



This Migrating Sandhill Crane stopped over at the Squaw Creek Wildlife Refuge in Mid August

## *Voices from the Valleys of the Nemaha*

Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

### Writers this month

Devon Adams  
Carol Carpenter  
Mary Ann Holland  
Merri Johnson  
Shirley Neddenriep  
Vicki O'Neal  
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](http://www.yourcountryneighbor.com)

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# COVER PHOTO

Stephen Hassler

Sandhill Cranes at Squaw Creek Wildlife Refuge are rare. I photographed two around mid August. They apparently stopped to rest on their southward journey. I think their colors are more vivid than in the Spring, but then, I don't get this close when photographing them along the Platt River.

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## Where to Find Your Country Neighbor

*Your Country Neighbor* is hand-delivered to grocery stores, pharmacies, hardware stores, restaurants, cafes, and businesses that advertise in this publication. Look for it in the following cities and villages; Hiawatha and Sabetha, **Kansas**, Rock Port, **Missouri**, and Auburn, Brownville, Cook, Falls City, Humboldt, Johnson, Nebraska City, Nemaha, Peru, Syracuse, and Tecumseh, **Nebraska**.

Past issues of *Your Country Neighbor* and more rural photography are online at:

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### St. Andrew's Parish in Tecumseh

will host its 8<sup>th</sup> annual Auction and Dinner on Saturday, September 15<sup>th</sup> at the Parish Hall. Itinerary is as follows: Social hour 4:30 P.M. for socializing (wine & appetizers) and bidding of the silent auction items.

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Live auction follows dinner.

The entry cost is \$25.00 and includes dinner (prime rib, potato, coleslaw, dinner roll, dessert, and beverage), raffling of 11 items (\$20/chance), door prize drawings, as well as the opportunity to bid on over 100 silent auction items. Reservations are required.

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## Admission is the Key for Medicare to Pay

By Mary Ann Holland  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension Educator

Let's say you, a Medicare beneficiary, experience an acute, sudden illness. Your call to the doctor's office results in a hospitalization. You are met in an exam room by a doctor; he/she assesses your condition and orders lab work to determine what the cause of your illness may be before making any recommendations about treatment. You are put in a hospital room, given a hospital gown, as well as a hospital bracelet, while doctors analyze tests, prescribe medications and determine a plan of action. You are being held for observation. Your total hospital stay ends up being five days and four nights, at which time you are discharged to a skilled nursing facility. You spend nine days in the SNF [skilled nursing facility] before being released to go home.

Several months after your recovery, you receive a sizeable bill from the skilled nursing facility. You are shocked that Medicare did not pay for your stay! You have Medicare along with Medicare supplement insurance; they should be paying this bill, not you! What is wrong with this picture?

The bottom line is, there is nothing wrong with the picture. You, not Medicare, are responsible for the cost of healthcare services received at the SNF. Medicare will fully cover the cost of your stay for up to 20 days in a skilled nursing facility as long as you've spent at least three days (and midnights) in the hospital as an inpatient (among other criteria). Observation services don't count toward Medicare's requirement as a 'qualified hospital stay.' You, in fact, were never admitted to the hospital.

The requirements for Medicare Part A Hospital Coverage include: a person must be **admitted** to the hospital and remain an inpatient while the physician prescribes in-patient hospital care for the treatment of an illness or injury. The beneficiary requires and receives care which can be provided only in a hospital, the hospital participates in Medicare, and most importantly, the Utilization Review Committee of the hospital approves the stay. When the stay is not approved, Medicare Part A is not responsible for the charges. A denial of coverage can be appealed.

The problem for most Medicare beneficiaries is they are unaware of the 'admission vs. observation' status and the serious financial implications for Medicare payment of the cost of services. Medicare's payment to the hospital is

based on the discharge diagnosis the hospital submits to Medicare. Some of the care you received during observation falls under Medicare Part B, your medical coverage. You will owe a 20% co-insurance or a co-pay, after the \$140 deductible has been met. Your Medicare supplement insurance may pick up the deductible and co-pays depending on your plan. The nine-day skilled nursing facility stay is not covered by Medicare because there was no hospital 'admission.'

What could you have done differently to avoid this? Ask questions! Ask your doctor about **admission** status; talk with hospital case management staff asking if their record shows inpatient status. Ask to speak with a discharge planner; if your physician does not admit you as an in-patient and you are not well enough to be home alone, Medicare does pay for some in-home care. Talk with your doctor about receiving Medicare-approved in-home healthcare. Unfortunately, you or your advocate, needs to be vigilant about 'admission' status during a hospital stay.

