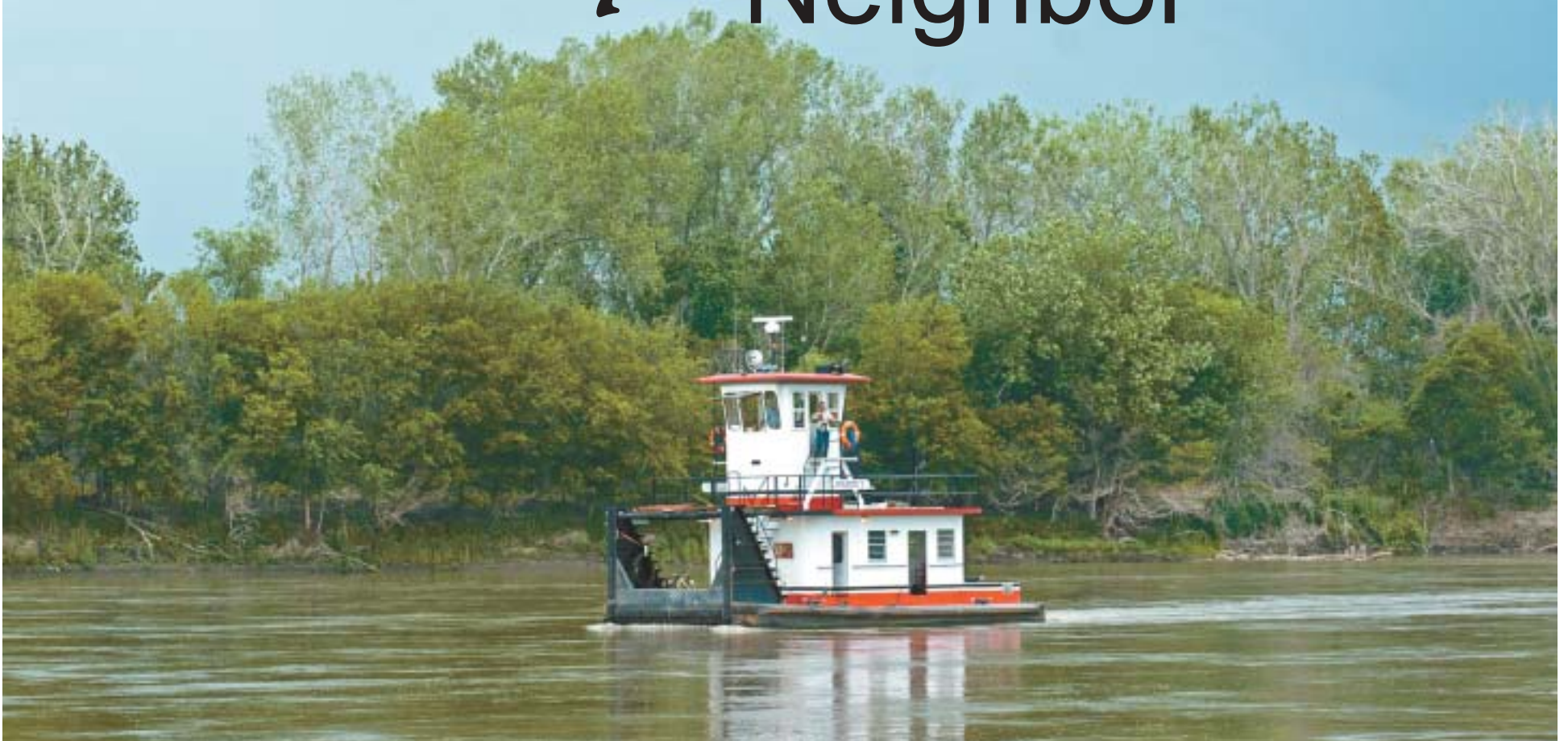


Your *Country* Neighbor

July 2012
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Colorful and not-often-seen Tugboat on the Missouri River near Brownville

Voices from the Valleys of the Nemaha

Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

Writers this month

Devon Adams
Carol Carpenter
Mary Ann Holland
Merri Johnson
Vicki O'Neal
Shirley Neddenriep
Karen Ott
Josh Whisler
Marilyn Woerth

Thank You

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Your Country Neighbor

P.O. Box 126
Peru, Nebraska 68421

countryneighbor@windstream.net

Editor's note:

*Seven years of this publication
are online at:*

www.yourcountryneighbor.com

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Poetry by Devon Adams

RAIN WIND

Soil sucked dry
rises into dusty clouds
that sweep the fields.
The sun breathes fire
until thermometers boil.
Then a swirl of moisture
from the sweaty southern
gulf creeps up the middle
of the continent and meets
a feisty cold front fresh from
the ragged mountains that
thrust their shadows over
the baking plains. The
fight that follows is loud
and violent, but the air
fills with the sweet smell
of rain on the wind, and
nothing else matters.

