

Published by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission since 1926

NEBRASKAland

November 2012

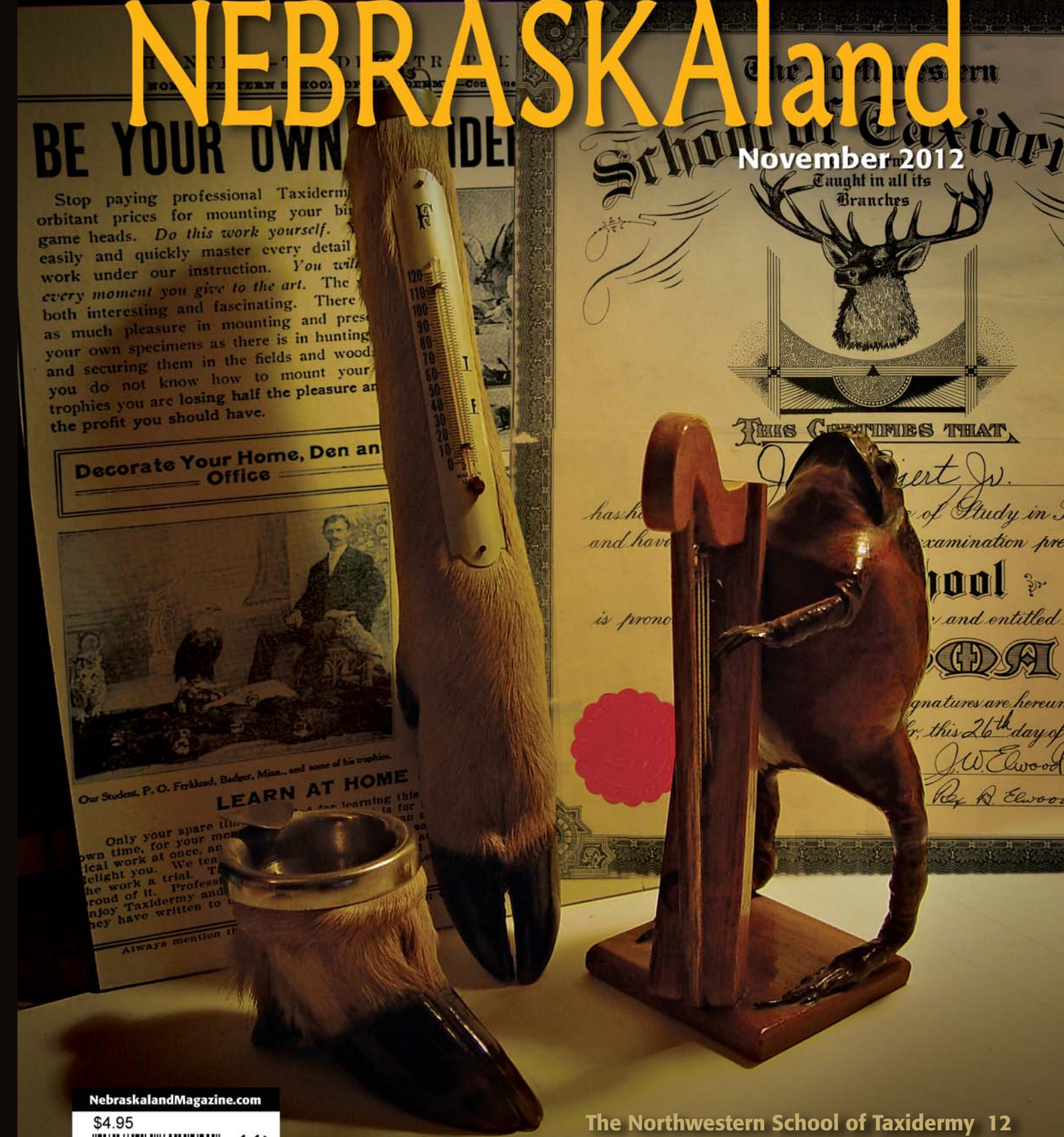


An autumn sunset provides the backdrop for roadside grasses and a barn at a farm near Bruning in northern Thayer County. Photo by Rick Houchin.

Published by the
NEBRASKA
— GAME  PARKS —

NebraskalandMagazine.com
OutdoorNebraska.org

See You Out There.



NebraskalandMagazine.com

\$4.95



7 25274 81144 1

The Northwestern School of Taxidermy 12

Mom Teaches Her Sons Hunting 22

Michael Forsberg's Game Trail Camera Trap Photos 26

Little Red Houses 32



NEBRASKAland

Volume 90, Number 9, November 2012

FEATURES

12 Taxidermy Taught by Mail

Founded in 1903, Omaha's Northwestern School of Taxidermy was a prospering business through almost all of the 1900s. By JON FARRAR

20 What About Bob?

A day afield among strangers becomes a trip of a lifetime for hunters on their first pheasant foray. Not because of the amount of birds killed, but because of the kindness of a very generous host. Text and Photos by JEFF KURRUS

22 Hunting With Mom

Despite battling stereotypes her whole life, a mom is now teaching her sons to hunt. Text and Photos by ERIC FOWLER

26 Witness in the Woods

A camera trap left on a game trail for almost two years reveals a rare glimpse of our natural world. By MICHAEL FORSBERG

32 Little Red Houses

A family tries to enjoy its self-proclaimed suburban "ranch" as progress threatens its future. Text and Photos by JEFF KURRUS

38 A Time for Change

As summer turns to fall, the days get shorter, the temperatures get cooler, and the scenery often gets prettier. Photos by LUKE KATHOL

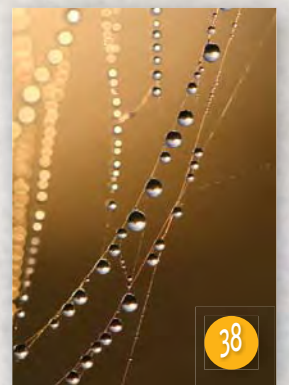
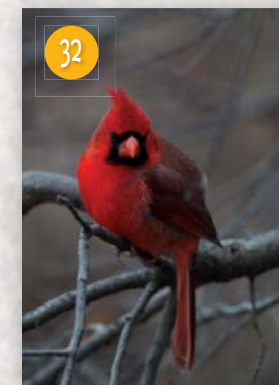
DEPARTMENTS

Comment.....	4
Mixed Bag.....	6
Outdoor Update.....	44
Nature Notes	45
Classifieds	46
Portraits from the Past	48
Page 49.....	49
The Last Stop.....	50

Cover: Thousands of professional taxidermists learned their trade through Omaha's Northwestern School of Taxidermy. Novelty and craft taxidermy was popular (see story on page 12). Photo by Tim Reigert.

Opposite: Jumped from its daytime bed, a whitetail buck deftly clears a fence by the edge of a Thomas County lake. Photo by Bill Hager.

NEBRASKAland (VOL. 90 / NO. 9, ISSN 0028-1964) is published monthly, except for the combined Jan./Feb. and Aug./Sept. issues, by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, 2200 N. 33rd St., Lincoln, NE. Periodicals postage paid at Lincoln, Nebraska, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to NEBRASKAland, P.O. Box 30370, Lincoln, NE 68503-0370.





Coyote Pup Chills Out

On a sunny morning during one of the endless days this summer above 100 degrees, my husband was walking our dog on their regular outing when they noticed what my husband thought to be a large cat walking up the hill to our house near Valentine.

He soon discovered it was a coyote pup and followed as it “hunted” up our lane and crossed our driveway before slipping through an open door into our garage.

My husband brought the dog to the house and hollered at me to “get the camera.” When I peeked into the garage, the coyote was lying on the concrete floor in front of my car, apparently seeking cool relief from the heat. It allowed me to snap a quick photo before it took refuge in the corner of the garage behind some boxes.

On a normal day, we may have just

left the pup alone to wander out by itself, but we were leaving for the day and hesitated to leave the garage open and unattended. We opened all the garage doors, but still had a difficult time persuading the pup to leave the relative darkness for the hot sunshine. When it finally did exit it trotted off to the shade of a nearby boat. We left the young pup in peace, and when we returned that evening, it had gone.

Cherry Hafer
Valentine, Nebraska

One Great Dog

While reading “One Great Dog” by Eric Fowler, I was overwhelmed with a multitude of emotions regarding my former and current hunting buddies. Each one of my German shorthair pointers was special in its own way, and each had its own unique personality.

It is never easy saying goodbye

when the time comes to put down your faithful companion. Looking at the picture in his article, I can see that Eric made many wonderful memories with Nikki. She will never be replaced, but Eric will never hunt “alone” as long as he has another dog by his side in the field.

Larry L. Harre
Kearney, Nebraska

Self Preservation

As I was reading this month’s great magazine I turned to page 13 and saw this on the top of the page: “When you see a deer with a rifle, your hunt is just about over.”

I have been deer hunting for a long time and have never seen a deer with a rifle, but if I do it doesn’t matter what type of tag I have – I’m shooting first! Rob Mercer
Stanton, Nebraska

NEBRASKAland Visitor Letters

We want to thank all 75 readers that sent e-mails and letters for last issue’s visitor, a **dog-day cicada** that was on **page 46** (see page 11 for the winner, rules and this issue’s hint). Here is one of the wonderful responses we received:

I found this month’s visitor on page 46; one of my childhood favorites, a cicada (Tibicen pruinosa), seems to be checking out the NEBRASKAland Calendar special. As a young farm kid, I loved finding the brown nymphs crawling out of holes under our elm trees and finding a place on the trunks to split open and emerge with pale, wrinkled wings. When they were dry and ready to fly, you could pick them up with finger and thumb on either side and feel the tickling, buzzing vibration of their “alarm” sound, the same sound they make when they are being carried off by a hungry bird. My mother’s generation had been taught that the dried nymph husks were poisonous, so we delighted in hanging as many of them as possible on our clothing and parading around in sight of Mom. Now, decades later, I still look forward to the “ZeeeeeZooouu” they sing in the trees to signal that summer is truly here.

Shirley Condon
Lincoln, Nebraska

No Nebraska summer would be complete without the loud buzzing of cicadas hidden in surrounding trees. The cicada found in last month’s issue is the dog-day cicada. The name comes from the timing of adult emergence in July and August – the dog days of summer.

Males entice females by making the familiar droning sound that people often hear outside during the summer months. Dog-day cicadas are a different species than the periodical cicada with its famed 17-year life-cycle; dog-day cicadas complete their journey from egg to adult in a mere two to five years.

Females lay eggs in slits in small branches or twigs. The nymphs hatch and drop to the ground, burrowing into the soil. They will spend the next several years feeding on plant roots before digging back to the surface and molting into their adult form, complete with wings. You may see their shed skin, looking like a dried husk, clinging to the bark of a tree.

Dog-day cicadas generally cause no significant damage, though some twig die-back is possible around the egg-laying site. Cicadas are often referred to as locusts, but this is incorrect – locusts are actually migratory

grasshoppers, and are in a different taxonomic family than cicadas.



Special thanks to Julie Van Meter, State Entomologist, Nebraska Department of Agriculture. Visitor image by Chris Helzer.
www.bugguide.net is a good site for identification

Send your comments to:
Doug Carroll, Editor
NEBRASKAland Magazine
P.O. Box 30370
Lincoln, NE 68503
or e-mail Doug.Carroll@Nebraska.gov
Please include your postal address and telephone number.
Letters may be condensed and edited for clarity. Photographs are welcome and will be returned.

Any program that receives federal funding from the National Park Service, or the United States Fish and Wildlife Service prohibits unlawful discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, age, gender, marital status, national origin, age, disability or political affiliation. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against in any program, activity, facility, or service, should contact the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Lincoln, NE 402-471-0641, the Equal Opportunity Commission, Lincoln, NE 402-471-2024, TTY/TDD 402-471-4693; United States Fish Wildlife Service, Civil Rights Coordinator, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Arlington, VA 22203; Director, Equal Opportunity Program, U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service, 1849 C Street NW, Mail Code 0008, Washington, D.C. 20240-0001.

NEBRASKAland Magazine

COMMISSION

Director Jim Douglas

Commissioners

Chairman - Ron Stave, Waterloo
Vice Chairman - Norris Marshall, Kearney
2nd Vice Chairman - Jerrod Burke, Curtis
Dr. Mark Pinkerton, Wilber
Dr. Kent Forney, Lincoln
Lynn Berggren, Broken Bow
Rex Fisher, Omaha
Mark Spurgin, Paxton
Mick Jensen, Blair

MAGAZINE STAFF

Editor Doug Carroll
Associate Editor Jeff Kurrus
Art Director Tim Reigert
Senior Editor Jon Farrar
Regional Editor Eric Fowler
Contributing Editor Michael Forsberg
Regular Contributors Bill Hager, Chris Helzer, Lisa Knopp
Photo Librarian Sarah Johnson
Circulation Donna Robinson
For address changes and questions about your subscription, e-mail Donna.Robinson@Nebraska.gov or call (800) 632-5263

Advertising

For advertising information contact
Donna Robinson, Circulation
Phone: (402) 471-5490
E-mail: ngpc.ads@nebraska.gov

NEBRASKAland Magazine Copyright 2012, all rights reserved. NEBRASKAland is available on audio cassette from the Nebraska Library Commission Talking Book and Braille Service, Suite 120, 1200 N. St., Lincoln, NE 68508. (800) 742-7691. NEBRASKAland Magazine and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission reserve the right to reject any advertising not in keeping with the agency mission. Rates: \$18 for one year; \$33 for two years; \$44 for three years. Nebraska recipients must add appropriate sales tax. To subscribe call 1-800-NEBLAND (632-5263), or go online to: NebraskaLandMagazine.com.

