

# KANSAS

*Wildlife & Parks*

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## The View From Here



by Steve Williams

# Hunting . . . Pass It On

Most of us can vividly remember our first successful hunt. And, no doubt, we remember the friend or family member with whom we enjoyed the experience. These special moments generally leave a positive, lasting impression on our view of the outdoors, and our hunting heritage is passed on to the next generation.

What has most likely been forgotten, or never fully realized, is the amount of effort and planning that went into the trip. Someone had to take the time to invite us, find a place to go, give us a ride, get equipment, check the regulations, and know how to clean and cook the game after the harvest. This person made a conscious decision to pass on knowledge.

For most sportsmen, introducing another person to hunting is not a sacrifice at all, but a privilege they enjoy. However, statistics show we are simply not reaching enough people with the right message. Hunting license sales are decreasing in Kansas, and nationwide. This alarming trend threatens the future of state and federal fish and wildlife agency programs, our political viability, and most importantly, our hunting heritage.

To help address this issue, KDWP formed two working groups, an internal group made up of department staff and an external group comprising various state conservation leaders. Both groups examined the factors that impact hunting participation rates and are finalizing an action plan to recruit new and former hunters, as well as retain current hunters in Kansas. Entitled "Kansas Hunting: Carry on the Tradition, Ensure the Future," the plan has already received the endorsement of Governor Bill Graves and most major wildlife conservation organizations in the state.

Endorsements alone, however, will not determine the long-term success of the program. That responsibility falls on the department and the sportsmen of the state. Only by working together will we reach our goal of increasing Kansas hunting participation to 15 percent of the state's population by 2005. Currently, 11 percent of Kansans hunt.

One priority of the hunter recruitment and retention effort will be a mentor program that will link experienced

hunters with those who don't have the privilege of hunting with an experienced relative or friend. Other programs include special youth hunt development, increasing sport shooting opportunities, outdoor skills and hunting information programs, and a host of other efforts designed to reduce barriers to getting involved in hunting.

Kansas sportsmen are truly blessed with a variety of opportunities. Our deer and turkey populations are at all-time highs, waterfowl numbers are well above historic averages, and, while down last year, upland bird hunting looks promising this season. And with more than 630,000 acres enrolled in the Walk-In Hunting Area program this year, there will be more land available for hunting than ever before.

However, these milestones have not resulted in more Kansas participants. So, we have refocused our efforts. As we begin to implement the strategies of our hunting recruitment and retention plan, we will need the help of all hunters. I am confident the sportsmen of this state will meet this challenge with energy and enthusiasm. Your efforts will not only bring you the joy of teaching a new hunter about the outdoors, but they will also help carry on the hunting tradition.

For more information on the department's hunter recruitment and retention efforts, please call (316) 672-5911 or visit the department's web site at [www.kdwp.state.ks.us](http://www.kdwp.state.ks.us).

*Steve Williams*

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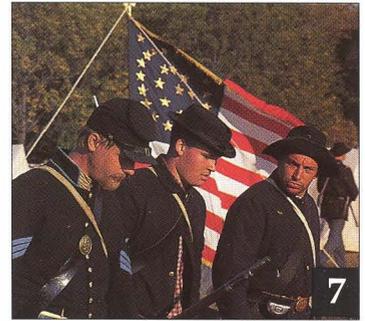
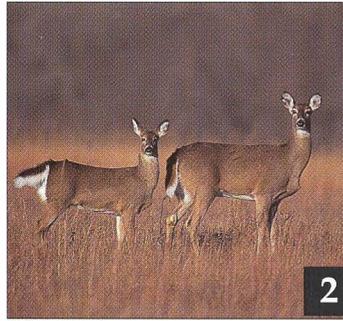
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##### Staff Writer

Marc Murrell

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**About the covers**  
**Front:** A white-tailed doe cautiously approaches the sound of a fawn bleat. Mike Blair called and photographed the deer with a 400mm lens @ f/11, 1/125 sec. **Back:** Rails offer a significant yet seldom-utilized hunting opportunity in September. Blair photographed this Virginia rail with a 600mm lens, @f/8, 1/500 sec.



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<http://www.kdwp.state.ks.us>

magazine e-mail — [mikegm@wp.state.ks.us](mailto:mikegm@wp.state.ks.us)

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# Necessary Harvest

text and photos by Mike Blair  
*photographer/associate editor, Pratt*

***Hunting is the most effective way to reduce deer numbers. Landowners experiencing deer problems must allow hunters access. And hunters must be willing to harvest female, or antlerless, deer to reduce the population. While bucks will always attract attention, an antlerless deer can provide a rewarding hunting experience.***



**I**t was a morning out of a deer hunter's dream. The temperature hovered at 29 degrees under a heavy sky, and snow began falling at dawn. With no wind, the large flakes fell straight down through the oaks. Against the ghostly bark of chinkapins, the snow lent an eerie silver glow to the understory.

A small buck appeared, busily eating acorns scattered among the leaves. I'd already filled my archery buck tag but still had several antlerless permits to fill. It was fun watching the 8-point pass and disappear in the copse. Then a twig snapped and a doe browsed into view. Moving slowly, she entered

the prime feeding area and stopped just 10 yards away. I drew my bow and made the easy shot, watching as the deer flagged over the hill. The hit was sure, but there was no rush. It was too much a storybook scene.

Minutes later, a second buck came and went. Movement caught my eye, and a group of does and fawns came up the hill. The seven deer fed in a scattered, relaxed way that fit the quiet morning. They moved steadily at the edge of bow range, crossing the ridge 50 yards away before vanishing. For awhile, the woods were empty.

At 9:00 a.m., I turned to climb down and saw a trio of deer

approaching from behind. A doe with two yearlings was headed for the crossing beneath my tree. The doe hurried, anxious to reach the acorns before bedding for the day. I drew my bow to the subtle sound of snowflakes hitting limbs, and placed the 5-yard shot exactly where I hoped. The deer went down just a few yards away. Now there was plenty of work to do.

I field-dressed the doe, and headed downhill to find the other in a shallow ravine. The cold air felt good as I finished with the second doe and went for help. It was a long drag to the nearest road, but a friend lived nearby. A partner would save much effort in loading the two deer.

As I walked through the snowy timber, I thought about how Kansas deer hunting had changed through the years. When I began bowhunting in 1970, deer were scarce. That season I hunted 60 days and saw only three deer, none of them close enough for a shot. Now, hunting in the same county, I'd seen 13 deer and filled two tags from a single stand in one morning. It was a vast difference which reflected nearly three decades of whitetail expansion in the Sunflower State.

Deer hunting has dramatically improved in Kansas, thanks to an abundance of animals and a growing need to control the deer population. Kansas deer hunting has long been known for its trophy white-tailed bucks, many of which are listed among the top entries in Boone & Crockett and Pope and Young scoring records. Even so, biologists are now most concerned with female deer. In good habitat, the average white-tailed doe can produce two or three fawns each year, regardless of buck harvest. The only way to reduce herd size is to harvest more does. Therefore, antlerless hunting is now strongly encouraged through increased permit sales and liberal seasons to help curb the rapidly expanding deer herd.

The story leading up to current deer management policies is an interesting one. Doe harvest has

always been a part of Kansas deer hunting. The state's first modern deer season occurred in 1965, and antlerless firearms permits were issued even then. Only in certain units during a few seasons were does protected from firearms hunting. Bowhunters have always been free to harvest does, given the lower harvest numbers of bowhunters.

Through the 1970s, deer herd size and number of authorized deer permits remained fairly constant. There were few landowner complaints about crop damage, and numbers of deer-vehicle accidents were insignificant. By the early 1980s, however, that began to change.

It was apparent that the whitetail herd size was growing toward a potential problem. Sales of archery permits, which have always been unlimited in Kansas, rose sharply between 1978 and 1985 in response to more abundant game. At the same time, an increasing number of firearms either-sex and antlerless-only permits were issued to bring greater pressure on the deer herd size. This liberal trend escalated until 1990, and included the 1988 introduction of the first unit archery permits allowing bowhunters in certain units to harvest a bonus, antlerless deer.

In some states with a lot of public land and tremendous hunting pressure, deer populations are surveyed to help manage for the largest deer herd that is biologically sound. In Kansas, however, nearly all land is privately owned, and a deer herd at the land's carrying capacity is not a management goal. Complaints of crop damage and deer-vehicle accidents demand action long before carrying capacity is reached.

Kansas biologists estimate



Mature Kansas white-tailed does typically have two or three fawns each season. Younger does will commonly give birth to one fawn. In ideal habitat, deer numbers can grow quickly.

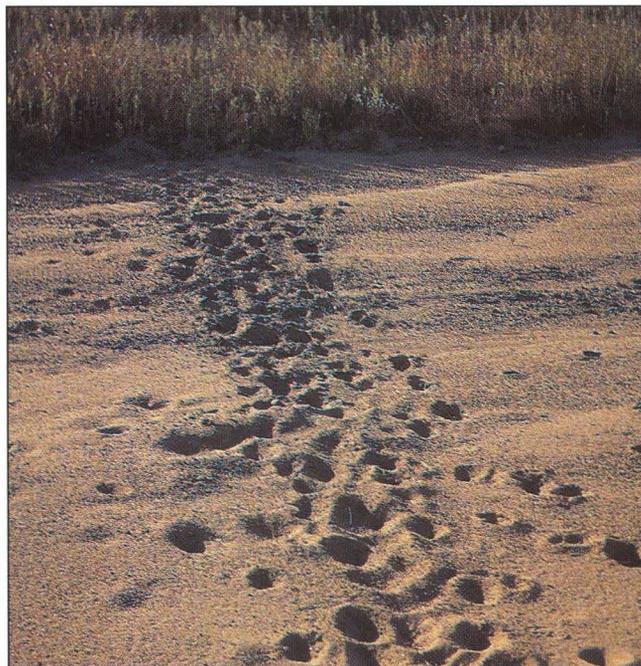
deer population trends based on hunter success rates, landowner tolerance, and deer-vehicle accident reports. Crop damage complaints are a function of herd size, as are the number of deer traffic accidents. These estimates drive management decisions. Because of the way this data is assembled and reported by

various agencies, there is a time delay before it becomes useful. In 1990, this lag resulted in a decision that interrupted the control measures then in place.

Stated simply, data interpreted in 1990 reflected what really happened to the deer herd in 1988. It appeared that herd size had stabilized during that year. Permit sales had continued to rise in the ensuing time, however, posing new questions: were deer harvest policies now too aggressive? Would the following years show an overharvest and sharp decline in the Kansas deer population?

Based on input from field personnel, landowners, and hunters, biologists decided to play it safe and reduce the number of deer permits issued from 1991 through 1994. Given time lag, it was 1996 before the verdict was in — the deer population was now rapidly expanding, on the order of 10 percent per year. This called for immediate action.

Lloyd Fox, big game project leader for the Kansas Department of Wildlife and



Heavily used trails provide evidence of abundant deer in Kansas. Just several decades ago, this scene was scarce.

Parks, summarizes the 1990 decision to reduce tags: "We erred on the conservative side. We saw the decline in deer population growth and decided to back off on the number of antlerless permits. We didn't hit the brakes; we just pulled our foot off the accelerator. Then, when we saw the results in the mid 1990s, we didn't get back in the ballgame fast enough, hard enough."

Antlerless and either-sex permits were modestly increased in 1996 and 1997, but it was determined that more hunting pressure was needed to control the deer population. Some 9,000 deer-vehicle accidents were reported in 1997, and crop damage complaints were at all-time highs.

In 1998, either-sex firearms permits were increased 10 percent, while antlerless firearms permits



Though Kansas deer hunting is known for trophy bucks, white-tailed does are extremely wary and present a difficult hunting challenge.

were more than doubled. At the same time, the department issued an unlimited number of low-cost "game tags" for antlerless hunting in seven of the state's management units. These allowed up to two

additional antlerless tags for any hunter with a primary bow or firearms permit. Game tags could be used in any season, but only with the appropriate weapon. These tags, costing just \$10.50 each, invited heavy participation in the expanded doe harvest. In addition, unit archery permits were available in all units.

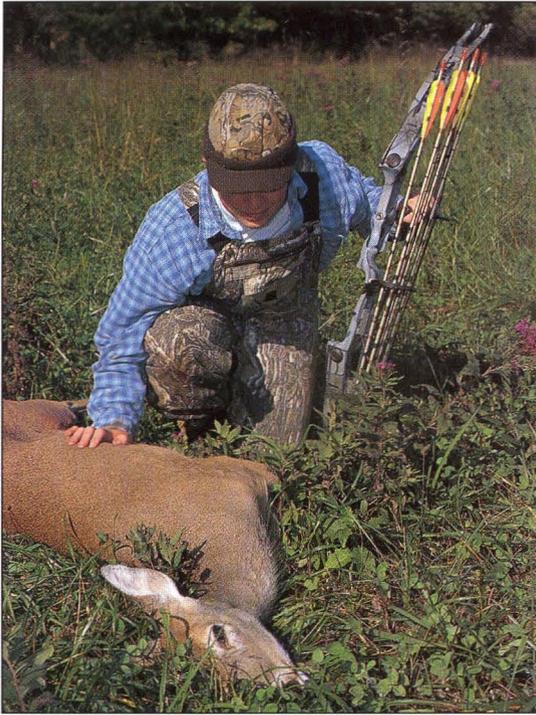
Suddenly, many hunters used to having just one deer license could obtain up to six permits, depending in part on special drawings. Results were evident in harvest figures. Deer harvest jumped from 52,000 in 1996, to 81,000 in 1998. Continuing and expanding liberal doe hunting policies this year, a harvest of 108,000 deer is projected for 1999 — double the number taken just three years ago.

This season (1999,) all either-sex and antlerless firearms permits are again substantially increased. Unlimited game tags (two per hunter) will be available in all but two units, with expected sales double those of 1998. Unit archery permits are available in all units, and a special 10-day antlerless hunt is scheduled for January, 2000. During the January season, all hunters with unfilled tags may harvest an antlerless whitetail, and bowhunters unsuccessful during fall archery season may switch to firearms, if desired, to fill their tags with antlerless deer.

Kansas deer hunters can expect to enjoy multiple permits and liberal seasons until deer populations



Kansas habitat can support more deer than the current population. However, due to crop damage and deer-vehicle accidents, biologists maintain the herd below capacity.



A doe is a fine bowhunting prize, one which this young hunter will remember forever.

are reduced. However, policies will be adjusted as the herd stabilizes.

"Things won't stay this way for long," says Fox. "Our surveys indicate that the ideal Kansas deer population is one that is stable at 1988-1991 levels. That is our target. With this size deer population, landowner tolerance, hunter preference and deer-vehicle accidents all come together at an optimum point. As we move toward that goal, our permitting system will be adjusted accordingly."

For now, these are the "good old days" of Kansas deer hunting. With opportunities to stock a freezer with tasty venison, and even share a deer or two with those in need, big game hunters with multiple permits can pack seasons of experience into a single year while helping eliminate a deer problem. Antlerless permits allow multi-season hunting with various weapons, something not available to Kansas hunters only a few years ago.

As management goals are reached, opportunities will probably decline. Even so, it's a sure bet that Kansas deer hunters will always enjoy what they've come to expect — some of the nation's finest whitetail hunting.

#### DOE OR ANTLERLESS?

Permits are designated "antlerless" for a reason. It's not always possible to tell a buck from a doe, depending on when a buck sheds its antlers. Most mature bucks carry antlers well into February or even later, but some may shed in December or earlier. Additionally, buck fawns exhibit only "buttons," or small velvet knobs. Male deer without antlers are easily mistaken for does, especially at a distance. Therefore, law permits them to be legally harvested with an antlerless permit.

There is concern among some sportsmen that trophy bucks which cast their antlers early might be accidentally shot using antlerless permits. Worry grows for January

seasons. This does happen, but data from 1998 indicates that it's a minor problem. Last year, more than 20,000 antlerless deer were taken with game tags, but less than 3 percent of the January kill were mature bucks with shed antlers.

Since the whole point is to harvest does, hunters should try to avoid shooting bald bucks. Deer behavior can sometimes help separate the sexes of antlerless deer. Bucks tend to travel alone more than in groups. Mature bucks often stand off to the side of larger groups of does and fawns. Large individuals are usually bucks. Does are usually surrounded by smaller yearlings.

If possible, use binoculars or spotting scopes to help determine sex. Mature bucks without antlers show visible pedicles where the antlers joined the skull. These appear as round, dark spots on the forehead. Button bucks sport obvious knobs at the pedicle locations. Does have flat, brown foreheads without obvious features. 





