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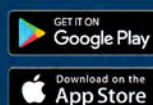
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ERIC FOWLER, NEBRASKALAND
This page: A mid-June sun rises beyond the rocky shoreline and limestone and shale cliffs at Lewis and Clark Lake SRA in Knox County.
ERIC FOWLER, NEBRASKALAND

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Nebraskaland magazine

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Ornate box turtles can be seen crossing roads in the Sandhills; watch for them.

JUSTIN HAAG, NEBRASKALAND

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Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever 2022 Habitat Tours



Date & Time

Event Name & Description

Location

May 21st 8 - 10am CST	Native Prairie Restoration: Private landowner, Dan Leuenberger, extends a special invitation to the public to his managed prairie chicken lek and restored prairie during Migratory Bird Month. Participants will have the opportunity to discuss community-based science and habitat programs while participating in bird identification activities.	Tecumseh, Nebraska Johnson County <i>Site instructions will only be sent to those registered</i>
June 2nd 9am - 4pm CST	Working Wetlands: Whether new or old to wetlands, there is a bit for everyone to learn how wetlands can fit into your operation! The morning section will demonstrate the process of restoration followed by an afternoon stroll through the uplands. Learn about rotational systems, tree management, and plant identification. Participants can attend all or part of the program. <i>Lunch will be provided for those who register.</i>	Clay Center City Park 316 W Glenvil Street Clay Center, NE 68933
June 21st 9am - 1pm MST	Maximize Profits in CRP: With ever changing input costs of site prep and seed, to changes in rental rates, profitability in conservation programs has never been more critical. Learn how you can use additional state and Pheasants Forever programs to assist you with CRP establishment costs as well as additional rental incentives. <i>Lunch will be provided for those who register.</i>	South Platte NRD, 551 Parkland Drive Sidney, NE 69162
June 23rd 9am - 12pm MST	Where the Heck are the Pheasants?: Learn about the top factors that influence pheasant numbers and what you can do to help make local populations more resilient towards predation, natural disasters, and weather changes. <i>Lunch will be provided to those who are registered.</i>	Alliance Public Library 1750 Sweetwater Avenue #101 Alliance, NE 69301
June 30th 5:30 - 8:30pm MST	Twist-Off Thursday Tour: Join us for an evening of touring local habitat projects, beverage tasting, and a Make and Take project to finish off the event. <i>Supper will be provided to those who are registered. Must be 21 years old to cosume alcohol, ID's required.</i>	Imperial Jaycee Hall West 5th Street Imperial, NE 69033 South end of Chase County Fairgrounds
July 12th 6:30 - 8pm CST	Birds and Brews: Bird populations are on the decline, so come for an evening learning about what Pheasants Forever does for birds and habitat (not just pheasants!), opportunites for you to implement on your own property, and why it is important to conserve natural places to enjoy the things we take for granted-- like food and even beer! Bring your competitive side, as we will have some trivia based on your newfound knowledge while you enjoy local brews from Corn Coast Brewing. <i>Must be 21 years old to consume alcohol, ID's required.</i>	Corn Coast Brewing 1433 Dahlberg Drive Lincoln, NE 68512
July 20th 10am - 3pm CST	Rangeland Health and Prescribed Fire Results: See how active ranches utilize tree cutting, prescribed fire, and rotational grazing to improve their pasture health and wildlife habitat. Tours to various locations in the area will be in the afternoon. <i>Lunch will be provided to those who are registered.</i>	Niobrara State Park, 89261 522nd Avenue Niobrara, NE 68760
July 26th 11am - 3pm CST	Landscape Scale Fire: Learn how neighbors cooperate across fence lines to target eastern redcedar invasion at meaningful scales. <i>Lunch will be provided to those who are registered.</i>	Bibs & Boots Cafe 1 Randolph Street Bartlett, NE 68622
September 11th 1 - 3pm CST	Monarch Butterfly Tagging Event: Join us for some Monarch Butterfly habitat and life cycle information along with catching, tagging, and releasing Monarch Butterlies as they migrate south for the winter. This is a family friendly event with all materials provided. <i>Weather permitting.</i>	Ron Larsen Day Use Area @ Lake Wanhoo 1651 County Road 16 Wahoo, NE 68066



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A Pawnee Pelican Dinner

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Please include your postal address and telephone number. Letters may be condensed and edited. Photographs are also welcome.

A FEW MORE CASTS

An angler fishes from a kayak at sunset in front of the marina at Branched Oak State Recreation Area.

ERIC FOWLER, NEBRASKALAND





An out-of-shape dog can lead to physical problems and anxiety during the hunting season. JEFF KURRUS, NEBRASKALAND

ALL-SEASON DOG TRAINING

By Todd Mills

Keeping your hunting dog in shape during the summer can be challenging, to say the least. With nothing to hunt, and kids and family activities getting in the way, it's easy to neglect your hunting companion. Unfortunately, that can lead to frustration when fall rolls around. An out-of-shape dog can lead to handling issues as well as physical problems — all can result in anxiety, and in some cases, disaster.

Although keeping your dog in hunting form may seem close to impossible during the summer, getting them ready to hunt isn't. Try these simple suggestions to help keep your dog physically ready when it counts.

Weight Control

Inactivity can lead to weight gain, and nothing will slow down your dog like carrying extra pounds. Since

your dog will be expending fewer calories this time of year, switch to maintenance food. Almost all types of quality dog food have different activity and calorie formulas. On average, with a 50-pound dog, you should avoid anything over 5 pounds of weight gain during the off season.

Keep Them Steady

After a certain amount of down time, your hunting dog will often think she's off the hook. Some just look for reasons to break the rules, so this is the perfect time for them to test your patience. Short, structured training sessions that reinforce the basic commands can keep your dog steady when the season arrives. Continually review sit, stay and heel while providing distractions. This can be done in your backyard, in your living room or in the field. Do

this three times a week throughout the summer months, and you'll avoid stressful moments when the bullets are flying.

Partner With Others

Finding someone to run dogs with can help hold both you and your dog accountable. Some of my good friends have come from the dog circuit, and the ability to troubleshoot and bounce ideas off each other is immeasurable. Find a mentor or companion you can get together with and work dogs. Having someone to throw marks and help with blind placement will not only save you time, it also pays off dividends in the long run.

Or, look for a dog training club close by that you can join. If you run Labs, the Missouri Valley Hunt Club near Valley is a good option.

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A solar light illuminates a brick house and parking area on the south side of Conestoga State Recreation Area near Denton in Lancaster County. ERIC FOWLER, NEBRASKALAND

SOLAR LIGHTS

By Eric Fowler

Any angler who likes fishing at night has figured out how to navigate in the darkness, be it on the water or shore. But you won't find many boaters who wouldn't prefer having a light they could aim for when it's time to head back to the boat ramp.

Thanks to technological advances in LED lighting, solar panels and batteries, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission has been able to install lights in several locations around the state where getting them was previously cost prohibitive or simply not possible due to the location.

Running an electrical line one-half mile to an improved access on the south side of Conestoga Lake State Recreation Area, for instance, would have cost \$22,000 for the wire alone. The solar light that was added during an Aquatic Habitat and Angler Access Program project completed there in 2018 cost \$8,500.

The lights include an LED bulb, a solar panel and batteries. Advances in LED lighting, which converts 90 percent of the energy it uses into light and use one-fifth of the power to create the same amount of light as the sodium- or mercury-vapor lights they are replacing, have made the combination feasible. This efficiency brings the size and cost of solar

panels and batteries required to power them down to a practical level. Additionally, the LEDs last two to four times as long.

Solar-powered lights have also been placed on the tips of breakwaters protecting three bays and boat ramps at Lewis and Clark Lake, and the marina bay at Sherman Reservoir. "That's a game changer," said Jordan Katt, motorboat access program coordinator with the Commission's fisheries division. "The rock can shift, so you can't bury wire. That's asking for trouble."

At Enders Reservoir, improvements to a low-water boat ramp at the south end of the dam will include a solar light. The issue there isn't the cost of the wire, it is the fact that the location is below the normal water line of the reservoir.

Locations of other lights include boat ramps on the Missouri River at Indian Cave State Park, Burchard Wildlife Management Area and Flanagan Lake in Omaha, and at a few other locations in state parks and recreation areas.

Without the advancements, and the corresponding drop in price that often comes with new technology, many of these locations would remain in the dark.

"It's giving us an opportunity to light it up," Katt said.

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The Rutten family of Cedar Rapids shares their fried and steamed turtle recipe. JENNY NGUYEN-WHEATLEY, NEBRASKALAND

ERNIE’S SNAPPING TURTLE

*Recipe by Kim Rutten
Edited by Jenny Nguyen-Wheatley*

Ernie was Kim and Ben Rutten’s mother, who prepared the family’s favorite meal of fried and steamed snapping turtle before her passing in 2018. Below, Kim shares her mother’s recipe the way it was taught to her. See pages 18-23 to read Jenny’s story on the Rutten family’s tradition of hunting turtles.

The season for snapping turtles is year-round, with a bag limit of five turtles and possession limit of 10. Ben Rutten recommends keeping snappers between 8-30 pounds for meat. Smaller turtles are not worth the effort cleaning, and bigger individuals should be left alone to breed. Those wanting to learn how to butcher a snapping turtle can watch Ben’s turtle cleaning demonstrations at Ponca State Park’s Missouri River Exposition in the fall.

You don’t need to purge turtles before you butcher them — that’s an old wives’ tale, Ben said. But do trim off all the yellow fat and mucous-type membranes, which can taste

awful. There is little difference in tenderness between a young and old turtle. They’re all tough. The following method of cooking will ensure fall-off-the-bone meat. The Ruttens like to serve turtle with potato salad and beans.

Servings: 6
Prep Time: Overnight
Cooking Time: 3 hours and 30 minutes

- Ingredients:**
- 3 pounds of turtle meat on the bone, cleaned and cut into smaller pieces
 - All-purpose flour for dredging
 - Kosher salt, to taste
 - Lard, for frying
 - ½ cup of water

Brine

- 8 cups of water
- ½ cup of kosher salt

Special equipment: roaster pan, large oven bag or foil

1. Combine 8 cups of water and ½

cup of kosher salt to make the brine. Add turtle pieces and refrigerate for no more than 8 hours. The longer you brine, the saltier the meat will taste. Then drain and rinse turtle pieces with cold water.

2. Preheat oven to 325 degrees Fahrenheit. Pat turtle pieces dry with paper towels. Heat 1 inch of lard in a frying pan over medium-high heat. Dredge turtle pieces in lightly seasoned flour — meat is salty already from brining — and fry both sides in hot lard until golden brown. Drain on paper towels.

3. Next, place fried turtle in a roaster lined with foil. Pour ½ cup of water underneath the foil, cover and steam in a 325-degree oven for 3 hours, or longer, until tender.

Or, place browned turtle pieces in a large oven bag and seal it closed. Set the bag in a roaster pan, and pour in ½ cup of water into the pan. Cook uncovered in a 325-degree oven for 3 hours, or longer, until tender. Serve with your favorite sides.



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The Turtle Family

The Rutten Family of Cedar Rapids Pass on a Hunting Tradition

Story and photos by
Jenny Nguyen-Wheatley

The Ruttens of Cedar Rapids do something that no one else does: hunt snapping turtles with their bare hands. Every summer, the Rutten “boys” — geared in old tennis shoes, jeans and a T-shirt — ease down into the greasy, stagnant oxbow lake on the flood-prone family property, called “The Island.” Each man carries a pitchfork, while other family members wait on the bank ready with gunny sacks.

Walking abreast, the hunters blindly poke at the odorous, muddy water. The swamp is full of clay-like mud, snags and vegetation, and the effort is slow going. They’re looking for that familiar “thunk” sound — that’s when they know there’s a snapper near their feet. The tone of a pitchfork tine bumping against a turtle’s back is different than the sound that a log would make, says Ben Rutten, the family’s patriarch. You only



From left to right: Scottie Kolm, Seth Schilousky, Todd Schilousky, Cody Schilousky, Jim Torres (*Dead Meat* videographer), Kaine Schilousky, Bryce Schilousky and Solomon (Ben’s dog) at the Rutten family property, called “The Island.”

need to hear it once, then the sound becomes unmistakable.

