



An American goldfinch perches on an ice-covered limb after an intense storm in Hall County. Photo by Rick Rasmussen.

Published by the
NEBRASKA
— GAME  PARKS —
NebraskalandMagazine.com
OutdoorNebraska.org

Published by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission since 1926

NEBRASKAland

December 2016

In this issue
NEBRASKAland
2016 Photo Contest



PLUS
Ice Fishing Initiation • Meat Under Pressure
Winter Color • Travel to Crawford • Bighorn Sheep
Time Well Spent • Welch's Kestrel

Experience Winterfest in Nebraska's State Parks



Rekindle the fun of being together.
Find events and details at OutdoorNebraska.org/Winterfest

NEBRASKA
— GAME  PARKS —

NEBRASKAland Magazine

Volume 94 • No. 10 • December 2016

FEATURES...

- 22** One Way to Start
A Personal Introduction to Ice Fishing
STORY AND PHOTOS BY JEFF KURRUS
- 32** Time Well Spent - What to Do in December
BY RENAE BLUM
- 34** 2016 Photo Contest
PHOTOS BY NEBRASKALAND MAGAZINE READERS
- 50** Meat Under Pressure
BY GERRY STEINAUER
- 56** Winter's Colors
PHOTOS AND STORY BY CHRIS HELZER
- 62** Small Harvest - Big Impact
STORY AND PHOTOS BY JUSTIN HAAG

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

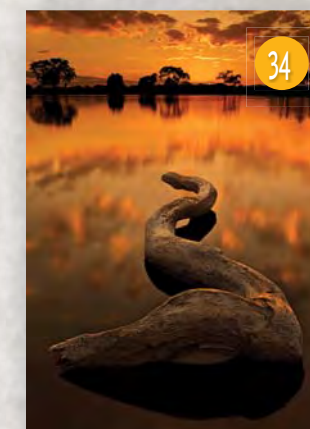
Mixed Bag – Holiday Gift Guide, Thirteen-lined Ground Squirrel, Travel to Crawford, A Brief History of Prairie Dog Towns Sold to Englishmen, Ponca State Park Winter Activities, Upcoming Events, and more 10
Page 49 – Welsh's Return of the Kestrel 60
In the Field – Holiday Tradition..... 72
Wilderness Workshop – Muzzleloading Tips..... 73
Portraits from the Past..... 76
In the Kitchen – Bacon-wrapped Goose Breast 80
Junior Journal – From Trail Tales for Kids 81
The Last Stop – Christmas Vacation..... 82



WHEN YOU SEE THIS SYMBOL IN THE PAGES OF NEBRASKALAND MAGAZINE, VISIT NEBRASKALANDMAGAZINE.COM AND VIEW OUR INTERACTIVE DIGITAL EDITION FOR MORE INFORMATION.

Cover: "Untouched Snow on Willow Island Road" by Richard Jones was one of the entries in this year's Photo Contest. See story on page 34.

NEBRASKALAND (VOL. 94 / NO. 10 ISSN 0028-1964) is published monthly, except for the combined Jan./Feb. and Aug./Sept. issues, by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, 2200 N. 33rd St., Lincoln, NE. Periodicals postage paid at Lincoln, Nebraska, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to NEBRASKALAND, P.O. Box 30370, Lincoln, NE 68503-0370.





Ivy Lunbery of Alliance shot this photo of a turkey vulture sitting on a fence post near Whitman.



Sabrina Nicholson of Curtis said of this piebald deer, "I've been photographing him since he was a baby. This is the second year rack – hoping he makes it through another deer season."



Zach Hanson of Omaha took this photo of backpackers at Indian Cave State Park. "We get together and camp one weekend per month, from October - April, no matter the weather forecast. Fall is by far my favorite time to camp and winter is a close second," Hanson said.

Hello NEBRASKAland Readers

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

Donated hides will be shipped to a tannery to be turned into soft leather and made into gloves for veterans who use wheelchairs or used for craft kits that are distributed to veterans at Veterans Affairs Hospitals across the world as part of the Elks Help a Vet program.

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

Contact your local Elks Lodge for more information.

Jeff Sneller
Lincoln Elks Lodge



Mark Deane of Papillion sent us this photo of Ivy Shaw during a kayaking trip down the Platte River between Eugene T. Mahoney State Park and Louisville State Recreation Area in Cass County.



Lindsey Keller captured this photo while looking for fall footage near Raymond.

Tanner Podraza took this photo in late September of a tractor near harvest season in Platte County.



Outdoor Plates

Gary Fredrick of St. Paul shows his love for deer hunting, something he's been doing for 42 years, on his message plate.

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

From the Editor: After publication of our November issue, we came across the following information concerning the November Brief History entitled "Game Day 1922."

Nebraska's 1922 win over Notre Dame's famed "Four Horsemen" marked the first loss by the legendary quartet between 1922 and 1924. The 1923 Cornhuskers repeated the feat with a 14-7 win over the Fighting Irish in Lincoln on Nov. 10, 1923. Those Irish teams, coached by the great Knute Rockne, finished their three-year run with the "Four Horsemen" sporting a 27-2-1 record, with both losses coming to the Huskers.

Send your comments to:

Jeff Kurrus, Editor
NEBRASKAland Magazine
P.O. Box 30370
Lincoln, NE 68503

or e-mail Jeff.Kurrus@Nebraska.gov
 Please include your postal address and telephone number. Letters may be condensed and edited. Photographs are also welcome.

Any program that receives federal funding from the National Park Service, or the United States Fish and Wildlife Service prohibits unlawful discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, age, gender, marital status, national origin, age, disability or political affiliation. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against in any program, activity, facility, or service, should contact the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Lincoln, NE 402-471-0641, the Equal Opportunity Commission, Lincoln, NE 402-471-2024, TTY/TDD 402-471-4693; United States Fish Wildlife Service, Civil Rights Coordinator, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Arlington, VA 22203; Director, Equal Opportunity Program, U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service, 1849 C Street NW, Mail Code 0008, Washington, D.C. 20240-0001.

NEBRASKAland Magazine

NEBRASKA
— GAME PARKS —

COMMISSIONERS

Director Jim Douglas

Commissioners

Chairman - Mark Spurgin, Paxton

Vice Chairman - Rex Fisher, Omaha

2nd Vice Chairman - Dick Bell, Omaha

Dr. Kent Forney, Lincoln

Robert Allen, Eustis

Pat Berggren, Broken Bow

Mick Jensen, Blair

Norris Marshall, Kearney

Dan Kreitman, Wahoo

MAGAZINE STAFF

Communications Director Christy Rasmussen

Editor Jeff Kurrus

Art Director Tim Reigert

Associate Editor Jenny Nguyen

Regional Editors Eric Fowler, Julie Geiser,

Justin Haag

Contributing Editor Michael Forsberg

Regular Contributors Chris Helzer, Gerry

Steinauer

Photo Librarian Jaclyn Cruikshank Vogt

Circulation Donna Robinson

For address changes and questions about your subscription, e-mail donna.robinson@nebraska.gov or call 800-632-5263

Advertising Sales Manager

For advertising information contact

Shane G. Gilster, 402-742-0125

Email: shanegilster@gmail.com

CONSERVATION OFFICERS

ADMINISTRATION (Lincoln)

Craig Stover (Administrator) 402-471-5531

Duane Arp (Asst. Administrator) 402-471-5531

Jeff Clauson (Asst. Administrator) 402-471-5531

NORTHWEST (Includes counties covered)

Jim Zimmerman (District Supt.) 308-641-6138

Sean McKeenan

(Cheyenne, Morrill, Box Butte) 308-279-9133

Scott Brandt

(Kimball, Banner, Scotts Bluff) 308-631-0663

Greg Hesse (Sheridan, Dawes) 308-760-3647

Dan Kling (Sioux, Dawes) 308-430-0572

Terry Brentzel (Deuel, Garden, Grant) 308-458-7650

Frank Miller (Cherry, Hooker) 402-389-0444

NORTHEAST (Includes counties covered)

Tom Zimmer (District Supt.) 402-649-8053

Dale Davis (Keya Paha, Brown, Rock) 402-760-0712

Jonathan Andreasen (Holt, Boyd) 402-340-3981

Mitch Johnson (Knox, Antelope, Pierce) 402-613-8612

Jeff Jones (Knox, Cedar) 402-762-5022

Owen Johnson

(Dixon, Dakota, N 1/2 Thurston) 402-266-1759

Jon Reeves

(S 1/2 Thurston, Burt, Washington) 402-889-8508

Dan Roberts (Dodge, Colfax) 402-719-1108

Cory Krause

(Cumming, Wayne, Stanton, Dodge) 402-380-6410

Steve Oberg

(Colfax, Platte, Madison, Stanton) 402-910-3366

Randy Pomplun

(Nance, Greeley, Wheeler, Boone) 308-550-0489

Doug Pollard (Loup, Garfield, Valley) 308-730-7050

SOUTHWEST (Includes counties covered)

Roger Thompson (District Supt.) 308-530-3097

Matt Brandt (Sherman, Howard) 308-202-0819

Tim Williams (Hall, Hamilton, Merrick) 308-380-7331

Pat George

(Clay, Adams, Nuckolls, Webster) 402-705-9989

Rich Routh (Franklin, Harlan, Phelps) 308-920-0367

Matt Andrews

(Gosper, Furnas, Frontier, Red Willow) 308-746-2418

Andrew Heyer (Dawson, Gosper, Phelps) 402-613-2241

Brian Piernicky

(Red Willow, Frontier, Hayes, Hitchcock) 308-340-6627

Nicholas Fix (Keith, Perkins) 308-289-0427

Bryce Streger (Keith, Arthur) 308-289-1169

Brandon O'Neal

(Lincoln, McPherson, Logan) 308-530-3157

Alex Hasenauer

(Lincoln, McPherson, Logan) 308-660-4671

Dale Johnson (Kearney, Buffalo) 308-440-3847

Mike Thome (Dawson) 308-529-8146

Ray Dierking (Custer, Thomas, Blaine) 308-870-0322

SOUTHEAST (Includes counties covered)

Levi Krause (District Supt.) 402-949-0593

Rich Berggren (Douglas) 402-619-1355

Dan Evasco (Sarpy) 402-616-5961

Heath Packett (Cass) 402-210-0888

Russell Mort (Otoe, Johnson) 402-209-1506

William Krause

(Nemaha, Richardson, Pawnee) 402-274-8063

Dan Zuehlke (Gage, Saline) 402-806-9084

Dina Barta (Lancaster) 402-890-6463

Doug Kramer (Lancaster) 402-890-6465

Dudley Sorensen (Lancaster, York) 402-937-3422

Travis Shepler (Lancaster) 402-613-2312

Stacey Lewton (Lancaster, Seward) 402-890-7140

Mike Luben (Saunders, Butler, Polk) 402-443-6392



Nebraska Wildlife Crimestoppers
1-800-742-7627

GIVE THE GIFT OF THE OUTDOORS

This year, give those on your list a whole year of fun and memories by giving Nebraska state park, fishing and hunting permits. These unique, welcomed gifts allow you to spend time together enjoying the outdoors.

State park, fishing and hunting permits can be ordered online or purchased at any of our offices, making your holiday shopping easy.



Share the beauty of Nebraska all year long with a **NEBRASKAland** calendar.



Let them choose their own gift! These "bucks" may be used to purchase any Nebraska Game and Parks merchandise, including permit, subscriptions and camping fees.

NEBRASKA

— GAME  PARKS —



Make this holiday extra memorable with the gift of a lifetime hunting or fishing permit or habitat stamp. Available for residents and nonresidents.



Don't forget a **NEBRASKAland** subscription as a guide for places to go and things to do.

Find more ideas or buy online at OutdoorNebraska.org/GiftGuide

or call 1-800-742-0056 (8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday – Friday)



Mixed Bag

A Mammal Brief

Thirteen-lined Ground Squirrel

By Lindsay Rogers

Once limited to prairies, the thirteen-lined ground squirrel (*Ictidomys tridecemlineatus*) can now be found in well-grazed pastures, cemeteries, mowed roadsides, golf courses, parks and even urban backyards. They are easily distinguished from tree squirrels and other ground squirrels by their smaller size (6-12 inches long) and their characteristic stripes extending along their backs.

They are quick and small, but if you are fast you can often see them standing on hind legs surveying the land. Once spotted, they quickly jump into their burrow to escape. They can also be heard giving alarm calls when in danger from predators including hawks, snakes and weasels. Because they are an important food source for so many species, most young do not make it through the first year and adults rarely live more than a few years.

In fall, thirteen-lined ground squirrels rapidly gain weight to sustain themselves through winter hibernation. In mid to late September, they enter true hibernation, meaning they allow their body temperature to drop just above freezing and their heart rate to drop from 200 beats per minute to just 20 beats per minute. They arouse from hibernation in March with males emerging first. ■



Lindsay Rogers is an outdoor education specialist with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

JOEL SARTORE/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PHOTO ARK

Hunters Helping The Hungry

Donate cash or a deer to help reduce hunger in Nebraska

(The program pays for the processing)

Learn more at

OutdoorNebraska.org/HHH



Pheasants Forever & Quail Forever State Habitat Meeting

February 11, 2017

Holiday Inn Convention Center ♦ 110 2nd Ave Kearney, NE

Presentation Topics Include:

- ♦ Pheasant Management
- ♦ Quail Management
- ♦ Dog Training
- ♦ PF/QF 4 Millionth Acre Celebration
- ♦ Youth Programs and Events
- ♦ Monarch Butterfly and Pollinator Information
- ♦ Big Game Management
- ♦ Prescribed Fire and Landowner Prescribed Burn Associations
- ♦ Habitat Partnership Programs
- ♦ Grassland Enhancement
- ♦ CRP Program Options
- And More!!

Help Us Celebrate!

Nebraska's Largest
26th
Annual Habitat Meeting

Lunch Provided

Event is \$30 per person and includes a noon meal.
Please RSVP by February 1st.

Register at www.NebraskaPF.com or by calling 308-850-8395.



