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magazine

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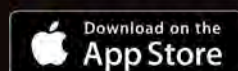
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Nebraskaland

Volume 97 • No. 7
August/September 2019

Cover: James Quinn of Omaha sails with his family on Lewis and Clark Lake in Knox County, popular among sailors for its size and reliable winds. Photo by Eric Fowler.

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PHOTO BY BOB GRIER

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Nebraskaland
magazine

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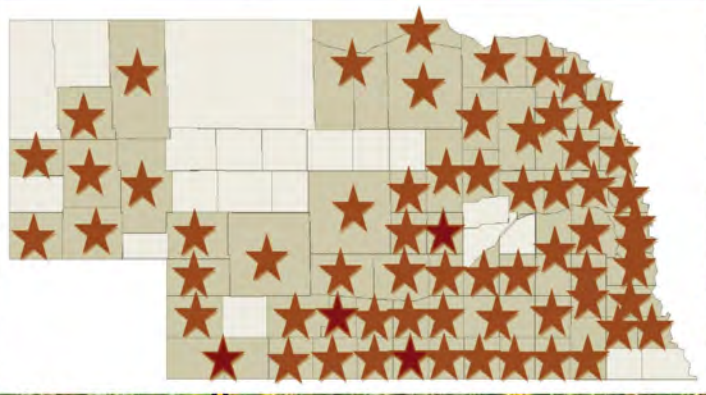
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White-tailed Deer

Richard Jones, Gothenburg
Steel Wool Spinning at Lake Helen



Karen Kutz Smith, Omaha
Scarlet Tanager at Fontenelle Forest



Steve Isom, Valentine
Sunset in the Sandhills



Alan Nash, Scottsbluff
Western Clouds

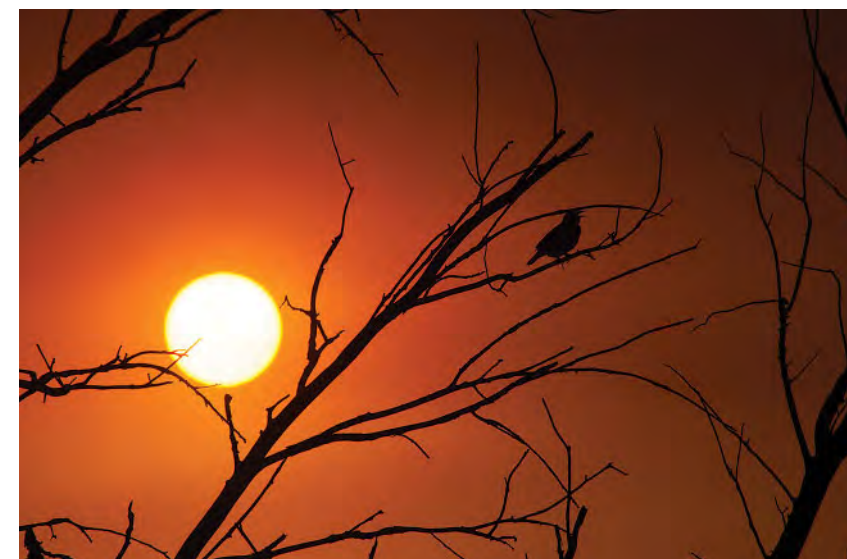


Terrin Vancura, Sidney
Chimney Rock Retriever



OPPOSITE: Karen Kutz Smith, Omaha
Eastern Gray Squirrel

Dakota Altman, Lincoln
A Sunset Singer



Correction: On page 69 of the July issue Irene Fisher's father should have read Ernest Ehmen. We regret the error.

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

Take a Dog Hunting

German short-haired pointer Charlie lovingly looks to her owner, Aaron Schroder of Lyons, for direction while pheasant hunting in Burt County.

PHOTO BY JENNY NGUYEN-WHEATLEY





PHOTO BY JARROD SPILGER

DOVE LOADS

By Jarrod Spilger

September means dove season to many Nebraska hunters. It also means stock up on the ammo, because aerobatic doves can be difficult to hit. The often reported average is three shells per dove, which personal experience confirms, although I did manage to bag a limit of 15 doves with 27 shots one rare day last season, for an average of less than two shells per bird.

Choosing the right ammo can improve your hit rate. While any shotgun will work, for the sake of economy most hunters use a 12-or 20-gauge. Target loads are fine, provided velocity is 1,200 fps or greater. Drop below 1,200 fps and catching up to speedy doves becomes difficult. Velocities over 1,300 fps have plenty of speed, but also generate more recoil. A load in the 1,250-1,275 fps range is a good compromise.

Charge weight can also determine felt recoil. A 12-gauge, 1½-ounce payload has more pellets and denser patterns than a 1-ounce charge, but also more kick, the effects of which quickly become cumulative over the course of an afternoon dove shoot. In 20-gauge, 1-ounce is too much, ¾-ounce is good, and ½-ounce even better, at least in terms of recoil.

Of course, a 16-gauge, 28-gauge, or .410-bore will also bag

doves, but again economics factors in since the cost of ammo for these shotguns is significantly higher.

Regarding shot sizes, stick with No. 8 early in the season, then switch to larger No. 7½ as the season progresses and birds become wary and shots get longer.

This year, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission challenges you to go hunting, and to take someone new with you. Whether it's a grandchild, a child, a spouse, a neighbor, a colleague or a friend, we challenge you to share your passion with someone you care about. It doesn't matter if they're brand new to hunting, or if they just haven't gone in a few years. Take 'em hunting.

For hunting ideas, turn the page to see short intro articles on squirrel, frog and upland hunting, as well as a reminder of how vital private landowners are to the preservation of our hunting passions.

For information about rules and prizes, visit OutdoorNebraska.org/takeemhunting.



UPLAND SLAM

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September 1, 2019 — January 31, 2020

Nebraska is an upland bird hunter's paradise – the mixed bag capital of the Great Plains – with diverse hunting opportunities, long seasons, great access to public lands and high rates of hunter satisfaction.

Learn more about the second year of the slam and the prizes you could win at

OutdoorNebraska.org/UplandSlam





PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS

CALLING SQUIRRELS

By Jarrod Spilger

Many hunters don't realize it, but squirrels can be called in just like turkeys or ducks. Under the right conditions, this tactic can be highly effective. The key to squirrel calling success is knowing when to call and what to say.

Calling is most effective on calm days so squirrels can hear you. Also, wait until enough leaves have fallen to make squirrels more visible, and pick a nice day when they are more active. A warm afternoon following a cold spell is ideal.

A squirrel's vocabulary consists mostly of chatters and barks. Chatters are a series of fast, staccato notes used to express everything from agitation to curiosity. Barks are short, sharp, single note sounds usually issued as a challenge. Making one or two barks, followed by a long series of chatters, is often all that's needed to spark a squirrel's territorial curiosity and draw them in for a closer look.

Another sound is the distress whistle, which is often made by young squirrels being attacked by predators. This drives adult squirrels crazy and encourages them to abandon their

treetop hideouts to investigate, just like kids on a playground come running to watch a fight.

Most calls are of the basic, bellows-style design. The open, barrel-end of the call is held in one hand, while the palm of the other hand is used to quickly compress the bellows to make barks and chatters. Some calls also have a whistle integrated into the barrel that imitates distress sounds.

Regardless of what is said through a call, the key is to say something. The squirrels will respond.



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GAGE CO, NE - 120 AC.

This property is an excellent mixed bag of both production and hunting. Along the western portion of the farm, you'll find tillable fields with Class II soils, buffer strips of CRP, and tall timber along the Wildcat Creek.

The eastern portion consists of rolling hills, pasture with portions of new fence, and the right amount of timber to provide excellent habitat for the resident deer herd. The combination of food, live water, and cover give this property top notch habitat for both deer and turkey. The beat down trails are proof that healthy numbers of whitetail call this property home. If you're looking for an all-around production and recreational farm, this is it! Call today for your private showing!



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PHOTO BY JUSTIN HAAG

YOUR FIRST PRONGHORN HUNT

By Emily Burch

You drew your first Nebraska Pronghorn tag, or you're planning on buying one when over-the-counter sales open Aug. 5. What now? Pronghorn, known for their incredible speed and vision, are one of Nebraska's most exciting big game animals. Bagging one, however, is no easy task. Here are a few pointers to help turn that first hunt into a success.

Season Dates: Archery season is Aug. 20-Dec. 31. Muzzleloader hunters have from Sept. 15-30 to harvest their animal, and the firearm season is Oct. 13-28. Several units also allow late doe seasons.

Firearms: Pronghorn see the world as if looking through wide-angle, 8x magnification binoculars. Bowhunters should prepare for confident 60-yard shots. Muzzleloaders vary widely in their capability – know the distance at which yours is powerful and accurate. With a rifle, be comfortable at 200 plus yards. Antelope will push your distance.

Supplies: Like deer, pronghorn do not see color, so clothing that breaks up your silhouette works as well as desert camouflage. Dress rugged and lightweight, and do not forget your blaze orange for the muzzleloader and firearm seasons. High-powered binoculars will save you miles of trekking, though sturdy boots are still a must. Kneepads and leather gloves will protect your limbs when stalking your trophy through cactus-studded plains. A blind is also a good idea.

Finding Land: Game and Parks has an online interactive atlas with downloadable map sheets and publishes the Big Game Guide, which can be found at OutdoorNebraska.org or sporting goods stores statewide. If you have permission

to hunt on private land, communicate with the landowner about where you plan to hunt. Once you have an area figured out, put in the time to glass and locate animals. Look for parcels of land with at least 2 square miles of interior. Though they like being able to see for miles, they'll often disappear into gullies or rolling hills to get out of the wind, so do not rule out land that isn't dead flat. They will usually be within 4 miles of water, too.

Tactics: Getting close to pronghorn is the real trick. Use everything in the landscape to your advantage. Line up the posts on a fence-line or get into a slight draw, stay low, and take your time. Play the wind as well, keeping them upwind and pushing closer during gusts. Get creative. Pronghorn are curious animals and more trusting of familiar surroundings, known to charge a white T-shirt waved just above the grass or to let several hunters walk into shooting range behind the cutout of an Angus. If stalking is not your game, use Google Earth to locate stock tanks near spotted animals. Set up a ground blind, bring a book and plenty of water for yourself and settle in. The hottest days are best for this strategy, especially if rainfall has been light. Additionally, antelope prefer to duck under fences instead of leaping them, and these places act like funnels. Setting up near an often-used high spot in the fence and letting other hunters push them to you has worked before, and will work again.

