

KANSAS

FISH & GAME



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November-December 1972

KANSAS FISH & GAME



November-December, 1972

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COVER PHOTOS

Front cover—Great horned owl. Ektachrome transparency by Vic McLeran.

Back cover—Results of a squirrel hunt. Ektachrome transparency by Ken Stiebben.

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Full Speed Ahead

One of the major mysteries of outdoor financing in Kansas is that governors and legislatures have held back on funds for major improvements and innovations even though they were on hand, paid for by fish and game enthusiasts themselves, and would not cost the taxpayer as much as a thin dime.

The new state fish and game director, Richard Wettersten, fresh from Minnesota, evidently couldn't understand it either. The commission, undoubtedly at his instigation, therefore has announced a five-year expansion program which will increase its budget by almost 100 percent.

Money is not the key to everything, but prudently spent it can account for a great deal. The outdoor program in Kansas has stood still too long while surplus funds from sale of game licenses, boat fees and the like, not to mention federal grants, piled up as unused surpluses held by the state exchequer.

The goal is both clear and desirable. In Wettersten's words, it is to "rejuvenate and elevate hunting, fishing and boating in Kansas to where they should be."

Popular support should gather quickly behind the program. The commission and its director are wise enough to strike in a campaign year when politicians are hard pressed to say no. The combination may be sufficient to gain full approval of the 1973 legislature. Let's hope so.

—Parsons Sun

Editor's Note: Since this editorial was published in the *Parsons Sun*, both gubernatorial candidates, Gov. Robert Docking, and Morris Kay, have announced endorsement of the Commission's Project SASNAK. Likewise, numerous editorials have been written supporting the five-year, five-plan program and several organizations, including the Kansas Wildlife Federation, Outdoor Writers of Kansas, Kansas Ornithological Society, Cherokee County Sportsmen's Fish and Game Association, Inc., and the Sunflower Sportsmen's Club of Parsons, have adopted resolutions endorsing SASNAK. In the Jan.-Feb. issue of KANSAS FISH & GAME, Director Richard D. Wettersten, will provide more details of the dramatic new program.



Killers in Disguise

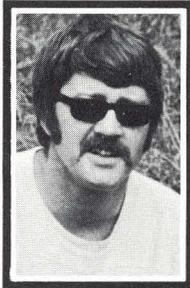
By Vic McLeran

THE WHITETAIL DOE was frightened!

This would be her first fawn and she stirred restlessly. Earlier, as darkness fell, she had taken refuge in a plum thicket. Now lying on her side, she labored alone in the dark. From a distant ridge, the sharp wail of a coyote suddenly split the night air. The cry was immediately taken up by several others in a yip-yipping crescendo. The pack was hunting!

Lifting her head nervously at the sound, the doe glanced around her. But the labor pains were continuous now, and her attention soon returned to the chore at hand. A few moments later the fawn was born. After cleaning her spotted youngster, the exhausted doe lay back, trying to regain her strength.

An hour or so later, as darkness faded to the hazy gray light of dawn, the doe heard a noise. Raising her head, she saw two dog-like forms several feet away. One was crouched, silently watching her, while the other circled slowly, its teeth exposed in a



McLeran

snarl. Wide-eyed with terror, the young doe lurched to her feet. The nearest animal immediately sprang at her, ripping a four-inch gash in her flank. As the doe whirled to bring her sharp forehooves into play, she was nearly knocked down by the other animal as it sank curved fangs into her throat. Spurred by pain and fear, the doe managed to tear herself away and stumble out of the thicket into the field. Her pursuer turned back to its running mate which was now approaching the fawn. Only an hour or so old, the fawn was defenseless. It was over in a matter of seconds!

The next morning, a rancher riding fence would find the partially eaten fawn. Spotting canine tracks in the

sand, he'd remember the calf which he lost a few months ago. "Coyotes," he'd mutter, concluding the little prairie wolves had taken this fawn as well as his calf.

But he was wrong because the true culprits were not coyotes, but free-ranging dogs. And increasingly here in Kansas, free-ranging dogs are responsible for livestock and wildlife damage — damage which is often blamed on coyotes. Operating under the facade of faithful hunting companion and trusted watchdog by day, these disguised killers can wreak havoc on livestock and wildlife populations at night.

To clarify the terms "wild" and "free-ranging" we asked Dr. Raymond Hall, professor of mammalogy at Kansas University for some definitions.

"To me, a wild dog is one which may or may not have been born in the wild, but actually spends most of its life in the woods away from human habitation," Dr. Hall said. "This animal is actually 'wild' in the truest sense, eating whatever it can kill. On the other hand, a free-ranging dog usually has a home, is often owned by an individual, fed at times and simply allowed to roam freely, coming and going as it pleases."

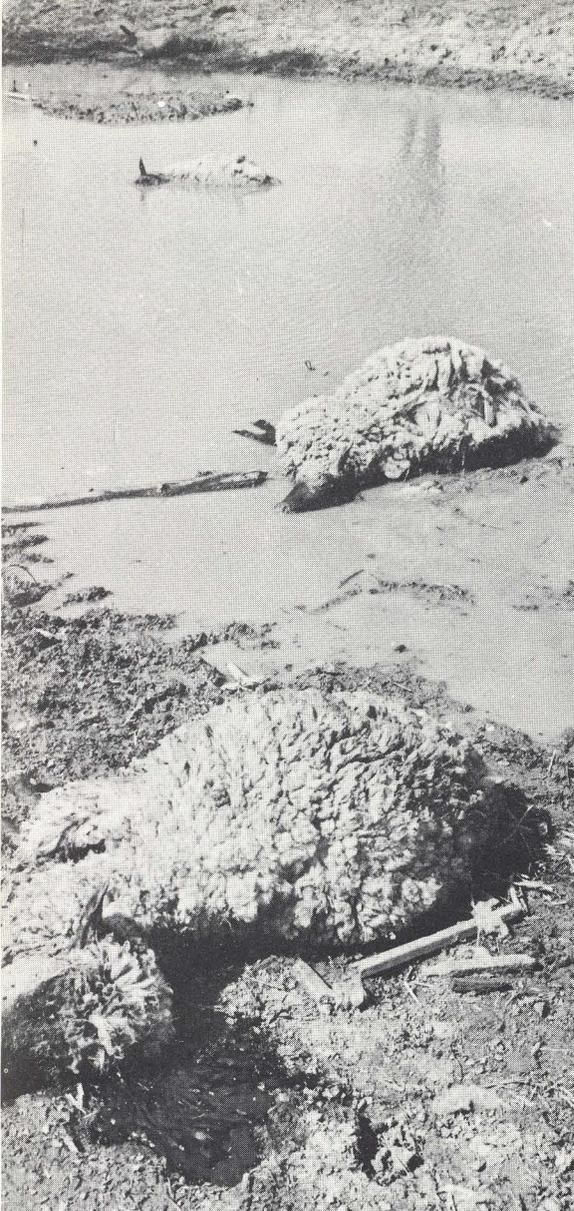


Photo courtesy Jack Smith

Dog kills can often be identified by the fact that several animals are killed wantonly and left lying. Coyotes on the other hand, usually take only one animal or what they can eat. Shown here are several sheep which were killed by a dog pack.

Dr. Hall and most other authorities seem to feel there are few truly wild dogs in the state. The major problem they say, centers around the free-ranging dogs.

Just how much of a problem are these Judas dogs? We asked F. Robert Henderson, wildlife damage control specialist for Kansas State University extension service. Henderson travels the entire state assisting stockmen with predator problems and is probably more familiar with the free-ranging dog question than anyone in Kansas.

"The free-ranging dog problem is more serious than most people real-

ize," Henderson said. "No one suspects that the old family dog which lays around the farmhouse all day may actually be a killer at night."

A check with game protectors and county agents from across the state revealed some interesting cases which illustrate free-ranging dogs' devastating effect on livestock and wildlife.

Larry Tiemann, county agent at Burlington, feels these disguised killers are worse than coyotes.

"No one suspects the old family dog which lays around the farmhouse all day may actually be a killer at night."

**F. Robert Henderson
Wildlife Damage Control Specialist**

"This is especially true in small feedlot operations where livestock are confined," he said. "I've seen losses occur when these dogs would drive cattle through fences and corrals."

The county agent at Kingman, Charles Weber, has experienced similar problems. "About 10 years ago, a pack of free-ranging dogs drove several of our heifers through a fence, crippling two of them," he said.

A dairy man near Beagle had some dogs run several of his Holstein heifers through a fence one night. The heifers got onto a nearby railroad track where five of them were killed by a train.

Jack McNally, law enforcement supervisor for the Commission's north-central district, once watched some hounds run a calf into a wire fence near Albany. The calf died later.

Game protector Dick McCullough, Mound City, recalls two incidents near Paola where farmers were losing poultry to free-ranging dogs. "Several years ago, a farmer had 24 turkeys killed by three free-ranging dogs. Another farmer lost seven turkeys to a neighbor's dog over a period of three weeks. The neighbors had simply moved away from the farm and left the dog on his own," McCullough said.

Bob Henderson believes livestock losses to free-ranging dogs may actually be higher than reports indicate. "Farmers and ranchers are more likely to take care of problems involving dogs themselves, than call

the Extension Service for help," the control specialist said. "As a result, I'm sure we don't hear of all the damage done by free-running dogs."

"For some reason, farmers are reluctant to report damage caused by dogs. It's easier to blame coyotes and then go out and shoot the dog," he explained.

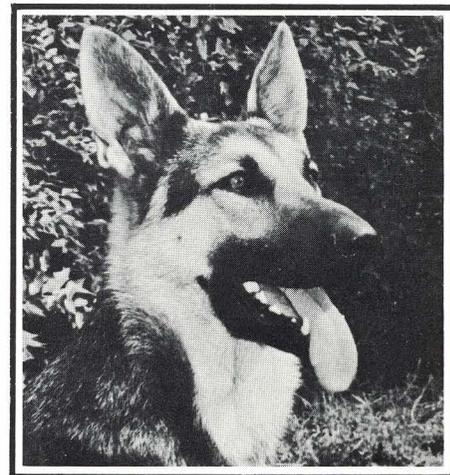
One county agent, speaking of a colt which had been killed by dogs, said, "Even the newspaper said the

colt was killed by coyotes. People just don't want to come right out and blame dogs for livestock losses." When dogs are shot or trapped in the act of killing livestock there is little or no publicity given the event—especially if the dog belongs to the farmer's neighbor.

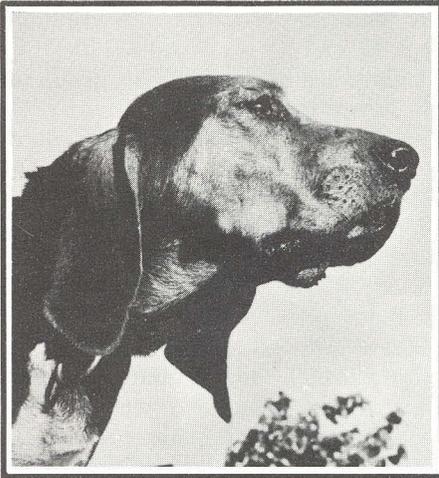
Like another county agent said, "We have dog problems now and then, but the situation is usually taken care of quickly!" Other similar remarks make the implication clear—the dogs are simply shot and disposed of with nothing said.

Because of this reluctance to blame dogs for depredations, coyotes usually take the heat. "I'd say at least 25 percent of livestock losses blamed on

In many instances, German shepherds were found guilty of killing or harassing livestock and wildlife.



Ken Stiebben



Ken Stiebben

Trail hounds in eastern Kansas, when allowed to roam, have been observed chasing deer frequently.

Increasingly here in Kansas, free-ranging dogs are responsible for livestock and wildlife damage which is often blamed on coyotes.

coyotes are actually caused by free-ranging dogs," Henderson said.

Reports from county agents and game protectors seem to confirm this. Gene Hitt, game protector at Pratt, tells of such an incident where coyotes took the blame for dog depredations, "Several years ago near Medicine Lodge, 'coyotes' were allegedly killing sheep. Traps were set in the vicinity of the kills and the farmer caught several of his neighbor's greyhounds."

Frank Hendricks, game protector at Ellsworth, was involved in a similar episode in Rice County where a farmer was complaining about coyotes killing his sheep. "I went to the farm one evening to try and call the coyote with a predator call," Hendricks said. "While I was there, the farmer and I watched his dog drag in a fresh-killed lamb and eat it. I didn't see the dog kill this lamb but it was fresh and I feel certain the dog, not coyotes, was the farmer's problem."

Henderson says in his experience German shepherds are the breed most often involved in livestock depredations. Several incidents in which game protectors have been involved seem to bear this out.

J. D. Lichlyter, Burlington game protector, had an experience with German shepherds killing calves near

Palco. "This farmer was losing calves and thought coyotes were killing them," said Lichlyter. "Upon investigation, we learned the neighbor's female German shepherd was killing the calves. The dog was disposed of and there was no further trouble."

"I had a case where a German shepherd cut up a small riding pony," said Dave Gentry, game protector from Emporia. "The pony was wounded so severely it had to be put to death. This damage was originally blamed on coyotes," he added.

Marvin Meier, Holton game protector, mentions another incident involving German shepherds, "I had a farmer complain to me about coyotes

ing livestock are usually traced to dogs—often a close neighbor's. I've seen other cases where the farmer's own dog was to blame. When this occurred, the dog usually did his killing during the night. But during the day when accompanied by his master the dog wouldn't give livestock a second glance."

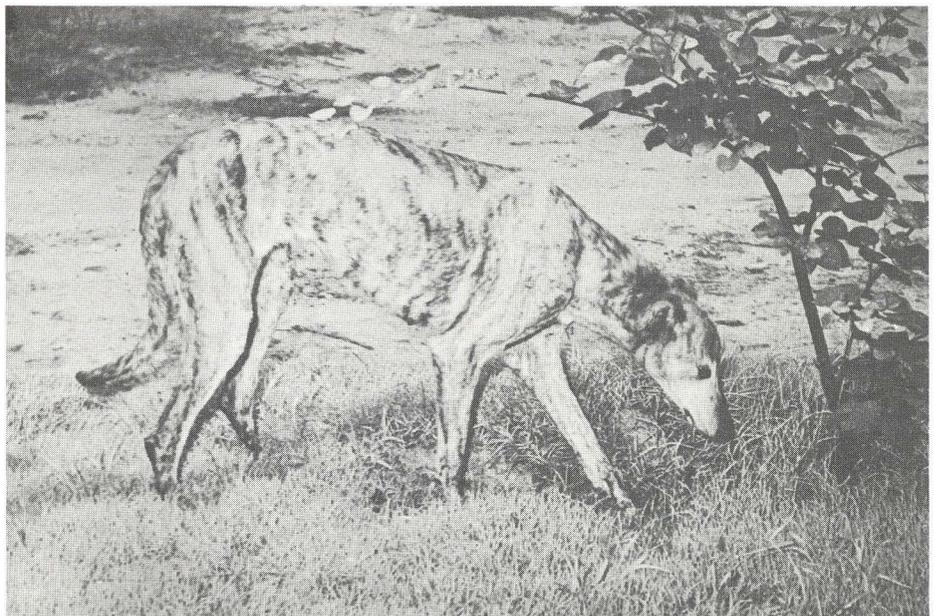
McCullough is well qualified to talk about the problem since he had first-hand experience with one of these disguised killers. "I had a bluetick hound that killed 19 of my dad's weaning pigs one morning," Dick said. "It took two weeks wages to change my dad's attitude toward me after that little incident. A .22 long rifle took care of the dog's attitude," he added.

