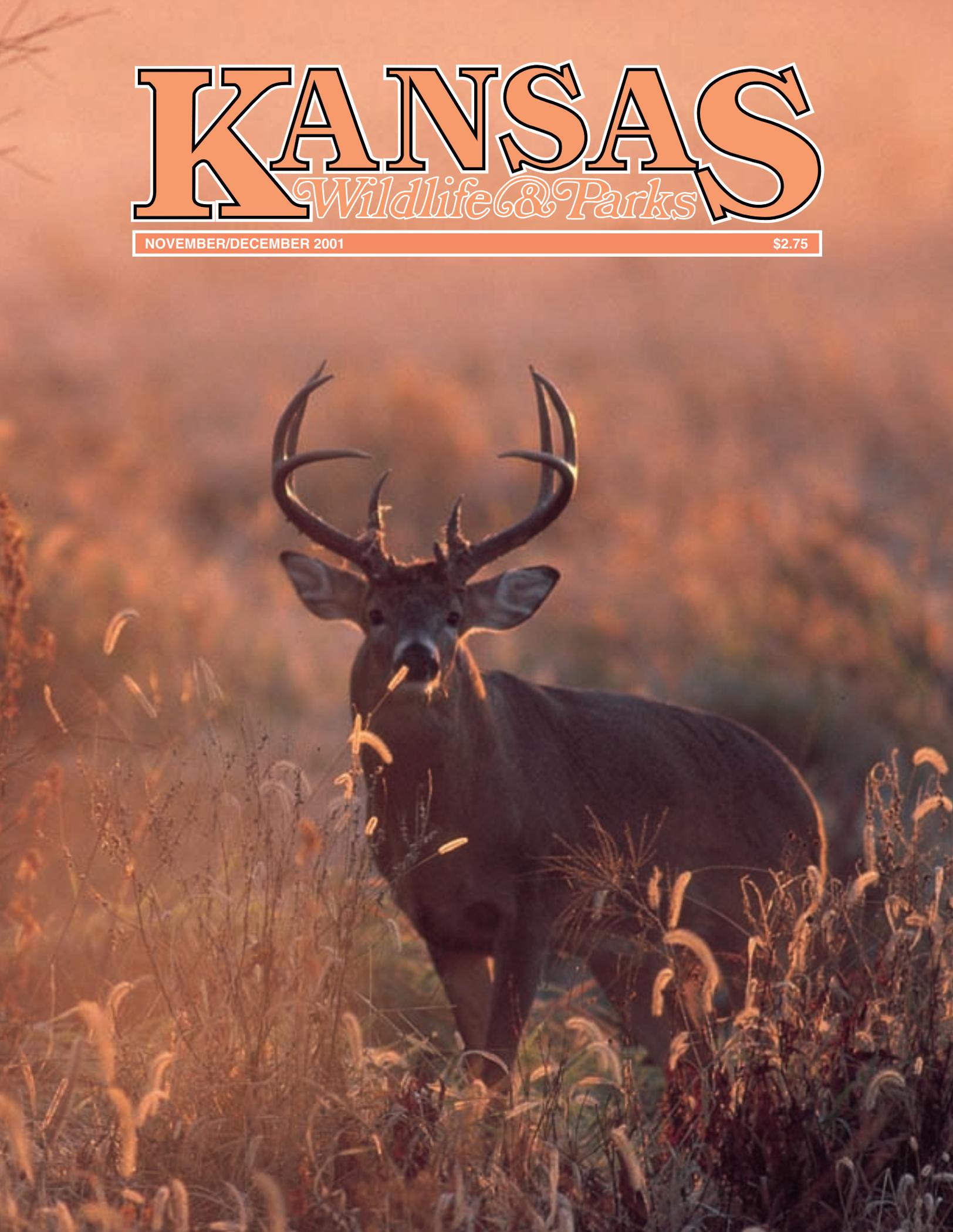


KANSAS

Wildlife & Parks

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2001

\$2.75





The View From Here

by Steve Williams



A Deer Hunter's Fall

With the hot days of summer behind us at last, ducks and geese are filling the skies, and the fall hunting seasons have arrived. While early estimates on this year's upland bird numbers are not optimistic, the prospects for the 2001-02 deer season remain excellent. As in past years, there have been a few changes in big game rules and regulations.

This season, residents may purchase Whitetail Either-sex permits over-the-counter from most department offices through the end of the season (mule deer permits are still allocated through a draw process). The reason the department requested this change, which was approved by the Wildlife and Parks Commission, is easily explained. Over the last several years, the number of Whitetail Either-sex deer permit applicants was generally less than the number of permits authorized by the Commission. With the supply for this permit type slightly above the demand, it was only logical to simplify the process. Since all hunters are limited to a single antlered-deer permit, the quality of the buck population will not be adversely affected. Firearms hunters must still specify the unit they wish to hunt. If a particular unit is receiving too much pressure, the Commission may revisit this practice in the future.

Hunters may now purchase up to four Whitetail Antlerless Game Tags and no longer have to purchase a regular permit to qualify for a Game Tag. Game Tags may be used statewide, except that no more than two of the tags are valid in deer management units 17 and 18. The Commission approved these changes, which also eliminated the more expensive leftover whitetail permits, to allow hunters increased opportunities at a reduced price.

Game Tags still may not be used on department-owned or managed wildlife areas, but may be used on private property, including Walk-In Hunting

Areas (WIHA). This stipulation was retained so that deer hunting pressure is focused on private property, where deer numbers are more of a concern. Hunters may also purchase a single Whitetail Antlerless permit that is valid on department-managed lands.

Three other minor changes that also increase hunter opportunities are as follows:

- Firearms permits for white-tailed deer may be used during both the regular firearms season and the muzzleloader-only season, with equipment legal for those seasons;
- Military units for deer hunting have been eliminated, allowing hunters to utilize an entire deer management unit if access to the military installation is problematic; and
- A preference point system has been established for Any Deer firearms permits, ensuring more equitable distribution of mule deer hunting opportunities.

Kansas deer hunters have performed a great service to the department and the public by harvesting record numbers of deer, especially does, the past several years. In 2000, the number of deer-vehicle accidents, compared to the preceding year, was reduced for the first time in 15 years. I commend you for your support.

I realize that annual changes to the big game rules and regulations can be confusing — and sometimes frustrating. While some changes are mandated legislatively, keep in mind that the majority of changes are made by the Commission with the hunter, and foremost, the resource, in mind.

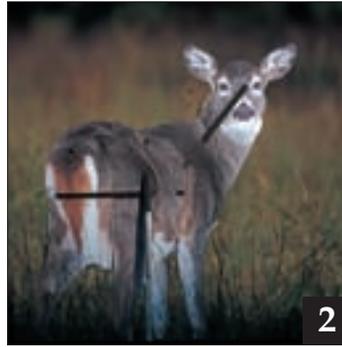
Good luck and have a great, safe deer season.

KANSAS

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About the covers
Front Cover: Early light frames a white-tailed buck as it searches for does. Mike Blair recorded the moment with a 600mm lens set at f/5.6, 1/500th sec. **Back:** This young Kansas hunter fulfilled his dreams for a trophy buck on a December outing. Blair took the photograph with a 55 mm lens, f/11 @ 125th sec.





Decoying Deer

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

Deer decoys can add an exciting element to deer hunting and be a valuable tool when bowhunting whitetails.

It was a scene right out of a deer hunter's dream. Heavy snowfall choked the gray dawn as a searching buck emerged from the nearby swamp. My pulse quickened as the trophy animal tracked closer, its muddy ankles looking like black socks against the snowy earth. Suddenly, it spotted my decoy in the small opening of the ash forest. Squaring off, the

buck hard-stared the imposter for a full minute.

The fake intruder made the buck mad, and its winter coat flared as if under the influence of an electric wand. In a menacing way, the buck bowed its neck and dropped its ears while marching stiff-legged toward the waiting "buck." As I hoped, the deer approached the decoy face-on, which brought it directly by

my bowstand. At 10 yards, the deer looked at me perched on the 12-foot ladder stand. But the combination of storm and decoy soothed the possibility of danger. The deer turned back to its rival.

It was the classic buck trap. The aggressor quartered away at 7 yards, fully focused on the face and antlers of the imposter buck. I drew an arrow, centered the



sight pin behind the shoulder — and let down without shooting. My goal for the season was to take a 170-inch Boone & Crockett-class deer by bow, and this 3-year-old

would score only about 140. The whitetail edged into the decoy's scent stream, caught a foreign odor, and bounded away through the Christmas card scene.

I didn't get my big deer that year, and I've always regretted not perfectly ending the story-book episode. But it proved how effective a decoy can be. Amazingly, later that same November day, I passed two more mature bucks that came to a doe decoy positioned near another stand half a mile upstream. It was a memorable day of hunting, and now I seldom leave for an archery stand without considering the importance of this hunting tactic.

Deer decoys pay off. I've taken a number of does and bucks over them, and the growing number of available models makes it easy for anyone

to do the same. In hunting and photography, I've tried several kinds of deer decoys, each having advantages and disadvantages. Like any whitetail tactic, decoys don't always work, but in the right situation, can provide an unbelievable show as well as shooting opportunities. Decoys add to the difficulty of setting up a hunt but are often well worth the effort.

Decoys are relatively new to modern deer hunting, though the concept has long been understood as an effective means of attracting these big game animals. Whitetails are social and ranked within a herd by pecking order, recognizing each other at a glance. Deer are curious, and will immediately investigate an unknown animal that comes on the scene. A decoy creates this circumstance, drawing deer to or toward a desired location to size up the "newcomer."

There are possible pitfalls. The decoy must appear natural and must not shine. Glare from plastic surfaces often scares a whitetail away, or causes it to approach on high alert. Either option is undesirable. One of my plastic decoys, quite lifelike in

Decoys can be an exciting way to bring deer close to hunters. Several types of deer decoys are available. The Outlaw decoy in the photos at left is a lightweight, photographic silhouette that can be used with or without antlers.

appearance, is notorious for spooking deer in bright light. On cloudy days or in shaded timber, it has worked well. But let a beam of sunlight fall upon it, and deer usually take one look and head for cover. The decoy is painted correctly, but there is simply too much glare from its smooth surfaces.

A full-body deer mount avoids this problem, since it has natural hair. This type of decoy is lifelike in every way but its rigid pose. My body-mount decoy is a large buck, drilled and rigged for optional antlers. It is homemade, pieced together with skins and capes taken in different seasons, and has wooden legs wrapped in burlap. It looks ridiculous, befitting its nickname, Shags. But it has been the downfall of several bucks and does and was the decoy that fooled the swamp buck on a snowy morning. Unfortunately, this decoy is too large to appear normal when used as a doe, so I use it only with a 150-class set of antlers in hopes of antagonizing a trophy buck into range.

Most deer are cautious around the full-body mount. They usually approach as a man would investigate a riled rattlesnake — curious but alert and ready to bolt. I soon learned to set up this decoy 40-60 yards upwind of my stand, especially on open ground. Then, deer circling into its scent stream would pass close enough for a shot. Scent is always a problem with the body-mount decoy, since its hair absorbs and holds foreign odors that are hard to mask even with

cover scents. This decoy's strength lies in the realism of its head and antlers. No decoy attracts deer from distances like the full-body mount. However, the statuesque, unmoving pose seems to elicit caution flags as deer move into shooting proximity. Bucks and does seldom approach it closer than 20 yards before leaving.

Despite success with the body-mount decoy, I usually leave it at home. It is heavy and unwieldy when hunting alone, is expensive beyond its value, and has to be protected from rodent and insect damage during the off-season. Though useful, I wouldn't recommend a full-body mount as a hunting tool.

Searching for ways to make decoy hunting easier, I tried a silhouette decoy produced by the Outlaw company. This decoy, a life-sized photographic deer reproduction, looks like a living animal. At first I was skeptical of a wafer-thin, two-dimensional decoy, but its immediate impact on hunting success quickly made it my exclusive choice. It has worked so well that now I use nothing else.

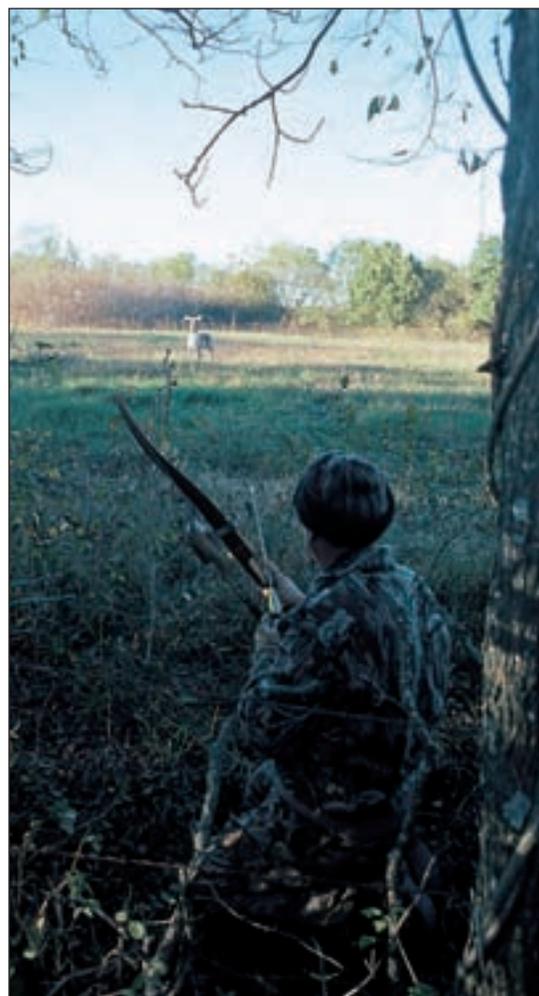
This decoy offers several advantages. First, it is lightweight and easy to handle. The decoy snaps together in three pieces and sets up in less than a minute. I usually carry it fully assembled and ready to stake, avoiding any setup noise that might alert nearby deer. This is a common problem with 3-D plastic decoys, which are too cumbersome to carry preassembled, but which cause considerable racket during assembly on a still morning. I can sneak in, stake the Outlaw, and take a



nearby stand without commotion. (For safety's sake, always drape the assembled decoy in blaze orange while carrying it)

Secondly, the silhouette decoy is easy to keep scent-free. I store my decoy in a clean cloth bag and handle the decoy only with gloves. At each use, I spritz it with Essence of Fall cover scent and sometimes affix deer tarsal glands to it with rubber bands. As a result, deer seldom scent-spook from this decoy, even at close range. More than a dozen times, I've watched bucks and does sniff the

Full-body mount decoys (top) are cumbersome but effective. Large antlers may intimidate young bucks but are necessary to attract trophy animals. Plastic 3-D decoys (right) can be effective in subdued light where glare is not a problem.



length of the silhouette decoy from touching distance without alarm.

Finally, the Outlaw's photographic realism offers one more important advantage: it appears natural to deer. With other decoys, it often seemed that a clock began ticking the moment a whitetail spotted them. One of several things occurred: the deer turned tail and ran; they came marching, tails raised, to check more closely; or in some cases, they actually approached the decoy. The outcome was usually the same. Ultimately, the decoy would scare them, and they would run away to alert other animals.

By contrast, deer that sighted the silhouette decoy behaved in two ways. Most would approach and circle it several times, usually very closely. It was not unusual for the decoy to be sniffed. Bucks might approach aggressively. Does and fawns approached it with curiosity. It was often funny to watch deer puzzle over the "disappearing" decoy as they went around it. But none of the deer spooked. Many stayed in bow range for more than five minutes. At the end, every deer simply walked or fed away, some even bedding nearby.

The other behavior, just as important, was that disinterested deer ignored the decoy. They treated it like another deer. Sometimes they approached and studied it as they fed, but I never saw a deer

spook from this decoy. I've also watched as raccoons passed it with nothing more than curiosity.

Gene Brehm, fellow bowhunter and wildlife videographer for Kansas Wildlife & Parks, had an interesting experience that bears this out. One evening he placed a silhouette "doe" near his treestand and watched as three fawns fed into the area. The young deer noticed and approached the decoy and then fed nearby until a coyote suddenly trotted down a fence-line. The coyote also spotted the decoy and sat down to study it from 50 yards away. At once, the three young deer bounded to the decoy and stood beside it, as if seeking the protection of an adult deer. They remained for a full minute, until the coyote turned and trotted away. Then the young deer gradually dis-

persed.

During the past few seasons, I've watched at least 50 deer interact with the silhouette decoy and had few problems. However, nothing in nature is sure. One of my eastern Kansas hunting friends had several experiences where deer ran away from the silhouette "buck." However, before season was over, the decoy helped his son get a great bow shot from the ground. The father-son team was walking together on their way to stands, when the dad spotted a nice buck coming down a ridge-line. Carrying the antlered decoy fully assembled, the older hunter quickly staked the decoy in a small opening, and the pair hid behind a large oak tree. The deer soon spotted the decoy and immediately postured toward it. It began a stop-and-go game of approaching the decoy, circling



Deer fooled by decoys will always circle to smell the "stranger." Bucks try to approach antlered decoys face-on but approach doe decoys from the rear. The hunter should position accordingly.



To avoid scent-spooking deer, handle decoys only with rubber gloves. Add cover scents and tarsal glands to help hide foreign odors. Position decoys upwind of a deerstand to avoid detection by circling animals.

