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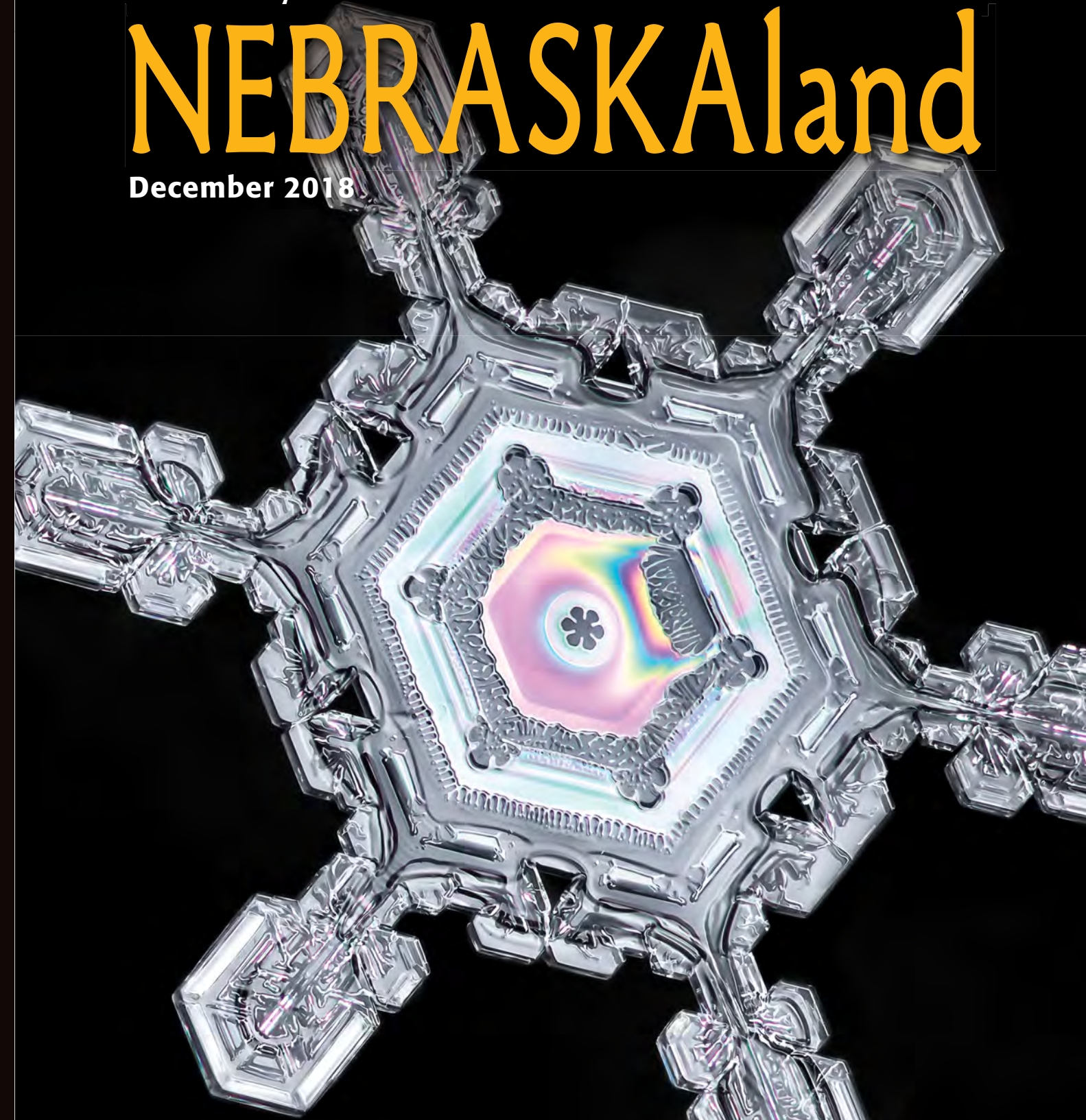
NEBRASKAland

December 2018



A Canada goose is rimmed by morning light as it rests on a slough along the Platte River in Sarpy County. Photo by Eric Fowler.

Published by the
NEBRASKA
— GAME  PARKS —
NebraskalandMagazine.com
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Frozen Art • Time Well Spent
An Ice-fishing Heyday • Travel to Sarpy County • Hasenpfeffer
Chimney Rock Goose Hunt • From Pivots to Prairies

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NEBRASKA
— GAME PARKS —

NEBRASKAland Magazine

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ON THE WEB...

To see additional NEBRASKAland content including photos, videos and articles, visit Magazine.OutdoorNebraska.gov/digital.

Cover: This snowflake image was taken by Don Komarechka. Read about his method for snowflake and frozen soap bubble photography on page 20.

NEBRASKAland (VOL. 96 / NO. 10 ISSN 0028-1964) is published monthly, except for the combined Jan./Feb. and Aug./Sept. issues, by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, 2200 N. 33rd St., Lincoln, NE. Periodicals postage paid at Lincoln, Nebraska, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to NEBRASKAland, P.O. Box 30370, Lincoln, NE 68503-0370.



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Michelle Hellbusch of Belgrade took this photo of her blue spruce tree after an ice storm.

Instagram Featured Photo

Paul L. Filsinger (@paul_filsinger) of Shelton took this image of sandhill cranes southwest of Shelton on the south side of the Platte River. Follow us (@nebraskaland) and tag us in your photos to be featured in an upcoming issue.



Jeffrey Allen of Gering took this photo of Scotts Bluff National Monument during the last few days of summer.



Karen Linot was excited to photograph this northern harrier near her home in Gibbon.

Correction: In the November issue, a caption on page 25 stated that a hunter was firearm deer hunting at Oak Glen Wildlife Management Area. However, this image was taken during a marketing photoshoot. It shall be unlawful to use rifles or handguns, except for .22 rimfire rifles, to take game, or to discharge rifles or handguns for any other purpose, within the boundaries of the Oak Glen Wildlife Management Area in Seward County.

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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PHOTO BY EEL TONY

NEBRASKA'S THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

By Melissa Panella, Wildlife Biologist

In spring 2004, I was attending a National Association of Interpretation certification and training program as a naturalist. The daily workshops were interesting, but as is often the case, the most memorable part of my trip took place during the meeting off-hours. I was spending the night in a cabin in the woods. I was also tired and very pregnant at the time, only a few weeks shy of my due date.

As I was trying to rest, I heard a scratching sound. The sound stopped, so I closed my eyes again. Several minutes later as I was dozing off, I heard the noise again. Other than the scratching, the cabin had been unusually quiet because my cabin mates were off on an evening adventure. I knew I wouldn't be able to sleep until I figured out where the noise was coming from, so I rolled out of bed curious but also slightly afraid of what I might find.

After pacing through the cabin, I finally determined with certainty that the source of the scratching was coming from the interior of the large wood-burning stove. I couldn't see through the closed cast iron doors, so instead I imagined what might be scratching around. I speculated that a bird

could have fallen down the chimney and gotten stuck. It also occurred to me that there could be some larger animal like a raccoon in there, and I should proceed with caution.

I probably should have tried to contact someone with the park and waited on a maintenance person for assistance, particularly given my condition. But instead, I began searching closets for a flashlight and a pair of gloves. I found cleaning gloves but no flashlight. I grabbed the biggest blanket I could find. I thought a broom might be a good idea too just in case.

My three cabin mates sauntered through the front door about the same time and wondered what the pregnant lady with all the gear was up to. I explained the situation, and we all anxiously braced ourselves for the creature's great reveal.

We slowly opened the wood-burning stove's doors – lo and behold nothing but darkness. We held the blanket over the opening and began gently pushing the broom around the interior of the stove. Within seconds, something “flew” into the blanket. What was it? Nobody saw it, but nevertheless we now had it captured within the folds of the blanket!

It seemed as if the four of us were moving in almost perfect unison as we quickly and carefully exited with our mystery captive through the sliding doors onto the deck. We pulled the blanket open, ready to run away screaming if necessary. There it was – a little southern flying squirrel looking up at us with its sparkling big brown eyes and pink button nose.

It remained motionless at first as it assessed its new situation. Then in a split second, it jumped onto a branch overhanging the deck and was gone into the night. We all smiled and laughed, grateful that we had the opportunity to see a flying squirrel up close and that we successfully got him back to the trees where he belonged.

Southern flying squirrels are considered a threatened species in Nebraska. They are a nocturnal, woodland species found in the southeastern part of our state. Flying squirrels are omnivorous but rely heavily on oak and hickory mast production for their forage. Extensive stands of mature oak/hickory woodlands provide suitable nesting cavities. Flying squirrels do not hibernate during winter, but they will become less active and sometimes huddle together in tree cavities for shelter and warmth.

Their geographic range is limited when there are few

woodlands that provide suitable habitat characteristics within our state. When old oaks and hickories are harvested or woodlands become fragmented or converted to other uses, food, cover, and nesting habitat for flying squirrels may be lost.

To conserve flying squirrels in southeastern Nebraska, management goals should include the maintenance of healthy woodland structure with native understory plants. Oak and hickory woodlands can be managed for multi-year age structure with plentiful large trees to provide nesting cavities. If timbering is part of management, cutting should ensure that an adequate number of large, well-spaced trees remain that can provide nesting sites. Minimum woodland stand size should be approximately two square miles. Control of invasive plants such as eastern red cedar and garlic mustard will also help in maintaining habitat for flying squirrels and numerous other wildlife species.

Southern flying squirrels don't actually fly, but they have wing-like skin that extends from their front and hind paws that allows them to glide. Maybe if you're in the right spot at the right time, you'll be lucky enough to see a flying squirrel gliding from branch to branch. They are certainly much better off in the trees than our chimneys. ■



Squirrel, historic illustration, 1849. Charles d'Orbigny's 'Dictionnaire Universel d'Histoire Naturelle' 1839-1849. Steel engraving. Original hand coloring.

Visit Sarpy County

By Josie Meister, Nebraska Tourism Commission

Experience the fun to be had in Sarpy County this winter season. From light displays to delicious Christmas treats, you're sure to be filled with holiday spirit in more ways than one.

Explore

See Mr. and Mrs. Claus and their live reindeer when you visit Washington Park in Bellevue this Christmas season. On Dec. 4, Ole Towne Christmas will be offering warm refreshments, hayrack rides, holiday light displays, a live Nativity scene and more.

Get out of your comfort zone and try an hour-long vinyasa style yoga class, surrounded by nature, designed to de-stress and relax you at Fontenelle Forest every Wednesday in December. Whether you're looking to get your wish list to Santa or to enjoy some yoga by a fire, Sarpy County is the perfect place to be.

Do

Cozying up with your loved ones while watching Christmas movies just seems right during the holidays. Shadow Lake Towne Center in Papillion has you covered. Visit Santa's

workshop and catch a Christmas classic on Dec. 6! If that doesn't satisfy your movie craving, visit Alamo Drafthouse Cinema to fill your appetite as well. This Star Wars-themed theater serves good food, drinks, and a unique experience all in one place.

Eat & Drink

Luckily, there are three meals in a day when traveling through Sarpy County. Head over to The Beanery for morning coffee and try one of their seven flavors of muffins or Black Sheep Coffee House for a handcrafted espresso drink. Also check out Local Beer, Patio and Kitchen for lunch and choose from over 100 local craft beers while enjoying a flatbread pizza or their signature Local Burger. Or stop by the Nebraska Brewing Company's brewery and taproom for a tour or go to their brewpub for a pint of their Cardinal Pale Ale.

