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JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2024



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What to Do in January and February • She was Born to Hunt
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Cover: Kristin Hartner, of Omaha,
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in the 2023 Nebraskaland Photo
Contest for her image of a milkweed
beetle in Sarpy County. See page 16.

KRISTIN HARTNER

This page: The sun rises above a
ponderosa pine snag in Cherry
County.

ERIC FOWLER, 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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Magazine Staff

Communications Director Christy Firestone
Public Relations Manager Shawna Richter-Ryerson
Editor Jeff Kurrus
Associate Editor Jenny Nguyen-Wheatley
Regional Editors Eric Fowler, Julie Geiser, Justin Haag
Contributing Editor Michael Forsberg
Regular Contributors Renae Blum, Chris Helzer, Chris Masada, Todd Mills, Ryan Sparks, Gerry Steinauer
Art Director Tim Reigert
Graphic Designer Mel Severin
Photo Librarian Jaclyn Cruikshank Vogt
Circulation
For address changes and questions about your subscription, call 800-632-5263
Advertising Sales Manager
For advertising information contact
Shane G. Gilster, 402-742-0125
Email: shanegilster@gmail.com

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Watch for snowy owls (Bubo scandiacus) this time of year in Nebraska. They'll often be on fenceposts and telephone poles.

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Prescribed Fire Training Workshops

A series of workshops will be held around the state in 2024 to provide guidance and instruction for completing safe and effective prescribed fires. These workshops are for landowners, resource professionals, volunteer fire departments and others interested in burning. No prior burn experience is necessary to participate.

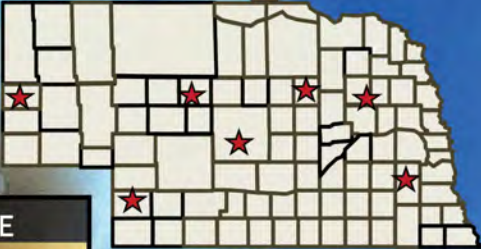


Table with 4 columns: DATE, TOWN, LOCATION, TIME. Rows include workshops in Ericson, Norfolk, Thedford, Lincoln, Scottsbluff, and an online session.

Introduction to Prescribed Fire



Topics include:

Equipment Preparation Techniques
Weather Forecasting
Fire Behavior
Fireline Positions
Safety

Table with 4 columns: DATE, ADVANCED WORKSHOPS, LOCATION, TIME. Rows include workshops in Ord, Imperial, and online sessions for 2024.

Registration fee of \$10 for basic workshops includes meal and training materials.
Visit www.NebraskaPF.com to register.

Join a Prescribed Burn Association

Prescribed burn associations are a collection of landowners, land managers, and volunteers who pool time, equipment, and knowledge to help each other get prescribed fire on the ground within their communities. There are many existing burn associations across the state to volunteer with and an opportunity for new ones to be formed. Contact Brian Teeter at 402-219-2572 or bteeter@pheasantsforever.org to find one nearest you or to start your own.



BLIND DOG

A Labrador retriever waits in a blind during a Canada goose hunt on the Platte River near Hastings.

JEFF KURRUS, NEBRASKA



FORAGING IN WINTER

By Greg Wagner

Gathering wild foods in Nebraska is not just a spring, summer or fall outdoor activity. Although it's not easy and the pickings might be slim, foraging can be done in winter as well.

But first, check regulations, obtain landowner permission and be able to positively identify plants with the help of a reputable field guide or app or by going with a Master Naturalist.

Eat only small amounts of wild foods that are new to you at first, and harvest in a sustainable manner, never taking more than you can eat. If you feel any doubt about a plant, don't eat it.

Cattail

The young, cob-like tips of this wetland plant are edible, as are the white bottom part of the lower stalk, and the spurs and spaghetti-like rootlets off the main roots. Cattail pollen is edible, too, but don't eat the fuzzy, hot-dog shaped heads. Cattail rhizomes are starchy and sweet, with a mild flavor and scent.

To prepare cattail shoots or the lower stalks, pull off the tough/fibrous outer leaves until you reach the tender, white inner core of the cattail heart. Wash the heart thoroughly and cut into roughly 4-inch pieces. Sauté in a skillet with oil for about 3 minutes. Then add minced garlic and ginger and a few splashes of sesame seed oil. Cover and steam for about one minute. Cattails taste somewhat similar to potatoes.

Watercress

While seeking cattails near streams, keep an eye out for watercress, a plant that likes cold water. It's a peppery member of the mustard family. More palatable than supermarket watercress, which is often bitter, wild watercress actually tastes sweeter in the wintertime. Even during the snowiest days of winter, watercress can be

found growing in tight, bright green bunches near water, particularly at springs or in spring-fed streams.

This delicate vegetable is quite tasty raw, whether added to salads, made into soup or used as a garnish on sandwiches. Consume it quickly after picking it, and always be sure to only pick it from bodies of water that aren't compromised by runoff pollutants.

Rose Hip

Rose hips provide welcome bursts of color in Nebraska's snow-covered countryside, especially in the Sandhills region. They're also full of sweet pulp that can be eaten raw or boiled to make syrup, jam or tea. Rose hips have an herbal flavor that's suggestive of roses without tasting too floral.

To make tea, boil 12-15 rose hips in water for 3-5 minutes. Smash them open with a spoon and steep for 20 minutes before straining and serving.

Persimmon

One of the most cold-hardy fruits in Nebraska is the American persimmon. When ripe, the fruit of this

native hardwood is round and about 1-2 inches in diameter, ranges from yellow-orange to a dark red-orange, and contains a large seed. Completely ripe wild persimmon is a delicacy. Look for wrinkled, soft, squishy fruit that is a bit sticky. You can eat ripe persimmons fresh or make them into a sweet jelly, jam or pudding.

Interestingly, after the leaves of the persimmon tree have dropped, much of the fruit will remain attached to the branches in winter. They are edible, and you can even pick them up off the ground if they're not rotten or half-eaten by wildlife. There are stories of early prairie pioneers in Nebraska gathering persimmon fruits in the wintertime when other foods and even wild game animals were hard to find.



Rose hips offer pops of fiery red in an autumn grassland.

JENNY NGUYEN-WHEATLEY, NEBRASKALAND

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Nestled along the tranquil banks of Soldier Creek, this property is a hidden gem offering a harmonious blend of outdoor adventure and income potential. It's a well-kept secret that combines relaxation and productivity on a unique canvas.

This property is a gateway to a world of possibilities where outdoor enjoyment and financial gain come together. Whether looking for a private family retreat or considering an investment, this property is incredibly versatile. It can be your personal haven, a recreational escape, or a smart addition to your investment portfolio.

Water plays a significant role here, with irrigated farmland acres benefiting from an 8-inch well and serene lakes and ponds fed by natural springs. An intricately designed irrigation system with a proven track record ensures the land's productivity. Thoughtful internal gravel roads provide easy access, even to the most remote fields. Additionally, pasture acres have recently been set aside for wildlife habitat but can be effortlessly converted for grazing.

In this natural showcase, you'll find exceptional opportunities for hunting whitetail deer, turkey, and upland birds. Occasional sightings of mule deer and elk add to the allure. For fishing enthusiasts, the property's 56 acres of serene fishing lakes offer endless angling potential, with the lakes and ponds also serving as exciting spots for duck and goose wingshooting.

The meticulous craftsmanship that has gone into designing this ranch is evident in every detail. Every facet, every angle, has been thoughtfully planned and executed to create a functional yet breathtaking environment. It's often said that "seeing is believing," and with this remarkable ranch, the saying couldn't be truer. Photographs can only begin to hint at the property's true splendor.

Your personal invitation to explore this extraordinary property along Soldier Creek awaits. Immerse yourself in the enchantment of the flowing creek, the vibrant natural colors, and the promise of abundant opportunities. Seize the chance to become a part of this remarkable story by scheduling your exclusive tour today.



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Ice-fishing boots should be waterproof and rated for temperatures well below zero. JENNY NGUYEN-WHEATLEY, NEBRASKALAND

ICE-FISHING BOOTS

*By Daryl Bauer
Fisheries Biologist and Outreach Program Manager*

I teach ice-fishing clinics each year, and we spend at least some time talking about staying warm. You will never enjoy ice-fishing if you are cold, and of course, layering is the key. There is excellent clothing available these days made just for ice-fishing. But don't forget — the same goes for a pair of good boots, because, well, while ice-fishing, you are always standing on the ice.

What makes a good pair of ice-fishing boots? They must be waterproof, and they must be rated for temperatures well below zero. In my opinion, pac boots of some kind, made with waterproof outers with felt pack liners, are the best.

True, a pair of good ice-fishing boots isn't cheap, and while I generally believe that spending a lot of money isn't required to get you started on ice-fishing, a good pair of ice-fishing boots will last a long time, and warm toes on the ice are worth every penny. Sorel boots have been my ice-fishing boots for many years — they are hard to beat.

Before you make the purchase, try on the boots and make sure they are large enough, because

cramped toes are cold toes. Additionally, your boots should be large enough to fit a pair or two of heavy, quality socks. I usually wear a base pair made of some type of synthetic blend, something advertised as “moisture-wicking” to reduce sweaty feet. Then, I layer with a thicker pair of wool or wool-blend socks.

I was fooled with electric socks. I never liked them — none of them ever worked as advertised. Now, I expect electric socks and boot liners are a whole lot better, but I've chosen to invest in quality boots that don't require me to wear electric socks or even foot warmers.