It's this Jekyll-Hyde thing which makes it difficult for an untrained observer to tell what actually caused the damage. We asked Bob Henderson how to tell the difference between kills made by dogs and those made by coyotes. "Tracks are the most obvious sign," he said. "Although similar in appearance, coyote tracks are longer, narrower and more oval-shaped than a dog's. They generally fall more nearly in a straight line and are spaced from 18-22 inches apart. Also, a coyote usually shows only two claw marks, one on each forward pad

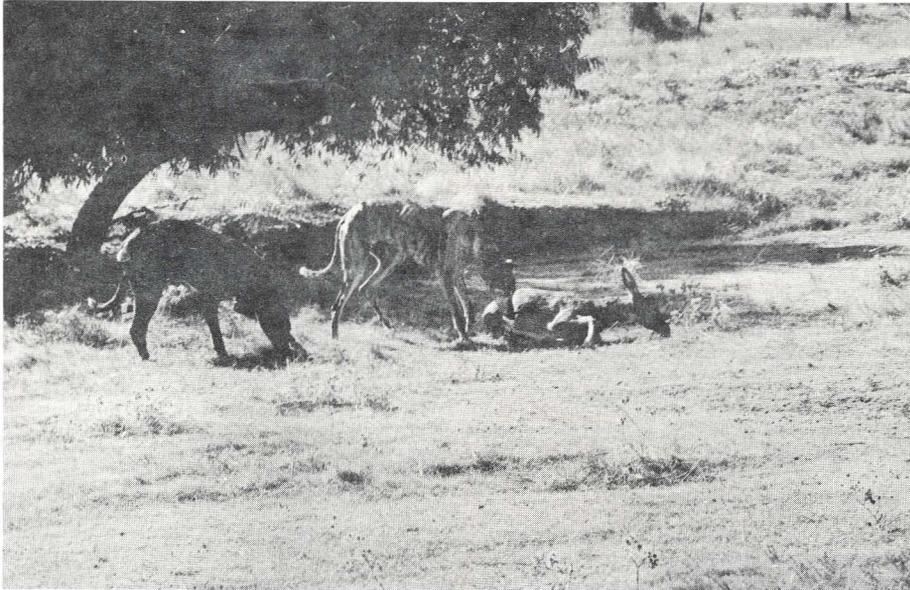
running some of his cattle through a fence. However, upon investigation we found the neighbor's German shepherd was to blame. We trailed the dog in the mud from the scene to the neighbor's house about one-half mile away."

Dick McCullough has also found that coyote damage can often be traced to free-ranging dogs. "Many complaints I receive on coyotes kill-

Coyote dogs and other "sight" hounds also have been involved in deer depredations. Dog owners should keep their animals tied or penned. Allowing dogs to roam freely often results in trouble.



Ken Stiebben



Although it's possible to protect livestock from free-running dogs, it's quite another story with wildlife. And each year, the Commission receives many reports of dogs killing and harassing native wildlife.

of the foot. A dog track shows four, one on each pad."

The number of animals killed at one session often is indicative of the culprit's true identity. "When coyotes make a kill, they generally take only one animal or what they can eat," Henderson explained. "Free-ranging dogs, on the other hand, will often kill several animals at one session—kind of a blood craze thing."

One county agent concurs, saying, "It's been my experience that coyotes kill only for food. But when free-ranging dogs make a kill, they usually get several animals and often leave them lay."

Where do these free-ranging dogs come from? In some cases they're strays — dogs which have been dropped in the country by owners who no longer want them. For the most part though, these dogs come from towns and farmhouses throughout the state. Dog packs range in size from two or three to more than 20. Tom Crispino, game protector at Parsons, has seen packs containing 24 dogs, roaming the strip pit areas.

How do these disguised killers get started killing livestock? It's amazing but some stockmen inadvertently encourage dead depredations by feeding dead livestock to dogs and coyotes. "A lot of farmers simply take their dead animals out to the nearest shel-

terbelt or draw where the 'critters' can clean them up," said Henderson. "Dogs eat carrion and will feed on dead livestock. Once they have tasted livestock, they know it's something good to eat. The next step is usually chasing cattle just for the fun of it," Henderson continued. "However, if a cow or calf became injured in the chase, as when running into barbed wire, and blood is drawn, the dogs' predatory instincts take over. Then what started as fun ends with the dogs making a kill. Once

this happens, you have a veteran stock killer."

Calves are extremely susceptible to this kind of treatment since they often become separated from their mothers. "As long as the cow is close, she can usually fight off the dogs," Henderson explained. "But calves often get through a fence and when this occurs, the youngster is easy prey for a dog pack."

There are no reliable figures in Kansas which would indicate how many free-ranging dogs we have, or the amount of damage they cause. In southeastern states where the problem is more serious and receives more attention, figures are available.

Georgia, for instance, which has an estimated 300,000 stray or free-ranging dogs, reported a loss of 5,000 cattle in 1967 to dog packs. These cattle were valued at \$885,000. The following year, another survey showed dogs had killed 11,243 pigs worth \$238,000.

Proper disposal of dead poultry and livestock coupled with dog-proof fences are helpful in preventing losses. Ideally, it's best to bring cows into small pastures near calving time, especially heifers who are calving for the first time. Young pigs born under field conditions are much more susceptible to predation than piglets born in a good pen. Likewise, poultry production within buildings or

PACK OF WILD DOGS THREATEN MAC PAIR

A pack of nine wild dogs threatened two McPherson men while they were working on a damaged cattle gate south of the city yesterday morning.

Walt Lattin of 513 S. Maple, said he and Mike Borth were repairing the gate which had been damaged by stampeding cattle when the pack appeared and started approaching them.

"They were growling, barking and showing their teeth," said Lattin. "They started coming for us so we picked up clods and started throwing them at the dogs. Then they started to move away."

Lattin explained that the dogs had apparently caused a number of cattle owned by P. F. Stucky to stampede the gate. "Cattle were scattered everywhere from Inman to Conway," he said.

Lattin and Borth were working on the farm which is located about three miles south and one mile west of McPherson. "Most of them were about as big as German shepherds and we were scared," Lattin said.

Both men were working about 40 feet from Lattin's truck when the dogs started to approach. "I really don't know whether we would have had time to get away if they had attacked," he commented.

"After the dogs left, they stayed in a pack and started down the road. You know, after going through that, I think it would be smart to carry a gun."

McPherson Sentinel
September 19, 1972

well-fenced areas greatly reduces loss to free-ranging dogs.

Protecting livestock from these disguised killers is one thing, but it's quite another matter with our native wildlife.

Game protectors and county agents from across the state reported instances of depredation by dogs on small game like rabbits, quail and pheasants. During spring and early summer when these species have young in the nest, they are extremely susceptible to dog predation. Bird dogs which are allowed to roam and self hunt have little trouble wiping out entire game bird clutches. Each spring game protectors receive numerous reports of dogs catching and killing young rabbits. This past summer, several Commission personnel reported finding young coons which had been killed by free-ranging dogs.

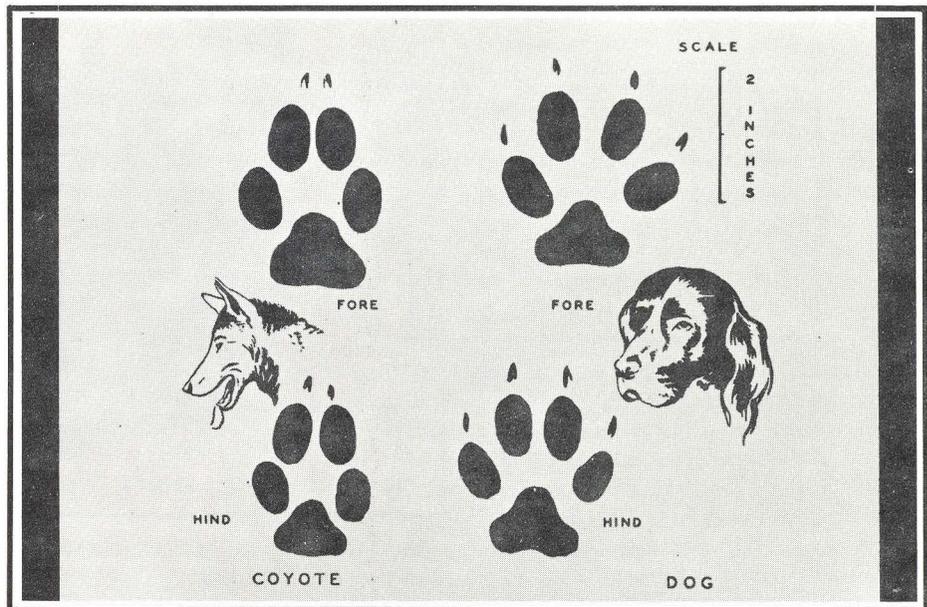
Although small game depredations are rather unspectacular and often go unnoticed, this is not the case when dogs chase deer. This is news and we frequently read newspaper accounts of dogs harassing or killing deer. There's something about a deer's scent which is irresistible to dogs. The temptation to chase these animals is so great that even well-trained hounds occasionally "break trail" to follow a hot deer track.

Although various species have been observed chasing deer, trail hounds like Walkers, black and tans, blue-

Young animals like the whitetail fawn shown here, are extremely susceptible to predation by "disguised killers."



Ken Stiebben



Farmers, ranchers and sportsmen should learn to distinguish between dog and coyote tracks. Although coyotes normally show only two claw marks, they occasionally show four when travelling in mud or soft sand. Even then however, the coyote's tracks can be distinguished from that of its domestic cousin by a narrower, more oval shape.

ticks and redbones seem to be the worst offenders. Conscientious hound owners are aware of this and go to great lengths to prevent their dogs from chasing deer.

Bill Hlavachick and Bill Peabody, big game biologists for the Kansas Forestry, Fish and Game Commission, seem to feel the problem is worse in eastern Kansas than in the western part of the state. "The eastern part of the state has more hunters who utilize trail hounds," they

say. "And once a dog like this is allowed to roam or hunt on his own, he often starts chasing deer." In western Kansas there are fewer trail hounds and the problem isn't as great.

All the different incidents involving predation on deer by dogs are too numerous to mention, but here are a few which vividly illustrate the problem.

Game protector Meier was called out by a farmer last summer who said dogs were chasing deer on his place. "When I got there, we found the deer, freshly-killed and partially eaten," Meier said. "The farmer asked that I leave the carcass near a creek about 150 yards from his house. A week later, he told me he had shot four of six dogs which were feeding on the deer."

An eyewitness near Penokee told J. D. Lichlyter of watching dogs chase and catch a deer in the Solomon river bottom. "This guy watched three coon hounds and a coyote dog chasing a three or four month-old deer," Lichlyter said. "As he watched, the dogs caught the deer, pulled it down and killed it."

Bill Burlew, Topeka game protector witnessed one of the goriest incidents of this nature. "About this time last year, I found a live doe which had

most of her rear end eaten away by dogs," he said. "An eyewitness told me he watched the dogs pull the deer down. The dogs were still there when I arrived to drive them away."

Even though the problem is not as pronounced in western Kansas, it exists nonetheless. George Anderson, game protector stationed at Ellis, once saw some dogs chasing a herd of mule deer in the vicinity of Cedar Bluff Reservoir. "The deer were being chased by five dogs of various breeds. I managed to get between the deer and the dogs when the deer crossed the road. This broke up the chase. Since that time, I've noticed several dogs at farms in the area which look like the same dogs involved that day," Anderson said.

Even if the deer is able to elude a pack of dogs, it still suffers some adverse effects. Deer must spend a certain amount of time each day foraging for food. Feeding time lost in eluding dogs reduces the deer's nutritional intake and results in a weaker animal. Also, studies in the South have shown that pregnant does which become exhausted during the chase often abort their fawns later. Then too, deer can become overheated during a chase. If they're forced into icy water by the dogs, severe shock can occur.

In addition to livestock and wildlife damage, free-ranging dogs represent an ever-present link between rabies in wildlife and the human population. Several years ago in Tennessee a rabies outbreak reached near-epidemic proportions. Although skunks and foxes were the primary carrier, free-ranging dogs which became contaminated were also respon-

sible for transmitting this dreaded disease.

Just how vicious are these free-ranging dogs? Can they be dangerous? You bet they can! Several years ago in Georgia, a young hunter entered the woods a day before bow season was to open. The young man was looking for a spot to place his tree stand. Carrying his stand, he was unarmed except for a sheath knife on his belt. Suddenly, two snarling dogs rushed him from the

get a shot at the third which angled off into the brush."

Most of the aforementioned men were armed and got off safely. Had the dogs attacked a youngster or an unarmed person, the outcome might have been different!

Free-ranging dogs are definitely a problem and there is no immediate solution in sight. What we probably need is some type of legislation which would allow us to deal effectively with the problem. Kansas law en-

If you keep dogs, fine. But keep them—either tied or penned—and don't let them roam or hunt alone.

forcement officials are not empowered to shoot dogs which are killing or harassing wildlife but New York has a law which authorizes all law enforcement personnel to shoot any dog which is harassing or killing deer. In Virginia, where a similar law prevails, as many as 40,000 stray dogs are killed annually. And Arkansas has a law stating that all dogs must be chained or penned during April, May and June—a period when young birds and animals are most susceptible to dog depredation. In Kansas, there is no statewide leash law and towns which do have such laws are often lax on enforcement.

South Carolina Wildlife published the following incident involving one of their conservation officers who was attacked by a pack of dogs which had been killing deer. "When I reached the creek there were six dogs swimming across," said the officer. "As the last one reached the opposite bank, I drew my sidearm and shot it. To my surprise, instead of fleeing, the remaining five plunged back into the creek toward me. The creek is about 25 feet wide and this gave me ample time to find safety up in a half-fallen water oak. From this position I killed two more of the dogs and the remaining three took to the bushes."

The Kansas Department of Health has no record of any deaths or attacks by free-ranging dogs in the last 12 years. However, I talked with an old trapper who had first-hand knowledge of such an incident. "I'd just finished running my trapline and had stopped for a smoke. Suddenly, I heard something crashing through the brush about 30 feet away. I grabbed my rifle and stood up. Through the undergrowth I could see three big bluetick hounds. As soon as they spotted me, they swerved and headed my way—snarling and growling. I dropped the first dog with one shot and the second one went down only five or six feet from me. I didn't

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In the final analysis, it boils down to a matter of individual responsibility. If you keep dogs fine. But keep them—either chained or penned. Don't let them roam or hunt alone. Self hunting not only destroys early training, it can lead to trouble.

The coyote is no saint—we're not saying that. But the coyote has been a natural predator within the ecosystem for many years and prey species have learned to deal with him. Free-ranging dogs on the other hand, are relatively new and unnatural predators. And let's face it, evidence indicates that in many cases the little prairie wolf takes heat for depredations actually caused by dogs. Keep this in mind and don't jump to conclusions by blaming coyotes the next time you spot a partially-eaten doe or a dead calf. The real villains might be free-ranging dogs—those killers in disguise!

This is NOT the way to get rid of an unwanted animal. Rather than merely dumping the dog, if you can't find a new home for the animal, take it to a veterinarian where for a small fee, the animal can be disposed of humanely.



Ken Stiebben

Bushytail Bonus

By Ross Manes

Photos by Ken Stiebben

Squirrel hunting is available to sportsmen throughout eastern and central Kansas but few hunters take advantage of the opportunity.

THE RUSTLING OF dead leaves and the scream of an early rising bluejay silenced most of the other woodland animals as two figures eased through the timber. The sun was coming up, but its rays wouldn't top the hills and penetrate the dense tree tops for several more hours. Separating, the two were soon invisible to each other, becoming only shifting shadows in the forest twilight. The absolute quiet of sleeping hardwoods returned to the spot.