4 MILLIONTH
ACRE OF HABITAT IN NEBRASKA

NEBRASKA
— GAME PARKS —



Travelogue

By Hannah Hundley, Nebraska Tourism Commission

Crawford

In some places, the cheerful spirit of the holidays come and go with the season ... but in this true northwestern town, it is felt all year round. This December, travelers will be jingling their bells all the way to **Crawford**, Nebraska – where the greetings are as warm as the hot chocolate. Along the way, they'll enjoy the scenic views of the **Pine Ridge** area, but it won't take long before all the colorful lights coming from **Fort Robinson State Park** capture their attention and draw them in.

Known as the "Garden Beyond the Sandhills", Fort Robinson is made up of more than 22,000 acres of exquisite, rolling landscape, compelling Old West history, rustic campgrounds, and the park's own buffalo and longhorn herds. This impressive fort is only 3 miles from the main streets of Crawford. It operated from the early days of the Old West until after World War II. Many of the original buildings have survived the test of time and remain in use at the park today. Other buildings have been reconstructed in efforts to preserve the fort's authenticity. Every year, these historic buildings are wrapped in colorful Christmas lights for Fort Robinson's annual **Light Up the Fort** event. From Dec. 3-31, 2016, travelers are invited to marvel at this magical light display, along with the many other decorative charms tucked in and around the fort's snowy pines – making it quite the winter wonderland!

Don't be fooled though – it may be the pretty lights that draw people in, but it's the smiling faces, warm welcomes and genuine acts of kindness around every corner that make them stay. The jolly town of Crawford is a popular destination for both nature lovers and game hunters alike. The locals will tell the visitors the best trails for hiking and the best shops for shopping. In addition, there are a variety of deer, elk, antelope and bighorn sheep roaming around, earning Crawford its title as the "Big Game Capital of Nebraska." When it's time to take a break from all the winter action, visitors can head over to **Q's Dairy Sweet** for a much needed cup of hot cocoa.

No matter how one prefers to spend their holidays, visitors will find it hard to leave this part of Nebraska empty handed – or empty hearted. Whether it's a family photograph in front of the lit-up lodge at Fort Robinson, a furry new prize from a successful hunting trip in the Pine Ridge, or even a trip to nearby Toadstool Geologic Park, Crawford has something special for everyone's stocking this year. ■



Light up the fort!



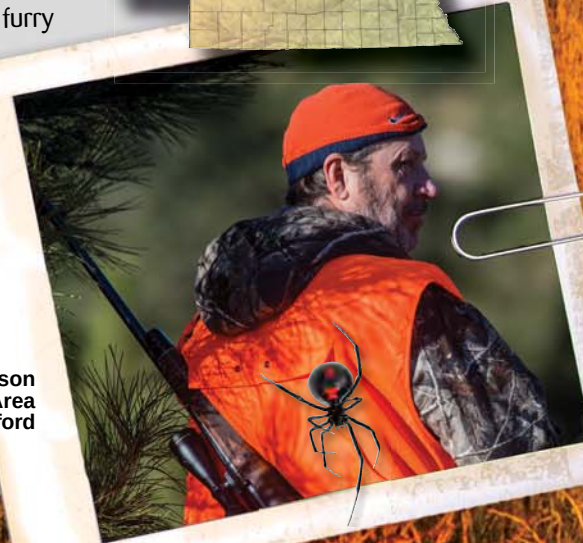
Ponderosa Wildlife Management Area near Crawford

Crawford



Toadstool Geologic Park

Hunting at Peterson Wildlife Management Area near Crawford



CRAWFORD, NEBRASKA

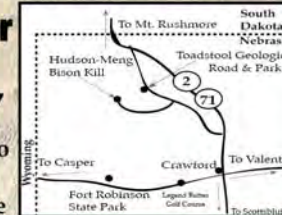
Garden Beyond the Sandhills

ATTRACTIONS: Big Game Hunting Capitol
Fort Robinson State Park - Crawford Historical Museum
Legend Buttes Golf Course - Crawford City & Peabody Hale Parks
Post Playhouse Repertory Theatre - Toadstool Geologic Park
Hudson-Meng Bison Bonebed - Site of Crazy Horse's Death
Prisoner of War Camp - Red Cloud Indian Agency

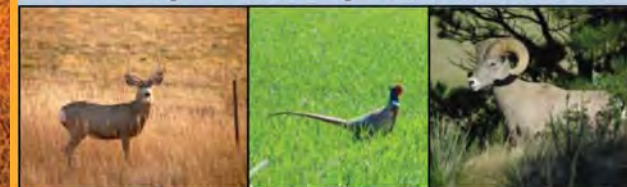
EVENTS: PRCA Old West Trail Rodeo July 3 & 4
4th of July Parade - Senior Pro Rodeo - Mud Truck Racing
Peabody Hale Fiddle Contest (Last Saturday in July)
Northwest Nebraska Rock Swap (Labor Day Weekend)
Legend Buttes Rumble Car Show (2nd to last Saturday in September)
Crawford Cattle Call (1st Saturday of November)

WE OFFER: Groceries - Gift & Souvenir Shops - Restaurants
Photography - Art Gallery - Public Schools - Swimming Pool -
Baseball/Softball Field Hardware - Gas & Car Service - Clinic -
Veterinarian - Ice Cream Shoppes - Motels/B&B's

Crawford Chamber of Commerce
308-665-1817
www.crawfordnebraska.info
Crawford Nebraska
Chamber of Commerce



R Lazy J Country Hideaway & Guest House



Experience Western Nebraska



Our comfy farmhouse retreat, welcomes sportsmen, families, wildlife viewers, stargazers and more. Sleeps two to eight adults.

308.665.2377
www.rlazyj.com



1260 Bethel Road
Whitney, NE 69367

Pine Needle Quilts

308.665.1107

413 Second Street • Crawford, NE



Pine Needle Quilts has been serving the Crawford, Nebraska, quilting community since October 2007, offering a wide variety of high quality fabrics and quilting supplies.

PineNeedleQuilts.com Like us on Facebook

OUR HERITAGE GUEST RANCH



A Natural National Landmark with Rich Homesteading and Native American History

- Fossil Digs
- Creative Expressions
- Artist Ride/Photo Shoot
- ACTHA Trail Rides
- Authentic Ranch Experiences
- Train Watching



Find us on Facebook

308-430-1239

1041 Toadstool Road | Crawford, NE

A Brief History There's Millions in It!

By Patricia C. Gaster, Nebraska State Historical Society

A good story – even if based more on fiction than fact – has always been popular among the newspaper-reading public. One such tale involving a shrewd Nebraskan, prairie dogs and a gullible English nobleman, appeared in the *Omaha Daily Bee* on Dec. 17, 1885, under the headline “There’s Millions in It!” The story, attributed to the *Chicago Herald*, explained how an unnamed, down-on-his-luck Nebraskan disposed of a worthless homestead claim.

“Last spring,” the homesteader said, “I went out into Western Nebraska and homesteaded a quarter section. I hadn’t seen the land, but took it supposin’ it was all right. But when I got there I found it already inhabited. About 150 acres of the 160 were covered with a prairie-dog town. Well, I concluded to settle down and see what I could do, and I’m mighty glad now that I did. About two weeks ago I was up to the railroad station trying to get trusted for some bacon and flour and terbacker, an’ feelin’ right smart discouraged. I was out of money and grub, and the winter was comin’ on fast, an’ I couldn’t see any way out of it but to eat prairie dogs, an’ they’re mighty hard to catch. But that day was the turning point in my luck. While I was at the station an Englishman got off the cars an’ said as how he was out west lookin’ for a place to make an investment. Said he’d heard o’ the fur business, and wanted to know if he was out in the fur country yet.”

Quickly the homesteader saw an opportunity, and invited the nobleman out to see his land. “An’ he went out with me, an’ I showed him the prairie-dog town, an’, as luck would have it, it was a bright sunny day, an’ the dogs was out scootin’ around by the hundreds. ‘Talkin’ about furs,’ I says,

‘what d’yo think of that? I’ve been six years growin’ these mink, . . . an’ they double every year.’” The homesteader told his fascinated guest that “they’re worth \$1 apiece. There’s millions in it.” In less than an hour the Nebraskan sold out to the Englishman for \$7,000 cash and took a train East.

Nebraskans may have laughed, but less than five years later, on June 23, 1890, a similar story (this time attributed to the *Chicago Tribune*) appeared in the *Bee*. In the second version of the now well-known story, Nebraska merchant C. A. Hastings regaled a *Tribune* reporter with the experience of Lord Wynford, who had stopped at North Platte “during his tour of the prairies. He seemed greatly pleased with the wild west and intimated that he would like to invest some money in something good. There was a smart young Irish lawyer in the town whose parents had had some unpleasant dealings with Lord Wynford in the old country. This young lawyer had lived in North Platte about two years. He came there to examine a claim he had purchased on paper. To his disappointment his farm was nothing but a prairie dog town.”

The lawyer called on Lord Wynford and offered for sale what he called “the most profitable investment in America.” The pair then drove out to the homestead to inspect what the lawyer called his “mink farm.” The farm “delighted Lord Wynford and on returning to the city he gave \$500 for the dog town. He owns it now and the good-for-nothing place is called ‘the lord’s mink farm.’”

In both 1885 and 1890 a number of newspapers around the country reprinted the stories of the Nebraskan who unloaded a worthless homestead on an English nobleman by convincing him that prairie dogs were mink. It seems unlikely that the tales could have been true, but they delighted newspaper readers then and now and made good copy. ■

Visit the Nebraska State Historical Society’s website at nebraskahistory.org.



Lithograph on a card of a “Prairie Dog City.”

Saving Wildlife and Wild Places

The Nebraska Wildlife Conservation Fund works to connect people and nature through education, research and habitat restoration. Learn about the fund, the projects it supports and how you can help online at:

NebraskaWildlifeFund.org

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



THE STRANGE AND
WONDERFUL
MASKS OF Doane
Powell

See the Story Underneath

on display at the
Nebraska History Museum
131 Centennial Mall North - Lincoln
Oct. 10, 2016 to Jul. 9, 2017
Free Admission

— CONNECT WITH US —



For outdoor news and events, subscribe to our weekly e-newsletter.

Text “NGPC Newsletter” to 468 311.

Or visit OutdoorNebraska.org to sign up.

NEBRASKA
— GAME PARKS —



Follow us on your favorite social media



Ponca State Park Winter Activities

By Lynn Mellick, Ponca State Park

Celebrate Christmas in the Woods at Ponca State Park! Activities will be offered every Saturday Nov. 26 - Dec.17, including crafts, cookie decorating, educational programs, free family photos and lighted hayrack rides. We will also kick off the beginning of the Third Annual Snowman Building Contest Nov. 26 - March 19.

Come build a snowman near the mini lodges or Resource and Education Center. When your snowman is complete, stop by the Resource and Education Center to register your entry. Photos will be taken and displayed throughout the winter season in the center's lobby and on the Nebraska Northeast Parks Facebook page. Prizes will be awarded for first, second and third place.

On Dec. 31 – New Year's Eve – Ponca State Park celebrates Winterfest, a day full of family-fun activities and friendly competition. There will be crafts in the morning, the National Fruitcake Fling at high noon, a 3K Yule Log Quest in the afternoon and guided hayrack rides at dusk.

For more information on the Ponca State Park Snowman Building Contest, discount lodging packages, Winterfest and Christmas in the Woods, contact the park at 402-755-2284 or ngpc.ponca@nebraska.gov. ■



PHOTO BY JENNY NGUYEN

A snowshoeing challenge will be held at Ponca State Park's Yule Log Quest during Winterfest on Dec. 31.

STOCK SEED FARMS
PRAIRIE GRASS • TURFGRASS
AND WILD FLOWER SEED

Quality Seeds Since 1956

A Leader in Native Grass & Wildflower Production

Visit www.stockseed.com to view our entire product line, request a free catalog, or place an order!

Email: prairie@stockseed.com • Phone: 800-759-1520
28008 Mill Road Murdock, NE 68407

POST & BEAM BARNs, HOMES, CABINS AND VENUES

BUILD YOUR LEGACY

LEGACY
Post & Beam

Visit our Website for a **FREE** Catalog!

WWW.LEGACYPOSTANDBEAM.COM

We may have a new look, but our commitment to our customers is STRONGER than ever!

Do-it-yourself made simple.
Kubota L3901

KUBOTA Rental ORANGE

Why rent a top quality Kubota tractor, utility vehicle or excavator for your next project? A Kubota's power and efficiency combined with comfortable, operator-friendly controls means you'll get more done. Kubota-friendly folks who know your Kubota inside and out are available to answer all your questions. Find them at your local Kubota Orange Rental Center. Just don't be surprised if that easy-to-use Kubota rental is simply hard to bring back.

Offering the area's most complete inventory of Kubota products since 1984.

**9317 S. 144th St.
Omaha, NE
402-895-6661**

KUBOTA OF OMAHA
Ag Solutions Group

www.kubota.com
Optional equipment may be shown.
© Kubota Tractor Corporation, 2016

DISCOVER NORTHWEST **NEBRASKA**

HIKING • BIKING • CAMPING
FISHING • HORSEBACK RIDING • HUNTING

CHADRON & CRAWFORD

DiscoverNWNebraska.com

SAVE UP TO 20%
WITH A MULTIYEAR PERMIT

Get your hunting permit online at OutdoorNebraska.org

Junior Duck Stamp Competition Underway

By Justin Haag

Students in kindergarten through 12th grade are encouraged to show off their skills as waterfowl artists by entering the 2017 Federal Junior Duck Stamp Competition.

Each year, hundreds of entries from students throughout Nebraska are judged in late March or early April at the Gering Civic Center. The deadline to enter is March 15.

Last year's contest was won by Creighton Scott, a 16-year-old student of the Debie Plog Art Studio in Omaha. Scott used color pencil to portray a king eider flying over water with snow-covered mountains in the background. The king eider is a large sea duck that spends most of the year in coastal marine environments and breeds on the Arctic



CREIGHTON SCOTT



tundra in June and July. ■

For details about the competition, contact Lydia Patrick, Nebraska's contest coordinator, at lydia_patrick@fws.gov. More information and contest guidelines may be found at fws.gov/juniorduck.

