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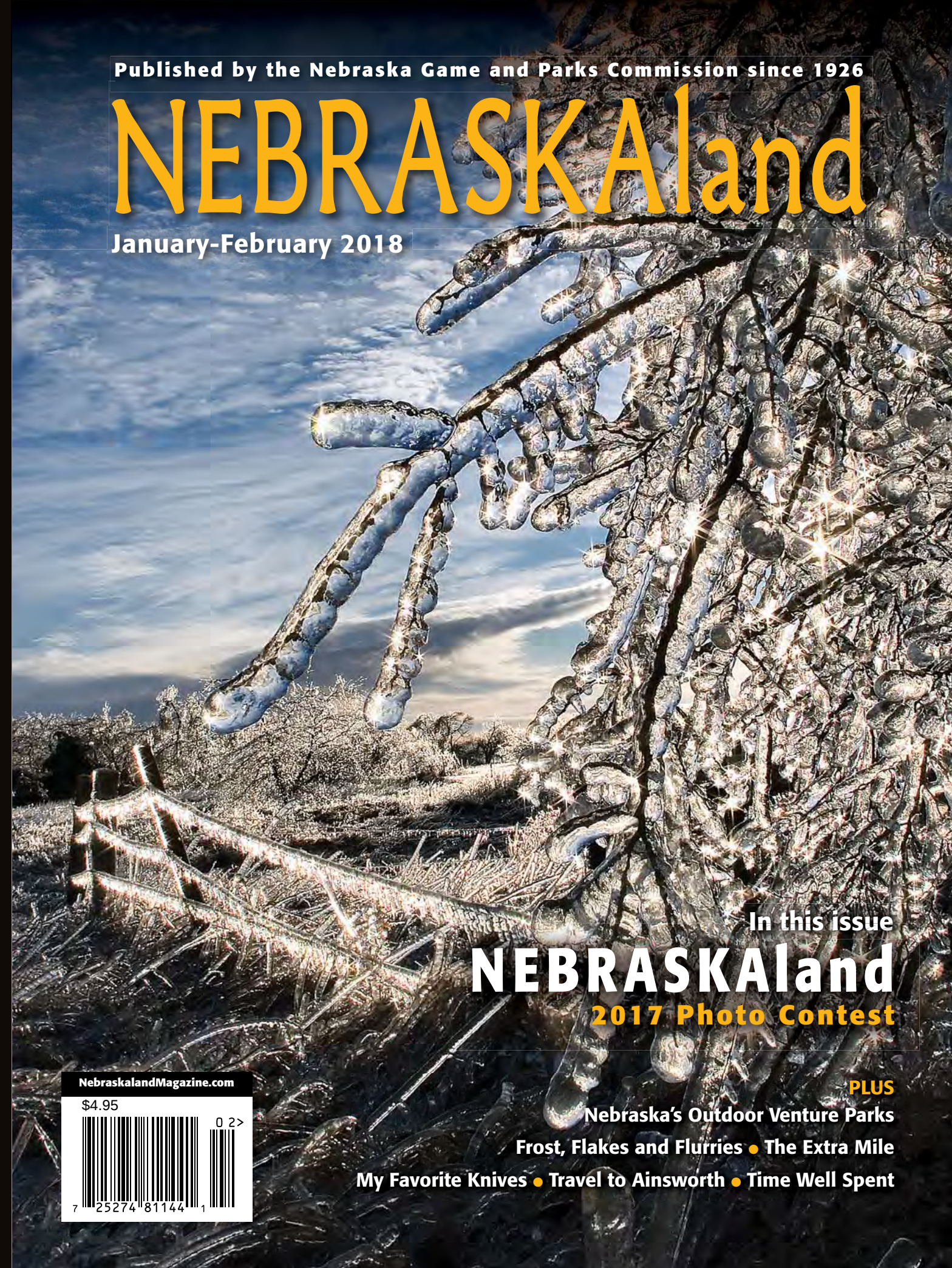
NEBRASKAland

January-February 2018



A herd of mule deer does stands on a Cherry County hillside at sunrise.
Photo by Eric Fowler.

Published by the
NEBRASKA
— GAME  PARKS —
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In this issue

NEBRASKAland

2017 Photo Contest

PLUS

Nebraska's Outdoor Venture Parks
Frost, Flakes and Flurries • The Extra Mile
My Favorite Knives • Travel to Ainsworth • Time Well Spent

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NEBRASKA
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NEBRASKAland Magazine

Volume 96 • No. 1 • January-February 2018

FEATURES...

24 Frost, Flakes and Flurries

PHOTOS AND STORY BY JUSTIN HAAG

32 Time Well Spent

What to Do in January-February

BY RENAE BLUM

34 Nebraska's Outdoor Venture Parks

BY JEFF KURRUS

48 The Extra Mile

STORY AND PHOTOS BY ERIC FOWLER

52 2017 NEBRASKAland Photo Contest

PHOTOS BY NEBRASKALAND MAGAZINE READERS



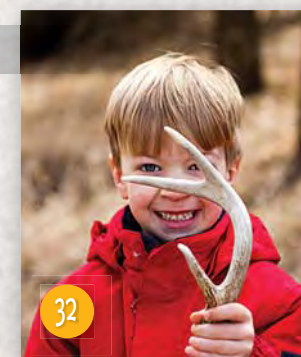
52

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

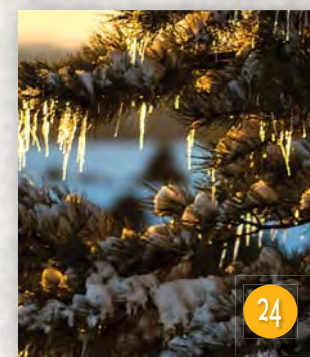
From Our Readers.....	4
Mixed Bag – A Mammal Brief of Coyotes, Travel to Ainsworth, A Brief History of Buffalo Bill for Senate in 1872, Bigger Hooks, Ice Auger Choices, Winter Fun – Snow or No Snow, Upcoming Events, and more	8
Junior Journal – Winter Tidbits	68
Wilderness Workshop – My Favorite Knives	70
Portraits from the Past – Readers' Photos	72
In the Kitchen – Baked Rigatoni with Turkey Meatballs.....	74
The Last Stop – Standing On Ice.....	78

Cover: This image was taken after an ice storm in Hall County. Photo by Rick Rasmussen.

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32



24



34



Denise Wiese of Doniphan was fortunate to watch and photograph this whooping crane for over an hour near her hometown.



Mike Benkis of Omaha shared this photo of a snowy owl in La Platte.



Joel Jones of Lincoln, formerly of Halifax, England, captured this striking view of our Nebraska state capitol building in a photo he calls "Pentagonal Obelisk."



"The summer sun playing peek-a-boo at Wildwood Lake" in southeastern Nebraska was submitted by Kari Pagles of Lincoln.

GET YOUR PHOTOS FEATURED
in an upcoming print edition of
**NEBRASKAland Magazine, on our website,
or social media**

How to have your photo considered:

- Follow @NEBRASKAland on Instagram
- Tag us in the photos you think we should feature
- Check your messages

That's it! We'll go through the entries monthly and notify you if your photo is selected.





Joel Jones calls this image "Nebraska State Capitol Rotunda," which is a composite of 20 images layered into a vertorama to capture the "amazing workmanship of this building."

NEBRASKAland Visitor
The December 2017 *NEBRASKAland* Visitor is a mammoth giant water bug (*Lethocerus americanus*) on page 33. They are found in muddy wetlands, streams and lakes. Unsuspecting swimmers sometimes are bitten on their toes, thus their "toe-pincher" nickname.
They feed on small fish, frogs and sometimes snakes.
Wayne Cross
Madison, Nebraska

I believe this month's visitor is on page 33 and is a giant water bug. We love your magazine. Your pictures are always beautiful! It shows off our wonderful state.
I send a gift subscription to a friend in Utah, who is a retired game warden, and he is thrilled to read *NEBRASKAland*!
Marlene Albin
Guide Rock, Nebraska

The visitor for the December 2017 *NEBRASKAland* is on page 33. True to size on page 33, it is a giant water bug. I also read that it is nicknamed the "Toe-biter!"
Carol Shafer
York, Nebraska

Correction: In the November, 2017 issue, it was stated the state champion bur oak tree was in Peru County. There is no county with that name, only a town. We regret the error.
-Editor

Send your comments to:
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Lincoln, NE 68503
or e-mail Jeff.Kurrus@Nebraska.gov
Please include your postal address and telephone number. Letters may be condensed and edited. Photographs are also welcome.

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A Mammal Brief

Coyote

By Lindsay Rogers

Smaller than a wolf, but larger than a red fox, the coyote is easily identified by its size. Like the wolf, its coloration can vary greatly from cream or tan to dark brown and deep gray. Coyotes are extremely adaptable and can be found across Nebraska in a variety of habitats, including farmland, forest, prairie, wetland and suburban areas. They are extremely vocal and are often heard rather than seen; their three main vocalizations are the squeak, distress and howl. At dusk and into the evening, they can be heard howling in groups forming a canine chorus.

Although often assumed to be true carnivores, coyotes are actually omnivores. The majority of their diet consists of small mammals including rabbits, ground squirrels and mice, but they will also consume berries, fruit and leaves. Coyotes can take deer, but doing so often requires teamwork from multiple individuals. ■

Lindsay Rogers is an outdoor education specialist with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.



Saving Wildlife and Wild Places

The Nebraska Wildlife Conservation Fund works to connect people and nature through education, research and habitat restoration. Learn about the fund, the projects it supports and how you can help online at:

NebraskaWildlifeFund.org

Look for the Peregrine Falcon image on your Nebraska tax return.



Prescribed Fire Training Workshops

A series of workshops will be held around the state to provide guidance and instruction for completing safe and effective prescribed fires. These workshops are for landowners, resource professionals, volunteer fire departments and others interested in burning. No prior burn experience is necessary to participate.



