when you get home. With outdoor cooking, the more you keep things simple, the easier cleanup will be.

This winter, keep an eye on the forecast. If there's a nice day on the horizon or if you have the ability to pick up and go at the last minute, get out and share a meal with family and friends in the wintery landscape. It just might be the cabin fever cure you've been searching for. ❄️



Use snow to roughly clean cookware. When you get home, thoroughly clean, dry and oil cast iron to prevent rust.

A Short Walk to the Wild Side

Photos and story by Justin Haag

As a regional editor in the Panhandle, my job takes me to some of the most magnificent public lands in the state. *Nebraskaland* readers know the Pine Ridge, Sandhills and Wildcat Hills have no shortage of natural wonders that serve a nature photographer well.

Perhaps the destination I am most thankful for does not show up on most maps, and isn't even outside the city limits of my home, Chadron. As a matter of convenience, the Thompson Natural History Preserve and adjacent land owned by Chadron State College is my go-to when I need a quick fix of the outdoors.

At less than 200 steps from my house, I almost daily enter a system of trails that course around two ponds and hills overlooking the town from a vantage of more than 200 feet above. With a diverse mix of wide, multi-use trails of concrete or buffalo grass, and undeveloped single-track, the property serves well for running, biking and hiking. Our dog seems to love it even more than I do.

In total, the trails cover about 200 acres of open property owned by Chadron State College and the Chadron State Foundation. Some points of interest include Briggs Pond, the landmark C Hill and a makeshift labyrinth of stones in the deep footprint of the city's old cistern. After a 2006 wildfire scorched the ponderosa pines on the hills, much of the property evolved from forest to grassland. Wildlife is still plenty attracted to it.

Lightning strikes during a thunderstorm at the Thompson Natural History Preserve at Chadron State College in Dawes County.

It's a pleasure to encounter the many wild creatures that inhabit this property at various times of the year. It may be mule deer and red foxes along the drainages, sharp-tailed grouse on the hillsides, Canada geese and songbirds around the ponds or tree swallows in nest boxes. From the first pasque flower in March to the sunflowers blooming when Jack Frost arrives, the plant community puts on its own show. The state champion peachleaf willow tree is on the property.

When the college was founded in 1911, a large footprint was allotted to the school. The 50 acres with Briggs Pond, a dam built in 1938 as part of a livestock and farming operation, wasn't included. When the Chadron State Foundation signed an option to buy those acres in 1974, Harold and LaVerne Thompson of Culver City, California, donated the \$40,000 to buy it.

The property not only serves as a recreational resource, but also is an asset for the college's science programs, including range and wildlife management.



LEFT: A Virginia opossum captured with a camera trap at Chadron State College's Thompson Natural History Preserve.

TOP RIGHT: Briggs Pond and a system of trails attract visitors to the Thompson Natural History Preserve.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Fog and frost decorate the scene at Briggs Pond.





As studies show people are becoming less connected to nature, such “urban” slices of the wild are important, and every community should make the most of what they have. Whenever I see Chadron kids have parked their bikes and gathered at the pond’s muddy banks to pursue bullfrogs and sunfish, I know the Thompsons would be happy with their investment. I’m even a little envious of those kids.

When I was growing up in the village of Danbury in the southwestern corner of the state, there was no pond or trail system to explore so conveniently. Regardless, my best friend and I made the most of whatever nature we could find. In our minds, the strips of trees along properties owned by the school and village might as well have been 100,000-acre forests, and were enough to rouse our sense of adventure.

That sense is rekindled every time I enter the Thompson Natural History Preserve. Wildest place in the Panhandle? Surely not. But it is wild enough. 🌿

ABOVE: Fibers shed from the sword-shaped leaves of a soapweed plant at the Thompson Natural History Preserve.

BELOW: An orange-crowned warbler moves along the branches of a buckthorn shrub.

OPPOSITE: Walkers visit the concrete trails south of the Chadron State College campus.



Snowbound

The Blizzards of 1948-49

By Patricia G. Gaster,
Nebraska State Historical Society

The winter of 1948-49 brought Nebraskans the most prolonged battle with the elements in the state's history. The first snowstorm hit Nov. 19, 1948, and the second on Dec. 29, to be followed by another on Jan. 2-5, 1949. State and local highway crews found that no sooner had they opened a stretch of road that it was closed again by drifting or by fresh snow. Trains were stalled, and for days in many areas the only effective transportation was by air.

The Nebraska National Guard was called out, and volunteers worked to rescue trapped livestock, homes and even whole communities. But the job was too big for Nebraska and other western states alone. On Jan. 28, 1949, Maj. Gen. Lewis A. Pick was named to direct one of the U.S.



Mrs. Ben J. Fuelberth on the road south of Osmond. NSHS RG3139-0-67



Train buried in the snow near Ashby after the Blizzard of 1949. NSHS RG6165-21-3

Army's most extensive rescue operations in peacetime.

