

THE IOWAN

IOWA'S OWLS

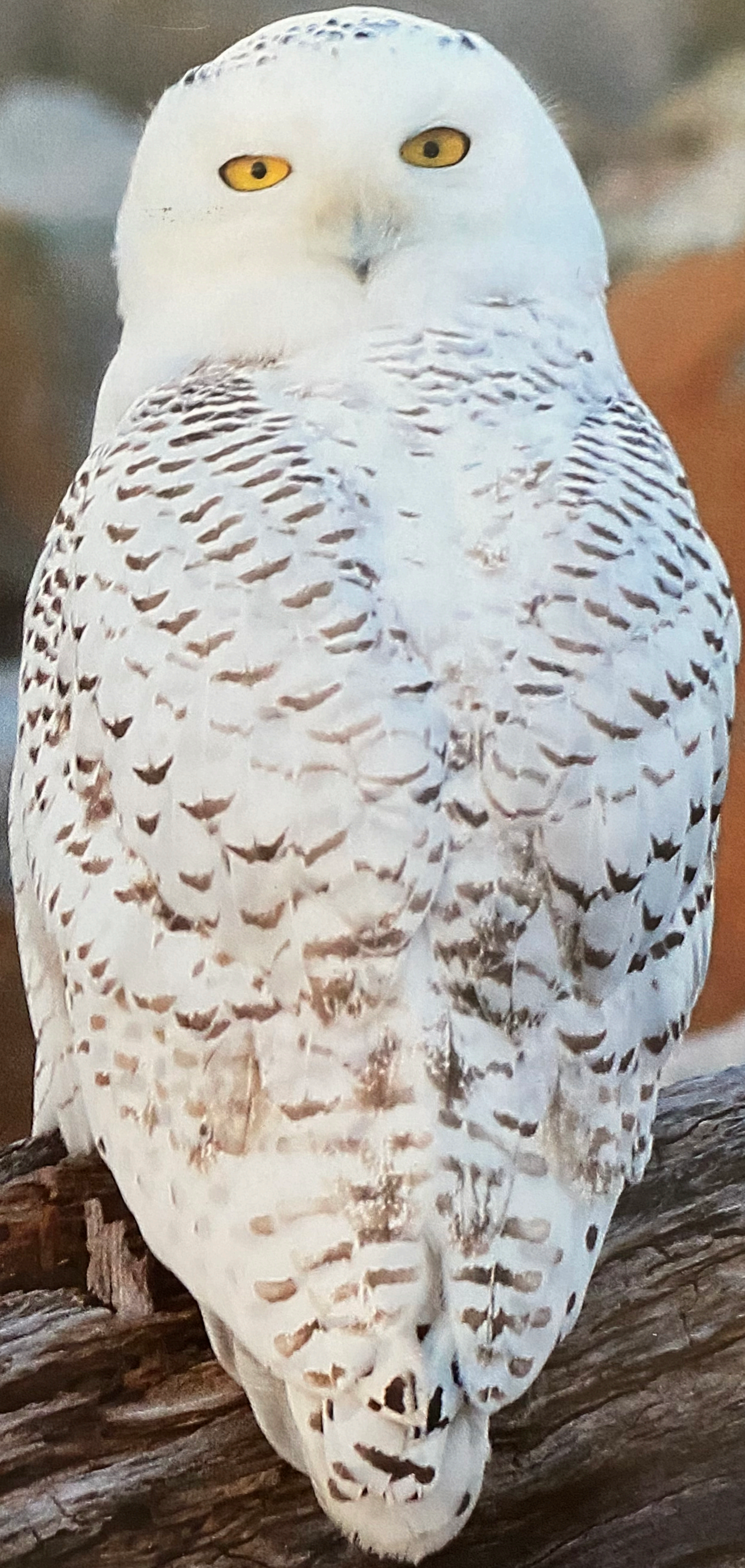
HOW TO FIND AND VIEW
THESE MAGNIFICENT BIRDS

FREDERICK MANFRED:
A PROFILE OF THE IOWA-BORN
WRITER OF "LORD GRIZZLY"