Basic Workshops

DATE	LOCATION	TITLE AND DESCRIPTION	ADDRESS	TIME
January 16th 2018	Scottsbluff	Prescribed Fire Basics — Learn why, when and how to plan and complete a safe and effective prescribed fire.	North Platte NRD 100547 Airport Road • Scottsbluff	9:00 AM— 4:00PM MST
January 17th 2018	Alliance	Prescribed Fire Basics — Learn why, when and how to plan and complete a safe and effective prescribed fire.	Alliance Public Library 1750 Sweetwater Ave. #101 • Alliance	9:00 AM - 4:00 PM MST
January 24th 2018	McCook	Prescribed Fire Basics — Learn why, when and how to plan and complete a safe and effective prescribed fire.	4H Building—Red Willow Fairgrounds 1400 W 5th Street • McCook	9:00 AM - 4:00 PM CST
January 30th 2018	Grand Island	Prescribed Fire Basics — Learn why, when and how to plan and complete a safe and effective prescribed fire.	Hall County Extension—UNL 3180 US-34 • Grand Island	9:00 AM - 4:00 PM MST
January 30th 2018	Norfolk	Prescribed Fire Basics — Learn why, when and how to plan and complete a safe and effective prescribed fire.	Lifelong Learning Center 601 East Benjamin Ave • Norfolk	9:00 AM - 4:00 PM CST
January 31st 2018	Lincoln	Prescribed Fire Basics — Learn why, when and how to plan and complete a safe and effective prescribed fire.	Lancaster County UNL Extension 444 Cherry Creek Road • Lincoln	9:00 AM - 4:00 PM CST
February 7th 2018	Broken Bow	Prescribed Fire Basics — Learn why, when and how to plan and complete a safe and effective prescribed fire.	Veterans Memorial Building 416 S. 1st Ave. • Broken Bow	9:00 AM - 4:00 PM CST

Advanced Topics

December 14th 2017	Broken Bow	Smoke Effects and Management — Smoke is an inevitable part of every prescribed fire. Join us to explore health hazards posed by smoke, smoke management tactics, as well as the ecological benefits of smoke.	Tumbleweed Café 850 East S Street • Broken Bow	6:00 PM - 9:00 PM CST
January 16th 2018	Maywood	TBD— Check NebraskaPF.com or our Facebook page for updates.	Clubhouse Lounge 106 N. Commercial Street • Maywood	6:30 PM— 9:00 PM CST
January 17th 2018	Hebron	Making Fire Work For You — The timing you choose to burn can greatly influence the outcomes. Come learn about timing and related benefits to achieve land management goal.	Stastny Community College 1350 Dove Road • Hebron	10:00 AM - 2:00 PM CST
January 18th 2018	Imperial	Using Prescribed Fire for CRP Management— This evening workshop will cover how to use prescribed fire as an option for mid-contract management in your CRP fields.	Mid Plains College 1324 Broadway • Imperial	5:30 PM - 8:30 PM MST
February 15th 2018	Neligh	Constructing your Prescribed Burn Plan— Learn the different components of a prescribed burn plan and how to develop your plan to maximize safety and effectiveness during your prescribed fire.	Antelope county Extension—UNL 501 Main Street Suite 9B • Neligh	5:30 PM- 8:30 PM CST
April 4th 2018	Tekamah	Integrated Wildlife Management Using Fire - Learn how you can design a wildlife management plan while incorporating all aspects of prescribed fire planning.	First Northeast Bank of Nebraska 448 South 13th Street • Tekamah	12:00 PM - 3:00 PM CDT

Registration fee of \$10 includes meal and training materials. Visit www.NebraskaPF.com or call 308-850-8395 for more information and to register.



Visit Ainsworth

By Brenna McFadden, Nebraska Tourism Commission

Ainsworth is known throughout the state for their Sandhills hospitality, and with so many reasons to visit it is easy to see why. This small town offers a variety of activities from enjoying time outdoors to spending time shopping downtown.

Spend a weekend at the Roadway Inn and plan out some time in nature at the Keller Park State Recreation Area. This wide expanse of 196 acres is found just northeast of Ainsworth and includes Bone Creek, one of the few spots anglers can pursue both rainbow trout and warmwater species.

Activities to get the whole family involved include camping, hiking, wildlife viewing and picnicking. As you are exploring the beauty of the Sandhills, look for the rustic footbridge across Bone Creek; it is sure to add some charm to the view.

While in town you can spend time in the historic downtown area perusing some of the local restaurants, shops and stores. One of the locals' favorite stores, Ranch-Land Western, has been in business for nearly 60 years serving the community's visitors. This store provides high-quality western wear and goods ranging from clothes for men, women and children to handmade saddles and unique home furnishings.

To continue your search for home décor, you can find eclectic options at Silver Linings, which also serves as a floral shop.

After you have explored Ainsworth, you will most definitely have built up an appetite, and what better way to treat yourself than by eating local? Local House 20 has a great menu with something for everyone, including steak and other Nebraska staples, and don't forget to finish off your meal

with some of their legendary bread pudding.

So, pack up the car and prepare for a weekend full of fun in Ainsworth. But don't plan on coming and going too quickly – you might just find this beautiful Sandhills area hard to leave. ■

While in the Area

Other places to stay, eat at and visit in the Ainsworth area:

- Yellowthroat Wildlife Management Area
- Sellors Barton Museum
- D and B Café
- Big John's Restaurant
- Book Peddler Books and Gifts



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Albert Allen of Ainsworth kayak fishes at Tower Lake at the Yellowthroat Wildlife Management Area in Brown County.

Ainsworth Area Chamber of Commerce

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2018 Upcoming Events

Jan. - Polar Bear Dip/ Niobrara River, Meadville
June 8-10th - Carnival Days, Ainsworth
June 22-24th - Alumni Weekend, Ainsworth
July 4th - Fireworks Display, Ainsworth
Sept. - Labor Day Weekend Brown Co Fair, Johnstown
Oct. 31st - Safe Trick or Treat Street, Ainsworth
Dec. 2nd - Santa & His Reindeer, Ainsworth
Dec. 2nd - Women's Club Christmas Pageant, Ainsworth

Ainsworth has many places to eat, lodging, and service stations located in the heart of some of the finest deer, turkey, duck, grouse, and pheasant hunting in the state. There are numerous sandhill lakes, ponds, and trout streams with great fishing, canoeing, tubing, and camping available. There are also state recreation facilities such as Keller State Park and the Long Pine Recreation Area which has a new archery range.

A Brief History

Nebraska Senator Buffalo Bill Cody?

By the Nebraska State Historical Society

As Nebraska’s state senators return to the Unicameral for this year’s legislative session, it’s a good time to think about the state senator that Nebraska almost elected in 1872: William F. “Buffalo Bill” Cody.

Most Nebraskans know that the famous Army scout and Western showman served at Fort McPherson and had a home and ranch in North Platte – today’s Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park. In 1872 some of his friends decided that his name recognition would make him a strong political candidate. They secured for him the Democratic nomination for the 26th District seat in the Nebraska Senate. The district included the counties of Buffalo, Cheyenne, Dawson, Franklin, Harlan, Kearney and Lincoln, as well as some unorganized territory.

As a Democrat, Cody had little hope of being elected from the predominately Republican district. And he wasn’t the most enthusiastic candidate. He later wrote in his autobiography, “I cared very little about it, and therefore



William “Buffalo Bill” Cody as an Army scout, circa 1870. NSHS RG3004-6

made no effort whatever to secure my election.”

But the Cody name proved a powerful draw. The returns filed with the Board of Canvassers located in Lincoln County gave Cody a narrow but surprising victory over his opponent, D. T. Ashburn of Gibbon. Cody won by just 44 votes.

One of the oddities of Nebraska geography is that the city of Lincoln is not in Lincoln County. North Platte is in Lincoln County. As it turned out, confusion on this point made a difference in the election.

Ashburn supporters immediately contested the results, charging that the returns were incomplete. An investigation revealed that the county clerk of Harlan County had mistakenly sent his returns not to Lincoln County, but to the city of Lincoln. These additional votes gave Ashburn the majority.

“Senator” Cody never appeared at the Capitol to claim his seat. When the legislature convened, it awarded Ashburn the seat. By that time, Buffalo Bill was already in New York opening his first stage production. Cody’s eventual success in show business no doubt amply compensated him for his “failure” in politics. ■

Visit the Nebraska State Historical Society’s website at nebraskahistory.org.

Opposite: Cody with the famous Lakota chief Sitting Bull, circa 1880. NSHS RG3004-23-45068



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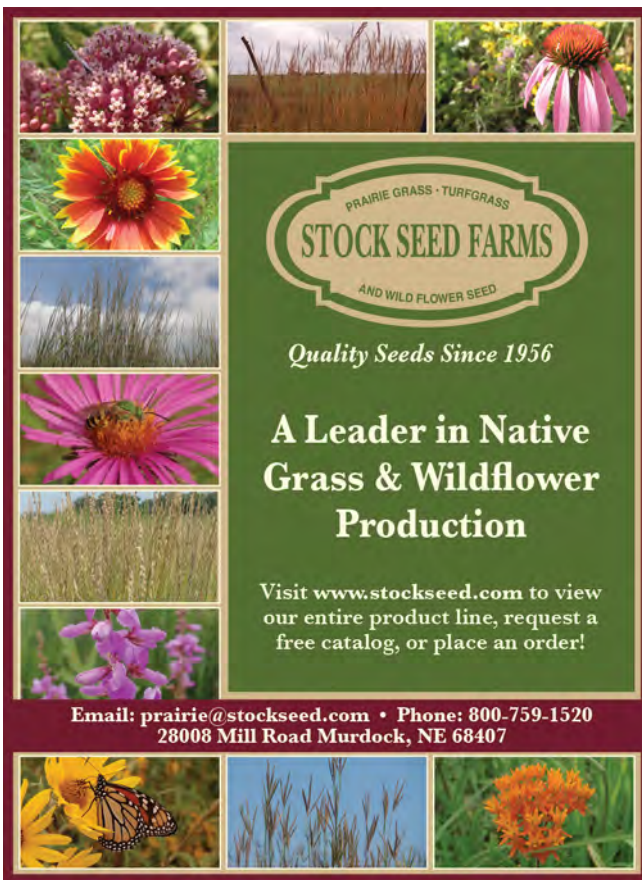
Thomas P. Kennard House, Lincoln

Sen. George Norris State Historic Site, McCook

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Ice Augers - Which Type is the Best Fit for You?

By Julie Geiser

There are many styles, prices and brand names of augers on the market. You really can't buy a bad auger nowadays, but you can buy one that fits your fishing style and budget.

Hand Augers

Many ice anglers have started their hard-water fishing ventures with a hand auger. With their simple design, low cost (under \$75) and light weight, some anglers still prefer hand augers over their more expensive power counterparts. Hand augers are good to use in remote areas where added weight and space is not an option. For those fishing for smaller species (that don't require a hole larger than six inches to pull fish through) and for anglers who only hit the ice a few times a season (and don't want to pay three times as much for a power auger), the hand auger might be a good fit.



Gas Powered

Two-stroke gas augers have been around for decades and provide anglers an easy, quick way to drill holes for ice-fishing. Many of these gas and oil mix machines have been replaced by the four-stroke engine that doesn't have as much maintenance, starting issues or smoke as the two-stroke. The cost for these models, however, can stretch a budget running from \$300 to more than \$600. Gas augers do require carrying small gas cans, repair tools and are sometimes hard to start. Gas lines can even freeze up in extremely cold conditions.

But for those who don't want to spend more on electric types and want to power through several inches of ice with eight- to 12-inch holes, this could be the choice for

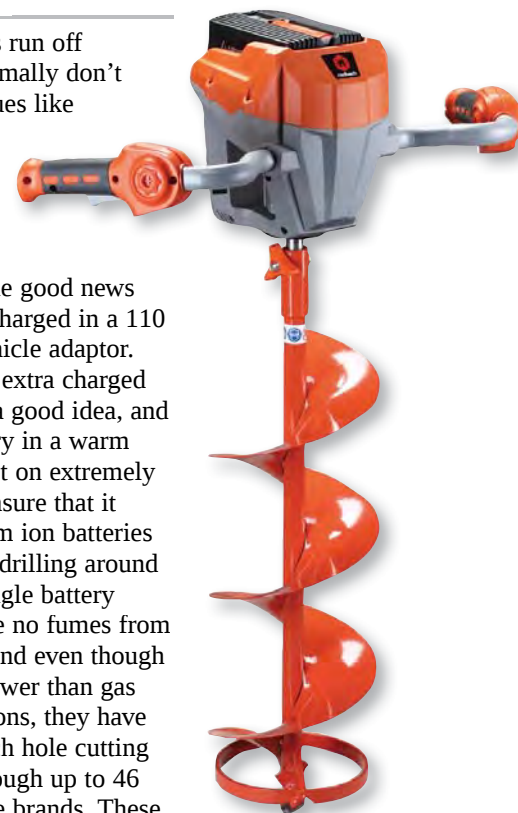


you. Gas augers last for years and many of the blades can be sharpened or replaced as the unit ages.

