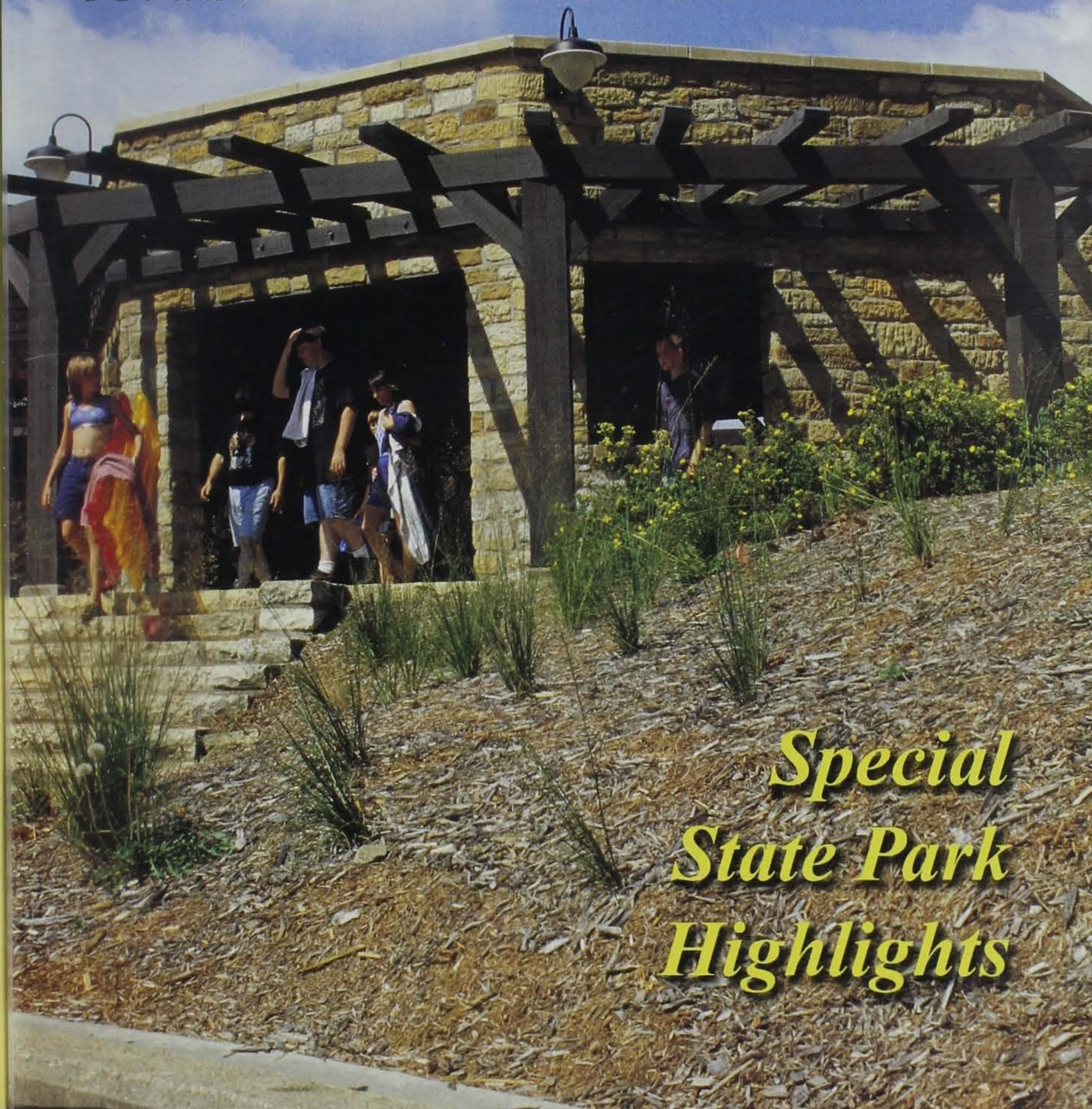


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IOWA

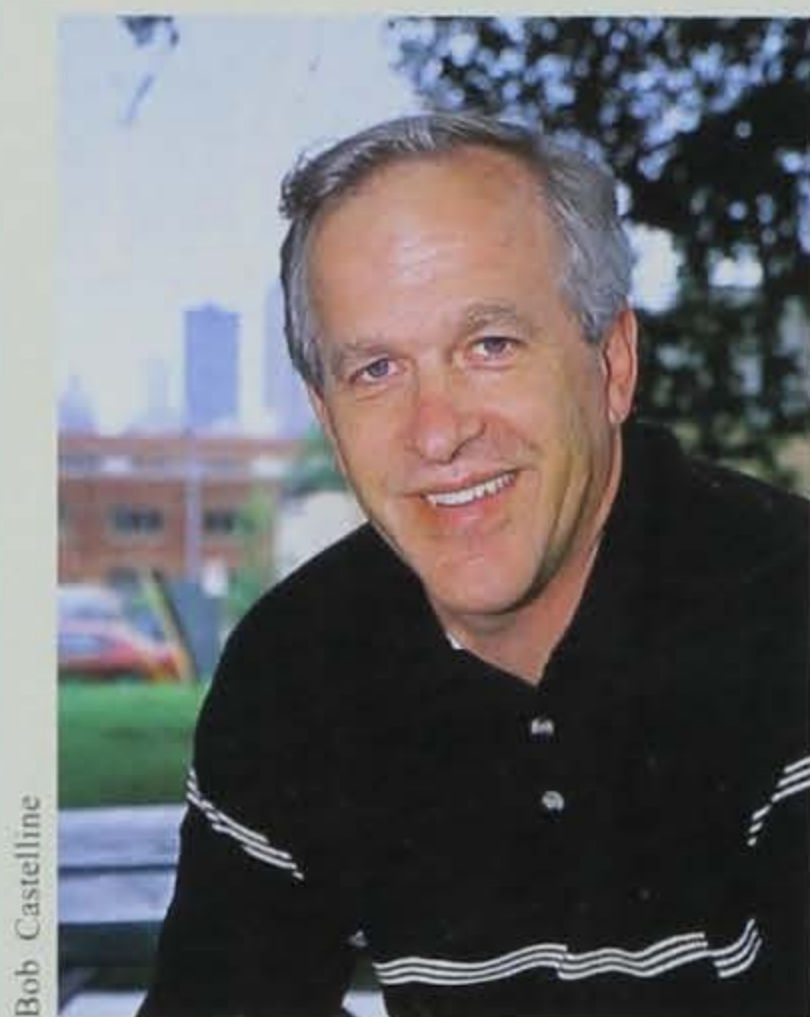
MAY/JUNE 2004

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES



*Special
State Park
Highlights*

FROM THE DIRECTOR



Bob Castelline

It's Out There, Just Waiting for Us

An advertisement like the one at right would likely grab the attention of most of us. It describes land many of us, from all walks of life, would like to own. In an era of high speed Internet, satellite television, cellular phones, mega-malls and super highways, there's still a part in all of us needing time and places to escape the pressures of everyday modern living by reconnecting to the natural world around us.

For most of us, property like the one described above is out of reach. We tend to forget, however, that all of us already own some of the most magnificent land our state has to offer. Individually, access to property like this would be difficult, if not impossible. Collectively, we all hold title to some of the most picturesque natural areas in

Iowa through our state park system.

Iowa's first state park, Backbone, was dedicated in 1920. In June we will dedicate our newest addition, Banner Lakes at Summerset State Park south of Des Moines, bringing us to a total of 85 state parks.

Our state park system in Iowa offers an interesting paradox.

At roughly 63,000 acres of state park land in Iowa, only 13 other states have less. Yet according to the National Association of State Park Directors, only 16 states draw more than the approximately 14 million visitors that Iowa's state parks do.

On the one hand, Iowans place a high value on our state parks. Many of the lodges and cabins we offer are booked as much as a year in advance. We have averaged nearly 700,000 camping visits annually over the last five years. And, as director of the DNR, I can tell you first hand how high emotions can get if people believe their favorite state park is not being properly maintained.

On the other hand, state park funding never seems to be a very high priority during the state

budgeting process. Only about 15 cents of every \$100 of general fund money spent on our state are dedicated to our parks – despite these facilities being among the finest amenities Iowa has to offer. Over the past five years, we've invested nearly \$22

million in capital improvements to our park system, including everything from simple paving projects

GET AWAY FROM IT ALL

Land available in picturesque, rural setting with access to lake and established timber, meadow and open green spaces across gently rolling hills. Beautiful views around every corner. Home to abundant and diversified wildlife. Established trails.

on roads and parking lots to complete renovations of campground facilities at places like Viking Lake and Lewis and Clark State Park.

While \$22 million is a lot of money, we currently have a list of more than \$71 million of capital projects still needed in our state parks. We are also in the process of doing a complete environmental assessment of each state park by the field offices in our Environmental Services Division, so our capital improvement needs are likely to grow. Many of the water and wastewater systems in our parks are older and in need of being updated.

Director's Message

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COVER: LAKE WAPELLO BEACH HOUSE
BY KEN FORMANEK

Pleasant Creek State Park



Clay Smith

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STATE PARKS 2004

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by Joe Wilkinson

For nearly 40 years, Milt Hunt has been the go-to guy when a state park needed a sign made, a table built or a display case designed. His latest project, though, may be his most challenging.

30 LODGES
For more than half a century, these beautiful stone and timber structures have been favorite gathering places for Iowans.

36 SOMETHING TO CHEER ABOUT
by Randy Edwards
For the first time in more than 20 years, there were no boating fatalities in Iowa last year. Water safety experts realize, however, that their efforts must continue to turn that triumph into a trend.

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Bullheads may not be the most popular fish in Iowa, but they probably hooked more kids on fishing than any other species.

41 BULLHEADS AT THE BISTRO
Three culinary arts majors at Des Moines Area Community College prove the words bullheads and fine dining can be used in the same sentence.

44 WEST DES MOINES SCHOOLS
by Tami Foster
The West Des Moines Community School District was awarded a Governor's Environmental Excellence Award. What are they doing that is so special?

46 WATER MONITORING: IMPROVING IOWA'S BEACHES
by Jessie Rolph
How important is water quality to Iowans? A recent Iowa State University study indicated Iowans rank it the most important factor they consider when choosing a lake for recreation.

Director's Message

cont. from page 2

Capital projects also need to reflect a change in needs by our society. Recreational vehicles are getting larger and more energy intensive. Our park system has been challenged by the need to update our infrastructure to accommodate the changing demands of today's society. This includes the development of a "destination" state park at Honey Creek in southeast Iowa that will offer more of an outdoor resort type of facility.

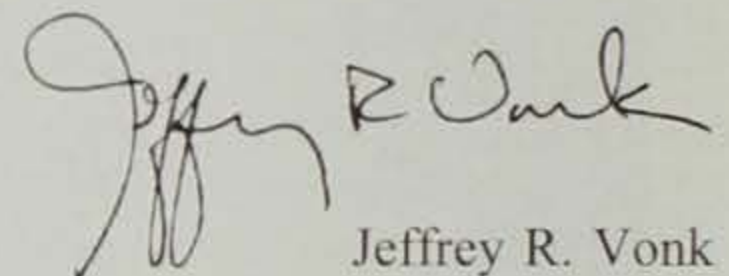
One other priority we have placed in our park system is to

construct more overnight cabins. We recognize that we have a lot of people who would like an overnight opportunity in our parks, but find themselves somewhere between investing tens of thousands of dollars in an upscale RV and feeling comfortable in a tent. We strongly believe cabins are a wise investment, encouraging more people to take advantage of the opportunities offered by our state park system.

This issue of the *Iowa Conservationist* features our state park system and some of magnificent experiences available to all of us. If you already are a regular visitor to any of our state

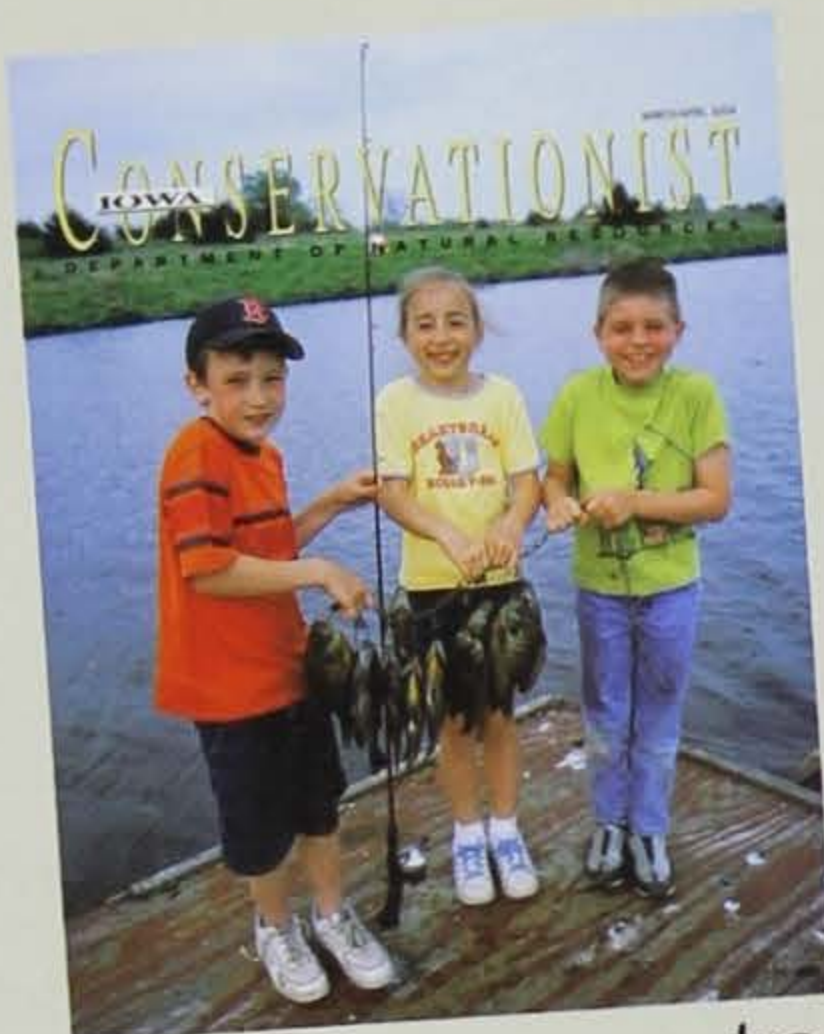
parks, we hope we will give you some ideas of other outdoor adventures of which you may not have previously been aware. If you are a more infrequent visitor to our state parks, we hope this issue will inspire you to take advantage of the rewarding opportunities waiting you in Iowa's great outdoors.

Iowa's state parks reach their true splendor when they are being enjoyed by their true owners – you.


Jeffrey R. Vonk

CONSERVATIONIST

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES



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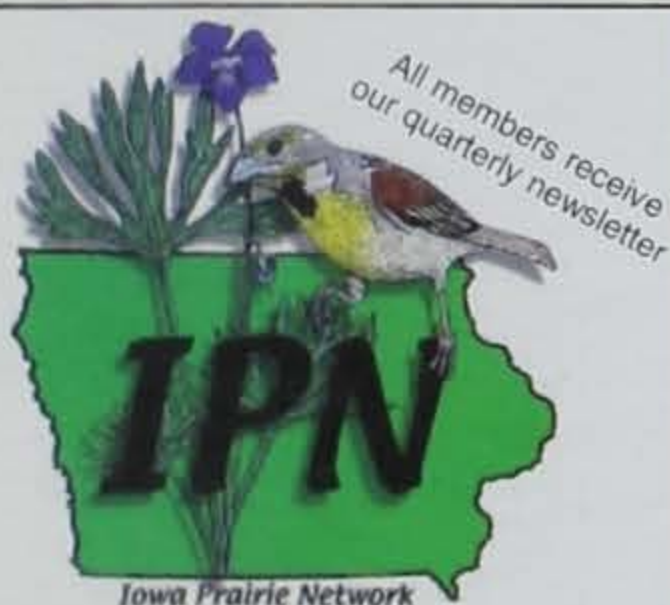
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State Parks 2004

Something for Everyone

by Heather Cline

Photos by Clay Smith

Iowa's camping season is getting underway, but for some, it has been in full swing since early April.

Take, for instance, Lisa and Bo Seidenkranz of Indianola, and their three sons, Scott, Tyler and Ethan, who took their first voyage several years ago in a humble, 33-year-old Starcraft fold-down.

"We looked like vagabonds!" Lisa said. But it wasn't about the look, it was about camping together as a family.

The Seidenkranzes are one of many Iowa families who make camping a regular part of their weekend entertainment.

"We really like the simplicity of getting away from it all – phones, technology," said Lisa. "It is restful." She loves to get into the "pioneer-spirit" and cook for her family around the campfire.

The Seidenkranz boys, ages 8, 11 and 16, are often found sitting around

the campfire with Lisa and Bo. "They love all of it!" said Lisa. "Fishing, the peace and quiet, seeing the wildlife — the turkeys and geese." For Scott, Tyler and Ethan, camping has become an integral part of growing up. So much so, in fact, last spring the family upgraded to a new fold-down.

The Seidenkranzes kicked off the 2004 camping season earlier this year at Lake Ahquabi near Indianola. In all their adventures, though, Lewis and Clark State Park near Onawa has become one of their favorites. Lisa says the small, friendly community surrounding the park helps make it so enjoyable. They also enjoyed camping at Lake Wapello and eating at the restaurant on the lake.

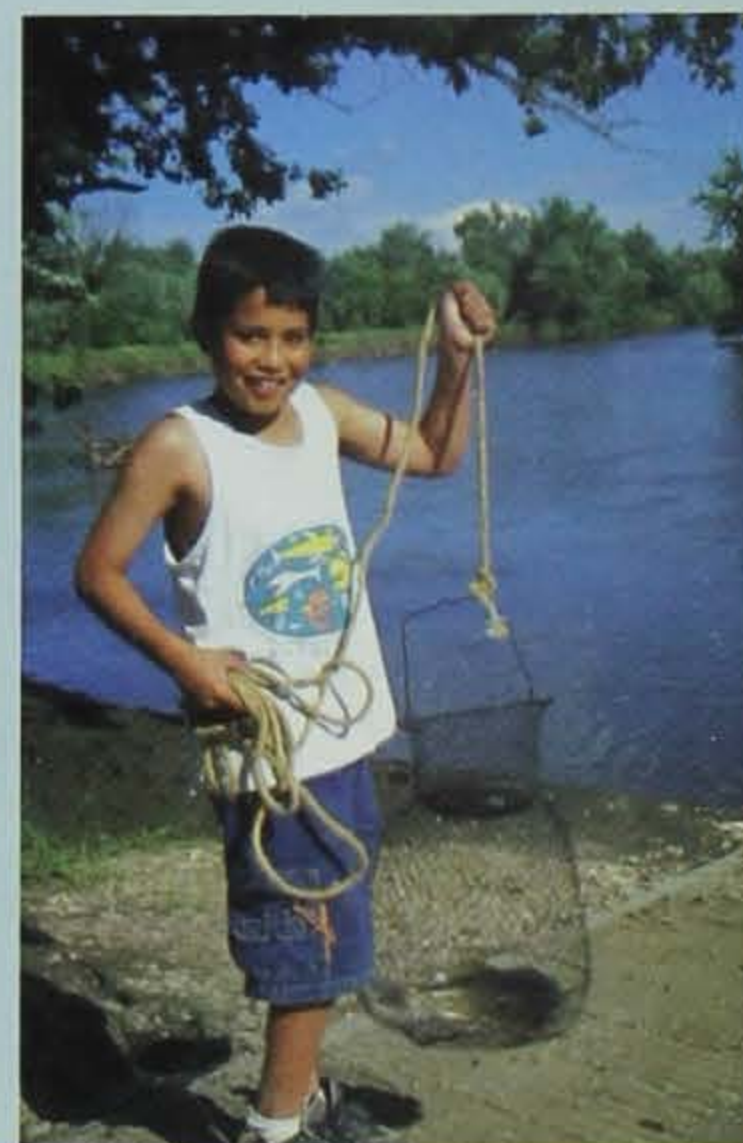
Lisa's most memorable camping experience came in February when she fulfilled a promise to her son and went tent camping at Lake Ahquabi. The

only sound that broke through the winter quiet was the pitter-patter of sleet and snow falling on their tent.

"That was until the ice fishermen passed by and laughed at us," Lisa recalled.

Two years ago the Seidenkranzes participated in the Explore Iowa Parks program and camped in 10 different state parks. Lisa said that by participating in the program, they discovered some beautiful parks they might not otherwise have visited.

Chuck and Pat Custer, from Randalia, also participated in Explore Iowa Parks. In the 2002 promotion,





The Seidenkranzes (left) kicked off their camping season in April at Lake Ahquabi. In 2002, the Custers (above) were winners of a kayak in the Explore Iowa Parks program and last year they visited 39 state parks. This year they plan to visit the rest.

they won a kayak in the grand prize drawing. Last year, they took their commitment to the next level and visited 39 state parks.

"We will try to make it to all of the others this year," Chuck said.

For 20 years, the Custers used a camper that slid into the back of their pick-up. Now, they camp in a fifth wheel they bought four years ago, and sometimes enjoy "caravan camping" with friends. They like to hike and birdwatch when they camp and Pat has faithfully kept a camping journal since 1978. Their favorite campground is Lacey-Keosauqua. Chuck recalls they camped there for the first time in 1976

and have returned nearly every year since. He says it's the beauty of the park, the friendly atmosphere and the nearby relatives bringing them apple pie and ice cream that make Lacey-Keosauqua such a wonderful place.

Most often, it's that beauty that draws campers back to their favorite destinations. Although Iowa is not marked by rugged mountain peaks, steep canyons or whitewater rivers, nor is it simply a flat agricultural state void of recreational opportunities. Iowa's beauty is much subtler, with landscapes and features that vary greatly between its border rivers. Iowa's state parks and recreation areas offer the best examples of this subtle beauty and provide a wide variety of recreational opportunities for those who take the time to explore them.

In this feature, you will find recommendations from state park supervisors across Iowa on where to find great camping, the top off-season spots, quiet getaways, family favorites and others. Look a little further into this issue and you will also find some great locations for weddings, family reunions and other special occasions in our "Lodges" photo feature. And check out the entry form for this year's Explore Iowa Parks program on page 25. Who

knows, maybe you will be one of the lucky ones who take home a grand prize.



Ken Formanek

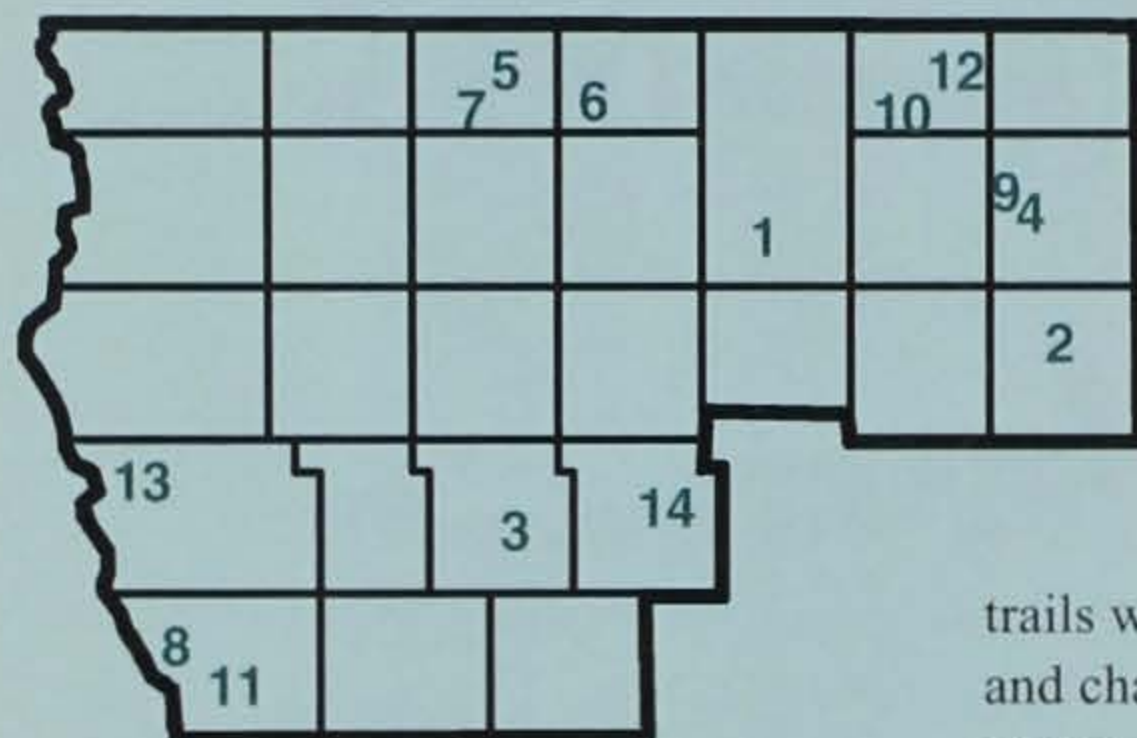


Northwest

by Mike Schoneboom

Outdoor Fun

Nontraditional/Extreme Sports
Stone



Park/County Phone Number

- 1 A.A. Call/Kossuth
641/581-4835
- 2 Beed's Lake/Franklin
641/456-2047
- 3 Black Hawk/Sac
712/657-8712
- 4 Clear Lake/Cerro Gordo
641/357-4212
- 5 Elinor Bedell/Dickinson
712/337-3211
- 6 Fort Defiance/Emmet
712/337-3211
- 7 Gull Point/Dickinson
712/337-3211
- 8 Lewis & Clark/Monona
712/423-2829
- 9 McIntosh Woods/Cerro Gordo
641/829-3847
- 10 Pilot Knob/Winnebago
641/581-4835
- 11 Preparation Canyon/Monona
712/423-2829
- 12 Rice Lake/Winnebago
641/581-4835
- 13 Stone/Woodbury
712/255-4698
- 14 Twin Lakes/Calhoun
712/657-8712

Northwest Iowa offers a varied topography, which is why Stone State Park in Woodbury County has proven attractive to extreme sports activists. Because of its close location to a large metropolitan area —

mountain bikers find the trails within the park both convenient and challenging. Several biking events and competitions have been staged at the park. The same trails are also used by hikers, backpackers and horseback riders for viewing the natural features of the park.