# The Battle of Mine Creek

by Sally Wilk

*park manager, Eisenhower State Park*

photos by Mike Blair

*The only Civil War battle on Kansas soil occurred on Oct. 25, 1864 in Linn County. Re-enactors chose the scenic area around Melvern Lake in Osage County to recreate this event to protect the archeology of the actual site. The first recreation in 1997 was spectacular, and it will be repeated this October 9 and 10.*

A volley of cannon fire rattled the still October afternoon. The repeat of black powder rifles further snapped the silence as infantry soldiers charged through the tall prairie grass. Galloping on horseback on the hillside above, Union officers shouted commands as Confederate soldiers cried out in defiance. This scene could have been one of many played out during the United States Civil War more than 130 years ago. However, it occurred at Eisenhower State Park, Melvern Lake, in 1997.

Re-enactors from the 8th Kansas Infantry and 3rd Kansas Battery will bring the Civil War once again to Eisenhower State Park on October 9-10, 1999, when the Battle of Mine Creek is brought to life. The 1999 event will be the second time the only Civil War battle fought on Kansas soil is recreated in the picturesque Melvern Lake setting.

The actual Battle of Mine Creek occurred on October 25, 1864, when 2,500 Union troops defeated 7,000 Confederate soldiers. General Sterling Price's Confederate troops had marched across Missouri in search of recruits and supplies. They were turned back at the Battle of Westport, Missouri, on October 23 and retreated southward through Kansas. Union cavalry struck them at Mine Creek, a tributary of the Marais des Cygnes River, where two Confederate generals were captured and Price's rear guard was overwhelmed. He escaped destruction, but at the cost of thousands of men and most of his wagon train. Although only a few Union soldiers were killed, 300 Confederate soldiers perished during the 30-minute battle that effectively ended the Confederate influence west of the Mississippi.

The Battle of Mine Creek came to Eisenhower when



Just a glimpse takes you back more than 130 years. Re-enactors pay close attention to historic detail in uniforms, camps, weapons, and flags.

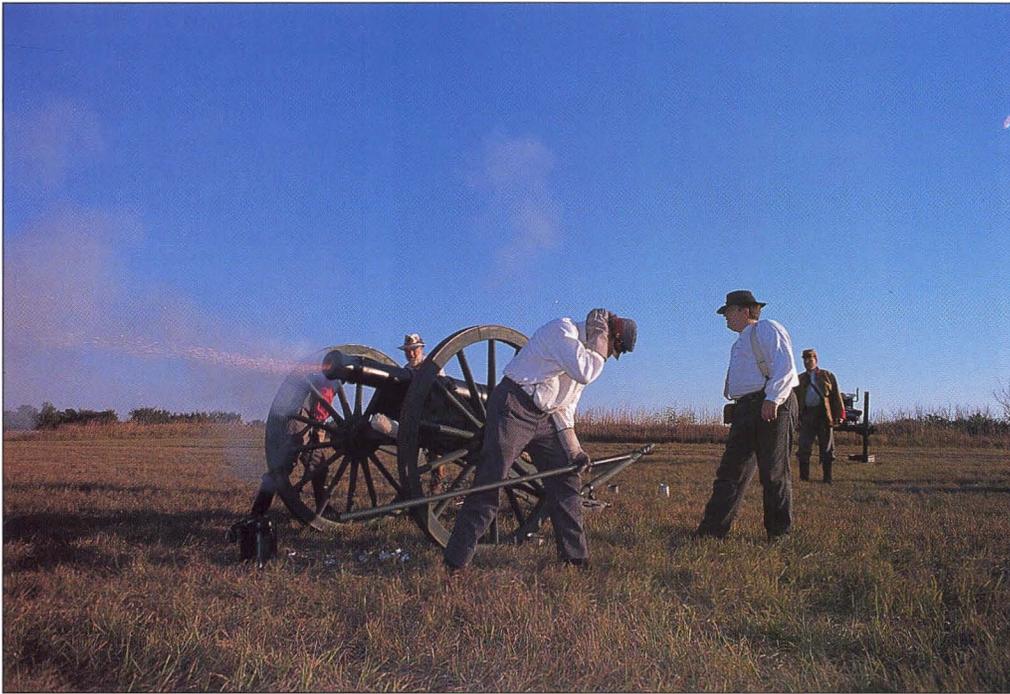
Civil War re-enactors contacted the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks in search of an event site. Eisenhower's native tallgrass prairie overlooking a timbered creek provided just the setting event coordinators were looking for. Although the actual battle site is preserved in Linn County by the Kansas State

Historical Society, concerns about protecting the archaeology of the site from contamination by reproduction artifacts prevents the group from conducting full-scale re-enactments there.

Visitors are encouraged to spend the weekend visiting both Union and Confederate encampments. A



A typical camp, except perhaps for the straw bales, shows what life was like for Civil War soldiers. You can almost smell breakfast cooking on the open campfire.



During the battle re-enactment, cannons fire, muskets shoot, and the war is on. In the real battle, 2,500 Union soldiers defeated 7,000 Confederate soldiers.

walk through the camps is a trip back in time. The event site excludes any hint of modern amenities. Volunteer re-enactors take their roles seriously; most are well versed in Civil War history and eager to share their knowledge.

Authenticity is paramount. From the buttons on the soldiers' uniforms to the tack on the horses, costuming is carefully assembled by each soldier. Tents, camp furniture and all personal equipment are authentic to the era. Various activities during the course of the weekend event give visitors a glimpse of what the daily life of the Civil War soldier was like.

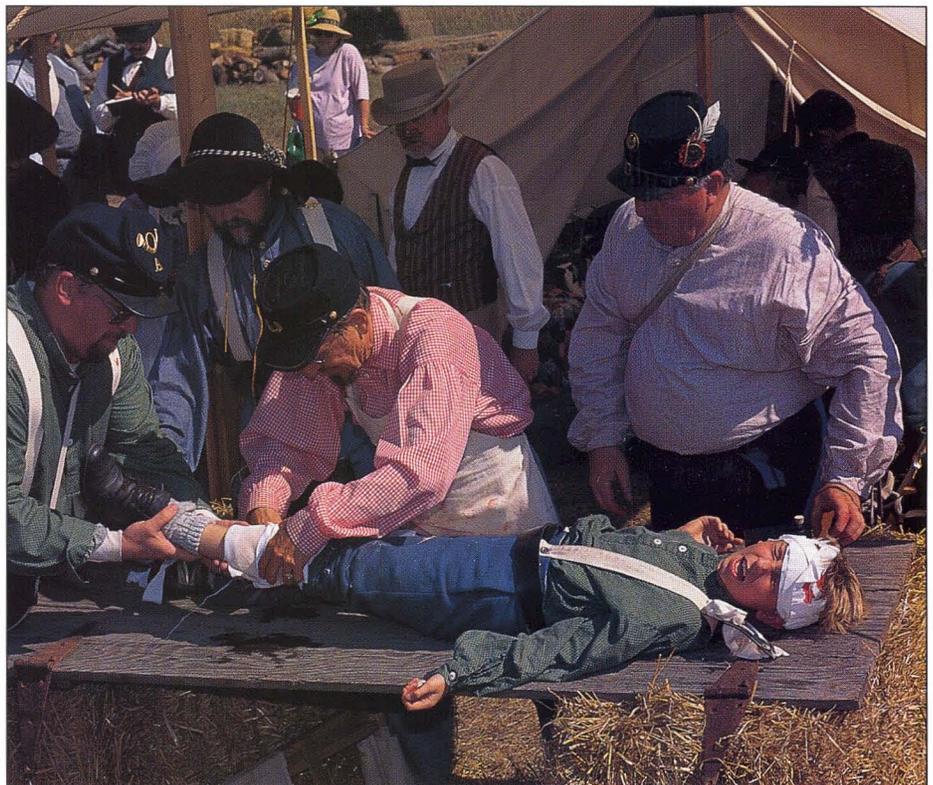
The day begins with a predawn bugle call and parade. Then visitors are treated to infantry, artillery, and cavalry drills, and breakfast prepared over an open campfire. While strolling through the camps, visitors might find a soldier cleaning his 1861 Springfield rifle or a lady quilting. Soldiers gather for a baseball game (1864 rules, of course), and visitors are invited to join the soldiers in giving thanks during an 1864 church service. Encampments of civilians and sutlers skirt those of the soldiers. Newspaper correspon-

dents are active among the camps and during the battle, taking notes and making sketches of a soldier's life. Pinkerton agents patrol the

perimeters in search of spies and deserters. Ladies in hoop skirts and gentlemen in their finery take sport in watching the ensuing battle from a safe hilltop location. Visitors can buy the same goods the soldiers did 135 years ago at the tent of the camp sutler or drink a homemade root beer at the medicine man's tent.

During the weekend event, re-enactors become soldiers of 1864. "Soldiers" earn their military rank through participation in one of the various re-enactor military units.

Coordinating the re-enactors is Dr. Boo Hodges of Salina. Under his leadership, a number of Federal units were assembled under the umbrella of the U.S. Frontier Brigade in November 1995. Through this structured organization, cavalry, artillery, infantry, signal, and medical units can be "mobilized" to do impressions at various events. Federal units include the 1st Kansas Volunteer Infantry, the 3rd



The wounded are tended to in open battlefield hospitals. Though the actual battle lasted only 30 minutes, more than 300 Confederate soldiers were killed.

Kansas Light Artillery Battery, the 8th Kansas Volunteer Infantry, the 1st Arkansas Cavalry, and the 4th Missouri Cavalry. Crowley's Company and the 9th Texas Infantry made up the Confederate States forces during the 1997 event.

The highlight of the weekend is the re-creation of the actual battle once each day on Saturday and Sunday. The battle is complete with full-scale cannons, cavalry, civilians, wagons, and infantry. Visitors not only hear, but feel the roar of the cannons as they boom through the valley. Yanks and Rebs battle within a few yards of the gallery, providing visitors an exciting view of the re-creation. Red-shirted young boys or "powder monkeys" scurry among the frenzy, supplying the artillery with the necessary supplies.



Historical detail is amazing, right down to the buttons on uniforms and tack on the horses.

Re-enactors follow strict rules of engagement regarding the use of blank rounds, horses, cannons, sabers and other accouterments of war to ensure a safe event for both volunteers and visitors. Following the battle, "wounded" soldiers are

removed from the field and transported to the camp of the U.S. Sanitary Commission. Visitors can have a front row view of the horrors of war, while surgeons explain the common types of battlefield injuries and how they were treated.

People from all walks of life are found among the re-enactors. Doctors, insurance agents, technicians, journalists, engineers, and laborers all find the hobby a great way to relive a simpler era, while at the same time developing a deep understanding for history not found in a book or a television documentary. Re-enactors are quick to point out they are not trying to glorify war, but rather sparking interest in American history and the civil unrest that divided our nation.

The 1997 event boasted 10 can-



The Battle of Mine Creek occurred in Linn County near Mine Creek, a tributary of the Marais des Cygnes River. The re-enactment site near Melvern Lake and Eisenhower State Park was chosen to protect archeology of the actual battle site.

nons, thirty horses, and two mule-drawn wagons. The nearly 400 "soldiers" on hand were volunteer re-enactors from ten different states. Word of the event has spread among Civil War enthusiasts and the 1999 event is expected to be even larger.

Mark your calendar to be at Eisenhower State Park on October 9 and 10 for the Battle of Mine Creek. Camps will be open to the public from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday, October 9th, and from 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on Sunday, October 10th. The event is a great day-trip or weekend

getaway for the whole family. Nearly 200 campsites, as well as shower and toilet facilities, at Eisenhower State Park will be open for the event. More campsites are available in nearby Corps of Engineers parks. On-site concessions are provided. As there is some distance between Confederate, Union, sutler, and civilian camps, visitors are encouraged to wear comfortable walking shoes. A gallery area is designated for the public to view the battle, but no seating is provided, so lawn chairs are a good idea. Admission is

charged with proceeds benefiting Save the Flags, a fund for the state's civil war flags in the Kansas State Historical Society's collection, and improvement projects at Eisenhower State Park.

For more information contact Eisenhower State Park, 29810 S. Fairlawn Road, Osage City, KS 66523, telephone 785-528-4102. Eisenhower State Park is located on Melvern Lake, five miles south of Lyndon, KS on US-75, and three miles west on K-278. 





# Early Birds

by Marc Murrell

*public information officer, Great Plains Nature Center, Wichita*

photos by Mike Blair

September signals the beginning of the fall hunting seasons as thousands of dove hunters head to fields and ponds. While doves are favorites of hunters as well as shot shell manufacturers, there are several other species of birds that can provide fantastic wing-shooting opportunities. Teal, rail and snipe (yes, there really is such a bird) visit the Sunflower State in September, often in huge numbers.

Teal are the smallest and earliest of the waterfowl migrants, arriving as early as August. Blue-winged teal are the first ones on the scene and also the first to leave, vacating by November. Green-winged teal also arrive early but may remain or migrate later in the fall. They have an iridescent, green speculum. Blue-wings are slightly larger and can be distinguished by the powder-blue patch on the top of the wing. Both species have characteristic flight so erratic and fast, it often leaves hunters scratching their heads wondering what just buzzed through their decoys. Teal travel in flocks of just a few birds early in the season up to 50-60 later in the year.

While teal can be found on many bodies of water ranging in size from a roadside ditch to a major reservoir, they typically prefer the close confines of shallow water marshes. Cheyenne Bottoms, Marais des Cygne, Neosho and Jamestown wildlife areas, as well as McPherson Wetlands and Quivira National Wildlife Refuge, can all provide excellent teal hunting.

Teal, unlike other species of ducks, aren't difficult to fool. You don't need huge spreads of decoys and you don't have to sound like a world champion caller in order to convince them to

join you. A few mallard or teal decoys, anywhere from four or five to a couple dozen, will work just fine to lure teal. Mallard calls will

***While dove and teal have a strong following of bird hunters each September, a couple of less familiar migrants, the snipe and rail, provide additional early-fall hunting opportunities.***

sometimes turn a flock of teal but most hunters have observed that teal, "are either coming or they're not," despite the best calling attempts.

The teal season is Sept. 11-26 in the Low Plains and Sept. 11-19 in the High Plains. The daily bag limit is four and possession limit is eight.

One bird that doesn't need any calling is the rail. Kansas has two rails that are hunted, the Sora and Virginia, with the former being the most abundant. Rails, which resemble a big-beaked sparrow on steroids, are found in and around shallow water marshes, similar to those mentioned as good spots for teal.

"I've been rail hunting about six or seven years," said John Silovsky, Neosho Wildlife Area Manager for the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP). "An elderly gentlemen I knew used to tell me about it and I thought it sounded kind of interesting. I think I did it out of curiosity more than anything else."

Rails are also early migrants. They spend much of their time in



Rails, the Virginia at top, and the sora, bottom, are common, seldom-seen marsh birds that migrate through Kansas each spring and fall. They provide a unique wetland hunting experience.

flooded vegetation hopping from plant to plant eating insects, slugs, snails, crustaceans, seeds and vegetable matter. The best hunting technique is to don a pair of hip or knee boots and walk slowly around the edges of the wetlands. As birds are flushed, make a mental note of the type of habitat they were in and try to find other areas similar to that.

"There seems to be a combination between water depths and density of vegetation," Silovsky said. "I find rails in the row crop units (typically milo left uncut that is flooded) as long as they're weedy. More consistently, I'll find them in moist soil units with vegetation about two feet high and moderately dense with a little water visible."

Silovsky believes a dog is beneficial, and the lab used for duck hunting works great for hunting rails.

"It's always fun to watch your dog work," Silovsky noted. "But they also help you flush rails. More importantly, as small as rails are, they help you find them after you



Yes, there really is such a creature as a snipe, and there is a hunting season for them. This small shorebird is very similar to the woodcock, a popular gamebird in eastern states.

shoot them."

Their diminutive size makes wingshooting a challenge. Fortunately, these birds fly only fast enough to keep them airborne. Their flight is labored and can best be described by imagining a 2-pound weight tied to their feet as they attempt to flee. They seldom fly farther than 100 yards before seeming to lose power and crash-

landing into the marsh. Although it would appear that a hunter could re-flush the bird by scurrying to the spot, the rail often pulls a Houdini, and no amount of commotion will flush them a second time.

"Rail hunting is overlooked," Silovsky believes. "I bet there's not a half-dozen people that hunt rails on the Neosho Wildlife Area. It's kind of like squirrels, it's one of



Shallow, weedy marshes are prime areas for snipe and rails. Nothing leisurely about it, the only way to hunt these early migrants is to cover ground, flushing birds as you walk. A retriever can help flush birds and is invaluable finding downed birds in heavy cover.

those things we have the opportunity to hunt that nobody takes advantage of."

Silovsky advises anyone with an interest to give rail hunting a try. He admits it's not extremely physically demanding, but you do a considerable amount of walking and hunters must be willing to get out and slosh around.

"The thing that might be the most attractive to people that want to try it is they can come out and teal hunt early and then when the hunter numbers thin out a little bit they can walk around and shoot some rails," Silovsky concluded. "They're an interesting bird and for anyone that has a lot of interest in just being in the marsh and outdoors it gives you a chance to do a little scouting and see what things look like for the rest of the waterfowl season."

The rail season opens Sept. 1 and runs through Nov. 9. The daily bag and possession limit is 25.