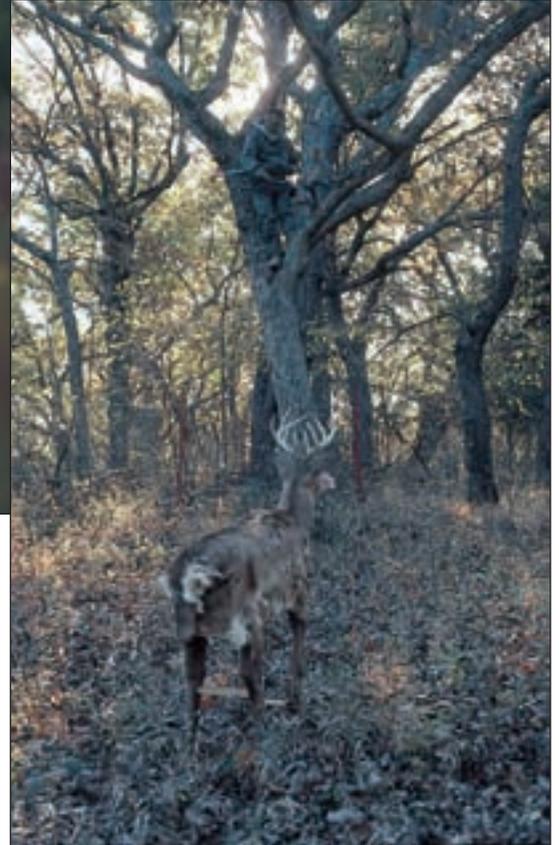
to point blank range. The 16-year-old made a seven yard heart shot, quickly dropping the 8-pointer which scored just shy of the Pope and Young record book. It was an exciting moment and the boy's largest buck.

Whatever deer decoy is used, the setup is important. Decoys should be placed in visible travel lanes, on field edges, or in woodland openings. Sometimes, motion helps to attract attention. I sewed a large and accurately colored tail and affixed it to my plastic doe decoy, which waved in the wind and helped to gain notice. The cloth tail was also useful in holding rut scent that could be applied to further strengthen the ruse. Deer calls and rattling antlers can also be used to help passing deer spot the decoy. In turn, the decoy visually "proves" that a calling or fighting deer is really present.

I hunt with deer decoys several ways, depending on season. Since most decoys have detach-

able antlers, they can be used as bucks or does. During October and the first week of November, I prefer to use decoys with antlers attached. I often hunt does in early season while bucks are active mostly at night. Does pay little attention to another doe at this time, but they are usually curious about a buck decoy in broad daylight. When hunting near feed, I place the "buck" in an open feed field downwind of the entry trail. The decoy is placed so that approaching does must pass my stand to reach the decoy's scent stream. This tactic has resulted in a lot of venison.

Pre-rut bucks are always interested in the antlered decoy as well, since it represents a possible challenge. For buck hunting, the decoy is set up along rublines indicating buck travel patterns and used in conjunction with a grunt call.



Yearling and two-year-old bucks respond best, partly because of their tendency to move more in daylight hours, and partly because they are aggressive and not as wary as older bucks.

It's important to match antler size to potential quarry. Very large antlers intimidate young deer and cause them to keep their distance. For most hunting, antlers from a two-year-old buck are about right. However, if trophy hunting, big deer may ignore a small-antlered decoy. For them, it's best to use a trophy rack on the decoy.

The second week of November typically represents



Deer may approach both buck or doe decoys depending on season. Generally, use buck decoys until about mid-November, then remove the antlers during the most active part of the rut – the last two weeks of November.

the chase phase of the whitetail rut in Kansas. From then through mid-December, it's best to use decoys as "does." Bucks of all sizes begin to move, checking every doe in sight. A doe decoy ups the odds for a buck, and also causes no concern for female deer. Unless in estrus, does want no part of bucks during this time, and will move quickly away from the antlered decoy, assuming it will chase them.

Doe decoys should be placed in visible areas where does congregate. Feed fields and hay meadows are good locations, since cruising bucks can see a decoy for long distances in these openings. Bucks are likely to come directly to the decoy, so the safest play is to position it close to a stand site. Bucks usually approach other male deer head-

on, but they approach does from the rear. Therefore, it's best to place doe decoys quartering away from the hunting stand. During rut, tarsal glands and estrus scents should be used in conjunction with the decoy. In some cases, a pair of decoys is even more effective. A buck and doe together gives the impression that an estrus doe might be available to a dominant animal.

In timbered corridors, place the doe decoy where it can be seen, and use a doe bleat call in conjunction with a grunt call or rattling horns. Using the calls together will sometimes bring a buck on the run, and the decoy gives the deer confidence to close the final distance. Older bucks are most likely to be taken this way; the sounds suggest a doe in heat, the buck bursts upon the scene, spots the decoy,

and comes right in. There is little time for the deer to become suspicious, as is possible in less energized moments. Be prepared to shoot quickly.

Few deer hunting tactics are as exciting as decoy hunting. There's nothing like watching as a buck walks into shooting range with its attention riveted on your artificial deer. Many times, my deer decoy has provided numerous easy bow shots at an animal. When I pass on the shot, it's fascinating to watch the interaction that occurs. The old excuses of "too heavy to carry" or "might spook a deer" are no longer concerns with this lightweight and effective silhouette model. But whatever decoy I use, it's probably worth the trouble. Decoys are the best way I know to invite a deer home for dinner. ♡

Designed For A Woman

illustrations and text by Dana Eastes
webmaster, Pratt

photos by Mike Blair

Women have long suffered by wearing outdoor clothing designed for men. However, as the number of women who hunt and fish grows, gear specially designed for women is becoming more readily available.



In art school, it was preached that “form follows function.” For instance, a chair is designed to fit a sitting person. For a hundred years, the outdoor apparel world adhered to this notion, creating clothing that was roughly designed to the task and fitted to men. Now, things are changing. The industry has fine-tuned its philosophy to accommodate women, so that function is finally following form. A growing number of women are discovering the joys of the outdoors, and makers of

hunting and fishing clothing are following them with gear that fits a woman’s form. Catalog sections and even separate catalogs devoted to women’s gear are distributed by major outdoor companies such as Cabela’s and Orvis. Many lesser known women’s outfitting companies such as Damsely and Tomboy are also marking territory.

What took them so long? It probably has to do with a woman’s priorities as well as

market considerations. Even though women are more accepted in outdoor pursuits today, they have fewer role models than men and aren’t as likely to be encouraged to hunt and fish as youngsters. When deciding to spend money, women are more likely put the family budget, fashion clothing, and house projects ahead of an outdoor clothing purchase. And women aren’t as apt to become glassy-eyed over the newest camou-

flage pattern. For a hopeful half-dozen hunting outings, why buy a \$200 Ghillie suit when a \$50 pair of coveralls from the local farm supply store will work? Many women, including me, have donned the oversized, worn, leaky cast-asides of their spouse. It might be uncomfortable, but it saves money.

So for years, women have trudged to the field in outdoor wear fitted for men. And some women may continue to choose men's outdoor clothing for various reasons. For instance, when buying coveralls for icefishing and rifle deer hunting, many women prefer the men's broad-shouldered roominess to add layers of warmth underneath. Another reason is price. Men's clothing is typically cheaper than women's, though there is not a great discrepancy between men's and women's outdoor clothing.

All of this seems reasonable until you finally try gear tailored for women. Then you see the difference. Granted, the temptation may be small for mothers in the toddler era — with the constraints of family and work, they are less likely to choose a 4 a.m. duck hunt when they have been up all night with baby. Even though they now have women's fitted outdoor clothing as an option, they won't make a clothing purchase until they absolutely need to.

But pre- and post-toddler women who enjoy the outdoors will at some time be in the market. They may find themselves with money and time to join their spouses and friends in outdoor activities. I have finally reached that stage again, now that our youngest of three is in kindergarten and I'm back to work after six years at home. I feel a renewed excitement to

embrace the outdoors — fully outfitted, of course.

So to research this article, I ordered a few items on consignment. Flyfishing is my favorite outdoor pursuit, and I ordered waders, boots, vest and hat. Before beginning, I consulted Lindsay Peter, a two-year veteran of the Wildlife and Parks stream testing crew. The stream crews spend three months each summer in waders and boots, monitoring the health of Kansas waterways. Peter suggested that I try on several wader styles to achieve the proper fit. She prefers the neoprene stocking foot waders for comfort. Neoprene stretches so it won't bind, is less prone to leaks, and lasts longer than the traditional

rubber waders. Neoprene tends to be hotter, though, and requires greater care to avoid snags on brush and branches.

I chose Clearwater Stocking-foot waders from Orvis. The item description on their website read, " 'No Sweat' breathable technology at a great new price that makes them an easy choice for dry, comfortable wading . . ."

The item description was genuine. When I tried the waders, they were indeed comfortable, and the light breathable uppers were cool and slick to help avoid accidental tears (snag is my middle name.) I was impressed. Of course, after wading in leather boots and jeans for years, it was an easy grin. They cost \$129 — a bit pricey for my budget



Women's fishing gear is attractive and functional. Waders designed for a woman's figure make it easier to move both in and out of water.

— but I was going to return them — so what the heck?

As for the boots, Peter recommended rubber-soled boots to maneuver Kansas' muddy creeks and ponds, but felt-soled boots to grip the rock bottomed, faster moving streams. Because of my family's yearly fishing trip to the Rockies, I chose the felt-bottomed Ultra-Light wading boots from Orvis. Mid-priced at \$85, they were lightweight and comfortable, a great compliment to the waders.

The Orvis women's flyfishing vest at \$69 and Columbia hat at \$24 were not essential, but appreciated extras. I also pondered ordering a \$59 casting shirt and \$149 Photochromic Copper Lens sunglasses, but opted for a \$12 blouse from Target and a \$6 pair of sale rack sunglasses from the local Maurices.

The new gear made my fishing more enjoyable and allowed me to stay in the water longer. Essentially, I was very happy to be dry. Although my brothers mocked my fishing technique, I could tell they were really jealous of my waders. My husband, lacking a pair of waders for himself, even tried them a few times. Now that's a twist.

Upland game hunting

I spoke with upland game enthusiast and new mother, Shannon Swafford. She and her husband have spent a good deal of time hunting pheasants. Most of her outdoor wear is men's, including her coat, bird vest and boots. Even though her hunting opportunities are now limited, her husband recently bought her some Women's Brush Buster pants from L.L.Bean. She appreciates the gift as well as the fit, saying, "It's not something I would have bought for myself, but they are comfortable and not as hot as the jeans and chaps I was wearing before."

Comfort and versatility are key ingredients for upland hunting gear. Weather can vary from warm to blizzard conditions. Pheasant hunting means walking miles in thick cover, so you'll need clothing that can be layered, depending on conditions. Cabela's catalog features women's game pants ranging from \$30 to \$70, a promising price for hip-fitting, leg-saving durability.

Footwear

Footwear is an important consideration, especially for upland hunting. You'll need boots heavy enough to withstand abrasion in heavy weed cover but that are comfortable enough to allow you to walk miles. This is one item of contradiction for women. When shopping for fashion, women may ignore comfort.

Finding the exact color and style of pump to match that new outfit is more important than blisters. And if one happens upon one of those "to-kill-for shoe sales," lookout. At a recent trip to the mall, when I asked my seasoned shopping friend why she

was frantically hoarding shoes and hiding others under the rack, she said, "When I hit one of these sales, I'll buy shoes two sizes above and below my normal size. You can't beat these prices."

Outdoor footwear, however, is another matter.

When it comes to shopping for boots, women will quickly sacrifice a fashion statement to keep their toes warm and dry. For winter hunting and ice fishing, a pair of felt insulated pac-type boots can't be beat. Foreseeing the ruination of a good fishing or hunting trip, my husband once bought me a pair for his own self-preservation. My best boot purchase, so far, has been my Chippewa packers. I've worn these do-it-all boots in streams (with a good coating of waterproofing,) while hiking, hunting, and even to the Wichita Symphony – boots and a skirt, if you're wondering.

Camouflage Clothing

Hunting game such as deer, waterfowl, or turkey requires specific clothing that will not only keep you



Custom rainwear and upland clothing make it easier for women to enjoy the outdoors.

warm and dry but also make you hard to see. I shopped for camouflage versatile enough for all seasons. I ordered, on consignment, a women's rain suit from Cabela's. Not just any rainwear, but an Advantage Timber Rain Suede Dry-Plus Pack Parka and pants to match.

Again, I was impressed. I could move easily; climb, sit, crawl, whatever. In the past, I lumbered along like Sasquatch, afraid of tripping and not being able to get up. The rain suede shed water like a duck's backside. The breathable material did not trap perspiration and offered great protection against a stiff Kansas wind. Not just for rain, this gear was designed for year-round use, from spring and fall turkey hunting and fishing, to winter icefishing and deer hunting. A woman may want to add a size larger than normal to allow layering for cold weather use.

I have come to the conclusion that hip waders are of no use to women. I was deeply touched by the story of a fellow outdoorswoman. After asking her husband to add a pair of women's hip waders to his own lengthy Cabela's shopping list, he said, "You don't need those. I'll keep carrying you across the river to our treestands." Now that's love.

The production of women's outdoor clothing is a welcome and greatly appreciated change. In the words of a 60-year-old woman wearing a pair of Simms men's waders I met while flyfishing, "It's about @#**#@ time."

Note to self: Give my coveralls to my oldest son, and tell my husband not to worry about my Christmas gift. Will keep all the gear I tested. With plans to return afield often, the form-fitting gear is well worth having. ♡



Numerous outfitting companies await on the web to supply women's gear. Here are just a few to get you started:

Kansas' Becoming An Outdoor Women site
www.gpnc.org/becoming.htm

Cabela's - World's Foremost Outfitter
www.cabelas.com

Orvis - Sporting traditions since 1856
www.orvis.com

Tomboy Catalog - Hunting & Fishing outfitter for women
tomboy-womenoutdoors.com

A Forum for women hunters
clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/womenhunters

Dunn's - Upland Game Outfitter
www.dunnscatalog.com/

C.C. Filson - Supplying rugged outdoor wear for extreme conditions
smtp2.thewwwstore.com/filson/index.html

L.L. Bean Company- Outdoor Clothing for everyone
www.llbean.com/

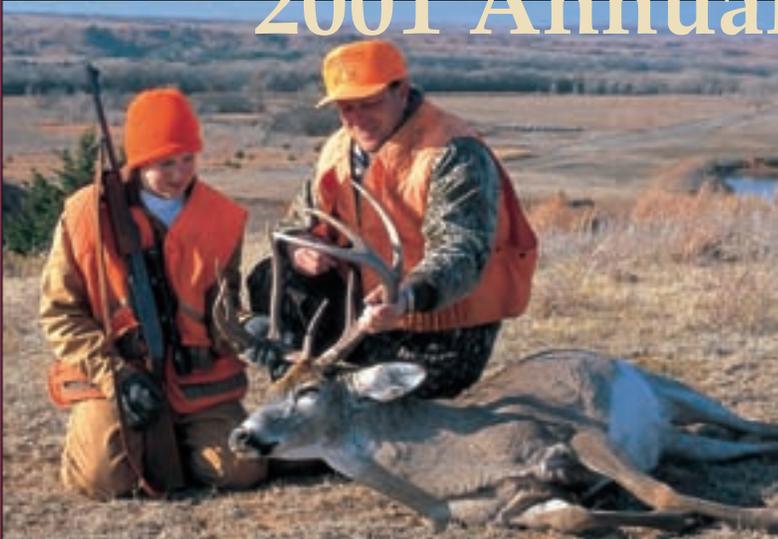
IFLYSHOP.com - Offers a variety of waders and fly-fishing gear
www.iflyshop.com/Flytech-waders.asp

Americanfly.com - America's online fly shop
www.americanfly.com/

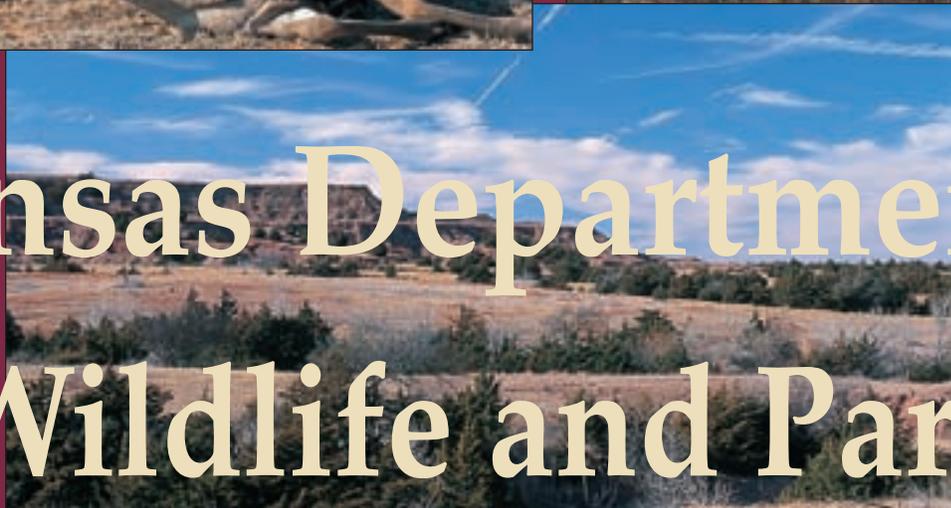
Black's Sporting Directories are the complete guides to equipment, instruction and destinations for the shot-gunner and fly fisherman.
www.outdoorlife.com/blacks/index.html

AllOutdoors.com - Info, friends, gear, everything
www.alloutdoors.com/aolibrary/hunting/bow/bo wwomen.asp

2001 Annual Report



Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks



This report briefly details a number of department accomplishments in the past year. The department continued to make progress in the Pass It On program, initiated to recruit new hunters and reverse the declining trend in hunter numbers. This fall marks only the second time in history that Kansas sportsmen and women have the opportunity to take a youth hunting during three special seasons – Youth Upland Bird, Youth Deer, and Youth Waterfowl. Numerous area-specific youth hunts were held around the state, with the emphasis on providing young hunters quality opportunities to enjoy the outdoors. Water Works Wonders, a national program to recruit and retain anglers, also took shape this year and is building momentum.