Chadron State Park - Winter Getaway

By Justin Haag

Located in the heart of the Pine Ridge, Chadron State Park serves as a prime getaway for travelers to enjoy winter scenery and activities.

The park's trail system provides opportunities for cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and hiking. A sled run, which

was new in 2015, has proved popular among park visitors of all ages. Also, the park can serve as a base for visitors enjoying other popular winter activities in the region, such as ice fishing.

During winter, the park's modernized duplex cabins are available by reservation. Each of the six quarters has a living room, kitchen, bathroom and two bedrooms – one with a queen bed and another with two singles. A minimum two-night stay is required, but most people won't want to leave once they're there.

The online reservation system isn't active for Chadron State Park in winter, so to reserve a cabin call the park's office at (308) 432-6167. ■

PHOTO BY JUSTIN HAAG



An Annual Hibernation Procession

By Dan Fogell

Winter. Some like it, but I'd venture to bet that like me, most do not. It's cold, windy, and the days are short. We all know someone who heads south every November to get away from it. We call them "snowbirds." Animals don't seem to like it either. Some head south like the snowbirds do. But most have no way of reaching those little latitudes and must find a way to avoid harsh Plains winters.

Those most affected are the ectotherms, such as insects, amphibians and reptiles. They can't produce body heat, and they lack fur and feathers – features that give endotherms a thermoregulatory advantage. Thus, they must get out of the cold.

A successful overwintering strategy is the limiting factor, determining whether an animal can exist at Nebraska's latitudes. Depending on their strategy, some disappear from the landscape sooner. Some are more cold-tolerant and can wait until the last minute, though none can stay active all winter. And if temperatures are mild, some will still poke their heads out and enjoy the sun.



Lizards and Amphibians

First down are lizards and amphibians. An unlikely pairing, I agree, but once you know why you'll understand. Insects disappear each winter too, and they happen to be food for lizards and amphibians. Though

they could stay out later, they would use crucial energy reserves that could not be replenished. So down they go. Lizards and toads dig deep into sandy soil, and frogs bury themselves in the sediment under water. But on an unseasonably warm day you often see bullfrogs along the water's edge.



Turtles

Turtles are next. Box turtles dig in just below the surface and stay all winter. Aquatic turtles dive down to the muddy bottoms of lakes and rivers and bury themselves with the frogs. It's important that they get there before ice forms on the surface. On mild days they often emerge and bask for a bit but go back to the mud as the day cools down. Snapping turtles have even been seen walking on top of ice-covered lakes.

Snakes

Last to go down are the snakes. Older, experienced snakes know how long they can push their luck before the winter cold sets in and may wait until the last possible minute. And while you won't see them on subfreezing days, snakes have been spotted on sunny, 50-something degree winter days. In Nebraska I've seen adult garter snakes every month of the year. Younger snakes are more naïve, and their timing may be off, but they are often the first to enter hibernation. The absolute last snakes to hibernate are babies – the young of the year. Having no experience, they either follow scent trails from other snakes or hibernate wherever they happen to be when it turns cold. Sadly, the latter often results in a suboptimal overwintering site and death.

The procession of herpetofauna into their winter hiatus is not random, but rather methodical. Balancing when to enter hibernation with life history decisions like conserving energy, avoiding freezing temperatures and staying warm enough to escape predation involves instinct, experience and even a little luck. The wrong decision can mean the difference between surviving the night and surviving the entire winter. ■

PHOTOS BY DAN FOGELL



Upcoming Events

by Jerry Kane

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

December 1

Bobcat

Bobcat hunting and trapping season opens

December 1-31

Deer and Elk

Muzzleloader deer and public and private land cow elk hunting seasons

December 2-23

Christmas at the Mansion

Arbor Lodge State Historical Park (SHP), Nebraska City

December 3

Archery Fun Shoot

Nebraska Game and Parks Outdoor Education Center, Lincoln

December 3

Archery on Fire

Platte River State Park (SP), Louisville

December 3

Fort Robinson Historical Christmas Dinner

Fort Robinson SP, Crawford

December 3-31

Light Up the Fort

Fort Robinson SP, Crawford

December 4

Shootout at Salt Creek

Nebraska Game and Parks Outdoor Education Center, Lincoln

December 4

Deer Processing Class

Sausage making, Fort Atkinson SHP, Fort Calhoun

December 4, 11, 18

Best Shots Rifle Class

Nebraska Game and Parks Outdoor Education Center, Lincoln

December 6

Learn to Hunt Predators

Nebraska Game and Parks Outdoor Education Center, Lincoln

December 10-18

Deer

Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge deer season

December 11

Deer Processing Class

Fresh venison cooking, Fort Atkinson SHP, Fort Calhoun

December 11

White-fronted Goose

First segment of white-fronted goose hunting season closes

December 14-31

Christmas Bird Count

Indian Cave SP, Shubert

December 16

Snipe

Snipe hunting season closes

December 17

Yule Log Quest

Platte River SP, Louisville

December 17

Christmas at the Bowling

Bowling Ranch SHP, Merriman

December 17-18

Deer

DeSoto December Muzzleloader deer season

December 20

Duck and Coot

Duck and coot hunting seasons in Zone 2 Low Plains and High Plains (first segment) and Zone 4 closes

December 22

Bighorn sheep

Bighorn sheep hunting season closes

December 27

Duck and Coot

Duck and coot hunting season in Zone 1 closes

December 31

Antelope and Deer

Hunting seasons close for archery antelope and deer, the Mule Deer Conservation Area, and statewide whitetail buck deer

December 31

Fishing

Underwater spearfishing season and archery fishing season for game fish ends

Women's Wellness Weekend

By Lynn Mellick, Ponca State Park

The third annual Women's Wellness Weekend Retreat returns Jan. 13-15 at Ponca State Park. Come find inner peace, inspiration among instructors and new friends, take time to pamper yourself, and leave relaxed at this intimate gathering. This three-day retreat offers over 25 sessions covering a variety of topics that will teach you how to improve your body and mind.

The weekend will kick off with inspirational guest speaker Jill Miller. Past classes have included yoga, dancing, aromatherapy, bird watching, acupuncture, meditation, stress management, self-defense, hiking, Dutch oven cooking and much more.

On Saturday during breaks, purchase jewelry, health and beauty products, and other wares from a variety of vendors. By appointment, take advantage of services such as massages, manicures, pedicures and facials. Then at lunch, enjoy a fashion show, where you can discover new, stylish looks for home, work and vacation. At the end of the day, a wine and cheese social will precede an elegant dinner party and evening activities.

Sunday will include a morning exercise class and time to gather one last time before departing for home.

Registration is limited and fills up quickly. If you would like to receive information relating to Ponca State Park's Women's Wellness Weekend Retreat, contact Lynn.Mellick@Nebraska.gov. ■



PHOTO BY JENNY NGUYEN

Learn yoga, breathing and stretching exercises at Ponca State Park's Women's Wellness Weekend Retreat on Jan. 13-15.

NEBRASKAland Visitor

Last issue's winner of the Visitor drawing was Adelene Vock of Nebraska City, Nebraska, who found the **banded woollybear tiger moth** on page 30.

Readers are encouraged to contact *NEBRASKAland* within 10 days after this issue's publication with the correct page number and name of this issue's "Visitor" – a critter found in Nebraska. We will then gather the correct entries and draw one to win a *NEBRASKAland* mug. To enter each month, write:

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

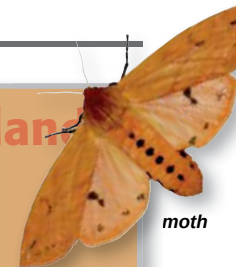
Or e-mail:

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

HINT: This issue's visitor is not on page 21.

The **banded woollybear** (*Pyrrharctia isabella*) is a medium sized tiger moth, native throughout the continental U.S., including Nebraska. These nondescript moths are dirty white to yellowish-brown in color, with black dots on their wings and a line of dots down the abdomen. While the adults get little notice, their caterpillars are familiar to all. Banded woollybear caterpillars are about 2 inches long when mature and covered in bristles, with black at each end of their body and a reddish band in the middle. As the caterpillars age and molt, they may have more reddish and fewer black bristles. In the fall the caterpillars become wanderers, crossing roads and fields, looking for places to hibernate through the winter, such as in leaf litter and under rocks. The caterpillars will briefly become active again in the spring, then pupate before emerging as adults.

Special thanks to Julie Van Meter, State Entomologist, Nebraska Department of Agriculture.



moth



caterpillar



One Way to Start

A Personal Introduction to Ice Fishing

Story and photos
by Jeff Kurrus

It gets cold in Nebraska. Even so-called “light” winters, during which natives barely adorn a heavy jacket, had always been too cold and long for me. I’ve been with NEBRASKAland for 10 years, huddled in my home for all of these winters unwilling to venture into the cold for more than a few hours at a time.

Until last winter. I finally decided I had enough. I needed to figure out why every serious ice angler was telling me how great their winter passion was. I had seen those people sitting on buckets on frozen water for years – those older, often miserable looking anglers holding a miniaturized jigging pole in one hand and their chin in the other. It looked awful. Little did I know these folks were having the time of their lives.

My first ice fishing excursions were from stories for this magazine – my trip to Calamus Reservoir with photographer Michael Forsberg in 2008 with the Mares brothers and my covering of the Cork Thornton Ice Fishing Tournament at Merritt Reservoir in 2011. What I didn’t know at the time was that the small bits of vital information I had kept from those trips would prove beneficial down the line.

THE START

Besides my work-related excursions, I began dabbling on the ice two winters ago. I picked up a hand auger on sale (\$25) at Scheels in Omaha and talked my dad, who is a consummate caster of crankbaits for largemouth bass on open water, into vertical jigging through an 8-inch hole. We used a few spare spring fishing crappie jigs for our lures, unwilling to tip these yet with any sort of live bait.

Our production was sporadic at best. We’d catch a few fish – bass, bluegill and crappie – but spent much more time cutting holes than fishing. After just a few holes, we’d each choose one, and jig repeatedly until

we got a strike. If we caught anywhere near half-a-dozen fish, I was elated.

But we were also learning. Toward the end of the ice fishing season, I borrowed a power auger from a friend, and dad and I cut about a dozen holes on a pond close to my home. Once we returned the auger, we kept these holes open for the remaining weeks by using our hand auger. During this time, my then 5-year-old daughter, Madeline, caught more fish than anyone. Her jigging pole remained in constant motion.

I used her same jigging technique on our last fishing day of the winter, adding one more aspect to make me feel even more comfortable: braided line. I was curious if I could feel fish just as well through the ice as I can with braided line in open water, and I quickly found that I could. Bluegill after bluegill came from the hole, and for the first time fishing over ice, I could feel my lure like I could when I was bass fishing in the summer. For a second, I was comfortable. The fish were stacked into this area and they were feeding heavily. When I called my dad after my trip, I reported that I had caught 10, more fish than we had ever caught together. I was convinced it couldn’t get any better.

I was wrong.

A PARTNER

Kevin Greene of Omaha owns a landscaping business which keeps him working sunrise to sunset from the spring to the fall. I’d see him at Nebraska football parties at a mutual friend’s house in the fall, and each time we were together we’d talk about fishing. He had grown up in Connecticut and spent time fishing on both coasts, mainly for saltwater fish, but ice fishing appealed to him because, like me, he struggled through the gloomy winters. We had found brief refuge earlier in the winter by snowboarding together while our kids sledged, but a mid-winter melt took away our board

Opposite: Kevin Greene of Omaha shows a channel catfish caught on a tip-up through the ice last winter on a private pond in west Omaha.

and left us once again searching for something to escape our cabin fever.

Because of this fever, shortly after Thanksgiving I bought a gas-powered auger (\$300) to give ice fishing a real go. It wasn't a top-of-the-line auger, which could go for several hundred dollars more, but I thought it might provide me the ability to cut a few more holes than I was currently doing.

With this power, and a couple of ice fishing rod-and-reel combos (\$30 apiece), we started fishing together. On one of these days, Kevin and I went with a group of

people, including NEBRASKAland's Jenny Nguyen, to a private lake in west Omaha. We cut a series of holes across a three-acre cove about 20 feet from each other, a perimeter of sorts, and then drilled an X across it. This pattern not only gave us several holes to fish, but also gave my kids, now at ages 3 and 6, a place to play.

And play they did. They pulled each other on the sled, loaded fish on and off the sled, giving them a ride as they did, and delivered supplies to each angler on the ice. It was in the upper 20s with no wind and the perfect winter day to be outside. It also became a

perfect day to learn, as nearly every one of us worked to catch fish while one of us didn't seem like she was working at all.

GAME CHANGER

Since I was a kid, I have learned to watch the hands of other anglers if they are catching fish. Are they reeling fast or slow? Are they twitching with their wrists or with their entire arms? But I had yet to apply this common practice to ice fishing until this particular day.

A number of bluegill and channel catfish were caught last season by copying Jenny Nguyen's stationary "jigging" technique, including one productive day on a lake near Yutan.

EQUIPMENT

The colder it gets, the more I must be sure my feet stay warm. I do this by wearing Wood n' Stream's Cold Weather series, a comfortable hunting boot that allows me to fish all winter long. Plus, they are waterproof.

To stay upright, Kevin and I wear Hillsound Freesteps6 and YakTrax XTR crampons, taking no chances of slipping in slush ice with each model's aggressive spikes. At the least, ice cleats should be standard equipment to prevent falls.



While all of us were periodically catching fish at best, Jenny was into fish repeatedly – hand-sized bluegill after bluegill, able to take home her limit of 15 in less than an hour and continuing to catch and release fish long after that. What was she doing with her hands? Absolutely nothing. She would lower her purple Lindy Slick jig, tipped with a waxworm, down to the bottom of the lake, where her line would go slack, and reel up about a foot and simply wait. No bobbing, no jigging.

The more fish she caught, the more interest she drew from the rest of us. We cut holes within feet of her and had some success, but not matching success. So then we looked at her lure next. She was using a 1/16 ounce jig.

"How much did it cost?" Kevin asked.

"On clearance at \$1.88," Jenny replied.