When a snapper is located, heart-pounding excitement ensues. The hunter who found it quickly applies gentle pressure onto the turtle’s back with one foot — just enough weight to pin down the animal and give others time to wade up and help. Then comes the harrowing part: getting the pitchfork underneath the turtle to lift it from the water and grabbing it by the tail — and hopefully, not its agile, beak-like head.

The Ruttens are only interested in snappers of a certain size. Turtles less than 8 pounds are too small, and anything over 30 pounds is breeding stock and thrown back. Those that fit the criteria are carried onto the bank, where helpers on land transfer them to the pickup truck. In Cedar Rapids,

the Ruttens are known for throwing the best parties. That’s why they hunt these aggressive reptiles. When cleaned and cooked well, snapping turtle can be delicious, and the Ruttens certainly know how to do it right.

Good to Eat

Turtle hunting started with Ben’s dad, Chic, and his uncle, Maurice, in the late 1930s. As boys, they would go down to the swamps along the Cedar River to catch turtles to bring to an old man in town who ate them. One day, Chic and Maurice decided to stick around to watch. The old man butchered and cooked the turtles, and then he sent the boys home with some to try.

“They ate it, and it was so good that they quit giving the turtles to that old guy and started eating it themselves,” Ben says, chuckling.

The hunting stuck. Almost 90 years later, Chic’s great-grandchildren still hunt turtles near the Cedar River and Beaver Creek. Ben and his younger sister, Kim Rutten Schilousky, are making sure the tradition stays alive. For Kim, the turtle hunts were always about family time. Her dad took her along as soon as she was able to go with her brothers: Ben, Sam, Dave and Jay.

“I went everywhere the boys went,” Kim says. “Although, I’m sure that when my brothers got into high school, they weren’t as happy to have me going — you know, dragging your little sister with — but they never told me I couldn’t. We



The best places to look for snapping turtles are in bodies of stagnant water with duckweed and other vegetation on the surface, says Ben Rutten. Hunt where the water is about 2 feet deep, because turtles can easily swim away in deeper areas.

always try to include the entire family on these hunts. Our kids are raised the same way.”

Kim got into the swamp when she was a teenager, but prefers to be “the bag lady” — running the gunny sack up and down the bank wherever it’s needed. She also holds another important job. Since the passing of her mother, Ernie, Kim has taken over preparing the family’s favorite meal. The Ruttens’ steamed turtle recipe is tried and true. Anyone who is willing to taste it will not be disappointed.

An Underutilized Resource

“A lot of people won’t try turtle just because of what it is. It doesn’t sound good to eat something that comes out of a muddy, stinky swamp,” Kim says.

The old adage that turtle tastes like shrimp, goat, pork, fish, lamb, beef or chicken is not true. Thankfully, snapping turtle meat is not the Frankenstein of the swamp. Instead, it’s more like the pig – swamp pig. Slow-cooked the way the Ruttens do it, the look and taste is akin to slow-cooked pork. It’s chewing on the odd-looking reptile bones that screws with your head.

For over 10 years, Ben has demonstrated snapping turtle processing at the Missouri River Outdoor Exposition at Ponca State Park, and his slot arguably draws in the largest audiences each year.

At home, Ben can clean a turtle in under 5 minutes, but

he takes it slow at Ponca. A turtle will butcher out about half its weight, he says, so a 20-pound turtle will give you approximately 10 pounds of meat and bone. He gets three pieces from each leg and cuts the neck and tail in half so they fit into the pan better. From one turtle, Ben can get 16 pieces of meat. Despite the grisly sight, Ponca Expo goers — young and old, male and female — continue to be mesmerized each year. Many are even brave enough to try a piece of Kim’s steamed turtle, and no one has ever had anything bad to say about it. Ben thinks his demonstrations are popular because they’re just different.

“It’s something people think they might want to do, because they’ve all caught a turtle on a fishing pole once or twice, or seen them crossing the roads. They think, ‘Well, if it’s worth eating,’ then they might want to try it. It’s a resource that is underutilized,” Ben says, although he’s not sure if anyone has ever made the leap to actually go through with it. He has seen many repeat audience members over the years.

“It’s a job to do it, and if you don’t clean them right, trim them up good, they taste bad. And then you got to cook them right, because they’re so tough. If you don’t steam them, then you can hardly chew them,” he says. “I’m probably pushing 800 turtles that I’ve cleaned in my life.”

When the Ruttens were still throwing large parties, Ben might clean 30-40 turtles a year. Now, he only cleans a few each summer and can still put all his nephews to shame.

“I get tired of watching them so I do it,” he says.

Turtle Party

The Ruttens’ “turtle parties” have become a part of Cedar Rapids’ town lore. When Chic and Ernie Rutten were still around and active, these gatherings were the social highlight of the summer season. Ernie and a couple of other ladies in town would fill three giant electric roasters full of turtle meat to feed what seemed like the entire community. Kim and the boys were expected to help in the garden and kitchen as soon as they were able, but only the women cooked the turtle.

“When it came to the turtles, mom ended up frying most of the day. I was probably 12 when I began helping with that,” Kim says. “The recipe hasn’t changed much over the years. That’s how mom taught us how to do it — just brown it in lard. Tastes better when it’s in lard. Of course, she did everything in lard.”

Once browned, Ernie would throw the pieces in a foil-lined electric roaster and put water underneath the pan. The turtle was covered with foil and steamed until done. Snapping turtle meat is tough, regardless of age. Generally, it takes three hours of steam time before the meat starts falling off the bone. Then, it’s ready to eat.

The “quonset party” of ’75, the year before Kim graduated high school, was the last big turtle party she remembers. A



When a snapping turtle is located, hunters have to be careful to grab it by the tail and not its head.



The Rutten family removes all yellow fat from snapping turtle meat and allows it to sit in saltwater overnight.



From left to right: Todd Schilousky, Cody Schilousky, Ben Rutten, Seth Schilousky, Scott Leysath (host of Sportsman Channel's *Dead Meat*), Bryce Schilousky, Kaine Schilousky, Greg Staub, Scottie Kolm and Crystal Hohn.

man who lived outside of town offered up his quonset for the party. Kim's parents brought all of their friends, and all the guys who hunted invited their friends and family as well.

"We sat on hay bales and set up tables, and we brought all the food in — salads and turtle and some other meat. And we filled that quonset with people and danced and partied all night," Kim says. "There were four local guys who had a band, and they came out and played, and we didn't pay them for any of it. They were there to party and have fun, too. It was just a good time."

And they went through a lot of turtle meat. Back in those days, the Ruttens typically butchered 60-70 turtles per year, and as far as Ben knows, they're probably the only family who hunts turtles with any consistency in the state. They've hunted private swamps near Albion, Belgrade, Primrose, Spalding and Fullerton. After so many years, all the landowners know them. Turtle hunting isn't like deer hunting. They can come and go, leaving little trace, and no one would mind.

Unfortunately, the days of the large turtle parties are gone. Now, gatherings are much smaller family picnics at the old house on The Island, typically after a hunt. Ben's longtime partner, Doris Kolm, also helps Kim with the cooking.

"People don't socialize like they used to anymore," Kim says, wistfully. "You try to set something up, and then it's 'gee, I got something going on.' I miss it. Every now and then, the older folks in town will mention it."

Still, the family continues to enjoy the pastime. Although many of the original turtle hunters have passed on, the reins have been handed down to Kim, Sam and Jay's children and grandchildren.

A Rutten Tradition

Kim's daughter, Crystal, helps with the cooking now and even a couple of her nieces have tried walking the swamp with the boys. Her oldest grandson and nephews, who have tagged along since they were little, love to get in the swamp and take part in everything. Kim's younger grandchildren enjoy the hunts, but they're still at the stage of playing along the edge and getting muddy.

"We always called it a 'Rutten tradition', but it's more and more coming down to my boys. Or, my boys are the ones left who still go and do it, but they don't care. They still call themselves 'Ruttens'," Kim says.

Most parents might think that snapping turtles and

children don't mix, but Kim is never worried. A snapping turtle's bite will hurt and leave a three-cornered cut, but it's nothing a little Epsom salt can't fix, she says. No one has ever come close to losing a finger. Kim is more concerned about broken glass or barbed wire in the swamp.

"I was never worried about being bitten because Chic always said that they didn't bite underwater — which ain't true," Ben says, laughing. "But I never got bit. I've been clawed more than anything."

Ben's nephews have heard the same fib from Grandpa Chic, and perhaps it's this foolhardiness that gets a young man going. However, not all hunters have been so lucky.

Ben recalled: "We went over to Uncle Dick's in the spring one time, when the turtles were coming up to lay eggs. It's always after a thunderstorm — I don't know why — but it always brings the turtles up to lay eggs. I think we picked up about 20 turtles that day. Uncle Bud had two to three turtles in a gunny sack and threw it over his back and one of them bit him in the butt. Must've caught that nerve, because he went down like a sack of rocks and couldn't get up. It wasn't real funny to him, but the rest of us sure thought it was."

Another fond memory: Ben's dad had a collector's permit, and if he found snapping turtle eggs, he'd plant them somewhere else to protect them from the raccoons. One year, Chic hatched out over 120 of them and took them down to the

swamp. Today, Ben continues the practice. Even now on The Island, when he ditches the crops for irrigation, he usually finds a nest that the raccoons haven't ransacked yet.

"I'll go dig up the eggs and replant them. There are little turtles out there every year. I took one to Ponca last year and left it there," he says.

Modern life offers a young person plenty of distraction. Ben recognizes that today's generation can't hunt like he and siblings used to, which was every weekend when they were in high school. But he and Kim are hopeful the Rutten tradition will continue.

"I think the boys will continue to hunt, and their kids probably will, too," Ben says. "The swamps are getting filled in around here with all the flooding, but there are still a lot of turtles around. They might not work as hard as we did, but it's still fun to go in and walk around. You see so many other things — the muskrats and frogs and red-winged blackbird nests. It's just fun being out there."

Ben is a retired Nebraska Game and Parks biologist, and his nephew Seth is following the same path. Turtles aside, Kim and Ben's main hope is to instill appreciation for the outdoors in their successors. It's apparent that they've succeeded. 

See the Rutten family's fried and steamed snapping turtle recipe on page 16.

Gumweed Bonanza!

Photos and story by Chris Helzer



A gray hairstreak butterfly visits a patch of gumweed at Chris Helzer's family prairie south of Aurora.

As a short-lived plant, gumweed lives the life of a scrappy and unfairly maligned opportunist. When grasses are heavily grazed, a streambank erodes, or repeated travel creates a trail of bare ground, curlycup gumweed jumps up and says, “Hold my beer!” It can’t fight toe-to-toe with perennial grasses, but if those grasses are temporarily sidelined, gumweed can ably fill the space until the regulars can return. As a reward for its service, we label it a “worthless weed” and in some cases, actively mow it down or spray it with herbicides.

Calling gumweed a weed is like getting angry at a substitute teacher or backup quarterback because your favorite teacher or player is sick or injured. Logically, we know we should be grateful to them for stepping in, but change is hard, isn’t it? Actually, the better analogy is this: Curlycup gumweed is the cool uncle who came to babysit when your parents went to Vegas for the weekend. You knew he wouldn’t be around for

long and that you’d get to eat pizza and stay up late playing video games while he was there.

My appreciation for curlycup gumweed has grown over the years, but it really skyrocketed on a late summer afternoon in 2019. I was working for a few days at the Nature Conservancy’s Niobrara Valley Preserve on the north edge of the Sandhills, and while doing butterfly surveys, I spotted a few species flitting around a patch of gumweed along a trail road in the prairie. As I came closer, I realized the butterflies were just a tiny sample of the crowd of invertebrates hanging around the flowers.