Medicare does not require hospitals to tell you your admission status, except when you are transferred from in-patient to observation. The unfortunate trend is an increasing number of seniors are spending days in the hospital under observation only. Resulting skilled nursing facility care doesn't qualify for Medicare coverage because the patient was not 'admitted.' And, they find out months later they are stuck with outstanding bills they are ill-equipped to pay. Don't let this happen to you or someone you know; be aware that 'admission' is the key.

This article was written by Mary Ann Holland, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension Educator and trained SHIIP professional. Resources used include: *Requirements for Part A Hospital Coverage*, *Volunteer Counselor Training And Resource Manual*, SHIIP, Nebraska Department of Insurance, 2012. *Medicare: Avoid big rehab bills*, and *The painful new trend in Medicare*, CNN Money, Aug. 2012. *Medicare and Skilled Nursing Facility Care Benefits*, CMS Publication No. 11359, Aug. 2008.

Mary Ann Holland can be contacted at the Cass County Extension office at 402-267-2205, or by e-mail at: [mholland1@unl.edu](mailto:mholland1@unl.edu). Questions should also be directed to the Nebraska SHIIP [Senior Health Insurance Information Program] of the Department of Insurance at 1-800-234-7119.



# Poetry by Devon Adams

## LESSONS

They waddle in a wiggly line, the four fuzzy kids following behind their tired mother. Here she is again, with four babies to raise, and she did that last year too. Time is running out ahead of her and the list of lessons is always long. But her children are eager learners, somehow knowing that the alternative to knowledge is death.

## TWINS

MaMa is cleaning her face again. The wild plums are sticky and juicy. Her brother is watching the cat that is watching the bird that is watching the worm wiggling in the grass. The soft wind throws down loose leaves that flutter over the family. Father is busy growing his antlers for another season of procreation. As with many humans, he lets Mom raise the kids while his eye roves. Last year's babies are teenagers, playing tag and learning how to be vigilant and alert. They will be shadows in the trees, weaving through the dappled sunlight on their journey through the days.

## FALL INTO WINTER

The dry wind shakes leaves in a death rattle, but they won't let go of their branches. It has been weeks since they died of thirst, but the trees are pretending to be alive, holding their summer shapes, praying for rain to remember to fall.

## IN CONTROL

Their memories develop a haze of denial concerning the control of their family. At some misty point when she was a child, their daughter assumed leadership, and they learned to react to her bouts of emotional storms. As if she was an entity unrelated to their blood ties, they saw her as an uncontrollable force that ruled each day of their complicated lives. Needless to say, she took the reins and whipped the team into escalating episodes of temper tantrums, threats and demands that were always met with compliance by her parents, albeit with massive, ineffective arguments that escalated to physical violence with increasing frequency. Broken glass, ruined walls, and smashed appliances became the norm, as the child grew in years but not in maturity. She became the quintessential queen of spoiled brats, known by her peers, her teachers, her relatives and the local police as a growing menace. She had come to the conclusion that she was exempt from the rules of society. She was special.

## LOSING TRACK

Somewhere along the way, she lost track of herself. Age was an easy path to follow, but there were distractions that caught her attention, and then she couldn't find her way back. Now she is wandering close to the edge of a cliff, but she doesn't recognize the danger, or realize that she needs help.

## SUSPENSE

There are situations when waiting for a decision can stop the clock. Time seems frozen and the length of a day stretches into the abyss of infinity. Nothing can ease the stress that gets worse by the minute. Then the issue is resolved and your heart beats resume. You can finally let go of the sack full of sand that has been sitting so heavily on your shoulders.

## ART BY DEVON ADAMS



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## HOPE, A GOOD THING

Shirley Neddenriep

During this drought (or drouth) events that are full of hope include the knowledge that green crops flourish along the Blue River. Maybe other river valley first bottom lands have fresh-looking corn and soybean plantings, too. Along with a shorter number of growing-degree days, and October-looking corn fields, it is good to know that greenness does exist at Barneston along the Nebraska/Kansas line.

Another event that triggers hope is a writing competition in which two talented Johnson-Brock students won special prizes. Their stories bring to life the reality and warmth of family living as they know it. Their creative writing tells of the beauty and freedom of American life as they are living it. Thanks to staff at J-B for publishing these stories in the August 14 issue of the Johnson Rag. Readers would enjoy more of these confident stories told by promising youth.

