



Dew hangs from a spider web on a foggy morning at the Branched Oak Lake marina. Photo by Eric Fowler

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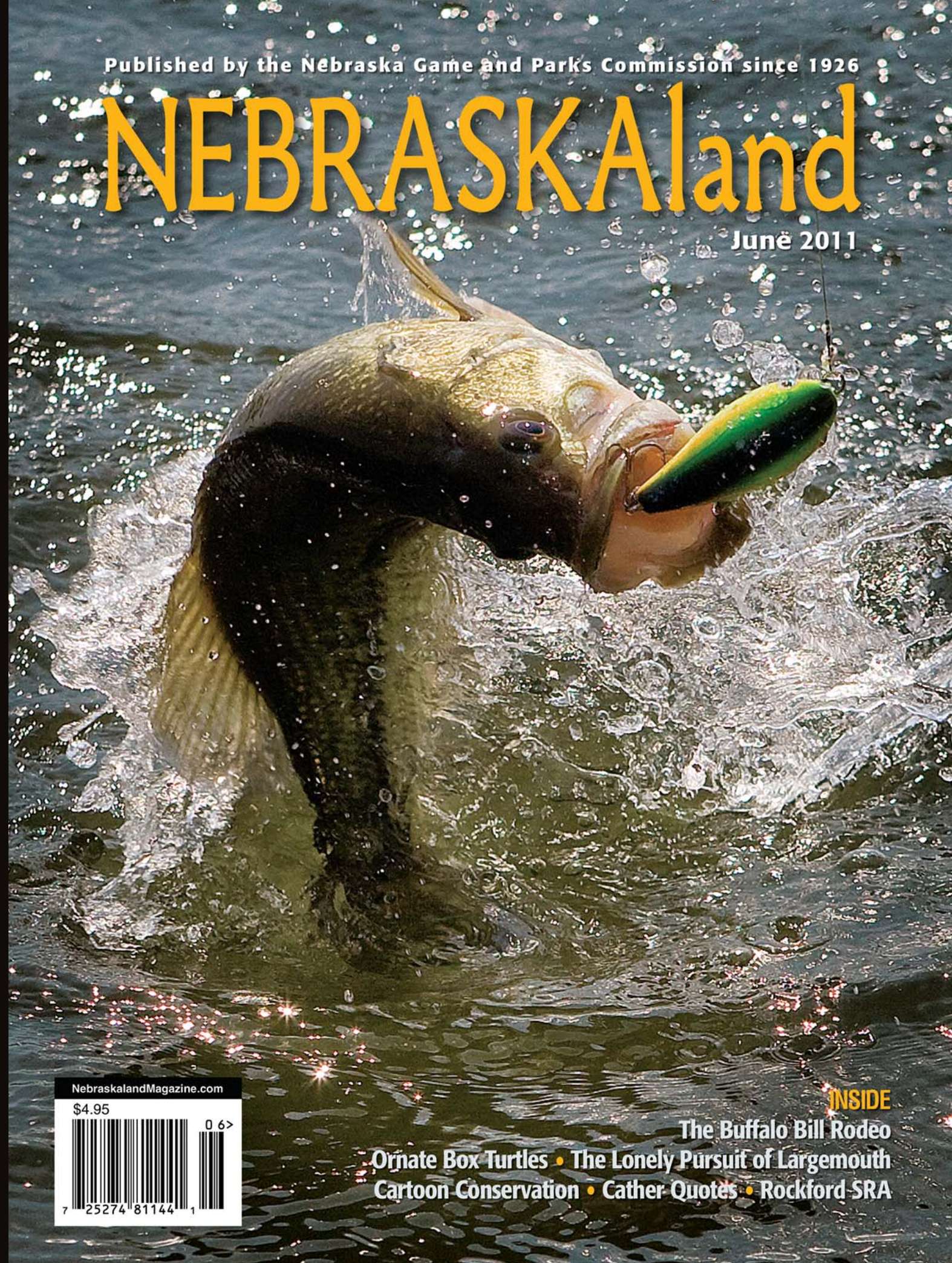
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NEBRASKAland

Volume 89, Number 5, June 2011

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The word rodeo was not widely used until the 1920s, but NEBRASKAland Days at North Platte hosts one of the biggest and best in the state. TEXT AND PHOTOS BY JON FARRAR

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Although relatively small, this long lived species is common to much of Nebraska and makes its life primarily in grasslands. TEXT AND PHOTOS BY MICHAEL FORSBERG

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Fishing for this species is often a quiet endeavor, regardless of what outdoor television tries to tell us. TEXT AND PHOTOS BY JEFF KURRUS

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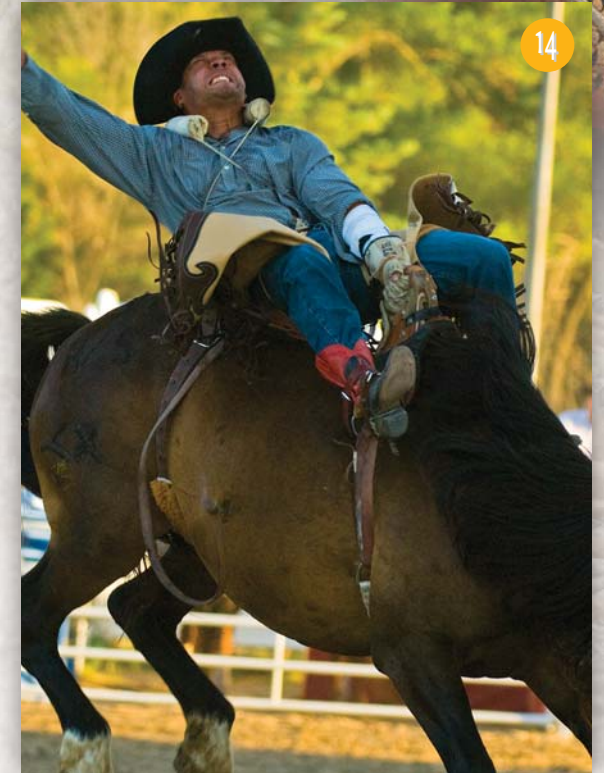
While he sought to make us laugh, cartoonist Gary Larson of "The Far Side" fame provided more than just a few smiles. He suggested how we should think about nature. BY JEFF KURRUS

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A photographic companion to some of this "Nebraska" author's most famous quotes. PHOTOS BY BILL HAGER AND MICHAEL FORSBERG

40 Rockford SRA - Get Away for a Weekend or a Week

Whether skiing, fishing or just enjoying a summer day at Rockford SRA, one thing is for sure – you probably won't be having fun alone. PHOTOS AND TEXT BY ERIC FOWLER



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Cover: A largemouth bass leaps from the water at Verdon Lake State Recreation Area. See story on page 24. Photo by Jeff Kurrus. **Opposite:** Platte River State Park visitors explore the tipi below the Walter Scott Lodge and Lincoln Journal Tower on a summer evening. The park also has tipis that visitors can rent for a night. Photo by Eric Fowler.

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\$6 Smile

The youth shotgun season opened last Saturday – it was our five-year-old son Cole’s first time being able to shoot and he got his first turkey with his new .410-shotgun. We (Chad and Katie Graham, parents) were excited when the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission came out with the \$6 youth permit for turkey hunting: We thought it would be a great way to get him excited about hunting and it definitely resulted in a great memory – it was amazing to watch Cole’s determination and respect for hunting as he shot his first turkey.

Being the mom, I usually have had to stay home and watch our other son while dad and son went hunting, so it was great for me to get to watch Chad call in the turkeys and work so hard to get that moment just right for Cole. Every wife and mother whose husband and kids hunt should go with at least once and maybe even start hunting themselves. I have a pink camo bow now and love it! You will respect and understand hunting so much more and it’s so beautiful being out in the early morning.

Hunting has also taught Cole how to work for something, and it’s teaching him patience and a respect for the outdoors. Hunting has also given our family new time with each other that isn’t sitting in front of the television — we are all together out in the great outdoors and that is the best part!!

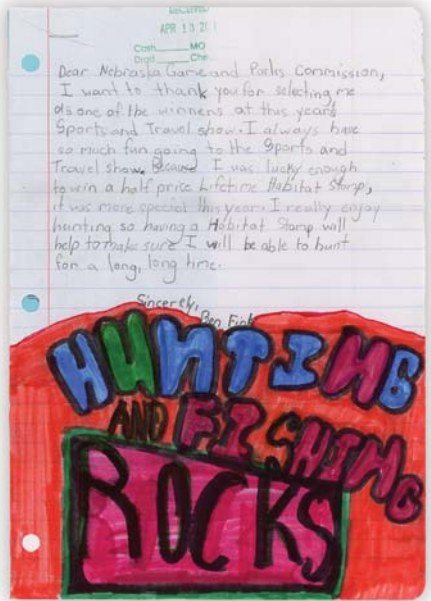
Katie Graham
McCook, Nebraska



Prince Charming

Last summer my lady friend and myself, along with a friend and his daughter, spent the day pond-jumping for bass in Pawnee county. “Princess Chelsie” got bored with the fishing and caught herself a bullfrog, but unlike the fairy tale, we ended up leaving without Prince Charming.

Jim Gronewold
Beatrice, Nebraska



Hunting and Fishing Rocks –Thanks

Dear Nebraska Game and Parks Commission,
I want to thank you for selecting me as one of the winners at this year’s sports and travel show. I always have so much fun going to the sports and travel show. Because I was lucky enough to win a half-price lifetime habitat stamp, it was more special this year. I really enjoy hunting so having a Habitat Stamp will help to make sure I will be able to hunt for a long, long time.
Sincerely,
Ben Fink
Elkhorn, Nebraska

Thank you for “Postcards from Louisville” in the May 2011 issue of *NEBRASKAland*. When our daughter Arielle was three, our family camped at Louisville State Recreation Area. As we enjoyed sipping lemonade at a picnic table, she suddenly stopped, grinned at my husband Paul and me, and said, “We are having a happy time!” Although she is in college now, we continue to make wonderful memories at Nebraska state parks and recreation areas any chance we get.

Sharon Berg
Bellevue, Nebraska

NEBRASKAland Visitor Letters

We want to thank all 78 readers that sent e-mails and letters for last issue’s visitor, a **sac spider** that was on page 31 (see page 13 for the winner, rules and this issue’s hint). Here are some of the responses we received:

This is a particularly rich edition of my favorite magazine – *NEBRASKAland*! My husband is a belly boat fisherman; the Switzer ranch safari story evokes future outdoor travel dreams; and the entire magazine is just loaded with other great articles and photos.

I did find the visitor on page 30 – a gentleman grilling out at a park looks ecstatic as he seems to be flipping a spider high in the air. Extra crunchy protein maybe?!

Debora Brownyard
Lincoln, Nebraska

Ok, I believe that the "visitor" you are looking for is found on page 31 in the upper left hand of the page and is a yellow sac spider.

I have arachnophobia in the worst way and it was absolutely horrific for me to look all this up. Yheewww!!!

I hope that in the next issue it is a snake, tick or rodent of some sort. Thanks for great issue again.
Becky Ingold
North Platte, Nebraska

I have found the visitor. I believe it is a yellow sac spider. I am not sure if the guy doing the bbqing is laughing or screaming because it appears that he has seen a spider.
Peg Webster
Wayne, Nebraska

Looks like a small spider attached itself to the top right corner of the photo on pages 30 and 31. Seems the griller is looking at the spider.

Thanks for a wonderful magazine. I enjoyed the article about the Sandhills, having spent many enjoyable visits to my wife’s home in Burwell.

Sincerely,
Robert A. Barclay
Healdsburg, California

I enjoy searching for your “visitor” in each issue of *NEBRASKAland*. We subscribed for our four sons and their families at Christmas so they could look. I believe the visitor this issue is the spider on page 31 at the top left. Thanks for the extra enjoyment in each issue. There is always so much to enjoy in your magazine.

Nancy Horalek
Humboldt, Nebraska

This small, pale creature is a sac spider in the family Cheiracanthium. These spiders generally live outside, though they will enter homes, especially in fall. They feed on insects, hunting for their prey at night. The sac spider gets its common name from the silk tube or sac it constructs, instead of weaving a web. If threatened, sac spiders will bite humans, causing mild swelling and occasionally redness.



– Julie Van Meter,
State Entomologist,
Nebraska Department of Agriculture.

Send your comments to:
Doug Carroll, Editor
NEBRASKAland Magazine
P.O. Box 30370
Lincoln, NE 68503
or e-mail Doug.Carroll@Nebraska.gov
Please include your postal address and telephone number.
Letters may be condensed and edited for clarity. Photographs are welcome and will be returned.

