

KANSAS

Wildlife & Parks

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2000

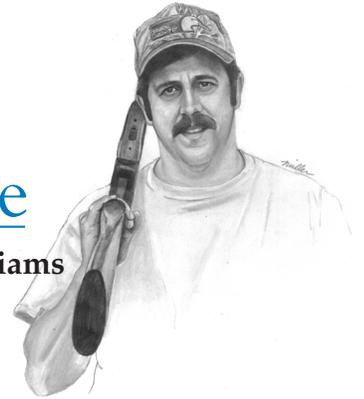
\$2.75





The View From Here

by Steve Williams



Youth Seasons: Mark Your Calendars

Remember the excitement of your first pheasant season opener — the camaraderie of family and friends? Or perhaps you can still smell the marsh mud as you followed your father into the predawn twilight on duck season opening day 20 years ago.

If you were fortunate enough to have been introduced to hunting at an early age, you know the magic. It rests in your memories forever, and it drives a basic desire to experience the outdoors each fall. Hunting is a valued natural heritage — one that must be passed on from one generation to the next. But hunter numbers are decreasing, and younger generations are in danger of missing these treasured experiences. And fewer hunters reduces the financial, social and political support needed for effective wildlife management.

“Pass It On” is a program designed to reverse the declining trend in hunter numbers. While the program is made up of many different sub-programs, such as Outdoor Mentors, Shooting Opportunities, Hunting Access, Special Hunts, and Education and Awareness, its most valuable component is you. It takes a hunter to make a hunter, and it is critical that youth learn important life lessons in the outdoors from experienced hunters.

You can become involved by simply taking a youngster hunting this fall. There are new opportunities this year to make those first hunts rewarding, quality experiences.

Youth Waterfowl Season: In each of our duck zones, the Saturday and Sunday before opening weekend are reserved for youth hunting. Youngsters under the age of 16 may hunt under the supervision of an adult 18 or older. See the 2000 Waterfowl Regulations brochure (available in mid-September) for season dates and regulations.

Youth/Disabled Deer Season: September 30-October 1 is a weekend for youth ages 12 to 16 or anyone who has a disability hunting permit to hunt deer. All hunters must have proper licenses and permits, and

youth must be accompanied by an adult 21 or older. All legal equipment may be used, according to permit type, and blaze orange must be worn.

Youth Upland Bird Season: November 4-5 is a weekend for youth and their mentors to hunt pheasants and quail prior to the traditional opening day. Youth 16 and younger may hunt under the supervision of an adult 21 or older. One supervising adult for each youth may also hunt. Daily bag limits are half the regular season limits.

It is my hope that these three special seasons will become the “new” opening days in the near future. I get excited just thinking about the marshes and fields of Kansas being filled with families prior to the traditional openers. I encourage you to get involved in any way possible. Our hunting heritage depends on it.

Take a young person hunting this fall. As our “Pass It On” theme says, “A little of your time . . . the time of their life,” just a small contribution of your time will make a huge impact on that youngster’s life. And I guarantee it will have a positive impact on yours. The rewards of introducing a new hunter to the outdoors are infinite.

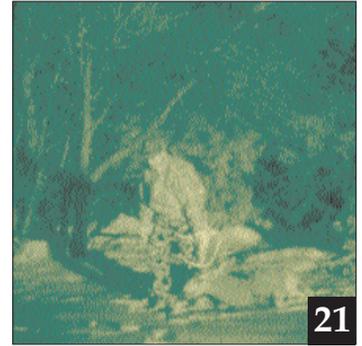
Other special hunt opportunities will also be available. Contact your nearest Kansas Wildlife and Parks office or local sportsmen’s group such as chapters of Quail Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited and National Wild Turkey Federation. Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) is also sponsoring youth/mentor events in cooperation with local sportsmen’s groups. Contact Randall Wells, (316) 263-3300 for more information on BBBS events. For more information on “Pass It On” contact Mike Miller, (316) 672-5911.

Steve Williams

- 1 The View From Here**
Youth Seasons: Mark Your Calendars
by Steve Williams
- 2 National Wildlife Refuges In Kansas**
Can you name the four national wildlife refuges we have in Kansas? If not, read on.
- 10 High-Tech Wildlife Law Enforcement**
Conservation officers must keep up with technology and training to stop poachers.
by Mike Ehlebracht
- 14 Cougars In Kansas?**
Despite dozens of reported cougar sightings each year, no physical evidence has been found.
by Kirk Johnson
- 20 Flowers Of The Sun**
The Kansas landscape is blessed with a variety of yellow flowers of the sun.
by Lorraine Kaufman
- 26 I'm Not Scared Of The Dark . . . Much**
Brave admission from a deer hunter with a run-away imagination.
by Marc Murrell
- 28 Kansas Park Ranger: All In A Day's Work**
On the job with Kansas park rangers, who work in our 24 state parks.
by Mike Harris
- 30 Grand Opening: Great Plains Nature Center**
The waiting is over. This unique nature learning center will open September 1.
by Marc Murrell
- 32 Conservation Officer**
Profile of the men and women who enforce our wildlife-related laws.
by Mike Ehlebracht
- 33 The Wild Currents**
edited by J. Mark Shoup
- 45 Pass It On**



7



21



27

<p>GOVERNOR Bill Graves</p> <p>COMMISSIONERS John Dykes, Chairman <i>Shawnee Mission</i> Gordon Stockemer, Vice Chairman <i>Wichita</i> Will Carpenter <i>Towanda</i> John Mickey <i>Atwood</i> Tom Warner <i>Manhattan</i> John Fields <i>Pittsburg</i> Adrian Price <i>Deerfield</i></p> <p>ADMINISTRATION Secretary Steven A. Williams Ass't. Secretary/Admin. Richard Koerth Ass't. Secretary/Operations Rob Manes Director of Administrative Svcs. Mike Theurer Director of Fisheries & Wildlife Joe Kramer Director of Parks Jerold (Jerry) Hover Director of Law Enforcement Kevin Jones</p>	<p>MAGAZINE STAFF Chief of Information and Education Bob Mathews Editor Mike Miller Associate Editor J. Mark Shoup Illustrator Dustin Teasley Photographer/Associate Editor Mike Blair Staff Writer Marc Murrell Editorial Assistant Bev Aldrich Circulation Barbara Theurer</p>
---	---

KANSAS WILDLIFE & PARKS (ISSN 0898-6975) is published by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, 900 Jackson St., Suite 502, Topeka, KS 66612. Address editorial correspondence and subscription requests to Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, 512 SE 25th Ave., Pratt, KS 67124 (316) 672-5911. Subscription rate: one year \$10; two years \$18; and three years \$27. Articles in the magazine may be reprinted with permission. Periodical postage paid at Pratt, KS and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, 512 SE 25th Ave., Pratt KS 67124.

Kansas Department of Wildlife Parks Website
<http://www.kdwp.state.ks.us>
magazine e-mail — mikegm@wp.state.ks.us

Editorial Creed: To promote the conservation and wise use of our natural resources, to instill an understanding of our responsibilities to the land.
Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs described herein is available to all individuals without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or handicap. Complaints of discrimination should be sent to Office of the Secretary, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, 900 Jackson St., Suite 502, Topeka, KS 66612.



About the covers
Front Cover: A snowy egret perches on a flooded fencepost at Quivira NWR. Mike Blair took the photo: 600mm lens, @ f/11, 1/250 sec. **Back Cover:** The bright yellow of prairie coneflowers is lost in silhouette against the sunset. Blair photographed this scene with a 200mm macro lens, @ f/16, 1/60 sec.



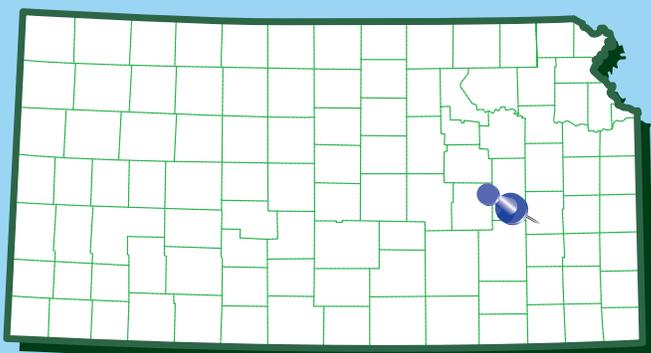
National Wildlife Refuges In Kansas

Flint Hills National Wildlife Refuge

by **Jerre Gamble**, *refuge manager, FHNWR*

photos by **Mike Blair**

Fifteen miles southeast of Emporia, Flint Hills NWR lies along the Neosho River above John Redmond Reservoir.



The Flint Hills National Wildlife Refuge lies in the broad, flat Neosho River Valley of Kansas, a native tallgrass prairie region of natural scenic beauty. The refuge is named for the gently rolling Flint Hills just to the west.

The refuge, established in 1966, consists of 18,463 acres located at the upstream end of John Redmond Reservoir. The land is owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and is managed under a cooperative agreement. Refuge habitat consists of 4,572 acres of wetlands, 1,400 acres of open water, 599 acres on the Neosho River and associated creeks, 3,917 acres of cropland, 3,200 acres of grassland, 2,400 acres of woodlands, 2,255 acres of brushlands and

120 administrative, recreation, and roadway acres.

The Flint Hills Refuge is managed primarily to benefit migrating and wintering waterfowl in the Central Flyway. Thousands of ducks and geese flock to the area during the spring and fall migrations, and many often choose to spend the winters here. A variety of management practices are utilized on the refuge to meet the needs of wildlife. Feeding and resting areas for migratory birds are provided through aggressive moist-soil and cropland management programs. In addition, mowing and prescribed burning are used to provide food and cover for waterfowl and resident species. Along with large numbers of migrating birds, the refuge is also a haven for white-tailed deer, turkey, bobwhite quail and an assortment of other mammals, birds, reptiles, and insects.

Wildlife observation, hiking, photography, sight-seeing, boating, picnicking, camping, fishing, wild food gathering, and hunting are



Upstream from John Redmond Reservoir, Eagle Creek meanders through Flint Hills NWR. The refuge includes wetlands, riparian timber, cropland and grassland.

permitted in areas open to the public. Three walking/hiking trails and a wildlife observation tower are open year-round for visitor use.

The refuge office is located in Hartford, approximately 20 miles

southeast of Emporia. Take I-35 exit 141 and drive south on K-130 eight miles to Hartford and follow the signs to the office/visitor center. Brochures and other information are available at the refuge's small visitor center. Office hours are Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.



Managed primarily for migrating waterfowl, Flint Hills NWR includes more than 4,500 acres of wetlands, but the area is also home to deer, turkey, quail and other wildlife.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 93-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System which encompasses more than 520 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 66 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 78 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

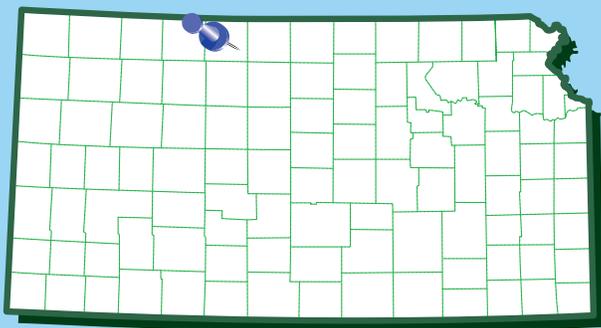


Kirwin National Wildlife Refuge

by Shannon Rothchild, *outdoor recreation planner, KNWR*

photos by Mike Blair

Five miles south and five miles east of Phillipsburg in Phillips County, Kirwin NWR and reservoir lie on the North Fork of the Solomon River



Kirwin National Wildlife Refuge is located in the rolling hills of southeastern Phillips County. The Refuge lies in a transition zone between the tall-grass prairies of the east and the short-grass plains of the west. As a result, grasses and wildlife common to both areas are found on the refuge.

The refuge surrounds Kirwin Reservoir and was established in 1954 as the first national wildlife refuge in Kansas. The reservoir is fed by the North Fork of the Solomon River and Bow Creek. The reservoir water levels fluctuate from year to year, depending on rain and snow runoff.

The area consists of 10,778 acres and supports diverse wildlife habitat including grasslands, wooded riparian zones, open water, wetlands, and croplands. The pri-

mary purpose of the refuge is to provide nesting cover, food, and shelter for migrating birds, waterfowl, upland game birds, and mammals. Refuge staff use a variety of wildlife habitat management practices to provide optimum habitat for wildlife. Crops such as corn, wheat, and milo are grown through a cooperative farming program. A portion of the crop is left in the field to provide food for migrating waterfowl and resident wildlife. Other habitat management tools include grazing, brush control, haying, mowing, and controlled burning.

Spring and fall are the best times to visit Kirwin National Wildlife Refuge to view migrating waterfowl, shorebirds, and song birds. Nearly 85,000 Canada geese can be seen at the refuge in November during peak migration. Several thousand ducks migrating through the Central Flyway also use the refuge as a place to feed and rest during migration. The wetland area adjacent to the refuge headquarters is one of the best places to view migrating birds. During the fall, spectacular white-tailed bucks can be seen moving about the entire refuge.

Fishing and hunting are also popular at Kirwin National Wildlife Refuge. Kirwin Reservoir is well known for its walleye, crappie, and largemouth bass. Excellent hunting opportunities for upland game,



As many as 85,000 Canada geese may rest and feed on Kirwin NWR during the peak of migration in November, and the area also attracts ducks and migrating shorebirds.

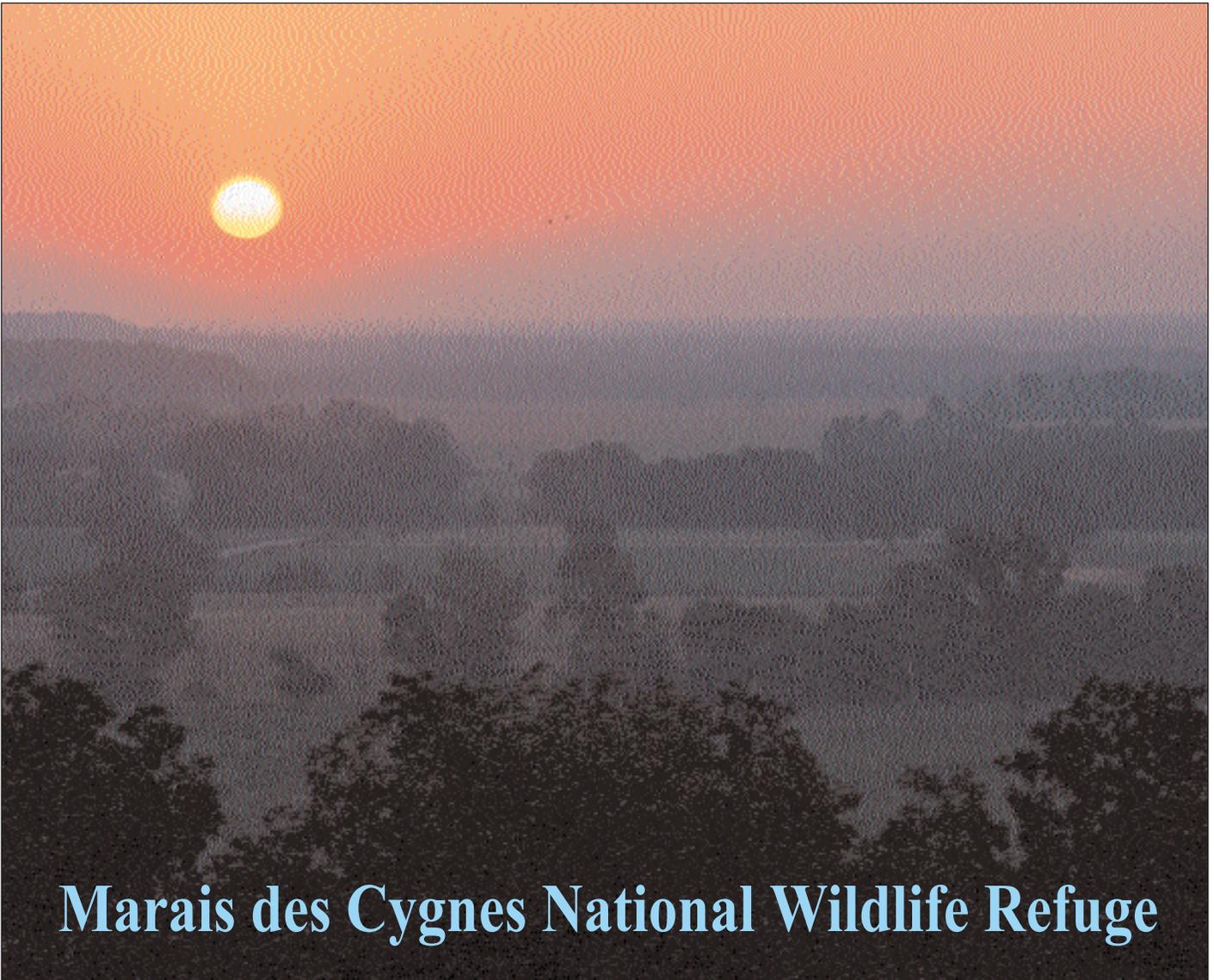
waterfowl, and archery deer hunting abound on Kirwin NWR.

A handicapped-accessible fishing dock at Knob Hill and trail at Crappie Point can be found at the refuge. The Crappie Point trail zig-zags its way through upland prairie and around riparian habitat along the shoreline. May and June are the best months to see the beauty of the Kansas landscape on this trail. Prairie Dog Town trail is another that can be enjoyed as it winds through the "dog town" located on the south side of the refuge.

Kirwin National Wildlife Refuge has developed a quality outdoor education program for folks of all ages. Programs that cover a variety of topics related to wildlife are hosted monthly by the refuge.

Whether you come for a day's visit or stay for a week in one of the primitive campgrounds, you will discover why Kirwin National Wildlife Refuge is where wildlife comes naturally. For more information contact refuge headquarters at RR 1, Box 103, Kirwin, KS 67644 or (785) 543-6673.



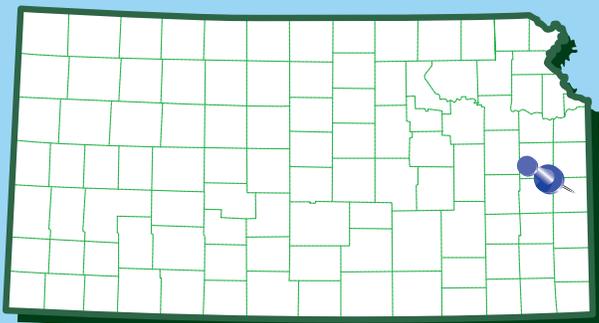


Marais des Cygnes National Wildlife Refuge

by Bruce Freske, *refuge manager, MDCNWR*

photos by Mike Blair

Six miles north of Pleasanton in Linn County, Marais des Cygnes NWR lies along the Marais des Cygnes River.



Marais des Cygnes National Wildlife Refuge is a 7,500-acre wildlife area located 45 minutes south of Overland Park. It is named after the Marais des Cygnes River which runs through the middle of the refuge and is the dominant natural feature of the region. The name, Marais des Cygnes, comes from the French language and means “Marsh of the Swans.” The name is said to be in reference to trumpeter swans, which were once common in the Midwest and reportedly used wetlands adjacent to the Marais des Cygnes River during spring and fall migration. Another reference states that the name refers to the sharp bends in the river which resemble the curves of a swan’s neck.

This is the newest national wildlife refuge in Kansas. It was established in 1992 for the protection and restoration of bottomland hardwood forest. It contains the largest and highest quality tract of bottomland hardwood timber in Kansas. Along with similar forest on the adjacent Marais des Cygnes state wildlife area, it preserves one of the northwestern-most examples of this habitat type in the United States.

