



JULY 1980

# conservationist



IOWA CONSERVATIONIST  
MAGAZINE

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# The Skunk River Conservation Unit

*more than a patch of woods*

by Steve Lekwa

SKUNK RIVER UNIT RANGER, STORY COUNTY  
CONSERVATION BOARD

The Skunk River Greenbelt makes up the majority of Story County's Skunk River Conservation Unit. A person cannot be too well acquainted with the Greenbelt area until he or she has had a chance to know some of its citizens and culture, both past and present. A casual afternoon walk or drive north from Ames along the river will afford the astute observer more than a view of a meandering stream flowing between tree-lined hills. It allows one to observe a community which has given a satisfying life to those fortunate enough to have shared it over the years.

The first modern settlers to share life in the Skunk River Valley north of present day Ames didn't arrive until almost 1850. The Skunk River, or Cha-ca-qua as the Indians knew it, didn't have a very good reputation. The area south of Ames was known as the "Slough of Despond" by all who had need of crossing it. It was noted for having more than its share of quicksand and mud. The area above Ames, though, was quite different and remains so today.

Those hardy folks who came to settle along the banks of the upper Skunk in Story County found what they needed. The water was pure and plentiful. Wood for building and fuel was abundant. Game was everywhere, even such critters as turkey, elk, and bear. The soil along the banks was usually rich and could raise good crops of grain, once cleared of trees and stumps. The sod-breaking plows had not been invented yet and the prairie was still an uninhabited wilderness. Except, that is, for countless flocks of waterfowl on the prairie potholes and seemingly endless numbers of prairie chickens on the drier uplands between them.

The land was rich, pure, and good, but life was a constant battle. Along the banks of the Skunk between Ames and Story City are scattered no less than seven pioneer cemeteries. Of the seven, only two, the Sheffield Cemetery and the Pleasant Grove Cemetery, are still regularly cared for. They are visible on hills above I-35 about three miles and five miles south of Story City. The others are known only to history buffs and a

few backwoods wanderers who stumpled across the fallen old stones and try to make out the names on their weathered faces. It should come as no surprise that many of those same names are found on rural mailboxes in the area today. The first settlers had come to stay on the banks of the Skunk!

No sooner had men arrived to till the land than others followed to start businesses to serve them. The first one of business was a good saw mill. A Mr. Jairus Chandler erected such a mill on a good site about three miles east of what is now Gilbert in 1850. Some of the first barns in the area owed their beams and planks to his efforts. The site Mr. Chandler selected had steep banks with limestone protruding here and there. It was a good place for a dam with plenty of good material nearby with which to build it. Before too many years passed the demand for meal and flour overtook the demand for building material. Mr. Soper took over the mill and began grinding grain from as far away as forty miles. The old mill stood for nearly fifty years grinding the farmers' grain into flour and feed. During its later years, each farmer was asked to spend some time with his team helping to keep the dam in repair as his grain was ground.

Where there were people and basic industries, towns were sure to follow. A map of 1860 would have borne names quite different from those known in the area today. The towns of Bloomington, Bear Grove and Sheffield are gone. Fairview became Story City and Ames did not yet exist. Each must have had dreams of eventual growth and prosperity, but the advent of the railroad bypassed most of them and the towns faded with their dreams. In the case of Bear Grove, at the mouth of Keigley Creek, just west of Soper's Mill, all traces of the little town has been lost.

As towns came so did the schools and churches. Bloomington, just upstream from present day Ames, had a Methodist church and the school still stands. Fairview (Story City) had a Scandinavian Lutheran Church. The pioneers near Soper's Mill started the Pleasant Grove Community Church in 1877. The little



Bridge built in 1867 at Soper's Mill.



Special use bridge at McFarland Park "Touch-a-Life" trail.

probably due to the sandy soil the river had left there. Though unfit for good grain crops, Henry made it grow great watermelons, potatoes, and other vegetables. In 1915 he decided that Starvation Hollow was no name for a good truck farm and therefore changed it to Pleasant Valley Farm, as it is still known today. Ida's husband, Rhiner, ran a saw mill on the land well into "the fifties", making good native hardwood lumber. Though Rhiner has been gone for many years, Ida remains active. Visitors aren't infrequent, due in no small part to her fabulous homemade pies and lively conversation. Ida even enjoys occasional visits with college students from nearby Iowa State University when they hold keg parties on the river bank near her home.

Ida Honderd's older sister, Lenora, married into the Doolittle family. The Doolittles had settled early in the area and owned considerable land between the Skunk River and Keigley Creek. "Nora" still lives on some of that land not far from a patch of ground the Doolittles had preserved and passed on from generation to generation now known as the Doolittle Prairie and managed by the Story County Conservation Board as part of the Skunk River Conservation Unit.

The entire pioneer valley from Ames to Story City was linked together by a stage road which wound its way along the banks of the river. Though floods caused problems at times and mud was common on the road, it was nothing compared to trying to travel across the open prairies above with their thousands of potholes and constant threat of storms and worst of all, fires. An entire family, the Sweringens, were buried in the Sheffield Cemetery after being caught by a prairie fire on the trail between Nevada and Story City. The old stage trail is visible in places yet today and serves as the backbone of the trail system being developed in Story County's Skunk River Greenbelt. Only recently have woody plants been able to begin establishing in the compacted soil where thousands of horses' hooves and iron wagon wheels passed so many years ago. Even a way-station for the stage line remains — now a farm home just north of the old Soper's Mill site. The remains of other pioneer cabins and houses can be found elsewhere along its route. Landmarks along the trail would have included Soper's Mill, Hannum's Mill (just north of present day Ames), The H-Tree, and an ancient cottonwood.

The H-Tree was well known to all early settlers. Two elms, a red and an American, had become joined by a horizontal crossbar about seven feet up, from which a third trunk grew. Legends say Indians did the grafting as a signal

(Continued on Page 12)

ch stands yet today, and services are every Sunday at 11:00 a.m. Though congregation is small by today's standards, it is well noted for the ice cream social it hosts each summer in the churchyard. Folks come from miles around to enjoy the homemade ice cream, cakes, pies, punch and coffee on grass and on a scattering of old benches. Old folks, whose parents helped

settle the Skunk River Valley, come each year to visit and watch their grandchildren play and enjoy an old-fashioned good time.

One of the long-time residents of the valley, Mrs. Ida Honderd, still lives in the house in which she was born. Ida's father, Henry Jacobs, came to the farm just before the turn of the century. That area was known as "Starvation Hollow",

# HAWTHORN LAKE AND WILDLIFE AREA

by Jim Bruce

*Photos by the Author*

**H**awthorn Lake and Wildlife Area is one of the Iowa Conservation Commission's latest contributions to the outdoorsmen of Iowa. This area located just south of Barnes City in the northeast corner of Mahaska County will prove to be a fine attraction for hunters and anglers, as well as those who just want to get off the beaten path.

The idea for a lake and public hunting area at this location began some years ago. The first land was acquired in 1972 and the last in 1978. A total of about 1,370 acres are presently owned by the Conservation Commission for public use.

Hunting on the area has been good with hunting pressure increasing every year as more people become familiar with the area. Much of the hunting on the area is for pheasant with quail, rabbit, deer, squirrel and, this past year, waterfowl contributing to the hunter's bag.

