

# Keokuk County Conservation Board News WINTER 2016

*Serving through education, recreation, and conservation of our natural resources*



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*From the Director's desk....*

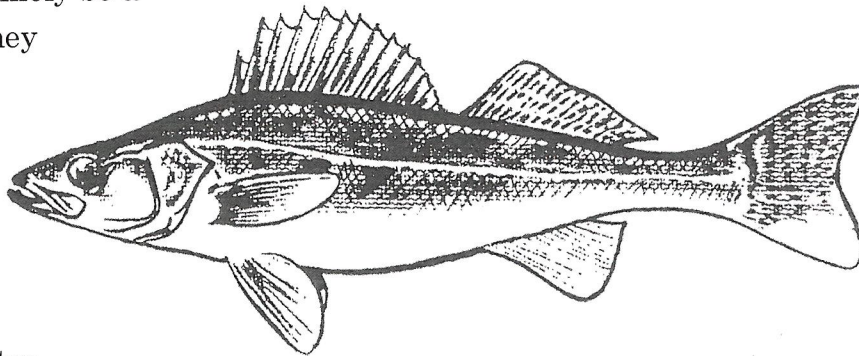
During one of our past board meetings, the board decided once again to stock 1,000 8-inch walleyes to Belva Deer Lake. If you remember, this is the same amount and size stocked three years ago. The board's decision to stock the 8-inch fish greatly increases the chances of survivability. Stocking smaller fish would most likely be a waste of money

because many would be eaten by other

larger predator fish. The walleye stocked three years ago are now approximately eighteen inches long and are highly sought after table fare.

After researching information about walleyes, I found it interesting that walleyes can live for decades; however, few older than six years are encountered. The maximum age recorded is 29 years old. Also, the biggest walleye ever caught weighed 25 pounds and was caught out of a lake in Tennessee. To my knowledge, the largest walleye ever caught out of Belva Deer Lake measured 29¾ -

inches long and weighed just over eleven pounds. It was caught through the ice a couple of years ago. That fish was obviously one of the original walleyes stocked three years after the lake was constructed. Research has shown that most walleyes grow 5-6 inches each year of their first three years and an inch per year after that.



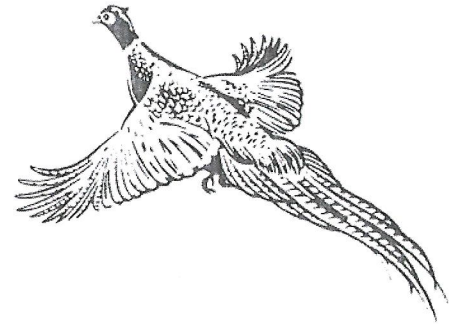
*Goodbye...*

The Keokuk County Conservation Board says goodbye after twenty-one years of outstanding service to Bob Mendenhall. Bob began his service on the board in December 1994 and was very instrumental in seeing the Belva Deer Lake project through its completion. I would like to personally thank Bob for his knowledge and sound decision making skills he brought to the board over the years. Bob was a great board member that truly will be missed.



