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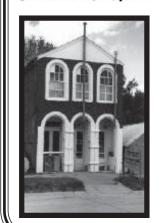
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# Whisler's Hunting & Fishing Report

by Josh Whisler Photos Provided by Author



#### Fishing:

The Missouri River has been low and icy. You can hear it before you see it when you approach its banks, with the ice patties slamming into the bank and into each other. Along with its low level, you have to look well down the river bank to see the water's edge. And as stated in previous articles, the ducks, geese, and eagles have returned and are common sights near the river's edge.

The ponds are starting to get some ice on them! Some report three inches on some area ponds and lakes. It has been well below zero degrees a couple of times. That combined with the winds we have been receiving will only add more ice. "And then it's time for panfishing." I'll check back with you on that, but soon enough it will be time to poke some holes in the ice and give it a try.

#### **Hunting:**

Several hunting season have come and gone with archery, muzzle loader, and late rifle deer seasons remaining. And we can't forget the small game commonly taken this time of year, that being cottontail rabbit. We have had some snow cover a couple of times that aid in the location of those little critters. Man can they make some tracks! I think one can make enough tracks in a day after a fresh snow to make it look like there are a hundred in the same brush pile. But that's what makes it fun, they always seem to be on the move when foraging for food during the cold weather. They are looking for something to eat and I'm looking for something to eat. Imagine that? From the looks of the snow, I'm not the only one looking them over either. Coyote and bobcat are also looking to make a snack of an unsuspecting rabbit. I use a 22 rifle and head shoot them to make them a little less messy when you clean them. But other rabbit hunters use shotguns so the rabbit can be bagged while on the run. With a rifle you wait

for the still shot. It's all the way you want to hunt and eat them. I like mine fried so I shoot them with a rifle so I don't have to eat buckshot. Now if you would rather have them in a stew or roasted in a the old crock pot, shot gunning them is the way to go. The meat cooks off the bone and shot falls to the bottom of the pot. Limits on rabbits are 7 bag (a day), 28 possession (in the freezer).

#### **Hunting Seasons left:**

Cock Pheasant	Oct. 29 - Jan. 31
Quail	Oct. 29 - Jan. 31
Squirrel	Aug. 1 - Jan. 31
Cottontail	Sept. 1 - Feb. 28
Jackrabbit	Sept. 1 - Feb. 28
Dark Goose (East Unit)	Oct. 1 – 2 & Oct 22 – Jan. 22
Light Goose (Statewide)	Oct. 1 – Jan. 13

Hunting and fishing are both possibilities right now. It's cold and you may want to get away from the holiday hustle and bustle and there is no better way to do that than to get out there and give it a try. You won't be sorry you did. Remember I'm not an expert but I have my share of luck. I wonder if the experts are having any luck today? So until next time "Happy Hunting & Fishing."



This month's hunting picture is of Frankie Wiese from Beatrice with a nice whitetail buck take during the regular rifle season.

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#### **Sprouts**

by Ann Yates

Nothing beats the midwinter blues like a window full of sunshine and a helping of something truly **FRESH** to eat. Sprouts have the health benefits of something picked fresh out of your garden. Here are some general instructions for sprouting seeds and a few serving suggestions.

What to sprout: Make sure your seeds are <u>untreated</u> (like is done to some seeds for planting). Bean seeds can be any bean, but soy and mung are the most popular; Alfalfa is the most popular tiny seed. When sprouting a grain like wheat, only sprout until you just see the growth, if it grows too much it will have the texture of grass. Do not use tomato seeds or potato eyes, they are in the nightshade family and poisonous.

#### **Equipment:**

Small mouth quart mason jar

Jar ring

6 x 6 in. square of clean, old, nylon stocking or double thickness of cheesecloth

Enough Dry, viable, Seeds to cover bottom of jar about 2 deep (you will learn to judge the amount of seed according to the size of the initial seed compared to the size of the finished sprout).

Sort bean seeds leaving only whole beans. Place seeds in jar and screw jar band onto jar and over cloth, anchoring cloth tightly in place. Wash seeds and drain right through the cloth, if the water tension will not allow drainage, simply press a finger against the top side of the cloth. This allows air in so drainage can continue. Cover with water to about 2 inches over the top of the seeds. This allows for expansion during the initial soak. Soak 8 hours, drain (reserve liquid to drink or use in soup because it has a lot of minerals in it). Now place jar in a brown paper bag, laying the jar on its side (beans sprout better if you also place it in a dark cupboard, keeping their surroundings as dark as possible). About 3 or 4 times a day rinse and drain (do not leave water standing on the seeds, they just need to stay damp). Some grains need only 24 hours to start sprouting, some seeds require 3 days and some 5 days to reach a desirable size. How big do you let them get? As stated earlier, grains should be used as soon as they start to sprout. Others you will let grow to 2 or 3 inches long (but before root hairs get much formation). With some seeds, like alfalfa, you want the two small initial leaflets to be out, then place them in the sun a few hours to green up, chill to crisp up.