COMMISSION OFFICES

Headquarters/Southeast District Office
2200 N. 33rd Street Lincoln, NE 68503
Phone (402) 471-0641

Northeast District Office
2201 N. 13th St. Norfolk, NE 68701
Phone (402) 370-3374

Southwest District Office
301 E. State Farm Rd. North Platte, NE 69101
Phone (308) 535-8025

Northwest District Office
East Hwy. 2, Box 725 Alliance, NE 69301
Phone (308) 763-2940

Bassett Office
524 Panzer St., Box 508 Bassett, NE 68714
Phone (402) 684-2921

Kearney Office
1617 First Ave. Kearney, NE 68847
Phone (308) 865-5310

Omaha Office
1212 Bob Gibson Blvd. Omaha, NE 68108
Phone (402) 595-2144

Ak-Sar-Ben Aquarium
21502 W. Highway 31 Gretna, NE 68028
Phone (402) 332-3901



CONSERVATION OFFICERS

Officer	City	Phone (308)
Jim Zimmerman (S)	Gering	(office) 763-2940 (cell) 641-6138
Greg Hesse	Alliance	760-3647
Scott Brandt	Gering	631-0663
Heath Packett	Gordon	360-0682
Dan Kling	Harrison	430-0572
Frank Miller	Valentine	(402) 389-0444

Officer	City	Phone (308)
Roger Thompson (S)	N. Platte	(office) 535-8025 (cell) 530-3097
Ray Dierking	Brkn. Bow	870-0322
George Sund	Cambridge	655-0028
Michael Thome	Cozad	529-8146
Terry Brentzel	Doniphan	(402) 469-5795
Matt Andrews	Elwood	746-2418
Dirk Greene	Imperial	882-0015
ale Johnson	Kearney	440-3847
Brian Piernicky	McCook	340-6627
Dudley Sorensen	N. Platte	530-0016
Nicholas Fix	Ogallala	289-0427
Dennis Thompson	Ogallala	289-0755
Rich Routh	Rep. City	920-0367

Officer	City	Phone (402)
Tom Zimmer (Sup.)	Norfolk	(office) 370-3374 (cell) 649-8053
Dale Davis	Bassett	760-0712
Steve Oberg	Columbus	910-3366
Daniel Roberts	Fremont	719-1108
Randy Pomplun	Fullerton	(308) 550-0489
Jeff Jones	Hartington	762-5022
Jon Reeves	Kennard	889-8508
Tim Williams	Neligh	929-0051
Pat George	O'Neill	340-0787
Doug Pollard	Ord	(308) 778-7101
Cory Krause	West Point	380-6410

Officer	City	Phone (402)
Sean McKeenan	Ashland	521-0159
William Krause	Auburn	274-8063
Mike Luben	Colon	443-6392
Dan Zuehlke	Cortland	806-9084
Darin Gress	Hebron	768-8665
Douglas Kramer	Lincoln	890-6465
Dina Barta	Lincoln	890-6463
Stacey Lewton	Lincoln	890-7140
Levi Krause	Louisville	949-0593
Robert Finke	Milford	947-1363
Russell Mort	Nebr. City	209-1506
Dan Evasco	Papillion	616-5961

Officer	City	Phone (402)
Craig Stover (Adm.)	Lincoln	471-5531
Duane Arp (Ass.)	Lincoln	471-5532
Jeff Clauson (Ass.)	Lincoln	471-0480

Nebraska Wildlife Crimestoppers 1-800-742-7627

See You Out There.



www.OutdoorNebraska.org

Outdoor Message Plates

Vic Tibbetts' message plate regularly gets dirty on the way to and from waterfowl hunts on the Loup River near his home in Palmer with his favorite shotgun, a Remington SP10. Tibbetts loves to hunt geese, ducks, turkey and deer, often accompanied by his sons, Troy and Chad; daughter, Jacy; or his granddaughters.

If you have a unique outdoor message plate you would like to share or know someone who does, e-mail a photo (high-resolution, JPEG format only, please) of it to Eric.Fowler@Nebraska.gov, along with your name, hometown and a brief description of the interests expressed on your license plate.





Wild and Scenic Winner

A photo entered by Laura Springer of Grand Island won the Wild and Scenic division of this year's Nebraska State Fair photography competition after being chosen the best from among several other entries.

A 17-year-old junior at Grand Island Northwest High School, Springer captured the photo in early August during a team retreat and team bonding event at her softball coach's house near Cairo. Springer said she loves capturing sunset photos and was taking photos at a pond near her coach's house when three ducks landed on the water.

"It was perfect timing and I took pictures until someone called me back up to the house to eat s'mores," she said. "All in all, it was a great day!"

Spear Gun Record

This past September, Sean Morgan, a junior majoring in wildlife biology at the University of Nebraska-Kearney, used a spear gun to harvest a new state-record grass carp that may also be a new world record.

Morgan was free diving in a private Buffalo County sandpit when he shot the massive fish, which was later recorded by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission as weighing 49 pounds, 10.5 ounces. Ironically, this record fish smashed his own pending state-record fish – nine days earlier he had shot a grass carp in the same sandpit that weighed just over 24 pounds, breaking the previous state record of 6 pounds, 4 ounces. The current recognized world record fish weighed 31 pounds, 14 ounces.



Upcoming Events

Here is a list of upcoming outdoor events across Nebraska. For more information about these and other events, visit the calendar page at www.OutdoorNebraska.org.

November 3

Bird Banding Workshop

Held at the Ak-Sar-Ben Aquarium from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m., participants in this free workshop will get up-close lessons on field identification and learn other information about many of Nebraska's songbirds. For more information, call (402) 332-3901

November 5

Ft. Robinson Christmas Dinner Tickets Go On Sale

Fort Robinson's 18th Annual Historical Christmas Dinner will be held December 1 this year and tickets sell out fast. For more information, call (308) 665-2900

November 17

Fly Tie-in

Hosted by the Cornhusker Fly Fishers club, a "Fly Tie-in" will be held at the Ak-Sar-Ben Aquarium Outdoor Education Center on November 24. Expert club members will be meeting at the aquarium from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. to tie fishing flies and answer questions from the public. Other tie-ins will be held the Saturday following the third Wednesday of the month in January, February and March.

For more information, call (402) 332-3901

November 18

Ft. Robinson Longhorn and Buffalo Sale

Fort Robinson's annual longhorn and buffalo sale will be held November 18 at the Crawford Livestock Market. Both potential buyers and the general public are welcome to attend. For more information, call (308) 665-2900

Nebraska Pheasants Forever & Quail Forever Wildlife Habitat and Pollinator Mixes

Our mixes are designed by wildlife experts to maximize the success of both the planting and the wildlife.

Our mixes meet all the requirements of conservation programs and are at the best prices available.



Over 200 species of grasses and wildflowers available

Custom mixtures can be designed to meet your wildlife habitat and pollinator habitat needs



For More Information Visit www.NebraskaPF.com



Travelogue by Jeff Kurrus

Lincoln, NE

A Sports Weekend

- 11/9/12**
- 4:00 PM** – Arrive at the **Branched Oak, Pawnee Lake, Conestoga Lake** or **Bluestem SRA** campsite after leaving work early. Walk-up reservations only. Prices range from \$7-\$24 per campsite.
 - 5:30 PM** – Eat dinner at **Misty's** in Havelock. At least one person at your table should order the prime rib.
 - 7:00 PM** – Watch Lincoln Stars Hockey vs. Cedar Rapids at the **Ice Box**. Tickets range from \$16-\$25.
 - 10:00 PM** – Return to campsite for nightcap of s'mores and stories.



Memorial stadium



- 11/10/12**
- 9:00 AM** – Eat a campfire breakfast.
 - 10:00 AM** – Drive into **Lincoln** and look for football tickets at **Stubhub.com** or from street vendors.
 - TBA** – Watch **Nebraska vs. Penn State** football game at **Memorial Stadium**.
 - 5:00 PM** – Eat dinner at **Buzzard Billy's** in the **Haymarket**. Be predictable and order the Cajun combo. Or be whimsical and order the seafood eggplant pirogue.

- 7:00 PM** – Watch **Nebraska volleyball vs. Purdue** at **NU Coliseum**. Again, check **Stubhub.com** and street vendors.
- 10:00 PM** – Return to campsite, pass on the nightcap, and go straight to bed because your family is exhausted.

8:00 AM, Sunday morning – Head to the house.

While this a dream weekend for any Nebraska sports fan, there is one important thing to consider: \$\$\$.

Because of how expensive this trip could be, alterations can definitely be made. However, if you've never seen a hockey game, I'd make it a point to. In person, hockey is unbelievable to watch. It's fast, has constant action, and is very different from what you see on television.

If tickets to the football game are too pricey, hang out in the **Haymarket** for the game day experience. The game can be viewed on the big screen in multiple restaurants in the

Haymarket, and the ocean of red can't be replicated. And if a day at the market has rendered a trip to the NU Coliseum for volleyball too tiring, a nature walk before sunset and a campfire dinner at Branched Oak or other local SRA is also a perfect way to finish your weekend trip to Lincoln.



dutch oven camp cooking

Deer Hides Needed

The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, known as the local Elks Lodge in most small towns, is again accepting donated deer hides from the beginning of the November firearm deer season through the end of the January antlerless deer season. Donated hides will be shipped to a tannery to be turned into soft leather and made into gloves for wheelchair-bound veterans or used for craft kits that are distributed to veterans at VA Medical Centers across the world as part of the Elks "Help a Vet" program.

Before the hides can be shipped, they have to have all excess fat, flesh and both heads and tails removed, then table or stock salt must be rubbed into all fleshy surfaces. Volunteers at the drop-off locations do most of this work, but hunters are welcome to do it themselves before dropping off the hides. Care must be taken in the skinning process, however, as even small holes can result in the hide being ruined during the tanning process.

DuckDawg Retrievers

A good dog makes all the difference

UpClosePhoto

www.DuckDawg.com

Great Plains

America's Lingerin Wild

Nationally-renowned photographer Michael Forsberg tells the story of the transformation of the Great Plains.

Coming Sunday, Nov. 25, to NET1/HD
In stunning High-Definition

A production of NET Television



Stone's Country Cabin, LLC

Located South of Harlan County Reservoir,
Just minutes From the Lake. (Open all Year)

Fishermen and Hunters Welcome

Call Today for Prices :

308-799-4475 or 308-920-0027

Fully Furnished, Full Kitchen ,

Washing Machine and Dryer,

2 Queen Beds and 1 Set of Bunk Beds,

Central Heat & Air

For more information go to the website below

www.harlancountymeatprocessors.com/html/stones_country_cabin.html



888-489-1680

sandcreekpostandbeam.com

Request your
complimentary
catalog today!



116 West 1st Street, Wayne, NE

TRADITIONAL WOOD BARNs & BARN HOMES



Duck Speeds

Jon Farrar

Gauging speed in miles-per-hour (mph) began in the 1700s when stage coaches established timetables, then came into common usage with the arrival of railroads and even more so when automobiles appeared on the scene. Estimating the speed of ducks by hunters could not have been far behind, as missing a shot at a duck crossing at 60 mph sounds more accurate than “pretty darn fast” or “zoomed by like a meteor.” But it was not until airplanes became more common that there really was much written about how fast birds fly, ducks in particular. In the early years of such reporting there was often no distinction made between the speed of a mallard being pursued by an airplane and one flying parallel to an airplane at a comfortable distance – the difference between burst speeds and sustained speeds. Outdoor magazines were filled with articles about how fast this duck or that duck could fly.

One of the most reliable sources for waterfowl information in its time, and still mostly accurate today, was Francis Kortright's *The Ducks, Geese and Swans of North America*, first published in 1942.

“There is a wide-spread misconception concerning the speed at which birds normally fly, and even regarding the speed they can attain when occasion demands, as when closely pursued by an enemy,” Kortright wrote. “It is not unusual to hear accounts of birds flying ‘a mile a minute’ While undoubtedly some birds can and do attain a speed even greater when pressed, few can develop an air speed of 60 miles an hour.”

Kortright wrote that in the past some sportsmen overestimated the speed at which ducks and geese fly by using “mathematical calculations” based on the velocity of a charge of shot, estimated distance to the bird, and how long a lead was required to hit the duck or goose. If all elements of the equation were known with certainty, he wrote, the speed of flight could be “determined with a fair degree of accuracy,” but noted that most hunters tended to overestimate the distance at which they shot birds.



PHOTO BY ERIC FOWLER

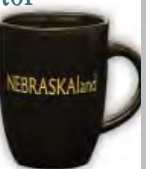
Pintails achieve their fastest “burst speeds” during spring courtship flights.