## Notes from the Ranger.....

I was doing some cleaning in my office, (which needs to be done on a more regular basis) and started with my desk. Sometimes I see things move on my desk and am not sure if it is a mole or a tribe of little gremlins, but when this happens, I know it's time to start filling the trash can. As with all desks I have pictures on mine and most of my pictures include my dogs and children and we are either hunting or playing baseball/softball. One of my pictures has my kids, me, and old Gus my blonde lab with a couple of pheasants at his feet. I remember that day very well because we spent it at my father in-laws farm hunting waterway's, CRP, and shelled corn fields. It was a great day hunting with my kids, working the dog, shooting some birds, and eating dinner at my mother in-laws table. The one thing I noticed about the picture was how young everyone looked, including the dog, and how much smaller my belly was to its conformed winter 2016 size. I flipped the photo over and the date written on the back said "November hunt 2007". Well since that documented hunt my son is now at Iowa State University, my daughter has five months left in high school, my dog has lost eyesight in his left eye and had it removed, and I look to be on full feed at the local Pizza Ranch buffet. And I'm quite positive I gave the hunting pants I'm wearing in the photo to my son. So the reason I mention the date on the back of the photo is because to my recollection it's the last year, until this year, that we had a substantial amount of pheasants. With bird numbers up it's been a good hunting season, although nothing like 2003, but still better than the last few years. As I needed some facts to substantiate and support my thinking, my thoughts went to the Iowa DNR and their roadside survey conducted every August. The survey is on their website along with information about weather, habitat, and Iowa's upland game species. When reading the introductory of the survey the last sentence is powerful and it states; "The two factors that determine abundance and distribution of upland game populations in Iowa are **weather** and **habitat**". I would like to touch on these two subjects and how they affect pheasant populations and "no" hawks have nothing to do with either one. Generally pheasant habitat in Iowa is made up of a mix of hay acres, small grain acres, and CRP acres. From 1990 to 2013 the state of Iowa has lost 1,850,076 acres or 2,891 square miles of habitat from the three previously mentioned mixes of acres. That lost equals a strip of ground 9+ miles wide that would stretch from Omaha to Davenport across the state. Starting in 2007 the state had five bad winters in a row with 30 or more inches of snow and three of those years had springs with 8 inches or more of cumulated rainfall. Since 1962, the beginning of roadside survey's, pheasant populations have never increased in years that had 30 or more inches of snowfall or in springs with 8 inches or more of rainfall. This shows weather is the biggest reason for our current low pheasant numbers and our loss of CRP and other habitats is only adding insult and injury to the past weather conditions. I encourage you all to go to the Iowa DNR website and study the roadside count from the past and cross reference it to same time weather conditions, you'll probably be surprised in what you find. Oh yeah, Gus still hunts and does a good job, just finds birds better from the right side vs. the left.



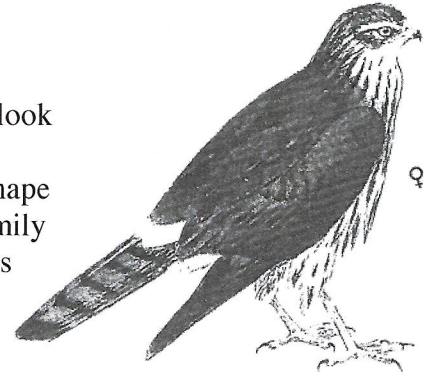
I would like to thank our outgoing board member Bob Mendenhall for all he's done for KCCB and the public should be very thankful for such a dedicated volunteer public servant. He is one of the most progressive leaders I have ever worked with and was never afraid to stand alone for what was right and just for the betterment of the community he resided in. He is a large part of what Belva Deer has become and his 21 years on the board will prove just that. I have enjoyed working for him the last 17 years and his dedication has always been a path and bright spot to lead me through my days. Thanks Bob for everything you have done for me and my family.

Ranger Pie Reighard

## NORTHERN HARRIER

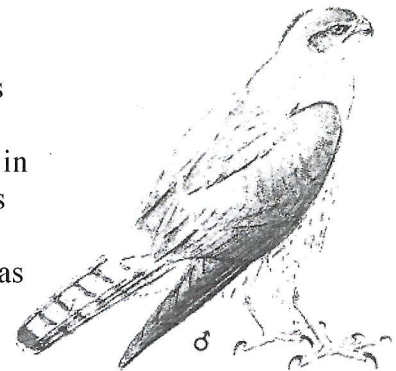
*Circus Cyaneus*

Known to many as a Marsh Hawk, the Northern Harrier has a distinctive look that is easily recognized from a long distance: a slim, long-tailed hawk gliding low over a marsh or grassland, holding its wings in a shallow V-shape and sporting a white patch at the base of its tail. Harriers belong to the family Accipitridae, along with kites, accipiters and eagles. These unusual raptors have a broad distribution across North America and can be found in Iowa year round.



Northern Harriers are slender, medium sized raptors with long, broad wings and a long, rounded tail. In fact they have the longest wing and tail relative to body size of any raptor in North America. Though not related to owls, they are the most owl-like of hawks with a flat, disc shaped face that looks and functions in much the same way that an owls does. Stiff facial feathers direct sound to the ears allowing them to rely on hearing as well as vision to capture prey. Sexual dimorphism is very evident. Adult males, often referred to as “grey ghosts”, are a light gray above and white below with black wing tips, a dark trailing edge to the wing, and a black banded tail. Females and immatures are brown with black tail bands. The adult females have whitish undersides with brown streaks whereas the immatures are more buffy with less noticeable streaking. All Northern Harriers have a white rump patch which is obvious in flight. Females are larger than their male counterparts.