Speaking of youth, and school, as it happened four great-grandchildren of mine, all age six, began their academic life this August in locations far apart from each other; Indianapolis, Falls City and Lincoln (2). Those four are separated by time and distance. It may be that these cousins will never get to know one another closely, we don't know. Each of them approaches the challenges of school in his or her own way, building upon the training each has had by their respective parents. No doubt that training coupled with support, or not, from siblings and saturated with scholarly instruction will bring out the best in each little child.

Here is a short report of the first day of school for one of the four; "Mom, I loved my first day of school and I already have a best friend. She has brown eyes, long brown hair and has a little sister, just like me." The mom commented, "I guess that is all you need to make a best friend!" And the little sister commented, "Mom, I am not ready to go to that 'Big Kid' school where my sister goes." She is only four. Her mom told her not to worry as she won't go to Kindergarten for two more years. At school schedules must be kept and still allow for creativity (see above). It's a fine line to walk. Staff are commended for doing their work so well and giving hope to us all.

Hope for a fine harvest from my peach tree waxed and waned during the hot summer and culminated in the largest harvest ever from that volunteer tree. What began life as a slender shoot beside the back step grew and spread to a huge and prolific fruit tree. Its organically grown fruit is akin to those brought from a neighboring state each August. Hopefully, the golden orbs will all find a good home, and soon.

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## Where Life Is Good

Marilyn Woerth

I must have had a premonition way back in January of what was to come this year. My prep for the gardening year starts in January with pouring over the seed and flower catalogues and ordering way more than my husband or my back is happy with. This year I did not. First off, I knew I had a very busy schedule ahead of me until the end of May. Secondly, we had a pretty dry autumn and winter, I was hesitant. (When I water during the winter it is never a good sign.)

One problem that we have this year of diminishing water supply, is the popularity of our water pond. It is 30 x 70 feet with an island in the middle of it. The liner is held in place on the island side, with decorative landscaping blocks and on the outside with many different colorful natural stones and rocks. Someone keeps pushing the blocks on the island into the pond. I'm not naming names (raccoons, coyotes, deer, dogs, opossums and skunks) and we have lost a few of our gold fish as well.



I wept over the demise of my favorite climbing rose; it was a Buck rose "Prairie Princess", a sweet pink, single, once blooming charmer. In surveying our yard it probably won't be my only loss.

This morning, while heading to the pond, I was once again hit with the fragrant Ode du Skunk, oops that's Eau du Skunk, I suppose now I will have to write a poem about a skunk. What the heck it might lift my spirits.

*There once was a lady named Mave,  
Who toiled selfishly in her soil.  
When all of a sudden, smelling to her dismay  
Eau de perfume du skunk and she recoiled.*

*"Oh my", said Mave, "I wish for a bell,  
To inform me of that smelly ole pole cat,  
As he roams upon my fragrant dell."*

*She acquired a bell, the color of gold,  
Then set out upon a mission.  
And never thought twice about her goal,  
Of the advanced feline warning addition.*

*The mission proved lost, to Mave's surprise.  
A mother's den she did descend, nose pinched tight,  
As wicked harsh vapors met her pale blue eyes.*

*And that was the end of Mave's 'ridiculous vision.*

LOL, now you know why I leave the poetry to others. So here we are in the heartland pulling ourselves up (once again) by our bootstraps with a song, a smile, and lots of humor in our hearts, and now some very bad poetry to make you chuckle. We are the heartland where life is always humorously good, because we chose to make it so. God bless.

## Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson

Here we are, knocking on autumn's door in mid-August. Hallelujah!! Personally, I've had enough summer. Seeing as how the season started long before the Summer Solstice, I'd say we're due for an early – and hopefully loooong – fall. The sleeping has been great, hasn't it? Cool enough that I've actually worn my booties to bed rather than close the window and miss out on that great fresh air and the lullaby of bubbling water in our backyard pond. But enough weather talk.

Hubby and I were discussing art the other day. What? You say you don't discuss art much at your house? To be truthful, neither do we. Hubby was gazing at the refrigerator door, studying a drawing made by our four-year old granddaughter during her visit here in July. He was wondering what Breckin was "seeing" as she was scribbling. As I recall, she started out tracing around a horse figurine. The purple outline in the center of the paper looks more like an amoeba than a horse, but it is a definite intentional shape. She filled it in with little dashes and dots and then proceeded to cover the rest of the paper with squiggles and loops.

In response to my husband's musing, I wondered if artists who create abstract art actually have the imagination of a four-year-old. Perhaps when they look at their own finished creations, they see what was in their minds as they were drawing or painting. As much as I have maligned that style of art, I have to admit that there is a *slight* possibility that it's the rest of us, who have lost our childhood creativity, who have no talent for art.