The primary purpose for acquiring the area was for development of a public fishing lake. This purpose is nearing completion. Construction of the dam was started in the spring of 1978 and completed this past fall. The earthen fill dam will impound some 160 acres of water with a maximum depth of 35 feet. The lake has two major arms and will be about two miles long from tip to tip.

Raising the county road across the east arm of the lake was a significant part of the total construction project. The fill-dirt necessary for this new road grade was taken from the nearby north shoreline in a manner designed to greatly improve fishing conditions in this area. The water depth has been increased to reduce the

growth of aquatic vegetation which so often hampers the shore fishermen.

Additional work to improve fishing conditions has been accomplished in the north arm of the lake. On the east side of the north arm five fishing jetties have been constructed. These jetties will increase shoreline length and increase water depth near the shore for improved fishing in this major access area.

A common practice in lake construction is clearing the lake basin of all trees and brush. This has been a questionable practice because it is detrimental to the fishery and costly to accomplish. To reduce the cost and improve the fishery none of the natural vegetation was removed from the lake basin, except as required for construction. In addition a great deal of artificial structure (fish shelters) was placed in the lake basin in the form of stake beds, etc.; more about these later. This may cost the anglers a few more hooks and lures but it will add more fish to the stringer.

With the construction completed it was now up to Mother Nature to give us enough water to stock fish. The head-gate on the dam was closed August, 1979. The lake will be stocked with fingerling largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish and tiger musky in 1980. A limited number of adult black crappie will also be put in the lake to serve as brood stock for this species.

Looking a little farther into the future we would anticipate that fishing should be providing a good deal of recreation at Hawthorn Lake in 1982.

Access to the lake is presently limited to walk-in, except the east arm where the county road crosses. However, survey for

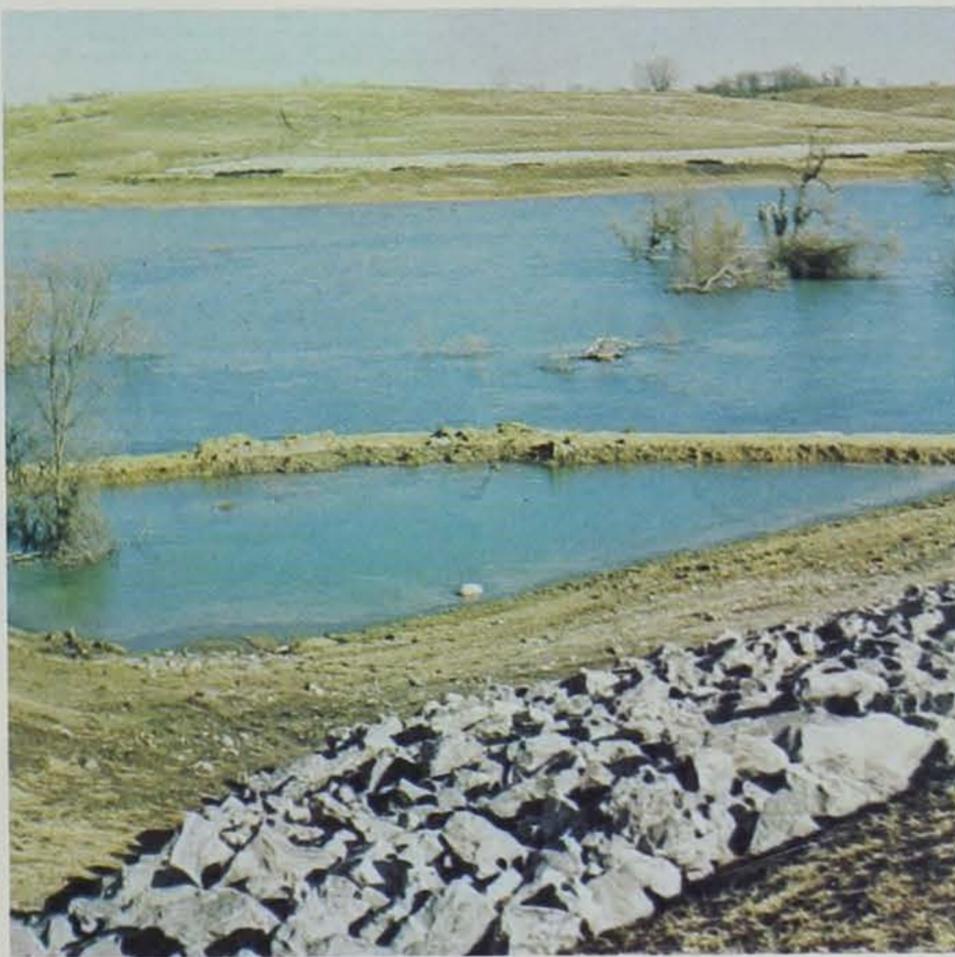
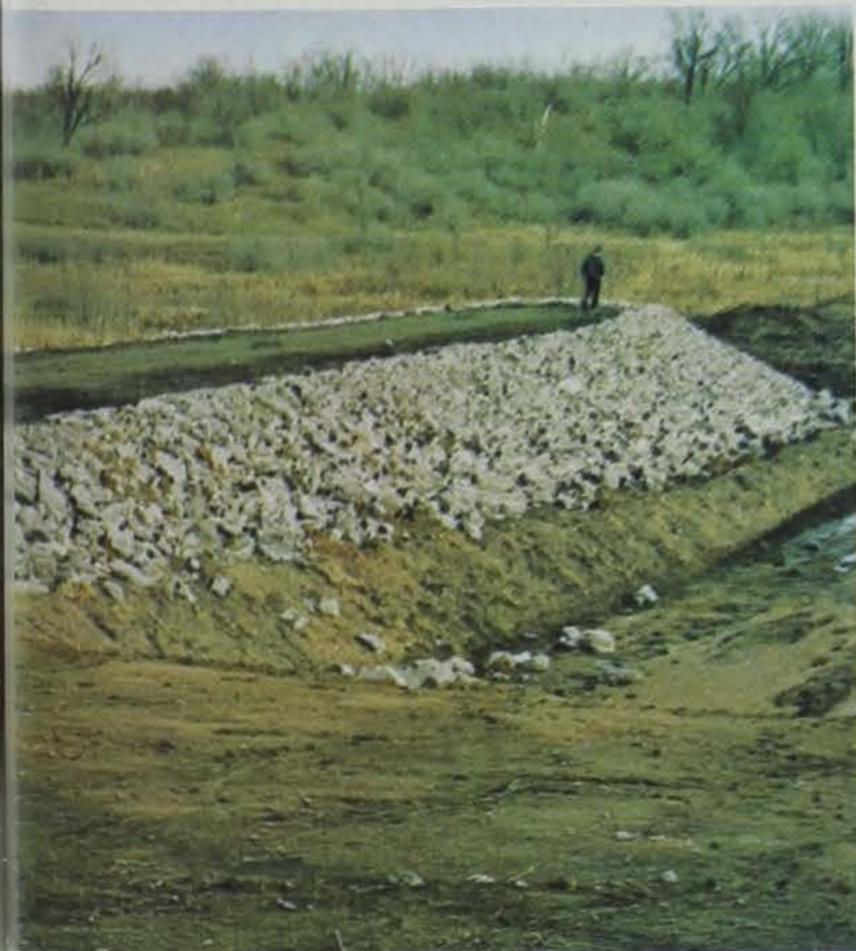
the roads is complete and it can be anticipated that access to the lake and boat ramp will be available when the fish population has developed to a catchable size.