#### How to use sprouts:

The more tender sprouts, like Alfalfa, are used raw in salads and sandwiches (better than lettuce).

Grain sprouts can be cooked directly as a cereal but are most commonly ground into bread dough.

Bean sprouts are usually steamed or cooked in some way.

#### **Korean hot soybean sprouts:**

Using a double boiler or mesh basket, steam the sprouts for about 10 minutes, or till desired tenderness. Transfer to saucepan and add red pepper flakes, a good quality soy sauce and sesame oil (optional), to taste. Heat thoroughly. Serve with sushi-nori seaweed sheets that have been brushed with sesame oil and then passed over a flame to crisp it (oil side up), brown rice and stir fried vegetables. If you have room for desert make it a fruit. Yum, and healthy as "all git out."

#### **Sprouted Red Bean Salad:**

Steam like the soybeans, above, but it will take less time, about 5 minutes. Chill. Add chopped boiled egg, cheese cubes (Greek feta cheese is great in this), black olives (again, Greek olives would be best), thinly sliced celery and chopped onion, all to your tastes of course. You could even add some steamed and cooled sweet corn, or grated carrots if you want to squeeze in a yellow vegetable. Serve this on a big, pretty leaf of lettuce, with a fresh fruit dish and fresh bread, offer a dish of toasted sesame seeds to top off the salad. **WOW** that sounds stupendous. Romantic too, don't forget, we are only a month away from that annual day of **LOVE**.

**Happy Sprouting** (more sprouts next month).

Ankles are starting to heal. Watch this publication for our *Honey Creek Vineyards Bakery* reopening schedule.

#### Diary of an Unemployed Housewife

by Merri Johnson

Have you ever noticed how many people answer the who-was-the-most-influential-person-in-your-life question with the phrase "my grand-mother"? "She gave me unconditional love." "She gave me tough love." "She always had time for me." "She was like a mother to me." The list of accolades goes on.

I'm not one of those people with a ready answer to the most-influential-person question. If, by "influential," you mean someone whose memory still lives in me, then the answer might actually be "my grand-mother," but not for the usual reasons.

Of course, I had two grandmothers, but I didn't spend much time with my Grandma Vermeer, who lived over an hour's drive away and died when I was only twelve. I recall her, from family gatherings of my mom's ten siblings and their children, as a tall, stout and impassive woman. No doubt she was kind, but I don't remember ever speaking directly to her. That doesn't mean it didn't happen, but it was never "just us." With over 60 grandchildren, how could it be, for heaven's sake?!

My *other* grandmother, Grandma Kolb, was another matter. She lived closer to us, and there were only two cousins, plus my four sisters and one brother. I have photographs of us with Grandpa and Grandma on various occasions and I remember the farm where they lived, especially the kitchen.

Grandma was a fastidious housekeeper; it seemed to be her calling. She could squeeze a dish cloth as dry as the wringer on the washing machine in the basement. The countertop was wiped down and every dish washed and put away in the cupboard before bed. The only item allowed to remain out was a small pink juice glass beside the sink. That glass sits in my china cabinet now. I wonder where her little cutglass syrup pitcher ended up. She had her own recipe for syrup. I've never been able to duplicate that flavor, though I've tried.

In my ten-year old's recollection, she's standing at the stove, stirring a pot of old-fashioned oatmeal with a long-handled metal spoon. It's funny how that memory is so clear, I could swear it was much more recent than that. That spoon, worn flat along the stirring edge, now stands in a utensil pot on my kitchen counter; it makes a good flour scoop. The oatmeal was for the barn cats, a supplement to mice. Both Grandma and Grandpa had a real soft spot for animals. I and all my siblings have at least one pet today.

For several years, beginning when I was about nine, my two older sisters and I went to stay with Grandma and Grandpa, ostensibly to help Grandma with chores. I can still recall the odor of fresh eggs, washed and packed in cardboard crates in the damp basement; perching on a branch of the cherry tree; and later, sitting by the back door, pitting those cherries.

Doing chores together may not be the typical grandmother and child activity, but I think now that perhaps it was Grandma's way of bonding. She told my oldest sister once that, as the only girl in her family, she was considered little more than a housekeeper. I think maybe she just didn't have much of an example of showing affection.

No, I don't remember words of encouragement or praise, or cuddling next to Grandma for a bed-time story, but I do remember her. And that's something.