The floodplain of the Marais des Cygnes River is generally one to two miles wide throughout the area. Flood events are most common in the spring and early summer and again in the fall. Floods typically last from a few days to as long as three weeks. Flood waters may be several feet deep on large expanses of the floodplain.

Much of the refuge which lies above the floodplain includes forest, grassland, and abandoned cropland. Tallgrass prairie, bottomland hardwood forest, and upland oak-hickory forest sites are found throughout the refuge.

Approximately 5,000 acres of the refuge are available for wildlife-oriented recreation such as hunting, fishing, and birding. A wildlife



Eastern wild turkeys are common in the rolling timber of Marais des Cygnes NWR. Established in 1992, Marais des Cygnes is Kansas' newest wildlife refuge.

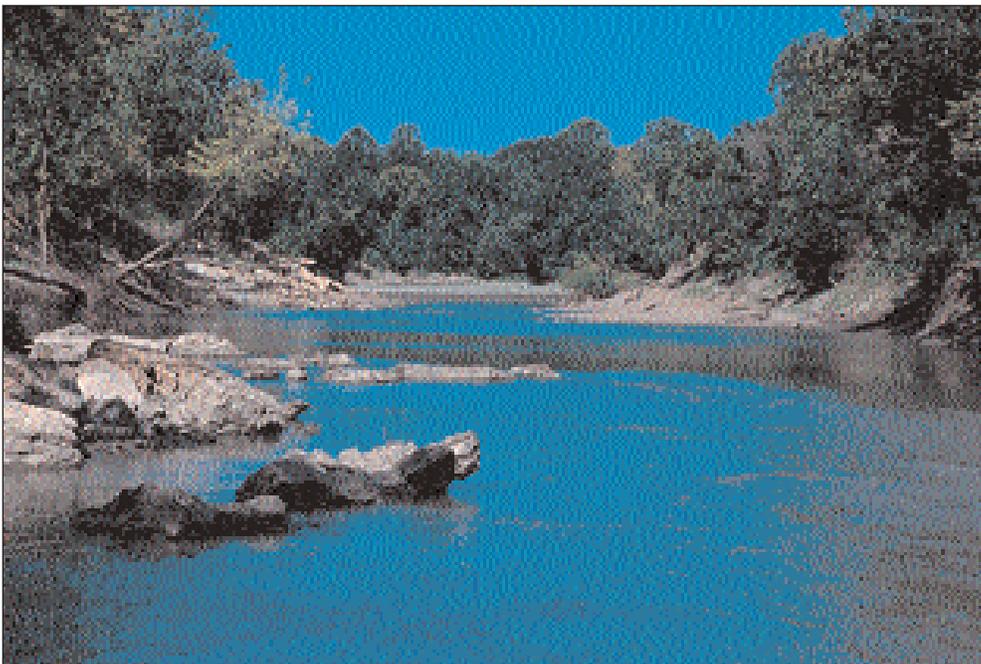
sanctuary, closed to all activities, encompasses the remaining 2,500 acres.

Birding is especially good in late spring when more than 30 species of warblers migrate through the

area, and in early summer when numerous species of breeding birds defend territories. The large diversity of plant communities provides for an equally diverse bird population. Breeding species found on the refuge include Kentucky warbler, Northern parula warbler, prothonotary warbler, red-shouldered hawk, turkey vulture, scissor-tailed flycatcher, and painted bunting.

Hiking trails have not yet been developed, but there are several refuge service roads which are available for public hiking. These roads traverse a wide variety of habitats and vary in length from 1/4 mile to more than a mile long.

Maps, refuge regulations, and other information may be obtained by contacting the refuge manager, Bruce Freske, at: Marais des Cygnes National Wildlife Refuge, 24141 KS Hwy 52, Pleasanton, KS 66075 or e-mail: Bruce_Freske@fws.gov or by phone: 913-352-8956. Office hours are 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM.



Named for the Marais des Cygnes River, which courses through the 7,500-acre refuge, the area also features the largest and highest quality tract of bottomland timber found in Kansas.

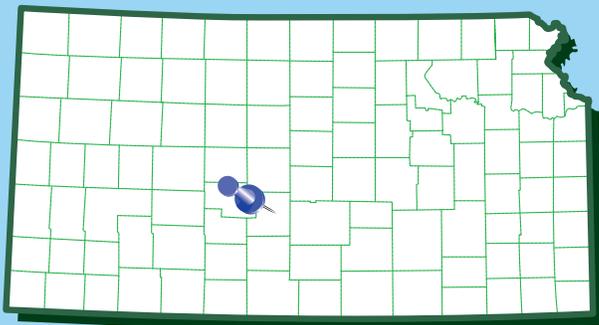


Quivira National Wildlife Refuge

by Dave Hilley, *manager, QNWR*

photos by Mike Blair

Fifteen miles southeast of Great Bend in Stafford County, Rattlesnake Creek feeds into the 22,000-acre Quivira NWR.



At sunset during the fall, sandhill cranes by the thousands descend from the Kansas sky to find roosting spots on the Big Salt Marsh of Quivira National Wildlife Refuge. Thousands of ducks and geese set up a chorus as they call to other flocks to join them on the marshes of the refuge. White-tailed deer leave the shelter of their daytime cover to forage in crop fields planted specifically for the wildlife. Coyotes yip to notify relatives as they move through the shadows, looking for an easy meal. Raccoons check each waterhole and marsh edge for prey as they start their nighttime travels. These are the sights and sounds of Quivira National Wildlife Refuge, a 22,135-acre refuge in Stafford, Reno, and Rice counties.

Quivira NWR was established in 1955 as a migration stop and wintering area for migratory birds of the Central Flyway. The name "Quivira" comes from a Native American tribe that lived in this area in 1541, when the Spanish explorer Coronado arrived to search for gold and treasures. Instead of gold and silver, Coronado found an area of fertile grasslands, abundant wildlife, and numerous wetlands. The wetlands were used by early white settlers for market hunting, to supply ducks and geese for Eastern restaurants. Hunting clubs followed to provide exclusive waterfowling rights to their members. With the establishment of Quivira National Wildlife Refuge, the area became part of the wildlife legacy owned by all Americans.

More than 7000 acres of wetlands, almost 13,000 acres of prairie grasslands, and 1,300 acres of crops provide the food, water and cover for refuge wildlife. Shorebirds congregate on the mud flats to feed on abundant invertebrates. Endangered species such as the interior least tern, piping plover, and peregrine falcon use the refuge. Whooping cranes, up to 42 per year, use the marshes on their migrations. A record 142 threatened bald eagles were recorded on Quivira last winter.

The Big and Little Salt Marshes on Quivira NWR are rare examples of inland salt marshes. These result from salt-rich groundwater coming to the surface due to an upswelling of bedrock. During drought periods, when low water concentrates the mineral, the salt content of the Big Salt Marsh can become three times as high as ocean water.

Wildlife are not the only visitors welcome on Quivira NWR, as more than 60,000 human guests tour the area each year. A Visitors Center, with interpretive wildlife exhibits, is open 7:30am - 4:00pm, Monday through Friday. On selected weekends, during the spring and fall migrations, the center is staffed with volunteers to assist the visitors. Much of the refuge is open to foot travel, and visitors may drive



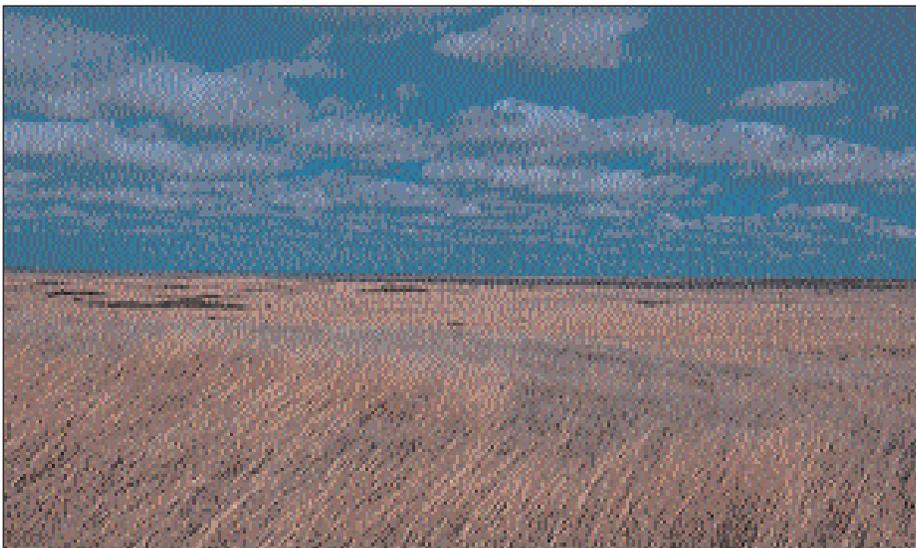
While sandhill cranes may number in the tens of thousands during peak migration, as many as 40 rare, endangered whooping cranes visit the refuge each fall and spring.

through the refuge on any roads not closed by signs or barriers.

Quivira offers a variety of educational opportunities, including interpretive trails, photo blinds, outdoor education classroom, bunkhouse for overnight educational program accommodations, observation scope, area educator guides, and numerous public

wildlife programs.

Spring and fall are the best times to visit Quivira due to the abundance of wildlife and excellent viewing opportunities, but anytime is a treat to visit this Kansas treasure. More information is available by calling (316)486-2393 or writing Quivira NWR, Rt. 3, Box 48A, Stafford, KS 67578. ♡



Native prairie grasslands make up more than half of the refuge's 22,000 acres, providing a haven for white-tailed deer, upland birds, furbearers and other wildlife.



HI-TECH WILDLIFE LAW ENFORCEMENT

text and photos by Mike Ehlebracht
conservation officer, Great Bend

In the poaching business, survival depends on staying one step ahead of the law. Fortunately for wildlife, today's conservation officers are moving high-tech and making the poacher's life more difficult.

It's pitch dark on a cold November night. An unidentified man stands over a deer that he illegally killed a few hours earlier. He's trying to figure out how to get the deer out in a hurry without being seen. What he doesn't know is that a game warden is just a few feet away, hiding in the darkness and watching his every move. The officer has been there for hours, hoping the poacher would return. When he's sure he has his man, he makes a run for the poacher. Case solved.

Not so long ago, this kind of "scruff of the neck" capture was all wildlife officers could rely on. But times have changed. That's not to say that poachers aren't still caught in the act because they are, but modern wildlife law enforcement officers have a few more options. The face of wildlife law enforcement has changed, including the kinds of crimes officers must solve, as well as the attitudes of the poachers and general public. Modern wildlife management methods are credited with bringing back many game species — some to levels not seen since the 1800s. However, there are many more people now. More critters and more people mean more problems.

While the word may seem outdated, poacher is a term that I, for one, am not willing to part with. The mere mention of the word conjures up images of a thief — someone who sneaks around looking for an opportunity to steal an animal from the rest of us. Years ago, the primary motive for a poacher may have been to feed his family. Today, almost every species has some commercial value, and far more sinister motives, such as greed and ego, drive poachers. Trophy-class deer antlers top the list in Kansas. A large set of antlers can



Like most thieves, poachers rely on the cover of darkness to avoid detection. Night-vision goggles, like those worn by the officer on the facing page, take that security blanket away.

sell for thousands of dollars. And there is also money to be made selling deer meat, fur, feathers, animals for the illegal pet trade, mussel shells for the cultured pearl industry or paddlefish eggs for caviar. Add to these types of violations illegal guiding, license fraud and environmental crimes, and you can understand what modern wildlife officers are up against.

Today's poachers have benefitted from modern equipment. They have better vehicles, weapons, spotlights, nets, and boats. And some have even gone ultra-high-tech, using night-vision goggles, global positioning systems, laser sights, electronic tracking devices, and computers for networking and information sharing.

To effectively enforce the wildlife laws, modern conservation officers

have had to go high-tech right along with the poachers. The public demands it, and the resource deserves it. As wildlife law enforcement moves into the 21st century, conservation officers are trained to investigate wildlife crime just like other crime is investigated. Night-vision goggles, spotting scopes, forensics, computers, and aircraft are commonly used to catch poachers today.

Probably the biggest advances in wildlife law enforcement have come in the area of forensics. It used to be that a warden would stand over a deer carcass and say, "looks like a bullet hole to me." Now we have the ability to not only determine if it is a bullet hole but also the kind and size of the bullet. If the bullet is found, we can determine the make and model of the gun used, even

matching it to the very gun that fired it. Some of these tests are performed in a laboratory, but officers are now trained to do many tests at the scene. Field tests might include lead and copper trace detection from the wound and determining the time of death of an animal. Some officers are trained in a science called oucherlony, which can be used to determine the species of an animal from a blood or tissue sample. Most officers have a working knowledge of fish identification from fillets, bird identification from feathers and bone structure, and sex identification of big game species from some bone structures. Officers carry a mobile lab in the form of a forensics kit that includes the equipment and chemicals necessary to perform these tests.

In addition to field testing, officers also send evidence to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's forensics laboratory in Ashland, Oregon. The lab can test bullets and firearms, latent fingerprints, animal blood, meat, fur, feathers, and bones.



Prior to acquiring this handy device, which quickly distinguishes non-toxic shot shells required for waterfowl hunting, officers carried a ruminant magnet to test shells.

Experts at the lab can identify a species from a piece of cooked meat, and they can also match it to another sample from the same animal with DNA. Eventually, they will have a database that will pro-

vide a geographic location an animal came from. This lab benefits wildlife agencies worldwide. Before it was available, evidence was sent to state labs where our cases were given a very low priority.



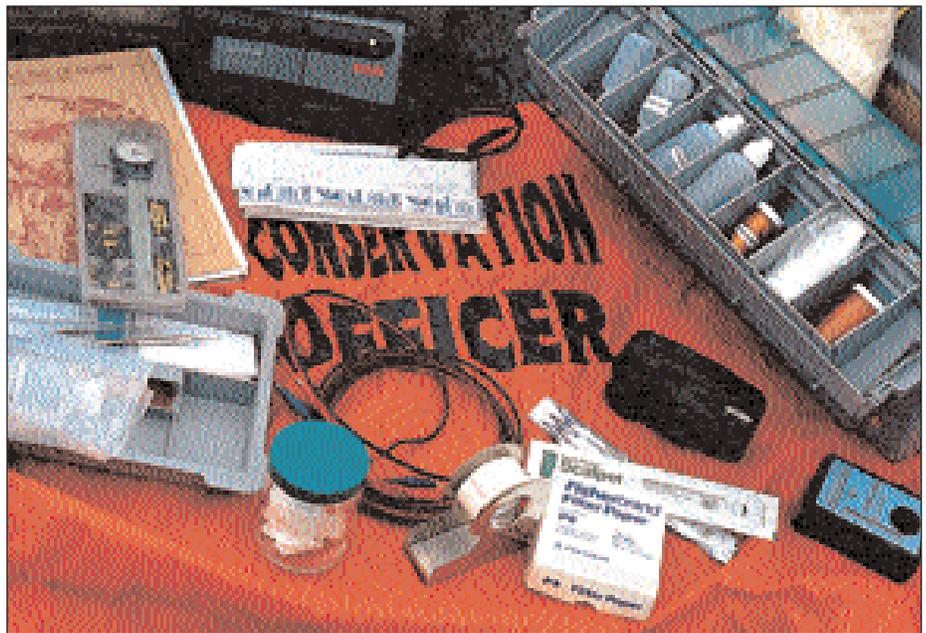
Scene-of-the-crime investigations are critical to catching poachers and getting convictions. The portable forensics kit allows officers to determine whether the deer was killed with a firearm or bow, approximate time of death, and take DNA samples for later analysis.

Other tools available include gadgets such as electronic lead and steel shot shell detectors. Not so long ago, the standard tool to test shells for steel shot was a ruminant magnet — the kind they put inside a cow to clean its stomach of metal trash. Today's officers also have better radios, photography equipment and vehicles. And most of us have cellular phones and computers. All of this equipment allows officers to spend more time on important activities — we are getting more efficient.

Decoy wildlife has also become an effective way to catch illegal road hunters. We have decoys for many species and for different situations. Some are simple stationary decoys, while others have integrated radio electronics to make them move in various ways. Decoys are now used by nearly every wildlife agency in the U.S. and Canada.

Today, most agencies also use some type of undercover work. In some situations, especially commercialization of wildlife, undercover officers are the only way to make a solid case, as well as provide a serious deterrent.

There are many things about wildlife law enforcement that will



Modern gear for wildlife law enforcement. Officers must participate in a variety of training so that new equipment can be utilized. It all spells bad news for poachers.

never change. Most notable is that we will always rely on assistance from law-abiding sportsmen. It's no secret that Kansas conservation officers are few and far between, and violators know this. It's really up to sportsmen to decide how much enforcement is enough. Most people would agree that our wildlife resources are too valuable to risk

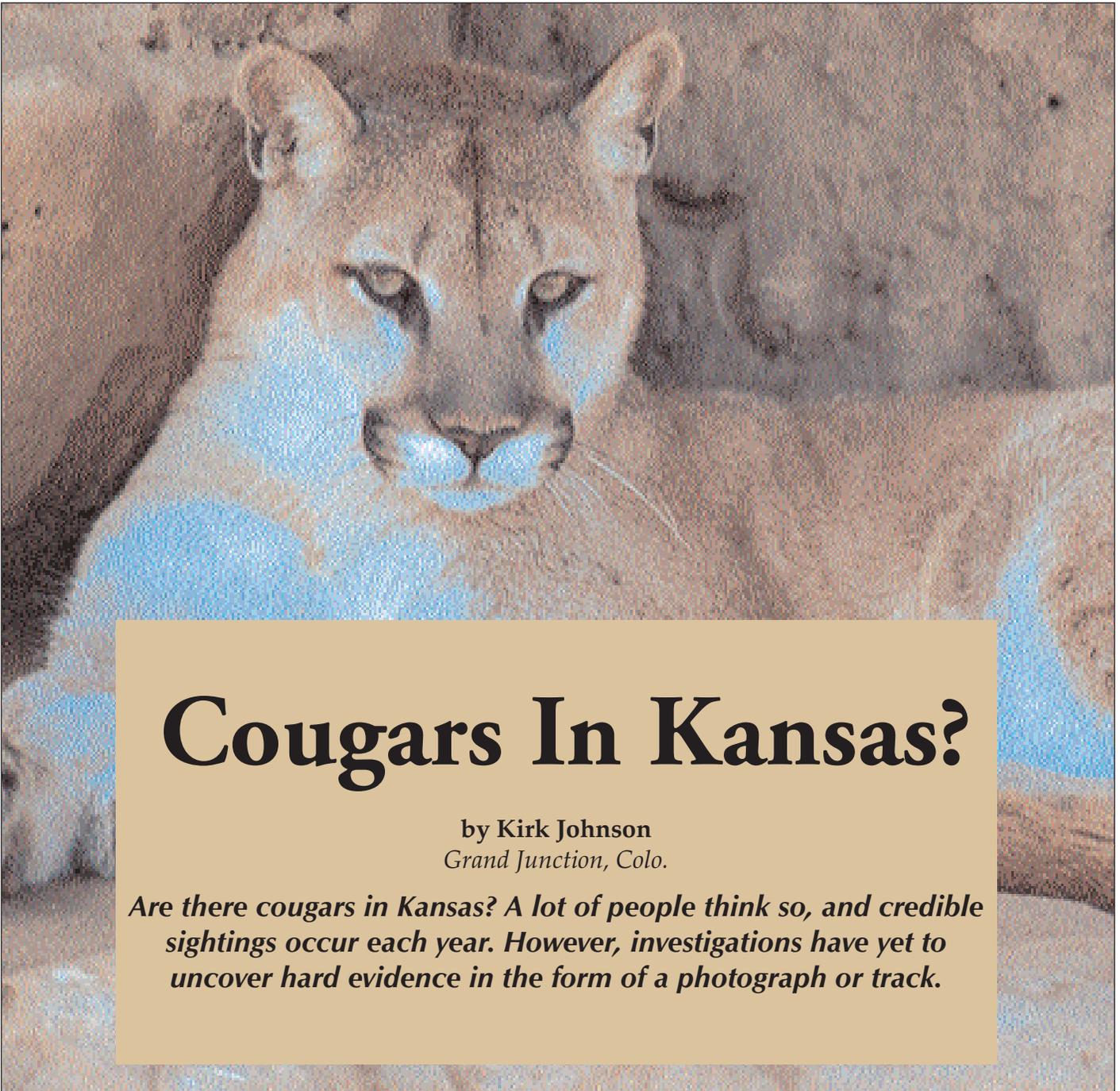
losing to illegal activity. If a sportsman looks the other way or ignores poaching, he or she is contributing to the problem.

