



Shell-leaf penstemon wildflowers display on private land in Sarpy County. Photo by Jeff Kurrus.

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Disc Golf at the Parks • May-apples • Lures for Largemouths
Fremont Lakes Treasure Map (kind of) • Grilled Bluegill

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NEBRASKAland Magazine

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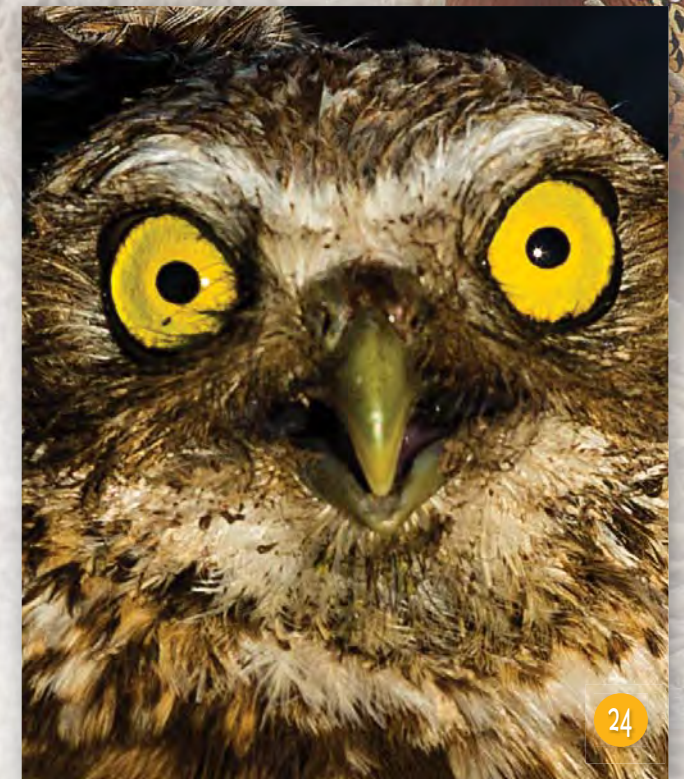
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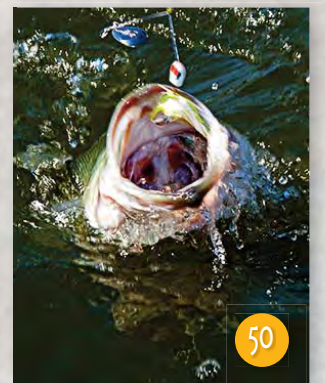
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Cover: Sawyer Haag reels in a crappie while fishing from a kayak at the Chadron City Reservoirs. Photo by Justin Haag.



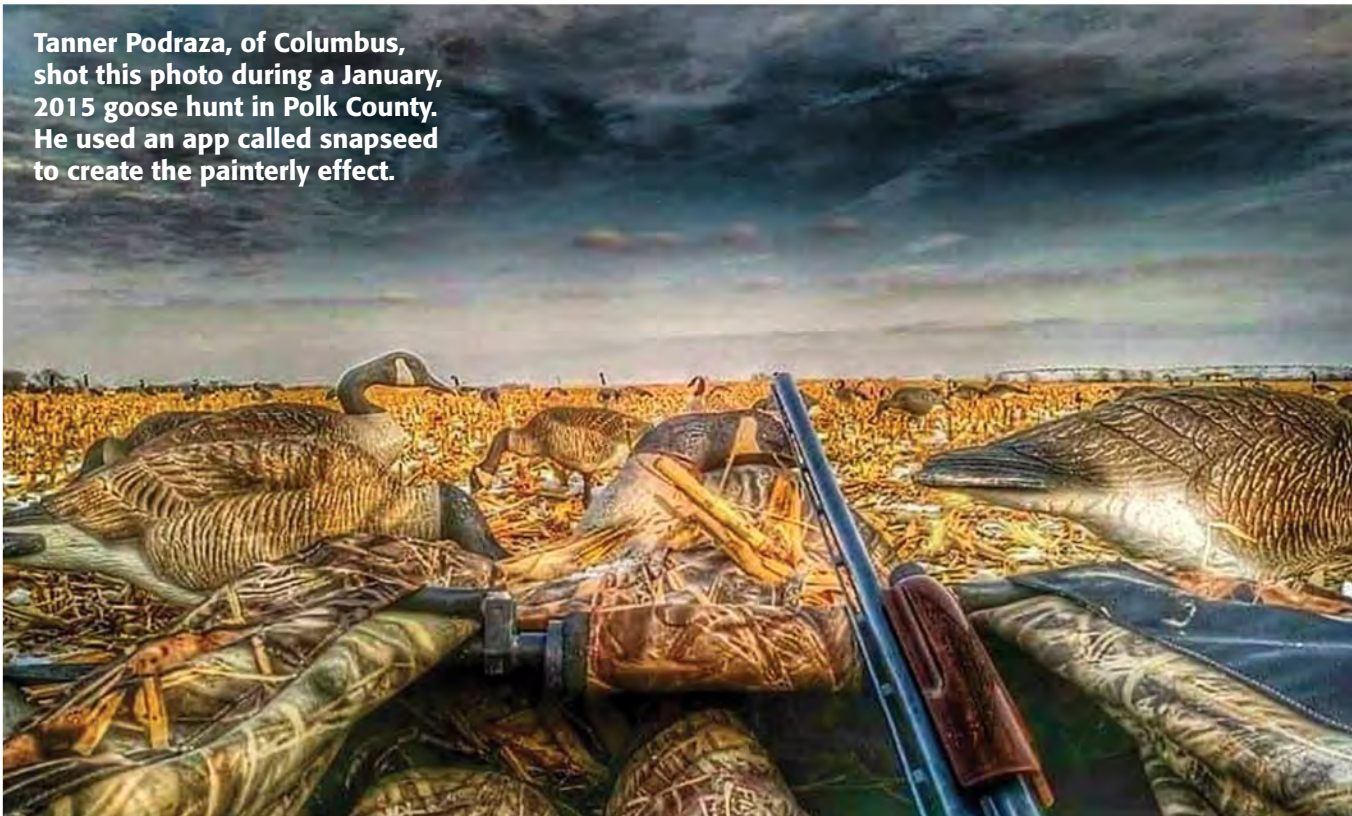
Six-year-old Charlie Caldwell of Lincoln holds up his first turkey, which he shot on private property near Ainsworth.

A Cultural Misunderstanding

I wanted to share with you an interesting true story about windmills that was told to me back in the 1980s by a friend of mine. The friend had a visitor come to Nebraska from Boston. As the Bostonian had never been to Nebraska before, they took a drive to rural areas. The Bostonian commented, “It was really nice of the farmers to put fans in the pastures to keep the cows cool.”

Mary Konz Morris
Omaha, Nebraska

Patrick Bryan captured “Reaching the Sky” near Gretna, where the Milky Way is rarely seen due to light pollution.



Tanner Podraza, of Columbus, shot this photo during a January, 2015 goose hunt in Polk County. He used an app called snapseed to create the painterly effect.



Outdoor Plates

For more than 30 years, Arnie Hoffman of Valentine has displayed his lifelong passion for crappie fishing on his vehicle. Now 86, he still fishes for slabs year-round, whether the water is soft or hard.

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) along with your hometown and a brief description of the interests expressed on your license plate to Eric.Fowler@Nebraska.gov.

Message in the Magazine

Now, you can send a message to NEBRASKAland Magazine at [Facebook.com/nebraskalandmagazine](https://www.facebook.com/nebraskalandmagazine) and your comment or photograph may appear on these pages.

–Editor

Correction

Regarding the article on Chief Standing Bear Symposium that appears in the May issue, according to tribal historical records, Lewis and Clark first encountered the tribe near what is now Niobrara. Also, the Fort Laramie Treaty gave the tribe’s land to the Great Sioux Nation, which led to the land going to the Yankton Sioux Tribe, rather than the Santee Sioux Tribe. We regret the errors.

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

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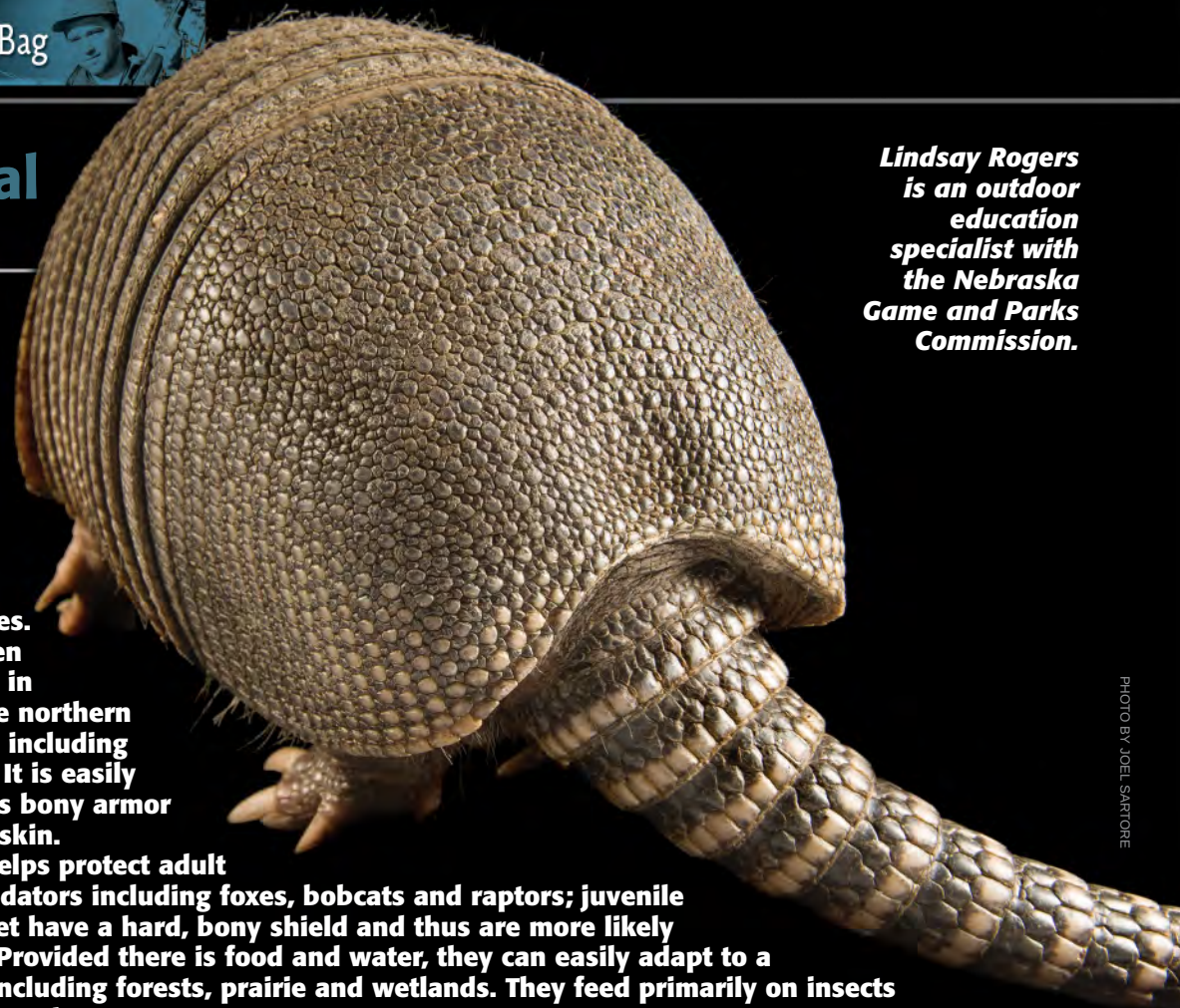
Mixed Bag

A Mammal Brief

Armadillo

By Lindsay Rogers

Of the 20 species of armadillos in the world, only one – the nine-banded armadillo – extends into the United States. This species has been expanding its range in recent years to more northern and eastern regions including southern Nebraska. It is easily recognizable with its bony armor covered in leathery skin. This suit of armor helps protect adult armadillos from predators including foxes, bobcats and raptors; juvenile armadillos do not yet have a hard, bony shield and thus are more likely to be preyed upon. Provided there is food and water, they can easily adapt to a variety of habitats including forests, prairie and wetlands. They feed primarily on insects including ants and termites. ■



