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magazine

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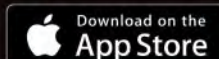
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Nebraskaland Volume 97 • No. 4
May 2019

Cover: Two young anglers fish near sunset at Birdwood Wildlife Management Area near North Platte. Photo by Julie Geiser

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PHOTO BY JUSTIN HAAG

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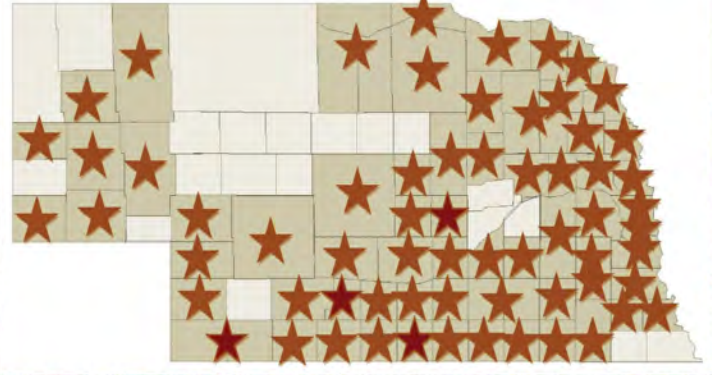
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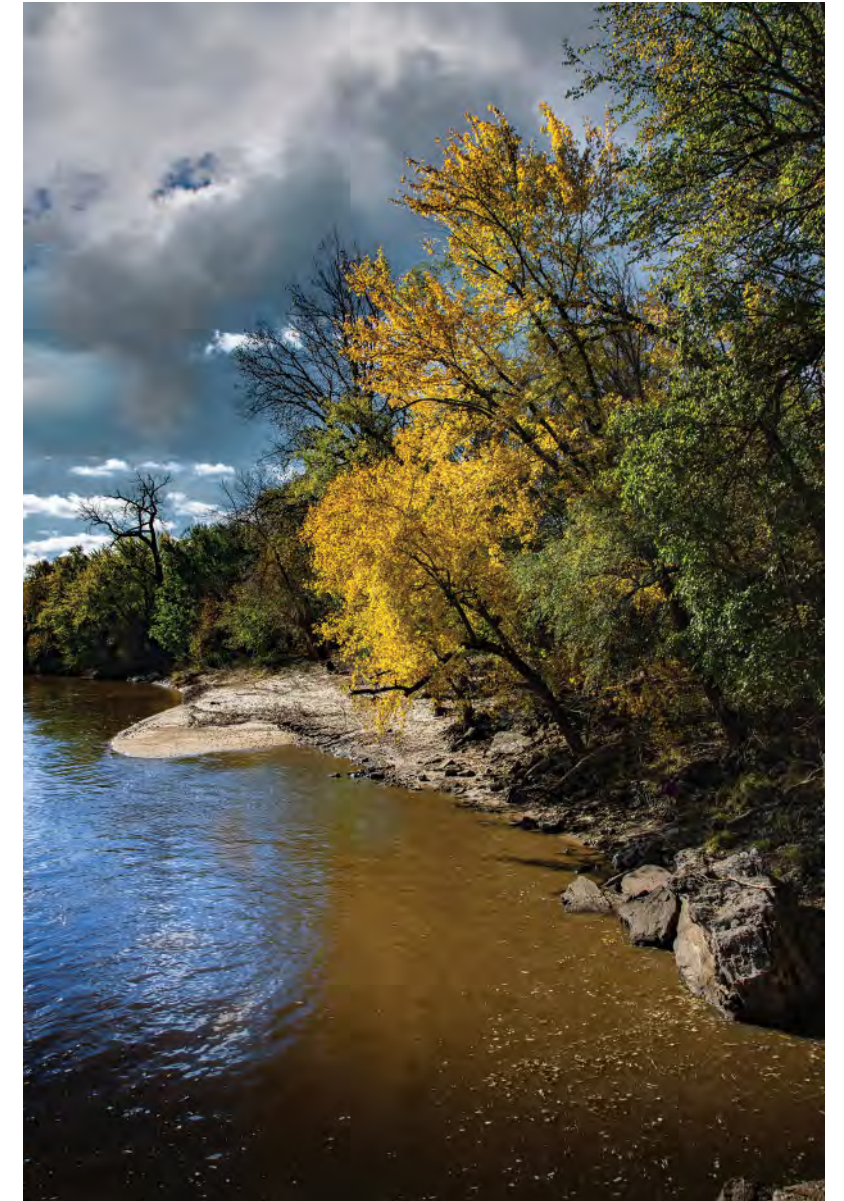
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condensed and edited. Photographs are
also welcome.

SANDHILLS RANCH IN MAY

On a ranch in Grant County, towering cumulonimbus clouds and a rainbow are reflected in the waters of a shallow Sandhills lake in early May. Fed by rainwater above and from the vast underground Ogallala Aquifer below, these shallow lakes and wetland complexes anchor the tremendous diversity of wildlife found in the Nebraska Sandhills region.

PHOTO BY MICHAEL FORSBERG



SALT CREEK TIGER BEETLE. PHOTO BY ERIC FOWLER

THREATENED AND ENDANGERED: THE SALT CREEK TIGER BEETLE

By Melissa J. Panella

Tiger beetles are a fascinating group of insects. They may be small at only half an inch long, but they are fierce predators. They are well equipped with large mandibles and teeth to hunt their prey, which includes the larvae of other insects. A larval tiger beetle will sit and wait anchored underground in its burrow until it senses a potential food item passing just over its head, then it quickly strikes in anticipation of catching a meal. The adult tiger beetles will instinctively pursue just about anything small enough.

Tiger beetles in Nebraska are colored in multiple hues of red, orange, green, blue and other colors, some with metallic sheen and bold white or cream markings. Several species of tiger beetle are found in Nebraska's saline wetlands – a biologically unique landscape.

The Salt Creek tiger beetle (*Cicindela nevadica lincolniensis*) is native to Nebraska. It's the only known place the species can be found in the world, within a restricted radius around Lincoln. Salt Creek tiger beetles are endangered because the remnant salt marshes where they live are so limited, and changes to the surrounding landscape result in their habitat being lost. In some cases, the habitat available to Salt Creek tiger beetles is only a thin stretch of open salt flat where the adults can forage and where females can find

adequate moisture and salinity to support their eggs. Tiger beetles are susceptible to the effects of pollution, chemicals and urban development. Because there are so few Salt Creek tiger beetles in a relatively small area, a single localized catastrophic event could cause their extinction.

Nebraska Game and Parks Commission partners with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Entomology Department to monitor the population of Salt Creek tiger beetles. Each summer, one or more surveyors brave steep terrain, extreme heat, copious ticks and mosquitoes, holes and quicksand that can unexpectedly swallow a biologist's leg. The most recent count from summer 2018 fortunately indicated no net loss of Salt Creek tiger beetles from the year prior. The next count will take place in May or June 2019, dependent on weather conditions that influence when the adult tiger beetles will be most active.

Many groups, including the Saline Wetlands Conservation Partnership, Lower Platte South NRD, City of Lincoln, Omaha Henry Doorly Zoo, Lincoln Children's Zoo, Topeka Zoo, volunteers and others, are involved in conserving Salt Creek tiger beetles. The protection and restoration of wetlands, a captive-rearing program, and recovery plans are keeping this striking little rare beetle unique to Nebraska.

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PHOTO BY CHRIS HELZER

SUN SEDGE

By Chris Helzer

In many Nebraska prairies, the first colorful flower in the spring isn't a wildflower, it's a tiny sedge. Sun sedge (*Carex heliophila*) is one of the most common plants in Sandhills prairies, as well as many other upland grasslands around the state. However, because of its diminutive size, it blends into its background well enough that someone walking through those prairies would be excused for not noticing it at all. When it blooms, though, its yellow flowers appear like tiny lanterns against a backdrop of drab brown grasses.

Despite being small, sun sedge plants play an important role in the ecology of grasslands, especially as a food source during the dormant season. Most grasses enter dormancy

by October and don't green up again until at least April, especially in the northern parts of Nebraska. Sun sedge, on the other hand, can stay green well into the winter and starts growing much earlier than grasses in the spring. Because of that extended growing season, sun sedge provides live forage to both livestock and wildlife during the colder months of the year, nicely complementing the cured grasses those animals otherwise rely on. It is joined by a few other small upland sedge species, depending upon location, including needleleaf sedge (*C. eleocharis*) and blackroot sedge (*C. filifolia*), both of which occur in tighter clusters than the more scattered plants of sun sedge.

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THE AMERICAN REDSTART

By Joel G. Jorgensen

May is a special month for birds as countless individuals representing dozens of species return from points south. Among the arrivals are the warblers, which are small, brightly colored and lively. Most warblers weigh less than two quarters but travel immense distances from wintering sites in Mexico, Central and South America to breeding areas in temperate and boreal forests of North America. Some 30 species may occur in Nebraska during the month as migrants, but only a small number remain to breed during summer.

The American redstart is a warbler that is both a statewide migrant and breeder, but summering birds are restricted to woodlands along the Missouri River, Niobrara River and in the Pine Ridge. Adult males older than a year are black with patches of orange on the tail, wings and side. Females are similarly patterned but are olive and gray rather than black and possess yellow patches rather than orange ones.