As we move into the next century, I'm sure poachers will dream up new ways to commit their crimes. Rest assured that Kansas conservation officers will be innovating to stay one jump ahead. It's inevitable that before long, a poacher will be standing over an illegally killed deer in some dark field in Kansas. The good news is the conservation officer watching from the bushes has a forensics kit, cell phone and is looking at him through night vision goggles. 🦋



Decoys are used frequently to catch poachers who shoot from vehicles and roadways without landowner permission. Generally, several complaints about roadhunting can get a decoy in place.

Editor's note: Officer Mike Ehlebracht was a frequent and welcome contributor to the magazine. However, in August he accepted a position with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. This editor, and readers alike, will miss Mike, but perhaps the wildlife resources and hunters of Kansas will miss him most. We wish our friends and one of our top conservation officers farewell and good luck.



Cougars In Kansas?

by Kirk Johnson
Grand Junction, Colo.

Are there cougars in Kansas? A lot of people think so, and credible sightings occur each year. However, investigations have yet to uncover hard evidence in the form of a photograph or track.

Mike Blair photo

On a crisp autumn day in mid-November 1998, Steven Ford, a mammalogist in the Biology Department of Pittsburg State University, his wife, and two friends noticed Ford's "mutt" staring up a tree in a wooded ravine not far from Pittsburg. Glancing through the bare limbs of the tree, Ford noticed a large, dark animal clinging to a large branch. Quickly grabbing his binoculars, he was startled to see a "long-tailed cat,

fairly dark in color" sprawled out on a limb. Suddenly the cat leaped out of the tree and disappeared into some nearby ground cover. Ford estimated that the cat "weighed around 60 pounds." Ford said that he had previously been skeptical of Kansas reports of cougars, also called mountain lions, pumas, or panthers.

Ford and his companions are convinced that the feline was not a bobcat, since it definitely had a long

tail. That leaves only two other possible suspects: either a wild or escaped captive cougar, or some other exotic non-native cat. Ford said that he had spoken with individuals keeping pet cougars in the region, and "no one was aware of any escaped captive cats" in southeastern Kansas.

Historically, cougars in Kansas lived not only in the tallgrass prairies and "riparian" (riverine) forests of the Flint Hills, but also in

dry wooded draws within the western mixed-grass plains. An explorer named J.R. Mead, who collected records dating from the mid-1850s to 1899, reported that the predator was occasionally found in central Kansas, but was more common in the southern half of the state bordering Oklahoma. Mead wrote that the cougar's habitat was along timbered streams, and in the adjacent prairies and hills. According to records kept with the Department of Wildlife and Parks, the last documented case of a cougar in Kansas was when one was shot on August 15, 1904, in Ellis County near Catherine, northeast of Hays. Reports of sightings or signs of the cats have persisted, however, every decade since until the 1990s.

Bob Henderson, now retired after 28 years as the former Wildlife Specialist with the Cooperative Extension Service at Kansas State University in Manhattan, said he received "approximately 100 reports a year" of cougars. Henderson recalled that one of the most memorable incidents occurred "sometime in the mid-1980s" along I-70, 3 miles east of the turnoff for Manhattan. A salesman called Wildlife and Parks to report that he saw a dead cougar along the side of the interstate. He then stopped and inspected the cat's body. William Gill, the current state supervisor for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Manhattan, said that the salesman described the cat as "the color of a brown paper bag, with a long tail."

Henderson happened to be on vacation during the time the salesman reported the incident, and said that state wildlife officials never investigated the road kill incident. Henderson returned to the office about four to five days later, and found no evidence of the dead cat on the highway. He believes, however, that this road kill was likely that of a cougar. Henderson admits, though, that in 28 years of collecting reports, he was never able to verify that any cougar tracks or other sign that people cited as "proof" proved to be the genuine article.

Charlie Lee, the current Extension Specialist with Kansas State University, related the same theme. He said in the 15 years he has worked as a Wildlife and Animal Damage Control Specialist, he could not confirm even one cougar track or livestock depredation report anywhere in the state. He noted that "approximately 80 people are licensed to have pumas in Kansas," and that it is possible that some reports received by state officials are from captive mountain lions that escaped or had been released. He did say, though, that in the thick salt cedar brush along the Arkansas River near the Colorado border, one pug mark "with possible claw marks" was discovered a few years ago, but it wasn't conclusively identified as a cougar's paw print.

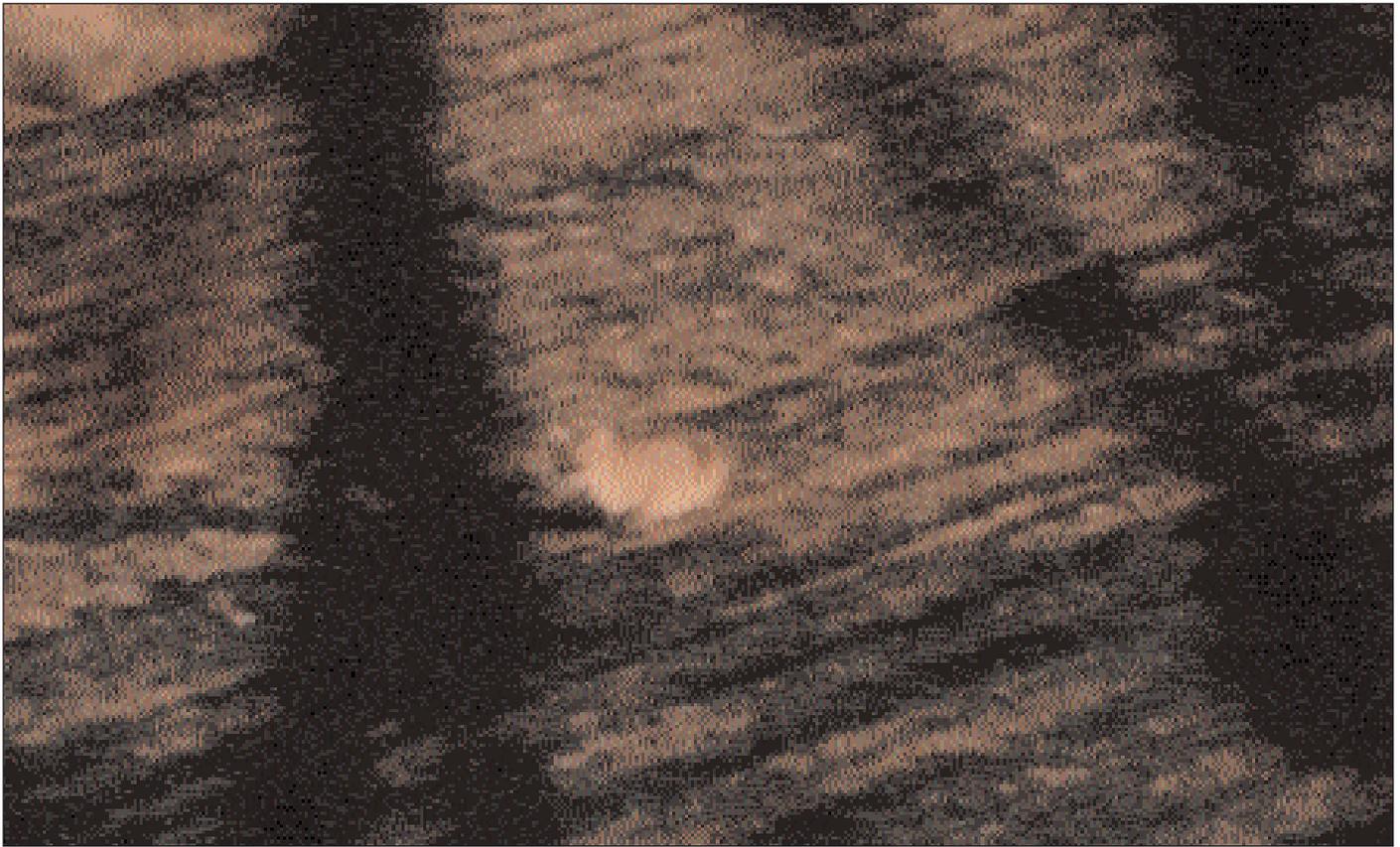
Southeastern Colorado's rugged "Badlands" country south of the Arkansas River has a small confirmed population of cougars, especially along the steep canyons of the Purgatoire River that flows northeast into the Arkansas. These canyons lie less than 60 miles from the Kansas border. Farther southeast, near the tiny town of Kim in the western "panhandle" of the

Comanche National Grasslands, ranchers have legally destroyed several cougars that attacked their horses. This plains population seems to be slowly increasing, and a hunting quota is now in place. Juvenile cougars, especially males less than two years old, have been known to disperse hundreds of miles from their mothers' original home ranges. It is possible that some transient individuals from the Purgatoire are following the riparian salt cedar habitat of the Arkansas River even through settled agricultural regions of southeastern Colorado and western Kansas.

Studies of cougar movements in California have confirmed that the big cats will migrate through semi-urban areas if a wooded "corridor" approximately 400 yards wide exists. Some of the habitat along the Arkansas River in western Kansas meets this criteria, but other sites on the river do not, having long ago been cleared of native stands of cottonwood and willow. A more likely transit route into the state would be along the willow and salt cedar thickets of streams such as the Cimarron River from Colorado into Kansas.



Conservation officers, biologists, and department photographers have checked out dozens of cougar sighting reports without a verified track. Note the obvious claw marks on these large dog tracks that were called in as cougar tracks.



This blurry photograph was taken by an unidentified bowhunter near Edna, Kansas. The color and shape look like a big cat, but there isn't enough detail to be conclusive. *(photo courtesy of the Cooperative Extension Service of Kansas State University)*

Mike Mitchener, a wildlife biologist with the Department of Wildlife and Parks in Liberal, said that it was his personal opinion that "mountain lions are dispersing into southwestern Kansas from rivers such as the Purgatoire or from the Black Mesa region of northeastern New Mexico and Oklahoma." Interestingly, the Cimarron River originates in the rugged, 9,000-foot extinct volcanic peaks of northeastern New Mexico's Capulin Volcano National Monument, an area with a transient cougar population. Dennis Carruth, the chief ranger for 15-square-mile Capulin Volcano National Monument, said that while there are no resident cats, he verified the presence of cougars by their scrape piles and scat. He suspects that "these are mostly two-year-olds that occasionally pass through the area." Carruth also said that he has spotted black bears near the monument north of Raton, not far from the Colorado border, and believes that a small population of

the bruins is resident in the region.

The Cimarron River runs through the sparsely settled and rugged 4,973-foot basaltic Black Mesa Nature Preserve in the panhandle of Oklahoma, and enters Kansas through the Cimarron National Grasslands. Mitchener said there was "recently a confirmed road kill of a mountain lion west of Boise City," in the Black Mesa buttes south of the Cimarron River. Boise City is less than 40 miles "as the crow flies" from Elkhart on the Kansas border.

Mitchener said that cougars are not the only carnivores that have been spotted in the Black Mesa region. In the early 1980s near Elkhart, Kansas, there were two verified black bear reports in the Cimarron National Grasslands. Mitchener said that one of the reports was "near highway 27, north of town, where several cowboys cornered and roped a yearling black bear from their horses." Mitchener recalled that the cowboys

threw the trussed-up young bear on the back of a horse, and brought it to some local fairgrounds. The yearling was eventually relocated to the Purgatoire River Valley of eastern Colorado. It is likely that juvenile black bears, like cougars, wolves, and even moose, sometimes follow wooded corridors for hundreds of miles looking for suitable cover, food, or mates.

Some juvenile felines may also be entering northwestern Kansas from Nebraska. The panhandle of Nebraska is known to have at least a transient population of mountain lions, mostly in the northwestern Pine Ridge region. In 1996, a small male lion was found "beheaded" beside a train track about 30 miles east of Scottsbluff. This is not far from the riparian woodlands of the North Platte River, and some young cats could be following the river into southern Nebraska. Southwestern Nebraska is an area of extensive bluffs with numerous wooded ravines and river valleys,

including Red Willow Creek and the South Fork of the Republican River. The South Fork flows from Colorado through northwestern Kansas into southern Nebraska, as do Prairie Dog and Sappa Creeks, both tributaries of the Republican in southern Nebraska.

Prairie Dog Creek has intermittent patches of good tree and shrub cover, including the 1,150-acre Prairie Dog State Park, 4 miles west of Norton. The park and the adjacent 2,000-acre Keith Sibelius Reservoir provide a haven for up to 400 black-tailed prairie dogs. According to a KDWP state park employee, the park and adjacent area receive about half a dozen reports of cougars each year, including one 1998 unverified report of a cougar seen eating a cow's carcass near Lenora, 10 miles south.

Larry Stones is a game warden who oversees Smith and eastern Phillips Counties to the east of Prairie Dog State Park, where up to 12 sightings of cougars are reported by farmers or hunters each year. Stones said "around five years ago a lady on a farm north of Phillipsburg had her horse torn up by some animal — and that a veterinarian from Montana familiar with cougars said that the wounds were from a lion." Southern Phillips County contains the 10,778-acre Kirwin National Wildlife Refuge, a haven for 40,000 migrating Canada geese, thousands of sandhill cranes, numerous white-tailed deer, prairie dogs, wild turkeys, ducks, eagles, and bobcats. Prey is abundant. Shannon Rothschild, the outdoor recreation planner for the refuge, said that while the refuge and surrounding area receives five to 10 reports of cougars each year, none have been substantiated by photographs, scat, or tracks.

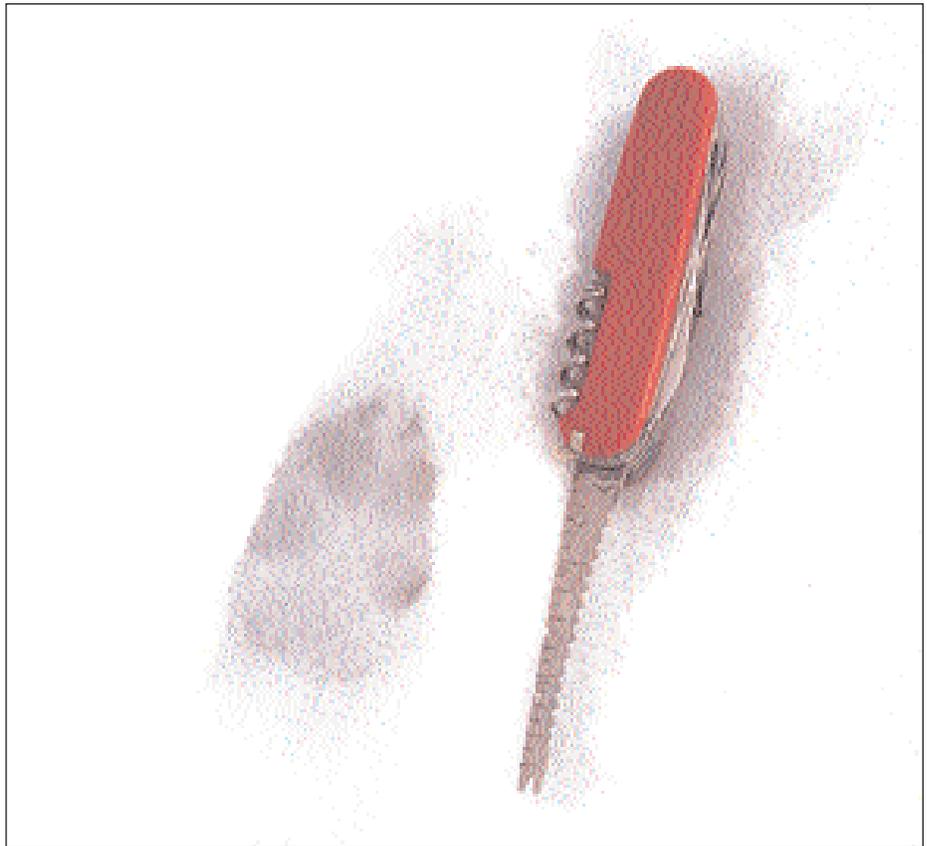
Just east of the refuge lies Claudell, nearly a ghost town. In August of 1991, Glen Sweat, an elderly farmer with land in the area, was hunting with family members in remote ravines near town. As they entered an abandoned barn,

mountain lion run out of the barn, and saw that she left four or five kittens inside." Sweat is convinced that the cat he glimpsed was a female cougar, since he's sure it had a long tail. Sweat, now retired, contacted the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, and they sent a photographer to the barn who photographed the kittens. Sweat estimated that the kittens were nearly nine inches long.

After close examination of the photographs, the photographer, Bob Henderson, and personnel with the Department of Wildlife and Parks agreed unanimously that the kittens were from a bobcat mother. According to the Wildlife and Parks photographer, there were bobcat tracks on the trail leading to the barn. Bobcat tracks typically are less than 2 inches in width, while a cougar's are from 2 to 3-1/2 inches wide. Sweat said, however, that he had "observed a female cougar several times in the spring of 1991 before discovering the kittens, and I

know the difference between a mountain lion and a bobcat." Adult cougars weigh from 80-200 pounds on average, while bobcats are much smaller, tipping the scales from between 15-60 pounds. The tail of the bobcat is aptly named, being "bobbed" to only around six inches at maturity. Sweat himself was puzzled by the "short, triangular shape of the kittens' tails," more reminiscent of those of a bobcat's. The kittens' eyes were still closed, indicating they were less than two weeks old.

While the debate over such incidents may never be conclusively settled in western Kansas, the Flint Hills have also been the site of many unsubstantiated reports over the years. On the morning of June 15, 1983, Boyd Dill, a biologist formerly with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Manhattan, "observed a single specimen of '*Felis concolor* (scientific name) cross highway 77 approximately 7.7 miles north of El Dorado.'" This would be



Tracks made in snow that have thawed and refrozen can be deceiving. When viewed initially, these tracks had promise. However, closer inspection revealed dog claw marks.

a few miles northwest of El Dorado Reservoir and State Park, on the western edge of the Flint Hills. Dill wrote that he followed the animal westward down secondary roads for several minutes, and then down an "abandoned road alongside a heavily vegetated gully." He was able to get within 6-7 yards of the animal, which stared at him for about 15 seconds, and then disappeared into the gully.

By 1984, Dill claimed to have compiled "sightings of 54 individuals and two 'confirmed' cougar tracks." Most sightings in the Flint Hills occurred in the "Uplands" and the "Osage Cuestas." Dill wrote that "both locations are rocky, with prairie knolls and shrubs interspersed with riparian woodlands." Dill believed that expanding white-tailed deer herds (estimated at 50,000 in the mid-1980s) provided an ample prey base for return of the big cats to the state. Dill wrote that several ranchers in Chase County in

1980-81 reported multiple sightings of a female with cubs, and that in December of 1979, a landowner from Oketo found the remains of one calf in a tree.

