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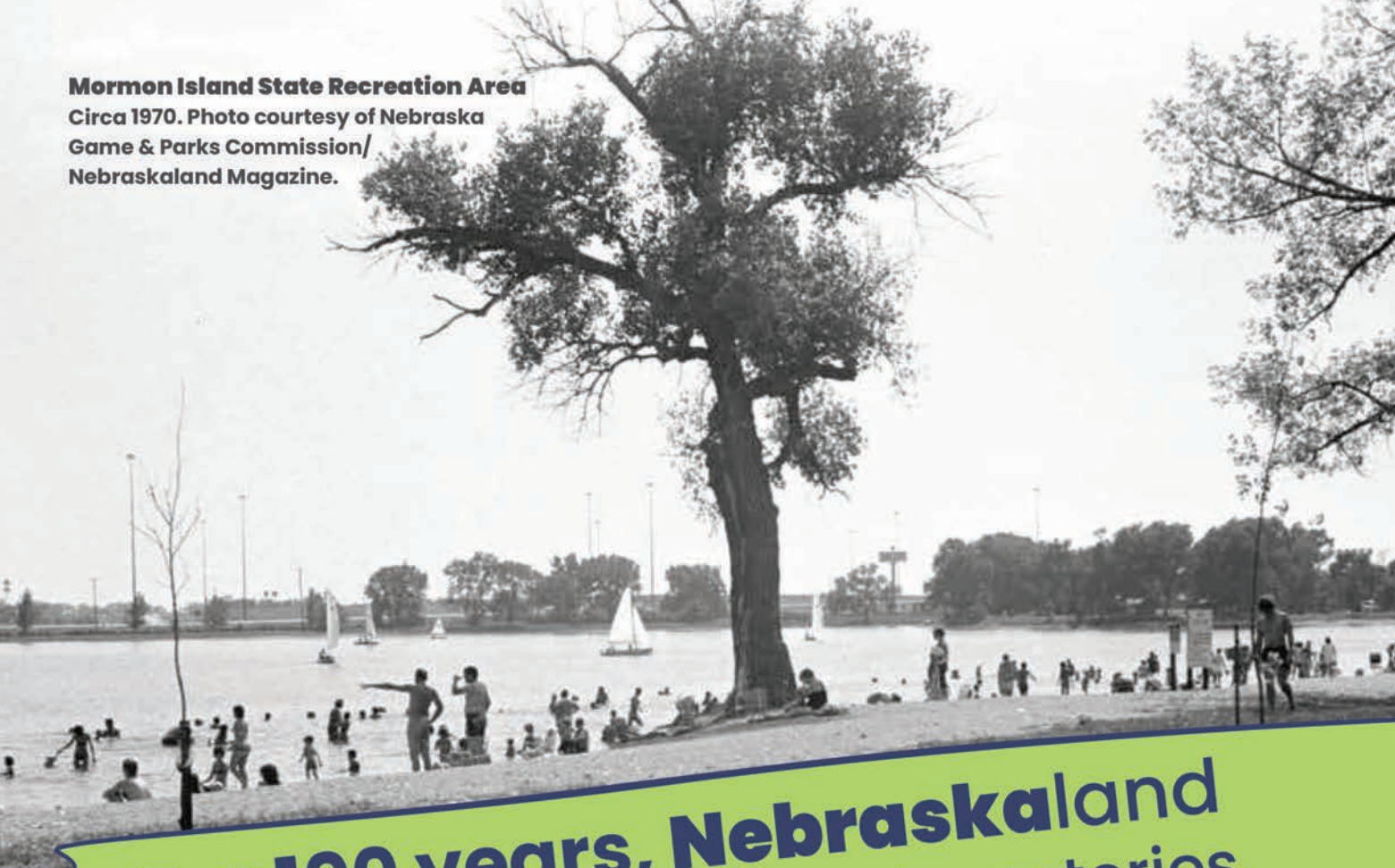
JUNE 2026



Celebrating
100 years

FROM OUTDOOR NEBRASKA TO
NEBRASKALAND MAGAZINE

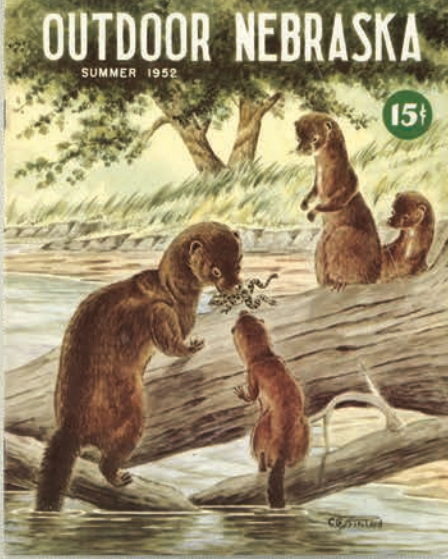
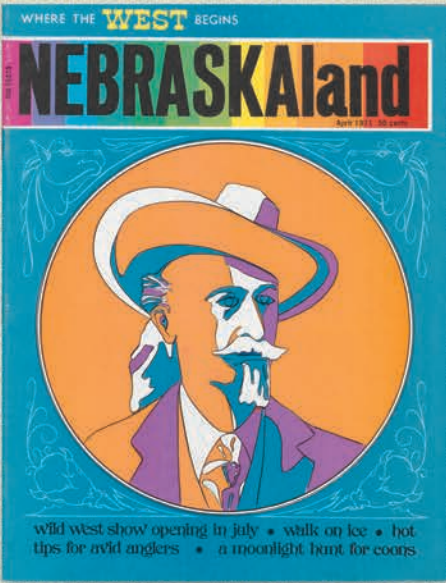
Mormon Island State Recreation Area
Circa 1970. Photo courtesy of Nebraska
Game & Parks Commission/
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For 100 years, Nebraskaland
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Mormon Island State Recreation Area
fifty years later (2020). Photo courtesy
of Nebraska's favorite island,
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Nebraskaland

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Cover: This April 1967 image appeared shortly after Outdoor Nebraska became NEBRASKAland Magazine, promoting “where the West begins.” See story on page 20.

This page: This photo, taken near Lincoln in 1993, was the cover image of The Road Home, one of Nebraskaland’s most popular issues of the past century.

MICHAEL FORSBERG, NEBRASKALAND

Nebraskaland
magazine

Published by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission since 1926. The Commission is dedicated to the conservation and protection of all the state's natural resources and the people who use them.



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An assassin bug captures tiny prey with its raptorial front legs and then injects a chemical that paralyzes and liquefies the innards of the captured creature. After it sucks out the resulting nutritious slurry, it discards the outer husk. For that and other reasons, assassin bugs make charming guests in outdoor spaces — as long as you're not a tiny insect.

BY CHRIS HELZER

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PAWNEE COUNTY, NE | 431 ACRES ± | TURNKEY INCOME AND RECREATION PROPERTY

This turnkey property in Pawnee County offers a mix of income and recreation. It includes 90.78± tillable acres, 112.88± CRP acres with contracts through 2030, and diverse habitat with water features. Improvements include an updated home, lodge-style octagon barn, large shop, machine shed, cabin, and guest accommodations. Strong access and infrastructure support hunting, fishing, and operational use.

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In this issue celebrating Nebraskaland Magazine’s 100th year in print, there are several things you won’t learn about.

You won’t see every beautiful park and place in Nebraska, nor will you learn about all the hunters, anglers and other conservationists who continue to protect this state’s natural resources.

You won’t hear from the long list of people who work behind the scenes to continue to make this publication thrive.

You also won’t hear the greatest campfire story I’ve ever been told.

What you will learn is our history, from the story behind the thousands of pictures we’ve published, to the art, parks and conservation messages we have featured. You’ll see portraits from our past, learn about the transition from Outdoor Nebraska to Nebraskaland, and understand how important this publication has been for so many readers.

We know it is important when we meet people like Jake Reinders, the co-owner of Grandpa’s Woods Golf Course near Murdock. While playing a round there with my son last fall, Reinders stopped when he saw me, pointing at my chest.

“Are you from Nebraskaland?” he asked, reading the logo on my pullover.

I told him I was and, with his index finger in the air, he asked me to wait for just a moment and disappeared.

Minutes later, he returned with a picture frame in his hand. It was a copy of the July 1968 cover and the pages from a story about the golf course published that year. Although it was nearly 60 years later, he couldn’t have been prouder.

We encounter people like this often. Some people we meet are part of families who have been reading Nebraskaland for generations. Some become lifelong friends.

Because the messages we convey are important. Spending time outdoors is time well spent. There are beautiful places in Nebraska that you need to see. And we want to continue building an outdoor community with every single one of you.

We do that because the place we live is so special.

We do that because we’re Nebraskaland.

Jeff Kurrus, Editor



Coming June 30th :
A New Exhibit at the Nebraska History Museum

In celebration of America’s 250th birthday, the Nebraska History Museum presents *Our Nebraska*, a new exhibit chronicling the history of the land and its residents from 1776 to the present. Discover the stories of the people and communities who shaped Nebraska, along with their impact on the nation as a whole.



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Your Nebraska

Follow us @nebraskaland and tag us in your photos to be featured in an upcoming issue.

Joshua Redwine, Los Angeles
A Nebraska Sunset over Oak Lake



Requests to use reader-submitted images and stories appeared in the first issue of Outdoor Nebraska in June 1926, and those requests haven't stopped.

Using section titles, including Speak Up, Comment, Letters and From Our Readers, Nebraskaland has featured reader-submitted content — from outdoor questions to personal stories and even poems — for the past century.

Then, in the January/February 2019 edition, we began our latest iteration of this section: Your Nebraska — a photographic look from the eyes of our readers. It's become so successful, with such a large backlog of images, that it still continues today.

We would like to thank everyone who shares their outdoor images with us and hope you will continue to send more. — Jeff Kurrus, Editor



Chris Masada, Lincoln
Female Cardinal



David Turner, Omaha
Mean Heron — Winner of the 2025 State
Fair Wild and Scenic Photo Contest



Rick Rasmussen, Doniphan
Red Fox Pup



Erik Johnson, Lincoln
Pants Butte Road

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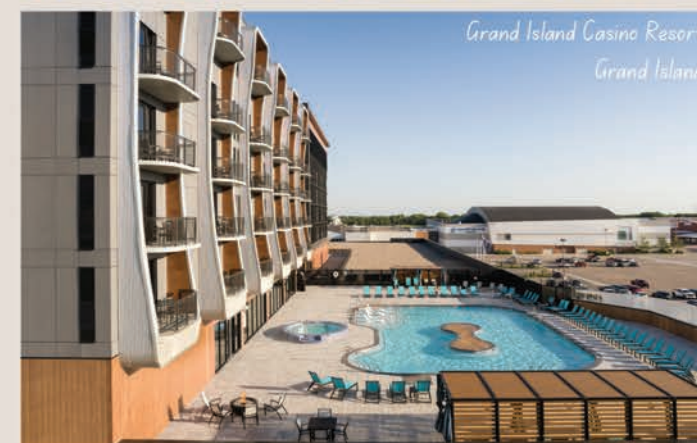
Please include your postal address
and telephone number. Letters
may be condensed and edited.
Photographs are also welcome.

Because
its openness is overwhelming.
Because
there's nothing dominant to stop the eye,
they say, "There's nothing out there."
Nothing at least
worth looking at,
and certainly nothing worth paying attention to."

As Nebraskans,
we've heard this many times
and as Nebraskans,
we smile politely and shake our collective heads.

From John Kloefkorn's "Crossing Nebraska"

BOB GRIER, NEBRASKALAND



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In the Field

Since 1926, Nebraskaland Magazine's main focus has been the same:
encouraging people to protect wildlife and spend time in the outdoors.

JOEL SARTORE, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PHOTO ARK

*"As a child growing up in Ralston,
I would study the pages of Nebraskaland
and dream of someday becoming a
wildlife photographer.*

*I was inspired by each month's
issue, and because I had parents
who told me I could do whatever I
wanted in life, I believed them."*

~ Joel Sartore



Named Halsey after the town where she was struck by a vehicle, this albino porcupine was rescued, then healed, by Nebraska Wildlife Rehab in Omaha.

This species is one of more than 18,000 now in the National Geographic Photo Ark, Joel Sartore's decades-long effort to document every species in human care around the world. The Lincoln-based photographer began the project at the Lincoln Children's Zoo in 2006.

Magazine a Top Priority for Chief Game Warden

By Justin Haag

Outdoor Nebraska's founder didn't waste much time before creating the magazine when he assumed a leadership role in the Nebraska Game, Forestation and Parks Commission, nor did he rest on his accomplishment.

Frank O'Connell was named the chief game warden in 1925, the year prior to the first issue, and promoted to director of the agency in 1929.

Samuel R. McKelvie, who had recently returned to his position as editor and publisher of the Nebraska Farmer after serving two terms as the state's governor, mentioned an encounter with O'Connell at the capitol in a 1926 issue of his publication — decades before his name would become attached to what is now the Samuel R. McKelvie National Forest in Cherry County. It indicates that O'Connell was eager to show off the new magazine and the state's natural resources.

"I asked him if there were any trout in Nebraska, and he replied emphatically in the affirmative," McKelvie wrote. "Then he handed me a copy of the first issue of Outdoor Nebraska — just out — and there was a picture of a fine catch made near Minatare."

Outdoor Nebraska's stories beneath O'Connell's byline show that he was a gifted writer passionate about wildlife conservation, but he didn't limit his messaging to print. In 1937, he provided the script and introduction for "Nebraska Beautiful." The 26-minute film, in its black-and-white glory, highlighted Nebraska's attractions, leading off with its new capitol building. Reports indicate he



Frank O'Connell was named chief game warden in 1925, the year before he started Outdoor Nebraska magazine.

took the film on tour and showed it at events throughout the state.

He earned respect far beyond Nebraska. In 1937, the International Association of Game Commissioners elected O'Connell president during the organization's meeting in Mexico City.

A military man, O'Connell served 30 years of active duty with the U.S. Army

and National Guard during a period that spanned both world wars. He later would be active in the American Legion and serve as deputy state director for the Selective Service System.

O'Connell died in 1971 in Lincoln at age 79. He was a native of Malcolm who graduated from Raymond High School and New York University.

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From Outdoor Nebraska to NEBRASKAland

By Justin Haag

The name has become so familiar to Nebraskans that most don't even ponder how it came to be.

The magazine's name change from Outdoor Nebraska to NEBRASKAland in 1964 came five years after the Game and Parks Commission had taken on the task of tourism promotion for the state.

The new moniker was part of what was being touted by Game and Parks director M.O. Steen and others as the most dynamic tourism promotion campaign ever. "NEBRASKAland ... where the West begins."

In promoting the June 1964 issue of the magazine, the agency supplied the media with a photo of Gov. Frank Morrison looking over the shoulder of a reader to see the new publication. It had been expanded to 60 pages, up from 28 just a few years prior, and included a 12-page spread about the state capitol building.

Also part of the branding effort were a billboard campaign and a traveling exhibit to 15 sport and travel shows — Dallas, Cleveland, Los Angeles and points between. Representatives handed out four-color western-themed travel folders titled "NEBRASKAland's Big Howdy," and agency artist Frank Holub produced a sheet of 21 stamps showing the state's historical, cultural and scenic gems. A NEBRASKAland symbol featuring an oxen-drawn wagon superimposed on the state's boundaries was copyrighted.

The campaign also brought the birth of NEBRASKAland Days, which started in Lincoln before moving to North Platte in 1968. Now run by organizers in that city, it continues to be one of the state's top community celebrations.