PAINTED PORCHES

There are white flakes
falling on the porch
from the old paint on
the damp walls.
Water has seeped
through the roof and
warped the boards and
invited bugs to move in.
Squeaks and groans
are the only sounds,
as wind and weight and
time conspire to twist the
structure into arthritic and
painful angles that only get
worse as the shadows of
the days follow the sun on
it's endless journey.

DUSTY MINDS

She is a tiny woman,
made mostly of bone,
like the frame of a bird.
Her flowers need water
and it is time for lunch,
but the shimmer of a wing
flying through the roses
outside the window catches
her eye. She pauses to watch
as it flies to the old cherry tree
that she planted as a seedling,
when time was forever and
only tomorrow mattered.
And now, she remembers
yesterday and forgets today.

ORANGE MISSLE

He is an army of one.
The notes of his melody
echo from all around the
field, like gun shots fired
from multiple soldiers. He
hides in dancing shadows.
Then the orange blaze
blasts out of the trees and
swoops at warp speed into
another wall of camouflage.

EMPTY SPACES

The house is lonesome
for the furniture that lived
inside it's walls so long.
Empty echoes bounce
through bare rooms
that seem larger
than they used to be.
Lightened spaces mark
the pictures in rooms
stripped of their souls.
Only the ghosts walk
here, but they don't care,
because they live on
inside the memories of
all the days gone by.



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ALL DAY LONG

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and stop your mind
from running so fast,
you may realize that
we are always in
the middle of time.
We are caught between
exhaling and inhaling,
remembering yesterday
and anticipating tomorrow.
The days come in fractions
of shimmering seconds,
that flutter across the pages
of a calendar that is nothing
more than abstract lines
and words, like a fragile net
holding a delicate butterfly.

GROWING POLE BEANS

Shirley Neddenriep

I always read the gardening articles written by Master Gardener Paul Fish with eagerness. He made an interesting comment about rain in his story of water usage. 'Generally rainfall is almost always overhead watering.' Then he asks why plants do so well with rain but droop when they are sprinkled with water. He admits that not even the experts know the answer to this one. Here is a summary of my most recent three years of experience growing pole beans with overhead watering and/or sprinkling.

On Mother's Day my son planted Blue Lake Pole beans in a row that had a little moisture in the bottom of the furrow he'd dug. After 10 days, then 2 weeks and no sign of life, I sprinkled that lifeless bean row, soaking it soggy. Still no beans. The soil dried and I soaked it a second time. Nothing.

Came May 30 and a .60" rain. A few days later tiny bean sprouts peaked through. I don't know if that rain brought them up, if they had germinated below soil level after being watered, or, if I was too eager to see growth.

They are planted next to a trellis of cattle panel mounted against the west cement wall of an empty hog building. Their expected growth is 5 to 6 feet.

Two years ago I planted pole beans in the same location. That variety of bean was expected to mature at 10 feet. I lashed lathe onto the panels for additional climbing space, but still those bean tendrils reached upward. That experiment failed. I learned that beans won't bear until they have reached maturity.

Last year I again planted the same variety (to use the second half of the package of bean seed.) However, I trained the vines to grow laterally so they were fooled into reaching their full 10 feet of growth, sideways along the panels instead of upward into thin air. They matured and yielded a great harvest of bunches of long, slender green beans. I am hoping for a harvest like that this year and I am certain it will happen with a little sprinkling of water to supplement sparse rainfall.

Growing beans is a versatile project. Elementary teachers use this tool for scientific learning. Children want instant gratification and in the usual slow process of growing plants in a garden, the bean is the quickest route to success.

I remember having planted a bean seed close to the inside of a glass jar half-filled with dirt. It seems to have been with other Second graders at Brock Consolidated School. After faithfully watering and staring at the row of jars for a week or so, sure as the sun rises, that bean seed sent out a green shoot.