Uptown Bakery can satisfy your sweet tooth in the afternoon with one of their specialty cupcakes or fresh, crumbly cookies, and then sit back and relax for dinner at Wine Cellar 510. Enjoy a glass of wine or catch one of their wine tastings happening every Thursday.

Stay

With all the activities Sarpy County has to offer, you're not going to be able to do them in one day. Book a room at one of the many hotel options available including Candlewood Suites, Comfort Suites, Courtyard by Marriott, Embassy Suites, Hampton Inn and Suites, Holiday Inn and more.

Shop

Get your last-minute holiday shopping done at the Nebraska Crossing Outlets in Gretna. You can find premier brands such as Nike, Kate Spade, Columbia and Fossil all with outlet prices.

Head to Cabela's on Dec. 10 and celebrate Santa's arrival with Christmas carols, cookies and hot cocoa. Santa's Wonderland lasts the rest of the month of December at Cabela's with arts and crafts, pictures with Santa and more.

Looking for something more personable?

Oh Darling has unique home décor that will bring warmth to any home. Finally, don't forget to Visit J'Amour Boutique or Absolutely Her Boutique for all your holiday outfit needs. ■



Sarpy County awaits with a wonderful mix of fun things to see and do this holiday season! And you'll find numerous stores decked out and ready for you to enjoy, including those at our exclusive Shadowlake Towne Center and Nebraska Crossing Outlet Mall. So grab your list, check it twice and make the journey to Sarpy County. Located just south of Omaha and along I-80. For a full list of shopping, restaurants and holiday events, visit us at GoSarpy.com.

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Downtown Papillion during the Christmas season.



A Brief History

One Leg in the Grave

By History Nebraska
(Nebraska State Historical Society)

Few people visit their own grave – especially not when part of their body already lies buried beneath the headstone. But Omaha police captain James MacDonald was such a man.

In the early morning hours of Dec. 21, 1921, MacDonald and several other patrolmen responded to a call that safecrackers were looting a grocery store at 40th and Dodge. The safecrackers – or “yeggmen” in the slang of the day – were attempting to blow open a safe with nitroglycerine.

MacDonald’s police car had barely pulled up when the burglars opened fire.

“MacDonald had scarcely stepped to the sidewalk ... when a shot from the lookout’s gun shattered his left ankle and the bone clear to the knee,” the *Omaha World-Herald* reported in a Dec. 30, 1928, retrospective. “He slipped to the pavement and, sitting with his back to a hitching post, continued the assault with the shotgun he carried, from this position. Here started a battle in which it has been declared more than one hundred shots were fired – a fray lasting nearly half an hour, and heard by neighbors for blocks around.”

As the bandits tried to shoot their way out of the drug store, MacDonald drove them back inside with his shotgun. Another bullet struck him in the left knee. The *World-Herald* continues:

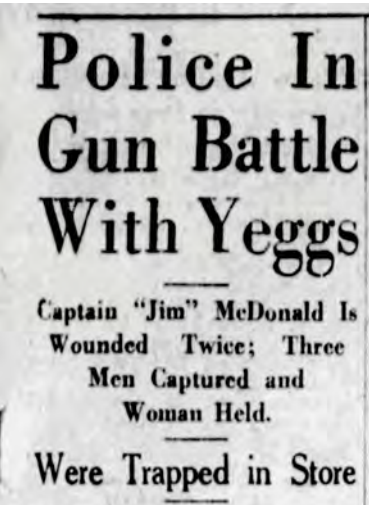
“‘You got me again!’ Jim called, and fired back, the shot striking the man’s hand, knocking down his pistol. Checks and securities, which were wrapped around the handle of the automatic, fell to the floor covered with blood. ‘You got me too,’ replied the bandit.”

Did they really say that, or was it a bit of storyteller’s license? The original 1921 reports don’t include this particular detail about the men politely informing each other about the results of their marksmanship. On the other hand, each man may have been trying to lure his adversary to come closer. Or they may simply have been in shock.

One of the burglars threw a bottle of nitroglycerine, but it failed to explode. Finally, “jammed weapons and lack of ammunition forced the cracksmen to surrender.” The three men were arrested. They’d been blowing safes all over Omaha for weeks, but claimed they’d barely broken even due to the high cost



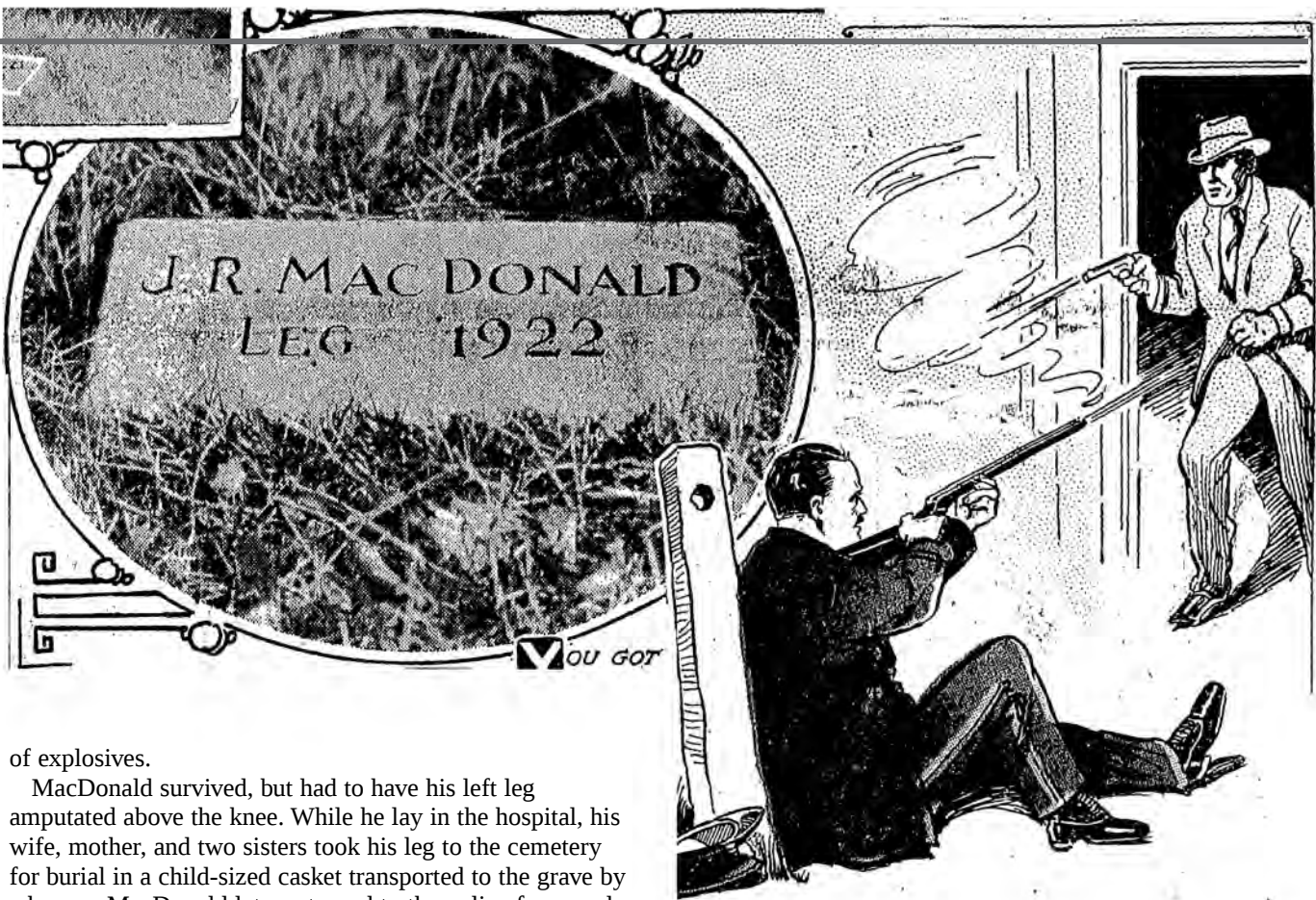
Omaha police badge, ca. 1920s.
History Nebraska 9380-57-(1)



Omaha Bee, Dec. 27, 1921.



Omaha World-Herald, Dec. 27, 1921. The bandits admitted to 18 safe-blowing jobs in about a month's time.



A real photo of the “leg” headstone, and an artist’s version of the shootout. *Omaha World-Herald*, Dec. 30, 1928.

of explosives.

MacDonald survived, but had to have his left leg amputated above the knee. While he lay in the hospital, his wife, mother, and two sisters took his leg to the cemetery for burial in a child-sized casket transported to the grave by a hearse. MacDonald later returned to the police force and

retired in about 1923 with a captain’s pension.

The 1928 article noted that MacDonald now “gets about right well” using only a cane. Each Memorial Day he went to the cemetery to place flowers on the grave where his leg was buried under a headstone that read, “J. R. MACDONALD / LEG 1922.”

“It’s a kind of queer feeling to stand by the side of your grave – to know that part of you is standing above ground active and well, and the rest of you, your body, I mean, lies below, dead and buried,” MacDonald said. “But it was a good leg; it served me for many years, and I’m not going to forget it.”

Though the 1928 story is whimsical, the leg burial had a serious point behind it. The family was apparently celebrating the fact that they didn’t have to bury the rest of their husband and father. A week after the 1921 shootout, the *World-Herald* had run an editorial titled “The Police Problem,” in which it observed that “a policeman’s lot is not a happy one,” and that a patrolman “takes his life in hand to protect the community which pays him a very modest stipend to serve as the monitor of law and order.”

The rest of James McDonald joined his missing leg at Westlawn-Hillcrest Memorial Park after his death in 1932. The “Leg” headstone was replaced with a more conventional one with the inscription: “He fought a good fight.”

Visit History Nebraska’s website at history.nebraska.gov.



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New Climbing Wall at Mahoney State Park

By Cara Pesek

Nebraska’s state parks and recreation areas – which annually attract hundreds of thousands of campers, boaters, anglers and others who love the outdoors – are increasingly becoming destinations during the winter months, too, with year-round cabin rentals, snowshoeing, holiday events, Christmas bird counts, and more.

Perhaps no park is as busy during the winter as Eugene T. Mahoney State Park, where the Activity Center has long provided cooped up kids a place to burn off energy on its indoor playground. This year, a new feature at the Activity Center provides a place for older kids and adults to get a winter dose of adventure, too.

Venture Climb, housed in a new, state-of-the-art addition to the Activity Center, opened in November, just as the weather turned cold. It features a 42-foot climbing wall with both auto- and top-rope belays, as well as a bouldering structure. Walls of varying heights and difficulty offer simple routes for tykes as young as two or three, and advanced routes challenge even experienced climbers.

“Mahoney State Park is becoming a destination for visitors who want to have a unique, memorable and adventurous experience,” said Jim Swenson, state parks director for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. “We are thrilled to be able to offer another fun and engaging challenge for our



Alyssa Baldridge of Lincoln ascends the indoor climbing wall at Eugene T. Mahoney State Park.

park visitors.”

A family could easily spend a whole day at the Activity Center, which in addition to Venture Climb and the popular indoor playground, also include an outdoor skating rink that offers scenic views of the whole park, as well as an impressive sledding hill, complete with a snow machine.

For pricing, hours and more information for all Activity Center features visit OutdoorNebraska.org/Mahoney. ■

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Save the date and join us at the Holiday Inn Conference Center. \$30 admission, \$15 for resource professionals, and \$5 for students. Noon meal included. RSVP by February 1, 2019. Register at NebraskaPF.com or (308) 850-8395

Donate Your Hides

By Jeff Sneller

The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, known as the local Elks Lodge in most small towns, is again accepting donated deer hides from now until the end of the January antlerless deer season.

