

MAY / JUNE 2015

IOWA OUTDOORS

THE DNE ATION AND RECREATION

IN THIS ISSUE:

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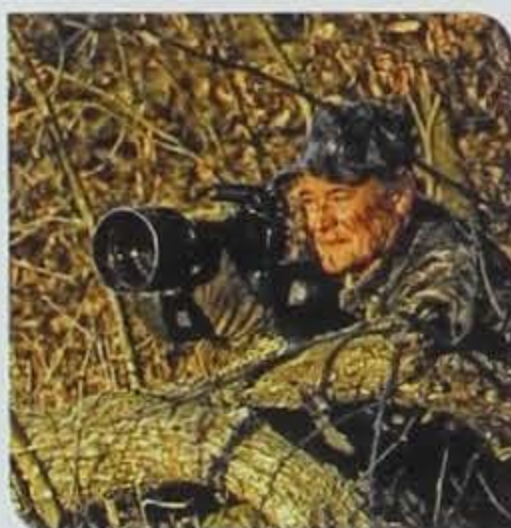
HANK KOHLER, a first time contributor to *Iowa Outdoors*, lives in Ames with his wife Anne. Hank has been awarded a Silver Master

Angler Award by the Iowa DNR and is fortunate to spend many hours on lakes and rivers in Iowa, Minnesota and Ontario. The rocks mentioned in his story are along the Boone River in Hamilton county.



BRIAN GIBBS, Clayton County naturalist, has been addicted to wild places ever since his father first took him trout fishing in Yellow River State Forest. His

passion for teaching others about enjoying and conserving natural beauty has led him to work in such scenic places as Glacier National Park. When not teaching, Gibbs is exploring the natural beauty hidden amongst the bluffs and valleys of northeast Iowa.



ROGER HILL has photographed wildlife since 1962 when he started hunting big game. His passion is capturing Iowa whitetails, pheasants, prairie chickens and the

rare sharptail grouse in their natural settings. His work is published in countless state and national magazines. Roger lives on a farm with his wife, Marcia, near Roland.



JEN WILSON is a travel and features writer based in Des Moines. Her work appears in *National Geographic Traveler*, *Frommer's Budget Travel*, *Midwest*

Living and *Esquire*. Find her book, *Running Away to Home*, at www.jennifer-wilson.com.

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To conserve and enhance our natural resources in cooperation with individuals and organizations to improve the quality of life for Iowans and ensure a legacy for future generations.

EDITORIAL MISSION

We strive to open the door to the beauty and uniqueness of Iowa's natural resources, inspire people to get outside and experience Iowa and to motivate outdoor-minded citizens to understand and care for our natural resources.

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ABOUT THE COVER

In a tradition spanning centuries, a Meskwaki performs song and dance spawned by the Native Americans' religious and social beliefs passed down through generations. What was historically a celebration during harvest and before winter, the annual event near Tama draws tribal members and visitors from all corners of the country. The 101st annual event is Aug. 6-9 at the Meskwaki Powwow Grounds on Battleground Road in Tama. **641.484.4678**; meskwakipowwow.com.

PHOTO BY CLAY SMITH



ABOUT THIS PHOTO

Meskwaki gather around a ceremonial drum, keeping the rhythm for singers chanting nearby during their annual August powwow. Singing and percussion are the most sacred aspect of traditional music, with drums and rattles the most important accompaniment. The music plays a vital role in telling history, with ceremonies and stories designed to give thanks to the Great Spirit and pass on ancestral customs to new generations.

PHOTO BY CLAY SMITH

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ACTIVITIES, TIPS AND EVENTS FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

GO CAMPING, REGISTER AND RAISE MONEY FOR NWF

"If we can teach our children to honor nature's gift, the joys and beauties of the outdoors will be here forever."

—JIMMY CARTER



Head to your favorite campground, or pass along the camping tradition and conservation ethics to your family in your own backyard. Join thousands of others sharing the outdoor spirit during the National Wildlife Federation's Great American Campout.

Since 2005, thousands have participated to promote camping to connect with nature and get kids outdoors. Studies show those who grow up to be conservation-minded had someone in their lives who introduced them to nature. Be a part of the 10th anniversary of this event and help meet the goal to get 10 million kids to spend regular time outdoors.

Be one of 200,000 to pledge to campout June 27 and the National Wildlife Federation and supporters will donate \$2 for each registrant in support of the NWF's wildlife conservation work—up to \$400,000. Search "campout" at www.nwf.org to register.

Carpe Diem and Carpe Nox (Tips to seize your day and night)

1. Fish. Little complements camping better than fishing. Try it at night. Not knowing what's on the end of the line until it's pulled to shore can be exhilarating. In the end, treat kids to a Dutch oven dinner or dessert. Search "recipes" at iowadnr.gov.

2. The fire is the main comfort of the camp, whether summer or winter, and is about as ample at one season as at another. It is as well for cheerfulness as for warmth and dryness.—Henry David Thoreau. Build one. Teach them how to effectively collect for and build a fire. Reward with toasted marshmallows or s'mores.

3. Bug Out. Day or night is a great time to observe and identify bugs. At night, stretch a white sheet between two trees and shine a light on it. Document the different insects that come to the sheet. And nothing is quintessential kid-like than chasing fireflies.

READY, SET, PEDAL!!

Create a Team for Iowa's Bike to Work Challenge

Enjoy the allure of bicycling and see what propels thousands to register for Iowa Bike Month and "compete" as individuals or teams for enjoyment, camaraderie and prizes during May. The Bike Month Challenge showcases the many benefits of bicycling—and encourages more folks to give their bike a spin.

Whether you bike to work or school to save money, for the bliss of it, for a healthy heart and mind or other reasons, the month celebrates pedal power and the many reasons to ride.

Last year 401 teams, 284 organizations and 1,686 individual riders rode a cumulative 53,354 miles in one month. It's fun, free and there are prizes and awards. (And for bragging rights, last year the DNR team in Des Moines won the public agency category.)

Learn more, find events, get cycling tips and register as an organization, team or individual at <http://challenge.bikemonthiowa.com/>.



4. Stargaze. Make it a challenge and search constellations other than the familiar Big Dipper. "Create" your own constellations and name them after what they remind you of.

5. Turn down the volume. Ditch the stereo and the iPod and listen to night sounds. Is that a barred owl or a barn owl? Is that a tree frog or a cricket? Grab some field guides and document your discoveries.

6. Play the name game. Find natural objects that start with each letter of the alphabet. Collect those items that you can, or take photos of those that you can't, to make nature collages of the experience later.

7. Stow electronics for better communication. Busy hands prompt the best conversations. Sing some camp songs, or tell stories around the fire. Keep in mind, scary stories don't always make for the best nights in a tent! For camping tips and recipes, go to pinterest.com/iowadnr.

Together



THE CAPTAIN OF DEATH

BY TIM LANE

The Cross of Lorraine is still affixed atop Broadlawns Hospital in Des Moines. A century ago it was the symbol the public and health experts rallied behind in an epic battle against the most devastating disease of all time. (The symbol is still the logo for the American Lung Association.)

The disease went by many names—white death, consumption, and later, tuberculosis. It was a disease that killed one in seven of all humans through history. As a deadly enemy, we knew little about it except what it did—wasting away its pale victims. But we were ignorant how it attacked. For more than a thousand years our best and brightest believed it was hereditary. Even when appearing in clusters of people exposed to it, the disease wasn't deemed contagious. This is like finding an arrow-riddled body and proclaiming death from natural causes.

But even a befuddled understanding led to some positives. Many diagnosed with the disease headed for the hills and other natural preserves. The ancient Greeks and Americans in the early 1900s sought pure air and nature as a cure.

The fact their impaired lungs functioned better away from polluted city air provided the illusion of a cure. But traveling to mountains, deserts and natural areas was often beyond the finances of many. This created demand for cities to develop local parks and sanatoriums. Parks were not seen as a luxury, but a necessity, providing "islands of fresh air." In New York City, Central Park was known as the "lungs of the city."

A century ago, one out of every 170 Americans lived in a sanatorium, while thousands more across the Midwest added sleeping porches to homes. Today, infrastructure created to address tuberculosis still serves. While sanatoriums at Oakdale in Iowa City and Broadlawns Hospital in Des Moines quarantined infected individuals, today they house critical medical and public health programs. The State Hygienic Laboratory at Oakdale may be in Johnson County, but it serves all Iowans through disease detection, environmental monitoring and newborn screening.

As antibiotics started to save lives (half of all people with active TB once expected to die within five years) the need for sanatoriums dwindled and they became campuses, hotels, resorts and ski lodges.

By 1947, Iowa led the nation with the lowest TB death rate. This was accomplished by realizing its contagious nature and taking action such as historic public health efforts on eliminating public spitting, sneeze suppression, the introduction of disposable Kleenex tissues, higher hem lines (away from contaminated soil) and a campaign against beards that were viewed as germ havens.

Another preventative approach was open air schools. In Des Moines, for example, open air schools were created in 1914 for students deemed "underweight" or physically unhealthy.

Those proclaiming a natural cure were correct, although it wasn't fresh air. Nature, however, was where Selman Waksman, a Rutgers University microbiologist, found a "strange organism" (streptomycin) living in the soil that attacked other microbes. He isolated it and thus found an unlikely cure against the Captain of Death while offering another example of nature coming to our rescue.

TIM LANE is a nationally recognized authority on public health and physical activity. He is past president of the Iowa Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance.

But Why?

Helping adults answer children's nature questions

BY A. JAY WINTER

A. Jay Winter educates up to 20,000 Iowa children each year as the DNR's training specialist at the Springbrook Conservation Education Center.

JACK IN IOWA CITY ASKS:

What do I do if I find an injured or abandoned animal?



If you find an animal baby that appears to be on its own, don't worry. Generally, one of its parents is nearby, watching. They're teaching their offspring to be independent, and in the case of danger, some animal parents will take off in order to create a distraction away from their young.

Many people "rescue" wildlife babies they believe to be abandoned. But when you take that rabbit out of the nest or that raccoon out of the tree, you're taking that baby away from its parents, its natural setting and a chance to live in the wild. Many times, taking an animal out of the wild greatly reduces its chances of survival.

However, if you know for a fact that the babies' parent has died, or if it's clear the animal is injured, a wildlife rehabilitator can help. Rehabilitators receive extensive training, including an apprenticeship, to learn how to care for animals and reintroduce them to the wild. They know when to feed them, how to feed them, how to treat injuries and they have the space and equipment to house the animals.

Find a list of rehabilitators at iowadnr.gov. Search for "rehabilitators."



DIY Upcycled Fish AND Camp Stool

Fish in style or lounge around the campfire with this twist on the common three-legged stool. We took an old pair of leaky fishing waders—destined for the trash—and substituted it for the traditional leather seat material.



INSTRUCTIONS

1. Cut dowels to 24-inch lengths. Drill a hole through each one 10.5 inches from the top. Drill a small pilot hole in the center of each leg for seat-mounting screws. Sand each leg smooth. Heavily sand the bottoms to partially round them.
2. Apply coats of finish such as stain, clearcoat or paint and allow to dry. While drying, work on the seat. Go online to find a seat template and download to see the exact size to cut your own. Ensure each corner is reinforced for longevity. We left a tab on each corner to fold under for double-strength. On one corner of the seat, leave a longer tab for an optional carry strap. We used the cinch strap on the leg of the waders as a closure strap to prevent the stool from opening when carrying. Staple three 14-inch lengths of webbing on top of dowels. Lay seat on top and stitch

HERE'S WHAT'S NEEDED

- three 1 1/8" hardwood dowels (enough for three 24" pieces)
- one 2.75" bolt, 1/4" diameter
- one 1.5" eye bolt, 1/4" diameter
- two acorn nuts
- three washers
- three finishing washers
- three 1" broad-headed wood screws
- finish
- Wader material for seat
- roughly 6 feet of 1-inch tow strap or webbing

TOOLS

- sander
- drill
- heavy-duty stapler
- screwdriver
- small socket wrench to fit acorn nuts
- knife
- leather punch
- waxed thread and needle

to webbing. Use remaining webbing for an optional carrying strap.

3. To assemble, thread two legs together with the bolt, using the eye-hole bolt in the middle. Use washers on both ends, and attach the acorn nut. If needed, cut bolt down with a hacksaw for a close fit. Leave some play in the assembly to move. Once two legs are secure, feed the eye-hole bolt into the third leg, and attach with a washer and acorn nut. With a socket wrench, tighten both nuts securely.

4. Attach the seat to each leg using a large finishing washer and wood screw. Don't over-tighten and strip out the holes. After secure, you can take a seat. The main bolt might bend a little to the stress, but that's fine; it keeps its bend permanently, and that shape will aid in the folding-up. Embellish your stool if desired, using a woodburning tool to add your name or other outdoorsy art.



TIPS, TRICKS AND MUST-KNOWS TO ENHANCE YOUR OUTDOOR FUN

New DNR Fishing Atlas shows where to fish in state lakes



If fish could speak, they'd be cursing as their favorite hangouts—jetties, bank hides, tree piles, rock reefs and mounds—are revealed in a new online fishing atlas available for PCs and smartphones.

“Usually anglers are clustered in a location, based on another guy’s luck. Now anglers can spread out to other habitat locations with similar water depth and contour,” says Lewis Bruce, DNR fisheries technician

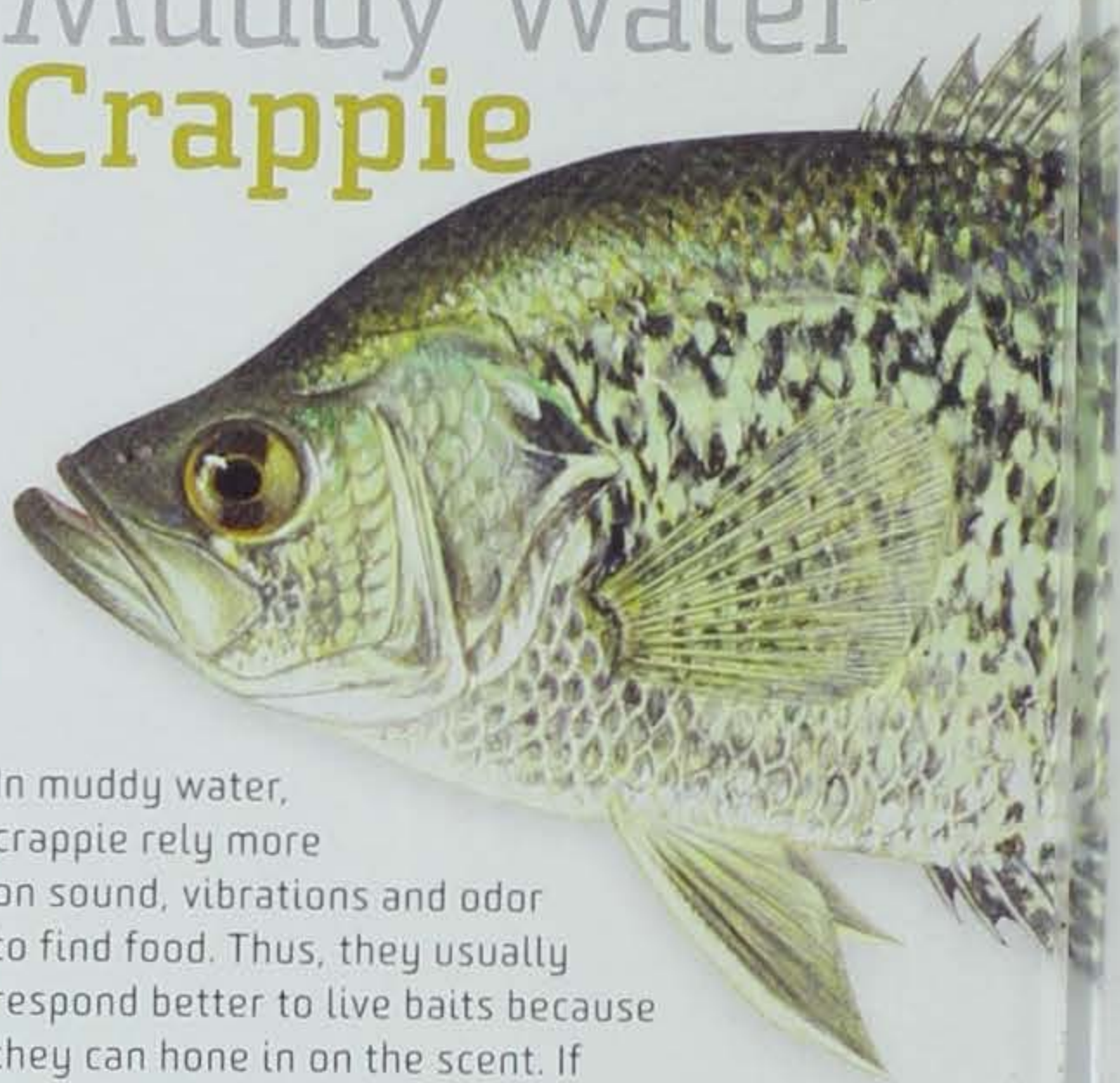
who organized the project.

Use it to plan fishing trips with road maps, lake amenities and topography.

Some anglers use GPS to find fish structure by downloading coordinates from iowadnr.gov that work with software from Hummingbird and Darwin GPS units.

iowadnr.gov search for “fishing atlas.”

Muddy Water Crappie



In muddy water, crappie rely more on sound, vibrations and odor to find food. Thus, they usually respond better to live baits because they can hone in on the scent. If using jigs, try spray, paste or solid scent attractants. As for colors, use black, brown, dark blue, dark red or a yellow/white combo.

Headlamp Lantern

Shed light on nighttime camping activities with a safe DIY alternative to gas-powered lanterns. Wrap a common headlamp around a gallon jug filled with water to illuminate the picnic table or tent for after-hours journal entries, drawing or games.

Sandy in Monona County asks:

I heard the monarch butterfly was being considered for the threatened species list.

What can I do to help them?

Populations of the widely recognized insect have plummeted 90 percent in the last 20 years, prompting consideration for the threatened species list. But Iowans, who live in the middle of the monarch's major migration corridor between Mexico and Canada, can help save this remarkable species right in their own backyard. Here's how:

THE RIGHT PLANTS IN THE RIGHT AREAS

Plant native wildflowers rich in sugars and lipids to deliver energy to traveling adults. Color does not matter, but butterflies prefer flowers that point upwards. Choose plants with many small florets. Avoid hybrids and showy horticultural varieties which are pretty, but don't always yield the most nectar. For optimum sun and beauty, stagger plants in height.

Plant a variety of nectar-producing natives that bloom from May to late fall, offering resting and feeding areas during monarch migration. Trim plants to fill in blooming gaps, delay blooming or bring on second blooms. New England aster, stiff goldenrod and liatris species are particularly good for fall migration, as blooms stay upright even in heavy winds.

As the exclusive host plant for larvae, milkweeds are essential for monarch survival. Loaded with toxins, milkweeds taste nasty, naturally protecting them from grazers. In turn, monarchs protect themselves when caterpillars eat the plant as it makes them a bitter meal for the bird inexperienced enough to try one.

Choose native milkweeds from the genus *Asclepias*. Best for Iowa include *Asclepias syriaca*, common milkweed, or *A. tuberosa*, butterfly milkweed, both for well-drained soils; *A. verticillata*, whorled milkweed, in open areas or prairies; *A. sullivantii*, Sullivant's milkweed, in moist prairies; and *A. incarnate*, swamp milkweed, for poorly drained or marshy areas.

DIVERSITY

The greater the variety of nectar sources and milkweeds, the greater the benefits to monarchs and other pollinators. Planting a diverse mix ensures some

wildflowers will thrive even in extremely wet or dry years. Wildflower assortments protect against insect pests, as most pest invasions occur when a few species dominate. If insects are a problem, remove affected plants or use non-pesticide solutions. Butterflies are extremely sensitive to pesticides, and most kill beneficial insects.

FOR LANDOWNERS

If you have a farm or large acreage, you may be eligible for USDA's Continuous Conservation Reserve Program. The program pays partial costs to establish long-term pollinator habitat and provides annual rental payments for 10 to 15 years as the plantings save soil, improve water quality and furnish wildlife habitat. Cost-share for native plants or seeds may also be available through the Prairie Partners program. Contact a DNR private lands biologist to discuss your needs and for recommendations on plantings and funding.

STAY TUNED

Recently announced, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service pledged \$3.2 million to help save the monarch. Habitat efforts will focus on the I-35 corridor from Texas to Minnesota. A new Iowa Monarch Conservation Consortium between Iowa State University, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship and Iowa DNR will provide more opportunities for communities and individuals to provide monarch habitat.

GET INVOLVED

Find local seeds and plants at monarchwatch.org or plantiowanative.com or 319-273-3005. Check with county conservation boards for monarch monitoring opportunities. Find out more about monarchs at monarchjointventure.org, a partnership of federal and state agencies, including the DNR, non-governmental groups and academics to protect monarchs.



'In Iowa ...we found peace.' Where Something is Stirring

Tama County has a rejuvenated state park with a secret admirer and lightly traveled state preserves. But this place where the Meskwaki settled is also home to one of the best chapters in Iowa's progressive history.

Driving east on highway 30 in Tama County after a spring rain, the landscape gently shifts. Tree-shorn farmland reverts to a more wooded incarnation. Old growth trees follow gentle slopes to open wetlands, with standing water in some places. During a rainy Iowa jag, the land is sopping and sloppy, soaking up water as it should.

A satellite map of this drive shows a wide buffer of trees along the Iowa River, though this is mostly farm country. Subtle, natural details like these are a sign you're among the 8,000 or so acres of settlement land of the Native American Sac and Fox Tribe of the Mississippi River.

Modern Iowans know them as the Meskwaki, owners of the casino just west of Tama. Their name means People of the Red Earth. But now they hold this Iowa River land in sacred esteem, and they're working to better protect it through their sovereign government. You can learn the history from a small settlement museum, or casino displays, or even in an old Lincoln Highway restaurant in Tama.

You can wander this river valley where the Meskwaki

found peace after long years of war, including a state park that's been mysteriously revived in the wake of a destructive storm.

