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NEBRASKAland

January-February 2013



Haybales and a centerpivot welcome the sunrise near Branched Oak SRA. Photo by Jeff Kurrus.

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NEBRASKAland

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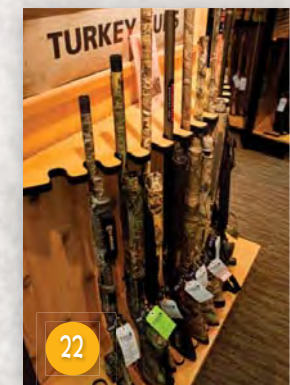
Cover: A rooster pheasant walks through snow in Hall County. Photo by Rick Rasmussen. To see more of his work, turn to page 14.

Opposite: A rusty hinge shines in Sarpy County. Photo by Jeff Kurrus.

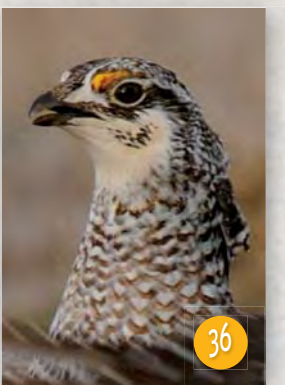
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14



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36



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Birdbath Bluebirds

I looked out the window on a cold day last January, and saw this colorful gathering at our bird bath, so I ran for the camera. Our cabin is in south Keya Paha County and we have eight bluebird boxes at different places on our land. We like to think that these bluebirds hated to leave their birthplace, even though the weather was not at all warm. We certainly enjoy all the stories and pictures from the Sandhills in your magazine.

Rosemary and Mel Thornton
Lincoln, Nebraska

Events Sidebar

I have enjoyed the insertion of the “Upcoming Events” sidebar every month in the magazine. It is a great way to highlight outdoor-and history-related activities across the state. Thanks for that addition to the magazine!

Ken Steinbeck
Grand Island, Nebraska

Bringing Out the Best

As a decades-long enthusiast reading *NEBRASKAland* (and *Outdoor Nebraska*), just wanted to tell you how much your magazine is appreciated.

First and foremost it captures what is unique about Nebraskans’ conservation and care for the unique land God has given us.

Your articles bring out the best of what it means to live, work, and play in Nebraska.

Thanks to the entire staff for the insights the articles offer and the great

pictures which educate and bring back fond memories. Thank you and God Bless,

Bruce Block
Spanaway, Washington

NEBRASKAland Visitor Letters

We want to thank all 76 readers that sent e-mails and letters for last issue’s visitor, a **cricket** that was on **page 8** (see page 13 for the winner, rules and this issue’s hint). Here are some of the wonderful responses we received:

As I do every time my new *NEBRASKAland* arrives, I searched first for the little visitor of the month. The December visitor almost slipped by unnoticed since he is so small and could have been hiding among the evergreen branches on page 8. But his friends and relations have visited us many times, big ones and little ones often chirping when we are trying to sleep, or rustling around under a newspaper. He is a little (perhaps young) field cricket ... bugguide.com listed him as *Gryllus Pennsylvanicus* and he is definitely a male as there is no ovipositor. If the evergreen in the picture on page 8 is still planted, the little fellow might find something to eat in the planter ... some leaf litter or something else organic. Otherwise, I should let him go outside in my garden ... there is plenty of that stuff out there.

Time to actually READ my magazine now, looks like some good articles ... love the photos of the bighorns ... and lots of good photos to

cut out and send to my mom. :-)

Thank you,
Solveig Knott
Grand Island, Nebraska

Hi, I found a bug on page 8 of the December *NEBRASKAland* magazine. I believe it is a cricket.

We enjoyed the update on the bighorn sheep in the Pine Ridge area – hope there are more follow up stories on them.

Janelle Downing
Norfolk, Nebraska

The insect that is new in this month’s magazine is a cricket and it is found on page 8. We have enjoyed your magazine for years and now several of our adult “children” also look forward to their subscription, especially those that now live out of state. Thanks for the fun – great publication!

J. Conrad Huerta
Cozad, Nebraska



This month’s visitor is on page 8 along the left hand side and halfway down. We have a cricket. Really enjoyed this month’s copy. Love to follow the saga of the bighorns that have been reintroduced in Nebraska. Also the snowy owl – saw one last year up at Desoto NWR.

I also wanted to tell you about an unexpected but very welcomed visitor for Thanksgiving this year. When I awoke Thanksgiving morning I looked out, as I doing every morning, at the small lake across from our home in southwest Omaha near Gretna. Much to my surprise I saw a trumpeter swan. We’ve seen a number of them in Wyoming, Montana, Canada, and even Iowa, but this was the first I’ve seen in Nebraska let alone almost in my front yard.

Keep up the great work.
Steve Tyler
Omaha, Nebraska

Crickets are members of the Orthoptera family, along with grasshoppers and katydids. They have enlarged back legs designed for jumping, two pairs of wings on their abdomen and can range in color from green to brown to black. Their chirping is one of their most distinctive features, and they do it in order to communicate. Depending on species, the chirping noise is made by rubbing their wings together or by rubbing a wing to a leg. Males chirp to attract females, and females pick mates based on which chirp they prefer. Chirps may also indicate danger is near. Chirping becomes very noticeable in the fall because the adults are mating and the females are laying eggs before they die. Females lay their eggs in the soil, where they remain throughout the winter. The young crickets, called nymphs, emerge in the spring. Crickets will eat a wide variety of foods, from plants and organic matter to insects. Inside your house they may also munch on clothing and other fabrics. Generally, minimizing hiding places and some well-placed sticky traps can take care of most cricket problems in the home. Or, take the approach that some other societies have; consider the cricket singing in your basement a sign of good luck and enjoy it.



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:
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NEBRASKAland Magazine
P.O. Box 30370
Lincoln, NE 68503
or e-mail Doug.Carroll@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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See You Out There



www.OutdoorNebraska.org





Ants With a Sweet Side

Chris Helzer

Ants are voracious predators. A single ant, armed with sharp mandibles and an indomitable will, is a formidable opponent and a swarm of attacking ants can easily subdue prey much larger than themselves (think of wolves working together to bring down a moose, but with lots more wolves.) You don't pick a fight with an ant.

Ants, however, are much more than simple killing machines. They have complex social lives and perform multiple services for the ecological communities around them, including seed dispersal and several important soil formation processes. Perhaps more surprisingly, however, ants have a sweet tooth.

Because they like sugar, ants can often be seen on flowers, searching for the sweet nectar within. In some cases ants can move pollen from flower to flower as they feed, but they are generally less effective pollinators than their fuzzier cousins, the bees. While flowers are the most obvious source of nectar for ants, some plants also exude a sweet liquid called **extrafloral nectar** through glands located on leaves, stems or other plant parts. For example, sunflowers often have numerous ants crawling around them, feeding on little clear droplets of sugary sap. At least on some days, a keen observer can find ants on just about every sunflower plant in a prairie.

There are numerous scientific studies on ants and extrafloral nectar, but exactly what the plants and ants each get from the interaction is not completely clear. Ants, of course, get something sweet to eat, but what do the plants get out of it? One theory is that attracting lots of ants to crawl around on you helps repel herbivores that might otherwise be happily be munching away on your leaves and stems (again, don't pick a fight with an ant). A second possibility is that plants produce extrafloral nectar as a way to distract ants from feeding on the nectar in flowers – leaving more of that nectar for bees and other pollinator insects that better help the plant produce viable seeds.

The evidence seems to support both theories, so it's likely that both are true, at least for some plant species. In either case, plants have "figured out" how to manipulate ants by taking advantage of their sweet tooth. Pretty smart for a plant ... yep, you don't pick a fight with a sunflower.

Upcoming Events

Here is a list of upcoming outdoor events across Nebraska. For more information about these and other events, visit the calendar page at www.OutdoorNebraska.org.

January 7

Project WILD Workshop

A free Growing Up WILD educator workshop for early childhood educators will be held from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. on January 7 at First Lutheran Church, 3601 Dakota Ave in South Sioux City. For more information or to register, e-mail Jamie.Bachmann@Nebraska.gov.

January 19

Fly Tie-in

The Cornhusker Fly Fishers club is hosting a "tie-in" Saturday, January 19 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Ak-Sar-Ben Aquarium. Club members will be tying fishing flies with hooks, fur and feathers as they answer questions from the public. For more information call the aquarium at (402) 332-3901.

February 6

Rainwater Basin Joint Venture Meeting

The Rainwater Basin Joint Venture will host its 18th annual Informational Seminar beginning at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, February 6 at the Hastings Hotel and Convention Center. A \$25 registration fee, payable at the door, covers all sessions, snacks, and a buffet lunch. Landowners and agriculture producers in the Rainwater Basin are invited to register free of charge. To register, please send an e-mail by January 31 to Shanda.spurgeon@ne.usda.gov; include name, organization (if applicable), and mailing address. Or phone (402) 463-6771, ext. 112.

February 24

Cowboy Poetry and Music Jamm
Bowring Ranch State Historical Park is hosting a "Cowboy Poetry and Music Jamm" February 24 beginning at 1:30 p.m. MST. No admission is charged to this event and everyone is welcome to attend. For more information call (308) 684-3428 or e-mail diane.burress@Nebraska.gov.

PHOTO BY CHRIS HELZER

Nebraska Prescribed Burn Training Workshops

CLASS	LOCATION	DATE & TIME	SPONSORED BY
Advanced	The Gathering Place 612 Howard Ave • St. Paul, NE	12/13/2012 9 am - 4 pm	Pheasants Forever Quail Forever
Basic	Hruska Memorial Library 399 5th St • David City, NE	1/16/2013 9 am - 3:30 pm	Pheasants Forever Quail Forever
Basic	Smith Building 108 N Main • Palisade, NE	1/16/2013 9 am - 4 pm	Pheasants Forever Quail Forever
Advanced	Community Center 101 S Broadway • Bloomfield, NE	1/17/2013 9am - 3pm	Pheasants Forever Quail Forever
Basic	Community Senior Center 555 W Gage St • Blue Hill, NE	1/18/2013 9 am - 4 pm	Pheasants Forever Quail Forever
Basic	South Platte NRD Office 551 Parkland Dr • Sidney, NE	1/22/2013 9 am - 4 pm MST	Pheasants Forever Quail Forever
Basic	Community Center 333 S Main • Nelson, NE	1/22/2013 9 am - 4 pm	Pheasants Forever Quail Forever
Basic	Homestead NM 8523 W State Hwy 4 • Beatrice, NE	1/23/2013 9 am - 4 pm	Pheasants Forever Quail Forever
Advanced	UNL Agricultural Research & Development Center 1071 County Rd G • Ithaca, NE	1/24/2013 9 am - 4 pm	Pheasants Forever Quail Forever
Basic	NGPC Visitors Center 1475 Hwy 61 N • Ogallala, NE	1/25/2013 8:30 am - 4 pm MST	Pheasants Forever Quail Forever
Advanced	Thayer County Fairgrounds 1302 4th St • Deshler, NE	1/25/2013 9 am - 3 pm	Pheasants Forever Quail Forever
Advanced	Curtis Cattle Company 223 Center Ave • Curtis, NE	1/30/2013 9 am - 4 pm	Pheasants Forever Quail Forever
Basic	Ravenna City Auditorium 307 Alba Ave • Ravenna, NE	2/5/2013 9 am - 4 pm	Pheasants Forever Quail Forever
Basic	Community Building Main St • Sargent, NE	2/6/2013 9 am - 4 pm	Pheasants Forever Quail Forever
Basic	The Goodrich Building 108 W O'Connor • Greeley, NE	2/7/2013 9 am - 4 pm	Pheasants Forever Quail Forever
Basic	Community Center W Kimball St • Callaway, NE	2/8/2013 9 am - 4 pm	Pheasants Forever Quail Forever
Basic	Nielsen Community Center 200 Anna Stalp Ave • West Point, NE	2/9/2013 9 am - 3:30 pm	Pheasants Forever Quail Forever
Basic	Buffalo County Extension 1400 E 34th St • Kearney, NE	2/20/2013 9 am - 4 pm	Prescribed Burn Task Force
Basic	Monsanto 76252 Hwy 47 • Gothenburg, NE	2/21/2013 9 am - 4 pm	Prescribed Burn Task Force



REGISTRATION FEE OF \$10 WITH LUNCH AND TRAINING MATERIALS PROVIDED

Prescribed Burn Workshops provide guidance and instructions for people with prescribed burning experience as well as those without any previous burning experience

TO REGISTER, VISIT www.NebraskaPF.com or call 308-850-8395

Workshops hosted by:



Travelogue by Jeff Kurrus

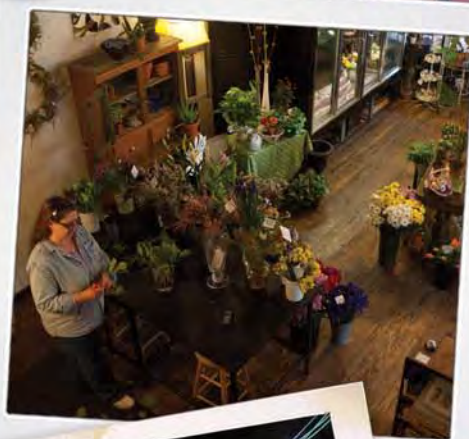
Omaha's Old Market

Rain, snow, ice. 60-degree sunny days, or 10-degree frigid ones. So goes another Nebraska winter, unpredictable at every moment. Regardless of the forecast, however, **Omaha's Old Market** is the perfect way to spend a wintry day.

Start with lunch at the **Twisted Fork** and their pitchfork ranch meatloaf, the **Indian Oven** and their Tandoori Chicken, **M's Pub** and the lamb burger, your choice cooked in front of you at **Asian Mongolian BBQ**, or any of the dozens of other fine or casual dining options.



Corner of 11th & Howard Streets



Then shop hop, starting in the **Old Market**

Passageway on

11th and Howard streets on those bitter days and outside along Howard on those Indian summer afternoons. Or, because

we know how important photographs are to all of our **NEBRASKAland** readers, walk over to 11th and Harney streets and visit Nebraska photographer Tom Mangelsen's **Images of Nature Gallery**.

Finish your day by eating again, bypassing your earlier restaurant choice and picking somewhere new. When you get home, email me at jeff.kurrus@nebraska.gov where you went and what you ate. I'm always looking for somewhere new. And I have no problem with you ordering for me. -JK



Omaha

Darn That Fog

Eric Fowler

Waking to a landscape covered in hoarfrost is a photographer's dream. Hoarfrost's creation is a simple combination of water vapor in the air and cold temperatures. The vapor source, however, can range from atmospheric fog to steam fog rising from water that is warmer than the air above it.

You can't always look at the forecast and plan for it, but it doesn't take a degree in meteorology to know that when overnight lows dip to -16 degrees, you can bet the farm that's much colder than the water temperature of the Snake River below Merritt Reservoir, and that steam fog would be rising from Snake Falls.

So where most folks saw doom and gloom in that forecast for a January day in 2011, I saw opportunity and planned a morning hike to Snake Falls on my way back from a trip to western Nebraska.

I could see the steam fog rising from the canyon when I parked on the highway. When I stepped through the pines into the canyon above the falls, I was met by waves of it billowing from the falls below.



I went right to work, but only a few frames into this shoot I learned a valuable lesson I should've seen coming after watching my breath frost up my glasses on the quarter-mile hike in: When steam fog is coating everything around the falls in hoarfrost and you make yourself part of the scenery and stay there long enough, you and your camera will soon be covered with hoarfrost as well. I began to notice weird highlights on the camera's liquid crystal display (LCD) 14 frames into the shoot. I spun the camera and found the culprit: ice crystals on the lens. With no Nikon-approved ice scraper on hand and no way to warm the lens, there was no quick solution to the problem. Thankfully I'd carried a second camera body and lens. Spinning the tripod away from the falls as I waited for the rising sun to peek into the canyon prevented the second camera lens from suffering the same fate as the first – wish I would've thought of that sooner.