6 WATERFALLS YOU CAN
VISIT IN A SINGLE DAY

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TRAGEDY IN WESTERN IOWA

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IOWA WATERFALL ADVENTURE

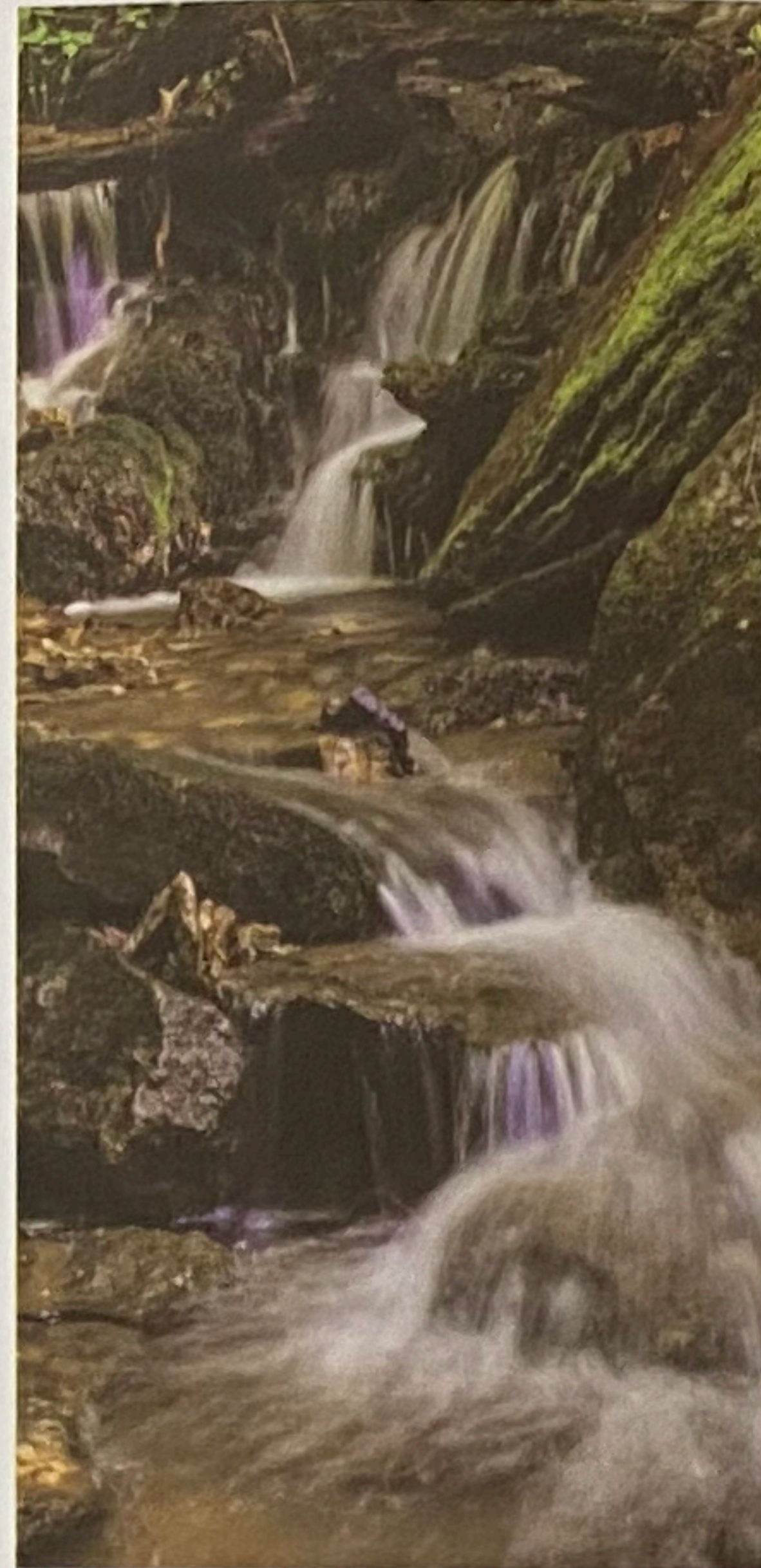
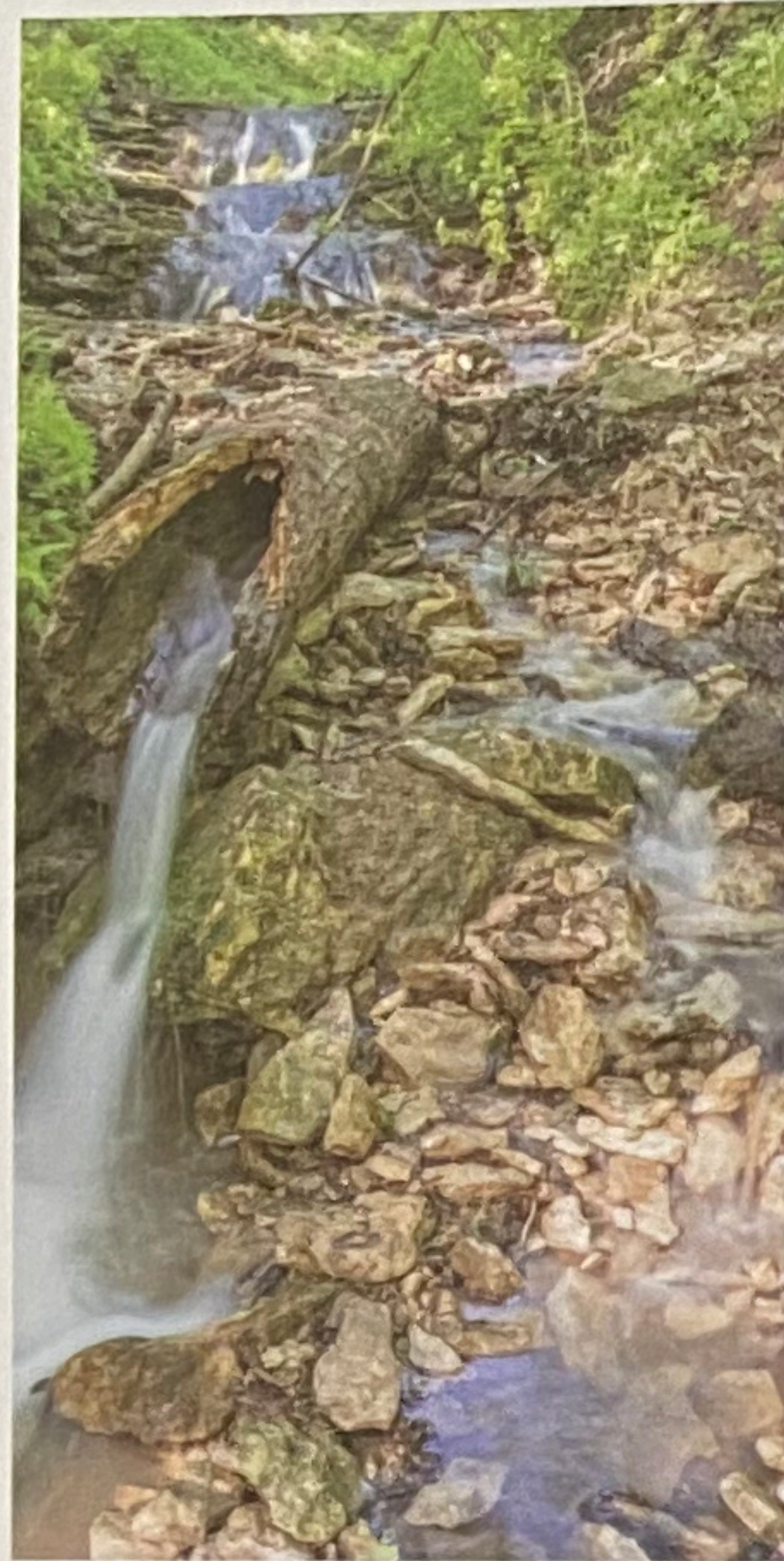
Six spectacular drops you can visit in one day