Ask experienced hunters about their success, and take the time to learn the antelope hunting regulations found at OutdoorNebraska.org/huntingseasons.

Discover Northwest Nebraska.

The northern edge of the Nebraska Panhandle combines the topography of the Pine Ridge and the hundreds of thousands of acres of public land to make Northwest Nebraska an outdoor playground. No matter where your interests lie, we have unparalleled opportunities to hunt and fish, hike, bike, and camp.

From prehistoric fossils to fur traders and the cavalry, the story of the west flows through here. Get off the beaten path and Discover Northwest Nebraska.



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PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS

TAKE 'EM FROGGIN'

By Jeff Kurrus

If you have young kids and you're not staying up until the wee hours of the night hand-grabbing frogs this time of the year, you're missing out. Here's what to expect and what supplies you'll need.

Bullfrogs will surround the edges of farm ponds and lakes throughout the state near nightfall. Hunting for them on the land can be tough because they can be skittish to sounds behind them – as they will be facing the water – so a small johnboat or canoe is ideal.

Supplies are simple – life jackets for the kids, a small, but sturdy butterfly net, insect repellent, a few hand-held

flashlights for scanning the banks, and one spotlight. The spotlight should be rechargeable in your vehicle by USB or a 12v outlet.

Shine lights in the frog's eyes as you quietly approach, and switch back and forth between handgrabbing and using a net depending on where the frogs are sitting. Rod-and-reel tactics can also be used near dusk and dawn using floating scum frog or mouse imitations.

These trips will be dirty, smelly, and laugh-out-loud funny. And your kids will love them too. Visit the Nebraska Fishing Guide for more information.

The advertisement features a dark background with a collage of ducks. On the left, a canvasback duck is shown in profile. In the center, a mallard duck and a redhead duck are shown. On the right, a teal duck is shown. Overlaid on the ducks is the 'NEBRASKA DUCK SLAM' logo, which includes a white silhouette of a duck in flight. Below the logo, the dates 'September 7, 2019 - February 27, 2020' are displayed in large white text. Further down, a paragraph of text describes the challenge: 'Add a new challenge to your waterfowl hunts this year – see if you can complete the Nebraska Duck Slam.' Below this, another paragraph says: 'Harvest four of our most popular duck species in one season and claim flyway bragging rights - and four tasty meals.' A call to action follows: 'Check out details at OutdoorNebraska.org/DuckSlam'. At the bottom, there are two logos: 'NEBRASKA - GAME PARKS -' with a small circular logo, and 'DUCKS UNLIMITED' with a duck head silhouette logo.



PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS

A THANK YOU TO LANDOWNERS

By Jake Jadowski

Dear Landowner,

I'm reaching out to say thank you. But before I do, I'd like to explain myself. I think a lot of hunters who share my passion would agree.

I love to hunt. Like many of us, my garage is full of decoys, blinds, generators, camouflage and tools. Whatever doesn't fit in the garage stays in the storage unit.

But sometimes it's hard to find a place to put all that gear to use. I don't own any land. My family doesn't own any land. In Nebraska, we are lucky to have more than 1 million acres of land open to public, walk-in access. However, with Nebraska's strong hunting culture, our publicly accessible land can receive a lot of pressure.

So sometimes, I rely on people I don't know in order to do the thing that I love. Without them, we can't always find a place to hunt.

This past waterfowl season has made that more apparent to me than ever. It certainly isn't the first year with unpredictable weather, early freezes, unseasonably warm temperatures, high river levels or muddy fields. But for whatever reason, finding places to hunt was more difficult than usual for me. And it became clear to me just how much we rely on landowners to give us an opportunity to hunt.

I know you guys get tired of us knocking on your door. I know you get tired of picking up the phone and talking to some guy that you've never met about permission. I know you have better things to do with your time. But we bother you anyway. And often, you tell us "no."

But sometimes you say "yes." Last season, three of us

loaded up the trucks and trailer and headed west hoping to find somebody that would be willing to let us set out some decoys. We met a farmer who opened his door to us. Not only did he give us permission to hunt on his land, but he made phone calls to other landowners on our behalf. He invited us into his living room to talk. He let us stay in a big shed on his property that was heated! And he even hunted with us (a dang good shot, too). Everything about it was awesome. We got to make new friends and meet new people and hunt new places. Not to mention, he set us up on one of the best late-season mallard hunts that a guy could ask for. I can't say enough about the way he welcomed us and treated us.

So to all the landowners that occasionally say "yes," thank you.

Thank you for recognizing our passion.

Thank you for the opportunity to do what we love to do.

Thank you for the opportunity to use all of our gear that we devote so much time and money.

Thank you for giving us a chance to hang out with our buddies.

Thank you for opening up your property and your homes.

Thank you for sharing stories.

Thank you for hunting with us.

Thank you for letting us make new friends.

To Jim and to Trevor and to Tony and to everyone like you guys, thank you for giving us a place to hunt.

Sincerely,

Jake



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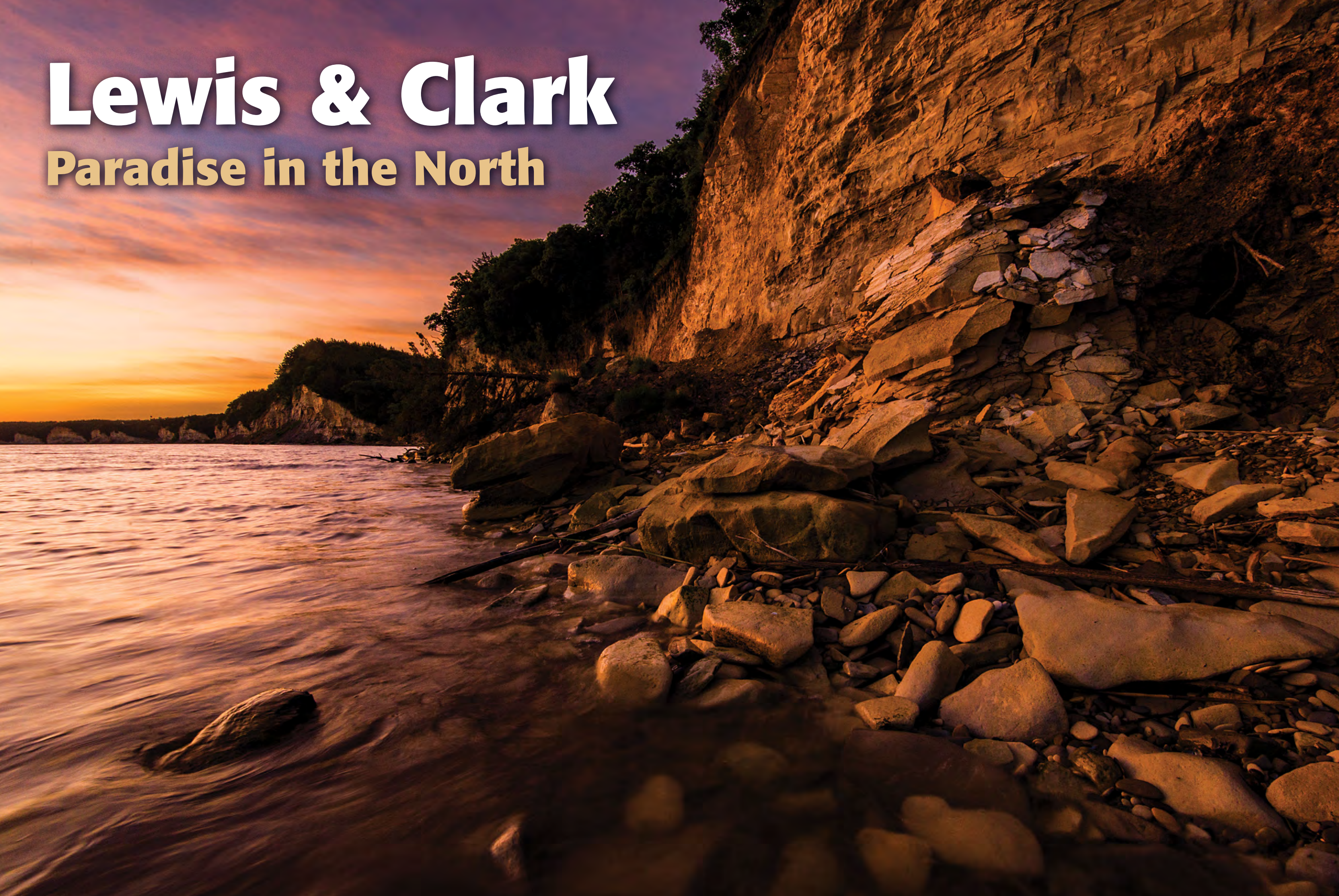
Sidekick.Kubota.com

*Class is based on these models: Polaris Ranger XP 900, John Deere XUV835M & Kawasaki Mule PRO-FXR. The handling comparison was performed on the FSAE SKIDPAD course in gravel conditions.

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Lewis & Clark

Paradise in the North



STORY AND PHOTOS BY ERIC FOWLER

There aren't many places you can pull your boat up on the bank at Lewis and Clark Lake. Water has eroded away hillsides ringing much of the lake, leaving cliffs that reveal colorful layers of Niobrara chalk and Carlisle shale, part of the geology of the area. Below those cliffs, more than 100 feet high in places, the shoreline is just too rocky. Still, boaters make the most of it, anchoring in the shadow of those cliffs when they want to hit the pause button and relax in the sun or go for a swim. The shoreline is one of the most picturesque backdrops you will see on any water in Nebraska.

There are countless boats on the reservoir on a summer weekend, but as Nebraska's second largest at 15 miles long and 2.5 miles wide, there is plenty of room for those and more. Some boaters have unfurled their sails and are riding the prevailing winds across the water. Some are pulling kids on tubes. Some have their lines out, drifting or trolling for sauger, walleye, white bass or catfish, or casting for big smallmouth bass.

