



An abandoned farmhouse sits as an oasis in the midst of a cornfield southwest of Sprague in Lancaster County. Photo by Brad Moser.

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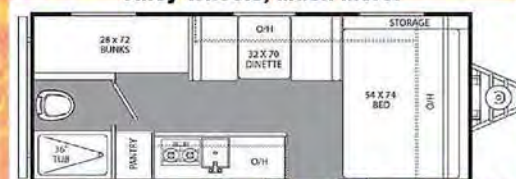
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ON THE WEB...



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Cover: Photographing river otters, such as this one, isn't as easy as it appears to be. See story on page 16. Photo by Luke Kathol.



First Time Fishing

I thought I'd tell you a fun little story that happened this past summer. I took my four grandkids down to fish on a private pond near Crete. This was their first time fishing so they were very excited. We baited up hooks and managed to get all four poles in the water. After about five minutes nine-year-old Zacharie excitedly exclaimed "I got a fish!" The next second, seven-year-old Henry screamed, "I got a fish too!" The two boys were working their reels pulling in their first catches ever. You can image our surprise when the one fish emerged from the water and it had both hooks in its mouth! The boys starting screaming, "We caught the same fish!"

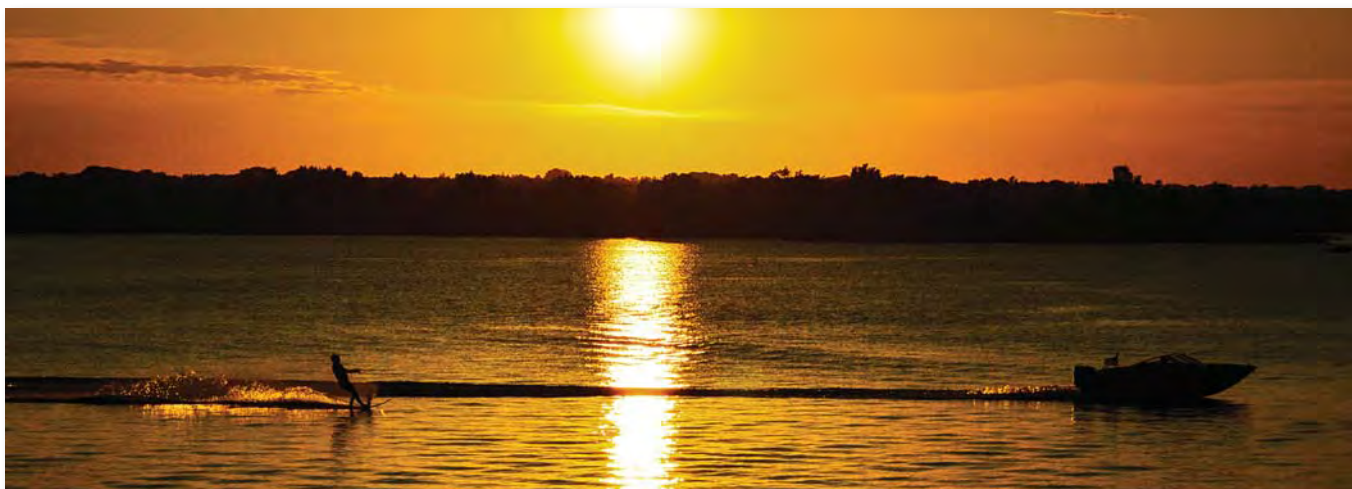
This story will be told around the table for many years, even when these young boys are grandpas. Cousins went fishing for the first time, and the first fish they caught was the same fish!

Smiling Grandma,
Linda Ward
Raymond, Nebraska

KANSASland

I have lived in Kansas for almost 2 years now after spending my years up to retirement in the state of Nebraska. We still enjoy reading the magazine and learning more about Nebraska ... wish Kansas had a KANSASland magazine.

Edward Jankowski
Eudora, Kansas

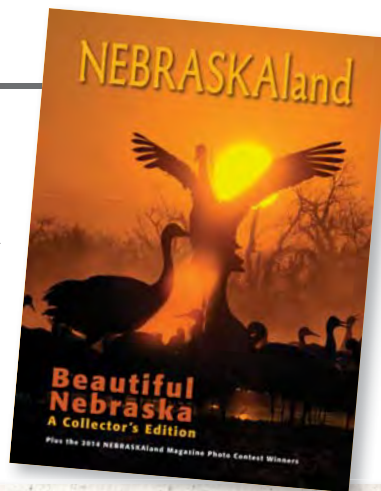


While photographing last summer, Lisa Woerly of Lincoln sent in this image of water skiers at Branched Oak Lake near Raymond.

Photo Special

Thank you so much for the NEBRASKAland Collector's photo magazine. I thoroughly enjoyed the "armchair" tour of our state! Keep up the good work.

Carolyn Keil
Lincoln, Nebraska



This mottled channel catfish was caught at Halleck Park Lake in Papillion by Derek Guyton of Bellevue last summer.



Jerry Jacobitz of Pawnee City submitted a photo of a white hummingbird from his backyard feeder.

Outdoor Message Plates



Dan Eby of Lexington displays his love for walleye fishing on his vehicle.

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



Anne Crofford of Falls City sent in this Chimney Rock photograph.

Send your comments to:
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or e-mail Jeff.Kurrus@Nebraska.gov
Please include your postal address and telephone number.
Letters may be condensed and edited for clarity. Photographs are welcome and will be returned.

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Mixed Bag

Paddlefish Stocking in Central Nebraska Canal System

By Julie Geiser

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission recently stocked 990 paddlefish at Gallagher Canyon and Midway Canyon reservoirs located south of Cozad.

The 12-inch paddlefish have been stocked in efforts to offer anglers a chance in central Nebraska to be able to snag or use bow and arrow on mature paddlefish.

"We hope to establish a sufficient population so that a season can be implemented similar to that on the Missouri river," said Dave Tunink, assistant administrator of the Commission's fisheries division. Tunink commented that "it will take a high density population to establish a season, which we hope to do in the canal system."

According to Tunink, the canal systems should be a good place to establish populations of paddlefish as the water levels are good with deep, open water in the canyon reservoirs. "The habitat is there for them, reservoir paddlefish grow well and as the fish get larger people may start to see them surfacing and rolling to feed," Tunink stated.

It will take several years to establish a paddlefish population in the canal system, which will hopefully lead to a season on the fish.

For now the population will grow primarily from stocked fish, which will be done in coming years with paddlefish fry from Gavins Point National Fish Hatchery in Yankton, South Dakota. The fry will then be raised in Nebraska hatcheries.

Primitive characteristics of the paddlefish include a skeleton composed of mainly cartilage and a deep forked, elongated tail fin – the upper lobe being longer than the lower lobe, similar to sharks. They are also equipped with an elongated paddle-like snout called a rostrum.

Paddlefish swim through water with their mouths open to collect tiny crustaceans, insects and have adaptations specifically for filter feeding on zooplankton. ■



PHOTO BY JULIE GEISER

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Mixed Bag



Train robber Sam Bass

Travelogue

By Julie Geiser

Big Springs

Located at exit 107 on Interstate 80, the small town of Big Springs may be small but it's big on history.

From outdoor opportunities, a night spent at an old-time motel, great food and history, this small town offers I-80 travelers a look to the past.

The restored **Phelps Hotel Bed & Breakfast** gives guests a great place to stay similar to its opening on New Year's Day in 1886. The Phelps Hotel was a stopping place for Union Pacific (UP) railroad workers who carried side-arms for protection against would-be robbers and Indians. The "House of Three Chimneys," as the hotel was referred to, was a landmark for pioneers.

Enjoy some "Grub at Gunpoint" at the **Sam Bass' Saloon and Steakhouse**. In 1877, the Sam Bass gang robbed the UP express train No. 4 of \$60,000 in \$20 gold coins at Big Springs, the largest robbery of a UP train. Legend states that part of the \$20 gold pieces are still buried in the area. Along with history and old photos, the menu of appetizers, sandwiches, burgers and their self-proclaimed best hand-cut steaks in the area are hard to beat.

For those looking for a day in the outdoors, **Lake McConaughy** is a 40-minute drive from Big Springs. With plenty of sandy beaches and a campground with amenities, Lake McConaughy is a great way to spend a day at the beach camping, boating, jet skiing and parasailing. The lake is a popular walleye fishery along with white bass, wipers, northern pike and channel catfish.

Ash Hollow State Historical Park is a mere 22-minute drive from Big Springs. The scenic State Historical Park's visitor's center offers a look back at the Oregon-California Trail where the old wagons still show their mark across the landscape at Windlass Hill.

The visitor's center covers the history of the area and hosts exhibits describing prehistoric animals, early man and indigenous people. The park features a landmark cave, spring and creek, a sod house and an old restored stone school house along with the site of an original trading post.

Hunters will want to visit **Clear Creek Wildlife Management Area** north of Big Springs. Clear Creek includes a 2,500-acre waterfowl refuge on the North Platte River, a 600-acre controlled waterfowl hunting area providing more than 2,000 acres of public hunting lands open to excellent deer, turkey, pheasant and waterfowl hunting, as well as fishing and bird watching.

