



A white-tailed deer rests in the shade of a woodland bed at Indian Cave State Park.
Photo by Eric Fowler.

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INSIDE
Life at the Fort • Kids Who Fish
Nebraska's Underdog Birds • Lewis & Clark SRA
A Lincoln Highway History • Permits for Life • Saltdog Summers



NEBRASKAland

Volume 91 • No. 5 • June 2013

FEATURES

14 Life on Soapsuds Row

This story of historical fiction details life at Nebraska's Fort Atkinson in 1823.

TEXT BY DOMINIQUE WORTHING, PHOTOS BY BOBBI ANDERSON

20 Through a Child's Eyes

Nothing is more genuine than the smile on a child's face when they're fishing. By JEFF KURRUS

24 Know Your Grassland Birds

These prairie underdogs are worth looking for and learning about. TEXT AND PHOTOS BY CHRIS HELZER

30 A Night at the Old Ballpark

Evenings with the Lincoln Saltdogs at Haymarket Park are a treat. TEXT BY JERRY KANE, PHOTOS BY JEFF KURRUS

34 The Lincoln Highway - A Centennial Celebration

Construction of the country's first transcontinental highway began a century ago. By JULIE GEISER

38 As I Grow Up

With a youth lifetime hunting permit and a \$5 turkey permit, 13-year old Jaci Tubbs is starting a passion that will last a lifetime. TEXT AND PHOTOS BY JEFF KURRUS

40 Lewis & Clark - A Summer Profile

Less than three hours from both Lincoln and Omaha, Lewis & Clark SRA offers visitors lots, or little, to do.

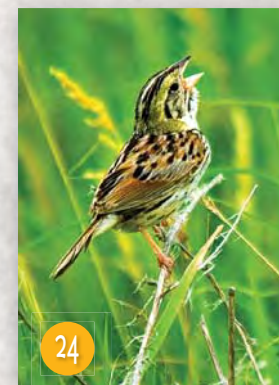
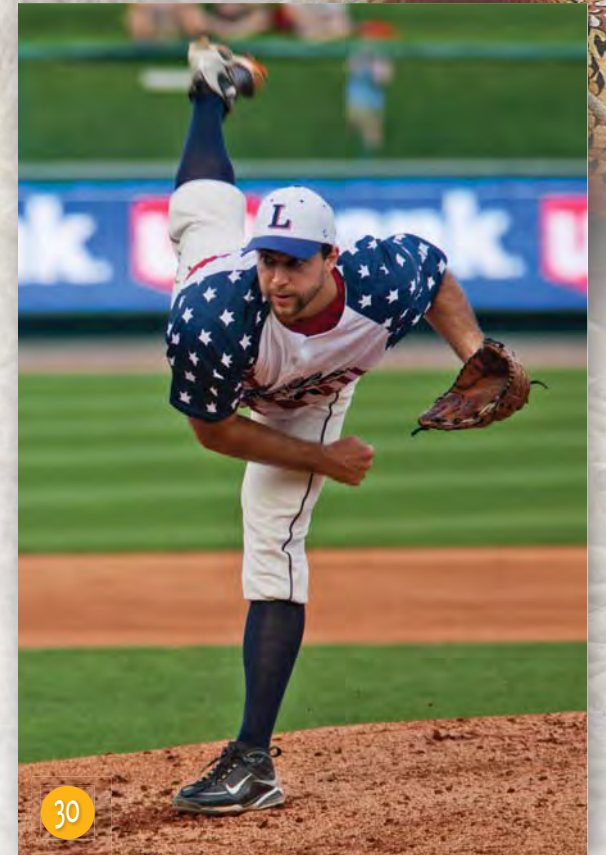
TEXT AND PHOTOS BY JEFF KURRUS

DEPARTMENTS

Comment.....	4
Mixed Bag.....	8
Nature Notes	44
In the Kitchen	45
Classifieds	46
Portraits from the Past	48
Book Review	49
The Last Stop.....	50

Cover: All ages enjoy the outdoor activities Nebraska offers, including swimming at Eugene T. Mahoney State Park (SP), watching living history at Fort Atkinson (see page 14) and visiting Lewis & Clark Lake (see page 40). Photo by Jeff Kurrus. **Opposite:** Tour wrangler Olivia Joyce of Crawford cozies up with dog Belle at Fort Robinson SP. Photo by Mark Harris.

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First Elk

My son, Zac, is 12 and this year was his first putting in for a Nebraska elk tag, and he had very good fortune with this bull. Elk hunting has been huge in my family for years, and Zac is the fourth generation in our family to field dress an elk with my grandpa's knife.

It's very cool to see Nebraska's youth in the outdoors. Zac is quite an accomplished hunter for turkey, deer, and antelope – he lives for it. Seems like only yesterday I was carrying my 3-year-old on my shoulders up and down the river as he watched me set traps and tell me what I did wrong. Funny thing was, a few times even at that age he was right.

Jess Hurlbert
Holdrege, Nebraska

NEBRASKAland Flashback Identified

I don't remember what the lion said back then but I was taken aback when I saw that the young shirtless man was none other than my kid brother, Marty Henderson, now residing in Texas.

Ron Peterson
Cortland, NE

NEBRASKAland Visitor Letters

We want to thank all 70 readers who sent e-mails and letters for last issue's visitor, a **nymph grasshopper**, that was on **page 52** (see page 13 for the winner, rules and this issue's hint).

Hello from the Inland Empire of the Pacific Northwest! My **NEBRASKAland** just arrived. I so love



Richard Wright of Lincoln photographed this white pelican at Stagecoach Lake.



Marion Ball of Arlington, Nebraska recently shot this photo of a banded goose near the nest at Summit Lake SRA near Tekamah.

the pictures and stories. They bring back such good memories of Waco, which is hometown for this Idahoan. I haven't been able to find the 'visitor' in the last few months, but today it looks like you have a grasshopper on page 52 at the bottom right.

Thanks again for bringing Nebraska back to my house.

Dennis Tracy
Grangeville, Idaho

The visitor is a narrow-winged sand grasshopper on page 52 in the bottom right hand corner. I have been getting this magazine for a couple of years now and it is always getting better. I really liked the stories about the bighorn sheep and the follow-ups.

Tad Naiberk
David City, Nebraska

You probably already know that UNL has a 142 page pdf publication called "Grasshoppers of Nebraska." You can Google it for free and it gives descriptions, range maps, pictures of the adult hoppers and other good stuff.

John Hannah
Columbus, Nebraska

Grasshoppers (and this grasshopper nymph) are common insects in Nebraska, with nearly 100 species found throughout the state. While a nuisance pest to the average homeowner, grasshopper feeding can result in serious damage to crops and pastures. The grasshoppers that swarmed the prairies in the late 1800s were devastating to the settlers, wiping out crops and denuding pastures.

Their populations and the amount of damage caused can fluctuate greatly from year to year, depending on environmental conditions. Cool, wet weather in spring can cause nymph die-off, while dry conditions may result in larger populations and greater feeding damage.

Grasshoppers have three life stages: egg, nymph (immature), and adult. Most grasshoppers overwinter in the egg stage, though some overwinter as nymphs. Females lay their eggs in the soil in late summer or fall, and nymphs emerge in spring and immediately begin to feed. Nymphs then go through several molts before becoming adults, continuing to feed. However, homeowners often do not notice damage, or high grasshopper numbers, until mid to late summer, when grasshoppers move

into yards as they leave drying pastures and fields.



Special thanks to Julie Van Meter, State Entomologist, Nebraska Department of Agriculture. Visitor image by Chris Helzer.

www.bugguide.net is a good site for identification

Send your comments to:
Jeff Kurrus, Associate Editor
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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 for clarity. Photographs are welcome and will be returned.

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Nebraska Wildlife Crimestoppers 1-800-742-7627

See You Out There



www.OutdoorNebraska.org

NEBRASKA OUTDOOR U!

www.outdooru.org

Nebraska Outdoor U!

By Olivia Johnson

Nebraskans wanting to learn more about the outdoors now have an opportunity that's more accessible than ever before. Nebraska Outdoor U! is a free, web-based, hands-on learning opportunity available to anyone interested in developing and improving his or her outdoor skills.

Launched in January of 2012 by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension, NOU! grew from the Commission's 20-year plan to recruit, develop and retain (RDR) hunters and anglers, and had enrolled 1,800 by the end of the year. The program operates with four paths of study: hunting, camping, fishing and shooting sports. Scott Stuhr, who has been developing the program since 2009, describes it as a self-study school class. "We have some learning opportunities online and then have some quizzes thrown in to celebrate the new knowledge," he said. "Then it is up to the participant to get involved outdoors, but we do try to get people involved in the programs that are already out there."

Participants' progress is tracked online and when a level is completed they receive an incentive to congratulate them and to keep their motivation flowing. There are six levels in each pathway, and people can sign up for the program at any time. NOU! works to cater to all ages and ability levels, and participants can work at their own pace and choose how far they go in the program.

Stuhr couldn't be any more passionate about the development and future of this program. "There are major health benefits to being outdoors, and habitat development requirements built into the program to benefit our natural resources," he said. "The program allows people to try something they haven't before, or just get more involved in spending time outdoors. It is great for families and groups to do together. The benefits are endless."

For further information and to enroll in NOU!, visit the program's website at OutdoorU.org. ■

See You Out There... But Where?



Do you know where this Nebraska photograph was taken?
See answer at the bottom of page 13.

PHOTOS BY JEFF KURRUS

Wanahoo Pike Survey



By Jeff Kurrus

Northern pike were first stocked in Lake Wanahoo in 2010, and from recent survey results they are doing quite well. During a one-week period in March, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission fisheries biologists and volunteers used trap nets to capture 828 pike. Most of the northern pike captured were 23 to 24 inches, but some pike reaching 34 inches were seen.

The captured northern pikes were tagged to obtain a population estimate, and to estimate growth and survival in Lake Wanahoo. Biologists estimate there are currently 1,745 northern pikes in Lake Wanahoo, with the growth and survival estimates to come once the data is analyzed.

Northern pike are catch and release at Lake Wanahoo and the use of live bait is prohibited at the lake. If you catch a tagged northern at Lake Wanahoo, please leave the tag in the fish and record the tag number. Tag numbers can be reported to ngpc.fishtags@nebraska.gov or 402-471-7647. ■

2013 Habitat Tours

TOUR TOPICS	DATE & TIME	TOUR LOCATION
Cedar Tree Removal for Recreation & Wildlife	May 16, 2013 9:30 am - 2:30 pm	Camp Moses Merrill 2849 Rd 31 • Linwood, NE
Wildflower Hike	May 18, 2013 10:00 am-11:00 am MST	Wildcat Hills Nature Center located 6 miles south of Gering, NE
National Pollinator Week		
Understanding the birds and the trees: Where does quality habitat come from?	June 18, 2013 8:00 am - 1:00 pm	Summit Lake State Recreation Area • Tekamah, NE South boat ramp, near the beach and picnic area
Chapter helps Improve habitat on Local Wildlife Management Area	June 19, 2013 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm	Triple Creek WMA (South of Palmyra)
Pollinators and Pollinator Habitats	June 20, 2013 9:00 am - 3:00 pm	Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center 11700 SW 100th St • Denton, NE
Pollinator Research Efforts on CRP	June 20, 2013 9:00 am - 2:00 pm	Franklin County Fairgrounds Franklin, NE
Southwest Nebraska Area Habitat	June 21, 2013 10:00 am—2:00 pm MST	Mid-Plains Community College 1324 Broadway • Imperial NE
Co-existence of Pheasants, Quail & Agriculture	June 27, 2013 10:00 am - 3:00 pm	Lexington Public Library 907 N Washington • Lexington, NE
Turkey Habitat & Management	June 27, 2013 10:00 am - 3:00 pm	Myrtle Hall WMA 82267 445th Avenue • Sargent, NE
Managing your CRP and other wildlife habitats	June 28, 2013 11:00 am - 4:00 pm	UNL West Central Research & Extension Center WCREC Auditorium • 402 W State Farm Rd • North Platte, NE
Habitat Management & Restoration for Upland Birds	July 9, 2013 10:00 am - 3:00 pm	Nebraska One Box Shooting Complex Broken Bow, NE
Making your farm or ranch operation work with wildlife	July 9, 2013 9:30 am - 3:00 pm	Red Will 4-H Building 1400 West 5th • McCook, NE
Habitat Hayrack Ride: CRP Upgrades and Long Term Management	July 11, 2013 2:00 pm - 8:00 pm	886 Rd and Hwy 15 NE of Hartington, NE
Fire in the Pine Ridge	July 11, 2013 9:00 am - 2:00 pm MST	Chadron State Park shelter by the fishing pond • Chadron, NE
Range Management	July 11, 2013 9:30 am - 3:00 pm	North Platte Community College 1101 Halligan Drive • North Platte, NE
Upgrading & Managing CRP for Grassland Birds, Pollinator Habitat & Plant ID Tour	August 15, 2013 11:00 am - 3:00 pm	Smith Family Ranch • 48832 Ave. 894 Rd Holt County • off Hwy 281, NW of O'Neill
6th Annual Rangeland Management Workshop	August 16, 2013 9:00 am - 3:00 pm	Mid-Plains Community College 2520 West Hwy 2 • Broken Bow, NE

Landowner Tours for Better Habitat!