Traditional Sports

Gull Point/Clear Lake complexes

The two largest parks in northwest Iowa — the Gull Point complex and the Clear Lake complex — are proven areas for traditional park activities. The fishing in these natural lakes is excellent for a variety of

species from panfish to big game fish. Many state records have been taken from these waters. The size of Clear Lake (3,643 acres) and the Great Lakes area (more than 11,000 acres between the main three — East Okoboji, West Okoboji and Spirit Lake) make them ideal for many traditional boating activities as well. During the summer months the waters are filled with sailors, skiers and windsurfers. Large beaches offer plenty of room for swimming, diving and sunbathing. The diversity of these areas makes them a popular spot for extended vacations.

Quiet Getaway

Pilot Knob

Pilot Knob is an oasis of rolling hills, wetlands, bogs and hardwood timbers. The campground is nestled in a corner of the park isolated from traffic, providing a quiet place to relax. There are several trails for hikers, which travel through the natural areas of the park and give visitors a chance to view the area wildlife. A stone observation tower built by the Civilian

Iowa's Great Lakes



Ken Formanek



Special Event Lewis & Clark Festival and Other Bicentennial Events

Lewis & Clark State Park is named for Meriwether Lewis, secretary to President Thomas Jefferson, and Captain William Clark, United States Army, who were commissioned by Jefferson in 1804 to head an expedition into the northwest to explore the vast territory purchased from France. With 26 men and supplies, Lewis and Clark led their expedition up the Missouri River from St. Louis by keelboat.

On August 9, 1804, the expedition arrived at the site where Lewis & Clark State Park now lies. They spent some time there exploring the region and making observations on the geographical conditions, plants and animals in the area. The park has been designated as part of the Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail by the National Park Service.

Today, thousands of people visit the park for outdoor recreation and to learn a little more about the expedition, particularly during the annual Lewis & Clark Festival held

the second weekend in June. Each year, the festival features, buckskinners, bluegrass music, movies about the 1804 trip, and a fishing contest. A major attraction of the park is the full-sized replica of the Lewis and Clark keelboat, *Discovery*, constructed by local volunteers and parks staff. This year's celebration, June 11-13, takes on a special significance and the park is expecting more visitors than ever, as the nation celebrates the 200th anniversary of the famed expedition.

Several national bicentennial "signature events" will be held across the country along the Lewis & Clark Trail. Between July 30 and Aug. 3 Omaha will host the 5th such event, highlighting the expeditions' first encounter with Native people in the West. The Otoe-Missouria, Omaha, and Pawnee Nation representatives will be on hand at Fort Calhoun, north of Omaha, the location where the expedition introduced themselves and their mission. This event will include a full re-enactment ceremony.

Following this signature event, Lewis & Clark State Park will hold a bicentennial commemoration August 7-9. For more information about the Lewis & Clark Festival or the bicentennial commemoration contact the park at 712/423-2829.

In addition to the festival, signature



event and commemoration, visitors to Iowa and Nebraska's Missouri boarder can take part in the Lewis & Clark Passport Education Program up and down the Missouri, where a series of hands-on sessions will be offered throughout the summer. Participants will be given the opportunity to walk in the footsteps of Lewis and Clark, operate the keelboat replica, experience military camp life, study native plants and animals up close, to name a few. A commemorative "passport" for stamping at each location is available for \$5. For a complete schedule and detailed map contact the Western Iowa Tourism Region at 888/623-4232, or the Golden Hills RC&D at 712/482-3029 or their web site at www.goldenhillsred.org/lewis&clark.

Conservation Corps of the 1930s offers a view of the park from a bird's perspective.

Family Favorite

Lewis and Clark

Because of its rich history and numerous recreational opportunities, Lewis and Clark State Park is one of Iowa's top family destinations.

The history stems from the fact noted explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark camped at the spot where the park now lies during their historic expedition up the Missouri River (see page 9). Recreational opportunities abound because the park sits on the shores of Blue Lake, an oxbow of the Missouri River.

The park offers fishing, hiking, boating, along with the unique opportunity to view a full-sized replica of the Lewis and Clark keel boat or enjoy a weekend at the Lewis and Clark festival held every June at the park. Here, visitors have a chance to relive the life-style of the era and view the many displays offered at the event. Lewis and Clark is a great place for a family to learn a little about American history, and rest and recreate in a relaxed environment.

Off-Season Visits

Gull Point Complex

The Great Lakes area in Dickinson County is more than just a place to go camping. The diverse, plethora of activities available there make it a great spot for a visit anytime, but the off-season is especially inviting.

After the lakes freeze, ice fishing begins in earnest. Thousands of anglers flock for the hard-water fishing season. Snowmobiling and cross-country skiing are also extremely popular attractions to the region when

snow cover dictates. One of the more popular events is the winter Ice Festival, which draws large crowds and packs the many motels and resorts that offer lodging during the off-season.

Camping

Because they are more isolated and have a non-modern "appearance," Pilot Knob, A.A. Call and Ft. Defiance state parks may be the most attractive to tent campers. Still, these parks offer the convenience of electricity, water and rest rooms. All have plenty of opportunities to hike, watch wildlife or simply relax without being bothered.

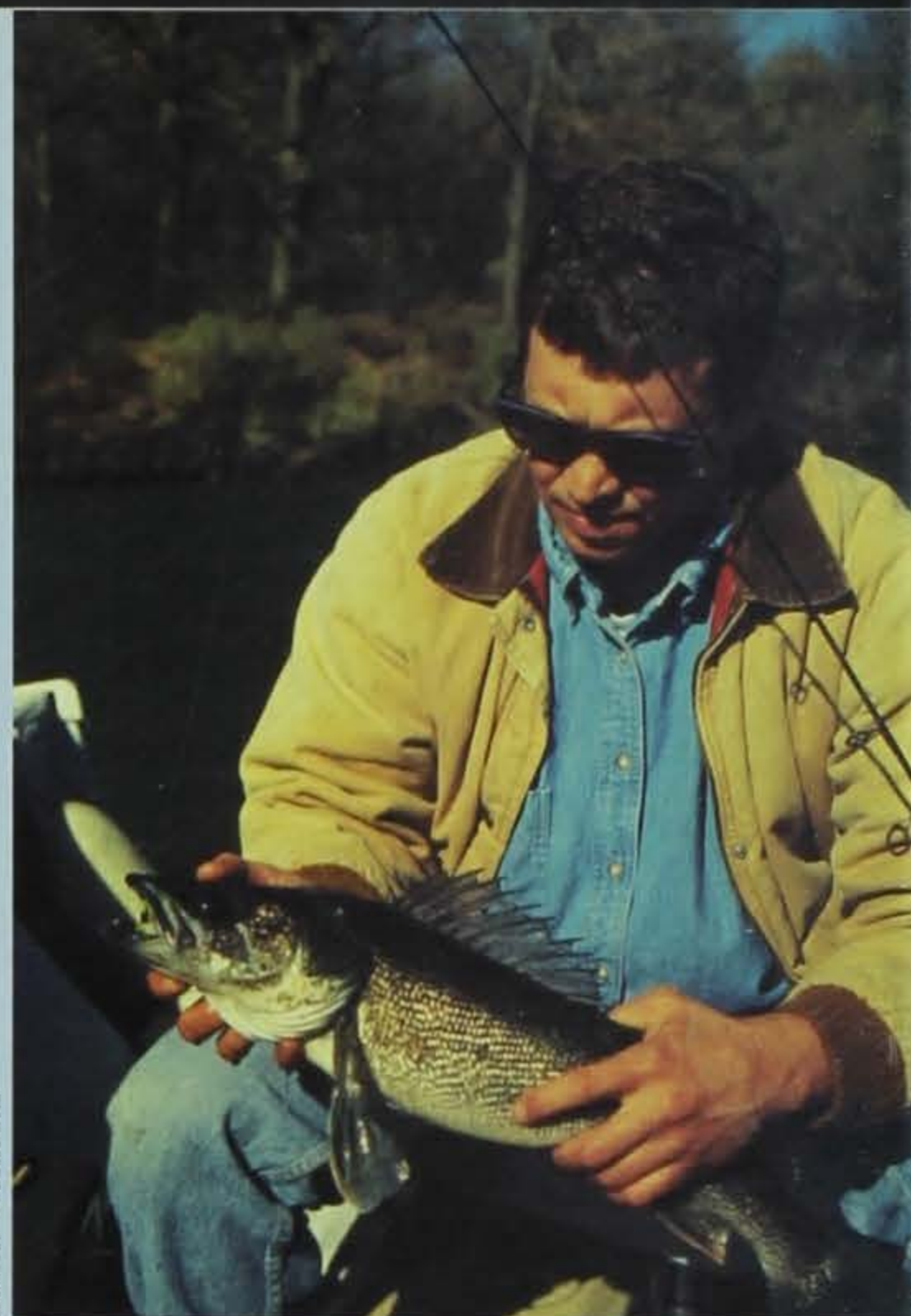
Most parks in northwest Iowa are well prepared for the RV camper. The Gull Point complex, Clear Lake complex, Black Hawk, Lewis and Clark and Beeds Lake are all set up to handle large RV units. All these areas provide, at minimum, electricity,

water, showers and a sewer dump station. All are easily accessible to water activities, have beautiful areas to hike and bike, and historical points of interest to visit with little cost or extra travel. These parks are near larger cities with other forms of entertainment, and they all offer the opportunity to camp close together and vacation with friends.

McIntosh Woods, part of the Clear Lake complex



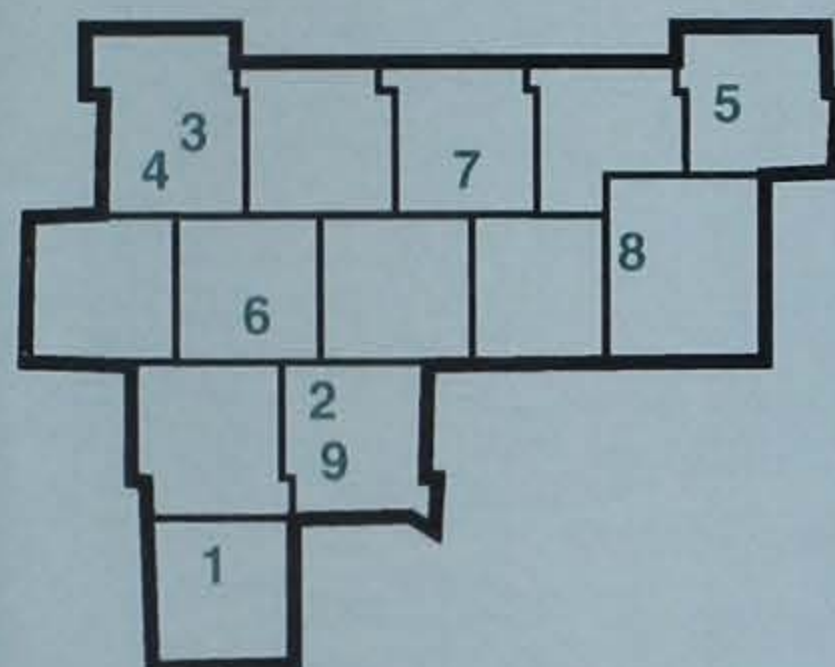
Lowell Washburn



Lowell Washburn

North-central

by Greg Van Fosson



Park/County Phone Number

- 1 Badger Creek/Polk
515/285-4502
- 2 Big Creek/Polk
515/984-6473
- 3 Brushy Creek/Webster
515/543-8298
- 4 Dolliver Memorial/Webster
515/359-2539
- 5 George Wyth/Black Hawk
319/232-5505
- 6 Ledges/Boone
515/432-1852
- 7 Pine Lake/Hardin
641/858-5832
- 8 Union Grove/Tama
641/473-2556
- 9 Walnut Woods/Polk
515/285-4502

Outdoor Fun

Nontraditional
Brushy Creek

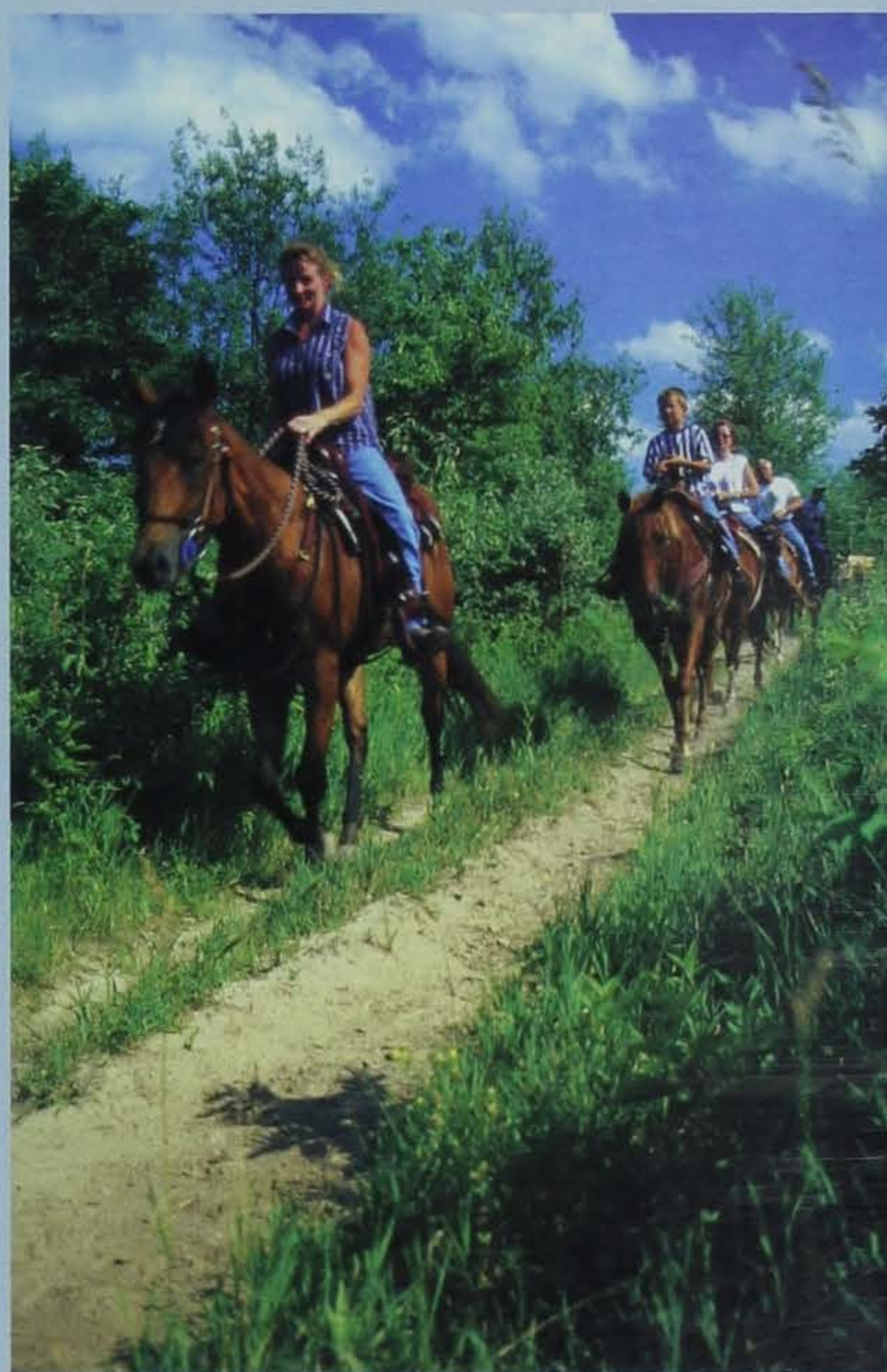
Not all parks and recreation areas can be all things to all people, but occasionally one dares to offer something a little different — if you have the strength, courage and stamina. If you are looking for something more than simply riding your bike on a paved, flat trail or you just want to get back to your western roots, then Brushy Creek State Recreation Area might be the ticket. The sprawling 6,000-acre-plus facility is Iowa's newest and largest state recreation area. It's also one of the more diverse.

Hikers, bikers and horseback riders will find the 45 miles of multi-use trails — traversing a wide variety of landscapes — challenging, regardless of season or skill level. Equestrian campers are treated to two of the most modern camp facilities anywhere in the Midwest. Both the north and south camps have modern showers and rest rooms, electric and non-electric campsites, horse wash areas, ample shade and a substantial hitch rail at every site.

Hunting and shooting sports are allowed in designated areas of state recreation areas. Every year hunters pursue a variety of game at Brushy Creek, from upland game birds and waterfowl to whitetail deer and wild turkey. Two unstaffed shooting ranges are available, one for rifles and one for shotguns.

Traditional
Big Creek

For excellent fishing, boating, swimming and biking opportunities, try Big Creek State Park. The focal point of this 3,550-acre park is the lake, created as part of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Saylorville Lake project near Polk City. The lake provides excellent year-round fishing for walleye, crappies, bluegills, largemouth bass and catfish, along with a chance at a smallmouth bass, muskies, wiper, bullhead or perch. Five modern boat ramps allow boaters and anglers easy access. The



lake's clear water also provides great family swimming fun at the beach. A large wooden play structure, volleyball court, picnic shelters, and concession and boat rental make Big Creek a summer fun hotspot. Concession questions, boat or shelter rental are handled through the concessionaire by calling 515/984-6083.

Biking is also big at Big Creek. A 26-mile, paved multi-use trail gives bicyclists and pedestrians a way to travel from Big Creek's beach south through the Saylorville Lake area all the way to Des Moines. Even though Big Creek itself doesn't offer camping, there are many campgrounds and campsites within easy driving and biking distance from the park.



Big Creek Beach

Family Favorite/Quiet Get-away

Ledges

Ledges State Park is one of Iowa's most popular state parks and has attracted millions of visitors since its dedication in 1924. With its sandstone cliffs, native plant communities and deep wooded river valley, Ledges is truly a unique place. The winding road along Pea's Creek offers motorists breathtaking views of the "canyon," the Des Moines River valley and the sandstone cliffs — not to mention the five picturesque water crossings it includes along the way.

The Civilian Conservation Corps constructed the park facilities in the 1930s using native timber and field-stone. They built the famous arch stone bridge, Oak Woods shelter, stone trail steps and the stone shelter in lower Ledges, which was named after the first park custodian Carl "Fritz" Henning. All of the facilities have been restored and are still in use today. Both shelters can be reserved by calling the park office at 515/432-1852.

Another very popular family

activity is hiking. The 13 miles of trails lead up and down steep slopes to scenic overlooks and spectacular views of the Pea's Creek "canyon." While most of the trails include steep portions, a fully accessible interpretive trail around Lo Lake is located at the southern part of the park.

Camping is another major draw, due in part to the design of the campground. There are 94 campsites, with the west side designed for modern RV camping featuring 40 electric sites and a modern shower and rest room. The east side however, lends itself very well to tent camping, with 42 non-electric sites. It also has a modern shower and rest room available. The east side also offers 12 unique "hike-in" campsites, allowing the more adventurous camper to get away from it all. For a side trip you can catch a ride on the Boone and Scenic Valley Railroad in nearby Boone.

Off-Season Visits

Pine Lake

Pine Lake State Park sits nestled along the scenic Iowa River valley near Eldora and Steamboat Rock. It fea-

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tures a pleasing woodland, river and lake mix in the midst of rolling farmland. The 650-acre park encompasses two lakes — 50-acre Lower Pine and 69-acre Upper Pine. Of special appeal to nature enthusiasts are the ancient white pine, white-barked birch and the rare ferns found along the Iowa River. The pine-scented air of the campgrounds and picnic areas is a pleasing rarity in Iowa and provides a perfect backdrop to the beautiful colors of an Iowa fall.

And what better way to end a fall or winter day than a stay in one of Pine Lake's remodeled stone and timber cabins nestled along the Iowa

River. Originally built by the CCC and the WPA in the 1930s, the four modern cabins have fireplaces to take the chill off a cool fall day or after a winter cross-country ski trip. Pine Creek and Bittersweet cabins accommodate up to six people, Goldfinch and Sandstone up to four. Each features a shower, rest room, stove, refrigerator, microwave, cooking utensils, heat and air conditioning. Cabin users must

provide their own dishes, eating utensils, bedding, towels and other camping items. Cabin are available through the park concessionaire, 641/858-3626 starting the first



Pine Lake Cabin

working day in January. Priority reservations for the handicapped-accessible cabin (Pine Creek) are accepted from Oct. 1 through Dec. 1 for the coming year.

Camping

George Wyth Memorial

With a growing number of people enjoying the experience of camping within a metropolitan area,

George Wyth State Park is becoming a popular attraction in the state. It really has something for everyone.

Located on the Cedar River within the Waterloo-Cedar Falls

metropolitan area, it is designated as a National Urban Wildlife Sanctuary. At George Wyth, the visitor can truly "get away" from the busy metropolitan area and take advantage of a variety of outdoor recreation activities.

The park offers lake and river fishing, swimming, camping, picnicking, hiking, bicycling and boating. It is unique in that it has several water

areas — East Lake (120 acres, open for power boating), George Wyth Lake (75 acres, no wake lake with handicap-accessible fishing pier), Fisher Lake (40-acre natural lake), Alice Wyth Lake (60 acres, electric motor only) and the Cedar River. Sail boating and windsurfing are also popular water recreation activities. Ample boat ramps are available on the lakes and river. With its five miles of paved multi-use trails, which are also linked to a 25-mile network within the cities of Waterloo and Cedar Falls, bicycling is a very popular recreation activity.

The park was originally dedicated in 1940 as "Josh Higgins Parkway," named for a popular radio character of the time. In 1965, it was renamed George Wyth Memorial State Park after a well-known Cedar Falls businessman and conservationist.