When the day is done, some will pull their boat into a slip at the Weigand Marina at Lewis and Clark State Recreation Area. The waiting list is long for slips that are leased seasonally, but a few can be rented daily. With four boat ramps, getting in and out of the water is quick and easy.

The marina is just one of the amenities found at the Weigand and the adjacent Burbach areas. Ten modern two-bedroom cabins sit on the lakeshore, with spacious patios and lawns overlooking the water. There are campgrounds, a swim beach, concession, playground and more. On most weekends in the summer, and a few in the fall, special activities are offered in the Weigand-Burbach area, including movie nights, hayrack rides and archery clinics, to name a few. The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission manages three other areas on the lake's south shore – Miller Creek, Bloomfield and South Shore – all of which offer camping of some sort and boat

ramps. In all, there are 250 sites, 150 with electrical hookups.

The South Shore area has more than 4 miles of trails open to hikers, horseback riders and mountain bikers and, in the winter, snowmobilers and cross-country skiers. The trails wind through the hardwood- and cedar-forested bluffs and remnant patches of native prairie above the lake, and in a few spots, take you to the edge of the cliffs for a sweeping view of the lake. A short trail is also found at the Miller Creek area.

The reservoir is a wide spot on the Missouri River, which forms the border between Nebraska and South Dakota on the northeastern edge of the state. It is formed by the 1.6-mile-long Gavins Point Dam, which was completed in 1955. Built and managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the dam's hydroelectric facilities produce enough electricity to power 68,000 homes.

Below the dam are more campgrounds managed by the Corps, as well as Lake Yankton, which recently underwent a project to remove rough fish and now provides excellent angling for largemouth bass, as well as some nice walleye and bluegills. The Nebraska Tailwaters area is another popular angling spot, with a chance to catch anything that swims in the reservoir and, in the fall, snag a prehistoric paddlefish. Above the spillway area is the Corps' Lewis and Clark Visitors Center. The Gavins Point National Fish Hatchery, operated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is also located below the dam.

The reservoir is named for the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Members of that party camped at three locations along this reach of the Missouri River on their way to the west coast in 1804, and at another on their way downriver two years later.

Once you see Lewis and Clark Lake, you may not want to wait two years between visits to this scenic gem. 

A woman rows a stand-up paddleboard along the south shore of Lewis and Clark Lake in Knox County. The rising sun illuminates the picturesque shale and chalk cliffs that ring most of the lake.





Lacey and Seth Gould of Wausa paddle their kayaks on Lewis and Clark Lake at sunset.



With patios overlooking the lake, cabins in the Burbach area are popular among visitors.



Gavin and Kaden Jarecki of Norfolk ride a ski tube behind a boat piloted by their parents, Jason and Melissa.



Cole Bartley and Joe and Mike Zoucha of Omaha fish for bass in the upper reaches of the reservoir.



Keaten Gilsdorf and Bentley, Sadie and Riley Reimers play on the bridge over Miller Creek behind their families' campsites at the Miller Creek area.

Cory and Wendy Zimmerman of Crofton and their crew participate in the boat parade during Marina Days in June at the Weigand area.



Kids play on a floating mat in the Bloomfield area.



A wave rushes over a rocky shoreline at the lake.

Outdoor Nebraska

By Renae Blum

As summer ends and we slip into fall, make sure to get outside and enjoy hunting, wildlife viewing, and the many Nebraska state park events taking place across the state, which you can learn more about at Calendar.OutdoorNebraska.gov. 📅



PHOTO BY ERIC FOWLER

Observe and photograph butterflies

Dates and locations vary by species

With warmer temperatures and flowers blooming, now is a good time to observe butterflies. The best times tend to be on clear, warm days around midday, at locations with lots of flowers. Species you can find statewide at this time include the monarch, black swallowtail, red admiral and common checkered-skipper.

End of Summer Bash

Aug. 30-Sept. 1,
Lewis and Clark State
Recreation Area



PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS

Enjoy fall hunting

Various dates | Statewide

Hunting opportunities abound in August and September. Multiple seasons are opening, such as archery deer, archery and muzzleloader antelope, elk, turkey, dove, grouse and teal.



PHOTO BY JENNY NGUYEN-WHEATLEY

Attend the Missouri River Outdoor Expo

Sept. 21-22 | Ponca State Park

Celebrate our outdoor heritage with more than 90 free, hands-on exhibits, demonstrations, vendors and activities including kayaking, fishing, outdoor cooking, rock climbing and more. A state park permit is required for each vehicle entering the park.



GETTY IMAGES

Learn about Native American history at Fort Atkinson

Aug. 3-4 | Fort Atkinson State Historical Park

This living history weekend includes the “Wardance and Gourd Dance of the Umonhon Nation,” a dance honoring Native American veterans; and a presentation by Eagle T. Knife Chief, a descendant of a Pawnee leader who signed the Treaty of Friendship at Fort Atkinson in 1825. Visitors can also view a traveling Smithsonian exhibit about the history of Native American veterans in the U.S. military.

See Nebraska Game and Parks at the state fair

Aug. 23-Sept. 2 | Grand Island

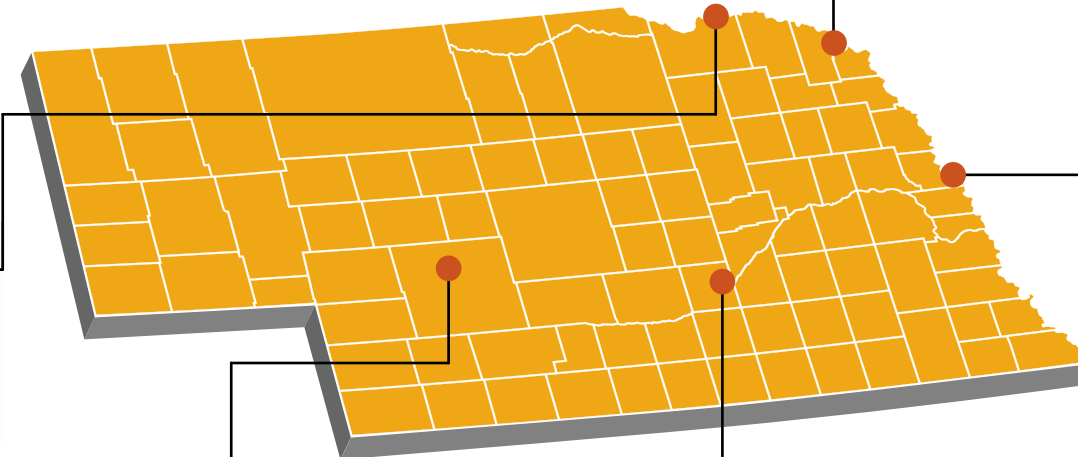
The Game and Parks exhibit in the Nebraska Building features a 6,000-gallon aquarium filled with fish found in Nebraska waters, an indoor archery and air gun range, and fun educational activities for all ages. Outside, you can find a sky fort, meandering stream, natural playground and more.



PHOTO BY ERIC FOWLER

Vintage Baseball Game

Aug. 17, Buffalo Bill
State Historical Park



From Hi-fi to Hunt Guide

Story and Photos by
Jenny Nguyen-Wheatley

Aaron Schroder of Lyons hunts on Nebraska CRP land north of Homer with German short-haired pointers Charlie and Remington, and pointing Labrador retriever Rio.





Schroder guides a teal hunt in early September.

Aaron Schroder lives in Lyons, Nebraska, with his wife, four dogs and two horses. He drives a truck, appreciates cheap beer, and enjoys spending time in his “man cave” – though he probably doesn’t like to call it that. Hunting gear takes up nearly all the extra space on the Schroder property, and when the season is in full swing, his wife, April Goettle, rarely sees him. You may think you know an Aaron – or two or several – in your life, but meet the real man, and you can’t help but do a double take. There’s no missing the weird cat tattoo and the slick-backed, rockabilly hair. That speech – definitely not Midwestern. Aaron doesn’t seem like someone who’s from

around here, let alone someone who would take you on your first pheasant hunt. Yet Lyons is only 20 miles from Onawa, Iowa, where he was born and where his parents still live. Aaron is different because he missed 20 years of living here. “Everything I do I’m obsessive about, it seems,” said Aaron, now 44 years old. “It’s just how I am.” His wife can attest to this behavior. Enticed by the “opportunity to leave [home] and go do something,” Aaron left Iowa at 18 to play rock music in Seattle. He worked at his birth mother’s restaurant during the day and played music at night. He met April through a musicians-wanted ad.

“We would work and then spend 3 or 4 hours a day practicing. It was a big commitment,” Aaron said, “I toured and made money, had a record deal.” For 12 years, this was Aaron’s life in Seattle. Then an opportunity to go to New York presented itself, and Aaron and April moved to Brooklyn to continue to play music professionally. The restaurant business was always there by default – the band toured as much as six months out of the year – and it was the kind of job that suited a musician’s

schedule. For a time, Aaron worked at Mario Batali’s Lupa. “So many people opened up doors and we continued to play,” Aaron said. “I remember we were touring in Scotland, and some musicians from Germany were discussing why we were doing what we were doing. One guy said, ‘It’s just adventure. I want adventure.’ And it just struck me,” Aaron said. “That’s the whole root of why we’re doing this.” It wasn’t about the money – there was never really much of that. Instead, playing music was a cheap way to travel and be away from work. It was a way to go overseas to “meet interesting people and have crazy experiences.” Then one day, Aaron walked away. A nearly 20-year obsession – gone. “I was getting older, and then a light came on,” Aaron said. “Jeez, I was 34 or 35 at the time, and I had been recording and touring since I was 19. When we arrived at JFK, right then, I knew I was done. I took my guitar off the airplane and I was like ‘I don’t need to do this anymore. I feel satisfied.’ ” After that, Aaron was free to do what he wanted, and around the same time, April finished her classes at Columbia. The couple lingered in New York a while longer to figure out their next move. The pivotal moment came when his father-in-law John called Aaron to go pheasant hunting. “John is a big outdoorsman and he always called me up to say, ‘take me pheasant hunting in Nebraska,’ but I never did. I grew up hunting in Iowa and had dogs, but stopped when I moved away. I hadn’t done it in such a long time.” Finally free from a life of band practice and touring, Aaron took up John’s invitation. He called his uncle Donny in Iowa to set up a



Schroder shot this rooster pheasant in January 2015 on Dakota County CRP ground.

hunt. John lived in Montana and Aaron was still in New York at the time. The plan was to meet in Omaha for opening day of pheasant season.