The smaller of the two people soon found what he was looking for, a huge Burr oak tree with a broad trunk to lean against, and a moss-covered bit of ground at its base to sit on. Turning his head through a 180 degree arc, he noted with satisfaction the other large oaks, a few shag-bark hickorys, scattered hackberry and ash, and a single tall walnut tree.

As his eyes adjusted to the dim light, details began to separate themselves from the mottled background. Half-way up a nearby oak the main trunk forked and in the crotch the dark oval of a large hole was visible. The

ground under the walnut tree was littered with walnut shells, their freshly cut surfaces showing white against the black-brown leaves.

Small birds gradually resumed their interrupted activity; worrying at a loose bit of bark, turning their heads

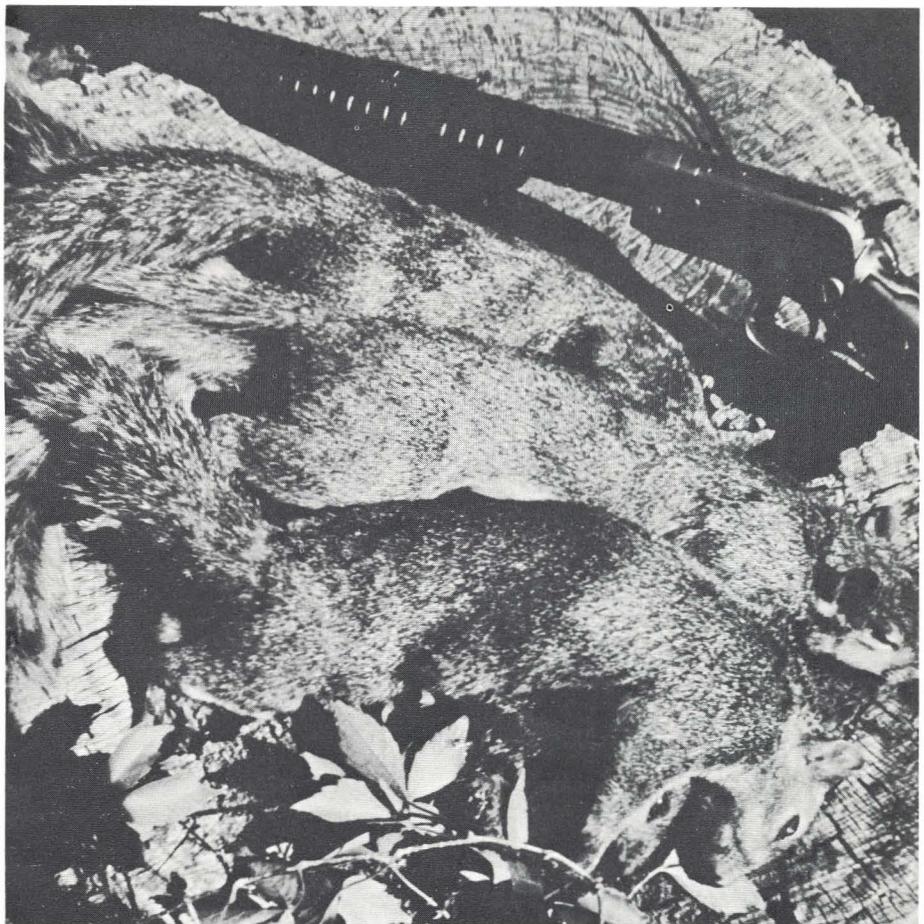
from side to side watching for an unsuspecting cricket or leaf-hopper. The lacy tip of a red oak twig fluttered down from the top of a tree fifty yards away, and the branch shook vigorously. As the reclining figure watched, a silhouetted form moved silently



Manes



Stiebben



The daily bag limit of five squirrels with a possession limit of ten, allows plenty of delectable meat for the average family.



Sitting quietly beneath a tree, as Topeka game protector Bill Burlew and his son are doing here, is usually the best summer hunting method.



down the branch to blend with the larger trunk of the tree. The sound of small, sharp teeth against the hard shell of an acorn drifted through the timber.

Other sounds betrayed the presence of unseen animal life. Scurrying sounds on the forest floor, and the swish of limbs as living weights transferred themselves from one branch to another came from several directions. A leaf on a low stem of the walnut tree popped when hit by a falling piece of green-hulled walnut.

Moving only his eyes, the youth peered into the uppermost parts of the walnut tree. A flickering tail gave away the location of a hiding fox squirrel. A quaking cluster of leaves identified another busy bushytail, and a third hurled itself into the lower branches from an adjacent scrubby ash.

Slowly the young hunter raised a .22 rifle to his shoulder. Looking over the sights he found one of the feeding animals perched on an exposed limb. The small front bead nestled into the rear notch as the slender barrel came into line with the motionless target. At the sharp crack of the rifle the squirrel tumbled to the ground. The hunter sat quietly, moving only enough to lower the rifle slightly.

The report of his partner's 410 shotgun, muffled by distance and dense

vegetation, proved that the other man was finding game in the wooded area he had selected. A second shot moments later might have meant more meat in the pot, or a case of poor marksmanship.

The instant quiet that followed the shots lasted only a few minutes. Squirrels were active in every part of the woods now, their raucous chatter cutting through the rain-like sound of falling twigs, bark, acorns, and bits of nuts.

During the next half hour the small rifle cracked again, and then once more, and three fat young squirrels lay among the leaves and walnut hulls when the boy finally stood up. His sudden activity disturbed a red-

headed woodpecker that had been pecking out burrowing insects a few feet above his head, and sent two surprised fox squirrels scurrying for the hollow trunk of an ancient oak.

"Of the state's six small game species only prairie chickens receive less hunting pressure than squirrels."

With delight and amusement he watched one of the squirrels pop from the hole, circle the bole of the tree at break-neck speed, pause to inspect the human below, and drop back into the hollow with a flick of its rust-brown and gray tail. He made no

effort to shoot at the adventuresome critter, three would be enough.

"Ready to go, son?" The quietly spoken words startled him slightly as he bent to pick up the last of his three bushytails. Tucking the squirrel into a light hunting vest, he nodded, and wondered if he would ever learn to move as quietly as his father. The older man leaned on the broad trunk of the Burr oak, a small grin on his face, with two fox squirrels hanging from his left hand. To gether they headed for the car, and home.

Hunting as depicted in the preceding paragraphs is readily available throughout eastern Kansas, and in much of central Kansas, but relatively few people take advantage of the opportunity. In fact, of the state's six small game species, only prairie chicken receives less hunting pressure.

Although the fox squirrel is far more abundant and widespread in Kansas, gray squirrels offer some extremely challenging sport in scattered area along the eastern border. They are also, according to some epicureans, somewhat better on the table than their red-coated cousins.

The gray squirrel, and to a lesser extent the fox squirrel, has shown an occasional inclination to move out of an area from one year to the next. The mass exodus of virtually an entire population has caused a few hunters to shake their heads in disbelief when an extremely productive area turns up a complete blank the following year. Large emigrations normally follow a period of unusually high popu-

lation and may be due to crowding or food shortage. Fortunately, hunters can frequently relocate the bushytails within a mile or two, where ever a good crop of acorns, hickory nuts and walnuts is to be found.

Gray squirrels in Kansas seem to prefer small bottomlands that are densely timbered with mature, old trees. Fox squirrels, on the other hand, can be found almost anywhere a few large trees grow, and occasionally

make their homes in abandoned farm buildings with little or no surrounding timber.

Naturally, the best numbers of squirrels are found in the most eastern counties, such as Miami, Linn, Bourbon, Atchison and Woodson. Surprisingly, however, small game harvest surveys indicate that hunters have almost as much luck in more westerly locations such as Sumner, Sedgwick, Harvey, Rice and Pawnee counties. Hedgerows and large stands of cottonwoods next to grain fields provide most of the habitat in central and western Kansas.

Squirrel season is a lengthy affair, lasting from June 1 to December 31, which gives hunters the opportunity to hunt them under varying conditions. The liberal daily bag limit of 5, and possession limit of 10, allows plenty of delectable meat for the average family.

Summer hunting for Kansas bushytails can be frustrating, if not downright irritating. Having tried valiantly to contend with the ferocious attack of ticks, chiggers, and blood-thirsty mosquitos, most hunters resort to long-sleeved shirts and generous doses of insect repellent after their first or second experience. Suitable protection from the insects permits a man to tolerate the long periods of sitting quietly beneath a tree that produce the best results in summer hunting. Because of the dense leafy cover encountered in the hardwoods during the warm months, squirrels are extremely hard to see, except for an occasional fleeting glimpse, and a brisk walk through the timber usually doesn't produce anything but sweat.

There are, however, advantages to summer hunting. With the exception of rabbits, which most hunters tend to avoid during the summer, bushytails are the only game animals offering a chance to break up the pleasant monotony of several months of fishing. Also, a summer hunt usually produces a lot of young squirrels which are vastly superior to older ones when rolled in flour, salted and peppered, and fried in butter.

Even so, fall and winter are the best times to pursue the lively limb leapers of the oak-hickory forest. Ahhh, winter. The trees have divested themselves of their leafy camouflage and walking through the woods is a rare pleasure. At this time of year a hunter can ease along from tree-to-tree watching and listening for the tell-tale drop of an acorn or walnut, he can patrol a fruit-laden hedgerow, or guard against an early morning attack on a tree-bordered corn field. He can, if he happens to be a sort of lazy individual, even revert to summer tactics and prop himself against a friendly tree. The latter, at worst, frequently results in a satisfying snooze, untroubled by crawling, biting, stinging insects.

Both rifles and shotguns are suitable for squirrel hunting, with the scattergun having a slight edge for summer hunting when shots are often at a rapidly disappearing target. Open sights, peep sights, and scope sighted 22's are all effective, and the choice should depend on hunting conditions and the ability of the hunter. Open sights are probably somewhat better when hunting heavy cover or under poor light conditions, but a four or six power telescope eliminates the prob-

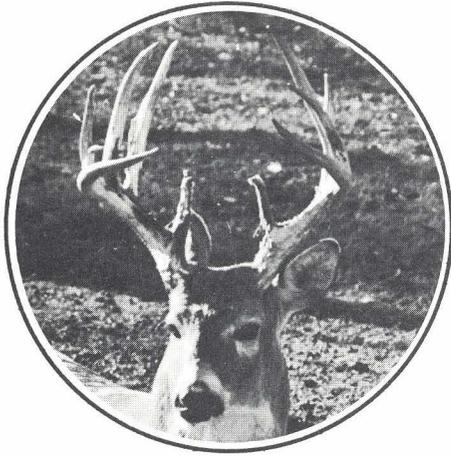
lem of bifocal wearers, and permits some really pin-point accuracy.

Squirrels can be prepared for the table in an almost infinite number of ways. For young tender animals, frying as described earlier is good and can be varied with deep-fat frying and the application of several sauces and batters. Squirrels of undetermined age are probably best prepared by slow cooking under cover, either baked or barbecued. Planking has been recommended for the occasionally encountered really ancient bushytail. In this procedure, the squirrel is thoroughly cleaned, placed on a smooth, clean cedar shingle and cooked for several hours at low heat, basting constantly with a heavy wine sauce. When removed from the oven, the squirrel is discarded immediately and the shingle is served piping hot with the remainder of the heavy wine.

Most cooks, however, recommend that old squirrels be pressure-cooked until the meat can be readily removed from the bone, and then incorporated into your personally preferred pot-pie recipe. The nice thing about all recipes for squirrel is that each one requires you to first go out and get a mess of bushytails.

Giving the farmer a few plump, juicy squirrels can go a long way in maintaining good hunter-landowner relationships.





Why Didn't I Get One?



The Kansas Deer Permit Story By Ross Harrison

ABOUT 35 YEARS AGO deer were considered extinct in this state by at least five wildlife authorities. Today, everyone knows Kansas has numerous whitetails and mule deer. Generally unknown, however, is the ironic situation in which these deer exist.

On one hand, they are so strongly thriving that if their numbers were not properly managed, they would be a severe menace to motorists and a costly nuisance to farmers.

On the other hand, if the legal hunting of deer was not tightly managed, the deer numbers would take a sharp nose-dive and they would be hard pressed to come out of it.

In either case, the firearms deer season is the fulcrum of a properly managed deer population.

That fulcrum is made up by the number of hunters and the type of season in any given year. It shifts back and forth to properly balance the deer population. On one side is the surplus for the hunters to harvest. Balanced on the other is the deer breeding stock—large enough to produce a good surplus the following season, and small enough to keep to a tolerable level crop damage complaints and deer-vehicle accidents.

Locating that fulcrum at the right spot, or arriving at the right number of deer permits to be issued is a

sticky business—especially when you consider it has to be done for 18 different firearm deer management units in Kansas.

Every year after the Forestry, Fish and Game Commission announces the number of firearm deer permits available and draws from a barrel of applications the names of deer hunters who are lucky enough to receive a permit, there are many permit-denied, would-be deer hunters who want to know

WHY HAVE I BEEN PASSED BY? Well, for those 60 per cent this year and the 50 per cent last year, here's why:

There just ain't enough deer to go around!

That, sometimes, is hard to swallow—really hard to swallow for a permit-denied farmer who knows his acres each year produce deer, yet he can't hunt them.

Let's look at these Kansas deer and deer hunters for the full picture. First a little scientific deer management with this fact kept in mind: The firearm deer management unit and the firearm deer hunter are the two most important concepts of Kansas deer management.

The deer in Kansas do not comprise a single herd. Instead, deer are scattered all over the state in random lots. So to manage them, biologists have divided the state into 18 deer management units, each with its own characteristics which affect its deer in a unique way.

Some characteristics of a unit include: The abundance, lack, or quality of deer food and shelter; the

number of deer; the number of people; the deer-vehicle collision rate; the type of farming; the attitudes of landowners about deer; the size of the unit; and whether mule deer or whitetails predominate—to name the important ones.

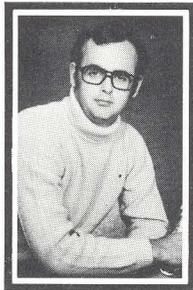
Because of all these variables, each unit is quite different from the others. And each characteristic of each unit has to be considered by biologists in determining the proper number of deer which can be safely harvested by firearm hunters. (The number of archery deer hunters is not limited due to their low numbers and low success rate.)

The story of managing deer can be told better by comparing two extremely different management units and picking out some of these considerations. There are no areas more dissimilar than the High Plains Unit of northwestern Kansas and the Osage Prairie Unit of eastern Kansas.

The High Plains Unit, wetted annually by about 18 inches of precipitation, is chiefly wheat farms and cattle grazing, with a few brushy draws and wooded streams. Osage Prairie, which collects up to 40 inches of annual precipitation, is typed by lush corn, soybeans, sorghum and hay crops, with frequent and substantial woodlots. Eastern rivers are lined with much wider bands of heavier timber.

Mule deer abound in the High Plains area. Whitetails are the deer of Osage Prairie.

It is hard to believe that two species of deer so similar in appearance can make such a difference in deer man-



Harrison

agement. But, studies bear out quite startling differences between muleys and whitetails, a major one being that mule deer have a lower reproductive rate than whitetails.

An average of at least one out of two female whitetail fawns in Kansas, born in June, will breed in the fall at only seven to eight months old. Many of these will successfully raise a fawn the following spring. Studies in north-west Kansas show less than one out of six mule deer breed and bear young during their first year of life. Year-and-a-half-old whitetails keep that gap spreading by out-producing yearling muleys at least 50 per cent.