One last thing that has proven to be worth its weight in gold — a boot dryer! If you're going to be on the ice for consecutive days, you need to begin each day with dry boots. The first boot dryer I tried was given to me as a Christmas gift, and honestly, I thought it was nothing but a gimmick — then I found out it was no gimmick at all. I currently have Cabela's Original PEET Boot Dryer, and I use it religiously.

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DUCK WITH STILTON-PEAR SALAD

By Jenny Nguyen-Wheatley

This salad is about balance: Dark waterfowl meat is complemented by sweet pears; tangy, dark balsamic vinegar; and salty, creamy Stilton blue cheese. Candied walnuts not only play off the slight funkiness of Stilton, but also adds crunchy contrast to the overall salad. It's a combination that works well with darker game meats.

With salads, everything should be made to taste. Don't be surprised if you find yourself having to tweak the amounts below. For the salad mix, feel free to use whatever you like. I used a combination of Italian blend and arugula. I like the combination of crisp romaine and peppery arugula.

- Servings:** 2
Prep Time: 10 minutes
Cooking Time: 15 minutes
Ingredients:
- 2 to 4 duck breasts
 - Kosher salt
 - Freshly cracked pepper
 - Olive oil
 - 4 ounces Stilton cheese
 - Thinly sliced red onion
 - Two servings of ready-to-eat lettuce mix
 - 1 pear, sliced
 - Candied walnuts

- Dressing:**
- 1 small shallot, minced
 - 4 tbs. good balsamic vinegar
 - 2 tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
 - Generous pinch of salt
 - ¼ to ½ tsp. granulated sugar, to taste

1. To make the salad dressing, combine dressing ingredients in a canning jar with lid. Before serving, give it a good shake to emulsify.
2. Pat duck breasts dry with paper towels. Season duck breasts with salt



Seared duck breast over a salad with pears and Stilton cheese. JENNY NGUYEN-WHEATLEY

and pepper. If skin is removed, heat oil in a skillet over medium-high heat, and when oil starts shimmering, cook breasts for about 3 minutes on each side, including the thicker side edge. Shoot for an internal temperature of 137 degrees Fahrenheit for medium. Allow breasts to rest loosely tented with foil to carry over cooking to 140 F. If breasts have fatty skin intact, lightly score the fat. Then add breasts skin side down first into a cold pan. Turn heat to medium-high and cook

the skin until browned and rendered. Cook the remaining sides for about 3 minutes each, looking for the same internal temperature as noted previously. Add oil if skin is lean. 3. In a mixing bowl, toss lettuce with balsamic dressing to taste and divide salad between two plates. Garnish salad with crumbled Stilton cheese, sliced pear, red onion and candied walnuts. Thinly slice duck breasts against the grain and offer finishing salt on the side.

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2023 Photo Contest

BEST OF SHOW

Lego Aviary
Photo by Chris Bergstrom, Blair
@chriscosmosphotography

Since Nebraskaland Magazine's photo contest began, we have seen tens of thousands of images, but none as unique as Chris Bergstrom's Best in Show winner, "Lego Aviary."

The image made our team laugh and also brought into discussion how much planning must have been done to capture this photograph.

"It took me hundreds of shots," Chris said. "I have a passion to shoot night skies, but, two years ago, we had a baby and was around the house a lot more. I had to fill that need to

take pictures."

He did so by combining his passion for Legos — he is a self-described Lego "nerd" — with his extreme attention to detail. "I would see a lot of house sparrows landing in our yard, so I slowly took away landing spots, such as patio chairs, so I could direct exactly where I wanted birds to land."

Then Chris put a pile of bird seed on the ground, his Lego characters nearby, and decorated the background with dandelions. From there, it was simply a matter of patience.

"I work from home," Chris said, "so I have my camera hooked up to a remote from my desk in my basement and, while I worked, I took these photos."

Chris also captured our imagination of what can be done in your own backyard.

To see more of his images, visit his Instagram page @chriscosmosphotography.

We thank everyone who participated in this year's contest and look forward to seeing our wonderful state through your eyes next year.

Happy shooting.

Jeff Kurrus, Editor
Nebraskaland Magazine



SCENIC

FIRST PLACE — Rime Ice Sunshine Eagle
Photo by Jeffrey Z. Carney, Ashland
@carneyphotography1



SCENIC

SECOND PLACE — Toadstool Splendor
Photo by Margaret West, Omaha
@westmargaretblock



THIRD PLACE — Standing Bear Clouds
Photo by Jayson Alder, Omaha
@alderimages

MACRO

FIRST PLACE — Peek-a-boo Beetle
Photo by Kristin Hartner, Omaha
[@kristin_hartner_photography](#)



MACRO

THIRD PLACE — Evening Snack
Photo by Ellen Hanzlicek, Dubois
@hanzlicekellen



SECOND PLACE — Lasioglossum on Heuchera
Photo by Tyler Moore
@drtylermoore

RECREATION

FIRST PLACE — Young Angler
Photo by Chris Bergstrom, Blair
[@chriscosmophotography](#)



RECREATION



SECOND PLACE — Holding the Universe Together
Photo by Ben Placzek, Omaha
[@bplaczekphoto](#)

THIRD PLACE — Burn Off
Photo by Matt Zvolanek, Ogallala
[@mericamut](#)



WILDLIFE

FIRST PLACE — Chicken Tag
Photo by Don Brockmeier, Eustis
[@donbrockmeier4](#)





SECOND PLACE — Curious Young Fox
Photo by Roger Richters, Utica
@rogerrichters



THIRD PLACE — Monarchs Delight
Photo by Deb Miller, Aurora
@11husky

Nebraska's Only Marsupial

*By Monica Macoubrie,
Wildlife Education Specialist*

With a nearly hairless, scaly tail, a mouth full of teeth, the ability to “play dead” and its overall I-don’t-give-a-dang attitude, the opossum might be one of the most unique mammals waddling throughout Nebraska.

Opossums are Marsupials

The Virginia opossum is a marsupial. When many of us think of marsupials, we picture a kangaroo jumping with a joey in the front pouch. However, there are quite a few other species that bear the name marsupial, including wombats, koalas and opossums. Being a marsupial simply means that females have a pouch, and the underdeveloped young must spend time in this pouch to complete development. Once born, the offspring immediately seeks the mother’s pouch. When compared to a kangaroo, the pouch of an opossum is quite small, so small it would be difficult for the casual observer to spot. Young will not leave this pouch until they reach maturity. When siblings grow too large to fit in the mother’s pouch, they cling to the mother’s back, where she will carry them until they are able to venture on their own.

Playing Opossum

Opossums play dead, we know, but a lot of misinformation is out there on how and why they do this. Opossums do not engage in this behavior when they feel threatened. They typically “play opossum” in situations when they are caught unaware or suddenly attacked. The animal drops to the ground in an instant and closes its eyes or stares off into space. Its body goes limp, its breathing slows down drastically, it discharges its bowels, and it sticks out its tongue and drools. By all means, it appears to be dead.



A Virginia opossum climbs a tree near Cherry Creek at Fort Robinson State Park. JUSTIN HAAG, NEBRASKALAND

This defense tactic is supposed to confuse predators and allow the animal to escape. While worthy of an Oscar, this is not an act. These animals are going through a process called thanatosis: when the body enters a catatonic state in response to fear, and it’s all involuntary. During this time, the animal doesn’t feel any pain and has no reflexes. The animal will not respond no matter what the predator does. Most predators will give up on an opossum once they believe it has died. Scientists believe this is an evolutionary

adaptation among carnivores to prevent them from consuming diseased meat. So, what happens to the opossum? Well, it can take anywhere from a few minutes to several hours for the opossum to become mobile again.

Prehensile Tails, Sort of

A Virginia opossum is around the size of a large house cat. It has a triangular-shaped head, a long, pointed nose, is mostly covered in grayish fur, and it has a tail, which is



In Nebraska, the common distribution of opossums is shown in brown, less common shown in gold. TIM REIGERT, NEBRASKALAND



Virginia opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*) from the viviparous quadrupeds of North America (1845) illustrated by John Woodhouse Audubon (1812-1862). NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

prehensile. A prehensile tail is adapted for grasping and wrapping around things like tree limbs. Although it is a myth opossums hang by their tails to sleep, they can grasp a branch with their tails for short periods of time. Their tails simply aren't strong enough to hold them for longer than a few minutes.

Opossum Feet

These animals have what's called an opposable hallux. Hallux are clawless, big toes that work like thumbs. The hallux helps this creature grab branches when they climb. So, when they leave tracks in the snow, it looks like a miniature child, or an alien, was walking around the prairie.

They're Intelligent

Opossum brains are only around one-sixth the size of a raccoon and one-fifth the size of a domestic house cat, giving

them one of the lowest brain-to-body ratios of any mammal. They also have a very smooth brain, lacking the network of folds and grooves seen in more "intelligent species." They lack a structure known as the corpus callosum, which connects the two halves of the brain. The corpus callosum is larger in more intelligent animals, and in humans, the absence of this structure would be considered a serious birth defect and is associated with a high rate of learning disabilities.

Despite all this, opossums excel at intelligence tests. In one study, scientists hid food for opossums to find, and their ability to remember was higher than cats, rats, dogs and rabbits. In another study, opossums demonstrated they can solve maze puzzles faster than cats and rats. Scientists have also documented the opossum's ability to recall specific smells a full year after being exposed to them.