For more information, visit Outdoornebraska.org, and Ci.big-springs.ne.us. ■



The Phelps Hotel Bed & Breakfast

Big Springs



Ash Hollow State Historical Park's sod house



Relaxing at Lake McConaughy SRA



Big Springs Veteran's Memorial



The Memorial includes a walkway to the circular memorial site with three granite ledger stones engraved with the names of approximately 670 local veterans. The ledger stones are centered with a 30' American Flag pole, surrounded by 25' flag poles flying the flags for the POW/MIA and the five branches of the Armed Forces. Two benches face the monuments and provide a peaceful place to rest and reflect. The area is bordered on the south with a 6' vinyl fence and the entire area is landscaped with hundreds of trees, bushes, grasses and flowers.

Journey to Deuel County



Slow down and enjoy a visit in Deuel County. Chappell and Big Springs offer a taste of small town American life with bowling, baseball, swimming and golf. Restaurants, lodging and camping are easily accessible from Interstate 80. An abundance of wildlife offers great fishing and hunting in the area. Journey to Deuel County for a relaxing vacation!

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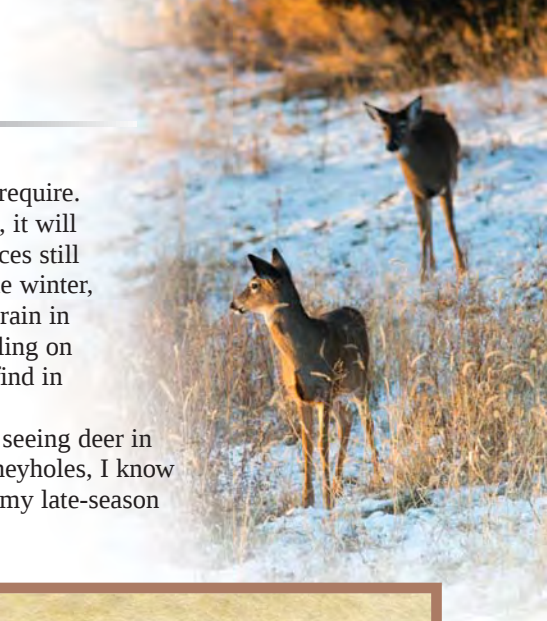
Late-season Deer Hunt

By Jeff Kurrus

When I first started hunting deer in Nebraska, a colleague at the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission told me how deer migrate to new haunts late in the season. But I didn't believe him. To prove him wrong, I spent 21 straight days in December and January hunting those same places I'd been in September without seeing the first deer. I'm a slow learner. Where they could be found, I learned, was near thermal cover, such as cedar trees and tall grasses like big bluestem. But they may not move much, knowing the caloric trade-

off that such forays require. When they do move, it will be toward food sources still viable throughout the winter, foraging for waste grain in crop fields and nibbling on any green they can find in alfalfa fields.

Now, when I stop seeing deer in my early-season honeyholes, I know it's time to move to my late-season stand locations. ■



Cast-iron Cooking for the Holidays

By Dylan Tegtmeier, Nebraska Outdoor U!

I know it is the holiday season when I enter the house in my snow-covered boots after a morning of December deer hunting and am instantly greeted by the smell of fresh baked treats. The warmest memories, such as these, are those that will last a lifetime, and one of the best ways to create these memories is by doing some seasonal cast iron cooking.

A nice, sweet ham is a Christmas favorite. Most folks, my family included, have a special recipe to make the ham just right. This recipe will get you started, but feel free to write down notes and adjustments to the recipe for next time, until you've made it your own secret recipe.

If you regularly cook with your cast iron, you've probably already established a nice patina of non-stick seasoning on your irons, from years of tender loving care. But if you're new to cast iron cooking, you'll need to season your cookware before getting started.

The object is to put a layer of resident grease on your iron to protect it from rust and aid in cooking. To do this, make sure your iron is scrubbed clean and dry. Then, spread a thin layer of vegetable oil on it and place it upside down in your oven at 375 degrees with a piece of tin foil under it to catch the grease drippings. After 1 hour, let your iron cookware cool, and then

you should be ready to cook with it.

Start out with a thawed spiral ham and stud the cloves onto the ham, then use toothpicks to stick pineapple all over the outside of the ham. Next, cover the ham and pineapple with a good coat of brown sugar. Pour pineapple juice into the pan, too. Then, add soda in with the pineapple juice – a can of Sierra Mist will work just fine for this. Now, you will put the lid on and begin to cook this with 24 charcoal bricks on top and 12 on bottom because you'll probably be using a larger Dutch oven.

To make the honey glaze, just mix brown sugar and honey in a heated pan to melt the sugar. Feel free to add some nutmeg to this too. As the ham continues to cook at about 180 degrees, add the honey glaze and cook to your liking. Cooking this at 180-200 degrees will put a good amount of flavor in the meat but will take longer too, usually 2-2½ hours. Experiment with the heat and cook time until you find what works best for you.

A Christmas meal with friends and family usually includes a cobbler of some sort as well. Peach cobbler is my favorite. A very simple cobbler recipe is this: one cup of flour, one cup of sugar, and one cup of margarine or butter. Mix this together until it is the consistency of mashed potatoes. Grease the bottom of your



PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS

pan with butter. Pour in your pie filling of choice into the pan, cover it with your flour topping, mix, and put your Dutch oven lid on. Every brick usually brings about 15 degrees of heat when using smaller ovens. So to cook this at 350 degrees you'll need about 13 bricks on top and 11 on the bottom. This should work for 10-14 inch ovens.

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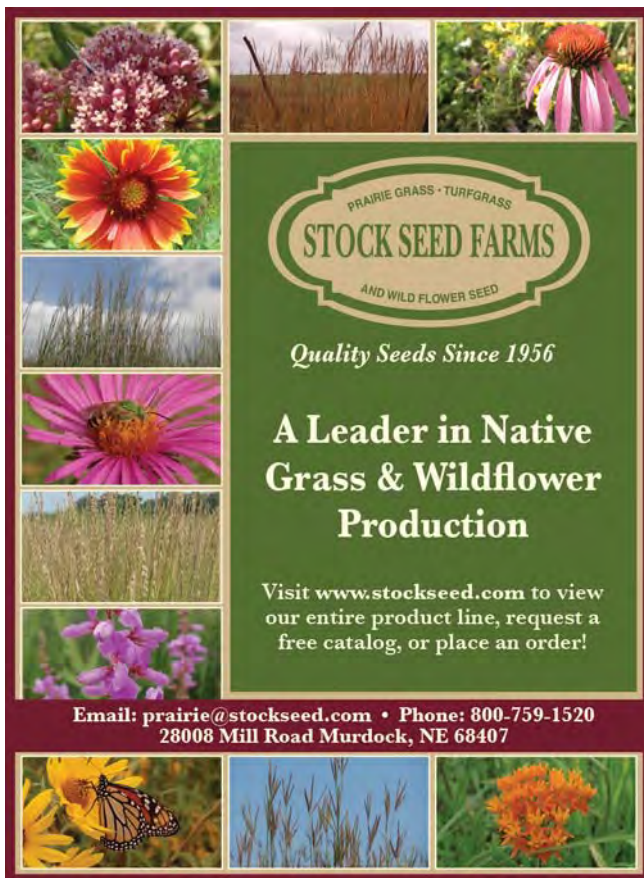
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Red-bellied Woodpecker

Song or calls: Rolling “churr” or “chiv-chiv.”

Description: Black-and-white barred back; white uppertail coverts; barred central tail feathers; white belly with a small reddish patch or tinge. *Male* has more extensive red on head, having red on both the crown and nape. *Females* only have red on the nape.

Habitat: Fairly open forest stands, often in river bottom forests. Often seen in orchards, urban parks and gardens.

Where in Nebraska: Common permanent resident in eastern Nebraska. Extends west along major river systems. Regular breeder.

Status: May be extending its breeding range northward and westward.

Fun Facts: As many as half of all red-bellied woodpecker nests in some areas get invaded by starlings. Excavates its nest in 7-10 days. ■

To learn about more birds visit NebraskaBirdLibrary.org.



Elks Lodge Seek Hides

By Connor Graham

The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, known as the local Elks Lodge in most small towns, is again accepting donated deer hides from the beginning of the November firearm deer season through the end of the January antlerless deer season. Donated hides will be

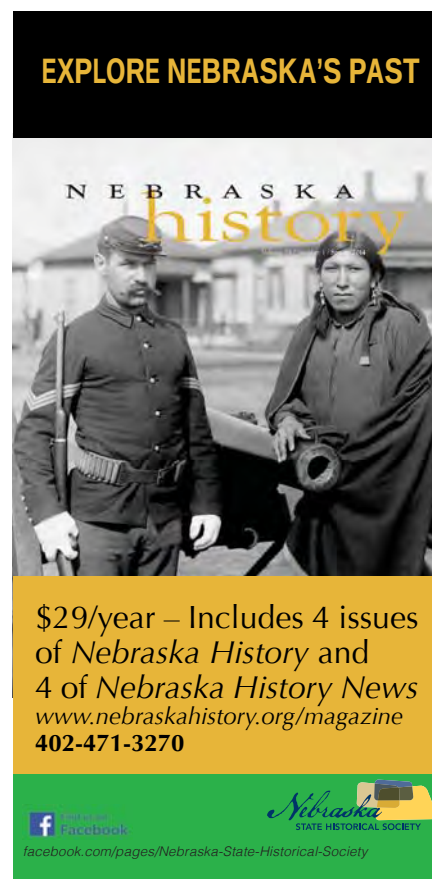
shipped to a tannery to be turned into soft leather and made into gloves for wheelchair-bound veterans or used for craft kits that are distributed to veterans at VA Medical Centers across the world as part of the Elks “Help a Vet” program.