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COMMISSION OFFICES

Headquarters/Southeast District Office
2200 N. 33rd Street Lincoln, NE 68503
Phone (402) 471-0641

Northeast District Office
2201 N. 13th St. Norfolk, NE 68701
Phone (402) 370-3374

Southwest District Office
301 E. State Farm Rd. North Platte, NE 69101
Phone (308) 535-8025

Northwest District Office
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Robber Flies

Chris Helzer

Robber flies are among the most impressive flying predators in the insect world. They typically hunt by sitting on a prominent perch and waiting for flying prey to pass by. When a robber fly spots a likely victim, it zips out and catches it in mid-air before piercing it with its long, stiff mouth, and injecting a paralyzing and liquefying substance. It then returns to its perch or other safe location to suck out the liquefied remains.

There are more than 7,000 species of robber flies in the world. In Nebraska, robber flies can reach sizes of 1½ inches or more, and can attack prey much larger than themselves, including bumblebees and dragonflies. While their bite can be painful to humans, they don't bite people unless they are handled roughly. Unfortunately, insects can't count on the same consideration.

A robber fly on its perch along the Platte River near Chapman. Photo by Chris Helzer

Upcoming Events

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

June 1-28

• Family Fishing Events

These events provide rod, reel, bait and fishing instruction for new anglers and those that haven't fished for years. Events are held from 6 to 8 p.m. unless otherwise noted:

June 1, Omaha's Benson Park Pond; June 4, Kearney's Yanney Lake, 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.; June 5, Grand Island's Mormon Island Lake 2, 12 to 4 p.m.; June 7, Papillion's Halleck Park Lake; June 8, Lincoln's Bowling Lake; June 14, Columbus's Pawnee Park East; June 15, Norfolk's Skyview Lake; June 16, Omaha's Youngman Lake; June 21, Lincoln's Holmes Lake; June 22, Omaha's Walnut Creek Lake; June 28, Omaha's Cunningham Lake.

June 4-5

• Rock Creek Trail Days – Rock Creek Station State Historical Park
Buffalo Stew Cookout and Program, \$9 for adults and \$6 for children ages 13 and under.
Contact: Rock Creek Station SHP (402) 729-5777
ngpc.rock.creek.station@nebraska.gov

June 4-5

• Fort Atkinson Living History Days–Fort Atkinson State Historical Park
Step back in time and experience life as it was at an early 19th century frontier Army post

June 10

• E.T. Mahoney State Park Stargazing Party

View the spectacular night sky using powerful telescopes. Stargazing begins at the driving range from dusk to 11 p.m., weather permitting.

June 18

• Outdoor Skills Workshop for Men - Platte River State Park
This day-long workshop is designed to increase your knowledge and to make you a better outdoorsman.

Contact: Christy Christiansen (402) 471-5547
christy.christiansen@nebraska.gov



Elkhorn River Cleanup

Karen Anderson

Volunteers will be taking part in a day-long cleanup project on the Elkhorn River on June 18. Trash will be collected in canoes on about 16 miles of the river, starting at Elkhorn Crossing and ending at Q Street in the Omaha area.

This is the first year for the event, and organizers hope to grow the program, repeating the effort at a different Nebraska river each year. The National

Park Service is organizing the event, with participation and support of several co-sponsors.

The event will go from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., with a barbecue dinner to follow. Volunteers must be 14+ years old to participate. All skill levels are welcome. For a registration form or for volunteer information and other details about the event, contact Karen Anderson at (402) 661-1542 or karen_anderson@nps.gov.

NEBRASKA

Pheasants Forever & Quail Forever

LANDOWNER HABITAT TOURS

Date and Time	Tour Topic	Date and Time
April 5, 2011	Conducting Mid Contract Management on CRP for wildlife	9:00 am to 4:00 pm - McCook - Chief Motel
April 21, 2011	CRP Mid Contract Management	9:30 am to 3:00 pm - Ogallala - Lake McConaughy Visitor Center
May 21, 2011	Wildflower Walk	11:00 am MST - Gering - Wildcat Hills State Recreation Area
May 21, 2011	Pine and Cedar Tree Thinning	1:00 pm MST - Gering - Wildcat Hills State Recreation Area
June 2, 2011	Wetland Management Workshop	1:00 pm to 4:00 pm - Merna - Merna Community Center
June 4, 2011	Youth Habitat Tour of the Loess Canyons	8:00 am to 5:00 pm - North Platte - Nebraska Game & Parks Commission
June 8, 2011	Pheasant Management Workshop	9:30 am to 3:00 pm - Trenton - USDA Office
June 9, 2011	Sandhills Prairie & Wet Meadow Management & Plant ID Tour	8:30 am to 4:00 pm - Bartlett - Sandhill Seasons Guest Ranch & Hunts
National Pollinator Week Events		
June 21, 2011	Pollinator Habitat and Plant ID Tour	9:00 am to 3:00 pm - St. Paul - The Gathering Place
June 22, 2011	Pheasant & Quail Management	10:00 am to 3:00 pm - Broken Bow - One Box Gun Club
June 23, 2011	Prescribed Burning and Diverse Seeding Results	1:00 pm to 5:00 pm MST - Scottsbluff - North Platte NRD
June 23, 2011	Making Wildlife Cost-share and Incentive Programs work for You	1:00 pm to 5:00 pm - Syracuse - 1st National Bank & Trust
June 24, 2011	Improving Habitat for Pheasants and Quail	5:00 pm to 9:00 pm - Grand Island - Heartland Public Shooting Park
July 7, 2011	Prescribed Fire & Managing for Wildlife in the Niobrara Valley	8:30 am to 4:00 pm - Stuart
July 13, 2011	Dakota County Twilight Habitat Tour	5:30 pm to 8:30 pm - Dakota County
July 14, 2011	Quail Management Workshop	9:00 am to 3:00 pm - Sargent - Myrtle Hall WMA
July 29, 2011	Restoring an Oak Savanna	9:30 am to 3:00 pm - Schuyler - USDA Office
August 4, 2011	Management of CRP Reenrollments and Mid Contract Management	9:00 am to 3:00 pm - Franklin - Franklin County Fairgrounds
August 5, 2011	Pheasant and Quail Management	9:30 am to 3:00 pm - Wahoo - USDA Office
August 9, 2011	Pheasant Management Workshop	9:30 am to 3:00 pm - Branched Oak - Dog Trial Area on Branched Oak WMA
August 18, 2011	4th Annual Rangeland Management Workshop	9:00 am to 3:00 pm - Oconto - Pressey WMA
August 18, 2011	Prescribed Burning Results on Grasslands	9:00 am to 3:00 pm - Red Cloud - Trailblazer RC&D

Landowner Tours for Better Habitat

WILDLIFE BIOLOGISTS FROM ACROSS THE STATE WILL BE HOSTING A SERIES OF HABITAT TOURS THIS YEAR. TOURS ARE DESIGNED TO DEMONSTRATE HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES, AVAILABLE CONSERVATION PROGRAMS AND HOW TO CREATE THESE RESULTS ON YOUR OWN PROJECTS.



FOR DETAILS AND TO REGISTER: WWW.NEBRASKAPF.COM

A Look Back - Summer 1940

Jeff Kurrus

In the Summer 1940 edition of *NEBRASKAland* predecessor *Outdoor Nebraska*, the natural history articles "Meet Mr. Chukar" and "Turtles – Friends or Foes of Fish?" gave readers valuable information about game found throughout Nebraska. In addition, readers could view the correct – and not so correct – way to hold a gun, as shown in side-by-side photographs one would not see in a 21st-century outdoor publication.

What would be seen are many other topics written much in the same style our current publication's Mixed Bag section is constructed: Short articles on the sauger, first-aid how-to, and even a poem entitled "The Plea of the Tree" entertain people just before a not-so-entertaining time in American history – the United States's entry into World War II in December of 1941.

One of the most interesting pieces from this particular issue is a small news release in the back of the magazine entitled "Bald Eagles Protected." This article relayed information concerning the recent Bald Eagle Act approved by President Franklin Roosevelt and serves as a reminder that some of our best laws haven't always been in place.

To read "Bald Eagles Protected" and "Turtles – Friends or Foes of Fish?" visit

NebraskalandMagazine.com and click on "A Look Back."

OUTDOOR NEBRASKA



Roadside Snappers

Jon Farrar

It is not an uncommon sight during June and into July, particularly in the Sandhills where sandy trail roads are close to lakes. Fishermen driving the trail road on the north side of Pelican Lake on the Valentine National Wildlife refuge will surely see "it" – evidence of female snapping turtles coming ashore to lay eggs. Early and late in the day is the mostly likely time to actually see a female excavating a nesting cavity with her hind legs, seeming to back down into the sand, usually on the north side of the trail (for maximum exposure to the sun), and usually where there is a drop-off made by the blade of a road grader. Destroyed nests are seen even more often, where some predator dug out the clutch of eggs, crushed them in its mouth to extract the nutrient-rich contents, and left behind broken and deflated golf-sized egg shells.

The larger the female snapper the more eggs she lays, but they tend to be smaller than those of younger turtles. Twenty-five to 80 eggs comprise an average clutch. Once the eggs are laid, the female covers them with sand and returns to water. Incubation is then accomplished by the sun-warmed soil.

It is not surprising, then, that length of incubation varies, from about nine to 18 weeks; and those eggs in warmer underground sites require less time to hatch. Even more interesting is that the temperature at which an egg is incubated appears to determine the sex of the turtle that will emerge from it. Males are produced if the temperature averages between 70 and 85 degrees Fahrenheit. Eggs incubated at cooler or warmer temperatures usually produce females. In large nests there may be significant differences in temperature between eggs deepest in the nest and those near the surface of the ground, so females may hatch from one part of the nest and males from the other, and at different times.

Male snapping turtles are mature when three to five years old, females when four to six years old. Predation of snapping turtle nests is common, with some studies reporting as high as 70 percent destroyed. In Nebraska, the most likely nest predators are skunks, raccoons and badgers. Once mature, though, snapping turtles are essentially invulnerable to predators and so the species prospers even with high nest losses.

Nebland Flashbacks



Okay, this one's a little different. We found this image among our photographic archives and are guessing it is from back when tourism and promotion for the state were part of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. We don't know who this "pheasant girl" is, or where this took place, but if you know, we'd love to hear from you.

www.agriaffiliates.com

Devil's Den - 556 acres rough canyons, hardland soils, trees; oil road access north of Arnold. Great deer & turkey hunting. \$600 per acre. (North Platte)

Jeffrey Lake - 255 acres canyon range, adjoins west side of the lake, south of Brady. Perfect for home or cabin, recreation opportunities, elk. (North Platte)

Thiesing Range Parcel #2 - 605 acres SW of Brady, Nebraska. Productive canyon range. Offers agricultural & recreational amenities. (Kearney)

Platte River Ranch - 218 acres north of McGrew. 133 acre 2010 Zimmatic center pivot, 20 acres gravity, balance grass. (Gering)

Stark Farm - 135 acres pivot irrigated cropland north of Loomis, NE. Well maintained, very productive farm. (Kearney)

Whitney Lake Pasture/Farm - 1,056 acres 8 miles NE of Crawford, NE. 145 irrigated pasture, 508 pasture, 240 upland hay, 135 dry cropland. (Gering)

Seader Farm - 238 acres NE of Henry; 2-newer pivots. 237 acres Pathfinder water; 4-2003 Behlen Steel buildings. (Gering)

Garden County Ranchette - 164 acres NE of Oshkosh; 120 pasture, 41 CRP acres; 3 bed, 1 bath house, outbuildings. Excellent access. (North Platte)

Garden County Pasture - 320 acres 9 miles northeast of Oshkosh, sub well. Excellent access on county gravel road. (North Platte)

Johanson Farm Auction - October 6th. Excellent cropland with expanded NRD acres for pivot development. (North Platte)

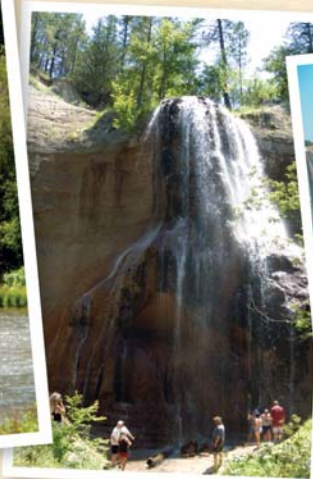
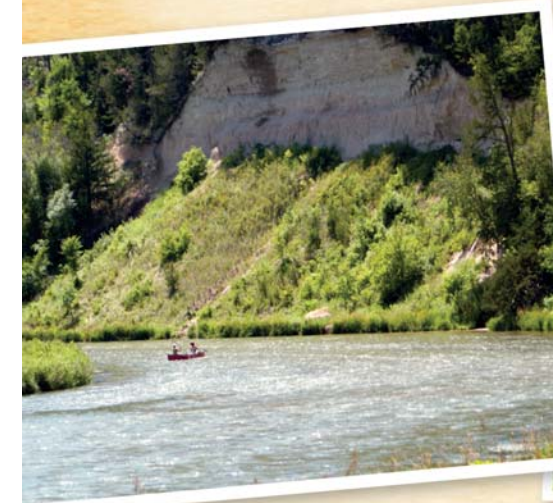
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For more information: Cherry County Tourism • PO Box 201 • Valentine, NE 69201
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Hiking with my Friends

Tom Scheimo

Nebraska has more public hiking opportunities than most people realize – there are many lakes, riversides, peaks, buttes, valleys, canyons and open prairies. But what if you don't know an area well, or just don't want to hike alone? If so, it's time to sponsor a weekly or monthly hike for old and new friends alike. Here's how you get started:

- Advertise in various local media, including television, radio, web sites or newspapers. These media usually have a spot for "events" at no cost to you. Or, if you have any writing abilities at all, pen a "news" or "feature" story – local newspapers are always looking for fillers of this type, and any photos you provide are a plus.