Everyone went back to the tackleboxes, trying to find the closest thing that matched Jenny's jig. We continued to catch bluegill until my rod bent double, but the pull on the other end was not a bluegill. All of

us gathered around, a group of friends curious what monster lurked beneath the ice. We found out a couple minutes later as a 20-something-inch channel catfish came through the hole. This fish was a game changer.

We all perked up a little bit more the rest of the afternoon, and added a few more channel cats to the already impressive number of bluegill on the ice. However, I couldn't get my mind off of Jenny's jig and the additional cost of my newfound passion, a passion which had kept my kids happily on the ice since early that morning. We had found our winter activity – but could we afford it?

FINGERNAIL POLISH

A few days later, while working in Papillion, I had a few minutes to spare and dropped into Dick's Sporting Goods. I scanned the shelves for ice fishing jigs, each in the same price range as Jenny's, then saw the red clearance sign seemingly shining in the distance. On this rack were two boxes of lead 1/16 ounce jig heads, with a 10-count each, for \$1.40. I could handle 14 cents a jig, if only I could get some color on them. But I already knew just the place to start.



Painting jig heads with fingernail polish is one way to save money when buying ice fishing supplies.



Alex Wade of Omaha poses with a crappie from Lawrence Youngman Lake as his dad Scott looks on.

That night, Madeline and I set up a painting area in the living room and asked my wife to gather all of her fingernail polish. She brought out three shoe boxes full of every color imaginable.

We agreed not to talk about her purchases as long as we didn't talk about mine, and Madeline and I started painting. We imagined the color of Jenny's jig and copied it, and then started painting lures in shades similar to bass fishing crankbaits.

I passed the other set of jigs along to Kevin for him to paint, and we put them to work the following week with excellent results. We cut 20 to 30 holes, lowered our lures until our lines went slack on the lake bottom, and then we reeled about a foot and began by using Jenny's stationary tactic.

The fish didn't mind the cheaper jig imitations, and we caught more panfish that day than we ever had, hopping from hole to hole in an effort to find schools of fish across the lake. If we didn't pick up a fish relatively soon, we moved.

We used this approach for the entire morning, sharing information with each other on what holes had produced and which ones hadn't, what colors we were catching fish on and if we were jigging or stationary or something in between.

However, we had also spent a fair amount of time fishing holes that weren't producing, an act that Kevin had a counter for in the coming days.

ELECTRONICS

Scott Wade, a friend of Kevin's, has been ice fishing since he was a kid, and he's the guy with the knowledge and gear: various ice fishing rods and tackle, sleds, shelters and a Vexilar.

I had seen a Vexilar in action before, the electronic machine that features a circular dial filled with various combinations of red, green, and yellow lights that notes not only the depth of the water, but also the fish that are under the transducer's cone angle. With the Vexilar's sensitivity set just right, an angler could even see his or her own jig raising and lowering on the dial.

However, prices for a fish finder like this range from \$300 to well over \$1,000, an investment neither Kevin nor myself wanted to make quite yet. We learned



Kevin Greene watches the Vexilar while jigging for crappies and bluegill on a private pond in Sarpy County.

the basics of the finder on Lawrence Youngman Lake in west Omaha, also applying what we had already learned, and caught more than 60 bluegills and crappie within our group of three adults and two teenage boys.

Scott let us borrow his Vexilar for a few days. Kevin and I took the same approach we had used before, except for the addition of me dropping the Vexilar transducer into each new hole Kevin cut, making a quick judgment if I had marked any fish and moving to the next hole.

After about 20 holes, Kevin would pause and look back to me. I'd point to the holes where I thought fish might be, and we'd divide and start fishing. In every instance after this until the end of the season, when we marked fish we had strikes within the first five minutes using an assortment of wax-worm tipped, fingernail polish-painted, jig heads.

Kevin and I ordered a new Vexilar of our own, splitting the cost (\$250 apiece) for a device we would

nearly always be using together. On our next trip, we furthered our success, finding trophy-size bluegill at Summit Lake State Recreation Area and two private lakes in eastern Nebraska. We couldn't wait until our next trip on the ice.

TIPS AND TIP-UPS

As the winter progressed, so did my trips to fisheries biologist Daryl Bauer's office at the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. We'd recount our trips, and I'd ask a lot of questions.

He introduced me to the 10-minute rule, used when trying to find fish in new holes. If you don't have a strike in 10 minutes, it is time to move. Toward the end of the winter, I said one word that once again upped our ice fishing ante. "Tip-ups?" I asked.

"Perfect for kids," Bauer said. "They love to set them up. When someone yells 'flag!' it's great."

"Brand?" I asked.

"There are a lot. I use the HT Polar ones," he said.

At \$13 apiece, we began to use them too, baiting



Crappies can be caught through the ice with a myriad of lures, including fingernail-polish-painted jig heads.

ICE FISHING DEFINITIONS

Cut: To drill a hole in ice. More importantly, it's the language that ice anglers use. I've never heard an ice veteran utter the word "drill."

Mark: Ice fishing language detailing if fish have been located (e.g. We marked several fish this morning on our Vexilar).

Spud bar: A necessary piece of ice-fishing gear that is a long, straight metal bar used to test ice thickness.

Swedish pimple: This long-celebrated jigging lure has been used by ice anglers for generations.



Teardrop: This teardrop-shaped ice fishing lure is one of the standards seen throughout the winter on lakes across the state.

Tip: To include additional bait to an ice-fishing lure, such as a waxworm (also known as a 'waxie'), minnow, mousie, mealworm or nightcrawler (also known simply as a 'crawler').

Tip-up: A device (see below) used in ice fishing in which a wire attached to a rod is tripped, raising a signal flag when a fish takes the bait.



Madeline Kurrus is all smiles during her favorite season of the year, jigging for bluegill and crappies at a farm pond in Sarpy County.



Even one or two bluegill can make for a memorable experience on the ice, since all fish caught on hardwater are trophies, especially for newcomers.



them with waxworms or chicken liver.

Before long on our first trip, flags shot into the air as we found more than a few channel catfish on our lines. Which led me, of course, to revisit Bauer and relay another story of ice fishing success.

“Wait until you hook into a northern pike,” he said, his eyes glowing. As were mine.

SPRING SADNESS

The coming of spring has never hurt more than it did a few short weeks after we first started using our

tip-ups. A few warmer days, days that would have once been a welcome sight, were met with a surprise of anger and resentment by Kevin and I. He soon would be gearing up for landscaping season, and I would soon be traveling west to view sandhill cranes in central Nebraska for my own spring migration.

It was hard to explain to others, but we now knew the joy that those die-hards sitting on a bucket had been feeling for so many years, for there is an indescribable level of excitement that accompanies hooking a fish as you stand on the ice, a split-second

mystery of “was this a fluke” that forces us to lower our jigs into the hole again.

One February night at a party, Kevin and I were already counting down the days to the next winter more than 300 days away when Kevin turned to me and asked, “What if we go north?”

“How far north?” I asked.

“As far as we need to go,” he said with a smile. “One more round.”

Permission for a trip farther north came quickly, as our wives approved, as did the wives of everyone else standing in the room. It was peer pressure at its finest.

“I have a friend in Bruce, South Dakota,” our friend Terry Mayfield said. He then made a quick call and found out that local lakes near that area still had 10 inches of ice. And Bruce was just four short hours away.

Five days later, Kevin and I were high-fiving our way up north for a two-day trek, wondering if what we had learned in Nebraska would translate to the Dakotas. It immediately did. We found fish on both days, introducing another set of friends to what we had been

experiencing for the last few months.

They received not only a brief tutorial of what we had learned from ice fishing, but also witnessed the party atmosphere that can occur when 500 groups of anglers decide that spring is coming and they want one more day of winter Mardi Gras of their own.

It was the perfect cap to our season. On the way home, Kevin and I compared notes on the year, two friends that had bonded on a block of ice reminiscing our successes as well as next winter’s needs.

Did we “need” a second Vexilar? How about a four-wheeler? Should we look into floating bibs? How many more rods should we be looking for? Should we buy a shelter?

As we stand on the ice somewhere this month, our excitement for the passion continues to grow, and we hope to see you on the ice as well this winter. If you’re hesitant, ask yourself one question: Am I waiting for spring to arrive?

If your answer is yes, then I have an idea what you can do to kill time while you are waiting. ■



The author is tackled by his son Eli while friend Matthew Marx looks on. There may be no better way to get kids hooked on fishing than introducing them to winters on the ice.

Time Well Spent

What to Do in December

By Renae Blum

Trees to decorate, cookies to bake, gifts to wrap and parties to attend – we are definitely in the thick of the holiday season. You may feel like there's not a minute to spare. That's when it's especially important to unplug from the stress and take time to relax with family and friends. The events below allow you to do just that. For a complete list of upcoming events across the state, or for more information on any of the activities listed here, visit Calendar.OutdoorNebraska.org. ■



PHOTO BY JENNY NGUYEN

Winterfest at State Parks

Various Dates
Statewide

Winterfest at Nebraska state parks is all about celebrating this special time of year with family and friends. Try old-fashioned holiday activities such as horse-drawn hayrack rides, ice skating, sledding, a yule log quest and more. Visit OutdoorNebraska.org/winterfest for a full list of events. Don't forget, many state parks have reduced rates on cozy cabins and other lodging right now, making for an inexpensive and memorable getaway during one of the most peaceful and beautiful seasons to visit a Nebraska state park.

Ice Skating

Thanksgiving weekend through March, as weather permits

Eugene T. Mahoney State Park

Take part in one of the most festive of winter traditions this year – try ice skating! The ice skating pavilion at Eugene T. Mahoney State Park offers breathtaking views of the Platte River valley and offers guests plenty of space to practice their skills. Skate rental is available. Call 402-471-1414 for admission and pricing.



PHOTO BY JEFF KURRUS



PHOTO BY ERIC FOWLER

Light Up the Fort

Dec. 3 – 31

Fort Robinson State Park

The historic grounds of Fort Robinson State Park are always a visual treat – but hardly more so than in December, when volunteers and park staff drape sparkling Christmas lights over many of the park buildings. Take a drive to see it; it'll definitely get you in the holiday spirit. Contact the park at 308-665-2900 if you'd like to volunteer to put up lights.

Open Hunting Seasons

Various dates

December is a great month for hunting in Nebraska – many seasons are open, and there's less competition afoot, as the frenzy of season openings is mostly past. Take advantage of free time from work or school to hunt for species such as pheasant, turkey, grouse and deer.



PHOTO BY JUSTIN HAAG

Christmas Bird Counts

Dec. 14 – Jan. 5

Indian Cave State Park

Calling all birders – we need your help! Christmas Bird Counts are an annual tradition across the nation in which participants identify as many species as possible over a 15-mile radius. You'll have the chance to aid scientists and conservation efforts while engaging in some friendly competition and stretching your legs.



PHOTO BY ROCKY HOFFMANN

2016 Photo Contest

BEST OF SHOW

Lightning Storm at Orleans, Nebraska
Harlan County
Photo by Rudy Gonzales



WILDLIFE



FIRST PLACE – Avocet Rain Dance
Garfield County
Photo by Chris Petersen



**THIRD PLACE – Canadas
and Bluewings**
Knox County
Photo by Roy Swoboda



SECOND PLACE – Family Outing
Sarpy County
Photo by Roy Liesegang



SECOND PLACE – All Kinds of Beautiful in Toadstool Geologic Park
Sioux County
Photo by Derrill Grabenstein



THIRD PLACE – Looking for the Sun
Saunders County
Photo by Nathaniel Johnson

FIRST PLACE – Stormy Spring Sunrise
Madison County
Photo by Roy Swoboda



SCENIC

FIRST PLACE – Sunset Reflections at Niobrara River
Cherry County
Photo by Ryan Lindbeck



SCENIC

THIRD PLACE – Waiting to Strike
Lancaster County
Photo by Jare Godfrey



SECOND PLACE – Untouched Snow on
Willow Island Road
Dawson County
Photo by Richard Jones



RECREATION

FIRST PLACE – Under the Stars

Nemaha County

Photo by Zach Hanson



RECREATION



SECOND PLACE – Dropping a Line at Branched Oak Lake
Lancaster County
Photo by Derrill Grabenstein

THIRD PLACE – Energy!
Saline County
Photo by Bernadette Korslund





FIRST PLACE – Black and White
Douglas County
Photo by Mckenna Robinette

With more than 1,100 images submitted, the 2016 NEBRASKAland Magazine Photo Contest featured tremendous work in the categories of Wildlife, Flora, Scenic, Recreation and Youth, displaying the beauty of the entire state.

Judged by NEBRASKAland Magazine’s staff, paring down the images was difficult – especially the Best in Show winner, which went to Rudy Gonzales and his image “Lightning Storm at Orleans, Nebraska.”

But there is one more winner yet to be revealed – the winner of the Reader’s Choice Award. This winning photograph will be published in our January-February 2017 edition.

We thank everyone who has made this year’s contest such a success, and we look forward to seeing even more outstanding photographs entered next year.

– NEBRASKAland Magazine Staff

Meat Under Pressure

Canning is a perfect way to preserve, tenderize and enhance your harvest

By Gerry Steinauer, Botanist

Pondering how to make that tough, long-bearded turkey you shot edible? Have a deer hanging in the shed and little freezer space? Love catching hard-fighting carp, but grimace at the thought of eating such bony fish? If so, you might consider canning your harvest.

In the days before freezers, Nebraskans, by necessity, were well-versed in the methods of canning fish and game, as it was – along with smoking and salting – their only way of preserving meats. However, with the appearance of home freezers in the mid-1900s, canning meats became a mostly lost art, though a few old-school hunters, fishers and their kin have maintained the tradition. Canning meat in pressure cookers not only conserves it, but also tenderizes tough cuts, disintegrates bones in fish and, best of all, makes for tasty, easy-to-prepare meals.

Canning Game

My mother-in-law, Lucille Kostel of Wagner, South Dakota, taught me what is now my favorite recipe for canning game birds. Having lived on



The author bags a pheasant on Ducks Unlimited Verona complex wetlands in Hamilton County.

PHOTO BY JENNY NGUYEN



Canned pheasant hot out of the pressure cooker. The liquid in the jars will gel upon cooling.