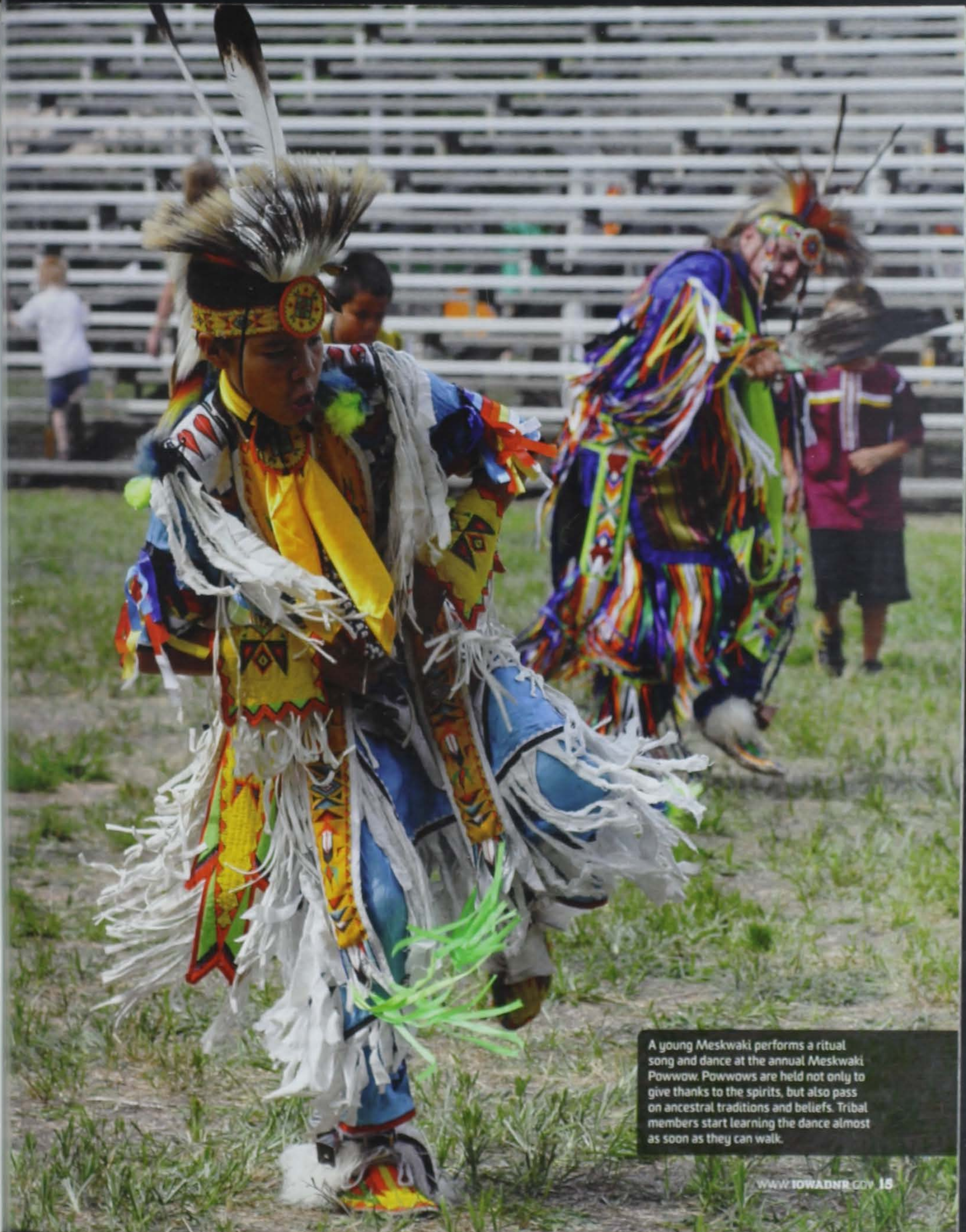
But the wandering is best when you start with the story of two cousin tribes, and a quietly dramatic testament to the just heart of Iowa Past.

The journey to Iowa

The Meskwaki people are of Algonquian origin from the Eastern Woodland culture areas. (Early explorers called them Fox, but that's only one clan of the Meskwaki.)

The Meskwaki fought the French in the Fox Wars, resisting the encroachment of white fur traders they first encountered in the mid 1600s. Though eventually defeated by the French and their Indian allies, Meskwaki warriors fought so fiercely that King Louis XV signed an order for their extermination—the only time in history a full army targeted a single tribe.

By the late 1700s, only a handful of Meskwaki remained.



A young Meskwaki performs a ritual song and dance at the annual Meskwaki Powwow. Powwows are held not only to give thanks to the spirits, but also pass on ancestral traditions and beliefs. Tribal members start learning the dance almost as soon as they can walk.

Lost In Iowa



Annual Meskwaki Powwow Aug 6-9, 2015)

This yearly gathering on the powwow grounds within Iowa's only Indian settlement originated from traditional Meskwaki social and religious beliefs, starting with weeklong "Field Days" that began in 1902 and were open to the public, with dancing, games and horse racing. Visitors today will see generations-old dances in full colorful regalia that once took place during the corn harvest—symbolizing reaffirmation and hope, worship and kinship.

Tribal historian
Johnathan Buffalo



Gathering with their Sauk (or Sac) cousins, they roamed along the Upper Mississippi River looking for home, just as American colonists seeking independence from Britain were doing the same. Many natives settled in Iowa.

In 1805, the Meskwaki and Sauk signed the first of many treaties designed to push them off land that white settlers wanted. (The treaties grouped these related-but-distinct tribes together as one, the Meskwaki, and that generalization continues today). After the bloody Black Hawk War, the Meskwaki were reluctantly relocated to an east central Kansas reservation in 1845.

"But actually," says Meskwaki tribal historian Johnathan Buffalo, "we never left. Individually, there was always Meskwaki in Iowa." Small bands hid in the state for years, surviving along the Iowa and Des Moines rivers despite yearly governmental attempts to round them up and force them to Kansas.

In 1856, the U.S. government attempted to move the Meskwaki again, this time to Oklahoma.

At this point, something unusual—and fairly amazing—happened.

Those Meskwakis living in Kansas decided to return to rejoin the tribe members back in Iowa, where they felt a sense of belonging. Returning to the state, Chief Mamenwaneke presented to Gov. James Grimes a sum of \$735 from tribal families in Kansas, with the request to buy a piece of land they could call their own.

That collection would eventually turn into the first 80 acres ever purchased by a tribe in the United States, according to Buffalo.

Coming home

The state legislature passed a law allowing the Meskwaki to live and buy land in Iowa—even as the U.S. government tried to force the tribe back south by withholding treaty-right annuities. (Annuities are annual payments from the federal government, established by treaties, in return for taking native ancestral land).



To honor historical culture, the Meskwaki hold a powwow every year, attracting tribal members and visitors from across the country. Traditional song and dance performed daily in brilliant attire is the highlight, but other opportunities to learn and experience Native American culture abound. The song and dance, along with the history tent, tell the story of the Meskwaki Nation. Vendors exhibit their best artwork, crafts and food. A favorite is Indian fry bread, a traditional staple of water, flour, baking powder and salt fried in lard and eaten with soup, sugar or honey or in place of taco shells (see recipe page 61).



The Wikiup

The early Meskwaki lived in lodging called the wikiup, a dome-shaped, cattail-mat-covered structure built in a protected area each year after the harvest, according to the University of Iowa Museum of Natural History. Johnathan Buffalo says they were small, so they were more efficient. The layers of overlapping bark, bulrushes or cattail mats over a frame of bent saplings held natural air pockets that added insulation for winter, and keeps smoke moving out the domed top. "They're not really made for comfort," Buffalo says. "A small fire would keep it warm enough that you could take your coat off, but you'd still have to use blankets."



Supported and protected by the "Great Father," Gov. Grimes, and his successors, the Meskwaki were assured they could set their roots in central Iowa, along the banks of the Iowa River, and Tama County resident Isaac Butler purchased those first 80 acres on their behalf.

"Individual Indians could not own land legally because we had the same status as cattle," explains Buffalo. "We were less than women. We had the same status as hogs and horses. A farmer wouldn't think to sell a plot of land to his horse and he wouldn't sell to an Indian in 1857."

The remarkable sale took place just 11 years after Iowa was granted statehood, and at the same time states like California were actively exterminating local tribes.

"Iowans have always been forward thinking, you know?" says Buffalo. "Iowa is very different. We've always felt safe along the Iowa River Valley. Here, we gathered our strength. So when we decided to buy land, it was within this valley. We've known many homes as a people ... but in Iowa, central Iowa in particular, we found peace."

In the 1860s, the federal government recognized the Meskwaki in Iowa, agreeing to pay their annuities here. Part of that money was used to buy more settlement property.

The tribe has lived a more independent lifestyle than others confined to reservations (reservation land is owned by the federal government). They routinely hunted off settlement property, says Buffalo, and were on good terms with their immigrant neighbors. In neighboring Iowa County, the Meskwakis found friends in the Amana colonies, also founded in the mid 1850s, also living separate lives within the greater state in order to protect their culture and religion. Go to the State Historical Building in Des Moines and you'll see Meskwaki artifacts—made of handsome Amana wool. The state archeologist located a trading post in Main Amana near the Lily Pond.

"We've always been close. Closer than today," Buffalo says, saying the bond between the colonists and the Meskwaki faded after the colonists incorporated in the 1930s. "We were so close that we learned each others'



The word powwow originated from the Native American word "powwaw," meaning "spiritual leader." They are a chance for tribal members to meet, dance, sing, socialize and honor their culture. While some are private, the annual Meskwaki powwow is open to the public. There is an admission fee.

language. When I was a boy, there were still older Amana people who spoke Meskwaki. And we learned German."

Today, unless you live in Tama County, you probably don't hear much about the Meskwaki. They live a quiet life on purposely uninviting unpaved roads that protect their privacy as much as you can when you open a casino along a rural highway. But the people Buffalo calls "the oldest living things you can see that was still alive when the mastodons and saber-toothed tigers walked this earth" have not forgotten their friendship with the state where they found a permanent home.

"We remember," says Buffalo. "We value that friendship with the people that came here. But it seems like Iowa has—what's that word?—Alzheimer's. Because they don't teach our mutual history anymore. They've forgotten so much.

"It's like losing a friend. They forgot about us, about our relationship. But we remember."

* **SOURCES:** *March/April 1974 issue of The Palimpsest, official publication of the State Historical Society of Iowa, and Meskwaki history texts and interviews.*

Tama County today

Under a spring blue sky scraped with white clouds, Quinton Pushtonequa drives a white pickup slowly through a rolling field on the South Farm of the Meskwaki settlement.

Pushtonequa is a tribal air technician and assistant bison manager on approximately 170 acres of paddocks where the giant beasts graze among locust, cottonwood and other lowland trees.

"This guy is our dominant bull," Pushtonequa says, his black buzz-cut nesting a pair of wraparounds, pointing to a mammoth creature about a basketball court's length away. Bison are about the size of a compact car and shaggy, with big curved horns on both males and females.

"They might come check us out. They recognize the truck from when we bring them hay in the winter when there's a lot of snow on the ground," says Pushtonequa.

This herd of almost 30 began about seven years ago with a few initial donations from the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge. Traditionally the Meskwaki hunted woodland bison, so the Meskwaki provide them pasture and wooded timber.

"Wow, we've got two more calves!" Pushtonequa marvels. The bison are doing well out here. There's not enough settlement land for the herd to get too big, he says, so they slaughter some for tribal distribution each year. (Also for tribal distribution is produce from a new community garden that aims to become certified organic.)

The Meskwaki are a sovereign nation within the United States (as are all Indian tribes). They are governed by an elected seven-person council of Meskwaki women and men serving staggered four-year terms, with a chair and vice chair appointed within the council. This governing body makes major tribal decisions.

The nation has its own natural resource department that oversees and assists with land use, and includes similar departments to the state, including a director, coordinator, fisheries, plus land, air and water management. When the Bureau of Indian Affairs is in town, about once a year, they do their own prairie burns. The Meskwaki have a Memorandum of Agreement with the state regarding hunting seasons—they're similar, but account for some cultural occasions throughout the year.

The settlement operates its own police force, human services and judicial and school systems. The curriculum is based on the state of Iowa standards, plus Meskwaki culture such as a dialect of the Algonquin language traditionally spoken by the tribe.

"The state and us pretty much have the same breakdowns and departments, but we deal on more of a federal level," says Kelly Schott, Meskwaki natural resources coordinator. "We work with the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) and the BLM (Bureau of Land Management)."

She says the mainly grant-based department writes for the same moneys as most states and counties—for example, they have EPA clean water and clean-air grants.

Interestingly, says Schott, as a sovereign nation, an Indian tribe can establish its own standards for air, land and water on settlement grounds. For example, in terms of water quality, they can choose the Iowa standard, the federal EPA standard or set their own water quality level that's even higher—and if they do that, the area upstream from the settlement would technically have to comply.

"Any water that influences that tribe's property has to be held accountable to the water quality standards set by that tribe," says Schott. That could make things pretty interesting in a state plagued by water-quality problems when their ongoing water study is complete.

"Water is so important in the tribe," says Schott. "For sustenance, for fishing, swimming, recreation, for harvesting of animals from that river. We need to be able to provide clean safe food and water to tribal members and the community."

On the matter of food, the tribe's traditionally all-red hard corn they use for flour—Meskwaki Flint, flint meaning the top of the kernel is not dented—have ears showing up contaminated with yellow kernels. That's a food issue, and it's also a cultural issue, as the tribe's historic seed bank is being lost, says Schott.

"If the land's not good, as the mother, it doesn't feed anybody. If the land is not in good shape, the people are not either," says Schott. "So there are tribal needs we address when we talk about conservation."

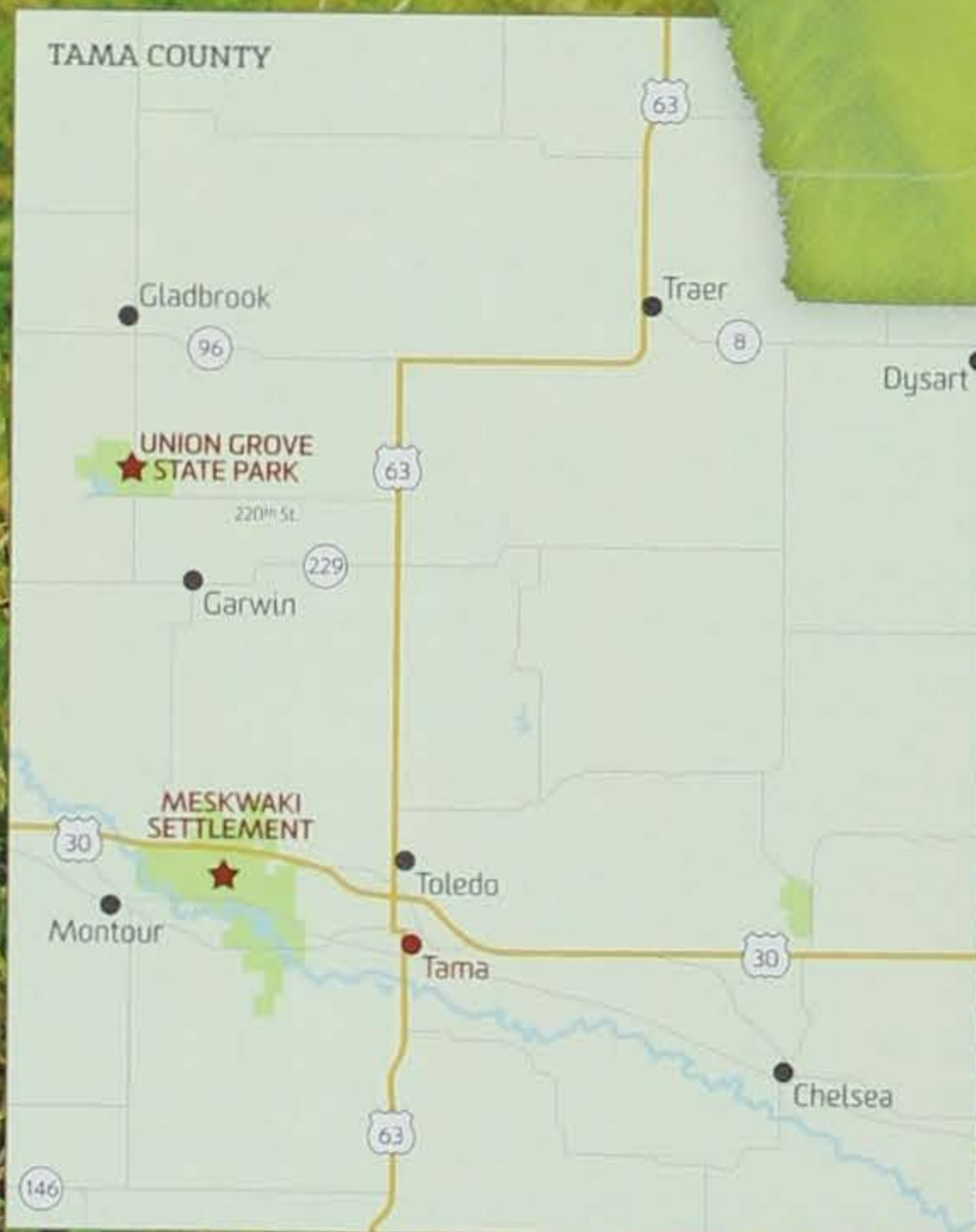
Mystery gift for a park

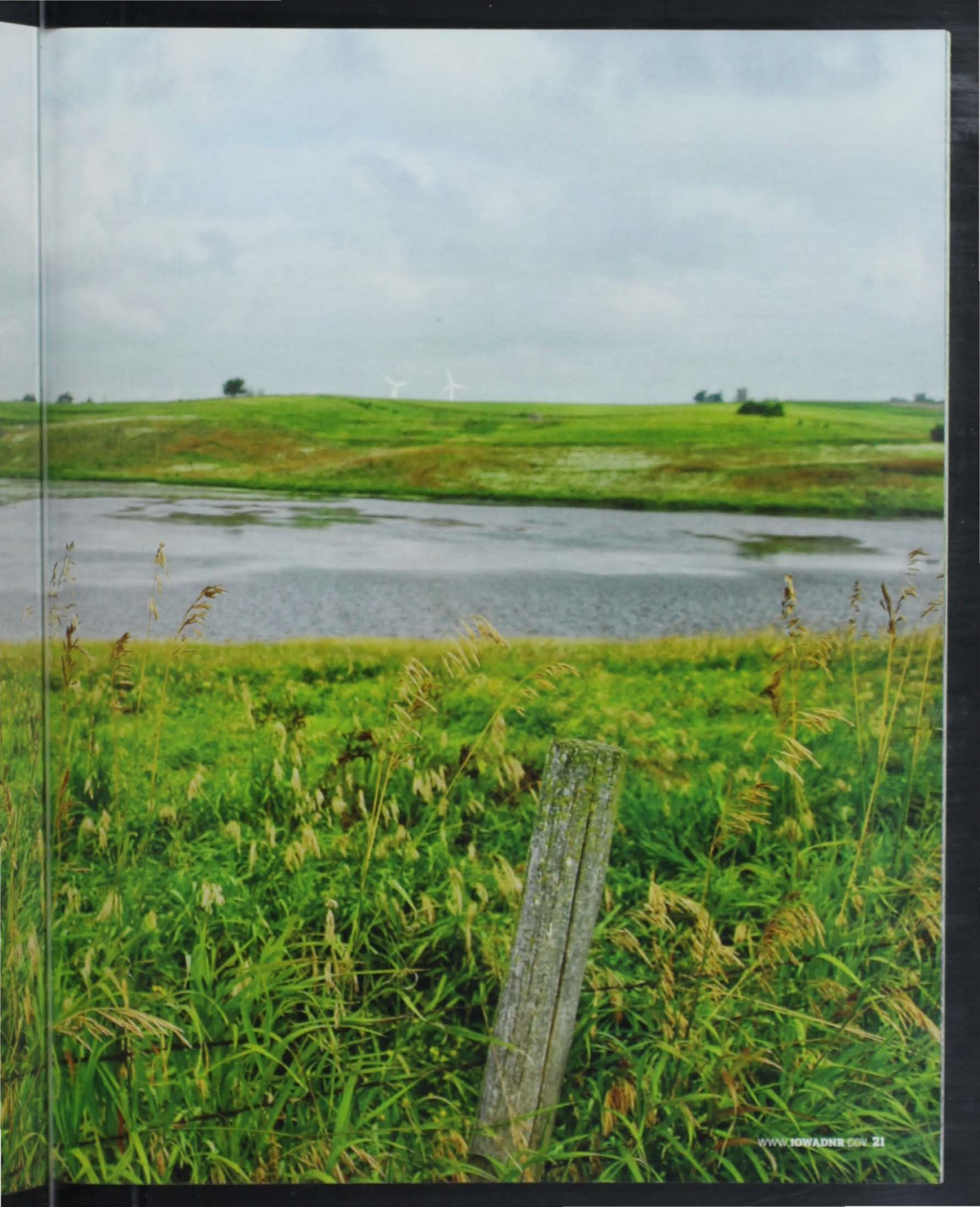
You can drive in the settlement along the county road known as 340th Street to see the bison herd in the paddocks, or stop at the Meskwaki museum at the Tribal Center on the 300th

Lost In Iowa

Visiting the Paha

When in the area, visit Casey's Paha State Preserve in northeastern Tama County, shown below. Paha means "high ground" in Native American language, and is a ridge formed by glacial till, clay and loess. Casey's Paha is a 175-acre preserve that highlights a half-mile portion of a 2.5 mile long elongated hill. Wind blown silt or loess tops the ridge and reaches 40 feet deep in areas. The deposits beneath the loess are all that remain of older glacial materials. It is an erosional remnant of a higher, once-continuous glacial plain. The preserve is an important stopover for migrating warblers and waterfowl.





Lost In Iowa

block of Meskwaki Road. (There's another one in the casino). Last year, the Meskwaki celebrated the 100th anniversary of their huge and popular powwow.

There's more to explore in the county as well. Outdoorsy types will want to check out Casey's Paha State Preserve, a forested preserve on the arching back of a large, elongated, whale-shaped hill known as a paha, the Dakota word for ridge or hill.

"To truly appreciate the magnitude of the whole paha—some three miles long by one mile wide—one needs to drive around its perimeter on backcountry roads as well as walk into the interior of the preserve on foot," says state ecologist John Pearson. "Although moderately large at 175 acres and part of the larger 665-acre Hickory Hills Park, the preserve and park are only a small fraction of the landform atop of which they ride."

Walk the subtle arch of this rounded landform for a barnacle's-eye glimpse of a "whale's back" breaching in the larger landscape in northeastern Tama County, 13 miles south of Waterloo.

There's also Mericle Woods State Preserve, one of the state's most lightly visited, on 132 acres of a quiet old oak forest tucked into a valley and containing an abundance of wildflowers and some trees that are more than 200 years old, three miles northwest of Toledo in southern Tama County.

"It protects a woodland whose preservation was initiated by a previous generation of landowners, setting aside the forest and only minimally using it as part of the farm that originally surrounded it," says Pearson.

Continue north on County Road T47 for about a half-hour to Union Grove State Park, around manmade 110-acre Union Grove Lake, in northwest Tama County. Ringed on one side by private cabins of a mostly retiree population, the 300-acre park on the other side includes three miles of dirt and grass trail that passes along the dam, a pine plantation, re-established prairie and Union Falls waterfall (the path is rugged and steep, and good for birding). A 200-acre wildlife area adjacent to the property is open for hunting pheasant and deer.

Straight-line winds in 2011 sheared off 284 trees around the lake, radically changing its appearance. The up side of the damage was a renewed effort to refresh the properties and redevelop older properties.

The belle of the ball is a brand-new Craftsman-style cabin built, according to park manager Roger Thompson, with a donation from a "secret Santa" who's determined to put Union Grove State Park on the map.

"The cabin was financed by a private individual who prefers to remain anonymous," says Thompson.

The pretty little place sleeps four comfortably, with heated concrete floors, kitchenette, and rolling barn doors. Construction begins on another within the next year.

Across the lake, Thompson points to the area that once housed a boat concession. "My Secret Santa wants to bring it back," he says. Paddlers already skimming across the lake seem to love its quiet, no-wake waters.

"This lake is seriously a great kid fishing lake. You

can always catch something," Thompson says. A sand beach across the way is busy and clean.

In the distance, wind turbines turn slowly in the breeze. Some grumble it ruins the view, but it looks modern and picturesque from the porch of a brand-new cabin in a revitalized park in a county that feels like something different is stirring. From the Meskwaki raising bison and addressing water quality and planting an organic garden to share and grappling with cross-pollination, to the regeneration of an old lake front.

It calls to mind something Johnathan Buffalo said about Meskwaki spiritual practice, which he likened to quantum physics, when pressed for a religious comparison.

"When we say everything is related, we're not saying it because it's noble or Indian-sounding," says Buffalo. "It's because we are all related in the same way of quantum physics, right down to the smallest molecule you can measure."