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

PHOTO BY JOEL SARTORE

Pheasants Forever & Quail Forever 2015 Habitat Tours



Photo by Scott Schmidt, PF



Photo by Scott Schmidt, PF



Photo by Kelsi Wehrman, PF

Title	Description	Starting Location	Date and Time
Results of Prescribed Fire in the Canyons	Travel through the Loess Canyons to see the remarkable difference prescribed fire has made in recent years. See the results of the landowner led Loess Canyons Rangeland Alliance (LCRA) Prescribed Burn Association and their massive efforts to battle Eastern Red Cedar encroachment.	Curtis Community Center 201 Garlick Avenue Curtis	June 11 10:30 am to 3:30 pm
The Birds & the Bees Habitat Tour	Learn about the critical importance of Honey Bees, Monarch Butterflies and Native Pollinators. Tour a Central NE property with prime habitat for pollinators and other wildlife and hear how pollinator declines affect you. Free bus transportation will be provided from St Paul.	St. Paul High School 1305 Howard Ave St. Paul	June 17 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm
What's the Buzz about Pollinators?	This tour will highlight areas where habitat management activities have been implemented to enhance the landscape for wildlife and pollinators. Learn how to identify grasses and wildflowers in Southwest NE and their economic importance as pollinators. Tour and supper will end at the PF Memorial Youth Park west of Champion NE.	Imperial NRCS 706 East 5th Street Imperial	June 25 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm MT
Quail Management and CRP Practices	Learn how to improve quail habitat with simple management techniques such as edge-feathering, creating down tree structures, and the importance of early successional habitat. See how CRP can be tailored to enhance quail habitat and benefit other species. Each participant will receive their own quail management take home package.	From Franklin, go 3 miles East on HWY136, turn south on 35 Road and go 1/2 mile	June 25 9:00 am to 1:00 pm
Benefits of CRP	This tour will illustrate the CCRP program and the tremendous advances through the Farm Bill to enhance areas for wildlife and pollinators. See the different CCRP practices and the difference they have made on the landscape.	Community Center 202 Sycamore St Pleasanton	July 15 10:00 am to 1:00 pm
A Patchwork of Habitat	Explore how the timing and arrangement of different management practices can improve your land for pheasants and other wildlife.	3097 County Road O Tekamah	July 16 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm
Pheasant Management on Public and Private Ground	This tour will illustrate high quality pheasant management on public and private ground. See how land managers are using tree clearing, invasive species control, prescribed fire, and grazing management to boost pheasant populations.	Medicine Creek Reservoir NGPC Headquarters Shop 40697 Trail 10 Cambridge	July 16 11:00 am to 3:00 pm
Pheasant Management	See what volunteers can accomplish for habitat! Davis Creek WMA has undergone some recent habitat work by the hands of local citizens and PF Chapters. Learn how this has improved the public access area for pheasants and show support for local volunteers.	Davis Creek WMA South of North Loup Meet at NRD campground on South side of lake	July 25 10:00 am to 12:00 pm
CRP with High Diversity Seed Mixes	This tour will highlight different CRP practices, primarily SAFE and Pollinator Habitat as well as upgrading and managing CRP for upland birds. High diversity seedings will be illustrated to show quality habitat is supposed to look like and how conservation programs can fit into your operation.	Grove Lake WMA 86502 Grove Lake Rd Royal	July 28 11:00 am to 3:00 pm
CP What?	See and understand the many different CRP practices that are available to benefit soil, water, and wildlife. Learn the best option based on your objective.	USDA Office 120 W. 16th Schuyler	July 30 9:00 am to 12:30 pm
Fire Ecology and Results	Take a quick tour of Howard County to see the tremendous effort and result of the landowner led Central Nebraska Prescribed Burn Association and their massive efforts to battle Eastern Red Cedar encroachment.	The Gathering Place 612 Howard Ave St. Paul	August 20 11:00 am to 3:00 pm
The Critical Role of Pollinators	Learn the global importance of pollinators and the local role they play in economics, farming, food resources, and the landscape.	Apple Jack Festival Nebraska City	September TBA

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Background Photo by Scott Schmidt, PF

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Mixed Bag

Travelogue

By David Bristow

Crete

If there's one artifact that sums up the early history of Crete, Nebraska, it's the time ball at **Doane College**. What does a time ball do? Think of the New Year's Eve ball drop at Times Square in New York City. Do you ever wonder why they drop a large ball at the stroke of midnight?

Time balls were once found in large cities and seaport harbors. A large metal ball on a pole would drop at noon, allowing ships and businesses to set their clocks to Standard Time, the nationwide system of time zones that began in 1883. Railroad whistles usually served this function in the interior, but Crete was an oddity.

Every day, a Doane College student would crank a windlass to raise the 56-pound metal ball — painted black and sectioned like an orange — atop the tallest building on campus. A special clock inside nearby **Boswell Observatory** sent an electrical signal to release the ball at just the right moment. It was all very modern and precise, and very much to the liking of Col. Thomas Doane.

Doane, of Cape Cod, Massachusetts, was a railroad civil engineer and leading citizen who wanted to make Crete into a prairie version of a New England town—something that may surprise you considering Crete's Mediterranean name and Czech and Latino ethnicity. The Eastern-staffed college was part of the plan, and the time ball was another coastal import.

Time balls became obsolete when time signals could be transmitted by radio, but Doane's ball is still kept inside Boswell Observatory, a reminder of the town's early ideals (Doane.edu/boswell-observatory).

Another part of the New England vision for Crete involved planting a lot of trees. Today the 300-acre Doane campus

—arguably the prettiest campus in the state — is also designated the **Osterhout Arboretum**, home to more than 160 species of trees and shrubs.

Around town, you'll find more recent beautification efforts in the form of murals. In 1992, local artists Geoff and Echo Easton painted a mural on their downtown building representing the history of Crete. Since then dozens of other property owners have commissioned murals. Public art became a Crete thing to do.

The town is also fortunate to have a half-dozen public-access lakes within a few miles east. Two of these, **Olive Creek** and **Bluestem Lake**, are state recreation areas; smaller lakes include **Merganser**, **Tanglewood**, **Teal** and **Wild Plum**. Check the 2015 Fishing Guide at OutdoorNebraska.ne.gov.

Crete is also just 10 miles southeast of **Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center**, an 850-acre tallgrass prairie sanctuary with walking trails, native grasslands and wetlands (Springcreekprairie.audubon.org).

For something more daring, consider **Crete Skydiving Center** (Skydivecrete.com) at the airport east of town. It offers tandem and solo dives and training for beginners. You'll have a good view of Crete while dropping like a time ball. ■



Doane College photo from 1900

Crete



One of downtown Crete's many murals.



Historic truss bridge at Tuxedo Park.

PHOTOS BY DAVID BRISTOW

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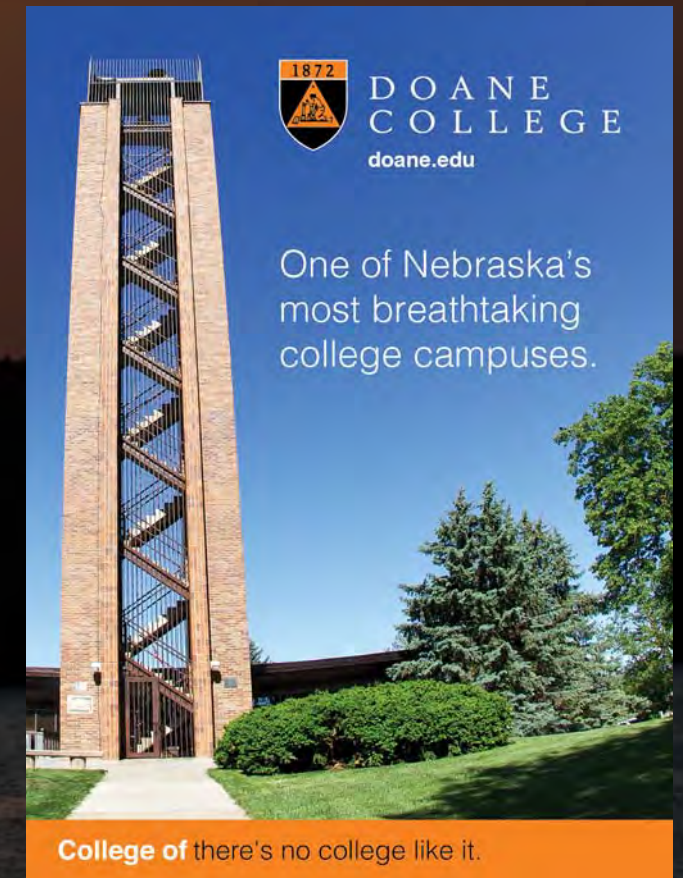


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Along the creek at Long Pine.

A Brief History Vacationing on a Budget in 1909

By Patricia C. Gaster,
Nebraska State Historical Society

“Where to spend my vacation is a problem which hundreds of Omaha minds are puzzling over just now,” said the *Omaha Daily News* on July 18, 1909, in a discussion of budget vacations within the state. The *News* told its readers that a fine vacation trip could be had in Nebraska at little cost: “Go to

any railroad ticket office and they will give you a list of vacation trips that can be made at an expenditure of \$10 to \$50.”

The *News* suggested Lake Quinnebaugh, near Tekamah, to fishermen looking for a bargain: “The railroad fare for the round trip is only \$1.68 and you can get at some farm house a week of the very best board—chicken and fish, and butter and eggs and milk—for \$6. That leaves \$2.32 to spend for snakebite medicine, tobacco, reading matter and other incidentals.”

Long Pine in Brown County was also said to be a low-cost vacation destination within the state. People

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From *Ainsworth Star-Journal*, April 26, 1945.

had long noticed the special features of Pine Creek canyon. The town's early entrepreneurs had big ideas about capitalizing on the potentially medicinal properties of the waters of the creek, a tributary of the Niobrara River.

In 1910, the year after the *Daily News* article on budget vacation destinations was published, three entrepreneurs formed the Long Pine Amusement Park, a health and vacation resort that would become one of the most developed and longest lasting of all amusement parks in Nebraska. The resort drew travelers, first by rail and later by automobile, to stay in cabins beside Long Pine Creek and enjoy outdoor recreation and live entertainment. The area remains a busy summer vacation spot today, home to Long Pine State Recreation Area as well as privately owned facilities. ■



This photograph of boating in Long Pine Lake was depicted on a hand-tinted postcard from 1927. From private collection.

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Bowfishing Mentor Program

By Jenny Nguyen

Fishing combined with the thrill of hunting and archery shooting, bowfishing is one of the fastest growing outdoor activities in the country. Many hunters do it during the off-season, and it's a fun activity for fishermen during the hot, dog days of summer. If equipped correctly, bowfishing can also be a fast-action sport at night.

Interested in learning how to bowfish but don't know where to start? Sign up for the Bowfishing Mentor Program at Ponca State Park this June. The course will be taught over four nights, June 4, 11, 18 and 19 from 6-8:30 p.m. You will learn basic bowfishing skills, including knowledge on archery equipment; how to find, identify and shoot fish; and cleaning and cooking fish.

The program is limited to 25 registrants, and students must be 10 years old as of January 1, 2015. Program is free and most gear will be provided, sponsored by the Nebraska Big Game Conservation Association and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. Participants should bring insect repellent, sunscreen and polarized sunglasses.

Ponca State Park is located at 88090 State Spur 26E, Ponca, NE, 68770. To register, contact Nick Tramp, nicktramp@myunitedagent.com. ■



Wyatt Verzani of Martinsburg shoots a carp while bowfishing by Ponca on the Missouri River with mentor Zack Hammack.

Nebraska Bird Library

Sponsored by

Northern Cardinal

Song or calls: Variable loud, liquid "cue cue cue," "cheer cheer cheer" and "purty purty purty."

Description: Conspicuous crest, and large, cone-shaped reddish bill. Male is bright red overall with a black face and throat. Female is buffy-brown to buffy-olive and has a red tinge on wings, crest and tail. Juvenile is similar to female but browner overall and has a dark brown bill.

Habitat: Forest edges, brushy forest openings, parks and residential areas with shrubs and low trees, second-growth woods and riparian forests.

Where in Nebraska: Common permanent resident in eastern Nebraska, becoming uncommon to occasional westwardly. Apparently absent from the western Sandhills and the Pine Ridge area.

Fun Facts: Northern cardinals are the only species in Nebraska with a red beak and both the male and the female sing (unlike most songbirds). ■

To learn about more birds visit NebraskaBirdLibrary.org.



PHOTO COMPOSITE BY JEFF KURRUS

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Wingtips by Wild Bird Habitat

The Northern Cardinal is a highly desired backyard bird at bird feeders.

Cardinals are abundant in Eastern Nebraska but their range continues expanding into western counties.

They nest in shrubs having two to three broods per season. The male is the primary caretaker of fledglings.

Newly fledged Cardinals have the plumage resembling the female but with a gray beak instead of bright orange.

Cardinals prefer large perching areas to feed such as on hopper or platform bird feeders. To attract them to seed tube bird feeders a tray must be installed.

Preferred seeds are sunflower seed, safflower seed, Nutra-safflower seed and hulled sunflower seeds.





13 Essentials for Trail Running

By Callie Rietfors

Trail running offers many benefits, such as softer surfaces to reduce the risk of injury and a more relaxing atmosphere than a crowded gym. For a better trail running experience, it's important to choose the appropriate gear. The Greater Omaha Area Trail Runners (G.O.A.T.z) recommends the following for trail running, from apparel to nourishment:

- Shoes suitable for the terrain.
- Lightweight merino wool socks for moisture-wicking and temperature regulation.
- Clothing for anticipated weather.
- Running waistband (like FlipBelt or SPIbelt).
- A handheld water bottle or a hydration pack for longer runs.
- Energy gels (such as Tailwind) or sports drinks for carbohydrates and electrolytes to replace salt lost through sweating.
- A lubricant like Body Glide or Vaseline for blister and chafing protection.
- Baby wipes.
- Cell phone or emergency contact and basic information.
- A watch for pace (some include GPS as well as heart rate and distance tracking. Smartphones also have running apps with these features).



Runners participate in a trail running race at Schramm Park State Recreation Area in Sarpy County.

PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS

- A flashlight, headlamp or knuckle light for early morning or nighttime runs.
- Bug spray.
- Sunscreen. ■

Callie Rietfors is a freelance writer living in Omaha. See more of her work on page 30.

Sandpiper Counterculture

By Chris Helzer

The upland sandpiper was given the perfect descriptive name. Members of the species scorn the banks of wetlands, lakes and rivers inhabited by “regular” sandpipers, preferring instead to feed and nest in grasslands far from any water. Lest the world fail to notice their brazen countercultural behavior, upland sandpipers stand prominently on tall fence posts or power poles and perform high, noisy flight displays no one can ignore. If upland sandpipers were people, they'd probably grow scruffy beards, wear fedoras, brew their own beer and brag about their collection of old vinyl records.