In addition to the thousands of hours of fishing and hunting enjoyment at the Hawthorn area, the lake will also serve, experimentally, to provide answers to specific fish management problems. Research investigations at Lacey will test the significance of man-made habitat to fish populations and more importantly to the fisherman. Construction of a new lake provides a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to build a multitude of fish habitat structures on the lake bottom. Placement of brick, tires, stakes, brush and dirt is greatly simplified; everything is done on dry ground before the bottom is inundated with water.

Fish habitat to be evaluated here will include tire reefs, stake beds, brush and man-made ridges and drop-offs. Some of the questions to be addressed are: Which type of habitat will most readily concentrate fish? What is the effect of each structure upon largemouth bass? Likewise, what will the effect be upon crappie, bluegill and channel catfish? Which structures are most easily fished? And most importantly, which structures do fishermen find most successful? Answers to these questions can be readily used by fisheries managers and applied to other lakes throughout the state.

The development of a new lake is a long process from planning until the first fish is creel. We hope you agree that the end result is worth the wait. Whatever your outdoor endeavor, fishing, hunting, bird watching, nature walks, picnicking, etc., we hope you will enjoy the Hawthorn area.





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# PILOT KNOB STATE PARK

by Craig Jackson, PARK RANGER

On April 12, 1934, a 210 man Civilian Conservation Corps came from Doliver State Park at Fort Dodge to Forest City for a four month stay in order to work at Pilot Knob State Park. Pilot Knob is located four miles southeast of Forest City in Hancock county just south of the Winnebago county line. The CCC company, number 1757, was the prize company in the state the previous year. Captain R.T. Nichols was in command. A captain, lieutenant, and medical officer were the only military personnel at the camp. The 210 men were not under military discipline, but the camp was patrolled at night, and

the men were expected to be in camp by a certain time. A civilian camp superintendent, George R. Morgan, was in charge of the men during working days.

The camp was allocated \$2000.00 for camp location which included the various expenses for the upkeep of the camp, other than meals. Meals were purchased in Forest City and hauled to Pilot Knob by truck to each work site. The 210 men had \$1500.00 a month to spend for themselves, which amounted to \$7.15 per person per month.



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Several projects were planned for the area. Here is the list as designed in 1934.

1. Look-out tower - attached shelter
2. ½ mile of wagon road
3. 4 miles of foot trails
4. Shelter house - open
5. 2 vault type toilets
6. 2 incinerators
7. Repair of barn (service building)
8. 2 entrance gates - 4 rock portals
9. Outdoor amphitheater
10. 2 foot rock bridges
11. Guard rails for road
12. Planting trees and shrubs
13. Landscaping
14. Plant disease control

Work details were usually split into working periods. The first shift began at 5:30 A.M. to noon, the second shift from noon to 7:00 P.M. Saturdays and Sundays usually were days off, with many activities for the men to occupy their time. Softball tournaments, singing groups, movies, plays, are but a few of the activities provided for the men.

By the end of April one mile of foot trail was completed around Dead Mans Lake. Guard rails were made from diseased or dead trees that were cut out. About 250 diseased trees had been cut out to this point in the project. The roads, trails and picnic areas were built first and construction of the park structures was to come later in the summer. By the middle of May, 4000 hard maple trees were moved from Rice Lake to Pilot Knob State Park. At the conclusion of the project over 20,000 trees and shrubs were set out at the park.

Because of a drouth during the summer of 1934, a 500 gallon tank was used to water the newly planted trees. At this time (during May), the 4 miles of foot trails were completed and these are still in existence today.

During the week of May 24th, the CCC's started to collect rocks from the park and surrounding farm land for the construction of the 35 foot rock look-out tower. The look-out tower, sitting on top of the Knob, is the second highest point in Iowa (1450 feet above sea level), and its summit is approximately 300 feet above the basin valley plain. It is one of the most scenic views anywhere in the country. Three counties can be seen from the tower on a clear day. Rocks were also collected for the entrance portals, the shelter house, the foot bridges, and the outdoor amphitheater.

On September 30, 1934, there was a celebration for the completion of four months of work. A band and nearly the whole community of Forest City attended the celebration. Following the ceremony, nearly three tons of blue grass seed was used in the park. The CCC camp moved from Forest City to Council Bluffs on October 1, 1934, for the winter, where barracks were already prepared for their arrival.

Today, Pilot Knob State Park has expanded to 528 acres. The structures erected in 1934 have endured 46 years of use with little or no change. We should consider ourselves extremely lucky to have had the CCC company here in Iowa and have some great and unique structures which shall endure through time. It is amazing the amount of work and the quality of work accomplished in such short periods of time. Pilot Knob State Park is one of the fortunate parks to have many such structures for future generations to enjoy. Come discover Iowa parks and enjoy the great outdoors and what it has to offer you.

*Photo taken in 1934 at the celebration for the completion of the park.*



## Poisonous Plants Are Also Po the

THEY MAY BE BEAUTIFUL; they may be plain; they may be wild flowers; they may be vines; they may be shrubs; they may be trees; they may be found in woodlands; they may be found in prairies; they may be in fencerows; they may be in marshes; they may be in state parks or in your own back yard!

We are referring to poisonous plants. They are found in many places in the outdoors! In the book "Poisonous Plants of the U.S. and Canada", John Kingsbury lists more than 700 species of plants which have been known to cause sickness or death. Some plants which are poisonous to people may be harmless to some wild animals and birds.

It is important for people who use the outdoors for work or recreation to be knowledgeable about the poisonous plants they may encounter in the outdoors or they may unknowingly end up with an unhappy experience involving a poisonous plant. It is therefore good insurance to learn how to identify these plants before going into any area where they may be found.

We might say that poisonous plants fall into two general groups: 1. Those that poison on contact; and 2. Those that poison when eaten.

### Plants that are poisonous to touch:

Of the contact poisonous plants, poison ivy is probably the most well-known, although every year many people are poisoned by it. It is quite variable in appearance. Sometimes it may appear to be mostly a low ground cover; then it may look like a small tree, growing upright to seven or eight feet high; or it may be a vine, climbing on brush or maybe up onto a tall tree for 50 or more feet. A large old vine like this may have a woody stem of six inches or more in diameter. But always it is poisonous. It has three leaflets which make up the leaf. Sometimes they are dull green, sometimes shiny, sometimes tinged with red, sometimes bright green, sometimes large, sometimes small. Almost always, however, the leaflet margins are more or less wavy or irregularly notched, although sometimes there is only the slightest suggestion of a wavy margin.

The poison is a colorless material found in resin ducts throughout the plant, even in the woody stems. However, it is not found in the pollen. Apparently four different poisons make up the poisonous substance in the plant. About half of the population are supposedly immune to the poisons, but this immunity can change, especially after repeated exposure to the plant. Almost everyone has heard the completely unfounded statement that eating a leaf or more of poison ivy will give a person immunity to the poison. This is *not true*. In fact, this practice is very dangerous, and could be fatal. While touching any part of the plant may poison many people, coming in contact with or breathing the smoke from burning poison ivy can cause serious and severe poisoning, even for people who consider themselves immune.