Kortright listed a number of waterfowl species and their estimated flight speeds under different circumstances. Those estimates have not changed all that much since Kortright's time, even though more scientific methods are now used, including radar or flying alongside a family of migrating cranes in an ultra-light. The fastest duck ever reported was a red-breasted merganser that topped out at 100 mph when pursued by an airplane. Top speed for a canvasback is around 70 mph. Most waterfowl species fly at speeds from 40 to 55 mph. The peregrine falcon, which may reach or exceed 200 mph in a dive, is reported to be the fastest of all birds.

On average, diving ducks are faster than puddle ducks because their relatively shorter and narrower wings are designed for speed, like a fighter jet. Some hunters will be surprised to know among the slowest of ducks are the teal. Blue-winged and green-winged teal are usually thought of as moving at the speed of light, but that is based more on their highly maneuverable flight – able to turn-on-a-dime and then instantly do it again. Sustained straight flight for teal is about 30 mph. All of these speeds are influenced by strength of the wind and the bird's course relative to its direction. Some birds,

such as pintails, attain their fastest “burst speeds” during spring courtship flights. ■

NEBRASKAland Visitor Winner and Hint



Last issue's winner of the Visitor drawing was Bryan Danburg, of Axtell, Nebraska, who found the **dog-day cicada** on page 46. 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 bug found in Nebraska that just happened to find its way onto one of the pages.

We will then gather the correct entries and draw one to win a *NEBRASKAland Magazine* mug. To enter each month, write:
NEBRASKAland Visitor
2200 North 33rd Street,
Lincoln, NE 68503.

Or e-mail:

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

HINT: This issue's visitor is not on page 4, 5, or 7.

TAXIDERMY TAUGHT BY MAIL

THE NORTHWESTERN SCHOOL OF TAXIDERMY

By Jon Farrar

The Northwestern School of Taxidermy in Omaha was founded by J.W. Elwood in 1903. It was a prospering business through almost all of the 1900s, selling an inexpensive correspondence taxidermy course as well as taxidermy supplies. The company's six-story building at 12th and Howard Street (sometimes given as Harney and 12th St.) in downtown Omaha housed business offices, dozens of employees attending to course mailings, taxidermy supplies and taxidermists on staff who mounted animals for those not wanting to learn to do it themselves. Promotional advertising during the 1930s claimed: "Our school is one of the most famous Taxidermy institutions in the world," and is "...the **only** school of Taxidermy in the world," a "world-wide institution with students in practically all countries."

Promotional booklets state Elwood was a superintendent of public schools in Iowa but resigned to start the taxidermy school. Elwood was quoted as saying: "I learned Taxidermy when a boy. I had to earn my own way through high school and college. My knowledge of Taxidermy made this possible. I tended furnaces and waited on tables occasionally, but it was profit from Taxidermy that brought in the cash that carried me through." Elwood stated he



ABOVE: J.W. Elwood was never shy promoting himself in brochures as the founder of popular taxidermy.

BELOW: Deer-hoof ashtrays were one of many "craft taxidermy" projects suggested in the lessons. This one by John Reigert Jr. was made in the 1960s.

taught the "art" to many of his sportsmen friends before recognizing the tremendous interest and need for an inexpensive taxidermy school. Seeing an opportunity and the need for a service and supplies not readily available, Elwood gambled and created a profitable business. He was never shy about tooting his own horn, and there is no denying there was a hint of a huckster about him.

"The cost of preparing the courses, the time spent in making up models for lesson diagrams, the expenses of printing and advertising, took all of his savings," the booklet states. "Within a few months, when people found out about his course, the picture changed. The first year brought an enrollment of 200 students, the second year 1,000. Since then some single year enrollments have been as high

as 12,000." It is nearly impossible to place Northwestern's catalogs and brochures in time, as they were not dated – no doubt so the supply printed could be used until depleted.

The interest in mounting wild animals for display swelled in the opening years of the 1900s and even earlier, in part because of the publicity lavished on prominent sportsmen such as Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt had an insatiable appetite for big game hunting and having his trophies mounted, and did taxidermy work both as a boy and while president. Another pioneer in American taxidermy was Dr. William T. Hornaday, who founded the National Society of American Taxidermists in 1880, and two years later was named chief taxidermist of the National Museum (now the Smithsonian). Hornaday is credited with being the first to place mounted animals in natural settings, often elaborate dioramas. Most taxidermists in those years learned the trade by serving as apprentices. Enter "Prof. J.W. Elwood, B.S."

Elwood's claims of being trained as a taxidermist as a boy, having developed the correspondence lessons himself, and being a lifelong sportsmen are a topic of lively dispute on some Internet sites. Some writers accuse Elwood of being a fraud on all counts. It is likely he did not prepare Northwestern's taxidermy lessons from scratch, but acquired the rights to use information and illustrations from two significant American books on

Few letterheads, envelopes or postcards in the early-1900s rivaled Northwestern School of Taxidermy's in elaborateness, amount of illustration and use of color.





taxidermy – *Taxidermy and Zoological Collecting* by W.J. Holland and William T. Hornaday, published in 1891; and *Methods in the Art of Taxidermy* by Oliver Davie, published in 1894.

Northwestern promotional claims that “Mr. Elwood has hunted in the wilds of America, in Canada, in Mexican jungles and in the Islands of the Sea” cannot be definitively substantiated or refuted, but he apparently was something of a hunter and angler in Nebraska at the least.

“J.W. Elwood of the Walter G. Clark Sporting Goods Co. has just returned from a sort of investigating trip in the sand hills and around the western Nebraska lakes,” *Omaha World-Herald* outdoor writer Sandy Griswold wrote in his August 22, 1915, outdoor column. “He was visiting his ranch, but the principal object of his trip was to size up the game situation, especially the matter of native hatched wild ducks.”

As Griswold noted, in addition to owning the Northwestern School of

Taxidermy, Elwood was a partner (and elsewhere said to be the sole owner) in the Clark Sporting Goods Co., an Omaha concern that Griswold described as “one of Omaha’s most prosperous sporting goods stores.” So it was no coincidence that the streetside window displays of the sporting goods store were frequently decorated with mounted animals put up by Northwestern taxidermists.

Elwood was a deputy game warden “and hence keeps a close watch on the game conditions,” Griswold wrote. He was one of 16 charter member of the Dewey Lake Club established in 1915 on the lake of the same name, now a part of the Valentine National Wildlife Refuge.

From 1913 to 1923, Griswold frequently mentioned Elwood and the Northwestern School of Taxidermy, writing in March 28, 1915: “Elwood is perhaps the best known of present day taxidermists and his work is featured in the Smithsonian, American, and other museums in this country. Indeed, he was selected to do the task of preparing and mounting collections for some of the most valuable Washington and New York institutions.” ... “All his life, Elwood has been studying and modeling animals and birds. He has even spent months in the wilds to become familiar with the denizens there. As a result of this constant study he has been able to construct hundreds of perfect animals and birds without even a single measurement to guide him.”

In addition to promoting him as a lifelong enthusiastic sportsman, Northwestern print material seldom failed to mention: “Mr. Elwood is an ardent sportsman and naturalist and an advocate of strict game protection. He was the leader in the movement, years ago, in preventing the extinction of wild-game. He with other vast influences, including Ducks Unlimited, stopped the slaughter of the disappearing wild fowl.” He was also said to devote some time lecturing and writing. Griswold noted: “He is a member of some of the best-known sportsmen’s clubs in America, and is frequently called upon by these organizations to deliver lectures of a semi-scientific nature.”

All of Elwood’s claims to being a

sportsman of substance and active conservationist could have very well been true, or only somewhat true, but they were often diminished in authenticity as they contained a plug for taxidermy, noting that with “...dwindling numbers of game animals the sportsmen could kill less and enjoy his trophies more if they were mounted and on display.”

Elwood or a talented copywriter churned out sales pitches rivaling a carnival hawk. Their self-endorsement and claims were not to be equaled until Herter’s catalogs for outdoor equipment came along in the 1940s. Herter was called the “P.T. Barnum of decoys” and that title extended to every other item they sold – all were the best ever, not to be equaled, field tested by Jacques Herter in the wilds of Alaska and sold at unimaginably low prices. And so it was with Elwood two decades earlier. For example, before World War II, the company sold only the “highest quality glass eyes” from Germany, where the “best glass eyes in the world” were made. When German-made eyes were no longer available, and after the war when they probably were again, Northwestern sold only eyes made in the U.S.A., “the world’s highest quality.”

Elwood advertised extensively in national sporting magazines, as well as other men’s magazines such as *Popular Mechanics*. Such advertising ranged in size from only a column



wide to a full page, to four, full-pages in magazines having less expensive advertising rates, such as *Hunter-Trader-Trapper*. His pitch promoted learning taxidermy for fun, for profit and to conserve wildlife.

“It’s like going to school without paying board and room or high tuition costs,” Elwood pitched. “And, there’s no drudgery of apprenticeship, no dry lectures. You start doing actual Taxidermy with your first lessons.” Throughout the company’s advertising history it particularly targeted boys. “We confidently believe that any

average man or boy who takes our course, studies and practices the lessons until he can mount specimens creditably, is ALMOST CERTAIN to find ways of turning his knowledge into CASH. Others DO earn fine profits, why not you?” A special, half-priced tuition rate was available for boys 16 years of age and younger. And during the Depression of the 1930s, when a quarter in a boy’s pocket was big money, Elwood even suggested two boys enroll together to cut the instruction costs by half.

Northwestern’s advertising was lavishly illustrated with specimens mounted by students, sometimes a taxidermist surrounded by dozens of

At the core of the Northwestern School of Taxidermy’s correspondence course was nine pamphlets containing two to five lessons each.

animal mounts, sometimes photos of a particularly good display, such as a snarling wildcat on a rock with a recently killed rooster pheasant in its

mouth. Few letterheads, envelopes or postcards in the early-1900s could rival Northwestern’s in elaborateness, amount of illustration and use of color.

Endorsements were an important component of promoting the Northwestern School of Taxidermy – from boys to housewives to average sportsmen who had taken the course; to graduates who mounted animals for the president of the United States, an Indian maharajah and the prince of Wales. Elwood never missed a chance to make advertising hay by publishing letters from curators and chief taxidermists of prestigious museums such as the Field Museum in Chicago,

Kits containing the basic taxidermy tools were sold in either leather or wooden cases, and in later years vinyl cases.



particularly if they mentioned that their skilled assistants learned their trade from his correspondence classes.

Northwestern promotional booklets always contained letters of praise and thanks from former students who had given up their old jobs to make more money in taxidermy, such as L.J. Loomis of New York who during the 1930s wrote he had made more than \$500 in one month: “Although I have long since passed the amateur stage, I find your course of lessons a very valuable guide and reference and they have a very prominent place in my shop. To anyone who loves nature and is willing to study hard, there is no finer profession to take up and with your course as a guide, anyone with a reasonable amount of practice and hard

work can turn out work that will not only give him a great deal of pleasure, but will benefit him financially as well.”

But it was the average amateur taxidermist who was Elwood’s bread-and-butter, not just in taking the course but in subsequently buying supplies. Pages of testimonials, including photographs of the writer (usually a young man), were always included in promotional booklets: “Many years ago, when I saw mounted specimens for the first time, I had a great desire to become a taxidermist,” were Nebraskan Charles H. Bratt’s words under his photograph. “When I enrolled in your school it was with a firm determination to learn the art thoroughly and completely, and I want to tell you that through your course of lessons I have been able to realize my ambition.”

While Elwood’s advertising was

particularly aimed at boys and young men, anyone with an interest in trying his correspondence course was invited. He listed some of the professions represented among the school’s students as lawyers, doctors, mechanics, teachers, trappers, artists, farmers, barbers, office girls, merchants, poultry men, woodsmen, clerks, fur breeders and housewives. Elwood did not ignore the possibility women might be interested in taxidermy, writing “I especially invite all ladies to join the School.”

“I wish I had the space in this book to publish all the fine pictures and enthusiastic letters that we have in our files from women and girls who have become taxidermists by taking our course of lessons,” Elwood wrote. “Of course most of our students are men and boys, since they are naturally more interested in hunting and outdoor life than most women and girls.”

“It is with great pleasure that we write to thank you for your splendid service,” Mrs. George Carr and Mrs.

W.P. Spence from Kansas City wrote. “We have never had anything in which we could invest such a small amount and receive so much value. Enclosed find pictures and a write up on our work from the local newspaper. We owe our entire success to your fine institution, and will recommend it on every occasion.”

Elwood was a master at making every student feel they were special and a member of a select group. The salutation of a seemingly personal letter from Elwood to young potential enrollees began with “My Dear Young Friend” and ended with the sentence: “I shall await your enrollment with great interest.” Such letters were general in content and never dated, suggesting the same letter was sent to many enrollees. The pitch was successful and solicited glowing responses, such as a letter from Henry C. Rosicky, Nebraska: “I have been greatly pleased with the careful attention you have given me and the interest shown in my progress.”

“Your personal letters have been very helpful and are so friendly that I feel that I am really acquainted with Mr. Elwood and other members of the faculty,” C.D. Gregory of Menatohn, California wrote. Fifteen-year-old W.B. McWha from Arkansas wrote: “It is a great pleasure to be a member of such a great institution as the Northwestern School....” Arthur W. Keller of New York wrote: “I want to repay you in some measure for the real interest you have taken in my success....” and sent photographs of his taxidermy work “which you can use in your advertising along with my full and complete endorsement of the Northwestern School.”