Before the hides can be shipped, they have to have all excess fat, flesh and both heads and tails removed, then table or stock salt must be rubbed into all fleshy surfaces. Volunteers at the drop-off locations do most of this work, but hunters are welcome to do it themselves before dropping off the hides. Care must be taken in the skinning process, however, as even small holes can result in the hide being ruined during the tanning process.

Contact your local Elks lodge for more information. ■



PHOTO BY STEVE ZECHMANN



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Wingtips by Wild Bird Habitat

Red-bellied Woodpeckers are common from rural woodlands to urban neighborhoods where there are mature stands of trees. They will readily visit backyard bird feeders containing peanuts, sunflower kernels, or suet.

During the winter, birds prefer feed that has a high fat content. This crude fat provides the necessary energy to keep birds warm through cold winter nights. Peanuts and suet are high in fat and are preferred by all woodpeckers.

Other backyard birds that feed on peanuts: Nuthatches, Chickadees, Carolina Wrens, Blue Jays, Northern Cardinals.

Upcoming Events

by Jerry Kane



Contact the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission at 402-471-0641 or visit OutdoorNebraska.org for more information. Visit HuntSafeNebraska.org for a list of hunter education classes and BoatSafeNebraska.org for a list of boating safety classes.

November 29

Families on Target

Nebraska Game and Parks Outdoor Education Center, Lincoln, 10 a.m., 402-471-6141

November 30

Dad's Day at the Range

Nebraska Game and Parks Outdoor Education Center, Lincoln, 1 p.m., 402-471-6141

December 1

Bobcat hunting and trapping season opens

December 12

First segment of white-fronted goose hunting season closes

December 1-31

Muzzleloader deer hunting season

December 1-31

Public Land cow elk hunting season

December 1-31

Private Land cow elk hunting season

December 2-22

Bighorn sheep hunting season

December 6

Archery on Fire

Nebraska Game and Parks Outdoor Education Center, Lincoln, 402-471-6141

December 6

Introduction to Archery

Platte River State Park (SP), Louisville, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., 402-234-2520

December 6

Fort Robinson Historical Christmas Dinner

Fort Robinson SP, Crawford, 5 p.m., 308-665-2900

December 6, 13, 20

Christmas in the Woods

Ponca SP, Ponca, 402-755-2284

December 8

Hunter Education Field Day

Platte River SP, Louisville, 402-234-2520

December 13

Decorating Nature for the Holidays

Wildcat Hills Nature Center, Gering, 9 a.m., 308-436-3777

December 13

Classic Christmas

Eugene T. Mahoney SP, Ashland, 402-944-2523

December 14

Christmas Bird Count

Ponca SP, Ponca, 8 a.m., 402-755-2284

December 16

Snipe hunting season closes

December 16

Duck and coot hunting season in Zone 2 Low Plains and High Plains (first segment) closes

December 16

Duck and coot hunting season in Zone 4 closes

December 19-22

Christmas with the Codys'

Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park, North Platte, 5:30-8 p.m., 308-535-8035

December 22-23, 26-29

Roger G. Sykes Outdoor Heritage Education Complex open to public, Platte River SP, Louisville, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., 402-471-5547

December 23

Duck and coot hunting season in Zone 1 closes

December 25

Christmas Day

Game and Parks offices closed

December 26-31

Yule Log Quest

Platte River SP, Louisville, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., 402-234-2217

December 27

Snow Run, Quest for the Yule Log and Fruitcake Fling

Ponca SP, Ponca, 402-755-2284

December 31

Archery antelope hunting season closes

December 31

Archery, Mule Deer Conservation Area and Statewide Whitetail Buck deer hunting seasons close

December 31

First segment of light goose hunting regular season closes

Archery On Fire

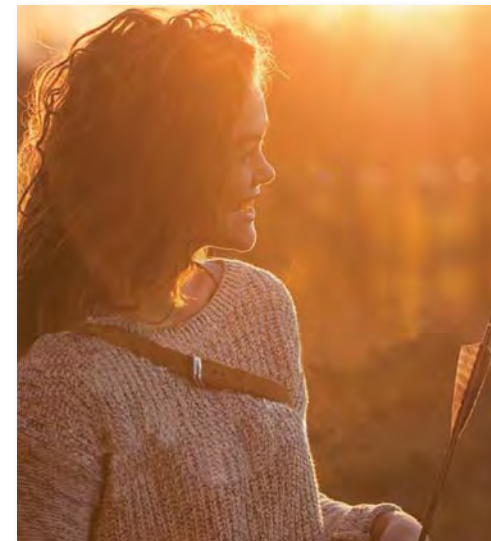
By Cara Pecek

Last December, on a day when temperatures barely climbed out of the single digits, hundreds of people braved the weather, inspired, perhaps, by their favorite character from the movie *Brave*.

That character is Merida, an independent young woman who also happens to be good with a bow and arrow. *Brave*, along with the *Hunger Games* books and movies, has led to a surge in the popularity of archery, and that popularity helped draw hundreds to Platte River State Park that cold December day for a day of free archery, hot chocolate, s'mores and memories made with family.

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission has led the way on making opportunities to practice archery available, and this December 6, two more free family archery events are planned. These events will take place at the new Nebraska Game and Parks Outdoor Education Center, 4703 N. 44th St, in Lincoln and at the Roger G. Sykes Outdoor Heritage Education Complex at Platte River State Park. Both events will run from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and feature free archery, as well as other activities, games and refreshments.

More information about both events is available at Archeryonfire.com. ■



Find Food, Find Quail

By Jeff Kurrus

Throughout the winter, quail require a lot of energy to survive sub-zero temperatures. As a hunter, use this to your advantage. Look for heavy thermal cover, just like when hunting white-tailed deer (see page 10), and food sources not covered by snow or ice. Quail would rather not expend energy they do not have moving long distances for food.



When quail hunting during the winter, look for food sources not covered by heavy snow or ice.

Search for annual seeds and grain, starting with giant ragweed, then western ragweed, corn, sorghum, soybeans, sunflowers, osage-orange and dogwood. Foods that also provide energy include wheat, acorns, and millet, while smartweed and switchgrass are considered poor sources of energy.

As long as you keep cover and food in mind, especially during this time of the year, you'll find birds. ■

See Jenny Nguyen's "Vietnamese-style Roasted Quail" recipe on page 54 of this issue.

NEBRASKAland Visitor



October's winner of the Visitor drawing was Tom Odvody of Dodge, Nebraska, who found the **Praying Mantis** on page 31. Readers are encouraged to contact *NEBRASKAland* within 10 days after this issue's publication with the correct page number and name of this issue's "Visitor" – a critter found in Nebraska. We will then gather the correct entries and draw one to win a *NEBRASKAland Magazine* mug. To enter each month, write:

NEBRASKAland Visitor
2200 North 33rd Street,
Lincoln, NE 68503.

Or e-mail:

Tim.Reigert@Nebraska.gov
with "Visitor" in the subject line of the message.

HINT: This issue's visitor is not on page 7, 15, 34 or 56.

The Praying Mantis is named for its prominent front legs, which suggests the position of prayer. They are formidable predators and have triangular heads poised on a long "neck," or elongated thorax, that can turn 180 degrees to scan their surroundings.

Typically green or brown and well camouflaged on plants, mantis lie in ambush or patiently stalk their quarry. They use their front legs (equipped with spikes) to snare their prey which are usually other insects – however, they will also eat others of their own kind. The most famous example of this is the notorious mating behavior of the adult female, who sometimes eats her mate just after, or even during, mating.

Females lay hundreds of eggs in a small case, and nymphs hatch looking much like tiny versions of their parents.



Information obtained from National Geographic.com. Visitor image by Donna Robinson. Bugguide.net is a good site for identification.

Other Than Otters

*A love-hate relationship.
Kind of.*

Photos and story by Eric Fowler

I hate river otters. Well, sort of. I used to love them. Then I volunteered to do the story on the species in the October issue of NEBRASKAland Magazine. And now I hate them. Kind of.

It was, I thought, a plumb assignment. A radio telemetry study to look at river otter range and movement in the central Platte River Valley was about to begin. I'd always loved watching otters in the zoo. I'd captured a few average photos of one from a photo blind on Clear Creek. The study meant I'd know where an otter was, which would guarantee some great photos. Right? Wrong.

Had I done any research, I would have known odds were stacked against photo ops. For otters spend their days sleeping in underground dens. When they do emerge at night, they swim underwater. Research technician Kent Fricke was tracking otters and put me in at the front door of a den with an otter in it countless times (I could count them, but am afraid to). As the mornings and nights in a photo blind at various sandpits and sloughs in Hall County added up, I



ABOVE: A wood duck and her duckling swim through a slough that parallels the Platte River in Hall County.

BELOW: The sun sets over a partially frozen sandpit along the Platte River in Hall County.



became convinced the otters knew I was there and were messing with me. The transmitters have a sensor that causes the “beep, beep, beep” heard on a receiver to pick up speed when the otter is moving. And the closer it is, the louder the beep. At times, the bleeping beeping was so loud and fast I thought an otter was going to crawl in the blind with me. I now know they were just running around the den, laughing.

Only twice did I actually see an otter. The first time it was way too dark to



get a usable photo. The second time, after Fricke had moved on to greener pastures, Dave Remple put me on a Platte River den at the Crane Trust south of Grand Island, and I finally connected.

By then, it was too late.