Wildlife Biologists from across the state will be hosting a series of Habitat Tours this year. Tours are designed to demonstrate habitat management practices, available conservation programs, how to create the best results on your next habitat project and much more.

Like Nebraska PF on Facebook

For more tour details & to register, please visit:

www.NebraskaPF.com or call Pam at 308-850-8395





Mixed Bag

Travelogue

by Julie Geiser

Paxton

In the Middle of the Fun

Whether you're fresh from the field or the water – or simply passing through west-central Nebraska – **Paxton** has plenty of history and fun for the family.

Ole's Big Game Steakhouse and Lounge – View the exotic animal mounts at Ole's Big Game Steakhouse and Lounge taken by its founder, Rosser "Ole" Herstedt, while you enjoy breakfast, lunch or supper.

Sutherland Reservoir – Only 17 miles east of Paxton, this 3,000-acre reservoir features migrating wildlife in the spring, upland and waterfowl hunting in the fall, and fishing and camping all year. Also bring your clubs for the nearby 9-hole Oregon Trail Golf Course.

Windy Gap Grill – This historic pass divides the North and South Platte River valleys. It was created by the wagon wheels of Kinkaiders who settled in the Sandhills north of Paxton, trying to make a new start on parcels of land given to them by the government. Also stop at the Windy Gap Grill and its rib eye steaks cut fresh daily.

5 Trails Winery – "The Fun Starts at 5!" is owner John Gamet's slogan. With wine tasting and purchasing on-site as well as meats, cheeses, pizza, and chocolate to enhance your tasting experience, he's telling the truth.

Peppers and More Smokehouse – For the road, drop in and try some of the best home-smoked sausages and cheese around and take some snacks on your way out of town.

Lake McConaughy – Camp for a day or vacation for a week, Nebraska's largest lake is only 20 minutes away from Paxton. While summertime is usually for fishing, boating or relaxing on the beach, also think about visiting the Bald Eagle Viewing Center at Lake Ogallala just below Lake Mac this upcoming fall.

Don't let Paxton be a drive-through town. Stop, eat, and see what this little jewel has to offer. You might be surprised.



The Windy Gap Bar & Grill

PHOTO BY JULIE GEISER



Inside at Ole's

PHOTO BY JULIE GEISER



Sailing at Lake Mac

PHOTO BY ERIC FOWLER



Send Us Your Trail Cam Photos!



Clint Burge set up his camera at the backwaters of the family farm between Cheney and Walton and captured this coyote photo on April 6, 2012, at 7:05 A.M.

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

Old Lenses

Bob Grier

Looking closely at photography blogs on the internet, there seems to be a quiet but growing realization that film and digital cameras may come and go as the technology rapidly changes, but good lenses can stand the test of time. All photographers should make note of this.

Even the least expensive interchangeable lens digital cameras available today often use that same brand's pre-digital lenses. Perhaps surprising, many older film camera lenses are available on the used market at reasonable prices, and inexpensive lens mount adapters are now available that allow photographers to mix and match lenses and cameras brands.



PHOTO BY BOB GRIER

This winter, on a trip to the Grand Canyon in Arizona, I carried one of these so-called "legacy" lenses from the early 1980s. The 28-year old lens, a Minolta 28mm-135mm zoom, is an A mount – the same lens mount as the latest line of Sony camera bodies. The lens offers full auto focus and auto exposure, and is substantially less expensive than buying new glass for that brand of camera.

Having several older lenses in the bag provides a way to save a dollar or two, but even better is the satisfaction of using a nearly 30-year old optic that has stood the test of time and continues to produce excellent sharpness, contrast and beautiful colors. ■

There's so much to

discover at the Plainsman Museum

Journey through time

in our village setting of 17 businesses, homes, a jail and a sod house to get a feel for what the 'good ol' days' were really like!

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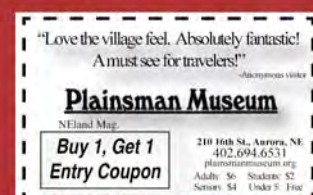




PHOTO BY LOWELL ROEBER, PAPIO-MISSOURI RIVER NRD

New Lake, Recreation Area Coming Soon in Dakota County

By Jenny Nguyen

Northeastern Nebraska currently awaits an exciting new project in Dakota County. Known as the Pigeon/Jones Creek Watershed, the \$17 million Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District (NRD) project will provide numerous recreational opportunities to residents in addition to curbing the community's longtime challenges with sedimentation, erosion and flooding. The project accounts for a total of 20,316 acres and is projected to open to the public by spring of 2016.

Terry Schumacher, Land and Water Programs Coordinator of the Papio-Missouri River NRD, said, "It's a multi-purpose project. You're getting the flood control and the sedimentation control, but you're also getting the recreation, habitat and the fisheries. And I think you're going to see a lot of use out of the site once it's completed."

Named after local outstanding conservationist Vince Kramper, Kramper Lake is one of the project's main recreational features. With 228 acres of water and a surrounding park of 595 acres, recreational opportunities at Kramper Lake will include

"no-wake" boating, fishing, five miles of hiking and biking trails, 10 miles of equestrian trails and separate RV, equestrian and tent campgrounds; hunting opportunities are still in question. Reminiscent of the hilly Danish homeland of immigrants who originally settled in the area, the NRD Board of Directors voted to name the surrounding park the Danish Alps Recreational Area.

Fishing opportunities will include largemouth bass, bluegill, black crappie, catfish and walleye, with a handicapped-accessible fishing pier as one of the lake's special features. As a partner, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission has contributed \$825,000 of Sport Fish Restoration and Motor Boat Access Program funds into the project. Other partners include the Nebraska Natural Resources Commission, the Nebraska Environmental Trust, the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality and Dakota County.

"You don't talk to too many people around here who aren't excited about this project," said Lowell Roeber, the Pigeon Jones Watershed Coordinator of the Papio-Missouri River NRD. "It brings something that benefits a lot of different people. There were some who

weren't exactly excited about getting rid of ground, but the benefits below the project in the [Missouri River] bottomlands for the general public and the local town of Hubbard due to the recreation coming in – they're all pretty excited." ■



Register for the Run Wild 10K for adults or 1-mile children's fun run at Mahoney State Park on June 1 at RunWildNe.org. Gear up with your own antlers and tail, with proceeds benefitting the Nebraska Wildlife Conservation Fund.

PHOTO BY ERIC FOWLER

Boiled Omelets

Eric Fowler

For no good reason, I hate doing dishes when I'm camping. Well, to be honest, I hate doing them when I'm home, too. But since I go camping to relax, it's usually cereal or rolls or something else cold to start the day. That changed at a Cub Scout campout a few years ago, when I learned how to cook an omelet with no cleanup required: Just boil it in a Ziploc bag.

Yes, I know: I was late to the boiled omelet party. But for those who are even later than me, it's amazingly simple.

Start by bringing a kettle of water to a boil over the campfire or cook stove. If you're in a hurry, bring your turkey fryer. While you're waiting, crack eggs into a freezer bag, seal the bag and scramble the eggs. Open it back up and add whatever ingredients you like in your omelet: bacon, sausage, ham, cheese, onions, green peppers ... you name it. Squeeze the air out of the bag, seal it, mix it up, toss it in the boiling water and watch it float as it cooks.



PHOTO BY ERIC FOWLER

Boiled omelets don't look as appetizing as one you might get at your favorite greasy spoon. But this method isn't about presentation, it's about not doing dishes in camp.

The great thing about this recipe is not only can everyone get their omelet made-to-order, you can cook them all at once, as long as you have a pot big enough.

How long it takes to cook your omelet will vary. One egg and a little cheese, something you might get a finicky Cub Scout to eat, could be done in 5 minutes. Add four or five eggs and the works like I do and it might take 10 or 15 minutes. Use tongs or a gloved hand to grab the edge of the bag and

pull it out. I don't like runny eggs, so when it's firm, it's done. If you want to double check, open the bag and cut through the center of the eggs to test it.

When it is ready, cut the bag open and dump the contents on a paper plate, eat it with a plastic fork and wash it down with a plastic cup of milk or juice. When you're finished, toss it all in the trash and go fishing. Because like I said, I hate doing dishes. Especially when there is dinner to catch. ■

News From the Field

- Clean, Drain & Dry - boaters and anglers are reminded to help keep Nebraska's water free of invasive species like zebra mussels by practicing three simple steps. First, when you leave the water, take time to clean any weeds and mud off the outside of your boat, motor and anchor. Second, be sure to drain all water out of all live wells, boat wells and bilge pumps. Third, allow dry out time for your boat before returning to a lake.

- Fishing for Millions - through July 7, 2013, anglers who catch specially tagged fish can receive merchandise and cash worth up to \$2 million at the following Nebraska waters: Box Butte, Calamus, Harlan County, Lake McConaughy, Merritt, Sherman, Summit, Wagon Train, Walnut Creek, and Wehrspann. Visit Cabelas.com to register.

- Cornhusker Trapshoot - visit Cornhusker-Trap.com for a list of winners of this 2013 competition and its record 2,253 participants. ■

DuckDawg Retrievers

A good dog makes all the difference

UpClosePhoto

www.DuckDawg.com

Upcoming Events

by Jerry Kane

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

June 1

Run Wild 10k Run
E.T. Mahoney State Park (SP), RunWildNe.org

Cowboy Trail
Bridge Ribbon Cutting.
Norfolk, 9:00 a.m.

Family Fishing Event
Yanney Park Lake, Kearney,
10:30 a.m.-1 p.m.

Scheels 3-D Archery
Tournament
Ponca SP, Ponca,
402-755-2284

Fishing is Fun Water Expo
Lake McConaughy State
Recreation Area (SRA),
Ogallala, 308-284-8800

Big Mac Shut Up and Fish
Walleye Tournament
Lake McConaughy SRA,
Ogallala, 308-355-2321

In the Spirit of
Children Fish and Chip
Tournament
Willow Creek SRA, Pierce,
402-329-4053

June 1-2
Living History Weekend
Fort Atkinson State
Historical Park (SHP), Fort
Calhoun, 402-468-5066

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

June 3
Pistol League
Platte River SP, Louisville,
6-9 p.m.,
christy.christiansen@nebraska.gov or
402-471-5547

June 4
Family Fishing Event
Skyview Lake, Norfolk,
6-8 p.m.

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

June 5
Beyond BOW
Handgun Class: Introduction
to Handguns.
Platte River SP, Louisville,
6-9 p.m., christy.christiansen@nebraska.gov or
402-471-5547

June 7

Big Game App
Final day of first big game
application period.

June 7-9
Intertribal Gathering
Fort Robinson SP, Crawford,
308-665-2900

June 8
Wild About Raptors
Workshop
Wildcat Hills Nature Center,
Gering, 308-436-3777

Nebraska High School
Bowhunter 3-D
Championships
Norfolk Archery Range,
402-368-5588/402-329-4500

National Park Service
Outdoor Event
Niobrara SP, Niobrara, all
day, 402-857-3373

Craft Fair
Johnson Lake SRA
Elwood, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.,
308-785-2685

June 12
Family Fishing Event
Fremont Lakes SRA No. 3,
Fremont, 6-8 p.m.

Beyond BOW
Handgun Class: Women's
Handguns.
Platte River SP, Louisville,
6-9 p.m., christy.christiansen@nebraska.gov or
402-471-5547

June 13
Family Fishing Event
Benson Park Pond, Omaha,
6-8 p.m.

June 14
Ash Hollow Historical
Pageant
Ash Hollow SHP, Wellen,
308-778-5651

National Park Service
Campground Program
Niobrara SP, 402-857-3373

June 14-15
Family Fish and Camp
Memphis SRA, Memphis,
6-8 p.m.