The popular Walk-In Hunting Area (WIHA) program continued to inch toward our goal of 1 million acres, with more than 830,000 acres enrolled this fall. A pilot Spring Turkey WIHA program began successfully, as well. The counterpart fishing program – Fishing Impoundments and Stream Habitats (FISH) – continued its growth. A record number of deer permits were again offered, along with a simplified application process.

The Parks Division again hosted numerous special events, including the inaugural Outdoor Kansas for Kids Day (OK Kids). The \$10 million facelift to our state parks' infrastructure was completed and helped spur annual attendance at the parks to record levels.

Providing quality programs and customer service to our constituents remain the top priorities of our department. Through the efforts of our dedicated staff, the support of Gov. Bill Graves, and the backing of our diverse constituency, I believe KDWP took another definitive step forward in 2001. We are one step closer to reaching our goal of becoming one of the nation's premier providers of outdoor recreation opportunities through the best in stewardship of wildlife and park resources.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Steve Williams".

Secretary, Kansas Department of

State Park Improvements

State park visitation reached 7.2 million in 2000, the highest year on record. All projects made possible by the Kansas Legislature's approval of Gov. Bill Graves' \$10 million appropriation proposal were completed by the end of the 2001 recreation season. Some projects initially scheduled had to be deleted or modified as bids came in over estimates. The Bureau of Reclamation provided extensive funding for major projects at Cheney State Park, as well as small projects at west region parks. A component of the AmeriCorps grant paid for access improvements to several park offices. Some motorboat access projects were funded under the Dingell-Johnson federal aid grant program. Money raised by Friends groups paid for other projects, including playground equipment at several parks. The KCC's solar grant provided to means to add solar lights to boat ramps, campgrounds, pit toilets, and signs at many parks. The Land and Water Conservation program that was so instrumental in building Kansas state parks was revitalized and provided approximately \$25,000 for capital improvement or renovation projects that were authorized and begun in 2000.

AmeriCorps

The department was awarded a second year of the AmeriCorps grant, beginning the new program at about the same time as members completed the first round of the program. Several members elected to enroll for a second term. The program awards members an educational credit of \$4,725 for serving 1,700 hours with the department. Members receive a living stipend while serving, and perform a variety of tasks, such as renovating facilities, presenting public programs, and assisting at local disaster sites throughout the state. During 2000, for example, 15 members provided 272 hours of service to relief efforts following the tornado at Parsons. An additional AmeriCorps grant was awarded to the department to present training on Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) issues.

Outdoor Recreation Grants

KDWP's Parks Division distributed \$500,000 to 40 Kansas communities for development of local recreation facilities. The Kansas Legislature appropriated the funding to assist city and county governments in recreation development such as ballfield construction and renovation, acquisition of playground equipment, and disabled-access improvements. This



was the third year for this grant program.

Land and Water Conservation Fund LWCF funding made possible two state park projects and 16 community projects, ranging from playground equipment acquisition to stadium renovation. These projects most likely would not have been done if the U.S. Congress had not approved appropriations for the program.

Regulation Review

The Law Enforcement Division made substantial progress in reviewing all regulations, in response to a Governor's Executive Order. An internal working group has identified regulations that can be clarified and consolidated. The Division is leading discussion on those proposed changes at Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission public meetings, and most significant revisions will be complete by the end of 2001.

Law Enforcement Statistics

Last year, KDWP conservation officers conducted a total of 71,224 hunting and fishing license checks, and 16,994 boat inspections. The field checks resulted in a total of 6,663 violations — an 8 percent violation rate. KDWP park rangers conducted a total of 87,829 park permit checks, which resulted in 7,811 total violations — a 2.5 percent violate rate. The resulting fines and court costs assessed violators totalled \$507,829. Officers investigated a total of 45 boating accidents in 2000, resulting in total property damage of \$55,017. There were no boating fatalities in 2000.



OK Kids Day

KDWP was a major partner in the inaugural Outdoor Kansas for Kids Day (OK Kids), hosting events at 20 of the state parks. Organized by the Kansas Wildscape Foundation, a non-profit foundation focused on providing outdoor recreation opportunities in Kansas, OK Kids brought thousands of youth from across Kansas into the outdoors on Sept. 8. Activities included



fishing, hiking, biking, birdwatching, shooting instruction, and hunter education courses.

Safe Hunting

A record low 19 hunting accidents occurred in Kansas in 2000, continuing the long-term improvement in hunting safety since the state initiated mandatory hunter education in 1973. Department officials credited the efforts of the 1,500 volunteer instructors around the state, who conduct about 350 courses statewide each year, and certify 12,000 to 13,000 new hunters annually. Instructors are required to undergo training every three years. The department sponsored the first Kansas Hunter Education Instructor Academy in March of this year, an event designed to enhance instructors' teaching skills. Governor Bill Graves proclaimed Sept. 22, 2001 as Hunter Education Instructor Recognition Day, acknowledging that instructors are "...a vital link in protection of our hunting heritage."



Birding in Kansas

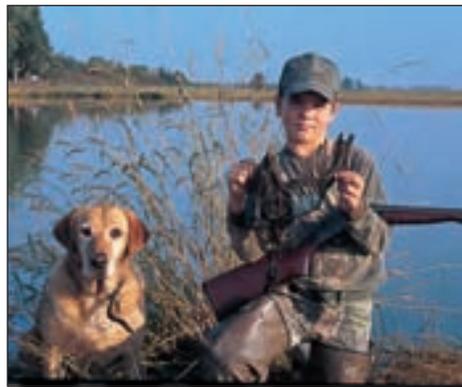
The department co-sponsored the first Wings 'n Wetlands Weekend at Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area and Quivira National Wildlife Refuge in April of this year. Hundreds of bird-watching enthusiasts from Kansas and many other states attended the event, which was also sponsored by the Great Bend Convention and Visitors Bureau and other local groups. Officials plan to make the event a regular occurrence.

Milford Wetlands Development

Nearly a decade of planning and cooperation culminated at a ground-breaking ceremony June 29 for the Milford Lake Habitat Restoration Project. Also known as the Milford Wetlands, the project will restore and add more than 2,000 acres of multi-use wetland cells around the north end of Milford Reservoir. Initially conceived in 1991, the project took off when the Kansas Wildscape Foundation agreed to the challenge of raising more than \$1 million in donations to match federal dollars available through the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers. Construction is slated for completion in 2003.

Outdoor Access

KDWP's popular Walk-In Hunting Areas program, in which the department leases privately-owned lands for



general hunting access, continued to grow substantially. More than 834,000 acres of WIHA are available for the 2001 hunting seasons, an increase of nearly 100,000 acres over the 2000 acreage total. The aquatic counterpart to that program — Fishing Impoundments and Stream Habitats (FISH) — also continued to grow; more than 1,300 acres of privately-owned ponds and lakes, as well as 60 stream miles were enrolled in the 2001 FISH program.

Cheyenne Bottoms Honored

Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area was officially named one of 100 "Globally Important Bird Areas" by the American Bird Conservancy. The Bottoms had previously been designated a "Wetland of International Importance" by the Ramsar Convention, and also had been tagged a "Hemispheric Shorebird Reserve" by the Western Hemispheric Shorebird Reserve Network. A

massive renovation project was completed at Cheyenne Bottoms in 2000.

Pass It On

The department's Hunter Recruitment and Retention Program, popularly known as "Pass It On," gained momentum in its second year of operation. The program is designed to increase the state's hunting participation rate to 15 percent by 2005. It features a variety of strategies, such as development of outdoor mentors, enhanced shooting opportunities, enhanced hunting access, and special hunts. Youth hunts have been especially well received by hunters. In addition to dozens of specially-planned, mentored hunts for youth and disabled persons around the state, the program also features specially-designated youth seasons for waterfowl, deer, upland bird, and spring turkey.

Fish Stocking

The department's Fish Culture Section stocked a total of 20.6 million fish, comprising 12 species, in Kansas' public fishing waters. In addition, a total of more than 125,000 channel catfish were stocked in urban lakes and ponds for the department's Urban Fishing Program. The popular trout fishing program benefitted from stocking a total of 129,000 catchable-sized trout.



Income July 2000-June 2001

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks relies on fees paid by the people it serves for most of its income. The sale of hunting and fishing licenses and associated permits accounts for about 48 percent of the department's annual income. Another 27 percent is derived from excise taxes paid on hunting and fishing gear and other outdoor equipment, which is distributed back to the state by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Park permits, boat registrations, and other license and permit sources account for another 14 percent. About 11 percent of the agency's funding comes from state general fund revenues. The tables on this page summarize calendar year 2000 license and permit sales.

FISHING/HUNTING/FURHARVESTING

License/permit	Number sold	Revenue
Resident Fish (\$15.00)	184,444	\$2,766,660
Combination Fish/Hunt (\$30.00)	46,097	\$1,382,910
Nonresident Fish (\$35.00)	8,966	\$313,810
Five-Day Trip Fish (\$15.00)	4,910	\$73,650
24-Hour Fish (\$3.00)	85,593	\$256,779
Trout Stamp (\$7.50)	10,236	\$76,770
Lifetime Fish (\$240.00)	235	\$56,400
Lifetime Comb. Fish/Hunt (\$440.00)	865	\$380,600
Lifetime Fish (payments) (\$35.00)	40	\$1,400
Lifetime Comb. (payments) (\$35.00)	267	\$9,345
Lifetime Hunt (payments) (\$35.00)	119	\$4,165
Lifetime Hunt (\$240.00)	1,040	\$249,600
Resident Hunt (\$15.00)	90,863	\$1,362,945
Nonresident Hunt (\$65.00)	51,863	\$3,371,095
Nonresident Junior Hunt (\$30.00)	1,792	\$53,760
Controlled Shooting Area (\$13.00)	6,289	\$81,757
48-Hour Waterfowl (\$20.00)	589	\$11,780
Deer Permit (variable)	166,872	\$4,401,705
Turkey Permit (variable)	43,226	\$711,430
Adult Furharvester (\$15.00)	3,816	\$57,240
Junior Furharvester (\$7.50)	96	\$720
TOTAL	708,218	\$15,624,521

STATE PARKS

Permit Type	Number Sold	Revenue
Annual Vehicle (\$29.50)	29,077	\$857,772
Annual Camp (\$100)	2,898	\$289,800
Second Vehicle (\$14.50)	9,884	\$143,318
Duplicate Vehicle (\$5.00)	819	\$4,095
Exempt/Handicap Vehicle (\$0)	27,363	\$0
Daily Vehicle (\$3.50)	269,383	\$942,841
Daily Handicap Vehicle (\$0)	105	\$0
Daily Camp (\$4.50)	113,101	\$508,954
14-Day Camp (\$50.00)	1,486	\$74,300
Utility (1) (\$5.00)	13,696	\$68,480
Utility (2) (\$6.00)	114,625	\$687,750
Utility (3) (\$7.00)	20,319	\$142,223
Youth Group Camping (\$2.50)	337	\$843
30-Day Camp (\$90.00)	16	\$1,440
TOTAL	603,109	\$3,721,815

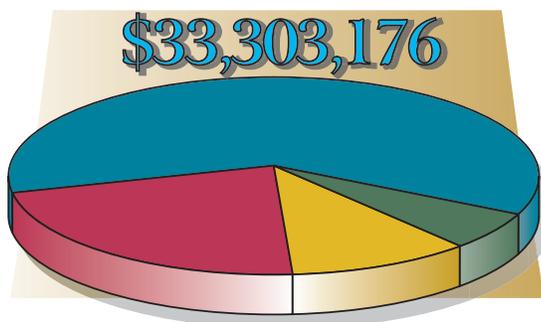
THREE- YEAR BOAT REGISTRATIONS

Registration Type	Number Sold	Revenue
Boats under 16 feet (\$15.00)	18,775	\$281,625
Boats over 16 feet (\$18.00)	19,230	\$346,140
TOTAL	38,005	\$627,765

FEDERAL AID

Reimbursement Type	Number Sold	Revenue
Coast Guard (boating safety)		\$ 653,012
Dingell-Johnson (fish)		\$3,950,546
Pittman-Robertson (wildlife)		\$2,091,288
Other		\$2,143,876
TOTAL		\$8,838,722

Expenditures (7/00 - 6/01)



Fish & Wildlife	\$21,073,922	64 %
Parks	\$8,102,442	24 %
Boating	\$1,028,625	3 %
Administration	\$3,098,187	9 %
Totals	\$33,303,176	100 %



The Other Side Of The Window

by Bob Mathews

chief, Information and Education Section, Pratt

illustration by Mike Miller

editor, Pratt

Looking outside on a dreary winter day nearly kept the hunter in. But a hunch and the desire to hunt provided a memorable afternoon.



It was a terrible winter day. Whipped along by a wicked north wind, sleet and snow peppered the house. Bitter cold and heavy overcast imposed an ominous, lifeless pall across the landscape. The house creaked and popped as frequent gusts lashed its sides. All in all, it was the perfect day to stay inside. It was the last day of deer season, though, and some inner voice kept nagging me to go. If nothing else, I needed to shoot the muzzleloader a final time so I could clean it and put it away. That's all I intended to do. I never expected such a day to yield one of the most rewarding hunts of my life.

The bank thermometer registered 13 degrees as I

drove down a deserted Main Street. For a moment, I considered heading back home. Instead, I checked the inventory of extra clothing, food, water, and gear beside me on the seat. Satisfied that I was ready for any contingency, I eased the truck onto the highway.

It was early afternoon, but heavy skies and blizzard conditions made for poor visibility. Traffic was nearly non-existent. Wind gusts rocked my truck from side to side as I left town and entered open country. I cranked the heater up a notch and settled in for what is normally a 30-minute drive.

An hour later, I stepped from my truck and began the half-mile walk to a shelterbelt I had hunted a few days earlier. No vehicles or tracks were visible on the snowy landscape. Somehow, the fact that I had 6,000 acres of public hunting to myself blunted the bite of the blustery wind pushing me toward the trees. The wind-whipped prairie grasses resembled ocean swells as I waded through dense stands of bluestem and sandlovecrass. The norther howled through crackling tree-tops, but I entered a more peaceful world once I reached the downwind edge of the shelterbelt.

I was warmed by the walk and becoming attuned to the storm. It really wasn't so bad as I began to stillhunt toward the far end of the shelterbelt. The difficult weather could actually work to my advantage, since everything was in motion and the wind covered every sound. The wild gusts shredded my scent stream to confuse the noses of downwind deer. It didn't take long for even more encouragement. I soon spotted movement a quarter-mile west.

Something or someone, besides me, was out in the storm. I leaned against a tree and squinted through my binoculars. Through wind-driven snow, I saw a deer, feeding ghost-like at the far end of a winter wheat food plot in the lee of the shelterbelt. I shivered with excitement as I strained for a better look, but couldn't make out more detail.

I mentally mapped an approach to the deer and eased along the windbreak's edge, fretting that the animal would disappear before I closed to shooting range. I carried a .50-caliber muzzleloader and hoped for an 80-yard shot. As much as possible, I kept clumps of cover between me and the deer. At 200 yards, I could tell it was a buck. I crept 50 yards closer, stopping every few steps to watch the feeding animal. Then I dropped to my hands and knees and crawled forward, using bluestem clus-

ters and an occasional scrawny cedar tree for camouflage. Each time the buck lowered its head for a bite of green wheat, I scurried forward; when the deer lifted its eyes to look around, I stopped. I was electrified by adrenaline and anticipation, now oblivious to the weather that earlier seemed so hostile.

I belly-crawled the last 20 yards and peered over a fallen log. I estimated the distance at 75 yards, and slowly raised the rifle, using the downed cottonwood trunk for a rest. The deer was standing broadside. I peered through the peep sight and placed the rifle's front bead on the deer's chest. The time had come. The buck took a step forward as I pulled the set trigger, exhaled, steadied the rifle, and eased my finger around the front trigger. I gave it a slight, almost imperceptible nudge and felt the jolt of the rifle. Absorbed in the moment, I barely heard the roar of the muzzleloader. The smoke was whisked away, and I saw the buck drop.

I looked at my watch. It was 4:30. Nerves caught up with me. Both hands shook as I measured and poured another charge of powder down the barrel, pushed a new bullet into the muzzle, and ramrodded it in place. Reloading seemed to take forever, and I glanced up every few seconds to make sure the buck was still there.

Still crouching behind the log, I stared at the deer, feeling humbled and proud and elated. Suddenly, I felt more connected to the real world than I had in a long time. The cold and wind now scarcely registered. I waited and watched for 10 minutes, then eased from behind the tree, dropped my pack to the ground, and cautiously approached the deer. I nudged its head with the rifle's muzzle, grabbed an antler and lifted a few inches, then lowered it to the ground. I stroked the buck's neck and chest, admiring it. I took a deep breath and looked around, savoring the moment. Sunset was an hour away, but the heavy overcast would bring early darkness. Time was short, and I pulled the knife from my pack and went to work.

Twenty minutes later, I began rigging for the long haul out. The road was at least half a mile away through tall grass and dense plum thickets. I thought about returning to town for help, but

somehow it was important to finish the job myself. I attached a rope to the buck's antlers and pulled 10 or 15 yards at a time between short rests. I was breathing heavily and constantly reminding myself to relax and not hurry. The drag seemed to take forever, but I didn't mind. I was alone, miles from the nearest house. I had several square miles of prairie all to myself. Exhilarated by the afternoon's events, I couldn't wipe the grin off my face.

Finally, after nearly two hours, I reached the sandy road and kicked a line across its width to mark the location. With the hardest chore finished, I leaned on a fence post to catch my breath one last time. I was suddenly aware that the world had gone completely dark. A disorienting, inky blackness heightened the spooky ambience of the wind-whipped countryside, but I felt warm and contented. I virtually floated back across the grassy winter hills, stopping to gather my pack and rifle.

It was more than a mile to the truck. When I finally stepped from the protection of the shelterbelt, I suddenly felt the cold. Snow and sleet were falling harder now. I leaned into the wind and stepped up my pace. Reaching the pickup, I started it and quickly removed a layer of clothing.