In 1971, the state's tourism responsibilities moved to the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. As the Legislature was considering that move, Dick Schaffer, chief of the Game and Parks' Division of Information and Tourism, stated the case for keeping things the way they were in a Lincoln Journal Star article.

"How do you do it?" he asked. "If we run a story in NEBRASKAland promoting Lake McConaughy, will we draw fishermen — or tourists? And when does a man cease being a fisherman and become a tourist?"

One of Schaffer's proudest initiatives was the NEBRASKAlander program, which encouraged businesses to serve as tourism centers in addition to their other offerings. More than 200 businesses earned the right to display the big NEBRASKAlander Tourist Information signs by meeting thresholds of quality and passing a written exam. The program won the state the highest award by the National Association of Travel Organizations, and Schaffer was named travel director of the year.

Today, the primary duties for attracting people from afar fall under the Nebraska Tourism Commission, which continues to partner with Game and Parks in many ways under its Visit Nebraska name.

It remains a challenge, though, to make a clear distinction between

tourism and outdoor recreation in a state that is so rich with the latter. In that spirit, the magazine still carries the Nebraskaland name, albeit with fewer capital letters, and does its part to attract people to "where the West begins."



NEBRASKAland's covered wagon is pulled by oxen "Neb" and "Raska" in a parade at the Wilber Czech Festival in Saline County. LOU ELL, NEBRASKALAND



NEBRASKAland artist "Bud" Pritchard mans a sportsman show exhibit in New York City. NEBRASKALAND



Conestoga covered wagon used as the Greenwood Tourist Station. NEBRASKALAND



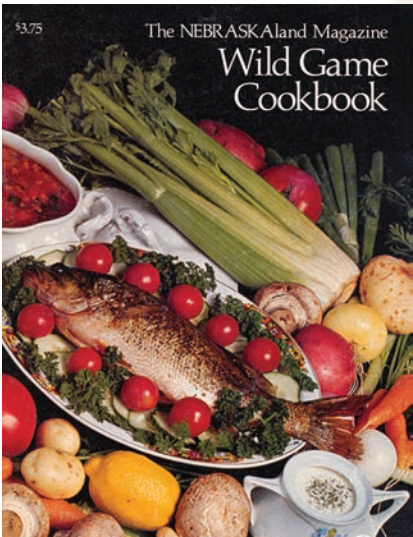
NEBRASKAland Magazine is represented at the Capitol Tourist Station in Lincoln. NEBRASKALAND



NEBRASKAland artist "Bud" Pritchard assembles an exhibit to promote the magazine. NEBRASKALAND

Roast Goose with Black Cherries

By Jenny Nguyen-Wheatley



- | | |
|---|---|
| 8 to 10-pound goose, ready for roasting | 1 pound fresh black cherries or 1-pound can |
| ½ cup sugar | ½ cup Cherry Kijafa |
| 3 cups chicken broth | ¼ cup flour |
| ¼ cup softened butter | |
| salt, pepper | |

Preheat oven to 325°. Pierce goose skin with fork to permit excess fat to drain off. Sprinkle goose with salt and pepper. Roast uncovered for 3 to 3½ hours. Remove goose fat several times. While goose is roasting, remove stems from fresh cherries. Place cherries in sauce pan with sugar and 1 cup water. Bring to a boil and simmer for 20 minutes. Set aside and chill. Canned cherries require neither sugar nor cooking.

Remove goose from roasting pan when finished. Again drain fat and add chicken broth. Place roasting pan over top flame. Bring to a boil. Scrape pan bottom to loosen drippings. Simmer for 5 minutes. Add Cherry Kijafa. Mix butter and flour to a smooth paste and add to pan. Continue to cook, stirring constantly until gravy is thickened. Simmer 5 minutes, strain, and add salt and pepper to taste.

Carve goose. Place pieces in one or two shallow casseroles. Drain cherries. Remove pits if fresh cherries are used, and arrange cherries over goose. Cut liver into small pieces and scatter over goose. Pour gravy over goose. Serve immediately or reheat for serving.

This recipe can also be used for roast duck.

Mrs. Michael Rogers, Middletown, Connecticut (formerly from Ord)

Published in Nebraskaland’s first Wild Game Cookbook in 1978, “Roast Goose with Black Cherries” intrigued me. This is my kind of recipe. Dark fruit complements the minerality of goose and duck brilliantly.

I didn’t have a goose in the freezer, so chose a larger, fatty wigeon. Use a corn cob holder to poke holes all over the skin, which will allow fat to render more easily. Then, rub a piece of lemon all over the skin, which will also help break down fat. Season the inside and outside of the bird with fine sea salt. Stuff the bird with the used piece of lemon along with a quarter of an onion and some fresh herbs, such as thyme or rosemary.

Ducks are much smaller than geese, so will take less time to roast. Place the duck(s) in a cast iron or roasting pan (with vegetables if desired, such as fennel, potatoes and/or carrots) and cook at 325 degrees Fahrenheit for 30-40 minutes, depending on size. There’s also no need

to repeatedly remove rendered fat from the pan — do that once at the end.

After roasting, remove the pan from the oven. Crank up heat to 450 degrees. When the oven comes to temperature, return the duck (or goose) to the oven for the skin to brown, about 10-15 minutes, rotating the pan occasionally to encourage even browning.

Instead of fresh cherries, I used a 15-ounce can of Oregon Dark Sweet Cherries, which I simmered with a couple of sprigs of thyme and a squeeze of lemon juice for 20 minutes to thicken the syrup.

Sadly, I could not track down Cherry Kijafa. So, I used Luxardo’s Cherry Sangue Morlacco in the gravy, and cut the recipe by half. Though, to be honest, I didn’t think gravy was necessary. The dark cherries and syrup could stand on their own. For more flavor, stir in a spoonful of duck pan juices to the cherries.



CHANGES

OUR PARKS THROUGH THE YEARS

By Julie Geiser

It's cliché, we know: Some things change through the years, while others seem to stay the same. Our state park system is no different. And throughout all of these changes, or lack there of, their photos have been featured in Nebraskaland Magazine.

SMITH FALLS

Early settlers knew Smith Falls as Arikaree Falls, in reference to a semi-nomadic tribe of Native Americans that lived in the area. In 1896, Frederic Smith filed the first homestead patent for the land and is who the falls are now named after. In 1941, Sandhills farmer Fred Krzyzanowski bought the property to graze cattle, not knowing at first that the beautiful falls were on his newly purchased land. In 1992, the Game and Parks Commission agreed to a lease with the Krzyzanowski family, turning the area into a state park.



Smith Falls, ca. pre-March, 1964.
LOU ELL, NEBRASKALAND



In 2023, an ADA-accessible walking path was finalized at Smith Falls State Park, bringing even more visitors to this iconic landmark. JUSTIN HAAG, NEBRASKALAND



Scout's Rest Ranch,
ca. 1980s. TED STUTHEIT

Scout's Rest Ranch,
after a fresh coat
of paint, 2014.
JULIE GEISER, NEBRASKALAND



BUFFALO BILL

Once the home of American scout, Pony Express rider, buffalo hunter and famed showman William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody, Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park at North Platte recaptures his life through memorabilia displayed in the mansion and Scout's Rest Ranch barn.

FORT ROBINSON

Fort Robinson was the site of the tragic Cheyenne Breakout in 1879 and the death of famed Sioux Chief Crazy Horse. Over the years, the fort served as the Red Cloud Indian Agency, as a cavalry remount station, K-9 dog training center, POW camp and beef research station. Located near Crawford, the park comprises more than 22,000 acres of exquisite Pine Ridge scenery, offering 60 miles of hiking trails and 20 miles of mountain biking trails, making it Nebraska's top park for hiking enthusiasts.



Fort Robinson has served multiple roles through the years,
including a military training station after World War I, ca. early 1900s. NSHS, RG1517



Nowadays, Fort Robinson is known for many activities, including its trail rides, 2014.
JULIE GEISER, NEBRASKALAND



Camping at Chadron State Park, ca. 1962. NEBRASKALAND



RV camping, 1991. BOB GRIER, NEBRASKALAND



Campers still enjoy the spacious sites at Chadron State Park, 2015. JUSTIN HAAG, NEBRASKALAND

CHADRON

Chadron State Park, founded in 1921, is Nebraska's first state park and has been a crown jewel of the Pine Ridge for more than a century. Campers and other visitors have long admired its mix of open fields and surrounding outcroppings as one of the state's most stunning landscapes.

INDIAN CAVE

Indian Cave is the main geologic feature of this state park and bears prehistoric Native American petroglyphs of unknown date and origin. These unique features can now be viewed from the ADA-accessible boardwalk that has seating, informational signs and a viewing deck seated just below the cave opening.



David and Kirsten Vogt sit above the cave opening in 1981. DON CUNNINGHAM, NEBRASKALAND



A new boardwalk and deck give visitors an up-close look inside the cave opening in 2022. ERIC FOWLER, NEBRASKALAND

ASHFALL FOSSIL BEDS

Nearly 12 million years ago, volcanic ash engulfed this ancient watering hole, entombing more than 20 different species of animals from turtles, cranes, deer, and rhinos, covering them in the rolling hills. Because of its scientific importance, the 360-acre historical park between Orchard and Royal was acquired in 1987 and is a joint project of the Game and Parks Commission and the University of Nebraska State Museum. Guests can tour this historical location and see paleontologists continue to dig the site in search of fossils.



Paleontologist Mike Voorhies carefully brushes volcanic ash off a prehistoric rhinoceros fossil at Ashfall Fossil Beds, 1987. KEN BOUC, NEBRASKALAND

The fossil beds are now enclosed in the Hubbard Rhino Barn, as shown here in 2012, protected from the elements and still an active dig site. JEFF KURRUS, NEBRASKALAND



ARBOR LODGE

Arbor Lodge State Historical Park in Nebraska City started off as a small house constructed in 1855 when it was purchased by Arbor Day founder J. Sterling Morton and his wife, Caroline. The home has been remodeled eight times over the years, transforming it into a beautiful 52-room mansion.



In 1875, the Mortons began calling their home “Arbor Lodge.” NSHS, RG2993-414



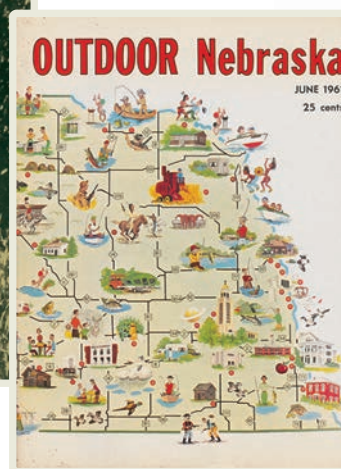
Arbor Lodge, 2024. ERIC FOWLER, NEBRASKALAND

Outdoor Nebraska

WHAT TO DO IN JUNE

By Jeff Kurrus

This month, when the last of the cool mornings transition to the heat of summer evenings, participate in one of the many activities that has captivated outdoor enthusiasts in the Cornhusker State for the past century. 📅



Take a Drive

June 1944 and June 1961

“Far too little has been said pertinent to the beauty and available vacation resources furnished by Nebraska’s State Parks,” read the June 1944 issue of Outdoor Nebraska. We can never say enough about the beauty of the state and available vacation spots in Nebraska’s state parks, but we’ve certainly tried in the past 82 years.

This month, take a drive. The kids are out of school, and there is a fishing, camping, hiking, biking and sit-in-a-lawn-chair spot with your name on it. Visit OutdoorNebraska.gov to find a park to visit or make a reservation to stay.



Visit Ponca

Summer 1934

In the summer 1934 edition, a news brief shared the following information: “A brand new state park and recreation grounds in Dixon County has been handed to the Nebraska Game and Parks Board as a gift The tract contains 220 acres of scenic and partly wooded bluff land ... situated two miles north of Ponca.”

Ponca State Park remains one of Nebraska’s most beautiful areas. Now is the ideal time to RV or tent camp or stay in one of its cabins and spend the rest of your time trying to decide what to do with all of the options in front of you. Visit OutdoorNebraska.gov/parks.



Fish the Sandhills

Summer 1950

“FISH NUMEROUS... ANGLERS SCARCE ... In Sand Hills” read the title of a 1950 Outdoor Nebraska article. “Have you ever had the desire to go fishing some place where there were both too many fish and too few anglers to catch them?”

As much as Nebraskaland Magazine has promoted the Valentine National Wildlife Refuge as other-worldly — both topographically and fishing-wise — our photographers rarely see these lakes overloaded with anglers.

Now is the time to take your vehicle down a two-track Jeep trail for the summer fishing adventure of your life.



Capture a Winning Photo

June 1970

Nebraskaland Magazine announced its first photo contest: “Start shooting and bag a prize.”

In October, we will begin accepting images for the 2026 photo contest, so start shooting now. Outdoor recreation is at its height in June. Look for unique compositions and light to move yourself to the front of the prize line. While a bag shot of a kid holding a fish is cute, an image of that same kid drenched in golden, end-of-the-day light against a gorgeous backdrop is what we’re looking for. For more information, visit NebraskalandMagazine.com.



Shoot a Muzzleloader

June 1980

“This scene might have been from 150 years ago as buck-skinner display arms, tipi and other paraphernalia connected with their sport,” noted a cover caption by Ken Bouc on muzzleloader shooting.

Whether you’re a longtime shooter, a history buff or just curious, attend the Fort Hartsuff State Historical Park Rendezvous on June 19-21 in Burwell and see fur trader reenactors with their muzzleloaders. Learn more at Calendar.OutdoorNebraska.gov.

For a complete calendar of events, visit tinyurl.com/nebmuzzleloader.

In May 1957, Coturnix quail are released at the Schramm Area by the Omaha Fish and Wildlife Club. Of all attempts to introduce exotic game birds, only the pheasant has met widespread success. NEBRASKALAND

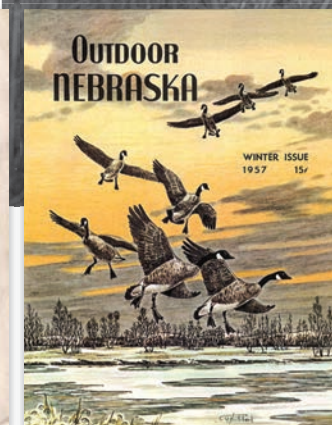


Research and management of Canada geese prompts conservation officers to release geese in hopes of re-establishing populations in the Sandhills, ca. 1970. NEBRASKALAND

A WILD HISTORY

As Nebraska's wildlife numbers recovered, species also populated the pages of Nebraskaland

By Justin Haag



The 100-year history of Nebraskaland Magazine goes back further than that. Or, at least the reasons for its creation do.

Euro-American expansion across the continent in the 1800s resulted in devastating losses to wildlife and its habitat, prompting the rise of the conservation movement in the early 20th century.

By the time Outdoor Nebraska, as the magazine was first known, was introduced in June 1926, species that had once been abundant had been extremely diminished or completely removed from the state.

When the publication was created, state fish and wildlife agencies were striving to get the word out about their efforts to reverse the tide of damage. In an age when magazines were driving popular culture, Outdoor Nebraska entered the scene bringing conservation messages to residents of the state.

The magazine's role as a voice for wildlife was apparent from the first issue, which contained stories about the introduction of the ring-necked pheasant and another on the status of migratory waterfowl. It also emphasized the importance of the game warden in conservation and publicized a half-dozen newly established game refuges.

The magazine also was a strong advocate for the development of parks and wildlands, with the first state park, Chadron, being just 5 years old at the time of the magazine's birth.