Thirteen years ago, the three men went hunting on opening morning in Monona County, Iowa. It was on public ground, the same places Donny took Aaron hunting when he was a boy. Though “stoked” to spend time with family,

Aaron admitted to feeling indifferent about the hunt. What he actually felt was unexpected.

“I remember it was a cold autumn morning,” Aaron said. “I put a shell in my shotgun, and suddenly boom – like WHOA. I thought ‘I miss this. I really like this.’ I forgot how much I liked hunting because I’ve been in a completely different environment. At that moment, I was pulled right back into it

... We had the worst hunt ever. We didn’t get anything or see anything. And I didn’t care.

“So I flew back to New York, and I just pushed everything else aside – my whole life has been like this. All of a sudden, I was reading and watching videos and wanting to get back into hunting and training dogs. I ended up flying back here four times before my hunting license ran out that year.”



Darlin', a German short-haired pointer, was Schroder's first hunting dog after his return to hunting. He and his wife, April Goettle, picked up Darlin' during their move from New York to Lyons, Nebraska.



Schroder has no idea how many birds he's cleaned since becoming a hunting guide. An accomplished cook, he has prepared pheasant just about every way possible.

Then Aaron’s dad called to say that an acreage in Nebraska was up for sale. They went to see the house, during the worst snowstorm Burt County has seen in years, and “somehow April still went for it.” Aaron loved the place immediately. They moved to Lyons five months later and picked up Darlin’, a German short-haired pointer puppy, on the drive from New York.

“I had paid for her a month or two before. I had everything laid out, and it was so fun!” Aaron said, barely able to contain his excitement over the memory. “I got this dog in my lap and we’re driving to our new house. I’m thinking, ‘Oh my god! My wife loves me so much!’”

Aaron didn’t have any plans at that point, except to take whatever odd jobs he could to afford his new hobby. Falling back on his restaurant experience, Aaron started as head chef at Pheasant Bonanza in Tekamah, where he introduced clients to wild game dishes that didn’t come from a can. He had no intention of turning hunting into a career, but quickly went from learning to train dogs on the side to becoming trainer and hunting guide full-time. He dove headfirst at the



Schroder's second dog Charlie is a talented German short-haired pointer. Out of Aaron's four dogs – two German shorthairs and two Labrador retrievers – she and Aaron have the most special bond.

opportunity to train for several months with the renowned John Greer at Tiger Mountain Pointing Labs in Ellensburg, Washington.

Aaron absorbed all he could, with the same obsession and tenacity he had for music. This was his new adventure, and much like his past life as a musician, the unpredictability of hunting and dog training kept his work exciting.

"The two are a balance – dog training and outfitting. You get slammed doing one thing, and get tired of it, and then you switch. It's like music – playing shows and recording. I can't do the same thing over and over again," Aaron said. "With hunting, there are always random occurrences that are fun to deal with, especially when dealing with nature. It doesn't get any more random than nature."

From upland hunting, Aaron then got into waterfowl hunting, which was an entirely new obsession in itself. A few years later, Aaron moved on from Pheasant Bonanza to open his own business: Double A Outfitting and Gun Dogs. It presented new challenges, which he relished.

"The things I really hated about outfitting at first are the things I really like now. Something always breaks. There are so many pieces," Aaron said. He may get up at 2 or 3 in

the morning – whatever it takes – because he assumes that something will always go wrong, and he's had a few close calls, unbeknownst to customers who show up hours later.

"I dig crazy weather patterns. I really enjoy them. But it makes working difficult when there's ice involved. If the river could talk," Aaron said, with a scoff. "Whether the birds show up is one thing, but nobody who comes hunting or dog training with me will ever suffer from any sort of shortcomings because something isn't working. That can't happen. In the end, it's really rewarding when things are how I want them to be."

As for wear and tear, life as a hunting guide isn't a huge upgrade from the days of sleeping on couches and floors. Aaron can put in as many as 90 hours per week during the hunting season. The work is a constant grind, and like many in the profession, he, too, suffers from aches and pains.

"I work by myself on the river a lot and have had some compromising times with the river. I remember sitting out there one morning, really early, and thinking to myself, 'I'm either really tough or really stupid,'" Aaron said. "I don't make a lot of money doing this. I could probably make more doing something else, but it's not the same.

You have to like it."

Sometimes he wonders when he'll stop guiding. Maybe he'll take a young hunter under his wing, as others have done for him. "I can just sit, lay down the stories and cook eggs or something. That's probably how I will go out," Aaron said, amused at the thought, before he quickly brushed it off. That day isn't happening anytime soon.

"Those guys that spend 50 years just watching the sky – that's just so romantic to me, to just watch the years go by like that, watching migrating birds and wildlife in general, and how they've adapted to change. These people have such a long perspective over a span of so many years," Aaron said. "I'm just more interested in it as the years go by. I'll sit out there for hours and hours, even when nothing is happening, and it'll seem like only 10 minutes. It's weird, to sit for hours and hours in one spot for so many years.

"I can't imagine doing anything else. It's all I think about. It's all I want to do. It's always calling me."

He isn't satisfied yet. [N](#)



Schroder carries out green-winged teal and wood ducks after a waterfowl hunt in Burt County.



A spread of duck decoys sit on a pond at sunrise. Schroder may get up at 2 or 3 in the morning to make sure everything is right before his clients arrive.

150 Nebraska State Fairs

By David L. Bristow, *History Nebraska*

Nebraskans will celebrate the 150th Nebraska State Fair Aug. 23-Sept. 2. Can you name the fair's five host cities, and the two years the fair was canceled?

Nebraska City hosted a three-day territorial fair in 1859, and the first two state fairs were there in 1868 and 1869. Brownville hosted for a few years, then Omaha and Lincoln switched back and forth until Lincoln became the fair's longtime home from 1901 to 2009. Grand Island has been the host city since 2010.

No fair was held in 1898 because host city Omaha was putting all its efforts into its Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition, a World's Fair-type event. And the U.S. government suspended fairs in 1945 due to World War II.

From the beginning, fair promoters disagreed whether the fair was primarily about education or entertainment. In 1868, future Nebraska governor Robert Furnas of Brownville scolded readers of the *Nebraska Advertiser*: "Don't go into sideshows to see fat women, or a calf with two heads and eight legs, or any other monstrosities; but look at the stock,

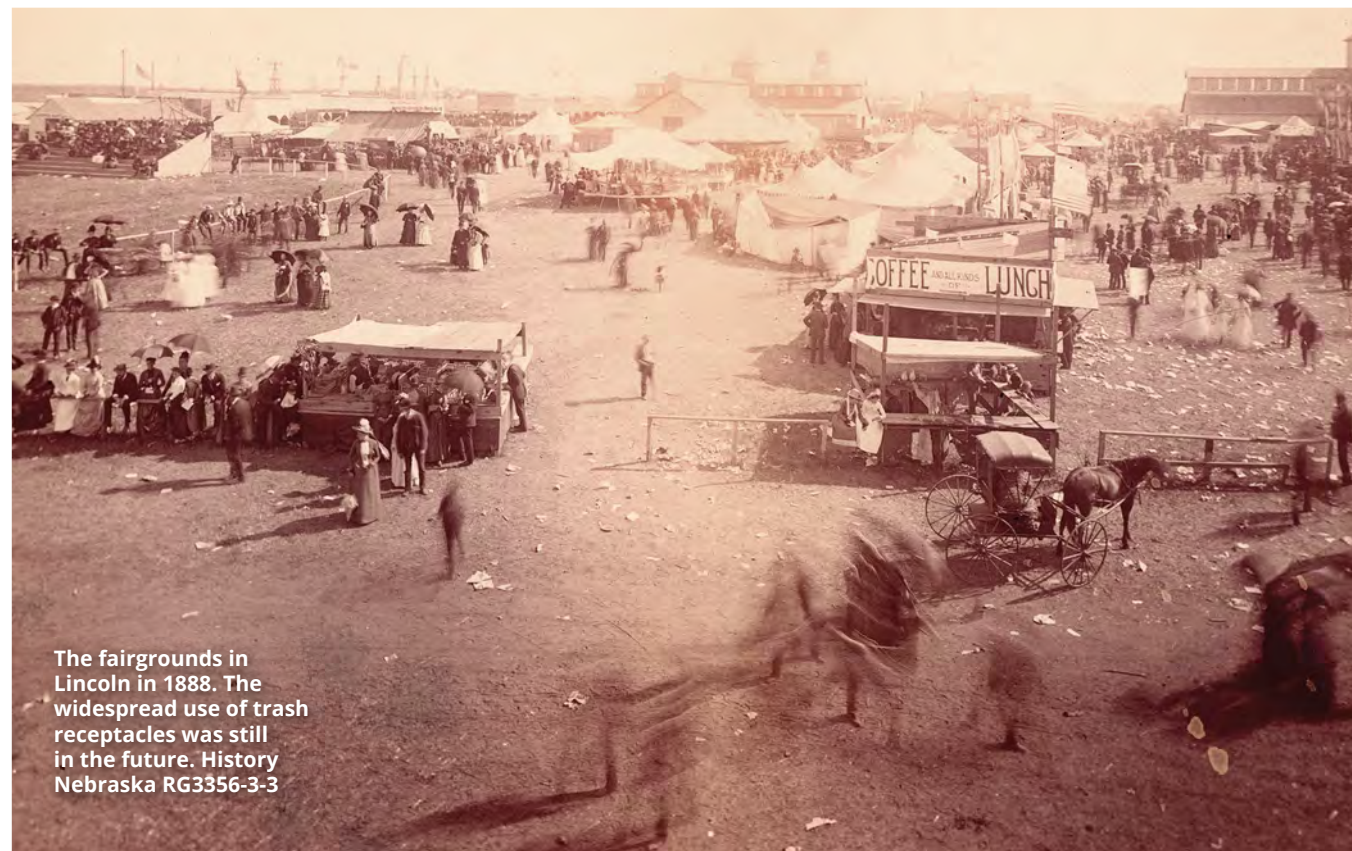
examine the points and make note of where you can purchase a fine Short Horn or Chester White, or any other desirable stock." At a time when the great majority of Nebraskans were farmers, Furnas believed that the fair's main purpose was to improve people's lives by improving agriculture.