They called it Operation Snowbound. The Fifth Army moved in with bulldozers and M29 Weasels (a tracked vehicle used in World War II). During 23 days of operation, the Army put up impressive numbers: opening 87,073 miles of road, liberating 152,196 persons from snowbound homes, transporting 35 sick persons to receive medical care or hospitalization, and delivering feed for more than 3,500,000 head of livestock.

Everyone who lived through the "Blizzard of '49" had a story to tell. Irene Woodburn of Wausa, for example, recalled how rain began to fall on Nov. 18:

"During the night it turned into heavy wet snow with high wind. This continued until the early morning of the 20th, leaving 30 inches of snow. I was a night operator at the telephone office. ... I was able to get to work every night, but many times thought I wouldn't make it. Only main street lights were on to conserve power. Cleanup operations hardly started when wind drifted it all shut again.

"This and more snow was to be the pattern until well into April. At last there was no place to shovel the snow, so no one did, and we walked over banks. Several thick layers of ice in the snow banks made clearing of snow impossible in places, as snow plows couldn't move it, so dynamite was used in some places. One snowplow operator from Iowa said, 'I didn't know Nebraska had concrete in their snowbanks.'

"Farmers used many different kinds of rigs to take groceries and other needed items home. All roads were blocked and

many remained that way until spring. A local man who had been a pilot in WWII, flew a ski-plane, taking medicine, groceries, etc., also bring[ing] some sick people to the doctor and hospital when needed ...

"The army men came with a machine called a weasel. It could be driven over snowbanks to reach homes. Highway 81 was the only hard surfaced road into Wausa at that time, so it was possible to get supplies when the road was open. Other towns weren't as fortunate. The handcar on the railroad was used between Wausa and Bloomfield. ... The final total of snow was 90 inches. Some snowbanks were 25 to 35 feet."

Each winter this incredible storm returns to the memories of those who lived through it, and for good reason. [N](#)

Visit NSHS's website at history.nebraska.gov.



Unidentified individuals stand in front of a snow-covered window in this photo from a series of Gov. Val Peterson's visit to Alliance. NSHS RG3139-0-113



Digging a cow out of a drift in a canyon bottom on Eldon Miller's property near Belmont. NSHS RG33139-0-80



A man carries loaves of bread delivered by airplane, somewhere in Nebraska. NSHS RG3139-0-133

Bigger Bass

Better Waters Ahead

By Eric Fowler

Fisheries biologists are hoping anglers fishing four reservoirs in southeastern Nebraska will go home and have a fish fry after a successful day on the water. And they are hoping largemouth bass will be on the menu.

Bass? What? You can't keep bass!

Yes, bass. Few anglers harvest bass, thanks to decades of promoting catch-and-release fishing for the species. Yet harvesting small bass, which, at times, have dominated the fish populations at Duck Creek, Prairie Queen, Prairie View and Wagon Train lakes, is what biologists think is needed to produce more big largemouths in those waters.

To facilitate the harvest, a new, experimental protected slot limit goes into effect this year on those four waters requiring anglers to release all

bass 15- to 18-inches in length, with only one fish over 18 inches allowed in the bag. The lakes previously had a 21-inch minimum length limit on largemouth bass, a departure from the statewide 15-inch minimum.

Aaron Blank, southeast district fisheries manager, said new or renovated waters are loaded with nutrients and can sustain a lot of fish.

"You get really good year-class strength out of the first stocking, but the problems really begin as you start stacking on multiple year classes," he said. "This creates an environment with lots of competition for food and typically slows growth rates."

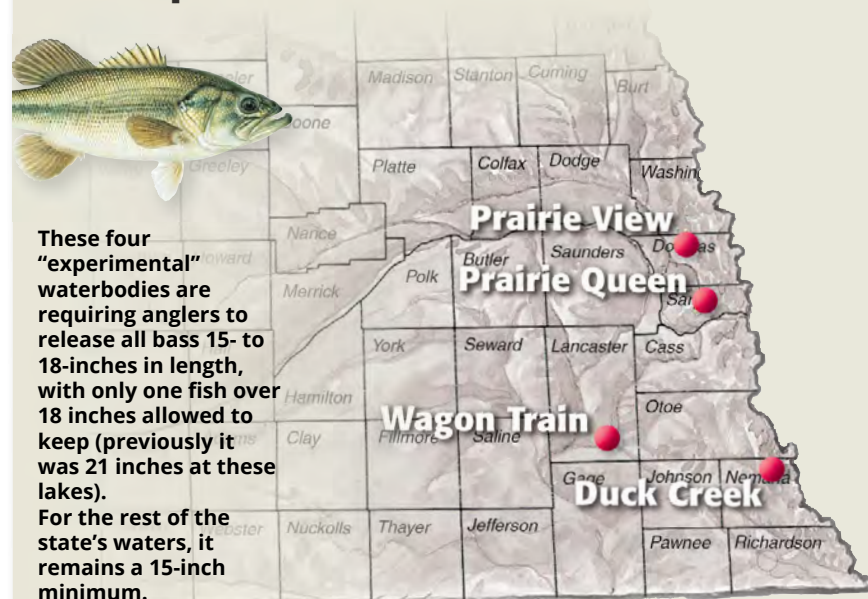
The result is often lots of bass in the 11- to 14-inch range, with few fish growing to longer lengths, and those taking longer to get there than biologists or anglers would like.