"The people of the middle west are just now awakening to the fact that unless something is done — and done quickly — the wild life and natural beauty of this prairie will have vanished before the ever-grasping hand of commerce," Frank O'Connell, the state's chief game warden who served as the magazine's first editor, wrote in one of his early articles.

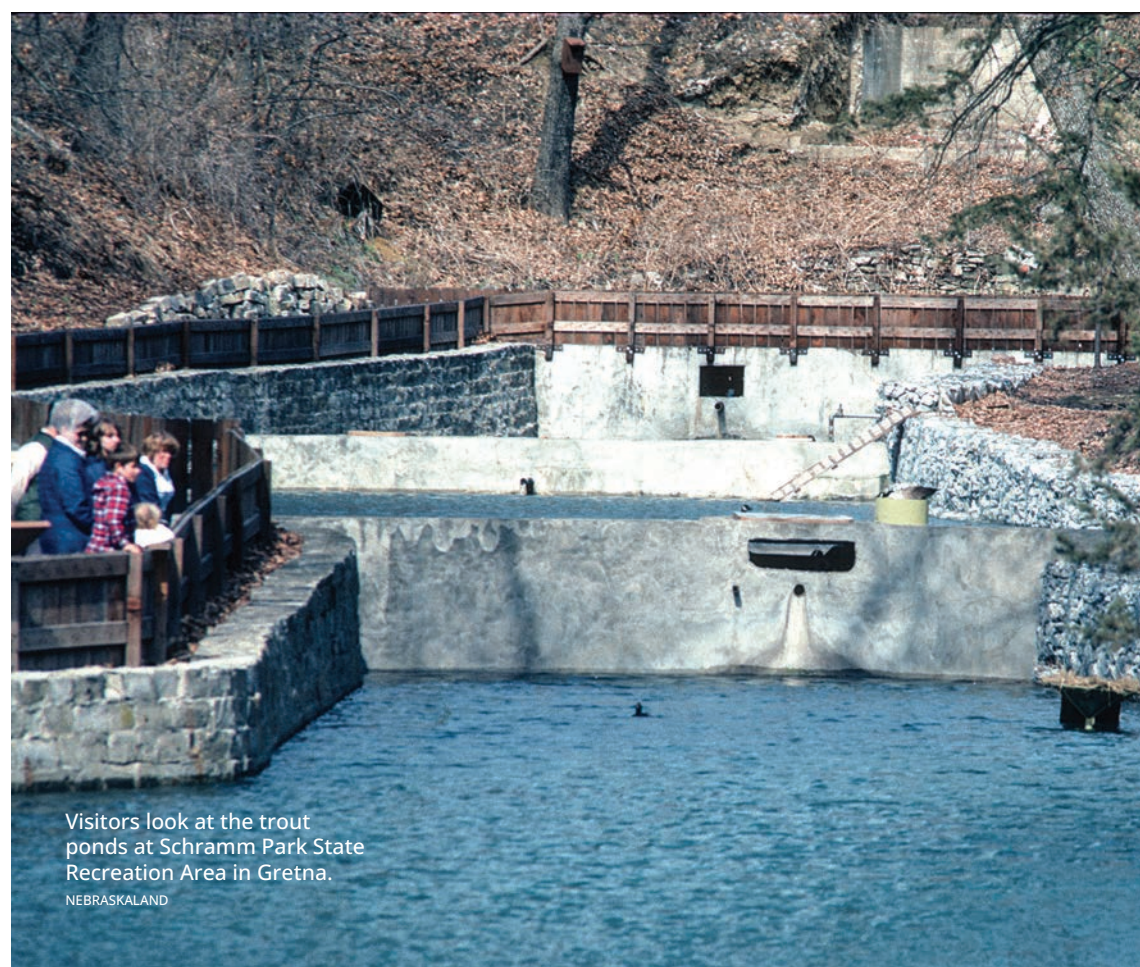
The Lacey Act of 1900 kicked off a string of important federal legislation to conserve fish and wildlife species, among them the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act of 1934 (the Duck Stamp), the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act of 1937 and the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act of 1950.

The magazine seemed to pull no punches in its goals of conservation and preservation, lambasting those who skirted hunting and fishing regulations and the "game hogs" who posed near piles of dead animals they'd shot. Early issues listed game violators and their fines.



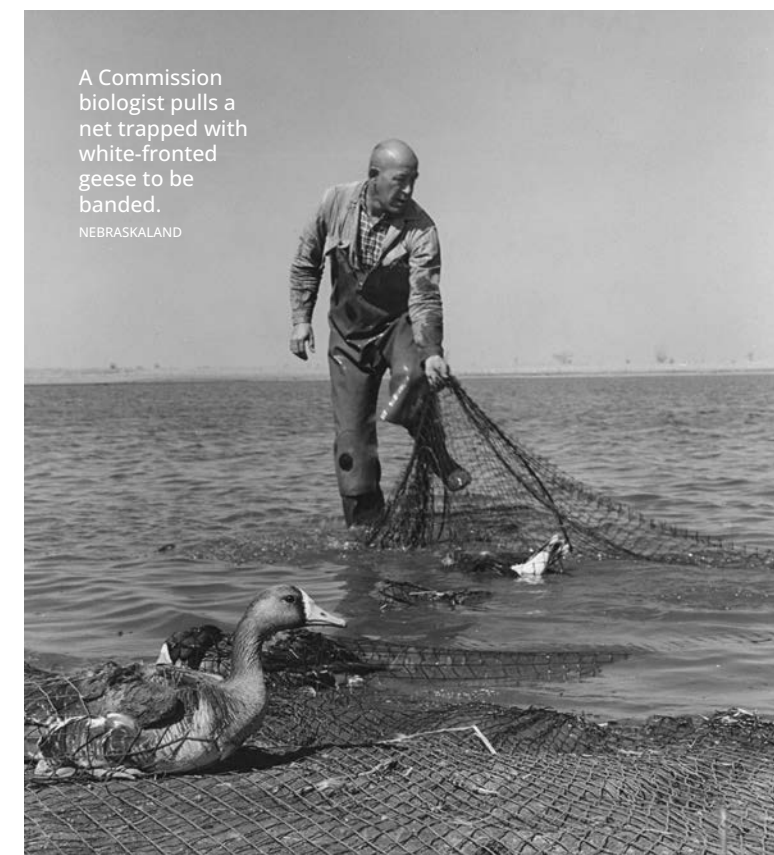
A group of women paddle a row boat across the hatchery ponds at Schramm Education Center, formerly Ak-Sar-Ben Aquarium, at Schramm Park State Recreation Area.

NEBRASKALAND



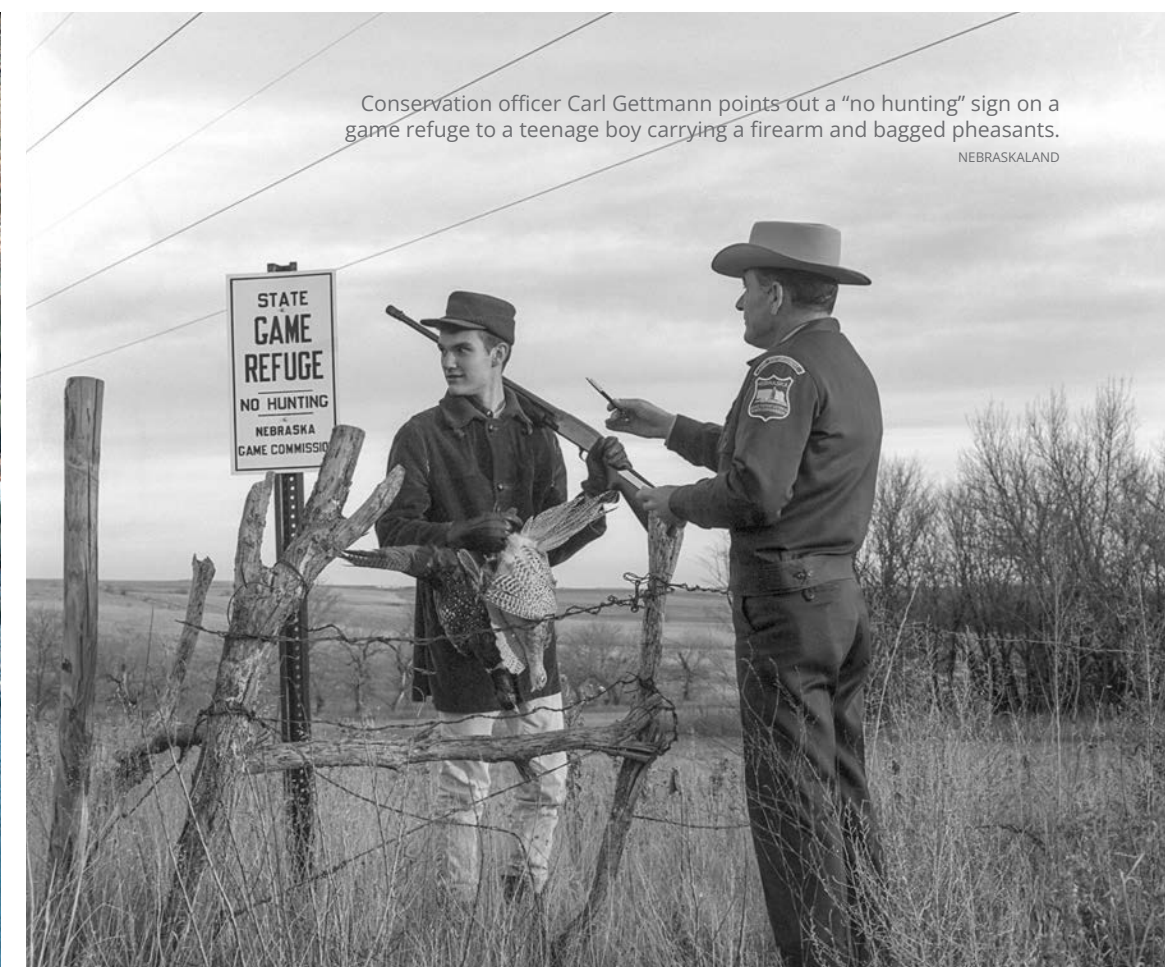
Visitors look at the trout ponds at Schramm Park State Recreation Area in Gretna.

NEBRASKALAND



A Commission biologist pulls a net trapped with white-fronted geese to be banded.

NEBRASKALAND



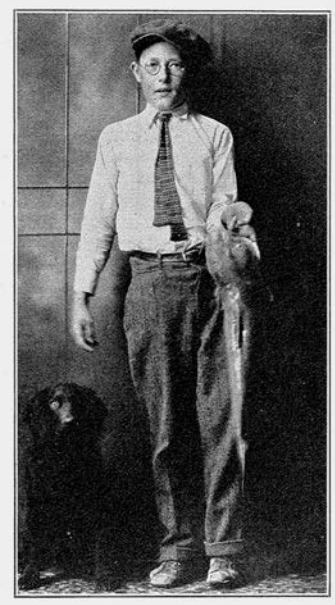
Conservation officer Carl Gettmann points out a "no hunting" sign on a game refuge to a teenage boy carrying a firearm and bagged pheasants.

NEBRASKALAND

In a colorful bit of prose, O’Connell wrote an article in 1927 from the point of view of a prairie chicken pleading its case before “the court of public opinion.”

“Today, Your Honor, we are faced with extinction,” O’Connell wrote, representing the impassioned bird. “The White Man has come in ever increasing numbers, pushing farther and farther westward until today there is no place left for us. Not only is it impossible for us to find suitable places where we can obtain food and build our nests — worse than that, Your Honor, it is impossible for us to find a place where White Man will even let us rest in peace and security. There is only a handful of us left.”

With so little wildlife on the landscape, much of the magazine’s content focused on the agency’s successful efforts in establishing fish populations. The pages showed photos of people holding their catch, the fruits of stocking efforts that had taken place since the agency’s creation as the Nebraska Fish Commission in 1879.



It also spread conservation messages to help wildlife, with the most important messages earning mention on a full back-page cartoon to drive home the message.

TOP: A greater prairie-chicken dances on a lek at Burchard Lake WMA in Pawnee County.

ERIC FOWLER, NEBRASKALAND

BOTTOM: Nebraskaland artist “Bud” Pritchard shows his “Wildlife in One Reel” illustration depicting pheasants.

NEBRASKALAND

The value of habitat, whether leaving it or creating it, was a prime topic in the 1950s, likely in response to the ever-increasing intensity of agriculture that followed World War II. During that decade, articles written by wildlife biologists and others — based on what they believed to be the truth at the time — often promoted planting some species of trees and shrubs that are now considered invasive. Several stories in the 1950s stumped for creation of the Soil Bank program, including some by Mel Steen, the Game and Parks director, who wrote the soil bank plan while in Missouri.

As habitat and even pheasant numbers declined, the writers encouraged feeding game birds to get them through the winter and installing flushing bars on horse-drawn mowers to give birds warning to get out of the way.

While conservation was a primary topic in the first issues, not all wildlife was looked upon favorably. Along with free-roaming housecats, some species were identified as “enemies of wildlife” — crows, goshawks, sharp-shinned hawks and turtles among them. Any species perceived to be harmful to game animals was frowned upon. All insects were considered to be a nuisance, and getting rid of them was seen as a benefit of having game birds.

While the words have had an impact, Nebraskaland imagery has surely done its part for developing the public’s appreciation for wildlife.

Artist C.G. “Bud” Pritchard joined the staff in 1949, bringing wildlife scenes to the cover and natural history articles until his retirement in 1974. As camera technology improved, staff photographers — the first of whom were hired in 1957 — brought high-quality photographs of countless species to the pages.



TOP LEFT: Kent Fricke releases a river otter into the Platte River in Hall County.

ERIC FOWLER, NEBRASKALAND

TOP RIGHT: Pronghorn are released in the Sandhills.

NEBRASKALAND

ABOVE: Turkeys are released in the 1960s as part of the effort to restore wild populations to the state.

NEBRASKALAND

As game species rebounded and became plentiful enough to hunt, the pages began telling about people pursuing them. For instance, each of the early deer seasons, the first in 1945 and the second in 1949, were celebrated in the pages of the magazine, including reports on hunter success and the average weight of harvested deer and photos of happy hunters.

The magazine also has helped celebrate the reintroduction of species. It reported on the release of Merriam’s wild turkeys from South Dakota and Wyoming to the Pine Ridge in the winter of 1958-1959, an effort that proved successful after numerous other attempts failed. In 1958, it told of the release of pronghorns south of Bassett to restore a population lost to settlement.

It told about the bighorn sheep brought from South Dakota’s Custer State Park to be placed in a 500-acre enclosure at Fort Robinson State Park in 1981, and when that growing herd was released from the pen in December 1988. Nebraskaland photographers accompanied wildlife division staff when they obtained sheep for ensuing releases from Colorado, Montana and Alberta, Canada.

The magazine also told about releases of river otters on the Platte, Niobrara and Elkhorn rivers between 1986 and 1991, and the species’ recovery and removal from the threatened list in 2020.

Just as state wildlife action plans such as the Nebraska Natural Legacy Project have brought a focus to a wide



OPPOSITE TOP: A tom wild turkey struts at Crescent Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Garden County. JUSTIN HAAG, NEBRASKALAND

OPPOSITE BOTTOM: Bighorn sheep run at Cedar Canyon Wildlife Management Area in Scotts Bluff County. JUSTIN HAAG, NEBRASKALAND

LEFT TOP: Canada geese are held in rearing pens at Sacramento-Wilcox Wildlife Management Area. NEBRASKALAND

LEFT BOTTOM: A bighorn sheep is released back to the wild after receiving ear tags and a telemetry collar from Game and Parks employees and volunteers at Williams Gap Wildlife Management Area. JUSTIN HAAG, NEBRASKALAND

array of animal species in need of conservation, the pages of NebraskaLand have reflected a more holistic approach to conservation by the agency. You'd be hard-pressed to find a wildlife species that hasn't graced the cover of Outdoor Nebraska or NebraskaLand or at least mentioned within its pages.