I drove to where I left the buck and pulled it under a barbed wire fence to the tailgate. For the first time since I spotted the deer, my hands were cold and numb. I was tired and wondered if strength remained to load the animal by myself. Adrenaline is a wonderful thing, I thought, as I climbed onto the pickup's bed. In a couple of tries, I was able to hoist the deer's upper body onto the tailgate. I pulled the buck into the truck bed and headed home.

As I drove through the dark and howling storm, the experience played in my mind again and again. I was tired and sore, but thankful for the wondrous excitement and satisfaction of this very special, unforgettable day. I felt more a part of the natural order than ever before. I felt a keen appreciation for the strange and compelling beauty of an extreme winter day in Kansas. Most importantly, the day's events reaffirmed some wise words I once read: "Bad weather always looks worse through a window." ❄️





The Beauty Of Buffers

text and photos by Randy Rodgers
wildlife biologist, Hays

The Continuous Signup of the Conservation Reserve Program includes options that increase farm profits, reduce erosion, and benefit wildlife, especially upland birds.

It isn't often that something this terrific comes along. In fact, some may think it's too good to be true. But it is true, and the opportunities shouldn't be passed up.

What am I talking about? A relatively new part of the federal Conservation Reserve Program offers the chance to improve Kansas farmland for conservation, crop production, and

wildlife all at the same time. What's more, it can improve farmers' financial bottom lines. The Continuous Signup of the Conservation Reserve Program, or CCRP, is considered by many to be one of the best conservation programs to come out of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in a very long time — except maybe for the name.

The often-misunderstood

name Continuous Signup doesn't mean that once in the program, you're in it continuously, forever. Most contracts are for 10 years, just like regular CRP. All the "continuous" part means is that farmers and landowners can visit their local USDA Service Center any time to sign up for CCRP buffers. This distinguishes it from the regular CRP which has typically been

open for enrollment during short signup periods.

The most obvious difference between regular CRP and CCRP buffers is the scale at which they're applied. Regular CRP was created in 1985 and provided incentives to landowners and farmers to take less-productive soils out of production and to seed them to permanent cover, usually native grasses in Kansas. Generally, all or a significant part of a field was enrolled for 10 years, creating blocks of grasslands that, with few excep-

tions, were not grazed or hayed. While the primary purposes of both regular CRP and CCRP are to control soil erosion and improve water quality, CCRP takes a more directed approach. Most CCRP buffers are installed in or around working crop fields on sites targeted to their specified purpose. Just the critical portions of the field are normally treated.

A major difference between regular CRP and CCRP is the relative ease of enrolling land. In regular CRP, farm operators or

owners must offer a bid of what they would accept as an annual payment. The land offered is then evaluated with a series of criteria producing a score that, along with the rental bid, determines whether or not the offer will be accepted. Only fields, or parts of fields, with highly erodible land (HEL) are eligible for regular CRP. None of this matters for CCRP. As long as the proposed CCRP buffer suits the land offered and serves the purpose specified for that practice, it's eligible for the program. The conservation benefits of buffers are so outstanding, USDA will accept just about any offer to install them on appropriate sites — no bids, no scores, no HEL limitations.

Just what are these wonders of conservation? Basically, buffers are just common sense. In fact, Common Sense Conservation is one of the catch phrases of the program. There's nothing complicated about buffers. Mostly, they're grass strips. Some CCRP buffers involve tree and shrub planting, but the practices with the greatest potential coverage in Kansas involve grass.

CCRP grass strips are broadly referred to as buffers, because that's exactly what they do — they buffer or minimize problems that can be associated with cropping. Grassing terraces, for example, stabilizes terrace structure and effectively buffers against further loss of terrace function, particularly by preventing washouts during thunderstorms. Grass filter strips placed along perennial and intermittent streams buffer our water resources against degradation by filtering out sediment, nutrients, and farm chemicals from field runoff. Grass wind strips buffer against wind erosion that can steal precious top-



Pheasants poured out of this Scott County cross wind trap strip shortly after this photo was taken. Contour grass strips can be seeded on terraces or on unterraced land

soil and reduce the quality of the air we breathe.

Of course, the most obvious benefit to the landowner and/or farm operator are the dollars. All CCRP buffer practices come with annual payments though USDA. These will vary across Kansas, depending on the soil type involved and the average land rental rates in that county. Annual payments decrease on a per-acre basis from east to west, ranging roughly from around \$100 in easternmost Kansas to about \$30 in the far west. USDA also provides 50 percent cost sharing for installation, an added 40 percent practice incentive payment for certain buffers, and some even carry a onetime signup incentive payment of \$100 per acre.

The beauty of buffers is that they provide so many and varied benefits — benefits that accrue not just to the farmer, but to everyone. Perhaps the best way to illustrate this is with the example of grassed terraces. Keep in mind that each CCRP practice has its own unique set of benefits.

By stabilizing the structure,



Buffers could have stopped this snow on the field where it would have provided valuable soil moisture; instead, it's just causing problems.

grassed terraces reduce sediment, nutrients, and pesticides in field runoff. Establishing stiff-stemmed grasses on terrace ridges creates a windbreak that slows the wind and prevents it from stealing topsoil. Slowing the wind leads to many other benefits, including keeping snow on the field where this important

moisture can significantly enhance crop yields. Retaining snow is especially critical in western Kansas where soil moisture is limited. Holding snow on crop fields also helps keep it from creating problems.

Consider the October 1997 blizzard that hit western Kansas. That storm dumped up to 2 feet of snow with 60 mph winds. Of course, snow blew off most croplands and huge drifts accumulated behind any kind of barrier. The storm caused serious losses of livestock in feedlots, much of which came after the blizzard. As the drifts melted, livestock were wading around in cold mud for months. The resulting stress, added to earlier losses, reduced weight gains, and caused further economic hardship. If the fields around those feedlots had been treated with grassed terraces or grass wind strips, chances are that much less snow would have blown into stock pens, cutting losses significantly. And snow kept on crop



Little bluestem (left) and switchgrass (right) stand up well through wind-driven rain or snow, making the grasses ideal for buffers and for wildlife habitat.

fields is snow that doesn't end up stranding travelers and drifting shut county roads.

By slowing the wind, grass strips also shelter adjacent crops. Persistent winds on the Great Plains increase evaporation from the soil and steal moisture directly from crop leaves. By reducing air movement across the crops, moisture that would have been lost can be channeled into additional growth, including stronger roots that let crops tap deeper soil moisture. In-field grass strips can also reduce the battering young plants take from high winds and wind-borne soil particles.

Although it defies conventional thinking, studies have shown that grass strips can enhance crop production by harboring increased numbers of beneficial arthropods. The best research on this has come from England where scientists have shown that aphid predators, particularly beetles and spiders, increase dramatically in permanent grass strips spaced across wheat fields. They call these grass strips Beetle Banks.



Greg and Mary Andersen are pleased with their grassed terraces, here dividing wheat from wheat stubble.

In Kansas, the best known aphid predator is the lady beetle, what every kid knows as the "ladybug." Greg and Mary Andersen, who farm in western Gove County, have an interesting story about the greenbug infestation that hit parts of northwest Kansas in the spring of 2000. They had seeded native grasses on 14 acres of terraces in the field northwest of their farmstead in 1996. When the greenbugs hit, the field with the grassed terraces was the only

one they didn't have to spray. The Andersens credit the increased numbers of ladybug nymphs and adults they saw in that field with keeping the greenbugs in check.

Typically, folks suspect that grass strips might harbor grasshoppers. Every time I've heard that, I've asked if anyone knew of a situation where grasshoppers had been a problem for crops next to CRP grass. After several years of asking, not one farmer or ag professional has said "yes." Now I can't say that no grasshopper ever hid out in CRP grass, but as far as I know, grasshoppers haven't been a problem after 15 years of the Conservation Reserve Program. Even the Andersens, with 5 miles of grassed terraces next to their farmstead, haven't seen it.

Farmed terraces, as we have in Kansas, wear down over time. One way to keep them functional is to rebuild them, either with a moldboard plow or more expensive specialized earth-moving equipment. But once a terrace is grassed, this rebuilding work and expense can be avoided. If anything, grassed terrace ridges may increase a little in height over time as trapped dust particles and organic matter slowly accumulate.

When it comes to grassed terraces, another CCRP catch phrase, "Farm the Best and Buffer the Rest," clearly applies. In many cases, terrace construction has excavated less productive subsoils that now comprise much of the terrace ridge. Consider also that rains run off terrace ridges, snow blows off them, and their elevation exposes them to desiccating winds during the growing season. Particularly where moisture is limited, these factors



A filter strip helps keep sediment and farm chemicals out of this small stream.



Lighter soils, often seen in terrace ridges, are less productive for crops but offer ideal sites for grass buffers.

mean terrace ridges may yield less, so farming them may be unprofitable. In most cases, terrace ridges would yield more benefits and profit as CCRP grass strips.

Terrace ridges aren't the only sites where farming can be unprofitable. Osage County farmer Keith Thompson realized this after he installed a yield monitor on his combine. The yield information showed he was losing money by farming some field borders and areas of poorer soils. The return on those sites simply didn't pay back the

input costs. By seeding those places to buffers, Thompson increased his farm profitability. Where the buffers qualified, CRP payments have provided an added financial bonus.

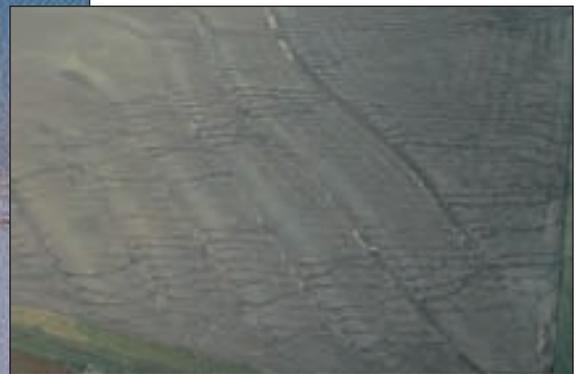
With low grain prices and high input costs, farm profit margins today are slim. Farming odd areas that produce lots of point rows

and double application of seed, fertilizer, and chemicals may not be a good idea. In many cases, buffers can be designed to even out farmed areas so over application of inputs is minimized, and profitability increased. This can be done with riparian filter strips along meandering streams. Grassed terrace width can be varied a bit to better accommodate farm equipment. Contour grass strips on unteraced land can be laid out to produce even-width cropped areas between them. Even the width of cross wind trap strips can be

varied to straighten out farming patterns. In some situations, a side benefit of a buffer is to create a permanent property boundary.

By working together with the producer, the USDA district conservationist (NRCS) and county executive director (FSA) can set up a system of buffers that will fit into the desired farming pattern. If, for example, terraces pinch together in places where grassing them would make farming tricky, those terraces need not be grassed. The farmer can choose to install as few or as many grass strips as desired. Just consider, at a minimum, that grassed terraces or wind strips can fit perfectly with existing farming patterns when placed at margins that normally separate different crops in the rotation.

I have encountered a few cases in which interested farmers were talked out of applying buffers by local chemical applicators. To be sure, it's preferable not to spray pesticides directly on buffers. But the native warm-season grasses best suited for buffers are actually fairly tolerant of herbicides, so a little accidental drift is not a big deal.



Elevated just above the rest of the field, terrace ridges tend to be dry since snow blows off, rains run off, and evaporation rates are greater. Farmed terraces sometimes wash out during heavy thunderstorms. These aging, but still functional, terraces could easily be grassed to create parallel cropping between them.

Perhaps some chemical applicators are concerned with a perceived inconvenience in spraying around buffers. This concern is easily addressed by properly designing the buffer system to facilitate chemical application.

When production benefits are factored in with the payments offered by USDA, the economics look pretty good. Farmers and landowners can justifiably lament the poor return that farming has recently provided. But those who take time to pencil out costs and returns, may discover that few if any cropping systems will consistently provide as much per-acre annual

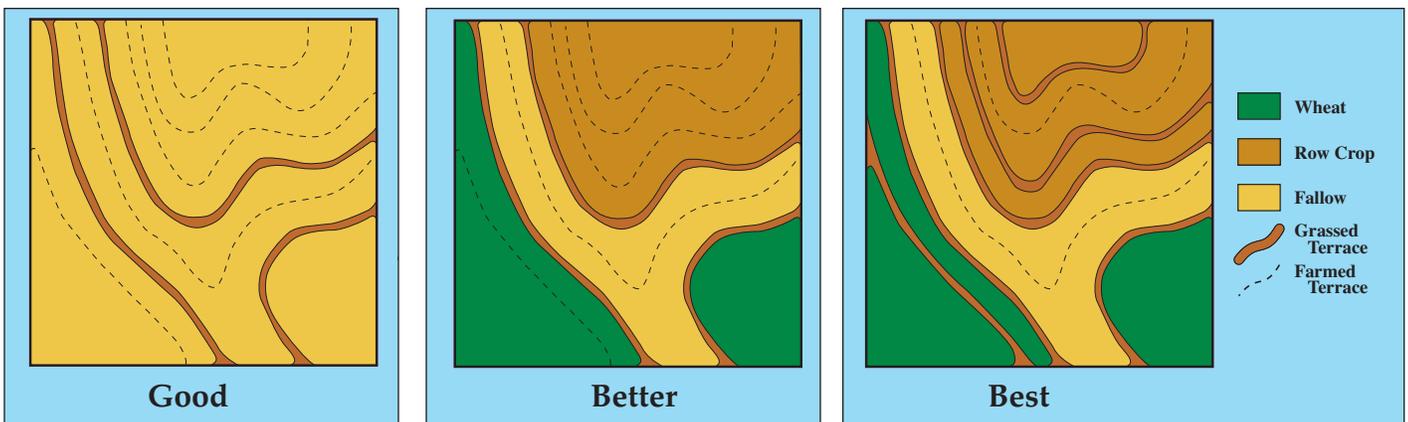
income as installing buffers.

One of the many beauties of buffers is simply that — beauty. Flying over fields with grassed buffers offers a vision of well-managed working land in harmony with nature. The graceful curves of grassed terraces or filter strips, or even the straight lines of wind strips, break up the monotony of large crop fields. The same is true at ground level. In summer, the greens of native grass buffers offer a welcome accent to golden ripe wheat and harvested stubble. If made part of the buffer's seed mix, bright sprays of Maximilian sunflower will highlight the onset of fall and attract migrating monarch

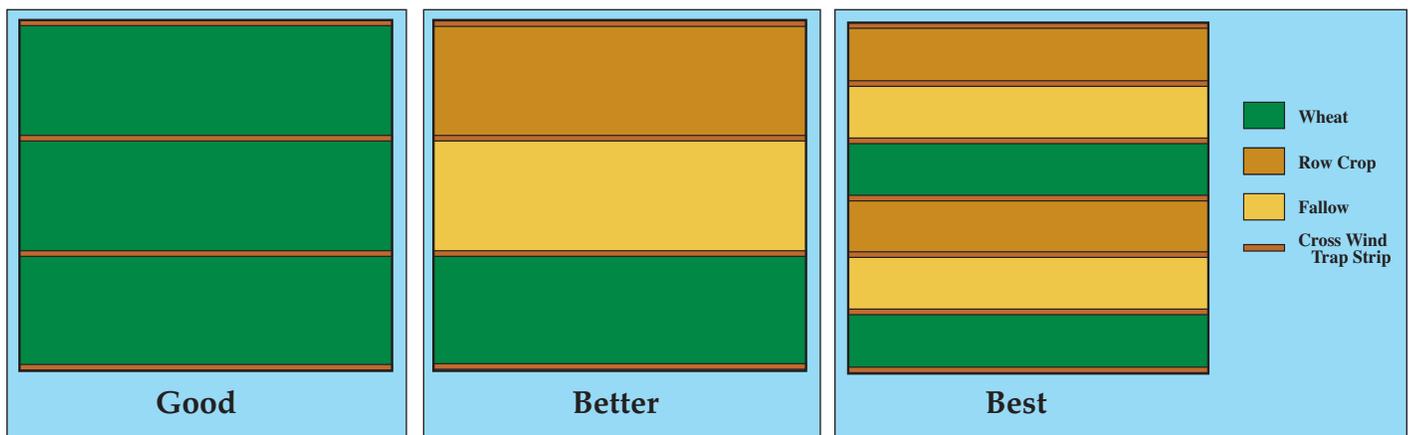
butterflies. Other wildflowers offer their own dashes of color. The subtle pinks, rusts, and yellows of dormant native grasses lend visual character to the drab grays and browns of the winter agricultural landscape.

And, of course, there's the wildlife. It's no secret that pheasants and quail, Kansas' most popular game birds, are in decline on our nation's farmlands. Kansas has fared better than most, but we are not immune. Economic pressures have driven agriculture toward intensification, with negative wildlife consequences. But no matter the cropping system, buffers can offer quality, func-

Grassed Terrace Systems



Cross Wind Trap Strip Systems



tional habitat where little might otherwise exist. Grass strips hold great potential to increase habitat edge — the places where different habitats come together. In the Andersens' field, fully 10 miles of edge were created by their grassed terraces. And the birds have responded. Pheasant numbers have increased several fold and quail are present now where none existed before. They still see weather-related ups and downs, but the ups are higher, the downs aren't so low, and recovery is quicker.

I can't recall how many times I've heard farmers express concern over watching hawks kill pheasants when they're tilling a large stubble field. Blame usually goes to the hawks — not the scarcity of habitat. When fields are large and the stubble represents the only cover around, a bird flushed this way has a poor chance of escape. Grass buffer strips can provide enough escape cover to make the difference between life and death. Even as few as two grass buffers,

spaced over a quarter-section, would generally put quality escape cover within 200 yards of a pheasant in need. That's far better than the too-common reality where the closest escape cover can be a mile or more distant.