Redstarts display their orange or yellow patches by fanning

their tails and drooping their wings. Redstarts do this, in part, to flush insects which they make short acrobatic flights to capture. Unusual among songbirds is that one-year-old male redstarts returning to breeding areas possess a plumage similar to females. These youngsters will hold territories and sometimes are able to find a mate and breed. All American redstart males have loud musical, albeit slightly buzzy, songs which they use to announce their presence to prospective females and rival males.

Catching a glimpse of an American redstart, and most other warbler species, requires patience as these birds quickly move from branch to branch in the woodland canopy. During May, birdwatchers often suffer from strained neck muscles due to glaring into the treetops for long periods, an affliction often referred to as “warbler-neck.” However, a clear view of an American redstart or any other warbler is worth the temporary discomfort.

Visit the Birds of Nebraska – Online (birdsofnebraska.org) for more information about Nebraska birds.



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PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS

TAKE 'EM FISHING

By Cara Pesek

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission is excited to announce a new summer-long, statewide challenge in which anglers can win great prizes just by sharing their love of fishing.

The Take 'Em Fishing Challenge encourages experienced anglers to take a pledge to go fishing with someone who either has never fished before or who hasn't fished in several years. Anglers who take a photo of themselves taking someone fishing can enter an online drawing for dozens of prizes including a \$500 Scheels gift card, fishing kayak, CampChef outdoor cooking equipment, a stay in a Nebraska state park, and the grand prize – a brand new Bass Tracker fishing boat.

"Every angler learned to fish from someone," said Nebraska Game and Parks Director Jim Douglas. "We hope this challenge will inspire our experienced fishermen and fisherwomen to remember those early trips that helped grow their love of fishing, and to pass on the tradition to someone new."

Douglas, who learned to fish from his parents, remembers catching his first sunfish when he was 4 or 5 years old on vacation with his family in Missouri. When he thinks back to that first catch, he remembers the sense of anticipation he felt then and still feels whenever he goes fishing, as well as the joy the activity brings him.

"I don't worry about other things when I'm fishing," he said.

The benefits of fishing are numerous. Anglers report feeling more satisfied with their mental health, more inspired at work

and closer to their families than non-anglers, according to the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation.

Fishing is an unusual sport in that it allows groups of friends or family to spend time together while engaged in the same activity, no matter the fitness or skill levels of the various participants. Fishing requires only basic, inexpensive equipment that can be found at any sporting goods store. Nebraska Game and Parks stocks ponds and lakes across the state with sportfish, which means that just about everyone can find a good fishing spot close by.

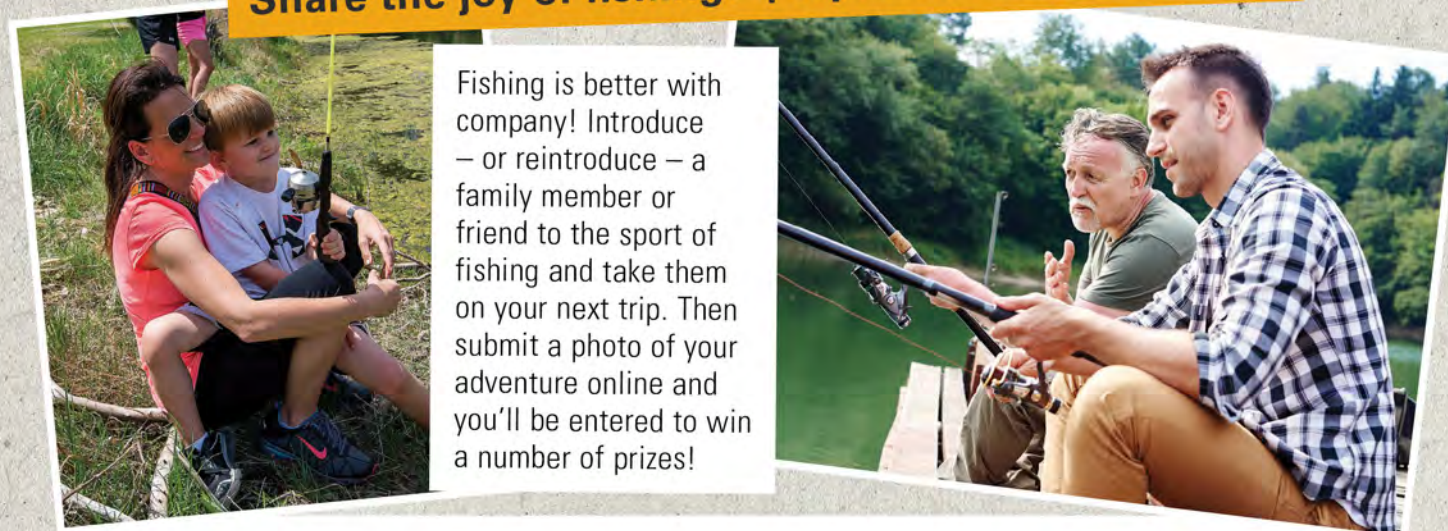
Fishing is also crucial to the conservation of our natural resources. Money generated through the sale of fishing permits and aquatic habitat stamps is used to maintain healthy fisheries in Nebraska water bodies, and to improve access for anglers. But many anglers are getting older, and we need a new generation of anglers to continue the tradition to ensure the health and vitality of Nebraska's aquatic resources for generations to come.

The Take 'Em Fishing Challenge will run April 15 to Sept. 15, 2019. Anglers can take the pledge at OutdoorNebraska.org/FishingPledge. Taking the pledge is not required for contest entry. For more information about Take 'Em Fishing Challenge, including prizes, official rules and how to enter, visit OutdoorNebraska.org/TakeEmFishing. For questions on getting started in fishing or public places to fish, visit our website or contact your nearest Game and Parks office.

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Saddling Up Out West

For exploring the rugged and spacious public lands of the Panhandle, it is tough to beat a mode of transportation that has been around a while.

Story and Photos by Justin Haag

The Panhandle of western Nebraska's rugged buttes, sweeping grasslands, rolling hills and ponderosa pine forests spur an urge of exploration for countless visitors each year. For many a seasoned cowpoke on down to the greenest of greenhorns, their most memorable experiences while visiting this region have been atop a mode of transportation that has been popular for thousands of years. That would be the efficient, nimble, high-powered *Equus ferus caballus*, better known to most as the horse.

Visitors to Fort Robinson State Park near Crawford soon realize they are in horse country. A sign at the entrance of the park's headquarters evokes visions of the park's history as a 19th century U.S. Cavalry post: "Through These Portals Passed the World's Finest Horsemen."

With Fort Robinson's expansive 22,000 acres, horsemen and horsewomen of all skill levels revel in a landscape fit for a Western movie. Deb Kennedy, assistant park superintendent, said the park offers something for riders of various skills.

"Riders don't have to stay on the trail. However, for those not-so-adventuresome people, we do have marked trails," Kennedy said. "They can ride leisurely on the prairie, quietly along the river, or into the buttes for a little more challenging ride with awesome scenery."

Kennedy said horseback riding continues to gain popularity at Fort Robinson, where weekly rodeos entertain visitors. Annual gatherings of horse enthusiasts, such as



American Paint Horse Association members Ray Tucker and Ken Graves are at the head of this group riding up the Red Cloud Buttes at Fort Robinson State Park.

the American Paint Horse Association, have bolstered the park’s reputation as first-rate riding ground. Ride the Ridge is an event at the park each June that showcases Pine Ridge scenery in a group setting and is open to all who bring a horse.

No special permission is required to ride at Fort Robinson, but a few rules exist. To ensure park safety and cleanliness, no riding is allowed near lodging or camping areas. Horses privately owned are not allowed on the two trail ride routes while park rides are in session. Overnight guests with horses must rent a stall, but the barn’s location near the campground and other lodging ensures that animals will be nearby.

Chadron State Park, a 36-mile drive to the east, also is known for its scenic views from horseback. While the park does not allow visitors to bring their horses, it does have a stable full of trail horses for rent. At both Fort Robinson and Chadron, wranglers lead trail rides with the parks’ horses from early morning through mid-afternoon.

Another attractive park in the Panhandle butte country that allows unguided horseback riding is Wildcat Hills State Recreation Area south of Gering. Farther east in Oregon Trail country is Ash Hollow State Historical Park near Lewellen, where riding is allowed on the park’s property west of U.S. Highway 26. Neither park has horses for rent, but people may bring their own.

While some of the other state park areas in the region do not allow horses, the dozen-plus wildlife management areas in the region do. The established purpose of the WMAs is to serve as wildlife habitat, so, no designated trails are marked in most cases. Organized group rides are prohibited on the properties but casual riders are welcome.

Hunting is encouraged on the WMA properties, so those pursuing game have the opportunity to do it by horseback – just as Native Americans, Cavalry soldiers of Fort Robinson and Euro-American settlers did generations ago. Regardless of whether or not horseback riders are looking to bring home meat for the freezer, they are likely to catch sight of charismatic wildlife. Riders in the parks farthest north and west may see bighorn sheep, especially when riding the

ABOVE RIGHT: Riders cross Soldier Creek at Fort Robinson State Park.