I don't remember the fate of the little green plants. The intent was for them to be carefully brought home on the school bus to be transplanted into the family garden. I expect our instructor had to find a way to dispose of 18 jars of dirt and immature plants.

Where Life Is Good

Marilyn Woerth

Around our three acres, we try very hard to be respectful of the wildlife. We only wish that the wildlife had a little more respect for us.

If you ever see an indigo bunting you will be amazed by its color. As it darts through the landscape it looks like a shimmering streak of blue (the male version). And boy, can that bird sing, from dawn to dusk. (Song birds are protected.) Indigo's are small about the size of a sparrow. And generally, a solitary bird except when they form flocks when migrating. There is one especially beautiful indigo bunting, that I would like to, well, let's just say that I am a bit peeved with the little beauty. You know, like that cute, smart, red head, in high school that spilled a can of pop on your best penny loafers, peeved.

One day after work, husband is not getting out his truck, so I stop my weeding to see what's up. I see a dart of blue and smile. Steve asked me if I had just seen what was happening. After my dumb look, he enlightens me. The indigo was fighting with itself in his side mirror of the pickup, not just one side but both sides. And not only was he trying to knock himself out, he was also leaving a calling card all over both front doors. With a chuckle my husband pointed to my car. Hmm, explains the cat prints on my windshield.

(LONG SILENCE) It's the weekend and I have to go out of town to take my mother to her grandson's graduation party. So as a dutiful daughter I take my car and give it one of the better (\$7) car washes. And life is good. After finishing my duties I take the three hour drive home, and then dive into bed.

Sunday, morning bright and early we go out to the car to head for church. Hmm, what's that on my shiny, clean car? Okay, now, it's war, but not yet, going to church and song birds are protected.

Throughout the day, I chased that nasty, blue delinquent away. Then it hits me, take away his opponent and he will leave my car alone. Plastic grocery bags were pulled out and tied across the mirrors. And they worked. It's a bit of a pain to put them on and take them off but they work. Dust is the only thing seen on my car now.

Then I forget to put the bags back on, one late night. Oh, I see you are having mulberries for breakfast, good for you (bad for me). Oh, you must have eaten a lot of them berries. Bags back on mirrors, husband's truck looks as bad as my car, he's not taking the time with the bags, and it's a pickup. My side mirrors look like they have been crying purple tears. I yell at the culprit, "You are very rude, I don't like you." He flies to the top of the tree and sings, I take it as jeering.

So living where life is good, is sometimes challenged by disobedient wildlife, but they are after all WILD life, and really I do love the songs he sings. Trying hard to reconcile myself with losing this battle, I still maintain that life is good, when I can wake up to the most beautiful of all bird songs.

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Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson

Raise your hand if you have a bundle of mystery keys in a drawer somewhere.

Might I suggest that those of you who didn't raise your hands have either forgotten that you have such a bundle, or you are way too zealous about throwing out things that appear to have no practical value.

In examining my own collection of keys, I find that I have one bearing the I.D. of an organization I used to work for. I guess the key itself is not a mystery, but why I still have it is. I'm pretty sure the organization has relocated, but I suppose I should try to return that key to the building owner. Perhaps by now they've replaced the locks and the key is truly of no practical value. So why do I still have it? Why don't I just remove the tag and throw the key away?

Probably for the same reason that I have a ring with two skeleton keys and a couple of smaller keys that I'm pretty sure fit the interior doors and built-in cabinets of a house we used to live in. I should give those to the current owners. I'm certainly never going to use them. Yet, I don't want to part with them. Aside from photos, those keys are pretty much the only physical souvenir we have of the house where our children came of age.

Then there are several other rings holding keys with numbers stamped on them. Could those numbers identify long-forgotten lock boxes? What treasures might be languishing there?

There are a few keys that look like they'd fit those tiny padlocks that come with diaries. You know, the kind that young girls pour all their angst and dreams into. I used to have one of those. Whatever became of it?

I guess what I'm trying to say is that mystery makes life interesting. And mystery keys can be the source of some revealing conversations.

A couple of weeks ago, an unidentified, but obviously new, key turned up in the washing machine. At first I assumed it fit our house doors. I didn't bother to check it out; just laid the key on the kitchen counter and went about my business. Unbeknownst to me, my husband recognized the key and picked it up. A week later, I found the key in the washing machine again. Hmmm.