Rails sit tight and flush close, but their flight is weak and often short. With a little practice, a hunter can quickly distinguish rails from other marsh birds by size and flight characteristics.

Another early migrant of interest to a handful of hunters is the common snipe. Typically thought of as a fictitious bird used to leave someone holding a bag in the middle of the night on a make-believe hunt, it actually does exist. Other than the woodcock, it is the

only species of shorebird hunted in Kansas.

Its body is characterized by long legs and an extremely long bill. It uses each for feeding as it wades in shallow water probing the mud in search of invertebrates. It flushes quickly and flight resembles an out-



Rail hunting provides a great chance for the hunter to get into the marsh before the main waterfowl seasons open, work the dog and do some scouting prior to duck season. The small breast of the rail is very similar in color and taste to that of the dove.



The hunter must act quickly. First, positively identify this bird as a rail, then make an accurate shot on the bird before it dips back into the weeds. Rails rarely fly far, but once flushed and missed, they are nearly impossible to flush again.

of-control, horizontally spiraling firework.

"They are one of the most challenging targets in the bird world," said Mike Ehlebracht, conservation officer for the department. "They can change directions on a dime. I liken it to quail hunting in the marsh."

While their flight is erratic, snipe come the closest to catch-and-

release as any game bird.

"Maybe they're not particularly smart because if you watch them they'll sometimes fly a quarter-mile circle and come right back over you," said Ehlebracht. "So if you didn't connect the first time around you get a second chance."

Identification is of utmost importance in snipe hunting as they are often found in areas with other

species of protected birds.

"Snipe generally get up in singles or occasionally there will be a couple within close proximity to each other, but they never get up in a big flock like dowitchers or other shorebirds," said Ehlebracht. "And when they get up they'll make that call, that 'YEEEEEP!'"

Ehlebracht said snipe can be found in habitat ranging from nothing more than mud to ankle deep water, usually along the shorelines of marshes. Although snipe are present in August and early September, late September is usually most productive. And if the fall weather doesn't turn bitter, they'll stick around into November.

"I think it's sacrilegious to hunt them with anything less than a break-open shotgun," Ehlebracht joked of his favorite snipe gun. "Snipe hunting is to hunting what fly fishing is to fishing. Automatic 12 gauges, that's like fishing for brook trout with a bass rod. You just don't do it."

Seriously, the lightest shotgun you can get steel shot for is recommended. A 20 gauge is a good choice, and any gun used should



Rail hunting can provide abundant shooting opportunities. The birds are common during migration when conditions are right, and the daily bag limit is 25.

have an open choke such as improved cylinder. The smallest steel shot load you can find works best.

As far as table fare, snipe are in the same category as a dove.

"The breast is just as big as a dove and maybe a hair bigger on average," said Ehlebracht. "And I don't think you can tell the difference."

Like rail hunters, snipe hunters are few and far between. Ehlebracht admits he seldom checks any snipe hunters. But it's an activity with potential to provide fine wing-shooting. Ehlebracht advises those interested in pursuing snipe to hook up with someone who has hunted them before.

"A lot of people are apprehensive about it because of all the other shorebirds," Ehlebracht said. "As soon as they point out a snipe or two when they get up, you'll remember the rest of your life.

They're not that hard to identify but it seems like a lot of people are put off because they're worried about getting into other shorebirds."

The Kansas snipe season is Sept. 1-Dec. 16. Daily bag limit is 8 and the possession limit is 16.

If you haven't tried hunting teal, rail or snipe, give it a try. It doesn't take any fancy equipment and competition isn't a problem, particularly for the latter two. Birds aren't hard to find as recent years have produced excellent numbers of each species at traditional wetlands across the state. And if your hunt turns into nothing more than a walk through the marsh in September, then you still haven't lost out as there likely isn't a better place to enjoy the great outdoors.

#### BEFORE YOU GO

To hunt rails and snipe, all hunters required to purchase a

hunting license must also have a harvest information program (HIP) stamp. (Hunters exempt from purchasing a hunting license include those hunting on their own land and residents under the age of 16 and over the age of 65.) Teal hunters who are required to have a hunting license must have a HIP stamp, as well as the state duck stamp, and all teal hunters 16 or older must also have the federal duck stamp. The HIP stamp is 50 cents, the state waterfowl stamp is \$3.25, and the federal duck stamp is \$15.

All migratory birds except dove and woodcock must be taken with non-toxic shot, whether on public or private ground. Shooting hours for early migrants are one-half hour before sunrise to sunset.

For more information, get a copy of the 1999-2000 Kansas Hunting Regulation Summary wherever licenses are sold. ♡





Mike Blair photo

# Do You Remember?

by Karl Grover

*area manager, Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area*

***Every duck hunter can remember his or her first duck. That experience -- duck hunting with a parent, grandparent or sibling -- left an indelible mark in memory, and it shapes the way they feel about hunting today. If you remember, you owe it to hunting and the next generation to pass on your passion for ducks to a youngster.***

**D**o you remember your first duck? Most duck hunters can recall the experience with vivid detail. Mine was a green-winged teal, shot on a crisp fall morning at the confluence of the North and South Platte Rivers. There was something about that morning that is difficult to explain. To non-hunters I had simply killed a bird to eat, but to me it was much more. It wasn't until a number of years later that I understood just

what that day had done for me. It has made me feel closer to the natural world and given me an increased appreciation for our wildlife heritage. These feelings have lasted to this day.

Most duck hunters have similar experiences. The traditions, rituals, and memories associated with waterfowl hunting are half the fun. In spite of this, Kansas waterfowl hunters decreased from 53,000 in 1971 to 13,000 in 1990. Some say the

declining hunter numbers are due to the expenses involved. Others cite declining duck numbers or increasingly complicated regulations. The steel shot requirement and "not enough time" are also listed as reasons for the decline in waterfowl hunters. Regardless of the reason, many baby boomers, such as myself, who began duck hunting in the 1960s, are now parents. We have the opportunity to share in a youngster's first duck

experience. So why are hunter numbers declining?

Too expensive? Resident hunters under 16 years of age need only a hunter education card to hunt. Duck numbers too low? Duck numbers have increased to near-record levels over the last three years. Regulations too complicated? A simple phone call to your local Wildlife and Parks office can net a listing of pertinent regulations for the area you wish to hunt. Steel shot a problem? Today's steel shot loads are far superior to those of the early 1980s and are very effective on waterfowl. And a youngster new to hunting will learn to shoot steel just as effectively as we did with lead. Not enough time? Waterfowl hunting areas have been purchased and developed across Kansas in the past 20 years. There is probably a waterfowl area within a short drive, no matter where you live. Several have even set aside portions of the property for youth hunting, which provide quick and easy hunting

access. At Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area, near Great Bend, for example, there is a 100-acre area that is open for youth hunting only. The accompanying adult may hunt with the youth. And the local Ducks Unlimited chapter has provided decoys for loan. Other wildlife areas, including Cedar Bluff, Jamestown, and Neosho, have youth hunting programs. Also, consult the 1999-2000 Waterfowl Regulation Summary brochure for youth waterfowl hunting days. The special early seasons allow for youth to hunt before the regular seasons open, ensuring an uncrowded, non-competitive hunting experience.

My son's first duck was a blue-winged teal. I'll never forget the expression on his face and the thrill in his voice as he turned and shouted, "I got 'im." At the age of 11, he doesn't realize that he, too, will grow up and reflect on that day. I hope he will have nurtured an appreciation for the wildlife her-

itage and an awareness of his responsibility as the steward of this resource.

Take a moment and reflect on your first duck hunt. There are more to those memories than simply killing a bird. Likely, those first experiences have influenced the attitudes you have about our wildlife resources and helped shape the type of person you are today. All hunters share in the responsibility to pass our hunting heritage along. And duck season, especially early teal season when the weather is mild, is a great opportunity to take a youngster to the field. The special time you spend with a youngster can be as rewarding to you as it is exciting for the new hunter. If our generation of duck hunters fail to pass on the hunting heritage, who will? We all hold the future of hunting, wildlife management, and wildlife-related recreation in our hands. ♡

Dustin Teasley photo



How a youngster is introduced to hunting will impact the way he or she feels about hunting throughout their life. An early-season hunt, such as the September teal season or the Youth Waterfowl Day, is the perfect opportunity to get a kid hooked on hunting.



Collector knives by Tim Herman

# Edge Art

text and photos by J. Mark Shoup  
associate editor, Pratt

*Knifemakers carry on an ancient art of building knives that are both beautiful and functional. However, with a high degree of craftsmanship and countless hours of labor, these knives bring high prices from collectors, and few will see work duty.*

Ten years ago, I wrote a column involving pocket knives in this magazine entitled "The Right Tool." Therein, I excused myself for not carrying a pocket knife because I had not been allowed to in school, defended myself against my father's grouching whenever I had to borrow his knife, and lamented the fact that I had once been unable to make a whistle with a good Buck Folding Hunter. While the column's narrative described a summer on the Arkansas River, and its theme revealed the difficulty (both tragic

and humorous) we humans have existing peacefully with nature, knives were the metaphorical tool that crafted the story, also revealing my unconscious fascination with fine blades.

Since then, I have bought, used, and often given away good-quality mass-production knives, and my appreciation for the look and feel of a good knife has grown. I have casually perused information on everything from good, practical hand-made knives to collector knives. Still, I've never owned a fine hand-made knife.

While there are many high-quality, affordable commercial knives on the market, many outdoorsmen and women (as well as collectors) long for something more unique. For this reason, knifemaking has become a popular hobby in the past twenty years, and good hand-made knives can be found in specialty shops and sporting goods stores throughout the country.

Like many hobbies, knifemaking may be approached on many different levels. From kits with pre-made knives to schools that teach

the ancient art of forging one's own blade, the prospective knifemaker has many choices.

Like most art forms, knifemaking has inspired organizations to teach and promote the art. The Knifemakers' Guild is comprised of members who concentrate on making beautiful collector knives, as well as those more practical artisans who prefer traditional hunting knives. The Guild began in 1970 when A. G. Russell rented tables at the Sahara Gun Show in Las Vegas and invited several knifemakers to display knives there. The show was such a success that the participants decided to meet again.

Later that year, 11 knifemakers met in Tulsa, Okla., to form the Knifemakers Guild. Today the Knifemakers' Guild has nearly 500 members from the United States and several foreign countries. Members meet once a year to display their work at the annual show. Thousands of collectors, investors, and sportsmen from around the world attend the Knifemakers Guild Show.

Members of the American Bladesmith Society take knifemaking back to its very roots — the making of the blade itself. The group was established to "diligently, reasonably, and responsibly work exclusively for the purposes of promoting and advancing the art and science of the forged blade and other implements, and also to inform and educate the public in



All Herman knives are original designs. However, he may make several knives based on one general design, pre-cutting components prior to final assembly and finish.

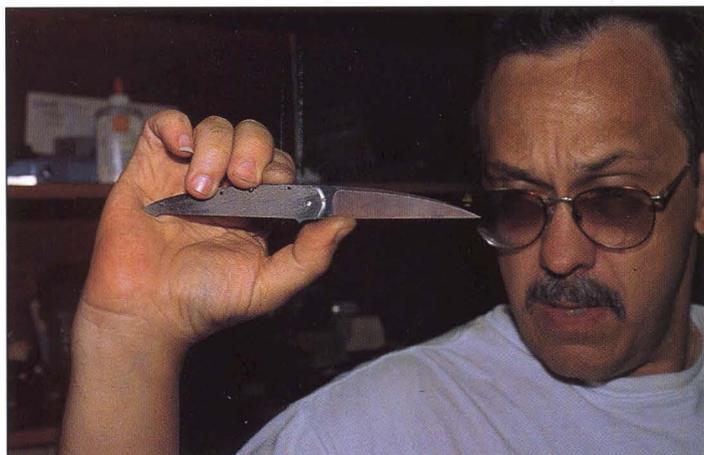
respect to bladesmithing, metal forging, and heat treating processes; knife and tool design and fabrication; related arts, and other areas in which the Society has expertise."

This group has taken the art of forging steel and knifemaking so far as to open the Texarkana College/ Bill Moran School of Bladesmithing. The first school of its kind, the faculty boasts some of the finest knifemakers in the world.

These are just two of many knifemaking organizations in the U.S., but most folks don't join a major organization or go to a school when they first begin learning how to

make knives. Whether experimenting with an old file or putting a new handle on an old knife, the resurging interest in this old art has inspired many outdoor lovers to make their own knives.

Raymond Elliott, of Lewis, is an outdoorsman whose curiosity got the better of him when one of his Haviland High School industrial arts students asked if he could make a knife as a project. Elliott has a masters degree in industrial arts and is an avid hunter, so he readily agreed. As an industrial arts teacher, this was a natural extension of skills he had already developed.



Tim Herman has an artist's eye, essential in transforming a block of steel into a collector's knife. He uses both belt and disk sanders to shape and sharpen his knives. All Herman knives are characterized by fine engraving and seamless fit.

"I had always liked knives," Elliott explains, "and when a student asked to make one in class, I thought it was a great idea. That student actually got me started making knives."

That was ten years ago. Since then, many of his students have made their own knives, and Elliott has honed his skill to the point where he sells his fixed-blade knives at shows and local shops, and even by custom order.

Elliott's method is to buy knife components from suppliers, then build the knife. (See "Sources" below.) These components include a pre-made blade, or blank, and material for making guards and handles, such as bolts, pins, and blocks of handle material. Handle materials include micarta (imitation ivory that also comes in maroon and black), zebra wood, rosewood, and cocobola wood. Another very popular handle material Elliott uses is Dymondwood, a laminated birch that has been stained various colors.

"Dymondwood is really popular because it is beautiful and very durable," explains Elliott. All these materials may be obtained from

knife material suppliers throughout the country. Elliott recommends anyone interested to purchase a copy of Knives Illustrated magazine, which also has many useful how-to articles on knifemaking. (Phone 1-800-999-9718 for more information.)

Although Elliott makes round-tang knives — in which a bolt-like extension on the back of the blade secures the handle (as seen on many stag-handle knives) — most of his knives are "slab" or "scale" handle knives. Scale knives have a "full" tang, meaning that the blade metal extends flat into the back of the handle and top to bottom.

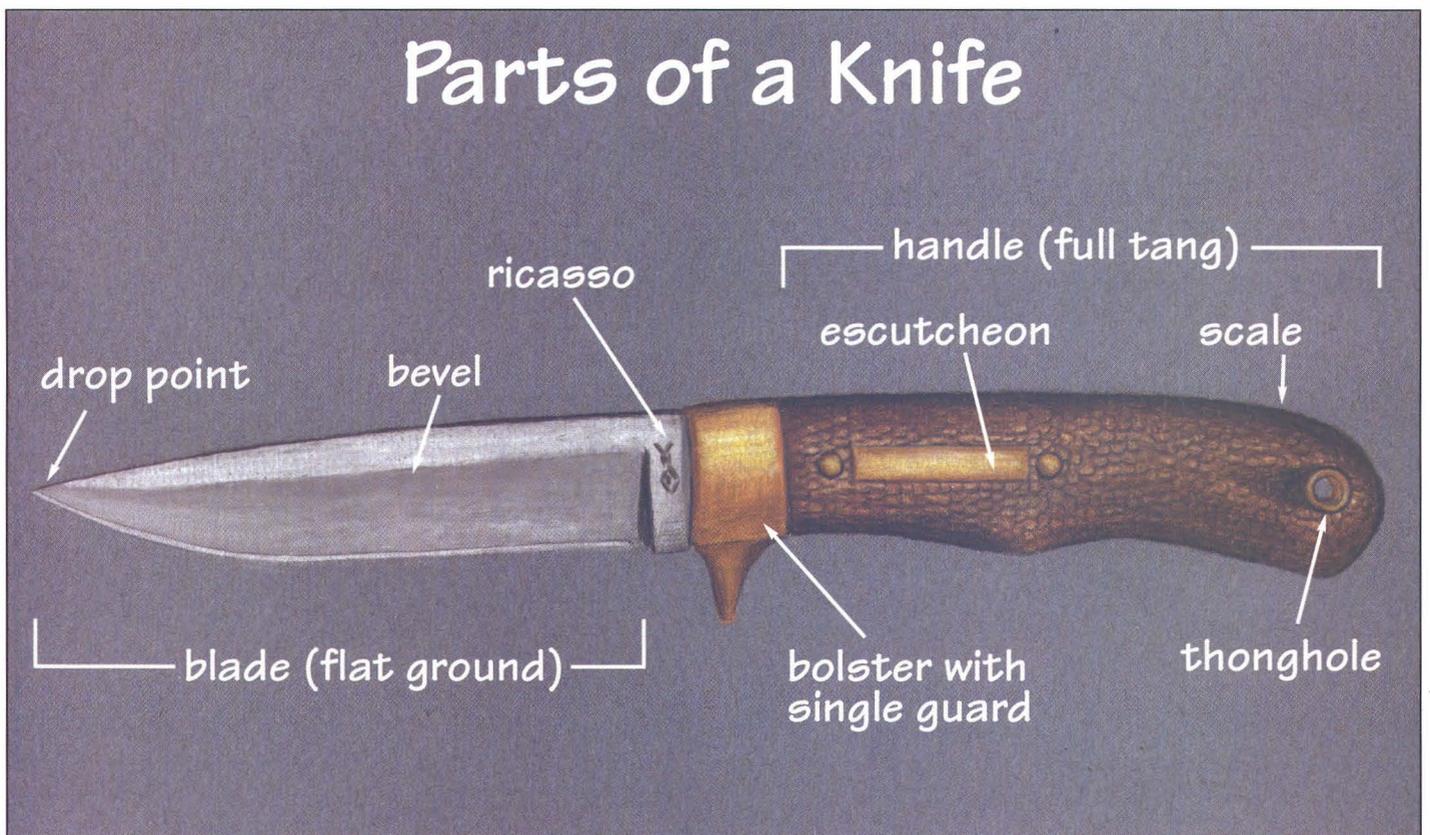
The first step in making one of these scale knives is to pin or silver-solder the guard onto the blank, which is usually 440 stainless steel. (See below for explanation of steels.) At this point, the guard is a notched block of brass that will later be ground and polished into an attractive shape. Next, Elliott outlines the handle material to fit the shape of the blade and marks the bolt holes on just one side of the scale. He then epoxys both scales to the blank and drills through the

original holes and both sides of the handle to ensure a perfect fit.