BOTTOM LEFT: Jhett Jelinek participates in the musical chairs game at the Fort Robinson State Park rodeo. The event, which features park employees and others from the surrounding community, entertains visitors one night per week.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Olivia Hunsperger, a wrangler at Chadron State Park, tends to one of the trail ride horses. Hunsperger, a Chadron State College student at the time of this photo, was among the group of temporary workers who keep things running at the parks.



picturesque WMAs in the Wildcat Hills, or ascending the majestic Cheyenne and Red Cloud buttes at Fort Robinson.

If the Nebraska Game and Parks properties are not enough, public lands managed by other agencies, such as the U.S. Forest Service in the northern Panhandle and the Platte River Basin Environments to the south, make riders’ opportunities seemingly limitless and are certainly not to be overlooked. The Pine Ridge Ranger District of the Nebraska National Forest consists of 52,000 acres and a 6,600-acre National Recreation Area.

The 7,794 acres of Soldier Creek Wilderness near Fort Robinson State Park is another prime destination for horseback riders. Not only does it provide the wild experience many horseback riders seek, but it also has corrals at its trailhead. Because equipment used for mechanical transport, including bicycles and game carts, is prohibited at this destination, horses regain popularity as vehicle of choice. Even the Game and Parks’ fisheries biologists resort to horse and mule while surveying the two trout streams that flow through the property.

Other Forest Service access points that have special amenities for horseback riders are the Outrider Trailhead near Chadron State Park and the Roberts Tract Trailhead and Campground south of Whitney. Each of these has corrals and a mounting ramp, while Roberts has a modern vault toilet, a hand water pump and picnic tables.

The expansive Oglala National Grassland which borders South Dakota, also managed by the Forest Service, provides a change-up of scenery and is equally captivating.

Contacting the agency headquarters for whatever land you are visiting will help you plan your riding and answer any questions about regulations and attractions. For instance, riders should know that any feed brought into Forest Service properties must be certified free of noxious weeds and weed seeds.

Beyond that, visitors will be hard-pressed to find a better dose of freedom on this rough terrain than that provided by the four-legged animal that has been such an important part of the region’s history. To experience the Panhandle at its best, the finest seat may be a saddle.

ABOVE LEFT: A horse stands ready for the annual round-up of longhorns at Fort Robinson State Park.

ABOVE RIGHT: Visitors enjoy a trail ride at Chadron State Park in Dawes County.

BOTTOM LEFT: Outfitter Casey Cary of Powell, Wyoming, leads a packhorse with survey equipment along the south fork of Soldier Creek. The equipment was used by Commission fisheries staff to survey the remote trout stream.



Fisheries on Four Legs

Each year, state fisheries professionals take to Nebraska’s lakes, rivers and streams to survey fish populations. Among the most unusual of the efforts is one in the Pine Ridge.

Commission fisheries staff members Al Hanson and Joe Rydell of Alliance in recent years recruited the help of mules and horses owned by Commissioner Rick Brandt and Wyoming backcountry outfitter Casey Carey in accessing the upper reaches of the Soldier Creek Wilderness Area.

Because of its Wilderness Area designation, the property allows no mechanized vehicles – not even trucks driven by fisheries biologists, bicycles or game carts. Horses and mules provide efficient transportation, though – and surely work well for those carrying a fishing rod, too.

Outdoor Nebraska

By Renae Blum

It's time to revel in all the outdoors has to offer, from hunting wild turkey to awesome fishing and countless park adventures. Here are a few more events and activities to keep you busy.

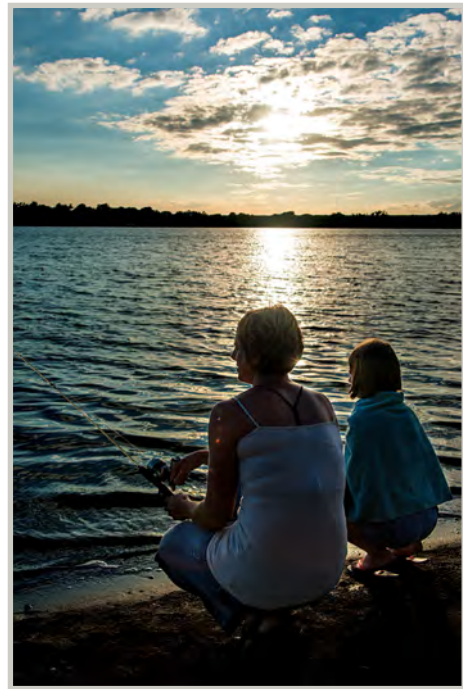


PHOTO BY ERIC FOWLER

Free Fishing and Park Entry Day

May 18 | All Nebraska state parks, state recreation areas and state historical parks

No permit, no problem. On May 18, spend the day fishing or exploring a Nebraska state park, state recreation area or state historical park without the need to buy a permit. It's a great chance to visit a park you've never been to or see if fishing is for you.

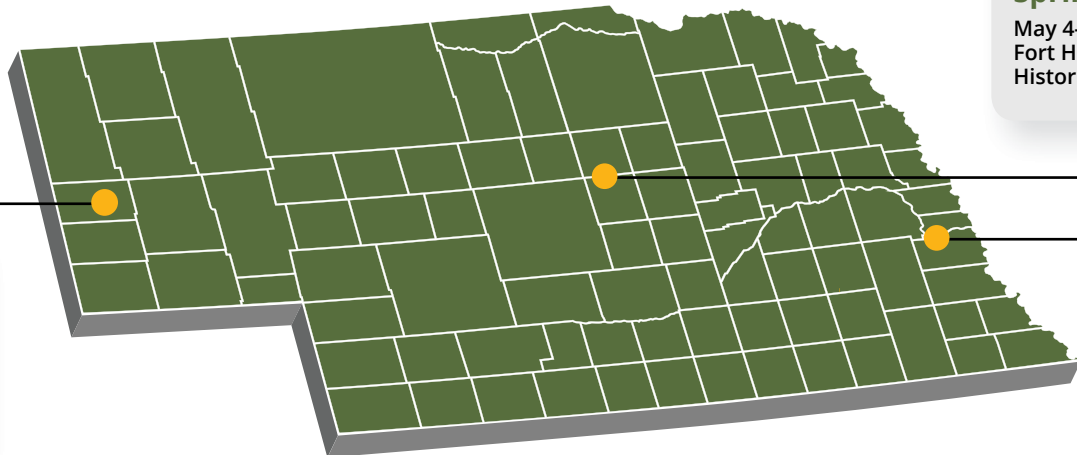


PHOTO BY JUSTIN HAAG

View migrating shorebirds

All month | Anywhere with proper habitat

May is the peak of spring shorebird migration in Nebraska. With proper habitat – shallow water and mud – shorebirds will gather in the Rainwater Basin and eastern saline wetlands, reservoirs and other bodies of water. It's great birdwatching, as shorebirds will let you get closer than other species. Just take it slow and give birds a little bit of space.



Family Fishing Night

May 12, 4-6 p.m.
Riverside Discovery Center "Zoo Pond,"
Scottsbluff

Spring Muster

May 4-5
Fort Hartsuff State Historical Park



PHOTO BY JUSTIN HAAG

Finish spring turkey season strong

Late May | Throughout the state

To finish spring turkey season strong, adjust your strategy. Take advantage of the extra cover, and in the early mornings, target spots such as crop field edges and shortgrass pastures. A single decoy – or none – may work best. Also, "don't stick with a call they're ignoring. If you hear a gobbler consistently answering a real hen, try to match her cadence and sound," writes Game and Parks' Aaron Hershberger.



PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS

What To Do in May



PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS

Mother's Day weekend at a Nebraska state park

May 11-12 | Various locations

For this special holiday, spend time with Mom at a Nebraska state park. Several parks will serve buffets on Sunday, and Arbor Lodge State Historical Park will offer live music, china painting demonstrations, special displays and more throughout the weekend. Learn more at Calendar.OutdoorNebraska.gov.

Schramm Education Center Grand Opening

May 18 | Schramm Education Center

Be one of the first to see Schramm's new education center, no park entry fee required. The center includes newly renovated and expanded aquariums featuring Nebraska's natural aquatic habitats, a 2,200-gallon touch tank, 17 live animal tanks, a virtual reality mountain biking experience and more. Take a break to enjoy over five miles of amazing hiking trails.

Outdoor Seniors

RIGHT: Morgan Ekhoﬀ
Aurora High School
Class of 2019

BELOW: Tim Taber
Doniphan-Trumball High School
Class of 2015

In the March issue of *Nebraskaland Magazine*, we shared the story of photographer Ryan Baker from Imperial and the trend he had observed regarding high school senior photos: most seniors he photographs want “hunting” photos. Especially the girls.

So we sent out a note to our readers to send

us these photos and received a large response from across the state.

While we weren’t able to publish every image that was sent, we can promise you this: our state’s hunting and fishing heritage is alive and well within the hearts and minds of this next generation.





OPPOSITE: Alex Smith
Ashland-Greenwood
High School
Class of 2019

RIGHT: Shayla Tibbets
Palmer High School
Class of 2015



RIGHT: Vanessa Smith
North Platte High School
Class of 2017





LEFT: Nathan Schulte
Gretna High School
Class of 2019



RIGHT: Hunter Kirby
Pius X High School
Class of 2019



LEFT: Trace Fulk
Mitchell High School
Class of 2016



RIGHT: Tinakea Thomas
Sterling Public Schools
Class of 2017



RIGHT: Ashley Tagart
Northwest High School
Grand Island
Class of 2013

That's Water-clover not a lucky four-leaf clover

By Gerry Steinauer, Botanist, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

Every now and then, I get a familiar call: “I found a huge patch of four-leaf clovers in a wetland. What’s going on?”

