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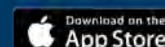
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NEBRASKA
- GAME PARKS -



Cover: Fly-fishing doesn't have to be exclusive to mountain streams. Practically all fish in Nebraska can be caught with a fly rod. To begin, see page 46 for a "Fly-fishing Primer." JEFF KURRUS, NEBRASKALAND
This page: May brings out the acmon blue (*Plebejus acmon*) butterfly to the Pine Ridge. JUSTIN HAAG, NEBRASKALAND

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Nebraskaland magazine

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JUSTIN HAAG, NEBRASKALAND

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Please include your postal address and telephone number. Letters may be condensed and edited. Photographs are also welcome.



NEBRASKA'S PINE RIDGE

A shaft of sunlight brightens a ridge top in the Pine Ridge of northwestern Nebraska.

JUSTIN HAAG, NEBRASKALAND



Stone Creek Falls at Platte River State Park in Cass County. JEFF KURRUS, NEBRASKALAND

MEMORIAL RUN HELPS RAISE MONEY FOR STATE PARK TRAILS

By Shawna Richter-Ryerson

Tyler Vanderheiden was an avid outdoors fan, who loved to hunt, fish and just be outside.

In 2021, the Tyler Vanderheiden Memorial Run was launched in his honor, with the goal of raising awareness and understanding of mental health and also to act as a fundraiser for Nebraska Game and Parks state park trails.

"Tyler loved the outdoors," said Shannon Vanderheiden, executive director of West Central District Health Department and Tyler's mom. "We wanted to honor his memory by giving back to what he loved while also raising awareness of mental health, a significant public health concern right here in Nebraska and across the country."

"This run helps raise awareness that walking and running are effective tools in the battle for mental and emotional wellness and are vital to helping address mental health and suicide prevention."

The annual memorial run is planned for May 14, 2022, at Cody Park in North Platte. Race organizers

have made it their goal to see runners from every Nebraska county and every state participate in-person or virtually in the race; participants may choose a 2-mile or 5-mile run.

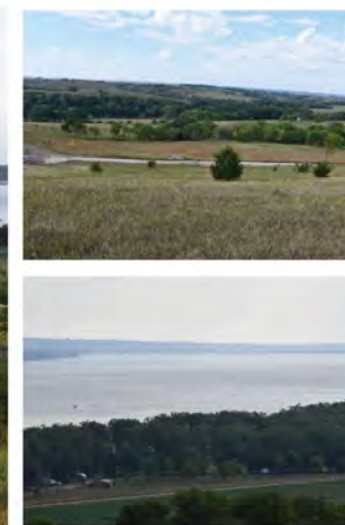
This year's race proceeds will help support the construction and upgrade of the Platte River State Park trail that leads to Stone Creek Falls. Improvements are aimed at making the trail Americans with Disabilities Act accessible.

We invite you to register online at PlatteRiverFitness.com/PublicHealth or donate to the trails fundraiser at tvm.BetterWorld.org.

The run is organized by the Platte River Fitness Series with support by the West Central District Health Department. Proceeds are donated to the Nebraska Game and Parks Foundation for the creation, maintenance or upgrade of trails at the 76 state park areas, and additional trails across the state will be supported in the future.

To learn more, visit OutdoorNebraska.org/MemorialRun.

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RAVEN’S RETURN

By Joel G. Jorgensen

Before Nebraska was settled by European Americans, its vast open areas were inhabited by the common raven. Ravens are similar to American crows, but are larger with a more extensive vocal repertoire that includes husky guttural croaks. With the disappearance of the vast herds of bison in the late 1800s, the raven was soon to follow, retreating to mountainous areas of the west and forests of the far north. However, this adaptable and widespread species was lying in wait and playing the long game. Changes in the environment that led to early declines eventually provided opportunities. It also helps that this species is not persecuted by humans to the degree it once was.

For the last several decades, the common raven has been slowly increasing in numbers and expanding its range in North America. There have been occasional reports of common raven in Nebraska over the past few decades, but for the longest time, all of these reports lacked solid documentation such as a photograph or an audio recording, which made judging their credibility difficult. Furthermore, it was also clear that many reported sightings were in error

and were misidentified American crows. However, it is likely that among the misidentified crow reports were a few legitimate common raven sightings.

Everything changed in 2021. On New Year’s Day, a common raven was seen and photographed in Sioux County by birder Kathy DeLara — this definitive sighting led other birders to look for this bird. Eventually, it relocated multiple times for the remainder of the winter. Other ravens were subsequently seen at various locations across Sioux County for the rest of the year. It appears multiple ravens have ventured into Nebraska, presumably from nearby Wyoming where this species is common.

It is quite possible the events of 2021 foreshadow what may end up as the eventual recolonization of Nebraska by the common raven. It is very unlikely ravens will become avian fixtures in developed areas such as Lincoln or Omaha, but small populations could become established in areas such as the Pine Ridge and Wildcat Hills at the western end of the state. Our birdlife is always in flux, and the raven’s return to Nebraska is just the latest example.

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Pizza with morel mushrooms, leek, fresh mozzarella cheese and arugula. JENNY NGUYEN-WHEATLEY, NEBRASKALAND

MOREL MUSHROOM PIZZA

By Jenny Nguyen-Wheatley

I've made variations of wild mushroom pizza over the years, and my go-to pairing is always leeks and morels. The flavors and aromas of mushroom and onion immediately take me to spring, even when there's 6 inches of snow outside. I often make this pizza with dried morels that I've dehydrated from the season before, just to remind myself that warmer days are around the corner.

If you find fresh morels this spring, try this recipe. Serve it with a glass of Pinot noir, Sangiovese or Tempranillo — you'd pay a fortune for a meal like this in a restaurant.

If using pesto as the sauce, I recommend a homemade one that's cut with spinach or kale, as too much basil can overpower the delicate flavor of morels.

Servings: 4

Prep Time: 30-45 minutes

Ingredients:

- 2 to 3 ounces of fresh morel mushrooms

- Refrigerated thin-crust pizza dough

- 1 leek
- Olive oil
- Splash of whisky, white wine or madeira
- 1 tablespoon of butter
- Pesto or white pizza sauce, to taste
- 8 ounces of fresh mozzarella cheese, sliced
- Grated/shaved Parmesan cheese, to taste
- Bunch of arugula
- Kosher salt
- Freshly cracked pepper

Special Equipment:

- Pizza stone
- Pizza peel

1. Preheat oven and pizza stone on the middle rack to 425° Fahrenheit. If you don't have a pizza stone, follow the directions on the packaging to prep the dough for a cookie sheet.

2. Slice white, light green and yellow parts of leek and wash thoroughly. In a pan over medium heat, add olive oil to

coat and cook sliced leek with a pinch of salt. Add a splash of water, cover and steam until tender, about 5-10 minutes.

3. Uncover leek and allow water to evaporate. Push leek to the side and add more oil. Brown mushrooms over medium-high heat until golden on both sides — do not crowd the pan. Add a splash of alcohol and cook until evaporated. Take off heat and stir in butter. Season to taste. Set aside.

4. On a lightly floured pizza peel, roll out pizza dough and cut/shape it to fit pizza stone, if needed. Spread with pesto or white sauce and top with mozzarella cheese. Top with morel mushroom and leek mixture. Transfer uncooked pizza to a preheated pizza stone and bake in a 425° oven until the bottom and edges become golden and the cheese is fully melted and slightly toasty, about 12-18 minutes.