Text and Photography by Brian Abelling

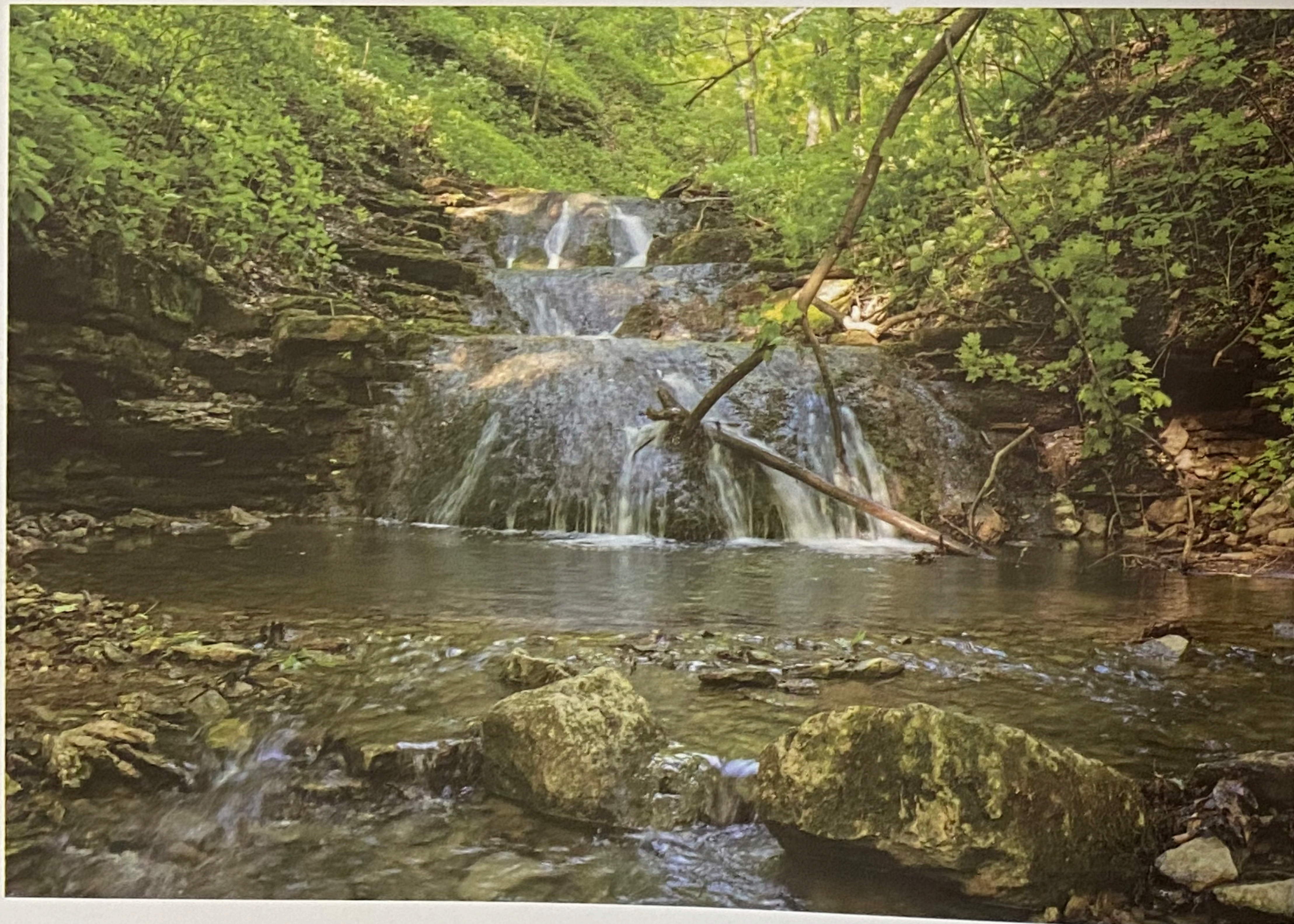
My son Wil was getting ready to start a new job, and we wanted to take in one more father-son photo adventure. He also wanted to invite his best friend, Sam Basler, along on the trip, as all of us love photography and exploring. I asked the boys what they wanted to see, and the one answer they had in common: waterfalls. Of course, Iowa isn't exactly blessed with an overwhelming number of waterfalls—in fact, most of them are spillways or other man-made falls. Our best chance of seeing the most natural waterfalls in one day was to head to northeast Iowa, where we laid out a plan to see a total of six (five natural waterfalls plus a man-made spillway) in one day. There are additional natural waterfalls in the area, but they are on private land. For our purposes here, we have focused on publicly-accessible locations.