Donated hides will be shipped to a tannery to be turned into soft leather and made into gloves for veterans who use wheelchairs or used for craft kits that are distributed to veterans at Veterans Affairs Hospitals across the world as part of the Elks Help a Vet program.

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

Contact your local Elks Lodge for more information. ■



PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS

YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT IS LURKING IN YOUR FIREWOOD

Tree-killing pests, like the emerald ash borer, hitchhike on firewood and spread insects and diseases that destroy our trees. Keep your backyard, campgrounds and favorite places safe from these pests.

PREVENTION IS KEY:

- Buy locally-harvested firewood.
- Ask a park ranger or campground host about where to get local firewood when you travel.
- If you brought firewood in from another area, BURN IT! Don't leave it, don't take it with you.

BUY LOCAL, BURN LOCAL.

To report potential emerald ash borer, contact the Nebraska Department of Agriculture at 402-471-2351.

NEBRASKA Good Life. Great Roots.

NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
ANIMAL & PLANT HEALTH PROTECTION

DON'T MOVE FIREWOOD.org

Nebraska EAB Update

By Julie Van Meter
State Entomologist, Nebraska
Department of Agriculture

The 2018 emerald ash borer trapping season has come to a close. Nearly 700 traps were set in Nebraska, primarily in the eastern third of the state. The trapping program was a joint effort of the Nebraska Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. USDA set traps based on a national model developed by the U.S. Forest Service, while NDA focused trapping efforts on locations at high risk for introduction and establishment, primarily campgrounds and state parks.

In June 2018, NDA discovered a single adult EAB specimen in a trap at a campground in Eugene T. Mahoney State Park. A second adult was later collected from the same trap. Mahoney State Park is located in Cass County, which had previously been declared infested after EAB was found in Greenwood in 2016.



Adult Emerald Ash Borer.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVID CAPPAERT, BUGWOOD.ORG

In August 2018, a local arborist contacted NDA to report a suspect tree in Fremont in Dodge County. NDA staff met with the arborist, inspected the tree, and found D-shaped exit holes and serpentine larval galleries, classic signs of an EAB infestation. EAB had not been previously confirmed in Dodge County.

A trap set by USDA in Lincoln caught a single adult specimen, which was confirmed in mid-August. This was the first confirmation of EAB in Lancaster County.

EAB was first discovered in the United States in Michigan in 2002. Since that time, it has been confirmed in 35 states, including Nebraska. Nebraska's first EAB infestation was confirmed in Omaha in early June 2016 by Omaha City Forestry staff, who found EAB larval galleries in an ash tree in Pulaski Park. A homeowner reported EAB-infested trees soon after in Greenwood, Nebraska.

NDA enacted the Nebraska EAB Quarantine on June 8, 2016, to slow the spread of the pest. Based on the new findings in 2018, NDA revised the Nebraska EAB quarantine effective Nov. 1, 2018. Lancaster, Otoe and Saunders counties joined Cass, Dodge, Douglas, Sarpy and



Nearly 700 emerald ash borer traps were set in Nebraska.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NICOLE RAMIREZ, NDA

Washington as quarantine counties.

The quarantine prohibits the movement of hardwood firewood from quarantine counties to non-quarantine counties, unless the firewood is certified by NDA. Other regulated materials include all hardwood mulch/chips, ash nursery stock, ash lumber or any part of an ash tree. For more information on the Nebraska EAB quarantine, visit nda.nebraska.gov/plant/entomology/eab/index.html. ■

Upcoming Events

by Jerry Kane

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

December 1
Bobcat Hunting and Trapping season opens

December 1
Cow Elk Hunting Season Opens
Private and public land

December 1
Light Up the Fort
Fort Robinson State Park (SP), Crawford

December 1-2, 7-9, 14-16, 21-23
Christmas at the Mansion Arbor Lodge State Historical Park (SHP), Nebraska City

December 1, 8, 15, 22
Christmas in the Woods Ponca SP, Ponca

December 1-31
Muzzleloader Deer Hunting Season

December 1
Archery on Fire Platte River SP, Louisville

December 4
Learn to Hunt
Predators Nebraska Game and Parks Outdoor Education Center, Lincoln

December 7-8
Becoming an Outdoors-Woman
Squirrel Workshop and Hunt Nebraska Game and Parks Outdoor Education Center, Lincoln

December 7-8, 14-15, 21-23
Christmas at the Cody's, Buffalo Bill Ranch SHP, North Platte

December 8
Women's Squirrel Workshop and Mentored Hunt
Nebraska Game and Parks Outdoor Education Center, Lincoln

December 8
Classic Christmas
Eugene T. Mahoney SP, Ashland

December 8
Nature's Gifts: Decorations from the Great Outdoors

Wildcat Hills State Recreation Area, Gering

December 9
Women's Fishing Instructor Training
Nebraska Game and Parks Outdoor Education Center, Lincoln

December 8-9
DeSoto Muzzleloader Season

December 8-16
Boyer Chute NWR Deer Hunting

December 9
White-fronted Goose Hunting first segment closes

December 15
Crow Hunting first segment closes

December 15
Christmas Bird Count
Indian Cave SP, Shubert

December 16
Snipe Hunting season closes

December 18
Duck and Coot Hunting season closes in Zone 2 and 4

December 22
Bighorn Sheep Hunting season closes

December 25
Duck and Coot Hunting season closes in Zone 1

December 26
Light Goose Hunting first segment closes

December 29
Winterfest
Ponca SP, Ponca

December 31
Archery Antelope Hunting season closes

December 31
Archery Deer and Statewide Whitetail Buck Hunting seasons close

December 31
Archery Fishing game fish season closes

December 31
Underwater Spearfishing season closes

HUNT HARLAN

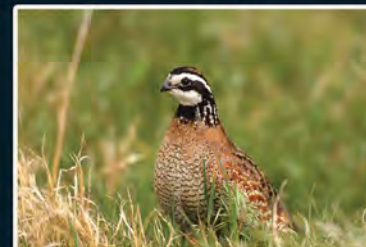
Over 17,000 acres of public hunting ground around the Harlan County Lake



Some private hunting ground available by permission; check the Public Access Atlas at outdoornebraska.gov



Hunter-friendly lodging options; check with them first about hunting dogs



All state permit requirements, hunting seasons and hunting regulations apply



Harlan County Nebraska

www.harlantourism.org

800-762-5498

The Red Crossbill

By Joel Jorgensen

The red crossbill is a distinctive finch whose crooked beak usually catches one's attention. Rather than being a deformity, the odd beak is an adaptation that the bird uses to extract its preferred food source – seeds from the cones of conifers such as pines, spruces and firs. Although its specialized beak may give the red crossbill an advantage in foraging on its preferred cone type, its relationship with conifer cone seeds is a double-edged sword that in many ways defines the species' entire life history. A bumper cone crop influences if and when the species breeds, and poor cone seed production may force individuals and populations to undertake nomadic wanderings across the continent in search of food.



PHOTO BY JUSTIN HAAG

The close relationship between bird and seed has also resulted in the evolution of different populations that are referred to as "types," not unlike the way tropical hummingbirds have evolved unique bill shapes and lengths as their preferred flowering plants evolved. Crossbills belonging to different types are biologically-isolated from each other. Overall size, beak shape and call notes differ among types. Only one type of red crossbill can generally be found year-round in Nebraska in the Pine Ridge and Wildcat Hills.

This type of red crossbill is adapted to extracting seeds from the cones of the common conifer found in these regions – the ponderosa pine. Occasionally, red crossbills occur anytime of the year in other extensive areas of ponderosa pine, such as the middle Niobrara River valley or planted forests at Bessey or McKelvie Nebraska national forests, as well as in cemeteries and at backyard feeders.

Other types of red crossbills can occur anywhere in Nebraska on occasion during years of poor cone crops of their preferred conifer species. When large numbers appear suddenly such an event is referred to as irruption. A major red crossbill irruption occurred in Nebraska in October 2017 and included red crossbill types that breed in the Pacific Northwest and Intermountain West. This irruption was short-lived, though, and it is virtually impossible to know when the next one may occur. Individuals who maintain bird feeders may get lucky and occasionally attract red crossbills. Otherwise, the bird feeders at Wildcat Hills State Recreation and Nature Center often host this species where crossbills and their peculiar beak can be appreciated at close range. ■

NEBRASKAland Visitor Ending

Last issue's winner of the Visitor drawing was Cheri Rychly of Bennington, who found the **arrow-shaped micrathena spider** on page 54.

This will be the last Visitor for NEBRASKAland. The Visitor started back in 2009 and this was the 89th Visitor. Perhaps we will have another contest in future issues.

The arrow shaped micrathena spider is a brightly colored spider found in most states east of the Rocky Mountains, including Nebraska. This spider is an orb weaver spider, related to the common garden spider. The spider's common name comes from its triangular abdomen, which on females includes several sharp spines. Females are very colorful, with yellow, black, red and white markings. Males are smaller in size and mostly black. These spiders overwinter in the egg stage, hatch in the spring, and spend the summer and fall eating small insects that get caught in their webs. The spiders inject a toxic venom into their prey that liquefies the interior of the insect, which they then consume. While these spiders are excellent predators of small insects, they pose no real risk to humans.



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

Make sure to see the all-new look of Nebraskaland Magazine with the upcoming January-February issue.

Frozen Art

Snowflake Photography with Don Komarechka

By Renae Blum

Don Komarechka is a connoisseur of snowflakes.

Give him a random snowflake, and he'll probably have a pretty good idea of how and why it likely formed, despite having no background in science. He can also tell you exactly how to take a macro photograph of that snowflake in dazzling detail, having photographed thousands.

Komarechka, a self-taught professional photographer from Barrie, Ontario, has made a career out of photographing what he calls "the unseen world," including snowflakes. In his work, these small crystalline structures, which usually measure just a few millimeters in size, explode in astonishing detail, revealing intricate patterns and layers that glisten like small jewels.

It's proof that you don't need to look far for an amazing macro subject in the winter – just head outside during any given snowfall and take a closer look.

Komarechka stumbled onto snowflake photography almost by accident. "I bought myself an extreme close-up lens, and took it with me to work that day. You'd be surprised how interesting things around the office look at very high magnification – a typical ballpoint pen, a pushpin in a corkboard."

Then it started snowing, and Komarechka kept shooting. Needing a darker background to make the snowflakes pop, he reached for a black mitten his grandmother had given him for Thanksgiving. It made all the difference.

"[The snowflakes] just sparkled. There was contrast and detail and shape and form, and it was magical. Every one of my snowflakes has been photographed on that same black mitten because it was just the perfect surface," Komarechka said.

"That day when I went home from the office, I just kept shooting. And the bug had bit me at that point," he continued. "It became – I don't want to say an 'obsession,' but probably an addiction."

Snowflake photography dominates Komarechka's work from December to mid-March every year – the same subject, photographed and edited in almost exactly the same way, innumerable times.

"You'd think I would get bored with it after a while. But no, you always discover something new," he said. "This past season I found many more exotic snowflakes than I would have expected.

"And when you see something that really breaks the norm, it's a drug. It really does have something of an addictive quality."

Komarechka's way of photographing snowflakes is unusual. Most photographers shoot snowflakes on a plate of glass or another transparent surface, with light coming toward the camera from behind. Komarechka shoots snowflakes with light reflected off the snowflake from in front of it. Komarechka's method is more work-intensive, but also makes it possible to see color in certain snowflakes – usually vibrant greens and magentas, but also blues, yellows and reds.