I grabbed my camera and tripod and spent a few minutes stalking the butterflies, moths, bees, flies, grasshoppers, crickets and beetles drawn to the pollen and nectar of curlycup gumweed. As I photographed them, I realized I wasn’t the only one taking advantage of the abundance of insects. Several spiders were also hanging out among the

flowers, catching insects as they moved from blossom to blossom. The whole circle of life was playing out in front of me on this “worthless weed.”

Eventually, I had to get back to my real job, but I returned to the same patch of gumweed in the early evening to continue photographing the incredible diversity and abundance of invertebrates. Between the 10 minutes earlier in the day and about 45 minutes in the evening, I ended up with reasonable photos of 14 species of animals. The actual diversity of species using the flowers was much higher, though, since most hopped, dropped or flew away before I could take their picture.

My photographic inventory included two types of flies, two beetles, two butterflies, a moth, a grasshopper and a tree cricket that were all feeding on pollen and nectar. I also photographed three kinds of wild bees, including one kleptoparasitic species that lays its eggs in the nest of other

bees. In addition, I got photos of two types of spiders, one using a web to catch prey and the other — a crab spider — ambushing anything that came within range of its long front legs. When I found the crab spider, it was feeding on a wasp it had just caught, which became the 15th species on my list.

As all this was happening, I was surrounded by gorgeous Sandhills prairie that stretched to the horizon in three directions and the stunning Niobrara Valley just to the north. The light was wonderful, and the wind was nearly calm. It was a perfect opportunity to explore and photograph a huge and spectacular place. Instead, I spent my time crawling around in a patch of “weeds” the size of a couple of pickup trucks and was completely enraptured. If you turn the page, you can see the 14 invertebrate species I photographed that day. [N](#)

Chris Helzer is the director of science for the Nature Conservancy in Nebraska.



Cutworm moth



Long-horned bee



Pawnee skipper



Tree cricket



Cuckoo bee 1



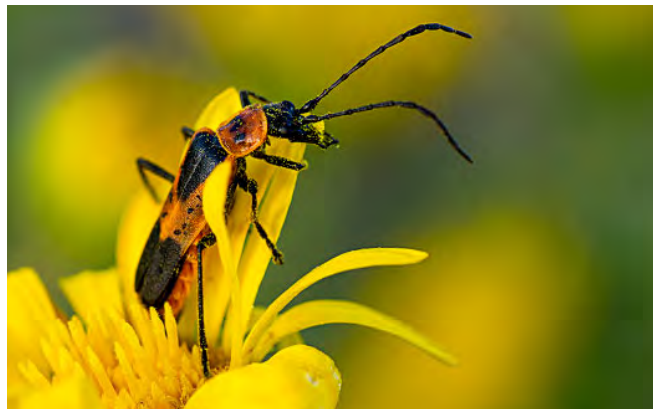
Bee fly 1



Crab spider with wasp



Variegated fritillary



Soldier beetle



Blister beetle



Cuckoo bee 2



Spotted orbweaver



Bee fly 2



Grasshopper



Ron Cox of Kearney fishes for largemouth bass in a borrow pit lake at Union Pacific State Recreation Area at the Odessa interchange on Interstate 80. JON FARRAR, NEBRASKALAND

It's 455 miles across Nebraska on Interstate 80. That's a long trip in a vehicle, unless you decide to stop and wet a line along the way. If so, there are dozens of lakes within casting distance of the interstate.

Fishing the Interstate

A Guide to the I-80 Lakes



NEBRASKA
— GAME  PARKS —

The I-80 Lakes System

It's 455 miles across Nebraska on Interstate 80. That's a long trip in a vehicle, unless you decide to stop and wet a line along the way. If so, there are dozens of lakes within casting distance of the interstate.

When I-80 was built, the route with the fewest obstructions was the flat Platte River Valley, but building the interstate along the river was a challenge because of high groundwater

levels and no hills to provide fill material. Wherever road builders needed fill for an overpass or roadbed, they took it from the valley floor. Groundwater soon seeped into the borrow pits.

Knowing this would happen, engineers and fisheries biologists collaborated to ensure the pits were dug with fish and anglers in mind. The result was the creation of more than 50 clear and productive fishing waters now known as the "I-80 Lakes." Forty of them are open to the public with their fisheries managed by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

This guide provides information about these lakes from west to east. While most of them are within sight of Interstate 80 from Bushnell to Grand Island, we have also included nearby waters just outside of casting distance from the interstate as well.

For a complete list of public waters and current regulations, pick up a copy of the annual Nebraska Fishing Guide.

Park Types

Along the I-80 corridor, there are state parks, state recreation areas and wildlife management areas owned by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission — each with their own amenities.

State Parks

- State parks have the most accommodations and activities, including lodging and modern campgrounds.
- A park entry permit is required for each vehicle.

State Recreation Areas

- These spaces are not as developed as state parks, yet most provide camping.
- A park entry permit is required for each vehicle.

State Wildlife Management Areas

- These areas are state-owned and managed for wildlife, fishing, hunting and trapping, and camping is allowed unless otherwise posted. Few areas have amenities.
- A park entry permit is not required.

Oliver Reservoir

This 270-acre, flood-control reservoir on Lodgepole Creek is managed by the South Platte Natural Resources District. It has water levels that fluctuate significantly, so boaters should be cautious.

Fish species: Crappie, walleye, channel catfish, northern pike, common carp, muskellunge, tiger muskellunge.

Amenities: Concrete boat ramps, wheelchair-accessible fishing pier, pit toilets.

Directions: From Exit 8 at Bushnell, go north on Link 53C about 2.5 miles to Highway 30. Turn right and go 3.5 miles east to the lake.

GPS coordinates: 41.231038, -103.824122



Above: Lake Ogallala is a great place to fish, and features a new fishing dock that joins one bank to another at the northwest angler access area. Anglers use this fishing location for trout, catfish, perch and carp. JULIE GEISER, NEBRASKALAND
Cover: A bluegill, one of the many species stocked in the I-80 lake system. ERIC FOWLER, NEBRASKALAND

Chappell Interstate Lake

When the interstate was built, Lodgepole Creek was redirected through a new channel to avoid flooding problems. This left the old channel cut off, creating an oxbow lake that was made even larger when additional material was excavated later to be used for interstate construction. The result was a clear, 30-acre lake owned by the city.

Fish species: Bluegill, largemouth bass, crappie, channel catfish, yellow perch.

Amenities: Concrete boat ramp, restrooms.

Directions: From Exit 85 at Chappell, go north a short distance and take the first right to enter the park.

GPS coordinates: 41.083934, -102.470537

Goldeneye

This 17-acre borrow pit pond alongside I-80 is managed by the South Platte NRD.

Fish species: Crappie, bluegill, channel catfish, largemouth bass, yellow perch.

Amenities: Rock boat ramp.

Directions: From Exit 107 at Big Springs, go south 1 mile, turn right and go 3 miles west on Road 6, then turn right on Road 203 and go north 0.25 miles, cross I-80 and the lake is on the right.

GPS coordinates: 41.040137, -102.128224

Lake Ogallala and Lake McConaughy SRAs

At 30,000 acres when full, Lake McConaughy is the largest lake in the state. Located below the dam is 650-acre Lake Ogallala. Together, the lakes offer some of the best fishing in Nebraska. Lake Mac is well known for its walleye, and it also offers exciting fishing for white bass, wipers, smallmouth bass and other species.

Lake Ogallala is a tailwater fishery, receiving cold water from Lake McConaughy that allows it to support trout, many of them trophy-size, year-round. Trout also are caught downstream from Lake Ogallala in the Sutherland Supply Canal and the North Platte River.

Fish species (McConaughy): Walleye, wiper, white bass, channel catfish, smallmouth bass, yellow perch, northern pike, common carp, bullhead, freshwater drum.

Fish species (Ogallala): Rainbow trout, tiger trout, walleye, white bass, channel catfish, yellow perch, wiper, smallmouth bass.

Amenities: Concrete boat ramps, fish-cleaning stations, restrooms.

Directions: From Exit 126 at Ogallala, go north on Highway 61, following the Lake McConaughy road signs through town. Continue north on Highway 61 for about 9 miles to Lake McConaughy. Continue on Highway 61 across the dam and turn right, following directional signs, to get to Lake Ogallala



Anglers fish Lake McConaughy in Keith County at sunset. ERIC FOWLER, NEBRASKALAND



Jim Einspahr and his daughter, Allie, fish off one of the fishing pads built in 2016 at Birdwood Wildlife Management Area to allow bank anglers better fishing. JULIE GEISER, NEBRASKALAND

SRA.

GPS coordinates: 41.200039, -101.664155

Sutherland Reservoir SRA

This 3,000-acre reservoir is the first canal reservoir downstream from lakes McConaughy and Ogallala. It is used for cooling of the Nebraska Public Power District’s Gerald Gentleman Station.

Fish species: Channel catfish, walleye, white bass, wiper, yellow perch, smallmouth bass, freshwater drum.

Amenities: Concrete boat ramp, accessible pier, fish-cleaning station.

Directions: From Exit 158 at Sutherland, go south on Highway 25 1 mile, turn left on Tower Road. Follow Tower Road around the east side of the lake, over the canal and turn right to enter the SRA. Alternative: Continue south on Highway 25 about 4 miles to the boat ramp on the southwest shore.

GPS coordinates: 41.102972, -101.102336

East Sutherland WMA

The 27-acre lake comprises nearly all the property and has been renowned for its clear water.

Fish species: Smallmouth bass, yellow perch, rock bass.

Amenities: Gravel boat ramp.

Directions: From Exit 164 at Hershey, go south about 0.25 miles to West Oregon Trail Road, turn right and go 3 miles west, then turn right on Lamont Road and go 0.5 miles north, crossing I-80 to the lake on the right.

GPS coordinates: 41.141637, -101.059729

Hershey WMA

At 53 acres, this is the largest I-80 lake in the state. It produces one of the best I-80 lake fisheries, has a maximum depth of 22 feet and is renowned for its water clarity.

Fish species: Largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish, rock bass, flathead catfish, northern pike, walleye, yellow perch.

Amenities: Concrete boat ramp, three angler access platforms.

Directions: From Exit 164 at Hershey, go south 0.1 miles to the first left turn, then follow Oregon Trail Road for 0.2 miles.

GPS coordinates: 41.134559, -100.998206

East Hershey WMA

This 20-acre lake’s fishery is protected with catch-and-release regulations for all species.

Fish species: Largemouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish, hybrid sunfish, channel catfish, rock bass.

Amenities: Gravel boat ramp.

Directions: From Exit 164 at Hershey, go south about 1 mile to West Antelope Road. Turn left and go 5 miles east to South Crane View Road, then turn left and go about 0.5 miles north, crossing the I-80 overpass. Turn right on West South River Road and follow it a short distance to the lake.

GPS coordinates: 41.125721, -100.902549



Birdwood Lake in Lincoln County is among the sandpit lakes formed from the excavation of sand and soil to build Interstate 80. ERIC FOWLER, NEBRASKALAND

Birdwood WMA

The 20-acre lake is a local favorite as it is near North Platte and offers good fishing. Automobile access is not allowed along the east and southeast shorelines.

Fish species: Largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish, rainbow trout (stocked seasonally), common carp, crappie, rock bass, yellow perch.

Amenities: Concrete boat ramp, five angler access platforms.

Directions: From Exit 177 at North Platte, go south on Highway 83 to

Walker Road. Turn right and go 3.5 miles west, then turn right on Homestead Road. Go 0.6 miles north, then cross the I-80 overpass to the lake, which is on the left. GPS coordinates: 41.116377, -100.830203

North Platte I-80 Lake

This 27-acre lake is located within the city-owned Iron Horse Park. Fish species: Largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish, yellow perch. Amenities: Concrete boat ramp, six



Jared Lorenson ice fishes at Fremont Slough WMA near North Platte. Lakes along Interstate 80 provide fishing opportunities throughout the year.

JULIE GEISER, NEBRASKALAND

fishing piers, kayak launch.