# Poetry, etc.



#### **Dark Birds**

by Kay Marks

Dark birds
Winter stirred
Swirling like black turtle beans
Through windy broth

#### Near the Missouri

by Kay Marks

"The house stood over there," he says, "We had no electricity. Your mother did our wash by hand.

We butchered a hog that year, just the two of us.
It was laid to rest in the cellar piece by piece jar by jar side by side.

The Missouri bled over the road, and I watched my crops go down.

Neighbors took up catfish that swam through graves of corn.

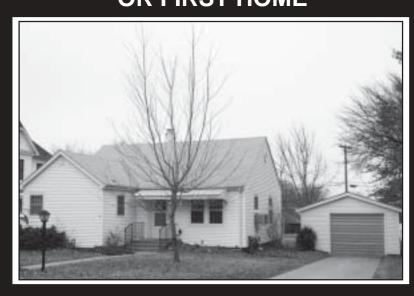
I broke a team of horses in the remnants of the mud."

"Hard times," I say.

"Yes," he says, "But good times too.

It hurts me to remember how fast it slipped away."

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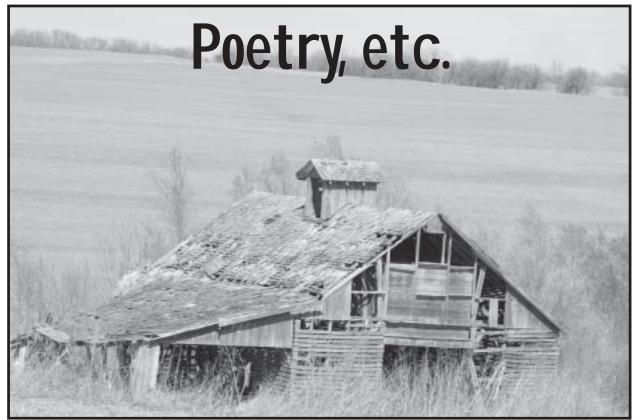
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#### Faded Barn

by Kay Marks

A faded barn
set back
from the road
unnoticed
except for
a photographer lugging a tripod,
a poet lugging words,
several nests of mice,
pigeons looking down from the rafters,
a cranky possom,
and three cats,
two black,
one orange.

Once it held a rhythm of draft horses stamping away flies, rangy Holsteins ready to let down their milk, tightly wound bales of hay, a succession of cats, and a farmer dressed in overalls carrying hope as a shield against drought, grasshoppers, and hail.

On this winter day, it hunches down as if on knees that are hundred-year old weary and giving out.

Though tormented by the wind's insult, it keeps its secrets and quietly waits to fall.

#### PRETTY THINGS

by Shirley Neddenreip

Little humps of snow mounded tops of bird feeders like winter caps. Filled trays of sunflower seed were hidden under snow. A cardinal floated to the pfitzer, cocking his head. He lit with force to knock drifts of powdery snow off the bough. For survival instincts you can't beat a cardinal. No food in sight. He flew away.

Barn sparrows came soon and messed around in the snow, uncovering the seed. Sunflower seed, specially bought and placed to attract the red birds, brought only plain brown and black sparrows to the view from my kitchen window.

Where do you find pretty things? Across the yard a level blanket sparkled. Pines, spruce and pftizers carried a load of snow. "What makes the snow sparkle so?" I asked the farmer at noon. We looked out the kitchen window.

He guarded his cup of tea and I stood with my hands hanging limp in dishwater. Five squirrels own the front yard. We watched the squirrels scamper from limb to limb, branch to branch, tree to tree. A good walnut crop and spilled corn have them fat and sassy. They chase each other in squirrel games.

A shadow fell as a huge hawk settled on a high limb. One squirrel gave chase, scampering up a snowy branch to within inches of the hawk.

That hawk deliberately shifted to another branch, but continued to scrutinize the neighborhood. The squirrel moved nearer. The hawk sat still, ignoring this nuisance until the rodent lost interest, or went for reinforcements in a retreat down the branch.

As I watched, the hawk flew off, sifting a shower of snow and heading for the barns where he might find a mouse, or a sparrow.

Life is plain in winter.

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### A Nebraska Farm Report from the Western Plains

# The Face of Drought by Karen Ott

The winter Solstice has come and gone, and with it Christmas, from now on each day will be a fraction longer than the one before. Hardly noticeable at first, the additional few moments will eventually grow into warm twilights with fireflies dancing on fragrant, freshly cut lawns. But, for now, night falls early on the high plains, the cold settling in as soon as the sun wraps itself in darkness and slips below the western horizon stained in winter pinks and yellows.