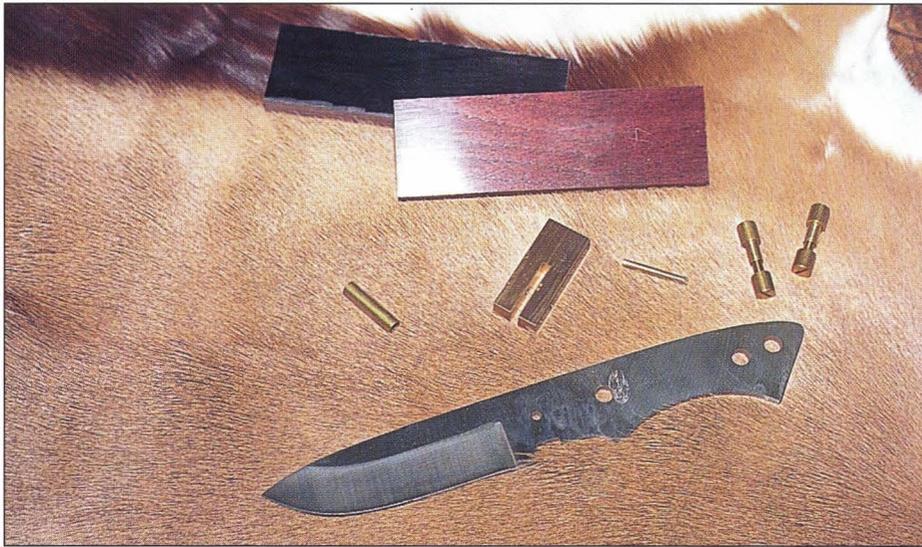
Using a special bit that drills a narrow hole in front of a larger hole, Elliott bores the holes out further to accommodate special "corby" bolts that fit neatly in the hole and leave an even handle surface. Brass tubing is also used for a lanyard hole on many of his knives.

The rest is a matter of filing, belt and disk sanding, hand sanding, and finally, buffing the entire knife on a buffing wheel. The product is a beautiful knife that anyone would be proud to own, but Elliott often does not stop here. Through his interest in knives, he has also picked up the art of scrimshaw, and many of his knives are carved in this way with ships, wildlife, or native American scenes.

With his teaching job and a summer carpet-laying business, Elliott is a busy man, but one day he hopes to take his knifemaking skills a step or two farther. He's made arrangements to buy a forge, and he would like to attend the Bill Moran School in Texarkana. And he will continue refining his engraving skills. If he keeps improving, don't



Dustin Teasley illustration



Raymond Elliot's components include the basic blade, handle material, guard stock, corby bolts, and lanyard tubing. He assembles these into the finished knife.

be surprised if you see an Elliott knife on the cover of *Blade* magazine someday.

Tim Herman, Overland Park, came to knifemaking from a very different background and perspective. A commercial artist by trade, Herman happened on to the Knifemakers' Guild Annual Show at Kansas City's Crown Center in 1977. As an artist, he appreciated the beauty of the fine collectors' knives he saw, some of which sold for thousands of dollars.

"I was addicted," says Herman, "but I couldn't afford any of the knives I wanted, so I decided to start making them myself."

Herman already had a lathe and had dabbled in pipe-making and other crafts, but this was a different ball game. So he began reading books on steels and knifemaking. After a few attempts at making daggers on his own, Herman met W.C. Davis of Raymore, Mo., who taught him how to make folding knives, which he has concentrated on for the last 10 years. He also makes "Price" knives — daggers named for their maker which were popular with gamblers in the Gold Rush years of the 1850s.

All Herman knives are characterized by fine engraving, seamless fit, and a ricasso (see illustration) smoothly milled to follow the contour of the handle.

Herman uses two types of steel: the highly stain-resistant (stainless) ATS-34 for collector knives and D-2, which carries a high degree of molybdenum, making it more wear-resistant. Both have a Rockwell hardness of 59-60. Because most of his knives are collectors, he uses primarily stainless steel, both for knife blade and handle. Even his damascus blades are a stainless damascus.

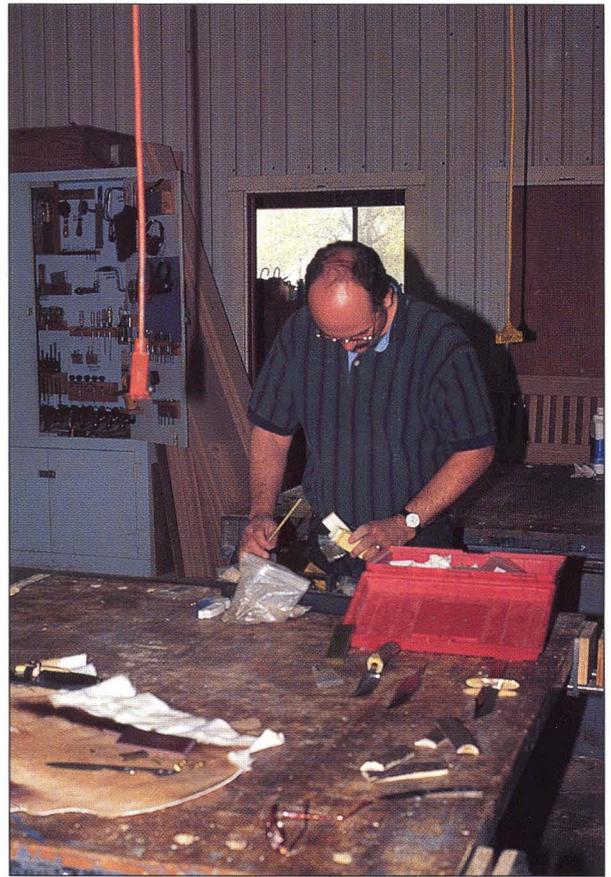
To make a folding knife, Herman starts with bar stock he buys and draws a blade and handle shape on the steel. He then cuts the blade on a band saw and shapes and bevels it on a belt sander. A drill press will bore the pin hole and create a slightly raised area around the hole so that the blade will rotate smoothly without touching either side of the handle.

The handle is fashioned using the same tools although elaborate feathering may require fine files and various sandpapers so fine they seem like cloth. Once the pieces are cut, shaped, and polished, Herman

fits a spring-steel lock inside the handle and slides the blade and spine (the spacer between the handles at the top of the knife) together between the two halves of the handle. The pins holding these pieces together now stick out from either side. However, because they are all made of the same material, Herman is able to grind the pins down and buff his handle out to make a knife with perfectly smooth, seamless sides, seemingly held together by nothing.

Herman engraves or inlays many of his knives, often using rare opals or mother of pearl. He even has developed a process that allows him to engrave elaborate color pictures on his knife handles. When he's done, he may have 40 hours — sometimes much more — on a single knife that sells for a minimum of \$1,000. He sold one knife for \$15,000.

Herman has won many awards for his knifemaking skills, including Baretta's Outstanding Achievement



Elliot's interest in knifemaking began when one of his industrial arts students asked to make a knife in class.

in Knifemaking, the Barrett-Smythe, LTD Annual Award for Best Folding Knife, and the Francis Anglade Award for Best Boot Knife. Today, he makes his living making knives.

I still don't own a fine hand-made knife, but after seeing the work of these two men and learning what goes into making one, it's a priority on my wish list. Come to think of it, my wife loves fine objects of art, and Christmas is just around the corner. . .

#### A Note On Steel

Whether you just want to make a knife for your own enjoyment and use or have aspirations of becoming a professional knifemaker, the art can be a rewarding experience. Before you begin, however, a little basic knowledge of steels is important. One of the first things you will encounter is references to steel hardness on the Rockwell Scale.

The Rockwell Test is a simple process of indenting a heat-treated blade with a tip, called a Brale diamond point, under a load of 150 kilograms. The test reading is called

a "C" scale and is used to determine if the blade was heat-treated properly. When properly heat-treated, a blade will hold an edge well and be reasonably easy to sharpen.

Most good field knives rate from about C56-C60 on the Rockwell scale. Blade material that tests below Rockwell C52 is too soft to hold an edge, and material testing above C60 is too brittle and difficult to sharpen. Knifemakers often heat-treat knife blades to reduce blade brittleness and increase hardness.

Essentially, a good blade will hold an edge, sharpen easily, and resist rust and corrosion. The knifemaker has three basic choices of steel: carbon steel, stainless, and high carbon stainless. To enhance desired qualities in knives, steels may contain alloys such as carbon, chromium, manganese, nickel, silicon, vanadium, molybdenum, and tungsten. Each steel has its benefits and drawbacks.

For instance, the more carbon in a steel, the harder it becomes. Hardness, however, can translate to brittleness. Although a hard steel

will hold an edge, the edge may break easily. Thus, hardness and strength are two different things. The more of one you have, the less you have of the other.

This is just a brief introduction to blade steel. For more information and to get started in knifemaking, read *Knives Illustrated*, or contact The Knifemakers' Guild or the American Bladesmith Society. ♠

#### Sources

Raymond Elliott, Box 22A, Lewis, KS 67552, (316) 324-5402; Tim Herman, 7721 Foster, Overland Park, KS 66204, (913) 649-3860; The Knifemakers' Guild (online at <http://kmg.org/>), 13950 N.E. 20th Street, Williston, Fla., 32696 (352) 528-6124; American Bladesmith Society (online at <http://www.americanbladesmith.com/>), P.O. Box 977, Peralta, NM 87042. Also check out Mark Tully's, "Making an Authentic Belt Knife," at <http://www.nwta.com/couriers/11-96/knives.html>. Some sources for materials include Atlanta Cutlery, 1-800-883-0300; Dixie Gun Works, 1-800-238-6785; and Smoke and Fire, (419) 832-0303. Others can be found in *Knives Illustrated*.



A sampling of Raymond Elliot's knives showing a variety of blade types and handle designs. Original scrimshaw is incorporated into many of his handles. Handle materials include micarta (imitation ivory), zebra wood, rosewood and cocobola wood.



# OUTDOORS AT 80

text and photos by Mike Blair  
staff photographer/associate editor, Pratt

*Mickey McDonald of Fredonia has spent a lifetime studying and enjoying the Kansas outdoors. Now in his senior years, this remarkable man stays active and works to help others learn about the natural things around us.*

“**T**oday I saw a seagull in prairie chicken country,” wrote a young Mickey McDonald in a letter to his dad dated 1945. This wasn’t a bird-watching report. Instead, it was a code between son and father that

meant the young Kansan had shot down a Japanese plane in a certain part of the Pacific Ocean.

Mickey “Little Mac” McDonald was a WWII Navy ensign flying an F4U Corsair off the aircraft carrier USS Intrepid, and remembers how

he communicated war news with his family in those days. “You weren’t supposed to tell where you were or what you were doing, so before I left, my dad and I got identical maps of the Pacific Ocean and broke them into zones. We named

the zones after our favorite hunting and fishing spots around our hometown of Fredonia. If I 'saw a sea gull,' that meant I shot down a plane, and he could look on his map to see where it happened."

Three such letters arrived before the war ended, along with others that included harrowing tales of two Kamikaze attacks against the Intrepid, and an account of being shot down and forced to ditch in the Pacific near Japan for later rescue by a U.S. Destroyer. "My plane sank like a stone," recalls McDonald.

The veteran pilot, now 80 years old and still an active Kansas outdoorsman, remembers a storied life from the deck of his self-built home in the wooded hills of Wilson County. An avid hunter and fisherman, McDonald continues a remarkable life that involves frequent camping, nature photog-



McDonald (left) and his friends hunted coyotes from a Piper Cub near Fredonia just after WWII. In one year, they shot 104 coyotes from the plane, selling the pelts and collecting a state bounty.

raphy, outdoor education, and insect research known to scientists throughout the country. He and his wife Doris raised five daughters, all of whom are following his footsteps in outdoor pursuits.

Continuing to speak of flying, McDonald recounts a post-war incident that nearly ended in disaster.

"Of all the dogfights and carrier landings in rough weather, I think my scariest moment in a plane happened while hunting coyotes back in Kansas."

It was just after the war when money was scarce. Coyotes were thick in the Fredonia area, and the animals were valuable. McDonald was not yet married, and along with friends, he hunted to supplement his income. At the time, Kansas paid a \$2 bounty for the ears, and a coyote pelt was worth \$1.50.

"I bought a Piper Cub whose instruments didn't work. I thought I was a hot pilot, so I wasn't worried. A buddy and I hunted coyotes from the plane. I'd fly low to the ground at less than 50 mph, and he'd shoot any coyotes we jumped with a long-barreled 12-gauge shotgun. It wasn't as easy as it sounds. Later we'd go back and pick them up. We killed 104 coyotes that year.

"One morning we were hunting when a big fog bank rolled in. I didn't think much of it - I expected to get above the cloud. But suddenly the sun disappeared and we were totally enclosed. In that situation, there is no sense of direction."

With neither equilibrium nor



McDonald enjoys nature photography, filming on his 40-acre Wilson County farm. For years he participated in a camera club and maintained a darkroom in his house.

instruments, the pilot knew he was in serious trouble. Nearby transmission lines and sloping terrain complicated matters. "I rolled the trim tabs down and put the stick in neutral," recalls McDonald. "That way, the plane would fly something close to level. We sweated for awhile in a total whiteout. Then suddenly the ground appeared. I was wing-down just a few feet above a pasture fence, about to crash. I landed the plane in a meadow and the fog closed around us again. We waited all day for it to lift. The Good Lord was watching over us that day."

In later decades, Kansas law changed to prohibit coyote hunting from airplanes. But McDonald and his friends had already stopped. "Sometimes we shot from the plane and sometimes we just spotted from the plane. In the early days, a few of

us would fly and the rest would stay on the ground. We'd spot a coyote from the air and fly back to our buddies. Then we'd drop a sandbag with a note saying where to look. When it got popular to use radios between hunters, planes, and dog wagons, it wasn't fun anymore," he says. "It got to where a coyote couldn't make it out of a section alive. Pretty soon, there weren't many coyotes left."

After this, McDonald simply changed hunting interests. Through the 1950s and 1960s, bird hunting occupied most of his time. He and his friends raised bird dogs and hunted quail and prairie chickens in the brushy grasslands surrounding his home. Though the chickens gradually disappeared, bobwhite hunting remained good through the decades. McDonald continued to

hunt quail until 10 years ago, when his last pointer died. "Once Butch was gone, I quit bird hunting. I just didn't want to go through that again," he said.

Now McDonald concentrates on bowhunting deer, another passion since 1966. He's taken more than 50 deer with a bow and arrow, many of them on his 40-acre farm. The biggest was a 10-point whitetail that scored 162-5/8, shot 5 years ago when Mickey was 75 years old. "I won't shoot a buck unless it's bigger than that," he says. "I like to eat yearling does, so that's what I try for. Last year, I did take a shot at a Boone & Crockett buck at 10 yards, but I missed. I just got too excited!"

At the age of 79, following double-bypass heart surgery a few months before bow season, the veteran hunter climbed into his tree-



McDonald is a serious entomologist whose collecting trips have taken him as far as Mexico. Here, he looks at some of the colorful species he collected there. He raises several native moths and butterflies in sleeve cages on the vegetation around his home.



McDonald enjoys daily walks with his wife, Doris, on trails they carefully maintain through prairie and woodland. Trails provide many sightings of wildlife and keep the couple active.

stands and harvested 5 deer with his 47-pound Browning compound bow. Due to the light draw weight of his equipment, he uses a string-tracker to help locate downed deer, should the arrow fail to exit.