There probably aren't many opportunities for you to run into a similar problem in Nebraska but keep my story in mind. And don't forget to hold your breath when you're looking through your camera's viewfinder in the cold – my LCD was so frosted up I could barely see it well enough to realize I had a problem. That one gets me every winter.

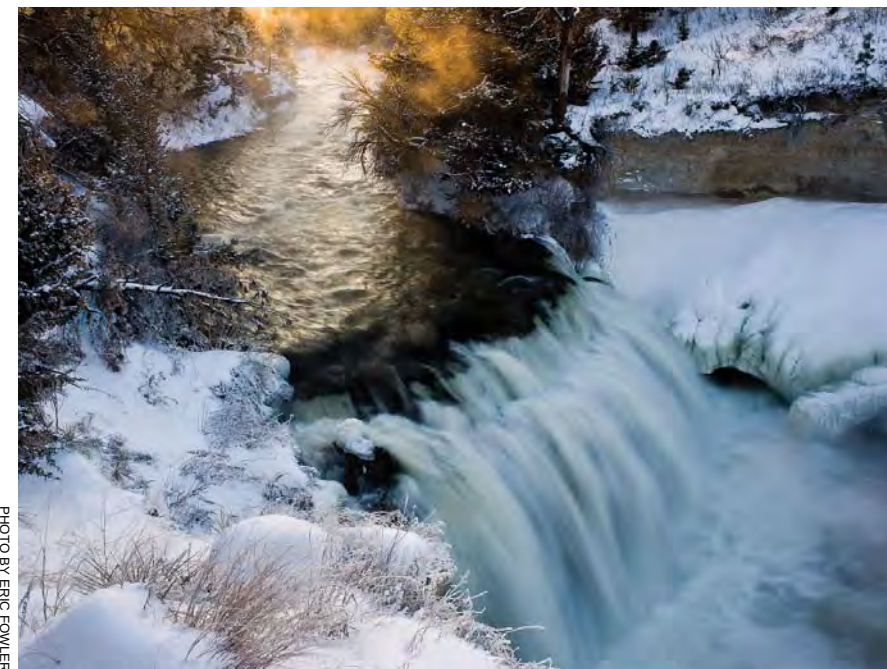


PHOTO BY ERIC FOWLER

Officer's Notebook

The Same Old Same

Looking over the tickets written in 2012 year by Nebraska conservation officers, it's kind of interesting (and sad) to see how every year the same offenses keep occurring:

No park entry permit; hunting/fishing/trapping without a permit; improperly equipped vessel (not enough lifejackets normally); possession of illegal size game fish; hunting/fishing/trapping without permission; no registration/symbols/improper registration; hunting with aid of artificial light from or attached to a vehicle; loaded shotgun in or on a vehicle; and overharvest of fish or game.

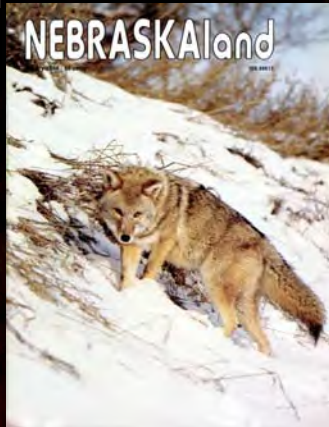
No one likes receiving or writing tickets, but these regulations exist for a reason, and all outdoorsmen and women should know and follow them. Game and fish laws exist to help protect these finite resources and to ensure all hunters and anglers have equal access to them – violators are essentially stealing from the rest of us.

Other regulations help ensure people's safety (such as life jacket requirements), protect private property rights and, because these activities are largely self-funded, help ensure that money is available to fund hunting, fishing and boating opportunities. That's why it's important that everyone pays their fair share for permits, licenses and boat registrations.

– Duane Arp,
Conservation
Officer, Lincoln



A Look Back – January 1974



Outdoor cartoons are a favorite of many sportsmen, often relating reality and absurdity to entertain. In the January 1974 issue of *NEBRASKAland*, readers were given a rare treat of multiple cartoons instead of just the one that sometimes appeared.

From the editorial side, I understand these were being used as “filler,” finishing a page whose text or photos didn’t flush. While this was probably a slight inconvenience for the staff attempting to complete

these pages, readers, even those viewing them nearly 40 years later, are thankful for a little more than the usual dose of comic relief.



Wedding Planning?

Start your memories together at our beautiful state parks. On-site lodging, catering and reception facilities make for a unique destination for you and your guests.

Let us assist with your wedding plans. Contact the park of your choice or learn more online at www.OutdoorNebraska.org

NEBRASKA
GAME & PARKS

News Item?

A record 103 active bald eagle nests were recorded in Nebraska in 2012, surpassing the previous record of 90.

“Even though we say the recovery of the bald eagle in the United States and Nebraska has been remarkable, it truly has been amazing,” said Joel Jorgensen, nongame bird program manager for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

Park of the jump in recorded eagle nests may be due to additional survey efforts said Jorgensen: “After a couple of years of less intense focus, in 2011 and 2012 we spent a few days surveying areas that had not been checked for a few years, so it did not come as a surprise that those areas were harboring additional nests.”

Bald eagles nested historically in Nebraska but were extirpated around 1900. The number of early nests were few and it is possible that bald eagles are more common now than before settlement by European Americans. Most bald eagle nests are concentrated along Nebraska’s major rivers.

See You Out There... But Where?



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

Bald Eagles Surpass Milestone

Joel Jorgensen

When does remarkable become ordinary? Perhaps when discussing the bald eagle's status in Nebraska in recent years. Ravaged by illegal hunting and DDT in the early to mid-20th century, bald eagles were at the risk of extinction.

By the 1960s there were fewer than 500 breeding pairs in the lower 48 states. Then came the banning of DDT in 1972, which eliminated a major roadblock hindering the species' population recovery.

Since then, the number of bald eagle pairs has increased to more than 12,000 in the lower 48 states. In 1991, the first active modern bald eagle nest was discovered in western Douglas County, the first breeding site since this species was extirpated from Nebraska near the year 1900.

One nest in 1991 grew to 20 by 2000, remarkably expanding their breeding range throughout the state. By 2011 there were 90 active nests in Nebraska, and in 2012 the number of



PHOTO BY BILL HAGER

nests increased to 103. The amazing part of this increase is that bald eagles are not like ducks or other gamebirds that lay large clutches of eggs each breeding season.

Instead, eagles are large raptors with slow rates of reproduction. If

one nesting attempt fails, they usually do not try again for that year and the opportunity is lost. But as for right now, there seems to be more successes than failures, a trend that will continue to be reported in future issues of *NEBRASKAland*.

Ice-fishing Seminar at E.T. Mahoney State Park

A free ice-fishing clinic is being held January 12 at Eugene T. Mahoney State Park's CenturyLink Lake from 1 to 4 p.m. Participants will receive instruction from the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission in ice-fishing technique, equipment, bait and safety.

Anglers are encouraged to bring their own equipment; however, a limited amount of equipment, as well as bait and hot cocoa, will be provided to all participants.

Participants must register by January 4. Call the Ak-Sar-Ben Aquarium at 402-332-3901 or e-mail lindsey.chizinski@nebraska.gov.

Outdoor Message Plates

Scott Lubischer of Lincoln enjoys hunting, fishing and the outdoors, especially in the fields and on the Missouri River in Knox County, so much that his mother-in-law thought his license plate should show it.

If you have a unique outdoor message plate you would like to share or know someone who does, e-mail a photo (high-resolution, JPEG format only, please) of it to Eric.Fowler@Nebraska.gov, along with your name, hometown and a brief description of the interests expressed on your license plate.

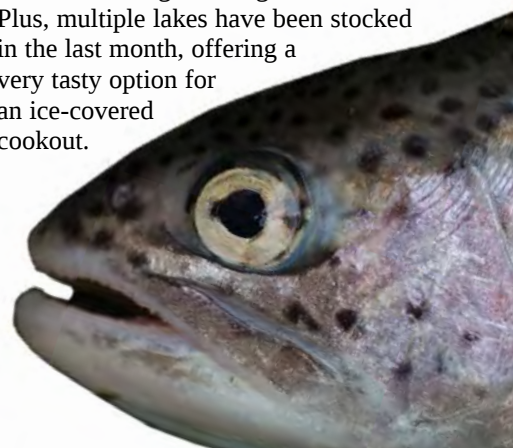


A Rainbow Winter

Jeff Kurrus

For great eats and fun fights through the ice, look at the NGPC's put-and-take rainbow trout stockings. The same baits that work in open water – small spoons, jigs and live bait – also work through the ice. Plus, typical presentations used for panfish through the ice will work well for the trout too.

Visit the NGPC's up-to-date fish stocking report at OutdoorNebraska.org. The catchable-size rainbows stocked in October throughout the state can still be caught through the winter. Plus, multiple lakes have been stocked in the last month, offering a very tasty option for an ice-covered cookout.



Send Us Your Trail Cam Photos!



Rex Adams sent *NEBRASKAland* this unique photo of a turkey in Gage County from the fall of 2011.

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

Unusual Pronghorn

Gayle Verbeck of Ogallala waited with great anticipation for the October 13 start of last fall's firearm pronghorn season and was rewarded with this unusual trophy.

After seeing but not being able to harvest a good buck around Sidney the opening weekend, Verbeck was northeast of Chappell hunting his way back to Ogallala when he came over a hill and spotted this strange-looking buck standing next to a doe that was laying down.

Verbeck got out his spotting scope for a closer look at the buck, which "looked like he had a black basketball around his head." After conferring with his son Jeff, Verbeck made a good stalk on the buck and was able to cleanly harvest the animal.

Verbeck said he was "elated" to have shot such an animal and plans to have it mounted. His right horn rough scored 17 inches with a 5 1/2 -inch base, while the left horn measured 17 inches with a six-inch base.

"Life is good in outdoor Nebraska," said Verbeck.



Turpin Time

Dick Turpin

Is there a message from the past or a tiny piece of memorabilia in your gun stock? You know this old 10-gauge double means a lot to me because it was given to me by Jimmy Span. Jimmy Span has since passed away but this gun belonged to his granddad and Jimmy knew that I was a friend of his granddad ... lived right across the street from him. Well one of the things I first noticed was ... a lot of these old guns ... your granddad's old gun ... the model 12 he left in the family may have the same thing ... they have a hollow place in the stock ... they'd put shot in there to keep it from kicking or they might put a note or some little trinket in there, so I'm going to check this old gun because ... lookie there ... there's a note ... "Don't you have anything better to do?" Ya think I've been had here? ■

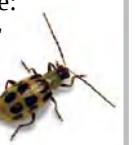


NEBRASKAland Visitor Winner and Hint

Last issue's winner of the Visitor drawing was Dan Tesar of DeWitt, Nebraska, who found the **cricket** on page 8. 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 5, 6, or 53.



A Lens on Cranes

By Jeff Kurrus

Photos by Rick Rasmussen



Left: Sandhill crane preening before heading out to feed.

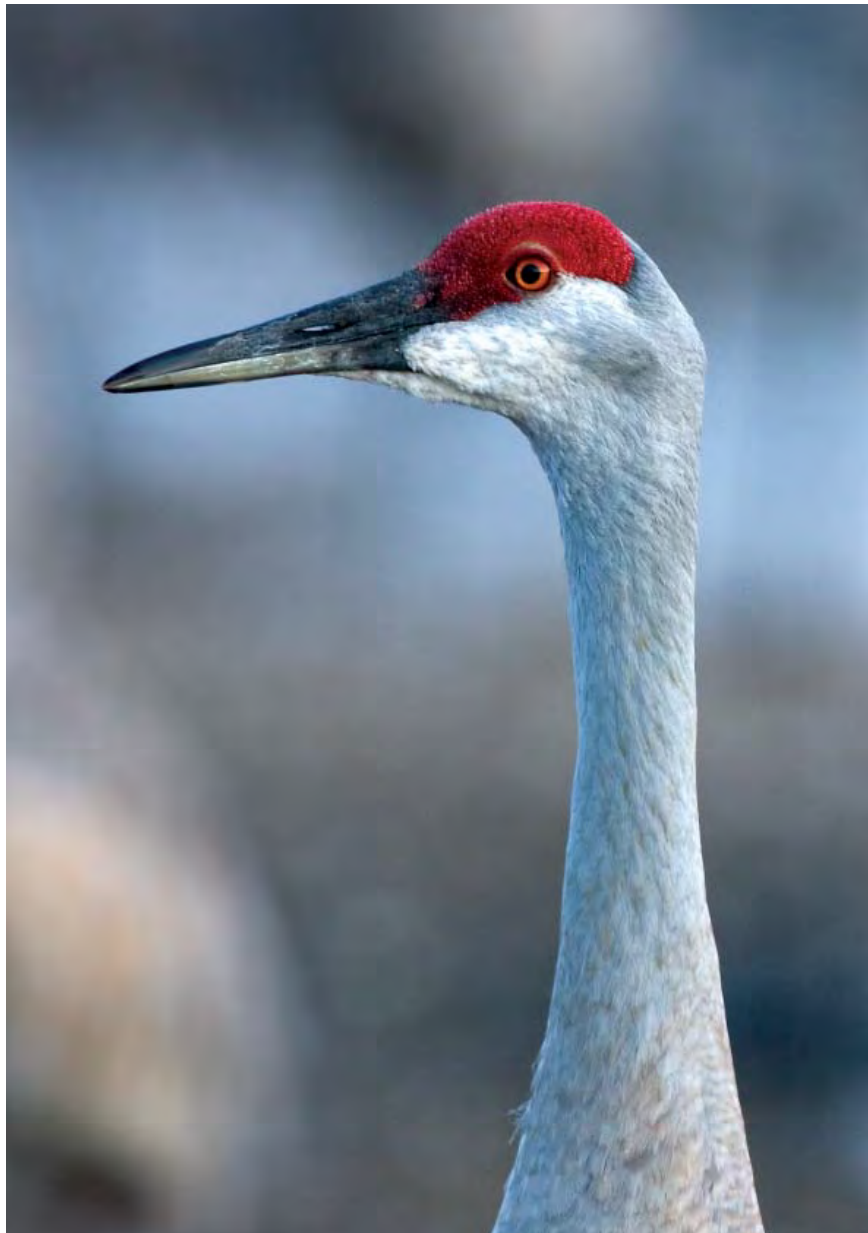
Above right: Sandhill cranes coming back to their roost at sunset.



In 2008, contributing editor Michael Forsberg, as he has been known to do, contacted NEBRASKAland about Doniphan-based photographer Rick Rasmussen. “He’s good,” Forsberg said, quickly prompting us to introduce ourselves to this lifelong Nebraskan.

As we came to find out, Forsberg was right. Upon first glance, two thoughts about Rick’s work were immediately

evident: One, his sense of light and composition was exciting as the subjects he shot, namely birds, seemingly popped from the page. Two, NEBRASKAland would never have enough room in its 52-page format to accommodate all of his photographs. So we immediately started using what we could so the rest of the world could get a glimpse of what we were viewing each time he sent more images.



Sandhill crane on alert.



Sandhill cranes making way for a deer crossing the Platte River.