TRIP NOTES

Annual Meskwaki Powwow. Turn south at the Meskwaki Casino exit and follow the colorful signs to the four-day event. Meskwakipowwow.com

Union Grove State Park. Picnic shelters are all within sight of the lake, many are shaded. 26 campsites, 7 with electric hookups. Primitive restrooms. Cabin \$75 per night or \$450 per week.

Meskwaki Bingo Casino Hotel. Gaming, as well as five dining options, hotel, a spa and the occasional live show. [800-728-4263](tel:800-728-4263); meskwaki.com

Meskwaki History Museum. Open weekdays 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., group tours by appointment. 300 block of Meskwaki Road, north side of the parking lot of the tribal center. [641-484-3185](tel:641-484-3185).

Matchstick Marvels. Iowa artist Patrick Acton glued more than 4 million wooden matchsticks into 65 detailed scale models of world-famous architecture and more. Many pieces have gone on to be featured in Ripley's Believe It or Not museums around the world. See several in this downtown Gladbrook museum. Admission charged. [641-473-2410](tel:641-473-2410); matchstickmarvels.com

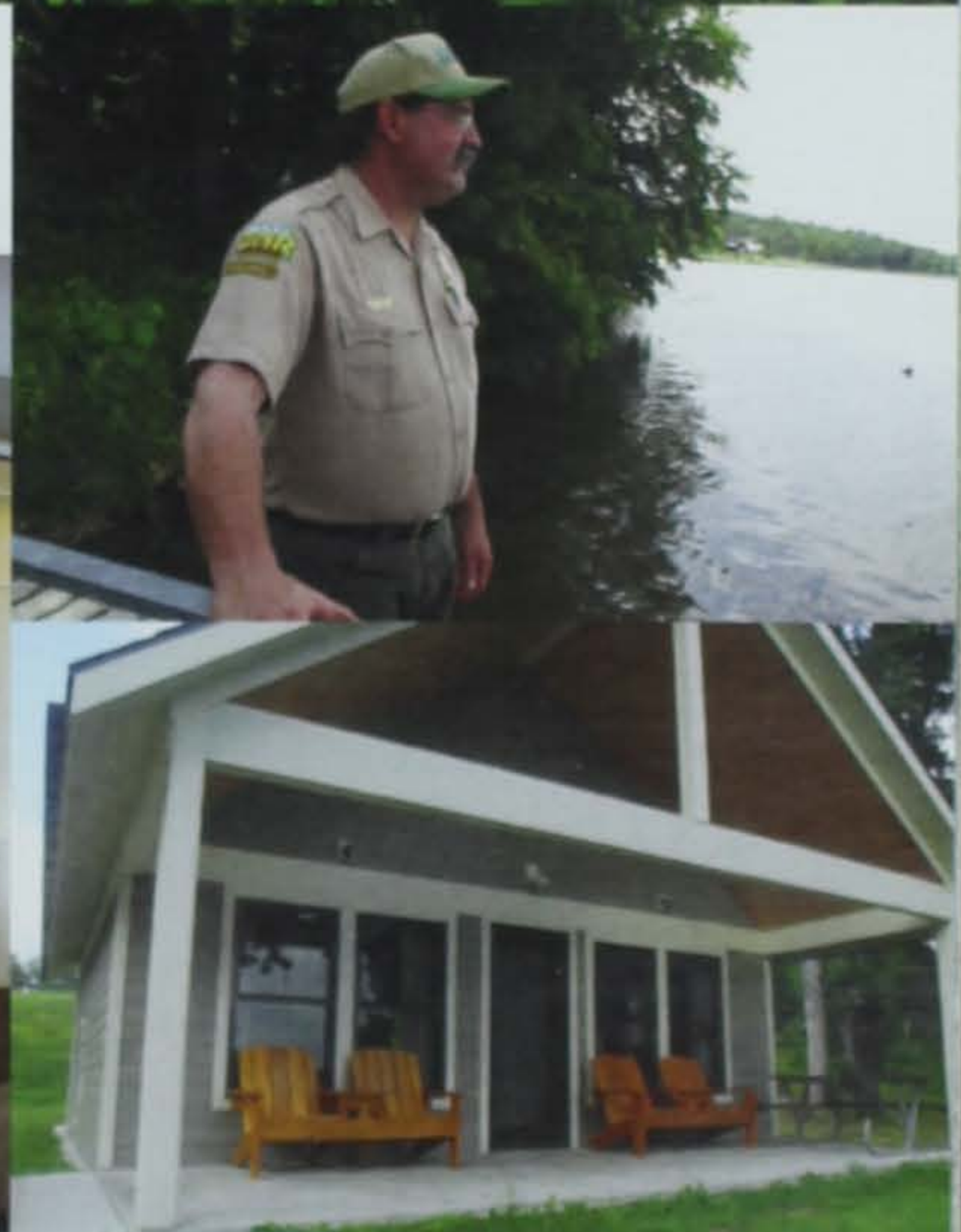
King Tower. In Tama, not on settlement land, this old Lincoln Highway eatery serves belly-filling road food with house-made specials regularly. An odd collection of Meskwaki portraits and some vintage-looking paintings decorate the walls, with a few artifacts in a display case at the counter ([641-484-5970](tel:641-484-5970)).

Casey's Paha State Preserve. [319-266-6813](tel:319-266-6813); iowadnr.gov

Mericle Woods State Preserve. [641-752-5521](tel:641-752-5521); iowadnr.gov



A fun-filled weekend awaits Meskwaki powwow visitors, but don't pass up an opportunity to visit Union Grove State Park. Although the 110-acre lake—loaded with crappies, bluegills, catfish, bass and bullheads—is the focal point of the park, the modern family cabin is a huge draw for central Iowa vacationers. The park is a pleasing contrast to nearby residential and agricultural areas.



Union Grove Lake will undergo a renovation beginning in June and should be refilled by late spring 2016. The lake will be restocked and should provide excellent fishing again within three years. Camping and modern family cabin reservations, normally made through the online or phone system, can be made through park manager Roger Thompson at **641-473-2556**. While there, stop in the Gladbrook museum and see Iowa artist Patrick Acton's matchbook masterpieces. Acton glued more than 4 million of the wooden fire-starters into 65 detailed models of world-famous architectural structures.



Live the CABANA Life

Nearly \$3 million in improvements
Ready to Roll at Big Creek State Park

BY BRIAN BUTTON PHOTO BY BEN CURTIS



Beachgoers never had it so good at Big Creek State Park, where the largest beach in Iowa's state park system is also one of the busiest. Now, nearly \$3 million in new features and renovations, most notably at the beach area, make central Iowa's favorite sandy fun spot even better.

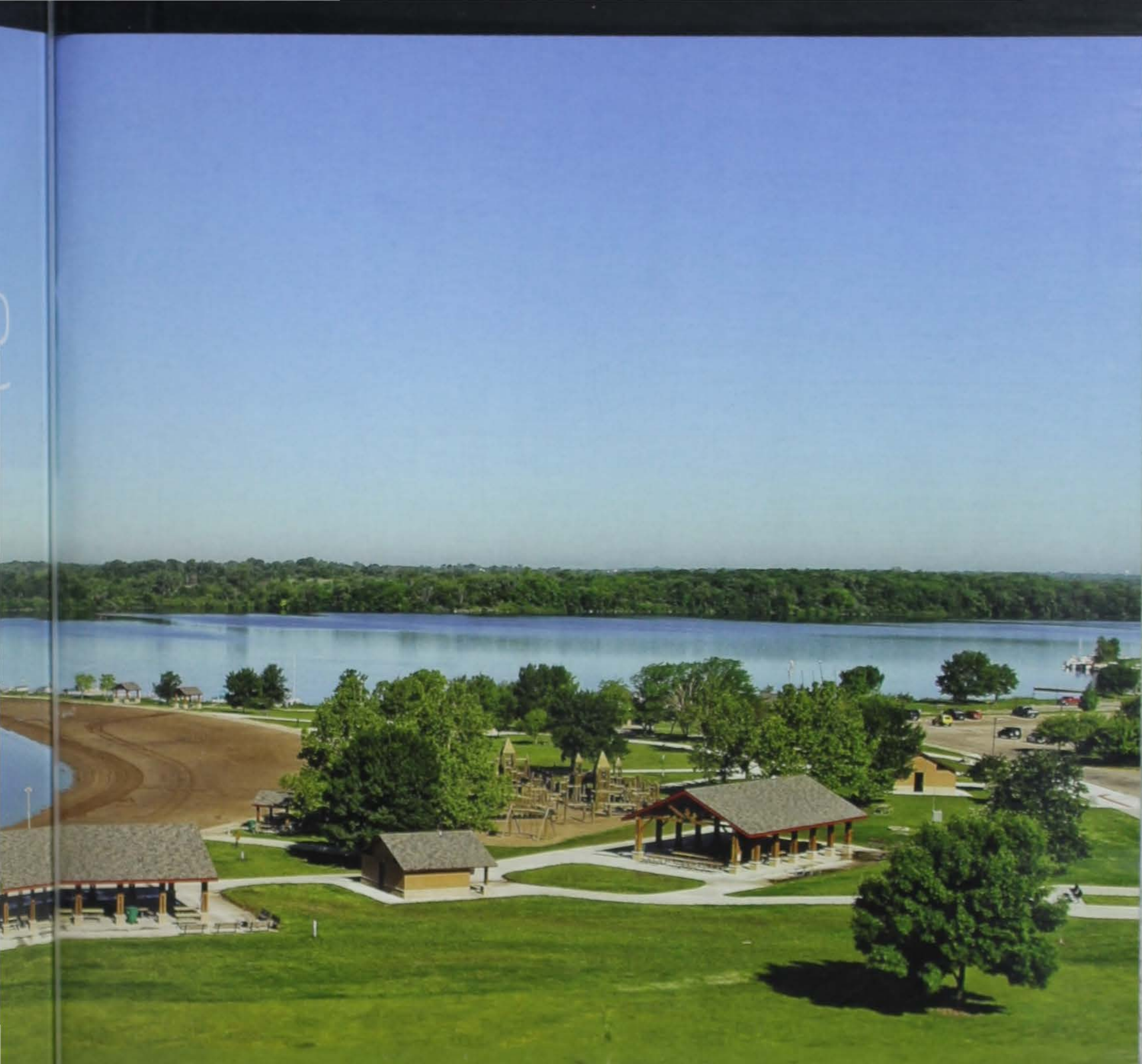
Laze away under nine new 10- by 10-foot cabanas, located beachside, available to visitors on a first come basis. Hold a family reunion under three large 68- by 40-foot shelters with adjacent restrooms. Each shelter can accommodate 200 people, and include handicapped-accessible picnic tables. (Rent through the state park

reservation system lowadnr.gov or 1-877-427-2757.)

"All of the developments are designed to improve or add to recreational opportunities here at Big Creek," says Chad Kelchen, park manager. "We are better able to provide shelters and serve our growing number of users."

Four of five boat ramps received major renovations to better accommodate anglers and boaters on both sides of the 822-acre lake.

Some of the most important improvements aren't as easily seen, but are most appreciated by swimmers and beachgoers. With \$425,000 invested in watershed practices to improve lake water quality, an additional \$580,000 is coming for more improvements. Conservation



practices are in place on both private and public land in the Big Creek watershed.

From dog patrols that put beachside geese on the run to tallgrass plantings that discourage geese at the beach, the sand is now much cleaner. New rain gardens filter runoff from boat ramps. Information panels on two beachside kiosks help interpret water quality improvements, and a watershed project coordinator and part-time watershed outreach coordinator continue to implement the new watershed improvement plan.

Also, visitors can enjoy a variety of recreational activities at Big Creek, such as paddling, model airplane field, boat rentals (no wake restriction for all craft),

massive wooden beachside play structure, softball, volleyball, disc golf and biking the 26-mile paved Neal Smith Trail from the beach past Saylorville Lake all the way to Des Moines. The lake holds crappie, bluegill, largemouth bass, walleye, channel catfish and muskie.


Rent sailboats, fishing boats, pontoons, kayaks, bicycles and paddleboards from Big Creek Marina. For rental prices and reservations visit bigcreekmarina.com or 515-984-6083.

To reserve shelters and learn more about the park call or visit **BIG CREEK STATE PARK** • 8794 NW 125th Avenue, Polk City 515-984-6473 • iowadnr.gov

Turkey Vulture NEST CAM

Wildlife photographer Roger Hill tracked the life of a pair of turkey vultures, most notably their offspring. Every day for nearly two months in 2012 and 2013, Hill quietly slipped into an old barn near his home in Roland, climbed to the rafters and photographed the progression of a turkey vulture nest, from the day two speckled white and brown eggs were laid until the sole-surviving offspring left the nest never to return.

BY ALAN FOSTER PHOTOS BY ROGER HILL

The photograph captures the interior of an old, weathered wooden barn. The structure is characterized by a dense network of wooden rafters and beams, some of which are in various states of decay or disrepair. A prominent vertical wooden post stands in the center, while another large beam runs diagonally across the right side. The walls are made of horizontal wooden planks, some of which are missing or broken. In the lower-left foreground, a simple wooden chair is visible. The lighting is natural, coming from the open sides of the barn, creating a play of light and shadow on the wooden surfaces. The overall atmosphere is one of rustic decay and historical character.

Large birds require large nest sites, and vultures frequently use spacious cavities found within rotting trunks of aging trees. Vultures also nest in abandoned farm buildings—especially across Iowa's less timbered interior, such as this old barn in Story County. Located in hay lofts or attics of retired wooden corn cribs, nests are often situated in dimly lit corners where rafters or crude board shelving provide a platform for eggs and young.



MAY 21, shortly before hatch. Mysteriously, one egg vanished without a clue after the first chick hatched.



JUNE 18, approximately a week and a half after hatch. The neck and crop is extended, indicative of a recent feeding.

Whodunnit

Although the barn showed ample sign of raccoons—a notorious egg predator—DNR wildlife experts don't believe they were the culprits. "You could go up in that barn every single night around 10, 11 o'clock and shoot a coon," Hill recalls. Raccoon scat was plentiful. If that was the case, raccoons would have gotten to the eggs long before hatch, says wildlife research supervisor Willie Suchy. One can only wonder what happened to the second egg.

Two For One

Both years, the adults laid two eggs. And both years, one egg mysteriously disappeared shortly after the first chick hatched. "I never found a shell the day that it hatched. The one time I got there in the afternoon and one hatched. The other time I got there in the morning—around 10 o'clock—and they had hatched. Both times the two eggs were there the day before," hatch Hill says. "Both times there was just one chick there," the day of hatch. In both cases, there were never any signs of egg shells, blood or anything like that." What happened to the second egg is a mystery, given life cycle habits indicate vultures generally lay two eggs and raise two young.

Daily Ritual

The vulture chick quickly accepted Hill's presence and tolerated the brief intrusions. "I checked it the day it hatched and took photos. I photographed it every day for 55 days until it flew the nest. It saw more of me than its parents, I suppose," he jokes. Hill's visits were usually early morning or middle of the afternoon so as not to disturb feeding.

What's For Breakfast?

Both times when Hill arrived at the barn the day of hatch, the chick's breast and neck area was swollen, and "seemed to have been fed. It appeared to have a half an orange or grapefruit in its neck," Hill remembers. "Come back six to eight hours later and that bulge would be gone and he'd be back to having a wrinkled neck."

JUNE 30, approximately three weeks old.





JULY 14, a little more than a month old. Having kept its white color well into its fourth week, the young bird is starting to gain some black feathers.

A Face Only A Mother Could Love

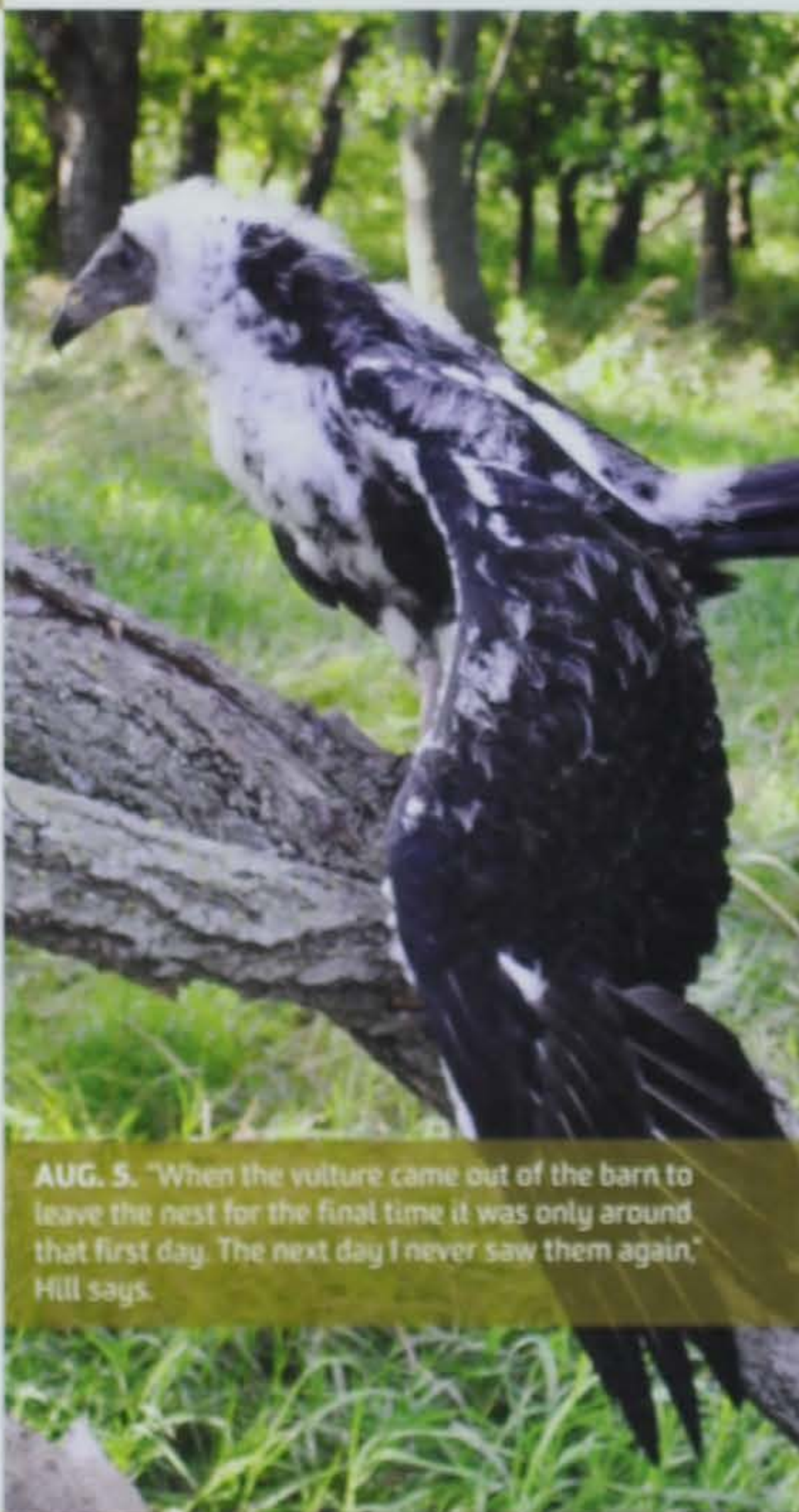
For unknown reasons, turkey vultures have become increasingly common during the past two to three decades. Often referred to as "TVs" by birding enthusiasts, turkey vultures derive their name from the featherless, red heads of adults. And there's no denying that, at least from a distance, a roosted vulture does somewhat resemble a male wild turkey. There's good reason for the vulture's distinctive, though ugly, bare head. As an avid consumer of carrion, turkey vultures routinely forage in some pretty nasty places. The complete lack of head and neck feathers aids in maintaining cleanliness.



JULY 23, approximately six weeks old. The juvenile is losing more white down. By now, the youngster is highly mobile.

Sticking Up For The Oddball

Well known as an accomplished wildlife photographer, with expertise in whitetail deer, pheasant, prairie chicken and big game photography, why Hill grew fascinated with vultures—unfairly viewed by the unknowing as a dirty animal with few redeeming qualities—is twofold. "They are just odd. I like doing the oddball things no one else is doing." Hill also feels they are an underappreciated and misunderstood species. Contrary to popular belief, vultures are among the cleanest of birds, spending up to four hours per day bathing and preening—more time documented for any other Iowa bird. And since they are nature's consummate garbage disposal—cleaning up dead and rotting animals from the land—they suppress the spread of disease to other animals.



AUG. 5, "When the vulture came out of the barn to leave the nest for the final time it was only around that first day. The next day I never saw them again," Hill says.

AUG. 4, "When the head area is white but the rest of the body is black, those were the last days before it left," Hill says.





MID-JULY,
slightly more than a month old.

You Smell That?

Vultures eat primarily carrion—dead and decomposing animal flesh. And while they prefer freshly dead animals, they often have to wait for their meal to emit gases for location and for the tissue to soften in order to pierce the skin. “Crows eat the first day and the vultures eat later on down the week,” Hill recalls. An exceptional immune system and strong stomach acid allows vultures to eat decomposing flesh without contracting the diseases associated with eating rotten meat—salmonella, cholera and botulism. A super-sensitive sense of smell allows turkey vultures to locate decomposing flesh up to a mile away. Their sense of smell is so acute, natural gas companies often rely on turkey vultures to detect suspected pipeline leaks by adding a “carrion-like odor” to the odorless gas.



JUNE 10,
shortly after hatch.



AUG. 2 “You can tell a day or two before they are gone for good. They stand around stretching their wings a lot...walk around half-flapping their wings,” Hill says.



Defend This

Although adults do little to defend their nest, startled vultures eject a vile stream of partially digested food at their threat. The smell alone is usually enough to discourage further advances from intruders. The regurgitated substance is foul smelling and can sting if directed at the face or eyes. 🐾



The first year Hill photographed a nest (2012), the single chick left the nest for good in 53 days. The next year, the sole-surviving chick left in 55 days.

Home Sweet Home

Turkey vultures build no nests but prefer to lay their eggs in natural cavities. Large birds require large nest sites, and vultures frequently use spacious cavities found within rotting trunks of aging trees. Along the bluff-shrouded corridor of the upper Mississippi River, turkey vultures may nest in natural shallow caves found on vertical walls of limestone cliffs. Ever resourceful, vultures also find nest sites in abandoned farm buildings—especially across Iowa's less timbered interior. Located in barn hay lofts or attics of retired wooden corn cribs, nests are often situated in dimly lit corners where rafters or crude board shelving provide a platform for eggs and young.



Music in the

Songs and Stories from Hawkman in Iowa's first designated Globally Important Bird Area

STORY AND PHOTOS BY BRIAN GIBBS

Springtime is when rivers run high and turbid. It is marked by hydrologic fluctuation, bird migration and the warming human psyche. One spring day, I kayaked the flooded backwaters of the Mississippi at lower Sny Magill Creek to celebrate this transformation. Little did I know the paradise I would discover.

Arriving, I paddle the flooded road into what appears to be stagnant, flooded forest. Minutes after entering the shallow water, a muskrat swims silently under the stern of my kayak. I pause in the streamside sun and watch the glowing rays split between dozens of silver maple, elm and cottonwoods. Water striders tickle the top of the tangerine sunlit river, their movements

e WIND



The cerulean warbler

The Mississippi backwaters near Sny Magill Creek in Clayton County form a small unit of Effigy Mounds National Monument called the Sny Magill Unit. It preserves at least 106 mounds representing the largest group in one location in North America. The Unit contains two bird mounds, three bear mounds, six linear mounds and 95 conical mounds, including a 2,500-year-old red ochre mound. And red-tailed hawks frequent the area.

sending tiny flashbulbs across the smooth waters. Tree frogs call alongside the long trills of American toads. A yellow warbler melds into the sun, and once when my paddle blade scuffs the water, the tremulous sound of wood ducks echo through the darkening backwaters. A blue-gray gnatcatcher wheezes overhead and red-bellied woodpeckers drum downstream.

