



Country Lines: *by Dean C. Young*

One doesn't have to follow the REC lines very far before reaching the reason many of us live here: picturesque hills and valleys, open and wooded, teeming with wildlife. Skirting a valley at the bottom of a steep ridge, I found a curving lane to the home of wildlife photographer Allen "Al" Cornell, who lives surrounded by nature on a piece of the family farm where he grew up in Bloom Township. From his own backyard he can view the seasons and animals that come and go. I relaxed in a comfortable chair viewing some of Al's spectacular photos as the beauty of snow in the valley out the window charmed me.

Al plopped a huge black ring binder on my lap, eagerly anticipating my reaction as I opened it. Here was a collection of large detailed photographs, an array of colors featuring animals in their natural environment as if we had just come around a tree and caught them unaware: wood ducks reflected in a mirrored surface of a pond, bright-eyed cardinals sitting on a snowy spruce branch, grandly racked bucks, comical green spotted frogs, and one of my favorites, a young fox with his attention riveted toward the camera. "The quality of photos," he said with a smile, "depends on how much time you want to put into it. Time is the key factor!"

I was surprised to learn that these photographic wonders were originally started as a hobby

years earlier. After Al finished school in West Lima and Viola, he attended UW-Stevens Point for natural resource management. Ever eager for learning, he then completed preaching school in Denver where he married Sally, who was also from back home. After doing some biology work and preaching two years in Butte, Montana, plus the birth of daughter, Sonia, Al and his unit moved back to this area where he worked for Alcam and another daughter, Shana, was added to the family.

Next, they spent some time in Hayes, Kansas, where Al preached but also was able to take some biology courses. At this point he decided a more permanent job was needed, so after working some years at a hog farm near Muscoda, Al was able to get a job with the Wisconsin DNR, working first at the Boscobel Nursery, then 19 years as a wildlife technician mostly in Sauk and Iowa counties. With this position, Al had varied work that included habitat management, negotiating rental agreements with farmers, converting areas back to prairie, setting up deer/turkey registration stations, turkey trapping for relocation, and wood duck banding.

"How did you ever catch the fowl?" I wondered aloud. Al described how the birds were baited with corn in a grassy area and a rocket net was launched overhead to catch them.

"We've caught up to 218 ducks and another time, 50 turkeys at once with the net!" he said. Photos of trapped birds were easy to take.

There were other ways to get photos, though. Al would use a decoy grouse with a filament tied to it so it could be pulled. Being competitive, a grouse would often follow the decoy. Al laughed as he told me about a grouse that attacked a decoy and broke its head off, then stood with a bewildered look on its face as he snapped some shots. Another decided Al was competition and flew up to knock his hat off. Sometimes a mirror propped on a drumming log would lure in a grouse. Also helpful was a floating blind for photographing waterfowl. Since Al doesn't swim, he felt this was a great asset!

I asked Al how he ended up doing wildlife photography in addition to all the other tasks he had at hand. "It was in Butte, that Sally encouraged me to take
(Continued on page 28 ►)



Al Cornell's nature photographs, some of which are featured here and on page 28, have been featured in nationally known magazines such as Birds & Blooms and National Wildlife, as well as calendars and books.



Yellow warbler; opposite page: fox kit



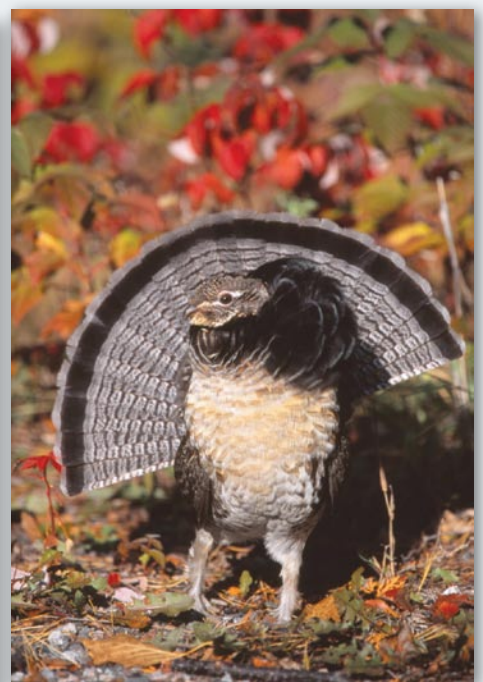
Black bear with clover



Canada goose



Cardinal



Ruffed grouse



Wood duck



Green heron

Pretty as a Picture

(Continued from page 4)

photos. I got some cheap equipment and film to start with, but it wasn't until the '80s before it took off." He has had luck using Kodak and Fuji film for his best photos. Al read magazines and books of photography to learn the right techniques.

"I kept experimenting by trial and error to see what works to get a bird close enough to get a picture," he explained. "My favorite seasons for photos are spring, when birds are migrating and having babies, and fall when there is pretty foliage and more light gets into the woods."

Just what are some of the tricks to the trade? Al uses backyard feeders and water to draw birds close by. He invented a solar-powered waterfall to help out too. "If birds are anxious to feed because of the weather, it is a better time to shoot," he noted. Al shook his head, looking out the window. "The neighbors probably wonder what I am doing lying by the feeder on a sleeping bag."