Big Springs Nature Park | Guttenberg

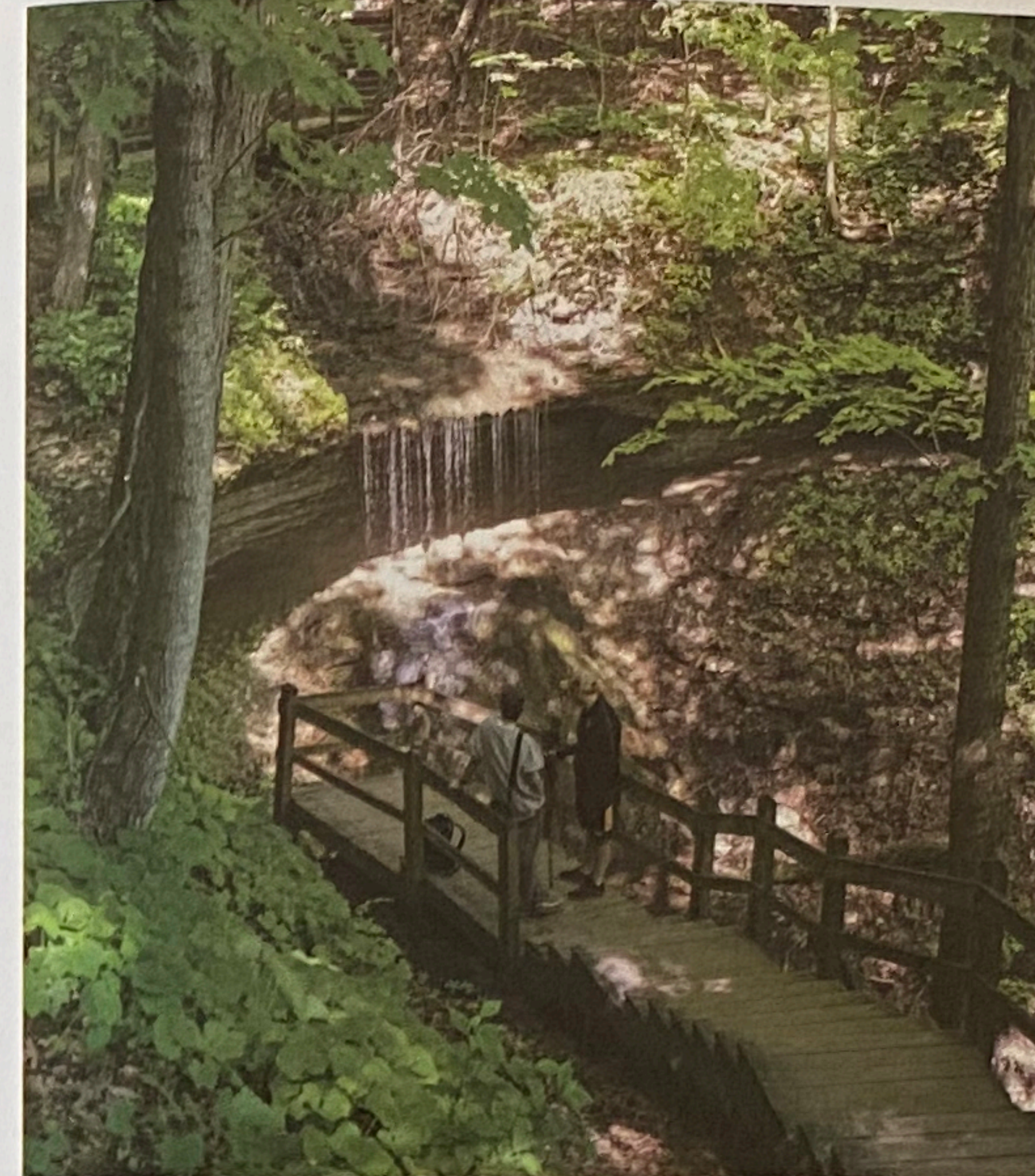
The park is less than a mile north of Guttenberg on Clayton County X56 on the west side of the road. There's a small parking lot at the entrance, along with a picnic shelter and portable toilet. The distance from the parking lot to the falls is just a quarter mile. The trail to get there is a narrow dirt path—it is not accessible for people who will be using wheelchairs, walkers, or other equipment that requires a smooth, even surface. However, even from the parking lot, you can see some of the small waterfalls. You'll have several points where you can break off the path and go down to the water or stay on the trail and climb the hill to the springs. Due to the dirt path, I'd recommend wearing shoes you don't mind getting wet and muddy. If you're wanting to protect yourself from weeds, thorns, and bugs on the narrow trails, then we'd also recommend long pants. While some folks really wish the trail was better defined, we really enjoyed this location because it was more natural and it invited us to explore in the creek bed or up the hill.



(Photo by Sam Basler)



Bridal Veil Falls at Pikes Peak State Park | McGregor



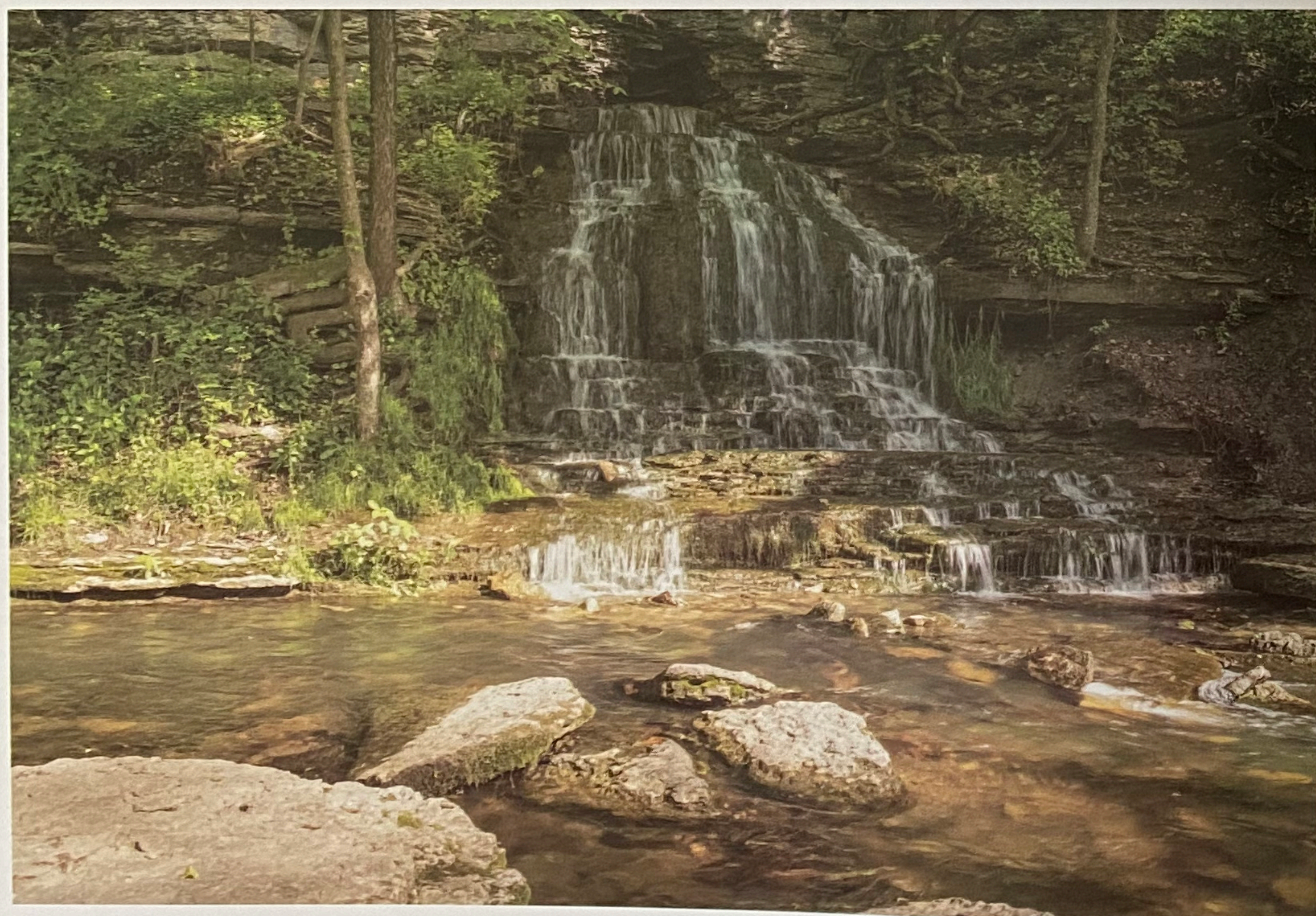
Punch this address into your maps app: 32264 Pikes Peak Road, McGregor. There's plenty of parking at the entrance parking lot of Pikes Peak State Park. From the parking lot, head toward the observation decks, which provide a view of the Mississippi River from 500 feet above. Here, there's a sign pointing north towards Bridal Veil Falls. The observation deck is accessible for people with disabilities. However, the trail to the falls is not. The trail is a well maintained boarded walkway that runs the entire three quarters of a mile to the falls. Walking to the falls is entirely downhill along the boardwalk steps, so the challenge is more about the climb back up. If steps are a problem for you, take this into consideration. Because it's located in the state park, this is one of the few waterfall locations that has restroom facilities. During typical summers, there's also a concession stand selling treats. The flow of the waterfall depends on the local conditions, but it is typically flowing year round. During winter, the water freezes and creates a thin white sheet of ice over the falls, which looks like a bridal veil, hence the name Bridal Veil Falls.