PHOTO BY GERRY STEINAUER

a farm her entire life among hunters, she has pressure cooked and stored countless jars of pheasant, wild and tame duck and goose, as well as chicken, pork and beef.

My first lesson came a few years ago on a snowy December morning in the same kitchen where Lucille learned canning as a child, while she labored next to her grandmother over a cob-burning stove. The pheasant hunting had been good, and a few limits of cleaned birds filled a cooler on the back porch. First, we filleted the breast and thigh meat from the bones and

cut these into several pieces. I was tasked with coating them with a mixture of wheat and corn flour, garlic powder, onion powder, salt and pepper. Lucille then fried the meat in her home-rendered lard (olive oil will also work, but the final product won't be quite as flavorful) until well-browned. Hot out of the skillet, she packed the pieces tightly into clean and pre-heated canning jars, then poured steaming broth (made by simmering the pheasant carcasses for several hours with vegetables and spices) into the jars, filling the space between the meat chunks and



PHOTOS BY GERRY STEINHAUER

Canned pheasant breast over garden-grown mashed potatoes is hard to beat.



Canning will tenderize the meat of tough, old tom turkeys and other game.

to within an inch of the rim. A mixture of water and chicken bouillon will also work if you do not have time for broth making. I then ran a butter knife down along the edge and middle of the jars to remove any air pockets where bacteria can survive pressure cooking. And finally, the jars were sealed and cooked at 15 pounds of pressure for 90 minutes.

Floured meat will thicken the broth into a dense gravy and give the pheasant a freshly fried taste. I savor the fall-off-the-bone tender meat right out of the jar and on sandwiches. I also heat it in a pan with a little milk to dilute the gravy and ladle it over mashed potatoes or rice.

Lucille has also canned both wild and domestic ducks and geese using this method. As liquid to fill the jars she uses broth made from the birds' carcasses, melted lard or rendered duck or goose fat.

Another method I use to can both pheasant and wild turkey breast and thigh meat is to first season it with salt, pepper, dried sweet basil and rosemary, then brown it un-floured in butter or olive oil. The meat is then packed into quart jars followed by a teaspoon of canning salt, a chicken bouillon

cube and simmering water. Without flour, the liquid in the jars does not form a gravy. Turkey breast is especially delightful canned this way. Pheasant drum sticks and wings, which some hunters find too tough to eat, I simply pack into jars raw along with a teaspoon of canning salt and simmering water. These make quick, nutritional snacks.

Fowl are not the only game that can be canned. My friend, Mark Dietz of Papillion, raves about his canned deer meat. "I use only the prime cuts, mostly roasts from the upper hind and front quarters and avoid using any meat with gristle or tendons, such as that from the lower legs," Deitz said. First trimmed of all fat, he cuts the roasts into inch-square pieces which are then tightly packed raw into quart jars. On top of the meat he adds two tablespoons of au jus base (a thick paste) and no additional broth, water, or canning salt. He then pressure cooks the meat.

"Everybody loves it," Deitz said, "It is great right out of the jar, in French dip sandwiches or in stroganoff. Sometimes I eat it over potatoes or rice with gravy made from the juice left over in the jars."

Canning Carp

In addition to being a deer hunter, Dietz is also an avid bow fisherman. Each year he and his buddies hold their own carp-o-rama on the Platte River in Sarpy County. "When the river rises in early June, the carp move into the backwaters to spawn. They will come to the surface to suck cottonwood fluff [attached to the seeds] and that is when we shoot them," Dietz said.

They arrow mainly common carp, some grass carp and a few silver carp. "They all go to the canner," Dietz said. "The best are the grass carp as they are pure white meat. They are pretty common in the Platte and we shoot three- to 30-pounders." Dietz explained that any fish with somewhat oily meat, such as catfish, trout, suckers and northern pike, are good for canning. Carp and drum are his personal favorites.

To prepare the carp for canning, Dietz fillets them just like any other fish, but cuts around the thick ribs. He removes the skin and the fishy-tasting red meat along the lateral line and near the tail. Some bones remain in the fillets, but not to worry, these are dissolved by the vinegar in the canning

solution and high pressure cooking. Dietz cuts the fillets into about one-inch cubes and tightly packs them raw into pint jars. To the jars he then adds a teaspoon of canning salt and one tablespoon each of white vinegar and vegetable oil (this solution can also be used for canning deer and other game). "Once cooked, the carp is as pure white and boneless as albacore tuna, and we use it just like tuna," Dietz said, beaming.

Dietz's favorite canned carp recipes are those of his long-time friend and canning mentor, Gene Hunt, superintendent at Fort Kearny State Historical Park. "My friends call it 'Gene Hunt's World Famous Carp Dip,' and I've been making it for over 30 years," Hunt said. The recipe is rather simple: drain a pint of canned carp, put it in a bowl, add a bit of diced onion, bell pepper and French's Mustard and mix. Hunt prefers French's Mustard as it contains added spices, but any mustard will do. To decrease the "wimp factor" he sometimes adds a bit of jalapeno, cayenne or habanero pepper to the dip, depending on the crowd he is serving.

Carp patties are also a Hunt creation. In a bowl, mix



PHOTO BY GERRY STEINHAUER

The Friday night salmon patties of my childhood are no match for a Gene Hunt carp patty.

together a pint of drained, canned carp, two eggs and six to eight soda crackers, and then form it into thin patties. Fry the patties in a lightly oiled pan until the edges are browned and the patties are heated through. Because the meat is already cooked, it takes little pan frying. Salt, pepper, crushed garlic or other spices can be sprinkled onto the patties while cooking. Hunt prefers his carp sandwiches with just mayo and lettuce.

Hunt cans only carp caught from rivers with sandy bottoms, such as the Platte and Loups, or from reservoirs fed by such rivers, such as the Calamus and Sherman, as the flesh of these fish is firmer, less oily and better tasting than that of fish from sandpits, ponds or mud-bottomed streams.

One reason Hunt cans fish and game is that it allows him to utilize tough or bony meat that others might discard. "I believe we should honor the animals we harvest by using all of their meat," Hunt said. The local fame he has attained for his carp dip and patties is also satisfying. ■

For more on canning meat, see information from the University of Wisconsin Extension: <http://bit.ly/2e2vs0o>, University of Minnesota Extension: <http://bit.ly/2fEGcT4>, and Oregon State University Extension: <http://bit.ly/2feXDH8>.



Mark Dietz (left) and Jason Wallace hold a stringer of Platte River grass carp and a common carp (left) that are prime for canning.

PHOTO BY DOUG CUNDALL

Canning Cautions and Tips

When canning low-acid foods such as fish and game, poorly sealed jars or undercooking may allow the survival of the bacteria *Clostridium botulinum* or its spores. The bacteria produces the toxin botulinum that, when ingested, causes botulism, a rare but serious disease; symptoms include nausea, blurred vision, paralysis and even death. *Clostridium* is common in our soils and waters and is easily transferred to meat. It prefers low-acid and low-oxygen environments, and therefore can subsist and grow in sealed jars of meat.

The bacteria's heat-resistant spores are killed during cooking only when temperatures reach a minimum of 248 degrees F for at least 30 minutes. The temperature in most pressure cookers set at 15 pounds of pressure reaches 250 degrees, well above the 212 degrees of conventional boiling or simmering, killing the bacteria and its spores. Because of the danger of botulism, meats should always be canned in a pressure cooker and never in a water bath (an unpressurized pot of boiling water). Most recipes call for pressure cooking meats at 15 pounds of pressure for 60 to 90 minutes. Properly canned, meats will remain preserved for several years.

- Pressure cookers are sealed vessels with interlocking lids to withstand high pressure, a gasket to prevent air escape, and a valve to release steam to maintain constant pressure. Trapped steam increases the cooker's internal pressure allowing the temperature to rise above the boiling point of water. When pressure canning, always use quality heat-tolerant canning jars, such as those made by Mason or Ball, and avoid reusing pickle or mayonnaise jars as they may crack. Canning jars can be bought at most grocery stores, but can often be acquired more cheaply at garage or estate sales. Avoid using jars with cracks or nicks on the rim.

- Another tip: When canning meat or other foods, only use canning or pickling

salt. Regular or table salt is not pure sodium chloride. It contains the additive calcium silicate, which, during canning, can cause the salt to settle to the bottom of the jars or cause clouding within the jars.

- Though modern-day stainless steel pressure cookers are safe, remain cautious when cooking with high pressure. Foremost, never put your face near the steam relief valve, as you could get scalded, and never take the lid off after cooking until the pressure has equalized, as steam or boiling water may rush out. Always read the instructions that come with pressure cookers regarding their operation and how to can specific foods. You might consider having a mentor the first time you can meats. ■



Browned pheasant is packed into clean, pre-heated canning jars.

PHOTO BY GERRY STEINHAUER



Winter's Colors

Hues of Hibernation

Photos and story by Christopher Helzer

Winter landscapes in Nebraska tend to be dominated by the grays and browns of dormant vegetation. Periodic snowfalls can provide welcome highlights on those drab landscapes, but even the white snow eventually turns a dull gray and then melts away completely.

Finding other colors during winter requires attention to detail - spotting a flash of red as a bird flits from one gray tree to another, or noting the subtle blue tones in an



Opposite: A Rorschach image appears in the burned bark of a ponderosa pine tree at The Nature Conservancy's Niobrara Valley Preserve.

Above: Wild rose leaves often persist well into the winter, adding a dash of red color to brown prairies.

expanse of white snow. Careful observers will discover red or gold leaves still clinging to branches, and clusters of green moss and other plants hardy enough to hold on to their chlorophyll through the coldest months. Even grays and browns can be captivating, especially if they have interesting texture or are reflecting golden light from early or late day sun.



Above: Mosses and sedges are still green at the end of December along a springbranch canyon waterfall at The Nature Conservancy's Niobrara Valley Preserve.

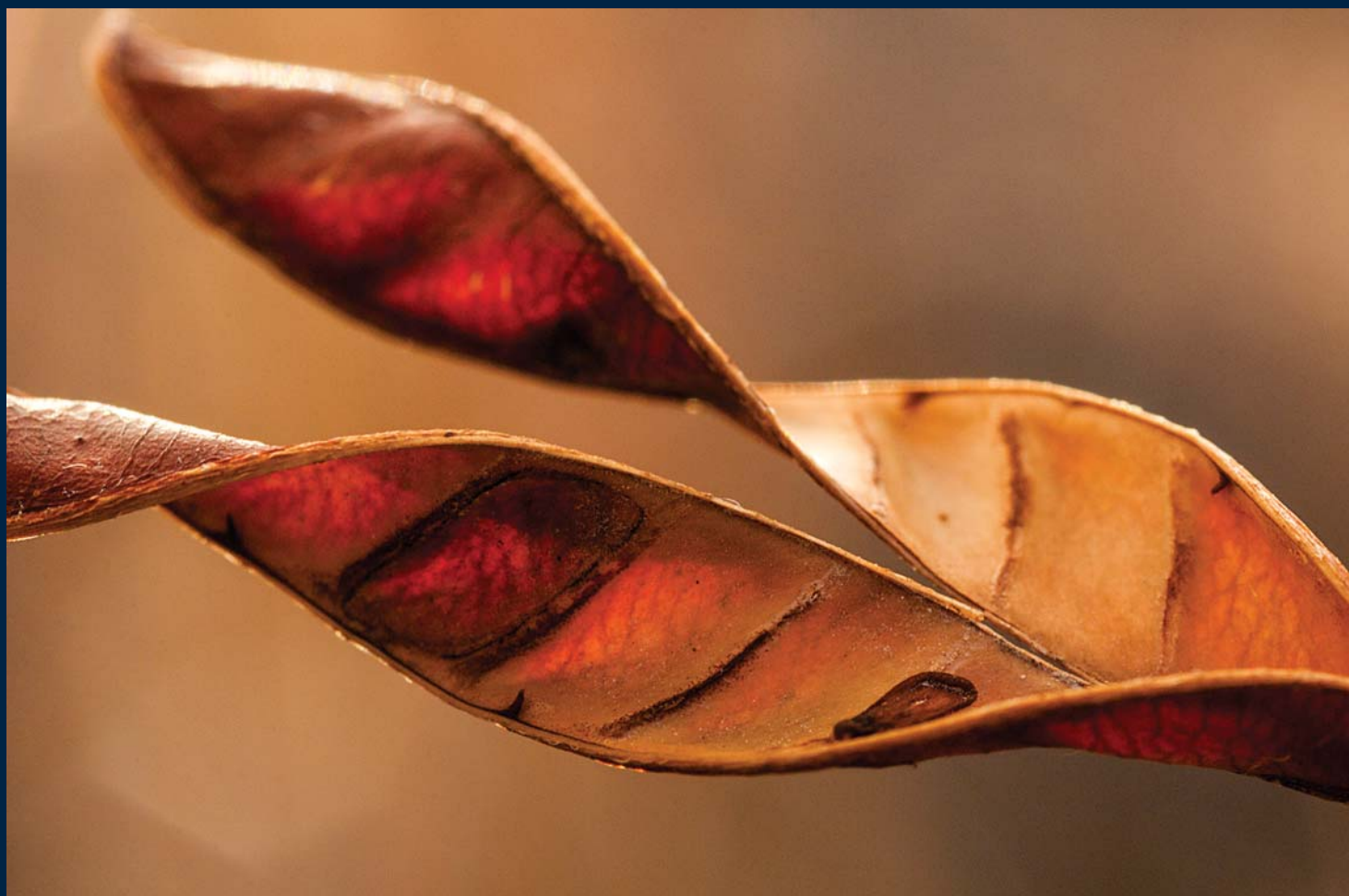
Left: The bold zebra stripes and red hood of a red-bellied woodpecker contrast starkly with the snowstorm behind it.

Opposite: Snow and ice provide welcome sparkling texture and highlights to winter landscapes, especially in early and late day light.





The period between vibrant fall foliage and spring green-up can seem interminably long, but winter isn't completely monochrome. Even in the middle of dreary, snowless landscapes, little splashes of color are waiting for those who are willing to go find them. ■



Winter is a good time to embrace the rich variety of brown tones across a landscape. Interesting texture and golden light at low sun angles can enhance the beauty of Illinois bundleflower (opposite, top) and partridge pea seed pods (opposite, bottom) as well as big, bearded bison.