While it's fun to make light of the peculiar habits of upland sandpipers, there is no denying their strength or stamina. Any bird that makes annual flights from South America to the Great Plains of North America deserves respect. As with many of our summer birds, we tend to think of upland sandpipers as a Nebraska species, but they actually spend three quarters of each year in Argentina, Uruguay or southern Brazil, and only use Nebraska prairies as a summer home. Upland sandpipers leave South America in mid-March and head north, usually returning to the general area from which they were hatched. Most of that nesting habitat is in the northern Great Plains, where upland sandpipers are considered to be characteristic birds of expansive grassland landscapes. However, there are also scattered populations in the northeastern United States – in sites such as blueberry farms, airports and abandoned strip mines. They were historically found in the northwestern U.S. as well, but it is now a rare and exciting occurrence for birders to see “uppies” there anymore. Nebraska has very strong populations of upland sandpipers in the Sandhills and other large prairies elsewhere in the state – especially those with areas of fairly short vegetation structure.



PHOTO BY CHRIS HELZER



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Nests are built on the ground and typically filled with four eggs. The young are precocial, meaning they can leave the nest very shortly after hatching and follow their parents on a search for insects to eat. Surviving nestlings will grow to approximately 12 inches long with a 26-inch wingspan, but weigh only about six ounces.

Their distinctive shape makes upland sandpipers easy for amateur birdwatchers to identify, as does their behavior. Males perform loud flight displays in which they fly with quick short wing beats and call out a series of upward ranging “chck” notes ending in a whistle that sounds just like a male construction worker's wolf whistle at a passing woman. Another identifying feature of upland sandpipers is that when they land on a post or other prominent perch, they tend to hold their long wings upright for a moment or two before daintily folding them away.

Nebraskans should feel a sense of pride when they see uppies perched on fence posts or hear their long wavering call from across the open prairie. An abundance of upland sandpipers is a great indication that the prairie landscape is still sufficiently large and intact to support most other grassland bird species as well – an attribute that is becoming less common around the country today. Keep an eye out for this eccentric and ostentatious creature during your next summer drive through the Sandhills or other large grassland landscapes, and give them a polite Nebraska finger wave as you pass by. ■

A regular contributor, Chris Helzer lives in Aurora and is the Eastern Nebraska Program Director for the Nature Conservancy. See more of his work on page 48.

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Fishing Camp Game

By Jeff Kurrus

While not revolutionary in its roll-the-dice and move across a board

framework, the questions in the *Fishing Camp* board game are for the entire family and arranged in four skill levels, from beginner to long-time angler. So it quickly has become a game in my house where Dad and daughter can still fish, even if there's a thunderstorm outside. For more information, visit EducationOutdoors.net. ■

NEBRASKAland PHOTO CONTEST



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Roughing It

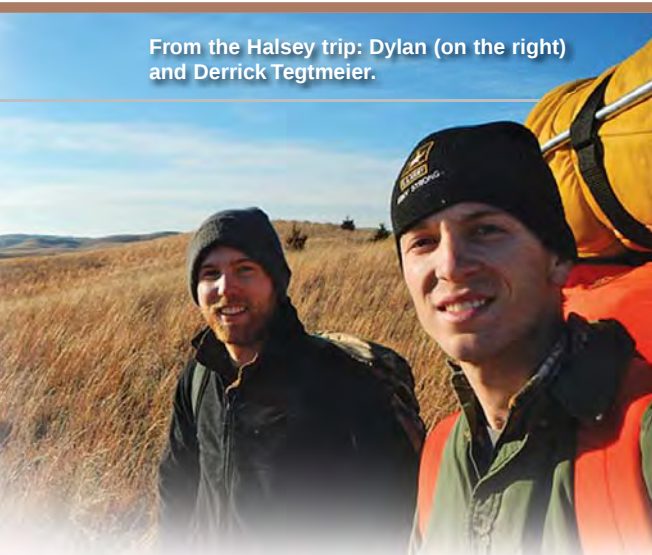
By Dylan Tegtmeier

Sometimes it is great to be *in* nature. If you want to enjoy every inch of nature, the park and the camping experience, “roughing it” can give you that freedom.

Let's say you want to explore Indian Cave State Park this June. You don't need to pack everything (including the kitchen sink), just a good backpack and some pre-planning will do. Check weather conditions and touch base with the park office to line up the 2-3 day trip. Pack clothes, a hammock and mosquito net, a space blanket and black heavy-duty binder clips, a water bottle, cooking pot, rope or 550 paracord, flashlight and some food. Don't forget the toilet paper, whistle, and first aid kit. Flint and dryer lint (fire starter) are a must (as is the ability to start fires with flint). Indian Cave is home to several fruit trees like paw paw, mulberry and black cherry, and many ground plants are edible if you are positive on plant ID. There are plenty of trees to tie a hammock to at Indian Cave. If it rains, use your backpack as your pillow and wrap your hammock with your space blanket. Use the clips to hold your blanket tight in case of heavy wind.

The Nebraska National Forest near Halsey in January is challenging. Extreme temperature and weather changes, beautiful sunrises and sunsets and the stars are amazing. The packing list is about the same, other than warmer clothes, gloves, ear muffs, etc. Replace the hammock and mosquito net with a good sleeping bag and tarp, and bring high-calorie food to help in staying warm. Dress smart and hike smarter. Sleep under a pine tree. Use pine

From the Halsey trip: Dylan (on the right) and Derrick Tegtmeier.



boughs to keep you off the ground and a limb of the tree to hold the center of your tarp. Slope the roof/sides at an angle (to keep away melting snow), and tuck in the edges of the tarp everywhere you can to keep the wind out. Bring someone with you for safety and to keep warm.

The biggest key to success while “roughing it” is knowing your limits. Don't expect to tackle Chadron State Park for a week in January if you haven't practiced in your own backyard first. Try a little “roughing it” this year and get back *in* nature.

Visit OutdoorU.org and start your own pathway to exciting and memorable experiences in the outdoors. ■



PHOTO BY DYLAN TEGTMEIER

Stay Alert... Their Lives Depend On It

- ◆ Stay Alert and Minimize Distractions
- ◆ Keep Your Headlights On
- ◆ Pay Attention to the Road
- ◆ Merge into the Proper Lane
- ◆ Don't Tailgate
- ◆ Obey the Posted Speed Limit
- ◆ Change Lanes Safely
- ◆ Follow Instructions from Flaggers
- ◆ Expect the Unexpected
- ◆ Be Patient



www.roads.nebraska.gov



Outside Together



By Lindsay Rogers

As parents, we all want the best for our children. We want to make sure they are learning, that they are happy (most of the time) and that they are healthy. Healthy meals, exercise and new learning opportunities are all important, and one of the best ways to raise healthy kids is to get them outside.

Research shows that children who are actively engaged in the outdoors perform better on standardized tests. More importantly, children who learn while outside develop better problem-solving skills – something that everyone, no matter their career, needs. Reduced stress levels, more energy and fewer behavior problems are all benefits of an active lifestyle outdoors for children (and adults), and spending just 30 minutes a day outside in your backyard or state recreation area can lead to better sleep and reduced obesity.

But, what is the best way to get children to explore the world around



Lillie Beach was one of many kids in group of Malcolm families who camped at Indian Cave State Park in April and were unfazed by rain that damped

them? Join them. Try creating a scavenger hunt together; find something in nature that starts with every letter of the alphabet. Or, start a tree identification journal with one leaf from every tree you find.

Another idea is to plant a pollinator garden. With a few inexpensive seed

packets you will make memories with your children and also provide habitat for pollinators such as bees, butterflies and beetles.

Getting outside is not hard and what you do outside doesn't have to be either. Time outside together is time well spent. ■

PHOTO BY ERIC FOWLER

Puncturevine

By Julie Geiser

Puncturevine, goathead, bullhead or Mexican sandbur – whatever you call it, we all know its impact once lodged in tires and the bottoms of feet. A summer annual, the puncturevine or *tribulus terrestris* is a mat of broadleaves with an extensive root system that grows almost anywhere countrywide. The foliage of this menace plant can be toxic to livestock, especially sheep, when eaten in high quantities and causes external and internal injury to grazing animals.

The green to reddish brown stems spread from the crown of the plant bearing many ground-covering branches, some stretching more than three-feet long. Leaves or cotyledons are divided into three to seven opposite pairs of leaflets. Yellow flowers typically occur in Nebraska late June

through September – the small quarter-inch flowers are produced where the stem and leaf stalk meet and eventually become the fruit or burs.

The fruit matures into four or five green nutlets, each with two spines and several shorter counterparts. As the nutlets mature they turn brown and woody before splitting apart. Inside each nutlet are three to five seeds.

One plant could produce 200 to 5,000 seeds in a season and on larger plants, 10,000 or more seeds. The seeds will ripen in six months to a year with germination during spring and summer the following year. Warm, wet weather

brings life to new plants. During dry periods, the seeds may remain dormant and viable in most conditions for three to seven years. The seeds are easily distributed as the burs adhere to tires, shoes, clothing, fur and feathers of animals. ■



PHOTO BY JULIE GEISER

The Immortal Turtle

By Dan Fogell

We've all heard stories about turtles living a long time. Charles Darwin brought a tortoise from the Galapagos Islands to England that lived to be 179 years old. Snapping turtles have been accurately estimated to be more than 75 years old. And box turtles can easily live more than 100 years. In fact, as turtles grow older they don't show any apparent signs of ageing, a phenomenon known as "negligible senescence." How can this be? Are turtles immortal?



This large common snapping turtle is about 40 years old and might easily live for another 50-60 years.

Young turtles are vulnerable, but once they reach adulthood turtles have a certain set of traits that give them a "survivorship advantage." The most obvious: turtles have a hard

shell that protects them when they pull themselves inside, a strategy so successful that the largest turtles in the world have no natural enemies (although not all turtles have hard shells). While this reduces their predation risk it doesn't necessarily explain their near immortality.

Turtles are ectotherms ("cold-blooded") with very slow metabolic rates – especially if they hibernate every year. Some hibernating water turtles go months without oxygen, reducing metabolic activity to almost nothing. Reduced metabolic activities contribute to longevity. Think of it as making your car last longer by driving it less frequently. But other ectotherms may not live nearly as long as turtles, so what else could it be?

The secret is in their cells. Normally, when cells divide a certain number of times their chromosomes can become sort of worn out and unstable. This can interrupt gene function and ultimately results in cellular senescence, which leads to all those signs of ageing that we all dread. Turtle cells do not senesce when they divide. Because of this, turtles rarely die of old age. They can be hit by cars, killed by predators



The lines in a turtle's shell are like growth rings on a tree and can often give you an idea of a turtle's age. This ornate box turtle is at least 20 years old.



PHOTOS BY DAN FOGELL

The only real sign of old age that turtles show is the smoothing of their shell over time. This painted turtle has a shell that has lost most of its growth rings.

and get injured or infected, but as they get older they really don't grow old.

Think about this when you see a giant snapping turtle, because that turtle *may* have watched Lewis and Clark make their way up the Missouri River. ■

Safe Tick Removal

By Julie Geiser

It's that time of the year when so many of us are outside, and that inevitable "What is that?" is asked when a tick undesirably appears on our body.

To appropriately remove a tick, use fine point tweezers or a tick removal tool to grasp the tick by the head or mouth, located next to the skin. Do not grab the tick by the body; doing this will cause the tick to secrete fluids into its host. Once you have the tick by the head, gently pull the tick straight out. If you must remove the tick with your fingers use a tissue or leaf to avoid contact with infected tick fluids.

A tick must feed on a host 36 to 48 hours before being able to transmit disease, so remove the tick as soon as possible. Try not to prick, crush or burn the tick as it may release infected fluids or tissue into the host. Trying to smother the tick with petroleum jelly, alcohol or nail polish will also increase the chances of transmitting disease.

Once the tick is removed wash your hands, and disinfect the tweezers and bite site. It is a good idea to make your own tick removal kit including fine point tweezers, antiseptic and a roll of clear tape or a small bag to seal ticks in. Keep the tick enclosed in the tape or bag in case an illness occurs; it can then be tested for disease.

While disease is rare, if there is any illness it usually starts with a rash three to 30 days after the bite. The rash appears as a solid red expanding rash or blotch, or a central spot surrounded by clear skin that is ringed by a red rash that looks like a bull's-eye.

Accompanying the rash in the early stages will be symptoms including fatigue, generalized achiness, headaches and swelling of lymph glands near the bite. Later a victim may have enhanced symptoms like pain in the joints, stiff, aching neck, tingling or numbness in the extremities, sore throat, changes in vision, fevers and severe fatigue.

In the case of a tick bite, be prepared to remove the tick and clean the site of the tick bite to protect yourself and your loved ones from long-term illness. ■



PHOTOS BY JULIE GEISER



Use fine point tweezers or a tick removal kit when bitten by one of these disease-carrying insects.

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Ron Bilstein of Battle Creek sent this photo of a curious white-tailed buck staring into a game camera.

Please submit your trail camera photos by e-mail to: nebtrailcam@gmail.com. Also include any information that will help explain your photo.

Upcoming Events by Jerry Kane

June 1

Underwater spearfishing season begins at Box Butte Reservoir and on private waters

June 1, 15

Pistol League

Platte River State Park (SP), Louisville, 402-471-5547

June 2, 3

Outdoor Chef Junior (2nd) and Outdoor Chef (3rd)

Nebraska Game and Parks Outdoor Education Center (NOEC), Lincoln, 10 a.m., 402-471-6141

June 2-4

Explore Archery Day Camp NOEC, Lincoln, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., 403-471-6141

June 2

Family Fishing Event

Skyview Lake, Norfolk, 6-8 p.m.