Storm clouds grow overhead in the evening heat while the dark backs of red-winged blackbirds and grackles fill the trees. For days, a south wind graced their backs and now, in true blackbird cacophony, they celebrate spring's arrival. A few hundred yards ahead, an elevated landform stands above water. Paddling closer, I notice dozens of earthen mounds adorning the top of the island. I realize I've finally arrived at the Sny Magill Unit of Effigy Mounds National Monument.

Containing more than 100 Native American mounds, the Sny Magill Unit preserves the largest concentration of burial mounds in the United States. The mounds were constructed during the woodland period (2,500 to 700 years ago) and were used for ceremonial and burial purposes. Today, the mounds are still considered ceremonial and sacred by Native Americans and provide a confluence of where the spiritual world is linked to a diverse natural world.

A thunderstorm rolls over the bluffs and drops rain onto the mounds. I take refuge under a gnarly bur oak and wait the storm out until a sunlit rainbow blooms in the sky. Yellow shafted flickers and red-headed woodpeckers undulate over the mounds. The cool air dances with warm river air until enough water vapor and cooling creates an eerie white fog. Softly, the fog crawls upriver, ever so slowly extending its gentle fingers over this ancient place. Before departing, I rest beside a swamp white oak that shields a large conical mound. My feet glow white in the mist and in the deep cobalt sky as a 10-million year-old song bugles from two sandhill cranes. Their haunting call echoes over the river and above the whale-backed bluffs into the ghostly beauty of time. This kayak trip is etched in my memory and provides me a clear picture of why bird researcher Jon Stravers told me to venture here.

Under the Wing of Gladys Black

Jon Stravers' love for birds dates to 1974 when he discovered a nesting red-phased screech owl in his backyard. The bird's quiet behavior provided a perfect study for Jon and his two small children, Lisa and Jon-Jon. Stravers' curiosity about the bird led him to his first communication with Gladys Black, already a well-known, spirited voice for Iowa's birds. Always resourceful, she took time to answer his phone call and even sent him a handwritten letter about the natural history of screech owls. Little did Stravers know her kind act would "light the spark" for his raptor affinity.

Stravers kept in touch with Black and accompanied her on several field trips where the two searched for shoreside raptor nests at Lake Red Rock. The magic of finding nesting raptors and documenting their life cycles was an instant hook. Black quickly became his mentor and the two migrated into an enduring friendship.

At her urging, Stravers attended an Iowa Ornithologist Union meeting in 1976. After hearing state ecologist Dean Rosa talk about Iowa's endangered species and the raptor work he was conducting, Stravers introduced himself. The two hit it off, and in the fall of 1977, he accompanied Rosa to his banding and trapping station on Malarkey Ridge near Wexford in Allamakee County. The surrounding landscape was incredibly rugged and Stravers experienced his first encounter with red-shouldered hawks. "Once I saw the courtship flight and habitat of red-shouldered hawks, I was hooked, I was ready," recalls Stravers.

For the next 37 years, Stravers conducted raptor research worldwide, including trapping golden eagles in the mountains of Nevada and banding raptors in New Mexico. Yet every year, the mystery of the red-shouldered hawk drew him back to Sny Magill Creek on the upper Mississippi.

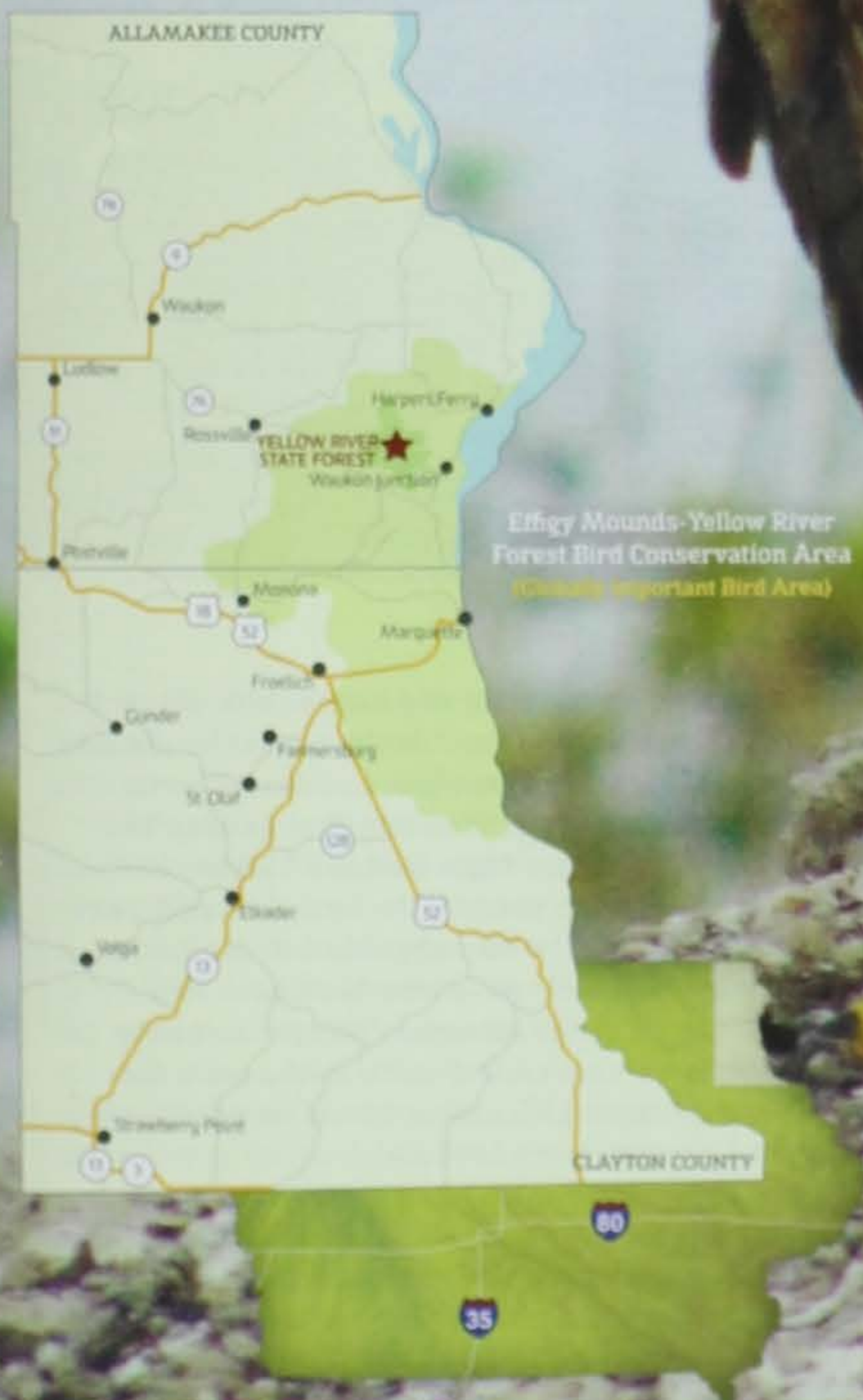
"The Sny Magill complex is the center of the universe because it contains a wonderful interspersion of water and ancient forest. The mystery of the mounds blends with the magic of an incredibly diverse bird community," he explains.

Big Blue Sky—Music For Birds

Today, from April through July, Stravers conducts daily bird contract work for organizations including Audubon, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the DNR. When not in the woods conducting research he frequently is heard playing with his band, Big Blue Sky. Originally a father son-duo, gigs now range from a solo act to an 11-piece band. More than 45 musicians from 11 states have recorded or appeared as a component of Big Blue Sky, playing Mississippi River boat cruises to annual concerts at Elkader's Opera House. A significant portion of band earnings support outdoor education programs for area students and Stravers' bird conservation projects. Music doesn't make him wealthy, but allows him to be enriched in the lessons of nature.

Stravers concentrates his research on discovering and monitoring populations of birds of greatest conservation need, including one of Iowa's rarest nesting raptors, red-shouldered hawks. These secretive hawks prefer large tracts of mature floodplain forests dominated by maple or cottonwood trees, unlogged for decades. These hawks are indicators of contiguous tracts of high quality forests and are an Iowa endangered species due to loss and fragmentation of this type of habitat. Despite growing conversion of bottomland timber into ag land, thousands of acres of protected, continuous bottomland forest exist along the Upper Mississippi and its tributaries

Jon "Hawkman" Stravers concentrates his research on discovering and monitoring populations of birds of greatest conservation need, including one of Iowa's rarest nesting raptors, red-shouldered hawks. These secretive hawks prefer large tracts of mature floodplain forests dominated by maple or cottonwood trees, unlogged for decades. They are indicators of contiguous tracts of high quality forests and are an Iowa endangered species due to loss and fragmentation of this habitat type.





ABOVE LEFT: Young red-shouldered hawks in the nest somewhere in the vast 135,000 acres of Iowa's first officially designated Globally Important Bird Area, the Effigy Mounds-Yellow River Forest Bird Conservation Area. While studying the hawks, Jon Stravers also documented significant populations of cerulean warblers in the area—a species that has declined 70 percent in the United States since the 1960s. The discovery of the warblers was critical for the global bird area designation. At right, Stravers records data (**TOP CENTER**) and with guitar (**RIGHT**) entertains a boat tour on the Mississippi. His band, Big Blue Sky, records and performs and donates a significant portion of earnings for outdoor education and bird conservation projects. **FAR RIGHT:** A sign in the water proclaims the entrance to the Sny Magill Unit of Effigy Mounds National Monument, which is a portion of the bird conservation area in Clayton County.

in northeast Iowa. According to Stravers, these areas provide ideal “cathedrals” for field research.

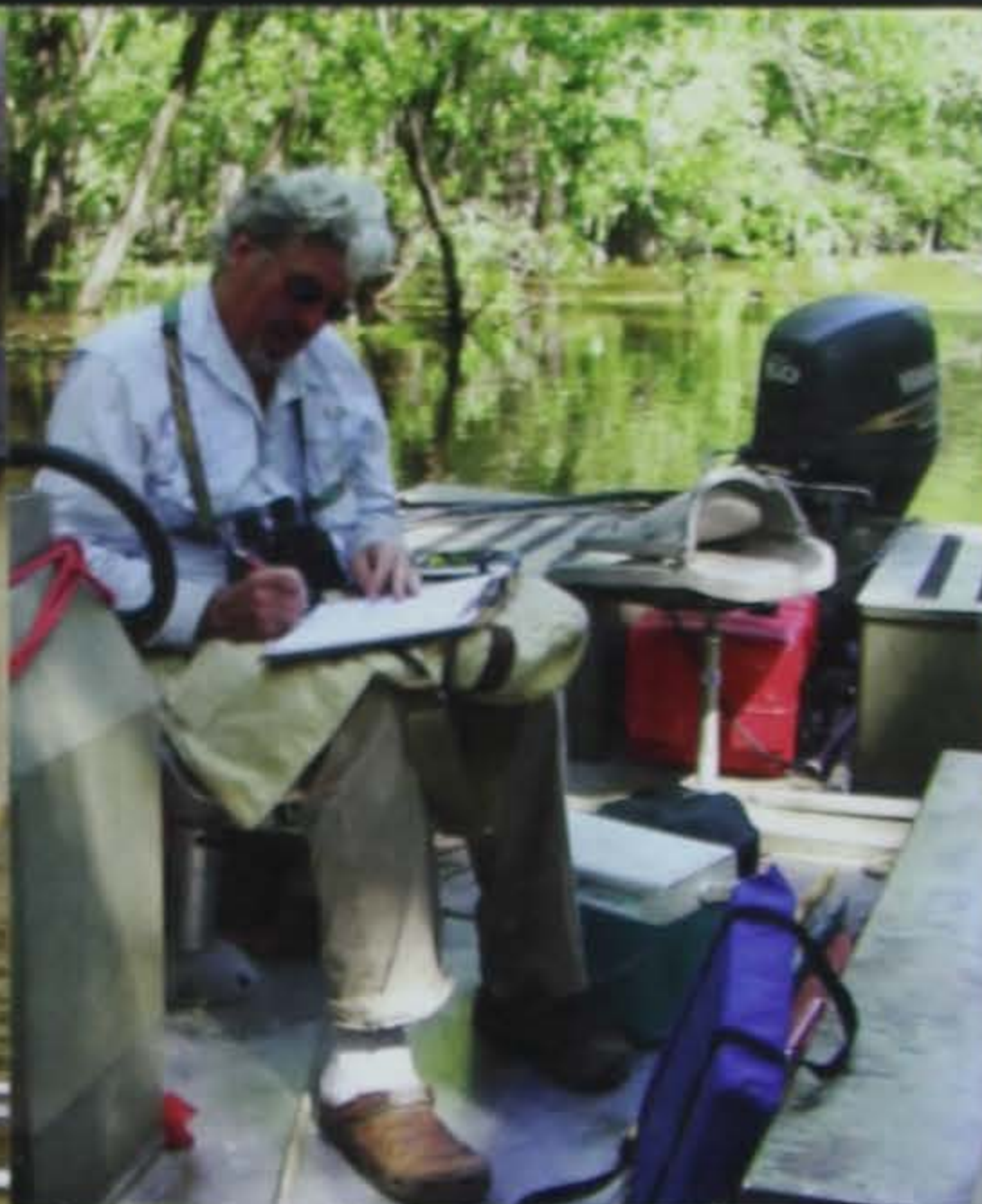
Red-shouldered hawks nest in remote locations. Stravers describes the bird as the “master of the floodplain,” and finding them requires him to ping pong his boat through flooded timbers. Some years, he walks in ankle-deep mud or wades waist deep water just to get a peek at the secluded nests. “I’ve looked in a lot of places where the birds weren’t,” says Stravers, whose dedication to research has given him a lifetime full of birdsong and endearing stories.

Sny Magill Creek seems to harbor his most captivating stories, including documenting a hawk nest active for more than two decades. One late May, at the lower end of Sny Magill, he was able to sneak up on a nesting female. Excitedly setting up the spotting scope, hopeful

to determine “how many young there were, how old they were and what they were eating,” in the instant he got the scope set up, the female spotted him and dove directly for him. He hit the muddy ground face first to hear “the wind traveling through her flight feathers.” Untouched, Stravers quickly stood to observe the bird circling higher and higher above him. The bird squawked its loud rage before again honing in. He dove face down back into the mud but was not lucky enough to escape the bird’s blow. With Stravers’ face tucked safely in the mud, the raptor took advantage of his exposed head, mysteriously striking him only with her folded feet.

Enter the Hawkman

A 1983 article in the *Iowa Conservationist* dubbed Stravers the “Hawkman of Iowa.” To this day, his family



and closest friends call him "Hawkman" or "Hawk." Recently, Hawkman treated me to a memorable birding adventure to learn more about the birds of my homeland.

While riding in Stravers' boat, I reflected back on the magical paddle I had that night with the cranes down at Sny Magill. I never would have experienced all those songs and stories without a phone call to Stravers. Now, in his boat, a smile comes across my cheeks as I hear the same familiar bird songs fill the air. Looking behind me in the boat, I see an incandescent glow of a thousand silver maples on Stravers' face. Together, we survey birds and whisper the birds' names to each other—American redstart, prothonotary warbler, yellow-rumped warbler—until suddenly, an unfamiliar song pierces through the valley floor. "Red-shoulder!" Stravers giddily declares. His research shows red-shouldered hawks prefer both

floodplain and bluffland forests to nest. If the birds don't have these two components, they are not as likely to use the area. He suspects the bird we just heard is from a bluffside nest just upriver.

As we voyage further up the flooded stream, we come to a large log jam. "Hold on! This is going to be a fight, and this one is going to hurt," Stravers warns. After successfully navigating through low-hanging boxelders and log jumping his boat over the timbers, Stravers excitedly states, "I'm the Hawkman, I got the boat, man!" No one else would ever pull that risky maneuver, I think to myself. For years, it has been these adventurous acts that allow Stravers to place himself in the wild places where red-shouldered hawks nest.

Several miles up the creek, the clouds finally begin to part. "Woohoo, there's the blue sky! If the sun peeks



A small bird of the deciduous forest treetops, the sky-blue cerulean warbler is hard to see. It nests and forages higher in the canopy than most other warblers. Females (male pictured) have an unusual way of leaving a nest after sitting on it. Some call it "bungee-jumping." She drops from the side of the nest, keeping her wings folded to her sides, opening them to fly only when well below the nest.

through, we might hear them," exclaims Stravers. Right on cue, two red-shouldered hawks emerge from atop the forest canopy and soar several hundred feet above. The raptors catch the midday thermals and perform a sky dance, then disappear over the bluff. "The birds didn't say a word; either they had a failed nesting attempt or they were trying to keep something secret," Stravers says as he pulls the boat to shore.

We stumble onto the bank, and after a few minutes of trekking through soggy forest floor, emerge underneath a large nest of sticks. Previous research has classified this as an inactive nest, but the two hawks we just saw lead us to believe the territory was active and there could be a new nest close by. We jump back in the boat, motoring another one-eighth-mile upstream before docking under a stand of cottonwoods. I watch as Stravers ambles about in his red coat, wooden walking stick in hand, as sunlight fills the forest floor and birds fill it with song.

Before long, Stravers motions me to a tree with a new nest in the making. Clumps of moss and broken branches line it and several pieces of fresh woody debris rest at our feet. Hawkman is unsure if the nest is indeed active or being used as a "dummy nest." While inspecting it, he explains there are five active red-shouldered territories in the area. He surmises that in early spring, raptors get together in pre-courtship communal gatherings and form what appears to be a "rouge of red-shoulders." During this period, the birds excessively call to maintain territory, recruit new mates and to possibly exchange mates. "Red-shoulders are all about language," says Stravers, who has hundreds of red-shouldered hawk calls on his audio recorder. "Females produce lots of noise during March courtship and then the intensity, frequency and spacing changes during her nest laying period, until finally she goes silent while sitting on the eggs."

Females lay eggs in early April and incubate 28 to 33 days. During incubation, the birds' relationships may change from matriarchal to patriarchal, with the male calling to declare his family's boundaries. As Stravers talks, a new bird song fills the forest and he excitedly pulls out his audio recorder. The song is a zippy "zee zee zee zizizizi eet." Stravers identifies the bird as a cerulean warbler. A blue wizard of a bird that jumps from the tops of trees into a "flying piece of sky," ceruleans are the fastest declining warbler species in North America. The birds require large tracts of contiguous mature forest to nest. Up until several years ago, they were thought to be very uncommon in northeast Iowa. Stravers recalls being so focused on red-shoulders he disregarded other birds. That changed on a boat ride with his late son, Jon-Jon, who clued him back into other birds. "You're missing other birds, Dad. Don't you hear that brown creeper, the cedar waxwing and the cerulean warbler?" Shortly after this conversation with his son, Stravers gave more attention to other birds and began

documenting cerulean populations.

In the exact moment the cerulean sings above us, a male red-shoulder calls: "keyaah, keyaah." The cry pierces the big blue sky and echoes through the surrounding bluffs. I shiver in amazement as Stravers records both bird songs on his audio recorder. Even though 95 percent of Stravers' red-shouldered hawk territories have ceruleans in them, he still looks as giddy as a fledgling bird in this shared moment. "I'm addicted to these birds," he exclaims. In 2012, his birding obsession documented a record-breaking 192 active cerulean territories in northeast Iowa, a significant count that would not go unnoticed in the birding world.

On May 31, 2014, more than 50 people, including members of several conservation agencies, packed into the headquarters of Yellow River State Forest. On this day, Iowa Audubon and the DNR officially dedicated Effigy Mounds-Yellow River Forest Bird Conservation Area as the state's first Globally Important Bird Area.

Totaling 135,000 acres, this BCA and Important Bird Area is the largest unfragmented forest remnant in Iowa and includes portions of the Upper Mississippi Refuge, Yellow River State Forest, Effigy Mounds National Monument, Pikes Peak State Park, Bloody Run Creek and Sny Magill-North Cedar State Wildlife Management Area. Before an area is designated by Audubon, several requirements must be met to achieve basic IBA status, and globally important status must be backed by comprehensive documentation of its importance to imperiled birds.

At the dedication, Doug Harr, president of Iowa Audubon and retired DNR wildlife diversity coordinator, surmised that Stravers' diligent research on ceruleans was the primary source of documentation in making global status possible. "The particular bird that brought such recognition to northeast Iowa is the cerulean warbler, a species that declined 70 percent nationally since the 1960s," says Harr. Mysteriously, during the dedication, three cerulean warblers were singing within 200 meters of the forest headquarters. The cerulean may be the gem of the area, but it is the biodiversity that sets this IBA apart from others.

"We are extremely pleased that Iowa's largest and highest quality forested landscape now has international recognition. This IBA has tremendous value not only to cerulean warblers but to the other 60 bird species found in this unit that are state designated birds of greatest conservation need," says Bruce Ehresman, DNR wildlife diversity biologist and longtime friend of Stravers.

"I started this research because I wanted to do something that nourished my soul and made people tell stories," Stravers confided. For as long as his ears and eyes will allow, Iowa's "Hawkman" will be on the Mississippi listening to music in the wind, smiling wide as the big blue sky. 🌳

Mesmerized BY Aquatic Ecology

A Peek Inside one Career Inspiration

BY MINDY KRALICEK PHOTOS COURTESY KELLY POOLE

"I feel very privileged and grateful to have this job. I get to do what I'm passionate about—protecting threatened and endangered species for Iowa's public trust resources. That's meaningful work and I'm proud to serve in this capacity." — DNR ecologist Kelly Poole

Kelly Poole shares with *Iowa Outdoors* how she first became an aquatic biologist and conservationist and her current role as a DNR ecologist who focuses on threatened and endangered animal species. In coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, she works with private landowners, businesses and DNR programs to help reduce harm to threatened species. It's a lot of time spent in the office, but she still gets afield too.

How did you become interested in biology and natural resources?
I grew up in Illinois. My parents loved the outdoors and we spent family time enjoying nature, especially lakes and rivers. We spent weekends at my grandparents' house on the Vermillion River in central Illinois and tent camped, boated and swam at lakes in southern Illinois. We also spent time at a family cottage in Wisconsin a few weeks every summer. When I was in seventh grade our family moved to a house my dad built on Lake Bloomington. It was here my brother and I snorkeled, ice skated, swam and fished year-round. How could I not be interested in aquatic life? Sometimes when winter conditions were right, I could lie on the clear ice in a protected bay and watch fish swim and turtles move below me.

What did you study in college?

I didn't go to college right after high school. In the early 1980s girls were encouraged to pursue careers in business. That didn't interest me at all. I'm glad I waited a few years. When I decided to go to college, I learned Iowa State University had studies for people interested in biology and conservation. Looking through their catalog, I noticed a course called aquatic ecology. I was thrilled to discover I could study something I was interested in my whole life. I enjoyed a variety of core classes the first two years, but it was the aquatic courses my junior and senior year I loved most. I majored in fisheries and wildlife biology.

I went directly to graduate school and received a master's degree from Iowa State in animal ecology. My thesis focused on Iowa's freshwater mussels. Following graduate school, I helped survey endangered river mussels in England. We studied the characteristics of the watershed and river system where these mussels were abundant and where it was absent. The species was believed to be threatened by pollution and dredging of slow-moving water channels. Our data helped develop recommendations for protecting England's freshwater mussels.