"This has to do with the same physics that puts rainbow colors in a soap bubble



or an oil spot,” he said. “It can only be seen using reflected light. And because that hadn’t really been explored heavily in snowflake photography until I started doing it, it was a huge mystery to me as to where these colors were coming from. It felt good to kind of be discovering things like that.”

For Komarechka, it’s not only the beauty of snowflakes that’s appealing; it’s also the chance to research and truly understand his subject. Science never appealed to him in school, but “as soon as you give it a practical use, it becomes something entirely different,” he said.

To share all that he has learned, Komarechka wrote a 300-page book including the science behind snowflakes, as well as his process of shooting these composite images. While his method requires patience and time to learn, once you understand the technique, “it’s like riding a bike,” he said. “It becomes muscle memory.”

While Komarechka hoped to inspire others to take up snowflake photography with his book, he also anticipated most people would be interested in just looking at the coffee table photographs in the back. And that’s OK.

“Perhaps you will be inspired to put on your black mittens the next time it snows, grab a magnifying glass and see what you can find,” writes Kenneth G. Libbrecht in the book’s foreword. “Each snowfall provides a unique exhibit of frozen art, and the show deserves an audience.”

In Komarechka’s work, you’ll get a front-row seat. ■



ABOVE: Don Komarechka photographs a snowflake positioned just beyond the tip of a paintbrush for visual reference.

OPPOSITE and BELOW: Uncommon combinations of temperature and humidity are at the heart of these unusual snowflake sculptures, which formed in rarely seen atmospheric conditions.



Taking Snowflake Photographs – Don’s Method

To take his shots, Komarechka leaves a black woolen mitten and a paintbrush outside through the winter in an enclosed space, keeping them acclimated to the cold so the snowflakes don’t melt upon contact. He then lays the mitten flat and examines the snowflakes that collect. Often they are in clusters; Komarechka uses the paintbrush to carefully separate them and position a choice snowflake at a preferred angle. To make sure he can find the snowflake again when switching to his camera, he points the end of the paintbrush toward it, with the brush resting on the mitten.

Komarechka then takes a few test shots to find an angle that gives the snowflake a glowing, reflective surface. “And then I start out of focus on one side of the snowflake and start rapid-fire shooting, passing the camera through all the focus points that I need,” he said. “This will typically amount to a few hundred shots while the snowflake is still relatively unchanged.

“Once I’ve got these images, I’ll load them up into the computer, choose the puzzle pieces I need, and begin a four-hour process of getting a perfect image of all of them combined together in Photoshop.”

As far as equipment goes, Komarechka says any camera that can accept different lenses will work. You will also need a specialized macro lens, sometimes referred to as an “extreme macro lens,” that goes well beyond the normal 1:1 life-sized magnification. Komarechka also uses a ring flash for all his snowflake pictures. No tripod is needed.

While any snowfall can produce beautiful snowflakes, Komarechka says a temperature of about 14 degrees Fahrenheit is ideal. “So long as it’s below the freezing point by a couple of degrees, the exact same techniques work anywhere in the world,” he said. Low wind, low cloud ceilings, and snowfalls during the night are also promising conditions.

For a complete look at Komarechka’s method, pick up his book, *Sky Crystals: Unraveling the Mysteries of Snowflakes*, at skycrystals.ca.



LEFT: A column-type snowflake that later grew plate-type crystals from either side as temperatures dropped slightly.

BELOW LEFT: A “bullet rosette” type of snowflake featuring multiple column crystals originating from the same point. Four crystals forming in symmetry is quite unusual.

BELOW: An exotic snowflake based on “arrowhead” crystal growth patterns. Branches grow outward from the main repeating body.

OPPOSITE TOP: Large blocky snowflakes form in lower humidity, with broad branches and a solid footprint. This one has added layers of depth within.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM: With side-branches that resemble razor blades, a snowflake of this design forms in very stable conditions. A brief pulse of increased humidity causes the trident-like branches to form.



Soap Bubble Magic

Snowflakes are not the only subject Komarechka photographs during the winter. Below, Komarechka explains his method for producing beautiful pictures of freezing soap bubbles.

“To create a freezing soap bubble image, at least the way I do it, start by lighting the bubble from behind with a bright LED flashlight. A Fresnel sheet magnifier can be used to refocus the light to be intensified over the bubble. To create the bubble, the formula is:

- 6 parts water
- 2 parts dish soap
- 1 part white corn syrup

The white corn syrup serves as a ‘cushion.’ When the bubble is blown from the end of a drinking straw, the syrup pools at the bottom of the bubble. When gently placed onto snow, this cushion prevents the bubble from popping instantly.

Temperatures between around -4 F and 17.6 F work best, with absolutely no wind. Even a little whisper of wind will knock the bubble about and it will pop/shatter.

Freezing soap bubble images are best taken when the bubble hasn’t yet completely frozen solid, so that you can see a variety of ‘puzzle pieces’ all about to connect together. You need to work fast, as most bubbles will freeze completely solid in around 10 seconds. There is a lot of trial and error involved, but once you get the hang of the technique you can start to use other foreground objects beyond just snow. I’ve used mineral samples, a branch from my Christmas tree, flowers and more. It’s a fun winter activity!”

Time Well Spent

What to Do in December

By Renae Blum

Outdoor fun doesn't stop in the winter. This month, hunters and anglers will stay busy with muzzleloader deer season and ice fishing; state parks will host a number of festive holiday events across the state; and the beauty of a fresh snowfall or line of perfect icicles can draw even the most reluctant of us outside with our cameras. To read about fun park events across the state, visit Calendar.OutdoorNebraska.gov. ■



PHOTO BY ERIC FOWLER

Indian Cave Christmas Bird Count

Dec. 15
Indian Cave State Park

The Christmas Bird Count is a long-standing program of the National Audubon Society that allows researchers to study the long-term health and status of bird populations across North America. Thousands of volunteers participate in the count each year, and you can be one of them – no birding expertise needed. The event is free and no pre-registration is required; binoculars and bird ID books will be available to borrow. The event begins at the park's shop at 8 a.m.

Winter Photography

Throughout the month
Statewide

There's no need to put your camera away during the winter. A fresh snowfall can provide a stunning subject, said *NEBRASKA*land photographer Eric Fowler, so bundle up and head outside. It is important to watch your exposure, he said, as the brightness of the snow can fool your light meter and lead to underexposed photos. As always, it's often best to shoot photos early or late in the day when the light is soft and warm.



PHOTO BY JENNY NGUYEN-WHEATLEY



PHOTO BY JENNY NGUYEN-WHEATLEY

7th Annual Winterfest

Dec. 29

Ponca State Park

A truly unique outdoor winter tradition, Ponca State Park's annual Winterfest includes a fruitcake fling and a yule log quest, as well as seasonal crafts and lighted hayrack rides. Come on out to enjoy the beauty of the winter season after the Christmas rush has passed.

Muzzleloader Deer Season

Dec. 1-31

Statewide

Enjoy less competition and more time in the field during muzzleloader deer season, which lasts all month. In addition to these benefits, muzzleloader hunting also offers a unique challenge. "It takes more patience, skill and a steadier hand than rifle hunting, and requires a more close-up encounter with the intended game," writes Wendy Horine. If you've never hunted with a muzzleloader, give it a try this year.



PHOTO BY JULIE GEISER

Ice Fishing

As ice conditions allow

Statewide

If conditions are right, anglers will be out enjoying a favorite winter tradition: ice fishing. People of all ages can enjoy this activity, and it can be surprisingly addicting for a newcomer. As always, safety is important. A quick recap: Make sure to fish with others, wear a life jacket, tell a friend or family member where you'll be fishing, and avoid alcohol. In case you should fall through, have a long rope with you so someone can rescue you, and wear a commercial or homemade ice pick around your neck to pull yourself to safety. Also, remember to check ice conditions while working your way out to your fishing spot. You'll need a minimum of four inches of clear, solid ice to support one person.

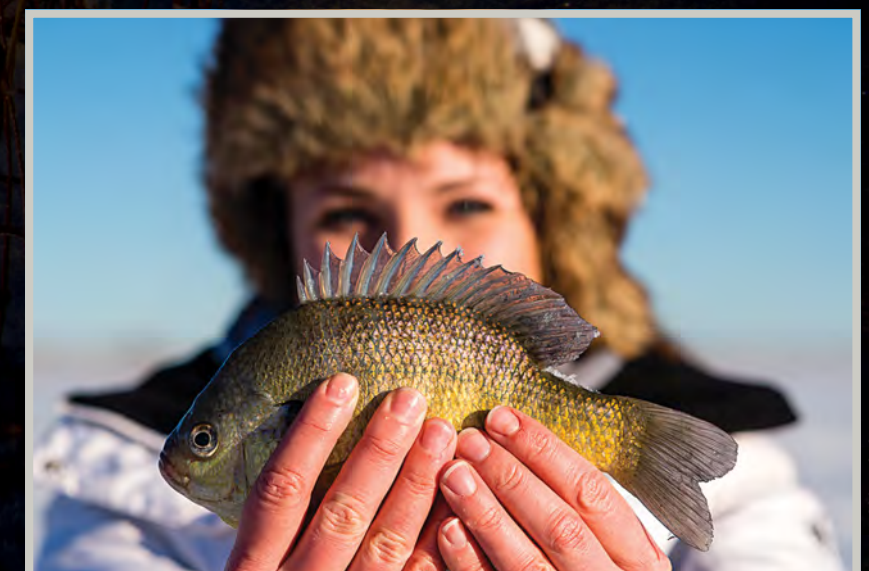


PHOTO BY JUSTIN HAAG

Search for the Heyday

Story and photos by Jeff Kurrus

Don Cox of Mullen clearly remembers 28 years ago. He was at Pelican Lake on the Valentine National Wildlife Refuge ice-fishing with his brother-in-law, Dave Fehlhafer, near an angler they nicknamed Red Man. While Red Man was catching some of the largest bluegill Don has ever seen, Don and Dave weren't doing so well, spending most of the time second-guessing their tackle and technique.

Nowadays, Don doesn't do a lot of second-guessing. An ice-fishing diehard with a number of tournament wins and thousands of hours on the ice, he's ready to adjust at a moment's notice, yet patient with the process that has allowed him so much success thus far.

Yet he has one goal that still evades him – and it goes back to that stranger on the ice so many years ago on Pelican Lake. Soon, he thinks, he might just have a chance to achieve it.

Hooked

On New Year's Day in 1990 – several weeks before his first trip to Pelican – Don awoke to a bucket of fish on his front porch caught by brother-in-law Dave. Despite ice-fishing sparingly as a child with his father and great uncle, he found himself intrigued.

That afternoon, Don and Dave went to Calamus Reservoir, which was supporting 16 inches of ice they had to cut with a dull, spoon hand auger that could only manage about two inches of ice per minute. They were fishing with two tip-ups and a makeshift outfit that used a tree branch as the rod. "I caught one largemouth bass through the ice that New Year's Day, but it changed my life forever."

He was so hooked, in fact, that despite a ranching income that at the time was about half the state's poverty level, he talked his wife into giving up the \$25 entry fee for he and Dave to enter the Valentine Jaycees Ice-Fishing Tournament at Merritt Reservoir. "It guaranteed \$5,000 in cash and prizes, and we thought about how much fishing equipment we could buy if we won the tournament."

