

KANSAS

Wildlife & Parks

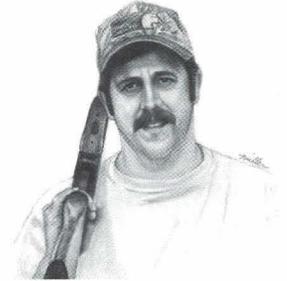
May/June 1999

\$2.75





The View From Here



by Steve Williams

Summer In The Parks

It's camping season. May marks the beginning of a busy time for our state park staff. Over the next three months, our 24 state parks will log more than three million visits. To kick off the 1999 park season, May 8 and 9 are "Free Park Entrance Days." On this weekend, visitors may enter any of our parks free — no daily vehicle permit is required, although camping and utility fees are still in effect for overnight stays. Each park offers unique recreation opportunities. Whether you like to camp, hike, fish, bike, or just relax, our dedicated park employees are ready for you and your family.

As an added attraction, all of our state parks host special events each year. If you enjoy music, you won't want to miss the Country Stampede at Tuttle Creek (June 24-27), Wilson's Hell Creek Hoedown (July 10-11), El Dorado's Prairie Port Concert (July 23), or Clinton's Jayhawk Music Festival (September 11). Fireworks and family activities will be held this Fourth of July weekend at Toronto, Glen Elder, Crawford, Kanopolis, Lovewell, and Prairie Dog state parks. Other events include bike races, regattas, fishing contests, tractor pulls, sand volleyball tournaments, triathlons, and more.

Anglers love our state parks because of the convenient access to reservoirs they provide. And the fishing should be great this year. In the west, Cedar Bluff, Webster, and Sebelius will provide great crappie, bass and catfish fishing. In the east, Perry, Melvern, Clinton, and Pomona will be hot spots for crappie. In the northcentral, Wilson and Kanopolis will offer great white bass fishing, and Lovewell has outstanding walleye fishing. In the southcentral region, Cheney Reservoir boasts some of the best walleye fishing in the state.

Trails may be one of our parks' best kept secrets, and you'll find a variety of nature, hiking, riding and biking trails at most of our state parks. Table Mound Hiking Trail winds through the colorful hardwoods along the shore at Elk City Reservoir. On the Dakota Trail at Wilson Reservoir you can view the blooming wildflowers and intricate sandstone formations of the Smoky Hills. Kanopolis is home to one of the most diverse trail systems

in Kansas, offering 25 miles of trails for hikers, horseback riders, and bicyclists. And there are more, too many to mention.

For pure scenic beauty, two state park gems shine in southwest Kansas. Scott State Park, north of Scott City, is nationally renowned for its rich history, natural springs, and deep canyons. Farther south, Meade State Park interrupts the flat High Plains with a valley of cottonwoods. The giant mushroom-shaped rocks at Mushroom Rock, near Kanopolis Reservoir, provide some of the most unusual geologic formations in Kansas.

In the southeast, Crawford State Park combines a stunning landscape of redbud trees and hardwoods with excellent wildlife viewing opportunities. At Fall River, canoeists can rent vessels in Eureka or use their own, put in at the north end of the wildlife area and paddle all the way to the state park on the reservoir. Our two most popular parks, El Dorado and Hillsdale, provide a great getaway for residents of Wichita and Kansas City. Both facilities are well-equipped for all types of recreation.

As you can see, Kansas state parks offer something for the whole family. Is it any wonder that nearly half of all Kansans will visit a state park this year? If you haven't been to a state park before, or just haven't visited recently, check us out. Governor Graves and the 1998 Kansas Legislature approved a \$10 million appropriation for repair of our park facilities, and many projects are in progress or completed. And you can't beat the price on May 8 and 9. Call your nearest Wildlife and Parks office for information about a state park near you, or call the department's Pratt office (316) 672-5911 for a color Kansas State Park Treasure Guide.

Steve Williams

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Wildlife & Parks

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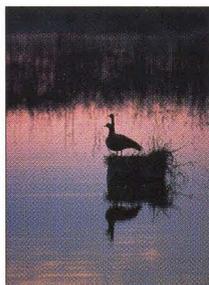
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About the covers
Front: Bluegill spawn in late spring in Kansas. Mike Blair filmed this scene with a 55mm lens, @ f/16, 1/60 sec. Back Cover: Marais des Cygnes Wildlife Area is home to hundreds of wild species, including these nesting Canada geese. Blair caught this early morning rendezvous with a 600mm lens @ f/4, 1/60 sec.

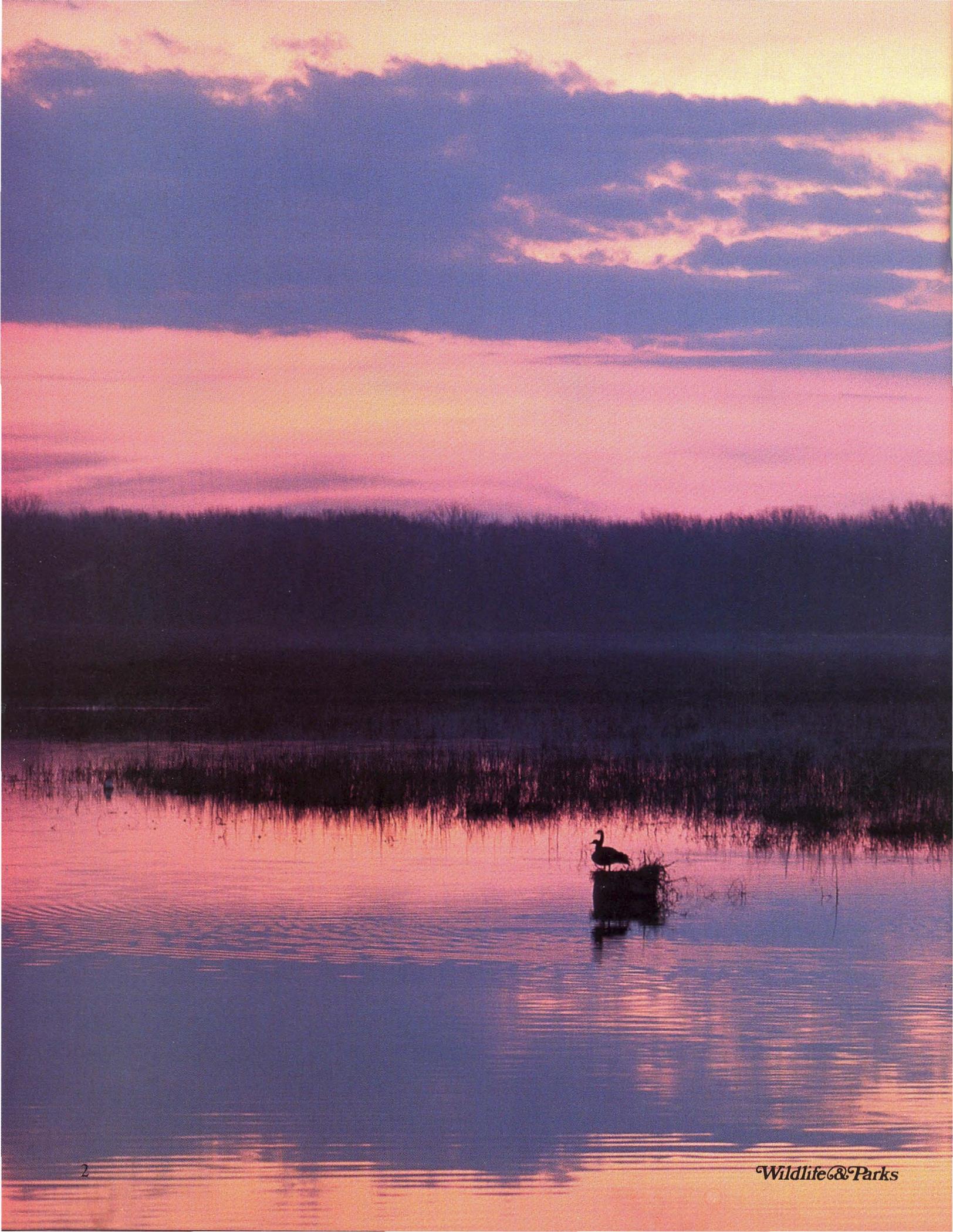


Kansas Department of Wildlife Parks Website
<http://www.kdwp.state.ks.us>

Editorial Creed: To promote the conservation and wise use of our natural resources, to instill an understanding of our responsibilities to the land.

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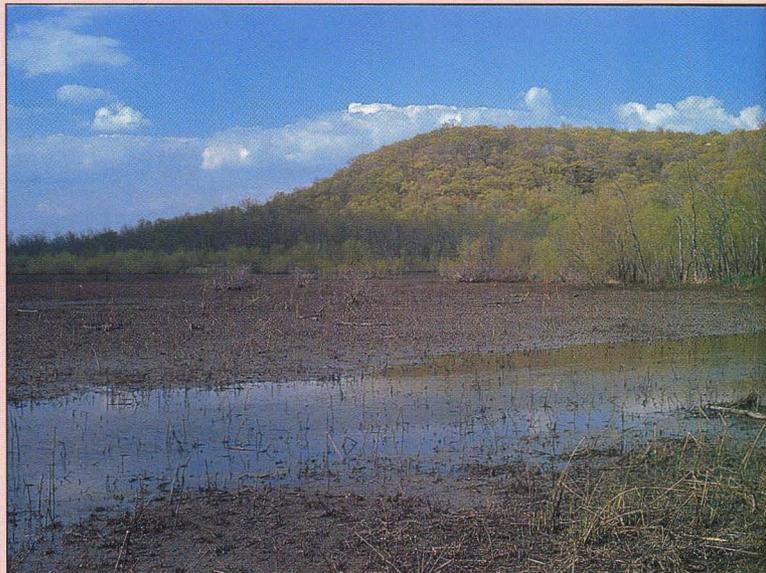




Marais des Cygnes

text and photos by Mike Blair

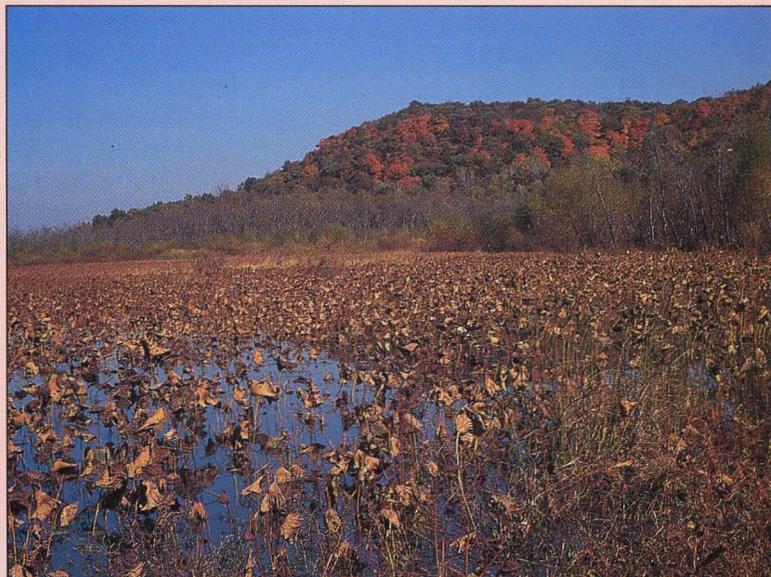
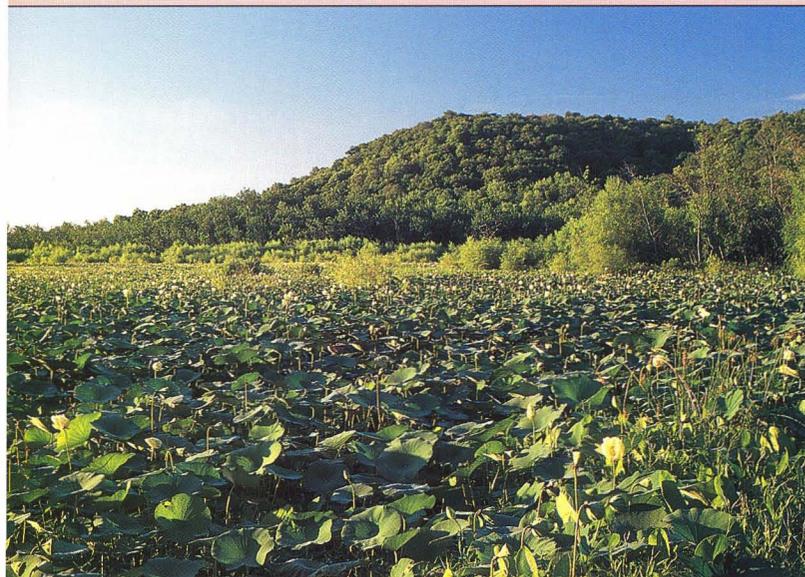
This wildlife area, named after the river that flows through it, is one of our most beautiful public lands. Managed primarily for waterfowl, the 7,000-acre area offers wetland, timber, and native prairie.



You can stand on a high ridge at Area B, listen to geese as they cross the sunset and trace the golden river as it borders the marsh below. Feel the bite of a northwest wind and forget the tiring climb that brought you there. The beauty and feel of the place is captivating. You breathe the name — Marais des Cygnes — and the place is transformed a hundred years, two hundred years. Back to the time of Indian legend, when French trappers named the place “Marsh of the Swans” for the mixed-tribe lovers who died in river floodwaters and escaped their pursuers on white wings.

Marsh of the Swans. It’s a fitting name for a beautiful place where these great birds still travel, in a narrow corridor of the Central Flyway which straddles the Kansas-Missouri border. Along with ducks, geese, shorebirds and waterbirds, trumpeter and tundra swans occasionally visit to keep legends alive and enthrall area birders. They take their place among hundreds of species of birds and animals that make Marais des Cygnes a temporary or permanent home.





The Marais des Cygnes Wildlife Area, located 60 miles south of Kansas City, is one of the state's oldest and most beautiful wildlife areas. Purchased by the Forestry, Fish and Game Commission, development of the area's wetlands began 40 years ago and continues today. The area encompasses 7,235 acres, divided among eight units and further subunits. It is situated on a broad floodplain and offers a diversity of habitat, including marsh, upland and wetland forest, native prairie, croplands, and streams. Some of the state's most beautiful mature timber is found there, and the area is unparalleled for fall color.

Management at the area is intensive. A permanent pump station with a network of canals and water control structures helps to hold pools at desire levels. Each spring, selected marshes are drained and rejuvenated by burning, disking, or mowing. This helps stimulate desirable food plants while discouraging undesirable plant species. During fall, the pools are re-flooded to provide wetland habitat for migrating waterfowl, waterbirds, and shorebirds. Usage during migration is often spectacular.





Though Marais des Cygnes Wildlife Area is known for exceptional hunting and occasional excellent crappie fishing, it is the area's natural beauty that draws many outdoor enthusiasts. Whether by auto tour or a quiet walk through riparian forests, visitors can expect a grand showing of Kansas' earth and sky. The sights, sounds, and smells of this unique area must be experienced firsthand to be fully understood.

Marsh of the Swans. Legends live there. Wilderness lives there. Visit for yourself to learn the beauty of one of Kansas' most special places. 





Catch, Photo & Release

text and photos by Mike Blair

To maintain quality fishing, many anglers practice catch and release. Taking a few seconds to snap a well-composed, color photo will provide the angler a lifetime memory on film and the peace of mind that the big fish still swims.

First there's the anticipation: late evening water that looks alive, where you know big fish are waiting. There's the cast: a silver thread arcing across the shadows to end in a quiet splash; the strike: a massive boil and dancing line as you fight the fish of a lifetime; then the capture: a rush of exultation as you lift your prize from its watery haunts.

You'll never forget this moment, but there's a way to define it that's better than memory. A minute's

work, the click of a shutter, and the experience can be forever frozen on film. A good photo is a powerful tool in sharing the drama and excitement of a successful outing. Even decades later, a glance at a picture can recall the emotions felt at such a moment.

A mounted fish can be a prized trophy, yet it lacks the intimacy of an artful photograph taken when caught. Anglers increasingly know this, and photography is becoming an important element of modern

fishing. Whether catch-and-release, where pictures provide the evidence of success, or creel fishing, where photos enhance the total experience, cameras are becoming a common item in the angler's checklist.

Considering technology, it's not surprising. Today's cameras often fit nicely into a shirt pocket or fishing vest and pack automatic features into inexpensive units. Decent pictures can be taken with nothing more than point-and-shoot tactics, but using forethought and a little

science, the photographs can be elevated to the level of art. Enlarged and framed, such pictures are themselves trophies — a reason that many anglers now release large fish after taking photographs.

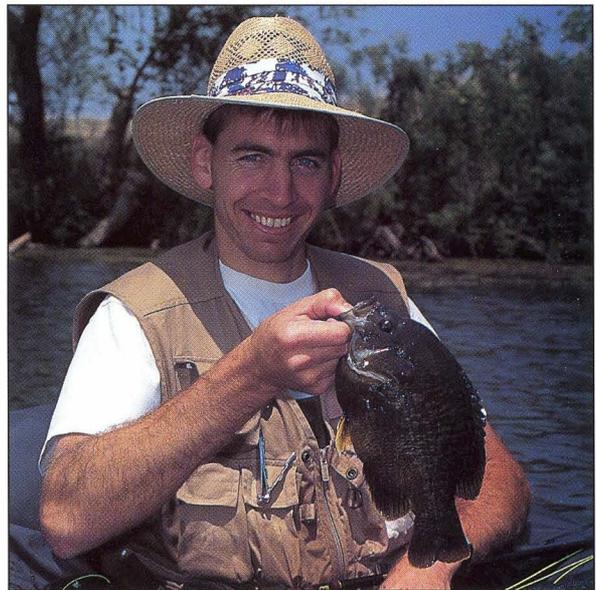
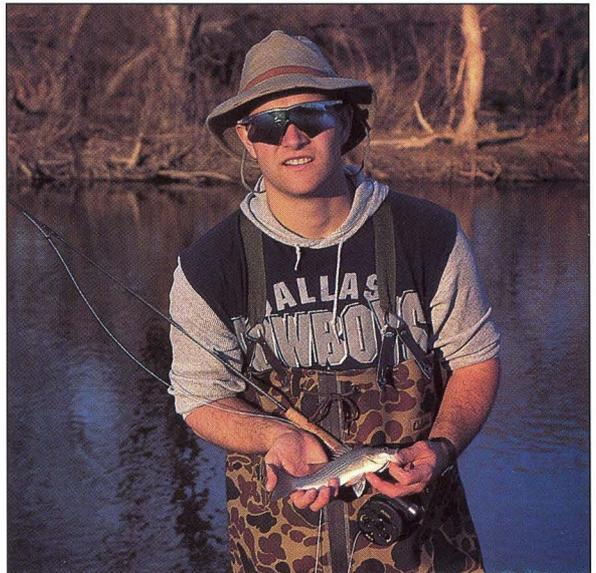
Good fishing photography is not difficult but does require attention to detail. It's easier when a partner can help, but good photos can also be made when fishing solo.

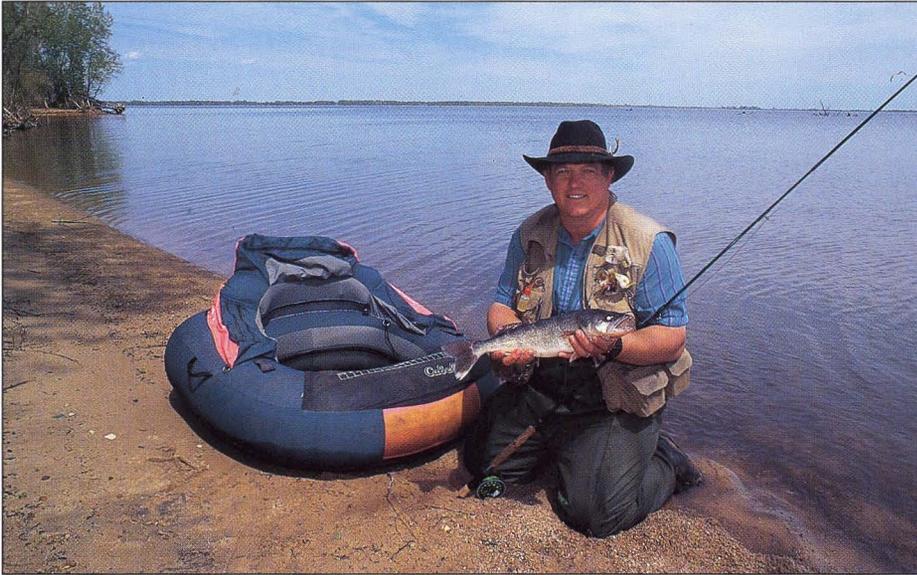
The first consideration is camera type. Without question, the most versatile camera body is a 35mm single lens reflex, or SLR. This camera accepts a variety of lenses, flash attachments and accessories such as fast winders for action shots of jumping fish. It allows manual focus, which is beneficial when composing a subject off-center in the frame, and close-focus, which is useful for detailed close-ups of a fish or lure. Armed with a wide-angle lens, an SLR can easily film a fish against the casting apron ruler of an angler's own float tube. Or, it can be used with a telephoto lens to make close photos from shore to boat. Using a flash attachment, an SLR allows optimum fill-flash under all lighting conditions, to soften harsh shadows and increase image detail. These are important advantages of single lens reflex cameras.

On the downside, SLRs are relatively large and heavy and are somewhat expensive. They are not pocket cameras and tend to have a variety of program options that are technically confusing. Generally, two hands are needed to run them, making it difficult to manage and photograph a fish while alone. However, they are the best option for serious photo work, where big enlargements or photo publication is a consideration.

Other fishing cameras fall into the point-and-shoot (PS) category. Like SLRs, these are generally 35mm cameras, and range from cheap throwaways, to sophisticated pocket models with built-in zoom lenses. Point-and-shoot cameras are so named because there is nothing to set or focus — you simply frame the subject and press the shutter. Exposure, focus, and flash are auto-

Many techniques can give you good fishing photos. The top photo, shot with an inexpensive point-and-shoot camera, illustrates the dramatic effects of late-evening light. In the middle photo, SLR fill-flash set one stop below ambient light prevented the angler's face from being lost in shadow, while improving detail and color of the fish. The bottom SLR photo was shot from a low angle with a wide-angle lens. Changing angles and striving for clean backgrounds keeps fishing photos interesting.





Fishing alone? Use a camera with a timer and tripod, as the author did to make this self-portrait. A tripod and timer function is also handy for taking group shots.

matically determined. Point-and-shoot cameras are the ultimate in simplicity, and are easily operated with one hand.

While PS cameras can provide good photographs, they have their own set of liabilities. Most cannot focus at distances less than 3 feet, and some require at least 4 feet of space between lens and subject. For an angler who chooses to hold a lipped fish while filming it with the other hand, this poses a problem. It also makes it impossible to get decent lure-in-mouth fish photos or other detailed close-ups. The built-in lenses are wide-angles, which slightly distort objects and make them appear farther away than they really are. The PS optimum photo distance for an angler with a fish is generally four to five feet. Even when boat fishing with a partner, this usually means moving closer to the subject. While some PS cameras have zoom lenses, the zooms may produce images that are less than tack sharp — not noticeable in normal print sizes, but troublesome in enlargements.

Another problem with PS cameras is automatic exposure. In normal circumstances, exposures are very good. However, against colored backgrounds such as shadow, sand, water, sunrise/sunset, or in fog, photos can be

badly over- or under-exposed, with no way to manually compensate. To avoid these problems, move close enough that the subject fills most of the frame. This sometimes interferes with best composition but is necessary to save the exposure.

Finally, PS cameras are not well designed for fill-flash. Most models have a built-in flash which can be set for fill, but this operates at full power and eliminates shadows,

rather than softening them. The resultant photos are often washed-out and unnatural.

Discussion of camera types is meant to compare options. However, remember that good photos can be taken with any camera, as long as limitations are considered. Attention to light angle and background can overcome a multitude of problems. Any camera is better than no camera.

Film is an important consideration when taking fishing pictures. Most anglers use print film because of its easy availability and processing. Slide film is another good choice because of its inherent sharpness and saturation. Slide film allows photos to be projected and shown to groups and is also the industry standard for published fishing pictures. Whichever film is used, a "slow" ISO rating of 100 is preferred to the faster films. Due to the amount of light reflected off water, faster films are seldom necessary. Also, 100 speed film makes the sharpest and richest enlargements.

Sometimes, throwaway cameras are a viable option, especially when a large fish is caught with no other way to get a picture. These cameras are nothing more than a light-proof



Autofocus helps when holding a fish with one hand and shooting with the other. Water and vegetation provide a background, and the hand gives a size reference.

cardboard box containing film. A built-in flash and lens completes the inexpensive arrangement, and the entire "camera" is sent in for development after pictures are taken. Film in these cameras is 400 speed, which allows them to be used in all light conditions. However, image quality cannot match that of a more serious approach. Framing is somewhat imprecise, so that subjects may appear differently on film than they do through the lens. This is a minor problem and overall, results with throwaways can be surprisingly good for standard-sized color prints.

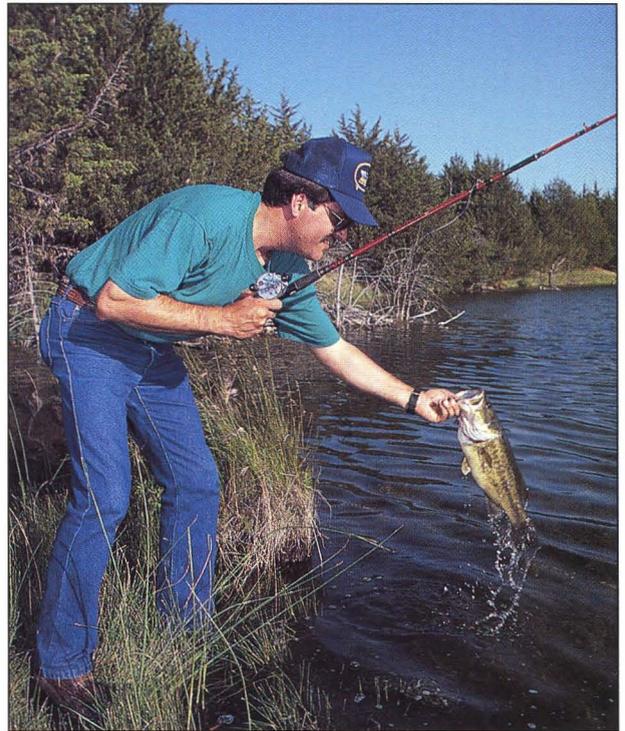
There are as many ways to photograph fish as there are of catching them. The first consideration is whether the fish will be released. After the stress of a battle, a fish mishandled during several minutes of photography may not survive, particularly in warm weather. With this in mind, the photo work should be done smoothly and efficiently, returning the fish to water as quickly as possible. If an aerated live well is available, it's a good idea to allow a fish to recuperate for a short time before further handling and photographing it.

The best fishing photos are clean

and simple but tell a story. The subject is well-separated from confusing backgrounds. The fish is positioned in a handsome way. Type of gear should be suggested. Try to include something about the mode of take — was the angler in a boat? On a dock?

Study the angler with regard to appearance. Are there harsh facial shadows from a hat or cap? Most film has a limited range of latitude, meaning that details in shadow are totally lost. Tilt the headgear back so that the angler's face can be seen. Or change the angle of light direction so that more light is thrown upon the face.

Arrange a subject so that the fish is foremost in the frame. An angler may hold a fish out front in both hands, with the rod stuck beneath an arm at a pleasant angle. Or the fish may be held in one hand, while the rod is in



Color, light, and a subject against a clean background help strengthen this action shot. A 50mm SLR lens provides a natural perspective.

the other. Be sure that the fish is in the correct hand — a common mistake is to partially obscure the subject by juxtaposing fish and equipment in the frame. The photo may be a simple portrait, or may imply action such as removing a hook from the jaw, lipping a fish at water level, or untangling a fish from a dip net.

Some type of length scale is desirable. Normally, the hands of the angler might suffice. To accurately portray size, a measuring tape can be included. It's helpful to have a partner when photographing a measured fish, though it can be done while alone. Fish that will be released should not be placed on a dry surface, since this removes protective mucous from the body and opens a fish to later fungal attack. Instead, place the fish on a wet surface, or even better, lie it on its side in shallow water, preferably on a bed of moss. Large fish, tired from a fight, will usually lie quietly in this way, allowing the photographer to position a ruler or fishing rod nearby for scale.

When a large fish is to be kept



Expensive gear isn't necessary for pleasant photos. With attention to light angle, subject, and background, disposable cameras can capture the moment, as illustrated here.



Avoid photographing fish on dry surfaces. An arrangement such as this provides an interesting photo with a size reference and protects the fish from harm.

and mounted, avoid photographing it on a stringer. The trophy will appear far more handsome when photographed in hand or habitat. Stringers introduce an idea of cold captivity that detracts from a photo, particularly with one or a few fish. Stringer pictures are more acceptable when portraying an out-

standing catch of panfish or small catfish.

The quality and angle of light are factors most important in obtaining good photographs. Fortunately, whether in a boat or on land, light direction can be easily manipulated for desired effects.

Light quality for photographs is best in late afternoon, followed closely by that of early morning. Morning light is often affected by haze, and photos appear more "blue" than those taken late in the day. Midday light is harsh, flat and unflattering. If weather is cool and there are provisions to hold a fish safely, it's best to wait for improved light before taking the photographs. Obviously, this is not always possible, but some circumstances allow it. When boat fishing a reservoir and holding fish in a live well, waiting until late afternoon will cast a "golden" glow upon the subject, dramatically improving the image.

Light angle is likewise

important. Frontlighting may provide the best detail in a photo, but may force the angler to painfully squint as he looks into the sun. By shooting the photo perpendicular to sunlight (sidelighting), the angler appears more natural, the fish may be turned to catch direct sun for best color, and shadows provide modeling which contributes mood to the picture. Backlighting, where the sun is behind the subject, can be useful in providing natural highlights to hair and water. Side- and backlighting form shadows on the angler's face, resulting in objectionable loss of facial detail. This is where fill-flash is useful. By flashing the subject with light output roughly one stop less than ambient light, the shadows are "opened up" to show detail, while remaining obvious enough to suggest normal, 3-dimensional modeling. With newer flash units on modern SLRs, fill-flash can be dialed to desired levels at the touch of a button. For older flashes, consult instruction manuals for tips on using this helpful lighting technique.

When fishing alone, it is possible to take self-portraits with many SLR and PS 35mm cameras equipped with self-timers. Camera models vary in delay times, with some allowing programmed delays of 30 seconds or more between the time that the shutter is pressed and released. Most models are preset for a 10-second delay time, which is adequate providing the scene is carefully prepared in advance. Depending on model, one or several frames are taken after the delay.

To take self-portraits, the camera must be stabilized in some fashion. It can be set on a log or tacklebox, but a tripod is much better since it allows height adjustment and an easy means to level the camera on uneven ground. Before shooting, look through the viewfinder and imagine the finished product, allowing ample room for you to set up in the image area during the time delay. Pay attention to the background to avoid undesirable situations such as a nearby tree or bush that might appear to grow out



Capture the overall experience when fishing. Enjoying the outdoors is what it's all about.

of your head. Arrange the scene as desired, activate the timer, push the shutter button, and hustle into position before the shutter is released.

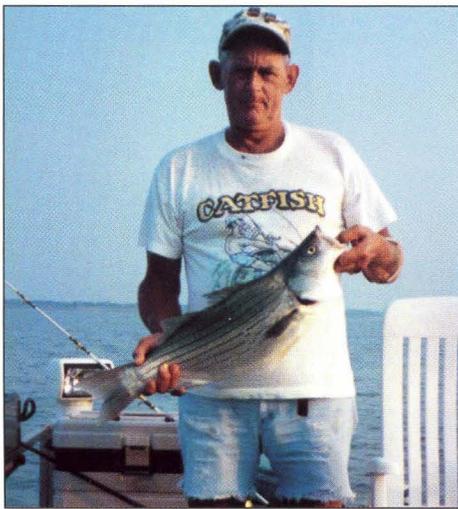
Finally, creativity is important in making good fishing photos. Change camera angles for dramatic effect. Position the subjects against a shadowed hillside for a clean image with good contrast. Avoid busy backgrounds such as reservoir riprap by shooting the photo from a

low angle. The fish and angler against a blue sky makes a sharp and powerful statement. Likewise, a subject filmed against water makes an uncluttered image. In some cases, entering the water and shooting from surface level might render a desirable effect. Good photos are limited only by the photographer's imagination.

Photos can help preserve cherished memories as children grow

and lifetimes pass. Where fishing is a favorite outdoor recreation, photography is a natural way to prolong the enjoyment of special moments. Against the backdrop of a natural world, the thrill of taking a lunker is captured forever when recorded on film. Framed by the fireside, such pictures are trophies indeed. ♡

Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine's Catch and Release Program



Edward Leonard with 26 1/2-inch wiper caught from Milford Reservoir on August 13, 1998.



Jim Maxfield with a 20 1/4-inch smallmouth bass caught from Wilson Reservoir on April 17, 1998.

Get a beautiful embroidered patch from Kansas Wildlife & Parks magazine if you catch and release a fish that meets the minimum lengths listed below. Note: To ensure these valuable trophy fish survive, measure, photograph and release all fish immediately after catching. Send application and color photograph to: Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (public information), 512 SE 25th Ave., Pratt, KS 67124

Largemouth bass	24 inches	Bullhead catfish	16 inches
Smallmouth bass	18 inches	Channel catfish	35 inches
Spotted bass	18 inches	Flathead catfish	50 inches
White bass	17 inches	Blue catfish	50 inches
Striped bass	36 inches	Crappie	15 inches
Wiper	25 inches	Trout	20 inches
Warmouth bass	10 inches	Walleye	24 inches
Bluegill	10 inches	Sauger	20 inches
Green sunfish	10 inches	Saugeye	24 inches
Redear sunfish	10 inches	Carp	30 inches
Drum	30 inches		

Name of Angler: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Species: _____

Length of fish: _____

Method of take: _____

Where caught: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____

Bait or lure used: _____

Signature: _____



It's A Jungle In The City . . .

... and a prairie, and a wetland, and a woodland — urban areas provide a variety of habitat for wildlife, and believe it or not, there are more wild animals in the city than people.

by Marc Murrell

public information officer, Great Plains Nature Center, Wichita

photos by Mike Blair

Wild animals are adaptable. Proof lies in the success stories of white-tailed deer, turkeys, elk and pronghorn. These species were reduced to dangerously low numbers as humans invaded North America. Since the turn of the century, they have rebounded nicely. However, human encroachment doesn't always hinder wild progress, even in major cities. In fact, cities may be the habitat of choice for several species of wildlife.

"Most people would probably be surprised at the amount of wildlife living within urban areas," said Bob Gress, director of the Great Plains Nature Center and a Wichita Naturalist for the last 20 years. "There are more wild animals in the city of Wichita than there are people, and I think you can apply that to any urban area. It shouldn't come as much of a surprise if you remember that wild animals include birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, and, technically, even insects. Just the birds and mammals would easily outnumber the human population."



While the opossum appears to be dim-witted and slow moving, it has adapted very well to life among people, finding cover in old buildings and food in the garbage.

So what is it that makes urban life so appealing to wild animals? Anyone familiar with the natural world knows wildlife cannot exist without quality habitat. Key components of this include food, water,

shelter and space. All of these, while not present in the same form as that found in rural areas, can be found in any city. Humans may provide some components such as bird food or nest boxes. Others may unknowingly feed wild critters by leaving dog or cat food out overnight. Yard management practices also can benefit wild visitors.

The urban wildlife phenomenon hasn't happened overnight, and many species' numbers have increased only in recent years.

"When I first came to Wichita 20 years ago, there were no egrets in the summer and no geese during the winter," Gress remembers.

Snowy, cattle and great egrets now dot pastures and waterways in and around cities. Some egrets and herons roost and nest in older neighborhoods year after year. Canada goose sightings were rare 15 years ago, and now as many as



Pushing up mounds of dirt as it fashions a network of subterranean tunnels, the plains pocket gopher can cause problems on lawns, golf courses and in gardens.

20,000 geese may winter in Wichita.

"I think we're doing a better job of managing the diversity of habitat within the city now," Gress said. "I think that the natural population fluctuations of species such as the herons, egrets and geese have brought them into the area because of changes within the last 20 years."

Some urban residents have been observing wildlife for years. But even those folks might take a step back when something odd appears for the first time.

"People within an urban area expect to see a small variety of birds at their bird feeders such as cardinals, chickadees, and woodpeckers," said Gress. "What surprises people are the animals that aren't typically thought of as normal residents."

In Wichita this could be a long list of strange visitors. Armadillos have been found well into the northern reaches of Kansas, and some have ventured through Wichita to get there. Other notable visitors include porcupines, coyotes,



Common only in the eastern part of Kansas, the grey fox is generally secretive, but it can be attracted to suburban areas with table scraps and food in garbage.

gray foxes, woodchucks, badgers, bobcats and spotted skunks.

"We have a tendency to think that the greatest diversity of wildlife would be in the rural areas, but urban habitat diversity may surpass

that of rural areas," Gress said. "There's a variety of grassy areas, park areas, and water areas."

One animal usually not considered a city resident is the white-tailed deer. Increasingly common in rural areas, a few white-tails now tolerate human activity to the point where they live within a stone's throw of busy highways, businesses, and even airports.

"Our deer herd within the city limits of Wichita is around a 100 animals," Gress believes. "We find them at Pawnee Prairie Park, Chisholm Creek Park, and along the Wichita-Valley Center Floodway. At different times of the year they show up in people's backyards."

Another critter that throws city-dwellers for a loop is the red fox. According to Gress, Wichita's population of red foxes is likely higher than in surrounding rural areas.

"In the country, coyotes are more likely to catch them and kill them," Gress



The striped skunk is well adapted to urban life and if left alone, it is usually not a problem. However, skunks can be trouble if they take up residence under a shed, trailer or porch.

knows. "Red foxes can also find plenty of food as they know where all the leftover cat food and dog food is, and they just go from one area to the next chowing down."

Studies have indicated that more than 70 percent of people enjoy observing wildlife. And while most people appreciate the beauty of wildlife, there are those who either don't care or don't want to be bothered by wild neighbors.

"I think people are tolerant of wildlife as a general rule," Gress said. "People like to see wildlife and enjoy those encounters in their yard or in the city. However, there are those instances where wild animals and people clash for whatever reason."

And when that happens, it's time for a moderator. People turn to a local zoo, veterinarian, biologist, or naturalist for solutions to problems.

"Wildlife are all around people, but they seldom notice," said



While many urban wildlife go unnoticed, others are noticed daily. Many residents keep bird feeders and enjoy hours of watching birds in their backyards.

Charles Cope, wildlife biologist for the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. "All of a sudden it shows up in what they have defined

as their space, and they don't know anything about the animal so they assume there's something wrong with it. They're worried it's going to



With some backyard habitat and some black oil sunflower seeds, urban residents can attract a variety of songbirds. Most common feeder visitors in Kansas include the goldfinch, pine siskin, house finch, chickadee, and junco.



While squirrels sometimes frustrate bird lovers with their ability to steal food from bird feeders, they are enjoyed by many, and some even have their own custom feeders.

harm them, harm their kids or that it is diseased. That's probably seldom the case."

Cope believes wildlife to be opportunists. In the event there is a conflict, generally it's the human side of the equation that initiated contact.

"A lot of times wild animals are there because people have offered them at least one of the components of habitat, if not all of them," Cope believes. "In the process of feeding one type of animal like birds, they draw in other animals like raccoons. Or, they may put out their dog food or cat food and just leave it out there so their dogs and cats can eat it whenever they want. These other animals show up and make use of these dinner plates as well."

People have also put themselves right in the middle of wildlife by leaving the city for the attractive

outskirts. As a result, they literally move in with many species of wildlife.

"People are moving out into the animal's habitats as well," Cope has seen. "They are buying five or 10 or 20 acres or even a plot of ground along the fringes of Wichita and they've moved in to where coyotes have always lived."

Most problems occur in spring when people encounter young animals on their own for the first time. The natural world springs to life at this time and wild animals follow suit often emerging from lethargic winter haunts. Fall is also another peak season for encounters

when young disperse and animals prepare for winter.

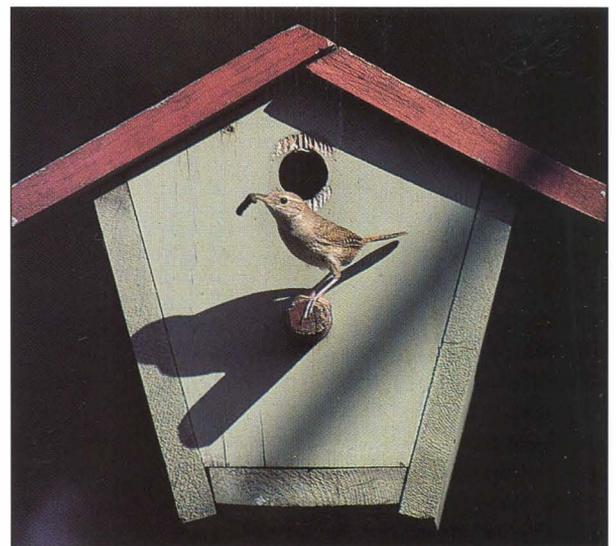
"The two biggest complaints are on raccoons and opossums," said Cope. "A male raccoon may have a home range of 10 square miles (in the wild) to make its living, but it may need only a couple blocks in the city to meet all their living needs."

It's sometimes hard for Cope to determine if someone is trying to pull his leg when they call with a question. Always professional, Cope treats every call as if it were completely legitimate. For instance, Cope got a call from a lady disgusted by the remnants of an overnight toad gathering.

"If you live close to water and you attract insects, you're going to attract toads," Cope patiently explained. "They're going to sit there and feed all night on the insects and then go to the bathroom. For the size of a toad, they leave a pretty good stool, and if you've got a lot of toads you could have a lot of stools."

As with any call, Cope tries to educate people about the usefulness of a particular species and its role in the natural world. With some good information, people begin to realize that wildlife isn't a problem after all.

"I let her know that toads were



Summer residents include the house wren, which fills the neighborhood with song. A simple bird house will attract nesting wrens.



Only recently have we seen urban populations of Canada geese. Today, it isn't uncommon for cities to host large winter flocks, as well as nesting birds in summer.

beneficial as they eat mosquitoes and the reason they were coming around was the porch light being on and they were eating insects attracted by the light," Cope remembers. "The lady ended up hanging up realizing they didn't have enough toads because she felt they had way too many mosquitoes."

But some calls border on being at least a little funny, even if they are serious. Cope remembered a call from a lady that had just bought a pond-front home in an expensive subdivision. She was irate that she couldn't leave her windows open in June because of an obnoxious bull frog croaking.

"There's not a lot you can do in a case like that," Cope laughed. "We don't go out and get animals that are bothering people. In this case I suggested she wait until July 1 and capture the frog when frog season opened."

Other calls are even more bizarre, like the time Cope heard from a concerned postal worker wanting to know what a shrew looked like. He

went on to explain that one of their carriers had been attacked by something like that and they were concerned about the possibility of rabies. As Cope prodded for more

information he discovered that the carrier wasn't scratched and rather than running to end the attack the carrier used Mace to stop his mouse-sized attacker.

Wildlife is truly something to enjoy no matter your age or other interests. Wild animals should be admired for their ability to adapt and survive in the urban world. As long as they continue to adapt, people will be able to co-exist and learn about the beauty and role of wildlife in our world.

"I think that the best advice for the communities is to enjoy the animals when you have the opportunity," Gress concluded. "Just because you see a fox, raccoon or opossum in your yard in the city does not mean that it's out of place. Actually, it's very much at home, and unless it's causing a problem just leave it be."

Cope echoes that sentiment.

"You should look at it and determine if it's a problem or an educational opportunity," he said. "Seeing them on hand is a great way to learn about wildlife versus having to go to the zoo and see them." 🐾



Deer are becoming common in fringe urban areas. Living inside city limits and unaffected by hunting, urban deer are a danger on highways and can damage lawns.



COMMONLY EXOTIC

by J. Mark Shoup
associate editor, Pratt

photos by Mike Blair

The cattle egret is a common sight in Kansas during spring and summer — so common, in fact, that it's easy to assume they've been around forever. Amazingly, the cattle egret is native to Asia and Africa and didn't show up in America until 1941.



Imagine yourself on the African plains after the rainy season: Impala leap among grazing zebra, wildebeest, and eland. Heat waves lift off the horizon, warping images of acacia and baobab trees in the distance. Near a waterhole, cape buffalo drink, keeping their distance from the lumbering hippos that slosh about. While these exotic animals may rivet your attention initially, a much smaller resident of the landscape cannot be ignored. It's a snow-white bird, much like a great blue heron but the size of a crow. Oddly, it perches on the backs of the

hippos and buffalo and walks boldly alongside and underneath these great beasts.

This is the cattle egret, a creature as much a part of the African landscape as the myriad species of antelope that grace the deserts, savannahs, and floodplains of this rich continent. While the cattle egret's story begins in African, its story ends — or more properly stated, continues — in North America, from Florida to Canada and points in between, including the Great Plains of Kansas.

Basically an insect eater, the

cattle egret is thought to have evolved in Africa, where it developed a symbiotic relationship with large grazing mammals. These creatures would stir insects from the grass as they moved, providing a ready food supply for the opportunistic bird.

This behavior still occurs in Africa, primarily on wet grasslands and floodplains although the drier savannahs are used by the birds in wet years when insects are more plentiful. And of course, they're found wherever cattle are found.

The cattle egret's scientific name



Living up to its name, this cattle egret perches on its dining partner. Cattle egrets follow large grazing animals, picking up mostly insects that are stirred from the grass as the cattle walk and graze. Other food items include frogs, snakes, mice and even eggs.

is *Bubulcus ibis*. It may grow 19 to 21 inches long with a 36- to 38-inch wingspan. Normally all white with yellow bill, legs, and eyes, the cattle egrets plumage becomes much more colorful in the late-spring and early-summer breeding season. At this time, orange plumes appear on the crown and neck; golden plumes may appear on the lower foreneck, shoulders, and back; and the legs turn coral pink to bright red.

The cattle egret nests with other kinds of herons or in colonies of egrets alone, throughout Kansas. Nest-building is a cooperative effort, with the male gathering twigs and branches and the female building the nest 5 to 15 feet above ground. Breeding may occur in the first year. Sometime beginning in April and as late as early July, two to six light blue eggs are laid in the nest. As eggs hatch, adults remove the shells from the nest and care for the young until they fledge 40 to 60 days after hatching.

Although the cattle egret is an opportunist that will devour small frogs, snakes, crayfish, mice, and even the eggs of other birds, insects comprise more than 90 percent of its diet. Egrets can be seen feeding at

garbage dumps, slaughter houses, and in plowed fields, but most insects are captured as they are flushed from the grass by large, slow-moving grazers. For this reason, cattle egrets are commonly



Native to Asia and Africa, the cattle egret somehow immigrated to the Western Hemisphere in 1877. By the 1940s, the bird was common throughout South America.

seen with cattle in this country, filling a unique environmental niche that separates them from other exotic species that compete with native wildlife. The cattle act as beaters for the birds, driving insect from the lair. In turn, the birds eat grassland pests and even ticks that may bother cattle. One study found 68 ticks in the stomach of a cattle egret. When grasshoppers and crickets are plentiful, one bird may consume as many as 600 of these pests in a single day.

Georgia studies conducted by E. L. Snoddy revealed the following about cattle egret feeding habits and their environmental benefit:

"The egrets tended the cattle daily from soon after sunrise until late afternoon. The number of cattle egrets observed with each animal varied but commonly averaged two per animal. Egrets walked very near the cattle, picking insects from the animals and surrounding vegetation. They pecked horse flies and other nuisance flies from the cattle's lower extremities and regularly perched upon the animals' backs to



By 1941, cattle egrets had reached Florida and by 1953, they were listed as a breeding bird of that state. Within 30 years, they had been spotted in most states, showing up in Kansas in 1964.

feed. The cattle did not appear belligerent or disturbed by the presence of the egrets. In fact, the cattle apparently encouraged the egrets' association by moderating tail-switching and other fly-fighting behavior while egrets were feeding on their backs.

"An analysis of stomach contents of egrets collected and dissected at a rate of five birds per week from August 15 to Oct. 16 revealed their diets. On the average, by numbers of specimens recovered, egrets consumed 59 percent horse flies, 28 percent grasshoppers and crickets, 5 percent tree frogs, 4 percent spiders, 2 percent dragon flies, 0.8 percent stable flies, 0.1 percent ticks, and 0.1 percent undetermined organisms. The average number of horse flies per egret stomach was 51.5."

One species of louse fly and some bird lice were also detected in egret stomachs.

The study concluded that cattle egrets are beneficial in two ways — by eating insects that damage forage plants and by eating parasites that might prey upon cattle and help spread disease.

Still, the cattle egret can be a nuisance when a rookery is established in or near an urban area. In such cases, thousands of egrets may congregate, leaving layers of bird droppings scattered about and an aroma most commonly described as a "stench."

While the cattle egret may cause some problems in or near cities, it may be the only exotic species to thrive in the New World without threatening native wildlife. In fact, the benefits of this bird — both environmentally and in terms of birdwatching opportunity — far outweigh any problems it may pose. But whether you like the bird or not, the story of their arrival on this continent, and their spread around the globe, is a fascinating one.



This egret pair gathers nesting material. Today, cattle egrets are known to breed on every continent of the world.



Cattle egrets nest in spring and early summer, often in large rookeries. Young fledge by late summer. These concentrations of nesting and roosting birds can cause problems when they are near urban areas because of the stench created by accumulated droppings.

A significant change in the landscape over the past 200 years has allowed the cattle egret to expand its range throughout the African continent, and the world, in the most dramatic example of species expansion in modern natural his-

tory. The catalyst for this phenomenon was the global development of intensive cattle farming. As the popularity of cattle as domestic animals spread, lands unsuitable for grazing were converted to pasture land. This, combined with the tendency

of young egrets to disperse a thousand miles or more from the nest, is credited with the cattle egret's amazing expansion.

Amazing indeed. At the turn of the 19th century, cattle egrets were pretty much confined to the naturally wetter areas of Africa and western Asia. (None occur in the desert Middle East.) As cattle ranching spread, cattle egrets expanded their range into southern Europe, China, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand. And by 1877, this curious white bird had made its way to the Americas.

It is 1,780 miles from the westernmost point of Africa to Dutch Guiana (now Surinam), where cattle egrets were first spotted in the Western Hemisphere in 1877. That's a pretty good nonstop flight for any bird, much less one of the slow-flying heron ilk. Scientists debated for years whether the egret had actually made the flight over or was



While similar to other egrets and herons, the cattle egret does much of its foraging on grasslands and agricultural lands, rather than wetlands.

carried by ship, an unlikely prospect considering the dearth of insects at sea. Author Les Line summarizes the debate this way in "African Egrets? Holy Cow!":

"In 1977, a South African biologist, Roy Siegfried, did some complex physiological calculations involving egret body weight, fat reserves, and metabolic rate and declared that a nonstop transatlantic flight might be feasible. This was good news, since the birds had been crossing the ocean for at least 100 years."

By the 1940s, the cattle egret could be found throughout northern South America as well as the West Indies. As the birds continued to immigrate, forests were cleared for cattle, creating instant cattle egret habitat. Lack of natural enemies and relatively little competition from native animals also contributed to the cattle egrets success in the New World. By 1977, egrets had made their way to the southern tip of the continent and were happily devouring insects on the pampas of Argentina.

The cattle egret has been tenacious in populating the planet on its own, but it did receive a bit of direct help from humans. Because the cattle egret adapts so well to varying climates and topography



Two to six light blue eggs are laid, usually in April through early July. Young egrets will fledge 40 to 60 days after hatching. They will breed during their first year.

and does not compete with other species, it was deliberately introduced to the Seychelles and to the Hawaiian Islands to control flies.

These enterprising birds did not ignore North America, either. In 1941, they reached Florida, and by 1953, they were listed as a breeding bird in that state. From there, they took the country by storm, establishing colonies in Texas by 1959, California by 1962, and Minnesota by 1970. Today, breeding colonies exist in all but six of the lower 48 states, as well as Ontario and

Saskatchewan. Colonization continues; migratory routes have been established, and stray birds have been spotted as far north as Alaska and far south as Antarctica.

In Kansas, the first reported cattle egret sighting was on April 26, 1964, at Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area, near Great Bend. Today, with modern migration patterns established, the birds begin arriving in the Sunflower State as early as the first week in March and may linger until the first of December, depending on the weather. They breed several places in the state.

Once confined to limited habitat in Africa and Asia, the cattle egret now breeds on every continent in the world, aided by mankind only in the altered cattle-grazing habitat we have created. It's an inspirational story of resilience.

This amazing bird would seem to have few limits to its adaptability. In Ray Bradbury's science fiction classic, *The Martian Chronicles*, a future astronaut turned Johnny Appleseed covers Mars with a hybrid tree that becomes full grown in a matter of weeks. The resulting increase in atmospheric oxygen makes the planet habitable to humans. Perhaps it was an oversight that Bradbury did not include cattle egrets in his description of the reformed planet's landscape. ♡



A typical sight in Kansas – egrets following cattle and feeding on insects. Their African cousins do the same, only they may follow a cape buffalo or wildebeest .



Steve Harper photo

GOVERNOR'S HOOKED ON FISHING CLASSIC

The second Governor's Hooked On Fishing Classic was held on Coffey County Lake last June. The event is hosted by the Hooked On Fishing Not On Drugs program, which provides youth fishing education across Kansas. The Classic raises money, as well as awareness, for the program and brings professional fishermen, politicians, and celebrities together in the name of fishing education.

What were professional bass anglers Jimmy Houston, Dion Hibdon, Cecil Kingsley, Brent Chapman, Tim Sainato, and Jim Morton doing in Kansas last summer? No, BASS didn't hold its famed Bassmaster Classic on Kansas waters, but there was a Classic event held. And while anglers didn't compete for thousands of dollars, entry fees were paid and money was raised.

The professionals joined a host of notable anglers gathered at Coffey County Lake near Burlington last June 3 and 4 for the Second Annual Governor's Hooked On Fishing Classic. The event is sponsored by the Hooked On Fishing Not On Drugs (HOFNOD) program, which spreads a fishing message to youngsters, while building self esteem and providing anti-drug awareness. The Kansas program is sponsored through a partnership between the Kansas Wildscape Foundation and the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks.

Governor Bill Graves has given his support to the program and last year, he fished in the tournament and hosted the Governor's Awards Luncheon — dripping wet. High winds and an unseasonably cool front assailed the anglers not long

after the Classic started. In fact, the weather ended the fishing prematurely, although spirits weren't dampened. And while the fishing was tough, the team of Wildlife and Parks commissioner Gordon Stockemer, Leon Breedlove and Dan Means, all of Wichita, weighed a 2 pound, 8 ounce smallmouth bass to win the Grand Championship. Several other fish were weighed in and released, and there was a "paper" tournament, for anglers measuring fish under lake length limits. But competition was not the main focus of this event.

The focus was youngsters, and more to point, getting youngsters into fishing. Fishing can be a wholesome pastime for young people — an alternative to negative activities and drugs. After the luncheon, busloads of youngsters arrived, and with the help of some tournament

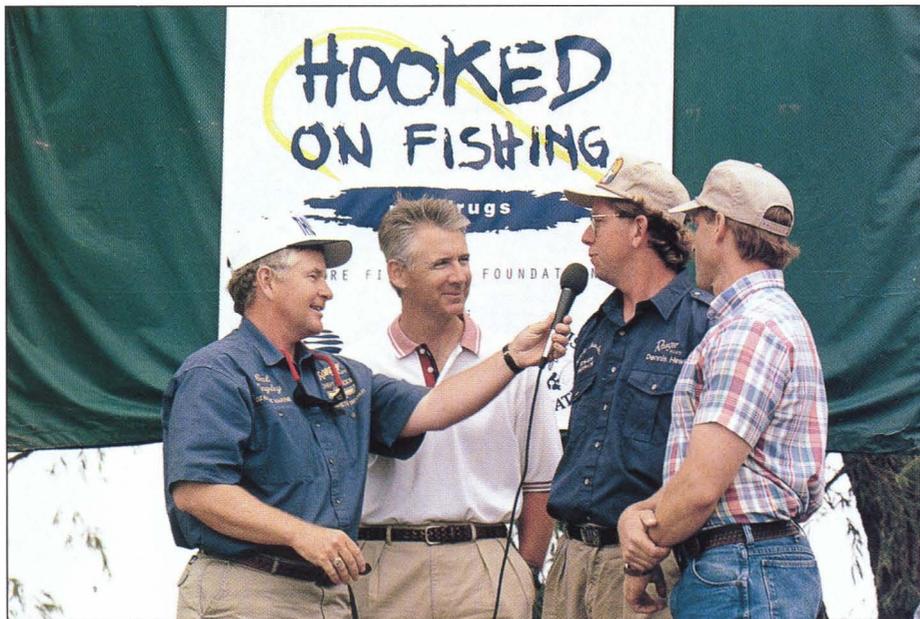


An excited young angler shows off his smallmouth bass to the television camera, while pro fisherman Dion Hibdon talks to Master of Ceremony Cecil Kingsley at the weigh-in.

entrants and volunteers, they fished. Sponsors that brought youngsters included Topeka YMCA, Crown Casting Club from Lawrence, Iola Police Department, and the City of Yates Center. In addition to fishing, Sunflower B.A.S.S. of Lawrence sponsored a Casting Kids Program for the youth. Rods and bait were provided, and young anglers lined the shoreline of the lake inlet canal. It wasn't long before rods were bending and scrappy channel catfish were being wrestled to shore. The scene epitomized the reason so many with busy schedules were there in the first place.

With 35 boats registered, more than \$15,000 was raised in registrations and donations. More than \$10,000 worth of gifts and prizes were donated by local and national sponsors.

There are 18 authorized local HOFNOD programs in Kansas. More than 2,400 youngsters between the ages of 6-18 have been involved. The 1999 Governor's Hooked On Fishing Classic will again be held at Coffey County Lake, June 8 and 9. For more information, contact program coordinator Kathy Brown George at (785) 238-6866. ♡



Governor Bill Graves and KDWP assistant secretary Rob Manes listen as their guide for the tournament, Dennis Hewit of Ozawkie Marine, talks about the day's fishing.

Steve Harper photos



Spring to Summer

photographs by Mike Blair









Edited by Mark Shoup

SHOTGUNS NEXT

Editor:

I am 67 years old and read *Kansas Wildlife and Parks* magazine cover to cover. More people should do that. After I read the March/April issue, I sent it to a rancher just south of Lander, Wyoming. Their state has a magazine also, but he thinks this one from Kansas is better and has better photos. I do too.

Anyway, I want to tell you how much I like Page 39 ("Handguns Now, Shotguns Later"). I have been a life member of NRA more years than I care to count, and what you wrote was first class. If more people don't wake up and smell the gunpowder, they could well lose their guns. I'll only be here 10 years yet, but the people who don't like guns out number those of us who hunt and punch holes in paper.

I want to see a concealed-carry law in Kansas but doubt it will happen. A crook can carry one; I can't, and all I do is vote and pay taxes.

Clayton Clark
Abilene

SHOTGUNS NEXT II

Editor:

I really, really enjoyed your sensible article in *Kansas Wildlife and Parks* magazine on Page 39 (March/April 1999, "Handguns Now, Shotguns Later"). I was pleasantly surprised to see an article like this in a wildlife magazine.

My dad was a hunter, conservationist, and fisherman and appreciated guns, taught me the same respect for and safety in the outdoors. I have been an NRA member for years, but sometimes I lose a little faith in their philosophies until I

read an article like yours. Thanks for charging my batteries.

Frank Kuebelbeck
Kansas City

EXPENSIVE GAME TAG?

Editor:

I did not realize that the new game tags that were introduced last year came with such a hefty price. Because they allowed antlerless deer to be taken during any season with legal equipment, I had to purchase a bow with all of the accessories and equipment, so I could hunt during archery seasons. I wanted to back pack my equipment in and out for greater mobility than a ladder stand, so I had to purchase a climbing stand.

Because I had to get closer to the deer during archery season than I would during rifle season, I had to be concerned about stealth. This came at the price of camouflage clothes for both warm September weather as well as cold December weather -- masks, gloves, scent removers, cover scents, lures, etc.. This has been the most expensive \$10.50 tag I've ever bought.

All kidding aside, I would like to commend everyone involved in making the game tag possible. Because of the game tag, I spent a lot of time deer hunting this year (regrettably taking away time from bird hunting with my dog).

Even though I didn't get to fill my muzzleloader tag because I got snorted and flagged by two does on Jan. 9 before I saw them, I did fill my two game tags previously. I have gained considerably more wisdom about deer behavior than I would have otherwise because of the time spent in the woods. I have seen more deer and passed several opportunities to take a deer than I have in the past. I didn't feel pressured to make a decision on whether I should let the

first one walk or take the first one because it may have been the only opportunity to put meat in the freezer.

I am extremely pleased with the deer season this year, mainly because of the game tags. You have made them easily accessible and, most of all, affordable. I give KDWP two thumbs up and will be looking forward to game tags next year.

John Sigears
Camden Point, Missouri

DAD'S GIFT

Editor:

I was really surprised to read the article, "Dad's Gift," in the Sept./Oct. issue of *Kansas Wildlife and Parks* magazine (by Lee Queal, Page 7). You see, I was born and raised in Bareboon, Wisc., which is just next door to the area Aldo Leopold bought and wrote the book about. It is beautiful country but not for farming. It is close to the Wisconsin River and is a wooded, swampy area.

We drove through that area in September. I suppose the book is out of publication now. I don't know as I ever read it but have read several articles about Aldo in my younger days.

I came to Kansas in 1947 to marry my wife and stayed here. Kansas is nice but very different from the beautiful bluffs and forests of Wisconsin. In my teens, I roamed the woods and hills of that state in the pretense of hunting but mostly to enjoy nature, which is my life. I have collected minerals from over the world for 38 years. Then in about 1990, I started carving songbirds, which I greatly enjoy and hope to sell.

I really enjoy your magazine. Keep up the good work. Is Lee from Wisconsin?

Bob Bates
Moundridge

Dear Mr. Bates:

Thanks for your interesting letter. Aldo Leopold's "A Sand County Almanac" is probably the most influential and oft-quoted conservation writing of the century. Although first published in 1949, it is still in print and available at any good bookstore.

Lee Queal is from Michigan. He earned a bachelor's degree in wildlife management at Michigan State and a masters degree from the University of Michigan. Lee is retired regional director for Ducks Unlimited in Kansas.

- Shoup

RIGHT TO HUNT NOT AT RISK

I have hunted upland game and migratory waterfowl in Kansas since I was 15. I have hunted big game in Kansas, Colorado, and New Mexico and am a lifetime hunting/fishing licensee. I am aware of the value of my privilege to use firearms for recreation, therefore.

I was disturbed that Mr. Shoup would use a taxpayer-funded publication to promote his personal opinions. Indeed, it is ironic that, while being a Kansas government employee, he advocates that citizens should have the right to arm themselves so that they will be able to overthrow our government. It was this same sort of propaganda that was believed by Tim McVeigh.

I do not fear the loss of my hunting privileges to the gun safety movement, nor do I subscribe to the propaganda that the goal of gun-control proponents like myself is "the elimination of private ownership of all guns." I chair an organization called Safe State, which has been opposing the attempts to legalize the carrying of concealed weapons in Kansas. If the people with whom I work on this issue desired to take away our sporting and recreational firearms, I wouldn't be a part of it. In fact, I can assure you that they do not feel that way.

It is popular to claim that proponents of reasonable restrictions on

the privilege to manufacture, sell, purchase, and use firearms are anti-hunters and animal-rights advocates. Let me assure you that I will stand elbow-to-elbow with Mark Shoup and the NRA if there is ever in my lifetime an attempt to eliminate my ability to hunt.

The best way to assure that the anti-hunting movement will continue to flourish is for people like Mark Shoup and the NRA to take radical public stands on reasonable proposals to improve public safety such as the imposition of background checks and waiting periods, the prohibition of machine guns and automatic weapons, the banning of armor-piercing ammunition, and promoting the use of trigger locks. Indeed, the NRA used to be the best friend of the hunter, but then thousands of hunters dropped their memberships in the 70s and 80s when the NRA became a mouthpiece for the firearm manufacturers. NRA efforts to promote the importation of the "South African riot gun," for example, could not be accepted by hunters as reasonable and was not an issue that hunters considered important to maintaining their hunting privileges. Men and women who love hunting and fishing as I, are nevertheless supporters of reasonable safety laws governing firearms. The sooner that the NRA figures this out, the sooner that the NRA will once again become accepted as a friend to hunters.

I have used the word "privilege" to discuss my legal ability to own and use firearms. I use that word because there is no such thing as a constitutionally-guaranteed individual right to keep and bear arms. The United States Supreme Court has consistently rejected this theory of the Second Amendment in *United States v. Miller*, 307 U.S. 174 (1939) and *Lewis v. United States*, 445 U.S. 55, 65 n. 8 (1980). No such right is guaranteed by the Kansas Constitution, either. *City of Junction City v. Lee*, 216 Kan. 495 (1975). The NRA has promoted for many years the theory that the use of the word

"militia" in the Second Amendment was intended to be understood to include "all private citizens." Thus, the NRA argues that all private citizens belong to a militia and that we have a right to keep and bear arms. The United States Supreme Court squarely rejected this interpretation of the Second Amendment in *Perpich v. Dept. of Defense*, 110 S.Ct. 2418 (1990).

In short, what we enjoy as gun owners is a privilege to use weapons in a manner consistent with the law. This is similar to our privilege to use automobiles. As long as we comply with the law, we are free to buy and use these machines. The same is true of firearms.

*Kelly W. Johnston
Wichita*

FISHING LINE DANGER

Editor:

I am hoping that you can warn your magazine readers about the dangers of fishing line to wildlife. Over Christmas, my daughter and I were walking along Big Creek, in Hays, when we noticed a bird flapping its wings as though it were caught in something across the creek. We hurried to a bridge and rushed to where we had seen the bird. A red-shafted flicker was feverishly trying to escape from fishing line that was wound around its wing.

Please warn your readers to pick up any fishing line that is reachable and discard it properly.

*Anne Milhollen
Hays*

STAFF KUDOS

Editor:

For a long, long time, I have meant to write you and tell you how much I enjoy Kansas Wildlife and Parks magazine and your wonderful photos and stories. I am grateful. Keep up the good work.

*Harold W. Gerlach
Topeka*

PRISON FOR POACHER

In January, a former Colorado big-game guide and outfitter was sentenced to a year and a day in federal prison for guiding five illegal hunters, four of them from out of state, to kills of trophy elk and deer.

U.S. District Judge Daniel Sparr also ordered Michael C. McGlone, 45, of Steamboat Springs, to pay a \$10,000 fine. McGlone pleaded guilty to four felony violations of the federal Lacey Act. Authorities considered McGlone the ringleader of five poachers, all of whom were prosecuted under "Operation Dinosaur," a joint investigation by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Park Service, and the Colorado Division of Wildlife.

McGlone pleaded guilty to four counts of arranging the illegal killing and interstate transportation of a six-by-six bull elk, a five-by-five bull elk, a four-by-four buck mule deer, and a three-by-three buck mule deer. McGlone had accepted at least \$25,000 from five men

to guide them on various hunts in Colorado dating back to 1994.

Dr. Robert Clark, Wichita, who butchered the animals and flew them home in his private plane, was sentenced last summer to four months of home detention and ordered to pay a fine of \$10,000 plus make a \$10,000 contribution to Colorado's Operation Game Thief. He also forfeited weapons and stuffed trophy animals, and he lost his hunting rights in Colorado and eight other western states.

William Tucker of Statesville, N.C., received 12 months probation, a \$2,000 fine, and was ordered to pay Operation Game Thief \$2,000. Richard Griffin of Tomah, Wis., received 36 months probation, a \$5,000 fine, and was ordered to pay Operation Game Thief \$5,000. He also lost his hunting rights in nine western states. Scott Belden of Punta Gorda, Fla., was fined \$750. [Another man was charged but had not been prosecuted as of this writing.]

—Mike McPhee, *Denver Post*

BLUE IN WHITE CITY

Keith Britt, Kenneth Britt, and Ronald Britt, rural White City, were sentenced March 17 in Morris County District Court for numerous violations of state fish and game laws that occurred during the 1996 and 1997 deer hunting seasons. Each was sentenced to 30 days in jail, with the sentence suspended and the defendants placed on probation for one year.

Keith was assessed a \$750 fine and Kenneth a \$1,000 fine. Their hunting privileges in Kansas were revoked for three years. Ronald Britt was sentenced to 90 days in jail, with the sentence to be suspended after four days were served. He then was placed on one year probation.

Charges filed against the Brittts included trespass, illegal use of two-way radio, taking deer from a motor vehicle, failure to tag harvested deer, illegal possession of deer, and hunting outside the boundaries of their issued deer permits.

—Council Grove Republican

ROLLOVER IN ANDOVER

It has been said that the wheels of justice grind slowly but finely, and that certainly was the case in federal magistrate court in Wichita. In February 1998, John A Schwartz of Andover was charged with, and admitted to, [illegally] killing migratory birds. He was charged under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

On Jan. 25, nearly a year later, U.S. Magistrate Judge Karen Humphreys fined Schwartz \$5,625, placed him on two years probation, and sentenced him to 50 hours of community service for trapping and killing more than three dozen hawks and owls.

Manny Medina, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service senior law enforcement agent for Kansas and Nebraska, said that his office received a complaint from a citizen regarding a hawk that was hanging from a trap on Schwartz's property. Based on the tip, law enforcement agents set up surveillance of Schwartz, and according to Medina, caught him two days later tending the traps. Schwartz told law enforcement officers that he had trapped the hawks to protect the two to three dozen pen-reared pheasants he had released on his 40-acre parcel of land.

"It's ridiculous to think that those pen-raised pheasants would survive in the first place," Medina said. Schwartz told Medina that once the birds were trapped, he would burn

them in a 55-gallon drum and then bury the carcasses.

"We dug up all the remains that we could find and sent them off to the lab," Medina said. Test results indicated that Schwartz had killed at least 41 hawks and owls, including great horned owls, red-tailed hawks, and a vulture.

"He would trap them and sometimes they would rot on the trap," Medina said. "It was a really, really pathetic thing."

Schwartz, then an electrical engineer in the Wichita area, has since been transferred to Texas.

Medina said he is pleased with the fines, probation, and community service requirement handed down by Humphreys. "She's a real strong wildlife supporter and has been all along," he said. Schwartz was required to pay \$5,125 (\$125 per bird) in wildlife restitution fees to the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks and was fined an additional \$500.

"An important thing is that he cannot hunt for that two-year period," Medina said. "His hunting rights were taken away. He was really crying the blues over that." Because Schwartz' crime falls under federal jurisdiction, the loss of hunting privileges extends to all 50 states.

Under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, Schwartz could have been fined as much as \$5,000 per bird. "This guy could have gotten hit a lot harder, but I'm satisfied," Medina said.

—Steve Harper, *Wichita Eagle*

PHEASANT INITIATIVE

Pheasant populations in the western half of Kansas have sustained a serious decline since the early 1980s. Farmers can help reverse this trend through several new practices being promoted through the Western Kansas Pheasant Initiative.

Habitat practices most likely to succeed will provide multiple benefits to the landowner and/or farm operator, are relatively easy to implement, and are cost-neutral or even profitable. Recent developments in pheasant management, agricultural rotations, and federal farm legislation have provided six areas of opportunity for western Kansas that appear to meet these requirements.

1) Stubble height: Research results indicate that pheasant habitat quality can be significantly enhanced by increasing stubble height. Increasing both wheat and row-crop stubble height also provides numerous agronomic benefits, including improved moisture storage and soil conservation. This can be accomplished by keeping combine headers as high as possible at harvest and choosing crop varieties that attain reasonable height.

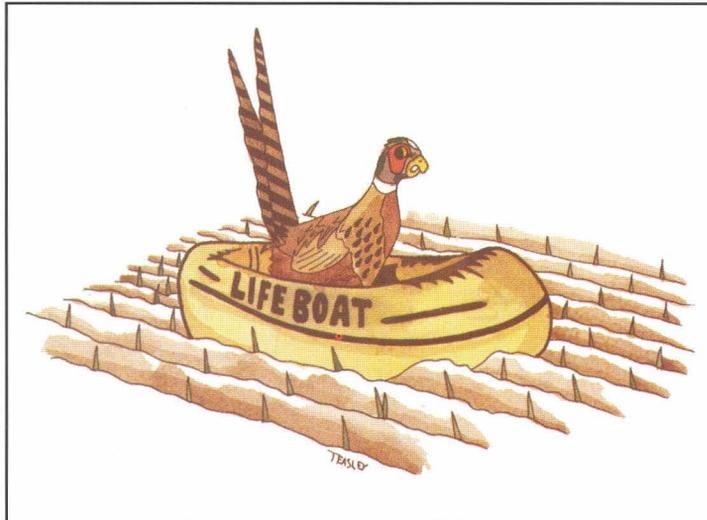
2) Wheat-fallow rotation: Early results of research conducted at the Tribune Branch of the K-State Agricultural Research system have provided evidence that this crop rotation can be modified to improve profitability while simultaneously enhancing soil conservation (erosion control and soil quality) and pheasant habitat quality. By allowing weeds to grow after wheat harvest and then using herbicides for initial spring weed control, profitability in wheat-fallow appears to be substantially improved compared to other practices.

Wheat-fallow remains a common cropping system in western Kansas and, as a result, offers much potential for affecting pheasant habitat if these modifications can be widely implemented.

3) Brood strips: First tested by Game

Conservancy scientists in Britain and known there as "Conservation Headlands," brood strips are simply 15- to 20-foot field margins where certain herbicide and insecticide treatments are avoided in the wheat phases of more intensive crop rotations. Research has demonstrated that these narrow unsprayed margins can substantially improve gamebird chick survival while simultaneously providing refuges for beneficial, predatory insects and spiders that help control crop pests. This practice has the benefit of being something that the farmer does not do, rather than something the farmer must do in addition to regular farming operations.

4) Continuous Signup CRP: The 1996 Farm Bill created a new form of



Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Unlike the regular CRP most people were familiar with, Continuous Signup CRP practices are typically small, in-field treatments that mix permanent cover into cropland rather than replace it. Grass buffer strips, typical of the Continuous Signup, hold tremendous potential to create habitat "edge" while simultaneously reducing erosion, enhancing water quality, and potentially improving production by stopping snow on the field and by sheltering crops.

Specific practices with the greatest potential include cross-wind trap strips, contour grass strips, field borders, and waterways. Unlike regular CRP, Continuous Signup practices can be

placed on any soil type and require no bidding process. Payments for Continuous CRP reflect prevailing county CRP rental rates and soil type. Some practices include a 20 percent payment increase. Grass strips also hold potential to act as refuges for beneficial insects as shown in Britain by their "Beetle Bank" program.

5) Improved Management of Existing CRP: While the regular CRP created by the 1985 Farm Bill has been widely regarded as positive for wildlife, it has not lived up to original expectations in Kansas. One reason is that original plantings did not include beneficial broad leaved plants. Recently-added CRP management options, such as strip discing and interseeding can now be used to create areas where broad-leaved plants can diversify CRP, improving habitat quality for broods.

Strip discing, in combination with mowing, can also be used to create firebreaks, which can make occasional controlled burns easier and safer. Fire can effectively remove excess "litter" accumulation that would otherwise reduce the quality of CRP habitat.

6) Center-pivot corners: The small size of center-pivot corners makes them ideal sites for creating pheasant habitat. Many irrigation areas in western Kansas are situated on sandy soils or are in areas dry

enough that wind erosion is a serious threat. Corners around irrigation pivots on these highly-erodible soils may qualify for CRP. Decoupling of federal farm subsidies from "base" acreages is reducing farmers' incentive to continue cropping these small, difficult-to-farm areas. This may provide additional opportunity to mix small acreages of high-quality, permanent habitat into irrigated cropping areas, many of which currently contain little or no permanent cover.

For more information, contact your nearest district wildlife biologist, your NRCS District Conservationist, or Randy Rodgers at (785) 628-8614.

*-Randy Rodgers,
research biologist, Hays*

4-H FISHING WORKSHOP

The past two summers, several fishing enthusiasts from Wildlife and Parks and the Kansas Cooperative Extension Service attended national workshops in Michigan and Texas. The intent was to return to Kansas and launch a Kansas 4-H Sportfishing Program for youth across the state.

Workshop attendees were trained to instruct in four disciplines: angling ethics and fish management, angling skills, tackle craft, and aquatic ecology. A fifth discipline, aimed at the role of coordinating the statewide program, was also presented. Members and organizers of the Kansas team include KDWP staff members Tommie and Theresa Berger, Pat Silovsky, and Lynn Davignon, along with Extension Service staff members Terry Mannell, John Stannard, and Dana Belshe.

The first Kansas 4-H Sportfishing training workshop was held March 19-21 at Rock Springs 4-H Ranch. Twenty eager participants from 12 counties were trained by team members in the disci-

plines mentioned above. These trained volunteers will return to their respective counties and implement the program for local youth. The program is not just for 4-H members; all youth may enroll and participate.

Plans are being made for next year's workshop. Arrangements are also being considered for hosting a national training session in Kansas in 2001. Coordinating with KDWP, the 4-H affiliation with county extension services provides an opportunity to get more kids hooked on fishing.

Anyone interested in joining the team committee may contact the team members listed above through the Pratt Operations Office of the Department of Wildlife and Parks.

-Lynn Davignon, fisheries biologist, Hays

MASS EXTINCTIONS

Nearly 70 percent of biologists in the U.S. believe a "mass extinction" of plants and animals is underway, but most Americans are unaware of the problem, according to a survey of 400 scientists released last year. The Louis

Harris poll, commissioned by the American Museum of Natural History, found that the scientists' concern for the disappearance of species surpassed their concern for pollution, climate change, and depletion of the ozone layer.

The poll comes on the heels of an International Union for the Conservation of Nature biodiversity study which found that at least one in eight known plant species is threatened with extinction. Some 70 percent of the scientists polled also predicted that as many as 20 percent of all living species could be extinct

within 30 years, and nearly all attributed the potential loss to habitat destruction.

University of Tennessee ecologist Daniel Simberloff said, "The speed at which species are being lost is much faster than any we've seen in the past."

However, the predicted disappearance of species appears to have made relatively little impression on the general public. Of the non-scientists polled, 60 percent had little or no understanding of biodiversity, and only half ranked the loss of species a "major threat."

- River Crossings

HUNTER RETENTION

Two working groups, one comprising Wildlife and Parks staff and another comprising department constituents, are nearing completion of a plan to recruit and retain hunters in the state.

The teams' common goal is to increase participation rates for hunting by recruiting new and former hunters and retaining current hunters. Specific objectives identified so far include increasing recruitment of youth and adults, increasing the retention rate among current hunters, reintegrating former hunters, and increasing the state's overall hunting participation rate to 15 percent by the year 2005.

Issues affecting hunting participation rates, the teams report, include the following:

- competing interests;
- lack of opportunity;
- lack of role models;
- hunter education requirements;
- lack of exposure to shooting;
- lack of hunting success;
- lack of family participation incentives;
- urbanization/shift in attitudes about hunting;
- lack of conservation messages in public schools;
- attitudes toward firearms;
- regulation complexity;
- lack of adult/youth skills training programs; and
- cost of participation in hunting.

Strategies to address these issues are contained in seven proposed general program areas:

- shooting opportunities;
- outdoor mentors;
- hunting access;
- marketing and promotion;
- education and awareness;
- special hunts; and
- department-wide programs.

-Mathews

WAY outside BY BRUCE COCHRAN



"WELL, YOU'VE BEEN WANTING TO GET YOUR EAR PIERCED."



Cool, sunny mornings and the thundering gobbles of a turkey are sure signs spring has arrived. If you like to hunt turkeys but haven't yet been out, it's time. Kansas turkey season ends May 23.

A permit costs \$20.50 for residents, \$30.50 for nonresidents, and \$10.50 for landowner/tenants. Persons 12 years of age and older, with completion of the hunter education course, can purchase a spring turkey permit. Turkey hunters under the age of 14 must have immediate supervision of an adult 21 years of age or older.

Kansas is broken into three turkey management units. Unit 1 in the southwest is restricted to 100 permits. Unit 3 in the northwest and Unit 2, which encompasses the eastern half and south-central parts of the state, have unlimited numbers of permits, one per hunter. Primary permits for units 2 and 3 can be used in both units. A second permit for Unit 2 only can be purchased for \$10.50.

Special equipment and scouting are necessary for bagging that wary gobbler this spring. Equipment such as camouflage clothing, water resistant boots for those heavy dew mornings, a shotgun, and an assortment of calls are basic needs for hunting spring gobblers. Some turkey hunters, especially archery hunters, also use decoys to help their chances for success.

Scouting for turkeys can be done a few days prior to hunting, but landowner permission should have been obtained weeks before. Driving country roads looking for turkey habitat and marking possible locations is a good way to start. After possible turkey areas are located, visit with landowners about permission. After permission is obtained, visit these areas in the evening a few days before you hunt with a crow, owl, or coyote call to produce "shock" gobbles from roosting birds.

Spring turkeys can be hunted from one-half hour before sunrise to sunset. Morning hunts tend to be the most productive early in the season. Later in the season as hunting pressure increases and hens go to nest early in the morning, a hunter may find birds more responsive to calling in late morning and early afternoon hours. Evening hunts can be productive also, but hunters should be careful not to hunt close to roosts, which can push birds off the hunting area.

Archery and shotgunning are legal methods of take for turkeys in Kansas. Archers must use a hand-drawn bow with a minimum draw weight of 45 pounds. Broadheads should be sharp and shooting skills refined. Shotgunners should pattern their gun with different shell types and shot sizes to find the best load for their gun before going afield. Shotguns and muzzleloading shotguns 20 gauge or larger and shot sizes 2 through 9 may be used as legal equipment.

Kansas turkey hunting can provide thrills for both young and old alike. A little preparation, and sometimes a little creativity, are all that is needed for a successful spring turkey hunt.

—Dustin Teasley,
graphic designer, Pratt

YOUTH DEER HUNT

The first youth deer hunt held at Jeffrey Energy Center Wildlife Area, in Pottawatomie County, was held last season and was a great success. The hunt was a cooperative effort by Western Resources and the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks.

Hunters were selected on a first-come, first-served basis. Hunters were required to be first-time deer hunters between the ages of 14 and 18 and have an adult accompany them on their hunt.

Jeffery personnel chose several prime sites, and blinds were set up.

Prior to the guided hunts, all youth hunters and their accompanying adults were invited to Jeffery Energy Center for a pre-hunt orientation. The afternoon consisted of presentations by Wildlife and Parks and Jeffery personnel addressing deer biology, management, and safety. Hunters were then taken to a range where they were allowed to sight in their rifles.

Fourteen out of 15 youngsters successfully harvested deer. Several nice bucks and does were harvested, helping to maintain a high-quality deer herd for years to come.

The enthusiasm of the young hunters was enough for sponsors to feel the program was a success. Hunters not only enjoyed an exciting hunt, but they also gained an understanding and respect for the natural resources of Kansas.

Located north of Saint Marys, Jeffery Energy Center comprises 10,500 acres of pristine Flint Hills land.

—Brad Rueschhoff, wildlife
biologist technician, Manhattan

POPE & YOUNG BOOK

Hunters interested in big bucks and archery hunting may want to check out a copy of the first edition of the Pope and Young Club's *Bowhunting Records of North American Whitetail Deer*. This volume contains a list of all Pope and Young white-tailed deer entered from each state and province, along with photographs of some of the top animals. To be entered in the Pope and Young record book, a typical whitetail must score 125 0/8, and a non-typical must score 155 0/8.

In addition to the state-by-state listings, the book also includes a list of the top 10 North American whitetails in each category. Kansas ranks fourth in the number of non-typical entries and sixth in the number of typical entries. It boasts six of the top 10 non-typical deer.

Articles on deer management and habitat round out the publication. For more information, contact Pope and Young Club, P.O. Box 548, Chatfield, MN 55923.

—Shoup



FISHING for LOVE

by Mark Shoup

*They say we're diving for pearls,
we say we're diving for love.*

-Roy Orbison

It never ceases to amaze me the lengths a man will go to impress the woman he is courting. It's a time of transformation, when hidden talents are magically discovered. Suddenly, he finds himself taller, younger, stronger, better educated, a better athlete, a better cook, and more of a gentleman than he ever realized. A previously unrecognized interest in flowers may blossom. Frequently, the hidden talents he uncovers match perfectly with his prospective mate's favorite pastime.

This theory becomes stranger than fiction when a cerebral city boy is courting a woman who loves to fish. Such is the case with my friend Scofield, who hails from Kansas City but has fallen for a country lass from Oklahoma. To my knowledge, Scofield had never baited a hook or so much as even touched a fish before he met Ellie May. He certainly had never expressed this interest to me. Now, however, you'd think that Bass Pro Shop is his favorite store.

This leads to some interesting conversations that I've had the dubious pleasure of participating in. One begins innocently enough as a discussion about a worthless foreign car he's always having problems with. It starts outside the local computer shop Scofield runs:

"Scofield," I advise, "you've got

to get rid of that tin can you're driving. What you need is something a true blue-blooded American male can be proud to drive. Get yourself a pick'emup truck. It pains me to see you driving that sissy car."

Now Ellie May, who has arrived in the middle of this sage advice, pipes in. "I told him we are going fishing and that sorry excuse for a vehicle is worthless because I can't even buy my man a gun rack for it."

"OK, you two," he says defensively. "You're right. I've been thinking about getting . . ." and then he names one of those little yuppie trucks named after some ski resort. Ellie May and I roll our eyes, but he is undeterred. "Spare parts are abundant and durable for this truck, and I'll not own another U.S. product so long as they keep building a truck worth maybe \$15,000 but costing \$30,000 in inflated wages to buy. I'd rather pay an import tariff for a quality product built by recognized, admitted communists than reinforce another generation of Big Labor's robots who have the nerve to call themselves Americans."

Scofield is capable of a pretty fair right-wing rant when he's wound up.

"You're in trouble, buddy," says Ellie May, the fire burning in her eyes. "My daddy's a union man. Ironworker. So was my grandpa. He was a coalminer."

"Well, yes, I know your father's a union man," Scofield stutters. "And he probably is sufficiently gifted in his own right to have never needed . . ." I figure it's time to change the subject, but Ellie May beats me to the punch.

"Oh, gawd," she cries. "We're plain incompatible, aren't we? I'm

gonna roll big 'ol gater tears."

If it's amazing what a man does to impress a woman, it's downright humbling what a woman can do to motivate a man she thinks she can change. "Uh, oh. Tears, man," I say. "You're in deep doo-doo." I think Scofield is going to cave in like cheap patio furniture.

"Oh, Scofield." Ellie feigns a sob. "Just what am I going to do with you?" Then she winks and morphs from Olive Oyle to Dollie Parton. "Now you have to promise to behave yerself on the creek bank today."

I look at Scofield and snicker.

"That's enough from you too, Mark!" Ellie scolds.

"I never thought I'd go for a gal in a big ol' fishin' vest," Scofield slobbers. His normally-intelligent demeanor has vanished as quickly as a Jim Carrey grimace.

"You're just after my lures," Ellie May taunts. "Leastwise, those you didn't leave in some tree down at Cheney Lake last time."

"I don't recall any trees." Scofield looks puzzled, then becomes weirdly animated. "But you're right. I'm after your lures. Come here." This is really out of character for Mr. Conservative Scofield.

"Heck, the fish is already on the line, Ellie May," I say.

"That's me!" Scofield chimes absurdly. "A gill-breathing bottom-feeder!"

I think he's been breathing too much Fish Formula.

Ellie looks at me and whispers across the back of her hand, "I caught him, but do you think I can keep him on the line? Will he keep smiling while I reel him in?"

"How 'bout it, Scofield," I ask. "Can she keep you smiling?"

To my surprise, Scofield breaks into song: "Catfish got whiskers and a sweet little grin, but you never can tell where a catfish has been." Love will make a country boy or a fool out of Scofield yet. I hope he at least learns to cast.

CATCH AND RELEASE LOGIC

Most Kansas waters have length limits on one or more species of fish. Minimum length limits mean that fish shorter than a certain length cannot be kept. For instance, if the minimum length limit for bass is 15 inches, all bass shorter than 15 inches must be released.

A slot-length limit prevents anglers from taking fish within a certain size range. For instance, if the slot length limit for bass is 13-18 inches, bass from 13-18 inches long must be returned to the water. Bass shorter than 13 inches and longer than 18 inches, however, may be kept.

These limits are specifically designed to meet the unique requirements of each lake to maximize high-quality fishing. Every lake is different, so length limits vary. All fish caught that do not meet length limit requirements must be returned to the water immediately, unrestricted. But whether an angler is obeying the law or just releasing a fish that is too small to keep, it is important to know the basics of fish handling to ensure that they will live to fight again.

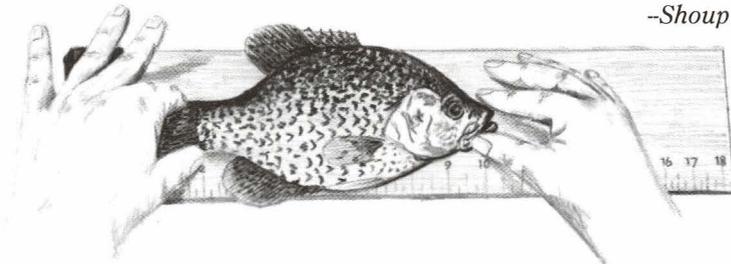
If a fish is obviously too small, don't lift it into the boat. While it's still in the water, grab the fish at the base of the tail (a wet cotton glove makes this easier.) Open the bail of your reel and set your rod down. If the fish scoots away, you won't lose your rod or the fish. Then carefully twist the hook free with a hook-out tool or needle-nose pliers.

It's very important to note that if the fish has swallowed the hook, cut the line as close to the hook as possible. The hook will eventually rust away, but pulling the hook out will surely kill the fish.

Fish will survive better if not played to exhaustion. Don't allow the fish to bounce around on the boat floor. This could injure it or remove the mucous coating that protects it from infection. Grip a toothed fish gently but firmly around the gill plates and mid-section; hold bass and crappie by the lower lip. Never touch the eyeballs or delicate gills. After removing the hook, wet your measuring board and measure the fish. To determine fish length, measure from the tip of its snout, with its mouth closed, to end of the tail, lobes pressed together.

If the fish is under the length limit or you just wish to release it, don't merely toss it back into the water. Release it gently. If it is slow to swim off, hold it upright until it can swim off on its own. This will aid the fish's revival. Although some fish will be lost by hooking injury, research has found this to be infrequent if properly handled.

--Shoup



MAY TOP FISHING MONTH

May is to anglers what November is to hunters – a time of outstanding opportunity with too little time to do it all. After suffering through the inconsistencies of March and April, anglers are thrilled when May weather finally stabilizes.

Just about any fish that swims can be caught in May, so the wise angler is ready for anything. Water temperatures reach preferred levels for most game fish species, and activity is high. Perhaps this is why so many trophy fish are caught this month. Of the 34 state record fish categories, 11 were caught in May. Of 161 Master Angler Awards submitted in 1998, 41 were taken in May.

Of course, May is highlighted on most serious wall-eye anglers' calendars. After spawning in late March, walleye are tough to find until water temperatures warm into the 60s. When the water warms sufficiently, walleye move to the shallow mudflats where they are caught by anglers drifting jig and night crawler combinations. A little wind chop on the water keeps the walleye shallow even on bright, sunny days, and the wind pushes the boat quietly over the fish. Some of the best walleye fishing happens in May and early June.

White bass have generally completed their spawning run by May, and many have moved back into the reservoir. Anglers cast jigs and troll crankbaits for these scrappy fighters.

Largemouth bass move to shallows in early May, and bass fishing can be outstanding. Spinnerbaits, plastic lizards, and jig-and-pig combinations are top lure choices. Fish in shallow shorelines with lots of cover.

Channel cat fishing can also be good in May. Channel cats usually spawn in early June, but they feed actively in May, especially after a spring thunderstorm that causes some run-off into the lake. Fish chicken liver, worms, and prepared stink baits in the upper ends of lakes or where streams or creeks run in.

Crappie spawn in May, and the fishing can be fantastic through the end of the month. Jigs and minnows fished around shallow-water structure, including brush, trees, and rocks, will catch lots of crappie.

Farm ponds generally warm more quickly than reservoirs, so fishing in the smaller waters may heat up sooner. May is generally a great month for all the common farm pond species, including largemouth bass, channel catfish, and bluegill.

The only bad thing about fishing in May is that it's only 31 days long. So don't put off that fishing trip any longer. Get out and enjoy some great Kansas fishing, and take a youngster with you. The fast action May fishing often provides is a great way to get a youngster hooked on fishing.

--Miller

BIRD-EATING DEER?

Biologists taking advantage of the latest advances in surveillance technology are recording big game animals doing some pretty wild things these days, like elk eating sage grouse eggs and white-tailed deer preying on songbird nestlings.

No, say biologists, these things have probably been going on a long time. Only now, with technology such as miniature video cameras allowing biologists to monitor nests, have they been able to discover and document such behavior.

While probably not common, biologists say, the predaceous behavior of deer and elk is probably not that unusual, either. The animals are simply taking advantage of a easy, nutritious meal.

Last year, for instance, a Wyoming Game and Fish researcher's remote camera captured an elk eating eggs from a sage grouse nest.

"Some of these animals really are omnivorous," says Pam Pietz, a wildlife biologist at the USGS Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center in North Dakota. Pietz likely has the first ever photo documentation of a deer predating a bird nest. "If they come across a nest where the food doesn't move or run away, they'll take advantage of it."

Using miniature video cameras to document the fate of grassland songbird nests, Pietz has recorded nest predations by white-tailed deer, Franklin's ground squirrels, and mice, in addition to the more well-known nest predators like foxes and weasels.

In two years of 24-hour-a-

day nest monitoring, Pietz has documented nest depredations in 29 nests. White-tailed deer hit two nests and field mice hit three. The most common nest predators, Franklin's and thirteen-lined ground squirrels, preyed on a combined total of 13 nests.

No one has documented white-tailed deer preying on nests before, she says. A few years ago, Canadian bird researchers capturing songbirds in mist nets reported deer eating songbirds right out of the nets. Although they also suspected the deer as nest predators, they could not confirm it.

But Pietz now has proof they are, at least in North Dakota. The deer her cameras recorded found the nests when they were grazing at night. They may have been attracted to the adult bird flushing as the deer approached. In both cases, the nests contained nestlings. But Pietz is confident that if a deer found a nest containing

eggs, it would eat them too. "They don't have to be stealthy predators to take eggs out of a nest," she points out.

When she first recorded a deer eating nestlings, she wondered if they would eat eggs, too. She incorporated the help of a captive deer at the research center to find out. "We presented it with a few quail eggs -- just to see what it would do -- and it munched them right up."

It's not too surprising that a variety of animals would be interested in nest contents, says Rothwell. "There's certainly some nutritional value."

Indeed, by necessity bird eggs are one of nature's most complete nutritional packages. Unlike fish and amphibian eggs, birds and reptiles hatch when they are nearly fully developed (as opposed to hatching into a larval form, like a tadpole).

But since bird and reptile embryos develop outside the body of a female (unlike most

mammals), their eggs must provide them with all the nutrients necessary to fully develop. To meet the demand of a growing embryo, eggs provide high quality protein containing all the amino acids, as well as fats; lots of vitamins including A, D, and E; and scores of minerals like calcium and zinc. And nestlings are a good source of protein, fats, and other nutrients.

So how big a deal is this ungulate nest predation? Should we blame low numbers of sage grouse or dropping numbers of grassland songbirds on elk or deer?

Rothwell says that these predations occur only occasionally and are nothing to worry about. "It's not a huge problem, and it's probably been going on for eons."

To find out more about the Pietz study, visit http://biology.usgs.gov/news/98_011.htm on the Internet.

—David Boyd, *Casper Star Tribune*

Stonefly = CLEAN WATER

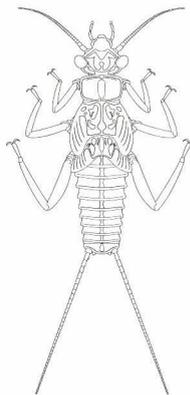
Stoneflies are small, drab insects found in and near flowing water in Kansas. Unless you are an avid fisherman or naturalist, you probably have overlooked these tiny creatures. But to the scientist, stoneflies provide valuable clues about the quality of the water in our rivers and streams.

Stoneflies comprise a group of roughly 1,550 species worldwide. Most are small to medium-sized, but some adult giant stoneflies grow to 2 inches. Fifty-four species occur in Kansas. Stonefly adults and nymphs have chewing mouthparts and long, filamentous

antennae. Adults have four wings that fold over the back when the insect is at rest, but most are weak fliers. They undergo simple metamorphosis with their entire nymphal development occurring in water. Adults are found along stream-sides. The primary diet of both adult and nymph is algae and other aquatic plants.

Nearly all stoneflies live in association with clean, cool, flowing water and are excellent indicators of water quality. In general, streams affected by chemical runoff, siltation, or organic enrichment will show marked declines in the abundance and variety of most stonefly species.

—Biota



**STUCKER
OFFICER OF YEAR**

Matt Stucker, Larned, has been named the 1998 Shikar-Safari International Wildlife Officer of the Year. The award was presented to Stucker for a variety of accomplishments during the year, including serving as the Department of Wildlife and Parks' Region 3 training officer, promoting professional training for law enforcement staff through volunteer efforts, serving as chairman of the department's Law and Regulation Committee, and assisting in education of other officers in computer use and two-way radio technology.

—*Mathews*

WEBSITE UPDATE

As you are probably aware, the remodeled department website is up and running. Webmaster Dustin Teasley is still ironing out a few glitches but, for the most part, all systems are go. We have received many compliments about the new site (and, of course, a few complaints). Many KDWP employees and constituents have requested that special events, programs, and other information be added to the site, which now comprises a little more than 300 pages of content.

All these suggestions are appreciated, and staff are working hard to incorporate as many as possible. Computer programs are being looked at that will help speed the updating process. Visit the KDWP website at <http://www.kdwp.state.ks.us>.

—*Chad Luce, public information officer, Topeka*

ENVIRONMENTAL GIVING

Environmental giving jumped sharply in 1997 - to \$4.09 billion - up 7.4 percent. This is \$280 million more than in 1996.

The increase contrasts with the previous year, when Americans upped environmental giving by just 1.6 percent,

below the inflation rate. The hike in 1997 tracked closely with overall giving, which rose 7.5 percent to \$143.5 billion, according to revised estimates in *Giving USA 1998*. Environmental giving, which represented 2.7 percent of total giving, has doubled since 1987, when it was \$2 billion.

For a copy of *Giving USA*, phone (888) 544-8464.

—*Common Ground*

FROGWATCH

The U. S. Geological Survey's Biological Resources Division has launched a new, volunteer-driven frog and toad monitoring program, known as Frogwatch USA. The program aspires to engage the public in conservation while helping to compile valuable information about frog and toad population distributions, population trends at individual wetlands, and yearly calling patterns.

Volunteers and scientists from across the U. S. can contribute to Frogwatch USA by periodically monitoring a convenient wetland site for the presence of calling frogs and toads. After surveying the wetland, they can directly submit their findings via the Frogwatch USA website (www.mp2-pwrc.usgs.gov/frogwatch/).

At the end of each season, results will be posted on this website for researchers, enthusiasts, and concerned citizens. For more information, visit the website or contact Coordinator Gideon Lachman (phone: 301/497-5819; fax: 301/497-5784; e-mail: FROGWATCH@usgs.gov).

—*Mathews*

KID CASTERS

Girl meets boy. Boy teaches girl how to cast rod and reel. Girl finishes first in Kids Casting championship. Boy finishes second. Both earn trip to national championships. Happens all the time.

Well, not really, but it did happen last March when Kate Price of Berryton became the first girl ever to win the Kids Casting championships. Price earned \$300 in cash, won a bunch of tackle, and

was going to Louisiana in April to represent Kansas in the 11- to 14-year-old class. She credits her friend, Bill Wigington, for her win.

—*Topeka Capital-Journal*

VOLUNTEER AWARD

This year's Volunteer Appreciation Award goes to the Waconda Lake Association. KDWP staff at Glen Elder State Park selected the group for their contributions during 1998, including their assistance with the park office ground breaking, July 4 Volleyball Tournament, tree planting, special youth hunts, and the Boller courtesy dock.

—*Kurt Reed, park manager, Glen Elder State Park*

**BONE CREEK
RESERVOIR OPEN**

Anglers in southeast Kansas have a new fishing hole - Bone Creek Reservoir, in Crawford County. This is a 540-acre lake located 5 miles north and 3 miles west of Arma.

The lake should provide good fishing for largemouth bass with some smallmouth bass, as well. Only 40 adult smallmouth were stocked initially, so although there is a slight chance anglers might catch a 3- or 4-pounder, most will be small.

The lake also has walleye, channel catfish, and crappie, as well as bluegill and redear.

There is an 18-inch minimum length limit on largemouth, smallmouth, and walleye, so fishing for these species will be almost exclusively catch and release until fall, when some will have grown longer than 18 inches. There is a 10-inch minimum length limit on crappie and a 15-inch minimum on channel cat.

A \$25 annual permit or a \$4 daily permit is required to use Bone Creek Reservoir. Permits can be purchased at many local vendors that sell fishing licenses, or at the lake. For more information, phone (316) 362-3022.

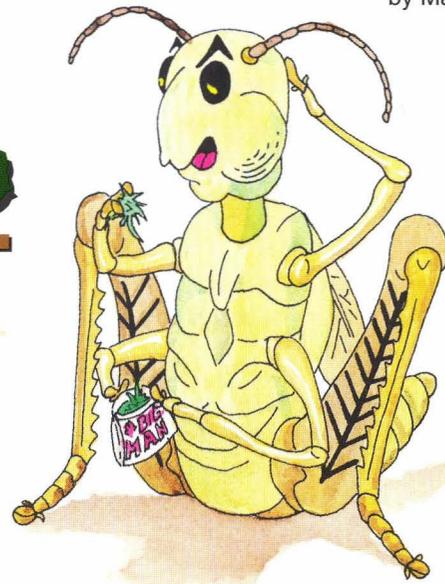
—*Shoup*

by Mark Shoup

'Bacey Chewin' Hoppers

*The poetry of earth is never dead:
When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,
And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run
From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead;
That is the Grasshopper's--he takes the lead
In summer luxury,--he has never done
With his delights; for when tired out with fun
He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed.*

--from "On the Grasshopper and the Cricket"
by John Keats



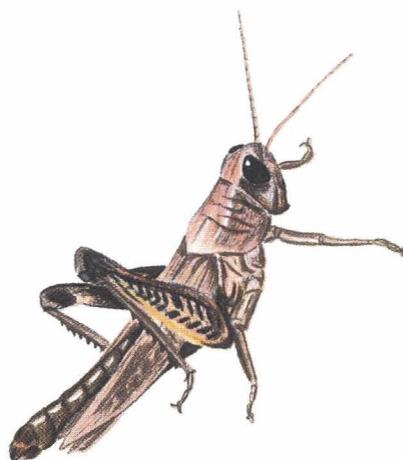
Lots of kids have had warts on their hands, and most have heard the myth that warts come from handling toads. But have you every heard that you can get rid of warts by rubbing grasshopper spit -- often called "chewin' tobacco" -- on the warts. Well, toads don't cause warts, and while grasshopper saliva may gross out its enemies, it doesn't cure warts.

Kansas has lots of kinds of grasshoppers, including bush katydid, meadow grasshopper, spur-threaded grasshopper, and one of my favorites, the band-winged grasshopper. Grasshoppers are everywhere in some years, and while they provide great food for wildlife, they can be pests to gardeners and farmers because they love to eat plants.

Grasshoppers belong to an

order of insect called Orthoptera, which includes grasshoppers, crickets, and cockroaches. Most are various shades of brown. The katydid is green. They have big eyes, two pairs of wings and, yes, big hind legs for jumping. At the end of the grasshopper abdomen, the male has a hard plate and the female has two pairs of valves used to dig a nest in the sand.

Birds, fish, lizards, preying



mantises, spiders, and even some mice will eat grasshoppers.

Grasshoppers can be found almost anywhere in spring and summer: vacant lots, grassy fields, gardens, or any old weed patch. They may even fly to your porch light at night.

Some people collect and raise grasshoppers as a hobby. This may seem weird, but it's a fun way to learn about insects and the workings of nature. An insect net and a jar with holes in the lid is about all you need to start. Sometimes, a grasshopper will hop right into the jar if you move slowly toward it. When handling hoppers, be sure to be gentle; their wings are delicate.

To get started raising grasshoppers, you need an aquarium with a screened lid, a desk light or light bulb socket (left on about 16 hours a day for warmth), and a cup of sand for

egg laying. The sand should be moist but not soaked, so you'll have to add water from time to time.

For food, you can mix lettuce, cabbage, grass, or whatever veggies are handy. Make sure they are fresh, though. Bran cereal is good, too. Don't leave old food in the cage. Hoppers get all the water they need from their food, so you shouldn't need to water them.

Clean the cage every day. Hold hoppers by the sides between the head and the legs. Never grab the legs.

When eggs are laid, cover the sand with a jar to keep the sand moist, and try to keep the temperature about 83 degrees F.

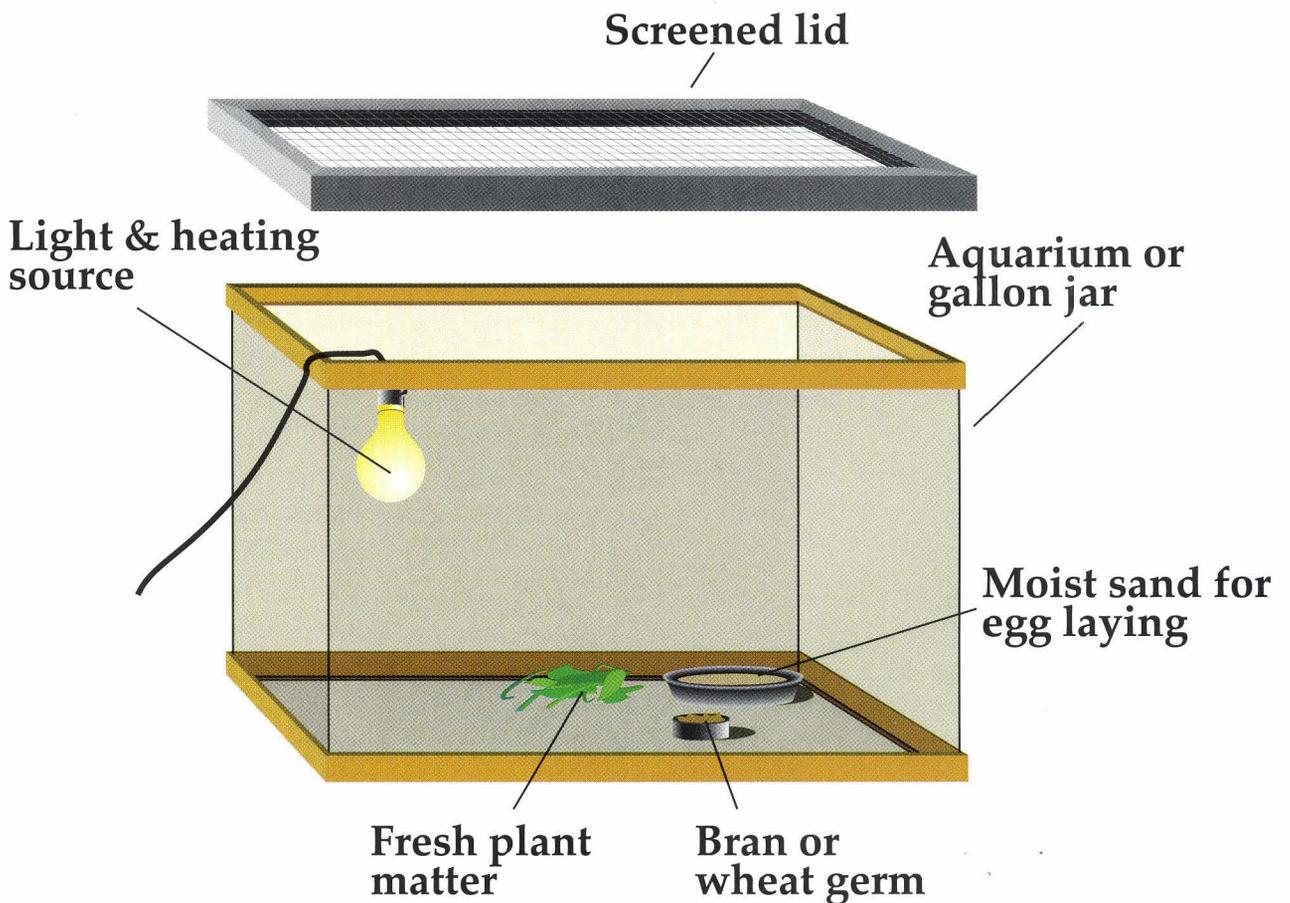
Don't put too many grasshop-

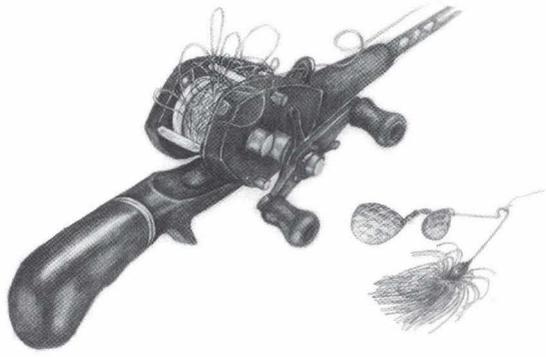


pers in your cage. Four to six should be plenty to start. Keep the cage out of direct sunlight, away from heating and cooling vents, and in a place where it can get plenty of air.

Grasshoppers are entertaining critters, and you'll probably

get to know each one in your "colony" by name. This is a great summer project. Keep notes. Read about grasshoppers at the library or on the internet. This would even make a good scout or school project.





Backlash

by Mike Miller

Crash's Wreck

There are two key ingredients to any youngster's happiness and well being: a bicycle and a fishing hole within riding distance from home. Of course it goes without saying (but I'll say it anyway), that every child should own a fishing pole by age 5.

I shudder to think how my life might have turned out if I hadn't enjoyed the privilege of these two life necessities. Okay, so growing up in a small Kansas town, I didn't have to worry about gangs, or street violence (aside from the occasional dog and cat fight), or drugs. And I guess my parents, teachers, and coaches might have had some influence. So maybe I wouldn't have ended up living on the streets in a life of crime without fishing, but I could have ended up working a mundane job in a big-city high rise, believing fishing was a waste time. That's scary! And who knows what sort of mischief I could have been into if I hadn't spent so many summer days at the lake.

One more ingredient to the recipe is a dependable fishing buddy. Luckily, I had several friends who liked to fish almost as much as I, including a classmate who lived next door. Crash, as he will always be remembered after a fateful fishing trip, was also a pretty fair basketball player. He was a foot taller than most of our classmates and about a foot and a half taller than me. When we weren't fishing, we were usually flinging basketballs at the rim and backboard Dad mounted on the roof above the garage.

Crash and I were ideally equipped for our journey to well-adjusted teenagers. We each owned an assortment of fishing poles and a bike. And the county lake was less than a mile from our homes, a short bike ride, although a trip to the Bait Lady's house to buy worms or a run to the creek behind the sewage plant to dig worms usually came first.

Although we spent countless hours of each summer perched on a bicycle, riding with fishing tackle and bait cans was a trick. With all the moving parts, a bike was a pole-breaking, line stripping, shin-barking machine. With two fishing poles lashed across the handle bars, a coffee can of worms pinched in one hand and a tackle box held in the other, our rides to the lake often resembled circus acts. On one occasion, I arrived at my favorite fishing spot to find that all the line from my reel had been transferred to the rear sprocket of my bike. On another trip, I tried a new technique of carrying my rods lashed to the rear fender. When my lash job gave away, I looked back to see the rod and Johnson spin-cast reel bouncing along behind me in four or five pieces. Somehow the line stayed attached the

bike, dragging the outfit for half a block.

But those mishaps pale in comparison to the Crash. I'll never forget that evening, and I don't suppose a kindly neighbor will either. Crash and I were anxious that night. I don't know why because we'd fished dozens of times that summer, but this evening was particularly nice. I remember peddling faster as we approached the railroad tracks with rods, tackle boxes and worm can, which Crash was carrying that night. Suddenly, just before the tracks, Crash lost control. I don't know if it was a pot hole or gravel patch, but Crash became Crash at that instant. His bike slid out from under him, and his rods, tackle and worms bounced in all directions. I spun my bike around and coasted back to the scene. It wasn't pretty. A reel had come apart and limp monofilament tangled around the pedals. And worms — there were injured, writhing worms everywhere.

At first I assumed we'd clean up the mess and continue on, but Crash didn't fare much better than some of the worms. He also writhed in pain, his long, gangly legs tangled in the crooked handle bars, knees and elbows bloodied. Fortunately for us, the kindly neighbor witnessed the crash, or heard the clash of bike, coffee can and asphalt, and came to Crash's aid. He and I carefully untangled Crash from his bike and fishing tackle, loaded bike and victim into the back of a pick up, and the neighbor whisked him home.

After they left, I looked longingly at the lake, which was visible just over the railroad tracks, calm and inviting. But I picked up the surviving worms and rode home to check on Crash's condition. None of Crash's injuries were serious, but some of the worms didn't make it.

I felt bad for Crash, but I also felt guilty because I was disappointed that we didn't fish. In fact, for a fleeting moment, after I knew Crash was safely on his way home, I seriously considered going on and fishing without him. But I didn't figure that would be the best-friend sort of thing to do.

Crash probably never realized I came by the house to make sure he lived, but I did. His mother answered the door with a wet wash cloth in hand, on her way to clean Crash's scraped knees and elbows. Although she had a sense of urgency in her voice, she smiled and assured me Crash would be fine. I rode home and shot baskets alone until dark. I think I made a game-winning shot at the buzzer that night. It wasn't as good as fishing, but summer wasn't over, and there was always tomorrow. ♡