Poison Ivy, left. Right: Poison Sumac.

Poison sumac, a shrub or small tree with gray bark to 10 feet high, has not been reported in Iowa but is found a few miles northeast of Iowa, just across the Mississippi River. It is possible that it might sometime be found in Iowa. It is almost *always* found in a wet boggy type of habitat. The poison is similar to that of poison ivy but may be even more violent. A few people have even developed a dermatitis from contact with the common smooth sumac, and staghorn sumac.

Wild parsnip, common along roadsides and in disturbed areas, may cause dermatitis in some people when bare skin comes in contact with any part of the plant. Wet sweaty skin seems to be affected more easily.

Stinging nettles, (*Urtica* species and *Laportea* species) are usually found in moist soil on bottomlands along streams and rivers, often in shady bottomland woodland. Contact with the stinging hairs on stems and leaves will cause burning or stinging sensation that may persist for an hour or more, usually less.

Clematis, a vine, sometimes called old man's beard, from the appearance of the clusters of feathery appendages on the seeds is considered a contact poison. Many people will develop a skin rash, somewhat similar to poison ivy, from contact with this plant.

Showy lady's slippers have irritating hairs which give some people a rash upon contact.

It has been said that for every wild plant that grows, someone, somewhere, is allergic to it. Certainly, many people suffer each year from plant and other allergies. One of the chief culprits of course is little ragweed with which hay fever sufferers are familiar, perhaps too much so, especially here in the midwest.

The best protection from plants which poison on contact, most people agree, is to keep away from them.

A very simple rule to prevent poisoning would be, don't eat any wild plant, fruit or roots which you find in the outdoors. However, a more practical rule might be, eat only the wild edible plants whose identity you are *completely* sure of.

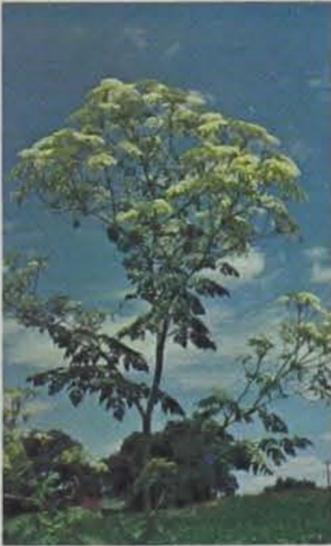
There are many edible wild plants to be found in our outdoor woods and fields, but there are also plants in the outdoors which are deadly poisonous when eaten.

# Part of the Outdoor Scene!

## Plants that are poisonous to eat:

The following is a partial list of *poisonous plants* which can be found in the Iowa outdoors:

**Water hemlock** — grows to be five or six feet high and somewhat resembles wild parsnip, except that it has white clusters of flowers instead of yellow. It usually grows in wet areas in very wet soils. It is deadly poisonous, especially the parsnip-like roots. It has a parsnip-like odor.



Left to right: **Water Hemlock, Poison Hemlock, Buttercup.**

**Poison hemlock** — somewhat similar to water hemlock, but the leaves have more of a lacy look. Although the plant and large carrot-like root is poisonous, the greatest concentration of poison is in the seeds. This is the poison hemlock which history says caused the death of Socrates, the ancient Greek philosopher. This plant is sometimes found in large patches, along roadsides and in vacant lots.

**Common nightshade** — there are several species. The common nightshade is found all over the state, in woods, fields, and even back yards. It has little green berries about 1/4" in diameter which are very poisonous. Apparently when these berries become ripe (i.e., turn black in color) they lose much of their toxicity, though there is a difference of opinion on this. It is better to be safe and avoid them. Inspect any outdoor area very carefully before allowing small children to play there.

**Sweet nightshade** — a vine-like plant which has clusters of scarlet berries. These are considered very poisonous.

**Stinging nettle** is a low spiny member of the nightshade family with large yellow berries. This is frequently found in yards, pastures, and disturbed areas.

**Wild cherry**, also in the nightshade family, often called cherry apple, is found as a weed in recently disturbed areas. The seeds have powerful narcotic poisons which have killed or severely poisoned many people. It was first reported after the early colony at Jamestown where a group

of the early colonists became crazed and poisoned after eating it.

**Moonseed** — a vine with maple-shaped leaves and poisonous blue-black berries. These occur in sparse clusters. Each berry has a single moonshaped flat seed. These berries look much like wild grapes, but each wild grape has several seeds. Occasional past reports of wild grape poisoning were probably caused by this plant.

**All buttercups** (many species) — They are poisonous, beautiful, usually shiny glistening yellow flowers, okay to touch but it is very dangerous to eat any part of the plant. There is even one species that is poisonous to touch. One species was used by some Indian tribes to poison the tips of their arrows.

**May apple** — all parts of this beautiful plant are poisonous. However, when the soft lemon-like fruit becomes ripe it is edible, and sweet tasting.

All members of the arum or calla family have calcium oxalate within the plant juices. If any plant in this family is eaten, severe and long lasting burning of mouth and throat occurs. Sometimes with such swelling of the mucous membrane tissues that breathing is inhibited. Fatalities have occurred in experimental animals after eating some of these arums. The poisonous plants in this family include:

**Jack-in-the-pulpit.** Found in medium to moist upland woodlands. Also called Indian Turnip.

**Green Dragon.** Found in similar habitat to Jack-in-the-pulpit, but much less common.

**Diffenbachia** (not a native plant, but often kept around homes in large flower containers). Sometimes called dumb cane.

**Skunk Cabbage** — may be found in wet, boggy soils in woods and marsh areas.



Left to right: **Dicentra, Skunk cabbage, Larkspur.**

All wild cherries (and tame ones too) have a compound in the leaves and twigs which releases cyanide when eaten. This is fatal to livestock and people.

**Elderberry** — the shoots, leaves and bark of this shrub contains a poisonous material. Children have made

whistles out of the hollow stems and have been poisoned by having the stems in their mouths. The fully ripe berries are used for making delicious jams, jellies and also wine. The fresh flowers have been used in making elderflower waffles.

Black locust — barks, sprouts, leaves and seeds are poisonous.

Dutchman's breeches — all parts of the plant are poisonous but more of the poison is concentrated in the divided tubers. Cattle have died from eating this plant.

Squirrel-corn and Bleeding-heart have poisonous qualities similar to the dutchmans breeches.

Larkspur — beautiful flower of open woods and prairies is poisonous. It has been fatal to cattle.

Monkshood — the fleshy roots contain a poisonous material. This was formerly a source of medicines, but has now been abandoned because the material did not remain stable.

Pokeberry — the root, which is perennial and may become very large, is deadly poisonous. The shiny blue-black berries are also considered poisonous to eat and apparently the seeds contain concentrated poisonous material. Paradoxically when the shoots first come up in the spring, they are considered to be among the most tasty and desirable of spring greens. However, people have been poisoned when they happened to cut off a tiny part of the root and included it with the cooked greens they ate.