It seems unlikely J.W. Elwood personally showered as much individual attention on students as was implied. One 1930s promotional booklet showed photographs of the clerical staff (all women) seated eight to a table fulfilling what must have been thousands of mailings each day. A caption noted Northwestern had 75 full-time employees and occasionally as many as 100 when needed. Another photograph showed a truck leaving the building, piled high with “over 200 sacks” of outgoing mail. Among the most important item mailed to students must have been the “fine lithographed



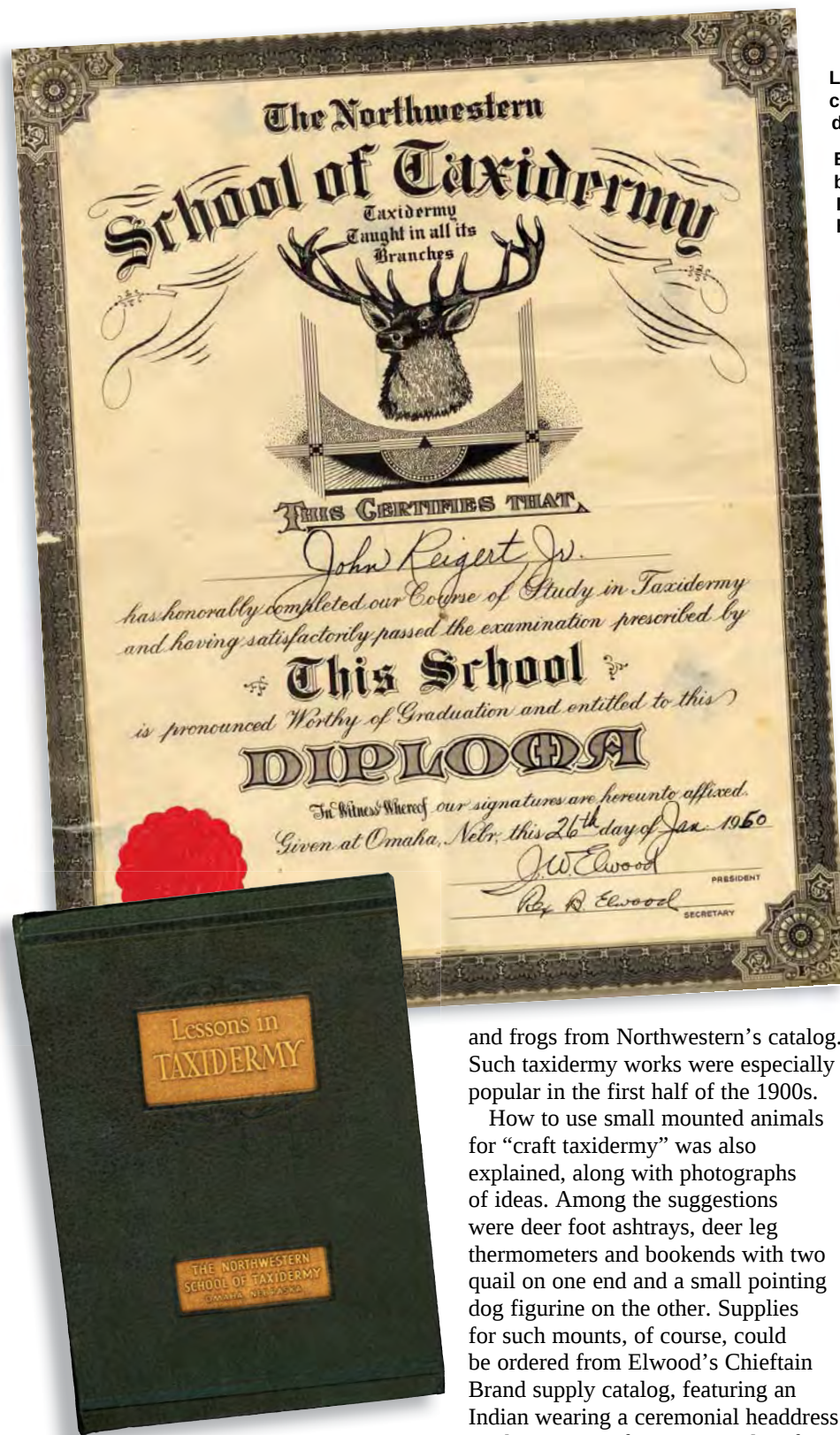
At age 15, John Reigert Jr. (NEBRASKAland designer Tim Reigert's father) began taxidermy work through the Northwestern correspondence course, as did many professional taxidermists across the country. He continued it as a second job until his death in 1972. He is shown here in his shop in about 1969.

diploma” if they completed the course work. Completion of the course was on the honor system.

At the core of the Northwestern School of Taxidermy correspondence course was nine pamphlets containing from two to five lessons in each, 160 pages in total. One was mailed monthly. A black, pebbled, hard-cover binder for the pamphlets was sold, with lettering on the cover “raised in relief, and heavily embossed in bronze.”

Book One started with the basics – collecting specimens, recommended guns and ammunition, setting up a workbench, care of specimens, killing live birds and materials needed, It recommended practicing with a pigeon and explained with words and drawings

how to skin a bird and prepare the skin for mounting. Book Two covered tools and materials needed such as different sized wires for the armature around which the body of excelsior (slender wood shavings) and tow (fine flax or hemp shavings) would be fashioned, selecting the proper artificial eyes, and pinning and wrapping the bird to hold feathers in the desired positions until the skin dried. Book Three explained similar procedures for mounting small mammals and novelty taxidermy – the mounting of animals “in human situations” that promised to be “amusing and comical.” Squirrels, rabbits and frogs were favorite subjects. Typically the mounted animals were placed in settings either hand-fashioned or using doll house furniture. Illustrated



examples included boxing squirrels (complete with boxing gloves and trunks and set in a miniature boxing ring); bullfrogs playing musical instruments or sitting in chairs around a table playing poker or musical instruments; or rabbits shooting billiard. Budding taxidermists could even order specimens of “horned toads”

and frogs from Northwestern’s catalog. Such taxidermy works were especially popular in the first half of the 1900s.

How to use small mounted animals for “craft taxidermy” was also explained, along with photographs of ideas. Among the suggestions were deer foot ashtrays, deer leg thermometers and bookends with two quail on one end and a small pointing dog figurine on the other. Supplies for such mounts, of course, could be ordered from Elwood’s Chieftain Brand supply catalog, featuring an Indian wearing a ceremonial headdress on the cover. A favorite was deer feet mounted on a backboard to serve as a gun rack.

Perhaps the most bizarre taxidermy field was mounting pets. “Almost all families have some favorite pet such as a cat, dog, canary, parrot, etc., to which they become greatly attached and would like much to preserve it when it dies,” the course noted. “By knowing

LEFT: Upon completion of the taxidermy course students received a “fine lithographed diploma.”

BELOW LEFT: A black, pebbled hard-cover binder for the lesson pamphlets was sold. It had cover lettering “raised in relief and heavily embossed in bronze.”

Taxidermy, you are in a position to do this work yourself and to preserve such specimens just as they were in life.”

Subsequent lessons took budding taxidermists through mounting large mammals up to the size of bison; mounting game heads; fish, “serpents” and turtles; tanning skins, both hair-on and hair-off; displaying horns and antlers; and building artificial rocks of paper-mache. The final book of lessons covered preserving insects, bird eggs and nests (even though it was illegal for nearly all species except exotic nuisance species such as house sparrows and starlings).

It is likely most of the Northwestern School of Taxidermy’s profit did not come from selling the instructional booklets, but from the sale of supplies. The company sold every glass eye imaginable. Charts provided the right size, type and color for gila monsters, moles and even pink eyes for albinos, as well as more commonly mounted species. Every instrument a taxidermist might require could be found in Elwood’s catalog, always the “highest grade” and at the lowest price – assortments of forceps, scissors and scalpels, along with brain spoons, paint brushes, cartilage knives, curved needles and fleshing knives. Kits with the basic instruments were sold in either a leather or wooden case and in later years in vinyl cases.

In addition, the materials required for taxidermy were sold – Calorax (a preservative that replaced the arsenic that had long been used to protect feather, hair and skin from insect damage); artificial leaves, berries and moss; assorted glues, paints, waxes and wood wool; wooden plaques for mounting game heads, tanning solutions, furrier combs and celluloid claws for fur stoles (usually fox or mink) popular in women’s fashion in the 1920s, and advertised as: “More attractive for trimming than natural paws.”

In the 1950s, taxidermy supplies

were entering a new period. Paper-mache ears for head mounts of larger game animals like deer, elk and moose replaced the formerly hand-fashioned interior support made of thin sheet lead or galvanized hardware cloth. Rather than building their own head forms from excelsior and tow wrapped with string, Elwood’s taxidermy supply house introduced pre-made head forms of “thick, strong, 8-ply waterproof mache paper for big game head/neck mounts, and for the heads of animal rugs for everything from badgers to leopards to polar bears. Northwestern advertising pointed out that paper-mache heads were more durable than those made of plaster of Paris; and that “teeth hand carved from solid celluloid” were superior or other products on the market. By the 1960s,



172 HUNTER—TRADER—TRAPPER NORTHWESTERN SCHOOL OF TAXIDERM. TAXIDERM NO LONGER A SECRET ART

READ THESE 4 PAGES CAREFULLY

Every reader of H-T-T, who does not know taxidermy should give this article careful consideration.

HUNTERS--TRAPPERS

Save Your Fine Trophies of Birds and Animals---Learn to Mount Specimens of All Kinds True to Life

IF you hunt or trap you often secure fine birds and animals that you would like to have mounted. The expense of sending them all to a taxidermist is large, and you, like all other sportsmen, many times lose these beautiful and valuable trophies. This is no longer necessary. You can Learn for Yourself right in your own home, to do all kinds of taxidermy work as well as a professional.

Our School This school was organized ten years ago for Hunters and Trappers. We teach by Mail every branch of Taxidermy, with wonderful success. Our course of lessons is so complete and so simple that any man, woman or boy can in a few weeks learn to stuff and mount every kind of bird, animal or game head. More than 35,000 students are enrolled in our school, and without a single exception they are delighted with this art and highly recommend our course. You can learn easily and quickly, and if you have not had our catalog, you should get it without delay.

Splendid Profits Do you want to earn more money? Do you want to enter a profession that pays big salaries or one in which you can earn from \$2000 to \$4000 per year by conducting your own business? If you do, this opportunity should be fully investigated. Taxidermy is becoming the most popular of arts. Game specimens are scarcer each year, and the sportsmen desire to save those that they do get. Big prices are paid for this work. The usual fees for mounting a hawk is \$5.00, and the work can be done in three hours. The fee for mounting a deer head is from \$8.00 to \$12.00 and the work can easily be done in one day. Other prices are in proportion. You can open a business for yourself and have an independent income, or you can work for other Taxidermists for \$20.00 to \$35.00 per week. Or you can give just your spare time to Taxidermy and earn \$10.00 to \$15.00 per week and not lose a moment from your regular duties. Taxidermy offers a big, broad, uncrowded field for those who desire to make money.

SEE NEXT PAGE

Always mention the HUNTER-TRADER-TRAPPER when writing to advertisers.

ABOVE: Elwood advertised extensively in outdoor magazines, the size of his ads apparently varying with the cost – usually one-column wide in major magazines like *Field and Stream*, as many as four full pages in magazines like *Hunter-Trader-Trapper*.

LEFT: A nattily attired J.W. Elwood from one of his promotional brochures.

Elwood was selling pre-made excelsior bodies for a wide variety of birds; and eventually pre-formed plastic heads and bodies.

Even though some label J.W. Elwood as no more than a clever shyster and opportunistic entrepreneur, perhaps never much of a taxidermist himself and perhaps not even much of a sportsman, the more important aspect was that most men who became professional taxidermists during

the 1900s had their start with his correspondence course, and thousands and thousands of others learned the craft only for their own enjoyment. Two sons had entered the business by the 1940s. Northwestern School of Taxidermy, Inc. incorporated in 1965, and was probably finished as a functioning business by 1998. The Nebraska Secretary of State’s office records show the business was “administratively dissolved” on April 16, 1999. ■

What About Bob?

Text and Photos by Jeff Kurrus

A day afield among strangers becomes a trip of a lifetime for hunters on their first wild pheasant foray. Not because of the amount of birds killed, but because of the kindness of a very generous host.

High-fences and pen-raised birds will forever be a part of the hunting experience. With less time for many to hunt, and more cash being spent at the pump than ever before, looking for a

guarantee while afield is here to stay. But it wasn't exactly what a Navy commander by the name of Chad West had on his mind when taking Elwood Vick, his 73-year-old father-in-law, on their first pheasant hunt. "We had to kick the birds up with our feet," West said about his first rooster experience, "in grass that looked like my front yard. I was looking for something a bit different than that."

"It was like shooting ducks on water," added Elwood, a Mississippi native who had long since stopped hunting quail back home

that," Elwood added, again referring to their paid experience. "Not what I'd call a hunt at all."