Directions: From Exit 177 at North Platte, go south on Highway 83 to the first traffic signal at Eugene Drive. Turn left, and then left again to enter the park.

GPS coordinates: 41.107564, -100.761427

Lake Maloney SRA

Lake Maloney is the second canal reservoir downstream from lakes

McConaughy and Ogallala. It is approximately 1,600 surface acres. It is used for the regulation of water used by the Nebraska Public Power District. Private residences line much of the shoreline but boat access is good, and bank angler access is available at the inlet and outlet areas.

Fish species: Walleye, wiper, white bass, channel catfish, common carp, smallmouth bass, bluegill, crappie, flathead catfish, freshwater drum.

Amenities: Two concrete boat ramps, fish-cleaning stations, privately managed marina.

Directions: From Exit 177 at North Platte, go south 6 miles on Highway 83, then turn west on South Maloney Drive to the SRA.

GPS coordinates: 41.047742, -100.769186

Fremont Slough WMA

Visible from I-80, this 30-acre lake is a hidden gem to visitors as it is not easily accessed. Vehicle traffic is limited to the south shoreline and the southern portion of the west shoreline.

Fish species: Largemouth bass, bluegill, crappie, rock bass, channel catfish, common carp.



Many fish species can be caught along the I-80 lake system, including crappies.

JEFF KURRUS, NEBRASKALAND

Amenities: Concrete boat ramp, three angler access platforms.

Directions: From Exit 179 at North Platte, go south on Link 56G for 1 mile to East State Farm Road. Turn left and go 2.5 miles east until the paved road makes a sharp right turn. Turn left onto Shack Road (gravel). Drive north over a canal bridge, then under I-80. Veer right at a fork and go 0.3 miles to the WMA.

GPS coordinates: 41.096816, -100.670083

Crystal Lake

This 7-acre lake provides a great getaway site.

Fish species: Largemouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish, channel catfish.

Amenities: Primitive boat ramp.

Directions: From Exit 190 at Maxwell, go north on Spur 56A 0.5 miles to West Island Road. Tum left, and follow the road, which parallels I-80, about 6 miles west. Tum left on Novacek Road and cross the overpass to the lake on the south side of I-80.

GPS coordinates: 41.082672, -100.618340

West Maxwell Rest Stop

This 7-acre pond is ringed with cattails and is a good spot to catch bluegill. Automobile access is restricted to the northeast shoreline.

Fish species: Bluegill, channel catfish, largemouth bass, common carp, crappie, redear sunfish.

Amenities: Concrete boat ramp, two angler access platforms.

Directions: From Exit 190 at Maxwell, go north on Spur 56A 0.5 miles to West Island Road. Go west 0.8 miles, then turn left on Old Military Street and go south 0.2 miles to the WMA.

GPS coordinates: 41.057193, -100.542585

Fort McPherson

The Nebraska Department of Transportation owns this 30-acre lake. Automobile access is restricted to the southwest part of the property.

Fish species: Largemouth bass,



This lake at West Brady WMA is another sandpit lake formed by excavation of sand and soil to build the Interstate.

ERIC FOWLER, NEBRASKALAND

bluegill, redear sunfish, channel catfish, rock bass, yellow perch, smallmouth bass, crappie.

Amenities: Gravel boat ramp.

Directions: From Exit 190 at Maxwell, go south on Link 56A and take the first left turn to enter the area.

GPS coordinates: 41.048580, -100.524390

Pawnee Slough WMA

This 30-acre lake, located away from the interstate, was created when a Highway 30 overpass was built west of Maxwell. Public access is maintained as a WMA, but NDOT owns the area. The lake’s shoreline is less conformed than many I-80 lakes and it has a maximum depth of 10 feet. Vehicle access is limited to the property’s northwest portion.

Fish species: Largemouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish, channel catfish, tiger musky.

Amenities: Gravel boat ramp.

Directions: From Exit 190 at Maxwell, go north on Link 56A 1.7 miles and turn west onto West Maxwell Street and continue 1 mile to lake entrance on the

south.

GPS coordinates: 41.083165, -100.543198

Maxwell Rest Stop

Westbound I-80 travelers can fish the 5-acre lake at this rest area, operated by NDOT. A paved walking path leads from the rest area to the pond, located at the west side of the area.

Fish species: Largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish, crappie.

Amenities: Modern restrooms.

Directions: Located 3.5 miles east of Exit 190 (Maxwell) at the westbound I-80 rest area near milepost 194.

GPS coordinates: 41.036422, -100.467729

West Brady WMA

This 6-acre lake’s fishery has catch-and-release regulation for all species. Vehicle access is restricted to the south shoreline.

Fish species: Largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish, crappie, crappie hybrid, redear sunfish.

Amenities: Concrete boat ramp, two

angler access platforms.

Directions: From Exit 199 at Brady, go north 0.5 miles to East Island Road. Turn left and go 2.5 miles west, crossing the I-80 overpass to the lake.

GPS coordinates: 41.016175, -100.417342

Brady WMA

This 25-acre lake has a maximum depth of approximately 14 feet. Vehicle access is limited to the south shoreline.

Fish species: Crappie, crappie hybrid, flathead catfish, channel catfish, largemouth bass, bluegill, smallmouth bass.

Amenities: Concrete boat ramp, three angler access platforms.

Directions: From Exit 199 at Brady, go south a short distance to the first left turn into the WMA.

GPS coordinates: 40.998403, -100.375828

West Gothenburg WMA

This 15-acre lake has a maximum depth of approximately 17 feet. Vehicle access is restricted to the east and

south shorelines.

Fish species: Largemouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish, channel catfish.

Amenities: Concrete boat ramp, two angler access platforms.

Directions: From Exit 199 at Brady, go north on Link 56D to Brady. Turn right on Highway 30 and go 4.5 miles east. Turn right on Overpass Road and drive across the railroad tracks. The road is just a few yards past mile marker 205. The WMA is on the right.

GPS coordinates: 40.985679, -100.301298

Jeffrey Reservoir WMA

This WMA allows access to a 900-acre, canal-fed lake. Water elevation is regulated by Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District for hydroelectric power generation. Lake contours and water level changes make this reservoir difficult to navigate. Much of the shoreline is inaccessible to the public, as it is privately managed.

Fish species: Crappie, channel catfish, flathead catfish, bluegill, walleye, white bass, wiper, freshwater drum, common carp, sauger.

Amenities: Concrete boat ramp,

angler access platform.

Directions: From Exit 199 at Brady, go 3 miles south to Brady-Moorefield Road, turn right and go 1.5 miles west to the lake.

GPS coordinates: 40.954463, -100.398272

East Gothenburg WMA

This 15-acre lake has received shoreline clearing to improve bank access.

Fish species: Largemouth bass, crappie, redear sunfish, sunfish hybrid, channel catfish.

Amenities: Articulated mat concrete boat ramp.

Directions: From Exit 211 at Gothenburg, go south on Highway 47 a short distance to Willow Island Road. Turn left and follow the road, which parallels I-80, about 4 miles east to the WMA.

GPS coordinates: 40.888257, -100.106241

Willow Island WMA

This area has a 24-acre lake and access to the Platte River.

Fish species: Largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish, common carp,



The Tri-County Supply Canal snakes through the flooded canyons at the inlet to Jeffrey Reservoir in Lincoln County. ERIC FOWLER, NEBRASKALAND

crappie, bullhead, gar.

Amenities: Primitive boat ramp.

Directions: From Exit 222 at Cozad, go about 1 mile north to Highway 30. Turn left and go about 5 miles west to County Road 416. Turn left and go 1 mile south, crossing the I-80 overpass to the lake.

GPS coordinates: 40.876829, -100.070489

West Cozad WMA

This 18-acre lake has clear water and abundant aquatic vegetation.

Fish species: Largemouth bass, bluegill.

Amenities: Primitive boat ramp.

Directions: From Exit 222 at Cozad, go a half mile north on Highway 21 to West 2nd Street. Turn left and go 0.25 miles west, then turn right on Road 225 and go 0.25 miles north. Turn left on West Railroad Street and go 1 mile west, then turn left and go 1 mile south on Road 419, crossing the I-80 overpass to the lake.

GPS coordinates: 40.855432, -100.012030

Cozad WMA

This area has an 18-acre lake and Platte River access.

Fish species: Largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish, common carp, yellow perch, rock bass.

Amenities: Articulated mat concrete boat ramp.

Directions: From Exit 222 at Cozad, go south on Highway 21 a short distance to the first left turn.

GPS coordinates: 40.840620, -99.985152

Johnson Lake SRA

Private homes around this 2,189-acre lake limit shoreline access, but bank anglers still can find good fishing for walleye, white bass, and some big

channel catfish. The inlet on the west side can be especially productive. Two accessible fishing piers are available along with near-water sidewalks designed for angling. Near the inlet, a breakwater has been retrofitted with bank angler access features.

Fish species: Flathead catfish, channel catfish, crappie, walleye, sauger, white bass, wiper, smallmouth bass, freshwater drum, common carp, paddlefish, bluegill.

Amenities: Concrete boat ramp at the inlet, fish-cleaning stations at the inlet and outlet, modern restrooms, pit toilets.



Biologists electrofish at West Brady WMA to help manage the fishery.

JULIE GEISER, NEBRASKALAND



Sandy Channel SRA, a group of sandpits near the Platte River in Buffalo County, is open to camping and fishing.

ERIC FOWLER, NEBRASKALAND

Directions: From Exit 237 at Lexington, go 8 miles south on Highway 283.
GPS coordinates: 40.696509,

-99.871542

Darr WMA

This WMA includes a 13-acre lake that provides quality largemouth bass fishing.
Fish species: Channel catfish, largemouth bass, bluegill, rock bass.
Amenities: Gravel boat ramp.
Directions: From Exit 231 at Darr, go north on Road 428 to the first left turn. Go 0.25 miles west on Road 756, then tum left and go 0.1 miles south to the WMA.
GPS coordinates: 40.785301, -99.849407

Dogwood WMA

This WMA has two lakes and access to the Platte River. The 8-acre east lake is larger and offers better fishing than the west lake as it isn’t affected by floodwater as frequently.

Fish species: Channel catfish, largemouth bass, bluegill, common carp, grass carp.
Amenities: Articulated mat concrete boat ramp.
Directions: From Exit 237 at Lexington, go north on Highway 283 a short distance and take the first right turn, Heartland Road. Go 5.5 miles east to County Road 439. Turn right and go 2.5 miles south, crossing an I-80 overpass to the lake.
GPS coordinates: 40.698825, -99.616631

Blue Hole WMA

This 37-acre lake has an active channel of the Platte River flowing through it, creating fishing opportunities for a variety of species.
Fish species: Largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish, crappie, common carp.

Amenities: Gravel boat ramp.
Directions: From Exit 257 at Elm Creek, go south a short distance on Highway 183 to the first right turn.
GPS coordinates: 40.687471, -99.382925

Sandy Channel SRA

This SRA has six lakes, totaling 52 acres. The largest lake has excellent water clarity and is often used by scuba divers.
Fish species: Largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish, rock bass, crappie, yellow perch, common carp, walleye (Lake 8), muskellunge (Lake 8).
Amenities: Concrete boat ramps on lakes 2, 4 and 8; accessible fishing piers on lakes 4 and 8.
Directions: From Exit 257 at Elm Creek, go 2 miles south on Highway 183 and look for the park entrance on the left.
GPS coordinates: 40.668388, -99.379785

Coot Shallows WMA

This 12-acre lake provides excellent largemouth bass angling.
Fish species: Largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish, crappie.
Amenities: Improved boat ramp.
Directions: From Exit 263 at Odessa, go north on Link 10B about 0.7 miles, then turn left on 11th Road and go 1.8 miles west to Daykin Road. Turn left. The WMA is a short distance ahead on the right.
GPS coordinates: 40.684382, -99.293481

Union Pacific SRA

This 15-acre lake has great shoreline access and clear water.
Fish species: Largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish, crappie, rock bass.
Amenities: Gravel boat ramp, modern restrooms.
Directions: From Exit 263 at Odessa, go north a short distance on Link 10B to the first right turn.
GPS coordinates: 40.678915, -99.253009

East Odessa WMA

This WMA has a 7-acre lake but can be difficult to reach when the minimum-maintenance access road is wet.
Fish species: Largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish.
Amenities: Platte River access.
Directions: From Exit 263 at Odessa, travel south to the first left turn, Wildwood Road. Follow this dirt road, traveling parallel to I-80 for 4.5 miles to the area.
GPS coordinates: 40.670505, -99.164810

Kearney Eastbound I-80 Rest Area

A 1-acre pond can be found at this NDOT rest area. Camping and boating are not allowed.
Fish species: Largemouth bass, bluegill, crappie, redear sunfish, channel catfish.
Amenities: Modern restrooms.
Directions: From Exit 263 at Odessa, go about 3 miles east on I-80 to rest area.