Our granddaughter's imagination is a constant source of entertainment and amazement for us. Horses have figured quite prominently in her make-believe scenarios on the last couple of visits. Maybe that's because she is thoroughly captivated by stories of Princes and Princesses, and you know, the Prince always rides a magnificent horse.

In July, she had me making up stories about horses. Some of the horses were noble, though some were mean. Regardless, it was a challenge to invent a fairytale on the fly. I was instructed to hold my hands just so, as if I were holding a book, and I had to "turn the page" at the appropriate time. When a change of scene was needed, she'd whisper urgently behind her hand to me that "the mean horse is on the next page!" I probably stressed out more about the plot than I needed to. She didn't seem to get bored no matter how much one story resembled the next. And she did her part, improvising whatever was available to act out the scenes. Her plastic princess shoes became guard dogs; Ken and Barbie made perfectly fine chicken farmers, no matter that they were way too big to fit inside the Lincoln Logs chicken coop; and in a four-year-old's mind, golf balls look a lot like chickens. Did I mention the mean horse attacked the chickens? Anyway, you get the idea.

At the top of our basement stairwell is a large, framed print of a colorfully painted door set in a brick wall (think Southwest Mission or maybe New Orleans). During her July visit, Breckin looked up at that picture and asked, in all seriousness, "Grandma, what's on the other side of that door?" I told her it could be anything she wanted it to be. She answered immediately that it was a really cool playground. I'm sure she was seeing that playground in all its glory.

Maybe if I spend enough time with Breckin some of her imagination will reawaken mine. If I can just keep her from growing up too fast....

Alas, I fear she'll outgrow this magical stage as quickly as the seasons change.