What they were looking for was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to experience something that Gretna resident Bob Schweikert does two to three times a week each fall – a tried and true Nebraska pheasant hunt. So when Bob was introduced to the Gulf Coast natives and saw their interest in a morning rooster foray, it was a no-brainer. "When are we going?" Bob said, and the hunting date was set.

It was an easy request to answer for Schweikert, a construction business owner in Omaha who was a self-described workaholic for 25 years before beginning his second occupational career as bookkeeper, bidder and beneficiary of "old man labor," those tasks befitting one whose desire for long work days had been supplanted by long days afield. But he's also in full support of a good honest day's labor being paid for with cash, check or permission to hunt – perhaps a new shelving system for a couple of mornings chasing longbeards the following spring or some sheetrock work for keys to the gate. "You got a deal," the client will say, feeling they got the better of the negotiation. But Bob knows better, and it can be seen on his face as he moves through the field – dog whistle in mouth and a concentrated, contented look on his face.

"We had to kick the birds up with our feet in grass that looked like my front yard. I was looking for something different than that."

yet had always had a lifelong dream to kill a pheasant. Like many hunters living outside of pheasant range, crisp Plains mornings are a bucket list opportunity for those having never seen a rooster rise.

"But not like

Bob Schweikert of Gretna moves through a field of pheasants over-and-under firmly in his hands.

So three days later, when this group of hunters got together for the first time, they were greeted by a frost-covered tallgrass field near Wilbur. They loaded their guns, unloaded Bob's two Brittany spaniels, Chevy and Sally, and continued a Nebraska tradition. As they walked, their sinuses clearing with each step, the newcomers tried to keep up with their veteran host, who always took the outside loop and was always a few paces ahead. Sounds erupted from below as they moved, the echoing repetition of "Hen" ringing through the air.

When the first shot was fired, it was from Bob's over-and-under, another fixture of a Great Plains pheasant hunt. When the second shot was fired, it was also from Bob's gun. Very quickly Chad and Bob silently hoped that the next flush came near the end of Elwood's gun muzzle. But it didn't – at least not for awhile.

Elwood could have cared less. Grass field here, ditch row there, and hens continued to rise, delighting him each time. "I used to bird hunt a lot," Elwood said later, "had pointers and everything. Nowadays the quail aren't around back home like they were many years ago, so bird hunting has become a void in my life." Not on that day, however. The wind was absent, the action was steady, and there wasn't a complaint in the world.

"Rooster!" Chad yelled shortly after arriving at the group's second locale of the day. Elwood raised, fired, and his first Nebraska pheasant crumpled in the tallgrass.

Moments later, the group of hunters who had known each other for less than a day were posing for photos, each picture capturing a moment in



TOP: Chad West (left), Bob Schweikert, and Elwood Vick pose for a photo with a mixed bag of quail and pheasants from their hunt in eastern Nebraska. BOTTOM: Chevy, Schweikert's Brittany spaniel, moves through a grass field toward a ditch row in search of upland game.

time that all would remember for years. "That hunt was one of the thrills of my life," Elwood said recently, "even though I had muscles hurting on me the next day that I'd never felt before."

"We had never heard that cackle," added Chad. "There isn't anything better than that."

Except for after the hunt.

"Oh, yeah," Chad added, "when we

got home we used a little pheasant ka-bob recipe that I got from one of those outdoor shows. Man, was it good. I'll tell you this – if anyone in

my neighborhood had a pheasant coop nearby, I'd be cutting that fence every night."

"He's got that right," Bob laughed, hearing Chad's idea, "I was cooking birds that night myself."

And they continue to speak fondly of the morning. About the covey of quail that Chad emptied his gun on, drawing little more than a single feather; the rooster that Elwood knocked down and the entire group tracked into a deadfall to retrieve; and the fun that Bob had introducing someone else to the joys of a Nebraska pheasant hunt.

"It was definitely a blast," Bob said during a recent conversation, ideas forming in his head. "When can you hunt next? How about tomorrow?" ■

Interested in pheasant hunting? Visit www.OutdoorNebraska.org and click on Hunting, Upland Game, then Pheasant. A small game permit will cost you \$14 and you'll need a Habitat Stamp for \$20.



Hunting with Mom

Photos and text by Eric Fowler

Like many kids, J.J. Hall caught the hunting bug at an early age, tagging along with dad just to watch, and is now passing that interest on to her family.

Yes, *her* family.

J.J. is short for Jennifer Jo. “That’s why I’m J.J. – he wanted a boy,” she said of her father, John Coles of Omaha. “I’ve been a tomboy from the very beginning. I don’t think I had a chance.”

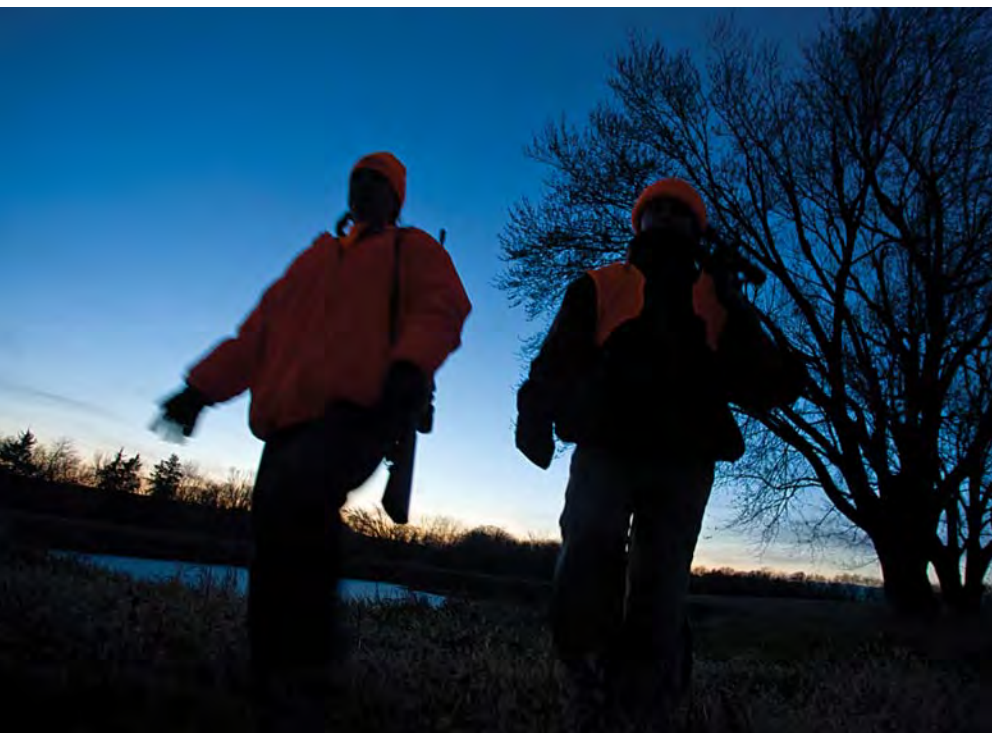
John got a boy as his second child, but before her brother came along, J.J.’s path was set and she was well on her way to being a die-hard deer hunter. The Nebraska City woman, a hospice nurse with a concealed carry permit and vanity plates that read “HNTN CHC” on her pickup, has since dabbled in upland game bird hunting, albeit with no success. Three years ago, she taught herself to turkey hunt.

That she is a woman who hunts

does not make her unique: Each year more and more women head to the field in pursuit of game big and small. In Nebraska, one in 10 deer hunters is female, a number that is growing thanks in part to programs like Becoming an Outdoors – Woman. One day J.J. hopes to find time to help with that program. “I think more women should be in the sport,” she said.

For now, she’s teaching her own classes in Becoming an Outdoors Man. She’s teaching her sons, 12-year-old Trevor and 8-year-old Max, to hunt. She taught her first husband to hunt before they divorced. She recently remarried. Her new husband, Kevin isn’t a hunter yet, but “He’s going to be. This will be his first year. We have to go get him a rifle.”

A woman who wants her husband to get a new rifle? It would be hard to argue that she is not unique on that front.



J.J. Hall and her son, Trevor Kahland, leave the field after an evening deer hunt near Auburn last November.



Bow ready, Trevor scans the woods from a blind while spring turkey hunting with his mom, J.J..

Start 'Em Young

J.J. was just two when her father took her hunting for the first time. “Then it was just, of course, watching and sitting and tracking,” she said. “Dad taught me from the beginning how to hunt, how to stalk.”

When she got older, J.J. joined her dad and others on annual deer hunting trips to Fort Robinson State Park near Crawford. “I got my first deer when I was 12. It was an 11-point buck and it was the biggest of the year for the group. Back then we had a group of about 30 of us going and we’d stay in the big officers’ quarters. It was

my first year hunting, I was the only female and I got the biggest deer – they weren’t sure they wanted me to come back the next year.”

Those trips continued until J.J. got married and moved away with her first husband, who was in the Navy, but resumed when they returned to Nebraska in 2003.

J.J. and her dad started deer hunting closer to home three years ago, which is also when she decided to try turkey hunting, something her father never did. Unsuccessful her first fall, she bagged a gobbler with her grandfather’s Montgomery Ward 20-gauge side-by-side during her first

spring season.

J.J. and her dad hope to head back to Fort Robinson soon, possibly as soon as Trevor is ready for that next step. So far, the boy has had trouble deciding if he really wants to hunt and, as every parent should, mom is letting him decide.

Both Trevor and Max started tagging along on hunts when they were only a few years old – J.J. has a picture of Trevor in an orange Bob the Builder vest from one of his early hunts; Max still has a rock with a speck of blood on it that he found while helping track a deer J.J.’s stepmother shot. Both boys started shooting BB guns about age 4,

.22s around age 6, and hunting rabbits and squirrels shortly thereafter.

But as many parents discover, there are challenges when it’s time to move to the next level of hunting, when the game gets bigger.

Patience, My Boy

Trevor’s first foray into turkey hunting lasted one morning. Shortly before sunrise, he and mom walked to a blind on the edge of the creekbottom. Like most kids, he was smiling with anticipation, full of questions and short on patience. Unlike most he carried a bow, still not crazy about the recoil that



came with the pull of a shotgun’s trigger. They had heard turkeys gobbling before they left the house and heard them often up and down the creekbottom for the first hour or so. “I hear them,” Trevor said. “They’re so close it’s like they’re right behind that tree.”

But the birds didn’t come. Trevor scratched on his mom’s knee and whispered, “Do it.” – his way of asking her to work her slate call again.

“Relax,” his mom would say. “Be patient.”

A little more than an hour into the hunt, Trevor was obviously losing what little patience he had, asking more than once why the turkeys weren’t coming. It took two full hours before he exclaimed: “I’m getting bored.”

Mom’s reply was one parents have been using for eons. “That’s why they call it hunting. Otherwise they would call it shooting.”

“I’ve had about five people tell me that,” Trevor said.

Soon after, he asked: “Do you think we’re going to get anything today.”

“That depends on how long you can hunt,” J.J. answered.

By then, Trevor’s smile had disappeared

“You act like you’re done,” J.J. said.

“I want to get one,” he replied.

Nearly three hours into the hunt, Trevor was almost rewarded for sticking it out, but a gobbler snuck through his shooting lane before they saw it and neither he nor the two hens following him returned J.J.’s calls.

But Trevor’s smile had returned, which brought a big smile to mom’s face as well. “Let’s go after them,” he said. “I can stalk them. It’s been done before.”

So they stepped from the blind and over the hill. Of course the birds were nowhere to be found, but J.J. knew that

letting Trevor stretch his legs would allow him to sit still for at least a while longer.

The questions continued. “I don’t know anything about turkey hunting,” J.J. confessed. “Ask me about deer hunting.”

Trevor closed his eyes and bowed his head.

“What are you doing, praying?” J.J. asked.

“Yes, that’s how I got my bass,” the boy replied, referring to the big fish he’d caught earlier that spring.

Soon after, they heard a hen cluck in a distant draw. When turkeys were around, Trevor was hopping all over the blind.

Four hours into the hunt, Trevor decided he’d had enough and took the archery release off his wrist. No sooner than he had, a jake and two hens appeared to the left of the blind and just 15 yards away. He got the release back on, but while knocking an arrow, it hit against the metal folding chair he was sitting on and the resulting *ping* sent the birds running. The jake didn’t run far and Trevor let an arrow fly, but missed.

The smile was gone, replaced by a pout. “Why am I so stupid?” he said with tears in his eyes.

“I think that’s telling us it’s just not our day today,” his mother replied, leaning over to kiss his forehead.

“I know it’s frustrating, but it’ll be okay. Remember all of those times I went out deer hunting and came back with nothing? You just keep trying.”

Now Trevor was done. They picked up his arrow and walked back to the house. The tears dried but the pout remained the entire way.

Don't Push It

Women should be better at teaching people to hunt and possibly be even better hunters than men, said J.J. – “I think we have more patience.”

That said, J.J. admits that she has A.D.H.D and has trouble sitting still.

Partly for that reason, she’s never hunted whitetails from a tree stand, but will try it this fall. She would rather stay on the move, which is why she always enjoyed the trips to northwestern Nebraska and the spot-and-stalk opportunities allowed by the wide-open spaces there.

Trevor, like most kids, is no different. Sure, they can sit still in front of a video game or the television for hours on end, but then there’s much more to keep their mind busy.