June 3

Family Fishing Event

Pawnee Park East Pond, Columbus, 6-8 p.m.

June 3, 10, 17, 24

Beyond Becoming an Outdoors-Woman (BOW) Archery Class Platte River SP, Louisville, 402-471-5547

June 4

Family Fishing Event

Stanton Lake, Falls City, 6-8 p.m.

June 4

Beyond BOW Beginning Canoe

Wehrspann Lake, Omaha, 402-471-5547

June 6

Ladies' Day at the Range

Weeping Water Gun Club, 402-471-5547

June 6

6 Hours of Darkness Adventure Race Branched Oak State Recreation Area (SRA), Raymond, 6 p.m., raceregister.net

June 6

Photographer's Workshop Wildcat Hills SRA and Nature Center, Gering, 308-436-3777

June 6

ColorFoam 5K

Eugene T. Mahoney SP, Ashland, 402-944-2523

June 6

Fish and Chip Golf and Fishing Tournament

Willow Creek SRA, Pierce, 402-644-7402

June 6-7

Living History

Fort Atkinson State Historical Park (SHP), Fort Calhoun, 402-468-5611

June 6-7

Pioneer Longrifle

Rendezvous Indian Cave SP, Shubert, 402-471-5427

June 6-7

Rock Creek Trail Days

Rock Creek Station SHP, Fairbury, 402-729-5777

June 6-7

Scheels 3-D Archery

Tournament Ponca SP, Ponca, 402-755-2284

June 6-Aug. 2

Swimming pool open daily, Niobrara SP, Niobrara, 402-857-3373

June 8, 10

Rimfire Sporter Rifle Clinic

Platte River SP, Louisville, 402-471-5547

June 8-26

Residents and nonresidents may apply for one deer permit in any draw unit. Residents and eligible landowners may apply for one buck or either-sex antelope permit in available units.

June 8-26

Residents may apply for one elk permit

June 9

Family Fishing Event

Johnson Park Lake, Fremont, 6-8 p.m.

June 9, 23

Best Shot Camp

NOEC, Lincoln, 6:30-8:30 p.m., 403-471-6141

June 10

Family Fishing Event

Benson Pond, Omaha, 6-8 p.m.

June 11

4-H Horse Camp

Fort Robinson SP, Crawford, 308-665-2900

June 11

Big Game Hunter Day

Camp NOEC, Lincoln, 10 a.m., 402-471-6141

June 12

Beyond BOW Platte River Canoe Trip

Schramm Park SRA, Gretna, 4:30 p.m., 402-471-5547

June 12

National Park Service

Program Niobrara SP, Niobrara, 7 p.m., 402-857-3373

June 13

National Park Service

Special Event Discover the Real Missouri River, Niobrara SP, Niobrara, 10 a.m., 402-857-3373

June 12-13

Ash Hollow Pageant

Ash Hollow SHP, Lewellen, 308-778-5651

June 12-14

Intertribal Gathering

Fort Robinson SP, Crawford, 308-665-2900

June 13

High 5 Relay Run

Eugene T. Mahoney SP, Ashland, 402-944-2523

June 13

Chadron State Park's 94th Anniversary Event

Chadron SP, Chadron, 308-432-6167

June 13

Free Family Shooting Event

NOEC, Lincoln, 10 a.m., 402-471-6141

June 16

Pony Express Re-ride

Fort Kearny SHP, Kearney, 308-865-5305

June 16

Pony Express Re-ride

Rock Creek Station SHP, Fairbury, 402-729-5777

June 16

Family Fishing Event Walnut

Creek Reservoir, Papillion, 6-8 p.m.

June 17

Family Fishing Event

Bowling Lake, Lincoln, 6-8 p.m.

June 17

Beyond BOW Dutch Oven

Cooking NOEC, Lincoln, 6 p.m., 402-471-6141

June 17

Camp Chef Outdoor

Cooking Workshop NOEC, Lincoln, 5:30 p.m., 402-471-6141

June 20

Carp-O-Rama Branched Oak

SRA, Raymond, 8 a.m.-1 p.m.

June 20

YMCA Dirty Bird Mud Run

Ponca SP, Ponca, 402-755-2284

June 20

Ride the Ridge

Fort Robinson SP, Crawford, 308-665-2900

June 20

Living History

Rock Creek Station SHP, Fairbury, 402-729-5777

June 20, 27

Buffalo Cookout

Niobrara SP, Niobrara, 6 p.m., 402-857-3373

June 20-21

Bugs and Bones Weekend

Ponca SP, Ponca, 402-755-2284

June 21

Father's Day Buffet

Fort Robinson SP, Crawford, 308-665-2900

June 21

Father's Day Fish Fry

Ponca SP, Ponca, 402-755-2284



June 21

Father's Day Buffet

Platte River SP, Louisville, 402-234-2217

June 21

Father's Day Fishing Tournament

Niobrara SP, Niobrara, 9 a.m., 402-857-3373

June 21

Family Fishing Event

Terry's Pit, Terrytown, 4-7 p.m.

June 21

Sod House Sunday Arthur Bowring

Sandhills Ranch SHP, Merriman, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., 308-684-5305

June 23

Family Fishing Event

City Pond, North Platte, 6-8 p.m.

June 22-25

Explore Bowhunting Day Camp

NOEC, Lincoln, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., 403-471-6141

June 24

Family Fishing Event

Cottonmill Lake, Kearney, 6-8 p.m.

June 25

Family Fishing Event

Mormon Island SRA Lake No. 1, Grand Island, 6-8 p.m.

June 26

National Park Service Program

Niobrara SP, Niobrara, 7 p.m., 402-857-3373

June 27-28

Becoming an Outdoors Family

Camp Two Rivers SRA, Waterloo, 402-471-5547

June 30

Hunt Camp

NOEC, Lincoln, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., 402-471-6141

Tips for Grinding Game

By Jenny Nguyen

Going from gambrel to grinder is quick, but not the best way to get juicy, quality ground meat. Think about these tips as you gear up for the fall.

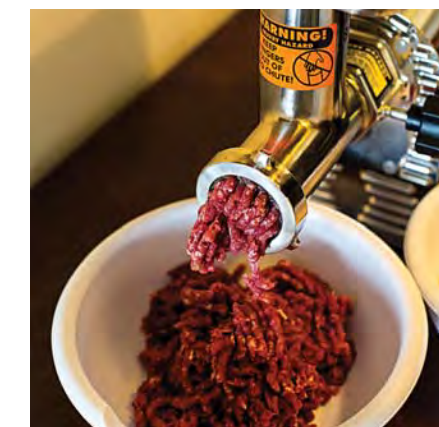
Cold meat: Unchilled meat is pliable, making the grinder smear the meat (and fat) instead of cutting it, resulting in a mealy, pulpy texture. First, remove silver skin and cut meat into one- to two-inch cubes. Spread pieces on parchment-lined baking sheets, cover with plastic wrap and freeze for one hour, until firm but not frozen.

Clean and cold instruments: Chill the tray, auger, blade and plates in the freezer until you're ready to grind. Always sanitize instruments thoroughly before and after each use.

Add fat: For juicy, flavorful burgers, meatballs, meatloaf etc., add 20 percent of partially frozen, cubed pork trimmings or bacon ends to venison. Grind together for uniform distribution of fat.

Plate sizes: Use the large plate for course grind, which is ideal for burgers and meatballs. Use the smaller plate for sausage.

Small batches: To avoid freezer burn and oxidation (discoloration), grind meat right before use. Freeze large pieces of roasts in vacuum-sealed bags. When you're ready, take a piece out, partially defrost it and cut it into smaller pieces, and then grind. Freshly ground venison always tastes better than pre-ground meat that has been sitting for months. ■



NEBRASKAland Visitor



Last issue's winner of the Visitor drawing was Will Cleavenger of Richland, Washington, who found the **honeybee** on page 54. Readers are encouraged to contact *NEBRASKAland* within 10 days after this issue's publication with the correct page number and name of this issue's "Visitor" – a critter found in Nebraska. We will then gather the correct entries and draw one to win a *NEBRASKAland 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 pages 7, 12, 21, 23, 32-33, or 35.

The honey bee (Apis mellifica) was introduced from Europe into the United States in the early 1600s. Since that time, honey bees have become established throughout the country and are very important to agriculture. Nebraska officially recognized the honey bee as the state insect in 1975. Honey bees are excellent pollinators, but not the only ones. The U.S. is home to nearly 4,000 native bees, and other insects including beetles, butterflies and moths, and even animals like birds and bats, pollinate flowers. Attract pollinators to your landscape by planting a variety of flowering plants to offer blooms throughout the season. In addition to providing a food source, these plantings also offer shelter and nesting sites. Pollinators will also benefit if you provide a shallow water source and reduce or eliminate the use of pesticides.

Special thanks to Julie Van Meter, State Entomologist, Nebraska Department of Agriculture. Photo from Thinkstock. Bugguide.net is a popular site for identification.

PHOTO BY JENNY NGUYEN

Backpacks in the Burrow

Story and photos by Justin Haag

Devices worn on the backs of burrowing owls are uncovering surprises about the small bird's behavior.



David H. Johnson, director of the Global Owl Project and staff researcher for the University of Idaho, about to release a banded and locator-fitted burrowing owl.

When David Johnson was 11 years old, he had an unforgettable experience while camping in southern Minnesota. Under a moonlit sky, Johnson quietly stared above from his sleeping bag as a small owl landed atop his pup tent. For the next 20 minutes, the young naturalist watched the silhouette of the small bird through the canvas fabric as it vigorously vibrated with each distinct whinnying call it made. Johnson was certainly fascinated by what he would later learn was an Eastern screech-owl, but didn't know then that the experience would steer him toward a lifetime of studying owls, and eventually to owls in prairie dog towns of Nebraska and other states of the West and the High Plains.

"I didn't choose owls, they chose me," Johnson said, reliving his camping story while working near a prairie dog hole in Sheridan County last June.

Coming to Nebraska

Johnson, a staff researcher at the Idaho Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit at the University of Idaho, has been studying the migration of burrowing owls over their range in western North America. The research team began work in Nebraska for the first time in 2014, the third year of the effort.

The burrowing owl prefers shortgrass prairie to forest, taking up residence in earthen holes usually created by other animals, most notably prairie dogs. The open country of western Nebraska is on

the eastern edge of the owl's range.

Last summer, Johnson and his assistant, Kelsey Jarvis, established study sites in the Panhandle near Mitchell, Hay Springs and Crescent Lake National Wildlife Refuge. Those sites are now included among 16 locations in 10 states and two Canadian provinces.

The owls are about nine inches tall and weigh less than six ounces. Females are slightly larger and heavier than the males.

Johnson traps the birds, takes their measurements and equips most of them with small geo-locators. The devices, which are worn like backpacks with straps around the wings, record the amount of ambient light every five minutes. If Johnson can catch the birds the following year, he can use the device's data to determine the time of sunrise and sunset each day of its journey. From that, he can estimate the

owl's latitude and longitude throughout its trip. At 3.2 grams, the devices are light enough that even the small males can carry them.

A few of the heaviest female owls get larger solar-powered satellite transmitters for their backpacks. Those units allow the researchers to track the birds in real time throughout the year. At six grams, the satellite units weigh almost twice as much and cost much more than the geo-locators.

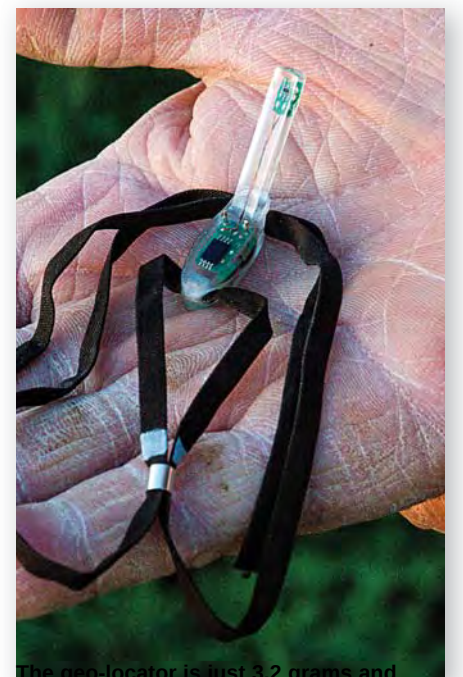
Big Trips and Small

Johnson and his fellow researchers are learning a lot from the data. For instance, males and females migrate differently, probably because of their roles in spring and summer.

While males from South Dakota, Idaho and Colorado migrated south, some deep into central Mexico, the research revealed that others from



An adult burrowing owl, equipped with a geo-locator, at a prairie dog colony adjacent to Walgren Lake State Recreation Area in Sheridan County.



The geo-locator is just 3.2 grams and records the amount of ambient light at the owl's location every five minutes.



Johnson uses the “burrow cam,” a semi-rigid hydraulic hose with camera pushed down the hole to get a live view of the owlets from his video monitor.

Oregon surprisingly went north to Washington for the winter.

“In order to be successful, males need a good burrow and a territory. If they’re really good hunters, they don’t have to travel south and come all the way back north again,” he said. “If they can tolerate the winters and they’re good hunters, then they’ll stay local.”

On the other hand, thus far, all females moved south to find milder conditions and build up reserves for the taxing months ahead. After all, when spring arrives they require enough energy to lay seven to 11 eggs. After a 22-day incubation period they must care for their brood.