"Getting a deer out at my age can sometimes be a problem," McDonald grins. "Last year I shot a young buck that ran down a steep ravine on my property. We maintain several miles of wide, mowed trails through our timber, and I drove my riding lawn mower down to where the deer was. But the mower got hung up in rocks and couldn't climb the hill. Then I tried a deer cart made from a ladder and bicycle wheels, but my wife and I together couldn't pull it up the slope. Finally, I just quartered the buck with a knife and carried it up a piece at a time."

McDonald and his wife process their own venison, cutting as much as possible into boneless steaks and chops. Everything is run through a commercial meat tenderizer before freezing. "We eat a lot of deer meat," the hunter says. "I eat a deer steak for breakfast every day, and some days we have venison for sev-

eral meals.

"I really look forward to deer hunting each year," McDonald says. "You see and hear so many things in the fall woods."

Though it's fascinating that McDonald is able to continue such arduous pursuits, it's not surprising that he still hunts and fishes. "I've done it all my life," he says. "When I was a young boy in the late 1920s, I'd buy three shells for my dad's 20-gauge shotgun and pot-shoot quail. I'd clean and trade them at the local grocery store for such things as potatoes and bread. I also seined and sold rough fish for 25 cents each, and one of my regular customers called me the 'fish man,' even when I was a kid."

During high school years, McDonald trapped to make spending money. He also ran hounds to catch possums and coons. "I remember one night we ran a civet cat up a tree," he says. "We all got sprayed."

He fondly remembers trapping muskrats with his dad near Fredonia in a big marsh that's no longer there. Old scrapbook photographs bring stories to life as he

remembers his youth. "We'd catch 10 or 12 rats a night," he says. "You could get 25 cents apiece."

Following the war, McDonald returned home to marry and start a 43-year career with the Archer Daniels Midland Company. Initially a chemist, he soon became foreman of the soybean mill. The mill shut down for 4 months in 1949. During that period, McDonald moved to Corpus Christi, Texas, and worked as a commercial fisherman selling sea trout and red fish to area restaurants. "I got 25 cents a pound," he remembers. After that, the couple returned to Fredonia when the ADM mill reopened.

Fishing has been a lifelong hobby for McDonald. Even now, he fishes several times a week at Fall River or Toronto reservoirs, or in his ponds. He once made treks to Canada for pike and smallmouths and traveled to several midwestern states in search of largemouth bass and stripers. Now, he spends most of his time fishing for crappie, white bass, or catfish in Kansas. "I love that thump on a jig," he says.

This spring with his wife, he camped in a fifth wheel at Fall River

for six weeks during the crappie spawn. "It was an odd year," he recalls. "The fish never really came to the banks, and I never once caught a limit. But we did catch a lot of nice fish. One morning I caught 37 crappie on a jig, and by the scale, 21 of them weighed 2 pounds or bigger."

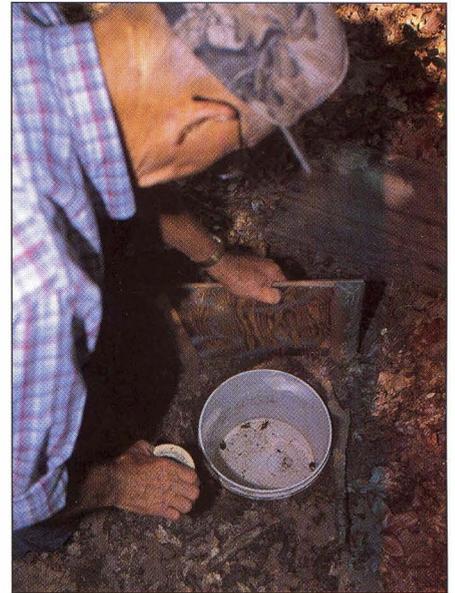
McDonald likes to crappie fish using a 12-foot rod with a cork and jig. When fish are shallow, he wades along the shoreline. Once he caught a 28-pound flathead while jigging in this manner. For deeper crappie, he uses a boat to jig vertically with traditional spincast gear.

During summer and fall months, McDonald switches to catfishing. He especially likes to fish for big flatheads off the wall at the Fall River stilling basin when water is released. His record flathead on rod and reel is 50 pounds, though he recently lost a fish he thinks was

bigger. "In June, I hooked a monster on a 6-inch perch. I fought that fish for 40 minutes and had it worn out. A friend and I were 30 feet above it on the wall, trying to get the cat into a homemade net I made from a bicycle tire. The fish was just too big to get into the net. Every time we'd try to raise it, the fish would flop out. Finally, the line broke. I'm going to make a bigger net!"

McDonald also looks forward to the time each summer when shad wash against the dam. At this time, channel catfishing is excellent. "I don't use shad for bait, though," he says. "Instead, I use livers or crappie guts to give them something different. Fish of 10-12 pounds aren't uncommon."

While living in town during the 1950s and 1960s, McDonald sold bait to local anglers for 15 years. "Back then, you could seine and sell all the minnows you could catch. I



McDonald checks one of his many ground traps for carrion beetles.

used to drive out to a dam on the Arkansas River between Udall and Oxford about once a week. I could catch so many Ark River shiners that I couldn't lift the net. I'd have to let a bunch escape before I could handle them," he says.

During the same period, he wrote a weekly newspaper column that included a fishing forecast and "big fish" reports. "I kept a scale and camera handy, and people would bring in their big ones to include in the paper. A lot of them would guess the weights way high, and when we'd weigh the fish, some of them would actually get mad," he laughs.

Much of McDonald's outdoor interest is chronicled through his photographs. He has done commercial photography work and for many years maintained a darkroom. His favorite photos are of wildlife and naturescapes around his home. Bobcats and deer are frequent subjects, as are the birds that visit his feeders. A favorite photo is one of a rare albino eastern turkey that lived for a time on his farm.

After retirement in 1982, McDonald began to devote time to another life-long interest — moths and butterflies. He caught every species that lived in southeastern Kansas and traveled three times to



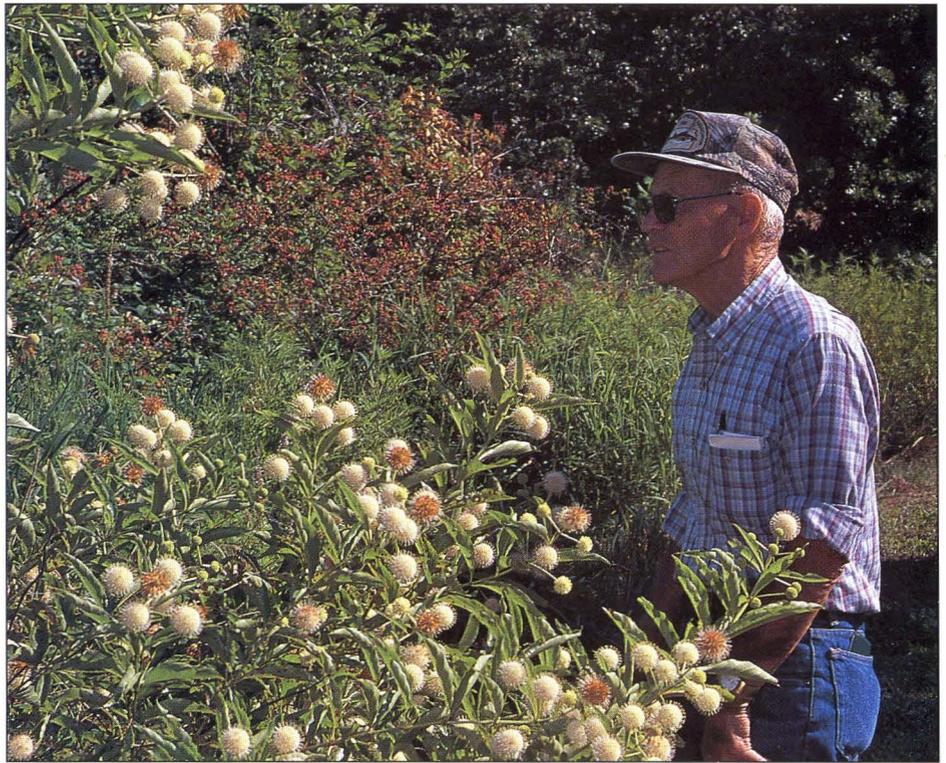
Trapping the first American burying beetle found in Kansas in 50 years landed McDonald on the cover of the Wichita Eagle. He is an expert on this rare insect.

Mexico where he studied and captured many of that country's beautiful and exotic species. Trapping in his own yard, McDonald caught and assembled an impressive collection of 32 species of underwing moths, gaining the attention of Dr. Larry Gall at Yale University. Much of McDonald's collection was borrowed for incorporation into the Yale museum and used as reference for a new book on underwing moths in the U.S.

McDonald continues his interest in the large and colorful moths of Kansas, raising several species each summer in sleeve cages on the native vegetation around his home. "I raise polyphemus, luna, Io — whatever I can find," he says. When cocoons hatch, he places females in a large screened trap to attract wild males for mating. Then the females are transferred to a paper bag, where eggs are laid. McDonald cuts the bag into strips to divide the eggs, stapling the paper strips directly to food plants. To avoid predation, he contains the growing caterpillars in 4-foot mesh bags tied to the plant. The larvae complete their development and spin cocoons, when McDonald collects them to wait for emergence. A few are kept for scientific collections, and others are mounted into beautiful art arrangements created to decorate local homes and offices, or to use in his educational exhibits. Remaining moths are released



Moth larvae, like this polyphemus, are reared in sleeve cages throughout McDonald's property.



McDonald checks a buttonbush for butterflies. His insect collections lead to many public school and civic programs each year.

around his home.

In recent years, McDonald has expanded his entomology interest to include all kinds of insects. He is particularly fascinated with carrion beetles, a colorful group that feeds on rotting flesh. To catch these, he places ground traps at soil level and baits them with fresh meat. As the meat spoils, beetles are attracted and fall into the traps where they are unable to escape.

In 1997, McDonald gained instant attention when he trapped a rare American Burying Beetle, a federally endangered insect that hasn't been recorded in Kansas since 1940. Unfortunately, it rained overnight and the beetle had drowned. Recognizing the rare find, McDonald contacted Snow Museum at University of Kansas, which had been searching for this insect in the state. The beetle was given to the museum, and McDonald

was issued a federal permit to continue collecting the species. Kansas University researchers visited McDonald's trapping sites to learn his techniques and establish other sample points in southern Kansas. McDonald has since caught four other specimens, marking them with a paint spot before release. None were recaptured. Since his first find, less than 10 American Burying Beetles have been collected by all Kansas researchers.

"That beetle created quite a stir," says McDonald. "I'd been in the newspapers when I shot down planes, but this was the first time I was featured in a front-page story." McDonald's "discovery" was carried in the Wichita Eagle-Beacon soon after the first beetle was captured.

McDonald continues to trap for these and other carrion beetles, learning and amassing information useful to researchers. His reputation as a serious, self-trained entomologist is evident by recent government contracts to trap potential watershed lake sites for the endangered beetles before construction permits

are issued.

With a high level of interest and enthusiasm for Kansas' native insects, it's only natural that McDonald shares his outdoor knowledge with various civic and school groups. "I do about 7 or 8 shows each year," he says, "mostly in schools." One day last year, he taught six straight biology classes at a local high school. He does many elementary school events, sometimes handing out cocoons so that young students can watch moths emerge at home. He also takes an annual insect exhibit to the National Hunting and Fishing Day at Independence, sponsored in part by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks.

In the cool morning air, the McDonalds lead a tour through their beautiful acreage, walking on trails they built themselves. Years of memories are interspersed with plans yet made. They stop at a blackberry patch for a quick snack and show off a pond they built and stocked. A neighbor kid and his

grandmother wave from the other side, telling of the catfish and crappie they just caught. The tour continues, and Mickey good-naturedly chides his wife for leaving branch stubs while trimming along the trails. "This is her project," he winks, while she advises that it might become his, if he keeps complaining.

The two pause to look at a cardinal nest with three eggs, and remember when a young whippoorwill was found along the trail a few years earlier. They stop in a clearing maintained for its view from the distant house. "Here is where the bobcats always cross," says Doris. "The other morning, we saw a mother and three kittens walk through here."

"There's one of my deerstands," Mickey points out. The 12-foot high platform is neatly constructed of lumber in a trio of oaks, with a chair awaiting an October vigil. "I just finished building that one, so Doris could sit and watch the deer close-up." The ladder leading into the

stand looks like something a twenty-year-old would use.

The two continue to hike, passing a spring where "you can catch some big perch." The trail leads to a meadow, where wildflowers are in full bloom. "Over there is the raspberry patch," Doris says. "It wasn't much of a crop this year."

After an hour, the pair splits up, and Mickey stops at oaks bearing sleeve cages to check on his caterpillars. The larvae are enormous, and will begin to spin cocoons within a few days.

McDonald heads up the trail, turning for home as the dew dries. "You'll have to come back when the catfish are biting," he says. "A few weeks from now we can catch them at the lake."

I plan on it. The promise of new recollections by this vibrant man would make a day of catfishing a delightful experience. The Kansas outdoor world through Mickey McDonald's eyes is truly a place of adventure. 

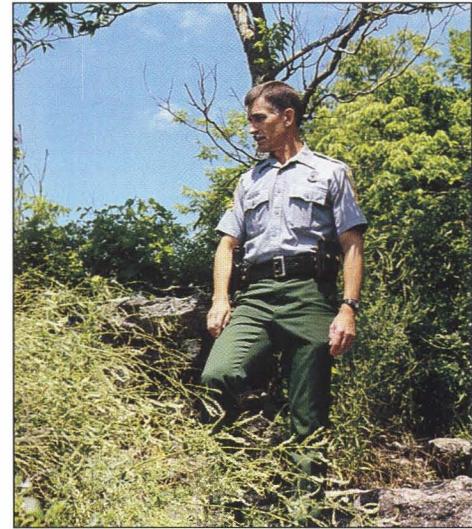


McDonald lives in the woods in a house he built while working for Archer Daniels Midland Company. A love of life and the outdoors has kept him active and healthy. He still bowhunts deer and spends each spring catching crappie.

# Wildlife Conservation Officer

by Mike Ehlebracht  
*wildlife conservation officer, Great Bend*

***Urban areas present unique challenges to wildlife conservation officers due to the high population and the growing urban sprawl.***



When you think about what it must be like to be a conservation officer, I doubt that terms like “rush hour” or “traffic jam” come to mind. And yet for Kansas CO Bruce Bertwell of Johnson County, these are regular occurrences. Most people probably picture a game warden’s job taking place in a rural setting. And in most cases, that would be right. However, even in a rural state like Kansas, there are places that are downright urban, and these urban areas require wildlife law enforcement.

While Bertwell’s district may cover only 440 square miles, there are 470,000 people living within that district — about 18 percent of Kansas’ total population. So, what does a city game warden do? Bertwell points out that even though urban sprawl is gobbling up wildlife habitat at an alarming rate, there are still many wild places in and near the city. His district boasts many streams and community lakes, which provide islands of relative calm in the busy lives of many Kansas City residents.

Bertwell spends much of his time fielding information requests, responding to animal damage complaints, and investigating reports of violations from the public. In fact, the total volume of these calls alone is staggering. Then there are the special permit reviews (game farms, pet shops, controlled shooting areas, falconry permits, etc.), inves-

tigations, public programs, and in his “spare time,” patrolling.

In his 22 years of wildlife law enforcement, Bertwell has worked in Topeka, Lawrence, and he spent five years as a special operations officer in Boise, Idaho. But for the last eight years, he has called Olathe home. His outdoor interests include hunting, camping, and running hounds, but he spends most of his outdoor time these days fishing. Bertwell enjoys many aspects of his job, including sharing information with outdoor enthusiasts and working outdoors. But it is clear that his favorite part of the job is investigating wildlife crime. He takes great pride in accepting the challenge of an investigative case.

He recalled a case where a homebuyer discovered an unplugged freezer that a prior renter had left behind. A neighbor told the new home owner that he suspected a rotting deer carcass was in the freezer. Reluctant to open the freezer himself, the homeowner called Bertwell. Armed with a nose-full of mentholatum, Bertwell managed to retrieve a rib bone for analysis. After a lengthy investigation, he determined that the doe was killed almost 2 years earlier, at night, from a road, and with a 9mm handgun. The guilty renter paid fines, received probation, served five days in jail, and lost his hunting privileges for a year.

The CO’s job involves a certain amount of risk. Sometimes it’s easy

to foresee, other times it’s more subtle. Like most COs, Bertwell can relate many incidences of careless gun handling during routine license checks. On behalf of COs everywhere, we’d like to say, “Please don’t point your guns at us, even by accident.” Other risks involve wildlife, like the sick fox Bertwell handled that tested positive for rabies. Fortunately, the situation ended happily for everyone — except the fox.