Older muley and whitetail does produce about the same number of young per doe, but the head start of the whitetails means the muleys could never make up for the original difference in production.

Right away it is obvious muleys are at a disadvantage and can not stand the hunting pressure which whitetails support for the simple reason that they can't replace themselves as fast.

Why? For starters, the mule deer

and the whitetail are two different animals.

They evolved differently in different habitats. Speculating on the differences in the genetics of the two, deer biologists theorize the more western and perilous habitat of the muley tended to keep the younger does from producing. At least the perils of large predators, severe winters, dry

If illegal hunting of deer was not tightly managed, the deer population could suffer drastically.

summers and limited food supplies, held reproduction of the mammal to a point where the mother could get a foot hold on life before she was saddled by her young.

Kansas mule deer have one of the highest rates of reproduction than muleys anywhere else in the country. Still, they don't match up to the whitetail.

Another disadvantage of the mule deer is that he's easier to hunt than the whitetail. In a bucks only season the mule deer hunters' success rate of 55 per cent in the High Plains Unit,

compared to the whitetail hunters' success rate of 15 per cent in the Osage Prairie Unit demonstrates this well.

Muleys aren't really any dumber than whitetails, as many hunters think. Their habitat, comparatively void of expanses of heavy brush and timber, makes them more vulnerable to the gun. Where many Osage Prairie whitetails can run for miles and re-

main in the thick of cover, most High Plains mule deer would be standing on open ground, nakedly exposed to a hunter after a 200-yard sprint in any direction, starting from the heart of a western Kansas wooded ravine.

Also, the terrain of western Kansas affords easy vehicular access for the hunter, where access to eastern whitetails is reduced because of more fencing, smaller farms and more land-owner control.

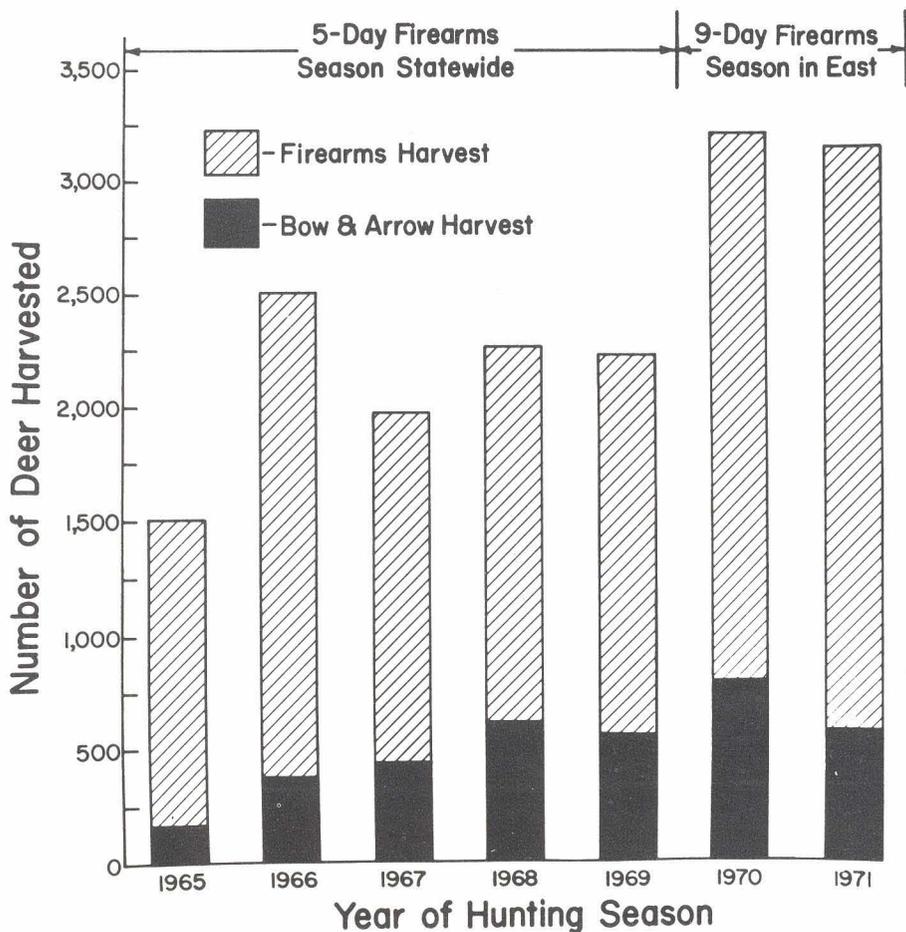
Put together, muleys have a lower rate of production; they are more vulnerable to the gun; and hunters can get at them easier than whitetails. Small wonder why permits to hunt them are sparingly issued. The total area of the four western units entails about one-third of the total state area, yet less than one-tenth of the state's deer permits are issued there.

This year, 324 High Plains Unit landowners or tenants competed for 125 available firearm deer permits. Sixty per cent failed to get their permit. In the same zone, 420 general residents applied for the other 125 permits for an even higher rejection rate of 70 per cent.

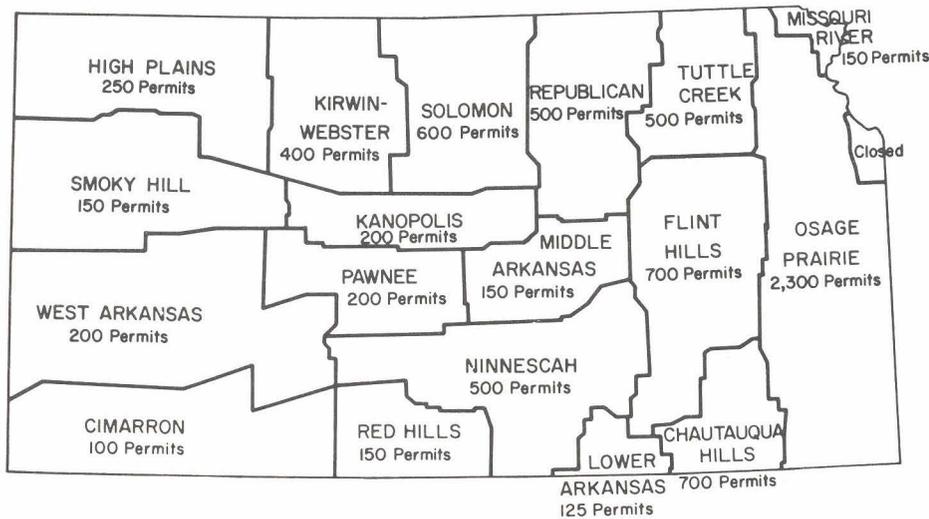
In the Osage Prairie Unit, so few landowners or tenants applied for firearm deer permits that all of them received their permits, and there were even 500 permits left over to add to the general residents quota! The general residents just barely filled their quota and tallied a low rejection rate of less than 10 per cent.

These figures show a more intense interest by hunters to hunt mule deer in western Kansas, rather than the whitetails in the east. And in such a case, there's always going to be an disproportionate number of dissatisfied hunters in the west.

Commission biologists feel the total harvest of deer in Kansas will stay about the same as shown in 1971 and 1970. However, the number of deer harvested from each unit may vary widely, depending on the management needs of that particular area.



FIREARMS DEER UNITS



A fallacy believed by some western Kansas landowners should be laid to rest here: Competition for firearm deer permits in the pressured western units is not due to Kansas City, Topeka, or Wichita hunters. An extensive survey by the Forestry, Fish and Game Commission has shown 80 to 85 per cent of the Kansas deer hunters hunt in the zone where they reside. And, many of those who don't, hunt in a zone that borders the one in which they reside.

Hunting pressure in western zones is due to the local hunters who probably because of their more rural tradition are more likely to hunt deer and are better at it.

So you can see why deer management can become a sticky business. Bill Peabody, deer biologist for the Commission, has a tough job in keeping the business from getting any stickier.

In the deer hunting trouble spot of Kansas—the High Plains Unit—where prospective hunters outnumber permits about three to one, Peabody has found a combination of several deer management techniques works best: A staggered schedule of “antlered bucks only” and “any deer” seasons, with a fluctuating permit quota, depending on the type of season and the population deer.

Peabody relates a little history of High Plains Unit deer hunting: “During the 1965 through 1967 bucks only season, each year 400 permits were available. But each year, the harvest of bucks declined from an original

Each year, hundreds of “woman” hours are spent in processing applications and permits for Kansas deer hunters.



hunter success of 56 per cent to a success of only 38 per cent in 1967. And each year the percentage of non-trophy yearling bucks in that harvest was higher than the year before.

“In other words, three straight years of strong, bucks only hunting resulted in a steady decline in bucks bagged, and of those that were bagged in 1967 more than 80 per cent were yearlings with only a pair of forked antlers for trophies.

“In 1968 the permit quota was cut from 400 to 100 bucks only. Success of the hunters, of course, boomed with so few hunters in the field. The lower number of bucks taken gave another year to those bucks that would have been harvested to put on a larger trophy rack and a few more pounds. The cut back also allowed the total herd to regain stronger numbers,” said Peabody.

“With a newly built population and more trophy bucks available, the 1969 season was set with bucks only the first four days and any deer provision the last day. The 1969 harvest was high and many trophies were taken. Since then, the 1970 and 1971

seasons both included 400 permits, any deer on the first two days and bucks only the remaining three days. This year, however, it was necessary to go to a strict bucks only season and reduce the permit quota to 250 in the High Plains Unit. Again, this will provide for an excellent 1973 season with many more good seasons to come.

And so it will continue in the future, according to the biologist. The varied types of seasons and varied permit quotas will allow more deer and better deer to be taken in the long run in the High Plains Unit.

Other units, faced with their own particular situations probably will find their quotas and season type change as years come.

On the point of allocating the limited number of permits to hunters, Peabody has strong feelings.

"With our present system of issuing permits, everything is based on one of the fairest principals going—luck. Where competition is keen for a small number of permits, you just have to be lucky to hunt deer. If you're not, you just have to keep applying each year."

"Alternative methods to our system are unworkable at present. For example, it has been discussed that we guarantee a firearm permit for the following year to a person who is rejected the year before. There's no way this would help the High Plains situation where more permits applications are rejected than there would be permits available the next year.

In 1971, 620 High Plains hunters were denied permits. This year only 250 permits were available in that unit. If those 1971 rejectees would be given 1972 permits, the High Plains quota would be filled more than two times—even before anyone else could apply. What would actually happen in that unit is that some hunters would be rejected two years in a row and some even three years.

"Or, if we said that once a person bagged his deer, he couldn't apply for another permit for two or three years, another bad situation would exist. This system would encourage hunters not to report their kill and not to provide the Commission with

age and sex information necessary to establish the next season.

"All considered, luck is the fairest alternative." Fortunately, once the cards are on the table, good deer management is as logical as it is scientific.

While biologists avoid the use of statewide deer population estimates,

creased use of flood and drainage control areas and the resulting timber stands; and strategically applied hunting are cited as the major reasons.

With the number of available permits in Kansas more than doubled since the 1965 opener and the season length increased from five to nine days in most of the state, it would



And if a deer hunter is fortunate enough to get his permit, he may be lucky enough to bag a fine buck like this one.

claiming they are difficult to back up with precise figures, these estimates do provide a handle to the recent success story of Kansas deer.

Starting in 1935 with virtually no deer, to the first legal season in 1965 with roughly 15,000 deer, then to this fall with close to 30,000 deer, the story is phenomenal.

Biologists, however, emphasize something of more importance—that deer numbers have just about doubled in the last seven years, even while a managed hunting pressure has increased and 17,000 deer have been harvested. Peabody says there's no doubt that there are more deer in Kansas today and in better condition than when Whitemen first settled Kansas. Modern farming practices; in-

seem Kansas deer hunters were getting plenty of a good thing.

But, encouraged by prospects of better deer hunting, more and more hunters have competed for the limited number of deer permits. And in the last two years alone, 55 per cent of those hunters who applied for permits were rejected. That comes to 25 per cent more than were rejected during the first six years of the legal deer hunt.

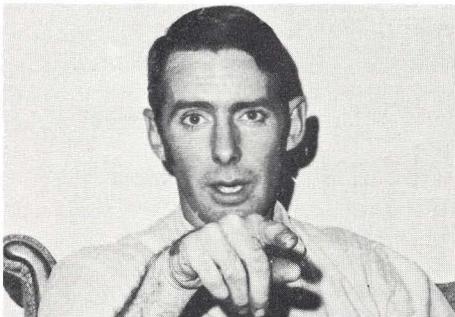
And so it follows. Biologists conduct their studies and set a limit on the number of deer that can be shot—not on the basis of how many hunters would like to shoot deer, but on the basis of how many deer can be safely harvested—to the benefit of the hunter, the habitat, the farmer, the motorists and of course, the deer.

Kansas Fish & Game Interview

NOTE: In the past few years, bowhunting for deer has become a big sport in Kansas. Each fall finds several thousand archers afield trying to harvest a trophy. In an attempt to provide information for aspiring or beginning deer hunters, Editor Vic McLeran talked with three of the state's most successful archers. Chuck Gibbs, electrical contractor from Great Bend, is currently Vice-President of Hunting for the Kansas State Archery Association. A member of both the Professional Bowhunters Association and the National Field Archery Association, Gibbs has completed the Kansas Association's Master Bowhunting program twice. He has taken four whitetails in Kansas and one mule deer in Colorado. Pete McBee, Utica rancher, was the 1967 state champion class C Bowhunter. In 1968, McBee was the state indoor champion in class B. While hunting Ness County in 1969, McBee took a non-typical 18 point mule deer which scored 170 and $\frac{7}{8}$ points in Pope and Young. Two years later, he harvested a 12 point typical muley which Pope and Young awarded 148 and $\frac{3}{4}$ points. Ray Mosher, owner of a Frankfort welding and machine shop, has taken six whitetail bucks with the arrow. In 1966, he shot a 12 point 310 pound whitetail which went 176 and $\frac{3}{4}$ in Pope and Young. During the 1970 season, Mosher killed a 220 pound buck near Frankfort. The experience, ideas and tactics of these three successful bowhunters should prove interesting to Kansas archers.

KF&G: Let's start off with equipment—what kind do you men use when bowhunting for deer?

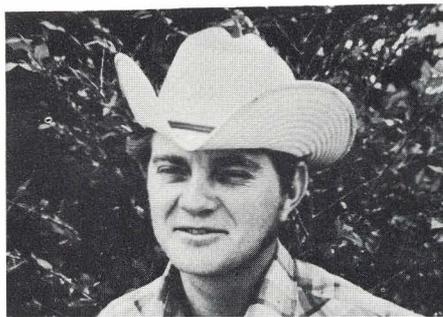
GIBBS: I use two bows; a 55 pound Bear take-down and a Jennings Compound Bow which is set for 65 pounds. I like Bear Converta-point arrows with the four blade tip. I mount quivers on my hunting bows. I also use bow socks and string silencers when hunting deer.



GIBBS: "The biggest mistake most hunters make when tracking wounded deer is in leaving their stand too soon after the animal is hit."

McBEE: I go with a 60" Bear Kodiak 42 pound pull and Bear magnum arrows with the Bear razorheads. I also use a Bear bow quiver.

MOSHER: I've been using the Ben Pearson 60" Mustang with a 44 pound pull. In arrows, I like the Micro Flight fiberglass jobs with a Ben Pearson dead head, and a bow quiver.



McBEE: "To become a successful deer hunter, archers must first select the proper equipment. Then too, plenty of pre-season practice is important."

KF&G: What do you feel is the best bow draw weight for a beginner who wants to go after deer?