It’s a Dangerous Place

Johnson believes life has gotten harder for burrowing owls as their habitat has gotten smaller and become more fragmented with agriculture and land development.

“Now there are some owls here and some owls there, but they might be 30 or 40 miles apart,” he said. “It’s a little bit troubling because we know that they like loose colonies and yet they want to be together. With individual sites that are far apart, what are your odds if you’re a male trying to attract a mate?”

He also said the owls have better chances of survival when they have strength in numbers. If an owl senses danger, it can warn other nearby neighbors.

“That way not each of them has to be on red alert status all the time,” he said. “If you’re a small owl, it’s a dangerous place. Having neighbors helps you.”

A Bird in the Hand

Catching wild owls for the study has taken a bit of ingenuity and some late nights. When nesting activity is spotted at a burrow, the researchers place a six-inch square tube about 18 inches long

over the hole so the birds must pass through it to get to the nest. Angled swinging doors at each end of the tube, in the fashion of a regular live trap, ensure that any bird entering is unable to exit.

Females are compelled to enter and exit the burrow to tend to young, so it’s not too hard to get them in the trap. It takes another level of trickery to get the males, however.

While the male is out hunting for voles and other small mammals to feed the family, a digital music player is placed inside the burrow with a recorded version of the male’s territorial “coo-cooo” call on loop.



Johnson’s assistant, Kelsey Jarvis, takes measurements of an owl at a trapping site. With declining habitat, the measurements are key in the development of artificial burrows for the owls.

Upon hearing the sound, the male is tricked into believing another male is staking a claim for his burrow. He soon angrily paces outside the burrow in taunting fashion, sometimes even dragging his wings like a strutting tom turkey. After a couple of minutes he’s had enough and enters the burrow to evict the imagined unwelcome visitor. He becomes trapped.

A bird entering the trap is a scene Johnson hopes happens several times a night as he and his assistant make

periodic rounds into the wee hours to equip the owls with their new backpacks. Some sites are better than others. The Sheridan County prairie dog colony near Walgren Lake State Recreation Area, for instance, is one of the best with eight nest sites over 160 acres.

A Better Burrow

In addition to placing the high-tech units on the owls, the researchers also

Burrowing Owl Migration - Fall 2014



Johnson’s research results in detailed location data for burrowing owls. Interestingly, one owl banded last year in Nebraska made a stop-over near a site in Mexico named Tecolotes -- which translates to “owl” in English.



The heaviest birds, which are females, get larger solar-powered satellite transmitters that provide real time location data.

take measurements of the burrow itself. Artificial burrows, created using average measurements of holes the owls choose for nesting, can help combat the decline of nesting habitat. Johnson’s team has found that most burrows are three meters long and have a dead end to them.

“In the absence of prairie dogs or badgers, and at places where there are no other options, artificial burrows can work,” Johnson said.

To get a better idea of what’s going on in the burrow, Johnson invented a “burrow cam” using semi-rigid hydraulic hose. By pushing the camera down the hole, he can get a live view of the owlets from his video monitor.

The Payoff

Overall, the research is helping answer questions about a non-game species that Nebraska hasn’t studied extensively, said Matt Steffl, the Game and Parks northwestern district wildlife manager who helped find potential

sites and gain permission for Johnson’s research.

“There has been a fair amount of research on the burrowing owls in states west of us,” Steffl said. “Since we are on the edge of their range we don’t know if the birds that nest here migrate to the same or similar locations as the more western populations or if they have their own migration corridor to a completely different winter home.”

With June upon us, Johnson is entering the final chapter of his project and is making rounds to his sites to recover data from the geo-locators. The satellite transmitters have already given valuable information. Seventeen of the 22 female owls with satellite transmitters were in Mexico this January, and seven owls that were fitted with satellite backpacks in other states made their way through Nebraska on their journey. Two of the three females that received satellite transmitters in Nebraska have been tracked south of the border. Interestingly, one made a stop-over

near a site named Tecolotes – which translates to “owl” in English – before ending up in central Mexico. It has since returned to Nebraska and at last report in April was about 15 miles northwest of its 2014 burrow at Diamond Bit, a Platte River Basin Environments site south of Mitchell.

From the screech-owl of his youth to the burrowing owls of Nebraska’s prairie, Johnson has studied and taken fascination with a wide array of owls during his career. Johnson’s research is developing a better understanding of this small bird of the shortgrass prairie, one of 12 owl species found in Nebraska and more than 230 varieties living throughout the world. Of so many choices, perhaps the burrowing owl should feel fortunate that this researcher chose it for study. Or, did the owl choose the researcher? ■

 See more photos and a video from this story at NEBRASKAland Digital.

Flying Saucers

By Callie Rietfors

Disc golf provides inexpensive outdoor entertainment for everyone.

With more than 70 disc golf courses in Nebraska, you've probably seen chain baskets scattering the landscape in parks statewide. Though commonly referred to as "Frisbee golf," disc golf is played with the objective of getting the disc into the target hole in as few throws as possible. You can play any time – alone or with a group – and the activity provides both exercise and outdoor entertainment.

Getting Started

Aaron Brooker of Kearney has been playing disc golf for 16 years and likens it to another course-related passion. "I like it for the opportunity to be outside and challenge myself. Disc golf poses the same challenges as golf for a fraction of the cost."

All you need to play is a disc and comfortable shoes. Begin with a starter pack to become familiar with the different types of discs. Like a golf club set, discs come in a variety of plastics, weights and dimensions for skill level, speed, throwing distance and accuracy or curve. Several web-based and local retailers sell discs, such as Birdie30 Disc Golf and Volo Disc Sports of Lincoln and Scheels in both Lincoln and Omaha. The Omaha company Teeboxx



Like traditional golf clubs, discs come in a variety of brands and models.

PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS



Throwers tee off at a disc golf tournament at Chadron State Park in northwestern Nebraska.

PHOTO BY JUSTIN HAAG



Blake Needles of Omaha participates in a disc golf tournament at Eugene T. Mahoney State Park near Ashland.

PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS



Chadron State Park features a nine-hole disc golf course in one of the state's most beautiful regions – the Pine Ridge.

PHOTO BY JUSTIN HAAG

for a list of Nebraska's disc golf sites, which includes an 18-hole course at Eugene T. Mahoney State Park near Ashland, a nine-hole course at Chadron State Park in the Pine Ridge and a nine-hole course at Fort Kearny State Recreation Area.

Each of these parks also offers camping and a host of other year-around activities. More information on each can be found at Outdoornebraska.org.

Tournament information for more seasoned throwers is available at Pdga.com. ■

even has a disc vending machine at Seymour Smith Park.

Disc golf courses are typically nine or 18 holes, but Lincoln has a 27-hole course at Roper Park – one of the oldest in Nebraska. While 18-hole courses demand increased exercise and offer more of a challenge, nine-hole fairways can be played in under an hour. Start by visiting Nebdisc.wordpress.com



PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS

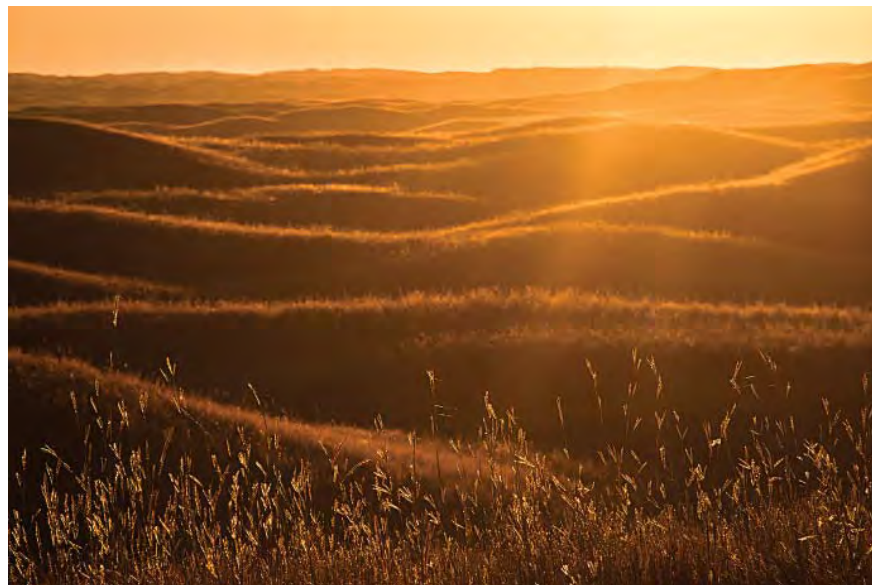
Nebraska on My Mind

*Photos and story
by Michael Forsberg*

*When I was a
kid, Dad would
always honk the
horn of our intrepid
Volkswagen 412
as we would cross
the state line back
into Nebraska from
wherever it was
we had been during
our summer family
vacations.*

A Rocky Mountain bee plant
opens like a blooming firework,
revealing a visiting ladybug, on
the Sandhills prairie in July.





Last light of a crisp autumn day makes the Sandhills appear like rolling waves of grass in a prairie sea.

I remember waiting on the edge of my seat, peering through the windshield as the landscape began to change to familiar territory, scanning the distant horizon for the “Nebraska - The Good Life” sign. Once my eyes locked on they would not waiver, and somehow Dad would always time it just right and honk the horn exactly at the moment we would speed by it with a sudden rush of wind. With us safely back in the Cornhusker State, I would breathe a sigh of relief. We had made it. We were home.

I still feel that way about Nebraska today. As a father, I am pleased to have passed the tradition onto our kids. And to be honest, even when I am traveling alone I still honk the horn.

As a photographer I travel a lot. I have been lucky enough to spend time in many places and with many people across the Great Plains and beyond. But there is always just a little more skip in my step when I cross back into the state where I was born and raised. Nebraska never is far from my mind.

Most of us have our own habitat of the heart: a place where we have set our roots deep, whether it be the woods, the mountains, the coast, the desert or the prairie. In a sense, the land shapes who we are and what we value. For those of us cut from the fabric of the Great Plains with its wide horizons, Nebraska is our home. But few can truly appreciate its beauty or value from the interstate or from an airplane window seat.



A sandhill crane lands with its flock to spend the quiet of the day on a secluded reach of the Platte’s south channel in late March.



A monarch butterfly (above) seeking sweet nectar alights on an Indian blanket flower in the sandsage prairie near Red Cloud. Like a bride’s veil, Fort Falls (left) flows through the diverse spring branch canyons of Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge in early October.

So when people from elsewhere ask me to explain Nebraska I usually start by saying if you drive the state east to west border to border you will travel roughly 430 miles and gain over 4,000 feet. I say that even though some think that Nebraska is a monotonous land of corn and beans; there may be more ecological communities in this state than any other to the East Coast, and within Nebraska's etch-a-sketch geographical boundary in the center of the nation is a biological crossroads where many eastern and western species meet.

In its dry western panhandle there are sweeping high plains, wedding cake-shaped buttes and ponderosa pine studded escarpments. In the humid east, there are rumpled carpets of rolling hills, tallgrass prairie remnants and the broad-

shouldered woodland bluffs of the Missouri. Within its midsection are the Nebraska Sandhills, the largest intact prairie grassland left on the continent. Running north to south are rivers that line up like rungs on a ladder – the Niobrara, the Loups, the Republican, and the Platte. And beneath all of it are aquifers like the mighty Ogallala and its fossil water, a treasure box of liquid gold beneath our feet.

And it's not just the land but its the people

and their connection to the land. Here in Nebraska people wave because we are friendly. We discuss the weather with as much regularity as we discuss what's for dinner. We measure rainfall in the hundredths of an inch, and we can identify clouds by their shapes.



A Western meadowlark perched on a yucca plant sings its melodious song ushering in summer across the state.



A bouquet of wildflowers (above) grows on the ridge of a sandstone butte in the Wildcat Hills of the Nebraska Panhandle.



A faint two-track road lined with gayfeather bends through virgin tallgrass prairie at Pawnee Prairie Wildlife Management Area in southeastern Nebraska.

Earlier this spring while in the Nebraska Sandhills, traffic was stopped on a two-lane highway while a ranch family moved a herd of cows and calves across the road to another pasture. It was a nice afternoon, so many folks got out of their vehicles to talk with each other, or rolled down their windows while listening to the radio broadcast of the Nebraska Cornhusker spring football “game,” which with over 70,000 fans in attendance had temporarily formed the third-largest population center in the state. While we waited for the cattle train to pass, occasionally I would hear above the din a string of rattling notes and would look up into the dome of blue sky and see chevron-shaped flocks of sandhill cranes that had just left the Platte Valley, winging northward on migration.

Later that day when I got to my destination I needed to stretch my legs. I grabbed my binoculars and a camera and took a brief walk back out along the same ribbon of highway, bordered by miles of rolling prairie as far as the eye could see. Only three vehicles came down the road that hour, and all three drivers stopped to make sure that my truck hadn’t broke down and that I was OK. Each time when I told them what I was doing they would nod with approval, smile and wave me on my way. They all had Nebraska plates.

There is no place like Nebraska. ■

Search for Treasure at Fremont Lakes SRA

By Jeff Kurrus

OK, there might not be any buried treasure, but after a recent chat with Fremont Lakes Superintendent Bill Booth, we're sure you'll find something on this map to entice you to one of Nebraska's most enjoyable state recreation areas. From a secluded hiking trail to a secret spot for bluegill fishing, we have the place for you.



PHOTOS BY JEFF KURRUS

Boasting 20 sandpit lakes, Fremont Lakes State Recreation Area offers a variety of activities. From watersports such as windsurfing (above, left) to relaxing with the family at a swim beach (above, right), Fremont has everything a family could ask for during a summer vacation.