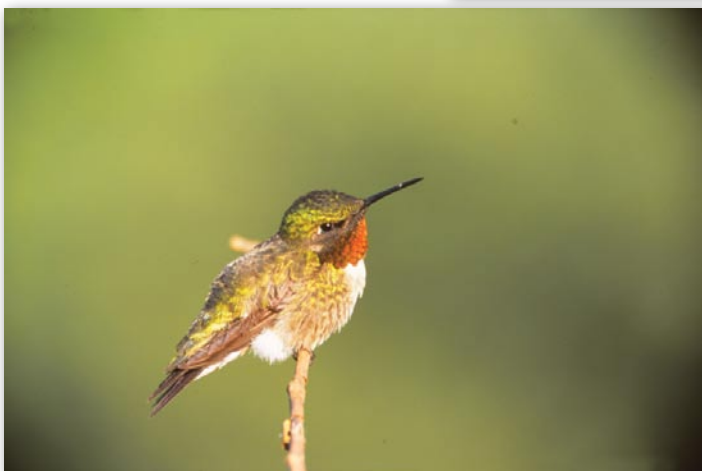
Al told me that the business is becoming more difficult to be successful. "Everything is moving to digital," he said. He is now learning some techniques on his new digital camera. Magazines have

closed their doors too, and the well has gone dry for many of the prosperous ones.

I was a bit amazed at how many famous magazines and calendars have featured Al's work. Calendars include: *Birds & Blooms*, *Ducks Unlimited*, and *Wisconsin Outdoor Journal*. Magazines featuring his photos and articles have been *Birds & Blooms*, *Birder's World*, *Bird Watcher's Digest*, *National Wildlife*, *Ranger Rick*, *Ontario Out of Door*, *Deer & Deer Hunting*, *Turkeys & Turkey Hunting*, *Wisconsin Outdoor Journal*, *Ducks Unlimited*, *Puddler*, *Turkey Call*, *Jake*, and *Wisconsin Natural Resources*. Al's photos have also been in 20 books, including a teen psychology book!

Al still finds time to help the DNR since he retired in 2008 and keeps busy with his vivid photos of wildlife in Wisconsin and other states too. Though Al has only sold his photos for magazines and calendars, he would consider selling prints to individuals as a new venture. If you are interested, give him a call at 608-625-6463, or e-mail him at al.cornell@hotmail.com. You may also check out his website at: <http://sites.google.com/site/al-cornell47/home> (use his new e-mail above — not the one on the site). ■

Do you know of an interesting business or hobby or unique way of life along the REC lines? Contact the REC business office or e-mail me, Dean Young, at dad@mwt.net.



Ruby throated hummingbird



Indigo bunting

Laugh Lines

Lena: "Why are you home from school early?"

Little Ole replied: "Becoss, I was the only one who could answer a question."

Lena: "Oh, really? What was the question?"

Little Ole sheepishly answered: "Who threw the eraser at the principal?"

* * *

Ole says now that he's older, he's learned a few things he would like to share, such as:

- It is easier to get older than it is to get wiser.
- My wild oats have turned into prunes and All Bran.
- I finally got my head together; now my body is falling apart.

* * *

Lars was watching his next door neighbor, Ole, on Earth Day as Ole was planting a tree at his own place. Ole carefully dug the hole the proper depth, planted the tree, watered it, and then mulched it. Lars was pretty impressed by this, but then Ole came over to Lars' place and planted another tree on Lars' property. After he finished there, Ole moved over to Sven's place, who was Lars' neighbor on the other side, and planted a third tree.

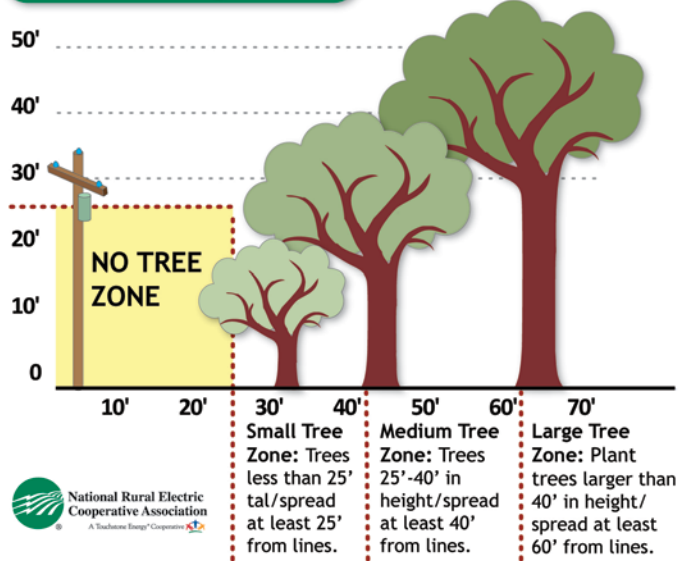
Well, Lars was really puzzled at this point and as Ole was walking back to his house, Lars stopped him and said, "Ole, it's great of you to plant trees on Earth Day, and I understand why you planted one at your house, but why did you plant one at my house and one at our neighbor Sven's house?" Ole replied, "I had to, Lars. I was just following the directions that came with the trees that said to plant them 'three yards apart.'"

Happy Easter

from Richland
Electric Cooperative



Tree Planting Guide



Be Careful When Planting Trees

Trees and power plants can co-exist if you plant trees with size and growth characteristics appropriate to their location. The chart above provides a guideline for what size of trees you should plant and where you should plant them. As a general rule, tall trees such as maple, oak, spruce, and pine should be planted about 60 feet away from the power line. Medium-sized trees such as Washington hawthorn and golden rain trees can be planted 40 to 60 feet away. Any trees planted 30 to 40 feet away should be small, such as redbuds, dogwoods, and crabapples.

Also, be sure to call Diggers Hotline, 811, at least three business days before you begin any planting project to locate underground lines. ■



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