GPS coordinates: 40.670577, -99.157959

Cottonmill Lake

Owned by the City of Kearney, this 43-acre lake is open 7 a.m. to sunset daily. It has excellent water quality and provides a great family fishing spot. Boating is restricted to 5 mph.
Fish species: Crappie, largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish, northern pike, walleye.
Amenities: Concrete boat ramp, fishing jetties, modern restrooms.
Directions: From Exit 272 at Kearney, go 1 mile north on Highway 44 to 11th Street. Turn left and go 2 miles west to 30th Avenue. Turn right and go 1 mile north to 24th Street. Turn left and go about 1.3 miles west to Cottonmill Avenue. Turn right and go 0.25 miles north to the park.
GPS coordinates: 40.703619, -99.146734

Kearney Westbound 1-80 Rest Area

This NDOT rest area has a 7-acre



A young boy and his dad fish from the bank at Fort Kearny SRA.

JULIE GEISER, NEBRASKALAND



Three anglers fish from the bank at sunrise at Windmill State Recreation Area in Buffalo County. BOB GRIER, NEBRASKALAND

pond with good fishing. Camping and boating are not allowed.

Fish species: Largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish, crappie, rock bass.

Amenities: Modern restrooms.

Directions: From Exit 272 at Kearney, go 2 miles west on I-80 to rest area.

GPS coordinates: 40.670782, -99.122559

Kea West WMA

This WMA has an 8-acre lake regulated as catch-and-release only for all fish species. No camping.

Fish species: Smallmouth bass, crappie hybrid, yellow perch.

Amenities: Concrete boat ramp.

Directions: From Exit 272, go 1 mile north to 11th Street, turn left and go 1.3 miles west to Yanney Avenue. Turn left and go about 1 mile south to the area, which is on the left.

GPS coordinates: 40.671942, -99.108871

Yanney Park Lake

This 20-acre lake in Yanney Heritage Park is owned by the City of Kearney.

Fish species: Largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish, crappie,

yellow perch, rainbow trout (stocked seasonally).

Amenities: Wheelchair-accessible dock, restrooms.

Directions: From Exit 272 at Kearney, go 1 mile north to 11th Street, turn left and go 1.3 miles west to Yanney Avenue. Turn left and go 0.3 miles south to the park on the left.

GPS coordinates: 40.679820, -99.108578

Kea Lake WMA

This WMA adjacent to I-80 has a 20-acre lake. No camping is permitted.

Fish species: Largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish, redear sunfish, crappie hybrid.

Amenities: Concrete boat ramp.

Directions: From Exit 272, go south a short distance on Highway 44 to the first right turn, drive through the motel parking lot to get to the WMA parking area.

GPS coordinates: 40.667720, -99.087708

Archway Lakes

The Great Platte River Road Archway Monument has four lakes totaling 30 acres open for public fishing. Lakes



Fishing pier at the inlet of Johnson Lake State Recreation Area in Dawson County. JULIE GEISER, NEBRASKALAND

range in size from 1 to 25 acres and offer good opportunities for a variety of species.

Fish Species: Lake 1 – Largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish, crappie, common carp, tiger musky, yellow perch; Lake 2 – Smallmouth bass, yellow perch; Lake 3 – Smallmouth bass, black crappie, channel catfish; Lake 4 – Smallmouth bass, rock bass.

Amenities: Gravel boat ramp on Lake 1.

Directions: From Exit 275, go north 600 feet to East 1st Street. Turn left and

go 0.3 miles and then turn right into parking area.

GPS coordinates: 40.670912, -99.032741

Bufflehead WMA

This 15-acre lake is good for largemouth bass. No camping is permitted.

Fish species: Largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish, rock bass, yellow perch, common carp.

Amenities: Concrete boat ramp.

Directions: From Exit 275, go 0.25

miles north to East 1st Street, turn right and go 300 feet east to Cherry Road. Turn right and follow the road east 0.5 miles to the WMA.

GPS coordinates: 40.671124, -99.018019

Fort Kearny SRA

There are seven small fishing lakes totaling 21 acres with plenty of shoreline access. All lakes offer good fishing for largemouth bass, bluegill and channel catfish. Fishing tackle can be borrowed to use in the park.

Fish species: Largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish, crappie, rainbow trout (stocked seasonally in Lake 6).

Amenities: Fishing piers (Lakes 5, 6 and 7), modern restrooms.

Directions: From Exit 272, go south on Highway 44 for about 2 miles to Link 50A, turn left and go 5 miles east. Turn left and go 1 mile north, following roadside SRA directional signs. Or from Exit 279, go 3 miles south on Highway 10 and 2 miles west on Link 50A.

GPS coordinates: 40.654568,



A smallmouth bass in a net at War Axe SRA in Buffalo County. JEFF KURRUS, NEBRASKALAND

-98.989448

Bassway Strip WMA

Several small lakes are located within this 6-mile long WMA, with the best fishing at the 7-acre west lake.

Fish species: Largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish, crappie, common carp, bullhead.

Amenities: Concrete boat ramp, Platte River access with kayak landing.

Directions: From Exit 279, go south a short distance on Highway 10 to the first left turn. Turn left and then immediately turn left again. Follow the road north and east 0.25 miles to the parking area.

GPS coordinates: 40.686424, -98.948675

Windmill SRA

There are six small lakes in the park, totaling 23 acres, with ample shoreline access. The lakes offer great opportunities to catch largemouth bass and bluegill, making the SRA a good choice for families with young children.

Fish species: Largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish, crappie, rainbow trout (stocked seasonally in

Lake 2), common carp.

Amenities: Wheelchair-accessible fishing deck (Lake 2), modern restrooms.

Directions: From Exit 285 at Gibbon, go north a short distance on Link 10C to the first right turn.

GPS coordinates: 40.706910, -98.845325

War Axe SRA

This 14-acre lake is good for smallmouth bass and walleye.

Fish species: Smallmouth bass, walleye, channel catfish, bluegill, redear sunfish, yellow perch.

Amenities: Modern restrooms.

Directions: From Exit 291 at Shelton, turn north on Link 10D and take the first right turn into the SRA.

GPS coordinates: 40.724548, -98.735290

West Wood River WMA

This WMA has a 15-acre lake.

Fish species: Largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish, crappie, common carp.

Amenities: Gravel boat ramp.

Directions: From Exit 300 at Wood River, drive south 0.3 miles on Spur



Larry Kurrus of Gretna fly-fishes at War Axe State Recreation Area in Buffalo County. JEFF KURRUS, NEBRASKALAND

GPS coordinates: 40.763152, -98.593763

Alda Lake

NDOT owns this 12-acre lake. Camping and boating are prohibited. Limited parking is available at the northwest corner of the lake.

Fish species: Largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish, northern pike.

Amenities: None.

Directions: From Exit 305 at Alda, turn north and drive a short distance to the first right turn.

GPS coordinates: 40.802790, -98.492013

Mormon Island SRA

Located just north of Exit 312, westbound I-80 travelers get a view of Mormon Island SRA as they approach



Sunrise glows pink and purple at Cheyenne State Recreation Area near Wood River with the interstate overpass in the background. JEFF KURRUS, NEBRASKALAND



RV camping at the east lake at Mormon Island outside of Grand Island. JEFF KURRUS, NEBRASKALAND

the exit.

There are three lakes located in the SRA. The West Lake (42 acres) and Middle Lake (20 acres) both provide excellent shoreline access and are conveniently located near the modern RV campgrounds. The East Lake (35 acres) is only accessible by foot and has poor shoreline access.

Fish species: West lake – Largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish, common carp, crappie, muskellunge, walleye, yellow perch; Middle lake – Largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish, crappie, redear sunfish; East lake – largemouth bass, bluegill, common carp, crappie.

Amenities: Fishing pier (West Lake), concrete boat ramps (Middle and West Lakes), modern restrooms.

Directions: From Exit 312 at Grand Island, go north a short distance on Highway 281 to the first right turn into the park.

GPS coordinates: 40.823675,

-98.377607

Grand Island Eastbound Rest Area

There is a 6-acre lake on the west end of this NDOT rest area open to fishing. Camping and boating are prohibited.

Fish species: Largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish.

Amenities: Modern restrooms.

Directions: From Exit 312 at Grand Island, go 3 miles east on I-80 to the rest area.

GPS coordinates: 40.823106, -98.327117 [N](#)

Fishing the Interstate: A Guide to the I-80 Lakes was printed in the June 2022 issue of *Nebraskaland Magazine*, published by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

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JEFF KURRUS, NEBRASKALAND

“It doesn’t matter if the rod is or isn’t bent. Time spent fishing is time well spent.”

– Justin Morgan, 1747-1798

Outdoor Nebraska

By Renae Blum

June is prime time for fishing, and activities at many state parks are in full swing. So make the most of it. You could be picking up new nature knowledge at a webinar, hiking a beautiful trail, attending a lighted boat parade and more. See details below. [N](#)

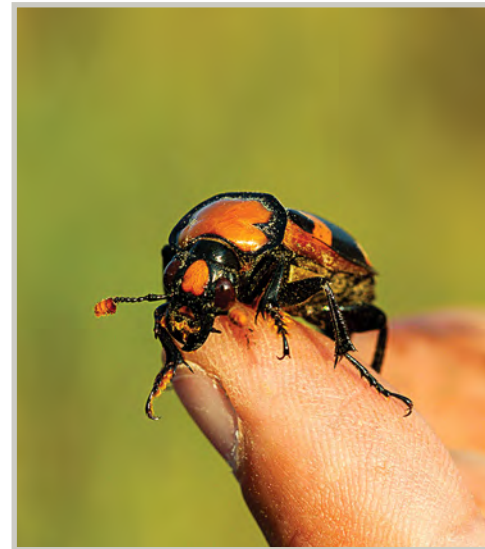


Celebrate National Trails Day

June 4 | Statewide

With more than 600 miles of trails, your Nebraska state parks are a perfect place to celebrate National Trails Day. Take your pick from interpretive nature trails, rugged mountain biking trails, paved trails perfect for a family stroll and more. Many offer excellent wildlife viewing opportunities, scenic vistas and educational interpretive signage. Find a trail near you at OutdoorNebraska.gov/trails.