Any guests coming from the north, east, or south go west of Fremont two miles on Highway 30, and then head south at County Road 19 into the park. Guests coming from the west will turn right and go south on County Road 19 approximately two miles west of Fremont into the park.



KEY

- A** This picnicking spot is an oft-forgotten family reunion locale, perfect for large, low-key gatherings.

B Get off the beaten path here to find birds. On Lake No. 10, birding is especially good for migrating waterfowl at ice-out.

C Wake up early to see the park's best sunrise location.

D Campsite No. 210 or on the back deck of the group lodge is ideal for capturing sunset photos.

E Brushpiles for crappies can be found throughout the park, but these are annual hotspots.

F Big catfish move into these shallows in the late summer afternoons.

G Year after year, largemouth bass are plentiful in these areas.
- H** Other bluegill bed locations can be found in lakes throughout the recreation area, but these are consistent locales every year.

I The legendary muskellunge can be caught on these waters, with each lake boasting fish above 36 inches and getting bigger.

J Need a hamburger or ice cream? Stop here for a treat.

K If camping and fishing is your desire, look no further.

L If camping and watersports is your choice instead, you've found your summer destination.

M Camp here if you're not sure of your weekend plans – great for socializing with new friends or reading a book on the waterfront.

N Bring your binoculars for wildlife viewing on these trails.
- O** Host a family reunion or wedding, preferably near sunset.

P Watch fireworks on the 4th of July at these locations.

Q This bullhead-stocked lake is aimed directly at introducing youngsters to fishing.

R Morel mushrooms can go from the ground to the grill here.

S Take the little ones to this shallow-water beach, which is perfect for toddlers.

T This high-energy beach fills quickly during the summer days.

U These low-pressure fishing holes are perfect for the canoe or kayak angler.
- 1–20 Lake numbers.

MAP BASE ARTWORK BY ANDREW FAUGHN

Kayaks and Kids

Story and photos by Justin Haag

Why should adults have all the fun when it comes to kayak fishing?

In 2008, my son, Sawyer, was 5 years old and the kayak fishing craze was in its infancy in western Nebraska. When I mentioned to friends and family that I was going to buy a kayak to take my son fishing, it was met with some skepticism. Back then, the word “kayak” most commonly invoked a mental image of daredevils paddling through whitewater in a Rocky Mountain stream.

Those fears subsided and kayaks have become common on Nebraska waters and elsewhere, as many have been enticed by the benefits of simplicity

and economy. The sit-on-top kayak was a great investment for my family, and we now have two of the vessels. Now 12, my son has spent many hours both riding with me and paddling solo, and I’m certain he’s caught more fish from atop the plastic than he has while walking the shoreline. My younger daughter has also spent considerable time aboard with me.

Kayak fishing with children requires many considerations, among the first of which is kayak selection. I didn’t go out and buy the first kayak I found. During research, I discovered the Malibu



Sawyer Haag displays a channel catfish that he caught fishing from a kayak at Carter P. Johnson Lake at Fort Robinson State Park.



PHOTO BY JUSTIN HAAG

An anchor can be an invaluable tool for kayak anglers of all ages. The author’s homemade system features a hand reel to quickly raise and lower a folding two-pound anchor. A trolley system – a loop of rope clipped to the front and rear of the hull with carabiners and a ring tied between – allows the anchor to be positioned on either end of the kayak. “Tie” it to the stern to have the wind at your back and the bow to have the wind in your face, but never from the side.

Pro Explorer. Its major selling point was the Gator Hatch, a front storage compartment access cover that doubles as a rear-facing seat for children. The hatch has allowed me to have face-to-face conversations with my younger passenger while I paddle to the good fishing spots, and conveniently bait many a hook and untangle a lot of line while we’re there – just as dads are supposed to do.

When my son outgrew the hatch seat, it was time to get him his own kayak. What’s the right age to let a

child fish solo? Sawyer was 8, but it all depends on the kid. You want your young paddler to be enthusiastic and independent enough to go alone, yet capable of making and executing good decisions on the water.

Of course, all the usual tips for going outdoors with children apply: bring water, snacks, sunscreen, proper clothing and footwear. Boaters of non-motorized vessels don’t require certification in Nebraska, but it’s a good idea to use the experience as a teaching opportunity. Visit BoatSafeNebraska.org

and the Nebraska Boating Guide for regulations and safety tips.

PFD for Them and Me

It can’t be said enough – wear the jacket. Kids age 12 and under are required to wear one, but I wear one, too. I want to be safe, lawful, and ready if a rescue situation arises. This is one area it doesn’t hurt to splurge a little. It’s important that the vest not only meets safety requirements, but that it’s comfortable and even looks good so the child doesn’t mind wearing it.

Drop Anchor

A small anchor is invaluable when it comes to fishing. Without one, even a light breeze will make it hard to fish. An anchor will keep your kayak from drifting into trouble spots, especially while landing and handling fish. Use one with caution, though. It’s important to have a trolley system that allows you to “tie” the anchor to the stern or bow without leaving your seat in the middle. An anchor dropped from the side of the vessel puts you broadside to the waves, leaving you, at best, all wet from the

Let your young angler hone skills while the kayak is parked in the driveway. A little practice on land will go far from curbing any anxiety they might meet on the water.

splashing waves or, at worst, capsized. I prefer the stern set-up, as it allows me to fish with the wind to my back.

Keep it Calm and Fish On

Introduce children to kayak fishing when the weather is calm and comfortable. When the wind picks up and the temperature drops, go ashore. A bad experience during youth can be discouraging, and there's plenty of time for them to be gung ho in the elements when they get older.

Also, stay away from places with a lot of motorboat traffic: big wakes can be scary for kids and adults, not to mention the risk of problems that might arise if someone, be it a young paddler or speedboat driver, isn't paying attention.

Paddle Power

Select the right paddle for your young angler. It should certainly be a paddle

made for kayaking, with blades at both ends, and the right length for a young paddler to handle with ease. The perfect shaft length will depend on the height of the paddler and the width of their kayak. Manufacturers and retailers will have charts to help you choose.

Those Darn Snags

It's hard to part with a beloved lure, but no piece of merchandise is worth capsizing. On a calm day, a child can paddle to the other side of a snag and free it.

At the first sign that Sawyer is struggling, though, I tell him to keep the anchor down until I can get there to help, or I simply tell him to grab the clippers and snip the line.

Holding the Rod

Unless you have a fancy pedal-powered kayak, you need a place to put your fishing rod while paddling.

Many kayaks come equipped with rod holders. Just make sure there's a secure place to put the rod that isn't too difficult to reach, no matter how long your arms are.

Practice Makes the Paddler

Don't let your children's first solo kayaking experience be all trial by water. When it comes to dropping the anchor, casting and switching between paddle and rod, let them hone their skills while the kayak is parked in the driveway. This practice will go far in curbing any anxiety that might meet them on the water.

With a little forethought and preparation, kayak fishing will open opportunities for both you and your children. Not only is it a cost-effective way to get on the water, but it can also bring some independence to a child – not to mention some fish to the deck. ■



PHOTO BY ERIC FOWLER

Kayaks easily carry anglers over and through aquatic vegetation, giving them easy access to open pockets in the shallows where fish often hide, such as this one on Hackberry Lake at the Valentine National Wildlife Refuge.

Sawyer Haag shows off a trout he caught while fishing from a kayak at the Chadron City Reservoirs.



Fish-finding from the Kayak

I'm always hesitant to add too many modern conveniences to my sit-on-top kayak, mainly because I bought it with notions of purist simplicities. My portable fish-finder, however, is always welcome when I'm on the water, whether it is January or June. I own the Lowrance x67c, a model that works both for ice-fishing and the open water.

For several seasons, I situated the fish-finder and its carrying case between my legs and dropped the transducer over the side. It worked fine, but the cord sometimes got in the way of paddling and the loose transducer didn't give accurate readings while the vessel was moving.

With a little searching on the Internet and some inventiveness, I found a better way – one that tidies things up and gets me a better reading of what's below. Keep in mind, while the basics of this article are universal, it is a custom job that will have to be tailored to your equipment.

Mount it Up

A fish-finder bracket, created by a manufacturer such as Scotty or Ram, will allow you to remove the fish-finder's main unit after a day on the water by simply unplugging it. The base, installed with the manufacturer's instructions, can also be used to attach a variety of other accessories, such as a rod holder. If the bolt holes don't match up, as was my situation, a little sawing and drilling on a piece of plastic cutting board from your local retailer's kitchen section result in a fine adapter.

Drill, Baby, Drill

In order to get your cables to where they need to go, drill a hole in the top of your kayak. (I know, it's painful.) I used a 3/8-inch drill with a 1-inch hole saw. One could get messy with silicone caulk for this purpose, but I find that a slit half-way through a foam practice golf ball reasonably ensures water doesn't get below the deck through the cable hole.



Getting the Signal

A fish finder's transducer emits and receives signals to detect the depth – and hopefully, fish – below a boat. While they are easily attached to the outside of a fishing boat's transom, hanging one from a kayak is a challenge. There are countless off-the-shelf and homemade methods that can be found online, including brackets that clamp to the side or rear of the craft. Thankfully, a transducer's signal can pass through a kayak's plastic hull. So like many anglers, I opted for a liquid-filled, internal mount made from PVC, reducing drag and leaving one less thing for my fishing and anchor lines to get tangled in.

The design I chose uses a short section of PVC pipe, a coupler and a cap. Measure your transducer to determine the size of PVC you will need. Find a location in your kayak for your transducer that will not be disturbed by paddles and other items. (I put mine under the seat.) Glue the PVC coupler to the hull using Loctite plastic epoxy. A little light sanding helps ensure a strong, watertight bond. To create the top of the housing, cement a short length of the pipe inside the cap and cut a vertical slit to allow it to slide over the cable.

Filling the housing with liquid removes the air and ensures a good signal. If your craft will never be subjected to freezing temperatures, use water. I used vehicle washer fluid for its antifreeze properties. Wrap the seam with waterproof duct tape and put a dab of silicone caulk at the cable's entry to seal the housing and keep the fluid from leaking during the open-water fishing season. When that ends and you're ready to hit the ice, the transducer and sonar unit are easily removed.

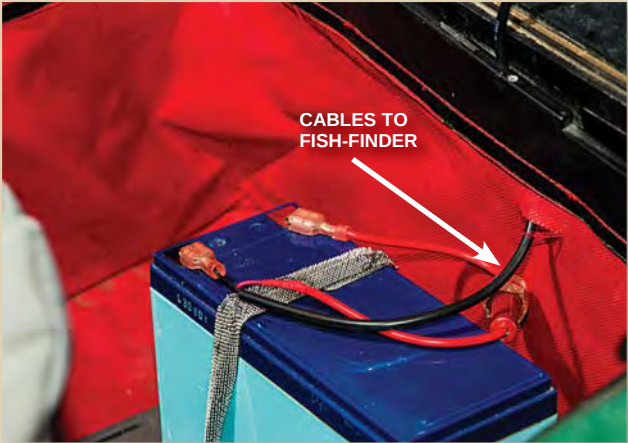


A water-filled transducer housing can be built from PVC pipe and glued to the inside of your kayak's hull.



Juicing Up

You don't need a big, deep-cycle battery to power your fish finder and other electronics. I use a small, sealed, rechargeable 12-volt battery that I stow in the hatch between my legs. If your kayak is prone to taking in water, put your battery in a watertight container.



Bon Voyage

Go find some fish! If you're like me, electronics don't ensure a successful fishing trip, but they will at least show you what you're not catching ■

On the Ball: Foam practice golf balls are great, inexpensive accessories for sit-on-top kayak owners. Not only will they serve as a seal around cords (see page 46), but they also work great as plugs for the scupper holes. To keep your hind end dry, push them into the holes beneath your seat.



The Wrong Side of Sunflowers

Story and photos by Chris Helzer

Sunflowers may be the most distinctive and characteristic wildflowers of the Great Plains. They are big and showy, and they follow second-grade art rules for how flowers should look – a dark round center surrounded by long petals. However, there are two sides to every sunflower blossom: the familiar, bright and attractive front side, and the hidden and lackluster back side, scorned by most painters, photographers and young crayon artists.

If you look at any book cover, calendar or coffee mug featuring a sunflower, it almost always showcases the “face” of the flower. It must be the most recognized flower face in the world. The front of the sunflower is also where the action is. It’s where bees come to gather pollen and nectar, and where – later in the season – birds and other wildlife come to harvest large nutritious seeds. In comparison, the backside of a flower must be pretty dull, right?

Actually, a sunflower’s reverse side is both aesthetically

pleasing and full of activity. Overlapping layers of beautifully-intricate green bracts (phyllaries) cover the center of the flower, and the petals are just as pretty from behind as from the front. In fact, because sunflower blossoms usually face the sun, the light passing through their translucent petals produces a wonderful and warm glow. The penchant for sunflowers to track the sun also means that the backside of flowers is a good place for small creatures to hide. Insects, particularly, can often be found there – taking refuge from the hot sun or hiding from hungry predators. Ants have an additional reason to swarm the flip side of sunflowers. Annual sunflowers produce sweet “extra floral” nectar that attracts the predatory ants as an apparent strategy to protect the flower from tiny herbivores (see NEBRASKAland January-February 2013 issue, page 6.)

The next time you’re hiking through a prairie in late summer, surrounded by the bright faces of sunflowers, take a minute to step around to the other side of a few plants. In



The backside of stiff sunflower at the Nature Conservancy’s Platte River Prairies.