5. To finish, top with Parmesan cheese, freshly cracked pepper and arugula to taste. Slice and serve immediately.

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Observe and Admire

Appreciating the Small Things

Photos and story by Joshua Redwine

Landscape photography often means finding that perfect moment by trusting your instincts and the direction of the wind, following wherever it takes you.

I began my career as a civil engineer, and my desire was to protect the environment by focusing my education in environmental engineering. In 2007, I was offered the opportunity to travel to Haiti, a once-in-a-lifetime journey. Armed with a few amenities from home and a sleek, new 5-megapixel, point-and-shoot camera, I boarded the plane that summer, arriving in Port Au Prince and settling in a small village on the southern coast.

While there, I wanted to capture the sights and sounds of the incredible Haitian landscape. I took long walks with our group through the mountains, starting at dawn and returning at dusk. Along the way, nature became irresistible, and I would come back every day with a memory card full of images. When people ask me where my love for landscapes came from, it was in Haiti, skipping across rocks jutting out of the rushing rivers near me.

School led me away from the camera for a few years, but after graduating from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 2011, photography pulled me back. I remembered how it felt to be completely engrossed with creating the perfect scene and wanted that feeling again. I picked up my first DSLR camera, with its seemingly infinite number of dials and switches, and found myself struggling to even hold the machine properly. Yet that didn't deter me.

I wanted to dive into every inch and detail of this new field. I sought out resources, watched videos, asked other photographers, all the while taking hikes on the trails in and around Lincoln.

There were hidden gems and unseen beauty in Nebraska that I wanted to capture through my eyes, so I have set out to witness this state at its most remarkable. Photographing Nebraska has become my passion, and I have gladly accepted the challenge of going whichever way the wind takes me. It has never failed to lead me to something incredible. [N](#)



RIGHT: Milkweed seed blows in the wind at Pawnee Lake State Recreation Area.



TOP LEFT: A bee gathers nectar from a flower in summer.

BOTTOM LEFT: A storm rages in the Nebraska National Forest near Halsey with a dazzling display of lights.

TOP RIGHT: A tattered barn gives up the ghost on a warm fall afternoon near Union.

BOTTOM RIGHT: A single corncob bares witness to a harvested field near Grand Island.





ABOVE: A windmill stands before an impending storm near Halsey.

LEFT: A little yellow butterfly enjoys a flower in the late summer.

OPPOSITE: Life finds a way as weeds push up through rotting wood on abandoned tracks in Lincoln.

Redwine is a former engineer, turned photographer, working out of Lincoln.



Outdoor Nebraska

By Renae Blum

May is the perfect time to be outside. Fill your days with time in nature, and give these activities a try. [N](#)



Try tanking

Throughout the month
Statewide

How does a lazy day on the river sound? Tanking is a uniquely fun, memorable experience — riding an outfitted tank down a slow-moving stream with friends and family. Nebraska outfitters generally offer two-to six-hour trips with shuttle service, paddles and life jackets.

ERIC FOWLER, NEBRASKALAND



Enjoy Free Fishing and Park Entry Day

May 21 | Statewide

Want to spend a Saturday fishing or exploring a state park? On this special day, no permits are required for either activity. Why not introduce someone to fishing, or gather up the family for a picnic at your favorite state park? See [Calendar.OutdoorNebraska.gov](https://calendar.outdoornebraska.gov) for details on special events.

JENNY NGUYEN-WHEATLEY, NEBRASKALAND

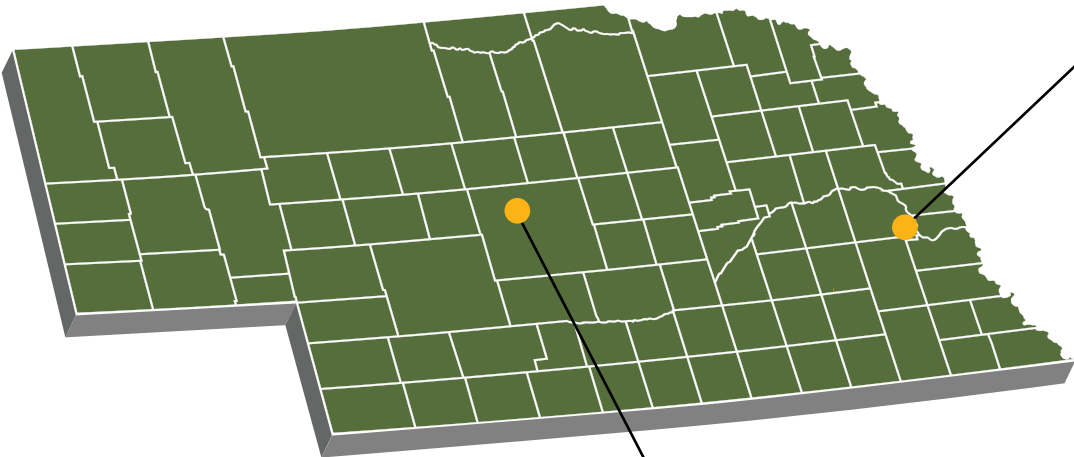


Attend the Sip Nebraska festival

May 6-7 | Eugene T. Mahoney State Park in Ashland

Enjoy unlimited tastings from Nebraska's best-produced wines, craft beers and spirits at Sip Nebraska. Spend the day playing lawn games, listening to live music, taking part in dance lessons and goat yoga, browsing local craft vendors and more. For full details, to purchase tickets and to reserve lodging, visit [SipNebraska.com](https://sipnebraska.com) or call 402-882-2448.

PHOTO COURTESY BLUR PARTIES



Last chance to participate in Take 'em Hunting

Through May 31 | Statewide

Turkey season is the perfect time to participate in the Take 'em Hunting program. Bring a beginner in the field with you, snap a photo and submit it online for the chance to win a John Deere Gator from AKRS Equipment. Make sure to get your photos in by the end of the month. Learn more at OutdoorNebraska.org/TakeEmHunting.

ERIC FOWLER, NEBRASKALAND

Visit Victoria Springs State Recreation Area

Throughout the month | Anselmo

An oasis at the edge of the Sandhills, Victoria Springs is the place to enjoy peace and quiet. It's a beautiful spot for a picnic, and you can fish or take a paddleboat ride around the picturesque spring-fed pond. Stay the night in the campground or a rustic cabin for an even more leisurely trip. Learn more at OutdoorNebraska.org/VictoriaSprings.

ERIC FOWLER, NEBRASKALAND



Discovering Slime Molds

A Botanist's Adventure

Story and photos by Gerry Steinauer,
Botanist

Two years ago, while morel mushroom hunting in a creekside woodland near Aurora, I saw a pink, dime-sized “ball” sprouting from a log. Baffled, I concluded it was a strange puffball mushroom. I snapped a photo and texted it to my go-to guy for mushroom identification, Chance Brueggemann, woodland ecologist at Indian Cave State Park.

His response: “It’s wolf’s milk, a slime mold.” I wasn’t sure what a slime mold was. I assumed they were slimy, mold-like fungi that grew on basement walls, long-forgotten food in a refrigerator and other dark, damp places. A little research showed how wrong I was.