HARLAN
Swanson Marine
800-733-5188

CLINTON
Larry's Marine
563-242-8968



Northeast

by Jerry Reisinger



Park/County Phone Number

- 1 Backbone/Delaware
563/924-2527
- 2 Bellevue/Jackson
563/872-4019
- 3 Bixby/Clayton
563/924-2527
- 4 Cedar Rock/Buchanan
319/934-3572
- 5 Fort Atkinson/Winneshiek
563/425-4161
- 6 Maquoketa Caves/Jackson
563/652-5833
- 7 Mines of Spain/Dubuque
563/556-0620
- 8 Palisades Kepler/Linn
319/895-6039
- 9 Pikes Peak/Clayton
563/873-2341
- 10 Volga River/Fayette
563/425-4161
- 11 Wapsipinicon/Jones
319/462-2761
- 12 Yellow River State Forest/Allamakee
563/873-2341

Outdoor Fun

Nontraditional
*Palisades-Kepler/Backbone/Volga
River*

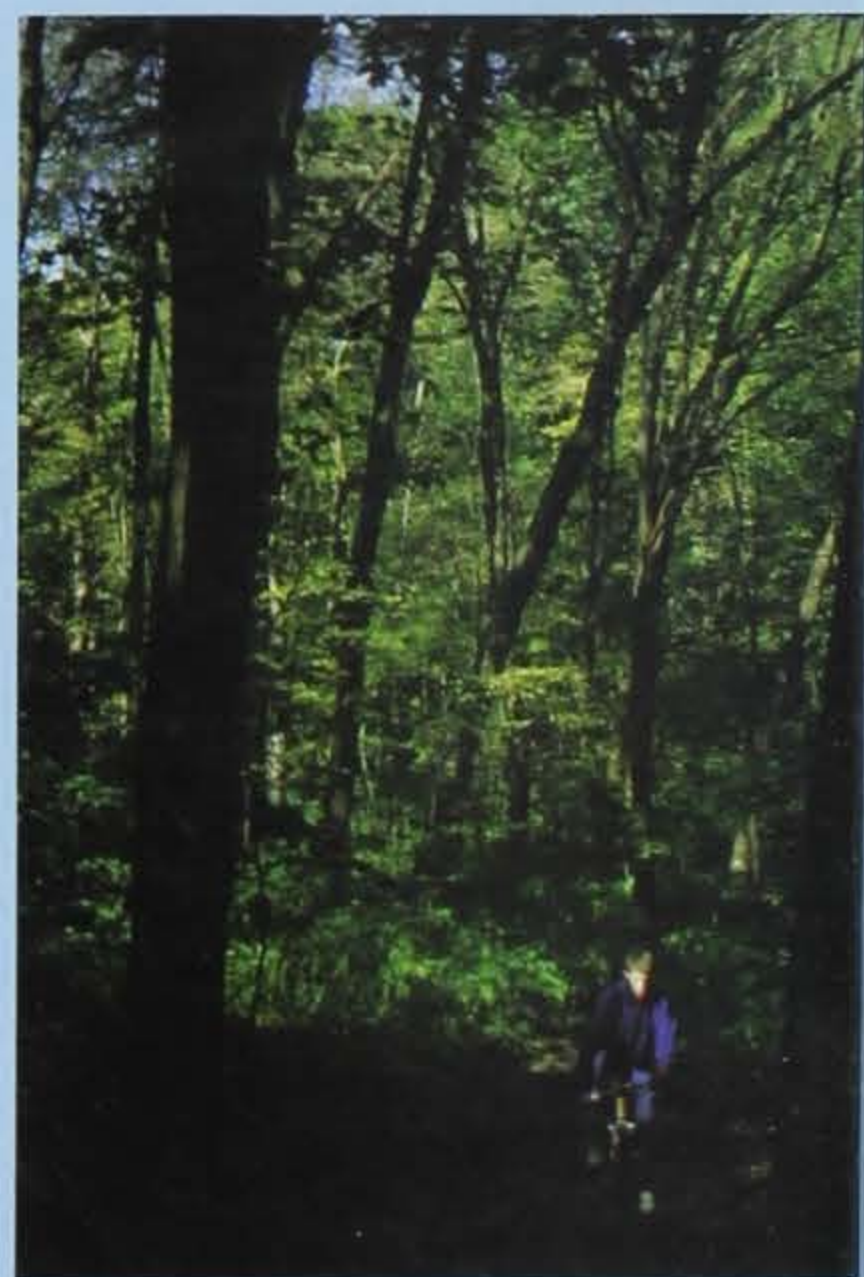
Because of northeast Iowa's unique landforms, its state parks provide exceptional opportunities for those who find the steep cliffs and rugged hills an inviting location to rock-climb and ride mountain bikes. For protection of the natural resources and visitor safety not all parks can offer these opportunities but the parks that do are popular with those who indulge in these activities.

Palisades-Kepler State Park near Mount Vernon has limestone bluffs along the Cedar River that are very popular with rock-climbers and rappellers. The tallest of the bluffs in this park is about 60 feet and can be found by hiking about a quarter-mile from the west parking lot along the river on the new and improved Cedar Cliff Trail. Climbers and rappellers must self-register at the park office before engaging in the activity. There is no charge for the registration. Get an early start to your day as there are limited good locations in the park to climb and the sites are often occupied by mid-morning on Saturdays and Sundays. Climbers are not allowed to tie to cedar trees or artificial structures such as railings and signposts.

Backbone, Iowa's first state park, is located south of Strawberry Point and is known for its dramatic cliffs and picturesque rock outcroppings along the sides of tall valley walls. Rock climbing and rappelling in this park take place in the northern portion of the park in what is referred to as the "flats" area and at a couple spots along the backbone ridge that the park is named after. The walls that are climbed in this park ascend to

around 80 feet and are of dolomite limestone. A couple of the climbing sites are located along the main picnic areas and roadways where they are easily accessed and where park visitors can watch without having to hike. Many of the climbers make it a day trip, but others make a weekend of it and climb a different cliff everyday. Bolts, pitons, or permanent anchoring equipment is prohibited.

Volga River State Recreation Area is a 5,600-acre site that is largely undeveloped but has a 135-acre lake, large tracts of timber, a scenic river and 25 miles of multi-use trails that are popular but not crowded with mountain bikers. The topography consists of rolling hills typical to this part of northeast Iowa and the trails are maintained as fire lanes, about 12 feet wide. Mountain bikes must stay on the improved trails and roadways and must share the trail with equestrians, hikers and hunters, in season. Maps of the park's trails can be acquired at the park office and a good place to begin a first trip is from the parking lots near



the lake. Expect to ride about half of the time in the shade of the park's timber. Other portions of the trails will take you into open, sunny areas.

Because of the type of impacts that horses and mountain bikes have on the trails, the entire trail system is periodically closed after rains to reduce rutting that causes erosion. Trail closures caused by rain often happen without warning so all mountain bikers are advised to call the park office before traveling to the park for a recorded report of trail status.

Traditional Wapsipinicon

Wapsipinicon State Park offers a variety of short hikes, picnic areas along the Wapsipinicon River, a playground, stream fishing, camping and a road system that lets you drive through the water of Dutch Creek as you loop through the hills of this wooded park in a winding fashion. You are assured of seeing many Canada geese along the river.

Quiet Getaways

Bixby

Just north of Edgewood lies one of Iowa's hidden treasures, Bixby State Park and Preserve. This quiet little spot became public domain when R.J. Bixby, a teacher, farmer and legislator, donated 69 acres to the state of Iowa, in 1926. The park is one of those special places where you can almost count on having the place to yourself. Perfect for a quiet picnic, fishing, hiking, bird watching or just relaxing.

This park has a beautiful spring-fed stream, exceptional flora, a stone CCC-built shelter and you can view an ice cave from its entrance. Nature's geological features make this park beautiful and inviting.

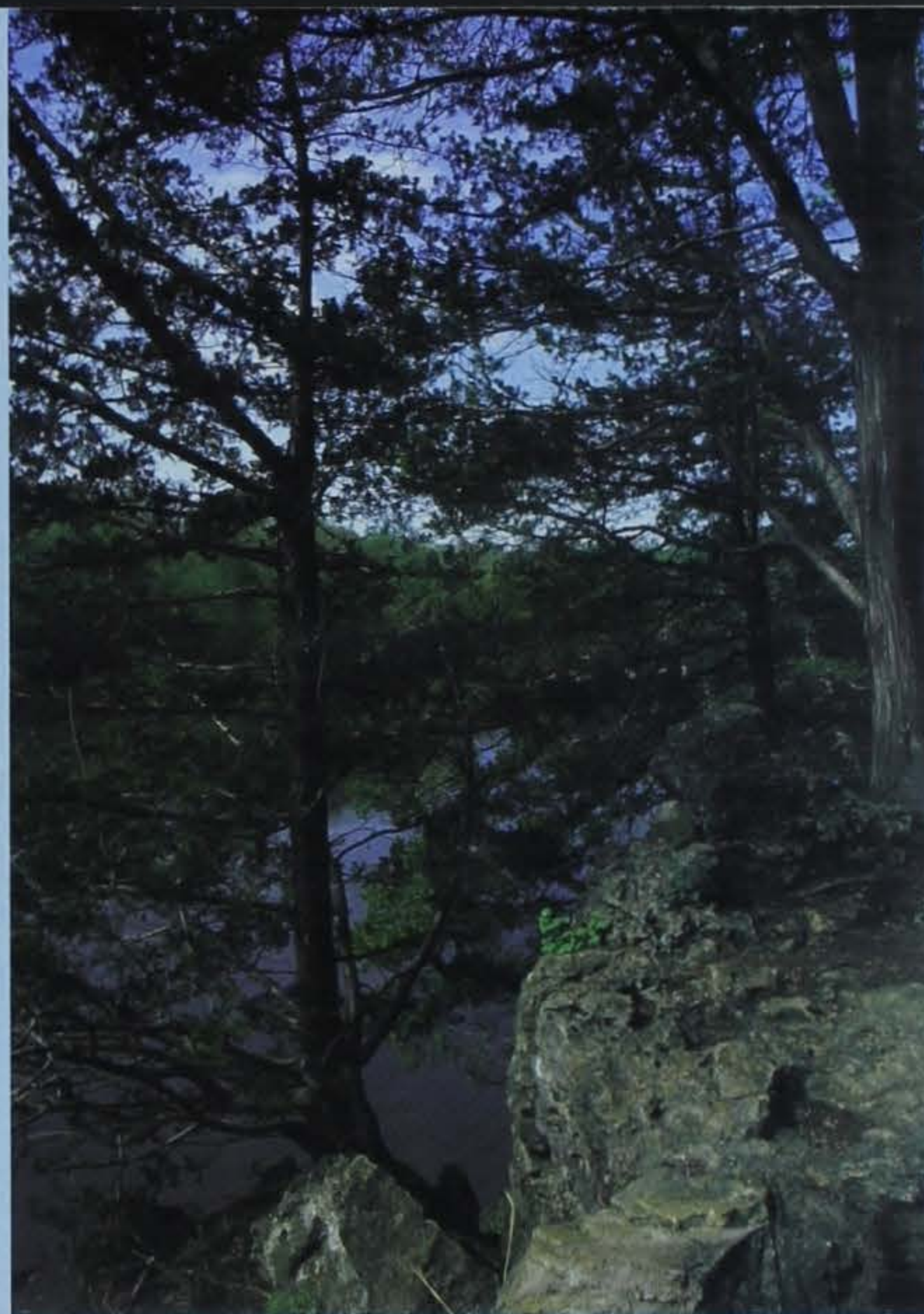
Today, Bixby consists of 184 acres of rugged algalic slopes, mature hardwood forests and a clear, bubbling trout stream, Bear Creek. It is a place where people sometimes escape to when they are looking for tranquility, beauty and simplicity. White pines are native to this park as are rough blazing star and silky aster.

Family Favorite

Bellevue/Maquoketa Caves

Bellevue State Park is located just south of the town of Bellevue, high above the Mississippi River. There are two disconnected parts to this park that each offer picnic shelters with panoramic views of the Mississippi River from 500 feet above. The Nelsen Unit has a lodge with kitchen facilities and a fireplace that is a popular place for family reunions. There is also a butterfly garden and a nature center. A naturalist is available for presentations to scheduled groups and to all park visitors on weekends. Both units at this park have play structures for the children and modern camping is available at the Dyas Unit.

As a supervisor for the northeast district, when someone asks me to



Palisades-Kepler

recommend a good park for youth groups and family outings that involve children, I always mention Maquoketa Caves State Park. This relatively small park, located northwest of the town of Maquoketa, has everything a scout or church youth group is looking for. Families with young children also find it to be the ticket to a fun weekend. Family camping is available at the park's modern campground. Youth groups must reserve a group campsite by calling the park office. There is a play structure near the family campground and of course there are the many caves in the park for everyone to explore. Whether you have young children or a group of teenagers, you'll have an active weekend finding caves named Dance Hall, Natural Bridge, Hernando's Hideaway, Shinbone and Rainy Day.



Pikes Peak

Off-Season Visits

*Pikes Peak/Palisades-Kepler/
Backbone*

The fall season is the time when several of northeast Iowa's state parks have their busiest days. Because of the abundance of hardwoods in this part of the state, coupled with vistas typical of northeast Iowa, hundreds of thousands of people come to our state parks on bright autumn days to appreciate the spectacle of autumn leaves.

By the second weekend of October, the leaves of northeast Iowa's sugar maples have turned bright red and the foliage of the ash is a brilliant yellow. The most popular place in the state to view fall color is at Pikes Peak State Park. Weekends in October find this park filled to capacity with visitors from early morning until the sun goes down. In addition to viewing the Mississippi River valley, many of the visitors will hike down the quarter mile length of elevated boardwalk trail to look into Wisconsin from Crow's Nest and then hike down to Bridal Veil Falls where you can walk behind the water of a natural waterfall. The view from the top of the 500-foot bluff at Pikes Peak is hard to relate to anyone who isn't there at that moment. The autumn sun feels good against the cool, fresh air as you take in the vastness of the Mississippi valley and

view the low-lying fog on its backwaters from high above.

Palisades-Kepler State Park, near Cedar Rapids, is a popular spot

when autumn days are at their best, as is Backbone State Park, near Strawberry Point. At both of these parks you can reserve a modern cabin for the family and linger into the night to enjoy a campfire and then sleep in deluxe accommodations with all the amenities of home.



Camping

Yellow River/Palisades-Kepler

Camping in a tent is a tradition that is older than Iowa's state park system but that remains a popular choice for many. Tent campers often require few amenities and prefer to be in a more natural environment than those camping in the more sophisticated, larger trailers and motor homes.

For those who really want to get away I recommend the hike-in sites at Yellow River State Forest. Four main sites have been designated for hike-in campers at various places in this 8,000-acre forest. The hike can be as short as a quarter mile or as long as four miles

Special Event

Fort Atkinson Rendezvous

The Ft. Atkinson Rendezvous has been held for more than 25 years the last full weekend in September (Sept. 25-26, 2004). For these two days, 160 teepees and canvas lodges are set up on the grounds of the 1840s military fort, along with period food vendors, cannon demonstrations, tomahawk throwing and an assortment of other period activities. Thousands of visitors come from all

over Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin to smell the smoke from black-powder guns, watch tomahawk throwers split a playing card in two, hear and watch cannons fire and witness life as it was at the fort during the 1840s.

For more information about the event call 563/425-4161.

The trails start at the forest headquarters where you can fill your water bottles, obtain a map and register at a self-registration station. There is no fee charged for camping in the hike-in campsites.

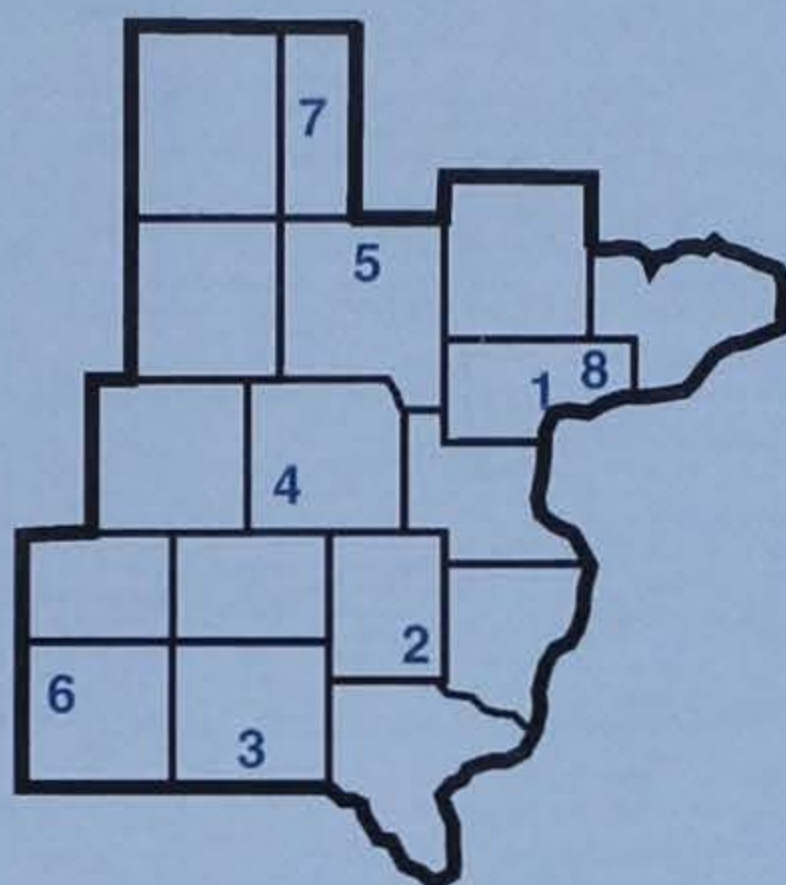
The Little Paint and Big Paint campgrounds in the heart of Yellow River State Forest are nice places for tent campers who don't want to carry their gear. These more traditional campgrounds offer a parking place, a picnic table and a fire ring. The standard non-modern camping fee is charged at the self-registration site at the entrance of each campground. There are no flush toilets or showers but there are pit-toilets in each campground and water is available at the forest headquarters.

Staying in modern campgrounds with recreational vehicles is the state's most popular kind of camping. Most of the campgrounds in the state now offer level sites, modern rest rooms, shower houses, electricity and sewage dump stations. At Backbone, Palisades and Pikes Peak state parks there is sometimes a need to arrive at the park before Friday to ensure getting a spot.

Palisades-Kepler State Park's campground was renovated only a few years ago to better accommodate large trailers and motor homes. Sites were made level and constructed with gravel lanes to support the larger vehicles when the sites are wet from recent rains. At the same time, new fire rings and renovated picnic tables were added to the sites. A modern shower house, updated camper registration station, new sewage dump station and newly paved roads are amenities we get lots of compliments on. A campground host camps in the campground and provides visitor services.

Southeast

by Tim Yancy



Park/County Phone Number

- 1 Fairport/Muscatine
563/263-3197
- 2 Geode/Henry
319/392-4601
- 3 Lacey-Keosauqua/Van Buren
319/293-3502
- 4 Lake Darling/Washington
319/694-2323
- 5 Lake Macbride/Johnson
319/624-2200
- 6 Lake Wapello/Davis
641/722-3371
- 7 Pleasant Creek/Linn
319/436-7716
- 8 Wildcat Den/Muscatine
563/263-4337

Family Favorite

Lake Macbride

Families looking for a park that provides the best opportunities for all ages should make the trip to Lake Macbride State Park.

There are two camp areas. The north unit has modern electrical sites and facilities, and easy access to Coralville Reservoir. Two playgrounds are in close proximity to the camp area. The south unit, located on the lake, is non-modern. There are seven boat ramps, an area designed specifically for sailboats, an area just for windsurfers and a Frisbee golf course.

The lake offers a variety of fishing and boating opportunities. The concession operation is one of the largest in Iowa, providing canoes, paddleboats, rowboats, motorboats and even pontoons for rent. The beach is a great place for young and old alike to cool off on a hot summer day, and refreshments are available on site. A multi-use trail extends from Solon to Lake Macbride and is open to hiking, biking and in the winter, snowmobiling.

History/Off-Season Visits

Lacey-Keosauqua/Wildcat Den

If you are interested in history, two parks offer developed sites detailing life in early Iowa. Ely Ford, on the Des Moines River in Lacey-Keosauqua State Park, is the site where the Mormons crossed the river on their trek from Nauvoo, Ill. to Salt Lake City, Utah. It is part of the Mormon Trek trail system and is visited by many of that faith throughout the year. If you stand on the bank of the river when the water is low, you easily see why the Mormons chose this location to cross what

would have been a formidable obstacle for wagons or those on foot. There is a trail that connects Keosauqua to the park. Hikers can enjoy the view as the trail follows along the Des Moines River, and a number of Woodland Culture Indian mounds are located along the trail.

The Pine Creek Grist Mill at Wildcat Den State Park is one of a very few water-powered gristmills operating in the Midwest. It was originally built by Benjamin Nye in the 1840s and has undergone many changes during its history. The state acquired the site and it sat virtually untouched until the late 1980s when a group of interested citizens formed the Friend's of Pine Creek Grist Mill and seriously set about restoring it. In cooperation with the group and state employees, the water turbine was

excavated and restored to operating condition. Major structural renovation was done to the mill and a fire suppression system installed. Currently the mill operates on a regular schedule during the summer, staffed by members of the Friend's group and temporary workers they hire. The attraction receives thousands of

carved by flowing water and shaded by large mature trees. The fall colors are often spectacular and the park receives only moderate use, so having a quiet, solitary experience is often a real possibility.

Lacey-Keosauqua is covered with a mature forest of mixed varieties that put on a spectacular display of color during the fall. The second weekend in October the Forest Craft Festival is held at the park (see page 19).

Outdoor Fun

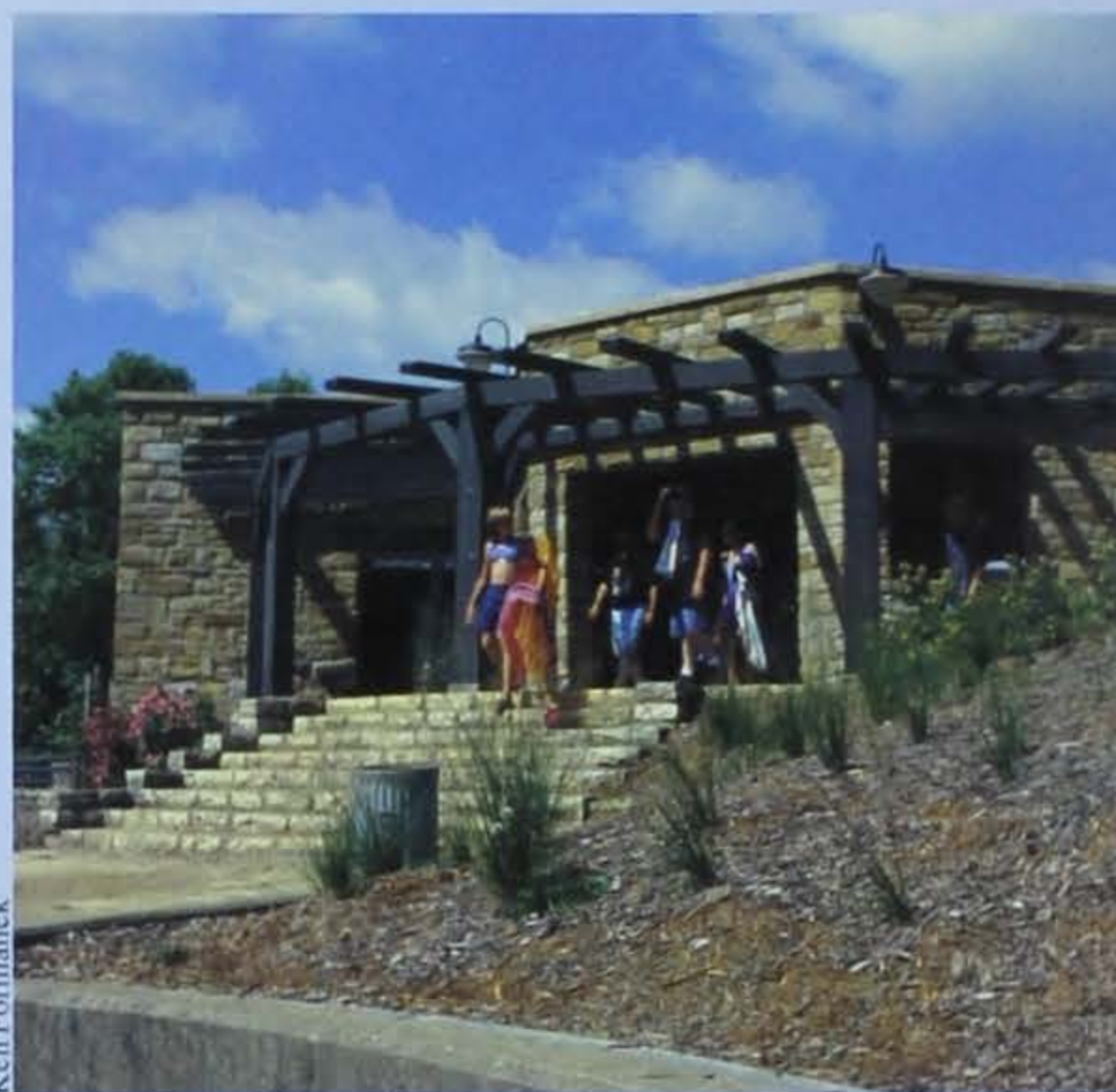
Nontraditional *Pleasant Creek*

Equestrians may want to check out the trails at Pleasant Creek State Recreation Area. There is a staging area for horses separate from the regular facilities. This area also has one of the few dog trial areas on public land.

Trials for many different breeds are held primarily during the spring and fall months. Anyone wishing to use the trial area should contact the park staff for information.

Traditional *Lake Wapello*

Lake Wapello State Park has all of the services anyone could want in a park. The centerpiece of this park is the restored Civilian Conservation Corps beach building housing a restaurant overlooking the lake. There are 13 modern cabins available for rent, a modern camping area, concession with boat rental and a large swimming beach. Hiking trails



Lake Wapello Beach Building

visitors from all over the United States and abroad each year. The Heritage Days festival is held in the fall each year on the site of the 1840s gristmill. This year's event is Sept. 18-19. Period artisans and vendors set up in the park, steam engines thresh grain and tours of the operating mill are given at regular intervals.

Southern parks enjoy a season that can extend several months longer than their northern counterparts. The fall is a particularly beautiful time to visit, with little competition from other users.

Wildcat Den State Park offers a great fall experience. The trail system winds through a canyon



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Wildcat Den

circle the lake and fishing has been excellent during the past several seasons.