Marty Hughes of Aurora lands a largemouth bass from a kayak at Duck Creek Recreation Area in Nemaha County.

ERIC FOWLER, NEBRASKALAND

An Experiment at Four Locations



Case Studies

At Prairie Queen, in Papillion, for example, scales collected from bass in 2021 to estimate the age of fish found that, on average, fish didn't top 15 inches in length until age 6. Blank hopes the new regulation will help fish reach that length a year or two sooner.

In 2022, Wagon Train, located near Hickman, was drained and renovated to remove gizzard shad, white perch and common carp that had found their way into the lake since it was last renovated in 2001. It was restocked in 2022 and 2024, and while drought

conditions persist and the lake remains more than 10 feet below normal, when trees and other vegetation that have sprouted from the dry lakebed are flooded, habitat conditions will be as good as they can get for fish.

Wagon Train will be the best test of how the slot limit works on new or renovated lakes. "We have a really good idea of how the bass populations are going to develop over the first four to five years under a 21-inch minimum," Blank said. "If we can reduce those densities in those early years, we might be able to produce and

sustain even more large bass in the five years post-renovation."

Prairie View, near Bennington, was completed and stocked in 2000. Electrofishing surveys in 2022 showed the lake had a robust bass population, yet while 60 percent of the fish were 12 to 15 inches in length, just 8 percent topped 15 inches. Harvest of bass there will hinge on the success of upcoming efforts to control curly-leaf pondweed, a non-native invasive aquatic plant, that covers the lake by early spring and basically shuts down the lake to fishing.

Prairie Queen and Duck Creek, near Peru, on the other hand, are just about a decade old.

At Prairie Queen, bass densities increased substantially for the first four years. While sampling catch rates declined after 2017, the bass size structure remained fairly constant until 2024, when the number of fish sampled 15 inches or longer jumped from 10 percent to 25 percent. One third of the bass sampled in 2024 were 8 to 12 inches.

Duck Creek also has seen sampling catch rates decline, but not as much.

Sampling in 2023 found just 3 percent of the bass topped 15 inches, with 60 percent measuring 8 to 12 inches and another 37 percent 12 to 15 inches.

Angler Perspectives

Marty Hughes can attest to that. The kayak fishing guide and tournament angler moved to Auburn in 2017 and started fishing Duck Creek as soon as it opened the following spring. “We had incredible days that first and second year fishing out here,” he said. “It was really good. There were a lot of 15- to 17-inch bass.”

Hughes has organized adult and youth kayak fishing leagues for several years, during which anglers measure every fish they catch. Those numbers show the same trend as the electrofishing survey data. In 2024, 11 percent of fish caught during events were longer than 15 inches and 60 percent were in the 12- to 13-inch range.

Hughes and anglers he fishes with still catch an occasional 18- to 20-inch fish. But he believes there should be more and hopes the new regulation will help produce them. “I think it’s a good idea because here you have



Largemouth bass (*Micropterus salmoides*) caught at Flanagan Lake in Douglas County. JEFF KURRUS, NEBRASKALAND

this incredible fishery with lots of little bass,” he said. “I fish a lot of Nebraska lakes, and Duck Creek has the habitat to grow huge bass, and it’s not happening.”

Blank thinks the slot limit will do just that, but noted managing waters with bass and panfish can be a balancing act as a lake can only support so many pounds of either type of fish; sometimes it’s a choice of

having big bass or big panfish.

Big Bass or Big Panfish?

The hordes of small bass commonly found in newly renovated lakes are good at thinning out the annual crop of bluegills and crappies. This leaves more food for and leads to faster growth of the panfish that survive the gauntlet. Imposing a 21-inch minimum length limit on these waters to help maintain higher bass densities has been the norm, providing anglers the chance to catch large panfish and high catch rates of bass, Blank said.

Bass densities decline as lakes age, but the goal of fisheries managers is to have 30 percent of the bass 15 inches or longer. In this scenario, however, a lake can end up with lots of small panfish due to the optimum foraging theory and propensity of big fish to eat big fish. “A 4-pounder has no problem eating an 8-inch bluegill,” Blank said. “They’re not going to eat a lot of age 1 bluegills. It doesn’t make sense for them if they can get four times the food and nutrients with four times less effort.”