Rare for Rabies

Any mammal can get rabies, but it is less likely for

an opossum to contract this disease. Compared to other mammals, some scientists think the opossum's slightly lower body temperature makes it hard for viruses to survive in its host. An opossum's normal temperature is around 95 degrees Fahrenheit compared to a dog's, which is around 101 to 102.5 degrees. Rabies is much more common in animals such as raccoons, foxes and skunks.

Opossum Teeth

Boasting 50 teeth, the opossum has more than any other land mammal. In its mouth are four kinds of teeth: incisors and canines for gripping and tearing, molars to crush their food and pre-molars for slicing.

Opossums are considered omnivores, which means they

will eat other animals and also plant material. Their teeth help them do everything from tearing apart prey to crushing tough nuts and seeds, and they have to be strong enough to handle different textures and hardness. Opossums also use their front incisors to precisely pick up small insects.

Their teeth can be used as a defense against predators, as well. On average, the opossum's bite force is around 45 pounds per square inch, in comparison to a raccoon, which has a bite force of about 100 pounds per square inch.

Opossums are extremely misunderstood and often misrepresented in discussion. Many people believe they are ugly, strange, unintelligent and useless, but just like every other animal in the ecosystem, opossums have a place.

So, the next time you see these waddling marsupials, give them a wave and remember all these cool opossum facts. [N](#)



A Virginia opossum in Cass County. JEFF KURRUS, NEBRASKALAND



Funding from the Nebraska Game and Parks Foundation helped build this mini-lodge at Ponca State Park. JEFF KURRUS, NEBRASKALAND

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

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

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



At the Core

CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF THE NEBRASKA GAME AND PARKS FOUNDATION

By Jeff Kurrus

Core values. The Nebraska Game and Parks has many. Access. Opportunity. Stewardship. Providing opportunities for hunting, fishing, hiking, biking, camping and outdoor education and recreation. They have an economic value of \$3.8 billion in our state. These activities are the backbone of introducing Nebraskans, and visitors alike, to the outdoors and keeping them outdoors, and the Nebraska Game and Parks Foundation is a central figure in each of these.

Established in 1983, the vision for the Nebraska Game and Parks Foundation was to take the work by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission to the next level, enhancing a myriad of projects when limited state funds could not.

But it's not just completing the projects that's important. It's the value of these projects to those whom we serve — the public — when the value of the Foundation's contributions are seen in moments and memories.

Here are some of their stories.

We're Staying Here Forever

Tucker Urbanovsky, of Arnold, loves to fish. Always has. His parents think he always will. Admittedly, that might be hard to say, as Tucker is only 4 years old, but his relationship with the outdoors only continues to grow, so his parents seem to think this is a safe assumption.

"No," he told his parents on a recent fishing and camping trip. "I'm not leaving. We're staying here forever."

"He asks to go fishing all the time," said his mom, Tori.

One of Tucker's first introductions to the outdoors was the Fort Kearny Outdoor Expo when he was 6 months old. In

the Urbanovsky family archive, there is a photo with him holding a fishing pole.

At this young age, he has already picked out his favorite quarry, channel catfish, and has no problem touching the fish, de-hooking the fish and eating a fish nugget or two his dad, Brent, fries after their good fortune.

When he's not fishing, he's watching coyote hunting videos with his dad and hoping to go on his first coyote hunt, like his 8-year-old sister, Daneo, and 7-year-old brother, Will, have done.

So with these three nature kids — as well as 2-year-old Sunny and 7-month-old Eva, Tori took it upon herself to apply for a half-price youth lifetime permit anytime she could.

"We get emails [from the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission] about the drawings, and I enter them all," she said. Recently, her persistence worked out when Tucker received a half-price youth lifetime permit.

This is where the Nebraska Game and Parks Foundation comes in. The Foundation established the half-price Youth Lifetime Permit program in 2006 by creating an endowment to introduce and even re-engage kids to the outdoors. Drawings for Nebraska youth 15 and younger are held throughout the state at partner events, public events and online, as seen with the Urbanovsky family. Winners of these drawings can purchase a lifetime hunting and fishing permit for half price, with the Foundation funding the other half.

Since the program began, the Foundation has provided funds for more than 9,000 lifetime permits like Tucker's, and Tori certainly won't stop filling out entry forms for the rest of the kids in their family anytime soon — just as the Foundation wants it.

Five Quilters and a Wayward Scrapbooker

If you walk into the Bison mini-lodge at Ponca State Park when Sarah Johnson, of Geneva, and her quilting friends and family are visiting, it's hard not to notice the unique furniture arrangement. Couches, chairs and tables are pushed against the wall replaced by a line of working tables — each topped with sewing machines and cutting mats.

Since 2006, Johnson's group — coming from Syracuse and Geneva, Nebraska, to Rapid City, South Dakota, and all parts in between — has taken up temporary residence at one of the cabins at Eugene T. Mahoney State Park or, most recently, one of the mini-lodges at Ponca State Park.

"The same six of us go every year," said Johnson. "This year, I was sitting at my computer at 12 a.m. on the first day the lodge was available at Ponca so I could get our reservation. We



With Foundation assistance, Ponca State Park's aquatic center replaced a pool originally opened in 1956.

JENNY NGUYEN-WHEATLEY, NEBRASKALAND



The Bison mini-lodge at Ponca fills every fall with a group of quilting friends from across the region. Because of the Foundation, friends and family are able to get together and do what they love to do. PHOTO COURTESY OF SARAH JOHNSON

work on our projects, talk and eat. Five of us are quilters and we have one scrapbooker who we're slowly converting into a quilter."

The Foundation's fingerprint on the construction of the mini-lodges at Ponca, as well as the Governor's Row mini-lodges at Eugene T. Mahoney State Park, has been immense,

raising millions of dollars to build them. But their work at either park isn't limited to these projects.

At Ponca, funds from the Foundation also established the aquatic center, replacing a relic originally opened in 1956. From locals wanting an afternoon dip at the pool to out-of-towners marking Ponca as a vacation destination, the aquatic center is just one more reason to visit this northeastern Nebraska park jewel.

At Eugene T. Mahoney State Park, the Foundation's reach is just as profound. From the purchase of the property in 1985 to the recently completed Crete Carrier Riverview Lodge, as well as the upcoming raging river water slide addition to the aquatic center, the Foundation remains the center point for completing any number of projects.

But the Foundation's work stretches beyond the projects themselves, as seen from Johnson and her group of quilters regardless of where they travel. This is how traditions start. And local businesses benefit because of these traditions. For, as Sarah Johnson and her group know all too well, if you're going to visit Ponca State Park, you must visit the soda fountain at nearby Keller Drug as well. Yet not before hiking or driving throughout the winding roads at Ponca — looking for deer or visiting one of the park's scenic overlooks of the Missouri River valley, their time at Ponca becoming their lodge away from home.



The Urbanovsky family from Arnold puts their kids' names in for a chance to win a lifetime hunt/fish permit every year. This year, their 4-year-old son, Tucker, won the permit.

JULIE GEISER, NEBRASKALAND



Visiting the touch tank is a high priority for many visitors at the Schramm Education Center. JEFF KURRUS, NEBRASKALAND



Alex Marx cools off at Platte River State Park's spray park, another Foundation project. JEFF KURRUS, NEBRASKALAND



Since its completion in 2015, Fort Robinson State Park's 1891 Officers Quarters has become a destination for large groups looking for an authentic Western lodging experience. JUSTIN HAAG, NEBRASKALAND

Only Once Before

Matthew Marx has lived in Omaha for nearly his entire life. He's married and has two grade-school-aged sons, Alex and William, whose day-to-day calendar — especially in the summer — is jam-packed with anything associated with nature.

From forest hikes to playing at Platte River State Park's spray park, the Marxes are an outdoor family. That said, it would make perfect sense for him to have visited Aksarben Aquarium, adjacent to Schramm Park SRA, at some point during his life — but that just wasn't the case.

"I went one time as a kid," he said.

That all changed with the aquarium's renovation to the Schramm Education Center, which opened in 2019. "Once the new one was built, we were there all the time." He and his boys have spent hours at the new aquarium, buying season passes so they could do arts and crafts, ride the virtual reality bikes, and participate in their favorite family outdoor activity: pet

the aquarium's shovelnose sturgeon.

"What's also nice about the new aquarium is that it's all Nebraska species. The boys can learn about the stuff that lives here, not in some faraway saltwater sea."

Before the renovations, Schramm primarily welcomed visitors on a seasonal basis. Now, thanks to being part of the Venture Parks project in association with the Nebraska Game and Parks Foundation, that number of visitors has tripled, including increased year-round visitation.

And for good reason. Matt is not the only person who grew up in eastern Nebraska and spent very little, if any time, at the old aquarium. But he's also not the only person who has found a new place to learn about nature in his own backyard — at Schramm Education Center.

The Best Kind of Friend

"Friends disappoint you," said Loretta Asche, drawing laughter from herself. "But vacation friends do not. At least ...

mine don't."

Asche's vacation friends have been with her for nearly 30 years at Fort Robinson State Park at their group's annual trail ride each September. Originally conducted by the Painthorse Association, this ride is now organized by Asche and gets a group of longtime "vacation" friends together who have one thing in common — horses.

"These people are better than friends," she said fondly. They come from all over the country — from Wisconsin to Maryland, and for many years they would stay all over northwestern Nebraska.

But for the past five years, since its completion in 2015, they've taken up temporary residence at Fort Robinson State Park's 1891 Officers Quarters.

With help from the Foundation, these Quarters are a direct replica of the original building, constructed in 1891, making them perfect for large groups of people like Asche's. "We have enough beds for 18 people," she said. "Four bedrooms. Four bathrooms. And a large area for meetings and meals. It's so



The Foundation provides financial assistance to Game and Parks' Becoming an Outdoors-Woman program.