That factor, combined with the disappointment Trevor took from that first unsuccessful turkey hunt, also made it his last. He just wasn’t interested.

Last fall, he hunted deer twice. “I didn’t really want to at first because the gun kicks and it sort of hurt me at first,” said Trevor, “but then I decided to get over it and hunt.”

The first day in the field, he wasn’t able to get a shot off at a buck that gave him an honest chance. They didn’t see a deer on the second hunt. After that trip, Trevor told his mom he didn’t want to go anymore. Too boring, he said. Mom was disappointed, but understood and didn’t push him.

“They don’t like to sit and wait,” she said. “Trying to find ways to keep him interested until he does get into it is the hardest thing. I’ve been trying to switch it up a little bit and try to walk a little more with him. I’d really like to get him out west. Hopefully next year I can, so we can walk and stalk more.”

The hunts she went on as a girl were family vacations, said J.J., who got out of school to go but had to bring homework with her. They would sightsee during the down times, hunt grouse – “flying footballs” her dad calls them – or ride four wheelers. Back at the cabin, they would play cards. “It was a big family thing,” she said.

Trevor has kept shooting, as has Max. Both are involved in 4-H shooting sports and won their age



Above: Sitting next to a tree waiting for a deer to walk from the woods in the creekbottom below gives J.J. and Trevor plenty of time to talk and share a laugh on a hunt last November. Left: J.J.’s vanity plate is short for “Hunting Chick.”

divisions in archery at the county fair. Trevor added a reserve champion ribbon in the BB gun competition.

Max “can’t wait” to hunt and already is hounding mom for a new compound bow to replace his kid-sized recurve.

It appears Trevor is ready to give turkey hunting another shot this fall. While visiting a friend near Brownville, where J.J. shot her first turkey three years ago, Trevor saw five big gobblers and told mom he wanted to hunt again. Fine, she said, as long as he passed the Hunter Education course, which was now required for him.

That will reinforce the safety aspect of what J.J. is trying to teach her boys, a challenge everyone faces when teaching kids to shoot and hunt. “They tend to forget how dangerous guns can be,” said J.J. “so it’s just constantly reiterating – point the gun up or hold the gun down, keep your finger off the trigger ... trying to get it so it’s

habit for them. They get so tired of me hounding them, but I say ‘No, you have to learn. I know what can happen.’”

To Heck With Stereotypes

While more women than ever are hunting now, many still have to deal with age-old stereotypes, whether it’s in the gun shop where salesmen assume they are shopping for their husbands and not themselves, or in the field.

“I deal with the ‘Bambi killer’ stereotype all the time, maybe even more than men, because I am supposed to be the caring, nurturing person. People ask how can I do that, hunt innocent animals. What I tell them is how much I love nature and feel a part of it. I love to go out and listen to the birds or watch the beauty of deer playing in a field, but I also explain that part of my hunting is to help the animal population, because too many

of something can turn bad.

“Nature seems to be in my blood. If I have had a bad day or week, I can just walk through the woods for an hour or so and feel completely relaxed and renewed. I’m out there enjoying the surroundings or being with my family and hopefully providing food for the table. Don’t get me wrong, I love buck fever and bagging a large deer, but the process is what keeps me coming back.”

Being able to take her boys along is another reason. She and Kevin are expecting their first child this fall. It will be a boy. J.J. had hoped for a girl. “I was hoping I could teach her and teach more women to hunt,” she said.

Again, J.J. ignores the stereotypes: “Girls, don’t be shy – ask someone to go hunting. And fathers, don’t be shy to take your girl. It’s definitely something that can be a family thing if you make it that way.” ■

Witness in the Woods

A camera trap intended to be left up for a week instead remained for almost two full years and recorded more than 700 images.

Photos and text by Michael Forsberg

Most of us spend a good share of our lives on the move. We tend to engage nature in the same way – if we hunt, we walk fields or stalk through the woods. When we fish we troll, drift or wade a shoreline. Even when we pause to sit in a blind or drop an anchor from the boat, we stay in place only briefly until our other world calls us home.

Wildlife photography is no different. With camera in hand we wander through a landscape searching for subject and scene and quality of light. We may sit for hours in a blind or go back to a favorite spot season after season, but we are only temporary visitors in the natural world.

But what would happen if you could pick a spot and set up a camera that would stay in place wired to capture action whenever it occurs, even when we are not there? What would it reveal?

In October 2009, I set up a camera trap system on a well-worn game trail along the Platte River to see what wildlife might pass by. At the time my goal was to leave the camera in place for a week. It stayed almost two years.

From one small spot of earth in the middle of the woods, this stationary camera recorded the natural world in motion beyond my wildest dreams. Every time I came back the camera had captured something else interesting in the frame. Soon this game trail became a street in a busy neighborhood and the camera became witness to both the wild citizenry that lived there and the cycle of seasons unfolding.

The camera revealed rainstorms, blizzards and autumn color. Flocks of turkeys displayed in front of it in springtime. Raccoon families used the fallen tree in the frame like monkey bars during the winter. Coyotes, bobcats and skunks used the ground as marking posts year-round.

Over time I began to recognize certain individual animals and their families. In one instance, the camera captured a spotted fawn in early summer. Later, it captured that same fawn in nearly the same pose, but this time all grown up.

When the river would freeze up the game trail would go cold, because an iced-up river meant more travel options for wildlife. Trail traffic was also low in late spring, when most animals were staying close to home tending to their newborn young. But the trail became most active during late fall when deer were in the rut, the nearby cropfields

were being harvested, and the young of the year from all these species were striking out on their own.

The last picture from the camera trap was taken in June 2011 during a rainstorm, when rising water levels in the Platte due to snowmelt in the Rockies and persistent rains in the plains began to kiss the woodland's edge. I pulled the camera just in time.

Through its stay, rodents chewed through camera cords, ants infested electronic flashes, deer noses smudged lenses and a bobcat repeatedly sprayed the camera box. But in the end it was all worth it.

What it affirmed was that there is no empty space in nature. Like each creature, every tiny piece of space nestled within a habitat has value and, if we watch closely, its own unique story to tell. ■

A regular contributor to *NEBRASKAland Magazine*, Lincoln-based wildlife photographer Michael Forsberg's work has appeared in publications such as *Audubon*, *National Geographic* and *National Wildlife*. He is seen here checking out the camera trap setup written about in this story. www.michaelforsberg.com



This bobcat was captured along the game trail one night past a full moon on January 1, 2010, at 9:39 p.m.





White-tailed Buck, 11/09/2009, 6:42 a.m.



Striped Skunk, 11/09/2009, 11:48 p.m.



White-tailed Buck, 11/27/2009, 7:04 a.m.



White-tailed Deer, 12/12/2009, 9:56 a.m.



Raccoon 1/17/2010, 3:51 a.m.



Tom Turkey, 4/4/2010, 5:48 p.m.



Tom Turkey, 5/4/2010, 10:12 a.m.



White-tailed Fawn, 7/5/2010, 9:58 a.m.



White-tailed Fawn, 9/8/2010, 7:17 a.m.



Hen Turkey, 4/21/2010, 12:29 p.m.



White-tailed Deer, 6/8/2010, 11:02 p.m.



Raccoons, 8/28/2010, 12:17 a.m.



Bobcat, 9/13/2010, 11:24 p.m.



Raccoon, 9/17/2010, 9:36 a.m.



Striped Skunk, 10/18/2010, 3:02 a.m.



Fox Squirrel, 12/27/2010, 2:31 p.m.



White-tailed Deer, 1/1/2011, 8:39 a.m.



White-tailed Deer, 10/20/2010, 7:07 a.m.



Raccoon, 10/20/2010, 6:49 p.m.



Coyote, 3/9/2011, 1:53 a.m.



Tom Turkey, 5/2/2011, 9:57 a.m.



White-tailed, 10/22/2010, 1:12 a.m.



Raccoon, 10/22/2010, 6:29 a.m.



Raccoon, 10/28/2010, 6:04 p.m.



White-tailed, 11/1/2010, 5:35 a.m.



Rainstorm, 6/02/2011, 9:56 a.m.

Little Red Houses

Photos and text by Jeff Kurrus



Above: A photo from the 1950s reveals when the red barns weren't so red.

Background: A contemporary aerial view of the property shows the Polenz family's red barns and Platteview Road.

Opposite: Chris Polenz and son Luke enjoy the view and their time together hunting turkeys.

They are actually barns – four of them to be exact – holding the memories of more than 70 years that the Polenz family has lived on their self-proclaimed “ranch.” The land, originally a gift to Otto Polenz in the 1940s, is 135 acres of row crop and hardwood timber that has an ever-busier road running nearly through its front yard. “Just 10 years ago when I’d pull onto Platteview Road, I’d seldom see a car,” said Chris Polenz. “Now, I seldom pull onto the road without having cars coming from both directions.”

This two-lane blacktop that carries speeders from Highway 6 south of Gretna to Highway 75 south of Bellevue may be expanded into a four-lane thoroughfare to accommodate Sarpy County’s growth projection of 150,000 by 2050. If that development occurs, multiple landowners will be forced to move their families for the advancement of civilization, including the Polenzes. “I’ve been told one of the proposals splits my acreage, eliminating all the barns; one just bulldozes one barn and my home; and the third goes through my son Luke’s deer stand where his 19-pointer was shot,” said Chris. “While I fully understand the need for growth, I hate to see family farms and cool Nebraska barns uprooted.”



Advancement, and the conveniences that often stand with it, is always double-edged. While it is nice that 7th grader Grant and 10th grader Luke attend Platteview Jr/Sr High School less than two miles from the ranch and that shopping is minutes away for mom Jennifer and the rest of the Polenzes, these same conveniences can close down peripheral farms as nearby towns like Bellevue, Papillion and Springfield expand their boundaries. But this isn't a new story.

Ask any resident that has lived in an area for a number of years and the memories are similar – cityscapes are bigger, landscapes are smaller. It's a notion that's accepted by the masses. Until that new shopping center or road is built right through your covey of quail.

"Right now, there's not much along the road other than homes, farmland and livelihood," read a recent Omaha.com story on the expansion of Platteview Road. Isn't that enough? Polenz and his family sure think so, but they're not going to dwell on this possible expansion too much

Left: Otto Polenz was gifted the family land in the 1940s. This heirloom portrait of him hangs in one of the red barns.

Opposite, top: The "big red barn" as it appears today.

Right: Inside the barns, tools, signs (like this Farmers Union shown), artifacts and remnants of 70 years connect the Polenzes to this place.



because they'd miss life happening everyday around them.

"All we can do is enjoy every evening, every hunting season, and every opportunity to stack up as many memories as we can until they pave four lanes of traffic through my front yard," said Chris. "Yes, we'll miss our home, but maybe our new one would be built better, more energy-efficient. Our barns, however, those are a different story. Using tongue and groove Douglas fir and cedar siding, they are some of the last of the hand-made wooden barns, and it's hard to duplicate work like that any more.

"And we won't try to. Instead, we'll just find a way to move the barns and their precious memories with us." ■



Below: Chris sits in the barn, the history of five generations on this land filling the walls around him.

Opposite: Whitetails stop near a hunting blind on the Polenz family property.

Background: Newspapers chronicling Nebraska football cover the walls.



A Time for Change

Photos by Luke Kathol

As the days grow shorter and the nights get chillier, autumn portends the coming cold weather of winter. This period, however, is often one of the prettiest times of the year – gone is the mostly green color scheme of summer as a vast combination of colors take over the Nebraska landscape.

A cottonwood leaf floats lightly on the surface of a calm pond as the water reflects autumn's colors.





Above: Red-winged blackbirds and grackles gather together at an evening roost during their annual migration south for the winter.

Left: Dew drops battle the force of gravity as they hang from a late-remaining spider web strand.

Right: A tight photograph of rooster pheasant feathers shows the intricate patterns and vibrant colors on one of Nebraska's prettiest birds.





Left: A fall cold front passes over the badlands, allowing the glow of late evening sunlight to brighten the landscape for a brief moment.

Above: An early fall frost lightly glazes fallen cottonwood leaves.

Luke Kathol has been a nature photographer for eight years and works out of Kearney. His photography emphasis has been on landscapes, birds and macro photography. He has been contributing to NEBRASKAland Magazine since 2010.

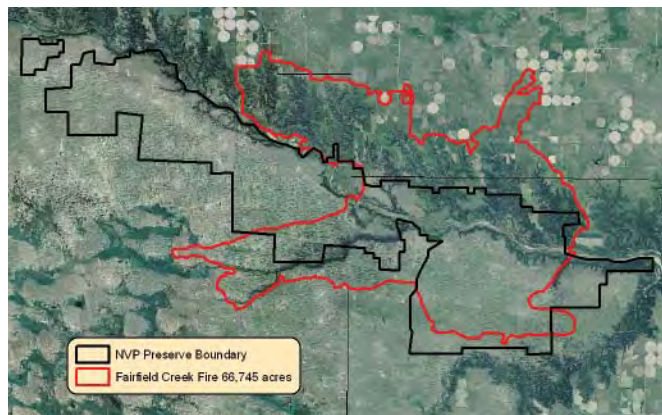


Season of Wildfires

The good and the bad of fire.