Meanwhile, gambling and liquor were allowed at the fair until 1879, and early newspapers complained of "indecent shows." The popularity of horse races, entertainers, and carnival-style midways may have disappointed the purists, but the fair relied on the big crowds those events drew.

Even Furnas acknowledged that the fair offered "a week of recreation for every family," and that "it happens on many farms that there is really no let up," making it hard to get away. By the time they arrived at the fairgrounds, in other words, most Nebraskans believed they'd earned the right to enjoy themselves.

Here are a few of our favorite photos from fairs past. [N](#)

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



The fairgrounds in Lincoln in 1888. The widespread use of trash receptacles was still in the future. History Nebraska RG3356-3-3



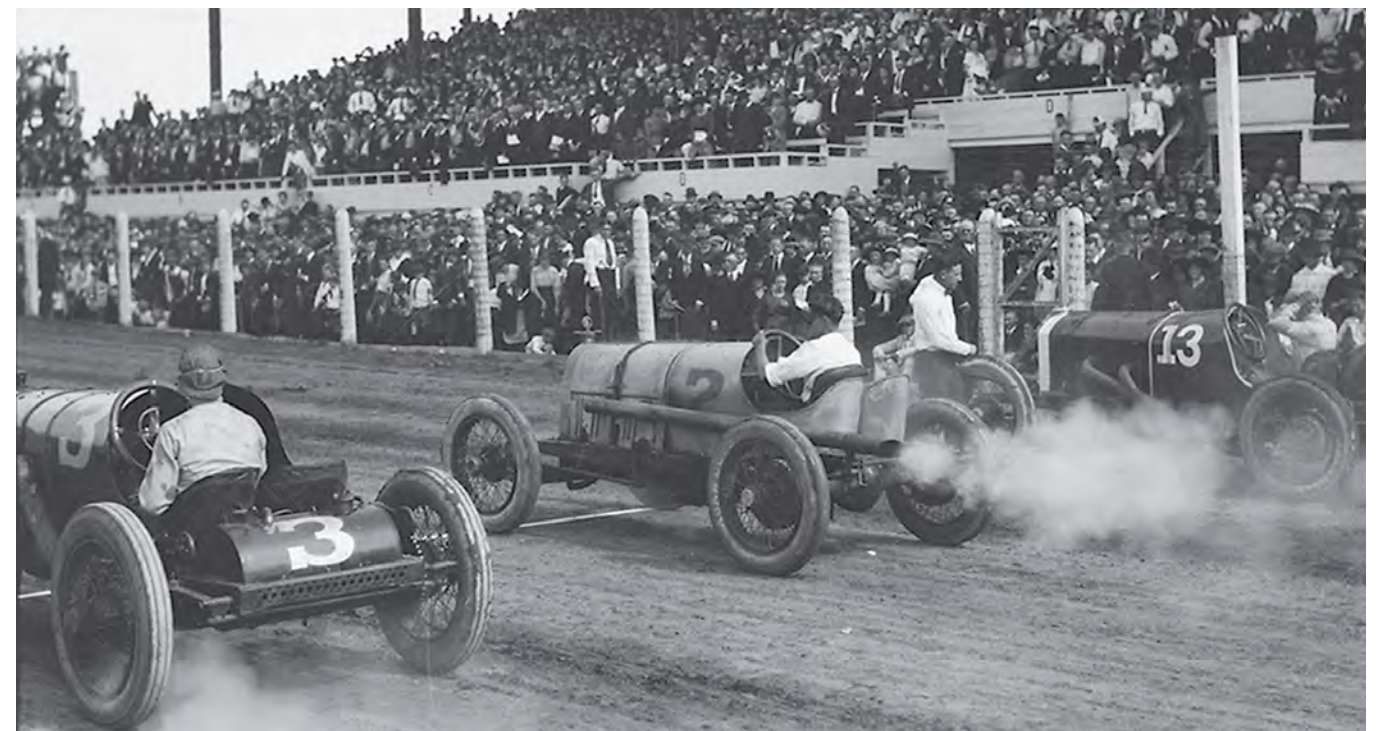
One of the earliest Nebraska State Fairs, and the first of two held in Brownville, 1870. History Nebraska RG 2304-3-6



Beatrice Simmons of Cozad, 1st Heifer Calf Club, 1924. History Nebraska RG3356-22-4



You can't have a fair without fair food. Hamburger stand, 1946. History Nebraska RG2183-1946-904-1



Auto racing in the 1920s. History Nebraska RG3356-20-242

Project Healing Waters

STORY AND PHOTOS BY ERIC FOWLER

When a roadside bomb exploded next to the vehicle David Landon and his fellow soldiers were riding in on a road in Iraq in 2009, Landon was thrown clear and the others killed instantly.

When a firefight ensued, others in the patrol had orders to pull back and nearly left him for dead. But one soldier thought he saw Landon move, ran into the gunfire and dragged him back to safety.

That was only one of the horrors Landon experienced. When he returned home to Omaha, he went into a shell. He rarely left his bedroom. Once outgoing, he didn't want to talk to people, not even family. When Landon would see an out-of-place box or backpack alongside a city street while riding in his mom's car, he curled up in a ball on the floor.

That has all changed since 2015, when Landon picked up a fly rod and started fishing with other disabled veterans who have similar stories. The program that introduced him to the sport is aptly named: Project Healing Waters. For many of the 8,300 disabled current and former service members taking part across the country, the therapeutic value of fishing has been life changing.

PROJECT HEALING WATERS got its start at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., in 2005. It was the brainchild of Ed Nicholson, a Navy captain about to retire and a cancer patient there. Walking the halls, Nicholson saw wounded soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, many missing limbs. He thought getting them outdoors and away from the hospital would help. Nicholson took a few of them fishing, and soon after, others joined to help. They offered weekly casting lessons on the lawn and fly-tying classes indoors. From there, Project Healing Waters was born.

Led by volunteers from local chapters of Fly Fishers International, Trout Unlimited and independent fly-fishing clubs, the organization now has programs in 219 locations in every state and Germany. There are two programs in Nebraska, with Lincoln's affiliated with the Cornhusker Fly Fishers, and Omaha's with Trout Unlimited. Its mission is to help in the physical and emotional rehabilitation of disabled active military service personnel and veterans through fly-casting, fly-tying and rod building classes and fishing outings at Department of Defense hospitals, Warrior Transition Units, and Veterans Affairs medical centers and clinics throughout the United States.

One of the wounded service members to take part that first year was a Nebraska native, David Folkerts. Folkerts grew up on a farm near York, joined the Nebraska Army National Guard and decided to make the military a career while at Wayne State College. He graduated in 2004, completed his training and joined the 70th Engineer Battalion, 1st Armor Division, at Fort Riley, Kansas.

In March of 2005, Folkerts was off to Taji, Iraq. His unit's job was to make sure roads were clear of roadside bombs and provide security for troops and others on the route. A month after he arrived, he volunteered to be on the team that would lead his platoon down a road to a helicopter crash site. When a roadside

bomb exploded, it tore through his left arm and caused profuse bleeding.

"The guys that saw it happen said it blew us up 20 feet in the air and off road," Folkerts said.

Emergency surgery in a Baghdad hospital included grafting a vein from his leg to save his arm. More surgeries followed at a hospital in Germany after which he was flown to Walter Reed. He would spend more time in recovery than he did doing his job on active duty.

"I was very fortunate, one, that I didn't die, but two, that I got to save the arm also," Folkerts said.

For the next three years, he was back and forth between Walter Reed, where he ran into the folks from Project Healing Waters, and Fort Riley, which was close enough that he could go home on weekends.

There are pictures of Folkerts as a child fishing on Beaver Creek, "a little muddy creek that went through my dad's cow pasture. I spent many days as a young boy down there with my cane pole and a bobber and worms fishing for bullheads," Folkerts said.

Fly-fishing, on the other hand, was a foreign concept to Folkerts. Asked to try it at Walter Reed, he initially declined, thinking it looked too complicated.

"My left hand was mostly paralyzed at the time and I was afraid to try it and fail and just be more depressed about my situation," he said.

His friends persisted and he eventually did try it, and quickly learned that his left hand functioned well enough to

strip and retrieve line while he cast with his right. Soon he went to New York, where he caught his first brook trout on an outing hosted by the fly-fishing club at West Point.

"I pulled it out of the water and took a look at it and saw how beautiful it was. I was like, 'Wow, this is pretty dang cool.' I was pretty much hooked there," he said.

From there he went to every meeting he could, and signed up for a five-day float trip on the Snake River in Montana.

"Just being out in the wilderness and being on that trip with six or eight other disabled vets was pretty amazing," Folkerts said. "It was an incredibly healing experience for me. When I came back, I just wanted to spread that. I appreciated what the program had given to me and I wanted to start giving back."

So he started volunteering with Project Healing Waters, helping others at Walter Reed learn what he now calls "the proper way to fish." Having been wounded in battle gave him "instant credibility" with the soldiers he was helping, and when he medically retired from the Army in 2008, he became the organization's second full-time employee, taking on the job of starting new programs. Now the national programs officer, Folkerts is in charge of training volunteers across the country, organizing destination outings for the vets, rod-building, fly tying and casting competitions, and other tasks.

What he likes most about the organization is not the fishing, but the "magic" of the relationships veterans build through ongoing activities held at least once a month.

"When you get veterans together in a social setting, it



Volunteer Will Sizemore of Omaha helps Jim Titus, an Army and Navy veteran from Omaha, fish during an outing at Conagra Lake in Heartland America Park in Omaha.



PHOTO COURTESY OF PAULA KRUGERUD PHOTOGRAPHY

David Landon of Omaha, an Army veteran from Omaha, fishes the Big Hole River in Montana on a trip to the Freedom Ranch for Heroes provided by Project Healing Waters. The trip and program have been life changing for Landon, who suffers from PTSD.

brings back some of that camaraderie they had, and a lot of veterans have a hard time relating or sharing their stories unless they're talking to another veteran."