So while it is not the norm, Blank hopes they can maintain the already quality panfish populations in these lakes while also having bigger bass. “I think we can do both,” he said. To



Marty Hughes of Aurora measures a largemouth bass while fishing from a kayak at Duck Creek Recreation Area in Nemaha County. ERIC FOWLER, NEBRASKALAND



Fried largemouth bass coated in Italian-style breadcrumbs and Parmesan, served with Caesar salad dressing for dipping. JENNY NGUYEN-WHEATLEY, NEBRASKALAND

make sure they’re on track, fisheries biologists plan to intensively sample the lakes to get population estimates, while also conducting repeat surveys to measure the response.

Culture of Bass Catch-and-Release

For the most part, a 21-inch minimum length limit on Nebraska lakes has acted as a total catch-and-release regulation for bass, with only trophy bass being kept to mount. Creel surveys conducted at nine southeastern Nebraska reservoirs with the regulation in place found just 547 of 131,910 bass caught were harvested.

The number harvested might not have been much higher without the regulation. Creel surveys at two other southeastern reservoirs with a 15-inch minimum between 2014 and 2019 found only 1.4 percent of the 11,800 bass caught were kept.

That could be attributed to Ray Scott, bass fishing tournament pioneer and the founder of the Bass Anglers Sportsman’s Society. In 1972, he began incentivizing anglers in his tournaments to have live wells so fish could be released after weigh-ins. That conservation-minded incentive led to catch-and-release being the norm for the majority of bass anglers. Tournament anglers now release 95 percent of the fish they catch, and some have never taken a bass home for dinner.

The mentality has also led to lakes with stunted bass populations in places besides Nebraska. In 2022, Oklahoma changed its statewide bass size limit from a 14-inch minimum length to one fish over 16 inches. Their goal was the same as it is for the new regulation on four Nebraska lakes: That anglers would dial back their catch-and-release ethic and harvest the small bass dominating most of

Parmesan Bass

by Jenny Nguyen-Wheatley

In a wide, shallow bowl, combine ⅓ cup Progresso Italian-style breadcrumbs and 3 tablespoons of grated Parmesan cheese. In a second bowl, beat 1 egg and 1 tablespoon of milk. In a third bowl, add ¼ cup of all-purpose flour. Preheat vegetable oil to 325-350 degrees F. Coat fish in this order: flour — shaking off excess, egg mixture and then breadcrumb mixture. Multiply coating ingredients as needed. Deep fry coated fish in batches until golden and crispy. Season with salt to taste.

their waters in order to allow more bass to get bigger.

“Not every bass has the genetics to be a 20-inch fish, and that’s not necessarily the goal for this regulation,” Blank said. “What we want to do is shift the size a couple of inches so instead of catching 12- or 13-inch fish, we’re catching 15- or 16-inch fish.”

If harvesting bass helps make that happen, it will lead to better fisheries and better angling opportunities. 📍

HELP NONGAME WILDLIFE SPECIES WITH TAX DONATIONS

By Julie Geiser



Whooping cranes along the Platte near Brady. JULIE GEISER, NEBRASKALAND

This tax season, consider donating a portion of your refund to the Nebraska Wildlife Conservation Fund when filling out your 1040N form. The fund supports Nebraska’s nongame and endangered wildlife that do not fall under the Pitman-Robertson Act, which protects game and furbearing species.

Over 2,000 species of birds, mammals, fish, reptiles, amphibians and plants are considered nongame species in Nebraska, representing over 95 percent of all species in the state. Some of these species are declining, endangered or on the brink of extinction.

The Nebraska Wildlife Conservation Fund is the state’s primary source of funding for monitoring, researching, managing and conserving at-risk species, such as the whooping crane, swift fox, western prairie fringed orchid and blowout penstemon. By supporting the fund, you are taking

an active part in conserving our state’s diverse and priceless wildlife for future generations.

Donations have a big impact as they are matched with other grants, so every dollar donated becomes \$4 for helping wildlife. The Wildlife Conservation Fund makes a variety of projects possible, including:

- Improving habitat across Nebraska for at-risk species by using funds to restore prairies and control invasive species. Habitat created with these funds also benefits many game species, providing needed cover and food sources.
- Preventing future endangered species listings by funding reintroduction projects, such as the now-thriving peregrine falcon, while continuing to fund pollinator and bat surveys, reptile and amphibian research, and a long-billed curlew habitat study.
- Connecting wildlife and Nebraskans through projects like “wildcams” for peregrine falcons and ospreys where people can watch these spectacular bird species on video.

Funding generated through the 1040N tax form is vital. Without it, education and research programs would not be possible. You may donate all or a portion of your tax refund to the Wildlife Conservation Fund.