JENNY NGUYEN-WHEATLEY, NEBRASKALAND



The 1891 Officers Quarters at Fort Robinson gives equestrians like Mike and Jill Angelo a place to stay near some of the best horseback riding in the state.

PHOTO COURTESY OF LORETTA ASCHE

nice because we have so much space. We visit each year for five days," Asche said. "But it feels like it's over in a day. We've become such good friends."

Places to Go

"Access is No. 1," said Andre Miller of Omaha, who spends any moment of free time near the water with a clutch of fishing rods and reels in his hand and a tacklebox slung over his shoulder.

He's always looking for a new place and, once there, where he should start fishing. "Folks have their spots," he said. "Moms and daughters. Dads and sons. Folks just want to be outside."

Being outside, and having access, is growing even easier throughout Nebraska with the construction of fishing piers, and the Foundation remains important at providing these access points. The Foundation has provided funding for piers at Mahoney State Park and Johnson Lake SRA, and Two Rivers SRA west of Omaha will have a new fishing pier in 2024 as a memorial donation for a beloved family member who recently passed away.

"Families go to those docks," Miller said. "They're such easy access for parents." Meanwhile, anglers like Miller have more of the shoreline to fish once these are installed.

But it's not just access at a public lake that interests folks like Miller, it's having somewhere entirely new to fish, hunt, hike, bike, or just simply, be. Throughout the Foundation's 40 years, land acquisition to create public access also has remained a high priority. Either by maintaining relationships with landowners who believe in the mission of Game and Parks and the Foundation and donate land or, through their estate planning,



The Foundation remains a supporter of Community Fishing Nights across the state, including this one in Omaha.

ERIC FOWLER, NEBRASKALAND

Even More Impacts

The Foundation's role in providing additional opportunities to Nebraska's outdoor enthusiasts goes even further than updated facilities and new properties to access.

With each hunting or fishing permit sold, Nebraska receives excise tax money through the Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson acts, respectively. This includes lifetime hunting and fishing permits.

In addition, when hunting and fishing equipment is sold, excise tax money is received. So when a hunter becomes even more excited to venture into the field, because of a new place to go, and visits Cabela's, Scheels or another local outdoor retailer, even more opportunities can be funded for current and future hunters and anglers.

To donate yourself, keep these in mind:

- Contributions are tax deductible.
- Gifts can include small or large financial contributions, natural areas, historic places, or donations for park facilities.
- Contributions can be designated to a particular project or area of the state.

For more information on the Foundation and how to give, visit nebraskagameandparksfoundation.org.



The Wildcat Hills State Nature Center offers educational opportunities, including birdwatching and banding workshops and the Outdoor Discovery Program, for visitors of all ages.

JUSTIN HAAG, NEBRASKALAND



The Crete Carrier Riverview Lodge and Mahoney State Park hosts large group outings — from weddings to conferences and everything in between — and Foundation support was integral in its construction. ERIC FOWLER, NEBRASKALAND



Accessible fishing piers create more opportunities to enjoy Nebraska's tremendous fishing opportunities. Andre Miller, of Omaha, fishes from one at Louisville SRA.

JEFF KURRUS, NEBRASKALAND

set aside and gift property to the Foundation for eventual public access, or for purchasing properties outright with these donated funds.

In recent years, 57 acres were purchased next to Kearny SRA. In Dawes County, 680 acres were purchased, while in Custer County, a 720-acre Life Estate tract will be received as a donation to the Foundation in the future. In the past 10 years, a Foundation endowment has helped with a total of seven acquisitions. Memorial donations, estates and wills are ways

Funding Opportunity

When it is determined that funding is needed for a Nebraska Game and Parks Commission project, representatives from Game and Parks approach the Foundation. The Foundation then makes a decision if and how much to contribute.

Take, for example, the recent and ongoing multi-faceted Venture Parks project. The Game and Parks approached the Foundation with a vision and need to reinvest and update outdoor recreation and education opportunities in four existing parks — Mahoney, Platte River, Louisville and Schramm — along the Platte River between Omaha and Lincoln.

The Foundation decided to support this effort, which identified more than 60 features in its master plan, designed to encourage people to venture outdoors, creating lifelong memories and establish the next generation of outdoor enthusiasts. The project was going to require support from the Nebraska Legislature and governor.

As Game and Parks Assistant Director Roger Kuhn tells it, the trip to the Capitol was memorable. “John Gottschalk, a director serving on the Foundation, walks into the state capitol, where senators on the appropriations committee have been listening to people ask for money all day, for multiple days.

“After sitting for several hours waiting his turn, John testifies to the appropriations committee hearing and says, ‘I’m here representing the Nebraska Game and Parks Foundation and I’m here to give you money.’”

The Foundation’s plan was to raise \$28 million of the estimated \$35 million project cost, asking the Nebraska Legislature and Game and Parks to fund the rest.

Twenty-four months later, with the help of many generous donors, ground was broken for the first Venture Parks projects. In 2024, the last Venture Parks project will be completed.

The Nebraska Game and Parks Foundation, and its generous supporters, does so much more than provide the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission financial support. It helps the agency meet its mission as stewards of the public’s natural resources, parklands and recreational opportunities. “The Foundation and its generous donors make Nebraska’s outdoors better, today and for future generations,” said Nebraska Game and Parks Commission Director Tim McCoy. “This supports our goals of engaging Nebraskans and our visitors of all ages in nature and outdoor recreation.”

that people and families have given back to Nebraska, creating a legacy that future generations can appreciate and enjoy.

But to be honest, Miller and a lot of outdoor enthusiasts like him don’t always know how these new access points and



Anglers at Johnson Lake State Recreation Area access newly constructed fishing piers. JULIE GEISER, NEBRASKALAND

properties appear, but they are surely happy when they do. And when told that Two Rivers SRA will soon have a new pier to either fish from or watch others fish from, Miller responded in a way that explains all of the work the Foundation does.

“Wow.”

Whether a person is quilting or kayaking, horseback riding or hunting, the Foundation is helping to make these moments happen. The gracious donors want people to enjoy the outdoors, and have a variety of ways to do that. They want the outdoors to be a huge part of their futures, and definitely want them to retain their pasts.

“Nebraska’s quality of life is greatly improved by providing public places and access to hunt, fish and experience our beautiful, family-friendly parks and recreation areas statewide,” said Foundation Chairman Jim Abel. “This is one of the reasons why the Foundation supports the agency’s mission and facilitates projects that benefit all Nebraskans, now and for future generations to come.”

With this mindset, it’s no surprise that the Foundation, with its successful and long-lasting projects, would have one final question on their mind.

What’s next? **N**

Opposite: Jim Abel has served as chairman for the Nebraska Game and Parks Foundation for nearly 20 years.



Even More Foundation Contributions

It's hard to summarize the meaning of the Foundation to the mission of the Game and Parks Commission, when their fingerprints can be found on so many outdoor-related projects. Here are a few more that the Foundation has assisted on statewide.



Harold Andersen Visitors Center at Fort Atkinson State Historical Park. JENNY NGUYEN-WHEATLEY, NEBRASKALAND



Picnic structure at Chadron State Park. JUSTIN HAAG, NEBRASKALAND



The nearly completed Treehouse Classroom at Schramm Park State Recreation Area.

JEFF KURRUS, NEBRASKALAND



Family-friendly shooting parks statewide, including this one at Platte River State Park.

ERIC FOWLER, NEBRASKALAND

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Saving Wildlife and Wild Places



The Nebraska Wildlife Conservation Fund improves land and water for native fish and wildlife, supports important research projects, and connects people with nature. Learn more about the fund, the projects it supports and how you can help at:

NebraskaWildlifeFund.org

Look for the Peregrine Falcon image on your Nebraska tax return.



Outdoor Nebraska

By Renae Blum

We are still in winter’s frigid grip, but spring is on the horizon, and the outdoors still holds many worthwhile possibilities. Keep reading for a few ideas to beat the winter blues. [N](#)



Try the sledding hill at Chadron State Park

As weather allows | Chadron

Enjoy gorgeous Pine Ridge scenery in a different way — from a sled! Chadron State Park’s designated sledding hill, located in the western section of the park, is a popular place for winter fun. It provides a steep 200-to-300-yard downhill run with no trees to worry about, plus a parking lot close by. Find the sledding hill location on the park map.

JUSTIN HAAG, NEBRASKALAND

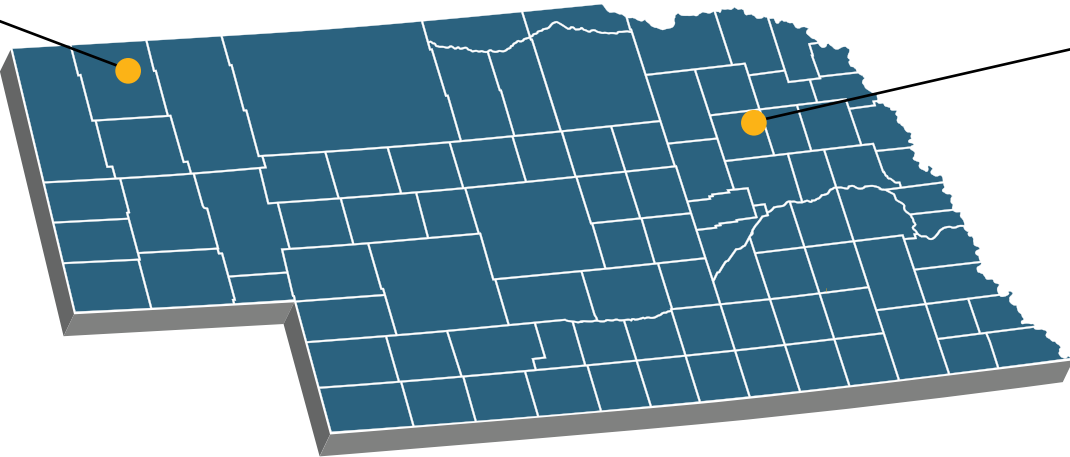


Photograph ice bubbles

Throughout the month
Statewide

The abstract shapes of air bubbles trapped in frozen lakes, ponds, puddles and waterfalls can make an intriguing photo subject. Search the water’s edge to find plants and insects frozen in the ice. A polarizing filter can cut down on reflections and glare, and watch your exposure, as large, light areas can cause underexposure.