Slime molds are like no other organism on our planet and these single-celled creatures have confounded naturalists for centuries. In their feeding stage, they are called a “plasmodium” and slowly creep under and about rotting logs, soil and leaf litter. Amazingly, experiments have shown that plasmodia display simple forms of intelligence and memory. Late in life, plasmodia transform into stationary, spore-producing, fruiting bodies that often appear as tiny, colorful mushrooms.

Recently, scientists, with the aid of DNA analysis, have placed slime molds (*Myxomycetes*) into the kingdom protista, a catchall group of mostly single-celled organisms not fitting neatly into the other four kingdoms of life: animals, plants, fungi and bacteria. The slime molds’ DNA suggests they are ancient creatures, one to two billion years old, slithering over the Earth’s barren rock surface at a time when the only other land creatures were bacteria. Today, they mostly inhabit moist forests.

I would be remiss not to mention the slime molds’ intricate beauty.



Wolf's milk growing at Indian Cave State Park on Brueggemann's prized slime mold log.

Red Lollipop

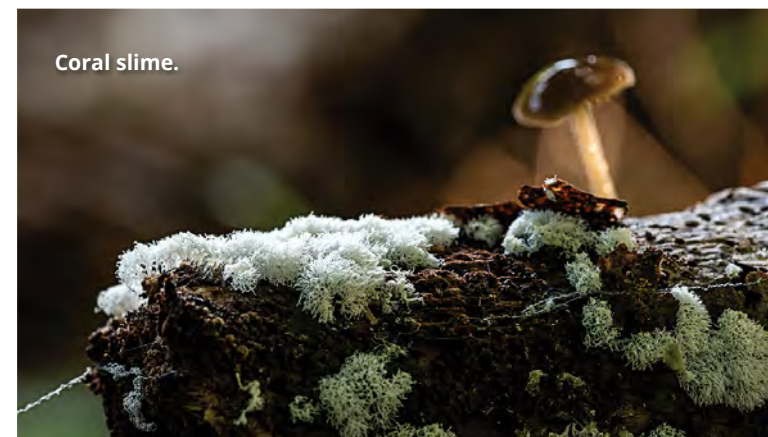
Last June, Brueggemann and I spent two days searching for and photographing slime molds in the steep Missouri River bluff forests at Indian Cave. The first morning, we veered off a hiking trail and entered a deep ravine bottom with a trickling stream. After a short hike, parting low-hanging ironwood and elm branches, our target came into sight — Brueggemann’s favorite spot to find slime molds: a hefty, decaying log.

The log did not disappoint. First, Brueggemann showed me a colony of fruiting wolf’s milk (*Lycogala epidendrum*) — pink globes growing from the rain-soaked wood. He pricked

one with a twig and out oozed a bubblegum-colored paste containing the developing spores. It’s not clear why pink ooze would lead to the name of wolf’s milk, but such is the privilege of naming.

Within days, the fruiting bodies’ pink color will fade, and then they will disintegrate into a brown powdery smudge. The powder is millions of microscopic, ripe spores.

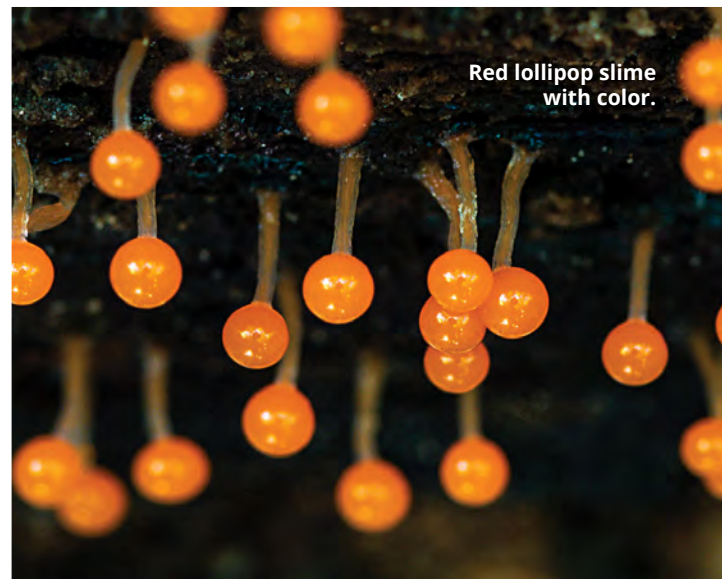
He next pointed to a cluster of tiny red dots that he calls red lollipops (*Hemitrichia calyculata*). Only through my camera’s macro lens could I make out their narrow stalks topped by round, red fruiting heads calling to mind the childhood delicacy of cherry Tootsie Pops, but only a fraction of an inch tall. Seeing the stalked heads, I grasped how slime molds



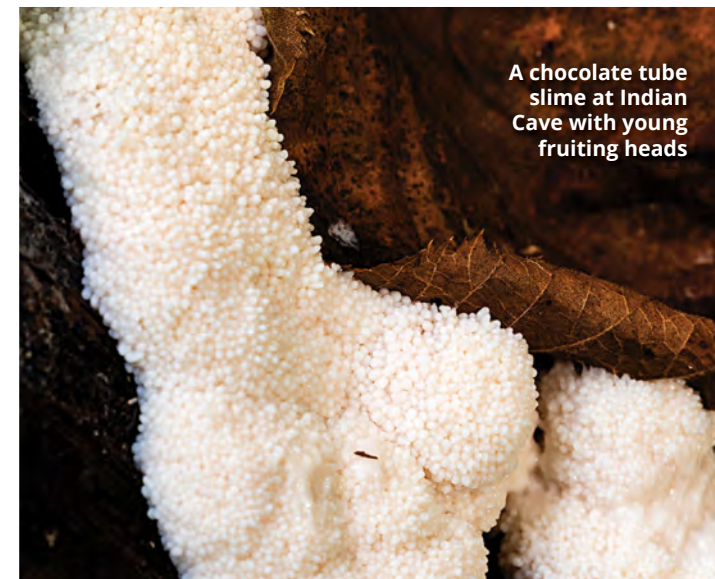
Coral slime.



Red lollipop fruiting heads are young and lacking color.



Red lollipop slime with color.



A chocolate tube slime at Indian Cave with young fruiting heads



By the next morning, the heads had matured.

could be mistaken for tiny, toadstool mushrooms.

Last, the log treated us to a patch of coral slime (*Ceratiomyxa fruticulosa*). Composed of white, translucent columns that often branch, its fruiting bodies indeed resemble coral, or perhaps more relatable for Nebraskans, a glazing of hoarfrost. When large, colonies can fuse, covering entire logs and tree stumps in white. Unique among slime molds, coral slime spores occur singly at the tips of incredibly thin stalks that project outward from the columns. All other slime molds

bear their spores within fruiting bodies.

Though other slime molds probably grow on Brueggemann's prized log, they were not fruiting and so not visible. No one knows how many slime mold species are found in Nebraska. Because our state has a relatively dry climate and few forests, it may be only a few dozen. World-wide, over a thousand known species of slime molds exist. Their wind-blown spores disperse far and wide, many species occurring on several continents.



Red lollipop caps shed and disperse spores.

Chocolate Tube Slime

Later in the day while cruising along in a UTV, Brueggemann driving, I spotted a small, white blob in the leaf litter. I shouted, Brueggemann hit the brakes, and we were treated to a slime mold, covered in low, round bumps. The round bumps were fruiting heads, just beginning to develop. Since immature slime molds are difficult to identify, we returned the next morning.