Of course, wildlife law enforcement is only part of the job. COs participate in many non-law enforcement department programs. Bertwell has enjoyed his involvement with the trap and transplant projects for antelope in western Kansas, as well as similar projects with bighorn sheep in Idaho.

“City game warden” may be a term used to describe COs like Bertwell, but in some areas, it’s getting harder to tell where the city stops and the country starts. It may not be the most romantic image of a CO’s life, but Bertwell fills a critical need in wildlife law enforcement. Like all COs, he works alone at all hours of the day or night. While speaking to high school students at a recent career-day program, I related this fact about our jobs. During follow-up questions, a young man asked if we worked, “even on Sundays, too?” Taking a line from one my favorite John Wayne movies, I replied, “There ain’t no Sundays west of Omaha.”

Edited by Mark Shoup

## LION STOCKING

Editor:

Is it a cover-up? It is easy to believe in conspiracy theories. Sometimes they make more sense than the truth. We all want to believe that our government is above reproach, but recent speculation seems to point toward covert government actions. Missions conducted under the cover of darkness. Secret call signs. Agents sworn to silence. Have we invaded yet another foreign country?

Am I speaking of fallout from the whole Clinton/Lewinsky, "cheat on my wife, lie to my country" scandal, the latest Saddam Hussein assassination attempt, campaign-money-for missile-technology-to-China cover-up? Perhaps drug use at the local sheriff's department?

No, I am talking about MOUNTAIN LIONS. In the recent past, I have personally heard of three first-hand sightings: one along the Kansas River near Manhattan a handful of years ago, another south of Holton in Jackson County in July, and a third on the western city limits of Topeka along I-70.

These are not "friend-of-a-friend-of-a-guy-I-know" stories; they were relayed to me by the person who sighted the animal. One was my brother, the second a co-worker, the third a friend. People whom I trust. With the huge deer population that Kansas now supports, it would be nice to believe that a long lost native species has returned home for a buffet. We have all seen armadillos victimized by vehicles along I-70 and the occasional stray moose from Minnesota, but it is hard to believe mountain lions came in the numbers that would seem to be needed to support the number of sightings I have heard about.

A recent "friend-of-a-friend" story I heard placed the influx squarely on the shoulders of Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP). The story goes that in an attempt to decrease the deer herd size they imported a top-of-the-food-chain predator. There is even a

number associated with the rumor - 20 breeding pair released around area reservoirs. Another story even implies KDWP has used strong-arm tactics in the recovery (and cover-up) of a cougar carcass.

Where would KDWP acquire this large number of animals? Call California, where restrictive hunting laws and outlawing of trapping has helped a lion boom. In recent years, there have been several human deaths from cougar attacks. Colorado has animals to spare too; biologist estimate their annual deer loss to cougars is 150,000 per year (Fur Fish Game, July 1999). They, too, have had human deaths due to cougar attacks.

I call on KDWP to publicly state their position on mountain lions. Tell us if you have imported cougars to the state or aided their propagation through the state. Does KDWP have evidence of a cougar population in Kansas? The knowing smirk of a conservation officer who said "No" to this question supplied my answer. Now it is time to put it in black and white and be held accountable.

*Leo (Lee) Scherer, Jr.  
Topeka*

Dear Mr. Scherer:

**Rumors that the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks is stocking mountain lions in the state have been circulating for decades, I would guess. I have heard them repeatedly in the 10 years I have worked here. We have explained to many individuals - through letters, phone conversations, personal contacts at the state fair, our magazine, and many other venues - that these rumors are unequivocally false.**

**Think about it: what would the department have to gain by stocking lions? One of our primary missions is to promote the sport of hunting, and deer have become a tremendous resource for the agency in accomplishing that mission. We are selling more and more deer permits each year, and each permit helps promote hunting. Why would we introduce a species that would reduce this valuable resource? While we recognize that deer numbers need to be**

**controlled, the real predator at the top of the food chain is man, not mountain lion.**

**In addition, what public relations advantage could we possibly gain by releasing a large, potentially dangerous predator into a state with no remaining wilderness? It would be a public relations nightmare, even if we wanted lions in Kansas, which we don't.**

**Do lions come through Kansas from time to time? Our agency and Charlie Lee, of the Kansas State University Extension Wildlife, have been trying to document them for years without success. This said, we don't deny that their occasional presence is possible. These large cats have a home range of 50 square miles or more, so yes, it's possible. We also know that the animals are sometimes kept as pets and that these pets sometimes escape, which could explain some of the sightings. To date, however, every investigated sighting has turned out to be something else, such as a bobcat, a mangy coyote, or a yellow lab.**

**To re-address your questions in summary: while we believe it is possible that wild lions might travel through the state on occasion, the Department of Wildlife and Parks does not stock - and has never even considered stocking - mountain lions. I will leave it others to speculate on how such rumors are generated.**

*-Shoup*

## RENEWAL INSPIRATION

Editor:

We had decided not to renew our subscription to *Kansas Wildlife and Parks*, but an amazing thing happened last July. I sat down for a few minutes and picked up the July/August issue. I really enjoyed the front cover photo and the article, "Velvet Wings," (Page 2) but that isn't what made me renew.

That evening we were sitting on our deck when a moth identical to the one on the cover photo flew past us to a nearby tree and stayed for 15 minutes.

We thought it must be nudging us in a certain direction, so sign us up again.

We also enjoyed the small-town trap range story, "Keeper of the Flame," (Page 8). It just goes to prove that guns and kids are not all bad if they have a guide in the right direction.

We're going to visit Pratt someday; meanwhile, keep on taking good care of Kansas.

*Mr. & Mrs. Robert Johnson  
Baldwin City*

## BISON OVERSIGHT

Editor:

I happened to see an article in the March/April issue of *Kansas Wildlife and Parks* ("Buffalo Nation," Page 2) about the public bison herds and wished someone had contacted our Friends group because we were not mentioned. Perhaps you are not aware of our existence.

Our group is fairly young, organized in 1996, but we have made great strides in getting a tour system established to give guided tours at the Finney Game Refuge. The refuge is in the sandhills, and only guided tours are allowed. However, guides are available from dawn to dusk, seven days a week, and we will take one at a time or as many as 35. Our tours are up-close and personal, given in a Suburban with a covered tour trailer for large groups.

Finney Game Refuge was established in 1916 and is home to the oldest publicly-owned herd in Kansas. The first animals were placed on the refuge in 1924.

We have visitors from 18 foreign countries and 39 states. The sandsage prairie is unique in many ways, and it is fun to help others learn to appreciate it.

*Karen Tanner, secretary/treasurer  
Friends of Finney Game Refuge  
Garden City*

**Dear Ms. Tanner:**

**We apologize for the oversight and thank you for the valuable information. Groups like yours help our agency accomplish its mission to provide the public with special outdoor opportunities while informing them of the value of the state's natural resources.**

**-Shoup**

## THANKS FROM TEXAS

Editor:

When I moved from Kansas (Arnold, Utica, Hays) in 1978 to my home near the Astrodome in Houston, I vowed to return annually during the pheasant hunting season. I did - 20 consecutive years. Each trip (an estimated 800 miles), I was joined by four to 20 friends, probably 200 total. Only one trip was disastrous, and, 19 out of 20 isn't bad for a six-day trip.

We walked out many fields in Ness, Trego, and Graham counties to bag an estimated 700 ringnecks in those 20 years. Mostly, we walked without dogs.

In 1996, I suffered a lower back injury from a nasty fall off a 4-foot bandstand onto a concrete floor. In 1997, I suffered a neck injury from an auto accident. In 1998, I was diagnosed as diabetic. Also in 1998, I was diagnosed with prostate cancer for which I am in treatment.

All good things must come to an end. No regrets. For health reasons, my west Kansas pheasant hunting days are limited, if not over.

As I pen this, I gaze at a ringneck I bagged in 1978 at fields near Arnold. Standing next to it is another beautiful ringneck I bagged at fields north of Bazine in 1983. At least 400 Kansas ringnecks adorn offices, dens, living rooms, and studies all over Houston. For each happy Texan, I say to the friendly, cordial folks of west Kansas, "Thanks for the memories." 'Til we meet again, keep the faith.

*Frank Canfield  
Spring, Texas*

**Dear Mr. Canfield:**

**Thank you for your wonderful letter. Here's hoping you can make it up to Kansas again soon.**

**-Shoup**

## WALKING MAGAZINE

Editor:

Every time I go into the local bookstore looking for a good magazine to read, your magazine ends up walking out with me. I have truly enjoyed it the last few years and would like to take this

opportunity to commend you on some excellent articles. I especially enjoyed the article on Page 8 of the May/June issue, "Catch, Photo, and Release," by Mike Blair.

As an avid fisherman for as long as I can remember, I have had many great fishing experiences that have not been recorded and could be forgotten through the years. With Mr. Blair's advice, you can be assured that a disposable camera will now become part of my tackle. I regularly practice catch and release, unless trying to stock a pond or on the chance that the ever-elusive 10-pound largemouth finds its way onto my lure. With Mr. Blair's suggestions, I will still be able to show my wife that I'm not just making up tall tales.

I would like to make sure that your readers are aware of the fact that nature is one of our most important resources. We must learn to take care of it for generations to come. While growing up in southcentral Kansas, there were many places to hunt and fish. Since moving away from my childhood home, I have found that it is becoming harder and harder to obtain permission from landowners to use their land for the pastimes I love. The main reason for these objections that I have encountered is that hunters or fishermen before me have neglected their responsibilities to treat landowners with the respect they deserve.

A few important rules to remember are these: don't hunt around cattle; close the gate when you are done fishing; pick up trash that you see while you are borrowing this person's land, even if it's not yours.

The future of your or anyone else's children depends on you acting responsibly in the outdoors. In hunter education courses, they teach you outdoor ethics. As a volunteer teacher of these classes, I feel that this also applies to fishing and other outdoor activities.

I would again like to commend you on a fine magazine that portrays the beauty that can be found in the Kansas outdoors.

*Preston Langley  
Lebo*

## RECORD DEER POACHED

What would have been a state record typical whitetail was taken illegally in southwest Kansas last deer season.

It all started when an outfitter from Colorado heard about a large whitetail that was possibly number two or three in the world. It was at a taxidermist's shop in Montrose, and he wanted to know more about it. The outfitter had learned that it was a Kansas deer and that it was possibly taken around the Garden City area. The outfitter contacted one of his friends in southwest Kansas to find out if a resident from Colorado could have a Kansas deer permit and if he had heard of any large deer taken in the Garden City area. The friend contacted me (BJ Thurman), and the investigation began.

I contacted the outfitter from Colorado and was able to get the name of the individual who had supposedly shot the deer and the name of the taxidermist where the deer was taken to be mounted. With this information in hand, I established that there was no permit issued to this man, Quentin Ladner, and no permits legally transferred to him.

I then found more information about

a large whitetail buck taken on the Black Ranch on the Cimarron River in Seward County. Several people had seen pictures of the large deer. I obtained one of the pictures that showed Mr. Ladner holding the deer head by an out building on the ranch. The picture was detailed enough that I could match up the building to show that it was indeed on the Black Ranch, and the snow fall in the picture gave a good time frame as to when the picture was taken. I then searched to see if the owner of the ranch had received a permit. Dwight Shepherd had received a landowner/tenant permit for unit 17.

I then contacted USFW senior resident agent Manny Medina because there was a possible Lacy Act violation of transporting an illegal deer across state lines. I also contacted Colorado officer Glen Case and asked for his assistance.

Interviews were coordinated in each state to happen on the same day. CO Tracy Galvin, Medina, and I were to handle the interviews in Kansas with Dwight Shepherd, and USFW agents from Denver and local game wardens from Montrose were to interview Quentin Ladner in Colorado.

At the Ladner home, Mrs. Ladner led the Colorado team on a wild goose chase. She said the head was at the taxi-

dermist and knew nothing about it. The Colorado team headed back to the taxidermist and found out that Ladner still had the deer head. The Colorado team headed back to Ladner's residence, and Mrs. Ladner then told the officers the truth about the deer. Quentin Ladner pulled up a short time later, and when he stepped out of the car he asked them if he was going to jail.

Ladner admitted to shooting the deer in Kansas without a permit and tagging it with Dwight Shepherd's landowner tag.

The interview in Kansas went without incident. Shepherd told us that Ladner was down the previous year and had found the deer's drop antlers. Ladner had asked Shepherd that if he didn't draw permit, could he (Ladner) hunt Shepard's deer for him. Shepherd agreed to this because he doesn't hunt much but does enjoy deer meat.

The rest is history. Ladner did not draw a permit, and Shepherd did. Ladner came to Kansas, shot the deer, tagged it with Shepherd's tag, gave Shepherd the meat, and took the deer head back to Colorado.

Ladner was cited in Federal court on a Lacy Act violation of transporting an illegal deer across state lines. The federal court fined him \$2,500. He was also charged with the following state charges: taking a deer without a valid permit, illegal transfer of a deer tag, possession of an untagged deer, and hunting without a Kansas hunting license. He was ordered to pay \$2,500 restitution to the state. He also lost his hunting privileges in Kansas for three years and had to pay fair market value for his rifle if he wanted it returned.

Shepherd was charged with illegal transferring a deer tag and possessing an untagged deer carcass. He was ordered to pay a \$500 fee, and lost his hunting privileges for one year.

The gross score on the deer was 212 6/8, and it netted 205 1/8 typical. The current state record typical whitetail taken with firearms scored 198 2/8 and was taken in Nemaha County in 1974.

--B.J. Thurman, conservation officer, Elkhart

## MYSTERIOUS Caller



One night during the 1998 deer season, I (Glen Cannizzaro) received an anonymous message left on my answering machine. The message went as such: "You need to go to (an address) in Leavenworth County, reference illegal deer hunting activities." The caller also said that I should be nonchalant and check the barn.

The the next morning, conservation officers Bruce Bertwell, Olathe; John George, Atchison; and I met and went to the address given. I knocked on the door, which was answered by a white male. I then identified the officers and told him that I understood he had been successful in deer season and that I needed to see the deer. He said, "No problem," and that the deer were hanging in the barn but first he needed to go to his truck and get his tags.

I allowed him to retrieve his tags, and we then went to the barn where he had two bucks and one doe hanging. Only one was tagged.

Our investigation determined that he had shot all three deer and put his wife's tag on one. All three deer were seized, and the man was issued three citations - two for failure to tag a deer and one for taking a deer without a permit. The man's wife received two citations for illegally transferring big game permits. Each paid \$500 in fines and \$45 in court costs, a family total of \$1,090.

--Glen Cannizzaro, conservation officer, Tonganoxie

## GRAVES, ROBERTS ENDORSE CARA

Gov. Bill Graves has joined Sen. Pat Roberts in announcing their endorsement of the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA, Senate Bill 25/House Bill 701.) Both expressed enthusiasm for the bill's primary features, which would benefit parks, wildlife, landowners and Kansans who enjoy our wild resources. More than 50 different Kansas organizations support the principles of CARA.

Hailed by proponents as the most far-reaching conservation legislation in 50 years, the measure is gaining strong bipartisan support in Washington.

"This is landmark legislation that will positively impact the lives of Kansas families for generations," says Gov. Graves. "Not only will it assist vital wildlife conservation efforts, it provides the opportunity to upgrade our parks and other outdoor facilities that we all enjoy."

The measure could bring as much as \$9 million annually to Kansas for state and local park enhancement, as well as wildlife conservation.

So what does this mean to the Department of Wildlife and Parks? In the Parks Division, it could make possible a fully-funded seasonal naturalist program, as well as enhanced park maintenance and development. Gov. Graves and most others recognize that the \$10 million revitalization program for our parks is a good start but that we need the infusion of these major Land and Water Conservation dollars to continue revitalizing state parks.

About 10 percent of the money earmarked for the nongame wildlife portion could be applied to the Law Enforcement Division, enabling a significant enhancement in law enforcement capabilities.

The Fisheries and Wildlife Division would receive funding for major wildlife viewing projects, enhanced wetland acquisition, and improved management resources and capabilities.

The Information and Education Section would benefit with more resources aimed at development of visitor centers and education program

## Muzzleloaders Aid Hunters and Fishermen

For the sixth consecutive year, members of the Kansas Muzzleloading Association met June 12-13 at Kingman State Fishing Lake and Byron Walker Wildlife Area to hold their annual work day and board meeting. Twelve members met early Saturday morning and donated their time and skills to improve the area, about 8 miles west of Kingman, for area fishermen and hunters.

The group constructed a set of stairs to be installed on the back side of the lake's dam to give fishermen safe access to a rock fishing pier. Members also pulled out floating goose nests for the summer, stained picnic tables in the shelter house, and placed wood chips around tree plantings and signposts at the lake and area headquarters. To complete the workday, they walked the nature trail removing overhanging brush and trees.

It is hard to drive through the area without seeing a project that the club has worked on. They originally built floating goose nests, forb seed drying racks, no-wake signs, an equipment storage shed, and part of an addition to the main shop building. The club was responsible for installing all of the picnic tables, grills, and fishing benches at the lake, as well as reconstructing an ornamental pond at the headquarters complex.