Camping

If you are an RV camper that prefers modern facilities, Lake Darling in Washington County is a good choice. The majority of the sites are level and can accommodate larger RV units. There are eight full-hookup sites, the only ones in the district. The park also offers fishing, hiking, swimming and boat rental.

Pleasant Creek State Recreation Area is also a favorite of RV campers because all of the sites are level with many pull-through pads. The lake has 24-hour access at the main boat ramp. There is a full service concession that offers many types of boats for rent as well as bait and tackle. The concession at the beach has a variety of food service, and modern shower and rest room facilities.

Another popular choice is the Fairport Recreation Area located on the Mississippi River upstream from

Muscatine. The camp area is right on the river and has two boat ramps providing access to the Mississippi. The sites are all level and filled most every weekend during the summer. All of the sites are electric and there is a modern shower and toilet facility, playground and large parking areas for vehicles with boats.

For the more traditional tent camper, there are a couple of parks to consider. While all of the parks in the southeast district have tent camping, Lacey-Keosauqua

State Park is a favorite. The camp area is heavily wooded, providing

excellent shade during the hot summer days. Modern facilities are a short walk from any site. There is an extensive trail system, a small lake, and concession for boat rental and refreshments.

Wildcat Den offers a more primitive camping experience. There are no modern facilities in the camp area but tent campers use it extensively. The camp area is well-shaded and its hilltop location provides better air circulation and a cooler camping experience. The trail system is well marked and winds through a canyon with many natural features.

Special Event Forest Craft Festival

During the second weekend in October (Oct. 9-10, 2004) the Forest Craft Festival is held at Lacey-

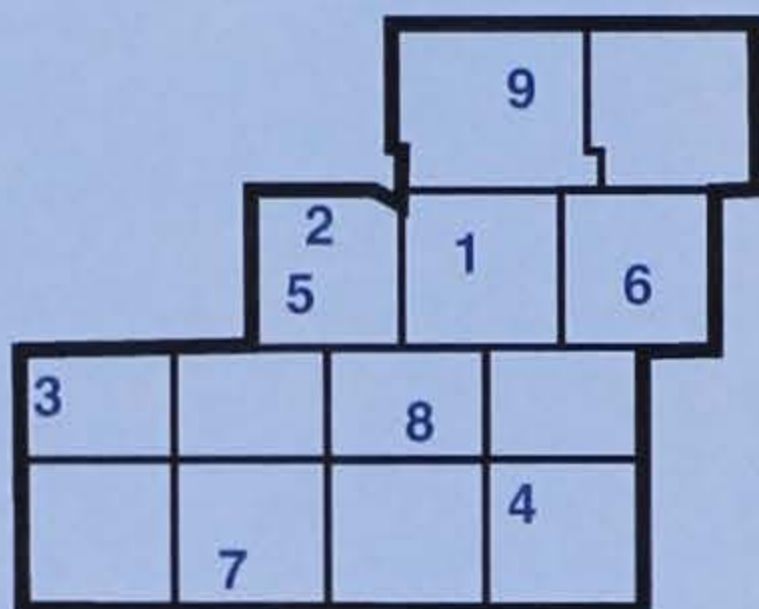


Keosauqua State Park. It has been an annual event for more than 25 years and is attended by thousands. Activities include a free lumberjack show three times each day with log rolling, pole climbing, chopping and sawing contests. A full-service concession is operated during the festival, offering hot meals and refreshments. Many vendors attend the event to sell products made entirely of wood. Everything from small, carved figurines to full-sized furniture can be purchased. A buckskinners rendezvous is held during the festival at the Ely Ford site and as many as 30 lodges are set up to demonstrate the living conditions and activities of early Iowa settlers. Admission to the event is free. For more information contact the park office or Villages of Van Buren Office of Tourism at 800/868-7822.

DNR photo

South-central

by Jim Lawson



Park/County Phone Number

- 1 Elk Rock/Marion
641/842-6008
- 2 Banner Lakes at Summerset/Warren
515/961-7101
- 3 Green Valley/Union
641/782-5131
- 4 Honey Creek/Appanoose
641/724-3739
- 5 Lake Ahquabi/Warren
515/961-7101
- 6 Lake Keomah/Mahaska
641/673-6975
- 7 Nine Eagles/Decatur
641/442-2855
- 8 Red Haw/Lucas
641/774-5632
- 9 Rock Creek/Jasper
641/236-3722

Outdoor Fun

Nontraditional
Elk Rock

Elk Rock State Park is located on the shores of Lake Red Rock, Iowa's largest federal impoundment. Its location makes it ideal for experiencing a variety of activities. Horseback riders, mountain bikers and hikers, for example, like the 13-mile multi-use trail system, which radiates from the equestrian campground areas. There are also additional trails available on adjacent land maintained by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Recent improvements to the equestrian camp area and the trail system have made the area more attractive than ever. Guests at the Elk Rock campground will find the newly completed playground and recently renovated horse stalls welcome improvements.

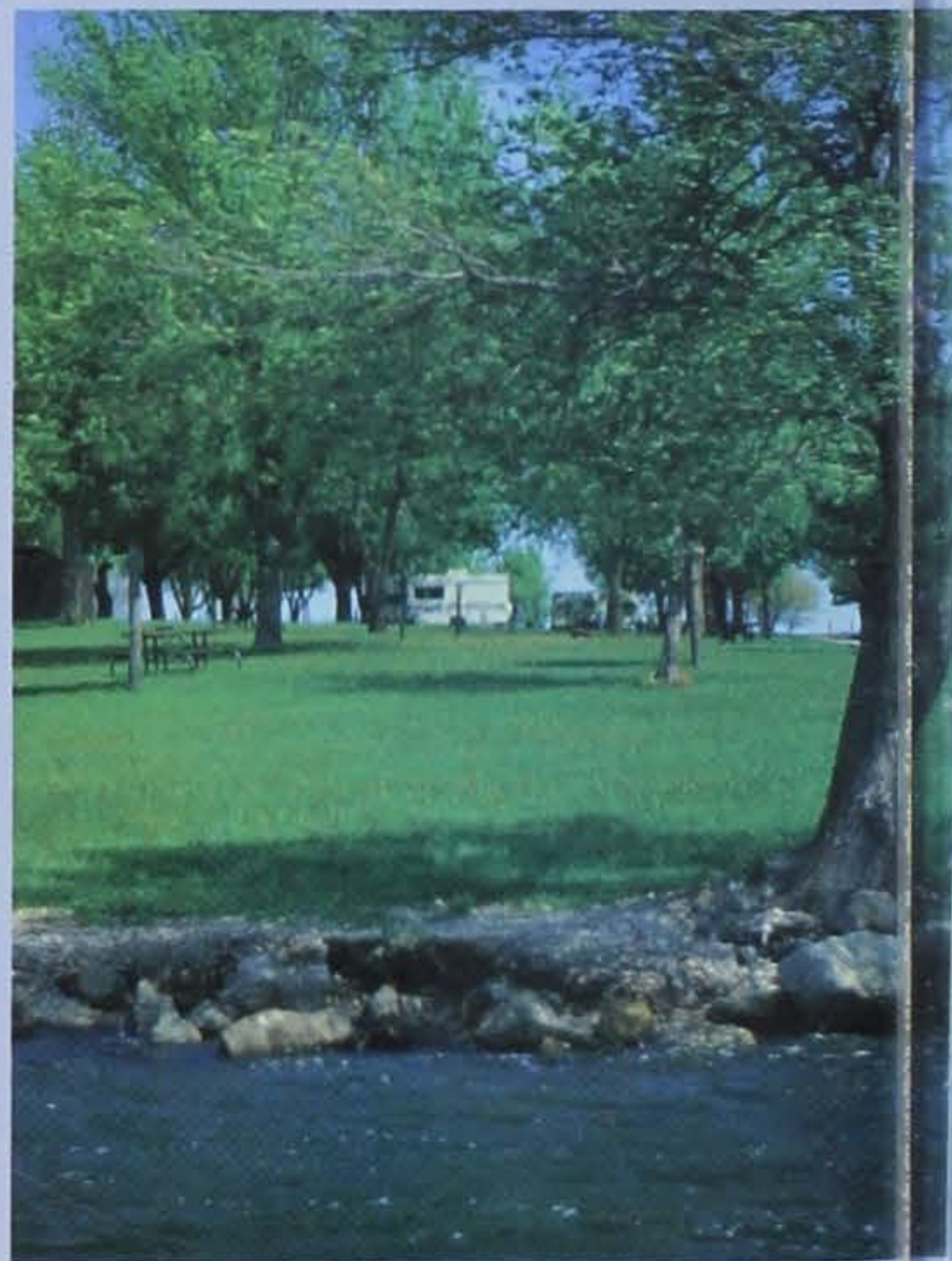
Traditional
Green Valley

Green Valley State Park offers visitors excellent fishing, boating and swimming opportunities. The beach on the 390-acre lake is a great place to cool off on a hot summer day. The lake has long been a popular spot with both shore and boat anglers. Four boat ramps provide convenient access to the lake. A number of fishing jetties are available, as well as two fishing piers for those with varying mobility. There are two modern fish-cleaning stations located in the campground near the beach. Multi-purpose trails bordering the lake provide additional fishing access and excellent opportunities to investigate the

990-acre park and its flora and fauna. Adjacent to the modern campground are two rustic, log camping cabins available for rent. The cabins have electricity, a covered porch, basic furnishings and a dock for overnight mooring. Visitors must provide their own bedding, towels, cooking utensils and other camping items. Shower and toilet facilities are located in the campground.

Quiet Getaway
Nine Eagles

Rugged wooded hills and valleys abundant with oak trees make Nine Eagles one of southern Iowa's most scenic parks. The 1,100-acre area has several trees more than 300 years old. Visitors have access to six miles of bridle and four miles of hiking trails, a swimming beach and two modern campgrounds. The recent addition of two open picnic



Green Valley

shelters and two new playground areas provide a welcome addition to the existing facilities.

The 64-acre lake is one of the most clear artificial impoundments in the state. With the exception of electric motors, only non-motorized boats are permitted on the lake. Bass, channel catfish, bluegill and crappie are abundant and provide hours of enjoyment for the anxious angler. For those seeking a more relaxed outdoor experience, Nine Eagles is well worth the drive.

Family Favorite

Lake Ahquabi

Nationally known political cartoonist and conservationist J.N. "Ding" Darling is credited with locating and recommending the site of Lake Ahquabi State Park. He obviously knew a good thing when he saw it. Located near Indianola and Simpson College, Lake Ahquabi has been a popular destination since its dedication in 1936.

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) constructed many of the structures in the 1930s, and during the past few years, all of these historic buildings have been renovated. One of the showpiece structures — the lodge — overlooks the lake, and is a much-sought-after spot for family reunions, weddings and other special occasions.

The lake itself was recently renovated and now provides excellent fishing for catfish, bass and panfish. An en-



Nine Eagles

closed dock makes fishing possible even during the dreariest weather. Canoes, paddle boats, kayaks and motorboats are available for rent from the concessionaire, adjacent to the ever-popular beach. The shore-front campground, nearby picnic area and a playground for the kids rounds out this ideal setting for a family outing.

Off-season Visits

Honey Creek

Visitors to Honey Creek State Park will enjoy beautiful timbered hills against the scenic background of Lake Rathbun. The lake was constructed in 1969 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as flood protection for 149,300 acres of land along

the Chariton River. Today, the lake provides an 11,000-acre playground for sail boaters, power boaters, waterskiers and anglers.

Honey Creek is a favorite camping destination. Facilities are available year-round, providing a unique opportunity for those who enjoy fall camping or winter activities such as snowmobiling or ice fishing. The Honey Creek campground underwent a face-lift this spring, adding sites and upgrading current electrical hookups to 50 amps. Future plans include the construction of four camping cabins adjacent to the campground, which will be available on a year-round basis.

Camping

Rock Creek

Rock Creek's campground serves nearly 33,000 campers each year and is the second busiest campground in the state park system (next to the Great Lakes complex). Its close proximity to Interstate 80 makes it a popular overnight stop for travelers.

The park, officially dedicated in 1952, is one of central Iowa's largest. The 491-acre Rock Creek Lake is the third largest state-operated impoundment. A multi-use trail system attracts numerous hikers,

horseback riders, cross-country skiers and snowmobilers throughout the year. The beach provides an ideal spot to sunbathe and swim. The lake's 15 miles of shoreline give anglers a chance to try their hand at catching bass, crappie, bluegill, catfish, saugeye and bullhead.

Lake Ahquabi Lodge



Southwest

by Robert Schierbaum



Park/County Phone Number

- 1 Lake Anita/Cass
712/762-3564
- 2 Lake Manawa/Pottawattamie
712/366-0220
- 3 Lake of Three Fires/Taylor
712/523-2700
- 4 Prairie Rose/Shelby
712/773-2701
- 5 Springbrook/Guthrie
641/747-3591
- 6 Viking Lake/Montgomery
712/829-2235
- 7 Waubonsie/Fremont
712/382-2786
- 8 Wilson Island/Pottawattamie
712/642-2069

Outdoor Fun

Nontraditional Lake Manawa

Serious (and not-so-serious) bicyclists will find a unique opportunity at Lake Manawa. The park offers a wonderful paved recreation trail that connects to the Wabash Trace Nature Trail, a nationally recognized rail trail. The Wabash Trace, with its crushed limestone surface, runs more than 60 miles south to Blanchard on the Iowa-Missouri border. For approximately 10 miles, from Council Bluffs to Mineola, an equestrian trail parallels the Trace.

For the ATV rider, there is an ATV park four miles from Lake Manawa on Highway 92/275 along the Missouri River.

Lake Manawa is one of southwest Iowa's few natural lakes. With 660 acres, it is a water lover's dream — a top-pick for boaters, windsurfers, water-skiers and jetskiers. The park also has a boat ramp on the Missouri for those who prefer river recreation.

Lake Manawa Beach



Traditional Viking Lake

If you are looking for a state park with all the standard recreational opportunities, a number of southwest parks could fill the bill, but the one that comes to mind first is Viking Lake. Fishing has always been a popular and productive activity at Viking, as well as hiking the trails that showcase the natural features of the park. But, probably the most popular activity at Viking is pontoon boating. Many pontoon boats are docked at the park during the recreation season. For those without a boat, the Viking Lake concession has pontoons for rent, as well as fishing boats, paddleboats, canoes and aqua cycles. Live bait, fishing tackle, and other supplies and convenience items are also available at the concession, in addition to a full-service restaurant.

A sandy beach with a new shelter awaits the swimmers and sun worshipers, and a first-class campground welcomes Viking's overnight guests. The newly remodeled and



Viking Pontoons

relocated campground is nestled between two arms of the lake, providing a unique close-to-the-water camping experience.

Quiet Getaway/Off-Season Visits

Waubonsie

Waubonsie State Park is known for its mature forest, prairie-covered ridges and some of the most majestic views to be found anywhere. When it comes to an overlook, few areas can match the scenic splendor of this Loess Hills park. Waubonsie's breathtaking view to the west captures four states and the Missouri River traveled by Lewis and Clark 200 years ago.

Fall and spring are particularly popular seasons at Waubonsie. Spring will find the park full of people in search of the coveted morel mushroom, or viewing the wildflowers and abundant wildlife. In the fall, the trees put on a great fall color display that

attracts visitors from great distances. The hiking trails are often busy, as are the equestrian trails.

Family Favorite

Springbrook/Lake of Three Fires

A couple of southwest Iowa parks, ideal for young families, are Springbrook and Lake of Three Fires. For the busy family, cabins may be just the way to go, and both parks have them available for rent. No need worrying about a tent and a lot of gear, or the expense of a recreational vehicle; cabins are reasonably priced and make for a quick outdoor getaway. The only drawback is cabin reservations are taken beginning in January and dates are booked quickly. A little planning is needed, but well worth it. Springbrook's cabins are located in a beautiful wooded setting and Lake of Three Fires' overlook the lake. Three Fires' cabins have been renovated to include heating and air conditioning, and therefore are available year-round.

Whether you camp in a tent or an RV, or stay at one of the cabins, there is plenty to do at both parks once you get there. Both offer great hiking opportunities. Both have lakes where fishing, swimming and canoeing are options. And both have playgrounds for small children to enjoy.

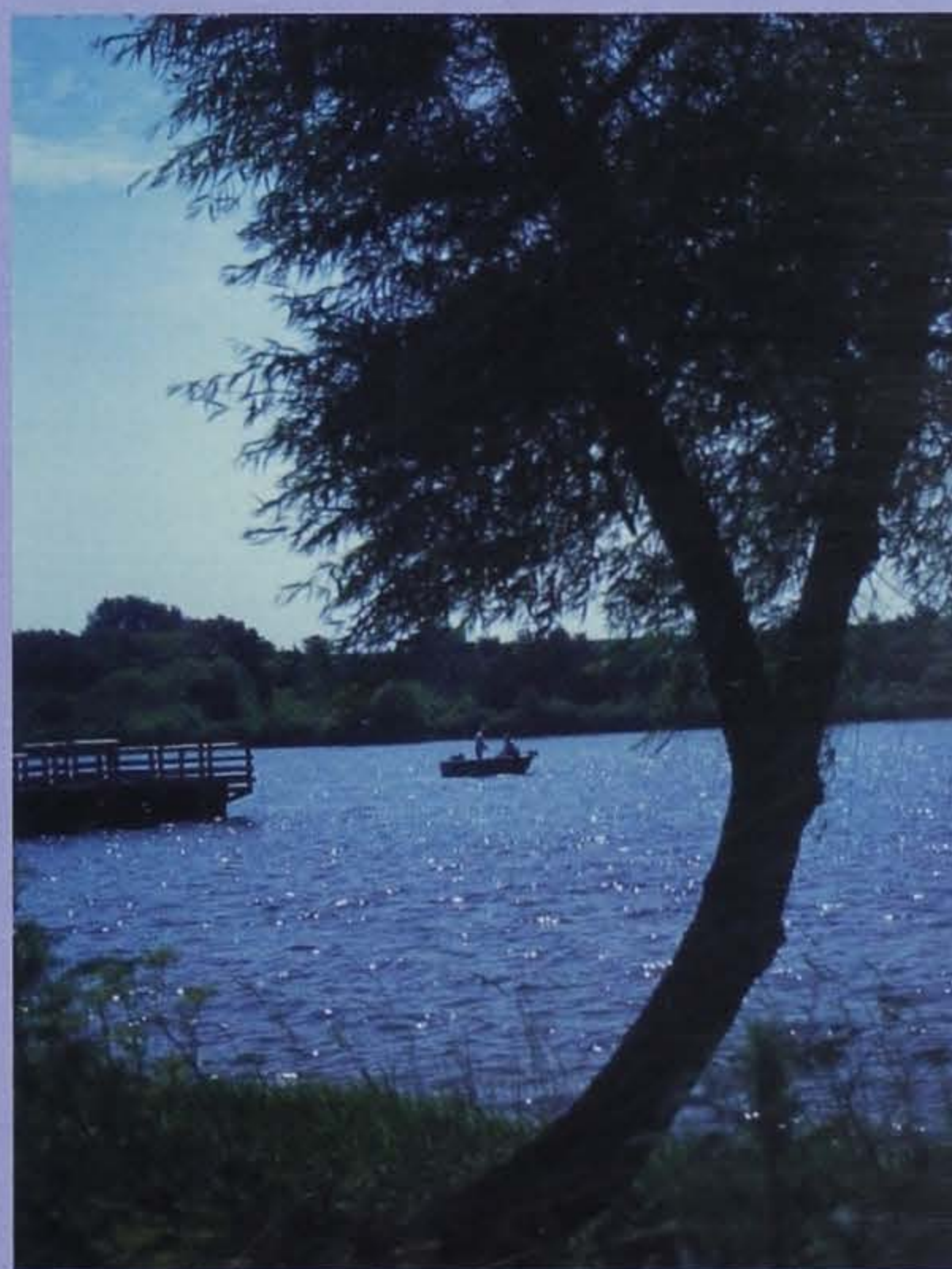
Springbrook has a store located in the campground, while Lake of Three Fires offers equestrian facilities for families that enjoy the outdoors from the back of a horse.

Camping

Viking Lake/Wilson Island

Worth mentioning again is Viking, with its relocated campground and new facilities nestled in a picturesque fork of the lake.

Wilson Island State Park may offer something many parks do not — a campground with plenty of space. Wilson Island is located next to the Missouri River and has some of the most spacious campsites of any park. So if you are looking for that spot without someone "right on top of you," Wilson Island is the place.



Lake of Three Fires



Make the Most of Your State Park Visit With These Publications

Contact the Department of Natural Resources for a copy of the *Iowa State Parks & Recreation Areas Guide*.

Individual park brochures are available at the parks or can be downloaded at the web site address below.

Contact the Iowa Tourism Office toll-free at 888-472-6035 or www.traveliowa.com for an *Iowa Transportation Map* and an *Iowa Travel Guide/Calendar of Events*. Use these to check out the local communities, nearby attractions and festivals while visiting a state park.

www.exploreiowaparks.com

William and Jan Barr of Villisca, (pictured with Viking Lake Park Ranger Gary Poen, Parks Bureau Chief Kevin Szcodronski and Viking Lake Park Manager Todd Carrick), won a year of free camping in Iowa state parks – the first place prize.



2003 Explore Iowa Parks Grand Prize Winners



Roger and Theresa Finken (above) of Indianola won the second place Trek mountain bike donated by Bike World. Gordon and Elaine (left) Wagner of Waterloo won the third place \$100 gift certificate from Cabela's.

Explore Iowa Parks



Earn Prizes by Camping!

The Explore Iowa Parks program gives campers a chance to enjoy Iowa's state parks and earn prizes like a free postcard collection, a free one-year subscription to the *Iowa Conservationist* or even one of **three grand prizes**. An entry blank is available below.



For contest rules and more information visit www.exploreiowaparks.com or contact the DNR at the address below.

Grand Prizes

1st Place

One year of FREE camping in Iowa State Parks, Recreation Areas and Forests!

2nd Place

Camping Gear Package (\$250 retail value) donated by

**SPORTSMAN'S
WAREHOUSE**
HUNTING • FISHING • CAMPING • RELOADING • OUTERWEAR • FOOTWEAR

921 SE Oralabor Rd
Ankeny, Iowa 50021
515/963-3500

3rd Place

Camping coupon book good for 7 nights of camping Iowa state parks, recreation areas and forests (\$91 value)

Entry Form

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone number _____

Email address _____

Total Number of Campgrounds Visited: _____

- ☐ AA Call
- ☐ Backbone
- ☐ Beed's Lake
- ☐ Bellevue
- ☐ Black Hawk
- ☐ Brushy Creek
- ☐ Clear Lake
- ☐ Dolliver Memorial
- ☐ Elinor Bedell
- ☐ Elk Rock
- ☐ Fairport
- ☐ Ft. Defiance
- ☐ Geode
- ☐ George Wyth
- ☐ Green Valley
- ☐ Gull Pt. complex*
- ☐ Honey Creek
- ☐ Lacey Keosauqua
- ☐ Lake Ahquabi
- ☐ Lake Anita

- ☐ Lake Darling
- ☐ Lake Keomah
- ☐ Lake Macbride
- ☐ Lake Manawa
- ☐ Lake of 3 Fires
- ☐ Lake Wapello
- ☐ Ledges
- ☐ Lewis & Clark
- ☐ McIntosh Woods
- ☐ Maquoketa Caves
- ☐ Nine Eagles
- ☐ Palisades-Kepler
- ☐ Pikes Peak
- ☐ Pilot Knob
- ☐ Pine Lake
- ☐ Pleasant Creek
- ☐ Prairie Rose
- ☐ Preparation Canyon
- ☐ Red Haw
- ☐ Rock Creek

- ☐ Shimek Forest
- ☐ Springbrook
- ☐ Stephens Forest
- ☐ Stone
- ☐ Union Grove
- ☐ Viking Lake
- ☐ Volga River
- ☐ Walnut Woods
- ☐ Wapsipinicon
- ☐ Waubonsie
- ☐ Wildcat Den
- ☐ Wilson Island
- ☐ Yellow River

*Gull Pt. complex consists of Gull Point, Emerson Bay and/or Marble Beach campgrounds and only counts once.

Please check the parks you camped.

Mail your camping registration forms (originals only) and this entry form together in one envelope to the address below by **November 1, 2004**.

Explore Iowa Parks . Iowa Department of Natural Resources . 502 East 9th Street . Des Moines, IA 50319-0034



Hunt's craftsmanship can be found in virtually every state park in Iowa, from the classic brown and gold signs (bottom right), to the sturdy dorm furniture at the Springbrook Conservation Education Center (far right), to the detailed cabinetry found in the new bobcat display (upper right) at Waubonsie State Park. Also, some of the lodge furnishings seen on pages 30-35 are Hunt's handywork.

THE Mastery OF Milt

by Joe Wilkinson
Photos by Clay Smith

You've seen Milt Hunt's work. You've sat on it; eaten from it, followed it to your favorite state park. Soon, under his sharp eye and trained hands, it will lead you back in time.