ERIC FOWLER, NEBRASKALAND

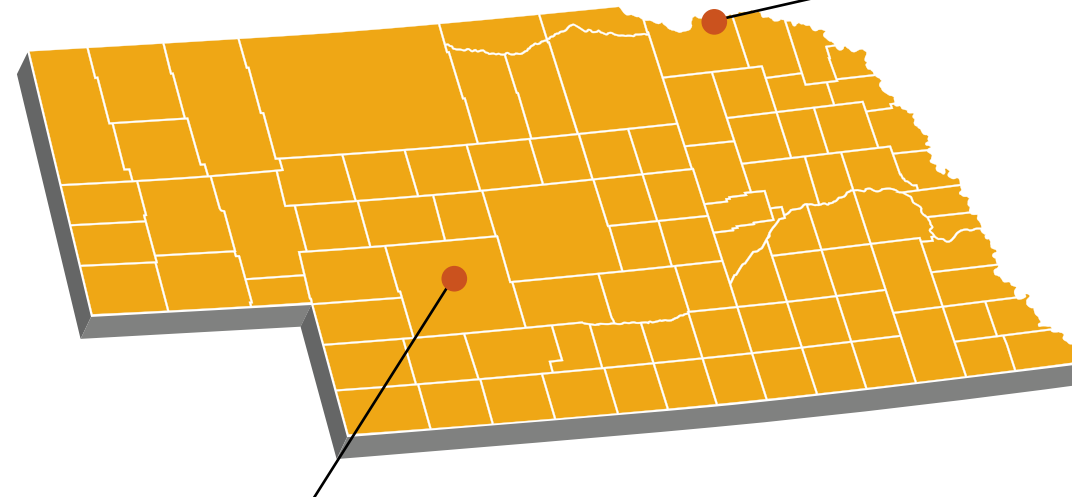


Attend Nebraska Nature Nerd Night

June 21, 7 p.m. CT | Virtual

Despite their lack of backbones, invertebrate animals have incredible adaptations, behaviors and tricks up their sleeve when it comes to surviving in the natural world. Join Game and Parks educators virtually as we explore the secrets of these fascinating creatures. Register online at Calendar.OutdoorNebraska.gov.

JULIE GEISER, NEBRASKALAND



Attend National Marina Day celebration

June 18 | Lewis and Clark State Recreation Area, Crofton

Now in its fifth year, this fun event includes a fish fry, yoga, kayaking, hayrack rides, hands-on activities for kids, archery, a fish-cleaning demonstration and more. Make sure to stick around for the lighted boat parade in the evening. See Calendar.OutdoorNebraska.gov for details.

ERIC FOWLER, NEBRASKALAND

Visit Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park

Throughout the month | North Platte

Home of famed showman William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody, Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park recaptures the life and career of the famed Army scout. Tour Cody's mansion home, browse memorabilia in the restored barn, and enjoy camping, fishing, picnicking and kayaking at the adjacent Buffalo Bill Ranch State Recreation Area.

JULIE GEISER, NEBRASKALAND



Plan a time to fish

Throughout the month | Statewide

May and June are the two best months for fishing in Nebraska, for any species and in any body of water. So make sure to get out there and enjoy it! Resources like the Fishing Guide and the 2022 Fishing Forecast can help you plan your outing. Visit OutdoorNebraska.org to view these and other helpful resources.

JENNY NGUYEN-WHEATLEY, NEBRASKALAND



Patterns From Above

*Photos and story
by Eric Fowler*

I fell in love with flying in small planes when I was a little twerp, riding in the back seat of one my dad was piloting. My first foray into aerial photography came during an internship at Chadron State College. That assignment was a big one: Photograph the entirety of the Oregon and California trails from Missouri to the West Coast. Wow.

So when I joined the staff at *Nebraskaland Magazine* 21 years ago, I quickly raised my hand when the editors were looking for someone to capture aerial photos of the Lewis and Clark Trail along the Missouri River. Ever since, I've spent hundreds of hours — I wish I had kept track — with my camera pointed out the window of a Cessna, capturing images for anyone at Game and Parks who asked.

Most flight plans have involved documenting Aquatic Habitat Program projects for our fisheries division. But there are always photo ops between the lakes. Rivers, tree rows, crop fields and highways contain or create interesting patterns and lines on the landscape below that beg to be photographed.

The perspective from 500 to a few thousand feet is entirely different than it is from the ground. It's why some people pay extra for a window seat when they fly. And why my mantra is "You buy, I'll fly." 🛩️

RIGHT: Light and dark lines in an alfalfa field surround a wooded draw in Nance County.





TOP LEFT: The intersection of harvested and standing crops in food plots, grasslands and rows of trees and brush create a patchwork on Pressey Wildlife Management Area in Custer County.

BOTTOM LEFT: Terraces wrap around a hilltop in a hay field in Washington County.

TOP RIGHT: The meandering Calamus River snakes its way through Calamus WMA in Loup County.

BOTTOM RIGHT: In fall 2011, receding floodwaters from the Missouri River left a maze of sandbars on Schilling WMA in Cass County, including one that took on the appearance of a shark.





Wind-deposited sand dunes stretch out across a Sandhills pasture in northwestern Loup County.



TOP LEFT: Buffer strips and terraces create a spiderweb pattern in a crop field in Gage County.

BOTTOM LEFT: A swirl of sandbars fades into the clear waters of Lake McConaughy around a sandy point at No Name Bay.

TOP RIGHT: An aerial photo shows patterns in a cornfield, evidence of the former course of the Elkhorn River near Wisner in Dodge County. Meandering rivers often change course, and crops grow differently in the varied soil types that remain in their former paths.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Tree groves and a low spot form a smiley face in a cornfield south of Plattsmouth in Cass County.



Southwest Nebraska's

1884 UFO

By David L. Bristow, History Nebraska

The story went like this: A “blazing aerolite” crashed near Benkelman in the southwestern corner of Nebraska. Local cowboys found metal machinery scattered over the prairie, but the intense heat kept them from getting too close. Returning the next day, they found the remains of an object “about 50 or 60 feet long, cylindrical, and about 10 or 12 feet in diameter.”

That was how the Lincoln-based *Nebraska State Journal* broke the news on June 8, 1884, under the headline “A CELESTIAL VISITOR.” The article provided additional details and names of multiple witnesses. In a separate column, the *Journal* said the machine might be from another planet “unless the alleged facts are greatly magnified or distorted.”

Two days later, the *Journal* reported even stranger news: The wreckage



This photo of James D. Calhoun ran with his obituary in the *Nebraska State Journal* on July 18, 1915. Appropriately for the portrait of a newspaper editor, type is showing through from the other side of the page.

had dissolved in a rainstorm and disappeared entirely.

It sounded almost like something from a Jules Verne story.

Over the years, there were multiple searches for remains of the object, but the *Journal* finally exposed the story as a hoax in 1927. According to former assistant editor Horace Hebbard, the story was the invention of managing editor James D. Calhoun, who seemed to think it was a good joke.

Pat Gaster of History Nebraska investigated the story behind the story in 2013. “Newspaper hoaxes have probably been around as long as there have been newspapers,” she wrote, “but their popularity peaked during

the late 19th century. Journalists sought to entertain as well as inform readers — and fill space — with stories that were wildly exaggerated and sometimes complete fabrications.”

Calhoun, Gaster said, was well known for his humorous tales and storytelling. (He once had a weekly newspaper column called “Nothing But Lies.”) He apparently figured that savvy readers would not fall for obvious tall tales, and those who did would make fools of themselves.

According to Hebbard, Calhoun’s “celestial visitor” story fooled at least one of the *Journal*’s own employees. A man from the business office quickly boarded a train, hoping to bring home wreckage to exhibit for a fee. “He was disillusioned when he arrived at Benkelman and found no one who had heard anything about the thing.”

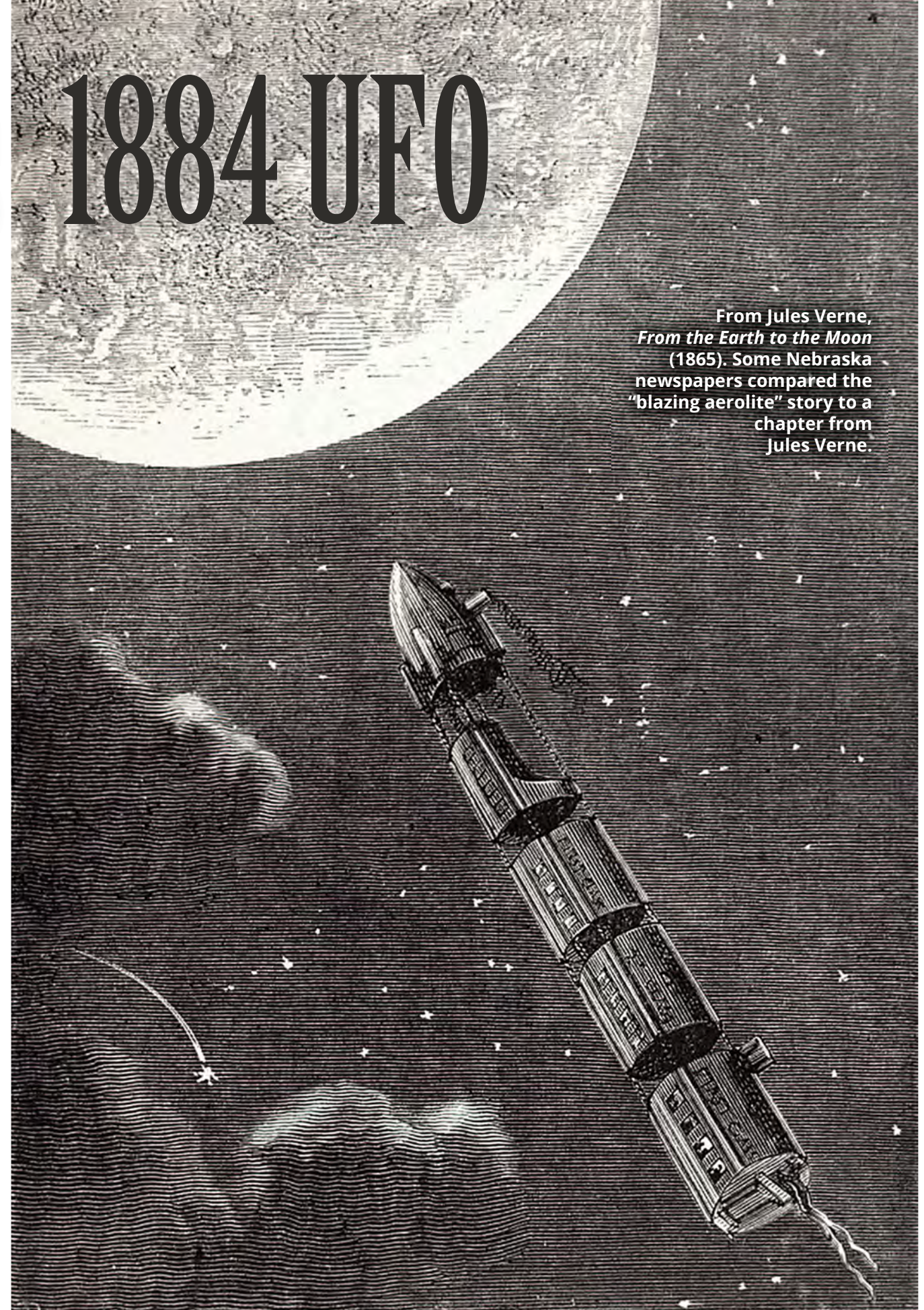
Read Pat Gaster’s complete article at *History Nebraska’s* website, History.Nebraska.gov. Search “celestial visitor.”



Nebraska State Journal Building at Ninth and P streets in Lincoln, sometime after 1881. History Nebraska RG2158-248



Daily Nebraska State Journal, June 8, 1884.



From Jules Verne, *From the Earth to the Moon* (1865). Some Nebraska newspapers compared the “blazing aerolite” story to a chapter from Jules Verne.

BEAR WITH ME A MOMENT...

By Roger Welsch

Maybe it's just a habit of old romantics like me, but I like to think that sooner or later, even the most unimaginative Nebraskan must wonder — maybe while watching an old movie or cruising along on Interstate 80 — what these Plains must have been like before the white man came. We know that many things have changed. The herds of bison that stopped trains for hours and the clouds of passenger pigeons that darkened the sky are gone.

But other relics have returned or, quite remarkably, survived. Once again, we have river otters in Nebraska. And eagles. There is hope for the whooping crane. Now and then, an errant elk appears in the eastern part of the state or moose appears far from where expected to amaze a motorist or gardener in a central county.