In the magazine's time, Canada geese have risen from near extinction to being considered a nuisance in areas. The coverage of that species included reintroduction of geese to the Sandhills after being raised in pens at Sacramento-Wilcox Wildlife Management Area. The publication also helped spread the word about the harmful effects of the pesticide DDT, and documented the return of bald eagles and ospreys after it was banned. Even trumpeter swans have become a common sight in places.

As the scope of research efforts for the state's fauna and flora has increased, NebraskaLand has delivered findings to the people. Often, biologists have penned the articles.

There are still many challenges on the conservation front. Among them are disease, predation and, of course, habitat loss from, as O'Connell put it, the "ever-grasping hand of commerce."

However, if the first readers of Outdoor Nebraska could have jumped ahead 100 years, they surely would marvel at the wildlife populations of today. O'Connell would be glad to see there are still prairie chickens around to state their case.

As the agency's conservation officers and wildlife professionals have led the charge in preserving and bringing back populations of living animals and plants, the magazine has been there to document progress and deliver the conservation messages that aided in the success. May the coming century bring as many triumphs to report. 



RICK MEYER, HOUSTON, TEXAS



PHIL KNERL, PONCA



JEFF STUMPF, OMAHA



CHRIS TWIDWELL, FLAGSTAFF, ARIZONA



JOHN TREMAIN, LINCOLN



LOWELL J. STARK, PRIOR LAKE, MINNESOTA



INEZ GEBERS, JOHNSON



SHARON PORTER, LINCOLN



JIM STEELE, OMAHA



RON MELBYE, WAVERLY



TOM EVANS, GOLDEN, COLORADO



LYLE CLEMENS, KENESAW

Portraits from the Past

By Jeff Kurrus



EVAN KLANECKY, UTICA



W.C. BILL HAMILTON, ANKENY, IOWA



MARK VAN SKIVER, HEBRON



ROBERTA HYDE, COMSTOCK



JOAN JOHNS, OMAHA



MIKE PONTE, GRAND ISLAND



DEREK RUSSELL, IMPERIAL



LARRY FREEZE, NORTH PLATTE



JIM WILSON, GRAND ISLAND



MIKE DAUBERT, OMAHA



KENT E. PERSON, HOLDREGE



BOB ANDERSON, LINCOLN



SALLY BOROWSKI, GRANT



BECKY STIEHL MCCORD, COLORADO SPRINGS



MIKE LEMKE, GARDEN CITY, KANSAS



RAYMOND MLINAR, GREELEY



ROBERT T. STEVENS, VALENTINE



PAUL LARSON, FREMONT

Reading our “Portraits From the Past” section each month is a cathartic experience for me. Since December 1997, more than 850 reader-submitted photos have been published, each an important piece of Nebraska’s outdoor heritage. When viewing these images, it’s easy to get emotional.

I never get over seeing photos of smiling young men on their last upland or big game hunt before they were sent off to fight for our country, never having the opportunity to walk those same fencerows or sit in that stand again.

When an elderly woman sends in a tattered black-and-white photograph of herself as a little girl holding a fish with her father, it’s impossible not to think about my relationship with my own daughter, knowing that in the future, images of us will be shared in this same publication.

Many of these photos have also made me smile: the excitement from a duck hunt 40 years ago frozen in time, the sepia tones of the original picture seemingly giving the hunter permission to enjoy a smoke after a long day afield.

Portraits of the Past is also where pastimes like trapping, and images of fathers and sons and friends and neighbors proudly standing in front of a pelt-covered barn wall, can be shown, because “it was just different back then.”

Images like these are of particular interest to many outdoor enthusiasts, because they are about so much more than trapping, hunting, fishing or camping — they illustrate a time when our moms and dads and all the others who took us outdoors were at the center of our universe, where time spent in nature together was the best time spent.



The Heyday, 1969 ▲

I always tried to fish on two specific days — New Year’s Day and Super Bowl Sunday — rarely encountering another angler.

– Leo Turner, Lisco



Looking for Pheasants, 1974 ▲

Here I am, going to look for a pheasant, shotgun in tow. We didn’t need to wear helmets in those days.

– Curt Koehler, Bee



Waterfowl Hunting, 1929 ▲

This photo was taken in Atkinson. Johnny Seger and his dad, Donat, are shown.

– Chuck Leiningen, Atkinson



After the Hunt, ca. 1920s ▲

I found this photo, taken in Lisco, of Ralph Golden, Tom Belieu, Isaac Robbins and Bert Robbins after a successful waterfowl hunt.

– Eldon Wohlers, Crawford



Boat Car, 1966 ▲

Driving the boat car at Box Butte Reservoir is Bill Barker, with Darlene Barker in the passenger seat and my mom Bev Wieting.

– Mark Wieting, Lincoln



Deer Hunt, 1979 ▲

My wife, Kathy, and I are all smiles after a mule deer hunt in Custer County.

– Gary Lemke, St. George, Utah



◀ Coyote Pups, ca. 1938

My dad, Henry Petersen, and I hold coyote pups on our farm northwest of Auburn. The pups were remarkably calm and didn’t struggle as long as we kept our hands on them and didn’t make any fast movements.

– Loren Petersen Green, Valley Center, California

My Dad Loved Coon Hounds, ca. 1950s ▼

This is my dad, Ernest E. Harmon of Syracuse. Even before he died at the age of 83, he made sure his coon hounds had homes.

– Irene Fisher, Humbolt



Cherry County Coyote Hunt, ca. 1922 ▲

My grandfather, Walter Adamson, and his father-in-law, Joe Edwards, photographed with coyote pelts from a Cherry County hunt.

– Marge Adamson Harris, Lincoln



Fishing for Sunnies, ca. 1950s ▲

This is me and my brother, Jim, sporting matching hats and shirts, no less, with sunfish from the creek near the old Mosely place west of Weissert.

– Steve Moseley, York



Pelican Lake Pike, 1984 ▲

Our sons, Wyatt and Dustin, hold a northern pike they caught while ice fishing at Pelican Lake on the Valentine National Wildlife Refuge.

– Doyce Williams, North Platte



Deer Hunt Near Worms, 1953

Posing with the deer of their dads from that season are Conni Bales and Barb Sander.

– Bob Sander, Holdrege

Record Whitetail, 1961 ►

My brother, Jeff Nelson, and Todd Wackel show off the Nebraska record whitetail that Todd's dad, Robert, shot. It scored 192 6/8.

– Bryan Nelson, Fremont



A Good Day, ca. 1943 ▲

My paternal grandfather, George Nolda, and his youngest son, Wilbur, with their two neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. Fink, show off the results from a hunt near Ravenna. Wilbur was drafted and sent to Korea years later. In a letter home he lamented not being home for pheasant season, but "I'll be home next year and we'll give them hell." He was killed in action a month later.

– Valerie Vierk, Ravenna



Hunting Near Agate, ca. early 1900s ▼

My grandfather, John Wesley Warren, center bottom row, used hunting to provide meat for their family and some to sell.

– Jim Warren, Gretna



Turtle Creek Catch, ca. 1935 ▲

Bernard Rischling, Warren Rischling, Francis Fixemer and Jack Adams — all from Geneva — after a day of fishing.

– Patty Adams, Omaha



Fishing at Lake Ericson, 1933 ▲

Pictured are Lawrence, my dad Jim, Francis, Grandpa John, Dave and Al — all Van Ackerens. I still have Dad's wooden tacklebox.

– Larry Van Ackeren, Yutan



Wood River Waterfowl, ca. late 1920s/early 1930s ▲

This is my great-grandfather, Jack Glass, with Bill Glass and Mort Mackey after a Platte River hunt near Wood River.

– Andrew Glass, Hastings



Crow Shoot, ca. 1947 ▲

Kennerd Palmer, Ralph Kohler and I pose with more than 500 crows shot off their roost back when crows were considered a disease carrier and this was legal.

– Gordon Cram, Tekamah



Rock Creek Station Historical Park, 1985 ▲
After an afternoon hike, members of the Wolfe, Perau and Schmersal families posed for a photo. Our three families camped together for more than 40 years.
– Mark Wolfe, Lincoln



Hunting with Dad, 1974 ▲
This is one of the many hunting trips with our father, John Moreland. Pictured are Marc, Bruce and Karen. Dad taught us to love the land, Nebraska in particular.
– Kristine (Morehead) Hansen-Cain, Omaha

Pheasant Hats, 1964 ▼
This is my father, Edward V. Naprstek, who prepared 340 pheasant pelts for shipment to Minneapolis where the feathers were used for Milady's Hats. The beaks were used for artificial fingernails.
– Marjorie Kearney, Overton



Snow Bunnies, 1928 ▼
Joseph E. Hejl, Ermine Klima, Josef Hejl and Steve Klima pose after a hunt in the Crete area. Josef immigrated with his family to America in 1903 from Austria.
– Francis Hejl, Denton



From Hoops to Ducks, 1951 ▲
Pictured are my father, Mel Jelkin, Rodney Bunker and Dallas Einspahr — three members of the 1951 Class C state basketball championship team from Hildreth — after a hunt near Clark Lake.
– Bill Jelkin, Omaha



Loup City Pheasants, 1930 ▲
Back row from left are John Borzekofski, Lou McDonald, Jake Kuntz with baby Mary Lou White, Frank Borzekofski and Paul Borzekofski. In the front row are Dorothy Thies, Barb Barnard, Bob Kuntz and me.
– Paul Kuntz, Beatrice



Me and Hank, 1986 ▲
Hank was owned by my hunting partner, Terry Rasmussen, in northern Howard County. Great times hunting there in the '50s and '60s.
– Henry "Hank" Lokke, Omaha



First Mule Deer for Dad, ca. 1945 ▲
My father, Matt Freeman, grandfather Jesse and uncle Douglas pose with the local game warden after a mule deer hunt. The mounted head still hangs on my wall.
– Mark Freeman, Dallas



◀ Loup River Hunt, ca. 1915
This is my father, John C. Poppe (right). His hunting companion is unknown to me. They lived in Scotia and hunted the Loup rivers area.
– Paul Poppe Newmyer, North Platte

Hunting the Edwards Homestead, 1910 ▼
My grandmother, Delania Edwards Adamson, top second from the left, poses with her brothers and neighbors at the Edwards Homestead — now the Ford family ranch.
– Marge Adamson Harris, Lincoln



The Magic Bullet, 1918 ▼
My great-grandpa Allen Cooper and his son, Richard, show the coyotes they shot with, as family legend tells, one shell.
– Marla Cooper Wademan, Crete



Jackrabbits near Wahoo, ca. 1941 ▲
Martin Hobza and I (right) show the results of a two-hour jackrabbit hunt 10 miles west of Wahoo in 1941.
– Dick Novotny, Omaha



Grandfather's Buck, 1963 ▲

My grandfather, Herman Blankenau, was a native German and World War I veteran for Germany. He grew up wanting to hunt, but German restrictions didn't allow it. He cherished being able to hunt in Nebraska.
– Don Blankenau, Lincoln



A Lifelong Shotgunner, 1940 ▲

This is my mother, Darleen Butolph. She and my father, Clarence, hunted together until he was drafted into the Army during World War II. He was killed in action in France in 1944, and my mother continued to hunt until 1990.
– Richard Butolph, Ventura, California



Coyote Hunting by Airplane, ca. 1940s ▲

Henry Glisman, Louie Steen, Bill Zimmerman, Henry Siert (my grandfather) Clarence Schroeder and John Zimmerman hunted coyotes by airplane west of Gretna.
– Bob Dickinson, Gretna

Two Days on the Platte, ca. early 1900s ▼

August Blenderman and Henry A. Heumann pose after a two-day hunt on the Platte River near Elm Creek.
– Bob Basoco, Lincoln



Two Days at Dewey Lake, 1908 ►

My grandfather, Henry Heumann, caught these fish over two days, June 17-18, at Dewey Lake. He turned 28 years old the following day.
– Bob Basoco, Lincoln



One of My Favorite Photos, 1968 ▼

Hunting pictures, and the stories that go with them, are priceless. This memorable day took place on Ray Walker's farmstead between Genoa and Saint Edward.
– Heath Birkel, Callaway



Duck Hunt Near York, 1985 ▲

My dad, Tom, taught me to love the outdoors at a young age. He passed away several years ago, but I am forever grateful for all of the memories we shared in the field.
– Chris Cox, Oro Valley, Arizona



Pheasant Hunt Near Schuyler, 1982 ▲

During Thanksgiving weekend on the family farm, my dad, Robert, and I hunted alongside our always reliable German shorthair, Toni.
– Roger Schmidt, Adrian, Missouri



Fishing at Lake Mac, 1948 ▲

My dad, Henry Adkinson, Floyd Nickolson, Winnie Adkinson, Francis Adkinson and my mother, Bula, show their catch of the day.
– Beatrice Hatch, Ogallala



My Favorite Picture, ca. 1916 ▲

This photograph in Lindsay of my grandfather, Fred Loeffler, is my favorite. He did not shoot the animal, only posed with it, as I imagine others did as well. He was 17 years old.
– Gary Ebert, Eagle



A Different Sort of Mixed Bag Hunt, ca. 1910s ▲

Ernest Wagner, Herman Bolz and Charlie Feurer after what looks to be a opossum, rabbit and squirrel hunt.
– David Feurer, Johnson

These portraits are powerful. They are our history, our memories and proof that we were all young once. For many, these images allow us to live vicariously through others as we continue to read Nebraskaland and, in our memories, we remain forever young.

“Portraits” is also where we can bask in the glory of others in hopes of having at least one more shot of that same feeling ourselves. [N](#)

The Photographers



A Retrospective on Nebraskaland Photography

By Eric Fowler

TOP LEFT: Today, photographers battle dust on the sensors of their digital cameras. In the late 1960s or early 1970s, Lou Ell stalked these elk on the Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge with his Graflex Speed Graphic camera, not knowing until the sheet film was developed that an ant had hitched a ride in the camera.

TOP RIGHT: Louis Lovenberg, known to Outdoor Nebraska readers as Lou Ell, was a writer, photographer and videographer for Nebraska Game and Parks for 17 years.

BOTTOM LEFT: The tell-tale circular highlights show Greg Beaumont used a mirror reflex lens similar to a telescope to capture this image of a duck on the Crescent Lake National Wildlife Refuge in the early 1970s.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Jon Farrar, pictured here in 1981, spent countless hours photographing wildlife from a variety of blinds, including this one he built from conduit and chicken wire to fit on his johnboat, during his 42 years with Nebraskaland.

Nebraskaland Magazine has long been known for its excellent photography. Indeed, photos have been present on its pages since it began as Outdoor Nebraska in 1926, including the first issue, which had a photo on the cover and 13 more inside.

Who captured the first cover image of a child wearing a straw hat, sitting on a stream bank, baiting a hook tied to his fishing line, tied to a twig is not known: There is no photo credit for that image or any in the issue, and no negative or print exists in the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission's extensive photo library. The identity of the child is not known, either.

We do know who captured the photograph of a Brittany spaniel, resting on its master's shotgun with three prairie chickens it had retrieved during a hunt featured on the second cover: Loron Bunney.

Bunney had at least three more photos in that issue, including a landscape of Scotts Bluff National Monument reflected in what is now known as Terry's Pit, photos of the new Rock Creek Hatchery, and anglers happily displaying their catch.