Becoming an Outdoors-
Family Workshop
Memphis SRA, Memphis,

christy.christiansen@nebraska.gov or 402-471-5547

June 15
Psychowpath Mountain
Bike Series
Ponca SP, Ponca,
Psyowpath.com

Chadron SP Anniversary
Day
Chadron, 308-432-6167

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

June 15-16
Bugs and Bones
Weekend
Ponca SP, Ponca,
402-755-2284

June 16
Father's Day Fish Fry
Ponca SP, Ponca, 11:30 a.m.-
1 p.m., 402-755-2284

Father's Day Fishing
Tournament
Niobrara SP, Niobrara,
402-857-3373

3-D Archery Shoot
Lake McConaughy SRA,
308-289-6509

Father's Day Buffet
Fort Robinson SP,
308-665-2900

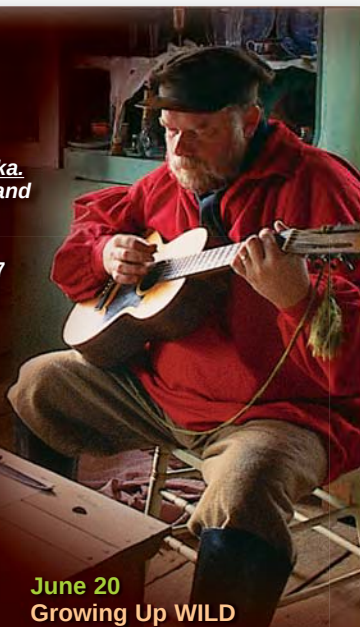
June 17-21
Shooting Skills Camp
For ages 11-15.
South Central 4-H Center,
Republican City,
402-471-6144

June 18
Pony Express Re-ride
Fort Kearny SRA, Kearney,
308-865-5305

Family Fishing Event
Walnut Creek Reservoir,
Papillion, 6-8 p.m.

June 19
Family Fishing Event
Bowling Lake, Lincoln,
6-8 p.m.

Beyond BOW
Handgun Class: Cleaning and
Sighting in.
Platte River SP, Louisville,
6-9 p.m., christy.christiansen@nebraska.gov or
402-471-5547



June 20

Growing Up WILD
Workshop
Atonement Lutheran Church,
4530 N. 85th St., Omaha,
7-9 p.m., lindsay.rogers@nebraska.gov

June 22
Carp-O-Rama
Pawnee SRA, Emerald,
8 a.m.-1 p.m.

June 23
Sod House Sunday
Arthur Bowring Sandhills
Ranch SHP, Merriman,
8 a.m.-5 p.m., 308-684-5305

June 24-27
Aquatic Skills Camp
For ages 14-18.
Eastern 4-H Center, Gretna,
402-471-6144

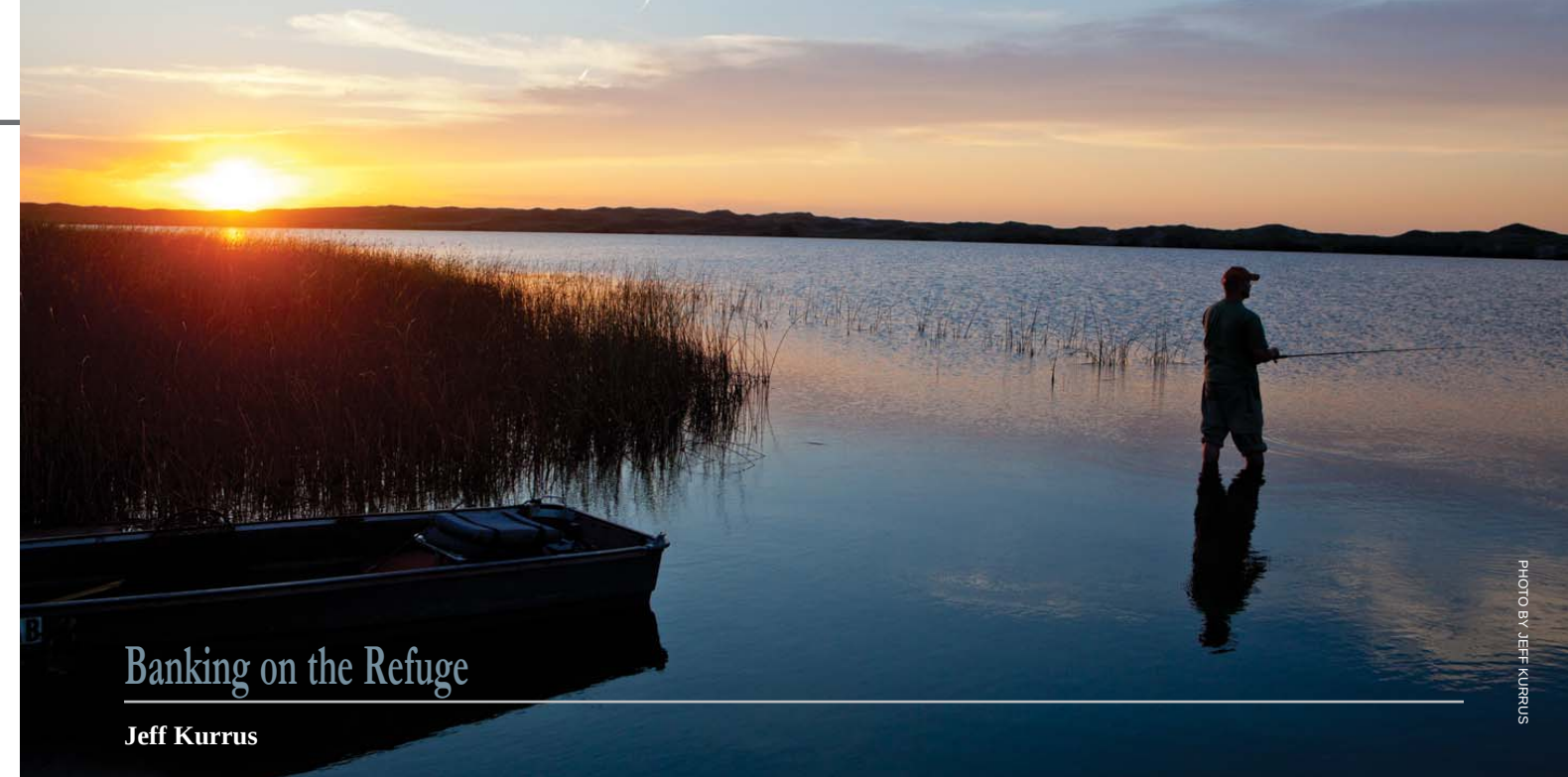
June 25
Family Fishing Event
Birdwood Lake, North Platte,
6-8 p.m.

June 26
Family Fishing Event
Cottonmill Lake, Kearney,
6-8 p.m.

Beyond BOW
Handgun Class: Fun with
Handguns.
Platte River SP, Louisville,
6-9 p.m., christy.christiansen@nebraska.gov or
402-471-5547

June 27
Family Fishing Event
Mormon Island SRA No. 1,
Grand Island, 6-8 p.m.

June 28
National Park Service
Campground Program
Niobrara SP, 402-857-3373.



Banking on the Refuge

Jeff Kurrus

In Nebraska, the wind is going to blow – especially in wide-open locales like the lakes at the Valentine National Wildlife Refuge. I've gotten used to it, but some days I just don't feel like trying to keep a boat straight. But no worries. The most productive adjustment I have made when fishing for species like largemouth bass and northern pike is one I've been using since childhood – bank fishing.

Bank fishing is especially productive at a place like the Refuge due to the vast amount of good fishing close to the shore. For example, at the boat put-in at Clear Lake last summer, I watched a pair of friends try to navigate white-capping waters while I waded out mere feet and casted black spinnerbaits as far as I could, taking advantage of the shallow flat near the put-in. The result? More northern pike than two men in

the boat mustered, including several fish above 30 inches.

But Clear Lake isn't the Refuge's only bank option. Hackberry, with its immense amount of shallow water bulrushes, is also an excellent place to wade through the muck and fish any open pocket of water you can find for pike or largemouth bass. Lure choices for these fish are similar. Stay weedless as much as you can, using floating soft plastics and spinnerbaits that will work through the rushes with little incident. Also make sure you have a pair of chest waders with you and an extra change of clothes just in case you step into a hole or venture out a little deeper than you originally intended.

Lastly, wear a personal flotation device (PFD) if you plan on wading

at all. It's hard enough walking in open water without coming across obstructions. Try doing this tromping through hundreds of yards of bulrushes and it's a matter of time before you fall. Just make sure you have a PFD to help pick you back up. ■

NEBRASKAland Visitor Winner and Hint



Last issue's winner of the Visitor drawing was Kevin Kleinschmit of Fordyce, Nebraska, who found the **nymph grasshopper** on page 52. Readers are encouraged to contact *NEBRASKAland* within 10 days after this issue's publication with the correct page number and name of this issue's "Visitor" – a bug found in Nebraska that just happened to find its way onto one of the pages.

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

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

HINT: This issue's visitor is not on page 4, 5, 7, 23, 29, 50, or 51.

Enjoy everything Wayne County has to offer!

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Chicken Show
July 12-13-14, 2013
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July 25-28-2013
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Life on Soapsuds Row

The Military Laundress Diary of Sarah Field

By Dominique Worthing
Photos by Bobbi Anderson



IMAGE OF GENERAL HENRY ATKINSON RG2411-178 NEBRASKA STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Fort Atkinson, established in 1820 on the recommendation of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, was the first U.S. military post west of the Missouri River. But there were more than soldiers at a post so important to the early fur trade, river traffic and Indian relations. Carpenters, coopers, Indian agents, blacksmiths and the like were stationed on these grounds near Fort Calhoun, with many of these running multiple duties including defense of the fort.

Also on this list were women, who worked as cooks, cleaners, and, in writer Dominique Worthing's historical fiction below, laundresses. Worthing's character, Sarah Field, tells of the day-to-day operations on the frontier, a behind-the-scenes look at how laundresses and others spent their time at Fort Atkinson.

April 22, 1823

My hands no longer bleed when I attempt to write. The ointment I purchased at the sutler store seems to be doing its job. The warmer weather and rain seem to help as well. The endless cycle of washing through the frigid winter left my hands in a horrible condition, nearly any task left them cracked and bleeding. The first day the path to the stream was clear of ice was enough to make me laugh aloud for joy.

Winter is finally over, and the whole fort is occupied with preparation for the growing season. We are such a large outfit that the keeping of the fields has outranked military drills on more than one occasion. There are nearly one thousand persons associated with Fort Atkinson, and it would seem nearly an equal amount of dogs, pigs, and cattle occupy the premise.

April 27, 1823

My neighbor, Molly Fitzgerald, has taken a turn for the worse. She has always been prone to illness since I have known her, but now she is unable to leave her bed. Her husband is a noncommissioned officer and they have two young children, Samuel and Laura. Mrs. Henry, a middle-aged widow who lives in the cottage on the opposite side of Molly, and I have been taking turns caring for Molly and her children. It seems as though we may soon care for her children permanently.

April 29, 1823

We buried Molly Fitzgerald in the fort cemetery this morning. Mrs. Henry will become the children's caregiver for the time being. Mr. Fitzgerald has taken to heavy drinking.

May 3, 1823

If I never see a pair of dirty trousers again I will be an infinitely happier woman.

May 5, 1823

Today is the one year anniversary of my father's death. Since his passing, I have received six offers of marriage, the most recent of which came from Molly Fitzgerald's husband. While I deeply care for Molly's children, I cannot begin to imagine being married, especially to my dead friend's husband.



Fort Atkinson State Historical Park, located in Washington County, hosts living history demonstrations throughout the spring and summer months each year. The complete 2013 schedule is as follows: From 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on May 4 and May 5; June 5 and 6; July 6 and July 7; August 3 and 4; August 31 and September 1; and October 5 and 6. On these days, volunteers portray life at an 1820s military fort.





The other women on Soapsuds Row whisper that I am crazy. Many of them would accept the first offer of marriage they received. Having made the journey from New York to Fort Atkinson with the sixth infantry at age twelve, and seeing firsthand the hardships faced by military families, I believe that I am able to survive on my own much better than with a husband and children in tow.

May 9, 1823

It has been announced that there will be a ball in two weeks’ time to celebrate the arrival of spring. All the women at the fort spend every moment that is not consumed with work preparing for the festivities. I welcome the distraction this party offers from our daily routine, and fortunately my hands have almost completely healed, so there is little chance of getting blood on my good dress.

In other news, it has been discovered that another laundress has been selling alcohol to the men illegally. There is no word yet on what her punishment will be.

May 18, 1823

The other women wonder why I have no intention of marrying. A young woman in my position, they say, could have her pick of the finest bachelors at the fort. Certainly I could have married after my father’s untimely death. Many other women in my place would have married. Yet it should also be apparent, if one was to look around the fort, why I have chosen not to marry.

Life here, while quite civilized for such an isolated place, is never far from danger; who knows when we may receive orders to move even further into the territory. Disease is ever present, claiming both adults and children, and there is always the threat of an Indian attack. Also, there is no guarantee your marriage will be a union of trust and security. Today another soldier was court-martialed for beating his wife, and unfortunately, this type of situation is not as uncommon as one would hope.