Small Harvest – Big Impact

Nebraska may not issue many permits for bighorn sheep hunting, but the rare hunts have been a big asset for conservation efforts.

Story and photos by Justin Haag



When it comes to exalting the unique, rugged characteristics of the Panhandle's landscape, perhaps no better "poster children" exist than the Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep (*O. c. canadensis*). They are always sure to turn some heads when they're spotted in Nebraska's Pine Ridge or Wildcat Hills, where they cling to the steep terrain and complement the scenery, along with the regions' other big game species.

Visitors to western Nebraska who see one of these charismatic animals are sure to list it as a highlight, and

they're usually quick to tell friends and share the photos they capture of the animals.

For those encounters, they can largely thank the contributions of hunters who make the Game and Parks Commission's conservation efforts possible. Whether it is through the state's permit auction and lottery, or through membership in a conservation organization, these hunters have provided funding for the species' reintroduction and management. Todd Nordeen, a Nebraska big game manager who supervises the bighorn sheep program, said the hunting program has provided critical funding and that the state's



Terry Bogle poses with the bighorn sheep he harvested near Crawford, which would later be confirmed as a state record. Bogle won the permit by entering the lottery. In the background are landmarks Crow Butte, at left, and Little Crow Butte.

conservation efforts for the species wouldn't be possible without it.

A Rare Opportunity

Just 20 hunters have had the rare opportunity to pursue bighorn sheep in Nebraska since reintroduction efforts for the species began in the 1980s, and they've all been successful. In 2015, the 19th and 20th sheep were harvested. One of those sheep qualified as a state record trophy and the other earned the distinction of being the first harvested in

the Wildcat Hills region of the North Platte River valley in modern times.

Similar to most Nebraskans who win the lottery permit, Terry Bogle of Lincoln wasn't overly familiar with the species that he had become lucky enough to pursue after his name was drawn from the 2,307 applicants who paid a \$25 entry. Although he's an avid deer hunter, exposure to bighorn sheep in eastern Nebraska only presents itself through television shows, media accounts or perhaps a trip to the zoo.

Accompanied by his hunting buddy, Bob Dykeman of



A bighorn ram grazes in the Nebraska National Forest near Chadron. Commission wildlife staff monitor bighorn sheep in the Pine Ridge throughout the year, which guides decisions about the hunting season. One horn on this ram shows considerable wear, known as brooming.



Hunters fortunate enough to obtain a bighorn sheep permit experience hikes over and around the hills, buttes and escarpments of western Nebraska.

Lincoln, and staff members of the Commission, Bogle set out on his northwestern Nebraska adventure last December. Nebraska bighorn sheep hunters are awarded four nights lodging at Fort Robinson State Park and four days of accompaniment by Commission staff. The staff members help the hunters find a highly sought-after mature ram with trophy qualities, which can sometimes be challenging to identify for those who haven't had bighorn sheep hunting experience. Finding a trophy ram is advantageous for both parties, because those are the animals almost all hunters are seeking, and are also the ones that are best to harvest from a management perspective. Not surprisingly, Nebraska's hunt has developed a reputation for high quality rams. The hunt gives permit holders an opportunity to ask questions and learn about Nebraska's effort to repopulate the species in western regions of the state where they were extirpated largely because of human activity in the early 20th century.

Bogle certainly left northwestern Nebraska satisfied.

"This whole experience has been outstanding and has exceeded my expectations," said Bogle, who stayed at Fort Robinson State Park and spent an evening and one full day scouting before harvesting a magnificent ram near northwestern Nebraska's most prominent landmark, Crow Butte. "It's given me a greater appreciation for what the Game and Parks Commission does."

Bogle's ram was later confirmed as a state record with an official net score of 190 5/8 on the Boone and Crocket

scale – a formulation of the horns' length plus four points of circumference. In addition to being a record, it qualified for Boone and Crocket's prestigious "Records of North American Big Game" publication.

A Coveted Hunt

Barbara Sackman of Long Island, New York, the other 2015 permit holder, was no stranger to bighorn sheep before her trip to the Gering area. Sackman and her husband, Alan, are world-renowned hunters who have received many honors from conservation organizations – the most recent being Barbara's prestigious 2015 Weatherby Hunting and Conservation Award. She won the permit through an auction administered by the Wild Sheep Foundation, one of the conservation organizations that has been integral to Nebraska's sheep reintroduction and management efforts.

Nebraska is a coveted bighorn sheep destination for people such as Sackman, a veteran hunter who has especially taken a liking to bighorn sheep hunting and was looking to harvest a specimen from the Rocky Mountain subspecies for the first time. The sheep, harvested at Cedar Canyon Wildlife Management Area near Gering, was her 29th bighorn and complemented a list that included Himalayan tahr, Barbary sheep and Arabian addax.

While the hunts are still in some of Nebraska's most rugged areas, they aren't quite as challenging as those of



Barbara Sackman is joined by her husband, Alan, while posing with the ram she harvested at Cedar Canyon Wildlife Management Area near Gering. The Sackmans, who have harvested numerous species of wild sheep throughout the world, chose Nebraska to experience hunting a Rocky Mountain bighorn.

other regions, where hunters travel by horseback into the mountains and move up and down steep slopes ranging in thousands of feet of elevation. Even Nebraska's most difficult topography features buttes and escarpments with less than 500 feet of elevation change.

"Sheep can be a very tough, difficult and challenging hunt.



Nebraska's bighorn sheep hunters are sure to leave with a trophy. In the Boone and Crockett scoring system, measurements are taken for each horn's length and four points of circumference.

There aren't as many permits across the country as there are for other big game, so any opportunity to harvest a bighorn sheep is highly sought after by sheep enthusiasts," Nordeen said. "Nebraska's not quite as difficult as other bighorn sheep hunting states in terms of terrain. We also have better access and opportunities to get close. In some places, a hunter might send in for 20-plus years to get preference points. By the time he gets a permit, he's not a youngster anymore."

Also aiding hunters' chances is the timing of the hunt. Nebraska's hunting season is set in December during the rut, similar to other Nebraska big game species. The rams, which can be difficult to locate for most of the year, are on the move and more likely to be seen during this period.

"That time of year, they're more mobile and looking for mates," Nordeen said. "They're generally around and we can get a better look at the rams that are out there."

Despite being comparatively less challenging, the sheep reside in some of Nebraska's roughest landscape, and hunters shouldn't assume it will be easy. Nordeen notes that one of the hunters passed on taking a trophy ram and later regretted it because it could not be located again. He eventually opted for a smaller specimen.

"With our success rate being 100 percent, maybe some people will foresee that it's an easy hunt," Nordeen said.

"From people who are unfamiliar with our region, we often hear, 'We don't want to hunt sheep in a cornfield.' The Nebraska bighorn sheep hunting experience is certainly not that, and it's far from being a guaranteed hunt."

Johnny Barta, the 2014 bighorn sheep permit lottery winner from the eastern Nebraska village of Western, Nebraska, said one of the biggest bonuses to the hunt was the opportunity to expose his adult son, Justin, to northwestern Nebraska's beauty.

"A highlight was being out here seeing these buttes with my son because he's never been here before," Barta said.

A Big Impact

Since the first hunt in 1998, \$627,900 has been raised through the \$25 permit application fee in the 14 years a permit has been offered by lottery, with an average of about 1,800 entries per year. Another \$638,000 has been raised from the seven permits that have been awarded by auction. Almost all of that money goes toward bighorn sheep management, or at least toward management of big game.

A number of factors go into deciding whether or not permits are issued each year. The Commission looks at total population and the population of rams and number of mature rams. Deaths from outbreaks of disease are also considered.

The Commission has yet to issue more than two permits per hunting season. Since 1998, there have been five years in which no permits were issued. In 12 of the years that there's been a hunting season, only one lottery permit was issued – such is the case for 2016. Those permits are only awarded to Nebraska residents.

"When you have small herds like we do, it's difficult to put a percentage or number on a threshold. With disease events that limit lamb production, you can have a pretty significant age gap," Nordeen said. "You could have 6-, 8- or 10-year-old quality rams, but then you might not have any more rams that are close to that in age."

Part of the Hunting Heritage

After years of monitoring bighorn sheep, one might expect Commission staff members to become attached to the animals and wince at the thought of them reaching the end of their lives. Nordeen said that's not the case.

"When we're looking at some of these older-aged rams that are close to being at the end of their lives anyway, getting harvested by a hunter is a good thing for them compared to going off somewhere and slowly dying on their own," he said. "Those hunting dollars come back to the conservation of the species."

Similar to other big game animals, a harvested bighorn sheep serves as a resource for meat and is another respected part of Nebraska's rich hunting heritage.

In December, Brett Roberg of Kearney will become the 21st hunter to pursue a bighorn sheep in Nebraska and will be working to fill the tag he won in this year's lottery. Those who support conservation can be reassured that his hunt will help ensure that bighorn sheep are around to serve as a poster species for the Panhandle's beauty for generations to come. ■

Bighorn Sheep in Nebraska

Bighorn sheep are native to Nebraska, but they haven't always been present within its borders. Audubon's bighorn sheep (*O.c. auduboni*) once roamed the butte country of the Nebraska Panhandle, but they disappeared from the landscape in the early 1900s because of disease, unregulated hunting and habitat loss. Sadly, that subspecies became extinct in 1925.

In an effort to remedy the negative consequences brought on by humans, Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep (*O.c. canadensis*) from Custer State Park in South Dakota, were reintroduced to Nebraska in an enclosure at Fort Robinson State Park in 1981. Those sheep were released to the wild in 1988 and 1993. Release efforts of sheep from Montana, Canada and Colorado in 2001, 2005, 2007 and 2012 have resulted in about 320 sheep that reside in areas of the Pine Ridge between Harrison and Chadron, and the Wildcat Hills south of Gering and east to McGrew.

Using proceeds from the hunts and from conservation partners, many of the sheep have been fitted with collars, and their movements are monitored by staff. The monitoring helps keep tabs on population and herd health – both important factors in conservation and decisions about hunting seasons.

The reintroduction efforts certainly haven't been without their challenges. Bighorn sheep are highly susceptible to disease, the main one being *Pasteurella pneumonia*. While domestic sheep owners can vaccinate against the malady when problems arise, it's usually unfeasible to capture and treat wild sheep in the same manner. ■



Workers collar a bighorn ram during one of the Commission's capturing efforts.



NEBRASKA
ASSOCIATION OF
BED & BREAKFAST

*Nebraska Association of Bed and Breakfasts
are the Better Way to Stay*

1-877-223-NABB (6222)
www.nebraskabb.com



BAKERS BED & BREAKFAST
Blair, Nebraska
402-426-8909
bakersbedandbreakfast.com



BARN ANEW BED & BREAKFAST
Scottsbluff, Nebraska
308-632-8647
barnanew.com



OFT'S BED & BREAKFAST
Bennington, Nebraska
402-614-7509
oftsbb.com



PRAIRIE CREEK INN
Walton / Lincoln, Nebraska
402-488-8822
pcibnb.com



**RICE LODGE &
CONFERENCE CENTER**
Odell, Nebraska
402-806-2174
ricelodge.odell-nebraska.us



WEST FORK ACRES
Milford, Nebraska
402-761-2727
westforkacres.com



CATHER SECOND HOME GUEST HOUSE
Red Cloud, Nebraska
402-746-2653
willacather.org



WUNDER ROOST BED & BREAKFAST
Roca, Nebraska
402-430-9130
wunderroost.com



GEORGE SPENCER TASTING ROOM
Gibbon, Nebraska
308-455-0717
georgespencerwine.com



RIVER INN RESORT
Brownville, Nebraska
402-825-6441
river-inn-resort.com



**THE RED CLOUD B&B
AT THE KALEY HOUSE**
Red Cloud, Nebraska
402-746-3989
redcloudbb.com



CONVENT HOUSE BED & BREAKFAST
Steinauer, Nebraska
402-869-2230
conventhouse.com

Return of the Kestrel

A Raptor Recovery Story

By Roger Welsch

My father was a German of the Old School – he didn't say much but when he did, it was a good idea to listen. By way of conserving his breath and energy (especially when it came to his only child), he often expressed his ancient wisdom in proverbs. He once cautioned me against making hasty generalizations by saying, "Rog, be careful when you paint with a broad brush." He wanted me to consider the individual rather than characterizing large groups with too hasty stereotypes. Good advice. And one that I find tends to apply to our relationships with creatures other than our fellow human beings.

Raptors, for example, get a bad "rap." (See what I did there?) We have seen kestrels take small songbirds at our feeder, and even while we know this is the way of nature and the world, it's still uncomfortable to see a small rabbit or pocket gopher fall prey to the stalkers and swoopers. We lost chickens to red-tailed hawks and even eagles – so many, in fact, that we finally gave up on poultry. It's a story as old as Abel and Cain and yet as modern as the Wild West stories of struggles between homesteaders and cowboys – herdsmen and meat eaters versus farmers and grain eaters. So even I was surprised last year when I found myself, gentle Linda, and old friend and hunter, Mick, struggling to rescue an injured raptor.

Mick had spent the weekend here and was just in the process of leaving. In fact, he had exited our door, and we thought he was on his way back to Lincoln when he came bursting back in sputtering, "There's a kestrel down. And your cat has it." We dropped everything and went running out to the yard. First we persuaded Boo Cat that she was not going to finish that kill. Unfortunately, however, in doing that we also frightened the bird that fluttered out of the yard and straight into our garage. Which is where everything goes that doesn't go somewhere else.

The kestrel made its way under a table where the cats lived and back behind some old camping gear, coolers and sacks of aluminum cans awaiting recycling. Which meant we had to pretty much dismantle most of the garage and Mick had to crawl through a narrow slot to get behind all the junk to catch the bird. I found a welding glove for him to wear while grabbing because the fierce aspect of the kestrel – its talons and beak but mostly the fiery glint in her eyes – suggested that she was not appreciating our efforts. Mick finally did grasp the bird and then....