- If these local media are too ambitious for you, post flyers around town. If there is a college in the area, the campus is a great place to find others. Students away from home crave downtime from their studies and are willing to explore their temporary homes. Notices can be posted at local businesses (get permission first), a "town square" location, library, coffee shop ... the list is endless. Every community is different.

- Post the following items on your flyer when recruiting a hiking group: water, snacks (depending on the outing's length), sunscreen, mosquito repellent, pepper spray if going into the wilderness, jacket, hat, good hiking footwear and, of course, a map of the hiking area and compass.

- Information for the outing should also include the destination or a couple of choices to be voted on by the group. Will you allow dogs? What if only one person is joining you – will you hike with a stranger? Think safety. Also meet in a well known, easy-to-find public place.

Bring your sense of adventure during these outings. There's education around every bend, especially if someone in your group knows the history, flora or fauna of an area.



A group of hikers break during an autumn walk along Nebraska's Pine Ridge.

Plus, the more comfortable you get with a group, the more opportunities arise, including, at least within my hiking circles, homemade jam and baked bread.

It is guaranteed you will make friends when you group hike, for there are no demands, no protocol – just life. So start enjoying it now.

Stopping Aquatic Hitchhikers

Aquatic nuisance species pose a great threat to boaters, anglers and any water-based business or public utility in

the state. Preventing the spread of these species starts with the owners of all water vessels. Boats and boat trailers can easily transport aquatic hitchhikers in many ways, so follow these

guidelines before leaving a body of water to help protect Nebraska's aquatic resources and recreational opportunities:

- Drain every conceivable place that holds water, including live wells, bilge, ballast tanks, and transom wells (don't forget the engine itself, especially on personal watercraft).
- Remove all visible plant fragments, mud and other debris from the vessel and its trailer.
- Clean and dry all equipment that came in contact with water.
- Allow everything to dry completely for several days before launching into another body of water.

Zebra and quagga mussels are a particularly hardy variety of aquatic nuisance species and can be quite small – their larvae are microscopic and adults can range in size from a grain of sand to two inches in length.

Outdoor Message Plates

Ken Carlson of Lincoln caught his first trout on a fly on Long Pine Creek as a teenager more than 50 years ago and now totes his fly rod around Nebraska casting for trout, panfish, bass and carp. He's had this message plate for 25 years.

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



Dispersing Wet Seeds

Chris Helzer

Many wetland plants have seeds that can float, which helps facilitate seed dispersal. When those plants drop their seeds into the water, they can travel across the water's surface – propelled by wind and/or current – until they are eventually marooned on the wet soil along the edge of the water. Traveling by water helps ensure the seeds will end up in a place appropriate for wetland plants to grow.

Some water-dispersed seeds are simply so small that they don't break through the surface

tension of water. Others have hairs or other structures that help them float. Still others have hollow spaces that make them buoyant. As with other plants, most seeds produced by wetland plants won't land in a place that allows them to successfully germinate and grow into a new plant.

However, it only takes one successful seed – out of the hundreds to millions produced –

to make the effort of growing, flowering and producing seeds worthwhile.



A raft of wetland seeds float on the edge of a small restored wetland at The Nature Conservancy's Platte River Prairies in Hall County.

The 2011 National Trails Day

Tom Scheimo

National Trails Day was originally conceived in 1987 after a report from Ronald Reagan's President's Commission on American Outdoors. The commission felt it very important that every American should be able to live within 15 minutes of a trail from their homes.

These trails were recommended to wind around and through communities, allowing an experience without retracing steps. This was called Trails for All Americans, and inspired others to join the American Hiking Society, as the first National Trails Day was launched in 1993.

Now, nearly 20 years later, the American Hiking Society helps all of us to carry the idea of National Trails Day into our communities, where we can expand our experiences and comfort zones to the great outdoors. On their web site there are a number of hikes registered for this year's Saturday, June 4 date throughout the country, including multiple events in Nebraska. Some of these include:

- Panhandle Trails, in cooperation with the National Forest Service, is sponsoring a hike. Visit panhandletrails.weebly.com for more information on their "Hike the

Ridge" event.

- Bader Memorial Park in Chapman will again have their float event on the Platte River. For anyone interested in visiting, visit baderpark.com for additional details.

- The YMCA in South Sioux City is sponsoring their Healthy Kids Day Event on June 4, which will include

hiking, kite flying, learning about camping, and preparing healthy trail snacks. Visit www.nwsymca.org.

Visit americanhikingsociety.org before June 4 to either register your own event or see if any more have been added. Then, lace up your sneakers, grab your family and friends, and start walking.

See You Out There ... But Where?



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

PHOTO BY BOB GRIER

Officer's Notebook

Stories and accounts from the officers that serve, protect and educate for Wildlife.

Thump, Thump

The Omaha-area metro lakes all experience heavy use and have size restrictions on black bass – the minimum length is 21 inches and you can only keep one bass a day. That is a nice fish, a trophy largemouth bass, otherwise you need to practice catch and release bass fishing on these lakes. Anglers who wish to keep some fish to eat should concentrate on panfish, trout or catfish as they often have no size restrictions and liberal bag limits.

When they are hitting, however, some anglers are tempted to keep a short bass or two. Enforcement comes in three forms: Routine patrol, checking permits and creels on anglers actively fishing; or with information provided by calls to the Wildlife Crime Stoppers number (1-800-742-7627) or the local Conservation Officer, whose cell numbers are listed in the yearly fishing guide and on page 5 of each NEBRASKAland issue.

The third way is the most productive. It requires patience, a good vantage point and a 25X spotting scope. The scope is a great piece of equipment – we can scan anglers and other outdoorsmen at long distance, watching for illegal activity. While doing this I have witnessed violators stash illegal short bass into waders, coolers, picnic baskets and vehicles.

I used the scope recently at Walnut Creek to scan several anglers scattered around the lake. One was fishing from a rocky point and was catching a few bass, all under the legal size as he appeared to be releasing them back into the water. I noticed, however, that he always released the short bass in

the exact same spot each time, so I decided to watch him a little closer. As it turned out, he had a pen made out of rocks in the open waters – no stringer, no fish basket and any officer making routine checks would be none the wiser. When the violator decided to call it quits, he grabbed three short bass from the pen and put them somewhere – I couldn't see where as there was brush obscuring my view. To top things off, I watched him throw two empty beverage cans into the cattails.

I left my vantage point and drove around the lake where I met up with him. I asked to see his fishing license and made small talk as he set his gear on the ground. Thump, thump. I asked if he'd kept any fish. "Not today," he said. Thump, thump. "What's that?" I asked. "What's what?" Thump, thump. "There's a thump-thump coming from your tackle box." Thump, thump. "Something's trying to get out, lets see what it is shall we?" Thump,thump. He emptied out the three illegal bass. They were still lively and flopping around, so I was able to release them back into the impoundment for another day, and another fisherman. I encouraged him to go back and pick up his litter while I wrote out a court citation that included a hefty fine.

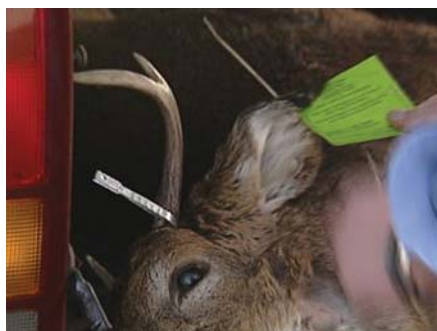
In my business, a good spotting scope and thumping black bass are sometimes all that's needed to make a case.

– Dan Evasco, Conservation Officer, Papillion



36th Time is a Charm

A 49-year-old Sheldon, Wisconsin man has been sentenced to six months in jail for having a deer his son shot in



Nebraska tagged with a Wisconsin deer hunting tag.

Richard Kochevar was sentenced by U.S. Magistrate Judge Stephen Crocker in federal court in Madison, Wisconsin.

According to a Department of Justice press release, the elder Kochevar had 35 previous criminal violations, including 10 separate Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources wildlife violations.

He pled guilty to a charge of submitting a false statement regarding the deer shot in Nebraska and transported to Wisconsin.

According to the press release, Kochevar and his son went hunting in

Nebraska in the fall of 2009 but neither had hunting licenses.

The son shot a deer and Kochevar took it back to Wisconsin, with Kochevar getting a friend to tag the deer with an unused Wisconsin deer hunting tag.

The investigation into the crime was conducted by the Wisconsin DNR and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

According to state court records, Kochevar has been found guilty of a variety of wildlife offenses, including hunting deer out of season, failing to obtain a deer hunting license, and assisting with bear hunting without a license.



Cody Newlun of Hastings hit 186 out of 200 clay pigeons in very windy conditions to win this year's Cornhusker Cup trophy.

Cornhusker Trapshoot

Cody Newlun of Hastings 4-H won a shootout to capture the Cornhusker Cup at the 42nd Annual Cornhusker Trapshoot in Doniphan this year.

Despite very winding conditions throughout the meet, Newlun finished with a 186x200 two-day score to tie Republican Valley 4-H's Blake Brumbaugh and head to the shootout. Jacqueline Baude of Papillion-LaVista South was the high overall girl with a 179x200, while Wade Knott of Louisville was crowned the junior high school champion after breaking 95 out of 100 16-yard targets.

This year 1,216 shooters competed in the senior high division of the trapshoot, and 692 competitors shot in the junior high portion. The Cornhusker is held at the home grounds of the Nebraska Trapshooting Association (NTA) and is hosted by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and the NTA.

The largest event of its kind in the country, the Cornhusker Trapshoot is open to any academically eligible junior high or high school student who has completed a Nebraska-recognized hunter education course.

High School 3D Championships

Entries are being accepted for the 2011 Nebraska High School Bowhunter 3-D Championships to be held in Broken Bow on June 11.

The event consists of firing shots with a bow and arrow at 3-D targets resembling animals that commonly are hunted. The targets are set at different ranges in different terrain to simulate hunting. The objective is to score hits in the vital areas of the 3-D target.

This free event is open to all school students ages 12 through 18 who have completed a bow hunter education course and can prove certification. Awards will be given to individuals and teams.

The championships, sponsored by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission's Hunter Education Programs and Mid-Nebraska Bowhunters, will be held at the Nebraska One Box Shooting Range.

For more information or to register, contact Mark Eggers at (402) 368-5588, mjegggers@cableone.net, or Hunter Education Coordinator Mike Streeter at (402) 471-6134, mike.streeter@nebraska.gov.



Turpin Time

Dick Turpin

I've lost count, but you can re-use five gallon buckets for about 400

purposes. Here's one that dog owners and gardeners might like.

Take a bucket and a good sharp knife...go around it like this (cutting bucket into two parts about four inches from the bottom) ... I sawed this before I got here ... the bottom of these buckets makes a good dish to water the hunting dog. That thing will last a long time for a dog waterer. Just throw it in the back of your truck and you got it. But this part here? What are you going to do with that part? I'm going to take it right over there and when I put my tomatoes in tonight I'm going to put this over one of those plants so it'll keep the bunnies out. They have enough to eat, they don't need to eat my tomatoes. ■



NEBRASKAland Visitor Winner and Hint

Last issue's winner of the NEBRASKAland Visitor drawing was Bill Coday of Fremont, Nebraska who found the **sac spider** 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 bug found in Nebraska that just happened to find its way onto one of the pages of our publication.

We will then gather the correct entries and draw one to win a NEBRASKAland Magazine mug. To enter each month, write: **NEBRASKAland Visitor 2200 North 33rd Street, Lincoln, NE 68503.**

Or e-mail:

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

HINT: This issue's visitor is not on page 5, 6, 32, or 36.



Buffalo Bill Rodeo

Text and photos by Jon Farrar

Not until the 1920s did the word rodeo come into common usage. Seeing who could ride a bucking bronco the longest or rope a calf the quickest was probably informal competition in ranch country a hundred years earlier.

While Nebraska has as legitimate a claim to be the home of the first rodeo as any – Buffalo Bill's Old Glory Blowout celebration in North Platte in 1882 – it is impossible to assign that honor to any specific time or place unless rodeo is so narrowly defined as to be meaningless. The first rodeos were organic – like mushrooms, they just grew from spawn in the soil whenever ranch hands gathered around a corral and put a little hard-earned cash on who they thought was the best rider or roper. Rodeo is the only American sporting activity that grew out of a real working occupation.