The fruiting heads had matured overnight, turning brownish in color, revealing itself to be a chocolate tube slime (*Stenomitis* spp.). Chocolate tubes, also called pipe cleaner slimes, have bunched, columnar, chocolate brown fruiting heads supported by short, thin stalks. The erect columns of this specimen had already withered and collapsed into a twisted mass, preparing to release its spores in hopes of landing on moist habitat suitable for germination.

A slime mold's life begins as a single-celled amoeba, emerging from a germinated, cracked-open spore. The amoeba prowls about, engulfing and digesting bacteria, algae, fungal spores and odd bits of organic matter. To move through wet environments, many species grow a whip-like tail to propel themselves. When the environment dries up, the tail retracts.

When an amoeba is lucky enough to meet another, their bodies and nuclei fuse in a form of primitive sex. Now a plasmodium, the organism continues to feed while the nuclei inside divide until there are millions. Spread microscopically thin, a single-celled plasmodium can encompass several square yards.

Eventually, the plasmodium migrates from its feeding area and perches on a high spot, such as a log, tree trunk or the top of leaf litter, where its spores can catch a breeze. Now stationary, the plasmodium transforms into fruiting bodies, inside of which the nuclei develop into spores and the life cycle begins again.

Slime molds have a clever adaptation that might explain their eons-long survival on this sometimes harsh planet. When exposed to dry, cold or foodless conditions, they can dehydrate and enter into a state of dormancy lasting weeks, centuries and possibly millennia. When favorable conditions return, they re-hydrate and dormancy is broken. This strategy is especially advantageous for slime molds living in desert soils, on mountain tops and other extreme environments.

Many-headed Slime

During our photo expedition, Brueggemann was keen to show me a many-headed slime (*Physarum* spp.). Previously, he had seen its beautiful, yellow plasmodia growing vein-like on logs, leaf litter and even large mushrooms. Though we did not find the slime in the field, its story is worth telling.

Unique among slime molds, many-headed slimes have large plasmodia, easily visible to the naked eye. Because they are easy to grow in petri dishes, they are the world's most-studied slime mold. One revelation from the lab is that the plasmodia of slime molds propel themselves by rhythmic contractions that push cell fluids back and forth in waves from their center to their extremities. The many-headed slime has been clocked at a tire-squealing speed of over an inch per minute. Having precise control of the contractions, they can change speed, reverse direction, steer around distasteful items (think bright light or salt) and send tendrils out to explore for food and suitable habitat.

Experiments show that *Physarum* can solve mazes in search of food. It extends tendrils on all paths until it finds the food, then retracts all except the feeding tendril. Later, when placed in the same maze, the slime mold can recall the correct path to its meal. In another experiment, many-headed slimes were hit with shots of cold air at regular intervals. Their response was to retract. Amazingly, they learned to expect



A many-headed slime plasmodium growing on a log at Indian Cave.
CHANCE BRUEGEMANN



Dog vomit growing in the author's front yard.

the blast and retracted in anticipation.

Contrary to traditional beliefs about primitive organisms, these behaviors suggest that slime molds have forms of intelligence and memory comparable to simple animals that possess nerves and elementary brains. Scientists are unsure how intelligence and memory work in slime molds, but assume it is through chemical messaging in the cell fluids. For now, it remains a mystery.

Dog Vomit

Last August, while tussling with our English Cocker pup in the front yard, I spotted several white blobs clinging to the grass. The blobs were dog vomit — not from our pup, but the so-named slime mold (*Fuligo septica*).

This grossly, but aptly-named species indeed looks like dog vomit, especially the foamy kind they expel after eating too much grass. The yellow-colored form of this species is often called scrambled eggs slime mold.

Dog vomit is widespread, possibly the most readily observed of the slime molds. It inhabits forest floors and logs, urban mulch piles, gardens and lawns. Its appearance in our yard was abrupt, as I had just mowed a day or two prior. A few days after I first observed the dog vomit, its white fruiting heads faded to tan in color and hardened with calcium. Soon

after, it disintegrated, releasing its black spores.

Although the dog vomit patches in my yard were at most a few inches across, infestations can be quite large. In 1973 in a Dallas suburb, a particularly large outbreak of dog vomit spread across lawns. Panicking, residents called firefighters to hose the mysterious blobs into oblivion. The jets of water only broke the slime mold into pieces that continued to slither and grow, sending suburban imaginations further out of control.

Possibly stoked by the 1958 sci-fi movie *The Blob*, they now feared that indestructible alien creatures had invaded their neighborhood, even as scientists reassured them that the invaders were harmless, earthly slime molds. Eventually, the “aliens” dissipated on their own, without the need for a nuclear strike.

The Dallas scare testifies to how little we, as a society, perceive and understand nature. Botanists use the phrase “plant blindness” to refer to the general public’s inability to see or notice plants in their environment. This is likely because plants are green, stationary and less eye-catching than mobile and more colorful animals.

As a botanist, I must now confess to “slime mold blindness.” All the years I have hiked Nebraska woodlands, head cranked down searching for plants, I have been oblivious to these beautiful and fascinating organisms. What I have missed! 🍄



A damaged dog vomit seeps the amber liquid in which its spores develop.

“Utter Disregard for Peril”

Eyewitness Account of an 1870s Nebraska Roundup

By David L. Bristow, *History Nebraska*

“By the mid-1870s Nebraska’s open-range cattle industry ... was experiencing growing pains,” writes historian Jim Potter. In the Platte Valley and the Panhandle, people worried about the “introduction of Texas cattle to supply the Indian agencies, unregulated ‘round-ups’ that caused ownership disputes (in winter, long hair made brands hard to see), and bulls running at large year round.”

In early 1875, cattlemen met in Ogallala to organize the Stock-Growers Association of Western Nebraska. At the group’s request, the state legislature authorized stock inspectors and limited the roundup period to May 15 through November 15.

The association then organized their first official roundup to begin in Sidney on May 15. One party followed Pole Creek up from Sidney and eventually worked east down both the South and North Platte rivers. A second party worked west from North Platte as far as Ash Hollow.

What was such a roundup like? Potter found a lively



Nebraska cowboys at Round Valley in Custer County, 1888.
History Nebraska RG2608-1423



Cowboy and herd in Cherry County in 1889.
History Nebraska RG2608-3300



A circa-1910 Nebraska roundup, from the collection of Chadron judge and newspaper editor Eli Ricker.
History Nebraska RG1227-15-3



Lee Brothers Ranch at Brownlee, Cherry County, in 1900. History Nebraska RG2608-1837

eyewitness account of the following year's roundup in the North Platte *Western Nebraskan* of June 17, 1876:

"... The cattle [were] sighted, scattered here and there in bunches, ranging from five to two hundred head, which at sight of a horseman would break and run. Then comes the excitement — up gulch, down canyons, over hills and tablelands, on a long steady run, in their vain efforts to escape from the boys who are pursuing them, horses and riders equally thrilled with the excitement of the chase; 'tis grand, exhilarating, and as the cattle are overtaken, checked and put with another bunch or bunches, they are then driven to the rodeo ground.

"Then comes the separation or 'cutting.' A band of a thousand head [is] surrounded by twenty horsemen or more. One party, employees of the owner, enter the herd, select the animals bearing the owner's brand and mark, cutting each animal from the main herd and making a bunch of that brand until all are separated.