The fly-fishing part is good, too, Folkerts said. There is the sense of accomplishment of building a rod and tying a fly and catching a fish. And of course there is the peace and healing power of being on the water in beautiful places and enjoying nature, and how that can help them cope and deal with their problems.

"It's kind of the opposite of war in Iraq and Afghanistan, or just war in general," Folkerts said. "War is like an overloading of your senses of horrible images, horrible experiences. And then getting out and fishing, especially fly-fishing in beautiful places, is like overloading your senses with positive images and positive experiences, and it works."

THE PROJECT HEALING WATERS program is not just for those who have served in the Global War on Terror. It is also open to any active duty military personnel and any veteran who has suffered a disability, no matter the disability.

Charles Baswell carried his mental scars from the Vietnam War for decades before he would even talk about them. He joined Project Healing Waters as a participant four years ago, becoming hooked after an invitation to join a fly-tying class at the Veteran's Administration Hospital in Omaha. He soon volunteered as an instructor and this year took over as the program lead for Omaha Project Healing Waters. He also volunteers at the V.A. Hospital, helping veterans cope with post-traumatic stress disorder.

"I work with these kids all day, and to take them fishing is an extension of the recovery center," he said. "They come scared. They're completely isolated. They're completely detached from society. Some of them, at times, they don't want nothing to do with anybody. And I understand that. Coming back from Vietnam, that's the way I was. I recognize myself in these kids."

Baswell has seen veterans come out of their shell through Project Healing Waters. But it doesn't happen overnight. He is in his fourth year in the program, and it took two years for him to start talking about what he saw in Vietnam.

Baswell volunteered to serve in Vietnam, joining the Navy because he loved the water and hoped it would keep him out

of the jungle. Instead, he was assigned to be a medic with the First Division, First Company of the Marines. He became friends with those soldiers, and saw many of them die.

"I got there in May of 1967 and I didn't leave until October of 1968. That's a helluva time," he said, pointing to the Tet Offensive in early 1968 as the worst of it. "We saw kids die every day. I still have nightmares where a kid grabs my arm and says 'Tell my mother I love her.' How do you absorb that, knowing he's dying right now? How do you absorb that? This is not once, this was ... oh my God ... I can't even ... I lost track."

Like other veterans, Baswell didn't talk about those nightmares after he returned to the states.

"I was in denial for 50 years," he said.

Now he wants to help soldiers returning from Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere face their demons and "realize that their sorrow and their pain and their hurt resonates," Baswell said. "We help each other."

Fishing is the perfect distraction, Baswell said. "When people come out here, there are no phones. You're not listening to the outside world. You're just watching the water," he said. Blocking out the noise can give you peace, which can give you hope.

Baswell had fished since childhood, but not until he joined the program did he take up fly-fishing. "It's my sanctuary," he said.

WHEN DAVID LANDON recovered from the knee, ankle and head injuries he sustained when that improvised explosive device detonated, he returned to action. His mother, Jane Landon, now his full-time caregiver, said she only knows bits and pieces about the things he experienced during his time in Iraq – about as much as the therapists who help him. About getting separated from his unit in Iraq, and saving a bullet for himself because he didn't want to be captured. About the children who would approach them, and how some were sent carrying bombs and the decisions that had to be made.

"These guys have experienced horrors that they want to lock up in a little box and chain it closed and not deal with it anymore," Jane said.

Landon began suffering other maladies. More than once, when his base was being bombarded by missiles, Landon was found walking toward the explosions rather than running away. One of his friends convinced him to seek help.

He told the doctors that he saw an English soldier in an old uniform beckoning him, his mother said. Landon was sent to a military hospital in Germany. There he began suffering seizures.

Separated from his friends, "he was a lost soul," Jane said. "It was the beginning of the depression, the PTSD, the anxiety."

In 2011, Landon was honorably discharged and returned home to Omaha. Healthy and always outgoing with a wonderful sense of humor when he enlisted, he was now "a shell of his former self," a recluse who had lost so much weight he was "basically a walking skeleton," she said.

For four years, little changed. In time, he would come out of his room when family was over, but he didn't talk, and didn't stay long.

"He could only take so much," Jane said.

When he became involved in Project Healing Waters in 2015, "there was a little bit of a spark," Jane said. At first, it was just as much of a struggle to get him to go to the meetings as it was to get him to a doctor's appointment, but after about a year, he started to open up to the volunteers and other participants.

What really turned Landon around, Jane said, was a five-day trip in 2018 to the Freedom Ranch for Heroes in Wise River, Montana, which hosts hundreds of members of Project



Volunteer Mike Dvorak of Lincoln and Jerry Gustin, an Air Force veteran from Omaha, have some fun with a bluegill Gustin caught during a Project Healing Waters event at Bowling Lake in Lincoln.



Volunteer Charles Baswell, a Navy veteran from Omaha, teaches Scott Novve, an Air Force veteran from Omaha, fly-casting during an outing at Bowling Lake in Lincoln.



Mark Glover, an Army veteran from Lincoln, fly-fishes during an outing at Conagra Lake in Heartland America Park in Omaha.

Healing Waters each year. There, they connect with other disabled veterans while float fishing the Big Hole River, and relaxing around a campfire at the lodge. Transportation, lodging and food is provided, as also everything they need to fish, from rods to flies to waders. If they have a caregiver, that person gets to go along at no expense as well.

Landon caught the biggest fish, a brown trout, and also cutthroat trout.

“I was going down the rapids and catching fish every five minutes,” Landon said. “It was a blast.”

Landon and the six other disabled veterans on the trip connected immediately and now stay in touch. “The camaraderie was absolutely amazing,” Jane said. “When veterans who have experienced these types of things can get together, they don’t have to retell these stories to share



Volunteer instructor Ken Wisenhunt of Lincoln shows Lenny Hiner and Bryan Carroll, both Army veterans from Lincoln, how to tie flies during a Project Healing Waters class at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Lincoln.



Volunteer Gene Svensen of Lincoln helps Michael Porter, an Air Force veteran from Denver, unhook a bluegill he caught during a fishing outing at Conagra Lake in Heartland America Park in Omaha.

a sense of belonging they don’t necessarily feel when mixed in with the rest of the society. They know. ‘You guys get it. I belong here. I fit in.’”

Landon has opened up more and his focus and self-confidence have improved. He rarely misses a Project Healing Waters meeting, and when there is a fishing outing, he has his gear loaded in the car the night before. He has even begun to take on the role of volunteer, helping others in the program.

Landon had fished before, mostly trolling with his dad, but not with a fly rod. He likes the challenge and the reward of catching fish with flies he tied on a rod he built.

“It’s really meditative,” he said. “It keeps you focused. It gives you something to do other than just sit around and mope about the past. Doors open up through Healing Waters. Opportunities with other people and other organizations.

“But mainly I like hanging around the people and just tying flies and just having fun.”

Jane Landon is grateful for how the program has helped her son and others, even though she knows there is more work to do.

“You’ve got to be patient,” she said. “You can’t assume, ‘Suck it up soldier, march on.’ That may have saved them in Iraq, but they’ve got to come back to our civilization and the rules that helped them survive over in Iraq, you can’t do that here.”

She is thankful Landon made it home. Many of the moms she met in support groups while he was deployed can’t say that. “But he did come home,” she said. “And the difference that I have seen in him since he’s really gotten involved in Project Healing Waters, it just ... it does my heart so good because I see that he’s got a future. He sees that. He can laugh again. He sees that there is a purpose to getting up in the morning and getting going and something to do that is worthwhile.

“It has basically been a lifesaver for him.”

Fishing? A lifesaver? How many anglers could have imagined that? 



Project Healing Waters hopes to one day serve 30,000 veterans. With 3 million disabled veterans in the United States, there are plenty of candidates. While some have physical disabilities, many more carry emotional scars of battle.

More than 2.5 million Americans have served in the Global War on Terror in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere since the terrorist attacks on the United States on Sept. 11, 2001. Nearly 7,000 have been killed and 53,000 wounded. Studies estimate that as many as 41 percent of returning veterans suffer from some sort of mental disorder, including traumatic brain injuries, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and substance abuse.

These war-triggered mental health issues have been around as long as war has existed. An estimated 30 percent of 2.7 million soldiers who fought in Vietnam suffered from PTSD at one point or another. More than 30 percent of soldiers sent home during World War II were discharged for psychiatric reasons. The issues have been referred to, among other things, as shell shock or battle fatigue. PTSD wasn’t recognized as a disability by the military until 1980. Treatment has advanced, but there is no panacea.

The implications can be tragic. Suicide rates are 1.5 times higher among veterans than the rest of society, and progress at a rate of more than 20 per day. They are highest among those who have served since 9/11.

Project Healing Waters in 2018

- 219 programs nationwide
- 8,307 disabled veterans served
- 4,001 volunteers spent 294,010 hours serving the program. 20 percent are former participants.
- 4,902 fly-tying classes
- 1,214 rod building classes
- 1,464 fly-casting classes
- 1,124 fly-fishing education classes
- 1,605 fly-fishing outings
- \$0 cost to participants

To learn more about the program or to find out how to participate, volunteer or make a donation, visit projecthealingwaters.org.

Coming Back to Shadow

By Gerry Steinauer, Botanist, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

I had a most interesting job shadow last summer: a young woman, whom I have known her whole life, traveled halfway around the world to get here.

Aurora Bischof is the daughter of my dear friends Richard and Vilma. I first met the Bischofs in 1998 when Richard worked as a wildlife biologist for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. In 2004, when Aurora was 5, the Bischofs moved to Guam and then in 2006 to Ås, Norway, where Richard is now a professor and Vilma a guidance counselor at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences. The job shadow was Aurora's first trip back to Nebraska.

During her five-week stay, Aurora traveled the state with me from the oak-wooded Missouri River

bluffs to our western pine escarpments. She met biologists ranging from ornithologists to woodland ecologists to entomologists and saw how they worked to conserve nature. In the end, the job shadow proved useful, confirming her desire to study ecology.

The Job Shadow Begins

Fresh from high school graduation, Aurora arrived at Omaha on a Saturday evening in mid-June travel-worn and tired. The following day would provide little rest as we rushed to prepare for a plant identification course I was teaching starting the next day in Holdrege.

Aurora would participate in this advanced course for biologists, which covered the difficult grass, sedge and rush families. It would be challenging, but what better way to test a young student's mettle than by learning plant taxonomy?