Will grassed buffers become predator travel lanes, potentially reducing nesting success? Most such concern originates in the corn belt. There, narrow strips like the now rare fenceline, are surrounded by soybean or corn stubble, or just black dirt. That makes a skinny fencerow stand out like a black Lab's hair on a white wedding dress. In such cases, nests may have a reduced chance of success. But I think it's unlikely Kansas will suffer this problem. Buffers offer greater width, better cover quality, and probably greater frequency of occurrence on any given field, all of which should diminish predator impact. What's more, in Kansas we are fortunate to have wheat as our major crop. Green wheat usually provides vast

areas of cover at just the right time for successful nesting of many species. Grass buffers in our wheat-abundant cropping systems will become part of much larger nesting blocks, effectively eliminating the strip effect at nesting. What buffers can offer as brood habitat, escape cover, and even winter cover, in my opinion, far outweighs this minor concern, particularly given the alternative.

While the grass species best suited for buffers depends on the purpose, stiff-stemmed native grasses are ideal. Switchgrass and little bluestem not only have deep root systems that bind the soil, but their stems stand well even under the force of wind-driven snow or rain. This standability is critical to controlling erosion, enhancing production, and to habitat quality. Perennial forbs in the seed mixture add benefits like nitrogen fixation and improved habitat structure.

Other potential benefits of buffers are on the horizon. Since the native grasses used in buffers take carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the air and hold the carbon in their deep root systems, buffers can help in the effort to slow the effects of global warming. Farmers and landowners may soon be able to receive direct, private-sector payments for seeding and maintaining grasses through the process of selling "carbon credits" on the open market. Buffers may also prove critical in minimizing the effects of severe weather extremes predicted to accompany global warming. Researchers are even interested in studying the possibility that native grass buffers could act as barriers to some crop diseases. It is known is that diverse ecosystems, particularly diverse agricultural ecosystems, are more



Adding broad-leaved forbs to the seed mixture will greatly improve the buffer's habitat quality. Here alfalfa and Maximilian sunflower diversify the stand.

resistant to such problems.

To the skeptics, all this may seem like just too rosy of a picture. Sure, there are some limitations, some paperwork to deal with, and a little grass stand maintenance will be needed down the line. Buffers won't work in every situation. One glaring oversight in the current CCRP rules is that grazing buffers, incidental to pasturing cattle on wheat, is not permitted. Kansas Congressman Jerry Moran and his staff have recently inserted language in the 2002 Farm Bill intended to correct this oversight. But unlike the general grazing prohibition on regular CRP, grazing some types of buffers, incidental to fall or winter gleaning of stubble, is already permitted with permission from the Farm Service Agency county committee. A 25 percent reduction in the CCRP payment is currently required if such grazing is to occur. Where we have experience with winter grazing around grassed terraces,

for example, cattle have grazed the stubble and left the coarse, dry grass of the buffers virtually untouched. Efforts like Congressman Moran's hold promise to increase CCRP flexibility even more.

Lots of people have worked hard to develop and adjust the Continuous Signup to make it a practical, flexible program that can truly work on the land. I can think of no other case where so many agencies and organizations, often with diverse points of view, have pulled together to make a conservation program work. Senator Pat Roberts and his staff deserve tremendous credit for seeing to it that grass strips can be installed on terraces. It is true testament to the value of buffers that they are so broadly supported. Just recently, nine state and federal agencies, including Kansas Wildlife and Parks, have joined together to hire new part-time employees to work in 25 County Conservation Districts for the purpose of pro-

moting and installing buffers.

Ultimately, the success or failure of CCRP rests with the people who own or work the land. There are few, if any, farms in Kansas that couldn't benefit from some type of buffer. Buffers truly deserve some of your time and thought.

Consider that buffers can not only reduce the farmer's financial risk, but improve quality of life. They are a simple way for us to give back to the land, to future generations, and to each other. Consider too that buffers could moderate criticisms of agriculture in a social climate where most citizens believe in paying farmers for conservation, but are less supportive of subsidies. And consider that buffers could represent a partnership between producers and consumers, rural and urban, that might help us pull together, rather than apart. Something worthwhile for everyone — that's the real beauty of buffers. ♡

Buffers With the Most Potential for Kansas

Practice No.	Name	Maximum Width	Contract Length
CP5A	Field Windbreaks	Variable	10 - 15 Years
CP8A	Grassed Waterways	100 feet	10 Years
CP15A	Contour Grass Strips	30 feet	10 Years
CP15B	Contour Grass Strips on Terraces	60 feet	10 Years
CP16A	Shelter Belts	Variable	10 - 15 Years
CP21	Filter Strips	120 feet	10 - 15 Years
CP22	Riparian Forest Buffers	180 feet	10 - 15 Years
CP24	Cross Wind Trap Strips	25 feet	10 Years



Managing Urban Deer

by James Lee, *district wildlife biologist, Kansas City*
and Lloyd Fox, *big game coordinator, Emporia*

As Kansas communities sprawl, residents are dealing with deer more frequently. Managing deer populations in an urban setting requires a multipronged approach and cooperation of residents and governments.

A growing number of Kansas communities have problems with overabundant populations of white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*). The main deer problems are damage to ornamental landscaping plants and deer-vehicle collisions. These may be minimized through the use of certain management practices. However, managing urban white-tailed deer is challenging for many reasons.

City ordinances often prohibit

efficient population reduction techniques, such as shooting. Alternative management strategies are often expensive and ineffective. Some people are philosophically opposed to any deer management. Also, people differ in their tolerances of deer, and “too many deer” for one person may be “not enough deer” for a neighbor. Such differences of opinion make evaluating urban deer management programs difficult. And unless every deer in an area is extermi-

nated (which is impossible and not a desirable option for most Kansans) some conflicts will occur. With that in mind, individuals and communities do have options for minimizing deer problems.

There are two general strategies to reduce deer conflicts. One is to prevent deer problems in the first place with fencing, repellents, harassment, and landscaping with browse-resistant plants. Another strategy is to reduce the deer population

through hunting, sharpshooting, trapping, or fertility control. Realistically, a combination of methods is necessary in most suburban areas.

Damage Reduction Methods

Fencing

Erecting fences is an effective way to minimize deer damage by forcing animals to change movement patterns. However, deer are notorious for testing fences and will find small gaps or even jump them occasionally. Some cities erect large concrete walls along heavily traveled roads to reduce the amount of noise that reaches adjacent



homes. These “sound fences” can have a secondary purpose of restricting deer access to roadways. Electric fences or 8-foot high chain-link or woven wire fences are required to provide a sufficient barrier to deer movements. Fencing is most applicable to small areas such as gardens or yards, but the high cost of fencing may discourage some landowners. Electric fences require a charger that costs at least \$150 and wire and posts which cost about \$0.10 per linear foot, while woven wire or chain-link fencing may cost several dollars per linear foot. Fencing is a good option for individual

landowners, but unless everyone in a community erects deer-proof fences, fencing does little to reduce general deer problems.

Repellents

Many people frustrated by deer in their gardens or yards are interested in the potential of repellents. Commercial sprays, soap, human hair, and predator feces are often used as “quick fixes” to prevent deer damage on landscape plants. Some of these repellents work for a short time in some situations. However, chemical sprays are usually washed off by rain or sprinklers, and they may fail to

protect foliage that has grown since the spray was applied. Generally, sprays work best on plants that are not attractive to deer in the first place, such as junipers or pines. Repellents such as soap, human hair, and predator feces

occasionally work until deer get used to their presence. Once deer realize that the thing they smell won’t hurt them, they resume their feeding. Some repellents are very expensive (up to \$400 per acre, with several applications needed per year), and some are virtually free, but none have proven to be effective long-term deterrents.

Harassment

Motion-sensitive lights will frighten deer from gardens and yards. However, deer may lose their fear of lights in the same way that they lose their fear of humans in residential areas. Also, lights obviously won’t scare deer during daylight hours. Another harassment technique is to keep a dog. A watchdog kenneled near a garden or backyard can sometimes be effective in keeping deer away, though deer may also learn to ignore a confined barking dog.

Landscaping

Ornamental plants are often



Electric fences (above) may be necessary to protect gardens and orchards from urban deer. Harassment methods such as motion lights or dogs may work temporarily.



Landscape plants are often attractive food sources, since they receive water and fertilizer that parched natural plants are missing. Browse damage can be severe.

more appetizing to deer than natural vegetation. Fertilization and frequent watering encourage plant growth and nutritional content that natural vegetation often can't match. Even plants that are only second-rate deer foods in natural areas, such as rhododendrons or azaleas, become attractive to deer when they are watered and fertilized. Native or browse-resistant plants recommended by a local nursery or cooperative extension office will incur significantly less damage than "ice cream" deer foods. However, deer regularly test different plants for their food value and may browse any plant to some extent.

Reducing Deer Populations

Fencing, repellents, and landscaping practices are not sufficient to reduce community-wide deer problems. In some cases, it is necessary to reduce the number of deer. Deer populations can grow very fast. For example, in one controlled experiment six deer were released into a 1,200-acre fenced area with no predators. Seven

years later, these six deer increased to 222. The population was reduced to only 10 deer, but six years later, the population grew to 212. This means that any population reduction method must be conducted annually to maintain lower deer densities. To do this, the deer birth rate must be lower than the death rate.

Urban deer populations normally have a lower death rate than rural populations because natural predators are rare or absent. At the same time, urban deer generally have birth rates equal to or even greater than rural deer because of better (artificial) food sources. In general, 40 percent to 50 percent of the deer population must be removed to cause deer density to decline. If fewer deer are removed, the population will remain stable or continue to increase. The success of deer population reduction methods is tied to the density of deer remaining after control, rather than the total number of deer removed. The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks encourages communities to set a goal for their deer population that will result in people having a favorable opinion of deer.

Hunting

Legal hunting has been used as a satisfactory method of deer population reduction in many



Soundproof fences can also discourage deer movement across urban highways. Fencing for individual homes is expensive and doesn't solve general deer problems.



Reducing deer numbers through regulated hunting is efficient and inexpensive. Paid sharpshooters are also efficient but can be expensive -- \$100-\$800 per deer.



hunters use short-range \$100-\$800 for each deer. Sharpshooting presents several problems that must be addressed before it is implemented. First, what will be done with the deer after they are shot? The meat is a good choice, but providing for the meat requires additional expenditure. Who will actually do the sharpshooting? The job of sharpshooting perhaps several hundred deer per year will probably require the addition of some city employees, or an outside contractor.

cities across the United States. In most urban areas, deer hunts must be controlled to ensure public safety and acceptance. Many Kansas municipalities have ordinances prohibiting the discharge of firearms or archery equipment, so hunting usually requires amending these ordinances. When used in conjunction with other damage reduction methods, hunting can be a very efficient deer management tool.

Hunting is generally the cheapest method of lowering deer densities. Some costs are incurred from the administration of the hunt, but the actual deer removal is free. Hunters provide their own equipment and do the "work" of removing deer without cost to a municipality. When communities adopt sound rules governing deer hunts, safety risk to the general public is minimal. Typical rules require hunting from elevated stands so that all shots are taken at a downward angle, and that

Sharpshooting

Baiting and shooting deer by paid sharpshooters has similar population effects as hunting. The major problem is its high cost. It is most applicable to areas where regular hunting is not an option. To use sharpshooting as an alternative to hunting is generally a waste of money — the same thing is accomplished, but at a cost of

Trapping

Trapping deer and releasing them "somewhere else" seems like an easy solution to deer overabundance, and this method has been used in some cases. However, there simply isn't anywhere to release deer where they won't cause the same problems. Most of Kansas has deer populations at levels equal to or exceeding human tolerance. Moving the problem around just isn't an option. A high percentage of deer usually die from stress and the hazards of their new environment shortly after being released, and well-intended deer trapping projects

Cost and effectiveness of Deer Damage Reduction Techniques

Technique	Cost	Effectiveness
Hunting	Low	High
Sharpshooting	High	High
Fencing	High	High
Repellents	Moderate	Variable
Harassment	Variable	Variable
Fertility Control	High	Low
Habitat Modification	High	Variable

often end up as just being a very expensive way to kill deer. If trapping were to be used as a deer management tool in Kansas, it would need to be part of a trap-and-euthanize program. Besides the often-overlooked difficulty of actually convincing a deer to enter a trap, the main problems with trapping involve what to do with the deer, who will do the trapping, and the high cost (about \$400/deer).

Fertility Control

As mentioned earlier, deer density declines only when the death rate exceeds the birth rate. Population reduction methods mentioned so far — hunting, sharpshooting, and trapping — have focused on increasing the death rate. But substantially reducing the birth rate could have similar results. One method of reducing birth rate is through fertility control. This method is still in the experimental stage, so it is not an option at this time. To date, several fertility control projects have been attempted, but



Deer numbers can quickly grow to problem levels where effective controls do not exist.

none have actually accomplished their intended goals. Fertility control faces several problems. A large portion (70 percent 80 percent) of the population must be treated each year. Aside from the difficulty of doing this, exactly how to administer the drug efficiently is a problem. Fertility control is expensive. Deer are fairly long-lived animals, so it may take many years for the effects of fertility control to be noticed. Many communities cannot afford to wait eight or 10 years for deer densities to decline. In contrast, a typical hunting or sharpshooting program may take only 1-5 years to influence deer populations. Another problem is that in areas adjacent to untreated deer populations (essentially everywhere except islands), untreated deer will continue to migrate into treatment areas and prevent deer density from declining.

Putting It All Together

Using only one of the methods outlined above will probably not solve deer problems. A

long-term approach to managing deer in an urban area requires homeowners and city governments to work together. Homeowners need to realize that deer are likely to have some impact on their surroundings no matter what is done, but they can discourage deer problems by fencing and planting browse-resistant plants. Experimentation with repellents and harassment techniques is encouraged, but homeowners shouldn't expect them to

be the best solution. City governments should allow safe, regulated hunts to maintain or reduce deer populations. In pockets of high deer densities where hunting will not achieve the desired results, sharpshooting or trapping should be done with KDWP approval.

No matter which combination of techniques is used, the amount of effort must be appropriate for the situation. For example, simply allowing hunting to take place within city limits will not solve the problem unless sufficient deer are removed. Many cities across the country have used a broad approach to managing urban deer with good results. ♡



Deer-vehicle accidents are an important problem in urban settings.

Wildlife Conservation Officer

text and photo by Matt Stucker
conservation officer, Larned



Officer's career takes him from one end of the state to the other.

Some conservation officers (CO) stay in one duty station their whole career, while others move around. I guess you could say Larry Dawson, Parsons, would be the latter. Dawson started his career in October of 1977 in the northwest region of the state. His duty station was Oberlin, and he was responsible for covering Rawlins, Decatur and the west half of Norton counties. Included in this area was Sebelius Reservoir.

In 1984, Dawson became an area supervisor in the Northeast Region. He worked this area for a couple of years but missed the open northwest and in August of 1986 transferred back to that region. This time he covered Cheyenne, Sherman, and Wallace counties and assisting with the west half of Logan County.

In 1995, Dawson transferred to Labette County, in the southeastern part of the state, to be closer to family. His area has about 25,000 people and covers approximately 650 square miles, including about 45 miles of river and Big Hill Reservoir.

With this kind of water and population, Dawson keeps busy during the summer boating and fishing seasons. But this area also has some excellent hunting opportunities, and it is during the hunting seasons that

Dawson has kept busiest. If you live in or have ever traveled to the southeastern part of Kansas, you know that the area has an abundance of hardwood-timber hillsides. With streams, ponds and lakes in the valleys, the area holds a variety of game, from white-tailed deer and turkey to quail. Migrating waterfowl can be observed throughout most of the fall. Small game such as rabbits and squirrel are also abundant.

One of the many cases that Dawson has been involved in during his career was where several nonresidents decided to go squirrel hunting in both Kansas and Oklahoma. Dawson received information from the undersheriff that there were some people in the company of a local citizen that were taking overlimits of squirrels. When Dawson visited with the local citizen, he said that the hunters were done hunting and that they didn't have much luck. He said that some were already on their way back to Louisiana but two were still camped out in a tent in a local park. Dawson tried to find these two, but ended up having to wait for them to return to their tent in the park. When they did, Dawson found they had 88 squirrels and two raccoons in a cooler. Dawson then contacted the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and

Fisheries where a local game warden located the two other individuals. One man had 56 squirrels in his possession, while the other had 51. One of these individuals was also a convicted felon and therefore couldn't possess a firearm. All of the people involved were charged with being over limit on squirrels, illegally taking a furbearing animal, and the convicted felon was charged with criminal possession of a firearm. This case shows that with a little perseverance and help from other states and agencies, the good guys win.

Because Dawson has moved around in his career, he has worked with many conservation officers throughout the state. Most will tell you about his dedication to the job and to the resource he has been charged with protecting. Others talk about his work ethic, especially when it comes to providing education and service to the younger hunters of his district. One of the comments I received about Dawson was that he has an ability to get his views across in a strong but friendly manner. The fellow officer told me that Dawson was a friend with just about everyone that he met. They then thought about that and added, "Unless, of course, you happened to be a wildlife violator." 

Edited by Mark Shoup

CALL FOR LETTERS

Dear Readers:

In the past, the "Letters" section of *Kansas Wildlife and Parks* magazine has been a perennial favorite. However, the past year or so, letters to the editor seemed to have become less frequent. This is unfortunate because they are welcome feedback to our editorial staff and contain interesting stories that are, I believe, much anticipated by our subscribers.

There may be many reasons for the drop-off in letters to the editor. Perhaps email is to blame. Many people are using this new communications medium to express their thoughts in print. It's quicker than snail mail and often more convenient. In the switch, however, perhaps some readers have failed to realize that we at *Kansas Wildlife and Parks* have entered the electronic age, too!