That time, I showed the key to my husband and asked if he knew what it was for. He claimed to have no clue, but he pointed out that it didn't fit the house doors, so we *obviously* had no need to keep it. "Just throw it away," he said. *Just throw it away?* Had he no curiosity about how it got into the washing machine twice?

Not only was he not interested in the key's unexplained presence, but he just assumed that it was somehow my doing. "You can't remember anything lately," he pronounced, so it wasn't surprising, he said, that I didn't recall where *I* had acquired that key.

Right about then, I *did* remember something. "Hey, is this the key to the day care center?" I asked. Well, it didn't take more than a couple of seconds for hubby to realize the incriminating circumstance he now found himself in.

He had borrowed that key to gain access to a building that our congregation is preparing to use as a day care center. We were doing some work on cabinets in the building and needed to get in on a Sunday afternoon. The key first appeared in the laundry when it fell out of *hubby's* pants pocket after working at the day care. When he picked it up off the kitchen counter, where I had placed it, he put it in his Sunday pants' pocket, intending to return it to the person who loaned it to him. But, he *forgot* to return it, so the key stayed in his pants pocket and ended up in the laundry a second time.

Well, well, well, Mr. I'm-Not-the-Forgetful-One, what do you have to say for yourself now?

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The Face of Drought

by Karen Ott

June 1, 2012

A newfangled computer, scads of cute, but unfamiliar icons, enough techie verbiage to choke a horse, and a graphics program better suited to someone half my age...what in heaven's name have I gotten myself into?

My oldest son says the purchase of all this newfangled 'stuff' ensures I'm "up-to date", that I'll be able to run faster, jump higher, and do just about everything better on this fancy schmancy machine...but I've heard the same sort of nonsense about 'high efficiency' washing machines..... and all mine does is make our clothes smell sour if I don't pull them from the tub three seconds after the spin cycle is complete.

New isn't necessarily better.....just more expensive.

Our area has gone from abnormally dry to moderate drought on the US. drought monitor map, but of course that's just a formality. No one can remember a year when every crop... sugar beets, corn, and beans have needed irrigating up; even during the toughest years of the drought enough spring rain fell to get the crop going. We've had just over a quarter of an inch in the last four months....and not all at one time.

The physically demanding, and psychologically discouraging, process of furrow irrigation in fields with light crop residue is challenging, but doable.... in no-till fields it's nearly impossible while the plants are still small. Pivot technology made no-till farming a viable option in this area, but not all fields can be pivot irrigated and all the men can do is watch their corn blacken and die because they can't push water through all the 'trash'.

One frustrated farmer, a new-comer from Colorado, said in all sincerity "I'm not tough enough to farm in Nebraska."

The most uttered sentence in the western panhandle is, "I wish it would rain."

As Always, Karen

June 8, 2012

On those rare occasions I visit "The City" I find myself assailed by smells; cooking grease, smog, car exhaust, the 'great unwashed' and even the scent of unfamiliar trees and flowers overwhelms my rural sensibilities. The smell of Magnolia blossoms has literally chased me to the other side of the street, and walking past an especially odoriferous 'gin joint' can nearly give me a case of 'the vapors.'

Continued on page 11 >>>>

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Looking North from H-136 at H-67 after a summer thunderstorm.

<<<< Karen, Continued from page 10

And don't even get me started about those department store employees who spritz every female passer-by with the latest perfume.....fragrances which (in my case) usually induce a ferocious allergy attack.

At home, here in farm country, the smell of freshly turned dirt makes my heart go pitter-pat, and nothing is as pleasing to the senses as a freshly cut field of alfalfa...unless it's the scent of rain...the real stuff, not Glade's smell-in-a-bottle used to cover up the odor of indoor pets....or an untidy house.

On Wednesday evening the sweet, life-giving smell of rain came riding the east wind. A few moments later the heavens opened and it began to rain, marvelously slow and steady. The home place received nearly an inch...the other farms half that.

We breathed a prayer of thanks and the land rejoiced.

Hallelujah! It has rained.

As Always, Karen

Melinda D. Clarke, CPA

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“Patriotic Barn” in Northwest Missouri, submitted by Carol Carpenter

To the High Country...