Me, I wonder about bears. We know they were here. There are legends about Big Bear Hollow on the Missouri River between Macy and Winnebago that speak of both brown or black bears and grizzlies. Bears were seen as mysterious and terrifying creatures, even a form of being somewhere between mankind and the animal world. A kind of Big Foot. Omaha legends about Big Bear Hollow and stories of bears carrying off Native women, recorded by Federal Writers field workers 85 years ago, can be found in my book, *Treasury of Nebraska Pioneer Folklore*.

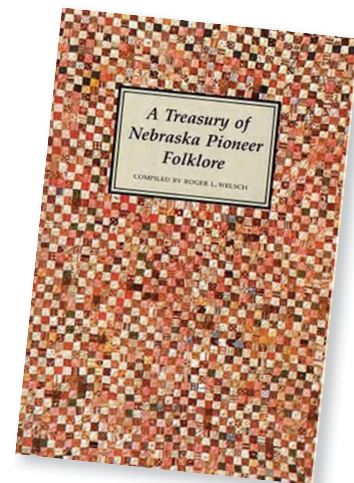
The most impressive evidence of bears on the Plains are, in my opinion, the many photos we have of tribal chiefs and warriors wearing bear claw necklaces. It's not just the

size or number of the claws that impressed me but even more than that, knowing how that bear was killed. The reason those necklaces were worn as such a badge of honor was that the bear was not, until fairly recently, taken down with a rifle at 200 yards, or bow and arrow at 10 yards, but with a spear — at arm's length. Imagine what a badge of courage those claws represented.

Within ancient European cultures as well as North American Indian tradition, a man who killed a bear and wore its skin took on the very spirit of that bear and was to be feared in battle as an incensed grizzly might be: a berserker — a bearskin wearer.

A friend and I once watched some Inuit hunters go out on the sea ice in far northern Greenland. My friend summed up very well what we were witnessing: “We have Nike missiles at Thule Air Base that can bring down huge bombers. But there go the real men, out on the sea ice to kill whales with a stick.” No wonder the Pawnee refer to themselves to this day as “Chaticks Si Chaticks” — “Men Among Men.”

Roger Welsch is an author, humorist and folklorist. He is the author of more than 40 books and has been contributing to Nebraskaland Magazine since 1977.



Chief Standing Bear, Ponca. 1829-1908.
PHOTO BY J. TAYLOR, CIRCA 1879



A Pawnee Indian and his horse attacked by grizzly bears. Note the broken spear in the bear's side and a third bear in the background. WOOD ENGRAVING BY J. WILLIAMSON, 1860.

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HOLT COUNTY Summer Events



O'Neill Summerfest - July 15, 16, 17
www.oneillchamber.com

Ewing Summer FunFest - May 27, 28, 29
Hairball Concert on May 28
www.ewingsummerfunfest.com

Atkinson Hay Days - August 19, 20, 21
www.atkinsonhaydays.com

Stuart 4th of July Celebration
www.facebook.com/stuartcelebration

Chambers Old Fashioned Hometown Fun - July 4

Page Community Day - August 27

SATURDAY, MAY 28



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JAPANESE BEETLES

By Julie Van Meter, State Entomologist
Nebraska Department of Agriculture

Japanese beetles (*Popillia japonica*) are exotic, invasive insects first introduced to the United States around 1916, on nursery stock. Since its introduction, the Japanese beetle has become established in almost every state in the eastern half of the country. It is a highly destructive insect, with both the adult and grubs causing damage to plant roots, foliage and flowers.

Japanese beetles have been found in many Nebraska counties. Typically, a county is considered infested when adult beetles have been caught in traps in the county for two consecutive years, or when more than one life stage (an egg, grub or adult) is confirmed in the same year. The Nebraska Department of Agriculture has conducted trapping surveys for the beetles for decades. For regulatory purposes, based on survey results and the large number of counties confirmed as infested, the state shifted to fully infested status under the terms of the U.S. National Japanese Beetle Harmonization Plan in 2021.

As Japanese beetles become more common across the state, the prevalence of this pest has implications for nurseries that ship out of state, along with homeowners making

Adult Japanese beetle.
DAVID CAPPAERT, BUGWOOD.ORG

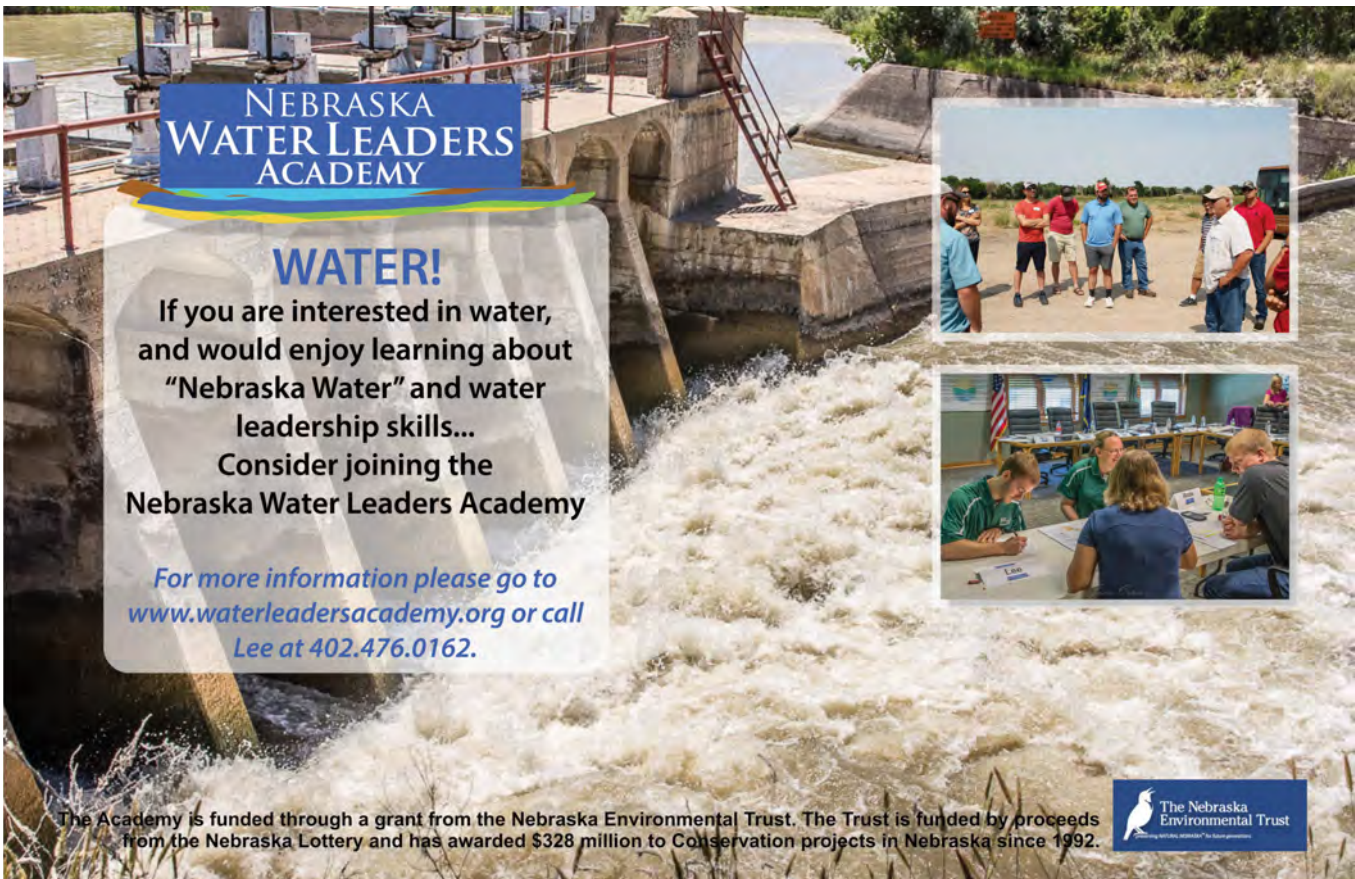
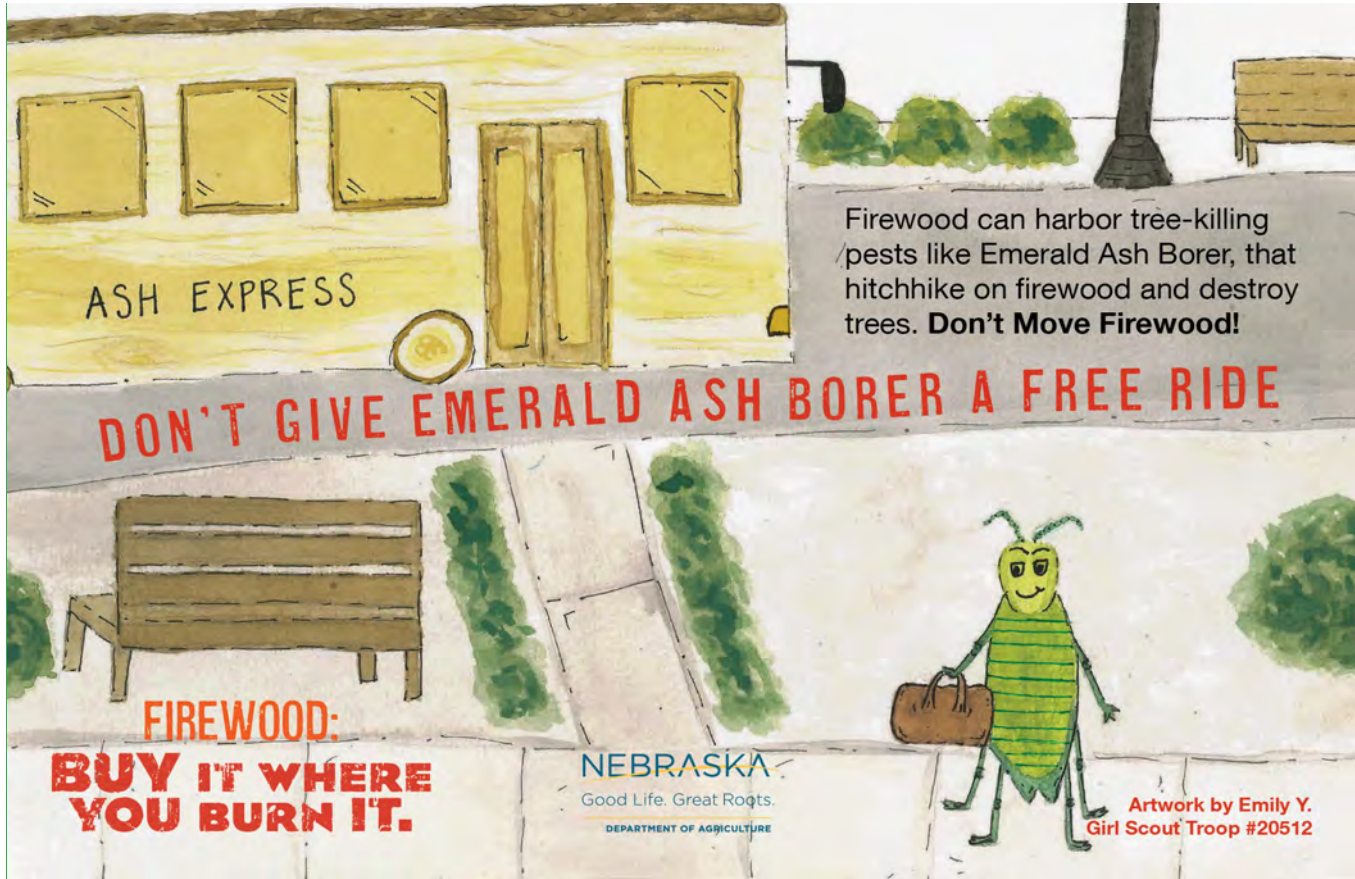


management decisions.

Many states require nursery stock shipped interstate to meet the certification requirements found in the harmonization plan or have Japanese beetle quarantines that prohibit or limit the movement of nursery stock from infested areas. Nebraska nursery stock may need special certification, in addition to a regular nursery inspection and license, to meet other states' entry requirements. This process may require soil sampling, trapping surveys, inspections and/or chemical treatments. The Nebraska Department of Agriculture's Entomology staff regularly work with nurseries to meet these certification requirements.