CHRIS HELZER



Attend Discover Ice-Fishing

Jan. 13 | Norfolk

Learn the basics of ice-fishing or pick up a few new tips from experienced anglers. A classroom event specifically for beginners and families will be from 10 a.m. to noon, followed by a free, on-ice event at Skyview Lake from 1-4 p.m. Go to one or both sessions. To learn more and register for the classroom event — or find other Discover Ice-Fishing events this month — visit Calendar.OutdoorNebraska.gov.

JEFF KURRUS, NEBRASKALAND

Hunt for cottontails

Season runs through Feb. 29 | Statewide

Rabbits are great-tasting and easy to clean — and hunting them with a rimfire allows you to hone your tracking and observation skills. Head out when there’s snow on the ground and look for tracks leading to a hiding spot, typically brush piles or overgrown hedgerows. Then flush the rabbit out. Rabbits often pause to look back before slipping back undercover.

That’s the time to take your shot.

JUSTIN HAAG, NEBRASKALAND



Listen for great horned owls

January and February | Statewide

Great horned owls are one of the earliest breeding birds in Nebraska, and in January and February, you can hear them calling between dusk and dawn, either seeking a mate or communicating with one they already have. It’s a low hooting sound, typically a “who-hoo-ho-oo” or “who-ho-o-o, whoo-hoo-o-o, whoo.” If there are trees nearby, you have a chance of hearing them — so you may not even need to leave your neighborhood.

ERIC FOWLER, NEBRASKALAND



Harleigh Lisius of Juanita hunts pheasants at Oak Creek Sporting Club in Brainard. The hunt was sponsored by Becoming an Outdoors-Woman and Pheasants Forever.

JENNY NGUYEN-WHEATLEY, NEBRASKALAND



Learn to Hunt

One young woman’s journey to becoming a hunter

By Jenny Nguyen-Wheatley

Harleigh Lisius wasn’t born into a hunting family, but she always knew she wanted to do it. The daughter of a fourth-generation farmer, the 23-year-old grew up among cattle, corn and beans near Juniata and spent countless hours playing in the shelterbelt on the farm, fishing her grandparents’ pond or camping.

Every Thanksgiving, highly-anticipated visits from her aunt and uncle brought exciting tales of the couple’s lives as wildlife biologists in Minnesota. Harleigh also marveled at the wild game they shared.

“I never got to experience hunting as a kid, but was constantly hearing about my aunt and uncle going hunting,” Harleigh said. “They’d always bring back smoked goose and venison for us during Thanksgiving, and it was great. I really wanted to experience that and be able to gather food for myself.”

Outside of an unsuccessful turkey hunt with a neighbor in 2018, which showed Harleigh just how much she loved to sit quietly and watch wildlife, her hunting aspirations wouldn’t be realized until several years later. Without a mentor, Harleigh felt hesitant to pick up the sport on her own, but that didn’t stop her from pursuing a career in conservation in the meantime.

Career Pursuits

After graduating high school, Aunt Becky and Uncle Jason sagely invited Harleigh to visit them in Minnesota. She expressed a real interest in wildlife conservation, and her relatives thought it would be a good idea for her to spend a couple of weeks job shadowing them in the field — Becky works with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources as a wildlife manager, and Jason is a prescribed-fire burn boss with the state.

While there, Harleigh received firefighter training with Uncle Jason and conducted wildlife surveys with Aunt Becky.

“I spent some time with my aunt doing grouse surveys. I also helped with some snowshoe hare surveys, which was really hands-on,” she said. “I got to spend my first night in a prairie-chicken blind. It was absolutely amazing just sitting there and feeling the chill running up my

spine as the chickens started cackling back and forth at each other.”

Harleigh’s visit to Minnesota solidified her college plans. After earning her associate degree at Central Community College, she transferred to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to pursue a fisheries and wildlife degree — and she hit the ground running. She soon signed up for a Pheasants Forever summer internship in 2021, a partnership with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Harleigh received training in checking Conservation Reserve Program acres and other government-contracted ground.

“I had no plant identification knowledge before that,



Lisius takes a selfie while out checking Conservation Reserve Program acres. HARLEIGH LISIUS

Women on the Wing

Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever's Women on the Wing is an initiative to encourage more women to gather and collaborate in the hunting and outdoor space.

Events across the country include field days to engage female landowners in conservation; Women, Wine and Wild Game events to build community; women's learn-to-hunt events; wing shooting clinics; and public land hunting days. Many of the offerings are made possible through partnerships with state agencies and organizations.

"Since 2017, we've hosted 332 women's events across the country with 5,383 participants," said Ashley Chance, hunting heritage program manager at Pheasants Forever.

To get involved, check out the events calendar: bit.ly/3R94wgi

Additionally, take advantage of Pheasant Forever's How to Hunt Upland Birds film series, which showcases five hunters as they give lessons on how to hunt across the country. The online course is free and covers the basics of equipment, technique, safety and more. pheasantsforever.org/howtohunt



Lisius practices shooting clay targets with mentor Christy Christiansen before a pheasant hunt at Oak Creek Sporting Club in Brainard. JENNY NGUYEN-WHEATLEY, NEBRASKALAND

outside of what was considered a 'weed' on the farm. So, I got hands-on training, and we were out in the field all day. I would hike from pivot corner to pivot corner on plots all over Stanton County," Harleigh said. "I got to work with some really amazing people."



Lisius, second from left, mounts her shotgun as a pheasant flushes at Oak Creek Sporting Club in Brainard. JENNY NGUYEN-WHEATLEY, NEBRASKALAND

Additionally, she assisted with goose banding and helped with events to promote prescribed burning and its benefits.

"That was really cool to see communities come together and be encouraged by the possibilities of the different ways of managing [land]," Harleigh said, and she's had similar conversations with her father on implementing changes on the family farm. "My dad is very supportive. I've actually been talking with him about different options that we could use on the farm — maybe doing cover crop and putting

corners into CRP."

Since Harleigh's internship with Pheasants Forever, she has worked at Two Rivers State Recreation Area and received training to become a park naturalist. Additionally, she received her Master Naturalist certification in 2022. She currently works as an archery and firearms instructor at the Turpin Outdoor Education Center in Lincoln.

It was through Harleigh's work with Game and Parks that her next hunting opportunity finally unfolded.

Mentorship

While working the Missouri River Outdoor Expo, Harleigh connected with Christy Christiansen, a Game and Parks outdoor education specialist, who told her about the Becoming an Outdoors-Woman program.

In October 2022, Harleigh attended the Ladies' Learn to Pheasant Hunt program at Oak Creek Sporting Club near Brainard. The three-day event was sponsored by BOW and Pheasants Forever's Women on the Wing initiative. Pheasant



During a mentored Beyond Becoming an Outdoors-Woman deer hunt in Lincoln County, Lisius waits in a pop-up blind with her rifle and checks the height of her monopod. JULIE GEISER, NEBRASKALAND

hunting would prove to be the perfect initiation — Harleigh had experience shooting trap with her boyfriend, who shoots competitively.

“I felt so excited to shoot my first bird — the almost shaky anticipation of waiting for the bird to pop up, and when it does, it’s almost like watching it in slow motion, and sweeping your barrel over the bird to just the right spot so that you can really hit it. And then watching the poof of feathers as it falls and kind of being in shock that, ‘I got it!’ I believe I hit two pheasants and a chukar that day,” she said.

The hunt gave Harleigh confidence where she felt lost or

overwhelmed before. She felt lucky to be guided by Game and Parks’ Christy Christiansen and Julie Geiser.

“It was great to walk into the field with them and have them give me advice, in saying ‘slow down’ or ‘stop,’ ‘wait’ and ‘look that direction,’ and helping me spot things that I wouldn’t have necessarily spotted as a new hunter,” Harleigh said. She also learned how to clean and take apart birds, which had been a mystery. BOW and Women on the Wing instructors broke down every aspect of upland hunting, step-by-step.

“They made me feel like I wasn’t so unknowing, and they

guided me in the right direction,” she said. “It was also really nice to hunt with other ladies, too, who either had no experience or maybe had some but were trying to get back into hunting. The connections were awesome in meeting women from all walks of life.”

Lifelong Conservationist

Since the pheasant hunt, Harleigh was invited to hunt waterfowl near Lexington. As an inexperienced waterfowler, Harleigh took advantage of Nebraska’s new two-tier program and opted for Tier II, which allowed her a three-duck limit with no species and sex restrictions. She shot her limit of mallards that day, one of which she sent to a taxidermist to mount.