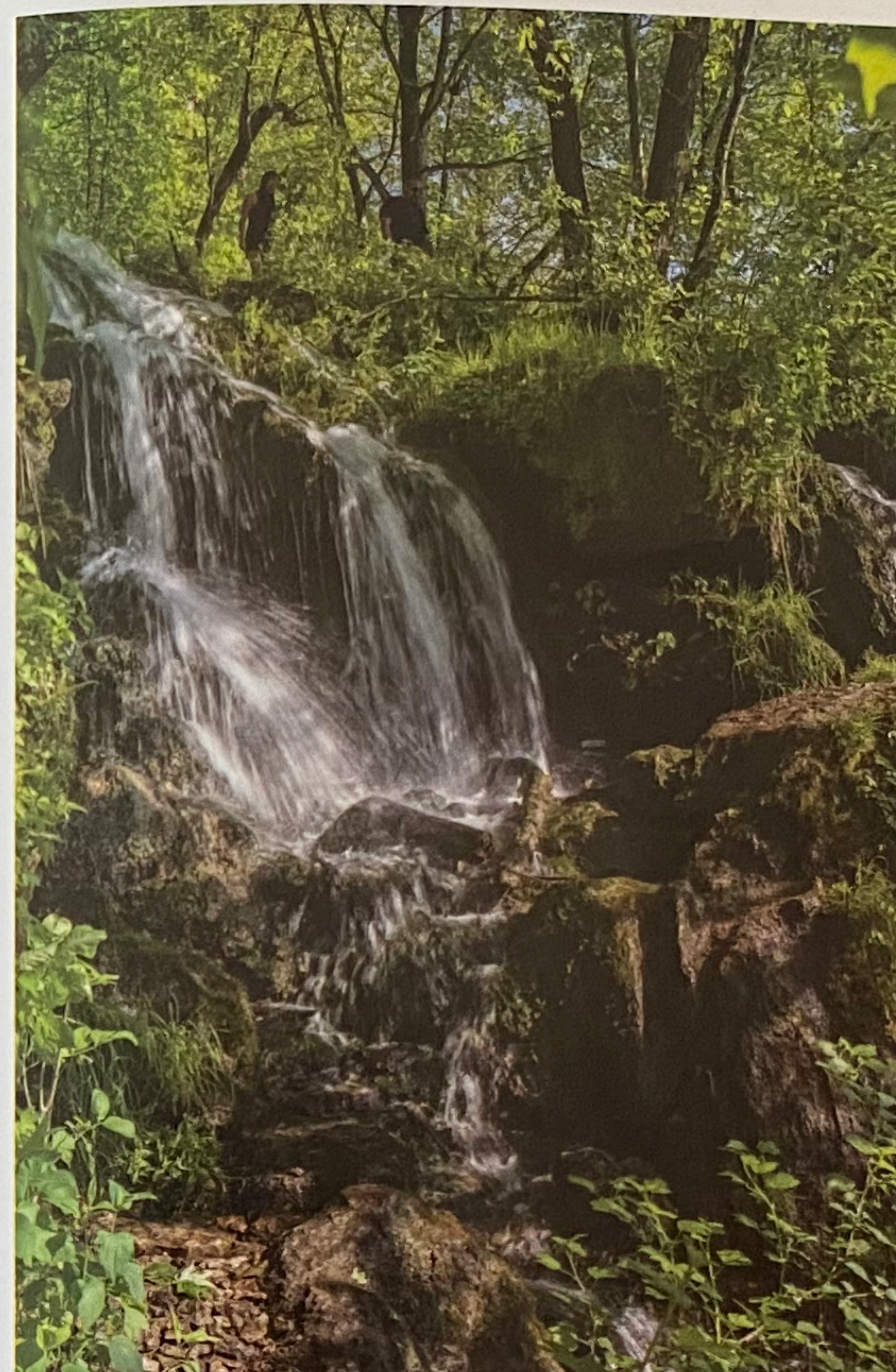
Beulah Falls | McGregor



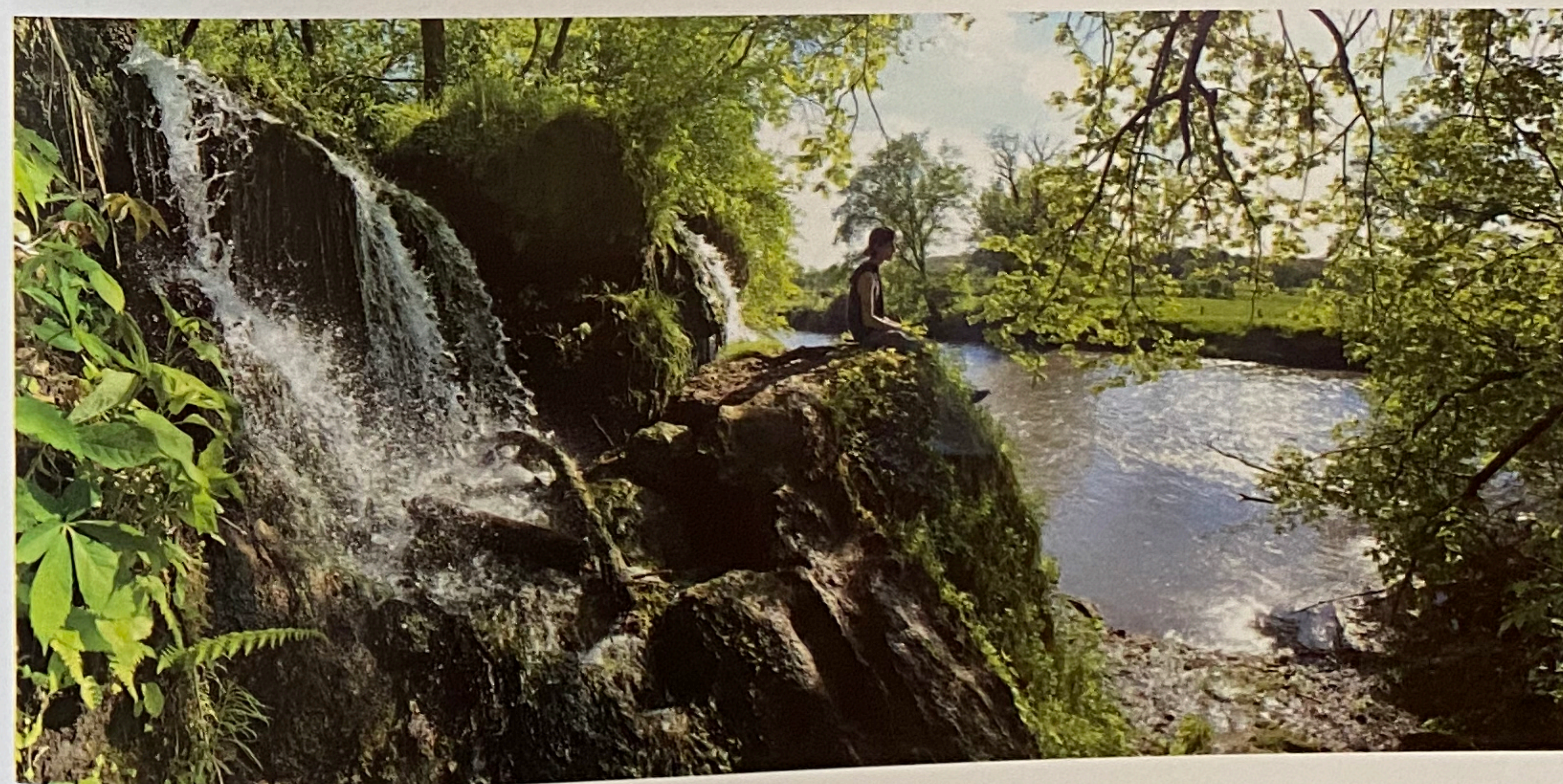
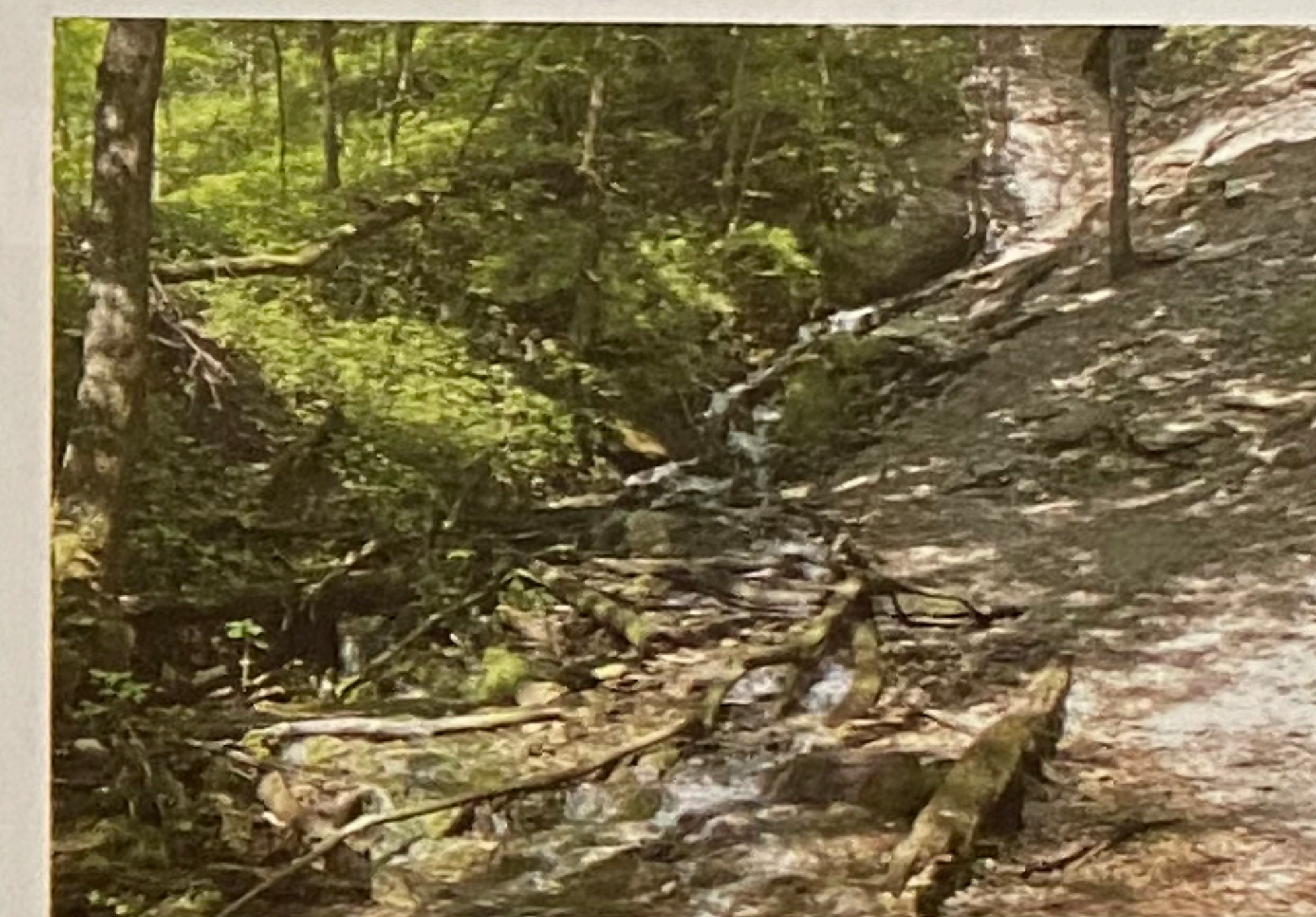
Located at 13299 Spook Cave Road in McGregor, the falls is located just inside the entrance to the campground at Spook Cave on the right-hand side, with plenty of parking right near the falls. If you prefer to avoid steps and long hikes, this waterfall is recommended. In addition to being accessible for people with disabilities, this is one of the few waterfalls on the list that you can fully enjoy from the comfort of your vehicle. On foot, the terrain is level leading towards the falls, which is just on the other side of Bloody Run. We encourage you to drive into the campgrounds further to Spook Cave; it has an admission price, but it's an underground boat tour through the cave that you'll be sure to enjoy.