ABOVE: A pair of beavers wrestle outside their den on an island in the Platte River owned by the Crane Trust south of Alda. They emerged minutes after I captured the only photo of a river otter I was able to get while working on the story that appeared in the October 2014 edition of *NEBRASKAland*.

RIGHT: Wild grape vines dip into the water of a Platte River slough.

OPPOSITE: A belted kingfisher perches on a shrub next to a Platte River sandpit.





Wild turkeys feed along a Platte River slough on a winter evening.

My disdain for the subsurface, subterranean, nocturnal rodents had grown beyond comparison. Despite my efforts, it was Fricke, Remple, Sam Wilson, and even Bob Grier, a now retired NEBRASKAland staffer, who were filling the files with great photos of otters they

stumbled upon ... during the day, no less. Lucky punks.

There was a consolation prize. Several, actually. Otters aren't the only critters that live in the maze of sloughs and sandpits along the Platte River. Spend enough time in a photo blind in those haunts,



*or on the way to
and from them,
and you will have
many other photo
opportunities. The
best of those are
presented here.
But I still hate
otters. A little
anyway. ■*

OPPOSITE ABOVE: A raccoon wades in a slough at dusk.

OPPOSITE BELOW: A mink pauses along a bridge.

RIGHT: A great blue heron makes a short flight to a deadfall after fishing in the slough.



Winterfest at the Parks

Three Places for Winter Fun

By Jeff Kurrus

The anticipation of the holidays is sometimes too much to bear for some little ones. Parents will do just about anything to get the kids out of the house, for even a few hours, before the big day arrives. Last year, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission provided more options for parents with its Winterfest celebrations at Platte River, Ponca and Eugene T. Mahoney state parks. And this year the Commission will be doing so again.

But just as there is a pulse in the air before the holidays, there is sometimes a post-Christmas lull that envelops a home. The state park system has you covered again with a host of activities all the way through February to get you through the winter months.

So check your list of this year's events, each sure to keep the family together a little longer before and after the most exciting time of the year.



Ponca's Fruitcake Fling draws competitors of all ages.

Ponca State Park Winterfest Events Calendar



November 29 - December 20 Christmas in the Woods
Each Saturday, Ponca will feature seasonal activities including old-fashioned holiday crafts, lighted hayrack rides, free cookies and wassail, groomed cross-country ski trails, a sledding hill and ice skating. A 30 percent discount lodging package will be offered.

December 14 Christmas Bird Count
This all-day event coincides with the National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count. Birdwatchers of all ages are invited to compare notes and sighting reports. A chili feed will follow.

December 27 Winterfest
This event features the park's 3K Quest for the Yule Log, the National Championship Fruitcake Fling, seasonal crafts, lighted hayrack rides and more.

January 1 First Day Hike
Ponca State Park is offering a healthy start to your new year with this event. Guests are welcome to take part in unguided hikes from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. At the conclusion of their hike, participants are encouraged to stop in at the Missouri National Recreational River Resource and Education Center to warm-up and enjoy a complementary cup of hot cider and cookies.

January 16-18 Women's Wellness Weekend
This new workshop includes presentations and activities on health and wellness, relaxation, meditation, self-improvement, outdoor recreation and more.

February 1 Super Bowl Sunday Mini-lodge Package
Special lodging discounts and incentives are available for Super Bowl weekend.

February 14-15 Birds & Breakfast
The focus of this event package is the Great Backyard Bird Count and Valentine's Day. Slated for this event are bird counts and tours, a Saturday morning breakfast, complementary wine or cider, lodging discounts and other activities.

Ponca also remains one of Nebraska's premier wildlife viewing destinations, featuring 20 miles of hiking trails along the Missouri River.



Pinning a nose on a "reindeer" was part of Ponca State Park's Winterfest event last year.

Platte River State Park Winterfest Events Calendar



December 6 Archery on Fire Event

This fun family archery event will run from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Participants, from beginners to seasoned veterans, will enjoy the great facilities at Platte River State Park's Roger G. Sykes Outdoor Heritage Education Complex. For more information visit ArcheryOnFire.com.

January 3 Yule Log Quest

This exciting event for family and friends starts at 3 p.m. as teams use a series of clues to find the location of the yule log. The day will also consist of other events, including a kindling hunt for kids, crafts, story time and s'mores by the fire. An evening hayrack ride caps off the day.

For additional information on the Winterfest events at any of these locations, including Platte River State Park, visit Outdoornebraska.gov/parks.asp.



PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS

Kids can make gingerbread houses and other seasonal crafts at Platte River State Park this winter.



PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS

Making s'mores kept the young ones warm at last year's Yule Log Quest event at Platte River State Park near Louisville.



PHOTO BY ERIC FOWLER

Santa Claus will once again make a stop at Eugene T. Mahoney State Park this season.

Eugene T. Mahoney State Park Winterfest Events Calendar



December 13 Classic Christmas

Kids can come and have their photo taken with Santa Claus from 1:30-4:30 p.m. at the Activity Center Building. Portraits will be taken by NEBRASKAland Magazine photographers. Families can also decorate cookies, make ornaments or create holiday greeting cards for local veterans. Enjoy free horse-drawn wagon rides for a memorable and unique tour of the park. There is a \$2 admission fee.

January 10 "Ice Bowl" Disc Golf Tourney

The tournament is from 1-4 p.m. All proceeds go to Hunters Helping the Hungry.

January 24 Cold Day, Warm Hearts and Family Fun

Bring the whole family to the Owen Marina from 3-6 p.m. to learn about surviving the winter wilderness and to enjoy fishing and birding activities. Stay to create memories with the children and grandchildren while making winter crafts and enjoy roasting hot dogs and s'mores over an open fire. There is a \$2 fee for hot dogs and s'mores.

February 11-14 Valentine's Special

Reserve a cabin or lodge room at regular price and add a Valentine's Special Package for only \$55. This deal includes a meal for two and gift package delivered to your room or cabin.

Events at other Nebraska State Parks

December 6 20th Annual Historical Christmas Dinner

This event, hosted by Fort Robinson State Park, includes the "Light Up the Fort" celebration.

December 13 Decorating Nature for the Holidays

Participants will gather at 9 a.m. to create garland feeders and nature-inspired ornaments while enjoying hot chocolate and cookies at the Wildcat Hills Nature Center. Call the center to preregister.

December 19-22 Christmas at the Codys'

At Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park, view the Christmas-decorated home and enjoy roasted chestnuts, holiday music, carriage rides and visits with Santa.

Three Camps

Story and photos by Mark Harris

Jeff Nelson of Lincoln spends quality time with his pal, Yegang, on Holmes Lake.

about how I wanted her to remember me and how I remember my dad,” he said. “I have great memories of warm-weather fishing trips growing up so I reconnected with the outdoors with her future in mind. Fishing summers again became such a passion that I felt a void when winter came.” It was then that Eric reinvestigated the contents of his father’s homemade, hand-me-down ice-fishing gear box. That box brought Eric to the ice and someday his daughter will join him – when she’s ready for the cold.

On behalf of those who love winter outdoor activities, I’ll explain. We don’t enjoy being cold – which is the crux of the misunderstanding – we like the challenge of existing outdoors in whatever nature gives. And we dress for it. We’re fairly comfy. Being in cold weather brings a profound alertness and an element of euphoria: it is daring.

Ice-fishing here comes in short stretches. Ice less than four inches thick is unsafe, and hazards are not always obvious. Lake ice also alters form no matter the thickness, producing one of nature’s most

mesmerizing sounds. Newly forming fissures sound like empty 50-gallon metal drums being pulsed by cushioned drumsticks.

Across the lake everyone has their fishing formula and lures vary widely, most commonly including some combination of jigs with corn or grubs, or colorful artificial flies for panfish and trout. Those few with fish finders have a massive advantage. With his finder on Bowling Lake, Blake Hauser of Lincoln pulled crappies and bass at a baffling tempo using grubs on a teardrop jig. Within flickering lights dancing onscreen like a World War II radar image, Blake pointed out his lure, the lake bottom and the approaching school of fish.

Josh Hoover-Rathjen prefers using a Salmo Darter lure, or jigs with wax worms. His finder pinpointed black crappie at

On behalf of those who love winter outdoor activities, I’ll explain. We don’t enjoy being cold – which is the crux of the misunderstanding – we like the challenge of existing outdoors in whatever nature gives.

Holmes Lake. “It’s not just about finding where they are: teasing helps, just a gentle tug as they approach,” Josh said. He mostly catches and releases, and aims for walleye and catfish but finds them most elusive. He’s happy with crappie.

“It’s a more active sport with a fish finder,” said Eric Einspahr. “You drill a hole, stick the finder down, and if nothing is there you move on. You don’t have to sit for half an hour to see if something bites.”

But some prefer the mystery of what’s beneath, or maybe it’s not only fish they are after. Some seek pure, uninterrupted time with a best buddy while others want solitude to recharge.

Ukrainian immigrant Petr Korol is one of several Eastern Europeans I met and “zimnya ryealka,” or ice-fishing, is deeply rooted in his culture. He used his “plyushnya” to



Blake Hauser of Lincoln pulls crappies from Bowling Lake with the advantage of his Vexilar fish finder.

chop a hole. A common tool where he comes from, it’s a sharp metal spike on a five-foot hand-carved shaft.

“Good for Ukrainian bears too?” I asked.

“Yes, yes!” he said, smiling but serious. With gestures and

broken English we spoke on a wind-chilled morning. As he fished bare-handed my gloved fingers burned. I asked him how he endured it. “Nobody gloves ice-fishing in Ukraine,” he said.