For those not receiving a state tax refund, check contributions can be made by mail to: Nebraska Wildlife Conservation Fund, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, P.O. Box 30370, Lincoln, NE 68503-0370.

Donations can be made online at OutdoorNebraska.gov; search “Wildlife Conservation Fund” and follow the secure link.

Conservation License Plates

Nebraska Game and Parks offers five specialty license plates at the Nebraska Department of Motor Vehicles.

Plate designs that benefit the Wildlife Conservation Fund include the bighorn sheep, sandhill crane and ornate box turtle.

Two other plates also support Game and Parks efforts. The Bike/Walk Nebraska plate supports trail maintenance at state parks. Nebraska has hundreds of miles of trails, including hiking, biking, horseback riding, snowmobiling, cross country skiing and water trails.

Mountain lion conservation plates benefit the Game and Parks education fund to provide youth education programs relating to wildlife conservation practices.

A specialty plate is \$5 or \$40 for a personalized one. The \$5 fee goes directly to the Wildlife Conservation Fund, Game and Parks State Park Improvement and Maintenance Fund or Game & Parks Commission Education Fund. Of the \$40 fee, \$30 goes to the conservation fund and \$10 goes to the DMV Cash Fund.





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by David Radler

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FULL MOON NAMES

By Monica Macoubrie, Wildlife Education Specialist

The night sky has long been a source of wonder and inspiration, with lunar cycles observed and celebrated by cultures across the world. In North America, full moon names offer fascinating glimpses into the cultural traditions, folklore and natural rhythms that shaped Native American and European American views of the cosmos.

Each name reflects the unique characteristics and significance of its respective lunar cycle, serving as a reminder of the interconnectedness between the celestial realm and the terrestrial world.



January The Wolf Moon

January's full moon is often dubbed the Wolf Moon. According to Native American and European folklore, wolves were believed to howl more frequently during this time of the year, perhaps due to hunger

or heightened activity during the winter months. The moon's eerie glow on the wintry landscape highlights the harshness of the January wilderness.



February The Snow Moon

As winter's grip tightens and snow blankets the land, February's full moon is aptly named the Snow Moon, as known by various Indigenous peoples across North America.

In some traditions, it's also called the Hunger Moon, as food supplies may run low during this harsh month, intensifying the struggle for survival.



March The Worm Moon

As temperatures begin to rise and the earth thaws, March's full moon heralds the arrival of spring. Named the Worm Moon by Native Americans, this designation refers to the

emergence of earthworms from the thawing soil, signaling the onset of spring planting and the renewal of life. It's a time of awakening and rejuvenation after the dormancy of winter.



April The Pink Moon

Contrary to its name, April's full moon doesn't actually appear pink. Instead, the Pink Moon derives its name from the vibrant pink phlox flowers that

bloom around this time of year in North America. This name is attributed to Native Americans, who marked the arrival of spring by the blooming of these flowers that paint the landscape with hues of pink and purple.



May The Flower Moon

May's full moon brings with it the beauty and fragrance of blooming flowers, earning it the moniker of the Flower Moon. As spring reaches its peak and flora bursts forth in a riot of colors, this name

encapsulates the abundance and fertility of the season. It's a time of celebration and growth, as nature flourishes in full splendor.



June The Strawberry Moon

In June, as summer approaches, the luscious red berries of the strawberry plant ripen, marking the onset of the strawberry harvest season. Hence, June's full moon

is known as the Strawberry Moon, a name attributed to Native Americans who used it as a cue for gathering these delectable fruits. It's a time of sweetness and abundance, as the earth yields its bounty.



July The Buck Moon

As summer reaches its peak and the antlers of male deer begin to grow, July's full moon is aptly named the Buck Moon. This designation originated from Native Americans who

observed the growth of male deer antlers during this time of year. It symbolizes strength, virility and the cycle of life as nature reaches its apex.



August The Sturgeon Moon

In August, as summer draws to a close, the waters teem with the abundance of sturgeon, making it an opportune time for fishing. Hence, August's full

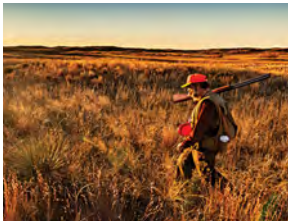
moon is dubbed the Sturgeon Moon by Native Americans, who relied on fishing for sustenance during this time of year. It's a reminder of nature's cyclical rhythms and the interconnectedness of all life.



September The Harvest Moon

As the autumn equinox approaches, September's full moon takes on special significance as the Harvest

Moon. Named by European farmers who recognized the moon's role in illuminating the fields, the Harvest Moon's bright glow provided ample light for farmers to work into the night, ensuring a bountiful harvest. This moon symbolizes abundance, gratitude and the fruits of labor.