White Baneberry and Red Baneberry — both found in our upland Iowa woodlands are poisonous plants, as the names suggest. The White Baneberry is also called Doll's-eyes. It has white berries with dark spots on them resembling an old fashioned doll's eyes.

Blue cohosh — while it has been used medicinally in the past, it is also poisonous. It has large smooth sky blue berries.

Buckthorn — a small tree, has small clusters of blue-black berries which have strong purgative properties and may be poisonous if taken in large or even medium amounts.

Horse chestnut or Buck-eye — has shiny seeds resembling chestnuts, which are poisonous. Each seed has a small somewhat circular light-colored patch on it — which accounts for the common name — Buckeye.

Common Privet — a cultivated and ornamental shrub, sometimes escaped to the wild. It has small clusters of little blue-black berries which hang on the plant all winter and may be seen well up into the spring season. Birds — especially cedar waxwings eat these berries with no apparent adverse effect, but children have died from eating these berries.

Castor bean — commonly planted as an ornamental — has very poisonous seeds or fruits which contain a powerful blood poison — called ricin. Children, adults, and animals have died from eating these seeds.

Euonymus or Burning-bush — both the native wild shrub and the ornamental planted variety, have beautiful red fruits which are reported to be poisonous.

Bittersweet — a common vine of woodlands and field borders it has beautiful orange-red fruits which are considered poisonous, although there is some record of these having been used as a last ditch survival food by early peoples. Horses have been poisoned by eating the leaves.

Wild or tame Iris — has underground stems which have caused severe digestive upsets when eaten.

Bloodroot is a very beautiful early spring woodland flower. It has an acrid poison in the blood-red juice. It was formerly widely used in pioneer medicine.



Left: Blue Cohosh; Right: White Snakeroot.

White Snakeroot — a fall blooming woodland plant with clusters of white flowers. This plant contains trematol one of the alcohols which is soluble in milk and butterfat. If you drink milk from a cow who has eaten white snakeroot, you can be poisoned because the cow passes much of the trematol on into the milk. This is the plant which caused the dreaded milk-sickness of the pioneers. It is reported that Abraham Lincoln's mother died of milk sickness which almost certainly was caused by white snakeroot poisoning.

Present milk handling methods generally preclude any white snakeroot poisoning in the milk we get at the market. However, individual local small farm dairy cows could conceivably run into a poisoning problem if they had access to a pasture with a high white snakeroot plant population.

Poisonous plants have a place in our natural woodland and prairie communities. Some of them are strikingly beautiful. Some of them have given us important and life-saving medicines and drugs. To really know them is to enjoy and respect them.

In any case, where poisoning occurs, it is very important that a doctor be consulted immediately as many of these poisons require prompt and specific treatment.

The Iowa Methodist Hospital in Des Moines maintains a Poison Information Center as a special service in poisoning emergencies. Phone 1-515-283-6254.

It is interesting and a lot of fun to discover the wild flowers and plants there are to be found in woodlands, prairies, marsh or anywhere they occur in the outdoors. It is a source of great satisfaction to be able to not only identify them, but to know something about their backgrounds, whether poisonous, edible, medicinal or otherwise useful and just how they fit into the natural outdoor communities. To be able to enjoy the outdoors this way is non-consumptive outdoor recreation of the highest order.

There are other poisonous plants which may be found in our outdoor areas, but the above are some of the most common. For our own safety, it is important that you know which plants are poisonous. But in a larger sense, it is important to us to have protected natural areas where we can study the relationships of the great variety of native plants, and animals and birds who live in these areas. From our observation and study of native woods and prairies may come the wisdom of how to live successfully in our world environment.

## Are Those 'Good Old Days?'

by Bob Fagerland

PEOPLE LIKE MYSELF who have reached the downhill side of life often view things in the past as superior to what we are now experiencing. It's very easy to forget the disappointments and failures in past years while the successes shine very brightly. Such is often the case in regard to game populations. But a look back may show that the good old days had some drawbacks.

My hunting experiences began in the 1940's. At that time, the pheasant season was around 25 days and only two-thirds of the counties were open to hunting. Now the season is twice as long with all counties open.

Ducks were then limited at four per day, while last year a person could harvest up to ten per day. The ruffed grouse, white-tailed deer, and turkey were either not hunted or nonexistent whereas today we have open seasons on them. I suppose the Conservation Commission is much like the baseball manager, in that if we are to take the blame for failures we should also be accorded the credit for successes. I certainly don't want to diminish the work of Commission personnel in bringing about these successes, however, I believe the real linchpin of Iowa's increase in wildlife is the Iowa farmer.

I have no way of knowing what people's ethics regarding poaching were in the 1800's, but I'm convinced the turkey and white-tailed deer have prospered in Iowa because the Iowa farmer has protected and nurtured these species with just as much concern as he had for his cattle, hogs, and other livestock. Iowa sportsmen can be thankful not only for the Iowa farmers' generosity in allowing him to hunt on private land, but also for the fact that the landowners have taken it upon themselves to protect the game and to inform law enforcement people of activities that would endanger our wildlife.

## ANALYZING AN ACCIDENT

by Betsy Malueg

IT WAS SUNDAY, July 1, 1979 when three 30 year old men decided to go waterskiing on the Mississippi River. The beautiful sunny morning was too much for them to pass by. They were experienced skiers and enjoyed many such outings each year. Each of them picked up a supply of beer and snacks at their local 24-hour store and they were on the water by 10:00 a.m.

The river was relatively void of traffic when they first started out, but by the middle of the afternoon the river was crowded with cabin cruisers, sail boats, ski boats and an occasional tow and its barge. By 3:00 p.m. if they had noticed the clouds moving in, they really didn't pay them much attention. The wind had picked up but it wasn't a big problem to three guys having a good time.

The three men headed out for a routine run up to lock and dam #11 near Dubuque. Each man was stationed in his position as operator, observer, and skier. The warm sun was very relaxing and the men were beginning to tire. Boat traffic was heavy and the wind was now whipping up some pretty fair waves. As the skiers approached the Julien Dubuque bridge, there were boats trailing close behind and two boats were approaching at a very high rate of speed head on. The beautiful day, the fun, and the beer had helped ease the skier into a carefree confidence. He did not see the oncoming boats. And, as he had done so many times before, the skier crossed the wake of his boat for the fun of the jump. Within a few seconds he had run head on into one of the rapidly approaching boats.

It was only a short time later that the state water patrol officer received a report of an accident while patrolling approximately a half mile down stream. When he arrived on the scene the victim had just been pulled out of the water. Friends of the victim and the waters officer managed to keep him breathing until he was transferred to a local hospital. The victim was cut so badly that a leg amputation was considered but later proved unnecessary. The man was fortunate; there are many other water skiing accidents which end in injuries from horrible disfigurement to loss of limbs and even death.

### *What can we gain from analyzing this accident:*

Water skiing is safe, but like any other sport the degree of safety is relative to the precautions and care that are taken by

its participants.

A close look at this accident will show two of the most common mistakes contributing to boating mishaps.