In his homeland, Petr used to fish the enormous Dnieper River where he once had to enlarge his hole to retrieve a 100-pound catfish. Asked if he had any fishing tips, he responded, “Don’t go out if the wind is from the east or when the moon is new. Everyone in Ukraine knows that.”

Wind or moon in their method or not, on thick-enough ice you will see them out there – those devoted Lincoln anglers – content in their surroundings, silently watching their line. Think them courageous or crazy as you pass, they don’t care either way as long as the fish are biting. ■



Salmo Darter lures are one way to attract bluegills.

I often wondered about those bucket-sitting people as I whizzed by Lincoln’s Holmes Lake and Bowling Lake. What are they catching, what drives them? So over the course of two winters, I slid out to visit.

There are three camps of people when the topic turns to ice-fishing: those who haven’t tried it but think it might be fun, those who do it every chance they get and those who think both other groups are nuts. There also seem to be common denominators in this predominantly male group at the lakes: many grew up in small towns, most are all-around outdoorsmen and all are thankful to have their winter pastime just a short drive from home.

Also notable are those with cherished childhood memories of family outings. Some are eager to build a bond with their own. When Eric Einspahr’s daughter entered the world four years ago, he pondered their life together. “I thought

A TURN THROUGH TIME

THE KREGEL WINDMILL FACTORY MUSEUM

Story and photos by Amy Kucera



Art Kregel took over the company from his father George in the 1940s.

In the period of settlement on the Great Plains, those who moved across and occupied the vast expanses of open prairie during the early-1800s were required to live near rivers and streams in order to easily access water. That is, until the development of the modern windmill.

In 1854, the self-regulating farm windpump was invented by Daniel Halladay. Better known now as the windmill, it made its debut at the time when farm and ranch operations were widely developing throughout the country.

The Kregel Windmill Company was one of more than 1,000 windmill factories that soon developed in the United States. Named for owner and operator George F. Kregel, the factory was run continuously at the same location in downtown Nebraska City from 1903 to 1991. There, Kregel would produce water pumping windmills, as well as provide water supply equipment, and the services of installation, windmill and well maintenance and repair. The “ELI” brand he created was named in memory of a departed friend.

His gearless design was unique. A direct-stroke machine – one revolution of the wheel produced one stroke of the pump – it was made with both an 8½- and 10-foot fan. The ELI was designed to pull itself out of the wind and, in the case of a stiff gust which may blow other windmills apart, to engage the self-locking mechanism, preventing damage to the equipment. A rare, all-wood mill was designed but few were manufactured. The second design included a wood and steel blade, and the final design was made entirely of steel.



Fingerprints prove that most items inside the Kregel Windmill Museum are as they were left last, and remain intact and untouched. Unlike other museums, dust is part of the charm.

Due to the rationing of raw materials during World War II, the factory halted production but continued to provide windmill-related services. George’s son Arthur took over the business in the 1940s and kept it in operation until his death in 1991. Heirs of the factory donated it to the museum’s non-profit organization in 1993. In order to preserve the interior contents from structural damage, a protective outer shell was built around the factory in 2011.

Visible fingerprints among dust show the items have not been moved

from their original location. A note remains on the desk from Arthur’s wife, Louise, asking if he had made an appointment to have his ears cleaned. Detailed ledgers line the shelves – many written with pencils sharpened to nearly nothing and saved with a collection of others like it reiterating the utter frugality of the times. Visitors have remarked the factory is extremely well-preserved; it appears as though the workers had just stepped out for lunch.

There is such a tremendous amount of history in the location, even the factory outhouse situated in the



The Kregel Windmill Museum is one of 14 museums located in historic Nebraska City.



Everyday items in the museum include hand-written notes from Louise Kregel to her husband, Arthur.



alleyway is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Though it is rare to see an ELI windmill on the landscape, a fully-restored version, originally manufactured in the one-story factory, now stands in the parking lot across the street from the museum.

When the factory reopened as a museum in 1993, the opportunity to provide unique educational experiences to the public was realized. Touch-

Hundreds of bottled samples of sand, gravel and soil from each ELI windmill drilled and installed in eastern Nebraska and western Iowa can be found at the factory.

screen kiosks complete with the re-creation of ambient noises of the once roaring factory machines guide tourists through the experience.

As a museum, its purpose has become to help people understand that innovation, resourcefulness, hard work and thrift are keys to living successfully through changing times. The factory demonstrates how Americans have historically relied on and continue to use renewable natural resource energy to enhance their quality of life. As the last historic and intact windmill factory known, it is now an exclusive reminder of this era in time.

The museum retains the promise for

a viable future. The resurgence of wind power development, combined with the trend toward a more sustainable human existence through investment in renewable energy, proves a living lesson exists among the artifacts. And though rural and small-town museums generally receive less attention than their urban counterparts, those working to preserve the museum hope to change

that, aiding in the revival of interest in these pioneer emblems through the use of hard work and word-of-mouth.

The old-fashioned way. ■

Plan your visit to the factory at Kregelwindmillmuseum.com.

N View more images of the Kregel Windmill Factory Museum.



Visitors have remarked that the museum is so well-preserved, it appears as though the workers have merely stepped out for lunch.

Preparing for Winter

When You Can't Read the Calendar

Story and photos by Dan Fogell

Each spring, we once again see amphibians and reptiles across the landscape, but only after they have used a variety of tactics to survive through the harshest time of the year.

Look at the calendar. Winter is coming. This means breaking out sweatshirts, coats, and making sure the heat works in our homes and cars. We are ready for winter when it arrives, though we may not always like it. But how do animals – specifically amphibians and reptiles – prepare for winter? How do they know it's coming? And where do they go?

When it comes down to it, amphibians and reptiles do two things: breed and prepare for winter. Body condition is an important factor contributing to survival during harsh winters. Preparing for winter means eating – building up energy reserves so what little metabolic activity occurs during winter can continue uninterrupted.

More importantly, there must be enough energy for the following spring as reproductive success is directly dependent on feeding success. For frogs such as the boreal chorus frog, accumulated sugar molecules from food act as a cryoprotectant – a sort of biological antifreeze – protecting



Boreal chorus frogs use high amounts of glucose in their tissues as a cryoprotectant that allows them to survive below-freezing temperatures.



This copperhead, muddy from spending six months underground, is slowly warming up in the early spring sun.



Amphibians, such as this Plains spadefoot, take advantage of summer's abundance of insects to build up energy stores for the long Nebraska winter.



As fall days grow shorter, timber rattlesnakes may travel miles to return to the safety of an overwintering den which they share with other snake species.

them through the winter by making it difficult for ice to form in their tissues.

Unable to read a calendar, amphibians and reptiles need to recognize environmental cues to know winter is just around the corner. A drop in temperature is a great cue. But sometimes temperatures stay warm through the fall and into the first weeks of winter. Thus another important cue is photoperiod: the length of time daylight is available. As winter approaches, daylight availability becomes shorter. Although it might be warm out, the shorter days will warn animals to prepare for the cold that will inevitably come.

Where these animals spend winter is dependent on their life history, but two key criteria determine their location: oxygen and above-freezing temperatures. Amphibians and turtles are mostly aquatic and will spend winters buried in the mud below and around water bodies and survive by breathing through their skin. They can extract oxygen from water, and with metabolic activity being reduced at colder temperatures, they can obtain enough oxygen to stay alive while completely submerged. Box turtles are non-aquatic so they dig themselves deep into the soil for the winter, but like chorus frogs, they too produce a biological antifreeze to protect their cells.

Lizards and snakes have to be more selective about their overwintering sites. They still have to breathe and remain at above-freezing temperatures, so their best course of action is to get underground below the frost line. This is easier said than done. Lizards can actually dig, and in places with loose soils, they bury themselves deep enough to keep from freezing. In other places, they can simply burrow beneath large rocks for the winter.

Snakes, however, have the most difficulty finding a winter home. In areas with rocky ledges they can crawl deep into

crevices and stay cozy, especially if these rocks face to the south. Places like this are rare, so usually snakes of multiple species share the most optimal sites. But what most snakes depend on are the burrows of other animals: crayfish, rodents, badgers and prairie dogs all dig burrows that go deep underground, and snakes are opportunists. When they find a nice burrow, they use it.

After a six-month nap or so, most amphibians and reptiles emerge and start their new season of feeding and breeding. Sadly, some will not survive the winter. But this ensures that only those with the best survival skills will live to pass on their skills to future generations. ■



Strong legs and claws help the ornate box turtle dig to a safe level for the winter, but as a backup plan they also produce a biological antifreeze in their body tissues.

Two Trappers, Two Eagles, One Lesson

By Eric Fowler and Julie Geiser

Eagles caught in traps last winter illustrate why law prohibits setting traps on visible bait.

Two Nebraskans learned the hard way last winter why it is illegal to set traps on exposed bait. They were both lucky that the bald eagles they unintentionally caught lived to fly again.

While bald eagles and other birds of prey such as hawks and falcons are adept hunters, they are not opposed to taking a free meal when given the chance. Their keen eyesight allows them to easily spot a dead rabbit or deer on the ground below. Terrestrial predators such as coyotes and bobcats also take advantage of an easy meal, using their keen sense of smell to home in on dead animals.

Trappers once commonly took advantage of the latter and set traps around carcasses, hoping to catch an unsuspecting coyote as it walked in for a bite. But because of the possibility of an aerial predator stopping by, the practice was banned long ago, and traps can't be set within 30

feet of exposed bait. As is the case with any law, game or otherwise, they aren't always followed.