It's the time of long, house-bound evenings, where women pass the hours doing handwork, or reading, and men snooze in front of the television, stocking feet crossed, the daily paper scattered on the floor beside them.

Although we had a good dose of Winter in late November and early December, we were given a short reprieve when the days of Christmas warmed to the mid fifties and higher. There was a feeling of heady freedom that came from being able to leave the house in medium-weight jackets, and glove-free hands.....we reveled in every moment of our independence, and for good reason.

For a while, in an effort to beat Mother Nature at her own game, we Westerners donned so many layers of cold weather gear we waddled through the frigid days as graceful as fat penguins. If any of our bundled children had the misfortune of falling, they lay where they fell, squirming on their backs like helpless, topsyturvy bugs, all appendages waving, no hope of righting themselves without a helping hand.....and heaven forbid the plump little darlings should exhibit a need for a bathroom break.

Though temperatures may vary widely, we panhandler's can always count on the constancy of two things: wind, and blowing dirt. It's been ages since we've seen moisture...and the soil is dry, dry, dry. There is talk of good snow in the upper reaches of the North Platte watershed, but here, in the parched North Platte Valley, blow-sand snakes across the fields, accumulating in undulating piles which slither this way and that in an unnatural, and perverted imitation of a living reptile.

The dry weather is worrisome to say the least. It's difficult to believe there are children in this valley who have lived their entire lives in drought, who have yet to experience the sort of wintry snows I knew as a child. The Radio Flyer sleds of my childhood were used up, and worn out, theirs have nothing to do but hang neglected on garage walls, pristine and perfect, and about as useful as a surf board on a mud puddle.

We've learned the hard way drought is both pernicious and tenacious. Those who believe the ordeal has ended need only drive across the North Platte at Torrington, or at Henry, just east of the state line. In both cases it's a pitiful sight. Our entire system of irrigation, and our way of life, is ailing; the river and unused sleds, two visible, if distinct, symptoms of ill health.

But of course there's always the chance we could get lucky this year. Our watersheds might be blanketed by several feet of snow come Spring, and I suppose some unforeseen incident could cause commodity prices to rise, and input prices to fall concurrently. And perhaps this is the year the 'powers-that be' will recognize the worth of the family farm, and the hearts of the small independents will swell again with optimism and hope. But as much as I'd like to believe....I don't.

Maybe, perhaps, possibly, and might: just pretty words which hold little meaning for those of us farming the heartland. Once we were part of the American Dream which promised success in exchange for hard work ....but we're wide awake now....and we know better.

But saying that....should we diminish with dignity and grace, meekly handing over the deeds to our fields, and the keys to our homes, to the rich and powerful? I say no. I say we fight to the last man, fight until the final family farm is put on the auction block. Let's raise a ruckus. Let's stand up at meetings and speak our minds. Let's write letters, and tell stories, and leave something behind for the next generation to ponder when we're gone. In other words...let's stop being nice.

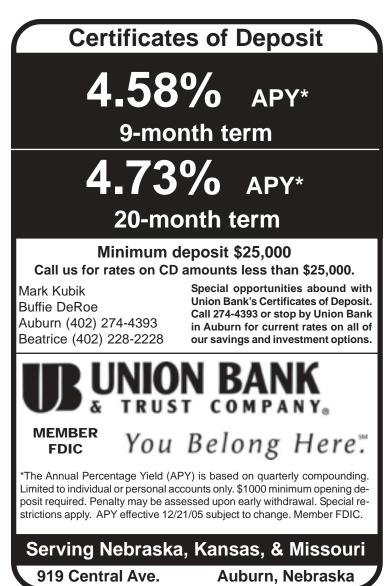
It will only serve to slow down the inevitable, but if we're loud enough, and passionate enough, we won't be forgotten. Someday, somewhere, someone will look back with admiration at what we did, and in an awed voice say; "These people were the best of America."

And maybe...just maybe, our fearlessness will inspire the next generation, and the next. The battle is not ours alone; we fight for rural America's future.

It's a new year, and it's time to stand up and be counted.

Karen

The interested reader will find other articles by Karen in The Nemaha County Voice. A subscription form with a special offer is on the back of this publication.



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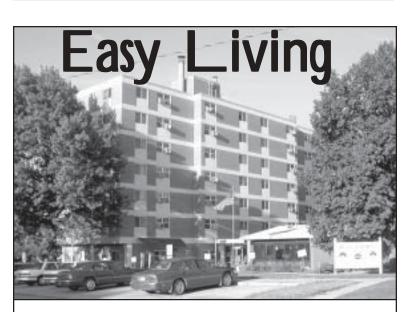


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