Malaphany Springs State Preserve | Decorah

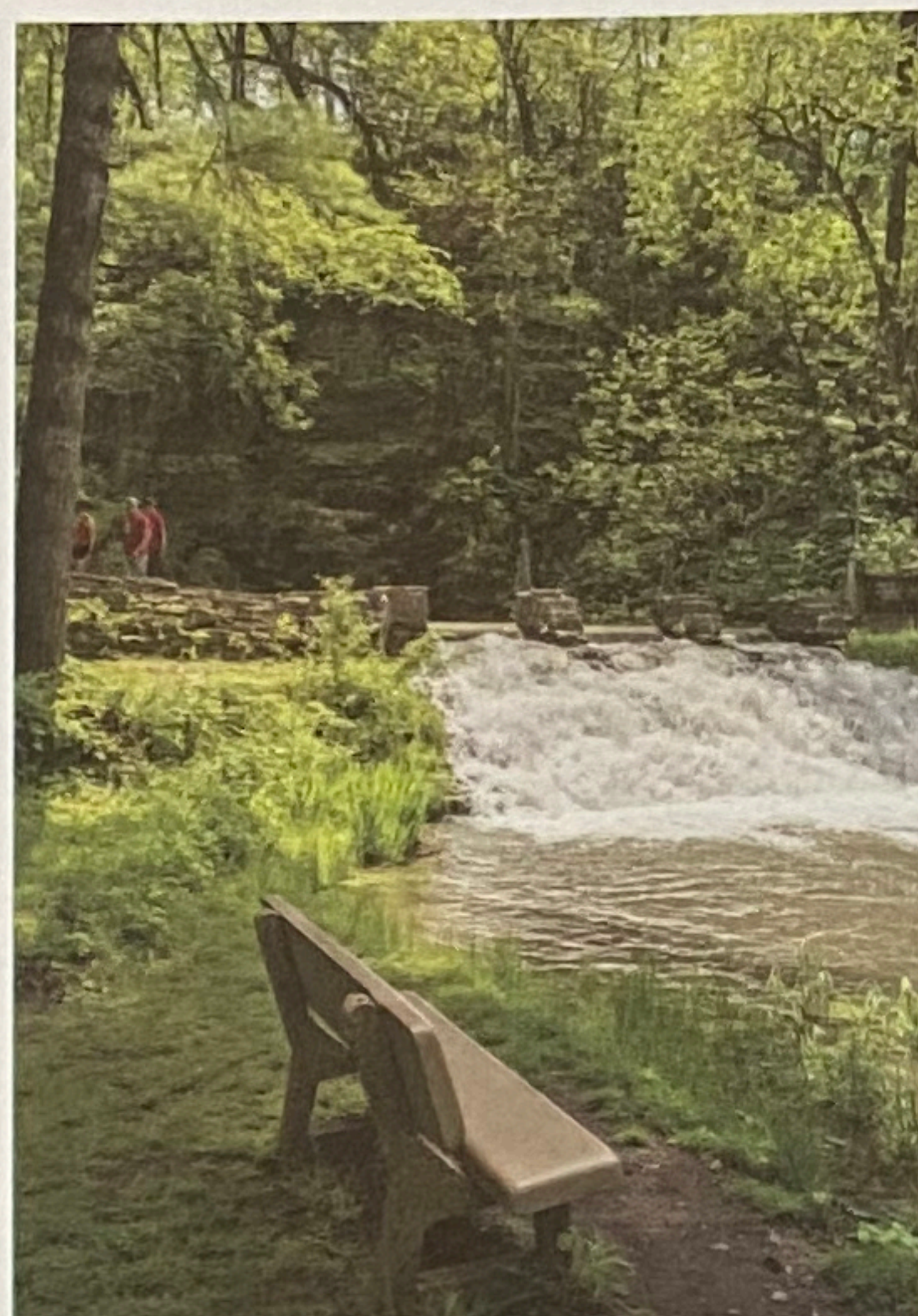


Once you arrive at 2820 Bluffton Road in Decorah, there are only 5 or 6 parking spots at the entrance, but it's common for cars to also park along the edge of the nearby gravel road. The trail to the springs is about a mile long (the longest hike of the six waterfalls). It's a well-maintained dirt path that has only a few steps or inclines. At the end of the trail, you'll have the option to hike up the bluff to the source of the spring, or you can go down to the riverfront. The largest drop of the falls is where it falls into the river, but getting to this segment can be tricky: you'll have to cross the water and climb down the embankment, which suffers heavy erosion. This location is also a frequent stop for kayaks and canoes heading down the Upper Iowa River; they will land near the waterfall and climb up to springs.



