In 1998, the department began a $10 million facelift of our park facilities. Crumbling buildings have been replaced, and campgrounds and utilities have been upgraded in our 24 state parks across the state. Soon, all of these infrastructure improvements will be complete. I’d like to take this opportunity to thank the folks who made this renovation possible.

The Commission’s Task Force on Outdoor Kansas, assembled by the Wildlife and Parks Commission in 1996, started the ball rolling. The group’s hard work paid off when Governor Bill Graves recommended the $10 million, one-time appropriation, and the 1998 Legislature concurred, approving the money over a three-year period. The department’s engineering section and park staff that helped plan and implement the renovations also deserve recognition for ensuring that projects stayed on time and on budget.

Perhaps the best summation of this undertaking was offered by Governor Graves almost three years ago, “As Governor, I want our state park system to reflect the pride we have in our state,” said Graves. “This year’s $10 million investment in our parks is a strong step toward improving our outdoor recreational opportunities for Kansans and for tourists who come to our state.”

I am proud of the strides we have made; however, we certainly have a long way to go to fulfill our mission of being one of the premier producers of outdoor recreation opportunities in the country. This goal is certainly ambitious in a state that ranks near the bottom for state park funding, but we will continue to stretch our dollars.

Due to inadequate revenue to meet increased operation and maintenance expenses, the Wildlife and Parks Commission acted on the department’s recommendation and raised certain park fees, effective January 1, 2001. Unfortunately, we are forced to ask our users to contribute more toward upkeep for state parks, or reduce the current services offered.

Coupled with new legislation that requires persons over the age of 65 and persons with qualifying disabilities to pay half price for a park motor vehicle permits, the department estimates the fee increases will generate up to $1 million in additional funding annually. The money will be used to improve operation and maintenance of the 24 state parks.

The new fee structure is diverse, allowing assessment of different fees for unique amenities, times of year, and user preferences, including in-season (April 1 - Sept. 30) and off-season (Oct. 1 - March 31) rates, as well as additional costs for prime campsites. While prices of a few issuances were simply raised, others, such as the annual vehicle and annual camping permits, will be available at the old price during the off-season.

In closing, the last people I have to thank are the most important, our constituents. Thank you for your continued support as we chip away at our conservation funding challenges. Studies have proven that Kansans are willing to adequately fund their state parks. As soon as a viable funding mechanism is identified, Kansas state parks will truly reflect the pride we have in our state. As you enjoy the beautiful pictures contained in this issue, please think about the importance of investing in our outdoor heritage.
Dear Reader,

The Kansas outdoors is a place of endless fascination. We’re fortunate to live where continental East meets West and North meets South. Here, one may see the arctic gyrfalcon or a southern ring-tailed cat. Pronghorns and muleys share the state with white-tails, and the eastern black bear occasionally wanders westward. Migrants from ice floe to equator pass overhead, affording rare viewing opportunities. Surprises abound.

It is my privilege to search for the beauties that define Kansas. No matter the season, they are plentiful. The sky, the land, and all its living things bless those who take the time to notice. I thank God for surrounding us with an infinite source of discovery, and hope you enjoy the images of photo issue 2001.

Mike Blair
Photographer/Associate Editor

2001 Kansas Wildlife & Parks Photo Issue Screen Saver

Enjoy this photo issue all year long. The 2001 Screen Saver package includes 12 memorable color photographs featured in this issue, that will fit any PC, Windows running system. Just send $5 to Kansas Dept. of Wildlife and Parks, Screen Saver, 512 SE 25th Ave., Pratt, KS 67124, or receive the disk free with a new or renewal magazine subscription. Just write “Send me the 2001 Screen Saver disk” on your subscription card.
Daybreak

Kansas comes alive as the day crew arises. Food is the first order of business, and those low on the chain seek plants and seeds for nourishment. Higher orders seek prey. There is drama in this work; some will be missing by nightfall. Others will live on, stronger, wiser.
Fox squirrel, Linn County

Snowberry clearwing moth, Miami County
Great blue heron, Neosho County

Spider with moth, Reno County
Northern water snake eating crappie, Barber County

Red-tailed hawk with snake, Pratt County
White-tailed buck in velvet, Crawford County
White-tailed bucks, Barber County
Renewal

Life demands replacement. After food, the search for mates takes precedence. Every species has its season – a frantic time to fight, display and chase. Beauty and rhythm mark these rituals. Young are raised and taught, or left to learn alone. The cycle is satisfied.

Spotted chorus frog, Commanche County
Indigo bunting, Linn County

Eastern turkeys, Linn County
Rutting pronghorns, Wallace County

Nursing bison calf, McPherson County
Emerging annual cicada, Linn County

Cardinal feeding young, Pratt County
Earth

Life commences on a wonderful stage. Each act is unique – nourished by soil, blessed by water, enframed by sky, enriched by color. Every sense gathers the experience, until the fortunate observer is humbled and thankful for this marvelous world.
Sunset over CRP, Barber County
Moon over chalk pyramids, Gove County