After a series of mishaps that included navigating one-way roads and disposing of a mule deer that had been hit by another driver's van – all to avoid the motel cost of staying in Valentine for the night – they arrived 40 minutes late to their moneymaker.

It took them an hour and a half to cut two holes apiece, and their newly bought rods didn't have enough line to get down to the 45 feet they needed to fish. They had no lunch, no water, and the beer in their system from the pre-

With no other soul on the ice, winter fishing diehard Don Cox of Mullen fishes at the Valentine National Wildlife Refuge's Pelican Lake. He longs for the days at Pelican when he's not the only one on the ice.





Don is all smiles while ice-fishing at Pelican Lake on the Valentine National Wildlife Refuge.

tournament Calcutta the night before was gone. With head pounding, Don starting eating ice from the holes they had cut as they watched a team near them haul in fish after fish. They didn’t catch a single one.

Red Man

After the tournament, Don and Dave talked to some guys who had fished Pelican Lake that same day. “When they showed us their bluegills, I had no idea what I was looking at,” said Don. “It wasn’t until I was at my son’s

doctor’s appointment a couple weeks later that something clicked.” There was an *In-Fisherman Magazine* photograph of a guy holding a 10-inch bluegill. “I just remember how happy he looked,” Don said. Then he thought back to the fish from Pelican not two weeks before. “There was not a bluegill close to that small.” By that Sunday he and Dave were pulling into Pelican, but they weren’t alone. “There had to be more than 600 people fishing,” he said. “Finding a parking spot wasn’t easy. It was a quarter-mile walk to get to the ice.”

They set up near a man whose area was dotted with Red Man chewing tobacco excretions, and watched him catch three of the largest bluegill that Don has ever seen. “He was obviously having a good day,” Don noted. “There was a 25 mile-per-hour wind and neither one of his two 5-gallon buckets where he was throwing fish moved at all.” While Red Man never shared his tackle and techniques – the man only glared and grunted at them – Don and Dave made a pact that day to get better at ice-fishing. They even set personal

goals: two-pound trophies of Nebraska’s three most popular panfish species – yellow perch, crappie and bluegill – and he wanted to do it on a public Sandhills lake. “I’ve caught several crappie over two pounds, and been close on the other species, but I’m not there yet.” For a long time, he was convinced he could accomplish this at the Refuge’s system of lakes. Through the years, he upgraded his gear and increased his knowledge to accomplish these goals, asking questions, researching and studying other anglers anytime he could. They were also reading anything they

could get their hands on. “I would get *In-Fisherman’s* ice annual and it was like getting a Christmas gift,” Don said. “There we learned about Dave Genz and Ice Team, and found out that for \$25 per year Ice Team would send four publications entirely about ice-fishing.” Eventually, through tournament experience and practice all over the country – including Minnesota, the Dakotas, Idaho, New York, and Canada, he was asked to join Genz’s Ice Team in 2002. In 2009 he won that same tournament that had first skunked him and Dave, then won it again in 2016 on Big Alkali. “Those years of tournament fishing are funny, and eye-opening, when we look back now,” said Don. “Many of the faces you see on ice equipment nowadays were fishing those same tournaments. We were right in the middle of the ice-fishing explosion.” However, as the ice-fishing scene has

expanded throughout the country, there has been one serious decline that has continued to affect Don. Because of the introduction of carp into the Refuge’s system of lakes, Don’s dreams of finding his 2-pound bluegill and yellow perch on public Sandhills lakes were behind him. With his years of knowledge, he has pined for the good old Red Man-sized fish that he couldn’t catch when he was getting started but is more than equipped to catch now. Because of recent plans by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Valentine National Wildlife Refuge and the Nebraska Environmental Trust, he won’t have to wait much longer.

Renovations

A massive renovation project began earlier this year on the Sandhills



Don releases a largemouth bass back into Pelican Lake.



Above: Don witnessed the ice-fishing explosion firsthand, when popularity increased in the 2000s and manufacturers like Clam and Vexilar took over the ice-fishing world. **Below:** A slab crappie is caught and released on a private Sandhills lake.



Caught on a private Sandhills lake, Don is convinced bluegills this size will be caught from Refuge lakes after they are renovated.

lakes on the Refuge to remove and keep common carp from these prolific waters.

Native to Europe, carp cloud the water with their bottom-feeding activities, hindering the growth of aquatic vegetation that is the base of the food chain and limiting the productivity of sight-feeding fish such as bluegill, yellow perch, largemouth bass and northern pike.

Watts Lake was the test subject when its renovation began in 2014, and by the 2018 season, keeper-sized fish were

being caught from the lake. Pelican was next. With work starting in 2018, the goal is to return this natural lake – like the other renovation projects on the Refuge – to its heyday.

“These lakes have a unique ability to grow big fish,” said Nebraska Game and Parks Commission Aquatic Habitat Program Manager Mark Porath. “They have great vegetation and invertebrates, which act as great energy packets for bluegill. They can grow like crazy.” Because of these factors, the top-end possibilities are

so much higher compared to other waterbodies out there, a fact Don knows as well.

The 2-Pounder

Fish with Don on a private Sandhills lake, one not beseeched with carp, and he’ll passionately point every time he pulls a gigantic bluegill from a hole. “See! That’s the possibility on those public lakes!” he says.

When the fish is on the end of your line, his excitement is even more. “Get

‘em! Get ‘em!” he calls out, as if it’s 1990 all over again and every fish is a revelation.

In many ways, it is – especially when he thinks about the future. “I want to see bluegill so big you can’t fit them through the hole,” he said. “And when those Refuge lakes are renovated, that’s exactly what we’ll see again.”

And he’ll be there to witness it – probably within eyesight of novice anglers wondering what tackle and technique he’s employing.

All they’ll have to do is ask. ■

Hasenpfeffer

A forgotten family recipe

By Gerry Steinauer, Botanist

When I was growing up, once a year my family would shoot a few rabbits while hunting pheasant and quail. The following weekend, using the rabbits, Mom would undertake what she called “the task of making hasenpfeffer.” Then, my uncles and older male cousins on the Steinauer side of the family would gather at our house for an evening meal of hasenpfeffer and gravy-smothered dumplings. This was followed by endless games of five-point pitch played for a cow and a calf (a dollar a game and fifty cents a set) accompanied by drinking a few highballs and bickering and laughing well into the night.

Hasenpfeffer is a traditional German dish of brined and stewed rabbit. “Hase” is German for hare or rabbit while “pfeffer” literally translates to pepper, referring to the general spiciness of the recipe which hinges on a spicy vinegar marinade with a long soak time. A gravy is usually made from the brine, in which the rabbit is cooked, and ladled over noodles,

potatoes or dumplings.

I never participated in hasenpfeffer feasts. I was so disgusted by the sour, vinegary aroma of the cooking rabbit that only near-starvation could have forced me to consume such a vile-smelling lagomorph. The other Steinauers showed no such nitpickiness and consumed it with lip-smacking vigor.

Last spring, at a gathering of the extended Steinauer family, a chat with some cousins somehow turned to, of all topics, hasenpfeffer. I was captivated as they reminisced about long-ago meals of hasenpfeffer at their own family tables. It was obvious: hasenpfeffer dinners were once a tradition in the Steinauer family and I needed to dig deeper.

I called my source for family history, my nearly 90-year-old uncle Clem Steinuaer of Tecumseh. He vividly recalled eating hasenpfeffer as a child in Pawnee County.

“I loved it,” he said. “Grandma Steinauer used to send me out with orders to shoot a young cottontail



PHOTO BY GERRY STEINAUER

Hasenpfeffer – a German rabbit stew – served with mashed potatoes and baked apple slices.

The Steinauer Hasenpfeffer Recipe

Ingredients:

- 1 dressed rabbit, cut into pieces
 - 2 cups vinegar
 - 3 cups water
 - ½ cup sugar
 - 1 sliced onion
 - 2 teaspoons salt
 - ½ teaspoon pepper
 - 1 teaspoon pickling spice
 - ¼ cup fat or oil (I used lard)
 - 2 tablespoons flour (I used more)
- Soak the rabbit 36 to 48 hours in the pickling mixture (vinegar, water, sugar, onion, salt, pepper and

pickling spice) in the refrigerator. Roll rabbit pieces in flour and sear in oil, then boil them in the same pickling mixture for 45 to 60 minutes or until tender. Remove the rabbit and thicken the mixture with flour to make gravy.

After searing, instead of boiling the rabbit, I cooked the pieces, along with three cups of the pickling mixture, in a crockpot set on high for four hours. Cooked this way, the gravy did not need thickening.

Numerous hasenpfeffer recipes using various pickling mixtures and cooking methods can be found online. Squirrel, and likely pheasant, can be substituted for rabbit in the recipes.

or jackrabbit for hasenpfeffer. We couldn’t afford much store-bought meat back then, but rabbits were plentiful.” He may still have a copy of his grandma’s hasenpfeffer recipe “stashed somewhere.”

I also talked with my mom, Mary Ann Steinauer of Omaha. Strangely, though of full German heritage, her maiden name was Dahmke, and raised on a farm on the outskirts of Millard, she had never heard of hasenpfeffer until marrying my dad. Despite cooking hasenpfeffer at my dad’s request, she, like her squeamish

youngest son, could never bring herself to eat it. “It must be an acquired taste from childhood,” she mused.

She thought the recipe she used was likely the same Steinauer recipe that Uncle Clem had stashed somewhere. My sister recently found my mom’s at-least-60-year-old handwritten copy of this recipe folded in a cookbook.

Recently, to revive a family tradition, and using two rabbits I harvested last winter, I used my great grandma’s recipe and made hasenpfeffer. Would I like it? Or would my tastes still be tainted from soured childhood

memories?

Well ... first of all, my now more sophisticated nose found the aroma of the cooking hasenpfeffer rather pleasant, slightly tangy, earthy – far from disgusting. As to the taste, it was really good. The meat was moist, fall-off-the-bone tender with just the right amount of spiciness and sourness. The gravy was wonderful over mashed potatoes.

Now I see why the Steinauer boys liked their hasenpfeffer. I never would have guessed it, but they had pretty good culinary tastes. ■

Making Goose Hunters By Chimney Rock

Story and photos by Justin Haag

If one were to devise a marketing plan for goose hunting in the Nebraska Panhandle, a scene such as this would surely be considered: “Big group, flying low from Chimney Rock.”

Those were the words of outdoorsman Larry Olson of Crawford as my son Sawyer and I were sitting in his goose pit near McGrew along

the North Platte River valley – my first goose hunting experience of the season and Sawyer’s first goose hunting experience ever. It is hard to think of a better place to have my son shoot his first geese – or a better person to accompany him while doing it.

Olson is well known in northwestern Nebraska for his hunting and fishing passion. A recently retired Chadron

mail carrier, his friendly nature makes him as popular in the field as he was on his delivery route. Many Chadron residents have fond memories of “Larry the Mailman” and his sidekick Twila Satchell, who also retired in 2017 after serving many years as a pleasant face behind the counter at the Chadron Post Office.

When Olson is not hunting or

fishing, he puts considerable time and resources into conservation efforts. One annual project is helping organize the banquet for the Pine Ridge chapter of Ducks Unlimited, a group he has served as chairman.

Always quick to take to the field with a shotgun or fishing rod since his youth in Sidney, Olson is devoting even more time to the outdoors these days. He

says with a grin that he has spent “only 32 days” hunting in the pit last season. Not too shabby, considering he makes a 90-plus-mile trip from Crawford to do it each time.

His log shows that he has had a lot of company. Last season alone, 54 different people took Olson up on an invitation to hunt at his pit with its picturesque south-facing view to the

Wildcat Hills.