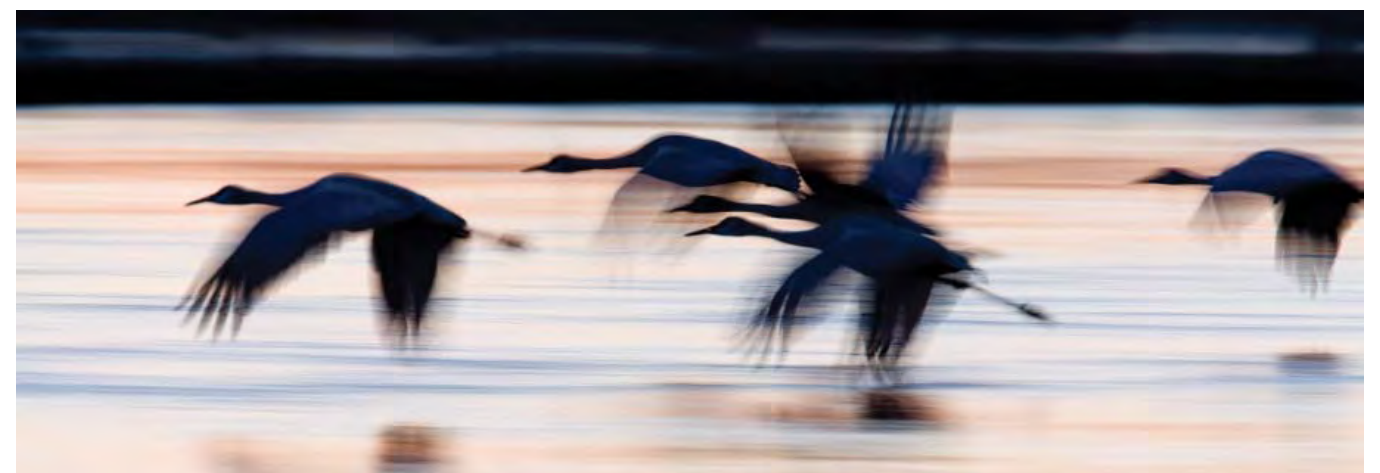
Rick's photographic career started in 1971, while he was still in 8th grade. "I took a photography class at that time, developing and printing in black and white," he said. "I was shooting with a Kodak Pony camera my grandfather gave me that still sets on a shelf in my office."

His interest continued through high school, drawing ire from his four sisters anytime he turned the family bathroom into a dark room, and has remained steady in his adult years as his life now revolves

around scoping out potential blind sites, studying tree lines, scouting riverbottoms and analyzing sunrise and sunset angles – bringing his wife Lori with him anytime he can.

"On one of our first dates," she said, "we army-crawled into a photo blind on the Platte River as the sun came up on a roost of 10,000 cranes."

Rick has traveled to the polar regions a total of 10 times in his life to photograph, but his favorite subjects remain Nebraska



Cranes fly low over the river during the low light of a late-winter evening.



A sandhill crane pulls out an errant feather while standing in a shallow river channel.

wildlife, including the cranes and numerous other species of birds this state has. "In January of 2009, when he returned from a trip to Antarctica," said Lori, "he was so excited about fresh snow and pheasants on our land that he sat for several mornings in his

blind photographing roosters instead of processing penguin pictures."

Once a waterfowl hunter, Rick now hunts with his camera, his unique perspective permeating from his photographs as he captures the expressions of various birds so beautifully. But he remains an avid archer,



Sandhill crane cooling off on a warm March afternoon.



A frisky crane plays catch with a piece of river vegetation.

hunting deer and elk each year ... well, except for this past fall as he left his bow at the house and spent his autumn ground-blind mornings with a camera in hand.

Knowing the type of beautiful work he's capable of producing, we (and the local deer population) are glad he did. ■

To see more of Rick's work, visit www.platterriverphotography.com.



Camping Made Easy

By Matthew Marx

For many Nebraskans, camping means “car camping,” with the objective of packing everything you need, family included, in the family sedan and heading to an area state park. I remember helping my father pack our rusty green Datsun with an old canvas tent, tattered blankets, miscellaneous kitchen utensils, coolers and paper grocery bags full of hot dogs and buns for a weekend getaway for our family of four. By the time we departed the house, there was often little room left for the passengers.

Once we arrived at the park, we’d locate our camping spot and begin unpacking the car. Next we’d start looking for some necessary but forgotten item and have to hop back in and start the inevitable journey back to town with my fuming father. In retrospect I realize that most of our mistakes were the result of taking too much of the wrong stuff and not being organized.

This type of experience is not limited to the past, or even to my own family – whenever I camp with my friend Terry’s family, I’m amazed at what they bring: groaning suitcases, a computer, stacks of DVDs, a fan and portable air conditioner, elaborate camp lounge chairs, a meat smoker and a hot chocolate machine (just in case). What results is an inefficient mess. The next time you go car camping, try these suggestions if you’d like an easier experience.

Pack Light

Each person has his or her own individual needs that should be respected, but most simply take too much unnecessary stuff. There’s much

to be said for comfort while camping, but separate comfort from decadence: An air mattress, extra pillow and heavy quilt are comfortable. A television, portable air conditioner and electric cappuccino maker are decadent. Part of the fun of camping is *not* having every



Hot dogs and marshmallows cooked over an open fire are camping essentials, and can be accomplished with little gear.

comfort of home. Learning to be happy with less stuff is a great lesson for kids, even if just for a weekend. Having the basics and being well-organized makes things efficient, which can free up time to do what you went to the park for in the first place – to have fun hiking, fishing, relaxing and getting away from the daily grind.

Organization is paramount if you want to be able to find what you are looking for when you need it. If you are weekend camping with kids, limit their clothes and personal items to one or two duffel bags. The same rule applies to you. Shared items are best kept in see-through plastic bins with snap-on lids. Pack these in the car first. Put nonperishable food in cloth grocery bags and pack these around the bins. Avoid the impulse to simply cram everything in haphazardly – it creates a mess and makes it harder to find things

when you need them.

When selecting a tent for car camping, buy a good quality, three-season tent from a reputable company. (A four-season tent is for winter backpacking, and will probably be too hot for general use.) Resist the urge,

however, to buy the ‘deluxe’ model with three rooms and a doggie door. Those tents look great, but usually require an engineering degree to assemble, and when the wind is blowing and the rain is spitting, easy tent assembly is a godsend. Buy quality and keep it to one simple room. It is useful, however, to buy a larger tent than the manufacturer recommends – a four-person tent will indeed fit four people, but that’s probably laying shoulder to shoulder with little room left for gear. If you have four people in

your group, buy the six- or even eight-person tent. You’ll be grateful for some elbow room.

A full-sized air mattress is usually necessary for adults to sleep in comfort and is well worth the bulk, but buy one with a built-in, battery-powered inflator. Foot-pumps are a reliable option, but that method takes almost as much time to fill the mattress as using simple breath, which I wouldn’t recommend unless you plan on passing out as soon as you’re done inflating it.

Easy Meals

Keep meals basic, tasty and as easy as possible. A hot dog on a green stick over an open fire is a classic, and frankly it’s more fun to cook that way when camping anyway. You can simply use needle-nose pliers from your tackle box to carefully maneuver an almost fully opened tin of beans,

corn, or soup onto some coals from the fire to heat up the contents (flip the lid open and stir often to evenly distribute the heat; flip the lid down when not stirring to keep out debris and ash.) Hamburgers and steaks can also be a good option if your campsite has a permanent charcoal grill, which many Nebraska state parks do (don’t forget to bring some charcoal and lighter fluid if necessary).

If you need to bring a stove, the standard green suitcase-style made by Coleman is a reliable standby if properly maintained. One skillet and one pot will usually suffice, and consider cooking meals that only require boiling water, since that makes it easy to do clean-up. If everybody in your group is responsible for his or her own ceramic mug, basics such as soup, boil-in-bag rice, foil-pouch Indian meals, instant oatmeal, or powdered hot cocoa are easy. Extravagant meals are wonderful, but I like to keep the high-end gourmet cooking for at-home dinner parties.

Try to limit your cold storage to one cooler for food and one cooler for drinks. Instead of ice in my food cooler, I use frozen water (or Gatorade) bottles, frozen water-heavy fruit such as grapes or pineapple chunks, and frozen hotdogs to keep things cold. This works better than loose ice-cubes, which melt and get into even the most carefully-zipped baggies and plastic containers. Loose ice will work fine for the drink cooler, though.

Essentials

There are some things you will want to take with you on almost every camping trip, and forgetting them can mean a journey back to town. Other than a tent, air mattress, blankets, pillows and clothes, this basic gear is versatile and usually has multiple uses: a sharp knife, metal spoon, lighter or matches, medications (including a pain-reliever), Nylon cord (paracord), flashlight, bandana, towel, first-aid kit, multi-tool, bug spray, sunscreen and

toilet paper. For basic comfort and ease I usually take these items as well: wet wipes, gallon-sized zip bags, cutting board, garbage bags, headlamp, can opener, water jug, small plastic basin, and ear plugs (especially if you tent with snorers!).

A successful camping trip is one where everybody has fun enjoying the outdoors and creating new memories with family and friends. If you pack light and bring the right gear, you’ll find you won’t miss the extras. And if you keep organized, you’ll be able to find what you need when you need it. ■

Matthew Marx is an English instructor at the University of Nebraska-Omaha. His last feature for *NEBRASKAland Magazine* was “Family Camping in Nebraska State Parks” in the April 2010 issue.



Tent campers at Branched Oak State Recreation Area.

Something Old Something New?

By Jeff Kurrus

A layman's look at today's hunting industry reveals that while some gear is truly revolutionary, the only thing "new" about many items is brighter packaging.

Robo-ducks, ghillie suits, and zombie bullets. This is the hunting world where we live, where technology and marketing flood the sportsman from all directions, a cornucopia of options for hunters who, throughout time, have pursued game using hand-loaded guns, trash-bag decoys and, God-forbid, cotton trousers. But through all this industry's new-fangled advances, a look back reveals that while some hunting accessories are truly revolutionary, others have been on the market again and again – the only change being brighter packaging.



Zombie scopes by Leupold can be found on retailer shelves.

PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS

And the guns these bullets come from have maintained their same basic actions as well. For rifles, the lever, bolt and semi-automatic options remain supreme, while shotguns have long relied on the pump, semi-automatic and break-action models for consumers. No gun manufacturer is trying to convince you that a "new" action should be used because the few that do exist seemingly fit every type of hunter.

The one hunting-related item that doesn't fit every hunter, however, is the ice cooler. "Keeps ice for 10 days!" manufacturers boast. Yes, you may have one ice particle left in your cooler after 10 days if the cooler stays in a dark corner of the garage and is only opened in the middle of the winter. Coolers have become so unfortunate that many manufacturers are now selling their "vintage" lines.

However, where other advances have been made, mostly in the barrage of 20th century plastics, are items that many hunters would also rather stay vintage – namely hunting calls. In this arena, waterfowl and turkeys are top sellers, yet grunt calls for deer have also picked up in popularity during the past 20 years. But they have all been around for much longer. In a 1966 Herter's catalog, the following statement was made regarding a grunt call: "Calling deer, like calling moose, is nothing new and has been successfully done by professional hunters, Indians, and guides for centuries."

Yet there is nothing regarding calls that has truly captivated the hunting industry. Crude models for all game species have been concocted by any manner of inventors and non-inventors through the years, down to the desperate hunter who first shock gobbles a turkey with his mouth and continues to refine this method for years to come. Sure, calls have become more water-resistant and easier to use for the newcomer, but a call is a call is a call. As long as it sounds, feels, and looks exactly like the hunter wants it to.

With all the changes in the hunting industry, a few things stay the same – namely popular shotgun models and actions. This 1951 Remington Wingmaster ad (right) is selling a shotgun that doesn't look much different from one you could buy today – yet was sold at a fraction of today's price.

Before you buy...be sure to see the sensational

REMINGTON *Wingmaster*^{*}

MODEL 870

REMINGTON
"WINGMASTER"
MODEL 870AP
PUMP ACTION SHOTGUN
Standard Grade \$80.80**
**Prices subject to change without notice

REMINGTON
"WINGMASTER"
MODEL 870ADL
PUMP ACTION SHOTGUN
De Luxe Grade \$92.35**

Like any good pump action shotgun, the Remington "Wingmaster" is made for years of dependable use. It is the "Wingmaster's" advanced-design features that set it apart from the others.

For example, "Wingmaster" plain barrels can be interchanged without any fitting whatsoever. Any plain barrel fits any "Wingmaster" action—you can switch them in a few seconds without using tools.

You'll like the 12 gauge "Wingmaster's" "Vari-Weight" plug—a steel plug that adds $\frac{3}{4}$ of a pound for waterfowl shooting. You can use a light wooden plug or no plug when you're after upland game.

The gun's pump stroke is scarcely a flick. Twin action bars—other guns have only one—prevent binding and twisting.

Before you buy any shotgun see the Remington "Wingmaster."

SPECIFICATIONS: "Wingmaster" Model 870AP Standard Grade 5-shot pump action. Take-down. Hammerless, solid breech. Wide selection barrel lengths and chokes. 12, 16, 20 gauges.

Model 870ADL: Same as Model 870AP except beavertail fore-end, matted barrel, other de luxe features. For free literature write Remington Arms Company, Inc., Bridgeport 2, Connecticut.

Only Remington "Wingmaster" has all these features

A gliding stroke is assured by these twin action bars. They divide the force of your pump stroke, preventing binding.

Heavy Steel "Vari-Weight" plug (12 ga. only), light wood plug or no plug give you 3 gun weights for different kinds of hunting.

No tools needed for take-down. You just unscrew magazine cap and lift barrel off. Extra plain barrels require no fitting.

Breech block locks into barrel extension—gives longer life, constant head space...another "Wingmaster" exclusive.

1816 The Oldest Gunmakers in America 1951
Present the Newest Guns

Remington

*"Wingmaster" is Reg. U.S. Pat. Off. by Remington Arms Company, Inc., Bridgeport 2, Conn.

Something Old

In a March 2011 *NEBRASKAland* article by Jon Farrar, he repeats the often-made statement that "there is nothing new under the sun" when describing the ghillie suit, a piece of hunting apparel that has been commercially marketed for more than 100 years yet only within the last 20 years has drawn considerable interest from hunting catalogs. "For the first time ever," read the 2003-2004 *Cabela's* catalog, "we are offering the extraordinary concealment of a ghillie suit in a lightweight, streamlined version."

But not-so-new isn't limited to camouflage suits. Knives are another example. The most oft-repeated claim is "our knife is the sharpest," but besides a backside gut hook for deer hunters, pull out a 20-year-old knife and it will not look much different than a hunter's knife today. Rifle cartridges haven't changed much either. Read a ballistics book published in the 1980s and the numbers won't look much different than they do now, as manufacturers repeatedly try to re-invent the wheel looking for the magic bullet.

Doesn't Make Scents

While scent eliminators fill the shelves at outdoor retailers and receive a lot of press these days, they are not new. In a 1966 Herter's catalog, the advertisement for Herter's famous buck deer lures reads: "Kills all human scent even with a down wind. Completely takes away a deer's caution. [Used] by Indians for centuries."



Herter's (above) shows one type of scent sold in 1969, which doesn't look much different than those sold today (left).



Your Favorite Inventions?

Headlamps are a mainstay for many hunters, making low-light scenarios easier to manage and navigate. But is it one of your favorites? Is something else so necessary that it never leaves your gear bag? If so, email me at jeff.kurru@nebraska.gov and let me know what I should also be carrying to the woods with me.



Something New?

State-of-the-art is a misnomer – always has been. Anything leading the pack right now, such as the lighter, stronger boots arriving on the market during the summer months, will be replaced by another lighter, stronger version 15 minutes later. Plus, “new” can also appear in the form of new advertisement, including Hornady’s “Zombie Bullets” to capitalize on the pop culture trend of zombie hunters.

Therefore, “new” becomes such a tricky word in the outdoor world because even a small tweak can classify an item as revolutionary. Take hand-warmers, for example. Various versions of these limb savers have been used for many years, yet most used liquid chemicals to activate. Some current versions, in contrast, contain ingredients such as iron, carbon and water, and experience a chemical reaction when they come in contact with oxygen, producing heat without the chance of fire.

The fundamental idea of camouflage is not new either. Examples of hunters and soldiers trying to blend into their surroundings has been chronicled for centuries, yet the wearing of camouflage clothes that attempt to match perfectly to a hunter’s surroundings is relatively new. While companies like Jim Crumley’s Trebark, Bill Jordan’s Realtree, and Toxey Haas’s Mossy Oak emerged from the simple thought of matching the hunting backgrounds of where these hunters spent their time, the further expansion of this idea has been anything but simple. By carrying twigs, dirt, and leaves from the woods to the factory, camouflage clothing became more than a way to blend into an outdoor scene, it became defined by the word “pattern.” Then, the Mossy Oak Company managed to find the one aspect of all outdoor scenes that could be replicated regardless of location – shadows. Thus there is a shadow-based pattern for

HOW TO IDENTIFY A SMART OUTDOORSMAN.