I respond: “Those are water-clover leaves, not those of the lucky four-leaf clover. So cancel the trip to Vegas.”

Once, a perplexed biologist studying waterfowl food habits in playa wetlands called: “I found this big, dark brown seed in a duck’s crop and can’t figure out what plant it is from.” To him I responded: “It’s not a seed, but the sporocarp of water-clover – a fern.”

“A what?”

“Allow me to explain.”

A Strange Fern

The little known water-clover (*Marsilea vestita*) grows in shallow wetlands throughout much of the state, excluding the Sandhills and far eastern counties. It is most abundant in the Rainwater Basin playas of south-central Nebraska and central Platte River Valley barrow pits.

A perennial, *Marsilea* spreads via shallow, creeping rhizomes. These horizontal underground stems often form dense colonies, which explains the “huge patch of four-leaf-clovers.” Its four-whorled leaves, known as fronds in ferns, do resemble a rare four-leaf clover, an odd leaf arrangement of a typically three-leaved legume. Therefore, I am never too critical of those callers’ botanical skills – so much for those confusing common names.

In early summer, the leaf stalks of submerged plants are long, thin and flexible as they elongate to reach the water surface. As wetlands dry in late summer, the plants become terrestrial and the stalks grow shorter, thicker and upright. The fronds become smaller and more firm than they were earlier in the season.

Starchy tubers form along the rhizomes. These are an overwinter food source and may tide plants over through dry years. During the past 10 years, I had never observed water-clover in an old bison wallow in our South Dakota pasture until last summer when high rainfall filled it. Then, lo and behold, *Marsilea* packed the shallow basin. This large colony could not have formed from spores in a single growing season.

The plants must have revived from long-dormant tubers and rhizomes when the life-giving water returned. What a superb survival strategy for a wetland species inhabiting the droughty Great Plains.

The Sporocarps

Ferns are primitive plants, first appearing in the fossil record about 360 million years ago, nearly 200 million years before the flowering plants. Unlike the latter, which reproduce through flowers and seeds, ferns reproduce through microscopic spores.

In most ferns, the spores form on the underside of fertile fronds in clumped casings known as sporangia. In some ferns, the sporangia are bunched atop stalks that rise from the plant’s base. The *Marsilea* are unique among ferns in that their spores form in small, bean-shaped structures known as sporocarps.

Located on short, lateral stalks at the base of the plant, the sporocarps are green, soft and hairy when young. In late summer, now lying on the soil surface, they mature to dark brown in color and are smooth, hard and durable. Sporocarps taken from a 100-year-old herbarium specimen germinated when placed in water.

Marsileas’ spore dispersal method is distinct. In nearly all ferns, the sporangia open and the spores are wind-dispersed. In the water-clovers, the intact sporocarp is moved about by water, especially flooding, or by waterfowl, which can transport them to isolated wetlands in upland landscapes, such as playas or bison wallows.

Ducks and geese either intentionally or accidentally ingest the sporocarps while feeding for seeds on wetland bottoms. In their gut, the gizzard’s grinding action and digestive acids and enzymes scarify the hard coat. Those sporocarps that survive the digestive journey intact are defecated into wetlands. Primed for water uptake, they rupture and release spores.

Water-clover is a tough, wonderfully-adapted fern growing in erratic Great Plains wetlands where no other fern could survive. When I run across it in the field I always feel excited – maybe even a bit lucky.



A late-summer bison wallow covered in water-clover.



Water-clover fronds.



Water-clover sporocarps and horizontal rhizomes.

Retiring Lures

Whether they be worn-out, abused, busted, or simply evoke fond memories, some of your favorite fishing lures sit on a desk, a shelf, or a fireplace mantle – a place of honor for retired lures.

A Mangled Fly

Ryan Sparks

Who you are fishing with is often more important than what you catch. From channel catfish in the Platte River to panfishing from a dock, some of my fondest memories are of fishing with my grandfather, or as I call him, “Papa.” By far Papa’s favorite fish is crappie. He’ll be the first to tell you that his love of crappie has more to do with eating than catching. When I was growing up we would fish until we had enough to make a meal and then our entire family would gather around a shaded picnic table – aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents and close friends – for a fish fry lunch of scalloped potatoes, hush puppies, garden watermelon, baked beans and, of course, fried crappie.

Later, I moved to Montana for graduate school and taught myself to fly-fish. I’m not sure what Papa thinks of it. He’s a faithful subscriber to the belief that live bait will always outfish artificial lures, so the thought of using a hook lashed with chicken feathers and deer hair doubtlessly seems ridiculous. He’s probably right. However, during a spring afternoon on a Cass County farm pond I showed him how effective fly-fishing can be. I caught so many fish the fly began to fall apart. Its black bucktail frayed, the copper mylar mangled and the thread wore loose. It kept catching fish.

Eventually, we made calls announcing a fish fry the next afternoon. I clipped the fly and slipped it in my pocket. The next day as we sat down to eat I noticed Papa was hanging

back, letting me fry the fish and watching dishes being carried to the table. He just leaned against the porch railing and smiled. That’s when I realized why Papa really loves crappie – they bring his family together.

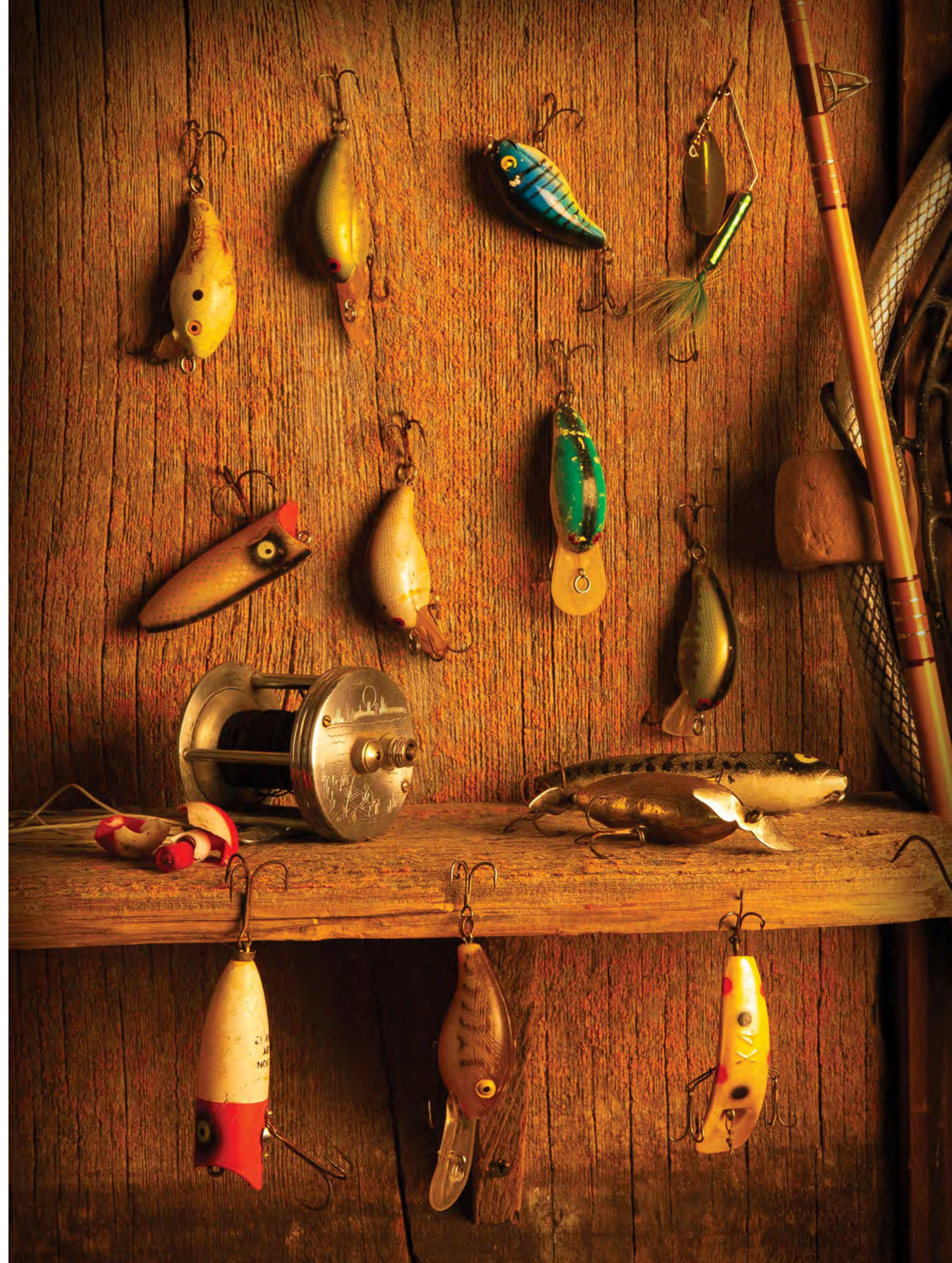
Most flies have elaborate names like Royal Wulff, Gold Ribbed Hare’s Ear or Lefty’s Deceiver. This home-tied fly doesn’t have a name and it’s about as basic as they come: a stout hook, lead eyes, some copper flash and a small clump of bucktail. When I look at it I remember Papa smiling and recollect that fishing is about much more than fish.