October The Hunter's Moon

In October, as the nights grow longer and colder, the Hunter's Moon graces the sky, casting its silvery light upon the earth.

Named by Indigenous peoples, this moon provided ample illumination for hunters to track prey and prepare for the coming winter months. It's a time of preparation and survival, highlighting the primal instincts of hunting and gathering.



November The Beaver Moon

As temperatures plummet and winter's chill sets in, November's full moon is named the Beaver Moon. The name originated by Native Americans who recognized it as the time to set beaver traps

before the waters froze over, ensuring a steady supply of fur for warmth and trade during the winter months. The Beaver Moon symbolizes resourcefulness, preparation and adaptation to the changing seasons.



December The Cold Moon

Rounding out the year, December's full moon is fittingly dubbed the Cold Moon as temperatures plunge.

This name underscores the harsh conditions of the winter season, with long nights and bitter cold prevailing. It's a time of introspection, huddling close to loved ones for warmth and finding solace in the quiet stillness of the winter landscape.

While some of this information is common knowledge, much of the lore is from darksky.org, sci.news, snexplores.org and The Old Farmer's Almanac.

Night Sky Ecology

The moon plays a key role in Nebraska's animal behaviors. For nocturnal predators like owls, the moon's phases affect hunting. During a full moon, owls can spot prey more easily, but they also become more visible, so they may adjust their hunting locations or times. Small prey animals, like rodents, are especially vulnerable during full moons and often reduce movement or hide to avoid detection. Migratory birds, such as ducks and geese, use moonlight to navigate, continuing their journeys even after sunset.

The moon also influences breeding. Some fish, like Nebraska's channel catfish, spawn around lunar cycles to time reproduction for optimal conditions. Amphibians like frogs and toads synchronize their mating calls with the full moon in spring, attracting mates across wetlands and ponds. The moon subtly guides these natural behaviors, shaping survival and reproduction in Nebraska's ecosystems.

It's not just the moon — stars also play a role in guiding species across Nebraska. Migratory birds use the near-static North Star to stay on course during night flights, while dung beetles navigate using the Milky Way. This night sky ecology examines how natural light sources shape the behavior and survival of nocturnal animals, revealing how animals rely on the sky to thrive.



A NEW YEAR’S TRADITION

By Renae Blum

The holidays are over, but for hundreds of Nebraskans, the arrival of New Year’s Day means there’s still one celebration left to enjoy: a First Day Hike.

First Day Hikes are a nationwide initiative to get people outdoors on Jan. 1 to enjoy state parks through free, guided hikes. Started in 2016 in Nebraska, the tradition has continued to grow. Last year, a record number of 22 Nebraska state parks participated, with more than 1,000 hikers in total.

Joining the fun in 2025 is the Cowboy Trail, which is offering a First Day Hike for the first time in honor of its 30th anniversary.

When people come out on that day — despite the cold, despite the temptation to sleep in — they’re often surprised by how fun it is, said Bob Hanover, an assistant parks administrator with Nebraska Game and Parks.

And each park puts its own twist on the experience. Past hikes have included activities such as sledding, winter birding, horseback riding and looking for wildlife tracks. Last year, Schramm Park State Recreation Area opened a classroom at the education center so people could create winter art on mini canvases after the hike. The park’s trail routes also featured mini paintings dangling from trees for children to find.

At Ash Hollow State Historical Park, a First Day Hike is “like a family reunion,” said Lisa Albee, a resident of Lewellen. The park hosts a potluck for attendees after the hike, featuring soup and leftover holiday goodies.

The event is filled with camaraderie, Albee said. “We chatter, chatter, chatter all the way up and down,” she said, laughing. She recalls one year, when the park got a lot of snow, a 75-year-old gentleman was having a



Participants in the First Day Hike at Schramm Park State Recreation Area on Jan. 1, 2024. RENAE BLUM, NEBRASKALAND

great time making snow angels.

“It’s become a celebration of the new year and of nature — sort of a spiritual connection with nature to kick off the new year,” Albee said.

Phil Miles, a superintendent at Red Willow Reservoir State Recreation Area near McCook, has been surprised by the turnout at their First Day Hikes. Last year, 82 people attended, making it one of the most well-attended in the state.

“We’re way out here in the middle of nowhere. To get that many people to do a First Day Hike is pretty incredible, I think,” he said. “It puts Red Willow on the map.”

Most hikes are in the morning and are 1-2 miles long, with a low level of difficulty. Everyone is welcome, including children and dogs on a 6-foot leash, though hikes are generally not stroller-friendly.

If you attend a First Day Hike, dress for the weather, bring water and plenty of snacks, and wear appropriate footwear. You can expect educational interpretation along the way, and often a bonfire and treats afterward.

To find a hike near you, search “First Day Hikes” at OutdoorNebraska.gov. A park entry permit is required at all locations, except for the Cowboy Trail.