The word rodeo came from the Spanish word *rodear*, (pronounced ro-day-oh). As originally used, the word rodeo meant rounding up livestock. An 1851 California statute, for example, states that: "Every owner of a stock farm shall be obliged to give, yearly, one general Rodeo within the limits of his farm, from the first day of April until the thirty-first day of July...in order that parties interested may meet, for the purpose of separating their respective cattle...." In the United States, during the days of running cattle on unfenced government rangeland, the



Above: Competition between cowboys after round-ups was probably the beginning of rodeos. By the early 1900s, they were common Fourth of July events in small towns. Right: Michelle Boesart, Miss Nebraska Rodeo 2010, at last year's Buffalo Bill rodeo.



Saddle bronc rider's gear – halter and hack rein, protective vest and chaps.

In the calf-roping event, contestants are timed roping a running calf, dismounting and tying three of its legs together.

equivalent word was “round-up.”

As the story goes, and it is almost surely correct, in the late-1700s and early 1800s in Mexico and what later became the United States’ southwest, vaqueros (hired hands on large cattle ranches, call them the original North American cowboys if you want) were said to compete against one another in such things as roping and bronc riding at the end of roundups. The same custom soon appeared on the Great Plains after cattle were gathered from large ranches to be sorted and some shipped to market. Such cowboy competitions surely drew crowds, but were too informal to be called rodeos. And the competition was

little removed from real ranch work, such as breaking horses and roping calves. Bull riding apparently was a Spanish tradition that grew out of the even more dangerous competition of bull wrestling, and bore no resemblance at all to any form of useful ranch work.

Some researchers state the first real rodeo, even though it was not called that, was held in Cheyenne, Wyoming, in 1872. That tradition continues as the Cheyenne Frontier Days Rodeo, which claims to be the largest outdoor rodeo. Some assign the first rodeo to Pecos, Texas, in 1883, as it was the first to offer prizes to contestants; or to Prescott, Arizona, in 1888 because it was the first to charge spectators an admission fee. However the first rodeo is defined, there is little doubt Buffalo Bill Wild West Shows were

Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park

Right next door to the Wild West Arena where the annual Buffalo Bill Rodeo is held, is part of what once was Buffalo Bill's ranch on the north edge of North Platte. It became a state historical park in 1965. When William F. Cody was at the height of his show business career, he owned about 4,000 acres there and appropriately called his home Scout's Rest, his retreat from the hectic show business world.

Cody was born in 1846 in Iowa. He hired out as an ox-team driver when only 11 years old. In 1859 he went with other hopeful gold prospectors to Colorado and in 1860 signed on as a Pony Express rider. Although too young to enlist in the army during the Civil War, he served as a dispatch messenger and scout for the Union Army. After the war he was paid to hunt bison to feed workers on the Kansas Pacific Railroad, and was reported to have killed 4,280 animals in eight months; but he earned his title “Buffalo Bill” in shooting competition with another professional bison hunter. He was an Army scout for General George Armstrong Custer in campaigns against American Indians; and in 1872 he guided the Grand Duke Alexis of Russia on a bison hunting expedition in southwestern Nebraska.

Cody had his beginning as a showman in Ned Buntline's stage play about the old west. After another stint as Army guide, he began touring eastern cities portraying scenes of battles with the Sioux. In 1882 he organized and staged the first Old Glory Blowout celebration in North Platte, an event often credited with being the beginning of rodeos. It also was the beginning of his Wild West Show. From 1883 into 1886, Cody toured the U.S., and in 1887 he took the show on a tour in England. It also played next to the 1893 Chicago World Fair. He enlarged his show and again toured Europe in 1902. Cody was always ready to roll the dice, and so was susceptible to questionable investments. He was forced to sell Scout's Rest Ranch in 1911 and died destitute in 1917 in the Denver home of a sister.

Today the historical park encompasses 16 acres that includes Buffalo Bill's house, built in 1886, and barn and outbuildings that have been restored to their original condition and filled with Cody memorabilia. Adjacent to the park is a 233-acre state recreational area providing picnicking, camping and hiking. There are 23 pad sites with 50 amp electrical hookups; as well as tent camping areas. For additional information see: <http://outdoornebraska.ne.gov/parks>

Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park is located in northwestern North Platte. From Interstate 80 at North Platte, take U.S. Highway 83 north to U.S. Highway 30, west two miles, then north on Bufalo Bill Avenue. Open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. March 24 to Memorial Day, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Memorial Day to Labor Day, closed Labor Day; 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday after Labor day.





While rodeos would seem to be mostly a draw for rural folks, from their beginning they've fascinated city people as well. Two old cowboys found quiet seats near top of the grandstand at the 2010 Buffalo Bill Rodeo in North Platte.

instrumental in promoting their popularity.

It was not until the 1920s that the word rodeo was commonly used, even among those competing in the sport. That same decade, rodeos became large organized events, staged not just for public entertainment but entrepreneurial profit and, like the wild west shows that preceded them, included such events as trick and fancy roping and riding. Women competed in the same events as men until 1929, when one of the country's best female competitors, Bonnie McCarroll, died of an injury sustained in a bronc riding event. It apparently remained acceptable for men to die in rodeo events.

Rodeos were immensely popular in large eastern cities. Rodeos billed as "championship competition" were held at New York's Madison Square Garden, the first in 1922. Even

during the depression of the 1930s, some cowboys were earning more rodeoing than were teachers or dentists. Of course teachers and dentists rarely end a work day with broken ribs. American rodeos were staged in Europe, the Far East and South America before World War II. Rodeo promoters organized before the cowboys offering up their bodies for small purses and audience entertainment did. In 1929, the Rodeo Association of America formed to promote the sport, but not until 1936 did those competing form their own organization, the Cowboys Turtle Association (CTA). It is said "turtles" was part of the organization's name as the cowboys were slow to organize but finally stuck out their necks. During a rodeo billed as the "world championship" in Boston the calf ropers, bull and bronc riders went on strike, refusing to compete in protest of purses

smaller than promised, poor promotion, incompetent (if not unfair) judging, and a lack of uniform rules. The CTA sanctioned no women's contests. In 1945, the organization was renamed the Rodeo Cowboys Association, and in 1975 became the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA). America being a capitalistic society, it was predictable that rodeos would become big business and the best of those competing would be financially rewarded, which only seems proper for anyone who would willingly crawl on the back of an enraged bull or jump off a perfectly



Young Texas twirlers Cody Jo Hattery (front) and Gracie Gambio (black hat) hawk pint-sized lariats at the Buffalo Bill Rodeo as Terilynn Riley totes the wares.



Steer wrestling is one of eight rodeo events sanctioned by the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association. Of those, only barrel racing is a womans' event.

good horse onto the back of a running steer. Prize money swelled enough that a select few were able to tour and make rodeoing a fulltime profession, at least until dislocated shoulders and rib-punctured lungs forced their retirement. Today, the National Finals Rodeo in Las Vegas draws nearly 200,000 spectators and attracts about 13 million television viewers.

The PRCA-sanctioned events are saddle bronc riding, bareback riding, bull riding, calf roping, steer wrestling, team roping, and steer roping. Barrel racing is the only

women's event sanctioned at PRCA rodeos and was not added until 1968. In response to the PRCA's longtime refusal to sanction women's events, the Girl's Rodeo Association organized in 1948. It later changed its name to the Women's Professional Rodeo Association and has played an important role in bringing women back to rodeo and ensuring purse money for women is the equal of that for men. Since the late-1940s, youth rodeo associations have formed, such as the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association, the National High School Rodeo Association,

and the American Junior Rodeo Association. "Old-timers" rodeos have also increased in popularity.

Rodeo competition has grown steadily over the years as purses increased. In 1953, the total prize money awarded at PRCA rodeos was about \$2.5 million. Thirty years later it was over \$13 million. Today, the best of the cowboys earn well over \$100,000 a year. As an example of the earnings possible in professional rodeoing, consider Cody Ohl from Texas, who started in PRCA competition in 1994. His specialties were team roping, tie-down roping and steer rop-



Roedy Owen Farrell of Thermopolis, Wyoming, stays behind the arena gates but outfits himself the same as his father, Will, a professional bull rider.

ing. His PRCA career earnings are \$2.4 million.

While most rodeos are a certified business, today, the once uncomplicated tradition of rodeos remains alive and well at small town Fourth of July and county fair events.

The annual Buffalo Bill Rodeo (where the photographs for this article were taken last year) is held in conjunction with the NEBRASKALAND Days celebration in North Platte and will take place June 15-18 this year. For additional information call (308) 532-7939, (888) 313-5606, or go online to: <http://www.nebraskalanddays.com/>. ■

Ornate Box Turtles

Text and photos by Michael Forsberg

Although relatively small, this long lived species is common to much of Nebraska and makes its life primarily in grasslands.

Last May I sat on a hillside in the Nebraska Sandhills watching two Swainson’s hawks riding thermals on a warm sunny day. Taking part in courtship flight, the birds were carving circles in near perfect synchrony, like two lovers figure skating together on an icy pond of blue sky.

Suddenly my attention was drawn back to earth by sand moving beneath my boot – a beautiful ornate box turtle was emerging from a shallow burrow in the soil at my feet. I

watched as it paused briefly to survey its surroundings, sand rolling down its high domed shell as its head swiveled slowly left, right, then up toward the sky, almost as if watching the hawks

still circling above. With typical turtle deliberateness and speed, it then made its way downslope, dodging bluestem towers of the prairie and disappearing out of sight, leaving only its tracks behind.

The ornate box turtle (*Terrapene ornate*) is one of nine native turtle species found in Nebraska and is the only native terrestrial species that makes its life primarily in grasslands. Although shy by nature, drive a highway or ranch road in the Sandhills after a

rainstorm in early summer and you will often see ornate box turtles moving across the road or poised along the shoulder.

The adult ornate box turtle is relatively small, rarely larger than six inches long. Its hard, intricately colored shell resembles dappled sunlight when viewed from above, with bright mustard yellow lines that can extend to their legs, head and tail radiating across a dark background. The upper part of the

box turtle’s shell (called a carapace) is highly domed. The bottom part of the shell (the plastron) has a single hinge, which allows the shell to close tight, protecting the turtle’s soft body parts from predation.

Side by side, the male is slightly smaller and can be more showy, usually with bright red eyes and reddish-orange forelimbs. The female’s eyes are a more subdued maroon, yellow or green.

There are four species of box turtles in North America, and their fossil record dates back 15 million years. The ornate box turtle was first recorded in Nebraska in 1795, and today is found throughout much of the Great Plains and parts of the Upper Midwest.

In Nebraska, the ornate box turtle

can be found statewide except in certain northeastern counties. It is most common in western Nebraska, especially in the Sandhills. Its habitat encompasses short, mixed and tallgrass prairies where loose sandy or loamy soils allow its curved claws to excavate nests and burrow to overwinter or escape temperature extremes by thermoregulation (turtles are ectothermic, meaning their body temperature reflects the environment around them).

Like other turtles, the ornate box turtle has a beak rather than teeth, like most reptiles have. They are omnivores and use their beak to eat a varied diet of succulent plants, fruits, earthworms,

carrion and insects. These turtles forage throughout the day unless temperatures become extreme and they have to seek shelter. In more northern parts of their range they are active roughly from spring to fall, while down south they can be active year-round.

In Nebraska, ornate box turtles breed from May through September and females lay their eggs in the summer or hold the sperm to use the following year. There are usually one to seven eggs in a clutch, and the sex of the young is determined by the temperature at which the eggs are incubated – cooler temperatures produce males, warmer temperatures females. Ornate box turtles

do not reach sexual maturity until about age 10, and can live 50 years or more in the wild.

Because ornate box turtles have relatively low reproduction, suffer high young mortality and are slow to reach sexual maturity, their populations are easily affected by changes to the landscape, such as habitat lost to crop conversion and habitat that is fragmented by roads and other development, which can hinder movement, increase vehicle mortalities and stop the flow of genetics from one population to another. In some states a history of commercial collection for sale in pet stores has had a big impact on ornate box turtle

populations. Fortunately, they are now protected from commercial collection in six midwestern states, including Nebraska.

If you see an ornate box turtle face to face, try to look deeply into its eyes. There you will find a fire kindled long ago and born of the prairie that still burns brightly in those cherished places in Nebraska where our native grasslands survive. ■

Contributing editor and freelance nature photographer Michael Forsberg lives in Lincoln. To view more of his work, visit www.michaelforsberg.com.



An ornate box turtle (*Terrapene ornate*) moves along a mowed path on a tallgrass prairie in southeastern Nebraska.

A Lonely Pursuit

Largemouth Bass Fishing



I was taught quite early in life by my father (pictured at Valentine National Wildlife Refuge) that bass fishing can be an isolated venture.

Text and photos by Jeff Kurrus

“You know why God made largemouth bass? So every person could catch a fish.”