By Chris Helzer, Ecologist for The Nature Conservancy

The hot dry summer of 2012 was a season of wildfires across Nebraska. Particularly large wildfires burned in the Pine Ridge and Middle Niobrara River Valley. One of the larger wildfires was the **Fairfield Creek fire**, which was started by lightning and burned more than 74,000 acres, including approximately 30,000 acres of The Nature Conservancy's Niobrara Valley Preserve.



The wildfires destroyed a number of houses and other buildings, many miles of fence, and did other physical damage to private properties. Those damages are real and substantial, especially for people who lost their homes. Ecologically, however, it's more difficult to categorize the effects of the wildfires because fire is such an important component of ecosystem function in grassland and woodland communities. In fact, many natural areas across the state are suffering losses in habitat quality as a result of many years of fire suppression. One of the most obvious and important consequences of that fire suppression is an overabundance of eastern red cedar and other trees and shrubs. In both grasslands and woodlands, that thick growth of brush and trees shades out other plant species, reduces habitat quality for most wildlife species, and facilitates the spread of invasive plants that thrive in cool and shady conditions.

At the Niobrara Valley Preserve, we are in the process of assessing the ecological effects of the Fairfield Creek

fire and making response plans. Most of the Conservancy land that burned was grassland, so the our major economic impacts are the short-term loss of forage for our bison and cattle herds, and the need to rebuild more than 40 miles of fences. The grasslands themselves, however, will be fine – summer fires typically trigger abundant growth of wildflowers and “opportunistic” plants the following year, and the drought will probably have a stronger impact on our decisions about grazing plans for next year than the fire will. The best news is that we got a huge and immediate boost in our cedar tree control efforts!

The impacts to the woodland portions of the valley are more complicated. While large areas of woodlands burned, much larger areas didn't and will continue to support woodland wildlife and provide seeds to the burned areas as they recover. Some of the burned woodlands got hot enough that the vast majority of the trees are now dead. Those areas will be dramatically different for the coming decades, but not necessarily in a bad way. There the grasses and wildflowers should colonize quickly, followed by scattered shrubs and – eventually – pine and oak trees again. In other woodland areas the fire was less intense, allowing many trees to survive. In those woodlands, the removal of cedar trees and thick layers of leaves and/or needles will allow grasses and wildflowers to flourish beneath the remaining trees.

This wildfire has created a valuable learning opportunity, and we're already working with the University of Nebraska to evaluate and measure various aspects of the fire's aftermath, including soil erosion, invasive species colonization, and native species and community recovery. We will also look at how the numerous controlled burns conducted locally in recent years affected those areas impacted by this year's wildfire – several large areas burned in the spring of 2012 did not return during the wildfire, providing natural firebreaks for firefighter to utilize and safe harbors for wildlife and insect species both before and after the fire. In addition, previous controlled burns may have decreased cedar density enough that the 2012 wildfire burned less intensely in some places.

Along the Middle Niobrara Valley, we and our neighbors will continue to use controlled burns to maintain biological diversity and suppress encroachment of eastern red cedar and other aggressive species. The ecological impacts of the 2012 wildfires will be mostly positive, but those benefits come at a huge cost – including the loss of homes and even lives. By incorporating fire into regular land management practices, we hope to avoid large wildfires in the future. ■

Preventing Pronghorn Problems

Wintering herds drawn to Panhandle crops.

By Eric Fowler



The seasonal migration of Wyoming pronghorn between their winter range in the Green River Basin and summer range in Grand Teton National Park, covering 150 miles each direction, is the longest land migration of mammals in the United States.

Pronghorns in Nebraska migrate too, more than 100 miles in some cases, and that movement is leaving Nebraska Game and Parks Commission wildlife managers in a bind. Large winter concentrations of pronghorns in the northern Panhandle are raising the ire of some landowners, who are concerned about damage the animals may be causing to their winter wheat or alfalfa crops.

The largest pronghorn concentrations are in an area where cropland and prairie meet between Alliance and Hay Springs, and along the White River between Chadron and Crawford. Up to 1,500 pronghorn have wintered in each region in recent years, with individual herds commonly holding 100 to 200 animals, sometimes more. Most have come from the surrounding grassland, but some have moved into Nebraska from South Dakota. While pronghorn have wintered in these areas for years, problems with their presence is a relatively new issue. “We had some pretty low numbers in 2005 and they've climbed back up and now we're seeing more winter migration and increased numbers [on the winter range],” said Todd Nordeen, district wildlife manager for the Commission.

Some landowners don't mind having that many pronghorn around. Others would just as soon the Commission declared open season on the wintering herds, but that might lead to the harvest of animals that spend the rest of the year 100 miles away, where another landowner enjoys watching and hunting the few he has. By the time the fall migration occurs, pronghorn already have been pursued by hunters during archery, muzzleloader and center-fire rifle seasons set by biologists to keep herds at levels appropriate for their summer ranges.

Late-season hunts for doe and fawn pronghorn were launched in 2011 in two Panhandle management units to address the problem. Unlike other late pronghorn seasons in north-central Nebraska, which are set mainly to reduce the overall population, these seasons are longer by design to extend hunting pressure and keep the herds moving so they don't get too comfortable on one property. A late hunt was added in a third unit this year, and the start of the late season moved up to November 1.

The Commission also spends countless hours hazing the animals away from crop fields, both from the ground with noise makers and from above with aircraft. “We're out there almost every day,” said Nordeen.

Such is the plight of the pronghorn, adored by few and despised by many for the perceived damage they do to crops and fences. Nordeen believes the animals have a bad rap simply because

they are active during the day and landowners can see them feeding on crops. Deer and elk, on the other hand, are active mostly at night: Out of sight, out of mind.

Whether pronghorn are causing yield loss to the wheat is not certain. A Colorado State University study in the 1980s found no appreciable yield loss in fields where tame pronghorn were wintered and in some parts of the country farmers graze cattle on green wheat in the winter.

“We're trying to address some of the concerns where there is some real damage, but again part of that is perception,” said Nordeen. “Some landowners would like us to wipe them off the face of the earth. That's the challenge – we can't just decimate the winter herds because they eventually spread out and are not a problem.”

The challenge may be bigger this winter: With little grass in pastures and next year's wheat crop behind schedule due to limited soil moisture, pronghorn may be drawn even more to the few patches of green that remain.

“We're expecting depredation to be much worse all the way around, not just with pronghorn, but with deer and elk. We're already getting the calls that we usually don't get until later in the year,” Nordeen said in September. “They're already moving in on hay bales and stack yards.”

“It's going to be a tough year for wildlife. It's tough enough for the farmers and ranchers, but wildlife is going to pay a price too.” ■

BOOKS/PUBLICATIONS/VIDEOS

NEBRASKA WILDFLOWERS. It's baaack ... ! Out of print for 21 years, the second edition of *NEBRASKAland* senior editor Jon Farrar's *Field Guide to Wildflowers of Nebraska and the Great Plains* is now available. This 6 by 9½-inch paperback is a must have for anyone interested in learning more about Nebraska's wildflowers and makes a great gift. To order this publication or to learn about other great gift ideas, visit NebraskalandGifts.com or call (800) 742-0056.

MAKES A WONDERFUL GIFT! – Published since 1926, *NEBRASKAland Magazine* is a nationally recognized, award-winning magazine of choice for thousands of readers throughout the nation. For those loved ones here and away, give the gift that keeps giving year-round. Order a gift subscription today – only \$18 for one year (10 issues), or save by ordering two- or three-year subscriptions. Call 1-800-632-5263 or subscribe online at NebraskalandMagazine.com.

EXPLORE NEBRASKA art, history, culture and the great outdoors with a subscription to *Nebraska Life Magazine*. One year (six issues) for \$21 or two years (12 issues) just \$38. Phone (800) 777-6159, write us at 206 W Norfolk Ave, Norfolk NE 68702-0819 or visit www.NebraskaLife.com. Makes a great gift.

NIOBRARA RIVER FILMS. Buy *Niobrara: Jewel of the North*. Watch *Floater's: A Niobrara River Adventure* free! www.malmoea.com.

DOGS

PLUM CREEK KENNEL. German Shorthairs, stud service, puppies and started dogs. Training for all pointing breeds. Specialize in training the handler as well as the dog. Wayne Clark, Percival IA 51648 (402) 304-1074, 712-529-4309, clarks1@iowatelecom.net

DUCKDAWG RETRIEVERS - Raising exceptional yellow and black Labradors. 30 month written health guarantee. www.duckdawg.com North Platte, NE (308) 534-3659.

PREMIER GUNDOGS TRAINING KENNEL, Inc. Nebraska state licensed gundog training kennel specializing in training programs for waterfowl and upland hunting

retrievers, spaniels, pointing Labradors and all gundog pointing breeds. Dale-Kris Taylor (402) 787-2048, www.premierygundogs.com.

FLATLANDER KENNELS INC, Scottsbluff, Ne. Nebraska's premier full-time retriever training facility for the serious hunter or AKC and HRC hunt tester. Trainer of NE, CO, KS and SD's first and only GRHRCH's! Training, puppies and stud dogs available for all levels of hunt tests and gun dogs. Chris Jobman (308) 249-0707, www.Flatlanderkennels.com.

GERMAN SHORTHAIRES AND BRITTANYS: Very close-working hunters that point and retrieve naturally. Awesome stud dog service available. Puppies occasionally. We "HUNT" our dogs on "WILD" birds. We can train your dog. Plum Thicket Kennels for 40 years. Elm Creek, NE. Doc & Jared Nelson: 308-987-2294

FISH/FISHING

FISH FOR SALE. Catfish, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, perch, crappie, bluegill, walleye, rainbow trout, grass carp, minnows. Pleasant Valley Fish Farm, 72645 U.S. Highway 83, McCook, NE 69001. (308) 345-6599.

NEBRASKA LAKE MANAGEMENT. Biological lake surveys, fish stocking, rough fish control, lake aeration, algae control, aquatic weed control. Rob Hofpar, Aquatic Biologist, licensed, insured and qualified. (402) 784-6005 Valparaiso - (888) 850-2460 www.nelakes.net.

FOOD/GIFTS/HOME

HOME BREWING/BEER AND WINEMAKING. Fermenter's Supply, 8410 K Plaza, Suite #10, Omaha, NE 68127. Phone orders only, (888) 655-2739. Advice line (402) 593-9171. www.fermenterssupply.com.

GUIDES/OUTFITTERS

CANOE - KAYAK - TUBE RENTALS on the beautiful Niobrara River with Dryland Aquatics at Sparks, Nebraska. Your Niobrara River Specialist. (800) 337-3119. www.drylandaquatics.com, info@drylandaquatics.com.

OUTDOOR EQUIPMENT

IS PERFORMANCE IMPORTANT? For the finest canoes and accessories look to Great Plains Canoe Co., 205 Main, Springfield, NE 68059. Phone (402) 253-2000.

VACATIONS/RESORTS

THE OLDE MAIN STREET INN. A historic bed and breakfast listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Beautiful dining room with fireplace. Headquarters for General Nelson Miles, Wounded Knee Incident, 1890-91. 115 Main Street, Chadron NE 69337 (308) 432-3380. www.chadron.com/oldmain.

BIG BLUE RANCH & LODGE – Enjoy fishing, horseback riding, hunting, hiking and birdwatching on working cattle ranch in southeastern Nebraska. Beautiful log lodge with fireplaces, kitchens and big covered porches, overlooks 20 acre lake. www.bigblueranch.com (402) 865-4335

HUNTER AND FISHERMAN PARADISE: Located on Elwood Reservoir. 1,300+ acres of wildlife, trophy-size fish – wipers, walleye, muskies, perch, catfish and crappie. Nebraska's best kept secret for hunting – duck, turkey, deer and quail. Cabins, rooms, tent and camper-spot campgrounds with full hookups (30 amp, 50 amp). Call (308) 440-4993 or visit www.elwoodcampground.com

VISIT NEBRASKA STATE PARKS this fall and enjoy activities such as fishing, camping and hiking. To find out more or to make a reservation, call (402) 471-1414 or go online at OutdoorNebraska.org and follow the Parks link.

Classified Rates: 85¢ per word, minimum \$15. Closing: First business day six weeks before issue date. Classified ads are accepted on a first-come, first-served, space-available basis. Classified Ads, NEBRASKAland Magazine, P.O. Box 30370, Lincoln, NE 68503-0370. Telephone (402) 471-5473. Fax: (402) 471-1984. E-mail: ngpc.ads@nebraska.gov.

LOCATED 9 MILES SOUTH OF
CRESCENT LAKE NATIONAL
WILDLIFE REFUGE & STATE PARK

BLUE CREEK LODGE OPEN YEAR ROUND

GUIDED DEER HUNTING, WATERFOWL & UPLAND BIRD HUNTING, A VARIETY OF FISHING ON THE RANCH OR AT THE REFUGE. FAMILY VACATIONS, WEDDINGS, PARTIES & BOAT RENTALS

FOR A MORE LEISURELY OCCASION THERE'S
HIKING, BIRDWATCHING, CANOEING, KAYAKING, TUBING AND MORE.