"This 'cutting' is exciting work. Now going at full speed as the animal makes an effort to get again with the main bunch; now stopping and wheeling as quick as a flash of lightning, dodging, twisting, until the animal perceives the folly of its efforts and permits itself to be driven to the bunch or brand where it belongs.

"No horsemanship can excel that which is displayed by an experienced cow-boy. As they dash over the rough prairie at the top of their mustang's speed, [avoiding] great numbers of holes, the work of prairie dogs and our family of sub-soilers, the utter disregard of their peril is something as courageous as it is rash.

"The training of the 'cutting' horses is something wonderful. No matter what distance the cutting horse has traveled, how fatigued it may be, the moment you ride it into the herd every muscle, every faculty, is on the alert and the intelligence they display is something almost human; and occasionally you hear a cow-boy speaking of his favorite, 'He knows more than most of men,' is the usual expression.

"All the cattle separated, each man holds his brand separate, another bunch is gathered and separated until night. ... Such is the routine, each day having its incidents. In case of dispute as to who owns an animal, the animal is lassoed, thrown down, and all marks examined and the ownership is readily proven. A great many true gentlemen can be found among these wild fellows, men that are honest, intelligent, and when one offers his friendship, it is a friendship that will stand all tests." [N](#)

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

In Hot Pursuit

Story and photos by Renae Blum

It had already been an enjoyable day: wading in Pawnee Lake, picnicking along the shore, chasing Frisbees and etching names in the sand. But it was perhaps a simple green post that garnered the most excitement of all.

“I see it! I see it!”

Spotting the familiar outline along a wooded trail, Kenzie and Ellie Muma of Papillion took off at a breakneck pace, racing to get there first. Once their laughing parents caught up, the girls took turns pressing a sheet of paper to the top of the post, making a rubbing with a crayon.

It’s an experience the Muma family enjoyed several times

that summer: visiting a Nebraska park, following clues to a post, making rubbings and mailing them in for a chance at prizes.

That’s much of the idea behind the Great Park Pursuit, a free treasure-hunt-style program that plays out each year at parks across Nebraska. Twenty official sites are selected each year, including city parks, state parks, natural resource district areas and sometimes national park areas. Teams can visit as many as they choose, following clues to Great Park Pursuit posts and logging their visits on paper or in a mobile app for entry into prize drawings.



After following clues to a Great Park Pursuit post, Kenzie Muma creates a rubbing to mail in for entry into prize drawings. Participants can also log their visits to a post with the Great Park Pursuit app, but this family prefers the rubbing sheets.



Amanda Fryzek and Vince Muma pause along a park trail with three of their children, 1-year-old Elijah, 4-year-old Ellie and 5-year-old Kenzie.

Past prizes have included a GoPro camera, backyard bird packages, two-night cabin stays, magazine subscriptions, park entry permits, and the grand prize, \$1,500 of outdoor gear.

It’s a popular program, too: Each year, participants make over 100,000 park visits, with more than 700 teams participating.

The Mumas have participated for several years now, and it’s become a mainstay in their lives. “It kind of lays out the summer for us,” said Amanda Fryzek. “It gives us different vacation plans for the weekends to enjoy with family.”

Her husband Vince guesses that they have visited more than 50 sites in total. They’ve stood beneath a waterfall at Smith Falls State Park, watched reenactors make candles at Indian Cave State Park, and splashed in puddles at Pacific Preserve in Omaha. They even discovered a park in their own neighborhood that they’d never visited: Halleck Park, a new favorite.

“This program really gets us to check out new places,” Amanda said. “We’ve gone back to Halleck Park so many times now.”

Her family’s experience of the Great Park Pursuit has been

How to Get Involved

Ready to begin your Great Park Pursuit adventure? Visit negpp.org and click “Get started” to sign-up your team for free. Browse the “Locations” tab to learn more about this year’s park sites and find one near you. Make sure to check out the “Activities” tab for ideas on fun activities for kids to enjoy when you make your visit. The program runs from May 1 to Oct. 31, 2022.



The Great Park Pursuit makes it easy to plan an outdoor experience. The park information sheets include detailed descriptions of each site, including directions and information on park amenities and activities. You can mark your visit to a Great Park Pursuit post with either the official app or the information sheet; some walking may be required to reach the post.

Anyone can participate. Teams can be made up of individuals, families, friends, coworkers, youth organizations or any other group you belong to. Both the program and app are free; you only need to pay for postage when mailing in rubbings. Follow the Great Park Pursuit on Facebook for additional tips and information.

The Great Park Pursuit is a joint program of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and the Nebraska Recreation and Park Association. Sponsors include the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District and the Nebraska Chiropractic Physicians Association.

a family affair from the start. Their oldest son, 11-year-old Keenan, introduced them to the program after trying it with his grandma. Since then, they’ve shared park visits with all their family and closest friends, and Amanda’s mom buys them state park passes each year for Christmas so they can continue enjoying the Great Park Pursuit.

One benefit of the Great Park Pursuit is that it’s an easy, cost-effective option for family fun, Amanda said. It also keeps them active and introduces them to Nebraska’s lesser-known gems.

“People think you have to travel far to see something really cool, and that’s not the case at all,” Amanda said. “Nebraska has such cool, unique places to visit. There are so many places to see and things to do here that we wouldn’t have done without the Great Park Pursuit.”



My City Sanctuary

Story and photos by Marissa Jensen

Quiet amid noise seems like a contradiction, and yet, I’ve discovered it in the most surprising of places.

Omaha is a bustling city where everyone is in a hurry to get somewhere — now. This incessant busyness is overwhelming. Every day, as weekdays feel longer and demands scream louder, I feel a part of me slipping away in all the noise. It was on such a morning, while in search of something “more” both within myself and outdoors, when I found the cure I was looking for. While walking a path near my house, I stumbled across a newfound

love nestled deep within the city: Bluestem Prairie Preserve — a section of vestigial habitat of native grasses and wildflowers.

Like my own Central Park, these 21 acres serve as a memory of what once was and the inspiration of what could be. Although that wasn’t my first visit to this nearby prairie, this day marked a transition within myself, and over the past year, I set about to explore this sanctuary and found a land teeming with possibility and life.

Hidden gems lie within the confines of all cities. From parks to ponds and paths to prairies, wilderness exists in



ABOVE: My red-tailed hawk shadow.
OPPOSITE: A female great-horned owl sits on a new nest.



An American goldfinch showing off its winter plumage.

the most unexpected places, waiting for our curiosity to find it. As the New Year began, I met a pair of breeding great horned owls searching for their perfect nesting site. I'm glad they found one here, which allowed them to raise their chicks at a safe distance from the noise that wrapped around them. Watching this next generation grow and thrive was a reminder that life is much bigger than ourselves. A red-tailed hawk became a beloved

friend who visited me on multiple outings, as if he were a shadow on my walks. He didn't seem to mind my presence, and in fact, may have used it as a tool to hunt. He often followed me, scanning the grass for critters I kicked up. Watching him enabled me to see this land in new light. With him, I bore witness to the circle of life, the elegant dance between predator and prey. As winter thawed, the prairie awakened, and the sights and sounds

of spring slowly came to life. The seasonal restlessness of spring is carried upon the wings of migration, and sanctuaries such as these provide a much-needed respite for many birds on their long journeys home. Lying in bed at night, I listened for the coyote's lonely cry. With my window cracked in invitation, the timbre of the prairie helped me drift off to sleep. Summer brought warmth and colors, with a canvas of wildflowers to greet

me and the insects each morning. Monarch butterflies floated among the milkweed, while a symphony of grassland birds sang their songs. A mulberry tree, heavy with the ripe taste of summer, would provide a welcome treat. Sitting in its ancient shadow, I reflected upon the history of this place and how it was becoming a part of me. Days after this visit, a reminder of those mulberries remained stained on my thumb.