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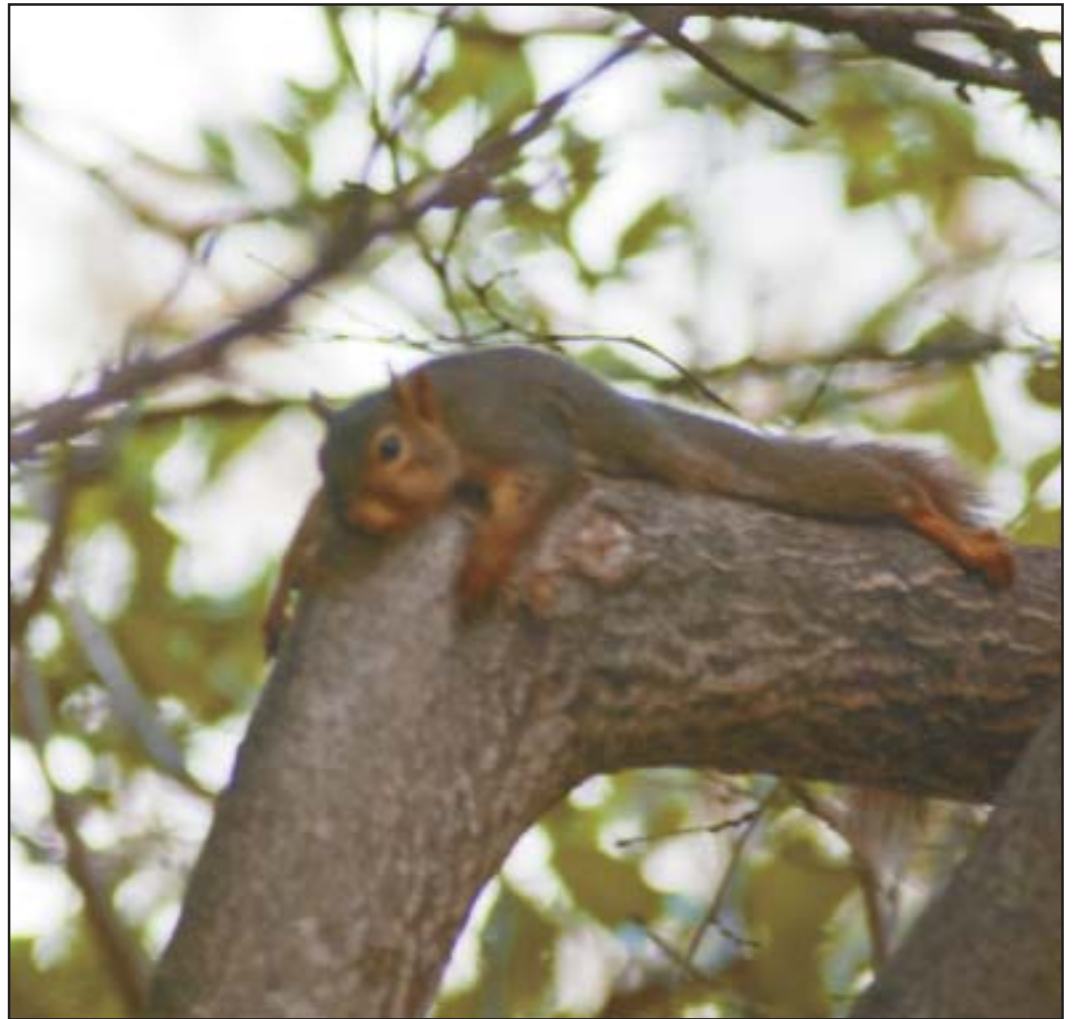
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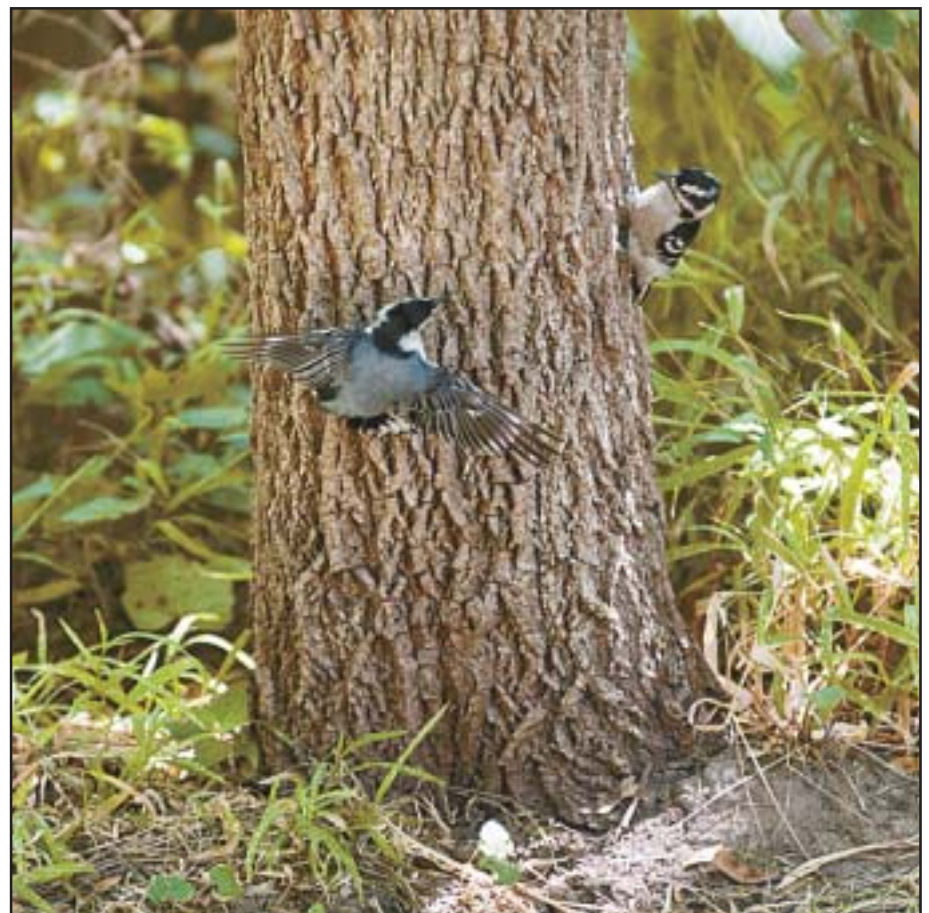
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Toss your troubles on my kitchen table, and drop your burdens on my porch floor; you're coming with me on my morning run, and we're burning daylight.

Out the door, down the sidewalk, across the graveled yard and onto the powdery-dry dirt road, where a thin layer of gravel crunches underfoot. We'll wait here a moment for farm-dogs Cross-Eyed Jake, and Lop-Eared Boxer, to join us. Their enthusiastic break-of-day greetings are infectious, and by the time they've finished their morning salutations you'll be smiling, regardless of your mood when you rolled out of bed.