GIBBS: The most common mistake a beginner makes is buying a bow which is difficult for him to handle effectively. I'd suggest he buy his bow from a dealer that is familiar with the requirements necessary to obtain maximum performance from equipment. By and large, the beginner should start with a bow in the 40 pound weight area.

McBEE: I'd have to suggest the beginner go with a bow between 35 and 45 pounds. But I'd caution anyone about going lower than 35 pounds.

MOSHER: This depends on the individual's size and strength but generally speaking, I'd recommend something in the 40 to 45 pound class.

KF&G: What type of material do you think makes the best arrow for deer hunting?

GIBBS: My preference is for the aluminum arrows. Wood has a tendency to warp in damp weather. Also, they hold moisture and this can cause the weight of the arrow to change and result in undershooting. Fiberglass arrows are durable and many archers prefer them over aluminum since they take rough treatment without bending like aluminum.



MOSHER: "The good archer gets out on scouting trips early in the fall to locate prime deer territory. In fact, he should spend as much time scouting as hunting."

ing due to my work and the advantage of daylight for tracking wounded deer.

KF&G: Do you use a tree blind and if so, what do you feel are some of the requirements for a good blind?

GIBBS: Yes, I use a tree blind. Hunters should remember that a good blind is one which is constructed in mid-August. It should be placed in well-traveled deer area, and should be made of old lumber or natural materials. New lumber is out, since it both looks and smells new. The blind should be placed about eight feet above the ground, making sure it's above the deer's line of sight. In hilly terrain, the blind might have to be placed a little higher. The platform should be about 24 to 30 inches square and anchored solidly to the tree. I normally build mine in the fork of a tree. I also cover the bottom of the platform with limbs and leaves and cover the top with carpet. I also like to add a comfortable seat. It should be as comfortable as is practical. You can't afford to be changing into a comfortable position every five minutes.

McBEE: I use a tree blind and feel they are essential when bowhunting for deer. I build mine a little higher than Chuck—anywhere from 12 to 18 feet. I select a tree which is situated near deer's feeding trails and feeding areas. The tree should be large enough to support the blind comfortably and should contain enough foliage to conceal the blind.

MOSHER: I used to hunt from tree blinds but for the past three years I have simply taken a stand in a concealed position. When I have used tree stands, I selected a large tree on or near well-used deer trails. I think large trees make the best stands since they offer more concealment and better shooting positions than small trees.

KF&G: What is your opinion of the commercial scents now on the market?

GIBBS: Commercial scents are good. I don't know if they actually help attract bucks, but they do cover the human odor. When deer hunting in Kansas, I think the smell of crude oil is just about as good as anything since it's something the deer are ac-

customed to smelling and it doesn't seem to cause alarm. Shaving lotions and body deodorants are out since they probably smell to a deer like a skunk smells to us. Buck lure usually works best once the deer have entered the rutting season. And I think it's best to select a lure which contains musk from the doe.

McBEE: I think the commercial scents are alright. Actually, anything that acts to disguise the human odor will help.

MOSHER: I believe scents help to stop deer. Although I have used them in the past, I don't use them all the time. I suspect they might prove advantageous for the beginner.

KF&G: How soon do you start tracking an animal which you've wounded but not killed outright? Do you start tracking immediately or do you wait awhile?

GIBBS: It's always been my feeling that all the preparations which go into deer hunting are wasted if the hunter jumps down from his stand and immediately starts tracking his animal. I always wait a minimum of 15 minutes when I make a good hit. If I'm in doubt as to the location of the arrow, I wait a full hour.

McBEE: I usually wait about one to one and a half hours depending on the location of the hit. I have been very fortunate on the two big bucks I have taken. One went down about 30 yards on a lung shot and the other dropped in its tracks from a spine shot. I feel that a wounded animal which doesn't go down in sight should be given plenty of time to bleed out.

MOSHER: As far as I'm concerned, this depends on the type of wound. When you've made a hit, fix the deer's location in your mind and look for your arrow along the animal's line of flight. If the arrow hasn't penetrated too deeply, it might be found broken off within the first 20 to 40 yards, provided it's a wooden arrow. If the arrow is found, notice the length and color of the hair on the shaft. Short hair means a leg wound, long for body, white for rump or belly. If you make a leg hit, follow the deer at once and keep him bleeding. As he loses blood, he will

run a shorter distance each time. A steady trail of blood or frothy blood usually means a lung or kidney hit. If this happens, wait for ten to fifteen minutes then follow. Dark blood and bits of greenery on the shaft indicates a stomach wound. In this case leave the deer alone for four or five hours in cold weather and six to eight hours in hot weather. You will often find the deer within 200 yards of where you hit him. If the deer is followed too soon, after being hit, he will leave the country. If you make a heart hit, the deer will usually dash off madly and drop within 100 to 150 yards.

KF&G: Where do most hunters make their mistake in tracking wounded deer?

GIBBS: I think the biggest mistake a hunter makes in tracking wounded deer is leaving his stand too soon after making a hit. An arrow kills by hemorrhage and this takes time—anywhere from ten minutes to eight hours. A hit in the heart lung area will be fatal in a very short time but the gut shot animal will take eight hours in hot weather. If you see the arrow hit the animal you can often judge the waiting time by that. If not, wait a minimum of one hour before tracking. Examine the site for hair and blood. Try and find the arrow, then examine it looking for hair clippings and the color of the blood. Begin your tracking and if you don't find blood for the first hundred yards don't think too much about it. Some high shoulder hits don't leave blood for several hundred yards. If you lose the trail, mark the last spot and go get help. An experienced bowhunter is always happy to help recover another's deer. Most of all, for the beginner, wait for a full hour before tracking your deer. The only exception is after a rain. Since rain washes out sign, you'll have to get right after a deer that is hit during or right before a rain storm.

McBEE: Starting too soon is probably the most common mistake made in tracking wounded deer. This is especially true when the hunter isn't sure of his hit location. When the animal is hit in a poor location, it can

McBEE: I feel that aluminum and glass are the best since they have a flatter trajectory and last longer than wooden arrows.

MOSHER: I'll have to go with the fiberglass arrows.

KF&G: What type of clothing do you wear when deer hunting?

GIBBS: Camouflage suits are a must! If you hunt from a tree stand the cotton coverall camouflage suits are fine. When stalking deer however, wool is best since it's quieter than cotton. The only drawback with wool is that it is hot during the early part of the season. Regardless of the type of clothing and footwear worn, it should fit well and be comfortable since you sometimes spend long periods of time motionless.

McBEE: When hunting, I wear regular work clothes under a cotton camouflage suit. I think it's a good idea to buy the camouflage suit a size or two larger to allow for extra clothing under it.

MOSHER: I use a full camouflage suit of cotton. I've never tried wool but assume it would be quieter than cotton because of its softness.

KF&G: How do you feel about hunting with a sight on your bow? Would you recommend it to a beginner?

GIBBS: I personally don't use a sight on my bow since I am a combination instinct-gap shooter. However, I hunt with bowhunters that use the sight and they highly recommend its use. The only drawback to the sight is the fact that you have to do exactly the same thing each time you shoot the bow in order to achieve consistent results. By this, I mean you must draw the bow the same length each time, place the knock end of the arrow on the same place on the string, anchor the release hand in the same place each time—all this after determining the deer is exactly 25 yards away from you. The sight also reduces a hunter's chance for making a quick shot in heavy brush. For those who know how to use them, they are deadly but for the novice bowhunter, sights are quite a burden.

McBEE: I don't use a sight on my bow. When sight shooting, you can set the sights for exact distances to the target. However, when a deer pops up, and you're sitting in a blind, you won't always know what the exact distance is from you to the deer. To me, that's a handicap.

MOSHER: Although I have a sight, I prefer to hunt without one. I can't see where the sight has an advantage over instinct shooting especially at close ranges where the exact distance isn't known.

KF&G: Would you recommend the use of a sight to a beginner?

GIBBS: Not really, for the reasons I've mentioned earlier.

McBEE: No, I think a beginner should learn how to shoot instinctively or work out some type of method. This enables him to aim for himself without relying on a sight. If he prefers, he can always go to a sight later.

MOSHER: I wouldn't recommend a sight unless the beginner is unable to attain accuracy without it.

KF&G: Are you an instinct or method shooter and is there any type of method which you would recommend to the beginner?

GIBBS: As I mentioned earlier, I'm a combination instinctive and gap shooter. I shoot instinctively at anything up to about 45 yards. Beyond that distance, I gap shoot. I'd recommend the beginner learn to gap shoot. This method is explained in archery magazines and books on bowhunting. Even better, I'd recommend beginning shooters join a local archery club where they can obtain first hand instructions.

McBEE: I'm a method shooter and would recommend it to the beginner. He should locate a good anchor point when the bow is at full draw. This can be done by pulling the bowstring to the same spot on cheek or jaw each time he shoots.

MOSHER: I use the instinct method and would recommend it to beginners.

KF&G: Do you prefer still hunting or stalking?

GIBBS: In Kansas, I prefer still hunting from the tree stand. However, I stalk when hunting the draws and creek beds of western Kansas and Colorado. Generally speaking, I've found the tree stand best for whitetail and stalking best for mule deer since they're often found in open country. McBEE: I definitely prefer still hunting. I have found that in the areas I hunt, it is almost impossible to stalk. Then too, still hunting is much more fun and exciting to me.

MOSHER: I use both methods but have had my best results still hunting.

KF&G: It there any certain time of day which you've found best for deer hunting?

GIBBS: Between sunrise and 10 a.m. seems to be the best time for me. I also see quite a few deer in the last hour of daylight but I've become very reluctant about hunting during this time of day because of approaching darkness. There's always the possibility of wounding a deer and then losing him in the dark. I personally feel that a shot shouldn't be attempted in the evening unless the deer is within 20 yards. I have found that deer wounded in the morning will have a tendency to lay down in cover in an attempt to avoid detection. I also think they lay down quicker and stay longer in daylight than in the darkness. I've always thought that deer feel safer in the dark and will get up to move out ahead of a tracking hunter. Always keep in mind that tracking is difficult in daylight and almost impossible in the dark. Then too, the hunter doesn't have a chance for another shot if the deer leaves cover in front of him. As advice for the beginner, I'd say, hunt the morning period, you have a far greater chance of recovering your deer since the animal's natural instincts plus tracking conditions are working in your favor.

McBEE: I'd have to agree with Chuck although I hunt both periods. In fact, all three of my big muleys have been killed during the evening period.

MOSHER: I prefer morning hunt-

often be spooked and eventually run clear out of the country where it will never be found. On the other hand, if the hunter gives the deer ample time to lay down and bleed, the animal can eventually be found.

MOSHER: I'll have to go along with Chuck and Pete. Most hunters simply don't wait long enough before starting their tracking. Then too, many hunters don't spend enough time in tracking their deer. They just give up too easily.

KF&G: When scouting the terrain for prime deer territory, what exactly do you look for?

GIBBS: Good deer country would have to be defined as that which provides shelter and food with the availability of water. In Kansas this means the majority of our deer are located in or around the major watershed areas, along creeks or rivers or near isolated ponds and lakes. Most of these areas have timber with agricultural crops nearby. However, deer can live on browse alone so they can be found in the middle of a large weed-filled draw or in the middle of a large stand of brush and timber. One item they must have is water. When scouting for an area to hunt, check the water holes first. This will tell you if there are deer in the area. Then you can backtrack to a good hunting spot and get permission to hunt the area.

McBEE: I scout an area looking for good deer trails, feeding areas and water holes. I also look for buck rubs, scrapes and deer tracks. Good feeding areas such as clover, alfalfa fields, wheat fields with an abundance of cover along with plenty of fresh deer tracks make good deer country. If you can find all of these signs, the deer are close by.

MOSHER: In my area, the best deer cover is found in the timber along streams, creeks, and rivers. I start scouting early in the fall. In fact, I spend as much time locating concentrations of deer as I do actually hunting. These pre-season scouting trips are a must for continued success as far as I'm concerned.

KF&G: How do you feel about the charge that archers are nothing but butchers with bows since many deer are wounded and lost each year?

GIBBS: It's just a charge the same as any charge made against sports which involve the taking of wildlife. Most of these charges are made by people interested in stopping all hunting by any method. They should consider the possibility of wildlife loss by overpopulation and disease. This could happen if some of the game wasn't harvested. Draining swamps and cutting timber is far more destructive to wildlife than hunting. But you don't read too many stories entitled "Butchers with Bulldozers" or "Killers with Chainsaws."

Plenty of pre-season target practice, locating strategic stands within good deer territory and familiarity with your equipment are all essential in bagging a trophy buck.

McBEE: I feel this charge is made by those who do not know the effect of proper bow hunting equipment. The large amount of deer which are lost is caused by improper equipment, careless hunting and even by giving up too soon when tracking a wounded animal. I also know a large number of gun shot deer are never recovered. A true, well-equipped archer is just as deadly on deer as any gun hunter.

MOSHER: I don't go along with this charge. Arrow wounds are clean wounds and many of the deer which are wounded do not die. I feel that some wounded deer pull out a fiberglass or aluminum arrow and survive.

KF&G: At what distance do you make most of your kills on deer and what do you feel is the maximum distance from which an archer should attempt a shot at a deer?

GIBBS: I have killed deer from seven to 70 yards with the average shot about 30 yards. The maximum yardage should be determined by the capabilities of the individual archer. Anyone who hunts with a bow should know his or her limitations and adhere to them. For all practical purposes I would suggest that the begin-

ner refrain from taking shots at game which is more than 30 yards from his position.

McBEE: I'd suggest that beginners stay within 15 to 25 yards and even for experienced bowhunters, nothing over 40 yards.

MOSHER: I think this depends on the individual archer's accuracy and his equipment. Most of my kills have been made at 70 feet or less. I feel that if we would keep our shots under 100 feet, we'd have fewer wounded deer.

KF&G: In conclusion, what do you feel is the most important factor in becoming a successful deer hunter?

GIBBS: To be a success at anything

takes work and bowhunting is hard work. It takes practice, patience, and study. In a nutshell, it take a responsible individual. There is no one factor that could be considered all important. Choice of equipment, target practice, location of a hunting area, pre-season scouting, trailing and recovery—all are part of becoming a successful deer hunter.

McBEE: To become a successful deer hunter, archers must first select good equipment, locate a good area and above all, have patience. After a hunter has located a good area and constructed a good blind he should stick with it. I've spent as long as four hours in tree blinds without getting a shot. If you've selected a good area and constructed your blind properly, the deer will show up, sooner or later.

MOSHER: Locating really good deer stands is one of the most important points to make. Also, I'd recommend that the hunter have several blinds or stands to hunt from so he can take advantage of changes in wind direction. Also, I don't think we can over-emphasize practice — the hunter should get plenty of pre-season target practice.

To better understand
wildlife, learn to read

The Book Animals Write

By Bill Scott

WE WERE HUNTING near Hope when the tracks suddenly halted.

What had that pheasant done?

There was nothing around us in the snow-covered green wheat field but bright sun and a north wind's knives slashing our cheeks.

He must have taken off. We looked closer.

That last set of tracks was deeper, where the ringneck had poised to spring. There were wing marks in the snow, like those made by a whiskbroom. He had flown, but where?

Those tracks pointed toward an old ragweed patch. We stalked downwind, my buddy swinging north to cut off escape.

WHAP AP ap ap ap! thundered the wing drumbeats.

Puh-POW! as gun barks blended.

Roast China bird never tasted better.

Knowing what tracks are made by which animals, going where, and doing what are of practical value for the hunter. That pheasant baking in the oven attests to that.

And the tracking adventure plunges one into the pulsating heartbeat of the wild. The souls of Daniel Boone, Kit Carson, and Jim Bridger.