Twelve-year old Grant Jensen of Gothenburg had been trapping for two years and didn't know about the law when he set a trap on a rabbit carcass in a center pivot track on his family farm during Christmas break last year. The home-schooled sixth grader enjoys trying to outsmart the animals, checks his trap line daily, sometimes even at lunchtime, and was hoping to catch a coyote that had been using the nearby fence crossing. He wasn't sure what he'd caught as he approached, but remembered thinking "whoops" when he saw the bird with the unmistakable white head. "I was really nervous and scared when I saw that it was an eagle," Grant said. "I thought I'd have a big fine or have to go to jail."

Grant's mother, Karla, was equally worried. "We knew this was a federal offense," she said.



An immature bald eagle drawn to a deer carcass on land near the Platte River southwest of Elm Creek found itself caught in one of the traps illegally set out by a trapper hoping to catch furbearers.



PHOTO BY ERIC FOLWER

Betsy Finch (let) and Janet Stander treat the beak of a bald eagle at the Fontenelle Forest Raptor Recovery rehabilitation center near Elmwood before the bird, which was caught in an illegal trap near Cozad last December, was returned to the wild in April.

Knowing the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission offices were closed, and not knowing who to call, Karla finally reached Commission Conservation Officer Mike Thome and Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District biologist Mark Peyton, who freed the eagle, a mature male. They then contacted Fontenelle Forest Raptor Recovery, which took the bird to its rehab facility in Elmwood for treatment.

Not two weeks later, hunters reported finding a similar sight – an immature female bald eagle caught in a trap set next to a deer carcass – on a Platte River Recovery and Implementation Program site southwest of Elm Creek. Biologists Ryan Chramosta and Nic Fryda freed the immature male and also sent it to Raptor Recovery.

It didn't take Conservation Officer Dale Johnson long to find out only one person had permission to trap on the property. When he asked the suspect, a 47-year-old Kearney man, if the traps were his, he said they were. Johnson then told the man he'd caught an eagle.

Commission conservation officers issue five or six citations each year for exposed bait and investigate two or three times as many cases. This wasn't the first time Johnson had worked this kind of case. "Every one that I've ever done, in my opinion, they did it knowingly," Johnson said. "It was an intentional violation."

"I think the majority of the trappers understand why we have that regulation. And even though they would maybe like to trap on bait, most of them are not willing to take that

The Law on Bait and Traps

"It is unlawful to use any bait in plain sight within 30 feet of foothold traps set on dry land. Bait is defined as fish, animal flesh, fur, hide, entrails or feathers."

– 2014 Nebraska Hunting Guide

Recovered But Still Protected

The remarkable recovery of the bald eagle since DDT and other organochlorine insecticides linked to its demise were banned in 1972 reached its pinnacle when an ever-increasing number of the birds allowed it to be removed from the federal list of threatened and endangered species in 2007.

While it no longer has the protection of the Endangered Species Act, bald eagles are still protected by several state and federal laws, most notably the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.

Individuals who "take" an eagle can be prosecuted in state or federal court, be ordered to pay civil or liquidated damages of up to \$5,000 and be sentenced to up to one year in jail. This is on top of any fines related to criminal charges for violation of game laws. "Take" does not simply mean kill. It also includes pursue, shoot, shoot at, poison, wound, capture, trap, collect, molest or disturb.



The adult eagle's leg, left, suffered bruising and broken skin but healed with no permanent damage. The immature eagle was not so lucky, as you can see the swelling on its right foot, below. The trap caught its rear toe, or hallux, and the loss of blood caused the appendage to die, necessitating its amputation.



Finch, Stander and Commission Conservation Officer Dina Barta work to capture the eagle from the flight pen prior to its release.

chance.” Johnson cited the Kearney man for trapping over exposed bait and not tagging his traps. He paid a \$100 fine on each count, plus court costs.

Like a state trooper deciding whether to issue a citation or a warning for speeding, conservation officers have digression in cases like this. Thome chose to not cite Grant. “He’s a good kid learning how to trap and learning about the outdoors,” Thome said. “He’s learning about stuff that not every 12-year-old is trying to learn about. While other kids are playing video games, he’s out experiencing the outdoors and that’s a good thing.

“And in this case it seemed more of a situation where Grant was young and new to trapping and probably truly didn’t know that what he was doing was wrong. It probably served just as much good, especially for a 12-year-old, to learn about how to do it the right way as opposed to being in trouble and getting a ticket. I’d rather see Grant continue to trap since there aren’t near as many kids that age who have been getting involved in trapping.”

Things could have ended differently had the eagles not recovered enough to be released. Betsy Finch of Raptor Recovery said the group treats birds each year that have been caught in traps, but they don’t see eagles every year and it was rare to have two. Often, treatment is not possible.

“If the foot is broken or the leg is broken above the foot,

we generally have to euthanize them. It’s mandated (by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service),” Finch said, noting that raptors with one leg are not able to hunt or perch and would most likely die of starvation.

Had either bird died or been put down due to its injuries, the perpetrators could have been assessed \$5,000 in liquidated damages, the value placed on a species, on top of other fines.

The immature eagle was caught by the hallux, its hind toe. The loss of blood caused the toe to die, forcing Finch to remove it. Some rehab centers would have put the bird down. “We feel they need a chance,” she said. “I think they can survive. We’ve had birds come in missing toes and that was not the reason they came in.”

The mature eagle Grant caught suffered severe bruising on the leg that was caught in the trap. Finch said they were initially concerned that the trap had limited the blood supply to its foot and it would not heal, but in time, it finally did.

As it turned out, the eagle needed time to recover from another malady: lead poisoning. Fairly common in raptors, which can ingest the lead by eating fish or game that, or parts thereof, contain shot, sinkers or bullet fragments. Lead poisoning is treated by injections of a chelate, which binds to the lead and can be excreted by the bird. Without treatment, “it certainly would have debilitated her,” Finch

said. “There’s no other way they can get rid of it. It could have eventually killed her.”

Finch would rather trappers follow the laws so they don’t catch raptors, but hopes they do turn the bird over to them if they do. In 39 years of treating birds, she has had to euthanize several eagles and other raptors that had been caught in traps. She treated some she suspects were caught by individuals who were trapping over exposed bait, knew it was a violation and that reporting the injured bird would lead to a ticket so they simply released it despite its injuries. “We’ve had birds come in that were skin and bones that were released from a trap with their leg hanging by a thread,” Finch said. “It’s much more humane to put them down at that point than to have them starve to death. But sometimes injuries look worse than they actually are.”

Thome also hopes to not have to free another raptor from an illegal trap. “Trapping is an important part of wildlife management with a heritage that should be passed down to younger generations,” he said. “Promoting the trapping heritage using ethics and proper rules and regulations will keep the sport around for others for years to come.”

Grant won’t be catching another eagle. He said he knows all of the rules now. So do his parents. “This was a learning lesson for us all,” Karla said. “We should have read through the regulations better.” ■



Grant Jensen watches as the eagle he unintentionally and illegally trapped is released by Conservation Officer Mike Thome on the family's farm near Cozad.

Crazy Horse Rides On

Beyond his untimely death at Fort Robinson, the legendary Oglala Lakota warrior lives on.

By Amy Kucera



A group of young riders cut a trail alongside a stretch of the Crazy Horse Memorial Highway near Chadron on the first day of the 17th annual Crazy Horse Memorial Ride.

It was the year of the stealing of 100 horses, as the Lakota winter count keeper Horn Chips (Ptehé Wóptuh'a) would describe 1840-41, when Miniconju Lakota Rattling Blanket Woman (Tasina Hlahla Win) gave birth to a son near Rapid Creek in present-day South Dakota.

Though the child received the name In The Wilderness (Cha-O-Ha) at birth, he would eventually take on the name of his Oglala Lakota father, His Horse Is Crazy (Tašúke Witkó), and would be better known as Crazy Horse.



The death of Crazy Horse at Fort Robinson, depicted as ledger art by Amos Bad Heart Bull (Wanblí Wapháha), an Oglala Lakota witness to the event.

Though no known photo of him exists, even at an early age the appearance of the young Crazy Horse was said to be striking. He had fair skin to match his curly, light colored hair, for which he was given the nickname, Curly (Gigi) by relatives.

In 1854, the young Crazy Horse witnessed the opening engagement of war between the U.S. Army and Lakota warriors near Fort Laramie in present-day Wyoming. It was the start of nearly a quarter-century of warfare that would forever change the nations who called the Great Plains home. The incident, known as the Grattan Fight, began when a detachment of soldiers was sent to arrest an indian who had killed a cow that had wandered into camp. When a soldier immediately opened fire on the peaceful people, killing Chief Conquering Bear (Mató Wayúhi), Lakota warriors fought back and killed the remaining combatants.

A decade later, Crazy Horse grew to be revered as a leader following his brave acts in war. He led warriors at the Battle of Rosebud in 1876, when General George Crook's army was halted by Lakota and Northern Cheyenne forces.

Crazy Horse was also a war leader in the Battle of Little Bighorn on June 25-26, 1876. Commonly referred to as "Custer's Last Stand," united tribes including Lakota, Arapahoe and

Cheyenne warriors overwhelmingly defeated the U.S. 7th cavalry led by General George Armstrong Custer, who was killed in the battle.

With victory came much celebration, but life on the open prairie would soon change dramatically for Plains tribes. After the harsh winter of 1877 weakened his band, Crazy Horse made the difficult decision to surrender to federal troops on May 6, in order to protect his people.