Wave goodbye to my scruffy across-the-road scarecrow....we're on our way...west to the corner, then south along what was once a long row of giant cottonwoods; to everything there is a season, and theirs are nearly spent. The remaining three trees house all sorts of wild animals so look closely when we pass by....you might just catch a glimpse of the raccoon family Dale watched skedaddle up into a hidey hole last night....or maybe you'll hear a squirrel scold the dogs as they sniff around the battered trunks.

*Continued on next page >>>>*

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<<<< Karen, Continued from page 10

Yellow-Lab Jake, a bit on the plump side, will most likely turn back when we reach the irrigation canal bridge, but Heinz-57 Boxer, my Great-Protector, will stick with us as we turn east onto the canal's access road. The air is cool and fresh, the first hint of fall in the otherwise explosively hot summer...enjoy it, drink it in, feel it's gentle touch on your face. It smells of grass, cattle, growing corn, and a thousand other fragrances, a comforting Balm of Gilead, a soul-soothing prairie perfume.

The cows and calves, off to our left, are peacefully grazing on a lushly-green, sub-irrigated pasture; the mamas will ignore us, but the babies, born last winter, are a curious lot so don't be surprised if they bounce up to the fence line and follow along.... until their mothers call them back, that is.

We're passing the silent, tumbledown stone house now, abandoned nearly 80 years ago when the young Mrs. Stone died of leukemia. The doors and windows are long gone and the kitchen floor is full of gaping holes, but the black walnut tree she planted still drops it's bitter seed, and just this week a patch of pale-pink Bouncing Betty began blooming in the weed choked yard. I think of her sometimes....tending her flowers, or standing on the porch steps, calling her farmer-husband and three small children in for supper.

They're all gone now but I keep them alive in my imagination....and after today maybe you can do the same.

Another half mile and we'll turn north on an abandoned county road. Until the dilapidated bridge gave out, the road was graveled, maintained, and open to general traffic....but now, left to Mother Nature's whims, prairie grass and cattails encroach on both sides, returning it, ever so gently, to its prairie roots.

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Low lying lakes border the road so watch for the ducks, geese, and herons that call them home. This summer I've watched a mallard duck mama raise six babies, and if we're lucky we'll see them swimming...mother in lead, babies in tow.... off to our right.

Now it's over the railroad tracks and west. "Sometimes this old farm feels like a long lost friend," sang John Denver, and that's how I feel when I turn towards home. With the sky a blue bowl overhead, and the land around us bursting with life and promise, we run our last mile...past fields of corn and river-bottom pastures.

A rooster's crow, and Cross-eyed Jake, welcome us home. It's time for breakfast so set yourself down on my front porch swing and watch the morning unfold while I set the table.

The day is just beginning....and everything is right with the world.

It's good to be back home again.

As Always, Karen



Downey Woodpecker at Bifdfeeder

# Poetry and

# Photography by

# Carol Carpenter



The End of Summer

This morning I woke up to a silent yard.  
No robins calling up the sun, no  
cardinals cheeping to their fledglings,  
baby wrens gone and the adults no  
longer perch on the fencepost, warbling  
or scolding the cats.

Did someone flip a switch to quiet the  
catbird and brown thrasher? A couple  
of ruby-throated hummingbirds still visit  
my red salvia and pink impatiens, but  
the Baltimore orioles are gone.

While the turkey vultures gather in great  
flocks by the lake, only the indigo  
bunting and goldfinches greet me as I  
walk to the mailbox and I think that  
when the wrens stop singing, this long  
hot summer is almost over.



Rain Cloud

Sweet popcorn cloud  
like a giggling playground tease  
swinging high and just out of reach  
flashing a frilly white petticoat  
under a soft blue skirt.

I smell your blood  
boiling as you grow  
hovering so close that  
I can almost taste that honey  
rumbling under the summer sun.  
You wink and run away  
from my dry grass and fields  
crackling in the July dust.

As you rub my nose  
with a cool wind  
I watch while you drop  
your precious cargo  
on someone else's corn.



Late Summer

It is the time of chicory and  
Queen Anne's lace,  
the grace of gathering butterflies  
when cicadas screech and  
bright green treefrogs  
beckon down the night,  
where the angle of sunlight changes  
as the deep emerald corn  
suddenly turns tawny beige.  
The exhausted earth  
stretches her aching back  
and drinks deep of September,  
after a long hot summer  
putting up hay.