At the beginning of the day the first mistake was made by the three men when they decided to take along a supply of beer. One of the first things impaired by alcohol is balance. People may not notice any decrease in their balance ability but water skiing is no place to debate the point. Vision is also reduced by alcohol. Drinking tends to decrease a person's peripheral vision, making the skier and the operator less likely to look ahead and to the side for possible problems. Add to that fatigue, vibration, and the carefree over-confidence that goes along with drinking and you'll be lucky to be alive at the end of the day.

The skier and the operator should not only be alert for other boats but also cross wakes. Remember, in a crowded river condition, cross wakes are going to be high. Other obstacles to avoid are partially submerged objects, swimmers, fishing lines, shallow water and docks. Running into any one of these obstacles could result in serious injury.

A speed and distance violation was the second mistake. If two boats are passing each other at greater than 5 mph they must be 50 feet away or greater. This accident involved two boats which were not 50 feet apart. Both operators should have cut motors immediately. As it happened, this accident could have been much worse for everyone involved.

Safety is the primary responsibility of the boat operator. The person who takes the helm of a water ski boat must take complete control and responsibility over the boat, the skier and its passengers. The operator must continually check the area for floating debris, smooth water conditions, other boat traffic, and drive a straight path, at a constant speed. The skier is concentrating on his own activity and will not be able to watch out for all these dangers. Insist that the skier wear a brightly colored personal flotation device and when the skier falls, return quickly as this person is helpless in the water against oncoming boat traffic.

Don't over do water skiing, especially at the end of a long day. A tired skier not only ceases to perform well but becomes a hazard to himself and others. Boat driving and skiing is not difficult and can be great fun. It requires common sense, practice and courtesy.

## SKUNK RIVER (Continued from Page 3)

along one of their trails. The old cottonwood mentioned is more than twenty-seven feet around and was probably a mature tree before the first pioneers settled the area. It stands out almost twice the height of its neighbors.

Life along the Skunk today has kept pace with modern times, almost. For the folks lucky enough to call its banks home, it still provides what they need. Many of the old hand-cleared fields are still farmed. Mr. Pat Nolan still runs a truck farm only a mile upstream from where Henry Jacobs raised his melons. Pat's specialty is pumpkins and he is famous with kids for miles around as owner of "Pat's Pumpkin Patch", the place where you can pick your own jack-o-lantern.

Daily activities of Story County Conservation Board personnel bring them into contact with many residents of the valley — Ida Honderd, Nora Doolittle, and Pat Nolan, to name a few. A pleasant visit can always be expected at the Austin Getz' place, also known as "Granddad's Farm", or with the Andersons, owners of the H-Tree site. Whether they are Scandinavian, German, or any other ethnic background, all seem to share a common pride in their local heritage.

Clean, cool water is still available, but sadly, not from the river. Hidden beneath the river valley are extensive aquifers of sand and gravel. This resource is being mined in several places as is the limestone which lies near the surface in the Soper's Mill and Hannum's Mill areas. The Sargent Rock Quarry is now shaft-mining high quality limestone more than 100 feet below the river's bed about a half mile upstream from where Hannum's Mill once stood.

One of the needs felt by today's residents of the area was probably not considered by their ancestors — the need for space, a place to breathe and get away from it all. That's where the old valley hasn't really kept up with modern times. The space is still there.

The Story County Conservation Board is working to keep that space intact for the benefit of all people in the area and for the benefit of the descendants of those first fur and featherbearing residents of the valley. The Skunk River Greenbelt is well on the way to becoming a reality. It is a long-range project that is taking the cooperation of many people. Most of the residents of the area are supporting acquisition of the Greenbelt as a means of insuring the future of their land in the condition that they have always known it, as open space.

Pressure was and is great for residential development along the wooded slopes and several major subdivisions had already begun carving

into the peaceful, wooded hills. The Story County Planning and Zoning Commission and the Story County Board of Supervisors recognized the importance of this historic, natural open space along the river. With the help of the Conservation Board, a new Greenbelt/Conservation District Zone was developed to protect this sensitive area from unwise development that could prevent the future utilization of the river valley and its many resources by the people of Story County.

Headquarters for the Skunk River Conservation Unit are at McFarland Park, 250 acres of woods, streams, prairies, fields, and picnic grounds with a small lake. McFarland Park is itself the result of cooperation with many groups of Story Countians. The hiking trails, almost three miles of them, have been built by county kids in the Youth Conservation Corps. A special use trail for the handicapped was largely funded and built by men from Ames' Town and Country Kiwanis Club. The prairie restorations have come about through the combined efforts of Dr. Roger Landers of the Iowa State University Botany Department, his students and the Conservation Board. The park continues to serve the people of Story County as a specially developed natural history park. Several Iowa State University graduate students are active on projects every year studying various subjects such as prairie establishment, fishery biology, and water chemistry.

Soper's Mill, always a popular spot for gatherings and fishing, continues in that tradition. Though the walleyes, northerns and even muskies that once populated the river are gone now, there is still a chance for smallmouth bass and channel cats. Though Soper's Mill has become known in recent years for its spring and fall keg parties from Iowa State University, it also serves as the site for the annual Soper's Mill Community Friendship Day Picnic. Visible links with

the past at Soper's Mill include the remains of the mill dam, only a riffle in the river now, and the old rainbow trussed bridge, built in 1867 just upstream from the mill dam. It has been restored for foot traffic with the help of members of the Ames Audubon Society, and is now listed on the National Register of Historic Sites.

The valley has scoured deeper today and pothole-draining tile lines from the surrounding fields add to the flow soon after heavy rains. Roads bridge the river every few miles, and nobody worries about quicksand any more.

The big predators are gone, but wildlife is still prevalent today. Whitetail deer are common and a few are harvested annually during the hunting season. Fox, coon, and even coyotes are seen from time to time by the frequent canoeists who now enjoy the river. Wood ducks are more common now than they were a few years ago and find many nesting cavities in old elm trees. Public hunting is available on Greenbelt lands so designated.

Canoe races have been annual events for several years and are great fun for participant and spectator alike. It is certainly easy to just tip over when you are hot from a hard paddle. Some folks forget the canoe and paddle in favor of an old inner tube.

The Skunk River Greenbelt is rich, not only in natural resources, but in a cultural heritage as well. It is unique in the same way that many of the meandering Iowa streams are unique — green, peaceful ribbons of space, offering shelter to man and animal alike from the pressures that face them, providing a place for man and nature to spend some time in harmony, and giving yet another means for us to seek out our real roots — those roots anchored in the soil and the sky, among the trees, grasses, and streams where our ancestors sunk their roots and stayed.

Prairie Cemetery



The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation is a private nonprofit corporation whose goal is the protection, preservation and wise management of Iowa's natural and cultural resources. The objectives of the foundation are to insure that natural, open space and park lands are preserved; natural resources and the state's economy are enhanced through a long-range, balance management plan; the natural beauty of the state is enhanced and protected; public awareness to and understanding of the state's natural resources is increased; populations and diversity of fish, wildlife and plants are maintained and scientific educational and recreational opportunities of natural lands are protected for future generations. The foundation may well represent our strongest hope for that future.