It's simple. Just look for the smile on his face and his battery-heated mittens. If you see Lectra-Mits, you've found an outdoorsman who knows how to keep his hands warm enough to comfortably perform the intricate manual tasks essential for hunting, skiing, snowmobiling or ice fishing—even in driving snow or bitter cold. Lectra-Mits come with hunter's split-palm trigger finger opening or all-purpose style. They're fleece-lined, insulated, have a snap on/off heat control, and feature suede palm and water repellent nylon back. Lectra-Mits. The smart way to conquer the cold this winter. This product should not be used by diabetics, persons with extreme circulatory problems, or any other person who may be insensitive to the application of direct heat to the skin's surface. If in doubt, consult your physician.

Lectra-Mits
TIMELY PRODUCTS CORP., 860 Honeyspot Road, Stratford, CT 06497
Call 1-800-248-2695, in Connecticut call 377-7798

A December 1987 ad in Petersen's Hunting Magazine attempts to sell electric mittens, a precursor to today's modern battery-powered electric gloves, socks, jackets

just about every location and season imaginable.

Clothing provides another example. Heavy, uncomfortable wool was replaced by inventor Eddie Bauer's down jacket in 1936, where he took a light, waterproof, cushioned resource to re-invent waterproof clothing. But it was during camouflage's inventive heyday of the 1970s and 80s that various companies combined camouflage with practicality, most notably W.L. Gore and Rowena Taylor's waterproof and breathable Gore-Tex invention in 1976, Thinsulate's appearance in 1978, and the Malden Mills Company's 1981 introduction of fleece. But the invention of Under Armour by former athlete Kevin Plank in 1995 to replace cotton as a base layer once again revealed that there will always be something lighter, stronger or altogether different.

Take H.W. Allen's compound bow as another example. While his 1969 invention was crude compared to current bows, even having triangular wheels, his invention set the stage for the constant tweaking of bows, much like the 1969 Baker Tree Stand, whose patent has spawned any number of climbing, hanging and ladder stands for hunters.

It also stands to reason that decoys would steadily improve through the years. Better paint and better appearance have always been the norm. But the motion-wing decoy is altogether different. "It's probably the one piece of hunting equipment that truly changed the face of waterfowl hunting forever," said Commission waterfowl biologist Mark Vrtiska. Combining the concepts of call birds and pull strings, motion-wing decoys emerged as early as 1999, but became internationally known when a company named Mojo came on the scene in the early 2000s.

And, of course, all the changes in hunting apparel

wouldn't be complete without talking about technology and how it has changed nearly everything for a large number of hunters. While there are some traditionalists still scouring the fields for game, many others, myself included, use Google Earth to locate hunting spots, read online migration reports before planning a waterfowl trip, or rely on a GPS when walking to or from an unfamiliar hunting locale. Trail cameras also fall on this list, especially ones with infrared flash and megapixel counts that would make digital SLRs from five years ago look archaic – until the next model comes along to replace them as well.

Conclusion

Hunting has never been more specialized. From camouflage to magazines, the entire industry is geared to each, individual person. The once-a-year pheasant hunter or the every-weekend waterfowler can find everything they need to pursue their outdoor desires. And there remains at least one guarantee in this industry regardless of what desire one does pursue – there will always be another Therma-cell, floating gun case, rangefinder, or more affordable version of night vision awaiting the consumer wanting the newest of the new.

And the best part of it all – as long as these “new” inventions keep appearing, whether they’ve never been seen in such shiny packaging or truly never seen before, the Pittman/Robertson Act will allow us, the hunters, to benefit each and every time the next creature from the underworld is threatening our way of life – as long as there is a company advertising the only bullets that can kill it. ■



The outdoor magazine industry perfectly represents the specialization of all things hunting, including manufacturers' attempt to cater to every hunter in every hunting situation. ,



PHOTO BY ERIC FOWLER

If you love Nebraska's natural beauty, wildlife, wide open spaces and unique recreational resources, the Nebraska Game and Parks Foundation is a perfect way to show your appreciation—and ensure that others continue to enjoy Nebraska's outdoors today and for generations to come.

The Nebraska Game and Parks Foundation was established to accept tax-deductible contributions of cash, corporate gifts, personal property, life estates and real estate to enhance the work of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission—necessary work that simply cannot be accomplished with limited state funds.

The Nebraska Game and Parks Foundation is an organization of Nebraskans for Nebraskans—focused on the future of parks, wildlife management and conservation in our state. Your tax-deductible contribution to the Foundation—in any amount—helps care for and preserve the outdoor resources that make Nebraska special.



Preserving Our Heritage, Focusing on the Future



For those that love Nebraska's natural beauty, wildlife, wide open spaces and unique recreational resources, contributing to the Nebraska Game and Parks Foundation is a perfect way to show their appreciation and ensure that others continue to enjoy Nebraska's outdoor legacy for generations to come.

About the Foundation

Nebraskans enjoy one of the best state parks systems in the nation, but it hasn't always been that way. In the mid-1970s the National Campers Association harshly judged Nebraska's state parks as "no showcase and in need of improvements."

The problems weren't, however, due to a lack of effort on the part of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission – budget restrictions were squeezing the organization. As a result, Nebraska's park and recreation system began to show signs of deterioration and prospects for new development were dim.

Thankfully, through the encouragement and support of a group of visionary Nebraskans, the Nebraska Game and Parks Foundation was established in 1983 to enhance the work of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission – work that simply cannot be done with limited state funds (state tax dollars cover well below 13 percent of the agency's overall budget). The Foundation is a conduit through which individuals, corporations and organizations can channel monies and property into the purchase of park and wildlife lands, to help the Commission build campgrounds and cabins and provide other greatly needed facilities and improvements.

Nebraska Game and Parks Foundation board members are dedicated volunteers. All donations are used for Game and Parks Commission projects. In its first two years, the Foundation underwrote acquisition and construction costs of nearly \$2.5 million for park improvement projects including

10 cabooses converted into cabins at Two Rivers State Recreation Area near Venice, road improvements and picnic shelters at Louisville State Recreation Area and lighted tennis courts at Fort Robinson State Park near Crawford. Since then, the Foundation has assisted on a wide variety of Commission projects and worked closely with it to identify and fund key projects, such as the reintroduction of bighorn sheep back to their native habitat in western Nebraska.

According to chairman and Lincoln businessman Jim Abel, the mission of the Foundation is to "... support the priorities and projects of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission that will help promote wildlife, parks and all the outdoor activities that go with them – in general, the outdoor life in Nebraska. That's why I think our work is so important – we help facilitate projects that benefit all Nebraskans."

Creating Legacies

Arthur Bowring Sandhills Ranch State Historical Park represents much of what the Nebraska Game and Parks Foundation is all about – creating a legacy for future generations to enjoy and learn from.

Eva Kelly Bowring was a widowed mother of three and

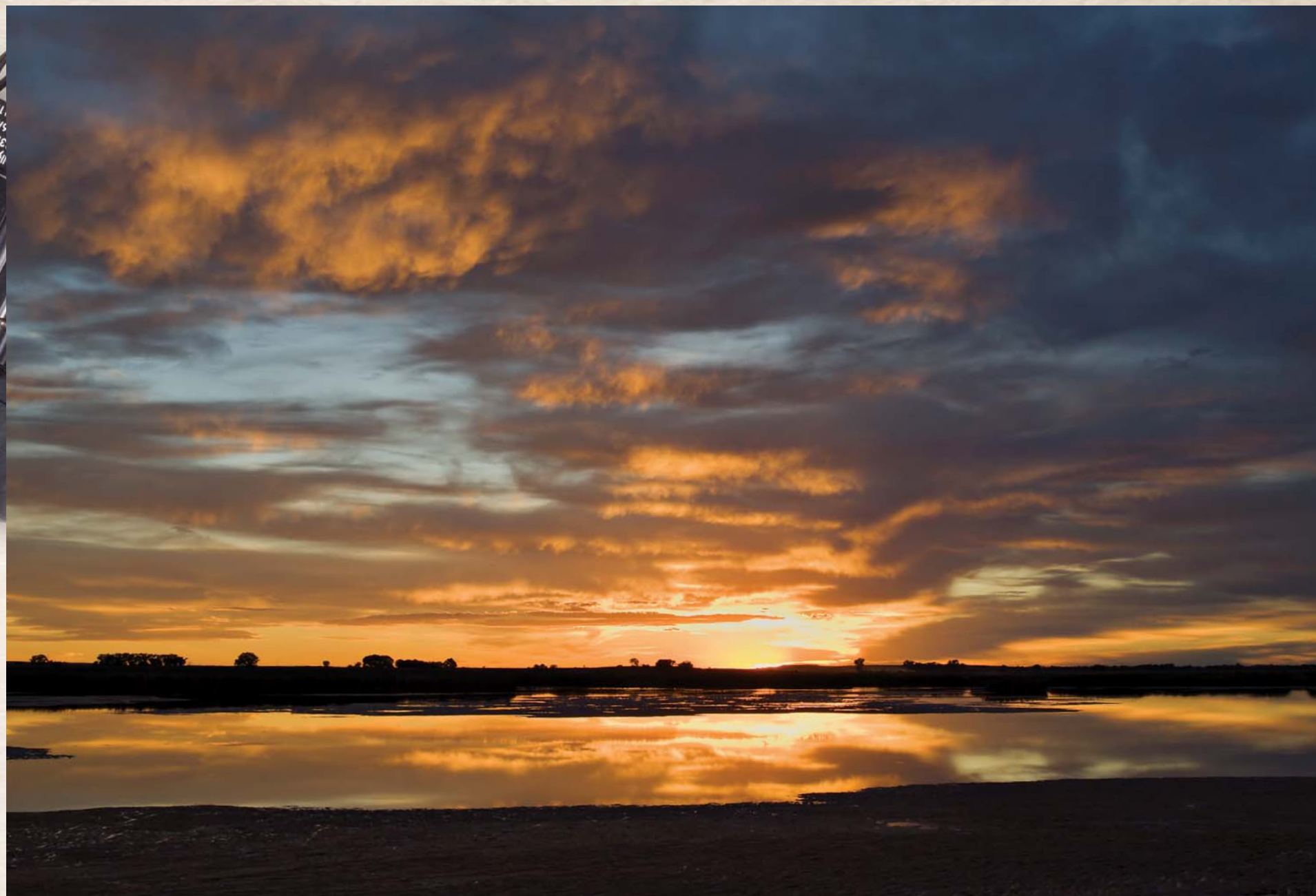


PHOTO LEFT BY BOB GRIER, OPPOSITE PAGE PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS

Foundation money helped fund the installment of water control structures and low level diking at Kiowa WMA in Scotts Bluff County.

working as a traveling saleswoman when her car broke down near Merriman, and local homesteader Arthur Bowring stopped to help. After the chance meeting, they started to date, eventually marrying and settling down on his Bar-99 ranch near Merriman. While helping her husband make their ranch a very successful operation, Eva got interested in politics and later became the first Nebraska woman appointed to serve in the U.S. Senate.

Upon her death in 1985, Eva Bowring donated the land to the Nebraska Game and Parks Foundation, requesting it be named after her late husband so that his name and legacy would continue to survive on the land that they loved – a common theme among many Foundation donors. The ranch came with stipulations, however – it had to remain a working ranch, property tax payments had to continue to be

made to the county, and the ranch's prize Hereford herd had to be maintained.

The Foundation accepted the ranch and leases it to the Commission to operate as the Arthur Bowring Sandhills Ranch SHP. Expenses associated with the ranch continue to be paid by the Foundation, and the income derived from the ranch lease is used for development and maintenance of the ranch and for other park sites in western Nebraska.

ROGER G. SYKES OUTDOOR HERITAGE EDUCATION COMPLEX

When Missourian Rodney Rames passed away a few years ago, he left a part of him in Nebraska. Having lived part of his life in the Cornhusker State, the gracious donor still had fond memories of it and the outdoor opportunities



Funding from the Foundation built this Bobcat mini-lodge at Ponca State Park.



The wave pool is a great place to cool off and relax while visiting Eugene T. Mahoney State Park and it, like much of the park, was largely funded through donations given to the Foundation.

it had afforded him. So in his will Rames left an estate gift to be used by the Foundation for capital improvements or acquisitions to support programs directed towards the outdoors, hunting and conservation.

Thanks to his generosity and a large donation from an anonymous donor from Omaha, in 2011 the Roger G. Sykes Outdoor Heritage Education Complex opened at Platte River State Park near Louisville. Featuring an archery range with a shooting tower, a 50-yard small-bore rifle range, an indoor 10-meter pellet gun range and a shotgun range, this shooting complex will serve as a way to introduce youth to the shooting and hunting sports for years into the future.

LAND DONATIONS

Land donations are a great way to ensure that the property and habitat you've cared for and about is protected in the future. For instance, Eugene and Soffia Polhemus of Phelps County have created a life estate that transfers 720 acres of land to the Foundation to be used perpetually as a wildlife management area upon their and their three children's deaths. This life estate entitles the Polhemus and their children to the use, possession and all rents and profits made from the land throughout their lifetime.

Similarly, O. John Emerson of Oakdale left 160 acres of rural Holt County land to the Foundation upon his death in 2003 to be used as wildlife habitat. The land was designated as the O. John Emerson Wildlife Management Area and managed for wildlife habitat until 2010, at which point it was gifted to the Commission by the Foundation.

PROTECTING THROUGH EASEMENTS

The Foundation also helps the Nebraska Land Trust purchase voluntary conservation easements on private land habitat. This land preservation tool protects land from potential future development and helps landowners protect their property for future generations. Recent donations from the Foundation helped protect 1,700 acres in Dawes and Sioux counties that is important habitat for elk and bighorn sheep and which serves as a key travel corridor between sprawling public lands in the area, including Chadron State Park.

Money from the Foundation has also been used to help protect land along the Lower Platte River corridor, including land that borders Schramm Park State Recreation Area.

"Thanks to support from the Foundation and caring landowners, people who hike the nature trail at Schramm will never have to worry about a subdivision coming into view across the fenceline," said Dave Sands, executive director of the Nebraska Land Trust.

Celebrating Successes

Probably the largest and best-known project that the Foundation has undertaken is Eugene T. Mahoney State Park (SP), the crown jewel of Nebraska's park system. Situated high on the bluffs above the Platte River midway between Lincoln and Omaha, Mahoney SP is one of the state's premier attractions – and would not be there but for the Foundation.

Through the Foundation, the initial purchase of 425 acres of land was made at a cost of \$539,000 and additional land was later purchased at a cost of \$132,000. In addition to the land itself, grants and funds passed through the Foundation have led to many of the enhancements made to the park, everything from expanding the lodge, to building an activity center and the family aquatic center. Ultimately, 80 percent of the funds required for this \$18 million showcase were raised through private donations through the Foundation; those donations continue to provide dividends, providing thousands of Nebraskans recreational opportunities and building memories that last a lifetime.

YOUTH HALF-PRICE LIFETIME PERMIT PROGRAM

Using a large donation from an anonymous donor, in 2005 the Foundation began its Youth Lifetime Permit Program to engage more youth in the outdoors, hunting and fishing. A series of drawings for Nebraska residents age 15 and younger are held at special events across the state. Winners can purchase a lifetime hunting and fishing permit for a Nebraska resident aged 15 or younger at half price, with the Foundation funding the other half.

Since the program's inception, the Foundation has helped pay for approximately 2,500 lifetime permits and hopes to grow this popular program as more funds become available.



PHOTO BY ERIC FOWLER

The Foundation's popular youth half-price lifetime permit program has grown over the years and is a great way to help get youth interested in hunting and fishing.