Propane augers have become popular the last few years and are easy to clean, have a lot of power with up to 40CC, four-stroke engines and are quieter than gas/oil mix engines. A one-pound tank of propane usually drills about 100 holes before needing to be replaced. They are similar to electric augers in that they are lightweight and function much like an electric version. Propane augers cost less than electric but do require a few pulls to get running.

Electric

Electric augers run off batteries and normally don't have starting issues like gas augers can. But they must be charged fully before heading out on the ice; the good news is many can be charged in a 110 volt outlet or vehicle adaptor. Having a couple extra charged batteries is also a good idea, and storing the battery in a warm hut or in a pocket on extremely cold days will ensure that it will start. Lithium ion batteries last a long time, drilling around 30 holes on a single battery charge. There are no fumes from electric augers, and even though they run a bit slower than gas or propane versions, they have a tough eight-inch hole cutting power to get through up to 46 inches with some brands. These lightweight but pricey options are great for those wanting the ease of a power auger.



Summary

Most of these augers last for years and blades on each unit can be sharpened if you know what you're doing. Replacing the blades is simple as well. Extensions are also available for many auger shafts if you will be fishing in areas that require a deeper cut.

Depending on the weight, price, area you'll be fishing, noise level and ease of use, the choice is yours as to which auger model is right for you. There are many brand names on the market, but all will work about the same to cut through the ice. ■

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© Kubota Tractor Corporation, 2016

Hooks For Bigger Fish

By Larry Kurrus

For you wintertime fly-tyers out there: Are some of your panfish hooks bending on larger fish? There may be a way to prevent that from happening. Most fly hooks are more than adequate for their intended purpose, but what if that Master Angler fish decides to take your bug? It's usually a hard pull at first, maybe a jump or two, and then that hard run that ends in a lost fish, disappointment and a bent hook.

An answer to this problem could come from hook manufacturer Eagle Claw. They offer a No. 8 and No. 6 hook for panfish that have a bit more bulk, are stout enough for

larger fish and make some really nice looking flies.

There is a slight downside to these hooks, but one that is easy to negotiate. The hooks have to be adjusted slightly from their original



PHOTOS BY JEFF KURRUS

A sturdier hook when fly-fishing can sometimes be the difference between landing a big fish or not, including a grass carp on a mulberry imitation.

design. If you look at the hooks, they are turned where the shank meets the hook end, and the point is bent in slightly (photo left, top).

Place the hook in your fly-tying vise and gently bend the hook end until it is straight with the shank. Then bend the point of the hook out until it is parallel with the shank or maybe even a bit more (photo left, bottom). This small alteration will keep more fish hooked.

Now you are ready to land that next Master Angler. ■



Before using the suggested panfish hooks, bend the point of the hook so it is parallel with the shank.

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Winter Fun – With or Without Snow

By Julie Geiser

When there is snow on the ground, many of us get out and enjoy snowy day activities such as sledding, snowball fights and building snowmen and snow forts. Many areas across the state may be without the white stuff this winter, but there are plenty of great outdoor activities to do – just be creative.

Geocaching

Geocaching can be done year-round; it is fun to hunt for caches and a great way to spend time outdoors even if there's no snow on the ground. You'll need a GPS unit or a smart phone to get started. To find cache locations visit geocaching.com, create an account and search for the caches hidden in your area. Caches can be close to home, or pack a sack lunch and sodas for a day of adventure. Caches can be found across the state.

Many of our state recreation areas and state parks have caches, which is a two-for-one deal: you can enjoy a day at a state area while you cache. All caches should contain a logbook or paper scroll to sign when you find it; some caches contain small treasures for the taking as long as you leave a treasure for the next cacher.

Wildlife Watching

Even if you can't track animal prints in the snow, you can still enjoy observing tracks and compare them to those in track books to see which animal made them. Wildlife management areas, lakes, state parks and state recreation areas are great places to view wildlife.

To increase your chances of seeing wildlife, consider these tips: look for out-of-place shapes and movements; look above and below you; be as quiet as possible and use binoculars. Set up a pop-up blind and make a game out of wildlife viewing. Kids love making games out of finding animals. Keep in mind that dusk and dawn are usually prime times for wildlife watching, and many birds will be out and about for viewing and photographing.

Visit State Parks

There is no better time to spend a weekend at a state park. Winter is a slower season at state parks so securing a cabin reservation or a spot for your camper or tent is much easier. Even in winter there are plenty of fun things to do such as fishing, hiking, birdwatching and photography – or just enjoying a quiet weekend away.

Have a winter picnic at a state or local park or state recreation area. If fire pits are available, warm your fingers and toes by the fire as you cook hotdogs and s'mores.

Backyard Campfires

Put your hat, coat and warm clothes on and gather around



PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS

Looking for geocaches can be done year-round.

the campfire. With backyard fire pits, anyone can enjoy sitting around the fire any time of the year.

This can be a fun way to spend an afternoon or evening. It's an ideal location to sit and watch the flames, read a book or enjoy some hot chocolate and family time.

Grab the s'mores supplies and make yourselves a treat, snuggle up in a blanket on your outdoor swing and enjoy the night sky with all the stars and moon. It just doesn't get much better than that.

Bird Feeding

With the winter months upon us, birds have a difficult time finding food and water. Below is a homemade treat for birds that kids and adults can both have fun making and watching birds eat.

Wild Birdseed Cookies

- 2 cups flour
- 1/2 teaspoon of baking powder
- 1/2 cup of sugar
- 3/4 cup vegetable shortening
- 2 eggs
- 3/4 cup birdseed of choice
- 3 egg whites
- Cookie cutters
- Yarn to hang cookies

Sift all the dry ingredients together and cut in the lard with a blunt knife. Add the eggs. Add the birdseed and knead until smooth. Allow the dough to chill overnight. Roll out the dough to 1/4-inch thickness and cut into shapes with cookie cutters. Insert a paper clip into the top of the shape to act as a hanger. Brush the cookie with beaten egg whites and press birdseed into the top of the cookie. Bake on an ungreased cookie sheet at 325 degrees Fahrenheit for 10-15 minutes or until the cookies are hard. String yarn through the paper clip to make a hanger and hang outside.

Don't forget to water the birds this winter; they rely on water to drink and to bathe even during the winter months. Watching birds come to a feeder or watering area can be exciting. Keep a journal of the birds that come to your feeder. Draw or take photos of them and compare them to those in a birding book to determine which birds have visited your backyard at that time of the year. ■

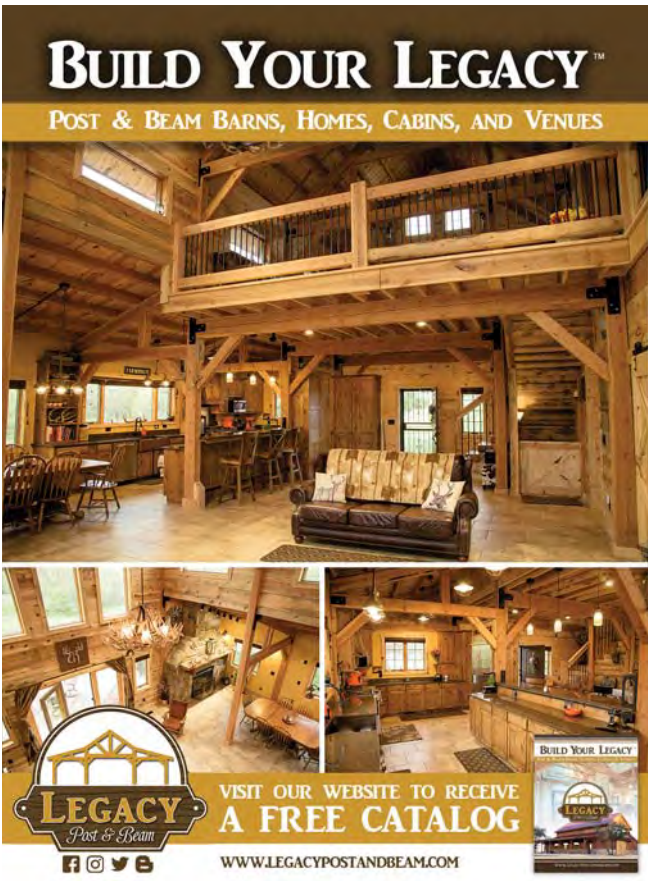


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NEBRASKA
- GAME PARKS -



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Upcoming Events

by Jerry Kane

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

January 1

First Day Hike

Ponca State Park (SP), Ponca; Platte River SP, Louisville; Chadron SP, Chadron; Indian Cave SP, Shubert; Eugene T. Mahoney SP, Ashland; Fremont Lakes State Recreation Area (SRA), Fremont; Wildcat Hills SRA, Gering; Ash Hollow State Historical Park (SHP), Lewellen; Fort Kearny SRA, Kearney

January 2

Super Tag and Combo

Application period begins for Super Tag and Combo multispecies lottery permits

January 4

Growing Up WILD Workshop

Lincoln

January 4

Big Game Informational Meeting

Geneva

January 6-7

Family Ice Fishing Clinic

Kearney

January 6-7, 13-14, 20-21, 27-28

Winter Fun Exhibit

Arbor Lodge SHP, Nebraska City

January 7

Shootout at Salt Creek

Nebraska Game and Parks Outdoor Education Center, Lincoln

January 7

Duck and Coot Hunting

Duck and coot hunting seasons close in Zone 3, Low Plains and High Plains Units

January 8

Spring Turkey Hunting

First day of spring turkey hunting permit sales

January 8-28

Duck and Coot Hunting

Duck and coot hunting seasons in Zones 2 and 3, High Plains Unit

January 9

Big Game Informational Meeting

Imperial

January 9

Big Game Informational Meeting

West Point

January 10

Big Game Informational Meeting

Fullerton

January 11

Big Game Informational Meeting

Broken Bow

January 11

Big Game Informational Meeting

Lincoln

January 13

Cold Day, Warm Hearts

Eugene T. Mahoney SP, Ashland

January 15

Deer Hunting

Deer hunting seasons close for Youth, Landowner, Season Choice and River Antlerless, and Gifford Point WMA deer hunting seasons close

January 16

Prescribed Burn Training Workshop

Scottsbluff

January 17

Prescribed Burn Training Workshop

Alliance

January 19

Dark Goose Hunting

Dark goose hunting season closes in North Central Unit

January 19

Nebraska Game and Parks

Commission meeting

Eugene T. Mahoney SP

January 20

Ice Bowl Disc Golf Tournament

Eugene T. Mahoney SP, Ashland

January 20

Crow Hunting

Crow hunting season opens statewide

January 20

Family Ice Fishing Clinic

Lake Wanahoo SRA, Wahoo

January 24

Prescribed Burn Training Workshop

McCook

January 24-February 11

Light Goose Hunting

Light goose hunting season

January 30

Prescribed Burn Training Workshop

Grand Island

Lainey Sheffield enjoys a sled ride in the winter outdoors.