Walleye-Chomped Red Fin

Daryl Bauer

There are no magic lures that catch fish all of the time. Every lure or bait ever made will catch fish when used in the right place at the right time. They are all just tools, and the trick is to use the right tool for the job.

With that philosophy, I do not retire lures for sentimental reasons. If they are catching fish, I want to keep them in the water. Sure, I have a bunch of them that have caught big fish, or are special baits for special reasons. But the collection of old, retired lures that hangs on a section of netting in my basement is made of baits with busted lips, mangled bodies, leaks, holes and other major failures. Far too many of them, including some expensive muskie lures, ended up hanging



PHOTOS BY JEFF KURRUS

on that net because a gust of wind caught a cast and they crashed on the rocks.

However, there is one – actually all that is left is just the front end of it – that has a good story behind it. That old silver Red Fin found its way to retirement one evening on the wind-swept point of a Nebraska reservoir.

The wiper bite had been very good that evening. As darkness approached, I had a hunch that a big walleye or three would show up. I switched to a minnow-imitating crankbait with good action. The old Red Fins have been a favorite of mine in shallow-water situations.

It was not more than a cast or two, and I got a good “thunk” as something ate the bait. Instinctively, I set the hook and felt the weight of a good fish; big head shakes were indicative of a nice walleye.

And then, there she was, gone.

Retrieving line, it felt like there was nothing left on the end, and I suspected the bait had broken off. Then, skipping across the waves in front of me came the remains of my Red Fin – just the front few inches and the front treble hook. The rest of the bait was completely gone, cleanly chomped off.

Must have been a really big walleye.

Oh sure, there must have been an unseen crack in the bait, something that failed at just the wrong time. But, that lure will forever be the crankbait that was chomped in half by a walleye. That is a much better story.



My Kmart Collection

Jeff Kurrus

There is a collection of retired fishing lures on a piece of driftwood in my office. Whether broken-lipped, failure to float, or some other angling ailment, they have all been designated to memory. But there is a set of them that are a little different from the rest. They are the Kmart lures.

When I was a kid, Dad came home with a 3-pack of shallow-running, bass-fishing crankbaits. They were crawfish, frog and bass-colored imitations, and soon after debuted on a set of farm ponds outside of Senatobia, Mississippi. After their initial trip, where their square bills ran true, bounced off underwater timber with rarely a tangle and caught bass at a rapid pace, Dad went back to Kmart and bought more than \$200 worth.

For the last 30 years, we have continued to search for these lures as our current supply dwindles. While Kmart only sold them for a brief time, we have tracked down others at antique shops, consignment stores and yard sales – sometimes offering as little as 25 cents for a lure we deem priceless.

And their value is not just because of the fish we know they’ll catch, or how we’ve never found crankbaits that run better, but that they take us back to a time when dad and son wanted to be better fishermen, and we had amazingly found a set of lures that convinced us that would be could be just that.

Fire Tiger

Jake Jadowski

My favorite

place in the world is

Ottertail County, Minnesota.

My family still goes there every year on vacation. As kids, we spent the mornings catching bluegills by the dozens. It’s the place that taught me how to fish.

As I got a little bit older, the fun of fishing for bluegill was replaced by an obsession with northern pike. I wanted to catch a pike more than I’d ever wanted to do anything. In my mind, it was a rite of passage. I couldn’t possibly consider myself a legitimate fisherman until I caught one.

One summer, my dad bought me a box of Daredevil spoons. And in the box was the Fire Tiger. I didn’t know anything about it. I didn’t know if it was a good lure or not. All I knew was that it was the coolest lure that I’d ever seen.

As a kid, I casted that thing thousands of times. I don’t even think I caught many fish with it. But I know I caught one. While everyone else was swimming, I grabbed my rod and I went to the dock and I started casting. I casted that Fire Tiger as far as my little body would let me toward the reeds where I hoped a northern was lurking.

In reality, I didn’t think I would catch one, not off the dock. But that didn’t matter, I loved casting and watching my Fire Tiger shimmer through the crystal clear water. And then it happened. I didn’t set the hook. I didn’t have to time think. All I knew was that my Fire Tiger just got ambushed by something huge. I’ll never forget the feeling. It wasn’t even close to huge. It probably wasn’t even big enough to eat, but I did it. I proved to myself that I could do it. My first northern pike.

I’ve kept that Fire Tiger in my tackle bag ever since. Even though I haven’t used it in years, that lure will forever be immortalized in my mind. Every time I come across it, it takes me back to my favorite place in the world, a simpler time, and the journey of a little kid trying to prove to himself that he was a real fisherman.

An Early Retirement

Eric Fowler

I’ve had some great days fishing in the Sandhills, and this was one of them. The northern pike were hammering my chrome and black Rat-L-Trap, and I remember looking at the lure and thinking: “I have got to get a photo of that thing with all those teeth marks on it.”



Soon after, I grabbed my leader while landing another pike and the fish somehow spun, unhooked the snap and swam away with that lure in its mouth.

I tied the one you see here onto my line. It was the same size and color, but it had lost a big chunk of chrome off one side in the few run-ins it previously had with fish.

I don’t know if it was that or it was simply tuned slightly different, but it would not catch fish. Neither would the only other chrome and black lipless crankbait of another brand I had in my box.

So this one is retired. I wish I could’ve retired the other.



Pike Like Tarpon

Larry Kurrus

I have an assortment of old and retired lures I can’t throw away, and another one that needs to be added to the still-growing collection. It is a black and blue spinnerbait with a red trailer hook.

In May of 2018, fishing partner Mike Groenewold and I took a four-day trip to the Valentine National Wildlife Refuge. Two of those days we fished Pelican Lake, where a renovation project would soon begin in the fall to eradicate carp.

Both days we were immediately into fish. It seemed that about every third or fourth cast, Mike or I had a fish on. We caught a few bass, but the northern pike were on every grass and reed mat we approached. The plan was simple: Throw your black and blue spinnerbait as far as you could, start reeling and hang on. The pike would do the rest.

Those two days were amazing. We caught more than 100 fish. Better than 90 percent were northers, with some of them going airborne trying to shake the spinnerbaits.

Now Pelican Lake has, in a way, been retired to a new life, one that has the capabilities to produce two-pound bluegills. My fly rod and I are surely game for that. My black and blue spinnerbait now hangs from an old fish lamp on my desk with its retired brethren, its red trailer hook silver from teeth marks. It reminds me of older Pelican Lake and a time when big pike would fly like tarpon.

Do-It-Yourself Dried Arrangements

By Renae Blum

Native flowers and plants aren't just great gardening choices; they also make stunning dried arrangements that are both fun and easy to create.

Mary Jane Frogge, a horticulture expert with Nebraska Extension, sat down with me to share the process. The following are her words, edited for length and clarity.

— Renae Blum

The Process

It's good to collect flowers when they're at their peak of bloom, so you have nice color. With grasses, the main thing is to pick ones that aren't over-mature, so they don't fall apart when you hang them.

Try to collect as long of a stem as possible. To cut, use hand-held pruners, the sharper the better.

Now strip the leaves off with your hands or with gloves and bundle the stems together. You want to bundle only about eight to 10 stems to make sure they dry nicely.

Then tie them together. A rubber band seems to work the best (and is easy to hang), but you can use twine if you like.

Once the plants are bundled, attach them to a hanger or hook to dry. You want to make sure they hang straight, in an out-of-the-way place so that you don't bump them. Pick a drier, warmer room out of direct sunlight. Depending on the size, it'll take six to eight weeks for the bundle to completely dry.

You can make many types of arrangements with your dried materials. I will describe how to make a swag arrangement you can hang on a door or wall. First, take the dry plants, lay them on a table and arrange them. Start with the dried grasses and fill in with the flowers. Keep adding until you

have an arrangement you are happy with.

Cut the stems so they are all the same length, then bundle tight. I like to use rubber bands because they hold better, but you can also use wire. To hang your arrangement, you can make a wire loop to hang from a hook or nail. You can add ribbon, too, to finish it off.

Other Tips

- I encourage you to grow native plants. It's good for pollinators and it's good for you. Plant in groups with blooming periods all throughout the spring, summer and fall, and collect continuously throughout the year.
- You don't have to use flowers or grasses; you can also use pods, nuts and even branches from a ponderosa pine.
- Go to a florist's shop or look online to get ideas for arranging. There are so many options.
- I would plan for the arrangements lasting about a year, because they do tend to break apart eventually and lose their color.

Final Thoughts

Why try this? Because it's fun! It gets you outside – it gets you out there looking at what plants you have and maybe encourages you to plant more native plants. This would be a great activity for kids, because they're always collecting things and bringing them inside.

Dried flower arrangements you make yourself are less expensive, fresher and of better quality than store-bought ones. There's also a satisfaction that you collected them and grew them from your own garden. I think that makes it more personal.

What Plants to Use

These native plants hang-dry well. Read on to find out the best time for collecting.

June: Larkspur (*Delphinium*), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), Queen Anne's lace (*Daucus carota*).

July: Bee balm (*Monarda*), purple coneflower (*Echinacea*), hoary vervain (*Verbena stricta*), gayfeather

(*Liatris*), lead plant (*Amorpha canescens*).

