

Published by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission since 1926

NEBRASKAland

August-September 2018



A snapping turtle periscopes up for a breath and a look as it moves across the salt marsh.
Photo by Michael Forsberg.

Published by the
NEBRASKA
— GAME  PARKS —
NebraskalandMagazine.com
OutdoorNebraska.org



In this issue
**Nebraska's
Saline Wetlands**
**Success in the
Salt Marsh**

NebraskalandMagazine.com

\$4.95



PLUS

The Eclipse – One Year Later • A Bucket of Turtles
Ponderosa Wildlife Management Area • Wild Game Seminar
Prickly Poppy • Oldies but Goodies • Time Well Spent



#NEGameAndParks  

EXPLORE YOUR STATE PARKS.

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

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

NEBRASKA
— GAME  PARKS —

 Share your images with us



NEBRASKAland Magazine

Volume 96 • No. 7 • August-September 2018

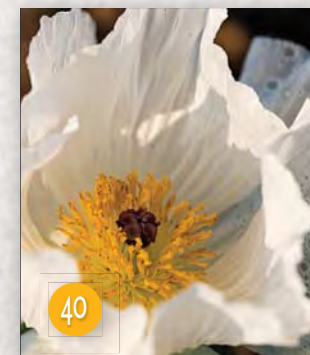
FEATURES...

- 18** The Eclipse
through the eyes of citizen scientists
By RENAE BLUM
- 20** Oldies but Goodies
STORY AND PHOTOS BY JEFF KURRUS
- 24** Time Well Spent
What to Do in August and September
By RENAE BLUM
- 26** Success in the Salt Marsh
STORY AND PHOTOS BY MICHAEL FORSBERG
- 40** Prickly Poppy
Nebraska's Only Prairie Poppy
STORY AND PHOTOS BY GERRY STEINAUER
- 42** Ponderosa Wildlife Management Area
STORY AND PHOTOS BY JUSTIN HAAG



INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

- From Our Readers – Letters, Comments, Etc. 4
- Mixed Bag – The American Beaver, Travel to Keith County, A Brief History of Racing Stock Cars 6
- Outdoor Education – College Wildlife Degrees 50
- Page 49 – Swarms of Locusts and Other Plagues 53
- In the Field – A Bucket of Turtles 56
- Portraits from the Past – Readers' Photos 58
- Outdoor Business – Frank & Mabel Ehlers 60
- The Last Stop – Here's Your Sign 62



ON THE WEB...

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

Cover: A sedge wren sings its heart out from its territorial perch at Little Salt Fork Preserve. Story on page 26. Photo by Michael Forsberg.

NEBRASKAland (VOL. 96 / NO. 7 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.





Instagram Featured Photo

Zack Knudsen (@zack_knudsen) of Tennessee, originally from Grand Island, Nebraska, shared this photo: "I was recently home and took a morning trip over to Platte River State Park. What a gem!" Follow us (@nebraskaland) and tag us in your photos to be featured in an upcoming issue.

Visitor Letters

The visitor is on page 49. I usually don't look for it, but after reading, it jumped out at me.

Also, it was nice to read about Jane Sparks on page 34, regarding her garden, etc. I was married to her brother, Bueford Bailey, at Big Springs. He passed away in August 1989. He was a well-known hunter and Nebraska trap shooter! I enjoy reading the magazine and sharing it with others.

Linda J. Bailey
North Platte



John Welsh of Ceresco spotted this coyote while deer hunting with his son, Cade, by David City.



Bruce Thiel of Lincoln calls this photo "the long road home," which was taken in Hooker County.



"This black crowned night heron was resting on a branch overlooking a stream northwest of Seward," said Liz Garcia of Utica.



Liz Garcia saw this male ruby-throated hummingbird in her pollinator garden.

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

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

NEBRASKAland Magazine



ADMINISTRATION

Director Jim Douglas
Deputy Director Tim McCoy
Commissioners
Chairman - Dick Bell, Omaha
Vice Chairman - Robert Allen, Eustis
2nd Vice Chairman - Dan Kreitman, Wahoo
Rick Brandt, Roca
Pat Berggren, Broken Bow
Jim Ernst, Columbus
Norris Marshall, Kearney
Doug Zingula, Sidney
Scott Cassels, Omaha

MAGAZINE STAFF

Communications Director Christy Firestone
Editor Jeff Kurrus
Art Director Tim Reigert
Associate Editor Jenny Nguyen-Wheatley
Regional Editors Eric Fowler, Julie Geiser, Justin Haag
Contributing Editor Michael Forsberg
Regular Contributors Renae Blum, Chris Helzer, Chris Masada, Gerry Steinauer
Photo Librarian Jaclyn Cruikshank Vogt
Circulation Donna Robinson
For address changes and questions about your subscription, e-mail donna.robinson@nebraska.gov or call 800-632-5263

Advertising Sales Manager

For advertising information contact
Shane G. Gilster, 402-742-0125
Email: shane.gilster@gmail.com

NEBRASKAland Magazine Copyright 2018, all rights reserved. NEBRASKAland is available in audio from the Nebraska Library Commission Talking Book and Braille Service, Suite 120, 1200 N St., Lincoln, NE 68508. 800-742-7691. NEBRASKAland Magazine and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission reserve the right to reject any advertising not in keeping with the agency mission. Rates: \$18 for one year; \$33 for two years; \$44 for three years. Nebraska recipients must add appropriate sales tax. To subscribe call 1-800-NEBLAND (632-5263), or go online to: NebraskalandMagazine.com.

COMMISSION OFFICES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Omaha Office
8495 Frederick Street, Omaha, NE 68124
Phone 402-595-2144

CONSERVATION OFFICERS

ADMINISTRATION (Lincoln)
Craig Stover (Administrator) 402-471-5531
Duane Arp (Asst. Administrator) 402-471-5531
Jeff Clauson (Asst. Administrator) 402-471-5531

NORTHWEST (Includes counties covered)
Jim Zimmerman (District Supt.) 308-641-6138
Sean McKeehan (Cheyenne, Morrill, Box Butte) 308-279-9133
Scott Brandt (Kimball, Banner, Scotts Bluff) 308-631-0663
Dan Kling (Sioux, Dawes) 308-430-0572
Kyler Prochaska (E 1/2 Dawes, N 1/2 Sheridan, W 1/2 Cherry) 308-430-3984
Terry Brentzel (Deuel, Garden, Grant) 308-458-7650
Frank Miller (Cherry, Hooker) 402-389-0444

NORTHEAST (Includes counties covered)
Tom Zimmer (District Supt.) 402-649-8053
Dale Davis (Keya Paha, Brown, Rock) 402-760-0712
Jonathan Andreassen (Holt, Boyd) 402-340-3981
Kyle Gaston (Dodge, Colfax) 402-719-6226
Greg Hesse (Greeley, Wheeler, Boone, S 1/2 Antelope) 402-843-6567
Mitch Johnson (Knox, Antelope, Pierce) 402-613-8612
Jeff Jones (Knox, Cedar) 402-762-5022
Jon Reeves (S 1/2 Thurston, Burt, Washington) 402-889-8508
Andrew Heyer (Pierce, Madison, Stanton) 402-613-2241
Cory Krause (Cumming, Wayne, Stanton, Dodge) 402-380-6410
Steve Oberg (Colfax, Platte, Madison, Stanton, Nance) 402-910-3366
Owen Johnson (Dixon, Dakota, N 1/2 Thurston) 402-266-1759
Doug Pollard (Loup, Garfield, Valley) 308-730-7050

SOUTHWEST (Includes counties covered)
Roger Thompson (District Supt.) 308-530-3097
Matt Brandt (Sherman, Howard) 308-202-0819
Tim Williams (Hall, Hamilton, Merrick) 308-380-7331
Pat George (Harlan, Franklin, Phelps) 308-920-2762
Matt Andrews (Gosper, Furnas, Frontier, Red Willow) 308-746-2418
Brian Piernicky (Red Willow, Frontier, Hayes, Hitchcock) 308-340-6627
John Lee (Hitchcock, Dundy, Chase, Hayes) 308-414-1432
Nicholas Fix (Keith, Perkins) 308-289-0427
Bryce Streger (Keith, Arthur) 308-289-1169
Sean Schultz (Keith) 308-760-0145
Brandon O'Neal (Lincoln, McPherson, Logan) 308-530-3157
Alex Hasenauer (Lincoln, McPherson, Logan) 308-660-4671
Dale Johnson (Kearney, Buffalo) 308-440-3847
Mike Thome (Dawson) 308-529-8146
Ray Dierking (Custer, Thomas, Blaine) 308-870-0322
Taylor Dixon (Dawson, N 1/2 Gosper, N 1/2 Phelps) 308-217-2108

SOUTHEAST (Includes counties covered)
Levi Krause (District Supt.) 402-949-0593
Rich Berggren (Douglas) 402-619-1355
Dan Evasco (Sarpy) 402-616-5961
Heath Packett (Cass) 402-210-0888
Russell Mort (Otoe, Johnson) 402-209-1506
William Krause (Nemaha, Richardson, Pawnee) 402-274-8063
Matt Taylor (Thayer, Fillmore, Jefferson) 402-200-9597
Dan Zuehlke (Gage, Saline) 402-806-9084
Dina Barta (Lancaster) 402-890-6463
Dudley Sorensen (Lancaster, York) 402-937-3422
Travis Shepler (Lancaster) 402-613-2312
Trevor Stahlecker (Lancaster) 402-314-9641
Stacey Lewton (Lancaster, Seward) 402-890-7140
Mike Luben (Saunders, Butler, Polk) 402-443-6392



A Mammal Brief

American Beaver

By Lindsay Rogers

If you have ever seen an American beaver, you know it instantly. These hefty rodents are easily identified by their large size, enormous, flat tail and close proximity to water. They are found across the state from large rivers such as the Platte and Missouri to small farm ponds.

Beavers are known for both their lodges and dams. Lodges consist of two chambers with the floor just above the water level. Lodges often have two entrances – both below the water level – requiring beavers to swim underwater to enter the lodge. The elaborate lodge construction consists of sticks, twigs, rocks and mud. Dams are often constructed across small streams to ensure the water levels in the pond remain high enough to cover the entrances.

Although all rodents have characteristically large front teeth, this trait is often attributed to beavers. These large, orange teeth come in handy for chopping trees and logs for use in both dam and lodge construction. Additionally, the large front incisors are used to expose a tree's cambium layer – soft tissue under the bark, which beavers eat. Beavers also feed on vegetation, roots and buds. ■

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



PHOTO BY JUSTIN HAAG

Nebraska's Great Park Pursuit

Visit Parks. Be Active. Win Prizes.



May 1 –September 17, 2018

Explore Nebraska's parks with this free statewide program. Be sure to download our new app.

Learn more and register your team online at NeGPP.org











Title	Description	Starting Location	Date and Time
Boost Game Bird Habitat by Grazing, Tree Removal and Prescribed Fire	Come see first-hand the processes and effects of habitat projects around Davis Creek and Sherman Reservoirs. We will look at grazed, burned, and tree removal areas, as well as some CRP fields.	Davis Creek NRD Campground 2620 Airport Dr. Ord, NE 68862	May 31st, 2018 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM CST
Prescribed Fire Tour	See what landowners are doing to combat eastern red cedar, enhance forage quality and increase profitability on grazing lands in partnership with a prescribed burn association. Catered evening meal to follow.	Community Center 201 Garlick Ave. Curtis, NE 69025	June 14th, 2018 2:00 PM—6:00 PM CST
Using Conservation Programs to Benefit Ag Production and Wildlife	Come learn about the program options which will benefit your farm and ranch through soil health, range health, while also providing wildlife habitat on those unproductive acres. We will also tour fields that are already benefitting from these practices.	2490 Road 45 Linwood, NE 68036	June 14th, 2018 9:30 AM - 2:00 PM CST
Beef, Birds and Working Lands - What Can You Do?	This tour will highlight a new initiative in the sandhills to help landowners receive technical and financial assistance for many landscapes. The tour will also showcase the importance of grazing systems as it relates to better grazing management for livestock and providing quality habitat for prairie grouse.	Bibs & Boots Cafe 1 Randolph St. Bartlett, NE 68622	June 21st, 2018 11:00 AM - 4:00 PM CST
Wildflower Wednesday	Join us for an evening of learning about wildflowers and their importance to many pollinators. Plant ID and site visits to areas in Southwest Nebraska. Bring your camera...if plants are blooming, excellent time to get close-up photos of blooms.	Imperial NRCS Conference Room 706 East 5th St. Imperial, NE 69033	June 27th, 2018 5:00 PM - 8:00 PM MST
Prairie Restoration Tour	Join us for an evening tour of a recently seeded prairie restoration project. Topics will include grassland management strategies, wildlife habitat, pollinator habitat and plant identification.	Northwest Corner of Highway 83 and W J Street McCook, NE 69001	June 28th, 2018 5:00 PM - 8:00 PM CST
Monarch Education Day!	Join us for a day of Monarch Butterfly and milkweed education. We will be taking a field trip to local milkweed patches to look for Monarch eggs, caterpillars and observing all species that frequent the patch. Free packets of Showy Milkweed seed will be given to attendees with instructions on creating your very own Monarch attracting Milkweed Habitat.	Wildcat Hills SRA Nature Center 210615 Nebraska Hwy 71 Gering, NE 69341	July 2nd, 2018 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM MST
Available Conservation Programs for Your Operation!	Unproductive Acres? Troublesome areas to farm? Come to this meeting to see what potential conservation programs are out there for you! We will address: wildlife enhancement, pollinator establishment, erosion, water quality etc. We will potentially tour some currently enrolled project sites based upon time and interest.	Nebraska Game & Parks Commission Lake McConaughy Visitors Center 1475 NE-61 Scenic Ogallala, NE 69153	July 12th, 2018 4:00 PM- 7:30 PM MST
Brush Removal and Mulching Demonstration	Do you have brush piles that you need to get rid of and burning is not an option? Come join us to learn of an alternative way of eliminating brush and brush piles. This tour will have a live demonstrations of brush removal techniques, chipping and mulch dispersal.	Nebraska Game & Parks Commission Maintenance Shop (West side of Lake) 13401 W Branched Lake Rd. Raymond, NE 68428	July 26th, 2018 9:30 AM - 12:00 PM CST
Cover Crop Seminar and Field Day	Join us for a day of discovering cover crops in Southwest Nebraska. The event will highlight grazing opportunities presented by the University of Nebraska , a producer panel featuring local producers and a field tour showcasing cover crops. Come learn the benefits for your operation and wildlife.	Ella Missing Community Center 411 6th St. Arapahoe, NE 68922	August 21st, 2018 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM CST
Answering questions on CRP: Deciduous tree encroachment, thistle issues and invasive cool season grasses	Come see the process and effects of different management methods of thistle, deciduous tree encroachments and invasive cool season grasses.	Hartington NRCS Conference Room 102 Elm St Hartington, NE 68739	September 6th, 2018 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM CST
Monarch Tagging at Lake Wanahoo	Join us for a Monarch Butterfly tagging at Lake Wanahoo SRA where you will have a chance to catch, tag & release butterflies. This is family friendly event. Weather dependent.	Ron Larsen Day Use Area 1651 County Road 16 Wahoo, NE 68066	September 9th, 2018 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM CST

Workshops are FREE! Visit www.NebraskaPF.com or call 308-850-8395 to RSVP for meal count.



Travel to Keith County/Ogallala

By Erin Lenz, Nebraska Tourism Commission

Surround yourself with wide open spaces, blue sky and warm hospitality when you visit Keith County. Home of the sparkling blue water and white sand beaches of Lake McConaughy, Keith County has plenty of activities in and out of the water to keep you occupied.

Explore

Ogallala is home to Nebraska's largest reservoir, Lake McConaughy. The possibilities are endless at Lake Mac with activities from water sports to sunbathing to bird watching. Grab a group of friends and spend the day boating or choose a more peaceful route and go fishing instead. Lake McConaughy's clear, deep waters make it a great destination with species such as walleye and catfish. With a lot of habitat diversity, the lake is also a great place to go birding with more than 360 species identified in the area, including large numbers of bald eagles that can be seen in winter months. Enjoy sunbathing? Soak up the sun on the popular white sand beaches and jump in the lake to swim and cool off. Kayaking, paddle boarding, water

skiing, wind surfing and more are also available. On one side of the Kingsley Dam sits Lake McConaughy and on the other, Lake Ogallala. With its chilling waters, the primary water sport at Lake Ogallala is rainbow trout fishing. For a change of pace later in the year, hunt at the Clear Creek Wildlife Management Area. Known for Canada goose hunting, Clear Creek includes acres of controlled waterfowl hunting, public hunting lands and a waterfowl refuge.

Do

Immerse yourself in the rich history of Keith County at one of these destinations. When it was completed in 1887, the Mansion on the Hill was Ogallala's finest residence. Tour the mansion and view the beautiful hand carved cherry wood fireplaces, curved staircases and 10-foot ceilings. Walk around Boot Hill Cemetery, the final resting place for cowboys, drifters and settlers back in Ogallala's Texas Trail era. Read the stories told of the people buried there and get a feel for what went on in the town back then.