Troy Smith, wildlife manager for Kingman State Fishing Lake and Byron Walker Wildlife Area, is elated to have such a group interested in the area.

"This group is fantastic," he says. "They show up every year, often using their own tools and vehicles and despite extreme heat, mosquitoes, chiggers, and poison ivy, work to ensure Kansas sportsmen and women have high-quality outdoor recreational opportunities. I personally wish to thank all the participants from this year and previous years for their help. They accomplish a lot of excellent projects that wouldn't get done otherwise."

Such groups are a model of community-government cooperation. Anyone interested in such projects in their area of the state should contact the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Park, (316) 672-5911 or e-mail [feedback@wp.state.ks.us](mailto:feedback@wp.state.ks.us).

-Shoup

funds. The Environmental Services Section could benefit through provision of financial incentive partnerships between private landowners and state agencies for conserving and restoring rare wildlife species.

Many have been working ardently towards this since the 1980 Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, which recognized the need for nongame programs but never carried any appropriated funding. Now we stand the best chance ever in achieving this goal with the Conservation and Reinvestment Act.

Money for the states will come from offshore oil leasing arrangements. Title I of CARA involves assigning some of these funds to the coastal states to help

them with the infrastructure and support services for the off-shore oil development. Title II provides money for parks through the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and Title III provides money for wildlife conservation efforts.

The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee held a mark-up session on S. 25 last July 28, and the House Resources Committee held a mark-up session in August. CARA and Resources 2000 cosponsors are currently in negotiations aimed toward one consensus bill. Resources 2000 is the Clinton Administration's bill that mimics the Land and Water Conservation features but does not have a viable wildlife component.

Once the bills are marked up, the main opportunity for any further changes will be during the compromise sessions between the House and the Senate. So far, Kansas only has Senator Roberts as a co-sponsor. In the midst of continual staff reductions, additional resource challenges, and pressing educational and recreational demands, if you ever thought that right now might be the best time for some kind of action on your part to help CARA, contact your federal senator and representatives.

Representatives offices and e-mail address may be found on the internet at <http://www.house.gov/>. Senators may be found at <http://www.senate.gov/>.

*-Ken Brunson, wildlife diversity coordinator, Pratt*

## BOTTOMS CATTAILS

Cattails are a big problem at Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area, according to Karl Grover, area manager for the state's largest wetland. However, a grant from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation is providing funds to try aggressive new strategies to combat these stubborn plants. Currently, four techniques are being used to reduce stands of cattails, which now choke large portions of area pools.

Cattails are a troublesome species that can seed large areas of shallow marsh land in a short time. Once sprouted on moist soil, they develop tuberous root systems that can tolerate drought and flooding up to 48 inches deep. By forming dense stands, cattails crowd out the open mudflats that shorebirds and waterfowl rely on to feed and rest. Once established, they are difficult to control.

Historically, Cheyenne Bottoms was relatively free of cattails. Surveys found virtually none of the plants in 1929, with only a minor occurrence in the 1960s. However, by the 1970s, the plants were common. Capable of exponential growth, cattails continued to expand through the 1980s and 1990s, until some management pools are now 50 percent to 90 percent covered.

Unfortunately, water levels at

Cheyenne Bottoms, which are ideal for waterfowl habitat and flood prevention of adjacent landowners, also favor cattail growth. The 1998 BOR grant of \$1.4 million is allowing experimentation to help determine best control for these plants.

Currently, a 3-year grazing research project is being conducted at Cheyenne Bottoms to determine the effects of cattle on cattails. Various stocking levels are being studied, and there are promising results. Cattails are greatly diminished when grazed extensively, but it remains to be seen how well the cattle do on a diet of cattails.

A second measure, currently the primary management tool for cattail control at Cheyenne Bottoms, is burning and discing. However, it is difficult to get the plants dried out sufficiently for a good burn, and a tracked-tractor is often necessary for working the moist soil. Even so, several thousand acres have been treated in this way with reasonable success.

Another measure currently in use is "scraping," which goes a step beyond discing by actually removing about 10 inches of soil that contains cattail roots and seeds. Scrapings of 1/2 acre increase wildlife use in otherwise dense cattail stands, inviting bird life and making ideal hunting sites.

The fourth control measure involves spraying to kill cattails. This alternative is expensive and does not immediately remove dead vegetation. Spraying is used in areas too wet to treat in other ways and is not fully effective until the standing dead cattails rot away. Even so, it removes a potential seed source. It is being evaluated as part of the overall control package.

Although cattail control is a difficult problem, the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks is making headway. Every bit of control achieved improves habitat on which wildlife depends. Hopefully, continued work at Cheyenne Bottoms will result in more open conditions at this famous marsh in future years.

*-Blair*

## GROUPS SUE NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION SERVICE

On July 12, the National Wildlife Federation (NWF), the South Dakota Wildlife Federation, the South Dakota Resources Coalition, the Izaak Walton League, and the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe filed suit against the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) in U.S. District Court. The lawsuit stems from a NRCS decision to alter the method of mapping and defining wetlands in South Dakota.

The lawsuit charges that NRCS violated its 1994 agreement not to change the state's wetlands designations before consulting with and obtaining the concurrence of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The suit further charges that NRCS violated the National Environmental Policy Act by failing to perform required environmental assessments.

South Dakota NRCS State Conservationist Dean Fisher said the change was prompted by differences in the wetland determinations between South Dakota and Minnesota.

"The state conservationists in Minnesota and South Dakota agreed to implement identical procedures to ensure that we are applying our wetland procedures consistently regardless of which state you live in," said Fisher. "While NRCS recognizes the values wetlands provide, we must classify them according to the wetlands conservation provisions of the enacted Farm Bills."

However, the conservation groups filing the suit believe that the change in wetlands designation will have negative impacts on waterfowl and shorebird populations, as well as damage water quality in the state's lakes and streams.

*-Chad Luce, public information officer, Topeka*

## SUPER ARCHER

In 1925, Howard Hill won the National Flight Tournament, a contest in which archers competed to shoot an arrow the farthest. He dominated that tournament for the next seven years, setting a national record in 1928 with a shot of 391 yards, 1 foot, 11 inches with a 60-inch longbow pulling 172 pounds.

In 1925, he hunted in Canada, where he amazed his guide with a successful 160-yard shot on a duck.

In 1937, Warner Brothers began filming *The Adventures of Robin Hood* and hired Hill to do the archer scenes.

After Robin Hood, Hill continued to build bows, shoot competitively (he won 196 consecutive field archery tournaments between 1926 and 1942), make short films, and do trick shooting for the growing movie industry. He hung out with Errol Flynn and Rory Calhoun and made enough contacts to finance his masterpiece, *Tembo*. The film was translated into seven languages and shown in 57 countries.

Hill developed a style of instinctive shooting he called "secondary aiming." While this method is not used much today by instinctive shooters, it worked for Hill, who would shoot hundreds,

sometimes thousands of arrows daily. Such an arduous practice schedule, combined with his natural athletic ability and imposing power (he is supposed to have had a 9-inch wrist and could string a 100-pound bow while seated), produced some impressive shooting. Among his many stunts, he would shoot dimes out of the air, fire 12 arrows in less than 25 seconds, and light a match at 30 feet with one arrow, then extinguish it with the next.

Hill died in 1975 at the age of 75.

—from "The World's Greatest Archer," by Lionel Atwill, in *Field and Stream*, June 1998

## IS IT LEGAL?

The following items are just a few of the most common concerns about hunting activities that may or may not be illegal. By no means does this cover all illegal activity, but it should help answer a

few of the most commonly-asked questions about hunting in Kansas. This information is also covered in the "Common Concerns" section of the 1999-2000 Kansas Hunting and

Furharvesting Regulations Summary, available wherever licenses are sold.

For more information, contact your local conservation officer or office of the Department of Wildlife and Parks.

### Conservation Officers:

- Conservation officers have authority to enter private land and check hunters, anglers, and trappers and to inspect facilities used for processing or storing wildlife.
- It is illegal to refuse to allow a conservation officer to check your license or inspect any wildlife in your possession.

### Deer:

- It is illegal to purchase a hunt-own-land deer permit and a statewide archery or regular firearms permit.
- It is legal to bait deer, turkey, and other game animals, except migratory game birds.
- It is illegal to move big game until it has been properly tagged.

### Furharvesting:

- Trapping, as well as hunting and fishing, is allowed and occurs on all public wildlife areas.
- If you plan to sell furs taken this calendar year in the next calendar year, be sure to keep your old furharvester license. It is required for sales records.
- All traps and snares must be tagged.
- It is illegal to display any coyote carcass. This does not apply to the pelt of a skinned coyote.

### Game Transport:

- It is illegal to transport pheasants without a foot or feathers attached that identifies the bird as a male.
- It is illegal to transport migratory game birds (except doves) without one fully-feathered wing or head attached, readily identifying the bird's sex and species.

### Hunter Education:

- Anyone born on or after July 1, 1957, must pass a hunter education course, and anyone under 27 years old must carry proof of hunter education training while hunting.
- Hunter education cards from other states and Canada are valid in Kansas.

### Equipment:

- Except by special permit, a crossbow is legal equipment only for rabbit, squirrel, coyote, and furbearers.
- Shotguns must be plugged - maximum two shells in the magazine - when hunting doves, ducks, geese, and other migratory game birds.
- A pistol firing shotshells is not legal for taking upland or migratory game birds.

### Target Practice:

- It is illegal to target practice on public land except in designated areas.

### Possession:

- Possession of migratory nongame birds, feathers, nests, or eggs is illegal.
- A person must be a legal resident of Kansas to apply for a lifetime hunting or fishing license.
- Railroad rights-of-way are not open to public hunting. Permission from landowners on both sides of a road is required to hunt road ditches.
- Sale of game is illegal and can be a felony.

—Shoup

# IN SEARCH OF THE ARK

by Mark Shoup



*Eventually the watcher joined the river, and there was only one of us. I believe it was the river.*

— Norman MacLean

The waters of the Arkansas River run in my blood and connect landmarks and events winding through my life. I have sought these currents from my hometown of Larned to their headwaters near Climax, Colorado. When I was growing up, I romped along the Ark's banks, swam her currents, and fished her deepest holes. In 1974, I even camped beside her for a month and drove a shallow sand point, from which she offered cold, clear drinking water.

Then in the late seventies and early eighties, I watched as irrigation tubes and dams in Colorado sucked her bone dry. I feared she would never flow again.

So it was with pleasant surprise that I greeted the Ark's return earlier this decade - the result of unusual rainfall in western Kansas and a successful lawsuit by Kansas against Colorado over water use. Her banks, though narrowed by dry years, were running full again. In the summer of 1998, I took my boys swimming in the Ark near Larned - at the same spot where I had camped 24 years earlier. As we bobbed along in the brown water, butts dragging the gravel bottom, I explained the river's checkered history and my relationship with her.

And the river was drawing them into her history, their own relationships.

This summer, we vacationed at my brother-in-law's cabin in Twin Lakes, Colorado, only 5 miles from the Ark and some 30 miles south of her headwaters. My oldest son, Logan, is 11 and a fish worshipper. Despite the rain, we fished as

much as possible in the local lakes, tributaries, beaver ponds - whose waters would soon feed the Ark and lead us home - and the big river herself, snowmelt clear. In the middle of one cast, Logan declared, "I just love fishing. I love it more than football, and you know what a football idiot I am." He had caught nothing longer than 6 inches, so I could appreciate the sincerity of this declaration.

Will, my 8-year-old son, fished with us some, too. He caught small rainbows at Twin Lakes and fished along the boulder-strewn banks of the Twin Lakes Forebay - a power generation lake that drives giant turbines at the main lake far below. One day, the three of us were fishing the Forebay when a black cloud boiled over Mt. Elbert and poured down rain. Wind frothed the lake and chilled the air. Will soon huddled between two rocks, shivering. Like me, he's not a hardcore angler, and I empathized.

"Come, on, Bud," I told him, "let's go back to the truck and let Logan fish." I knew Logan would not want to quit, and I felt sorry for him, as well. His line had tangled; the fish wouldn't bite; and we had been battling the weather all morning. Figuratively as well as literally, a dark cloud hung just above his head.

Bravely, Will said, "It's okay, Dad. You can go ahead and fish." But this wouldn't be fair.

"What the heck, Will. I'm ready to sit in the truck for awhile. Let's let Logan fish." So William and I trudged back to the truck, threw our tackle in the bed, and jumped in the warm, dry cab. He described his latest "Mystery Minds" story, a series of books he is writing, and introduced me to games of 8-, 10-, and 20-square tick-tack-toe, which he always seemed to win. Some 150 yards down the bank, Logan cast through the rain in his shorts and raincoat, throw after throw, never looking back, never hurried.

Thirty minutes later, the rain let up, and I went to check on Logan. "Come on,

Bud. Let's get some lunch."

He looked up at me, beaming. "Just one more cast, Dad?"

"Have you caught anything?" I asked.

"No," he replied happily, "but I've had lots of bites. This has really cheered me up, Dad!"

Later, we hiked along the Arkansas near Buena Vista and, in the mountains above the cabin, explored tiny streams that flowed downhill toward our river. On the way home, we followed the Ark downhill through Buena Vista and Salida - where she turned muddy from the summer rains - through Pueblo and onto the plains along Highway 50. The mountain highways were as pinched with cars as the river was with rafts, so once we escaped Pueblo's traffic, Rose and I breathed a sigh of relief.

We were now in familiar territory. We were, in fact, in my mother's childhood landscape - the melon and corn fields near Rocky Ford. As we drove along the flatlands, I noted furrows of dark, rich water criss-crossing the highway and explained to the boys the purpose of these canals, and that they carry Ark River water. Although we had left the "colorful" part of Colorado, we had all become engrossed in this terrain. Outside Rocky Ford, we stopped next to a roadside fruit stand and bought vine-ripened Rocky Ford cantaloupe, beets, and five dozen ears of sweet corn.

In town, the road crossed a verdant, green canal and passed what was once my grandmother's house. We took some pictures, then continued our journey, counting the times we crossed the river. John Martin Reservoir, near Las Animas, was brimming full, but the Ark flowed on. By the time we passed the long old river at Larned, we had lost count of the times we had crossed her. It was at least 15, we thought.

Today, I live closer to the Rattlesnake and the Ninescah than the Ark. Still, both rivers feed the ancient Ark in a patchwork of veins swelling the heart of the sandy lowlands. As MacLean wrote, "Eventually, all things merge into one, and a river runs through it."

And so the Ark rolls on through Kansas, Oklahoma, Arkansas - crossing other lives, carving history, establishing relationships.



## GENETICS TESTS SURPRISING

Kansas state fish hatcheries have been in operation for more than 80 years, and today they function with a mix of time-tested methods and modern technology. For example, channel catfish are produced in hatchery ponds much as they were when Pratt Hatchery manager Seth Way developed the technique in the 1930s. On the other hand, modern genetics testing methods have opened up a new field of exciting possibilities for fish culturists and biologists.

Laboratory testing of fish tissue, called protein electrophoretic analysis, can determine the species or subspecies of a fish, as well as its genetic background. This information can be valuable to fish culturists and district biologists because certain subspecies may adapt differently to lakes in different climates. For example, the Florida subspecies of largemouth bass grows faster and larger than other subspecies, making it attractive to anglers in other regions. However, because the Florida bass evolved in a warm climate, biologists have learned that it may not grow as fast nor as large as the northern subspecies in cooler northern climates. In many cases, it grows slower and spawns later than the northern subspecies. Knowing the genetics of fish brood stock can benefit biologists when they are establishing a new fishery or maintaining an existing one.

Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks fisheries staff recently began to inventory the genetic histories of brood stock in state hatcheries, as well as that of select wild populations in reservoirs and state fishing lakes. When this research is complete, culturists hope the data will enable them to produce fish that allow

biologists to create and maintain better sport fisheries.

Channel catfish, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, spotted bass, as well as white bass and wipers were tested. Fish samples from hatchery brood stock, as well as those from several reservoirs were sent to the Center for Aquatic Ecology at the Illinois Natural History Survey in Champaign, Ill. The Center is considered one of the leading facilities in genetic analysis.

The results of the largemouth bass analysis surprised biologists. The majority of the Meade Hatchery brood fish contained genes from the Florida subspecies of largemouth bass. The Meade brood stock was established more than 20 years ago with fish from a federal hatchery, a state of Texas hatchery and a private hatchery in Missouri. At the time, genetics testing of this nature wasn't available, and it wasn't considered critical until recent years.

Largemouth bass from all but one of the reservoir samples were determined to be pure northern subspecies. The exception was La Cygne Reservoir near

Pleasanton. La Cygne is an electric power plant cooling lake, and Florida bass were stocked experimentally 20 years ago. Biologists wanted to learn if the Florida bass would prosper in the lake, which has warmer water temperatures as a result of the power plant discharge.