January 30

Prescribed Burn Training Workshop

Norfolk

January 31

Prescribed Burn Training Workshop

Lincoln

January 31

Hunting Seasons

Hunting seasons close for November late doe/fawn antelope, fall turkey, pheasant, quail, partridge, grouse and squirrel

February 3

Birds and Binoculars

Eugene T. Mahoney SP, Ashland

February 3-11

White-fronted Goose

White-fronted goose hunting season

February 7

Prescribed Burn Training Workshop

Broken Bow

February 10

Pheasants Forever

Pheasants Forever State Habitat Meeting, Kearney

February 11

Dark Goose Hunting

Dark goose hunting season closes in East, Platte River, Panhandle and Niobrara units

February 11-15

Valentine's Day Special

Eugene T. Mahoney SP, Ashland

February 12

Light Goose

Light Goose Conservation Order hunting begins

February 14

Valentine's Day Dining

Platte River SP, Louisville

February 28

Hunting and Trapping

Bobcat, raccoon, Virginia opossum, long-tailed weasel, mink, red fox, gray fox and badger hunting and trapping seasons close

Ice Fishing to Bring List

By Julie Geiser

When heading out on frozen lakes or ponds to ice fish, you won't want to leave home without these important items.

- Tip-ups and ice fishing rods/reels
- Ice shelter (anything to keep out of the wind)
- Propane heater for cold days
- Spud bar (for checking ice thickness)
- Ice auger
- Sled to carry auger and supplies
- Five-gallon bucket to carry lures, jigs and bait, extra line, hook sharpener, bobbers, split shot, needle-nose pliers for hook removal and line cutting, hand warmers, ice cleats, flashlight and matches or lighter
- Five-gallon bucket to sit on
- Phone
- GPS or fish locator
- Ice picks (to pull yourself out if you fall through)
- Compass
- Ice scoop for removing slush from holes
- Fishing license
- 50 feet of rope and life vests for safety

If you take your kids with you, also consider bringing snacks, extra clothing and gloves, tissues or a hanky, and extra sleds or ice skates to play with. Don't forget to protect everyone's eyes with sunglasses, as the sun and wind can burn them. Sunscreen and lip protection is a good idea to bring along as well.

Lastly, no outing is complete without water to drink, some sandwiches or even soup, which is easily warmed on a cooker/heater or brought inside a thermos. ■



PHOTO BY JULIE GEISER

Even in a one-person ice shelter, there is room for essential ice-fishing items that you should never leave home without.

NEBRASKAland Visitor

Last issue's winner of the Visitor drawing was Geniece Helmick of Broken Bow, Nebraska, who found the **giant water bug** on page 33.

Readers are encouraged to contact *NEBRASKAland* within 10 days after this issue's publication with the correct page number and name of this issue's "Visitor" – a critter found in Nebraska. We will then gather the correct entries and draw one to win a *NEBRASKAland* mug.

To enter each month, write:

NEBRASKAland Visitor

2200 North 33rd Street

Lincoln, NE 68503

Or e-mail: Tim.Reigert@Nebraska.gov with "Visitor" in the subject line of the message.

HINT: This issue's visitor is not on page 14, 23, 55, 56 or 68.

The giant water bug (Lethocerus americanus) is native to North America and can be found in Nebraska. Adults are tan to brown, with a flat, oval-shaped body, growing up to four inches in length. As their name suggests, these insects are aquatic, found in ponds and streams. But they are also good flyers and are often seen on sidewalks and around lights. Giant water bugs are ferocious predators, feeding on other insects, small fish and even frogs. They grab prey with their front legs and, using their beak-like mouthpart, inject a powerful toxin into their prey. The toxin will paralyze the prey and dissolve its internal tissue, which the giant water bug will suck out. Giant water bugs are known to occasionally nibble on toes dangling in the water. While their bite is usually harmless to humans, it can be painful, earning the insect its other common name – toe-biter.

Special thanks to Julie Van Meter, State Entomologist, Nebraska Department of Agriculture.



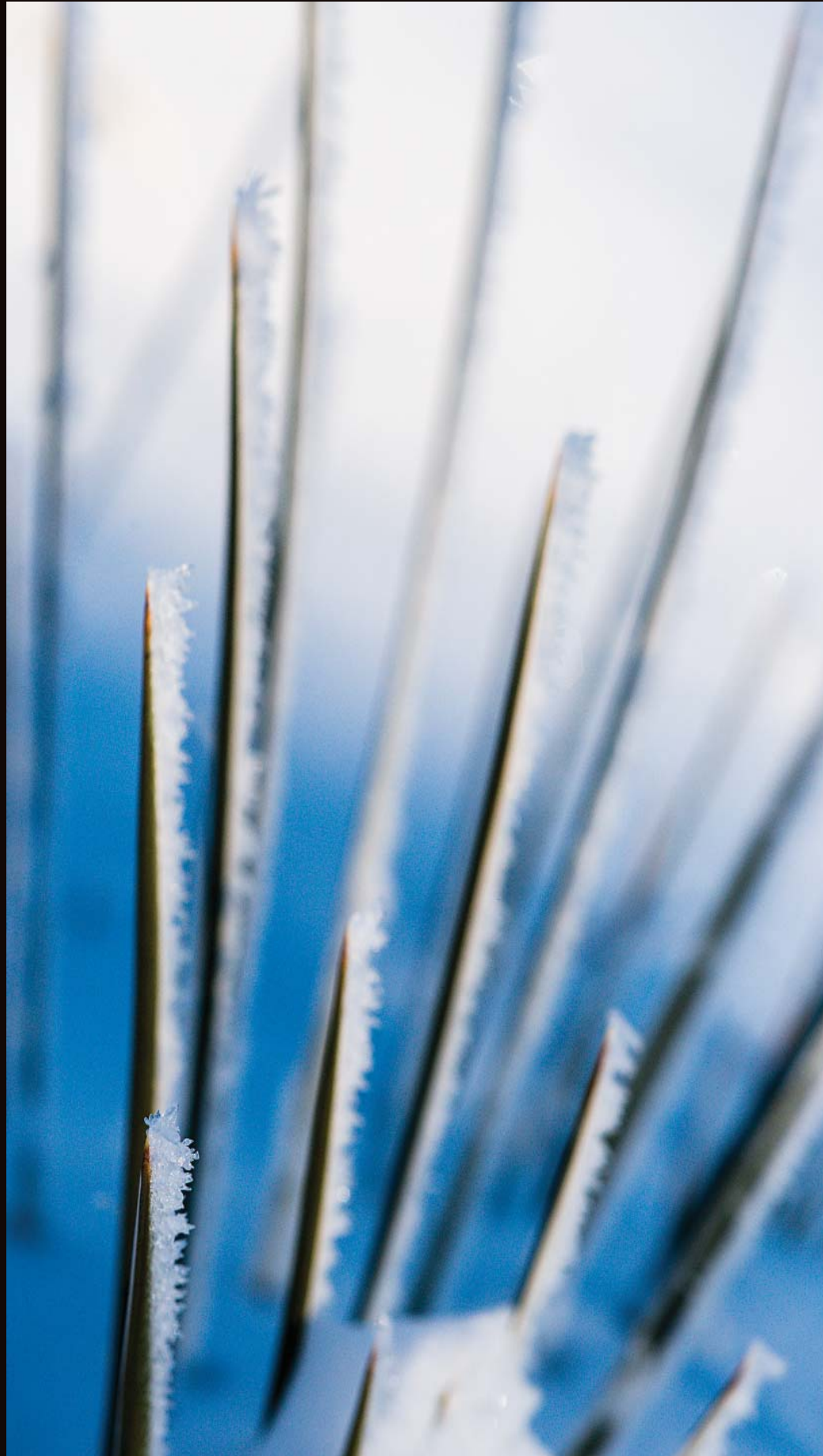


FROST, FLAKES AND FLURRIES

Photos and story by Justin Haag

As winter grips the region, it is sometimes hard to recognize the beauty it brings. Residents of the northern Great Plains may groan at the thought of handling the snow shovel or ice scraper once more, but there is no denying that our winter landscape looks a little better when dressed in some solidified precipitation.

Propelled by the unrelenting wind at the end of another day, snow sprints across the blanketed plains of western Nebraska.



Similar to the work of a skilled artist, winter's snow and ice brings fresh perspective to familiar scenes.

Far left: Frost puts a new edge on the needle-like leaves of a soapweed.
 Above: In a spectacle fit for a snow globe, a flock of wild turkeys forages among the challenges of the season.
 Lower right: With sub-zero temperatures, frost crawls its way over the top of a shallow stream at Ponderosa Wildlife Management Area.



Fleeting sunlight, which comes at a premium on these shortest days of the year, adds to the magic.

Above: Clouds do their best to hide the sun behind snow-coated pines at Chadron State Park.

Far right: The evening sun illuminates icicles, formed after an afternoon of temperatures just above freezing.

Bottom left: Morning sunlight highlights snow kicked up by the thundering hooves of speedy pronghorn.





In ways both literal and figurative, winter can be confining to the body and spirit. To a similar degree, this magical time of year arouses the senses and delivers beauty in heaps to those willing to brave the elements. May you find freedom in nature's artistry. ■



Top left: A thin layer of ice traps air bubbles along the banks of the White River at Fort Robinson State Park.
Bottom left: A heavy coat of hoarfrost envelops hardwoods and pines along White Clay Creek.
Top right: Mule deer use their hooves to eke out a winter day's nourishment.

Justin works and lives in northwestern Nebraska. He has been a regional editor of NEBRASKAland Magazine for 5 years. He lives with his wife, Cricket, and children, Sawyer and Kiera (whom you probably have seen pictures of in the magazine).



Time Well Spent

What to Do in January and February

By Renae Blum

It's the start of a new year – what surprises could your outdoor adventures hold in 2018? They can begin right now with some suggestions below. For more information on outdoor events across the state, visit Calendar.OutdoorNebraska.gov. ■



PHOTO BY BOB GRIER

See Bald Eagles at the Lake Ogallala Eagle Viewing Center

Weekends from 8 a.m.-2 p.m.
Lake Ogallala

Eagles can be seen year-round across the state, but winter and early spring are the best times to see large numbers of eagles. A great place to go right now is the Lake Ogallala Eagle Viewing Center located below Kingsley Dam. The center is open for eagle viewing on weekends in January and February from 8 a.m.-2 p.m. Stop by at 9 a.m. or 12 p.m. to see a fun presentation by the park naturalist.

Get in Shape for Hunting and Fishing in 2018

Anytime
Statewide

Start taking steps now to have a better hunting and fishing experience this year with diet, exercise and good sleep. Your body will thank you during those long, early morning walks.



PHOTO BY ALEXANDER CHERNYAKOV



PHOTO BY CHRIS MASADA

Sandhill Crane Viewing

Mid-February
Central Nebraska

If you've seen it once, you'll never forget it – and will probably never regret seeing it again. As Sandhill cranes begin migrating through Nebraska in mid-February, pick a place for viewing. Popular sites include Fort Kearny State Historical Park and State Recreation Area, the Crane Trust Nature and Visitor Center near Alda, and the Iain Nicolson Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary near Gibbon.



PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS

Ice Skating at Mahoney State Park

Until mid-March – call ahead for ice conditions
Activity Center and Outdoor Ice Skating Pavilion

Ice skating is an activity for all ages. It makes for a great date night, a fun family workout or just a memorable afternoon. Give it a try this month!

Look for Shed Antlers

After hunting season
Statewide

Shed hunting, which some think of as a large-scale Easter egg hunt, sharpens your observational skills. Seek areas where deer concentrate to bed and feed, and places where they have to jump, such as a fence, creek or ditch. Seek permission from landowners where necessary.



PHOTO BY DOUG CARROLL



CLIMBING WALLS like this one will be featured at Eugene T. Mahoney State Park's Family Activity Center.