August: Pitcher sage (*Salvia azurea*), purple lovegrass (*Eragrostis pectinacea*), sideoats grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*), little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*).

September: Goldenrod (*Solidago*), prairie dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*), big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardi*), Indian grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*).

PHOTO BY DAWN DOWNEY



50 Years at the Cornhusker Trapshoot

By Julie Geiser

May 2-4 is the 50th year for the prestigious Cornhusker Trapshoot, one of the nation's largest youth trap shooting tournaments. Around 2,500 high school and junior high competitors from Nebraska and across the nation along with their family, friends and coaches will visit the Nebraska Trapshooting Association's home grounds in Doniphan, bursting the small town's population of about 850 to almost 10,000.

The trapshoot began in 1970 as a duel between Northeast Community College and Chadron State College, which was organized by Dave Wells of Norfolk and Jim Carlisle of Chadron. In 1971 nine colleges participated in the shoot.

Expanding in numbers over the decades, today the tournament consists of high school and junior high divisions covering a three-day event where schools, 4-H teams and individuals shoot for top places, and the all-around top high school shooter

receives the coveted Cornhusker Cup award. "I can remember when I started overseeing the tournament, we didn't use all the trap houses. Now almost every squad and trap is full," said Terry Brentzel, conservation officer for the Commission and tournament director.

This event has grown into one that has made memories and lasting friendships over the years. The camaraderie and safety record displayed by these youth is exemplary, and the sportsmanship they exhibit is to be commended. "There are lots of great stories from the trap shoot; one special moment I have was when I gave Maddie Spellman of Aurora her medal. She was struggling with cancer and shot from her wheelchair in 2016; she passed away shortly after that," Brentzel stated.

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission along with the Nebraska Trapshooting Association sponsor the premier event and several directors ensure the American Trap Association rules of shooting are followed.



PHOTO BY BOB GRIER



PHOTO BY JULIE GEISER

BELOW LEFT: Hall County. 2015 Cornhusker Trapshoot. Photo taken during Saturday's competition.

ABOVE RIGHT: 38th Annual Cornhusker High School and Junior High School Trapshoot, held May 3-5, 2007, at Doniphan, Nebraska.

BELOW RIGHT: Shooter at 2016 Cornhusker Trapshoot.



PHOTO BY JULIE GEISER



PHOTO BY DOUG CARROLL



PHOTO BY DOUG CARROLL



PHOTO BY DOUG CARROLL

ABOVE LEFT: 38th Annual Cornhusker High School and Junior High School Trapshoot, held May 3-5, 2007, at Doniphan.

BELOW LEFT: 41st Annual Cornhusker High School and Junior High School Trapshoot, held April 29-May 1, 2010.

ABOVE RIGHT: 42nd Annual Cornhusker High School and Junior High School Trapshoot, held April 28-30, 2011.

BELOW RIGHT: May 1977 Doniphan Cornhusker Invitational Cup Winner J. Hoppes.



NGPC ARCHIVES

A Farm Boy Comes to Omaha, 1888

By David L. Bristow,
History Nebraska

“I guess there ain’t any end to Omaha,” wrote 17-year-old Frisby Rasp in a letter to his parents in 1888. “You can walk till you are tired out in any direction you choose, and the houses are as thick as ever ...”

Rasp grew up on his parents’ farm in southwest Polk County, Nebraska, the oldest of six children. Now he enrolled in the Omaha Business College at 16th and Capitol streets. He paid \$40 for tuition, and one of his teachers helped him find a boarding house. For the first time in his life, he was on his own in a big city.

“Big city” is relative. That year’s Omaha City Directory claimed a population of 125,000, a huge (and probably

exaggerated) jump over the 30,000 counted in the 1880 census.

But it seemed big enough to Frisby. Even the post office on the northeast corner of 15th and Capitol was enormous, “a large three story stone [building]. It covers half a block. They receive over a carload of mail every day.”

He was writing on May 6, one day after he arrived. In his May 7 letter he reminded his family that “I haven’t got any letters yet,” but hoped there would be one waiting for him at the big post office. He admitted he’d been “feeling pretty lonely.” Two days later he complained, “I haven’t heard from you yet; you must be dead. I ain’t a going to mail this until I

do hear.” Two more long days passed before he received his long-awaited letters from home.

Rasp’s own letters over the next few months show us something that historic photographs don’t capture: how 1880s Omaha looked, sounded and smelled to a rural Nebraskan of the time. Rasp’s portrait is vivid, though not always flattering.

“Every thing here is coal smoke and dirt and people,” he wrote soon after his arrival.

“It is dusty just as soon as it quits raining,” he added later, “and the dust here is the worst dust I ever saw. It is all stone and manure. Streets that ain’t paved, 2 feet deep of mud.”

Omaha was just beginning to pave its main streets. Rasp marveled at the “great steam roller” working in front of the college. But he soon tired of all the noise.

“I am getting so I hate to hear an engine,” he wrote on May 9. There must be at least 50 at work beside[s] the factories, and they never stop, night or day. It is puff-puff-puff-puff-toot-toot-toot-braw-braw-puff-puff-puff-puff.”

He was overwhelmed by the crowds and anonymity. “I have seen more people since I came here than every person I ever saw before I came and with a few exceptions I never see the same person twice ...” The nationwide bicycle craze was underway and Rasp saw so many that “I am sick a looking at them.”

Omaha was filthy by a country boy’s standards. On May 16 he promised to come home on a visit “and quit breathing smoke and drinking filth.” A few days later he added that “the water is full of sewerage. I haven’t drank a drop of water for a week. I don’t drink anything but coffee. The coffee hides the filth ...”

The Rasp family was deeply religious, and Frisby was shocked by Omaha’s vice. “Every other store is a saloon,” he wrote before adding a quick reassurance: “but I never even

looked in one ...”

“This is an awful wicked town,” he noted several days later. “The saloons run on sunday [sic] and most all work goes right on.” A “bad house” operated next door to the college, and another brothel stood on the corner across from his boarding house. Even local newspapers, he wrote, claimed that if you shut down all the saloons, brothels, and tobacco shops, half of Omaha’s businesses would be gone.

Even so, when Rasp toured the county jail he seemed disappointed to report that “there was nobody in yesterday.”

Rasp was an ardent tourist of local institutions. He marveled at the steam printing press at the *Omaha Republican* (“the fastest printing I ever saw”), witnessed “1000 carloads of lead and the biggest engine I ever saw” at the lead smelting plant, toured the city’s electrical power plant (another “largest engine I ever saw,” powering lights that are “40 times as good as gas”), and rode the elevator in a six-story hotel (“it is a beauty”).

For all his complaining he seemed to be enjoying himself. He just didn’t want to stay.

“I wouldn’t live in the City always for anything,” he wrote. “Get an education there and a good start in life and then let me have a farm.”

Which is pretty much what he did. After graduation he worked as a bookkeeper in Omaha for two years and later served as a business college instructor in York and a pastor in Wayland, but spent most of his life on a farm near Gresham. He and his wife, Mattie, raised seven children on the farm, and Rasp died there in 1948. His daughter Naomi Rasp Frederickson donated his letters to History Nebraska; edited and introduced by Sherrill Daniels, they were first published in *Nebraska History Magazine* in 1990.

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



Looking east along Farnam Street, Omaha, 1889. History Nebraska RG2341-28



Omaha’s post office in 1888. History Nebraska RG2341-0-247



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE NEBRASKA TOURISM COMMISSION

VISIT THE NORTHWEST

By Josie Meister, Nebraska Tourism Commission

Start your summer by exploring the northwestern corner of Nebraska, where scenic beauty and Old West history await. With activities such as hiking, biking and horseback riding, this is a nature lover's dream destination.

Visit Fort Robinson, the largest state park in Nebraska and a former active military post. Enjoy the beauty of the surrounding buttes by horse-drawn wagon, horseback riding or in an open-top Jeep. History buffs will find the fort's many museums and restored and reconstructed exhibit buildings fascinating.

Just 30 minutes east of the fort, Chadron State Park is Nebraska's oldest state park. Located in the heart of the Nebraska National Forest, hike alongside breathtaking scenery.

Then wet your fishing line at Box Butte Reservoir, which features a 1,600-acre lake and 612 acres of wilderness to roam when you're finished on the water.

For a view of the Nebraska horizon, visit Oglala National Grassland, the location of the Hudson-Meng Bison Bonebed and unusual rock formations at Toadstool Geologic Park.

History lovers will also enjoy Agate Fossil Beds, where mammals roamed 19 million years ago. High Plains Homestead is a living tribute to the Old West, featuring log buildings, roaming bison, Native American history and

pottery. Then head to Belmont Tunnel, Nebraska's only rail tunnel that spans 698 feet; the last train passed through May 3, 1982.

Hungry? Start your day at Bean Broker in Chadron for a specialty coffee or sweet treat and stick around for lunch to try their daily specials, featuring locally grown herbs and produce. If you're craving barbecue, try Dairy Sweet in Crawford for Texas-style smoked barbecue or Wild's Bar and Grill for a fresh cut, locally-raised ribeye. Don't forget dessert! Stop by Staab's Drive-In for a cold treat on those hot summer days.