What are some exciting memories as a DNR biologist? Winter surveillance for white-nose syndrome, a disease among bats, is one. I was one of three biologists that entered Maquoketa Caves State Park to count hibernating bats and look for signs of white-nose syndrome. I'd never been around bats before and there they were, in clusters sleeping on cave ceilings. It was an amazing day and I learned so much from the experience. This is what excites me about working at the DNR—I learn something new every day.

Another vivid experience was assisting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to assess restored river oxbows in western Iowa. We were interested in Topeka shiners, a protected fish species, and how they survived the drought of 2012. It was the hottest day of 2013 and the crew was pulling nets through mucky water and sorting and identifying what was collected each pass through the small shallow wetlands. The nets were loaded with a variety of fish and a few turtles. I was amazed anything could live in this warm water with little oxygen. But we found Topeka shiners, both adults and young fish, too.

Another highlight was fish monitoring on the Mississippi River at Guttenberg. This was one year in a long-term monitoring effort. The fish were shocked so we could net them and collect data. That day I caught an unusually large redhorse. It was such a surprise.

It's one thing to learn from textbooks, but to learn in the field and have these experiences is fascinating.

A few of ecologist Kelly Poole's fondest work memories include monitoring bats in Maquoketa Caves for white-nose syndrome, assisting the USFWS looking for the endangered Topeka shiner in river oxbows and surveying mussel populations and diversity in Iowa rivers.



What's your favorite thing to do outside?

I love Iowa. There are states with massive mountains and those with ocean waves crashing against the shore. But, Iowa's beauty is subtle, quiet, and that's what makes it interesting to me. Like walking in a natural area when the snow is melting and, if conditions are right, seeing all the trails rodents have made under the snow...where they went to find and store food.

Hiking is my favorite. Ledges State Park is a great place. I like the big trees; they have a quiet, deep beauty. To wind down after work, I hike the woods near my home in Boone County. It's soothing.

What advice can you give young women interested in a natural resources career?

Pay attention to what you enjoy doing and learning about. Get a good education. Stay true to your interests, but be flexible. Get a variety of work experiences within your interest area. When you discover what you really want to do, that suite of experiences will help you become a great candidate for that special job. 🐾

A scenic view of a lake with lily pads and a woman and child fishing from a rock. The background shows a line of trees under a cloudy sky.

Great Bets

For Fun

Family

Fishing

Easy Access, Amenities And Attractions
Make For Family Angling Getaways

COMPILED BY MICK KLEMESRUD

Southwest Iowa

Lake Icaria near Corning is the family spot to catch 8- to 11-inch crappies, bluegills up to 8 inches, walleyes, largemouth bass and channel catfish.

Try jigs or minnows around the fishing jetties for springtime panfish. Troll crankbaits along the dam for walleyes, or cast over fish mounds or cedar tree piles with jigs or plastics for largemouth bass. Channel catfish like nightcrawlers along the rocky shoreline, silt dam or fish mounds.

The 648-acre lake is surrounded by a popular, well-maintained park managed by the Adams County Conservation Board (mycountyparks.com; 641-322-4793). Make it a family overnigher at one of two modern campgrounds, 14 log-style cabins, trails, swimming beach with concessions, volleyball court, playground and picnic areas. A full-service marina rents boats and sells bait and tackle. After fishing, tire out the kids in the 1.25-mile water ski zone.

Green Valley Lake State Park features a recently upgraded campground, three cabins, picnic areas, playground, trails and swimming beach. Ride the 5-mile bike trail into Creston from the park for antique shops and eateries.

Bluegills up to 8 inches are caught near the fishing jetties or along two fishing piers. Use small jigs in the spring. The lake has tons of 13- to 27-inch walleyes and 13- to 17-inch largemouth bass. Crappies range from 9 to 11 inches.

Troll crankbaits along the dam or rocky structure for walleyes. For largemouth bass, use crankbaits along weed lines or plastics fished near cedar tree piles.

There are four boat ramps, courtesy docks, a fish cleaning station and a ski zone for recreational boating on the 379-acre lake. iowadnr.gov or 641-782-5131.

Central Iowa

Shoreline access abounds at bluegill-laden **Thomas Mitchell Pond** south of Mitchellville. Enjoy a quiet family picnic and spend an afternoon fishing at this county park. Use a 1-inch piece of nightcrawler suspended under a small bobber. Mycountyparks.com; 515-967-4889

Bluegills at **Copper Creek Lake** in Pleasant Hill are



accessible from shore, but kayaks or canoes make fishing even more fun. Go in May to cash in on the spring bite using a small piece of nightcrawler. Bring the kids' bikes and ride the 1.22 mile trail around the 40-acre lake. www.ci.pleasant-hill.ia.us/ 515-262-9368.

Ada Hayden Lake north of Ames is stocked with trout during the cool months and hold over into summer for exciting fishing using a flyrod or typical panfishing methods—a small bobber and small hook tipped with an inch of nightcrawler or prepared bait. A paved trail around the lake is perfect to locate pods of trout near shore. Once found, present bait ahead of the feeding fish. Search Ada Hayden Park at cityofames.org.

Trout stocked in fall and winter at **Lake Petocka** in Bondurant remain into spring. Excellent shore access is especially inviting for flyrodders after trout or bluegill. To baitfish trout, cast a small piece of nightcrawler and a small weight to the bottom and let the fish come to you. cityofbondurant.com.

Northwest Iowa

Mill Creek Lake in O'Brien County is on par with many of the better fisheries in the area. The 23-acre lake bursts with largemouth bass, bluegills, crappies and channel catfish. Make a weekend family getaway with the campground, cabins, concession, lodge, swimming, beach, trails and universally accessible fishing platform. mycountyparks.com 712-295-7200.

Black Hawk Lake State Park. When not fishing, young anglers can burn energy at the new playground in Speaker Park across from the stone piers in Town Bay. With two campgrounds and two hotels in Lake View, lodging is easy. The town holds concerts, weekend festivals aimed at kids and families and other events for fun after fishing. Roam or ride paved trails to other public areas to watch wildlife. iowadnr.gov; 712-657-8712.

Catch walleye from shore on **Storm Lake** in late April and May. Ample public shoreline makes fishing easy, and playgrounds at city parks are a nice diversion for

young anglers. King's Pointe Resort is on the water and includes waterparks and beach for a ready-made family weekend. Campgrounds and cabins dot the east shore.

Kingspointeresort.com, 866-552-5960; camping at stormlake.org or 712-732-8023.

Yellow Smoke Lake has extremely clear water, big bluegills, bass, ample shoreline access and a well-manicured swimming beach, plus cabins, a campground and playground. Use the bridges and fishing jetties to get over the water without a boat. *Mycountyparks.com; 712-263-2748.*

Southwest Iowa

Lake Anita State Park is a family fishing destination a few miles south of I-80 in Cass County with modern camping, playground, fishing jetties, picnic shelters, paved bike trail and swimming beach—plus 8-inch bluegills. The best fishing begins late May when bluegills arrive on spawning beds to build disk-shaped nests in 2 to 4 feet of water along protected shorelines. Get your kids to look for open areas in vegetation and cast a small hook with an inch of worm dangling one foot below a quarter-sized bobber. For even faster action, try a 1/32 ounce black feather jig tipped with a piece of nightcrawler.

By early July, bluegills move out, so fish deeper water off the ends of fishing jetties or, better yet, drift fish from a boat. Cap the family fun with a movie and free popcorn in the campground Saturday nights during summer.

lowadnr.gov; 712-762-3564.

The Greenfield City Reservoir, just south of Greenfield in Adair County, is a secret family-fun spot that consistently produces fish. Kids can catch ample crappie and bluegills (use small jigs tipped with a piece of worm) plus largemouth bass and channel cats. A city park around the trolling-motor-only lake offers a paved path, playground, picnic shelters and disk golf.

Viking Lake State Park in Montgomery County is a longtime family favorite now made better due to improved water quality, a new restaurant, expanded campground, swimming beach, hiking trails and easy fishing. Photos adorning the park's bait shop wall confirm the largemouth bass here are lunkers. Kids can catch bluegill and crappies, swim and gobble ice cream at the restaurant—all without leaving the park.

Stocked channel catfish is an automatic success, and with Viking Lake's campground on the water and new fishing jetties, it's ideal for catfishing. *lowadnr.gov; 712-829-2235.*

Southeast Iowa

Marr Park near Ainsworth is a premier Washington County recreation area with its 6-acre lake, 1-acre pond, paved lake trail, nature center, campground, volleyball, softball, playgrounds and shelters.

The lake has swarms of 12- to 15-inch largemouth, bluegills up to 8 inches and oodles of 14- to 18-inch channel cats near the dam. The lake has a lot of fish-attracting structure, some visible from the surface. There is a single lane boat ramp and an electric motor-only restriction.

The lake trail connects with one leading to Ainsworth. The pond is on the comeback after it was drained, deepened and a fishing jetty installed. Nearby is a gazebo, new playground and rental lodge. *mycountyparks.com; 319-657-2400.*

Wilson Lake Park in Lee County receives fall trout stocking that attracts hordes of anglers, and its pockets of cool water allow trout to grow all summer.

"There is a lot of enthusiasm when people see trout in the summer," says fisheries biologist Chad Dolan. In addition to trout, the 6-acre lake has improving panfish and largemouth bass opportunities.

The park caters to families with its trail system, shore access and campground with cabins. *mycountyparks.com; 319-463-7673.*

Lake of the Hills in West Lake Park next to I-280 and U.S. 61 in western Davenport is the primary fishing lake in Scott County. The 54-acre lake holds channel catfish up to 20 inches and excellent numbers of largemouth bass. It is stocked with 2,000 trout spring and fall. All the lakes in the park have 6.5 to 7-inch bluegills.

The park's expansive campground has primitive trails that connect four bluegill-laden lakes. It's a family fun spot with beach, concession, shelters, playgrounds, children's forest, universally accessible fishing pier, boat ramp and picnic areas. *scottcountyiowa.com; 563-328-3281.*

Northeast Iowa

George Wyth Memorial State Park is a popular family spot in Waterloo. The 75-acre lake features plentiful shoreline access and sizeable populations of bluegills, crappies, northern pike, catfish and largemouth bass.

Kids love to cast from the floating fishing platform, roam the fishing jetties and burn energy at the swimming beach and playground. Bring your bicycles as the campground connects to the metro's extensive bike trail system that leads to shopping, restaurants and entertainment venues. *lowadnr.gov; 319-232-5505.*

Casey Lake in Hickory Hills Park is managed by the Black Hawk County Conservation Board, although it is located in Tama County near LaPorte City.

The lake has high catch rates for largemouth bass, bluegills, channel catfish and crappies. Half the lake has easy shore fishing access. Enjoy three fishing jetties and a fishing platform at this 37-acre lake, which is benefiting from watershed work to reduce sediment and improve water quality.



Kid Fishing Tips

1. Make it Fun. Keep outings short.
2. Keep it simple with easy-to-use tackle.
3. Give each child a job to do.
4. Give kids your full attention.
5. Fish for easy-to-catch species.
6. Go early in the day when kids are most attentive.
7. Keep it short.
8. Pack snacks.
9. Dress comfortable for the weather.
10. Bring a camera to record memories!
11. Anglers 16 years of age and older require a fishing license.



A time-honored pastime at Lake Anita State park is weekend movie night. A favorite of campers, locals also make the drive for the free movie. Refreshments available, with funds benefitting the friends group. (The popcorn is free!)





Few things are as enjoyable and memorable for a kid than a family day on the water—especially if the fish are biting. Largemouth bass are especially fun for kids to catch.

PHOTO BY JAKE ZWEIFHNER

After fishing, see wildlife exhibits, including live animals. The park has camping, trails, playground, cabins and boat ramp. *Mycountyparks.com*; 319-342-3350.

Volga River State Recreation Area. The massive 5,700-acre Volga River State Recreation Area south of West Union is home to Volga Lake. The 135-acre lake is stocked every other year with 9-inch channel catfish. Cast for crappies up to 9 inches and bluegill up to 7 inches, along with numerous 10- to 16-inch channel catfish.

Volga Lake sports a boat ramp and paved parking lot for easy watercraft access (boats must operate at no-wake speeds.) Use the universally accessible walkway from the ramp to cast to cedar tree fish attractors, or fish from two jetties, one accessible by walking the face of the dam.

The area features modern and equestrian campgrounds. Enjoy picnic spots and hike miles of multiuse trails. Paddle, wade or fish for smallmouth in the Volga River, which flows through the park. *Iowadnr.gov*; 563-425-4161.

Trout Run flows 2.4 miles along the southeast edge of Decorah and is stocked with 10- to 12-inch rainbow and brook trout weekly April through October, along with annual stockings of fingerling browns, ensuring plenty of fish willing to bite.

Bubbling from a spring near the fish hatchery, Trout Run provides easy angler access with ample parking, modern restrooms and picnic areas. Paved walkways provide universal access on hatchery grounds. Tour the hatchery to view and feed trout, walk through a prairie and glimpse the famous Decorah eagles. The stream is easily accessible by car or from the extensive multiuse trail system. Decorah offers both upscale and kid-friendly lodging, entertainment and dining choices along with museums and boutique shops. *Iowadnr.gov*; *decoraharea.com*.

Lake Meyer offers anglers of all skills fishing opportunities in a relaxed, quiet setting. It has fishing jetties, an accessible fishing dock and shoreline access around the lake. Strategically sunken cedar trees provide fish habitat. Boats can be used, but only with electric motors.

Just southwest of Calmar, the 38-acre lake is a paddler's dream, especially on calm summer days. Haul in bluegills up to 8 inches, crappies up to 10 and largemouth up to 14 with some topping 20 inches. The lake is stocked annually with northern pike and every other year with channel catfish.

The park sits on 162 acres of deep woods and has a restored prairie for birdwatching. The modern campground offers picnic shelters, hiking, a baseball

diamond, horseshoe pits, playground and nature center. *mycountyparks.com*; 563-534-7145.

Spring Branch Creek ends in Bailey's Ford Park in Delaware County—a popular trout fishing destination. The stream is stocked twice weekly from April through August with rainbow and brook trout, and once weekly during September and October. Trout are aggressive soon after release, making stocking days popular.

"The stream is pretty small, so no need for any special equipment. It's primarily shallow with small pools," says fisheries biologist Dan Kirby. "Fish from shore and use small jigs or small hooks tipped with either a piece of nightcrawler or prepared bait."

Special regulations apply upstream from Bailey's Ford Park (14-inch minimum length limit, artificial lures only).

Spring Branch Creek has parking, bank hides and stream deflectors and streamside paths.

The county park is home to a popular, modern campground, playground and shelters and a conservation center. *Mycountyparks.com*; 563-927-3410.

Southcentral

Rathbun Lake. Crappie fishing at Rathbun Lake is tough to beat, with tens of thousands caught annually from this 11,000-acre lake. This spring will produce even more. Fishery surveys suggest crappie numbers are higher now than any time in the last 20 years.

Many fish are 7 to 9 inches long, and will continue to grow. There are high numbers of slab crappies exceeding 11 inches, too.

The DNR and Army Corps of Engineers manage eight parks for camping, swimming, fishing and boating, while concessionaires operate two marinas and two more campgrounds.

The DNR's Honey Creek Resort State Park provides a massive lodge hotel, restaurant, deluxe cabins, indoor waterpark, golf course, miles of trails, marina facilities, swimming beach and other amenities. *honeycreekresort.com*; 877-677-3344.

Lacey-Keosauqua State Park offers a swimming beach, camping, trails and easy access to the Des Moines River. The 22-acre lake is known for bluegills exceeding 9-inches and for excellent numbers of largemouth. Many channel cats exceed 22 inches.

Iowadnr.gov; 319-923-3502.

Next door is Lake Sugema, home to some of southern Iowa's best largemouth bass fishing. The 575-acre lake has excellent fishing for crappies and walleyes, plus muskies over 40 inches. Crappies run 9 to 10 inches and

TROUT FEES Required on All Trout Waters

With more trout stocking across the state in nearly 20 lakes, anglers must remember a trout fee (\$12.50) is required in addition to a fishing license to fish for or possess trout. License fees support Iowa's trout fishery, rearing, stocking and habitat improvement. Buy licenses online at *Iowadnr.gov* or at retail shops.

walleyes up to 22. In the spring the dam is one of the best places to fish. Vbcountyconservation.com; 319-293-3532.

Lake Wapello State Park in Davis County is home to largemouth bass commonly over 18 inches.

"If you are looking to catch a big bass, Wapello is one of your best bets," says fisheries biologist Mark Flammang.

Bluegill and crappie are abundant and will continue to grow. Channel catfish up to 8 pounds were recently sampled. Recently remodeled Lake Wapello offers a campground, trails, lodge, playground, swimming beach and cabins. Seven fishing jetties get anglers close to fish. lowadnr.gov; 641-722-3371.

East Central

Kent Park Lake. The 26-acre Kent Park Lake is a longstanding family destination. Home to the Johnson County Conservation Board and its nature center, its paved lake trail provides easy shore access in addition to jetties and a handicap accessible area.

Hook into 6- to 8-inch bluegills, largemouth and channel cat, with an occasional nice-sized crappie. A large population of 12- to 14-inch bass is a hit with kids.

The popular beach and concession stand yield family fun after the bobbers are stowed, and the nearby campground and playground provide more family memories. Mycountyparks.com; 319-645-2315.

Lake Macbride State Park. At 940 acres, Lake Macbride in Johnson County has easy access to limestone shores, numerous fishing jetties and a handicapped accessible fishing pier connected last year via sidewalk to the parking lot. Macbride has a strong year class of crappies now measuring 7 to 9 inches and growing, a bonanza of 6- to 7-inch bluegills plus "every other species imaginable," says fisheries biologist Paul Sleeper.

Convenient fish cleaning stations dot each side of the lake. A concession stand and beach offer fun after fishing. Pedal bike trails and choose between a modern campground away from the lake or a primitive lakeside campground with playground. lowadnr.gov; 319-624-2200.

Diamond Lake. Enjoy recent changes to 100-acre Diamond Lake in the heart of Poweshiek County, including a new and remodeled campground and a hard surface bike trail that connects to Montezuma. The lake is one of the area's most consistent fisheries with a huge year class of small crappies.

Boats with electric motors are allowed. A convenient fish cleaning station is near the new campground. Select spots allow fishing and beaching of boats at your campsite. Part of the lake protection project added a 3-acre pond in the watershed, popular with anglers. Mycountyparks.com; 641-623-3191.

Central

Smith Lake (Kossuth County). Catch bluegill, largemouth bass, crappie and channel cat on this 59-acre impoundment that features a jetty and six piers or docks and trails for shore fishing. Rent kayaks from Waters Edge Nature Center. mycountyparks.com; 515-295-2138. The county park has camping with 16 new sites on the north side of the lake, a playground, beach and shelters. A perk for campers is free canoeing on designated weekends. Take a history side trip to a war museum four miles away in Algona where 10,000 German POWs spent WWII. Pwcamp.algona.org; 515-395-2267.

Pine Lake State Park and the Iowa River (Hardin County). Pine Lake State Park offers fishing in two lakes—the 69-acre upper lake and 50-acre lower lake—plus the adjacent Iowa River.

Enjoy fishing for largemouth bass, bluegill, crappie and channel catfish. Both lakes have a boat ramp and fishing jetties. The lower lake has a swimming beach and shore trail.

A popular campground on Upper Pine Lake has four restored depression era cabins built by the CCC below the spillway near the river. (lowadnr.gov; 641-858-5832).

The Iowa River is known for smallmouth bass, walleye and channel catfish, plus inner tube rentals through a private contractor. After fishing, swing some clubs at Pine Lake Country Club, a nine-hole golf course between the lakes.

Beeds Lake State Park in Franklin County and its 100-acre lake offers largemouth bass, bluegills, crappies and channel catfish with a trail for easy access to jetties around the lake. Relax in the large campground with a playground, picnic areas, swimming beach and shelters. A bike trail connects the park to Hampton. Hike below a picturesque, cascading waterfall dam built by the CCC. lowadnr.gov; 641-456-2047.

Mississippi River

Lansing Village Creek-Pool 9. The Village Creek boat launch and floating fishing platform south of Lansing in Allamakee County is a favorite for boaters and weekend fun seekers. Avoid crowds at the boat ramp by walking the new fishing sidewalk across the bridge on the west side of Highway 76, a half-mile south of Village Creek boat landing. The area is an excellent bluegill and largemouth bass fishery, and catfish anglers have success around the bridge abutments early to late summer.

City of Guttenberg-Pools 10 and 11. Access to Bussey Lake's floating dock and boat ramp above Lock and Dam 10 provides easy family-fishing. Yellow perch fishing is excellent along vegetation beds, as well as for bluegill, crappie and northern pike.

An accessible walkway on South River Park Drive is behind the DNR fisheries station and aquarium. It is a



A lazy day at the lake catching fish, playing with bugs and worms or just pondering the underwater world rekindles and rejuvenates the spirit and inspires wonder in children. Time-honored memories are not created on a screen, but rather when it involves the family.



TOP: JAMES FINCH/ISTOCK; MIDDLE: JAMES FINCH/ISTOCK; BOTTOM: JAMES FINCH/ISTOCK



OUTDOOR JOURNEY FOR GIRLS SUMMER CAMPS

Meet new friends, test your firearm and archery skills, catch a few fish and learn how to clean them and try your hand at paddling at the Outdoor Journey for Girls summer camps. The three-day camps will be June 17-19 and Aug. 5-7 at Springbrook Conservation Education Center near Guthrie Center, and July 7-9 at Hickory Hills Park near Dysart. Along with learning basic outdoor skills, campers come away hunter safety certified. Camps are sponsored by the DNR and Iowa Women in Natural Resources. Local Pheasants Forever chapters provide full or partial scholarships to attend. For information and to register, go to iwinr.com, or call 515.423.4747 in central Iowa or 515.360.8712 in eastern Iowa.

PHOTO BY BEN CURTIS

popular fishing venue for children. Anglers catch panfish, bass and drum from the sidewalk. In early spring, catch walleye and sauger moving to the dam to spawn.

The three-lane Guttenberg South ramp provides boat access to Pool 11. Shore anglers can fish up and downstream from the ramp. Walk the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's educational nature trail south of the ramp. In early spring and summer, the rocky shoreline is excellent for bluegill, catfish, drum and large and smallmouth bass. Boaters can access dam tailwaters to fish wing dams for walleye, sauger and catfish. Then moor to a handy floating fish cleaning station.

Massey Marina Area, Pool 12. South of Dubuque; Dubuque County Conservation Board.

Massey Marina and Park offers boating access to Pool 12. The well-lit marina, five miles south of Dubuque off Highway 52 South and the Great River Road, offers seasonal and daily slip rentals, marine fuel and short-term courtesy docks. A concession offers food and drinks, showers and bait. Picnic grounds and campsites include playgrounds. A two-lane boat ramp and daytime parking for vehicles and boat trailers is located at the north side of the park. Shoreline fishing is also available. mycountyparks.com; 563-556-3416.

Spruce Creek Park, Pool 12, north of Bellevue; Jackson County Conservation Board.

The 43-acre Spruce Creek Park lies on the banks of the Mississippi River at the mouth of Spruce Creek. It boasts a marina, modern camping, showers, large picnic area, two shelters and playground. jacksonccb.com; 563-652-3783.

Rock Creek, Pool 14; Clinton County Conservation Board

Rock Creek Marina and Campground is on the Mississippi River backwaters near the confluence of the Mississippi and Wapsipinicon rivers. It is site of the Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center, home to popular Blue Heron Eco-Cruises.

Enjoy modern and primitive camping, cabin rentals, a camp store, dock rental, boat rentals (flat bottom, canoe, kayak and paddle boats), two boat ramps, bait, hiking, showers, playgrounds, water (camper hookups/adapters) and dump station.