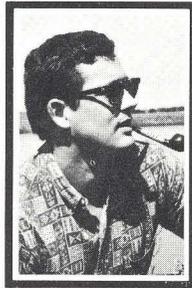
The very best media for footprint study, according to Joseph J. Shomon, Director of the Nature Center Planning Division, National Audubon Society, is soft mud or fine moist sand. Studying ditches, washed sandy or muddy places from field, sand bars and gully washes are all good bets. Freshly worked fields and soft earth are limited in usefulness primarily to

the larger mammals, like deer and cougar.

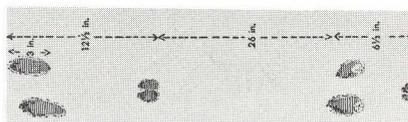
Snow makes tracking dramatically quick and easy. Many sportsmen say after a snow is the best trackin' time. And it is true that you can often track more quickly and at a longer distance after a snow than at any other time. But snow departs quickly, like Frosty the Snowman. And as it melts, the structure of the track is changed. A track blasted by a warm sun is soon enlarged and distorted, as Olaus Murie, now deceased president of the Wilderness Society, observes in his book, *A Field Guide to Animal Tracks*.

Nothing substitutes for actual experience in reading tracks. If you are fortunate enough to know a good tracker, make him a friend! Pet his dog. Rake his leaves. Invite him duck hunting. For as helpful as book drawings are, expertly guided experience is even better!

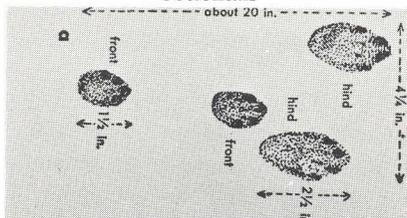
Now let's look at some books written by animal authors.



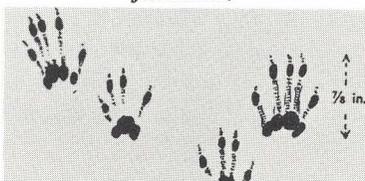
Scott



Cottontail



Jackrabbit



Squirrel

COTTONTAIL RABBIT

Tracks of this well-known animal author can be found in feed fields, pastures, ditches, around ponds, and even in your own backyard or schoolyard. Look for cottontail tracks after a night snowfall.

BLACK-TAILED JACKRABBIT

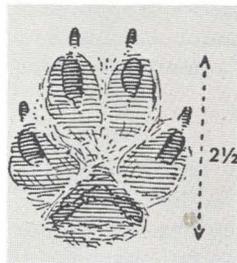
Autographs of this long-eared speedster and his country cousin, the cottontail, are very similar. The hind feet ahead of the front feet in normal strides, because rabbits are primarily *hoppers*. Other jackrabbit signs are shrubs and weeds snipped off in a slant-cut effect.

SQUIRREL

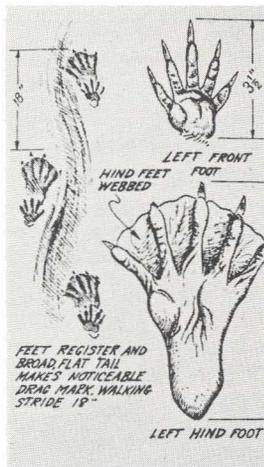
A tree-climbing rodent, the squirrel has a tendency to keep forefeet parallel. Hind feet are five-toed, front feet have four. Leaps vary from eight to 30 inches.



Mink



Fox



Beaver



Deer

RED FOX

Red foxes are increasingly common in the eastern half of the state. Murie describes the track as a "dainty straight line." The width of the trail is usually not more than $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide, while the coyote's trail is from four to six inches in width. Also, the sprawl of the front footprint is tightened to the narrower, more pointed hind footprint.

BEAVER

You can easily spot if there's a buck-toothed beaver in the neighborhood. He leaves a huge hind footprint, often six to seven inches long. In comparison, the black bear's is eight inches. The beaver is always close to water, and his tail leaves a drag mark between his footprints. The front track shows five toes, while the webbed hind foot reveals six toes.

MINK

Ever seen a "ball" floating down the stream? Next time, look closer. It may be a rolled-up mink in the midst of a siesta. A tough little character, he often attacks animals larger than himself. Licking one's weight in mink would challenge Tarzan!

The sought-after prize of trappers, the mink is largely nocturnal, only occasionally venturing out during the day. He has a strong play instinct, pushing himself belly forward in the snow and even coasting down a slope.

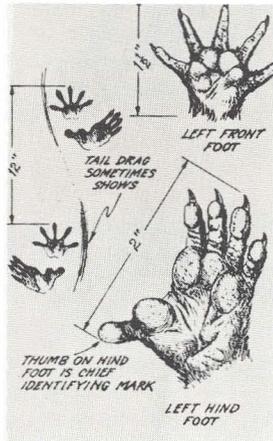
Mink tracks on mud and sand measure $1\frac{1}{4}$ to $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches wide. In snow, tracks may be as much as $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Length of stride varies from $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches in mud to $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches in snow.

WHITE-TAILED DEER

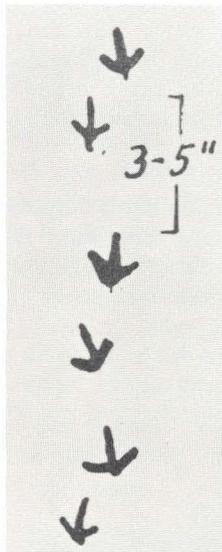
The whitetail is so named from its habit of erecting its white tail when fleeing. It resembles a surrendering white flag, and for that reason is sometimes called "flagtail." The tracks of the white-tail and mule deer are often "too close to call," like the Kennedy-Nixon election returns. However, there is one conspicuous difference between the running track of the muley and the whitetail. Murie writes, "In galloping, the whitetail uses the 'rocking horse' gait so common among large animals, in which the hind feet swing far ahead of the front foot tracks.—The mule deer, on the other hand, generally proceeds in speed with a bounding rubber-ball action, all four feet coming down together, hind feet behind."



Skunk



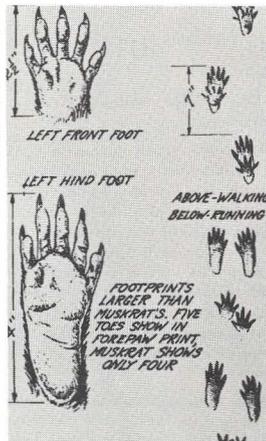
Opossum



Pheasant



Muskrat



Raccoon



Bobcat



Poacher

PHEASANT

The pheasant makes one of the larger tracks of the upland game birds. It measures 2½ to 3 inches in length and about 2¾ inches in span, depending on the bird's age. So many different strains of pheasants have been introduced sizes may vary widely.

MUSKRAT

A mainstay of the trapper's income, the muskrat sports four toes on his front foot, five on his hind foot. A slender drag line left by the tail and sprawling forefoot toes are also his characteristics.

RACCOON

Tracks of the 'coon's hind foot resemble those of a bare-foot boy cavorting on the creekbank. The front prints average ¾ inches long and hind prints are about 4½ inches long. The forefoot print imitates an eight-year-old's hand pressed into the mud.

OPOSSUM

Another odd, distinctive track, the 'possum walks with his front and hind feet parallel. Nature's sanitation engineer has an inward, even backward-pointing toe on his hind foot. Besides this chief identifying mark, the tail drag sometimes is evident in snow.

SKUNK

Chances are you'll smell this little stinker before you ever see his tracks. Summertime often finds him catching insects under bright outdoor lights. Winter is the time for "sleeping it off." No claws show on the hind foot, which is shaped like a baby's. Both hind and front feet are five-toed. Distance between tracks is about three inches.

BOBCAT

Night hunting is the bobcat's specialty. No claws are exposed as his feet pad softly across the wilderness floor. Also the anterior border of the ball pad is dipped, or two-lobed, while the coyote's is not.

POACHER

A most common animal track, it occurs most frequently around "No Hunting" and "No Trespassing" signs. Other signs the tracker may look for is torn-down fence, empty bottles, wadded up cigarette packs, fresh blood and fur or feathers where this animal has butchered his prey.

Does *your* print belong in this picture?

For those who want to continue their study of the fascinating book animals write, I recommend Olaus Murie's *A Field Guide to Animal Tracks*.

This winter, try reading an all time best seller—the book animals write.

DUCK CALLS

By Farrell Brewer

THERE'S NOTHING BETTER than roast wild duck for dinner according to Larry Largent, an avid duck hunter. Larry with his duck hunting companions, his father Dale, brother Rodney and friend Bill Harper, all of Overland Park, Kansas, spend many hours plying their skills of waterfowling at the Marais Des Cygnes Waterfowl Management Area and other Kansas waterfowl areas each year.

The quartet is no ordinary group of waterfowl hunters, they hold national honors in the world duck calling contest. Larry won the contest in 1971 while his brother Rodney nailed down second place. Bill Harper who assisted the boys' father in teaching good calling methods to them ranked fifth in the contest.



Brewer

This was the first world contest for the Largents while Harper entered the contest two previous years. The contest is conducted at Stuttgart, Arkansas, the famous duck hunting capital of the world and is sponsored by the Stuttgart Chamber of Commerce. Larry had only entered one other calling contest before the championship meet, the same with his brother. Rodney beat his brother in the previous contest but Larry aced him out by 20 points in the world meet.

Twenty-two states were represented in the contest. Larry, although a Kansas resident, represented Nebraska in the contest as only one representative from each state is permitted to enter. Rodney represented Missouri with Bill Harper calling for Kansas. The contest is judged by six

Overland Park duck hunters manufacture the famous Marshland waterfowl calls.

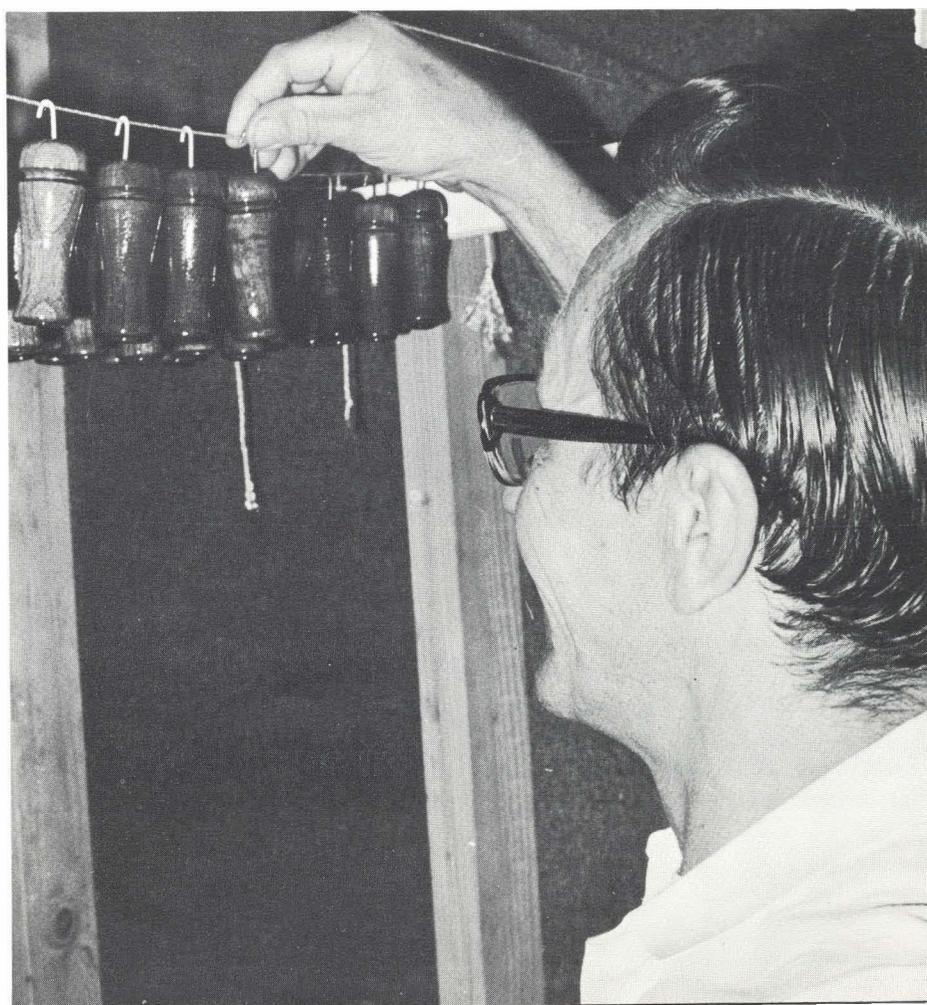
notables from conservation groups and Ducks Unlimited chapters. Contestants are judged on their ability to perform six calls starting with the highball, on to the comeback, feed chatter, clucks, lonesome hen and ending with the contented duck call.

Although many waterfowlers would be pleased with the honor of being the world champion duck caller there are other benefits. Larry received a check for \$1,000, a blazer, trophy and the right to defend the championship this year. Larry stated he definitely would return to defend his title. Rod and Bill vow to give him a run for the money in the next meet.

The foursome is also involved in a business venture closely related to good waterfowl hunting. They manufacture Marshland duck and goose calls. They said the business was started basically because they were not satisfied with the calls that were available and decided to make a better call. They have incorporated 30 years of duck hunting experience into their call.

Larry used a call he picked at random from the manufacturing line to use in the contest. He pointed out that it was the one he had used duck hunting all year. "I believe you need to be familiar with your equipment"

Dale Largent, one of Marshland's founders, inspects calls that have been dipped to see if they're dry enough for a second coat.



Farrell Brewer



Trimming the reed just right is the secret to making a good call according to Rodney Largent shown here.

was the reason given by Larry in the selection of the call. Bill and Rodney also used Marshland Calls.

Upon deciding to manufacture waterfowl calls they began to look for the necessary equipment. They selected some lathes originally designed for making wooden salt and pepper shakers. The project of modifying and changing the machines was handed to Dale Largent who the rest say is the mechanical brains behind the organization. In a period of three months he had the machines converted into workable call making machines. Dale said he had no doubt that the salt and pepper making machines would do the trick. "After all, they were designed to turn wood and that is what we make our calls from."

The manufacturing process begins with the selection and purchase of suitable wood. They use walnut, cherry and zebra wood in making standard calls and make a custom built duck call out of hard rubber.

With the wood selected they have it cut into two inch by two inch strips for the barrels of the call and one and one-quarter inch by one and one-quarter inch strips for the inserts.

The strips are then sharpened in what resembles a gigantic pencil

sharpener powered by an electric motor.

Once the wood is sharpened it is placed in the lathes to form the barrels and inserts. The lathes turn out rough cuts at the rate of 30 per minute.

With the lathe work completed the hard part begins. Each piece undergoes hand sanding and fitting. The patented tone chamber is constructed next. A design is then burned onto the barrels and inserts.

On down the assembly line the calls are dipped in a finishing material and allowed to dry for 24 hours before they are dipped again and allowed to cure for at least a week.

When cured the calls are equipped with the most important piece—the reed, made of hard rubber. All are hand tuned by Larry and Rodney. The calls are tuned once and then checked just prior to shipment. The end result is a hand-tuned quality call.

They have been in the call making business for two years and plan to produce more than 7,000 calls this year although they have a capacity for turning out from 10 to 15 thousand calls with their present equipment.

Another unique facet of Marshland Game Call company is that they contribute two percent of their annual

sales to Ducks Unlimited. Their reason for the contribution is simple, according to them. Ducks Unlimited uses donated funds to construct nesting habitat for waterfowl. With more ducks produced, there is more need for duck calls and Marshland is in the duck call marketing operation.