NEBRASKA'S OUTDOOR VENTURE PARKS

.....
CREATING A NEW LEGACY

By Jeff Kurrus



Ropes courses and water playgrounds ... state-of-the-art aquariums and touch tanks ... these are just a few of the exciting attractions coming soon as part of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission's Venture Parks complex. Yet excitement isn't the Commission's only goal.

After the opening of Platte River State Park's Crawdad Creek in the fall of 2016, Owen Roberts-Day visited with his daughter, Hattie. Owen watched his daughter happily playing in the water, where children are encouraged to get wet and learn about the creek's resident fish and frogs. She repeatedly pulled the trigger on her water pistol, shooting water into the creek.

"As a teacher, I know many families who can't afford to go on lavish vacations, but can afford the \$6 it takes to get a carload of people into one of our state parks for a day," said Roberts-Day, who frequently visits Nebraska's state parks with his family. "Plus, it's right here in our own backyard."

Since 1921 when Nebraska's first state park opened near Chadron, Nebraska's state parks and recreation areas have provided families and individuals the chance to hike, fish, camp and enjoy Nebraska's great outdoors. Over the years, as park visitors' tastes have evolved, Nebraska's state park system has responded by offering larger and more modern lodging, more electrical sites, and wheelchair-accessible fishing piers, among other features.



SPLASH PAD concept rendering for Platte River State Park.

But Crawdad Creek, with its picturesque pools that invite park guests to get wet, is new territory. It was the very first feature to be completed as part of the Venture Parks complex, which aims to meet the needs of a new generation of park visitors who expect more activities and amenities. Venture Parks will bring innovative, educational, exciting and often unexpected features including a treetops ropes course, a climbing wall, glamping cabins and much more to four southeastern Nebraska parks – Eugene T. Mahoney State Park, Platte River State Park, Schramm Park State Recreation Area and Louisville State Recreation Area.

"We wanted to look at our parks differently – to use them differently – to introduce people to a safe environment where they could experience nature," said Nebraska Game and Parks Commission Director Jim Douglas.

Crawdad Creek is just the start.

"The most exciting parts for me about the Venture Parks complex is meeting the needs and wishes of the next generation of parkgoers in a way that leads to a greater appreciation for the outdoors, and watching the combined enthusiasm of all the people that are making this happen."

— Jim Douglas, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission Director

WHAT DO WE WANT TO BECOME?

The Venture Parks concept began in 2014 when Douglas asked a small group of his staff a question: "Who are we and what do we want to become?"

For years the state's 77 parks and recreation areas had offered various activities: horseback riding, swimming, fishing, wildlife viewing and kayaking among others. But the group knew they would need to add exciting, family-friendly attractions to continue to draw visitors.

"Because of the changing demographics and social norms of people in Nebraska and beyond, we decided that some portion of our state park system needed to be more than a walk in the park," said Douglas. The group knew that different people sought different experiences from the outdoors. Some wanted excitement, while others a spot where they could spend a tranquil afternoon.

Douglas and his colleagues began to discuss what a new type of state park system might look like. "It was a small group of us in an outdoor setting," Commission Division Administrator for Parks Jim Swenson remembered, "and we started to ask each other questions: What made you want to come and work for the Nebraska Game and Parks? What caused you to love the outdoors? How do we capture these ideas and invigorate visitors to have those same outdoor desires?"

Those conversations sparked plans and fundraising efforts to create new amenities at these four parks.

As the projects began to take shape, Douglas and

his team honed in on the logistics of overhauling these very popular parks. They hired a consultant who advised them how much visitation would have to grow and how much they would have to charge for new attractions to ensure the project would be financially self-supporting. They decided to divide the project into four phases, adding new features and activities over the course of several years.



They then embarked on an aggressive fundraising campaign to raise the estimated \$35 million the new attractions are projected to cost. The first people they approached was the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission's Board, whose immediate excitement for the project led the group to the Nebraska Game and Parks Foundation, which has a mission of stewardship for Nebraska's outdoor and recreation resources. Dick Bell, the Commission Chairman and Foundation member, was key to what has

been a successful fundraising effort. "Thanks to our innovative public-private partnership and many generous donors, the Venture Parks complex is becoming a reality," said Bell.

The Nebraska Legislature in 2015 approved the estimated \$35 million project and authorized \$7.3 million of Commission cash funds to be used for the project. Together with the Foundation, the Commission approached private donors with the goal of raising nearly \$28 million of the \$35 million needed for the project.

In 2016, ground broke on the Venture Parks complex.

AKSARBEN AQUARIUM

AN EXCITING “EDVENTURE”

Aksarben Aquarium has, since 1979, been a place for school-age children in the Omaha and Lincoln areas to come in contact with nature. However, with education displays dating back to its opening, it is time for a learning upgrade.

The Aquarium’s new Interactive Exploration Center will focus on the state of Nebraska’s most valuable resource – water. The new-and-improved aquarium will feature tanks triple the size of the old ones, and will house entire ecosystems.

Visitors will be able to see how coolwater streams flow into rivers and finally into reservoirs. A farm pond ecosystem will be featured in its own tank, as will small species such as stonerollers and daces that people don’t often see.



Finally, visitors will have the opportunity to touch live fish in the shovelnose sturgeon touch tank.

For Swenson, this project is personal. As a child, he often tagged along with his dad and grandpa when they were spending time outdoors, which inspired his career in conservation more than anything he learned at school. “At the aquarium kids can learn and not even know they’re learning,” he said. “You can teach kids in the classroom, but you also have to let them touch it

and smell it for these kids to fully appreciate what they’re looking at.”

The nature center will also feature live animals – including snakes, turtles, and frogs – and young visitors and students will have the opportunity to

play on a 12-feet-tall bur oak tree slide, crawl across balance beams, and ride a stationary bike that, with the help of 55-inch TV screens, simulates mountain biking the trails at nearby Platte River State Park. For visitors who want to spend their day outside, improved Platte River access will make it easier to canoe and kayak.

At Aksarben, adaptability will take center stage. “When

you go into most museums, their displays are 80 percent permanent and 20 percent changeable,” said Outdoor Education Specialist Lindsay Rogers, “but we wanted to design something that featured the opposite. We want people to understand that nature isn’t stagnant, so their nature center shouldn’t be stagnant either.”



HDR NEBRASKA OUTDOOR VENTURE PARKS INTERACTIVE EXPLORATION CENTER AQUARIUM - SCHRAMM SRA

Why the Platte River Parklands?

The Platte River Parklands have received a large amount of focus due to these Venture Park upgrades, and for good reason considering 1.5 million people live within an hour of these locations. However, multiple projects have also been recently conducted throughout the state, including the rebuilding of the Officer’s Quarters at Fort Robinson State Park near Harrison and the recently opened nature complex

and shooting range at Wildcat Hills State Recreation Area.

And these are just the start of ideas for future state parks projects. Spend more than a few minutes with Douglas, and his eyes light up about the possibilities. “We have project plans throughout the state,” said Douglas, “but we need the funding to do these.”

LOOKING TO GET AN IDEA of what these projects will look like, artwork was created (opposite and above) of the Interactive Exploration Center lobby and aquarium at the Aksarben Aquarium where children (right) will be able to get a hands-on experience.



PLATTE RIVER STATE PARK

FIND YOUR WILD SIDE

Crawdad Creek features five shallow ponds that empty into Jenny Newman Lake and gives kids the opportunity to watch tadpoles, dip their toes in the water and feel mud run through their fingers.

By the time the summer of 2018 rolls around, visitors to Platte River State Park, which opened in 1982, will be able to take a walk right up the hill from Crawdad Creek and visit the park's new two-tiered splash pad, a replacement for the park's pool.



NEBRASKA OUTDOOR VENTURE PARKS
GLAMPING CABIN EXTERIOR - PLATTE RIVER SP



Platte River State Park will also offer the state park system's first "glamping" opportunities. Glamping is an up-scale camping option, also known as luxury

camping, and the park's three glamping cabins will feature queen-sized beds that can be rolled onto a deck for people to sleep under the stars.

OLIVER HILBERT of Gretna (opposite, top) plays in the water at Platte River State Park's Crawdad Creek.

CRAWDAD CREEK (opposite, bottom) flows into Jenny Newman Lake.

ARTWORK was created (above) to show what one of Platte River State Park's glamping cabins will look like.

THE POOL at Platte River State Park will be replaced by a two-tiered splash pad (right).



EUGENE T. MAHONEY STATE PARK

UNLEASH THE ADVENTURE

The Nebraska State Parks system welcomes an estimated 12 million guests per year, and Eugene T. Mahoney State Park remains one of the top tourist attractions in the state. The park's Family Aquatic Center alone hosts more than 100,000 visitors during the three-month summer season. So it was no surprise that Mahoney would become a centerpiece in the Venture Parks complex.

Mahoney will feature a new tubing/sledding run located on the hill east of the Family Activity Center that will provide families fast-paced thrills that can be enjoyed throughout the year – as Winter Wonderful during the snowy months, including a snow-making machine, and an Alpine Slide area in the spring and summer months.



HDR **ELDORADO CLIMBING WALLS** **NEBRASKA OUTDOOR VENTURE PARKS** **ACTIVITY CENTER ROCK CLIMBING AREA - MAHONEY SP** *Nebraska Game & Parks Foundation* **NEBRASKA - GAME & PARKS -**



HDR **NEBRASKA OUTDOOR VENTURE PARKS** **MAHONEY TUBING AND SLEDDING HILL - MAHONEY SP** *Nebraska Game & Parks Foundation* **NEBRASKA - GAME & PARKS -**

Just up the hill at the Family Activity Center, a location that already features an ice skating rink during the winter months and an indoor playground all year, a 40-foot indoor climbing wall will be added. In addition, a treetop ropes course will be constructed down the road from the Center, and will feature ziplines, rope swings and a suspended walkway, as well as interactive educational displays depicting the native wildlife, plants and trees of Nebraska.

ZIPLINES and a treetop ropes course (opposite, top) will be featured at Eugene T. Mahoney State Park.

ARTWORK (opposite, bottom) depicts the year-round tubing/sledding run being constructed at Mahoney.



CONSTRUCTION (bottom) continues on an addition to the Family Activity Center at Mahoney that will feature a 40-foot rock wall (top).

LOUISVILLE STATE RECREATION AREA

A NATURAL PLACE TO GET AWAY

Water adventure will be the headliner at Louisville State Recreation Area. From water rope swings to a 21,000- square-foot floating playground, Louisville will become one of the state’s most exciting camping and water fun hotspots.

Visitors will be able to rent watercycles and paddleboards, and access the Platte River from a new airboat ramp and canoe/kayak landing for float trips. “Water is a magnet for people,” said Nebraska Game and Parks Commission Assistant Director Roger Kuhn, “so we want to give easier access so it’s more inviting for users to get on the Platte River.”



WATERCYCLES (above) will be available at Louisville State Recreation Area.

PARKGOERS can visit the new floating playground (below, and opposite) at Louisville State Recreation Area.



FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Construction on these Phase I Venture Parks projects is currently underway, and many of these features will be open for use in 2018. Other projects, including the ones below, will follow.

At Schramm Park State Recreation Area, a treehouse classroom will overlook an interactive stream and a rock-skipping station. Current hiking trails will also be updated for mountain bike use, and a Capt'n' Jim's Pirate Rafts attraction, which is a raft building activity, will be located on one of the existing hatchery ponds.

Less than 15 minutes away, Platte River State Park will boast an obstacle course, small zipline and ropes course for younger participants, and improved river access for canoes and kayaks. Also, a natural playground and rock wall will help visitors find their own wild side. Finally, visitors will also have the opportunity to use 49 full-service RV campground sites.