A squirrel keeping an eye on my wanderings.



A monarch butterfly nectaring on milkweed.



A bumblebee gets nectar from a lovely coneflower.



A cedar waxwing takes rest under a canopy of trees which line the prairie.



A juvenile red-tailed hawk.



Summer's palette courtesy of freshly picked mulberries.

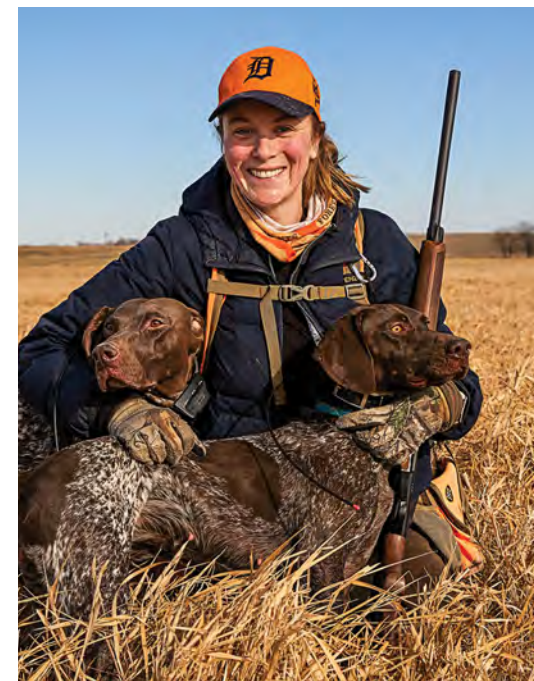
Then, like in the blink of an eye, the season fades into fall and winter, as once again, waves of wildlife move on with the tide of migration. Vibrant colors lie dormant until rising up with spring's new growth.

Left behind to watch the seasons and wildlife transition each year, I ponder what this place has taught me. Quiet patience and appreciation of little and seemingly common things were all subtleties I had previously taken for granted. During visits to my city sanctuary, I developed a love and adoration for these little gems, all tucked within my neighborhood city. Each walk promised a glimpse of something wild and the realization that wilderness is never too far outside our reach.

Now, I wait. As winter's cold breath wanes, I patiently anticipate the prairie's green shoots. What lies in wait for this city sanctuary, and likewise, myself? How will the coming years transform who we are and how we grow? Only time will tell. All I know is that I will continue to walk the trails and search for meaning, regardless of

the season. And perhaps someday, a kindred soul will visit and find what they've been searching for as well. 

Omaha native Marissa Jensen is a writer and photographer who spends her free time exploring the unexpected wilderness of Nebraska.



Another Hobby

A Fly-fishing Primer

By Jeff Kurrus

Fly-fishing often gets a bad rap, accused of having too many accoutrements and being too pricy. Yet a bare bones, Walmart rod-reel combo costs less than \$50, and some of the other supplies can be found around the house. If you talk to an experienced fly angler, more specifically a fly tier, you'll probably walk away with enough flies to last you several trips. And the casting is nothing more than practice. Pull the fly hard off the water above your head, wait long enough to allow the line to straighten behind you, then gently move your arm back forward to cast your fly. Before long, you'll be casting as far as you want.

Until then, take a look at this checklist. 



1. Two-piece fly-rod – These rods come in various lengths and weights. A fly can be left on the line when it's broken down to two pieces.
2. Four-piece fly-rod – Same as the two-piece versions, these models can be more easily packed for local or out-of-town trips or left in the vehicle in a rod case throughout the fishing season.
3. Fly-rod case – These hard cases protect fly rods from breaking and are designed for two- or four-piece rods.
4. Fly assortment – Flies should match the fish you seek, including dry flies, wet flies, popping bugs or weighted flies.
5. Fly box – Container for holding flies. Optimally can fit in the angler's pocket.
6. Fly-fishing bag – Carrying case for desired equipment.
7. Leader line – Usually monofilament line that connects to the fly line on one end and the fly on the other.
8. Fly line – Because most flies are so light, fly line is used to transfer the energy from the cast from the fly rod to the fly. The fly line weight must match the rod weight.
9. Waders/Hip Boots – Allows anglers to wade when stream or lake fishing. Waders come in a variety of types, including stocking foot models. Hip boots are handy to keep in the vehicle at all times.
10. Forceps/Needle Nose Pliers – Tools often used to remove hooks from a fish's mouth.
11. Wading net – Should match the species of fish targeted.
12. Fly line dressing – Wax-like substance used to keep floating fly line clean and buoyant longer.
13. Line cutters – A pair of nail clippers work just fine.
14. Strike indicator – Visual indicator for subtle strikes.

PASS THE SALT

By Roger Welsch

Capital cities of most states are on vital transportation routes — rivers, railroads, highways. Or perhaps where there is the promise of wealth from abundant resources — lumbering, mining, water. But then there’s Lincoln, our capital city. Railroads and highways have to divert from the most obvious paths of least resistance — for example, the Platte Valley — to serve the second smallest city in the state. There’s certainly no river traffic on Salt Creek.

In fact, not only is water not a Lancaster County asset, it’s a major problem. Lincoln’s water has to be piped in from Platte River sands from Ashland 30 miles to the north, the subsurface water at Lincoln not being suitable for drinking, and in fact, not even being usable to water lawns or cool generators.

Some smarties out there already know where I’m going with this; some of the rest of you may have spotted a clue a couple of lines above. Lincoln is here precisely because of its water. Or, perhaps I should say, what’s in the water. There are hints all around us: Salt Creek ... Saline County ... Salttillo And less obvious in place names like Boy Scout Camp Miniskuya at the southwestern edge of the city, Miniskuya being the Lakota word for salt water. To this day, the Omaha Tribe knows Lincoln by the name Nithskithe — “Salt.”

It’s hard to imagine these days, when tons of salt are spread on our streets and highways to remove ice and snow and dietitians warning us to limit the sodium in our foods, but before huge salt plugs were mined in Kansas and salt could be scooped up by giant loaders from the Utah salt flats, salt was a rare and valuable commodity. There were

phrases like “worth his salt,” a reference to a time when a man’s day’s work could be paid with a small amount of the mineral. Plains tribes traveled great distances to come to the salt “lick” now known as Capital Beach, to dust salt from thin surface deposits with feather brushes and carry it back to tribal homes in deerskin bags.

Efforts to extract salt commercially with evaporation “pans” were never very successful, but one year in Lincoln’s early development, 62 tons of salt were extracted from the Lincoln flats. When I was a boy, it was to be a great adventure to ride the city bus “way west of the city” to Capital Beach amusement park and swim in the natural salt water swimming pool, filled from what some believed to be a vast salt water ocean under Lancaster County. My father used to tell me about an artesian well of salt water on the northeast corner of Ninth and O streets, where newcomers were welcomed to refresh themselves and their horses with a big gulp of the clear sparkling water, immediately to be spat out on the pavement when the joke was realized.