"It's going to be a prairie schooner," explains Hunt, showing the rough sketch and the wooden wheel hub he is assembling in the DNR's carpenter shop. The covered wagon will be a full-size replica of the mule- or oxen-drawn wagon that delivered countless thousands of 19th century settlers out West. The hands-on display is especially fitting as Iowa and the nation pay tribute to the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark "Voyage of Discovery." It is also a diversion from his routine of turning out thousands of signs and dozens of pieces of quality wood furniture for Iowa state parks.

About half the size of the massive Conestoga wagon, the icon of the Oregon Trail movement is the most out-of-the-ordinary project Hunt has tackled in his half-century-plus with the Department of Natural Resources and its predecessor, the Conservation Commission. Laughing at a suggestion that he is building the covered wagon from memory, he actually found the details on the Internet.

"I looked up a Sears Catalog from

the late 1800s. They sold them. Studebaker made them," confides Hunt. "Each wheel has 16 spokes; 3 inches wide at the hub, tapering to 2 inches at the outer edge. It is a challenge making the wheels — they're different sizes from front to back. That's what's exciting to me. I love challenges like that."

State park visitors have depended on Hunt's work for decades. If you have followed a sign to the beach; or sat, eaten or slept in one of the lodges or cabins; you know it. He has made the signs in every Iowa state park. Any lodge or cabin features his furniture; in some, his woodworking.

Hunt remembers the old, heavy wooden signs; hand cut, routed and painted. "I took 90 of those to my first statewide parks meeting, to hand out," he recalls. "I thought that was really something." Now, most signs are aluminum with pressure sensitive plastic lettering. Hunt and assistant Tim Schutt crank out 10,000 a year at their Lake Macbride State Park shop.

Yet, while the signs are important pieces of Iowa's outdoor recreation scene, the other element of Hunt's workload brings a smile to his face.

"I would much rather make furniture," he admits. "It's more



challenging.” His woodcrafting brings rave reviews from park users who see the benches, drop-leaf tables, bunk beds and futons in lodges and cabins. Their sturdy, outdoorsy look blends perfectly in a lodge setting, but precise cuts and joints belie a craftsman’s touch. Mortis and tenon joints provide the sturdy feel and look. The round blocks outside complete the look, making them look peg-assembled.

“We have seen an increase in

lodge use in the last two or three years here. A lot of that is due to the quality of the tables and woodwork,” said Ron Puettmann, park manager at Lake Macbride State Park. “We get many nice compliments. People tell us that ‘to find that kind of craftsmanship these days is rare.’”

Walnut tables grace the lodge at Bellevue State Park. “They add character to the setting, without seeming too simple,” assesses park manager Shannon Petersen. “People

tell us, ‘it looks so nice,’ when they’ve used them.”

Occasionally, other challenges come Hunt’s way. “Four years ago, we re-caned chairs from Gull Point (State Park) at Spirit Lake. That was different. We had some good help on that project. Natural caning on 85 pieces of furniture!”

His memories flesh out a pretty good timeline of the state park system in Iowa. After all, it was conceived not too many years *before* Oral Milton Hunt went to work as a laborer at Lake Ahquabi State Park in 1951. A graduate of nearby Indianola High School, Hunt’s family had moved there from Lester and earlier from Bronson in northwest Iowa. Building things seemed to come easily — and early.

“I remember my first work bench, when I was 10 years old,” recalls Hunt. “It was two 1x12 boards on a sewing machine stand. It’s all I’ve ever known.”

As a park laborer, he did routine maintenance. “One day, Ed Meyers — the park officer — asked me to cover a ventilation opening in the walk-in cooler,” recalls Hunt. “I built a grill for it. I’ve been building things ever since.”



In 1956, he went to Red Haw State Park as the park ranger. In 1961, it was off to Clear Lake and MacIntosh Woods parks. When the carpenter's job came open in 1965, he was a natural fit. There hasn't been much turnover, since that position was established in 1941. Hunt took over for Roy Reed, who was leaving. Paul Wears was the "other guy" in the shop, already there for 15 years. He would stay another 20 before retiring. Schutt and other seasonal workers filled the gap for several years, before Schutt was hired full-time, 10 years ago.

While many of his creations are standard, Hunt does get to use his imagination frequently. "There was an old U-shaped conference room table," he recalls. "We dismantled and then rebuilt it, to be moved in pieces in an elevator. I always wonder what happened to that." An oak and glass case was just delivered to Waubonsie State Park. A mounted bobcat will be display



Hunt's shop is located at Lake Macbride State Park (top). Hunt loves a challenge and currently it is designing and building a covered wagon. Research has taken him to old Sears-Roebuck catalogs (above) for ideas. Above right, Hunt works on one of the wagon wheels.



inside it this summer. "There was also small pyramid; a three sided conversation piece on (then Division Administrator) Mance Ellerhoff's desk. I really scratched my head quite a bit to figure that one out," Hunt admits.

From his shop window now, he looks across the water to the beach and concession area of Lake Macbride, one of Iowa's busiest state parks. With nearly 40 years here, and a fifth decade before that in state parks, Hunt has seen changes.

"There are a lot more signs to be made now. The way we make them has changed significantly," admits Hunt. And how about the parks



themselves? "Lots of 'day use' (picnicking, hiking, sight-seeing) back then. Some days, we had to turn people away at Ahquabi. There were no more parking places," he reminisces. "It was mostly tent camping. There were a couple fold downs or small trailers. There was no such thing as an RV back then. And there was no designated camping area; no special facilities like we have now."

Now, parks feature electric plug ins, concrete camp pads, hot showers and attract \$100,000 houses on wheels. Still, the premise remains the same; to enjoy the outdoors. The same is true for Hunt's world. More tools are

electric; the drills might be cordless, but they still work the wood. "There has been a lot of renovation of the old CCC-era lodges and buildings," reminds Hunt. "At Backbone, Lake of Three Fires, Beeds Lake. When they are renovated, they need furniture, so it's 'call on Milt.'"

But how much longer will they be calling on Milt? In an era of job-hopping, dot-com startups and plant relocations, 10 or 20 years seems like a mountain of time in the job market. Hunt's 53 years with the same employer — and counting — rates somewhere above Mount Everest! His son, Alan, lives nearby in Solon.

Daughter Jan is in Blue Springs, Mo. Is he perhaps tipping his hand, as he mentions that his wife Jo is retiring this spring?

"You bet," he says with a smile when asked if he has any plans for retirement. Does he want to share those yet? "No." For now, the answer is like that little desk pyramid. Just leaves you scratching your head.

Besides, there is a covered wagon to finish.

Joe Wilkinson is an information specialist with the department in Iowa City.



Ken Formanek

For more than a half a century, they have served as beautiful gathering places for weddings, family reunions, holiday parties and other special events. Most are monuments to the Depression-era workforce that built them — the young men of the Civilian Conservation Corps and Work Progress Administration. Iowa's state parks are fortunate to have these and other great structures of stone and timber, and in recent years most have undergone significant renovation. Take a look at some of Iowa's great

Lodges

Photos by Clay Smith



State Parks with Lodges

Park/County

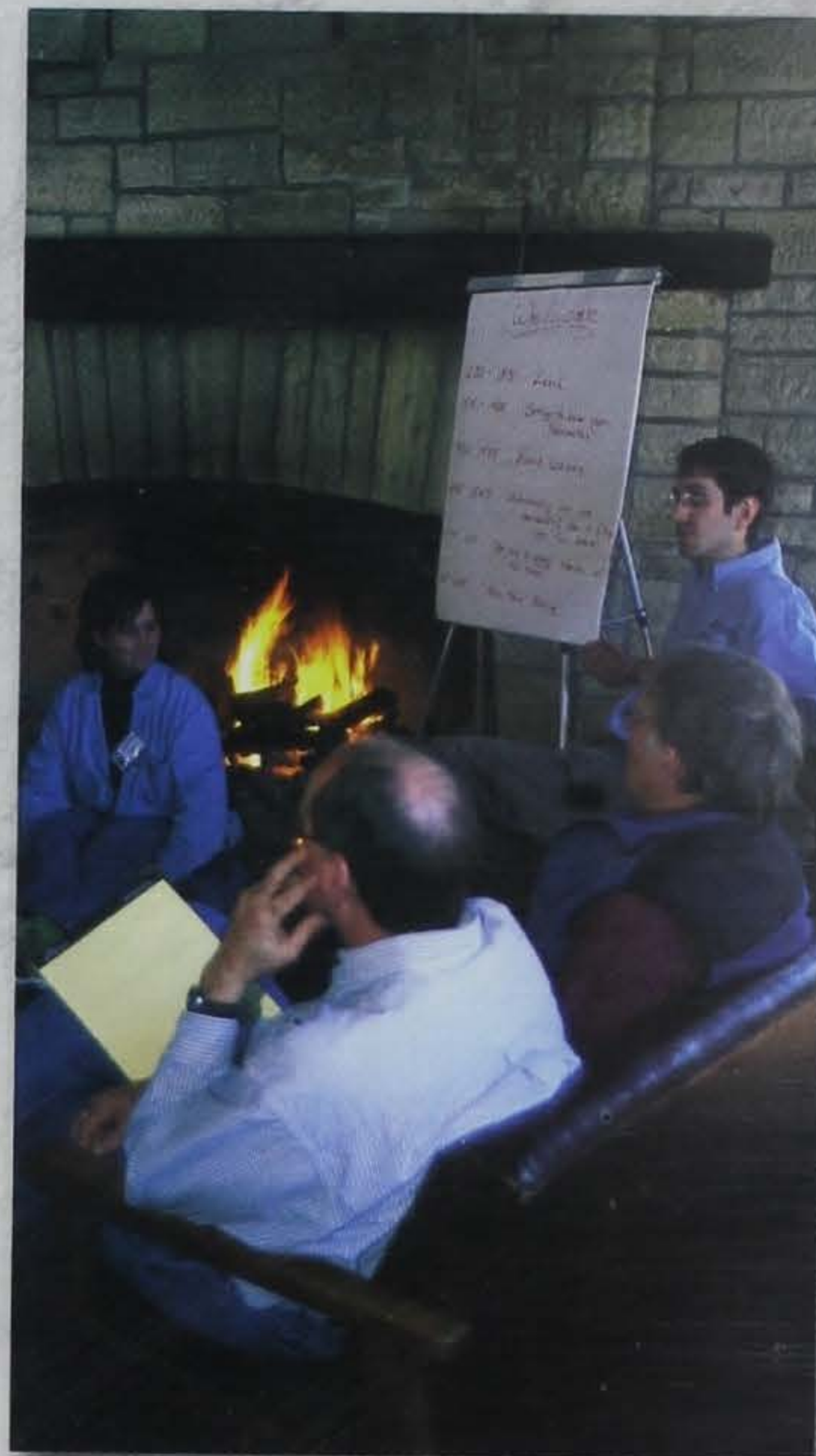
AACall/Kossuth
 Backbone/Delaware
 Beed's Lake/Franklin
 Bellevue/Jackson
 Clear Lake/Cerro Gordo
 Dolliver/Webster
 Ft Defiance/Emmet
 George Wyth/Black Hawk
 Gull Point/Dickinson
 Lacey-Keosauqua/Van Buren
 Lake Ahquabi/Warren
 Lake Keomah/Mahaska
 Lake Macbride/Johnson
 Lake of Three Fires/Taylor
 Lewis & Clark/Monona
 Palisades-Kepler/Linn
 Pine Lake/Hardin
 Pleasant Creek/Linn
 Stone/Woodbury
 Viking Lake/Montgomery
 Walnut Woods/Polk
 Wapsipinicon/Jones



Pine Lake lodge (above), Lake Keomah lodge (left) and detailed light fixtures from Clear Lake lodge and ceiling from Beed's Lake lodge (opposite page).

Thanks to landmark legislation in 1996, known as Restore the Outdoors, \$19 million was appropriated to some desperately needed park projects. Of this money, \$4 million was use for park lodges. Over the past eight years, 14 stone and timber lodges received renovation critical to preserving these treasures.





Walnut Woods (above) and Dolliver (left) lodges.

Nearly all of the rental lodges were constructed of native materials available locally — logs cut from park forests and stone quarried in the parks or nearby. Each lodge has its own unique characteristics, representing the very essence of the state park system.

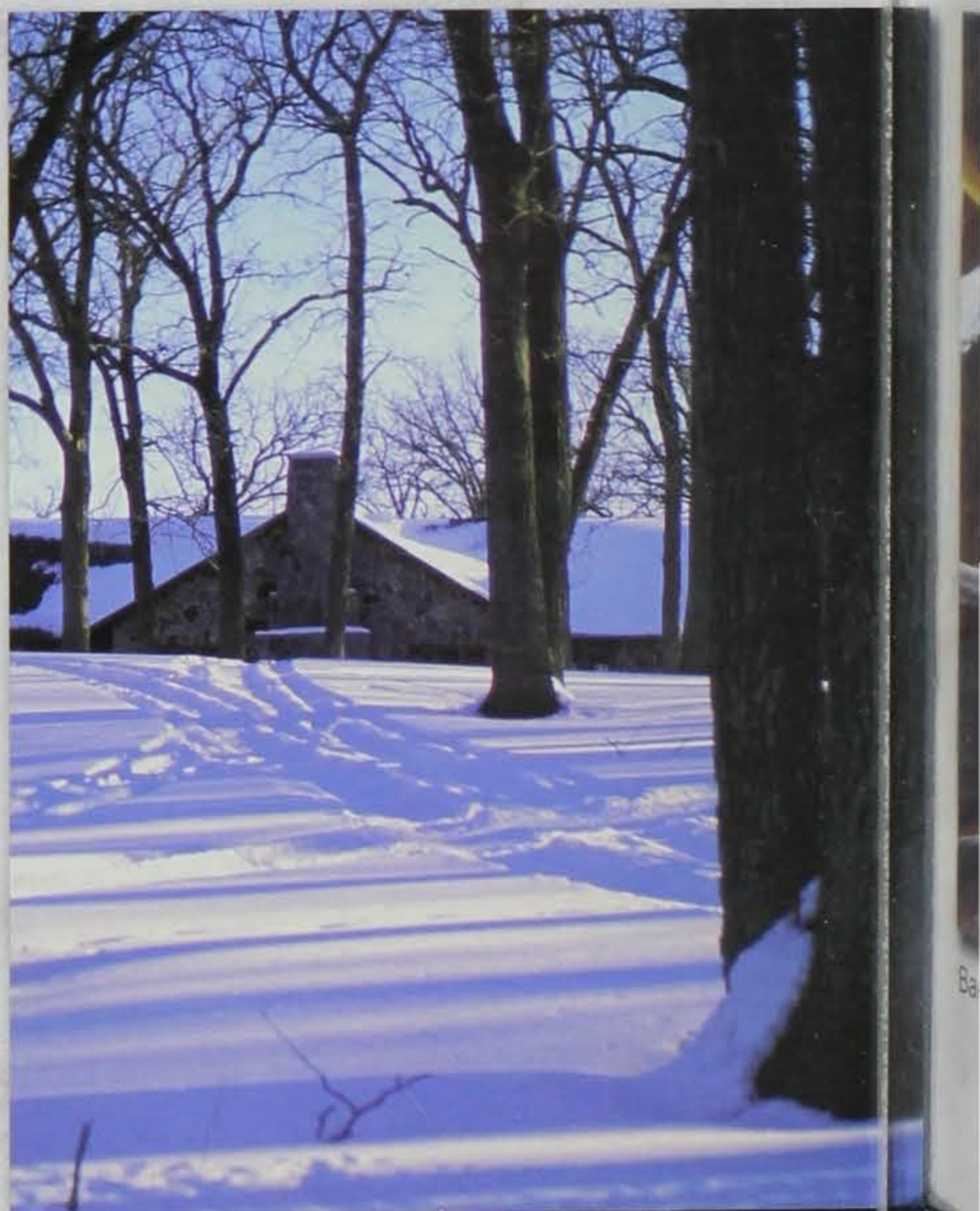
Stone Park lodge dining hall with its detailed fireplace screen (opposite page top and middle). Palisade-Kepler lodge (opposite page bottom), for decades has hosted about 30 weddings per year. It accommodates up to 170 people. As with all park lodges, reservations are taken beginning the first working day of the calendar year.

Park lodges traditionally have been the perfect setting for numerous family reunions, weddings and graduation receptions. Many companies and other organizations are taking advantage of these beautiful structures for meetings, picnics and retreats. In addition to the modern rest rooms and meeting area space, most lodges are equipped with kitchens complete with refrigerators, sinks and stoves and/or microwaves. Rental fees have been reduced by half during the week to increase use by businesses and organizations. In addition, three lodges are available year-round — Walnut Woods, Wapsipinicon and Lacey-Keosauqua. Walnut Woods also has air conditioning.

Maria Flecksing



Kitchen at Walnut Woods and Gull Point lodge (right).





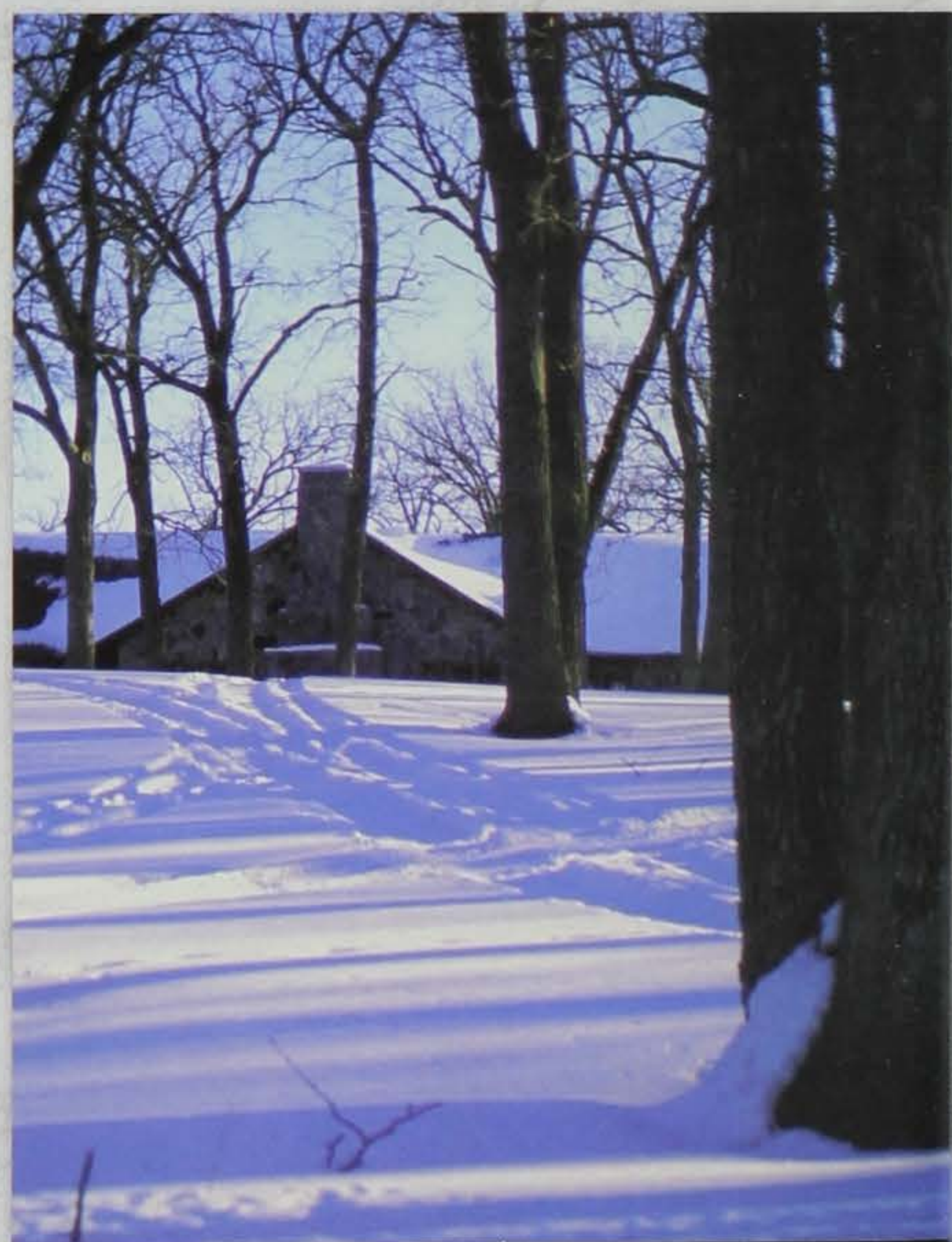
Backbone State Park beach house/lodge (top) and A.A. Call lodge.

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Maria Fleckings



Kitchen at Walnut Woods and Gull Point lodge (right).





Backbone State Park beach house/lodge (top) and A.A. Call lodge.

Something to Cheer About

by Randy Edwards,
DNR Assistant Law Enforcement Chief

Since 1983, Iowa has recorded 140 boating-related fatalities. We have seen as many as 11 fatalities and as few as one during a single boating season. In 2003, Iowa had 43 boating accidents resulting in 30

played a part, credit must also be given to law enforcement officers patrolling Iowa's waterways and working with the boating community in an effective enforcement and education effort. A huge thank you

also goes to the corps of volunteer boating safety education instructors, including the U. S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and the U. S. Power Squadron, which conduct classes throughout the state.

Those safety classes are key to turning that no-fatality triumph into a trend. For those who can't seem to fit a class into their schedule, the Iowa DNR offers a home-study boating safety course. Course materials are available by contacting the DNR at 515-

score, a certificate will be sent to you. (There is a \$5 fee to receive a certificate.)

An even more convenient way is the on-line boating safety course. This fun, interactive method covers the same materials as the home-study course. This course can be found at <http://boat-ed.com/ia/>. The cost is \$15 for the course, plus an additional \$5 for the certificate, which can be paid on-line with a credit card.

For those who prefer the traditional classroom setting, a list of boating safety classes is available at www.iowadnr.com/law/lawdb/viewcourse.html or by calling the Iowa DNR at 515-281-5918.



injuries. However, in 2003, **there were no boating-related deaths.** To have *none* is quite remarkable, and is a significant milestone Iowans should all be taking note of and celebrating.

While good fortune certainly

281-5918 or at webmaster@dnr.state.ia.us. The test, along with all of necessary study information, is included in the packet. The test must be returned to the DNR for scoring, and with a passing



Nationally, in 1963 there were 33 boating related deaths for every 100,000 boats. In 2001, there were less than six boating related deaths for every 100,000 boats. Clearly, recreational boating safety education programs and law enforcement efforts are working effectively and saving lives.

Still . . .

Approximately 80 percent of the boat operators involved in accidents had never taken a boating safety course.

Nearly 70 percent of all reported boating accidents involved operator-controllable factors. Nearly 80 percent of boating related fatalities were boaters who were not wearing a life jacket.



Remember, it is illegal for any person under 12 years of age to operate a personal watercraft (PWC) unless accompanied in or on the same machine by a responsible person 18 years or older. Furthermore, a person who is 12 years of age or older but less than 18 shall not operate any PWC unless the person has successfully completed a DNR-approved watercraft safety course. A person required to have a watercraft safety certificate must carry and show the certificate to a DNR officer upon request.

To ensure you and your family have a safe and enjoyable boating experience:

- Take a boating safety course. Many insurance companies offer a discount on boat insurance with proof of having taken a safety course. Do it together as a family.
- Be sure your boat is properly equipped and has the appropriate number and types of life jackets for everyone on board. Better yet, have everyone wear their life jacket while boating.
- Regularly review the boating regulations to stay familiar with your responsibilities as a boat operator.