"We think we can triple that program," said Abel. In recent years private donors and partners such as Cabela's have made additional investments in our outdoor future by helping fund this important initiative.

In much the same way that support given to Mahoney SP has grown beyond the original investment, the donations used to help purchase lifetime permits grow multiple times -- every dollar used to purchase the permits can be used to match grant money available to Nebraska from federal excise taxes levied on certain hunting and fishing equipment, and each permit sold qualifies the state for a larger portion of the grant funds.

PONCA STATE PARK

Nestled in the Missouri River bluffs and wetlands that form Nebraska's northeastern border, Ponca State Park has long been a haven for people and wildlife alike. However demand for cabins at the park usually far outpaces supply.

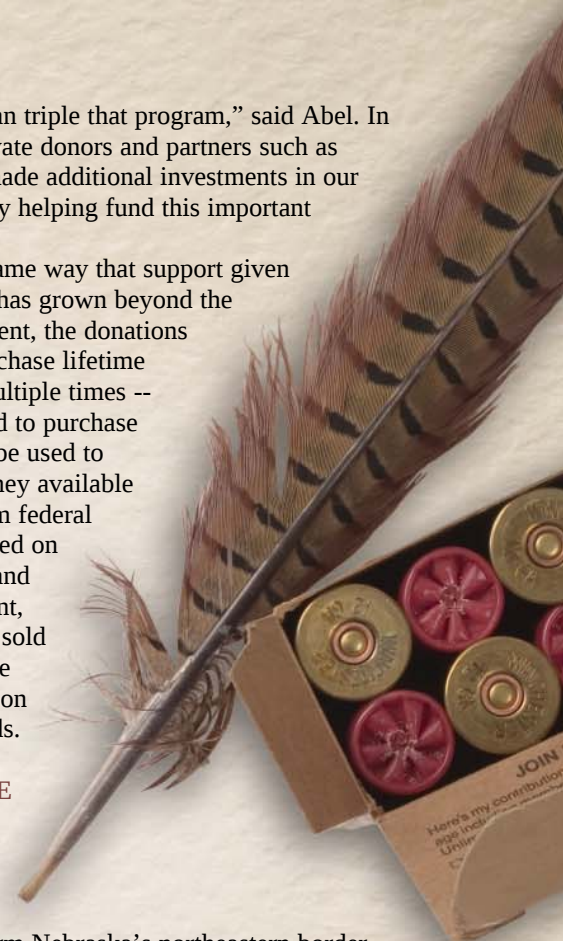
Fortunately, contributions through the Foundation have recently enabled the Commission to greatly increase the lodging options at this magnificent park. Fifteen mini-lodges are now available at the park with four bedrooms and two full baths, and two "green" strawbale construction cabins each featuring two bedrooms. These are in addition to the park's 14 log-style, rustic cabins. The Foundation also funded the purchase of additional wetlands along the river and habitat developments to create an ideal home for waterfowl, deer and many other animals, including much-needed spawning habitat for the pallid sturgeon.

FORT ROBINSON

Fort Robinson is western Nebraska's premier state park and a historic outpost that served from the days of the Indian Wars until after World War II. The Foundation is in the process of fund-raising for a project to construct a replica of the fort's old officers' quarters that will be used for overnight lodging. As of late 2012, approximately \$969,000 has been raised to fund the design and construction of this project.

ASHFALL STATE HISTORICAL PARK

Under these 360 acres of rangeland, purchased by the Foundation in 1986, lies a treasure trove of prehistoric animals buried by volcanic ash 10 million years ago. Located near Royal, Ashfall's internationally significant paleontological find is a historical treasure that the Foundation helped protect for generations to come.





FORT ATKINSON STATE HISTORICAL PARK

The Foundation helped raise most of the funds for reconstruction of the entire fort as well as construction of a visitor's center and council house.

KELLER PARK STATE RECREATION AREA

Land to create a new park was donated through the Foundation by Neal and Pauline Keller –197 acres of pristine land on Bone Creek. The park opened in 1986, complete with camping facilities.

PLATTE RIVER STATE PARK

Located within a 50-mile radius of over half the state's population, Platte River State Park is a major park facility in eastern Nebraska. The Owen Foundation, through the Game and Parks Foundation, gave \$425,000 for 15 modern housekeeping cabins at the park, and another \$150,000 from the Foundation provided a water treatment plant and utility improvements.

Land recently purchased adjacent to Platte River State Park in Cass County is typical of the role the Foundation plays in helping the Commission fulfill its mission: "Without the Foundation's help, this native forest area likely would have been developed and lost forever. It was just another example of the Foundation playing an instrumental role in preserving key natural properties," said Roger Kuhn, Commission park division administrator.

ROCK CREEK STATE HISTORICAL PARK

This showcase of Oregon Trail and Pony Express history received its visitor center, campground and picnic areas and acquired additional acreage through the Foundation



Foundation money helps support all types of Commission-related outdoor activities, including birdwatching.

Ways to Give

"The pennies, nickels and dimes of schoolchildren are as important as help from our most successful corporate enterprises."

Eugene T. Mahoney, former director of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, spoke these words when the Foundation was first established and they have proven true.

The Foundation was established to accept tax-deductible contributions to enhance the work of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, and over the years these thoughtful gifts have come in every size and type – from the aforementioned nickels and dimes to fragile natural areas, unique historic places, much-needed wildlife habitat and sizeable cash donations for park and recreational facilities.

Contributions are tax deductible and can be designated to a particular project or area of the state. Many gifts have come as memorials to loved ones who had a particular love for nature or a certain area, such as the Bowring Ranch. Others are meant to help improve or create opportunities for other citizens and youth to enjoy the great outdoors.

Contributions can take many forms – direct contributions of cash or gifts, either as an individual or corporation; bequests of cash, land or property in a will; conservation easements; life estates; real estate; trusts; or split life insurance.

"If someone has an interest in outdoor heritage, recreation and conservation, and wants to honor a family member or help continue the outdoor legacy, the Foundation will help facilitate a gift to make that happen," said Abel.

Looking for Help

Thanks to the generosity of Nebraskans and gracious donors, the Nebraska Game and Parks Foundation has been a resounding success. While it has accomplished a great deal since its inception, the list of needs remains long.

In these days of ever-increasing costs and ever-tightening agency budgets, the Foundation is needed more than ever for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission to continue to provide the services and outdoor recreation opportunities for Nebraska's citizens and visitors. To that end, the Foundation welcomes participation and contributions by all Nebraskans in helping fulfill its worthy cause.

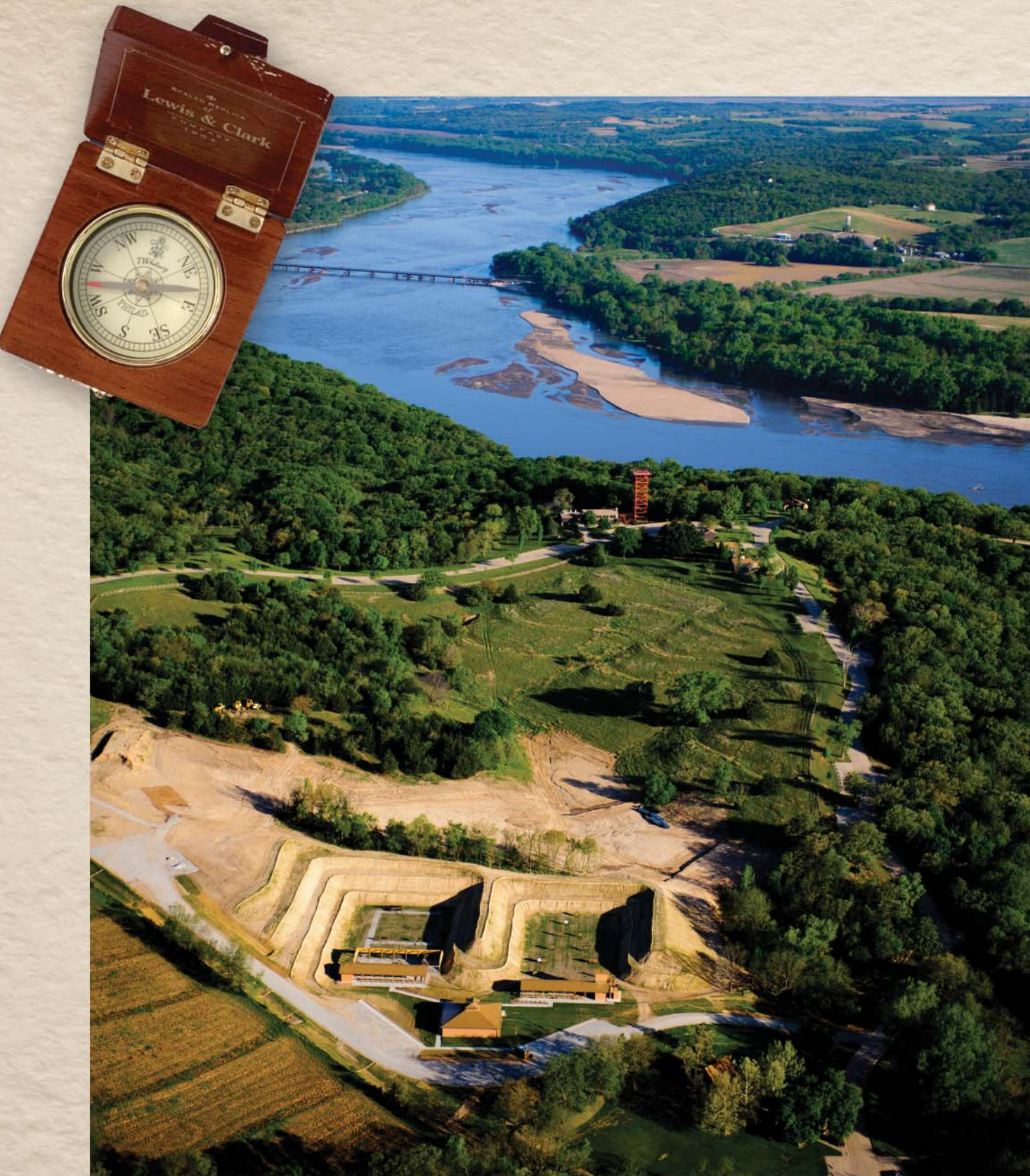
For more information, or to contribute to the Foundation, call Jackie Wrieth, the Foundations executive director, at (402) 939-3830; or Jim Abel, president/chairman, at (402) 434-1703. Mail correspondence can be sent to:

Nebraska Game and Parks Foundation
c/o Jackie Wrieth
P.O. Box 24470
Omaha, NE 68124-0470
www.nebraskagameandparksfoundation.org

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and the Nebraska Game and Parks Foundation thanks our donors and all Nebraskans for your dedicated support of our mission of stewardship of the state's fish, wildlife, park and outdoor recreation resources in the best long-term interest of the people and those resources. ■



Foundation money has played a key role in helping bring bighorn sheep back to their native habitat in western Nebraska.



Roger G. Sykes Outdoor Heritage Education Complex at Platte River State Park near Louisville.

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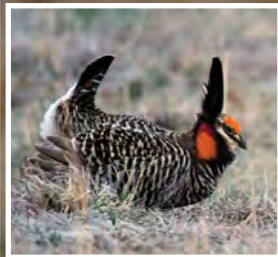
See You Out There

What are You, Chicken?

Text and photos by Michael Forsberg

There have been times in the Nebraska Sandhills where I have sat in a blind photographing prairie chickens on their display grounds (aka “leks”) while off in the distance I could hear the cooing cries and rapid tail-rattling of sharp-tailed grouse displaying on leks of their own. There have also been times where, while photographing sharptails, I could hear the distinctive booming calls of the greater prairie chicken courting females down the valley at the dawn of a new day. Never did I think, however, that I would see both species on the same lek, much less photograph them in the same frame.

Greater prairie chickens and sharp-tailed grouse are closely related and native to our prairie grasslands. They are similar in size and shape, but have key physical differences: The **sharptail** is lighter in color with a sharp-pointed tail and a purple neck sac that inflates during courtship display, while the **prairie chicken** has a rounded tail and its neck sac is yellowish orange, revealed when it lifts its long, draping pinnae feathers up like horns during its display.



Greater Prairie Chicken

In general, greater prairie chickens are birds of the tallgrass prairie that expanded their range westward along with Euroamerican settlement, taking advantage of cultivated grains for forage until more intensive agricultural development began to eliminate their habitats altogether. Today in Nebraska the greater prairie chicken is at the western limit of its range.

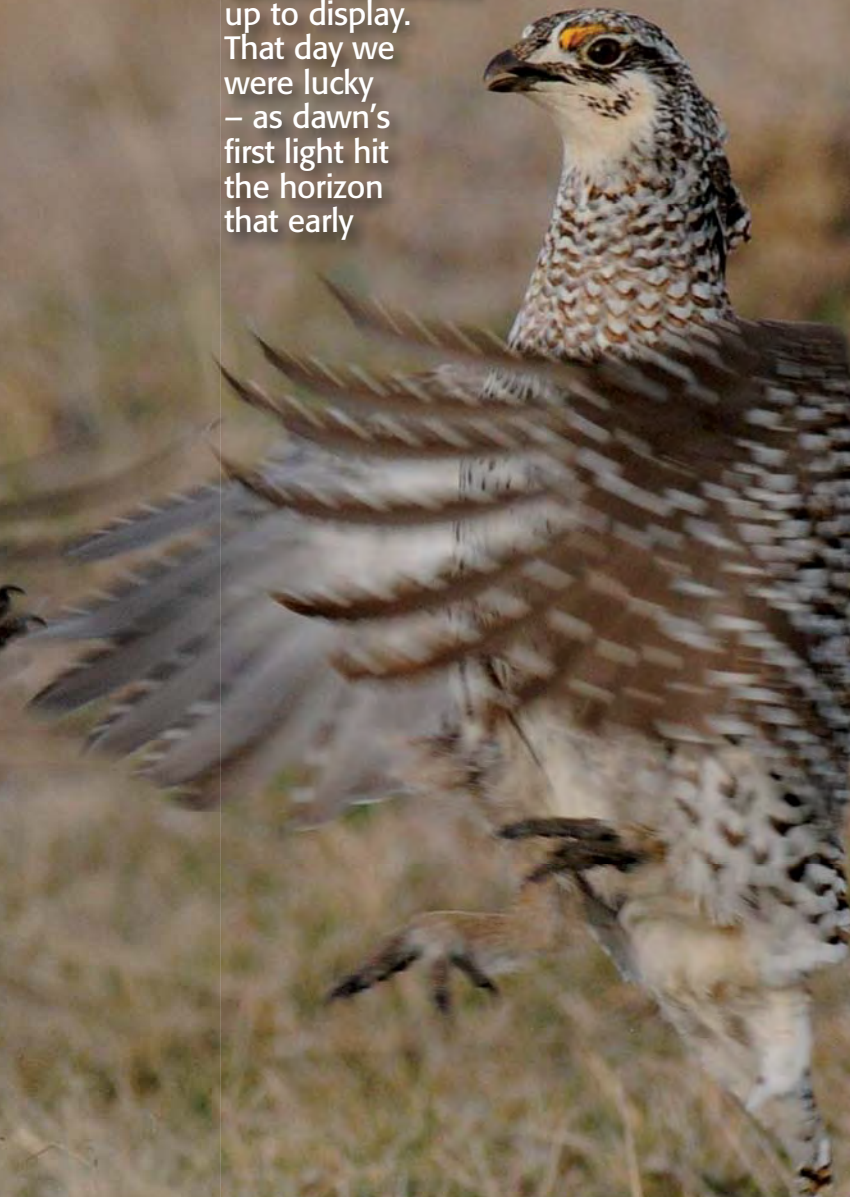
The sharp-tailed grouse is a bird of open country and has a much larger geographic range, ranging from the desert Southwest to near the Arctic tundra in Alaska. The Great Plains race of the sharptail found in Nebraska is



near the eastern limit of its range and has retreated north and westward from agricultural settlement and development, preferring large areas of native intact grassland mostly unhindered by man.