May 21, 1823

This morning, while gathering water at the stream for today’s washing, I fell and cut my right leg just below my knee. The gash required three stitches. The doctor was quick to warn me of the potential for infection. It would seem I will not be able to dance at the upcoming ball.

May 24, 1823

Even without the ability to dance, yesterday evening’s ball was a lovely party to attend. Indeed, watching other’s dance is far more enjoyable in some respects. My leg shows no signs of infection thus far. Mrs. Henry and I have come to an agreement, she gathers the water for both of us so I may stay clear of the stream until my leg is healed, and I have taken over her mending, allowing me to spend more time sitting down rather than hobbling around on my feet.

May 28, 1823

My leg is still sore, but continues to heal well. I paid a short visit to the doctor and he is happy with my progress.

June 1, 1823

Summer is upon us and so are the violent storms that accompany this season. Last night the sky seemed to be brighter than day more than it was night. Despite the heavy rain and wind the crops and livestock are still in good order, although a few chickens have been reported missing.





Many of the laundresses seem to lack basic understand of both subjects. I wish that more of the laundresses were as interested in learning to read and write as Mrs. Henry.

June 18, 1823

The most shocking event occurred today. A keel boat, by the name of Yellow Stone Packet arrived bringing members of the William Ashley fur trading company who were fleeing an Indian attack from up further up the Missouri river. Several members were wounded and taken directly to the hospital. It is rumored that more than a dozen fur traders died in the initial attack by the Ree. The main mission of the Yellow Stone Packet was to deliver a message from William Ashley himself to Colonel Leavenworth asking for assistance to fend off the attackers.

The sixth infantry is to prepare for campaign immediately; these are direct orders from the Colonel.

June 19, 1823

Every laundress in the fort is twice as busy as usual in preparation of the infantry's departure. Many women split their time between the hospital and laundress work, helping with the injured from the Yellow Stone Packet.

June 20, 1823

Today they buried one of the men from the Yellow Stone Packet. Colonel Leavenworth and the sixth infantry are anxious to leave for the north. It is believed that the Colonel will be taking around two-hundred men with him.



June 3, 1823

My leg continues to heal. Although I am capable of safely making my way to and from the stream Mrs. Henry continues with our arrangement. I believe she would rather draw water than use a needle, her poor eyesight makes mending a difficult task.

June 10, 1823

My leg is now fully healed. Mrs. Henry was sad to end our arrangement, but the long hours of light make mending a much easier chore. Molly Fitzgerald's children, who were nearly always as sickly as their mother before her death, seem to thrive in Mrs. Henry's care. Mr. Fitzgerald does very little for them except give Mrs. Henry a small sum of money to raise them, and so they are left completely to her instruction.

June 13, 1823

Mrs. Henry has seen me writing in my journal and asked me to teach her to read and write. Samuel, the older of the Fitzgerald children will begin to attend the fort school this autumn, and Mrs. Henry wishes to be able to assist him in his studies.



June 21, 1823

Colonel Leavenworth, a little over two-hundred men, and thirty of the Yellow Stone Packet survivors departed for the north to fend off the Ree and offer aid to the rest of the William Ashley fur trading party. Many of the women were crying as the keel boats disappeared from sight. It will most likely be months before we see them return, and who knows how many will return at all. Whether a blessing, or a curse, there will be significantly less laundry in the coming weeks. ■

Dominique Worthing is a freelance writer living in Omaha.

Bobbi Anderson is a fine art, digital artist/photographer living in Blair. To see more of her work, visit Bjaimaging.com.

Through a Child's Eyes

By Jeff Kurrus

When we see kids fishing, we see ourselves and how we used to see fishing, as nothing more than a hook, bobber, and time spent near the water. The mystery of what was lurking beneath the surface always weighed heavy in our thoughts.

We may not remember what we ate for dinner last Saturday, but we still remember the day the big one got away, and the emptiness we felt when our line went slack. We also remember the desire we had to wet a line once again. We say kids nowadays spend too much time watching television and playing video games, but we're short-sighted in our thinking. Given an iPad or cell phone when we were young, we may have done the same. Some of us did, and can even tell you what Pong and Atari were.



PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS

Nolan Yaren of Brussels, Belgium concentrates during a cast attempt at a Lancaster County pond.



PHOTO BY ERIC FOWLER

While her sister, Carryonna, stays focused on the task at hand, Tavaris Valdase keeps her eyes on a photographer closing in on her fishing spot at Holmes Lake.



PHOTO BY ERIC FOWLER

Keegan Hollins takes a break from ice fishing with his parents, Matt and Kami, to make snow angels on the ice at Holmes Lake in Lincoln.



PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS

Harry St. Pierre Schneider and father Steve of Las Vegas smile after catching a largemouth bass at a Cass County pond.



PHOTO BY ERIC FOWLER

Gracie Bernhardt-VanWinkle of Gering waits for a bite at Lake Minatare SRA.



PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS

Lainey Kathol of Omaha holds a trout at Two Rivers SRA while big sister Margaret looks on.



PHOTO BY ERIC FOWLER

Reina Ayer of Bellevue recoils as a largemouth bass she caught from Jenny Newman Lake flops on the end of the line as she poses for a photo during the 2012 Outdoor Discovery Program at Platte River State Park.



PHOTO BY ERIC FOWLER

Whisper Bernhardt-VanWinkle of Gering holds a crayfish she caught – and named Fred – while fishing at Lake Minatare SRA.



PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS

Madeline Kurrus of Gretna hides behind a bluegill she proudly caught at a private Sarpy County pond.



PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS

Mera Greene of Omaha keeps her distance from a rainbow trout she caught while fishing at the Ponca State Park pond.

As adults watching these anglers, we root because we want them to see, and feel, the same way we did when we were that age. We also want them to eventually hold a fish in their hands, because smiles from children with a fish are genuine. They're not forced smiles associated with school picture day. They're a combination of accomplishment and surprise. These smiles are waiting to be made all across Nebraska on any given day throughout the year. All that's needed is for you to add the water. ■

Know Your Grassland Birds

Text and photos by Chris Helzer

I write a lot of *NEBRASKALAND* articles about underdogs. During the last several years, I’ve covered topics such as spiders, moss, grasshoppers, thistles and wasps. In an upcoming issue, I have a fascinating article about moths. Yes, moths.

For the most part it’s easy to understand why those underdogs aren’t always familiar to or appreciated by the general public. Insects are small and hard to see, thistles are spiny and spiders are pretty creepy. I get it. However, this article is about birds. Everyone likes birds, right?

So why is it that so few people have ever heard of lark sparrows, dickcissels, bobolinks or most other grassland bird species? Okay, most of those species are small and drab colored, and they tend to live in the middle of large open areas – you’re not likely to find them in your backyard or down at the city park. On the other hand, when you’re in a prairie, grassland birds are usually the easiest animals to see. Other animals such as coyotes, deer and badgers may be bigger, but you don’t actually see them very often. As long as you’re willing to take a short walk into a prairie, you can always find grassland birds.



Meadowlark chicks peer out of a nest in a prairie near Alda.

Most grassland birds nest right on the ground. The others build elevated nests in a clump of grass or other prairie vegetation, but those nests are almost always less than waist high (your waist, not the birds’). It might seem crazy that grassland birds don’t nest up in trees where they’re less accessible to many predators. However, trees are not that common in most prairies, so that would limit nesting opportunities. Plus, nesting in one of only two or three trees in a prairie would be a lot like hanging out a sign that says, “Hey, Predators – look *here* for free food!” Instead, grassland birds rely on a needle in a haystack approach. Most of them prefer to nest in the middle of relatively large prairies, presumably because that gives predators a lot of area to cover if they’re searching for nests.

Within a prairie, grassland bird species choose their nesting sites based on vegetation structure. Upland sandpipers and horned larks like to nest in short grass, while Henslow’s sparrows and sedge wrens prefer sites with tall, dense vegetation. Others fall somewhere in the middle, including grasshopper sparrows, which thrive in moderately-short grazed pastures. Some, including grouse and northern bobwhite, are special cases, and use a variety of habitat types at different times of year. Because birds are so mobile, they can easily find new nesting locations each year if the habitat changes, but they may also return to the same site year after year if it doesn’t.

Most grassland birds set up and defend well-defined territories. Males regularly patrol and sing from various perch sites that define their span of control. If you watch a singing male for 10 or 15 minutes, you’ll notice him flying and singing from the same perches over and over. His neighbors are doing the same thing, ensuring that their territories (and females) are safe from any brash young male that might be waiting to take advantage of a lapse in attention.

Most grassland nesting birds are long-distance migrants, and a number of them travel as far as South America for the winter. Scientists know relatively little about what happens during migration, including what kind of habitat those birds use during that time. Radar and other technologies are slowly helping discover the routes taken by migrating birds, but where they sleep and feed along the way is still largely a mystery. Of course, not all prairie birds disappear from Nebraska over the winter. Greater prairie chickens, sharp-tailed grouse, and northern bobwhite all stick around,



Most grassland bird nests, including this meadowlark nest, are right on the ground.

though they tend to travel around locally in relatively large groups. Western meadowlarks can be seen all winter long too, though it’s not clear whether they are the same birds that nest here or northern birds that see Nebraska as a milder alternative than North Dakota or Manitoba.

Nebraskans should really get to know the bird species that live in the predominant land cover of our state. Many of those bird species are relatively unknown even to serious birdwatchers, let alone the casual nature enthusiast. That’s an unfortunate situation for the birds as well as the people who are missing out because grassland birds could use a little attention. Most species of prairie-nesting birds are experiencing population declines across North America – some at an alarming rate – and they and their habitats are in great need of protection. As a public service to the people of this great state, and to the birds that need your conservation attention, I humbly submit the following introduction to a few of the bird species we share Nebraska’s grasslands with.

Western Meadowlark

If there is a characteristic bird of Nebraska’s prairies, it’s the meadowlark. It’s easy to see – often perched on a fencepost, displaying its bright yellow breast and distinctive black necklace. The song is truly melodic, and has been

described in detail within many works of art and literature. It’s no wonder the western meadowlark was chosen as Nebraska’s state bird.

There are actually two species of meadowlark in the state, the western and the eastern. As the names imply, they are somewhat segregated by geography, but they have a large area of overlap as well. They are not distinguishable by looking at them, but their songs are very different; the western’s song is longer and with more clear tones than the eastern meadowlark’s shorter and more whistle-like tune. Both species tend to prefer vegetation that’s not overly tall, and do well in many grazed pastures. Where the two overlap in range, eastern meadowlarks tend to nest in lower, wetter sites than do westerns.

Meadowlarks nest right on the ground, weaving together a grass nest that has a partial roof over the top to help shield it from view. Within that nest, they lay creamy white eggs with dark streaks. When flushed from the nest, the adult meadowlark often takes off with a noisy fluttering flight with the apparent hope of luring predators from the nest by imitating an injured bird that would make easy prey. Because both the male and female look identical (at least to humans) they are both well camouflaged, but only the female incubates the eggs – probably because the male often has more than one female within his territory. No wonder he sings so loudly.



A male dickcissel sings in a flowery prairie with wild bergamot flowers in the background.



This dickcissel nest contains three blue dickcissel eggs and four speckled eggs laid by a marauding brown-headed cowbird.

Dickcissel

Because of its yellow breast and black markings, you could be forgiven for mistaking a dickcissel for a meadowlark at a distance. When you see them side by side, however, dickcissels are only about half the size of a meadowlark. When they sing, they further distinguish themselves from meadowlarks because the dickcissel’s song has none of the meadowlark’s melody. The dickcissel’s name comes from its largely toneless “dick siss siss siss” song. But that namesake tune is only one of several common variations that can be heard around the state, some



A female bobolink bears almost no resemblance to a male, but is well camouflaged for sitting on her nest.

of which are so different from each other they are hardly recognizable as belonging to the same species. Regardless of tune, however, all songs have the same insect-like buzz and are relatively short and repetitive. It’s the kind of song you might not notice upon first wading into the prairie; it can seem like part of the overall background noise of a healthy prairie full of insects and other creatures. But once you realize the loudest of those noises is the song of a community of dickcissels, the effect is like being in a bus full of children singing “Ninety-nine bottles of beer on the wall.”

Dickcissels prefer to nest in areas with tall vegetation and lots of wildflowers or weedy plants. They, along with red-winged blackbirds, are different from most other grassland birds in the state in that they don’t seem to mind nesting in fairly small or narrow grasslands. As a result, dickcissels are often seen in road ditches and grassed waterways within crop fields – as well as in any other grassland with the right kind of vegetation structure. While it seems ironic for birds nesting in small predator-prone habitats, the nests of both dickcissels and red-winged blackbirds are actually pretty easy to find. (They do at least weave them into the vegetation a couple feet off the ground.) When a female dickcissel is sitting in her nest, her well-camouflaged back helps hide her nest within a clump of vegetation. But when the female flushes at the approach of a blundering human (or presumably other large animals) the bright blue eggs she leaves behind in the nest are really easy to see.