The Flint Hills are the eroded remnants of an ancient fossil-filled limestone ridge that runs north and south from southern Nebraska to the Osage Indian Reservation in northeastern Oklahoma. According to Dave Jones, the Fish and Wildlife Administrator for the 100,000-acre Fort Riley Military Reservation west of Manhattan, "90 percent of the Flint Hills is tallgrass range in very good condition." Most of it is privately-held pastureland, well maintained by the local ranchers for generations. John Barber, a spokesperson for Fort Riley, said "long linear riparian woodlands are interspersed throughout the tallgrass prairies of the military reservation." Jones said that Fort Riley receives an average of one report a year of cougars from servicemen on

the military reservation." Jones noted that in his investigations he has, "never observed any evidence that suggests or confirms the presence of lions and has never seen any photographs or paw prints."

A spokesperson for the 11,000-acre Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve, a private reserve managed by the Park Trust, said that several reports of the large felines have been received from local ranchers and farmers. One unconfirmed record indicated that tracks of pumas were discovered around Strong City and Council Grove, in the heart of the Flint Hills. As with other areas in the state, however, rangers could not verify any physical evidence from the Tallgrass Preserve.

An intriguing photograph of a fuzzy, "cougar-like" animal was taken in 1993 in a field near Edna, Kansas, by an unidentified bowhunter through the branches of some trees. Edna is located 30 miles east of Coffeyville near the Oklahoma border, on the eastern edge of the Flint Hills. The animal appears to be crouching and looking up at the photographer. A computerized scanned image slightly enlarges the photo, creating a hazy close-up effect, and reveals an animal with a definite cougar-shaped head and tan body. The photograph is distant and slightly out-of-focus, however, so some wildlife officials are reluctant to say conclusively it is a puma.

Some cougar believers feel that the Department of Wildlife and Parks has a "conspiracy of silence" to deliberately deny the existence of resident cougars. However, this is not the case, according to department officials. While there is considerable circumstantial evidence of at least a transient population of cougars in Kansas, until a



Many areas of Kansas support a large enough deer population to feed cougars. However, the big cats generally avoid human activity, and there are few remote areas in the state.

sighting of the big cat is conclusively confirmed by photographs, hair, or a carcass, wildlife officials, as Dill admitted, will continue to classify the species as “extirpated” (locally extinct) in the state. 🐾

Chasing Lion Reports

“Do you have lions here?” a visiting Colorado elk guide asked as he knelt along the two-rut Barber County road we were walking. I bent to study an impressive four-inch track, distinctly circular without claw marks. It was slightly distorted by slippage on the sandy grade, and another partial track was not definitive.

“A lot of people think so, but I’ve never seen hard evidence,” I told him.

“Well, I’ve seen a bunch of lion tracks, and that’s what this looks like to me.” We studied the fresh mark for a minute, wishing we had

a camera. It would be useless to return later, given the dry and windy conditions. The track raised an interesting question, and it certainly wasn’t hard to visualize a big cat in this remote stretch along the Medicine River.

Each year I check out several leads for possible photographs of cougars in Kansas, and all have been false alarms, or inconclusive. One batch of wild kittens, uncovered when a “mountain lion” ran from an abandoned Smith County barn, turned out to be bobcats. Another eyewitness report of a mountain lion walking through a back yard led to unmistakable coyote tracks in fresh mud along the observed route. A similar observation in a snowy wheat field, investigated within an hour of a daytime sighting, revealed coyote tracks that led to a bedded, mangy coyote in a plum thicket. Fresh “cougar” tracks on a muddy road

proved to be those of a large dog. And on it goes.

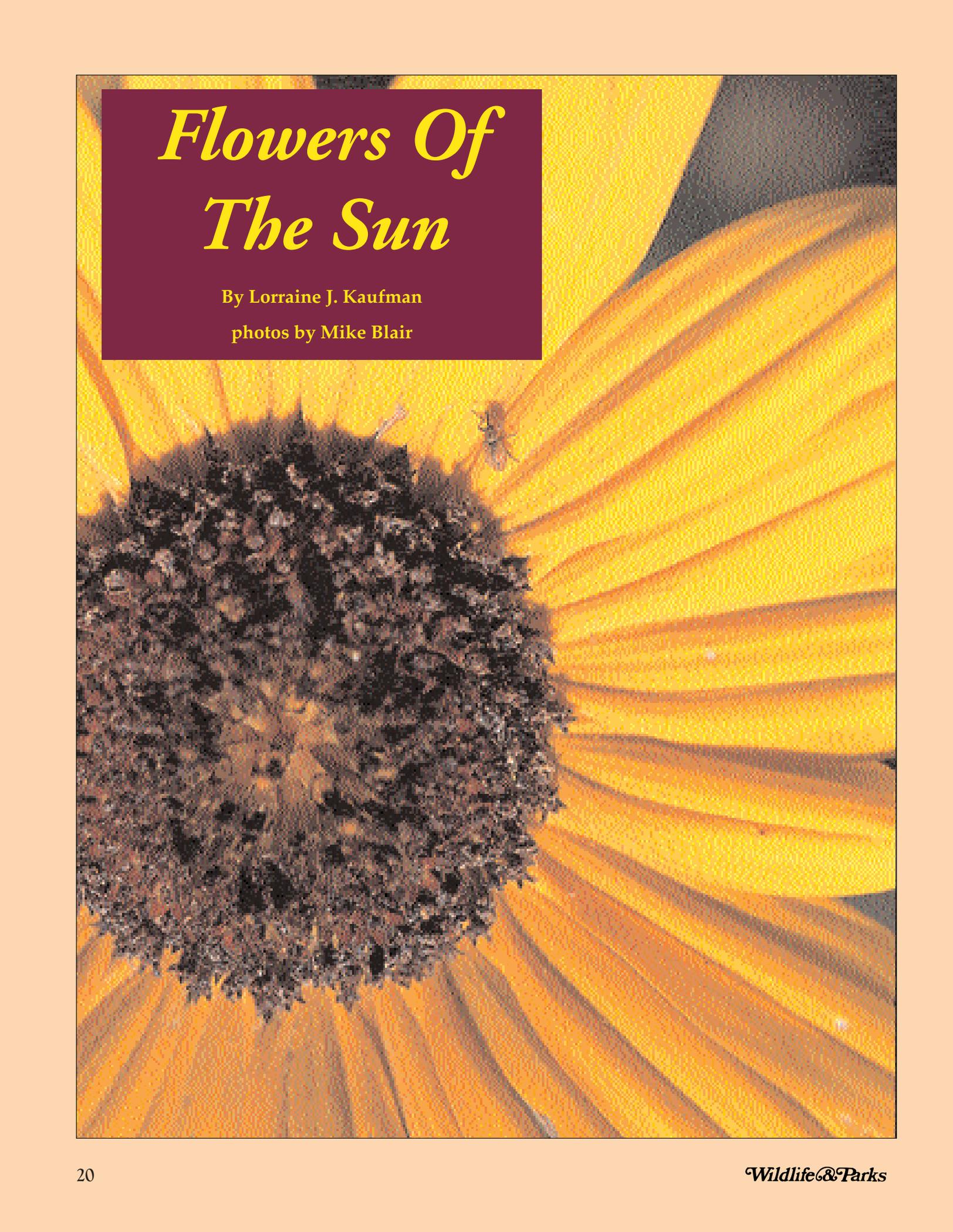
Still, I believe it’s possible that mountain lions roam through Kansas. Generally, when I can reach a report location quickly, I call the site with an electronic mountain lion tape. This produces the mating screams of a mountain lion, which should attract any lonely animal interested in its own kind. So far, no takers.

The mystery of Kansas mountain lions continues. A popular rumor says that the Kansas Department of Wildlife & Parks is restocking these animals and covering up information about their existence. There is no such agenda.

In the meantime, I continue to hope for a meeting with this large predator. *Kansas Wildlife & Parks* magazine readers will see the proof first. *Mike Blair*



Cougar tracks are about 3 1/2 inches wide and 3 inches long. They usually do not show claw marks, and the toes are teardrop shaped and widely spaced. The heel of the track will show three distinct lobes. Dog and coyote tracks show round toe marks, narrowly spaced, and claw marks are usually present. The heel of a dog track will be smooth, not lobed.



Flowers Of The Sun

By Lorraine J. Kaufman

photos by Mike Blair



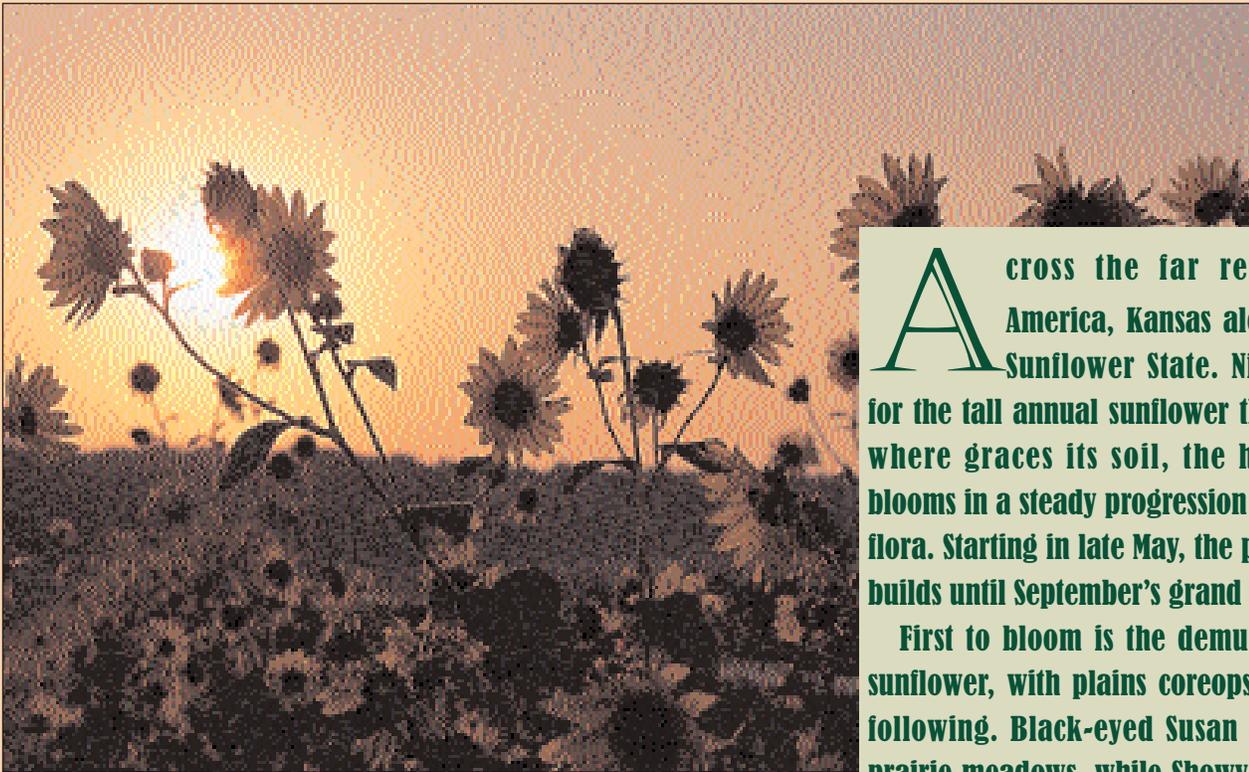
bur marigolds

Late summer belongs to the flowers of the sun. Bold and beautiful, yellow wildflowers claim any uncultivated spot as their rightful domain. They enliven the outdoors with the radiance of the daytime star and cheer the landscape in the way that a friendly smile warms the heart.

Flowers of the sun stand guard along lane and highway. They line fencerows, dot prairies, and fill ditches, seeps, and draws. Each species forms a colony that may cover acres of favored habitat. There's a special grace in the swaying flowers, as they bend with syncopation to the rhythmic whims of the south wind. To stand among them is to know the warmth of nodding sunshine.



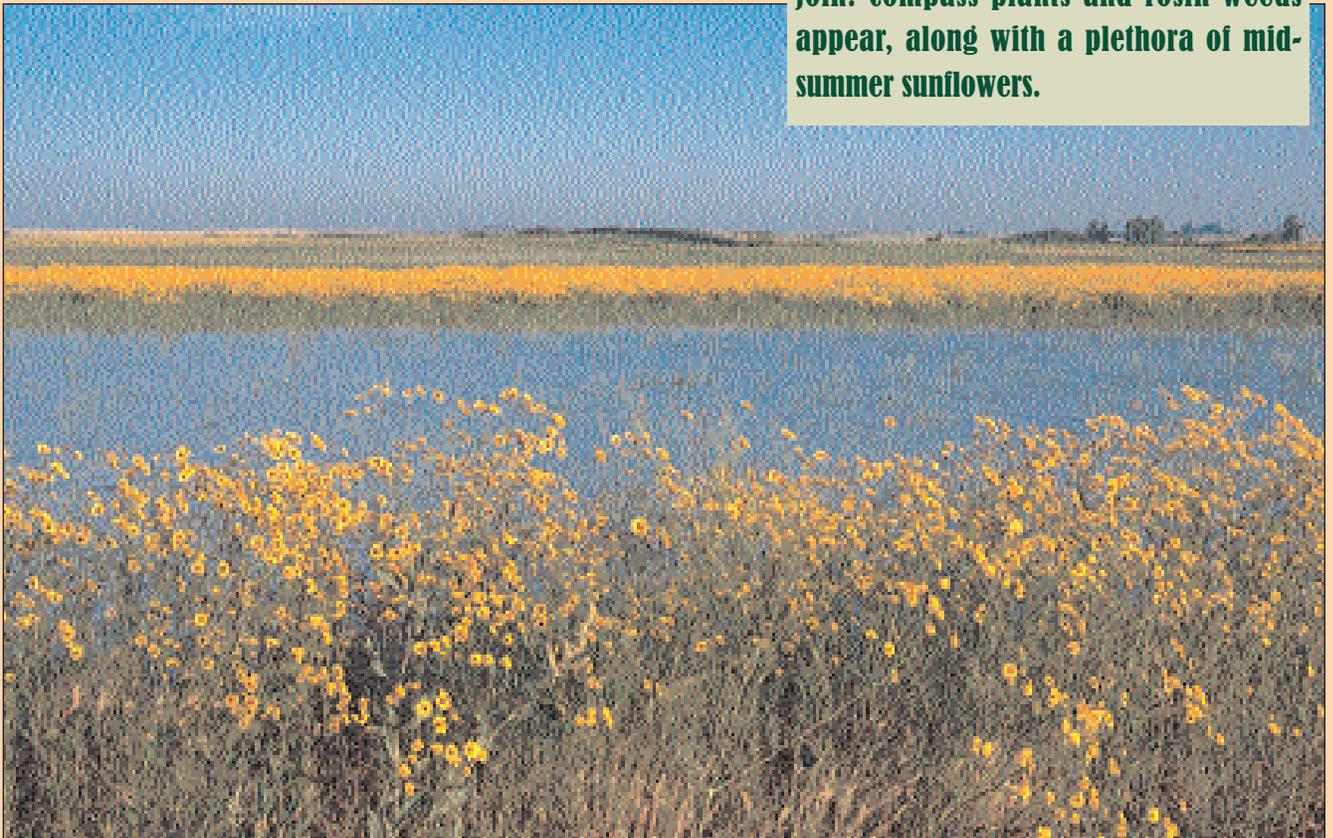
blackeyed susan



common sunflower

Across the far reaches of America, Kansas alone is the Sunflower State. Nicknamed for the tall annual sunflower that everywhere graces its soil, the heartland blooms in a steady progression of related flora. Starting in late May, the production builds until September's grand finale.

First to bloom is the demure prairie sunflower, with plains coreopsis quickly following. Black-eyed Susan decorates prairie meadows, while Showy partridge pea presents its buttery yellow. Others join. Compass plants and rosin weeds appear, along with a plethora of mid-summer sunflowers.



Plains coreopsis



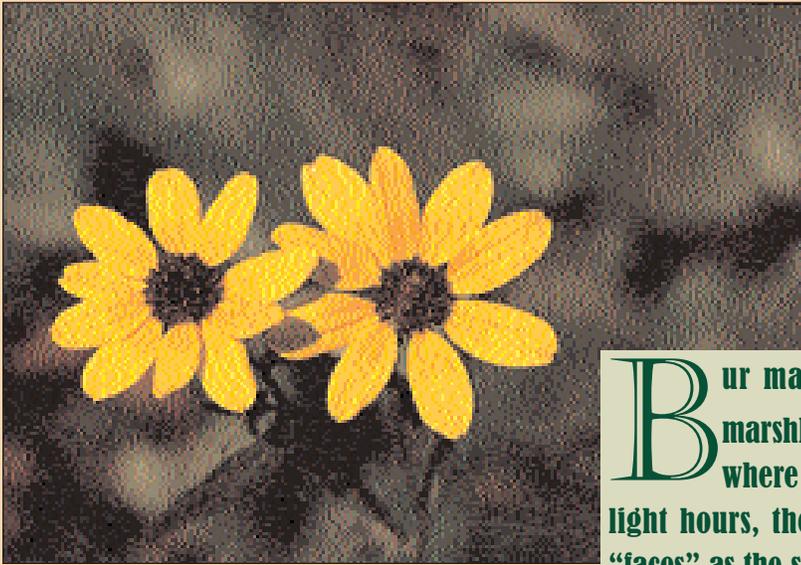
Maximilian sunflower

Butterflies, bees, and beetles attend. The contented hum of insects at yellow bouquets proves the value of these plants beyond their beauty.

Shadows turn northward as blooms of goldenrod unfold, and Jerusalem artichoke paints the roadsides yellow as nights turn cool. Grayhead and prairie coneflowers drip lemon petals from bald heads. Maximilian sunflowers clamber up stout stems, clasping them as closely as a kitten climbing a tree. Broomweed gathers on a prairie hillside to lend its Midas' touch.