Southwest of Camanche on Highway 67, turn south on 291st Street (at Wendling Quarry) and follow the road to the park. [Mycountyparks.com](http://mycountyparks.com); 563-259-1876.

Centennial Park in Davenport has a multi-lane boat ramp, shoreline fishing, picnic and playground areas and river gazebos. Hike or bike the trail through the park. Let the kids cool off in the spray park or heat up in the skateboard park. Even the family pet can have fun in the off-leash dog park. Exercise on the cricket or rugby fields and basketball court.

Catfish and drum are primary targets from shore up to the casino boat. Above the casino in the tailwater of Lock and Dam 15 are white and smallmouth bass, drum, walleye and sauger.

Boat the tailwater and Sylvan Slough for excellent walleye and sauger fishing. After the catch, take the family to a baseball game at nearby Woodmen Field, home of the Quad City Bandits, ride a Ferris wheel, skate an indoor ice rink or hit the farmers market in the stadium parking lot. LeClaire Park has a band shell with events such as Bluesfest, Ribfest and other cultural events. cityofdavenportiowa.com; 563-328-7275.

Muscatine's Riverside Park features a multi-lane boat ramp, city-owned marina, picnic tables and shelters, walking trail, playground, basketball court and buildings for rent.

Fish here for catfish, drum and an occasional walleye, sauger and white bass at the upper end of the park where Mad Creek enters the river. With a boat, access Lock and Dam 16 tailwaters for walleye, sauger and paddlefish snagging in season.

Several backwaters below Muscatine offer bass, bluegill and crappie. The downtown area is just across the tracks from the park and several restaurants and boutique shops are within easy walking distance.

Downtown, visit the Pearl Button Museum (Muscatinehistory.org; 563-263-1052) to learn about this early 1900s industry that made buttons from freshwater mussel shells captured along the riverfront. muscatineiowa.gov

Burlington's Riverside Park offers a multi-lane boat ramp, riverfront walking trail, visitor's center and picnic tables. Fishing is mostly for catfish and drum.

The riverfront trail leads from the visitor's center upstream under the highway 34 bridge past the iconic Big Muddy's Restaurant (in a former warehouse) to a walkway leading to a concrete piling 75 feet into the river.

With a boat it is an easy run upstream to Lock and Dam 18 for tailwater walleye and sauger, or downstream for backwater fishing in the Burlington Island complex for bass, bluegill, crappie, northern pike and catfish. Soak up some sun by boating over to the sandy beach created by channel dredging.

The visitor's center features local artist showings, craft festivals and farmers market. Take the family for a spin down steep Snake Alley, a cobblestone street with seven curves on one block.

Venture bluffside to Crapo Park for sweeping river views. One block off the way, tour the boyhood home of Aldo Leopold, father of modern conservation.

Other family oriented areas include **Buffalo Shores Park** near Buffalo, with boat ramp, camping and swimming beach. **Fort Madison River Front Park** has a boat ramp, marina, picnic facilities, sand volleyball court, reconstructed fort, flower garden and an old steam engine and railroad museum. Learn more at www.burlingtoniowa.org

Rocks IN THE River

A Father's Reflection on Family Memories

BY HANK KOHLER PHOTOS BY BRIAN STRONER AND COURTESY HANK KOHLER

It is a short drive to the put-in spot. Arm out the window, I watch fields of corn and beans go by, and though few farms grow hay these days, my nose is alert for the chance to smell a recent cutting. I don't understand the physics of sound waves, but I think it's cool that while I'm going down the road at 60 miles per hour, I can clearly hear the song of a blackbird or meadowlark as I pass by.

The canoe is unloaded just above the streambank. On this trip, like many now, I will be alone. Our children, who used to accompany me on these excursions, have grown and moved away. It's a very special day when one can join me, but this time I'm going solo.

The list of what I take—camping gear, fishing equipment, food and drinks—has become routine. I caution myself to never take for granted how special both this place is and how my day will be.

Leaving it all in the canoe, I drive downstream to the take-

out. I've never had anyone bother my stuff while I was gone. Dad told me years ago that if you can't trust a fisherman, who can you trust, and I guess I've been fortunate that only anglers have noticed my unattended supplies.

With the truck at the county park, I mention to the camp host that I will be on the river for the night. I don't want anyone to wonder if someone had trouble upstream.

And so it begins. Since I am now where I will get out tomorrow, I need to pedal my middle-aged mountain bike out of the park, up the hill and back to the canoe. The trip is only about 5 miles, with the last mile-and-a-half an easy, smooth blacktop. The start and longest stretch is gravel, hopefully packed hard, not loose with small drifts of sand.

The incline out of the stream's valley is a bear. Geared way down, I pass trees and fence posts slowly, and then even more slowly. This is my first trip of the year. Did the winter and passing months take too much of a toll? The front wheel wobbles, I hit a stone or two that I should have missed, but I make it. That's good I think. Satisfied

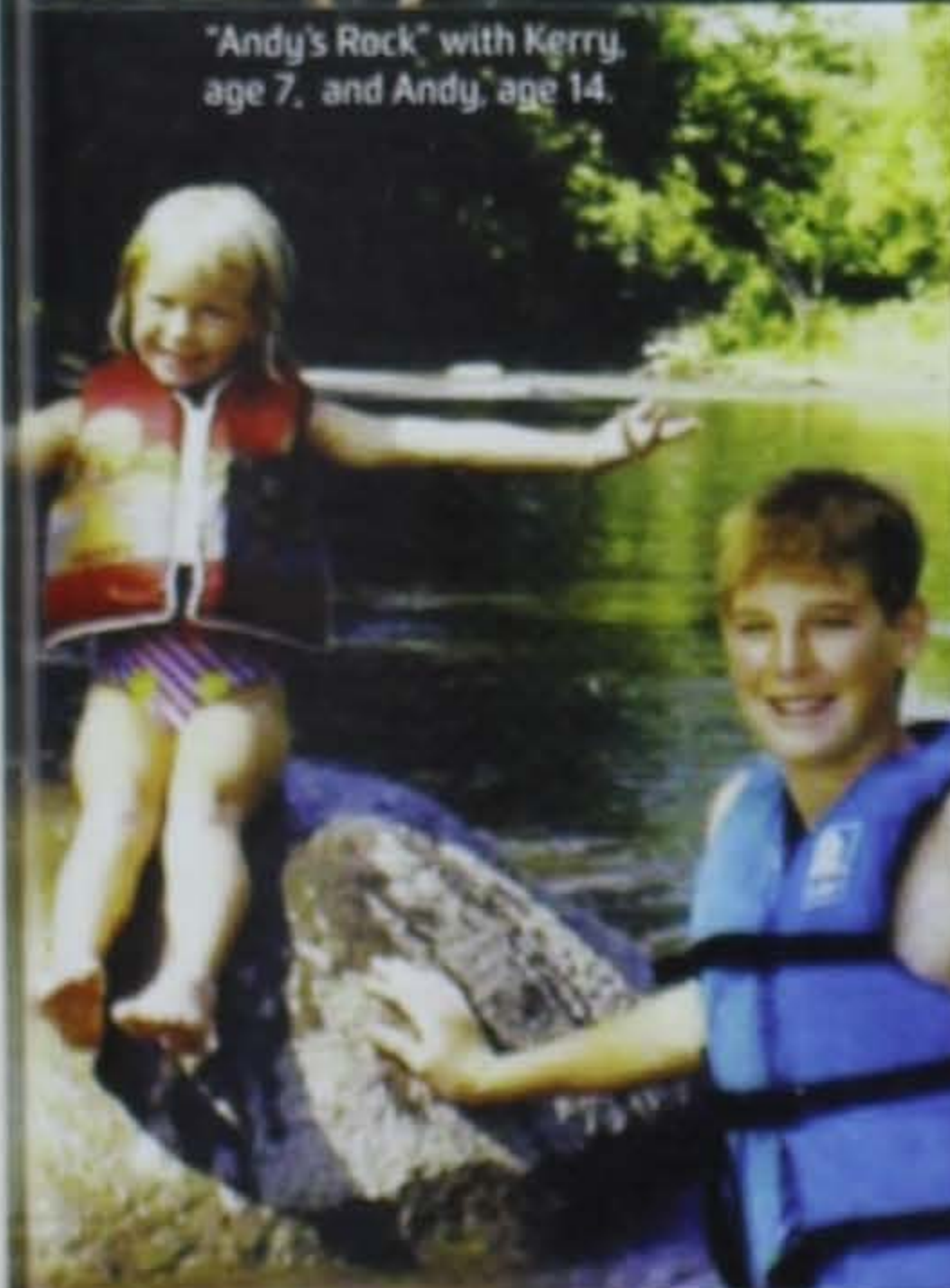




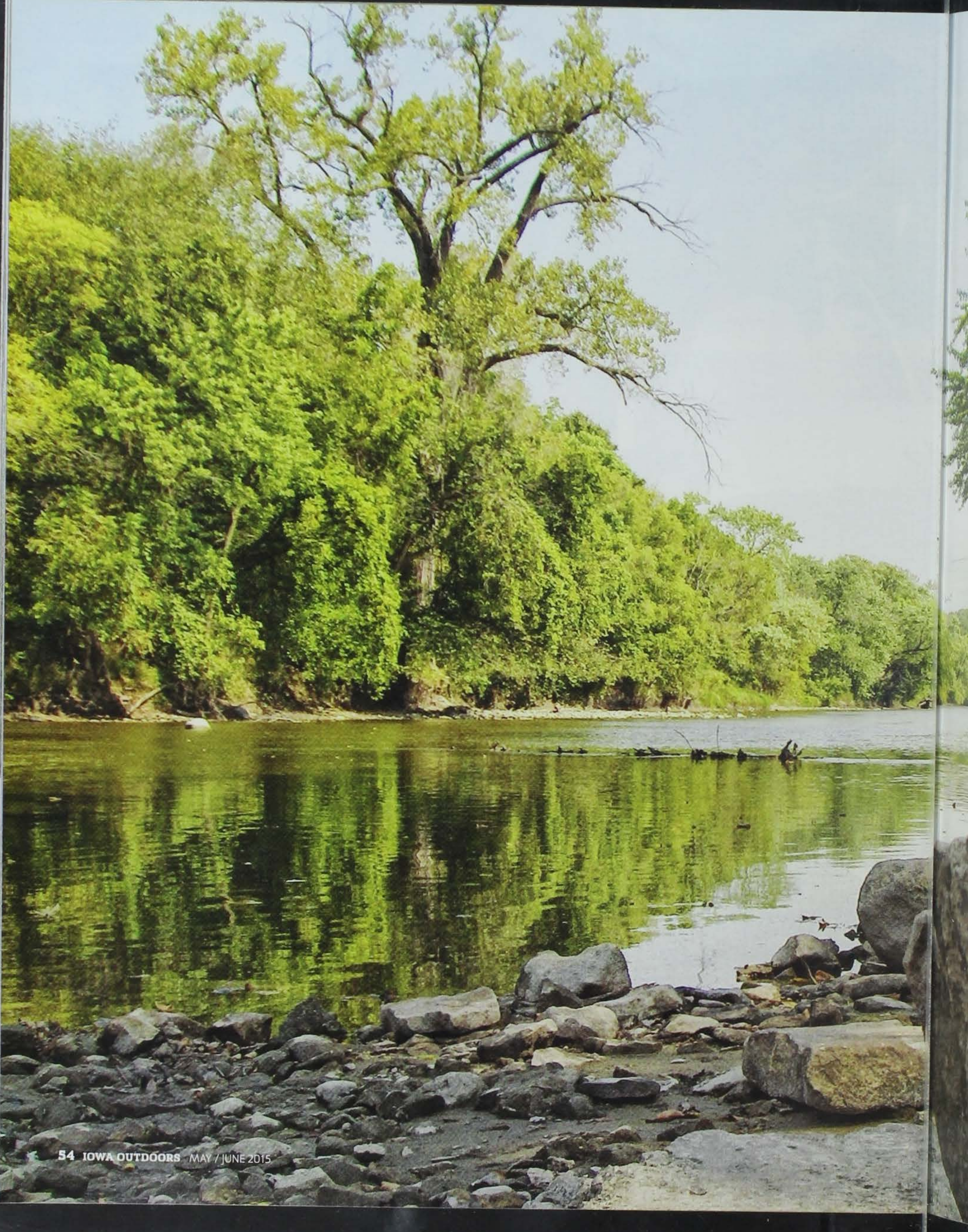
Rocks in the Boone River in Hamilton County provide family memories for the Kohler family of Ames. Upper left, then 8-year-old-daughter Kerry with a catfish she named "Sweet Pea." Below, father and writer Hank with Kerry on "Kerry's Rock" in 1989.




"Andy's Rock" with Kerry, age 7, and Andy, age 14.

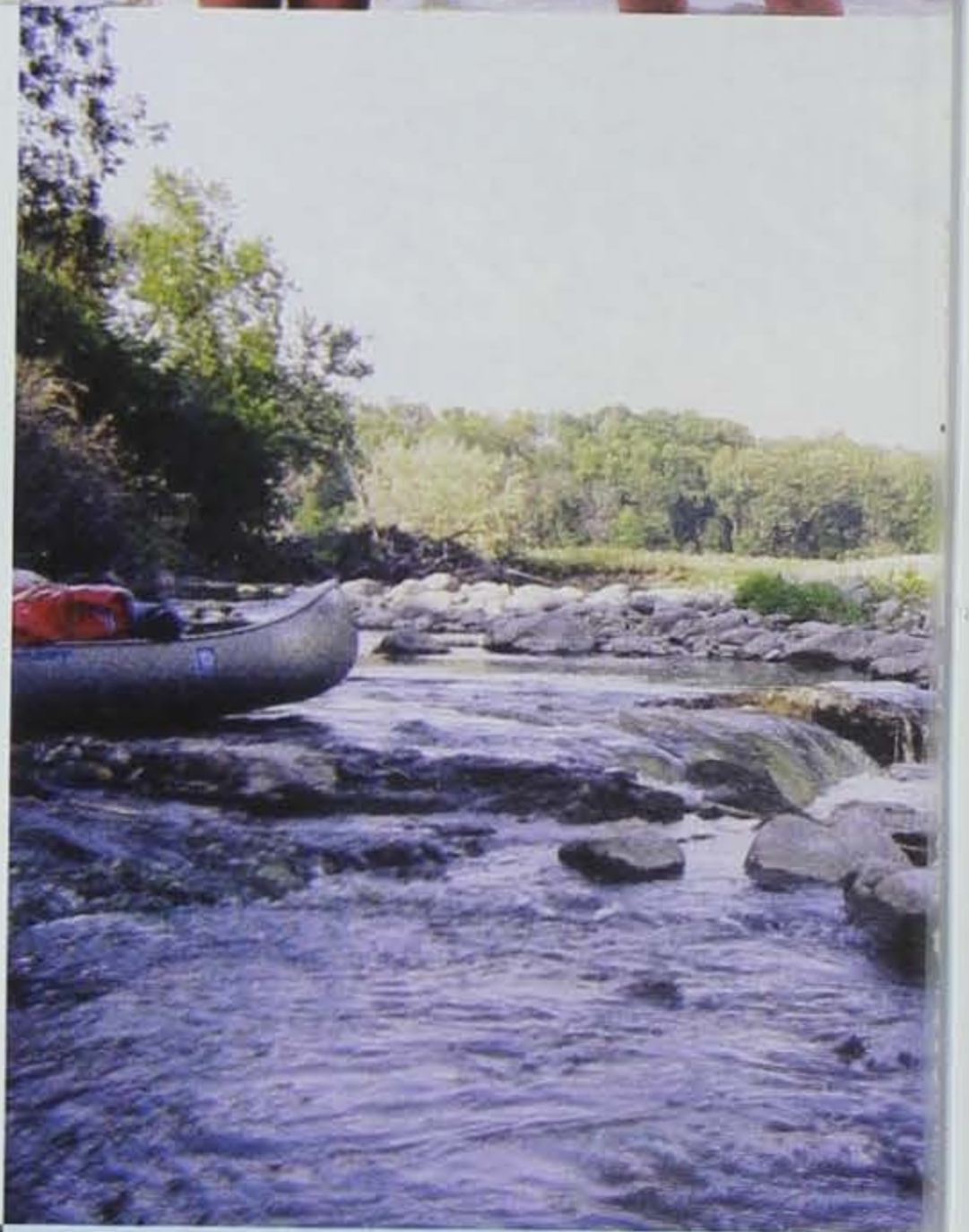
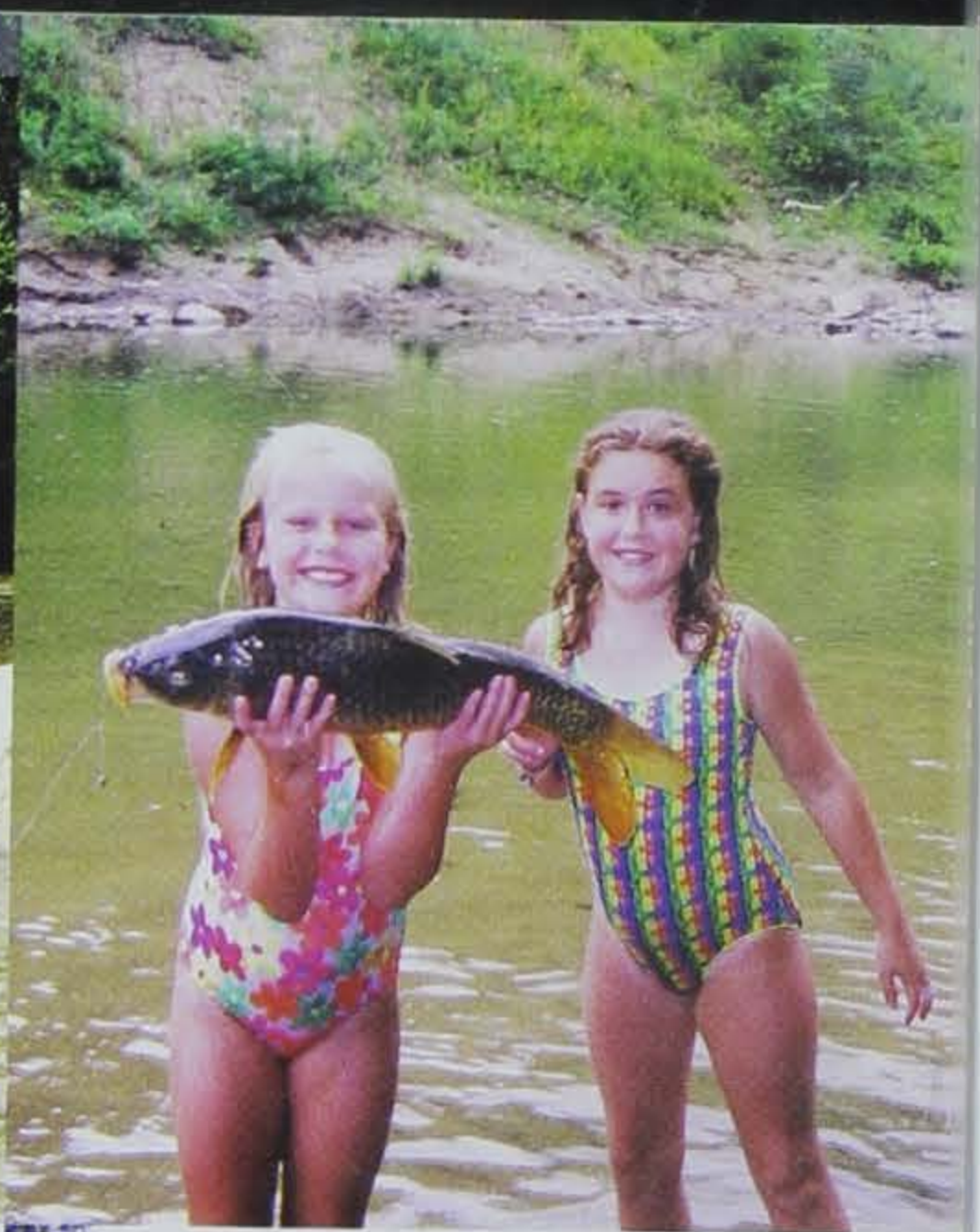
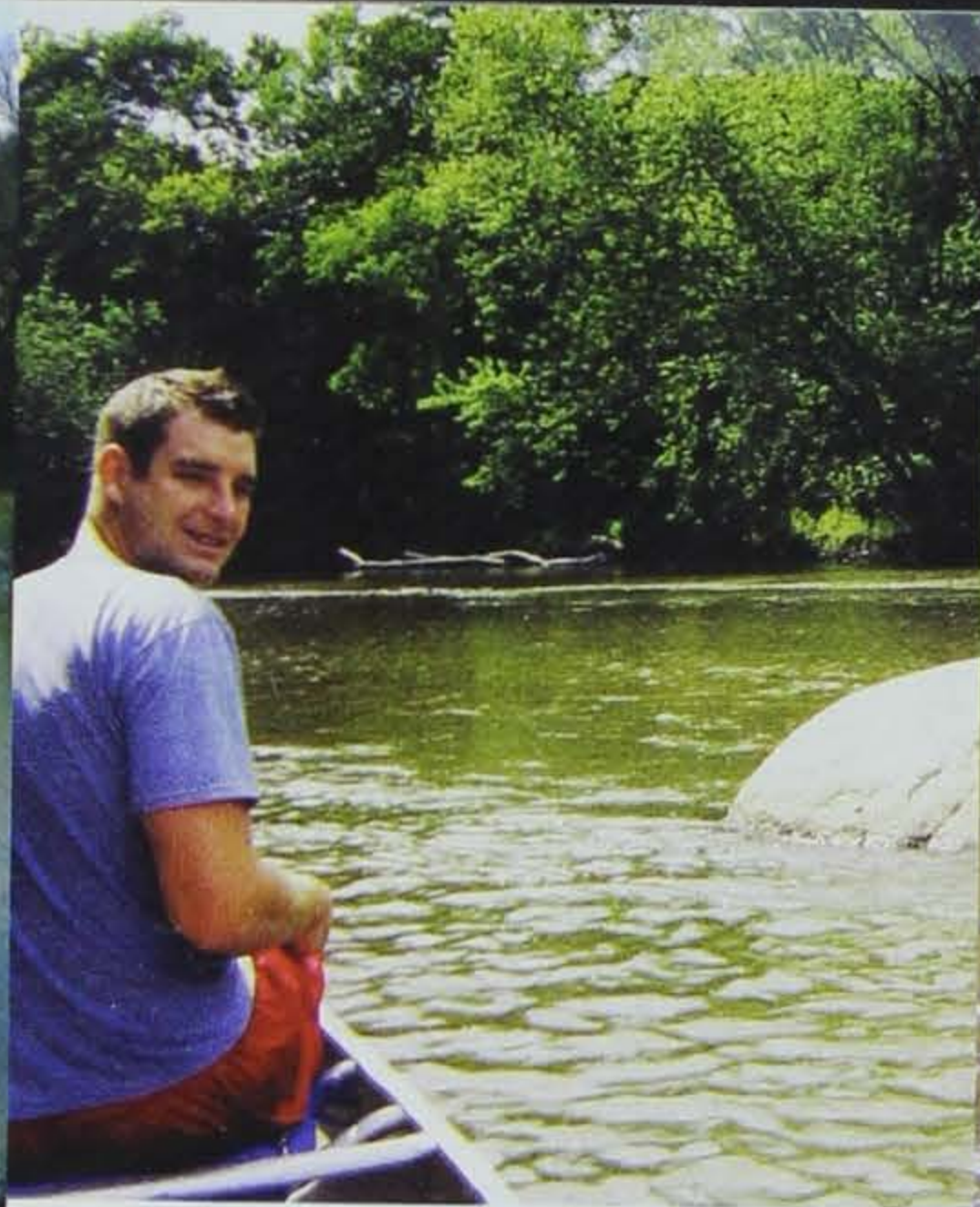
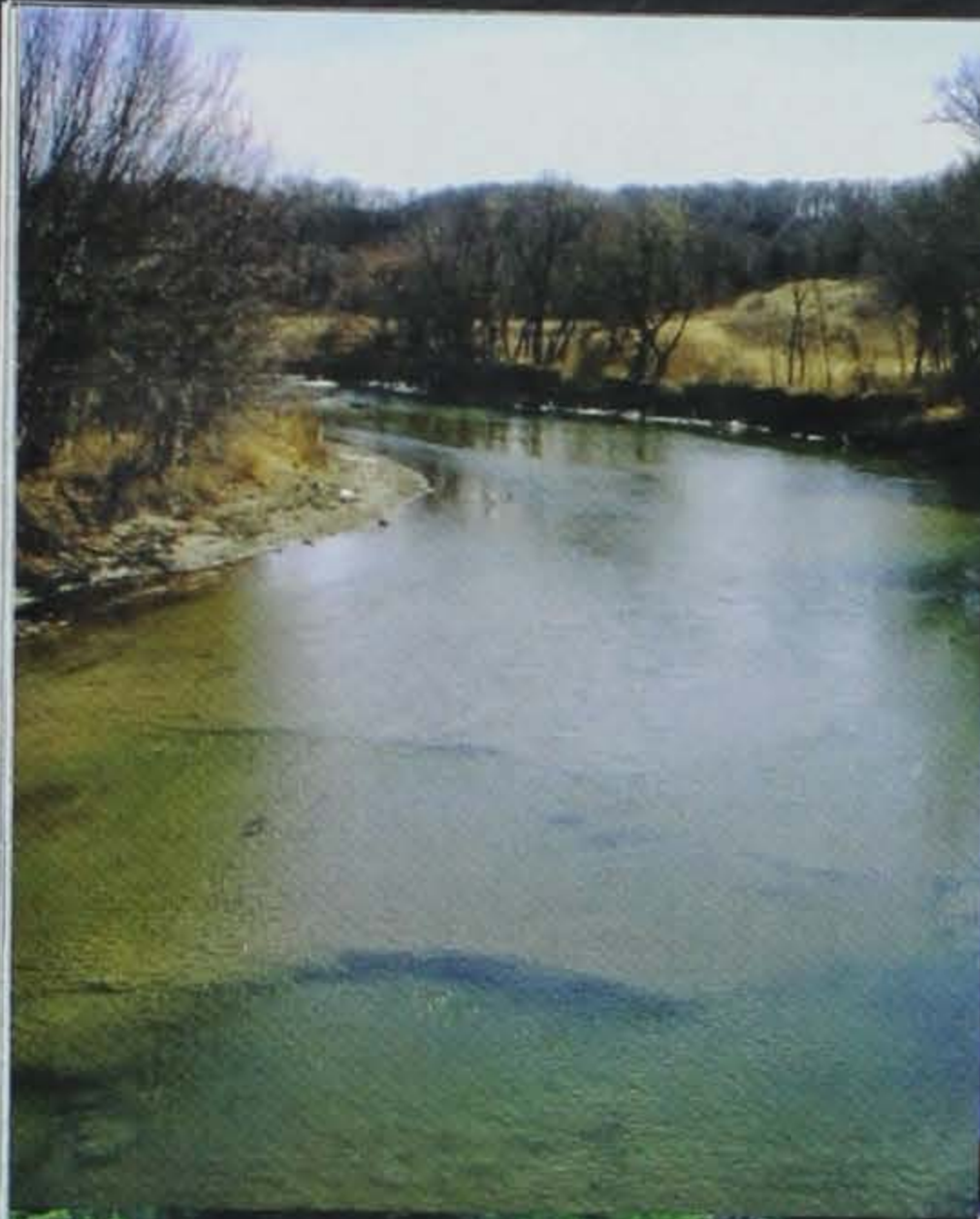