While the decline in population numbers of dickcissels could easily be blamed on North American habitat losses and the species’ apparent poor ability to hide their nests, scientists think farmers in Venezuela bear a share of the responsibility as well. Dickcissels flock up in large numbers during the winter and can do significant crop damage in South American fields. As a result, they are seen as pests by farmers, and frequently chased out of fields by noise makers and other strategies. Now and then, whole flocks are sprayed with pesticides by frustrated farmers. Fortunately for Nebraska, we still have abundant populations of this noisy but charming little bird, and because they feed mainly on abundant grassland insects in our state, no one seems bothered by their presence.



Male bobolinks are mostly black, with white patches on their wings and beige feathers on the back of their heads.

Bobolink

Bobolinks stand out in a crowd. From a distance, they look like small blackbirds that are missing the back of their heads. In reality, the back of their head is covered with beige-colored feathers, but it creates an odd look to be sure. However, well before you’re close enough to see bobolinks, you will probably hear their song, which sounds exactly like R2D2 from the Star Wars movies. (Don’t believe me? Do a web search for “bobolink song” and see for yourself.)

If you hear one bobolink singing, chances are you’ll hear a couple more join in before the first finishes its song. Male bobolinks often cluster their territories together in hay meadows, alfalfa fields or moderately grazed pastures. The proximity of the birds’ territories means that each bobolink can usually see and hear several others, and they always seem to have something to say to each other. Many times they’ll even sing while flying – an unusual trait among birds. The overall effect of this is pretty entertaining; a bunch of partial-headed black birds flying around singing like robots (droids, actually).

Female bobolinks look nothing like males, but – similar to female red-winged blackbirds – are instead well camouflaged with streaks of numerous shades of brown. While a male bobolink looks like a small blackbird, a female looks more like a tall sparrow. A male will often have more than one female nesting in his territory, but he has a hard time keeping them within his boundaries. When a female bobolink takes to the sky, at least two or three males will shoot after her and chase her until she lands again – and she doesn’t necessarily land in the same territory she took off from. Presumably, this means there is a fair amount of fooling around going on – something that is probably an advantage for the female because she can produce offspring from several sires and hedge her genetic bet, so to speak.

Bobolinks winter in the Pantanal region of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay, so they make annual migrations of nearly 10,000 miles each way. Much of that flight is over water, which is quite a navigational and athletic feat for a small bird. They migrate and winter in large flocks, and – like dickcissels – can be a major pest to farmers along the way, especially those with rice fields. Here in Nebraska, it’s easy to tell when the breeding season is over and the southward migration is beginning because bobolinks start hanging out in larger groups and stop defending territories. Our prairies are certainly much quieter and less lively after they leave.



A grasshopper sparrow sings from a rose bush in a Platte River prairie near Wood River.

Grasshopper Sparrow

Grasshopper sparrow populations are declining elsewhere in the United States, but they are still abundant in Nebraska. Because they thrive in pastures that are cropped fairly short, they have abundant habitat here. Grasshopper sparrows don’t usually nest in the smallest of grasslands, but are likely to be in any prairie larger than about 20 acres. However, while they may *be* in most Nebraska prairies, that doesn’t mean you’d necessarily notice them there.

In appearance, grasshopper sparrows are about as nondescript as a bird can be. Both males and females are a drab brown with few distinctive markings. They’re not



Henslow's sparrows are usually found in thatchy prairies. The contrast between the olive head and brown back distinguishes them from grasshopper sparrows.

unattractive – they just don’t have any characteristics that draw your eye. On the other hand, if you make your living by hiding yourself and your nest from predators, being nondescript is probably not a bad thing.

Grasshopper sparrow males are plenty vociferous, but even their song is unlikely to draw your attention unless you know what to listen for – and you can still hear high frequency sounds. The name “grasshopper sparrow” comes from the insect-like quality of its song, which sounds like a series of short chips and long buzzes. Most often, the tune sounds something like, “cheep chip bizzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz.” Not exactly a head turner. On the other hand, once you’ve picked out a grasshopper sparrow’s song, you’ll be surprised how many you hear as you walk around Nebraska’s grasslands.

Henslow’s Sparrow

If grasshopper sparrows are nondescript, Henslow’s sparrows are nearly undetectable. They are actually slightly more distinctive in coloration than a grasshopper sparrow – you can tell the difference between the two species by looking for the contrast between the olive head and the brown back on a Henslow’s sparrow. (Hey, I did say *slightly* more distinctive). What makes Henslow’s sparrows harder to find than grasshopper sparrows, however, is their (so-called) song, which sounds, in its entirety, something like, “zizzidick!” Not exactly the kind of sound you’d particularly notice in a prairie full of buzzing insects, singing birds, and rustling grass. Even more frustrating to birders trying to check the Henslow’s sparrow off their life list is that males don’t usually even sit up on a perch to sing – they just stay hunkered down in the vegetation and say “zizzidick!”

Speaking of nests, the Henslow’s sparrow may have the most difficult nest to find among all of the grassland birds – at least for us bumbling humans. I’ve heard a lot of

Henslow’s sparrows during my time in Nebraska prairies, but although I frequently come across the nests of many other bird species, I’ve never seen a Henslow’s sparrow nest. They apparently take full advantage of the tall, thatchy vegetation where they nest. Even researchers who spend most of their summer looking find very few Henslow’s sparrow nests. As a result, we don’t know much about their reproductive success, but scientists assume that the biggest reason for their low population numbers in most parts of the U.S. is more related to the scarcity of tall, thatchy prairies than to predation.

If you live in eastern Nebraska, there may be Henslow’s sparrows near you. They are particularly abundant in the southeastern quarter of the state, but can be found at least as far west as Red Cloud and along the Platte River west of Grand Island. If you want to find one, you’ll probably have to go out and focus hard on listening for their song – you’re not likely to notice the song if you’re doing other things or listening for other birds at the same time. If you hang out long enough in a large prairie that hasn’t been burned, mowed, or grazed much in the last several years, and you’re both lucky and a good listener you might just get to hear its, ahem, spectacular song. Zizzidick!

Lark Sparrow

For a sparrow, the lark sparrow is spectacularly gaudy – for a sparrow. Its head is decorated with patches and stripes of rusty brown, black and white, it has white tips on the corners of its long rounded tail, and a black spot in the middle of its pale breast. Over the top, really. As if to accentuate its showy appearance, the lark sparrow also has one of the prettier and more extravagant songs of all sparrow species – one that is difficult to describe, but easy to recognize again once you’ve heard it.

In Nebraska, lark sparrows can be found across the state,

but are most abundant in the western portions. Lark sparrows tend to nest in relatively sparsely vegetated habitats with patches of bare ground and scattered small bushes or trees to perch on. They may build their nest on the ground or in a short tree or shrub, sometimes taking over the old nest of a mockingbird or brown thrasher. Lark sparrows often nest close together, so if you see or hear one, there are likely others close by.

During courtship, there is much strutting, hopping around, and flashy displaying of tails and wings. Also, the males frequently engage in flying battles with five or more competitors, trying to beat each other up with their gorgeous wings. Interestingly, once courtship is over, lark sparrows prefer to walk rather than hop as they move around on the ground – an unusual trait among songbirds.

Lark sparrows winter in the southern Great Plains and the deserts of northern Mexico and breed throughout most of the U.S., minus the far eastern and western states. Their populations have been declining in the eastern portions of their range, but they are still abundant in Nebraska’s Sandhills and panhandle prairies. That means that if you’re hiking around in the grasslands of western Nebraska, you’ll have ample opportunity to stop and admire the look and sound of these magnificent birds.

If you haven’t had the opportunity to get to know these and other grassland birds, they’re easy to find. Sure, you’ll have to get out of town and into the open grasslands where trees are few and grasses and wildflowers rule. On the other hand, if you live in Nebraska and don’t do that on a fairly regular basis, you’re not *really* living in Nebraska, are you? ■



This slightly bedraggled lark sparrow caught breakfast in a dewy prairie at The Nature Conservancy’s Niobrara Valley Preserve north of Johnstown.

Conservation Implications

In many ways, grassland birds are the perfect ambassadors for prairie. While most are not particularly flashy, they are relatively accessible, engaging and musical. As such, they can help draw people out into the prairie who might not otherwise do so. Once out in the middle of the grassland, those novice prairie naturalists have the opportunity to meet many hundreds of other species (plants, insects, mammals, reptiles and amphibians) that are equally fascinating but are only visible to those adventurous enough to go looking for them.

Grassland birds are in need of conservation, but so are all the other species they share the prairie with. Because birds are tied mainly to vegetation structure and prairie size, they can live in just about any kind of grassland (brome fields, Conservation Reserve Program [CRP] lands, and tame grass pastures, as well as native prairies). Protecting those grasslands is difficult, especially when commodity and land prices are both high, but they’re relatively easy to rebuild when prices and public sentiment swing back in their favor.

Unfortunately, most prairie species are much more specialized in their habitat needs, and can only survive in high quality unplowed native prairies – or restored prairies that have especially diverse plant communities. Protecting healthy native prairies is even more difficult than maintaining brome pastures and CRP, and rebuilding them once they’ve been converted to row crops or other land uses is extremely difficult. The complex ecological processes (pollination, soil nutrient cycling and storage, etc.) in a diverse prairie community are vital to the survival of the myriad plant, animal and insect species that live there, but also to all of us who depend upon grasslands for food, recreation and livelihoods.

Grassland birds thrive in healthy native prairies too, but they’re not a good indicator of that prairie’s health. Birds in native prairie are kind of like toppings on ice cream. The ice cream tastes better with toppings, but it’s the ice cream that’s most important. As we focus on conservation of Nebraska’s grasslands, it’s important that we remember that while bird conservation is important, it’s not the end game. Birds can be great ambassadors for nature, but they are only a tiny component of the ecological systems we need to protect and conserve.

A Night at the Old Ballpark

By Jerry Kane
Photos by Jeff Kurrus

It was a warm August evening in Lincoln, and the calendar would flip to autumn in just over a week. Football season had almost arrived – but not quite. That night the Lincoln Saltdogs were at home, playing host to the Sioux Falls Pheasants in an American Association baseball game.

This was not a unique scene; the same thing is playing out at ballparks large and small all across the country, and has been for decades. Sodas, hot dogs, popcorn, cold brew, cotton candy, furry team mascots, between-inning entertainment – they are all essential equipment, just like the bats, balls and gloves. A wild scramble for a home run ball past the outfield fence is every bit a part of baseball as a hit-and-run play or hitting the cut-off man.



Saltdogs mascot Homer works his way to the fans in the upper deck.

This is family-friendly entertainment. Parents quenched their children's thirst with a soda and appeased their desire for sugar with cotton candy, then took them to the playground beyond the right field fence to let them burn off that energy. The team mascot (how hot it must be in that costume in August) was a magnet for young children. What 7-year-old wouldn't want to high-five a big, smiling, floppy-eared dog named Homer?



Two boys watch the game from behind the fence, wishing they were on the field themselves.



A youngster enjoys the festivities both on and off the field.



(from left to right) Lily, mom Diana and Kate McPike from Lincoln watch the Saltdogs game from the berm at Haymarket Park.

Hardcore fans were there for the baseball. It's more fun for them to spout their baseball jargon – backdoor slider, Texas Leaguer, chin music, Mendoza line – at the park than at home in front of the television. It's also where fans could see their red, white and blue sport. It helps when those are your team colors, but it really sings when your uniforms are adorned with the stars and stripes like the Saltdogs wore on this evening. Baseball is also “us versus them,” the good guys against the bad guys. And the good guys even wore white hats that night.

After three hours, another game was history. Families rolled up their blankets strewn picnic-style on the grassy berm and collected their sleepy-eyed children. The grounds crew then put their baby – the playing field – to bed for another night. While the home team lost 8-6 on this night, it was no matter. For the Saltdogs, another tomorrow was only a day away. Because in baseball, there's always tomorrow. ■



Wilberto Ortiz chats with the catcher from the opposing team before stepping into the batter's box.



Left-handed pitcher Moises Melendez follows through after a pitch to the plate.



Fans enjoy an evening of baseball and ballpark food.