They camped awaiting relocation to the reservation on the Powder River as promised to him by the U.S. government. However, amid rumors of an escape, he was brought to Fort Robinson to be arrested on September 5, 1877. Crazy Horse had been apprehensive to go, but did not fully resist soldiers until he was led to be confined at the Fort's guardhouse.

Accounts of this historic moment vary. When the warrior realized he was entering a jail, he struggled for his freedom. A great commotion ensued, during which Crazy Horse was stabbed twice with a bayonet.

His second cousin, Oglala Lakota holy man Nicholas Black Elk (Hehaka Sapa), described the death of Crazy Horse to Nebraskan writer John G. Neihardt, as translated in *Black Elk Speaks*:

They took him to a little prison with iron bars on the windows, for they



Several Lakota chiefs gathered at the dedication of the Crazy Horse monument at Fort Robinson circa 1934.

had planned to get rid of him. And when he saw what they were doing, he turned around and took a knife out of his robe and started out against all those soldiers. Then Little Big Man, who had been his friend...took hold of Crazy Horse from behind and tried to get the knife away. And while they were struggling, a soldier ran a bayonet into Crazy Horse from one side at the back and he fell down and began to die.

Of the 17 eyewitness accounts from that day, all but one point to his murder by a soldier at the guardhouse. In an interview years after the incident, Little Big Man (Wicasa Tankala) claimed Crazy Horse stabbed himself in the struggle.

After the injury, Crazy Horse was taken to the adjutant's office and tended by assistant post surgeon Dr. Valentine McGillicuddy. Crazy Horse's father and stepmother had immediately traveled from the Pine Ridge after hearing the news and, together with his cousin, Touch the Clouds (Mahpiya Iháhtagya), were with their son at the time of his death.

As word of his death spread, the sound of drums and cries of mourning could be heard throughout the land. A procession, led by his parents, took his body on a travois and traveled out of Fort Robinson the next morning,

returning to Beaver Creek. His body was scaffolded in the traditional manner and later buried by his father in an undisclosed location. It is speculated his body was moved numerous times in order to evade the destruction of his final resting place.

To this day, reconciling the effects of a tumultuous history between nations is ongoing. Beyond the controversy that continues to surround the details of his birth and death, efforts in Nebraska continue to honor the legacy of his life.

A museum at Fort Robinson includes a detailed history and Plains Indian artifacts from the era, as well as items found during the reconstruction of buildings by the Nebraska State Historical Society in the 1980s. Aside from the 1865 Soldier's barracks, the original cabins surrounding the parade grounds, including the adjutant's office where Crazy Horse died, were destroyed in the early 1900s. A stone marker, usually found adorned with prayer ties, tobacco and other offerings from visitors, now stands near the site where the warrior was slain.

From a humble beginning with a handful of riders to the largest gathering of the Lakota horse nation, the Crazy Horse Memorial Ride is a growing tribute to the Oglala Lakota war chief, as well as warriors of

yesterday and today.

"Crazy Horse never got to ride out of Fort Robinson," said ride organizer Bamm Brewer, an Oglala Lakota from Pine Ridge. "We ride out of here for him."

Riders camp overnight at Fort Robinson State Park and gather the next day, forming a circle at the Parade Grounds for a moment to honor his legacy before embarking on an 80-mile ride from Crawford to Pine Ridge, South Dakota.

"There is a spiritual level to the ride," said Brewer. Before the journey, he smudges, or purifies, the participants with the smoke of sage, a plant sacred to the Lakota people.

Now in the 17th year, riders traverse part of the Crazy Horse Memorial Highway, a designation of U.S. Highway 20 from Hay Springs to Fort Robinson that was dedicated in November 2010 by Nebraska Governor Dave Heinemann.

As those in front carried flags and eagle staffs, Brewer and more than 200 riders traveled through the Pine Ridge escarpment led by the "spirit horse" — a designated riderless horse to honor the spirit of the warrior.

Native filmmakers have partnered with The Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs and Platte River Pictures

"Crazy Horse never got to ride out of Fort Robinson," said ride organizer Bamm Brewer, an Oglala Lakota from Pine Ridge. "We ride out of here for him."

to create a documentary about the event. "The Crazy Horse Project" has formed a collective of indigenous artists, collaborating to express what it means to be Lakota. The movie is scheduled to be released next year.

"One of Fort Robinson's main attractions is its unique and diverse history," said Mike Morava, superintendent at Fort Robinson State Park. "Assisting the riders in honoring Crazy Horse every year is one of the rewarding aspects of working at present-day Fort Robinson."

This history now includes the gathering of all nations in unity, to preserve the Lakota way of life, just as

the legendary leader continues to inspire new generations to do the same.

As a group of young Lakotas on horseback awaited their signal to ride out of the Fort, they rested under the shade of an old, towering cottonwood tree — one of the many silent witnesses to the history of what happened here.

"Crazy Horse, the veterans, the youth and the unity of the bridging of cultures — without those purposes, the ride would not exist," Brewer said. "The ride is for everybody." ■

View "The Crazy Horse Project" at Crazyhorseproject.tumblr.com.



Coleman Eagle Elk (Hehaka Wanbli) wears traditional regalia while dancing at the annual Oglala Lakota Wacipi in Pine Ridge, South Dakota. The three day celebration of Lakota culture also features food, art and a rodeo.

Another Family Heirloom Retired

The cold, wet truth about wader repair.

By Justin Haag

Anyone who has spent much time in boot-foot chest waders has surely experienced it: a wet crotch and wet socks. Wader construction keeps getting better, but it's a sad day when the dam of fabric intended to keep you dry inevitably gives way and moisture seeps to places you'd rather it not.

I recently upgraded to a new pair of 3mm neoprene waders, but I just didn't have the heart to let go of the old ones. They were one of the first gifts given to me by my wife when we were newlyweds. Any gift from a spouse that is sure to result in hours and dollars spent in the field is an expression of true love and should gain its place as a family heirloom. Not to mention the fact that it's always good to have a spare set available for the wader-less among your hunting or fishing party.

In an effort to find a repair, I went to the location only the brave should go to find important information: the Internet message boards. The experiences shared online include using a variety of patching chemicals such as Aqua Seal, made for the task, Shoe Goo, a great product which obviously has a name for another purpose, and even Flex Seal – the “as-seen-on-TV” stuff that floats a boat patched with a screen door.

Aqua Seal and Shoe Goo gained the most favor in

comments, by the way, as Flex Seal works best with some sort of backing, such as the window screen on the boat. In a pinch, a few commenters suggested putting your legs in a couple of trash bags, secured tightly to your body with duct tape, before dropping them in the old waders. As one who loves to incorporate duct tape in projects, this sounded mighty time-efficient and attractive. But, because I planned to write about it, I decided to further my research and find something a little more permanent.

Story short: I couldn't find any product specialists who recommended attempting to fix a set of waders nearing 15 years of age. The time and money, and chance of failure, is too great, they tell me. One issue that makes repairing waders such as mine much more difficult is cracked boots. When rubber gets old, it oxidizes and breaks down, creating a myriad of fissures in an area that gets a lot of stress from movement.

So, there you have it: Another family heirloom that has been demoted to decoration status. I may keep them, and some trash bags, around to use as a spare set anyway. When it comes down to it, it's likely to be the crotch of a friend, and not mine, that suffers most. And isn't that OK? ■



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2013 AMERICA'S BEST BROKERAGES



◀ My sister, Kim Schaaf, and father, Lyle Clemens, were featured in the April 2014 NEBRASKAland Magazine with my dad's 19½ pound pike. I cannot be outdone once again by my sister! I am enclosing a picture of my mother, Jeanne Clemens, and me which was probably taken the summer of 1966 at Porter's gas station in Clay Center. Mom is holding her 33 pound, 8 ounce buffalo, which was a state record. Mom caught the monster buffalo on a spinner using 8-pound test line. The fish measured 38 inches long and 27 inches around (I am guessing the fish and I were about the same size!).

– Lisa (Clemens) Hadenfeldt,
Scottsbluff, Nebraska

► This picture is of Terry Rasmussen and his dog, Hank, in northern Howard County. We hunted there in the '50s to the '80s. Great times.

– Hank Lokke,
Omaha, Nebraska



▲ The first photo shows 35 rabbits. Hunters from left are Harry Skoog, Louis Bokelman, Ernest Bokelman, Ted Bokelman and William Bokelman. They were hunting near Genoa in 1923. The second photo is of Max Bokelman with a coyote he shot with a .22 caliber rifle in probably October of 1947 near Ulysses. Thanks for a great magazine which always has great photography.

– Herm Bokelman,
Venice, Florida



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

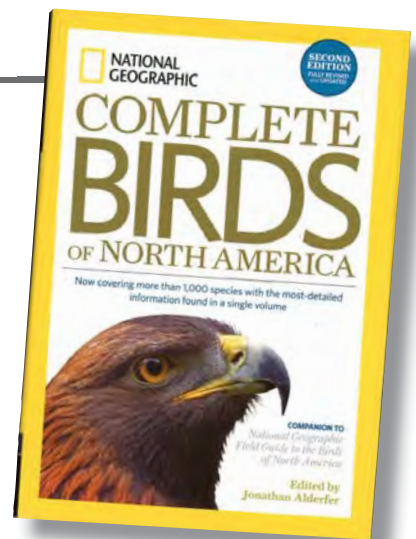
Christmas Gift Ideas

Options for the outdoor enthusiast in your family.