During the summer of 1978, officials of the Iowa Conservation Commission met with Governor Robert D. Ray to discuss the need for and role of a private foundation dedicated to Iowa's natural resources protection. The Governor called on two leading Iowa citizens, Robert Buckmaster of Waterloo, and Bill Brenton of Des Moines, to aid him in evaluating the potential of the private sector assisting government in the preservation of the state's natural resources. In the spring of 1979, Buckmaster, Brenton and a third Iowan called on for assistance, Dick Ramsay of Des Moines, reported to the Governor that there was indeed a need and recommended the establishment of a foundation completely financed by private monies. The need arises from the inability of government to react quickly, to procure sufficient funding and to enter into long-term contracts. Other factors reflecting this need are general public mistrust of government, the inflexibility of governmental agencies, and the lack of concentrated influence and assistance by the private sector. The foundation approach, it was felt, could better meet these needs.

First, articles of incorporation were filed, bylaws were established, program objectives were developed and a committee structure was created. Then, an IRS tax exempt status was obtained. This key move allows individuals and corporations to deduct donations to the foundation.

The three individuals did feel there needed to be some tie to the various resource agencies and organizations in the state. The

## "For those who follow" The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation is Created

by Mark C. Ackelson,



suggested foundation thus provided for the inclusion of the Governor and the chairpersons or presidents of various state resource agency citizen boards and citizen resource organizations as ex officio trustees.

At the invitation of the Governor, other Iowans were asked to serve, bringing the number of trustees to the total of approximately fifty. The board is balanced from geographical, political and professional standpoints. These Iowans have accepted the challenge and opportunity (the complete membership list is included at the conclusion of this article).

Since those initial organizational efforts, the foundation has moved rapidly. This speed reflects the concern and urgency of the situation. Here is how the program has progressed.

Three full-time staff members were hired and an office was established in Des Moines. At this point, the foundation became a reality. The Board of Trustees was expanded to the present number and funds for initial operation were raised by them. The board set financial program objectives for the next year.

The services of a leading Iowa advertising firm were donated by Bill Fultz of Fultz, LaCasse and Associates of Des Moines. A comprehensive communications program was developed, including

a film on Iowa's natural heritage. Services of one of Iowa's most successful fund raising firms was also donated by Howard Braren of Howard Braren and Associates of Davenport and the fund raising began. Finally, a preliminary catalog of project opportunities was developed and a workshop on the status of natural resources in Iowa, 1979, was conducted.

Preservation efforts have already been initiated on several projects around Iowa through technical assistance. Cities and counties have been assisted by identifying potential funding sources for projects. Private landowners have been assisted in developing preservation and acquisition plans. Donations to government bodies have been negotiated. The foundation has worked with federal agencies to gain additional funding for Iowa natural resource projects. The foundation is also assisting natural resource agencies in developing long-range resource objectives.

The generosity of and concern by Iowans for our state's resources will provide the funds enabling the foundation to invest in projects and programs as a partner with government. Future projects and programs could include: 1. The preservation of natural, open space and park lands by a. The encouragement of direct contributions by fee title donations or partial donations

(bargain sales, easements) to the appropriate managing government agency or organization; b. Direct acquisition through a revolving fund with subsequent repayment, transfer of title and management to a state county or municipal government or organization; c. Providing technical assistance (planning, land preservation technique consultation, legal) to state or local units of government for the development of long-term preservation/management plans for areas; d. Ongoing evaluation of project and program management. 2. The development of a long-range perspective for the management of Iowa's natural resources by a. Encouraging the state to prepare a long-range comprehensive and coordinated plan for the natural resources of Iowa; b. Encouraging the funding of that plan; c. Funding of research or special studies that will provide better understanding of our natural resources for the manager or that will provide bench mark data from which success can be measured. These can be one time grants or partial grants to encourage or act as a catalyst for continual government commitment; d. Funding of educational or cultural efforts that will encourage a conservation ethic in Iowans; e. The review and evaluation of the actions of government in the private sector and the provision of a long-term resource management perspective; and f. Sponsoring special workshops and planning sessions that will encourage a long-range perspective for coordinated resource plan.

The foundation encourages your investments in Iowa's future — gifts, contributions, endowment, estates, trusts, bargain sales, etc. We also ask your assistance in identifying potential projects throughout the state. Government alone cannot and should not face the task of preserving Iowa's natural heritage. We all must become involved. The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation is a means to enhance, protect and preserve our natural heritage . . . for those who follow.

For further information, contact the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, Suite 830, Insurance Exchange Building, 505 Fifth Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa 50309, (515 288-1846).

The staff members are: Gerald F. Schnepf, Executive Secretary, Mark C. Ackelson, Assistant to the Executive Secretary and Sue Hough, Office Manager. Board of trustees are: Executive Committee Chairman, Robert Buckmaster, Waterloo, President Bill Brenton, Des Moines, Secretary-Treasurer Richard Ramsay of Des Moines.

# Warden's Diary

by Rex Emerson  
LAW ENFORCEMENT SUPERVISOR

"YOU should have been here last week. The fish were really biting".

That's what they tell me every place I go fishing. July is usually hot and dry, the rivers are low and the fishing slow. Which is the way it was when I was sitting on the river bank waiting for someone to run a fish trap.

I had taken a rod and reel along, plus a jar of stinking catfish bait. There was no use sitting out there doing nothing. Maybe I could catch some catfish. If the fish trapper didn't show up by supper time, a fried fish sure would taste better than canned weiners.

As the hours went by without a bite - except mosquito bites - I thought, "Maybe I should have been here last week!"

The biologists told me their surveys showed a good population of channel catfish in this river. So, why don't they bite? With time on your hands and forced to stay at one fishing spot, it gives a person time to work out such problems.

There was a small feeder stream running into the river about 100 feet upstream from me. There was just a trickle of clear water running from it. Sliding down the steep bank I tore my pants on a sharp rock. With a canoe paddle I stirred up the mud in the bottom of the small stream, which caused a little cloud of silt to go out into the river, just like after a rain. It was a tough job

getting back up the steep bank, but it paid off. In less than five minutes a catfish thought food was washing from the small stream and decided it was time to feed - and I caught him!

The cloud of silt quit coming from the small stream and the fish stopped feeding. Sliding down the bank to stir up some more mud I tore my pants again on the same rock. It suddenly made me think of the lady up at Rossville who painted the toilet seat and hung a "Wet Paint" sign on the toilet tank. She evidently didn't believe her own sign. By using a mirror in one hand and a rag soaked in paint thinner in the other hand, it took her at least an hour to get the paint all off.

After I riled the water again one more fish decided to bite. Neither fish was anything to brag about, just nice eating size. That's the statement people make to console themselves when they can't catch a big fish. It's always a "nice eating size".

It was getting late in the day so I dressed my two little fish. This is rather difficult when you don't have a pair of pliers along. A small fire was made out of dry wood so as not to cause a lot of smoke. The fish were put on a green stick and propped up with two rocks so they would be held over the heat. If you want to try this at home, so you won't have any dishes or pans to wash, let me know and I will draw a diagram for you.

At this very moment the sound of an outboard motor interrupted my attempt at being a great chef. The fire was about to go out and needed some attention, but it would have to wait. Fifty yards down the river was where the fish trap was located and that's where the boat stopped. After the motor was shut off I had to be more quiet while approaching the spot. Any strange sound in the weeds and brush on the bank would alert the violator and he would leave, never to return. When I peeked over the bank he had the fish trap in his boat removing some fish. The anchor of the trap was holding his boat out about ten feet from shore. Now was the time!