If you have thoughts on our magazine or just want to tell us a story, please don't hesitate to drop me an email at markjs@wp.state.ks.us, or contact our editor, Mike Miller, at mikegm@wp.state.ks.us. Or you can contact us the old-fashioned way by mailing to KDWP, Magazine Staff, 512 SE 25th Ave., Pratt, KS 67124.

We'd love to hear from you.

-Shoup

WHY OVER COUNTER BUCKS?

Editor:

I don't understand the reasoning for selling either sex whitetail deer tags over the counter. Is this another attempt to control the deer population? I fear this will only invite more poaching of bucks.

Think about it; I don't have a tag but see a large buck. I can shoot the deer, hang it in the barn (or garage), and go to town and buy a tag. I can now legally have the meat processed and have the head mounted by a taxidermist. This would not have been possible in previous years as you had to apply for the tag earlier in the year to receive it by opening day of

season.

Why don't you stop issuing tags that allow the harvest of a buck for one or two years. The true sportsman will understand and the population will come down without hurting the buck population. This would also allow a few more bucks to become trophy bucks. But of course, you would lose the out of state fee revenue, wouldn't you? So what.

It was the Kansas residents who paid to build this fine deer herd over the years. If you must sell either sex tags over the counter, please limit them by area as you have done so well at for the previous years. Thanks for giving me a way of speaking my mind without driving for miles to a meeting.

Bill Eck
Cherryvale

Dear Mr. Eck,

I appreciate your concern for the Kansas deer herd. I will try to respond to a couple of these concerns.

First, for the past several years, any resident who wanted a whitetail either sex permit could get one. These permits have been leftover in every unit. Last year, these permits reverted to whitetail antlerless only permits. So you are probably right: if someone wanted to shoot a deer illegally, take the chance of being caught dragging it home, and then actually get a permit for it, they could. The date and time, however, would not match their actions, so they would have to make sure they weren't seen. The vast majority of poachers, however, never bother trying to make it look good.

Whitetail either sex permits are available to residents only from Wildlife and Parks offices or by downloading the application from our website (www.kdwp.state.ks.us) and mailing it. They are not valid until the calendar day following purchase.

Second, this agency is staffed by people who have dedicated their lives to the wildlife of Kansas. They could make a lot more money doing something else, but this is their passion. Selling more deer permits does not raise their pay or

bring them more "profits." Any income received by this agency goes right back into the management of the natural resources of the state. We have not had any new, much-needed positions created in several years. Quite the opposite, we have lost staff who have not been replaced because of budget restrictions. Again, any revenue we raise goes into programs such as the Walk-In Hunter Area program and the Pass It On program, activities that offer more opportunity for the sportsman and help protect hunting for future generations.

Third, whitetail either sex permit are limited to specific units, as in past years. The age structure of buck harvest has remained within our goals. However, if deer numbers are reduced below desired levels, our system allows us to return to the restrictive permit process by management unit.

-Shoup

SOUTH OF THE BORDER

Editor:

I recently [last November] began receiving *Kansas Wildlife and Parks* magazine. I enjoyed the first one until it was drenched by a spilled soda on my coffee table. I've enclosed \$5 and would appreciate another copy. It was the November/December 2000 issue.

I want everyone in Kansas to know how much I enjoy hunting in your state. Your Department of Wildlife and Parks really has its act together. I'd give anything if Oklahoma was in sync with you guys.

I live in town, so I just have a limited few places to hunt. A friend informed me of your Walk In Hunter Area program, so Kansas is now my home away from home.

I wish you a very Happy New Year and hope you don't mind me hopping across the border from time to time (with appropriate licenses!).

Richard Smiddy
Pryor, Oklahoma

YOUTH HUNT THUMBS UP

Editor:

Last year, I participated in two youth hunts on Webster State Park. In the first one, sponsored by the local Pheasants Forever chapter, I shot my first quail. I was one of many young hunters who discovered the hidden wildlife on the park. We walked hidden draws, forged creeks, and tackled thickets just to get a fleeting shot at a covey of quail or an escaping rooster. We also exercised the safety that had been drilled into us at hunter education.

One time, a covey broke right in front of us, giving us all an opportunity for a good shot. We stood around for an instant, congratulating our comrades, when someone shifted their weight, and two quail busted out from underneath him. Our guides, who had hung behind us, hit the ground faster than I thought two old guys could. They thought we were going to swing our guns to shoot at them.

They couldn't have been more wrong. We all turned to watch the birds go, but never did we even think to raise our guns. We had a good laugh at that one, especially because one was the park ranger.

We all had a great time hunting, as well as bragging about our shots. Even though not all of us got a bird, we all had many shots. I may have gone through two boxes of shells, but I got my quail.

On the second hunt, a friend and I got to go out goose hunting. We started by carrying the decoys and guns to our blind, which was set up on the edge of a wheat field. Almost immediately, the geese started flying near us. With the help of our guide, they started passing directly over us.

The first goose was a little Hutchins that landed among the decoys. We did everything short of throwing our shotguns at him to get him up. Finally, when I approached him, he took off. He finally cleared them, and we both shot. Finally, on my friend's third shot, he fell to a full load of 2s.

A couple of seconds later, some more geese roared over us like jet planes. Our guide was just about to tell us not to shoot because they were going too fast when I shot. I caught the lead goose in the neck and brought him down. As I ran out to

claim my prize, I saw something green on its neck. I snatched him up and ran back to the blind. My first goose was double-banded. It had a leg band from Cedar Bluff and an unidentified neck band.

The rest of the hunt went just as well. As both my friend and I brought down our second geese from the same group, our guide couldn't believe it. With one more shot like that from my friend and another supersonic shot by me, we both limited out.

Both experiences provided great opportunities to learn and have fun, as well as something to shoot for next year - literally.

*Zach Hein
Stockton*

HUNTER ED HUNT

Editor:

Thought I'd drop you a line about a hunter education course that I taught at the Iola Middle School in their Safebase program.

The class started with 14 students. By the time it was over, I was down to four. Keep in mind that the class was taught one hour at a time for 16 weeks. Two boys and two girls were the final four. They were Chris Thorn, Tim Valentine, Tracy Jones, and Asley Carr.

At completion of the class, the final four were rewarded with a unique oppor-

tunity provided by Jim Guffey, operator of Walnut Ridge Controlled Shooting Area outside of Walnut. Jim set the kids up with a hunt, complete with one supervisor per kid. He set out eight pheasants, 18 quail, and eight chukars in two different fields and split into two hunting parties for a half day hunt. Jim also supplied a dog for the kids to hunt over.

The kids and supervisors took five chukars, four pheasants, and two quail. This made a trip for all to remember. Part of the deal for the supervisors being able to hunt was that the kids got the first shots on all birds.

On behalf of myself and the rest of the hunting party, I would like to thank Jim for supplying the dog and all birds at no cost to the kids. He provided memories that will last a lifetime to four kids and their supervisors. This was a great boost for the Pass It On program.

*Tim Cox
Iola*

FEW WORDS NECESSARY

Editor:

Would like you to consider this picture for your magazine.

*Max K. Richardson
Chanute*



Dead Battery Bust

I recently went to Lake Olathe to check fishing licenses, checked one area and planned to drive to another, but my truck battery was dead. I asked a guy for a jump-start. He obliged, and I started to drive away, but now my plan was to find a new battery because the old one wouldn't hold a charge.

Then I saw a man swimming in the middle of the lake. It was apparent that he had departed from the other side, and he appeared to be tired or a poor swimmer or both. As he swam in my direction I began to wonder if he would make it to shore. I didn't want to turn my truck off, so I left it running and began to prepare for a possible

rescue.

I got a rescue disc from my truck (basically a floating Frisbee with a rope attached), removed my gunbelt, and emptied my pockets.

As he swam nearer, a vehicle approached. When the man made it and got out on the bank, I put my gunbelt back on. The man acted like he was under the influence of alcohol, so I walked to the car to determine if it was someone who had driven around to pick him up.

It was. A young female was at the wheel with a partially full wine cooler. She was far too young to legally drink. I couldn't smell alcohol on her breath, and she swore the bottle was the swimmer's. I asked her age, and she said 16.

She hesitantly gave me a name and could not decide on her date of birth.

The swimmer and the girl told me that they left a friend on the other shore, so when I got things secure, I picked him up. The girl finally gave me her real name and date of birth. She turned out to be 13 years old, too young to drink or drive. She told me she had been in a group home recently because she had gotten in trouble. I confirmed that and also discovered that there was an outstanding felony warrant for her arrest issued in Wyandotte County for criminal destruction of property. I also learned that she was listed as a missing person (runaway).

Meanwhile, my truck was still running, so I requested

the assistance of the Olathe Police Department. They came and arrested the girl and the 31-year-old swimmer. Swimming there is a violation of city ordinance, and the man had been drinking. There was marijuana debris in the car, and the girl admitted to the police that she had smoked some earlier in the day.

The man said that he used to swim in the ocean. I only hope his future outings don't involve alcohol or drugs. Combining them with swimming is a good way to become a drowning statistic. When the situation was under control, I didn't waste any time getting a new battery.

- Bruce Bertwell,
conservation officer, Olathe

FISH FARMER SENTENCED

The owner of an Amana, Iowa, fish farm was sentenced Friday, July 20, by a federal court in Des Moines, Iowa, to six months home confinement and three years probation and fined \$13,654 for violating federal wildlife laws. As part of a plea agreement, Myron J. Kloubec, owner of Kloubec Fish Farms in rural Amana, pleaded guilty to four counts of illegally possessing and transporting non-native fish without a permit and one count of killing federally protected migratory birds.

In May 1998, Kloubec directed his employees to bring breeder bighead carp from Randolph County Fish Farm in Missouri to his Iowa fish farm with the intention of raising the species in one of 63 ponds on the complex. These carp subsequently spawned, creating about 1 million bighead fry that were later returned to ponds at the Missouri farm. Kloubec knew it was illegal to possess, import, or export bighead carp without a permit but did not apply to the state for one.

Kloubec had applied for a permit to bring black carp into Iowa in 1992 and 1993. In both cases, permission was denied by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, citing potential dangers to native fish species should the carp be introduced into state waters. Black carp were similarly banned in Missouri and Kansas. Despite the prohibitions, Kloubec bought 1,000 live black carp from a fish farm in Arkansas in May 1998 and transported them to the Randolph County Fish Farm in Missouri. He took 200 of the black carp to Iowa

where he stocked them into ponds at his Amana farm.

In July 1998, Kloubec illegally imported 10,150 live gold sea bass fry to Iowa from Taiwan. Kloubec had a license to import wildlife from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; however, the license did not authorize Kloubec to import fish prohibited by state law.

Iowa law limits commercial propagation of fish to mostly native fish and requires special permits for propagation of non-native, potentially injurious fish species. The possession, import, export, and interstate transportation of the black carp, bighead carp, and gold sea bass violated sections of the Lacey Act, a federal wildlife protection law that prohibits trade in species protected or banned by state laws.

Kloubec also pleaded guilty to one violation of killing federally protected migratory birds. In June and July 1998, Kloubec was observed shooting birds flying over his ponds, killing at least two terns and one kingfisher. The birds are protected by the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

The investigation was conducted jointly by special agents of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. Kloubec's fine will be paid into the Lacey Act reward fund, an account that pays rewards to persons who provide information to law enforcement agencies about violations of federal wildlife laws. Persons having information about violations of federal wildlife laws are urged to contact special agents of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The special agent in Kansas can be reached at (316) 788-4474.

-U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Small Dam Renovation EIS

In April, the Oklahoma Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) announced the agency's intent to develop a statewide Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to cover small watershed dam renovation projects, originally built under NRCS programs. Wildlife advocates, as well as soil and water conservation interests, are watching the outcome of the EIS process carefully because it is likely to set the course for similar efforts across the country.

Renovation of the watershed control projects was

authorized by the Small Watershed Rehabilitation Amendments of 2000. The program has not yet been funded by Congress, but the Oklahoma pilot project is expected to be financed in this year's federal appropriations.

There are nearly 2,100 watershed dams in Oklahoma. Within the next 10 years, 1,300 dams will pass their 50-year planned service life; 250 are presently at or near that point.

Many of the small watershed structures built before the 1970 National

Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) was passed resulted in wetlands losses, stream channelization, and losses of riparian and upland habitat. Advocates note that the dams have provided some wetland habitat (especially as they age) and some deep-water aquatic habitats. Some structures built more recently have included design features to make them more wildlife-friendly and even to provide specific habitats for sensitive species. In the minds of many wildlife professionals, however, the program's negative effects, for both aquatic and terrestrial species, have been more pronounced.

Wildlife advocates recognize that issues of human health and safety must be primary concerns in some watershed structure rehabilitation situations. They assert, however, that such projects must be done in a manner that minimizes detriments to terrestrial and aquatic wildlife.

Of primary concern are wetlands and riparian areas. Where these habitats occur, conservationists say, renovation projects should be designed or modified to avoid or at least minimize negative impacts.

Some wildlife conservationists are concerned that although administratively convenient, a statewide EIS could facilitate quick implementation of some projects that merit more rigorous scrutiny. Individual EIS examination of projects that significantly impact wetlands will allow critical planning and design features that address the special conditions of each structure and its unique habitat assets. A carte blanche EIS could undermine the

intent of NEPA and allow the loss of some structures' significant biological values.

Conservationists are most adamant that dams not be renovated in a manner that avoids complete analysis of each candidate site to ascertain the presence or absence, size, type, and quality of wetland that may be impacted. Any wetlands or riparian habitats destroyed by dam renovation projects should be replaced in quantity and quality through mitigation.

There is also concern that a blanket EIS could allow losses of aquatic and riparian habitats through stream channelization. This ecologically destructive practice was devised to protect land and people but often causes downstream flooding and increased erosion.

Finally, for the structures to serve their original public safety and property protection purposes and retain their other public and ecological values, WMI has recommended that NRCS include the following standard dam renovation features: (1) shallow-water operation, with control structures typically designed for wetland management; (2) native grass buffer strips on the entire perimeter of the impoundment and adjacent stream channel; and (3) fencing to exclude livestock from entering the water and moist shoreline (except for limited stock watering sites) and the dam or control structure area.

For more information, contact Rob Manes, WMI Midwest Regional Representative, at (620) 316-5650.

-Rob Manes, Wildlife Management Institute

SPORTSMEN SPEND MORE

Although the number of anglers and hunters who bought licenses has remained fairly steady since 1998, their expenditures have continued to rise, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced today.

Anglers bought 29.6 million fishing licenses in 2000 compared with 29.7 million in 1999. These anglers paid \$490.8 million for their licenses, tags, permits, and stamps, compared with \$481.2 million in 1999. Additionally, the number of hunters remained fairly steady, with 15 million buying licenses in 2000, closely mirroring the 1999 statistics of 15.1 million purchasers in 1999. However, expenditures were in excess of \$613.9 million for hunting licenses in 2000, up from \$580.2 million the year before.

Revenues raised through license sales support state fish and wildlife agencies, their conservation projects, and their hunting and fishing safety and education programs.

License sales figures are compiled annually by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service from information submitted by each state fish and wildlife agency. The figures are part of a formula to determine the amount of funding each state receives through the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration and the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration programs, both administered by the Service. Under these programs, hunters and anglers pay an excise tax on hunting and fishing equipment such as firearms, ammunition, and tackle. The money is, in turn, distributed to the states for fish and wildlife restoration programs.

-U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



Frank Cross: Kansas, Curiosity, and Catfishes

Frank Bernard Cross died in Lawrence on Thursday, July 19. He was 75. Frank made Kansas his home just after graduating with his doctorate in 1951 from Oklahoma Agricultural and Mining College (now Oklahoma State University).

He was hired to complete three separate missions - to revitalize the Kansas Biological Survey, to explore the commercial production of midwestern fishes, and to serve as a professor-curator at the Natural History Museum of the University of Kansas. Never one to appear daunted by such a tall order, Frank took it upon himself to learn more about the people and history of Kansas and to serve in an advisory capacity whenever anyone asked for his opinion. Many people came to rely on his opinions for their depth, consideration, and human touch.

During his career, Frank completed the seemingly impossible missions set before him by the administration. In 1966, with his graduate student Bill Simco, Frank completed a landmark publication on the production of channel catfishes in Kansas. This still serves as the basis for many commercial growers' operations today.

To complete this task, Frank had to design the ponds, find a site, oversee construction of the ponds, develop research protocols, investigate diets, and mentor graduate students in the process. During this time, Frank was also busy surveying the aquatic fauna of the state. He felt that the first step in revitalizing the Kansas Biological Survey was to get out and look at the state, talk to her citizens, and get to know her fishes. This required extensive collecting trips and travel across Kansas.

On these trips, Frank always took the time to talk to landowners and anyone who might stop by. He was particularly interested in the fauna, rivers, and streams of the Flint Hills. He noted the spoils of coal strip mines and the effects of their drainage on the local streams. He noted the drying of streams in western Kansas and the loss of groundwater. He studied the operations of the in-stream miners of the Neosho Basin, and he looked at the effects of channelization and dredging on the Kansas River.

Frank was always asking questions: "How do these fishes live their lives?" "What are their patterns of distribution?" "How do they vary geographically?" "How do these systems work?" "How are the fishes responding?" "How are we affecting the aquatic systems we depend upon?" "What are we doing?"

His surveys, collections, and questions also tied into his position as professor-curator at the Natural History Museum. As the collection grew, students were enticed to learn about the people and fishes of Kansas, and studies were undertaken to answer some of the questions most critical for the best management of aquatic resources.

Somehow, Frank found time to also serve on legislative committees, speak at hundreds of public meetings, and be home for his family. Incredibly, he also found time to visit countless ponds across the state, providing free expertise in conservation practices, pond management, and ecosystem balance.