For a week she listened to lectures, used a microscope to key out plants, and botanized with the class in nearby prairies and marshes. It was soon obvious she had an eye for detail and a knack for botany. To her embarrassment, she did so well keying out plants that to the class I sometimes referred to her as the "Norwegian sedge-keying champion." Norway, as you might know, is a sedge-rich land.

Next up, we traveled to Scottsbluff for a one-day pollinator workshop for conservationists held at the Wildcat Hills Nature Center. In the morning there were discussions on prairie restoration methods, design of seed mixes and the habitat needs of pollinators. During the afternoon plant identification hike, Aurora actively sought and photographed insects and wildflowers, always asking me their names. Though present at an early age, it was evident to me that her passion for nature, a prerequisite of all good biologists, had advanced to a new level.

Fun and Games

For a well-deserved break, we traveled to our South Dakota farm for a long Fourth of July weekend. On the trip up, we pondered 12 million-



Her first time shooting, Aurora easily out-shot the author.

year-old rhino fossils at Ashfall Fossil Beds State Historical Park and the next day toured the remains of a 1,000-year-old Indian village in Mitchell, South Dakota, but our guest was most excited about experiencing a traditional Independence Day celebration.

Grace, my wife, and I aimed to please. The afternoon of the Fourth we played Frisbee golf on a make-shift, around-the-farmyard course and later shot targets with .22-caliber rifles. Her first time ever shooting, with cool Norwegian composure, Aurora easily out-shot me at 30 yards over open sights. That evening we barbecued, had cherry pie a la mode for dessert, and then interrupted the peaceful darkness with the flash of sky rockets, the burst of Blackcats and the lazy twirl of sparklers. "I wish we did this in Norway," Aurora mused afterward.

Back to Work

After the weekend, we drove to Indian Cave State Park in southeastern Nebraska to meet with local land managers to discuss oak woodland management. Here, Aurora saw

first-hand how herbicides and prescribed fire were used to battle invasive plants and maintain the rich woodland flora. She also saw, what was for her, more new and interesting wildflowers, mushrooms, birds and insects, and enjoyed the world's best homemade glazed doughnuts in the café in the little burg of Nemaha.

Her last job-shadowing event was a trip to the central Niobrara River Valley where I collected field data for a vegetation mapping project. This trip would test Aurora's toughness as we would spend several days bouncing over sand dunes in a utility vehicle and hiking steep, bluff woodlands.

As I guessed, the athletic Aurora held up well, though she was annoyed by "all the ticks and mosquitoes," suggesting they "had a fondness for Norwegian blood."

One evening, while staying on the Niobrara Valley Preserve, as an ominous sky approached from the west I feared Aurora might experience her first tornado. No cyclone developed, but the storm delivered a show of lightning, thunder and wind-driven hail that banged against our cabin. "It was so exciting," said Aurora. "I had never seen such a storm. The hail was gigantic."



Aurora cools off below a waterfall on the Niobrara River.

PHOTOS BY GERRY STEINAUER

A Path Forward

For Aurora, last summer's greatest challenge was learning all the botanical terms in English, her second language since moving to Norway, and dealing with her allergy – of all things – to corn pollen. Her favorite places were the Niobrara River Valley and Indian Cave State Park. "They were beautiful," she said.

Aurora spent this past school year at the University Pablo de Olavide in Seville, Spain, taking Spanish courses. She has decided to continue her education this fall in her hometown at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences majoring in ecology and nature management.

"Before the job shadow I was pretty sure I wanted to be a biologist of some type, but now I am convinced," said Aurora. "I can't see myself doing anything else." 📌

Exploring in the mountains of Norway, Aurora's interest in nature was evident from an early age.



PHOTO BY RICHARD BISCHOF



VISIT KNOX COUNTY

By Emerson Belitz, Nebraska Tourism Commission

Knox County in northeastern Nebraska is full of unique attractions and rich history. Journey through the County along Nebraska Highway 12, designated the Outlaw Trail Scenic Byway that stretches 231 miles across the state, for hidden gems, hole-in-the-wall eateries, historical sites and cultural experiences such as powwows.

One of Knox County’s largest attractions, Niobrara State Park, boasts an itinerary of fun events and activities. Spend an evening at a buffalo cookout, take a horseback trail ride or learn about the park at the J. Alan Cramer Interpretive Center. From swimming and boating to hiking and biking, there’s something for everyone.

Nearby is the Ponca Tribal Museum, where you can learn about the culture and history of the Ponca Tribe. Traditional headdresses, jewelry and artifacts will open your eyes to the history of a proud and enduring nation. Learn about Lewis and Clark’s expedition west at the Lewis and Clark Visitor Center overlooking the Missouri River. Located on the banks of the 15-mile-long Lewis and Clark Lake, the center offers camping, modern cabins, beach fun and a top-notch marina.

Golfers love the challenging and picturesque terrain of Tatanka Golf Resort in Niobrara. Tatanka was voted 2015 ‘Best New U.S. Resort Course’ in Golf Magazine. Ohiya Resort and Casino, Nebraska’s first of its kind, is just east of Niobrara. This attraction, owned and operated by the Santee Sioux Nation, features lodging and more than 400 machines.

At Ashfall Fossil Beds State Historical Park, more than 350 complete skeletons and fossils of 25,000 specimens were preserved after a prehistoric volcanic eruption. Observe the ongoing excavation in the Hubbard Rhino Barn, and you may

even get to talk to one of the paleontologists working at the site.

Get a taste of country cooking at Green Gables, which offers home cooking in a casual dining atmosphere and a gift shop carrying antiques, clothing and accessories. Save room for a delicious dessert. Stop in Verdigre for a kolach at the Verdigre Bakery or homemade meals, pie and soft serve ice cream at the Cozy Corner Cafe.

Sportsmen’s Bar & Grill and Two Rivers Hotel in Niobrara provide a nostalgic Old West saloon atmosphere with exceptional steakhouse dishes. Spend the night at the Historic Argo Hotel in Crofton; built in 1912, this beautifully restored hotel is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Interested in hunting? The county features three state wildlife management areas, two of which are on the Missouri River. Swanson Hunting Lodge and Whitetail River Lodge offer lodging as well as controlled hunting grounds.

See what all of the “buzz” is about at The Hive in Bloomfield. This family-owned restaurant serves a variety of lunch items and offers an extensive espresso menu. The Hive carries a wide variety of wines and beers, many of which were brewed in Nebraska, so pick up a bottle or two after your meal. Stop by LemonDrop Boutique, conveniently located above The Hive, for a selection of women’s clothing and accessories. In addition, this café and shop is also a 2019 Nebraska Passport stop.

Knox county offers adventure for all, whether you search for it in a brewery, in history, or in the great outdoors.

More vacation resources are available at visitnebraska.com.



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ANIMAL HEADGEAR

By Monica Macoubrie

The word headgear definitely does not ooze a sexy persona, but when it comes to animals and their “headgear,” this may mean the difference between getting a mate, surviving, or even thriving in their environment. Many animals in Nebraska have extensions on their head that can be adaptations used to help them in their environment. Let’s take a look at a few cases in Nebraska.



ANTLERS/HORNS This is probably the most common type of animal headgear. Animals that have antlers include *deer* and elk, while horned animals include bison and *bighorn sheep*. Most of these animals have these head extensions to defend



CREST/CROWN When referring to crests or crowns people are usually talking about the top part of a bird’s head. Many birds have a distinct crown shape with the peak either closer to the back or front of the head. Some species, such as *blue jays*, can manipulate their crown by raising and lowering their feathers to change shape for courtship displays, to defend territory or to show aggression.



ANTENNAE A key characteristic of insects is to have antennae. However, antennae come in many shapes, sizes and forms. For instance in longhorn beetles, their antennae can be longer than the length of their body. Alternatively, when looking at *moths*,

themselves from predators and to fight members of their own species for territory, and ultimately win the girl. In most cases, only the males have horns or antlers, but in some species, females can have them too.

they have comb-like or feathery antennae, which they use as smell receptors to detect molecules miles away.



FEATHERY GILLS belong to most *salamanders* during their aquatic tadpole stage. Here they have very noticeable and feathery gills, which they use to breathe in the water during their “eft” or second phase of their reproductive life cycle. When they become adults, they will lose their gills and produce lungs to breathe on land with instead.



HOODS Something a little terrifying to not only read about but actually see in Nebraska is a snake with a hood on its back. But not to worry, cobras don’t live here. It’s an *Eastern hognose snake*. When scared or threatened, these non-venomous snakes will widen or expand the extra skin around their neck to resemble a hood. This helps them look bigger and more intimidating to predators and prey.

PHOTOS BY (FROM TOP LEFT): DEER-STOCK, BIGHORN SHEEP, BLUEJAY-JUSTIN HAAG, MOTH-ERIC FOWLER, SALAMANDER AND HOGNOSE SNAKE-STOCK.

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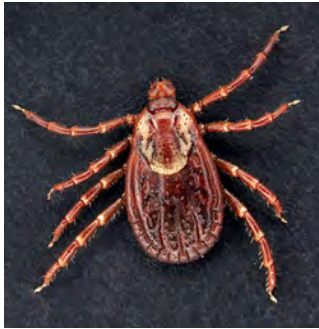
TICK SURVEY

By Julie Van Meter, State Entomologist,
Nebraska Department of Agriculture

The Nebraska Department of Agriculture is conducting surveys in 2019 to better determine which tick species are present in Nebraska. American dog tick, winter tick, brown dog tick and lone star tick are all known to be established in the state. In 2018, the Gulf Coast tick was found in two separate instances in Nebraska, indicating the tick may be expanding its range into our state. Since spring 2019, the department has confirmed deer tick, or blacklegged tick, in Douglas, Sarpy and Saunders counties in eastern Nebraska.

Ticks are known to carry a number of diseases that can be transmitted to humans and animals as the ticks feed. For example, deer tick can vector Lyme disease, and the American dog tick can transmit Rocky Mountain spotted fever and tularemia, all bacterial diseases. The lone star tick may vector a number of diseases, including human ehrlichiosis (bacterial) and Heartland virus. The Gulf Coast tick can infect dogs and humans with *Rickettsia parkeri* and *Hepatozoon americanum*.