Salt is an important part of our geology, history and culture. And it is easily seen, as much today as ever. Next time you are on I-80 between Capital Beach Lake and the south end of the Lincoln airport runways on a hot, dry summer day, glance quickly to the north. See that white dusting on the ground on the other side of the fence? It’s Niskithe! Salt! And the reason for Lincoln.

Roger Welsch is a folklorist, humorist and author who lives in Dannebrog.



When the soil dries, the concentration of salt becomes obvious — a crust of salt that forms on the surface. CHRIS HELZER

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HOLT COUNTY Summer Events

O'Neill Summerfest - July 15, 16, 17
www.oneillchamber.com

Ewing Summer FunFest - May 27, 28, 29
Hairball Concert on May 28
www.ewingsummerfunfest.com

Atkinson Hay Days - August 19, 20, 21
www.atkinsonhaydays.com

Stuart 4th of July Celebration
www.facebook.com/stuartcelebration

Chambers Old Fashioned Hometown Fun - July 4

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OUTDOOR DISCOVERY DAYS

By Julie Van Meter, State Entomologist
Nebraska Department of Agriculture

Entomology staff with the Nebraska Department of Agriculture have participated in the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission's Outdoor Discovery Days for several years. Elementary students from across the state attend hands-on outdoor learning opportunities each spring, held at Fort Kearny State Recreation Area and Platte River State Park. Students learn new outdoor skills and increase their knowledge of wildlife and the outdoors.

This spring, youth attending Outdoor Discovery Days will have the opportunity to learn about exotic and invasive insects that threaten Nebraska's trees. NDA staff will teach students about invasive insects including spotted lanternfly, emerald ash borer (EAB) and Asian longhorned beetle. Activities will help students better understand the biology and identification of these pests, preferred hosts, signs and symptoms of infestation, and how to prevent pests from becoming established in Nebraska.

Outreach is a very important part of NDA's work to protect the state from the introduction and establishment of invasive species. Teaching the industry and citizens about invasive species increases the number of eyes looking for signs and

symptoms of these pests. As more people across the state know what to look for and how to report possible invasive species sightings, the potential increases that an infestation can be found early when eradication is most likely to be successful.

If you think you have seen an exotic invasive species not known to occur in Nebraska, such as spotted lanternfly or Asian longhorned beetle, or think you've found EAB in a Nebraska county not known to be infested, please report it. Collect the insect or take pictures. Note the time of day and location where you found the pest. Reports can be sent to NDA by emailing agr.plant@nebraska.gov. Or use the Nebraska Invasive Species Programs online reporting tool, found at neinvasives.com/report-a-sighting. Together, we can help protect Nebraska from invasive plant pests.



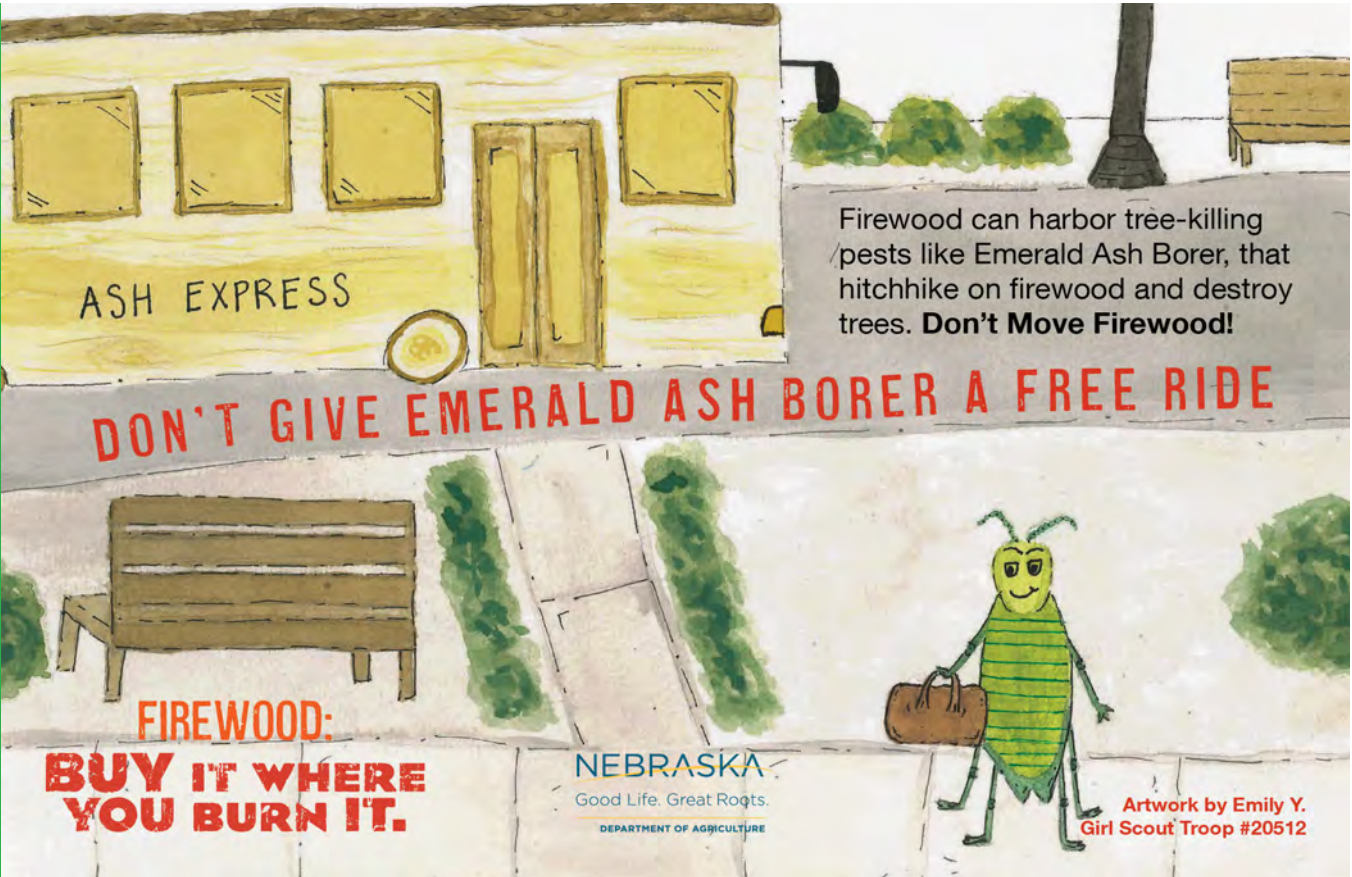
Asian longhorn beetle.

KENNETH R. LAW, USDA APHIS PPQ, Bugwood.org



Spotted lanternfly.

RICH GARDNER, BUGWOOD.ORG



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An advertisement for Leach Camper Sales. It features a white Leach camper parked on a paved road with a forest and mountains in the background. A QR code is visible in the bottom left corner. The Leach Camper Sales logo is in the top right corner, with the website LEACHRV.COM and the phone number (402) 466-8581.