Call making is a part time venture for all involved at Marshland. Bill Harper is in the printing business, Larry Largent is a Junior High School Physical Education instructor, Rod Largent is a student at Kansas State Teachers College of Emporia and Dale Largent is a service manager for an automobile firm in Overland Park, Kansas.

They market the calls in all 52 states by mail order and have factory representatives in eight states. They not only market the calls they offer a package "Mallard Talk by Marshland" which is designed to teach anyone the A, B, C's of waterfowl hunting.

Experienced waterfowl hunters support the premise that the proper use of a calling device is one of the most vital secrets to success in waterfowl hunting. How you build your blind and set your decoys are equally important, but it is really a combination of these three basics which determines whether you get good shooting or draw blanks. Tips on these basics to good waterfowl hunting are covered in Marshlands Mallard Talk booklet.

The quickest, easiest and most effective way to learn waterfowl calling is to watch the experts, these being the professional guides who literally "call for their supper," or experienced amateur sportsmen who usually come home with full bags. Lacking access to these sources, the hunter can listen to professionally made phonograph records—of which there are many—or visit a zoo, public park or farm where domesticated ducks and geese will provide him with authentic calling lessons.

Since mallards are sprinkled liberally over most of the U. S., species other than mallards often respond to the mallard's call as readily as to their own. This is the reason why most duck calls are designed to sound like that of a mallard.

Duck calling techniques vary widely in different sections of the U. S. Along the Pacific coast, for example, hunters use a deep toned call with lots of volume. In the mid-west they prefer a high pitched call. In South Louisiana, the most popular call is harsh and loud. Just the opposite is true in Minnesota where hunters purchase soft calls.

In addition to this, the ducks themselves have different voice levels. A particular hen mallard might issue soft, come-hither pleadings while a sister from the same brood belts out her calls like a fog horn.

Bill Harper contends that it is impossible to "over call" mallards as long as you are talking their language since the ducks themselves make a lot of racket while calling other ducks.

Ducks call differently, and no two men will blow the same duck call entirely alike. Further confusing the issue is how ducks react in different environments.

By way of example, the favorite call for mallards in the flooded timber marshes at Marais Des Cygnes would be a series of 10, 12, or 15 "highballs." While at Cheyenne Bottoms mallards respond better to only 4 or 5 "highballs." This may be attributed to the multitude of trees at Marais Des Cygnes which makes it more difficult for mallards to hear a call, while the opposite is true in the open marshes of Cheyenne Bottoms where sound carries more easily.

There aren't many solid gold calls in existence but even if people could afford them, they wouldn't sound as good as those with modest barrels of wood, plastic or cane. Very few cane calls are seen outside of Louisiana where it is still the favored material of many old timers.

Calls made of wood or plastic barrels look better than the cane and are much stronger.

Hard black rubber is the finest material for reeds and practically all of the champions use calls fitted with them. Plastic reeds are soft and more pliable. Although easier to make, they do not work as well as rubber.

The most serious drawback with hard rubber reeds is their brittleness.

In cold weather, they might snap off with the first blow, leaving you without a call. This hazard can be reduced to some extent by blowing several times through the wrong end of the call to warm the reed with your breath. An even better idea is to carry an extra reed in your wallet where it will be available when needed.

Too many callers, the people from Marshland feel, labor under the illusion that effective calling involves nothing more than buying a call and blowing it in the general direction of ducks and geese.

It's a real insult to the intelligence of these beautiful birds, they charge. Two out of every three hunters in the marsh haven't the slightest idea what they're doing. They are in the same league, mentally speaking, with those who insist on shooting when they know perfectly well the birds are out of range.

"The lack of knowledge among those who proclaim to be waterfowlers and those who would like to learn the art of good calling is why we offer the Mallard Talk package," said Bill Harper.

Marshland people contend that any-

one can become reasonably proficient with a duck or goose call by following a few very simple rules.

"You might not win a contest," they admit, "but it will definitely help you have a quality hunt if you make up your mind to study the right methods and practice as often as possible."

Marshlands method consists of listening to an experienced caller or phonograph records and practicing with the aid of live ducks. They provide a record in their Mallard Talk package.

On the subject of selecting a call, although they admit bias and contend Marshland calls are the best, they advise beginners to seek the help of a friend or salesman who has enough experience to tell if the call is particularly suited to him.

It's like trying on a suit or a pair of shoes they say. "You've got to be properly fitted."

For those lacking the time and ambition to do these things, they have one bit of advice.

"Buy your call, polish it carefully the night before the hunt, take it with you into the duck blind, place it in the bottom of your shell bucket and leave it there."

All Marshland calls are given a final test to see if tone quality is up to par. Here, Larry Largent checks a call.



Farrell Brewer

For ten bucks you can make a simple but practical gun cabinet.

A \$10 GUN CABINET

By George Valyer

"A GUN CABINET for \$10? You have got to be kidding!" That was the comment of my friend Gary Harrison when I approached him with the idea of building a cheap gun cabinet that would provide protection for guns as well as some place where firearms would be unavailable to the neighborhood children who seem to like my wife's cookie jar and regularly invade my domicile for a raiding party.

I had wanted a gun cabinet to house my assortment of firearms for years but the \$80 to \$150 necessary to purchase a really good one just never seemed available. Taxes, shoes for the kids, insurance and a host of other demands constantly kept the budget exhausted and there never seemed to be enough of that "filthy lucre" left over to justify that kind of an expenditure.

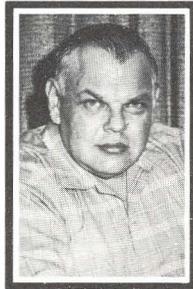
Still, for safety's sake, a gun cabinet was needed in my household. The corner of my closet wasn't the best place in the world to stash my firearms, especially with their accessibility to youngsters — the closet doesn't have a lock. Besides, who wants to get a key every time he needs a clean pair of pants. The solution to the problem seemed to hinge on building a cabinet and it had to be done with a minimum of hard cash.

The reason my friend, Gary, became involved is because he works at the local lumber yard, the ready source of materials for a project such as this. I had developed the simple plan for construction but I needed his help in selecting the proper materials and getting them cut to size. Together, we determined the cheapest type of lumber available for the project was

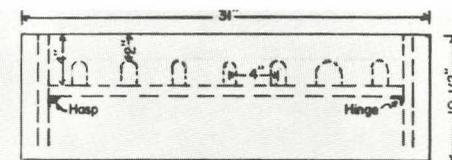
shelf-grade white pine. It had some knots but was about a third the price of knot-free top grade material. The knots would not detract from the usefulness of the cabinet and might even add a rustic attractiveness to the finished product. Quarter-inch plywood, AD grade, was selected for the back of the cabinet with the knotty side placed to the back where it wouldn't show. After cutting the

After some preliminary sanding of the boards, assembly of the components was begun. Eight-penny finish nails were used along with an application of glue to hold the butt-joints together. In addition, the bottom or base board was fastened to the sides with flat-headed wood screws properly countersunk. The assembly of the basic box seemed to require more than two hands so my 13-year-old

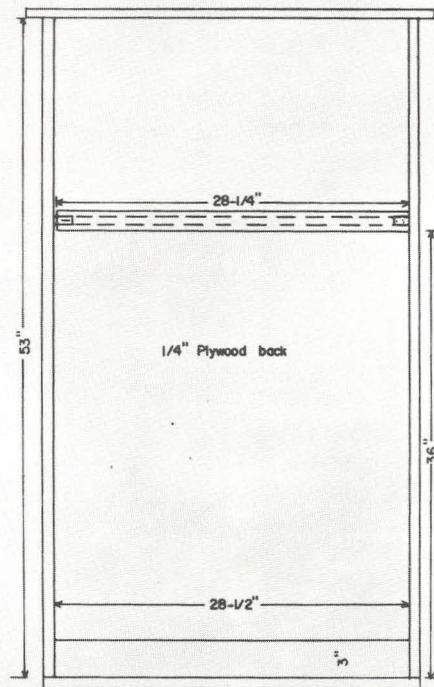
Ken Stiebben



Valyer



TOP VIEW



FRONT VIEW

lumber to size in the lumber yard's work shop, the bill came to just a little over \$9. This price also included the hinge and hasp for the locking mechanism to make the cabinet "kid proof." I had plenty of nails, screws and glue at home so the price of these items was not included.

son, Tom, lent his assistance. Together, we checked the alignment of the top with the sides and nailed them in place, being careful to maintain the specified dimensions.

Even with the nails, screws and glue, the frame seemed to be a little wobbly but the addition of the ply-

wood back stabilized the basic cabinet. Care should be exercised to keep the corners square and the back panel in alignment until the back is firmly nailed on. Small, one-inch wire nails were used to attach the back panel.

The most exacting operation was the inletting of the piece which holds the barrels to the guns. This was accomplished by carefully laying it out in advance of any cutting by marking the exact spot and size of the notches. A $\frac{1}{16}$ -inch wood bit was used to drill holes in the board four inches apart. Then a saber-saw was used to cut away the wood to form the notches.

Since a side-by-side double barrel shotgun was to be kept in the cabinet, a wider notch was needed for this gun. This was accomplished by drilling two $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch holes side by side in the proper location. After opening the notch to the front with the saber-saw, a wood rasp was used to smooth the cuts and slightly round off the edges. Sandpaper wrapped around a dowel accomplished the final smoothing.

Mounting the notched board to the back panel was accomplished with two wood screws from the back of the cabinet and a finish nail at each end of the board, driven through the side gave it stability.

The one-by-three inch board at the bottom of the front of the cabinet was installed next using glue and finish nails. This prevents the butt of the firearms from slipping out of the cabinet.

The installation of the locking bar is the next and final step in construction. The one-by-two inch piece is mounted by a hinge at one end while the other end is secured by a hasp. Mark the position of the hinge screws with a pencil while holding the bar and hinge in position. After drilling a small starting hole for each screw, it is a simple matter to install the bar. The hasp is easily installed by using a similar method. Make sure that sufficient clearance is maintained so that the bar clears the hasp in opening—you can cut a little off the end of the bar is necessary. The loop part of the hasp is mounted on the bar

and the hinged part of the hasp is secured to the side of the cabinet.

A shelf to hold cleaning materials can be added to the inside of the top of the cabinet but ammunition should never be stored in this location. Instead, it should be locked up in a drawer or cupboard well removed from the location of the cabinet.

If you like to display your guns to

visiting sportsmen, then you may wish to use a fancier wood for the construction. Three-fourths inch plywood could be used or, if available, hardwoods such as oak or walnut would make a beautiful piece of furniture. But, if your need is for a simple but safe place to store your firearms, how can you beat a \$10 gun cabinet?

List of materials for gun cabinet:

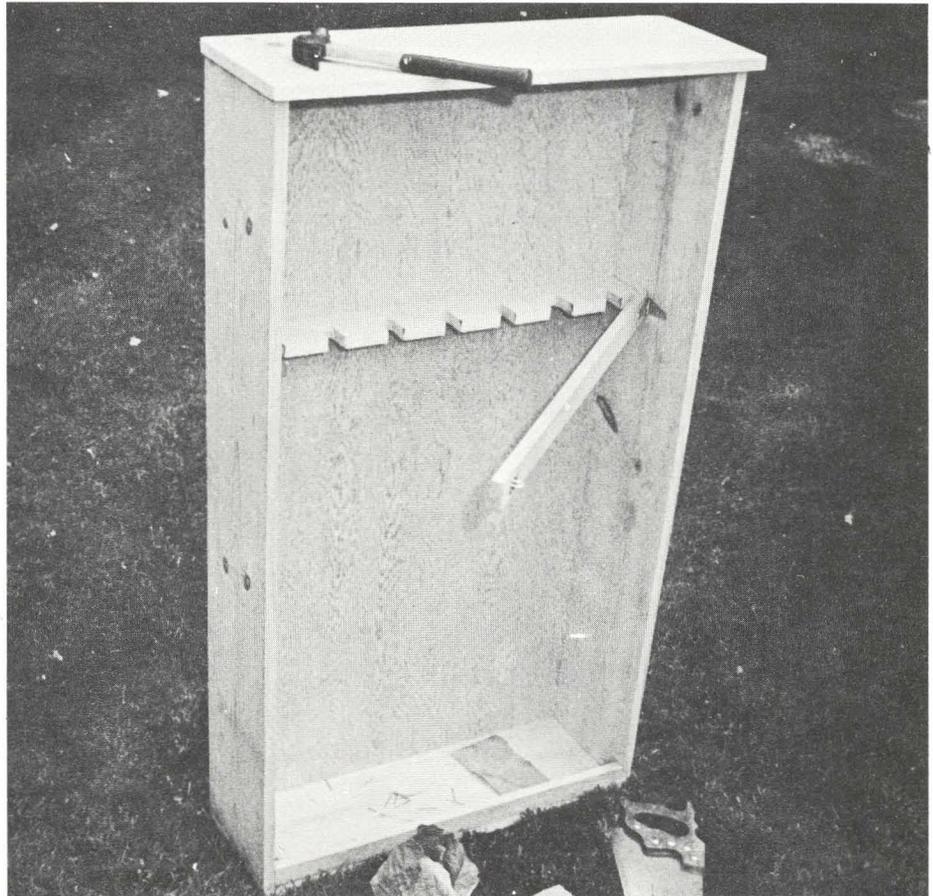
Unless otherwise noted, all material is white pine. Plywood $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch thick may be substituted or, if desired, hardwood may be substituted.

- 2 pieces, 1 x 10 x 53 inches
- 1 piece, 1 x 10 x 31 inches
- 1 piece, 1 x 10 x 30 inches
- 1 piece, 1 x 4 x 28 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches
- 1 piece, 1 x 3 x 28 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches
- 1 piece, 1 x 2 x 28 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches
- 1 piece, $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch plywood 30 x 54 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches
- 1 small hinge 1 small hasp

Total cost of materials using white pine, \$9.26. (Not including nails, screws and glue.)

The finished cabinet is small enough that it can be placed in most closets. If the builder desires, the cabinet can be stained and felt can be glued in the notches, resulting in a fancier cabinet.

Ken Stiebben



Giant Canada Goose

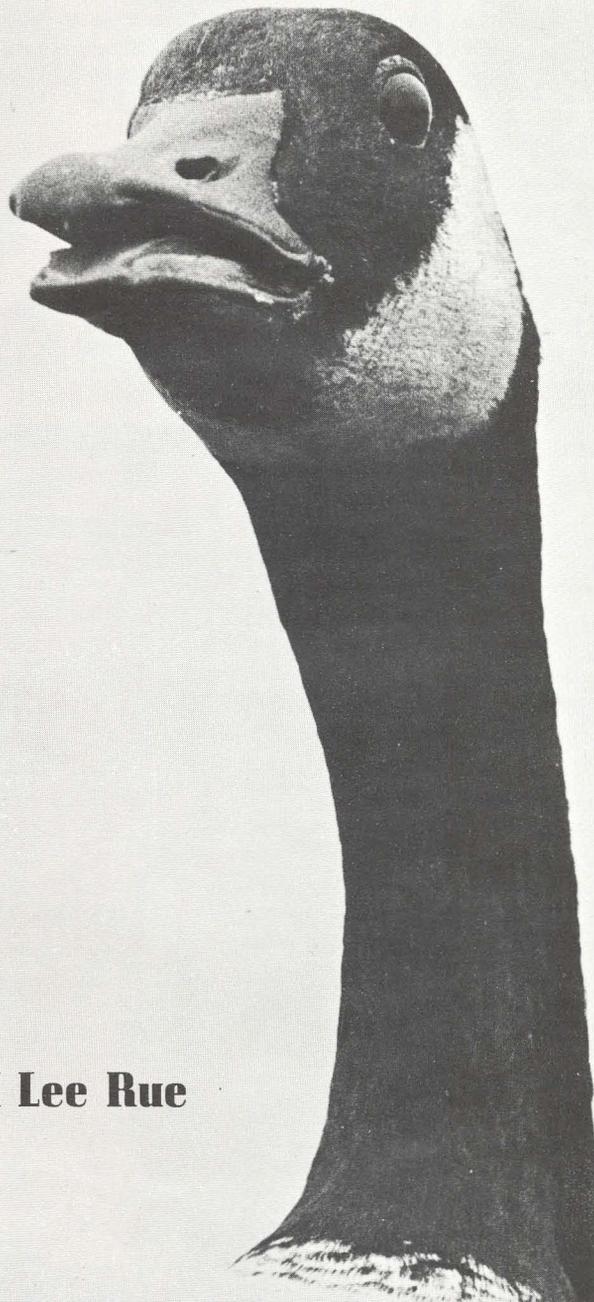


Photo by Leonard Lee Rue

By Ross Harrison

The largest and felt by some to be the greatest of all geese on the North American Continent recently has been making Kansas one of its most popular wintering homes.