In January 2023, Harleigh attended another BOW program to hunt deer during the late river antlerless season. She hunted on private property near Brady with Geiser and was successful in shooting her first deer, a white-tailed doe. The hunt was memorable because Harleigh took her great-grandfather’s .308.

“It was special because I know my grandpa has shot deer with that rifle,” she said. Afterward, Christiansen invited Harleigh and a couple of other mentees to a “processing day,” when they learned how to break down the quarters of the

Becoming an Outdoors-Woman

Nebraska’s BOW offers a variety of outdoor workshops, clinics and camps throughout the year. Come learn something new or improve existing skills, including shooting, hunting, kayaking, fishing, ecological education and more. Nebraska Game and Parks also offers women-only hunter education courses.

To view events, visit bit.ly/3MPrUNh.

deer into different cuts of venison.

Today, Harleigh takes every chance she gets to sit in a blind, whether to view sandhill cranes or prairie-chickens with her camera or to hunt with a gun. Career-wise, she has taken interest in conservation photography and communications.

Harleigh is set to graduate this spring with a degree in fisheries and wildlife, and wherever her passion ends up taking her in conservation and/or in hunting, she will be one to watch. **N**



Lisius shot a doe during the late-season hunt and learned how to skin and process her deer as part of the Beyond Becoming an Outdoors-Woman program. JULIE GEISER, NEBRASKALAND

Saloon-Smashing Carrie Nation in Nebraska

By David L. Bristow, *History Nebraska*

Imagine that you are in a bar in the early 1900s — a glass of cold beer in your hand, a spittoon within easy spitting distance on the hardwood floor, and a racy painting of some unclothed beauty hanging on the wall.

You turn at the sound of a woman's voice singing hymns, and in walks a mature woman in a long, black dress. Standing nearly 6 feet tall, she wields a hatchet and has fire in her spectacled eyes.

And then she starts smashing the place up until she is tackled and hauled away by police.

Starting in 1900, Carrie Nation became a household name for her fanatical (she agreed with that word) opposition to alcohol. The 55-year-old Kansan spent much of early 1902 crusading in Nebraska.

In March, some saloons in Fullerton and Hastings locked their doors as soon as Nation arrived in their town. One Hastings bar owner probably wished he had done likewise after Nation “grabbed a chunk of ice from a dish of olives” and “slammed it through” a “breezy



Carrie Nation in 1903. NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

picture” she didn’t like, in the words of the Lincoln Courier.

Days later, the mayor of Blair refused to let the Kansan speak at the city opera house, saying, “We have enough trouble of our own, without importing any more.” But Nation

spoke at Boyd’s Opera House in Omaha, a city she called a “Hell-hole of iniquity.” Sipping from a “pitcher of light-brown Missouri River water,” Nation “shot ragged holes in the social system, upset theology, ripped politics up the back, and with a well-primed charge of verbal dynamite blew up the government in Washington,” according to the Omaha Bee.

“You business men here that want saloons are nursing the adder in your bosoms that will sting you,” she said. “You men can vote it out, and you women can smash it out.”

The City of Lincoln, meanwhile, was seriously considering a local prohibition ordinance, and Nation went there to campaign for it. When it failed in a close vote, she blamed local resident William Jennings Bryan — recent presidential nominee and the



Stickpin engraved with the words, “Carry A. Nation Hatchet.” Nation sold these for a dime as a fundraiser. She gave this one to a railroad station agent at a telegraph office in Exeter, Nebraska. HISTORY NEBRASKA, 10376-1



William Young Saloon, 416 S. 15th St., Omaha. HISTORY NEBRASKA, RG2341-0-1266



Ericson, Nebraska, 1910. A poster supports Omaha Mayor Jim Dahlman’s candidacy for governor. Dahlman was a notorious “wet,” meaning an opponent of Prohibition. HISTORY NEBRASKA, RG3542-95-17



Saloon in Wheeler County, Nebraska, circa 1900. HISTORY NEBRASKA, RG3542-7-5

MRS. NATION BREAKS RECORD

Measures Up Over All Other Single-Handed Conversationalists.

TALKS MORE THAN AN INSURANCE AGENT

at Happy-Hour Emporium of "Micky" Mullen Hatchettier Meets with Cordial Reception and Appropriate Music.

Nation toured Omaha's vice district accompanied by reporters. OMAHA BEE, MARCH 30, 1902

country's most prominent Democrat — for not speaking up enough in its favor. Never tolerant of half-heartedness or political calculation, Nation wrote in her autobiography, "From that time forth I knew Bryan was for Bryan and what Bryan could get for Bryan."

Nation's followers shared her uncompromising fervor. While she was in Lincoln, news broke that a woman had horsewhipped the mayor of Topeka, Kansas, for failing to shut down the city's saloons. Nation applauded the attack. On April 1, newspapers reported that a dozen veiled women had entered a saloon in Eddyville, Nebraska, smashing furniture and emptying out liquor bottles.

Nation herself never did anything veiled. She was soon back in Omaha touring the city's notorious Third Ward in the company of several newspaper reporters. A crowd followed her to Goldsmith's saloon at Ninth and Capitol, "possibly the toughest joint in town," according to the Omaha Bee. "With wild peals of laughter the women raised their glasses of beer, blew the foam from the amber fluid so that it almost fell upon the 'smasher's' dress and drank to her health."

She received a harsher welcome in a Nebraska City saloon a few days later when she tried to get behind the bar — presumably to break things — and in the ensuing scuffle was reportedly slapped by a bartender. Nation took it in stride. In her autobiography she boasted, "I reeled and fell and while I knew he struck me with his clenched fists as hard as he could, so it seemed to me, I did not have a bruise." Ejected from the saloon, she came back later and was arrested and jailed.

STRIKES CARRIE NATION IN FACE

Nebraska City Bartender Pugilistic
—Carrie Also Arrested There
But Is Released.

The incident in Nebraska City. OMAHA WORLD-HERALD, APRIL 6, 1902

But opposing alcohol wasn't Nation's only crusade. She was also an ardent supporter of women's suffrage. For her, and for many women of her generation, the two causes were

related. In one of her public debates on suffrage, Nation took on a county judge in Seward. According to the Blue Valley Blade, the pair spent the evening quoting the Bible at each other.

"She seems to have a very poor opinion of the stronger sex," the Blade commented. "Mrs. Nation contends that men are to blame for all the evil in the land and that things will not go right until women are allowed to vote."

Dying in 1911, Nation did not live to see the country embrace both Prohibition and women's suffrage in the wake of World War I. For Nebraskans, her 1902 tour showed both the growing power — and firm resistance — to her causes. [N](#)

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



Saloon in Abie, Butler County, Nebraska, circa 1900. HISTORY NEBRASKA, RG3268-1-5

Wildlife's Wintering Ways

Story and photos by Justin Haag

When the mercury dips down around zero, most of us are fortunate to have heated spaces to take refuge. Wildlife aren't so fortunate, but do have special adaptations and behaviors to battle the elements.

Some escape the cold by migrating south. While such travel is certainly effective, and attractive to us humans, it comes at the expense of a lot of energy and most animals would rather stay put if possible.

Warm-blooded animals must maintain an internal body temperature, and wildlife can certainly succumb to cold and frostbite just as humans can. Thanks to biological features, our neighbors of the wild are able to withstand frigid temperatures much better than we are.

One of the primary tactics for many species is to take things down a notch. That is, they either hibernate or enter the period of slowed activity known as torpor. And, depending on the animal, there may be herding, denning, burrowing and roosting in tree cavities involved.

A certain amount of "porking out" also helps, as nature's smorgasbord of food in fall helps animals prepare for months ahead. Wild turkeys, which are heavily dependent on ground forage, often carry enough fat into winter to roost in a tree without food for a week if a snowstorm forces them to do so.

Similar to many birds, you will often see turkeys fluffing feathers to boost insulation. Most terrestrial species use a natural coat of some sort to stay warm. Mammals such as deer gradually replace the hair of their summer coats with heavier ones for winter.

The Canada goose has upwards of 25,000 feathers, which, similar to other waterfowl, it keeps waterproofed with oil from a gland in its lower back. The

Thick winter coats of the pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*) match the frost-covered Panhandle landscape on this morning.

thick undercoating of fluffy down feathers traps heat from their body close to the skin.

Also remarkable are the goose’s feet, which use an artery of warm blood to heat the frigid blood returning to the heart from below — a handy feature for a bird that spends a lot of time standing on ice.

The cottontail rabbit surely prefers being too cold rather than too hot. When not foraging, rabbits take refuge in underground dens lined with grass, straw and twigs. Regardless, winter is a tough time for the species as estimates say only 30 percent make it through to spring.

Of course, one of the most important

RIGHT: An eastern cottontail rabbit (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) sits on a bed of snow at Metcalf Wildlife Management Area near Hay Springs.

BELOW: A great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*) sits through a light snow in an abandoned ranch house in Sioux County.

OPPOSITE PAGE: A dark-eyed junco (*Junco hyemalis*) clings to the branch of a redleaf rose after a snow in Chadron.





considerations for an animal to stick around in winter is the availability of food. Most wintering herbivores are able to adapt from eating the green leaves of summer to the woody twigs and bark that remains. While chickadees certainly like seeds at feeders, the small birds will also eat fat from decomposing animal carcasses.

For deer, a keen sense of smell helps them find food under the snow, and the pads of their feet harden for winter to make it easier to dig through the snow and ice.

The ways animals survive in the wild are many, whether during winter or other times of the year — it's something to think about while we're huddled up with a hot drink near the fire. 🍷



ABOVE: Big snowflakes fall as a flock of wild turkey forage through the snow near the White River west of Chadron.