At the time, Bunney was in his second year as a game warden with the Bureau of Game and Fish, a job he would hold for 40 years and do so well that an award given annually to a current officer now carries his name. Bunney was also a dedicated hunter and one of the state's top trapshooters, and penned a few articles on that subject and others for the magazine. But he was also a photographer, and a good one. A profile of the officer in the Summer 1951 issue said: "Many of the pictures appearing in past issues of Outdoor Nebraska were taken by Bunney."

In 1949, Bunney even captured a photo of two whooping and three sandhill cranes in flight along the North Platte River somewhere west of Lake McConaughy. At the time, there were believed to be just 35 whoopers left in North America.

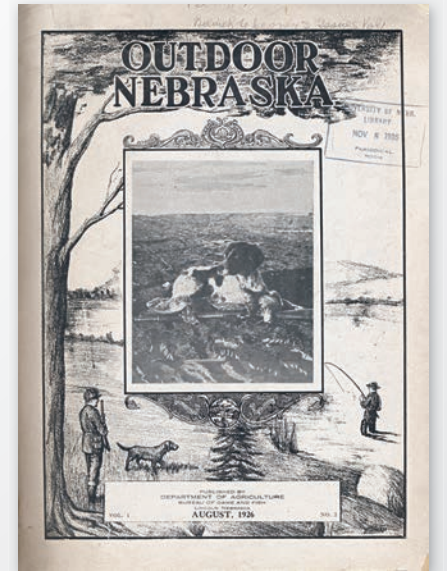
The second issue of the magazine perhaps told the story of where some of the photos published in the decades to follow came from: "Pictures Wanted: The editor of Outdoor Nebraska desires good pictures of fish and game. If you have a good picture of your fishing trip, send it in. Or, if you have a picture of a Nebraska lake or stream or bit of scenery, send it in. All pictures not used will be returned."

There have been photos in nearly every issue of the magazine. Many, especially photos of happy hunters and anglers with their bags, were likely contributed by readers. Others may have been captured by the magazine's editor, or camera-toting Commission biologists or wardens. Some were provided by the University of Nebraska or local newspapers.

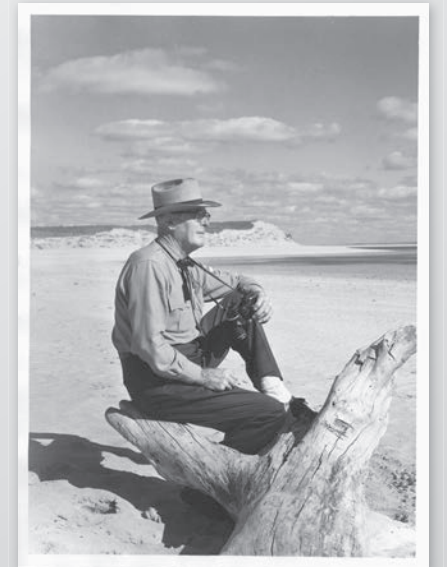
It wasn't until 1957 that Outdoor Nebraska hired its first photographer, Fred Gibbs. His first credited photos appeared in the fall issue. Gibbs was hired in advance of the magazine's transition from a quarterly to monthly publication in 1958.

In April 1958, he was replaced by Gene Hornbeck, who served several roles on the staff, including photographer-writer and chief of photography, until 1969, when he left to become the outdoor editor for the Omaha World-Herald, a position he held until 1990. Hornbeck mostly photographed and wrote about hunters and anglers pursuing fish and game around the state, but also photographed landscapes and wildlife.

Lou Ell was the next photographer to join the staff. His photos and stories first appeared in 1961, and he served as chief of photography before retiring in 1978. Ell excelled in all fields, including landscapes and wildlife, and with a background in studio photography, was innovative in that work. (See Old-School AI on page 59.)



Loron Bunney, pictured below, was a game warden from 1925 to 1965. He was also a photographer, capturing many images for Outdoor Nebraska during his career, including the cover for the second ever issue of the magazine, a Brittany spaniel after a successful grouse hunt.





LEFT: Ken Bouc witnessed multiple lightning strikes above an old farmstead.

BELOW: Rocky Hoffmann found Canada geese and mallards swimming through steam fog on the North Platte River on a cold winter morning.



ABOVE: Farrar captured a bison wearing a bouquet of sunflowers on its horn on the Niobrara Valley Preserve.

RIGHT: Farrar said this photo of an eared grebe laying an egg in a Sandhills marsh was his “all-time high.”



Several other photographers spent time on the staff, including Dick Schaffer, Greg Beaumont, Charles Armstrong, Steve O'Hare and Jack Curran.

While photography had become the calling card of the magazine in the 1960s, it was the work of four individuals who joined the staff between 1969 and 1974 that took it to the next level: Ken Bouc, Jon Farrar, Bob Grier and Rocky Hoffmann.

Grier and Hoffmann were the first staff assigned to district offices, Grier in Alliance and Hoffmann in North Platte. Prior to that, staff often made two-week-long road trips from Lincoln to other parts of the state to gather images and words.

All four captured stunning landscapes, with perhaps Grier, who the Commission sent to a workshop taught by Ansel Adams, leading the way on that front. They photographed wildlife, with Farrar going to great lengths to capture intimate portraits of so many species, including the obscure, lesser-known ones. (Read “A Rare Bird: Remebering Jon Farrar” in the March 2022 *Nebraskaland*) Hoffmann often

focused on people and what they did outdoors. Bouc often focused on history, fishing and fish in his work. He captured many of the photos in *The Fish Book*, a special issue produced in 1987, using an underwater camera, mask, snorkel and fins, or strobes and aquariums in the photo studio.

By the time the last of the quartet retired in 2012, they had a combined 155 years of experience with the magazine. Another outstanding writer and photographer who worked during that same era was Don Cunningham, who joined the staff in 1981 and was the editor before moving on in 2000.

Those five helped young Michael Forsberg, hired in 1993, get started down a path that allowed him to leave his mark in both images and stories in the magazine and become one of the top conservation photographers in the country.

“I think what sticks with me about that staff in general was across-the-board, you know, they were just consistently good,” Forsberg said. “And they knew what they were good at. And so they self-sorted, I think, the kinds of stories and the kind of photography that they knew



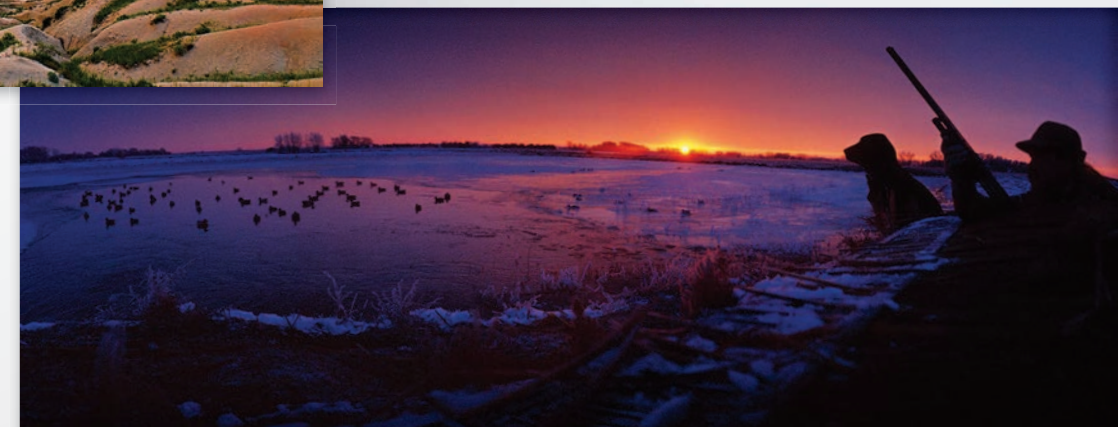
LEFT: Bob Grier found a single white horse grazing in front of seven windmills as a storm approached the Watson Ranch to the north of Scottsbluff.

BELOW: Justin Haag photographed a flock of turkeys feeding in a snowstorm near Chadron.



ABOVE: Grier captured a storm moving over the badlands in Sioux County.

RIGHT: Don Cunningham used a 35mm panoramic camera to shoot this image of duck hunters at sunrise.



they could pull off, and did it very well and worked really well together as a team.

“They had just enough ego to care about the pictures that they were making and the words that they were writing, but were really genuinely good people. I couldn't have had a better mentorship opportunity than with all of those guys.”

When I came to Game and Parks in 1998, my first job was not with *Nebraskaland*, but I hoped it would lead to a position on the staff. I thought that opportunity would come in 10 years or so when Bouc, Farrar, Grier or Hoffmann retired. It was Forsberg leaving in 1999 to do his own thing that opened up the position I filled the following year.

I'm now the old guy on the staff, and find it hard to believe I've been a part of the magazine for one-fourth of its existence. I, too, was blessed to have learned so much from the long-timers and Forsberg, the short-timer.

The goal of the current magazine staff — Jeff Kurrus, Justin Haag, Jenny Nguyen-Wheatley and Julie Geiser — and others

I've worked with, including Doug Carroll, is simply to live up to the standard set by those who preceded us. We know that being a member of the staff is a dream job. We get paid to photograph and write about all of the great things this state has to offer: the land, fish, wildlife and the importance of conserving all three, the many outdoor recreational opportunities, and especially the people.

“It's the Nebraska people,” Grier said of what makes *Nebraskaland* special. “I was never turned down for the opportunity to go on somebody's land to photograph. Everybody made themselves available. More than that, they'd grab you and say, ‘Here, I'm going to show you this or that.’ You meet an awful lot of good people.

“I think it's something to be proud of. It's something you can say to people, when they say ‘What is your name?’ and I'd say Bob Grier. And they'd say, ‘Oh, you're a photographer with *Nebraskaland*.’ They'll recognize you for the rest of your life working for the magazine.”

It is a responsibility none of us, current or past, take lightly.

Photography History

Wildlife photographers of today, imagine this: Your assignment is to capture photos of greater prairie chickens and sharp-tailed grouse in the Sandhills. Your camera is a Graflex Speed Graphic, with “speed” in the name because its top shutter speed is 1/1000th of a second.

You have a 400mm lens mounted to the front of the camera’s bellows. It is one of the larger focal lengths made for the camera, but is comparable to a 120mm lens on a 35mm camera. You focus manually, of course, likely through the rangefinder on the side of the camera, compose the shot and hope the birds don’t move before you can trip the shutter.

Your film comes in 3 1/4- x 4 1/4-inch sheets. You have a special film holder that holds a dozen sheets mounted on thin metal plates that can be shuffled front to back within a leather bag hanging off the side. You remove a dark slide before each exposure, and when you’ve exposed all 12, you pop on another film holder or you are done until you can reload in a darkroom or, possibly, in a dark bag you brought to the photo blind.

That is how Lou Ell and Gene Hornbeck photographed grouse for a feature in the May 1963 issue of *Outdoor Nebraska*, according to a note in a later issue from editor Dick Schaffer, who added that most grouse were 20 to 30 feet from their blinds. The film in the Nebraskaland photo library tells a somewhat different story, with both medium-format and 35mm negatives of grouse in the photo spread. Regardless, some of the images were captured with the Graflex, requiring the photographers to be extremely deliberate, a far cry from the spray-and-pray approach that is possible with today’s high-speed digital cameras.

Can you imagine photographing wildlife that way? I asked Michael Forsberg, a former Nebraskaland staffer and current contributor, who replied, “No. It just blows me away to see that. I don’t think people understand the kind

of talent and commitment that existed back in the day for the photographers for the magazine. We live in a luxurious existence now.”



LEFT: Gene Hornbeck turned the camera on his photo blind and new 500mm Nikkor lens in 1963.

RIGHT: A 3 1/4 x 4 1/4 sheet of film shows prairie chickens captured by Lou Ell with a Graflex Speed Graphic camera.

While the Graflex was known to be one of the cameras used in the 1950s and, in Ell’s case, into the 1970s, we have no idea what others were carrying in the early years of the magazine. Were they box cameras like the Kodak Brownie, with a fixed aperture and 1/25 or 1/50 of a second shutter speed that required you to shoot in full sun or with flash with one type of film, or switch to a faster film on a cloudy day? Were they viewfinder or rangefinder cameras? There was a Leica M3 in the equipment pool at the magazine at one time. The 35mm single-lens reflex camera most of us are familiar with was introduced in the 1930s, but didn’t offer interchangeable lenses until the 1940s or ‘50s. Hornbeck had begun using 35mm in 1963, possibly sooner, as he published a photo spread “Life on a Sand Hills Lake” in September of that year that included a photo of his new Nikkor lens sticking out of his blind with the caption: “Cramped blind housed 500mm telephoto lens camera for

feature.” That camera may also have captured some of the grouse photos previously mentioned.

When Bob Grier joined the staff in 1970, they did have some Pentax Spotmatic 35mm SLR cameras, standard lenses up to 500mm, and even a 1000mm reflex mirror lens. But the primary camera was a Mamiya twin-lens reflex with interchangeable lenses up to 400 mm, equivalent to a 320mm in 35mm cameras. The medium-format camera produced a 6cm-by-6cm image and held 12 exposure rolls of film. The maximum speed of the leaf shutter, located in the lens, was 1/500th of a second.

Staff moved to a different medium format camera, the Hasselblad, in the late 1970s and continued using it into the late 1990s. Grier said most staff had five lenses from 40mm to 500mm, which compared to 30mm to 400mm. The tack-sharp Zeiss glass, and the comparable resolution of the large film, made them excellent cameras for landscape photography, if you forgive the weight and bulk. Like the Mamiya, however, the maximum shutter speed was 1/500th of a second, making them less than ideal for wildlife. The interchangeable film backs did allow flexibility. “You had two or three film backs,” Grier said. “You could have one preloaded with faster film for wildlife situations, but you’re still only getting 12 exposures.”

Of these early cameras, only the Pentax had a built-in light meter, so photographers carried hand-held meters to set their exposure. When rushed, they went with settings printed on film boxes, which they had memorized, and could always fall back on the “Sunny 16” rule. Grier said he continued to use hand-held meters for several years after built-in meters became standard. “I didn’t know if I could believe the meter in the camera,” he said.

The serious move to 35mm SLRs came in the early 1980s, when Nikon F3 and Canon F1 bodies were added to the bags. Some had motor drives, a first, allowing between 6- and a blazing 9-frames-per-second, a major advancement.

Autofocus technology hit the photography scene in the 1980s. The magazine staff began moving that way in 1990 with the purchase of two Canon T90s. A few years later they added Canon EOS-1, Nikon F4 and other bodies.

The early autofocus technology “sucked,” Forsberg said. All practiced zone focusing, prefocusing at a set distance and letting depth of field expand the range. And they excelled at tracking moving subjects because they practiced. “I’d go sit out in my front yard and practice, focusing on the cars driving by on the street,” Forsberg said.

In the early years of the magazine, photographers used both black-and-white and color film, including Kodak Tri-x and Kodacolor. Film was processed in house from the 1950s into the 1980s. It didn’t have much latitude, and the cardinal rule in film photography was to keep the sun over your shoulder.

When staff began using color-slide film, Kodachrome was a favorite of some due to its color reproduction and wider latitude. Others used Ektachrome. Later, the staff switched mostly to Fuji film, including Velvia 50, with its rich colors, and Provia. If light or the situation changed, requiring a switch to a faster film, they were adept at switching, even in mid-roll, when they would mark the last frame on the film leader and reload it later to save a few bucks. They bracketed exposures, taking one image at the setting the camera’s meter recommended, one at a stop over and another a stop under, just in case the meter was fooled.