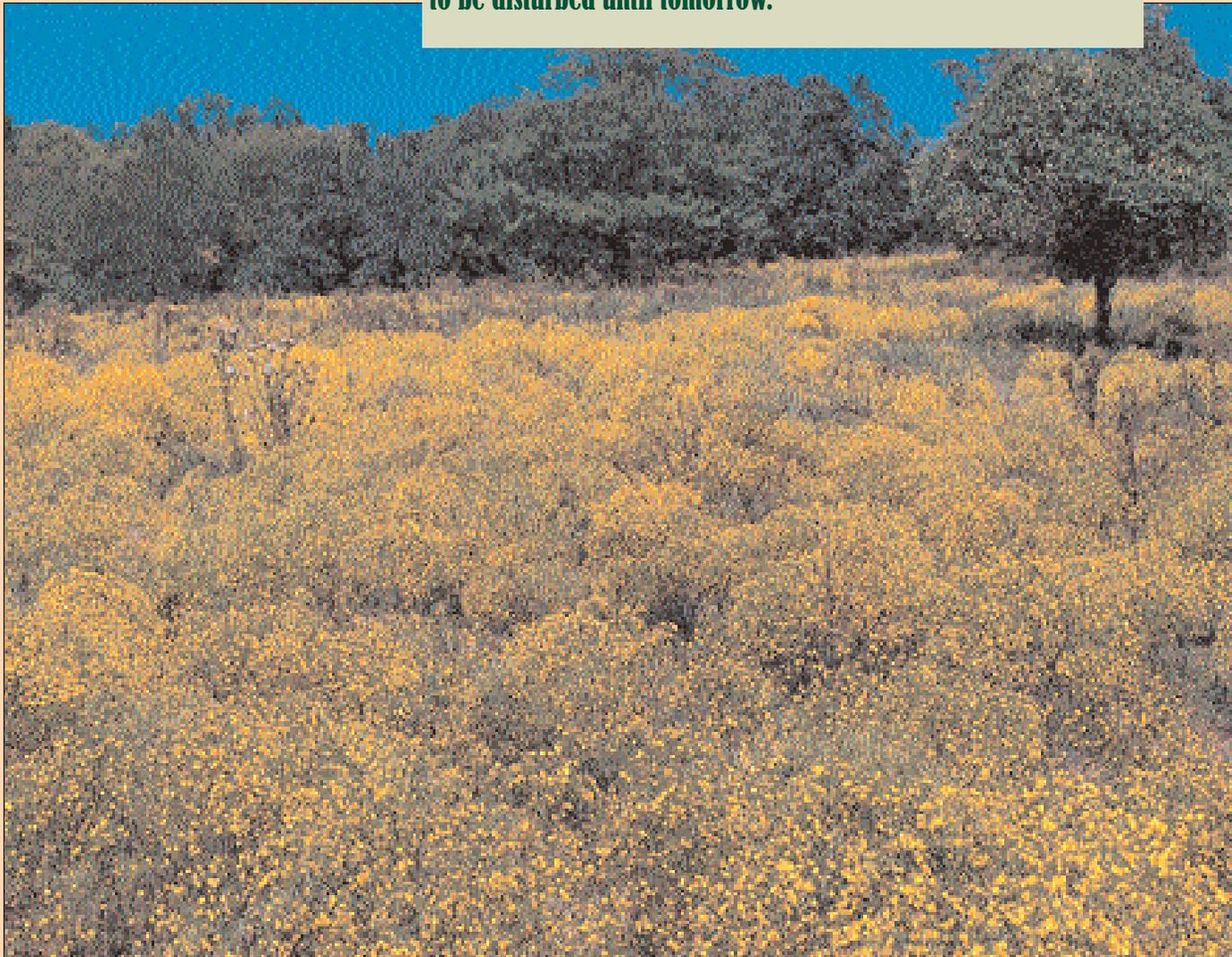
prairie coneflower





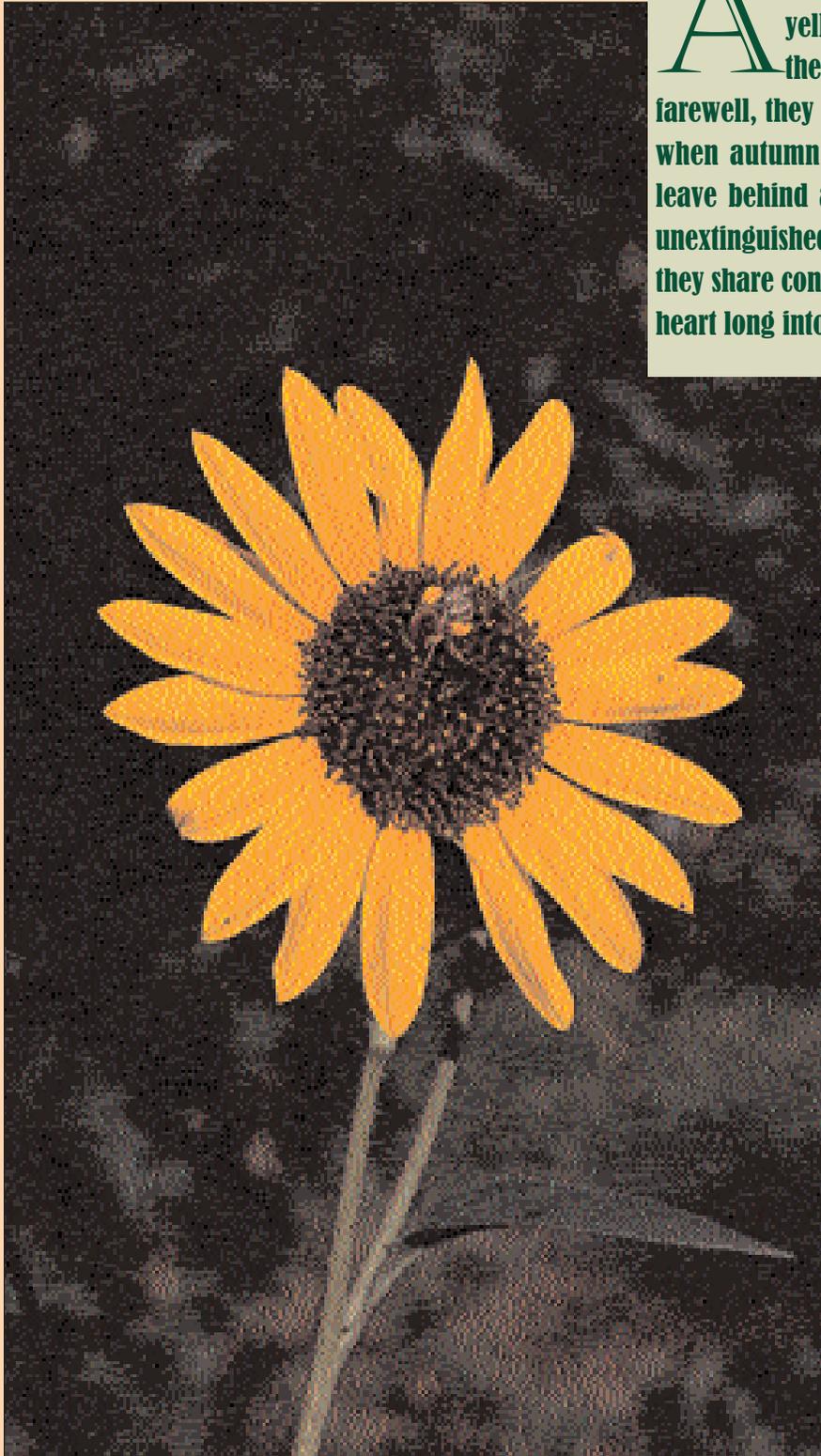
tickseed sunflowers

Bur marigolds are a brilliant coverlet on acres of marshland, outlining farm ponds or roadside ditches where moisture is plentiful. Spreading cheer in daylight hours, their thin-veined petals fold gently across their “faces” as the sun sinks, giving the impression they do not wish to be disturbed until tomorrow.



broom snakeweed

And on it goes, the sweep of yellow spilled by the flowers of the sun. Bowing in a winsome farewell, they make their final curtain call when autumn's leaves are flaming. They leave behind a golden glow of memories unextinguished by autumn frosts. The gifts they share continue to warm and cheer the heart long into winter. ♡



common sunflowers



I'M NOT SCARED OF THE DARK! (MUCH)

by Marc Murrell
manager, Great Plains Nature Center, Wichita

illustration by Dana Eastes
webmaster, Pratt

*A hunter battles his active imagination in the pre-dawn trek to his treestand.
Unfortunately, he's losing the battle.*

There's no other activity where darkness has more of an impact than deer hunting. Coon hunting maybe, but those guys wear headlamps and are a different breed altogether. Nothing scares them. Even most deer hunters don't mind the dark. But the occasional one, like myself, is man enough to admit that pitch black is reason for a bit of apprehension.

Apprehension is a manly word for scared. But there's a reason for that fear: An active imagination. My imagination doesn't just run away with me, it sprints with world-class speed and runs a marathon. This fact is illustrated by an experience that happened to me a couple of years ago.

On an early-morning drive to my favorite bowhunting spot, I heard a radio news report that a dangerous felon had escaped police custody. As usual, he was considered armed and dangerous and on the loose somewhere in my neck of the country. This was in the back of my mind as I walked to my deer stand.

It was darker than the inside of a cow. My pace was faster than normal as I crossed a grass draw. I rounded a corner and standing there in front of me was a shadowy figure of a man; a very big man holding an ax. At the instant I froze, the grass at my feet exploded. I knew I was a goner and could only manage a guttural moan.

As the sounds of my certain death subsided, I pried my eyes open and untangled my arms from around my head. The outline of a gnarly Osage orange tree I have passed dozens of times became instantly obvious. And I realized I had stepped in the middle of a roosted covey of quail at the instant I was imagining my own gruesome murder. I was fortunate

not to have wet myself.

I made it to my stand and nestled into my perch 15 feet above the ground, although my heart rate never returned to normal. I felt somewhat safe among the hundreds of trees and assumed if I could fool the eyes of a deer, I could get past those of a deranged criminal. There's no way he would wander by my stand anyway, unless of course my imagination brought him there. It did.



It was a sound I'd heard before. The crack of a gunshot in the distance as kids on a neighboring farm plinked cans along the river. But this was different. There was only one, and it was still dark. It was followed by a loud thud, like a body falling to the ground after being shot. Like maybe the angry felon getting revenge on the one who ratted on him.

I listened intently and could barely hear the sound of something being dragged along the ground. The sound got louder, and my heart rate revved up again. It got closer, stopping occasionally, I assumed, so the felon could catch his breath. Dragging bodies is hard work, my imagination said. I just

knew he was going to dispose of the body in the ditch next to my stand. Unfortunately, the sounds were coming from behind me, and although my imagination could see quite well, I was blind to reality.

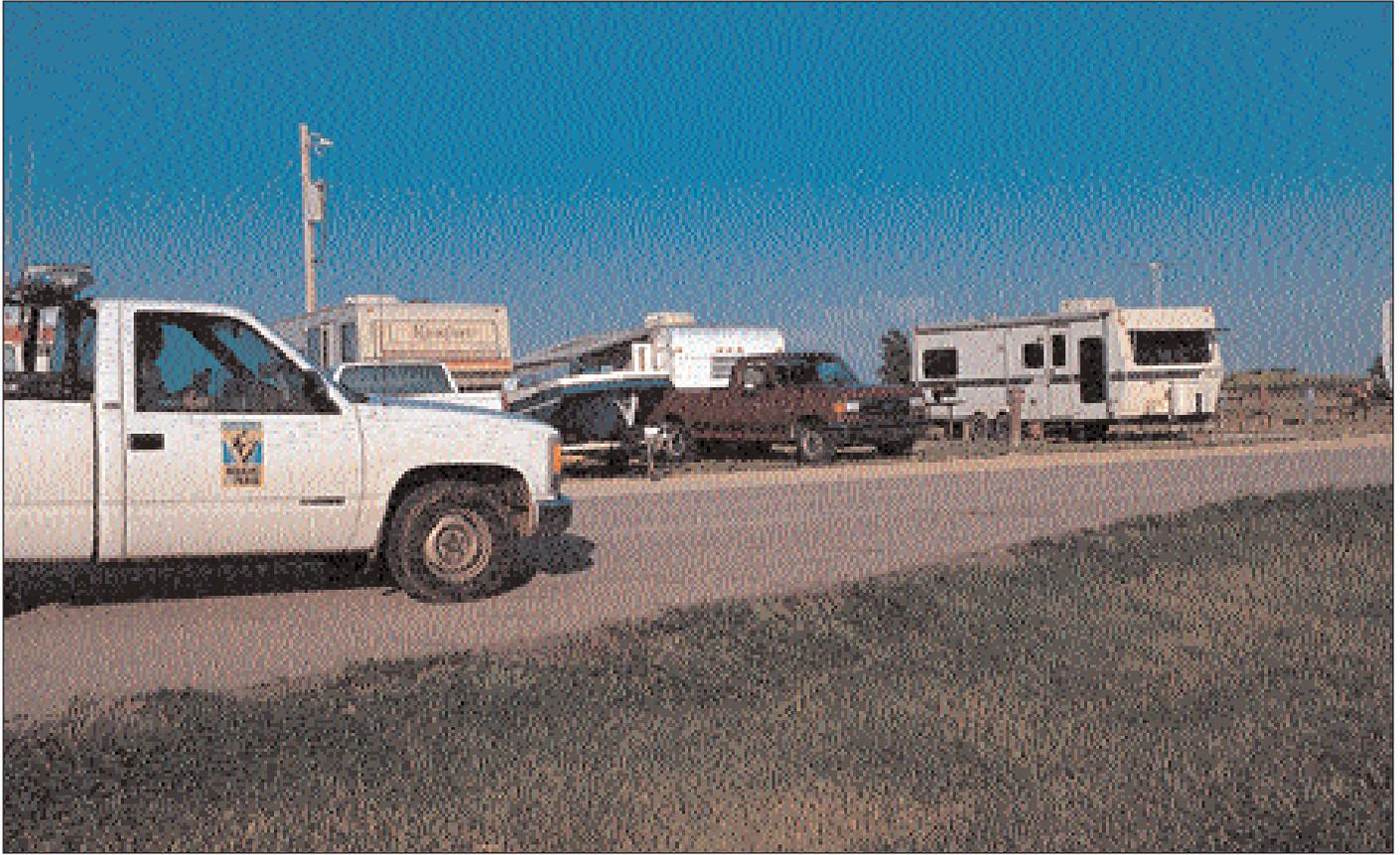
I decided I wasn't going down without a fight so I nocked an arrow and tried to quit shaking. Buck fever is nothing compared to the idea of coming face to face with a crazed killer with blood on his hands and nothing to lose.

Darkness began to fade as the sounds closed in and were only yards away. With the help of my imagination, I made out the shape of something dark and round, pulling its victim with a noticeable limp — the perfect description of a wanted killer. I readied my bow.

About the time my heart was ready to leave my chest, my eyes were beginning to see the scene without my imagination's help. Finally, reality hit and I saw the biggest, fattest beaver I've ever seen. I laughed out loud, both relieved that my life wasn't in danger and amused at my own "apprehension." I couldn't help but look around to see if anyone was watching me.

The determined beaver worked to drag its prize, a 15-foot sapling, back to the lodge. It would stop occasionally and gnaw on the tender bark before resuming the drag. It didn't look like a felon, and I'm pretty sure the beaver had never been in handcuffs.

And so it is. With an imagination like mine, reality isn't much of a factor in the dark. Every pre-dawn jaunt to my treestand is an adventure. I know for a fact there's nothing to be afraid of. The problem is I can't seem to convince my imagination. Maybe it's not the dark I'm scared of, it's those things that go bump in the night. 



Kansas Park Ranger: All In A Day's Work

by Mike Harris
park ranger, Milford State Park

photos by Marc Murrell

The title "park ranger" means different things to different people but in Kansas, it means wearing lots of hats and taking care of park customers.

A park ranger's job is the envy of many. That explains the two most common questions we hear: "How do you become a park ranger?" and "What does a park ranger do?"

To answer the first question, we need a little personnel background. Park ranger candidates should have

a college degree, preferably in a natural resource or related field. And of course some related job experience always helps. Most of the current park rangers have worked their way through the system, often beginning as seasonal or temporary employees. And a little luck can't hurt, especially when you consider

that there are only 26 park rangers stationed at the state's 24 state parks.

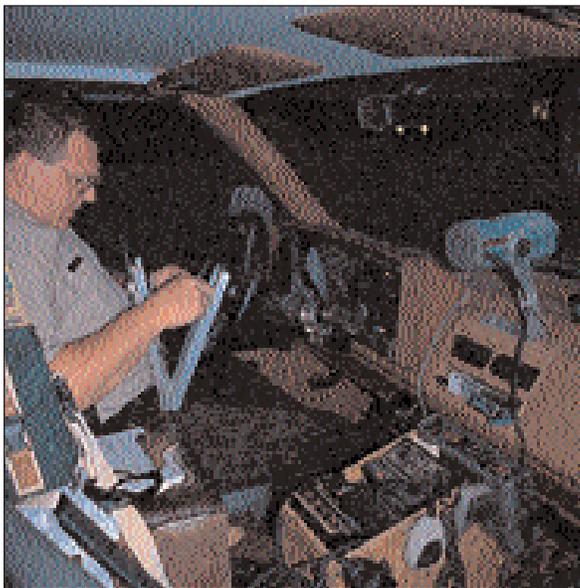
What does a park ranger do? Although I've been asked that question hundreds of times, I still don't have a brief answer. A typical day for a park ranger is hard to describe, and rarely are two days ever the same. I can describe our varying work tasks. Ranger duties are generally outlined as performing 50 percent law enforcement and customer service, 30 percent supervision and administration, and 20 percent park maintenance and development.

In the course of daily duties, park rangers often encounter people who are not familiar with our law enforcement role. The term ranger adds to the confusion since it has different meanings from agency to agency. Generally speaking, a ranger is a law enforcement officer with jurisdiction and responsibilities centered around natural resources. However, a ranger in one agency may work as a naturalist and manage and interpret natural

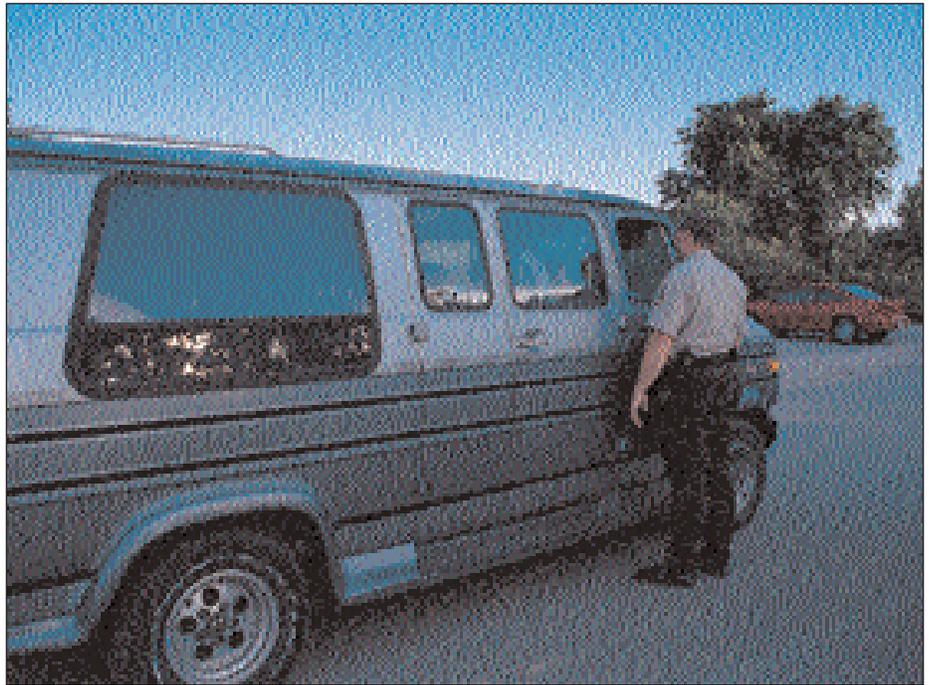
resources, and at another agency, a ranger may perform park maintenance and have limited enforcement authority. In other agencies, rangers may be park police, enforcing laws, investigating crimes and making arrests. The Kansas park ranger is a combination of all of the above.

Our law enforcement duties include routine patrols to detect park, hunting and fishing, and boating violations. What most people don't know is that we also enforce traffic violations such as speeding and DUI, alcohol violations such as minor in possession and transporting open container, people and property violations such as domestic battery and theft, and drug violations. We work a variety of special events, some as large as the Country Stampede at Tuttle Creek State Park and other smaller bluegrass festivals or historical reenactments. Rangers also organize and participate in DUI check lanes. However, our customer service responsibilities remain our highest priority.

Supervision and administrative duties include supervising full and part-time staff, volunteers, inmate crews, community service workers, and various other work programs. We routinely sell and account for all permits and department issuances.



In his mobile office, Ostlund finishes up paper work. Traffic violations are a ranger's responsibility.



Cheney park ranger Jeff Ostlund spends much of his time on patrol visiting with park patrons and providing information. Here he gives directions to a group at Cheney.

And we prepare cost estimates, submit formal bids, make purchases, and prepare budget submittals through the department's planning process.

A working knowledge of electrical, water, and sewer lines, heavy equipment operation, construction and maintenance is necessary for our park maintenance duties. We

help plan and develop capital improvement projects and help with resource management activities such as tree and grass plantings, controlled burns, establishing fish and wildlife habitat, and improving timber stands.