BELOW LEFT: A white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) moves through the snow-covered landscape of Chadron State Park in the Pine Ridge of Dawes County.

BELOW RIGHT: A black-capped chickadee (*Poecile atricapillus*) feeds on a deer carcass at Gilbert-Baker Wildlife Management Area in Sioux County.



A Backyard Prairie

An Acreage Transformed

Story and photos by Renae Blum

When Sue Kirkpatrick bought her acreage in 2013, which is 3 miles east of Lincoln, she didn't intend to become a native prairie hobbyist. After 30 years of living in neighborhoods with city ordinances, neighborhood covenants and manicured lawns, Kirkpatrick simply desired the freedom to do what she wanted in a more relaxed environment.

But things changed after she signed up for the Nebraska Master Naturalist Program in 2014. The program offers adults in-depth training on the natural world, as well as volunteer opportunities.

Kirkpatrick completed her training, which included both classroom time and hands-on outdoors learning, over the course of a week at the Niobrara Valley Preserve near Valentine.

"It was like adult summer camp. It was so fun, tromping around in the woods and water and prairie, and viewing bison, kayaking the Niobrara and sitting by campfires at night," she said.

Kirkpatrick also learned from natural resource professionals about biodiversity, prairie restoration, and what plants belonged in her corner of Nebraska.



An aerial view of Kirkpatrick's acreage east of Lincoln. NICK SAUVAGEAU, NGPC VIDEOGRAPHER



Sue Kirkpatrick poses with freshly cut wildflowers from the prairie restoration she created on her acreage.

"As I learned about Nebraska ecosystems, it became clear that I wanted to do my part to conserve the plants and animals that belong on my 5 acres," she said.

During her training and the volunteer opportunities that followed, Kirkpatrick also met many people who would help her on her journey: conservationists, nature educators, biologists, nature nerds, land managers and more.

Small Beginnings

When Kirkpatrick first moved to her place, much of it was annual sunflowers, young cedar trees and brome grass, an aggressive, non-native plant. It was mowed at first, so Kirkpatrick let things grow for a bit to see what popped up.

One element that has stayed from those early days is a patch of thickspike gayfeather (*Liatris pycnostachya*),

a native species of the low, moist tallgrass prairies in southeastern Nebraska often planted in prairie restorations. It creates beautiful spires of purple flowers and is becoming rather uncommon in Nebraska, due to prairie loss and disturbances such as heavy grazing and herbicides.

The gayfeather patch was only about 15 yards in size at the time, and Kirkpatrick decided to let it grow. Every year since, it has increased and

has now spread to about an acre of her property. When it blooms in late July and early August, the area directly behind Kirkpatrick's house blazes into a stunning field of purple.

"I know it's more of a monoculture in certain areas, but I'm OK with that," Kirkpatrick said. "It's really pretty."

Another early project was professionally designed. Kirkpatrick removed a juniper tree from the end of her driveway and hired Benjamin



Monarch butterfly in a patch of thickspike gayfeather behind Kirkpatrick's house.



Kirkpatrick planted wild plum in her backyard, a shrub native to Nebraska.



A native plant display in front of Kirkpatrick's house, designed by Monarch Gardens.

Vogt, owner of Monarch Gardens, a prairie-inspired design firm in Lincoln, to create a display of native plants in its place. Today, the cluster of butterfly milkweed, native grasses, purple poppy mallow, purple coneflower and other native plants creates an attractive entrance to her property for both people and pollinators.

The Prairie Process

After planting various native plants around her house, Kirkpatrick turned her attention to a prairie restoration, planting her first half-acre area in the spring of 2017. She purchased a seed mix from Prairie Legacy, Inc., a Nebraska company that sells native plants and seeds for habitat restorations. Prairie Legacy selected a seed mix for Kirkpatrick of more than 50 native prairie plants, including purple prairie clover, yarrow, little bluestem and butterfly milkweed.

Kirkpatrick began the planting process by treating the area with an herbicide to kill off what lived there. Then, when the conditions were right for growth, she mixed the seeds with vermiculite to add bulk and planted them, tossing them directly on top of soil wetted by sprinklers.

She planted her second half-acre in the winter of 2019. Again, Kirkpatrick hand-planted the seeds, dropping them directly on the snow-covered ground.

Today, the two sections are thriving. No watering and little weeding is needed, though Kirkpatrick does mow or burn the sections once a year.

Kirkpatrick has also seeded other patches of her property with native plants, and around the edges of her property, she's planted many native trees and shrubs. All this habitat has attracted a variety of wildlife, including birds, a snapping turtle, coyotes, opossum, raccoons, a fox, deer, turkeys and snakes.

A Transcendent Experience

"This experience is more than just land management," Kirkpatrick said. "It's transcendent. It's about experiencing the awe, the wonder, and the miracle of nature."

It's also been a journey of personal growth for her. "I'm learning to treat myself with the same wholehearted acceptance that I grant to the ebb and flow of the biology on my 5 acres," she said. "It's all about trust and acceptance — trusting God and nature, accepting the various outcomes of my projects, and trusting that it's going to be OK, whatever happens out there." 

Lessons Learned: Tips for Growing Native Plants at Home

By Renae Blum

Looking to try something similar to Kirkpatrick's project? Here are some lessons she's learned over the years, in her own words.

- **Start small.** One of the first things I did to my place was plant fescue, a non-native lawn grass, in bare patches of dirt so weeds wouldn't take over. I won't do that again. The area was only 15 feet by 75 feet, so upon the advice of a conservation-minded person, I killed it with black plastic. (Clear plastic is effective, too.) After a summer of intensified heat on the fescue plot, it was ready for a seeding of native grasses. Not a big area, but a beginning.
- **When you start to establish a prairie restoration, do what the professionals tell you to do.** They really do know what they're talking about. If they tell you to mow the first year, do it. The prairie takes a while to get established. As the saying goes, the first year it sleeps, second year it creeps, third year it leaps.
- **Mowing and other mechanical methods of plant removal can be great tools.** I'm still learning this one. When I first moved here from a manicured neighborhood, I was rebelliously anti-mowing. Well, there is a time and place for it. It is helpful in setting back weeds, establishing trails and creating a safe fire break before a prescribed burn.
- **Get to know your weed whacker.** One of the happiest days of my life was when I learned to operate mine. It's my favorite tool. It goes places the mower can't.
- **Every action (or inaction) has a consequence.** Every management decision has an effect, and sometimes your decision is to do nothing. Some of the consequences you will be happy about; some you might not like.
- **Don't worry too much about it.** An important one. This place is not my bread and butter; it's a hobby.
- **If you feel like this is just too much work, maybe you should choose to do something else.** When I bought an acreage 10 years ago, many people said, "An acreage ... that's a lot of darn work!" I didn't buy it to make a lot of work for myself, and I don't think it is a lot of work. I love going outside and checking on how my plants have grown, and watching for birds and



other wildlife. If I didn't have weeds to get after, or that darn "work" to do out there, I wouldn't have as many opportunities to enjoy nature.

One year I had the idea that apple trees might be fun. Wrong! Too much work, no fun (for me). Also, no apples. Same with a patch of serviceberry bushes I put in nine years ago. I watered them for a couple of years and mowed around them even longer, but they never grew. Time to move on.

• **Understand and accept that your prairie will change — while continuing to manage it.** For example, at my place, the gayfeather first established itself in the northwestern corner of my field, but it has spread out and grown thicker in another corner. False boneset is currently becoming more prevalent in the original northwestern corner.

While enjoying the natural changes in plant populations, I need to be watching my prairie in order to do the things that mimic natural disturbance phenomena (strategic grazing, prescribed burning or discretionary mowing), which gives different plants a chance to grow. A variety of species helps to keep a prairie healthy. And, of course, I'm always keeping an eye open for noxious weeds and invasives which require intervention.

• **Sit down.** This is a difficult lesson. A friend suggested that I put in some benches or seating in strategic places. I laughed, asking, "How often do you think I sit down outside?" Well, since then, I've been practicing being still out there, listening, observing — and loving it.

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ANTLERS VS. HORNS

By Monica Macoubrie, Wildlife Education Specialist

How many times have you heard someone say, “Wow, look at the horns on that deer”? Horns and antlers are not interchangeable. While they share some similarities, horns and antlers are distinct forms of animal headgear.

Antlers

Males in the Cervidae family, including mule deer, white-tailed deer, moose and elk, are the only class of mammals to grow antlers. Exceptions: Both males and females of caribou and reindeer possess antlers, and, oddly, males drop their antlers before females. For instance, caribou males in Alaska drop their antlers in October, whereas pregnant females may retain their antlers well into May or June the following year. Scientists believe this is to help females fight and defend their food sources through the winter.

Antlers can grow exceptionally large, and their morphology will vary among species.



An animal’s larger antlers are a good indicator of metabolic efficiency and usually means the animal is fitter. These are desirable traits for a female looking for a reproductive partner. JEFF KURRUS, NEBRASKALAND

How Do Antlers Grow?

Antlers begin growing from two small bony structures on top of an animal’s head called pedicles. For deer or elk in Nebraska, changes in testicular and pituitary hormones during the spring signals the growth of antlers.

In the early stages of development, antlers have high water and protein content. They are made of bone and are coated in velvet — a thin, fuzzy layer of skin tissue that carries blood and nutrients to the antlers during development. When the antlers reach their full size, the velvet will dry and stop

growing. The animal will then shed this layer by scraping its antlers on trees and thick brush. This scraping action will also stain, shine and sharpen the rack. The result will, hopefully, be impressive enough to compete for and attract a mate.