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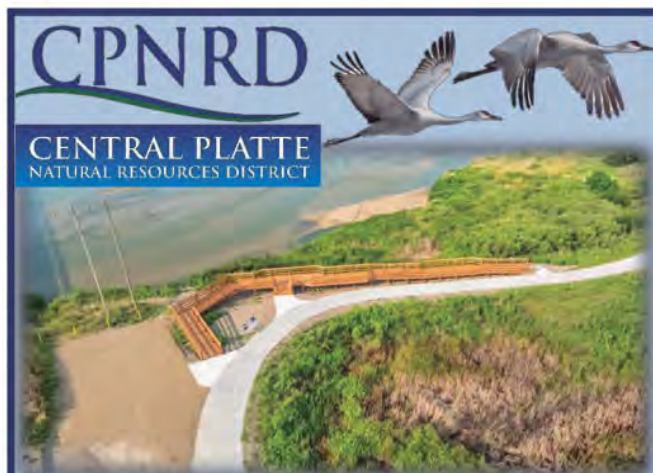
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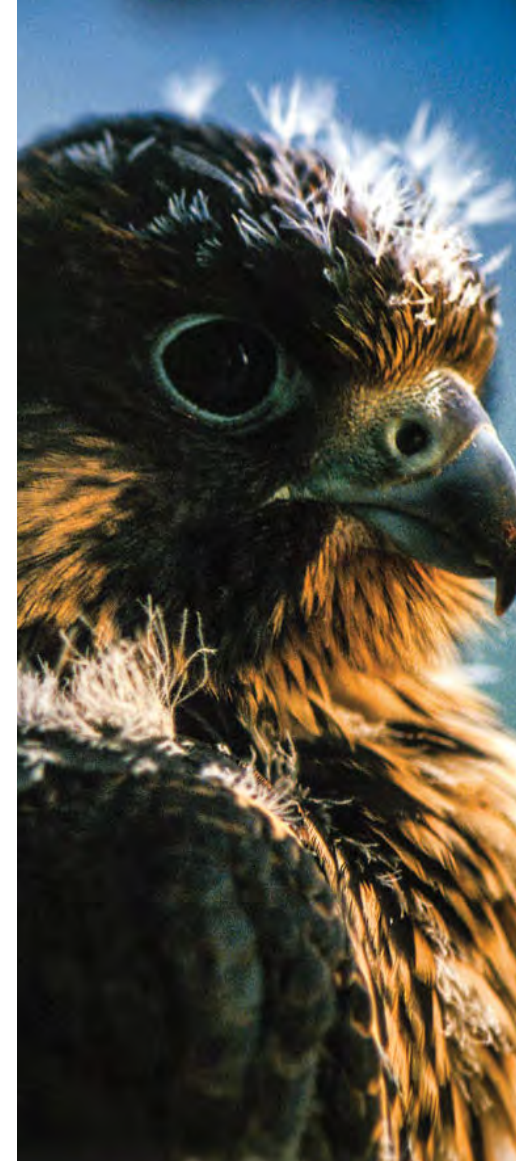
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WEATHERING THE STORMS

By Jeff Kurrus

A look at the forecast this time of year often seems repetitive: Cold, with periods of snow. But a conscientious viewer of the weekly forecast can see openings that some people don't, glimpses of memorable days afield right around the corner. Here's what to look for:

Ice-Fishing

When ice-fishing, pay attention to the same weather patterns that produce good results during the open water. Clouds, before a storm, can cause a feeding frenzy. Otherwise, look for stable weather over a period of days, especially as it warms toward a thaw, for the best bite.

Upland Hunting

Sleep in if you're an upland hunter. Pheasants will feed early and then return to cover. If there is any precipitation, they may feed even longer.

For quail, most definitely stay in bed and wait until 10 a.m. to hit the field, giving birds time to put scent on the ground for dogs. Overall, bypass windy days as birds can be overly skittish and often flush wild. Calm, sunny days are often more productive, especially after a fresh snow when birds can be tracked.

Goose Hunting

During extremely cold, sunny days, Canada geese will sometimes sit on the roost for as long as possible, not flying past your decoys until well after shooting time has expired.

If there is moisture in the air, however, they will eat early. And knowing their food supply could soon be buried, birds will feed up to, and during, a snowstorm.

Late in the season, if there are two to three days of warm weather with



Drew Beard of Gretna holds a bluegill caught at a pond near Louisville. Three days of cloudy weather produced a banner day for Beard, a newcomer to ice-fishing, and his friends last January. JEFF KURRUS, NEBRASKALAND

southerly winds, get to the field or water immediately. You'll have some birds heading back north to decoy.

Deer Hunting

Deer will also feed long in front of storms before hunkering when it hits. Be sure to sneak back into the woods when the snow stops falling, as deer emerge to feed once more.