To make the job even more difficult to describe, each of the 24 state parks is different, and the size and location of a park dictates work-time percentages. Indeed, state parks require very different levels of law enforcement activities. State parks near urban areas, such as El Dorado and Hillsdale, experience a huge volume of people daily. In fact,

five of the top ten tourist attractions in Kansas are state parks. And park rangers stationed at those parks work a higher percentage of law enforcement than rangers at less busy parks. Regardless of the percentage of time spent in law enforcement, all park rangers must be cross-trained to handle whatever situation arises.

In addition to the duties listed, a "typical" park ranger will hold a variety of certificates or instructor ratings in firearms, weapon retention, defensive tactics, hazardous material, hunter education, big game scoring, waste and potable water treatment, water rescue, Intoxilizer 5000 (blood alcohol content), Kustom Doppler Radar, basic supervisor training, CPR, first aid, and personal watercraft operation.

As you can see, a "typical" day is hard to describe. Our job has evolved into one of the most diverse law enforcement positions in the state. From arresting criminals to driving a crawler, to providing public programs, park rangers do it all. We wear a lot of hats and take pride in our work. ♡

GRAND OPENING: GREAT PLAINS NATURE CENTER

by Marc Murrell

manager, Great Plains Nature Center

photos by Bob Gress

director, Great Plains Nature Center

After years of work, planning and setbacks, this unique nature education center will finally open on September 1, 2000.



If good things come to those who wait, then Wichita's Great Plains Nature Center (GPNC) should be spectacular. Visitors will finally get a chance to preview this unique facility with a Grand Opening on September 1-3, 2000. Special Grand Opening hours will be 9 a.m.-9 p.m. Friday and Saturday, and noon-5 p.m. on Sunday. Regular guided hikes and special programs will highlight the event. The Center is adjacent to Chisholm Creek Park at East 29th St. North and Woodlawn.

The GPNC is a cooperative project between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP), and the City of Wichita's Department of Park and Recreation. All three agencies share compatible goals and provide recreational, interpretive and environmental education opportunities to the public.

The project was initiated by a meeting between KDWP and the City in 1988. Wichita was chosen since the greater metropolitan area was home to more than 400,000 people. It was quickly discovered these two agencies could not complete the project alone, and they enlisted the assistance of the USFWS.

A Memorandum of Agreement was signed by the three agencies in 1991, outlining the responsibilities

of each agency. The USFWS provided approximately \$4.7 million for land purchase, building design and construction and exhibit design. KDWP provided approximately \$1 million for exhibit construction and provides annual operation and maintenance costs for the building (in exchange for regional staff office space). The City provided approximately \$1 million for external features of the Center and is responsible for grounds operation and maintenance. The City also dedicated the adjacent 240-acre Chisholm Creek Park to be managed in a manner consistent with the educational mission of the GPNC. The park's nature trails tie to the entrance of the Center.

Groundbreaking took place in 1994. The GPNC was scheduled to open in 1996 when office staff moved in. However, SuperScenics, Inc, the original exhibit hall contractor, had a building collapse under ice and snow, destroying some of the exhibits being constructed for installation. SuperScenics, Inc. defaulted on the contract and several hundred thousand dollars in committed funds were lost.

The project was on hold for more than two years pending litigation involving the contractor and procurement of additional funding. The USFWS reprogrammed

\$500,000 from another project to assist with funding. In addition, a generous \$300,000 donation from the Fred C. and Mary R. Koch Foundation was pledged. A new exhibit construction contract was awarded to The Roybal Corporation from Denver, Colo. in 1999.

In recognition of the Foundation's generous contribution, the GPNC exhibit hall will be called the "Koch Habitat Hall." A tribute to Fred and Mary Koch and their love of natural resources will be prominently featured at the exhibit hall's entrance.

Elizabeth B. Koch, President of the Fred C. and Mary R. Koch Foundation, stated, "Fred and Mary Koch shared a passion for the outdoors, and it is our hope that this grant will stimulate a similar passion and appreciation for our Kansas natural resources in both children and adults."

Also featured on the recognition wall is the Coleman Company, which donated \$100,000.

As a result of their generosity, the auditorium has been named the "Coleman Auditorium" and features accent lighting with special edition Coleman lanterns.

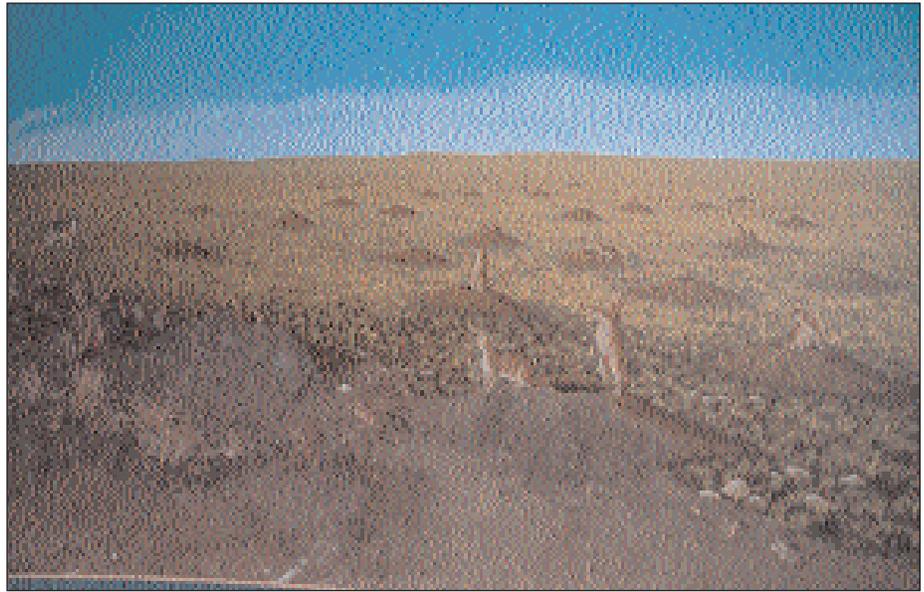
Other substantial contributors to the GPNC include The Forrest C. Lattner Foundation (\$65,000), the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (\$50,000), Scenic

Landscape (\$50,000), Chris Paulsen Polk (\$48,000), The Boeing Company (\$22,000), Wichita's Project Beauty (\$12,000), and the Ark Valley Chapter of Quail Unlimited (\$10,000). In addition, Vic and Steve Scholfield, Steve Hatchett, Robert Griffith and Stephen Mardis provided a \$271,000 discount on land acquisition.

Educational experiences will be provided that impart the importance of wise stewardship of these natural resources and the roles and responsibilities of KDWP, USFWS and the City. The GPNC will serve as a resource for environmental education with school districts, youth organizations, tourists and other groups and interested individuals. On-site staff from all three agencies provide guided tours, field trips and learning seminars. In addition, two teachers are on staff and coordinate a curriculum for second, fifth and eighth grade students from the Wichita Public School System, as well as other visiting public, private and home schools.

There is no admission charge to the Center, but some of the programs and field trips may charge a nominal fee for supplies and other associated costs. Normal hours of operation will be 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Monday through Saturday.

Walk-in visitors will be accommodated through state-of-the-art exhibits and interpretive displays in the Koch Habitat Hall. The Coleman



Accuracy and detail highlight spectacular murals that form the back drop of the Great Plains dioramas. Each features lifesize mounts of many native plains wildlife.

Auditorium will feature audio-visual programs, seminars and other on-site demonstrations and presentations. Chisholm Creek Park features more than 2 miles of handicapped accessible nature trails that traverse wetland, prairie, and riparian woodland habitats found throughout the Great Plains. Trail visitors might catch a glimpse of white-tailed deer, raccoons, bobcats, painted turtles, water snakes and numerous other species of wildlife. Since the park is designated as a natural area by the City, dogs, skateboards, roller blades and bicycles are not allowed on trails.

GPNC staff have recruited interested individuals from within the community to form the Friends of the Great Plains Nature Center. The non-profit Friends Group hired a part-time volunteer coordinator and gift shop manager and provides funding for seasonal naturalists. In addition, they will take an active role in numerous projects and fund-raising efforts benefiting the Center.

The potential for informing people about wildlife and environmental topics at the GPNC will be

far-reaching. Annual visitation is expected to exceed 150,000. The partnership among these three agencies, the spectacular exhibits, aquarium and learning opportunities, make the Center a truly unique attraction. ♡

Join The GPNC Team

Are you interested in joining the Friends of Great Plains Nature Center? As a member, you'll receive advance notice of all GPNC events in the newsletter, "Prairie Reflections." Plus, you'll be eligible for a 10 percent discount on purchases at the Owls Nest Gift Shop and be invited to special events just for Friends Group members.

Membership categories include \$10 for a student/educator, \$20 for individual, and \$30 for a family membership. Money raised will be used to support the educational programs, gift shop and GPNC sponsored events.

The GPNC is also looking for qualified volunteers to staff the gift shop, monitor the Koch Habitat Hall, staff the reception desk, greet visitors, and provide guided tours.

For more information on the Friends Group, or to become a volunteer, contact the GPNC at (316) 683-5499 or contact our website at www..gpnc.org.



Active learning stations will provide a fun way for youngsters to learn about the plains ecosystems.

Conservation Officer

text and photo by Mike Ehlebracht
conservation officer, Great Bend

Seventh in a series profiling the men and women who enforce the state's wildlife related laws.



If you live in Kansas, and you have ever looked under a rural bridge, in just about any county, then you have probably seen various, miscellaneous deer parts. Most responsible sportsmen do not regard this as the best way to dispose of unwanted deer remains. Conservation officer Rick Campbell received a call on evening that a man had made such a discovery. When Campbell arrived, he learned that the man had fallen from a 20-foot bridge and landed right next to a pile of fresh deer parts. There was not a deer season open at the time, so Campbell started to investigate. Before the night was over, he discovered that the guy who took the header from the bridge and another man, had poached the deer. Campbell seized the rest of the deer, a rifle, and some butchering tools. It seems that when the two were trying to discard the remains, one of them held on for just a second too long.

Campbell is a 21-year veteran officer stationed in Pottawatomie and Wabunsee counties. He is married and the father of two, so it's not surprising to learn that one his favorite work activities is the Youth Hunter Education Challenge program. Campbell and other conser-

vation officers run a program that takes young hunters to the next level of hunter education and safety skills. The youth compete regionally in evens like wingshooting, rifle and muzzleloader shooting, and archery. There are also events that test their knowledge of hunter ethics and wildlife identification. Each year Campbell helps hundreds of kids make their way toward become responsible sportsmen and women, and he has also been involved in YHEC at the national level, traveling to other states.

Campbell got his start like most COs, wanting an outdoor career. Now he enjoys the season changes associated with the job. There always seems to be something new just around the corner. Each month can change a CO's direction and priorities. He shares a common frustration among officers that no matter how many hours he works, he can't catch all the bad guys. Some cases can take incredible amounts of time.

Campbell was involved in one such case where poachers were setting fish traps in the Kansas River. Taking turns with other officers, Campbell staked out the location in an attempt to catch the poachers. Sure enough, the men returned to

collect their catch on Campbell's watch. He radioed for help and apprehended the poachers, confiscating a van, boat and motor, as well as 90 pounds of illegally taken fish. According to the Campbell, the most memorable part of the night wasn't the actual bust, but rather the quiet moonlit boat ride at 1 a.m., with only the sound of his paddles as he stroked to water. All in a night's work. Catch the bad guys, be home safe by 5 a.m. — real game warden work — life is good.

Campbell has also been involved in some special operations investigation that he finds very exciting. These cases usually involve commercialization of our resources and can only be effectively stopped through special operations. Many of our COs are trained to perform in this capacity when called.

When Campbell has spare time, he enjoys turkey hunting and other outdoor pursuits. He also spends as much time as possible with his family. His advice to others is to spend time with your kids hunting, fishing, playing sports, or whatever they have an interest in. But if you think you might want to try bridge jumping, like the fellow mentioned earlier, avoid deer parts, and try a bungee cord. 🦋

Edited by Mark Shoup



TWO IN ONE

Editor:

I thought you might get a kick out of this picture. One like it made the Kansas City Star newspaper on Sunday, May 28. These are Kansas farm pond bass. My son caught both on one cast. One on one hook and one on the other hook of the Zara Spook lure. One was 7.5 lbs. and the other was just under 7 lbs.

Needless to say, it was probably the catch of a lifetime for my 11-year-old son, Mark. *Field and Stream* magazine called and they are going to see if they have space to put a little article in. The fish were caught up around Lincoln, Ks., May 14. (Hope it's legal to catch two on one cast?) Might make a good picture in *Kansas Wildlife and Parks* magazine.

Take care, Thanks to all at the KDWP.

*Steve Wiesner
Lenexa, Ks*

Dear Mr. Wiesner:

Yes, it's legal to catch two with one cast, but it hardly seems fair to the rest of us! That would be the catch of a lifetime for anyone. Congratulations to Mark.

--Shoup

ARTHRITIS REMEDY

Editor:

Mr. Miller sounds like his dog has a problem ("Old Dogs," *Kansas Wildlife and Parks* magazine, May/June 2000, Page 45) mine did about three years ago. Arthritis had nearly stopped him. He was dragging his hind legs.

One evening, we saw a story on one of the TV stations about a remedy for arthritis in dogs. They recommended Rymodil. In two weeks, he was back running and enjoying his walks. Three years later, he is still doing well. His muzzle is getting grayer at age 15.

Anyway, I thought you might like to give it a try. Enjoyed your article because it reminded me of my "Bud."

*Dennis Shogren
Hutchinson*

Dear Mr. Shogren:

Thanks for the concern. I have tried Rymodil on Magnum with mixed results. Right now, he's kind of like the cowboy in the movie, "The Electric Horseman" -- some parts just wake up sooner than others.

--Miller

BIG CLUTCH

Editor:

Enclosed is a photo of a turkey nest I found in Linn County on April 22. It was taken by Dr. Sid McKnight of Parker.

One week later, there were 20 eggs in the nest. Do you think that two hens were laying in the same nest? Two hens had been seen together in the vicinity.

I took a nice gobbler while sitting under a tree 10 feet from this nest -- unaware of its presence.

*Jim Harding, DDS
Prairie Village*

Dear Dr. Harding:

Sounds like you had quite a good turkey hunting season.

Twenty eggs in one nest would be most unusual. The 13 in photo you sent is about the upper end of a clutch -- the average clutch ranges from 8 to 15 eggs. The odds of one hen successfully raising 20 young would not be the greatest although it could be possible for one to lay 20 eggs.

While it is known that pheasants will create "dump nests," in which more than one hen will lay, this has not been



documented in turkeys.

In any case, I'm sure it was an exciting find, especially so close to your hunting spot.

--Shoup

HUNTER FOREVER

Editor:

I am 65 years old and have hunted since I was 8, during WWII and after, when rabbits were like a plague. I was also fortunate to live where coyotes were always close at hand. We also had pheasant and quail. By living amongst game, you soon learn their habits if you concern yourself.

I've seen a time when deer were nonexistent in Kansas. Now, we have a plague in some areas and hardly any only a few miles away. The reason is habitat. Years ago, we thought we had to go to the river or creek to find deer. In the past three or four years, I would guess, 85 percent of deer will be found in Conservation Reserve Program [CRP] land, heavy-growth pastures, tall weeds in gullies, heavy shrub brushes, and plumb bushes miles from the creek or river.

However, you can walk all day in 400 acres of CRP and never see a deer although you will probably come within 10 yards of them. When they think they are hidden, they don't move. On the other hand, in open pastures they will run one-half mile before you get to them.

I think the best way to hunt is to get down wind from a trail and hunt like a bowhunter. Scouting four times, 30 to 45 days before hunting, at the same time of day you plan to hunt, and you will come home much more pleased than you would have driving miles and miles and being empty-handed. In CRP, I stand on a hill and have seen deer stand up 150 yards away about 5:30 p.m. There isn't anything that compares to CRP next to corn, alfalfa, or soybeans.

But most importantly, treat the farmer or rancher as you would want someone to treat your lawn. Don't trash the area [or leave gates open]. Get permission before scouting as well as before hunting. If a landowner wants you to take a doe, do it. Let the landowners know how you are doing, and give them

a gift of some kind. At least a thank-you letter.

Finally, practice. If you can't hit your target at 200 yards in October, you won't hit a deer on December 1, either. Once you shoot, go to where the animal was and track for blood. Many deer will run 70 yards or more, even with a lung or heart hit.

*Kenneth Austin
Dodge City*

HUNTERS HELP HUNGRY

Editor:

An area that I thought would be helpful to the many deer hunters in the state [and help stabilize the herd] would be an outlet or charitable organization that could use venison. In our case, I am the only consumer of venison in the family and usually eat a portion of one deer with the balance given to friends and neighbors.

An organization that would accept venison that was processed and packaged by a locker facility would encourage many hunters to fill their

unused tags; have the deer butchered, processed, and packaged; and donate it to an organization in their locale. You could increase the number of tags filled, and the organizations would benefit.

*Joe Bormann
Overland Park*

Dear Mr. Bormann:

Actually, such a program does exist, on a limited basis. In Wichita, the department has worked with a local butcher shop for the past six years to accept donated deer and then give it to the local Union Rescue Mission. A similar program exists in the Topeka area and is sponsored by the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. In these cases, the butchers donate a portion of the cost and the sponsoring organizations cover the rest.

However, individuals may do this on their own by contacting any local charity that would accept the processed meat.

--Shoup

WAY outside

BY BRUCE COCHRAN



"YOU NEVER KNEW YOUR UNCLE LEROY. HE WALKED INTO THE WOODS WEARING A NEW CAMO OUTFIT IN 1989, AND NO ONE EVER SAW HIM AGAIN."

DEER LAW NABS RAPIST

One July morning, I climbed into my truck and headed east with my sites on Miami State Fishing Lake. This morning was just like any other typical weekend morning, until I was about three miles into my journey. The Miami County dispatch notified me that a Franklin County deputy held a deer poaching suspect near Richmond.

I switched my radio to the Franklin County sheriff's Office and started to monitor their traffic. While doubling back west, I was notified that they had a suspect with a deer in the back of his vehicle. Moments later, I heard the deputy on the scene radio the dispatch that he heard something moaning in the field. Seconds later, the officer requested backup and ambulance.

Knowing this was not a typical poaching call, I thought I should get to Richmond as soon as I could. As I approached the Junction of Highway 59

and John Brown Road, the ambulance and backup units buzzed by. I fell in behind the parade because I was a little unsure of my destination.

When we arrived, I saw a man in his late thirties wearing only a pair of cutoff jeans. He was covered in mud and wore a set of handcuffs. The deputy directed the ambulance personnel about 15 rows into a soybean field. There, they found an unclothed woman who was in obvious pain.

As I talked with the deputy and the half naked suspect (who was apparently drunk), the story unfolded. The Franklin County dispatch had received a call from a farmer who had observed a small car near his cornfield. The farmer believe the individuals were stealing corn. When the deputy arrived at the location, all he saw was the male suspect and a deer literally stuffed in the back of his Volkswagen Rabbit. The deputy did not know of the woman's presence until he heard sounds from a

soybean field directly across from the cornfield.

The suspect told us that he had offered to give a woman a ride home early this same morning. Along I-35, he had seen a roadkill deer and decided to take it with him. He did not notify any law authority that he had possession of this animal, and during the journey, he had decided to stop by the cornfield.

While the ambulance crew attended the woman, they were unable to get a statement from her, so the decision was made to detain the suspect on the deer charge. By the time the suspect was booked into jail, the hospital staff and investigators were able to obtain enough evidence to charge Michael Carrier with aggravated rape, aggravated kidnapping, and aggravated battery. He currently is serving a 34-year sentence in state prison. The victim still suffers injuries from the attack.