Harriers forage on the wing, coursing low and slow to the contour of fields and marshes, looking and listening for prey. In summer they eat approximately 12 % of their body weight per day increasing to about 19% in the colder seasons. Up to 95% of their diet is comprised of small mammals such as voles, mice and ground squirrels however they will also feed on songbirds, reptiles, amphibians and insects. Occasionally larger prey such as rabbits and adult ducks are taken and harriers have been known to subdue these by drowning underwater.



Harriers are the only hawk-like bird known to practice polygyny – one male mates with several females. Mating occurs in April and nesting begins in March. The courtship flight of the male is spectacular to observe. The flight consists of dives from 50 to 100 feet, swooping near the ground and climbing again to repeat the process. The apex of the climb is usually terminated by a roll or somersault before the next dive. They are ground nesters constructing a nest of sticks lined with grass in low, dense vegetation. Both birds participate in nest construction, but brooding falls to the female. The clutch will average 5 whitish eggs with brown splotches with incubation taking 31 days. The young birds will be able to fly by 30 to 35 days of age but will leave the nest before this time, scattering throughout the surrounding vegetation.

I want to thank Bob Mendenhall for his time here with the conservation board. My time with him has been the shortest of all the staff members but I am a better man for it. I consider him a friend.

Brian



# KIDS PAGE!

## FOLLOW THE DOTS

### ALASKAN FRONTIER

AKHIOK  
ANCHORAGE  
ANGOON  
ANVIK  
ARCTIC  
ATKA  
BARROW  
BEAVER  
BERRY  
BETHEL  
CANDLE  
CHEVAK  
CLEAR  
COHOE  
CORDOVA

CRAIG  
CURRY  
DEADHORSE  
DEERING  
DOUGLAS  
EAGLE  
EKWOK  
HOMER  
HOONAH  
IKATAN  
JUNEAU  
KATALLA  
KENAI  
KODIAK  
MINTO

NOORVIK  
NULATO  
OPHIR  
PALMER  
PORTAGE  
SAXMAN  
SELAWIK  
SEWARD  
STEBBINS  
SUSITNA  
SUTTON  
TANANA  
THANE  
TOGIAK  
UMIAT



A	N	A	N	A	T	D	W	G	E	G	A	R	O	H	C	N	A
K	J	M	U	P	E	O	S	V	Y	S	C	A	K	T	A	R	F
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I	A	R	R	U	X	R	B	U	E	R	J	H	O	K	N	R	A
K	O	W	K	E	Y	Q	T	W	C	Z	D	E	L	D	N	A	C

### ALASKAN MAZE

Follow the path to find out who Nanook will feed first.



**KCCB Board Members**

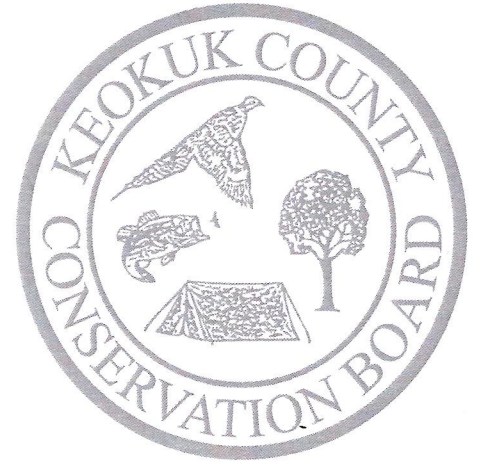
- Tom Siskow ..... Sigourney
- Jay Peiffer ..... South English
- Greg Dyer..... Richland
- Bob Mendenhall..... Sigourney
- Sharon Lyle ..... Keota

**Staff**

- David Long.....Director
- Pie Reighard .....Ranger/Naturalist
- Brian Ulin.....Maintenance/Ranger

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Sigourney, IA 52591



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