Japanese beetles are known to move in infested nursery stock. To prevent the spread of invasive species, purchase only certified plants from licensed nurseries. Inspect plants for evidence of pests before purchasing and putting in your landscape.

There are a number of chemical options available for managing Japanese beetles. Check with the Nebraska Extension for additional Japanese beetle management recommendations.



VERSATILE VIOLETS

By Kellie Hayden

I step out of the car and feel that the night's cool air has started to lift. Leatherman and foraging tin in hand, I also grab the flannel haphazardly tossed in the backseat a week ago. I follow the shaded path, but it doesn't take long to find them. They'd be meek and unassuming if not for their indigo gemstone-like flowers spreading over the sun-dotted forest floor.



Gathering violets. KELLIE HAYDEN

Viola sororia was my first forage, and they're still one of my favorites. For many, violets signify the coming of warmer days. It's natural that after a harsh winter and the promises broken by false spring, we'd be drawn to such bright chroma against the gradually greening landscape.

V. sororia is native to eastern North America. It can be found across Nebraska in domestic spaces and is common in the eastern third of the state. This perennial tolerates sun and shade, developing large populations below trees or other, taller perennials. *V. sororia* patches are also found in the lawns of older homes, and the occasional violet can even be spotted growing in sidewalk cracks, earning

them the “weedy plant” label. This species' bloom period typically falls within April - June.

Violets are easy for beginning foragers to identify, and they can act as a stepping stone to learning more difficult forages. Since they can grow in colonies, collecting a handful of blooms is less likely to drastically affect populations. This forage also can be found in both rural and urban settings, so regardless of where someone lives, most Nebraskans don't have to travel far to find them.

In a couple of foraging books, I've read that some view violets as a boring forage; they don't have a unique flavor when compared to some sought-after forages. While violets won't send anyone scrambling for more based on flavor alone, *V. sororia* brings a gorgeous splash of spring to virtually any homemade dish — something particularly helpful when you're looking to impress family or friends.

I love to top desserts with violets. Any experienced baker knows that



Baking with violets. KELLIE HAYDEN

even the most carefully-crafted recipes can look dull when the final product is ready. Violets can visually elevate homemade bakes with minimal cost. As violets aren't bursting with flavor, no recipe adjustments are required either.

When the bloom period is over,

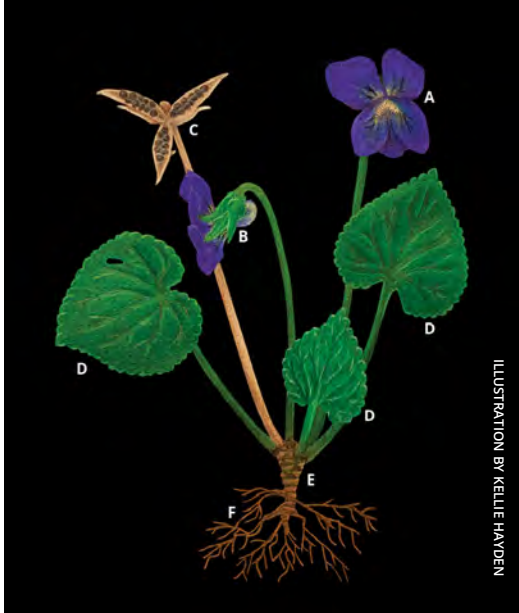


ILLUSTRATION BY KELLIE HAYDEN

- A. Bloom colors include indigo, purple, wine-red, white with purple centers, and white.
- B. Note the “spur” on the back of the bloom, visible from the side.
- C. Non-colorful flowers are not present at the same time as colorful blooms, but looking for these when foraging leaves can help with identification August-October.
- D. Violet leaves can vary in size, shape and margin from one population to another. Generally, leaves are heart-shaped and have crenate, or scalloped, margins.
- E. Flowers and leaves alike rise from the base of the plant.
- F. The root system is usually a taproot with smaller roots also present.

leaves can still be foraged. Violet leaves can pair nicely and lighten up some “heavier” autumn harvest flavors. I enjoy adding *V. sororia* leaves into kale, almond, goat cheese and cranberry salads.

Ficaria verna (an invasive and toxic species) isn't normally found in Nebraska, but its leaves look somewhat similar. Exercise caution and only forage what you can positively identify.

An early-season flower, pollinators rely on *Viola* species as a food source when other plants aren't yet blooming. Violets are also the host plant of fritillary butterflies — similar to how monarchs need milkweed, fritillaries need violets for survival. To maintain quality habitat and to ensure others can enjoy violets, take only what you need. I collect one bloom for every 20 present.

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NEBRASKA BIRDING GUIDE WEBSITE LAUNCHES

By Olivia DaRugna, Watchable Wildlife Biologist

Birding opportunities are nearly endless in the expansive and diverse state of Nebraska. From the spring and fall stream of massive flocks of waterfowl to cranes and shorebirds within the heart of the Central Flyway, to the multiple contact zones where eastern and western bird species meet, Nebraska is the perfect birding destination with over 400 species to observe.

Trying to decide where that next adventure will be can be difficult with so many places to explore across the state. Let the revamped Nebraska Birding Guide website help you decide. This new website features detailed looks at 80 locations, each offering excellent birding and other outdoor recreation opportunities for the whole family to enjoy.

Explore the common and notable birds of the parks you visit this summer, such as the Kentucky warbler at Platte River State Park or black-billed magpies at Fort Robinson State Park. Those new or getting back into birding can find tips, tools and resources on the website to hone their birding skills. Heading east? Visit the wooded Missouri River corridors of Indian Cave or Ponca State Park and be immersed in the beautiful music coming from colorful



Upland sandpiper. OLIVIA DARUGNA, NGPC

songbirds hiding in the tree canopies. Discover more birding opportunities at locations across the state by visiting NEBirdingGuide.org.

Moving west across Nebraska are unique wetlands brimming with life. In June, the Rainwater Basin in south central Nebraska is coming down from the large flocks of waterfowl in early spring and peak shorebird migration in May, but still, many birding opportunities are to be had in this unique wetland system. Curious about what birds you can expect to see in the Rainwater Basin? Want to find new spots to visit, or curious about best ways to access these sites? Refer to the Nebraska Birding Guide website for answers. The website can help you keep track of where and when to enjoy the many peak birding opportunities across the state, like the waterfowl and shorebird migrations.

In north-central Nebraska lies the expansive Sandhills covering 19,300 square miles. Over 300 birds have been observed in this important ecological region that supports both grassland-dependent and wetland species. Traveling through this rolling landscape, you are bound to see a variety of species, including upland sandpipers, trumpeter swans, common nighthawks or maybe even a short-eared owl. Discover on the website several birding locations in the Sandhills that offer free opportunities to view greater prairie-chicken and sharp-tailed grouse from viewing blinds in the spring. Any nature enthusiast will appreciate the vast and untouched beauty of the Sandhills ecological region. To learn more about this fascinating landscape and other ecological regions and habitats across the state, visit the Nebraska Birding Guide website.

Summer is the perfect time to explore the Panhandle with cool nights offering reprieve from the hot summer heat. Use the Nebraska Birding Guide website to discover the top birding locations in the Panhandle that offer chances of seeing unique birds that are found nowhere else in the state, such as western tanagers and cordilleran flycatchers. Learn more about these and other top birding locations, the trails to explore and the amenities they offer through the interactive map on the website.

Wherever you are in Nebraska, amazing birding is not far away. Explore the songbirds of the eastern tallgrass prairie, the Central Platte Valley where over half a million sandhill cranes congregate each spring, the Sandhills where greater prairie-chickens display and the unique topography and raptors in the west. There is such a diversity of birds and landscapes for everyone to enjoy. Let NEBirdingGuide.org inspire and help you plan your next birding adventure.

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Pheasant Hunt near Henderson, York County, 1980

Hunting pheasants around Henderson Nebraska in 1980 — back when the Big 8 was a powerful football conference.

Pictured from left is Stan (me) with my Buffaloes shirt, John Martens and Wes Friesen cheering on our beloved Huskers.

Prior to 1962, I lived in Emerson and Allen. I grew up out here in Fort Morgan, Colorado, before moving to Thornton in metro Denver.

My friends and I loved hunting pheasants and cheering on our football teams, razzing each other about missed shots and football games.

– Stanley Jensen, Thornton, Colorado



Trapping near Fremont, 1981

Mark Denny, at right, and I were both from Fremont and ran our trapline in the mornings before school. We did the skinning in the evenings. These raccoons and mink were among the animals we caught.

– Todd Bridgman, Valley



Prairie-chicken Hunting near Halsey, 1980

Lynn Berggren and his dad, Myron Berggren, relax after a October 1980 morning walking the hills near Halsey for prairie-chickens and sharptails flushed and retrieved by Lynn’s dog, Old Bill.

– Kevin Berggren, Duluth, Minnesota



Fishing near Eustis, Frontier County, circa 1950

At right is my great-grandfather, A.T. Wilson, who arrived in Nebraska in 1868 at 3 years old.

He is seen here after fishing for bluegill and crappies with his two sons-in-law.

At left is Floyd Hecht, who married A.T.’s daughter, Jessie Wilson. Floyd was the manager of the Farmer’s Co-op and a judge of Frontier County.

At center is son-in-law George Hollister, who married daughter, Neva Wilson. He was a disabled military veteran.

A.T. lived to be 100 years old.

– Jeanne Carver Malad, Indianapolis, Indiana



72 Mallard Drakes on the Main Loup River, 1935

My grandfather, Lavern “Curly” Jacobsen, at left, Virgil Welsh, at right, and Dr. Leschinsky, taking the photo, shot 72 mallard drakes and one goose on the Main Loup River between Palmer and Fullerton. At that time, the limit was 35 ducks a piece.

Curly taught his children and grandchildren to hunt, fish and love the outdoors. He served on the Game Commission for a period of time and was instrumental in the building of Sherman Reservoir, even donating the water rights to the project. Virgil owned Citizens Bank. Both resided in St. Paul. Dr. Leschinsky was a dentist in Grand Island.

– Shane Jacobsen, Park City, Montana

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 2000. We will give priority to unusual photos or activities. When possible, please include a story about the photograph and identify the people, places and approximate date it was taken. Text may be edited and photos adjusted for reproduction. All photos will be returned.

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NEBRASKA
— GAME  PARKS —



BACK OFF

By Jeff Kurrus

From time to time I'm asked to shoot stock photographs for our marketing department. Not only do we want to portray hunters, anglers and other outdoor enthusiasts in a good light, we also want to photograph folks in good camera light.

These shoots also allow us to capture images without interrupting the weekend ventures of our users. If you've ever been photographed by one of our *Nebraskaland* staff members, it wasn't for long. We try to get what we can quickly, then disappear so you can enjoy your day.

So we hire models. Sometimes these are from talent agencies, and other times they are people we know personally who fit the criteria we need.

Whether the model is a professional or first-timer, it's the photographer's job to get them comfortable. My tactics to do this include silly jokes and stories, commands "not to smile" and self-deprecating humor.

But on this particular day, I was failing. The photo subject was someone I knew. She worked tremendously hard and smiled every time I asked her to, but I kept telling myself those weren't the smiles I was used to seeing away from the

camera.

So I tried to put myself in the mindset of a teenage girl on her first photoshoot, with some gray-haired family friend on the other side of the camera click-click-clicking his way through hundreds of images.

What would I want if I was her? Probably to be left alone for a minute or two.

So that's what I did. I asked her to walk to the other side of a field, about a hundred yards away. I swapped my wide-angle lens for my telephoto and asked her to return.

Her face during that walk back was of pure happiness. She was simply moseying her way through the field after a "turkey hunt," and the genuine smile I had sought for had been found.

Photographing people is no different at times than photographing wildlife. You have to constantly adjust, keeping in mind the reason we use camo and our hide when shooting wildlife is the same reason we take a few steps back when photographing people.

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