By Vicki O'Neal



Time...time...time. It's ticking away.

We're all getting older—and closer to the grave. It's something we'd like to ignore, but every once in a while we come face to face with eternal things...and our own mortality.

I myself am turning 50, which is well into the “*Middle Ages*,” but not yet to the “*Golden Years*.” A rather scary place to be...The monumental half-century mark! What was I going to do on this birthday to make it worth remembering?

My husband settled that question for me on the morning of my birthday. “Get ready,” he said, “We're going on a road-trip...a Mystery Tour to the High Country.”

Although Michael didn't blindfold me, he may as well have. I was mystified. I had no idea where we would end up.

The sun was bright and the sky was cloudless—a perfect day for a road-trip. We meandered through the historic mountain villages of NorCal, and then went on into Oregon, stopping to sample from the fruit trees that grew along the way. Apples. Pears. Plums.

At last toward evening, my husband pulled to a stop in the mountain community of Ashland, Oregon—a wealthy college town known for its culture and Shakespearean Festivals. “Look! This is Lithia Park,” he said, and by his tone, I knew it was very important to him. “Now,” he said. “We'll get out and walk.”

I looked around me. It wasn't just

a Park...it was a nature habitat. There were lots of little creatures—birds, squirrels, ducks, and chipmunks...Lots of lovely trees and pools and a burbling creek. The trails and wooden footbridges everywhere created an air of wonder and adventure waiting around the next bend.

“Years ago,” Michael said, “my grandmother was the Curator of this Park—the overseer of all the shrubs and flowers and greenery planted here. Grandma was a renowned botanist and author, you know...Well-respected on the West Coast.”

Ah. Now I understood why this place was so important to him.

I wandered the shady pathways beside my husband—the Grandson of the famous botanist/curator/author. I marveled at it all, reveling in the beauty around me. The trails wove in and out for well over a mile. We worked our way higher and higher up the canyon as the sun sank low in the west.

Soon, my legs grew weary, but I dared not stop. Michael was still urging me onward. At last, we rounded a bend and there in the gathering dusk was a remarkable sight.

It appeared to be a cemetery full of tall, narrow gravestones. On closer inspection, it turned out to be the haven of a most patient Rock-Stacker. Years ago, a renowned artist had spent endless hours stacking rock upon rock. Perfectly balanced, the stones formed delicate spires—rising high into the air—some of them towering over our heads.

It was like a miniature “Stonehenge,” but much more fragile and beautiful. I gazed about me awestruck.

What a strange paradox...To see a garden, not made of living foliage or lovely blossoms, but created from the most humble objects on earth. Stones. Smooth, flat stones...unremarkable in themselves, yet unique in their towering sculptures. A garden wrought from countless hours of painstaking patience.

How many times these same spires must have toppled before they attained their elegant stance!

All it would take was one deranged vandal to make shambles of this place in a matter of moments, and yet these towering stones had been this way for years...A hushed sanctuary that instilled respect in all who passed by.

I'd never seen anything like it.

We stood in the twilight, transfixed, gazing at the fragile little garden. Then silently, my husband and I turned to go.

It was nearly dark now, but by the light of the old-fashioned park lamps, we could see shadowy shapes moving about us. Deer were grazing on the grass nearby, nibbling on the acorns scattered throughout the park. Does and their young...and even a few antlered bucks grazing just a few yards away from us, unperturbed by our nearness.

It brought to mind the pastoral, heavenly scenes portrayed in biblical paintings. Docile deer grazing amid the glories of Heaven.

Unafraid. In perfect harmony with all of Creation.

The heavenly scene was also reflected in the bright glow of windows high above us on the canyon wall. Mansions...Multimillion-dollar palaces were perched there, half-hidden by the trees. Through the lighted windows, we could see the glimmer of wealth. Sparkling chandeliers and elaborate wall hangings. Golden fixtures and bejeweled artifacts.

It was like glimpsing Heaven from afar. “My mansion in Heaven will be that beautiful,” I whispered.

“Oh no!” my husband said. “It will be much finer!” I could only sigh with contentment.

And so it was...on my 50th birthday, I got a glimpse of Heaven, as it were. I had stepped into a higher realm. It was a tantalizing preview of the things that await us on the other side.

I went away with a new appreciation—knowing that Heaven will be so glorious. It will be far greater than anything we can imagine!