“I like to give the experience of goose hunting to people who otherwise wouldn’t be able to go,” Olson said. “Some people can’t pay a lot of money to do this sort of thing and I like to give them the experience.”

Even though Olson has made a sizable investment with the lease and gear, he does not ask for money from



Chimney Rock and the Wildcat Hills stand as a backdrop for Larry Olson’s goose pit in eastern Scotts Bluff County.



Larry Olson's yellow Labrador retriever Issy retrieves a goose while pup Roxie tags along.

his guests. Now Olson can count Sawyer among the many people he has witnessed shoot their first goose. He

said there have been about 35 first-time goose harvesters at the pit in itself, and many more at other locations before he

took on the lease.

"I really like taking the kids," he said. "They are the future of hunting and the more hunters we have in the field the better it is for all of us because that's more people paying for conservation. I've also had a lot of women and girls come down and hunt and they really seem to eat it up."

Olson provided us with an exemplary goose hunting experience from when we arrived early in the day, including several doses of time-honored waterfowling wisdom.

"Sawyer, there's an old saying in waterfowl hunting: If you burn breakfast it's a good day," Olson said just before using a well-worn cast iron skillet to warm up breakfast burritos made of goose sausage, eggs and cheese. He did not burn the tasty fare but a less experienced hunter might have as several flocks teased us. When the first flock approached the pit that morning, my heart raced just as much as it did north of Lisco in

the late 1990s when I was in a goose pit for the first time. From glancing over to Sawyer and hearing his simple declaration "this is cool," I could tell that he was getting the same feeling.

When Olson was not working to lure geese with the variety of calls hanging from his neck, he was sharing his hunting expertise and stories of past hunting trips. Perhaps it was Issy, his 9-year-old yellow Labrador retriever, who worked hardest. Despite her age, she retrieved like a champion, although appearing to be a little annoyed with Olson's 4-month-old pup

Roxie, also a yellow Lab, shadowing alongside.

Even though we thought we were in for a warm day with blue skies, we were instead greeted with a goose-hunt-friendly mix of clouds, stiff north winds and temperatures not quite warm enough to melt the blanket of snow surrounding us. The geese kept us busy and several big flocks of mallards also flew high overhead.

With the last goose of a three-man limit downed, evening sunlight casting a long shadow from Chimney Rock, and smiles on our faces, we headed

back north for Chadron. I know the experience will not be forgotten any time soon, especially by the youngest hunter in the blind that day.

Later that evening, as Sawyer and I were making one more memory for the day with knives in hand, I was thankful for the great resource of tasty meat provided from hunts such as this and a hunting heritage that helps bond generations. Perhaps I am most thankful, though, for hunters such as Larry Olson who find enjoyment in sharing that experience and are so eager to do it. ■



Larry Olson works a goose call from the pit.



Larry Olson, along with puppy Roxie, poses for a photo with guests Justin and Sawyer Haag.

Reading Upland Hits

The difference between a clean kill and a wounded bird isn't black and white

By Ryan Sparks

On a frosty November morning, Dad and I dumped my English pointer, Tippet, into a short draw that reliably holds a covey of quail. As we walked the perimeter, the icy earth squeaked under our boots and we watched the dog bound through the brome grass. When she went on point in a tangled plum thicket, I stomped around, kicking branches and breaking limbs until a covey exploded from the backside. Neither of us had a shot, but Dad saw where the birds came down. When we brought the dog over, she instantly locked up on point again. This time the covey was spread out and flushed in two bunches about 10 yards apart. I shot a bird on the covey rise, then swung on a second that came down just out of sight. My dad also shot a pair, and I took my young pointer to where they had come down. She quickly found the first three, but after another 20 minutes of searching, we couldn't find the fourth. Finally, Tippet pointed 30 yards from where I thought the bird was, and when I kicked expecting to flush a single, I found the final bird. Even though the shot had looked clean, the quail managed to move a good distance and wedge itself under a thick layer of grass. If it hadn't been for the dog, we would have never found it.

That day reinforced the importance of reading a bird's reaction to a shot. Nebraska has a wide range of upland hunting opportunities, and with this year's Nebraska Upland Slam, there has never been a better time to brush up on your upland hunting skills. The following descriptions should be helpful in determining how well you hit the bird, what it's likely to do after the shot and what you should do to recover it.

Birds That Come Down Dead

Puffball: These birds erupt in an explosion of feathers and immediately fold up and drop with their head down. They are the easiest to recover because they usually remain where they land and don't bury themselves in the cover. If you are hunting with a dog, get it slightly downwind of where you saw the bird come down. It shouldn't take much effort to find it.

Pinwheel: The bird tumbles head over tail, tries to set its wings, but spins sideways like a pinwheel. These birds drop headfirst and are dead before they hit the ground. Anytime a bird drops headfirst is a sign it was a clean kill – the way you want them to be.

Sky Rocket: These birds fly straight up in the air when shot. They can climb a good distance, but then fold up and tumble back to the earth. This is especially common with pheasants and grouse. It's a rarity, but this can also happen with gliding birds. On a grouse hunt several years ago, my hunting partner had a bird glide 200 yards before suddenly falling like it hit a wall. After a brief walk, it was laying right where it fell. I think these birds are dead but don't know it yet. They are running on pure adrenaline, but when it runs out it's like an engine grinding to a stop.

Flinching: You think you missed, but the bird made a slight cringe before continuing on its way. These birds show little reaction to the shot. Flinching birds are a prime example of why you should watch as long as



Ashley Bales of Lincoln shoots at a flushing rooster over a milo field on a hunt at Yankee Hill Wildlife Management Area.

possible. They might not respond immediately, but soon their flight starts to become erratic. Larger birds such as grouse and pheasants will hit the ground running or be lying dead where they fell. The only way to find out is to make a good mark and get the dog downwind. More often than not, these birds were hit in a major blood vessel. Unlike a squarely hit bird that dies from trauma, these bleed out in the air and eventually die from hemorrhaging.

Birds That Come Down Alive

Cartwheel: Rather than the pinwheel described above where the bird spins sideways, these birds tumble head over tail. Many people take this to be a sign of a clean hit, but if the bird's head is up, it's still alive. A broken wing causes birds to cartwheel, but once on the ground birds can survive a long time with a broken wing. If you can't get a

follow-up shot at the bird you need to get the dog where the bird came down as quickly as possible before it has a chance to run or bury itself.

Glider: Healthy pheasants usually fly a good distance before hitting the ground running. Quail can glide as far as pheasants, but most often stay put once they come down. If you hit a bird that glides in for a landing without going far, chances are it's a cripple. These are some of the toughest birds to recover because they have a head start on you. At longer distances, it's also tough to get an accurate mark where the bird came down. Watch the bird's legs. A dangling leg means it's wounded, most likely with a broken leg, and your chances of recovering it increase significantly. If you have the opportunity, a follow-up shot on a gliding bird is the best option.

Low and Behind: The most frustrating birds let out a puff of

feathers, but continue to glide into the distance. The feathers make you think it was a solid shot, but the bird's reaction says differently. This usually means you hit the lower back quarter of the bird. It's wounded, and will usually angle downward with its head up. It may glide a ways, but it's looking for a place to run. Get the dog there as soon as possible.

Recovering Crippled Birds

When you have a bird come down alive it's going to run, bury itself, or both. A successful recovery starts with a good mark so watch the bird until you're absolutely sure it's come down. Approach your mark from downwind and look for feathers, which are a sure sign the bird was hit and is nearby. Keep the speed and direction of the wind in mind. It will cause feathers to drift from the place of impact.

Sometimes you can hear a bird rustling in the grass or running.

Mark the place where you think it came down with a blaze orange hat or on a GPS unit and return to it later if need be. Also, remember to trust your dog's nose. Sometimes a scent will take it away from where the bird landed. Don't call your dog back. Mark the spot and follow along. There is a good chance it's trailing a fleeing bird.

Start paying more attention to not only whether a bird has been hit, but how it reacts to the shot. Knowing how to read your hit and get your dog in the best position for a recovery will add up to more birds in your cookpot. ■

Don't forget to enter your birds at OutdoorNebraska.gov/uplandslam. By harvesting a sharp-tailed grouse, greater prairie chicken, ring-necked pheasant and bobwhite quail you will receive an official certificate and be entered to win one of several grand prizes.

From Pivots to Prairies

A Sandhills family restores grasslands

Story and photos by Gerry Steinauer, Botanist

Two summers ago, when I pulled into Dan Frank and Allyson Dather's Sandhills ranch just west of Bassett, their appearance was

unexpected. Dan wore shorts, T-shirt, tennis shoes and a ball cap, while Allyson sported shorts and low-cut cowboy boots that exposed a colorful



Allyson Dather and Dan Frank pose in a Sandhills meadow.



PHOTO BY ERIC FOWLER

Center-pivot-irrigated cropland occupies former prairie on low Sandhill dunes in Keith County. Hundreds of thousands of acres of Sandhills prairie has been lost to pivot development over the last half century.

tattoo of prairie wildflowers running the length of her right calf. This was not standard rancher attire.

Though unconventional in aspects, Dan and Allyson are traditionalists at heart who could talk shop with any weathered Sandhills rancher. On this day, however, their minds were not on cattle. They were excited to show me the prairie they recently restored on former center-pivot-irrigated cropland.

At day's end, after bouncing around for miles in a UTV, I was impressed by the prairie restorations, their grasp of prairie ecology and land ethic.

History of the Frank Ranch

In the 1930s, Frank's great grandfather, Harry Frauen, ranched with his brother east of Valentine. One version of the family legend has it that their wives did not get along so they flipped a coin to see who would stay on the ranch and who would leave. "Great Grandpa lost the flip and was bought out by his brother. So he bought this place," Frank said with a laugh. The less interesting version of the story is that during the Dust Bowl the Valentine ranch could not support two

families, so one had to move on.

The Bassett ranch has stayed in the Frauen/Frank family ever since. In 1976 after graduating from high school in Minneapolis, Dan's father Tom moved onto the ranch, working it with his grandfather. A few years later, he married his wife Deb. The couple had two daughters, Nicole and Erin, followed in 1988 by their son, Dan.

In 2006, Dan left the ranch to attend the University of Nebraska earning a degree in diversified agriculture and a minor in grassland ecology. Like his father, he returned to the ranch shortly after graduating, working it

with his parents. Allyson, who grew up on a Knox County ranch, met Dan "serendipitously" in 2008 and joined him on the ranch in 2011.

Broken Ground

The Sandhills, occupying 20,000 square miles of north-central Nebraska, are our nation's most intact grassland ecosystem. Farming in the Sandhills was limited until the 1950s, when the invention of the self-propelled center-pivot irrigation system allowed, for the first time, efficient irrigation of the dry, sandy dunes. Since then, hundreds of



A center-pivot irrigation system, once used to water crops, now stands idle on a prairie restoration on the Frank Ranch. The pivot will eventually be removed.



Canada milkvetch (above) and black-eyed Susan (bottom right) are among the first wildflowers to establish in prairie restorations such as those on the Frank Ranch.

thousands of acres of Sandhills prairie have been converted to cropland under pivot irrigation using water from the underlying Ogallala Aquifer. Prairie on the low, rolling dunes and sand flats of the Sandhills’ periphery has been most susceptible to pivot development.

Located on the northern fringe of the Sandhills, much of the Frank ranch was suitable for pivots. In the 1970s, Dan’s great grandfather put in a few pivots on several hundred acres of low pasture. Beginning in the early 1980s, after taking over the reins of the ranch after the death of his grandfather,

Tom Frank added several more pivots.