Well, now what? A bird in the hand may be worth two in the bush but in a panic like ours, it was worth about 20 points on our blood pressure. Linda scrambled to find a pet carrier but then again the question was "Now what?!" Some clattering old synapses in my brain slammed shut and I remembered that up in town, just a mile away, two friends are active in raptor recovery, a program for rehabilitating,

and when possible, releasing back into the wild birds just like this one. Mick and I made a mad dash into town, pounded on Blake's door until we roused him, explained hurriedly what had happened and what we had, and asked if he could help us. Once he had us calmed down, he worked on doing the same for the kestrel, getting it into one of his cages, and promising us he'd do what he could to save this bird.

And that's the thing about it that struck me as curious: there are millions (if not billions) of birds in this world. We see them constantly out our windows and doors. I don't know what their mortality rate is but I suspect in this jungle a lot of them die every day. Every hour. Every minute. So why was this one individual suddenly of such apparent importance to us? Perhaps because it was injured? Because of its beauty? Maybe that there are far fewer kestrels than sparrows? I don't know but for these brief, frantic moments there were four Nebraskans investing a lot of emotional energy into this little lady of the fiery eyes.

Over the next few months I occasionally asked Blake if he'd heard anything about "our" kestrel. It turned out the bird had a broken wing but it was recovering and might be eligible for return to the wild. Or if not, she could serve as an educational tool when Blake visited schools or talked to groups about raptor recovery centers, this one as it turned out centered in Fontenelle Forest near Omaha. Okay, we had done our part, all that we could. And that could have been the end of the matter.

But it wasn't. One day six months later Blake called and said the kestrel was ready to release, and he and his partner Vicki would like to bring it back down here to release. Wow. And so our Lady of the Garage came back home. Again that could have been the end of the story, but it turned out she had acquired a male admirer who was also rehabilitating at the Center and he would be set loose at the same time. And the event was as spectacular as we ever could have hoped. I held the female only briefly but long enough to see again that steely, defiant look. And then she was out of my hand and off in the direction of the river, swooping and swirling as if to show that she hadn't forgotten a thing about her niche in this environment. Then she settled at the top of a nearby cottonwood. And called.

We set the male loose and he flew directly to her and for a moment they sat together, watching us. I'd like to think it was a moment of gratitude but even this hopeless old romantic is not that goofy. They were probably thinking something more like, "What the heck was that all about?"

And then they were off, again toward the river. That's a lot of trouble for a lot of people to salvage two wounded birds. Was it worth it? That single moment of seeing the two head off toward the river was worth more than the price of admission, believe me. Now every time I see a kestrel here I wonder, "Is that her? You know ... my kestrel?" ■

Keep the Raptor Recovery Center at Fontenelle Forest in mind for such occasions, or better yet, support their efforts in rescuing birds like our kestrel:
facebook.com/FFRaptorRecovery/.



BRING NATURE HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS WITH A GIFT FROM



Wild Birds Unlimited



BIRDFOOD • FEEDERS • BIRDBATHS • NATURE GIFTS

402.399.9976 Rockbrook Village/108th & Center, Omaha

www.wbuomaha.com

Christmas Decor

402.421.2204
604 Calvert St. • Lincoln, NE



ChristmasDecor.net

- Fully Insured, First Class Expertise
- Hassle-Free Take Down & Storage
- Lease/Service Programs
- Proactive Maintenance
- Stunning & Impeccable Designs
- Home & Commerical Properties



ABP works

Reclaimed Barn Wood Trays

Make a piece of Nebraska history a part of your home. Custom orders welcome, prices vary with tray size.

Table Center Piece • Serving Tray
• Bar Tray • Ottoman Tray

A Great Wedding or Christmas Gift!

www.abpworks.com | 402.802.1737
abpworks402@gmail.com



Master's Hand CANDLE CO. & GIFT SHOP

Every Woman's Dream Shop!
Enjoy a Holiday outing with your girlfriends.



Free Chocolate Samples!

- Shopping
- Luncheons
- Chocolates
- Jewelry
- Gifts & More!

Bring in this ad and receive a ¼ lb of FREE fudge! Expires 12.31.15

Tekamah, Nebraska
Just 45 minutes north of Omaha on Hwy 75

402.374.2003
mastershandcandles.com

NEBRASKA RAISED 100% GRASS-FED BISON




American Grassfed

Celebrating 20+ years!

Animal Welfare Approved

See website for new "Gift Boxes" as well as Subscription Boxes!

www.StraightArrowBison.com

308.872.3066 or mail@straightarrowbison.com

Good health to you and all that is yours. 1 Samuel 25:6

Grandma's Fruit & Nut Cake

Celebrating 100 years!



Holiday Tradition Since 1917

Proudly baked in NEBRASKA and shipped nationally by

Beatrice Bakery Co.
BAKING AMERICA'S BEST

Also offering: Coffee Cakes, Artisan Fruit Cakes, & Liqueur Cakes

Stop by and Shop!

201 S 5th Street (just 1 block south of Main St.)
Beatrice, Nebraska

www.beatricebakery.com • 800-228-4030

BUCKS WOOD PRODUCTS was originally known for the signature cedar log signs.

But I do custom log furniture, speciality pieces, benches, and much more.

All I need is your idea and I can go from there.



I take the orders, make the finished product, and deliver too you in person. 99% of all products I make are custom ordered by you.

BUCK'S WOOD PRODUCTS

402.270.4046
Neligh, Nebraska
info@buckswoods.com

Find us on: facebook.

www.buckswoods.com

World-Class Chocolates

Ship Holiday Gifts all over the world

BAKERS CANDIES

proudly made in

Nebraska

Greenwood

To view all of our chocolates visit us online or call:
www.bakerscandies.com / 402.789.2700



Sprucing Up a Holiday Tradition

Not all Christmas trees are created equal.

By John Duplissis, Nebraska Forest Service

Christmas trees are a tradition for many Nebraska families. The look, the smell, the warmth their lights provide on the most frigid of December evenings – it is easy to appreciate why trees are often the focal point of holiday celebrations. However, when it comes to choosing the perfect centerpiece, not all Christmas trees are created equal.

Which is Better – An Artificial or Natural Christmas Tree?

One approach to answering this question was undertaken by the Canadian sustainability firm, Ellio. Its analysis – at least in regards to the science – showed that “the natural tree is a better option than the artificial tree, in particular with respect to impacts on climate change and resource depletion. Natural tree production has positive impacts on climate change because natural trees sequester CO2.” In all fairness to the authors and the report, they noted that if you kept and used your artificial tree for more than 20 years, the artificial tree was a more sustainable option.

A more obvious reason to go natural is the support it provides for Nebraska businesses. If you are interested in local products and sustainable forest management, “choose and cut” tree farms are a one-stop shop. The first “choose and cut” tree farm was established in Lincoln by the late Walt Bagley and his wife Virginia in 1963. Since then, many operations have evolved into certified, sustainably managed businesses.

For example, Christmas tree producers carrying an American Tree Farm System certification must demonstrate

that they manage their lands “to protect wildlife habitat and watersheds, to conserve soil and to provide recreation for their communities.”

So artificial or natural? I will let you decide.

Which Species Makes the Best Christmas Tree?

Historically, choice and selection of trees was a regional matter. Not long ago one could guess what part of the country a person was from just by asking what species of Christmas tree they preferred. Folks from the Northeast tended to prefer balsam fir, with white pine running a close second. Folks in the Lake States also liked balsam fir, but red (Norway) and Scotch pine were runners-up. Moving westward you would find Fraser and Douglas firs as top picks, but Colorado blue spruce was also popular.

Today it is very likely you could find all of these trees for sale in Nebraska. But which species makes the best Christmas tree? Here are a few things to consider.

First and foremost, how important is smell to you? The firs, and, to a lesser extent, the pine trees, have a strong and pleasant aroma that most people enjoy. Spruces also tend to have a strong fragrance, but many folks do not find it as pleasant as the firs or pines.

What about ornaments? Each year my wife and I purchase ceramic ornaments that are special to us and our family. These ornaments tend to be fairly large and heavy, and we like them to be prominently displayed. This means we need a tree with short needles and relatively strong branches. Firs and spruces are great options as pines will often bend and droop under the weight of heavier ornaments.

Another issue for most folks is needle retention and needle dryness (whether the tree is fire prone). Based on a study done by Dr. Les Werner at the University of Wisconsin –



PHOTO BY JUSTIN HAAG

Pine trees have an aroma that most people enjoy, making them a popular choice for Christmas trees and other décor during the holidays.

Stevens Point, Fraser firs consistently ranked the highest in all of their tests (measuring water uptake, sap flow and needle retention). Based on the data collected, this study ranked these species in the following order:

- Fraser fir
- balsam fir
- Scotch pine
- Black Hills spruce (white spruce variant)

Where Can I Find a “Choose and Cut” Christmas Tree Producer?

Overall, there has been a pretty dramatic decline in the number of businesses that are still in operation. Around 20 farms can be found in eastern and central Nebraska, down from 50 in the late 70s. An updated list is kept by the Nebraska Department of Agriculture, which includes driving directions, when the farms are open, and what types of trees are available. For a list of Nebraska tree farms, visit <http://bit.ly/christmastreesne>. ■

Tips for Muzzleloading Season

Follow these simple instructions to make this season your best ever.

By Julie Geiser

The muzzleloading deer season runs the entire month of December, and hunters will be hitting the field with traditional and the newer inline guns.

Keep these tips in mind regardless of which muzzleloader you shoot.

Cleaning

After purchasing a new gun, remove the oil from the gun by cleaning the barrel. This same process can be done to clean the gun after shooting. Use a tub of very hot water mixed with a drop of dishwashing soap. Put the muzzle end of the barrel into the water and pump a rod with a cleaning patch, moving it up and down the inside of the barrel. This action creates a vacuum and will pull the water up into the barrel to clean it. This works for both types of muzzleloaders.

On an inline, remove the breech plug and soak it in breech plug cleaner while cleaning the barrel. Use a toothbrush to clean the threads where the breech plug screws in. Use a small wire to clean the fire hole in the breech plug. Inlines don't require the tub bath and are simple to clean with bore cleaners for inline guns.

For caplocks, remove the nipple and soak it in the tub of hot water while you clean the barrel; clean the port in the nipple with a nipple pick to remove any oil or debris.

The hotter the water the better when cleaning the barrel; it will dry the barrel faster as it heats the metal, but run several dry patches through the bore until they come out dry. Next, run a patch with bore butter through the bore to season the barrel and protect it from rust, which keeps the gun accurate. Bore butter is a non-petroleum based lubricant that will season the barrel. For inlines use breech plug grease on the threads before screwing the plug in the barrel. Then reassemble the gun.

Shooting

Always remember the powder, patch,



PHOTO BY JULIE GEISER

ball combination for caplocks; even with inlines the powder always goes first. This mistake is usually made by every muzzleloader shooter at some point. To remedy this problem purchase a CO2 cartridge load remover. It beats trying to pull a chunk of lead back up through a barrel. These tools attach to the breech of the muzzleloader and fire the load out the muzzle with ease.

In addition, choices for powder and bullet combinations are sometimes overwhelming as there are so many types to choose from. The best advice is to read the manufacturer's suggestions for proper bullet and powder amounts and types. You can always tweak powder loads and bullet types the more you shoot, and it is a good starting point. From there you can find which combinations shoot most effectively from your muzzleloader.

Once you find the loads that work best in your rifle, load the gun the same way every time. When starting a ball or bullet use a short starter first. If using bullets or sabots, use a short starter that will not deform the bullet tip, and don't start the bullet crooked. Then proceed with the ramrod to seat the load, marking the ramrod after it is loaded. This tells you that the powder and ball or sabot is seated in the same spot every time.

Keeping the powder dry can also be a challenge. There is nothing like hearing a fizzle instead of a kaboom when you squeeze the trigger. Place a piece of electrical tape on the end of the barrel. Cut the tape so it fits over the muzzle and press it down firmly; shooting through the tape has no effect on the shot. On inlines the breech is fairly protected from moisture getting in, while caplocks are not. I place a dot of fingernail polish on the nipple of my caplock to keep moisture out. When you are ready to fire, simply pluck the polish off and place the percussion cap on the nipple.

When shooting, increase your success with open sights by trying a peep sight. Peep sights help prevent aiming errors by increasing the sight radius, or the distance between the front and rear sight. Using fiber optic sights is another option for aiming and is better than using plain iron sights.

Also, invest in a few speed loaders – these gadgets will decrease loading time when getting another shot off quickly is crucial. Pre-load these plastic tubes with powder or pellets, patch and ball or a bullet.

Finally, know the rules and regulations before you go hunting. The Nebraska Big Game Guide lists legal weapons, calibers and scope use for muzzleloaders on page 48. ■

*Growing Legacies.
Yielding Results.*

We Specialize in
Farm Real Estate • Auction Services
Land Management • Farm Appraisals

Nebraska • Iowa • Kansas • South Dakota • Colorado

mp Mid-Continent
Properties, Inc.
Farm Real Estate, Management & Appraisals

402.334.0256
www.Mid-ContinentProperties.com
www.facebook.com/midcontinentproperties

Antelope Creek
Wildlife & Ponds

605.660.6566
antelopecreekwp.com

**Wildlife, Habitat,
Pond, Fishery & Land
Management**

Expert Service from Brett Kleinschmit

402.459.5823

- World Class Turkey
- Trophy Whitetail Deer
- Quality Upland Game Birds

**HUNT WHERE SUCCESS
IS EXPECTED!**

GOBBLE GRUNT
Outfitters
www.gobblengrunt.com

BOOK NOW!
gobblengrunt.com

THE BEST PIT BLINDS FOR SALE

402.450.5658
www.Kohlerblinds.com

**KOHLER
BLINDS**
— LINCOLN, NEBRASKA —

SHARE THE EXPERIENCE

\$5 YOUTH
HUNTING PERMITS

DEER & TURKEY

START PLANNING AT
OutdoorNebraska.org/FiveDollarYouth

NEBRASKA
— GAME PARKS —

LAND FOR SALE

**\$1.7
BILLION
& 490,000
ACRES**
sold in the
last 5 years



MORRILL CO, NE - 218 AC.