Advancements in the quality of film, cameras and lenses allowed the magazine staff to abandon their Hasselblads and move fully to 35mm SLR cameras in the 1990s, something Grier said was “extremely freeing.”

“You could carry a belt pack with a few lenses and camera around your neck and very easily go hiking,” he said.

The biggest advancement in photography came with the advent of digital. Grier and I began Nebraskaland’s move to digital on our own equipment, Grier with a Canon Powershot G2 in 2002 and a D60 the following year, and myself with a Nikon D1x in 2004. Once we started shooting digital, it was hard to go back to film. Instantly, we knew if the exposure was correct and whether we captured the image we were hoping for. The entire staff switched to digital in 2005 and has upgraded several times since.

“We’re photographing wildlife on the prairies here in Nebraska that are mostly active on the edges of day, when the light is low,” Forsberg said. “There are a lot of photographs that can be made today that couldn’t be made in the old slide-film days.

“[With digital] you could look at the back of your screen and see if you’ve got what you wanted. And if it wasn’t running away or flying away, if it was a landscape or a person or something else, you could explore compositions with your camera, you could explore exposures with your camera ... and so I think it allowed us to start to see things in a little bit different way.

“And we didn’t have to wait a week for the slides to come back and put them on the light table to see if we got something or not.”

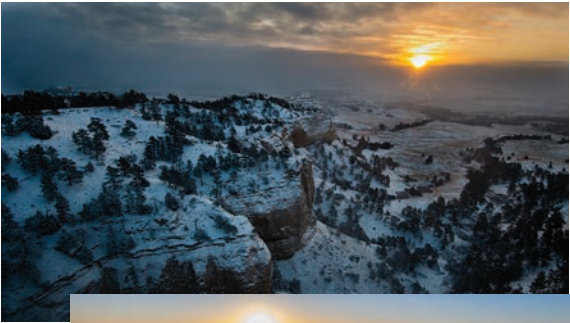


The evolution of cameras similar to ones that have been used by Nebraskaland photographers during the past 100 years ranges from box, folding, press, rangefinder, twin-lens reflex and Hasselblad, medium format, 35mm single-lens reflex, and digital SLR and mirrorless.



ABOVE: Haag began using a camera trap with external flashes to capture wildlife photos 24/7 in 2015. The tool is practically the only way to photograph reclusive species like mountain lions.

RIGHT: Justin Haag has photographed the Pine Ridge from a helicopter and with a drone.



The staff has always been quick to take advantage of advancements that allowed them to capture photos in ways they previously couldn't. Capturing an up-close photo of a bird on a nest, for example, once required either sitting in a blind nearby or placing a camera even closer that could be fired remotely from a blind nearby. The first remotes were air activated, and the range was extremely limited. It increased with the advent of infrared remotes, but only slightly. Radio triggers increased the range to a mile.

Now we can use motion-activated camera traps equipped with multiple flashes to capture intimate portraits of wildlife 24/7 while we are back in the office or sleeping at home. While they existed long ago, camera traps weren't practical until digital expanded the number of photos you could capture from 36 exposure roll of film to thousands.

The perspective of aerial photographs is sometimes the best way to tell the story about a landscape, and aeriels have been a part of Nebraskaland since the 1930s. Now, in addition to pointing the camera out of the window of a Cessna from 500 to a few thousand feet above the ground, we now have drones to capture images from lower elevations.

I got my start in photography in 1989 when my dad gave me a Pentax Spotmatic his uncle had purchased in the early

1960s. It was the camera that began the shift to 35mm at Nebraskaland. I had four lenses up to 300 mm, set my exposure and focused manually, and advanced the film with the fastest thumb in the west.

The advancements that have come since are mind boggling. We now carry mirrorless cameras with incredibly accurate autofocus that you can set to automatically detect and track a subject like a bird or person. The maximum speed of the electronic shutter is 1/32,000 second. Advanced metering makes automatic exposure settings extremely reliable.

You can rattle off 120 frames per second if you really want to catch the peak action. In the film days, exposing 10 36-exposure rolls of film in an outing was a lot. We can now do that in 3 seconds. We can even back up in time, recording images up to a half second before we actually tripped the shutter. We can change ISO on the fly, or let the camera do it for us. And we can capture usable, albeit barely, images at ISOs up to an insane 102,000, nearly allowing us to shoot in the dark.

Yet while much has changed in photography, the subjects photographed by Nebraskaland staff remain the same: its striking, diverse landscapes, its wildlife and its people enjoying both.

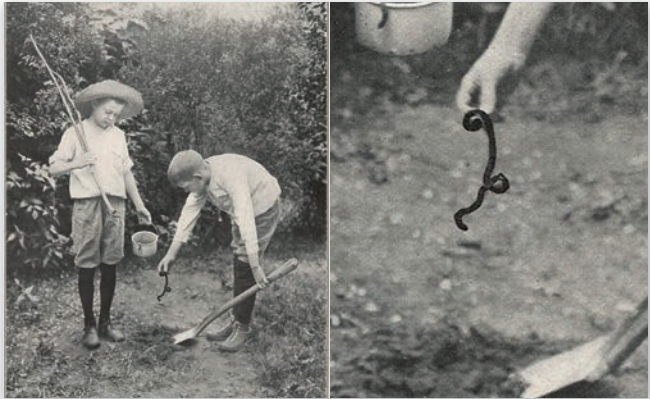
Technological advances and lighter materials used in super telephoto lenses have made life easier for Nebraskaland photographers during the past 70 years. Three lenses staff have used include: Nikkor T C 1:5 f+50cm (Introduced in 1955, 19.9 lbs.), Nikon 600mm f4 ED (1987, 14.4 lbs.) and a Nikon AF-S 600mm f4 FL ED VR (2015, 8.4 lbs.).



Old School AI

Generative artificial intelligence is changing the world we live in. It is being used to write stories and create photographs and videos so realistic it is sometimes hard to tell they are not real.

AI-generated stories and photos will not be a part of Nebraskaland Magazine's content, as we have chosen to follow long-held journalistic standards and lean toward documentary-style content. But that doesn't change our past. "Fake" photos have been around as long as photography, and many found their way onto the pages of Outdoor Nebraska and Nebraskaland.



A photo of boys collecting bait in the April 1931 Outdoor Nebraska included a hand-drawn worm.

While considerable effort went into making some of these photos, little went into the first, which appeared in 1931. In an illustration of two boys collecting bait to fish, the worm was drawn in the photo ... and not very well.

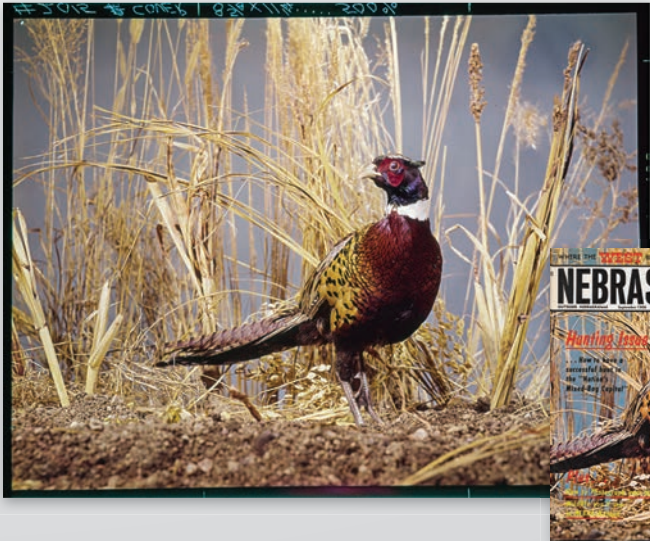
Gene Hornbeck began staging photos as soon as he joined the staff in 1958. For the October cover that

year, he photographed a pheasant, likely a mount on a stick, flushing from a field with a hunter taking aim in the background. The following month it was a Canada goose, again likely a mount, standing next to a cornfield. Another mounted pheasant and turkeys followed in 1959, both of which appear to have been photographed outdoors.

Lou Ell joined the staff in 1961 and brought with him experience in studio photography. He continued the type of work Hornbeck was doing in a studio in his basement, and helped design the studio in the Commission's new headquarters building, which opened in 1971. In both, he built sets with dirt, mud, logs, cornstalks, grass and other plants, and photographed taxidermy mounts of birds under studio lights. Once you know this occurred, it is easy to pick out some of the studio shots he and Hornbeck created, as many included the same sky-blue background.

Long-time staffer Bob Grier was hired by Ell in 1970 and remembers assisting on some of these shoots, including one where Ell set up a trigger to fire when a live pheasant took flight. Insects were also brought into the studio.

Grier remembers another set Ell built centered around a log. "He'd set up his lights and put the cottontail into the log, and he'd stand over there with a can of flocking material that you'd use on Christmas trees, and I'd be over there and poke the other end of the log with a stick and the rabbit would come out the front of the log and he would spray this stuff up in the air above it and it just came down like snow," Grier said. That image was on the cover of the February 1973 magazine, with Grier getting the photo credit.



Gene Hornbeck photographed a mounted pheasant in the studio for the September 1966 cover.



Lou Ell photographed cottontail rabbits in the studio more than once.

Staff members also set up a coop made of nylon netting in the studio to photograph birds in flight, including hummingbirds and gamebirds. The hummingbirds, photographed by Jack Curran, appeared in Birds of Nebraska in January 1985.



Jack Curran photographed a hummingbird within a net enclosure in the studio.

Hornbeck and Ell also got creative with fishing photos, creating images to make it appear trout, bass and pike were jumping out of the water. No one recalls exactly how they did it, if the fish were real or mounts, or if they were pulled out of the water or held above it while someone tossed something below them to make a splash, but the results were life-like enough that five made the cover. Ell added another touch when creating the April 1966 cover,

having a bass leaping toward a dragonfly perched on some cattails. Other fish were tethered with monofilament line and photographed in streams. And Hornbeck made an image look as though one was peering up through a hole in the ice at a woman angler.

Ell staged wildlife photos outside as well. The March 1962 cover photo used off-camera flash to illuminate a coyote that was likely a pet. The November cover that same year featured a turkey that was likely a captive bird or a mount with a hunter in the background aiming to shoot.

Between 1958 and 1978, there were at least 23 of these staged photos of fish, mammals and birds, real or mounted, featured on the cover, and many more inside.

Jon Farrar was another photographer who had a basement studio. He built an elaborate set for a least weasel he kept in his basement for about a year, allegedly leaving a window open during a snowstorm to give the set a different look. His daughter, Tasha, said he harvested a deer during rifle season to feed that weasel for the year or so he kept it. Farrar photographed other wildlife in the basement, as well, and Tasha was told that when she was just a baby, a rattlesnake he kept escaped into their home.

Fish were also photographed in the studio, primarily by long-time staffer Ken Bouc. Collected by fisheries biologists from waters around the state, they were set loose in a variety of fish tanks wrapped in black fabric and lit with



Pieces of clay targets were glued to plexiglass held in front of the camera to create this image.



Bouc's studio photo of male red shiners in spawning colors graced the cover of The Fish Book in 1987.



Lou Ell staged several jumping fish photos, including this one for the April 1966 cover. Current AI technology was used to remove the color shift from the old transparency and sharpen the photo.

strobes. Bases were built with sand and gravel surfaces to simulate the bottom of a lake or stream. Artificial plants, and even plants collected from area waters, were added to the tank to simulate a fish's natural habitat.

Bouc's underwater work wasn't all in the studio. He also is believed to have acquired the magazine's first underwater camera housing and went afield with a snorkel and fins to capture fish images. The Fish Book, a special issue published in 1987, is filled with these images, many of which would have been difficult, if not impossible, to capture in the wild when considering the rarity of some of these species and the poor water clarity in the state.

Some photos were created in the darkroom, including one for a story Grier did on crow hunting. "I never could get a picture of a crow flying," he said. For his story, they sandwiched two images, one Grier took of a hunter with a shotgun taking aim and another of a flock of crows flying overhead.

Old-school AI was also used to create photos of trapshooting. In an October 1970 story titled "Getting the Jump on Birds," pieces of clay targets were glued to a piece of plexiglass and held in front of the camera with a shooter in the background, a position no photographer would put themselves in. Bouc recreated the idea in color for a July 1992 story on sporting clays.

Thanks to advancements in photography, including camera traps, we can capture photos today that would have been impossible in the past.

We continue to stage photos from time to time at NebraskaLand, whether it is minnows in a tank or held captive in a stretch of stream by nets, mussels in an aquarium, or snakes in an enclosure. In some cases, this is the easiest, or only, way to capture quality images.

But rest assured, the last image of a mounted pheasant taking flight from grass appeared in the pages of this magazine long ago. [N](#)

1926
JUNE



The Nebraska Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Game and Fish published the first issue of Outdoor Nebraska set to be released from “time to time.”

1928
JANUARY



First color cover.

1950
JANUARY

Longtime artist C.G. “Bud” Prichard’s artwork first appeared on the cover of Outdoor Nebraska. By the time he retired in 1974, his work was featured on 43 covers.

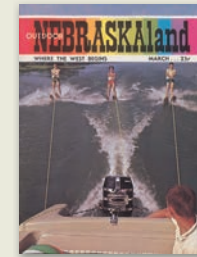


Outdoor Nebraska began publishing monthly instead of quarterly.

1958
JANUARY

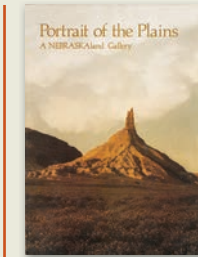


1964
MARCH



Between March and June, the magazine’s name changed from Outdoor Nebraska to Outdoor NEBRASKAland before settling on NEBRASKAland. An 8-page color section also was added.

1976
JANUARY



The first “Special Issue,” a book-length publication on a single topic — Portrait of the Plains, was published. Twenty-nine specials have been published since then, the last one being “100 Years of Nebraska State Parks” in 2021.

1986
AUGUST
SEPTEMBER



With this issue, NEBRASKAland began publishing 10 times per year.

2019
JANUARY
FEBRUARY



NEBRASKAland changed its masthead to its current typographic style. Since its inception in 1926, NEBRASKAland Magazine has featured more than 70 masthead changes.

100 YEARS OF NEBRASKALAND

By Eric Fowler

1930
OCTOBER



This was the last color cover printed until August 1942.

Outdoor Nebraska began paid subscriptions: 25 cents a year or \$1 for five years.



1952
SPRING

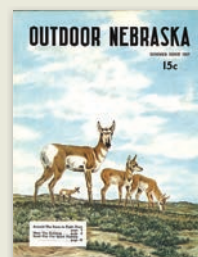


Outdoor Nebraska adopted its present 8 by 10 format.

1937
FALL

Fred B. Gibbs was the first photographer listed on the staff page. A year later, the first photo spread was published.

1957
SUMMER



1971
MARCH



Winners of NEBRASKAland’s first photo contest were announced. The contest continued for two years, then was discontinued until 2014’s Beautiful Nebraska. The reestablished contest continues today.

1984
JANUARY
FEBRUARY



NEBRASKAland’s youth magazine, Trail Tales, launched, with four 16-page issues per school year. It is sent to every fourth-grade classroom in the state.

1995
FALL

WHAT I LEARNED,



A sandhill crane feather glows in the evening light in Nebraska's Platte River Valley at the Crane Trust.

WHAT I SEE

Story and photos by Michael Forsberg



I still remember my first month on the job at Nebraskaland. It was January 1993. I was a newlywed and had just landed a position as a staff photographer and writer for a magazine I had loved since I was a kid in Lincoln. My heart was full and my head was spinning.