For more information, visit the following boating and boating safety websites:

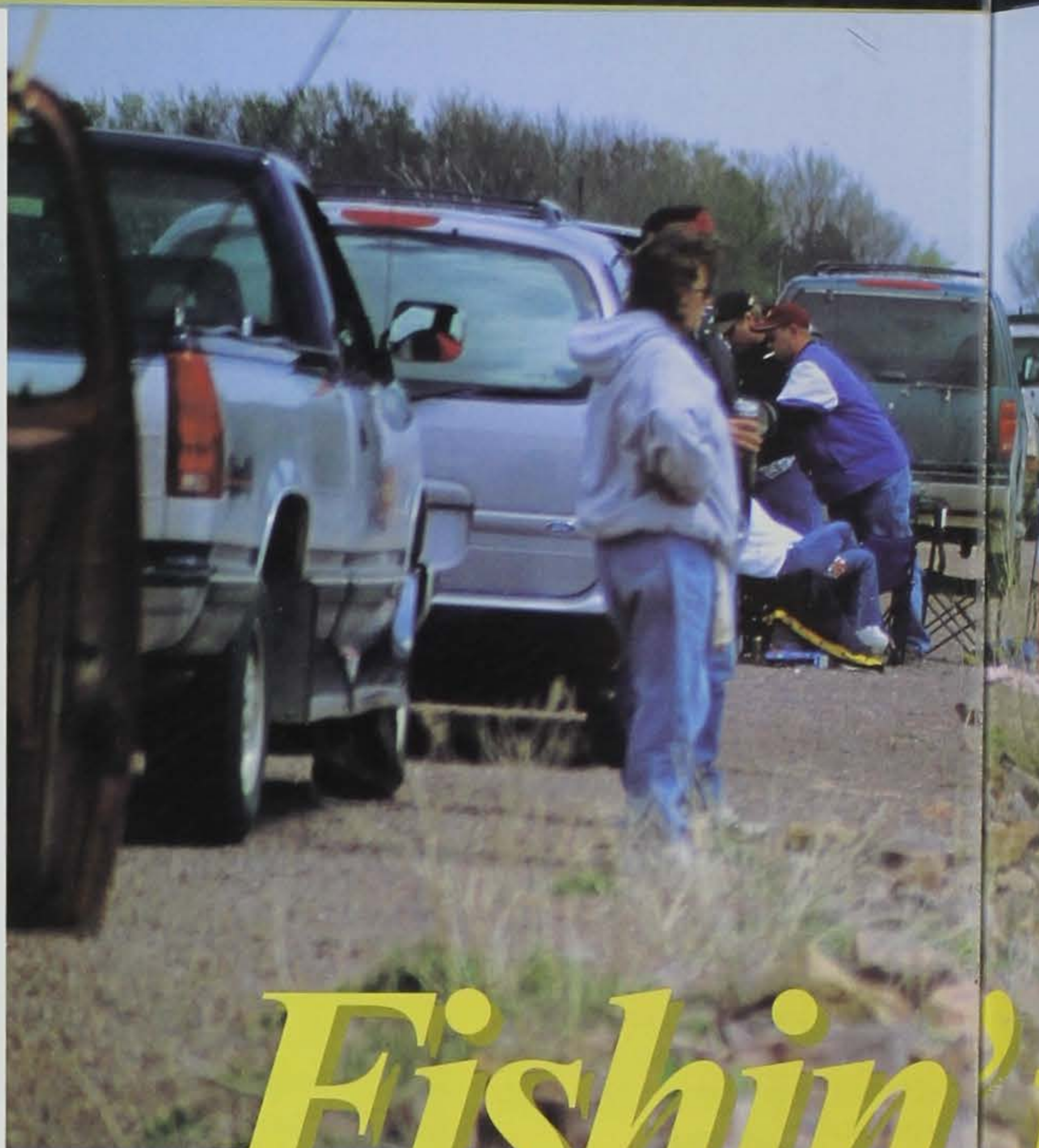
American Canoe Association: www.acanet.org
National Association of State Boating Law Administrators: www.nasbla.org
National Safe Boating Council: www.safeboatingcouncil.org
Personal Watercraft Industry Association: www.pwia.org

Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation: www.rbff.org
U.S. Coast Guard: www.uscgboating.org
U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary: www.uscgaux.org
U.S. Power Squadron: www.usps.org
U.S. Sailing Association: www.ussailing.org



R&L Marine
 1875 16th Ave SW
 Cedar Rapids, IA
 800-843-4818

Colony Concessions
 1730 Juniper Ave
 PO Box 341
 Corning, IA
 641-322-5234



Fishin'

At first glance, they look a little like a miniature shark with a bad Fu Manchu and scraggly goatee. Rounded nose, rows of tiny, rough teeth. Cool, smooth, slippery skin, and a dorsal fin that sometimes sticks above the water's surface.

They'll talk to you, slime you and sometimes even bite you. And given half a chance, they'll let you know why they have very few natural predators.

Bullheads. Pure ugliness. Living proof even Mother Nature has a sense of humor.

They are known by a variety of names, some of them printable. The most popular are bullcat, bullpout, butterball, buttercat, chucklehead, creek cat, greaser, horned pout,

mudcat, paperskin, polliwog, polly, slick, snapper, stinger and yellow cat.

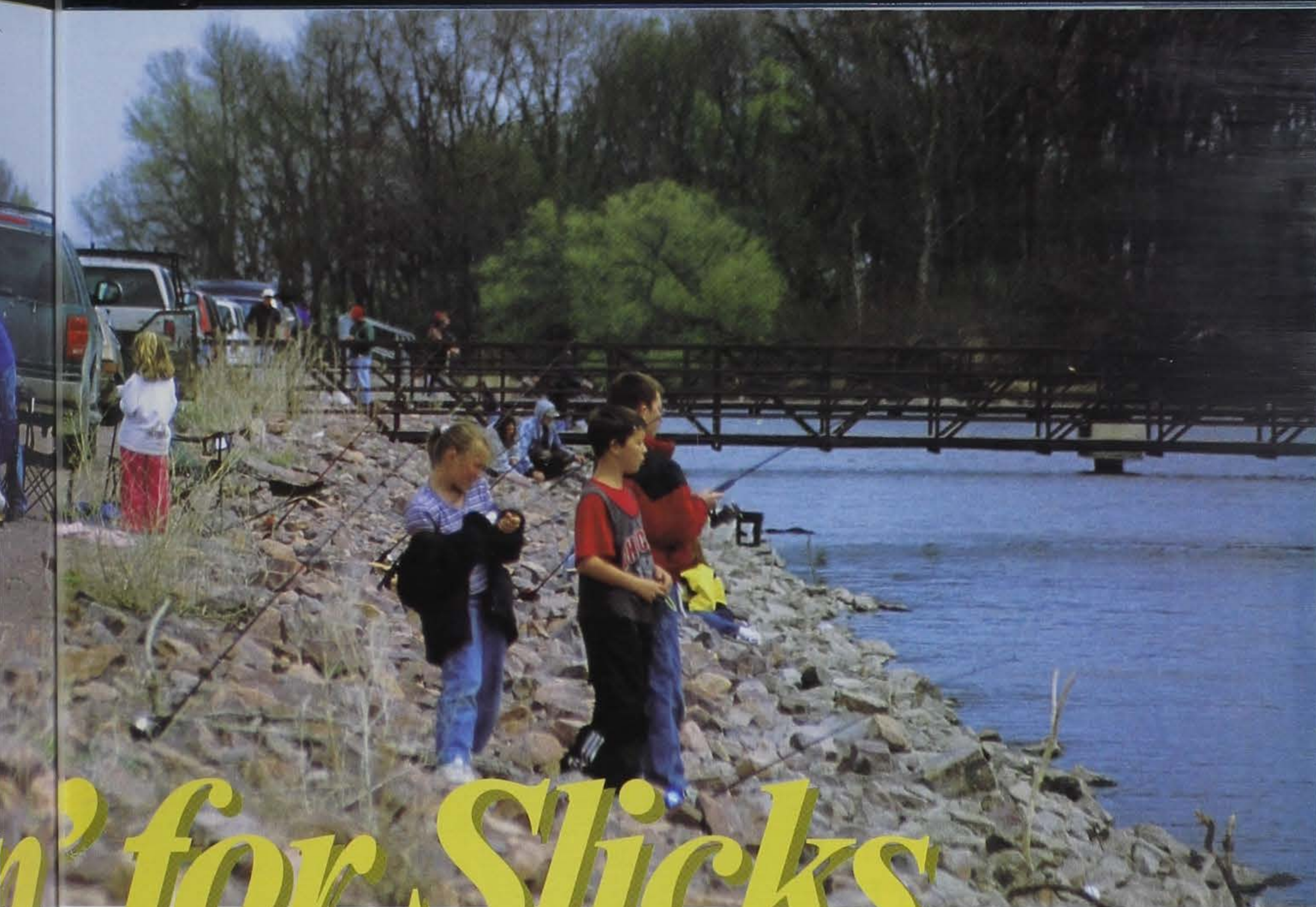
Horned pout might be the most fitting. Swoop your hand through a black mass of baby bullheads or carelessly handle an adult and you'll know why. Most seasoned bullheaders have felt the "sting" of a bullhead and go out of their way not to experience it again.

The "sting" comes from sharp, ridged spines along the dorsal (top) and pectoral (side) fins. When attacked or touched, bullheads flare their fins, burying those sharp spines in their adversary's flesh. The attack is quick and painful, and in some cases, results in swelling of the injured area.

Bullheads. Ask any 30-something angler, no make that 40-something, and few will admit they fish for them. Even fewer will admit they eat them. They command less respect than the gizzard shad, which at least makes good catfish bait. They are the Rodney Dangerfield of the aquatic world.

Or are they?

A quick search on the Internet yielded roughly 16,000 sites dedicated to bullheads. Residents of Waterville, Minn., proudly call their tiny hamlet "The Bullhead Capitol." The bullhead is so revered there a four-day celebration is held the first full weekend in May, complete with games, rides, fireworks and, yes,



n' for Slicks

fried bullheads. Some say Bullhead Days is the social event of the year in Waterville, and has been for 40 years now. And one can only speculate why "Rochester New York's premier rock band" calls itself The Fabulous Bullheads.

Granted, not all websites were so flattering. One site likened bullheads to the "fish world's equivalent of barnyard hogs, feeding on a wide range of live and dead offerings . . ." Even noted writer, philosopher and naturalist Henry David Thoreau bemoaned the feeding habits of the bullhead.

"They will take any kind of bait from angle worms to a piece of tomato can, without hesitation or



DNR photo

by Al Foster
Photos by Clay Smith

Bullheads may not be the most revered fish in the waters, but they no doubt hooked a lot of kids on the sport of fishing. They are ready biters, admirable fighters and actually quite tasty if prepared properly.

coquetry, and they seldom fail to swallow the hook."

Bullheads are considered omnivores, eating both plants and animals. That classification, though, might be a little shortsighted. As Thoreau pointed out, bullheads are just as much scavengers, opportunistic feeders, as they are omnivorous. They eat just about anything dead, or alive for that matter. And yes, they'll even eat their own. Night crawlers are the bullhead's preferred fare, but they are known to feed on small bait fish, clams, snails, waterfleas, small crustaceans, crayfish, leeches, doughballs, grubs, tree frogs, grasshoppers, crickets, beetles and salamanders. Seasoned bullheaders also swear by hotdogs, marshmallows and corn.

Thoreau's disdain for the bullhead, though, is exactly why they are one of Iowa's most popular game fish — or at least one of the most-caught. With a seemingly insatiable hunger for everything from crawfish to corn, they bite readily from spring through fall. And although they are no small-mouth bass or northern pike, they are admirable fighters.

Ask that same 30- or 40-something crowd — the ones who won't admit to fishing for bullheads — and a week's salary says many probably grew up fishing for them. Countless kids were brought up on bullheads because, quite frankly, they are one of the most accommodating fish to catch. In my formative years, I spent many Saturday afternoons "drowning worms" on the banks of Rock Creek Lake with my dad. Bullheads were the quarry; most anything else went back in the water. Quite frankly, I didn't know what a crappie was until my teen years. We talked, joked,

munched on sandwiches and candy bars, drank sodas and caught fish.

And for that, I have the bullhead to thank. I am sure many others feel the same.

From Thoreau's musings, it's tough to tell whether he respected

bullheads or simply misunderstood them. Regardless, he obviously had a firm understanding of the underlying attraction of bullhead fishing.

"Many go fishing all their lives without knowing that it is not fish they are after."



Ken Formanek

The key to cleaning bullheads is finding someone else to do it for you.

But if your persuasion skills are not at their finest that day, and they'll likely have to be to convince someone to clean your fish, here are a few tips that will make the adventure, well, less adventurous.

Bullheads can be filleted much like a panfish. However, to eat a bullhead any other way than "on the bone" would violate the bullhead bylaws drafted by our forefathers.

There is no secret to skinning bullheads. It's a simple theory of skinning, gutting and removing any other inedible part. However, there are a few tricks that may help cut time off the process.

First, a sharp knife and skinning pliers are a must. Regular pliers will work, but skinning pliers have

more surface area for grabbing skin, and thus, more pulling power. Also, a cheap pair of gloves will make it easier to handle the slippery fish.

Make an initial cut around the head, in front of the dorsal and behind the pectoral fins. Don't cut too deep; just enough to cut through the skin. Next, split the belly from the anal vent up to the first cut. Use the pliers to remove the skin, starting at the head and pulling to the tail.

Twist the head to sever the backbone and remove; most of the entrails will remain attached to the head. Make sure to remove the white air sac (located near the head), the blood line along the backbone and any remaining entrails. Finally, use your knife to cut off the tail, and the skinning pliers to pull out the fins.



Pictured left to right: Ephraim Malag, Robert Anderson, Jed Hoffman and Caleb Steenhoek. Who better to give us a lesson in bullhead cooking 101 than students in the hospitality career program at Des Moines Area Community College in Ankeny. Considering there is a two-year waiting list to get into the program, we knew we were getting some of the best, young talent in the area. All three are second-year culinary arts majors, and Malag and Steenhoek are also studying hotel/restaurant management.

Bullheads at The Bistro

Finding chefs willing to put their reputation on the line to prove the words bullheads and fine dining can be used in the same sentence actually wasn't all that difficult. We simply asked Robert Anderson, chair of the hospitality career program at Des Moines Area Community College, who found three of his students who relished the chance to put their skills to the test.

Finding a similar number of people to taste-test the final product was a little more challenging. Only local radio and TV personality Steve Pilchen, better known as the "Round Guy," agreed to serve on the panel. The rest claimed "prior commitments."

Based on the Round Guy's reaction, illustrated on the following pages, it was their loss.

Jed Hoffman's Bullheads

4 bullheads, filleted

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup soy sauce
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup brown sugar
 2 T fresh grated ginger
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup white wine
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup Worcestershire sauce
 1 T fresh rosemary, chopped

Marinate the fillets for two to three hours in sauce. Drain and wrap in kataife (shredded phyllo dough) or phyllo dough. Bake at 350 degrees for 20 minutes until lightly brown. You may also French fry them in hot oil.

We served these with yellow lentils.



Ephraim J. Malag's Bullheads

4 bullheads, filleted

Crust

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup toasted slivered almonds, medium chopped
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup toasted pine nuts, medium chopped
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup diced Roma or sun dried tomatoes

Combine in food processor and lightly chop.

1 egg + $\frac{1}{4}$ cup milk = egg wash

Place fish fillet in egg wash and roll into crust. Sauté in oil.

Sauce

1 head of garlic, chopped
 1 large red onion, chopped
 3 large Roma tomatoes, diced
 8 large basil leaves, cut in thin strips
 2 oz. olive oil
 6 oz. butter
 salt and pepper (to taste)

Combine all ingredients except butter in a sauce pan on medium. Heat for 5 minutes and simmer for 20 minutes. Add butter at end and blend in.

Local radio and television personality Steve Pilchen, a.k.a. the Round Guy, graciously agreed to be our guinea pig . . . ahh . . . one-man taste testing panel despite admitting he "doesn't remember eating bullheads" before. It quickly turned into an impromptu dinner and comedy show.

The Round Guy On The Choice of Wine: "This wine has more cork in it than Sammy's (Sosa) bat."

The Round Guy on Caleb Steenhoek's bullheads: "Hey, I didn't order this. Oh this is good. I am tasting the citrus. The flavor of the bullhead doesn't really come through. Delicious"

The Round Guy on Jed Hoffman's Bullheads: "That's very good. Excellent job, my friend."

"Each of these so far have been worth finishing."

The Round Guy on Ephraim Malag's bullheads: "Very good. Sauce is delicious. Nice job my friend."

The Round Guy Parting Comments: "Each one was delicious and each one done in a way to keep it from tasting really fishy. I thought it was delicious."





Pear-shaped potatoes

1 pound mashed potatoes, cold.
1 cup Panko crumbs (bread crumbs)
2 eggs + 1/2 cup milk = egg wash

Form mashed potatoes into pear shape, add into egg wash and into Panko bread crumbs. Roll between hands to smooth out crust. Deep fry until golden brown, about four minutes.

Caleb Steenhoek's Bullheads

4 bullheads, filleted

Marinade

2 limes
2 lemons
3 oranges
1/2 cup sugar
1/2 cup water

Marinate fish for about two hours and roll lengthwise. Roast in oven at 325 degrees for six to eight minutes.

Vegetables/Lomain

Clean, finely julienne and set aside:

1 red pepper
1 green pepper
1/2 carrot
1/2 portobella mushroom
4 oz. of lomain or similar noodles, prepared according to package

Sauce

Mix the following:
1/2 cup teriyaki sauce
1/4 cup oyster sauce
1/4 cup sesame oil
1 T hot chili oil
1/4 cup fish sauce



1 green onion, finely chopped
1 T fresh ginger, finely chopped
1 T peanut oil

Heat a sauté pan and add a tablespoon of sesame oil; add vegetables and sauté until crisp tender. Add about a 1/3 cup of the sauce and 1 ounce of pasta; heat until hot and serve.

Place pasta/sauce mix on dish followed by three rolled medallion filets. Garnish with fresh chopped scallions.



This past February, four Iowa businesses and organizations were recognized for their comprehensive environmental programs. Following is the first in a series featuring the four Governor's Environmental Excellence Award winners.

West Des Moines Schools

by Tami Foster
Photo by Clay Smith

Ensuring a sustainable future for the community has been the driving force behind the West Des Moines Community School District's commitment to establish a sound environmental management program within their school system.

The district, which encompasses more than 36 square miles in Polk and Dallas counties, includes nearly 9,000 students and 1,200 staff. The 18 buildings that house the district also serve community colleges, churches, scout groups, adult education programs, recreational leagues and other programs and activities. District

officials recognized that addressing environmental concerns that could affect the schools would also impact the surrounding community.

"Environmental issues facing a school district are broad and dynamic. As a result, most school districts do not address many of the issues dealing with environmental health and resource management until a problem arises," said Doug Woodley, operations supervisor for the school district.

"We decided to take a proactive approach to demonstrate that schools can integrate environmental concerns into daily operations and realize significant economic, health and safety benefits for students, educators, district staff and the community."

The collaborative effort that ensued involved all levels of staff within the district, including students and parents.

During the 2000-2001 school year, opportunities for environmental improvement were identified. By setting priorities, the school district realized how school operations and activities impact the environment at both the departmental level and throughout the entire district. By using available resources, the district was able to identify solutions to the issues of greatest concern:

Eliminate hazardous materials – Through the Rehab the Lab program, "sweeps" were conducted at all district facilities to identify and remove potentially hazardous materials from custodial supply closets, chemistry storage rooms, science facilities and art rooms.

Use environmentally friendly products – Making use of recent studies, the district identified vendors that provide products that meet

environmentally preferable products (EPP) for custodial cleaning. These products meet EPP standards, are economically competitive and meet performance requirements.

Promote green building concepts – The district formed a design team to contribute ideas for a new elementary school scheduled to open in fall 2004. Team members were able to integrate some sustainable building concepts, including the use of daylighting and energy efficient mechanical systems. A project goal was to make the building itself a teaching tool, providing students the opportunity to learn from the school environment.

Reduce waste generation – The district was the first school system in the state to implement the Resource Management (RM) contracting process, which provides incentives for the contractor to work with the waste generator to reduce the quantity and toxicity of wastes generated. RM has allowed the district to improve management of the solid waste stream by optimizing the container size and collection schedule. In addition, the contractor provides a monthly summary of waste quantities and expenses to track the waste generation at each facility.

Reuse materials – Through WDMbay — a computerized internal exchange program — items such as chairs and desks are transferred from a school that no longer has a need for the items to one that does. This material exchange program minimizes unnecessary purchases, landfill tonnage, warehouse space requirements and handling/transportation costs.

Recycle products – Paper, cardboard, shrink wrap, ink-jet



cartridges, pallets, plastic bottles, pop cans, textbooks and electronic equipment are recycled throughout the district. Recycling efforts are conducted by staff and student volunteers. Teachers incorporate recycling themes into the curriculum and involve students in the collection, sorting and education processes.

Implement Integrated Pest Management services – Traditional pest control includes regular applications of harmful chemicals without regard to the number or type of pests present. IPM focuses on preventative measures such as eliminating pest entry, food sources and harborage, followed by non-chemical removal techniques. Chemical pesticides are used as a last resort, with specific criteria for the type and placement of these controls. IPM will be initiated district-wide this summer.

By optimizing environmental management, the entire educational system benefits through increased learning opportunities and reduced operating costs.

The projects were funded by a combination of Environmental Protection Agency education grants (\$5,000), Department of Natural Resources Solid Waste Alternatives Program (SWAP) grants (\$40,000)

and district allocations and staff hours (not quantified). In addition, Iowa State University Extension provided technical assistance for the IPM project. The projects do not require a large capital investment, but rather are designed to redefine current operational procedures or the scope of existing service agreements. While the projects are just entering the implementation stages, it is anticipated solid waste disposal costs can be reduced by approximately 45 percent. Pest management costs will remain relatively unchanged, however, indirect benefits that will be realized include improved building energy efficiency, labor savings in cleaning costs and reduced property and structural damage. In addition, reduction in staff sick days and worker compensation claims, reduced compliance costs, reduced insurance and liability and improved student performance are other anticipated benefits of the environmental improvement activities.

“Demonstrating sustainable practices at school, such as source reduction, recycling and pest management programs, will reinforce these concepts for use at home and throughout the community,” said Woodley.

Recycling is only a small part of what West Des Moines Schools are doing for the environment. Here, Stilwell students empty paper waste as part of their daily routine. Teachers throughout the district incorporate recycling into their curriculums.

“The push for sustainable operations within the district has begun from several directions, including programs that focus on recycling, reuse, source reduction, chemical avoidance, and, most importantly that which is the primary function of a school system – education,” said Woodley. “Demonstrating sound environmental practices to our students will undoubtedly result in a more sustainable future generation.”

The district will soon make many of the tools developed for the environmental program, including a recycling manual and bid/contract documents for Resource Management and Integrated Pest Management, available on the school operations web page.

Tami Foster is a program planner for the department's energy bureau in Des Moines.



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By Jessie Rolph
Photos by Clay Smith

Water Monitoring: Improving Iowa's Beaches

As the DNR enters its fifth season of monitoring beaches, results are being used to help improve water quality and recreation opportunities around the state.

The beach ball is in the back seat, the swimsuits are packed and everyone's ready for a day at the beach. The only thing left to do is pick which one of Iowa's many beaches to visit.

Most Iowans pick a lake based on its level of water quality, according to a recent study by Iowa State University.

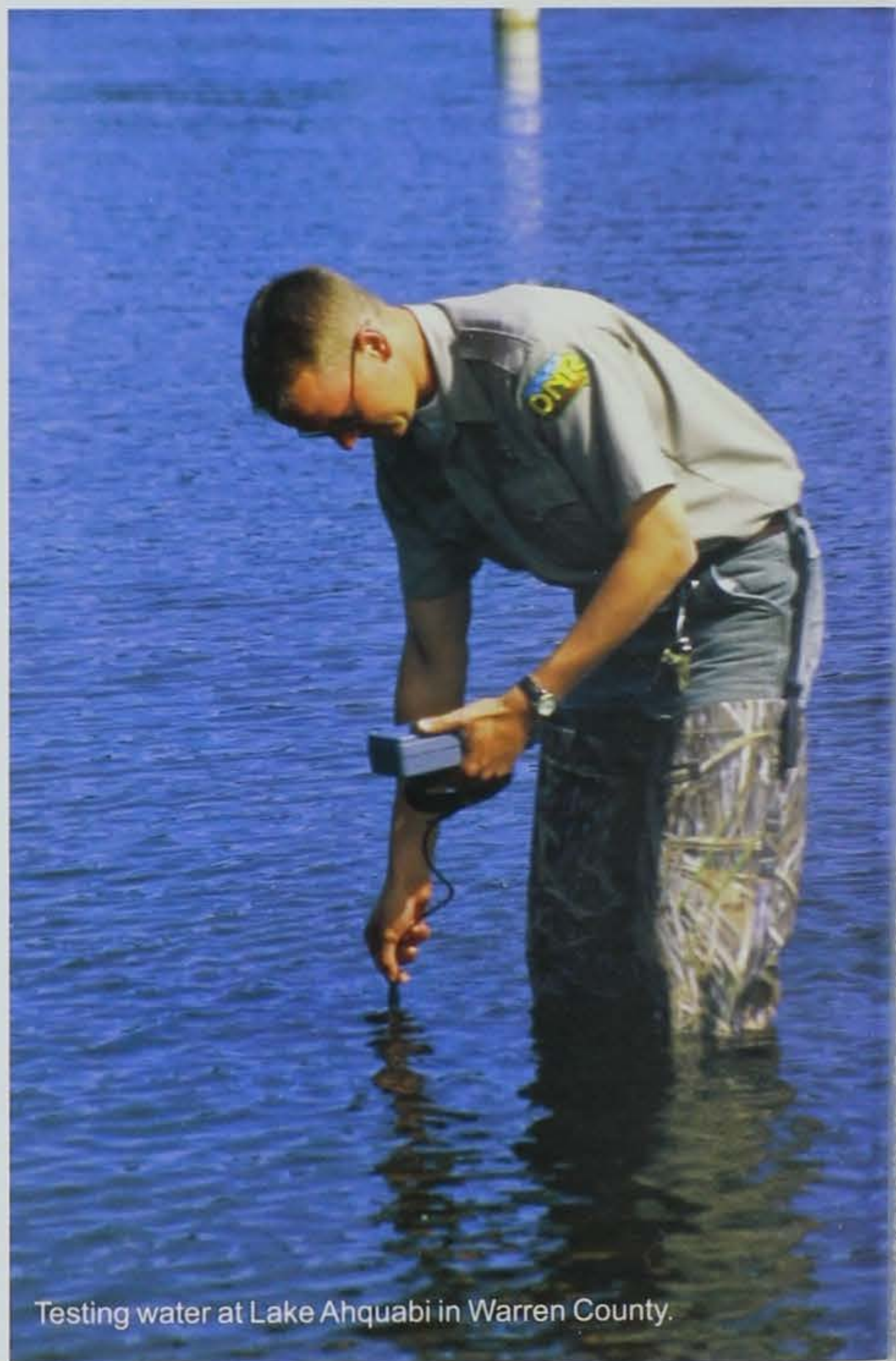
Survey respondents in the study ranked water quality as the most important factor in choosing a lake for recreation and ranked safety from bacteria contamination/ health advisories as the most important characteristic of a lake.