2013 Saltdogs Home Schedule

May 23 7:05 PM Winnipeg Goldeyes	July 5 7:05 PM Fargo-Moorhead RedHawks
May 24 7:05 PM Winnipeg Goldeyes	July 10 7:05 PM Amarillo Sox
May 25 7:45 PM Winnipeg Goldeyes	July 11 7:05 PM Amarillo Sox
May 26 2:05 PM Winnipeg Goldeyes	July 12 7:05 PM Amarillo Sox
May 27 7:05 PM El Paso Diablos	July 13 7:05 PM Amarillo Sox
May 28 7:05 PM El Paso Diablos	July 15 7:05 PM Gary South Shore Railcats
May 29 7:05 PM El Paso Diablos	July 16 7:05 PM Gary South Shore Railcats
June 7 7:05 PM Sioux City Explorers	July 17 7:05 PM Gary South Shore Railcats
June 8 7:05 PM Sioux City Explorers	July 23 7:05 PM Trois-Rivieres Eagles
June 9 5:05 PM Sioux City Explorers	July 24 7:05 PM Trois-Rivieres Eagles
June 13 7:05 PM Kansas City T-Bones	July 25 7:05 PM Trois-Rivieres Eagles
June 14 7:05 PM Kansas City T-Bones	July 26 7:05 PM Sioux Falls Canaries
June 15 7:05 PM Kansas City T-Bones	July 27 7:05 PM Sioux Falls Canaries
June 16 5:05 PM Kansas City T-Bones	July 28 5:05 PM Sioux Falls Canaries
June 17 7:05 PM Sioux City Explorers	August 6 7:05 PM Sioux Falls Canaries
June 18 7:05 PM Sioux City Explorers	August 7 7:05 PM Sioux Falls Canaries
June 19 7:05 PM Sioux City Explorers	August 8 7:05 PM Sioux Falls Canaries
June 28 7:05 PM El Paso Diablos	August 9 7:05 PM Gary South Shore Railcats
June 29 7:05 PM El Paso Diablos	August 10 7:05 PM Gary South Shore Railcats
June 30 2:05 PM El Paso Diablos	August 11 5:05 PM Gary South Shore Railcats
July 2 7:05 PM Fargo-Moorhead RedHawks	August 16 7:05 PM Rockland Boulders
July 3 6:05 PM Fargo-Moorhead RedHawks	August 17 7:05 PM Rockland Boulders
July 4 7:05 PM Fargo-Moorhead RedHawks	August 18 2:05 PM Rockland Boulders

Outdoor Night at Haymarket Park

On August 8, the Saltdogs will host outdoor night, with local outdoor organizations sharing information with the public. The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission will be raffling half-price youth lifetime hunting and fishing permits, creating the type of night that Saltdogs owner and Nebraska Game and Parks Foundation chairman Jim Abel loves to see. “The role of the Foundation is to provide the opportunity for people to enjoy the Nebraska outdoors, including hunting, fishing, and camping. The half-price youth lifetime permits are just one more way to accomplish these goals.”

The Lincoln Highway

A Centennial Celebration



The Lincoln Highway marker is on the left as “Welcome to Omaha” greets visitors at the Douglas Street Bridge.

By Julie Geiser

In the early 1900s the roads in the United States consisted of dirt – rutted, bumpy and dusty during dry times, muddy and virtually impassable when wet. Automobiles were new, and for most people, the only concern was getting to town, not across the country or even the state.

Carl Fisher, however, was an innovator and had a broader vision.

After paving the Indianapolis Motor Speedway with brick and starting the Indianapolis 500, he came up with the idea of a \$10 million, coast-to-coast graveled highway in 1912. Henry Ford had just made automobiles affordable for the common man, who deserved a better road to drive them on. Such a road would spur economic growth and tourism throughout the country.

The government had yet to enter the highway business, and Fisher knew that to get the country on board for this great project he would need backers and looked first to others in the auto industry who could benefit most. He found Frank Seiberling, the president of Goodyear, and Henry Joy, president of the Packard Motor Car Company, large financial contributors who would play key roles in the highway’s development.

Joy was chosen to lead the Lincoln Highway Association when it was founded in 1913. It expanded on Fisher’s idea and began to promote not just a graveled highway, but a paved one, linking the coasts. Fisher led a caravan through the western United States to explore possible routes on existing roads.

The caravan passed through Colorado and Kansas, but that fall the Association bypassed those states and opted for the shortest route between New York City and San Francisco, covering 3,389 miles and crossing 12 states, including Nebraska.

On Halloween night in 1913, cities across the United States held a simultaneous celebration to kick

off the first transcontinental highway project, which would become known as The Main Street Across America. Nebraskans celebrated the Lincoln Highway project with the rest of the country. There were symphony performances, luncheons, fireworks, parades, bonfires and speeches about the benefits of the highway that would stretch 485 miles from Omaha to Bushnell, mainly following the Platte River Valley and the Union Pacific Railroad line.

Yet it would be years before the highway was paved. There were sections of dirt, sand and pasture marked only by posts, poles and hand-painted signs. The Lincoln Highway Association could not afford to pave the road itself, but it did pave “seedling miles” in remote areas so people could see first-hand the benefits of traveling on concrete roads. Joy hoped people would then put pressure on the state and local governments to finish constructing the highway in their state.

Several cities in Nebraska, including Elkhorn, took it upon themselves to do just that and used tax dollars to pave portions of the route. A 3.6 mile section of brick highway built in 1920

remains a reminder of what it took to build the Lincoln Highway. Anyone who drives the bricks east from Highway 31 along the south side of the Union Pacific Railroad will get a taste of what it was like to drive it.

There are other reminders of the Lincoln Highway you can visit today in Nebraska as well, including three blocks of original bricks in Fremont west of 10th and Broad Street and two blocks of Main Street in Shelton. There is also a tree-lined avenue in Duncan along with an original Lincoln Highway marker, one of 2,400 placed by Boy Scouts on September 1, 1928, to officially mark and dedicate the road to its namesake, President Abraham Lincoln.

At Overton, an original Lincoln Highway bridge remains between the Union Pacific Railroad and Highway 30. One can still follow the “stair steps,” the zig-zag route the highway took from Gothenburg to North Platte.

Bypassing those stair steps was one of several changes that came when most of the Lincoln Highway became U.S. Highway 30 in the 1920s. Another significant change in Nebraska came in 1930, when the route shifted north to



Carl G. Fisher, Vice President, Lincoln Highway Association

Camp at an SRA

There are 20 state parks and recreation areas to visit within 10 miles of the Lincoln Highway route through Nebraska, including the following camping spots near the Kearney celebration July 1:

- Windmill State Recreation Area
- Fort Kearney State Recreation Area and State Historical Park
- Union Pacific State Recreation Area
- War Axe State Recreation Area



This photo, taken in 1926 between Kearney and Gibbon, shows the method used for graveled the Lincoln Highway - piling the gravel along the side and drawing in one to two inches at a time.



UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN LIBRARY, LINCOLN HIGHWAY DIGITAL IMAGE COLLECTION

Campers at an Omaha campground by the Lincoln Highway in 1923.



PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS

Built in 1920, a 3.6 mile section of brick highway east of Highway 31 in Elkhorn gives current drivers an idea of what it was like to ride on the Lincoln Highway.

Blair from Omaha. There had already been other big changes to the route of the Lincoln Highway nationally, including the addition and removal of a dogleg through Denver, Colorado in the initial years of the project.

In 1935, the final part of the Lincoln Highway to be paved in Nebraska was completed near North Platte. A ribbon-cutting ceremony officially opened a 30-mile stretch of road, and the headline in the November 6, 1935 *Omaha World-Herald* read, "Lincoln Highway Now Hard-

Surfaced Across State; North Platte Celebrates." Nebraska's first border-to-border, paved highway was complete, consisting of 323 miles of concrete paving and 139 miles of oiled gravel.

By the 25th anniversary of the Lincoln Highway in 1938, all but 42 miles of the highway had been surfaced with material better than gravel. But its legacy – spawning state and federal highway systems, including the Interstate Highway System, and allowing Americans to experience the freedom of the open road – was set. ■



UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN LIBRARY, LINCOLN HIGHWAY DIGITAL IMAGE COLLECTION

A gravelled section of the Lincoln Highway between Hershey and North Platte in 1923.

Celebration

The centennial of the Lincoln Highway, set for this summer, is sure to bring back memories of an era where "tin lizzies" and other motorcars traveled the roads. Cars were full of families traveling to town from rural areas and many people were choosing the city life where electricity and radios were new technology. "Newsies" were on street corners selling the daily news to those shopping at department stores and shops on Main Street.

Car and history buffs alike will have a great time reliving the experience in Kearney at the official Lincoln Highway Centennial celebration July 1. Hosted by the Lincoln Highway Association at the Great Platte River Road Archway, a museum spanning Interstate 80 that explores the Lincoln Highway, the Oregon Trail and other key pieces of U.S. history that connected a country, the celebration will include a parade of vintage Packards and other events.

As a lead-up to the celebration, auto tours will start June 21 in New York City and June 22 in San Francisco and follow the original Lincoln Highway route to Kearney, arriving June 30 to kick off a host of events beginning downtown on the bricks, including food, music, silent movies and a Lincoln Highway era show and shine that is expected to draw regional and national clubs and cars from 1913 through the 1950s.

"This is a national celebration and it is an honor to have Kearney host the event," said Sarah Focke of the Kearney Visitors Bureau, who expects people from across the country and even the world to attend the event. "This is the time for Nebraskans to shine and to be proud of our history and culture in the state."

For more information about the Lincoln Highway or the Centennial Celebration in Kearney, NE visit: Visitkearney.org
Lincolnhighwaynebraskabyway.com
Lincolnhighwayassoc.org



As I Grow Up

Text and photos by Jeff Kurrus

After winning a half-price youth lifetime permit and taking advantage of Nebraska's \$5 youth turkey permits, 13-year-old Jaci Tubbs is starting a passion that will last a lifetime.

There were 75 turkeys in this field the other day," said father Jim Tubbs of Lincoln to his 13-year-old daughter Jaci during a recent turkey hunt near Denton. However, while there were turkeys seen the morning of the hunt, not a single one came within bow range of where she and her dad were hunting. But no worries – with a \$5 turkey permit in one pocket and a lifetime small game hunting permit in her other, that morning was just a continuation of a life in the outdoors for this young lady.

"She drew her own name during a raffle with the Prairie Bowmen in 2007 for the half-priced lifetime small game permit," said Jim, also a volunteer mentor with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. However, it wasn't until she was 11 that she wanted to start hunting with dad. "When she asked me if she could go I told her it was time to buy her a shotgun – but she declined," he said.

"If I can't bow hunt with you I'm not hunting," Jaci told him. "I don't like loud noises."

From that point forward, Jim had a new hunting partner – the same person who had been his shooting partner since she was 5. "She started with a Brave recurve bow at that

young age," Jim said, "then I got her a Stacy compound." By the time she was officially able to start shooting in the Nebraska Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) in fourth grade, Jaci had been shooting with her dad for several years. Her experience quickly showed.

As a sixth grader she was the NASP state runner-up in the elementary division, and followed that with a state title in the 2013 junior high division as a seventh grader against more than 80 other shooters. In May, she took this title on the road and competed with 10,000 other shooters at the NASP national tournament in Louisville, Kentucky.

But as much as she likes competition shooting, the mornings in a hunting blind keep pulling her back. "I get more excited hunting than shooting targets," she said. "Probably because my targets move when I'm hunting. I've even been shaky." Ironically, she wasn't shaky at all when shooting for an additional \$1,000 scholarship during a NASP shoot-off at the state competition in March, a contest she won for all female age brackets.

Yet hunting remains different. Although she has been going with dad for years, she's still waiting for her first archery kill of any kind. And while it's probably not the right time for her to be thinking about shooting small game with her bow yet – perhaps there's a rabbit hunt in her future – that day may soon come.

If so, she'll have the lifetime permit to do it. ■

Permits for Life

By Jane Gustafson

Created in 2006, the half-price youth lifetime permit program was the brainchild of a former Nebraska Game and Parks Commissioner who created an endowment with the Nebraska Game and Parks Foundation. Donations to the fund are accepted each year, and in 2012, former Director Rex Amack secured a three-year, \$50,000 annual commitment of support from Cabela's.

The program provides Nebraska youth, age 15 or younger, the opportunity to obtain a lifetime hunting and fishing permit with half of the cost being paid by the Foundation. Lifetime combination hunting/fishing permits, fur harvester permits, habitat stamps and the Nebraska waterfowl stamp are also options for program winners. Since 2006, a total of 2,775 lifetime permits have been awarded to Nebraska youth through this program. Winners have come from all counties across the state. Including a conservative estimate of federal matching funds, the lifetime value of the Foundation's to-date \$500,028 investment in the program is \$3,154,953.

In addition to public drawings at Commission events statewide, conservation organizations and events focused on outdoor pursuits can apply to hold drawings or use these half-price permits in raffles as fundraisers for their activities. To learn more about this program, visit OutdoorNebraska.org or contact Jane Gustafson at jane.gustafson@nebraska.gov.