Siewer Springs | Decorah

When you arrive at 2321 Siewer Spring Road in Decorah, you'll find plenty of parking available. This location required minimal step-climbing and hiking. Siewer Springs is the one man-made falls on our list; the water flows out of the spring and eventually out into Trout Creek. The falls itself is relatively short, but the location is worth a visit because you'll likely see trout-fishing at this location. Also check out Trout Run Trail and the fish hatchery with thousands of trout in large, open tanks.

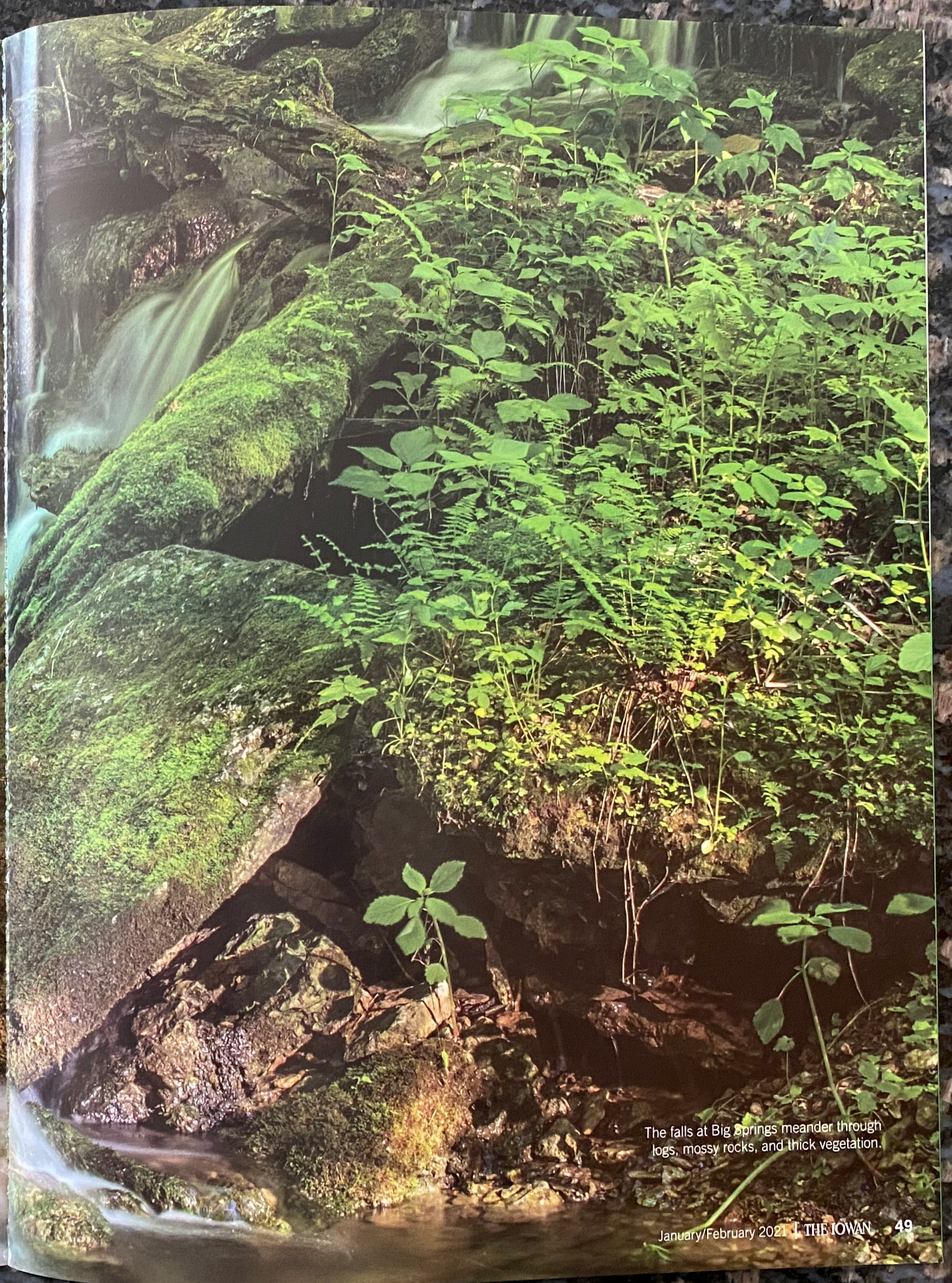


Dunning Springs Park | Decorah



To access this location, take Quarry Street, which eventually turns into Ice Cave Road in Decorah. Follow the signs for Dunning Springs. At the falls itself, there are only four parking spots, and one of them reserved for people with disabilities. If these spots are full, there is additional parking along Ice Cave Road, which is just a quarter-mile walk to the falls. This is Iowa's largest and best waterfall, which we purposefully saved for the last visit. If you score one of the few parking spaces at the falls, you'll be able to see the falls from your vehicle. On foot, there are two main paths you should explore: the first is the stone-arch bridge across the water (it's a boardwalk with steps that leads to an observation point over the falls) and the second is to climb up the rocks along the right side of the falls (there is no formal path or walkway—just climb the rocks). Be sure to bring shoes that you can get wet and towels for drying off afterward. For our last visit of the day, we stopped at Toppling Goliath Brewing Co. (1600 Prosperity Road in Decorah). The boys are older than 21, so this was technically our last "waterfall" and a great way to end our six-waterfalls-in-one-day trip.





The falls at Big Springs meander through logs, mossy rocks, and thick vegetation.