The bird is the giant Canada goose, *Branta canadensis maxima*. He's kind of hard to distinguish from his close relatives, the 20 or so other varieties of Canada geese which all bear the same *Branta canadensis* scientific name, but which have different variety names. About half of these 20 spend some of their time in Kansas. Again, he's kind of hard to distinguish from most of these, except for one thing—bulk!

The record giant Canada is 24 pounds heavy—three to six times as large as the smaller Canada varieties. In Kansas the largest giant Canada recorded weighed more than 18 pounds.

But before further describing the maxima, a quick check of his history will provide better insight to him. As late as 1962 the so-called giant Canada goose was considered non-existent in Kansas and the rest of North America. It is recorded that prior to the turn of this century there were thousands of giant Canadas with permanent homes in the Great Plains, Kansas included. These birds far outweighed their similar appearing Canada cousins which migrated past the giants far to the north for nesting, then back far to the south to spend the winter months. By 1950, however, the big Canadas were shot up and much of their waters were drained from their prairie homes. Most biologists considered them extinct.

Then in 1962 a wildlife researcher, Harold Hanson of Illinois re-discovered the giant Canada in Minnesota. It was theorized that while the "wild" giant Canadas may have passed out of the picture, there were at least a few game breeders who kept remnants of the original stock for sale and trade.

The re-discovery of the big birds generated much excitement and demand for the giant Canada boomed.

Commercial game breeders, private interest groups and individuals, along with governmental agencies all wanted to re-establish the giant Canada. Massive game farm breeding programs found tiny flocks of the rare birds appearing all over midwestern United States and southern Canada.

The new giant Canadas found dozens of huge reservoirs which provided a fantastic new water resource and nesting facilities beyond compare. More reservoirs were being built each year. And bordering these impoundments were thousands of acres of crop land which could supply an almost endless store of the best goose food possible.

The story of the giant Canada's comeback in Kansas is nothing short of phenomenal. The central Flyway Council reported some 300 Canada geese wintering in Kansas in 1955. Hindsight has shown most of these were large Canadas with many being the maxima, or giant.

The 1971-72 wintering count showed upwards of 100,000 Canada geese wintering in the state, of which an estimated 30,000—count 'em, 30,000—were the large Canadas, again with many being maximas.

Together, the 20 some varieties of Canada geese have the same basic coloration, the grey body, black neck and head, with the white cheek patch wrapping around the bird's chin.

The varieties of Canada geese which spend some time in this state, according to Marvin Schwilling, waterfowl project leader for the Forestry, Fish and Game Commission, range from the slight 2½-pounders to the giant which has surpassed 18 pounds. At the heavy end of the scale, the giant is joined by another variety, *moffitti*. Schwilling points out:

"It is hard to talk strictly in terms of the giant Canada goose in Kansas, when another variety of the Canada goose, *moffitti*, is so similar. The two varieties are nearly the same color, they are found in the same locations and small *maximas* and large *moffittis* may be of equal weight."

Schwilling says there's no way to estimate the number of each of the two in Kansas, only the total of both.

Hanson, the man who re-discov-

ered the giant Canada and the world authority on their classification, claims that of the following features the *maxima* will possess the extreme, where the *moffitti* will have some or all of the traits, but in a lesser degree, while the features are seldom exhibited in smaller varieties of Canada geese.

The traits include: An adult weight of at least nine pounds; a long, rangy appearing frame and wider wingspread; habitation chiefly in the Great Plains in the U. S. and Canada; lighter coloration; and a slight hook-back to the ear of the white cheek patch.

A day in the life of the typical giant Canada will vary widely, depending on the time of year and, of course, age. Schwilling comments that juvenile *maximas*, like most teenage youth, have a sort of mixed up outlook on life. They are less aware of the perils in the world and they take more chances.

Consequently, the young of the year comprise most of the giants taken by hunters," said Schwilling.

Autumn will find large flocks of giant Canadas grazing in pastures and wheat fields of the Dakotas and southern Canada. Schwilling's observations have led him to believe that the grazing flocks are divided into not-too-distinct family units, consisting of the parents and anywhere from one to seven or eight young of the year. The family units, he says, will loosely stake out an area and guard it rather haphazardly against the other geese.

Federal studies have shown that while thousands of geese might graze a large field, they do no harm to the crop production. Schwilling says, however, if the cropland is extremely wet, geese have been known to "puddle" the soil and as it dries out the surface is left packed tight.

Also there is some minor concern by landowners that if the geese overgraze an area, spring winds might carry away more than the normal amount of soil. Most often this is not the case, though.

As winter approaches, the northern birds get that mysterious migration twitch. Usually in a one or two-day,

non-stop flight, they leave for southern states, not too much further south than Kansas and Oklahoma. More and more are stopping every year in Kansas because of the abundant reservoirs and ample winter wheat crops.

From about Thanksgiving through February, Kansas becomes the winter residence of more than 30,000 of the large Canadas. At the Cheyenne Bottoms and Kirwin Reservoir where more than 100 of the large geese are permanent residents at each site, the migrating flocks may build those numbers up to 6,000 birds.

The rest are found at Elk City, Kanopolis, Fall River and Cheney Reservoirs as well as more than 20 other areas.

Schwilling says the best time to view the giants in Kansas is before 9 a. m., when they are just waking up on their loafing areas and getting ready to disperse to the surrounding crop lands.

During the winter months, much of the aggressiveness and territorial feeding of the birds is lost. Still, there is somewhat of a pecking order, reports Schwilling, where the more mature males will guide the flock in and out of their loafing and feeding areas.

Smaller varieties of Canada geese will migrate much further to the south to winter in the milder temperatures. But the heavy goose down of the giant Canada seldom finds him suffering from the cold Kansas winter.

As the winter progresses, Schwilling says the birds will turn to grain, such as corn and maize, as a source of "hot" food. The hot foods offer more protein and carbohydrates to better heat their bodies.

Often as the geese fly from loafing to feeding areas, as soon as they touch down, they tuck their feet up under their soft feathers for insulation. They'll eat an area out around them as long as their neck reaches, then briskly waddle to another spot and do the same thing.

It should make some females happy to know women's liberation has a big influence in the life of the giant Canada. Although the geese mate for life, the initial selection of the mate is made by the fairer sex, according to Schwilling. Just before mating in

February or March, the geese migrate back to their summer homes in the northern plains states and southern Canada.

"It's not known for sure why, or on what basis they make their selections, but the female runs the mating game. I've watched the head-bobbing affair of the males as they taunt and pull feathers in tussles with other males," Schwilling describes. He said when the act is over, one of the males is chosen by the female.

The female, however, gets stuck with most of the nest building activities. There's the natural tendency to secure a nesting spot where it would be hard for predators to find. Often, the nests will appear on high ground so the parents can view the area for approaching trouble. Or, it may be very well hidden along the water's edge. There are even cases where giant Canadas have taken over abandoned owl and hawk nests or just built a nest in the fork of a tree.

At any rate, the male is always near the female while she's on the nest.

"Believe it!" states Schwilling. "The giant Canada goose is one bird that can really protect its home." Schwilling said he has read of successful attempts by coyotes to raid giant Canada nests while the adults were present, but on the smaller egg-eaters, such as raccoons, opossums and crows, the giant is a feathered fury.

Their main attack is performed by gripping the foe with their beaks, then whaling the tar out of them with their extremely powerful wings.

In the five to six-week nesting period, the female will lay an average of six to eight eggs in the first two

weeks, then incubate them for about four more weeks until they hatch. During this period the pair will fly out in the morning and afternoon to graze. Each time she takes special care to cover her clutch with feathers and the lining of the nest.

If the parents-to-be are unlucky, a skunk or other egg-eater will find the nest and devour the eggs before the geese return. If the mother was in the egg laying stage, she generally will renege. If she was into the incubation period, she probably will wait until next year to raise a family.

If the pair are lucky, a brood of ugly appearing goslings will peck their way out of the tough shells sometime in mid to late April.

Until the young can fly in mid-August, the devoted parents guide the young around a small world. In the water the fast-growing goslings will find small forms of aquatic plant and animal life to nourish their bodies. There also, the young will find turtles and other predators, waiting to help keep the goose population trimmed.

But some of the young will always survive the perils of nature. When Thanksgiving comes many will come down to Kansas for the winter and either take up permanent residence or wing it back north in the spring with some passing flock to the Dakotas, or southern Canada to raise their own families.

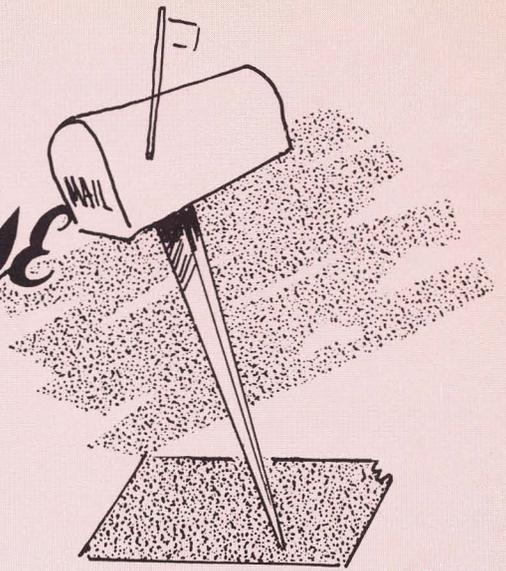
Wherever they go, chances are good they'll stop by Kansas again, for this state is quickly becoming recognized as one of the most richly furnished winter homes for the largest goose of them all.

Fast growing, but vulnerable, giant Canada goslings are never far from their protective parents.

Ken Stiebben



Readers' Response



Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake—"We recently killed what we thought was an eastern diamondback rattlesnake at our farm. It was between three and four feet long with the exact markings of an eastern diamondback according to the color picture in our *Golden Nature Guide*. It had crawled into a drain pipe. The kids called their Dad and we worked it out of the drain pipe with a rod. It put up a huge fight, hissing loudly and rattling inside the pipe before we got it out. Upon investigating the dead snake we could find no rattle although the noise we'd heard was identical to that of a rattlesnake. This snake had a sharp, pointed tail and on the tip was a half-inch, needle-shaped point which resembled a thorn. We've seen quite a few bull snakes in Kansas but these diamond shapes went straight down around the reptile's underside. We also carefully examined the 'fangs' of the snake. What we found were lying flat in the snake's upper mouth but could be drawn out to some degree. We'd certainly appreciate some information on this matter."—Mrs. William Laderer, Fulton.

We checked with Joseph "Tom" Collins, herpetologist with the Museum of Natural History at Lawrence. From the information you provided, Collins feels your "Eastern diamondback" is actually a bull snake. "Bull snakes and hog-nosed snakes are the only Kansas reptiles which hiss," Collins explained. "And the three to four foot length makes me pretty sure it was a bull snake since the hog-nosed variety rarely attains this size. Bull snakes and many other harmless species vibrate their tail tips rapidly when disturbed or excited," Collins continued. "When this vibrating tip comes in contact with something, the resulting noise sounds much like a rattlesnake. Then, too, coming from inside a drain pipe, the sound was probably amplified and distorted. The needle-like point you found on the snake's tail is what we call the terminal spine and is found on all snakes which have a complete tail." Collins said the eastern diamondback rattlesnake is confined to the eastern part of the United States and is found west of the Mississippi River only in portions of Louisiana and Mississippi. The "fangs" you described were probably the reptile's teeth. As for the markings on your snake, these are widely variable from snake to snake and occasionally they will resemble the patterns of a rattlesnake.

Snakes, regardless of how you feel about them, are a natural and essential part of the ecosystem. They play an important role in controlling pests like rats, mice, grasshoppers, locusts and cockroaches. For this reason, they should be left alone. Only when venomous reptiles are found close to human dwellings can they justifiably be killed. If an individual is in doubt as to the snake's identity, the reptile should be preserved in alcohol until a game protector, biologist or herpetologist can make positive identification.—Editor.

Most Popular Magazine—"Having received the July-August issue of KANSAS FISH & GAME Magazine, I must say this has been the most popular magazine I have ever had to offer in my shop. I can truthfully say more people looked at your magazine than any other I have had. Besides, we learned something too. Thanks a lot."—Walter's Barber Shop, Garden City.

Wants to Reprint—"We would like to do a reprint on the story by Farrell Brewer, 'Catfish Experiments in Kansas' and would like to use the photos so will you please send them?"—Leo Pachner, president, Farm Pond Harvest magazine, Kanakee, Illinois.

Serving Abroad—"I'm now serving on an aircraft carrier in the Tonkin Gulf off Viet Nam. I get your magazine through my parents who live in western Kansas. My service with the Navy has taken me to many states across the nation. But of all the Fish and Game magazines I've read, I don't think I've seen one which is more enjoyable than yours. I'll be returning to Kansas soon and would like a subscription started."—Gary D. McMillen, RVAH-6, F.P.O. San Francisco.

KANSAS FISH & GAME invites all readers to submit their comments, suggestions, likes and dislikes to Readers' Response. In each issue the magazine will feature as many letters as space permits. We reserve the right to edit and condense letters.

—Editor.

Finds It Distasteful—"I was pleased with the article on coyotes in the latest issue, especially with the part that points out that these animals do not seriously damage the Kansas game populations. You might also have pointed out that it is no longer legal to hunt coyotes with the aid of an airplane. I find the practice of hunting these animals distasteful, because coyotes are usually left to rot after they have been killed. Nobody eats coyote meat and few people even use the skins. Why kill an animal that causes little harm and is useless when dead?"—Matt Amsden, Managing Editor, The Halstead Independent.

Enjoyed It All—"A copy of your September-October issue was given me by a friend who thought I would enjoy reading the article about Mrs. Docking's fishing trip. Not only did I enjoy that article but the entire magazine as well. Please add me to your subscription list."—Betty Lou Denton, Topeka.

Neato!—"That sure was a neato article, 'Kestrels, those feathered opportunists.' I liked the first part of it. And for that one with the lost foot, it could have been born that way. I also liked the one about the coyote. It eats a lot of different foods doesn't it? In fact, the whole magazine is good."—Jeff Sellin, 3rd Grade.

A Foot Hunter—"I liked the article 'Good Hunter Health.' I'm a foot hunter and like to walk. If hunters knew more about how to protect themselves against the weather, they would do more walking and consequently get more shooting."—Herbert Brooks, Colony.