That statement, recently made to me by a walleye fisherman at Merritt Reservoir, often seems to be the overwhelming thought concerning America’s most popular freshwater fish, the largemouth bass. And why shouldn’t it be? As a creature known for its propensity to strike just about anything on or near the water, includ-

ing frogs, birds, turtles, other fish, or even tin can tops (according to fishing writer Robert Hughes in his memoir *A Jerk on One End*), the bass’s reputation as an easy catch seems well justified. At least until one watches some bass anglers in action.

If catching these fish were so simple, why would one need a bass boat that skims the water at 70 miles per hour, why would a tournament angler, complete with his or her logo-covered

uniform, scream in elation at every two-pounder caught in front of a camera, and why would there be aisles and aisles of largemouth lures at every outdoor retailer? If these so-called “green carp” were so readily available for anglers to essentially scoop from the water, a johnboat and relatively large net should seemingly suffice in limiting out for the day.

Yet anyone who has spent time on the water fishing for largemouths

understands why some anglers go to these extremes to catch these fish – it’s pretty darn fun to watch them jump into the air, and it’s certainly not always as easy as it looks. Dennis Brauer and Darrell West, two tournament anglers who fished the 2010 Bassmasters Classic on Lay Lake in Alabama, would support this latter claim – while perennial tournament power Kevin VanDam eventually won the tournament, boating 5-fish limits on

“The angler known for their prowess also shows how inept they truly are when largemouth bass angling. The more lures one has – the more failure they have experienced.”

three consecutive days, neither Brauer or West caught a single fish and were disqualified from even fishing the final day of the tournament.

To understand the complexity of fishing for a species often perceived as easy to catch, one should look no further than the spinnerbait – one of largemouth bass fishing’s most common lures. The spinnerbait, resembling virtually nothing else swimming in freshwater, seemingly supports some people’s claims that the largemouth will strike just about anything moving through the water. How could a lure be so popular for a freshwater fish that resembles a saltwater creature, the jellyfish, much more than anything in your local pond or reservoir? The simplicity of this lure, however, ends there.

When fishing a spinnerbait, an angler must first consider color. While white and black are always near the forefront, any angler new to bass fishing will also learn a color not often seen in the pursuit of other hobbies – chartreuse.

Once this new color is learned, one must now decide on the various blade options available, including those with names like the Colorado, Indiana or willow-leaf, or if the angler wants the blades to be copper, gold, silver or a painted color. Anglers must also decide if they will fish a single blade or tandem blades, and what types of blades will be combined together.

Once these elementary choices are made, then spinnerbait size is chosen – 1/8-, 1/4-, 3/8-, or 1/2-ounce are the norms, yet ultralight, as well as heavy, muskie-tempting sizes, will also suffice. Finally comes the additions – will you add a pork trailer, soft plastic tail or some other appendage to spice up your selection?

A conversation between two anglers regarding this process therefore might resemble something like this:

“What are you going to fish with?”

“Red head, white skirt. Tandem blades.”

“Two willows?”

“Gold Colorado and silver willow.”



The spinnerbait, one of largemouth bass fishing’s most popular lures, is a curious lure.



For many largemouth anglers, speedy boats (above) have become part of the bass fishing experience. If largemouth bass are so easy to catch, then why do so many tackle boxes (right) look like this one?

“3/8?”

“Quarter. You?”

“Black, blue skirt. Half-ounce.”

“Wow, going big today?”

“Yeah. Thought about a trailer, but decided against.”

“Blade?”

“Single silver Colorado. You know, sunny day and all.”

Once this conversation is had and each lure is cast, how will the angler fish it? The options are numerous. Reeling it back as fast as possible near the surface, letting it sink to a preferred depth and then reeling it back, giving the spinnerbait an occasional twitch or complete stop of motion, or any other number of techniques used by anglers.

Any angler that invests this much complicated preparation would seemingly garner a little respect from those whose days are spent using bottom bouncers or Lindy rigs, but it will probably never happen, despite the fact that any bass angler who has spent their fair share of time on the water also knows

how to Carolina rig a worm, float a fluke, bounce cranks, or scum frog lily pads. Much like the walleye, crappie or trout angler, the bass angler learns these acts not out of curiosity, but necessity.

So the following question must be asked: Why all the “green carp” whisperings? Perhaps it’s this fish’s so-called palatability issues. Why eat this scrap fish when our Nebraska waters have bluegill, crappie and walleye in them? The basic notion of fishing involves catching something that will eventually be eaten. However, the largemouth bass is more known these days by the catch-and-release principles attached to it. Every time a walleye angler sees another catch-and-release claim by a television fisherman, a giggle must inevitably slip out. Even the channel catfish, known for its ability to eat just about anything dead it can find on the bottom of a waterbody, garners more dinner respect than the bass. However, I still contend that

while each of these species is a suitable meal cooked any manner of ways, my cracker crumb-fried or mushroom and lemon sauce-grilled bass recipes can each hold their own on any number of outdoor supper tables.

Eat bass? How dare I? Well, some things learned as a child never seem to change. I can still remember walks through the woods back to my parents’ home as a 13-year-old, a stringer of 15-inch largemouth slung over my shoulder. While the rest of the world was calling me a teenager, I was calling myself a bass fisherman. That year I was given both an over-and-under Plano by my father and the opportunity to choose five lures from his tackle box.

In any other world, used goods are often no better than second-rate gifts that someone seeks to rid themselves of by handing off to you. Yet inside a tackle box, each of these lures holds the key to how good they are by how many teeth marks scratch their surface. Being young and inexperienced in the





A largemouth bass leaps from the water at Verdon State Recreation Area, trying to shake a treble-hooked crankbait from its mouth.

ways of the fishing world, I, however, picked the brightest and shiniest, no doubt choosing a small set of lures that had good reason for being so glossy.

With this collection I began fishing by myself, taking those walks through the woods behind my parents' home and repeatedly casting my still shiny lures into stump-filled water. During those days, I noticed how largemouth often strike your lure right before you pull it from the water, I saw females on

spawning beds repeatedly pick up and move my plastic worm without striking it, and I learned how to feel stumps beneath the surface with my crankbaits, often deciding that a successful fishing day was measured not so much by the numbers of fish caught as the numbers of lures in my tackle box at the end of the trip.

The more I fished, the more places I fished. The more places I fished, the more I learned. I knocked on a lot of

doors during those years, promising not to keep any fish. I also kissed a few girls during that time with one eye closed and the other looking over their shoulder at their daddy's pond behind the house.

It was on those days that I learned about this fish that "anyone can catch," and how true, yet how maddeningly false, this statement can sometimes be. Catching largemouth bass can be ridiculously easy occasionally, but even

during the good times the veteran bass angler has the question "Why?" running repeatedly through their mind. Even the elated, screaming bass angler is trying to figure out why they're catching fish today – what makes today so different than yesterday?

I learned this conundrum early on while bass fishing, and have constantly chased the answer to "Why isn't this working today?" This is my love/hate relationship with the largemouth, a

constant inner struggle of what to do next when pursuing a fish that is so "easy to catch."

If you pull a green carp angler to the side, and force him or her to whisper why they chase the not-so-elusive, but often-hard-to-catch, largemouth, they'll probably give you a similar answer, almost embarrassed how bass fishing is too-often portrayed on outdoor television, yet also understanding why an occasional fist pump or high-five is shared between anglers in the boat.

And while I've never been on the

water and heard an angler scream after catching a fish, I have heard more than one angler swear under their breath at why they have so many lures that are absolutely, positively worthless at catching bass. I also know that those anglers who so enjoy fishing by themselves do so because it's the only time they can hear themselves think.

"You know why God made largemouth bass? So every person could catch a fish."

I guess so. At least, sometimes, I hope. ■

Solitude

In hindsight, the first six months of a new parent's life is marred by little sleep, irrelevant and, quite often, indiscernible spousal arguments and diapers. It was during these times that a 10-minute walk for my wife, or a 30-minute bass fishing trip for me, allowed us to function in mainstream society.

It was during those times that I took issue with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission slogan "See You Out There": You, regardless of who you are, were not welcome in my few moments of quiet and calm.

It was on those rare afternoons, right before sunset, that the sound of line releasing from the spool of my 5500 C was the only sound worth hearing. The click of the spool release, the swoosh of the cast, the plop in the water and the first turn of the handle. Just as the ripples drifted away, so too did the weight on my chest.

That was where, for an instance, my questions of whether I would be a good father were replaced by "Can I make a cast to that overhanging tree limb on the opposite bank?" Because I could usually make that cast, and though I was still unsure of my original query, the weight was much less heavy.



CARTOON

By Jeff Kurrus

While he sought to make us laugh, cartoonist Gary Larson of “The Far Side” fame also created a desire to learn more about the natural world around us – often for no reason other than to “get” the joke.

We have all seen the cartoons – deer with bull’s-eye birthmarks and bears with “deer guts.” But many of Gary Larson’s 4,337 cartoon strips from 1980-1994, syndicated in over 1,900 newspapers, 17 languages and aptly titled “The Far Side,” not only revealed a slightly tilted way of looking at nature, they also sought to bare witness to many of the problems that confront the very subjects he writes about. See, it would not be funny to write about something that is no longer there. And while it

is simple enough to congratulate Larson for making us laugh, it is far more appropriate to commend and thank him for his contributions to conservation.

THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY

It has been well documented in multiple publications that Larson has been contacted by the scientific community, albeit rarely, when he has failed to provide accurate representations of the natural world – Larson would be reminded that humans and dinosaurs didn't coexist, or that polar bears and penguins are not found in the same hemisphere outside of zoos. Despite that, when the scientific community starts noticing and wanting you to correct your cartoons, there is definitely a thought of inclusion into that particular community.

"I've seen Larson's cartoons come up in national meetings a lot," said *American Entomologist* editor-in-chief Gene Kritsky. "Larson's work provides a way for the nonprofessional to connect to nature. People who understand Larson's humor can use that as a vehicle to understanding natural history."

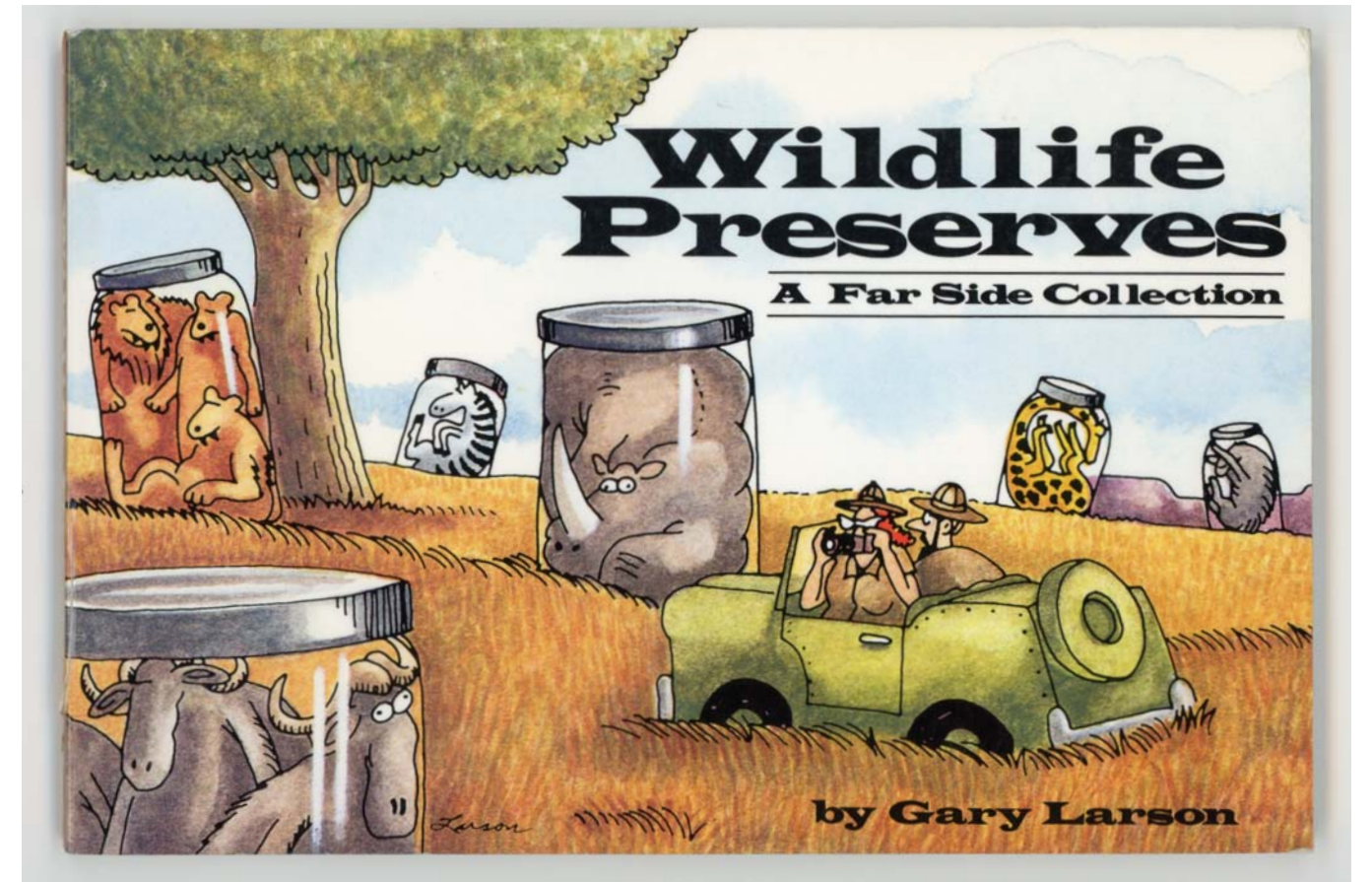
Larson provides the opportunity for viewers to find out for themselves what the punchlines to his cartoons mean. To understand his humor past its visual component, viewers must either have a working knowledge of nature or have the curiosity necessary to form this working knowledge. Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of Larson's work is that his humor encourages readers to think and learn about nature.