The invasive longhorned tick, native to parts of Asia, is also cause for concern. This tick is known to infest both livestock and humans, and carries a number of serious



American dog tick female.



Lone Star tick.

diseases. It was discovered in the United States in New Jersey in 2017, infesting sheep. Since that time, infestations have been confirmed in seven additional states, but the tick has not yet been found in Nebraska.

Tick feeding also can result in tissue damage to livestock and wildlife hosts, blood loss, and ultimately weight loss, health decline or even death.

The department's surveys will continue through the end of the year and will likely continue in 2020. Survey methods include field surveys, carbon dioxide trapping, livestock surveys and surveys of hunter harvested deer at deer check stations. Tick specimens will be tested to determine what, if any, diseases they carried. This data will assist the public, livestock producers and health professionals by providing a more complete picture of the distribution of tick species in the state.

PHOTOS BY SUSAN ELLIS, USDA APHIS PPQ, BUGWOOD.ORG

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NOT SEEING IT DOESN'T MEAN IT ISN'T THERE

By Roger Welsch

Extinction is a funny thing. Well, okay, it's not a funny thing, like ha-ha funny, but it is a funny thing like "peculiar" funny. The July 2, 2018, issue of *The New Yorker* magazine, for example, had an article about the extinction and grand finale of the Tasmanian tiger, the last of the species having been killed 75 years ago or so. Allegedly.

The problem – people south of Australia keep seeing Tasmanian tigers. Or think they see them. Or remember that they saw them. The result is doubt: the Tasmanian tiger may be extinct but no one knows for sure.

Prehistorically, many species have thrived and then disappeared. Camels once roamed what is now Nebraska, as well as mastodons, giant *bison antiquus*, and primal horses. I find their teeth right here in the river a few hundred yards from where I sit. The modern *bison bison* came frighteningly close to being nothing but a memory but now they are almost commonplace, even if only inside stout fences.

Currently, the list of endangered plants and animals is downright depressing. In my lifetime I've seen the American elm and chestnut reduced to scattered survivals. Long-needle pines and ash trees now face the biological onslaught. Is it true that cottonwoods are threatened? Whatever even happened to the jackrabbits I used to see here? And magpies. I haven't seen a hog-nose puff adder here for years.

In my lifetime I have seen a lot of things come and go, then come back again. Whooping cranes are still on the brink, but the hope is that like the bald eagle, careful husbandry and strict protection can bring even the endangered back. I never thought I would live to see a river otter here, and yet there one morning, one was sitting there looking at me from the roadside as if I were the one who was out of place. On the few occasions I have seen a prairie chicken on the gravel between here and Grand Island I found myself wondering, "Is that the *last* one?" The return of the bald eagle doesn't mean that it's now commonplace, either; we never see one without stopping and gaping, slack-jawed at the beauty. There have been rumors of wolves spotted not far from here. Neighbors all around us have seen mountain lions and we once heard one scream below our yard on a summer night ... unforgettable! Are they here, or not? As elusive as some wildlife are, one can never be sure. Wild turnips (*Psoralea esculenta*) and scarlet globemallow (*Sphaeralcea coccinea*) were once common here, but now?

Tasmanian tiger (*Thylacinus cynocephalus*, extinct in 1936). Woodcut engraving after a drawing by Robert Kretschmer (German painter, 1818 - 1872), published in 1875.

Extinction may not be the last word because 1) it's amazing what might be hiding out there in the woods; 2) life has strange ways of persisting; and 3) sometimes humans, too often the cause of the problems, may be also the solution. There was a time (the 1850s) when an aphid called phylloxera was carried from this country to Europe where it devastated vineyards. There was some fear that real wine, which is to say wine from vinifera grapes, would never be tasted again. American grapes (*labrusca*) were immune to the plague but they don't make very good wine.

Then it was discovered that French vines grew good grapes when grafted on *labrusca* rootstocks, and ... voila! We have wine again! And now French hybrids have been developed that deal with the root erosion of the pest and we have European varietals – or close – growing in Nebraska. "Extinction" was averted.

Will we live to see a revival of the Tasmanian tiger? The coelacanth fish was thought to have gone extinct 65 million years ago, but then one showed up again in 1938. My own hope lies in the return of the mastodon to the Plains. While I'd probably have to do some work on our fences, my thought is that the drivers who fly across the bridge here, over a hill, and around a curve near our home and paying no attention to the deer crossing warnings, might slow up when they see a woolly mammoth at a *Mastodon Crossing* sign.

When I ran across a statement that the Skidi Band of Pawnee is "extinct," during a meal I said to my friend and chief of the Skidi, Pat Leading Fox, "Boy, Pat, for being extinct, you sure eat a lot!" And now that the Pawnee, complete with Skidi, are back in Nebraska, the return of the mammoth doesn't seem entirely out of the question.



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THOSE TOOL-SHARPENING DAM BUILDERS

By Justin Haag

Anyone who has watched a North American beaver (*Castor canadensis*) gnaw through a tree trunk has surely been in awe of its proficiency. Using teeth to whittle on wood, after all, is a task neither appealing to humans nor something the American Dental Association advises us to do.

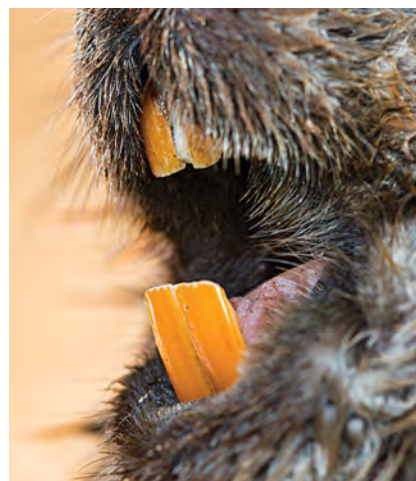
Those four orange incisors that protrude as much as one inch from the top and bottom of a beaver's mouth comprise just one remarkable feature of North America's largest rodent, and perhaps its most important tool. They allow the beavers to not only cut timber for building lodges and dams, but also allow them to eat some of their favorite foods – tree bark and the thin layer of growing tissue beneath it, known as cambium.

Remarkably, the beaver's incisors continue to grow throughout their life span, which is typically 10-15 years. In

fact, the beaver's front teeth can grow as much as four feet per year – a figure greater than its body length.

If a beaver would not chew, his teeth would surely become too long to be useful. The incisors are designed to abrade and are self-sharpening. With strong enamel in front and softer dentin in the back, they are honed to a sharp edge with each bite. A set of 16 molars distributed evenly toward the rear of their mouths complete the chewing process.

One would think the incisors might be pearly white, considering that they are constantly being replaced by new material. However, the orange coloration of the front teeth is not directly from food stains, but rather is indicative of enamel rich with iron – the same mineral that makes blood red. That iron, as opposed to the magnesium found in the enamel



A close-up of a beaver's orange incisors.

of most animal teeth, makes beaver teeth especially strong, hinders decay by resisting acid and bolsters strength.

The beaver is certainly worthy of awe, not only for its increasingly appreciated value to wetlands but also for its four orange tools.



A camera trap image shows a beaver swimming near a felled tree on Little Bordeaux Creek near Chadron.

PHOTOS BY JUSTIN HAAG

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Taken in 1979 while pheasant hunting southwest of Elwood. Both shotguns are 12 gauges, one Remington 870 and one Winchester Model 12. Darwin and Darold Nielsen were from Stapleton. The coyote was sold whole for \$25. The pickup is a 1970 F100 Ford Sport Custom with Winnebago topper.
 From left: Darold Nielsen, Kearney; Troy Nielsen, Kearney; Jeff Nielsen, Wheat Ridge, Colorado; Mitch Nielsen, Lakewood, Colorado (with coyote).
 – Jeff Nielsen, Wheat Ridge, Colorado



Taken in February 1969 from the heydays of Ninemile Creek in Scotts Bluff County. I know I always tried to fish on two specific dates – New Year’s Day and Super Bowl Sunday – rarely encountering another angler.
 – Leo Turner, Lisco



This picture shows Charles Glover (left) and Rex Williams (Charle’s brother-in-law) on opening day of hunting season 1952. Pheasants taken in southwestern Hamilton County. It was Rex’s last hunting season in Nebraska. He and his wife moved to Alaska in the spring as he began his career with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
 – Jonathan Pulscher, Palmer

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



FINDING THINGS

By Gerry Steinauer, Botanist

My mom once told me that as a child I must have walked around with my head down because I was always finding things. Most memorably, I found a French coin on the sidewalk in front of the Millard Bank, certainly worth a fortune I thought, and a pocket knife or two. Probably, I just brought home a lot of junk.

My oldest brother far outdid me, once finding \$600 rolled up in a rubber band at Swimland located west of town. The police speculated that somebody won big on the horses at Aksarben, then lost the wad while lounging on the beach. I like to think that something more sinister was involved.

My penchant for searching has continued into adulthood. Fresh out of college and working for the Missouri Department of Conservation, for instance, one morning my boss said, “You can find arrowheads over in that soybean field. It used to be an Indian village.” At lunch, I wolfed down my sandwich, hustled across the road and found my first arrowhead. I was hooked, and ever since, whenever walking over bare soil, I keep an eye out for the sheen of flint.

Most of my other outdoor pursuits also involve searching. I

enjoy hunting for more mushrooms more than eating them. Nature photography is simply seeking and capturing beauty. I favor pheasant hunting over other types of hunting because I get to walk and look for birds, or in the snow, search for their tracks. Sitting in a morning deer blind and “waiting” makes me edgy – a half hour of that is about all I can take and then I am off stalking. Professionally, as a botanist, I sometimes spend whole days walking through prairie or woodland with my head down searching for specific plants.

This innate need to search, and ogle with satisfaction over my finds, I believe goes back to our days as hunters and gatherers when finding fruits, nuts and game was a necessity; those with drive and keen eyes survived the winter. I likely would have been a fat and sassy hunter-gatherer.

In our modern world, this primitive urge to search for things can still be advantageous. Case in point, back in 1965, if my brother had invested his newly found \$600 with an Omaha company known as Berkshire Hathaway, today he would be worth a cool \$11 million. Unfortunately for him, he instead put the money in the bank.

PHOTO BY GERRY STEINAUER

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