Maximilian sunflower (*Helianthus maximiliani*) at the Nature Conservancy’s Platte River Prairies.

addition to seeing a different side of this charismatic plant, you’re also likely to spot a variety of small creatures you would otherwise have missed. Maybe those small creatures know something you (and your favorite second-grader) don’t. ■

Note: To some landowners, all sunflowers are lumped together as “weeds.” That characterization is both inaccurate and unfair. In fact, of Nebraska’s nine species of native sunflowers, seven are perennial plants and only

two are annuals. The two annual species are weedy, only in that they can quickly establish in disturbed areas (heavily grazed pastures, crop fields, or after drought has weakened surrounding vegetation), but they are not aggressive, and quickly diminish in abundance as nearby perennial plants regain their vigor. Nebraska’s perennial sunflowers are not aggressive either, and both annuals and perennials play important roles in their ecosystems, especially as food sources for pollinators, seed-eating wildlife, and foraging deer and other large herbivores (including livestock).



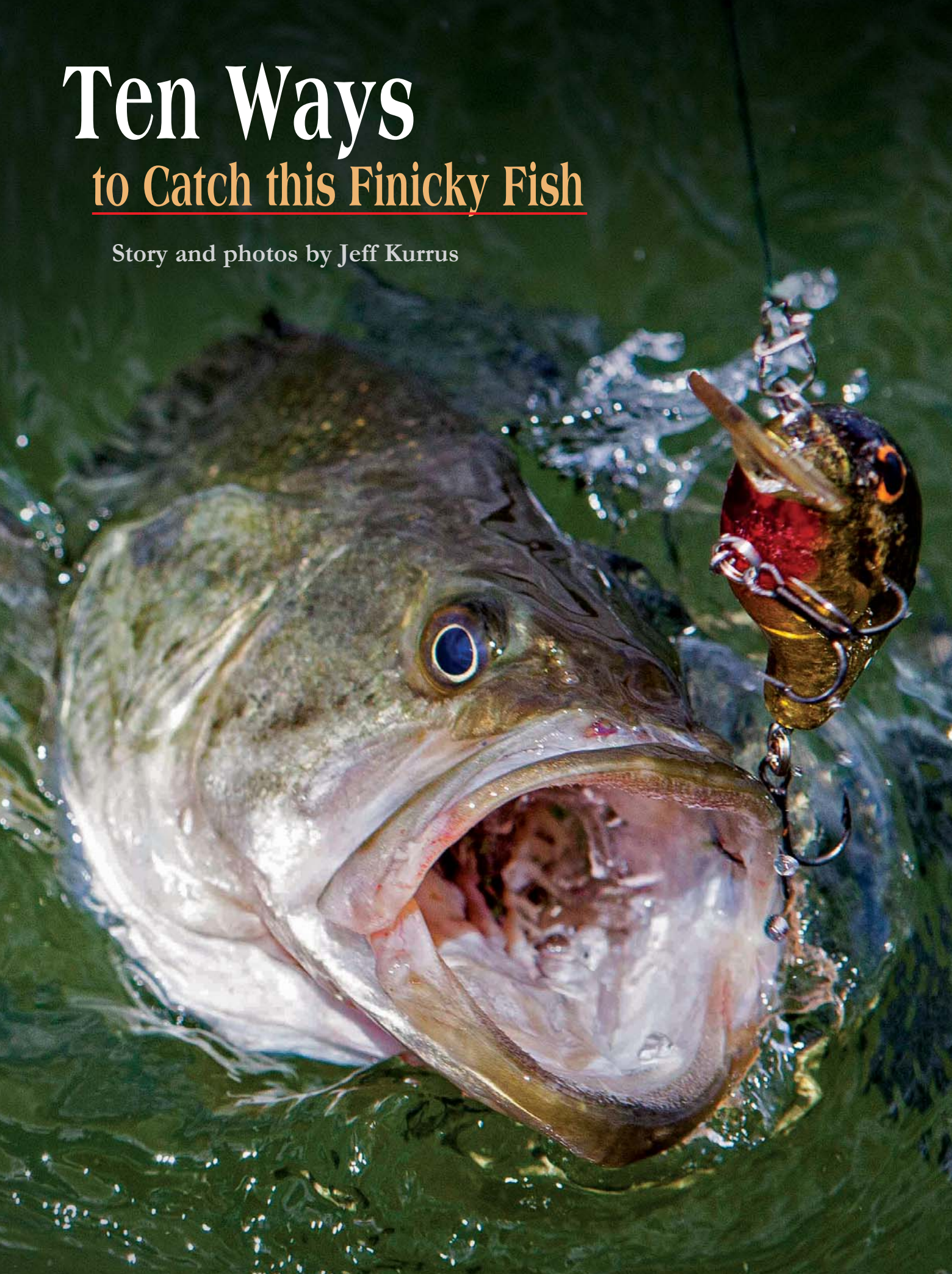
The traditional view: stiff sunflower (*Helianthus pauciflorus*) flower at Lincoln Creek prairie restoration in Aurora.



Annual sunflowers (*Helianthus annuus*) at the Nature Conservancy’s Platte River Prairies.

Ten Ways to Catch this Finicky Fish

Story and photos by Jeff Kurrus



Largemouth bass, America's most popular sport fish, can be caught in a variety of ways. Most anglers view these options as falling into a few distinct lure categories, including crankbait, spinnerbait, soft plastic and topwater. But sometimes the fish don't cooperate and you're not sure what to next. Let this be your guide:

Topwater Scum Frog

This time of year, many Nebraska lakes have a large amount of aquatic vegetation. Fish this lure at any time of day on the edge of the vegetation or right in it. Using low-stretch braided line is a must to retrieve fish that strike through the vegetation and then bury themselves in it.



Lucky 13

For many anglers, these lures made by Heddon for more than 50 years have gone out of fashion. However, they're a marvel because they can trigger a strike when fished as a topwater popper or reeled slowly just beneath the surface, giving them the action of a swimbait.



Skimming Spinnerbaits

Fishing these right beneath the surface, where you can still see them, is a technique to be used when fish are lurking below the surface in vegetation, waiting to ambush whatever swims by. You can also lift your rod tip and allow the lure's blade to slap the water's surface. Begin reeling as soon as your lure hits the water.



Ultralight

Downsize your rig and fish near the edge of vegetation with any number of smaller lures, including in-line spinners and beetle spins. What won't hit a larger lure might hit a smaller one. It's worth a try.



Weightless Worm

Texas-rigging a worm with no weight is an excellent way to increase your lure's action and keep your bait in a fish's strike zone longer. Use this technique around woody structure and in creek channels.



Crippling Crankbaits

Even if you can't possibly retrieve a crankbait through vegetation, casting one into holes in vegetation, then twitching the lure, is a great way to trigger a strike. If you have any lures with broken lips, use them here instead of your best lures and you won't be as worried about losing one in the cabbage.



Open-water Crankbaits

If you're fishing one of the many Nebraska lakes thick with vegetation, it's worth a few long casts with a crankbait in open water to see if there are bass suspended above deep vegetation.



Match the "Hatch"

While it's nearly taboo to keep a largemouth north of Kentucky, it is legal on many waters in Nebraska. Cut open the belly of one to see what they're eating. You might just be surprised by how many crawfish parts you find. You might also be surprised at how tasty it is when you fry or grill the fish for dinner.



Go Unconventional

Fish topwater lures at noon. Tie on the lure hidden away in the bottom of your tackle box that has never caught a fish. These and any other cockamamie ideas you might have should be tried when the fish just aren't active. All you're looking for is one strike. Or will you keep doing what isn't working?

Timber Cranks

Just because you're near riprap or some other underwater structure, don't shy away from floating crankbaits because you fear them getting hung up. Just watch your line when you're reeling. When the line's entry point stops moving closer as you retrieve, know that your lure is about to hit an obstruction. Simply hesitate until your lure floats above the obstruction, then begin reeling again. Quite often the bass will strike as the lure rises above. ■



May-apple

a plant of many names

By Gerry Steinauer, botanist



May-apple, shown here growing at Indian Cave State Park, has a long history of medicinal use. Extracts from the plant were once the main ingredient in the popular laxative Carter's Little Liver Pills (right).

"Toxicologists may deem it an error,
To imbibe of May-apple Madeira.
But if the list was complete
Of the toxins we eat,
Perhaps we would all die of terror."
— Botanist James A. Duke

There is a plant that grows in the deciduous woodlands on Missouri River bluffs in southeastern Nebraska with so many common names it befuddles even the most retentive botanist. Settlers in Ohio called the plant "parasols" due to its umbrella-shaped leaves, and the early French in Missouri named it "citron sauvage," meaning wild citron, due to the fruit's resemblance to that of the Old World citrus (*Citrus medica*). Other regional names include Indian-apple, hog-apple, devil's apple, mug-apple, wild lemon, yellow berry, wild jalap, peca, raccoon-berry, American wild mandrake, duck's foot, umbrella plant and maypop. As early as the 1730s, Carolinians were referring to the plant as May-apple, because it bloomed in May. For reasons unknown, this name gained favor and is the most widely used today.

May-apple (*Podophyllum peltatum*) is a perennial, which spreads via long, creeping rhizomes, often forming expansive colonies. In Nebraska, these plants are found mainly on moist, low slopes and bottoms. In April, the stems, topped with folded, conical-shaped leaves, emerge from the soil, resembling miniature tepee villages on the forest floor. Plants can eventually reach 18 inches in height, the single stem forking into two, long-petioled leaves. Strangely, non-flowering plants have just one leaf.

Each plant has but a large and beautiful single flower with six to nine cream-colored, fleshy petals.

The flower's primary pollinators are bees and bumblebees. The blossom's placement — on a drooping stalk

hidden below the leaves — is odd, as most insect pollinated flowers are exposed and well-advertised. Another enigma is their odor, described as "very fragrant" to "nauseous." "I am always forcibly reminded of a bad case of ozaena when inhaling their perfume," wrote the doctor and ethnobotanist Charles F. Millspaugh in 1887. Since ozaena is defined as a chronic disease of the nose characterized by a foul-smelling nasal discharge, this is a rather uninviting appraisal of a flower's fragrance.

May-apple's namesake fruit is a one- to two-inch long, plum-shaped berry that ripens in July and August, becoming "tender to the touch, like a kiwi" with a lemon color and fragrance. A Delaware study found box turtles the primary consumer of the fruits and seed disperser. When seeds pass through an animal's acidic gut, it often enhances germination. The name raccoon-berry infers that these night roamers also feed upon the fruits, as do squirrels, opossums, chipmunks and ground-dwelling birds.

Opinions vary as to the fruit's value for human consumption. The 19th century Harvard botanist Asa Gray described them as "mawkish, eaten by pigs and boys," while the early 20th century botanist, from the same institute, Merritt Lyndon Fernald stated they are relished by most individuals, but peculiar in flavor. The berries' flavor has been likened to that of strawberries, tomatoes and paw-paws, another deciduous woodland fruit. Today, the fruits are used to make jelly and jam, and popular in some regions are May-apple drinks, juice and Madeira wine. *Mother Earth News* recently published a May-apple recipe for "the most delicious summer punch this side of the Garden of Eden!"

But beware when harvesting May-apples. All parts, except the ripe fruits, are toxic to humans; a mere touch of the roots and rhizomes can cause a rash or blistering. Even the seeds are poisonous to humans and only the pulp of ripe berries should be consumed raw or cooked. Further caution, over-eating the ripe fruit can have a laxative effect, while the unripe fruit is a particularly powerful bowel cleanser. Perhaps the name "devil's apple" was conceived by some misguided soul who partook

of the unripe fruit and suffered the consequences.

Native Americans apparently favored May-apples. "The Cherokee, Delaware, Iroquois, Menomini, Meskwaki, Osage, Penobscot, and Ojibwa ate the fruits fresh, cooked, or mashed and made [them] into small cakes that were dried for future use. As needed, the cakes were soaked in warm water, cooked as a sauce, or mixed with corn bread," wrote Daniel F. Austin in his 2004 book *Florida Ethnobotany*.

Properly prepared and dosed, eastern tribes also used May-apple as a medicinal plant. "The Cherokee used *Podophyllum* to treat intestinal worms, rheumatism, ulcers and sores, and as a laxative and spring tonic," stated Austin. The Delaware's name for the plant was maskiichtew, maashk meaning "defecate" and kiich meaning "causes." The Iroquois used the plant as a pesticide, soaking corn seeds in it before planting. The Menomini used it to kill insects on cultivated plants. Austin also mentions accounts of Natives committing suicide by eating May-apple roots, and solemnly noted "because the roots are purgative, emetic, and irritating, that would be an excruciating way to die."

As folk remedies, early Euro-Americans used preparations from May-apple rhizomes, roots and leaves as a purgative, liver-cleanser and de-wormer, and also to treat jaundice, constipation and venereal diseases, among other afflictions. Modern research has discovered healing compounds concentrated in the plant's roots and rhizomes. Podophyllin, a resinous powder obtained by precipitating an alcoholic tincture of the rhizomes, is used in a cream to treat genital warts, while alpha-peltatin and beta-peltatin are laxatives. Podophyllotoxin has immunostimulatory and anti-cancer properties, as it prevents cell division, and is a precursor of synthetic drugs used to treat testicular and small cell lung cancer and rheumatoid arthritis. Presently, the roots and rhizomes used to make these drugs are wild harvested, though someday field plantings of May-apples may permit extensive production. Perhaps the plant of many names may become the plant of many cures. ■



May-apple's fleshy petals surround a central ovary and ring of yellow stamens.

