

# Conservation Corner

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October is halfway over, harvest is in full swing, and the Chicago Cubs are still playing baseball. All's right with the world. Like some of you, I enjoy following the Cubbies. Perhaps this is the year? Regardless of the final outcome, it's been fun watching this talented group of young players quickly develop into one of the best teams in the MLB, and so I thought this week we could take a closer look at the Cubs that live not only on Chicago's North Side but around the world.

The year is 1876 and the Chicago White Stockings are one of eight charter members of the National Baseball League. In fact, they win the first National League pennant that fall. Later known as Cap Anson's Colts and the Orphans, their current name first appeared in the March 27, 1902, edition of the *Chicago Daily News* that reported "Frank Selee will donate his strongest efforts on the teamwork of the new Cubs this year." The nickname stuck and the rest, as they say, is history.

Do you know the origin of the word cub? Experts believe it comes from the Old Norse word *kobbi*, which means a young seal. Today the word cub has several definitions, including a young animal, a young and inexperienced person, or an apprentice such as a cub reporter or cub scout.

Of course, cubs thrive and flourish in the world of nature as well as the world of sports. The young of many big cats including the cheetah, jaguar, leopard, lion, panther, and tiger are known as cubs. Like their kitten cousins, these wild cubs are also born blind and helpless and completely dependent on their mothers. We even have some wild cubs here in Pocahontas County, including the young of badgers, minks, and raccoon, all who are born blind and helpless at birth.

But perhaps the best known cubs in the world of nature are the cubs of the different bear species. And while Iowa no longer has a resident bear population, each year the Iowa DNR confirms about five bear sightings in the Hawkeye State. Last summer, for example, there were two black bears caught on camera near the Yellow River State Forest in northeast Iowa, young males from Minnesota and Wisconsin looking for food and/or love.

Bears are fascinating creatures that seemingly perform miracles, lying down in the autumn as if dead, giving birth in the middle of winter, and coming back to life each spring. Bear cubs are also born tiny and helpless, weighing less than a pound and looking like little rats without tails. Did you know bear cubs are smaller compared to the relative size of the mother than any other placental mammal? Bear cubs awaken often during their first winter, nurse on their sleepy mother, and quickly grow bigger. When they emerge from their den in the spring, the cubs are ready for a new season of walking, climbing, and playing ball.

Go Cubs!