Robyn fishing on a log in 1992 at age 8.

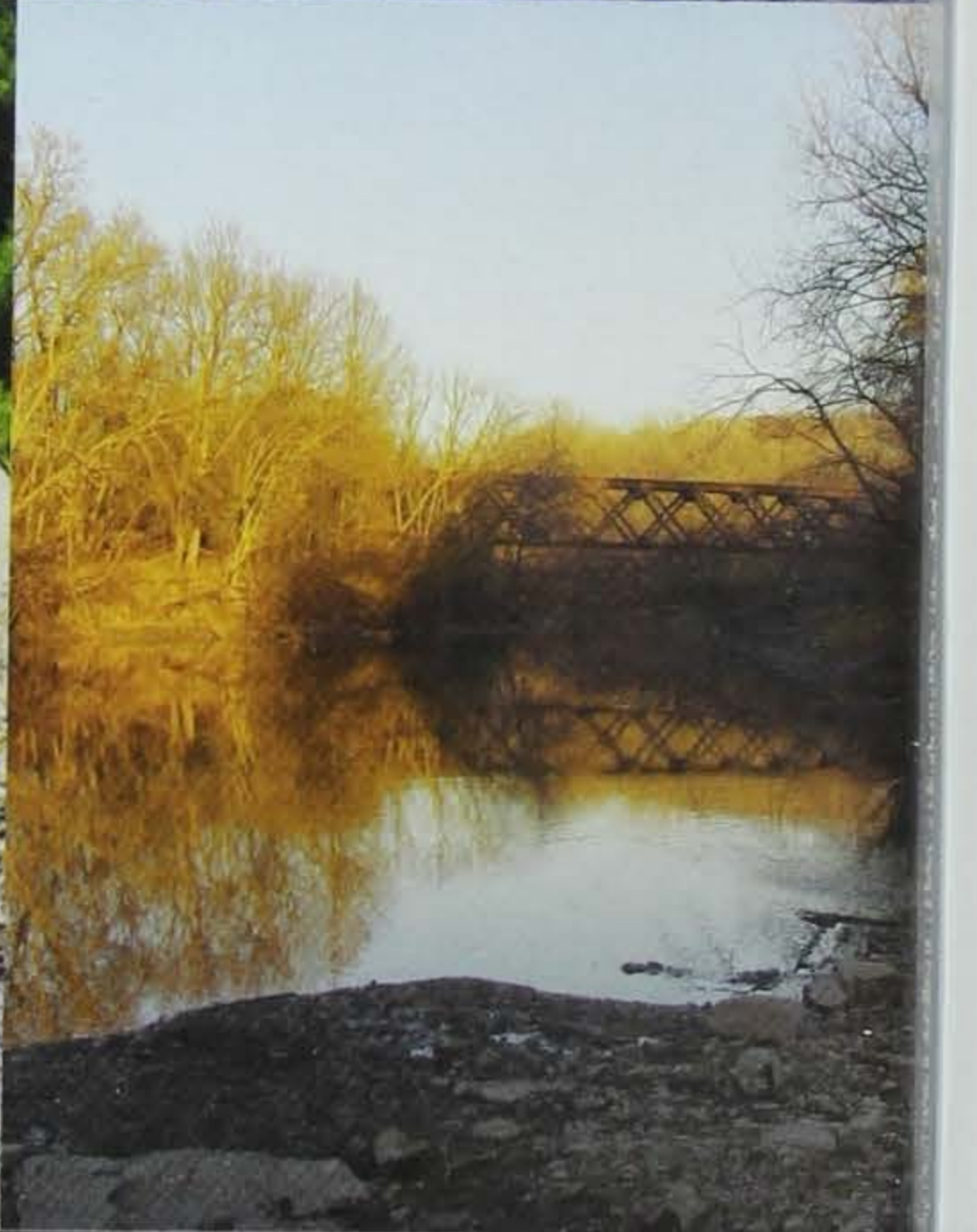
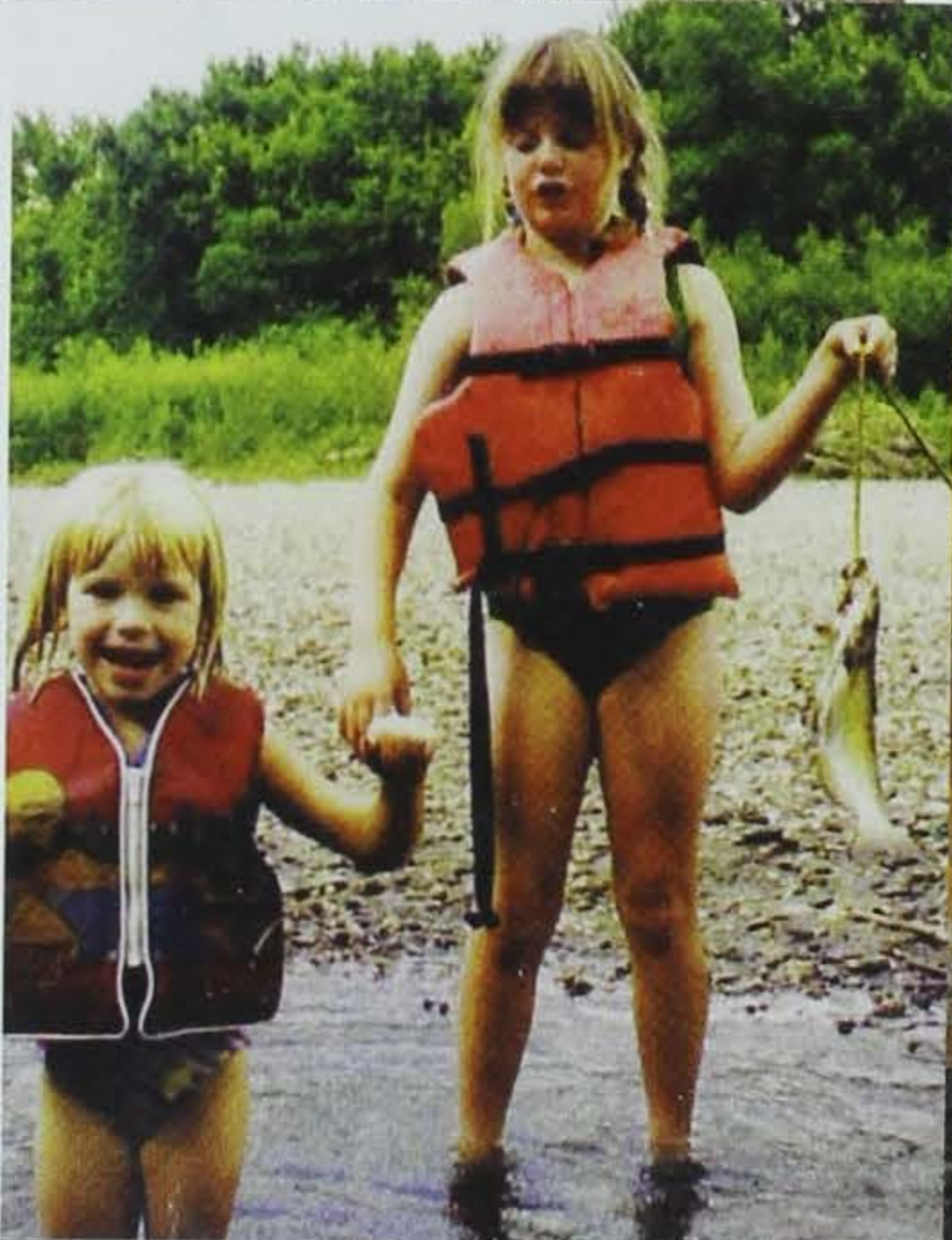




The Boone River valley is part of central Iowa's largest expanse of woodland. The boulder-strewn river formed from meltwater as glaciers receded northward some 13,000 years ago. The broad valley indicates the volume of water was considerably more during the glacial age than today. Shales, siltstones, sandstones, coal and limestone are found along the waterway.



Top center: Andy at age 25 in June 2006. Top right: Kerry, age 9, with friend Gretchen and a fish named "Big Pig." At right, Robyn, age 7, holds a catfish and Kerry, 3, near Robyn's rock.



with my effort, I sing a bar or two of Three Dog Night's "Out in the Country" and head for the canoe.

Once on the river, the first one I meet will be Andy's; Kerry's is the largest. Just past Robyn's is the best place to camp. I will paddle by hundreds of rocks today, but only three will be oh-so special.

The "That rock's mine" tradition started when our son Andy was old enough for a river trip. Asking many questions as kids do, he wanted to know who owned the rocks we passed by. I said they were part of nature, no one had title to them and you couldn't move the big ones if you wanted to. "I'll tell you what," I continued. "Why don't you choose one, call it yours and you can see it every time we come back." Not being particularly patient or picky, he immediately pointed to a boulder in the middle of the river right in front of the canoe. It has been his rock and our barometer to gauge the river level ever since.

That was almost 30 years ago. Our daughters chose their rocks when it came time for their first float. Both were more selective. Decisions that seemed final were changed at the next bend. Short-term favorites were replaced, as if later in life they were trying on shoes or buying a purse. Imagine that.

Passing Andy's rock I notice it is half submerged and I smile. Perfection comes to mind. The ease of the float and chance for good fishing should be just right.

Every time I dip a paddle into the current or slowly drop anchor above a snag that could provide supper, I marvel at the river's beauty. I am sure that a 200-yard hike in either direction would put me in cropland, but I see no fields from my canoe. Instead, I am treated to high green canyons formed by maples, walnuts, cottonwoods and willows. They capture and hold the aroma of stink bait, the whistle of wood ducks and the scolding chatter of kingfishers.

Anchoring across from Kerry's rock, I think of times spent here with my kids. Looking down the river valley is like staring into a kaleidoscope of brightly colored memories. I view friends, family and fish from years past. My children appear of all ages from the first time on the river to the present. I can see their smiles, hear their laughter. Images appear to float on the breeze and current like the cottonwood fluff. Here for a second then drifting away, only to be replaced by another. They cover the canoe, the river and my thoughts with warmth.

A tug on the line jolts me back to the present. The fight is on. It hasn't surfaced like a channel cat or jumped like a smallmouth. It's hooked on my night crawler pole and could be one of a dozen species the stream holds. Not having seen it yet, I enjoy the resistance created by the strength of the fish and current of the river. Hopes of walleye fillets sizzling in the skillet start to rise, but soon I am gently releasing a brilliant scarlet and silver redhorse. Once you get past the lips, this is by far the most beautiful fish in the river. Having kept a few catfish, I watch the up-and-down flight of a red-headed woodpecker as I paddle toward Robyn's rock and a sandbar camp.

Passing by banks filled with nesting swallows, my mind drifts with the current and I start to wonder about the rocks. Where did they come from? How old are they? Compared to their age my entire life is just a wing beat. I try not to, but sometimes I feel my years. I used to sing "Sunshine on my Shoulders" while I paddled shirtless, grateful for the strength I had in the two of mine. Now they throb at times. As I've aged, my body has become

a ledger of additions and subtractions. A new hip and an ankle brace show up on the plus side, while strength, flexibility and the hair that used to adorn my head have all become minuses.

I know that day will come when I won't float the river. And when I can't bike the hill, lift the canoe, raise anchor or paddle the rapids. Yes, that day will come.

But it will not be today!

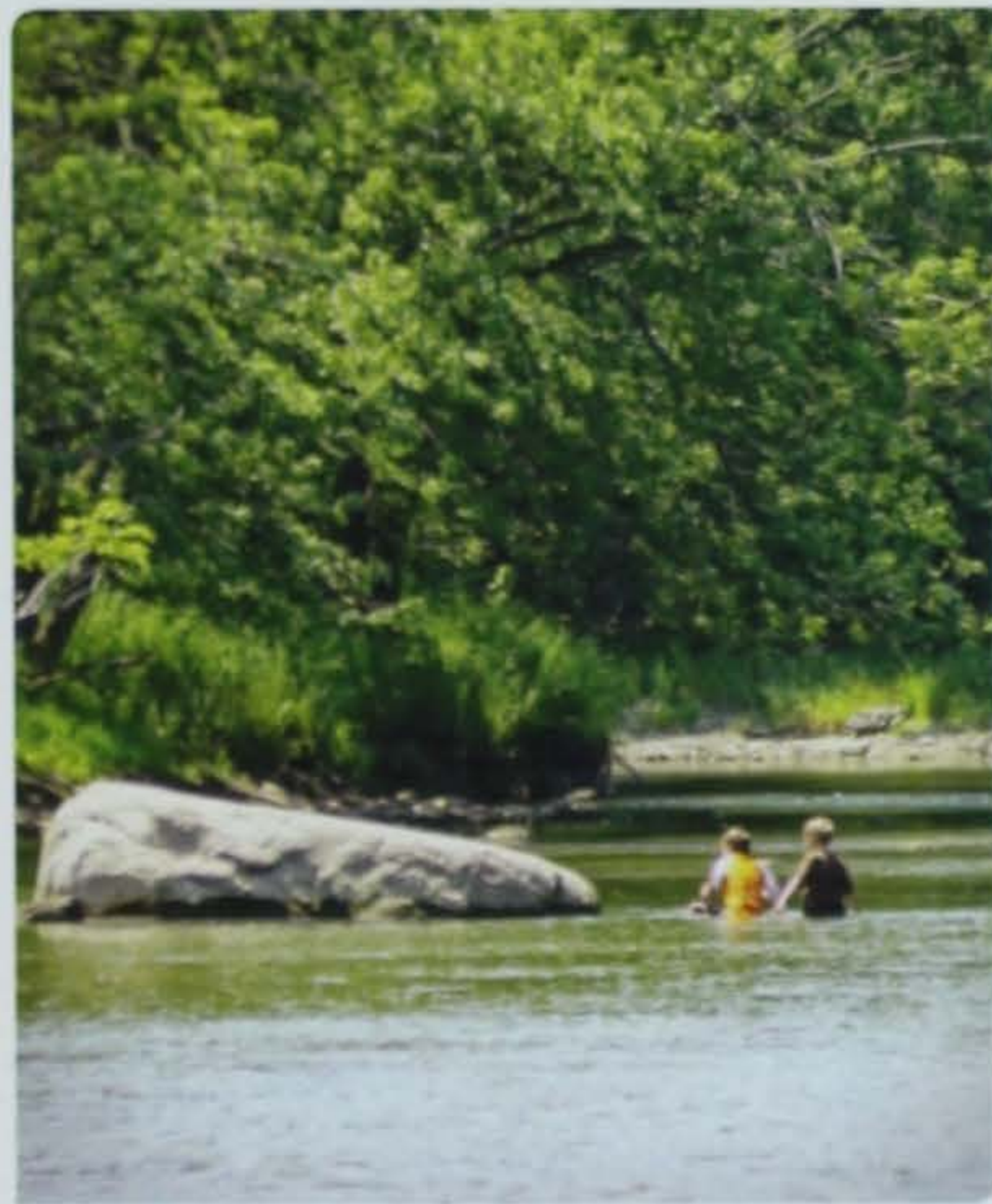
Catfish cleaned, I take a strong stroke. My shoulders hardly ache, and with another stroke they are almost healed. As I approach Robyn's rock, I seem to gain strength with every bend of the river.

Perhaps these are the life-sustaining waters Ponce DeLeon sought so many years ago. Perhaps for me

they are even more special. Immersed in appreciation for what the river has given and still provides, I start to sing ELO's "Mr. Blue Sky" when I see them. Up ahead in the shallows are three children laughing, splashing, skipping stones. Their magical aberration calls to me, "Put in here Dad, we've been waiting. Camp's set up."

Paddle at rest, the current alone guides me to shore.

Through the portal of time.
Past the rocks in the river. 🐟



BY BRIAN BUTTON

SIMPLE PET-FRIENDLY STEPS TO REDUCE WILDLIFE MORTALITY



Domestic cats are non-native predators, and based on numerous studies, kill staggering numbers of songbirds nationally every year. Estimates range from 1.4 billion to 3.7 billion birds killed per year, and 7 to 20 billion mammals annually, according to studies by

the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Smithsonian's Migratory Bird Center. Felines are a top three cause of declining bird populations, along with habitat loss and collisions with buildings. The solution? Keep kitty indoors. And the benefits aren't just "for the birds"—cats benefit too.

Keeping cats indoors is one of the best ways to ensure a long, healthy life for your pet, say veterinarians. Indoor cats live longer, safe from bites and wounds from other roaming cats, dogs, wild animals and injury from automobiles. They have reduced exposure to rabies, infectious



Ideas for Creating Safe, Outdoor Cat Enclosures

- Use lattice or screened enclosures
- Use pvc pipes for framing and cover with netting or screen with wire
- Attach brackets off top of privacy fences to attach screen, wire or netting enclosure
- Modify a dog kennel
- Add a litter box, water bowls and sleeping areas to existing screened-in porches
- Purchase an outdoor pet gazebo or cat playpen available online from pet stores, Walmart, Amazon and other retailers

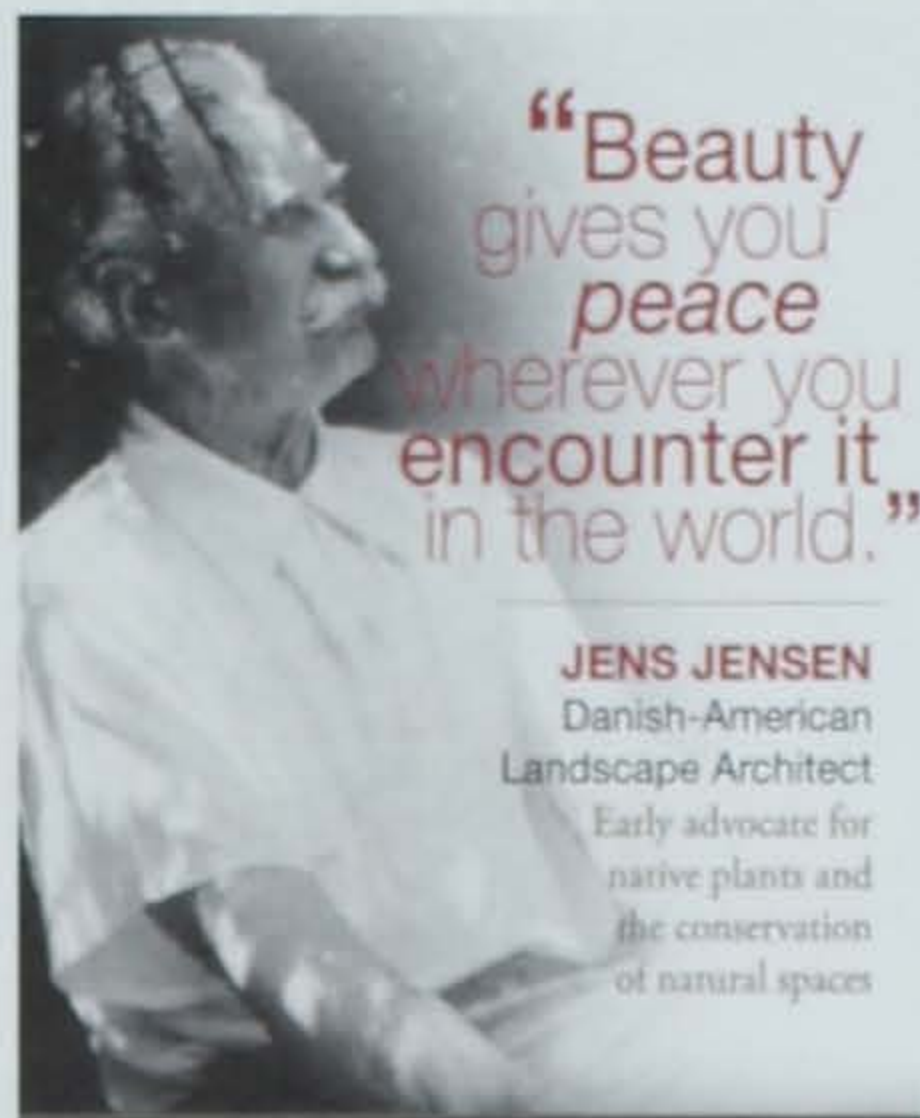
diseases, parasites and poisoning from engine antifreeze and other outdoor chemicals.