How successful was he? Frank published more than 65 scholarly works, including his 1967 *Handbook of Fishes of Kansas*, a book that is still considered the best field guide of its day. It should also be noted that 47 of these were coauthored, many with his students. Frank ensured that the Fish Division at the Natural History Museum prospered, working with his students to increase the collections from a few thousand specimens to more than 325,000 specimens. These specimens are part of the heritage of Kansas; they stand as an important legacy in a state where species are beginning to disappear and some streams no longer flow in the west.

Frank was outwardly a quiet soul. He spoke softly and often chose his words so carefully that his sentences were interrupted by pauses. Behind this reserve was the passion with which he carried out his research, his unswerving advocacy of the natural environment (tempered by a deep-seated care for the public), and his devotion to his family and community.

So, what did Frank leave as a legacy? When anyone in Kansas speaks of fishes, studies the aquatic environment, or wonders how many of the state's fishes live, Frank Cross's name and the results of his research are sure to enter the conversation.

He left Kansans richer, knowing the natural history of its aquatic inhabitants and understanding how to balance the needs of the natural environment with the needs of its citizens. Kansas is poorer for having lost a personal advocate for the environment and its people. It remains a challenge for the state of Kansas to find someone to try to fill the void left by his passing.

-Kate A. Moots (Shaw), Saipan, MP

EDITOR'S NOTE: In our last issue, a tribute to Frank Cross by Joseph Collins appeared on Page 36. In editing, the name "Frank" was changed to "Mr. Cross." Mr. Collins informed me that this is in error and should have been "Dr. Cross." My apologies to Mr. Collins.

Considering the impact Dr. Cross had on fisheries biologists in Kansas, many within the Department of Wildlife and Parks, we thought it fitting also to include the following tribute, written by another colleague, Kate Moots. - Shoup

MELANIE'S FIRST DEER

I first wanted to go deer hunting when the boys in my class said, "Girls don't hunt."

In the summer of 2000, I took my hunter education course. When it was time for the test, I was so nervous, but I passed. To get ready, I had to practice. My dad took my sister and I out to one of our pastures to practice target shooting.

Now I was ready and looking forward to deer season. I used a .243 caliber and was glad because you barely feel it kick.

The first day I went hunting, I saw lots of does and small bucks, but I never took a shot. The next day, I saw a great big buck. I even had a perfect shot, but my permit only allowed me to shoot on my own land. Then I saw an 8-point buck in one of our pastures. I took my first shot, but I missed. Confused, the deer turned around and faced a different direction. I missed a second shot.

We checked to make sure there was no blood trail, and there wasn't. Even though I

missed my first shots at a deer, I still had lots of fun.

The next day after choir practice, we went to one of our pastures and saw two bucks and 14 does. I looked at them through my scope, but they were too far away, so we went around some trees to sneak up on them. I saw that I had a clear shot and aimed at one of the bucks. When I shot, they all ran into the trees. We then saw the deer coming out of the trees one by one. I looked for a clearing and waited for a buck to come out.

I saw the first buck go by, and as soon as I saw the second buck running, I shot and killed it. I started screaming, "I got it!" That was the happiest moment of my life.

I just couldn't stop smiling all the way home. I had just shot a 5-point buck. I was so happy that I even called Larry Stones, (conservation officer, Kirwin) and thanked him for teaching my hunter education course. I could hardly wait to go to school and tell the boys I had shot a deer.

-Melanie Berg, age 12, Logan

KIDS' SHOOTING DAYS

August 25 was the date of the 2nd Kids' Shooting Day at Powder Creek Shooting Park in Lenexa. The shooting days are a cooperative effort among the Department of Wildlife and Parks, Powder Creek Shooting Park, and the Kansas City Chapter of Safari Club International to encourage kids to become interested in hunting and shooting sports. These events are free of charge to boys and girls under 16 years old.

Ninety-three kids aged 7 to 15 showed up for the event in August. The day started at 10 a.m. when National Sporting Clays Association instructors from Powder Creek taught the kids about proper gun handling, firearms safety, and how a shotgun works.

After a quick lunch provided by the Kansas City Chapter of Safari Club International, the activities shifted to the range. The kids were assigned instructors, given shooting glasses and earplugs, and directed to one of several shooting stations. Wildlife and Parks provided ammunition and clay targets from funds allocated to the Hunter Recruitment and Retention Program.

Attendees spent the rest of the afternoon shooting at a variety of targets at Powder Creek's 5-stand, skeet, trap, and sporting clays ranges. Many of the kids had never shot a shotgun before, let alone hit a flying clay target. More free kids' shooting days are planned for the future. Contact KDWP at (913) 894-9113 or Powder Creek Shooting School at (913) 390-0546 for more information.

-James Lee, district wildlife biologist, Kansas City

KANSAS TROPHY DEER

The following is a list of the top three deer taken in Kansas in each category. This is not an official listing, and anyone who believes they have taken a bigger one is welcome to enter it in the department's trophy deer awards program.

Archery-Typical Whitetail

Score	Name & Town	Year	County of Kill
193 2/8	Stephen Weilert, Humboldt	1994	Woodson
188 5/8	Jerry DeFoor, Olsburg	1998	Pottawatomie
187 7/8	Gary Freeman, Chanute	1995	Neosho

Archery-Non-Typical Whitetail

267 7/8	Dale Larson, Olsburg	1998	Pottawatomie
257 0/8	Kenneth B. Fowler, Buhler	1988	Reno
249 6/8	Clifford G. Pickell, Wichita	1968	Greenwood

Archery -Typical Mule

202 6/8	Carl Ghan, Jr., Scott City	1992	Gove
187 7/8	John Hardman, Lenora	1996	Graham
186 4/8	Thad Rash, Syracuse	1996	Hamilton

Archery -Non-Typical Mulea

269 0/8	Dean Hamilton, Healy	1989	Lane
245 7/8	David Bainter, Clayton	1993	Decatur
238 0/8	Gary Keller, Oakley	1995	Thomas

Firearms -Typical Whitetail

Score	Name & Address	Year	County of Kill
198 2/8	Dennis P. Finger, Netawaka	1974	Nemaha
194 7/8	William Mikijanis, McLouth	1985	Leavenworth
191 4/8	Michael A. Young, Cedarvale	1973	Chautauqua

Firearms -Non-Typical Whitetail

280 4/8	Joseph Waters, Topeka	1987	Shawnee
279 1/8	Chris Theis, Shawnee	1992	Leavenworth
258 6/8	John O. Band, Courtland	1965	Republic

Firearms -Typical Mule

202 2/8	Bryan Morehead, Greensburg	1999	Kiowa
190 4/8	Robert Yost, Russell	1984	Russell
190 0/8	Kendall Helton, St. Francis	2000	Cheyenne

Firearms -Non-Typical Mule

260 6/8	Lee Odle, Stockton	1966	Rooks
258 6/8	Lance Randolph, Jennings	1996	Decatur
*240 6/8	Bill Bussen, Norton	1996	Norton

*Muzzleloader

Labor Day weekend 2001, my father is on his third leg. Not his last leg, mind you, but having had three knee replacements before age 80 (he's now 81), he is, quite literally, on his third leg. I don't think he wants to go for four, but he does want to go hunting. Nothing rigorous - a little dove hunt will do, like last year.

Rose, the boys, and I are visiting for the long weekend, and Dad has arranged a hunt north of Larned over a shortgrass pasture pond where we had many a fine evening shoot when I was growing up. This will be a family affair: come late afternoon, Dad, my Uncle Stan (Dad's brother, formally known as "Unc"), Logan, Will, and I are itching to go.

(Strangely, Rose and Mom demure. I haven't the foggiest notion what they will do without us around, but that's their problem.)

I get Dad's stool from The Bolt Hole -- his custom-made shed that serves the multiple purposes of reloading room, workplace, and safe house. (The name has WW II allusions I have never quite understood, but I think it must have been the first place the men at Molesworth Air Base in England went when they finished a mission. Similarly, I believe there are occasions for Dad to bolt into this hole.)

I put the stool, guns, ammo, and buckets in the back of Unc's Explorer, and the boys pile in. Dad shuffles to the vehicle with his walker, which I also put in back, and we're off, three generations of Shoup men on a hunt.

We drive into the pasture and help Dad set up his stool next to a gnarly old cedar tree north of the pond, with Will close behind. (At 10, he will hunt later with me, but today Will is our hopeful retriever.) Unc sets up on the south side of the pond, and I drive the vehicle out of the pasture while Logan waits.

Once back, I set Logan on the west side of the pond, just below a shallow dike. I've decided not to hunt, so I can spot for Logan, coach, and mainly just enjoy him.

Few birds are flying, and dark

BUILDING BRIDGES



by Mark Shoup

thunderheads loom in the north and west. As we were driving north, they appeared to be as far away as Hays, but by the time we set up, it becomes clear that the sun will soon be blotted out - a good thing for those west-facing shots, I think.

But it's slow going, and Logan lapses into conversation about a variety of topics, a rare thing in recent months. Suddenly, this 13-year-old creature is the boy I have known since I helped bring him into the world.

He takes a quick passing shot at a single dove and misses, then is back to asking questions about guns, game, and weather and providing me with a wealth of unsolicited, rapid-fire information.

"You know what's cool, Dad?" he asks, as if the passing dove has brought some revelation to mind.

"What, Bud?"

"A dove is light on the bottom and dark on top. That makes good camouflage. He's disguised if you're looking up into the light sky or if you're looking down into the dark ground. It's just like a bass in water. Predators looking up or down have trouble spotting them because fish are colored that way, too. I think military airplanes imitated this because that's the way they are painted. Hey, Dad."

"Yeah, Bud?"

"What's the name of that big bridge in New York?"

"You mean the Brooklyn Bridge?"

"Yeah! That's it. It was the longest bridge in the world when it was built. It's about 3,400 feet long. How close is that to a mile?"

"Well, how long is a mile," I ask.

"Five thousand two hundred and eighty feet, so its about two-thirds of a mile, I guess. It really cut down the time it took to get to New York."

Another dove darts past. Logan misses again, but he's smiling and handling the gun very well.

Now I hear a shot from Dad's direction. Soon, Will comes running over with a dried cow paddy the size of a basketball.

"Will, what are you doing with that cow paddy?" I ask, perplexed.

"I shot it, Dad!" he beams. "Grandpa let me set it up, and I got it with one shot!"

Sure enough, the paddy is centered with a perfectly even pattern of shot.

"Well, way to go, dude!" My praise is genuine, but playful. "You done killed yerself a cow paddy. How far was he?"

"About 50 feet," he answers proudly, then scurries back to Grandpa, quarry in hand. Sometimes it's tough just being the bird dog, but Will is resourceful when it comes to entertaining himself.

By now, the black clouds have blotted out the sun, and vertical lightning bolts are stalking us from the north. Logan is the only one to have fired a shot, and although there's plenty of shooting time left, none of us see the wisdom in walking about with lightning rods in our hands.

I fetch the truck, and everyone piles in. The bolts now crack within a mile and are closing fast as we leave the pasture. Although the foreboding clouds will chase us south toward home, they will not dampen our spirits. If anything, we are energized. "I had fun!" Logan declares.

"So did I!" Will adds.

Simple statements, each. But profound, like a bridge across generations.

FISH RECORDS

Ever wonder how that lunker you caught in your youth stands up to other fish?
Here's a listing of Kansas state record fish as of August 10, 2001

BASS, LARGEMOUTH 11 pounds, 12 ounces Kenneth M. Bingham, Topeka	CARP 47 pounds, 1.6 ounces Phil McAmis, Hutchinson	GAR, LONGNOSE 31 pounds, 8 ounces Ray Schroeder, Topeka	SAUGEYE 9 pounds, 12.96 ounces Raymond D. Wait, Norton
BASS, SMALLMOUTH 6.37 pounds Jimmy Gilreath, Milford	CATFISH, BLUE 94 pounds James Edmiston, Shawnee	GAR, SHORTNOSE 5 pounds, 15 ounces Jack M. Frost, Manhattan	STURGEON 5 pounds, 3.68 ounces Edwin P. Hood, Mankato
BASS, SPOTTED(KENTUCKY) 4 pounds, 7 ounces Clarence E. McCarter, Wichita	CATFISH, BULLHEAD 7 pounds, 5.4 ounces David A. Tremain, Havana	GAR, SPOTTED 7 pounds, 12 ounces Charles Harbert, Arma	SUNFISH, GREEN 2 pounds, 5.76 ounces Fae Vaupel, Russell
BASS, STRIPED 43 pounds, 8 ounces Chester Nily, Sylvan Grove	CATFISH, CHANNEL 34 pounds, 11 ounces Kennith Bradford, Lansing	GOLDEYE 2 pounds, 4 ounces Mike Augustine, Junction City	TROUT, RAINBOW 9 pounds, 5 ounces Raymond Deghand, Topeka
BASS, WARMOUTH 1 pound, 1.76 ounces Vivian A. Bradley, Pittsburg	CATFISH, FLATHEAD 123 pounds Ken Paulie, Caney	PADDLEFISH 90 pounds, 12 ounces Joseph Cole, Walnut	WALLEYE 13 pounds, 2.56 ounces Dustin Ritter, Hoisington
BASS, WHITE 5 pounds, 9 ounces Jeffery L. Clark, Clay Center	CRAPPIE, BLACK 4 pounds, 10 ounces Hazel Fey, Toronto	PERCH, YELLOW (ring) 1 pound, 0.96 ounce Walker Trimble, Burlington	WHITE AMUR 60 pounds Darrell Lancaster, Belton, MO
BLUEGILL 2 pounds, 5 ounces Robert Jefferies, Modoc	CRAPPIE, WHITE 4 pounds, 1/4 ounce Frank Miller, Eureka	PIKE, NORTHERN 24 pounds, 12 ounces Mr. & Mrs. H.A. Bowman, Manhattan	WIPER 22 pounds Kevin Carson, Osage City
BUFFALO, LARGEMOUTH 54 pounds, 4 ounces Randy Lee, Minneapolis	DRUM 31 pounds, 4 ounces Arthur C. Hyatt, Coffeyville	REDEAR 1 pounds, 11.04 ounces Larry Fox, Scott City	GREEN SUNFISH/BLUEGILL HYBRID 2 pounds, 10.4 ounces Ron fountain, Paola
BUFFALO, SMALLMOUTH 51 pounds Scott Butler, Lawrence	EEL, AMERICAN 4 pounds, 7.04 ounces Ralph B. Westerman, Manhattan	SAUGER 4 pounds, 12.8 ounces Jimmy Barnes, Kansas City	

Water Willow Update

One of the most important elements in managing sportfish populations in lakes and reservoirs is habitat. Whether it involves essential spawning substrate for walleye or critical escape cover for small black bass, providing optimum living and growing "accommodations" for Kansas' sought-after game fish is an uphill battle that fisheries biologists continually face.

The normal succession and aging of impoundments contribute to the habitat dilemma as flooded timber and brush decompose with time. Likewise, rocky shorelines and underwater points, favorite game fish feeding grounds, become silt-covered and grown over with algae, rendering these areas less desirable. As habitat degrades, the numbers and diversity of sportfish species declines. The end result is limited angler success and reduced fishing opportunities.

KDWP biologists have been investigating several techniques to establish aquatic vegetation in larger reservoirs to overcome the problem of insufficient habitat. To date, the most promising approach involves the planting of an aquatic weed known as water willow, *Justicia americana*.

Water willow ranges throughout the East and Midwest and is common in the eastern third of Kansas. It's found along streams and sandbars in dense colonies, preferring the shallow running

water of riffles. The plant can tolerate being submerged for long periods and during dry times it spreads toward wetter substrate by way of a network of creeping rhizomes. In static waters it will grow in depths of 4 feet, providing valuable shallow water habitat. Established beds of water willow also act to reduce wave energy and control shoreline erosion.

Early transplanting work by department biologists met with mixed results. Recent efforts have involved proper planting densities, planting depths, and increased knowledge of preferred bottom types that allow the vegetation to spread more quickly and become permanently established.

Water willow has been planted at Cedar Bluff, El Dorado, Glen Elder, Hillsdale, Webster, and Wilson reservoirs.

Success in establishing water willow has initiated some timely research projects. A project spearheaded by the KSU COOP fisheries research unit will study water willow benefits at the eastern impoundments. A Fort Hays State University graduate student will conduct his master's thesis studying utilization of water willow by sportfish and impacts the new habitat will the recruitment of bass, crappie, and sunfish at Cedar Bluff.

- Lynn Davignon, district fisheries biologist, Cedar Bluff Reservoir

Critter Quiz

Don't have time to take a full course in mammalogy? Well, take this test instead. It highlights attributes of different mammalian orders and families and showcases the extreme cases in some groups (the biggest, the smallest, and so on). After all, these are the only facts most people remember after the final exam.

Q. Which U.S. land mammal has the most teeth?

A. *The Virginia opossum is the record holder with fifty teeth. It also boasts the shortest gestation period (twelve to thirteen days) and the greatest amount of growth from birth to average adult weight (1/10 ounce to 12 pounds). The Virginia opossum, by the way, is the sole North American member of the most primitive mammal group on Earth: Marsupialia.*

Q. What's the smallest mammal in North America?

A. *The pygmy shrew of southern Indiana weighs 1/16 ounce when full grown. It belongs to the order Insectivora, which contains shrews and moles and the shortest-lived mammals in the world (many species typically live less than a year).*

Q. What's the largest rodent in the country?

A. *No, it's not a rat but the American beaver, which can weigh up to 86 pounds. The smallest rodent, meanwhile, is the Northern pygmy mouse. This species probably also sets records for being the fastest species to attain sexual maturity (twenty-eight days) and for having the highest reproductive output (nine litters in 202 days).*

Q. What's the smallest carnivorous mammal in the United States?

A. *The least weasel, which attains a maximum weight of 50 grams. Compare that figure with that of the largest member of the order Carnivora, the Alaskan subspecies of the brown bear, which can weigh up to 1,700 pounds.*

Q. What's the only member of the order Xenarthra in the United States?

A. *The nine-banded armadillo. Sloths and anteaters are among the other strange members of this order.*

Q. What's the largest weasel in the United States?

A. *Don't guess the wolverine, which tops out at 40 pounds. The largest species weighs twice that. Give up? It's the sea otter.*

-nature

Harvestmen

What we in Kansas call daddy-longlegs are more commonly known by entomologists as harvestmen. Harvestmen are arachnids (8-legged arthropods), but they are not spiders. Spiders are also arachnids, but spiders have two body parts (fused head-thorax and abdomen), two fangs, and produce silk. Harvestmen do not produce silk, have no fangs, and have one body part, not two as in spiders or three as in insects. Spiders have a waist; harvestmen do not.