In Nebraska the two species overlap their ranges, especially in the Sandhills, where enough healthy grassland habitats remain for both species to survive.

A friend who had invited me to join him on a prairie chicken lek he regularly photographs had mentioned that a male sharptail grouse sometimes shows up to display. That day we were lucky – as dawn’s first light hit the horizon that early



April morning, there he was, standing as if he belonged among about a dozen booming male greater prairie chickens, ready to battle as the veil of night was lifting from the stage.

While the prairie chickens were standing with tails erect, wings drooped and heads low to the ground, airsacs blown out like balloons making their telltale “oooa-hooooom” sound, the sharptail was cooing and bowing, stamping its feet, rattling its tail and dancing with wings outstretched like a kid playing airplane, weaving in and out of the prairie chickens as if taunting them. All the while the prairie chickens seemed to ignore him, acting like disinterested adults.

The sharptail tried to enter the interior of the lek where the two dominant males resided, but quickly realized his error as he was chased away. He then settled on stalking the west end of the display ground, trying to pick a fight. When two female chickens entered the stage the males went wild, displaying reached a fevered pitch, and the sharptail could no longer be denied. One prairie chicken finally squared off with him and for the next hour they were locked in place, kicking, biting, flutter jumping and otherwise taunting each other over an invisible boundary line drawn in the grass.

According to biologists, such interactions between species probably occur regularly where ranges overlap but are not common. The two species are known to mate and will occasionally produce hybrid offspring. During the last Nebraska Game and Parks Commission comprehensive spring grouse survey done a few years ago, 240 leks were identified and four of them were used by both species.

About an hour after sunrise, a northern harrier flew over the lek and the prairie chickens scattered into the surrounding hills. But the sharptail remained a moment longer, seemingly quite proud of himself being the last one on display, awash in the limelight of the morning sun before finally winging away. ■



Sharp-tailed Grouse

The Plains Forts

A Harsh Environment

By John D. McDermott

In perspective, the United States Army had an almost impossible task to perform during the last half of the 19th century. It had an effective strength of something less than 15,000 men, yet at the height of the Indian Wars it manned 136 forts, posts, camps and cantonments, 16 arsenals and armories, three training facilities for recruits, and one engineer depot. Troops guarded some 3,000 miles of frontier and an equal length of seacoast. They scouted thousands of long, weary miles in uncharted territory. Besides its role as the agent of empire, the army physically attacked the wilderness, building forts, roads and bridges, at times conducting extensive farming operations and gathering some of the first scientific data on the great hinterland. Troops

guarded railroads and telegraph lines and escorted paymasters' and quartermasters' trains. They guarded parties engaged in surveying railway and boundary lines and public lands. Military posts were the focal points in the effort to protect succeeding waves of trail emigrants, miners and settlers from actual or threatened attack by Indians and other unfriendly parties, to guard lines of transportation and communication linking East and West and points in between, and to act as a buffer between the Indians of the plains and their unlawful tormentors. Beyond this, the officers, their wives and the soldiers of the frontier army were the arbiters of white civilization, possessing a strong need for expressing Euroamerican values through such means as education, recreation, the

arts and relations with Indians and frontiersmen. Making the mission more difficult for the 19th century army on the western plains was the environment: physical, meteorological, and harmfully occupied, and complicated and intensified by the strict regimentation of the army that rewarded sameness and frowned on innovation. Or to put it another way – their environment could be frustrating, unrelenting, noxious, infectious and lethal. In coping with the environment in this sense, the men and women who served in and with the frontier army often relied on humor to cover their fears and dismay.

Officers who left posts in the East had a big adjustment to make when they came West, and their colleagues did not necessarily make it easier for them. In the late 1860s some advice for soldiers going to the frontier appeared in the *Army and Navy Journal*, the principal military newspaper of the period:

"Altogether we have to advise each of the fellows who are to come here this fall, to do as follows:

- 1st. Make your will.
- 2nd. Get your life insured. We could recommend a certain company on Broadway, but then people might think this was an advertisement.
- 3rd. Bring enough money to pay your own funeral expenses.
- 4th. Have a first-class obituary of yourself prepared for insert in the *Army and Navy Journal*, by some New York Bohemian, for people out here haven't the time or the genius to write them.
- 5th. Don't ever expect to return, but say your adieu as you would if you had been selected for a 'forlorn hope.'
- 6th. Get your regimental adjutant to intercede to prevent you being sent here. Argue that these fellows can't be



The Battle of the Rosebud, June 17, 1876, in which Lakotas and Cheyennes fought General George Crook's troops to a bloody draw. The artist captures the usual stereotypes of war between whites and Indians. For soldiers of the era, battle was a rare event. From Richard I. Dodge, *Our Wild Indians: Thirty-Three Years' Personal Experience Among the Red Men of the Great West* (1884).

expected to have any desire for a return to society. They (we) might as well stay because they (we) are used to it.

You will find this arrangement will work beautifully, it being already in practice in about four artillery regiments."

Officers going to the frontier had to travel light and be prepared to move to the next assignment quickly. In 1868, a veteran offered good advice to those going west. He recommended that each should bring with him a good mess chest, well-furnished for four or six persons, a good roll of bedding, a mattress, a few comfortable camp chairs, and a trunk filled with a good supply of clothes for a least one year. Before leaving, he should give his measurements to a good tailor and boot maker so that he could replenish his wardrobe by order at any time. Also recommended were a table spread or two, a few curtains, some cloth suitable for covering furniture, and a roll of carpeting. In conclusion, he stated that an officer would never regret bringing any small articles of luxury that his taste suggested, for he would find very little difficulty in taking them with him

from station to station.

Quarters at frontier posts were never lush, especially in the beginning, and army regulations complicated matters. They provided that when an officer reported for duty at any post, he could select the quarters of any officer junior to himself for his residence. This could sometimes become a fast game of musical chairs. Here is a situation described at Fort Buford:

"Recently a captain, next in rank to the senior captain at the post, arrived here to take command of his company, having been absent from it two or three years. He chose the quarters of a captain who was junior to him in rank. This captain in turn displaced another captain. He ranked out a first lieutenant, who turned out the quartermaster, also a first lieutenant. He chose the quarters of the adjutant, also a first lieutenant, and he ousted a second lieutenant. Before, however, the adjutant had time to move, a first lieutenant of cavalry returned to duty at the post who outranked him, and who chose the quarters the adjutant had selected, the latter officer, therefore, had to choose again and there upon

took the quarters of a second lieutenant of cavalry who then displaced a second lieutenant of infantry, who in turn outranked a junior second lieutenant of the post. The removals are in process of execution, and within two weeks another first lieutenant will arrive for duty, and he outranks a half dozen of the officers now present, and is likely to set them moving again."

Another disadvantage was the lack of opportunities for men and women with varied interests. William Bisbee, who as a junior officer served at Fort Phil Kearny in 1866, remembered the situation:

"These earlier days of army life in the Indian Country west of the Missouri River and northwest to the Canadian border line, from the 60s to the 90s, were likened by one of my contemporary friends as "a waste of 25 years of our early existence," and oblivion apart from civilizing participation or influences: no society affiliations, club associates or, in fact, any educational advantages: no libraries or lecture features, few books and oftentimes lapses of months, without newsprints or in touch with the



"Winter on the Plains – A Terrible Experience in the Teeth of a 'Norther.'" From Richard I. Dodge, *Our Wild Indians*. Dodge, a career officer, writes of a February expedition along the Republican River in which some of Capt. John Mix's men were overcome with cold and refused to go on, even at the point of Mix's revolver. "The captain finally put up his pistol, and falling upon them with the flat of his sabre, belabored them into the ranks, and brought all in safely to the post."



Virginia Volunteer Cavalry, serving at Fort Caspar in winter of 1865-66, has left us a detailed account of what it was like to suffer from the effects of cold. "Pvt. George Holliday went to the mountains with a party to cut wood that November. On the way back he took a short cut that ended up causing him to reach the post later than the rest of the party. His legs had no feeling

Soldiers of the Eighth Infantry inside barracks at Fort Robinson.

outside world: no theatres or refining amusement halls of the present day life."

But army women were not daunted. They organized. As one wife put it,

"We did not stagnate. Though we were far from civilization. A reading club was started by the ladies, and we kept up with the publications of the day: lectures were given by the officers and a good deal of undeveloped talent was brought out in some good private theatricals. A string band was formed in the regimental band and they gave concerts so that in the winter months there was always something to be done, and the summer there were horseback riding, picnics and excursions in the surrounding country."

The first thing one had to deal with in carrying out the mission was the natural environment. The Great Plains is part of a geographical habitat stretching from Canada to Mexico, bounded on the east by the 100th Meridian and on the West by the Rocky Mountains. It is semi-arid, receiving less than 20 inches of rainfall a year. It is, generally speaking, scarce in wood and surface water, often windy, and registers extreme

temperatures of heat in the summer and cold in the winter, creating a new context for the word "survival."

Among frontier soldiers, the Wyoming climate was often a topic of conversation. A private soon to leave Fort Townsend in Washington Territory to serve at a post in Wyoming wrote a letter to a friend about his expectations, which was published in the Army and Navy Register. He wrote, "We are told that during the winter in Wyoming the snow is six and seven feet deep, and that the thermometer frequently runs down to 40 and 50 degrees below zero, and that during the daily blizzards it is necessary to carry heavy weights in our pockets to keep from being blown away."

Tongue in cheek aside, a mid-century Wyoming blizzard was nothing to make light of. For example, a detachment of the 11th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry went to South Pass late in 1863; upon their return through Platte Bridge Station, they ran into a bad snowstorm. The troops finally made it to Fort Laramie, but, as one of the party reported in a letter to his uncle, "two of the men were so badly frozen that they died in a few hours. Nearly every man froze either his feet, hands, or ears." A soldier of the Sixth West

below the knees. 'I was soon met by some men who had come to help me in,' he wrote in a reminiscence. 'The men at the camp had snow-water melted, turpentine ready, and the minute I arrived they ripped leggins, boots and socks, from top to toe, and peeled them off, and my feet, which were badly frozen, were put to soak in two large camp kettles of water. And, oh the pain I experienced after the frost came out of those feet. Tongue cannot describe it. For six long weeks I laid in my bunk or hobbled on crutches, and did not have to haul any more wood that winter. But I was not the only one frozen that day. Several other men had their feet, ears, fingers and toes, badly frosted, from which they were laid up some time, and I may say in my own case now, after lapse of 17 years, I still suffer from the effects of that freezing.'"

Troops soon learned to prepare for the bitter cold. They began augmenting their own uniforms. According to Holliday:

"We had been providing ourselves with the customary winter outfit of clothing, which consisted of a wolf skin, or buffalo cap, buffalo skin overshoes with leggins attached which reached to the knees and then, fastened by long buckskin strings, was allowed to hang down the side

of the legs. Buffalo mittens, and the customary cavalry uniform, completed the costume. These 'extras' had to be furnished by ourselves, and cost considerable."

Summer had its own enchantments. Besides sunstroke and dehydration, hail was a threat. Fort Laramie on the west and Fort Robinson on the south are not far from the center of hail activity in the United States. Records at Fort Laramie indicate that severe hailstorms destroyed gardens and repeatedly broke all windows on the north side of its many buildings. These ice pellets could also be lethal – the Army and Navy Register reported in 1888 that a hailstorm near Fort Custer, Montana, had been severe enough to knock a soldier off his horse, kill a large number of calves and colts, and literally beat to death an old Indian woman who had been caught while out gathering wood.

In the Southwest, summer conditions were even worse because of the heat. One observer wrote in 1869:

"I have even heard complaints made that the thermometer failed to show the true heat because the mercury dried up. Everything dries: wagons dry, men dry, chickens dry; there is no juice left in anything living or dead, by the end of the summer ... mules, it is said, can only bray at midnight; and I have heard it hinted that the carcasses of cattle rattle inside their hides, and that snakes find a difficulty in bending their bodies, and horned frogs die of apoplexy. Chickens hatched at this

season, old Fort Yumers say, come out of the shell ready cooked; [and] bacon is eaten with a spoon ... "

If the climate was not bad enough, there were creatures that could make life miserable for the initiate. Mosquitoes earned the most exaggerated mention. According to one Wyoming victim, who referred to them as "Platte Valley birds," they were "as blood thirsty as starved tigers."

"Bars are no protection," a soldier declared, "as they easily tear them out, or lift up the edge and come under."

More seriously, however, the effects of numerous mosquito bites could be lethal. One soldier at a western post who went AWOL while under the influence was found dead the next day. Swarms of mosquitoes had bitten him mercilessly. An officer's wife reported: "There he lay in the sagebrush, where liquor had overcome him. But the mosquitoes had gotten in their deadly work and had literally sucked the life from his body. It was bloated and practically bloodless – a bitter temperance lesson to the garrison men."

Another, more dangerous, discomfort were rattlesnakes. Lt. William Bisbee found them plentiful on his way to Fort Phil Kearny in July of 1866, reporting that "killing the reptiles with whips and revolvers was one of our daily amusements." One afternoon in 1879, soldiers at Fort Fred Steele, Wyoming Territory, killed 73 rattlesnakes a short distance from the post. Even more upsetting was the tendency of

the serpents to seek shelter in human habitations. A soldier from Fort Harker, Kansas, told of killing three rattlesnakes found warming themselves by the fire in his log and sod cabin in February of 1867.

Fleas also seemed to abound, particularly in places where humans had lived for a time. Mrs. Andrew S. Burt, the wife of the commanding officer of Fort Laramie in 1888, pasted a clipping in her cookbook describing Dr. Hazen's method for getting rid of fleas:

"Set a lighted candle in a dish of water in the middle of the room. The fleas, attracted by the light, will hop in, and in the morning, the dish will present the appearance of Pharaoh and his host drowned in the Red Sea. It is more effective than Persian or any other powder. It is strategy, my boy, and the fleas never learn it till it is too late."

Mary Rippey Heistand had another means of treatment. At Camp Poplar River in Montana, the post was infested with sand fleas, the buildings having been built on the site of an abandoned Indian village. She described about her method as follows:

"Four or five times a day I have undressed myself when fleas were torturing me. It was my custom to spread a white blanket to stand on as I removed my clothing. I was thus enabled to see the annoyances—tiny only in size—against the white blanket, and on it their legs tangled and made them an easy prey in their turn. The process was slow, as I



1883 log barracks at Fort Robinson, Nebraska. Founded as Camp Robinson in 1874, the fort served the army until 1948.



Soldiers resorted to killing their exhausted mounts for food during Gen. George Crook's 1876 campaign against the Lakota.

shook each garment before laying it aside. Sometimes when the insects came to light they escaped with an agility unequaled, jumping clear of the blanket. At one time I was put to bed with fever induced by these miserable insects. They had tormented me so that I scarcely knew what I was doing; my temperature arose and I collapsed. The physician pronounced my malady 'flea fever.'

A companion of the flea was the bedbug. One soldier in Nebraska found his match: "I was chasing bed bugs all night," he wrote. "They would come around in the night with lanterns to find a nice place to bite you. They would not come singly but in battalions. Some were large and strong; they had hair on their backs."

In 1864, a soldier newspaper at Fort Union, North Dakota, printed this account:

"We have seen them – seen them in battalions – seen them in divisions and in army corps, and they were of all sizes from the smallest, four which can stand on the head of a pin, up to the size of a mud turtle. We have seen them regularly organized – thoroughly drilled – and apparently in a good state of discipline; at first they would throw out a few foragers who would wait very quietly until we were asleep when they would draw what blood they could carry and go quietly off. For the sake of maintaining peace we submitted

until they came in force one night and attempted to carry us off bodily Charge after charge they made which we successfully repulsed with a trifling loss of blood on our side. At length they changed their tactics, and one much larger than the others advanced to the attack alone; ... we were rapidly losing strength and thought our time had come – we remembered that our life was not insured, and all actions of it seemed to pass in rapid succession before us; thought upon our home and those dear ones that were anxiously waiting our return and we determined to struggle to the bitter end; at length fortune favored us and by a brilliant maneuver we were enabled to place our opponent on his back and plunging a knife into him finished him. The rest were apparently thunderstruck and stood unable to do anything but gaze, so taking advantage of their surprise we seized our blankets and once more fled."