Tom had inherited only a small portion of the ranch from his grandfather, and he and Deb slowly bought the remainder from relatives. They also purchased other lands to add to the ranch, some of which contained pivots. By 2011, the Frank ranch had 17 center pivots growing corn, sudangrass, alfalfa, and soybeans to feed their expanding cattle herd and for market.

“One reason my parents put in and farmed pivots is that they were buying

land from the mid-1980s through the late 1990s,” Frank said. “At the time, increasing and diversifying their income stream from strictly cattle to include crops was crucial to help make the land payments.”

The farming, however, has had environmental consequences. “Now, because of farming in the area, we can’t drink our tap water due to high nitrate levels,” Frank said. “Sandhill soils are nutrient poor and crops grown on the pivots require much nitrogen fertilizer. We have to apply about 200 pounds of nitrogen per acre to grow

corn. In the 1980s they applied more.” In areas of the Sandhills the aquifer literally touches the land surface and irrigation water easily seeps down through the porous sands, carrying nitrates into the groundwater.

Frank was also troubled by other aspects of farming with center pivots. “It takes a lot of electricity to run the pivots, much of which comes from burning coal,” Frank said. “Also, to grow crops on dry sand requires an incredible amount of water. Most of our pivots pump 900 gallons a minute and take 48 hours to make a single lap

around a typical 132-acre field to apply a little over one-half inch of water. You can do the math.”

In addition, the Frank ranch lies within the headwaters of the spring-fed Long Pine Creek, one of Nebraska’s most pristine cold water streams, and unfortunately, the pivots’ use of groundwater can impact stream flows.

On a personal level, Frank also was tired of spending days on a tractor planting and harvesting crops and cutting and baling alfalfa on the pivots. He desired to be “more rancher and less farmer.”

Restoring Native Grasslands

A few years ago, seeking change on the ranch, Dan and his sisters approached their parents about seeding some of the pivots back to grassland. “We had to do some pleading as it is hard for any rancher or farmer to break management tradition or change their cash flow,” Frank said. “My parents, however, were never really passionate about farming, their passion lies in cattle. They also had come to realize that farming the Sandhills was not



Fire and Wildflowers

College exposed Dan Frank to new methods of grassland management, one being the use of prescribed fire. Recently, Dan and Allyson have learned the art of conducting burns by attending prescribed fire workshops and by assisting conservationist groups and other ranchers with fires. They now conduct prescribed burns on their own ranch.

Prescribed burning has traditionally been considered taboo in the Sandhills and is still little used by ranchers who fear the fire escaping and rampaging across the prairie-covered dunes. Local lore also holds that burning will expose the sands to wind erosion and that a pasture cannot be grazed for a year or two after burning to prevent harming sprouting grasses and the soil. Research is proving these traditional beliefs false and that prescribed fire can provide ecological and economic benefits in areas of the Sandhills, and be conducted safely.

"Fire can be vital in maintaining healthy grasslands," said Frank. "In areas with eastern red-cedar invasion, burning is the only cost-effective method of controlling them. Any rancher with cedar problems should be a fan of prescribed fire."

Dan and Allyson showed me one pasture they had burned the previous two springs. "Both years, we turned cattle onto the pasture just three weeks after the fire," Frank said. "We grazed it really hard for three to five weeks, then rested it from June through August and grazed it again in the fall." He has found this management especially effective in reducing the spring and fall-growing, non-native smooth brome and Kentucky bluegrass that are invading his low-lying prairies and which he hates with a passion. As ranchers, he and Allyson appreciate the sand bluestem, prairie sandreed and other cattle-fattening native grasses this practice promotes. As prairie enthusiasts, they are grateful for the lush response of wildflowers.

great for the environment."

In the spring of 2016 and 2017, the Franks planted seven of their center pivots, totaling 935 acres, back to grassland using seed mixes containing 60 species of prairie grasses and wildflowers native to the Sandhills. Though most of the thousands of pounds of seed was purchased from seed dealers, Dan and Allyson also hand collected the seed of bush morning glory, silky prairie clover, rough gayfeather and other wildflowers from their Sandhills pastures.

"In the spring of both years, I drove the tractor and drill planted the clean, purchased seed," Frank said. "I scattered the uncleaned seed we collected from the back of our UTV while Allyson drove." Both summers, Frank irrigated the new seedlings using the pivots resulting in the rapid establishment of the prairie plants. The pivots will eventually be removed.

The Franks will wait three years after planting before grazing cattle on the restored prairie and receiving income off the former cropland. Meanwhile, with the actual pivots still on the land those areas' property values and taxes will remain high. "For the first few years the restorations will be a financial drain. This is just one of the reasons it's so hard for most ranchers and farmers to do this," Frank said.

The timing of the restorations, however, worked nicely for the Franks. With recent low crop prices the pivots had become less profitable and, after over 30 years of ranching and farming, Dan's parents were in a solid financial position and could now afford to make changes to their operation – now blending conservation with production.

"Allyson and I never could have afforded to restore the pivots back to prairie without my parents' help," said Frank. "It was too expensive."

The seed alone for the restoration cost the Franks more than \$100,000, and there was also the expense of

planting and running the pivots to aid seedling establishment. "Let's face it, I was the main initiator of the restorations, but my parents are responsible for making it happen. The passion Allyson, my sisters and I have for healthy and productive prairie had rubbed off just enough on my parents to get this done."

Because the pivots are in the sensitive Long Pine Creek watershed, the Natural Resource Conservation Service provided the Franks cost-share for the seed through their Environmental Quality Incentives Program. The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Northern Prairies Land Trust and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service also provided guidance or cost-share for the plantings.

Last summer, when I visited the restored prairies, they were already thick with native grasses and the vibrant blooms of wildflowers. Bees and butterflies floated about in pollinator heaven while the air hummed with the melodic song of dickcissels, grasshopper sparrows and other grassland birds. From a hunter's perspective, I saw excellent habitat for deer, pheasants, quail and prairie grouse.

A Prairie Ethic

"Though some might think we restored the pivots just to have pretty wildflowers, we will still utilize the land," said Frank. "Our crop will be beef, no longer grain." Frank stressed that cattle grazing will also be used as a tool to keep the restorations, as well as their native Sandhills prairies, healthy and biologically diverse.

"Prairie continues to be plowed under, not only in the Sandhills, but throughout the Great Plains, and in areas, what prairie remains is terribly degraded. Allyson and I find this heart-wrenching and we have decided to do something about it on our ranch," Frank said, adding that, as finances allow, they hope to restore more pivots to prairie in the years to come.

"We ranch to make a living and because we enjoy it, but we want to do it in a manner that enhances our land for nature and future generations of ranchers." ■

Allyson Dather stands alongside shell-leaf penstemons in a recently burned Sandhills pasture. The tattoo is a collage of her favorite prairie wildflowers.

Fire in the Sky

A good reason for a late-night jaunt.

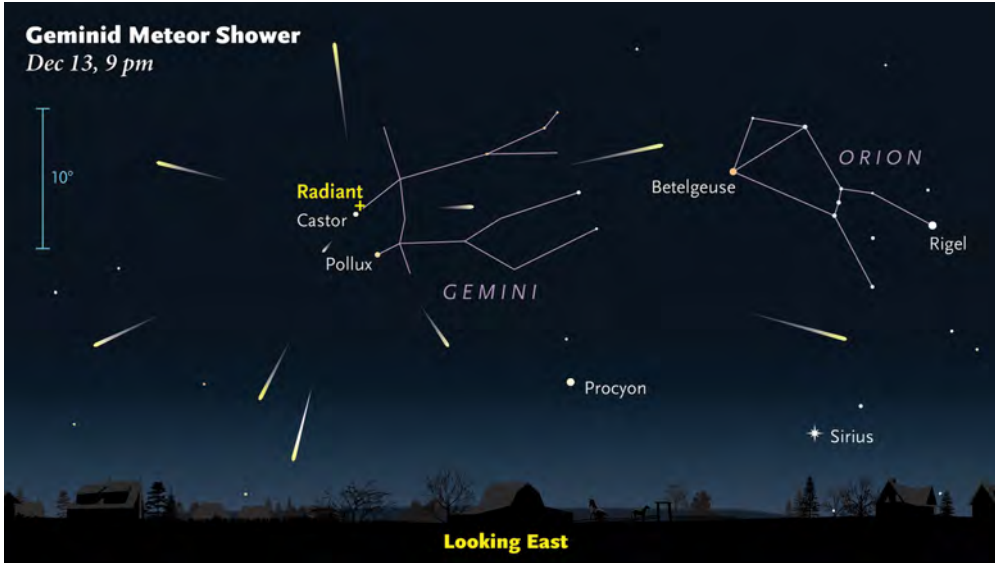
By Roger Welsch

I am writing these words early morning Aug. 12, 2018, once again coming down from a night up on the hill behind our house; I went up last night, anticipating “a perfect night for the Perseid meteor showers ... 60 to 80 shooting stars per hour”... having seen but eight. And four of those flashed from north-northwest to south-southeast and therefore were more than likely space junk than cosmic visitors. The problem with viewing this time was smoke haze from fires in the United States Northwest and Canada. It’s always something.

So last night as I lay back in the lounge chair I tossed into the back of my pickup truck, I could see waves of haze move across the sky from east to west, and while the stars were brilliant between the haze lines, even during clearing interludes, there was a blurring overcast.

So, how disappointed am I this morning? Not much, actually. Any night spent under a Nebraska sky is a good night. Nothing is as comforting to me as lying under an open sky, “to neighbor once again with the stars,” to rephrase a line from John Neihardt. There have been periods in my life when I have spent more nights looking up at the open sky than a confining ceiling but ... uh, let me put it this way, “advance maturity” has limited those overnight adventures.

I have always loved to lie facing south so I can look out at the passage of the planets and know I am looking across the disk of the solar system, perhaps when the Milky Way is visible across the disk of our galaxy, in the winter watching Orion stalk his prey across the sky through the night; or I lie with my feet to the north so I can calculate by the rotating Big Dipper around the North Star how much time I have left in my warm sleeping bag (and yes, I know it is our Earth that is rotating and not the stars but ... literary license and all), a kind of reverse action 24-hour clock; or on the occasion of



meteor showers (or at least promised meteor showers) I face the northeast and watch the rise of Cassiopeia. I used to point that constellation out to my children, telling them that the big W in the sky stands, of course, for Welsch.

To be honest, there are very few nights when I have slept under a clear Nebraska sky, in any season, when there is not the occasional “falling star,” always a surprise, always a wonder.

“Meteor showers” are only nights when the numbers might be greater but the Earth is bombarded constantly by these space dashers, many only as big as a grain of sand but nonetheless burning bright because of the cosmic speed with which they slam into our atmosphere.

I still remember the surprise of one night in September more than 60 years ago when I was camping with friends near Lincoln and the sky was lit by a brilliant *green* meteor flash. Copper perhaps?

Meteor showers are not rare events: a listing of notable “showers” shows more than three dozen such events in any one year, so while a shower with particular promise is the sort of thing that takes me up the hill loaded with my lounge chair and optimism, any clear Nebraska night merits attention overhead.