When I jumped off the bank into the water I was close enough to grab his boat. What a splash! The poor guy sat there as if he was petrified. Fortunately he didn't have a bad heart. As I pulled his boat over to where I could tie it to a tree, he was informed who I was and why he was going to get a citation to appear in court. His fish trap was pushed up on the bank, along with the three fish that had been caught in it. That would make four charges against him - one for each fish and one for the trap. By standing on the bow of his boat I could just reach my citation book which I had left on the bank.

That's when he regained his voice. He asked, "Where did you come from?"

After sending the reformed fish trapper on his way I returned to my camp site, only to see a raccoon devouring my two "nice eating size" fish. Oh well, I didn't have any salt and pepper anyway.

## LOOKIN' BACK

in the files of  
the CONSERVATIONIST

### Ten Years Ago



the *Conservationist* featured an article highlighting Iowa's proud conservation history. Aldo

Leopold, Ira Gabrielson, George Hendrickson and Emerson Hough are among the great conservationists born in Iowa.

Another story presented a series of studies which showed that hunting does not adversely affect populations of mourning doves, a game bird which is currently protected in Iowa.

### Twenty Years Ago



the magazine suggested live bait to those who wanted to catch big bass. Records had shown

that most bass over 3½ pounds (of those included in surveys) were taken on live bait. Minnows were tops with green frogs and cray fish also high. Night-crawlers took many bass but not as many big ones.

### Thirty Years Ago



the *Conservationist* listed the species of lizards found in Iowa. Included were three species

of skinks, a racerunner and the legless lizard or glass snake. For the most part the lizards are found in the southeast and southwest corners of the state.

In the 1800's it was believed that most fish were not fit to eat if taken between March and June.

## Thanks for the Memories . . .

Would you like to do something for the farmer who let you hunt last year? Or has a friend or relative included you on one of their hunting, fishing, camping or boating trips lately? Show your appreciation in the form of a gift subscription to the IOWA CONSERVATIONIST! All you need do is send us (1) the name of the recipient, (2) his/her complete address, and (3), a check or money order for the proper fee. Our address is: IOWA CONSERVATIONIST, Wallace Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319. We will send each and every name on your gift list a suitable notification of your thoughtfulness.

Subscription rates - 1 year - \$2 2 years - \$3 4 years - \$5

**DO IT NOW!**

# Classroom Corner

by Bob Rye  
ADMINISTRATOR, CONSERVATION  
EDUCATION CENTER

DO YOU TAKE the opportunity to notice sounds that are often missed by others? Those who do not have ears tuned to specific sounds may never hear them.

Birds make a variety of sounds. In towns during the day, the clear "cheerio" of the robin, and monotonous chirps of the house sparrow are commonly heard. At night, the nasal "peent" of the nighthawk can be heard above city buildings. In country fields and forests the flute-like melody of the meadowlark and brown thrasher are heard during the day. The barred owl, asking "Who cooks for you?" and the whip-poor-will repeating its name sound through the forests at night.

The nighthawk, whip-poor-will, chuck-wills-widow, and poor-will belong to the same taxonomic family — goat suckers — *Caprimulgidae*.

The goat suckers are ample-tailed nocturnal birds with small bills and weak tiny feet. During the day they rest horizontally on a limb, or on the ground where their mottled brown pattern will blend with the surroundings.

Long ago this group received its common name, goat suckers (night jar in Europe), because in Europe it was accused of taking milk from goats. What actually was happening was that the birds, while flying over goat pastures, made a loud, jarring noise that so disturbed the goats that they gave less milk the following morning.

The birds do not feed upon goats' or cows' milk. Instead they catch insects with their wide mouths, aided by their long, stiffened facial muscles. Bird experts say the whip-poor-wills eat a prodigious amount of moths as well as other insects

including mosquitoes.

The birds within this group are also well known for their calls. All but the nighthawk call their own name.

The nighthawk is the slim-winged gray bird we see flying erratically about after insects high over the roofs of cities. It is usually seen flying at dusk. In courtship the male folds his wings and drops earthward like a dive bomber, zooming up sharply at the end of the drop with a sudden deep whir that has a booming sound. He offers observers quite a number of sounds for listening!

Learn to recognize bird calls. During trips into fields, forests or towns, draw your own or a group's attention to different birds as their calls are heard. After a few expeditions, most bird cries will be fairly easy to recognize.

An entertaining activity on this subject can be done in the field, school or school yard. Two chalk lines or lengths of tape or cord are drawn at each end of an area. Divide the group into two teams of equal numbers, each team representing two or more

different birds. A player who is a fairly fast runner is selected to represent the "bird of prey". The teams line up facing each other, about ten feet apart, with the bird of prey in the center midway between the lines.

The teacher, leader, or member of the group most adept at imitating birds, gives the call of one of the birds represented by either team. As soon as the call is heard, the team whose bird it is runs to "seek cover" behind the line at the end of the play area. The bird of prey tries to catch a player before he crosses the line. The caught player drops out of the game, which continues until only one player is left beside the bird of prey. The survivor then becomes the bird of prey. The birds are redistributed between the teams and the game starts over again.

The game is one method of training your senses. Walking in parks, forests, wildlife areas, along lakes and rivers will provide opportunities to listen to birds and learn their calls. Take time now to do some walking.

## Profile of an Endangered Species

# BLUE-SPOTTED SALAMANDER

by Dean Roosa

There are three salamanders of the genus *Ambystoma* in Iowa. By far the most common and largest is the Tiger Salamander (*Ambystoma tigrinum*) that has revolted many a mother when her fifth grader proudly brought one into the house in late spring or early fall. Another, the Small-mouthed Salamander (*Ambystoma texanum*), is a diminutive cousin that occurs in southeast Iowa. But the blue-spotted salamander (*Ambystoma laterale*), a near-twin to this latter species, is the month's featured endangered species.

This small species, black with bright blue spots, has been suspected of occurring in Iowa since 1937 but was not unequivocally attributed to the state until Drs. Bruce Menzel, Iowa State Univ. and Carl Goellner, Coe College, performed field and laboratory studies in 1973-1975. So far as is known this species occurs in two locations — sandy



Photo by Sylvan T. Runkel

ephemeral ponds or floodplain woodlands along the Cedar River in Linn and Black Hawk counties. These are "disjunct" populations — being distant from the major portion of its range in northeastern United States and southeastern Canada. One site is on state-owned land, the other was recently purchased by the Iowa Chapter of the Nature Conservancy. Because they are

active for such a short time in spring and thus easily missed, there is a strong possibility that more populations will be found in Iowa. Fortunately, a new freeway route missed by short distance the major Iowa habitat for this species; it could easily have been erased.

New highways, new pipelines, urban sprawl and conversion of marginal land to agricultural use all make it imperative that we find the remaining natural areas that harbor species like this salamander so their safety and protection can be assured.

To some Iowans, it is silly to show concern over anything as insignificant as a "slimy salamander"; to others, who believe we have not scratched the surface in our understanding of the value of a species, it is essential that we protect all native Iowa species irrespective of their habits, appearance or economic importance. I'm glad to be in the latter category.