To maintain and improve water quality at beaches across the state, the DNR monitors water quality at beaches throughout the swimming season.

A GROWING EFFORT

In 2000, the new Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health Act (BEACH Act) required states with coastal or Great Lakes beaches to monitor those waters. While Iowa is one of 20 states not required under the BEACH Act to monitor, the DNR understood the need to develop its own comprehensive beach monitoring program.

While the greatest risk associated with swimming in natural water bodies is drowning, there is also a chance of contracting a waterborne illness from contaminated waters. For these public health and safety reasons, the DNR began monitoring bacteria levels at 31 state park beaches in 2000 and expanded the program to include 35 state-owned beaches in 2001, and all 37 in 2003.



Testing water at Lake Ahquabi in Warren County.



That year, the DNR also adopted a beach policy that used results from weekly water samples at state beaches to determine if swimming should be recommended.

With a number of county-run Iowa beaches expressing an interest in water monitoring, the DNR's program has again expanded this year to include 35 of Iowa's 58 county-run beaches. County beaches will decide independently whether or not to post swimming advisory signs.

These monitoring efforts stand out compared to other states in the Midwest. Janice Boekhoff, a research geologist with the DNR's water monitoring section, contacted a number of Midwestern states in 2002 and found that the states were testing only a limited number of sites.

"We do more monitoring than most surrounding states," Boekhoff said.

TESTING THE WATERS

Trained staff members from the University of Iowa Hygienic Laboratory take the weekly samples from three locations along each state-owned beach and at three water depths (ankle-, knee- and chest-deep). These nine samples are mixed together to create a composite sample, which is sent to the lab to be analyzed.



The lab tests for fecal indicator bacteria in the water, namely *E. coli* bacteria. The strain of *E. coli* that the DNR tests for at beaches differs from

other strains of *E. coli* that make people sick, such as the strain that can contaminate meat. The strain of *E. coli* that is tested for at beaches will not make swimmers sick — in fact, the bacteria normally live in the digestive tracts of humans and animals.

However, the presence of this *E. coli* strain suggests that some amount of fecal matter may be in the water and that pathogenic microbes may be present. It is these pathogens that can cause waterborne illnesses. Measuring the amount of *E. coli* in the water can be used to determine the health risk to swimmers.

KNOWING THE FACTS

There is no risk, however, for anglers who fish even when bacteria levels are high. A fish's skin and scales protect it from the contaminants the beach monitoring program tests for, meaning the meat is safe to eat.

"The bacteria are not found in fish flesh," said Marion Conover, head of the DNR fisheries bureau. "If there were bacteria, cooking the fish would kill it. Properly cleaning and cooking the fish, no matter where it was caught, is always important."

While the beach is not closed when a swimming advisory is posted, those choosing not to swim can enjoy many other activities in Iowa's state parks.

"When some people hear or

What a beach advisory sign really means for swimmers

You can still enjoy a day at the beach, even if there are high bacteria level advisories posted at your favorite swimming hole.

Elevated bacteria levels do not mean that the beach is closed. Instead, beaches with elevated bacteria levels are posted with a "swimming is not recommended" sign. People can still enjoy volleyball, sunbathing and other beach activities.



When a favorite swimming area is posted with an advisory sign, some people may decide to swim at another nearby area that does not monitor its water. It is possible that bacteria levels there may also be elevated if it has rained within the last 24 to 48 hours.

Many high bacteria levels in Iowa come after rainfall, when bacteria from areas surrounding the waterbody are "rinsed" with runoff into the lake, pond or river.

Beaches can be closed by the DNR in the event of a documented health risk, such as a wastewater bypass, hazardous chemical spill or a localized outbreak of an infectious disease.

"People's kids are playing in the water. They need to know what's in it."

Rich Leopold, executive director, Iowa Environmental Council

see that a beach is posted, their first thought is to cancel their trip to the park," said Sherry Arntzen, an executive officer with the DNR state parks bureau. "We encourage people to think about other activities, like hiking, birdwatching, boating or fishing, and to use common sense when deciding whether or not to swim."

FINDING THE SOURCE

As beach monitoring in Iowa enters its fifth season, water quality experts have learned a few lessons on bacteria levels at Iowa beaches.

For instance, bacteria numbers



A family enjoys a day at Union Grove beach, located in Tama County.

tend to rise after a rainfall, as rain runoff drains into the waterbody, carrying bacteria from surrounding areas. Once the sun starts to shine again, the bacteria begin to die off. Therefore, experts recommend avoiding swimming for 24 to 48 hours after a rain event.

Since bacteria levels can change so quickly — high one day, low the next day, or vice versa — not having real-time results can be a limitation for beach monitoring.

The current testing process takes several days to get results. According to Boekhoff, bacteria must grow for one day, then the bacteria must be

2004 DNR Beach Policy

State-owned beaches will be posted with a "Swimming is Not Recommended Sign" if:

- The geometric mean exceeds the water quality standard (five samples in a 30-day period exceeds 126 colony-forming units of *E. coli* bacteria per 100 ml of water)
- The beach is classified as "vulnerable" (see list below) and one sample exceeds Iowa's one-time maximum standard (235 colony-forming units of *E. coli* bacteria per 100 ml of water)
- The beach is classified as "less vulnerable" and two weekly samples exceed the one-time water quality maximum standard (235 colony-forming units of *E. coli* bacteria per 100 ml of water)

Beaches that have had one or fewer exceedances of the state standard in the last four years running will be monitored less frequently. These beaches will be monitored on a weekly basis from the week before Memorial Day through Labor Day.

All other state-owned beaches would normally be monitored from April 15 through Oct. 31, however due to budget constraints, these beaches will be monitored the week before Memorial Day through Oct. 31.

The DNR reserves the right to close a beach in the event of a documented health risk including such things as (but not limited to) wastewater bypass, spills of hazardous chemicals or localized outbreaks of an infectious disease.

Beaches are added to the "vulnerable" list after one year with a high geometric mean. Beaches can be removed from this list after two years without a high geometric mean.

Beaches in the vulnerable category:

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------|
| • Backbone Lake | • Lake Darling |
| • Beed's Lake | • Lake of Three Fires |
| • Clear Lake | • Prairie Rose |
| • Geode | • Rock Creek |
| • George Wyth | • Union Grove |

Beaches that will be monitored less frequently (weekly from the week before Memorial Day through Labor Day):

- | | | |
|-------------------|------------------|------------------|
| • Black Hawk | • Lake Ahquabi | • Pleasant Creek |
| • Blue Lake | • Lake Anita | • Red Hawk |
| • Brushy Creek | • Lake Keomah | • Triboji |
| • Green Valley | • Lake Macbride | |
| • Gull Point | • Lake Manawa | |
| • Lacey-Keosauqua | • McIntosh Woods | |

Telling the facts from the fish stories

Just being in water with high bacteria levels will make you sick.

False. The bacteria that the DNR tests for does not make you sick. However, it can indicate that disease-causing pathogens are in the water.

You can fish when there's a swimming advisory posted.

True. A fish's skin and scales provide it with natural protection, and proper cleaning and cooking kills any bacteria. Waders, however, should avoid the water if they have open sores or wounds exposed to the water.

There are only high bacteria levels at beaches where signs are posted.

False. Not every beach in Iowa monitors its water or posts signs when levels are high. Many bodies of water in Iowa tend to have high bacteria levels for 24 to 48 hours after a rainfall. Swimmers should use caution and avoid swallowing the water.



Fish caught at high-bacteria-level beaches are safe to eat.

counted and re-counted before information is entered into a database.

Because of this delay, a one-time sample showing high results isn't a large cause for alarm. However, if the geometric mean samples are high, it can signal a chronic problem. The

mean indicates a problem, the cause of the high levels can be hard to track down.

"It takes time and effort to determine the sources of high bacteria levels, but it's generally coming from several sources in the surrounding environment," Boekhoff said.

Beaches with chronic high bacteria levels are often the subjects of intensive watershed investigations by the DNR. The investigations take

of these investigations allow local citizens and officials to take action in improving their beach's water quality.

Intensive watershed investigations are taking a high-tech turn, as DNA fingerprinting methods are becoming part of the DNR's water monitoring tool kit.

A source-tracking investigation at Lake Darling in southeastern Iowa is using a number of new methods to determine the source of high bacteria levels. With the DNA fingerprinting method, or ribotyping, a number of bacteria from known fecal sources (like deer, geese, humans, etc.) from the Lake Darling watershed will be DNA typed and used to create a library. Unknown bacteria from the lake, beach and streams in the watershed will be compared to the fecal bacteria samples in the library.

By matching the unknown bacteria with known bacteria samples, researchers hope to find the cause of bacteria contamination. Once the source of contamination is identified, work can begin on improving water quality.



Viking Lake beach, located in Montgomery County.

geometric mean is a type of average, calculated using a formula of at least five separate samples equally spaced over a 30-day period.

Even when a high geometric

frequent water samples from not only the affected body of water, but from points throughout the watershed (the surrounding area of land that drains into the body of water). The results

Weekly beach monitoring results are posted on the Web at:
www.iowadnr.com/news/beach.html



Big Creek beach, located near Polk City.

RAISING AWARENESS

Monitoring beaches across the state has not only provided scientists with more information, but has also helped water quality become a topic of conversation around the state.

"It's a good thing in raising awareness and educating people about water quality and water quality issues," said Rich Leopold, executive director of the Iowa Environmental Council. "People's kids are playing in the water. They need to know what's in it."

The DNR has been very responsive in the way it presents data to the public, making the monitoring very useful, Leopold said.

"Some problems in the state have been identified through monitoring, and those problems are now being addressed," he said.

For example, when bacteria levels were frequently elevated at George Wyth Memorial State Park

in Waterloo, an intensive watershed investigation was initiated and public meetings were held to discuss the beach. Findings from the investigation determined that human fecal matter did not cause high bacteria results, but fecal matter from geese

could possibly be the cause, Boekhoff said. In an attempt to remove the possible source of high results, sprinklers were used when the beach was closed to keep geese off the water, and some geese were taken from George Wyth to another state park.

"Results still go high, but we're getting closer to determining the source of those high results," Boekhoff said.

WHAT'S NEXT

A number of beach monitoring research opportunities lie on the horizon, including more watershed investigations and more work with the DNA fingerprinting method. The DNR is also partnering with the University of Iowa Center for Health Effects of Environmental Contamination (CHEEC) and the Department of Epidemiology in the UI College of

Public Health on a pilot epidemiological study looking at illnesses that occur on the beach.

The DNR also hopes that more county- and city-run beaches express interest in participating in the DNR's water monitoring efforts.

The DNR monitors most beaches from the weekend prior to Memorial Day to Oct. 31. Weekly results can be found at the DNR's Web site at www.iowadnr.com/news/beach.html.

Jessie Rolph is an information specialist for the department in Des Moines.

Tips to lessen your risk of illness at the beach

- Do not swallow the water.
- Wash hands after using the restroom and after changing diapers.
- Swimming in lakes is not recommended for persons who are very young, very old or have immune system problems.
- Do not swim if you have or have recently had diarrhea. Please wait at least a week after the episode of diarrhea before swimming.
- Keep children in clean diapers and change diapers in the restroom.

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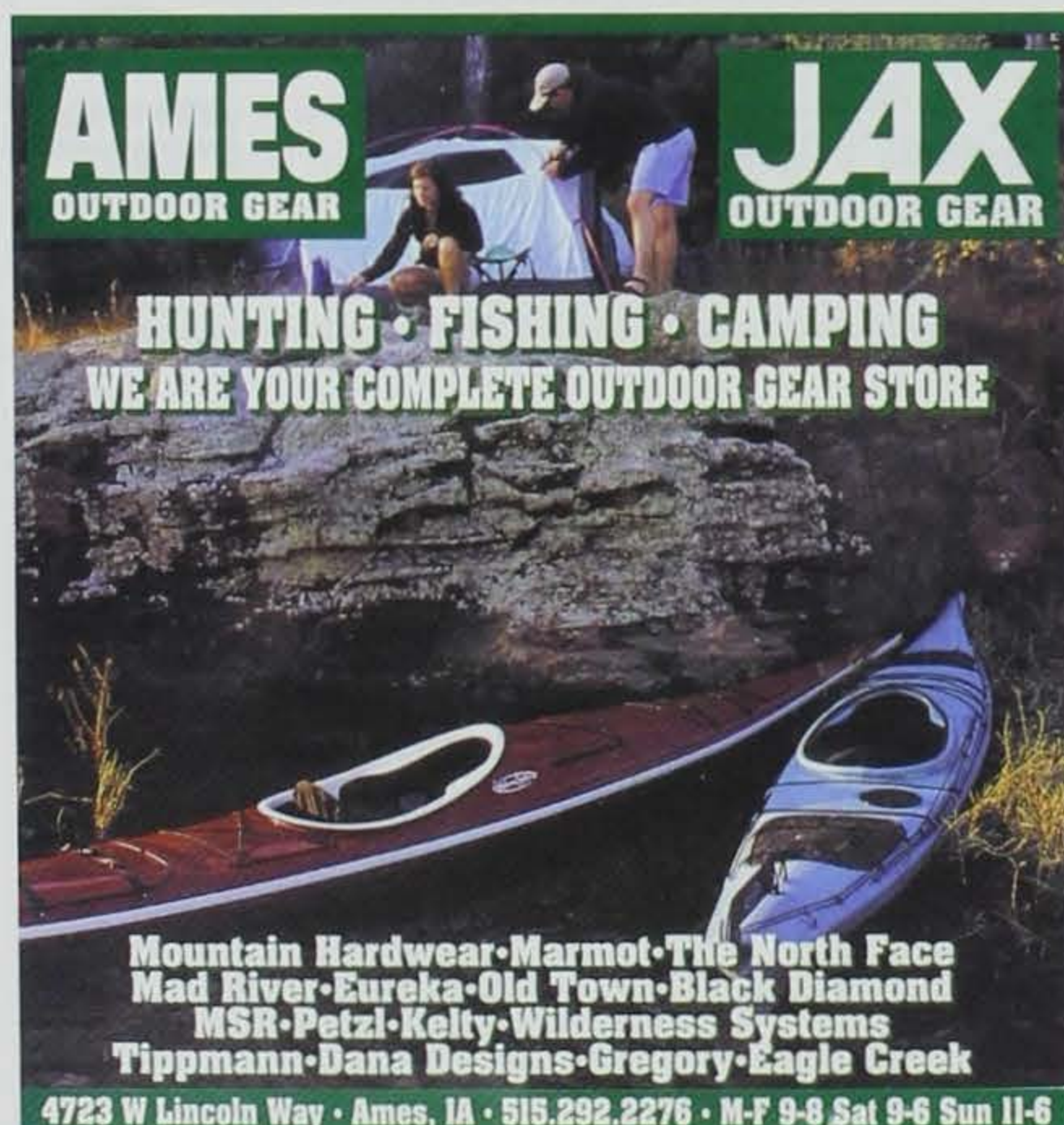


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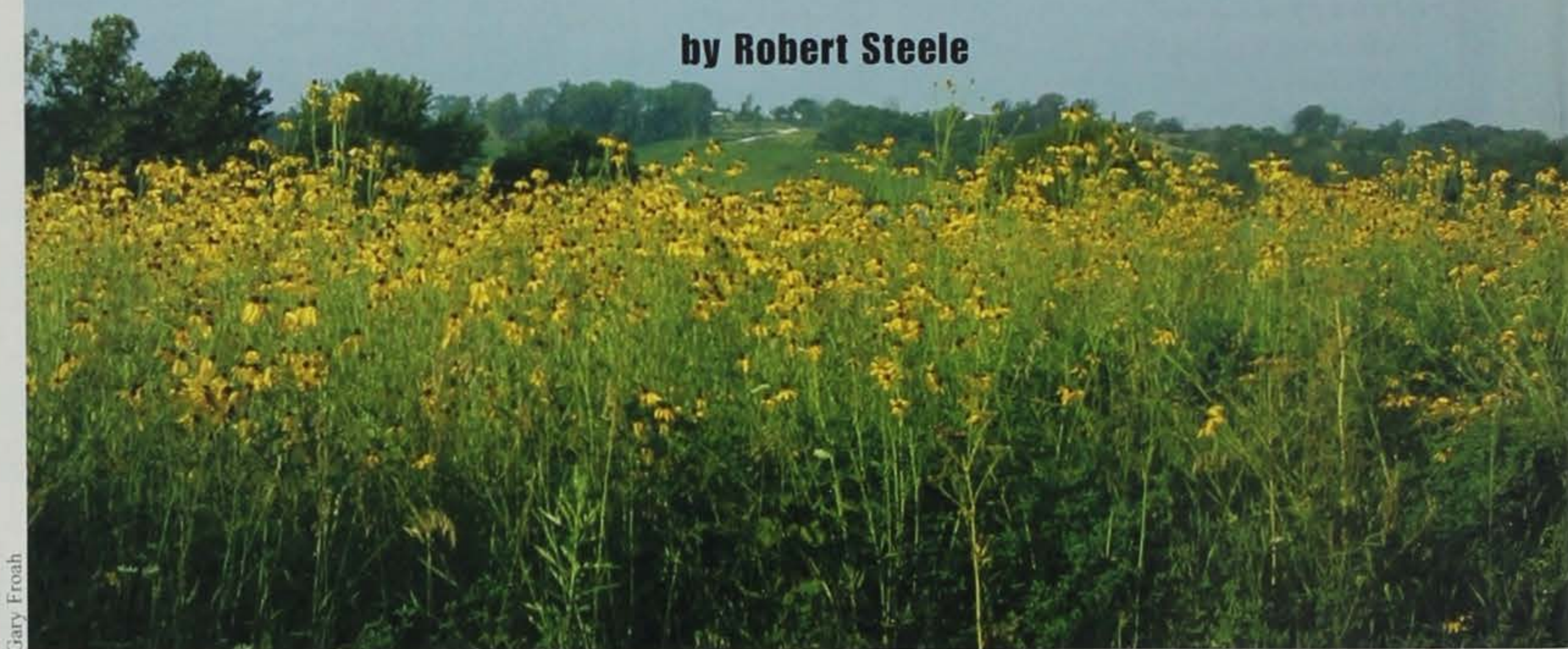


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PARKS PROFILE

Rock Creek State Park

by Robert Steele



Gary Froeh

It's the second busiest campground in Iowa, and one of central Iowa's most popular boating destinations. Thousands of anglers flock to the 491-acre lake to sample the plump bullheads, feisty catfish and fast crappie fishing. Deer, pheasant and waterfowl abound on the abundant adjacent public hunting land. As popular as Rock Creek State Park is today, however, it may never have existed if not for the perseverance of a prominent Jasper County businessman.

Jim Vorhies owned a sporting goods store and operated a restaurant in Newton, roughly a 20-minute drive from the park. He was also the first president of

the Jasper County Izaak Walton League. He had a vision — most likely fueled by his business and personal pursuits — for a recreational area in the county.

Initially, a committee was formed to develop a lake plan, but it was Vorhies and Fred Maytag II who secured the funding to finance it. Vorhies had lobbied the Iowa Legislature and state conservation commission for years to finance and construct an artificial lake in Jasper County. Maytag, of course, was the president of the Newton-based appliance company that still bears the family name. More importantly, at least as far as the park is concerned, he was also a state senator. Together, they convinced

the 1947 Iowa Legislature to commit the \$450,000 needed to build the lake.

Rock Creek may not command the high lakeshore property value like a Clear Lake. Nor does it draw the crowds of summer vacationers like the Iowa Great Lakes. But don't tell that to the half-million people who visit Rock Creek every year.

ABOVE: Native prairie flowers have replaced invasive woody vegetation. TOP RIGHT: On hot, summer days, campers head to the beach on the south end of the lake. RIGHT: When morels are in season, the parking areas are often full of mushroom hunters.

Part of Rock Creek's popularity might be due to location. Roughly nine miles north of Interstate 80, it's also within a short drive of Kellogg (five miles south), Grinnell (seven miles east), Newton (14 miles west) and Marshalltown (23 miles north).

Part of it might be the camping. With more than 32,000 camping guest days registered every year (number of campers per spot multiplied by number of nights), it's consistently Iowa's second busiest campground. Wait until Friday night to find a campsite and electrical sites, at least, will be at a premium.

More than half (100) of the 198 campsites have electricity. Those on the lakeshore are typically the first to fill. There is a modern rest room and shower building, along with a playground area, near the northern end of the campground. Hikers, bikers, horseback riders and snowmobilers all have access to the 14-mile multiuse trail.

Part of its popularity might be



Clay Smith

due to the fishing. Bullhead fans have long considered the 491-acre lake one of the top destinations in the state. Bullheads up to a pound are not uncommon. Rock Creek also boasts strong populations of catfish, crappies, bass and bluegills. An added plus is the occasional saugeye.

For the music fan, concerts featuring local country and bluegrass talent are held every Friday night between Memorial Day and Labor Day. The con-

certs are held at the north boat ramp by the concession building.

Like most of Iowa, the rural Jasper County landscape surrounding Rock Creek has undergone its fair share of land-use changes. Prior to European settlement, the area was mainly prairie and wooded groves. During European settlement — from the 1860s to the 1950s — the land was subject to intensive row cropping and pasture use.

In 1952 the lake (then 602 acres) was filled and the park dedicated. The land was left fallow to recover. However, recent decades have seen a return to extensive farming and pasture use in the watershed. The immense watershed and extensive farming in it have created water quality and sedimentation problems — despite significant improvements of farming practices in the watershed since 1952.

A study of lake sedimentation was conducted in 2000 by Iowa State University. The study concluded the lake had lost 40 percent of its original volume and roughly a third of its surface



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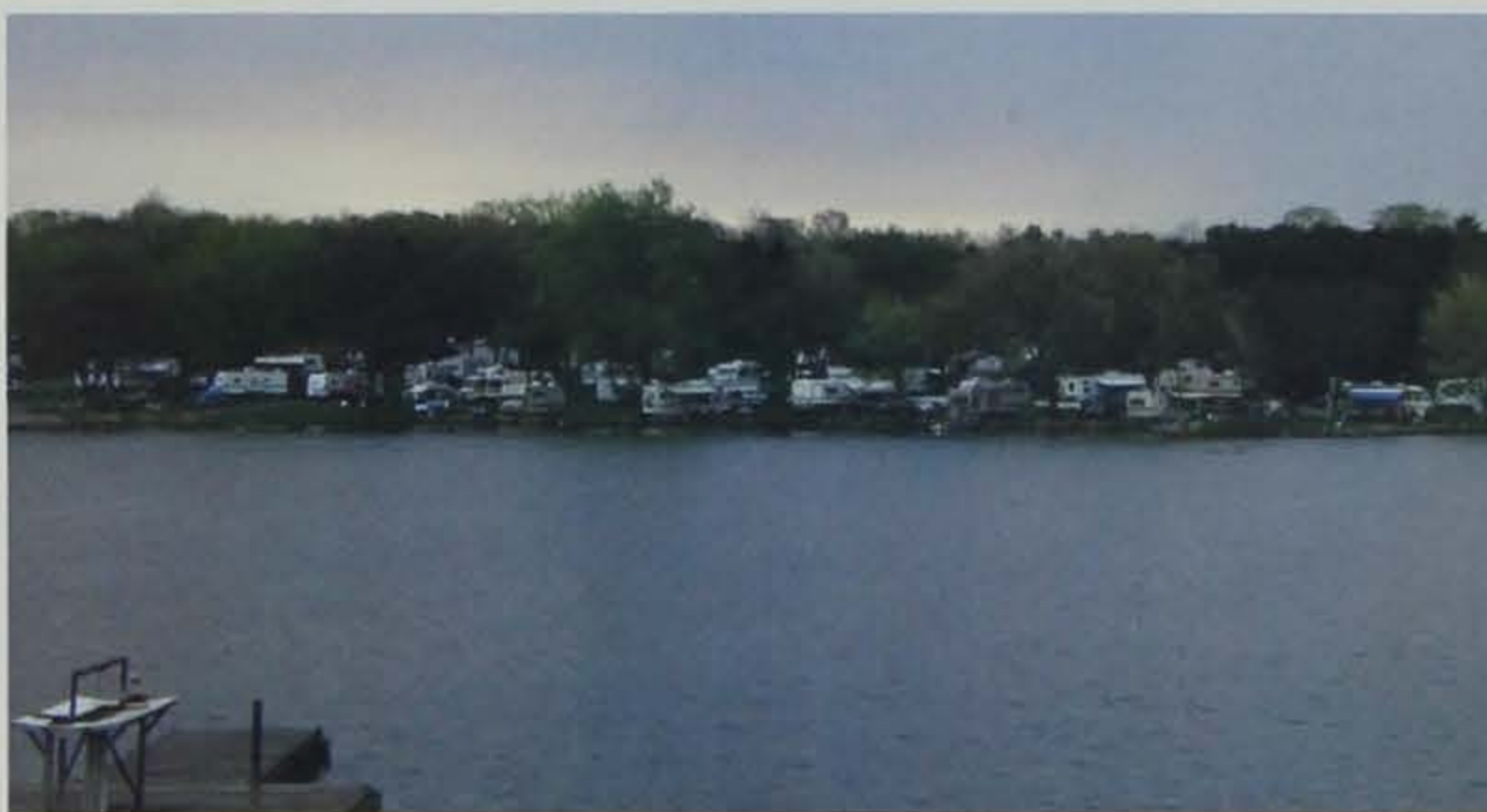


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PARKS PROFILE



Jim Lawson

Rock Creek boasts the second busiest campground in the state, second only to the sprawling Gull Point Complex on the Iowa Great Lakes (left). Good fishing for catfish, bullheads, crappies and bass is one of the main draws of Rock Creek (below far left). Waterfowl is also abundant on the lake and the adjacent public hunting area (below).