“Larson trusts us to know things,” said *Salon* writer Susan McCarthy, “He figures we’ve heard about spiders that disperse by ballooning on pieces of silk, and will be amused by the idea of bison doing the same thing.” However, McCarthy added, even if we are unsure of what is going on with the ballooning bison, “there’s still a goofy pleasure to be gotten from the picture.” By doing this,

In 1987, at the height of his popularity, Larson sat down with *Rolling Stone* writer Peter Richmond for a rare interview.

"I can't imagine how we'll be remembered by future generations if we allow this to happen. It's a holocaust. Only instead of killing off people, we'll be 'the flora and fauna Nazis.'"

– Gary Larson



Wildlife Preserves, published in 1989, is one of Larson's 23 books.

Larson encourages readers to research wildlife in order to “get” the joke. This learning process, in turn, allows us to understand even more punch lines in the future.

When one starts to read Larson, it is hard not to want to learn about hibernation, ornithology, scavengers, anthropology, the metamorphosis of butterflies, how various avian species feed their young, and how many insect species eat their young. One of his cartoons features a pair of insects talking at a dinner party: “Think about it, Ed....the class *Insecta* contains 26 orders, almost 1,000 families, and over 750,000 described species – but I can’t shake the feeling we’re all just a bunch of bugs.” Another cartoon shows a man and his son watching a bird singing in a tree. The father says: “And now, Randy, by use of song, the male sparrow will stake out its territory ... an instinct common in the lower animals.” Surrounding the father and son are rows and rows of fences marking the boundaries between houses.

These are examples of probably Larson's finest technique – allowing humans to see how ridiculous and simple-minded we are without having to hammer readers over the head to get the point across. In a 1987 *Rolling Stone* interview, Larson commented, “There are so many animals on this

planet that we're dependent on. Without them, we'd be history. But take us off the planet, and who suffers?" The author of the article, Peter Richmond, also commented about Larson's cartoons. "[His] message deep down is a dark one – something about taking ourselves too seriously and strutting around as if we owned the place." He goes on to note: "In one strip ... God drops a jar labeled humans onto the earth by mistake and mutters 'Uh-oh,' as woodland creatures stand by in bewilderment."

Larson has the unique ability to entertain while also inspiring, and this humor has been carried over into the academic world. In a January 2005 National Public Radio broadcast, it was stated that Professor Michael Burgett, a scientist at Oregon State University, teaches a class entitled Honors College 299: Far Side Entomology. Class topics, as the broadcast told, range from “insect phobias to the wonder of a spider’s web to the bloodsucking nature of mosquitoes.”

The class is laced, as reported by Tom Goldman, with comedy, yet there is a serious side as well: Students discover how certain insects contain up to 1,000 sensors that distinguish between dark and light, while also learning that insects have societies much like humans do. When asked





Many of Larson's most iconic cartoons involve animal-related subjects. It is clear when viewing his cartoons that he understands the influence that mankind has on the animal world, as well as the absurdities surrounding these relationships.

why Burgett wants his students to study entomology through Larson, he replied that he will have done his job if he can make his students first laugh about Larson, then broaden their thinking to subjects like Karl von Frisch, who won the 1973 Nobel Prize for his work on honeybee communication. "Someone once asked von Frisch why study a honeybee," Burgett said, "and he said, 'Why study the elephant?' He said any species can reveal all or nearly all the secrets of life, and that's very, very, very true."

In a recent interview, Professor Burgett stated, "Larson contributed by giving thousands, if not millions, of people a better understanding of the broad bosom of Mother Nature. Specifically, in my class at Oregon State University about 800 students who have taken my "Far Side Entomology" class over the past 20 years are much more keenly aware of the inter-dependence that exists in the web of life ... and that

appreciation came largely through explaining the entomology behind Larson's cartoons."

Because of these contributions, the scientific community has diligently embraced Larson in a variety of ways. In a Fall 1994 *American Entomologist* article, G.D. De Jong sampled 217 cartoons, mostly syndicated strips, and found that Larson's "The Far Side" made up 39.2 percent of the cartoons featuring insects, while no other cartoon sampled more than nine percent and most were less than one percent. While the study did not include cartoons that were based on an "entomological taxon" (e.g., Spiderman, the ants in B.C.) unless the humor was directed at another insect, it still brought up a relatively sound point, concerning Larson's work: If millions of readers were going to come across insects in their daily reading, more than likely they were going to come across them in Larson's work.

In addition, a statement made by the Society for Conservation Biology in 2001 when it gave Larson a Distinguished Service Award for his contributions to science in nature in "an irresistibly funny and thought-provoking style, and in helping people re-think ourselves and nature from an unlikely perspective." He was also dubbed the "unofficial cartoonist laureate of the scientific community" by *Natural History*. And in 1989, Dale Clayton from the Committee of Evolutionary Biology at the University of Chicago sent Larson a letter requesting his permission to name a newly discovered species of louse the *Strigiphilus garylsoni*, after the cartoonist. "It is simply meant to honor the enormous contribution that my colleagues and I feel you have made to biology through your cartoons," he said.

NATURAL CONCERNS

Funny how mere cartoons can acquire so much acclaim and attention. If all he did was write and draw cartoons, many people might still think all the attention was justified, yet Larson has gone beyond giving us talking bears and car-driving cows. In the last few years Larson has become involved in multiple conservation fronts as *USA Today's* Elizabeth Weise reported in a November 2006 article entitled "Larson is Drawn to the Wild Side." From his page-a-day calendar, "all his earnings from the three million calendars printed about \$2 million, according to publisher Andrews McMeel, will go to Conservation International for the organization's work to help end the illegal trade in Asian elephants, Indochinese tigers, Asiatic black bears, pangolins, freshwater turtles and Siamese crocodiles in Cambodia." The money also helped to provide awareness in China concerning the use of threatened species for exotic dishes, traditional medicine and for pets. Larson has also helped raise money for the Jane Goodall Institute after a cartoon related to her work was reprinted on a T-shirt for fundraising purposes. Furthermore, in 2006 he assisted in a coalition to save an area open to hikers and naturalists known as Turtleback Mountain on the west side of Orcas Island near Seattle, Washington that was staring in the face of developers who wanted to alter the area's 1,578-acre natural landscape.

Larson, in his desire to aid this particular effort, created an original artwork for the project that was also screened onto T-shirts which were then given to people who donated at least \$150. The cartoon featured a number of doctors tending to the mountain in an emergency room – while one doctor applies a defibrillator, another removed developers from the mountain and tossed them into a waste can. A limited edition, two-volume "The Complete Far Side" book and lithograph set was also auctioned off for \$32,000. By November 15, 2006, the \$18.5 million dollars needed to preserve the mountain from development was raised.

As reported by the United Nation's Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, species are going extinct approximately 1,000 times faster today than they did a few hundred years ago. In the last 50 years, the report said, "humans have changed ecosystems more rapidly and extensively than in any comparable period of time in human history."

"I can't imagine how we'll be remembered by future generations if we allow this to happen," said Larson in Weise's 2006 interview. "It's a holocaust. Only instead of killing off people, we'll be 'the flora and fauna Nazis.'"

"[Growing up] I had a strong interest in reptiles and amphibians," said Larson in a recent NPR interview. "But when you do that, you start to obviously encounter a lot of reactions from people. They walk into your place and they are horror-stricken at what they see. It made you feel like you had to explain yourself. I never had a fear of those things at all. I thought they were beautiful. It started me thinking, 'Well, is it me or is it you?' Why is someone else looking at this and saying it's ugly ... and I started realizing that maybe we all bring prejudice to nature as well when we decide what's beautiful or what's ugly, or what's dramatic and impressive and what's not."

Do we care more about white-tailed deer than opossums? More about pheasants than crows? Is that not one of the ongoing concerns when we talk about conservation on the prairies, a place many people see as a thoroughfare to either the mountain or the ocean? Just because we don't have snow-capped peaks or the sound of the Atlantic in our backyard, people too often don't think about what it means to an ecosystem when the prairie is plowed under or the Platte River becomes overrun with invasives.

But what would happen if we were told that we will never be able to see a pronghorn antelope, a sandhill crane or a bullfrog again? Imagine the first warm day of spring. Now imagine it without hearing birds. It's nearly impossible to do, yet man has found a way to continue its elimination of species throughout the world. In a 2001 article for the American Institute of Biological Sciences entitled "The Sixth Extinction," paleontologist Niles Eldredge wrote, "There is little doubt left in the minds of professional biologists that Earth is currently faced with a mounting loss of species that threatens to rival the five great mass extinctions of the geological past. As long ago as 1993, Harvard biologist E.O. Wilson estimated that Earth is currently losing something on the order of 30,000 species per year – which breaks down to the even more daunting statistic of some three species per hour. Some biologists have begun to feel that this biodiversity crisis – this 'Sixth Extinction' – is even more severe, and more imminent, than Wilson had supposed."

In his own unique way, Larson has provided a way for us to see the absurdities of nature and, sometimes, our own treatment of it regardless of where we live. Be it a metropolitan area or the rural parts of western Nebraska, we can all relate to the nature that Larson presents. Even if we can't relate, we definitely want to, and by wanting to we also want to see more, learn more, care more. Which is the essential essence of conservation. ■

Although Gary Larson retired from "The Far Side" in 1994, his collections are still available throughout the world, including your local bookstores. Open one and try not to laugh. Or, in a more realistic scenario, open one and try not to learn.

WILLA CATHER

AN AUTHOR FOR THE AGES

“As one of the greatest American novelists of the 20th century, Cather was gifted in conveying an intimate understanding of her characters in relation to their personal and cultural environments.”

Willa Cather was born in Back Creek Valley, Virginia in 1873. When Cather was nine years old, her family moved to rural Webster County, Nebraska.

The family later resettled in the county seat of Red Cloud, where Cather lived until beginning her college studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. During her eight years in Webster County, Cather seemed to soak up nearly everything happening around her. In a 1921 interview, she said, “My deepest feelings were rooted in this country because one’s strongest emotions and one’s most vivid mental pictures are acquired before one is 15. I had searched for books telling about the beauty of the country I loved, its romance, and heroism and strength and courage of its people that had been plowed into the very furrows of its soil, and I did not find them. And so I wrote *O Pioneers!*.”

Over a period of several decades, Cather wrote prolifically. Her works include *Alexander’s Bridge* (1912), *O Pioneers!* (1913), *My Ántonia* (1918), and *A Lost Lady* (1923), all of which explored the pioneering experience on the Plains. In 1923, *One of Ours* (1922) received the Pulitzer Prize for

fiction. Other well-regarded works include *The Professor’s House* (1925), *My Mortal Enemy* (1926), *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927), *Shadows on the Rock* (1931), *Lucy Gayheart* (1935) and *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* (1940).