On the first day, I was introduced to Carl Wolfe, my office mate. Wolfe, a biologist and longtime outdoor educator, greeted me kindly then quickly pointed at the paper wasp nest suspended by fishing line from the ceiling near my new desk. “That is Dick Turpin’s. He just moved to the second floor but left the nest behind. He thought it still might have wasps in it.” He couldn’t help but grin.

Fortunately, I wouldn’t be at my desk much. I would be out learning to be a storyteller.

My first day afield was spent photographing field sparrows riding prairie seed heads down to the ground to feed during a snowstorm and fading light at Bur Oak Wildlife Management Area near Seward. My first wildlife story was documenting the daily rhythms of wintering bald eagles during a subzero week at Lake McConaughy. I used a cardboard refrigerator box as a blind covered with an old white bed sheet.

My assigned gear was a used Nikon F3 with a motordrive that shot a blistering six frames per second, and a 24mm, 50mm, 200mm macro and 400mm f3.5 prime lenses. No autofocus. No zooms. Old school. We shot unforgiving color slide film only and at \$12 a roll for purchase and processing 36 exposures, there was little room for technical error or poor compositional judgement. When legendary Nebraskaland staffer Jon Farrar reviewed my first photos on the light table in his dimly-lit corner office, he said, “Kid, your work is different.” I took it as a compliment.

At our all-staff meetings, I learned the complexity of how a monthly statewide magazine was planned. We worked on issues up to two years in advance while sitting around a table stained with coffee and donuts arguing content and jockeying for position and placement for our stories that we would write, photograph and assist in layout. I didn’t know it then, but I was in the best storyteller’s boot camp I could ever imagine.

I FELL IN LOVE WITH WILD NEBRASKA.

OPPOSITE TOP: Whitman Road on a fresh June morning feels like the heart of the Nebraska Sandhills.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM LEFT: A burrowing owl displays at Buffalo Gap National Grasslands in South Dakota.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM RIGHT: Caught on a time-lapse camera, a windmill stock tank and clearing thunderstorm is revealed at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Gudmundsen Ranch in the Nebraska Sandhills.

RIGHT: Whooping cranes walk through moonrise in a prairie wetland during fall migration near Marcelin, Saskatchewan.

FAR RIGHT: Near sunset, a bobcat moves along a creek drainage at Audubon's Spring Creek Prairie near Denton, Nebraska.



My early years with Nebraskaland shaped me more as a photographer than any other period in my life. Beyond the nuts and bolts, I learned how to track animals and gauge their movements, build blinds, manage extreme heat and cold and get trucks unstuck from a variety of circumstances without the assistance of AAA.

I acquired simple truths, such as leaving the fence gate the way you found it; if a rancher tells you it's just over the hill, you better pack a lunch; and the land you are standing on is not just someone's property but a family's livelihood. It also taught me how to approach and work with people when access and acceptance are necessary to tell a story, and those things are built on trust. And trust takes time.

Most importantly, my work with the magazine helped me to see the often overlooked and underappreciated beauty of one of the most ecologically diverse states in the Union. In short, I fell in love with wild Nebraska, and that love has instilled in me an unwavering responsibility to conserve and protect it for generations to come.

Shot with a camera trap, a pronghorn herd on the move crosses a wildlife-friendly fence on the A Bar A Ranch near Encampment, Wyoming.



Photographed with a time-lapse camera, a mountain lion pauses at sunrise above the banks of the North Platte River at State Line Ranch, Colorado.

“KID, YOUR
WORK IS
DIFFERENT.”

— Jon Farrar

TOP: A sandhill crane spreads its wings at daybreak on the Platte River roost at Nebraska’s Audubon Rowe Sanctuary.

RIGHT: A lone bison bull strides across the prairie under cloud towers at Wind Cave National Park, South Dakota.



Today in my rearview mirror, I see with clarity the privilege I’ve had, camera in hand, to show the world how North America’s cranes connect habitats and people along the Central Flyway; how a lingering wildness still survives across the 1 million square miles that is the Great Plains ecosystem; and how a team of like-minded souls can capture change over time across the Platte Basin by following a drop of water from mountains to plains and witness a watershed in motion, build community, and help grow the next generation of conservation storytellers.

In that mirror I also see an older and grayer me.

Looking forward through the glare of a bug-stained windshield, admittedly the future is harder to see. But what I know is there are stories that want to be told and people who need to tell them. And that is why this magazine is so important. Our relationship with the land and what we hold dear is really one big, unfurling, never-ending story. We share, care, learn and grow together by telling these stories.

Here’s to another 100 years, Nebraskaland. I am grateful. 

Michael Forsberg, a Lincoln native, was a full-time member of the Nebraskaland Magazine staff from 1993 to 1999. He has since published three books, co-founded the Platte Basin Timelapse and received numerous awards for his conservation writing and photography. A faculty member in the School of Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and a Senior Fellow with the International League of Conservation Photographers, he continues to contribute to Nebraskaland.



CLAREMONT GALE "BUD" PRITCHARD



CLAREMONT GALE "BUD" PRITCHARD



CLAREMONT GALE "BUD" PRITCHARD



CLAREMONT GALE "BUD" PRITCHARD



PAULA DAY



NEAL ANDERSON

ART FOR CONSERVATION

USE OF TRADITIONAL ILLUSTRATIONS THROUGH THE YEARS

By Jenny Nguyen-Wheatley

Photography and Nebraskaland are synonymous. The magazine is known for its intimate portraits of fauna and flora, sweeping landscapes of eastern prairies and western escarpments, waterways and the people who enjoy them. While it's difficult to imagine a time when photography was not the dominant medium, we would be remiss to forget the vital role that traditional illustrations played during the magazine's history.

Although Outdoor Nebraska — Nebraskaland Magazine's precursor — was primarily, and sparsely, illustrated by black-and-white photographs, paintings and syndicated comics and cartoons prior to 1949, it was the "Bud" Pritchard years of the 1950s through 1970s that transformed the magazine into the visual powerhouse it is today. For a while, traditional illustrations accomplished what photography could not.



PAULA DAY

Wildlife captivated the young Pritchard so intensely that he began sketching and painting their likeness.

BETTER THAN PHOTOGRAPHY

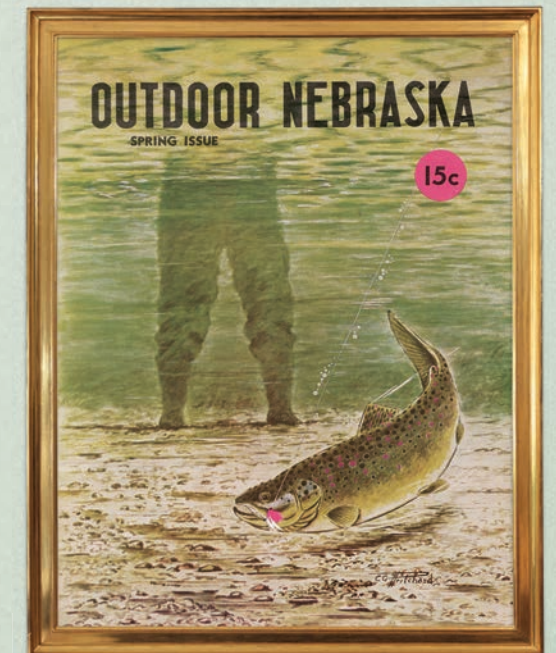
An English springer spaniel flushing a covey of quail, mallards touching down on water, an underwater view of a brown trout tussling with a fisherman above, a white-tailed buck leaping over a fence and seemingly off the page ... until the 1960s, these up-close portraits of wildlife would have been difficult or nearly impossible to capture in detail on film. Camera technology had yet to keep up with the demands of Outdoor Nebraska, and it would take a skilled artist to carry the magazine through the next 20 years.

Having grown up on his family's farm near Kenesaw northwest of Hastings, Claremont Gale "Bud" Pritchard spent countless hours observing migrating birds on the two marshes near his home. Wildlife captivated the young Pritchard so intensely that he began sketching and painting their likeness as a boy — and he didn't stop, not even for the Second World War that shipped him to places such as India, North Africa, Italy and the Philippines, where he sketched local birdlife and scenery on the backs of military forms and scraps of paper.

Once home, Pritchard caught his big break to become a professional artist. By chance, he met pheasant and quail biologist David Damon, who shared Pritchard's wildlife art with the Nebraska Game, Forestation and Parks Commission Director Paul T. Gilbert. As editor of Outdoor Nebraska, Gilbert offered the artist a job, and by the Summer 1950 issue, C.G. Pritchard appeared on the staff page as "Artist" — the magazine's first full-time illustrator on payroll. For the next two decades, Pritchard's work would go on to define the look of the magazine, and in many ways, also the agency.

"Considering that high-speed photographs capturing animals in motion were not widely available," wrote longtime magazine editor Jon Farrar in his March 2006 story "Bud Pritchard — Birder, Artist, Gentle Man," "Pritchard's ability to render animals in motion was remarkable testimony to his years of field study and sketching."

His art appeared on 43 magazine covers from 1950 through 1958 — every cover except two. "Notes on Nebraska's Fauna," a profile of a wildlife species, including lesser-known nongame species, premiered in 1950 and ran through 1992, alternating with "Notes on Nebraska's Flora" from 1971 to 1989 — Pritchard's artwork illustrated 193 of these features.



ALL ART SHOWN BY CLAREMONT GALE "BUD" PRITCHARD



JACK CURRAN



DUANE WESTERHOLT



STEVE O'HARE



CHRISTINE MERCER



MICHELE ANGLE FARRAR



ROGER MEISENBACH



STEVE O'HARE



PAULA DAY



DAN CURRAN



DUANE WESTERHOLT



NEAL ANDERSON



TIM REIGERT

EDUCATION THROUGH ART

Magazine covers weren't the only place where traditional illustrations made a lasting impact. Subsequent Nebraskaland illustrators also contributed to the plethora of artwork the magazine and Commission required over the years to inform and appeal to hunters, anglers and other outdoor enthusiasts. Because accurate identification of game, fish and flora species was a priority to the Commission, illustrators were frequently called upon to produce art that could show wildlife characteristics in fine detail.

Jack Curran was — pun intended — a jack-of-all-trades, producing artwork and photography wherever needed during his tenure as art director and contributor during the mid-1960s through mid-1980s. Under Curran, Roger

Meisenbach joined for a short period in 1968-1969 to offer his perspective on history and the outdoors.

Michele Angle Farrar, whose work began appearing in the late 1960s, was especially skilled in watercolors of native plants, illustrating the “Notes on Nebraska’s Flora” series. She became Nebraskaland’s art director in the early 1970s.

Appearing on the masthead as illustrator beginning in the mid-1970s, Duane Westerholt took over as art director after Angle Farrar’s departure in 1981. He was best known for his detailed line drawings, including comparative anatomy sketches of young versus older turkeys, waterfowl profiles and a portrait of the legendary conservation officer Loron Bunney.

Longtime staffer Steve O’Hare bounced between different mediums, providing photography to the magazine beginning

in the mid-1970s and contributing his unique style of woodcut prints in the 1980s.

Along with O’Hare, illustrator Paula Day and Dan Curran also provided sketches in the mid-1980s that supported a range of feature stories, including those on hunting, fishing and history. Similarly, Christine Mercer’s pencilwork added life to sportsmen’s tales published between 1981 and 1983; she also illustrated the Nebraskaland Magazine Wild Game Cookbook published in 1999.

After Pritchard’s death in 1975, Lincoln native Neal Anderson took over the long-running “Notes on Nebraska’s Fauna” series, producing nearly 100 gouache paintings for the department on a freelance basis until 1989.

Tim Reigert, who retired earlier this year, contributed line art and watercolors of flora and fauna, illustrations for how-to stories and comical sketches of people in the outdoors during his 30 years as art director.

Countless freelance artists also supported the magazine during the last century.

Each of these artists contributed illustrations that helped educate Nebraskans who may have had no other way to learn about the flora, fauna and beautiful places found in their own state, especially before the internet. Even after advancements in photography, traditional artwork continued to fill a niche illustrating how-to articles, complex conservation ideas, humor, sportsmen’s tales and hard-to-photograph wildlife situations.

TO IMAGINE HISTORY AND PLACE

Although Nebraskaland is best known for its stories on wildlife and outdoor recreation, history, culture and tourism have long been subjects the publication regularly covers. One artist rises above the rest in this regard — Frank Holub, who began contributing to Outdoor Nebraska in the 1960s.

Holub’s most iconic work is arguably “Giganticus” — also known as “The Monster of Walgren Lake” — which appeared on the January 1962 cover: A green, dragon-like creature with red eyes rising out of a rippling Walgren Lake, startling cattle — its favorite food — that had been grazing on the shore and causing a horse to rear on a nearby hill and nearly throw its rider.

Like the Loch Ness Monster that has attracted droves of curious tourists to the Scottish Highlands, the accompanying tongue-in-cheek feature story cleverly detailed the legend of the Sandhills’ own monster, with official reports dating back to 1921. No doubt, this piece of creative genius captivated readers and succeeded in attracting parkgoers to this state recreation area in northwestern Nebraska — which also offered boating, camping, fishing and picnicking, the story noted.

Humor aside, Holub was also talented in his ability to capture the swashbuckling spirit of the West. For instance, his April 1962 cover is an exciting reimagining of a rare piece of Nebraska history: A flustered Grand Duke Alexis receiving an assist from Buffalo Bill Cody during a bison hunt.

“The homespun, buckskin west had never seen anything like him, an honest-to-goodness Russian prince ready to take on the prairie wilderness for a couple days of buffalo hunting. Big and bewhiskered, as fancy a greenhorn as had ever graced the Plains, the Grand Duke Alexis had come a visiting, the royal emissary of Alexander I, czar of all the Russias,” wrote J. Greg Smith.

During Holub’s, Meisenbach’s and Curran’s time with the Commission, they produced an astonishing body of work that featured Native Americans, scenes of pioneer life and the Wild West. Their art reinforced Nebraska as a place of history, adventure and “Where the West Begins” — a tagline that appeared on Nebraskaland’s cover from March 1964 through August 1972.



FRANK HOLUB



FRANK HOLUB



ROGER MEISENBACH



ROGER MEISENBACH



JACK CURRAN



JACK CURRAN



JACK CURRAN



JACK CURRAN



NEAL ANDERSON



MICHELE ANGLE FARRAR



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CLAREMONT GALE "BUD" PRITCHARD



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CLAREMONT GALE "BUD" PRITCHARD

*"The real reward
is making people
aware of the
need for habitat
where wildlife
can prosper."*

– C.G. Pritchard

ART FOR CONSERVATION

Pieces such as Neal Anderson's 1982 painting of bighorn sheep or Michele Angle Farrar's ethereal Pine Ridge landscapes in 1980 captured readers' imaginations. These artists helped the reading and viewing audience picture remote places or envision elusive or endangered species and, ultimately, encouraged readers to want to conserve those unique environs and the flora and fauna that inhabit them.

Outside of the magazine, artwork from Pritchard, Westerholt and Anderson was also featured on state and federal wildlife stamps to raise revenue for habitat work. For example, Pritchard's hooded mergansers won first place in a Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest and was featured on the 1968-69 stamp, which raised \$5.5 million for wetland acquisition.

As far back as the 1920s, Outdoor Nebraska has used art to spread messages of conservation, many involving humor and sarcasm through cartoons and comics — though, during the early years, the social and political commentary was often heavy-handed.

Still, in this regard, art has changed little in its purpose. Even when the magazine began featuring more photography in the mid-1960s, the role of art did not change. Pritchard's ethos in creating wildlife images continues to resonate today.