Ron Johnson

acreage, and excess phosphorus was causing algae blooms. Those issues alone were impairing the lake's ability to support its intended purpose. It has also been estimated that more than 25,000 tons of soil is deposited in the lake every year, and 89 percent of the phosphorus moving through the watershed is attached to the sediment.

To correct the problem, the study recommended dredging the north, east and west arms of the lake, rock riprapping 20,000 feet of shoreline to reduce erosion, converting 544 acres of cropland in the watershed to permanent



Clay Smith

vegetation in those areas where severe erosion was evident, installing 56 miles of riparian buffer strips to reduce runoff and erosion, creating 58 small ponds in the upper watershed to catch sediment and nutrients eroding from cropland, and installing three large sediment and nutrient detention basins to catch further runoff from the watershed.

Before a plan was developed, though, a detailed assessment had to be completed to identify and quantify the

underlying causes of the water quality problems. The approach used to conduct the assessment was innovative for Iowa's non-point source program, given it was a cooperative effort between local Jasper

County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), Iowa DNR, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship-Division of Soil Conservation (IDALS-DSC) staff. Together, the group used the DNR's Geographic Information Systems

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(GIS) technical capability to identify critical areas that delivered excessive sediment and phosphorus to the lake. With that information, a plan was developed, the primary objective to reduce sediment and phosphorus delivery by 80 percent and 70 percent respectively.

Staff have also aggressively restored prairie areas and actively managed forests, intermediate areas and marshes. Seasonal park staff and volunteers from local organizations and Grinnell

College, under the supervision of the area manager, have made great strides in restoring and managing the prairies. More than 300 acres of land have been returned to native prairie flowers and grasses. That figure grows by an estimated one acre per year as workers and volunteers remove invasive woody vegetation and replace it with big and little bluestem, rattlesnake master, blazing star, Indian grass, black-eyed Susan, golden Alexander and wild bergamot.

Every year park staff and volunteers renew their commitment to improving Rock Creek Lake's water quality, and thus protecting and enhancing the resources that draw nearly 500,000 people to the park every year. Those efforts are paying off. Hopefully, they'll continue to pay dividends well into the future.

Robert Steele is the park manager at Rock Creek State Park.

ROCK CREEK AT A GLANCE

LOCATION: Approximately three miles east and two miles north of Kellogg and seven miles west of Grinnell.

FISHING: Good populations of bass, crappies, bluegills, catfish, saugeyes and bullheads in this 491-acre lake; 15 miles of shoreline provides ample opportunities for shore anglers. Average depth 9 feet, with deepest at 18.

HUNTING: Public hunting available north of the lake. Waterfowl, upland game and white-tailed deer common.

BOATING: Any-size motor operated at no-wake speed allowed. Docks available for rent.

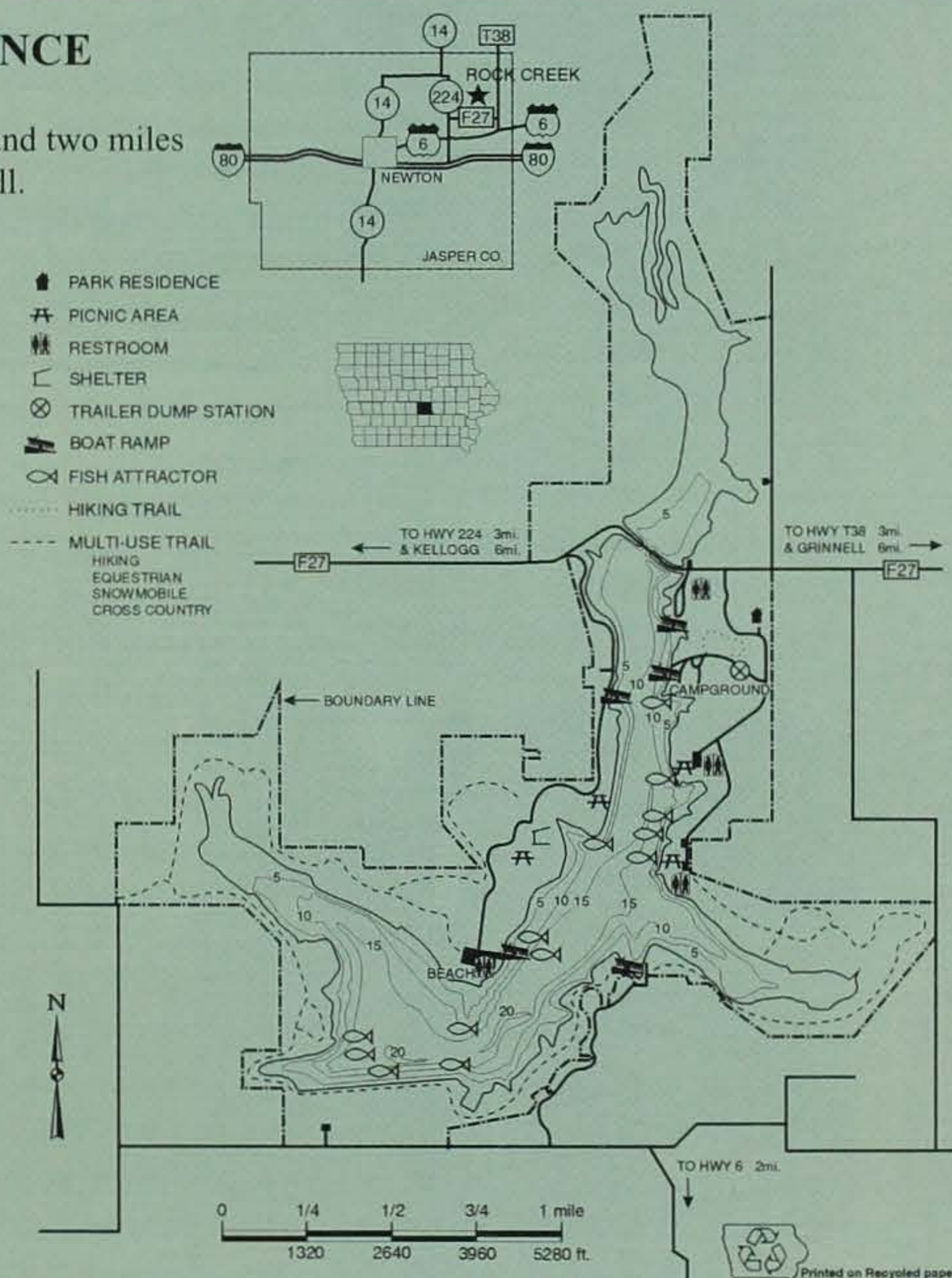
CAMPING: Offers 198 campsites, including 100 with electrical hookups; modern rest room and shower facilities.

TRAILS: Hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding and snowmobiling allowed on the 14-mile multiuse trail.

PICNICKING: Plenty of picnic opportunities; open picnic shelter on southwest side of lake near beach available for rent.

FUN FACTS: Second busiest state campground in Iowa.

CONTACT: (641) 236-3722; email at Rock_Creek@dnr.state.ia.us.



CONSERVATION UPDATE

Another Good Year For Walleye Egg Collection

For Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) hatchery workers, the most important item on this spring's work schedule has come and gone. Fisheries crews have hit the water, set nets, captured spawning walleyes and collected millions of eggs.

Those spawning, adult walleyes — minus their eggs, of course — have long since been released back into their home waters. And all those precious golden eggs have hatched into millions of tiny walleye fry.

According to DNR fish culture supervisor Mike Mason, the majority of those future lunkers will be immediately distributed to public waters across the state. A smaller number of fry will stay behind in DNR nursery lakes until they are stocked as 2- to 3-inch fingerlings later this summer.

"Statewide, we collected over



Collecting eggs (top) from lakes with abundant fish populations makes walleye fishing possible in other lakes.



900 quarts of (walleye) eggs, which is about average."

Mason noted that spawning walleyes were collected at Lake Rathbun, Spirit Lake, Storm Lake and Clear Lake. However, Clear Lake was this year's "undisputed brood fish hotspot." Nearly half of the state's total egg collection came from this 3,600-acre natural lake.

"It was really an incredible spring at Clear Lake," says Jim Wahl, DNR (north Iowa) district fisheries biologist. "We handled

nearly 1,800 walleyes here and collected around 430 quarts (58 million) of eggs during eight nights of netting.

"Clear Lake was the real bright spot for this year's walleye netting efforts," said Mason.

"There's no question that this will be the place for people to go to fish for big walleyes."

Former Banner Wildlife Area Closed For Improvements; Park To Be Renamed

Construction at the former Banner Wildlife Area north of Indianola in Warren County began April 12, prompting the temporary closure of the area to all recreational uses, including the shooting range and the spring turkey hunting season.

Improvements to the area include installing 2.25 miles of new roads, 3.5 miles of mountain bike trails, new pit latrines, new range covers and a new concession building to serve the shooting range and bike trail. The containment tubes will be replaced at both ranges and an earthen noise barrier will be constructed between the shooting range and the bike trail.

Work is scheduled to be completed by July 1, depending on spring weather.

The Charles "Butch" Olofson range at Big Creek State Park near Polk City is available until the range at Banner reopens in July.

Banner Wildlife Area will also undergo a name change. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) recently held a contest to name this new state park. The contest concluded April 21, and the winning name will be released at a later date.

DNR, Employees Honored by Ducks Unlimited

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources and two of its employees were recently honored by Ducks Unlimited for contributions made to waterfowl conservation, protection and education.

Richard Bishop, chief of the Iowa DNR's wildlife bureau, received the Conservation Achievement Award for his contributions to waterfowl conservation over his long career. From his early days flying surveys and banding geese in Manitoba in the 1960s, to serving on the Mississippi Flyway Technical Committee and Mississippi Flyway Council later in his career, he has been active throughout in waterfowl management. He has helped advance such issues as Canada goose reintroduction, special teal seasons, waterfowl baiting, evaluation of the duck hunting point system, Prairie Pothole Joint Venture, Cooperative North American Shotgun Education Program and the North American Bird Conservation initiative.

The award was presented during the 69th North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference held March 19 in Spokane, Wash.

The agency received the 2004 Conservation Award "Professional Category" for reaching a milestone in financial contributions to waterfowl protection efforts. With this year's contribution, the DNR has

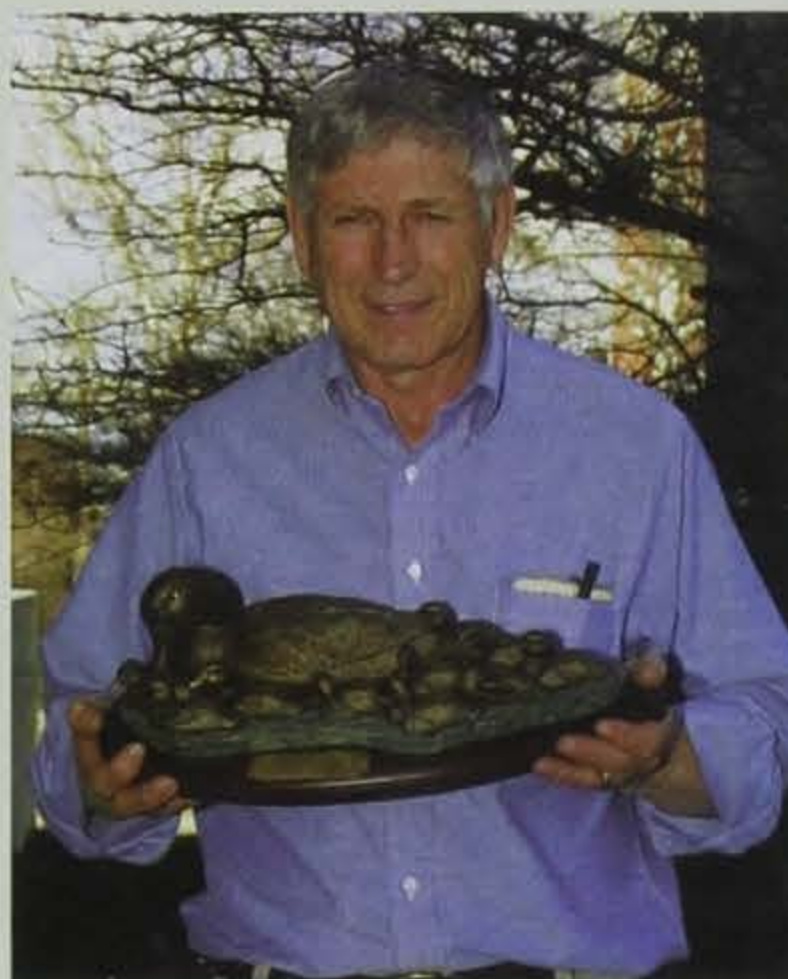
given more than \$1 million for work being done by Ducks Unlimited Canada.

Lowell Washburn, an information specialist with the department, was also a winner of a 2004 Conservation Award "Professional Category." The award recognizes the prominent role the media plays in promoting conservation and raising awareness of natural resources.

Washburn has devoted most of his long career with the agency to covering Iowa's outdoor heritage and its natural resources. An outstanding photographer and writer, his work has been published in 54 magazines and countless newspapers. He is a staff writer for the *Iowa Conservationist* magazine, contributes weekly articles and photos to the Associated Press and newspapers across the state and hosts a weekly TV outdoors show.

An avid waterfowler, angler and falconer, his passion is wetlands and educating people about the value of marshes and wetlands for wildlife and water quality.

Both awards were presented at the 2004 Iowa Ducks Unlimited State Convention.



Richard Bishop



Lowell Washburn (left) and Roger Pederson, director of the Ducks Unlimited Iowa/Minnesota Conservation Programs



DNR Director Jeff Vonk and Bishop

CONSERVATION UPDATE

More Than 300,000 Catchable-size Trout To Be Stocked This Year

For those anglers or families who have never experienced the beauty of a spring or summer day on an Iowa trout stream, it is an unforgettable memory.

To enhance that experience, along with the success of trout anglers, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) trout hatcheries at Manchester, Decorah and Elkader annually release catchable-size trout in 44 northeast Iowa trout streams. The stocking program continues throughout the summer and into late fall to provide an abundance of trout fishing opportunities.

More than 300,000 catchable-size rainbow, brook and brown trout will be stocked in the nine-county "trout country" area in northeast Iowa in 2004. Hatchery staff will make nearly 1,300 stocking trips to streams this year.

Monthly stocking schedules for select catchable trout streams are available on the DNR website at www.iowadnr.com or by contacting any of the three trout hatcheries (Manchester: 563-927-3276; Big Spring: 563-245-2446; Decorah: 563-382-8324). Weekly stocking updates for all three hatcheries are also available 24-hours a day on a single recorded message at 563-927-5736. In addition, 20 catchable streams will be stocked on an unannounced basis. This reduces the fishing pressure on the day of stocking



Lowell Washburn

and gives more anglers the opportunity to catch trout.

Iowa also has seven streams with special regulations to protect or enhance wild or fingerling-stocked trout populations. Anglers are restricted to artificial lures-only on posted areas on those streams. Depending on the stream or stream section, anglers are also required to either release

unharmful all trout of certain species or of certain lengths. Special regulations are in effect on posted portions of Ensign Hollow and Bloody Run in Clayton County; Spring Branch in Delaware County; French Creek and Waterloo Creek in Allamakee County; South Pine Creek in Winneshiek County; and McCloud Run in Linn County.

All Trout Anglers Required To Pay Trout Fee

Trout anglers are reminded of a new requirement regarding trout fishing in Iowa.

Anglers are now required to purchase the trout fee to either fish for or possess trout. This is a change from past years when anglers were required to pay the trout fee only if they possessed trout.

The new requirement means anglers who practice catch-and-release angling for trout will still need to purchase the trout fee which helps support the program. The annual trout fee is \$11 for Iowa

residents and \$13.50 for nonresidents. Both residents and nonresidents under 16 years of age can still fish for or possess trout for free if they fish with a licensed adult who has paid the trout fee. However, the combined catch of the children and licensed adult cannot exceed the daily limit of five trout. Those with a lifetime fishing license must also purchase the trout fee to fish for trout.

No trout fee is required for Iowa residents on Free Fishing Days, June 4-6.

Iowa Meeting Tougher Ozone Smog Standards

Iowa again is in an elite crowd. Just 18 states meet federal outdoor air standards for ground-level ozone, the main ingredient found in smog, the EPA and state officials announced in April.

Part or all of 474 counties and some 159 million Americans are in areas that fail to meet ozone smog standards.

For ground-level ozone, most days in Iowa rate "good" to "moderate" for air quality. Several days of unhealthy ozone levels are measured in Iowa each year, but the days are infrequent enough to allow the state to maintain its clean air status.

On those rare days of unhealthy air, the DNR issues health advisories. The levels potentially can impact sensitive groups, such as persons with asthma and other respiratory problems, children and active adults if they are outdoors for prolonged periods and breathing large volumes of air during play, exercise or work.

Ground level ozone forms when tailpipe exhaust and smokestack emissions react in bright sunshine and warm weather with fumes and chemical vapors. The chemical can burn the lining of the lungs, cause premature aging of lung tissue and increase respiratory symptoms.

The ozone smog season in

Iowa runs from April to late October, when state officials monitor the air for the pollutant.

Current ozone smog levels are available for Iowa at www.iowacleanair.com, and nationally at www.epa.gov/airnow.

DNR Launches Gas Price Watch Website

As the summer driving season approaches, Iowa drivers can find the latest information on rising gas prices at a new DNR website.

Along with updated gas prices, visitors to the site will find fuel and money saving tips, background information about impacts on the U.S. gasoline market, answers to frequently asked questions and links to other publications and resources regarding fuel issues.

The site is located at www.state.ia.us/dnr/energy/. Click on "Gas Price Watch."

"While consumers may not be able to bring the price of gasoline down in the short term, increasing their fuel efficiency and using renewable fuels can lessen the impact on their wallet and affect long term prices," said Jennifer Moehlmann, DNR energy analyst.

For more information, contact Moehlmann at (515) 281-8518, or by e-mail at Jennifer.Moehlmann@dnr.state.ia.us.

Upcoming NRC and EPC Meetings

The dates and locations have been set for the following meetings of the Natural Resource Commission and Environmental Protection Commission of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

Agendas are set approximately 10 days prior to the scheduled meeting date. For additional information, contact the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Wallace State Office Building, 502 E. 9th St., Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0034.

Natural Resource Commission:

- June 10
Muscatine County
- July
No meeting

Environmental Protection Commission:

- June 21
Ingram Office Building,
Urbandale
- July 19
Ingram Office Building,
Urbandale

State Preserves Advisory Board:

- July 1-2
Kent Park,
Johnson County

WARDEN'S DIARY



A Few Thousand Miles Left

by Chuck Humeston

I must admit, I'm starting to get a little tired of this. It seems like it happens every two or three years. Usually it starts with a little twinge or something that gets worse over time.

The first time, the surgeons deftly removed a kidney. Four years later I was in again for back surgery. I am sure I was an impressive sight, walking up to a group of deer hunters doubled over because I couldn't stand up.

The latest round started with a sore shoulder, then an arm that hurt so badly I had to carry it around in my good hand. Later, I lost feeling in my hand. So there I was, back in the shop watching the doctor put the x-ray up on the light board. I had a bad feeling when he walked in and said, "We've got to fix this."

"You're lucky you're not paralyzed," he said as he pointed out the ruptured disk.

"Will I be able to go back to doing what I do?" I asked.

"Sure," he answered. "I can fix that." I like confident people, especially the ones that are going to cut holes in me.

This time, I ended up with my

neck fused, and a new plate and a few screws to boot. I should be real fun at airport security now.

During rehabilitation, I couldn't lift anything, so there wasn't much to do except sit by the window and watch spring unfold. My wife and I live on a hill in a wooded area overlooking the Iowa River. Watching the woodpeckers come to my suet block and the eagles soar over the tree line was better than any video. As the days warmed, the finches flocked to the thistle feeder. Pairs of Canada geese appeared on the island in the river as the ice disappeared. One of those first warm days brought two pairs of wood ducks to check out my wood duck houses. Every night our resident barred owl reminded us of his presence, not to mention the raccoon trying to wrench my suet blocks loose.

With all that, my daughter and son-in-law still ask, "What do you guys do out there?" They make it sound, seemingly, like we're the last two people on *Survivor*. What do we do? Good grief!

There were a few days where I asked myself, "How did I ever get interested in simply watching nature?" I could watch

this free show for hours. Not everyone feels that way, though. Sometimes parents ask me, "How do I get my son or daughter interested in the outdoors?"

Good question in this day of fast food, fast entertainment, TV/CD/DVD and Game Boy, cell phones, pagers and the like. Seems like the practice of just watching and enjoying is a lost art. I've never had a pat answer for these parents' question because, quite frankly, I'm still trying to figure it out for myself.

I have a pretty good idea, though. I'm an Iowa product. I grew up in a small southern Iowa town. It was the greatest place in the world to grow up. And although I've been all over Iowa, a large portion of the U.S. and have traveled out of the country, I still think the finest people in the world are back in that small town. I once had someone tell me my hometown seemed "kind of backward." Maybe because there was no McDonalds?

"Really?" I asked. "It may seem that way, but the people there will give you the shirt off their backs if you need help." That's progressive in my book. It's almost impossible to grow up in a support structure like

that and not have a sense of values.

Growing up we had to make our own entertainment, and that almost always took place in the outdoors. My dad took me fishing in Iowa farm ponds with a fly rod. Bigger trips were to the northwest Iowa lakes. I spent many nights sitting up late reading dog-eared copies of *Fur, Fish and Game*, *Field and Stream* and *Outdoor Life*.

My first experiences with guns were typical — BB guns, then a .22 rifle. Pheasant was the game of choice back then. Deer were still sparse enough that, if someone reported seeing one, we would jump in the car to go look for ourselves.

It seemed most of my shaping experiences really didn't involve doing anything. Instead, and

maybe this was the key for me, they involved just learning to watch and enjoy.

I remember squirrel hunting — mostly falling asleep until the warm rising sun on my face woke me up — and the unexplainable experience of listening to the timber literally come alive around me.

I remember evenings at the edge of a pond, watching the sun set and listening to the bullfrog symphony. Or having the quiet solitude shattered by the explosion of a largemouth bass responding to the simple twitch of a Jitterbug. Or simply sitting in a canoe listening to the small waves slap against the sides.

I remember sitting on a lake shore watching the storm clouds roll in, feeling the cool breeze as the storm gathered air, smelling

the sweet aroma of the falling rain. I remember winter nights, walking through town under the glow of the street lights on a quiet, cold night; listening to the snow crunch under my feet; wondering how my friends and I survived our sledding expeditions on the gravel roads through the hills back home.

Is that an answer to the question parents ask? I don't know, but it sure worked for me. It's why I can still sit, not having to do anything, just watching, enjoying and wondering.

Still, I'm thankful I'm up and running again, and not just watching from the window. I told my wife, "My drive train is still good. I just need some body work every now and then."

I guess I still have a few thousand miles left in me.

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