At nearby Eugene T. Mahoney State Park, a lazy river attraction and zorbing will be created at the Family Aquatic Center, a "Mudville" area will lure those not shy of getting dirty, and an interactive trail system will welcome hikers and bikers looking for excitement while walking and riding through the park.

Down the road at Louisville State Recreation Area, fishing enhancements, trail development and interpretation, and a King of the Hill attraction will welcome all ages.

Jim Abel, Chairman of the Nebraska Game and Parks Foundation, believes the Venture Parks initiative is an exciting project and is proud that the Foundation's efforts will benefit Nebraskans and those visiting our state who are interested in the outdoor experience. Abel, along with the Foundation's Board of Directors, feels the varied attractions at the four Venture Parks will encourage people to visit each of the parks.

"Given the proximity of the four parks to one another, parkgoers will easily be able to experience each location's unique activities and attractions," said Abel. "The Foundation envisions a new connection and purpose for visiting these four parks located in the

Platte Valley. These newly developed features will appeal to our existing park visitors and attract a new generation of parkgoers. This will be a major Nebraska tourist destination. The Nebraska Outdoor Venture Parks will be something very special."

These four Platte River parks will also answer the questions from Douglas and his staff of "Who are we and what do we want to become?" But they will accomplish even more for Douglas. "The most exciting parts for me about the Venture Parks complex is meeting the needs and wishes of the next generation of parkgoers in a way that leads to a greater appreciation for the outdoors," Douglas said, "and watching the combined enthusiasm of all the people that are making this happen."



EXPLORE YOUR STATE PARKS.

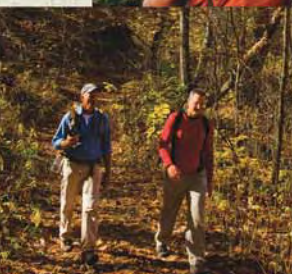
#NEGameAndParks  

In Nebraska's state parks, an adventure waits over every ridge and around every bend. Moments wait to be had and memories beg to be shared. This year, get outside and discover seventy-seven parks and enjoy unlimited experiences. No matter what you choose to do outdoors—it'll be time well spent.

To get inspiration for your park adventure, visit OutdoorNebraska.org/Explore.

Nebraska's Outdoor Venture Parks was written by Jeff Kurrus, and printed in the January-February 2018 issue of *NEBRASKAland Magazine*, published by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

NEBRASKA
— GAME  PARKS —





The Extra Mile

Story and Photos
by Eric Fowler

While photographing trumpeter swans last February at Calamus Reservoir, I met a goose hunter who I just couldn't seem to walk away from.

Some people go to great lengths to hunt waterfowl. While at Calamus Reservoir last February photographing trumpeter swans, I ran into one of those people.

It was late-morning when I bumped into him at a parking lot on the wildlife management area at the west end of the lake. We exchanged a few words as he unloaded two sleds from his Jeep, loaded them with goose decoys and his shotgun and donned his waders. As he headed south across a pasture toward the Calamus River, sleds in tow, I headed southwest up a big hill, hoping to get a view of the river and any swans that might be on it.

I'd never been to this part of the area. What I found was that hill gave me a sweeping view of the river and the

Tim Schuckman of Broken Bow pulls two sleds full of goose decoys across a frozen backwater at the upper end of Calamus Reservoir last February, heading toward open water and a late-season hunt on the Calamus River on the wildlife management area.

remains of what was an oxbow lake when the Calamus was dammed in 1985. When full in the spring, the reservoir reaches this far west. In the winter, it is a shallow, sprawling river, minus the oxbow, which removed from flowing water, was ice covered.

I watched from that hill as the man I'd seen in the parking lot dragged his sleds 250 yards across the oxbow to the edge of the ice and the river. One at a time, he pulled the decoy



Schuckman rearranges his spread, a mix of modern-day commercial decoys and 50-year-old homemade fiberglass models (left) made by his father, John.

sleds to the middle of the channel, put out his spread, and stashed the sleds on the far bank. When he was done, he settled in to his blind in the middle of the river: the stump of a massive cottonwood tree that had been sawed off and weathered by three decades of ice and rising and falling water. This was not his first rodeo.

Not really having anything to do until evening, when I planned on waiting for swans to return to roost on another part of the reservoir, I decided I had to know this guy's

story, and his name. So I returned to my truck, pulled on my hip boots, grabbed my camera gear and headed his way.

At the riverbank, I realized the water was deeper than it looked from the hill, and chest waders would've been a better choice. I introduced myself from afar, and the gentleman graciously walked 40 yards from his stump blind to the bank and did the same. When he said his name was Tim Schuckman, it was a small-world moment. His brother, Jeff, is a Nebraska Game and Parks Commission fisheries biologist in Norfolk. His late father, John, was a conservation officer in northeastern Nebraska for 29 years.

It was also an "oh no" moment. I knew Tim's mother had



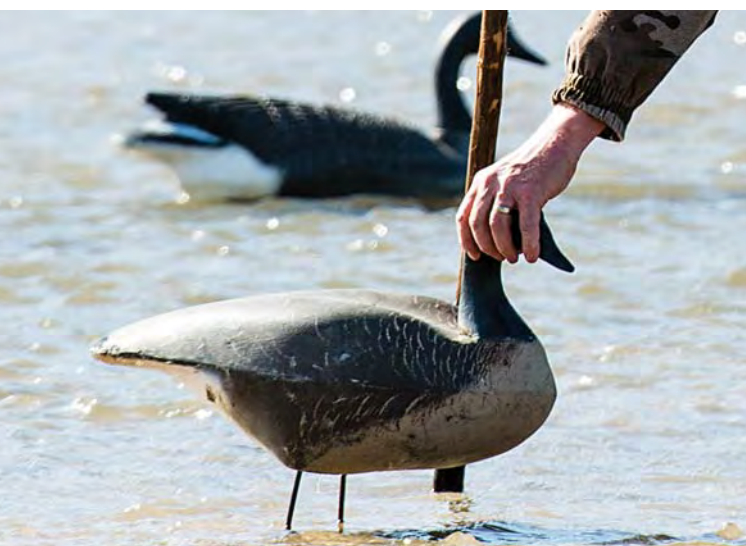
Schuckman watches a distant flock of geese from his blind, a weathered cottonwood stump in the middle of the river.

passed a few days earlier. When I passed my condolences, the 59-year-old said he had made the drive from Broken Bow that morning to escape. I offered to leave. He said stay. So I tucked myself away in a tangle of tree roots on the bank, and watched.

There were plenty of geese on the reservoir and on the river above Highway 96. A few flocks passed, and to each Tim called on his flute. But this late in the season, which would close in three days, fooling geese can be tough. Between flocks, Tim and I chatted about all things hunting and fishing. He proudly pointed to the fiberglass decoys that made up half his spread, and the fact that they were made by his father. Tim was the coverboy of the *NEBRASKAland Fishing* special issue in 2001, a photo by long-time magazine staffer Ken Bouc of him holding a big northern pike, one of his favorite fish and mine, on a Sandhills lake. So we traded pike stories.

Six hours after we bumped into each other in the parking lot, and four after I'd pulled up a riverbank, I had to say goodbye and move on to the real assignment. Tim stuck it out to sunset. A few flocks of geese appeared to turn for a look, but none did so much as set a wing. "There's always next year," Tim would say later.

Still, his day was well spent. And so was mine. I have an innate appreciation for hunters who go the extra mile, as I often do myself. I just hope I can still do the same when I'm Tim's age. ■





2017 Photo Contest

With 862 images submitted, the 2017 NEBRASKAland Magazine Photo Contest featured another year of inspiring images in the categories of Wildlife, Flora, Scenic, Recreation and Youth, displaying the beauty of the entire state.

Judged by *NEBRASKAland Magazine's* staff, paring down the images was difficult – especially the Best of Show winner, which went to Derrill E. Grabenstein and his image “Canoe on Bluestem Lake.”

In addition, the Readers' Choice Award went to Samuel Raetz for his image, “A Blizzard Duck Hunt Near North Platte.” This photograph also won second place in the Recreation category.

We thank everyone who has made this year's contest such a success, and we look forward to seeing even more outstanding photographs entered next year.

BEST OF SHOW

Canoe on Bluestem Lake
Photo by Derrill E. Grabenstein

WILDLIFE

FIRST PLACE – Booming
Photo by Nikki McDonald



SECOND PLACE – Full Moon Lights the Way
Photo by Peter Carbonell

THIRD PLACE –
Alien Predator
Photo by
Brian Baer



FLORA



SECOND PLACE – Beauty in the Flowers
Photo by Suzie Wahlgren



THIRD PLACE – Ice Storm
Photo by Maranda Miller



FIRST PLACE – Ice Storm
Photo by Don Brockmeier



SCENIC

FIRST PLACE – Pine Ridge Showers
Photo by Erik Johnson

SCENIC



SECOND PLACE – Winding Verdigre Creek
Photo by Ryan Lindbeck

THIRD PLACE – Why the Niobrara is a National Scenic River
Photo by Peter Carbonell