*--David Ellis,
conservation officer, Miami County*

Second Base Stolen

One Memorial Day weekend, conservation officers Terry Mills, Jim Bussone, and I were working at Cedar Valley Reservoir in Anderson County, patrolling the lake, stopping vessels, doing safety inspections and checking fishing licenses.

One boat we checked that day had two gentlemen fishing. We asked to see their fishing licenses, and they both produced valid Kansas licenses. We then checked their safety equipment; they had all the necessary equipment, but because the boat was more than 16 feet long, they needed a Type IV life preserver. (Most people refer to these as throw cushions or seat cushions.)

Terry asked to see theirs, but they didn't understand what we were talking about when we called it a Type IV. Terry then said, "How about a seat cushion?"

One of the gentlemen handed Terry a square cushion that he had in the boat. It was white and had two nylon straps. Each strap had a metal buckle. Terry looked at it and couldn't find a Coast Guard sticker on it, which all approved life

preservers are required to have. I had never seen a Type IV like this before, but there was something familiar about it.

We continued to talk to the men about the fishing and other matters when it came to me. I could remember as a kid sliding into second base; this is where I had seen the object the man had handed Terry. It was an old-style base used for baseball and softball diamonds. We explained to the man that it was not an approved life-saving device, and we issued a warning citation and told him he needed to get an approved one before he used the boat again.

About a month later, I was patrolling Coffey County Lake, where the gentleman was again fishing out of his boat that we had checked that Memorial Day weekend. I stopped and checked to see if he had replaced the Type IV life preserver. Sure enough, he had a brand new Type IV on board, but he still had the base on board because he liked to sit on it, and it brings him good luck.

*-- Brad Hageman,
conservation officer, Burlington*

AMERICORPS GRANT BOLSTERS OUTDOOR PROJECTS

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks is one of four groups in the nation awarded a community service grant designed to provide long-term benefits to natural resources, outdoor recreation opportunities, and public awareness of the outdoors.

This grant will allow the selection of 54 individuals to serve on the Kansas Outdoor AmeriCorps Action Team. Each team member will receive a living stipend and, at the end of their minimum 1,700 hours of service, an educational credit award of \$4,725.

Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks staff, along with personnel from the Kansas Office for Community Service, worked together to obtain the grant during a very competitive national selection process. Gov. Bill Graves and his staff supported these efforts and approved the use of grant personnel to assist with the

restoration and enhancement of Kansas' environmental and recreational resources.

AmeriCorps team members will be based in at least 16 Kansas state parks. They will assist with a variety of projects throughout the state.

All team members selected must be 17 years of age or older, U. S. citizens, and have either a high school diploma or GED. Team members will gain service experience and knowledge through hands-on participation in a variety of projects. Senior team members are actively being sought in order to share their knowledge, skills, and appreciation for public service and team accomplishments with other members.

To apply for one of these team member positions, or to obtain more information, contact one of the state park offices listed below. The team member selection process will begin in early November.

—Shoup

- Crawford State Park (316) 362-3671
- Eisenhower State Park . . . (785) 528-4102
- Toronto State Park (316) 637-2213
- Perry State Park (785) 246-3449
- Clinton State Park (785) 842-8562
- Hillsdale State Park (913) 783-4507
- Cheney State Park (316) 542-3664
- EL Dorado State Park (316) 321-7180

- Kanopolis State Park (785) 546-2565
- Wilson State Park (785) 658-2465
- Milford State Park (785) 238-3014
- Tuttle Creek State Park . . (785) 539-7941
- Cedar Bluff State Park . . . (785) 726-3212
- Glen Elder State Park . . . (785) 545-3345
- Lovewell State Park (785) 753-4971
- Webster State Park (785) 425-6775

Wildlife Management Challenged

The outcome of a threatened lawsuit in Michigan could have broad implications for use of federal aid funds to improve and maintain wildlife habitat. The case challenges the ability of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to use funds generated by sportsmen and women for certain basic habitat improvement practices.

In August of 1999, the Sierra Club in Michigan and three individuals notified the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that they intended to file suit over the use of Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act (also known as Pittman-Robertson, or PR) funds by the Michigan DNR. The notice cited concerns with the DNR's use of those

funds (generated by excise taxes on sporting arms and ammunition) to facilitate timber cutting for wildlife habitat improvements on state lands. The wildlife benefits also were being achieved through prescribed burning, wetland management, and food plot development.

In addition, the notice took issue with cumulative impacts of this and four other wildlife habitat improvement projects also funded with PR money. The Sierra Club asserts that the five projects should be considered in one proposal and not be excluded categorically from the review processes prescribed by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and USFWS guidelines. "Cumulative impact" concerns regard, at least in part,

the massasauga rattlesnake, a state listed species proposed for listing under the federal Endangered Species Act. However, the combination of such projects frequently makes management, implementation, and monitoring and reporting of projects cumbersome and inefficient.

The management practices in question have been carried out with PR funds for more than 50 years. Reduction of timber coverage in densely forested areas develops early successional habitats and essential edge cover once created by wildfires. The wetlands management activities involved the use of control structures to manipulate water levels, which diversifies habitat and improves food availability for a variety of wildlife, including waterfowl and shorebirds.

The Sierra Club maintains

that these common activities may be illegal. The group has requested that federal funding for the projects be halted until the issues are resolved and that, in the future, federal funds be used only for DNR projects that do not "focus on creating habitat for game species at the expense of nongame species."

The implications of this matter if applied broadly could increase costs greatly and slow delivery of important wildlife habitat improvement efforts benefiting both game and nongame.

In the coming months, natural resource agencies and conservation organizations that represent professional wildlife management will be monitoring the outcome of the Sierra Club's challenge.

—Wildlife Management
Institute

PASS IT ON: VOLUNTEER TO ENSURE YOUR FUTURE

Hunting, fishing, and trapping are vital parts of our heritage. This way of life is dependent upon participants passing on their experience and knowledge. However, statistics show that participation rates are declining. The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks is currently undertaking a massive effort to recruit and retain participants to ensure the future and carry on the traditions of hunting, fishing and trapping. The success of this plan is dependent upon volunteers.

Outdoor activity became a large part of my life when I was 10 years old. My hunting partner in those days was Jon Lane. Although both of our fathers hunted to a small extent, the majority of our experience came in the form of trial and error. It would be difficult to imagine what my life would be like now were it not for his companionship. Largely based on that companionship, I have chosen to pass on the knowledge that I have gained in order to recruit new and retain former participants. I can think of no better way to spend my time than teaching someone to do something about which I feel so passionate. My volunteer activity comes basically in two forms.

First, I try to introduce new members to the outdoor activities I enjoy. Those new members come from all walks of life: business contacts, social contacts, and complete strangers. I also invite others who have fished or hunted before but have fallen away from those activities to accompany me on my next outing. Ideally, I would like to



recruit or retain at least three people per year, a small but realistic number.

Second, I became a hunter education instructor. Under a law that took effect July 1, 1973, the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks was assigned responsibility for the design, implementation, and coordination of a statewide hunter education program. This law mandates that anyone born on or after July 1, 1957, except hunters hunting on their own land, must complete a hunter education course and possess a certificate of course completion before legally hunting in Kansas. A large number of students enter hunter education courses every year, and this allows me to pass on my knowledge, experience, and hopefully, enthusiasm to them.

The process to become a hunter education instructor requires a small time commitment. The program survives largely on a few dedicated full-time employees of the Department and a large number of highly motivated and dedicated volunteers. To become a hunter education instructor, you must be 21 years of age or older and have

successfully completed the Kansas Hunter Education course before submitting an application. Once the application has been submitted, the prospective instructor undergoes a background check and is assigned to a training instructor.

Following a three-hour instructor orientation course, the prospective instructor must assist in teaching at least one hunter education course. The prospective instructor is evaluated by the training instructor and must receive a passing recommendation prior to certification. The certification is valid for three years, and, in order to qualify for recertification, the certified instructor must have attended at least one in-service workshop as well as taught, or assisted in teaching, one course in that three-year period.

Overall, the time commitment is minimal and the rewards are plenty. Very little can compare to watching a young person grin from ear to ear when they catch their first fish or hit their first clay target on the skeet range. Why else would we have dedicated instructors who have volunteered their services and experience for over 25 years? Additionally, the skills taught to these students may help to prevent an injury to them or the others around them.

Proceed cautiously because volunteering is contagious. I recently was asked to help out with a fishing clinic at Gage Park in Shawnee County. How could I possibly say no to helping with a pack of Cub Scouts? I will tell you that based solely upon the excitement in those children's eyes, it was worth every minute. Get involved and pass it on. Your future is in your hands.

- Christopher Tymeson,
agency attorney, Topeka

BIG BRO, BIG SIS HUNTERS

Big Brothers and Big Sisters (BBBS) of Sedgwick County is doing its part to give kids the opportunity to become involved in the shooting sports. On June 24, the organization helped youngsters test and sharpen their outdoor skills at the Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever,

and Quail Unlimited sporting clay shoot at Michael Murphy and Sons shooting range in Augusta.

Big Brothers and Big Sisters who were experienced shooters got the chance to shoot for \$20 per round, lunch included, while introducing their "Littles" to the sport, too. The Littles got to shoot in a specially-supervised area sponsored by Rusty's Outdoor

Sports, where they got to shoot for free.

National Rifle Association shooting instructors taught the kids how to shoot properly in this controlled environment.

This event was a win-win situation for Big Brothers/Big Sisters. Not only were Bigs able to expose their Littles to a new activity for free, but the sponsors donated almost 50 percent of each entry fee to

the BBBS "Pass-It-On -- Outdoor Mentors Program," in collaboration with the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. The program hopes to match Big Brothers and Big Sisters to children from a waiting list to a mentor for six months in order to learn more about outdoor Kansas through wildlife conservation, fishing, and hunting.

-Bigs and Littles

Fall River YOUTH DOVE HUNTS

Sept. 1 is always a date that Kansas sportsman look forward to. It marks the start of fall hunting with the opening of dove season. It also marks a special time for the area youth at Fall River Wildlife Area.

Each September, two youth dove hunts are conducted on Fall River Wildlife Area with the assistance of the Greenwood County hunter education instructors and the Greenwood County Chapter of Friends of the NRA. The youth hunts are always held on the opening evening of dove season and the following Saturday evening. This allows youth living some distance from Fall River Wildlife Area to have the opportunity to enjoy a hunting experience where the focus is just on them. Fifty percent of the youth who attend experience their first hunting opportunity.

The youth dove hunts are very popular, and with a limited number of participants, they fill up rapidly. By early July, calls had been received from as far away as Kansas City to reserve spots for this year's hunt. Even though 17 percent of the parents are non-hunters themselves, they bring their young family members for the experience and excitement of pursuing the fast-flying mourning doves. Usually, the parents are just as excited as the young hunters as they focus all their attention on showing their children the proper

techniques for hunting. The look in their eyes as their youngsters down his or her first birds reveals how proud each is.

Fall River Wildlife Area is well known for its dove management. Each year, fields are selected for dove management based on past history of an area that provides either a good hunting opportunity, an excellent feeding area, or a good roosting spot for doves.

From those fields, two to three are selected and designated as the youth hunt fields. They are then posted Hunting for Special Youth Hunts Only, until all hunts are completed, after which they are opened to the public. This gives the young dove hunters the experience of hunting undisturbed feeding fields.

Youth dove hunts are for kids under age 16 who have completed a hunter education course and have an adult to accompany them on the hunt. Only the youth are allowed to hunt. For those families that have more than one youth and do not have enough parents available, volunteers are on hand to help mentor. Also, for those parents who are non-hunters, or if a shotgun becomes inoperable during the hunt, loaner shotguns are available to the youth. Youth hunts run from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

The young people are not the only ones excited about this hunting experience. Area sportsmen and clubs donate shotgun shells and refreshments for the event. Hunter education instructors provide a brief overview of hunting safety prior to the hunt. The young hunters are then assigned a place in the field

FORT REQUIRES HUNTER EDUCATION FOR ALL

Fort Riley Army Reservation is a well-known destination for many in-state and nonresident hunters. The U.S. Department of the Army and Fort Riley have established regulations to ensure hunter safety and compatibility with the military mission.

The Department of the Army has recognized the value of hunter education with the enactment of **regulations requiring completion of a certified hunter education course for all hunters on Army lands**. Fort Riley hunting and fishing regulations further strengthen hunting safety. For example, hunter orange requirements are more stringent than the state's, and it is required for many forms of hunting, including quail and pheasant hunting.

Law enforcement is another means for ensuring safety of hunters and non-interference with the military mission. A new full-time, permanent civilian Conservation officer has been established to ensure that federal, state, Army and Fort Riley hunting laws and regulations will be followed. The conservation officer not only will enforce laws to protect wildlife but also will protect the military mission, and the interests of ethical hunters.

Brochures summarizing Fort Riley hunting and fishing regulations are available at the Directorate of Environment and Safety-Conservation Division Office. The Conservation Division staff can answer specific questions. Phone (785) 239-6211 or e-mail beauforc@riley.army.mil. Hunters must familiarize themselves with the procedures and regulations for access prior to hunting on Fort Riley.

*--Dave Jones, Fish and Wildlife
Administrator, Ft. Riley*



to hunt, in rows facing opposite each other.

While the hunt is going on, the area manager, conservation officers, and hunter education instructors are in the field rotating between the young sportsmen, showing them the proper techniques of hunting and helping with any problems.

Because half are first-time hunters and the average age

is 12, the young hunters must leave their shotguns with their parents while they retrieve downed birds. Also, one of the hunter education instructors shows how a dog works and helps find downed birds. The young hunters have averaged harvesting 3.6 birds per person, with some of them getting their limits.

*--John Bills, wildlife area
manager, Fall River*

You've Got A Friend In Me

by Mark Shoup



All parents attempt to guide the train of their children's thoughts, with occasional success. There are times, however, when their thoughts take a surprising turn our way.

As my eight-year-old son, William, and I eat breakfast and prepare for an early summer outing, he sings Randy Newman's theme song from *Toy Story*. The refrain continues as we drive to the Red Hills until I stop him in mid-lyric and dissect the grammatical merits of the tune, just to get his mind off the movies.

"You've got' is a redundant phrase, Will," I lecture. "It could more correctly be stated, 'You have.' It would be simpler and more elegantly expressed."

Unimpressed, Will continues, "When you're miles and miles..." but stops and ponders. Apparently, what I've said has reminded him of school because he suddenly launches into a discussion of math.

"In April," he declares, "I started getting really bored with math, so I made up this game where close numbers are friends. Sometimes they fight and take away from each other, but sometimes they want to get more powerful, so they combine and become bigger." He brings bullies and big brothers into the equation, too. I am admittedly intrigued.

"Well, when they combine, don't they lose their identity?" I ask.

"They get a new identity, but they keep their old identity in case they ever want to split," he patiently explains.

Split and joining personalities in math? Hmm.

"What about multiplication and division," I ask.

"They can do that, but they have to have really powerful parents." He says this with a straight face. I've got to change the subject again.

"Lookie there!" I articulate. "We're getting into the Red Hills." It's time to get into the outdoors.

We reach the Red Hills pasture in late morning. Will is already hungry, so we eat. I had killed a wild hog on this property last year, and Will has lots of questions about that. I assure him that hogs will not eat us.

We have brought several guns for target practice, and I explain the actions of each as we eat. "I'll carry this one when we go exploring," I say while explaining the action of a revolver.

Having consumed half a pound of salami, two packs of crackers, and a banana, Will declares in sequence, as if one comment is a direct extension of the next, "I think I'm on a growth spurt. Let's go exploring."

As we enter the trees near a stream, Will wants me to lead. I stop and note that a kestrel is perched in a dead tree just a few feet away. "He's a hog watcher," Will proclaims.

At a clear pool in the stream, translucent darters fill the water. They shoot upstream in small schools, then hold stock still, seemingly frozen in moving water. Water striders scurry about the surface, casting light-ringed shadows on the river bottom.

We walk perhaps a half mile downstream, picking up fossil oyster shells. All the time, Will is hearing rattlesnakes and hogs in the brush, but it's a game as much as anything. Finally, we climb out of the canyon to high ground. As we stroll through the rugged pasture, Will absently returns to his song, then begins chattering about *Toy Story II*.

I don't want to go there. "Look at this grass, Will," I say, pointing to the copious amounts of cheat grass. "This is called Japanese brome. It's not native, but it shows you that this pasture has been overgrazed. Stop grazing this for a couple of years, and the native buffalo, gamma, and little bluestem grasses will take over."

"You know what happens to Buzz?"

he asks, unfazed.

"And look at this sage." I am ignoring him. "Roll it between your fingers."

He inhales the fragrance and lets out an exaggerated sigh. "It looks like peacock feathers," he observes. *He's coming round*, I think.

Suddenly, we spook two hen turkeys and about 20 poults, and we freeze. They amble away at first, then fly at our first step. Amazingly, the little ones, no bigger than pigeons, can fly, too.

Now Will is hooked. We amble through the pasture, discussing coneflowers and insects, sage and its many uses. By the time we reach a cliff overlooking my pickup, it has been more than an hour. We sit on the hill and survey the stunning landscape that might have been plucked out of a 1950s western movie. Will leans on my shoulder in the warm sun. Without thinking, I begin to sing softly, "You've got a friend in me..."

And Will continues, "You've got friend in me," and we trade lines.

"When your miles and miles from your nice warm bed,"

"Remember what your old pal said:" and in unison,

"You've got a friend in me."

It is a sublime moment, the kind a parent remembers always and a child may forget tomorrow.

The rest of the day is filled with shooting and talk of various kinds. With his bare feet, Will is able to find all the brass that I lose. He masters my .38 special and fires about 10,000 rounds through the .22, eating between turns and remembering other trips we have had to this spot. At one point, he has a revelation:

"I remember years ago when we were camping out here, I woke you up because I was afraid of camels." He seems pleased with the thought.

We take the long way home, driving through Sun City to Medicine Lodge. "Why do they call it Sun City and not Sun Town," Will asks, but before I can answer, he is asleep. His window is wide open, and the full aroma of Red Hills earth, sage, yucca, coneflower, cedar, and a myriad of emerging grasses blows across his face and over mine. A child's song wraps itself around my thoughts as we glide along the deserted highway:

"You've got a friend in me."

KANSAS

Trout Fishing

Kansas Wildlife & Parks began stocking trout in the late 1980s and established a trout season, with a permit system, in 1994. Since that time, the program has expanded, and during the last trout season, some 144,000 trout were stocked by the department throughout the state.

Trout are stocked at 20 specified locations throughout the state. There are usually a lot of phone calls in the fall about stocking locations and stocking dates. And because all of our trout are supplied by out-of-state contractors, delivery dates and exact times are difficult to pin down. However, we do have rough schedules and stocking rates we can provide so that anglers can plan trout fishing trips; but, remember, these dates are approximate.

The trout season in Kansas runs from October 15 through April 15. During this season, all anglers regardless of age, are

required to have a trout stamp to fish for and possess trout. The stamp costs \$8.00 and is good for a given calendar year. There are two locations in the state -- the Tuttle Creek Reservoir Seep Stream and the Mined Land Wildlife Area's Unit 30 -- where a trout permit is required throughout the entire year. These two areas have water cold enough to allow trout survival year-round and good fishing at times other than the regular trout season.

Most of the trout stockings for the October through April season begin just prior to or on October 15. Following is a list of the trout locations, the approximate stocking schedules, and the phone number of the biologist in charge of the trout program for that location.

An experimental stocking last spring on the Solomon River above Webster Reservoir continues to be evaluated and may be continued in the future. In addition, several local city and county governments purchase trout for stocking in their lakes. These trout stockings generally require a local permit rather than the statewide trout stamp.

All the trout in the above mentioned

areas are rainbow trout. The statewide contract specifies that the trout must be no less than 10 inches long and must average two fish per pound, except that five percent of each stocking by number must be over 14 inches. Therefore, most of the fish are uniform in size, but there is a potential to catch a larger fish. Some of the larger fish are excess brood fish that may weigh up to 5 pounds or more.