The Root of the Problem

In 1752, the *Virginia Gazette* published the following recipe to cure dry-gripes (bowel pains). "Take a sufficient Quantity of May-Apple Roots, wash and boil them in clean Water, till the Quintessence of Virtue is received into the Water, then drain off the Water, and put Molasses with it, let the Proportion be one-third Part Molasses, and two-thirds Water, boil it over a gentle Fire and stir it often, then cool it and put it into a Bottle and keep for Use. Take care not to give too much; give about four Spoonfuls to a Man or Woman, and if it does not work in four Hours, give a Spoonful or two more, and repeat it three hours after, 'til it does work."

Photographing Nebraska's State Parks

Public areas offer a variety of photographic opportunities.

By Eric Fowler and Jeff Kurrus

From the first-time point-and-shooter to the photographer with National Geographic-esque aspirations, Nebraska's state park system is the perfect place to capture your next memorable image. With eight parks statewide, as well as 59 state recreation areas spread across the state, there's no more varied place to photograph. Here are a few more reasons why:

Scenery

Among the many qualifications that must be met before a property can become a state park is its scenic value. The eight parks certainly have that. Stand on the overlook at Niobrara State Park and look out across that river and the Missouri at sunrise or sunset, or on a ridgetop trail at Chadron State Park where you can see miles of ponderosa pine forest, and you'll agree. Your photos will, too.

Variety

Within a park or from one to the next, you will find a wide variety of subjects to frame in your viewfinder. Take Smith Falls State Park near Valentine, for example. In less than a mile, a nature trail takes you across the Niobrara River to the state's highest waterfall, along and over spring-fed streams, uphill past hardwoods, birch, aspen and ponderosa pine trees and into the Sandhills. If you can't find a pretty picture there, you're not trying.

Wildlife

A morning drive through Eugene T. Mahoney State Park near Ashland, a walk down the park's miles of trails, or an evening spent on the deck of the cabin you rented for the night will often put you face-to-face with deer and other wildlife. And because they're so used to seeing people, and only limited hunting is allowed, they won't turn tail and run as soon as they see you, giving you more time to compose and click. You might find the same at other state parks. Or you can stop by Fort Robinson State Park and have a decent chance of photographing every big game animal that lives in our state: white-tailed and mule deer, elk, bighorn sheep and pronghorn.

They're Yours

With a park entry permit on your car's windshield, you are free to come and go as you please, as often as you'd like. That's why the park system was created. And part of the reason the state's taxpayers make a small contribution to the system: to ensure people have a special, wild place to visit. But users pay the majority of the costs to acquire and maintain these parks. So when you set out on a photo hike and bring home a wall-worthy image, you can tell people, "that's my place." Visit OutdoorNebraska.org for more information on state parks. ■



A broad, colorful view at Indian Cave State Park.



A photo hike along Stone Creek at Platte River State Park.



A white-tailed deer at Eugene T. Mahoney State Park.

PHOTOS BY ERIC FOWLER

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Burrowing Cows

Sometimes the domesticated animals trigger the wildest experiences.

By Justin Haag

With camera in hand, I've had the pleasure of encountering an incredible wide variety of animals. Each species is special in its own way and a joy to photograph. There's one animal from a shoot last summer I wish I'd never met, however.

In photographing burrowing owls for the story in this month's magazine, I had every advantage. Thanks to David Johnson's research, I knew exactly where a nest was located and what day the chicks would be emerging from the old prairie dog hole.

My daughter and I had fun setting up a blind near the burrow and I anticipated returning soon to get some great photos. For bird photography, my favorite set-up consists of four grass blind sheets piled over a light frame. It creates something of a cave for the photographer, getting him on the birds' level and providing concealment ... from most critters.

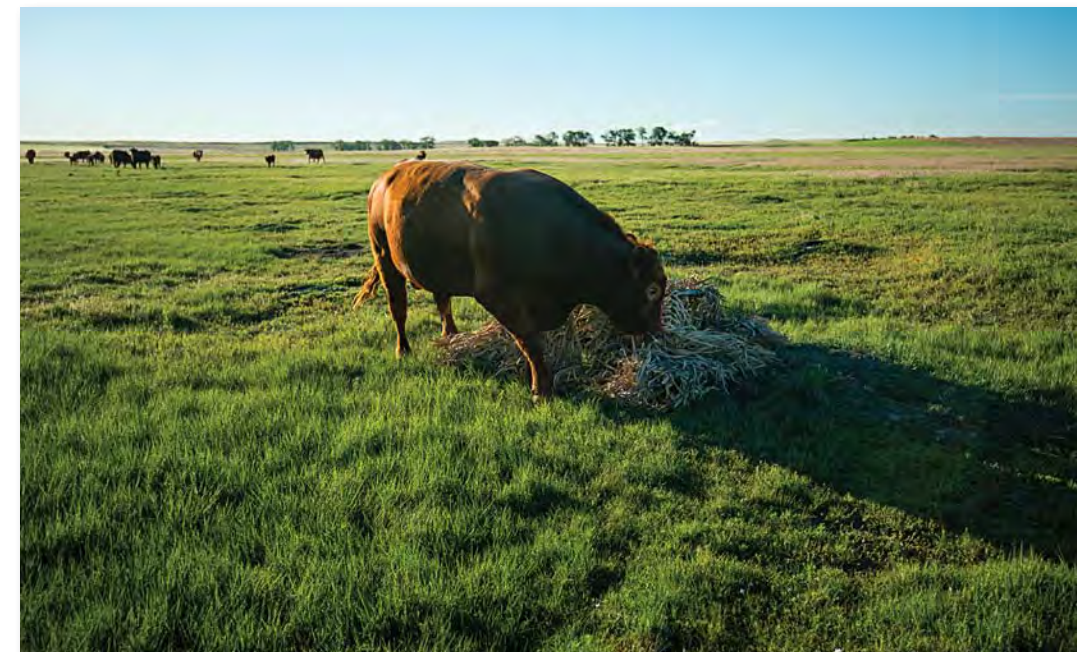
On a beautiful June morning a couple days later, I assumed my prone position below the grass sheets well before sunrise. It was positioned in a place where the rising sun would be at my back, hopefully projecting nice light on the little owls.

With each passing minute, the animal community came alive. Prairie dogs barked while long-billed curlews and meadowlarks foraged nearby. Then, the big moment arrived. First, an adult owl emerged from the den, shortly followed by three of the newest members of the burrowing owl population. Excitement! Click, click, click ...

Then, after I'd fired off just a few frames, something else emerged. In my preparation, there was one variable I hadn't given much consideration: Prairie dogs often share space with cattle.

While clicking away at the owlets, I heard some snorting behind me. With a beautiful sunrise at its back stood my new bovine adversary, staring straight at me, pawing at the dirt with slobber falling from his snout. It was a red Angus bull, adding some bellowing to let me know he meant business.

Had I not feared for my life, I could have composed a great photo of the scene. Having been to a fair number of rodeos, however, visions of the "Coors Man in the Can" became most prominent in my head. As the bull started trotting toward me, I quickly pondered a couple of choices:



A red Angus bull pushes over a photography blind at a prairie dog colony on private property after evicting the photographer.

stay and brace for what might become a great tale of airborne journey or make like a chicken and head to the truck. Yeah, I abandoned ship.

As I walked away from the blind, the bull hurried toward it, lowered his head and quickly turned the blind upside down with one nudge. He turned his gaze toward me and my camera equipment. It was as if he was saying, "Next time, it's you, buddy."

With the territory claimed, the rest of the herd closed in and added further insult to my effort. Turns out the grass sheets are palatable to cattle. Who knew? As they munched away at my hiding spot and the bull staring me down, I had little else to do but head to the truck and call it a day.

A smarter man would have left well enough alone, but I'm a NEBRASKAland photographer. I gave it a couple more tries in coming days under the increasingly shrinking sheets of grass, only to be evicted both times by the protective brute. On our last tango, he stood bellowing at the fence, as near to my truck as he could get, as I walked the long way around to get in the cab.

Nicely played, Ol' Red. Nicely played. In case you're keeping score from our "first rodeo," it was Ol' Red 3, Justin 0. And, believe me; this photographer isn't looking for another go-round with this particular animal. ■



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◀ Two brothers having their picture taken in a photo studio in Dodge, Nebraska. Pictured (left to right) is Bernard (Barney) and Lewis Schulte (my father) on the right.

They lived on a farm in Dodge. When they returned home with their rabbits their parents (Engelbert and Mary) took them to have their picture taken.

Barney was born in 1906 and Lewis in 1908.

I believe the picture was taken in 1916 or 1917.

We do enjoy reading NEBRASKAland Magazine.

– Darlene A. (Schultz) Wees, Papillion, Nebraska



▲ This is a photo of myself (left) and my buddy, Joseph Vacanti, on the Platte River west of Louisville State Park in 1961. We hunted out of my dad's blind and it was rare to see Canada geese in eastern Nebraska. That morning we spotted three coming down the river and gave them a call – they turned and came right over our decoys, wing out feet hanging, looking like bombers. We got all three. Joe shot his first goose that day and was so excited he was shaking and then vomited. We laughed so hard I started shaking. What a memory that was – we still laugh about it to this day. Joe lives in Texas and plays golf. At 77, I still hunt ducks and geese.

– Herman J. Stock,
Omaha, Nebraska



◀ The picture was taken in 1957. Left to right is myself, Ann, Karen, Uncle Oliver and dad Myron Berggren. Growing up we looked forward to visiting our grandparents' summer home on Lake Irene near Alexandria, Minnesota. Trips were planned for the bass and walleye opener, sometimes Fourth of July and always before school started. The sounds and smells of squeaky oar locks, wooden boats and the fish cleaning shack will remain with me forever.

– Lynn Berggren,
Broken Bow, 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.

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Grilled Whole Bluegill

Small fish are better eaten whole.

By Jenny Nguyen

Strong fighters and willing biters, bluegills are fun to catch and also good eating. With sweet white meat and also firm, these small fish can be filleted, but they can also be eaten whole, which I prefer. These seven- to eight-inch bluegills I caught through the ice this winter were perfect for the grill, and they took to marinating well. If you'd like, you can also stuff them with fresh herbs.

Having to eat around fish bones should not be a deterrent to eating whole fish. Although it requires a tiny bit more effort to enjoy, I prefer whole fish to fillets. Not only can you get to meat that you would've missed if you had filleted the fish, but the skin and bones help to keep the fish sweet and succulent. Whole fish also makes for a more beautiful presentation and preparing it that way allows you to appreciate the fish for what it is. We know that red meat is much more than a slab of protein in a Styrofoam tray wrapped in plastic. Fish are no different – they have bones and they have heads. They are more than the indiscernible, perfect, boneless fillets we see at the grocery store, which we as anglers, for some reason, emulate religiously with our own catch. So in the kitchen, I try to get away from doing the same things over and over again. Prepared whole fish is rustic, and it's real. I don't mind dinner staring back at me, because then I know exactly what I'm eating.

Lastly, be sure to remind your guests about the bones. Bluegills are fairly



PHOTO BY JENNY NGUYEN

easy to eat, but their bones can be small. If you're not skilled at picking around bones, stay clear of the rib area.

Servings: 2

Prep Time: 2 hours and 10 minutes

Cooking Time: 10 minutes

Ingredients:

- 6 pan-size bluegill, gutted and scaled
- 1 jalapeno pepper
- 2 large cloves of garlic, minced
- ¼ teaspoon of chili powder
- 1 lime, juiced
- lime wedges for serving
- 1 tablespoon of cilantro, chopped
- ¼ cup of olive oil
- 2 green onions, minced
- salt and pepper, to taste

1. Roast jalapeno pepper under the broiler or over a fire until charred all over, turning often. Place in a zipper storage bag or in a small bowl covered with a tea towel or plastic wrap to cool; the steam will allow the charred skin to release. Once cool, scrape off the charred skin and cut off the stem. Mince the jalapeno.

2. In a small bowl, combine roasted jalapeno, garlic, chili powder, lime juice, cilantro, olive oil and green onion. Pour mixture into a gallon-size zipper storage bag.

3. Rinse bluegills under cold water and pat dry with paper towels. Score both sides of each fish three times. Scoring helps the marinade penetrate the meat, and it also allows for even cooking, especially on bigger, thicker fish.

Sprinkle salt and pepper on both sides of the fish, then place fish in the bag with the marinade. Massage bag to distribute marinade, then allow fish to marinate for 2 hours in the refrigerator.

4. Prepare grill half an hour before cooking. To avoid sticking, scrub heated grill grates thoroughly. Grill bluegills for 3-5 minutes on each side over direct heat, or until cooked through. Serve with lime wedges and a cold Mexican cerveza. ■

This recipe and photograph originally appeared on Jenny's Food for Hunters blog at Foodforhunters.com.



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Counting Flowers by the Wall

They look good in any light. When driving by the Red Cloud Buttes at Fort Robinson State Park near Crawford it's hard not to stop for a photo. When tourism season is at its peak, it seems more common than not to see visitors pulled off to the shoulder of U.S. Highway 20 to snap a photo of those majestic sentinels which steeply rise about 450 feet above the main park and form something of a wall.

I, too, am often attracted by those buttes with camera in hand. I've photographed them in winter, summer, spring and fall, from above and below, from near and far.

Just before sunrise on a June morning, I decided to hike toward the buttes. It didn't take long to find something worth photographing. June is prime time for wildflowers in the Pine Ridge, and at my feet were scores of bright yellow blooms among the grasses.

Not only did those flowers provide a nice accent for the picturesque scene, but they're aptly named for such a location. They were *Erysimum asperum*, commonly known as western wallflower. Western wallflower? Yes, in this scene I would say that's what they are. Is there a better place for a flower of such a name to grow?

Justin Haag
April 22, 2015



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