308.772.9912
www.BLUECREEKLODGING.COM
8460 RD 181, OSHKOSH, NE

Ribbons of Prairie

PRAIRIE PLAINS RESOURCE INSTITUTE
AURORA • NEBRASKA

EST. 1980

IMAGINE THE BEAUTY
Imagine the beauty of a meandering native prairie and river corridor – a ribbon of prairie along the stream, laced with trails and rich in wildlife for people to enjoy. Ribbons of Prairie is a vision to promote diversity in the landscape of eastern Nebraska. Prairie Plains Resource Institute is working to transform vision into reality.

Prairie Plains RESOURCE INSTITUTE
1307 L Street | Aurora, NE 68818 | 402-694-5535 www.prairieplains.org

Explore the Science of Life



Environmental Studies

You've got the whole world in your hands through the School of Natural Resources. Explore conservation, environmental protection, natural resource management, sustainability, the green economy, climate change, biodiversity and social justice and obtain the knowledge to identify, analyze and resolve environmental challenges.

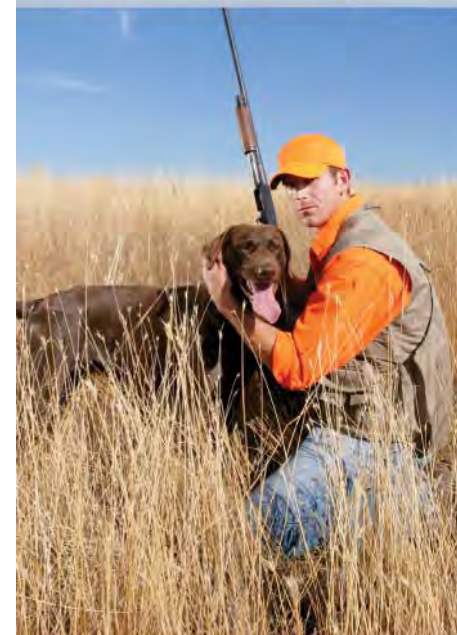


University of Nebraska–Lincoln College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources
103 Agricultural Hall • Lincoln, NE 68583-0702 • 1-800-742-8800 ext. 2541
casnr.unl.edu • casnr@unl.edu

The University of Nebraska–Lincoln is an equal opportunity educator and employer with a comprehensive plan for diversity.



YOUR DOG IS MORE THAN YOUR PET, HE'S YOUR PARTNER.



MidWest Veterinary Specialty Hospital is the only facility in the region to provide the expertise of board-certified veterinary specialists and the advanced technologies of a university teaching hospital. As specialists, we work in partnership with your pet's primary care veterinarian to select and deliver cutting-edge diagnostic, therapeutic, and treatment options.

Our specialty services include:

- Surgery
- Internal Medicine
- Critical Care
- Diagnostic Imaging
- Physical Rehabilitation

For more information on our hospital and the services we offer, please visit
www.midwestvetspecialists.com



9706 Mockingbird Dr., Omaha, NE 68127 • P: 402-614-9000 | F: 402-614-5445

Monday – Friday • 8 am – 5 pm* www.facebook.com/MWVSH

*All hospitalized patients receive continuous care, 24 hours a day.



Exceptional Specialists. Uncompromising Care.



◀ The boy on the right is me (Andy McGovern) at age 15. The other boy is my brother, (Mike) Rich McGovern, when he was 13. The location is west of Red Cloud in Webster County, near Inavale and Riverton. It was a special day, as I just bagged my first rooster using my single-shot, Savage 20-gauge and a 3-inch magnum shell loaded with #6 shot. Four adults accompanied the group: My dad, William J. (Bill) McGovern (who took the photo); Robert (Bob) Plembing of Grand Island; and two of Bob's friends from Minnesota. What made it so special was that the bird had been shot at and clearly missed by Bob and one of his friends. They both were using Browning 12-gauge automatics. There was a pause of a second or two, the adults were done firing and that gave me my chance to pull down on the rooster, dropping him at a substantial distance – there was no question about who had bagged that bird!

– Andy McGovern, Grand Island, Nebraska



▲ In this photo from December 1955, are my dad, Marvin Seggerman and uncle Alfred Schoen, along with some of the members of their hunting group. From left: Norris Schoen, Richard Dux, my father, Richard Schenrock, George Ehrett, and my uncle. They all had enjoyed a prosperous day of duck hunting in Jefferson County along the Big Sandy, west of the Powell Bridge. They were all avid hunters for many years and all, except Mr. Ehrett, continue to reside in Fairbury.

– Marsha Seggerman Baumfalk, Beatrice, Nebraska



▲ This is a photo of my father, Carroll Saunders (right) and friends with two catfish from the Elkhorn River in the early 1950s. One weighed 54 pounds, the other 22. It was an exciting catch.

– Barbara Saunders Fowle, Grand Island, Nebraska

Send contributions to: Portraits from the Past, NEBRASKAland Magazine, P.O. Box 30370, Lincoln, NE 68503-0370. Or e-mail to tim.reigert@nebraska.gov. Photos should show people enjoying Nebraska outdoor activities, such as camping, boating, hunting or fishing, and must have been taken before 1980. We will give priority to unusual photos or activities. When possible, please include a story about the photograph and identify the people, places and approximate date it was taken. Photos will be returned.

The Thunderers

Looking at tornadoes from a Plains Indian point of view.

By Roger Welsch

I am writing this well before you read it. We have just had several days of a horrendous tornado outbreak that has killed scores of people and obliterated homes, schools and entire towns across the country. Days ago we recorded the very first February tornadoes in Nebraska throughout its albeit brief history. Tornadoes are one of the few things in this world I fear, right up there with women. Those who have followed my writing history know that while I love Nebraska and the Plains, I am not a Suzie Sunshine and am not reluctant to talk about the tough part of life out here – those things that have tested the people of the Plains, sometimes to the limits. In fact, I revel in those very extremes and trials. Which means, above all, our weather and climate.

For years I wondered why in my extensive exploration of Plains Indian lore I never found a reference to tornadoes. You know the Omaha, Lakota, Ponca and Oto were familiar with tornadoes. The Pawnee were noted for their constant, extensive and intensive observing of celestial events. Surely in their studies of the skies they saw tornadoes. So ... why weren't these very distinctive and notable weather features spoken of in their lore?

Then I was looking at some Omaha tales about The Thunderers. These powerful, frightening, and destructive supernatural beings strode across the Plains destroying camps and villages, killing whole herds of bison, ravaging the landscape. They towered in the sky, roared with horrendous fury, and left only destruction in their wake. Hmmm ... sounds like tornadoes to me!

We can't fault the native peoples for not knowing that tornadoes are indeed a totally natural, if nonetheless frightening, feature of Plains weather. We are still learning about how tornadoes form, the dynamics of their destruction, and how to predict and prepare for them. Even in this oh-so-learned society we still stand in awe and ignorance before the, well ... Thunderers. There is also a fascination: How many video clips have you seen on television in which a handheld camera is capturing an approaching tornado – twisting, tearing and throwing cars and houses in every direction – and wondered how long the camera-wielder would stand there in the path of this approaching giant? (And how often have you heard the voice in the background screaming, “Ralph, get in here now, Ralph, I mean NOW!” Change that to “Roger” and you have an idea of every tornado threat we’ve had out here in Howard County in the last 30 years.)

In fact, I appreciate even more than any scientific analysis the traditional Omaha understanding of tornadoes as beings. Blizzards are too big to appreciate as discrete entities. They cover huge areas and are hard to identify precisely because they blur at the edges. (Hurricanes used to be this way until we started seeing views of them from satellites in space, and

then once we saw them as clearly defined entities, we started giving them names. See? The Omahas were once again way ahead of us!) That's how I see tornadoes and why I am in fear of them. They are things. They are individual beings. They seem to have life that is within the grasp of our eyes, ears and understanding. Their malevolence seems therefore less general. They take this house, but not the next. Some days here on the Plains they can be seen from dozens of miles away, towering 60,000 feet into the sky from their Mother Thunderhead. Yikes. Gives me goosebumps just to think about it!

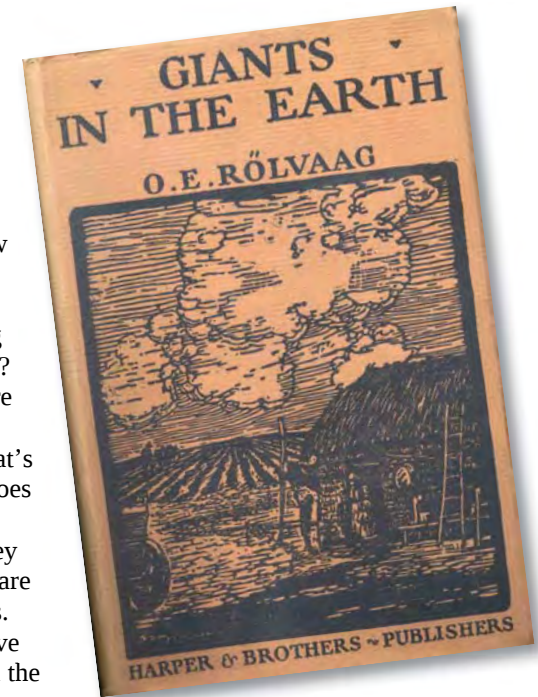
I imagine that no matter how clinical the science ever gets in its analysis of the vortices we call “tornadoes” – Fujita scale, Doppler radar and anemometers aside – from the time I realized what The Thunderers were, I have not been able to think of tornadoes as anything but The Thunderers. That metaphor, if you prefer a literary to a mythological term (the very word comes to us from the Latin tonare, meaning “to thunder”), brings me closer to understanding and dealing with them. I am still in fear of them, but now I can see them as the Omaha, Lakota and Pawnee did – malevolent giants stalking the Plains in search of whatever grief they can bring down on puny, puny mankind. Ole Rolvaag in his insightful book *Giants in the Earth* wrote the chilling words, “Monsterlike the Plain lay there – sucked in her breath one week, and the next week blew it out again. Man she scorned; his works she would not brook ...”

Yikes!

Perhaps most revealing is the title of one of the chapters of Rolvaag's book: “The Great Plain Drinks the Blood of Christian Men And Is Satisfied.” Except that The Thunderers never seem to be satisfied.

Okay. Have I cheered you up now? ■

Roger Welsch is an author, humorist and folklorist. For years he was a regular guest on CBS's Sunday Morning with Charles Kuralt. Welsch resides in Dannebrog, Nebraska, with his wife, Linda. He has appeared in NEBRASKAland Magazine since 1977.





Ring of Fire

I heard about the annular solar eclipse (often referred to as the “Ring of Fire” eclipse) from many news sources. The Ring of Fire is a not-so-frequent passage of the moon in between the earth and sun, resulting in various degrees of sun blockage. Depending on the location and timing of the viewer, the moon may block most of the sun except for a luminous outer ring, hence the “Ring of Fire” moniker. News sources had spoken about the eclipse being viewable in the areas of California, Nevada, Arizona, etc. in the evening of May 20th.

I decided to head out to Branched Oak Lake in northwestern Lancaster County in the evening to see if the eclipse was visible. There appeared to be some interference with the normal view of the sun and I began to call some friends to let them know it might be possible to see the eclipse. I noted there were several groups of people who had set up chairs and some had equipment to enhance their viewing opportunity.

I settled into an area near the dam, keeping an eye on the development of the eclipse. More and more of the sun was being blocked by the moon as time passed and the sun plummeted toward the horizon. Simultaneously, more and more people arrived to enjoy this rare opportunity. I set up a tripod and camera and began attempting to capture a decent image. As one might imagine, it takes some doing to obtain a sharp picture of the lake and trees with a properly exposed eclipse. I took a number of photos and made adjustments as the moon continued to eclipse more of the sun. I felt fortunate to capture this image that, ironically, looks quite a bit like a crescent moon against a burnt orange sky.

In case you may have missed this Ring of Fire, another comes along in 2023. See you there!

Gordon Harrod
June 29, 2012



SHOPPING WAS NEVER EASIER

This Holiday Season, give the outdoor enthusiast on your list something they can use all year long!

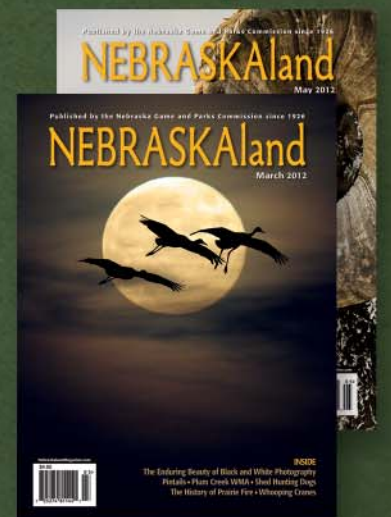
Lifetime Permits



NEBRASKAland Calender



NEBRASKAland Subscription



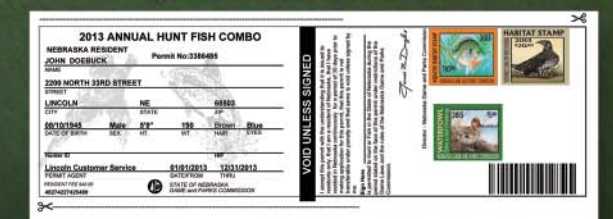
Park Bucks



Park Permit



Annual Hunt Fish Combo



NebraskalandGifts.com

Or place your order by calling 1-800-742-0056