Waves on sandstone, Wilson Reservoir, Russell County
Ice storm, Barber County

Sunrise over pool, Stafford County
Sun through greenbriar, Linn County
Green is the trademark of the growing season, everywhere expressed in the chlorophyll of leaves. Driven by sunlight, plants blend water and carbon dioxide to form the sugars that fuel the world. Plants paint the land with colorful flowers, then blaze in a glorious autumn finale. Earth is clothed by the hosts of their kingdom.
Autumn poison-ivy, Miami County
Dutchman’s breeches, Linn County
Plains beebalm and gallardia, Pratt County

Showy evening primrose, Bourbon County
Prickly pear cactus fruits, Pratt County

Blue-eyed Mary, Linn County
Rose hips, Linn County
Fauna

Animals are the outdoors’ finest expression. They animate a stationary world, overwhelming its silence with language and covering its vistas with motion. The wildlife of Kansas is endlessly varied. It is a treasure for all who observe and understand.
Spider on stagnant water, Allen County
Common egret, Kingman County
Spicebush swallowtail on thistle, Linn County

White-tailed doe, Linn County
Mobility.

There really is poetry in motion. Animals run or fly to find food, escape predators, or migrate to suitable climates. Each is equipped with its own mode of travel. Speed and agility are commonplace, but to envious man, wings are the pinnacle of locomotion.
Ring-billed gull, Miami County
Northern shoveler, Barton County

Cottontail, Pratt County
Ornate box turtle, Reno County

Pronghorns, Wallace County
Black rat snake climbing tree, Linn County
White-tailed doe at sunrise, Pratt County

Rio Grande turkeys, Sedgwick County
Participation

The outdoors is a playground to refresh the soul. Beyond opportunities to observe nature, land, water and open air invite many forms of recreation. Hunting and fishing are an outdoor legacy. Boating, sailing, hiking and camping are also popular Kansas pursuits.
Fishing, Pratt County

Camp meal, Lovewell State Park, Jewell County

Water sports, Hillsdale Reservoir, Miami County
At the end of a recent nickel-dime poker game, Lennie raked in the last pot and began to gloat. He chuckled obnoxiously as he made a scene of neatly stacking his coins.

“I must be starting a run of good luck,” he belied, gleaming over his huge windfall of $7.45. “2001 might be my year.”

With that, Lennie leaned his chair back on two legs and gazed intently into the glass eyes of a mounted deer head that presides over our poker games. The old buck had the extreme misfortune of stepping in front of Lennie’s arrow more than 10 years ago. Lennie was looking for inspiration to make predictions for the coming year. He pawed a handful of pretzels from the bowl, shoved about 10 of them in his mouth and began to reflect.

“You know, 1989, the year I killed that yeeuuge monster buck, was a good year. Since then, I’ve been on a down cycle, kind of like grouse populations. I wonder if it has to do with sunspots? Anyway, I’m feeling different now. Heck, this was the best year of duck hunting I’ve ever had. That’s probably why I didn’t get a deer – spent too much time duck hunting.”

“Maybe it was because you kept sleeping in on mornings you planned to deer hunt,” I jabbed.

“You never listen,” he snorted. “I’ve told you that I see more deer in the evenings where I hunt. Besides, I woke up those mornings but knew the wind was wrong, so I went back to sleep. There’s nothin’ I hate more than to hunt a stand in the wrong wind and spook a big old buck. By the way, Mr. I-Get-Up-Early-To-Hunt-Deer, I don’t remember you killing a buck last year.”

“I think I need to keep better company. Some of your bad luck rubbed off,” I said.

“Well, that’s all going to change in 2001,” he said happily. “This poker game is a sign. Heck, I’ve never won three pots in a row. Good things are on the horizon for ole Lennie.”

Lennie stared again into the lifeless eyes of the deer head and went into a weird trance. I was afraid he had a wad of pretzels caught in his throat, but then he began rattling off predictions for the coming year, as if possessed. Here are Lennie’s highlights for 2001:

I’ll invent the Fiddle Shad, a new lure that will make the Banjo Minnow obsolete and me a millionaire. With my new wealth, I’ll successfully lobby to make it illegal to televise infomercials on Saturday afternoons when a college sports event or a fishing and hunting show could be on.

A new sport will test middle-aged men on their television remote control skills. Called Channel Surf Challenge, contestants will sit in recliners and compete in channel changing quickness and the ability to return directly to channels carrying sports, hunting and fishing shows or Baywatch after the entire cycle has been surfed. Points will be deducted for each commercial or infomercial that appears on screen for more than 5 seconds.

Ducks will learn to avoid the robo decoys with moving wings. A decoy that projects a hologram of a duck bachelor party, guaranteed to attract drake mallards, will be the craze.

New camouflage patterns will be developed for the urban hunter. For deer hunting in outlying suburban areas, a new bowhunter pattern will feature ornamental bush, tulip and chain-link fence images instead of oak leaves and branches. For goose hunters, a new camo will help them blend in on golf courses. Three patterns will be available -- rough/sandtrap, Bermuda fairway, and bentgrass green.

Lennie’s gaze with the deer head broke, and he fell backward in his chair. “Whew,” he sputtered as he picked himself up off the floor and brushed pretzel crumbs off his chest. “I must have dozed off. Anyway, as I was saying, 1989, when I shot that yeeuuge monster buck, was a good year. You remember how I outsmarted that old buck? Well, see, I figured out his travel routes, but the wind was always wrong in the mornings . . .”