Squirrel Hunting

When squirrel hunting, look for nice

weather. Those same warm afternoons that hunters like when they are in the field are the same ones that brings squirrels out of their nests.

When it comes to winter hunting, weather is key. There is always quarry within reach. You just have to be adaptable.

Thanks to Daryl Bauer, Eric Fowler, Todd Mills, Jeff Rawlinson, Ryan Sparks, Gerry Steinauer, Mark Vrtiska and Greg Wagner for their expertise regarding winter hunting.

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Pheasant hunting in Fillmore County, 1991

The night before this photo was taken we had a new 3-inch blanket of snow. The best thing about hunting in the snow is that it gives one the opportunity to track game. On this hunt, Jeff shot at a rooster and clipped a wing. The rooster glided and went down in a harvested milo field.

We found where the rooster had hit down in the snow and began tracking it. Eventually the rooster stopped and hid, and Daisy pointed him.

Harvesting this rooster enabled us to limit out on this snowy day hunt. The hunt took place in Fillmore County on Jan. 5, 1991.

From left: Lonnie Shafer, Daisy, Jeff Shafer.

P.S. Jeff and I have been hunting together since 1983. I am now 79 years old, and we still pheasant hunt together. Jeff was 18 years old in this photo.

– Lonnie Shafer, York



Pheasant hunting near Harbine, 1970s

Pictured from left are Jerry Beckman; Jim McConnel (deceased); myself, Rod Heim; Don Rademacher (deceased); and Loy Marotz.

The four on the left were members of the East High School mathematics teaching staff and Marotz was an East High principal. The group made an annual hunting trip to Jerry Beckman's farm. Almost all of the hunting was done in milo fields.

– Rodney Heim, Lincoln



Walleye fishing at Lake McConaughy, 1999

People were commenting on walleye being too big at the lake. My good friend Mark Walters and I would go out at 1 a.m. and fish until sunup. We caught three walleyes over 10 pounds, released two and one is on my wall. What a night!

– Mike Wolken, Tecumseh



Bullhead fishing near Columbus, 1982

This is my 4-year-old son, Tony, of Columbus and the stringer of 14 bullheads he caught on his first time fishing. We were fishing a farm pond north of Columbus. In the picture he is showing his fish to the owner of Geno's Baitshop in Columbus.

Dad never got a line in the water — too busy unhooking and baiting for the little Master Angler!

– LaRoy Edie, Columbus



Send contributions to: Portraits from the Past, Nebraskaland Magazine, P.O. Box 30370, Lincoln, NE 68503-0370. Or e-mail to Tim.Reigert@Nebraska.gov. Photos should show people enjoying Nebraska outdoor activities, such as camping, boating, hunting or fishing, and must have been taken before 2000. We will give priority to unusual photos or activities. When possible, please include a story about the photograph and identify the people, places and approximate date it was taken. Text may be edited and photos adjusted for reproduction. All photos will be returned.



This photo of an eastern red fox squirrel in Washington County was one of 625 images shot over a 30-second span. One would say that is slight overkill. JEFF KURRUS, NEBRASKALAND

A MIRRORLESS RETIREMENT

By Jeff Kurrus

Cameras are fancy. Always have been. Historically, they have always been on the cutting edge of technology, seemingly boasting more wonder and options than a spaceship. Many years ago, while visiting with longtime *Nebraskaland* and world-renowned photographer Michael Forsberg at Rowe Sanctuary near Gibbon, he looked at his camera. “I have no idea what most of these buttons even do.”

One of the latest innovations are mirrorless cameras. No more opening and closing shutters in 1/5000 of a second, everyone, because creating an image from that sort of speed seems infantile, right? Now, the shutter doesn’t open at all. Light passes through the lens into the camera body, this light is converted into a digital signal, and this signal becomes image data.

Got it? I know I don’t.

What I do know is that my mirrorless camera works silently. No more clicks when you press the button, and no more delayed clicks when there’s not enough light to keep your photo subject sharp. And to add injury to insult, the camera is insanely fast. Holding down the trigger for five

seconds can result in more than 100 images being taken.

Thus, my newest nightmares — as I have seemingly forgotten everything I have learned from shooting for more than 30 years, nearly 18 for this publication.

Who needs 225 images of the same squirrel on the same limb in the same light with the same confused look on his face?

More importantly, who needs 399 blurry images of this same animal?

I never would have realized how bad I needed the sound of that shutter to open and close, not only as a reminder of laying off the Gatling gun every once in a while but also knowing my own shaky ability to keep my camera still as light begins to fade.

Perhaps I will go back to a less civilized camera, back to the days of hearing that shutter open and close considerably faster than a hummingbird can flap its wings in a second.

Or, I could stay with what I got. There has to be a button or two on there somewhere that can help, right?

Maybe Forsberg will know.

Hmm ... probably not.



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