The Petrified Wood Gallery in Ogallala boasts a collection of ancient

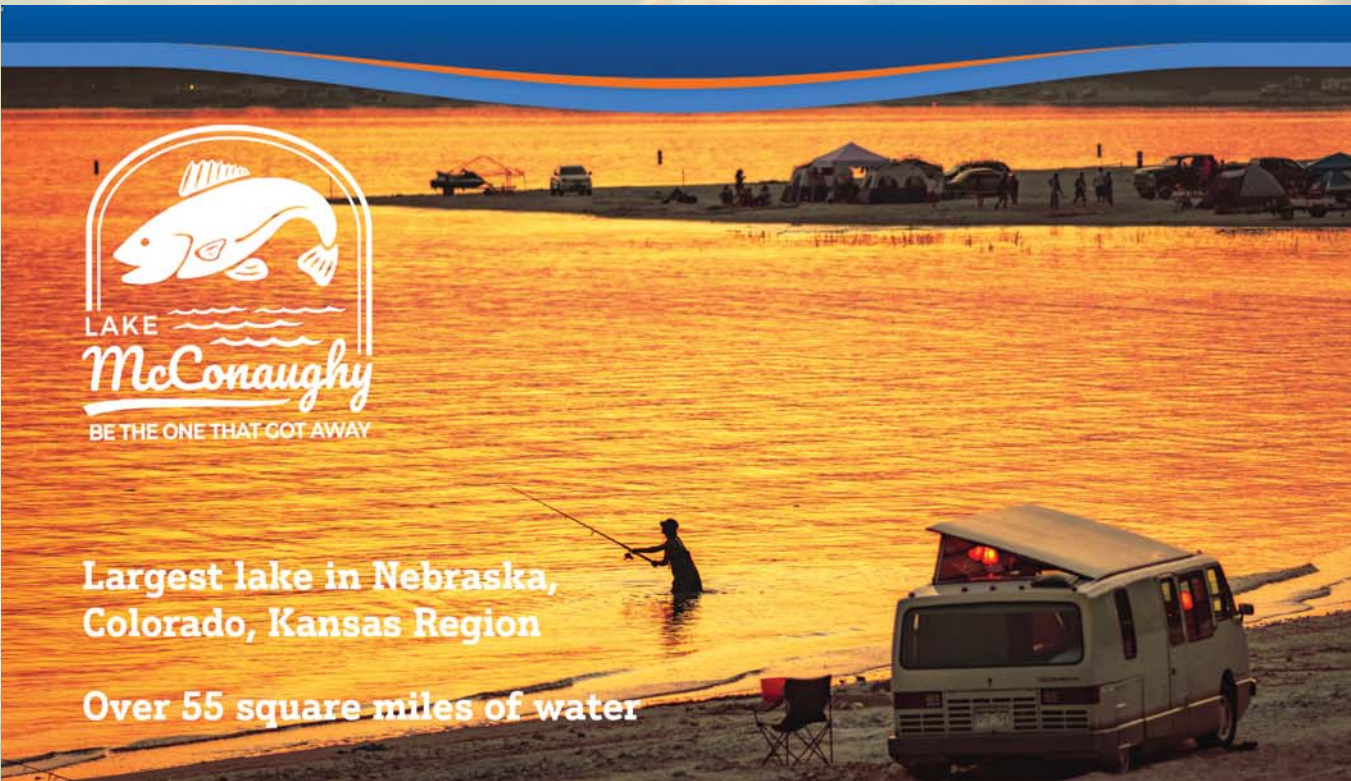
woods, gemstones, fossils and Native American arrowheads and artifacts. The most exceptional part of this gallery is that much of the artwork is constructed using petrified wood pieces. Finally, golf at the Bayside Golf Course located at Lake McConaughy, complete with rolling hills, native grasses, valleys and ravines.

Eat

Enjoy an extraordinary dining experience at Ole's Big Game Steakhouse & Lounge in Paxton. Open for eight decades, this restaurant not only serves delicious food but also showcases more than 200 big game trophies and mementos of Ole's worldwide safaris. Considered the "Cowboy Capital" of Nebraska, Ogallala is home to the Front Street Steakhouse and Crystal Palace Saloon. After you're done eating head over to the cowboy museum and general store. The new Prairie Rodeo Museum exhibit pays tribute to Nebraska's rodeo history. Then stay for the Crystal Palace Revue, a performance recreating what Ogallala was like back when cowboys came to town off the Texas trail. Spending the day on the lake? Take a quick break for lunch or dinner at the Open Range Grill. Close to Lake McConaughy, locals and lake regulars recommend chowing down on one of their amazing gourmet burgers and hand-cut fries.

Stay

If your ideal stay is close to the lake, there are many options available. Lone Eagle, Little Thunder and Cedar View are modern campgrounds located on the shores of Lake McConaughy, equipped with shower and restroom facilities. Camping on the beach or in any mowed area is also allowed at Lake McConaughy for a more primitive experience. If camping isn't your style, Lonesome Dove Lodge offers hotel rooms and suites that keep to the western theme of Ogallala. ■



Largest lake in Nebraska, Colorado, Kansas Region

Over 55 square miles of water

Fishing – Boating - Camping



Visit us at
Ilovelakemac.com
for lodging, dining and shopping info

800-658-4390

Explore Old West heritage of Ogallala



Lake McConaughy's beaches are a great place to relax and enjoy the sand and water.



Beautiful white sand beaches



@ LakeMcConaughyNE

Download the Lake Mac App in the App Store or Google Play



A Brief History

Start Your Engines!

By History Nebraska
(Nebraska State Historical Society)

Harold Mauck lived life in the fast lane. The professional photographer, amateur race car driver, and pilot was born on the family farm west of Plainview in Pierce County in 1921. After serving in the Army Air Force during WWII, he returned to Plainview and opened a photography studio in his aunt's home. The business thrived.

Luckily for us, Harold took his work home while he explored his hobbies. On weekends, Harold raced stock cars, flew airplanes and pursued adventure. Harold's passion for racing and his love of photography blended to create this collection of photographs unlike anything in the Midwest.

By the 1950s, pre-World War II automobiles seemed hopelessly out of date, no matter their condition, and were sent to junkyards by the millions. These cars fueled the new sport of stock car racing.

Passenger autos of the 1930s were not designed with

racing in mind, and did not handle especially well when pushed to their limits. This racing was a contact sport. Car owners cut away fenders to keep them from folding in on the tires, and added large bumpers to protect the radiator and other vital organs.

Below, Harold Mauck and his wife, Tina, pose atop a race car. Harold's football helmet may not have been the best choice for head protection, but it was typical of the day. Racers were required to have such safety equipment, but couldn't always afford the latest in racing helmets.

Necessity is the mother of invention. Above opposite, a local racer is using flex-hose for exhaust tubing. While not as sturdy or long-lasting as exhaust tubing, flex-hose is easy to work with and replace. This driver seems proud of the result.

Harold and Tina operated Mauck Studio for 39 years, retiring in 1986. The photo collection came to History Nebraska shortly after Harold's death in 2010. Starting Aug. 25, the Nebraska History Museum in Lincoln is hosting an exhibit of Mauck's racing photos plus cars and artifacts from Speedway Motors Museum of American Speed. ■

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



A local racer in Crofton, Nebraska, using flex-hose for exhaust tubing in 1965. RG5705-20-7-2



Harold and Tina Mauck pose atop a race car. Harold's football helmet was typical of the day as head protection. HN RG5705-2-7.



This racing was a contact sport. Car owners cut away fenders to prevent them from folding in on the tires. HN RG5705-7-30



NEBRASKA

LET HISTORY BE YOUR GUIDE.
est. 1867

*Visit 8 fascinating historic sites &
over 500 historical markers!*

Download the "Explore Nebraska History" app today!

Available on:

 GET IT ON
Google Play

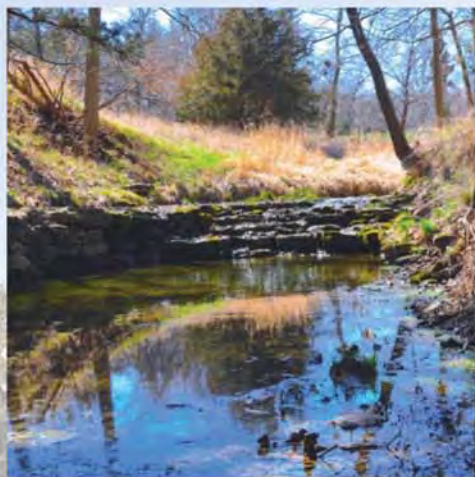
 Download on the
App Store



history.nebraska.gov

LAND FOR SALE

\$2.9 BILLION
746,000 ACRES
sold company wide
in last 5 years



CASS CO, NE - 149 AC.

This is the farm you have been waiting for. This well-rounded property has it all, income from CRP, hardwood timber, spring fed creeks, numerous small ponds, beautiful views, seclusion, great numbers of deer, turkey, and small game. The deer numbers are high with more than 2 dozen seen on the initial tour. If you are looking to get after some Nebraska long bearded gobblers, they are more than plentiful as well. The rolling topography and vast CRP fields offer excellent views and great habitat for a wide variety of wildlife. If you are looking to build your home or a weekend retreat in the country yet not too far from the office, then take a good look at this property. Rural water and electricity run along the road. Farms that have all of these listed qualities in one package this close to Omaha and Lincoln do not come to the market often.

JOHNSON CO, NE - 319 AC.

Here is a farm that is truly a must see! There are multiple crop fields surrounded by dense timber that continues across the north side of the farm. Each tillable field is surrounded by an unbelievable amount of timber edge giving you the option for numerous stand locations. A live creek winds its way through the northwest side of the property providing a secluded water source for the numerous deer that call this farm home. This already large acre farm walks and will hunt, much bigger than most others its size due to the topography and timber. Multiple access points throughout the property make easy access for both agriculture and getting to your tree stands undetected. The acres lying south of 50th Road are almost 100% income producing and are an added bonus to an already great property.



CONTACT JASON OR LUKE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THESE AMAZING PROPERTIES



JASON SCHENDT | BROKER
jason.schendt@whitetailproperties.com
402.707.4885



LUKE WALLACE | AGENT
luke.wallace@whitetailproperties.com
402.340.6187



WHITETAIL TROPHY PROPERTIES REAL ESTATE

HUNTING | RANCH | FARM | TIMBER

WHITETAILPROPERTIES.COM

Whitetail Properties Real Estate, LLC | dba Whitetail Properties | Nebraska & North Dakota DBA Whitetail Trophy Properties Real Estate LLC. | Lic. in IL, MO, IA, KS, KY, NE & OK - Dan Perez, Broker | Lic. in AR, CO, GA, MN, ND, TN, SD & WI - Jeff Evans, Broker | Lic. in OH & PA - Kirk Gilbert, Broker | Lic. in NM & TX - Joey Belington, Broker | Lic. in IN - John Boyken, Broker | Lic. in LA, MS, GA & AL - Sybil Stewart, Broker | Lic. in TN - Chris Wakefield, Broker | Lic. in TN - Bobby Powers, Broker | Lic. in AR - Johnny Ball, Broker | Lic. in SC - Rick Elliot, Broker | Lic. in NC - Rich Baugh, Broker | Lic. in MI - Edmund Joel Nogaski, Broker



Premier compact pontoon manufacturers for over 30 years!
HOTWOODS
308-381-6275 Grand Island, Nebraska
www.hotwoods.com



Four Pontoon design to assure the ultimate in stability.

ALL-ALUMINUM DOCKS AND WALKWAYS



BUILD YOUR LEGACY™

POST & BEAM BARNs, HOMES, CABINS, AND VENUES



Now located in Fremont, NE!



VISIT OUR WEBSITE TO RECEIVE A FREE CATALOG

WWW.LEGACYPOSTANDBEAM.COM

PRAIRIE GRASS - TURFGRASS
STOCK SEED FARMS
AND WILD FLOWER SEED

Quality Seeds Since 1956

A Leader in Native Grass & Wildflower Production

Visit www.stockseed.com to view our entire product line, request a free catalog, or place an order!

Email: prairie@stockseed.com • Phone: 800-759-1520
28008 Mill Road Murdock, NE 68407

ADVENTURE LIVES
HERE
IT STARTS IN THE
WILD WEST
OFF THE BEATEN PATH

DISCOVER NORTHWEST NEBRASKA

DiscoverNWNebraska.com
@NWNebraska

CHADRON • CRAWFORD • HARRISON
© Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

Tag a Monarch, Help Uncover a Mystery

By Renae Blum

It's one of the miracles of nature: each fall, millions of insects weighing less than one gram fly to overwintering sites in Mexico from across the United States, some traveling several thousand miles. This is the monarch butterfly, and the details of how this migration occurs are still surrounded by questions.

Since 1992, Chip Taylor and his team at the University of Kansas have endeavored to find answers via a monarch tagging program. Each year, their nonprofit, Monarch Watch, distributes hundreds of thousands of tags to volunteers willing to help them track migrating butterflies. Tagging takes just a minute or two – netting the butterfly; recording the date, location and other information; and applying a small adhesive tag to the monarch's wings before releasing it.

Months later, locals in Mexico spend hours sorting through dead butterflies looking for tags; it can take several hours to locate just one. (For their trouble, Monarch Watch pays the equivalent of \$5 per tag, about half a day's labor.) Once Monarch Watch receives the tag code of a recovered butterfly, they enter it into a recovery database and search for the original tagger's data. Using this information, they can calculate the distance traveled by that particular monarch. Both the tagger and tag recoverer are informed of the findings.

The tagging program has shed light on questions about the migration, such as when monarchs leave, how long it takes them to reach overwintering sites, the success rate for monarchs from different parts of the country, and how migration changes from year to year.

To tag a butterfly, all you need is a tagging kit and a quality net. Both are available for purchase at shop.monarchwatch.org. Taylor advises tagging monarchs starting from Aug. 1 until you no longer see them.

Monarchs are easiest to catch when feeding or sitting on vegetation. Approach slowly from behind and sweep the net forward quickly. To keep the monarch from escaping, flip the end of the net bag over the handle.

With one hand holding the handle, use the other to collapse and flatten the net so the butterfly's wings are closed. Place your thumb and forefinger over the leading

edge of the wings from the outside of the net to hold the monarch still.

Then use your other hand to reach into the net and firmly grasp the butterfly's thorax – the center body part to which the legs are attached – with your thumb and forefinger to pull it out.

To hold the monarch safely for tagging, either grasp the thorax with a thumb and forefinger, or hold it on its forewings just behind the head with your thumb and forefinger. Then simply peel off the tag and place it on the butterfly's discal cell – a mitten shaped cell in the middle of the hind wing. You want to avoid touching the back of the tag and damaging the adhesive; use your fingernail or another object, such as a toothpick, to handle it.

After applying the tag, press down on it with your thumb and forefinger on both sides of the wings for two to three seconds, adhering the tag to the wing.

At some point, make sure to record data on your sheet, such as the tag code and sex of the butterfly. Males are easily distinguished from females by the

black spots on their hind wings.

Research has shown that tagging is not harmful. "We place the tag close to the center of lift and gravity for the butterfly," Taylor said. "When the butterfly is in the air, there's effectively no contribution to the mass of the butterfly."

Tagging monarchs is a fun way to participate in science, learn more about the natural world, interact with nature, and spend time with your kids. Taylor says children as young as seven can tag a butterfly, and younger children can help capture and sex them.

For Nebraska Game and Parks Fish and Wildlife Manager Kristal Stoner, participating in tagging is a way to contribute to a cause she's passionate about, and to share it with her family. Last fall, her 9- and 12-year-olds helped her tag monarchs.

"It was really fun," she said. "They felt important because they got to help mom with this project. Overall they think it's really exciting, and it's something I think they're proud of." ■



PHOTO BY ERIC FOWLER

Bug Banter

By Julie Van Meter
State Entomologist,
Nebraska Department of Agriculture

The brown marmorated stink bug (BMSB; *Haylomorpha halys*) is an exotic insect, originally from Asia, likely introduced to the United States in the 1990s. It was first identified in Pennsylvania, is now established across the Northeastern, Mid-Atlantic and Midwestern regions, and is creeping into the Plains and Western states. These stink bug populations in Nebraska are likely low, and no reports of damage have yet been received. However, they have been found in Douglas, Otoe and Lancaster counties.

Adults are approximately five-eighths of an inch long and mottled brown. They can be differentiated from other stink bugs by the white bands across their antennae and white and brown/black bands on the edges of their wings.

They overwinter as adults, hidden in leaf litter or structures. Adults emerge in spring and begin to feed, mate and lay eggs. First instar nymphs

have orange to reddish markings, but successive stages will appear more adult-like in coloring.

Populations are generally at their peak in late summer to early fall, before the new adults start looking for overwintering sites.

These bugs feed on more than 300 species of plants, including ornamental plants, fruit trees, soybeans and other legumes and vegetables. Their nymphs and adults have a piercing-sucking mouthpart, and use them in a straw-like fashion to pierce the fruit or vegetable. Small necrotic spots on fruits/vegetables and leaf surfaces often result from feeding damage.

As fruits and vegetables mature, secondary infections may occur around the feeding site, and pitting, scarring and discoloration may become more apparent. Even though fruits and vegetables may still be edible, the damage may be so significant that they are no longer saleable.

In addition to being a plant pest, the insect is also a nuisance. In heavily infested areas, large numbers of them



Adult Brown Marmorated Stink Bug.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVID R. LANCE, USDA APHIS PPQ, BUGWOOD.ORG

can be found congregating on buildings and entering homes in the fall, looking for places to overwinter. This aggregating behavior is similar to that of Asian lady beetles.

While the insects do no structural damage and cause no human health problems, they do have an offensive odor, and a large number of them on or in a house can be upsetting to homeowners. ■

Contact the Nebraska Department of Agriculture at 402-471-2351 or agr.plant@nebraska.gov to report a possible sighting.

YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT IS IN YOUR FIREWOOD

LURKING 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

PONTMOVE FIREWOOD.org

Upcoming Events by Jerry Kane

July 31-August 2

Learn to Hunt Camp Nebraska Game and Parks Outdoor Education Center, Lincoln

August 1

Squirrel Hunting Squirrel Season opens

August 1, 8, 15

Introduction to Shooting Platte River State Park (SP), Louisville

August 1

Family Fishing Event Mormon Island State Recreation Area (SRA) Lake 1, Grand Island; Recharge Lake, York

August 1, 15, 22, 29

Wednesday Walkers Fremont SRA, Fremont

August 2

Family Fishing Event Windmill State SRA Lake 2, Gibbon; Holmes Lake, Lincoln; Skyview Lake, Norfolk

August 3

Family Fishing Event Iron Horse Lake, North Platte

August 3

Bighorn Sheep Hunting Final day for lottery applications

August 3-5

Becoming an Outdoors-Family Camp Ponca SP, Ponca

August 4

Family Fishing Event Medicine Creek Reservoir SRA, Cambridge

August 4

Youth Shoreline Fishing Tournament Louisville SRA, Louisville

August 4

Kids' Fishing Clinic Calamus SRA, Burwell

August 4

Going Batty Wildcat Hills SRA, Gering

August 4

National Park Service Mobile Ranger Station Niobrara SP, Niobrara

August 4-5

Living History Fort Atkinson State Historical Park (SHP), Fort Calhoun

August 5

Waterfowl Hunting/Cold Water Hypothermia Safety Class Niobrara SP, Niobrara

August 5-10

Nebraska Star Party Merritt Reservoir SRA, Valentine

August 8

Red Willow Family Fun Night Red

Willow Reservoir SRA, McCook

August 10

Family Fishing Event Fort Kearny SRA Lake 6, Kearney

August 10-12

Ponca Tribe of Nebraska Powwow Niobrara SP, Niobrara

August 11

Youth Shoreline Fishing Tournament Memphis SRA, Memphis

August 12

Family Fishing Event Terry's Pit, Terrytown

August 12

Republican Valley Archery 3-D Shoot Red Willow Reservoir SRA, McCook

August 13

Turkey Hunting Fall Turkey Permits available beginning at 1 p.m. Central Time

August 15

Elk Hunting Elk Private land antlerless season opens

August 15

Bullfrog Hunting Bullfrog Season opens

August 16

Nebraska Game and Parks Board of Commissioners Meeting Valentine

August 16

Bighorn Sheep Drawing for lottery permit

August 17

Stargazing Eugene T. Mahoney SP, Ashland

August 18

Director's Cup Archery Tournament Nebraska Game and Parks Outdoor Education Center, Lincoln

August 20

Archery Hunting Antelope Archery season opens

August 24-September 3

Nebraska State Fair Grand Island

August 25

Arrow Building and Broadhead Seminar Nebraska Game and Parks Outdoor Education Center, Lincoln

August 28

Learn to Hunt Doves Workshop Nebraska Game and Parks Outdoor Education Center, Lincoln

September 1

Hunting Seasons Open for Cottontail, Jackrabbit, Dove, Snipe, Grouse, Rail, Raccoon and Opossum

September 1

Deer Hunting Deer Archery Season Choice, River Antlerless Private Land Only, Statewide Whitetail Buck, Gifford Point Wildlife Management Area (WMA), Youth, and Landowner seasons open

September 1

Elk Hunting Elk Archery bull season opens

September 1

Buffalo Cookout and Humanities Nebraska Program Niobrara SP, Niobrara

September 1-2

Living History Fort Atkinson SHP, Fort Calhoun

September 1-9

Teal Hunting Early Teal Hunting season in High Plains Zone

September 1-16

Teal Hunting Early Teal Hunting season in Low Plains Zone

September 2

Sidewalk Chalk Art and National Park Service Mobile Ranger Station Niobrara SP, Niobrara

September 3

Labor Day Celebration Indian Cave SP, Shubert

September 5, 12, 26

Wednesday Walkers Fremont SRA, Fremont

September 8

Birds and Bagels Wildcat Hills SRA, Gering

September 8

Family Fishing Event Barnett Park Lake, McCook

September 8

Youth Shoreline Fishing Tournament Louisville SRA, Louisville

September 8

Night Owl Run/Walk Niobrara SP, Niobrara

September 9

Family Fishing Event Zoo Pond, Scottsbluff

September 12-14

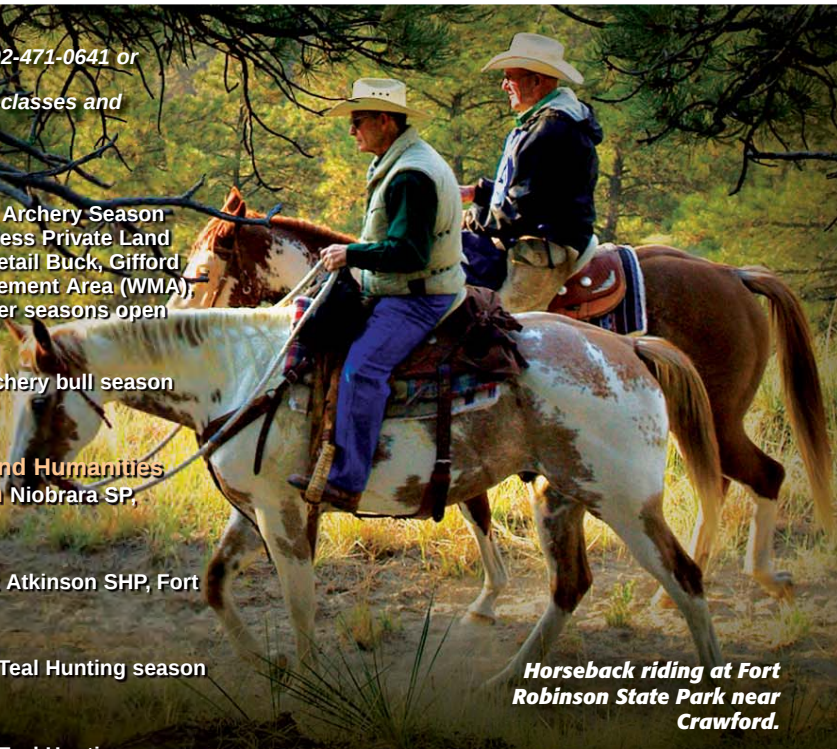
Sierra Club Missouri River Expedition Niobrara SP, Niobrara

September 14

Stargazing Eugene T. Mahoney SP, Ashland

September 15

Turkey Hunting Fall Turkey Hunting season opens



Horseback riding at Fort Robinson State Park near Crawford.

September 15-16

Missouri River Outdoor Expo Ponca SP, Ponca

September 15-30

Antelope Hunting Antelope Muzzleloader season

September 18

Learn to Hunt Basic Workshop Nebraska Game and Parks Outdoor Education Center, Lincoln

September 21

Elk Hunting Firearm bull season opens; Public land antlerless season opens

September 21-22

Bioblitz Indian Cave SP, Shubert

September 22

Woodcock Hunting season opens

September 28-30

Prairie Blacksmith Convention Fort Atkinson SHP, Fort Calhoun

September 29

Ladies Day on the Range Ponca SP, Ponca

September 29

Nebraska Youth Smallbore Silhouette Invitational Pressey WMA, Oconto

September 29-30

Competitive Horse Trail Ride Indian Cave SP, Shubert

September 29-30

Youth Waterfowl Hunting season in Zones 2 and 4

Small Game Seminar

By Jenny Nguyen-Wheatley

Award-winning *Hunter Angler Gardener Cook* blogger Hank Shaw will visit the Nebraska Game and Parks Outdoor Education Center in Lincoln to talk about wild game on Oct. 4, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. The seminar will show hunters how to get more out of their wild game and fish through new cooking tips and techniques, with a focus on upland birds.

Shaw will also offer signed copies of his latest cookbook *Pheasant, Quail, Cottontail* at a discount, and a portion of the proceeds will be donated to Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever to support habitat restoration.

Shaw's previous cookbooks *Duck, Duck, Goose* and *Buck, Buck, Moose* each won Excellence in Craft awards from the Outdoor Writers Association of America in 2013 and 2017, respectively.

The James Beard Foundation – considered the "Oscars of the food world" – awarded *Hunter Angler Gardener Cook* Best Food Blog in 2013. Shaw was also honored with the Bert Greene Award from the International Association of Culinary Professionals for Best Food Blog in 2010 and 2011.

The wild game seminar is free to attend; call the Outdoor Education Center at 402-471-6141 to RSVP. The center is located at 4703 N. 44th Street in Lincoln. ■



Hank Shaw's latest cookbook covers upland birds and small mammals.

NEBRASKAland Visitor



Last issue's winner of the Visitor drawing was Sharon Kaup of Mitchell, South Dakota, who found the **two-spotted spider mite** on page 49.

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

To enter each month, write:

NEBRASKAland Visitor
2200 North 33rd Street
Lincoln, NE 68503

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

HINT: This issue's visitor is not on page 13-15, 17, 32, 37 or 62.

The two-spotted spider mite (Tetranychus urticae) is a widely distributed plant pest, found throughout the U.S. It is small, with its two-segmented body only one-fiftieth of an inch long, and orange to yellow to greenish in color. The mites have a transparent body wall and their spots are actually visible accumulations of waste. Mites have a piercing sucking mouth, like a straw, to suck liquid from plant cells. These spider mites prefer the hot, dry weather of summer, and populations will often spike at this time of year.

The mites overwinter in leaf litter and under bark. After emerging in the spring, females resume feeding and lay eggs, which quickly hatch. Spider mites can reproduce and grow rapidly – an entire generation from egg to adult can occur in less than two weeks.



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



The Eclipse

through the eyes of citizen scientists

By Renae Blum

One year ago, for just a couple of minutes, the sky darkened in the middle of the day. The air cooled, stars and planets appeared, and the sun seemed to transform before our eyes. The 2017 solar eclipse was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. But as fascinating as it was, not everyone had their eyes trained on the skies the whole time. There was a question that needed answering: how would animals and plants react to the eclipse?

That was the premise behind a citizen science project started on iNaturalist.org entitled “Life Responds.” Nearly 650 people across the United States logged on to record their observations of what happened in nature before, during and after the eclipse.

One of them was Nebraska Game and Parks Commission naturalist Holly Green, who coordinated efforts for park visitors in central Nebraska to make their own observations. As she gathered and submitted data, Green got a unique glimpse into how the eclipse affected wildlife in Nebraska. Several observations stood out to her:

- **Unusual cicada activity.** “They started being active as it got darker and darker, and the birds were chasing them out of the trees trying to eat them,” Green said. “The cicadas were deafening. And then when totality happened, it was silence. It was just eerie.”

- **Confused bats.** After totality, an onlooker observed a bat clinging to a door in the women’s restroom at Mormon Island State Recreation Area.

“It had its eyes closed tightly, and was hanging on in a stretched out, vertical position,” the observer wrote. It is unusual to see bats during the day. It is assumed that the bat began foraging when it perceived dusk, but when the sun rapidly returned, the bat was forced to quickly find a place to roost. Usually, they would roost in a tree or crevice out of sight and hang upside down in a compact position.

Green spent a month reading through all 2,000-some observations on the iNaturalist project, making her own notes and finding connections. Much of what was observed was already expected behavior, she said: nocturnal animals awakening, temperatures dropping, flowers closing up, farm animals returning to bedding areas, and domestic animals showing signs of stress.

However, Green said, observers also discovered new information and unexpected behaviors and trends. Among them were:

- Some animals, such as prairie dogs, retreated to their homes during the eclipse and refused to emerge for some time afterward, a behavior Green termed “skepticism.” “Skepticism in animals, from what I had read, was not something we had really paid attention to,” she said; previously, the focus was always on animal behavior during the eclipse, and not afterward.

- Some owners reported that domestic animals, such as dogs, started nightly feeding behaviors, bringing their bowls to their owners – something that hadn’t been noted previously.

- Owners often commented that their animals behaved the way they did before a storm – for example, cows going back to the barn.

As is natural for a citizen science project, the conditions for data collecting weren’t perfectly controlled, and most of the observers weren’t trained scientists and lacked thorough knowledge of the species they were observing. Not to mention, they were likely running on the adrenaline of seeing the eclipse, and that could have affected data too, Green said.

Nevertheless, thanks to the iNaturalist project, we now have confirmations of what were previously just generalizations, Green said, complete with audio, video, and photographic proof. “A lot of it was confirming or rejecting things we already knew, but didn’t have the ability to prove,” she said.

It couldn’t have happened without citizen science, Green said. There was no way for scientists to be present at every point along the 13-state stretch of totality. But they didn’t need to be. As it turns out, you don’t have to be a scientist to produce data that matters – just someone willing to observe. ■

This sunset-looking photograph was taken during the middle of the day during the 2017 eclipse at Verdon State Recreation Area in Richardson County by Jeff Kurrus.



A loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*) basks in soft light in the waning moments of the 2017 total solar eclipse at Bighorn Wildlife Management Area in Dawes County. Photo by Justin Haag.

Oldies but Goodies

Try these six fall activities ... again.

Story and photos by Jeff Kurrus

Sometimes we simply forget. We either get so caught up in the daily trials of life that we don't remember the good times we had, or we get stuck in a routine and stay there.

This fall let's do something different ... or something all too familiar. Each of the following activities are ones I have enjoyed in years past. The only problem I have is not having enough time to accomplish them all.

Current Favorites

Squirrel Hunt

I can't remember a time in my outdoor life that was more fun than walking pine needle-covered ATV trails through the hardwoods during the late afternoons watching for the slight movement of a squirrel in the trees above me. When I saw one, I'd scoot against the closest cover I could find and wait out my quarry, knowing that there was a good chance the squirrel would eventually lose patience, or its fear, and emerge from behind the limb from where it had been hiding. Wearing head-to-toe camouflage and using either a 20-gauge or .22-caliber rifle, the goal was to bring two squirrels back to the house – just enough for dinner and to entice me to go again in a few days.

Tip: Hunting squirrels with a .22 is a good way to improve your rifle shooting skills for big game seasons.

Hand-grabbing Frogs

While Nebraska's laws do not allow our family to carry on our "gigging" pastime like we did when I was a kid, they provide a better option that we hadn't even thought about on our Mississippi River backwaters: hand-grabbing frogs. Luckily, my daughter has grown up in Nebraska, and only chooses a net when the bullfrog is nestled against a rocky dam. We will catch frogs on rod and reel until sunset, and then use a cordless, high-beam spotlight to find and catch frogs on the edges of ponds and sloughs. The frogs freeze in the bright light, and the hunt only ends when the batteries in our lights go out.

Tip: Use a flashlight to scan shorelines for eyes, then



Top: A bullfrog freezes on a mat of algae on a Sarpy County pond. Frog hunting is a summer pastime for my family, and can be enjoyed by all ages – from light-shiners to hand grabbers.



Right: I never would have imagined the following to be true before I tried it, but afternoon hunts for squirrels can become as addicting as any other outdoor pursuit.



Andrew Voss of Omaha bowhunts from the ground in a Cass County cornfield.

switch to the high beam once you start making your move toward the frog. This helps save rechargeable battery lights.

A Cornfield Archery Hunt

I've had days when sitting in a deer stand is the last thing I want to do, even though I want to deer hunt. On these days I'll still hunt in rows on the edges of corn fields near travel lanes. Nothing peaks the adrenaline more than drawing your bow back while you're on the ground.

Tip: Windy days offer the best chance at moving through the corn, and pulling the string, without being detected.

A Hook and Bullet Trip

The most fun I've had on a hook and bullet trip was at Grove Lake Wildlife Management Area in Antelope County. I fished for northern pike with a group of friends in the morning, and in the afternoon we split up to bowhunt for



Walking field and food plot edges for mourning dove, even with a canine companion, is a great way to extend the dove season and practice on your wing shooting for flushing species such as pheasants.

whitetails and shotgun hunt for doves. By day's end, we had pictures of multiple species. I've also had great trips for rabbits and bluegills on the I-80 lake system, most notably near Cozad.

Tip: Check out the interactive fishing map at maps.outdoornebraska.gov/fishing, then search for those areas listed as wildlife management areas (WMAs) for your best combo trip opportunities.

Jump-Shooting

From breaking limbs on deadfalls, also known as "rabbit hotels," to walking field and creek edges for doves and teal, respectively, nothing gets the blood going like jump-shooting. These hunts can be accomplished without dogs. If jumping waterfowl is a possibility, be sure you're shooting steel shot. No. 6 steel shot is a good all-around load option as long as you keep your shots in the 20-yard range.

Tip: Wheat stubble is a great option for dove, as long as you walk across the rows to keep from spooking birds.

On the Fly

With fewer anglers on the water to watch you hook yourself while attempting to cast with your new fly rod, late summer into fall is the perfect time to learn how to cast. Warmwater fish such as bluegills, largemouth bass and crappies are still biting throughout the state, and there's always the opportunity to stream fish for trout. Anyone who picks up a fly rod and spends

more than 15 minutes with it will be unable to put it down. Start this new passion now.

Tip: To start, don't spend a lot of money: a good rod and reel combo for beginners can be found for around \$50.

Future Favorites

Fly and Bike

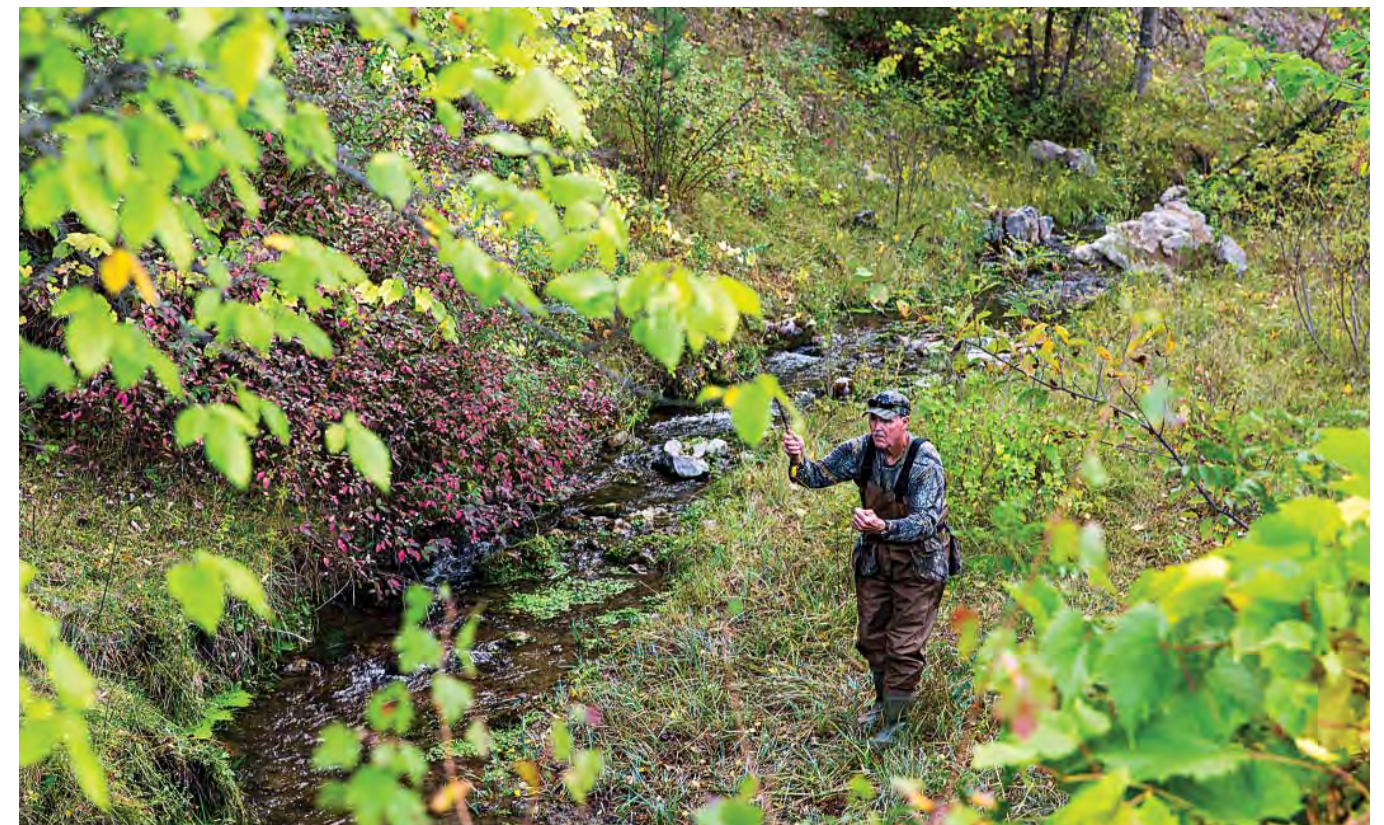
Every time I pass by the West Papio Trail in Omaha, I can't take my eyes off the creek that flows beside it. I'd love to get a buddy to drop off his truck across town and bike and fish our way from west to east with our fly rods. On a cool day, you might not even have to catch a fish to have an awesome time. Visit papiord.org for an updated trail map.

Spot-and-Stalk Archery Hunt

To glass for mulies, and then see if I can get within shooting range with a bow, would be a trip of a lifetime. And I could do it in my home state.

A Sandhills Dove Hunt

Years ago, I spent a fall afternoon fishing in the Sandhills, only to have a last-minute idea near dark to visit a nearby windmill, where doves were piling in. I've regretted the decision to fishing that day ever since. ■



While fly-fishing with my dad, Larry Kurras (pictured), at Soldier Creek last year in Dawes County, we had the entire creek to ourselves, and the fish cooperated nicely.

Time Well Spent

What to Do in August and September

By Renae Blum

Summer is fading and cooler temperatures are on the rise. Welcome in the new season by enjoying the outdoors to the fullest. Your adventures could include a hunting trip or two, a visit to the largest outdoor expo in the Midwest and more. To read about park events across the state, or to learn more about the events listed here, visit Calendar.OutdoorNebraska.gov. ■

Hunting Seasons Open

Various dates
Statewide

Lace up your boots and get your gear ready to go – fall hunting season is here. August and September welcomes the opening of many hunting seasons, including turkey, grouse, teal, archery deer and elk. Bring a young person with you and pass on the tradition. Learn more at OutdoorNebraska.gov/huntingseasons.



PHOTO BY JENNY NGUYEN-WHEATLEY

View the Perseid Meteor Shower

Aug. 12-13
Statewide

You'll have multiple "shooting stars" to wish upon the evening of Aug. 12 and the morning of Aug. 13, during the peak of what is expected to be the best meteor shower of the year. NASA meteor expert Bill Cooke recommends heading to a dark area in the suburbs or countryside, and spending a few hours outside watching the sky. At an expected rate of about 60-70 meteors per hour, you may see around one meteor per minute.



PHOTO BY JENNY NGUYEN-WHEATLEY

Attend the Missouri River Outdoor Expo

Sept. 15-16

Ponca State Park

With more than 90 hands-on activities for people of all ages, the Missouri River Outdoor Expo is the largest of its kind in the Midwest. Come by from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. to enjoy outdoor activities such as kayaking, archery, fishing, shooting and outdoor cooking. Wildlife encounters and educational programs also will be offered. This year's entertainment features Paralympian archer Matt Stutzman, precision archer Frank Addington, Jr., C2 Trick Shooting, and the all-female logging team Axe Women Loggers of Maine. The event is free with the purchase of a park permit.

See the Nebraska Game and Parks Outdoor Encounter Exhibit at the Nebraska State Fair

Aug. 24-Sept. 3

Grand Island

Visitors to the state fair can once again enjoy plenty of hands-on activities at Game and Parks' home in the Nebraska Building, such as indoor archery and pellet gun ranges, kids' Nerf gun range and other youth games. Make sure to also check out the sky fort, meandering stream and 6,000-gallon aquarium filled with fish found in Nebraska waters.



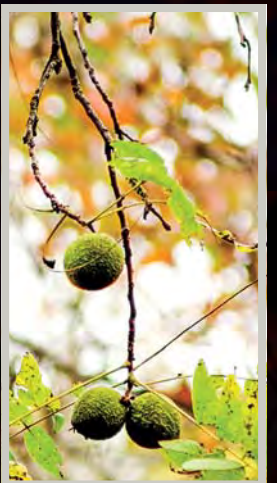
PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS

Forage for Wild Nuts

Mid-September to late October
Statewide

Harvesting wild nuts is a fun way to add wild-grown foods to your pantry and enjoy fall weather with friends and family, writes Game and Parks' Greg Wagner. A variety of trees and shrubs bear edible nuts in Nebraska, such as pecan, shagbark hickory, black walnut, American hazelnut, Chinese chestnut and oak.

Wagner recommends that foragers research correct identification and what nut trees grow in the area; get permission from landowners; wear rubber or plastic waterproof gloves if handling black walnuts or butternuts, as they leave lingering stains; and hull nuts as soon as possible after harvest. Then wash off nuts, dry them thoroughly and store them in a cool, dark spot with good air circulation. "Shelled nuts can be stored for a short time in your kitchen pantry or for longer periods in your freezer," he writes.





A Biologically Unique Landscape

Wetlands are among the most productive and biologically diverse habitats on earth. They are the kidneys of the landscape, filtering our water of pollutants and converting them to less harmful substances. They control flooding by giving water a place to go and slowing down runoff and allowing water to absorb back into the soil. They recharge local water tables and aquifers. Sadly, they have been viewed more as a nuisance or an impediment to progress in our country's brief history, and roughly half of all wetlands in the U.S. have been destroyed. Nebraska's eastern saline wetlands have also suffered extensive losses. However, there is hope as many people now recognize the importance of these wetlands and are taking actions toward Success in the Salt Marsh.

White-tailed deer gather and leave their marks in the salt-encrusted soils of a saline wetland near Dakota Springs, a saline spring source that pulses with open water even in the depths of winter.

Success in the Salt Marsh

Story and photos by Michael Forsberg



Saline Wetlands Conservation Partnership



1500 miles from any ocean, water infused with salt from an ancient sea rises up, forming one of the rarest natural communities in Nebraska. A generation ago, all could have been lost to urban growth and the plow, but today restoration and hope are on the rise.

It is just before dawn in Nebraska’s eastern saline wetlands. You sit quietly on the edge of a salt marsh – a nearly level pan of sparse vegetation and mud. Just in front of you water laps in rhythmic beats at the shoreline. On the opposite shore, the growing light gently begins to fill in the dark spaces, giving definition to the dusky shapes that have been murmuring in the distance. They are a mixed flock of shorebirds and waterfowl on migration – lesser yellowlegs, Baird’s sandpipers, killdeer, blue-winged teal and northern shovelers.

As the sun crests the horizon, cliff swallows that have wintered in Central America tug nesting materials from a muskrat hut. Painted turtles periscope up from below the surface. All around you, red-winged blackbirds and sedge wrens begin their morning chatter. Then a northern harrier swoops down, strafing the cattails, and blows the entire crowd off the water.

You leave the water’s edge and follow a game trail that takes you to a creek crossing littered with mink and raccoon tracks. The trail eventually leads you to the base of a hill where cattail and cordgrass meet big bluestem, and where a

thread of flowing water bubbles up from a clear cold spring.

From the spring, you begin to climb up the hillside prairie while meadowlarks and dickcissels sing in stereo declaring their territories from shrubby perches. And as you reach the top you look around and begin to see more clearly where you are – the farmland and acreages, the powerlines, and the county road, and off in the distance, the hazy line of Lincoln punctuated by the state capitol.

If someone would have blindfolded and dropped you here in the half light of dawn, you might have felt you were in wilderness. But you are just a few miles away from the city of Lincoln, population 300,000, the second largest population center in the state, and growing.

An Ancient Wetland

This saline wetland landscape is a remnant of a once vast prairie wilderness that comprised a rich diversity of life in North America’s Great Plains. We can only imagine what it was like in this part of eastern Nebraska when this country was truly wild. When long before Euroamerican settlement, Plains Indians and the indigenous cultures before them

recognized this rich tallgrass prairie landscape and these salt basins as home.

Perhaps the closest we can come is the writings of W.W. Cox, who described the Lincoln landscape of July 1861 this way:

“As we viewed the land upon which now stands this great busy city, we had the exciting pleasure of seeing for the first time a large drove of beautiful antelope, cantering across the prairie about where the government square is (9th and O streets). We forded Salt Creek just by the junction of Oak Creek, and what a struggle we had in making our way through the tall sunflowers between the ford and the basin. There was something enchanting about the scene that met our eyes. The fresh breeze sweeping over the salt basins reminded us of the morning breezes at the ocean beach.”

If we were to take his same path today, we would start in the heart of downtown Lincoln, pass through the historic Haymarket District, by Pinnacle Bank Arena and Memorial Stadium, and probably hop on a bike trail to cross a bridge near the shoreline of Oak Lake and end up wandering the residential neighborhood of Capitol Beach, once the largest saline wetland in the basin before it was transformed and eventually cut in half by the Interstate. One can only imagine what W.W. Cox would think standing there now. He probably wouldn’t believe his eyes.

Jewels of Salt Creek

Nebraska’s saline wetlands are rare jewels found only within the Salt Creek watershed, a roughly 52-mile-long, 1,627 square mile drainage that encompasses much of Lancaster and Saunders counties, and flows generally southwest to northeast before merging with the Platte River near Ashland, just above Eugene T. Mahoney State Park. Contained within this watershed is a roughly 12-by-25-mile-long elliptical dish shaped by Salt Creek and its floodplain. It is where the city of Lincoln sits, and where roughly 20,000 acres of saline wetlands once were.

Born in the swales and depressions within Salt Creek and its tributaries, the saline wetlands contain a diverse assemblage of habitats including saline marsh and meadows, salt flats, and spring and seep fed wetlands, bisected by streams and surrounded by tallgrass prairie. Their unique natural citizenry includes salt loving plants with names like sea blite, saltmarsh aster, and saltwort, the latter found nowhere else in the state. More than 250 species of migrating and resident birds have been documented since around 1900. In addition, thousands of species of insects and other invertebrates, many of them wired for a life among saline soils, can be found here – including one of the rarest creatures on earth, the Salt Creek tiger beetle.

The saline wetlands’ magical ingredient is groundwater that emerges at the surface through



A series of time-lapse images capture Salt Creek tiger beetle habitat restoration in progress at the Marsh Wren Saline Wetland.



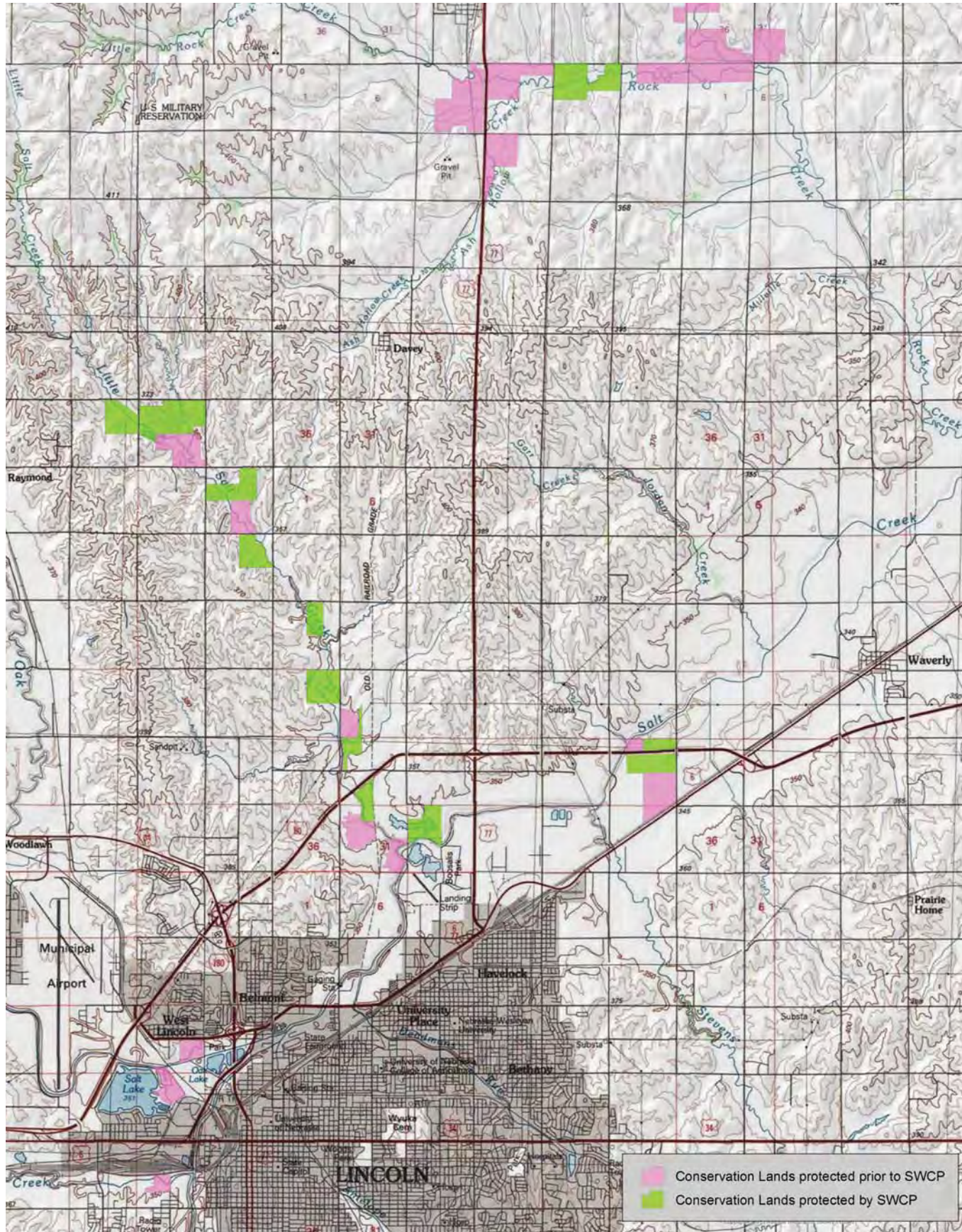
Along Little Salt Creek, excavating and re-shaping a bank to access saline soils and allow for water inundation is the first step in the process.



Over time and with a little luck, new communities of salt-tolerant wetland plants and animals will be established and can thrive, including the water-loving Salt Creek tiger beetle.

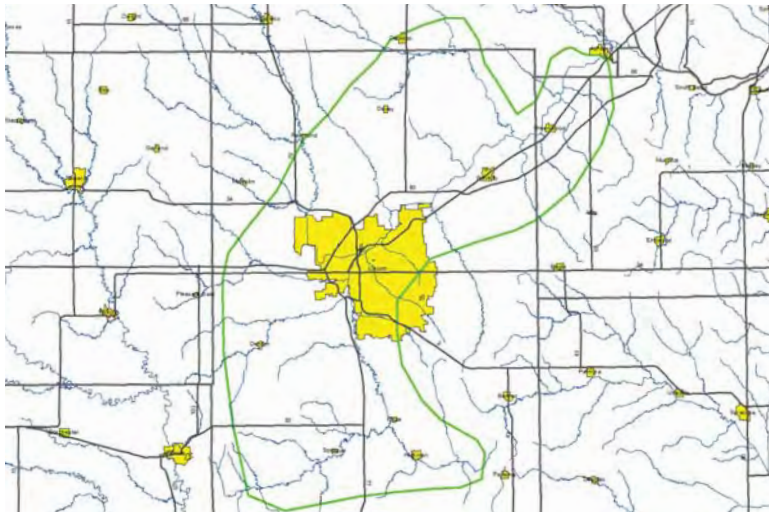


The sun sets as shadows fall over a saline wetland and a muskrat hut at the Little Salt Fork Marsh Preserve.



Securing conservation lands for Nebraska’s eastern saline wetlands began in the 1980s. The Saline Wetlands Conservation Partnership was formed in 2003. The lands in pink were acquired before the Partnership, and the lands in green were placed in conservation after the Partnership was established. As of 2018, the partners manage nearly 4,000 acres of land containing more than 1,600 acres of saline wetlands.

MAP CREATED BY TED LAGRANGE, NEBRASKA GAME AND PARKS COMMISSION



Nebraska’s eastern saline wetlands (inside the green border) are contained within the Salt Creek watershed, a 1,627-square-mile watershed that encompasses much of Lancaster and Saline counties, and includes the city of Lincoln. Salt Creek and its tributaries eventually drain to the Platte River near Ashland.

a myriad of seeps and springs and is nearly as salty as the ocean, coming from deep upwellings of water infused with salt passing through layers of limestone bedrock and Dakota sandstone laid down ages ago when the Great Plains was a vast inland sea.

It is this salt in the water that formed a white crust at the surface when the wetlands would periodically dry out that brought hope of economic opportunity to the area and helped establish Lincoln in the 1860s. The commercial salt mining industry was short lived, but it did serve its purpose long enough to help Lincoln set roots as a thriving community and Nebraska’s capital city.

Growth and Decline

To accommodate the growth of Lincoln over the next century and the inevitable building into the floodplains, saline wetlands were drained, filled in and covered. Salt Creek was channelized and straightened for flood control and to transport wastewater away from the city. As the channels were straightened and the banks modified the channel cut deeper, velocities of water in those channels



An aerial view containing Little Salt Fork Marsh Preserve, and portions of Little Salt Springs and Little Salt Creek West Wildlife Management Area, shows off these connected conservation lands at the peak of fall color. The long-term integrity of our remnant saline wetlands and tallgrass prairies is dependent on scale, connecting these lands together.



A male black damselfly, or ebony jewelwing (*Calopteryx maculata*), flares its wings in courtship display from a perch along a tributary of Rock Creek. Damselflies, dragonflies and a myriad of other insect species make their lives in saline wetland landscapes.

increased, which had a direct effect on its tributaries that began to headcut and form faster and deeper channels themselves.

Soon, groundwater tables were dropping, and periodic flooding that used to spread across the floodplain and infuse the groundwater connected with these wetlands could no longer be recharged. Other wetlands were being ditched, drained and filled for agriculture, and surrounding prairie grasslands were also being lost to the plow.

As topsoil ran off fields and entered waterways, saline soils were buried in sediment, and as banks began to slough off in incised channels, they began to cover up the seeps and springs that fed the streams. Later, other wetlands were filled in or used as landfill sites, or paved over for roads and parking lots, and housing and commercial developments grew north.

In short, as the city grew the wetlands suffered, and after a century of growth and development, only a small percentage of the original 20,000 or so acres of saline wetlands remained, mostly surviving in small fragments less than 20 acres in size, and highly degraded.

Wetlands are among the most productive and biologically diverse habitats on earth. They are the kidneys of the landscape, filtering our water of pollutants and converting them to less harmful substances. They control flooding by giving water a place to go and slowing down runoff and allowing water to absorb back into the soil. They recharge local water tables and aquifers. Sadly, they have been viewed more as a nuisance or an impediment to progress in our country’s brief history, and roughly half of all wetlands in the U.S. have been destroyed.

It wasn’t until the early 1980s that concerted conservation efforts began to officially protect eastern Nebraska’s remaining saline wetlands when the Lower Platte South NRD began purchasing easements, and when lands that became Arbor Lake and the Jack Sinn Wildlife Management Area were acquired by the City of Lincoln and the Nebraska Game and



The fleshy pink leaves of sea blite explode like confetti on a salt pan at Arbor Lake.



Both freshwater and saline water sources feed this wetland in the valley at Little Salt Creek Wildlife Management Area. The difference in water sources is evident by distinct plant communities and is pronounced in the fall.

Parks Commission, respectively. In 1991, *NEBRASKAland Magazine* elevated the profile of saline wetlands, calling attention in a public way with a seminal article co-authored by Jon Farrar and Richard Gersib entitled “The Last of the Least.”

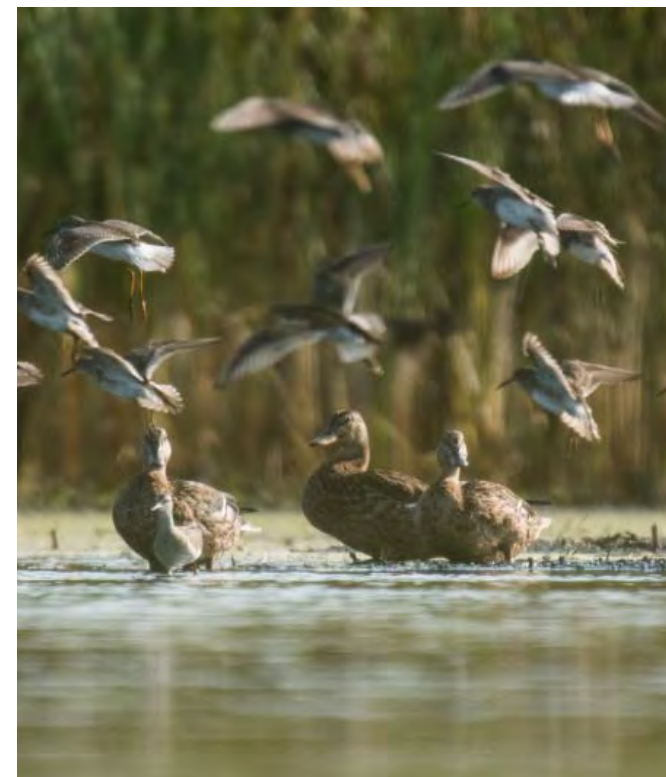
A Rare Beetle

Today, Nebraska’s remaining eastern saline wetlands are considered to be the rarest and most limited natural community in the state. In one way, their rarity represents what we have lost. But their rarity and increasing public awareness have also assigned them high priority for conservation. In the last 20-plus years, these remnant habitats are slowly being protected and increasingly connected, in part by the fate of a half-inch, water-loving beetle, a unique conservation partnership, and the care and dedication of many people.

In 2000, the Salt Creek tiger beetle was listed as an endangered species in the state of Nebraska. By 2005, the species was listed as federally endangered.

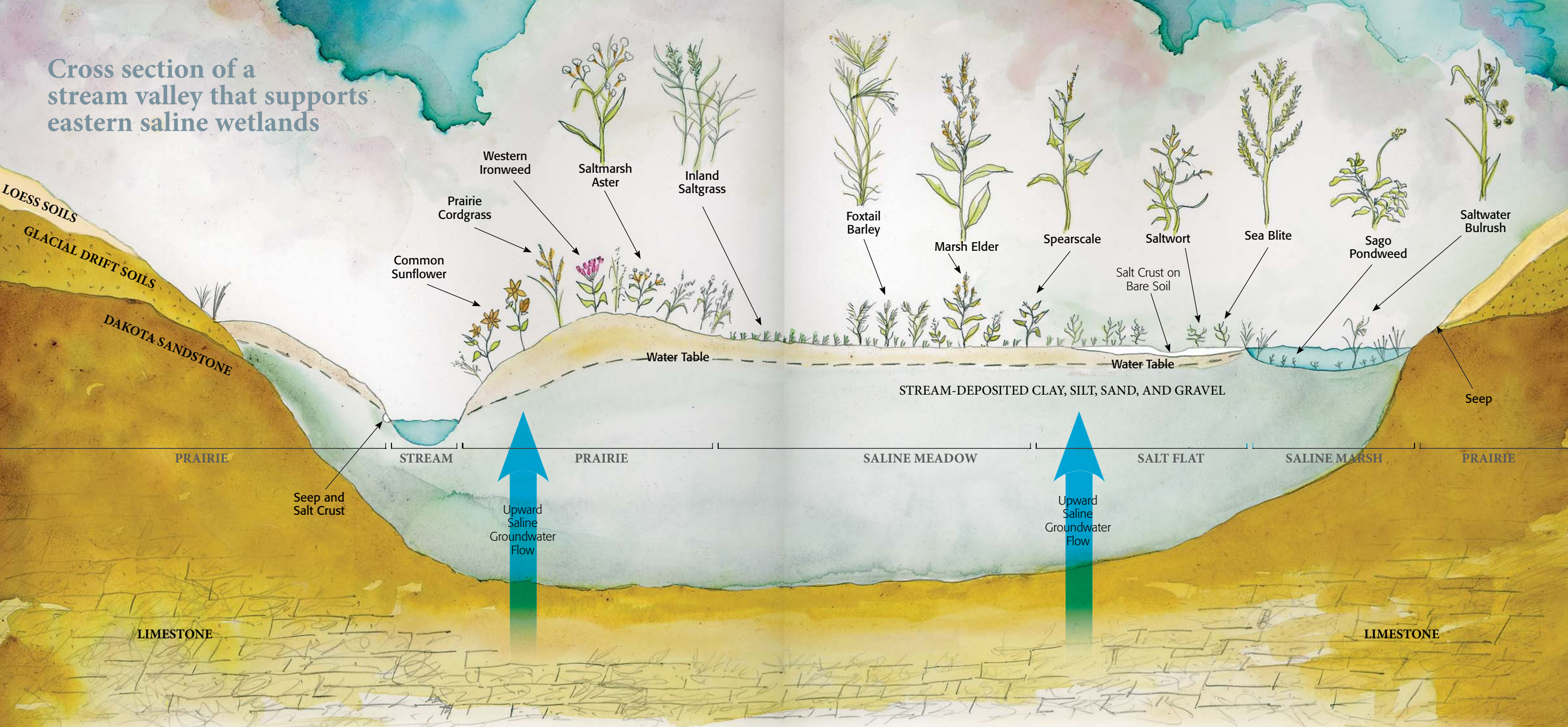
“They are mud-loving, water-loving beetles,” said Steve Spomer, a Lincoln native who grew up collecting bugs and became a University of Nebraska-Lincoln entomologist and tiger beetle expert. “When other tiger beetle species go find shade to cool off, this beetle goes down to the water.” Spomer has studied these insects for nearly four decades.

Nebraska’s eastern saline wetlands have 12 tiger beetle species, but what makes the Salt Creek tiger beetle different from the others is that it is found almost exclusively on the



Blue-winged teal, pectoral sandpipers, and a short-billed dowitcher mingle in the shallows of a salt marsh at Little Salt Fork Marsh Preserve.

Cross section of a stream valley that supports eastern saline wetlands



Dakota sandstone, an ancient formation of porous, rust colored sedimentary rock, underlies the soils of much of eastern Nebraska. Where streams have cut down through overlying soils, Dakota sandstone is exposed, and saline waters from still deeper and older rock formations are under pressure and rise to the surface as springs and seeps which flow into depressions in the floodplain. Repeated evaporation of saline water in these shallow basins over thousands of years concentrated salts in floodplain soils, setting the stage for the formation of the saline wetlands.

Recent work indicates this groundwater was recharged under climatic conditions colder than present-day or at higher elevations. Age dating of groundwater sampled at sites along Rock Creek and Little Salt Creek indicate

recharge occurred from 16,000–37,000 years before the present. Related research indicates that salt present in the groundwater may be derived from bedrock units older than the Dakota, possibly marine bedrock beneath parts of Kansas.

Compared to other communities, the number of plant species growing on highly saline soils is small. Each species has adapted to a particular part of the wetland, a micro-environment defined by minute variations in soil saturation and salinity. The idealized saline wetland shown above illustrates how salt tolerant plants are distributed throughout a Nebraska saline wetland.

A salt flat may surround the standing water and saline marsh community. Salt flat soils have high clay content, are saturated with water, and have the highest

salt concentrations. The portion of the salt flat nearest the center of the wetland is the wettest, keeping salts in solution, and salinity levels moderately high. Here, saltwort, a state listed endangered plant found nowhere else in Nebraska, thrives. Beyond the wetter, inner ring of the salt flat, evaporation frequently dries the soil surface, concentrating salt near the surface. Sea blite occupies this slightly drier, central portion of the salt flat zone. Inland saltgrass, dwarfed in stature and sparsely spaced, is often the only plant which can survive on the dry, salt-encrusted outer portion of the salt flat.

The greatest diversity of plants on a saline wetland is found in the saline meadow, a transition zone between the salt flat and prairie at the outer edge of the wetland. Closest to the salt flat, foxtail barley and marsh elder

dominate, but many other species also grow here, including spearscale and saltmarsh aster. In the saline marsh, sago pondweed and saltwater bulrush thrive.

The plants of a saline wetland are seldom arranged in so orderly a manner. The boundaries between zones where one species or another is favored are constantly changing as soil saturation and salinity fluctuate, and a mixing and merging of plant species occurs. Frequently, the most consistently wet portion of a saline wetland is not at the center, but below seeps emerging from the base of hills at the edge of the floodplain, as illustrated here. Salt flats on large basins may have small depressions or "pans" which periodically hold water, where plants most tolerant of high salinity and saturated soils grow. ■

wettest, salt encrusted soils, along banks of streams and ditches with running water.

Due to their specific needs tied to water, changes on the land and destruction of habitat nearly erased them from the earth. The beetles were never widespread but once thought locally abundant based on museum records. At the time of their federal listing, only several hundred adult individuals remained.

“Tiger beetles are good indicators for the health of the salt marsh,” said Spomer, who puts on many miles each summer monitoring populations. “They can recover quickly from temporary changes in populations, natural events like floods, and even pesticides to a point, but not from habitat destruction.”

While the Endangered Species Act draws a necessary regulatory framework around protecting the beetle and its habitat, the recovery plan for the species and its habitat recognizes a collaborative approach. In conservation today, and especially in working landscapes with a mix of landownerships, collaboration is key, and partnerships can be everything.

The Partnership

The Saline Wetlands Conservation Partnership was formed in 2003, two years before the Salt Creek tiger beetle was federally listed, but at the perfect time to help protect, restore, and manage many of the remaining saline wetlands in the Salt Creek watershed and educate people about the importance of these wetlands. Today, its major partners include the City of Lincoln, Lower Platte South Natural Resources District, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Pheasants Forever, and a bundle of other agencies and entities, including private landowners.

To date, the Partnership has helped to acquire from willing sellers roughly 1,600 acres of land containing saline wetlands, ranging in size from 7 acres to 220 acres. An additional 800 acres containing saline wetlands are protected with conservation easements. And the Partnership is focusing on connecting many of those parcels together to create scale.

The Partnership has also helped to coordinate nine restoration projects, ranging from full-scale wetland restoration of a landscape like the new Marsh Wren area owned by the Lower Platte South NRD, to creating endangered species habitat for Salt Creek tiger beetles, and improving public access at many of its sites. It has also been in classrooms and provided field experiences for thousands of students from grade school through college.



Small but mighty, a sedge wren measuring four inches long and weighing less than half an ounce sings strong from its territorial perch at Frank Shoemaker Marsh.

Tom Malmstrom, longtime coordinator for the Partnership, said he didn’t know the saline wetlands even existed when he was in college, but now knows them like the back of his hand. “I always tell people I have the job I wanted out of college, but it just took me 25 years to get it.” He also knows that building an intimate relationship with this landscape means building solid relationships and trust with landowners and his colleagues in the conservation community. It all works together.

The Partnership has been in existence for 15 years, and has provided a frame that focuses on inclusion rather than regulation, with the end goal to conserve saline wetlands for the entire community. “I think the people in the community still believe in the vision,

and those in the partnership still believe in it,” says Malmstrom. “The Partnership has done a good job removing the endangered species nexus that really was a volatile component of it when we first started. People started seeing the value beyond the Salt Creek tiger beetle.”

An Environmental Resource

Another positive turn for the saline wetlands has been the City of Lincoln and Lancaster County recognizing the importance of green spaces and “environmental resources”



A curious mink pokes up from between the slats of an old bridge along Rock Creek at Jack Sinn Wildlife Management Area. Predators like mink play an important role in the balance and diversity of life in the saline wetlands landscape.

such as wetlands and prairies as a vital part of Lincoln’s natural heritage in its comprehensive plans. The most recent plan guiding future growth identifies the saline wetlands as an environmental resource that should be conserved due to their benefits to society, recognizing their rarity, the vital habitats they provide for threatened and endangered species, and the legacy they played in the founding of the city.

But perhaps the most important thing of all is that these saline wetlands and salt marshes are still a mystery to most people, which poses perhaps the biggest challenge and opportunity.

Ted LaGrange, wetland program manager with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, remembers coming to Lincoln as a young biologist, and barely knew about the saline wetlands that he would come to know so well and share with others.

“I was giving a saline wetland tour to some kids the other day, and we were parked just south of Interstate 80 and North 27th Street. I told them when I came to Lincoln in 1993 there was no urban development there except a Kmart located way south on Cornhusker Highway, a wetland, and a small house and some pastureland. That was a generation ago to these kids. They weren’t even born yet. I told them none of the apartments and hotels and car dealerships they see now were there, and they couldn’t believe it. Then I took them north of I-80 to Arbor Lake, and I said if the city had not removed this location from a future urban growth area you would just keep driving through development at



Releases of the federally endangered Salt Creek tiger beetle have taken place at selected saline wetland sites, like here at Arbor Lake. The larvae are propagated in the lab at the Henry Doorly Zoo in Omaha, and released with partners and volunteers under the direction of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

least for a couple more miles, and certainly within a mile of the interstate you would have fast food restaurants, gas



With heads down, mixed flocks of shorebirds feed heavily on the rich soup of aquatic invertebrates found in healthy salt marshes rimmed by the prairie at Jack Sinn Wildlife Management Area. Protecting saline wetlands means protecting prairie too.

stations and motels. Arbor Lake would still be there because it was already protected, but all around it would be urban development.”

LaGrange pointed out how close these saline wetlands are to Lincoln, its increasingly growing and diverse community – both with students and adults – and how there is tremendous opportunity to educate and engage people with these special places just outside our doorsteps, and build appreciation.

That’s a key value of any natural landscape on the edge of any urban center, and it presents a choice. In a state like Nebraska with strong agricultural roots, its citizens might still have more connection to the land than in many other states, but we live in an increasingly urban world. And if we find value and want to protect the natural heritage in the places we live, the choices that we make now will make a big difference later to the generations that come after us, even if we won’t live to see it.

People and the Land

Beyond facts and figures, laws and regulations, conservation is about people and their experiences and relationships with the land. Those relationships are both intimate and they tie us together in a place as a community. Looking back, there is a quiet legacy of relationships that run deep in the saline wetlands landscape, from an ancient past we can only imagine, to people that have made a life

with the land as agriculturalists, hunters, or scientists, birdwatchers or nature lovers, finding joy or solace in these ancient and rarest of wetlands in Nebraska. As we look forward, what will someone sitting quietly at sunrise on the edge of a salt marsh north of Lincoln experience 50 years from now?

Last year my oldest daughter called me from her college dorm at the University of Nebraska, excited to tell me that her cross-country team had just run a trail through a saline wetland on the edge of the city.

“Dad, it was beautiful, with all the flowers and different colors of the prairie grass and wetlands, the birds, the butterflies, and it’s so close to where I live. I never knew! Now I have a place to go and retreat to. Maybe we can pack a lunch and go there sometime together this fall. Hey, what are you doing tomorrow?” ■

Visit the Saline Wetlands Conservation Partnership at lincoln.ne.gov/city/parks/parksfacilities/wetlands/ to learn more about this biologically unique Nebraska landscape and to read Jon Farrar and Richard Gersib’s 1991 NEBRASKAland Magazine article “The Last of the Least.”

To view more of Michael Forsberg’s stunning photographs from this project, visit magazine.outdoornebraska.gov/salinewetlands.



On an early summer day, a young hiker walks down a trail and into a world of hidden beauty and discovery – eastern Nebraska’s saline wetlands.



Success in the Salt Marsh was written by Michael Forsberg, with the cooperative efforts of the Saline Wetlands Conservation Partnership. Printed in the August-September 2018 issue of NEBRASKAland Magazine, published by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

Cover image: A lesser yellowlegs captures a tiny invertebrate out of the briny waters of a saline wetland.



SHARE YOUR OUTDOOR EXPERIENCE WITH US!

#NEGameAndParks



For outdoor news and events, subscribe to our weekly e-newsletter. Text “NGPC Newsletter” to 468-311 or visit OutdoorNebraska.org to sign up.

Prickly Poppy

Nebraska's Only Prairie Poppy

Story and photos by Gerry Steinauer, Botanist

Matchless among our state's flora are prickly poppy's (*Argemone polyanthemos*) six large, crinkly, white petals. Also unique: cut its stems or leaves and they bleed a sticky, mustard-yellow sap. The latex sap and petal design are characteristic of the poppy family (*Papaveraceae*) to which prickly poppy belongs. Nebraska's only other native poppy is bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*), which inhabits our northeastern woodlands.

Native to the western Great Plains, prickly poppy's range includes the western two-thirds of Nebraska, where it most frequently grows in sandy prairies and roadsides. The biennial's prickly stems hold somewhat succulent, bluish-green leaves with a whitish, waxy coating. The showy flowers bloom from mid-June through mid-August. From these develop about inch-long, green seed capsules

with stout, yellow prickles.

The tissues of all 32 *Argemone* species, native to the Americas and Hawaii, are rich in alkaloids, some with known antimicrobial, narcotic, pain-relieving and astringent properties. Through millennia of trial and error, Native Americans became aware of the plant's chemical powers.

Plains tribes made a tea from prickly poppy seeds or sap that was applied to treat sore eyes, including pinkeye. The pulverized and moistened seeds were rubbed into their hair to kill head lice and used to treat burns, cuts and sores. The Tepehuan Indians of Mexico crushed the leaves and stems of the Mexican prickly poppy (*A. mexicana*) to use as a fish stupefying agent.

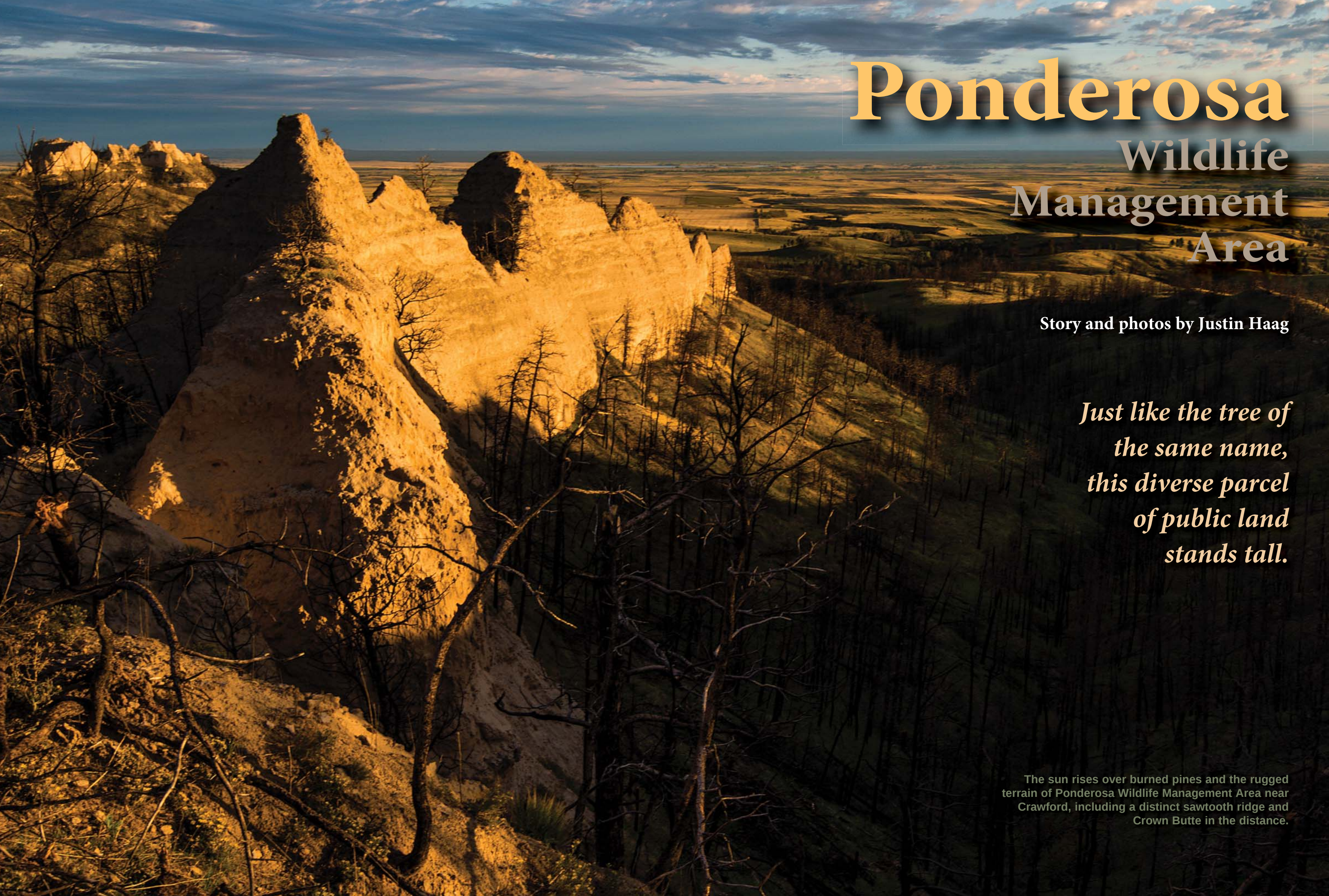
The Kiowa used prickly poppy prickles for tattooing, inserting ash from the plant's burned leaves under the skin. The Lakota used the yellow sap to dye arrows, making errant ones easier to find among the prairie grass. This unique plant also had many other uses among native tribes. ■



LEFT: Set deep within the prickly poppy's petals are a ring of lemon-yellow stamens that surround a maroon, lobed stigma.

RIGHT: Rooted on a Cherry County sand dune, prickly poppies catch the morning sun while a thunderstorm brews to the west.





Ponderosa

Wildlife Management Area

Story and photos by Justin Haag

*Just like the tree of
the same name,
this diverse parcel
of public land
stands tall.*

The sun rises over burned pines and the rugged terrain of Ponderosa Wildlife Management Area near Crawford, including a distinct sawtooth ridge and Crown Butte in the distance.



A mountain lion is photographed by camera trap while visiting a mule deer it killed and cached. The Ponderosa was the site of the first cougar captured for study in the Pine Ridge.

Nebraska's Pine Ridge has much to offer, and a prime example of it is a piece of public land named for the tree most prominent in northwestern Nebraska – the ponderosa pine. Ponderosa Wildlife Management Area is a 4,020-acre property along Squaw Creek Road six miles southeast of Crawford that is as beautiful as it is distinct.

Pine Ridge

With a peak elevation of 4,492 feet, about 580 feet higher than its lowest points along the hardwood-lined creekbottoms, “the Ponderosa” features an array of habitat.

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission acquired the property in 1965, and it was immediately popular with hunters. After all, that was just three years after the reintroduction of the Merriam's subspecies of wild turkey had taken hold in the Pine Ridge and the Commission initiated the first hunting season for the species.

Greg Schenbeck, a wildlife biologist who recently retired from his post of managing the property, said turkeys are just one of many species that enjoy the range of habitat, which includes Squaw Creek and two other unnamed streams. A total of 13 food plots, two water catchment systems and a solar well add to the offerings enjoyed by wildlife.

Both whitetails and mule deer are harvested on the property. Elk are known to traverse it on occasion, and

bighorn sheep inhabit the rough country on the north end that includes Crown Butte.

Other game species at Ponderosa include sharp-tailed grouse, dove, rabbit and squirrel. Bobcats and red foxes are also observed on the property. Furthermore, skilled anglers might harvest a brook trout along the narrow banks of Squaw Creek.

Birders also frequent the area, enjoying sightings of Cassin's kingbirds, prairie falcons and red crossbills. Among the Ponderosa's botanical gems is a native stand of quaking aspen trees.

The Early Days

Lon Lemmon, who was based at the Ponderosa from its beginning to his retirement in 2005, has witnessed the Commission's entire history of the property, and more. For much of his employment, Lemmon, his wife Carolyn and their children lived on site. After retirement, the couple moved to a house just up the road.

Lemmon's family also ranched the property prior to its purchase by the Commission in 1965. Lemmon's career with Game and Parks began when the land on which he and Carolyn were living was offered for sale to the Commission, later to become Ponderosa Wildlife Management Area. James Ivins, a banker in Crawford and Harrison and a long-time business partner of Lemmon's family, had owned the property. Unfortunately, Ivins was diagnosed with terminal

A tent cot glows beneath the evening sky.



Water from a spring
thunderstorm
clings to the petals
of a narrowleaf
beardtongue.



cancer, prompting sale of the land and the end of a partnership that spanned five decades.

When Gary Schlichtemeier of Alliance, who was the Commission's wildlife manager in the northwest district at that time, was looking for someone to provide day-to-day maintenance on the new property and other wildlife management areas in the Pine Ridge, he approached Lon. Little did Lon know that he'd be there for four decades upon taking the job.

Rim of the World

One way to experience the property's opulence is to hike Rim of the World Road, accessible near the property's north entrance and surely named for its grand views at the top. The road was forged early in the 20th century as a way for area residents to travel between the top and bottom of the ridge as an alternate to the road along the creek, which often washed out after heavy rains.

Lemmon said the road remained open to vehicles when the Commission assumed ownership of the property, but was soon closed. Hunting traffic took its toll during inclement weather and too many visitors became stuck trying to navigate the incline.

"We had a little grumbling. The one I'll never forget was an older gentleman," Lemmon said. "I stopped at the No. 3 parking area up here and he came right up out of his vehicle, came right over and got in my basket. 'You expect us to walk up and hunt this thing?' He really laid it on me. And he said, 'That hill there takes the first two eggs you eat for breakfast to get up it.' That's been called the Two-Egg Hill ever since."

Rim of the World remains a service road, and an egg burner.

Wildlife Outpost

As an outpost of the Commission's district headquarters in Alliance, the Ponderosa has long served as a base for



A redheaded woodpecker flies from its nest at Ponderosa WMA.



Fog hangs among buttes and ponderosa pine trees on a spring morning. The area features about 1,500 acres of green timber.



Mule deer fawns and a doe visit an area burned by wildfires at Ponderosa Wildlife Management Area. The photograph was captured with a camera trap.

wildlife management efforts in the Pine Ridge.

Situated on the Ponderosa along Squaw Creek Road is the old ranch house that Lemmon and his family lived in while he was manager. Now having been converted to an office for Commission wildlife biologists and technicians, it gets many calls and visits from hunters in the Pine Ridge looking for tips.

The Ponderosa office has not only played a central role for management of nearby wildlife management areas but also in research projects of the Pine Ridge.

Some of the first deer monitoring projects in Nebraska began there decades ago. With a wooden box trap, Lemmon and other staff caught

deer and placed colored streamers on their ears for future observation. At Ponderosa, for instance, they placed orange streamers on the captures. At a trapping site a little farther east, they used pea green.

“We put the streamers on in January or February,” Lemmon said. “In the fall of that year, one of those buck mule deer fawns from the Ponderosa was killed north of Lusk (Wyoming) and one of the bucks wearing a pea green one was killed near Oshkosh.”

Presently, the area has been central to the Commission’s mountain lion research efforts and was the site of the first cougar captured and collared in the Pine Ridge. Of course, the GPS collars used in today’s monitoring efforts are

much different from methods used to track wildlife in the beginning.

Hot Topics

Similar to so much of the Pine Ridge, the Ponderosa has had a close relationship with fire – some of it even positive.

In the early 1980s, the Ponderosa was the site of what still stands as the largest successful prescribed burn in the Pine Ridge. Agency staff burned 1,200 acres, improving the health of the forest and plant community.

In 2000 wildfire struck 215 acres on the property’s west portion. Although considered a misfortune at the time, Schenbeck said the fire’s effects were largely beneficial as it thinned

out some of the pines without doing catastrophic damage to the forest.

In 2012, the result was not as positive. The fire that roared across the Pine Ridge then scorched 1,200 acres on the Ponderosa – approximately 47 percent of its timber. A backfire lit by Commission staff along the east side of Rim of the World Road is credited for keeping the blaze from spreading westward. Although many trees were decimated, the result could have been much worse.

The Commission is working to preserve the green timber that remains, estimated at 1,445 acres. In recent years, the property has been the subject of extensive pine thinning, which has improved the health of the forest and made it less susceptible to catastrophic fire. Staff also has worked on projects to restore the property’s native warm-season grass prairie.

In order to make those projects

happen, the Commission receives assistance from organizations such as the Nebraska Environmental Trust, Nebraska Wild Turkey Federation, Nebraska Forest Service and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.

The dead trees from 2012’s blaze continue to fall and the effects on wildlife are sure to evolve over time. So far, mule deer are frequently seen in the burn area and red-headed woodpeckers are especially conspicuous as they fly among the standing dead trees. Regardless, the fire opened some scenic views of the White Valley to the north.

Of course, at this special historical piece of property, beautiful views are in abundance whether up top or down below. And whether it’s a hunting trip, or just an excursion to see the best of the Pine Ridge, visitors are sure to marvel at what the Ponderosa has to offer. ■



A red crossbill clings to the branch of a ponderosa pine tree.



With a thunderstorm moving in overhead, hoary vervain and wilting purple coneflower seem to be waiting for a dose of moisture at this northwestern Nebraska area. The property has been managed to feature native plant diversity.

Major: Fish and Wildlife

From 101 to Ph.D., Nebraska's colleges and universities play a vital role in developing professionals who serve wildlife and fisheries.

By Justin Haag

It may be common for students' thoughts to turn to the outdoors during a lecture, but some are fortunate enough to do so under the teacher's direction. They include the next generation of wildlife and fisheries professionals, many of whom are earning degrees at Nebraska colleges and universities.

While growing up on the family farm and ranch near Berwyn, Lacey Clarke did not dream she would someday be handling wild greater sage grouse in Montana or researching exotic birds in Australia, but her studies have led her to those experiences and more.

"I love wildlife and the outdoors, so choosing wildlife management was pretty easy for me," said Clarke, who earned a degree from Chadron State College in 2015.

Clarke is one of the many graduates of what have become popular fields of study for college students – wildlife or fisheries management. The programs are not only filling a need to provide an educated work force for agencies that manage lands and natural resources, but are serving as a key

career step for those who are passionate about the outdoors.

At about 200 undergraduate students and another 50 graduate students, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's fisheries and wildlife program in the School of Natural Resources serves as the state's largest program.

Larkin Powell, professor in the School of Natural Resources, said programs such as these are vital to people's essential role of caring for the planet.

"Fisheries and wildlife education prepares students to meet the challenges of a world that is increasingly responsive to preserving fisheries and wildlife habitat, protecting threatened and endangered species, and the thoughtful management and conservation of natural ecosystems," he said. "Without new generations of students learning to not only appreciate natural resources, but to also understand how to manage and protect them, we would slowly continue to lose unique habitats and species."

The university offered its first course in wildlife management in 1948 and the program has grown to offer

seven career-oriented options. They are wildlife ecology and management, fisheries ecology and management, conservation biology, zoo animal care, habitat management, law enforcement, and nature-based entrepreneurship. In addition, many students seeking graduate level degrees perform research projects with the Nebraska Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit administered by the university.

A much younger program than that of UNL's, but also "wildly" popular, is that of Chadron State College in the northern Panhandle. While most college wildlife and fisheries programs are offered as part of the school's science offerings, the wildlife management curriculum at Chadron State is part of the rangeland management studies – at about 60 students the program consists of about half the school's rangeland majors. It began in 2003.

Teresa Frink, the professor who leads Chadron State's program, said the knowledge of plants and soils offered in the rangeland curriculum comes in handy for graduates when they take on a land management role.

"Contrary to what many people believe, most wildlife biologists do not spend their days riding horses to count elk and capturing grizzly bear cubs," Frink said. "Wildlife biologists spend the majority of their time and their resources on habitat management for wildlife."

Colleges and universities see value in hands-on projects to get their students outdoors. The experiences for students are as varied as the state's landscape and wildlife diversity.

"Most of the upper level courses are very much hands-on," said Mark Pegg of the UNL faculty. "We use aquatic and terrestrial resources both close to campus and across the state to show our students how to best perform the task at hand. Often this also includes close interaction with NGPC and other agencies thus providing unique opportunities for our students that also includes networking with biologists."

At Chadron State, students have helped the Commission handle bighorn sheep and wild turkeys during captures, staff deer check stations, and build water-catchment systems at Pine Ridge wildlife management areas. In the lab, they have observed necropsies of a variety of western species, including mountain lions, swift fox and bighorn sheep.

Opportunities at the University of Nebraska at Kearney involve the study of the sandhill crane migration each spring semester. Conservation areas such as the Crane Trust, the Nature Conservancy and Rowe Sanctuary provide prime venues to learn and work.

Wayne State College students have worked on projects on Biologically Unique Landscapes identified in Nebraska's wildlife action plan, but also traveled outside Nebraska to study stream ecology in Mongolia and beach mice in Florida.

Most of the programs also have club opportunities, such as student chapters of The Wildlife Society, to become further involved and develop leadership.

Many institutions are recognizing these programs' importance and investing toward them. For example, UNL has multiple off-campus sites used by students throughout the year, such as the Nine-Mile Prairie near Lincoln and Cedar



Megan Rust, Chadron State College student, carries a wild turkey captured on private property in northern Sheridan County that was later transported to Montana for release.

Point Biological Station near Ogallala.

In fall 2015, CSC completed the construction of the Rangeland Complex with new plant and animal labs to complement more than 200 acres of outdoor lab space right outside the door.

UNK has several vehicles used specifically for field trips for wildlife courses and undergraduate research projects, and Peru State College has two boats for aquatic work.

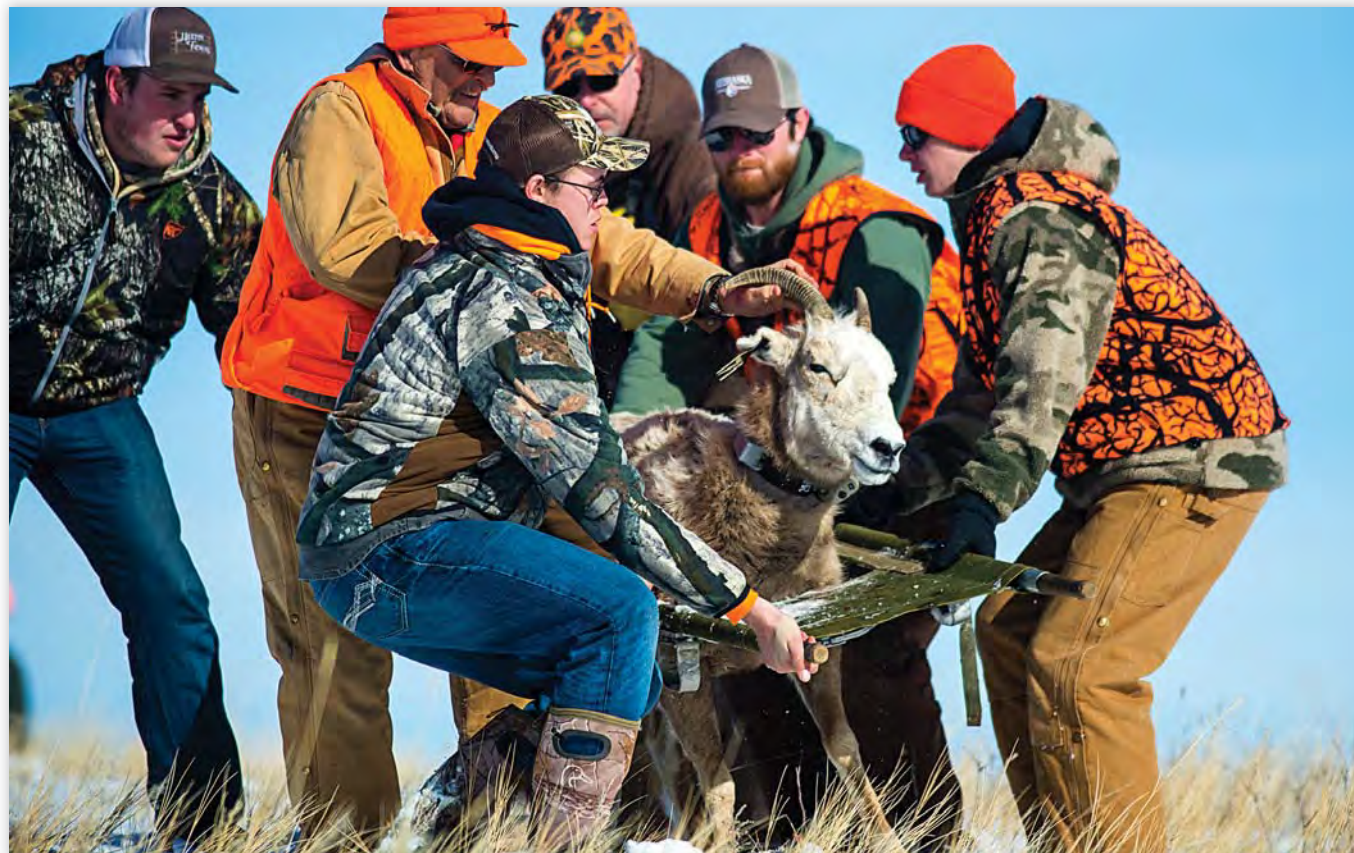
Professors agree the job market is competitive for graduates, but students who put forth solid effort and are flexible with geographic placement almost always find jobs – especially those who take the extra step and get a master's degree.

Many of the graduates are hired by land management and conservation agencies such as the Natural Resource Conservation Service, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, the U.S. Forest Service, Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited and the Bureau of Land Management.

Dustin Ranglack, professor at UNK, said the work is important regardless of the employer.

"Wildlife and fisheries are a public trust resource, meaning that they belong to all of us and are managed and conserved for the benefit of present and future generations," he said. "The status of wildlife and fisheries populations – how many there are, how fast they're growing, etc. – indicates the health of the environment in which we live."

Whether graduates become wildlife biologists, range conservationists, agriculture producers, or pretty much anything else, you can bet their education will serve them, and our planet, well. "One of my favorite students became a Catholic priest, which shows the breadth of influence that our students have after leaving our program," Powell said. "Can you imagine a person better prepared to talk about the stewardship of our earth?" ■



PHOTOS BY JUSTIN HAAG

Chadron State College students join Commission staff and volunteers to release a bighorn sheep ewe back to the wild after equipping it with a new radio collar near Chadron State Park this winter. Pictured are Nebraska Game and Parks Commissioner Rick Brandt; students Wyatt Helton, Josh Kling and Travis Millikan; and Commission staff members Todd Nordeen and Justin Powell.

BUY YOUR
FISHING
LICENSE TODAY.



PARENTS DON'T
FRAME
PICTURES OF THEIR
KID PLAYING
VIDEOGAMES.

OutdoorNebraska.org



TAKE ME FISHING™

NEBRASKA
— GAME PARKS —

Swarms of Locusts and Other Plagues

A folklorist's view of a scientific phenomena.

By Roger Welsch

When I was a tad, back in Paleolithic times, I may not have understood famine and plagues of frogs, but I sure got the idea when it came to clouds of locusts – with some misunderstanding on my part, to be sure, about exactly what was meant by “locusts.” I imagined those great, clunky beasts that shatter a summer’s night with their buzzing, slamming into Pharaoh’s armies and wiping them out by bodily impact alone. And heavens forfend, what if the attack came late afternoon along the Nile, say maybe August around 6 p.m., Central Standard Time?! The ear-ripping buzz would be enough to send anyone fleeing to the deepest depths of the pyramids. In fact, maybe that’s why they built them, I thought!

I was genuinely disappointed, if for no other reason in the fearsomeness of Pharaoh’s armies, when I found out the locusts in question were mere grasshoppers, which Tut or Rameses or one of those guys could easily have defeated with a counter force of a couple biddy hens and chicks. (When we made our permanent move out here to the edge of the Great American Desert in 1987, we were beset by grasshoppers. They ate all our flowers and shrubbery and even the curtains off the window in the outhouse. Seriously. We put two biddy hens and their chicks to work and soon grasshoppers were an endangered species and the chickens were foraging hundreds of yards away from the house searching for survivors. Linda and I got to the point where we felt sorry for the hoppers and protected a couple in jars full of foliage just in case they went totally extinct.)

Now, cicadas – that we called “locusts” in our primal innocence – are truly another beast, not as destructive perhaps as biblical locusts but no less creepy when you’re a kid. Like bumblebees, on those occasions when they attempt flight, it seems to be a kind of mad hurling of their massive



bodies into the air with utter abandon, without a lot of pre-planning for a safe landing or, for that matter, what lies in their direct trajectory. Like me. Being dive-bombed by a hell-bound cicada is not just an unpleasant surprise, it can be downright bruising.

And then there’s that “song” that shatters the peace of a summer evening for all the world like someone lighting up a chainsaw behind the shrubbery surrounding the patio just about the time I take that first sip of a cold gin and tonic and settle in to admire the calm of country living in Nebraska. Really? That’s an attractive ballad to other locusts? Well, there’s no accounting for taste: Linda likes country music and I still love her, so ... Well, there you are.

Despite their, uh – I’m trying to be kind here – bad manners, Bob Dylan vocals, and outright scary looks (Linda tells me), cicadas are remarkable creatures, exiting their earthly nurseries after long years of magical transformations in the moist, gloomy dark, leaving their creepy exoskeletons stuck to trees, walls, and, gulp, tool handles anywhere they decide to change their bony clothes.

Maybe part of my childhood misunderstandings about how much of a threat cicadas pose arose from the armies of cicada sheddings Billy Danek and I assembled in the Roger and Billy Garage Museum on South 12th Street in Lincoln. We scoured the neighborhood for cicada “shells” and gathered them into rival armies facing

off on the fields of some alien planet. An army of Star Wars robots is nothing compared to ranks and rows of cicada exoskeletons!

The science of the cicada is remarkable; for example, take a look at this one fact appearing in the Wikipedia entry for “cicada”: “It has been found that bacteria landing on the wing surface are not repelled, rather their membranes are torn apart by the nanoscale-sized spikes, making the wing surface the first-known biomaterial that can kill bacteria.”

I’m having second thoughts about that Pharaoh’s army thing!

Moreover, unlike crickets and a lot of other bugs, cicadas don’t vibrate or rasp body parts to make their “song” (which can be heard a mile away and can actually damage human hearing), which is to say, they don’t practice “stridulation” but instead “vibrate their drum-like tymbals.” Which brings us to yet another reason why I am a folklorist and not a scientist.

I prefer a good story to big words like “stridulation” and “tymbals.” A folktale in Dannebrog, where we live, tells of the elderly couple sitting on their front porch swing, enjoying the sounds of a small town summer evening ... cicadas and the church choir practicing just down a street a ways. Thinking of the hymn in the air, granny says, “Isn’t that the sweetest sound of summer?” Her less romantic husband, hearing only the cicadas, opines, “Yep. I hear they make that sound by rubbing their legs together.”

I think that was the occasion when Mrs. Nielsen punched Lars so hard she broke his arm. ■

Roger Welsch is an author, humorist, folklorist and a former essayist for CBS News Sunday Morning. He is the author of more than 40 books.



*Step back in time
to the late 1800s*



Bring your family, bring your friends and make plans to visit the **Nebraska Prairie Museum in Holdrege**. See original photos of the Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show and check out cars and implements from the turn of the century.

Hours: Mon-Fri, 9 am-5 pm • Sat-Sun, 1-5 pm

NEBRASKA PRAIRIE MUSEUM
OF THE PRAIRIE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

nebraskaprairie.org
308-995-5015
N Hwy 183 • Holdrege, NE

**TWELVE MILLION YEARS
PRESERVED IN ASH.
ONE NATIONAL LANDMARK
THAT'S ALWAYS EVOLVING.**

Ashfall Fossil Beds State Historical Park | ashfall.unl.edu
Located two miles west and six miles north of Royal, Nebraska.



N

**STAY & PLAY
IN SARPY
COUNTY!**



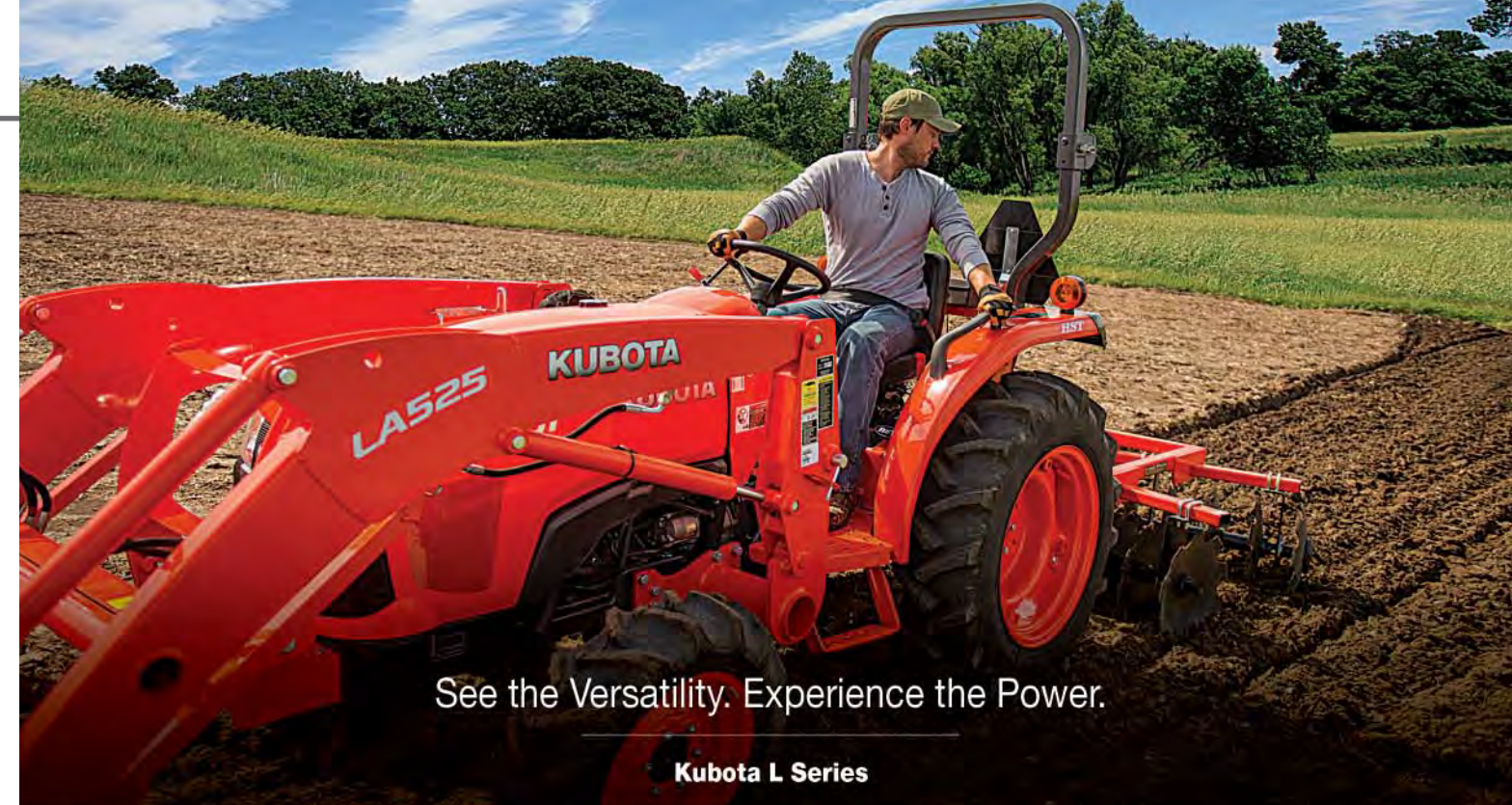
Offutt Air and Space Show
Aug. 11-12



Located a few minutes south of Omaha, Sarpy County awaits with a wonderful mix of fun things to see and do. Don't miss the 2018 Offutt AFB Air & Space Show, August 11-12. Or catch the Sarpy County Fair, 80 years in the making, August 1-5. And while you're here, spend the summer evening at one of our local wineries or breweries. Whatever you decide, stay and play and plan your getaway at **GoSarpy.com!**

Sarpy County
So Near, So FUN.

BELLEVUE • GRETNA • LA VISTA • PAPILLION • SPRINGFIELD • OFFUTT AIR FORCE BASE • OMAHA METRO



See the Versatility. Experience the Power.

Kubota L Series



It takes passion and dedication to build a productive property. Kubota's L Series was made for the job. Prep faster, plant easier and grow more with the versatile compact tractor that's engineered for power, comfort and convenience. Plus, choose from a full line of performance-matched attachments and implements today.

\$0 Down, 0% A.P.R. Financing for 60 Months*

Offering the area's most complete inventory of Kubota products since 1984.