Plan your trip around northwestern Nebraska's July events. Enjoy live music, food and drinks at Chadron's Bands on Bordeaux summer concert series every Thursday of the month. Other events include Crawford's 4th of July Celebration July 3-4 and Fur Trade Days in Chadron July 10-14.

Find unique accommodations at Sheepwagon Hideouts at RuJoDen Ranch or check out one of the region's many campgrounds. Chadron has several hotel options.

Whether you are looking for recreational activities, beautiful scenery, or a taste of the Wild West, your first visit to northwestern Nebraska won't be the last one.

Discover Northwest Nebraska.

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THE RV LADY

By Katie Larsen

If you’ve ever contacted the Reservation Call Center for Nebraska State Parks, you know who CJ Zajicek is. She’s the one who’s always nice to you – the one whose positive, personable attitude and interest in you makes you feel like you were her only phone call of the day – just the way great customer service should be.

CJ has been working for the call center since it opened in 2004, taking calls for the 26 Nebraska state parks and recreation areas that accept advance reservations. She hears from people all over the United States and sometimes from other countries.

Though reservations can be made online, CJ still receives plenty of calls – and for good reason. Parks Director Jim Swenson said, because of CJ’s care and compassion, “People want to talk to her, and know that she’s a person who can help. And we as an agency can rest assured that those customers are in good hands with her.”

CJ has several thank-you emails from campers printed out and hung up by her desk, alongside pictures of her grandchildren. One such email thanks her for “going above and beyond the call of duty” while another comments that she makes customers feel like they are “her No. 1 concern.”

She appreciates the campers as much as they appreciate her. When asked what she likes the most about her job, CJ’s answer was immediate. “The people. And being able to help



them – they’re so grateful.”

For more information on camping in Nebraska state parks, including how to make a reservation, call CJ at 402-471-1414 or visit nebraskastateparks.reserveamerica.com.



PHOTOS BY JEFF KURRUS



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FORT KEARNY EXPO

By Julie Geiser

Each year the Fort Kearny Expo brings together people of all ages and outdoor experience levels to learn about fishing, animals of Nebraska, Dutch oven cooking, shooting sports, archery, kayaking and more. Hands-on activities allow for that first spark of excitement; visitors can see and touch what they're learning. Live turtles, fish and other wildlife are often featured.

The Fort Kearny Expo takes place Saturday, May 11, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Fort Kearny State Recreation Area, just south of Kearney. The expo is free to all visitors, made possible by generous sponsors. Only a park permit is required for vehicles to enter the SRA.

Special guest Sam Larson of Lincoln is a wilderness instructor, author, and speaker. Last year he won History Channel's survival reality TV challenge *Alone*. Larson will talk about the show, along with survival skills such as primitive fire starting, knife skills and the edible and medicinal plants of Nebraska.

"Outdoor education is education in its oldest and purest form. I'll be bringing skills to the expo that help people to be better informed and be able to enjoy nature more," Larson said.

For more information about the event along with a full list of activities, visit the Nebraska Game and Parks web page at OutdoorNebraska.gov/fortkearnyoutdoorexpo.



PHOTOS BY JULIE GEISER

JOHNSON LAKE TRAILS

By Chuck Olsen, Paid Advertisement

Since water filled Johnson Lake in 1941, its 900 cabins have been popular among fishermen, boaters, campers, and family gatherings. Over the years, biking groups formed to ride the 10-mile loop on shared public roads.

About 25 years ago, a couple's group called the "South Side Riders" included Larry Roper, superintendent of the lake's state recreation area. He and fellow riders held a common vision for a dedicated concrete hiking and biking trail that would stretch all around the lake.

Roper became a moving force for the construction of the first 1.1-mile segment in the park, costing \$370,000 and paid by Federal Highway Funds administered through the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. It was dedicated in July of 2005 in his memory.

The vision lay dormant for several years until a bike and vehicle collision. Public concern for hiking and biking safety rose, which prompted Johnson Lake Development, Inc. – the local cabin owners' association – to form the Hike Bike Leadership Team to plan, raise funds and construct new trail segments.

Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District became an integral partner, since most of the trail would lie



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHUCK OLSEN

on its property. Over the last 10 years, plans were made and funds were raised for the construction, segment by segment. To date, 8.5 miles of the 8-foot by 6-inch concrete trail has been constructed, with only half a mile remaining.

The last mile, a narrow dam road, will remain a shared road between bikes and vehicles. So far the trails team has raised \$1.2 million in donations and the Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District has contributed \$500,000 in support, in addition to preparing the trail beds and constructing the canal bridge crossing.

As neighborhood associations joined the cause, they have added 21 landscaped rest areas, adding a park-like atmosphere with benches, trees, gazebos and arches. Johnson Lake Trails is becoming one of the state's premier biking destinations, easily reached within a half day's drive. One recent trail event brought in participants from 27 different counties. And the numbers are increasing!



EXPLORE ARCHERY

By Katie Larsen

Explore Archery is a program for kids ages 8 and up who are interested in learning archery basics. Classes are offered through the Nebraska Outdoor Education Center in Lincoln. The next 8-week session begins April 4.

“The special thing about this program is that it is designed to focus on the fundamentals rather than the target score,” said Facility Manager Heather Weihe. “We do candy shoots, treasure shoots, mystery shoots, and other games to focus on developing proper fundamentals.”

This March, I visited an Explore Archery class and participated as an adult new to the sport. There were also five kids in this class, spanning ages 8 to 12.

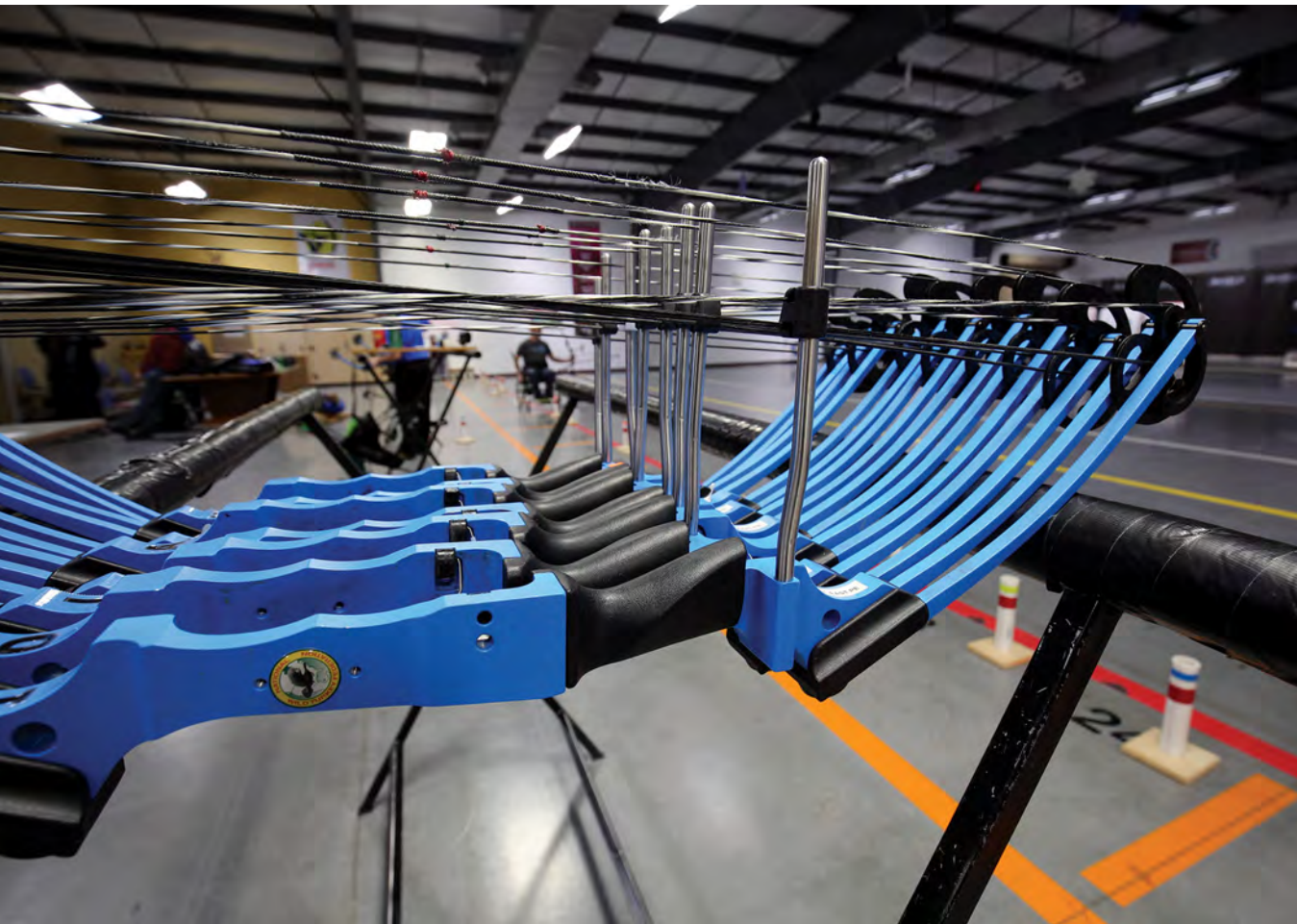
The class began with safety rules, including whistle signals for the range, and basic instructions on stance and shooting technique. Then we each received a bow and three arrows, and I was silently relieved to see several parents step forward to pick up bows of their own. Suddenly I didn’t feel quite so alone.