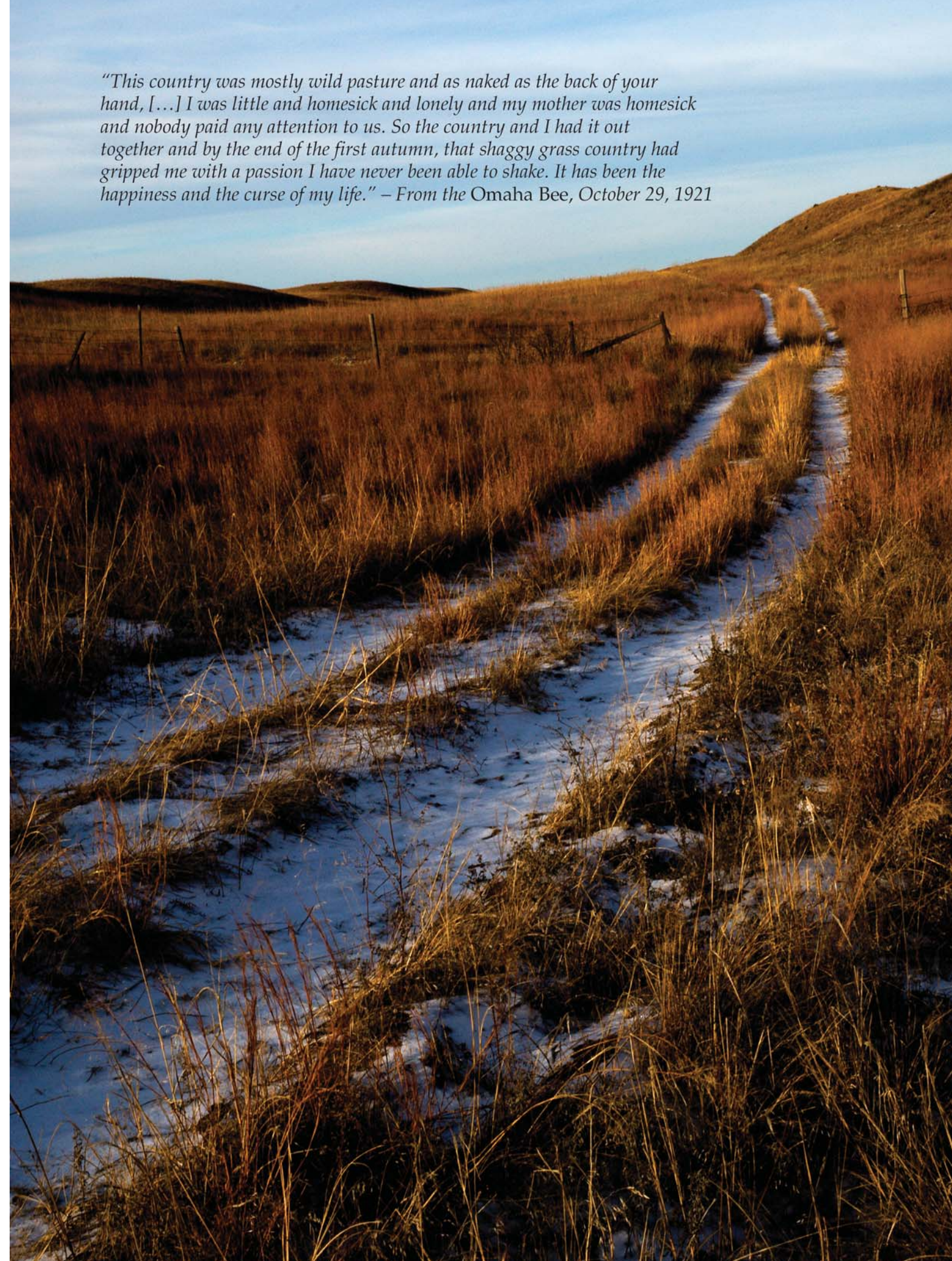


As one of the greatest American novelists of the 20th century, Cather was gifted in conveying an intimate understanding of her characters in relation to their personal and cultural environments – environments that often derived from Red Cloud. Complex and brilliant, Cather lives on through her many devoted readers and through the work of the Willa Cather Foundation. Since 1955, the Foundation has worked to preserve and promote the art, literary and historical collection relating to the life, time and work of Cather. In total, the Willa Cather Historic Site comprises the largest number of sites on the National Register of Historic Places devoted to a single author. Both town and country tours of sites related to Cather are available. ■

For more information, visit www.WillaCather.org or call (866) 731-7304.

— The Willa Cather Foundation

“This country was mostly wild pasture and as naked as the back of your hand, [...] I was little and homesick and lonely and my mother was homesick and nobody paid any attention to us. So the country and I had it out together and by the end of the first autumn, that shaggy grass country had gripped me with a passion I have never been able to shake. It has been the happiness and the curse of my life.” – From the Omaha Bee, October 29, 1921



LEFT: PHOTO COURTESY OF THE WILLA CATHER FOUNDATION. OPPOSITE: PHOTO BY BILL HAGER



ALL PHOTOS BY MICHAEL FORSBERG

"Trees were so rare in that country, and they had to make such a hard fight to grow, that we used to feel anxious about them, and visit them as if they were persons." – My Ántonia



"The chirping of the insects down in the long grass had been like the sweetest music. She had felt as if her heart were hiding down there, somewhere, with the quail and the plover and all the little wild things that crooned or buzzed in the sun. Under the long shaggy ridges, she felt the future stirring." – O Pioneers!

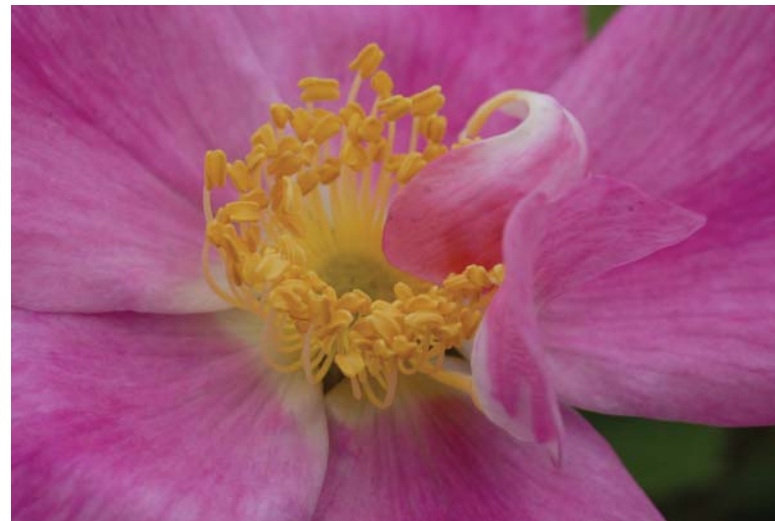


"The earth was warm under me, and warm as I crumbled it through my fingers. I kept as still as I could. Nothing happened. I did not expect anything to happen. I was something that lay under the sun and felt it, like the pumpkins, and I did not want to be anything more. I was entirely happy. Perhaps we feel like that when we die and become part of something entire, whether it is sun and air, or goodness and knowledge. At any rate, that is happiness; to be dissolved into something complete and great." – My Ántonia

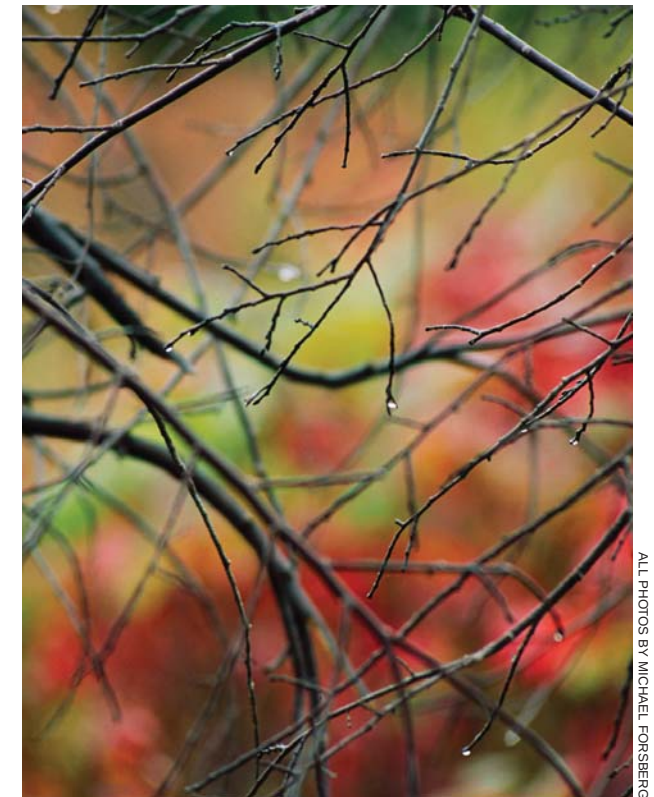


"I felt motion in the landscape; in the fresh, easy-blowing morning wind, and in the earth itself, as if the shaggy grass were a sort of loose hide, and underneath it herds of wild buffalo were galloping, galloping..." – My Ántonia

"But the great fact was the land itself, which seemed to overwhelm the little beginnings of human society that struggled in its somber wastes. The land wanted to be let alone, to preserve its own fierce strength, its peculiar, savage kind of beauty, its uninterrupted mournfulness." – O Pioneers!



"The feeling of the rain on you is sweet. It seems to bring feelings you had when you were a baby. It carries you back into the dark, before you were born." – O Pioneers!



ALL PHOTOS BY MICHAEL FORSBERG

Rockford SRA

Get away for a weekend or a week

Photos and text by Eric Fowler



Rockford State Recreation Area is a busy place on most summer weekends. Located southeast of Beatrice, the reservoir's popularity is understandable. Despite numerous lakes in the area, including two that allow speedboats to actually speed, Rockford draws the most attention because, at 150 acres, it is twice the size of the area's next largest "speed" lake. You'll still drive in circles at Rockford, but they're bigger circles.



Above: A handful of primitive sites where folks can park an RV have remained popular even after a modern campground with electrical hookups opened at Rockford State Recreation Area in 2006.

Right: Lawrence Bay and his son Tyson frequently make the short drive from their home in Beatrice to jet ski on the lake.

Opposite: Jason and Andrea Faas of Louisville pull dinner off the grill at their lakeside campsite.



For more information about Rockford SRA and other camping, hunting and fishing areas in southeastern Nebraska, visit OutdoorNebraska.org.





Above: Garrett Hereth and Cindy Burrows of Beatrice pull up some shade to fish for catfish and watch boats go by.

Opposite: A group of Beatrice families spend a summer day relaxing and swimming from a pontoon boat anchored in the lake.

You won't, however, have the area to yourself. On any given summer weekend, campers fill most of the 32 spots in the modern campground that opened in 2006, as well as other primitive sites that allow campers to pitch a tent near the water's edge. Others will pull up a picnic table in the day-use area while kids play on the swimming beach or playground. Anglers might even wet a line to fish for channel catfish.

You also might find visitors simply soaking up the scenery provided by the 100 acres of land around the lake, much of it forested, or the colorful slabs of limestone protruding from its banks.

Come autumn, after the boats have been put away for the year, you may be the only one taking in the fall color. On these days you might want to bring a shotgun, bow or rifle and chase the wild turkeys, white-tailed deer and other wildlife that roam the area.

On these days you'll realize that Rockford can be a quiet place. Even though quiet at this SRA isn't always on the agenda. ■



Roger's Devilish Nebraska Quiz

Take this quiz, if you dare call yourself a Nebraskan.

By Roger Welsch, Dubious Facts Checker

Fellow Nebraskans – I have long insisted that to bear that title we should have a citizenship test (and a lot of other requirements, to wit, viz: leaving the state for more than two weeks, especially for reasons of climate, would bring about an immediate cancellation of Nebraska citizenship). To that end, and in keeping with my own reputation as the State Keeper of Perverse Information, I would like to present to you my own Devious, Deceptive and Devilish Nebraska Quiz. Careful now ... this one could leave you cussing and writing nasty letters of complaint to the editors of *NEBRASKALand*. As usual, I have included at least two erroneous facts just to keep things interesting (and to save my sorry hide, since even I'm not sure of some of these puzzlers).

Questions

1. What Nebraska town could just as easily be called Bait Town?
2. What Nebraska town likes to brag that it is the only town in the state with every one of its streets paved?
3. Which is the correct spelling? A) Kearney or B) Kearny?
4. What Nebraska ghost town sees by far and away the most automobile traffic?
5. Where in Nebraska is the Rio de Santa Maria?
6. Where in Nebraska, according to one prominent historian/Nebraska scholar, does "the West begin?"
7. Where is Nebraska's largest body of water?
8. Why is Grand Island named Grand Island?
9. What three counties in Nebraska are named after animals? (I know this is an oldie but it's also one of my favorite bits of Nebraska trivia.)
10. What town name in Nebraska has

been changed occasionally to reflect the latest census?

11. Where in Nebraska is the Nebraska River?

12. What is the only town in Nebraska that was bombed during World War II?

13. According to Pawnee legend, the Nahurac (or Animal Council) meets annually to decide how things will go the following year. Give an approximate location for three of the four meeting sites of that congress.

14. Where is Howard City, Nebraska. (Guesser beware! I thought about asking you where Lone Star, Nebraska, is, but that would have been sneaky because it made a huge mistake and changed that name in 1881. Howard City, however, is still Howard City, according to postal records.

15. Which is the correct pronunciation of Keya Paha (ignore how your favorite weather forecasters mispronounce it ... if they can't get the weather right, we can hardly turn to them for information about place names!)

- a. KAY-a-puhuh
- b. KEE-uh-PA-ha
- c. Kee-YAP-un-huh
- d. KIP-uh-ha

16. Where is the longest straight main street in the world?

17. What Nebraska town is named after the oldest flag in the world? That was, in fact, handed down to its people by God? None of that Betsy Ross stuff here.

18. What Nebraska place name comes from Native American connections, calls its high school teams the Indians, yet honors the person most famous for being hated and killed by Indians?