While some cat owners put a bell on the cat to "warn birds," studies show cats learn to stalk without jingling the bell and that regardless, birds fail to equate a tinkling bell with danger—it simply isn't a warning birds identify.

Another misconception among cat owners is that their pet just "toys" with songbirds, then releases them harmlessly. But evidence shows internal organ damage or infection from bites and scrapes (cat saliva contains bacteria and viruses) dooms 80 percent of birds that "escape." A "kittycam" study by the University of Georgia and National Geographic shows cats prone to targeting songbirds average one kill every 17 hours. It also shows just 23 percent of prey items are returned to homeowners, 49 percent are left at the site of capture and 28 percent are consumed. "Our results suggest that previous studies of pet cat predation on wildlife using owner surveys significantly underestimated capture rates of hunting cats," note the researchers.

Tips for Safe Outdoor Areas for Housecats and Wildlife

For cat owners that wish to safely give their pet time outdoors without inflicting damage to songbirds, use homemade or purchased patio-like "catios." These areas contain pets outdoors, safe from other animals, while allowing them to sun. Owners can purchase kits or make DIY cat enclosures from materials such as hardware cloth, screens, chicken wire or other materials. Some enclosures are small, simple and portable, while others are over-the-top, ornate "catios" with elevated runs that connect to a window to allow cats the freedom to go to their screened enclosures whenever desired. If the unit is outdoors, ensure adequate water and shade. Add a removable litter box. Some owners add vertical structures such as limbs for cats that enjoy climbing or sunning shelves with sleeping baskets. Some grow catnip and other plants that cats like to nibble on. Simplest option of course, is just a nice soft spot in front of a cat's favorite window.



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JENS JENSEN
Danish-American
Landscape Architect
Early advocate for
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Wild Cuisine CAMPSIDE

BY ALAN FOSTER PHOTO BY CLAY SMITH



Lay the lid over a bed of coals and preheat for 10 minutes. When a drop of water dances on the surface, the lid is ready. If the water steams, it's too cold. If it quickly fizzes away, it's too hot. Above: squash cooks on a hot lid.

Indian Fry Bread

Just because you left the frying pan at home on your weekend camping getaway doesn't mean you have to scrap dinner plans. A Dutch oven lid doubles nicely as a frying pan.

Virtually everything cooked in a normal frying pan can be cooked on a Dutch oven lid. Deeper, lipped lids double nicely as a deep fryer. Flat lids work well as a griddle. Lids are actually healthier too, since they are seasoned, less cooking oil is needed. Use your favorite pancake recipe to make perfect campground flapjacks. Fried veggies turn out crispy and golden without using excess oil or butter. Dredge sliced zucchini or summer squash in seasoned flour, then egg wash followed by crushed cracker crumbs and fry. Do the same with spring morels. Sandwich sautéed pheasant breast, cheese, salsa and avocado between two tortillas for a perfect quesadilla. Pizzas turn out crispy on a Dutch oven lid, especially

if done in a covered grill. Indian fry bread puffs up crispy and light without soaking up excess oil. Follow the recipe below for a sweet or savory campground treat.

INDIAN FRY BREAD

4 cups flour
2 tablespoons baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
2 cups warm water

Mix dry ingredients in a bowl. Slowly add water to create a soft but not sticky dough. Knead for five minutes. Let rest for 30 minutes. Break off egg-sized balls and roll out to 8 to 12 inches. Cut a hole in the center to prevent excessive puffiness. Fry until golden, about three minutes per side. Top with honey, cinnamon sugar, jam or powdered sugar for a sweet treat. Use as a crust for pizza, tostados or Navajo tacos using your favorite toppings.



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Rathbun Lakeshore Grille

A quick glance at the Rathbun Lakeshore Grille menu reads like any typical eatery. Hot wings. Caesar Salad. Pizza. Pasta. Steak. Burgers. But you don't have to read far to realize this is no ordinary restaurant. This popular Honey Creek Resort State Park eatery overlooks Rathbun Lake and specializes in hearty Midwestern fare with distinctive Iowa flare. Wings glazed with Cookies barbecue sauce. Des Moines' Graziano sausage in the penne pasta. Restaurant produce grown in Centerville at Country Roads Produce. Cobb salad, Iowa style, with roasted sweet corn and Maytag blue cheese. Many offerings don't hide their Iowa connection—the Honey Creek, Rolling

Cove, Iconium, Rathbun, Mystic, Island View—all named for small towns or area attractions.

With 45 years experience, executive chef Bob Newell's passion is providing the "best possible dining experience" and customer service. His philosophy is getting to know his customers and serving them what they like. Catch a mess of fish in the lake and "Chef Bob," will cook it for you. Describe a past special offered just once months before and he will recreate it. Need gluten free or vegetarian? It's his specialty—a testament to 22 years with health care cuisine. Want to learn tricks of the trade? Schedule or attend one of his



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numerous cooking demonstrations.

Reservations recommended, as typical weekend nights spring through summer see 300 guests. Hours are: Breakfast, Monday-Saturday, 7-11 a.m., followed by lunch until 2 p.m. Dinner is Sunday through Thursday, 5-9 p.m. and Friday and Saturday 5-10 p.m. Sunday breakfast buffet is 7-11 a.m., followed by Sunday brunch, which includes breakfast buffet, until 2 p.m. 12633 Resort Drive, Moravia, IA 52571; 641-724-1430. Honeycreekresort.com

BAKED TROUT FLORENTINE

4 whole fresh trout, cleaned
 2 cups spinach, chopped
 1 1/4 cups bread crumbs
 1 cup Riesling or white wine
 1/4 cup dry sherry
 1/4 cup olive oil
 1/4 cup fresh chopped sautéed mushrooms
 1 cup drained and chopped artichokes
 1/2 cup chopped fresh asparagus
 1/4 cup chopped green onions

1/2 cup skim milk
 2 teaspoons melted butter
 1 teaspoon olive oil
 1 teaspoon lemon juice
 1 teaspoon each salt and pepper

Sauté green onions, mushrooms and asparagus in oil until they begin to soften. Add sherry and stir. Add spinach and artichokes. Cook two minutes or until spinach wilts. Remove from heat and add bread crumbs, milk and lemon juice. Mix well. Wash trout and pat dry. Stuff each with 1/4 of the spinach mixture. Combine wine, pepper and butter in a pan and bring to boil. Turn off and set aside. Place trout on baking pan. Brush with wine mixture and cook, basting occasionally. Trout are done when opaque and flakes easily.

BRONZED CATFISH WITH SHRIMP AND GOUDA CHEESE SAUCE
 SAUCE
 1/4 cup flour

2 cups 2 percent milk
 3/4 cup shredded smoke Gouda cheese

Sprinkle flour into a medium, heavy sauce pan. Gradually add milk, whisking until blended. Place over medium heat and cook until thick, about eight minutes, stirring constantly. Remove from heat, stirring until melted.

CATFISH

1/4 cup flour
 3 tablespoons Cajun seasoning
 2 8-ounce ounces catfish fillets
 2 tablespoons olive oil
 6 peeled and deveined shrimp

Mix together flour and seasoning on a plate. Season catfish with salt and pepper, then dredge in flour. Heat oil in skillet to medium heat. Add catfish and fry until golden brown, about three minutes per side. Add shrimp and cook two to three minutes. Plate fish and top with sauce, then shrimp.

Warden's Diary

BY ERIKA BILLERBECK



Whopper!

It's a good thing I'm a sucker for a good story, because I hear my fair share. Many are excuses, sob stories and wild tales told to distract me from the task at hand.

Sometimes it seems like the most important part of my job is simply sorting fact from fiction. When does an officer call BS? Is the person completely fibbing, or is there some truth? I've found there are different categories: complete whopper, partial falsification and the very rare absolute truth. Whether an officer believes a person's story comes down to previous experience. Unfortunately, for the typical officer, his or her previous experience probably does not make for the most trusting audience. The other day when I was driving through North Liberty and heard a call of a "suspicious naked man in a van," I knew I wouldn't be able to drive by without "helping" the local police sort out what was sure to be one interesting story.

When I arrived, two officers were standing near an old Toyota van with Arizona license plates. The vehicle was parked in someone's backyard under a shade tree.

One of the officers was talking to a young woman. The woman was wearing an ankle length, wraparound skirt. She had piercing green eyes and rat's nest hair.

As I listened to her strange story, I kept my eye on the other officer who was standing at the passenger side of the van, speaking with a shirtless (except for a strange quilted vest) man who I assumed to be the "suspicious naked man in a van," though he was no longer naked if he ever had been. The man was very thin and had bushy black hair standing out in frizzled curls, a straggly black goatee and dark eyes. Aside from the vest, he also sported a pair of burlap pants barely held up by a drawstring.

The woman told us her name was Daina, and her

husband was Thiago. The story goes they had just returned to the mainland from Hawaii. In Hawaii, Thiago had been living in an eco-village called Cinderland, which was run by a man named Jesus Cinderland. Producers from the National Geographic channel decided to film a series about the eco-villagers. The show was about villagers constructing an ark due to Cinderland's vision of a coming flood. So Thiago was paid to be part of the TV series which was yet to air. Daina met Thiago during that time and shortly thereafter married.

Daina went into detailed description of their religious beliefs. The very short version, using Daina's terminology, is they had both been "New Age" before becoming "Born Again" Christians. Now their mission was to convert "hippies" from "New Age" to "Born Again." Still following? Now you know how I felt.

Daina and Thiago returned to the mainland and decided to set off on a journey to Utah for a "Rainbow Gathering" in the Uinta National Forest. Daina, likely seeing the confused expression on my face, explained that Rainbow Gatherings consist of a bunch of "New Agers" who sometimes smoke marijuana, play guitars and make friends. Because this young couple had stopped smoking marijuana and changed their religious beliefs a couple months prior, and therefore no longer fit the mold of the typical Rainbower, their goal was to use the Utah gathering as a mission trip.

Daina told us she placed an ad on Facebook to try to find a vehicle they could borrow for the summer. The ad was answered by a stranger named Tony, who said he had a van located in Indiana. Tony offered it for free if they would eventually return it to him in Sedona, Ariz., where he was starting a new church. After renting a car to get

from Florida to Indiana, they picked up the van from the address Tony had given them (where the van was waiting for them—keys already in the ignition). They had been travelling across I-80, then I-380 before taking their current break in North Liberty, where they sought rest in the shade of the tree.

From an officer's admittedly cynical prospective, the story was thus far a wee bit hard to believe. We expressed our doubts, our concerns, based on the popular trafficking route from the Midwest to Arizona, that there could possibly be drugs or money stashed inside the van, which they might not even be aware of.

Daina and Thiago understood our concerns and agreed we should do whatever necessary to quench our curiosity. They harbored no doubts that in the end, the van would be clean. They felt Tony wouldn't put them up to something so bad. Clearly they were more trusting than us.

The officers requested a K-9. When he arrived, the dog jumped out of the squad car, walked over to the van and immediately "hit," detecting the scent of drugs or money, by sitting down near the rear of the van. The handler walked him to the front of the van where the K-9 became so excited he didn't merely sit... he belly crawled under the van where he finally laid down in his attempt to indicate.

We searched the van but didn't find a thing. The officers requested the assistance of a drug task force. Thiago and Daina insisted we take the van to a lift so the underside could be searched. The task force pulled side panels,

sniffed air from the spare tire and pulled up carpet only to come up empty-handed. Eventually, they gave up. Either the money and/or drugs were too well hidden, or the dog "hit" on something that had been in the van prior to our arrival. We thanked the couple and sent them on their way.

I returned home and told my husband of the ridiculous story I had heard. Yeah right, like these people were really going to be on the National Geographic channel, and they "borrowed" a van to go to a Rainbow Gathering where they planned on spreading "the word" to a bunch of "hippies." This was definitely a complete whopper if I'd ever heard one.

But then, just before crawling into bed that night, I couldn't help myself. I checked Facebook. There I found Daina and Thiago's pages. I found their ad for the van as well as Tony's response. I Googled "National Geographic Cinderland Jezus Ark" and was taken to the National Geographic Channel website, where it described a new show called "The Ark" featuring eco-villagers attempting to construct an ark. And a few days later, I watched a local Utah news station online talk about various arrests made at the Rainbow Gathering and the mess left behind in the Uinta Mountains.

OK...so maybe from now on I will be more trusting, less cynical and more prone to believe the stories people tell me. Then again, let's not get carried away. I'd forgotten about the category "Too crazy to be made up." I decided just to file this one under "partial falsification" and call it good. 🐾



BY JESSIE ROLPH BROWN

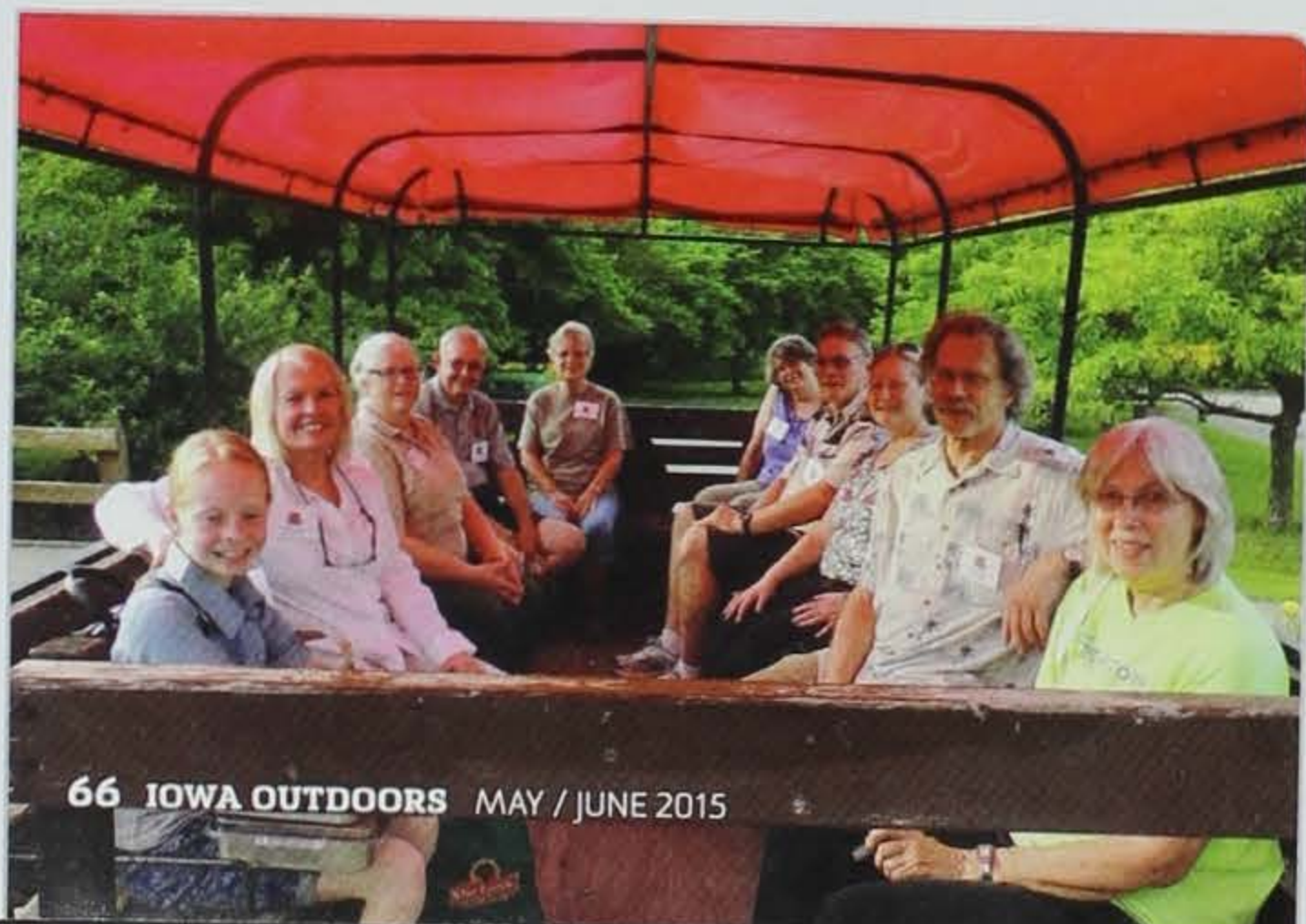
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THE PARK BUILT UPON A ROCK

FRIENDS OF CEDAR ROCK

Group works to protect and preserve significant architecture in an Iowa state park

"This is really a unique park. We don't really have parks dedicated to someone's house and architecture," says Jerry Reisinger, retired DNR state parks supervisor and director of Friends of Cedar Rock. The group of 40 history and architecture aficionados has worked since 2003 to protect and preserve Cedar Rock, a unique home built along the Wapsipinicon River in the 1940s by legendary architect Frank Lloyd Wright. Donated by original owners Lowell and Agnes Walter in 1981, the house's interior design—all furniture, carpets, draperies and accessories were chosen by Wright himself—remains intact. "All those originals are still there. It's truly like it's been mothballed from day one," says Reisinger. And that's what draws Wright followers and architecture buffs from around northeast Iowa, like fundraising director Carl Thurman, to the friends group. "We need to preserve the heritage and architectural history," says Thurman, who has photographed all of Wright's buildings in the U.S. "This house was built to be at the cutting edge of modern architecture in the 1940s, but it's still fascinating people." However, 60-some years will take a toll on even the best maintained homes. Wright also designed a boat house for the Walters along the Wapsi, complete with office space and bunks above the boat storage. Wright only designed a handful of these river pavilions, and not all were built, making the boat house architecturally significant. In need of restoration—especially the masonry—the friends group set out to raise \$16,000 to help with repairs. Now they're nearing their revised goal of \$160,000. "To raise all the money is a pretty significant benchmark for us," says Allison York, the group's president. "With a historical property, there's always something that needs fixing or preserving." The group also helps draw attention to the park through events like Strawberry Moon, visitors' only chance each year to see the house lit up at night; home tours; river float trips; and the annual Afternoon With Frank Lloyd Wright, featuring guest speakers lecturing on Wright and architecture. "The restoration of the river pavilion is a project that would not be in the works without the dedication of the Friends of Cedar Rock," says park staff Katie Hund. "Cedar Rock is incredibly lucky to have such a dedicated and loyal group to support this unique example of Wright's Usonian architecture."



66 IOWA OUTDOORS MAY / JUNE 2015

MONARCH HABITAT TAKES WING

HIGHLAND ELEMENTARY, WATERLOO

School teams with prairie center to provide critical monarch habitat



The bright wings of the monarch come to mind for many Iowans when they hear the word butterfly—but drastically declining populations mean that some young Iowans have never seen the once widespread colorful insect. After reading an article on the monarchs' plight and noticing the lack of butterflies in her area, Waterloo kindergarten teacher Elaine Brown wanted to do something—her school, Highland Elementary, had a prairie, after all—so she called Dave Williams at the University of Northern Iowa's Tallgrass Prairie Center. Williams helped students create and seed the 1-acre prairie back in 2007, and today, he grows 500 butterfly milkweed and 500 swamp milkweed plants to attract monarchs. Milkweed plants—once widespread on the Iowa prairie but now also declining—are critical habitat for monarchs, as monarch caterpillars feed only on milkweed, and monarchs lay eggs only on milkweed. As an Earth Day project last year, more than 500 Highland students planted the young milkweeds and listened to Williams speak about monarch biology and milkweed. "We're getting schools to think about native vegetation and pollinators. Many kids don't get the opportunity to see these plants first-hand," says Williams. "It would be a huge loss if we lost monarchs. We have the opportunity to restore these little patches and use it as an educational platform." Other schools took notice of the Highland effort, and an Eagle Scout project to restore the Peet Junior High prairie in Cedar Falls followed, along with other school prairie plantings in Cedar Falls and Janesville, and near the Denver Public Library. Calls have come in from as far as Des Moines. The Highland students tied the event to classroom work on butterflies, and Brown hopes to soon use the prairie to study the butterfly life cycle first-hand. "We want to increase the habitat so we can study natural butterflies," she says. "Just knowing that we're trying to do our part to bring monarchs back—I like exposing the kids to thinking about how to help the environment."

CEDAR ROCK PHOTO COURTESY JERRY REISINGER; MONARCH PHOTO COURTESY ELAINE BROWN
PHOTOS FROM WIKIMEDIA COMMONS BY MICHAEL RUBES

Clever Carnivorous Bladderworts

UTRICULARIA, collectively called bladderworts, are carnivorous plants consisting of approximately 233 species. They occur in fresh water as aquatic species and terrestrial species in marshy areas across every continent except Antarctica and are cultivated for their flowers, which resemble those of orchids and snapdragons. The name bladderwort refers to its bladder-like traps or utricles. *Utricularia* is derived from a Latin word commonly meaning "wine flask" or "leather bottle." Aquatic members have the largest bladders, initially thought to be flotation aids before discovery of their carnivorous function.

PLANT STRUCTURE

Certain plants might produce closed, self-pollinating flowers; but the same plant or species might produce open, insect-pollinated flowers elsewhere or at a different time of year with no obvious pattern.

They grow in moist soils poor in dissolved minerals, where their carnivorous nature gives them an advantage. In Iowa, fens are likely areas.

ODDLY BUILT

Bladderworts are highly specialized, not clearly separated into roots, leaves and stems. (Most of the plant is below soil or water.) They have the most sophisticated carnivorous trapping mechanism of any plants on Earth.

FEED ME!

All *Utricularia* are carnivorous and capture small organisms using the bladder as a suction trap. Terrestrial species have tiny traps (0.2 mm to 1.2 cm) for minute prey such as protozoa and rotifers swimming in a water-saturated Iowa fen. Aquatic species, such as common bladderwort, have larger traps able to capture daphnia (water fleas), nematodes, fish fry, mosquito larvae and small tadpoles.



SUBSURFACE PLANT

The main parts of bladderworts lie beneath the water or soil. Terrestrial species may produce a few leaf-shoots flat against the soil, but in all species only the flowering stems rise above and are prominent. Land species are generally visible only when flowering.

INSIDE THE TRAP

Prey is dissolved by digestive secretions often within a few hours. All the time, the trap walls continue to pump out water, and the bladder can be reset in as little as 15 to 30 minutes.

SMALL, SOPHISTICATED TRAP

The bladder trap, when "set," is under negative pressure, and when triggered, the prey and surrounding water is sucked inside and the door closes—as fast as one hundredth of a second. Water is constantly pumped out the bladder walls to suck the walls inward by the partial vacuum. That energy is stored like a spring.

Extending outwards from the trap are long stiff bristles, or trigger hairs, that act as levers. When prey bump into them, the levers deform the flexible door, creating a tiny break in the seal. The walls instantly spring back; the door flies open and a column of water is sucked inside along with the prey.

Over the trap entrance is a flexible oval flap. A soft membrane called the velum stretches to form a seal. A second band of springy cells cross the door to provide a bendable "lip" for a watertight seal along with cells that excrete a sugary mucous to help form the seal and attract prey.

The trap is surrounded by antennae to guide prey animals to the entrance and protect the trap from springing uselessly from larger bodies.

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PHOTO BY JAKE ZWEIBOHMER

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