Anglers have good luck on Power Bait, salmon eggs, cheese, whole kernel corn, worms, small dark colored jigs, small spinners, and various dry and wet flies.

The daily creel limit is five fish per day with a possession limit of 15. Trout stamps are available at Wildlife and Parks offices, most county clerks offices, and some license vendors. The stamp is good for a calendar year and must be signed across the face with the angler's signature. You must also have a fishing license if not exempt by law. The trout stamp may be attached to your fishing license or simply attached to a piece of paper and carried with you when you are fishing.

-Tommie Berger, fisheries biologist, Sylvan Grove

Northwest Kansas:

- Cedar Bluff Stilling Basin** -- 2,000 in mid-October, 1,500 in mid December & early March. Phone (785) 726-3212
- Sherman County: Smoky Gardens** -- 750 in mid-October, mid-November, and mid-February. Phone (785) 726-3212
- Webster Stilling Basin** -- 2,500 in mid-October, mid-November, mid-December, mid-January, and mid-March. Phone (785) 425-6775
- Glen Elder State Park Pond** -- 1,000 in mid-November, mid December, and early March. Phone (785) 545-3345
- Kanopolis Res. Seep Stream** -- 1,000 in the middle of each month, October through March. Phone (785) 658-2465
- Salina's Lakewood Lake** -- 750 in the middle of each month, October through March. Phone (785) 658-2465

Northeast Kansas:

- Clinton State Park's Lake Henry** -- 300 on October 15, November 1 and 15, February 15, March 1 and 15, and April 1. Phone (785) 832-8413
- Tuttle Creek Res. Seep Stream** -- 600 every 2 weeks in Oct. through April and 600 once per month in May, July, Aug., and Sept.. Phone (785) 539-7941

Southwest Kansas (Phone (316) 227-8609 for all stockings.):

- Great Bend's Veterans' Memorial Park Lake** -- 520 every 2 weeks from mid-October through April 1
- Finney Refuge Sand Pits** - 510 every 2 weeks from mid-October through April 1
- Scott State Lake** -- 2,800 on October 15 and 1,500 in the middle of each month through March
- Morton County's Cimarron National Grasslands Pits** -- 525 every 2 from weeks mid-October through April 1
- Dodge City's Lake Charles** - 410 every 2 from weeks mid-October through April 1

Southcentral Kansas:

- Sedgwick County: Vic's Lake** -- 1,250 every 2 weeks from mid October through April 1. Phone (316) 683-8069
- Sedgwick County: Slough Creek** -- 500 every 2 weeks from mid-October through April 1. Phone (316) 683-8069
- Wichita's KDOT East Lake** -- 750 every 2 weeks from mid-October through April 1. Phone (316) 683-8609
- Hutchinson's Dillon Nature Center Pond** -- 500 every 2 weeks from mid-October through April 1. Phone (316) 459-6922
- El Dorado State Park's River Area Below the Dam** -- 500 every two weeks from mid-October through April 1. Phone (316) 322-7513

Southeast Kansas:

- Fort Scott's Gunn Park Lake** -- 400 every 2 weeks from mid-October through April 1. Phone (316) 231-3173
- Mined Land Wildlife Area's Unit 30** -- 1,000 every 2 weeks from October 1 through mid-June. Phone (316) 231-3173

FEATHERED PHANTOMS

Kansas hosts a wide array of hawk species. The first hawk that comes to mind is the red-tailed hawk. The red-tailed hawk is a member of the genus *Buteo*, meaning "soaring hawks." The redtail feeds primarily on rodents even though it was labeled by many for years as the "chicken hawk," most likely because it had occasionally been in the wrong place at the wrong time.

However, some birders say the Cooper's hawk deserves the chicken-thief title. This swift hawk could swoop down and grab a chicken and vanish into the woods undetected. When the farmer went to investigate his misfortune, all he would notice was the red-tailed hawk soaring over head, thus mistakenly accusing it.

The Cooper's hawk belongs to a group of hawks called accipiters or "bird hawks." There are about 50 species of accipiters found throughout the world, mostly located in the tropics. There are three species of accipiters that inhabit Kansas: the Cooper's hawk, the sharp-shinned hawk, and the northern goshawk. Accipiters have short, rounded wings and long tails. These characteristics allow them to maneuver rapidly in and out through heavily-wooded areas in pursuit of birds. Accipiters, unlike other hawks, can out-fly most birds with their quick bursts of speed and agility. Accipiters hunt by stealth, moving from perch to perch in thick cover, observing the terrain, then

flying with a great burst of speed to overtake their prey.

The Cooper's hawk is a medium-sized accipiter measuring 14-20 inches long. It is widespread throughout the United States, preferring wooded areas, but is sometimes seen in suburban areas. Adults have a slate-colored back and a rusty-barred breast. The distinguishing

characteristic of the Cooper's hawk is its long, rounded tail with a wide, white band on the end. The Cooper's hawk feeds primarily on small- to medium-sized birds and occasionally small mammals.

Very similar to the Cooper's hawk is the sharp-shinned hawk. Typically, the sharpshin is smaller, measuring 10-14 inches. The best

way to identify the sharpshin is by its smaller size and squared tail. The sharpshinned hawk inhabits dense wooded areas, farmyards, and city parks. It is commonly seen in backyards jetting after birds at bird feeders. The primary food source for the sharpshin is small songbirds. Once the sharpshin catches its prey, it takes the quarry to a favorite perch, called a "butcher block," where it plucks its prey and eats it. The sharpshinned hawk is fairly common over most of the United States.

The third and less common of the Kansas accipiters is the northern goshawk. The goshawk is comparable in size to the red-tailed hawk. It is the largest and most aggressive of the North American accipiters, measuring 20-26 inches long. The goshawk is more associated with dense coniferous forests in northern United States and Canada but does occasionally venture southward into Kansas. In its northern range, the goshawk feeds on grouse, ptarmigan, hares, and squirrels. In Kansas, it feeds on medium-sized birds and small mammals. Goshawks are easily identified by their size, blue-gray back, light underparts with dense gray barring, and a black crown with a white line over each orange-red eye.

Next time you're exploring in the woodlands of Kansas, keep an eye out for these feathered phantoms called accipiters threading their way around the many obstacles searching for food.

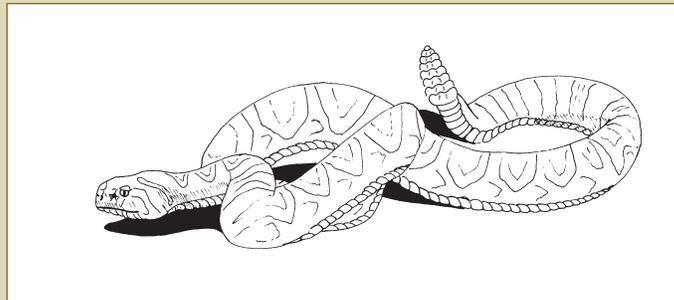
-Kevin Becker, fisheries technician, Pratt

DIAMONDBACK!

Last Spring, Benny Goatley of Silverdale parked at his residence to let Mrs. Goatley out at their sidewalk. Mrs. Goatley uses a walker, so Mr. Goatley got a bag of groceries and walked to the passenger side to help her out of the car. But when he opened her door she screamed, "Look out behind you Benny!"

Goatley turned to see a huge rattlesnake, which he killed. The monster serpent measured 51 inches.

Conservation Officer Gene McCauley, Winfield, was later called by Mr. Goatley to see the snake and a photograph of it. The snake was frozen, but the picture was good, according to McCauley, so he took the snake to biologist Max Thompson at Southwestern College. Thompson keyed it out and compared it to other snakes in their collection. It was identified as a western diamondback, which is not native to Kansas. Mr. Goatley has since donated the rattler to Southwestern College.



"It is my understanding that previous western diamondbacks taken in Kansas - at Wilson Reservoir - were actually of the Mexican subspecies," says Thompson. "This indicates that they have been brought in and released. The specimen from Silverdale, here in Cowley County, will be taken to KU in the near future for identification and probably deposited in the museum's collections."

There has been one other diamondback picked up on the highway north of Winfield, and that specimen also may be taken to KU, according to Thompson.

It's possible that someone is intentionally transplanting these snakes in an attempt to start a breeding population. Such activity, however, is illegal.

-Shoup

FROM CEDAR BLUFF

Cedar Bluff State Park staff has developed a way for park users to remember their loved ones. Last year there were two different families who asked if they could plant a tree somewhere to memorialize their loved one. Park staff decided that a tree memorial area was a good way to do it. There are currently two trees planted in the area with one more on the way. The memorial is located directly west of the park office. Guidelines for the tree park may be picked up at the Cedar Bluff office.

On May 6 and 7 Cedar Bluff Park hosted TH' Gatherin. This was the first year that it was held at the park as it had previously been held in WaKeeney. TH' Gatherin is a celebration of area residents' Celtic heritage. There were games, kids games and rides, a feast, and three folk style bands. KBSH TV-Hays and KAKE TV-Wichita covered the event.

*-Troy Brown, park manager,
Cedar Bluff*

FISH-ART WINNER

A distinguished panel of judges has selected winners for the Second Annual Wildlife Forever State-Fish Art Contest, including a winner from Kansas. The Kansas winner is Ethan Walker of Colby, who entered in the 7th- through 9th-grade category. Kansas had no entries in the 4th- through 6th-grade or 10th- through 12th-grade categories.

Participation in the Wildlife Forever State-Fish Art Contest more than tripled in its second year.

All the state winners for the Wildlife Forever State-Fish Art Contest were recognized at the State-Fish Art Expo at the Mall of America in Minneapolis, Minn., from June 2-4. A massive art display featured all the winning artwork and an award ceremony on June 3 acknowledged these talented young artists.

An illustrious panel of judges, including legendary fishing enthusiast Babe Winkelman, WCCO-TV anchor Don Shelby, Federal Duck Stamp winning artist Phil Scholer, and renowned wildlife photographer Karen Hollingsworth,

judged the artwork.

For the Wildlife Forever State-Fish Art Contest, young artists nationwide create an illustration of their state fish and a written composition on its behavior, habitat, or efforts to conserve it. Entries are categorized by grade level: 4-6, 7-9, and 10-12. Three winners from each state are selected and invited to the Mall of America in Minnesota to participate in a three-day State-Fish Expo.

To use art as a "medium" for teaching conservation education, teachers across the country received information on the contest and a full-color State-Fish Art Contest Lesson Plan, which is specific to aquatic natural resources and includes extensive background information, a

species identification section profiling each state fish, a thorough glossary, and suggested quiz questions and student worksheets.

Sponsors for the contest include America Online, Cabela's, Careco Television Productions, Mall of America, MarkSport Studios, National Fishing Week, and the North American Fishing Club. Babe Winkelman is the 2000 National Spokesman.

For information on the Wildlife Forever State-Fish Art Contest, visit www.statefishart.com or America Online (Keyword: Fishart) or call toll-free at 1-877-FISH ART.

-Wildlife Forever

PUBLIC DEER MEETINGS

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) scheduled public meetings at sites around the state to discuss deer management issues. Some were held this summer, but several more will be conducted in September. The meetings are designed to provide information and to collect public comments regarding the recent and numerous changes in both the deer herd and in deer-related laws and regulations in the state.

Since the mid-1980s, the growing deer population has challenged public tolerance in some areas of the state. In response to this population growth, the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks has implemented numerous programs and deer management strategies.

The meetings on these issues will follow a standard format. They will start at 7 p.m. and end at 10 p.m. Lloyd Fox, big game program coordinator for KDWP, will provide updated information on deer populations and management. The public will be encouraged to contribute ideas and opinions. For more information about the meetings, call the KDWP Operations Office at (316) 672-5911, the Emporia Research and Survey Office at (316) 342-0658, or the KDWP office nearest you. If notified in advance, the department will have an interpreter available for the hearing impaired. To request an interpreter, call the TDD Service at 1-800 766-3777. Any individual with a disability may request other accommodations by contacting Sheila Kemmis at (316) 672-5911.

-Shoup

City	Date	Meeting Site
Dodge City	01-Sept.	Little Theater, Dodge City Community College, 2501 N 14th Ave.
Lawrence	02-Sep	Free State High School, 4700 Overland Drive
Pittsburg	08-Sep	Room 109 Grubbs Hall, Pittsburg State University
Eureka	09-Sep	Eureka High School Auditorium
Manhattan	15-Sep	Rm. 123 Weber Hall Auditorium, KSU
Salina	6-Sep	Nickel Hall, KS National Guard Training Cntr, 2930 Scanlan Ave.
Wichita	22-Sep	Metropolitan Complex, 29th St. N and Oliver
Topeka	29-Sep	KS History Center, 6425 SW 6th Ave.

by Mark Shoup



EYES in the NIGHT



In the popular Harry Potter books, one of Harry's best friends, a giant named Hagrid, has a spider named Aragog that is the size of an elephant. Aragog protects Hagrid and his friends. While you'll never come across a spider like Aragog in real life, the creatures that inspired this tale are equally fascinating.

Early fall nights in Kansas are much like the summer -- warm, but with a soft breeze -- and this is the perfect time to go spider hunting. That's right, spider hunting.

If you're afraid of spiders, don't panic. I'm not talking about crawling through caves or tunnels like Indiana Jones, where giant spiders wait in humongous webs for unsuspecting victims. Just a stroll through your lawn will do.



And you might find things even more interesting than Aragog: an orb weaver, for instance, such as a shamrock spider; several varieties of jumping spiders; wolf spiders; and if you're near water, fishing spiders. While orb weavers are among the web-weaving spiders, jumping spiders, wolf spiders, and fishing spiders are wandering hunters.

Orb weavers can be easily found by their perfectly-shaped webs, but to find wandering spiders, you need a flashlight or, better yet, a "headlight" -- a flashlight that straps to your head.

When searching for wandering spiders, avoid street-

lights and other sources of light because they make the spiders more difficult to spot. Shine your light at the ground or toward low vegetation about fifteen feet ahead of you. Move the beam very slowly until you see a small shining spot resembling a tiny star. This light -- called "eye shine" -- is the spider's eyes and is usually light green. A whitish shine may be a drop of a dew or rain, and a red or orange shine may be a moth or a June bug.

Perhaps the easiest to spot and among the most fun to watch are the burrowing spiders, such as the burrowing wolf spider. These are large spiders that live underground and at night sit outside the burrow -- a hole about the size of a nickle. From here, they wait for movement in the grass that indicates the presence of an insect. Once a burrowing spider hole is found, you



can return to the same spot each night to observe it.

You can also spot web-building spiders with a light. If you see a light spot suspended in air in your beam of light, you're in for a treat. Both the orb weaver and its web will shine, and watching a busy orb weaver in the night is a fascinating experience.

The shiniest silk is that in a tangled web close to the ground, which belongs to the widow spiders. The black widow is the only one of these species in Kansas, and it is rare. Still, black widows are poisonous, so learn to identify them. The female has a reddish hour-glass marking in the center of the underside of the abdomen, and her body is smooth and black. A black widow web, like that of many other spiders, is irregular, very stiff, and difficult to break when touched.

Once you spot eye shine or a glimmering web, hold your light on the spot and move closely toward it. The spider will be blinded by the light, allowing you to approach and capture the little creature.

Placing a jar over the spider is one way to catch it. Sometimes, you can hold the jar on the opposite side of the spider and chase it into the jar. Because spiders found in trees sometimes drop to the ground on their silk dragline when disturbed, hold a collecting jar beneath them (if you're in the catching mood).

So what do you do once you've captured one of these eight-legged critters? Identify it first. Get a copy of the Golden Guide, *Spiders and Their Kin*, available for \$5.50 from the Pratt Operations

Office and many state park offices, to help identify your catch. If you really get into it, you can put soil in an open aquarium with a small wet sponge, leaves, rocks, and a branch and observe the spider for a few weeks. See what kind of insects it eats and what its web, if it spins one,

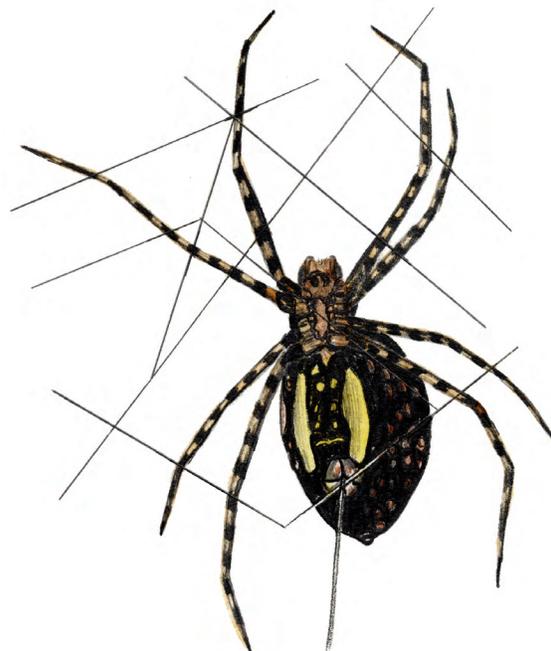
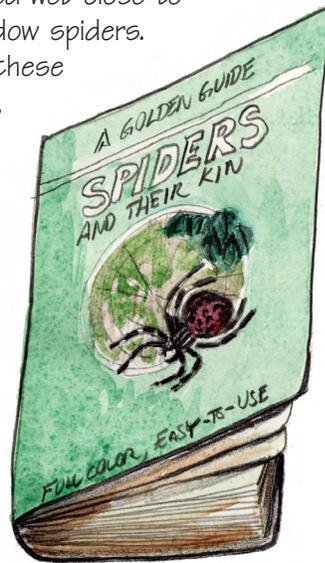


looks like. How does it hunt? How does it react to light, noise, heat, and cold?

Many people are afraid of spiders, but they are fascinating and beneficial creatures that eat many pesky insects invading our homes and gardens. (In Kansas, only the brown recluse and the black widow are poisonous.) And they've been appreciated throughout the world for centuries. The newsletter, "The Talking Leaf," relates this spider legend:

"In Scotland it is said that King Robert the Bruce who had fought the English in several battles, losing each one, took shelter in a cave. There he watched a spider building its web. Each time the spider laid a strand, the wind blew it away, but the spider did not give up. Eventually, after countless attempts, the strands held, and with the web built, Robert the Bruce saw it take its first dinner. This was said to inspire the Great King of Scotland to eventual victory over the English at the Battle of Bannock Burn."

Their industrious nature and intricate hunting and web-weaving habits make spiders one more reason to get out and enjoy the warmer evenings of the year. This year, try spicing up a September evening with a spider hunt.



*A little of your time . . .
the time of their life*



- Hunting is a treasured heritage that must be passed down from generation to generation
- As our population becomes increasingly urban, our ranks are thinning.
- Fewer hunters reduces social, political and financial support for wildlife management.
- Many of today's youth aren't getting a chance to hunt.
- Do your part as a hunter and introduce a youngster to the magic of hunting this fall.

Special Youth Hunting Opportunities

Youth Deer Season
Sept. 30-Oct. 1, 2000

Youth 12-16 years old may hunt deer under the supervision of an adult 21 years old or older. All hunters must have proper deer permits, which retain unit, species, equipment and antler restrictions. All hunters must wear hunter orange.

Youth Waterfowl Season
Weekend prior to regular
season opening day

Youth 15 and under may hunt ducks and dark geese while under the supervision of an adult 18 years old or older. Daily bag limits are the same as regular season limits.

Youth Upland Bird Season
November 4-5, 2000

Youth 16 and under may hunt pheasants and quail while under the supervision of an adult 21 years old or older. A supervising adult may also hunt during this season. Daily bag limits are half that of regular season limits.

Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks