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LEWIS & CLARK

A SUMMER PROFILE

Text and photos by Jeff Kurrus

“It was beautiful,” friends will tell you following their vacation to any number of Nebraska destinations. But that’s never enough for you and your family. For you always follow this statement with a question: “What did you do while you were there?”

If the destination is Lewis & Clark State Recreation Area (SRA), then you may want to sit down to hear their answer. It will take some time.

CAMPING AND CABINS

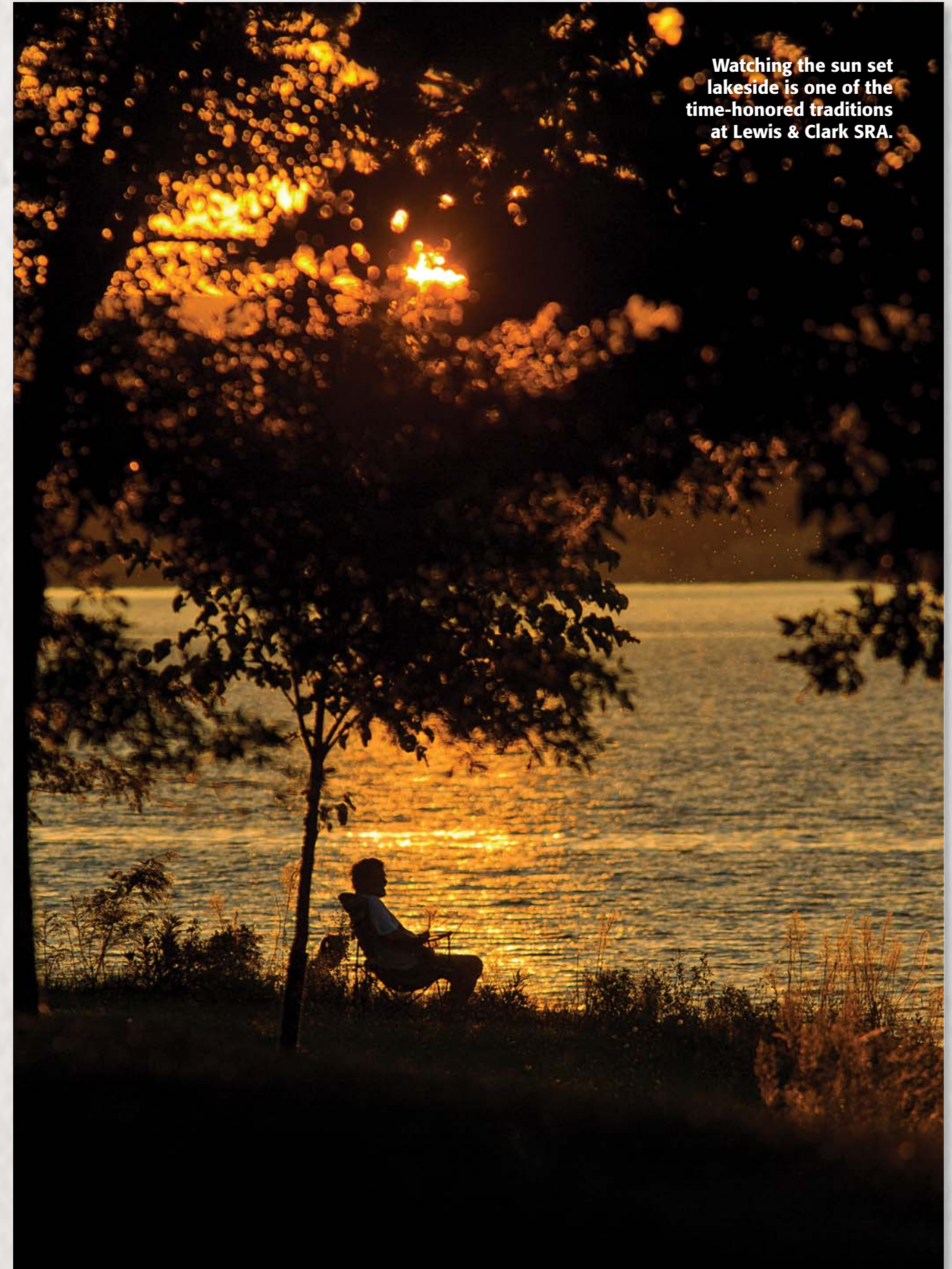
With 10 lakeside cabins that sleep seven people each and more than 200 campsites available, Lewis & Clark SRA offers room for those who want to relax in a furnished home setting, take their RV homes with them, or throw a tent in the trunk and sleep under the stars.

At each cabin located in the Weigand-Burbach



Jessica Hilbert and son Oliver from Omaha play on a blanket outside one of Lewis & Clark SRA's 10 lakeside cabins.

Watching the sun set
lakeside is one of the
time-honored traditions
at Lewis & Clark SRA.





Above: With 23,000 surface acres of water, Lewis & Clark affords visitors the opportunity to fish, ski and sail.
Below: Anglers fish and relax on one of the breakwaters at the Weigand-Burbach area.

area of the park, there are two bedrooms, modern kitchen, outdoor grill, and campfire ring. It's a perfect place for a large gathering of family and friends.

The campgrounds at Weigand-Burbach are great for families looking to meet new friends at the next campsite. However, if isolation is your desire, try looking at the Bloomfield or Miller Creek areas for an overnight stay. Or, come for the day and visit these locations or even South Shore and its 4-mile long hiking, biking or equestrian trail overlooking the original Lewis and Clark campsites from 1804.

Unless you would rather be on the water instead of looking at it.

FISHING AND WATERSPORTS

The Lewis & Clark area offers a unique opportunity because the lake itself is a renowned walleye and smallmouth bass fishery, with hotspots for both species near Gavins Point Dam and the upper ends of the lake. However, these aren't the only species to be caught, as sauger,

largemouth bass, bluegill, crappie and catfish are also available.

In the tailrace below the dam, various fish species can be caught throughout the year. On the lake itself, bank anglers can also take advantage of several breakwaters on the south side of the lake that give anglers access to both shallow and deep water.

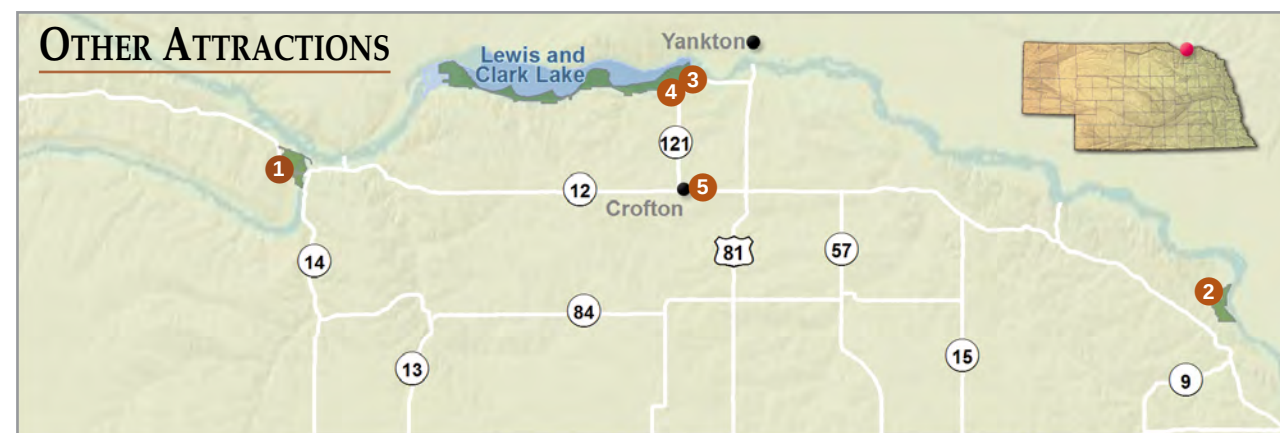
The deep water of the lake, 45 feet at its maximum, and its 23,000 surface acres is also valuable for the myriad of water sports that brings visitors from throughout the entire region. With a lake stretching more than 15 miles at full pool and boat ramps at Weigand-Burbach, Bloomfield, Miller Creek, and South Shore, skiing, sailing and the like remain some of the biggest draws of the lake, which is less than three hours from Lincoln and Omaha.

WILDLIFE VIEWING

Late afternoon drives in and near the park, with an ice cream cone from the Weigand-Burbach marina in hand, give families the opportunity to see wildlife. Plus, the more roads that are driven, the more scenic vistas overlooking the lake can be viewed.



OTHER ATTRACTIONS



1 Niobrara State Park (42 miles) - Offers cabins, camping, wildlife viewing, scenic vistas for hiking, and horseback riding.

2 Ponca State Park (60 miles) - Includes mini-lodges and rustic cabins, camping, wildlife viewing, hiking and an interpretive center.

3 Lewis & Clark Center - Operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, this visitor center gives a spectacular view of Lewis & Clark Lake, Gavins Point Dam and the Missouri River. The center also includes exhibits about the Missouri River, including geology, early exploration and settlement, and the construction of the dam.

4 Lakeview Golf Course - This 9-hole, 2,925 yard public course is both scenic and affordable for the golfer in your family. For more information, visit CroftonLakeview.com.

5 Argo Hotel - Located 10 miles south in Crofton, the Argo celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2012 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. With a period-style restaurant on-site, it is a must-see for anyone wanting to take a step back in time.

To make a cabin or campground reservation at Lewis & Clark SRA, Niobrara SP or Ponca SP, visit Nebraskastateparks.reserveamerica.com.

RELAXING

A vacation is not complete without being as lazy as humanly possible at least some of the time. Opportunities abound at Lewis & Clark SRA for these non-activities, including shaded waterfront reading spots all along the south side of the lake near the cabins, campground, swimming area, playground or marina.

Hopefully this answers a few of your questions. But don't take my word for it. ■

CAMPING AT LEWIS & CLARK

- Weigand-Burbach Campground - 150 paved pads, 52 non-electrical sites, 30/50 amp electrical hookups, dump station and public showers. Tent camping sites also available.
- Bloomfield area - 36 camping pads with 30 amp electrical hookups and public showers.
- Miller Creek - primitive camping area.
- South Shore - day-use only.

Let's Share the Sand

Aiding terns and plovers at Lake Mac.

By Joel Jorgensen

Imagine yourself on a summer day arriving at Lake McConaughy for a fun-filled weekend with friends and family. You head to the beach with your gear (don't forget the sunscreen!) and have the sand all to yourself. Well, almost. You notice a small, sand-colored bird behaving as though it is injured. Being a kind person, you stop to consider the poor bird's plight. Then, you see a sign next to you with a caricature resembling the very bird you are observing and the words "keep out" plainly written in white type on a red background.

You have walked into a complex situation that is several things. Biologically, you are witnessing the struggle for survival – an adult piping plover defending its nest or young chicks by feigning an injury to lure a perceived predator away. From a conservation perspective, you are witnessing a concerted effort by several agencies to keep human recreationists from harming nesting piping plovers. Legally, you are on the frontlines of the larger question of balancing endangered species' management with human interests.

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) is a federal statute and the Nebraska Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Act is a state statute that makes imperiled species' protection a priority. Piping plovers are state and federally listed as threatened while interior least terns, which also nest at Lake McConaughy, are state and federally listed as endangered.

Anyone watching the news knows that the protection of threatened and endangered species occasionally results in conflicts. While details of each situation differ, the general theme is species' protection competing with human interests. More often than not, the other human interest is a perfectly valid one (fishing, enjoying an afternoon on the beach or pitching a tent); it merely competes with a threatened or endangered species or its

habitat.

Piping plovers and interior least terns nest together on expanses of bare or sparsely vegetated sand near water. Nests blend in perfectly; the eggs appear not much more than errant small rocks and both species' tiny chicks are similarly camouflaged

and vulnerable, a problem when prime nesting habitat is also attractive to people for recreation.

When beaches are crowded, the situation puts people and birds together and can create conflicts. In some of these situations, particularly those on the East Coast, conflicts have become bitter between bird protection efforts and recreational interests and led to heated arguments, vandalism and even death threats.

At Lake McConaughy, both species were discovered nesting in the late 1970s (piping plover) and 1980s (least tern), and the area has become important in supporting regional populations, particularly for piping plovers. Management efforts to protect the birds are implemented by the lake's owner, Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District. Specifically, Central, in coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, erect fences, psychological barriers and signs intended to inform recreationists of areas off limits to humans – places occupied by a nesting least tern, piping plover or their young chicks.

While these efforts can be successful as long as recreationists follow the rules, it takes a very small proportion of the more than 800,000 people who visit Lake McConaughy each year to create conflicts at the lake. The areas cordoned off for the birds are appealing



PHOTO BY JOEL JORGENSEN

A piping plover performs the broken wing display.

to recreationists, and it is very easy for people to unknowingly step on a nest or chick if they choose to not respect the law and go beyond a sign into a nesting area.

Unleashed dogs, which are not allowed under park rules, also cause problems. When people destroy nests or chicks, or harass adult or young piping plovers or least terns, "take" occurs under the federal ESA and the state Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Act – a violation of state and federal law. It is a problem when even one "take" event occurs, and the issue escalates if "take" occurs with some frequency or pattern.

Recreationists can greatly influence the future of Lake McConaughy and whether the beaches can support both protected species and recreation. Protection measures can only be effective if park visitors give piping plovers and interior least terns their space by looking out for signs and staying out of the areas cordoned or fenced off for the birds. This is one conflict we can avoid if we collectively and proactively work together and share the sand. ■

Joel Jorgensen is the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission's Nongame Bird Program Manager.



Philly Cheesesteak Duck Rolls

A new twist on the classic Philly cheesesteak sandwich.

By Jenny Nguyen

I distinctly remember the first time I had a real Philly cheesesteak sandwich. I was sitting on the steps outside of the King of Prussia Mall, ravenously admiring a big, fat hoagie in my hands. The smell of hot chipped steak, caramelized onions and melted cheese wizz escaped into the nippy New England air. Fast forward a few years later, I returned to Philadelphia a second time to discover the Philly cheesesteak egg roll – crunchy, cheesy and savory delights that would change my perception of Philly's beloved sandwich forever.

Now, as someone who eats wild game regularly, I am constantly thinking of new ways to cook it. As much as I love the old, tried and true, discovering new ways to enjoy game can often be just as satisfying. This is one of my favorite ways to prepare wild duck, especially with the special dipping sauce. I hope you enjoy it.

Servings: 2, about 6 egg rolls
Prep Time: 15 minutes (plus 2-3 days if you want to brine* the duck)
Cooking Time: 30 minutes

Ingredients:

- 1/2 lb. wild duck breasts (brined, optional)
- 1/4 cup onion, thinly sliced
- 1 green onion, white and light green parts thinly sliced
- 3-4 splashes Worcestershire sauce
- kosher salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
- 1 tbs. olive oil for sautéing
- egg roll wrappers (store bought)
- provolone cheese slices, about 6
- 1 egg, beaten
- vegetable/corn/peanut oil for frying

Dipping Sauce:

- 3/4 cup ketchup
- 1/2 tsp. powdered mustard
- 2 tbs. brown sugar
- Tabasco sauce, to taste

1. Slice duck breasts thinly against the grain.



PHOTO BY JENNY NGUYEN

Serve your duck rolls with savory mustard, ketchup, brown sugar and Tabasco sauce.

2. In a pan, heat 1 tbs. olive oil over medium-high heat. Sauté sliced onion until translucent, about 5 minutes. Sprinkle a little salt over onion to help draw out moisture. Then, add the sliced duck breasts and green onion and sauté until the meat is browned. Add 3 to 4 splashes of Worcestershire, salt and pepper to taste. Drain the mixture of all liquids and allow to cool. Hot liquid will ruin the egg roll wrappers when assembling.

3. Lay 1 egg roll wrap on a clean, dry surface with a corner pointing towards you. It should look like a diamond from where you stand. Place 1 provolone cheese slice in the middle of the wrap and then place some of the cooled duck mixture atop the cheese slice, as if you're filling a burrito. Do not overfill.

4. Snugly fold the corner closest to you. Brush the side corners with beaten egg and fold them in. Finally, brush the top corner with egg and roll up the entire egg roll. Make sure everything is well sealed. Repeat until you run out of duck mixture.

5. Heat 1-2 inches of oil in a saucepan, just enough so the egg rolls won't touch the bottom of the pan. When the oil is hot, fry egg rolls about 1 minute on each side until browned. Drain fried egg rolls on paper towels.

6. To make dipping sauce, simply mix ketchup, powdered mustard, brown sugar and Tabasco sauce in a bowl.

* To brine: Bring 4 cups water, 1/4 cup kosher salt and 1/4 cup brown sugar to a boil. Cool completely before brining duck breasts in a nonreactive bowl; slice duck breasts for more effective blood leeching.

Cover and store in the refrigerator. Replace brining liquid with ice water the next day and refrigerate. Repeat for up to 3 days. Drain duck and dab with paper towels to dry. ■

Jenny Nguyen is a NEBRASKALAND Magazine regional editor based in Norfolk.



BOOKS/PUBLICATIONS/VIDEOS

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▲ I inherited one of my mother's old picture albums in 2005. I don't remember ever seeing any of these pictures as I was growing up. I am 82 years old now and I can remember my dad talking about hunting on the Groves Ranch when he was younger. Some of these pictures were taken before he was married in 1925. This is how they used to hunt ducks. Dad said the limit was 25 ducks per day then. I numbered the pictures on the back and will try to tell you what little I know about each.

1. Taken in the mid 1920s, my granddad, my father, his brother, their brother-in-law, and a friend of the family usually made up the hunting party. Model Ts were the mode of transportation.

2. Picture of the Groves Ranch house in the background. This ranch was located outside Bingham.

3. This is a better picture of the ranch buildings. Notice the lake in the background. It almost came up to their house. Dad said there were lakes like this all through the hills. Their mode of hunting was

to sit on the end of a small lake and pass shoot, keeping the ducks moving from one lake to another.

4. This is the way they camped. The man in the tent is my grandfather, Charles Waugh, from Valley. The other two are my uncles.

5. This is Fred Larson of Omaha on left. My granddad Charles in center, and my uncle Joe Wardell of Washington, Nebraska.

6. My dad, Donald Waugh of Valley, is in the center with all the boys from the Groves family helping him hold up their game.

My dad used to talk of these hunts all through his lifetime, but I did not realize the scope of them until I found these pictures. The Groves family lost their ranch in the Depression years so the hunting trips ended before I was big enough to get involved. I never did know how my dad and granddad got involved with this ranch family, but I know they enjoyed every trip.

— Richard W. Waugh, Valley, Nebraska

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

What the River Carries

Encounters with the Mississippi, Missouri, and Platte.

By Elizabeth Mack

A well-informed and inspired collection of essays by Lisa Knopp, *What the River Carries: Encounters with the Mississippi, Missouri, and Platte* explores these three rivers of our landscape with the reverence of an inhabitant and the detailed precision of a historian and geographer.

In the first section of the collection, “Part I: The Mississippi,” Knopp recounts the forced surrender of land along the Mississippi from the Sauk, Meskwaki (Fox) and Ho-Chunk (Winnebago) tribes that become Burlington and Catfish Bend, Iowa. We learn of the legend of “Old Moe,” a two to three hundred-pound flathead catfish who supposedly lives deep in Burlington’s river bottoms. Fishermen attempted to pull Old Moe out with “two hundred yards of one-thousand-pound-test nylon rappelling rope” connected to “the hitch of a four wheel drive pick-up.” Whether the tales are true or legend is left to the reader.

An undercurrent of the Mississippi’s ecological problems is always present, as Knopp suggests that attempts to control the river with levees offers what many believe is “a false sense of security that encourages risky development,” as the levees produce a “higher and faster” river flow, creating a recipe for disaster, as many along the rivers have come to learn.

Weaving personal stories of family with the history behind prehistoric American Indian burial mounds, Knopp takes the reader on a journey in “Mound Builders,” as she recounts a trip with her aging mother to Effigy Mounds National Monument in Northeast Iowa. Although the history behind the construction of the 1,500-year-old mounds is fascinating, the real story is of family: children growing and leaving home; aging parents and parents that have passed; and contemplations on the passage of time.

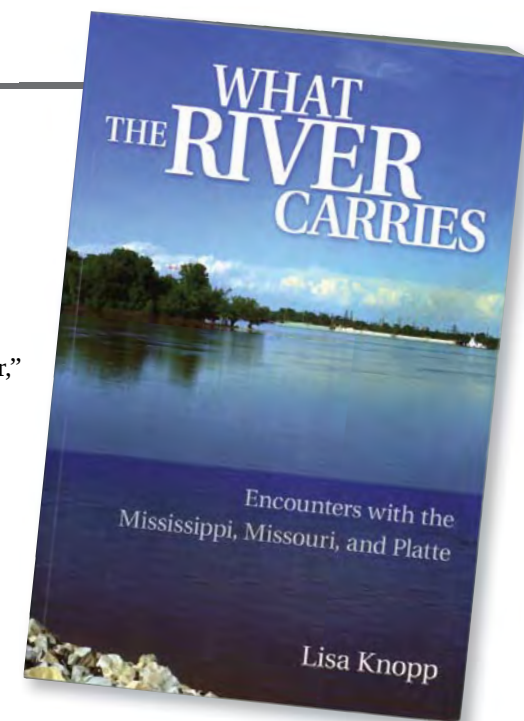
In “Part II: The Missouri,” Knopp

finds the Missouri a “familiar stranger,” unlike the Mississippi that she grew up to know intimately. But her stranger vantage point is deceiving, as she becomes a learned expert through interviews and painstaking research. “This wasn’t a geography I had chosen,” Knopp says, as she begins her Missouri River journey in St. Louis, attempting to uncover exactly where Lewis and Clark began their own Missouri journey some 200-odd-years earlier. In “The Overlook,” we see the once-wild river reshaped by shortsighted intervention into a “relatively controlled and predictable river,” resembling more of a “drainage ditch” than free-flowing river, a cautionary tale of the outcomes of insinuating our desires upon a landscape.

As we travel further into Part II, “Missouri River Music” details the heritage of the river, from Conor Oberst and the burgeoning Indie scene in Omaha to Kansas City’s jazz district, where jam sessions were an “undammed, unchanneled river, meandered, looped, braided ...”. The essay recalls perhaps the first Euro-American musician to play along the banks of the Missouri, Pierre Cruzatte, Lewis and Clark’s keelboat oarsman. The groups’ journal keepers tell of Cruzatte’s evening fiddle-playing as the expeditioners danced and sang.

Part II concludes with the poignant “Restorations” at Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge, where the Corps is working to restore the river and provide habitat for endangered species. In this personal and compelling essay, Knopp parallels the refuge’s restoration with her own troubled son’s restoration that being around nature provides.

In “Part III: The Platte,” the writer describes this river as one she is coming to know as a relocated inhabitant. Knopp recalls on first seeing this river it seemed more a creek with its shallow, flat bottom, often running dry, a river that seemed to creep more



than rage. But as the writer travels deeper into the river, learning more about the diversity of the Platte River region (boasting a more diverse flora between eastern and western Nebraska than between eastern Nebraska and New England) she admits a newfound respect for a river that she has grown to love.

The collection concludes with “Meanderings,” originally published in NEBRASKALAND, which brings nature – and a “Phantom River” – right to the author’s Lincoln front door after a raging storm. Throughout these detailed and often intimate portraits, Knopp urges readers to consider their relationship to the landscapes they love, or landscapes they might want to learn to love. “Growing to love a landscape is similar to growing to love a person. Both require time and intention, if one is to develop and sustain a love that is deep and committed,” Knopp writes. By understanding the narratives of the rivers that run through the land we inhabit, perhaps it is possible to understand ourselves a bit better. We are all sojourners in any landscape we inhabit, and Knopp’s informed essays show the importance of being a respectful caretaker. ■

Lisa Knopp’s *What the River Carries* is available at bookstores throughout Nebraska and at Amazon.com.





Crab Spider

I needed some photos of bees for a project I was working on. Unfortunately, bees – as the saying goes – are really busy. This makes them hard to photograph, and I spent a long hour one hot summer afternoon chasing them around with very little to show for it. Just as I was about ready to stomp off in disgust, I spotted this crab spider hanging out on a prairie clover flower. Artistically, I liked the composition of the image. Philosophically, I liked the idea that the spider was trying to do the same thing I was – capture a bee.

The difference, of course, was that I just wanted photos, but the spider wanted a meal. I guessed the spider had been trying for a lot longer than I had, and it made feel a little sheepish about quitting. Crab spiders like this one hunt by sitting still on a flower, knowing that a pollinator insect will eventually come. That habit of sitting still (not to mention their poor eyesight) makes them relatively easy to photograph, and this one was no exception. It was nice to know I wasn't going to go home empty-handed.

After I photographed the spider, I decided to follow its example and try just a little longer to get a good bee photo. Fifteen minutes later, I finally managed a couple decent images of bees feeding on some nearby prairie clover flowers. Then I gave up and headed for my air-conditioned vehicle, feeling good that persistence had paid off.

I hope it worked for the spider too.

Chris Helzer
April 17, 2013



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