Harvestmen have a small body with the cephalothorax and abdomen broadly joined, presenting two large eyes over a tubercle (a nodule). Their legs are generally very large and thin. (Some species live in humus and have short legs and reduced eyes.) Unlike other arachnids, harvestmen don't perform mating courtship.

-Shoup

Backyard Habitat

Whether you're just beginning your Backyard Wildlife Habitat project or you've been providing wildlife habitat for years, your efforts are valuable to wildlife and worthy of recognition.

Having your yard certified as an official Backyard Wildlife Habitat site is easy. Everyone who provides the four basic habitat elements (food, water, cover, and places to raise young) and who takes steps to conserve natural resources in their yard may apply.

When you are certified, you'll receive a personalized certificate from the National Wildlife Federation.

Your habitat will be assigned its own

unique number, and it will be entered into the National Register of Backyard Wildlife Habitat sites. You'll be part of a network of 26,885 people who share their living space with wildlife.

If you wish, an announcement of your achievement will be sent by NWF to local news media.

You'll also begin to receive the *Habitats* quarterly newsletter, free-of-charge, and will be notified of any NWF training opportunities or special events planned for your area.

To find out more, visit the National Wildlife Federation website at <http://nwf.org/habitats>.

-National Wildlife Federation



**1ST SCHOLASTIC
TRAPSHOOT**

More than 200 of the nation's best high school trapshooters - representing 25 state championship teams - came to Vandalia, Ohio, to compete in the inaugural Scholastic Trapshooting Program last summer. Champions were crowned in junior and senior high school divisions.

"We're very pleased with the turnout in the first year of the program and thank all the participants and their coaches for the outstanding sportsmanship they exhibited during the competition," said Doug Painter, executive director of the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF), which sponsored the program in partnership with the Amateur Trapshooting Association (ATA). "These young competitors clearly show that the future of trapshooting is in good hands. Special kudos go to the members of the national champion teams for the exceptional shooting ability they displayed."

A complete listing of the first, second, and third place teams, as well as downloadable photographs of the national finals and more information about the program may be found at the National Shooting Sports Foundation's website, www.nssf.org/stp/photos.

-Bullet Points

TREE UTILITY

Western Resources was recognized on April 24 as a Tree Line USA Utility by the Kansas Forest Service and The National Arbor Day

Foundation.

Ray Aslin, state forester for the Kansas Forest Service, made the presentation during Tree City USA ceremonies Tuesday, April 24 in Great Bend. This is the second year that Western Resources received the honor.

To earn Tree Line USA status, utility companies must do the following:

- follow approved pruning, trenching and tunneling practices;
- keep copies of reference books on every truck that may work with trees;
- annually provide education to its employees about proper tree practices;
- have a trained professional on staff or contract to monitor and ensure quality tree work;
- provide one or more tree educational mailings to customers;
- on average, spend 10 cents or more per customer on proper tree planting; and
- hold, sponsor, or participate in an annual Arbor Day celebration.

According to Aslin, utilities making this commitment are considered "the cream of the crop when it comes to trees."

"This award reiterates that Western Resources follows nationally-recognized tree trimming policies and emphasizes our commitment to public education, tree planting and quality tree care in the communities we serve," said David Wittig, Western Resources chairman of the board, president, and chief executive officer.

*-Kathleen W. Ward,
Kansas Forest Service*

**TUTTLE CREEK
HONORED**

On June 14, 2001, Tuttle Creek State Park was presented a national trail award in Washington, D.C. Tuttle's Cedar Ridge Trail was given the Outstanding Use of Recreational Trails Program Funds for Accessibility Enhancement award. The award was presented by the Coalition of Recreational Trails, a federation of national and regional trail-related groups. Of 4,000 eligible projects, only seven received awards that day.

The Cedar Ridge Trail is a 3/4-mile trail equipped with an ADA compliant scenic boardwalk, benches, and information kiosks. To build the trail, many hours of manual labor were spent cutting trees and digging up large limestone rocks. Workers also had the challenge of grading the trail to an ADA compliant slope and width. The trail was completed with a surface of packed gravel.

The project hosted National Public Lands Day on Sept. 28, 1999, and 250 volunteers worked that day to assist with construction.

Design and construction assistance was received from Western Resources, Flint Hills Job Corps, Flint Hills Trail Riders Association, Tuttle Creek Lake Association, Americorps, and Kansas State University Park and Recreation Management and Engineering clubs. The trail gives visitors of all ages and abilities an excellent opportunity to experience wildlife and nature in northeast Kansas.

*-Todd Lovin,
park manager, Tuttle Creek*

**NO ADULTS IN
YOUTH SEASON**

On Tuesday, July 24, the Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission voted to continue the youth upland bird season; however, adults will no longer be allowed to harvest game during this special season. The bag limit for youth will remain half of the normal season limit -- two pheasants and four quail per day.

The Commission also established Nov. 3 and 4 as the season dates for the youth upland bird season. Youth 16 years of age and younger may hunt under the supervision of an adult 21 or older. All youth must complete a certified hunter education course prior to hunting, and youth 16 years of age must also possess a hunting license.

Nonresident youth under 16 must possess a junior nonresident hunting license (\$30.50), and nonresident youth 16 years old must possess a nonresident hunting license (65.50).

In addition, youth seasons will be continued as last year for deer and waterfowl. The youth and disabled deer season runs Sept. 29-30; only youth 12 through 16 and disabled hunters may participate. Youth waterfowl season runs the weekend preceding the opening of duck season in each zone. Only the youth may hunt.

In the spring of 2002, youth turkey hunting days will be conducted. The dates are tentatively April 5-7, subject to final approval.

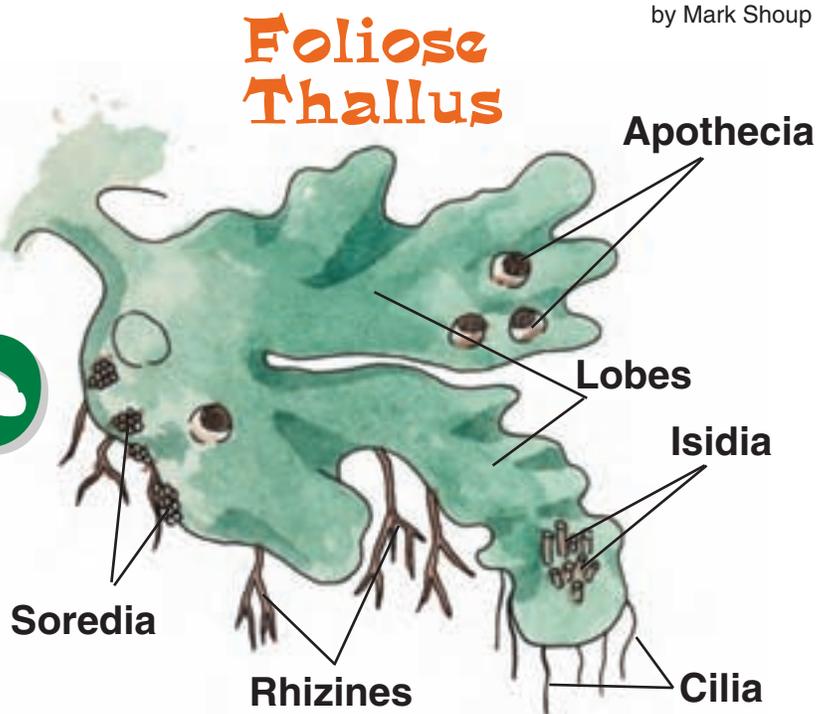
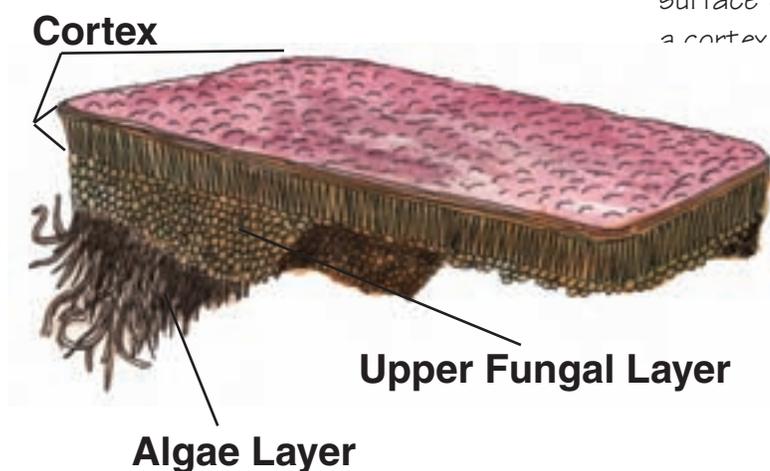
-Mathews

by Mark Shoup

TWO TO TANGO

Have you ever seen lichen growing on a rock or tree? Did you know that lichen are not one species but two? That's what they are: two species created especially for each other.

To make a lichen, two specific species of fungus and algae join "hands," so to speak. If the fungus and alga are made for each other (not just any old fungus or alga will do), they create a lichen body, called a **thallus**. [Note: "alga" is the word used for one, "algae" is used for two or more.] This "marriage" forms a unique type of thallus body; biologists use the lichen's body type to assign names and identify different types of lichen.



Once mated, the alga uses sunlight to create food (sugars) that feed both the fungus and the alga, and the fungus builds a thallus to house both organisms. This kind of agreeable arrangement is called **symbiosis**.

The first drawing on this page represents a generalized leafy (or **foliose**) lichen. The second drawing shows a cross-cut section of what a lichen looks like inside. The actual lichen is thinner than a wooden ruler. This particular lichen has a hard top surface called a **cortex**. Most foliose lichens have a cortex on the lower side, too. However, crusty (or

crustose) lichens are attached directly to the surface of the rock or tree, so they never have a cortex on the lower surface.

When some species of animal or plant die out for no apparent reason, they can be indicators of unseen problems, such as pollution. These are called **indicator species**. Some lichens are sensitive to air pollution and will die if the pollution level is too high. For



Lobaria pulmonaria in boiling water bath produced a dye bath that gives this golden color to cotton.

A long soak in water containing a *Parmotrema* species made this cotton a pretty violet.



this reason, scientists are experimenting to see if this unique plant formation might be helpful in determining the quality of your local air. If so, the lichens would be very useful indicator species. (There could be other reasons you don't have many lichen in your area, such as lack of moisture or other habitat factors.)

Lichens are important in many ways, to both plants and animals. Some make the nitrogen in

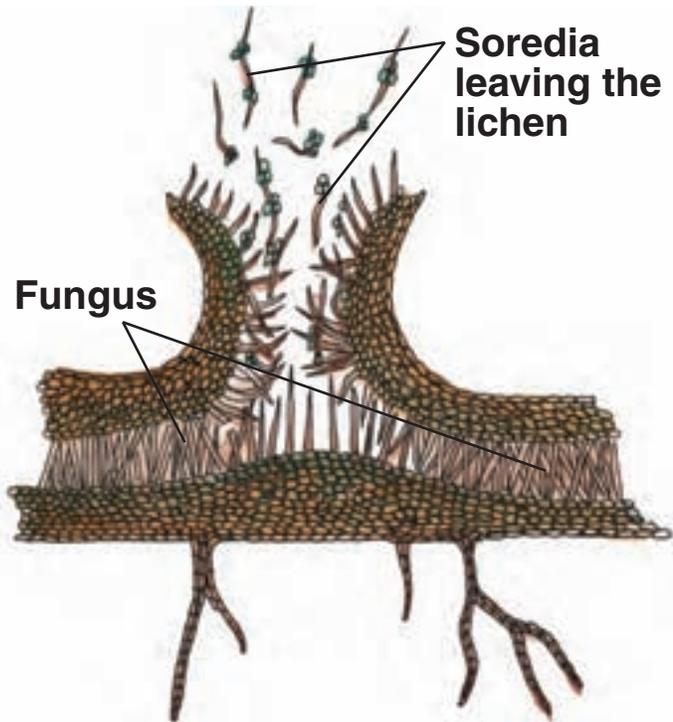
the air usable to plants. Lichen are also homes for spiders, mites, lice, and other insects. These critters are important food sources for birds and other animals, which in turn take their own places in the food web.

Humans also have learned to use lichens in many useful ways. People can eat some lichens. (CAUTION: a few are poisonous, so don't experiment without adult help.) Drug companies make antibiotics from lichens. One of the most creative things people do with lichens is make dyes to color wool. While some colors are subtle, others are bright and cheerful.

Lichens grow very slowly, sometimes only fractions of an inch in a whole year, and many do not regrow well if they are collected or harvested too much. If you collect for crafts, research, or even for food, be sure not to pluck too many. Check with your local wildlife biologist or the Pratt Operations Office, Nongame Section, for information about them and where good collecting spots might be. In some parts of the country, certain lichen are endangered, but none in Kansas are.

Algae and fungi have teamed to form lichens, each its own unique cooperative success story. Doing what each does best, they live as one organism, both inhabiting the same body. They add color to our natural environment. Enjoy them next time you are kicking around the streams and cliffs in your neighborhood.

Lichen Reproduction



Lichens make soredia to reproduce the lichen body. This is a very fast method of reproduction, and helps ensure that the new lichen will survive because both partners are together. Note how the fungus wraps around the alga cells.



Backlash

by Mike Miller

Seeing Is Believing

My wife enjoys seeing wildlife. In fact, after 20 years of having me point out deer, pheasants and turkeys as we drive down the highway, she's actually pointing "critters" out to me. Hunting doesn't interest her, but she has tagged along on several bird hunts to see the dogs work. I invited her turkey hunting, but when I couldn't guarantee she wouldn't get ticks on her, she declined. (The fact that she'd seen me pull numerous ticks from my clothes and body after morning turkey hunts didn't help.)

Last fall, she made a quantum leap. During our vacation in Colorado, the elk were bugling. We watched from several hundred yards as a small herd emerged from the timber and fed into a meadow. She wanted to get closer.

The next evening, we sneaked across the meadow and hid in a scraggly knot of spruce trees. She fidgeted for the first 30 minutes. "They're not coming tonight," she resigned.

"Patience," I whispered. "It's early."

Not long after the sun slid behind the mountain, we heard thundering hooves in the timber above us. Resonating off the mountainside, the sounds were magnified and a little ominous. A bull screamed; more thumping of hooves.

"Will they get us?" she asked, only half joking.

"No," I assured. "Watch the edge of the timber."

Six or seven cows and calves and two bulls finally filtered out. Several of the cows trotted by within 50 yards. As the light faded, the larger bull bugled defiantly. I had hunted elk several times, and these sounds were electrifying to me. Now they were to her, too.

"I want to get closer," she said as we made our way back to the truck in the moonlight. "Maybe we could climb one of the trees where they came out."

She would feel safer from a tree she admitted, and we would be closer — if the elk came out in the spot we picked. But I knew climbing an aspen without a tree stand wasn't feasible. We didn't make it back to the meadow, but I knew she was hooked on the experience.

I thought she might enjoy seeing deer from a tree-stand during the archery season here in Kansas. I bought a ladder stand and attached it to a tree 10 feet from the one I was hunting from. On a warm November evening I suggested we go.

I briefed her on the procedure, that we'd have to be quiet and keep movement to a minimum. She's not good

at keeping still but when she manages to, she falls asleep, which concerned me.

"Can I take something to read?" she wondered. "I'm afraid I'll get bored if we don't see anything."

I was confident we'd see deer, but it was okay with me if she wanted to read quietly.

Dressed in a pair of my camouflaged overalls, sleeves and pant legs rolled up, she followed me through the locust and hedge trees. When we reached the stand, I shinned up, attached a safety belt, and rechecked the stand's sturdiness.

"Put the belt around your waist as soon as you reach the top," I instructed.

"Are you afraid I'll fall out?" she grinned.

"Put the belt on," I said. "I never hunt without one."

The woods were silent and as boredom crept in, she pulled an oversized fashion magazine from her backpack. There was no wind and I wondered how nearby deer might react to the sound of those large, slick pages turning. It seemed loud to me.

We saw several deer that night, but none came close. Our only excitement was a skunk that waddled slowly under our stands at sunset. She wasn't thrilled about walking out in the dark with a skunk so near.

The next Sunday was warm and calm — a perfect evening. I'd teased her about the loud page turning, so she brought along a small paperback. I watched her settling into the stand — getting too comfortable, so I whispered at her to stay awake. She rolled her eyes. Minutes later, I hissed at her to point out a small buck to the west. The eight-point wandered through the locust trees toward us, walked directly to the tree she was in, then sniffed the rungs of her ladder stand. She leaned out to look directly down on the buck. I was afraid he would bolt, but he never saw her. I considered the evening a success.

As we walked out in the near dark, I asked her what she thought. No great excitement was in her voice, but she said it was fun. She was hoping for a big buck, I guess, like I was. I suppose a small whitetail isn't all that impressive when you've watched an 800-pound bull elk echo its bugle off the Rocky Mountains.

I hope she wants to try again. As encouragement, I bought her some women's clothing in the latest camouflage patterns. Her hunting clothes will fit, and she'll be in style — at least in this hunter's eyes. 