It’s a humbling experience to learn a new skill as an adult amidst a group of children. After my first arrow fell short of



the target, I found myself watching the 8-year-old boy next to me to learn from what he was doing. The instructor made corrections to my stance and had to remind me more than once to draw the bowstring all the way back to the corner of my mouth. With his help, after that first failed arrow, I managed to at least hit the target every time – though the kid next to me still had better aim.

If you can’t make it to this session, watch for others beginning this July and January 2020. Sign up through apm.activecommunities.com/ngpc.



PHOTOS BY JEFF KURRUS

GREAT PARK PURSUIT

By Renae Blum

Nebraska’s park system is filled with beautiful gems that are great places to spend a relaxing day or weekend. Let us introduce you to a few of them (and hand out some prizes in the process) with the 2019 Great Park Pursuit.

Here’s how it works: Sign up your team at negpp.org and start picking sites to visit from the official list. Once there, you’ll follow clues to a post hidden somewhere on the property and submit proof you were there to be entered into a drawing for outdoor prizes. Past prizes have included an iPad, free cabin stays, *Nebraskaland Magazine* subscriptions and calendars, gift cards, and outdoor recreation packages worth up to \$1,500. The more parks you visit, the better your odds.

Taking part in the pursuit is even easier this year with the addition of an app that makes logging in your site visits fast and easy. No need to bring along the crayons and a rubbing sheet, unless you like the traditional rubbing method. The app can be found on both iOS and Android.

Since 2008, more than 22,000 Nebraskans have enjoyed the adventure the Great Park Pursuit offers. The goal of the pursuit, a partnership between the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and the Nebraska Recreation and Park Association, is to get people active, enjoying the outdoors, and learning more about Nebraska’s great outdoor recreation opportunities. It’s free to sign up and participate in the program – the only cost involved is mailing in your impressions, if you choose not to use the app; and paying for entry into some park sites.



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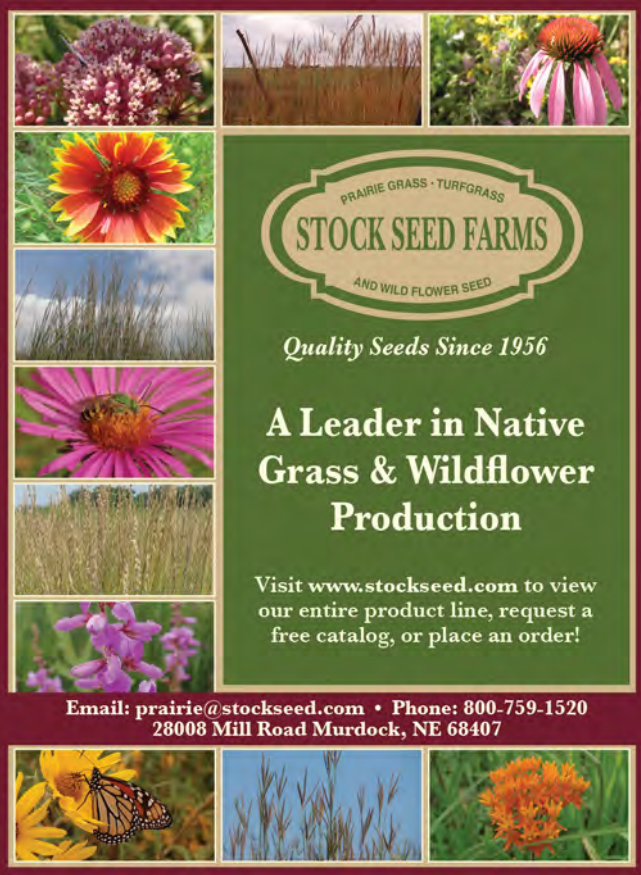
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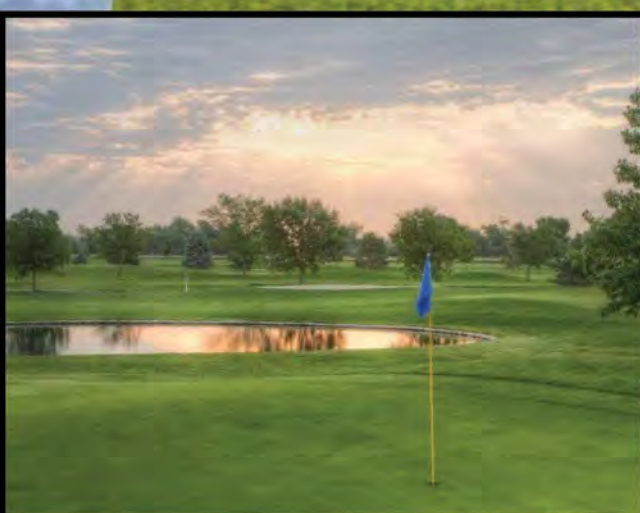
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INVASIVE SPECIES THREATEN NEBRASKA

By Julie Van Meter, State Entomologist, Nebraska Department of Agriculture

Invasive species are a serious threat to Nebraska, with the potential to cause millions of dollars in damage to the state's agricultural and natural resources. The Nebraska Department of Agriculture Entomology Program annually conducts surveys to monitor for the introduction of invasive plant pests. Early detection of these pests is vital to either successfully eradicate or limit the spread.

The Department of Agriculture coordinates with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission to monitor for invasive insects at state parks and recreation areas, which are considered high risk for invasive pest introductions. Most insect traps are in place by late May and remain in place until October.

A large purple prism trap in the canopy of an ash tree is part of the department's survey for **emerald ash borer**. The larvae of this insect is easily transported in firewood, making



UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS FOREST ENTOMOLOGY LAB, UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS, BUGWOOD.ORG

campgrounds a likely spot for the introduction of this pest. Another large trap that can be found in parks around the state is the black cross vein panel trap. This trap is roughly three feet in height, and hung from a heavy metal pole near hardwood trees. The target of this trap is the **velvet longhorn beetle**, an invasive beetle found in South Dakota in 2018.

Lindgren funnel traps have four to eight black funnels arranged in an accordion style, with a collection cup at the bottom. The trap's appearance mimics a tree trunk. Each trap is baited with a lure to attract either the **walnut twig beetle** or **oak ambrosia beetle**.

A small, triangular trap tucked into hardwood foliage is likely a Gypsy moth trap. This delta trap is baited with a pheromone lure to attract male **gypsy moths**. More than 500 of these traps will be set statewide.



KENNETH E. GIBSON, USDA FOREST SERVICE, BUGWOOD.ORG

Each of these traps is part of an early detection program to protect our state from invasive species. While the traps may cause a few second looks, they pose no danger to people. For more information on the plan pest survey program, visit the Department of Agriculture's website at nda.nebraska.gov/plant/entomology/pest_survey/index.html.



KARLA SALP, WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, BUGWOOD.ORG

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From left, my dad, Tom Eads; Bob Grier, former *Nebraskaland Magazine* regional editor; Barry Carlson; and Ozzie Randall in 1974. Bob and Barry went rattlesnake hunting with my dad and neighbor Ozzie. The article was in the August 1976 magazine titled “The Viper’s Den.” My dad passed away five years ago, and I have such memories of him and me going snake hunting. In fact, I still live where this photo was taken, and I still hunt with my kids.

– Brenda Eads Fulk, Whitney



I ran across the attached photo of my little brother Steve, right, and me with a pair of carp. The photo is from 1967. While it looks like we hooked the carp, our dad, Tony, shot them while bowfishing. Next to fishing, we liked Batman most!

– Don Blankenau,
Lincoln



This photo was taken in 1918 on the family homestead near Inavale in Webster County. Pictured, at right, is my grandpa Cooper (Richard I.). On the left is my great-grandpa Cooper (Allen A.). The story goes that they shot both coyotes with the same shell. This would be my father’s dad and grandpa. My father is Richard A. Cooper and he is 88 years old.

Also on the Cooper homestead was a sod house where my father was born. My dad and aunts used to talk about snakes and other creatures that would try to go through the outside wall to get inside. My aunt Mable told me she would kill the snakes with a hoe as they were crawling through the wall.

– Marla Cooper Wademan, Crete

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. Text may be edited and photos adjusted for reproduction. All photos will be returned.



IN A HURRY

By Jeff Kurrus

Sometimes I get in a hurry, especially when the fish are biting.

Last May, while fishing near West Point, my fishing partner and I were catching as many bass as we wanted on any number of lures. Crankbaits, spinnerbaits, topwater – it didn’t matter. The fish were there for the taking. And with little wind and steady weather, they remained active all day.

Yet that still didn’t stop me from almost ignoring this wooden relic, rotting away in a patch of weeds by the lake. I took a couple of photos, yes, but didn’t do my job as a photographer. I didn’t step closer to investigate. Perhaps I would have found the old, cracked plastic from a red and

white bobber or even treble hook scratches from one of the wooden platforms.

Maybe I would have seen the initials of some kid who carved his name in that same wood when the fishing was slow, or the long faded measurement sticker on the hull of the boat.

Perhaps the owners didn’t fish in it at all.

However, I will never know, for I paused long enough to make two images before sprinting back to my john boat. Because I definitely do fish – much like I hope the owners of this boat did as well – and the fish were calling me back to the water.

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