I'll never forget that trek to the High Country...the wonders of the Mystery Tour...and the treasured memories of my half-century birthday.

I will never forget...Not if I live to be 100!

Whisler's Hunting & Fishing Report



by Josh Whisler
Photo Submitted by Author

Fishing:

The Missouri River flow this last month has fluctuated some but has remained low and accessible. Although some thunderstorms rolled through the area and dumped an inch or greater with each pass, the river level was not affected all that much due to the dry spells in between the storms (there wasn't a lot of run off - the ground soaked it up). However, the storms did stir up the water. The saying goes "River on the rise-the fish are biting". That holds true most of the time, but I also think the clarity of the water has a lot to do with it too. When the water is murky that means run off is coming into the river, which means that the creeks and stream running into the river have flushed bait into the river with the runoff water. The river fish instinctively know this and go into a feeding frenzy when runoff enters the river. So with the murky water the fish have been biting and with the lower levels this year, the water is warming up faster too. What's that mean? Flathead Time! The early fish are usually the Channels and the Blue Cats. As the water warms up, the Flatheads become more active. This week the water temperature reached 78 degrees. Daytime fishing is pretty good but the fish will soon move to night feeding. They will stay in the cool holes and come out at night to feed. What are they biting on you ask? Chubs mostly along with cut baits and the old reliable - night crawlers. Missouri River Rules still apply, "Big Bait - Big Fish". You really need to get some bait and go out and give it a try right now. And don't forget the Deet. With the higher temps come the bugs. The fishing in area lakes and ponds has also been good, with the Bass, Crappie, and Bluegill all hitting right now. Most any power baits have been proven to be successful, along with minnows and night crawlers. It's time to get out and fish if you want some good action and fair sized fish to take home to eat.

Hunting:

Here we go again - time to plan your deer hunting season. The seasons are set and it's time to get your permit NOW!

Application Period: May 21-June 1:(Residents and Nonresidents may apply for one permit in any draw unit.

July 9- Close of Season - Residents, nonresidents and eligible landowners may purchase remaining permits.

Note 1 - Our Area of the state is (Blue Southeast) is a buy unit - just buy a permit - no permit draw required.

Note 2 - Earn-a-buck has been removed from all deer hunting units.

DEER Seasons


Archery Sept. 15 - Dec. 31(**Mule Deer Conservation Area** Sept. 15 - Dec 31(**November Firearm** Nov. 10 - 18(**Nonresident Statewide Buck** Nov. 10 - 18(**Resident Restricted Statewide Buck** Nov. 10 - 18(**Muzzleloader** Dec. 1 - 31(**Season Choice and River Antlerless** Sept. 15 - Jan. 18, 2013(**Youth and Landowner** Sept. 15 - Jan. 18, 2013(**Statewide Whitetail** Buck Sept. 15 - Dec. 31(**DeSoto Muzzleloader** Oct. 20 - 21, Dec. 8 - 9

Face it. It's time to get out there and get to fish'n. And don't forget to start your deer camp plans by contacting Nebraska Game and Parks Website. And give it a try. I assure you that you can find something local that will provide some fun this Summer. 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 fishing picture was a Large Mouth Bass landed by Anna Meints while her sister Ava and Grand Mother Jackie Whisler assist. The fish was caught and released. Nice Fish Anna!!

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Poetry and Photography

by Carol Carpenter



Grab the Wind

Cotton sheets snap
fountain grass bristles
mist drifts softly down
cloud feathers swirl
across the sky
only for a moment
to grab the wind.



Marigolds

In the big clay flowerpot
outside Decker's grocery store,
I dead head marigolds
yellow, red and orange.
Pinch the withered blossoms,
fledgling seeds, between
my thumb and index finger,
and hold the taste of summer
in the palm
of my hand.



Raspberry picking

Dressed in jeans
long sleeved shirts
thick insect repellent
between batches of briar
nettles and poison ivy
we picked a gallon
and a half of black raspberries
over at the farm
caressed by cool breezes
and comforting shade.

Fingers purple and bloodied
devouring warm berries
atop cold vanilla ice cream
raspberries stirred with sugar
under a copious coverlet of
cobbler and crispy crumbs
imperial jewels of jam
and sequestered gems
stashed for winter and
the sweet taste of summer
on the tip of my tongue.



Red-winged Blackbird Babies in Nest

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