Reviewed by Robert Gaia, Joel Jorgensen and Jeff Kurrus

Throughout the year NEBRASKAland Magazine tests a number of products so you don't have to. Here is a list of some of the best we've come across in 2014. ■

Veterans and aspiring birdwatchers alike need an in-depth tome to satisfy their thirst for knowledge and to complement compact identification field guides. National Geographic's *Complete Birds of North America* is an excellent addition to the bookshelf or coffee table for anyone interested in learning more about the lives of birds they know and the ones they hope to one day see. Plus, at \$25, it is priced right as a gift to yourself or the bird-lover on your list. JJ



Music lovers who spend a considerable time outdoors need a portable speaker system that has both high quality sound and durability. The Jacket by Altec Lansing excels at both. Shock resistant, the Jacket can pair with Apple, Android and BlackBerry devices. But its best feature is its battery life, ensuring up to eight hours of continuous playback on a single charge. It also comes with an AC adapter. Retail price: \$130. To learn more about the Jacket and Lansing's waterproof version, the Life Jacket, visit Alteclansing.com. JK

Guideline Eyegear has the ideal frames for the outdoor runner in your family. The new Spray model is polarized, lightweight and has vented lenses to help prevent fogging. Retail price: \$50. Available at Glpolarized.com. RG



Attach a Dakota timepiece to your loved one's hunting backpack on Christmas morning. Including luminescent hands and markers, a compass, thermometer, red LED microlight and integrated carabiner, this gift is perfect for your outdoor enthusiast. Retail price: \$40. Visit Dakotawatch.com to see their complete list of styles. JK

The Maniac boot series from Wood N' Stream is the most comfortable boot I've had on my feet in years. This 8-inch waterproof hiker, available for men with 400 or 800 grams of Thinsulate, features excellent ankle support and an easy-to-lace design. Ideal for archers and upland game hunters. Retail price: \$159. Available at select outdoor retailers. RG



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Perfectly roasted quail in just 10 minutes.

By Jenny Nguyen

Every culture has its own “pub food.” For Americans, it’s burgers, fries and Buffalo wings. For Vietnamese people, pub food or “mon nhau” consists of dishes such as duck blood soup, toasted dried squid, pickled meats, and various salads and sausages made from parts of animals most westerners would throw away. Growing up, I cannot say that I appreciated these foods. Some family parties and dinner invitations were spent in angst as my brother, Ngoc, and I watched the adults munch away at pig ear salad and tripe. Often, the only thing we found edible at the table was the shrimp chips.

This is not to say that Vietnamese pub food isn’t good. Unlike Anthony Bourdain, at 10 years old my palate just could not deal with sausage that still resembled the pig’s head or a gelatinized pool of duck blood garnished with peanuts and chopped up liver. “I hope you don’t get sick, mom,” I said as I watched her slurp up the bright, red mixture from a Styrofoam bowl – I think I accused her of being a vampire at one point. And sure enough, her Americanized stomach failed her. I remember watching her run across the street to get to the bathroom as my dad and I were thinking, “I told you so.”

Though some dishes required some nerve to eat, there were many that were more “normal” and delicious. Roasted or fried quail was one of them – a dish that I happily gnashed and gnawed with eager hands and teeth. I was too young to drink beer then, but I can tell you now that there are few greater things in life than eating perfectly roasted meat and grabbing at beer bottles with greasy, salty hands.

Servings: 2

Prep Time: 2 hours and 10 minutes

Cooking Time: about 10 minutes

Ingredients:

- 4 whole quail
- 2 tablespoons of soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons of Ponzu sauce
- 4 teaspoons of sugar
- 1 teaspoon of five-spice powder
- 1 teaspoon of freshly grated ginger
- 3 tablespoons of rice cooking wine (or dry sherry)
- 1 green onion, white and light green parts chopped
- kosher salt, to taste
- 1 tablespoon of oil (or melted butter)

Dipping Sauce:

- 1 tablespoon of lemon juice
- ½ teaspoon of salt
- 1 teaspoon of cracked black pepper

1. In a small bowl, combine soy sauce, Ponzu, sugar, five-spice, ginger, rice wine and green onion. Rinse quail under cold water and pat dry with paper towels. Salt well inside



PHOTO BY JENNY NGUYEN

Asian-spiced bobwhite quail served with a lemon dipping sauce.

and out and place in a zip-close bag. Pour the marinade into the bag, massage and refrigerate for 2 hours.

2. Take birds out of the refrigerator and let them reach room temperature before cooking. Turn broiler on high. Oil the grates on a roasting pan with rack and preheat it in the oven. Remove quail from the marinade and paint the birds with butter or olive oil.

3. Roast the quail for 5 minutes breast-side down. Flip breast-side up and roast for another 2 to 3 minutes, or until skin turns golden. Turn them over on their wings and roast for 1 minute on each side. Do not leave the oven, because it does not take long for the broiler to burn food. Combine dipping sauce ingredients and serve on the side. This recipe is also perfect for grilling and frying. ■

This recipe and photograph originally appeared on Jenny's Food for Hunters blog at Foodforhunters.com.



Read Jenny's *NEBRASKAland* blog "Midland Musings."



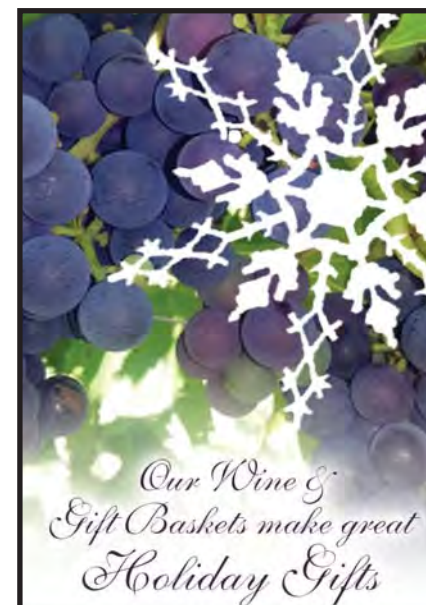
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Last pheasant season, while hunting with Mark Vrtiska near Columbus, it was evident early in the hunt that his dog, a Vizsla named Pinnie, was tiring quickly. Pinnie flushed several birds for us within the first hour, but as the afternoon went on she slowed considerably more than we did.

Finally, not 200 yards from our vehicle, she lay down in the middle of a trail and refused to get up. “She’s just about done,” Mark said, and we both knew that he was not just speaking about that particular day. As Mark made his way back to Pinnie, I stayed put. This was not a moment for me, so I photographed from afar.

He stopped above her and began to talk. Then, kneeling down, he began to pet her. Finally, when she still refused to move, he helped her stand up and sparked enough enthusiasm that she was able to limp her way back to her dog box.

Afterward, Mark wasn’t sure what the future held for Pinnie. One more season? One more hunt? He didn’t know. What was undeniable to him was the end would be coming soon, and I knew that even though it would be tough to swallow, I had captured what has become one of my most memorable photographs in the field, one of a hunter helping another back to the truck.

Jeff Kurrus
October 20, 2014



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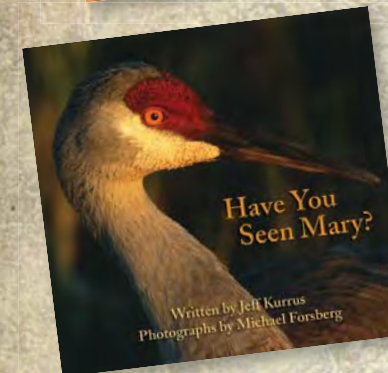
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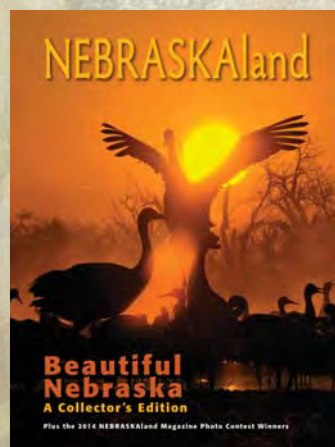
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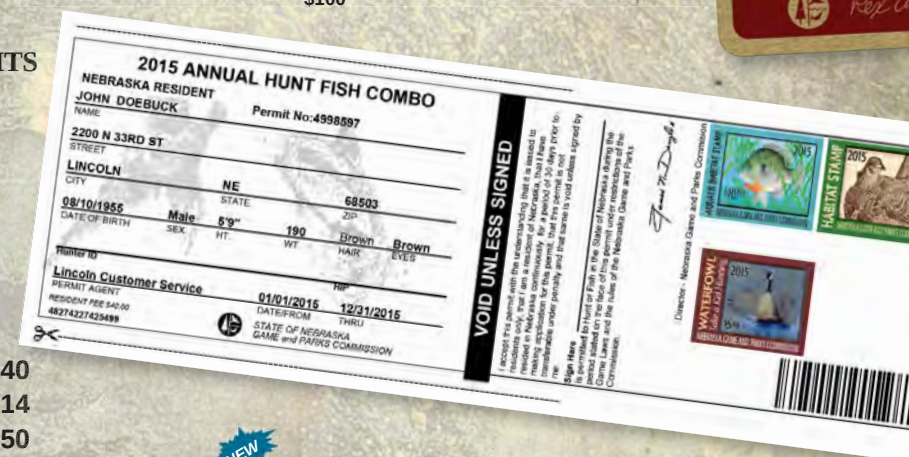
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