**9317 S. 144th St.
Omaha, NE
402-895-6661**



*\$0 down, 0% A.P.R. financing for up to 60 months on purchases of select new Kubota L Series equipment from participating dealers' in-stock inventory is available to qualified purchasers through Kubota Credit Corporation, U.S.A.; subject to credit approval. Some exceptions apply. Example: 60 monthly payments of \$16.67 per \$1,000 financed. Offer expires 8/31/18. See us or go to KubotaUSA.com for more information. Optional equipment may be shown.





A Bucket of Turtles

Snappers in suburbia provide learning opportunities for all ages.

By Jeff Kurrus

“Jeff, I have a bucket for you to pick up,” the voice on the other end of the line said. “On my way,” I replied, having no idea what was actually in that bucket. But it didn’t matter. When Jarel Vinduska of Gretna calls me to pick up a bucket, or photograph shell-leaf penstemon, or take a look at the carp running up his creek channel, I get in the truck and go.

Vinduska has been a longtime friend of *NEBRASKAland Magazine*, having pointed me in the direction of many photo opportunities through the years, so the invite to his home was already a delightful call. Then he added to it. “Bring your kids,” he said.

When the three of us showed up at his house, he walked out the front door and grabbed a white bucket from his driveway. “Turtle eggs,” he said. My daughter Madeline clapped her hands as she looked into the bucket and saw a pile of dirt. “Spray the top of the dirt with water for the next week, and then watch what happens.”

“Jarel, how many are in there?” I asked.

“Twenty-six,” he replied. “I was moving dirt with the dozer and they started falling out of the pile near the pond.”

For the next six days, my kids did exactly what was asked of them, spraying the top of the dirt with a water bottle to keep the soil moist, and steadily watching the unmoving dirt.

Then, one evening after finishing another photoshoot, I checked in the bucket as I had every other day. On this night, there was a snapping turtle hatchling standing on top of the dirt,

the remains of its egg in a hole beneath it.

I ran through the house, not even seeming to question why I was as excited as I was, but was told by my wife Laura that I was not to wake up the kids. “If there are 25 other eggs in there, there will be plenty to see tomorrow,” she said.



She was right.

For the next two days, my kids, their friends, and these kids’ parents gathered around that white bucket repeatedly, searching for any inkling of movement from the earth. Each new hatchling was greeted with cheers as our little square of suburbia turned into something akin to what they’d see in a wildlife documentary.

And with these cheers came the questions: “How big do they get?” “Are they boys or girls?” “How long will they live?” and “Can they fit in their shells?” were some of the questions I received. Some of which I knew, and some I had to go to Nebraska Game and Parks Commission Education Specialist Monica Macoubrie to answer.

While these snapping turtle hatchlings were about the size of a golf ball, I knew that they could grow up to weigh more than 90 pounds and live for 100 years. Known for their aggression and ability to bite with their powerful, beak-like mouth, this turtle species cannot fit its head inside its shell at any point during its life. Thus, it “snaps” to defend itself.

Regarding its gender, Macoubrie passed along that differentiating is tough because males and females are about the same size, but the vent is much farther away from the edge of the plastron than that of the female.

I also received one other question throughout the coming days that I wanted the answer to: what was the sharp, white object on the tip of each turtle’s snout? “It’s what they call an ‘egg tooth,’” Macoubrie said. “This is a point on the hatchling’s snout used to break through the eggshell when hatching. After several days, it will fall

off.”

When given the answers, the growing number of neighborhood kids remained fascinated, and it is a fascination that had remained constant since last September when they saw the hatchlings for the first time.

Today, we still have 18 snapping turtles. They’ve been used in educational settings in multiple school districts and shown to seemingly every kid within a mile radius of our home. And they are, quite possibly, the easiest pet we’ve ever had.

Which is why we just can’t seem to release them back to Vinduska’s place like he has asked us to do when we’re done with them.

Because we’re not quite finished learning yet. ■

PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS

Our Best Defense is a Solid Offense

Nebraskans understand the importance of having a solid offense when it comes to football, volleyball and baseball. This theory applies to outdoor education as well.

As we face the fact that each new generation pulls in fewer hunters and outdoorsmen and women than the previous generation, we must try to preserve our hunting heritage.

The most effective way to fight this is by introducing young people to the outdoors. Whether it is through hiking, hunting, fishing, birdwatching, archery, or a simple walk on a trail, we must actively engage young people in outdoor activities.

Nebraska Safari Club International strives to develop programs that promote outdoor education along with preserving our hunting legacy. On June 9 the organization held its first annual “Take a Kid Outside” event at Pheasant Bonanza Hunt Club and Kennels. While at the event, young people were engaged in fishing, archery (thanks to

the Prairie Bowmen), dog retrieving and exhibition shooting.

Not without irony, the volunteers had more fun than the kids, or so it seemed! Young people were eager to tell their fishing tales as each child caught a fish. The youngsters had an equal amount of enthusiasm working with the retrieving dogs and were enthralled with the shooting exhibition.

Our fight to build our hunting community can be won by taking interest in our young people. If you would like to be part of a dynamic organization that promotes youth hunting and outdoor education,

please consider joining Safari Club International and/or attending a local chapter event. ■

For more information, visit nebraskasafariclubint.com or call Mary L. Middleton at 402-214-8270.



The “Take a Kid Outside” event was held at the Pheasant Bonanza Hunt Club and Kennels. Young people were engaged in archery as well as many other outdoor activities.

Mary L. Middleton
Nebraska Chapter
13404 Carpenter St.
Omaha, NE 68138



SCI

FIRST FOR HUNTERS



402-214-8270

nebraskasafariclubint.com





◀ Steve Van Meter, my dad (on the left), and Sam Spearman with a stringer of catfish caught on the Platte River south of Wood River back in 1974. Steve went to high school in Arapahoe, and Sam was originally from Ainsworth. They became friends while attending Kearney State Teacher's College. Steve went on to a long career as Elementary Principal at Gibbon, Nebraska, while Sam spent most of his career teaching elementary physical education with Papillion Public Schools. Steve was a lifetime hunter and fisherman, and while he is no longer with us, he passed on that love of the outdoors to me and my daughters.

– Nate Van Meter, Bennet, Nebraska

▼ A unique glimpse of Indian Cave back on Oct. 28, 1905, complete with carvings and petroglyphs.

Standing (right) is Emma Miller, my aunt. Standing (left) is Caroline Greenwald Miller (sister-in-law of Emma). The woman seated is a family friend, Edna Weber. All three were from Falls City and drove a buggy to Indian Cave that day for an adventure.

– Fred Miller, Walton, 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. Text may be edited and photos adjusted for reproduction. All photos will be returned.

Hunters Helping the Hungry

Your tax-deductible donation will help reduce hunger in Nebraska.

Learn more at OutdoorNebraska.org/HHH

Celebrating our 5th year

DASH FOR THE Splash TRIATHLON

Sidney Regional Medical Center

Check out our special anniversary offer!

Saturday, Aug 4, 2018
Sidney NE

250 meter SWIM • 8 mile BIKE • 2 mile RUN

Celebrating our 5th year, registration is FREE! Registration is required to participate, race details include:

- Race Time: 7:30 am
- Race Location: Sidney Aquatic Center/Deadwood Trail
- Individual and Team Registration for ages 14 & up
- Kid's Triathlon for ages 8-13 (individual and team)
- Registration closes Aug 1, sorry no race-day registration
- Registration forms are available at Sidney Regional Medical Center, Cheyenne County Community Center and online at: GetMeRegistered.com

• For volunteer opportunities, contact Kristin Narjes at 308.254.5825

• Questions? Email dashforthesplash@gmail.com

Proceeds go toward health and wellness programs for our community

[Sidney Regional Medical Center](http://SidneyRegionalMedicalCenter.org)

Facebook

So Much to Do!

DOWNTOWN SOUNDS in Hickory 2018

Brought to you by the Cheyenne County Chamber of Commerce & the City of Sidney

17 Southern Fried

Southern Fried is one of the hottest Rocky Mountain Country Music acts! Nominated for Album of the Year and Songwriter of the Year by the RMCMA.

6:30 pm-9:30 pm

Concerts are free!

Sponsored by **VIAERO WIRELESS**

cityofsidney.org
sidneycheyennecountytourism.com

HISTORIC DOWNTOWN SIDNEY, NEBRASKA

CHEYENNE COUNTY NEBRASKA

SIDNEY
FOOTER
LOUISIANA
LOUISIANA

The Frank & Mabel Ehlers Addition

Legacy of Commission employee lives on in public trust.

By Justin Haag



Frank Ehlers, shown here during one of the Commission's early bighorn sheep captures, was a longtime Commission employee based at Ponderosa Wildlife Management Area – which now features an addition with his name.

Hunters and others exploring a portion of creekbottom at Ponderosa Wildlife Management Area near Crawford do so as part of the legacy of a Nebraska Game and Parks Commission employee who once lived on that land.

The easily accessible 40-acre “Frank & Mabel Ehlers Addition” to the wildlife area includes more than a quarter-mile of Squaw Creek, the coldwater stream that runs below towering cottonwoods and other deciduous trees. The property, which was added to the Ponderosa in 2016, pays tribute to longtime fixtures in the Ponderosa neighborhood.

Not long after the Commission

purchased the Ponderosa in 1965, Ehlers was hired to join Gary Schlichtemeier and Lon Lemmon to manage the property and other wildlife areas in the Pine Ridge. He worked for the Commission from 1967 to his retirement in 1986. Frank and Mabel died in 1993 and 2006, respectively.

Ehlers became known for his ingenuity at building traps and other tools for wildlife management projects. He had a reputation for working hard, in spite of not joining the Commission until he was 50 years old.

“Frank didn’t have a lot of formal education, but he was an absolute engineer,” Lemmon said.

The Ehlers also had a deep affection for wildlife, especially the hundreds of

wild turkeys that thrived on their place.

“Frank and Mabel loved the land, and Frank loved his job,” said Greg Schenbeck, who recently retired as a land manager for the Commission.

The Ehlers property, along with a 320-acre school lease, has increased the size of the wildlife area from its original 3,660 acres to 4,020. The family, which includes children Sharyn and Roy, donated a portion of the addition. The National Wild Turkey Federation provided funding for the purchase and Cameco Resources released its uranium interests in the land.

More information about the wildlife area may be found starting on page 42 of this month’s *NEBRASKAland*. ■

Antelope Creek
Wildlife & Ponds

605.660.6566
antelopecreekwp.com

Wildlife, Habitat,
Pond, Fishery & Land
Management

Expert Service from Brett Kleinschmit

Osage Taxidermy
Nebraska's Premier Taxidermy Studio
Custom trophy room design and service

Assisting in all your Hunting Destinations
in Africa, New Zealand and Alaska.

Mike PeBeck Importer/Exporter
402.984.0855 Hastings, Nebraska

osagetaxidermy.com

**SAVE UP
TO 20%**

when you buy a 3- or 5-year
hunting permit



GET YOUR PERMIT ONLINE AT
OutdoorNebraska.org

NEBRASKA
— GAME PARKS —

Pond-Tini
Mid-Summer Sale

Prices
starting
at \$4,199

You Tube 800-657-2184 • www.pondtini.com

f



Here's Your Sign

Sometimes nature sends obvious signs about what a person should not touch. Cacti, yucca plants, porcupines and rattlesnakes have signals akin to a flashing billboard. Then there are more devious dangers such rash-inducing urushiol on unassuming poison ivy plants. I am not sure where the subject of the following story fits into that spectrum, but I now know I should have been paying a little closer attention to some signs.

"Ohhh, look at the fuzzy caterpillar," my 10-year-old daughter Kiera said with excitement, as the striking yellow-green specimen with a conspicuous series of black spikes of hair on its back marched down a tree trunk at our Fort Robinson State Park campsite.

I am no entomologist, but the talent scout in me took one glance at this peculiar looking larva and knew it was destined to become a model. I let the caterpillar crawl on to my hand to keep it from escaping the scene — so focused on getting photos that I did not quite catch some words Kiera was relating to me about many caterpillars being poisonous. I detained the fuzzy creature long enough for an impromptu photo shoot.

After photos, I searched the Internet for "yellow green caterpillar

with spikes." I soon learned the American dagger moth (*Acronicta americana*) caterpillar has an incredible characteristic I wish I had known a few minutes earlier. It's poisonous.

"That's what I said!" Kiera exclaimed, as her dad stood in front of the popup camper reading excerpts from the article with a dumb look on his face. Yes, at that point I realized those spikes on the caterpillar's back, and the words from my daughter, might have been trying to tell me something.

Remarkably, the hairs of the dagger moth caterpillar are hollow and contain toxins that cause a reaction on a person's skin when they break off. It is more of a delayed thing like poison ivy than an instant sting like a bee or wasp, so there is no immediate deterrent to keep a person from handling the caterpillar.

Oh, but I figured I was in the clear because I was careful to not mess up the caterpillar's hair for its big-time photo shoot. No petting, no coddling, just a hike up and down my arm. It was not long, however, until the itching commenced and a little red rash appeared on my index finger at the point the caterpillar climbed aboard. Nothing major, for sure, but an annoyance.

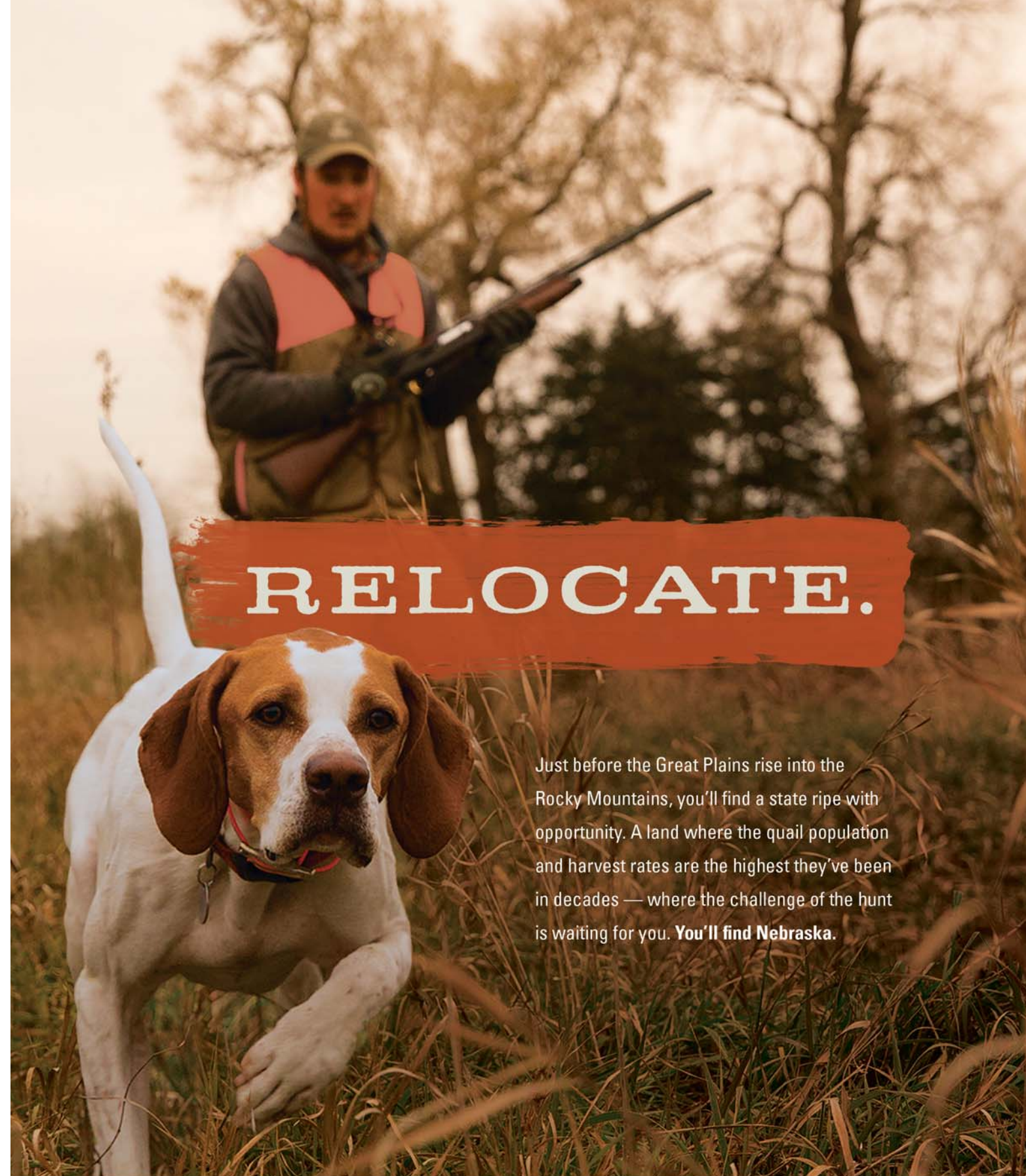
I know what you are thinking; it serves me right. One should always be careful handling things they do not know about regardless of how fuzzy they appear or how cool the photos will look.

A little later, after our attention had turned from the caterpillar to other campsite business, a brutal scene caught my attention from the corner of my eye. A ferocious predator to the insect world, a *Turdus migratorius* (commonly known as the American robin) was mercilessly pecking away at the same caterpillar that had just been the subject of my photos. Whether or not that bird had a nasty case of heartburn later, I do not know. Maybe my daughter knows.

I guess that caterpillar, similar to me, had to learn a lesson the hard way that day: It's a jungle out there. ■

This article originally appeared on the NEBRASKAland Magazine blog "Afield and Afloat."

Justin Haag
August 18, 2016



RELOCATE.

Just before the Great Plains rise into the Rocky Mountains, you'll find a state ripe with opportunity. A land where the quail population and harvest rates are the highest they've been in decades — where the challenge of the hunt is waiting for you. **You'll find Nebraska.**

HUNT NEBRASKA QUAIL | OCTOBER 27, 2018 - JANUARY 31, 2019

Begin your adventure today and get your permit at HuntNebraskaQuail.com

NEBRASKA
— GAME  PARKS —