My next try will be the night of

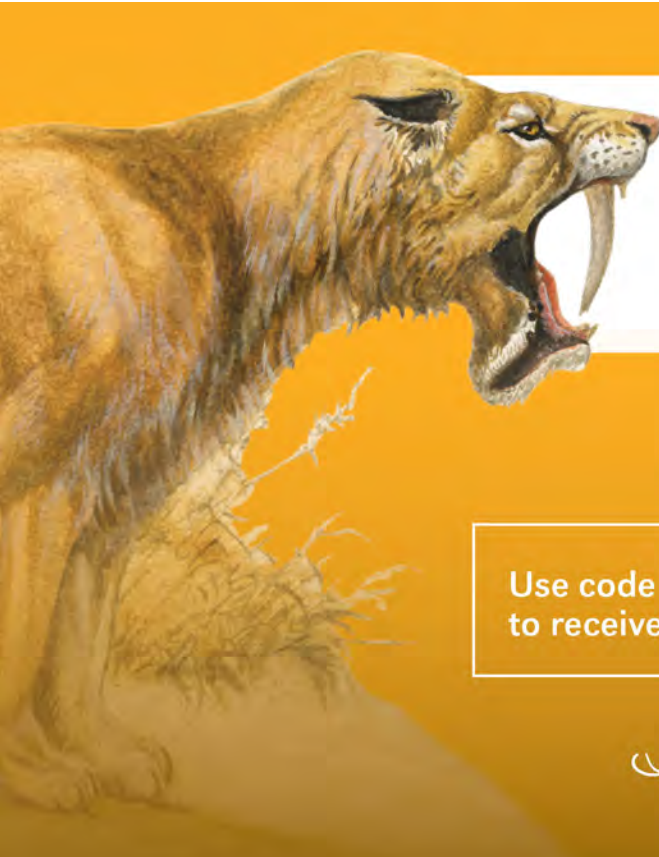
Dec. 13 for the Geminids display, which once again, my almanac promises to be a particularly good one since the moon will set early, offering a dark sky. I am partial to the Geminids too because unlike the Perseids, best viewed sometime around 2 a.m., the Geminids will (hopefully!) blast the sky shortly after 10 p.m., meaning I can go up the hill, spend a couple hours in the December chill, and then return to the house and a warm bed not long after my usual bedtime.

There is a reason Nebraska hosts star watching parties, especially in the Sandhills, where there is less light pollution and wider horizons. But anywhere out of city lights can offer good viewing, for example in our state parks, perhaps a view across a lake or river. Given a night in the Nebraska countryside, a clear sky, and the whole cosmos offering, perhaps, a spectacle, there isn’t much room left for disappointment! ■

Roger Welsch is an author, humorist, folklorist and a former essayist for CBS News Sunday Morning. He has been contributing to NEBRASKAland Magazine since 1977.



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Herb and Citrus Roasted Quail

Little birds make the best finger food.

By Jenny Nguyen-Wheatley

Whole quail are nearly impossible to eat with a fork and knife, so for this recipe, put those utensils away and bite in. This is drinking food at its best. Enjoy with a cold mug of ale along with other finger-friendly sides and snacks.

If you are not a hunter but would like to try this recipe, check out the Asian Market in Omaha for frozen whole quail. They are similar to wild birds.

Servings: 2-3

Prep Time: 24 hours

Cooking Time: 15-25 minutes

Ingredients:

- 6 whole quail, skin on
- 2-3 fresh sprigs of rosemary, leaves only
- Small bunch of fresh thyme
- 5 cloves of garlic, crushed or minced
- Grated zest of 2 medium oranges
- Juice of 2 oranges
- ¼ cup of olive oil, plus extra
- Juice of half a lemon
- ¼ cup of chardonnay
- ¼ teaspoon of cumin
- ¼ cup of white onion, minced
- Kosher salt, to taste
- Freshly cracked pepper, to taste
- Paprika, to taste

1. To make the marinade, rub rosemary leaves and thyme sprigs (keep whole if tender) between your fingers and palms and then place into a large bowl. Next add garlic, orange zest, orange juice, ¼ cup of olive oil, lemon juice, chardonnay, cumin and onion. Whisk and set aside.

2. Rinse quail under cold water and pat dry with paper towels. Sprinkle salt on the outside and inside of each bird and place them inside a large zip-top bag. Give the marinade another good whisk and pour it into the bag. Remove as much air from the bag as possible before sealing. Refrigerate for 24 hours. Flip the bag over occasionally.



PHOTO BY JENNY NGUYEN-WHEATLEY

3. Take quail out of the refrigerator one hour prior to cooking. Preheat your oven to 450 degrees Fahrenheit – at least 400 if your oven doesn't go that high – and once preheated, allow the oven an additional 30 minutes to get nice and hot. If you like, you can grill the quail instead over direct medium-high heat.

4. Remove the quail from the marinade and pat dry with paper towels. Brush each bird generously

with olive oil, then rub with paprika and a light dash of salt. Place them onto a rimmed cookie sheet and roast for 15-20 minutes or until the skin becomes brown and the bird is just cooked through. (You can tie the legs together with cooking twine to keep the birds from touching on the cookie sheet.) Serve immediately. ■

This recipe and photograph originally appeared on Jenny's blog at foodforhunters.com.



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► This is a my late father, Russell Boggs, in a picture taken in the early 1920s in Hershey, where he lived.

— Jim Boggs, Grand Island



▲ From the left is my dad, Art Push, Jr., who is now 89 years old and hunted until he was 86; and my uncles Richard Hamilton, Mike Hamilton, and Bob Hamilton after a successful day of pheasant hunting west of Lincoln circa fall of 1957. They are all from Omaha, Nebraska.

— Art Push III, Kennard



◀ Pictured is myself and Fred Bentley (right) looking over our duck harvest in my backyard in Lincoln on the opening day of the early teal season of 1966. We shot these birds from a temporary blind made of weeds from the then filling Salt Valley lake in southeastern Lancaster County now known as Hedgefield. All birds are blue-winged teal. One of them had a leg band that was attached near Yorkton, Saskatchewan, Canada, in Aug. 20, 1964. I sent it to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and they sent back the banding information to me.

The empty shells were added in an attempt to give interest to the picture. I was shooting a Winchester Model 12 and Fred used his side-by-side double barrel. I believe it was a Parker.

Fred, who died in 1980, was my next-door neighbor and close friend. He was originally from Cleveland, Ohio, and had much experience in waterfowl and upland game hunting in Ohio and surrounding states. He piqued my interest in gamebird hunting, and we had many good hunts in the field and from the blind.

— Brick Paulson, Lincoln

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

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Let's Go Hunting!

The first National R3 Symposium was held in Lincoln May 21-23, 2018. R3 stands for recruitment, retention and reactivation. Representatives from 40 state fish and wildlife agencies and many non-profit and industry members met at the symposium to discuss the future of hunting.

Many have heard that hunter numbers in the United States are in a decline. The latest (2016) U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service report released shows hunter numbers are down to 11.5 million in the U.S., which is about 5.6 percent of the population, and new hunter recruitment at about 3.5 percent. Furthermore, current estimates for 2018 put that number down to 10 million.

R3 is a national initiative by most state game and fish agencies to help reverse this trend. Did you know that approximately 80 percent of all the dollars that go into wildlife conservation in North America are the result of various taxes on the sales of hunting, shooting and fishing related purchases? The North American Conservation Model depends on this vital income, so every purchase we make is important to the success of conservation in our country.

The R3 initiative has many state, federal, industry and NGO members such as Safari Club International, the National Wild Turkey Federation and Pheasants Forever.

To improve hunter retention, recruitment and reactivation, these groups are working together to develop strategic short-term and long-term partnerships to encourage these goals.



Our own Nebraska Game and Parks Commission is working as stewards of our resources to protect our interests. They have worked hard to develop hunter education, making Nebraska a safe and enjoyable hunting experience for hunters of all ages. They protect our wildlife with regulations that improve hunting opportunities.

They have worked with private landowners to make 230,000 acres of private lands available for public hunting through the Open Fields and Waters program. Hunters will find many opportunities to enjoy the lands enrolled in this program.

Nebraska is also a member of the Council to Advance Hunting and Shooting Sports to protect and promote participation in hunting and the shooting sports for future generations. Their action plan includes goals to increase participation in the hunting and shooting sports.

Please join us in supporting all participants in the R3 initiative. The Nebraska Chapter of Safari Club is a proud supporter. We sponsor and support education and youth activities with dollars in our state. ■

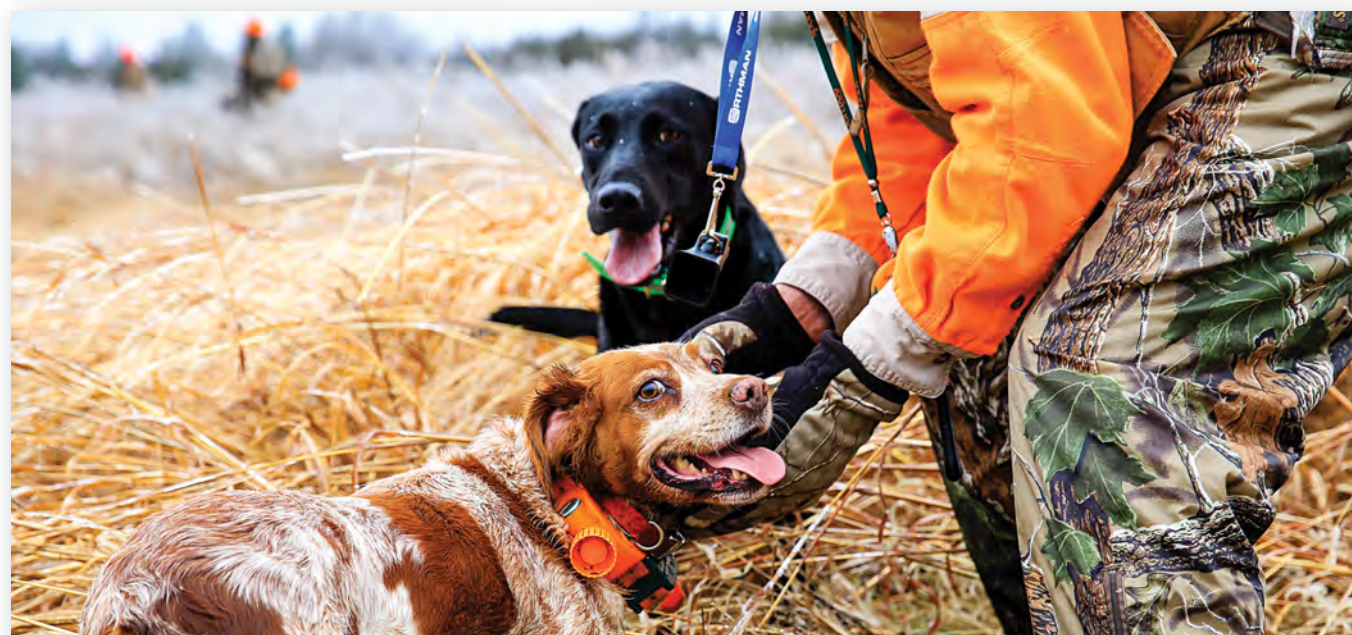
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Little Legs, Big Heart

The grass ruffles ahead, flicking away ice like specks of glass. A flash of fur here. Some red and white there. Nose to the ground, bouncing and zig-zagging, punctuated by small bursts of short legs leaping. For brief moments, soggy ears take flight over vegetation.

Then halt.

Tongue wagging and panting – a little body still winding with motion despite stopping.

Cate the French Brittany looks back to check on her hunter, Commissioner Robert Allen, who follows closely behind.

“Come on!” she seems to say, through bug-eyed, larger-than-life expression.

How can you not follow her to the ends of the earth? ■

Jenny Nguyen-Wheatley
Dec. 14, 2015

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