Food was also a problem at frontier posts. Taking a great deal of criticism was the hard bread, used especially on patrols or campaign. Called "hard tack," and usually baked in three-by-three-inch squares, the dense biscuit or cracker had great powers for survival and longevity. One soldier of the 1860s claimed that a friend had seen some that were stamped 1812 A.D.. Following the Civil War many thousands of these were on hand,

and the parsimonious army, suffering budget cuts, decided to use them until exhausted. In 1861, Gerhard Stullken of the 9th Wisconsin Battery Light Artillery visited Fort Kearny on the way to Denver, and drew a few barrels of hard tack. "It was hard and looked hard," he wrote, "[and] it had probably lain here for years, and worms had eaten holes through it. This ... was soldiers' fare on the plains, hard tack and sowbelly, as we called it. Sometimes we would break the hard tack with the axe and soak them over night, then fry them in the morning and sometimes we would throw them in hot grease and fry them awhile; this would make them brittle so we could eat them. The crackers were about as large as a man's hand and some were as hard as a shingle. I know; I took one along one morning on the march to nibble on the way. I chewed till I got tired, then threw it down and the cannon wheel went over it without breaking it. Soon after the cannon wheel went over an old buffalo head and crushed it all to pieces."

Another much discussed item of soldier fare was introduced into the army in 1856. Fort Laramie was an experiment station for testing the new product marketed by Chollet & Company and labeled "desiccated vegetables." One army study explained that, "As desiccated vegetables, the water is in large part removed, the bulk correspondingly reduced, and the liability to injury from variations of heat and atmospheric moisture overcome."

According to the study, vegetables were "thoroughly cleaned, sliced, dried in a current of heated air, weighed, seasoned, and pressed with a hydraulic press into compact form, sealed in tin cases and enclosed in wooden boxes." A block of the concentrate one-foot square and two inches thick weighed seven pounds and contained vegetables for a single ration for 112 men. Among those vegetables eventually available in desiccated form were potatoes, cabbage, turnips, carrots, parsnips, beets, tomatoes, onions, peas, beans, lentils, celery and green peppers.

The concentrate had amazing regenerative powers, and more than one novice found that soaking a generous piece in water made more

of the vegetable than he wanted. This characteristic led to a story of a soldier eating his ration raw and nearly dying from swelling after taking a drink of water. During the Civil War, soldiers commonly referred to the mixed product as "desecrated" vegetables or "baled hay."

One officer who undesiccated his potatoes described the result as "a dirty brook with all the dead leaves floating around promiscuously." Cooks achieved the best results by making soup of the vegetable, improving the taste by adding meat. As a result of testing, the commanding general of subsistence in 1858 recommended that desiccated potatoes and mixed vegetables be introduced as part of the ration, to be issued twice per week in lieu of beans and rice.

One of the problems with the usual army diet was that it lacked fresh fruits and vegetables and other sources of Vitamin C; consequently, scurvy was always a winter threat. A soldier writing in the Cheyenne Daily Leader described the effects of the disease:

"The feet of some swell to an enormous size, their flesh becomes soft and flabby, and assumes blue and yellowish tints, while if you press the part affected with your finger, on withdrawing it the impression will remain. Other patients become fearfully emaciated. Teeth fall out and gums become sore in every case."

In 1859, Assistant Surgeon Edward W. Johns at Fort Laramie gave his patients watercress to treat the disease until all was consumed. Then he tried to give cactus juice to the troops, but they would take it only when mixed with whiskey.

These, then, were a few of the problems that confronted the men who served at the many camps, outposts, stations and forts on the Great Plains during the Indian Wars of the West. Why, then, did the men and the women who followed them serve in the frontier army, despite its trials and travails, its isolation and its usually incondite life? In the case of enlisted men, it might be one of many reasons, such as economic betterment, career training, a chance to learn the language, flight from criminal prosecution, disappointment in love, a desire to see the open spaces, or a free ride to the proximity of mining



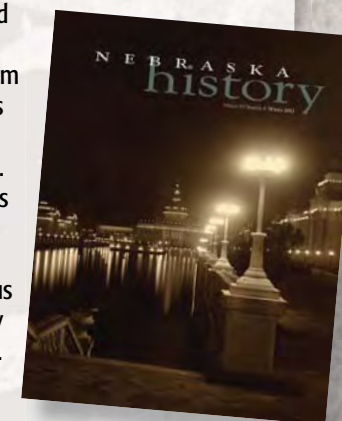
A cavalryman from "Nebraska's Own" Fifth U.S. Cavalry at Fort McPherson, near present-day North Platte. NSHS RG0951-24

districts. During the Civil War, many were motivated by patriotism or a wish to take advantage of generous bounties offered by some state and localities. For officers, it may have been a family tradition, an opportunity to exercise leadership, the thrill of a wilderness adventure, a means of supporting a wife and children, a desire to act as an agent of white-European civilization.

Whatever the reasons, officers and enlisted men on the plains did their duty under difficult conditions, and we remember them for it. ■

John D. McDermott of Rapid City, South Dakota, has written several articles on military topics for Nebraska History. His 11th book, "Red Cloud's War: The Bozeman Trail, 1866-1868," will appear this fall. This article was presented as a paper at the Fort Robinson History Conference held April 23-25, 2009.

This article was reprinted with permission from the Nebraska State Historical Society's *Nebraska History Magazine*, a quarterly, illustrated magazine that explores Nebraska's history and culture through original articles and historical images from the NSHS's extensive collections. Subscribers receive *Nebraska History* plus a quarterly newsletter. To learn more, visit nebraskahistory.org/magazine or call toll free at 1-800-833-6747.



ICE FISHING INTRO

By Jordan Katt, Fisheries Biologist,
Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

For those of you anglers whose wintertime recreation includes watching In-Fisherman videos or staring out the window while cleaning your summertime fishing equipment, postpone these viewings and cleanings and start your first season of ice-fishing instead.

If you've never ice-fished because you didn't think you had the equipment to do so, you're probably cleaning most of that equipment right now.

For it doesn't take a lot of tackle to start catching fish on hard water – only certain necessities that will leave you out in the cold if you choose to leave home without them.

Here is that list:

SPUDS AND AUGERS

A **spud bar** (a chisel-like blade) can be used to make holes in the ice.

An **auger** (hand or powered) makes the job easier with the use of sharp blades. Be sure to have an extra set of blades if you're using a hand auger.

RODS AND REELS

You can use **any fishing rod** you have around, including broken.

Shorter **ice-fishing specific rods** can be purchased.

Tip-ups are generally used when targeting large fish, such as northern pike, walleye or largemouth bass.



Tip-ups are great for targeting large fish.

ICE-FISHING SAFETY

PROPER CLOTHING

Layers of noncotton clothing work best. Wool, fleece and polypropylene are fabrics good for keeping you warm and dry. Do not use cotton clothing.

Good rubber boots with felt liners are perfect to keep water out and warmth in. Bring extra wool socks.

Hats are necessary to keep body warmth in.

Gloves are also needed. Fingerless Glomitts or half-finger styles are great for tying knots. Be sure to bring an extra pair.

OTHER SAFETY EQUIPMENT

Ice picks should be worn around your neck in case you need to grip the ice and pull yourself out of the water.

Ice creepers or cleats are great to help you keep your balance and traction on the ice.

Life Jackets are always good to wear regardless of ice thickness.



Ice-fishing cleats



A gas-powered auger is a handy tool for cutting holes quickly, offering anglers ease-of-use and mobility.

BAITS FOR FISH

Wax worms, meal worms and artificial lures are great for catching small panfish and trout.

A combination of a jighead or teardrop with a live worm also works well.

Small and medium-size minnows work well on crappie and perch, while medium and large minnows (or small bluegill) also entice bass, walleye, pike and other big fish.



BLUEGILL



RAINBOW TROUT



WHITE CRAPPIE



YELLOW PERCH



LARGEMOUTH BASS



WALLEYE



NORTHERN PIKE

FISH ART BY JOE TOMELLERI



This graphic, provided by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, reminds anglers how much ice is needed before walking, or riding, across a lake.

Watershed in Motion

An update of the Platte Basin Timelapse Project

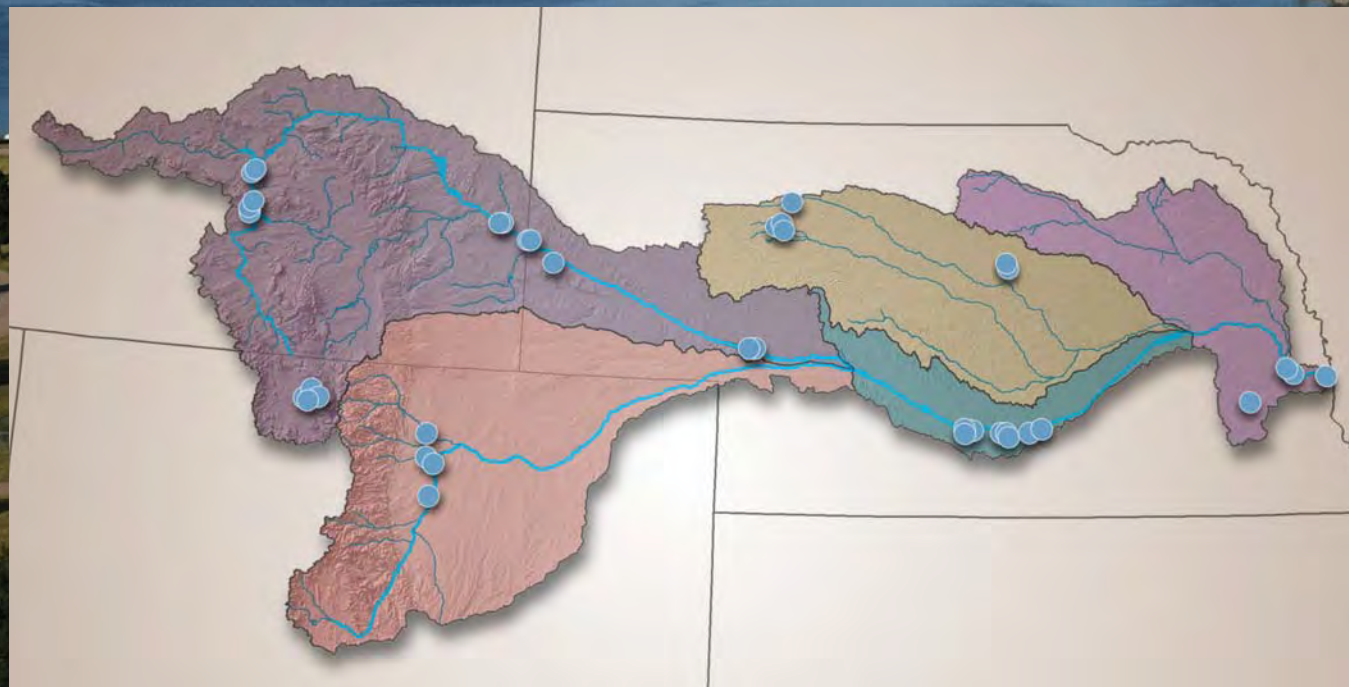
By Michael Forsberg

In the June 2012 issue of NEBRASKALAND Magazine, readers were introduced to the Platte Basin Time-lapse Project (PBT), a collaboration between numerous private and public partners, including the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. The project uses

time-lapse camera technology to help put the Platte River watershed in motion and show how water moves through this vast basin, which stretches more than 600 miles from west to east, drops 13,000 feet in elevation from its highest point along the Continental Divide, and drains

A time-lapse camera captures water from the North Platte River (right) moving down an irrigation canal. The water is delivered to croplands located south of Gering-Scottsbluff in the North Platte River Valley.

Background: This timelapse camera image shows Lake Ogallala and the spillway from Kingsley Dam. From here, the water heads east to serve a variety of interests downstream.

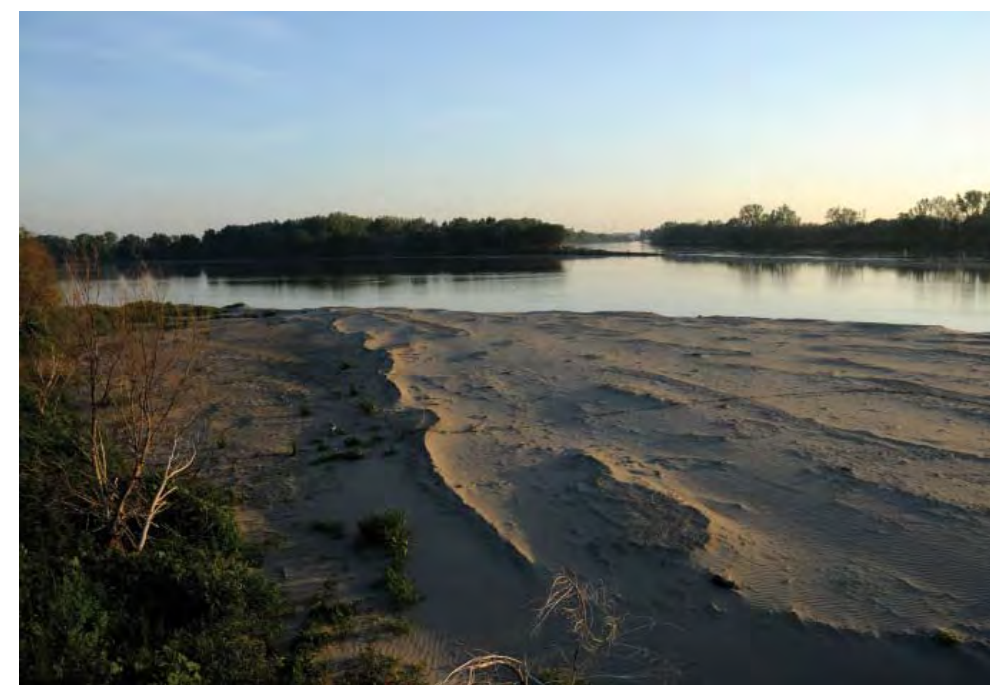


The Platte Basin Time-lapse Project (PBT) currently has 38 cameras placed at a variety of locations throughout the 90,000-square-mile Platte River Basin. The project encompasses parts of three states: Wyoming, Colorado and Nebraska. Each camera is recording images every hour of daylight throughout the year for several years. From these still images, time-lapse videos are being constructed with the help of students at the University of Nebraska - Lincoln, setting the watershed in motion.





In November 2012, Jeff Dale and Michael Farrell install a time-lapse camera along with rancher Sara Sortum on the Switzer Ranch in the eastern Sandhills. In April 2012, the lake in the background was full. This camera will record changing lake levels and wildlife use over time.



The first time-lapse image (above) shows what the confluence of the Platte and Missouri rivers looked like at Schilling Wildlife Management Area near Plattsmouth during the flood of 2011. The second image shows the same view a year later.

roughly 90,000 square miles across parts of Wyoming, Colorado and a large part of Nebraska.

Each camera tells a different story and is programmed to take a photograph every hour of daylight throughout the year for several consecutive years. Today nearly 40 timelapse cameras are in place and the project's goal of 45 cameras anchored in the landscape is nearly complete.

Since July 2012, nine additional cameras have been installed along the North Platte watershed, including a stretch that focuses primarily on irrigation water delivery between the Whalen Diversion Dam near Fort Laramie, Wyoming, and Kingsley Dam at Lake McConaughy north of Ogallala.

In the South Platte watershed, cameras have been placed along the Front Range in

Colorado to explore the urban use of water in the Denver area, and in a remote canyon along the north fork of the Poudre River northwest of Fort Collins that harbors a wide diversity of wildlife species and provides critical habitat and movement corridors between the mountains and the plains.