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An advertisement for the Pawnee Plunge Water Park. It features a large aerial view of the water park and three smaller photos of people enjoying the water. The text "MAKE A SPLASH At the Pawnee Plunge Open May 27 - August 7, 2022" is at the top. The address "560 33rd St, Columbus NE", website "visitcolumbusne.com", and phone number "402-562-4269" are in the middle. The bottom section shows a QR code, the Columbus Area Convention & Visitors Bureau logo, and the Pawnee Plunge Water Park sign.

RARE BUTTERFLY SURVEY

By Cody Dreier, Pollinator Ecologist, NGPC

The regal fritillary and monarch butterfly are both species that have been declining and are being considered for listing on the federal Endangered Species List. The monarch has already been evaluated, and the determination was that its listing is considered warranted but currently precluded because of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's prioritization of species in need of more urgent attention. This means that while the monarch meets the requirements for federal listing, there are too many other species in even worse shape that take precedence. Listing of the regal fritillary will be determined in the next few years.

In Nebraska, both butterflies are listed in Nebraska's State Wildlife Action Plan as Tier 1 Species of Greatest Conservation Need. This designation helps us focus our research on the species that can benefit most from conservation and management efforts. Because of limited staffing, some research efforts benefit greatly from help from the community and volunteers.

The rare butterfly survey relies on the help of trained volunteers from communities across the state. Volunteers who help with this community science project walk along survey routes looking for monarchs and regals. They also gather vegetation, habitat and land-use information to help biologists understand where the butterflies are located and sometimes, more importantly, where they are not on the landscape.

This project runs from June 15 to August 15 to capture the



Regal fritillary butterfly. CHRIS HELZER

window of time that both species are in flight in Nebraska. Monarchs usually arrive in Nebraska around May and stay through September. Regal fritillaries, however, do not migrate and have a comparatively narrow window of time when they are active in the state.

Please consider attending one of three free training events planned for this project this spring. The first is an in-person training on May 21 at Schramm Park State Recreation Area near Gretna. The second is a virtual training on May 26 on Zoom. The last is another in-person training on June 4 at Homestead National Historic Park near Beatrice. Only one training is needed to participate in the survey, and they will run from 1 p.m. until 5 p.m.

The first hour of the training is open to anyone who would like to learn more about monarchs, regals, common plants and other community science opportunities. After this introduction, anyone interested in participating in the survey will learn the ins-and-outs of the methods during the remainder of the training.

These training sessions will provide the skills and materials needed to participate in this project and help contribute important data for the conservation of these rare butterflies. Registration is required. Please sign up for one of the events at Calendar. OutdoorNebraska.gov or through the events links at facebook.com/nebraskamPI. Further details will be sent to registered participants. For more information or questions about the project, contact Pollinator Ecologist Cody Dreier at cody.dreier@nebraska.gov or at 402-471-1755.



Monarch butterfly. ERIC FOWLER, NEBRASKALAND

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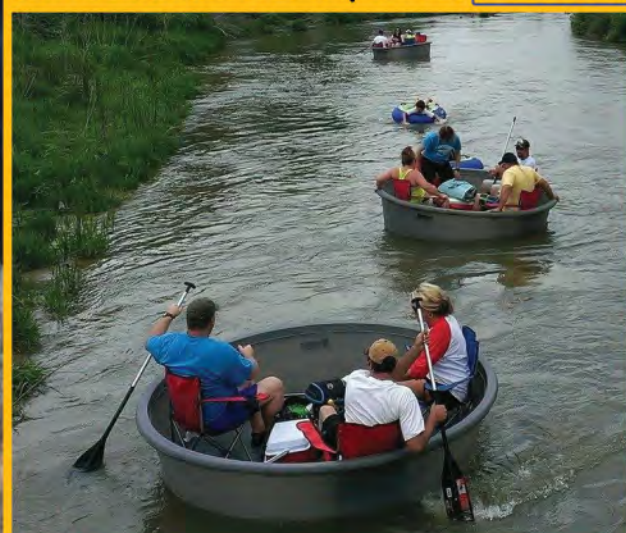


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Atkinson Pheasant Hunt, 1980.

This picture was taken in Atkinson (Holt County) on opening day of pheasant season in 1980.

Front Row: Bryan Slaymaker, Ray Shaffer, Troy Shaffer and Claire Beck.

Back Row: Larry Ries, Roger Ries, Harry Morgan and Dean Gotschall.

My dad, Larry Ries, has kept this picture tucked away for a long time. Two of the men in the picture are no longer living, so this is a very cherished memory. This was one of Bryan's first big pheasant hunts.

Dad gets *Nebraskaland* and shares it with all of us kids and grandkids. We love this magazine!

– Brandi Mitchell, Atkinson



Deer Hunt South of Worms, 1953.

This photo was taken on Harold Luebbe's property south of Worms after a successful deer hunt in 1953. The hunters were Arnold Luebbe, Bill Stolle and Bill Carter, all of Grand Island. Posing with the game were Conni (Stolle) Bales, now of Omaha and Barb (Luebbe) Sander, now of Holdrege.

Arnold Luebbe was my wife's uncle, and Harold was her dad.

– Bob Sander, Holdrege



Pheasant Hunt near Shickley, 1986.

My best friend, Bob Anderson, of more than 50 years just passed this spring, and we found this picture and displayed it at his funeral service.

This was taken outside of Shickley in 1986. Four of us and our sons and another friend are in the picture. From left to right are Bob and Blake Anderson, Mike and Marsh Kelley, Mike and Kevin Eisenhower, Dick and Mike Ripley and Dick Young (all from Lincoln).

Plus, Rixie and Roses, our goldens.

– Mike Kelley, Lincoln

Fishing near Palisade, 1940s.

This is a picture of my father-in-law Dr. F.M. Karrar (far right) and friend.

– Bev Karrar, Omaha

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



SMILING FOR, AND AT, PHOTOS

By Justin Haag

Through the years, I have taken countless pictures of my son and daughter holding fish. From dinky perch and crappies to much larger bass and northern pike, no catch has been off limits for a snapshot. Chances are, you have been exposed to some of those pictures in the pages of this magazine and other Game and Parks materials.

Now that my son is in college and my daughter in high school, the photos bring a smile as I look back at them and relive the years along the shoreline, on kayaks, on ice or in a boat.

One photo from the mid-2000s makes me smile a little more than the others. It is a low-resolution image taken during an impromptu trip to the nearby Chadron City Reservoirs. I'm holding a largemouth bass and at my side is my preschool son, Sawyer, his prized Spongebob fishing combo and a little bluegill. Sawyer's Cabela's hat is hardly shading his chubby cheeks, and his Husker shirt is barely containing remnants of his baby fat.

Moments prior to that photo, I had helped him set the

hook on that little bluegill, the first of many caught that day. After assuming full control of the rod, he gritted his teeth, laboriously turned the handle, and said, "Dang, it's hard."

The struggle came as some disappointment to his father. "What kind of wimp am I raising here? It's just a little bluegill," I thought.

Soon, I would see a much larger fish — a largemouth bass — rise to the surface and create a swirl. It was then apparent why Sawyer was laboring during the retrieve. Turns out that small bluegill, fighting a struggle of its own, served as a superb lure for a nearby bucketmouth looking for a meal.

Thankfully, I had a little point-and-shoot digital camera with a timer along that day to document one of the first of so many of my kids' prized, and not-so-prized, catches.

My budding angler got a hands-on lesson about how the food chain works that day, while Dad got a lesson that things are sometimes not as they first appear in fishing ... or, of course, in parenting.

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