RECREATION

FIRST PLACE – Milky Way Photographers at Stagecoach
Photo by Brad Goetsch



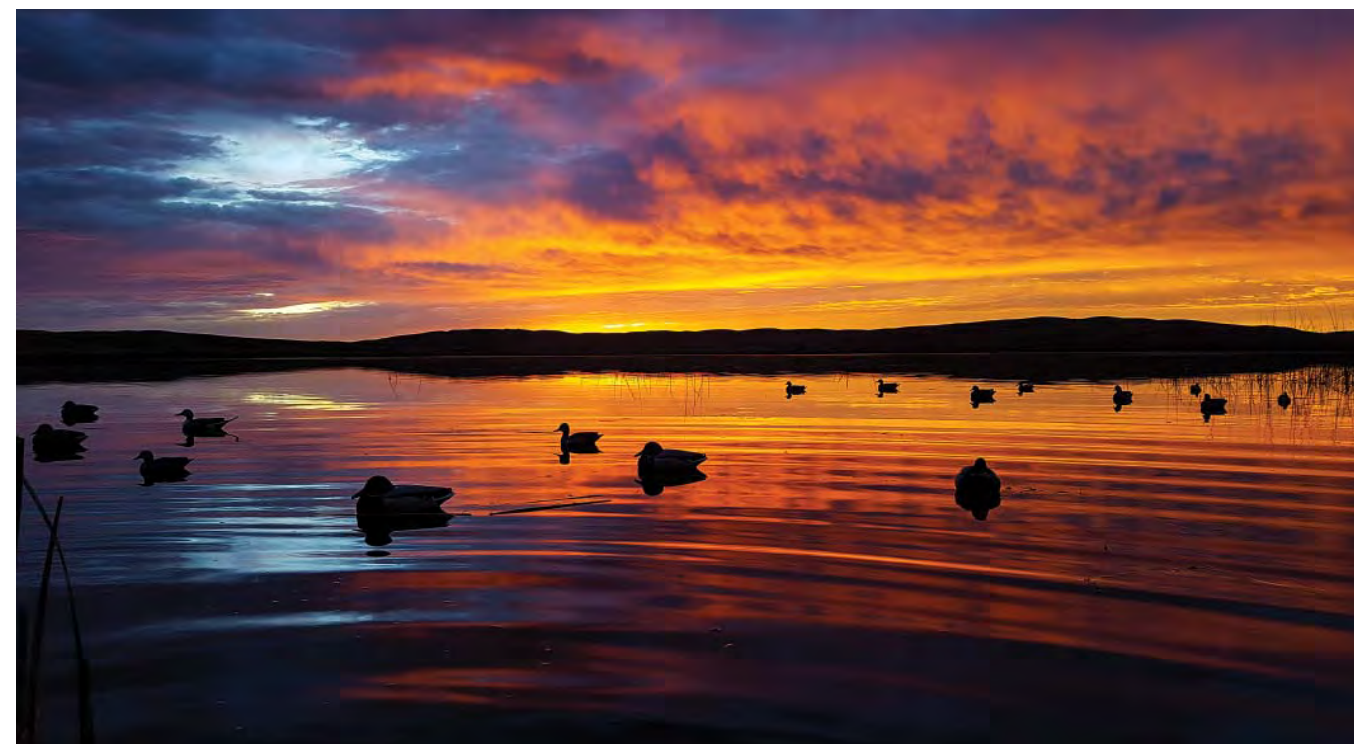
RECREATION

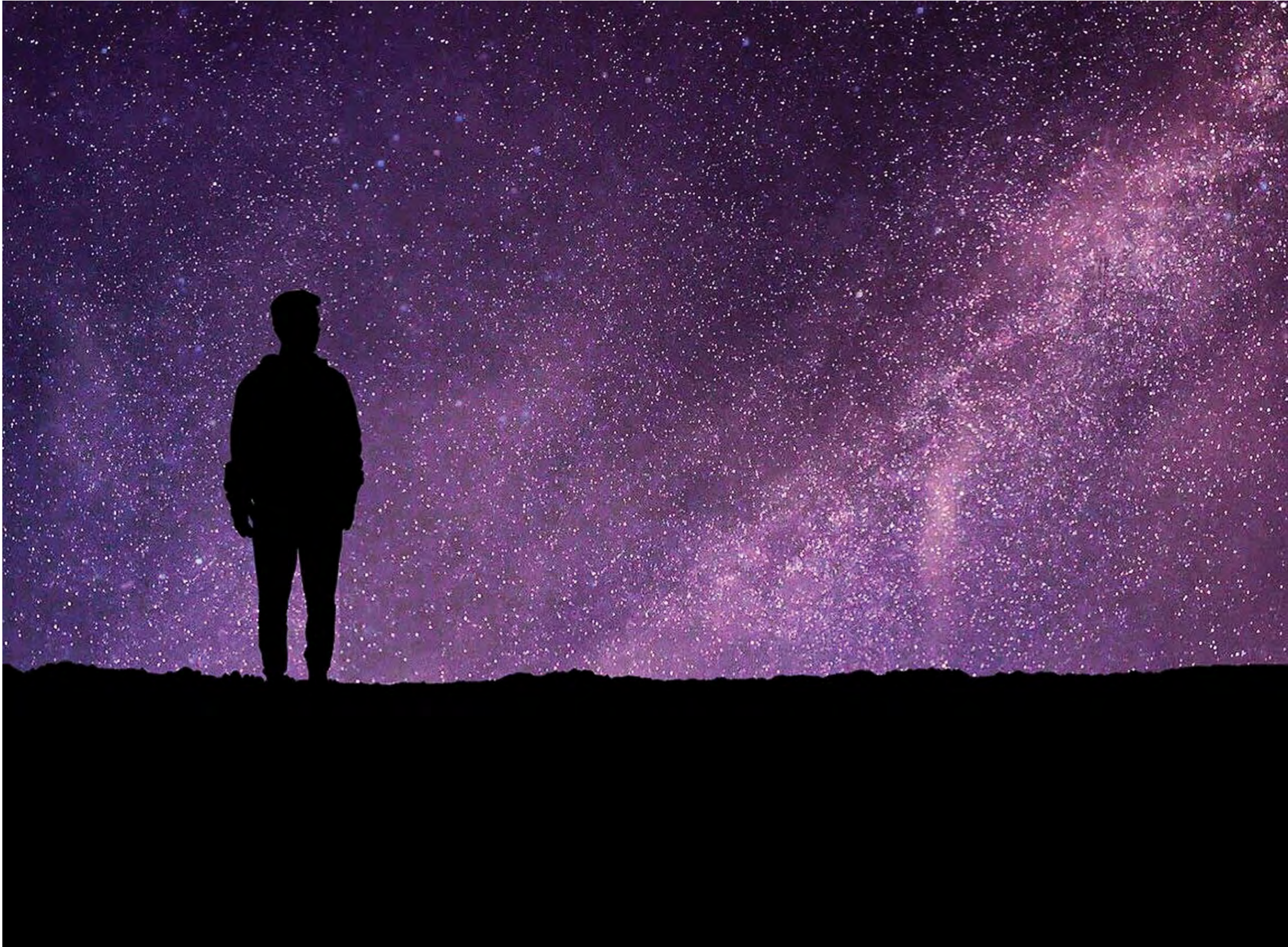


SECOND PLACE – A Blizzard Duck Hunt Near North Platte
Photo by Samuel Raetz

Readers' Choice Award Winner

THIRD PLACE – Sandhills Decoys
Photo by Matt Zvolanek





FIRST PLACE – Ethereal Dreams
Photo by Aaryan Naik

junior journal

interesting notes for readers of all ages

by Monica Macoubrie and Donna Schimonitz

Prairie Mammal Adaptations

By Jamie Bachmann, Northern Land Trust

When winter sets in on the Nebraska prairie, we adapt or change our habits. We are now in charge of keeping track of hats, mittens and coats. The sun is just peeking up when we are leaving for school and it has already gone down by the time we get home for the day. During these short days and frigid nights, we spend more time hunkered down in the warmth of our homes.

People who live on the prairie adapt and survive during the winter months. Let's check out how some of our Nebraska mammals adapt to winter on the prairie.

Two common adaptations for winter survival are hibernation and torpor. An animal will go into hibernation when the day is shortened and hormone changes let the body know it needs to conserve – or save – energy. Hibernators will remain in this state as long as possible, occasionally waking up to get a snack, take a quick drink and use the bathroom. Torpor is a kind of light hibernation that an animal's body will enter into for a short period

of time when the temperature drops and food is hard to find. Torpor allows animals to conserve energy during times of extreme cold, yet remain active when winter temperatures are tolerable.

The striped skunk will go into torpor and survive on the fat stores it built up during the fall. As temperatures continue to drop, it will look for a burrow in the ground left abandoned for the winter by a badger or a fox that once used it. Raccoons, too, will enter a state of torpor during harsh winter weather and can go weeks without eating food. During the fall, they eat and build up layers of fat to keep them warm.

Thirteen-lined ground squirrels are true hibernators. Between September and October, they will enter their complex underground burrows and may not emerge until March or early May.

The ability to adapt to the sometimes-fierce cold of a Nebraska winter is key to survival for many of our native mammals. Can you think of other winter adaptations? 🐾

Mammal Coat Identification

Match these animal names to their winter coats, featured below:

SKUNK, BADGER, RED FOX, RACCOON and FOX SQUIRREL.



Answers top to bottom: RACCOON, FOX SQUIRREL, SKUNK, RED FOX and BADGER.

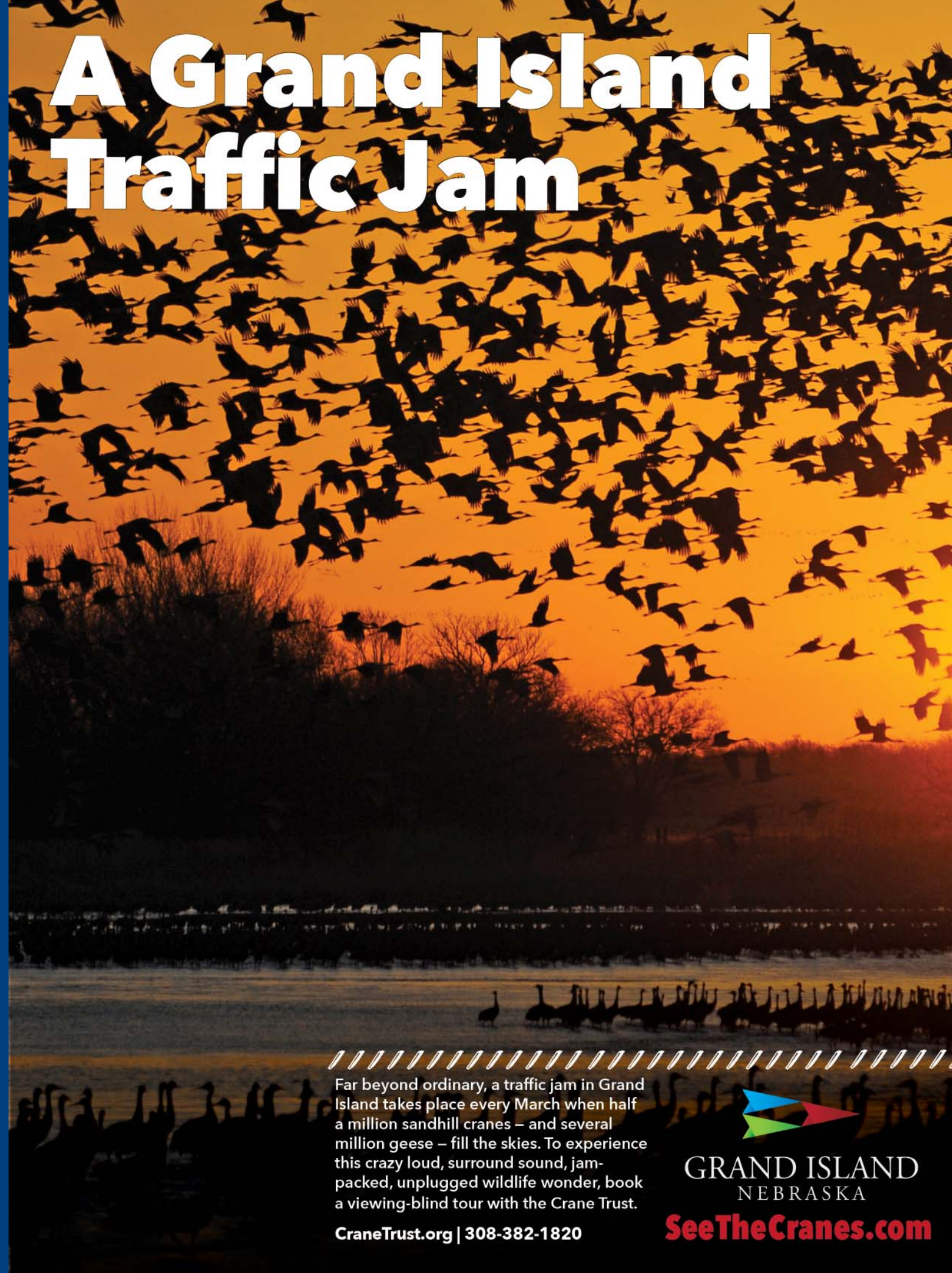
NATURE CALENDAR

- Watch for praying mantis egg cases: *all winter*
- Look for channel catfish foraging in rivers and ponds: *all winter*
- Blanchard's cricket frogs out basking: *warm winter days*
- Bighorn sheep gather near Fort Robinson during rut: *November – December*



Praying mantis egg case and fur by Getty Images

A Grand Island Traffic Jam



Far beyond ordinary, a traffic jam in Grand Island takes place every March when half a million sandhill cranes – and several million geese – fill the skies. To experience this crazy loud, surround sound, jam-packed, unplugged wildlife wonder, book a viewing-blind tour with the Crane Trust.