In the Nebraska Sandhills, two cameras were added late last fall on a ranch north

of Burwell – one camera is trained on a Sandhills lake to watch its water levels fluctuate over time and record migratory bird use; the second is documenting tree removal on a cedar-choked hillside and its restoration back to prairie.

Along the Lower Platte from Eugene T. Mahoney State Park to Schilling Wildlife Management Area at the Platte's confluence with the Missouri, cameras



This time-lapse camera image (above) from the central Platte River at the Plum Creek site near Overton shows what the bank looked like in early summer 2011. Just over a year later the south bank has eroded away and is completely out of the frame.

These time-lapse camera images of the central Platte taken at Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary (above left) and the Lied Hiker Biker Bridge near South Bend along the Lower Platte (above right) show the river at high water in the summer of 2011 after record snowmelt from the Rockies and heavy rains in the spring throughout most of the basin. The images below them show the same scenes a year later during the extreme drought that gripped the region in 2012.

are beginning to use wireless and cellular technologies to test the remote transfer of image data.

Since the first camera was installed nearly two years ago, roughly 150,000 images (and counting) have been taken, capturing everything from river processes such as sandbar movement and bank erosion, to the cycle of the seasons on both prairie lands and agricultural fields.

Perhaps the most compelling story, however, has been documenting the cycle from extreme wet to extreme drought as it has unfolded the past two years.

In 2011, the Platte Basin "bathtub" was full, thanks to above-average snowpack in the Rockies in the winter of 2010-11 and above-average precipitation the following spring. There was ample water in the system, filling the river bank to bank and

reservoirs to near capacity for most of the year. In 2012, the opposite was true. Well below-average snowpack in the mountains and little precipitation in the plains has left most of the Platte Basin thirsty for water, with extreme drought gripping the region.

As the Platte Basin Time-lapse Project unfolds in 2013, its focus will increasingly shift to building content on an evolving website with the help of University of

Nebraska- Lincoln students, using time-lapse photography and other visual media as the key tools to help raise awareness about our water resources, forward education and research efforts, and otherwise monitor the pulse of the Platte River, this critical lifeline in our state. ■

Michael Forsberg is a professional nature photographer and contributing editor to NEBRASKALand. To see more of Mike's images, go to www.michaelforsberg.com.

You Hunt With That Dog?

Even with good intentions, sometimes a hunting companion chooses you.

By Gerry Steinauer, Botanist, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

One cold day last December, my pheasant hunt over, I walked out of the grassy field and onto the gravel road, my faithful hunting dog at my heels. A truck pulled up, and while chatting with the hunter inside, I waited for the inevitable question. It soon spilled from his lips: “You hunt with that dog?”

The dog referred to was Callie, my stump-legged, long-bodied, fox-faced Welsh Pembroke corgi – not your typical hunting dog. In a world where bird hunters pride themselves on the breed and pedigree of their hunting dog, whether it black Lab, Brittany spaniel or wirehair, I have received a lot of grief about my nontypical hunting companion.

Callie came to me twelve years ago as a puppy, an unexpected gift from a friend. Her first year, I took her pheasant hunting with me just for the exercise. I never expected her to be a hunter, though in the back of my mind I may have been hopeful. She showed no real interest in hunting – her one encounter with a pheasant was barking and growling at a downed rooster, which had my hunting buddies roaring with laughter. Their Callie jokes were relentless and sometimes even humorous ... “When do the legs come in on that dog?” That’s the biggest caterpillar I have ever seen!” “Watch out, that pheasant is going to attack her!”

Then on opening day of her second year, unexpectedly, Callie trailed and found two crippled roosters buried in the grass – she had figured out the game and caught the hunting bug. From then on each fall morning she watches anxiously, hoping I grab my shotgun from the hall closet so she can rush for the back door. Over the years, as her hunting abilities grew, the jokes have become somewhat less frequent.

Callie is best at tracking pheasants. When afield she ranges close, nose to the ground, and when the trail of a pheasant is crossed the chase is on. When the trail is hot, it is amazing how fast her short legs can move – when the weather is warm, I sometimes opt for tennis shoes rather than hunting boots just to keep up. Her interest in bird hunting seems odd, as corgis were bred in Wales primarily for sheep and cattle herding, but also for varmint killing and rabbit hunting. Perhaps Callie comes from a rabbit hunting

line of corgis, as she has no interest in livestock or herding but loves chasing cottontails and has a unique “yip” when on one’s trail. Possibly, corgis are just adaptable dogs – my brother-in-law hunts coons with his big male corgi, which is Callie’s half-brother.

Callie is good at finding cripples but doesn’t retrieve them – with those short legs she can’t lift the bird off the ground or haul it through cover. On two occasions, however, when I have dropped roosters into irrigation ponds, she has swam out and brought the birds back to shore. Another limitation with corgis as hunting dogs is deep snow – Callie once chased a wounded rooster into a soft snow drift where they both became stuck, she only a few feet from the rooster and yipping like mad. Several times I have had to carry her out of snow-packed marshes. Fortunately, she fits perfectly in my game pouch, tolerates the ride and, weighing about 20 pounds, is not an overly heavy load.

For several years I ventured up to South Dakota to pheasant hunt with my friend, Jarren Kuipers. His parent’s farm dog, a Jack Russell terrier named T-bone, would go bonkers when we showed up in hunting attire. Describing T-bone as hyper is an understatement: In the truck or car on the way to a hunt he bounced around like a ricocheting bullet. Like Callie, T-bone had no formal training in bird hunting and lacked a hunting pedigree (Jack Russells were originally bred for fox hunting and, later, badger digging), but took naturally to pheasant hunting. Though no bigger than a tom cat, skinny as heck and short-haired, T-bone was tough as nails. He could bust through tall grass or iced-over cattail marshes all day, flushing pheasants and occasionally finding wounded birds. Wintery Dakota days didn’t faze him. His one bad habit, besides being excitable – he

considered skunks fair game. I once saw him dive into an old badger hole and, after a quick growl, come shooting out like a rocket, his face covered with green stink. After a little gagging, puking and rubbing himself nearly clean on bean stubble, he was back to hunting in short order. I can imagine what those high-dollar South Dakota hunters, in their fancy pickups with their fine hunting dogs, thought when they drove by and saw Jarren and me hunting behind a corgi and Jack Russell: “Poor saps can’t even afford a hunting dog!” ■



Gerry with Callie



Jarren with T-bone

TOP PHOTO BY CHRIS HELZER, BOTTOM PHOTO BY GERRY STEINAUER

from NEBRASKAland's Trail Tales magazine for kids

junior journal

interesting notes for readers of all ages

by Lindsay Rogers and Donna Schimonitz

FLOODING

Its Effect on Nebraska's Fish and Wildlife

by Schuyler Sampson and Tara Anderson

Each year many streams and rivers across the world, and across Nebraska, swell until the water can't go anywhere else but out of their banks. This causes flooding on the surrounding land. We see in the news what happens to houses and roads, but have you ever wondered what happens to fish and wildlife during a flood?

Many rivers and streams in Nebraska flood in the spring. However, flooding can also happen in winter when ice jams form – like along Nebraska's Platte River.

During a flood, large amounts of sand and dirt (called sediment) are moved downstream by the fast moving waters. When the water slows down, the sediments drop out. This pile of sediments creates a sandbar and provides new habitats for both fish and wildlife.

This creation of a sandbar can be a positive. For example, sandbars provide two rare bird species – least

terns and piping plovers – with a place to make their nests. And the tips of the sandbars provide good habitat for fish trying to get out of the fast-moving water.

The creation of new sandbars can also be negative, like when small sand and sediment particles fill in an area that fish need to spawn (mate). This sand and sediment can suffocate their eggs before they have time to hatch.

The high water of a flood also creates new habitat by overflowing onto the land. This can increase the amount of area and food for fish.

Many wildlife species are terrestrial (live on land) and prefer to live on the land near rivers and streams. As the water rises, their homes become flooded and they are forced to find new areas to live.

Much like humans, fish and wildlife are affected by large flooding events. Some species actually benefit from flooding events, while others are negatively affected. 🐟

Migrate, Hibernate or Stay Active?

Some animals migrate south for the winter, others hibernate (sleep) though the cold months, and still others stay active all winter long. Place a “M” next to the animals that migrate, a “H” by the animals that hibernate, and an “A” next to the ones that stay active.



White-tailed Deer



Beaver



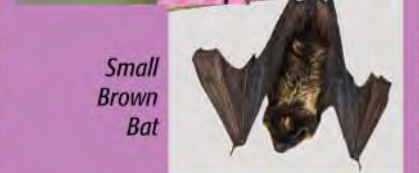
Mallard Duck



Groundhog/Woodchuck



Monarch Butterfly

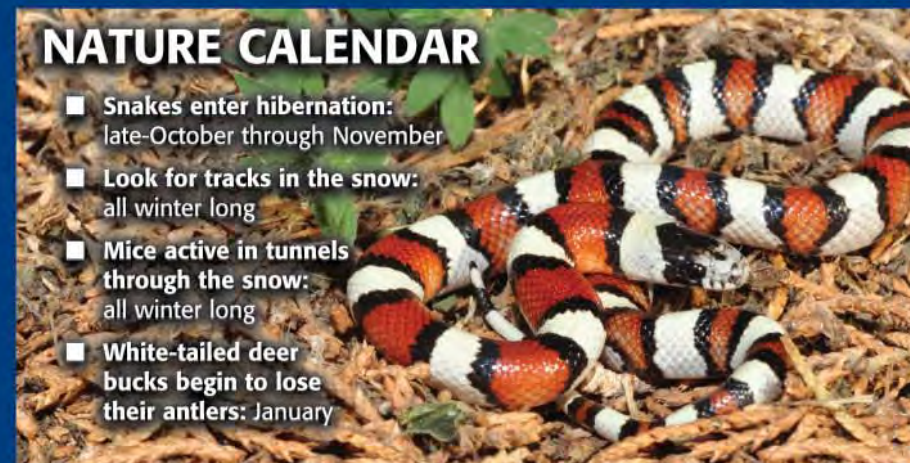


Small Brown Bat

ANSWERS: Deer (M), Beaver (A), Mallard Duck (M), Groundhog (H), Monarch Butterfly (M), Bat (H).

NATURE CALENDAR

- Snakes enter hibernation: late-October through November
- Look for tracks in the snow: all winter long
- Mice active in tunnels through the snow: all winter long
- White-tailed deer bucks begin to lose their antlers: January



Captain Plains Milk Snake photo by Dan Fogell

BOOKS/PUBLICATIONS/VIDEOS

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Peace on the Plains

Why Dick Cavett and others find the Plains so peaceful.

By Roger Welsch

Not long ago my classmate (Lincoln High, not Yale!) Dick Cavett and his lovely bride Martha came to visit us in Dannebrog. I learned long ago that the worst thing we in Nebraska can do when entertaining people like the Cavetts is to try to impress them with our cosmopolitan sophistication. (As if Dannebrog, Nebraska, offers that option!) But I still find people around here who feed visiting Danes our version of Danish food (not even close!) in an effort, I suppose, to make them feel at home. Wrong idea. What people want to see in Nebraska is ... well ... NEBRASKA!

So Linda and I took Dick and Martha to the town tavern for lunch and were lucky enough to find that the lunch special for the day was meatloaf. I love meatloaf, always have, but one of the distinctions at the Dannebrog tavern is that when you order meatloaf, you don't get a piece of meatloaf – you get meatloaf! Oh, and mashed potatoes. In my book “Everything I Know About Women...” I tried to explain one of the great truths of human behavior by pointing out to female readers that it is not elegant parfums [sic], fancy face paint or lacy undies that charm men into the terrors of commitment. No, resistance to that fatal step is overcome first, most and best by ... mashed potatoes. Mashed potatoes will do the job every time.

When Sue brought the plates of meatloaf slabs and spud mountains to our table, I began to worry about Dick's state of health. His eyes glazed over, his shoulders went slack, and the smile on his face said “ecstasy.”

And when we had left the tavern with the usual wheelbarrow full of leftovers and were standing in Dannebrog's main street saying our farewells as Dick and Martha got ready

to head northwest into the wonderful wilderness of Nebraska's Sandhills, I felt I had done my job as Captain Nebraska (“Defending Our State From Fanciness Wherever and Whenever It Might Arise”).

Then I realized I had underestimated both my town and what Cavett, this Nebraska boy gone to the degenerate East, had grown used to. We stood there talking for a quarter hour or so and then Dick grabbed Martha's arm

why it is that we who live here love what one detractor called “this hulking giant” so much. Showing to others what we love about Nebraska is a good and natural thing. But even more importantly, when we have visitors to our state we can use their reactions to remind us why we love this place.

Now, months after Dick and Martha's visit, Linda and I still remember and smile about that day, when we rediscovered something



A peaceful but wet Dannebrog around 1896.

and said, “Listen!” We listened. To nothing. There was not a sound. And a wide smile spread across our guests' faces because that is precisely what Dick was hearing and drinking in. Linda and I then realized that they were finding real joy in the silence, utterly different from the constant roar they had grown used to in New York City.

Then Dick asked Linda, “Where is everyone?” Being a woman of small-town Nebraska, she stated the obvious, “We are everyone.”

The usual rationale for promoting tourism in Nebraska is profit. And that's fine. But I would like to suggest a couple more reasons, one fairly modest, the other quite substantial. First, we need to bring people here, especially ex-patriots like the Cavetts, to tell the former and remind the latter

important about Nebraska that we had almost forgotten. We were reminded again of the relative peace in our lives, the tranquility of good and ample food, the pleasure of laughter and good company, and the safety of an empty village main street.

You know ... The Good Life. ■

Roger Welsch is an author, humorist and folklorist. For years he was a regular guest on CBS's *Sunday Morning with Charles Kuralt*. Welsch resides in Dannebrog, Nebraska, with his wife, Linda. He has appeared in NEBRASKALAND Magazine since 1977.



KANDRA HAHN



◀ This photo was taken in the fall of 1972 after a successful deer hunt near my parent's farm between the Platte and Loup rivers, three miles south of Columbus. The people in the picture are my father, Cyril Zoucha; my brother, Rick Zoucha, left; and myself, Randy Zoucha. My father enjoyed deer hunting, both with rifle and bow, and instilled his passion with us at an early age. I, Rick and my older brother, Ron, enjoy deer hunting to this day and thank him for his good example.

– Randy Zoucha, Lincoln, Nebraska



◀ A picture of a successful pheasant hunt in the fall of 1978. We were hunting private ground, mostly fencerows, around Bruning. Back row from left is Keith Hunt and Ray Clayton. Front row from left is Charles Hunt, Ben Hunt, and Danny Helmick. Not pictured is Lawrence Helmick.

– Betty Clayton, Lincoln, 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.



Filling the Balloon

At some point each calendar year, I re-visit photographs to do more than cull – I see what I need to work on and start forming a list of Nebraska locations I want to shoot the following year. But sometimes my work gets delayed when I become transfixed with a particular photo. In past years the culprits have been a retrieving retriever and a way-too-close image of a snapping turtle. Animals, and their expression-filled faces, are always great fodder for someone who loves to look at photographs.

However, sometimes you just can't beat a good ol' human or two to provide those expressions for you. None ever so clear than the family I photographed at the Wine and Balloon Festival last summer in Omaha trying to get a balloon afloat. When viewing the photo, the operator's face is priceless, excitement and concentration emerging as he watches 20-foot flames mere inches away. Or even the small child's fascination, and perhaps horror, at the rising shine and heat emitting from the balloon.

And while I become so engaged with this photo, I have two thoughts that always creep to the front of my consciousness. One, the cup of water in the kid's stroller seems to ironically glare at me from the orange of the fire. And two, moments later, after a brief gust of wind, I had to move the child and stroller away from the balloon.

The child's parents were very thankful.

Jeff Kurrus
November 27, 2012



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