19. What Nebraska town is known to at least one Nebraska tribe as "Salt?"

20. What Nebraska river was known to both the Pawnee and the Omaha as "Plenty Potatoes?"

21. List 10 Nebraska towns named for

Indian tribes.

22. Name five Nebraska towns named for specific Indians.

23. What is the county seat of

- a. Kearney County
- b. Lincoln County
- c. Seward County
- d. Grant County
- e. Arthur County
- f. Scotts Bluff County

Answers

1. Worms, just down the road from my home a piece.
2. Again ... Worms. Of course, there's only one street in town, but it IS paved. (I told you this was going to be tricky!)



Worms, Nebraska

3. Both. Two e's = the town; one e = the fort.
4. Charleston. And I'm betting you've been there. A lot of times. It lies under I-80 Exit 348. When you go through that interchange (watch that speedometer, buddy!) you are driving right through Charleston.
5. That was one of the first names for the Platte. You have to admit, it sure is easier on the ear than Pllllllaaaaat!
6. It is my expert opinion that the West begins in the middle of the main intersection of Lincoln – 13th and O – and I can prove it. Stand smack in the middle of that crossroads, right in the middle of the star, and face north toward Love Library on the university campus. Hold out your right arm parallel to the ground. Everything to your right is to the east, right? Now

hold out your left arm. See? Everything to your left is ... WEST! And there you are, precisely midway. And probably soon on your way to the hospital in an ambulance – have you seen the traffic at 13th and O lately?

7. The Ogallala Aquifer under our feet.

8. Because it's on an island, and it's a grand one. As you go down the Interstate, notice all the channels of the Platte you cross, and they are all going in the same direction. That means you are ... on an island! Gosh, I wonder why so many people in Grand ISLAND have water in their basements!

9. • Antelope
- Buffalo
- Garfield.



How old does that make Odie?

10. Farwell. When Poles dominated the town, it was Posen but when the census listed more Danes, it became Farwell...or "farewell." Farewell to Posen!

11. Ha! That was another name for the Platte and I want the name changed back. Nebraska is so much more melodious than PLLLLAAAAAT! You say Wyoming and Colorado probably won't go along with that idea? Tough. That's THEIR problem. They can call it whatever they want in THEIR states.

12. I hope I'm right on this one. It's been a while since I've thought about. But according to my 73-year-old and wornout synapses, it was Dix. Well, okay, so it was bombed by us, with dummy bombs, by some tipsy lads in training for our Army Air Force, but still...



13. The primary Pahuka where the Nahurac, or Animal Council, meets is the towering cliffs on the south side of the Platte River opposite Fremont. Other sites mentioned as Nahurac meetings spots are the high cliffs on the Cedar north of Fullerton, a cedar-covered island in the Platte near Central City, and Guide Rock on the Republican. And think about it: Who

would you rather have determining the fate of the world? Congress, or the animal representatives of the Nahurac?

14. Howard City is still the official name for ... Boelus, Nebraska. Don't pay attention to what the maps say.

15. D.

16. O Street in Lincoln. I wasn't sure if if this is still true but Jim McKee, official Lincoln historian, says that is indeed the case as far as he knows. I think it was poet Allen Ginsberg who remarked that it is "the brave little town that calls its main street O Street!"

17. The Dannebrog, Denmark's flag, although the preferred spelling is DannebRog. At least here at our place.

18. Custer County. Someone with a GREAT sense of humor came up with the idea of calling the high school team of CUSTER County's largest town "the Indians."

19. Lincoln's name in the Omaha language is Niskithe, or ... Salt.

20. The Loup. And what does "loup" mean? It's French for "wolf." Named after the animal but also the Wolf Indians ... which is to say, the Pawnee.

21. • Ogallala
- Arapahoe
- Ponca
- Otoe
- Pawnee City
- South Sioux City
- Winnebago
- Omaha
- Brule
- Santee
- Dakota City
- Seneca (although probably named after the New York State town of Seneca, which is named after the eastern tribe. But not the Roman Seneca? No one seems to be sure on this one.)
- South Yankton
- One could argue that Macy is named for the Omaha tribe since the name is a contraction of Omaha Agency. By the way, the Omaha name for Macy is "Hail."
- Loup City (which is named for

the tribe, which is named for the animal, which is to say the wolf, which is loup in French, or maybe it is named for the river, which is named for the wolf, which is also the source of the name for the tribe. But it doesn't matter since most people who are not the middle of Nebraska spell it Loop anyway and think it's named after a lariat.)

22. • Tecumseh
- Yutan (an Oto chief)
- Osceola
- Red Cloud
- Leshara (a Pawnee chief)

- Rosalie (After Rosalie LaFlesche, the famous Ponca-Omaha scholar)
- Barada (for Antoine Barada, Omaha-French trapper-trader and talltale figure)

23. • Minden
- North Platte
- Seward
- Hyannis
- Arthur
- Gering

I would welcome any additions to my lists in this quiz. If you have complaints or arguments with my questions and/or answers, write to the NEBRASKALand Complaint Desk, Roger Welsch Corrections Division, Dubious Facts Checker.



Tecumseh



Osceola



Red Cloud



LaFlesche



Barada



Trail Maps Updated

GPS information being added online to state's trail maps.

By Eric Fowler

Maps detailing the hiking, biking and horseback trails winding through Nebraska's state parks and recreation areas have been available for years, if the term "detailing" was used loosely: The maps provided a good idea where the trail started, but only a general idea of where they led, which might leave you standing in the woods, staring at a piece of paper and wondering how far it was to the creek, campsite, trailhead, outhouse or wherever else you really wanted to be.

Thanks to technology, much of that has changed now. Detailed, accurate, interactive maps of 100 miles of trails at eight parks are now available on the Commission's web site, with 32 more parks still to come. And not only can you print those maps, you can download the data to your hand-held Global Positioning System (GPS) equipment before hitting the trail.

The trails maps join the Hunting, Fishing, Parks and Boating features on the Commission's feature-rich, Geographic Information Systems Mapping Tool at OutdoorNebraska.gov. Widgets (tools or interfaces) allow users to search for trails by park or trail name, surface (paved or rock, for instance) or use (horse, snowmobile,

hike, mountain bike, etc.); check the weather; measure trail lengths (and area); bookmark trails for quick reference; and more.

Zoom in and click on a trail to pull up detailed information on each trail, and switch between street, satellite and combined views as needed. The map legend includes 32 amenities that are marked on the trail, including scenic viewpoints, campgrounds, snack bars and more. Photos taken along some of the trails are a click away, and imbedded links will take you to the park's web page.

The Commission's engineering staff has been walking and riding park trails while packing survey-grade GPS equipment and digital cameras to gather data for the agency to present online. Through two years of work, they have learned one certainty:

"We're finding more trails than we thought we had," said Michelle Stryker, Outdoor Recreation Planner with the Commission. "Our brochures said we had nine miles of trails at Chadron State Park, and now we have 15 miles mapped. Wagon Train SRA has 9½ miles of trails and none of that was mapped."

Most of the existing trail maps were completed in the 1990s without GPS

technology. Combine those estimated lengths with the work that has been done so far, and the Commission has about 300 miles of trails in 40 parks. That could change, as trails have been added at some parks and some have been closed, including at Ponca State Park, where new cabins were built across trails in recent years. The maps can be easily updated, so future additions or closures, even temporary ones caused by things such as landslides or fallen trees, can be easily noted on the maps.

Crews hope to finish mapping the remainder of the trails this year. Eventually the project will also map the 10 water trails the Commission has laid out for canoers, kayakers and tubers on nine Nebraska rivers, including the Cedar, Niobrara and Missouri. When the state park trails are completed, said Stryker, the Commission will work with communities and other state and federal agencies to include their trails on the site.

The mapping project is being funded by a Recreational Trails Program grant through the Federal Highway Administration. Keeping the work in-house is allowing all of the parks to be mapped for less than the \$145,000 bid the Commission received to map only Mahoney and Platte River state parks. ■



MAP BY SUDHIR PONNAPPAN

Ashfall Fossil Beds State Historical Park

Prehistoric burial site in northeastern Nebraska only one like it in the world.

By Jon Farrar

Ashfall Fossil Beds State Historical Park (SHP) had its beginning not so much out of luck but as a stroke of good fortune, a pay-off for paleontologists' persistence. In 1971, University of Nebraska-Lincoln professor of geosciences Mike Voorhies and his wife were searching an eroded hillside in Antelope County when they found part of a small skull protruding from the soil. Connected to the skull was the skeleton of a young barrel-bodied rhino. In subsequent years one thing led to another, or more accurately, one skeleton led to another.

Twelve million years ago the landscape that is now Nebraska was a vast savannah where prehistoric horses, camels, barrel-bodied rhinos and a host of other animals roamed. An enormous volcanic eruption in Idaho sent clouds of ash particles (essentially shards of microscopic volcanic glass) into the sky. Prevailing winds carried the ash dust east, depositing a layer up to two feet deep in northeastern Nebraska. Animals inhaled the ash and died when too much accumulated in their lungs — first the smaller animals and then the large hoofed species. Paleontologists speculate the large mammals lasted no longer than three to five weeks.

Where Voorhies found the baby rhino skull apparently had been a watering hole where animals of all kinds had gathered and perished, their bodies to be covered by more ash and deposits that became sandstone, then layers of sand and gravel, and ultimately soil that grew corn. The massive burial site was entombed, waiting for Voorhies to discover it and for dozens of paleontologists to exhume and study the bodies. Because the animal carcasses were so quickly covered, they were preserved in three dimensions — what paleontologists call an articulated skeleton. Young animals have been uncovered next to their mothers, their last meals still in their stomachs. Because of that, and because there are



PHOTO BY JON FARRAR

Paleontology student Maria Brown delicately exposes ancient rhino bones.

so many species preserved in a relatively small area, there is no paleontological site like Ashfall in the world. Since 2010, about 200 fossil skeletons have been unearthed there, including of 14 species of prehistoric land mammals, three species of birds and four species of reptiles.

Ashfall Fossil Beds SHP, a joint venture of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and the University of Nebraska State Museum, was opened to the public June 1, 1991. No more than a handful of fossil sites are enclosed in North America, and Ashfall is the only one where paleontologists continue excavating fossil skeleton and the public can watch. In 2006, Ashfall was designated a National Natural Landmark by the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Initially, a small "rhino barn" (so named as barrel-bodied rhinos are the most common species uncovered) was constructed to protect the site from the elements. It covered 2,000 square feet and allowed for 11 years of work. Because fossilized skeletons were left partially exposed for public to view, paleontologists had run out of room for further excavations. In 2007, the

Theodore F. and Claire M. Hubbard Family Foundation of Omaha announced a \$1.2 million gift to the University of Nebraska Foundation for construction of a larger and better enclosure. Work on the 17,500-square-foot, temperature- and humidity-controlled, structure was completed and opened to the public in 2009, appropriately named the Hubbard Rhino Barn. The new barn encompasses part of the hillside to expose the sedimentary layers lying over the fossil bed. Voorhies estimated the new barn will allow for 40 more years of excavation. ■



Ashfall Fossil Beds State Historical Park is located two miles west and six miles north of Royal in Antelope County. The park's summer hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and Sundays 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. A Nebraska State Park Permit is required and there is an admission fee.

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◀ Photographed in November 1969, these ducks were taken from ponds in the canyons near Atlanta (southwest of Holdrege). Pictured left to right are: Larry Haphe; Gary Johnson (myself); Marion Wallington; and Larry Haphe's cousin.

These friends used to go hunting all the time. One of the ducks in the picture was the one mentioned in the enclosed certificate of appreciation.

— Gary Johnson, Holdrege, Nebraska



► This photo was taken at our farm in Thayer County in the late-1970s when pheasants were plentiful.

Pictured left to right: Dean Lancaster of Lincoln (former manager of the Nebraska Crop Improvement Association); his nephew, Brian, and his brother, Everett (deceased). Dean, now 96, was an avid and excellent hunter.

Early one morning while we were walking to the prime waterway that we always hunted first, Dean dropped two roosters and wryly remarked "If I don't take the shells out of my gun, I'll have to go back to the motel."

— Reuben Schiefer, Chester, Nebraska



▲ Pictured left to right is my dad, Kenneth Dangler, and his cousin, Percy Dangler, on a Sunday afternoon in 1946. The stringer of bullheads were taken from a pond in the middle of the section that our family farm was located on near Giltner. Bullheads are generally looked down on for "eaten" fish," but if you put them in a washtub with water running through it for a couple of days, the "muddy" taste goes away and they are really very good. The same goes for crawdads – their taste then very much resembles shrimp. Dad died in 1983 and Percy died in 1948.

— Bob Dangler, Hastings, Nebraska



▲ This picture was taken about 1940. From left to right are: Rollie Campbell – my great uncle; William Campbell – my great grandfather; James Campbell – my grandfather; and Cleo "Tank" Campbell – my father. They would fish Beaver Creek near Albion until they had two washtubs full of catfish and then come home and salt them down for future consumption.

— Randy Campbell, York, Nebraska

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

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