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GRAND ISLAND
NEBRASKA

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My Favorite Knives

For in the field and kitchen.

By Jenny Nguyen-Wheatley

Few things peeve me more than dull knives. As someone who spends a lot of time breaking down game animals and cooking them, having the right tools to complete the job is critical; my food is already dead, and the last thing I want to do is fight with it again in the kitchen.

So over the last few years, I've put together a collection of knives that I enjoy using most: knives that will take me from field to table.

In the Field

For dressing out and quartering animals in the field or in your garage, the two knives I use are the Havalon



Piranta Edge and my husband's trusty 110 Folding Hunter Buck knife, which his father gave to him. The Buck knife is hardwearing and will last a lifetime if you take care of it. Stiff and robust, the blade is tough enough to cut through hide, cartilage and joints.

For more precise work, such as caping/skinning, deboning and carving out muscle groups, the Havalon Piranta has been my go-to for many years. Its replaceable, surgical blade cuts through meat like butter. When deer is hanging, you let gravity do most of the work with this little knife. And its thin, fine blade also makes easy work of breaking down smaller game animals such as quail, partridge, small ducks, squirrels and rabbits. Havalon knives come with a package of replacement blades, allowing you to work with a fresh blade every time.

Moderately priced, both knives retail under \$50.

For the Freezer

For cutting down muscle groups into smaller pieces, such as steaks and

roasts, I suggest investing in a quality boning knife. I have the Shun Classic 6-inch boning/fillet knife (\$144), which is not only beautiful but also highly functional. With a little bit of practice,



its long, extremely sharp edge allows me to precisely cut meat – both raw and cooked – into uniform portions. Its thin and semi-flexible point also makes efficient work of removing silver skin. I also recommend this Japanese knife for breaking down game birds. In addition to game, it's the best Thanksgiving turkey carving knife I've ever used.

Although Shun advertises this knife as a fillet knife as well, I do prefer something more flexible when skinning and deboning fish. While I'm still using a cheap Rapala Fish 'n Fillet knife (\$29.99), which gets the job done when properly sharpened and is a good choice for throwing into your tackle box, it doesn't hold its edge long. I have my sights on the Wüsthof Classic Ikon fillet knife (\$202), which felt great in my hands at the store and comes with a leather sheath.

Also, every kitchen needs a pair of poultry shears for cutting off duck feet and bird butts. I don't remember where I got mine or if they even have a brand, but they are sturdy and have worked fine all these years.

For the Table

In addition to my Shun Classic boning/fillet knife, my other workhouse in the kitchen is the Wüsthof Classic Ikon 7-inch hollow-edge santoku knife (\$169). I use this knife in 90 percent of



my cooking: chopping, slicing, mincing and dicing. It has great balance and is made of strong German steel, while the Japanese-style blade offers fluid rocking motion for quickly chopping herbs. People with larger hands may

prefer a classic chef's knife, but as a vertically challenged woman with hands to match, I find better control in the santoku.

While I've upgraded to more expensive cutlery, I must not forget my humble beginnings: I purchased the J.A. Henckels International Fine Edge



Pro 2-piece santoku set for under \$25 at Target while I was in college. These 7- and 5-inch knives have given me many years of service and still do in a more "retired" capacity, such as cutting through the occasional stubborn squash and accompanying me on camping trips. Although they do require more constant sharpening, as is expected of knives in their price range, it was the best \$25 I've ever spent.

Knife Care

The more high-quality and sharper the knife, the harder the steel and ironically, the more prone it is to chipping or breaking. While a cheap knife from Walmart may not chip or break under abuse – that is because it's made of a softer steel – the drawback is that it will not hold a keen edge.

Take care of your investment by using these specialty knives only as intended, handwashing them and drying immediately. Store your expensive knives in a knife block or in their respective sheaths, not jumbling around in a drawer. Also use them over quality wooden or plastic chopping boards, which will extend the life of your knives unlike hard glass or stone surfaces. Use a honing steel to keep your knives in tip-top shape throughout the year, and when needed, sharpen your knives with a good quality sharpener. Retailers such as Sur La Table and Williams-Sonoma also offer professional knife sharpening services for a fee. ■

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► Victor was an illustrious character of North Platte. An immigrant from Austria, he had many titles. Originally planning to go all the way to Oregon, he ended up settling in North Platte and working for the Union Pacific since he was trained as a mechanical engineer.

He went on to be mayor of North Platte, ran a dry goods store there and also was a photographer. He even went on two tours with Buffalo Bill, documenting the showman's Wild West Show. Victor later sold his photo equipment to Louis Bostwick and helped him get started in photography.

At right is a photo of Victor taken by Bostwick in 1929 at Victor's home in North Platte. This scan is from the original 8-by-10 negative.



Send contributions to: Portraits from the Past, NEBRASKAland Magazine, P.O. Box 30370, Lincoln, NE 68503-0370. Or e-mail to Tim.Reigert@Nebraska.gov.

Photos should show people enjoying Nebraska outdoor activities, such as camping, boating, hunting or fishing, and must have been taken before 1980. We will give priority to unusual photos or activities. When possible, please include a story about the photograph and identify the people, places and approximate date it was taken. Text may be edited and photos adjusted for reproduction. All photos will be returned.

◀ As I was reading the other day, I noticed you're looking for photos for your "Portraits from the Past" page. Well, I have several, since both sides of my family go several generations back here in Nebraska. The only problem is that I don't have much info on them.

These top two images were probably taken between 1915 and 1935. I've worked here in Omaha as the digital archivist for the Benson Historical Society for almost a decade so preserving old photos is one of the things I do well. Attached are four of what I have.

Both are undated (but probably taken between 1915 and 1935) and were shot near the Swanson farm west of Aurora. The first is my great-uncle on the right, Myrl R. Swanson, with another man showing their hunting skills of the prairie chicken. The other shows a hunting expedition in a wagon pulled by mules. What's interesting is that it seems that they unhitched a horse from another wagon to pose in the shot. The mules don't look too happy, with their ears back. It seems they wanted to show off the horse as well.

— Sam G. Swanson, Omaha, Nebraska

► Here's one from North Platte in 1893 (bottom left). My grandmother is the girl in front with the hand mitts. The photo was by her father who was also at one time the mayor of North Platte, Victor vonGoetz (shown in the image below).

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Baked Rigatoni with Wild Turkey Meatballs

A pasta casserole with turkey, mushrooms and bacon.

By Jenny Nguyen-Wheatley

Simple to put together and filling, I love a good baked pasta dish. And having discovered some beautiful velvet pioppini mushrooms at the grocery store, I added them to this casserole for texture and a woodsy flavor that complemented the ground turkey meatballs. However, you may use any mushroom you prefer. The ground meat came from the thighs and legs of a wild turkey, and I didn't miss the red meat. This pasta dish also makes great leftovers.

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cooking Time: 1 hour

Servings: 6-8

Ingredients:

- 3 tablespoons of olive oil
- 2 cloves of garlic, chopped
- 4 slices of bacon, chopped
- 8 ounces of any mushroom
- 2 14-ounce cans of chopped Italian tomatoes
- ½ cup of fresh flat-leaf parsley, chopped
- 1 pound of uncooked rigatoni pasta
- 8 ounces of grated mozzarella cheese
- 1 cup of whole milk ricotta cheese
- ½ cup of grated Parmesan cheese, plus extra for sprinkling

Meatballs

- 1 pound of ground wild turkey
- 1 egg
- ¼ cup of grated Parmesan cheese
- 3 tablespoons of flat-leaf parsley, chopped
- ½ cup of Italian-style breadcrumbs
- 4 cloves of garlic, minced
- Salt and pepper to taste

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit. Bring a pot of water to

a boil with a generous pinch of salt. Cook rigatoni pasta according to package directions for al dente. Drain and set aside, reserving some of the cooking liquid for later.

2. To make meatballs, combine ground turkey, egg, ¼ cup of grated Parmesan, parsley, breadcrumbs, garlic, salt and pepper. Roll into balls and place on parchment paper to avoid sticking. In a large frying pan, heat 3 tablespoons of olive oil over medium-high heat. Once the oil is hot but not smoking, fry meatballs until browned on all sides. Remove meatballs, drain on paper towels and set aside.

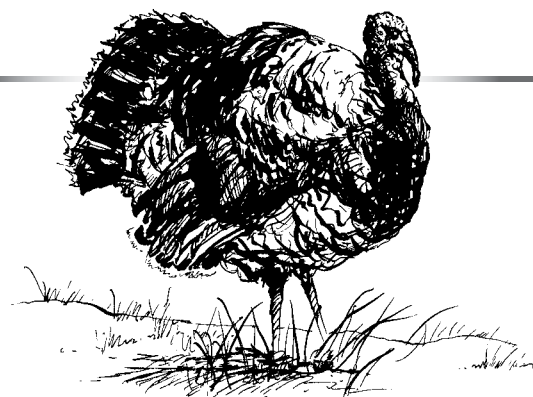
3. In the same pan, lower heat to medium and render chopped bacon in the remaining oil, stirring occasionally. Add mushrooms to the bacon and sauté for 5 minutes. Add 2 cloves of chopped garlic and stir for 30 seconds. Next, add tomatoes with juice and parsley.

Simmer until thickened, 10-20 minutes.

4. Take the tomato sauce off the heat. In a large bowl, combine cooked rigatoni pasta, tomato sauce, meatballs, grated mozzarella cheese, ricotta and ½ cup of grated Parmesan. Add salt and pepper to taste and, if necessary, add some reserved pasta liquid to keep mixture moist.

5. Transfer pasta mixture to a large baking dish. Sprinkle more grated Parmesan cheese on top. Bake pasta for 20 minutes in a 400 degree oven or until the top turns golden and the cheese has melted. ■

This recipe and photograph originally appeared on jonesdairyfarm.com.



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Find the details on these and other events on our Winterfest page. OutdoorNebraska.org/Winterfest

NEBRASKA
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2018

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Make 2018 a year to remember.

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Hike a new trail, visit a favorite park and start a new opening day tradition. Gather old friends to make new memories.

Enjoy this year, and all Nebraska has to offer – because time outdoors is always time well spent.



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— GAME  PARKS —



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Standing on Ice

We went from the airport to a frozen pond – the “we” being Robbie Gaia, my lifelong best friend, and myself. The entire time we told stories about our outdoor exploits.

Through the years we have talked each other into many trips – from largemouth bass fishing in the cypress tree swamps of Louisiana to fly-fishing for smallies in Otter Tail County, Minnesota.

But this trip would be different. I was asking him to do something that, for his entire life, he had been told not to do – stand on a block of ice.

In Tennessee, where we grew up, ice was always to be avoided. There was never ice thick enough to warrant any reason to stand on it. When we shot ducks across a frozen pond as kids, we retrieved them by casting crankbaits across the ice, hooking into the ducks we had shot and reeling them back in.

Now I was asking him to spend a 40-degree day walking across this body of hardwater because I bragged about how much he would enjoy it.

Within minutes, he understood why with his first pole bend of the day. It wasn’t his last.

We caught fish all day on the ice – bluegills, bass, and crappie – continuing our stories about deer, duck and fishing seasons past the entire time.

Nearly a year later, as winter returns, we continue these talks about our past trips in the field. Except now we talk about the day he first stood on ice, and how it was different than anything else he had ever done.

*Jeff Kurrus
Dec. 4, 2017*



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