# Whisler's Hunting



by Josh Whisler  
Photo Submitted by Author

# & Fishing Report

## **Fishing:**

The Missouri River flow this past month has once again been extremely low. Access to the river is still good, a little dusty, but still good. Also, all the local ramps are accessible. Although it could be a little tricky at times getting in and out of the river with a boat, because all the loading and unloading is off the end of the ramp. "The End of the Ramp?" Yes you heard me right - The End of the Concrete Boat Ramp. Most concrete boat ramps are poured in sections, allowed to set up, and then pushed into the river on top of a bed of Rip-Rap Rocks. Then the next ramp section is formed up and spliced to the first section with rebar and then it's poured with concrete. And again the structure is pushed into the river and another section is prepared until the desired boat ramp length is obtained. The Peru Boat Ramp is around 100 feet long, and to get a boat unloaded the trailer has to be backed off the end of the concrete ramp on to the rip-rap rock bed. Now that's how low the river is right now. Sandbars are still very visible and are still an obstacle that has to be dealt with when maneuvering a boat in the river. These sandbars are great places to catch fish as the bait fish gather near these sandbars for food and protection in the shallow waters. And I guarantee the catfish know this. The flatheads, channels, and blue cat are all still biting well at pretty much any time of the day. What are the fish biting on? The big ones are hitting on chubs and cut bates (carp, shad, anything with blood in it), and the pan size fish are hitting dough baits and night crawlers. If you have been waiting for it to cool off to fish, the time is right now. The bug numbers seem to be down and when it cools down in an evening they are almost non-existent. Deet spray is always a good idea to keep all the critters off while you're concentrating on the fish that's biting on your line.

## **Hunting:**

Seasons are opening one by one and it's time to get your shotgun out and practice shooting blue rock to sharpen up your skill for Doves migrating through. I've actually seen quite a few perched around and darting by. I think it will be a pretty good year as long as a cool front doesn't push them south before we can get out and get to them.

## **SMALL GAME SEASONS**

**SQUIRREL** — Season dates — Aug. 1 — Jan. 31, 2013 — **Daily bag limit** — 7 — **Possession limit** — 28

**COTTONTAIL** — Season dates — Sept. 1 — Feb. 28, 2013 — **Daily bag limit** — 7 — **Possession limit** — 28

### **DOVE (mourning, white-winged and Eurasian collared)**

Season dates — Sept. 1 — Oct. 30 — **Daily bag limit** — 15 in aggregate — **Possession limit** — 30 in aggregate

**PARTRIDGE** — Season dates — Oct. 27 — Jan. 31, 2013 — **Daily bag limit** — 3 — **Possession limit** — 12

### **GROUSE (prairie chicken and sharp-tailed grouse)**

#### **East Zone:**

Season dates — Sept. 1 — Jan. 31, 2013 — **Daily bag limit** — 3 — **Possession limit** — 3 — **Open area** — east of U.S. Highway 81

**PHEASANT** — Season dates — Oct. 27 — Jan. 31, 2013 — **Daily bag limit** — 3 — **Possession limit** — 12

**QUAIL** — Season dates — Oct. 27 — Jan. 31, 2013 — **Daily bag limit** — 6 — **Possession limit** — 24

### **YOUTH PHEASANT, QUAIL AND PARTRIDGE\***

Season dates — Oct. 20-21 **Daily bag limit** — 2 rooster pheasants, 2 quail, 2 partridge  
**Possession limit** — 4 rooster pheasants, 4 quail, 4 partridge

Deer hunting seasons are coming and it's time to get your deer permit too.

**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**

Fishing is very good now and the hunting seasons are coming on too. Right now it feels like fishing is far from over but we all know better. It really is time to get some fishing in if you're going to do any this summer. And it's highly advised that you sight your gun in because your favorite season will be here soon enough. 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."

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# The Joys of Indian Summer

By Vicki O'Neal



We're country gals—Joy and I. We both have Native American ancestry and we both love "Indian Summer!" We're like two peas in a pod.

One day, we took it in our heads to go to the Holmes River Bluff all by ourselves for several days.

The weather was perfect for a camping trip and the waters were sparkling.

The sunlight gleamed against the pale cliffs rising up and up. It was post-card-perfect and we were lucky to be in the middle of it!

Quickly, we set up camp and inflated the air-raft, preparing to launch into deep waters. We made a final check of our supplies: oars, picnic lunch, water jug, sunscreen, sunglasses...?

"Oh my Gosh!" my friend said. "I almost forgot. I can't go anywhere without my prescription sunglasses! My doctor says I could get cataracts again without them!" Joy settled the pricey pair of sunglasses on her nose and looked at me brightly. "I'm ready now. Let's go!"

We headed into the wide smooth waters, and with each stroke of the oar, my friend became more excited. By the time we reached the small cove, Joy was ecstatic.