In light of these findings, fish culturists are planning to replace the largemouth bass brood stock in our hatcheries with pure northern subspecies bass. Continued genetics testing will ensure that all largemouth bass produced in our hatcheries and stocked in public waters are northern bass.

Channel catfish test results showed that our brood stock descended from native Kansas channel catfish, a subspecies well-known for its excellent productivity and growth rate. Naturally, these fish are well-adapted to Kansas waters, and the millions of channel cats produced each year at state hatcheries provide excellent angling opportunities.

Fisheries staff were also pleased to learn that white bass/striped bass hybrids, commonly called wipers, were not reproducing with white bass or other hybrids. The populations of smallmouth bass and spotted bass tested were pure.

As with many discoveries, the genetics information raised more questions than it provided answers. Other fish species will be tested, and continuing research will attempt to answer those questions. Fisheries management and culture continues to be a unique mix of traditional and modern convention, and each new discovery helps provide better fishing.

- Miller

## GREAT YEAR FOR PADDLEFISH

This was an exceptional year for paddlefish anglers at Chetopa, Kan., with a record 2,010 paddlefish harvested. The previous record was 1,400 fish in 1990.

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks has had very good harvest information since 1993, when the first check station was established. Prior to that, harvest estimates were made from information provided by local conservation officers.

The following are harvest results since 1984:

1998 - 800	1992 - 71	1987 - 150
1997 - 394	1992 - 71	1986 - 100
1996 - 497	1991 - 44	1985 - 805
1995 - 769	1990 - 1,400	1984 - 600
1994 - 325	1989 - 20	
1993 - 541	1988 - 160	

Paddlefish are long lived, some attaining 30 years of age. Most fish harvested range from 7 to 18 years of age.

-Shoup

## AS THE LAKE TURNS

What's up with the lake? Why does it stink? Where's all this yucky stuff coming from?

Questions like these are typical in fall because what's taking place is a natural phenomenon that occurs in lakes, some ponds, and reservoirs. This dramatic, annual event is called turnover.

Preparations for fall turnover begin in summer. As air and water temperatures begin to rise, the water forms into three distinctive layers: the epilimnion, the metalimnion, and the hypolimnion. The top layer, the epilimnion, is at the surface because it is lighter and less dense. This layer is constantly in contact with the atmosphere; thus, it continues to heat up as air temperatures rise. The epilimnion is the only layer that contains aquatic plants, which produce oxygen.

Under the warm upper layer is a thin zone known as the metalimnion, or thermocline. This is a layer of rapid temperature and oxygen change. Cooler than the epilimnion, aquatic animals will use this zone if oxygen levels remain high enough.

At the bottom of the lake is a layer of cold water called the hypolimnion. Generally it is 30 or more degrees cooler than the surface and has very low oxygen levels. Because sunlight cannot penetrate these depths, plants cannot survive and oxygen is not produced. Any remnants of available oxygen from the previous turnover are consumed by decomposing organic matter. Fish and other aquatic animals cannot survive these harsh conditions and move up the water column to zones of higher oxygen content.

In autumn, when surface water temperatures fall to about 50 degrees Fahrenheit, the epilimnion becomes as dense as the deeper water and sinks. This downward movement of surface water displaces the deeper water and forces it upward. As the water begins to circulate, fall turnover occurs and distributes oxygen throughout the lake.

During fall turnover, the rising hypolimnion may bring up pieces of par-

tially decayed material that sometimes have a rotten egg odor. This is sulfur dioxide gas that is released into the atmosphere as it reaches the surface.

After fall turnover, the water is no longer stratified. Winter water temperatures range from 32 degrees at the surface to a warmer 39 degrees at the bottom. Because water is densest and heaviest at 39 degrees, this temperature is the determining factor of lake turnover.

In early spring, when surface water warms a to 39 degrees, it becomes heavier than the water below it, and lake turnover begins again. The three layers of water begin to form, and the cycle continues.

*-Jasen Ballenger,  
The Sanctuary*

## JACKRABBIT DISTRIBUTION

Historically, the black-tailed jackrabbit was distributed throughout Kansas. Data from 30 years of rural mail carrier surveys (RMCS) conducted by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks indicates a steady downward trend in jackrabbit populations.

In one Wildlife and Parks study, jackrabbit counts from RMCS were averaged by county from all surveys conducted in 1975-76 and 1995-96. The RMCS is conducted by more than 500

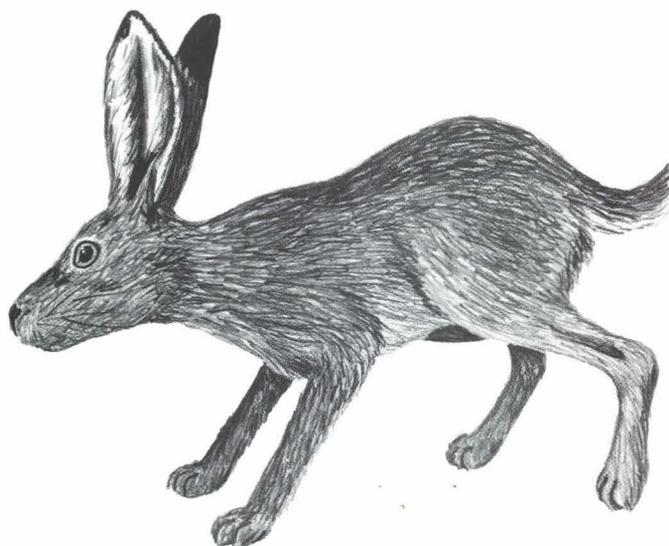
volunteer rural mail carriers in January, April, July, and October. The carriers are asked to record numbers of various species observed while driving their usual delivery routes during a specific five-day period. They also record the miles driven during that period and the county in which their route is primarily located. This procedure has not changed since the late 1960s.

Jackrabbits were observed in 66 and 54 Kansas counties during 1975-76 and 1995-96, respectively. In 1975-76, highest jackrabbit abundances were in southcentral and southwestern Kansas. Low numbers of jackrabbits were present in southeastern, northwestern, and northcentral Kansas. Jacks were not found in northeastern or eastcentral Kansas.

In 1995-96, the highest numbers of jackrabbits remained in the southcentral and southwestern counties. Jacks are now absent from most of the southeastern and eastcentral counties that had low numbers in 1975-76. Low numbers are present in northeastern Kansas.

Between the 1970s and the 1990s, jackrabbits disappeared from 24 counties, increased in 13 counties, and remained the same in four counties. In the 1990 surveys, jacks appeared in seven counties that did not have observations in the 1970s.

*-Roger Applegate, small game coordinator, Emporia*



**JUST A CLICK AWAY**

Starting September 1, hunters, anglers, and boaters will be able to purchase licenses, some permits, and registration renewals from the department's website ([www.kdwp.state.ks.us](http://www.kdwp.state.ks.us)), as well as subscribe to *Kansas Wildlife and Parks* magazine. Through software developed by the Information Network of Kansas, anyone with an Internet connection and a printer will be able to purchase, and print, many department issuances 24 hours a day, seven days a week over a secured system using any major credit card. Unique security codes will be printed on the licenses to ensure their validity.

While anyone is welcome to purchase a license from their home computer, private vendors will still offer the same department issuances as in the past. Many major KDWP offices will also sell licenses and permits using the department web site, instead of writing them out by hand. This should speed up the transaction, and, more importantly, begin the formation of a computer database of license purchases. This data will make it easier, and less expensive, for the department to survey the state's hunters, anglers, and boaters.

—Chad Luce, public information officer, Topeka

**GEARY COUNTY TRAILS**

Junction City Parks and Recreation has added three new nature trails. South Park Trail was made possible by a grant from the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. This 1 1/8-mile trail winds along the edge of Junction City overlooking the Smoky Hill River Valley and other spectacular views along the Flint Hills. The entire trail is handicapped accessible and open for pedestrian and bicycle use.

A new trail at Homer's Pond provides streamside views, and the pond is stocked with various kinds of game fish. Handicapped fishing areas have recently been added. Homer's Pond Trail is approximately 1 mile long and winds

through a richly-wooded area in the heart of Junction City. This trail was made possible by a grant from Wal-Mart Corporation.

The third new trail is the Riverwalk Trail, which is 10 feet wide and stretches along 4.8 miles of the Republican River. Trailheads are located at the Fort Riley boundary just next to the Republican River and near the outlet tube at Milford Reservoir. This trail is open for pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians. Use of the trail is restricted to daylight hours. No motorized vehicles are allowed in spring and summer.

This trail was a cooperative effort among the Junction City Parks and Recreation Department, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Army at Fort Riley, and a grant from the Department of Wildlife and Parks.

For more information on these trails, phone (785) 223-5172, or e-mail [wellsd@jc.net](mailto:wellsd@jc.net).

—Junction City Parks and Recreation

**TUTTLE PART OF NATIONAL EVENT**

Tuttle Creek State Park will participate in National Public Lands Day Sept. 25 by hosting volunteers to help clean up and develop the trail system around the

reservoir.

But National Public Lands Day is more than a cleanup; it is a day of building and renewing public places where Americans go for recreation. There will be more than 140 sites in nearly every state in 1999. The event began five years ago with 700 volunteers at three sites. In 1998, more than 17,000 volunteers and community partners contributed more than \$1.5 million in improvements to public lands in 82 locations.

—Chad Luce, public information officer, Topeka

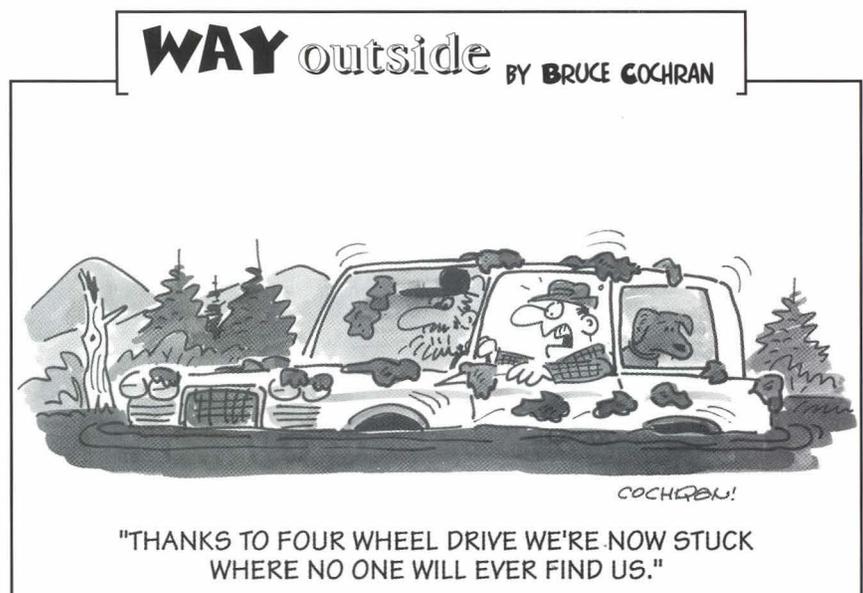
**FAIR FACELIFT**

The department's state fair exhibit is undergoing a massive overhaul. The antiquated, boxy, undersized, leaking, rusty aquaria have been removed. Although they served us well for several decades, they've been replaced by a new 900-gallon aquarium, two new 150-gallon aquariums, and four new terrariums.

Also slated for appearance at this year's state fair are fiberglass replicas of 15 state record fish, from largemouth bass to paddlefish.

Come by and sample our new look at the fair, which runs Sept. 10-19.

—Mathews



# The HAUNTING OWLS

**T**here once was a woman who was afraid of owls. When asked why, she would say that a hooting owl on a rooftop predicted that someone in the house would soon die. Superstitions like this are common for any of the mysterious creatures of the night. The owl is no exception.

Fear of the owl and hooting is ancient. Roman history claims that three of the Caesars had their deaths foretold by the hooting of owls in day light. This old attitude toward the owl as a bad omen continued through the Dark Ages and still endures in some people's minds.

Owls are not night creatures (called "nocturnal") because they've

been cursed, however. Hunting in the dark is very successful for owls. Most rodents are active at night, and owls are equipped to take advantage of the darkness. Owls

have large eyes -- so large that they can't be moved in their sockets. To make up for this, owls can move their heads in a 270-degree radius.

Owls also have sensitive hearing -- so sensitive that barn owls can capture prey in complete darkness. One ear

opening of an owl is higher on its head than the other. This allows the owl to be more accurate when pinpointing the sound of a mouse.

Also, owls have facial feathers that aid in directing sound to the ear. Their flight feathers are covered



with a soft, fuzzy down with a combed leading edge. This makes their flying completely silent. To these features, add sharp talons and a hooked bill, and you have a master hunter.

Owl calls are haunting, however. A barn owl's cry can make the hair on the back of your neck stand on end. These screaming calls are spooky enough to cause old abandoned houses to be declared haunted. Yet the calls are simply the owl's means of communicating its location to mates and letting other owls know its territory is occupied.

Several owls nest in Kansas. They



are the great-horned, barred, barn, screech, burrowing, long-eared, and possibly the short-eared. The short-eared owl is more commonly seen during the winter months hunting or perching along open grasslands. The snowy and the saw-whet owls are winter visitors to Kansas, as well.

It is interesting to watch how Hollywood movies use the menacing calls of owls whenever some evil is lurking about. But once a person knows a little about owls and how they live, owls gain respect and lose some of their mystery. After, all owls are adapted to what they do best -- capture nocturnal rodents.





# Backlash

by Mike Miller

## Where The Doves Are

(or maybe, where are the doves?)

I've been hunting doves for longer than I care to admit. I always look forward to the Sept. 1 opener because it's the true start of the fall hunting seasons in Kansas. Okay, so it's usually nasty hot, and the mosquitoes have organized blood drives waiting, but dove hunting is a bird hunter's first chance in the field. Opening day of dove season is a treasured tradition in these parts, but I have to say that doves can be despicable creatures.

The biggest problem with doves is that you can't depend on them. We'll see doves by the scads in early August and be convinced that a limit of doves will be as easy as sitting on a bucket. By the middle of August the speedy little gray birds (SLGBs — probably the nicest thing I've ever called them) will be seen in huge numbers on the highlines, around waterholes, and worked wheat fields. But it's all a big tease because on an Aug. 31 scouting trip, you won't count a dozen birds.

"They're around," you'll tell yourself. "All those birds couldn't have left that quickly." But they could have. On Sept. 1, you'll awake to an unusually cool morning. "At least it won't be so stinkin' hot," you'll say. But what you should say is that "at least my gun barrel won't get hot because this wimpy cool front has pushed the zillion doves we had to Mexico." In fact while you're sitting on your bucket sweating and swatting mosquitoes, they're probably down there at some resort drinking a Piña Colada.

When SLGBs stick around past Sept. 1, you still can't depend on them. One night several thousand birds will roost in a tree belt. The next night, when you bring your buddies to your secret "dove honey hole," maybe three will show. And you can't depend on those to fly in a straight line. They have mystical timing — diving, veering, or dipping just as you squeeze the trigger.

For all its fanfare, dove hunting can often be a lesson in frustration. But as with all outdoor experiences, we tend to forget the more common ones while remembering those few outstanding ones. So, each August, we'll gather around the water cooler and reminisce about glorious past dove hunts (or hunt). "Why, there

were doves coming from all directions. It seemed like every dove in the county wanted a drink from that little pasture pond. I've never shot better in my life . . ." so the story goes.

Last year is a perfect example. I saw lots of doves on August scouting trips. And I found a new dove spot that looked perfect: a pasture pond tucked away in the sandhills, a perfect open bank. As I sat there expectantly on the first evening, I had plenty of shotgun shells handy in case the birds came in waves. My Brittany, glad to be in the field again, happily galloped around the pond banks. Then he came to a sudden halt, tail tucked and a forlorn look on his face. I went to investigate and found an enormous sandbur patch, most of which were now matted in his fine fur, which I had neglected to trim before our hunt. I picked burs until my fingers were bloody, keeping busy since no doves were flying yet. It was still early.

I was still ready. This place was too good. But as time wore on, the doves I counted had been an average of 400 yards away. The three that had flown within range caught me by surprise as I squinted at those far-away birds, and I didn't get a shot. I finally walked the 400 yards to the other end of the pasture, thinking maybe there was a pattern to their flights. There was, I saw more doves from my new position — 400 yards away. I stumbled on to another little pond on my journey, and this one looked even better than the first. I sat for the last 30 minutes of daylight, full of renewed optimism. I think I saw six more doves, and shot one or two of them.

To make matters worse, Lennie called that evening after I got home. "How'd you do?" he quizzed. "Really?" he was surprised by my report. "Rocky and I shot our limits at the old Jenkins place. It was awesome! Doves everywhere . . . (click) Hey, did we get cut off?"

It was a typical hunt — one which I will soon erase so it won't take up room in my memory banks. After 25 years of dove hunting, I have several good dove hunts stored in there, and I may need the extra room in case I have a good hunt this fall. ♡