"When pressed by acclaim for his work, Pritchard typically replied the real reward of his job was making people aware of the need for habitat where wildlife can prosper," Jon Farrar wrote in this tribute to the late artist.

Art, whether traditional or modern, should make people feel something. And occasionally, that art can be impactful enough to push people to take action. [N](#)



COURTESY OF N. Y. TRIBUNE



Mallard ducks roost on a warm-water slough along the South Platte River in Lincoln County.

FOR 25 YEARS

**ERIC FOWLER'S CONTINUED LEGACY
AT NEBRASKALAND MAGAZINE**

By Jeff Kurrus



Nebraskaland photographer Eric Fowler's happy place is wading through a marsh with at least one camera in his hand. JEFF MULLINIX

I was terrified, and I didn’t even know Nebraskaland photographer Eric Fowler yet.

It was the spring of 2002, and I was driving with a good friend Matthew Marx on the way to Verdon State Recreation Area to be photographed for my first Nebraskaland story.

As a freelance writer, I had submitted an article to the magazine and, to my extreme happiness, the story had been accepted. The next step, then-editor Tom White informed me, was that the magazine would send a photographer to shoot photos of Matt and me fishing our favorite lake in the state. A reader of the magazine, I knew the work of the staff, including the photographer assigned to my story — Eric Fowler.

When his truck arrived, pulling a small, flat-bottom boat behind it, my heart immediately sped up. For the first time in my life, I had to catch fish. We did the customary introductions and then he gave very specific instructions: “Just go fish.”

Matt and I dropped in our little john boat and tried to do what we normally do, but it was nearly impossible. We simply couldn’t take our eyes off the photographer, who effortlessly switched between telephoto and wide-angle lenses while standing on the lake’s west jetty as we cast toward him in the water.

When the light became oh-so-perfect, he shared his one wish: “Now all we need is a fish.”

Luckily, I hooked up with a largemouth — seemingly on command — which was the starting point for one of our most memorable fishing trips ever.

“I still remember that day,” Fowler has told me through the years, excitement always in his voice. “The light just kept changing.”

After the day, we parted ways, but Matt and I couldn’t stop talking about the way he worked — how a “Nebraskaland” photographer does things. Fowler’s efforts did pay off. The spread, with its variety of composition and light, appeared in June 2003. I was proud of that story and showed it to everyone. We even got the cover — a highly sought-after cherry on top of the most wonderful dessert.

And it was all because of Fowler’s work.



TOP: A marbled orb weaver spider in a rare orange phase, also known as a pumpkin spider, hangs from its web.
BOTTOM: A bull elk makes his way through the bottomland forest along the North Platte River near Lewellen.

THE GROUNDWORK

Fowler’s dad, Dave, gave him his first 35 mm camera in 1989, and and soon after he had gotten the journalism bug at Chadron State College. He shot for the student newspaper, took on internships and did freelance gigs. He considered going into business with his dad, a studio photographer, but decided it would be more fun to go to ball games instead. He worked for newspapers in Chadron and Scottsbluff, hoping to get to Sports Illustrated someday, before landing a job with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission’s publications department in 1998.

Because Fowler had also been writing and shooting outdoor stories for these papers, becoming a staffer for Nebraskaland Magazine was the new goal. His chance came three years later when Michael Forsberg left the magazine to freelance full time. From there, Fowler continued to excel, penning impactful conservation stories on fire and water, natural histories on river otters, elk, and other species, and countless human-interest pieces of people experiencing the outdoors. But in many ways, Fowler was just picking up the baton.

TOP: A North American paddlefish swims in the Missouri River below Fort Randall Dam in South Dakota.
BOTTOM: Using a camera trap, Fowler captured this image of a female mountain lion at Indian Cave State Park.

CONTINUING THE GROUNDWORK

Fowler will be the first to share that his predecessors — namely Jon Farrar, Ken Bouc, Rocky Hoffmann, Bob Grier and Mike Forsberg — set the bar high at Nebraskaland and strongly felt it was his duty to continue the caliber of their work long after they retired from the magazine. No one was better in the studio than Bouc, Fowler often said. Bouc’s Cellars of Time from January/February 1994 is one he frequently references, marveling at how the staff light painted dinosaur skeletons while still shooting with film cameras. Still inspired to this day, Fowler continues to improve his own studio techniques, photographing anything from American burying beetles to detailed shots of fishing tackle. Bouc was also his staff’s de facto underwater photographer, a skill Fowler picked up in 2009 with the purchase of a point-and-shoot underwater housing, eventually becoming SCUBA-certified in 2015 and adding underwater housing dedicated to an SLR. His first foray in camera trapping in 2014 resulted in capturing bats in flight above a pond, but that set-up was

TOP: Matt and Amy Ludwig of Adams kayak at sunrise at Wagon Train Lake State Recreation Area.
BOTTOM: Sunrise illuminates the fog in a meadow along the Platte River in Douglas County.

borrowed. He added one to his bag two years later, following the work of Forsberg and colleague Justin Haag in hopes of capturing photos of a mountain lion that had decided to call Indian Cave State Park home. His camera trap photo of a mountain lion walking across a log at Indian Cave State Park immediately became iconic. His painting-like depiction of this seldom-seen predator rivaled some of the best photographs ever seen in this publication. Today, he continues to run camera traps across the state. He’ll also lie in a blind for days and shoot photos of wildlife for a natural history story, just like Farrar, wake up early and chase landscapes like Grier or roll up to a campground in the afternoon like Hoffmann to mingle — while still photographing — with visitors. His most recent foray is drone photography in 2023, set in motion by the drone work being done by Haag in the Pine Ridge and his own longtime method of shooting from an airplane — which started through an internship at Chadron State and continues with his often-said motto for aerial photography: “You buy, I’ll fly.”



OPPOSITE TOP: An arched doorway marks the entrance to McDowell's Tomb in the cliff at Rose Creek Wildlife Management Area in Jefferson County.



This camping photo at Indian Cave took three trips: one to scout, another to cut down a dead tree and some invasive trees in the prairie uphill from the campsite and the one for the shot.



A bald eagle flies above the spillway on Lake Ogallala below Kingsley Dam.



A long, nighttime exposure reveals stars and gives a ghostly appearance to sandhill cranes roosting on the Platte River in Hall County.

ANOTHER LEVEL

Fowler's seemingly tough exterior quickly disappears when he gets the opportunity to share images from a shoot or has ideas for another one.

Recently, Fowler walked in my office and said, "Look at this." In the image was of one of his trail cameras on the edge of an extinguished wildfire. "I can't wait to see what's on this card," he announced excitedly. That attitude is at the heart of why this publication continues to excel. Fowler has uploaded nearly 77,000 images to the magazine's online database, and has a few hundred thousand more to caption and upload — if he could ever quit shooting.

A few days later, his focus was on photos of people holding fish. "I'm just not very good at those," he said self-deprecatingly, as though a quarter-century worth of knowledge could be diminished by this. But in that fleeting moment, you could also see the light bulb clicking on — some new idea he has yet to try.

In his mind, that's what he's supposed to do. Because that's what his predecessors did: constantly strive to tell outdoor stories in new, visually stunning ways — because they lived the conservation mission, hoped Nebraskaland readers would stick around for another 100 years, and ... they loved their jobs. **N**

Nebraska Vacation Guide



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Nebraska Vacation Guide



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July 18

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Nebraska Vacation Guide

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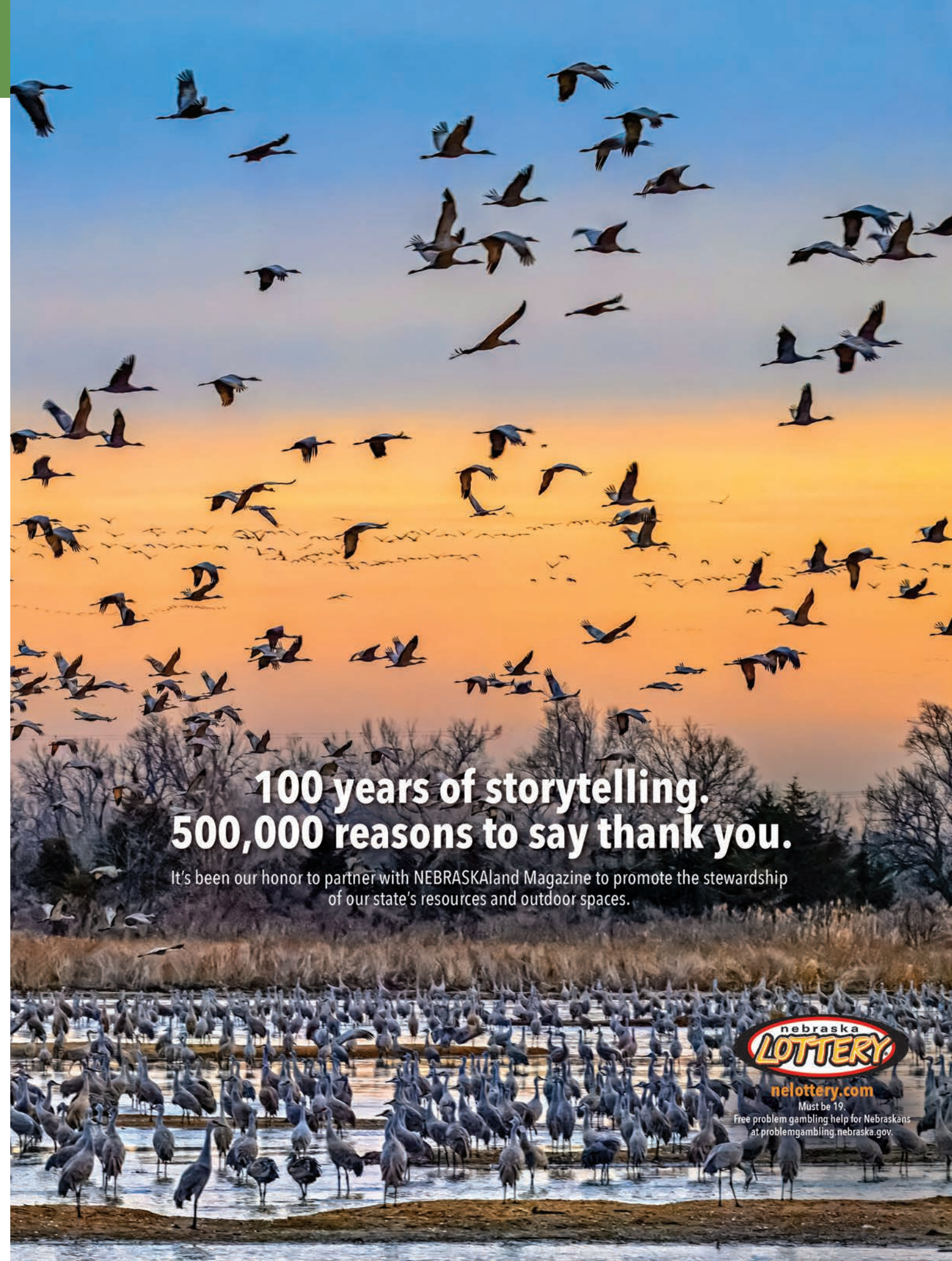
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Mixed Bag

Dual Threat: Longtime Nebraskaland staffer Rocky Hoffmann was an example of what has long been expected for this publication — the ability to capture photos like this one, a close-up of a tom turkey, and write a story to go along with it. *See story on page 96.* ROCKY HOFFMANN, NEBRASKALAND



OutdoorNebraska.gov
(search for Aquatic Invasive Species)

More than 25,000 Calendars

By Jeff Kurrus

Hogs, hay and taxes. This is how North Bend's Richard Freeman has spent his work life. As a longtime tax accountant who also sold hogs and hay for more than half a century, his office is a collage of memories.

Do a quick spin in the room and the walls and tabletops tell his story, from the black-and-white pictures of family members set beside prints of his children to the framed newspaper articles about his businesses on the wall beneath antique farm implements.

Spend a few minutes talking to Richard, and he mentions the long list of people who have helped him through the years, from his childhood friend John Colgan to his assistant Barb Porkorny and all the helpers in between.

And right in the middle of these memories is yet another unique one: piles of Nebraskaland calendars dating back to 1967, two years after the calendar began.

He started giving away the Nebraskaland "Calendar of Color" that year, gifting more than 25,000 copies over his career to clients across the country. When asked why, his answer was simple: "Because it's the best calendar out there."

That is not to say he hasn't had his favorites through the years, proudly holding them up to reveal his love of fog-covered mornings near the water or keelboats floating the Platte River,



or how he's especially fond when the calendar highlights multiple images for a single month.

Like many of us, he has filled these pages with appointments and errands of the day, with a look at any particular year providing an overview of what life was like at the time.

Now, he's finishing up his last tax

season before retiring at the age of 84. He reminisces about having some clients for more than 50 years, then laughs when he recounts that he has done taxes for five different Robert Johnsons. But he has no plan to stop giving away calendars.

And why would he? "You have the best calendar. No doubt."

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Portraits from the Past



With My Granddad, 1968 ▶

Each issue, we rely on you, our Nebraskaland family, to supply photographs for the ever-popular Portraits from the Past department. This month, it's our turn.

In this image, captured by Richard Voges of Nebraskaland, Enfrid Nelson and his 7-year-old grandson, Danny, both of Monroe, show off their catch from a sandpit lake near the Loup River. It could have been taken in any decade of Nebraskaland's existence, including today.

We certainly hope each of you have experienced a day like this.

Next issue, Nebraskaland will once again feature your Portraits from the Past. These can be submitted to jenny.wheatley@nebraska.gov. As always, thank you for a look into your Outdoor Nebraska.

– Jeff Kurrus, Gretna



NEBRASKAland Magazine

Send contributions to: Portraits from the Past, Nebraskaland Magazine, P.O. Box 30370, Lincoln, NE 68503-0370. Or e-mail to Jenny.Wheatley@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. Please send ORIGINALS if possible for best reproduction.

Not So Dismal

By Bob Grier

I had some memorable assignments in my 40 years with Nebraskaland. One of the most memorable came in July 1971, before I had even been on staff for a year.

Lowell Johnson, the magazine's editor, and I joined two men for a canoe trip down the Dismal River. On our second day on the river, we already had to saw our way through a tangle of cedar trees when we approached a waterfall and made the poor decision not to portage around it.

Lowell summed up what came next in "A Dismal Trip" for the October 1971 issue. "Somehow, we appeared to have let our enthusiasm get the upper hand over good sense, and this was the result: Our 17-foot aluminum canoe teetered on the brink of a 7-foot waterfall, stopped from sliding over only because our load grounded us on the lip. Bob Grier, the man in the bow, was suspended over the raging pool below the falls. Allowing a few seconds for the predicament to register in his mind, he turned around slowly and said, half seriously and half in jest, 'Don't get out!'"

We didn't have waterproof cases back then so of course I was worried about my camera gear, which was packed in a wicker trappers' bag. While the boat was being held I grabbed the bag and ran around so I could look upriver over the falls.

With my Mamiya twin lens reflex, I fired away as one of the men from the second canoe came to help, slipped and fell, swamping our canoe and sending it over with our gear still inside. Most of it was lost, including a camp stove and Lowell's new ultralight fishing rod.

We spent quite a bit of time trying to find that gear before giving up. When we finally got around to righting the canoe, we managed to scoop up a nice brown trout that had become trapped inside. There were several jokes about inventing a new lure for trout — a 17-foot aluminum spoon.

Lowell included plenty of details of our trip in his story, but he did leave one out: We had the fish for supper.

We didn't know if it was legal or not at the time, so we thought we'd keep that one to ourselves.



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