As the antlers stop growing, the outer, spongy bone is replaced by compact bone while the centers become filled with coarse, spongy lamellar bone and marrow spaces. In winter when growth hormones decrease, the pedicle loses calcium, which will weaken the connection between the pedicle and the antler. At this point, the antler(s) will fall off. For a short time, males will be without antlers until the growing process begins again in the spring.

Purpose of Antlers

Among cervids, the phrase “bigger is better” couldn’t be truer. Hunters know that males use their antlers during the breeding season to compete for females and to fight other males for hierarchy and leadership; females see males with larger antlers to be fitter because of their position as alpha males. Additionally, antlers also are indicators of good metabolic efficiency and food gathering, which are desirable traits in a reproductive partner.

Antlers aren’t just used for acquiring a mate — they also are used for protection against predators. Animals such as coyotes, bobcats and mountain lions could be potential predators for cervids.



Just like deer, elk will develop velvet on their antlers during the growing process. This velvet helps bring nutrients and blood to the developing ornaments. It will later be rubbed off when the antlers stop growing. JEFF KURRUS, NEBRASKALAND



Male bighorn sheep will often crash into their opponents and fight to establish dominance and mark territories.

JUSTIN HAAG, NEBRASKALAND

Horns

Horns grow on completely different groups of animals: males, and females in some species, of bovids. The Bovidae family includes cows, sheep, goats, water buffalo, antelopes and gazelles. Unlike antlers that have the same basic shape, the appearance of horns varies widely from one animal to the next.

How Do Horns Grow?

Unlike antlers that branch out and shed, horns, also called ossicones, do neither of these. In many species, horns never stop growing throughout the life of the animal, which is useful as horns can become worn down over time. Normally, the only reason an animal loses its horns is if they are broken or cut off, and if this happens, horns cannot re-grow.

The growth of horns is completely different than that of antlers. The cores begin as small, bony growths underneath the skin and over the skull in the subcutaneous connective tissue. Horns are not attached to the skull — they possess their own centers of ossification and fuse secondarily to the skull bones.

In the Bovidae family, horns can grow singularly or as symmetrical pairs, such as those seen on bighorn sheep.

Purpose of Horns

Although the process of growth is different for horns and antlers, they are similar in function and use. Horns are often used by males to fight and display during the breeding season. These fights include clashes that will ultimately determine the overall strength of the animal and its right to breed.

Unlike antlered species, the females of many species of bovids possess horns, especially among larger species. This

is most likely due to the tendency of larger species to fight more often; smaller bovids typically prefer to run away and hide.

Horns on males are usually thicker at the base and able to withstand more force. On females, they are normally straighter and thinner, which may make the horns better for stabbing for defense.

In addition to fighting for dominance, territory or a mate, horns can be used for other functional purposes, such as digging in soil or stripping bark from trees. There is evidence of horns being used as cooling systems: Blood vessels in the bony core of the horn can let off heat to lower the animal’s body temperature.

Pronghorns, the Exception

In the Sandhills and western Nebraska, you may find an animal known as the pronghorn. This animal is the only surviving species of the North American ungulate family: Antilocapridae. Not only are pronghorn a unique ruminant, they also carry unique headgear, which have characteristics of both horns and antlers.

True antlers are made of bone and are shed each year, and true horns are made of compressed keratin that grows from a bony core and are never shed. Interestingly, the horns on a pronghorn are neither true horns nor true antlers. Instead, the sheath is made of keratin, yet the horns are shed yearly.

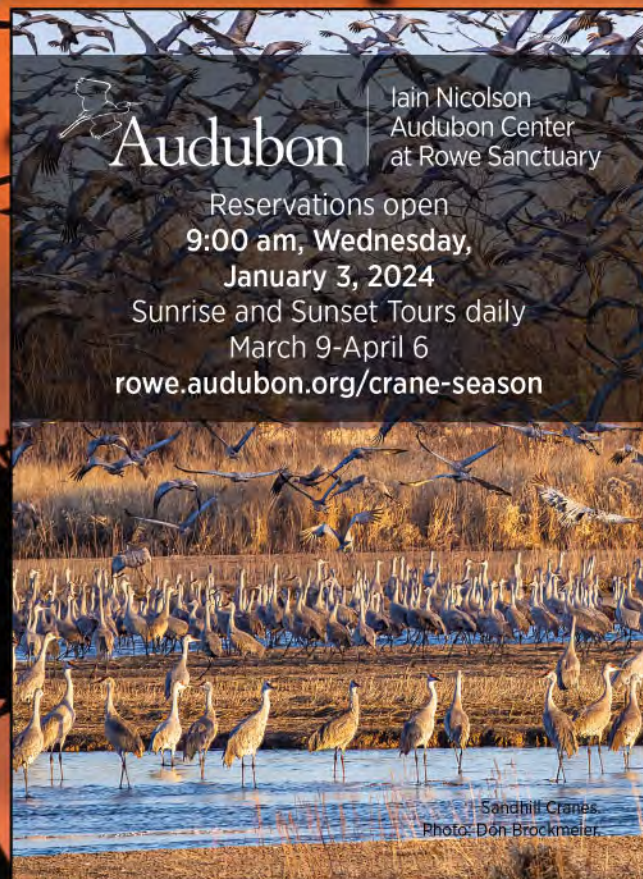
True horns normally have only one point, but pronghorn have branched horns. Females also have horns, but they are much smaller than their male counterparts. Pronghorns are the only animals in the world that have forked horns that are shed each year.



Pronghorn have neither true horns, nor true antlers. Instead, they have a combination of both. Their horns are forked and are shed annually. JUSTIN HAAG, NEBRASKALAND

Sandhill Crane

Migration Guide



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Sandhill Cranes
Photo: Don Brockmeier



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Fishing near Chambers, 1952
 It is such fun to see the portraits from the past! I went to my archives and found this photo. These are my parents, Jeanne and Lyle Clemens, when they were newly married. They are displaying their catch of crappies in front of their home in Chambers, Nebraska, probably around 1952.
 – Lisa Hadenfeldt, Scottsbluff



Pheasant hunting near Cozad, 1939
 Pheasant hunting near Cozad back in 1939 with (left to right) George Kennedy, Raymond Lemme and Uncle Einar Andersen. My mother was from Cozad, and her brother, Einar, was from Bassett.
 – Marjorie Kouba, North Platte

Send contributions to: Portraits from the Past, Nebraskaland Magazine, P.O. Box 30370, Lincoln, NE 68503-0370. Or e-mail to Tim.Reigert@Nebraska.gov. Photos should show people enjoying Nebraska outdoor activities, such as camping, boating, hunting or fishing, and must have been taken before 2000. We will give priority to unusual photos or activities. When possible, please include a story about the photograph and identify the people, places and approximate date it was taken. Text may be edited and photos adjusted for reproduction. All photos will be returned.



Deer hunting west of Columbus, 1959
 The photo shows my grandfather, Gotlieb Wilke (far right), and my uncles, Robert Wilke (sitting), Walter Wilke (in back of pickup) and Billy Schroeder. These deer were all shot a couple of miles west of Columbus along the Loup River on opening day.
 – Myron Behlen, Columbus

Pronghorn hunting near Kimball, 1978
 Gary Koci (me, shown right) with hunting guide and partner Ed Zals back in 1978 while hunting antelope near Kimball.
 – Gary Koci, Lincoln





JEFF KURRUS, NEBRASKALAND

PINTAILS

By Jeff Kurrus

“Pintails!” Todd Mills burst from beside me, his eyes wide as he stared at the sleek flyers above us from our Platte River goose blind that day. His gaze was part panic — because he always gets a little more keyed up when pintails are in the air.

How could you not be in wonderment when watching these birds fly?

“They’re coming right in!” he darn near shouted, ignoring the tornado of Canada geese working our spread as well, which is especially interesting because duck season had closed and we had driven to Hall County with one focus in mind — geese. But that focus changed when Mills picked those birds out of the sky.

“Wow,” was all he could say as they came in easier than any flock of pintails had ever done before, seemingly well aware that they were out of danger.

Once they gave us their flirty buzz, the entire

group well within gun range, they left — never to be seen again.

Hours later, when we returned to the truck after one of our most memorable goose hunts ever, Mills finally got comfortable in his seat and turned toward me.

“How about them pintails?” he said, his 61-year-old voice sounding like a teenager again. “How many do you think there were?”

“I think I can tell you that,” I said. When I got home, I texted him the photograph with this message: “There’s nothing special about this image. Too far away. But I thought you’d like.”

“Oh my,” was all he responded to this average-at-best photograph of what many believe to be hunting’s most beautiful and graceful bird, reminding me that sometimes it’s simply not about the photo itself. It’s the feeling you get when you see it.

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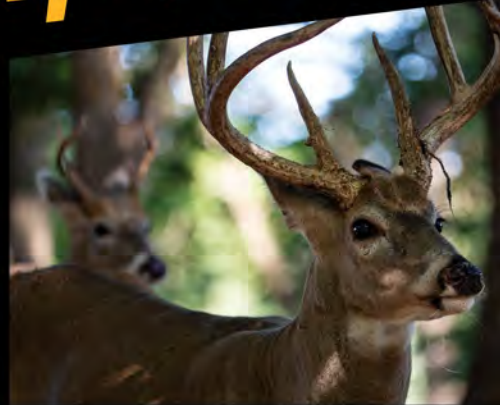
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