"Look how beautiful it is! There's even a waterfall! I've never seen such a gorgeous spot!" She laughed and clapped her hands. Then with a wild whoop worthy of an Indian, Joy leaped out of the raft—plunging into the crystal clear waters.

A moment later, she came up sputtering, a look of panic on her face. All her laughter had vanished in an instant. She gulped and tried to speak, but she had inhaled water and was coughing hard.

Her look of panic scared me. Grabbing the oars, I paddled towards her.

She was crying and flailing about. "My glasses!" she sobbed. "I forgot to

take them off and now they're 30 feet down at the bottom. I can't dive that deep!"

"Calm down!" I said. "They're just a pair of sunglasses!"

"But they're post-surgery, high-tech, prescription sunglasses! They cost me \$1700! Both my doctor and my husband are going to kill me...!" She was nearly hysterical.

Our joyful Indian-Summer day had suddenly turned ugly.

I thought hard and fast. "Don't worry," I said. "I'll call my husband. He can dive down there and get them." I spoke with more confidence than I felt. I wasn't at all sure my husband could dive in such deep water, but I had to calm my friend somehow!

We paddled quickly to shore and I ran to the tent to fetch my cell phone. My husband sighed when he heard of our predicament, but said he would be there shortly with the SS Minnow and his snorkel gear.

I went to tell Joy. She was sitting on the shore, by now, looking calm and serene. She smiled when she heard that Michael was on his way. "I've been praying," she said, "And the Lord let me know that your husband will find my glasses for me."

I wasn't so sure myself, but I didn't say it.

My fears grew as the minutes turned into hours. My husband had not appeared as promised. He eventually called to say that he hadn't found all his gear, yet, and that it was too late to go diving now. It would have to wait until tomorrow.

My friend didn't even blink. "That's fine," Joy said. "He'll find my glasses tomorrow."

Tomorrow...! It would be almost 24 hours since the glasses had sank to the bottom. How long would they remain in the little cove before drifting

downstream?

When we went to bed that night, I tossed and turned and fretted. My friend slept peacefully in her tent. I could hear her gentle snores in the darkness.

When at last morning came, I tidied up the camp and waited impatiently for my husband to appear.

Michael didn't show up with the SS Minnow until after 11:00. "I couldn't find all of my gear and somebody stole the oars for our rowboat," he said glumly. "I finally had to go buy new ones."

On that unhappy note, we set out in the rowboat. Things weren't going well from my viewpoint, but my friend Joy wasn't the least discouraged. We left her sitting on the opposite shore, smiling serenely. She waved at us cheerily. I sighed.

In the cove, my husband put on his fins and mask and adjusted the mouthpiece on his snorkel. It would be a tankless dive, which meant added peril. Even a skilled diver can be swept up in the current and become trapped by hidden branches or a root mass. Minutes later, that diver would be history!

I breathed a prayer as my husband slid into the waters. He swam about the surface for several minutes, peering into the depths, then taking a deep breath he plunged out of sight. He reappeared moments later looking grim.

Searching for a pair of brown sunglasses on a muddy river bottom? Not a good prospect!

Michael went down again, this time kicking his feet very high before he disappeared. He was going in deep!

I sat in the SS Minnow, waiting. My husband was gone for a long time. 30 seconds...45...A full minute. It seemed forever. I'd begun to visualize all kinds of calamity when sud-

denly he popped up like a cork. He swam toward the boat with the same grim expression on his face.

I slumped. Well...That was that! The water was too murky at the bottom. Too deep. Too impossible.

Michael turned the boat around and headed for the opposite shore where my friend sat watching. Joy still wore that confident, serene expression. She got to her feet and stood waiting, a half-smile on her face as we approached. I felt sad for her.

A cloud had slipped in front of the sun and everything seemed bleak. I felt like crying. What would my friend do without her post-surgery, high-tech, prescription sunglasses?

I heaved a sigh. Sometimes our prayers don't get answered, it seems. Sometimes we just have to accept—

My thoughts were interrupted by a loud gasp. I turned to see my husband reach into his scuba suit and pull out a pair of brown prescription sunglasses.

Joy reached for them with a shout of gladness. "I knew you would find them! The Lord told me so!"

We all started to laugh, our voices echoing against the cliffs. "The Lord answered our prayers! Hallelujah!"

The sun came out from behind the cloud just then. Everything was bright and cheery. The birds were singing. We were laughing. It was a joyful Indian-Summer day again!

Hallelujah...indeed!

Miracles can happen if we only believe!







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