North Platte River Frontage, Beautiful timber framed home/cabin with covered porch overlooking irrigated crop fields and pond, 2400 sq ft heated shed with concrete floor, bathroom, shower, and game cleaning station, 3 waterfowl blinds, each with 120 gallon propane tanks, 10 ladder stands, 3 deer blinds, 2 steel bridges to cross sloughs, 3 ponds with windmill aeration stocked with bluegill and bass, Pasture, crop, alfalfa and 2 waterfowl pits leased producing approximately \$45,000/year, 75 acres irrigated farmland, Zimmatic 5 tower (60 acres), and remaining 15 acres under irrigation - **\$1,800,000**

SEWARD CO, NE - 280 AC.

Home built in 2003, 2,288 square feet, basement with garage, Heated stone floors, Railroad boxcar flooring with hand forged nails, Antique functional wood burning cookstove in kitchen, 67 +/- tillable acres (14 +/- in alfalfa, 53 +/- in corn), Pasture income, 40 foot lookout tower, 4 ponds, 2 that are stocked with bass, bluegill, and crappie, 3 shooting ranges, distances ranging from 30 yards to 600 yards, Thick, hardwood timber with intermittent cedar thickets, Vast areas of natural grass, Internal trail system, majority is rocky - **\$2,250,000**



CONTACT JASON OR LUKE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THESE AMAZING PROPERTIES



JASON SCHENDT | AGENT
jason.schendt@whitetailproperties.com
402.707.4885



LUKE WALLACE | AGENT
luke.wallace@whitetailproperties.com
402.340.6187



WHITETAIL TROPHY PROPERTIES REAL ESTATE

HUNTING | RANCH | FARM | TIMBER

WHITETAILPROPERTIES.COM



Whitetail Properties Real Estate, LLC. DBA Whitetail Properties | In the State of Nebraska DBA Whitetail Trophy Properties Real Estate LLC. | Dan Perez, Broker - Licensed in IL, IA, KS, KY, MO, NE & OK | Jeff Evans, Broker - Licensed in AR, GA, IL, MN, TN, WI | Wes McConnell, Broker - Licensed in AL, IL, OH, SD & WI | John Boyken, Broker - Licensed in IN | Sybil Stewart, Broker - Licensed in AL, MS & LA | Chris Wakefield, Broker - Licensed in TN | Joey Bellington, Broker - Licensed in TX





I loved to fish and hunt and have done it all my life. Left picture is me from 1984 with a few bass. In 1996 I caught a 7 lb. 12 oz. largemouth on only 6-pound line. I fished mostly around Hickman and a few farm ponds. I deer hunted 63 straight years and got a deer 61 times including this last year. I am 88 years old now and have decided to stop deer hunting. Picture on right is me with deer near Gothenberg in 1984. Most deer I hunted near Lincoln. I've gotten one 18-pointer and lots of 4 and 5 point deer.
— Fred Hansel, Lincoln, Nebraska



◀ This picture was taken around 1964 at my dad's farm in Hooper. I am the rider. If you look at the left rear leg of the horse, you can see the dust cloud as the horse slipped. She then fell over backwards with me still in the saddle. Lucky for me I ended up sort of on the side of the horse on my left leg. I was hurt but not too bad, missed about one week of work. This was a neat horse to ride but you better hang on. I still have horses but nowadays I just enjoy looking at them. I now live in Minnesota. My brother Dale Alberts took the picture; he lives in Cedar Bluffs, Nebraska.
— Robert Alberts, Dent, Minnesota

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

Now through April **SAVE 30%** on Cabins and Lodge Rooms

Make your reservations today
at OutdoorNebraska.org or
call 402-471-1414
Some restrictions apply.

NEBRASKA
— GAME PARKS —

VISIT CHEYENNE COUNTY

Sidney Dalton Gurley Lodgepole Potter

Events, Attractions, Shopping, History, Relaxation...
Whatever you & your family enjoy, you can find it here!

Upcoming Events:
Friday, Nov. 25th: Lamplight Tours at the Historic at the Ft. Sidney Museum and Commanders Home
Saturday, Nov. 26th: Small Business Saturday, Downtown Sidney
Saturday, Dec. 3rd: Parade of Lights and Tree Lighting, Downtown Sidney

For more information on all that Cheyenne County has to offer, go to www.sidneycheyennecountytourism.com
OR contact the Cheyenne County Visitors Center
658 Glover Rd., Sidney, NE (308) 254-4030 / (866) 545-4030





Special Guest & Featured Speaker
Mike Rogers
Host & Producer of SCI's Expedition
Safari on the Outdoor Channel

Hunting Convention & Expo

January 13 & 14, 2017

Ramada Plaza Hotel & Convention Center
3321 South 72nd, Omaha, NE 68124

- Featuring Live & Silent Auctions, Raffles and Free Seminars.
- Showcasing spectacular hunts, fishing trips, vacation packages, amazing art, firearms, clothing and equipment.
- Exotic game feed on Saturday night.

For more information:
www.NebraskaSafariClub.org



THE LODGE RESTAURANT

At Eugene T. Mahoney State Park

Featuring breakfast,
lunch and dinner buffets.
(call for hours and availability)

The Lodge at Mahoney State Park
28500 W Park Hwy, Ashland, NE
402-944-2523



NEBRASKA MASTER NATURALIST

Explore. Contribute. Connect.
Discover Nebraska's natural resources!

Join Nebraska Master Naturalists who conserve our natural legacy,
Training as volunteers through in-depth learning in Nebraska's Native Plants,
Wildlife, Geology, Ecology, Outdoor Skills and much more!

Learn More at naturalist.unl.edu





Photo Courtesy of Karen Klein

Travel the Winner's Circle!

Nebraska Spring Birding Trifecta



Sandhill Cranes (KEARNEY)

Visit South Central Nebraska this Spring to be a part of some of the best Birding experiences!

- Watch a majority of the 600,000 Sandhill Cranes migrate through the Platte River Valley.
- View the alluring mating dance of the Greater Prairie Chickens.
- See the American White Pelicans, one of North America's largest birds, arrive by the thousands.

For more information go to:
NebraskaSpringBirding.com

Greater Prairie Chickens (McCOOK)

American White Pelicans (HARLAN COUNTY)

Visit Nebraska.
Visit Nice!

Produced in part by a grant from the Nebraska Tourism Commission.
888-444-1867 • VisitNebraska.com

Pond-Tini

A Revolution in Pond Recreation

You  Find us on 




800-657-2184 • www.pondtini.com

234 N. Tyler | P.O. Box 450 | Elm Creek, NE 68836



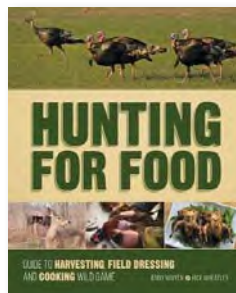
Marinated Bacon-wrapped Goose Breasts

Please excuse the Easter-like table cloth. Is winter over yet?

By Jenny Nguyen

This recipe is long overdue. I didn't last year, but my first two years working with the magazine, I go out to photograph the goose banding in the summer with the Commission's wildlife division. It's always a fun, but sometimes-chaotic time – imagine a rodeo, but instead of cattle you got angry, confused geese. Anyway, one of the guys asked me to dedicate a goose recipe to the goose banding crew. Well, here it is. And I thought I'd better include bacon in it.

On a different note, I'm excited to announce that my book *Hunting for Food* is available for sale at Nebraska Game and Parks Commission district offices and online gift shop – just in time for the holiday season! Co-authored by my partner, Rick Wheatley, *Hunting for Food* received a nonfiction wildlife honor award from the Nebraska Center for the Book this year!



Servings: 2
Prep Time: 4 hours
Cooking Time: 10-15 minutes
Ingredients:

- 1 large wild goose breast
- 1 sprig of fresh rosemary
- 4 sprigs of fresh thyme
- 2 cloves of garlic, minced
- Mild or hot chili pepper, sliced
- ½ cup of red wine
- ¼ cup of olive oil
- Kosher salt and cracked pepper, to taste
- Thick-cut smoked bacon

1. Remove silver skin, leftover shot and feathers from wild goose breast. Rinse under cold water, pat dry with paper towels and sprinkle generously with salt and pepper. Place goose breast into a zip-top bag or small bowl.

2. Before placing into marinade, crush or rub rosemary and thyme between your fingers to release their oils. Combine rosemary, thyme, garlic, chili pepper, red wine and olive oil. Whisk marinade to emulsify oil and wine, and pour over goose breast. Cover and refrigerate for 4 hours or overnight; flip breast halfway through.

3. One hour prior to cooking, remove goose from refrigerator to bring to room temperature. Prepare grill for medium-heat cooking. Remove breast from marinade and wrap with bacon. If needed, use toothpicks to keep bacon together. I took some of the peppers and wrapped it with the breast as well.

4. Grill bacon-wrapped goose breast until bacon is cooked through and goose is cooked to preferably medium-rare, but not past medium. If bacon cooks too quickly and flares, move breast to a cooler part of grill and cook until desired doneness is reached. Allow breast to rest for 5 minutes before cutting. Cut breast into thin medallions to serve. ■

This recipe and photo originally appeared on Jones Dairy Farm's website, jonesdairyfarm.com.



PHOTO BY JENNY NGUYEN

junior journal

interesting notes for readers of all ages

by Lindsay Rogers and Donna Schimonitz

Winter is a Busy Time of Year!

By Deborah Woracek, Fontenelle Forest Nature Center

Do you ever wonder what animals do to survive winter? Nebraska's wildlife species do one of three things – migrate, hibernate, or stay active. Let's take a look at each of these survival tactics.

MIGRATORS

Waterfowl migrate south because they need food. Waterfowl such as geese and ducks feed mainly on aquatic (water) plants and insects. When the water freezes in Nebraska they can't find enough food. The warmer weather in the south means they will have plenty of food.

Monarch butterflies that hatch in Nebraska migrate south to the mountains in central Mexico before migrating back north in the spring. When they arrive in Texas they mate, lay their eggs, and die. When the next generation is ready, they fly a little farther north. It will take three generations of monarchs to make it back to Nebraska the next summer.

Did you know that some of our "winter resident" animals actually

come from areas to our north? When they can't find food up north, they migrate south to Nebraska. A good example is the dark-eyed junco.

HIBERNATORS

Hibernation is a form of dormancy, or inactivity, that some animals use to survive winter. For some animals, this means truly sleeping throughout the winter. They do not eat, drink water or move around. But, they still breathe the same amount of oxygen. These animals are known as "true hibernators." Examples of Nebraska true hibernators are little brown bats, woodchucks and some ground squirrels.

Other animals will go into "torpor," which means they will sleep for long periods of time, but will occasionally wake up, eat and move around. Skunks and bears are good examples.

Then other animals go into what is known as "brumation." This means that they are not truly asleep, but rather slowed down. They do not eat, but still need water. They slow down their breathing and need less oxygen. Snakes go into brumation.

STAY ACTIVE

You may notice squirrels and rabbits are active in winter. Raccoons may sleep for several days during severe cold, but otherwise are active.

Chickadees, white-breasted nuthatches, and tufted titmice will hang out all winter in a flock to help find food and watch for danger. White-tailed deer, foxes and great-horned owls are all active throughout the winter. To survive the cold, these species must eat a lot. This extra food helps create extra energy, which goes into keeping their body warm. 🐾

What Do I Do For Winter?

Identify if these animals migrate, hibernate or stay awake.



Answers top to bottom: hog-nosed snake hibernates, rainbow trout stays active, mallard duck migrates.

NATURE CALENDAR

- **Squirrels gather in nests to conserve energy:** *All winter*
- **American goldfinch males begin molting into bright yellow breeding plumage:** *Late February*
- **Woodpeckers feeding on suet and bird feeders:** *Throughout the winter*
- **Bullfrogs begin hibernation:** *Early to late November*



Fox squirrel photo by Getty Images

Getty Images

Christmas Vacation

Even when I was a teenager, no longer pining for G.I. Joe and Transformer action figures, Christmas never lost its luster. For my desires then consisted of daybreak mallards, later afternoon bobwhites and evening brunettes.

My best friend Rob and I, along with my dad and an assorted pile of other friends, would lug a pile of misshapen and poorly painted decoys into flooded timber adjacent to the Mississippi River outside of Memphis, Tennessee. If we so happened to talk a flock of greenheads below the cypress trees, we had a shot to empty our guns every time.

A long walk back up the steep hill among the cypress knees would lead us back to the house for eggs, biscuits and a late-morning nap.

I'd switch my waders for brush pants in the afternoon, and meet up with family friend Rick Hearn and his English pointers, Rebel and Sambo, to look for coveys along ditchrows and dikes all across northwestern Shelby County. Nothing was better than watching one of these dogs go on point. We'd bust the covey, kill a couple of birds and look up minutes later to see the dog again on point having found a single.

We'd finish the day around sunset, and I'd head to the house and take a shower for the evening festivities.

I'm reminded of this every year around this time, especially lately with Nebraska's increasing quail numbers.

About a year ago, I started hunting with family friend Brian Sparks in Cass County and his English pointers, walking ditchrows and shelterbelts reminiscent of what I walked during my high school and early college days.

With my Browning Light Twelve still across the crook of my arms, I sometimes feel like I'm 17 again. Except that I'm a bit more sore after each walk than I was on those days, and my hunts sometimes get cut off because I have to pick up the kids from school.

But everything else is about right – the excitement that happens when a dog goes on point, the sound quail make when they flush and even the smell in the air after a shotgun has been fired.

The only major difference is my nightly activities. No



more evening excursions for my friends and me. My evening brunettes? That's changed too – for the one that I desired most when I was a teenager has been my wife for nearly 20 years.

Neither this time of year, nor that brunette, has ever lost its luster.

Jeff Kurrus
October 13, 2016



DEER HUNT NEBRASKA

NO LOTTERIES. NO HASSLES. NO EXCUSES.
**NO REASON
TO STAY HOME.**

Don't leave your deer season to chance. Hunt Nebraska this fall and take advantage of over-the-counter permits, trophy-quality whitetail and mule deer and the opportunity to hunt the rut. We make it easy to get into the stand—but once you're there, you've got to earn it.

Plan your hunt at OutdoorNebraska.org/Deer

